

Running Head: IMPLEMENTING CLIL TO IMPROVE STUDENTS ENGLISH  
COMPREHENSION

Implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning to Improve 11th Graders English  
Comprehension

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Medellín

June - 2019



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### **Abstract**

This action research project was developed in order to analyze the implications of implementing content language and integrated learning in a public school in Medellin, Colombia and how it improves English comprehension. This project was carried out at the CEFA in an 11th-grade group from the technical emphasis in healthcare. The school does not have a specific curriculum for its English courses which affects the pacing of the course and the overall linguistic competence of students. Looking for alternatives to tackle this situation, I came across Content Language and Integrated Learning. It is an approach that offers the possibility of teaching a language through specific content and content through language. Two interviews to the CT, student-teacher journal and a survey allowed me to find out the extent to which this approach improved English comprehension.

*Keywords:* Content Language and Integrated Learning, Comprehensible Input, Alternatives in Assessment.

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### **Degree Requirements**

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) Program at Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia. It was carried out at the *Institución Educativa Centro Formativo de Antioquia* CEFA.

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### **Acknowledgments**

I want to offer my deepest and sincerest gratitude towards my two sisters to whom I owe this achievement, for their relentless and unreserved love has given me the strength to move on time and time again. I also like to extend my thanks toward all those amazing human beings I have had the pleasure and honor to meet along this long way. You all know who I am speaking to, I dare to say. Lastly, I devote one deeply bow to all those amazing teachers, coworkers, fellow students and professionals that have shared with me a few of their priceless experiences and perspectives in an attempt to educate this stubborn creature as I call myself.

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### **Preface**

As a former public school student, I am aware of the huge gap between private institutions and public ones regarding everything. From an objective standpoint, the main reason for this gap lies in the number of resources invested in them. It is no secret that stakeholders find more profitable to invest in private tutoring and well-structured institutions with international certifications and recognition. Being that the case, public institutions which are financed by government budget have a reputation of being poorly organized and structured. In this action research, we will observe the planning, implementation, and results of an action plan intended to tackle foreign language comprehension, and how this will end up influencing my personal and professional development as it resulted in a nurturing and profitable experience in the public education context.

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### **Description of the Context**

Understanding an educational context becomes the basis to nurture the work and development of action research. This section will address general aspects such as the history of the institution, its location, and its facilities. In regards to the PEI (Institutional Educative Project), I addressed information concerning the CEFA's institutional mission and vision. I provided the curriculum for the course of English proposed by the institution. Finally, I mentioned the group's characteristics as well as the general background of the coordinating teacher, referred to herein as the CT, and the student-teacher.

The Institución Educativa Centro Formativo de Antioquia (herein CEFA), is a public educational institution for female students, legally approved by the National Ministry of Education (MEN) according to Resolution 007248 of November 23rd, 1992, to provide formal education with "eight technical and one academic emphasis". It was founded in 1935 by Joaquín Vallejo Arbeláez with the following goals: to bring women closer to the labor force, to qualify and enable them to participate in the workforce. The previous, based on the idea of empowerment of the working class. Joaquín Vallejo Arbeláez implemented a liberal pedagogical reform with the tenets of the revolution in progress at the time: obligation, gratitude, merit, and laicity of education. Thus, he intended to offer equal educational opportunities to the women of Antioquia by granting them greater chances to access university level studies.

The CEFA is located in the downtown area of Medellín, commune 10, within the Boston neighborhood. The area is characterized by the presence of cultural sites such as, "Pequeño Teatro", Museum "Casa de la Memoria", and Pablo Tobón Theater ~ higher education institutions like CESDE, Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, José María Córdoba Military School, and the CENSA. The institution has the following areas: Library (1); Chemistry &

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Physics labs (3); Computer labs (4); English labs (2); School store (1); and the following sport venues: swimming pool (1), Coliseum (1), and a gym (1).

The CEFA's EIP (2018) states as its mission and vision the promoting and training women to be recruited by the workforce or to access Higher Education under principles of citizenship, high academic competitiveness and a visionary scope. The CEFA offers "technical emphasis baccalaureate degree in Healthcare; Commerce; Computing; Nutrition; Chemical Sciences; Design and Mathematics". English courses are standardized for every grade. The guidelines are as follows: "English, please!", "Propuesta de Currículo Sugerido de Inglés", and "Guía 22". They have no specific methodology or approach for teaching the foreign language.

This action research was developed with the group 11S3 which has an emphasis on Healthcare. The class was made up of 31 students with ages ranging between 16 and 18. Their average socioeconomic stratum is 3, and most students live in distant neighborhoods. English classes are twice a week, on Thursdays at 8:05 a.m. and Fridays at 10:00 a.m. Due to institutional policies, the general calendar has one additional option. It is implemented when there is a "special assembly", in these cases the time table changes by starting classes 45 minutes later than the normal schedule. The overall English level of the course is True Beginners with 5 students at level A2, according to the last mock tests implemented by the institution.

The cooperating teacher (CT) was 34 years old and holds a Bachelor's degree in International Business from Universidad del Tolima, 2005. He has been teaching English since 2006 and has worked at the CEFA since January 2018 with the eleven groups of 11th grade. The CT stated that he uses the communicative approach. However, he prioritizes on direct translation, vocabulary, and basic instructions. Accordingly, the teacher often explained and provided instructions, then immediately translated to Spanish.



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The previous information set the premises of this action research. It intended to present a general overview of the institution, its practices, the staff and students whose joint interactions structured this specific educational setting. All in all, it aimed to inform the reader about issues which had directly affected the classroom pacing and general outcomes concerning foreign language comprehension and production.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This section describes the English course issues identified throughout the observations from the course 11S3 at the CEFA. In the first place, I was able to notice the lack of a specific input related to the actual students' language skill and the technical emphasis (Student-teacher Journal entry, 28/03/2019). That came to my attention because the English course did not present a defined structure to address the specific setting of the students in terms of curriculum, language requirements as eleventh graders, nor took into consideration the students point of view regarding what they found useful or not when it came to language comprehension and the school technical emphasis.

It was necessary to address the course content in order to scope how it was designed, planned and implemented. With regard to this topic, it was convenient to understand the institution's tenets as stated in its IEP. The CEFA drives its IEP (2018) upon "The four pillars of Education": Learning to know; Learning to do; Learning to be and Learning to live together. For the purpose of this action research, I was going to address "Learning to do". According to the UNESCO (2015) learning to do is "to acquire not only occupational skills but also the competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams." (p.39). In that regard, the institution's IEP proposes competencies such as "the set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make it possible to act and interact in a meaningful way in situations in which it is required

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to produce, appropriate or apply knowledge comprehensively and responsibly.” (p. 145).

Additionally, it states that “know-how is the set of actions that are carried out when analyzing and solving a situation-problem.” (p. 145). Accordingly, the institution’s IEP (2018) states the following:

Learning to do in order to acquire not only a professional qualification but a set of competencies which enable the student to face a large number of situations and to work in teams. Moreover, learning to do in the framework of the different social and work experiences that are offered to young people, whether spontaneously because of the specific context, or formally thanks to the development of teachings in different ways.

This principle becomes for our Educational Institution in one of the purposes of training in order to contribute to the consolidation of the IEP principles. (p. 42)

Regarding the IEP’s proposal on the technical emphasis, some specific objectives are, to have initial basic training for a job and to access a technical preparation to link to the productive sector and the training possibilities that it offers (IEP, 2018, p. 35). In light of those factors, the English course objectives did not offer specific input in terms of current knowledge in the field of study. In fact, the English course did not address any particular topic related to the specific emphasis of the target group, in this case, Healthcare. The institution’s IEP presents the English course objectives following the proposal of the Ministry of Education presented in the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages: English. That is Linguistic competence; Pragmatic competence; Sociolinguistic competence; Comprehension skills: Reading and Listening; and Production skills: Writing, Monologues, and Conversations. In addition, it includes the Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages (MEN, 1999, page 11) Organizational competence and Pragmatic competence. It is necessary to bear in mind that these proposals are

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stated as general guidelines with a broad scope of implementation; nonetheless, the IEP does not design or propose any particular course of action to address that particular context, leaving the English course as something general for every grade and emphasis, and adopting the guidelines proposed by the Ministry of Education as they are.

All the above showed that it was convenient to offer a more adequate content within the English course, one that presented input coherent with the students' language skill while at the time it offered content related to their specific field of emphasis, Healthcare. Thus, in order to address such issues, one course of action was to plan and implement task-based activities focused on some specific topics related to the emphasis of the group, Healthcare, so the students' comprehension could be fostered and reinforced through meaningful interactions and activities. The topics included anatomy, that is, parts of the body, or internal organs, and also vocabulary related to healthcare, e.g., medical procedures, instruments' and medicines' names, etc. The need to teach English taking into account the technical emphasis arose from the current globalization, a process portraying two blended situations, cultural globalization and economic globalization (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). As the technical emphasis should be included within the course content, we could implement a methodological approach that could help students meeting with current English proficiency requirements according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference). According to the Ministry of Education (2006), by 2019 every graduated student from high school must attain B1 proficiency level in English. Nonetheless, the English language proficiency observed in the classroom did not reach such standards (Taken from Observation 4, March 28). Thus, it was necessary to plan and implement course activities that allowed the students to achieve a language comprehension level capable of fulfilling minimum requirements in regards to the specific emphasis.

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### **Theoretical Background**

For the purposes of this project, three concepts were addressed in order to understand the perspective from which each one of them was conceived in this project and how they related to each other.

#### **Content and Language Integrated Learning**

According to Marsh (2002), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) presents educational methods in which “subjects are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language.” This definition displays how CLIL not only implies the teaching of content through English but remarks on the relevance of the language when teaching content. That is to say, this approach to language teaching portrays that language is used to learn as well as to communicate. Moreover, it is the subject matter which determines the language needed to learn (Bonces, 2012).

Marsh (2002) includes this definition that CLIL also adds a procedure when it is implemented effectively. For instance, when students learn a subject (e.g., math, chemistry or science) through a foreign language; this nonnative language acts as a means for learning. Thus, teachers plan integrating more than language and content, but procedures as well by stating how content will be addressed in such a manner that it becomes meaningful for every learner. Moreover, proficiency level does not become a hindrance. In consequence, the educational community needs to be aware that using a foreign language when teaching content incurs in language learning since structures, vocabulary, and pragmatics, among other linguistic features, are implicit in the topic being taught. CLIL entails teaching the foreign language while students learn a subject – matter (Bonces, 2012).

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Jacques Delors (1996) stated that formal education tends to emphasize certain types of knowledge in detriment of those which are essential to sustaining human development. He affirmed that equal attention should be granted to all organized learning as far as the four pillars are concerned, that is, learning to be, learning to live together, and learning to know and learning to do. For the purpose of this action research, I addressed the learning to do pillar which is presented as “acquire not only occupational skills but also the competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams.” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 39).

With regard to competence, the IEP (2018), argues that a competence "is the set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make it possible to act and interact in a meaningful way in situations in which it is required to produce, appropriate or apply knowledge comprehensively and responsibly."(p. 145) Afterward, it presents the general working competencies which are divided into six classes, according to the emphasis they make onto the intellectual, personal, interpersonal, organizational, technological or business creation (p. 147).

In order to carry out an effective teaching process that enhances students’ language comprehension, teachers should bear in mind different ways to assess students’ performance to provide as much learning opportunities as possible while taking into account the individual characteristics and affordances of the students.

### **Comprehensible Input**

According to Stephen Krashen (1982) in order for language acquisition to take place, the person must receive comprehensible input through reading or hearing language structures that slightly exceed their current ability. The input hypothesis states that:

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a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to move from the stage “ $i + 1$ ” is that the acquirer understands input that contains  $i + 1$ , where “understand” means that the acquirer is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message (Krashen, 1982, p. 21).

Additionally, it is important not to focus on specific grammatical structures or activities designed to learn. In fact, it is needed to use classroom activities or tasks that promote acquisition, because as argued by Krashen “The input hypothesis relates to the acquisition, not learning” (Krashen, 1982). The input hypothesis also states that an acquirer must not be forced to speak too early. That is, a certain amount of comprehensible input must be built up before the acquirer is required to speak in a classroom (Brown, 2000, p. 278).

In order to carry out effective planning and implementation of this proposal, it is necessary to accurately assess the students’ competence beforehand in order to offer input comprehensible enough to bring about improvement in the target language. In this regard, analysis of archival data, as well as an alternative assessment, must be conducted to keep record between the before and the after of the students’ linguistic competence concerning the use of comprehensible input.

### **Alternatives in assessment**

Tests are the most used tools to gauge students’ language proficiency; however, as stated by Brown (2004) they portray certain restrictions such as time limitation, standardized and decontextualized frameworks, and formal procedures to sample the performance of a test-taker in a specified domain (p, 251). In contrast, Brown states that alternatives in assessment is a term that tallies with a group of characteristics that facilitates addressing students’ comprehension through a set of activities; furthermore, he considers tests as a subset of assessment. Alternatives in assessment have some characteristics: they require students to perform, create, produce or do

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something; they use real-world context or simulations; they are non-intrusive in that they extend the day to day classroom activities; they allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class; and they use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities (p, 252).

One challenge when applying such an approach to assessment is the time constraints regarding the design and implementation of the alternatives in the assessment. This is due to the fact that the teacher needs to keep the reliability and practicality, but both tend to take a large amount of time when being implemented, which in turn becomes a hindrance in certain contexts (Brown, 2004). The author suggests taking into consideration the features of the particular context when designing the assessment activities and the way is going to be assessed (formative or summative). For instance, self-assessment and observations of students' performance throughout the course are both options of alternatives in the assessment that may not take much of the session as they may be part of an ongoing activity or the final stage in one.

To conclude, it is relevant to determine through careful observation which technique is adequate for the specific context, taking into account that it may offer helpful and meaningful insights on students' performance, particularly so when regarding language comprehension. As formal and informal procedures are needed to assemble information on the student, it is convenient to make use of strategies that facilitates and offers quality. Thus, the following section will address the guiding question for this action research which encompasses the information above.

### **Research Question**

How can the implementation of the Content Language and Integrated Learning improve 11th graders English language comprehension at CEFA?

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### **General Objective**

Describe the way Content Language and Integrated Learning improves 11th graders English comprehension at CEFA.

### **Specific Objectives**

- Define students' language comprehension characteristics regarding oral and written English language.
- Relate Content Language and Integrated Learning with the development of students' language comprehension.
- Analyze Content Language and Integrated Learning benefits to improve students' language comprehension.

### **Action Plan**

The proposed Action Plan contemplates a series of classes during the first semester of 2019 which addressed the technical emphasis' content as a drive for the English course sessions. The target group was composed of female teenager students eager to get good marks, but with an English course, that did not offer the necessary and adequate input to teach them what they were to learn. I worked towards the achievement of goals such as appropriate English proficiency and content related knowledge that nowadays are not addressed by the program. For instance, the first part of the course (February and Mars) aimed for gauging language objectives designed based on the results of a Diagnostic test carried out at the beginning of the semester (Nikolov, 2016). This helped to scaffold the course content taking into account the actual language level the students were in at that moment.



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Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) implies the teaching of content through English but remarks on the relevance of the language when teaching content. That is to say, that approach to language teaching portrays that language is used to learn as well as to communicate. Moreover, it is the subject matter which determines the language needed to learn (Bonces, 2012). The institution's IEP and the Healthcare technical emphasis English requirements had been considered as well because they were the educational scaffold that conveyed the vocabulary, competencies and specific aims of the program. Regarding these technical emphasis requirements, Concepción & Díaz (2006) present them as follows: research; the handling of the instruction manuals of the devices and instruments that are found in Healthcare Centers; the management of programs and computers; and finally the interaction with foreigners such as patients or colleagues.

Taking the previous information into account, I included vocabulary and knowledge related to their technical emphasis (e.g., healthcare facilities, procedures, instruments; healthcare professions). Moreover, I focused on the principles stated in the comprehensible input hypothesis by Krashen (1982). This was based on the premise that grammatical structures should not be addressed specifically, but rather the classroom activities should be focused on acquisition which was identified as a must in the information analyzed through archival data (Appendix A) and the diagnostic test.

It was also necessary to bear in mind strategies setting clear and specific objectives for the English course, that is, study techniques, expected outcomes, engaging and scaffolding activities. For that purpose, I have taken into consideration the goals for the 6th grade English course in terms of linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic objectives stated in "Expedición Currículo- El plan de área de Humanidades, Idioma Extranjero - Inglés" (2014). That course of action was

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based upon the statistical data found in the SABER 11 tests' results from 2016, 2017, and 2018 (see Appendix A for percentage information) which provides quantitative data regarding the actual level of English skill the students by the end of their high school studies.

Afterward, the information gathered from that process provided some insights on the specific skills that needed to be addressed in order to cope with language comprehension and technical emphasis requirements. For that purpose, I made use of “Alternatives in Assessment”, a method proposed by Brown (2004) for conducting assessment procedures. For instance: observation— is a systematic, planned procedure for real-time, almost furtive recording of student verbal and nonverbal behavior; portfolio— is a purposeful collection of students work that demonstrates students' efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas; and self-assessment— derives its theoretical justification from a number of well-established principles of second language acquisition, taking autonomy as a vital one (Broen, 2004). For the purpose of planning, implementing and analyzing the aforementioned data, besides the tests, activities and archival data analyzed throughout this action research, I implemented three data collection methods: classroom observations and student-teacher journal from each session, two interviews with my CT, and one survey to my students. Those tools allowed me to display the process and establish to what extent this action research implementation contributed to improving 11th graders English language comprehension at CEFA.

### **Development of Actions**

The actions mentioned before were aimed at improving students English language comprehension through classroom activities that addressed their specific technical emphasis and linguistic competence. Thus, each session was planned towards the acquisition of comprehensible input that would allow them to improve their understanding of English and scaffold knowledge

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consistent with their school grade. A total of 12 classes were planned and implemented from April to May.

During the first section of the implementation period, i.g., classes one to four, were focused on general vocabulary related to healthcare, that is, professions, procedures, facilities and human anatomy which is necessary according to the information related to the technical emphasis stated in the IEP. The first session was used for applying a diagnostic test taking into account the English course content covered in previous grades according to the information provided by the CT. As part of this test, the students were asked to complete sentences with the appropriate word, verb tense or information required (Appendix B). From the second to the fourth class, students were involved in picture-cued activities concerning human anatomy, medical basic procedures, and healthcare facilities. The main purpose of this section was to allow students to acquire enough vocabulary to better comprehend the information in each session while presenting the input as “input+1”. In the fourth session, an alternative assessment was implemented to gauge student comprehension related to the input covered so far. Besides classroom observations, the teacher implemented an activity in which the students had to write the word which described the image (e.g., profession, facility, procedure or instrument).

In the course of the second section of the implementation, from class five to eight, the sessions were focused on the simple tense while implementing the knowledge from previous sessions. Through activities such as “Healthcare and I” or “Important events on healthcare and the future of medicine”, students had the chance to use English to communicate in past, present or future using the simple tense. Although it was not explicitly stated the grammatical structures, they were included as part of the activities, so students could comprehend the meaning of the ideas written or read by them or the teacher. During this period of time, I made sure that every

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student complied with the activities proposed in class as well as the homework assigned for each session because the class time was 50 minutes which became one constraint for a more thorough implementation. The eighth class was for assessment, which covered the input presented up to that point, asking to write a short paragraph with information related to students daily life, that is, they had to write about their day using the information presented in the past sessions.

In the last section of the implementation, from class nine to twelve, the main focus was the continuous tense and the modal verb would. The main purpose for those topics was the final project for the semester that each group must present, in the case of eleventh graders, it was about “future plans”. Thus, I planned activities that addressed future reference, and continuous tense in past, present, and future. Every piece of information presented included past input plus one piece that was not originally taught. For instance, the modal verb ‘would’ was not included at the beginning, but later to elicit questions from students as “what is the meaning of that word?”, and allow them to make deductions about it. During the final session, an assessment was implemented following the same rationale as the previous ones, to gauge the comprehension of the students concerning the topics covered up to that point. The assessment was on the students writing what were their future plans taking into account that they were about to graduate from high school.

As part of the data collection methods, at the end of the implementation process I made an online survey to my students in which I consulted what was their opinion on the course, the student-teacher performance, the CT and other students performance, and what they believed would be the outcome of the student-teacher taking charge of the course a whole academic period. The decision-making process carried out in this action research was based upon the observations and journal I wrote and compiled throughout the implementation, which comprises

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the other methods selected for data collection along with two interviews to my CT, one carried at the beginning of the semester and the other at the end of the implementation process.

Finally, I used thematic analysis as the main drive for analyzing the data gathered in this action research. Thematic analysis has been described as a descriptive qualitative approach for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013, p. 3). According to Braun & Clarke (2006), the analysis phases and their descriptions can be stated as follows:

*Familiarising with data:* Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas. *Generating initial codes:* Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.

*Searching for themes:* Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. *Reviewing themes:* Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map. *Defining and naming themes:* Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

*Producing the report:* The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

### **Findings and Interpretations**

The findings to be described emerged from three different sources of data which are the student-teacher journals, two interviews to the CT and one survey conducted to the students. Every source of data was analyzed based on the phases for thematic analysis implementation stated by Braun & Clarke (2006). After meticulous data analysis, the following patterns are the

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most relevant along with this action research. The first one refers to the *impact of Content Language and Integrated Learning in students' comprehension*, the second one is related to the *impact of Alternatives in Assessment in the English course*, and the last one has to do with *comprehensible input in an English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom*.

### **Impact of Content Language and Integrated Learning in students language comprehension**

I found out that students highlighted the relevance of using authentic and technical related material in the English classroom. “(...) thanks to the teacher and his teachings it is easier for us to have a good academic performance.”<sup>1</sup> (Students' survey). “(...) in some jobs or other activities they are asking to elaborate projects in English and this could help me.”<sup>2</sup> (Students' survey). Moreover, this was evidenced by the CT in his comment, “I think that this approach is very useful when one wants to include certain topics into the course curriculum. In fact, what you are doing here is of much help to me because I can implement in other groups and see what happens. I can also make adjustments and try it in another technical emphasis, you know that we have 8 different emphases, but no course specifications for any which I find as a huge problem for me and my students.” (CT Interview 2).

It is important to mention the fact that it is the first time that students were instructed in their technical emphasis in the English course, so they were not used to study topics already seen in their first language through a foreign language. Even though this caused positive reactions from most of the students, there were cases in which a certain degree of rejection was detected by some students. This approach as a way to benefit students' language comprehension is something that may take time to elicit the appropriate attitude from the students. “To my disappointment, I

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<sup>1</sup> “Si porque gracias al profesor y sus enseñanzas se nos hace mas facil tener un buena desempeño academico.”

<sup>2</sup> “si, porque en algunos trabajos u otras actividades son piden elaborar proyectos en ingles y esto me podría ayudar”

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found out that some of the students are reluctant to learn vocabulary related to their technical emphasis because they do not find it interesting, but repetitive and dull” (Student-teacher journal, entry 04/04/2019). The CT remarked that this was part of the process and offered a piece of advice regarding students’ attitude, “(...) as you know they are teenagers, anything hardly catches their attention, so don’t worry and keep up the pace, they will eventually get used to it and work at your pace.” (Student-teacher journal, entry 04/25/2019).

According to Marsh (2002), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) presents educational methods in which “subjects are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language.” This definition displays how CLIL not only implies the teaching of content through English but remarks on the relevance of the language when teaching content

As seen above, the implementation of a new approach needs time and consistency when it comes to bear results. However, in this particular case, in the end it appears to have had a positive impact in the lights of the students’ perception and CT’s point of view as the general perception stands around the usefulness of the content addressed and the way this benefits to the overall performance of the students, where the students stated improvement in the language comprehension level of their peers and themselves. “Yes, I have noticed a considerable improvement in some of my classmates who previously said they did not understand any English.”<sup>3</sup> (Students’ survey). “Some of the girls have told me that they have improved their comprehension thanks to the fact that they already most of the words in Spanish, so they can

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<sup>3</sup> “Si, he notado una mejoría considerable en algunas de mis compañeras que antes decían no entender nada de inglés.”

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relate the content easier and remembered without much difficulty.” (Student-teacher journal, entry 22/05/2019)

### **Impact of Alternatives in Assessment in the English course**

In this regard, students’ opinions about the effectiveness of the activities carried out in class have some insights regarding what they find interesting and engaging when assessing their knowledge, “Yes, I think so since it has helped me to have a better vocalization about speaking in English, presenting a female friend, having a better writing and having a good personal presentation.”<sup>4</sup> (Students’ survey) The use of a variety of activities that tackle students interest not in the means of the topic, but rather the possibility to relate to it because it is something more close to reality, prompts positive responses from the students:

Yes, thanks to the knowledge I have acquired, I have been able to participate more in the class since now I have more elements that allow me to do it, and at the same time, I find it more comfortable to ask and clarify doubts.<sup>5</sup> (Students’ survey)

The previous comment shows the effort made to reach students’ interest through activities that differ from those “listen and repeat; conjugate the verb; fill-in the gaps”, and makes them move into a more real-like experience when using the foreign language. Moreover, it displays a positive response in terms of picking the interest of the CT to make use of such techniques:

That activity that you were implementing in the session, the one with the images and creating a short story, was very interesting, because I do not know any of those in the images, but the students reacted immediately by calling their names. I know that was not

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<sup>4</sup> “Si lo considero, ya que me ha ayudado a tener una mejor vocalización al respecto de hablar en inglés, a presentar a una compañera, a tener una mejor escritura y a tener una buena presentación personal.”

<sup>5</sup> “Si, gracias al conocimientos he adquiridos he podido participar más en la clase ya que ahora tengo más elementos que me permitan hacerlo, y al mismo tiempo me resulta más cómodo preguntar y aclarar dudas.”



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the idea, but you caught their attention by using famous people to address a very easy and boring topic. And I said to myself ‘wow students know what he’s talking about, me? I have no idea’. (CT interview 2)

The use of technological resources, when available, got students out of the routine; therefore, they were engaged and interested in finding out what they were going to do in class. “Through all the activities carried out in the subject of English I have understood the language much more since I can deepen in the comprehension and pronunciation.”<sup>6</sup> (Students’ survey) Additionally, planning activities that made students use two or more skills at the same time led them to actively partake within the classroom because they found it more engaging, fun or just different.

Yes, we have had the opportunity to explore all those dynamics in the classroom, something that seems too important to me because many times they (the teachers) only focus on a single activity, and pieces of advice are presented which is appropriate.<sup>7</sup> (Students’ survey)

Alternatives in assessment have some characteristics: they require students to perform, create, produce or do something; they use real-world context or simulations; they are non-intrusive in that they extend the day to day classroom activities; they allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class; and they use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities (p, 252).

Taking this into consideration, it is appropriate to state that most of the activities carried out in the course had a positive impact on the development of the planning and effectiveness of

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<sup>6</sup> “Mediante todas las actividades realizadas en la asignatura de ingles he comprendido mucho más el idioma ya que puedo profundizar en la comprensión y pronunciación”

<sup>7</sup> “Sí, hemos tenido la oportunidad de explorar todas esas dinámicas en el espacio de la clase, una cosa que me parece demasiado importante porque muchas veces solo se enfocan en una sola dinámica, y se lleva a cabo un consejo que es lo pertinente.”

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the lessons. Due to the fact that this feature presented input in ways students did not know, they could pick their interest and prompt them to take a more active role within the sessions, which in the end bear good results in terms of language acquisition and improvement of their linguistic competence as seen through their own perspectives and those of the CT.

### **Comprehensible input in an English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom**

Implementing comprehensible input in the course provided valuable insights with regards to students' language comprehension in terms of engagement within the classroom. Most of the students were more active in the different instances of the sessions because they felt the information that they were acquiring as something more relevant, new and interesting. This statement was addressed by students and CT alike. When asked about if they were able to improve their language comprehension, students answered: "Yes because understanding the language facilitates everything in the classroom."<sup>8</sup> (Students' survey) "Yes, of course, because thanks to the activities we have learned, we have learned to write and speak more clearly."<sup>9</sup> (Students' survey)

I did not know about the comprehensive input hypothesis, but once you took the time to explain it to me, I could realize the array of possibilities it offered concerning the way I could manage my sessions from here onwards. What I mean is that you can teach a previous topic at the same time that you are giving them hints about the topic that's coming. After observing your class, I could notice how the students seemed more interested in the topic, though not all of them, as usual. It is problematic when you have

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<sup>8</sup> "Si, ya que al comprender el idioma se facilita todo en el aula de clase."

<sup>9</sup> "Si claro porque debido a las actividades que vamos desarrollando hemos aprendido a escribir y hablar mas claro."

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most of your students on a level that is lower than it is supposed to be, but that how things are. (CT Interview 2)

In addition, students' assessment results provided evidence of the improvement in the language comprehension as reported in the last journal entry and in the last interview to the CT, "I must admit that this methodology, although old and kind of simple, proves to be effective in this case. I believe it is because the girls are very proactive, and easy going when comes to proposing new things." (CT Interview 2)

It is important to remark that while the comprehensible input may have had a positive effect within the classroom, some students stated that the pace of the session was not of their liking as most of the students have a lower linguistic competence which in their opinion made the language comprehension development fell short.

We must not deny that there is information that one does not know and is important, but I think that the great percentage of the topics covered are only related to my academic life since most of them are things that are generally repeated.<sup>10</sup> (Students' survey)

I do not think so, every time I see how my classmates' progress goes, the only thing I can notice is that they have not progressed, they are still stuck in what has been taught in elementary school, for example, greetings, count to ten, and color names among other things that are irrelevant, but in any case I do not see improvement in what really matters, such as knowing how to pronounce, knowing how to interpret what is said in that other language, knowing how to correctly construct sentences or engage in a short conversation

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<sup>10</sup> "Algunos lo son, no hay que negar que se dan datos que uno desconoce y son importantes, pero considero que el gran porcentaje que se da de los temas son solo son pertenecientes para mi vida académica, ya que son cosas que, en general, simplemente repiten."

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(and with this I do not speak of knowing how to put together phrases like "the house Is blue").<sup>11</sup> (Students' survey)

According to Stephen Krashen (1982) in order for language acquisition to take place, the person must receive comprehensible input through reading or hearing language structures that slightly exceed their current ability. By tracking the grades from each student since the beginning of the intervention to its conclusion, those who were consistent with lower grades based on archival data, have shown improvement in their assessment results. And those students that are consistent with higher grades maintain their average marks. Thus, it proves that there might be some correlation between the implementation of Comprehensible Input and enhance language comprehension due to the fact that comparing assessment results before and after its implementation displays an increase in grades related to the topics covered through such strategy.

### Conclusions

Taking into account the findings mentioned above, I can draw the following conclusions. In the first place, the implementation of Content Language and Integrated Learning displayed favorable results related to planning, implementation, and assessment. Developing the lessons around this approach offered insights concerning the students' stance on what they would like to be taught and what they identify as useful or adequate for their learning process. Students proved to be engaged and ready to perform different activities in the classroom. There was evidence that

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<sup>11</sup> "La verdad no, cada que veo cómo está el progreso de mis compañeros lo único que puedo notar es que no han avanzado, siguen atascados en lo que se a enseñado en primaria, por ejemplo, saludos, contar hasta diez, saber algunos colores, entre otras cosas que son irrelevantes, pero de resto no veo una mejoría en lo que realmente importa, como lo es el saber pronunciar, el saber interpretar lo que se le dice en este otro lenguaje, el saber armar correctamente oraciones o entablar una pequeña conversación (y con esto no hablo de saber armar la frases como "the house Is blue")."

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demonstrated the acquisition of input presented throughout the course, and the ability to use English to complete tasks displaying linguistic competence development.

Secondly, the use of alternatives in assessment offered the possibility to raise the students' interest in tasks that could offer more information regarding students' performance. That is, the options presented by this strategy include many activities that are not commonly associated with assessment in public schools, such as observations and self-assessment, and these options can foster within the students a more favorable attitude concerning the way their performance is "measured". Moreover, the activities implemented in this action research along with the topics covered were able to bear good results thanks to the inclusion of features that the students find appealing, such as popular artists and pop music.

In addition, Comprehensible Input became handy for enhancing the average linguistic competence of the group because it allowed me to set the different topics within a framework that promoted the acquisition of specific knowledge related to the English language. It is a convenient strategy to promote the acquisition of linguistic features, but not so much when it comes to grammatical features as it does not allow for further explanation, nor in detail study as the focus is meaning, not form. Moreover, Comprehensible Input has a downside when it is implemented in a group from which you do not have previous information due to the fact that you need a clear picture of the language competence of the students in order to design, select and implement the appropriate input while adding enough difficulty as to represent a doable challenge for the group.

Then, as far as the scope of this project regarding its objectives goes, I believe it is fair to state that one of the outcomes suggests the effectiveness of content language and integrated learning when because it takes into consideration certain features of the classroom which were not included before, for instance: the content related to the technical emphasis and students'

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interests as a means to catch their interest and trigger engagement in the learning acquisition. Moreover, as it was also taken into account the actual language skill of the group, it was positively received by students in general as they found more congruent what was addressed in the lessons with what they identify as convenient for their academic performance.

### **Reflections**

The process to develop this action research was meaningful and challenging in many ways. On one hand, I have had the chance to develop a broader point of view regarding people stances when it comes to interaction, that is, instead of being led by prejudices I should take some time to observe and learn more about them. In this regard, I have improved my understanding of human nature and come to the conclusion that all of us are a work in progress and as such, we have the power to change and seek for self-improvement.

As most of my university experience has happened at the same time as my professional experience, I thought that I was somewhat prepared to face most of the situations that might occur at the practicum; however, the actual experience proved me wrong, as the variety of situations, severity of the consequences of my decisions, and the huge responsibility bestowed upon me as “teacher” made me realize the gap that exists between the public education and the private sector, my field of expertise up to this point. The number of things that are not working as they are supposed to be daunting. It is terrifying and impressive to realize how things really work and are even more surprising that things actually work even under such circumstances. I deeply appreciate every single one of those experiences and hope to be able to learn a profit as much as possible from them.

Finally, it was meaningful because it allowed me to hone the research skill relevant to my academic career. It offered me the chance to study, analyze and reflect upon real contexts and

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situations closely related to my profession. This experience has provided me with priceless experiences related to language teaching and learning, methodologies, educational context, group work, and professional networking. Having the opportunity of experiencing the public education context first hand has set the ground for a more mature and elaborated array of beliefs and practices that may become useful in the near future, once my professional life begins.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

## 7.1 Porcentaje de estudiantes por niveles de desempeño en Inglés

Nivel de agregación	A-			A1			A2			B1			B+		
	2016-2	2017-2	2018-2	2016-2	2017-2	2018-2	2016-2	2017-2	2018-2	2016-2	2017-2	2018-2	2016-2	2017-2	2018-2
Sede 1	24% ▼	32% ▼	22%	38% ▲	38% ▲	39%	27% ●	21% ▲	27%	11% ▼	7% ▲	10%	1% ▲	2% ●	2%
Colombia	36% ▲	44% ▼	37%	33% ▲	30% ▲	34%	19% ●	16% ▲	19%	10% ▼	8% ●	8%	2% ●	2% ●	2%
ETC	27% ●	37% ▼	27%	33% ▲	30% ▲	35%	22% ▲	19% ▲	23%	14% ▼	11% ●	11%	4% ●	4% ●	4%
Oficiales urbanos ETC	32% ●	43% ▼	32%	37% ▲	33% ▲	39%	22% ▼	17% ▲	21%	8% ▼	6% ▲	7%	1% ●	1% ●	1%
Oficiales rurales ETC	39% ▼	53% ▼	30%	38% ▲	31% ▲	39%	17% ▲	12% ▲	23%	5% ▲	3% ▲	6%	1% ▲	1% ▲	2%
Privados ETC	13% ▼	17% ▼	11%	20% ▲	22% ▼	21%	23% ▲	25% ▲	29%	31% ▼	25% ▲	26%	13% ▲	11% ▲	14%

Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 1. SABER 11 tests' results: 2016, 2017 &amp; 2018.

Reporte de resultados históricos del examen SABER 11.

## Appendix B

PARTE 5  
COMPRENSIÓN DE TEXTOS DESDE EL NIVEL LITERAL

LEA EL TEXTO Y SELECCIONE LA RESPUESTA CORRECTA PARA CADA PREGUNTA.  
EN LAS PREGUNTAS 103 A 109 MARQUE A, B o C EN SU HOJA DE RESPUESTAS

WALT DISNEY

Walt Disney was born on December 5th, 1901. Disney became one of the best-known motion picture producers in the world. He is particularly well known as a film producer and a popular showman, as well as an innovator in animation and theme park design.


Disney is famous for his contributions in the field of entertainment during the 20th century. His first success was through the series, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit which was created by the Disney studio for Charles Mintz of Universal Studios. When Disney asked for a larger budget for his popular Oswald series, Mintz refused and Disney had to quit. Later, Disney and his brother Roy Disney started from scratch and co-founded Walt Disney Productions, now known as The Walt Disney Company. Today, this company annually makes approximately US\$ 35 billion. This success is largely due to a number of the world's most famous fictional characters he and his staff created including Mickey Mouse, a character for which Disney himself was the original voice.

Disney won 26 Academy Awards out of 59 nominations, including a record four in one year, giving him more awards and nominations than any other individual. He is also the namesake for Disneyland and Walt Disney World Resort theme parks in the United States, as well as the international resorts in Japan, France, and China.

26 CONTINUE ABAJO

HEALTHY HABITS  
ELEVENTH GRADE  
IDIOMA EXTRANJERO: INGLÉS  
HUMANIDADES  
CENTRO FORMATIVO DE ANTIOQUIA -CEFA-  
MEDELLÍN, ANTIOQUIA  
COLOMBIA  
20\_\_

**HEALTHY HABITS**



Goal: to comprehend and to produce oral and written texts about my healthy habits and classmates'.

1. Look at the questionnaire Sarah completed about her free-time activities. Then, write seven sentences about her hobbies. See the example.

How often do you ...	Every day	Every two weeks	Once a week	Twice a week
1. play sport?	✓			
2. play a musical instrument?			✓	
3. go dancing?		✓		
4. paint or draw?				✓
5. go to the cinema?		✓		
6. watch TV?			✓	
7. read?	✓			
8. play video games?				✓

a. Sarah plays sports every day.  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_  
d. \_\_\_\_\_

Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 2. English

mock test as preparation for SABER 11 test