

Teaching English to students with special needs: a case of study in a high school of Avila (Spain)

Enseñar Inglés a alumnos con necesidades específicas: proyecto realizado en un centro de Secundaria en Ávila (España)

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Recibido 27 octubre 2016
Aceptado 15 marzo 2017

Resumen

Este estudio muestra cómo se puede enseñar inglés en Secundaria a alumnos con déficit de atención e hiperactividad (TDH) y/o dislexia, sin retrasar al resto de la clase. El profesorado debe asegurarse de que todos los niños aprendan. Por esta razón, hemos desarrollado metodologías e implementaciones didácticas para lograr el éxito en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma. El estudio se ha realizado en un aula de 23 alumnos de primero de Secundaria de Ávila. Los datos se obtuvieron a través de cuestionarios, actividades y observación directa e indirecta. Los resultados sugieren que la utilización de la metodología de Aprendizaje Basado en Tareas (Task-Based-Learning) junto con las implementaciones didácticas apropiadas, han conseguido que estos alumnos mejoren sus habilidades en lengua inglesa, y se sientan mucho más motivados a la hora de aprender. Los resultados de este estudio son válidos pero no concluyentes, y se requiere una investigación más avanzada.

Palabras clave: Déficit de atención e hiperactividad (TDH), dislexia, metodología de aprendizaje basado en tareas, innovaciones didácticas.

Abstract

This study focuses on the ways in which teachers can teach English as a second language (ESL) in high school to ADHD and Dyslexic students without delaying the rest of the

students of the class. The main aim for teachers must be to ensure that all children can learn to their full potential, therefore, this paper describes different methodologies and didactic innovations that can contribute to successful second language learning. The present study was conducted among 23 students of First year of ESO in a high school in Avila (Spain). Data were collected through questionnaires, tasks, and classroom observation. Findings suggest that using Task-Based Learning methodology in conjunction with appropriate didactic innovations have made students not only improve their English language skills, also they feel more motivated towards English language learning. Nevertheless, the results of this study are valid but not conclusive and further investigation in the field is required.

Key words: ADHD, dyslexia, Task-Based-Learning methodology, didactic innovations

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the Educational System has faced a huge challenge: the necessity of making the educational process manageable and successful for every single student, regardless of his or her individual learning abilities and styles. The main aim for teachers must be to ensure that all children can learn to their full potential. Therefore, one of the most important areas in pedagogical studies is methodology of teaching. Teachers should become used to various methods of teaching in order to deal with diversity in the classroom and the teaching method ought to be individualised so as to take into account the students' needs. Diversity is a typical feature of a classroom, resulting from differences in students' levels, interests, gender, abilities, cultural and family background, and a variety of difficulties and learning disabilities, such as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and Dyslexia. These two disabilities will be the ones we will focus on this study.

It has been assumed that the majority of ADHD and dyslexic children do not require special educational services. Therefore, they can receive competent education in general schools providing the implementation of instructional strategies and practices, (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). We must bear in mind that generally speaking, their English competence is almost non-existent when they start Secondary Education. Most of these children can write and read in their own language with difficulty but they cannot do the same in English. As a result, these kind of students face the subject of English without enthusiasm. They know they will get low marks, they will not understand the tasks

properly and, as a result, they will show lack of self- confidence and independence, misbehaviour and even depression.

The focus of this paper is a study carried out in a secondary school analysing how the ADHD and Dyslexic students can learn English as a second language (ESL) in high school without holding back the rest of the students in the class. The aim is to argue that that these students can learn, despite their circumstances, and we will suggest an appropriate methodology and didactic implementations so that they can be successful language learners. Our premise is that by furnishing the right materials and applying the right methodology, these children can work efficiently and would be able to achieve the learning goals. Moreover, this methodology might benefit all the students since it can contribute to creating learning environments that will be low in threat and high in challenge and so should result in a successful learning experience for the whole class.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the last twenty years, teaching EFL has suffered great transformations in relation to the new trends in English language teaching (Roberts, 2015). However, the large class sizes teachers must face may make students with learning difficulties experience failure as teachers may not be able to implement the interventions required (Volpe et al, 2009). Therefore, students with learning difficulties may experience failure and frustration. The characteristics of these students, especially persistent inattention, negatively impacts academic functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Thus, they may feel significant levels of anxiety since they might not be able to follow the class as well as classmates (Kennelly et al, 2014).

Dealing with children means dealing with a great range of diversity and our aim is to find the best method for managing this. Unless we can make language in the classroom significant and memorable, students will not be able to process language more naturally (Bowen, 2013). For this reason, the methodology that we decided to use was the Task-Based Learning method (TBL). This method was adopted in order to help the whole class develop communicative competence in English to a higher degree of proficiency and accuracy and to make learning funny and successful though specifically designed to help ADHD and Dyslexic kids improve their English skills significantly (Zentall, 2005)

Task-based learning can be seen as a development within the communicative approach (Willis, 1996). It has the advantage of switching the focus of the student toward achieving a goal where language becomes a tool, so that the use of the language is a necessity. For

children with attention deficit, this method makes them become involved in the whole process. They feel totally engaged and they are willing to take part in each task (Zelenka, 2017).

TBL consists of three different stages: Pre- task, task-cycle (task, planning, report) and feedback (Willis, 2007), and the main advantages of following this method not only for students with special needs but for the whole class are that it is student's centred, language is conceived as a tool and it turns the focus of teaching from abstract knowledge towards real world application. This is essential when working with ADHD and Dyslexic young people (Kennelly et al, 2014).

Whereas in traditional approaches the student always remains passive and the range of activities is very limited, with this methodology innovation is present every single day and movement, creativity and visual aids become crucial in the classroom (Larsson, 2001). Therefore, since we were interested in fostering second language development in children with special needs, we needed to provide them with the appropriate tools for becoming very active learners. In order to increase the advantages of this method, it was used in combination with other methodological tools, such as cooperative learning, multiple intelligences and learning strategies. We believe that this combination can lead to engage SLD students in each task as it will be explained below.

Cooperative learning is an approach, that stresses the positive effect of cooperation among the students in education (Garcia, 2013). Group work and cooperative learning increase student opportunities of interaction, takes into account learning differences, allows students to discover their strengths and weaknesses and enhances cognitive and personal growth (Casal, 2007). Furniture in the classroom should be arranged so as to allow to students interact with one another. By so doing it, it allows students to develop positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills, and processing (Johnson and Johnson, 1994). A significant part of the activities designed have been carried out by cooperative groups following the cooperative principles. The third methodological tool takes into account the different learning styles or multiple intelligences. According to Gardner (1983), students have different styles of learning and teachers should not assume that all students can learn by using the same activities and by performing the same type of activities. He distinguishes eight types of intelligences and considers that all of them should be addressed in class to provide all of the students with plenty of opportunities to acquire the language. This methodology, based on cognitive

psychology, is especially useful for designing activities for students with special needs. The eight intelligences in MI theory have provided a pedagogical palette that we have drawn from to create the right activities to suit ADHD or Dyslexic students.

Finally, in the creation and development of the activities carried out in this study, it has been employed the Total Physical Response method (TPR). Using TPR activities has contributed to engaging all the students and they were useful for learning new bits of vocabulary, verbs and instructions within a context (Asher, 1977). TPR may have a very positive impact on academic achievement since students are allowed to express feelings through movement and this helps internalize language, especially SLD students (Hwang, 2014).

3. THIS RESEARCH

3.1. School context

The present case study was designed for and conducted in a first-year class of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the context of the syllabus of Secondary Education. There were 23 students. In general terms and despite the diversity of the students, all of them had the same level of English, which could be described as ranging between A2 and B1 according to the *Common European Framework of Languages*, with the exception of a Russian pupil, who had been diagnosed with ADHD, and one Spanish boy, who had been diagnosed as Dyslexic, whose level was lower.

3.2. Method and participants

The participants in this research were a group of 23 students from First Year of ESO where there were two pupils with special needs: one with ADHD (named here Miguel), and one with Dyslexia (for the purposes of this study named Javier).

Different methods of assessment were used to measure SLD students' English competence at different stages. First, we employed observation as an instrument for assessing the level of students' involvement and learning by monitoring their participation in class and their performance on the tasks assigned. Moreover, three different questionnaires were used to check student progress. One questionnaire was given to the families of the children with ADHD and Dyslexia and another was completed by the rest of the students in the class. The last was given to the participants with special needs. In this way, we gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to carry out our research. These questionnaires consisted of different sections related to the daily work, acquisition of contents and the impact of the

methodology on these children. Each section contained a variety of items and a five-point Likert scale was used to measure students' level of agreement to each statement.

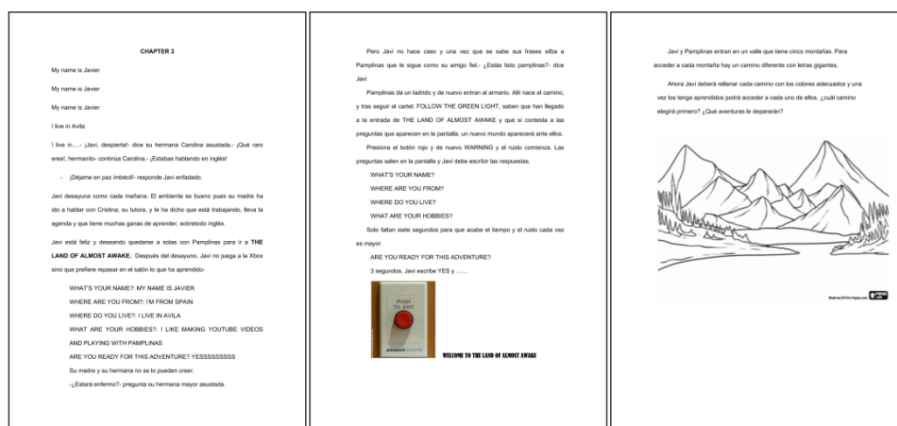
3.3. Activities

The determining features taken into account to design the activities were their almost inexistent motivation towards the subject, their lack of English communicative competence, and their difficulties with reading. Accordingly, we needed to create specific material to deal with and manage these difficulties. The activities explained detailed below were divided into three groups: vocabulary, grammar, and discourse patterns.

3.3.1. Activities focusing on vocabulary items

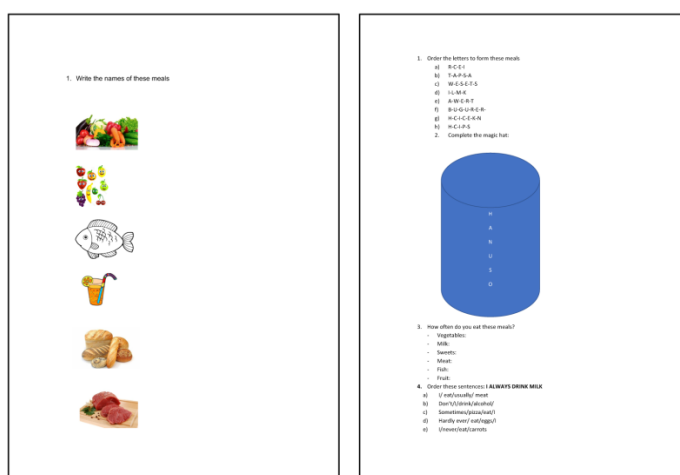
In order to acquire relevant and significant vocabulary and structures, which could help them to develop their communicative competence, and to smooth their reading difficulties, a fictional book was created. This book was designed using the idea of mixing two different worlds (one in Spanish and one in English) in an interactive way. It consisted of twenty different chapters. Each of the children had their own customized fictional book. This was because the main character of the story was the ADHD student or the dyslexic one. Thus, in one book the protagonist was the student with ADHD and all the environments described were connected to his own experience, while in the second one, although the story was the same, the protagonist was the other boy, and all the settings portrayed dealt with his life. The book used Spanish and English. It told the story of a hero who found a hole in his bedroom. Inside the hole, there was a new world full of mystery: "the land of almost awake". Once they entered the hole, the only possible language was English, whose difficulty kept increasing in each chapter, and they needed to carry out different missions in order to save that land as it is shown in image 1.

Image 1: Third chapter of the fictional book



Following this procedure, each chapter dealt with a different semantic field trying to cover most of the fields taught in primary education. After each episode, there were extra activities, which involved using writing and speaking skills, in order to reinforce and broaden the contents as shown in image 2. Moreover, each student used a vocabulary study card with new words from the book. The closing ten minutes were always devoted to vocabulary revision using activities based on TPR. These activities consisted of speaking aloud new words learnt in each chapter, and students had to stand up and mime them.

Image 2: Extra activity corresponding with chapter 8



3.3.2. Activities focusing on grammar structures: storytelling

The lessons described in this section were aimed at helping students internalize present simple structure. The same activities may be used with other grammar structures as well as vocabulary patterns. TPR, multiple intelligences, cooperative work and TBL were combined here in order to enhance SLD students' acquisition of English grammar and vocabulary.

Storytelling consisted of telling them a story (*The story of the bus*) with their help. We told our students to stand up and we called out different verbs which we were going to use in the story. Once they had heard the verb, they had to mime it out in front of the teacher. This activity took us five minutes. Then, they were told to take a seat and we explained them we would pretend this to be a bus. They chose the ADHD student to be the driver and he was joyful and started to act as if he was really a bus-driver. The rest of the students took a seat but they saw that there were only twenty-two seats and they were twenty-

three. Therefore, one student could not sit down. It was explained that the person who did not have a seat had to stand up. At that moment we started to tell them a tale about that bus and one passenger that did not have a seat. We started to describe that passenger, and then we stopped talking and each student had to continue the description. Once we had described him, we continued the story that was being invented and we told them that that student had a problem. Again they had to guess what the problem was. All of them wanted to participate enthusiastically contributing different solutions. The dyslexic student asked his fellow students different words that he did not know in order to speak in English. Finally, the passenger who was standing up had to convince one of the other passengers to give up his/her seat to him. This activity lasted thirty minutes. During the last fifteen minutes they were required to sit down and write on their notebooks a brief summary of the story.

3.3.3. Activities focusing on discourse

The following activity was aimed at internalizing discourse features and was designed according to the principles of the Task-Based Learning method. Our project was called “sustainable house”. In the pre-task we showed them different sustainable and weird houses around the world using the Internet. They had to pick up one and explain why they thought it to be the best house of them all. After that, we analyzed the materials which had been used for building those constructions and we explained that when we want to talk about processes we use the passive form. However, we did not tell them it was a passive structure. They copied all the information and then we told them that during that week they would have to build their own sustainable house. For the final task they would also have to deliver an oral presentation and write both an individual and group report. They spent the last ten minutes planning how to approach the task. The next three classes were devoted to building the houses in cooperative groups. They also had the weekend to finish their projects and the first day of the following week we gave them a piece of paper they had to fill in in order to write the report. Once they completed it, they had to practice for the oral presentation. Thus, the next day, they showed their houses to the class and the pictures were displayed in the corridor of the school so that their parents and the other members of the school could see them. Finally, we gave effective feedback when we corrected their reports in order to help students improve their writing skills.

3.4. Results and data analysis

To explain the outcomes achieved, we will first interpret the results obtained from the activities described in the previous section, and then, the outcomes of the questionnaires. The vocabulary-focused activities, involving the readings from the fictional book designed for them, produced interesting results. At first, both students had a negative attitude towards subject of English, and lacked motivation as a consequence of poor results obtained in previous years. They were not very interested in the method we were going to use in class because it involved reading; however, when they read the first episode of their books they were willing to cooperate and they started to produce more complex utterances using vocabulary learnt from the episodes of the book.

The results of the activities focused on grammar structures in so far as these specific students are concerned were the following: during the interactive activity, both of them were participating actively. While the dyslexic child asked his partners words that he did not know in order to be able to do the task, the ADHD boy preferred to use a kind of Spanglish without making a lot of effort. We told him that we would not pay attention to him if he did not try harder. At that moment, he mimed as if he was braking to stop the bus. We did not look at him and he immediately started to drive again and to ask us to tell him some words he needed to use in order to continue the story. When we sat down and we started to write, the boy with dyslexia wrote ten sentences using the present simple to tell the story. There were no connectors and they were simple sentences but he managed to do it. He still made some grammar mistakes since he had forgotten to include the auxiliary *and*, therefore, he was told to try to correct his own mistakes. The ADHD one wrote twelve sentences but they were very messy and blurred. He was really tired and he did not want to continue. Surprisingly, there were not any grammatical mistakes, only some spelling mistakes. Yet, he was told to repeat the task at home with the help of his parents but he did not submit it the next day.

Overall, the outcomes obtained from those activities focused on discourse were very positive indeed. The ADHD student had the idea of designing a cat house. He was drawing without stopping but he did not want to write the report. He did the speaking part and he was able to tell us the materials used, and why he liked the house. On the other hand, the boy diagnosed with dyslexia did not like arts and crafts. Therefore, at first, he was not very participative. Yet, when he felt comfortable with the project he started to work with enthusiasm and he learnt to describe all the materials and the steps followed. In the

written report he was not able to describe the process followed to build his house without making spelling mistakes but he was able to explain it in the speaking test.

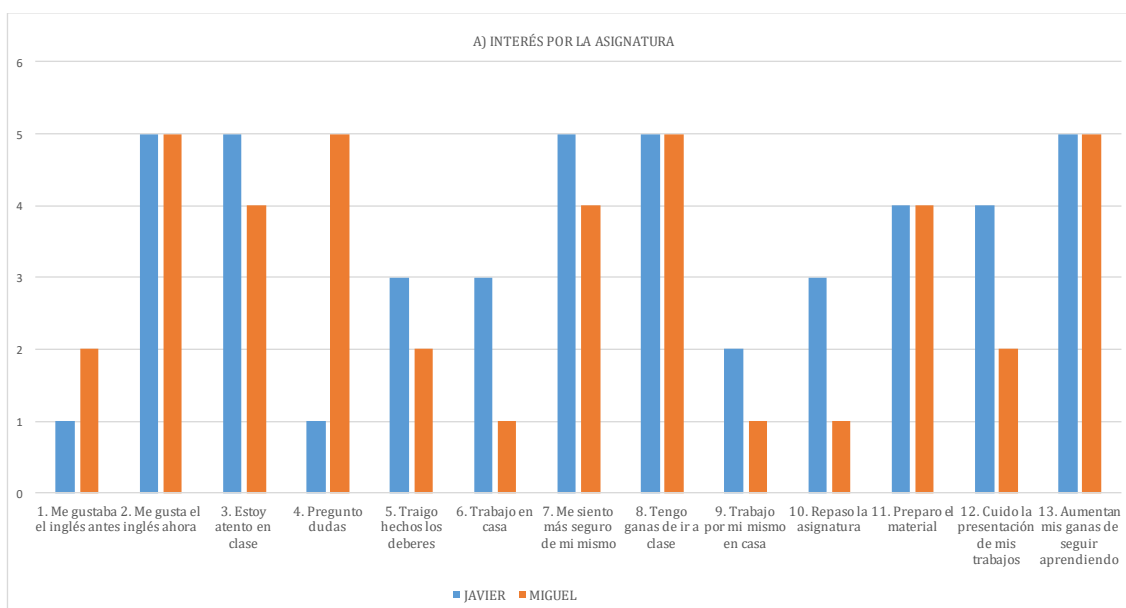
Turning to the data collected from questionnaires, we have divided the results into three different parts: the first one corresponds to the SLD students' questionnaires; the second one corresponds to students' questionnaire, and the last one corresponds to SLD parents' survey. Furthermore, the results of each questionnaire have been classified according to its different sections.

3.4.1. Results and analysis of SLD students' Questionnaires

3.4.1.1. Section A: Interest for the subject

The results obtained in this section regarding to the interest shown for the subject are shown in **figure 1**.

Figure 1. SLD students' interest for the subject



As noted earlier, questionnaires were distributed to the students of 1º of ESO, the SLD students and the parents of the SLD students. Analysis of the SLD students' questionnaires (**Figure 1**) suggests that the implementation of this new methodology has positively impacted the students. The first section of this questionnaire "Interest for the subject" reveals how their interest and motivation have increased considerably as shown in items, 2, 7, 8 and 13 in which the results are between four and five points. Moreover, an analysis

of the results in items 1 and 2 reveals a significant change in the students' attitude towards the subject. In **figures 2 and 3** we can highlight their negative attitude towards the subject at the beginning of the course, and the positive attitude they show currently.

Figure 2. Miguel's and Javier's average score for item 1

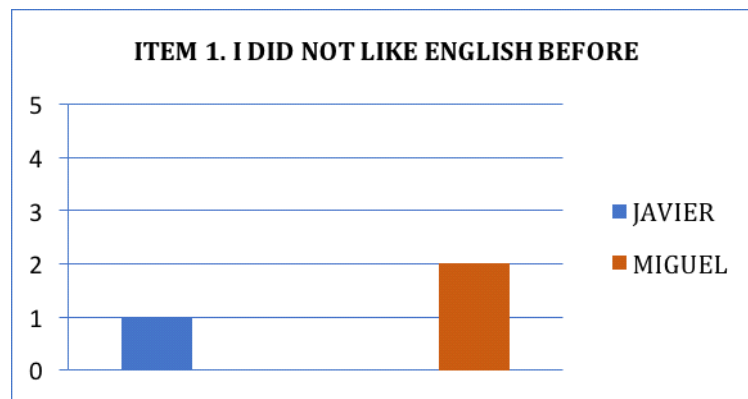
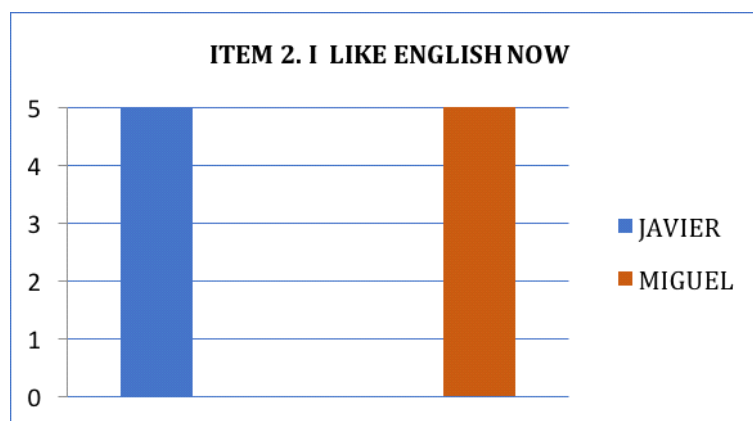


Figure 3. Miguel's and Javier's average score for item 2



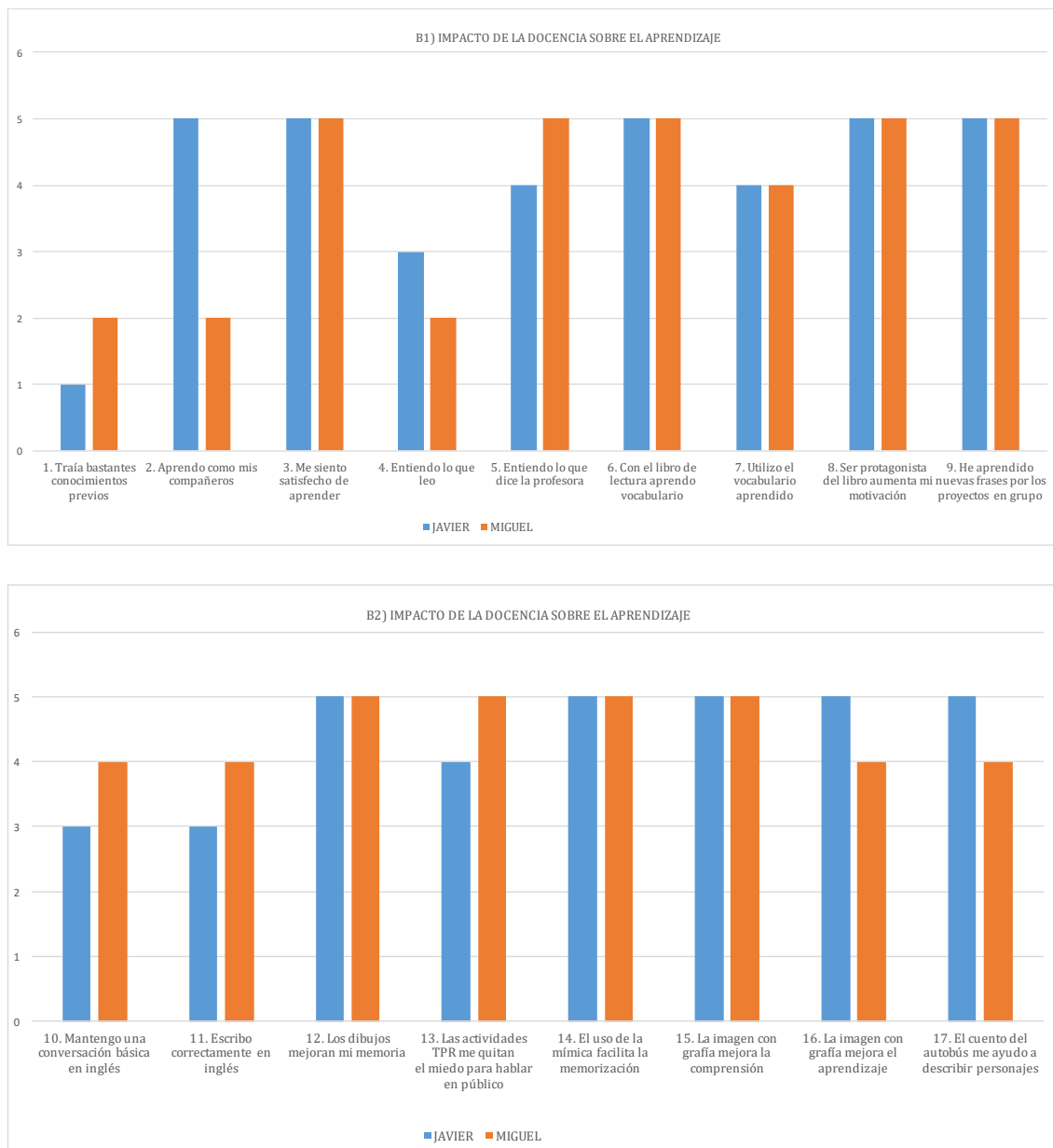
The methodology developed seems to have contributed to increasing their self-esteem and improving their attitude towards English as items 2, 7, 8, and 13 show. Both SLD students reported that they feel much more interested in the subject now than they were at the beginning. Moreover, there has also been a shift in their academic results. Both students reported to have failed this subject previously. After this case study was carried out, these students passed this subject satisfactorily. However, the amount of time devoted to

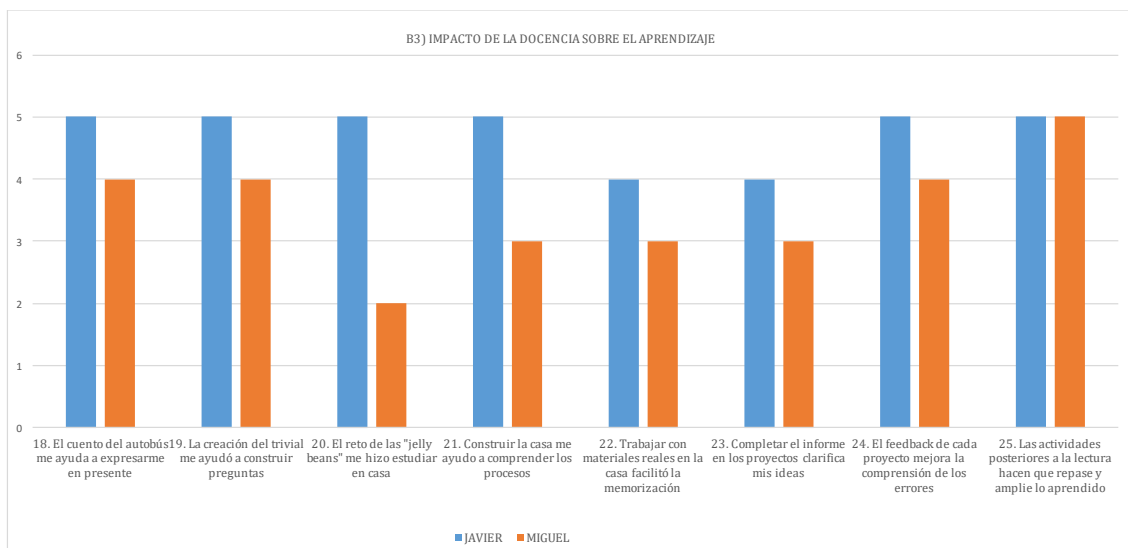
working at home was shown to be minimal as items 5, 6 and 9 reflect. Therefore, it can be stated that this methodology has improved their classroom behaviour.

3.4.1.2. Section B: Impact of the methodology on their learning progress

Regarding to the impact of the methodology on their learning progress, the results are shown in **figures 4, 5 and 6**.

Figures 4, 5, 6. Impact of the methodology on their learning progress





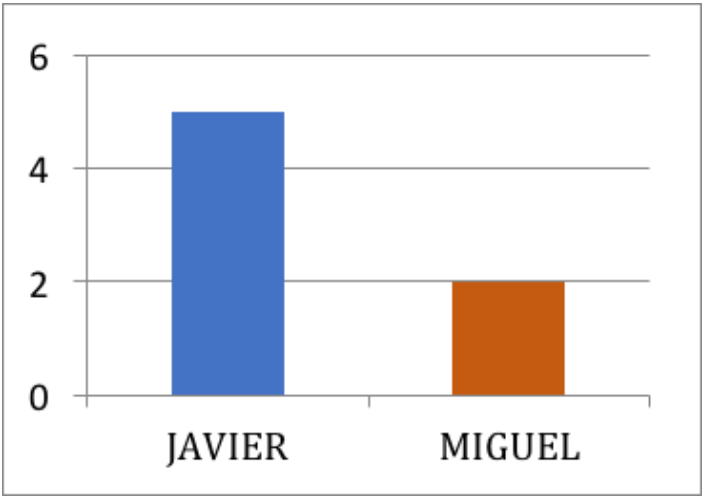
The second section of this questionnaire analyses the impact of the methodology on their learning progress. The results have been divided into three different graphs shown in **figures 4, 5 and 6**. They illustrate that both students have improved their English language skills (items 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11). Moreover, items 1 and 3 demonstrate students' satisfaction with their progress. As students report, their English competence was unsatisfactory at the beginning of the course, but they now perceive that they are improving. We could conclude that this methodology is effective since it gives them a sense that they are progressing and, therefore, feel more motivated to learn. However, they still require much support from their teacher, because they have not become fully autonomous.

Figures 4, 5 and 6 also suggest that the activities carried out in class enhanced both language learning and motivation. Among them, the fictional book, the activities related to drawing, storytelling and those based on TPR have received the highest scores, obtaining scores between 4 and 5, as shown in items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

Furthermore, these data reveal how the reinforcement and the use of meaningful activities have helped these students overcome the problems they encounter, especially with the English grammar. Items 23, 24 and 25 highlight these positive results.

Lastly, the students diverged in their responses to item 2 "*I feel I am learning as my partners*". Whereas Javier reported that he does not feel that he learns differently from his fellow students, Miguel notices a difference between himself and his peers. See **figure 7**.

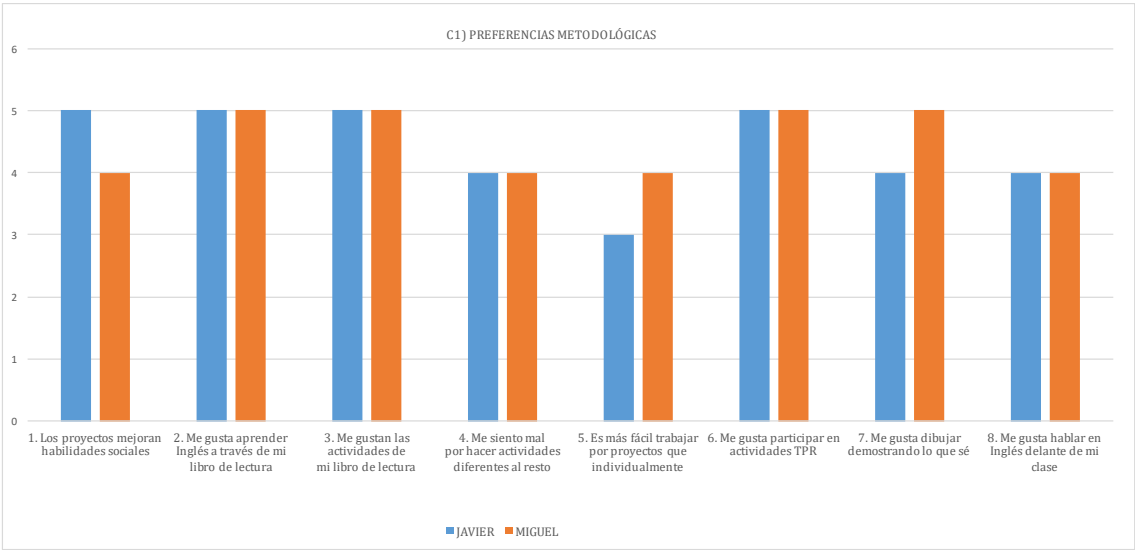
Figure 7. Miguel and Javier average's score for item 2

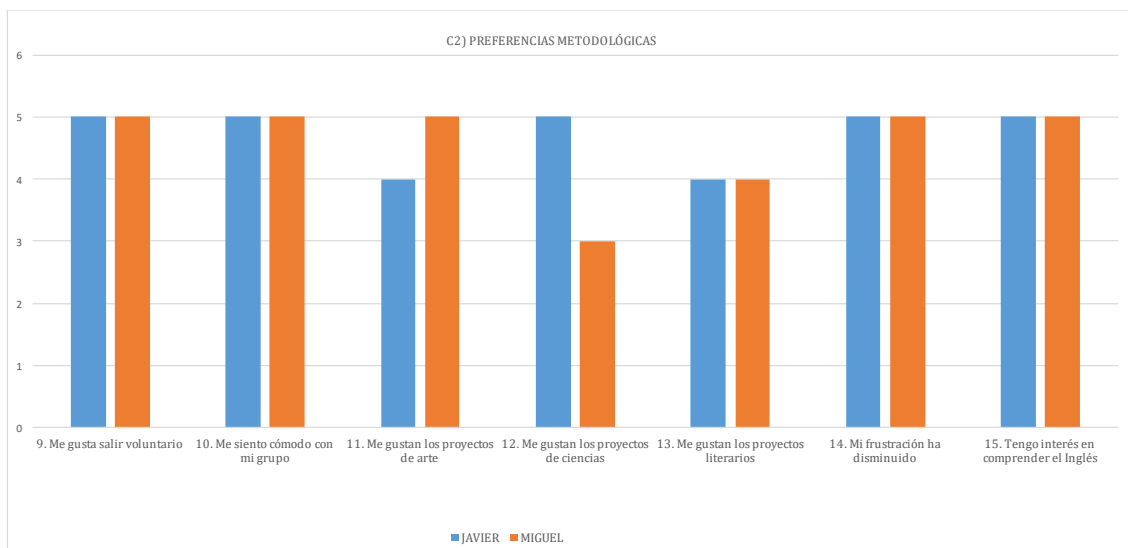


3.4.1.3. Section C: Methodological preferences

The results achieved in the last section: methodological preferences are shown in **figures 8 and 9**.

Figure 8 and 9. Miguel and Javier methodological preferences





The last section covers their methodological preferences shown in **figures 8 and 9**. This survey reveals how working through projects (TBL) has increased their social skills, as item 1 shows. This method has also contributed to increasing student participation since they felt more confident to talk in front of the class, as shown in items 8 and 9. The fictional book and the complementary activities, such as drawing and total physical response activities, have encouraged these two students to learn English, and have reduced their frustration levels, as shown in items 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 14 and 15. Cooperative group work has similarly reinforced their self-esteem and has made the learning process easier, as items 5, 10, 11, 12 and 13 illustrate. All this research reveals that this methodology has been beneficial for both students, and their comments, included at the end of the survey questionnaires prove their enthusiasm is genuine. However, they still struggle to complete the activities as their peers do, as item 4 suggests.

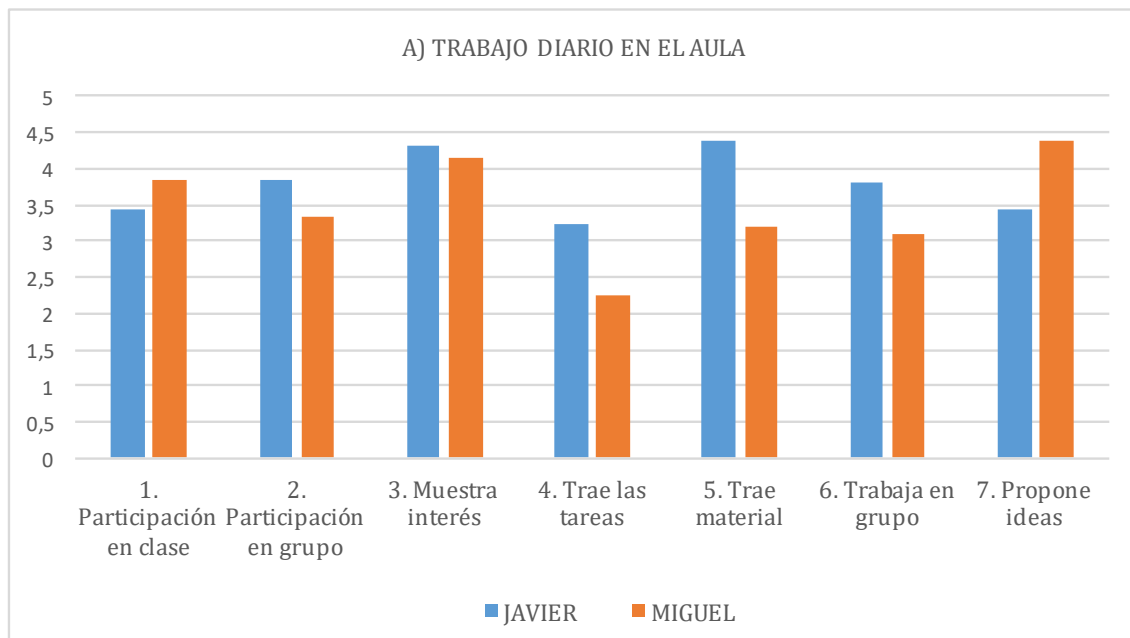
3.4.2. Results and analysis of 1^º ESO students' Questionnaires

3.4.2.1. Section A: Daily work

The outcomes of section A of 1^ª ESO students' questionnaires are shown in **figure 10**. These data reveal that the rest of the group perceive a positive change in the daily work of these two students. Their level of participation has considerably increased as shown in items 1, 3, 6 and 7. The results obtained evince that this kind of methodology has largely improved the daily work of both students inside the classroom. However, the results diverge when it refers to homework. Item 4 demonstrates that these two students still struggle to do their homework on their own and to submit completed assignments.

Therefore, this methodology has been successful in the classroom, but it has not produced similar results at home.

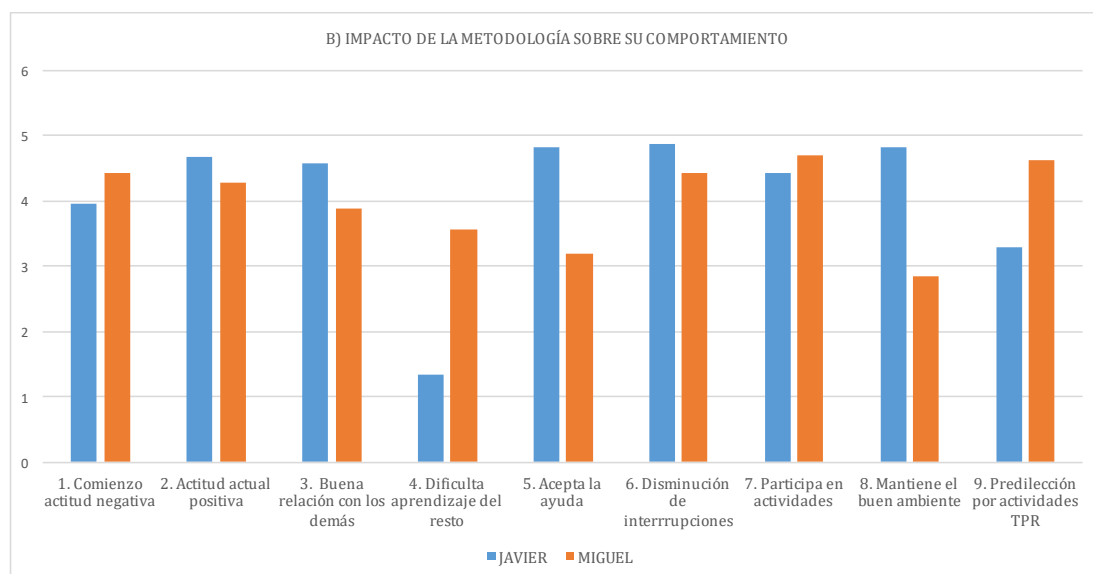
Figure 10. 1º ESO students' analysis about Miguel's and Javier's daily work



3.4.2.2. Section B: Impact of the methodology on SLD students' behaviour

The results regarding to the impact of the methodology on SLD students' behaviour are shown in **figure 11**.

Figure 11. 1º ESO students' analysis about the impact of the methodology on Miguel's and Javier's behaviour

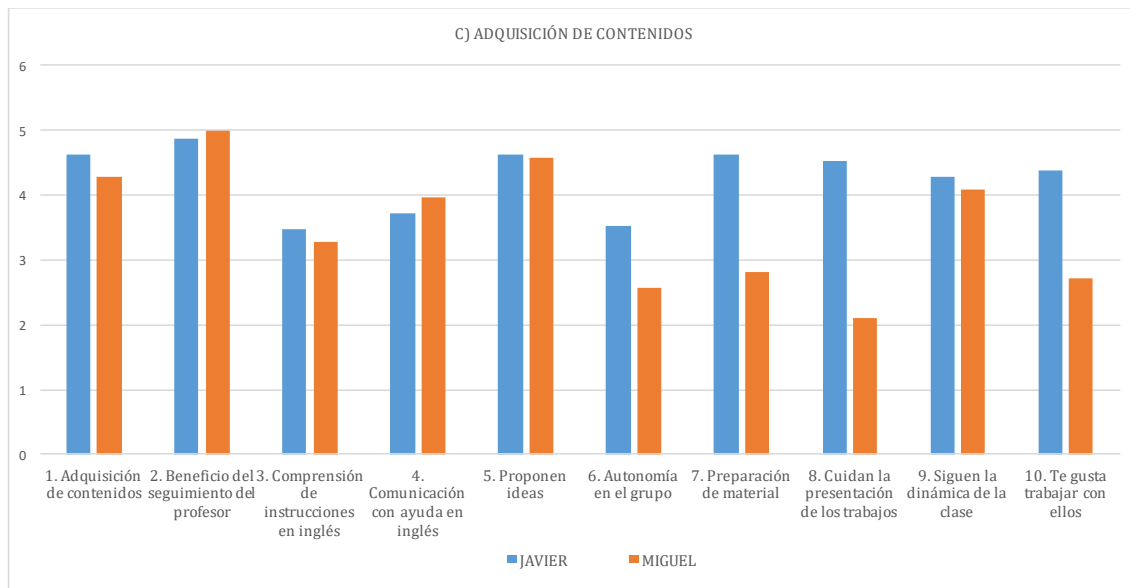


The methodology applied has succeeded in changing the attitude of SLD students'. It has been demonstrated that the negative attitude of the students has given way to a more positive one, as shown in items 1 and 2 (**figure 11**). The results were as follows: Javier got an average score of 3.9 in item 1 whereas Miguel got 4.4. In item 2, Javier got an average score of 4.6 while Miguel's average was 4.2. Therefore, the rest of the group perceive a significant improvement in their classroom behaviour as well as in their relationships with their peers (item 3). Javier had an average score of 4.5 and Miguel had an average of 3.8 in item 3. Furthermore, due to their positive attitude towards the subject, they have become more self-confident. Javier and Miguel now propose new ideas in their groups and participate in the different activities, as shown in items 5, 7 and 9. In addition, as the rest of the students reported, Javier's disruptive behaviour has ceased. This is illustrated in item 4, where he obtained a score of 3.5. In contrast, the students reported that Miguel continues to be disruptive. Miguel's disruptive behaviour has not ceased and still needs improving, as illustrated in the average score obtained in item 4, which is 1.3. Therefore, we can conclude that this methodology has significantly improved Javier's behaviour in class. However, even if Miguel's behaviour has improved, his progress has not been as significant as Javier's. Despite these results, in the last part of the survey questionnaire, where students were asked to include additional comments, they reported that Miguel behaves better in the English class than in the rest of the subjects. In item 6 *"Their interruptions have decreased"*, both students received similar scores: Javier got 4.8 and Miguel 4.4. In general terms, these results suggest that the disruptive behaviours of these two students have been reduced as a result of the implementation of this methodology.

3.4.2.3. Section C: English competence development

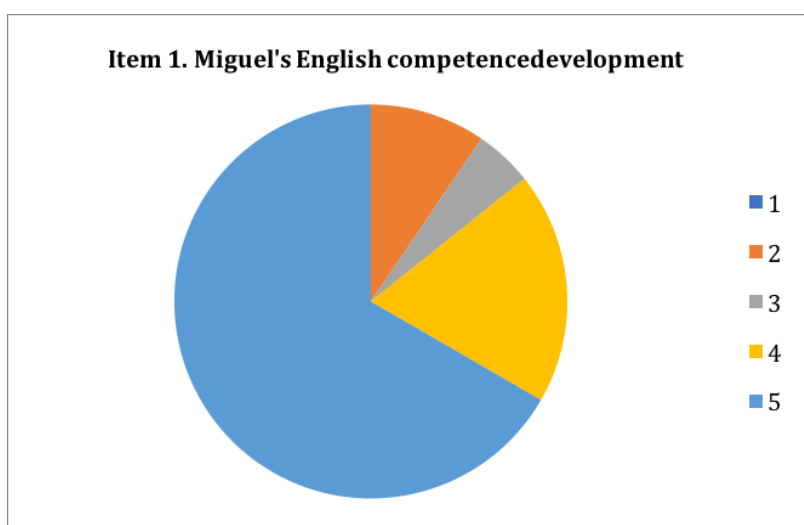
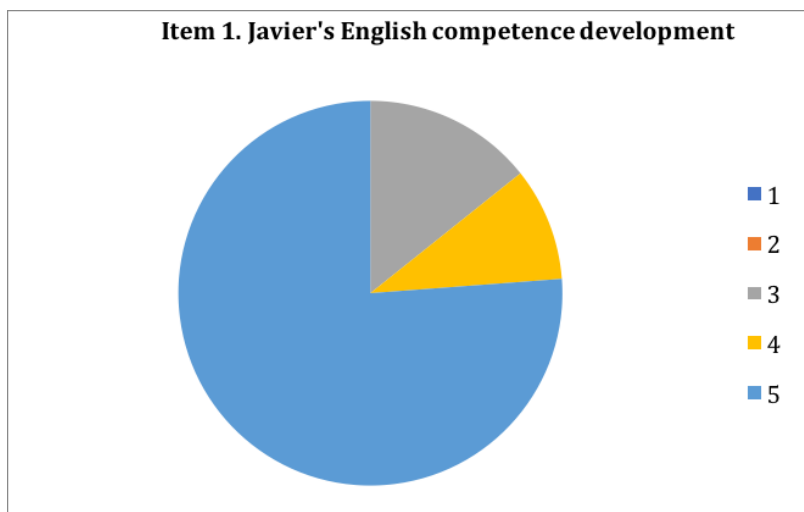
Regarding to the last section of students' questionnaires, results are shown in **figure 12**.

Figure 12. Javier's and Miguel's English competence development as perceived by the rest of the class



The analysis of the data obtained in this part of the questionnaire reveals that the other students are conscious that these students' communicative competence in English has remarkably improved, as shown in item 1. They also recognize the importance of the teacher's monitoring of the SLD students to enhance learning acquisition (item 2). Most respondents agree that these students not only can understand the instructions given in English (item 3) and are able to communicate ideas (item 4), but also that they are more autonomous (item 6), show more initiative (item 5), and they participate in classroom dynamics (item 9). This may be the reason why most students like working with these students, as shown in item 10. We could conclude that most students corroborate the beneficial impact of the implementation of this methodology on these students' learning, shown in **figures 13 and 14**.

Figures 13 and 14. Javier's and Miguel's average scores for item 1

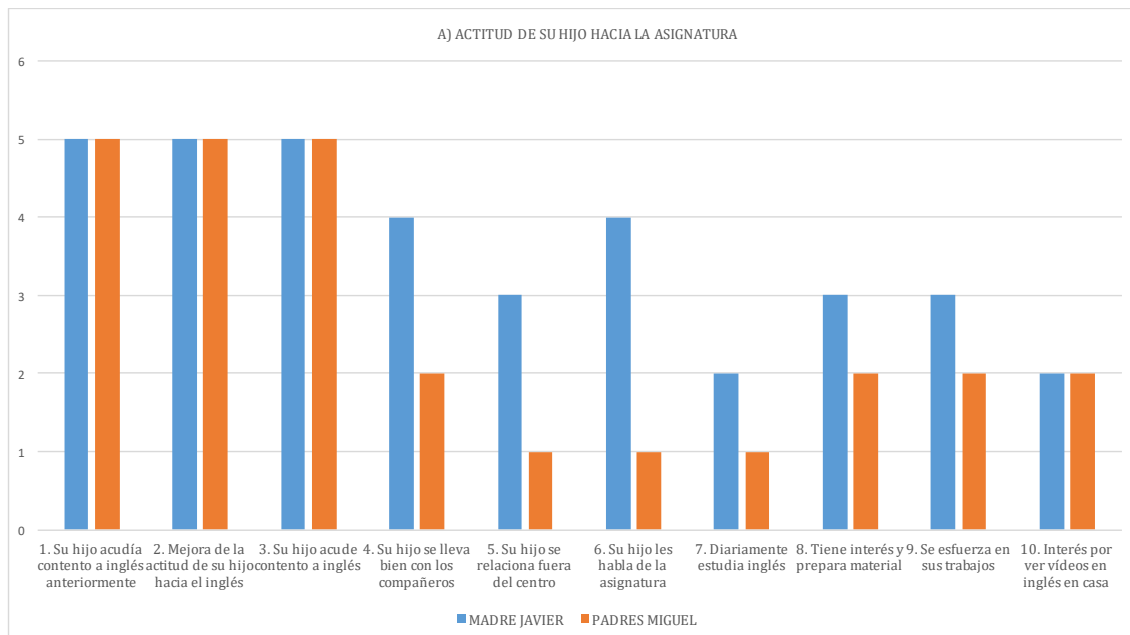


3.4.3. Results and Analysis of parents' Survey Questionnaires

3.4.3.1. Section A: Their kids' attitude towards English

The results obtained from SLD kids' parents' survey in section A are shown in **figure 15**.

Figure 15. Miguel and Javier's attitude towards English reported by their parents



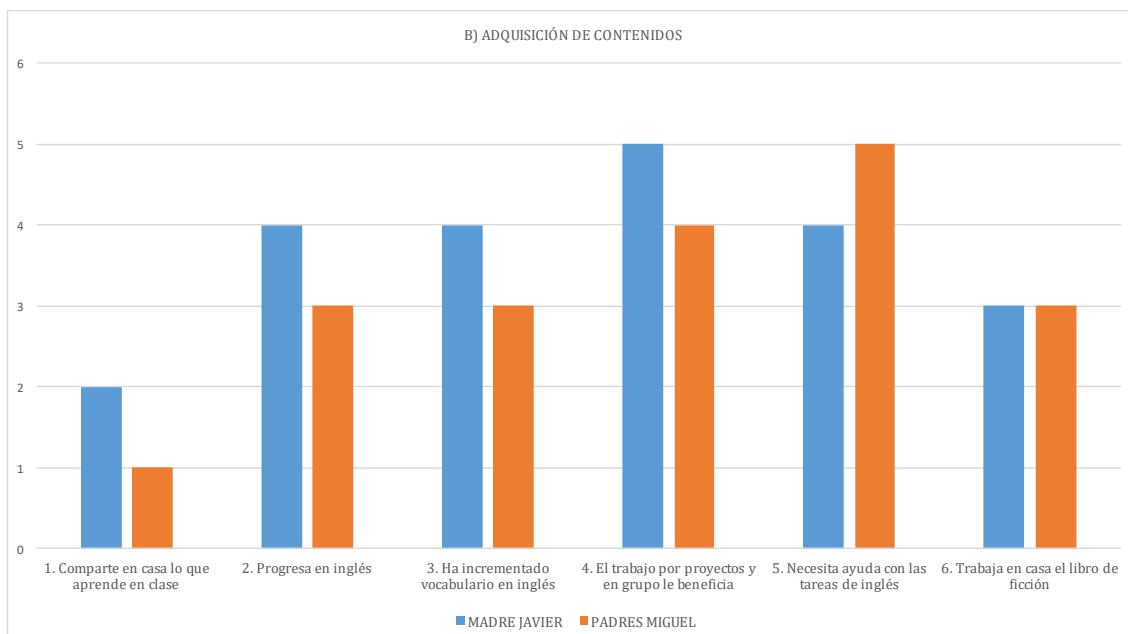
The data obtained in the first section of this survey questionnaire illustrates that the SLD students' attitude has improved and that their motivation to learn English has increased. These results can be observed in items 1, 2 and 3 which received a score of five. Their positive attitude has also largely influenced their relationships with their peers. However, while Javier currently maintains strong relationships with his classmates outside of class, Miguel still struggles in this area, as shown in items 4 and 5. Nevertheless, they do not study English at home, as shown in items 7, 8, 9 and 10. These results illustrate that this methodology has worked in the class but not at home.

Moreover, while Javier has begun to share with his mother what he is learning, Miguel has not, as shown in item 6.

3.4.3.2. Section B: English competence development

The results of section B which deal with English competence development are shown in **figure 16**.

Figure 16. Miguel and Javier's English competence development reported by their parents

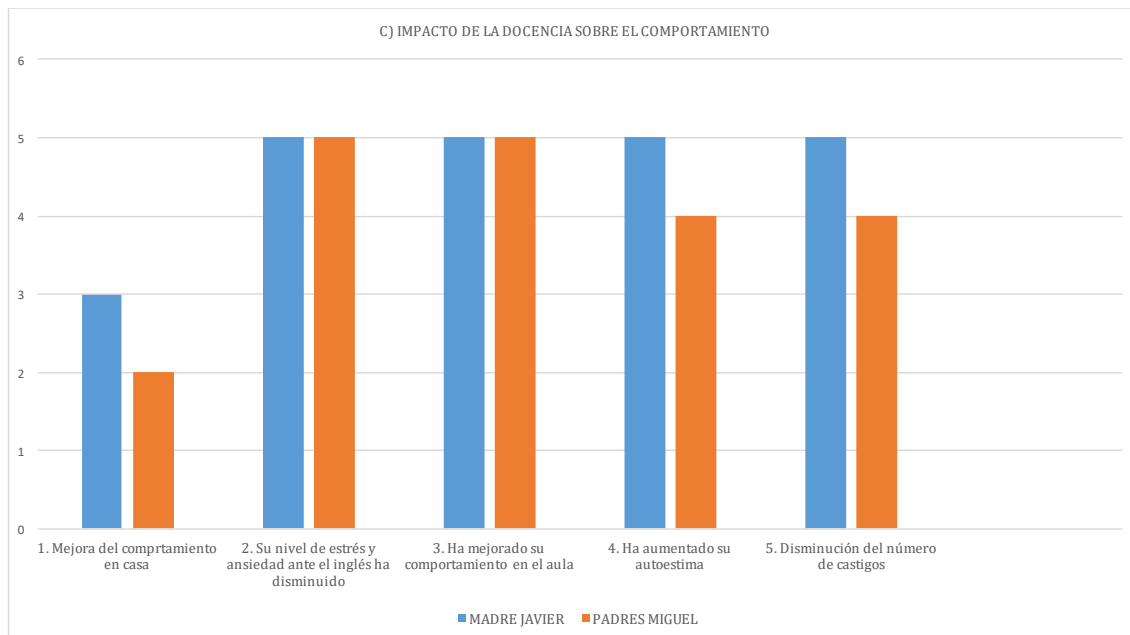


The results obtained from the survey questionnaire (**figure 16**) illustrate that the SLD students have developed their competence in English, as shown in items 2, 3, 4 and 6. The parents think that this kind of methodology has increased the students' success in the classroom and has helped them learn. However, it is apparent that parents experience some difficulties appreciating what their kids learn. Miguel does not tell his parents anything about school, and Javier started to talk to his mother about this subject only one month ago.

3.4.3.3. Section C: Impact of this methodology on SLD students' behaviour

The results shown in **figure 17** highlight that parents perceive that their children's classroom behaviour has improved. Moreover, their level of stress and frustration has been considerably reduced as shown in items 2, 3, 4 and 5. As we have previously mentioned, these results are not the same at home. At home, Miguel's behaviour is still challenging. However, in Javier's case, although it is not as positive as it is in the class, it is not as disruptive as it used to be.

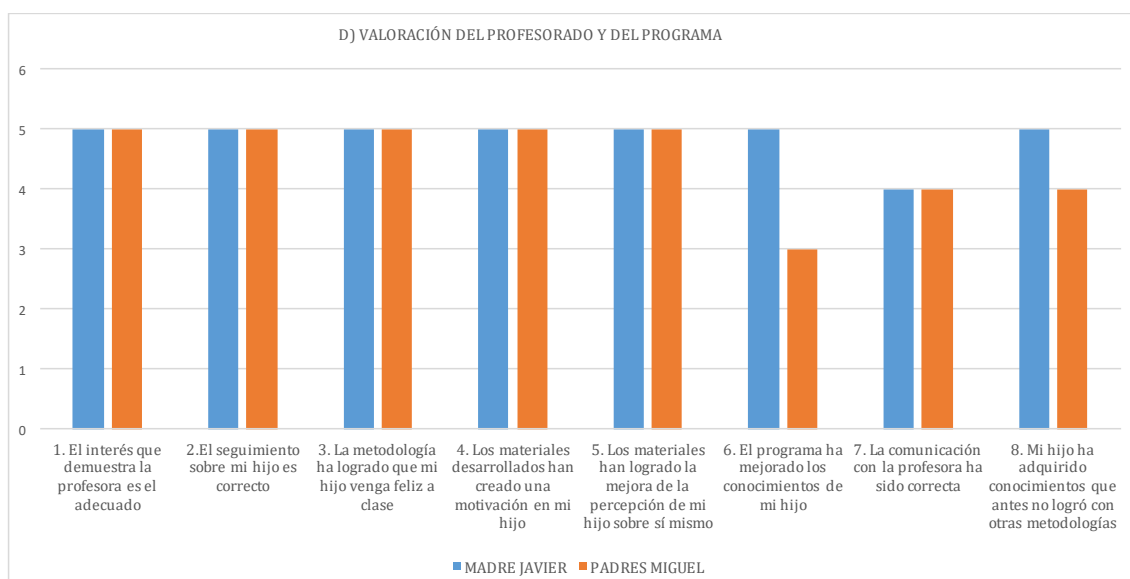
Figure 17. Parents' perceptions of the impact of this methodology on their children's behaviour



3.4.3.4. Section D: Assessment of the program

To finish with, the results obtained with the assessment of the program are shown in **figure 18**.

Figure 18. Parents' assessment of the program



This section of the questionnaire (**Figure 18**) suggests that parents appreciate the methodology that has been developed and implemented, and they have given it the highest score. This corroborates that parents are satisfied with the results of the learning program and with the methodology implemented in the English class. The only item of the

questionnaire that has obtained a lower score is item 6 *“this new methodology has helped my son develop his competence in English”* to which Miguel’s parents have given a score of 3. As we mentioned in section A of this part of the questionnaire, this is due to the fact that he does not want to share what he learns at school with his parents, and he does not like talking to them about school. The results of the questionnaire prove that the methodology applied and the role adopted by the teacher have been successful since it has contributed to achieving the objectives proposed at the beginning of this research: to facilitate the development of their competence in English and to develop students’ self-esteem in order to enhance their motivation towards the English language.

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study has been to analyse how teachers can teach English as a second language in high school to ADHD and Dyslexic students without in so doing detracting from the progress of the rest of the students in the class. We feel that this research points towards the effectiveness of combining several methodologies in helping the SLD students develop their communicative competence as well as their self-esteem.

The study shows that by providing the right methodology and appropriate didactic tools, these students can be successful language learners. Firstly, it is important to mention that developing new materials and following different methodologies have been crucial in order to achieve the objective. Previous studies like the ones carried out by Russian teachers working with SLD students, such as Turketi (2010) and Roszak (2009), or the Argentinian Iglesias (2010), have proven that traditional methodologies have not been effective when working with SLD students. Previous studies have also concluded that these students lacked enthusiasm for English as they knew they would receive low marks (Chen et al, 2011). There is another similarity between this study and previous studies of an analogous nature. All these studies have revealed that using motivating activities which include movement and the development of creativity help to increase their communicative competence. The TPR method developed by Asher (1977) was actually welcomed and encouraged in all the different studies. The results obtained in the present study resulting from the implementation of motivating activities involving movement and creativity were highly positive, since SLD students increased their communicative competence and their levels of anxiety towards English language learning significantly decreased. The inclusion of the TPR method allowed every student to become a valuable participant in classroom activities regardless of his learning differences. Furthermore, this research has proven

that an association of a word or a phrase with some physical movement has helped create additional connections in the brain. However, when teaching students with special needs, it is important not to overuse this method since, although ADHD children are easily attracted to a novelty, they can also quickly get tired if similar activities are persistently repeated. Moreover, the results of this study are in consonance with studies conducted by Ellis (2000), Nunan (2004) or Willis (2007), which suggest that the so-called task-based learning method is very effective since it is more student-centered and each student can use their own abilities to accomplish the task. The combination of task-based learning and activities specially designed for these students has been essential to achieve our aim. Task-based-learning has helped to keep students engaged while pursuing a particular goal. It has made SLD students' brains focus on a goal, which is not linguistic in itself, thus switching their attention from primarily language issues towards more comprehensive educational goals. Direct learning can be challenging for such students. Therefore, the use of projects has reduced student frustration and disruptive behaviours. As Nunan's study points out, "this method shifts our perspective on the learning process from knowing *that* to knowing *how*" (Nunan, 2004: 24). This means that the sole focus of the class is not only on the English language, but on carrying out interesting projects and activities where students can develop their multiple intelligences. The results of the activities carried out, and the data gathered from the survey questionnaires demonstrate the enormous shift SLD students' have experienced throughout this course. It has been proven that the defiant attitude of these students has been transformed into a more positive one. Their enthusiasm and motivation have impressively improved their communicative competence. Based as it was on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, the didactic tool they most valued has been the fictional book. This task was conceived to be the fulcrum of the entire project and was a task that helped them connect the learning process to their life experience. Therefore, it was considered crucial for the success of the experiment. The creation of the fictional book based on a story they enjoyed has been successful since it provided students with a motivation they had lost, and their vocabulary broadened considerably. This increase of vocabulary has been used to instil grammar patterns that could not have been possible otherwise. Following the multiple intelligences theory, we have developed activities which involved drawing and music in order to enable these students to narrate stories, and, as the survey and the tests show, there has been a noticeable evolution in their narrative skills. Another relevant aspect worth mentioning is

the fact that working in cooperative groups has contributed to increasing SLD students' participation since they feel more confident to talk in front of the class.

This study also illustrates that the impressive progress achieved by these students in the class could not be observed at home. While Javier's mother recognized that her son has changed for the better, Miguel's parents did not. However, both parents appreciated the methodology that was developed and implemented. This corroborates that parents were satisfied with the results of the learning program and with the methodology implemented in the English class. In Miguel's case, the ADHD boy, they continue struggling at home as his behaviour has not improved much. He is still defiant and disruptive, and he does not want to share what he learns at school with his parents. Moreover, in both cases the amount of work devoted at home is not sufficient and they have not been able to do their English tasks at home on their own. Furthermore, data collected from the questionnaires suggest that, although they enjoy doing different activities to those done by their classmates, they do not like feeling different from their peers.

This methodology has also helped considerably reduce the use of Spanish in the English classroom; Spanish was only used in such occasions when the tasks or concepts were difficult to understand. This contributed to increasing the students' exposure to the English language and consequently to enhancing their competence. This methodology has also been widely accepted by the other students in the classroom. The data gathered from students' survey questionnaires suggest that they consider SLD students are learning in the same way as their peers and, most important; they do not feel these SLD students are hindering their own learning process. It was also observed that some of the other teachers had started to implement some of the strategies used in the English classes as they observed the progress made so far.

Finally, the results of the present study clearly show that the methodology applied has facilitated the development of SLD students' communicative competence in English and has developed students' self-esteem in order to enhance their motivation towards the English language.

Nevertheless, the results of this study though valid, are not conclusive, and further investigation in the field is required. This research has been applied in one class with two students with special needs during the course of an academic year. This is a small sample and, in order to get conclusive results, this methodology should be implemented in many other schools with students with special needs. Furthermore, this research, which started

at the beginning of this course, should continue with this group to determine the long term effects of this methodology in order to see what activities are more efficient and how different strategies must be applied depending on their age. Therefore, a more in-depth study is required to achieve more extensive results.

5. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to prove that SLD students were able to learn as their peers with an adequate methodology and that this will not necessarily impair the progress of the rest of the class. From the results obtained in this study, it can be concluded that students' communicative competence in English has improved markedly. These students not only can understand the instructions given in English, and are able to communicate ideas, but they have also become more autonomous, show greater initiative, and participate more in the classroom dynamics. Furthermore, their attitude has improved and their motivation to learn English has increased. Becoming motivated and engaged in the different tasks has made the learning process more fruitful, and as they realise that their competence in English has improved, they are more encouraged to learn. However, the results reported in this study suggest that the same effects have not been achieved at home. They still find it difficult to work autonomously and their attitude, especially in Miguel's case, have changed very little. Therefore, the findings of this preliminary study reveal a positive impact on these students' learning process. The data obtained also demonstrates that the whole class benefited from the methodology developed. Thus, the hypothesis presented at the beginning of this study has been satisfactorily proven. This study has been carried out in a secondary school in a particular context, and therefore findings are not conclusive and cannot be used to make generalizations. However, this research project highlights the need for obtaining further information not only with these students but with a wider sample.

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