



TEMA 5

**GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ENGLISH
SPEAKING COUNTRIES. DIDACTIC APPLICATION OF GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORIC
AND CULTURAL ASPECTS.**

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ÍNDICE

0. INTRODUCTION

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM

2. THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

3. THE UNITED STATES

4. OTHER COUNTRIES

5. DIDACTIC APPLICATION OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

6. CONCLUSION

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WEBGRAPHY

O. INTRODUCTION

English is the second most widely spoken language in the world, only behind Mandarin Chinese. It is widely spoken in all the six continents, where it has a strong and also different influence depending on the region. English is the main language in some countries like Great Britain, the United States of America and Australia, whereas in others like India, Canada, Nigeria or Pakistan, although it shares its importance with other languages, it is also an official one and the English-speaking community is large and solid.

It also has great repercussions on other languages like Spanish or French, which have absorbed a lot of English expressions and terms, incorporating and mixing them with their own vocabulary. In this unit, we are going to focus on different English-speaking regions, all of them important and relevant in the global world context.

Origin of English

English belongs to the Indo-European family of languages. The parent tongue, called Proto-Indo-European, was spoken about 5,000 years ago by nomads believed to have roamed the southeast European plains.

The history of the English language really started with the arrival of three Germanic tribes who invaded Britain during the 5th century AD. These tribes, the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, crossed the North Sea from what today is Denmark and northern Germany. At that time the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most of the Celtic speakers were pushed west and north by the invaders - mainly into what is now Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Angles came from "Englaland" [sic] and their language was called "Englisc" - from which the words "England" and "English" are derived.

Being the importance of the English language absolutely relevant, it became one of the compulsory subjects included in the curriculum years ago in many countries as in Spain.

Nowadays, the basic objective when teaching languages is the acquisition, on the part of the learner, of the communicative competence in that language. Canale and Swain carried out the most recent and influential analysis regarding this topic and they divided the communicative competence into five sub-competences: grammar competence, discourse competence, socio-linguistic competence, strategic competence and socio-cultural competence.

Due to the importance given to the learning of foreign languages, the Council of Europe created two reference documents, that languages' teachers have to take into account:

1. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR

The Framework is a document which describes in a comprehensible manner the competences necessary for communication, the related knowledge and skills and the situations and domains of communication.

This document facilitates a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods and it also provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency. It is the result of extensive research and ongoing work on communicative objectives, as exemplified by the Threshold Level concept. It has become a key reference document and valuable tool for educational and professional mobility.

The levels of proficiency established are C2, C1, B2, B1, A2 and A1, being C2 the highest level and A1 the initial.

2. European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The portfolio is a personal document in which those who are learning or have learned a language (whether at school or outside school) can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. It contains a language passport which its owner regularly updates. It also contains a detailed language biography describing the owner's experiences in each language. Finally, there is a dossier where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences.

English is widely spoken all around the world and it has a strong influence in all cultural and economic relationships. It is the main language in many important countries like the UK, the USA or Australia; whereas it shares its importance with other official languages in many others.

In this topic, we are going to focus on the socio-cultural aspects of three of the most important Anglo-Saxon countries: the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and the United States, dealing with their geography, history and culture. We will also deal with some other countries and the didactic application of these aspects in the classroom.

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy in north-western Europe, officially the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. People often confuse the names for this country, and frequently make mistakes in using them. United Kingdom (UK) is a term that refers to Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Britain is also a proper term to refer to the entire nation; Great Britain is the largest island in the cluster of islands known as the British Isles and it is formed by England, Wales and Scotland. On the other hand, Northern Ireland is located in the north-east corner of Ireland, the second largest island in the British Isles. It is always correct to call people from England, Scotland or Wales British; although people from England may also be properly called English, people from Scotland Scottish and people from Wales Welsh.

The United Kingdom is a small nation in physical size with an area of 244.110 sq. km, but highly populated, with a population of around 65 million in 2016. Its capital city is London and it is situated near the south-eastern tip of England. England is the largest, wealthiest, and most populous division. It represents the 53,4 % of the area of the UK. Scotland makes up the 32,3 %, Wales the 8,5 % and Northern Ireland the 5,8 %.

The UK is bordered on the south by the English Channel, which separates it from the continent of Europe. It is bordered on the East by the North Sea, and on the West by the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The United Kingdom's only land border with another nation is between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Besides, the UK contains a number of small islands. These include the Isle of Wight, Anglesey, the Isles of Scilly, the Hebrides archipelago, the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands.

Several dependencies and dependent territories are associated with the UK as the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea and the Channel Islands. Both of them are largely self-governing and have their own legislative assemblies and systems of law. Britain's dependent territories are spread throughout the world and are the remains of the former British Empire. They are generally small in area and without many resources. The UK has experienced difficulties with some of its territories: Argentina has made claims to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) and Spain has made claims to Gibraltar.

It has been a leading member state of the EU and its predecessor, the European Economic Community (EEC), since 1973. However, on 23 June 2016, a national referendum on the UK's membership of the EU resulted in a decision to leave, and its exit from the EU is currently being negotiated. The UK is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Council of Europe, the G7 finance ministers, the G7 forum, the G20, NATO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO)

The current Prime Minister is **Rishi Sunak**, a British politician who has served as Prime Minister of the UK and Leader of the Conservative Party since October 2022..

As to the languages (apart from English, which is the major language throughout the UK): The Celt spoke Celtic which survives today in the form of Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic. Less than a quarter of all Welsh people (600,000, out of 2,800,000) speak Welsh. Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic are still spoken, although they have suffered more than Welsh from the spread of English. However, all three languages are now officially encouraged and taught in schools.

GEOGRAPHY

England: England has three hill regions in the north, west and southwest, and two lowland regions in the southeast and east. The northern hill region includes the north-south Pennine Range, which peaks at Cross Fell (2930 feet [893 m]), and England's highest point, Scafell Pike (3210 feet [978 m]), in the Cumbrian Mountains of the Lake District. The countryside connecting these five regions is composed mainly of rich agricultural plains. The Thames and the Severn are the principal rivers, and the Mersey and the Humber estuaries are significant for developing port activities.

Scotland's geography is varied, with lowlands in the south and east and highlands in the north and west, including Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in the British Isles at 1343 m (4406 feet). There are many long and deep-sea arms, firths (coastal waters) and lochs. The Clyde, Spey and Tweed are the main rivers. Scotland has nearly 800 islands, mainly west and north of the mainland, notably the Hebrides, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands.

Wales: Most of Wales is occupied by the Cambrian Mountains, and much of the land is suitable only for pasture. Wales' highest point is Snowdon (3560 feet [1085 m]). The largest and capital city is Cardiff. The main rivers are: Dee, Tywi and Teifi.

Northern Ireland: It is mostly hilly. The main cities are Belfast, Londonderry/Derry and Armagh. Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the UK, is in the centre of Northern Ireland. The Bann, Erne and Foyle are the major rivers.

Climate: It is temperate, with plentiful rainfall all year round. Temperatures rarely fall below -5 degrees centigrade or rise above 30 degrees centigrade. The predominating wind is from the southwest, bringing mild and wet weather from the Atlantic Ocean.

HISTORY

The British Isles have a rich history going back thousands of years. The following is a scheme that sums up the main historical periods of the UK:

4000 BC to 1066, the Dawn of Civilisation to the Norman Conquest

4000 to 1500 BC – Stone age men, the first farmers, Stonehenge.

1500 BC to 43 AD – The age of hill forts and the Celts.

43 AD to 410 AD – Roman Britain: they came, they saw, they conquered.

410 to 1066 – The Romans leave, the Anglo-Saxons arrive, the Normans conquer.

1066 to 1660, the Norman Conquest to Cromwell

1066 to 1154 – The Normans consolidated their conquest.

1154 to 1485 – The Middle Ages. Who wants to be the king?

1485 to 1603 – Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and the Tudors.

1603 to 1660 – The divine right of kings to rule, then chop off their heads.

1660 to 1918, Cromwell to the end of World War I

1660 to 1715 – Restoration and Revolution, the beginning of the Empire.

1715 to 1815 – The German George ruled Britain.

1815 to 1914 – Peace and prosperity, the Empire grows.

Britain in the 20th Century

1914 to 1918 – The First World War, carnage without a cause.

1918 to 1939 – The after effects of World War I, the General Strike, Independence for the Republic of Ireland (1922).

1939 to 1945 – The Second World War. Winston Churchill becomes prime minister (1940).

1945 to 2000 – Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953). Britain loses the Empire.

6 May 2023 coronation of Charles III, he is King of the UK and the 14 other Commonwealth realms. Charles succeeded his mother as monarch upon her death on 8 September 2022. At the age of 73, he became the oldest person to accede to the British throne.

CULTURE

The UK's is the oldest and most influential of the English-language cultures in the world. Besides, the UK has produced some of the world's finest literature and prolific writers. From earliest writers like Daniel Defoe to Joseph Conrad and William Golding, along with the nineteenth century writers like Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, the UK's literary framework has given us some of the major work we all recognize: Oliver Twist, Pride and Prejudice, Robinson Crusoe, The Lord of the Flies, The Heart of Darkness... We cannot stop mentioning other writers whose works marked the development of world's literature: Stevenson's Treasure Island, H.G. Wells with The War of the Worlds, George Orwell with 1984; Arthur Conan Doyle with the Sherlock Holmes series; Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Virginia Woolf, Orlando; Aldous Huxley, Brave New World... And it is important to mention some more recent ones: J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit", Roald Dahl's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" or J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter". And if we focus on the poetry, the quality is almost the same: Shelley, Keats, Yeats... British drama is very important too. The best-known British playwright is William Shakespeare with his works: Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and many others. Nowadays, British theatre is following the same path as the USA and turning to the musical genre: Cats, Evita and We Will Rock You have been a great success.

UK **cinema** has provided Hollywood with great actors and directors. The past and present cinema cannot be understood without the contribution of some British artists: Charles Chaplin, Cary Grant, Sean Connery or Anthony Hopkins. The most famous British director is Alfred Hitchcock (Strangers in a Train, Vertigo, The Birds...). Some of the titles created on British soil have also achieved great success; some examples: Laurence of Arabia, Chariots of Fire or The Piano.

The UK's **music** has covered a wide variety of styles: Mike Oldfield, The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The London Symphony Orchestra, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Clash, The Police... Singers like David Bowie and Elvis Costello are also British. Nowadays music is also influenced by a wave of British bands: Coldplay, Muse or Radiohead.

As to **education**, it is a devolved matter, with each country having a separate education system. Education in England is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education, the day-to-day administration and funding of state schools is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Universally free of charge state education was introduced piecemeal between 1870 and 1944. Education is now mandatory from ages five to sixteen, and in England youngsters must stay in education or training until they are 18. The majority of children are educated in state-sector schools. In Wales, a significant number of Welsh students are taught either wholly or largely in the Welsh language; lessons in Welsh are compulsory for all until the age of 16.

Compulsory schooling- English system

1- Primary education.

- Primary School or infant School (Reception, age 4 to 5; Year 1, age 5 to 6; Year 2, age 6 to 7).
- Primary School or Junior School (Year 3, age 7 to 8; Year 4, age 8 to 9; Year 5, age 9 to 10; Year 6, age 10 to 11).

2- Secondary Education

- Secondary School or High School (Year 7, age 11 to 12; Year 8, age 12 to 13; Year 9, age 13 to 14; Year 10, age 14 to 15; Year 11, age 15 to 16).

In the United Kingdom there are some of the world's most famous universities, including the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge. They have produced many great scholars, scientists and engineers including Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin. The nation is known for many inventions including locomotives, the telephone, vaccination, television, the railway, and both the internal combustion and the jet engine. The nation's role was decisive in the development of computers and the later development of the World Wide Web. In 2006, it was reported that the UK was the most productive source of research after the United States.

2. THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The Republic of Ireland, is a sovereign state in north-western Europe occupying about five-sixths of the island of Ireland. It covers an area of around 70.285 sq km. The capital and largest city is Dublin, which is located on the eastern part of the island, and whose metropolitan area is home to around a third of the country's 4.75 million inhabitants. Other important cities are Galway or Cork.

The state shares its only land border with Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom. It is otherwise surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, with the Celtic Sea to the south, Saint George's Channel to the south-east, and the Irish Sea to the east.

It is a unitary, parliamentary republic. The legislature, the *Oireachtas*, consists of a lower house, *Dáil Éireann*, an upper house, *Seanad Éireann*, and an elected President (*Uachtarán*) who serves as the largely ceremonial head of state, but with some important powers and duties. The head of government is the *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister, literally 'Chief', a title not used in English), who is elected by the Dáil and appointed by the President; the Taoiseach in turn appoints other government ministers.

The state was created as the Irish Free State in 1922 as a result of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. It had the status of dominion until 1937 when a new constitution was adopted, in which the state was named "Ireland" and effectively became a republic, with an elected non-executive president as head of state. It was officially declared a republic in 1949. Ireland became a member of the United Nations in December 1955. It joined the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the European Union, in 1973.

The **president of Ireland** (Irish: *Uachtarán na hÉireann*) is the head of state of the Republic of Ireland and the supreme commander of the Irish Defence Forces.

At this moment, the president is Michael D. Higgins. The Taoiseach and the Tánaiste is Simon Coveney.

The Taoiseach is **the prime minister and head of government of Ireland**. The office is appointed by the president of Ireland upon the nomination of Dáil Éireann. The current Taoiseach is Micheál Martin who took office on 27 June 2020, and the Tánaiste is Leo Varadkar.

Two main languages are spoken in Ireland: Irish and English. Both languages have widely contributed to literature. Irish, now a minority but official language of the Republic of Ireland, was the vernacular of the Irish people for over two thousand years and was probably introduced by some sort of proto-Gaelic migration during the Iron Age, possibly earlier.

GEOGRAPHY

It is one of the largest islands in Europe. A ring of coastal mountains surrounds low plains at the centre of the island. The highest of these is Carrauntoohil in County Kerry, which rises to 1,038 m (3,406 ft) above sea level. Western areas can be mountainous and rocky with green panoramic vistas.

The most important river in the country is River Shannon, 386 km in length.

The climate in Ireland is mild and equable, with low temperatures ranges throughout the country. Although it is a wet territory, rainfall is much heavier in the west part of the country. Due to its continuous precipitations, Ireland has varied vegetation, from conifers and mixed forests to vast plains, farmlands and extensive grass formations

HISTORY

Historians estimate that Ireland was first settled by humans at a relatively late stage in European terms - about 10,000 years ago. Around 4000 BC it is estimated that the first farmers arrived in Ireland. Farming marked the arrival of the new Stone Age. Around 300BC, Iron Age warriors known as the Celts came to Ireland from mainland Europe. The Celts had a huge influence on Ireland. Many famous Irish myths stem from stories about Celtic warriors. The current first official language of the Republic of Ireland, Irish (or Gaeilge) , stems from Celtic language.

Some important facts along the Irish history are:

- 5th Century: St. Patrick arrived on the island and it is believed he Christianised the whole country. An extensive monastic life developed.
- 8th Century: The Norse invaded Ireland and settled down until they were defeated in the 12th century by Ireland's High King, Brian Born.
- 12th Century: The English king Henry II invaded Ireland and proclaimed himself overlord of the entire island. The independence of Gaelic Ireland had come to an end.
- 15th Century: For 150 years, Ireland exported soldiers and churchmen to Catholic countries.
- 17th Century: Anglicans, representing only about one tenth of the population, gained control of land and political issues, excluding not only Catholics but also Presbyterians from basic civil rights.
- 18th Century: Irish Protestants began to agitate in order to stop English control, and some civil rights were restored to Catholics.
- 19th Century: The first of January 1801, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland came into existence. The union not popular in Ireland and the breach between Catholics and Protestants widened. The negative economic consequences of the union were exacerbated by the disastrous famine (1846-51) caused by the loss of several potato harvests, and over 2.000.000 people emigrated.
- 20th Century: After the potato famine a revolutionary movement began. A Civil war followed and a provisional Irish government was proclaimed.
- In 1921 the British granted the Status of dominion into the six Protestant countries of Ulster (Northern Ireland). The 26 Catholic countries of southern Ireland established the Irish Free State (Eire in 1937 and Republic of Ireland in 1949, the year that Ireland left the Commonwealth).
- Successive Irish governments have favoured peaceful reunification with Northern Ireland, while militant groups, in particular the provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), have tried to achieve Irish Unity by force. In October 2001 the IRA formally proclaimed its wishes to abandon the war and made proof of it by given up the arms and find a way to the union of Ireland by peaceful means.

CULTURE

The culture of Ireland includes customs and traditions, language, music, art, literature, folklore, cuisine and sports associated with Ireland and the Irish people. For most of its recorded history, Ireland's culture has been primarily Gaelic. It has also been influenced by Anglo-Norman, English and Scottish culture. Today, there are notable cultural differences between those of Catholic and Protestant (especially Ulster Protestant) background, and between travellers and the settled population.

Due to large-scale emigration from Ireland, Irish culture has a global reach and festivals such as Saint Patrick's Day or Halloween, are celebrated all over the world. Irish culture has to some degree been inherited and modified by the Irish diaspora, which in turn has influenced the home country.

Though there are many unique aspects of Irish culture, it shares substantial traits with those of Britain, other English-speaking countries, other predominantly Catholic European countries, and the other Celtic nations.

For a comparatively small place, the island of Ireland has made a disproportionate contribution to world literature in all its branches, in both the Irish and English languages. The island's most widely known literary works are undoubtedly in English. Particularly famous examples of such works are those of James Joyce, Bram Stoker, Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde and Ireland's four winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature; William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. Three of the four Nobel prize winners were born in Dublin (Heaney being the exception, having lived in Dublin but being born in County Londonderry), making it the birthplace of more Nobel literary laureates than any other city in the world.

The Irish tradition of folk music and dance is also widely known. In the middle years of the 20th century, as Irish society was attempting to modernize, traditional Irish music fell out of favour to some extent, especially in urban areas. Young people at this time tended to look to Britain and, particularly, the United States as models of progress and jazz and rock and roll became extremely popular. During the 1960s, and inspired by the American folk music movement, there was a revival of interest in the Irish tradition. This revival was inspired by groups like The Dubliners, the Clancy Brothers and Sweeney's Men and individuals like Seán Ó Riada. The annual Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is the largest festival of Irish music in Ireland.

Before long, groups and musicians like Horslips, Van Morrison and even Thin Lizzy were incorporating elements of traditional music into a rock idiom to form a unique new sound. During the 1970s and 1980s, the distinction between traditional and rock musicians became blurred, with many individuals regularly crossing over between these styles of playing as a matter of course. This trend can be seen more recently in the work of bands like U2, Snow Patrol, The Cranberries, The Undertones and The Corrs.

Ireland has three levels of **education**: primary, secondary and higher education. The education systems are largely under the direction of the Government via the Minister for Education and Skills. Recognized primary and secondary schools must adhere to the curriculum established by the relevant authorities. Education is compulsory between the ages of six and fifteen years, and all children up to the age of eighteen must complete the first three years of secondary, including one sitting of the Junior Certificate examination.

There are approximately 3,300 primary schools in Ireland. The vast majority (92%) are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. Schools run by religious organizations, but receiving public money and recognition, cannot discriminate against pupils based upon religion or lack thereof.

3. THE UNITED STATES

The United States of America (USA), commonly known as the United States (U.S.) or America, is a constitutional federal republic composed of 50 states, a federal district, five major self-governing territories, and various possessions. Forty-eight of the fifty states and the federal district are contiguous and located in North America between Canada and Mexico (countries with which the United States share land borders). The state of Alaska is in the northwest corner of North America, bordered by Canada to the east and across the Bering Strait from Russia to the west. The state of Hawaii is an archipelago in the mid-Pacific Ocean. The U.S. territories are scattered about the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Nine time zones are covered.

With an area of around 9,8 sq km, is the third or fourth world's largest country. At this moment, the population is over 324 million people. Its capital city is Washington D.C. and the biggest city is New York City. The monetary unit is the dollar (100 cents).

English (American English) is the de facto national language. Although there is no official language at the federal level. In 2010, about 230 million, or 80% of the population aged five years and older, spoke only English at home. Spanish, spoken by 12% of the population at home, is the second most common language and the most widely taught second language.

Both Hawaiian and English are official languages in Hawaii, by state law. Alaska recognizes twenty Native languages. While neither has an official language, New Mexico has laws providing for the use of both English and Spanish, as Louisiana does for English and French. Other states, such as California, mandate the publication of Spanish versions of certain government documents. The most widely taught foreign languages at all levels in the United States (in terms of enrolment numbers) are: Spanish (around 7.2 million students), French (1.5 million), and German (500,000).

The U.S. government is a representative democracy with two legislative bodies. These bodies are the Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate consists of 100 seats with two representatives from each of the 50 states. The House of Representatives consists of 435 seats and are elected by the people from the 50 states. The executive branch consists of the President who is also the head of government and chief of state. **Joe Biden is the 46th** and current president of the United States, having assumed office on January 20, 2021.

GEOGRAPHY

It may be divided into seven areas:

- the Atlantic Coastal Plain, in the East.
- the Appalachian Mountains, in the east and southwest.
- the interior lowlands, covering the nations vast midsection.
- the Western Cordillera.
- the Western Intermontane Plateaux.
- the Hawaiian Islands.
- Alaska, with tundra-covered Arctic Plains in the far north.

The hydrology is dominated by the Mississippi River basin, including its two major tributaries: the Missouri and the Ohio rivers. The country other major network of waterways consists of the Great Lakes, a group of five large lakes on or near the United States-Canadian border. They are the largest group of fresh water lakes on Earth. Niagara Falls is a set of massive waterfalls situated on the Niagara River, on the border between the United States and Canada.

The climate in the United States is very different depending on the region, varying from the tropical rainforest of Hawaii and the tropical savannah in South Florida to the subarctic and tundra climates of Alaska. Also, in the south-west part of the USA we can find the deserts of the Basin and Range province, with the hottest and driest spots in the States. Along the Pacific coast appears a Mediterranean-type climate which affects southern California.

HISTORY

The history of the USA is short but full of events. Before America declared its independence in 1776 a good number of countries had attempted to build their empires in North America.

First, the Spaniards reached Florida in 1513; the French explored the Mississippi in 1673; the Russian reached Alaska in 1741; and the British settled in 1607 in Jamestown and the "Pilgrim settlement" took place in 1621 at Plymouth.

The original 13 colonies of the United States were formed in 1732. Each of these had local governments and their populations grew quickly throughout the mid-1700s. However during this time tensions between the American colonies and the British government began to arise as the American colonists were subject to British taxation but had no representation in the British Parliament.

These tensions eventually led to the American Revolution which was fought from 1775 to 1781. On July 4, 1776, the colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence and following the American victory over the British in the war, the U.S. was recognized as independent of England. In 1788, the U.S. Constitution was adopted and in 1789, the first president, George Washington, took office.

Following its independence, the U.S. grew rapidly and the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 nearly doubled the nation's size. The early to mid-1800s also saw growth on the west coast as the California Gold Rush of 1848-1849 spurred western migration and the Oregon Treaty of 1846 gave the U.S. control of the Pacific Northwest.

Despite its growth, the U.S. also had severe racial tensions in the mid-1800s as African slaves were used as labourers in some states. Tensions between the slave states and non-slave states led to the Civil War and eleven states declared their secession from the union and formed the Confederate States of America in 1860. The Civil War lasted from 1861-1865 when the Confederate States were defeated.

Following the Civil War, racial tensions remained through the 20th century. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the U.S. continued to grow and remained neutral at the beginning of World War I in 1914. It later joined the Allies in 1917.

The 1920s were a time of economic growth in the U.S. and the country began to grow into a world power. In 1929 however the Great Depression began and the economy suffered until World War II. The U.S. also remained neutral during this war until Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941, at which time the U.S. joined the Allies.

Following WWII, the U.S. economy again began to improve. The Cold War followed shortly thereafter as did the Korean War from 1950-1953 and the Vietnam War from 1964-1975. Following these wars, the U.S. economy for the most part grew industrially, and the nation became a world superpower concerned with its domestic affairs because public support wavered during previous wars.

On September 11, 2001, the U.S. was subject to terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C., which led to the government pursuing a policy of reworking world governments, particularly those in the Middle East.

CULTURE

American culture has produced many famous writers as Twain, Poe, Melville or Whitman in the 19th century; or Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Mailer or Tennessee Williams in the 20th century.

One of the country's most popular and internationally influential art has been the cinema. American film-makers such as Howard Hawks, Orson Welles, Frank Capra, John Ford or John Houston gained world renown.

The country has also developed several types of popular music: jazz, blues, country, western, rock and roll...

American public **education** is operated by state and local governments, regulated by the United States Department of Education through restrictions on federal grants. In most states, children are required to attend school from the age of six or seven (generally, kindergarten or first grade) until they turn 18 (generally bringing them through twelfth grade, the end of high school); some states allow students to leave school at 16 or 17. About 12% of children are enrolled in parochial or non-sectarian private schools. Just over 2% of children are home-schooled.

4. OTHER COUNTRIES**Canada**

Canada is a country in the northern part of North America. Its ten provinces and three territories extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific and northward into the Arctic Ocean. Canada's border with the United States is the world's longest binational land border. One third of the population lives in the three largest cities: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Its capital is Ottawa, and other major urban areas include Calgary, Edmonton, Quebec City, Winnipeg and Hamilton. Canada is a federal parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. The sovereign is Queen Elizabeth II, who is also monarch of 15 other Commonwealth countries and each of Canada's 10 provinces. As such, the Queen's representative, the Governor General of Canada, Mary Simon since 26 July 2021 (Simon is the first Indigenous person to hold the office.), she carries out most of the federal royal duties in Canada. The country is officially bilingual at the federal level. It is one of the world's most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations, the product of large-scale immigration from many other countries.

The Prime Minister is Justin Trudeau.

According to a 2012 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada is one of the most educated countries in the world; since the adoption of section 23 of the Constitution Act, 1982, education in both English and French has been available in most places across Canada. Canadian provinces and territories are responsible for education provision. The mandatory school age ranges between 5–7 to 16–18 years, contributing to an adult literacy rate of 99 percent.

Australia

Australia is a country comprising the mainland of the Australian continent, the island of Tasmania and numerous smaller islands. Australia's capital is Canberra, and its largest urban area is Sydney. Australia is a member of the United Nations, G20, Commonwealth of Nations, ANZUS, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the Pacific Islands Forum. Australia is a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy with Elizabeth II at its apex as the Queen of Australia, a role that is distinct from her position as monarch of the other Commonwealth realms. The Queen is represented in Australia by the Governor-General at the federal level and by the Governors at the state level. In practice the Governor-General has no actual decision-making or de facto governmental role, and merely acts as a legal figurehead for the actions of the Prime Minister

Since 1 July 2019, the governor-general has been General David Hurley and the Prime Minister is Anthony Albanese since 2022.

Although Australia has no official language, English has always been entrenched as the *de facto* national language. Australian English is a major variety of the language with a distinctive accent and lexicon and differs slightly from other varieties of English in grammar and spelling. General Australian serves as the standard dialect. According to the 2011 census, English is the only language spoken in the home for close to 81% of the population. The next most common languages spoken at home are Mandarin (1.7%), Italian (1.5%), Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.3%), Greek (1.3%), and Vietnamese (1.2%); a considerable proportion of first- and second-generation migrants are bilingual. Over 250 Indigenous Australian languages are thought to have existed at the time of first European contact, of which less than 20 are still in daily use by all age groups. About 110 others are spoken exclusively by older people.

School attendance, or registration for home schooling, is compulsory throughout Australia. Education is the responsibility of the individual states and territories, so the rules vary between states, but in general children are required to attend school from the age of about 5 until about 16. In some states (e.g., Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales), children aged 16–17 are required to either attend school or participate in vocational training, such as an apprenticeship.

New Zealand

New Zealand is an island nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. The country geographically comprises two main landmasses (the North Island and the South Island) and around 600 smaller islands. New Zealand is situated some 1,500 kilometres east of Australia across the Tasman Sea and roughly 1,000 kilometres south of the Pacific island areas of New Caledonia, Fiji, and Tonga. New Zealand's capital city is Wellington, while its most populous city is Auckland. In 1841, New Zealand became a colony within the British Empire and in 1907 it became a Dominion. Today, the majority of New Zealand's population of 4.7 million is of European descent; the indigenous Māori are the largest minority, followed by Asians and Pacific Islanders. The official languages are English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language, with English predominant. Elizabeth II is the Queen of New Zealand and the head of state. The Queen is represented by the Governor-General (The incumbent governor-general is Cindy Kiro, since 21 October 2021), whom she appoints on the advice of the Prime Minister. Its Prime Minister is, at this moment, Christopher John Hipkins. Primary and secondary schooling is compulsory for children aged 6 to 16, with the majority attending from the age of 5. There are 13 school years and attending state (public) schools is free to New Zealand citizens and permanent residents from a person's 5th birthday to the end of the calendar year following their 19th birthday.

Most of the major sporting codes played in New Zealand have British origins. It is considered the national sport and attracts the most spectators. Golf, netball, tennis and cricket have the highest rates of adult participation, while netball, rugby union and football (soccer) is popular among young people. Māori participation in European sports was particularly evident in rugby and the country's team performs a haka, a traditional Māori challenge, before international matches.

India

India, officially the Republic of India, is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country (with over 1.2 billion people), and the most populous democracy in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast. It shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the northeast; and Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh to the east. In the mid-18th century, the subcontinent came under British East India Company rule, and in the mid-19th under British crown rule. A nationalist movement emerged in the late 19th century, which later, under Mahatma Gandhi, was noted for nonviolent resistance and led to India's independence in 1947. India is a federal republic governed under a parliamentary system and consists of 29 states and 7 union territories. It is a pluralistic, multilingual and multi-ethnic society.

The Constitution of India designates the official language of the Government of India as Hindi written in the Devanagari script, as well as English. There is no national language as declared by the Constitution of India. Hindi and English are used for official purposes such as parliamentary proceedings, judiciary, communications between the Central Government and a State Government. States within India have the liberty and powers to specify their own official language(s) through legislation and therefore there are 22 officially recognized languages in India.

Education in India is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels: central, state and local. Under various articles of the Indian Constitution, free and compulsory education is provided as a fundamental right to children between the ages of 6 and 14.

In Western black Africa, in countries like Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Ghana, there is the so-called Pidgin English. A pidgin is a simplified language that develops to fulfil the communication needs of people who have no language in common but who need to interact. Its origin goes back to the period of slave commerce (it is also known as slave lingua franca): people with different linguistic origin had to look for a simplified hybrid linguistic system in order to communicate among themselves and with their owners. So, the function of this linguistic variety was to overcome immediate communication needs. In the cases in which the pidgin variety becomes main language of a community, the variety is called Creole. For instance, Caribbean Creole (Jamaica or Barbados) and Sierra Leone Creole. The degree of deviation presented by this variety regarding the international standard is so noticeable that it has become almost incomprehensible for those not being native.

At this point we are going to talk about the **Commonwealth: The Commonwealth of Nations**, also known as simply the Commonwealth, is an intergovernmental organisation states that are mostly former territories of the British Empire. The Commonwealth operates by intergovernmental consensus of the member states, organised through the Commonwealth Secretariat and non-governmental organisations, organised through the Commonwealth Foundation.

The Commonwealth dates back to the mid-20th century with the decolonisation of the British Empire through increased self-governance of its territories. It was formally constituted by the London Declaration in 1949, which established the member states as "free and equal". The symbol of this free association is Queen Elizabeth II who is the Head of the Commonwealth. The Queen is also the monarch of 16 members of the Commonwealth, known as *Commonwealth realms*. The other Commonwealth members have different heads of state: 31 members are republics and five are monarchies with a different monarch.

Member states have no legal obligation to one another. Instead, they are united by language, history, culture and their shared values of democracy, free speech, human rights, and the rule of law.

The Commonwealth covers more than 29,958,050 km² (11,566,870 sq mi), 20% of the world's land area, and spans all six inhabited continents. With an estimated population of 2.328 billion people, nearly a third of the world population.

Under the formula of the London Declaration, Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth, a title that is by law a part of Elizabeth's royal titles in each of the Commonwealth realms, the 16 members of the Commonwealth that recognise the Queen as their monarch. However, when the monarch dies, the successor to the crown does not automatically become Head of the Commonwealth. The position is symbolic, representing the free association of independent members, the majority of which (31) are republics, and five have monarchs of different royal houses (Brunei, Lesotho, Malaysia, Swaziland, and Tonga).

5. DIDACTIC APPLICATION OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

Once we have presented some of the most relevant factors of English-speaking countries is time to move on to the next step; since socio-cultural competence would allow the pupils to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life, thinking and behaviour of people with a different cultural heritage.

In our global society we must prepare our students to develop analytical and independent ways of thinking and we, teachers, should help, encourage and guide students to make them aware of the differences as well as the similarities between cultures.

The second-language teaching involves combining language and socio-cultural concepts, in order to allow the students to acquire a wider and better control of the second language. One of the teachers' main objectives should be to give their pupils at least a basic socio-cultural background before they leave the primary school. This process is not easy and should be divided into different stages. We consider that the comparative aspect should never be forgotten but we must clarify first the difference between generalization and stereotype to avoid possible misunderstanding or misinterpretations of the cultural aspect they are going to learn in the classroom. They should understand these countries' peculiar cultural and social characteristics and accept there are many different aspects in human life. So they will learn to accept and adapt themselves to the different circumstances they will have to cope with if they go to any English-speaking country.

To get this, we can make use of different materials. The use of realia (maps, menus, brochures, books...) can help us. Nowadays, using the Internet we can get a great amount of materials as well as information. We can visit museums, streets, watch videos, listen to songs, communicate with other countries easily, etc.

Let's see how to work different aspects:

GEOGRAPHY

We should teach essential geographic aspects like countries, capitals and rivers, developing map-work skills. To teach this it is important to use globes, atlases, maps, pictorial maps, etc, but also using apps or computer programs such as Google Earth, Google Maps, GeogSpace, Google Lit Trips, Map Your Memories...

We can also use websites for teaching geography as: National Geographic, Fact Monster, Duckster's Geography for Kids...

HISTORY

History is not taught as soon as geography because students need more vocabulary and they will need to use the past tense, which in primary education is in the last years. But, anyway, history can be taught with texts or comics which students will draw, colour, fill in the gaps and even write some sentences, using drama activities about historical characters. They can also be given a comic without a text and after a listening, they can answer some questions.

We can also use resources such as interactive games or online activities: KidsPast.com, TeachingHistory.org, etc.

CULTURE

We can work many different aspects, that will probably attract our students' interest. For example, through songs such as "Jingle Bells" or "I wish you a Merry Christmas", apart from providing linguistic knowledge, pupils can see how English speaking countries celebrate Christmas and learn these typical songs. With the presentation and celebration of holidays such as St. Patrick, Thanksgiving, the 4th of July, Halloween, Easter..., apart from learning vocabulary and important cultural aspects, students can also learn history. Dealing with myths and legends are also useful.

It is also a good idea to create a pen-club, an e-twinning or Erasmus project with a school from an English-speaking country. This way pupils will be able to exchange information, desires or emotions with English-speaking pupils through letters or the Internet and they can also visit the other school.

Another approach to culture could be to introduce videos or cartoons through which we can work different aspects like **clothes**, weather, **food** or education. After watching the video, we can ask questions about what they have understood, what they like or dislike, whether they would like to visit these countries or not, the similarities and differences they have found with their own country... We can also read or watch traditional stories, riddles, nursery rhymes... or books that were created for English-speaking children.

Everyday language and sayings such as idioms make up another important aspect of imparting culture to ESL students.

Some activities:

- watching videos about important cities or English speaking countries , for example London: to know a little about landmarks, some curious customs like the change of the guards...
- Singing modern or traditional songs to make them enjoy using the English Language.
- Using maps to learn about geographic features, posters about myths and legends: Loch Ness Monster for example, Big Foot...
- Using leaflets to learn about monuments, places...
- Providing realia (flags, magazines, newspapers, British money, typical products like tea, marmalade, gingerbread biscuits, fish and chips, candy canes...).
- Watching videos about traditions such as Halloween, Saint Patrick's day...
- Playing games (criquet for example).

We do not only raise our pupils' interest towards British culture and language, but they may even feel attracted by Great Britain, Ireland, Australia... fostering interculturality (**Kramtsch**).

6. CONCLUSION

Teaching a foreign language is very difficult, but it is better and more motivating for our students if it is accompanied by cultural issues. Culture brings the outside world into the classroom, and helps our students understand a little bit more about the language they are learning in terms of usefulness.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural competence enriches our lives and our communicative competence, and makes us develop empathy and respect towards other cultures, as we live in a multicultural and multilingual society

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