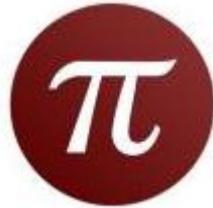


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*Teaching Spanish through Living Sequential Expression:  
Theoretical Considerations and Practical Implementation with  
Arab Children and Teenagers*

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of languages nowadays is becoming more and more important, for we live in a more international and interconnected world. And, as a consequence, the field of teaching and learning languages and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is growing and developing to great extents, trying to adapt itself to the changing world.

However, there are some issues that still persist and need to be paid special attention, like the problem of motivation among the students, specifically when learning foreign languages. Richards & Schmidt even admit very boldly that “[m]otivation is generally considered to be one of the primary causes of success and failure in second language learning” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 344).

Despite the extensive research on the field, from Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis and Gregg’s answer to its flaws to more up-to-date research like Csizér’s *Motivation in the L2 Classroom*, or Dörnyei’s extensive research and his theory of the *L2 Motivational Self System*, among others, there are still many chances of facing difficulties when dealing with the students’ motivation.

The reasons behind this can also be numerous, like language aptitude, age-related factors or not very suitable methodologies for students used to a different learning system. Some of these were at the core of my experience at *Our Lady of El Pilar School*, located in Jerusalem’s Old City, where I found myself teaching Spanish to Arab-speaking teenage girls.

Also known as “The Spanish School”, it is based in the building that hosted the first Spanish Consulate in the city. The Consulate gave the building to the Congregation of the Sisters of Calvary and, in exchange, the school committed to teach Spanish from age 6 till last year of high school, which means that it includes what is commonly known as children and teenagers in its range. Also, it is important to point out that, in general, the socioeconomical level of the students is not very high, because the school is known for offering scholarships and tuition reductions, which attracts families with less resources.

There are also other circumstances, such as the difficulties with finding permanent Spanish teachers, the scarce resources and the lack of a defined curriculum, that, when brought together, have prevented the students from achieving a good level of Spanish in recent years. When I arrived at the school, I faced all these problems, being the main one

the low motivation of the students, in which I have been working since I arrived at the school.

However, after two years, I was still dealing with the issue with not very good results. And at this point is when I learnt about a technique that Prof. Christophe Rico was trying to implement in his classes at Polis Institute, known as *Living Sequential Expression* or LSE.

LSE is based on François Gouin's method, which he developed and called the *Series*. In 1880 he presented the method in his book *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*, published originally in French. In it, he exposes a 'series' of actions that are expressed in a sequential order, the same way children reproduce what they see or experience for the first time in their mother tongue.

Even though Gouin's method did not manage to be very widespread at the time and that there is not much research on the topic, some of the premises Prof. Rico was developing for LSE apparently could help overcome the problem on motivation that I was experiencing with my students, but *could Living Sequential Expression (LSE) be a good option for teaching languages to Arab children and teenagers?*

Around this question, that very quickly became the core of this research, there are two direct consequences that have already been hinted:

The first, and the most logical one, is that it would include a practical part where I would try to implement LSE in some grades of the school of El Pilar. For this, I would translate into Spanish the SLE learning materials (originally in Greek, translated into English) that Prof. Rico had created following the Gouin's *Series*. Then I would teach with them following some requisites, like trying to get a wide range of age and being able to adapt the classrooms to allow the students to move around and face each other.

Under these circumstances, four Grades were initially chosen: 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> (10, 12, 15 and 17 years old, respectively). They happened to be not very numerous classes, ranging from 6 to 12 students. The original plan was to teach them through LSE from October to mid-April. However, the number of lessons would vary according to the group, for some of them had two lessons per week while others had three. Also, the attitude towards the language was taken into account at the beginning, because it varied depending on the group. Some other observations were made, like if there were students

with learning disabilities or students who were learning the language for the first time. Finally, it is important to highlight that for the younger groups it was the first time they had me as their Spanish teacher, while I had already been teaching the older ones for two years.

On the other hand, the second consequence for the research was the necessity to provide some theoretical bases in very different aspects. For example, the contextualization of Second Language Acquisition or SLA among Arabs, or some studies on cognition that could provide some theoretical indications on how memory works when learning languages. This would also serve to gather some supporting evidence that shows how LSE helps the language structures to get fixed when learning them. A final point describing LSE technique and its main points was also considered necessary.

However, once theoretical research started, the lack of sources that documented the evolution of the Gouin's *Series* throughout the years and the lack of research that included all the sources that talked about him and his method were shown as evident. This made necessary to work more deeply in this part.

One of the main reasons for this was the discovery of Charlotte Mason and her theory of education, that is currently being followed by some educational systems. According to her pedagogy, she proposed the Gouin's *Series* as the most appropriate and natural method to learn a foreign language, and her theory is still being followed nowadays, especially in the United States. There is even a manual, *Speaking Spanish with Miss Mason and François. Volumes 1 and 2*, and a line of schools under Ambleside Schools International (ASI) that implement Gouin's *Series*, so it is not as lost as it could initially seem. After this discovery, the priorities changed and the necessity of working on the history of the *Series* and its development up to LSE became more relevant, which gave this research a different outline.

Currently, even though the body of the research is still divided in two parts, theoretical and practical, the theoretical part presents a different organization:

First, the study of the Gouin's *Series* and its initial impact is described in depth, considering most, if not all, the articles and reviews that were published at that time, covering the relevance of his method – at least in English. Some more sources that describe how it works are also included, given that Gouin is still mentioned by some researchers as precursor of modern language methodology.

Also part of this section is the role of Charlotte Mason and her teachings in keeping alive the *Series*. Given that there is little academic research on this issue, some other sources have been used, because Mason's documents are not very easily accessed with the available resources and much of her research is available through mere experience of people putting it into practice. However, it is still relevant, for there are no previous attempts of gathering this information and putting it into context. Some primary sources have been attained too, like an interview with Brian Brostrom, the director of the Spanish Department of the Ambleside Schools International, which follows the Gouin's *Series* under Charlotte Mason's pedagogy. His contributions are very enlightening and give a clear and realistic view over teaching with Gouin's method.

Second, the change from the Gouin's *Series* to LSE is made. However, neither Gouin nor Charlotte Mason showed interest in providing the method with an appropriate theoretical basis, probably because that was not important at that time. Nowadays the situation has changed, and teaching languages methodology is greatly developed. This allows research to go a step further and, with enough development, try to constitute LSE as a method or, at least, to place it within an appropriate method. For this reason, a little explanation of teaching methodology is included, in an attempt to bring the pieces together and open the door for further theoretical research for LSE. Also, some studies on cognition are analyzed, in an attempt to contribute to the theoretical basis.

These two main sections are the constituents of the theoretical part.

On the other hand, the practical part also changed its former structure and currently includes some preliminary considerations on the teaching context and the age of the students, which have a very important impact on the students' motivation and performance, as was assumed at the beginning. Then the main section is the actual implementation of LSE at the school of El Pilar with the aforementioned Grades and some final considerations on the work carried out.

As can be implied from this outline, the relevance of this research cannot be overlooked, for it is both academic and practical. First, because it seems that there are no previous attempts to gather all the information about the Gouin's *Series* available to this day. Second, because it lays the groundwork for providing LSE with a theoretical basis, currently a very necessary issue in teaching methodology. Third, because it puts LSE into practice with children and teenagers.

From that last point, both aspects are important: that LSE is put into practice, which will provide some evidence of its success, or not. And also, that it is implemented with children and teenagers, a very sensitive age range, for which there are not much research. As Macaro puts it:

There is a scandalous (and I am treating myself to a highly charged adjective here) lack of research on adolescent and younger learners in ‘foreign language’ contexts. And there is even more of a scandalous lack of research on young beginner learners. This cannot continue. If we consider that the vast majority of second language learners in the world today are not adults and many of them are only just beginning to learn a language then we realize that we are failing in our duty to help them overcome their ‘real world problems’. (Macaro, 2010: 305).

In the end, the aim of this research can be summarized with Macaro’s words, for it started after facing a deep lack of motivation and with the desire of improving the learning conditions of my students, in order to help them “overcome their ‘real world problems’”, and present an obligation as something more pleasant than it seems.

Hopefully, what has been introduced here and is now developed below will contribute somehow to this aspiration.

## **PART 1. From Gouin's *Series* to LSE: a theoretical approach.**

In the first part of this work I will try to give a general view of the historical background of LSE and its relation to Gouin's *Series*, as well as the current situation with the implementation of Gouin's method. On the other hand, the step from Gouin's *Series* to LSE will be taken, trying to shed some light over theoretical aspects of LSE and to set the grounds for further research.

### **1. François Gouin and the discovery of the *Series***

In this part I am only going to give a brief explanation of who François Gouin was and how he discovered his *Series* method. It is important in order to put it into context and to understand how it fits in the history of language teaching methodology.

For this, the best explanation is found in his own book, *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*, published originally in French in 1880 as *L'Art d'Enseigner et d'Étudier les Langues* and translated into English by Howard Swan and Victor Bétis in 1892. It is what I will follow for the summary.

Also, Howatt & Widdowson (2004: 178-185) give a very detailed account of his experiences, as well as a very interesting critique of the *Series*, that will be mentioned at some point, as part of the reviews found.

François Gouin (1831-1896) was born in Normandy, where he studied secondary school. Afterwards he attended the École Normale de la Seine and started teaching in the Lycée of Caen. At the University of Caen he took classes in philosophy and his teacher advised him to go to Germany to learn philosophy at the University of Berlin (Swan, 1892: xiii). Here is where his problems to learn German started.

He attempted up to six times to learn the language through different methods, as he thoroughly explains in his work. He tried to learn German in the same way he had learnt Greek and Latin through grammar, also through the German lexical roots, through going to the hairdresser and listening to the conversations, by translating Goethe and Schiller with a dictionary, by the Ollendorff method<sup>1</sup> and, finally, by learning 30.000 words of a

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<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre à lire, à écrire et à parler une langue en six mois, appliquée au Latin*, by Heinrich Ollendorff. He also wrote a method to learn German, based on translations and sentences unrelated to each other, which is what Gouin probably used (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 183).

dictionary in one month. All these attempts were unsuccessful and did not help him to understand German at the Academy.

Some authors find difficult to believe his ‘story’, like Howatt & Widdowson, who even hint that he got into trouble and was attacked, because in the Preface of the English version Swan feels the need to defend him. However, even they have to admit that he provides a “‘fictionalized’ review of the literature of language teaching methodology of his time, based to some extent on personal experience” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 183). This implies that Gouin’s experience is presented, rather than as true facts, more as a ‘story’ of his quest to learn German, where the main character, Gouin himself, reviews these methods probably before introducing his.

Also, Howatt & Widdowson state that the incident at the mill that triggered Gouin’s discovery of the *Series* is “totally convincing” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 183). It happened once Gouin came back to France and found his almost three-year-old nephew speaking French fluently. They visited a mill together and saw all the steps of the making of the flour. This brought the boy to question and reconstruct the visit, using what he found around the house, like his toys or other objects. However, this reconstruction happened to be *sequentially*, according to the process he had seen. This is what enlightened Gouin:

[T]he insight he gained from observing the child’s use of language was of great importance. The boy used language in order to understand and organize his experience, and he used his experience in order to control and explore the resources of his language. This dynamic relationship between language and cognition lies at the heart of linguistic development, and Gouin was justified in his recognition of its significance (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 184).

As Howatt & Widdowson explain above, probably his most important discovery was about the link “between language and cognition”, that he also managed to ‘deconstruct’ in two ways. First, by choosing appropriate themes and series taken from ordinary life, and secondly, by making a distinction between objective, subjective and figurative language, as will be further developed when we talk more specifically about the method and its development.

After this discovery, he came back to Germany and finally started to understand and even to babble German after a few weeks. He taught at Berlin, England and Geneva

(Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 184), where he put all this together and published the book at his own expense. Howard Swan translated the book into English with the help of Bétis, Gouin's pupil, and it gained more popularity in England than in France. However, no many studies on Gouin's '*Series*' can be found, something that will also be discussed in the following part.

First, it is important to point out the main principles of Gouin's method, that could be summed up as follows:

1) Importance of the ear over the eye:

Each language has a pronunciation proper to itself; each sentence has its note, each word its accent these three things have their effect, not upon the eye, but upon the **ear** (emphasis mine) (Gouin, 1892: 302).

It is worth noting that he also emphasizes the necessity of a teacher that pronounces properly. For him, the importance is given to the sounds, how we perceive them and form the idea in our minds.

2) Three steps are taken: reception, reflection, conception.

We shall commence by representing to ourselves seeing in the mind's eye [...] facts already **perceived** by us and already transformed by the **reflection** and **conception** into constituent parts of our own individuality (emphasis mine) (Gouin, 1892: 39).

As he experienced it with his nephew, the importance of this process is mainly cognitive, by making something external part of our intellect, in this case linguistically speaking.

3) Importance of the verb and its meaning (or instrument) within the sentence:

The **verb was the foundation** upon which the child, little by little, built up his sentence. The verb was the germ from which, piece by piece, sprang and blossomed forth the sentence itself. The verb [...] was the **link** by which the child attached sentence to sentence, perception to perception, conception to conception (Emphasis mine) (Gouin, 1892: 45).

In other words, the verb was the key to understanding the language, with many things depending on it. For us this might not seem very new; however, many of the methods Gouin tried, as he explains, were based on the importance of the noun, rather than the verb. As a consequence, the meaning also depends on the understanding of the verb.

4) “Sequentiality”, the first logical operation.

A series of general ends which it proposes either aloud or to itself, and which it attains one after the other by successive and perfectly determinate means. Here there is **sequence**; here there is **order** (Emphasis mine) (Gouin, 1892: 92).

Gouin clearly states that this is devoted to “Nature” as he calls it, were order (“the relationship of succession in time”) can be seen and followed, forming “sequences”, as he points out. This would be then a logical way of learning.

5) Mapping human experience: series and themes.

Each one of us in reality, from the first dawn of intelligence, **forms series**, constructs exercises, **works out themes** (Emphasis mine) (Gouin, 1892: 82).

Therefore, the concrete way of putting together everything that has been said before is through the series and themes that Gouin thoroughly described and adjusted. Later on, these plans will be revised and discussed to be put into practice through the *Living Sequential Expression*.

Swan sums up Gouin’s intention when creating the Series method: “In this way the foreign language becomes in reality a “language” to the learner, not a slow translation or a set of printed signs; it is associated with actual facts, and expresses his ideas and mental conceptions in the foreign language itself” (Swan, 1892: xi). And this might be its main virtue as well, because in a very natural way language is acquired, the human experience is transformed into language and, at the same time, it is sorted out by the aforementioned “sequentiality”.

Nonetheless, it is also worth pointing out some flaws in Gouin’s *Series* that need to be taken into account, as Howatt & Widdowson noted in their work: “[his] enthusiasm [...] blinded him to two serious flaws in his interpretation of the incident, both of which severely damaged the practical usefulness of his teaching materials” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 184).

According to them, the first one was the “failure to realize that using language to structure experience [...] is only one of a number of functions for which it is employed” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 184)., which means that to transmit the experience the language could have been used in other ways: in a conversation, as a description of places or people... Or a sequence of actions, as it happened. They support this asseveration with the example of Gouin listening to his nephew retelling the story to someone else, instead

of to himself. Then it would have possibly been an ‘interpersonal’ model, rather than a descriptive one.

The second flaw was the fact that “[i]f Gouin had reflected on his observation of the boy instead of exploding with excitement [...], it would surely have occurred to him that there was a relationship between the sequences in the child’s narrative and the sequences in the industrial grinding process. Other events must obviously be organized in their own particular ways” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 184). Again, they give another visual example by adding: “If he had taken the boy to the duck-pond the following weekend, he would have discovered something else, perhaps equally interesting: spatial organization maybe, or cause-and-effect, or the expression of delight. But he did not do any further research” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 184).

These claims are intriguing since they show aspects of the *Series* method that could be improved or implemented. Obviously, Gouin probably had not studied teaching methodology, and this was not at the time as developed as it is nowadays. Therefore, the flaws do not necessarily detract from the importance of the method he discovered. However, these notes shall not be dismissed either, for they can help to improve and enrich the *Series* method.

### **1.1. The *Series* method: its pedagogical context and applications in the history of SLA**

Before moving forward, it is important to analyze the repercussion of Gouin’s method, as well as the context where it was developed. For a start, it could seem that there is not much to say about it. However, after some research we come to realize that this assumption is not true: the nineteenth century was quite important for the development of language teaching methods, as well as the repercussion of Gouin’s work was deeper than we could expect.

In the first place, Gouin is mentioned in many works that review the teaching methodologies and their history. From simple teachers that include them in their presentations (Cinthya Canton, *Biographies and Overview of Methods*), to manuals like Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Decoo (2011). Nowadays it is even possible to find some blogs of parents trying to implement the *Series* method in their homeschooling programs

for foreign languages, and websites here and there give some information with more or less successful ways of putting his method into practice. This means that it is an “active” method and that the people that get to know about the *Series* consider it could be a good way to learn a language.

However, not much literature has been written about it. *How to learn a language* (1893/4), by Rev. Henry W. Bell is a contemporary review of the Gouin’s *Series*. Although nowadays it can be considered somehow old-fashioned, it still makes good points about the basis of the *Series*. It has its importance, though, because it is considered to have been the inspiration to Charlotte Mason’s book, who happened to be the editor of the magazine where the article was published. Charlotte Mason’s implementation will be deeply discussed in the next part, for it is probably the most important contribution to the *Series* method since Gouin published his book.

Around the same date there is another article, *The Gouin Method* (August, 1893), written by James L. Smith and published in *American Annals of the Deaf*. This means that only a few years later the Gouin’s *Series* were already known in the United States. Smith provides a summary of the method and its basis, and mentions that “the experiment made with Gouin’s system upon Mr. Stead’s children, the result of which was published in the *Review of Reviews*, March, 1893, cannot be ignored” (Smith, 1893: 179). The experiment with the mentioned children is the one he did after discovering the *Series*, by going to live with a Saxon family: he would teach French to the children and learn German from them at the same time (Smith, 1893: 178). He also supports the *Series* by quoting the ideas on a natural way of learning in different “apostles of education” (Smith, 1893: 181), which are: Erasmus, Comenius, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, among others. He mentions again another article from the *Review of Reviews* (by J. Stuart Blackie. August, 1892), that endorses Gouin’s method. However, none of these mentioned numbers of the *Review of Reviews* are easily found nowadays and it was not possible to get them. Besides, Smith does not even provide the titles, making the task more difficult.

Another good point of Smith’s article is the comparison he gives with Estella Sutton’s *Toy Object Method* (1891). Before developing Sutton’s ideas further, for their similarity with Gouin’s, it needs to be added that, for the rest of Smith’s paper, he just makes an emphasis on the necessity of the teachers to prepare the materials under Gouin’s method and then bring it to its purpose on how it could help teaching deaf children.

About the *Toy Object Method*, it is very impressive to see how a very similar method arose around the same time in the United States. Sutton also applies two criteria, first that the method must follow the child's "natural way of learning", and second, that it must help to "the formation of good mental habits" (Sutton, 1891: 237). The Toy Object Method, then, would be very suitable because:

[A]ctions come first and language follows [...] presenting no arbitrary nor detached actions but orderly sequences, both the actions in each lesson and the lessons themselves forming a connected series in which natural associations are the links (Sutton, 1891: 238).

This premise is very close to Gouin's, although she was applying only to children's learning (adult learning is not taken into consideration).

Then, a series of child early experiences in life are described, to support why this 'natural' method is good to teach them and gives the example of the "first action lesson with toys" (indispensable in this method):

Willie carried some wood. He put the wood into the wood-box. Miss A. put some paper into the stove. She put some kindlings into the stove. She put some wood into the stove. She lighted a match. She lighted the paper. The fire burned.

This is simple language, but it tells a complete story and expresses formulated ideas (Sutton, 1891: 240).

As can be seen, the idea of a "series" is so similar that it could be considered almost the same, as well as other principles like "making the series orderly and fitting each new lesson into the preceding one" (Sutton, 1891: 241). She suggests that this plan can go on for the first three years of the child learning, and includes a suggestion for the first-year contents:

General topic: the household

1. Making the fire. 2. Cooking. (a) Frying. (b) Broiling. (c) Baking. (d) Boasting. (e) Boiling. 3. Marketing. 4. Sweeping and dusting. 5. Mopping. 6. Washing. 7. Ironing. 8. Parlor work. 9. Chamber work. 10. House cleaning. 11. Entertaining visitors (Sutton, 1891: 241).

Again, the topics are very similar to those that Gouin suggested. There is no indication that she knew him or his method, and also her purpose was only to teach deaf children, although in a very similar way to Gouin. On the other hand, it is unlikely that

she developed this method any further, and did not try to implement it in places other than the schools where she taught (Smith, 1893: 182), because there is no further evidence or writing. Later on, she published some more articles, but they were focused on kindergarten education.

As will be seen in the next article, in the end Gouin's method was the one that prevailed also in the United States. But it is not less striking the fact that around the same time as Gouin, and before his work was translated into English, a very similar (almost identical) method was started, although never properly developed, maybe because the limited scope of action it was initially born into (teaching deaf children). This could also be the reason why even Smith encourages his readers to go through Gouin's book (Smith, 1893: 184).

Some years later, another article was published in the United States regarding Gouin's *Series: A Historical Sketch of the Gouin Series-System of Teaching Modern Languages and of Its Use in the United States* (1912), written by C. H. Handschin, It gives a very interesting account of how the *Series* method was being developed and implemented, with real facts and figures.

Having laid in front of us a wide range of studies where information about the context and the use of the *Series* method is found, now we can get into deeper analysis.

First of all, as Richards & Rodgers (2001) describe in their first chapter, the most widespread method to teach languages, up to the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, was the Grammar-Translation Method. However, at the end of the nineteenth century some language teaching innovations started to be implemented, among which Gouin's *Series* can be found.

As was briefly described, Gouin had the Grammar-Translation Method among those he tried in his attempts to learn German, but it was not the only one, because at that point some other methods were already being suggested. This switch came because in the European context a better oral proficiency was being required (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 7).

Marcel and Prendergast are among those who, together with François Gouin, started to make theories and implement these changes. Especially Prendergast "was one of the first to record the observation that children use contextual and situational cues to interpret

utterances and that they use memorized phrases and “routines” in speaking (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 7). According to these authors, he even proposed that languages should be taught by following the most basic structures of the language, but they also agree to acknowledge Gouin as “perhaps the best known of these mid-nineteenth century reformers” and “was quite popular for a time” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 8), even with “hundreds of schools in England [...] using this method” and one school in Paris given by the government of the city, where he taught until his death in 1896 (Handschin, 1912: 170-171).

Handschin (1912: 171-172) also gives an account of places where the method was being implemented at the beginning of the twentieth century (mainly, Scandinavia and Holland.) In Germany, together with the appearance of some articles, “the method is used in its purity at Gandersheim-im-Harz and in one public and seven private schools in Hamburg (Handschin, 1912: 172). If the author gives such an account, it is because he wants to use it as an argument in favor of the implementation of the method in the United States, where “the progress of the series-system has been slow” (Handschin, 1912: 172). Some more articles giving a favorable opinion on the *Series* method were written, and he even mentions that Betis, Gouin’s disciple, went to Boston in the years 1895 and 1897 to demonstrate the practical side of the method, although with no great results.

Handschin continues giving information about articles that have been an inspiration, paying particular attention to the German ones. It is worth noting Brebner (1904) and Bagster-Collins (1908), who both devote several pages to the Gouin method in Germany. Finally, the author describes the adaptations of the series-system in the US, which do not quite follow the original method. However, one of the versions came to be used “in some two hundred high schools and academies and a few colleges” (Handschin, 1912: 174). Handschin then describes the variations and how this book works, and finally adds that “the results of this teaching have thus far been very satisfactory. The interest of the students is much livelier than under the grammar-translation method, and their knowledge of, and ability to read, the foreign language is considerably greater” (Handschin, 1912: 175). About the failings, he concludes: “In the few cases where it failed to do so, the failure was due, no doubt, to the unpreparedness of the teacher and to the fact that he made his work too prominently a conversation course” (Handschin, 1912: 175).

It is important to highlight that, if I have dwelt on Handschin at length, it is due to the fact that there are almost no reviews on the *Series*, in spite of this one being more than one hundred years old. Moreover, it combines the “Historical Sketch” with some information about the use of the method and its outcome, and also good bibliography for further research, even though it can now seem a little out of date. Also, it is interesting to point out that the main applications of the method nowadays take place in homeschooling programs in the United States, as it will be discussed in the next part.

However, to return to the general situation with the language teaching innovations, Richards & Rodgers (2001: 7-8) conclude that these reformers “did not manage to achieve any lasting impact” and also “[t]he work of individual language specialists like these reflects the changing climate of the times in which they worked”. Nonetheless, the reason why they were not successful was that “the ideas and methods of Marcel, Prendergast, Gouin, and other innovators were developed outside the context of established circles of education and hence lacked the means for wider dissemination, acceptance, and implementation” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 7). This could seem a very likely explanation, taking into account that, in the case that is being analyzed here, Gouin had a hard time trying to get into the Academia and his ideas had many detractors, as it was discussed when the *Preface* to the English translation of Gouin’s work was discussed.

Not much later, though, the Reform Movement started, and this is precisely the setting where Gouin’s *Series* moved during their first years. It is very striking to see how similar the principles of the ‘reformers’ were to those that Gouin had suggested in his book. According to Richards & Rodgers:

In general the reformers believed that

1. the spoken language is primary and that this should be reflected in an oral-based methodology;
2. the findings of phonetics should be applied to teaching and to teacher training;
3. learners should hear the language first, before seeing it in written form;
4. words should be presented in sentences, and sentences should be practiced in meaningful contexts and not be taught as isolated, disconnected elements;
5. the rules of grammar should be taught only after the students have practiced the grammar points in context - that is, grammar should be taught inductively;
6. translation should be avoided, although the mother tongue could be used in order to explain new words or to check comprehension (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 10).

As can be seen, all these rules could perfectly apply to Gouin's *Series*, from the importance of the spoken language to delaying the written form and teaching in sentences and contexts. The only point that could provide some discussion is the last one: in Gouin (1894), where he extensively describes how the first lesson of the *Series* method should be, he starts by explaining the *Series* to the students in their mother tongue, to switch into the target language later on, while he is constantly checking comprehension through the *Series* itself. In any case, it can be considered that both the 'reformers' and Gouin tried to teach following "natural methods", because they follow the natural development of children learning.

Handschin mentions that Gouin's *Series* were used at least twice in schools under the "reform method" in England (1912: 170). However, in the United States "Gouin is forsaken, and the grammar is taught inductively, many devices of the reform method being used [...] In reading-texts, likewise, the reform textbooks are given the preference" (Handschin, 1912: 175). In the end, this supports the argument previously mentioned: the Reform Movement was inside the intellectual circles, so it enjoyed of better acceptance and was more widespread.

Finally, as a union of the Reform Movement, the attempts to build a methodology around observation of child language and the attention to naturalistic principles of language learning, the Direct Method came out. By that time, Lambert Sauveur, teacher and linguist, had already come up with the Natural Method and had been practicing it for some time, as well as we know that Gouin used this method in one of his attempts to learn German. Sauveur's Natural Method was developed together with Gottlieb Heness and "explicitly adapted from Pestalozzi, which involves using a psychologically ordered sequence of activities involving all the senses" (Pym, 2016: 11). However, Sauveur claimed later on that he had created a new method that "teaches language without grammar or dictionary; it speaks French from the first hour, and does not pronounce one word of English" (Sauveur 1874: 6). It moves from pictures or objects to questions and answers, all of them based on daily routines and repetition, mainly for people who only wanted to *speak* the language, not so much to *read* in it (Pym, 2016: 12).

On the other hand, the Direct Method was based on the same principles, to the point that very often Sauveur is considered, with Berlitz, one of the developers of the method. Both the Natural and the Direct Method were based on the fact that "a foreign language

could be taught without translation or the use of the learner's native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 11).

However, there are two key points that make a difference between the Natural Method and the Direct Method. The first one is that the Direct Method was better developed and implemented than the Natural Method. This is mainly thanks to Maximilian Berlitz, who:

accomplished [it] on a commercial level in his network of specialized language schools. Two key principles were that the lessons were completely conducted in the target language and that grammar was learned inductively; furthermore, he gave major attention to carefully graded progression (Decoo, 2011: 58).

Even nowadays the principles of the Direct Method are well-known, thanks to the emphasis Berlitz put in those aspects. Nonetheless, the reason why it did not have success outside private schools (although they tried), was because some of the requirements were difficult to fulfil. For example, the lesson was organized "around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 12). This does ensure the students' learning, but it is a requisite that cannot be guaranteed in every circumstance. It could be considered that the Direct Method takes some ideas from the previously discussed methods and movements, with the difference that its success is well-known, as opposed to the previous ones. According to Decoo, it is very clear that:

In the right circumstances the Direct Method could be successful. Such circumstances include a well-trained and enthusiastic native teacher, fully worked-out material, well-thought-out strategies and a small group of motivated adult students (Decoo, 2011: 58).

For him, the secret of the success is a list of circumstances that needs to be filled up and that sometimes could even be counterproductive.

The second key point is directly related to the implementation, and it is the marketing that it received, as Pym (2016: 13-14) claims. This probably brought the Direct Method to be "the most widely known of the natural methods" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 11), to the point that very often the Natural Method and the Direct Method are

considered almost the same, as if the difference were a logical improvement over time. The reasons behind it could be the lack of theoretical basis at that time, that would have set the differences, and also the claim that all of them are “natural methods”, as previously quoted from Richards & Rodgers. This term, even being correct, can lead to confusion, especially because at that time the principles of the Natural Approach, which could serve as a delimitation for all these methods, had not been established yet by Krashen and Terrell (1983)<sup>2</sup>.

Coming back to the Direct Method, it received many critics as well, who perceived several drawbacks. Out of these, the most important was the role of the teacher, who needed to be native in the target language, go to great lengths to avoid using the mother tongue of the students and be very dependent on his skills, rather than on a textbook. Undoubtedly, all this is true. Gouin was aware of it in his *Series* and that is why in his school of Paris he focused on the formation of teachers. Maybe his method was also affected by these critics and suffered a similar fate as the Direct Method, which, by the 1920s was declining in noncommercial schools.

Overall, this is the context in which Gouin’s *Series* were born and developed, a very changing environment in terms of language teaching, and that might have been the reason why it did not reach enough popularity. Nonetheless, it shares many characteristics in common with the Reform Movement, the Natural Method and the Direct Method, which could eventually help to draw a wider and more updated version of the *Series* through the *Living Sequential Expression* technique.

## **1.2. Charlotte Mason and the *Series*: her contribution**

As it has been suggested previously, Charlotte Mason’s contribution cannot be overlooked in the development of the method. Her emphasis on using Gouin’s *Series* to teach foreign languages is important, probably because it is one of the very few practical accounts of the method that remains, if not the only one (besides the original work from

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<sup>2</sup> The Natural Approach – and the nature of ‘approach’ and ‘method’ – will be explained in 2.1. *The theories in the basis of LSE*. However, it can be anticipated that “approach” is in an “upper” level. So the Natural and Direct Methods can be within the Natural Approach, but the approach is wider in its scope than the methods.

Gouin). A more recent version<sup>3</sup> in the form of a Spanish manual based on Gouin and Mason's language teaching is still being used and recommended, although it suffers from some changes to adapt it from Gouin's original *Series* to the teaching program that she follows.

However, it is important to know more about Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) and her motivations in the first place. She was an English educator, author and thinker, "the unlikely pioneer of a social and intellectual movement". (Ambleside Schools International, n.d.)<sup>4</sup> As can be quickly inferred, like François Gouin, she lived in the period when educational changes were happening, especially in the field of languages that is being analyzed. She was also from England, the country where Gouin's *Series* had a deeper impact.

Mason taught for nearly 30 years and then founded the House of Education, where she ran a teacher-preparation program (ASI, n.d.). She co-founded a magazine, *Parents' Review*, that published many articles, some of them talking about languages and giving very positive reviews on Gouin's method, like Bell (previously discussed) and Duriaux (1898). The last one even praised his method by saying: "As regards method of teaching—nothing has so far been done to surpass the work of M. Gouin" (Duriaux, 1898: 427). Mason also wrote a six-volume series where she developed her education theory and a very well-defined curricula for children from kindergarten to last year of high school.

She summarized her ideals for children's education into 20 Principles, included in the preface to Volume 6 of her *Series*, *Towards a Philosophy of Education*, and studied in detail within that Volume. Some of these ideals would include short lessons (from 10 to 20 minutes for younger children to some longer ones for the older) and a focus on habit training, getting in touch with Nature and outdoor life and "first-hand exposure to great and noble ideas" (Ambleside Online, n.d.)

However, what is most relevant for the scope of this work is the fact that she based her curriculum for teaching foreign languages on François Gouin's *Series*. Actually, Mason praised his method, devoting some writing to it: "...M. Gouin's work (*the Art of*

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<sup>3</sup> *Speaking Spanish with Miss Mason and François, Volumes 1 and 2*, by Allyson Adrian. There are similar manuals for French and German as well.

<sup>4</sup> From now on, quoted as ASI. It must be distinguished from *Ambleside Online*, a different source with other purposes that will also be cited later on.

*Teaching and Studying Languages*) is the most important attempt that has yet been made to bring the study of languages within the sphere of practical education..." (Mason, 1886: 302). This is not difficult to understand if we take into account that Gouin's method fills in many of the ideals that Mason tried to implement.

For example, she believed that narration, "the child telling back a story" (Ambleside Online, n.d.), is one of the bases, together with copywork in the first years. For this, the *Series*, in their simplicity, are clearly suitable. They also refer to daily actions and aspects, which is another of the ideals she promulgated: "...[languages] should be acquired as English is, not as a grammar, but as a living speech" (Mason, 1886: 300). Another interesting point coinciding with Gouin is the following: "...it is incontestable that the ear, and not the eye, is the physical organ for apprehending a language..." (Mason, 1886: 302)

On the other hand, the Volume 3 of the series, *School Education*, includes many thoughts about the teaching and curriculum of children aged 9 to 12 with details of books, exams..., also related to foreign language teaching (Mason suggested French when she wrote the volumes, probably following Gouin's book *A first lesson in French*). There, she gives an account of how the lesson should develop that is worth reproducing here:

1. Tell the children in a few words what the series is about.
2. Explain the verbs in the infinitive, by doing the actions when possible.
3. Let the children say the verbs in the infinitive.
4. Let them write the verbs on the board. (*For more experienced students*)
5. Explain, by actions, when possible, the rest of the series.
6. Repeat each sentence several times slowly and carefully.
7. Let the children repeat the sentences.
8. Let them write the series on the board. (*For more experienced students*)

(Mason, 1904: 346)

However, what she presents is a very good summary of Gouin's aforementioned book. In *A first lesson in French*, Gouin reproduces step by step how the first lesson should be (1894: 7-43, being 7-11 an introduction; afterwards, he sketches out how the second lesson should take place). Mason follows the same pattern, adding that only more experienced students should write it on the board. This is more a side-effect of her teaching suggestions, for, as opposed to Gouin, she is counting on the students to start learning the language earlier on, but not allowing them to read or write before a certain

age. On the other hand, she fully adheres to Gouin's suggestion that the first approach by ear, listening and speaking, and being later introduced to writing and, finally, reading, exactly as the mother tongue is learned (Gouin, 1894).

There are two other remarks that can be done to her summary. First, that Gouin places a stronger emphasis in the conjugation of the verbs from the very beginning. Between points 3 and 4 he would stop the development of the *Series* to "conjure up the good fairy Grammar" (Gouin, 1894: 27), and they would conjugate both orally and written some of the verbs they have learnt in the *Series*. Later on, he reproduces a conversation where the teacher asks the students if they think they have learnt any grammar, and the students answer that they have not, to end up pointing out that they have actually learnt "a great deal of grammar without your noticing it" (Gouin, 1894: 42). This is included to emphasize how it is possible to learn a language without the grammar being the center of the lesson, which now can be easily acknowledge, but at his time, it was a very innovative point of view.

Secondly, Gouin is not clear about saying the verbs in the infinitive or about writing the whole series on the board. About the infinitive, maybe he considered that it was too soon to introduce the concept, but nothing can be said for sure. And about writing the whole series, he just puts an emphasis on the fact that "the pupil will never be allowed to read or to write an exercise until he knows first how to speak it" (Gouin, 1894: 44).

Gouin (1894) only fully developed the first lesson, gave some ideas for the following ones and some remarks about how it should be completed. However, Mason developed a complete curriculum based on these recommendations still in use nowadays. Before getting into it with detail, it will be worthwhile to briefly analyze one example of a complete lesson that she gives. The example chosen is hers, instead of Gouin's, because her "series" are simpler and more doable (a single series in Gouin could have up to three parts completely developed, as is described in *A First Lesson in French*). In this case, Mason's example (1904: 347) is for a lesson in Italian:

Subject: Italian Gouin.

Group: Language. Class IV. Average age: 16.

Time: 30 minutes.

OBJECTS.

1. To increase the girls' interest in foreign languages.

2. To enlarge their Italian vocabulary.
3. To give the girls more facility in understanding Italian when they hear it spoken, and also power to express themselves in it.

LESSON.

Verbs.

Volere esercitarse - Aprire - Suonare - Studiare - Volere imparare

Italian.

Luigia *vuol esercitarsi* sul piano.

*Aprè* il piano.

*Suona* una scala e degli arpeggio

Poi *studia* una Sonata. di Beethoven.

Che *vuol imparare* a mente.

English.

Louise *wishes to practise*.

She *opens* the piano.

She *plays* a scale and some arpeggio

Then she *studies* a Sonata by Beethoven,

Which she *wants to learn* by heart.

All kinds of details are given, from the average age, to the time, to the objectives or the planification of the lesson itself. This is only an example of several of them that can be found in the volume. Before the first lesson, a description of the development of the lesson similar to the one above is given, so the teacher remembers (or learns, if it is the first time), how it works. Also, as we can see, Mason provides the *Series* both in the taught language and in the mother tongue. Nonetheless, this is only a summary of the curriculum that was developed later on, according to the specific requirements of the teaching sessions.

I was able to find information about these in *Mason's Living Language*, a website that facilitates Mason's curriculum for foreign languages and gives a very complete arrangement of what children should learn according to her. Also, some references to how French is taught in the Parent's National Education Union (P.N.E.U.) schools have been found<sup>5</sup>. These were created while Charlotte Mason was still alive, following her ideas in education, and are still used nowadays. Although more languages are taught in these schools, the author recognizes that only French follows Mason's suggestions and, as a

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<sup>5</sup> This information was initially found in a non-academical source, acknowledged in this research as Becca (n.d.) and Becca (2017). In Becca's accounts, the links to the original sources from an academic institution were given. However, this institution (Redeemer University College) does not have the information available anymore. I still consider it important enough to include it citing Becca (n.d.). In further research, Redeemer University College should be reached to try to get the original sources.

consequence, Gouin's *Series*. I think it is worth analyzing the curricula, provided that it is very detailed and gives good ideas to make the teaching more complete.

First of all, it is important to notice that, for Mason, "language lessons are scaffolded through the terms and through the Years/Forms" (Becca, n.d.). The forms are the name that the different set of *Series* receive, according to Mason. It is simply another division, easily relatable to the Grade or Year where they would be learnt in a school.

A very interesting aspect is the duration allotted to the classes. For Years 1 to 3, it is only 10 minutes three times a week, plus an additional 15-minutes class for song. The first year great emphasis is put on vocabulary: "...they should learn a few —two or three, five or six— new... words daily, and that, at the same time, the old words should be kept in use..." (Mason, 1886: 80) However, for the series in this first stage, Mason differs in the implementation: "[t]he method of teaching may be varied, partly because that recommended by M. Gouin requires a perfect command of the [language], and teachers who are diffident find a conversational method founded on book and picture easier to work and perhaps as effectual—more so, some people think..." (Mason, 1886: 306). Finally, poetry, nursery rhymes, short stories, games and songs have much importance.

In Years 2 and 3 narration, writing and reading, in this order, are little by little included, always being respectful with the student pace. Some of the work that remains from Mason's implementation are the exams that the students took in 1926 (in French). These were:

Programme 105 Exam Form IB, 1926

Sing a French song, or, act a nursery rhyme in French.

Give the French names of four things in your bedroom, and say in French how you use them.

Programme 105 Exam Form IA, 1926

Say, in French, how you get up in the morning, wash yourself, dress yourself.

Recite, or, act in French, a scene in a lark's nest (*L'Alouette et Ses Petits*), or recite a French poem (Becca, 2017, May 25).

I decided to go through the curricula programs because they give a clear idea of what the student was supposed to know after Year 1 (Form IB) and Years 2 and 3 (Form IA). It seems that she managed to fulfil these requirements while teaching. In my opinion,

her idea to implement Gouin with young children is very sensible and complete, and a good way to keep them motivated while learning the language in an attractive way.

Years 4 to 6 are similar to the previous ones, but progressively harder. In Year 4 the lessons switch from 10 to 30 minutes and the formal study of grammar begins. Moreover, the students are given pictures to describe with complete sentences. This becomes a proper narration with short paragraphs in Years 5 and 6. The exams of these years reveal the different expectations:

Programme 105 Exam Form IIB, 1926

Say what you can, in French, about a visit to a fruit shop or to a grocery's shop.

Make six French sentences about *Le Brave Chasseur* (see picture page 24,

Themoin)

Programme 105 Exam Form IIA, 1926

Describe, in French, (a), how *La Petite Charité* was taken away by the fairies, or, (b), *Le Mauvais Elève*.

Make six sentences, using different tenses of the verbs *écrire*, *prendre*, *arriver*. Name each tense (Becca, 2017, May 25).

From the exams, it is implied that the students were also expected to know short stories and poems. It shows a varied scope that still does not take away the context (like the visit to the fruit shop). The students are supposed to be able to make a full description of something that they had studied with appropriate sentences and structures of narration, which is sensible after approximately six years learning the language.

Years 7 to 9 experience a considerable change: the lessons switch to 45 minutes, twice a week, and still one 20 minutes lesson for song. Most importantly, the vocabulary starts to be learnt “by-the-way through literature and there is less use of games and pictures. Students continue formal lessons in grammar, and the reading and reciting of poetry and songs. The work becomes considerably harder” (Becca, n.d.). If so, Mason suggested students should “begin studying their third language” at this point (Becca, 2017, May 25).

On the other hand, the exams are also quite different, and they include translating passages from the mother tongue (English, in this case) into the foreign language (French).

Programme 105 Exam Form III, 1926

Describe in French, (a), an incident from *La Princesse Feuille-morte*, or, (b), two places of interest in Paris.

Translate *Siepmann*, p. 125, IV., “Henry.... early hour.”

Make sentences, (three of which should be in the past tense) using the conjunctions, *quoique, bien que, à moins que...ne, de peur que...ne, il faut que*. (Becca, 2017, May 25).

For Year 9, “conversational French lessons, grammar, literature with narration, poetry and songs” are listed as contents. The expectation is that, by this year, they can show “a strong command of French grammar” (Becca, 2017, May 25).

Programme 105 Exam Form IV, 1926

Write a French conversation between two ladies, who have visited France, discussing, for example, a vintage, a picnic, or the journey; or describe, in French, the judgment scene from *Pathelin*.

Which conjunctions require (a), the indicative, (b), the conditional, (c), the subjunctive, in French? Use one of each of them in sentences.

Use, in sentences, the third person singular of the present indicative of the verbs, – *mener, geler, céder, jeter, appeler*; give the second person plural of the Imperative of these verbs (Becca, 2017, May 25).

Definitely, in these last levels, Mason’s method differs from Gouin’s: the *Series* are left apart to start more conventional or deep lessons. It is sensible, though, for the students have already achieved a good understanding and use of the language and they keep moving on to a more academic level. Years 10 to 12 follow the same path, but again harder, showing a very strong command of the language. However, the oral and conversational aspects of the teaching are still emphasized through the rest of the years.

In conclusion, for Charlotte Mason, Gouin’s *Series* were a wonderful introduction to a foreign language, that was fully applied through the first years, together with some other fun activities, like stories, songs and games, to provide variety and keep the interest. It gave the students the perfect basis to move on to deeper and more difficult activities, progressively more unrelated to the method. Nonetheless, by the end of their formation, they had already mastered the first foreign language and had sufficient instruction in the second one. As Mason puts it: “No doubt M. Gouin’s [series] method should be more successful than any other in steeping the student...in German or French thought” (Mason, 1886: 303).

### **1.3. The current implementation of the *Series*: are they still being used to teach?**

There is little doubt about Mason's belief in Gouin's *Series* that brought her to successfully develop and implement his method in schools. However, although there are still many schools under the P.N.E.U that started with her, it is easy to suppose that they began to follow Mason's ideals only in philosophical terms and got progressively detached from her teaching methods. This assumption has two pillars:

First, the absence of information. It is possible to find a list of P.N.E.U. schools, all claiming to follow Mason's ideals, but no further information is given about this implementation.

Second, the detailed account of an American family who brought Charlotte Mason's educational method into the spotlight again, creating a whole homeschooling plan out of her teaching methods (Charlotte Mason Research Company, 2019.) In summary, the mother read about Mason in *For the Children's Sake* (Susan Schaeffer, 1986). After intensive search of the original 6-volumes *Charlotte Mason Series* (which had almost disappeared by that time), they started by reprinting them to end up writing a whole new series of books, connecting families through the same homeschooling programs under Mason's ideals and contributing to the proliferation of many blogs and websites based on her and, as a consequence, on the Gouin's *Series* for the teaching program of foreign languages.

Nonetheless, not all the programs found have brought Gouin's ideas back. Many of the websites that have Charlotte Mason as their inspiration for the homeschooling program, either do not include foreign language teaching, or suggest other books and sources. Only the most faithful ones, from which almost all the previous information has come, still implement the Gouin's *Series*.

*Ambleside Online* is a very good example of this situation: it is currently one of the main references for Charlotte Mason's homeschooling program, but among the books suggested to teach Spanish, only one follows Gouin's *Series* according to Mason's curriculum. *Mason Living Languages* is another great advocate in favor of Gouin's *Series*. Finally, *Ambleside Schools International* is a group of schools spread throughout the world that follows Mason's educational program and, in their website, it is stated that, as

part of the curricula, the “Gouin series for Spanish instruction” is followed. They very kindly accepted to be interviewed and some of the aspects will be analyzed later on.

Out of the three websites mentioned, the second one as already been discussed through the analysis of the exams and other ideas. However, from *Ambleside Online* I would like to briefly go over the outline of the book they suggest, because it is the most modern use of the Gouin’s *Series* currently in practice.

The title of the book is *Speaking Spanish with Miss Mason and François. Volume 1*, compiled by Allyson D. Adrian (2013), and followed by a second volume of the same collection. It is a very recent book which has both a printed and an e-book version, with a total of forty-two series with the possibility of buying the audio files separately. The variety of Spanish used in the book is Latin American. In the first volume, before developing the *Series* there is an introduction, *Meet Miss Mason and François*, where a brief account of their lives and their vision is given, in order to support the teaching method developed in the book.

Then, a subsection explaining *How to use this volume* is also included, taking into account that the book’s main audience is directed to are self-learners or homeschooling parents who teach their children. The steps suggested to follow are: learning the English series by heart, also by acting them out. Once students know the *Series* and the verbs in English, they move on to the Spanish, learn the verbs in the language and move on to the whole sentence of the *Series*, remembering that “[a]cting out is essential to this method” (Adrian, 2013: x). Until the student does not know the verbs by heart, they do not learn the sentences. So, the structure suggested by them would be: sentences in English – verbs in English – verbs in Spanish – sentences in Spanish. The two first steps can be simultaneous, for it is the main language of the learner (and also it could be switched to learn English following the same procedure).

These *Series* also include a response box: “These are comments a teacher can say to the student(s) to develop an ear for questions and feedback. [...] If you are learning alone at home, take an extra minute and say the responses and answer the questions” (Adrian, 2013: xi), and a recommendation to write the *Series* down after you learn them (only for older students, as Mason suggested). Finally, “[a]t the bottom of some pages you will find recitations, conversations, exercises, or grammar,” which gives a rest to the mind and change the routine. It follows Mason’s idea of varying the activities so the

student does not get bored and they “are a delightful way to increase your fluency” (Adrian, 2013: xi).

The example of the first lesson in Spanish (Adrian, 2013: 3) can be found below, so we can get an idea of how it looks like:

Serie uno

This ebook has been licensed to M Lopez de Tejada Irtzo  
Jer, Sevilla Sevilla, Spain  
mayteirtzo@hotmail.es Not for distribution

## Abro el libro

Tomo el libro.  
Abro el libro.  
Cierro el libro.

tomo  
abro  
cierro

Variaciones:

Tomo el cuaderno. Abro el cuaderno.  
Cierro el cuaderno.  
Tomo la billetera. Abro la billetera.  
Cierro la billetera.

<b>Respuestas:</b>	<i>Al estudiante:</i>	<i>¡Mírame!</i> <i>¿Qué estás abriendo?</i> <i>¿Qué estás cerrando?</i> <i>¿Qué estás haciendo?</i>
	<i>A los estudiantes:</i>	<i>¡Mírenme!</i> <i>¿Qué están abriendo?</i> <i>¿Qué están cerrando?</i> <i>¿Qué están haciendo?</i>

The book starts with the first person singular pronoun (“I”) and until series twenty do not change to first person plural (“we”) and third person singular (“he/she/it”) in series twenty-nine. From that point on, the variation between these persons becomes more regular. In the response box the imperative form is included, together with the second person singular and plural.

On the other hand, and omitting the recitations from the Bible at the end of some series, some of the extra content the book includes, in order, is: ordinal and cardinal numbers until ten (series three), the days of the week (series four), question markers (series six), the months (series eight), the seasons and the weather (series nine), the definite article (series eleven), the imperative in singular and plural (series twelve), the numbers up to forty (series twenty-one), the negative imperative (series twenty-three), the first person plural (series twenty-five), the numbers up to sixty (series twenty-nine), the future “will” (series thirty), an introduction to the past (series thirty-one and thirty-

two), the numbers up to eighty (series thirty-five), the verb “to have” (series thirty-seven) and counting up to one hundred and “reflexive verbs” in Spanish (series forty-two).

The first short stories (for the third person singular) appear in series nineteen, twenty-eight and thirty-nine. In series thirty-six there is an exercise to describe “my bedroom”, based on answering a set of questions and in series thirty-eight a basic “get-to-know someone” conversation.

As can be implied, a fair amount of knowledge can be learnt with this book in the first two or three years, as the author recommends. The series are also thought so they cover different areas of vocabulary: from mere physical actions to observation of nature, weather, colors, food or meals.

However, most of the feedback from the book does not really apply to our research, because it usually comes from homeschooling families. Even then, there are two main events: either the family was successful and liked the method, or they never completed it for various reasons.

On the other hand, *ASI*'s teacher in charge of the Spanish curricula for their schools, Brian Brostrom, granted me an interview<sup>6</sup> to discuss how the implemented Mason and Gouin's method in their schools. Some of the answers will be presented and discussed now. However, the complete interview is very relevant and it will be included in Appendix 1.

ASI implements Spanish through the Gouin's *Series* in K-8 in ten schools in the United States that teach Spanish, using Adrian's books. Brostrom recognizes that “some of these series were modernizations of Gouin's own series, some were inspired by Gouin, and a few were written by our own Ambleside language teachers” (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019). They also have created additional series to complement the book, and also they have “issued an appendix of problematic series and suggested corrections or variations to our teaching staff”, because they recognize the book presents some typos, and also that are “truly incorrect word choices or incorrect usage”, as well as “several series that suffer from *leísmo*” (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

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<sup>6</sup> Conducted on April 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, via email. Brostrom is also the Spanish teacher at the Ambleside School *RiverTree* in Minneapolis, Minnesota, apart from being in charge of supervising the Spanish curricula for all the schools that implement it.

Brostrom recognizes two problematic areas with the book: the first, that they do not spend as much time with the English series as with the Spanish ones, as Adrian suggests. They have found that “this is tedious for students, and we believe it goes against Gouin’s own teaching” (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019). The second is that they need to constantly check they are not “following the steps too rigidly” or becoming “too systematic”, while still following the system. The answer to this is to complement the book with other activities, as Mason suggested, although they include them *gradually*. “For grades six through eight we also have an anthology of literature that Ambleside has created called *Mente a Mente*” (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

The rest of the aspects he discusses are always shown in a very positive way. For example, they follow Mason’s allotted time for classes, and Brostrom remarks “how much our students acquire with so little time” (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019). Also, if the series are well and vividly followed, the “students do remain motivated and thoroughly enjoy the series work”. If the students become fatigued with the series in grades 6-8, they “add additional grammar instruction and readings from our anthology to keep them motivated and to keep the curriculum enriching for them”. New students in K-4 adapt very quickly to the method and in higher grades they “may need more encouragement and some remediation” (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019). Although they monitor the results in younger students, until grade 5 there are not exams, and these will be mainly orally focused at first, with the technical portion gradually involving more functions of grammar. They “try to keep most of the exams oral until seventh or eighth grade” (personal communication, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019).

Finally, about the conclusions using the method:

I would say that the students gain very good pronunciation, excellent ears in hearing the spoken language and comprehending what is said, a good background in how the patterns of the language works, and some limited proficiency in spoken Spanish. Most importantly they have a positive relationship with language learning and some tenacity and willingness to take risks in speaking as they enter the rigors of high school language learning (Brostrom, personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

I have decided to include so many details from the interview because there are not many accounts so well developed and presented about Gouin’s method usage. However, it shows that, if well-used, the results are very good. Gouin’s *Series* also leave an imprint in the students, who will draw upon the *Series* to fix new structures. In general, they will

have given them “great strength and skill in tackling a more rapid and robust learning of Spanish” (Brostrom, personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

Brostrom goes into detail in all the aspects that here have been summarized and can be found in the Appendix. It is undeniable that this complete vision gives a very clear idea about how Gouin’s method works, and provides one of the few *real* accounts of the fact that it is useful for learning a language and that, in the end, show that Gouin’s *Series* can work well even nowadays if properly implemented.

## **2. From Gouin’s *Series* to Living Sequential Expression. A renewal by Christophe Rico**

In February 2018, Prof. Rico gave a talk for Paideia where he introduced for the first time the concept of *Living Sequential Expression* (LSE). As has been explained, this technique is based on the Gouin’s *Series*.

Also, in that talk he suggested that the storytelling skills could be enhanced through the *Series*, which would also help with the grammar and vocabulary acquisition. Also, this technique combined with other practices, like TPR (*Total Physical Response*) and comprehensible input, could create a good formula for Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

However, provided that LSE theory is still to be developed, it could be useful to make a first approach that will lay the groundwork for further research.

### **2.1. The theories in the basis of LSE**

First of all, some reference needs to be given about the chosen name, because it already has a purpose, as can be guessed from it. As Prof. Rico puts it:

It has been coined jointly by Stephen Hill, a specialist of Second Language Acquisition, and me, through a fruitful discussion between the two of us. The name underlines:

- 1) The immersive character of the method (LIVING)

2) The connectivity between the actions as a means for language acquisition (SEQUENTIAL)

3) The speech-oriented character of the technique (EXPRESSION) which is not just a way of learning passively but also of producing speech.

(Rico, personal communication, February 26th, 2019)

As can be seen, the mere name of the technique already emphasizes the basis that need to be paid attention to. Richards & Rodgers (2001: 8) make some of these connections in their work, when stating that Gouin's *Series* promote "practices that later became part of such approaches and methods as Situational Language Teaching (Chapter 3) and Total Physical Response (Chapter 6)". Therefore, it becomes necessary to make a connection between LSE and the approaches and methods that are involved and reinforce it, such as TPR or the Natural Approach, for they can be relevant when trying to develop LSE theory deeper and further. In the same way, the Polis Method in which LSE was conceived by Prof. Rico cannot be overlooked.

From a chronological point of view, then, the development of the aforementioned methods and approaches would be as follows:

First, the Natural and Direct Methods, together with Gouin's *Series*, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, as they have already been explained throughout, they are not going to be mentioned again. Suffice it to say that they are methods that surged as an answer to the Grammar-Translation method and that can nowadays be categorized within the Natural Approach, that was developed later.

Second, Situational Language Teaching (SLT) and TPR arose, between the 1930s and the 1960s by British applied linguists and in 1977 by James Asher, respectively. By the time TPR was first presented by Asher, SLT's impact was already declining as a method for SLA. Asher's method, on the other hand, it is still very important.

Then, in 1983 Krashen & Terrell presented the Natural Approach for the first time. As opposed to the methods, the Approach is a different category that can actually accommodate many methods within it.

Finally, the Polis Method has been recently presented officially in Rico (2019). Being currently developed and theorized about, Rico considers LSE as one of the techniques in the basis of the Polis Method, as will be explained later on.

However, before getting to analyze and compare these practices that have been mentioned, it could be important to try to get LSE within an appropriate methodological category, for the following question may arise: is it a technique or can it be ascribed within a more suitable category?

As we have seen, Gouin's *Series* are always referred to as a method. However, this might have happened because, when Gouin's *Series* were developed, the appropriate terminology had not been proposed yet. Nonetheless, if LSE is directly based on the Gouin's *Series*, could it also be considered a method?

In this regard, Prof. Rico prefers to talk about LSE as a technique (Rico, personal communication, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018), but some highlights regarding methodology on teaching languages will be given, in order to shed light on the issue.

Anthony (1963) was one of the pioneers to give a definition for these important categories. He considered *approach*, *method* and *technique* the three necessary levels of conceptualization and organization when teaching a language:

The arrangement is **hierarchical**. The organizational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach [...]

An **approach** is a **set of correlative assumptions** dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the matter to be taught [...]

**Method** is an **overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material**, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is **procedural**.

Within one approach, there can be many methods [...]

A technique is **implementational** – that which actually **takes place in a classroom**. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well (emphasis mine) (Anthony, 1963: 63-67).

This was already a very simple and clear first classification, that helps distinguish the different practices, and how they relate. According to this, the Natural Approach by Krashen & Terrell (1983) – which will be outlined later on – could be the main theoretical ground for many methods that, in turn, will specify their own techniques. For example,

both the Direct Method by Berlitz and the Gouin's *Series* "could" fit in this Approach, but develop different techniques. The same would happen with the Communicative Approach, and so on.

This means that, according to Anthony, the Gouin's *Series* could actually be a method: he definitely presented a very detailed and organized plan of the language material to be taught, and also the way it should be taught. It is even possible that Gouin's *Series* could have enjoyed a longer lasting success if it had further developed the theories behind the method and diversified its techniques.

On the other hand, Anthony's delimitations do not quite clarify whether LSE should be considered a technique, following Rico, or a method, as a successor of the Gouin's *Series* it is based on. It is true that, so far, it cannot be considered more than a set of techniques, but the fact that we already have a guideline for the contents and the way it should be taught, suggests we could be further than that.

For this, I have found very interesting how Richards & Rodgers (2001: 18-35) shed new light on Anthony's proposals. According to them, "[i]t fails to account for how an approach may be realized in a method, or for how a method and technique are related" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 20). These two points are actually key to what we are trying to find out here. In their revision, they propose the method to be the one that brings everything together; that is: "a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in a procedure" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 20). This way, they introduce *design* and *procedure*, the first being the level in which the objectives, syllabus and contents are determined, together with the roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials; and the second being the implementation phase that Anthony refers to as technique. This could pose a challenge to some previous assumptions.

For example, Gouin's *Series* would be a method lacking many factors, like a fully described approach that goes further than the fact that we learn actions in sequences and series, as he proposed. Something similar would happen with the design and the procedures, none of which are completely developed.

Nonetheless, it actually gives LSE a possible place, because we can consider that it fulfils all the characteristics to actually be a *procedure*, that is: LSE can be considered a set of techniques, practices and behaviors, with specific requirements in terms of time,

space and equipment used by the teacher, interactional patterns observed in lessons and different tactics and strategies used by teachers and learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 33). Even though to analyze that was not the focus of the practical part of this work, some of those ideas can actually be deduced by how the implementation worked in the end.

Also, it can be implied that, if a proper design is set and an approach to which LSE could be ascribed is found, LSE could develop into a full method with time and enough theoretical background. Richards & Rodgers note this in the conclusions to the chapter where they discuss these issues:

Methods can develop out of any of the three categories. One can, for example, stumble on or invent a set of teaching procedures that appear to be successful and then later develop a design and theoretical approach that explain or justify the procedures. Some methodologists would resist calling their proposals a method, although if descriptions are possible at each of the levels described here, we would argue that what is advocated has, in fact, the status of a method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 34).

For this, even though it is still early to determine, if LSE procedures turned out to be successful, they could eventually lead to the complete development of a language teaching method.

So now it takes even more importance to briefly discuss the approaches, methods and techniques that somehow relate to LSE, because they could help when determining the theory behind this procedure. However, it will only be some preliminary highlights, for it is not the purpose of this work to establish the theories for LSE to become a method.

Provided that Richards & Rodgers has already been a good source for our purposes, it will be the main one that will be followed also in this part. As was already mentioned, Richards & Rodgers (2001: 8) considered that the Gouin's *Series* are very related to Situational Language Teaching and TPR. I also consider that storytelling is in the core of LSE, for stories come up naturally when using LSE, although it only has the category of "teaching strategy" or "technique" and has not developed into a full method, as opposed to TPR. For this reason, it is only mentioned here. Finally, the Natural Approach, developed by Krashen & Terrell is important to be taken into account, for many of their premises could possibly apply to LSE.

Now, getting into the analysis, it is necessary to remember that Situational Language Teaching is a method barely used nowadays. It was "developed by British

applied linguists from the 1930s to the 1960s” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 36) and its main characteristics were the primacy of spoken language over the written form and that “[n]ew language points are introduced and practiced situationally” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 39), being this last point the most defining of the method. However, even though Richards & Rodgers claim that “it has shaped the design of many widely used EFL/ESL textbooks and courses, including many still being used today” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 36), it is true that its impact is not as important as others, like TPR, to which more attention will be devoted.

It still needs to be mentioned because Palmer and Hornby, the leaders of the Situational Language Teaching (and the Oral Method linked to it) were familiar with the Direct Method and “attempted to develop a more scientific foundation for an oral approach to teaching English than was evidenced in the Direct Method” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 36). As a result, they were able to present in the 20s “a systematic study of the principles and procedures that could be applied to the selection and organization of the content of a language course” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 36).

However, not much more can be said about it: in spite of some ideas and characteristics which get some resemblance with the Gouin’s *Series*, like language teaching starting with the spoken language or the systematic principle of “*gradation* (principles by which the organization and sequencing of content were determined)” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 38), it is only a resemblance. Even the specialist of this method tried to avoid confusion with the Direct Method and other methods of that time, which, although “used oral procedures, lacked a systematic basis in applied linguistic theory and practice” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 38).

On the other hand, Total Physical Response (TPR) holds a totally different status in relation to LSE, given that Asher, who developed the method, has given his opinion on Gouin’s *Series*. But, first, some attention needs to be paid to the main principles of the method. TPR “is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 73). Asher also compares second language learning

as a parallel process to child first language acquisition. He claims that speech directed to young children consists primarily of commands, which children respond to physically before they begin to produce verbal responses. Asher feels that adults should

recapitulate the processes by which children acquire their native language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 73).

Undoubtedly, these principles are very similar to Gouin's assumptions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like following the process of a child to learn a language. Also, in his approach, Asher recognizes that "the verb, and particularly the verb in the imperative" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 73) are the main director of the learning. Another aspect in common is the fact that listening comes first, and even better if it is accompanied by physical movement, while speech and writing should come later, together with the idea that grammar is better taught inductively. To support all this, he uses a complex theory of "bio-program", brain lateralization and reduction of stress.

On the other side, his design of syllabus, learning activities and roles in the classroom is very well developed, with imperative drills being the major classroom activity. Other activities are role plays and slide presentation, while "conversational dialogues are delayed until after about 120 hours of instruction" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 76). The role of the teacher is also very similar to that of the teacher in LSE.

Up to this point, I was still following Richards & Rodgers because they condense Asher's main claims, but from now on Asher (1977, 2012) will be used. Asher (2012) is the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of his work, originally published in 1977. The first interesting thing found in it is the author's personal claim that the "TPR is a tool, not a method", because "teaching is an art, not a science" (Asher, 2012). However, as Richards & Rodgers (2001) suggest, the fact is that it is developed, mainly by Asher, following an approach and presenting a very clear design and procedure, for which it can be *conceptually* considered a method, even though the author prefers not to refer to it as such.

Asher's work (2012) presents seven parts, with the first two being an introduction, where some of the ideas already discussed are developed; the third, frequently asked questions; and the most important one, the fourth, where he develops the main ideas to teach in classroom lessons.

In the third part, there is a question devoted to Gouin: "How does TPR relate to an approach developed in France in 1894 by François Gouin?" (Asher, 2012: 3-67, 3-68). To which he answers that "there is an intimate connection". He describes how Gouin discovered the method in his book and agrees with him on the fact that language is not a science, but a "delusion". He also adds that

his thoughts [Gouin's] are almost in complete harmony with the Total Physical Response, except that – and this is not clear from his writing – whether one *silently* acts out a series of movements in a scenario or *speaks sentences immediately* [sic] *in the target language that link* one action to the next (Asher, 2012: 3-68).

This is Asher's only concern about the difference in the procedure. He thinks that it is a strategy of "listen-and-repeat-after-me" and proposes, very interestingly, that "a comparison of Gouin's speaking-immediately-approach and TPR's silent period of comprehension through body movements is an exciting contrast for future research project". Nevertheless, before concluding, he reiterates that "linking one thought to another in storytelling is a powerful agent for helping students *internalize the skill of speaking, reading, and writing in the target language*", which is basically what Gouin proposed in his method.

However, in practice, the fifty-three lessons reproduced in Asher's work, were made for adults of different nationalities in three-hour sessions five days a week and "based on a training log used by one instructor to teach English as a second language" (Asher, 2012: 4•8). Although the first lessons follow a very similar structure, adding progressive verbs and items that are present in the classroom, it soon deviates from LSE, by the way grammar is introduced and how it does not follow the logic of the 'series'.

For example, following Asher (2012), the first four or five lessons are a sequence of commands from the teacher, without any kind of production from the student. This first happens with the 'role reversal', where the students start giving commands to each other after around 15 hours of learning. At this point in both Gouin's *Series* and LSE the students would have already started conjugating verbs in the present tense. Then, around the eighth lesson the present continuous would be introduced within the commands: "Juan, touch the chalkboard (PAUSE). Rita, touch the chalkboard that Juan is touching" (Asher, 2012: 4•24), together with the first questions for the students to answer (how many, who is...). By that point, even though the commands are still at the core of the teaching, there is no sequentiality that can link TPR to LSE.

In spite of this, the way vocabulary is introduced and the pace are good examples that could be taken into account for classroom practice, and it can still be considered a great tool in combination with other resources. Also, the explanations he gives are very appropriate for the development of a lesson under LSE procedure. And, as Asher notes:

The content is flexible and can be shifted around without negative consequences. The criterion for including a vocabulary item or grammatical feature at a particular point in training is ease of assimilation by students (Asher, 2012: 4-8).

Further comparison is out of the limits of this study. However, a deep analysis of these materials and procedures should be necessary if LSE theory and practice is to be enriched, provided that both procedures could profit from one another. I also suggest having a look at Cabello and Denevan's manual to learn languages through the TPR method, called *Total Physical Response in the First Year*, that can be found for Spanish, French and German.

Finally, Asher also explains that TPR can be used both as the core of an entire course but also as a supplement (Asher, 2012: 3-18). And Richards & Rodgers agree on the fact that "for many teachers TPR represents a useful set of techniques and is compatible with other approaches to teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 79).

Now, it is important to make some notes on the Natural Approach, for it also have aspects in common with LSE. It was first outlined by Terrell, who was joined by Krashen to elaborate a "combined statement of the principles and practices of the Natural Approach" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 178). They identified this approach to those "traditional" ones that were "based on the use of language in communicative situations without recourse to the native language" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 9). Nonetheless, Natural Approach and Natural (or Direct) Method are not the same, even though the authors relate their approach to the method<sup>7</sup>.

The difference of this approach is that direct repetition is given more importance, as opposed to TPR, as well as formal questions and answers. The focus on accurate production is not very strong. Something very important of this method, that will be analyzed in the next part, is the emphasis on exposure or *input*, shared by LSE. On the other hand, the Natural Approach considers that vocabulary is more important than grammar, "suggesting the view that language is essentially its lexicon and consequently the grammar that determines how the lexicon is exploited" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 180). This view is not strictly shared by LSE, where the verb is the element that directs the learning process.

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<sup>7</sup> The Natural and Direct Methods were explained in 1.1. *The Series method: its pedagogical context and applications in the history of SLA.*

The Natural Approach follows a few hypotheses worth mentioning: the acquisition/learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. Apart from the input hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis also hints some points present in LSE, like the fact that “acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 182). Rico (2019) already hints at this happening in the Polis Method, so it would be logical if it also happened in LSE as a technique or a procedure of the method.

However, it must be taken into account that these hypotheses were originally related to Krashen’s Monitor Theory, and, as Gregg mentions, “a theory of second language acquisition must include some sort of linguistic theory if it is to have any value as a theory. [...] Krashen has no such theory” (Gregg, 1984: 95). In his work, Gregg reviews one by one the problems that do not allow Krashen’s Monitor Theory to be considered as such. And he concludes that:

each of Krashen’s five hypotheses is marked by serious flaws: undefined or ill-defined terms, unmotivated constructs, lack of empirical content and thus of falsifiability, lack of explanatory power (Gregg, 1984: 94).

There is no need to go into explaining each of those flaws, but it is important to note that also Gregg agrees that there are some important questions in which he is right, like that “comprehensible input is vital for learning and that a teacher’s more important job is to provide that input” and “that affective barriers can prevent successful acquisition of a second language and that a teacher has the duty to try to lower those barriers wherever possible” (Gregg, 1984: 94). An emphasis is being put in these two because they are still being used, even though always taking into account Gregg’s implications.

Coming back to the Natural Approach and its components, it is necessary to highlight that TPR can be included among its techniques and procedures – or even methods. In the end, the Natural Approach is precisely an approach, that can be materialized in many ways, with different designs and procedures. This also means that LSE approach could be perfectly considered a “Natural” one. As Richards & Rodgers put it:

The Natural Approach belongs to a tradition of language teaching methods based on observation and interpretation of how learners acquire both first and second languages [...]. Like Communicative Language Teaching, the Natural Approach is hence evolutionary

rather than revolutionary in its procedures. Its greatest claim to originality lies not in the techniques it employs but in their use in a method that emphasizes comprehensible and meaningful practice activities, rather than production of grammatically perfect utterances and sentences (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 190).

All this taken into account, we can consider that LSE fits some of these ideas, like the necessity of having comprehensible and meaningful activities, or that is also evolutionary within its context, apart from the fact that it also belongs to “teaching methods based on observation and interpretation”.

These observations have been made by focusing on LSE. However, it is important to point out once again that Prof. Rico considers LSE to be part of the Polis Method. Therefore, this method also needs to be taken into account. On the other hand, whether the Polis Method could fit into the Natural Approach or not is a question suggested for further study.

The Polis Method was introduced by Christophe Rico a few years ago and originally developed through teaching ancient languages like Koine Greek and Biblical Hebrew at Polis Institute in Jerusalem, where all these languages get in touch and “these contacts enrich the Polis Method with new ideas” (Rico, 2019: 204)<sup>8</sup>. For example, nowadays the method is also being implemented with modern languages like Spoken Arabic. As described by Rico (2019), the main components of the Polis Method are the following:

Total Physical Response, grammatical induction, text progression, use of images and accessories, gradual difficulty of the exercises, work in pairs, songs, participatory storytelling and story building (Rico, 2019: 205)<sup>9</sup>.

Some of them, like TPR, have already been discussed, which shows the close relation that LSE has with the Polis Method. However, the addition of LSE, according to Rico (personal communication, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019), is still being experimented on, as can be implied from this work. Other theoretical principles of the Polis Method are total immersion, with the classes taught entirely in the target language, and dynamic language development, which means that the learner internalizes aspects of the target language respecting the inner structure and dynamics of the language (Rico, personal communication, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

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<sup>8</sup> The original is in French. Translation is mine.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

This last idea is in consonance with Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis mentioned earlier in this work<sup>10</sup> and also with Gouin's idea of the preference of the ear over the eye. Out of this, the Polis Method develops the skills from listening to speaking and reading and, finally, writing (Rico, personal communication, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019), which is also the way it works in LSE. In this sense, LSE works well within the Polis Method, although further research is still needed to provide the appropriate theoretical basis.

To sum up, in this part we have seen the theory behind LSE, from the formation of the actual concept, to the most correct term to name it with. In my opinion, and only according to Richards & Rodgers, it could be *procedure*, although it is still an open discussion, for, as Asher claims, in the end, teaching is an art, and practices are no more than tools.

Also, we have seen its relation to TPR, the Polis Method and the Natural Approach, mainly, due to their similarities. Situational Teaching Language has been mentioned, due to the historical relation that is usually stressed when talking about the 19<sup>th</sup> century teaching developments. However, after this analysis, the common points that LSE shares with TPR and the Natural Approach have been highlighted, together with its relation to the Polis Method, in the hope of being useful for further and deeper theoretical research on LSE.

## **2.2. How memory is enhanced through LSE: some theoretical considerations**

In the previously mentioned talk Prof. Rico gave for Paideia, another point he introduced that needs further analysis is the factors that enhanced memory when implementing LSE. These were related to “connection, senses, experience and context” (Rico, personal communication, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019). He suggests some ideas like connection being enhanced by sequentiality, or comprehensible input being enhanced through context.

In the next part, through some research on cognition and memory, we will try to shed some light over the issue to provide enough theoretical basis for later development. First, as Ortega reminds, SLA research related to cognition is focused on what it takes to

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<sup>10</sup> Pp. 43-44.

‘get to know’ an additional language in order to use it fluently both in comprehension and production. However, it develops at a slow pace, provided that it depends on the theories and methods of ‘neighboring disciplines’ about how the human mind and brain work (Ortega, 2009: 82). Also, the scope of study goes from “behavioral and neurobiological evidence” to long periods following an L2 speaker (Ortega, 2009: 82), so it is very wide.

Many scholars have developed this field in recent years, and one of them is Li (2017), who makes the first division in cognitive aspects when learning a language, which are these: language aptitude and working memory. Before analyzing them, it must be taken into account that different researchers provide different categorizations, but they do not necessarily exclude one another.

Language aptitude “[t]raditionally [...] refers to a set of cognitive abilities, including phonetic coding ability, language analytic ability, and rote memory, which are predictive of learning rate” (Li, 2007: 396). Then, he goes on analyzing different results and data available to prove whether this asseveration is accomplished. However, given that we are not focusing on discussing learning rate, from this part only the main points that relate language aptitude with the kind of instruction will be highlighted. According to Li:

1. Aptitude is less important in deductive instruction than in inductive instruction.
2. Low-aptitude learners benefit more from deductive instruction.
3. High-aptitude learners benefit more from inductive instruction.
4. Explicit instruction is more likely to implicate aptitude than implicit instruction.

(Li, 2007: 404).

Taking into account that, initially, LSE is more of an inductive instruction, it will be important for the instructor to consider the best way to adapt it to the students, like giving more explanations if required. Although this is something not initially planned by the LSE procedure, it cannot be overlooked, for “aptitude is a strong determinant of L2 success and therefore should be taken into account when making pedagogical decisions” (Li, 2017: 409).

Nonetheless, it does not mean that LSE should be rejected if the students showed a lack of language aptitude. Li also considers this situation and provides a possible answer:

In the spirit of maximizing instructional effects for learners of different aptitude profiles [...], it would seem advisable to employ inductive tasks that prompt learners to discover rules through meaning-oriented tasks and then provide explicit rule explanation in the posttask stage to accommodate low-aptitude learners who need more external assistance (Li, 2017: 410).

This could be a fair way of facing a situation that is very likely to happen, for homogeneity among the students rarely happens. Also, depending on the group, the last step of giving the explicit rule explanation could be omitted, as, for example, if working with children who do not have sufficient explicit knowledge to understand the rules.

Li also sheds some light over this issue: “the predictive aptitude research has found that [...] Child L2 learners tend to rely more on memory and adult learners more on analytic ability, although this claim needs to be tested in further research” (Li, 2017:402). Again, it does not mean nothing has to be said about the rule or, at least, making the children notice what is happening in the contents they are learning, but it should always be adaptable.

On the other hand, Li makes the distinction between working memory (the one he analyzes), and phonological short-term memory by comparing the results among them, as well as some other variables in many research and data. Working memory is “about access and is limited” and “has both a ‘storage’ and a ‘processing’ function, handling automatic and controlled processing. Its two main characteristics are limited capacity [...] and temporary activation” (Ortega, 2009: 89). Both of them can be considered on the side of short-term memory. However, Li refers to the working memory as a direct response to a *stimulus*.

To further investigate memory, Ortega (2009), as a good summary of other people’s research, will be followed later on. Here only some ideas on the distinction made by Li (2017) will be commented on very briefly.

For example, the fact that “[p]honological short-term memory is a significant predictor of vocabulary learning while the role of complex working memory in vocabulary learning is uncertain” (Li, 2017: 406). This is important to take into account in LSE, because the role of repeating the series (or what someone is doing) out loud gets an increasing importance, in order to fix the words and structures.

Nonetheless, Li also concludes in his analysis that the phonological short-term memory loses its relevance after the beginning stage and “at more advanced stages, long-term memory or learners’ existing vocabulary knowledge takes over as the more dominant factor for vocabulary development” (Li, 2017: 406). Therefore, the previous knowledge will gradually become more relevant and, in order to continue developing the vocabulary knowledge, the first steps with phonological short-term memory need to be well fixed.

There is a similar relation between the learning of explicit and implicit knowledge and oral proficiency/performance. While working memory would relate to explicit knowledge and the development of oral performance, phonological short-term memory would do so for implicit knowledge and oral proficiency (Li, 2017: 406-409). Then, the importance of oral repetition and development under LSE proves itself to be a good way of helping memory to be enhanced and it is also especially suited to learn through implicit knowledge, which is the one supported by LSE.

On the other hand, Ortega (2009) discusses information processing in her work, and from there she compiles many studies on how memory works. According to information processing, “the human mind is viewed as a symbolic processor that constantly engages in mental processes”, also as an answer to the “stimulus-response” theory (Ortega, 2009: 83). And, precisely, “these mental processes operate on mental representations and intervene between input (whatever data get into the symbolic processor, the mind) and output (whatever the results of performance are)” (Ortega, 2009: 83).

Here, before continuing with the analysis, it is worthwhile to consider the notion of *input* in a deeper level. As was said, Prof. Rico establishes a relation between context and comprehensible input. This last one comes from the idea present in Krashen (1985) of the L2 learner being able to subconsciously understand new elements (grammatical or lexical) by the meaning they conveyed. Then, as Macaro summarizes it, “[u]nderstanding unknown items was dependent on the learner being able to infer their meaning from the context – a notion formulated as ‘i + 1’ (current knowledge/competence + the new item)” (Macaro, 2010: 49). This fits LSE, where acquisition of the L2 can actually happen by listening and performing what is understood at the beginning. Only when assimilation has taken place, the learner can perform what is being acquired.

Nevertheless, the issues with Krashen's Input hypothesis cannot be overlooked. First, because not everything can be acquired from context. As Gregg puts it, referring to English: "I find it difficult to imagine extra-linguistic information that would enable one to 'acquire' the third person singular -s, or yes/no questions, or direct object placement, or passivization" (Gregg, 1984: 88). Again, Gregg points out that, even though speech of a native speaker will help to acquire the comprehensible input, "we still have no indication of how understanding is related to the acquisition of (i + 1)" (Gregg, 1984: 90). In any case, it can be considered that the data produced is "consistent with the hypothesis, [but] much could hardly be considered 'evidence' for its existence" (Cullip, 1993: 9). This is a way of saying that the results point in favor of the hypothesis, but not so the evidence, which is also the assumption that is being considered in this research.

Now, coming back to information processing in Ortega (2009: 83), she makes a difference in the human cognitive architecture. Following mainly Bialystok & Sharwood Smith (1985), she states that it is made of representation (or knowledge), comprised of three kinds: grammatical, lexical and schematic or world-related; and access (or processing), which works through two different mechanisms: automatic and controlled processing. "Information processing psychologists believe that all human perception and action, as well as all thoughts and feelings, result from the interaction of these two kinds of processing" (Ortega, 2009: 83). It can be inferred from it that automatic processes require less effort and can be performed together with other routines, while controlled processing needs intentional activation and require much more effort and cognitive resources.

It was necessary to make this difference in order to understand the following point, which is what Ortega calls "proceduralization and automaticity" (Ortega, 2009: 84), processes that entail a conversion from explicit to implicit knowledge. However, she recognizes that it is a particular kind of information processing theory that was developed by Anderson in his *Adaptive Control of Thought* theory. Anderson was a psychologist who theorized about learning as a transformation from controlled to automatic performance after many trials:

The module responsible for learning of this kind is the procedural module (or production system). I offer the procedural module as an explanation for behavior [...]. Through production compilation, thoughtful behaviors become automatized; through utility learning, behavior is modified to become adaptive (Anderson, 2007: 181).

As a consequence, Anderson's theory counts on practice and is skill-specific, which means that "practice that focuses on L2 comprehension should help automatize comprehension" (Ortega, 2009: 85). However, rather than a simple accumulation of rules that are repeated until they become automatic, Ortega points out that it allows the knowledge to be more elaborated and well specified.

This last idea could be supported by different mechanisms, like sequentiality. As previously mentioned, the connection made through sequentiality in LSE helps proceduralization, precisely because it is based on processes we are already used to make, we have already "automatized". Acquiring the specific structures has good support and facilitates the automatization, because the connections do not need to find their appropriate relation: it is already made by sequentiality.

Other considerations that can be discussed from Ortega (2009) are about long-term and working memory categorization, as well as the role of attention.

About long-term memory, it "is about representation", "virtually unlimited in its capacity" and made of two kinds: "explicit-declarative memory and implicit-procedural memory" (Ortega, 2009: 87). While the first one is about knowledge that we can recall and verbalize, the second one is about things that "we know without knowing that we know them. Implicit-procedural memory supports skills and habit learning" (Ortega, 2009: 87). Therefore, it is the one involved in sequentiality and in the process of an action becoming a habit.

Ortega also establishes the different aspects needed to remember a word, which are the link between the form and its meaning, together with the strength, size and depth of the knowledge represented in memory (Ortega, 2009: 88). However, they will not be described, for it is not within the scope of this research.

Working memory has already been introduced when analyzing Li's study. It could also be added that, compared to L1, its capacity is smaller, maybe because the central executive functions work less efficiently or because the sounds in the L2 are articulated with less speed. It can work both as storage and dynamic processing, whether if the task is passive or active.

Finally, the role of attention in L2 learning is essential. It activates working memory and allows the stimulus to remain in the working memory for longer through **rehearsal**,

making it available for further processing and for entering long-term memory (Ortega, 2009: 93). In LSE attention is enhanced by acting out the series: the learner needs to pay attention if s/he wants to perform the actions correctly, and the instructor can also know more easily who is more engaged and who is not. Therefore, it can be implied that there is a direct relation between experience, acting out through TPR and maintaining the attention.

Another point in Ortega worth considering is that “SLA researchers have asked themselves whether L2 learning is possible without intention, without attention, without awareness and without rules” (Ortega, 2009: 94). While the first three do not apply for this study, learning without rules might be worth explaining, although briefly. The reason is that it is closely related to implicit learning. In fact, some experiments have shown that, when memorizing a pattern, even if not understood, some intuitive, implicit knowledge of how the rule works can be extract.

On the other hand, it also “leads to the formation of memories of instances that can be accessed more easily, allowing for faster performance, but without knowledge that can be generalized to new instances” (Ortega, 2009: 102). So still, in order for the acquisition to be more productive, some kind of guidance or notice about it should be given, even if it is still not the main focus. As Ortega suggests later, it does not necessarily lead to create a systematic rule (Ortega, 2009: 102), so here is where the instructor would need to make the student notice and together induct the rule somehow.

After dealing with cognition, Ortega finishes her discussion opening a new door to the emergentist approach, suggesting that in the future it could have more active role in SLA. Actually, this approach turns out to be very relevant to the focus of this study. As Ellis & Larsen-Freeman put it:

Emergentists believe that simple learning mechanisms, operating in and across the human systems for perception, motor-action and cognition as they are exposed to language data as part of a communicatively-rich human social environment by an organism eager to exploit the functionality of language, suffice to drive the emergence of complex language representations (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006: 577).

In other words, if the person has the adequate dispositions and exposure to a language, learning mechanisms such as perception, motor-action and cognition, are enough to bring up complex language representations. This assumption was at the core

of Gouin's suggestions at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and are still very relevant for LSE. Perception would be what Prof. Rico describes as "senses", motor-action would correspond to "experience" of the procedure by acting it out, and these, together with comprehensible input from "context" and automaticity and proceduralization from "sequentiality", would be the components of the *act* of cognition in LSE.

Even the tenets of the emergentist approach Ortega briefly discusses fit in with the LSE theory we have so far. For example, the fact that probabilistic learning suggests a "graded and stochastic" learning, that "proceeds by (subconscious) guesswork and inferences in response to experience that always involves ambiguity and uncertainty" (Ortega, 2009: 103).

Other tenet is associative learning, which is "learning the association between form and meaning or function. The more reliable the association between a form and its meaning or function, the easier it is to learn" (Ellis & Wulff, 2014: 75). Ellis & Wulff give good examples of this about the frequency of some words appearing together. Once again, sequentiality will fit well into this category for the reasons that have been previously considered. The discussion could continue with other tenets or arguments, all of which are pointed out in Ortega (2009: 104).

These are only brief mentions that would need further analysis, also in the original sources, because it is likely that Gouin was not thinking in such a complex way. Therefore, in order to appropriately see if Gouin and Emergentism work out a common assumption, the basis under Emergentism and its approach should be further investigated, but that is beyond the limits of this work. Nonetheless, the question is already posed for future research, if found appropriate to provide or discuss theoretical basis for LSE.

Finally, it should be noted that the emergentist approach is under the "usage-based" approaches, which, according to Ellis & Wulff, unite the "commitment to two working hypothesis:

(1) Language learning is primarily based on learners' exposure to their second language (L2) in use, that is, the linguistic input they receive.

(2) Learners induce the rules of their L2 from the input by employing cognitive mechanisms that are not exclusive to language learning, but that are general cognitive mechanisms at work in any kind of learning, including language learning" (Ellis & Wulff, 2014: 75).

It is important to mention this because the elements that have been considered since the beginning of this section (sequentiality, senses, experience and context), can perfectly fit into the usage-based learning. Also, Ellis & Wulff's observations (2014: 86-88) after research when learning a language could be relevant when implementing and analyzing LSE in a practical way. It could present itself as a good way to verify whether LSE could fit within one of these approaches.

## **PART 2. Teaching LSE to Arab girls: the implementation**

As it was mentioned in the introduction, for this work I intended to put LSE into practice in the school where I taught in the 2018-2019 academic year.

After studying the conditions of the classrooms (the possibility of having a special disposition and having enough space), I decided that I would try LSE with 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades (although the last one did not take place in the end, so it will not be considered for the study). This would provide me with enough information and, also, a varied range of age to test the procedure.

However, before talking about the lessons, the contents and how everything was developed, I consider it necessary to include some theoretical considerations on the context where I was teaching, together with age-related factors, which play an important role when learning languages.

### **1. Contextualization**

In this part there is an important aspect that needs to be taking into account, and this is the teaching environment and culture, for which it is important to put some issues into perspective.

On the one hand, it is the third foreign language that they learn from 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, together with English and Hebrew (Arabic is their L1). This affects them in two ways:

First, they can feel overwhelmed with so many languages. The educational programs devote five to seven hours to English and Arabic, and three to four to Hebrew. Spanish, on the other side, is a particular choice of the school, that decided to offer it for reasons linked to the History of the school premises and the agreement with the Spanish Consulate. This means that the academic pressure is not so strong with this language, but sometimes it also affects the students' interest, especially if they do not feel inclined towards learning languages.

Secondly, and related to this, it is the students' motivation. Richards & Schmidt define it as follows:

[I]n general, the driving force in any situation that leads to action. In the field of language learning a distinction is sometimes made between an orientation, a class of reasons for learning a language, and motivation itself, which refers to a combination of

learner's attitudes, desires, and willingness to expend effort in order to learn the second language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 377).

In this case, and according to this definition, the orientation of my students sometimes cannot help, because the reason they would give is that they are "forced" to study the language as part of the curriculum. On the other side, "attitudes, desires, and willingness" are more variable, and depend on each student. So from now on, when I refer to my students' motivation I will mean this second option, "motivation itself", according to Richards & Schmidt.

Other scholar who has contributed with many studies over the years on the field of motivation is Dörnyei. For example, Dörnyei (2005) provides an overview of research on motivation and second language, including a division of the history of the field in phases. Although beyond the limits of this research, it is worth mentioning his classification of motivation in three broad levels:

[T]he *Language Level*, the *Learner Level*, and the *Learning Situation Level*; these levels correspond to the three basic constituents of the L2 learning process (L2, L2 learner, and L2 learning environment), and reflect the three different aspects of language (the social dimension, the personal dimension, and the educational subject matter dimension) (Dörnyei, 1994: 283).

Out of this, it is important to highlight the distinction Dörnyei establishes between the learning process and the dimensions. In his work he deepens into each one of them, paying special attention to the social dimension, for the implications that learning a language usually brings up. However, he does not overlook other factors like "need for achievement" or "intellectual curiosity" (Dörnyei, 1994: 275), which show that motivation is a very complex reality that affects the students' performance. As Dörnyei himself states:

[M]ost teachers and researchers would agree that it has a very important role in determining success or failure in any learning situation. My personal experience is that 99 per cent of language learners who really want to learn a foreign language [...] will be able to master a reasonable working knowledge of it as a minimum (Dörnyei, 2001: 2).

As a consequence, along his works, he proposes different strategies to stimulate and maintain motivation, like in Dörnyei (1994). Nonetheless, going over them is beyond the limits of this research. Instead, Csizér's three aspects of motivation (effort, persistence

and choice) are going to be commented on. According to her, “choice usually refers to the fact that L2 students choose to learn, while both effort and persistence relate to the learning process itself,” (Csizér, 2017: 419).

Here we see that everything is against the students’ motivation. First, because the study of the language is imposed by the school, and second, because age is a decisive factor in effort and persistence, especially for teenagers: if they do not see a clear outcome or immediate reward, then to obtain good grades, or simply, to *learn*, very often does not seem enough for them. It makes perseverance decline and some students give up from the beginning.

Finally, the importance the families give to the language also affects the students’ motivation. If they are supportive and treat the ‘subject’ as any other, generally it will have a positive impact in the students’ performance. However, if they consider it irrelevant, this view will be also shown on the children. Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (1981) would argue that it is because the Affective Filter is increased, being that the “part of the internal processing system that subconsciously screens incoming language based on [...] the learner’s motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states” (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982: 46). As a consequence of all this, in which many of the aspects mentioned above could fit in, the “ability to acquire a second language” (Krashen, 1981: 35) is lowered.

Nonetheless, it must also be acknowledged that, even though the Affective Filter is very interesting as a concept, the hypothesis itself does not completely work out, as Gregg (1984) emphasized. In his words, “Krashen gives no explanation of the development of the Affective Filter, and no account of why it develops only with puberty” (Gregg, 1984: 93), among other problems. And, in this case, the Affective Filter not developing before puberty is clearly problematic, for some of my students affected by the aforementioned factors are still in the pre-puberty stage, so there we would find a contradiction, which is precisely what Gregg refers to.

Much more could be said about this, and also about the factors that affect motivation, as it is shown by the extensive analysis made by Dörnyei and other authors. However, coming back to the particular circumstances of the students, it is also necessary for the Spanish teachers to take into account that the pressure on the students cannot be the same as if it were a mandatory subject for the official Ministry examinations. This

issue has both advantages and drawbacks: on one side, it allows the teaching to be more flexible, open and prone to having fun and trying different activities. On the other side, it is easier not to plan, just teach “on the spot”, repeat contents over and over, and so on.

This last situation has happened before and it is also part of the students’ lack of motivation. As children, they were more prone to learning new things and enjoying while they were doing so. However, if after a few years they realize they are just doing the same things over and over, they lose motivation and interest and their performance deteriorates.

This brings us to another main problem, which is the lack of a planned program, as opposed to other foreign languages like English or Hebrew. Even though some books are available, and in recent years an extra effort has been made to find something that actually fits the students, it was still one of the weak points.

The reason behind this is deeper than it might seem at first, and it directly affects the teaching materials. For teachers, it is more common than it seems to face difficulties when teaching languages to students other than those coming from Western countries. This could be because the methodologies the books are based on have their origin in Western countries and are not necessarily applicable to Eastern teaching (Boillos Pereira, 2012: 124).

Here it might be necessary to remember the distinction that Syarifuddin (2017: 63) makes between authentic and adapted materials. For him, authentic materials are those that match the target language culture, but not that of the learner. As,

authentic materials may not reflect the learners’ social reality, those materials can even cause students to become confused, because most students will probably never see the context of these authentic materials throughout their life except if they go to a native speakers’ country (Syarifuddin, 2017: 63).

Following Syarifuddin, the materials of many of these books would be authentic, so the students would have a hard time relating to them, the level of interest would decline and the students would “resist his [the teacher’s] more Westernized teaching approach” (Pennycook, 2001: 128). This eventually could lead to a complete failure of the teaching programs or the particular activities, as authors like Fareh (2010), Santos de la Rosa (2012) o Boillos Pereira (2012) describe in their works.

It is beyond the limits of this research to deepen into those activities, for they follow an approach very different from the one that will be presented in the practical part. However, it is important to highlight that not only do the students do feel related to the content of the exercises, but they also have difficulties derived from comprehension blockage.

As Boillos Pereira (2012: 126) points out, the lack of understanding of every single word in the activity, or the lack of mastery of the grammatical contents, create this previously mentioned insecurity, that can even paralyze the learner's production. This might be simply because the student does not recognize which grammatical content he needs to use, because in his learning tradition it is necessary to know which structure they need to use and, without this support, he feels unable to keep on. We should not forget that Boillo Pereira is talking about literate adults, but her conclusions are perfectly adaptable to our case.

Pennycook gives a very direct explanation of why, on his opinion, these Western methodologies do not really work out of those contents, that it is worth briefly considering:

Assumptions about "active" and "passive" students, about the use of groupwork and pairwork, about self-interest as a key to motivation ("tell us about yourself"), about memorization being an outmoded learning strategy, about oral communication as the goal and means of instruction, about an informal atmosphere in the class being most conducive to language learning, about learning activities being fun, about games being an appropriate way of teaching and learning all these, despite the claims by some researchers that they are empirically preferable, are cultural preferences (Pennycook, 2001: 129).

Under his point of view, the way of teaching tells more about the teacher's background rather than the students'. With the students of El Pilar I have received requests that support Pennycook's ideas, like repeating vocabulary words several times in class, so it gets fixed to their memory, or asking me to be standing on the board to reinforce the authority role, rather than sitting with them in a circle<sup>11</sup>. These are their preferences: they have experienced it works for them, so they "opt instead for an approach to learning with which they were more familiar" (Pennycook, 2001: 128).

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<sup>11</sup> These refer to previous teaching experiences, not while I was applying LSE.

This attitude shown by them also conveys another fact: while the Western methodologies invite the student to an active participation in the classroom and make him responsible for their own learning, the Arab students are used to a different learning system. In this, the teacher's management and the mastery of Grammar are the important aspects to achieve the product from which they are going to be evaluated. Therefore, the conclusion is that the student does not get involved and they do not get appropriate training of the imagination and critical thinking, basic aspects in Western and, especially, European traditions.

About that, it could be easily seen that it is probably a product of a culture where the Quran has been memorized for centuries, and its structures analyzed as a way of studying and learning the language, instead of producing it and "playing" with it. The logical consequence is to apply that to foreign language learning, and that is what they expect. Because, in the end, "schooling reproduces social relations" (Pennycook, 2001: 122), as has been discussed by many scholars in the theories of cultural reproduction.

In the end, it is very important that the chosen methodology tries to adapt or implement all these factors if it wants to have chances of success. As Pennycook states, "postcolonialism also demands that we work contextually" (Pennycook, 2001: 71), and the materials, then, need to be easily adaptable to these contexts, taking into account students' preferences as well as the necessity of learning.

Eventually, it could even lead to a 're-thinking' of the teaching strategies and be the seed to renovation, if necessary, as Pennycook suggests when talking about critical pedagogy and making the learning accessible to the students, rather than getting affixed to what it is assumed that works best:

Once one acknowledges [...] the fact that curricula represent not so much timeless truths and knowledge but rather very particular ways of understanding the world, then one can start to develop a critical form of pedagogy that addresses the marginalizations and exclusions of schooling by encouraging students to develop their own voice (Pennycook, 2001: 130).

## 2. Age-related Factors

Taking into account the groups of students LSE has been put into practice with, one comprises ten-year-old girls (5<sup>th</sup> Grade), another twelve/thirteen (7<sup>th</sup> Grade) and the last one fifteen-year-old girls (10<sup>th</sup> Grade). Thus, it means that the youngest are still children, the oldest are teenagers and the middle group are in the period right between childhood and adolescence. The question of the theoretical implications of this age difference arises, given that the children going into adolescence experiment some changes that cannot be dismissed and that have been linked to language learning from the beginning, as Singleton & Ryan put it:

Scholarly attention to the part age plays in language acquisition has mainly focused on precisely the assumptions which underlie comments such [...] (a) the idea that there are age ranges within which certain things should happen in normal L1 development, and (b) the idea that one's age is a major factor in how efficient one is as a language learner, and in particular as an L2 learner (Singleton & Ryan, 2004: 2).

While Singleton & Ryan's first premise is related to L1 acquisition and, therefore, out of our focus, the second premise is a main assumption that has been widely discussed and researched on. Actually, those same authors give a deep account of the theoretical perspectives (2004: 118-197) when learning a language, both for L1 and L2, and list the main authors and theories developed and followed in recent years.

One of the main theories is the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), first proposed by Penfield & Roberts (1959) and further developed by Lennerberg (1967). It goes around the idea that there is a critical period during children's development before which learning languages is easier. After this critical period, some of their cognitive abilities set down and their learning languages competence decline. As Scovel puts it:

In brief, the critical period hypothesis is the notion that language is the best learned during the early years of the childhood, and that after about the first dozen years of life, everyone faces certain constraints in the ability to pick up a new language (Scovel, 1988: 2).

Taking this into consideration, under the CPH, the groups where LSE has been implemented fall into different categories and, in consequence, their way of learning will differ and the way of teaching should adapt to each.

Singleton and Ryan (2004) also discuss aspects related to the CPH in depth, such as brain lateralization (an aspect developed by Lennerberg, among others) or decreasing brain plasticity (developed by Penfield). However, for most of these assumptions, Singleton & Ryan adopt a skeptical posture, supported by different or more recent evidence.

On the other hand, there is a posture that suggests older learners acquire the language more quickly, for their structures have already been developed and their understanding is more complete (Hu, 2016: 2). Harley & Hart (1997, 2002) provide an example of this, in this case with the interaction of aptitude and age. Their results bring up that younger learners rely more on memory while older learners do so on language analytic ability. Thus, it can also be concluded that, depending on the factor that is being analyzed, younger or older learners would show different results.

That is why Singleton and Ryan suggest that “talking about *an* age factor may be misconceived, and that we should rather be thinking in terms of a range of age-related factors” (Singleton & Ryan, 2004: 227). These authors also argue that “a multiplicity of causes and that different phenomena” (Singleton & Ryan, 2004: 227) may imply different learning outcomes, and the results cannot be determined only by the age factor. That is why they conclude that “the idea of a critical period specifically for language development may well have had its day” (Singleton & Ryan, 2004: 227).

Having said that, it is undeniable that children learn in a way somehow different from teenagers and adults. In spite of the fact that many studies on children learning (and, specifically, language learning) have been found, the same cannot be said about adolescents’ studies. This might be because, after entering into adolescence, they are included in the same group as the adults. However, the situation is different enough to place them in different groups, given that, although their way of learning can show features closer to adults’ learning, their learning situation and environment (even more when it comes to regulated education) is more similar to that of children, without many significant changes.

In any case, most of these studies focus on the best time to start learning a language, but that is a premise different than ours: in the case where LSE is going to be put into practice, there is no option to choose. Spanish language is included in the program and it is not optional. Therefore, it is more relevant to look into some highlights on children

language learning, for some ideas could be useful when adapting LSE to different ages. Again, not much research has been found for teenagers, so the same study will be followed, with adaptations according to age. Probably, after working with them, some clear conclusions will come out, which might help for future research.

For this part, Halliwell (1992) has proven to be a very clear source. To start with, the author gives a relevant account of some the characteristics that define children's learning. According to her, children are:

- already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words;
- already have great skill in using limited language creatively;
- frequently learn indirectly rather than directly;
- take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in which they do;
- have a ready imagination;
- above all take great delight in talking!

(Halliwell, 1992: 3)

All these characteristics have been found when teaching the younger group. Also, from previous experience, I can say up to twelve/thirteen years, the students fit into this category, although sometimes particular groups or children can start changing earlier or later. For example, in the middle group of our research, girls that fall into both a more childlike and a more mature category could be found, so that posed an extra challenge in teaching. On the other hand, the older group also fit in some of the characteristics defined by Halliwell. For example, they still love talking and creating fun. However, it is also true that they generally get blocked if they do not understand the "full" meaning, and sometimes get stuck if they are not told the answer. These aspects needed to be adapted according to the age group.

Halliwell also deepens into the previous list, giving some points that I can consider relevant to go over. For example, when talking about children interpreting meaning without full understanding, she adds: "children are able to understand what is being said to them even before they understand the individual words. Intonation, gesture, facial expressions, actions and circumstances all help to tell them what the unknown words and phrases probably mean" (Halliwell, 1992: 3). This is very important for a procedure that relies very strongly on repetition, oral language and action and it gives to it a higher chance of success.

Later on, Halliwell adds that “[i]n later life we all maintain this first source of understanding alongside our knowledge of the language itself. It remains a fundamental part of human communication” (Halliwell, 1992: 3). Again, this cannot be overlooked for the other groups, for they might have lost the intuition about it. However, once they get back into the new procedure, they can perfectly recall that way of learning.

On the second point, using limited language in a creative way, it can be added that, even more than that, they rely on gestures and actions when they do not get the words, in order to make themselves be understood, expecting the teacher to tell them the thing they want to know, but avoiding using their mother tongue. Once they get the word from the teacher or other classmate, they usually repeat it a few times, so they get to remember it. Older students, on the contrary, have recourse to their mother tongue much more often.

Points three to five are all connected. Halliwell gives examples on the role of games and how children are able to make the language their own through them. Also, they are always ready to suggest ways to make them more interesting according to their likes, something that with older students do not always happen.

On imagination, Halliwell adds: “Language teaching should be concerned with real life. But it would be a great pity if [...] we forgot that reality for children includes imagination and fantasy” (Halliwell, 1992: 7). This is why it is very important “to stimulate the children’s creative imagination so that they want to use the language to share their ideas” (Halliwell, 1992: 7). An example of this is when something out of the ordinary is shown. In one of the first classes, when they receive commands and learn the verb “to sit”, they are delighted when they are not told to sit on the chairs, but on the floors, on the ground, even on the windows. It gives them an extra excitement that older students received more reluctantly, and also, together with the excitement, comes the part where they need to remember the words, if they want “to sit” there again.

The final point that Halliwell discusses is how children enjoy talking, and I would go further than that: not only they like talking, but also, they do not mind making mistakes. They will answer even if they risk being incorrect, because the important thing is to get the opportunity to speak, even better if they have to repeat. Their ability to guess is also more developed, and it contributes to all the previous points discussed.

Trying to take all these characteristics into consideration and adjusting the plans to develop it for children is particularly important. In the same way, and depending on the

groups, some of these ideas can be adapted to teenagers. They are still not far from the days when they enjoyed playing and used imagination to understand their surroundings, so it is just a matter of learning how to bring that back, even if it requires an extra effort for the teacher, which is something that could be expected when teaching a group of students of any kind.

Up to this point, some basic notions in the contextualization and the age of the students LSE was going to be implemented with have been given, so the view over the procedure and the results is better established and understood. Now it is time to go into the actual implementation of LSE with the mentioned group, how it has been developed and the answer received from the students, which is one of the main purposes of this research.

### **3. LSE into practice at the School Nuestra Señora del Pilar**

#### *Description of the groups*

In October 2018 I started to implement the LSE procedure with some groups of students as part of my research. I teach from 7th to 12th Grade, and in that month also 5th and 6th Grades were assigned to me. Taking into account the size and characteristics of the students of each class, I decided to implement the procedure initially in Grades 5th, 7th, 10th and 12th, from October to March, both included.

Those ages provided me with a good range to compare results. Also, another reason to have chosen those groups was the arrangement of the classrooms. These are not very big and very often there is not enough space to move around, let alone to change the arrangement of the desks and chairs, which would have made almost impossible to implement LSE. However, this also affected another factor: as a consequence, the study groups were not very big, varying from 6 to 12 girls.

According to the weekly lessons, most groups had 2 lessons per week initially, except for 7th Grade, which had 3. However, from January to March most of the holidays, trips and visits took place on Thursday, a day in which all the groups had Spanish class, so many weeks the lessons were reduced to 1 or 2, in the case of 7th Grade. This affected the learning pace in the second part of the year.

The motivation in the groups did vary<sup>12</sup>, from no motivation at all (12th Grade), to little motivation (7th Grade), or moderate motivation (5th Grade). In the case of 10th Grade, the levels of motivation varied among the students, going from high motivation to no motivation at all, which provided an extra challenge. How the motivation evolved while implementing the procedure is an aspect that was taken into account as well. As explained by Brian Brostrom in the aforementioned interview, Gouin's method gives them very good results in terms of motivation, so it is a very relevant parameter.

Another issue was the different levels<sup>13</sup> of knowledge in the different classes and, even, among the students of the same group. In general terms, 5th Grade had a beginner's level (A1), with only good command of some sentences and little understanding of the language in general. The same happened in 7th Grade. In 10th Grade, on the other hand, there was a group of more "advanced" girls, who were already familiar with the present tense, for example, and had a wider range of vocabulary<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, there was also a group with little knowledge of the language, either because they were new or because they had not shown any interest in previous years. As for 12th Grade, the situation was very similar to 10th Grade, with the difference that only one of the students was interested and had assimilated the contents.

Finally, it is relevant to highlight that there was a new girl in 7th Grade and two new girls in 10th Grade, who did not know any Spanish before. Their evolution in the language will be especially followed up.

I have summarized these initial characteristics in the following table:

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<sup>12</sup> Here I will be referring to Richards & Schmidt (2010: 377) definition of "motivation itself" previously discussed, being that the "attitudes, desires, and willingness to expend effort in order to learn the second language". However, no direct measurements were taken, so the classification is subject to the teacher's judgement. In this case, motivation could also be compared to the general interest they took in trying to learn the language.

<sup>13</sup> To measure this the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is the one generally followed by the materials that are used by the school, so the terms I refer to fall within these categories.

<sup>14</sup> This could be considered *advanced* A1 level, yet not A2, according to the CEFR.

Grade	No. of students	No. of lessons per week	Total amount of lessons	Level of knowledge	Initial motivation	Other observations
5th	7	2	24	Initial Beginners	Moderate	One student with learning disabilities
7th	12	3	45	Initial Beginners	Little	One new student
10th	9	2	32	Intermediate Beginners	Moderate to non-existent	Two new students, one student with learning disabilities
12th	6	2	4	Intermediate Beginners	Non-existent	

Before getting into properly describing the implementation of LSE, another issue should be addressed: although initially 12th Grade was one of the chosen groups, after only 4 lessons, the students requested to come back to a traditional teaching method, for they were not willing to perform the commands or take an active participation in the proposed activities. However, even though at the beginning they responded well to the traditional method, they lost interest a few months later. However, we faced this difficulty not only in this subject, but also in all the subjects in which they did not have to take the official Ministry examinations. The logical explanation is that they decided not to focus on everything they were not going to be tested on and, being an extra, it did not deserve their time or attention.

A question arises out of this situation: would it have been more interesting to them if it had been the first time they had studied Spanish? It should be taken into account that they had been studying Spanish for twelve years and, unfortunately, they are leaving the school with almost non-existent knowledge of the language, besides the typical polite model questions and answers. It is understandable that they consider the subject totally secondary with those results.

Also, despite that I had taught them for two years, the constant change of students (either leaving the school or arriving), the inexistent motivation in the group in general and the lack of a more appealing teaching method before this course, might have contributed as well. Had they started with LSE two years earlier, probably they would

have adjusted better and would have left the school with some more language tools and knowledge.

Therefore, given that only three groups remained for the research, I will refer to them as older group, middle group and younger group (10th, 7th and 5th Grade, respectively).

### *Adapting LSE to these groups*

At the beginning of the research I received a document from Prof. Rico where the main contents to be implemented were included. However, this document was in English and the first step was to translate it into Spanish.

It was divided in two parts: first, a set of *sequential* commands and, second, a set of *sequential* everyday actions, following Gouin's *Series* but more updated, according to Prof. Rico's revision<sup>15</sup>.

Almost from the beginning the procedure contemplated the students learning the sequences in the present tense, the past tense and the future tense, so they eventually get to *describe* what they do 'now', what they did 'before' and what they are doing 'later'. The first translation choice was to decide which kind of tenses would be chosen for this. After some discussion with Prof. Rico (personal communication, October 3<sup>rd</sup>) and some research on what other Spanish manuals teach first, we agreed on using the Spanish equivalent to the English present perfect<sup>16</sup>, and the Spanish equivalent to the "going to + infinitive" future, which are also the ones taught first in more traditional teaching methods.

Also, LSE follows the pattern of giving commands first in the singular form and then in the plural, so by the time the students get to the *Series* they are supposed to be familiar with both singular and plural conjugations in the three mentioned tenses plus the imperative form. This, for a language with little variation in the conjugations of the persons, like English, does not pose a challenge as intense as for Spanish, where the variant of the conjugations with all the exceptions plays a major role.

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<sup>15</sup> From now on, when talking about the contents in this document they will be referred as "first part" for the sequential commands and "second part" or "series" for the sequential every day actions.

<sup>16</sup> The present perfect is very frequently used in the peninsular variant of Spanish. However, in the Latin American variants it is almost never used. This should be taken into account for prospective manuals of Spanish variants other than the peninsular one.

This brought me to consider the best way of introducing and pacing the materials. For example, *to which extent was necessary for the students to know the past tense before starting with the second part (the actual Series)? Or, which other contents that LSE does not contemplate needs to be included, also as a way of varying the contents and giving them more lexical content?*

Supposedly, much of the vocabulary is intended to be acquired with the development of the *Series*, but giving a first look before actually being exposed to it in the *Series* can help to a better fixation.

Also, whereas LSE is a good procedure for describing actions and storytelling, dialogues/conversations and questions/answers are not among its strong points, so it was up to the teacher to come up with activities to reinforce these aspects and insert them in an organic way throughout the process of teaching.

On the other hand, grammatical contents such as non-active verbs (like *can* or *like*) usually play a very important role when learning a language in the early stages, so it was decided to include them within the contents, also as a way to reinforce the *infinitive* form in Spanish, which has an essential part in the language.

Another important issue was the use of the target language: for many years, the instruction has been done in the mother tongue of the students. In this sense, LSE was a good improvement, but I tried to be flexible, allowing them to check understanding in their mother tongue and giving some grammatical explanations in Arabic, when required. In any case, the students' understanding has greatly improved compared to other years/grades.

These are only the general considerations that I, more or less, followed along all the grades. However, the timing and pacing was different for all of them and I adjusted the contents according to their interests and/or motivation in specific moments. Therefore, before extracting some conclusions about the implementation, it becomes relevant to describe how the teaching has been evolving in each of the grades. The first one will be longer, for more aspects will need to be described that were implemented in the same way in the other groups.

### *The younger group*

For a start, 10-year-old children love being able to move around in class and doing ‘silly’ things they are not usually allowed to do, like jumping or sitting on the table, or in the teacher’s chair. So, from the beginning, LSE proved to be very enjoyable for them. It was my first time being their teacher and it also gave them a positive impression about what Spanish was going to be with the ‘new’ teacher.

I also discovered that, out of all the groups, they were the ones that got the general meaning of the commands without worrying if they understood it perfectly. For them, to get a general understanding of what I was saying was enough. Therefore, the concept was more important than accuracy in the meaning, so this allowed us to have the lessons in the target language most of the time.

Another aspect that was not very important for them was grammatical explanation, while the middle and older groups very often requested to specifically know the grammar rule behind what we were learning, the younger group did not care about it. And, in return, they tended to repeat the new words or sentences more frequently, very often until they got it right, which is a characteristic of first language acquisition especially present in children. They were sometimes pleased to hear themselves pronouncing the new words, or repeating them with the same tone and gestures I used, which is something I definitely encouraged. They even used those words at home when they thought it was suitable, as some parents referred to me.

These aspects were the ones manifested more strongly in this group, as opposed to the other two.

In terms of content, we covered all the first commands and the present tense conjugation in the singular persons (I/you/he-she). In the process, we included the elements of the classroom (that appeared since the first lesson), the masculine/feminine nouns, the singular/plural of the nouns, the numbers and the colors.

By the time we got to the colors, the students were so motivated that they even brought posters with extra work they did at home. Also, in the lesson where we learnt the verbs “arrive/leave”, “enter/exit”, “open/close”, and “knock” on the door, they suggested that we could write the story of “Lara” (the name of one of their friends) who arrives late

at school, knocks on the door and enters in the classroom. Like this, with very few verbs, they had created the first story of their own.

After these contents, we moved on to extracting the infinitive from the imperative. In Spanish manuals, the infinitive form is something that it is generally presented without further explanation. However, in Arabic such a form does not exist, which has always proved problematic when teaching it: the students are not only requested to learn the first conjugations of the verbs, but also what the infinitive means. Very often it is too much for them to cope with, and they would get blocked when giving them the infinitive and ask from them to conjugate the verb.

However, the formation of the infinitive came out very naturally when ‘extracting’ it from the imperative form. For the younger group I omitted the verbs that have vocalic changes in the present tense: as in the imperative the vowel changes are included, they learnt that as the ‘norm’, that is kept in the conjugation of the present for the singular persons<sup>17</sup>. Probably, that issue will be addressed when learning the plural imperative, where the vocalic change is shown<sup>18</sup>. In this case, learning the general rule for the natural formation of the infinitive was given priority. Once they will get that, going into the exceptions will be more organic, but there was no time to experience that during the implementation of this research.

What was actually very useful when learning the infinitive from the imperative was the distinction of the three groups of infinitive: those which finish with “-ar”, “-er” and “-ir”. Again, when learning the commands and the present singular tense, only two groups are seen: the “a” group (those in which the command finishes with this vowel) and the “e” group (those that finish with that vowel). The conjugation in the present will happen according to it.

Then, the “e” group is split in two: those verbs who have the infinitive in “-er” and those who have it in “-ir”. They do not know it yet, but this difference will affect both the imperative and the present conjugation of the plural persons. But the most relevant aspect that we can get from this is that we are building the grammatical structures in an

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<sup>17</sup> For example, the verb “volver” (to come back/return). In the singular imperative is “vuelve”, which is what they heard and learnt. The present conjugation for singular persons is: “yo vuelvo / tú vuelves / él vuelve”, so they do not learn at that point that there is a vocalic change there.

<sup>18</sup> Again, this needs to be watched out for some Latin American variants of Spanish, because it does not always happen in the singular persons.

organized, consecutive way: we simply add something new to what we already knew, a different twist that, still, does not make it very complicated.

After learning the infinitive, that was reinforced by a song called *Todo el mundo en esta fiesta*, where we played with them, we started to learn some verbs where we make use of the infinitive. These verbs were “poder” and “me gusta” and, given that they are not active verbs, that directly refer to an action and where LSE could be used, it was a good opportunity to practise question/answer activities. The verb “poder” (can/be able to) did not pose any extra difficulty from what they already knew. However, the verb “me gusta” is always one of the most difficult verbs for the students to learn. First, because the verb is conjugated only in singular/plural, according to what comes after it, and then because the pronouns used to refer to the person are not the usual ones (but not the reflexive ones, either).

For “me gusta” (to like) we started first with the infinitive. One of the activities, for example, was answering questions after being thrown a ball, and then asking again to another classmate. A final round would be about what one of the classmates liked, so they would use the third person. A few lessons later, we came back to that verb, and they still remembered the use. Also, the change towards the plural (“me gustan”) was very organic and they did not forget the correct pronunciation.

This contrasts with other grades that have also studied “me gusta” this year for the first time, like 6th Grade. They did so through a traditional method and a book, and most of the class did not assimilate the concept, being older than the younger group.

The final topic we had time to address was “the food”, together with “me gusta/n”. The next content would have been an emphasis in the verb “to go”, which is essential for the formation of the future (*ir a* + infinitive, which they already know), together with some places and means of transport, to expand their vocabulary. And, from there, the plural forms, before getting into the past.

Another issue I would like to address, even though it concerns all the groups, is the reflexive verbs in Spanish. While in traditional methods they are taught separately, once it is considered the student has assimilated the present tense conjugation, under LSE the first word they hear is a reflexive verb: “levántate” (get up/stand up). So, when you get into the present tense conjugation, you directly explain that the final “te” comes to the front and changes according to the person. And it is part of the verb.

This is probably the part in which the students make more mistakes in all courses. Especially because they associate “yo me” / “tú te” and they tend to use it when conjugating *all* the verbs, so it needs to be clarified that it applies to a *group* of verbs *only*. I also placed an emphasis on this when correcting that error. However, I still think it is positive that the students are in touch with that kind of verbs from the beginning, even if they are not tested on them. It makes that group to be more naturally perceived: they are just another group of verbs, not a *strange* group (and therefore, more difficult).

Finally, given that this is the only group of children where I implemented LSE, I would like to present some remarks:

- LSE brought a more positive and enthusiastic attitude to the classroom. In this group, according to the teacher’s judgement, there were two girls with low language aptitude who had a very negative perception of the language, but adapted perfectly and after some lessons became fully integrated. Also, the girl with learning disabilities was able to participate in all the activities: as her disability is associated with writing, but not with speaking or memory, she did not face many difficulties and even her self-esteem increased when attempting to answer questions and being more active in class.
- After a few sessions, they started to show real interest for Spanish: I would give them some children’s book to read at home and they would do it with pleasure, summarizing afterwards what they had understood from the story (which was usually correct). Also, they were willing to communicate with the school’s principal in Spanish (she does not speak Arabic), and would ask me for specific sentences and greetings to say to her. In the same way, even though at the beginning they would talk to me in Arabic, little by little they got used to trying to express themselves in Spanish, asking for what they wanted to say when they did not know.
- LSE helped to show off their creativity: from wanting to make up or translate songs into Spanish, to telling stories, making pannels on the topics or suggesting new games to ‘play’ in Spanish. Generally, we would have half a class more creative and playful and then sit to fix what we had learnt by playing, and they adapted to that pace very nicely.
- As some of them have younger sisters in the school, the general perception of Spanish in younger students has started to change: now I have little girls who

stop me in the courtyard and try to talk to me in Spanish, or ask me questions about it.

- The evident difference of language level was easily overcome and all the students were able to follow the learning pace and achieve some useful learning. It is generally easier for the teacher to adapt and personalize the requirements according to each student's necessity.

In conclusion, we can say that LSE has enhanced their natural tendency to learn through playing and get the general meaning without worrying to understand everything. The fact that it was a small group may have also contributed, but it allowed them to get over their differences in learning aptitude and enjoy the class while learning, each one at her own pace. It also helped to bring up the motivation and interest, an issue that had always been a struggle.

#### *Middle group*

In this group the results have been more mixed, especially because LSE did not affect the motivation of a few students within the group, and that somehow had repercussions on the overall performance. It was also the first time I was teaching them, so they did not know exactly what to expect.

The first few classes were average. However, very often they lost patience because they wanted to perform the actions and did not want to wait. If I was not even with the commands I would give to every girl, they would complain and, therefore, disconnect from the lesson. If later on I suggested them to give the commands, the same would happen, even reacting with bad attitudes. When I brought games to class, they would show their interest for the first few minutes, getting into something else as soon as I was not paying all my attention to each one of them. Moreover, in this group there were two girls with major behavioral problems that sometimes would even cause an interruption in the teaching. This affected not only Spanish, but most of the subjects.

However, there still was a group of girls who took an interest in the language and the procedure. One of them had just been accepted to the school and had no previous knowledge of the language and her progress has been very positive.

With this group all the first part of the LSE procedure was covered. We started by covering the first commands and the present tense, both in singular and plural. This group was more analytic than the younger group and very often requested grammatical

explanations (even over and over), until they got the idea. This made advancements in the classroom and use of the target language more complicated.

Also, I tried to bring songs, games, doing posters... and to use different approaches with the more disruptive girls, so as to try and involve them in the lessons. Sometimes it worked, but some others only contributed to lose the attention of the girls that actually showed interest. For example, before learning the future, we followed the same procedure to learn the infinitive, on the one hand, and then to learn the verb “ir” (to go) on the other hand. When learning “ir”, I suggested them to create a poster with the different uses of the verb, like “go to + place” and “go by + transport”, as we had learnt for the vocabulary. The girls that were interested in the language adduced that they already knew it, so they did not need to make a poster. The other ones did not want to do it either.

Also, for some of them it was difficult to understand why I had to speak in the target language, and why writing was not the main focus, and made me clear a few times they wanted a more traditional teaching method. However, once or twice we tried with a traditional manual and I observed the same behavior and interest patterns, so I decided to continue with LSE, for at least they would get more direct commands and, even when not being involved in the teaching, they would be receiving some input in the target language.

Other contents we covered, apart from the same studied with the younger group where: the possessives, the demonstratives, the prepositions of place, the verb to go (to + place / by + transport) and the future. They also covered the verbs “poder” / “querer” / “me gusta”. Here I also tried the question/answer exercises, both working as a group and in pairs. But neither of these cooperative activities worked well, for they would lose their attention quickly or not do the activity at all. Not even getting bad results or failing in the exams moved some of them to do anything, so they did not mind not doing the activity.

The last topic we covered, by using emojis, was the emotions (“how are you”). While some of the girls found it entertaining, there were some girls who did not respond well.

Some final remarks are the following:

- Motivation was not achieved in some of the girls, especially those who had major behavioral problems and, as a consequence, affected the whole performance of the class.

- The girls who showed an interest, among whom was the new girl, did moderately well. They understood the use of series and commands, as well as learnt how to produce the language when requested. However, it did not boost their creativity and they did not take an active participation in their own learning.
- Some girls that were affected by those who did not want to learn had attention problems. When they wanted to learn, though, many times the same topics or explanations had to be repeated or emphasized. In the long term, this also had a negative effect on the girls with interest, who became bored of covering again things they already knew, even if we did it through different activities or exercises.
- Overall, the girls who got the essence of the procedure performed well in what they were requested, from knowing the verbs of the initial series to producing their own perfectly understandable sentences. However, they would prefer to do it in the written form rather than spoken. This might have been affected by the deep analytical sense of many of the girls, who simply saw the language as another subject to be learnt and evaluated from, in order to get a grade. That is why they also saw the games sometimes as a ‘waste’ of time.

In conclusion, and despite all the efforts to take the middle group into the procedure, the results have been very varied. The reasons behind it can be numerous, from being in an age of change between childhood and adolescence to not being used to be taught without an authoritarian figure: in LSE the instructor *accompanies* the students, more than *gives* them a lesson, and maybe they were not ready for that. This brings us back to Pennycook’s research and the necessity of considering whether procedures presenting such ‘Westernized’ characteristics are suitable for them, because “despite the claims by some researchers that they are empirically preferable, [they] are cultural preferences” (Pennycook, 2001: 129).

Also, it could have been related to age-factors, because at times they did not seem to know what they wanted: if it was games time, they lost attention very quick; if it was ‘performing’ time, they would get bored if not performing immediately..., and so on. More time should be given, to see if it was merely due to the stage of development between childhood and adolescence.

Another factor that could have affected is that this group was bigger than the others, so it poses the question whether LSE is suitable for bigger groups if we are not sure about their motivation to learn the language.

However, these results do not necessarily take away the validity of the procedure, and a good example of that is the girl without any previous knowledge, who ended up almost surpassing her classmates. This brings us to the same question that was faced when talking about 12th Grade: would it have been different had it been the first attempt of the girls to learn the language?

### *Older group*

This was the only group of the ones I chose that I had taught before. So, at the beginning, I had to get them to agree on this new procedure: they knew I could teach in their mother tongue, and had to come to terms with the fact that I would not be doing that so often. However, after an initial period of adjustment, they ended up getting well into LSE.

This group was also more advanced, compared to the other two: they already knew how to use and conjugate the present tense, had struggled with what the ‘infinitive’ means in Spanish and knew that we had three groups. They counted on this advantage over the other groups and it allowed us to go faster in the first stages as well.

The first part of commands in singular and their conjugation was easily covered. They were familiar with prepositions of place, colors, numbers, possessives, singular/plural nouns, verbs “poder” / “querer” / “me gusta”... So all this was good for them to review. Also, it was a good introduction to the imperative form, which they had never faced before. The plural form came quickly, as well as the future: they were also very familiar with the verb to go, as well as the infinitive, so they did not struggle much. Also they had heard or briefly seen the reflexive verbs before, but these were not fixed, so the procedure also helped to fix that content.

The first real thing they had to stop to consider was the past tense. From now on, all the contents were specifically put into practice only with this group, and it is what posed a challenge also for them. About the present perfect, first we started with the participles. However, there are not many irregular participles (although the ones that are irregular are very frequent in use), and once you assimilate the participle, the use of the

past comes easily. We enjoyed games and some readings, and very soon we also moved into the actual series.

From the series (the second part of LSE), what was most difficult for them was to actually perform the commands, because either they felt silly or were shy. Very often, I had to be the one doing it (and maybe adding more silliness), so they would get over that and do it themselves. The second difficulty we faced was that they were too used to do everything in the written form, so it took them a while to come to terms with spontaneous oral production.

On the other hand, when after learning a series or a few series we came to the texts that contained the verbs and expanded the vocabulary, they were delighted. I presented them with both more serious and silly texts, and sometimes they gave a better response to the serious ones rather than the silly ones. Also some of the texts were in the form of a dialogue. But, although they became very good in description and narration, they still struggle with normal conversation, that should probably be an emphasis in future courses.

In this group there was one girl with learning disability and for her, together with the two new girls, the learning pace was too fast, so sometimes I had to request less from them, especially in evaluations.

Some final remarks about this group are the following:

- We did not struggle with lack of attention or behavioral problems, so once they got into the procedure, they liked it and their motivation raised.
- Following the commands, everything fell more naturally into place. Not only they learnt the future and past tenses, but they assimilated it very naturally, while fixing the structures and vocabulary they already knew.
- They found the series very interesting and encouraging for learning. While they had some problems with performing and speaking, they improved greatly in understanding and writing.
- The gaps in learning pacing were present, but easy to solve. While some girls needed help, their motivation was not affected. The ones that were not previously motivated reacted well to the procedure and were incorporated to active participation.
- Although not generalized, LSE boosted the creativity of some of the girls, who brought posters to class, invented their own stories or talked extensively about

their own routines. They also requested further readings or songs to work on at home.

In conclusion, putting LSE into practice with this group shows that it is also possible to implement it with students that already have some knowledge of the language. It only needs to be adapted to what they know, as well as to the pace of learning that is suitable for them. In this case, I already knew most of the students, so that was also a good help. Trust in the new procedure from the instructor's part, and on the teacher from the student's, was also a very important asset for the success of the implementation. On the other side, it was a good way to prove how LSE could work with older students, for their way of learning is different from that of children. That was shown by the fact of them being shy or feeling stupid sometimes, which requires a different answer than with the children.

#### 4. Final considerations and conclusions on the implementation

After analyzing and describing the general performance and results of each group, it is necessary to bring everything together and extract some general conclusions, that will shed light on all that has been said before.

I consider that a comparative table can be the best option for that. In it, I will include the elements covered by each group, the complementary materials that have been used / I have created specifically for these lessons and what happened with the motivation and the learning outcome.

	Contents covered	Materials used and produced	Learning outcome and motivation
Younger group	<p><i>Grammar</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- verbs from the first part of LSE (singular imperative and present tense of the singular persons)</li> <li>- singular/plural - masculine/feminine</li> <li>- formation of the infinitive with regular verbs</li> <li>- Verb "poder" +</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- visual glossary of verbs</li> <li>- existing songs: <i>Veo, veo / Buenas noches / Todo el mundo en esta fiesta</i></li> <li>- existing tales: <i>La playa / Teo quiere ir al cole</i></li> <li>- songs/stories we made up: <i>Buenos días / Se va la noche / Lara llega tarde</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- both learning outcome and motivation are very positive.</li> <li>- the learning goals were achieved</li> <li>- the motivation changed from moderate to high after implementing LSE.</li> </ul>

	<p>infinitive - verb “me gusta” + infinitive - verb “me gusta/n” + singular/plural nouns</p> <p><i>Vocabulary</i> - some opposites - classroom elements - numbers - colors - parts of the body - food</p>	<p>- images for the body and the food. - candy for the numbers - mandalas for the colors -ball</p>	
Middle group	<p><i>Grammar</i> - same elements as above - plural imperative and plural conjugation of the present tense - formation of the infinitive with irregular verbs - future tense - verb “querer” - demonstratives - possessives</p> <p><i>Vocabulary</i> - some opposites - classroom elements - review of colors and numbers - parts of the body - verb “ir a” + places - verb “ir en” + transport - emotions</p>	<p>- table of verbs in present tense and infinitive form - existing songs: <i>Veo, veo / Todo el mundo en esta fiesta</i> - images for the body, places and transports - emojis for emotions - ball</p>	<p>- both the learning outcome and the motivation varies depending on the student, with important differences. - the learning outcome goes from little outcome to having achieved the learning goals. - the motivation goes from non-existent to moderate. In average, I would say it did not change much.</p>
Older group	<p><i>Grammar</i> - first part of LSE (everything covered) - 16 full series - Pronouns of direct object - review of the remaining contents from above</p> <p><i>Vocabulary</i> - some opposites - review of most contents from above</p>	<p>- texts created to work on the series - images and other elements for the vocabulary of the texts and the reviewed vocabulary</p>	<p>- both learning outcome and motivation are very positive. - the learning goals were achieved for most of the students, with some having an adapted program. - the learning motivation changed from moderate to</p>

	- topics covered in the series they studied		high.
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As can be seen, the general outcome is very positive. To understand whether what happened with the middle group is an isolated example or not, further implementation of LSE should be performed. But, in general, both the contents and the implementation can be considered a positive experience. The learning goals were achieved and in two out of the three groups the attitude towards the language became more positive throughout the course, according to my general impression. Both working with the first part of LSE and with some of the series and texts proved useful and encouraging for most of the students, so I would not hesitate to implement it again in following years and with other grades, to test how it works.

It is relevant to list some positive aspects next, some of them associated to how LSE contributes to learning Spanish, on the one hand, and how it contributes to language learning in general, on the other hand.

For the first, I find that, Spanish being an eminently verbal language (as opposed to Arabic), a procedure that bases its teaching in the verbs is very sensible. Also, many Spanish manuals start teaching the verbs “ser” and “estar” (which in English are only one, “to be”), from the beginning. In the present tense, this verb does not even exist in Arabic, so that was always an issue at the beginning of any Spanish course. With LSE those two verbs are omitted at the beginning, and the students get to learn verbs that they can relate to an action. Given that “ser” and “estar” are copulative verbs, not transitive, with LSE there is no need to learn them at the beginning, but rather they can be introduced once the students get more familiar with the language. This is very positive for Arabic, but can be applied to any other language, for those contents are generally difficult to foreign students.

Also, starting with the imperative in Spanish facilitates the learning of the verbal groups, for the ending of the imperative also has it implicit. It is even more positive because the learning of the groups is progressive: first you present only two groups (“a” and “e”), and when you teach either the imperative plural or the infinitive, the “i” group can be added.

However, with the “i” group there is an issue that still needs to be some thought when teaching the plural persons: while “we” and “you” (plural) respond to the conjugation with “i” (nosotros escribimos – vosotros escribís), “they” do come back to the “e” group (ellos escriben). It is common that they get confused and also write ‘they’ with “i”, or they forget about the “i” in the conjugation and just conjugate it with “e”.

One option could be either teach “they” before introducing group “i”. From the singular “he/she” to the plural “they” only an “n” is added in all the conjugation groups (él canta – ellos cantan / él escribe – ellos escriben). The danger of this idea is that they can identify this singular/plural change for verbs with the singular/plural change for nouns (an issue that was dealt with in the middle group). Another option is to teach them in the same way as the singular persons, just emphasizing the change and being patient with the assimilation of the correct form.

Here it is also important to take into account that in some Spanish variants the conjugation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural is not very frequently used (they use “ustedes” with the conjugation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural). In some other countries like Argentina, this form is also changed for “vos”, with a totally different conjugation. These issues cannot be overlooked, although they are common when teaching Spanish under any circumstances or methods.

On the other hand, some general positive aspects when teaching any language under LSE are the following:

It is easier to have the lessons in the target language, even if they do not understand every single word. In this practice, it applies mainly to the younger and the older group, for the middle group struggled more with this issue. Once they understand how LSE works and get use to it, they stop wanting to know the exact meaning of everything: if they know they have understood the general sense, or the meaning of the main words, it is usually enough for them. This allows the lesson to be taught in the target language for most of the time, without increasing the level of stress in the students.

It easily adapts to the characteristics of each group and, particularly, of each student. For example, in terms of movement there are always students more active than others, and whole classes more active than others. The way SLE is implemented can be adapted to each of them. It is up to the teacher to know his/her students (it always is) and find the exact amount of “movement” it requires, although there must always be a minimum to

perform the actions. Other example, as has been seen, is related to learning disabilities or new students: they can get involved in the development of the classes very easily, and the teacher can adapt the content to different paces of learning.

Another aspect is that you can create and adapt your own materials. Even though it is based on Gouin's *Series*, and this idea must not be lost, you can choose the series that better reflect your students' reality. As can be seen in the translation from English into Spanish (Appendix 2), I decided to omit the Series about "shaving", provided that all my students are girls and they do not see themselves reflected in that reality, or the whole series about cooking, because we did not have the means to do it *in situ* (which would have been the ideal), and I knew they would have not been happy just *pretending* to cook, but not having the opportunity of actually *cooking*. Also, the verbs of those series are not as relevant for them in their daily lives as some others.

In spite of this, this does not disregard the possibility of having a manual with all the specific contents and series, with the necessary images, tables to write conjugations, printed texts for the series, and so on, that they can fill up progressively. This is especially important when they are children, because it is very easy for them to lose the materials that are given to them in sheets, and also when the environment is not technologically friendly, as it happens in the school of El Pilar.

Related to this point there is another aspect that needs to be developed, and it is to complement LSE with more lexical aspects that also contribute to make the lessons more varied. Otherwise, it is easy to get bored, even more when the students are children. This is an idea already present in Charlotte Mason's pedagogy.

They actually tried to implement it in Adrian (2013). However, this manual includes the series and, below, in some lessons there is a specific aspect of vocabulary to work on, which in the end is not very dynamic. There are other ways to do it, like studying the body parts when suitable verbs for that are learnt.

Once you get into the actual series in LSE, the vocabulary comes along with it more easily, so another option could be to start inserting those series sooner, in order for them to acquire the necessary amount of vocabulary in a more dynamic way. However, the danger in this is that the students do not get the necessary assimilation of the previous basic verbs, so once again it will depend on the teacher to recognize when the series should be started for his/her students.

In this practical account, I did not even consider to start the proper LSE series with the younger group, for they were assimilating the contents of the previous part more slowly, but still enjoying the lessons. This pace gave me the opportunity to work on more texts and songs, which was very enjoyable. On the other hand, I tried to do the same (giving them more time to assimilate the contents and not starting with the LSE series so soon) with the middle group. Nonetheless, given the results, now I wonder if it would have helped to introduce the proper series and the texts earlier in the process. It is something that would need to be taken into account when putting LSE into practice. However, in this case the results in the procedure would have been the main factor for the change, and not necessarily the vocabulary contents.

Hopefully, this account of the experience about teaching LSE to some groups of students at the school of El Pilar can lay the groundwork for further implementation of LSE, especially with children and teenagers.

In general, the results can be considered positive and I will not hesitate on trying to implement it again with more groups in the future, for the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Also, further development will help to make it more dynamic with time, although in that case the danger would be to lose flexibility, which is one of LSE's main assets. It is particularly well-suited for children, for it allows them to move around and boosts their imagination and creativity. Implementation with younger children would be essential to further prove the validity of LSE, although there are not many doubts about its success, if well implemented.

## CONCLUSIONS

Now that all the points introduced at the beginning of the research have been covered, it is important to bring them back together in order to make sure if the initial considerations of this work have been fulfilled.

Around the question of the adequacy of the LSE procedure to teach Arab children and teenagers, some relevant issues have emerged, making it much richer than it could seem at first.

On the one hand, the study of LSE brought us back to François Gouin's *Series* method. Together with the description of the *Series* and its findings, and due to the lack of prior research on Gouin, it was necessary to give a review of its impact, as well as an account of the authors (mainly English-speaking ones) that have talked about Gouin's method.

Moreover, Charlotte Mason's pedagogy was brought into light and related to Gouin's teaching, something that most works that analyze Gouin's method omit, even nowadays. Taking into account that she was a strong supporter of the implementation of the *Series* for the foreign languages' teaching according to her pedagogy, it was essential to analyze her contributions as well. Indeed, thanks to her emphasis, the *Series* are still currently in use. This analysis included, for example, the book *Speaking Spanish with Miss Mason and François*, by A. Adrian, which is the only Spanish manual that proposes teaching Spanish through a method very close to the original Gouin's *Series*. However, except for some homeschooling programs and other independent schools, this manual does not seem to be very well known.

One of these chains of schools that actually implements Spanish teaching following Gouin's method is *Ambleside Schools International*. The opportunity of talking to Brian Brostrom about ASI's experience in teaching foreign languages with the *Series* is very valuable for this research, because it is the first updated and official account of an institution about how Gouin's *Series* work with their students. Brostrom's detailed description of the implementation of the method at their schools shed new lights on how alive the Gouin's *Series* still are, thanks in part to Mason's pedagogy. It was also good to know about their experience in order to compare with my own practice and to have a clearer idea about what to expect.

After reviewing Gouin and Mason, the groundwork was set to get into Prof. Rico's renewal of the Gouin's *Series*, known as *Living Sequential Expression* technique or procedure. For this, some theoretical notions were reviewed by analyzing some of the methods more directly related to LSE, as well as other techniques and procedures, in order to discuss and, maybe, delimit the grounds where LSE could be placed.

However, the purpose of this research was not to provide the theoretical foundations for LSE, but rather to do some precedent work that could lead towards that goal by, for example, reviewing some methods and approaches. Out of these, both the Natural and the Emergentist Approaches (this last one also related to the "usage-based" approaches) offer interesting ideas from which LSE could benefit. In the same way, Asher, who developed the TPR method, suggests that more could be done to investigate how Gouin's method and TPR relate to each other. Finally, it cannot be forgotten that Prof. Rico conceived LSE at the beginning as another technique that could fit into the Polis Method. As can be implied from this, there is much work to be done in this field, but at least some limits were set and some lines were hinted, in order to know where the research could point towards.

Something similar happened with the studies on cognition, whose aim was not to deepen into the field, but rather, to enrich the theoretical implications on LSE and how the procedure can be supported by the results of previous works on memory and cognition, with some positive outcomes. For example, the fact that context and sequentiality, both very important in LSE, could actually help enhance memory when learning a foreign language. Still, this was limited to the theoretical field, and practical research would need to be carried out in order to prove these assumptions.

On the other hand, for the practical basis two aspects were discussed together with the practical implementation. The first one was the importance of the context where the learning environment was taking place. In a non-Western setting like the Middle East, this becomes even more relevant, because the teaching methodology does not always adapt to different learning systems, as could be the case among the Arabs. Syarifuddin or Pennycook's studies reflect on these realities.

The second aspect was age-related factors, which was also important because it is undeniable that they do not learn in the same way as adults. Some considerations needed to be addressed, like the importance of games and repetition in the process of learning.

Some of these ideas actually supported LSE procedure as a good way of learning a language for children.

Last, but not least, the development and results of the practical implementation were presented. As can be seen, the outcome of the teaching experience can be considered very positive. The students' attitude towards the language changed for the better in general, with some exceptions in the middle group, where it could be discussed whether the changing age (not children, but not yet *fully* into adolescence) could have played its part. This is in consonance with Brostrom's notes on their experience at ASI. As he pointed out, their students also show a very good attitude towards the language, although in grades 6 to 8 they can face some problems if the students get bored or grow tired of the methodology.

In relation to the contents, the amount that we were able to cover with the three groups was in accordance with the standards of learning of other manuals, with the particularity that, in general, the fixation of these contents was better, much more natural and flexible. Especially with the young group, their creativity was enhanced and the way of acquiring the contents seemed much more natural than with traditional methods. With the older group the main achievement was to get them to understand general speech and to speak, something that had always presented difficulties.

Finally, putting LSE into practice also helped show its strengths, together with some points that need more work. Among the second, there is the compelling necessity of creating more materials to support the series. As can be seen from the appendixes, the teacher's workload increases not only because of the lesson planning, but also because he needs to prepare his own materials to follow this procedure, and it is still questionable in terms of time profit, especially if lessons for different groups and levels need to be prepared.

It is also important to take into account that LSE by itself can get somehow tiring and boring, and it needs to be implemented together with some other activities or techniques. For example, with the younger group songs, stories and games played an important role, as Charlotte Mason suggested. With the middle and older group, more grammatical support was required at times. As with the materials, these adaptations are up to the teacher, which is something that he or she would normally face in any learning environment.

Nevertheless, I still consider that LSE is more appealing for the student than traditional learning or more “westernized” techniques that do not seem natural for him/her, clearly because the way of learning is culturally influenced. Therefore, the answer to the question that was posed at the beginning of this research is affirmative: LSE proved itself efficient to teach Arab children and teenagers.

Based on a natural approach to learning that the Arab student can relate to in most cases, as was hinted in the practical part, it is not difficult for the students to get into it, and it presents something different from the way they are used to learn, which is also good. The real challenge will be to keep that motivation up throughout more extended periods, but the experience at ASI suggests that, if properly carried out, these problems are easily overcome.

There is still work to be done in relation to the development of the LSE procedure, both in terms of materials and theoretical basis. However, after trying to deepen into both of these aspects, the perspectives seem very promising as an up-and-coming technique or procedure that could provide good results for foreign language instruction.

As over time the Gouin’s *Series* were still in use, most of it under Charlotte Mason’s adaptation, the renewal suggested by Prof. Rico might have been precisely what Gouin’s *Series* needed to be adapted to the current period. The LSE procedure can prove itself to be very efficient with the required time and means, and hopefully this research would have contributed to its development.

## **Appendix 1: Interview with Brian Brostrom<sup>19</sup>.**

1. Maryellen told me you follow the Gouin Series in K-8. Do you use any particular books? If so, which ones and in which grades? Are you happy with those materials?

We use the following two books of series for grades K-8 compiled by Allyson D. Adrian and published by Cherrydale Press: *Speaking Spanish with Miss Mason and François*; volumes one and two.

It's my understanding that some of these series were modernizations of Gouin's own series, some were inspired by Gouin, and a few were written by our own Ambleside language teachers. We also have several other series available on our website that were written by Ambleside language teachers that are used in addition to the books by Allyson Adrian.

In addition to this book of series, we refer to another work of Allyson D. Adrian in teaching Gouin's method: *Teaching Languages with Miss Mason and François*, as well as M. Gouin's very own work, *The Art of Teaching and Studying languages*.

We find many of the series delightful, although we have had to create some additional series. The two volumes of series of Allyson Adrian unfortunately have some errors that we believe are just typos, and other errors that are truly incorrect word choices or incorrect usage. There are also several series that suffer from leísmo. We've issued an appendix of problematic series and suggested corrections or variations to our teaching staff. The series have otherwise proven useful in our instruction.

Allyson's book on usage of the method is also helpful, but we've found that it has two problematic areas:

One is that she has the students spend as much time on the series in English as they do in the target language of Spanish. This is tedious for students, and we believe it goes against Gouin's own teaching. Here are Gouin's own words on the matter from his work: "The English verb has simply served as a bridge for passing from one bank to the other,

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<sup>19</sup> Via email, on April 14th and 22nd, 2019. Brostrom is the teacher in charge of the Spanish curricula for Ambleside Schools International, and Spanish teacher at the Ambleside School RiverTree in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

but a bridge that has been drawn up as soon as the passage was effected. In other words, we have made the class 'think in French.'"

The other issue is that she has made it perhaps too systematic or deprived the series somewhat of life. We must of course follow the system and isolate the verbs and work on the components, etc., but the true delight and spirit of the series is that of the gestalt, i.e. the complete narrative that the series relates. By following the steps too rigidly, we can sometimes miss the forest for the trees. The book would seem to need just few more hints about the primary goal for teaching the series and some ideas on atmosphere.

2. Do you follow CM's guidelines to teach languages with Gouin's method? For example, not having the children write for the first two or three years or using complementary materials, like songs, tales,...

We do follow CM's guidelines here. We do not have students write until grades four or five, and we hold off on any visuals/reading until the end of grade two or beginning of grade three, and even then we still concentrate on oral and aural learning before they see a visual representation of content. I often use this phrase with grades three and higher: "We've heard it, we've spoken it, and now we can see it." We prioritize learning through the ear and tongue before the eyes. We also use rhymes and songs for the early grades, as well as some recitations of Biblical passages and poetic works. For grades six through eight we also have an anthology of literature that Ambleside has created called *Mente a Mente*.

3. Do you follow CM's suggestions in terms of the duration of classes (in the first years they are very short), or do you adapt to specific requirements? Could you briefly describe the time allotted to the English courses in every course?

We do follow CM's suggestions for duration of classes in that they are short. In grades K-1, students have Spanish twice a week for fifteen to twenty minutes. In grades 2-4, students have Spanish three times a week for twenty minutes, and in grades 5-8, students have Spanish three times a week for thirty minutes. One of the reasons we have chosen this method is its efficiency in use of time, valuable time that we need for our full and rich curriculum in addition to foreign language. People may state that a child would learn more in an immersion environment, and I always have to respond that I should certainly hope so. A child should certainly know more in an area if it were central to all

they learned throughout the hours of a day, but I continue to be inspired at how much our students acquire with so little time.

4. How are the results under this method? And the motivation of the students? Is it difficult to keep the motivation up?

If we are doing the series well and breathing life into them, students do remain motivated and thoroughly enjoy the series work. We've found that some teachers were anxiously trying to have students memorize the series as they would a poem or passage from the Bible. The anxiety that many of the students experienced was simply unhelpful. When they instead give effort while simultaneously taking joy in the series, the results are much better, and they are truly beginning to pick up speech patterns and think in Spanish. Sometimes our older students in grades 6-8 can become somewhat fatigued with series work, so we add additional grammar instruction and readings from our anthology to keep them motivated and to keep the curriculum enriching for them. As for results, I would say that the students gain very good pronunciation, excellent ears in hearing the spoken language and comprehending what is said, a good background in how the patterns of the language works, and some limited proficiency in spoken Spanish. Most importantly they have a positive relationship with language learning and some tenacity and willingness to take risks in speaking as they enter the rigors of high school language learning.

5. If you accept new students in upper grades, do they manage to adapt to the level of the class?

The method works very well for new students to quickly adapt in grades K-4. Most can jump in with little to no remediation. This is one of the great advantages of this method for lower grades.

For students in grades 5-8, it can sometimes be more difficult to adapt. If the student has some experience in learning Spanish or another language, or is an extremely bright and motivated student, he/she can usually adapt fairly quickly. For others it can be a bit more of a challenge, and they may need more encouragement and some remediation. We approach this on a case by case basis.

6. By the time the students reach Grade 9, how would you describe their level of Spanish? Are they fluent in conversation? And writing?

Students in grade nine usually have excellent pronunciation, a very good ear toward Spanish, and some limited proficiency in conversation. They are also picking up admirable accuracy in spelling and writing. We avoid use of the terms fluent and fluency, as we prefer proficient and proficiency as being more realistic in describing students' abilities. We might describe this as a continuum as follows: low proficiency, limited proficiency, intermediate proficiency, high proficiency, and near-native proficiency. Beyond this, one might then use the term fluency. For those schools with high school Spanish in our Ambleside network, we find that the Gouin method has given them great strength and skill in tackling a more rapid and robust learning of Spanish and we start them with a beginning college level text. Such a text has all of the basics of grammar and usage within, but it moves at a faster pace. Most of our students are ready for this having been well-fed and watered by our work with Gouin. And although we begin using more traditional methods in high school, we still find that a thoughtful series is entirely useful. If students are learning something tricky, say the frequent use of reflexive pronouns and verbs in comparison to English, we develop, or the students develop, a short series with a narrative towards a goal that features a high usage of reflexive constructions. Such occasional series work is truly useful to them and helps them to quickly master a concept as we continue to work on proficiency and immediate synthesis of their thoughts in Spanish.

7. Finally, in how many schools do you (Ambleside Schools International) work using this method? Are the results similar, or are there relevant differences?

We use this method in ten of our schools in the United States that teach Spanish. There are perhaps one or two of our schools in the United States that teach a language other than Spanish, and I'm not sure if they are using Gouin or not. We find that most of us have very similar results. Newer schools that are only a year or two old and have only a limited experience in teaching Spanish will of course have more modest results.

Our network school in Linz, Austria, teaches Spanish and some English with this method, but they are a new school, and we could not yet comment on results.

I'm not certain if our schools in South Africa are using Gouin to teach Afrikaans or the other local languages or not. I'm limited to giving guidance in Spanish in our network.

8. In which sense do you use "proficiency" to describe the language aptitude of the students? (as opposed to "fluency"). For example, what is expected from a student with limited or intermediate proficiency.

Limited proficiency would be an understanding that the student has some basic vocabulary and can carry on limited communication within simple tenses and indicative mood of the second language. Intermediate proficiency would be an understanding that the student has mastered more basics and is able to both understand and express more complex thoughts and questions and is growing in an ability to express using more verb tenses and moods. Intermediate proficiency would also indicate that a student has a growing vocabulary and can make himself/herself understood even if he/she doesn't know the exact word in his/her first language.

9. How do you evaluate the level of the students? Do they take the usual exams or, on the other hand, are evaluated under different standards?

For our younger students we have no exams, but we are always monitoring how they respond. Are they confident in the language? Can they move through a series with confidence on their own? How are their ears and tongues developing, i.e., do they understand more of what is said to them and are they pronouncing/making effort to pronounce the language well?

Starting with students in grade five, we would give an exam in which they chose a series from the semester that they believe they can best orally speak and act through. Each student chooses his/her own series from the semester. They would also then orally recite our current recitation piece, which might be a poem, e.g. *Cultivo una Rosa Blanca*, or *Canción del jinete*, or something similar or a passage from the Bible. They would then also have a grammatical /technical portion of the language. A grade five student might at first in this section recite the Spanish alphabet and spell words in Spanish with the alphabet. For second semester of grades five and higher the technical portion would involve more complex functions of grammar. They might, for example be asked to orally give infinitives of verbs of each type (verbos regulares que terminan en -ar, -er, and -ir, por ejemplo) and then conjugate and use /perhaps act out those verbs in some context. We try to keep most of the exams oral until seventh or eighth grade. I prefer to hear the students speak first. If they can speak it, I know they can write it, but the converse is not always true.

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