

**Educators' experiences in training CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning)  
methodology**

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### **Abstract**

Educators require specialized training in order to effectively address the academic demands of the institution and adjust to social transformations. In response to this need, Universidad Santo Tomás has implemented a voluntary training program aimed at teachers, through a diploma course in CLIL under the leadership of the Bucaramanga branch. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to conduct a qualitative analysis of the experiences lived by teachers during this training process, addressing aspects such as their motivation and commitment. The aim is to show that both the acquisition of linguistic competences and the mastery of contents play a fundamental role in the adequate development of this methodology. In addition, factors such as intercultural understanding and the perception of its relevance in the practical environment are considered, which will have a significant impact on the successful implementation of the knowledge acquired.

***Key concepts:*** *EFL community, Language Proficiency, CLIL, Teacher's experiences.*

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### **Contextualization**

In an increasingly competitive and demanding world, it is essential to invest in excellent quality education that not only offers the necessary tools for correct professional development, but that goes much further by understanding the challenges of the globalized world while providing facilities so that these can be faced and overcome more easily, making the students stand out from the rest and achieve success both at a personal and professional level.

According to what the Ministry of Education states in section 11 of chapter 2 undergraduate graduates must have a minimum level of B1 and higher education institutions must ensure that graduates of all Bachelor's degree programs have level B1 or higher in a second language, corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), verified with the results of the Saber Pro-Test, CEFR standardized exams, or referred to in the Updated List of Exams published by the Ministry of National Education.

Thus, positioning the acquisition of a second language such as English as one of the main challenges faced at the national level not only by students but also by their educators, who are the end of the day are in charge of fulfilling such educational objectives and preparing people by equipping them properly with as many tools as possible to face this world. Likewise, in order to face this situation, education institutions and their tutors do not just rely on the knowledge they already have, but they are in a constant search to acquire new strategies that allow them not only to be one step ahead of the challenges but also to be able to correctly direct and guide their students taking them to stand out in this competitive world.

A clear example of this is Universidad Santo Tomás, a private, non-profit, national Catholic Higher Education Institution that has different campuses located in Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Medellín,

Tunja, and Villavicencio in the face-to-face mode and 23 CAU University Attention Centers in the Open and Distance mode (Universidad Santo Tomás, 2024), recognized for having many High-Quality Accreditation Programs, an institutional accreditation of high-quality multicampus, in addition to the International Institutional Accreditation granted by the International Institute for Quality Assurance.

Universidad Santo Tomás responded to this language need with the vision of enriching the common standard programs, as shown in the development plan 2016-2019 of the Bucaramanga Campus, where the incorporation of CLIL-type methodological strategies is established. This aims to not only improve the level of foreign language proficiency in the academic community but also implement strategies to make the intercultural aspect visible and position it as a fundamental element in the processes of bilingualism. Thus, the diploma Training on Methodology and Didactics for the Implement Content Subjects in a Foreign Language (CLIL) was introduced for educators of any academic program from any campus who wish to join during the Summer School.

Therefore, this research project was based on these educators who voluntarily got involved in this diploma course and pretends to get to know in a deep way their general experiences, to listen and see their perceptions, how they felt during the classes and sessions, what are their reflections, views, and position on the implementation of this methodology, and especially getting to know what is the impact that this diploma course can have not only professionally but personally.

Furthermore, the researcher believes that this study could be very enriching for the university itself, as Wunsch (1994) stated, the quality of an academic institution depends on the quality of the work and learning experience of its faculty, staff, and students, so this research permits the institution to have an external view of the process their educators lived through this diploma in order to do an



analysis and reflection that may allow them as an institution to take the corresponding actions, they believe will help educators to continue improving their studying-teaching experiences and through this being in a continuous process of quality improvement in the university.

Finally, this study allows the researcher and the readers to have a better understanding of English teaching and learning contexts in EFL education (Research Subproject 4. Medina, M., Bonilla, M., López, D., Hernández, E., Rodríguez, S.M., 2016) as a full characterization of the experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and phenomena that educators live in this specific educational context, bringing a light about how to continue growing in the CLIL knowledge in the institution, helping others educators to feel motivated to take the diploma while seeing from this specific view some positive aspects this experience could give them to their own teaching and learning contexts, such as promoting project-based learning, bringing reality to the classroom, and opening a new perspective about how it feels to take their students further not only with content but also with a globalized language, culture and free communication that will help them to develop themselves even more, despite the fact that they are already practicing their profession.

More specifically, as described in the European Framework for CLIL teacher education (2011), CLIL teachers develop a greater ability to identify and overcome obstacles in learning content, adopt multiple cultural perspectives, promote critical thinking and the ability to relate new knowledge to personal experiences. In addition, it is emphasized that linguistic awareness is fostered among students by explicitly working on the acquisition of technical, semi-technical and academic language vocabulary. Thus, allowing educators not only to define and update their pedagogical and content competencies, but also their level of linguistic competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference CEFR, and even to manage their functions in terms of sociocultural learning.

Highlighting also, that for the degree in English as a foreign language this will be an opportunity to expand its vision taking as an example the experiences of these educators to compare them with those of the pre-service teachers in training, extracting from this research as much information as possible that may become useful for the adaptation and improvements in the educational processes of students and why not, of the same educators in charge of directing each academic space in the degree.

### **Research Statement**

The interest in CLIL on the part of the researcher began while studying the academic space "Pedagogical Practice" (2019), in which she was asked to integrate this methodology in her classroom activities as a teacher in training. The research at that time on the subject was conducted autonomously through the internet, in addition to requesting help from some tutors at the university and, finally, using books as a guide. Later, a few months after completing this academic space, she was informed by an educator that a diploma course in CLIL was being developed exclusively for teachers at the University of Santo Tomas. From that moment on, her curiosity was aroused, which led her not to miss the opportunity to approach it and explore further, from an external role of observation, the experiences of educators from her own university during the diploma course.

In particular, the curriculum development and teachers training unit of the Bucaramanga campus decided to create this totally free diploma course, Training on Methodology and Didactics for the Implement Content Subjects in a Foreign Language – CLIL, for students of an average of B2 level of proficiency, aimed at professors from all over the country and from any program who voluntarily decide to enroll, which consists of three main moments starting in the summer school and aims to empower instructors from different academic programs to develop didactic strategies while selecting and adapting materials in a foreign language, as well as the creation of their own tools and classroom projects in the foreign language English.

Consequently, in this diploma course, teachers are allowed to reflect on theory through practical exercises in which they not only design a pedagogical proposal but also apply it in their respective academic spaces as soon as the student semester begins. Also, regarding the level of English, students and teachers are expected to have an average of B2 level of proficiency in the classroom.

Thus, this study was focused on those educators, some from language programs and some others from content programs, who were taking the diploma course that year, with the aim of having a bigger view of how is this EFL specific community, and how were their experiences through the entire course, since the beginning with the proposals for it, how was developed, and finally, with the results of the same. Allowing, like this, to make an extensive analysis of the educators' expectations, perspectives, opinions, reflections, points of view, beliefs, and their posture about their learning process, how is it going to be the use of the methodology in their classroom, and if it could have any impact on their personal and professional life.

As a result, this gave the researcher a better understanding of the continuing education that was always talked about during her career, pointing out that education does not end with one or two university degrees, but that one must take advantage of every opportunity to continue to grow. On this specific occasion, for the participating teachers it was about growing in a methodology applicable to any field of education and, for the researcher, it was a way to identify external and internal factors that influence the learning process, from an objective point of view, taking them as an example for her professional life that begins at the end of this research project, projecting herself not only as a teacher, but also as a lifelong learner.

In view of the above, this study had as a base the following research question:

*“What are the experiences of an EFL educators group taking the CLIL Diploma course offered by USTA Bucaramanga?”*

**General Objective:**

To analyze the experiences of an EFL educators group taking the CLIL Diploma course offered by USTA Bucaramanga.

**Specific Objectives:**

To compare teachers' perspectives on their CLIL learning experience.

To differentiate the factors that influence CLIL learning and development considering the experiences described by teachers.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **EFL community:**

English as a foreign language (EFL) is the study of English by non-native speakers who do not live in an English-speaking country. According to MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Metzger, D. S., Kegeles, S., Strauss, R. P., Scotti, R., Blanchard, L., & Trotter, R. T. (2001) a common definition of community emerged as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings, more specifically, as Cambridge dictionary emphasizes, people in a community may have similar interests or want to achieve something together (2024. Definition 3).

Furthermore, McMillan & Chavis (1986) define that in a community there's a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together, and as Sarason (1974) appointed, as a result, developing interdependence, mutual support and responsibility, and collective consciousness between the members of the same, or even as commented by Rovai (2002) in the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network, promoting like this, the most essential elements of a community as connectedness, interactivity, overlapping histories among members, spirit, trust, common expectations, and shared values and beliefs.

In the context of this research, when speaking about an EFL community, it refers to a group of nine educators (six from language programs and three from content programs) from Universidad Santo Tomás who were taking the diploma course in Training on Methodology and Didactics for the Implement Content Subjects in a Foreign Language - CLIL. Additionally, these educators were not just linked by their workplace or nationality, but they were actively engaged with the

purpose of improving their teaching skills by acquiring the CLIL methodology through different strategies that not only included autonomous work but teamwork in every session, doing reflective exercises of self-assessment and co-evaluation, sharing values, beliefs, and expectations, moreover being able to effectively overcome limitations by a properly language preparation, professional development, cultural integration, language assessment, and being proactive in their approach.

### **Language Proficiency:**

According to Language Testing International, language proficiency, known as Language Proficiency, is defined as the ability demonstrated by an individual to understand, produce and interpret a specific language in a variety of subjects and contexts, using listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) classifies Language Proficiency into six levels, ranging from A1 to C2, which can be categorized into three main levels according to the skills developed: Basic User (Beginner), Independent User (Intermediate) and Proficient User (Advanced) (Council of Europe, 2004). It is important to note that each linguistic domain is interrelated with the others, although their development may vary and be independent of each other, which implies that not all domains are placed at the same level of proficiency.

In the specific context of this diploma course, given the complexity of the topics covered and the various activities involved, participants were required to have a minimum average level of language proficiency of B2 (Independent User), which the CEFR describes as follows: "Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.

Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options" (Council of Europe, 2004).

Level C1 corresponds to a "Proficient User" with more advanced capabilities: Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. (Council of Europe, 2004).

Although the minimum recommended level is B2, a C1 level is preferable to ensure greater efficiency in using formal and specialized vocabulary, thus ensuring greater fluency and accuracy in the use of the language.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that the Language Proficiency is qualified by means of international accredited exams for such work, in the case of the English language, the most popular are: IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC and the Cambridge KET, PET, FCE, CAE and CPE.

### **Educator's experiences:**

While mentioning "Professors" it is referring to teachers in a college or university (Macmillan Dictionary, n.d. definition 2). In particular, the ones from Universidad Santo Tomás that were involved in the diploma course and decided to participate in this research.

Following with the word "Experience", it can be defined in this case, as the totality of characteristics, both past, and present that make up the particular quality of a person, place, or people, as well as is the impact made on an individual by the culture of a people, nation, etc., and



finally, experience represents the totality of a person's perceptions, feelings, and memories (Collins Dictionary, 2024, definition 4 a-b, 5c) Having as a base these as a whole concept we can refer to that the experiences of educators were related to their present characteristics in and outside their learning space that had an impact on their particular way of acquiring the knowledge about CLIL methodology defined by their participation during the diploma sessions, their perceptions, feelings, opinions, and reflections about the diploma course itself.

Besides, Démuth (2013) defined these perceptions as the end products of the interaction between stimulus and internal hypotheses, expectations, and knowledge of the observer, while motivation and emotions play an important role in this process. Sharing, like this, that all these concepts are related to each other, feelings, emotions, reflections, perceptions, and experience are interconnected, that's why they all played an important role in this study (Alvarez, 2021; Alvarez & Orjuela, 2024).

Furthermore, in this research, the construct of educators' experiences is based, also, on the concept of Teacher's conceptions defined by Ferreras-Listán, M., Pineda-Alfonso, J. A., & Hunt-Gómez, C. I. (2020) as ideas, opinions, or ways of understanding the world that teachers have and that generally influences their teaching practice assuming that as a result of the experiences lived in the diploma course, is the way educators will carry on their own teaching practices in their respective academic spaces.

In the remainder of this document, not only will the term "Educator" be used, but it will also be referred to by its synonyms "Instructor", "Teacher" and "Pedagogue".

**CLIL:**

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language, for this particular case, English, is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language. It is a balance because each is interwoven, even if the emphasis is greater on one or the other at a given time. (Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010). In simpler words, according to the European Commission, CLIL allows pupils to learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language.

This method allows students to learn an additional language while acquiring knowledge in other areas of the curriculum, thus promoting interpersonal competencies, cultural sensitivity and communication skills needed in today's job market (British Council, 2022). Benefiting the EFL community by allowing one class to be interdisciplinary with the others, which helps teachers save time by focusing on two goals simultaneously

This promotes a deeper and more meaningful level of assimilation, thus improving students' communicative skills and exposing them to the culture of the language being taught. In addition, CLIL methodology promotes student motivation and engagement by providing students with the opportunity to learn through a communicative and contextualized approach, allowing them to relate academic content to their interests and previous experiences (Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010)). Similarly, according to Dalton-Puffer, C. (2011), by developing intercultural skills while interacting with academic content in a second language, the student is prepared to participate effectively in a globalized and multicultural world.

Moreover, as Coyle's said about the 4Cs curriculum (1999), a successful EFL learning through a

CLIL class should include these four elements: Content, communication, cognition, and culture. Moreover, Harmer (2005) defined communication as the students being able to communicate the content but communicating with others too; cognition as students developing their thinking skills referring to HOTS (Higher order thinking skills) and LOTS (Lower order thinking skills) according to the Bloom's Taxonomy created in 1956 for students to think critically about what they are doing and experiencing; and culture for students to be able to relate content to their own culture through comparison with other behavioral norms (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

Although there is no single CLIL model, each institution is free to adapt the use of CLIL with different models depending on the age of the students and where the schools are located, it's fundamental to plan the classes based on the 4Cs. Additionally, Marsh (2016) believes that CLIL will always be characterized and differentiated from other methodologies because of the following elements: holistic education, competency-based learning, learning autonomy, creativity and critical thinking, the need to change the curriculum from what to learn to how to learn and recognize the relevance that the impact of technology has on the lives of our students.

In this research, educators were trained in CLIL so that this methodology would empower them and enable them not only to consolidate the effective use of the foreign language, English, but also to respond correctly to the needs of the students so that they can leave the classroom equipped to face the demands of the professional world.

### **Literature Review**

In order to understand the advances in the field, it is essential to review various documents with similar objectives that can contribute to this study. Despite a meticulous bibliographic search, little information was found on the specific topic under study (Educators' experiences in CLIL methodology training) in Colombia. For this reason, the study "Content and Language Integrated Learning: Knowledge and perceptions of in-service teachers before and after a professional development program" was considered relevant.

The study conducted by Jermaine S. McDougald and Daniel Pisarello (2020) to 26 language teachers in the city of Valledupar, before and after participating in a virtual professional development program, showed that, although the participants had years of experience in implementing CLIL in their institutions, at the beginning of the training process they showed a great lack of knowledge on the subject. However, positive results were obtained at the end of the study. It is notable that the training program was completely online and designed specifically according to the expectations of the participants, including fundamental concepts and strategies in CLIL, planning, implementation and methodology. However, 62% of the teachers expressed concern about time, stating that CLIL is very time-consuming for lesson planning and teaching. In addition, 66% indicated needing more support from coordinators and specialists to properly implement CLIL and other bilingual processes. Also, 84% emphasized the need for teamwork to improve implementation.

This study is valuable for our research because the diploma course on CLIL training given to USTA teachers was also conducted virtually, so it is to be expected that the results of the educators' experience would be very similar to those of our study.

Another relevant study is "Designing and Implementing Content-Based Courses in English with a Non-Language Faculty at a Public Colombian University" (Arismendi Gómez, F.A., Días Mosquera, CP., & Salazar Valencia, L.N. 2008). Although the participants were not in a formal CLIL training program, their entire process of designing and implementing content-based courses in English was studied. This study allowed us to observe the teachers' experiences of the learning process during the research. Most of the participants expressed having gained confidence in modeling the use of language for a specific field of knowledge, internalizing more vocabulary and improving their pronunciation. Participants described their feelings about the experience with CLIL implementation, using expressions such as "It keeps oneself alive" or "I left with my ego high above".

Both studies are fundamental because with them it is possible to anticipate the difficulties that teachers will experience during the CLIL training process and to understand that, like any learning process, it is initially challenging due to the need to get out of the comfort zone and make metacognitive changes that, over time, will become easier, resulting in an increase in teachers' confidence in applying CLIL in their classes.

In a previous investigation entitled "Improving Bilingual Higher Education: Training University Teachers in Content and Language Integrated Learning" a questionnaire was conducted to find out the perceptions of teachers from four different universities about the CLIL method and the need to organize future CLIL training. There was great concern about the students' level of English, which was considered inadequate for the classroom. Sixty-four percent of the teachers recognized the need to adapt their classes according to the students' level of English, which led 50% of the teachers to devote more time to class preparation. In terms of motivation, it was evident that 80% enjoyed teaching in English, unlike the group that felt obliged to teach the class in English, expressing

demotivation due to low remuneration compared to the effort required to implement CLIL. (Strotmann, B., Bamond, V., López Lago, J., Bailen, M., Bonilla, S., & Montesinos, F. B. (2014).

This is consistent with additional studies: "Attitudes, perceptions and experiences of teachers in CLIL: A look at content and language" showed, through surveys and interviews with 140 Colombian teachers, that 52% had a positive experience teaching content through English. 92% were concerned about the time needed to plan lessons that included the 4Cs (communication, content, cognition and culture). In addition, 50% of teachers agreed that "CLIL requires a lot of administrative support", while 44% highlighted the need for cooperation with subject teachers. This study, conducted by McDougald (2015), had similar results to those obtained in Madrid with teachers from 26 primary schools focused on bilingual teaching, where questionnaires were the main form of data collection. Teachers also expressed concern about the lack of time to do many activities in and out of class, which impacted their beliefs about their classroom development. Finally, the data showed that teachers have low self-esteem not only about their language proficiency, but also about their teaching. However, Pena Díaz and Porto Requejo (2018) reported that, despite this, teachers are motivated and dedicated to this project, which will help them improve it and become a model for schools that have not yet implemented it.

Finally, it was found significant research for our object of study, implemented in Spain at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya: CLILing at university: Insights from the lecturer training programme at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Vraciu, Alexandra. 2014). Six editions of this training program were conducted and it was observed that teachers' expectations changed with respect to their previous experiences with teaching in English. The teachers were always motivated, although at the beginning those who had never taught in English feared that the topics would not be adequately developed due to their lack of experience and that the students would not participate

in the class as they would if the class was taught in Catalan or Spanish. At the end of the six editions of the training program, it became evident that the motivation of the teachers is fundamental for the success of the program and that the teachers modified their behavior during the process by observing improvements in their language skills and in the conduct of the classes. They considered the feedback provided by the training group and by the trainers to be very important, and a preference was shown for dynamic or practical classes rather than theoretical ones.

All these research papers guide and provide an idea of what can be expected when starting the CLIL training program for teachers at Universidad Santo Tomás, underlining the importance of describing the experiences of teachers in this area. This will allow the implementation of improvements in the institution, in the faculty and will serve as a basis for future research that will provide knowledge to improve the bilingual training of professionals in Colombia.

### **Research Design**

The design of this case study research is of a mixed type, framed primarily in a qualitative approach. This approach is based on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions or experiences, which is particularly useful in the study of the humanities (Bhandari, 2020). In this context, the researcher assumes the role of an external observer, in charge of collecting information through qualitative instruments such as classroom observation formats and interviews, allowing participating teachers to express in detail their personal experiences.

However, in a first phase, a characterization of the population was carried out, for which it was necessary to use a questionnaire (contextualization form) that allowed to delimit, quantify and systematize the characteristics of the participants through percentages, thus employing a quantitative approach.

Finally, it is essential to highlight that in order to ensure and protect the integrity, rights and well-being of the participants during this study, several ethical considerations were taken into account. Participants signed an informed consent form containing detailed information about the study and, in a virtual encounter, they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, thus protecting their personal data. A promise was made to maintain an objective, transparent, honest and respectful perspective to avoid causing physical, psychological or emotional harm to the participants, communicating the findings accurately and truthfully without misrepresenting them.

### **Case Study:**

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the experiences of a group of educators taking



the CLIL Diploma course offered by USTA Bucaramanga. Like this, the research design that is used is the Case Study, under the descriptive paradigm as it allows to gain an in-depth understanding of this specific context, of the particularity and complexity of a single case (Stake, 1995, p.6), without generalizing into a wider population.

A case study is a method of collecting and organizing data to maximize our understanding of the unitary character of the social being or object studied (Dörnyei, 2007, p.152) Moreover, in a case study the researcher plays the role of observer of the characteristics of the unit of analysis, in this case, a group of teachers taking the CLIL Diploma course offered by USTA Bucaramanga, to make generalizations about this population (Nunan, 1995).

For Stake (2005) there are three types of case study: The intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study, and the multiple or collective case study. The first one is selected for this study as the case is of interest not because it illustrates something or represents other cases but because of its own value or specialty. The case study is an excellent method for obtaining a thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context (...) allowing researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us (Dörnyei, 2007, p.155)

Through this case study, the main goal is to be able to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon, doing a deep analysis of the information gathered, and making different interpretations of it.

To enter into the data collection instruments, it's necessary to see the meaning of Triangulation method which allows the study to be provided in detail of careful analytical procedures adopting different perspectives while collecting and studying the information, to answer "what", "how" and

“why” of the research question promoting reliability and validity of this research. Triangulation checks out for consistency which increases the credibility of the research (Imas, 2009).

Cohen and Manion (1986) define it as an attempt to map out or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint (p.254). In the same way, Altrichter (1996) refers that triangulation is helpful to achieve a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation (p. 117)

Although Denzin (1978) identified five types of triangulation, this study will focus on data triangulation, which consists of comparing and contrasting data from different sources or collection methods, such as interviews, observations, and documents, in order to approach a research question from different perspectives and thus obtain a more complete and robust understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). The instruments used on this occasion were: a contextualization questionnaire at the beginning of the research process, followed by observation of different classes in different contexts to observe the performance of the educators, accompanied by a class diary, and finally semi-structured interviews with each teacher at different times.

Finally, it is important to highlight that for Jick (1979) a multiplicity of data sources is also considered to confer a degree of convergent validity on the research and according to Bluhm (2011) in a research study where two or more data sets are used for corroboration or claims for external validity or reliability, the study gains impact.

### ***Instruments for data collection***

#### **Instrument 1: Characterization**

The first instrument elaborated is called Contextualization and is oriented to know the target population of the study, that is, the teachers who participated in the CLIL training and who agreed to participate in the research. It consists of a 15-question questionnaire, the first of which was to identify the basic characteristics of our target population (age, gender, level of English, teaching experience, etc.). It was administered only once, at the beginning of the study, in a virtual format.

#### **Instrument 2: Observation**

Observation is a qualitative data instrument about getting into a context, which means that the researcher goes to the place where the research is taking part, providing, like this, direct fundamental information. Two well-known types of observation are Participant Observation and Non-Participant Observation. The latter was used as an instrument to carry out the research study, since the researcher is not involved in the participation during the class, therefore, it is possible to make a more detailed and concentrated observation, looking at the context, and analyzing what is happening with the participants, in this case, evidencing what are the experiences of the group of teachers when taking the CLIL diploma course offered by the USTA Bucaramanga and how it influences their learning process and perception of the method.

According to Dörnyei (2017), observation can be structured or unstructured. The first one was implemented during the research study because it involves entering the zoom meeting to observe the classroom with an observation scheme to be completed according to a specific focus. This scheme (See Annex 2) is in a high inference category, based on what an observer can see but also

requires some judgment about the function or meaning of the observed behavior (Dörnyei, 2007, p.180). In addition to this, it is important to highlight that this observation instrument was based on the speech therapy observation protocol for educational practices, contained in the book "El lenguaje en la educación, una perspectiva fonoaudiológica", edited by Rita Florez Romero. This instrument has been widely used by speech-language pathologists for many years to observe in a direct and structured way the learning process of students, with the purpose of identifying the environmental, teacher and student factors that influenced this process.

Notably, this incorporation is significant for our research, since it allows us to rely on a recognized framework and make pertinent adjustments, considering the profile of the target population of the training. In addition, it enables us to make systematic observations of each planned academic session and to understand more clearly the learning process in order to implement CLIL. In addition, it enables us to identify the factors that favor meaningful learning, those that hinder the proper learning process and to understand the teachers' perception of the topics addressed during the training. It also provides us with information on the topics that presented the greatest challenges for the appropriation of knowledge and its practical application, as well as those that were more accessible to the participants. Based on this, we can identify the topics or aspects that require greater emphasis to be addressed in future training and that later an improvement plan can be established that allows us to fulfill the main objective of adequately implementing CLIL in order to improve the academic level of university students.

Finally, to complete the observation process it is necessary not only to be in the classroom and watch what is happening, but also to record it, in audio or video, in order to have the opportunity, when necessary, to review the recordings again and with more time and dedication to make a detailed and complete description of the events to be reported in a specific file so that the relevant

information is organized and clear at the time of analysis. However, in order to do this, it is essential to begin with an informed consent form to inform the participants what the research is about and why it is necessary to make the recordings (See Annex 1). One observation will be made per module or per skill seen during the CLIL training; in total there were four classes.

Finally, some of the possible limitations presented are related to the fact that the observation process is carried out virtually, which may result in connection, audio or video failures, as well as power problems. To mitigate this risk, it has been decided to have tutors record each session. Other potential limitations are beyond the direct control of the tutors, such as distractors present in each participant's study environment. To address this situation, participants were asked to keep the webcam on as much as possible, which would allow for better monitoring by the tutors of the attention paid.

### **Instrument 3: Interviews**

An interview is a qualitative data collection about a meeting face-to-face in which the data-gather asks questions to a person from the context where the research is carried out. The purpose of the interview is to collect specific and in-depth information regarding the experiences and perceptions of the educators during the academic sessions received in the CLIL diploma course offered by USTA Bucaramanga. For this research, a Semi-structured interview was done since although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended so that the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner. (Dörnyei, 2007, p.136) (See Annex 3)

***Study phases:***

The study was carried out in three phases:

1. **Application of the contextualization form:** In the first session, the participants were asked to fill out the population characterization form online at the following link: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dVM\\_iRMml3\\_o0uKHR74IwU4DWgODjs6nQvMq3cNBjKo/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dVM_iRMml3_o0uKHR74IwU4DWgODjs6nQvMq3cNBjKo/edit), In order to know the population under study, this form was used to request permission from the teachers who decided to participate in the research through informed consent (Annex 1: Informed consent).
2. **Observation of the academic sessions:** The last class of each training module was observed, that is to say, there were 4 observations, each observation lasted 4 hours, videos and audio were taken to analyze the information in greater detail. The researcher filled out the observation form for each observed academic session previously elaborated and stipulated based on the protocol of speech audiological observation of educational practices (Annex 2: Protocol of observation).
3. **Application of the interview:** we proceeded to apply the semi-structured interview for the development of this interview we requested permission from the teachers who decided to participate in the research through informed consent (Annex 1: Informed consent) to take video and audio recordings which later allowed us to transcribe (Annex 3: Interviews) and analyze the information.

The estimated duration of each interview was between 40 to 50 minutes in a group setting where the pedagogues who decided to participate in the research answered the researcher's

questions spontaneously and freely.

Due to the fact that during the group interview, two of the teachers were unable to attend, the interview was conducted individually, and one of them decided to answer it in writing.

4. **Analysis of the information:** The general data of the study population was collected and the information was classified according to the questions established in the virtual form.

Subsequently, the audio transcriptions of the group interview and the personalized interview were made, and the information was classified taking into account the similarities of the answers to establish categories, each of which is named below.

## Data analysis

### Instrument 1: Characterization

For the characterization instrument it was used the tool called google forms to facilitate the data collection process because the teachers could access the corresponding link and answered the questions from any device with internet access.

The results are shown below:

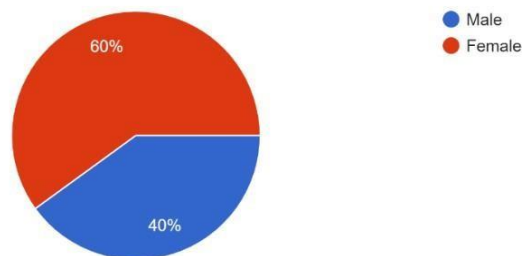
1. Confirmation that they accept the consent and participate in the survey knowing the purpose of the research: 100% of the surveyed teachers agreed to participate.

10 respuestas



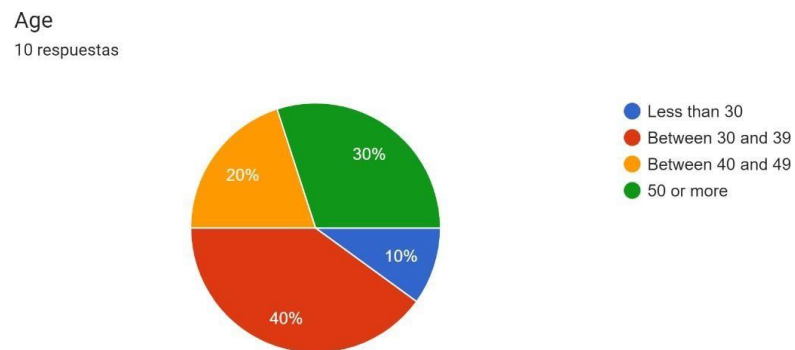
2. Gender: 60% of the educators who participated in the diploma course were women and 40% were men.

Gender  
10 respuestas

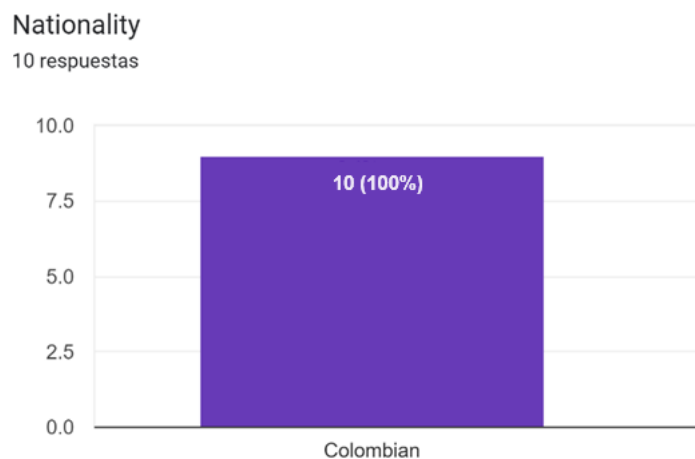




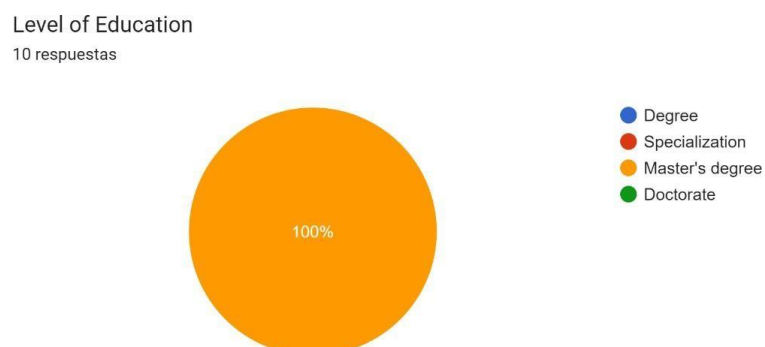
3. Age: 40% of the educators who participated in the diploma course were between 30 and 39 years of age, being this range the one with the highest participation, followed by teachers aged 50 years or more, who accounted for 30% of the total.



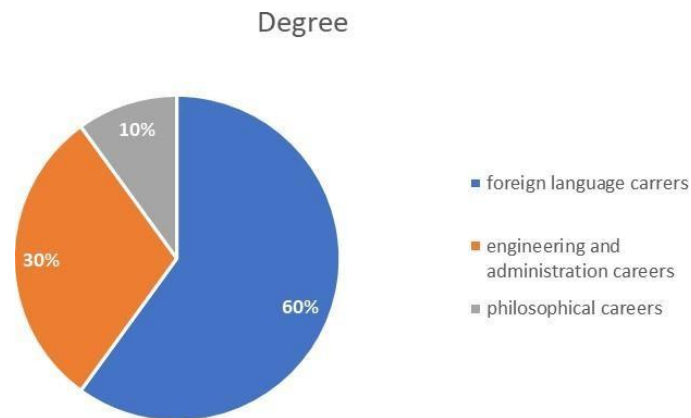
4. Nationality: 100% of the educators surveyed are Colombian.



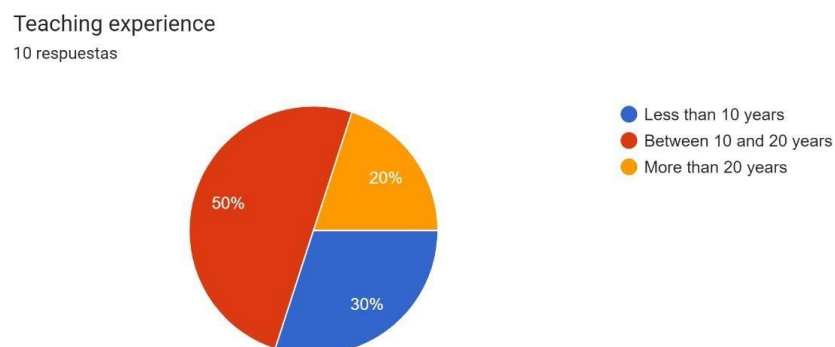
5. Level of education: 100% of the teachers surveyed have a Master's degree.



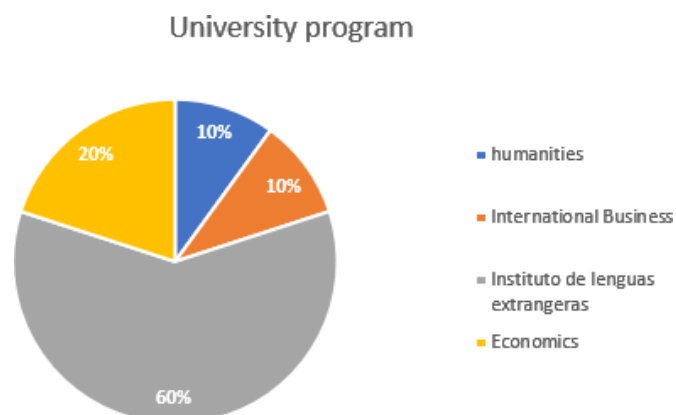
6. Degree: 60% of the educators surveyed studied careers related to foreign languages and English, followed by 30% who studied engineering and administration.



7. Teaching experience: 50% of the pedagogues surveyed have 10 to 20 years of teaching experience.



8. University program: 60% of the educators surveyed are part of the foreign language program.



9. Faculty (USTA): The following is a list of the names of the faculty to which each of the teachers belongs and it can be seen that most of them are part of the language institute of the Universidad Santo Tomás.

**Branch and/or Faculty (USTA) to which you belong**10 respuestas

Villavicencio  
international business  
Economics  
Fray Bernardo de Lugo Language Institute - Bogota  
DUAD- Bogota  
ILFBL  
Bucaramanga  
Language Institute  
Institute of foreign languages  
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

10. Specialization's degree: the following is a list of the names of the specialization's degrees obtained by the educators surveyed.

**Name your degrees: Specialization**6 respuestas

Pedagogy for Higher Education  
Comlutense  
Public management  
Specialist in Spanish-English translation  
Teaching adult learners  
Pedagogy for higher education

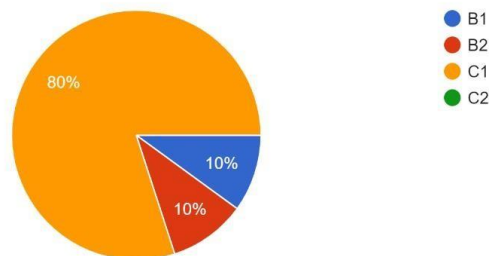
11. Master's degree: the following is a list of the names of the master's degrees obtained by the teachers surveyed.

## Name your degrees: Master's degree10 respuestas

didactics of languages  
 master in financial management  
 Business  
 Master in teaching Spanish as a foreign language  
 Master in Education with emphasis on intercultural communication, ethno-education, and cultural diversity  
 Master in Religious Studies  
 MSc Production Systems in I.E.  
 Master of Education  
 Didactics of languages  
 M.A. IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS TO THE TEACHING OF EFL

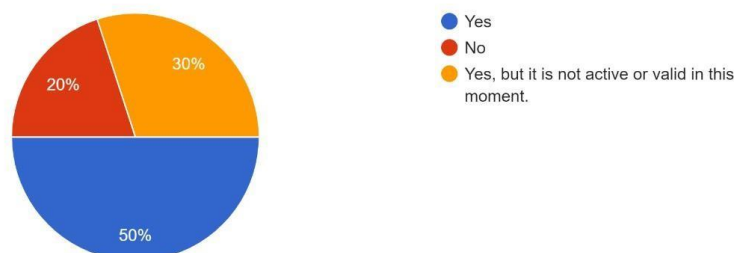
12. English level: 80% of the educators surveyed are in C1

English Level  
 10 respuestas



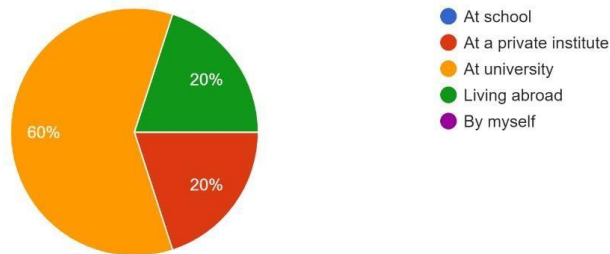
13. International language level certification: 50% of the educators surveyed have an international certification of their level of English, but 30% agree that the certification is not current.

Do you have an international language level certification? (IELTS, TOEFL, CAE, other?)  
 10 respuestas



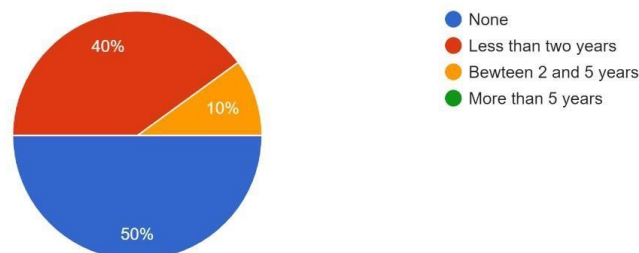
14. Place of learning English: 60% of the teachers surveyed learned English at the university.

Place where you learned English (you can select one or more options)  
10 respuestas



15. CLIL experience before the Diploma Course: 50% of the educators surveyed had no experience in the CLIL program before taking this diploma course, but it should be noted that 40% of the instructors surveyed had less than 2 years of experience in the use of CLIL.

CLIL experience before the Diploma Course  
10 respuestas



## Instrument 2: Observation

For the observation the researcher watched 4 videos of 4 different sessions, each one had a duration of 4 hours. The recorded videos of the diploma course were analyzed and used to collect the following data:

1. Environment:

100% of the classes were conducted in a virtual environment.

2. Materials:

The materials used for the development of the sessions were mostly PowerPoint presentations.

3. Sessions:

The sessions were divided into the four Language Skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening).

4. Mentors:

The mentors in 100% of the observed videos fostered a harmonious educational environment.

In 100% of the observed videos, it is noted that the mentors planned the academic session in advance.

5. Students:

The educators were very participative in 100% of the sessions.

The attitude that the pedagogues showed towards the class was liking in 100%, and fear in 50%.

Instructors showed that the degree of difficulty of the sessions was medium in 90% and difficult in 10%.

The behavior among colleagues was Collaborative in 60% and of union in 40%

6. The main difficulties faced by the educators during the academic session were: Technical difficulties with the internet

Confusion at the time of dividing into work groups since one group had to leave the link of the current meeting and move to another link.

Difficulty in adapting their work to be done in a virtual environment since they were structured for face-to-face environments.

The difficulty in timing the activity as some teachers went on a bit too long and could not finish saying everything they wanted to explain.

7. Difficulties for educators in applying what they have learned in these 4 sessions in their classrooms:

The evaluation process is complex and lengthy, and the instructors do not have enough time to properly guide their students, give them space, and evaluate them, despite having a rubric and it is overwhelming for teachers and students.

When educators ask their students to write in English, some of them go to the translator to copy and paste the text to avoid grammatical errors in the second language, taking into account that the vocabulary they should use is technical because it is about the subject they are studying, and this causes them to take longer to perform the activity.

The risk of the students saying that they failed the subject because they did not know how to express themselves in English despite knowing the educational content or vice versa, when the students speak and express themselves perfectly in English but do not know the

educational content of the specific subject being taught, that's why the teachers have to find different tools of evaluation to avoid the division between the content of the subject from the correct use of the second language.

The limitations the instructors have when carrying out innovative activities with their students when developing a topic in both a face-to-face and virtual environment, make it more difficult to keep the attention of their students in virtual environments.

8. Students' complexes during the sessions:

At the first session, some pedagogues expressed their feelings as lack of confidence, and at the time of feedback to the first volunteer, they were more embarrassed since it was the first intervention.

Some educators of administrative careers feel intimidated when speaking in English by the teachers of the language area because they have a better command of the English language so it is easier for them to interact in this language.

Some instructors find it more difficult to use digital platforms.

One of the teachers commented that when he has the final product, how can he know if it is well elaborated or not? In his opinion, an instrument or tool is needed to tell him if he has elaborated the activity well for his students.

9. Observations:

At the beginning of the class, the activities to be developed throughout the session are shown and a clear agenda of how the time will be divided is shown.



Teachers raise their hand to take turns to speak.

Pedagogues during the session ask questions and comment on each other's work, make jokes, and discuss how to survive in a classroom. They are very effusive and engaged in the subject, and it turns into a conversation between friends.

The mentors participated as mediators during the entire session. The mentors are kind to correct some errors

The sessions were divided into 2 parts and closed with a moment of reflection and conclusions.

The mentors in charge of the diploma course were willing to solve the educators' doubts.

### **Instrument 3: Interviews**

It was performed an interview with the teachers who took the diploma course, which lasted 50 minutes.

1. Main motivations to apply for this diploma course:

Improve the knowledge of CLIL methodology.

To learn how the CLIL methodology should be implemented in university classrooms. To contribute to the university's project to implement this teaching methodology.

To help and motivate students to integrate the content of English language learning with non-English-related topics.

2. Main expectations of the diploma course:

To learn new strategies to make the lessons more enriching for students. Learning effective methods for evaluating students.

To improve the level of English since the diploma course was conducted entirely in English, taking advantage of the fact that there are not many places where people with a good level of English can get together to share their knowledge.

3. Main challenges encountered while taking the diploma course:

Time limitations since there are many activities that educators must perform simultaneously considering that the diploma course is demanding due to its level.

When completing the tasks, the teachers designed their subject matter by choosing the topic that best suited their knowledge, for example, economics, but throughout the course, they had to change the subject matter for more complex topics such as teaching theories, which made the activities more demanding.

Due to COVID disease, completing all the activities of the diploma course was more complex.

4. Main opinions about the activities carried out during the diploma course:

The activities were very practical, while the mentors were showing the PowerPoint presentation of the theory, they treated the attendees as a classroom so that they could see an example of the subject they were explaining so that later the participants could develop the activity.

5. Main achievements during the diploma course:

The participants in the diploma course broadened their horizons in the use of the English language and began to use it in different contexts.

The educators achieved a higher level of knowledge of CLIL methodology, which was the main objective of the diploma course, and were willing to apply the tips and strategies learned with their students.

The instructors found that the material used in the diploma course will help them to enrich their classes which will benefit the students, as this methodology encompasses deeper concepts such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and student skills.

#### 6. Applications of the CLIL methodology:

Most of the pedagogues were able to apply the CLIL methodology in some of the courses or subjects they were teaching at the time, as they wanted to practice what they had learned during the course. However, it is more difficult to apply the CLIL methodology in academic programs that are not in the area of foreign languages because not all students have a good level of English, so instructors apply learning strategies but do not get to dictate the class 100% in English because when they are teaching the subject in this second language there is a risk, that students do not understand the content of the subject and a conflict arises when educators are going to evaluate the performance of their students. Nevertheless, it is important to try to dictate a part of the class in English to motivate the students to learn this second language.

Teachers consider that by applying the CLIL methodology strategies in their classes, the role of students has changed from a passive role to an active role, which makes classes more

participatory and dynamic, making learning more meaningful.

7. Recommendations for the following diploma programs of CLIL:

It would be better to have the classes every other day so that the educators have time to carry out the activities corresponding to the diploma while they fulfill their other academic responsibilities.

It is recommended that the activities be done in groups, in which an English instructor is paired with a pedagogue from the administrative area so that both topics can be integrated since this is the objective of the CLIL methodology.

It is important to add a practical example where a guest mentor shows all the participants how the topic was carried out in his classroom, making it easier for the teachers to follow the activity to create its own lesson.

At the end of the interview, 90% of the educators agreed that they would recommend this diploma course of CLIL to their colleagues. Not only for language instructors but also for teachers of other careers, because it provides new tools, information, and new ways of approaching teaching, creating a new perspective on how to teach.

After a detailed description of the results, the following categories of analysis were identified for this qualitative study: Professional preparation and teacher training, educators were trained on module and lesson design, alignment with the curriculum, consideration of linguistic competencies and recognition of specific educational needs. Continuing with Challenges and barriers, it was

identified that time represented a significant constraint for educators, affecting the balance between their workload and the time needed to dedicate to the diploma course.

Following with the impact of the program on teaching practice, positive changes were observed in the preparation of classes by teachers when integrating new methodologies and educational tools. Regarding the challenges faced and implementation strategies, an initial difficulty in focusing planning directly towards CLIL methodology was evidenced, due to English proficiency requirements and the lack of materials with specific academic theory for each subject, and regarding the integration of technology, the need for further training in technological tools to improve educational efficiency in both teaching and learning was recommended, in addition, its potential as a facilitator to overcome challenges related to time and the creation of authentic material for classroom use was highlighted.

Finally, regarding the experiences and perceptions of the educators, most of the participants reported positive experiences during the course, standing out for their motivation and enthusiasm in all the sessions. They also expressed satisfaction with regard to the fulfillment of various expectations and achievements through the course. However, negative experiences related to moments of confusion and frustration were mentioned, particularly in the creation of material and the advanced use of the English language. The support provided by the tutors to handle these critical moments was underlined.

## Conclusions

During this course, educators were trained to work collaboratively with their students so that their specific needs were identified within this pedagogical approach. Having the ability to design modules and lessons that can be aligned with the established curriculum, ensuring that the key concepts of the subjects are accessible to all students, considering their varied linguistic competencies and educational needs. In particular, teachers were equipped to simultaneously promote the development of content, language skills, critical thinking and learning capabilities, integrating students' prior knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences, and thus, providing them with tools for the use of a second language in their daily professional life as stated in the European Framework for CLIL teacher education

In the same way, time proved to be the greatest limitation for the teachers during the development of this diploma course, due to the fact that, despite being aware of the need for constant updating in their profession, the addition of the current workload to the time dedicated to the diploma course made the schedule even more demanding for them. An investment of 4 hours per day per class was required, in addition to all the autonomous work time necessary to complete the activities. Nevertheless, the teachers showed constant motivation, enthusiasm, and expectation, experiencing great changes in the way they prepared their classes and absorbing as much knowledge as possible about the CLIL methodology and the language itself.

Likewise, it is suggested that more training be provided to teachers in relation to various technological tools that can serve as facilitators for the prioritization and synthesis of tasks, which will contribute to improve the use of time in the educational environment. In addition, continuous updating through research on the use and benefits of artificial intelligence in education is

recommended, with the purpose of keeping up to date with the latest trends and innovative pedagogical practices.

It is also important to note that, due to the COVID pandemic and the consequent limitations, the acquisition of technology by teachers to address basic educational needs was barely in process. In relation to the course, it is suggested that forums be used to facilitate group work at the beginning of the diploma course, subsequently allowing each teacher to specialize or focus on his or her area individually. Likewise, it is considered that a greater emphasis on Bloom's taxonomy would be beneficial in terms of practicality, by providing a summary of what has been done and greater clarity in the topics addressed.

Regarding project design, teachers initially expressed greater difficulty in focusing their CLIL planning directly on teaching the method, since they found it complex and demanding to find specific theoretical information about it. However, in the end, when they were allowed to focus their project, planning and activities to their specialized area of teaching, they were facilitated in the application of the method itself, allowing them greater flexibility when proposing the implementation of effective and didactic strategies to promote knowledge construction and cooperative learning among students, while fostering critical thinking in their subjects. As a result, a much more versatile and profound role was evidenced on the part of teachers in creating an efficient learning environment.

Although the teachers expressed the desire to have a session during which they could carry out an observation activity, where they could analyze the role of the teacher and the student, didactic strategies, linguistic use, and others, in a real classroom, and get an idea of how their students would react when starting the implementation of this methodology in their own classrooms, they

emphasized that all the tools provided by the tutors of the diploma course were very useful. At all times, the tutors filled them with confidence when evaluating the activities and resolved all their concerns and questions with care.

Consequently, in this case study it was observed that the expectations of the diploma course were met by the teachers, who enjoyed the process and were able to overcome any difficulties presented. They were always confident in asking questions and commenting on each other's work, making jokes, and discussing the topics in each session. The topics were approached with effusiveness and commitment, and now they are ready to face any future challenges in their classrooms through a process of reflection and continuous improvement.

Finally, this study, from a professional perspective, was experienced as an enriching practice by the researcher, which not only allowed her to acquire formal and valuable experience in conducting educational research, from the identification of needs to the implementation of instruments and the evaluation of results, but also, by analyzing the experiences of educators in the area of CLIL training, she was able to contribute to existing knowledge and open new ways to advance in this field both at the institutional level at the University and in the general educational field. Additionally, the recognition of the need for further research on the use of CLIL methodology and other innovative pedagogical practices is what motivates her to continue exploring this field. This may include additional research on the impact of technology on teaching, strategies for linguistic and educational inclusion, among other relevant topics that may arise in her own classroom as she practices her profession.

In fact, it is expected that further research will be conducted, thus allowing the University to be enriched with an external view about the process experienced by its educators in training. It is



anticipated that both improvements and limitations that may arise in different specific educational contexts will continue to be recognized. In addition, it is expected that the process of analysis and reflection regarding the study-teaching experiences, as well as the full characterization of the experiences, perspectives, beliefs and phenomena experienced by the educators, will be continued, with the aim of opening new avenues to advance CLIL knowledge in the institution. In addition, it is also hoped that other educators will be motivated to join the diploma course by highlighting the benefits that this experience can bring to their own educational environments. This will help to promote broader and enriching professional development in the educational community.

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## **Annexes**

[Annexes - Thesis-Elisabet Sanchez Valencia](#)