

Using the Universal Design for Learning Approach to Enhance Inclusion in a 5th Grade
English Class.

Alan Bedoya

Universidad de Antioquia

Thesis, Research, and Practicum Advisor

Iván D. Flórez G.

Medellín

November 2018

Abstract

In this action research project I sought to understand how to enhance inclusion through the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach in an English class of a fifth grade group. This group consisted of 42 students, of whom 10 students had a medical diagnosis and special educational needs. Data collection methods used for this project were journal entries, interviews, a checklist and a survey. In general, data suggest that group work enhanced the participation of all students, and that UDL principles encouraged students' motivation and participation arousing interest in students. Additionally, data indicate that despite the inclusive practices students with special educational needs have a high probability of being rejected by their peers.

Keywords: Inclusion, English language teaching, special educational needs, universal design for learning

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellin, Colombia.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I am really grateful to my research, practicum and thesis advisor, Iván Dario Flórez, his expertise, his constant support, and excellent disposition have made this research project possible. I am very fortunate to have his guidance.

I would also like to thank my cooperating teacher, Gloria Amparo Pineda, and students from I.E Antonio José Bernal, from where I graduated too. This work is a small retribution to the patience, understanding and love that this institution has offered me.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude God and my parents, who are my inspiration to be a better person every day. As well, a big thank you for my friends and colleagues, Simón Navarro and Julián Moreno, who have taught me the value of friendship. Through all these years, we have shared memories that will last forever.

Table of Contents

Preface..... 7

Description of the Context 9

Statement of the Problem 11

Research Question..... 14

 General Objective 14

 Specific Objectives 14

Theoretical Background 14

 Inclusion 14

 Inclusive Education 16

 Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 17

 Inclusion in the Colombian EFL classroom 18

Action Plan..... 18

Development of the plan 19

Findings and interpretation..... 22

 Team Work for Enhancing Inclusion in Class..... 22

 Enhancing Students’ Motivation through UDL Principles..... 24

 Rejection of Students with Diagnosis..... 25

Conclusion..... 27

Reflection 28

References 29

Appendix A 30

Appendix B 32

Preface

This text has as objective to share my experience using the universal design for learning principles in a 5th grade at a public school in Medellin and how this approach enhances inclusion in an EFL class. The grade in which this project took place has 42 students whose ages range from 9 to 11 years old, and it is important to add that more than 10 students out of these 42 students are in psychological care school programs or they have been diagnosed with disabilities that go from psychosocial disorders, ADHD, and low vision until autistic spectrum, these students are indeed students with special educational needs. Additionally, I have observed that in the English class students' special needs are not being taken into account in the development of the class, and in most of the cases, students with any special educational need do not get engaged in the class activities.

For this reason, in this implementation I suggested a series of actions derived from the UDL approach, which aimed at helping students with special educational needs achieve the objectives for the English class. In the first place, I have analyzed the syllabus in terms of English performance indicators of 5th grade, and I have changed them into wider indicators that cover all students in the class since these indicators are not clearly made to meet the students' special educational needs, all this made up the first stage. Moreover, inclusive education implies the detection of the external obstacles that hinder inclusion in a given environment. Under an inclusive approach and the UDL approach, learning barriers are not intrinsic to people, but they are external barriers caused by inappropriate practices or unprepared agents. In the second stage, I have thought in reasonable accommodations that allowed students to achieve the already changed performance indicators without meaning a double effort for the development of teaching practices. Finally, I have developed and applied lesson plans and teaching practices that look for the elimination of the elements that cause exclusion, through actions that encourage not the integration of vulnerable populations into the class as a way of

homogenization and student control, but the inclusion of them in the English class by improving participation, peer work and constant feedback.

Among the data collection methods used in this project, we find journals, interviews, surveys and document analysis throughout the different stages that composed it. The subsequent triangulation has shown that natural pairs and team work were one of the most efficient strategies for the inclusion and participation of students with special educational needs in class activities, and in many cases these students expressed the importance of this strategy in their learning process. Similarly, I found that the applied principles of the UDL approach in the design of activities allowed most of the students to feel motivated and to participate in class, as a result they develop more interest in the English class activities. Finally, as an unexpected finding, data collected in surveys and interviews have shown that that immediate and positive feedback from the teacher encouraged many students to use English as a way to participate.

Description of the Context

My practicum takes place in the public educational institution Presbítero Antonio José Bernal, and more specifically in its elementary school “Escuela Toscana”. This school is located in Toscana, which is a neighborhood from the comuna 5 “Castilla” in the northern part of Medellín. It is important to say that the Toscana elementary school offers grades 1st to 5th in two shifts. The student body comes from close-to-school neighborhoods such as Plaza Colón, Acevedo, Boyacá Las Brisas, among others. Most of these students come from low-income families, strata 1 and 2.

By 2019, the school aims to be recognized for their research processes, thus strongly highlighting the importance of formative research in its educational practices; and also for the implementation of strategies for changing its context and developing tolerance and respect for diversity. Furthermore, the Presbítero Antonio José Bernal institution’s main mission is to provide educational services in primary and secondary levels based on principles of social inclusion and healthy coexistence. In its philosophy, it is notorious the strong emphasis for the improvement of social realities at generating inclusion in an environment of learning.

In terms of academic structure, the school year in this institution is divided into three terms of 10 weeks long each. At the end of each term, students take final exams in which they have to apply what they learned in the whole term classes. The area of humanities is composed of English and Spanish courses. It is worth mentioning that English represents only the 30% of the established percentage for the area of humanities, which in turn reflects on the amount of hours spent in English classes. For example, in 5th grade, while the subject “Lenguaje” has over four hours of class per week, the English class only has two hours. Moreover, the English class time is frequently reduced due to some other school activities.

Regarding the structure of the school English syllabus, there is a main objective for each grade, and problematizing questions for each term. In the case of 5th grade, the main objective is to develop students' skills through didactic activities in an environment filled with confidence, which allows and encourages students to learn English. This objective should be achieved through three problematizing questions:

- a) How could I make a presentation about the essential elements of my country?
- b) Do I recognize how much progress I have made in the acquisition of English grammatical elements?
- c) Do I establish strategies to search, select and share sites and documents from the digital world that allow me to improve my English learning process?

Besides these guiding questions, the English syllabus also provides topics and indicators of performance. However, this syllabus is not strictly followed because the students do not have the expected English level needed to achieve the aforementioned objective. Therefore, the teacher implements class activities to level the students.

The fifth-grade group B, which is the group I will be teaching, has 42 students whose ages range from 9 to 11 years old. Although it is a large group, students are very attentive and participative in the English class. It is important to add that some of these students are in psychological care programs. This group of students attends classes in a classroom that is oriented to the English course. Thus, the classroom is big enough, it is illuminated and well distributed. In this classroom, there is a whiteboard, a computer and a big TV with four speakers, and there are also 22 stored laptops which are functional, but they are not used. There is also a rack full of English resources and games such as lottery games, flashcards, big books and children's stamps. The classroom is decorated by some English and vocabulary posters that belong to the ABC learning kit. All the materials and the classroom in general are in optimal conditions.

Their English teacher and my cooperating teacher is a woman with over 20 years of experience teaching kids and whose bachelor degree is on primary education and Spanish language teaching. She has been teaching English for 3 years and she also teaches other two subjects, all of them in 5th grade.

Statement of the Problem

In 2016, the national government and the ministry of education implemented the so-called "Ley de inclusion educativa" and the decree 1421, which establishes and provides the conditions for students with special educational needs to attend public institutions and thus these establishments cannot deny the admission or reject any student because of his/her needs. In addition, this law has many more implications apart from the admission of students. The state has a duty to ensure reasonable accommodations for all students to receive quality education, and this applies to all students, all materials and all academic practices. However, there is no clarity on how to apply this measure in the educational establishments and in particular in the English class, where students should have materials and strategies according to their special educational needs and English teachers have to be prepared not only in the foreign language, but also in inclusive educational practices.

Taking into account that the decree was validated in the second semester of last year, many institutions and teachers still do not know how to apply it in their institutions and classes. The reasonable adjustments that the decree demands are conceived by teachers as double work, which makes the application of the decree even more difficult. In addition to this, one of the main challenges that I have observed in the English class is that students' special needs are not being taken into account in the development of the class, and in most of the cases, students with any special educational need do not get engaged in the class activities.

Among the causes, I have been observing throughout the course of the English class that all students must achieve the same goal through the same activity. There are no variants or accommodations that allow students with difficulties or with any special educational need to achieve the goal. This greatly hinders the learning process of some students and especially those with learning difficulties. For instance, in a class that I observed, students had to find body parts vocabulary words in a word search puzzle, but in the same class there is a student that has only 20% of his visual capacity, so for him, it was impossible to develop the activity. Although he did not get a negative grade, he did not get engaged in the activity itself.

Secondly, I have noticed that the English teacher in this institution lacks preparation in inclusion strategies. The proposed strategies for the achievement of class objectives directly attempt to homogenize the students and teach them all a topic in the same way, even if they do not have the same rhythm and learning style or if they are not in the physical or mental conditions to approach it. However, the problem goes beyond the teacher's lack of preparation. Not only the teacher has no academic training to meet this challenge, but also the institution does usually not have adequate strategies and a directed action plan to look after this type of vulnerable population. As a first measure, it is essential to empower teachers in inclusive practices, thus, in their classes they establish wide activities and strategies that shelter particularly students with special educational needs among different school populations.

Many public institutions are struggling for applying the 1421 decree in their PEI. This decree compels them for receiving students, regardless their special conditions or needs. Thus, it is possible to see in a classroom multiple students with different needs, some of them physical needs: lack of vision, hearing problems, reduced mobility, etc. And other students with psychological disorders such as: TDH, depression, extreme anxiety, and so on. This is a

real challenge for teachers, and especially for English teachers because, in most of the cases, we are not prepared enough for facing these conditions.

Finally, the performance indicators constitute a structural problem that prevents the inclusion of some sectors of the population in class activities. Since these indicators clearly are not made to meet the students' special educational needs. As an example of this, in the institution fifth grade English syllabus we find that in the third term, students must achieve the following performance indicator: "Describe oralmente habilidades con I can". However, students are eager for demonstrating their learning process and their English level more than just an oral report, they really want to paint, write or even act by using English in a meaningful way for them.

Among all the different approaches that could help us to understand the special needs and enhance them in the classroom, we find that the differential approach and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which are the strategies the decree 1421 suggests, are an approach for developing healthy and inclusive practices in the English class. Even without special needs the students in a class have so many differences in terms of their learning processes, lacks, wants and needs. All this tends to affect or improve the development of the English class and the students learning process itself. Therefore, in this action research proposal, I will suggest a series of classroom actions that will aim at helping students with special educational needs achieve the objectives for the English class. One way of doing this, it is through the UDL Approach, which provides all students with curricular flexibility, reasonable accommodations and accessibility that address to look after vulnerable populations as students with special educational needs.

Research Question

How does the Universal Design for Learning approach enhance inclusion in a 5th grade English class in a public institution in Medellin?

General Objective

To explore how the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach enhances inclusion in a fifth grade English class.

Specific Objectives

- a) To use the Universal Design for Learning approach to design and implement English lessons with equity and quality for all students.
- b) To identify the more effective classroom strategies that provide students, particularly those with special educational needs, with multiple opportunities to participate in the English lessons.
- c) To examine the usefulness of such strategies in enhancing students' English learning process.

Theoretical Background

This action research proposal draws on theories of inclusion, inclusive education and the Universal Design for Learning approach, which will be briefly discussed below. Among the theoretical bases we have in Colombia, I have found the decree 1421 itself as an official perspective to define the aforementioned concepts, there, teachers are encouraged to apply a differential approach from the perspective of a universal design for learning.

Inclusion

Nowadays, it is possible to say that the term inclusion is a trend within the newest educational theories. Since homogenization as a product of industrialization does not meet anymore the society educational needs, vulnerable populations and students' special

educational needs. Therefore, at this moment more than homogenize a group of students, we as teachers need to protect and know how to teach all those minorities through teaching practices that respect and embrace diversity as a factor of cultural richness. In this sense Robayo and Cardenas (2017) affirm that “inclusion involves the cessation of putting minority groups in the midst of those educative systems that claimed themselves as regular educative centers” (p. 123).

However, I have observed that the teacher looks for an integration of students with special educational needs, through the empirical adaptation of syllabus, practices or activities. And as a result, those soft measures do not engage students in the classroom activities. For applying inclusion in a classroom Ainscow (2003) proposes inclusion as the product of four definitions: inclusion is a process, inclusion identifies and eliminates barriers, inclusions as the participation of all students and inclusion as the defense of vulnerable populations (p. 13).

Firstly, Ainscow (2003) states that, in order to understand the concept of inclusion, it is necessary to consider inclusion as an endless process, in which teachers have to develop a cycle of inclusive practices that go beyond the integration and adaptation of students into the classroom environment. Analyzing, changing, and applying teaching practices, policies and structures are the stages within this process.

In the second place, according to Ainscow (2003), inclusion implies the detection of the external obstacles that hinder inclusion in a given environment. Under an inclusive approach, learning barriers are not intrinsic to people, but they are external barriers caused by inappropriate practices or unprepared agents. Apart from the identification of these barriers, inclusive practices look for the elimination of the elements that cause exclusion, through actions that encourage not the integration of vulnerable populations into the school system, but the inclusion of them in school and society.

Inclusion also involves the assistance and participation of all students. If we prepare our classes regarding the students' special educational needs, we are definitely developing teaching practices that cover all students. Nevertheless, inclusion recognizes the importance of keeping the quality level high, so as teachers, we must not decrease the quality of our activities in order that students with special needs can be engaged in them.

Finally, inclusion is considered as the defense of those vulnerable populations that are usually neglected in the educational spaces. As teachers, we have to take the necessary measures to safeguard the participation and healthy learning processes of all students.

Inclusive Education

According to Robayo and Cardenas (2017) inclusive education emphasizes “the transformations of education in general and the educative institutions, so that they can provide equitable and high quality responses to diversity” (p. 123). Hence, the application of inclusive education allows vulnerable populations, and especially students with special educational needs to have access to education founded in terms of equity and quality. In general terms, inclusive education is the analysis, modification and application of inclusive teaching practices in the classroom.

In this sense, the decree 1421 stresses on the importance of students and teachers' participation, and it defines inclusive education as a permanent process that attends and recognizes the diversity of the population, regarding their ages and characteristics. This process focuses on developing the students' learning processes around cooperative work among peers, where there is no attempt to integrate the population with the same systems and structures, but to create new methodologies, objectives and practices for the inclusion of all. (MEN, 2017, p. 5).

To evaluate the application of an inclusive educational proposal in an educational institution, it is necessary to consider factors such as the conceptualization of the curriculum and how some objectives and performance indicators are defined. In addition, the conceptualizations around inclusive education have to be consistent with the current educational policies so as not to contravene the government regulations. On the other hand, institutions and educational agents, such as teachers, students and administrators, should check that the educational structures and systems respond directly to the students' special educational needs. Finally, all the above must be translated into effective and accurate practices that ensure the application of the law and the students' high quality education right. It is in this part where the differential approach as a response to a public policy and the universal learning design have very important roles (Echeita & Ainscow, 2010, p. 37).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

In general terms, the universal design for learning is an approach that allows us to understand and make possible the differential approach suggested by the MEN and it aims to identify and eliminate learning barriers by proposing inclusive educational practices. Moreover, the UDL constitutes a proposal to change the students' learning experiences from a theoretical and practical perspective. The school, the teacher and the class must offer a meaningful environment where the student can show all his/her potential through the development of skills and competencies. All this allows the student and his/her family to achieve a full life in society based on principles of equity and quality (Casanova, 2006, p. 89).

For Rose, Meyer, and Gordon (2014) the universal design for learning and its operation appeal to three fundamental learning principles: 1) **Representation**, that is, to provide students with meaningful situations in which they meet multiple ways of representation and stimulus; 2) **action and expression** which is about providing students with situations in which they could develop activities in multiple ways of physical activity and

information management; and 3) **motivation**, in terms of providing students with opportunities for identifying personal interests and peer collaboration. These three principles aim to minimize learning barriers and enhance situations and meaningful experiences where all students can learn. Therefore, from the UDL perspective the teachers' work could be summarized as empowering students to access different knowledge from multiple tools such as cognitive, kinesthetic, or socio-affective strategies because these tools allow students to collect and apply the knowledge, for purposes of this proposal it would be English language.

Inclusion in the Colombian EFL Classroom

As a result of the application of decree 1421, many institutions and teachers have set themselves the task of grounding and applying the differential approach and the universal design for learning in the classes from different fields. However, little has been done in Colombia about the application of UDL in Colombian classrooms. Robayo and Cardenas (2017) have written an article that establishes a connection between inclusive education and ELT policies in Colombia, in which they conclude that "Colombia faces several challenges in the achievement of true IE -inclusive education- systems" (p.134).

Action Plan

To achieve the objective of this implementation, I would plan some actions that would last 8 weeks, and which would be organized into three main stages: process analysis, identification and elimination of barriers, and application of inclusive teaching practices. These stages would follow the definition of inclusion adopted by Ainscow (2003) already discussed above. To explore the results of implementing this action plan I would adopt the action research model as described by Burns (2010). That is to say, I would develop two cycles, an iteration that would include the phases of planning, action, observation and reflection (Burns, 2010).

In the first week, the process analysis would take place, as I would analyze the 5th grade English syllabus in order to modify it in the light of the UDL principles. Next, in the second week, I would design activities taking into account the term topics and some reasonable accommodations for providing all students with opportunities to show their English learning process. In the third and fourth weeks, I would apply the activities already designed in class; it would aim to implement the UDL approach to design an English class that could ensure inclusion of all students. Regarding the need of at least two cycles, the process and results analysis stage would have place again in the fifth week, identification and elimination the further barriers in the sixth week of the implementation, and finally the seventh and eight weeks would be developed for inclusive school performances through the new activities application.

Apart from the previous teaching actions that would aim at promoting inclusion in the classroom, I would also develop and apply certain research instruments for data collection, with the intention of visualize and analyze the impact of such actions. I would keep journals entries throughout the implementation. Next, I would have two interviews with different students to analyze the students' perceptions about UDL. Moreover, a CT checklist would have place to collect the CT's thoughts about the project; and finally, I would apply a general survey for all students at the last stage of my implementation.

Development of the plan

The implementation of the actions lasted 8 weeks as planned in the plan. It was based on two cycles of analysis, identification and elimination of barriers, and implementation of inclusive activities. Additionally, although it was originally planned to cover three English topics in the term, which are modal verb can, daily routines and present progressive, the implementation has covered just the first two due to lack of time.

In the first week, I have implemented, with CT's help, an analysis of the school English syllabus and a careful modification of the performance indicators, this aimed to modify the English syllabus in the light of the UDL approach and its principles. For instance, a performance indicator for the third term of fifth grade was the following: The student communicates through presentations of himself or others, through simple texts. However, in the case of a student with low vision, this indicator was impossible to reach because it was very difficult for him to write. Therefore, it was necessary to make a small change in the performance indicator so that it could cover all students. Then, the new indicator was: The student communicates through presentations of himself and others, through a text or an oral description.

In the second week, I carried out an activity design and class planning regarding the strategy of reasonable adjustments proposed by the MEN and the Colombian government (2017) to ensure that students with special educational needs would have opportunities to show their English learning process in multiple ways. Some of the strategies I took into account some activities that I have observed were meaningful for students, which were team or pair work, row or individual competitions, songs, games, videos, etc.

Next, in the third and fourth week, I applied the already prepared activities in the classroom; this application strived to implement the UDL approach in the English class based on principles of equity and quality. The application consisted mainly in the development of a worksheet in pairs, its different activities sought to develop different skills such as memory, listening, written or oral production in students and everything was related to the expression of the students' different abilities with the help of the modal verb can. Taking into account the cyclical condition that an inclusive project must have, the project stages were applied twice with the same actions. However, in the planning and application of activities stage conducted in the sixth, seventh and eighth weeks, the main topic was daily routines. Students were

provided with different activities where they could tell their own daily routines through different expressions such as texts and oral reports, and then they compared them with other students' works.

As for the research actions, I kept six journal entries, made two interviews to two groups of students, asked my CT fulfill a checklist, and made a general survey for all students. Firstly, I kept a series of journal entries that allowed me to register relevant information for designing inclusive activities throughout the whole implementation, thus I reflected on my own practices and how I could connect practice and theory. This was enriching since I could see how the changes introduced have influenced the students and how at the end these changes have become inclusion-promoting activities.

Additionally, I applied two semi-structured interviews for two of students, it aimed to examine the students' perspectives about the new activities in the fourth and eighth week of the implementation. My first interview was conducted with a group of nine students; five of these students had different medical diagnoses and the rest of students without any diagnosis. Later, the second interview was accompanied with a group of four students, two natural pairs of students with different diagnoses. This data collection method allowed me first, to deepen in areas of special interest for me such as motivation, participation and teamwork, which are principles of the UDL approach through already prepared questions, and second by relating these interviews, I could go beyond these elements and analyze emerging issues as group work benefits, students' interests and relationships among them.

Finally, I prepared and applied the general survey for all students and a checklist for the cooperating teacher in the eighth week, that is, at the end of the implementation, in which I could observe the perspective of all students and the teacher regarding the development and impact of the implementation. It is important to say that the survey was general since the

application and design of class activities were not directed only to the English learning process of students with special educational needs, but also to all students in the classroom, otherwise it would not be an inclusive environment in which all students count and can participate.

Findings and interpretation

The main objective of this action research project was to explore how the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach enhance inclusion in a fifth grade English class. This section deals with the different findings that I have been able to identify through the analysis of data coming from journal entries, two interviews, a survey and a checklist applied to the CT. In general terms, the answer to this objective is related to different strategies that as teachers we could apply in the classroom for enhancing inclusion, and they could be organized in three main categories. First, natural pairs and team work were one of the most efficient strategies for enhancing inclusion in class. In second place, the applied principles of the UDL approach in the design of activities allowed most of the students to feel motivated and participate in class. And finally, data suggest that students with any diagnosis have a high probability of being rejected by their peers.

Team Work for Enhancing Inclusion in Class

Data indicate that team work was useful to enhance inclusion in the English class. Before this implementation I could observe that classroom environment did not favor students' engagement in the activities, particularly those students with special educational needs. Factors that I identified as causing this were, for example, the difficulty of the activity, the poor understanding of the instruction and the structure of the activity did not allow the participation of these students (Journal entries 2 and 4, 2018). However, when implementing group work and natural pairs strategy, I noticed that the importance for students to select their own teams, which made them perceive team work not as an imposed burden, but as

comfortable collaborative work. This strategy was especially effective to promote the participation of students with special educational needs.

Evidence that supports the effectiveness of this strategy, for example, comes from an interview in which students were asked how they felt working in pairs or teams, and a student diagnosed with a psychosocial disorder answered:

La verdad me siento mal trabajando solo sin Yeison* a veces tengo demasiadas cosas que hacer y no tengo alguien que me ayude, un compañero a mi lado, yo creo que es mejor trabajar en equipo y en pareja porque nos apoyamos entre sí, podemos comunicarnos, entendernos. (David, First Interview, October 8th, 2018).

Group work also awakened the interest of students without diagnosis, to the question if students feel that teamwork and natural pairs facilitates the participation of all students, Alejandro a student without any diagnosis answered that “a pesar de que algunos estudiantes aprenden diferente o tienen otra manera de entendimiento, nos relacionamos entre todos, y cada uno con usted, y pues usted nos enseña teniendo en cuenta a todos y así podemos aprender más” (Alejandro, second interview, October 22nd 2018).

Seeing the students' response to this strategy, it was essential during the activities design to include group work as a necessary strategy for encouraging students to participate in class. The above can also be seen in the results of the survey in which, to the question how often students have the possibility of working as a team, 66% of students answered always and 29%, almost always (Question N.18, survey, October 29th, 2018,). However, it is not about adjusting all class activities as group work, but rather finding meaningful moments to implement this strategy as a support for students, especially for those students with special

* To protect the personal information and privacy of the students, all names were changed.

educational needs. Regarding this, the cooperating teacher concluded that “los estudiantes siempre tienen la posibilidad de trabajar en equipo y lo hacen de manera positiva (trabajan conjuntamente y siguiendo las instrucciones del docente)” (CT, checklist, October 30th, 2018).

Enhancing Students’ Motivation through UDL Principles

The lack of motivation became evident throughout class observations, since class activities did not arouse any interest in the students, many of them participated only because of the constant attention calls of the CT. One of the fundamental principles of the UDL is to provide students with multiple forms of motivation (Ainscow, 2010). It is necessary first to awaken the interest of the students, and then teach them English. Data suggest that the applied principles of the UDL approach in the design of activities allowed most of the students to feel motivated and participate in class, thus developing more interest in the English class activities. Therefore, the inclusion of games, contests or even songs in class activities ensured not only the participation of all students, but also motivated them to learn and develop class activities. For instance, 37 students out of 42 recognized the importance of participating in class and they also recognized that the design of the activities motivates them to participate. (Questions 7 and 13, survey, October 29th, 2018).

Similarly, it is not a secret that traditional education is still deeply rooted in our education system. Repetition and grammar are constant elements in primary education and the English class is not an exception. This is where the principles of the UDL approach can make important structural changes, because we could go beyond traditional principles, since we present to the students’ multiple forms of participation. In the case of Yeison, a student with only 20 percent of his visual ability, it is unthinkable for him to develop writing because the mere fact of writing represents a challenge for him. Therefore, it is necessary to provide students with different activities that ensure the participation of each student from their

abilities and not from their weaknesses. As a consequence, students could notice this type of problematic and some of them could even demand changes, Antonio is one of those students:

Uno se da de cuenta que uno puede aprender mediante otros medios que no sea escribir, por ejemplo, la profe por ella nos pone a escribir literalmente en una sola clase todo el cuaderno, en cambio usted nos pone a ver, a leer. (Antonio, first interview, October 8th, 2018).

It is necessary to clarify that in order to develop this curricular flexibility proposed by the principles of the UDL approach, there must first be a change in the performance indicators, these changes allow the indicator to cover all students. It is not about judging the student for what he or she is not able to do, but to understand him/ her in a comprehensive way, only in this way we could discover his/her learning potential. Cristian a student with ADHD concludes about it, saying that “a mi me motiva el inglés y me gusta aprender otros idiomas, no siempre estar en lo mismo como escribiendo...si no como yo soy capaz de hacerlo” (Cristian, first interview, October 8th, 2018,).

In sum, when we have got students’ attention and interest, they start to feel motivated and as result they participate and get engaged in English class activities.

Rejection of Students with Diagnosis

Educational inclusion is a process that takes a long time to see deep and lasting results. In addition to an arduous and united work from the part of the educational institutions, the territorial entities of education and the educational agents such as professors, students and community in general. The UDL approach proposes the first actions that a teacher can generate to positively impact their class through principles that could convert the syllabus, teaching actions and the class activities into mechanisms that enhance inclusion in the classroom, it is necessary to adopt structural measures in the background that a single English

class could not cover. In the reflection part of an informal CT interview, she expressed that sometimes students express their preference to work with other students than those with a diagnosis, of course they do not know that these students have different educational needs and difficulties. She also said that in the English class, the activities can propose companionship and cooperative work, but if after leaving the English class, this work is not continued and mechanisms of exclusion are still adopted in the different subjects, the inclusive work of the class of English can get lost (CT, personal communication, October 16th, 2018).

Moreover, the general survey results have suggested how students in spite of the implementation have unconscious cautions to work with a student with any special educational needs. For instance, to the question name three students you would never work with, 32 students out of 42 mentioned at least one student with a diagnosis. (Question number 9, Survey, October 29th, 2018). That is to say, although the class activities and the principles of inclusion of the UDL approach are applied in class, this does not necessarily mean that all students will accept the differences of their classmates. The students themselves attribute this problem to different factors such as lack of mutual understanding, because they are restless or because they do not work. A very interesting question would be do not these so-mentioned students work because they do not want or because they cannot?

Undoubtedly, some students with disabilities can notice this problematic. The following excerpt from an interview with Cristian exemplifies this.

Cristian: “Hay veces que los otros no quieren trabajar conmigo, entonces uno es el único que trabaja y solo...”

Researcher: “¿ Por qué pasa esto?”

Cristian: “No sé, creo que porque trabajo diferente”(Cristian, first interview, October 8th 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that the Universal Design for Learning effectively helps to enhance inclusion in the classroom. First, data support that teamwork and natural pairs are one of the most effective strategies to enhance inclusion of all students. It was also evident that the application of UDL principles in class enhances motivation, participation and interest in students. Finally, evidence supports that in spite of the UDL application, students with special needs have a high probability of being rejected by their peers.

Inclusive education is a right that all students must have. It is necessary to recognize in students their learning potential, and not to judge them by what they cannot do. Without the necessary changes, our educational system and the syllabus itself could be strongly incapacitating and it could limit the teacher's action to an attempt to homogenize the group of students. The realities and students' learning processes are different, therefore, we as teachers could not expect all our students to learn in the same way, at the same speed and develop the same abilities.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges that I had to face throughout this implementation is raising awareness among students and teachers. It is very difficult to reverse the traditional educational thinking of the homogenization of students as a term of quality through repetitive practices that do not take into account the students' differences, interests or particularities, and the mere admission of students with disabilities as the only measure that can be taken in public institutions. It is not enough to apply small changes in the curriculum to define an inclusive education, it is necessary to build a new curriculum based on principles of equity and respect for population diversity. The institutional community and especially the students should also participate in this construction, therefore, students and teachers should be empowered for generating change. When we teach thinking about the students who have the most difficulties, we can assure that we are covering the students who do not have them.

Reflection

The practicum and the implementation of my project represented for me a significant growth on both professional and personal levels. Through this process, I could experience the different dynamics of a real educational context and I could understand that not all human beings learn in the same way and that there are some vulnerable students that can be invisible in the classroom. In this sense, I understood that teachers can either establish disabling practices for many of our own students or we can be the voice of change and concern of those students. I also realized that it is not only the government who must ensure an education with quality and equity terms, the teachers must be the first to adopt measures against the exclusion and repression of students with disabilities.

Additionally, these years I learned what teaching represents and I always felt passionate about teaching and learning process, particularly the process of learning a language. However, the practicum showed me that a teacher is also a researcher and that teachers are not just passive agents in the education system, we can be agents of change and enhancers of profound changes in our educational contexts. Finally, I understood that teaching and research are complementary fields and there can be no complete professional realization without either of them.

References

- Ainscow, M. (2003). *Development of inclusive educative systems*. Paper presented at the Congreso Guztientzako Ezkola, San Sebastián, Spain.
- Ainscow, M., & Miles, S. (2009). *Developing inclusive education systems: How can we move policies forward*. In C. Giné, D. Durán, T. Font, & E. Miquel (Eds.), *La educación inclusiva: de la exclusión a la plena participación de todo el alumnado*.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. *Esl & Applied linguistics professional series*.
- Casanova, M. A. (2006). *Diseño curricular e innovación educativa*. Madrid: La Muralla.
- Echeita, G., & Ainscow, M. (2010). Inclusive education as a right. Framework and guidelines for action for the development of a pending revolution. *Tejuelo: Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura. Educación, 12(1)*, 26-46.
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN (2013). *Lineamientos política de educación superior inclusiva. Colombia*.
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN (2017) *Decreto 1421*. Ley estatutaria de inclusión. Colombia.
- Robayo Acuña, L. M., & Cárdenas, M. L. (2017). Inclusive education and ELT policies in Colombia: Views from some PROFILE journal authors. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 19(1)*, 121-136.
- Rose, D., Meyer, A., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and Practice*. Wakefield, MA: CAST Professional Publishing.

Appendix A

Encuesta estudiantes

Nombre: _____ Edad: _____

Barrio donde vives: _____ Estrato: _____ Grado: _____

1. ¿Te gusta la clase de inglés? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____

2. ¿Cómo te sientes en la clase de inglés? _____

3. ¿Aprender inglés te resulta difícil? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____

4. ¿Te sientes motivado a aprender inglés? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____

5. ¿Participas en clase de inglés? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____

6. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando participas en clase de inglés? _____

7. ¿Sientes que tu participación en clase de inglés es importante? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué? _____

8. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando trabajas en equipo o parejas en las clases de inglés? _____

9. ¿Alguna vez te has sentido rechazado por tus compañeros en los trabajos de grupo? Si ___ No ___
¿Por qué? _____
10. ¿Respetas las diferencias de tus compañeros cuando trabajas en equipo? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué?

11. ¿Consideras que puedes trabajar en equipo con cualquier persona del salón? Si ___ No ___ ¿Por qué?

 - Menciona con un nombre y apellido tres estudiantes con los cuales trabajarías en equipo
_____, _____, Y _____
¿Por qué trabajarías con ellos? _____

 - Menciona con un nombre y apellido tres estudiantes con los cuales nunca trabajarías en
equipo
_____, _____, Y _____
¿Por qué no trabajarías con ellos? _____

Por favor marca con una X los siguientes aspectos y la frecuencia con la que ocurren en la clase de inglés

Marque del 1 al 5, siendo 1= Nunca, 2= Casi nunca, 3= Algunas veces, 4= casi siempre y 5= siempre

Aspectos	1	2	3	4	5
- El profesor realiza diversas actividades y utiliza diferentes materiales en clase de inglés					
- Las actividades que el profesor crea motiva a los estudiantes a participar en clase					
- Todos los estudiantes pueden participar en las actividades que el profesor desarrolla en la clase de inglés					
- Los estudiantes participan en clase y puedan expresarse de diferentes formas.					
- El docente diseña las actividades de aprendizaje para que promuevan la comprensión, el respeto y la tolerancia por las diferencias.					
- Hay un ambiente de tolerancia y respeto estudiante-estudiante y profesor-estudiante en la clase de inglés					
- Los estudiantes tienen la posibilidad de trabajar en equipo y/o en pareja					
- El profesor mantiene motivados a los estudiantes en las actividades de clase					
- Los estudiantes desarrollan las actividades de clase incluyendo tareas, trabajos en equipo, talleres, etc.					
-El profesor responde positivamente ante las dificultades de los estudiantes y los ayuda a superar los obstáculos o problemas					
- El profesor reconoce, valoran y difunden los éxitos de los estudiantes participantes.					
- Los estudiantes reciben retroalimentación de su desempeño en las actividades de clase de inglés					

¿Tienes algún comentario, sugerencia y/o ideas que le quieras decir al profesor de inglés? Deja tu comentario aquí: _____

Appendix B

CHECKLIST INSTRUMENT

Objetivo: Detectar si los principios del diseño universal para el aprendizaje están siendo aplicados en el aula de clase y la respuesta de los estudiantes a las actividades de clase.

Fecha y hora: _____ Lugar: _____

Docente: _____ Número de estudiantes: _____

Observador: _____ Número de estudiantes con NEE: _____

Por favor marque con una X los siguientes aspectos y la frecuencia con la que ocurren en la clase de inglés

Marque del 1 al 5, siendo 1= Nunca, 2= Casi nunca, 3= Algunas veces, 4= casi siempre y 5= siempre

Aspectos	1	2	3	4	5
Múltiples formas de presentación: No hay ninguna representación de un significado que sea óptimo para todos los estudiantes; proporcionar distintas opciones en la representación es esencial. (CAST, 2006, P.14)					
- El docente planifica las actividades de aprendizaje pensando en las características de los niños, niñas y adolescentes a las que van dirigidas.					
- Los estudiantes pueden acceder a los saberes del área a partir de diferentes medios: Visual, auditivo, kinestésico (movimiento o juegos)					
- El docente es innovador, emplea diversos estilos y estrategias de enseñanza en las diferentes clases					
- Los estudiantes tienen la posibilidad de aprender de diversas formas y utilizando diferentes recursos.					
- El docente adapta sus estrategias a las habilidades de cada uno de los estudiantes participantes.					
- Todos los estudiantes pueden participar de las actividades de clase y no hay estudiantes que se queden por fuera debido a la naturaleza de la actividad					
Múltiples formas de expresión: No hay un medio de expresión que sea óptimo para todos los estudiantes y es esencial ofrecer diferentes opciones de expresión. (CAST, 2006, P.27)					
- El docente diseña las actividades de aprendizaje para que promuevan la comprensión, el respeto y la tolerancia por las diferencias.					
- Los estudiantes pueden participar activamente en la clase y hay un ambiente de tolerancia y respeto estudiante-estudiante y profesor-estudiante.					
- El docente promueve que las sesiones de trabajo estimulen el trabajo cooperativo de los estudiantes					
- Los estudiantes tienen la posibilidad de trabajar en equipo y lo hacen de manera positiva (todos trabajan conjuntamente y siguiendo las instrucciones del docente)					
- El docente crea oportunidades para que todos los estudiantes participen y puedan expresarse de diferentes formas.					
- Todos los estudiantes pueden participar en las actividades de clase y dichas actividades motivan la participación del estudiante de manera general.					
Múltiples formas de motivación: No hay un único medio de implicación que será óptimo para todos los estudiantes; ofrecer múltiples opciones para el compromiso y la motivación es esencial. (CAST, 2006, P.37)					
- El docente motiva a los estudiantes a responsabilizarse por su propio aprendizaje					
- Los estudiantes son responsables con el proceso de aprendizaje, es decir, desarrollan las actividades de clase incluyendo tareas, trabajos en equipo, talleres, etc.					
-El docente responde positivamente ante las dificultades de los estudiantes					

- Los estudiantes persisten en las actividades de clase incluso si hay obstáculos e intentan desarrollar las actividades de la mejor manera					
- El docente reconoce, valoran y difunden los éxitos de los estudiantes participantes.					
- Los estudiantes reciben retroalimentación de su desempeño en las actividades y responden y participan de manera activa en estas.					

Comentarios:
