Incidence of content and language integrated learning methodology on processes of teaching english as a second language

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ABSTRACT

The methodology for learning foreign languages and the development of mental processes need to be internalized by students in the oral and written interactions to facilitate the understanding of the target language, essentially when it is taught as a second language. Therefore, foreign language teachers must seek the correlation approach of linguistic competencies and the integrated learning of the contents, a model that is also the object of this study. For this work, observation, deductive and collaborative methods were used. In addition, a Likert survey with 10 questions related to the subject of study was applied to 314 students of levels I, II, and III of the Pedagogy of National and foreign languages career, face-to-face modality of State University of Milagro. With this, the researchers were able to know the students' interests in relation to learning the English language, since a great part of the people who were subjected to this study, completely agreed that this methodology is relevant and offers benefits to the learning process of the English language. In addition, this study remarks on the importance of developing language skills and abilities in learning English as a foreign language with a student-centered approach.

Keywords: *content and language integrated learning (CLIL); foreign language learning; language skills*

Incidencia de la metodología de aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas en los procesos de enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua

RESUMEN

La metodología para el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras y el desarrollo de los procesos mentales, deben estar internalizados en las interacciones orales y escritas de los estudiantes para facilitar la comprensión del idioma de destino, básicamente cuando se enseña como segunda lengua, por ello, los profesores de lenguas extranjeras deben buscar el enfoque correlacional de las competencias lingüísticas y el aprendizaje integrado de los contenidos, modelo que es, además, objeto de este estudio. Para tal efecto, se utilizaron los métodos de la observación, deductivo y colaborativo. Además, se aplicó una encuesta Likert con 10 preguntas relacionadas con el tema de estudio a 314 estudiantes de los niveles I, II y III de la carrera Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales Extranjeros, modalidad presencial de la Universidad Estatal de Milagro, con ello, los investigadores pudieron conocer los intereses de los estudiantes en relación al aprendizaje del idioma inglés, puesto que, gran parte de los encuestados estuvieron completamente de acuerdo en que esta metodología es relevante y oferta beneficios en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Además, destaca la importancia en el desarrollo de las destrezas y habilidades lingüísticas del aprendizaje del inglés como idioma extranjero con enfoque centrado en el estudiante.

Palabras clave: *aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas; aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras; destrezas del idioma*

INTRODUCTION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual approach educational methodology since, through this, an additional language is used for the teaching and learning of both the content and the target language, unlike traditionalist methods for education (Assessment, 2016). Furthermore, the objectives do not focus only on the content or language, but the achievement of one has a direct influence on the dominance of the other as they are intertwined. Although some of the contents are mandatory for teachers to emphasize one or the other at a certain time, most of the time, the result is a balance of them in the learning process.

This language instruction method is usually used in social contexts and increases the levels of language learning. The CLIL method is related to the process of being acquainted with the so-called lingua franca and uses it as a communication tool among nations in order to enable everyone to understand each other without having to learn many languages (Šulistová, 2013).

Additionally, this method is commonly linked to the development of greater intercultural awareness to provide with learners' experiences, which would have been impossible in a traditional setting. In spite of language and culture being inseparable, language work in itself does not necessarily lead to the sort of self-awareness and tolerance of difference linked to intercultural understanding (Richards, 2006).

According to some authors, this method rises because of the influence of bilingualism, based on the theories of acquisition of a foreign language, and the ones of cognitive learning and constructivism. For that reason, (Hood & Marsh, 2010; as cited in Ahmed & Sohbani, 2015) emphasize the principles of bilingual education and involvement in a bilingual environment typical of certain regions combined with content-based language learning and the teaching of English as an added language.

In addition, this methodology describes an evolving approach to teaching and learning where subjects are taught and studied in a non-native language (Assessment, 2016). Therefore, it is an approach concerning languages or intercultural knowledge and understanding (Marsh, 2002); in other words, it is a meaning-focused learning method (Van de Craen, 2006).

Similarly, according to the TKT handbook (Bentley, 2010), this method is an evolving educational approach to teaching and learning where subjects are taught through the

medium of a non-native language. Consequently, this method describes an evolving approach not only to teaching but also to learning where subjects are taught and studied through the medium of a non-native language (Bentley, 2010).

On the other hand, fluency is one of the language elements that is remarkable on this methodology. (Richards, 2006, p. 14) states that "fluency is one of the objectives of this method, which occurs when a speaker engages in interaction and maintains an understandable and continuous communication despite communication limitations. In addition, "fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must identify meaning, apply strategies, and use communication strategies and work to improve communication" (Richards, 2006, p. 14). Consequently, the importance of integrated learning of content in foreign languages comes from its educational approach that seeks to reinforce linguistic diversity and at the same time presents a shift toward curricular integration. Therefore, students show that they can easily acquire a second language due to the greater exposure to the target language in quantity and quality and to the motivation provided by the interactive nature of these types of lessons to learn.

The CLIL method presents some basic competencies whose main features are closely related to an educational practice of quality:

- Linguistic communication
- Competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical world
- Information processing and digital competence
- Social and civic competence
- Competence of learning to learn
- Autonomy and personal initiative

General principles of CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning theorizes foreign languages as a means to work on detailed content about wide varied topics, while at the same time letting expand the knowledge of a language that is not one's own.

CLIL has different principles such as:

- Students' previous experience to facilitate relations with earlier knowledge
- Use of understandable content
- Encourage creative use of the target language
- Lack of correction of improper linguistic forms

- Use of linguistic and non-linguistic methodologies

- Reinforcement of the oral skills of students

- Search for contextualizing specific objectives

- Importance of theory and practice

- Use of complementary resources

- Dynamic participation of students in the learning process

Advantages and Disadvantages

Even though CLIL has some advantages, there are some disadvantages when it is compared to other educational approaches. However, there are some remarkable advantages that are worth to be mentioned as the ones that follow (Assessment, 2016).

- It develops confidence on learners.

- It enhances academic cognitive processes and communication skills

- It encourages inter-cultural understanding and community values

Similarly, CLIL as a teaching methodology has some positive aspects but it also has some adverse aspects when compared to other approaches (Šulistová, 2013, p. 49).

This comparative table shows some positive and negative aspects of CLIL methodology.

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Enhances critical thinking of students.	A high level of time consumption to prepare resources.
Learning process based on real-life situations	Different levels of language knowledge of students/teachers
Raising intercultural awareness of students and teachers	Limited information on the CLIL
Increasing employability	Lack of motivation to use the CLIL approach
Breaking fear of traveling outside the home country	
Acquisition of communicative skills	

Importance of applying CLIL methodology in the classroom

Definitely, CLIL promotes a change of focus in the classroom when the main objective is to develop communication skills in a foreign language, which can be as effective and meaningful as possible. Therefore, when teachers use the lingua Franca of the school to teach, they can provide all information to students and gain their understanding; however, when they teach subjects using a new language, this understanding is not always possible. Because of the previous reason, teachers have to guide students on how to search for information on their own by working together to discover new ideas. Thus, the use of the foreign language becomes a part of the learning process. Consequently, teachers must change their methodology in order to find different ways to help students learn the target language much more easily and effectively (Fajardo, et al., 2020). Subsequently, students must be independent and practical when developing their activities, considering the use of valuable learning resources, which are linked to information technologies and the Internet, which definitely help to reinforce their knowledge.

On the other hand, learners must also manage interpersonal relationships efficiently as part of cooperative and collaborative work, since working in groups helps to obtain an integral, dynamic, and cognitive development of language skills. These steps allow learners to be well prepared and motivated to apply their intercultural knowledge and communicative skills leading them to acquire responsibilities to create their own learning processes.

CLIL as a Teaching Methodology

When applying CLIL as a teaching methodology, it is evident the answers for the student's needs to learn a specific vocabulary of the topics they are learning, as well as several grammar tenses, and expressions according to different contexts (Ledford, 2019). Therefore, the more the students are exposed to the use of the target language, the more easily and effectively they are going to develop language competencies (Klapper, 2009). That is to say, all these elements contribute to developing language skills of the target language. Hence, learners must use the target language to work on their activities in the classroom by following instructions in sequence and organizing their thoughts. Likewise, they also learn to identify, classify, and manage problems in order to find their solution (Fajardo, et al., 2020).

CLIL and the Development of Language Skills

To develop and improve language areas and skills, different strategies, which are focused on the acquisition of several language means such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc., are applied. For this reason, it is essential to bear in mind that language skills are divided according to the type of communication process, that is, the receptive skills (listening and reading) and the productive ones (speaking and writing).

The objective of CLIL in English Language Teaching (ELT) is to use these integrated and complex skills so that students can be able to improve their language skills and enhance their training in the correct use of the target language when carrying out the proposed activities by using the CLIL methodology (Manso, et. al, 2020).

In addition, in the process of English language acquisition, the development of the four skills that allow the mastery of this language is fundamental to reaching a high level of understanding and production (Dörnyei, 2001). Hence, the activities that lead their development must be focused on precise receptive reactions in the students, in such a way, they can have security and ease in their oral practices as well as in individual or group work by showing an effective development of productive skills of the language (Ellis, 2003).

On the other hand, currently, there is a diversity of technological resources as fundamental tools in language learning that cannot be left apart. These tools help students in the development of their language skills. Consequently, these elements

strengthen self-learning, which becomes attractive and generates reflections on efficient teaching methodologies of the English language. Therefore, it is evident that not all teachers use appropriate strategies to fully reinforce the target language. Similarly, they contribute to reduce opportunities for students to practice English as foreign language and consequently, these students find themselves at a disadvantage compared to other students who are exposed to the target language in their classes all the time (Frydrychova, 2014).

These facts help to identify that many teachers focus on the development of language receptive skills rather than on productive skills. Thus, they do not integrate the four language skills as a useful strategy to teach this language. In addition, they mostly pay attention to the development of language functions, since they do not use a diversity of learning strategies with their students, which would help in the learning process of this foreign language.

Additionally, it is imperative to keep in mind that, in the foreign language learning process, many students are generally fearful or insecure when practicing or producing language in an oral way, due to the usual inappropriate reaction of classmates when laughing at them for inaccurate pronunciation of words (Kramer & Catalano, 2015).

On the other hand, many teachers also pay little attention to developing writing skills; which serves to identify the correct use of grammar and spelling rules of the language. These skills are as important as the other ones since their correct development can motivate students when showing a high level of communication through writing tasks (Cole & Feng, 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research work was carried out with 314 students of Foreign Languages career at State University of Milagro-Ecuador. The deduction and observation methods were used. In addition, a Likert type survey with 10 questions regarding the Content and Language Integrated Learning methodology and the development of language skills was applied.

The students above mentioned provided valuable information through the surveys, which served as input for the development of this research work. The process of selection of information was aligned to the technique of sampling, so, 314 students of the career in reference were considered or this aim.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *In your opinion, what level of importance does the previous introduction of the topics and contents have to reach the lesson objectives?*

In this question, 79% of the respondents indicated that the presentation of the contents prior to the lesson is relevant since they help to analyze and understand the topics to be discussed, in order to be able to carry out the activities in a collaborative way.

2. *In your opinion, ¿How valuable are lesson contents provided by your teacher to reach the lesson objectives?*

The results show that there is a tendency of 76% of respondents who think that lesson contents are fundamental to reaching the lesson objectives. This means that students' learning is mostly based on the type and quality of content that are offered to them. It is advisable to present high-quality content to students to assure their participation in the lessons and reach the lesson objectives.

3. *In your opinion, ¿Should English instruction be focused on content and language to develop all language skills?*

The results of this question show a tendency of 92% of the respondents who consider that the teaching of English should be focused on the content and development of all language skills. Therefore, the study programs must have the commitment to effectively relate their contents with several engaging activities to encourage the development of the four language skills.

4. *In your opinion, is creativity relevant to contribute to the development of English language skills?*

In this question, there is a tendency of 94% of the participants who consider creativity as a key to developing all English skills, so teachers must be focused on creating types of resources that involve creativity that helps the learning process effectively.

5. *In your opinion, how valuable is the process of correcting language production during the lessons?*

In this question, there is a tendency of 80% of the respondents who agreed that correcting students during English lessons is really valuable since appropriate feedback provides students with important information that allows them to improve their productive skills.

6. In your opinion, is verbal input essential to reinforce the lesson contents?

In this question, there is a tendency of 93% of the respondents who answered that verbal input is really relevant to reinforce the lesson contents. This shows how important is verbal input in the learning process, which gives students valuable tools to develop language skills.

7. In your opinion, what level of relevance does apply theory and practice have to contribute to the learning process of English?

This question shows a tendency of 78% of respondents who think that linking theory and practice is really relevant in the learning process of English as a second language. This fact demonstrates that exposing students to all kinds of practice gives them valuable resources that contribute to acquiring language in a much easier way.

8. In your opinion, how often should interactive resources be applied to enhance the English learning process?

In this question, there is a tendency of 86% of the interviewees who indicated that always or usually, interactive resources should be applied to enhance English learning process. This means that interactive complementary resources play a very important role in the learning of a foreign language like English since they provide a wide variety of activities that strengthen this process.

9. In your opinion, do you think that your English lessons are dynamic enough?

This question shows a tendency of 80% of respondents who think that their English lessons are dynamic enough. This fact proves that students acquire the English language in a more productive way when they are offered activities that involve a lot of participation.

10. In your opinion, do you think that the English learning process is improved with the use of interactive resources from the web?

In this question, a tendency of 92% of the respondents agreed that the English learning process is considerably improved by the use of interactive resources from the web. This fact gives valuable information to teachers regarding applying technological tools and encourages them to always update their knowledge in this field to offer their students engaging lessons.

ILLUSTRATIONS, TABLES, FIGURES.

Table and figure 1 – *Importance of previous introduction of the topics in a lesson*
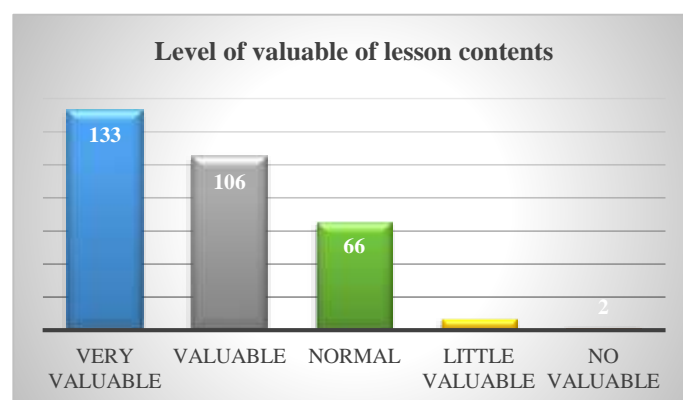
Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Very High	150	48%
High	96	31%
Medium	64	20%
Low	3	1%
Very Low	1	0%
Total	314	100%

Importance of previous introduction of the topics in a lesson

VERY HIGH	150
HIGH	96
MEDIUM	64
LOW	
VERY LOW	1
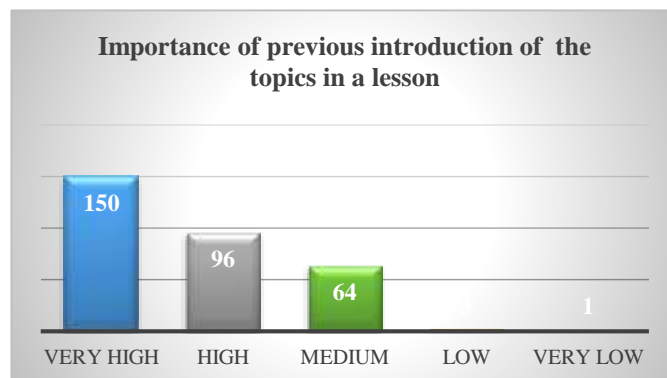
Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 2 – *Level of valuable of lesson contents*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Very valuable	133	42%
Valuable	106	34%
Normal	66	21%
Little valuable	7	2%
No valuable	2	1%
Total	314	100%

Level of valuable of lesson contents

VERY VALUABLE	133
VALUABLE	106
NORMAL	66
LITTLE VALUABLE	
NO VALUABLE	2

Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 3 – *English instruction focused on content to develop skills*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Totally agree	143	46%
Agree	144	46%
Indifferent	22	6%
Disagree	3	1%
Totally disagree	2	1%
Total	314	100%

English instructions focused on content and language to develop skills

TOTALLY AGREE	143
AGREE	144
INDIFFERENT	22
DISAGREE	
TOTALLY DISAGREE	2
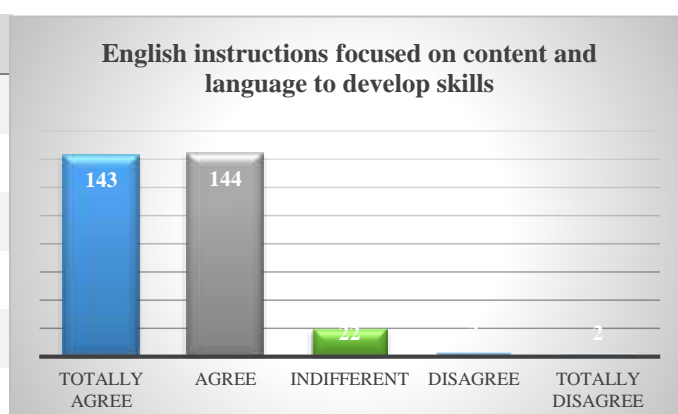
Source: Survey Applied

**Table and figure 4 –** *Creativity contributes to development of English skills*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Totally agree	168	54%
Agree	126	40%
Indifferent	14	4%
Disagree	5	2%
Totally disagree	1	0%
Total	314	100%

Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 5 – *Corrective language*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Very valuable	143	45%
Valuable	108	34%
Normal	59	19%
Little valuable	2	1%
No valuable	2	1%
Total	314	100%
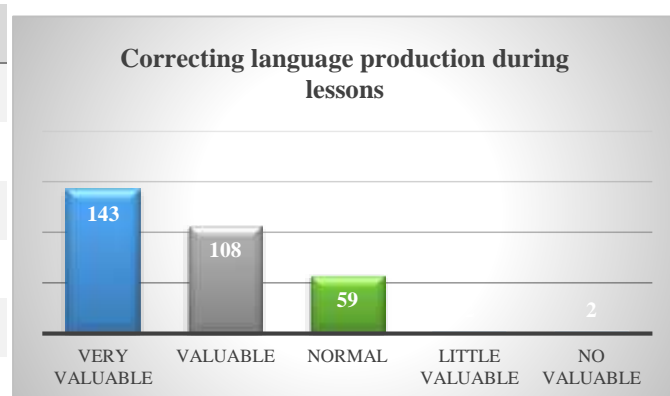
Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 6 – *Verbal input to reinforce lesson contents*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Totally agree	136	43%
Agree	158	50%
Indifferent	11	4%
Disagree	6	2%
Totally disagree	3	1%
Total	314	100%
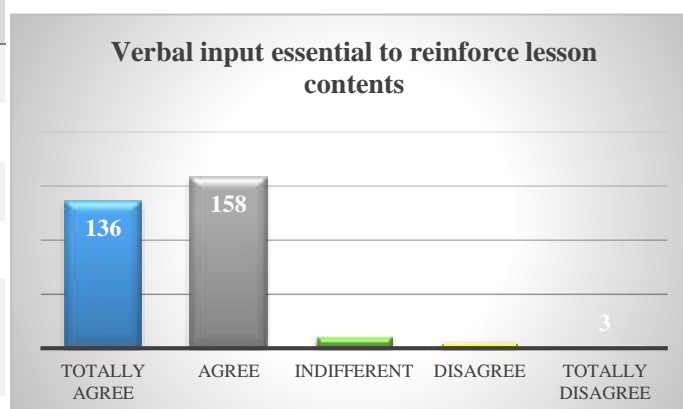
Source: Survey Applied

**Table and figure 7** – *Theory and practice contribute to learning process*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Very relevant	160	51%
Relevant	86	27%
Normal	63	20%
Little relevant	2	1%
No relevant	3	1%
Total	314	100%
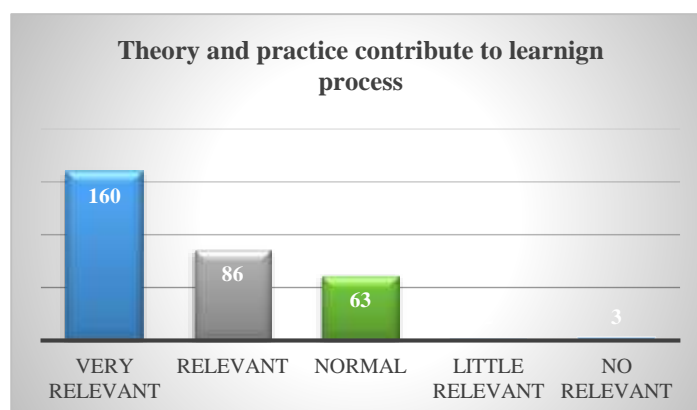
Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 8 – *Interactive resources*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Always	164	52%
Usually	104	33%
Sometimes	43	14%
Hardly ever	2	1%
Never	1	0%
Total	314	100%
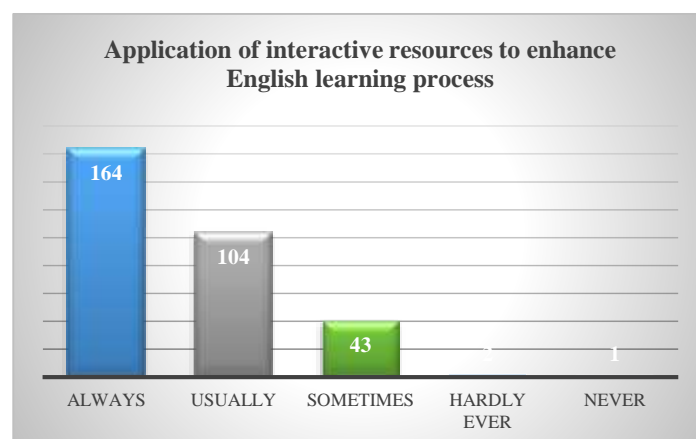
Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 9 – *Point of view about dynamic English lessons*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Totally agree	104	33%
Agree	148	47%
Indifferent	47	15%
Disagree	11	4%
Totally disagree	4	1%
Total	314	100%
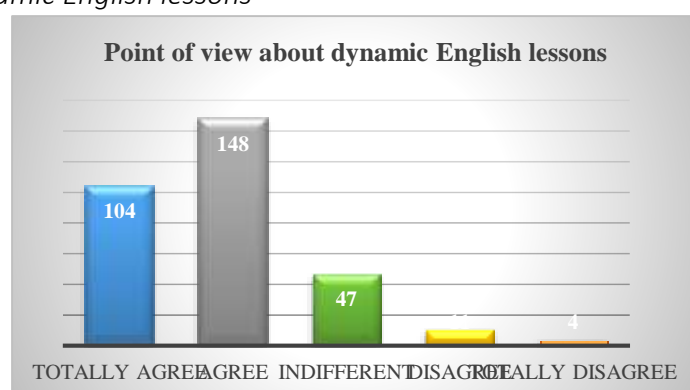
Source: Survey Applied

Table and figure 10 – *Interactive resources*

Scale	Quantity	Percentage
Totally agree	179	57%
Agree	109	35%
Indifferent	18	6%
Disagree	4	1%
Totally disagree	4	1%
Total	314	100%
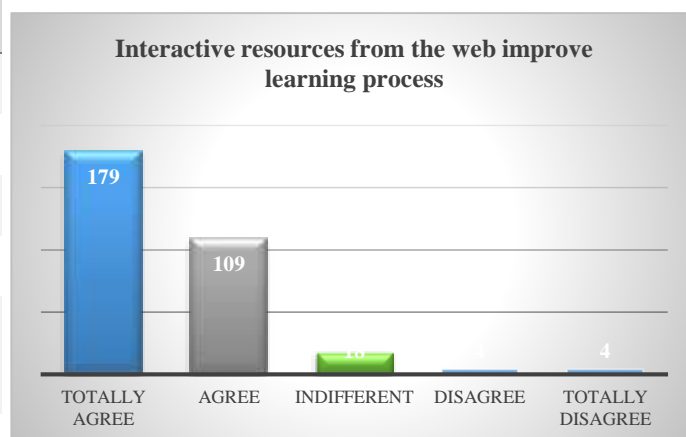
Source: Survey Applied

CONCLUSION

After working on this research work, there is some important information to remark about CLIL.

This methodology is useful to teach English language since it offers the students the opportunity to work on activities that let them deal with contents and topics to expand their knowledge and at the same time to acquire foreign language domain using English since their school subjects are taught in this language.

On the other hand, CLIL offers some advantages compared to other teaching methodologies since it is a useful media to build confidence on learners to use the English language. In addition, cognitive processes and communicative skills are improved when using this language. Consequently, intercultural understanding and values are reinforced as a result of using the English language in a diversity of contents and contexts.

Finally, it is important to remark the use of technological tools in this methodology to offer students interactive activities so that they can be engaged to the learning process and exposed to this language as much as possible to develop English language competences. Therefore, CLIL must be taken as a challenge that leads teachers and students to prove a new and motivational focus on teaching and learning methodology whose main objective is to develop communicative skills in English language to make learning process as effective and meaningful as no other.

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