



PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR

FACULTAD DE APRENDIZAJE, LENGUAS Y COMUNICACIÓN

TEMA: Implementation of Universal Design for Learning in English classes and its impact on language learning according to teachers' perceptions.

USO PÚBLICO

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DEDICATORIA

“Pon en manos del Señor todas tus obras y tus proyectos se cumplirán”

Proverbios 16:3

A mis amados padres, por su apoyo incondicional;

A mis dos hijas, por ser mi motor y mi motivación más grande;

A mi esposo, por siempre estar pendiente de mí, por alentarme a cumplir mis sueños;

A todos los docentes que enseñamos con amor y creemos en el gran poder que tenemos en nuestras manos.

Mi amor y admiración eterna.

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FACULTAD DE APRENDIZAJE, LENGUAS Y COMUNICACIÓN
MAESTRÍA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA**

TEMA: Implementación del Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje en clases de inglés y su impacto en el aprendizaje del idioma desde la percepción docente

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Fecha: 13 de febrero de 2026

RESUMEN

El presente estudio analiza las percepciones de docentes de inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) sobre la efectividad de la implementación del marco educativo “Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje” (DUA) en la adquisición de una segunda lengua; se centra específicamente en analizar su impacto percibido en el aprendizaje estudiantil y los desafíos de implementación. El estudio fue realizado en una institución particular ubicada en Quito, Ecuador. La política educativa ecuatoriana ha enfatizado la educación inclusiva y la eliminación de barreras para el aprendizaje utilizando DUA como referente; sin embargo, existe escasa evidencia sobre la percepción y aplicación de esta herramienta, especialmente en contextos de enseñanza del inglés. Para esta investigación se ha utilizado un diseño descriptivo, no experimental y transversal, con un enfoque predominantemente cuantitativo. La recolección de datos se realizó mediante una encuesta aplicada a docentes de inglés que enseñan desde séptimo grado hasta primero de Bachillerato, estos resultados se comparan con una encuesta aplicada en la misma institución a todo el personal docente sobre DUA. Los hallazgos indican que los profesores ven esta herramienta como un marco útil para fomentar el compromiso, la comprensión y la motivación en las clases de inglés. Las técnicas de representación y compromiso se utilizan predominantemente; mientras que la acción y la expresión, especialmente en el ámbito de la evaluación flexible, son más difíciles de implementar. Los principales obstáculos identificados fueron las limitaciones de tiempo y la necesidad de formación continua. La comparación muestra que los profesores de inglés utilizan el DUA de manera más consistente que otros profesores. Este estudio ofrece evidencia contextualizada de las percepciones de los profesores sobre el DUA en Ecuador y destaca la necesidad de apoyo institucional y orientación específica por área disciplinaria.

Palabras clave: Accesibilidad educativa, Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje, Enseñanza del inglés, Inclusión educativa, Metodologías activas

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers about the effectiveness of implementing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework when approaching second language acquisition. It focuses specifically on the perceived impact it has on student learning and the obstacles to doing so through implementation. The research was done in Quito, Ecuador at a private institution. Given that Ecuadorian educational policy has been rooted in inclusive education and the elimination of obstacles to learning, using UDL as a framework, there is scarce evidence out there on the perception and application of the use of this tool, especially in English language teaching environments. The design of this study was descriptive as well (non-experimental, cross-sectional), and it is dominantly quantitative. Surveys of English teachers from seventh grade through the first year of high school were used to measure data. These findings were evaluated against the findings of a survey of UDL delivered by all teaching staff at the same institution. The results indicate that teachers find this tool to be helpful in enhancing engagement, understanding, and motivation in English lessons. Representation and engagement strategies are the predominant ones and action and expression, especially in flexible assessment, can be challenging. Of those challenges, time constraints and the need for continuous training were identified. The report demonstrates that English teachers tend to use UDL more frequently than other teachers, even among colleagues in such tasks. This paper contributes contextual factors for teachers' perception of UDL in Ecuador and emphasises the value of formal institutional backing and subject matter-specific teaching.

Palabras clave: Active methodologies, Educational accessibility, Educational inclusion, English teaching, Universal Design for Learning.

INTRODUCTION

English has developed into a strategic subject at educational levels of the world because of its importance in globalization, access to higher education systems, and inclusion in academic, professional and intercultural societies. English has come to be considered as one of the mandatory subjects in the national curriculum in Ecuador (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Yet, despite its significant curricular importance, learning a language still poses numerous challenges of learning for students of diverse backgrounds in the country. According to the EF (2025), Ecuador is among the countries with the lowest English proficiency in Latin America, ranking 18th out of 21 countries in the region and 83rd worldwide.

Students come to a classroom with a wide variability of proficiency and styles of learning, emotional issues like language anxiety, and disparate academic support. There is recognized evidence internationally that there are inequalities in language instruction when instruction fails to accommodate diversity of learners (UNESCO, 2020). Such barriers demonstrate the essential need for instructional methods that go beyond one-size-fits-all teaching practices and remove barriers to engagement with and learning in English classrooms.

This research is also focused on an English teacher perspective interested in learning disabilities and inclusive education. It used to be (and continues to be) the case that the focus of students' academic access to content was more on understanding how cognitive and learning differences affected their access, though initially this interest stemmed from some level of understanding this subject matter. However, the classroom teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context demonstrated that difficulties of learning do extend beyond the scope of diagnosed learning disabilities. Fear of using the language, poor motivation, and grammatical over a communicative approach to teaching often limit English learners.

It has been reported that language anxiety and low engagement may be effective for restricting learners' motivation and their communicative ability even when they do not have a formal learning disability (Shawn Loewen, 2021). Furthermore, standard form-based teaching approaches have resulted in lower motivation and opportunities for the language to be used authentically (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). These observations prompted reflections regarding redesign of instruction in that regard as how English

teachers design the process to address both cognitive variability and affective barriers to second language learning.

From this background, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) appeared as a solution to meet learner variability as an integrated whole, as it has been proposed to accommodate students with learning differences as well as mitigate affective barriers and enhance engagement within language learning contexts (Kormos, 2012). This synthesis of inclusive education and EFL pedagogy form the conceptual foundation for this study.

Recently, UDL attracts considerable public attention in Ecuador due to its role in the national efforts to enforce inclusive education and reduce the barriers faced by learners. The guidelines and regulations of the Ministry of Education stipulate the importance of flexible curricular designs, reasonable adjustments, and strategies for adapting curricula and lesson strategies to meet the needs of different types of learners (MINEDUC, 2025) UDL is thus promoted in this sense as a framework that encourages access to learning, participation and learning in depth. The efficacy of UDL, however, is based fundamentally on how teachers understand what their beliefs are and what they see that is happening out-of-the-box in the classroom. While, on the other hand, policy documents argue for inclusive design, little empirical evidence has been reported in Ecuador about how teachers, particularly EFL teachers, are aware of UDL as an effective way to assist with the acquisition of English language. Given that perceptions can influence educational results for teachers in relation to pedagogical decision making, pedagogical innovation dissemination and sustaining inclusive practices, it is important to explore teachers' perceptions.

This paper contained five chapters. Chapter I consists of the main background of the study, the justification, and the structure. Chapter II establishes a problem statement and theoretical framework; and includes readings on UDL, inclusive education, EFL teaching, as well as legal bases of study within Ecuadorian educational system. Chapter III presents the research methodology to be used: research design and participants, instruments and procedures for data collection and analysis. For the English teachers' survey and the institutional UDL opinion poll, Chapter IV provides a detailed introduction and analysis of the findings and compares findings. Thus, Chapter V offers implications for teachers, institutions, and next steps as a result of the study findings.

CHAPTER I: PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1. General context: English education and inclusion in Ecuador

Given its importance in facilitating higher education access, academic mobility, and participation in globalized society and industry, English is strategically positioned in the Ecuadorian educational system. The national curriculum designates English as compulsory across Basic General Education and Baccalaureate, an indication of the state's understanding of the fundamental importance of this medium to students' future opportunities (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Furthermore, English is becoming more important in the context of university entry, scholarships, and international academic exchanges, solidifying its position as a significant source of educational equity and social mobility.

Meanwhile, Ecuadorian education policy at the same time focused more and more on inclusive education as the principle of inclusive education. According to the "*Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural*" (MINEDUC, 2023), inclusion is a broader responsibility within the framework, defined as a systemic duty and means the reduction of barriers to learning to ensure access, participation, and achievement for all students, irrespective of differences between individual students (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2017). In recent ministerial instructions, they have also made heavy emphasis on the necessity for flexible curriculum design, flexible teaching and differentiation of teaching and accommodation due to the fact of learner difference (MINEDUC, 2025). These orientations of policy tell us that Ecuador does not just "care" about English as a subject but is becoming more aware that teaching English is a core strategy in fostering equitable learning opportunities.

Notwithstanding this policy framework, there have been ongoing discrepancies between curricular aspirations and in-school practices. Classrooms often consist of young people who have a wide variety of home-language backgrounds, varied prior experiences with the language, or varying levels of academic and emotional support. Disparate instruction and practices in schools can often be the cause of exclusion, demotivation, disappointment or failure to meet students where they are, especially in a subject as challenging as a foreign language. This framing of the debate highlights the importance of coherent pedagogical designs where language teaching and learning are both at the national and regional level with attention to inclusive pedagogical practices in the national

agenda.

1.2. Specific context: EFL learning, inclusion, and UDL in Ecuador

Learner variability is particularly significant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Ecuador. This might include mixed learners in one class knowing different parts of the vocabulary and/or not expressing confidence in using English for communication. Affective barriers such as language anxiety and fear of error are often associated with such reasons, and so can inhibit participation and sustain exclusion in communicative tasks. In EFL settings such affective and cognitive barriers have been reported, which have been shown to be particularly negative to language learning in the absence of design into language instruction in EFL (Vygotsky, 1978).

Recent international studies indicate that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can provide a meaningful answer to those challenges by offering a framework for the students free-play, flexibility on how they can organize the teaching of content, how and in what manner learners learn, and the ways that they demonstrate their performance in this environment. For instance, (Sarmad Ahmad, 2023) found that UDL-compatible teaching in EFL teaching promoted reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition as the result of multimodal input and flexibility of expression.

Second, for linguistically mixed classrooms, UDL increases fair participation and learner independence among students with multiple opportunities to engage with or use language (Kavita Rao, 2021). In the Ecuadorian case, there is evidence that UDL may supplement communicative methods of English teaching to accommodate learner diversity through concrete classroom practices rather than lofty policy edicts (Fritzner Joseph, 2025). However, despite these findings, empirical evidence regarding UDL in EFL instruction is scarce regarding teachers' perception and use of UDL in Ecuador. This is an important gap as teachers' beliefs, experiences and judgments affect how inclusive frameworks are perceived and practiced in their daily work.

1.3. Background of the problem

Internationally, the UDL (Universal Design for Learning) approach has been recognized as a potential educational framework and is a relevant construction for improving the accessibility, inclusiveness, and participation in meaningful learning of different students; but UDL is under-utilized in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Ecuador, where it has yet to be fully observed. English teachers are teaching to various

types of “diverse” linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional groups, but the extent to which UDL is well-liked and implemented is unclear. UDL is not designed to make learning easier, it removes barriers without sacrificing success and holds high expectations for all learners (David Rose, 2022).

Moreover, empirical evidence of a teacher’s satisfaction with the effectiveness of UDL in facilitating students’ learning in English is scarce. Failure to have this information impedes the introduction of inclusive practices and results in institutions making poorly informed decisions regarding the level of instruction and the sharing and distribution of resources and pedagogical innovators. Hence, the research gap at this moment is the lack of systematic data collection about English teachers’ perceptions of implementation and impact of UDL implemented in EFL teaching, creating a gap in the existing knowledge in integrating inclusive methodologies in EFL classroom practices.

Today, in a global context, gaining a second language is not only a homework issue, but is also a necessary building block for personal, cultural, and professional growth. In summary, the second language acquisition is a multilayered process (Vygotsky, 1978), in which multiple linguistic, cognitive and cultural processes must be integrated with an instructional model, which may not be entirely captured by classical instructional methodologies.

The effectiveness of innovative language teaching methodologies is based on studies. Fritzner and Toro Añazco (2025) investigated the integration of Project-Based Learning and UDL framework in learning English as a second language in Ecuador. Their research shows that students who have experienced them are more involved, more engaged, inspired to perform and proficient in the language than those being taught in traditional methods. Other studies have demonstrated that students that have been assessed under real-life, meaningful tasks and are encouraged to demonstrate their learning using a variety of methods and hand on in multiple channels, motivation and commitment are higher than traditional education (J. Herrington, 2014). This is especially important in language classes, where students may experience anxiety and have less of a way to practice the target language in their everyday lives.

Moreover, UDL champions multimodal instruction to support learning of challenging language concepts through visual input, audio, digital media, and tactile activities. Flexible assessment tasks such as oral presentations, creative projects, and digital storytelling allow students to represent learning in multiple ways that promote cognitive

engagement and enable more in-depth processing of information (David Rose, 2022). It is also worth mentioning that studies suggest that the UDL framework is currently underutilized. Although Project-Based Learning has been mainstreamed in education, familiarity with UDL appears weak (Phil Hiver, 2024), often due to inadequate teacher training and unclear implementation of UDL concepts. It points to a research gap, particularly lack of studies addressing teachers' perceptions of UDL in EFL context.

1.4 Problem formulation

Research question:

How do English teachers perceive the application and effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning in their classroom practice?

1.4.1. General objective

To analyze English teachers' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning in EFL teaching.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1. To identify the extent to which English teachers report applying UDL principles—representation, action and expression, and engagement—in their EFL classrooms.
2. To examine teachers' perceptions of the benefits of UDL in supporting students' English language acquisition.
3. To determine the challenges or barriers teachers face when implementing UDL in EFL instructional settings.
4. To assess teachers' perceptions of the relationship between UDL-based practices and students' progress in learning English.

1.5 Justification

The present study is being conducted in a private educational institution and therefore should be recognized as a contextual limitation. Private school students experience greater access to resources, smaller class sizes, and more exposure to English than do public school students in Ecuador. This socioeconomic context may potentially cast doubt on the generalizability of the research and the role of material resources in UDL implementation.

From its conception, UDL is not primarily a resource-centered scheme, the resource-

based nature of UDL is driven by the design of instructional programs and practices (David Rose, 2022). The core principles of UDL, deliberate consideration of learner variability, provision of multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression—are centered on pedagogical choices rather than technological or economic investment (David Rose, 2022). UDL has been shown to be effective when compared with high-cost resources because of instructional design and teacher practice (Kavita Rao, 2021).

Moreover, even in private schools, social and educational inequities persist. Students may vary because of prior exposure to English, support from home for learning, emotional readiness to communicate, or access to meaningful language use in contexts beyond the classroom. So, a study of UDL implementation in a private IB school does not negate equity concerns but rather can be interpreted in terms of a specific institutional context with such understanding of a teacher's attitudes toward learner variability.

By attending to teachers' perceptions and practices, this study prioritizes pedagogical feasibility and instructional decision-making rather than assumptions of socioeconomic advantage. While national-level policy advocacy for inclusive education and the strategic role of English in Ecuador is noted, there is minimal empirical evidence on how English teachers perceive the implementation and effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning in EFL classrooms. Although UDL has received more emphasis in policy and institutional discourses, educators' perceptions towards its principles, action-oriented design and how it affects the EFL students' learning are not well-documented.

The lack of such evidence is particularly relevant when teaching English in a communicative, inclusive and teacher-oriented way (i.e., in schools that are IB-aligned). In the absence of a clearer picture of teachers' attitudes, attempts to encourage UDL may end up remaining at a declarative level, detached from classroom realities. As a result, context-specific research is required to determine English teachers' views concerning the implementation of UDL and the perceived impact of UDL on inclusive and meaningful learning in the English language.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Background of previous studies

The following paper reviews five recent and relevant studies that focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in EFL and inclusive learning environments. This review aims to position the present research within the state of the art, to identify the findings by way of a body of evidence for converging areas and to expose the gaps that merit a concern to study teachers' perceptions of UDL in Ecuador.

A first relevant study is that of Sarmad Ahmad (2023) focusing on the influence of UDL- embedded learning in reading skills and vocabulary development in EFL regarding English as a Foreign Language. The purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which instructional design informed by UDL principles was effective in increasing measurable language outcomes. With a quasi-experimental quantitative design, the author measured the level of student performance pre and post intervention using strategies based on UDL. Findings showed that the results had considerable difference between reading comprehension and vocabulary retention, indicating that multimodal representation and different outlets for expressing the content of a language helps improve students' language-learning efforts. While mainly centered on the success of students, this research supports the pedagogical significance of UDL within EFL contexts and merits investigating how teachers perceive the impact of UDL.

A second study, conducted by Rao, Ok, and Bryant (2021), examined teachers' perception on UDL implementation across various educational settings, for example in multilingual and inclusive classrooms. The aim was for teachers to be familiarized with, value, and use UDL principles in practice. Using a mixed-methods approach, they combined survey data with qualitative reflections. Teachers generally considered UDL to be a beneficial approach to increasing student engagement and accessibility but described difficulties with scheduling time, designing assessments, and the ongoing need for professional development. This research is directly relevant to this study, given the key role of teacher perceptions in defining the practice of UDL and the role of feasibility and contextual support.

A third relevant work is Muhammad's et. al. (2024) investigation of UDL into the Ecuadorian setting and its related uses in EFL classroom and the correspondence to the communicative language teaching methods. The aim of this study is to

investigate the application of UDL principles in English teaching to cater for learner diversity. Based on an applied research design, the author studied classroom practices and pedagogical planning. The findings indicate that UDL complements communicative methodology by providing a richer input, increasing students' interest and providing more versatile forms of expression. Such a study offers national relevance to the existing research and informs the analysis of UDL at work in Ecuadorian English classrooms.

Avellán-Zambrano and Alcívar (2024) conducted a fourth study, which explicitly examined teachers' perception towards UDL in language education. Objectives: the study aimed to establish teachers' perceptions on the usefulness and practicality of UDL principles in their teaching contexts. By means of a standardized survey design, they found that both teachers agreed that UDL results in increased student motivation and participation levels but are also uncertain about flexibility in assessment as well as workload expectations. Teachers' perceptions of UDL are linked to their individual teaching context and prior teaching experiences, supporting the need for an exploration of data on perceptions when assessing inclusive concepts such as UDL.

Lastly, Sánchez-Barbero, Martín-Pastor, and Durán-Martínez (2025) investigated inclusive pedagogical practices implemented in EFL classrooms, concentrating on teacher attitudes and instructional practice. A mixed methods design was used to study teachers' adjusting instruction to account for differences in learner variability. It also reveals that inclusive beliefs are supported in theory but limited by curricula and structural support from the institution. Although the study is not explicitly examining UDL, what contributes to understanding how teachers' beliefs contribute to inclusive practice in language education may further strengthen the argument at the present time for perception as a key variable.

In short, these studies suggest UDL has the potential to improve EFL learning for accessibility, engagement, and flexibility in expression. They also show that teachers have high overall views of UDL as well as some real-world time, assessment or professional readiness problems. Yet there remains a notable gap in Ecuadorian research that studies the perceptions of English teachers when it concerns implementation and effectiveness of UDL in school, focusing mainly on secondary education in the country. In particular, the present study fills this gap by

using teachers' perceptions as a lens through which to analyze practice and contributes contextually relevant evidence linking inclusive education policy, pedagogical theory, and classroom practice in Ecuador.

2.2 Theoretical foundations

2.2.1. Universal Design for Learning: definition, structure, and pedagogical rationale

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a pedagogical framework developed by CAST that promotes flexible learning environments designed to address learner variability (CAST, 2024). Rooted in a neuroscience-informed view of learning, UDL argues that variability is the norm, not the exception; therefore, the design of instruction should anticipate differences in how learners perceive and process information, how they express what they know, and what motivates them to persist.

UDL is based on three central principles: Multiple means of representation (how information is presented), Multiple means of action and expression (how learners demonstrate learning), and Multiple means of engagement (teachers' support of motivation, self-regulation, and participation). At its most fundamental level, the UDL approach repositions a basic educational question that has been formulated as "What is wrong with the student?" to: "What barriers exist in the environment, and how can instruction be designed to minimize those barriers?" This shift is meaningful in terms of EFL, where language learning typically causes anticipated obstacles: misunderstanding due to insufficient vocabulary, apprehension in speaking, limitations in performance when a single modality of assessment is accessible.

UDL addresses language learning needs through multimodal input, flexible output, and meaningful engagement. These tenets are critical for understanding deeper, motivating longer-term learning and retention. Inclusive education is described as a commitment to provide all learners with equitable opportunities regardless of their disabilities, linguistic background, socioeconomic status, or learning profile to participate at school and to be successful in it (UNESCO, 2020). It seeks to remove physical, curricular, and instructional obstacles to participation and achievement. Inclusive education frameworks encourage teachers to adopt student-centered and adaptable pedagogical practices.

From this standpoint, UDL is taken to be a tool for operationalizing inclusion (Edyburn, 2010), such that learning is accessible and flexible. Didactic strategies based on

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are a means for English teachers to practice flexible and accessible approaches based on the variability of learners. In EFL classrooms, these strategies promote understanding, engagement, and production of language as content is presented, practiced, and assessed in multiple ways. Three particular strategies, especially relevant to UDL, are strategies for presenting content, strategies for engaging students, and strategies for assessing learning.

1. Strategies for Presenting Content (Multiple Means of Representation)

UDL supports the diversity of input from teachers in content areas so language and input processing strategies can be used by learners from multiple language backgrounds. The variety of language-related content provides students access to the ideas and understanding to better understand these ideas and understand how they function, as is the case with reading comprehension and listening. This framework could include visual supports (pictures, diagrams, graphic organizers), auditory input (recordings, podcasts), video-based or simplified text and bilingual glossaries as resources for comprehension of EFL materials (CAST, 2024). It is suggested that teachers would also integrate with multimodal resources, include captioned video material to foster listening skills, and provide realia and virtual simulations to contextualize meaning (David Rose, 2022). These multimodal representations can support overcoming linguistic barriers that hinder deeper understanding.

2. Strategies for Engaging Students (Multiple Means of Engagement)

To maintain motivation and get active support, UDL makes suggestions for actions that feed from interests of the students self-motivation autonomy and collaborative learning. In EFL teaching contexts, teachers might provide tasks with choices (for instance, deciding on the subject of speaking activities), apply interactive devices (games, digital tools) and provide culturally sensitive resources based on students' experiences (Shawn Loewen, 2021). Cooperative teaching frameworks for both pair work and group problem-solving help keep the engagement levels up through increasing peer interaction. The application of explicit expectations, the provision of scaffolding and providing feedback, has been found to help students stay motivated and to reduce students' experience of anxiety related to language learning (David Rose, 2022).

3. Strategies for Assessing Learning (Multiple Means of Action and Expression)

UDL encourages adaptive and dynamic assessment models that enable learners to show what they know in a multitude of formats. In EFL classrooms, this could involve spoken

presentations, recorded voice tasks, written work assignments, digital portfolios, quizzes, or project-based assessments (Edyburn, 2010). The teachers can use models, checklists, and outstanding performance to scaffold assessment. Formative assessments like self-assessment checklists, exit tickets, and mini conferences expose learning and inform instructional changes. Giving the students choices in ways they articulate their understanding recognizes what works for them — their strengths, to be clear — and empowers their confidence when it comes to using that language. UDL-aligned didactic strategies help the English teacher support and teach English learners to make inclusive, fluid, and learner-centered environments. Such strategies meet a range of needs and support equitable language learning opportunities.

2.2.2. Inclusive education as a policy and pedagogical objective

Inclusive education positions equity as such that all students have opportunities for meaningful participation and achievement—whether they have a disability, come from a linguistic background, come from a lower-income zone or work in a certain area, or have a less proficient learning profile. UNESCO's global surveillance agenda about inclusion lends support that systems need to work towards reducing physical, curricular and instructional obstacles rather than putting it to the learner to “fit” what already exists.

UDL is often characterized as operationalizing inclusion due to the structured approach it offers to flexibility and accessibility when using design principles. (Edyburn, 2010) asserts that acknowledging UDL as an approach in practice is more than just naming it something; it's drawing out those features of the design that can be identified, and that can help reduce barriers and widen options.

2.2.3. English as a Foreign Language (EFL): variability, barriers, and opportunities for UDL

EFL is taught and learnt in multilingual contexts which do not have English as their first language. In these situations the learners don't have enough opportunities to interact with the legitimate English language once they leave school, and we emphasize the importance of classroom layout and teaching structures. Furthermore, the EFL classroom also commonly features multiple language levels, cognitive abilities and sociocultural background and socio-emotional profiles, such as language-anxious students who might be less willing to communicate with others.

In IB contexts, language learning is developmental, building on an acquired system and

following through the stages as an expression of what students bring to the classroom, recognizing and valuing the full range of language profiles of every student (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2020). This principle is consistent with UDL's assumption of variability and with the case for investigating UDL use in a (IB) school like ISM. Meaningful learning occurs when students can connect new information to prior knowledge, construct understanding, and practice their newly learned knowledge in authentic and relevant opportunities (Ausubel, 2000).

In this light, learning is not just a matter of memory but a cognitive process that includes purposeful use. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotes meaningful learning, which is defined as designing instruction with consideration of the diversity of learners, and helps eliminate barriers to students understanding and participation. Multimodal representation facilitates accessibility of content and supports understanding, strategies to encourage engagement develop an active engagement and motivation, and flexible means of action and expression support higher order processes and durable learning (David Rose, 2022).

For instance, in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, meaningful learning is associated with communicative competence development as learners have to internalize and use language patterns purposefully during interactions (Jack C. Richards, 2013). UDL facilitates this type of development by facilitating instruction and responsiveness to a variety of learner needs, thereby mitigating many of the potential obstacles encountered in language learning, such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, and cognitive processing limitations (Edyburn, 2010). Since UDL provides a variety of paths to content, to learning-based activities and to show comprehension, it creates an environment conducive to improving student engagement, and therefore support for continued learning in EFL classroom (CAST, 2024).

2.2.4. Teacher perceptions and teacher cognition as determinants of implementation quality

EFL teaching is the formation of communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is known that learners are typically plagued by anxiety, less exposure, and diverse abilities for many EFL learners which suggests that flexible pedagogical responses are required. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) generally means teaching and learning English in non-English speaking countries (Jack C. Richards, 2013). EFL learning is primarily targeted at developing learners'

communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including vocabulary, grammar, and knowledge of foreign cultures. Because of the large number of learners in EFL classrooms with different levels of proficiency, motivation, and learning requirements, flexible teaching methods, in particular UDL, can help to address variation and improve accessibility when learning languages.

These beliefs, attitudes, interpretations, and judgments that a teacher possesses about what they teach and their ways that they teach (Borg, 2015) are considered the beliefs about the teacher's own beliefs and ideas. These perceptions determine whether teachers endorse, adapt, or refute pedagogic methodologies (such as UDL). Through the lens of inclusive education, the teachers' perception informs the extent to which UDL is utilized and the kind of strategy they selected, as well their perception of the effect of the method in student learning (Al-Azawei, 2017). In conclusion, teachers' perceptions are critical for assessing the true status of UDL implementation in EFL classrooms.

2.3. Legal foundations

This research is legally grounded in Ecuador's national commitment to education as a guaranteed right and in the State's obligation to ensure access, participation, and meaningful learning for all students, particularly in contexts of learner variability. Inclusive education is not seen as an aspiration in Ecuador; rather, schools and universities must actively respond to the diverse student population and obstacles that may hinder educational opportunities.

This is why examining this type of universal design for learning (UDL) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is pedagogically relevant and legally aligned with the local educational framework. The Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI) defines access to education as a constitutional right and the State's responsibility to ensure access, permanence, and quality of the national education system (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2017). The LOEI not only guarantees enrollment but also positions equity and inclusion along with participation as core principles underlying educational policy.

This globalized vision of high-quality education provides a framework for conceptualizing instructional approaches that aim to eliminate learning obstacles and accommodate diverse student experiences. To this end, exploring UDL aligns with the legal requirement that educational arrangements be adapted to students rather than having students

conform to fixed instructional frameworks. The General Regulation to the LOEI further elaborates these principles by providing a framework for inclusive education as a system-wide obligation.

The Regulation focuses on access, participation, learning, promotion, and completion at all educational levels and specifically addresses the removal of learning barriers and the application of pedagogical and methodological changes (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, 2023). This regulatory perspective emphasizes that inclusive practice is not optional or a luxury but a normal part of everyday pedagogical work.

Such expectations are especially important in language classrooms where participation and interaction are emphasized. This article demonstrates that through specific normative instruments, the Ministry of Education has finally implemented these principles. Ministerial Agreement MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2025-00028-A establishes procedures to ensure continuity of education and meaningful learning for students with disabilities in educational settings (MINEDUC, 2025). Crucially, this agreement explicitly connects inclusion and the elimination of impediments with reasonable accommodation and individualized curricular adaptations to implement Universal Design for Learning.

By directly naming UDL, the Ministry makes UDL not just a conceptual model and a practical guide but the means by which an organization aligns with an inclusive policy. National guidance documents linked to the "Back to the Classroom" framework also emphasize flexible curriculum planning and how instructional strategies should be tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners. UDL is proposed in these sources as a tool for designing the instructional framework to anticipate variability and promote participation through accessible and differentiated approaches (MINEDUC, 2025)

Although this guidance is broad in practice, it provides a solid foundation for the expectation that teachers engage in inclusive planning rather than employing a one-size-fits-all instructional model. In this legal context, the current study aims to explore how these inclusive directives are interpreted and implemented by English teachers in their practice.

The study connects national policy with actual classroom experience by examining teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of UDL—including those related to representation, engagement, action and expression, preparedness, and perceived barriers. This study seeks to examine how teachers working in EFL contexts understand,

adapt, and experience inclusive principles, rather than assuming that policy translates positively into practice. Hence, the legal foundation of this research is intended to serve as more than a formal obligation but provides a context-specific basis. The LOEI, its General Regulation, and Ministerial Agreements work together to make UDL analysis of the topic official through a lens in the context of the Ecuadorian approach to overcoming learning barriers and promoting equitable educational opportunities. By framing the study within such a legal context, this research provides evidence that may assist professional development, institutional design, and ongoing promotion of inclusive education practices in the English classroom.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this chapter is to justify the methodological choices that characterized the present study. It details research method, design and context and participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and operationalization. It explains the extent to which it is possible and rigorous to investigate teachers' perceptions with a descriptive research approach.

3.1. Research approach

In this study research methodology, we employ a largely quantitative research methodology with descriptive and interpretive components. The quantitative orientation is justified since the aim of the study: the finding of patterns and tendencies in teachers' perceptions about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) implementation and effectiveness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. Quantitative data enable systematic description of what perception trends occurred among respondents, while qualitative responses and interpretive analysis contribute contextual depth to understanding how teachers articulate and frame their experiences.

It is important to acknowledge that perceptions are inherently subjective. A teacher may report discomfort in working with UDL or may perceive that it has not yielded visible results; however, such perceptions do not constitute definitive evidence about the intrinsic effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the framework itself. Rather, they reflect how UDL is experienced, interpreted, and enacted within particular professional contexts. As (Borg, 2015) explains, teachers' beliefs and cognitions play a central role in shaping classroom practice, and understanding these belief systems is essential for educational research that seeks to inform instructional decision-making.

From this perspective, the value of perception-based research lies not in establishing objective truths about a pedagogical model, but in examining how teachers' professional knowledge, accumulated experience, and contextual judgments influence the adoption and adaptation of innovation. Therefore, although perceptions are subjective, they are analytically meaningful when the purpose of the study is to explore teachers' beliefs, expertise, and professional reasoning. In this research, quantitative findings are complemented by limited qualitative analysis of open-ended responses in order to capture not only measurable tendencies but also the reasoning that underpins teachers' positions.

3.2. Type and design of research study

The study was conducted using a descriptive, non-experimental, and cross-sectional research design. It is descriptive because it seeks to characterize teachers' perceptions without manipulating variables or introducing treatment conditions. It is non-experimental in that no instructional intervention was implemented, and cross-sectional because data were collected at a single point in time. This design is consistent with the purpose of the study, which is to examine how teachers currently perceive the implementation and effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) within their instructional context. Rather than establishing causal relationships, the study aims to document patterns, perceived benefits, and perceived barriers, and to explore how classroom practice aligns with theoretical and policy frameworks.

An important component of the research design concerns the construction of the data collection instrument. The survey was developed based on the three core principles of UDL—multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression—as outlined in the UDL Guidelines (CAST, 2024). Each dimension was translated into measurable items reflecting observable instructional practices, perceived student responses, and implementation challenges. In addition, items related to teacher preparedness and perceived impact were informed by research on teacher cognition and educational innovation, which highlights the importance of teachers' beliefs and professional judgments in shaping classroom practice (Ching Sing Chai, 2011).

The inclusion of Likert-scale items was intentional, as this format allows for the systematic identification of tendencies and degrees of agreement across respondents. While such scales do not measure objective effectiveness, they provide structured insight into perception trends. To enhance content validity, survey items were designed to correspond directly with the study's research objectives and with constructs identified in recent empirical research on UDL implementation and teacher perceptions (Kavita Rao, 2021). This theoretical alignment supports the reliability of the instrument, as it ensures that questions are grounded in established frameworks rather than constructed arbitrarily.

Furthermore, the survey included a limited number of open-ended questions to allow participants to elaborate on their responses. This design decision strengthens interpretive validity by capturing nuances that fixed-response items may not fully reflect. By combining structured quantitative items with brief qualitative input, the instrument balances measurability with contextual depth. Overall, the research design and instrument

construction were guided by theoretical coherence, alignment with established UDL principles, and consistency with the study's objectives. This structured approach enhances the credibility of the findings and supports the use of perception-based data as a meaningful source of evidence within educational research.

3.3. Background and participants in the research

The study was conducted at ISM, a private educational institution in Quito, Ecuador, which provides International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP). Under IB Language Learning Guidelines (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2020), the school has three campuses (all in different parts of the city) of its own and it provides English language education according to the phases of proficiency. This way, it recognizes the differences between learners and can give a relevant environment where UDL implementation may be examined.

The target population for this investigation was English teachers in Middle and High School, who were responsible for preparing students ranging from the seventh year through a student first year at all high school programs. In this research, the teachers were not in a probability to perform but voluntarily participated. In total, 11 English teachers filled the survey. Participants had to have at least one year of teaching experience and some level of familiarity with UDL for implementation, whether it was implemented in full or in partial form, in the current academic year as per inclusion criteria. The study also refers to an institutional opinion poll of UDL conducted by the school among its entire teaching staff besides the English teacher survey. This empirical data is used for context to enable comparison of English teachers' trends. The institutional data is narratively and analytically included but not a standalone methodological strand.

3.4. Data collection and analysis procedures

Data collection was conducted via an online survey that attempted to question English teachers' perspectives of the implementation and effectiveness of UDL across the EFL classroom. The instrument consisted of Likert scale questions, multiple-choice items and a small set of optional open-ended items that were to be tested. Items of the survey were aligned with the three UDL key principles of multiple means of representation, engagement, action and expression, and perceived impact and perceived barriers.

The school-administered institutional UDL opinion poll, whose use had previously been authorized during internal assessment, was retrieved with consent and collected for comparison. Both instruments are varied in content area and target demographic, but they

share conceptual dimensions that permit a comparative reading of perceptions over time. The quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistical procedures, including frequency, percentages, and means.

Data was formatted and summarized within a spreadsheet package and analyzed by tabulation and visual presentation of findings. Qualitative analyses of open-ended responses were conducted by (thematic) classification to identify patterns and illustrative insights as recurrent concepts. Analysis was derived from comparative descriptive logic. What that indicates is findings from the English teacher survey were interpreted in light of institutional trends. It adds depth to contextual knowledge without inserting any experimental comparison or causal claims.

3.5. Description of the research Instrument

The most used data collection tool in this study applied was a structured questionnaire to investigate the English teachers' views on the implementation and impact of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the EFL classroom. The instrument was divided into thematic parts corresponding to the central elements of UDL and the specific aims of research. In order to clarify, and also to arrange the data, the survey questions were classified into the index categories, following the respective construct that was measured. The structure of the questionnaire was as follows:

- **Section A (A1–A5): Multiple Means of Representation**
Items in this section examined teachers' reported use of varied instructional materials, multimodal input, vocabulary scaffolding, and differentiated presentation of content.
- **Section B (B1–B5): Multiple Means of Engagement**
These items explored strategies used to foster student motivation, participation, emotional safety, and relevance of learning tasks.
- **Section C (C1–C5): Multiple Means of Action and Expression**
This section addressed teachers' perceptions of flexible assessment practices, varied forms of student output, and opportunities for demonstrating learning in multiple formats.
- **Section D (D1–D4): Perceived Impact on Student Learning**
Items measured teachers' perceptions regarding the influence of UDL practices on

student participation, comprehension, language production, and overall progress in English.

- **Section E (E1–E4): Perceived Barriers and Preparedness**

This section examined perceived challenges in implementing UDL, including time constraints, training needs, institutional support, and confidence levels.

Most items were structured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree,” allowing for the identification of perception tendencies. A small number of open-ended questions were included at the end of the questionnaire to provide contextual clarification and illustrative insights.

3.6. Operationalization of variables

The key variable is the participants’ perceptions of the implementation of UDL in EFL instruction. This variable was operationalized by measuring the dimensions below:

- Multiple means of representation: multimodal input, vocabulary scaffolding, and different materials.
- Multiple means of engagement: tactics to advance motivation, participation, relevance, and emotional safety.
- Multiple means of action and expression: student output (variety of forms of output), formative learning assessment and flexible demonstration of learning.
- Perceived impact: teachers’ opinions on the impact of UDL on student participation, learning and language acquisition.
- Perceived barriers: time, training, resources and institutional support issues.

It also included a full set of measures for each dimension in several survey items to provide coverage of dimensions in alignment with research aims. This methodological framework allows us to provide a consistent and rigorous account of teachers’ perceptions of UDL within the EFL classroom. The study presents grounded and ethical insights into the practice of inclusive methodology through a qualitative quantitative analysis of the practices in the context of context, making it suitable for a context-based intervention.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter reports and analyzes results of the two data sources used in the study: the primary survey that was conducted with English teachers at ISM School and the institutional opinion poll on Universal Design for Learning applied to the entire teaching staff. Adhering to the research design – descriptive, non-experimental – the analysis of the data does not aim to derive causal inferences based on any findings, focusing on the patterns, trends, and relationships among and between datasets, in line with the descriptive design. A systematic interpretation of teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and its perceived effectiveness in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL); results organized according to research objectives and the theoretical framework.

4.1. Description of the sample

The main sample consisted of 11 English teachers at ISM School who took the UDL–EFL Teacher Perceptions Survey. Participants were Middle and High School; 7th grade to 1st year of Baccalaureate who were recruited on the school's three campuses. All participants reported exposure to UDL in the schools through institutional standards, professional development workshops, or classroom planning requirements implemented in the current school year. Within an IB setting where differentiated instruction and student-centered instruction are the goals it serves as a relevant foundation to study perceptions of UDL in EFL classrooms.

Table 1: Demographic profile of English teacher participants

Variable	Category / Range	Frequency
Gender	Female	8
	Male	3
Age range	25–34 years	4
	35–44 years	4
	45–55 years	3
Nationality	Ecuadorian	9
	Foreign	2
Years of experience as English teachers	1–5 years	3
	6–10 years	4
	More than 10 years	4
Teachers' English proficiency level	B2 (CEFR)	5
	C1 (CEFR)	6
Students' English proficiency level (reported)	A2–B1	6
	B1–B2	5

Table 1 presents the demographic and professional profile of the English teachers who participated in this study. The sample was comprised mainly of female teachers (n = 8), with a minority of male teachers (n = 3). The ages of the participants were from 25 to 55 years, indicating a representation of career stage and professional experience. By nationality, most people were Ecuadorian (n = 9) and two teachers were foreign nationals, bringing international perspectives to the instructional environment. Teaching experiences of English language education teachers was mixed in the sample: there were relatively equal proportions of both early (1–5 years) and mid-career (6–10 years) age, as well as highly experienced educators (more than 10 years' practice). This balance is designed to allow for a broader array of professional viewpoints on the experience of working with Universal Design for Learning. Regarding language proficiency, all the teachers in the study were proficient in the higher standards (B2-C1 by CEFR) that could reflect professional competency level in the English as a Foreign Language in the secondary education context.

The UDL opinion poll administered by the school involved 192 teachers of mixed subjects with differing levels of qualification. This data set mirrors the wider institutional milieu within which UDL is adopted and presents a profile that represents a pooled understanding of teachers' knowledge, preparedness, and expectations for the implementation of inclusive instructional strategies. This study uses this poll as a comparative tool for understanding teacher perceptions in the English classroom.

4.2. Results from the primary survey: English teachers' perceptions of UDL in EFL

4.2.1. Perceptions of UDL implementation: Multiple means of representation

Data from the first survey shows that English teachers tend to regularly report that they are using representation strategies that promote student comprehension in classrooms consistent with UDL. They used multimodal communication with a consistent use of visual support, video, sound recording, simplified or scaffolding text, etc. According to the findings of the first part of the survey, all survey participants used UDL on frequent basis to support reading comprehension.

Teachers also identified linguistic support in terms of vocabulary pre-teaching, contextualized examples and guided input. Results of this study indicate that

representation is one of the most widespread UDL principles in EFL teaching at ISM. Such behavior reflects expectations of language learners, who are most likely to need a comprehensible input and is consistent with theoretically derived implications that multimodal representation aid comprehension and cognitive load in foreign language-related settings. Likert scale ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). No responses were reported in disagree categories for these items.

Table 2: Frequency and means of items related to representation

Item	Likert Scale Response	Frequency	Mean
B1. I present English content using more than one format (text, visuals, audio, video).	3 (Neutral)	1	4.45
	4 (Agree)	4	
	5 (Strongly agree)	6	
B2. I provide vocabulary support using visuals, examples, or glossaries.	3 (Neutral)	2	4.36
	4 (Agree)	3	
	5 (Strongly agree)	6	

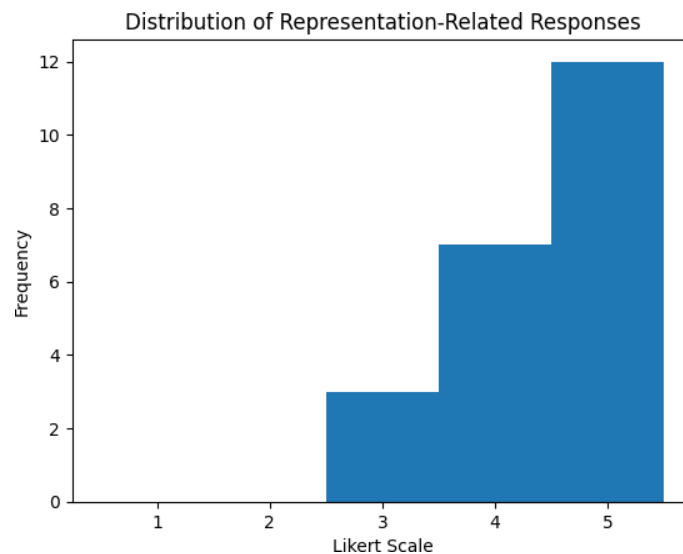


Figure 1: Distribution of responses based on Likert scale

In Figure 1 we demonstrate the response distributed across the Likert scale for items reflecting multiple means of representation. The distribution is biased towards the right side of the scale, leaning toward 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

The findings in Table 2 and Figure 1 confirms that English teachers in ISM demonstrate more than average implementation of UDL-aligned representations practices. The high scores of both items (M = 4.45 and M = 4.36) indicate that the teachers consistently use a variety

of formats to present English contents and provide vocabulary support on these topics, using the visual and contextual approach. The lack of backlash serves to further confirm the belief that such techniques are well maintained in EFL study.

From a theoretical perspective of UDL (Open-ended design), the present results are consistent with the principle of multiple means of representation, or the notion that the use of varied means of knowledge input may help to overcome perceptual and linguistic obstacles to knowledge acquisition (David Rose, 2022). EFL learners tend to have difficulty in understanding content because they do not have as much vocabulary and they do not know the structure of English texts; therefore, multimodal input contributes significantly to the understanding and in making meaning.

However, the strong ratification of representation strategies also reflects the needs of language learners in Middle and High School settings, where many children have heterogeneous achievement levels. Using text, visual and audio support, as well the explicit vocabulary scaffolding, teachers can present more easily understandable settings for knowledge acquisition. Their findings are in line with previous research on UDL-informed representation strategies in language teaching contexts this is particularly effective considering that they target heterogeneities in learners' linguistic and cognitive profiles.

4.2.2. Perceptions of UDL implementation: Multiple means of engagement

English teachers reported broadly positive perceptions regarding UDL's role to encourage student engagement and motivation. A variety of teachers felt that giving students options regarding topics, tasks, or formats for interaction keeps them engaged and gets them actively participating in English learning initiatives. Several participants also linked UDL programs with lower language anxiety, especially when students were presented with speaking assignments.

However, some variability in engagement style is also suggested in the answers and teachers agree that time constraints and academic pressure would make it difficult to plan strategies for engagement systematically. But the data suggests that engagement is valued and appreciated, and that if people believe it is desirable and good practice, there is a chance to change it: but this can be subject to factors like time planning, class dynamics and what's happening in the room.

Table 3: Analytical summary information of descriptive statistics on Engagement related

Item	Description	Mean
C1	I provide meaningful choices to increase student motivation.	4.00
C2	I connect learning activities to students' real-life contexts or interests.	4.55
C3	I use pair or group work to increase participation in English.	4.27
C4	I apply strategies to reduce anxiety and encourage communication in English.	3.64
C5	I clearly communicate learning goals and successful criteria to students.	4.45

The findings of Table 3 show that English teachers in general feel that UDL-aligned Engagement strategies can be observed at a high level in practice. The highest mean score is indicated as the extent to which teachers relate to relevance and authentic engagement to the context or interest of the learner (M = 4.55) indicating that teachers' motivation to engage and engage in EFL instruction largely reflects meaningful connection to the relevance to real-life experiences of students such that teachers value a strong consideration of relevance and authenticity in EFL education.

This finding aligns with UDL theory, which posits relevance and purposeful learning as critical components of prolonged engagement in learning (CAST, 2024). High mean scores also were observed for use of collaborative learning structures (M = 4.27) and clear communication of learning goals and success criteria (M = 4.45). These approaches correspond to UDL's principles to promote self-regulation, goal orientation and social interaction, which in turn contributes to active participation and perseverance in a learning environment.

Especially in EFL contexts characterized by the necessity of meaningful communication and opportunities for interaction, pair/group work affords authentic interactional space to use language and to decrease pressure for individual performance. Making meaningful choices for motivation as a positive stimulus for behavior also achieved a high mean of M= 4.00, a clear statement that teachers appreciate the importance of autonomy in language learning.

UDL theory suggests providing a choice increases learner agency and engagement, especially when students vary in interest, confidence, and preference for a mode of engagement. In contrast, the lowest mean score in this dimension corresponds with those who use the methods of reducing anxieties and communicating in English (M = 3.64). The value reflects both group and teacher (although this value is still highly consistent between teachers) and indicates that teachers are more diverse in their perception and utilization of affective barriers through speaking (for example, language anxiety).

This result is significant because affective factors are the most important in EFL acquisition and are specifically considered in the UDL aspect for engagement with strategies to support emotional safety and take risks (CAST, 2024). The finding potentially suggests that more professional development, or focused guidance, would aid in UDL implementation. Overall, the findings on engagement are largely in accordance with theoretical predictions of UDL in language learning.

These strategies of relevance, collaboration, clarity, and motivation are reported by the teachers as being employed regularly for the maintenance of involvement in EFL classrooms. Conversely, the fluctuations in anxiety reduction methods noted emphasize the persistent challenge of targeted address affective dimensions of language learning, that should continue to be addressed through continued institutional and professional development, engaging and student safety.

4.2.3. Perceptions of UDL implementation: Multiple means of action and expression

Teachers' perceptions of action and expression show that flexible assessment and numerous opportunities for student outputs are available, but do not implement them to the same extent as representation strategies. Others observed flexibility, and many respondents mentioned that their students could show what they have learned in various mediums, such as presentations, written work, verbal presentations, or digital products. Scaffolds, including models, rubrics, and sentence stems, were frequently reported.

However, teachers reported not entirely certain of the extent to which flexibility can be allowed without impeding evaluation validity, particularly at summative assessment. This suggests a possible lack of institutional and professional guidance in relation to UDL-aligned assessment across EFL.

Table 4: Action/expression indicators

Item	Indicator	Mean
D1	Students can demonstrate their learning in different ways (speaking, writing, multimedia).	4.18
D2	I provide scaffolds for language production (sentence starters, models, rubrics).	4.36
D3	I use formative assessments regularly to monitor student progress.	4.55
D4	Students use digital tools to support their oral or written expression.	3.36
D5	I differentiate assessment pathways while maintaining the same learning objectives.	4.18

Table 4 reveals that the attitude of the English teachers toward UDL-related action and

expression-related approaches were relatively high. The highest average score in this dimension is based on the role of formative assessment in keeping the student on track (M = 4.55) indicating that teachers have a strong focus on feedback and monitoring as part of EFL teaching.

This conclusion aligns with UDL recommendations which highlight formative assessment as a central means for enhancing individual learners' self-regulation and instructional responsiveness (David Rose, 2022). Also, very high mean scores for scaffolds for language production (M = 4.36) and making students have opportunities to show learning (M = 4.18). Such practices mirror an appreciation for students' variation in language production and are consistent with communicative aspects of EFL teaching in which students are likely to express their competence better using speaking, writing, multimodal tasks depending on proficiency and self-efficacy. Diversifying assessment processes along shared learning targets (M = 4.18) demonstrates teachers' efforts to strike middle ground between flexibility and academic demands.

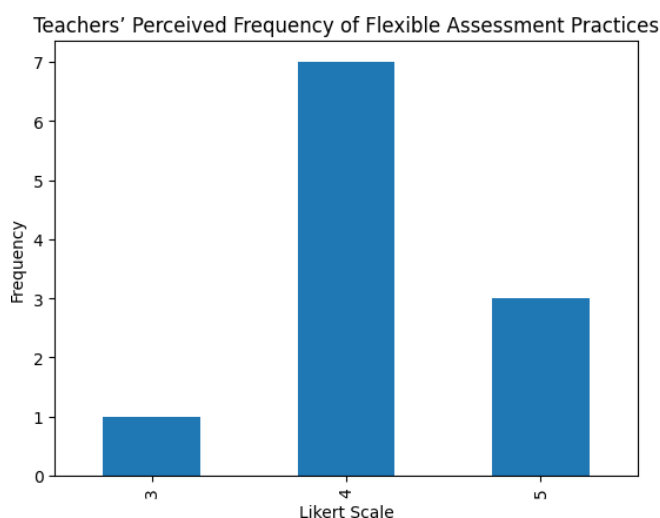


Figure 2: Teachers perceived frequency of flexible assessment practices

The frequency with which teachers utilized the practice is depicted in Figure 2, with some variation being reported by them, suggesting that continuing pressures to strike a balance between inclusive assessment and standardized evaluation could be a problem. On the other hand, the use of digital tools to facilitate the expression of the learners had the lowest overall meaning on this dimension (M = 3.36). If general agreement is still present, this means that digital tools are not yet fully, or consistent with, assessment and expression practices. This could relate to access, familiarity with certain tools, confidence or doubt in their assessment usefulness.

From a UDL lens, this finding suggests the possibility for growth there, as digital tools can greatly help enhance student expression and accessibility in EFL settings. In all, the results for action and expression suggest that ISM English teachers appreciate flexible output and formative assessment for UDL implementation. While data from the online assessment has demonstrated differences to varying degrees, especially digital expression, this variability raises the necessity for continued professional development and institutional support to reinforce UDL-aligned assessment strategies for EFL classrooms.

Distribution of responses on differentiated and common objectives for differentiation in assessment by pathways, which are seen in Figure 2. Most responses seem to correspond either to “agree” or “strongly agree,” suggesting an overall acceptance of flexible assessment strategies.

4.3. Perceived impact of UDL on English language acquisition

In terms of perceived impact, most English teachers reported that students benefited from UDL to both engage and express an interest about how in English the UDL process supports students in learning, namely, participation, comprehension, and motivation. When there are multiple access points and different modes of expression in school, students appear to be more prepared to communicate and demonstrate a grasp on the content of a unit, educators reported.

While perceived effects in specific language skills, including vocabulary development and speaking performance, were also reported positively, teachers tended to frame these effects in qualitative terms rather than as measurable gains. This mirrors the relative subjective nature of the data and correlates with the teacher judgment aspect of the study rather than direct assessment outcomes.

Table 5: Perceived impact on language skills

Item	Impact Indicator	Mean
E1	UDL increases students' participation in English activities.	4.45
E2	UDL improves students' comprehension of English input (reading/listening).	4.45
E3	UDL supports students' language production (speaking/writing).	4.09
E4	UDL helps students retain vocabulary and language structures over time.	4.36
E5	UDL benefits students with diverse learning needs or mixed proficiency levels.	4.55
E6	Overall, UDL has improved students' English learning progress this school year.	4.18

When using Table 5, English teachers have demonstrated that the positive influence of UDL in the English language learning of students is perceived as strong. Mean scores

for all indicators were between 4.09 and 4.55, indicating consistent agreement that UDL is effective in language learning processes. The mean value of 4.55 on the perceived benefit of UDL to students with heterogeneous types or levels of proficiency confirms the general UDL perception as a paradigm to help accommodate variability among learners in heterogeneous EFL classroom learning contexts.

Similarly, high mean scores of greater student engagement (M = 4.45) and enhanced understanding (M = 4.45) regarding English input were also reported. These findings align with meaningful learning, which implies that the learner is able to make meaningful responses about knowledge and connections to prior learning (Ausubel, 2000). Due to the varied ways in which representation and engagement can be accomplished, UDL appears to support the provision of the ground for in-depth understanding and prolonged engagement with English learning tasks.

Teachers also reported positive attitudes on vocabulary retention and long-term language development (M = 4.36). Such perception supports the idea that UDL leads to lasting learning, flexible and multi-modal instruction that exposes students to language structures in different contexts strengthens memory and transfer. These results are in line with UDL theory that highlights repeated, meaningful exposure and active processing as primary processes of retention (David Rose, 2022).

While still high, the lowest mean score for this section is related to UDL's support for language production (speaking and writing) (M = 4.09). Such variation might however suggest more complex output support, particularly when students feel anxious or lack confidence when learning a foreign language. Considering the communicative competence aspects, this indicates that UDL is effective in supporting participation and comprehension but may need more scaffolding and focused strategies to deepen the productive skills (Jack C. Richards, 2013).

4.4. Perceived barriers and challenges in implementing UDL in EFL

There were many positive perceptions from the teachers; however, the teachers also mentioned certain challenges related to UDL implementation. The biggest barriers reported are lack of time for planning, the extra work of developing flexible materials, and the need for further training in UDL concepts. Some of the teachers also reported shortcomings in assessment policies and resource availability. Open-ended facilitative questions also reinforced these findings, with teachers

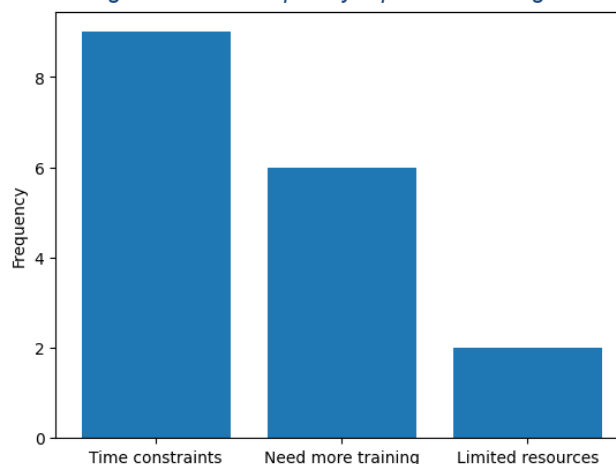
emphasizing institutional backing, opportunities for collaborative planning, and practical examples of UDL implementation in language teaching settings.

Table 6: Barriers ranked by frequency

Barrier	Frequency*
Time constraints for planning and implementation	9
Need for additional professional training in UDL	6
Limited availability of instructional resources	2

As shown in Table 6 and Figure 3, time limitations are the most significant barrier to the consistent implementation of UDL in EFL classrooms, as the majority of English teachers named limited planning time as their issue. This result indicates that teachers appreciate the value of UDL-related practices, but lesson preparation-oriented and curricular-driven pressures may contribute to the inability to systematically operationalize flexible and inclusive practices. The need for further training is identified as the second most frequently reported barrier. While general confidence was reported by teachers in implementing particular UDL practices (e.g., representation and engagement), their perception of the need for deeper understanding and practical guidance (e.g., assessment flexibility, digital tool integration) is higher. This is consistent with evidence that successful UDL implementation relies on sustained professional development rather than isolated training sessions. In contrast, limited resources were reported as a barrier by fewer participants. This suggests that, within the ISM context, material and technological resources may be relatively accessible, and that challenges are more strongly associated with time management and pedagogical expertise than with physical or digital infrastructure.

Figure 3: Most frequently reported challenges



As shown in Figure 3, the most reported challenge was time constraints, followed by the

need for additional training. Availability of resources is indicated to be a comparatively lower barrier. Overall, the qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative findings; the main barriers to UDL implementation are structural and pedagogical rather than attitudinal. The responses from teachers reveal a positive disposition towards UDL and a willingness for a greater degree of institutional support for the sustainable use of UDL within EFL classrooms.

4.5. Results from the institutional UDL opinion poll

A review of the opinion poll at the institution reveals that overall, teachers at the whole-school level report moderate to high awareness of UDL and varying confidence in their ability to effectively implement it. While many interviewed indicated an improved capacity for identifying learning barriers and planning inclusive strategies, a substantial proportion felt they needed more training and guidance.

The views about the effect of UDL on student participation and learning were mostly positive but, as in the EFL survey, teachers pointed to the importance of continued support and time for planning. These results offer a valuable institutional backdrop against which the results of the English teachers can be interpreted.

Table 7: Institutional UDL perception indicators

Dimension	Indicator assessed	Dominant trend observed
Prior knowledge of UDL	Knowledge of UDL before the academic year	Most teachers reported <i>partial to moderate</i> prior knowledge
Understanding of UDL principles	Understanding of engagement, representation, and action/expression	Majority reported <i>partial</i> understanding; fewer reported full mastery
Identification of learning barriers	Ability to identify learning barriers in students	Most teachers reported <i>moderate to high</i> confidence
Distinction of inclusion concepts	Differentiation between barriers, reasonable adjustments, and curricular adaptations	Responses clustered around <i>partial</i> understanding
Inclusive planning	Inclusion of UDL-aligned strategies in lesson planning	Majority reported <i>moderate incorporation</i>
Preparedness for implementation	Perceived readiness to implement UDL in daily practice	Most teachers reported feeling <i>partially prepared</i>
Perceived instructional impact	Strengthening of classroom strategies through UDL	Predominantly <i>positive</i> , with “in great measure” responses
Differentiated supports	Offering options and supports for diverse learners	Most teachers reported <i>moderate to frequent</i> use
Perceived student impact	Improvements in participation and performance	Generally <i>positive</i> , though not uniformly high
Support needs	Additional support required for effective implementation	Strong emphasis on <i>training and guidance</i>

The institutional UDL opinion poll has identified an emerging but uneven use of Universal

Design for Learning at the school. Overall, our teachers report a basic familiarity with UDL concepts, but most report they know only a fraction before the school year and a growing understanding of the three most important concepts.

There are not yet large numbers of UDL principles, teachers may not be fully fluent in each single component of the pedagogy, however they appear to have learned this enough to support the reflection and planning process for the instruction. Generally, teachers perceive themselves to be moderately able to identify obstacles to learning and include inclusion in their lesson plans. Yet responses about preparedness and conceptual clarity regarding the difference between learning barriers, reasonable changes, and curriculum rethinking suggest that there are still unknowns.

This indicates that despite the presence of UDL at the institutional level, further integration of conceptualization and practical usage is needed. Crucially, the survey finds teachers understand that UDL has a positive impact on teaching strategies in classrooms and on student participation, consistent with the framework's objectives.

Cumulatively, these results depict UDL as a growing institution-focused approach, rather than a coherent practice. This context provides a meaningful backdrop through which the analysis of the English teachers' survey outcomes can be read, and this contextual information supports the comparative analysis provided in the next section.

4.6. Comparative analysis: English teachers vs. institutional trends

The attitudes of English teachers and the institutional context have several convergences and divergences. The two sets of data have a positive and convergent view of UDL and both acknowledge UDL has the capacity to increase engagement and accessibility. EFL teachers report more frequent use of representation strategies, likely due to the demands of language teaching and a focus on multimodal input in EFL pedagogy.

Conversely, the results also suggest that flexibility of assessment and workload are major concerns in both datasets, indicating that these two are not discipline-specific barriers but systemic problems. It also underlines that EFL teachers do indeed encounter some UDL practices, however, there remain similar structural barriers which hinder them just as teachers who manage work in other subject areas. Comparisons are in terms of construct alignment, rather than item-by-item equivalence.

Table 8: Comparative summary of aligned constructions

Construct	English teachers (EFL survey)	Institutional trends (UDL opinion poll)
Knowledge of UDL	Generally high and contextualized; teachers report practical familiarity with UDL principles in language teaching.	Mostly partial knowledge; conceptual understanding still developing across subjects.
Preparedness to implement UDL	Moderate to high preparedness, particularly in representation and engagement strategies.	Predominantly partial preparedness; many teachers express uncertainty.
Implementation of representation strategies	Consistently high use of multimodal input and vocabulary scaffolding.	Moderate use; varies by subject area.
Implementation of engagement strategies	High emphasis on relevance, collaboration, and participation in English activities.	Moderate emphasis; engagement strategies present but uneven.
Action and expression / assessment flexibility	Moderate use; formative assessment strong, flexible summative assessment less consistent.	Similar challenges reported; assessment flexibility identified as complex.
Perceived impact on student learning	Strongly positive perceptions of impact on participation, comprehension, and motivation.	Generally positive perceptions, though less pronounced.
Perceived barriers	Time constraints and need for training most prominent.	Same barriers identified at institutional level.
Professional development needs	Clear demand for EFL-specific guidance and assessment support.	Strong demand for general UDL training and practical examples.

In Table 8 the comparison shows that there is agreement between perceptions of English teachers towards the institution, as well as divergence between perceptions of English teachers towards the institution and institutional perspectives on UDL. There is considerable convergence between the importance of UDL in inclusive teaching, and within the findings of both datasets in terms of shared barriers towards time commitment and the importance of continuing professional development. This correspondence may indicate that barriers to UDL implementation are more fundamental to the institution than unique to any one area of study.

But important divergences emerge between the degree and nature of implementation. English teachers are more prepared and consistent in implementing UDL principles, particularly regarding representation and engagement strategies. One reason is that multimodal input to language courses, scaffolding of vocabulary, and opportunities for interaction are already crucial components of successful teaching, which accounts for these divergences and where we are heading in that regard. Accordingly, such UDL practices can therefore be somewhat more grounded and immediate and appear more intuitively and, to some extent, at least culturally relevant to language classrooms than

to other subject areas.

Particularly differences can be seen in how they may be perceived to affect, too. Across all UDL participants, English teacher responses on engagement, comprehension, and motivation among students remain consistent with each other regarding the overall use of language in all UDL strategies. Indeed, this may, in essence, be an indication of a communicative aspect of language learning in which differences in engagement and access emerge more noticeably in classroom interaction.

While institutional views of impact appear more wary and general, this may be due to heterogeneity in subjects and learning goals in the school-wide dataset. In the same way, convergence is shown in action/expression but also flexibility of the assessment. English teachers and teachers generally consider the area of assessment to be a “highly contested area” of UDL implementation, and the two groups suggest that there is a tendency of tension between the more inclusive practices and the requirement to impose standardized evaluation requirements. This common struggle highlights the need for more extensive institutional guidance on assessment design across disciplinary areas, and for subject-specific adaptations.

These results need to be analyzed based on both the specific and institutional factors of EFL instruction and UDL adoption in general. Incorporation of learner variability in English language teaching; communicative interaction; and multimodal input are inherent in all learning styles, which corresponds to UDL principles. Thus, EFL instructors could perhaps be more inclined, or more comfortable, to incorporate UDL strategies into their day-to-day practice.

The adoption of UDL at the institutional level is at a transitional level, the awareness and good attitudes are developed but they are not implemented in full. The comparative results imply that EFL classrooms might act as early adopters or reference points for the implementation of UDL and contribute to learning during professional development and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Overall, this comparison points out the need to integrate institution-wide programs with the support needs of individual content. Despite sharing an institutional vision for the adoption of UDL, successful integration of UDL practices typically relies upon a focus on how EFL strategies are contextualized to disciplinary requirements, such in the context of EFL.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that English teachers perceived in the use of and efficiency of UDL (Universal Design for Learning) in EFL instruction in an IB school context of Ecuador. The findings below are a direct extrapolation from those achieved through the primary survey for English teachers and the secondary institutional UDL opinion poll.

First, the findings indicated that the English teachers feel they personally implement UDL principles, specifically UDL principles involving multiple means of representation and engagement. Multimodal resources, vocabulary scaffolding, cooperative instructional frameworks, and relevancy-based practices were commonly observed by the teachers. These practices align well with the communicative and student-centered practice of teaching EFL and are the clear equivalent of UDL principles and the current language teaching techniques.

Second, it is observed that teachers consider UDL has an advantageous effect on the learning process in the language students' English (in the fields of participation, comprehension, motivation, and vocabulary retention). Taken together, these opinions suggest that UDL contributes to a more accessible and inclusive learning environment, encouraging meaningful academic study and communicative competence. While the positive effect for productive English skills—for example, speaking and writing—as reported was somewhat weaker, teachers felt more beneficial in the utilization of the method, indicating the challenge of supporting production of foreign languages in foreign language contexts.

The third is that UDL will encounter obstacles to its effectiveness even when there are favorable attitudes toward the framework. Time and professional development were the biggest challenges that English teachers faced, and this reflects the institutional trends in the schoolwide survey. This suggests that organizational and structural barriers to implementing UDL as opposed to attitudinal or conceptual barriers to implementation were the predominant types of barriers. Fourth, the comparison between what English teachers think and what institutions are doing reveals both convergence and divergence. Even though both sides believe that UDL is worthwhile and similar difficulties exist — all groups acknowledge that the process is difficult — English teachers appear to

demonstrate greater concrete implementation and real benefits. This differs based on the nature of EFL, where learner variance, multimodal input, and interaction together play a crucial role in effective instruction.

Finally, findings verified that institutional UDL implementation is developmentally appropriate at an institutional level as awareness and partial consolidation are realized at the institutional level. Teachers' perceptions rely upon ongoing adoption as opposed to a fully established practice, underscoring the importance of long-term institution-wide support, coherent policies, and subject-specific guidance.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the following suggestions be made to the teachers, institutions and future research.

5.2.1. Recommendations for teachers

English teachers should also maintain a greater focus on the intentional utilisation of the principles of UDL (particularly action and expression, flexible assessment pathways, digital support for student output). And with representation and engagement strategies gaining broad adoption, adding in the use of varying assessment approaches could improve learners' ability to demonstrate their language skills as well. Teachers may benefit from the sharing of UDL-aligned practices that are used in EFL environments that facilitate collaborative planning and reflective practice. However, with time being the reported problem, small, long-lasting changes rather than large change would prompt continuous effort.

5.2.2. Recommendations for institutions

It would be desirable for schools as an institution to encourage consistent and professional development on applied UDL applications in practice, but particularly with a focus on assessment and discipline related teaching. The training should not only be a theoretical introduction – it should have modeling, examples in the classroom, teacher demonstrations, and the chance to practice. Institutions should be seeking such support from structured support as the introduction of structurally supportive structures, such as protected planning time, shared resource banks, and assessment guidelines that can facilitate UDL principles.

Since English teachers and all the other teachers identified several barriers to using education, possibly a collective, institutional approach would make implementation of inclusive practices more sustainable and coherent. Furthermore, convergence of UDL expectations with national inclusion policies and internal evaluation frameworks might facilitate consistency and reduce uncertainty in teachers' thinking about instructional and assessment decisions.

5.2.3. Recommendations for future research

This research has potential for future research using this study to broaden the study to direct measures of student learning; students' learning outcomes can be triangulated with teachers' perceptions and empirical data. Future longitudinal work should consider the extent to which educators' beliefs about UDL change over time as UDL becomes more entrenched.

Finally, integrating two or more institutions as a purposive sample or comparing diverse fields of study may provide even more evidence on disciplinary contexts informing adoption of UDL in practice. Qualitative approaches like classroom observation and in-depth interviews can contribute to understanding how UDL principles are actually applied – or more technically, how teachers cope with and confront these implementation difficulties.

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ANNEX

UDL–EFL Teacher Perception Survey

Title of the Study:

Implementation of Universal Design for Learning in English Classes and Its Impact on Language Learning According to Teachers' Perceptions

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Introduction

You are invited to participate in this research study exploring English teachers' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in EFL classrooms. Your responses are anonymous and will be used exclusively for academic purposes. Please answer honestly based on your teaching experience. Estimated completion time: 10–15 minutes.

Section 1. Demographic Information

1. Gender:
 - Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to say
 2. Age range:
 - 25–34
 - 35–44
 - 45–55
 - Over 55
 3. Nationality:
 - Ecuadorian
 - Foreign
 4. Years of experience teaching English:
 - 1–5 years
 - 6–10 years
 - 11–20 years
 - More than 20 years
 5. Highest English proficiency level:
 - B2
 - C1
 - C2
 6. English proficiency level of your students (general average):
 - A1–A2
 - B1
 - B2
 - Mixed levels
-

Section A – Multiple Means of Representation (A1–A5)

Please indicate your level of agreement:

Scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

- A1. I use varied formats (visual, auditory, digital, printed) to present content.
A2. I provide vocabulary scaffolds to support comprehension.
A3. I adapt explanations according to students' language proficiency levels.
A4. I use multimedia tools to enhance understanding.
A5. I anticipate learning barriers when planning my lessons.
-

Section B – Multiple Means of Engagement (B1–B5)

- B1. I provide choices in classroom activities to increase motivation.
B2. I design tasks connected to real-life contexts.
B3. I encourage active participation in English during class.
B4. I create a classroom environment where students feel safe using English.
B5. I incorporate collaborative learning activities regularly.
-

Section C – Multiple Means of Action and Expression (C1–C5)

- C1. I allow students to demonstrate learning through different formats (oral, written, digital, visual).
C2. I use flexible assessment methods.
C3. I provide opportunities for creative expression in English.
C4. I adapt assessment tasks according to student needs.
C5. I value communicative competence over grammatical perfection in evaluation.
-

Section D – Perceived Impact on Student Learning (D1–D4)

- D1. UDL strategies increase student participation in English.
D2. UDL practices improve students' comprehension skills.
D3. UDL strategies enhance students' motivation to learn English.
D4. UDL implementation contributes to students' overall language progress.
-

Section E – Perceived Barriers and Preparedness (E1–E4)

- E1. I feel adequately trained to implement UDL principles.
E2. Time constraints limit my ability to apply UDL strategies.
E3. Institutional support facilitates UDL implementation.
E4. Implementing UDL requires additional planning effort.
-

Open-Ended Questions

1. In your experience, what has been the greatest benefit of applying UDL in English classes?
 2. What challenges have you encountered when implementing UDL strategies?
 3. What type of institutional support would help you strengthen UDL implementation?
-

Ethical Considerations

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. All responses will remain confidential and will be reported in aggregated form.