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English L2 Acquisition with UDL

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Abstract

Educators and psychologists have reviewed and developed new models of teaching to understand more in-depth different learning approaches in order to improve L2 learning, taking into account the student's diversity to foster their needs. This research aims at identifying current teaching methodologies all along with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach. It also intends to analyse if the method presented in this research is also present in a study centre in Barcelona named STUCOM or else, if they follow a traditional methodology. This centre is located near Plaça Catalunya, it is a private and semi-private school where they teach Batxillerat and vocational training. The focus on this research will be on first of Batxillerat students specifically, there will be five participants, without specifying on any modality in class since classes are mixed up, the modalities a class can have are humanistic, social sciences, technological and scientific. Students here come from Barcelona city and also from towns near the city, the classes are inclusive, so students with different abilities are there too. In addition, this research also pretends to analyse if UDL supports students' individual needs to 1st Batxillerat Students on L2 Learning Acquisition.

Keywords:

Universal Design for Learning, Multiple Intelligences, education, Communicative Approach, Cooperative Learning.

Educadors i psicòlegs han desenvolupat nous mètodes d'ensenyament per tal d'entendre amb major profunditat els diferents mètodes per millorar l'aprenentatge del segon idioma tenint en compte la diversitat dels estudiants per tal d'adaptar-se a les seves necessitats. Aquesta recerca té com a objectiu identificar metodologies d'aprenentatge més actuals juntament amb el mètode del Disseny Universal per l'Aprenentatge com a eix central. També té com a objectiu analitzar si el mètode presentat en aquesta recerca es troba present en un centre d'estudis d'aquí Barcelona que es diu STUCOM o si per contra, segueixen enfocats en els mètodes més tradicionals d'aprenentatge. Aquest centre es troba a prop de Plaça Catalunya, és un centre privat i concertat on ensenyen Batxillerat i

formació professional. Aquesta recerca es centrarà als estudiants de primer de Batxillerat, específicament hi hauran cinc participants, sense especificar la modalitat donat que a les classes les quatre modalitats estan barrejades, les modalitats que ofereixen a la STUCOM són: humanitats, ciències socials, tecnològic i científic. Els estudiants vénen de la mateixa ciutat de Barcelona i també de poblacions properes, les classes són inclusives per tant estudiants amb diferents habilitats també es troben a la mateixa classe. A més a més, el treball té com a objectiu analitzar si el DUA ajuda a les necessitats individuals dels estudiants de primer de Batxillerat durant l'adquisició de la segona llengua.

Paraules clau:

Disseny Universal per L'aprenentatge, Intel·ligències Múltiples, educació, competències comunicatives, Aprenentatge Cooperatiu

Educadores y psicólogos han desarrollado nuevos métodos de enseñanza para entender con mayor profundidad los diferentes métodos para mejorar el aprendizaje del segundo idioma, teniendo en cuenta la diversidad de los estudiantes para adaptarse a sus necesidades. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo identificar metodologías de aprendizaje más actuales juntamente con el método del Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje como eje central de las otras metodologías que serán explicadas aquí. También tiene como objetivo analizar si dicho método está presente en un centro de estudios de Barcelona nombrado STUCOM o si por el contrario, siguen enfocados en los métodos más tradicionales de aprendizaje. Este centro se encuentra cerca de Plaça Catalunya, es un centro privado y concertado donde enseñan Bachillerato y Formación Profesional. Esta investigación se centrará en los estudiantes de primero de bachillerato, concretamente habrán cinco participantes, sin especificar la modalidad de su itinerario ya que las clases tienen todas las modalidades mezcladas, en este centro ofrecen: humanidades, ciencias sociales, científico y tecnológico. Los estudiantes proceden de la misma ciudad de Barcelona y también de poblaciones adyacentes, las clases son inclusivas por lo que estudiantes con diferentes capacidades también se encuentran en ellas. Además, este trabajo tendrá como objetivo analizar si el DUA ayuda a las necesidades individuales de los estudiantes de primero de bachillerato durante la adquisición del segundo idioma.

Palabras clave:

Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje, Inteligencias Múltiples, educación, competencias comunicativas, aprendizaje cooperativo.

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1. Introduction

It is known that every student is unique and consequently, each one learns in a particular way. However, the educational system believes that most people can learn in the same way, hence, a supposedly fair education is the one that teaches all students in the same way. There are theories such as the Universal Design for Learning, the Communicative Approach and the Multiple Intelligences theory - which was developed by Gardner, who sought a way to understand how the mind works- that claim the possibility of adapting materials able to fit all of the students by taking into practice different teaching methods and using a variety of resources so that every learning aspect is covered by different approaches.

This research parts from the idea that Universal Design for Learning proposes a different way of designing the curriculum, making sure that every students' needs will be covered. In other words, this methodological approach wants to adapt the curriculum so that all students are provided with the same opportunities to learn. This research aims to know how the UDL supports students' individual needs and how it activates the different parts of the brain: 'through universal design for learning, we provide a structured framework to account for much of the variability of all the individuals in a given learning environment to design that environment to be flexible'. (Meyer et al, p.56).

There is also an approach to new teaching methods for second language acquisition, the Natural Approach, as well as the already mentioned UDL theory which proposes an adaptation of the school curriculum using Gardner's MI theory. UDL wants to cover the needs of all the students throughout and adapt the contents of the curriculum. This research intends to focus on the students and how these theories can help them improve while taking into account their motivational aspects.

This paper will expose the objective, in addition to the hypothesis of this research and will be followed by the theoretical framework. When it comes to the methodology part, this research intends to do some questionnaires to some students that are taking the first course of batxillerat in English classes and witness how these classes are done to check the methodologies that are used. Then, the results would come next, however, due to the actual situation of the country, it appears to be quite difficult to perform these questionnaires.

By doing this research, it is aimed to see if in STUCOM they take into account batxillerat students' variabilities by incorporating theories such as UDL or if, by contrast, they follow a more traditional teaching methodology.

2. Objectives and Hypothesis

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To analyse how UDL supports students' individual needs
2. To observe the implementation of UDL activities into 1st batxillerat stage and analyse its effectiveness.

The hypothesis by which I part are several: Is the approach used in class useful for batxillerat students in order to process the information? Taking into account the UDL, what are the strategies that batxillerat students use to study the English Language as a FL autonomously?

3. Theoretical Framework

This section is going to present the UDL approach and multiple methods that are related to it which also help learners while learning an L2. These methods will be divided into sub-sections, that are: Multiple Intelligences, Cooperative Learning, Motivation and Natural Approach, this one will contain subsection: the Communicative approach

3.1. UDL

UDL is an educational framework that guides the design for the curriculum - including goals, materials, methods, and assessments- its aim is to give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. According to UDL, barriers to learning are in the design and not in the learners. This approach is based on neuroscience and on evidence-based

educational practices. UDL wants to implement more flexible methods of teaching to adapt itself to different learner styles to improve the learning experience and the results for all students.

UDL had its origins in UD which was firstly used on architecture. In its early days, it was meant to design products and environments that would attract most people. In 1984 the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) was founded and CAST applied the concept of UD to change the educational curriculum.

According to Meyer et. al, in its beginning, they focused on the problems of diverse learners who were considered to be “in the margins”, those who struggled with learning, they tried to find solutions for helping them outside the class to overcome their barriers. They considered that “integrating these tools into students’ and teachers’ lives at schools was a big challenge” (2). They began creating individual versions of digital books adapted to each learner’s needs afterwards, they realized they could create a major digital book that embedded all these options with a customizable interface so each learner could find the supports that were useful for them. “[T]his led to a major breakthrough in our overall approach: the realization that the curriculum, rather than the learners, was the problem” (Meyer et. al, 3)

In the early 1990s, they changed their approach to addressing the schools’ problems rather than students’ ones and later they coined this new approach with the name of UDL.

According to UDL, the purpose of education nowadays should not be knowledge acquisition but becoming a “learner expert” (Meyer et. al, page 8); becoming an expert is not a fixed goal, it is a process which is aimed at teachers and students. An expert learner is referred for someone who is always evolving by using both introspection and guided feedback from others, a key thing when being an expert is self-knowledge as a learner, this means, it is important to be aware of your strengths and weaknesses where the learner can develop better its characteristics, among others, we define an expert learner as one who is “purposeful and motivated” (the “why” of learning), resourceful and knowledgeable (the “what” of learning), and strategic and goal-directed (the “how” of learning)” (Meyer et al, 25). As Meyer et al say in their book, expert learners know that they can improve through effort and dedication in addition, they also know how to solve problems and adapt themselves to new strategies if the ones they were using are not helping them (29-30).

A) Guidelines

“Modern neuroscience views the brain as a complex web of integrated and overlapping networks, and learning is seen as changes in the connections within and between these networks” (Meyer et. al, page 50). This view of neuroscience is relevant to education since it deals with issues of learning and also, it provides an understanding of learning variability, as Meyer et. al say: “by providing options relevant to the learning goal and learner variability can we create learning environments that are effective for all” (125); hence, it is necessary to change the teaching approach to adapt it to multiple variabilities, that is why UDL guidelines became an important point since they “offer insight into specific kinds of systematic learner variability and specific ways to build curricular flexibility around this variability” (Meyer et al, page 14). Their bases are on the idea that the standard learner does not exist, every student learns in different ways and to be successful, educators must be more flexible in the way they teach so that every student has an opportunity to be successful, “[w]e know that building flexibility into learning environments is essential for student engagement and success, the guidelines help us apply that concept in specific situations and for specific reasons”(Meyer et al, 110). The Universal Design for learning says in the book, the Guidelines are created to support those who have to decide the school curriculum, their goal was to provide guidance that could be useful to educational designers (Meyer et.al, 125). According to UDL, educators should follow three principles to design successful learning experiences. The guidelines are organised around the three UDL principles, these are: the multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation and multiple means of action and expression (Meyer et al, 7). These guidelines help us to understand “specific and predictable kinds of variability” we will find as educators (Meyer et al, 125). Guidelines provide concrete suggestions as checkpoints for how to address variability among students, there is no need to know our students in advance to plan the range of variability because populations are usually predictable (Meyer et. al, 110). UDL claims that emotions and cognition need to be involved in the process of learning, hence, students need to feel a positive environment conversely, if they feel the environment threatening, even instructions that are well designed will not be enough (Meyer et. al, 14)

In every Guideline, this research will also talk about their location in the brain lightly to add some context and relate it to the neuroscience that UDL studies.

- Engagement: represents the “why” of learning

To acquire a good engagement, the curriculum has to be provided with options, so that each learner feels a positive environment, but they also have to feel challenged. If teachers only provide one approach it means that students will be forced to work in ways that are not optimal for them. A psychologist of the early 20th century, Lev Vygotsky, created the concept of Zone of Proximal Development which it means that learners in order to learn need to feel challenged while learning but still they need to be able to achieve this goal with help, in other words, it is important to challenge students but bearing in mind where they are and placing their challenge in an achievable point, in other words, the challenge should be only a step further than where they already are. Therefore, as Vygotsky theory agrees, the challenge for students must be personalized so it fits each student. Engagement should provide options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence and also for self-regulation. Regarding the brain part, it is called “affective”, it is in the centre of the brain. In connection to the guideline, this network monitors the environment to set priorities, either the internal and the external one, it is related to motivation and it also involves the students’ behaviour and their eagerness to learn (Meyer et al, 54).

According to *The UDL Guidelines*, affect is crucial when it comes to learning and each learner differs in how they can be engaged or motivated to learn, therefore, there is no such thing as a perfect method to motivate all students, “there is no single tool, method, or path to success that is optimal for every student” (Meyer et al, page 124). A study by Dörnyei, Zoltan and Ushioda claimed that there were areas that fomented motivation, those were : creating a good relationship with students – listening to them-, having clear goals during lessons both individually and collectively and making teaching as high in quality as possible by modelling enthusiasm and giving students an enjoyable classroom experience (321-323).

In relation to recruiting interest, it is very important to bear in mind that not all learners are going to be interested in the same thing, but more importantly, the information that does not engage students will be unapproachable for them. Teachers should provide learners with as much autonomy as possible by offering choices such as the colour, the design and the tools and also by keeping in mind the level of challenge and, if possible, involving them in setting their own personal, academic and behavioural goals. Moreover, it is important to relate what they are learning to their culture or to something that is of

interest for them and also including activities that foster the use of imagination and providing tasks that allow participation and experimentation. Besides, and recalling what has been said previously, creating a safe space for learners is fundamental, teachers should reduce threats by creating an accepting and supportive climate inside the classroom, varying the level of risk and creating class routines “learning is achieved by employing a curriculum with options built in such that each learner will appraise the environment positively in part because each student can find the right level of challenge and support” (Meyer et. al, 50).

To create engagement, effort and persistence should be sustained throughout the process by keeping in students’ minds their final goal so they do not lose track of what they want to reach, and for those for whom a final goal feels overwhelming, it can be divided into short-term objectives. Also, teachers should provide alternative tools to fit different students. UDL has to be flexible to address variability since by doing this it is easier to meet specific students’ needs

It is critically important to design learning contexts that offer flexibility in the domain of engagement, so that each student can find a way into the learning experience, remain persistent in the face of challenge or failure, and continue to build self-knowledge (Meyer et al, 91)

As the quote says, it is important to provide different choice levels according to each need. Furthermore, fostering collaboration and communication is an important issue however, this point will be further developed and understood in the cooperative learning point. When it comes to assessment, providing an assessment that is relevant, constructive and accessible will help to stop feeling feedback as something negative, feedback should be positive, effort emphasize, directed to improving and should also provide tools to identify error patterns. Self-regulations are considered to be the intrinsic ability of a student to regulate their emotions and motivations and sustain the effort to meet those goals, besides the ability to seek help or adjust their expectations and strategies (Meyer et al, 90), the problem is that in nowadays system, classrooms do not teach these abilities as it is considered to be implicit in the curriculum itself .To foster this inner ability is a good idea to provide checklists or reminders also by offering charts or templates teachers can help them to learn how to collect data and self-monitor their progress.

The goal in engagement is to become experts who are purposeful and motivated.

- Representation: the “what” of learning

Representation takes into consideration perception, language and symbols and finally, comprehension. As Meyer et. al say “a learning context with these options [representation] presents few barriers, regardless of the variations in biology and background of the students” (99), which means that if educators follow these guidelines few problems will be found for students. Concerning the brain part, it is placed on the recognition level and it is placed in the posterior parts of the brain (Meyer et al, 54)

When it comes to perception, learners do not comprehend information in a single way, that is why, as it has been said before, information should be presented in multiple ways. Moreover, multiple representations allow students to make connections in the concepts. The information should be presented in a way that is perceptible to the learners, otherwise learning will be impossible. “To reduce barriers to learning, it is important to ensure that key information is equally perceptible to all learners” (*The UDL Guidelines*), it can be done by offering students ways of customizing the display of information and providing the documents in advance so they can manipulate them by changing the colours, the sizes,. and by providing alternatives for auditory and visual information, for instance, if a video is going to be displayed, teachers can make sure that it also has text “simple media options such as text-to-speech, animations to show processes or images to expand on verbal ideas are a start” (Meyer et al, 102) among other things.

When talking about language and symbols to some students, linguistic representations can be difficult to understand or maybe the non-linguistic ones even they can have problems with some of their symbols, or maybe with the graphs, this is why multiple representations should take actions for clarity and comprehensibility to all learners. Regarding understanding across languages, educators can make all the information be in the dominant language, link vocabulary to definitions and pronunciations, provide links to glossaries or even using pictures or videos for more clarification.

To make comprehension easier for students, it is a good idea to activate background knowledge as in this way information will be more likely to be assimilated, or by emphasizing key elements, highlighting patterns, guiding information processing even

with visualization. Showing that they know how to incorporate what they have learned into new contexts is a useful way to see if they have acquired the knowledge.

The goal for representation is to be resourceful and knowledgeable.

- Action and expression: the “how” of learning

Action and expression checkpoints are physical actions, expression and communication and executive functions. Regarding neuroscience, this part is called the strategic network and it is placed on the front of the brain, research shows that this area is the “locus of our abilities to act skilfully and strategically”. (Meyer et al, 74-75).

Learners differ in how they can express what they know and how they have acquired that knowledge what it is called, their learning experience. Because of this, each student depending on their capacities will approach the input in very different ways, for example, those who do good in writing texts maybe are not that good in doing speeches. Action and expression require strategy, practice and organization, and learners as it happened in the other guidelines, can differ.

According to Meyer et al, “[I]t is important to provide options for physical activities such as varied response methods and access to a variety of tools and assistive technologies” (102). Teachers should provide options for physical activities such as offering variabilities for rate, timing and speed among others. It is also important to provide materials with which learners can interact. To provide the same opportunities for students to interact with learning, educators should ensure multiple means of accessibility of the materials. Apart from providing learners with different tools, it is also necessary to teach them how to use them.

For building expression and communication, it is important to provide an alternative for expression, so the student can show in a suitable way for them the knowledge, the important point for strategic expertise

[...] is providing options for expression and communication including multiple media, multiple tools for construction and composition, and support for the development of fluency through graduated support in practice and performance. (Meyer et al,102)

Therefore, not only it reduces barriers in specific media but also it increases the opportunities for all learners to develop better expression in different media. Changing the media by which communication and feedback are distributed can also be a good idea, in other words, instead of using traditional tools, more modern ones can be used as they are considered to be easily understood for students.

Finally, to internalize the knowledge for executive functions which are those functions that allow humans to overcome impulsive reactions and instead help them to set long-term goals and plan effective strategies for reaching those goals, they allow learners to take advantage of their environment, executive functions “have very limited capacity due to working memory” (*The UDL Guidelines*) it happens that when these functions have to be devoted to managing low-level skills that are not automatized yet or because of the lack of fluency with executive strategies, they cannot take consideration of high-level functions which are their real duty. UDL involves efforts to expand executive capacity by scaffolding lower level skills and by scaffolding higher level executive skills and consequently they are more effective and developed. When guiding an appropriate goal setting, teachers cannot assume that students know how to guide themselves so they should provide objectives or schedules; it is important to support planning and strategy development since students should get used to thinking before start acting and also they shall learn how to show and explain their work, techniques such as making students summarize a concept in their own words can give teachers good data to know if their students are understanding the concepts or if any modifications should be done . It is also a good idea for educators to “provide checklists and project planning templates for understanding the problem” (*The UDL Guidelines*); besides, providing short-term objectives that will guide to long-term goals should also be facilitating managing information and resources, by providing templates or tools about how to collect data and how to organise information for instance, by providing checklists. Finally, enhancing the capacity for monitoring progress such as asking questions to guide self- monitoring and reflection, considering that learning cannot occur without feedback , “assessment should be flexible in order to meet learner variability, henceforth, more than one means of response in multiple media since in this way students can show their skills” (Meyer et al,139-146), options can be customized to provide feedback that is more explicit, informative and accessible, asking questions to self-monitor is a good idea, also showing representations of progress, using templates that guide self-reflection on quality.

It has to actively inform and involve learners, it should provide feedback in a way that both learner and teacher can develop an idea of how to improve the results, teaching is more effective when teaching can learn about the learner progress through feedback (Meyer et al,139-146)

The goal for action and expression is to be strategic and goal directed.

B) Curriculum

According to Meyer et al, instructors should remember that commitment with engagement relies upon an adaptable educational program on which each learner can discover their balance among challenge and support(11) .UDL puts students at the centre of learning instead of putting the curriculum hence if a student has difficulties while coping with the curriculum it has to be changed in order to adapt itself to students. Therefore, the curriculum should have the flexibility to reduce unnecessary barriers, “instead of seeing variability as a problem, we now understand it to be an actively positive force in learning for the group as a whole” (Meyer et al, 10).

3.1.1. Multiple Intelligences by Gardner

Multiple Intelligences are essential to UDL for the reason that without it, it would be impossible to create materials that could adapt to each student since MI is the crucial part to develop different materials involving more than one approach.

Multiple Intelligences theory sets its basis on the belief that human beings are gifted with multiple abilities surpassing what could be measured in traditional intelligence tests, that is to say, these intelligences are innate, however, they can also be worked on for further development. This theory was developed by Howard Gardner in 1983, despite the fact he was not an educator, he wanted to explain how the mind works. Those who support this theory believe that intelligence, taking into account a traditional point of view, does not take into consideration all the abilities human beings use when solving problems. With MI centred instruction, there is a shift from a 'one size fits all' to a learning paradigm in which instruction is directed to the strengths of all students in a class. (Mckethan et al). However, as Conti says, this theory has also been criticized for not having ‘empirical evidence’, nevertheless Gardner and his supporters argue differently: they believe that

this theory sees human intelligence as a 'complex web of abilities', they adapt classroom instructions so students can show their strengths and improve their weaknesses besides giving students the opportunity to show in different ways what they have learned. Unlike the MI theory, teaching in a traditional way includes students learning the same thing in the same way and using the same measures to evaluate all of them. "[...] teaching and learning in higher education institutions is often conservative and teacher-centred, and privileges certain kinds of abilities over others" (Mckethan et. al, 432). By contrast, MI offers students the possibility to express and show what they have understood in different ways. As Madkour et al paraphrased in their article, previous research indicated that conventional teaching systems just supported learning grammatical rules by heart which has a negative impact in their speaking and social aptitudes which they need to accomplish to become an expert in the language (qtd in Madkour et al, 93)

Originally there were seven intelligences: the linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Then the naturalistic and the existential were added. As Gardner pointed out, when students identify their MI, they can understand their strengths and weaknesses. Encouraging them to develop their MI can help them become motivated to acquire fundamental skills for learning English. Furthermore, teachers can take advantage of their students' MI and develop activities that suit them best. (Madkour et al, 92-93)

3.1.2. Cooperative Learning

As it has been mentioned in the guidelines, cooperative learning has an important point in UDL since working cooperatively is also fundamental for acquiring a language "active engagement with learning is gained through social processes"(Meyer et al, 11) that is why cooperative learning will be taking part in this research.

Cooperative learning is a change in the interpersonal reward structure of the classroom, from a competitive reward structure to a cooperative one'(Slavin). Cooperative learning emphasizes the importance of social interactions among students by working in small groups. As Loeser points out, 'cooperative learning has an impact on academic achievement, self-esteem, confidence, interethnic relationships, and attitudes toward the learning process'(Loeser). Five elements are to take into account, as Loeser paraphrases in his article, when it comes to cooperative learning, these are: positive interdependence,

face-to-face interactions, individual and group accountability, interpersonal skills and opportunities for group processing (qtd in Loeser). When it comes to positive interdependence, students need to depend on one another in order to complete the task, the teacher can assign students roles and materials then students need to agree on which strategies to use and how the final product will be like in order to gain a group reward. In face-to-face interactions there should be a space inside the class for the teams to meet and be able to talk and agree on the final version. The teacher should provide ways of solving disagreements and to talk positively. In individual and group accountability an evaluation will be provided to individuals and to the whole group, where each member will have a crucial role in order to make the whole group succeed, rewards and feedback will be given. As social interaction and peer relationships are crucial for this method of learning, sometimes students must be taught social skills.

Loeser also quotes in his article an essay by Archer-Kath et al and states that "for cooperative learning groups to be productive, members must ask each other for information, give each other information, ask for and give each other help when they need it, and support and praise each other's efforts to learn" (qtd in Loeser). It is also very important that every student reflects on what went wrong during the project both individually and as a group and how the interactions affected the group performance. As Loeser points out "Cooperative learning aims to create situations within the classroom in which students apply the social skills necessary to successfully interact and contribute to future society" (Loeser).

In cooperative learning, teams can be grouped being heterogeneous, homogeneous or just being randomly chosen. On the first one, the main aim is to select students of different levels, abilities, races, language proficiencies and learning styles, among others, so that there will be students which will have different perspectives on the topics, for instance. On the second one, the students will have the same abilities, language proficiencies or personalities. In addition as Loeser quotes, research research has shown heterogeneous groups are the most beneficial for cooperative situations since they represent a range of different characteristics such as: different abilities, ethnicities, backgrounds and interests. (qtd in Loeser)

In cooperative learning is believed to be beneficial assigning roles to students so that each of them has a specific function that is essential to the success of the group. As Loeser paraphrases, Mastropieri et al indicated that "giving a specific role to each student in a

group can promote cooperation and group efficiency" (qtd in Loeser). He also points out that "researchers generally agree that teachers should rarely if ever, assign one grade to a group for a final product" (Loeser)

Numerous studies indicate that student engagement and attitudes toward learning increase significantly in cooperative learning situations. In Loeser's article, he also mentions Slavin and Cooper's work where they highlighted that as a consequence of heterogeneous groups and positive social interaction among students of different racial and ethnic background they can build 'cross-ethnic friendships [and] reduce racial stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice' (qtd in Loeser). Hence, cooperative learning also helps student engagement and achievement among a culturally diverse population. Furthermore, Tran paraphrases some researchers that have proven that students doing cooperative learning demonstrate a 'better belief and performance of personal and academic collaboration than those of individualistic learning'. As Tran quotes, cooperative learning is known to increase students' learning motivation (qtd in Tran, 12-12).

In addition to all of this, cooperative learning has also proven to develop skills for solving, "critical thinking and interpersonal skills, in particular when students share their ideas during learning tasks" (qtd in Tran, 13). Cooperative learning benefits students to boost learning 'it is recognized to be an effective learning model and sound pedagogical approach to promote and socialize learning among students in any level of education'(qtd in Suatarman, 204). Besides, Suatarman also paraphrases Motaei who stated that students showed better performance after using cooperative learning in general English; he claimed that foreign language acquisition anxiety is the issue that educators have been trying to solve (qtd in Suatarman, 205)

Suatarman, also paraphrases Bruxbury & Tsai who applied cooperative learning model in order to overcome language learning anxiety. Students show confidence in language learning after they are involved in the cooperative learning model (qtd in Suatarman, 203).

3.1.3. Natural Approach

Taking into account UDL guidelines that believe in multiple representations, it is a good idea to talk about natural approaches and communicative ones, since they engage

students by using real language in class and they focus on interactions which can help learners acquire the language while speaking as it is believed that acquiring a language can only happen if there is communication.

The Natural Approach proposed by Krashen and Terrel can be described as a method that sees the learning of first and second language as similar (Rasakumaran, 102). The Natural Approach uses techniques and activities that involve different sources in order to provide comprehensible input, “the natural approach sets forth an exciting set of principles for the planning of second language courses at all levels” (Goldin, 338). In Natural Approach the teacher only speaks the target language and class time is devoted to providing input for the acquisition of the language “classroom time is devoted almost exclusively to communicative activities; errors not impeding communication are ignored” (Goldin, 338). During the class, students can use the target language or their first language, nonetheless, they are encouraged to use the target one. At the end of the course, evaluation is based on communicative competence. “The main hypothesis of the theory in the Natural Approach is that the acquisition of a language can only be achieved by the understanding of messages” Krashen and Terrel believed that developing proficiency in a language was the result of using it in natural communicative ways. (Rasakumaran, 102)

3.1.3.1 Communicative Approach

“Communicative approach is aimed at breaking language barrier giving learners an opportunity not only to understand studied material but also to keep up the conversation on the relevant topic and, as a result, start speaking English fluently and thinking in it as well” (Andronova, 103). The Communicative approach focuses on communication and on developing a student’s ability to express themselves through the target language. This approach believes on creating meaningful communication like basing itself on real-life situations, rather than learning by heart language structures, “the ability to learn a non-native language is determined by the pace with which the learners have developed communicative competence”(Renukadevi,75-76). Communicative competence means that learners while learning the target language, develop all skills – reading, listening, speaking and writing – eventhough speaking is the most developed one, they also develop

good pronunciation skills while learning vocabulary and grammar, this can only be acquired through the influence of communicative language teaching.

Being communicative competent means that the learner knows how to use the language in different contexts, such as formal and informal. Some criteria should be achieved in order to talk about being communicative competent, which are: the speaker should be able to use language in varied contexts, should understand different types of texts and be able to manage the communication even if they have limited language knowledge. There are books that are aimed for communicative teaching, however, they should meet some criteria: they should have authentic material, they should also meet an appropriate level, which means, that the material should be chosen according to the students' level and it should be interesting for students since they are going to be more interested if the text meets their criteria. (Andronova,103)

4. Methodological Approach

This section is devoted to the explanation, discussion and justification of the sources that were used in order to get the data. This part will develop information about who were the participants and how they were chosen, which were the instruments used and finally, how the data was collected.

4.1. Participants

A questionnaire survey was conducted in STUCOM which is a semi-private centre to interview five participants from first course of batxillerat, in the class there are a total of 15 students, gender mixture is more or less equal. To try to make it fairer, the participants will be two boys and three girls, to cover further differences, participants will be chosen from different parts of the class because in this way maybe they have different backgrounds or at least their opinions will differ more than if they are friends. Regarding the level, they have a regular level in English therefore, teachers have to make them feel more engaged than in higher level classes at least from what I had the opportunity to

observe. This same class will be observed during three or four lessons to see different activities.

4.2. Instruments

Materials according to UDL, should align to goals by providing opportunities for teachers to engage learners, should engage learners to become proactive (Meyer et al,152)

Paper questionnaire was designed to elicit participants' opinions towards some questions, the purpose for this questionnaire is to know the students' opinion in relation to what they think of their class activities and how they like to study, in other words, what they like to do when studying to learn the content. The purpose is to know, in case UDL was implemented in the school, if it helps them while studying. The questionnaires will not take longer than five minutes, and participants will be questioned before and after class, one at a time. The questions for the students are:

1. What kind of activities do you enjoy the most in class?
2. What are the activities you find the most boring of all in class?
3. Do you usually study using the notes you have taken in class, using the books, the teacher's power points or any online resources she gives you? If you have chosen the last option, tell us which resource she usually uses.
4. In class, do you do activities that involve movement, music, theatre or even activities outside the physical classroom? (choose as many options as you want)
5. When you study at home, do you usually do diagrams, sing the lesson, create a story with the lesson or any other thing in order to remember what you have been studying?

As for the class observation, I used a grid to check it while being in class items that were evaluated, the reason for this survey was to know if in the class the teacher implemented UDL activities, besides analysing their effectiveness, this is, did they help batxillerat students to comprehend the information or to perform the activities adapting them to their needs or abilities? The grid has numbers, from one to five, being one the 'never' option and number five the 'always'. The analysed items were:

1. The topic is being addressed taking into account more than one MI.
2. The teacher engages the students to participate.
3. The teacher takes into account the learners' interests by offering choices of content and tools.

4. The teacher offers adjustable levels.
5. Cooperative activities are taken into account if not for these sessions for other ones and a final project would be carried out afterwards.¹
6. Different ways of giving instructions are implemented.

4.3. Data collection

Before going to the first class, the teacher agreed to participate in this research. The procedure was explained to her, I would not interfere during the classes I would just be at the back of the class with my grid during three or four classes. Before the first class begins the students were informed about this research and they were told that five participants were going to be requested voluntarily, that is to say, if they do not want to participate they could say it and they would not be asked to.

The teacher can help to choose the participants who are going to be interviewed as she knows them better. After seeing how the students behave during the first class, the first participant would be interviewed after the class finished, individually. On the second day, one participant would be interviewed before the class and another one afterwards, just as it would happen on the third day.

After collecting all the data, it would be analysed qualitatively to do the research and I would take the statistics out of them in order to get to a conclusion. I would compare the answers and do my statistics taking into account what I saw in class and what the students answered.

The questionnaires would be taken in paper just like the grid. Getting this information would take three or four classes which means that it would only take one or two weeks to collect all the information.

5. Results

Due to the COVID situation I was not able to take into practice any part of my research, however, as I had the opportunity to witness some of the classes of 1st of batxillerat I

¹ This one will be answered by further comments the teacher may do in class during these sessions or instead, if she does not say anything regarding this point, I will go and ask her directly.

could have some idea of how the results would be. As regards students results I expected that they said their favourite activities were those that did not imply the book such as their magazine with real-life things in English and on the other hand, the one they could find more boring would be those activities following the book such as grammar exercises. When talking about how they study I cannot get to a conclusion, however, I remember that some of the students created songs and other stories in order to remember what they have studied in class. To continue with, movement is not taken into practice inside class nevertheless, their class activities include music and ICT resources in which they have to move and get into teams.

On the other hand, inside the class, most of the activities are not done taking into account MI still, teachers try to engage students to participate and classes are dynamic and speaking activities have a real impact. Content is usually related to what they like, they watch movies or series they are interested in, the teacher really involves herself on getting to know what they like and relating the class to some topic of their interest. Cooperative work is also done so students can help each other with the activities they have problems with. Taking into consideration what I could see, I cannot say they offer adjustable levels inside the class, they split classes taking into account their level, but inside the class they do not do any further divisions; neither have I seen the teacher giving different ways of instructions. Because of this, I would dare to say that they are evolving and changing from traditional education to a more innovative style by including ICT resources in class which will also involve UDL, through listening to music and giving real-life content and also relate it to the things they like. Nonetheless, my final conclusion in this aspect, would be that they still have a long path to reach a more developed UDL stage however, they are on the right way to achieve it.

6. Conclusions

To finish with, “UDL offers educators and students an opportunity to come to know one another well so they can continually negotiate ways to balance demands and resources” (Meyer et al, 163). UDL gives us the opportunity to know our students and engage with them and make them our companions through the learning path while creating a special bond which would help them to increase their levels of motivation and class engagement.

I think nowadays is more important than ever to take into consideration different learning methods and strategies and to put them into practice; furthermore, due to the actual circumstances, it is the best moment to implement new resources and break the book barrier since it is more important than ever to reach our students and make them feel they are in a supportive environment. It is said that nowadays we are preparing students for jobs that have not been created yet, by making them expert and self-regulated learners, we can help them to adapt themselves to new circumstances. In class, level of challenge should be taken into serious consideration since ages are the same but learning levels, capacities and intelligences are not thus, we should provide students with more options and let them also choose from controlled activities to allow them to spark their creativity. As I was not able to implement any of my instruments, I am going to reflect on my research, at least on what I intended to get from it. I think my research can help students achieve their academic goals or even discovering they have academic goals since it is focused on UDL which implies a change inside the school system; students can succeed academically speaking, the only thing they need is teachers that can adapt the materials to the different abilities students may have. My key points in this study are the incorporation -on a certain level- to UDL of cooperative learning, natural approach and motivation, these factors are taken into consideration, as I personally believe, inside UDL but I think that this approach should take advantage of all the studies that have been taken in these methods and implement them inside UDL. In my opinion, this would make UDL more complex and more complete. In my study, the key points I had were being able to talk to the students and get to know how they use the information they get in class and if they consider it useful when studying. I think it is very important to listen to students and take into consideration their point of view to adapt the learning experience. On the other hand, there is always room to improve and my research could also be improved by studying more classes and courses, drawing from the premise of doing this research in the same centre, I think that this study could also be done to 2nd of batxillerat and also to vocational training where students, at least by what I witnessed, have more difficulties when learning and I believe that incorporating UDL in their classes would be an extraordinary way to help them. To finish with, even though I was not able to do my research I will take advantage of everything I have learned, and I will put it into practice in my own classes.

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