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Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in
Ecuadorian private high schools

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

Doctora.

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DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in ecuadorian private high schools, realizado por Díaz Martínez Xavier Alfredo y González Maldonado Enrique Teodoro, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, diciembre de 2014

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“ Nosotros Díaz Martínez Xavier Alfredo y González Maldonado Enrique Teodoro declaramos ser autores del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in ecuadorian private high schools, de la Titulación de Licenciado Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Carmen Delia Benítez Correa director (a) del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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DEDICATION

To our families, whose support gave us the strength to continue our studies and accomplish this objective.

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We thank to our professors whose guidance and patience helped us continue in the uncertain road of studying at distance.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out why Ecuadorian students finish high school and go to the university with little or no English language knowledge.

To carry out this study, the quantitative method was used and the instruments applied were: Observation Sheet, Teachers Interview, Student's Questionnaire and Teacher's Questionnaire. The techniques used were: open questionnaires, observation, note taking, surveys, and interviews.

The scope covered three different classes in five private schools in Guayaquil, observing EFL teachers ranging from 8th elementary to 3rd course of high school with youngsters aging 12 to 17, attending classes in the morning.

The process consisted on observing three classes in each school to find out the environment of the class and how the teachers developed it. Different factors such as: students' English level, needs and classroom conditions were taken into consideration as well as English teaching training, school facilities and standards for quality in education.

As a result, it was found that class size, population, methods used by teachers and motivations, affect the English teaching-learning process.

Key words: factors, influence, teaching, learning process, language.

RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

Los factores que influyen en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés en los colegios secundarios ecuatorianos del sector privado es el tema de esta investigación. El propósito es averiguar por qué los estudiantes ecuatorianos que terminan la secundaria van a la universidad con poco o ningún conocimiento del idioma inglés.

Para llevar a cabo este estudio se utilizó el método cuantitativo, y los instrumentos utilizados fueron: Observation Sheet, Teachers Interview, Student's Questionnaire y Teacher's Questionnaire. Las técnicas utilizadas fueron: observación, toma de notas, encuestas, y entrevistas.

El alcance de esta investigación abarcó tres clases en diferentes cursos en cinco colegios privados de Guayaquil, observando profesores de inglés desde 8° de educación básica hasta 3° curso de bachillerato, con jóvenes entre 12 y 17 años, que asisten a clases en la mañana.

El proceso consistió en la observación de tres clases en cada colegio para conocer el entorno de la clase y la forma en que los profesores la desarrollaban. Diferentes factores como: niveles de inglés, necesidades y condiciones del aula, así como la formación en la enseñanza de inglés, instalaciones escolares y normas de calidad en la educación de los estudiantes.

Como resultado, se encontró que el tamaño de las clases, población, métodos utilizados por los profesores y su motivación, afectan el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de inglés.

Palabras Clave: factores, influyen, proceso, enseñanza, aprendizaje.

INTRODUCTION

It has been noticed that in Ecuador many students finish their high school and start the university with little knowledge of the English language; this is why the government has implemented a series of programs aimed to improve the quality of education in English language in high schools; as a part of these programs scholarships are being given to students recently graduated from high school or college students, who wish to study in foreign universities; unfortunately, these scholarships are being denied due to the lack of knowledge of the English language on the part of the applicants. This lack of knowledge has created the necessity to carry out a research focused on the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools, which tries to identify such factors more accurately.

Based on what has been previously mentioned, this research has been focused on the following specific objectives: Identify students' English level and their needs in the classroom, determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place, identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers, and determine institutional facilities and standards for quality in education.

The importance of the issue is that Ecuador requires professionals who have up-to-date knowledge in different areas, in order to achieve this goal, Ecuadorians must study in foreign universities that can provide it. The language of choice used in universities receiving international students is English. Therefore, it is required that graduates from high school have a very good knowledge of the language. The results obtained in this area by private schools is higher than in public schools.

Previous research regarding these topics has been carried out by different authors. For example, Imullah, Hussain, & Naseer, (2008) studied what the direct

influence of teachers in the subject of English was, as well as how positive and negative reinforcement influence in the class were, analyzing in this way the students participation level in the classes. Here the authors have highlighted the importance of classroom organization for the development of a good class, which motivates teachers and students in a good environment.

The authors mentioned some limitations that they had, such as that observations were made obtrusively which may have affected the results, as well as the short time taken for the observation (13.50 min). Additionally, the schedule in which the observations were made was not standard.

Another study made by Khamkhien (2010) sets two main objectives: to determine both how gender, motivation and experience in studying English make a difference in selecting the language learning strategies and how these factors and the strategies used to acquire the language are related.

Khamkhien first acknowledges that due to the limited number of students, the findings of this study remain inconclusive. He also mentioned that other variables such as nationality, age, field of study, etc., possibly influenced the learning strategies identified. Additionally, there is a lack of tools needed to gather the inventory of strategies used by students.

One more study related to the topic researched is the one done in 2006 by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu, for whom the main purpose was to know if teachers normally relay on their traditional tools (textbooks and boards) as the way to spread and express what they wanted in the classrooms, being the cause of poor quality of the English teaching in public secondary schools. The authors did not find any limitations in this study.

METHOD

Settings and participants

This research was carried out in private high schools of Guayaquil. The students who participated in this research were from 12 to 17, ranging from 8th elementary to 3rd course of high school. These students received eight hours of English classes per week and attended classes in the morning; most classes had a number of students that was easy to manage and were distributed in groups according to their English level. All the students came from middle to upper economic and social conditions.

Procedures

The research required to have all the data collection sheets ready such as: observation sheets and teachers and students' questionnaires. During the observation, notes were taken from what was observed along the class process with the purpose of recording some details that took place during the class. In order to register the data related to the class development, the observation sheet provided by the university were also filled out. The class was observed sitting apart from the rest in order to reduce the teacher's peer pressure.

Right after the class, a teacher's questionnaire and a student's questionnaire were filled simultaneously by both the teacher observed and a student randomly chosen from the class. Also the teacher was surveyed to find out the professional preparation and level of English. After the students were gone, a teacher's interview sheet was used in order to measure the level of English knowledge according to the Common European Framework.

Once all the instruments were filled, the information was tabulated and presented in the corresponding charts for the analysis, which consisted on the

teachers' responses compared with those from the students', the information gathered in the observation formats, and the notes taken during the class observation. This analysis consisted on taking the results as the base, and from these, developing criteria through description, analysis, and related interpretation founded on solid and scientific information, issuing opinions and coherent arguments on the topic under investigation, without losing sight of the project objective.

Based on what was previously mentioned, the data was divided in four major variables: those concerning teachers, concerning students, regarding classroom, and finally those concerning the educational institutions. Data collected from each variable was grouped and the number of occurrences was tabulated, graphed, and analyzed.

Several factors were considered from each of the variables described above. Regarding teachers, several aspects considered important for a good teaching-learning process were evaluated. Regarding students, other elements were also taken into account. These elements focused on the class process more from the students' perspective and what they considered necessary to reach a meaningful learning.

Finally, respecting factors concerning educational institutions, four other elements were considered important for the class development, and they were analyzed according to what teachers stated during this research.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

It has been noticed that students graduated from most high-schools have very little or no knowledge of the English language; this limitation keeps students from expanding their knowledge and access to scholarships from foreign institutions. The importance of the issue is that Ecuador requires professionals who have up-to-date knowledge in different areas; in order to achieve this goal, Ecuadorians must study in foreign universities that can provide this knowledge. The language of choice used in universities receiving international students is English. Therefore, it is required that graduates from high school have a very good knowledge of the language, and it has been noticed that students graduated from high schools and applying for scholarships, do not have it.

On this section, different approaches, methods, and other topics dealing with the process of acquiring a new language will be deeply studied in order to improve knowledge on them. Among these topics are those concerning the teachers' preparation and developing of the class, the students' aptitudes and learning styles as well as those concerning the educational institution.

Much has been talked about the importance of learning English besides, considerable efforts have been made by schools to increase students' proficiency in English, however sometimes results have not exactly been what has been expected, for that reason the Ecuadorian government decided to give high priority to English teaching-learning process. Aiming towards this direction, Rene Ramirez (2012), head of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT), started the so called "Teach English" program, which has as a main purpose to improve the better teaching of English language in schools ran by the

government. The program consists on sending Ecuadorians to study English and teaching methodologies in the best universities of the United States (Ecuadoruniversitario, 2012).

Teaching Approaches and Methods

What teachers acquire abroad will help them to improve their knowledge in the use of methodologies and approaches which play an important role in the teaching-learning process. Richards & Rodgers (2001) express that for some scholars *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)* goes beyond the mere putting together grammar and functional teaching. Although this thought is not shared by others who believe that it is simply the use of techniques that make students work together. What it is agreed is that this method connects two groups in an action/reaction process, that is, one side creates a situation that commits the other side to interact.

In connection to this method, Howatt (1984) thinks that there are “strong” and “weak” types of CLT; the first one just states how important it is to provide the students with the occasions to use English, while the other one makes them use the language in order to acquire it. Still both points of view elicit learners to talk to each other, therefore acquiring the language in one way or another.

Furthermore, Harmer (2007, p.50), states that a “language is not just patterns of grammar with vocabulary items slotted in, but also involves language functions such as inviting, agreeing and disagreeing, suggesting, etc.” This statement helps to express clear his view on CLT, since for him acquiring a language is not only the language per se, but on how to use it. This is the first principle that he holds, and the second one is that language acquisition will come by itself if students are given enough opportunities to practice it and get plentiful of exposure to it. Harmer also supports the idea that Communicative Language Teaching has to do with students

transmitting real ideas and thoughts and not merely messages based on grammatically controlled language.

Following the same line, Terrell (1977) proposed a new way in English teaching which he decided to name the Natural Approach. In certain way this approach was classified as “traditional” since it is based in the use of the language in situations that involve communication but avoiding the usage of the native language and regardless of the grammar used (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Because of that, they feel that the most important goal a language has is to communicate with others, and since this approach is oriented to exploit the communication skills, they state that this is an example of communicative approach. Although this approach has been very well accepted, the authors see the language acquisition of English in the same way audiolingualists do, that is as “mastery of structures by stages” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.180). Krashen also speculates that learners’ emotions or attitudes play an important role in the acquisition process, since this can either block or let pass the necessary knowledge. Krashen based this hypothesis by researching how students acquire a second language, and identified three “affective or attitudinal” variables which are: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. According to his studies, these three variables play a key role in the teaching-learning process.

Another important method is Cooperative Language Learning, which has very old roots, this method was born with peer-tutoring and peer-monitoring. It is based in the learning through classmates’ help in order to avoid leaving students with less knowledge behind. This helps the teacher construct a better relationship among students, and instead of competing each other build a team structure (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994: 21). Both Piaget (1965) and Vygotsky (1962) convey in the importance of social interaction regarding the learning process.

Other approaches like Content-Based Instruction (CBI) offer a similar view since teaching grows around the information being addressed to the student instead of a syllabus. Success is based on classes aiming true communication which involves information. An idyllic condition for learning another language would be a class where grammar and other formal activities have nothing to do with the teaching process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

CBI is focused more on the subject being taught through the target language than in the language itself. This approach encourages students to think and learn using L2. In this way the four language skills are put in practice turning into an essential part of the learning process.

Other approaches have a different view of language teaching. For instance Task-Based Teaching (TBT) is based on performing tasks as the essential part of the teaching process. Willis & Willis (2011, p.1) state that this approach is “clone by designing of tasks-discussions, problems, games, and so on”, requiring that students practice the target language by themselves. Although TBT is not seen in the same way around the world, because teachers may start using this approach but later on they make the necessary adjustments in order to fit the students’ needs (Edwards & Willis, 2005).

Even though many approaches rather avoid grammar, TBT accepts its importance since the student will not perform well unless he/she has the correct grammar. This leads to the need of the teacher’s fluency in the target language, however he/she does not have to have a lot of experience using TBT. Due to the nature of this approach it is not suitable for preparing students for examination, but for teaching spoken and written L2. Cooperative Language Learning is used in order to accomplish the assigned task (Willis & Willis, 2011).

In addition, Richards & Rodgers (2001) state that when students are grabbed in task work, it gives a better setting for activating the acquiring process than activities that are focused on traditional strategies, providing therefore an enhanced opening for receiving the essential information to achieve the target language.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) also claim another important method known as Total Physical Response (TPR); this approach claims that language can be taught through a combination of speech and action. Richards & Rodgers (2001) highlight how James Asher developed the method based on various traditions and procedures for teaching language. Asher views adults learning as a replica of how children learn their first language, and children learn through commands and actions.

In order to apply this method, TPR learners must firstly be listeners and performers, that is, they must first listen carefully to the instructions given by the teacher, and then execute the instructions given (physical response). Also students must produce using their own new set of language; they are also stimulated to produce when they feel ready to, and this normally happens when enough material has been internalized. The teacher plays a very important role in this method, since it is him/her who decides what is going to be taught and what supporting material will be used.

As it usually has been referred, motivation is considered the most important player in the teaching-learning game. Recent studies state that the higher teacher self-efficacy, the higher the students are motivated to learn, leading the teacher to change the students' point of view towards the learning of English. Thus, motivation is a real support for developing any kind of activity, and when it comes from the teacher it has a very powerful effect on the students, and the classroom itself turns into a living example (Ahmed & Tamiz, 2012). Harmer (2007) agrees that despite of all these new

methods and approaches, some old methods have surprisingly survived through the times as it's in the case of Grammar-Translation Method, which has roots as old as 1780. This method is characterized by exposing learners to brief grammar rules and a list of words. With this material students must perform some translation exercises in which they have to use the words and rules given.

Even though nowadays it is not used as a teaching method, the grammar-translation method is still alive in a certain way. The majority of students use translation in several stages of their learning process, thus helping them to achieve certain knowledge of the target language by associating it with their native language. Regardless of this advantage it is good to lead learners to leave it behind little by little since later on it will prevent them from triggering the language they have acquired.

Some other authors like Patel & Praven (2008) state that this method is very useful when learning certain languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Latin, Arabic and Greek. This method is very popular among some teachers because they rather take the easy path of translating words and phrases to the native language and then explain the meaning and the grammar involved.

The key features of this method are: words are taught as vocabulary units and not in context; grammar is the core of the language and rules are explained in the native language and are compared with L1; communication is not a goal, the language is; reading and writing are the major tools used to accomplish the goal, therefore it does not develop listening and speaking skills (Patel & Praven, 2008)

Managing Learning

Managing learning in a classroom environment involves several steps and strategies that a teacher must carry on. Among them are giving feedback, instructions and timing the activities carried out within the class.

Giving instructions appropriately can lead students to a better learning thus motivating them to go beyond, which is very important in order to have the students' engaged and with good predisposition for learning. The way a teacher sets up the instructions for any activity can make a difference between an engaging and interactive class or a boring and confusing one; the teacher must be clear at giving the instructions and also verify whether the students have understood or not what has been required, using a level of language that is easy to understand for the whole class is absolutely crucial, otherwise the students may get confused and that could become an unnecessary use of time (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005).

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) agree that something a teacher cannot avoid is giving continuous feedback to the students, this way they will be able to evaluate their achievements. There is not a single way of giving feedback that will depend on the instructor and the group characteristics. Some will be easier to implement than others and that is something for the teacher to decide.

How teachers correct students, as part of the feedback process, has significant impact in the way students learn. Hejazi (2012 p.5) concludes that "there is a significant relationship between the teacher's error correction and the EFL students' speech accuracy". If teachers are able to systematically correct their students' mistakes in pronunciation as soon as they are made, students' speech accuracy will be improved.

Due to the fact that feedback plays an important part in the teaching learning process, and it has a lot to do with the way a teacher rewards improvements, it is important to focus on positive feedback first (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005).

Other studies state that there is nothing wrong in pointing out what were students doing wrong, because in this way they can acquire better approaches (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991). It is imperative for the learner to be aware of what the mistakes are and why they have made mistakes, otherwise they will likely repeat them later (Woolfolk, 2007).

As it is well known, the way time is used during class is something teachers as well as students must be aware of. Teachers should let students know how time will be used during the activity, thus they will not spend the time inefficiently and the teacher can go through the planning accordingly (Woolfolk, 2005).

In this aspect Woolfolk (2007, p.446) agrees that time in class is precious and must be wisely used in order to achieve the goal set, giving more time will not always help in getting it. “To be valuable, time must be used effectively” claims Woolfolk and brings forward the idea that spending time in certain learning activities is called “engaged time” and that is also useful.

Teachers have to bear in mind that engaged time does not assure that students are getting knowledge, since they may be using an incorrect approach to learn. The time when learners are acquiring knowledge is called “academic learning time” and that is the goal teachers should be trying to obtain (Woolfolk, 2007).

Lesson Design

On the topic related to Lesson Design, Acklam & Robertson (2000) state that there should be some principles to be followed, and these principles have a special sequence which begins with a “Warmer” or attention getters, then the “Lead-in”

which sets the context for the language taught. After that, we proceed with the “Language presentation” which occurs when teachers introduce learners to a new content and sets the rules of use. Later on, the “Controlled practice” which gives the students the chance to become more familiarized with the new structure. One more step that follows the previous one is the “Freer practice”, in which students are given a chance to use their creativity and make use of the new structure in their own sentences. Previous to the last step is the “Feedback”, in which reinforcement, consolidation and correction play a vital role. Finally comes the evaluation where the students will show how well they have acquired the topics introduced.

According to Acklam & Robertson (2000, p.17), “this is a basic model for teaching grammar points” but “there are other elements to lesson” which can also be considered such as homework and revision. This resembles a trip with a beginning and an ending in which the plan is the diagram that shows you the correct route to follow.

Other authors like Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005, p.175), claim that “writing a lesson plan has a number of important functions”, the first one mentioned is “An aid to planning”, because once the teacher has set the goals for the lesson, he or she can prepare the steps needed within the time frame available. Next, the authors mention “A Working Document” which aids teachers to be focused on the main objective of the lesson. After that, it comes the need of “A record” where the progress made during the class is registered, in order to be used for preparing the next one. They also state that “Aims, Procedures, Approaches and activities, Materials, aids and equipment, information about the students, and Anticipated problems” must be included in the lesson plan.

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) refer to it as “Aims”, in which teachers trace the objectives planned and expected to be achieved at the end of the lesson. Regarding “Procedure”, here is where teachers organize the phases in which the lesson will be divided to reach the goal. The next part in the plan would be “Approaches and activities” in which the ideal approaches and tasks to reach the desired goals will be expressed. Another important element of the plan that must be mentioned is the “Materials, aids and equipment” which are to be used at each step to be able to reach the desired goals in the lesson. It is also important to register all relevant information about the class such as number of students, books used, classroom size, and characteristics.

Finally the authors consider important to foresee the possible inconveniences that might arise during the lesson in a section they call “anticipated problems”. This will help the teacher adapt the lesson to the new conditions in case anything unexpected happens during the development of the class.

Class Size

There are different criteria regarding to what a big class is, but what is common are the problems that may arise with large classes that will really affect the teaching-learning process of a foreign language such as English. Woodward (2009) identifies certain problems such as noise, too many people and objects that cannot be moved and all in an enclosed area, lack of material for all of the students, some student’s requirements will not be fulfilled and not all questions will be answered, students using their mother tongue if they all share a common language, thus avoiding the usage of the target language.

According to this author, other constraints teachers may face are the discipline and the way to keep students interested in the topic being taught, thus demanding a

great effort from the teacher. Working in groups, may become a challenge when managing large groups, which demands different strategies from the teacher, such as groupwork, where several discussions can take place, getting more students participation, but as usual like in any large group, monitoring is a concern.

With medium size groups, taking turns could be a good approach, restricting or setting a policy regarding the number of times a person can interact in order to avoid monologues or monopolization by one or two students (Gower, Phillips, & Walters, 2005). On the other hand, in small classes the teachers can deploy all their energy to fulfill most of the students' interests (Woodward, 2009). Small groups are easier to manage and the teacher can have a closer monitoring of the activities performed in class. In this way more students get a chance to speak and practice; but if the group is too small, peer interaction is reduced as well as scaffolding with classmates.

Classroom space and seating arrangement

Regarding classroom space and seating arrangement Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005, p.21) state that “Your position and the way you organize the positions of the students in your class is of great importance.” However, we have to be careful with the cultural background of the students. The way in which students sit in the classroom can determine his or her attitude and interaction towards the class, partners and teacher, therefore teachers must be carefully aware of this situation. Besides that, many factors like adulthood, childhood, monolingualism, multilingualism and personality can have a remarkable effect on the way in which students must be arranged.

Another factor to be considered in order to have a better educational environment is the sitting arrangement, in which “café style” or sitting students around tables leads to an easier way to develop pair work or group work activities.

Other arrangements suggested can be “corners”, in which the class is divided in four groups, each in one corner of the classroom who are going to discuss focused aspects of a topic; this is a good chance for the students to develop deeper thoughts about a topic and experience many valid points of view about it.

One more sitting arrangement style is “fishbowl” in which part of the class sits in a close circle, facing inward, while the rest of the class sits in a bigger circle around the smaller one. The students sitting on the inside circle talk about a certain subject, in the mean time, those students sitting on the outside circle listen for new information and/or evaluate the matter of discussion according to preset criteria.

It is advised for class discussions or “open” pair work or when students talk across the classroom not to move the position of seats. Only when students need to talk individually with other members of the class (a mingle activity for example) is when we should move the seats to the sides letting a space in the middle for students to interact.

Regarding this topic Lima (2011, p. 55) claims that “classrooms around the world show that they share some physical features” like the traditional seat queues with students facing to the front. “Seating arrangement, furniture and the places occupied by the teacher and learners” need to be checked when trying to comprehend the real aim of a classroom because this is the place where the student’s experiences with the language are being developed.

Classroom and/or Teaching Resources

Regarding this topic, Chand, Nkosh, & Phiri (2005, p.2) define teaching material as “the aids used by the trainer to help him/her in teaching his/her lesson effectively.” These “aids” are developed to guarantee an effective teaching-learning process. These teaching-learning resources can have different sizes; they can be

easily purchased or prepared and they don't need to be expensive, many are easy to be carried, and are ready to be used in different situations. They motivate students to participate in class therefore connecting the learning to real life experiences. Some common teaching learning materials are maps, charts, diagrams, books, projectors, TV, videos, slides, boards, charts, markers, etc.

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) also mention other types of teaching resources like for example: The board, the overhead projector, visuals, worksheets and work cards, the cassette recorder, videos, computers and photocopier. All these tools must be fully explored in the teaching learning process. Even if the school does not own all of them there are many other creative ways through which we can make an appropriate learning environment.

The board is an essential element in the classroom and the teacher is required to fully take advantage of it. Projectors are also very important tools in the classroom because they can become time savers, attractive, easily handled, and interactive. Visuals can also be realia, pictures or photographs. They have a variety of uses, for example teaching colors, locations, prepositions, word stress, parts of speech, people, etc. Worksheets and word cards are also important teaching resources, to do follow-ups, lesson reinforcements, communicative activities, etc. The cassette recorder is another significant tool especially for activities like listening, pronunciation, learning songs, voice recording, etc. Videos are very useful to bring real life situations to the classroom and learn from them, we can also learn gestures and physical background or give additional information. Besides, computers offer a wide variety of interactive options to increase the language learning progress because of the mental agility and skills that they develop.

Classroom Observation

For Wajnryb (2000, p.1) “Observation is a multi-faceted tool for learning”. Being observed involves being ready for the observation and having a good follow-up can turn into an enriching experience. Observations can be started by the schools as part of a program for new teachers or for supporting their staff. Class observation has become part of a regular procedure in educational institutions, being observed by a supervisor or by a teacher in trainee is common. The supervisor normally will sit segregated from the rest and most of the time will not take part in the class process, but sure will write what is going on within the classroom (Gower, Phillips & Walters 2005).

According to Richards & Farrell (2011), it is very important to perform observations by either your supervisor or cooperating teacher. They state that when being observed by supervisors, it will be focused on “how well you carried out different aspects of the lesson.” The authors also refer to the different procedures the observer may focus depending on the observation, these procedures are: Checklists, Seating charts, Field notes, and Narrative summary; after the observation, a follow-up conversation between the observer and the teacher being observed will carried out for feedback.

Learning Styles

Woolfolk (2007) agrees with Gardner (1983, 2003 p.114) on the fact that “there are eight kinds of human abilities. An individual might have strengths or weaknesses in one or several areas”, according to Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory, not everybody has the same abilities, and people have some of them more developed than others; therefore, different people are keener to learn better in certain way than in another.

The Multiple Intelligences mentioned by Gardner are as follows: The first type is “Logical-mathematical” which gives people the ability in dealing with numbers and chains of reasoning. These people are likely scientists or mathematicians. The second one is the “Linguistic”; people with this type of intelligence has sensibility to sounds, rhythms, words and functions of language. Poets and composers are in this group. The third category is the “Musical” where people with this ability can produce rhythms and musical forms. These are people like composers or musicians. The fourth one is the “Spatial”, having the capacity to perceive visual-spatial world and perform transformations. People like navigators and sculptors fit within this group. The fifth one is the “Bodily-kinesthetic”, people with this type of intelligence have the capacity to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, motivations, and desires of other people. People with these abilities tend to be dancers or athletes. The sixth type is “Interpersonal”, these people have the capability to discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, motivations, and desires of other people. Therapists and salespeople have this ability well developed. The seventh type of intelligence is the “Intrapersonal”; the ones who have this type of intelligence have the ability to access to the person’s internal feelings and discriminate among them; it means to acknowledge one’s own gifts, weaknesses, desires, and intelligence. The eighth one is the “Naturalist” or ability to recognize nature, to make distinctions in the natural world, to understand systems and define categories (perhaps even categories of intelligence). These are people like botanist, farmer or hunter.

These theory from Gardner leaves the door open that learning styles vary in people who will apply different strategies in order to achieve cognition. A study by Khamkhien (2010) concludes that it is not clear yet which gender employs

significant amount of learning strategies. Also it concludes that there might be a factor that leads one sexual category to choose a determined strategy. Other elements are also mentioned to be decisive when learning, for example age, attitudes toward learning, expectancy, interest, and needs. These elements remain and can even grow through lifetime, affecting the way a person achieves what is trying to learn.

Another study confirms what the previous authors have stated. O' Donoghue (2006, p.1) suggests that "There is no one "best" way to learn. It is increasingly recognized that people learn in different ways." As we have seen, people applies different strategies depending on the most developed ability or intelligence. Thus, teachers have to apply a variety of methods and techniques that aim to strengthen each of these abilities in a student and through these abilities to reach the desired goal in the teaching-learning process.

Language Aptitude

The idea of a talent related to the learning, which lead students to be successful in second language acquisition, has been kept for many years; although the concept that there is a language-learning aptitude has remained as a hypothesis (Saville-Troike, 2008). Besides this, Krashen (2007) and Carroll (1973) identify three principal aspects of aptitude. The first one considered is phonetics, which according to Carroll (1973, p.19) is "the ability to store new language sounds in memory". The second aptitude is the ability of the person to prove his cognizance to the grammar and structures in the language being taught. The last element of aptitude is called "inductive ability" which is the capability of checking the material being presented and from that point on recognizes the grammar and patterns involved. Following the same line, Krashen (2007) contrasts Carroll's and Pimsleur's (1966, p.182) summary of components of language aptitude who proposes that the capacity for foreign

language has three components: “verbal intelligence, motivation, and auditory ability”.

Hereafter some studies that contribute to a better understanding of these topics, will be analyzed.

Inamullah, Hussain, & Nasser (2008) carried out a study whose objective was to explore the direct influence of the teachers in the college level teaching-learning process in the subject of English and to know about positive and negative reinforcement in the class and to analyze the student participation level in the classes. The Method applied in this study required the use of an instrument developed by Flander (1970) which has been used extensively in various studies. This study concludes that teachers have a great influence on students that becomes key part in the teaching-learning process, therefore educators must be aware of how critical is to create a classroom environment that helps transmitting the knowledge in order to have better results. The key factor is the interaction between teacher and students.

Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu (2006) carried out another study whose objective was to examine the factors responsible for the poor quality of the teaching of English as a second language in public secondary schools in Nigeria. The Method used in this study were the application of questionnaires and observation schedules. The researchers designed the questionnaire by generating a list of items, which solicited students' responses on teaching strategies, instructional resources/media used by the teachers and the teaching/learning environment. This study concluded that teachers should change their traditional ways of teaching which are sometimes only limited to the use of textbooks and chalkboards. Besides that, it is important for teachers to be aware of new “instructional delivery methods” that will allow them to be able to choose among a wide range of ideas and strategies to achieve the desired goal with

the students. They also suggest that teachers should be more engaged with technological tools that could lead students to become more self-learners and to be more exposed to “authentic learning experiences” (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu, 2006, p.8).

Regarding how students can be motivated, Mojavezi & Poodineh (2012) developed a study whose objective was to investigate the influence of teacher self-efficacy (TSE) on the students’ motivation and achievement. The Method used in this study required the participation of two groups: the first group consisted of eighty senior high school teachers in four different cities of Iran. Two instruments were employed in this study; the Teacher self-efficacy Questionnaire, developed by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001), and the Students’ Motivation questionnaire which consisted of four parts: The first and the second parts elicit information on students’ intrinsic (items 1-7) and extrinsic motivation (items 8-12). This study concludes that if a teacher’s efficacy is higher, the student’s motivation will be higher too, therefore changing the attitude of the students to the English language learning. This motivation leads students to higher achievements too. They also conclude that educational institutions should provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their “self-efficacy.” Motivated students create learning strategies in order to reach their goals. These strategies differ from one gender to another.

Khamkhien (2010) carried out a study whose objective was to determine three factors: how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies and to compare the roles of these factors and the pattern of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students. The Method used in this study required the participation of two groups of university students who were drawn from two public universities in Thailand and Vietnam.

They had to fulfill four main criteria to be qualified for the study. The instrument used was the '80-item Strategy Inventory for Language Learning' (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) and a background questionnaire. In order to identify the language learning strategy patterns used by Thai and Vietnamese students when learning English, the scores gained from the SILL was calculated. To determine the three factors, the data obtained from the background questionnaire were analyzed. This study concluded that it is not clear which gender uses a wider variety of strategies to acquire another language. Although other factors affect the type of strategy chosen by them, highly-motivated students tend to reach a better proficiency in English than those lowly-motivated. Khamkhiem also refers to the strong goals that a highly-motivated student can have in order to learn a foreign language, such as complete course requirements, study abroad, etc.

Another study carried out by Hejazi (2012) had the objective of investigating the effect of the teacher's error correction on the accuracy of the EFL learners' speech. The Method used in this study required the participation of 40 Iranians out of 95 adults, both male and female, aged between 19 to 25, who were EFL freshmen and sophomores. The instruments used for this study were: A TOEFL test for the purpose of making homogeneous subjects in the level of English proficiency; a number of questions for the pretest interview; a checklist of certain grammatical points that was used as a guideline for correcting the students' syntactic errors in speaking, during the treatment which was also used as a guide-line for the raters who rated the interviews; and finally a number of questions for the post-test interview. This study concluded that the way feedback is given, will have a strong influence in the student's development since there is a great relation between the way the teacher's correct mistakes and the accuracy gained by L2 students. Correcting

students immediately after they have spoken, will tend to make them more careful about how they speak, since if they make an error, they will be constantly stopped and this will make the experience not enjoyable for them.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

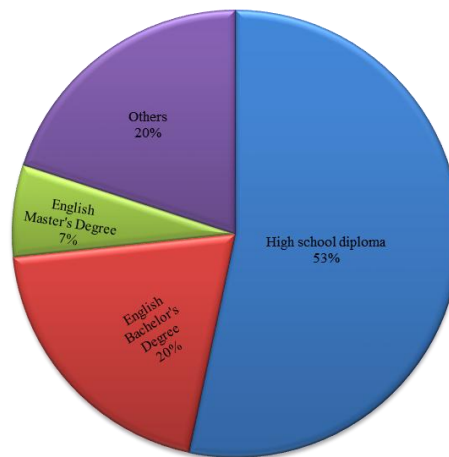
In this section the results of the study will be analyzed and interpreted. The analysis will be done of each of the factors taken into account for the study, in each factor some questions will be analyzed first quantitatively and then qualitatively. To support the analysis, both, the results of observations and students answers will be used.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In the previous graph, as it can be seen, 53% of the teachers surveyed hold a High school diploma, 20% of them hold an English Bachelor's Degree, 7% of the teachers hold an English Master's degree, and 20 % of them hold other degrees.

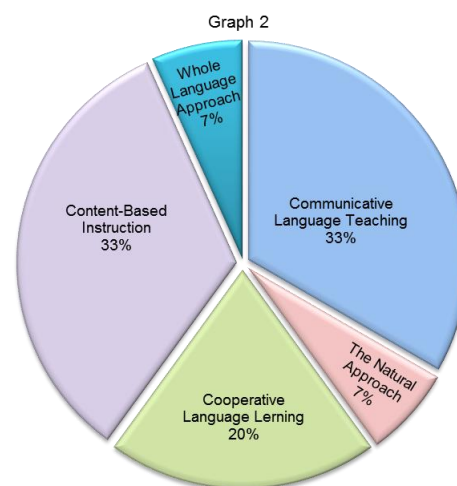
According to these results, we can infer that the majority of teachers (53%) do not have a degree in English teaching that guarantees their knowledge and pedagogical skills; nevertheless, it must be said that most of them are skillfully

prepared to carry out their teaching role, except for two of them whose proficiency in English was not so good.

Among all the teachers, only one (7%) mentioned to have a Master's degree, she was a foreign teacher, even though not an English native speaker since she is Russian, but she showed a great knowledge of the language and very good pedagogy as it was evidenced during the observation. In the group of "others" (20%) a publisher was found as EFL teacher as well as a Civil Engineer and one graduated in Tourism and Hotel Management, until now, they have been working for many years in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. This is why they were very skillful and showed good class management. The same situation was observed with the teachers having a bachelor degree in English teaching.

Although most of the teachers had a good knowledge of the language, one of them had problems to understand and answer the questions made in order to verify her English level. She had a very strong Spanish accent and used very simple words.

Which of the following methods was used in the observed class?



Author: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In this graph it can be seen what method was said to be used by each teacher during the development of the class given. Five of the teachers surveyed (33%)

stated that they used Content-Based Approach and Communicative Language Teaching. Both approaches encourage students to think and learn using L2. In this way the four language skills are put into practice, turning these approaches into an essential part of the learning process.

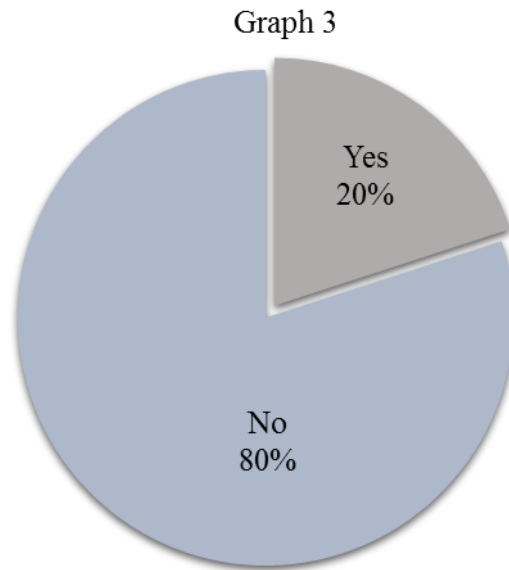
Continuing with the analysis, three teachers (20 %), agreed that they mostly used Cooperative Language Learning method (CLL). This method, as explained by Richards & Rodgers (2008) the students have the opportunity to express their ideas and feelings using the L2 acquired, giving meaning to their learning, thus learning to communicate.

Another method said to be used by one teacher was The Natural Approach (7%) proposed by Krashen & Terrell (1983) which is based in the use of the language in situations that involve communication but avoiding the usage of the native language, regardless of the grammar used.

Finally Whole Language Approach was claimed to be used by another teacher (7%). This method stresses the learning of reading and writing naturally focused on true communication and for pleasure. It also emphasizes the importance of meaning and meaning-making in teaching and learning. (Richards & Rodgers, 2007)

Regardless of what has been stated by the teachers, during the class process it was observed that teachers used more than one method in order to achieve their goal.

Do teachers use whole-group activities to teach their lessons?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

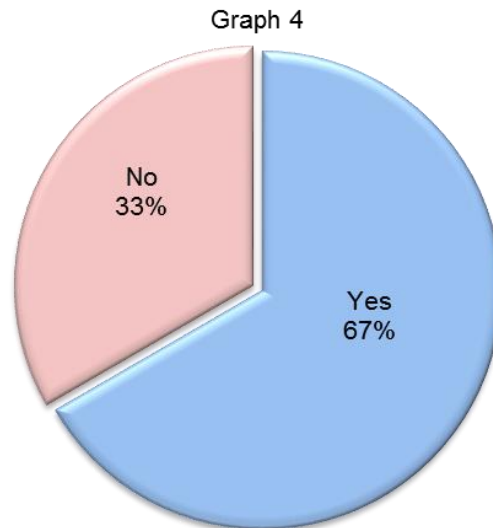
In the graphic shown we can see that only 20% of the teachers said they use whole group activities in their classes while 80% of them said they do not use it. This type of activities were used as warm-up to remember what was taught in the previous day, and for introductory activities of new material.

Even though, all of the students were happy with the way their teacher taught them, only one student stated that his teacher did not allow him to interact with his classmates, and that was exactly what was observed.

Considering the answers the students gave versus what was observed, it can be said that the students answered according to what regularly happens in class.

It can also be inferred that one reason why most teachers do not use whole-group activities is because they do not have large classes. The theory states that large classes must use group activities in order to develop their speaking skills in a more organized way (Gower, Phillips, & Walters, 2005.)

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado

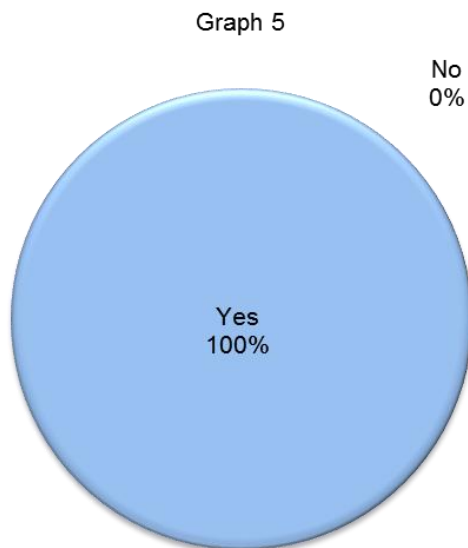
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As we can see in this chart, ten teachers (67%) of the teachers use individual activities and five (33%) of them rather use a different one.

It was also observed that teachers used the text book exercises and handouts as individual activities. Teachers told the answers to students and they corrected the exercises as they listened, which increased the teacher's talking time and reduced the students' interaction.

This type of error correcting method lead some classes to be very much teacher centered instead of student centered. Students' participation was restricted to checking their answers and sometimes few questions arose, but the class was not too alive.

Do teachers use group activities to teach their lessons?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As this graph show, all of the teachers, that is the fifteen of them (100%) said they used this type of activity. Even though all the teachers agreed in the questionnaires that they are in favor of using group activities to help each other since it eases the communication among them, this was not observed during the class. It was seen that two of them used group activities, and the rest, thirteen, just got stuck to the book or used individual activities. One teacher brought up the problem of students using their native language when working in groups, which turns out to be a problem since they do not tend to practice the target language being taught, but still agreed that it is a good approach.

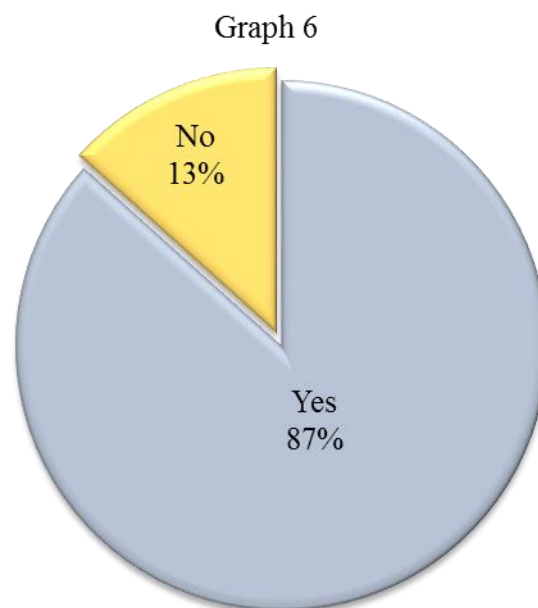
As it was mentioned before, students did not matter much about the techniques their teachers use and few of them were aware of the fact that they could have a better class, but that was more an exception.

The few teachers that used this approach, had very lively classes, with students interacting in both, their native and the target language. While the students were

working together we observed how one of them was helping another to express what he wanted (scaffolding).

The teachers in these classes wisely were not too strict when they found students talking in their native language, they rather helped them express themselves and continued monitoring the class.

Do teachers use English most of the time in their classes?

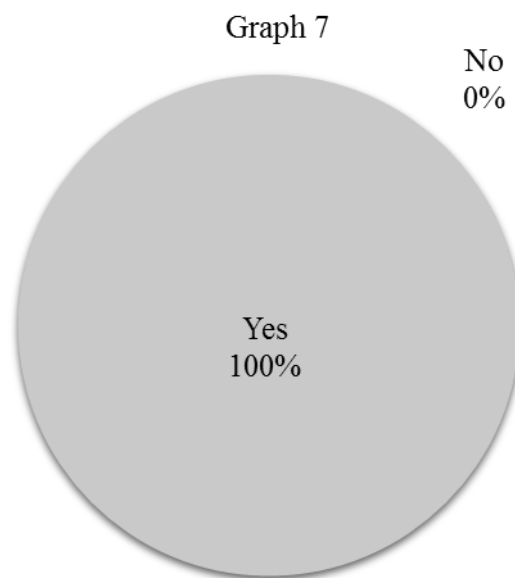


Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The previous graph, which is related to the amount of English language used in the classroom, shows that thirteen (87%) of the teachers said they use it in the class while the remaining two (13%) said they do not use it. This claim was truly evidenced during the observation. The use of the English language most of the time in the classroom is part of The Natural Approach spectrum which, as was mentioned before, is founded in using the language in situations that involve communication but avoiding the usage of the native language, regardless of the grammar used (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Regarding this question, it could also be verified through the interviews made to the students that most teachers truly communicate with them using the target language (English), only one student was concerned because the teacher sometimes used Spanish in class to explain certain things. The observation showed that this teacher in particular sometimes used Spanish to explain first and then he repeats everything in English. Curiously, in the survey only one student addressed this issue.

Do teachers plan their lessons?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

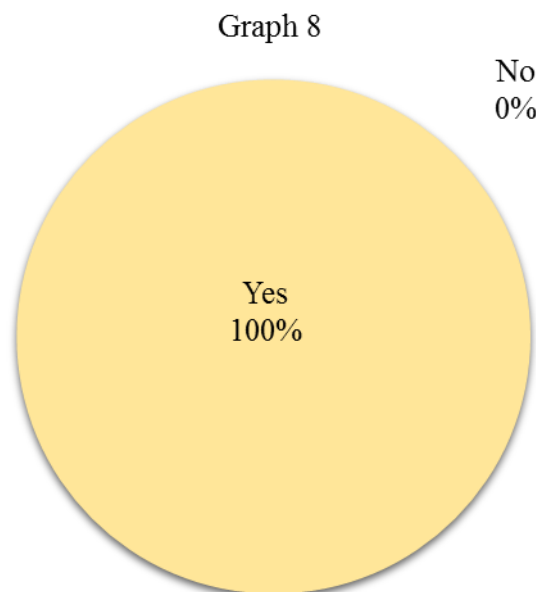
Although 100% of the teachers claim that they plan their lessons, none of them had the plan when it was requested. Still, it could be seen by the development of the class that they followed certain order, which demonstrates certain level of planning and organization. In the previous graph, it can be seen that 100% of the teachers said they plan their classes as they stated. Some do it daily, others weekly, and some others monthly.

However, during the research it was found out that not all the teachers accomplished all the elements that a basic pattern for planning a class should have.

From this 100%, it was seen that most of the teachers focused their plans on four main elements: Lesson topic, Objectives, Warm up, guided or individual activities, review/assessment/feedback, and materials or resources; whereas few of them took care of elements like: Timing and Introduction.

In relation to lesson planning, Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) agree that it is very important to plan and look ahead any inconvenience that may come in order to be prepared and ready to face them. Also writing down the different type of activities, and approaches to follow for reaching the goal set, become important at the moment of setting up the plan.

Do teachers consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach their lessons?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

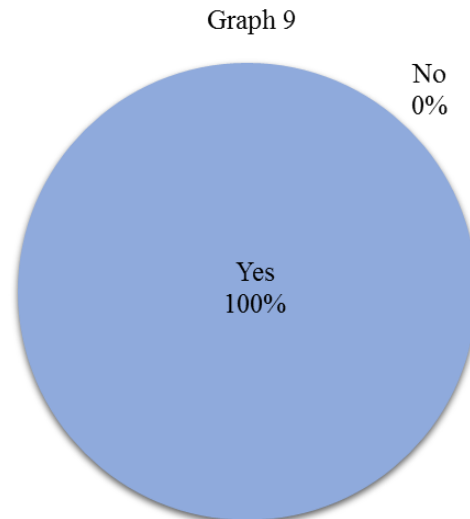
According to the questionnaire results, 100% of teachers expressed that discipline was very good in each of the classes. This could be observed since no student ever did an act of indiscipline or misbehavior, some of them joked with the teacher but with duly respect.

Even though all of the teachers expressed that they control the time, few of them (only 5) controlled the timing of exercises effectively. A characteristic that was commonly observed is that teachers in general had a good sense when the class is over, but do not assign a specific time in order to complete a task.

Concerning feedback, in almost all classes teachers asked and re-asked students about what was taught, and in almost all of the cases (14 out of 15) they gave students feedback regarding the work or exercise done, explaining what went wrong in the cases needed. Regarding reading instructions, only in one of the observed classes a teacher gave explanations on grammar aspects and the explanation did not conduct to any exercise, this contradicts what Woolfolk (2007) states about giving instructions when introducing a new topic, although in this case it was only a review. Regarding the instructions given to the students, they were very clear and they made sure students understand what they wanted from them, only in one of the classes a student asked again about the instructions. Giving clear directions is very important as Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005) quote about giving instruction prior developing a task.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider the students' needs to teach English successfully?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As it can be seen in the previous graph, 100% percent of teachers say they are aware of the importance of knowing the student's needs when teaching English. These needs are aimed to fulfill certain relevant aspects such as age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation and learning styles with the purpose of achieving the highest teaching-learning standards.

Regarding "age" Saville-Troike (2008, p. 84) states that "Young L2 learners are more likely than others to acquire the language in a naturalistic setting as opposed to a formal classroom context." Therefore, it's important for teachers to create as many naturalistic situations in class as possible to make students be able to get the most out of their lessons while applying them in a real life context.

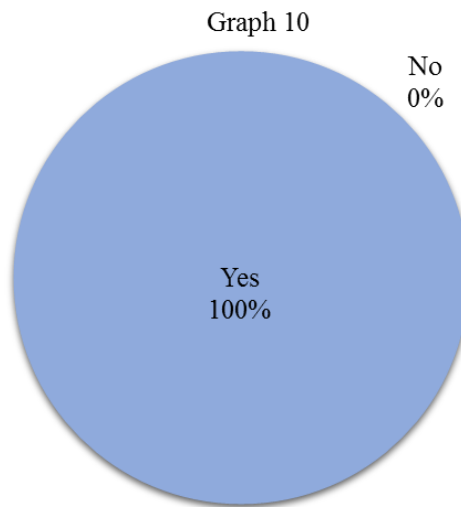
In relation to "gender" a study by Khamkhien (2010) concludes that it is not clear yet which one employs significant amount of learning strategies to learn better. Saville-Troike (2008) suggests that different attitudes and learning conditions, which are experienced by males and females, may advantage one group over the other for

Second Language Acquisition in different ways and different societies, but neither group has an innate advantage. Based on this, it can be concluded that both genders have the necessary skills to learn a language. However, different conditions can either work in favor or against the success of their learning process. Referring to aptitude and attitude Khamkhien (2010) agrees that these elements remain and can even grow through lifetime. That's why it is common to see more skilled students every year and more eager to accept harder challenges.

In relation to motivation, Khamkhien (2010) also suggests that it can be high and low depending on the learners. The highly-motivated students can be lead to reach higher and stronger goals in life. Thus, it is important for teachers to take advantage of this valuable tool in their classes because it will create an environment full of life with students eager to participate while enjoying the teaching learning process.

Regarding "Learning styles" O' Donoghue (2006, p.1) suggests that "There is no one 'best' way to learn. It is increasingly recognized that people learn in different ways." Consequently, teachers have to apply methods and techniques that aim to strengthen each of these abilities in a student and, through these abilities, to reach the desired goal in the teaching-learning process.

Do teachers consider the students' level to teach English successfully?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

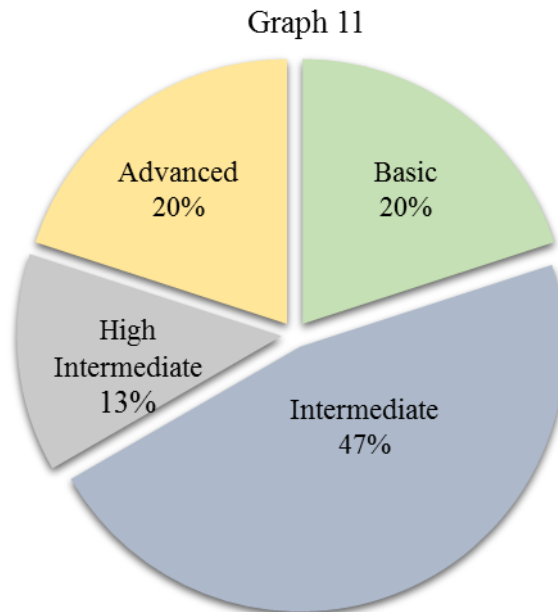
It can be easily seen in the previous graph that the 100% of teachers, claimed that they plan their classes focused on the student's level of the language.

In one school it was observed that students in one class with the same level were from 8th, 9th, and 10th grades, and the teacher applied adequate strategies intended to reach them all. This mixture of students had an obvious effect on the behavior and students' interaction. They generally ended up making sub-groups looking for their peers but strategically prevented by teachers who mingled them with other students.

It could be seen that teachers used their experience to make themselves clearly understood by their students, using the appropriate speaking speed, gestures and expressions, and adequate material for a clear comprehension of the topic covered.

Warm-ups, vocabulary, realia and interactive activities were developed according to the student's language level with the only purpose of strengthening their knowledge and improve their language proficiency.

Which is the level of the students?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

According to the teachers, all the students had different levels of language knowledge. Seven teachers (47%) said their students were in an “Intermediate” level.

On the other hand, three teachers mentioned that their students had a “Basic” level (20%), and they were considered as false beginners or real beginners in the learning of the language.

A minor group of teachers, three of them (20%), placed their students at an “Advanced” level; it was noticed that not many students had reached the required proficiency to be placed in such level.

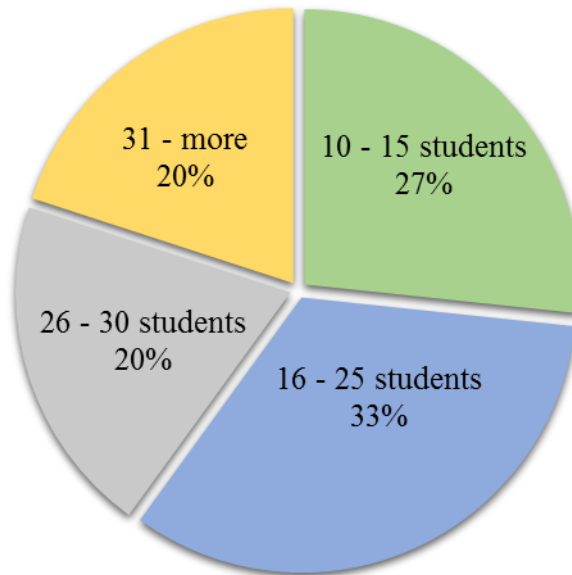
Finally, it was found that a small group of teachers, only two (13%), said their student are in a “High Intermediate” level; some teachers mentioned that this level sets the basis for reaching the “Advanced” level.

It can be concluded that the knowledge level of most of the students is still below for what is required in order to reach the minimum needed to gain a scholarship to study abroad, as it is expected.

Factors Concerning Classroom

How many students do teachers have in class?

Graph 12



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

This graphic shows that four teachers (27%) work with groups of 10 to 15 students, while five teachers (33%) stated that they work with groups of 16 to 25. When teachers were asked regarding how they felt with these numbers, it was stated that they did not represent any trouble to carry out their teaching task.

Even though teachers mostly agreed with the number of students in their class, two of them did not. They both were concerned about learning and considered that there were too many students in their class and this makes it difficult for them to achieve what they wanted. The others, instead, considered the number as appropriate because they could interact with the other classmates and the class was not “boring”.

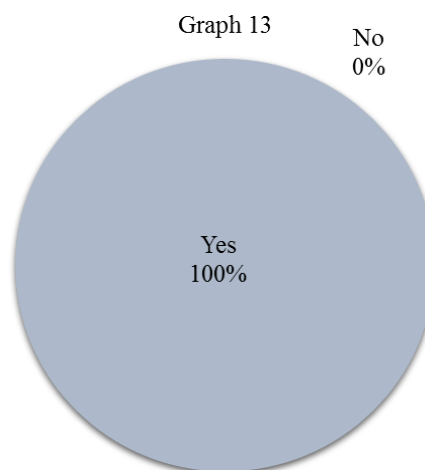
It must be emphasized that the survey was carried out in private schools, therefore the number of students within each classroom was appropriate. Definitely not having overcrowded classes is an advantage for the teacher and students since

both can deploy all the tools they have to make the teaching-learning process more effective.

Despite that most of the classes had few students, there were some with larger groups, that is 26 - 30 (20%) and 31- more students (20%). Regarding this type of classes, teachers should take advantage of making groups for the better development of what they are trying to achieve. Gower, Phillips, & Walters, (2005) presented this idea on how dividing the class in groups and taking turns on the discussion, can help more students to participate, but still the monitoring problem is present.

Large classes definitely do not play in favor of the teaching-learning process, students tend to get easily distracted, and if the classroom is not big enough, the teacher has to really make extra efforts to keep the students' attention and to at least cover what has been planned.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with this number of students?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

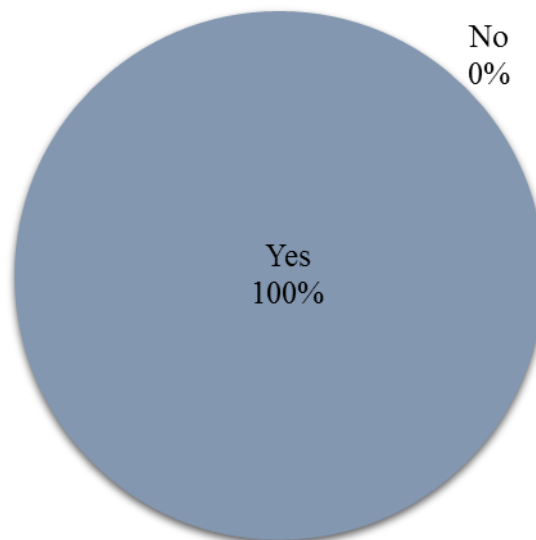
According to the survey applied to the teachers, they said that all (100%) felt comfortable working with the number of students they had; nevertheless, in the classes with more than 30 students, they expressed that it could be much better if they were working with less students, since there are certain exercises in which not

all the students can participate, but still it was no problem for them to handle that number of students.

In contrast, two students did express their concern about the number of classmates in their class. Although the class had less than 26 students, there was not enough space and therefore it seemed there were too many students and this caused a distracting factor, especially because they were too close one from the other.

Do teachers have enough space to work with their group of students?

Graph 14

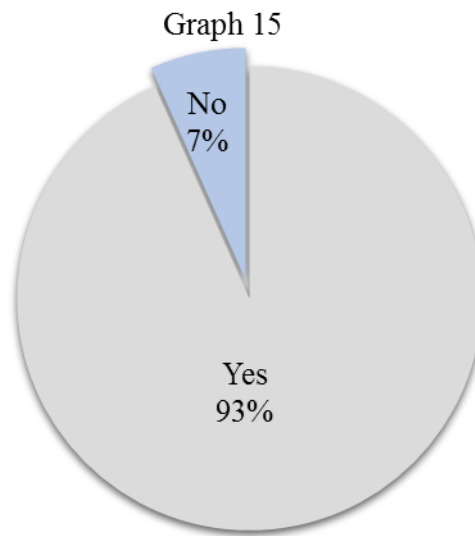


Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

All teachers (100%) said they had enough space in their classroom to work with the group of students they were teaching, even though most of the students agreed with this, two of them disagreed.

In spite of their statements, the class observation showed that in one institution the classrooms were not big enough to host all the students. The seating arrangement made the interaction with the teacher and other classmates difficult and moving the seats in order to make groups was almost impossible due to the physical size of the classroom.

Do teachers arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding this concern fourteen teachers, which represent 93%, claimed that they arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned, only one teacher (7%) was discontent regarding the lack of space in her classroom, and she considered she could do different types of exercises if there were more space to arrange the seats in different ways.

This particular truth affects the development of a class but it was something out of her hands and she tried to take advantage of the situation by doing exercises where one student could help another.

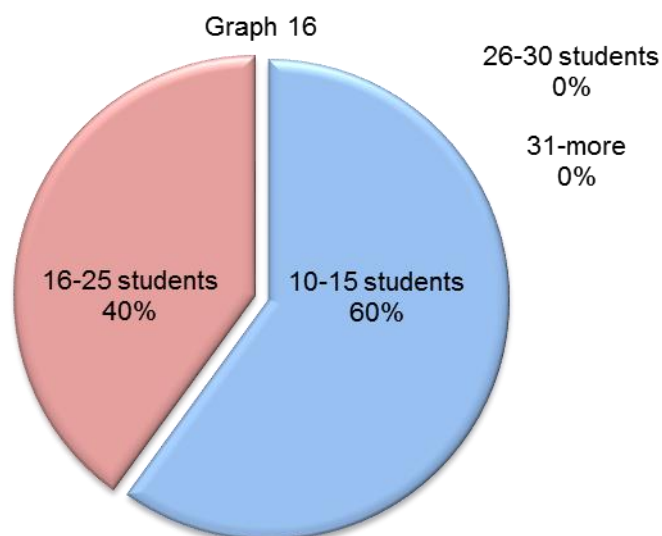
As Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) have mentioned: “the way you organize the positions of the students in your class is of great importance” and it also has to be considered the cultural part especially in multicultural environments. Even though this is something well known by the teachers, and even they said they arranged seats in relation to the activities planned, throughout all the observations, no teacher

changed the seating arrangement during the classes observed, and kept the typical position, that is the teacher in front of the class and students facing the teacher.

This seating arrangement in all cases is something that has been noticed in previous investigations. Lima (2011) discovered that teachers are always placed at the front of the class, while students are arranged in rows giving the front to the board. However, in one school the classrooms, although they were somehow typical, had the amphitheater arrangement, that is seats were rising gradually all facing to the front. This form gave students a better view towards the board, and teachers toward students. It must be remarked that although they used tables for two students, they could be easily moved around the classroom in order to have different configurations according to the class needs.

In three of the schools visited it was observed that there was enough space to move the seats in different arrangements according to the class's needs, but in one particularly there was space restriction.

How many students do teachers consider is appropriate to teach English?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

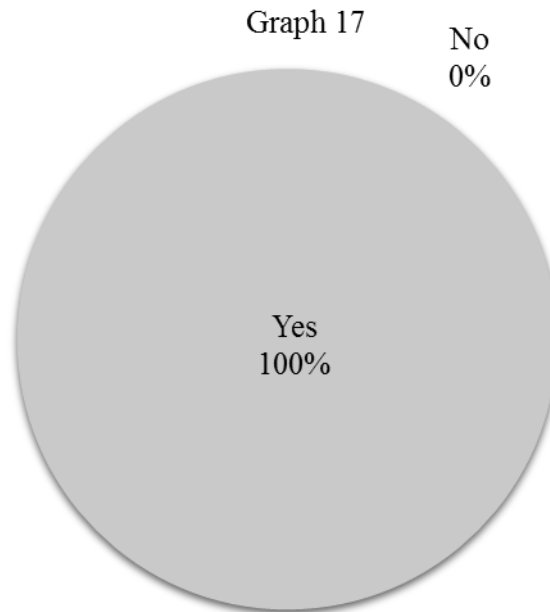
The chart shows that nine teachers in high schools (60%) feel more comfortable working with small groups – up to 15 students. While six teachers (40%) considered a medium size class – up to 25 students – as appropriate. None of them considered appropriate to work with more than this number since they believe the result will not be the same since students will not learn well and they feel the quality of their job will be affected

Due to the fact that some of them were teaching classes with more than 25 students, when they were asked how they felt regarding this, they commented that this was what they had received and there was no problem working with big classes, but they believed that with smaller numbers they could reach all the students and the exercises practiced in class could be monitored more effectively.

As a result it can be seen that teachers are well aware of the work they are performing and the overcome pursued, but circumstances out of their hands make them face a different reality.

In relation to the number of the students, Woodward (2009, p. 219) advises that “contrary to what teachers of smaller groups sometimes think, teachers of large classes need to use pair and group work a lot in order to give students natural oral target language practice and use.” This will surely make the teacher prepare the class well in advance, because not doing it could cause them a lot of trouble.

Do teachers use teaching resources?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Although all teachers (100%) stated that they use teaching resources, only in one school it could be observed the use of technological teaching resources such as TV, DVD, Overhead projector, and computers with internet access inside each one of the classrooms. Teachers in the other schools tend to find other sources such as tape recorders and cd players, to accomplish their goal. Four teachers used handouts in order to add different kind of exercises and check the students understanding of the topics.

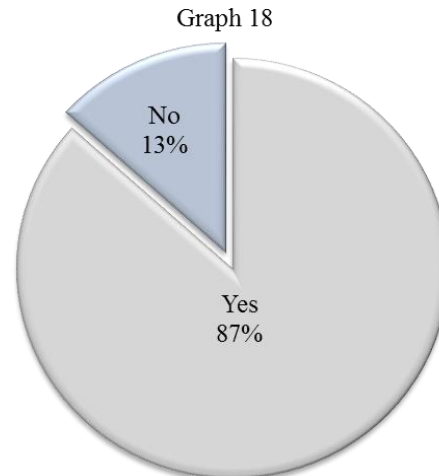
On this regard, when reviewing the students' questionnaire, 12 out of 15 stated that technological resources were used in class. It could not be established if those in disagreement referred to that class in particular or to all of the classes with that teacher.

The most common resource used was the board; even though the whiteboard was seen in the 15 schools observed, in one of them a green chalkboard was still in use. As a matter of fact, the board was divided in two, one part was green and it

was used with chalk, and the other one was white and used with erasable markers. In general, it was observed a good usage of the board space, they had a corner with advice and announcements, and in one part they wrote the instructions and on the other part the students developed the exercises.

Chand, Nkossa, & Phiri, (2005) listed a number of Teaching Learning Material or TLM, among them there were books, boards, and technological devices. In all the observed classes the students had books and they used them extensively with exercises; but despite these recommendations, for other teachers only the board, books and CD players were all they needed, disregarding the use of technological devices as mentioned by the authors. Surprisingly, one of these teachers was a very young one.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

When teachers were asked regarding other teaching resources such as TVs, tape recorders, DVDs, etc. they (87%) said that there are classrooms with TVs and DVDs, and they have to sign-in in order to use them. They also claimed that they use the tape recorder when needed and they did not need it in the class being observed.

Due to this situation, 13% of the teachers interviewed considered that they should have more resources at hand, in the classroom. Resources like computers and internet were considered to be critical by them in order to be more updated and face nowadays tendencies.

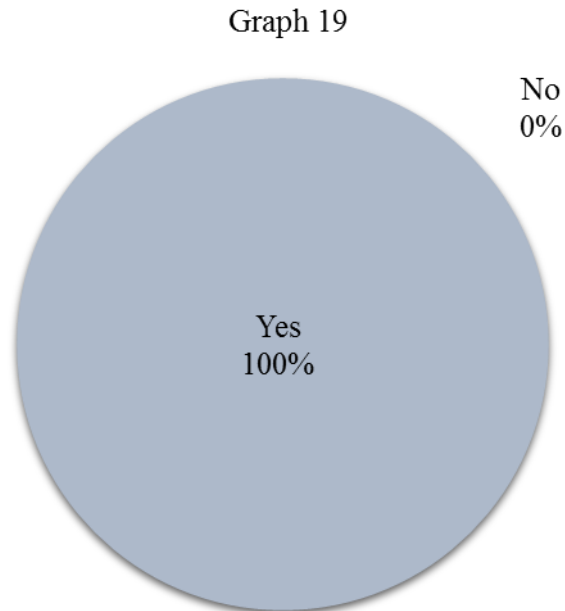
After observing all the classes, it was noticed that some schools do not invest in their infrastructure, and although they claim to have very good results with what they have, it is clear that they can improve their results.

It is also comprehensible that adding computers and overhead-projectors means to improve the environmental conditions in the classrooms, which means investment, and it was observed that in two schools the classrooms did not have windows that could be closed, it was just an open frame so there was a lot of noise coming from the outside, and just one school had air conditioning implemented for the classroom which is needed to extend the life of the overhead-projector.

Gower, Phillips, & Walters, (2005, p. 65) state that “it is unusual to find classrooms without a board of some kind, whether it is white, black or green. It is essential, then, to organize its use in order to obtain the maximum effect.” Most schools have attached their teaching methodologies to this approach and forgotten the new tendencies and how well all these new tools can be used in order to reach and engage both, teachers and students, in the teaching-learning process.

Factors Concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review your lesson plans?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In the previous graph, 100% of the teachers, from fifteen of the sample, claimed that the institutions where they work review the teacher's lesson plans. Most of the reviews are said to be made once a week, meaning that there is a general interest and control shown by the institutions with the aim of knowing how well prepared and organized the teachers are at the moment of planning their classes.

Some teachers said that the school reviews lesson plans once a month, in which case there should be a more constant control in their teacher's organization when giving classes.

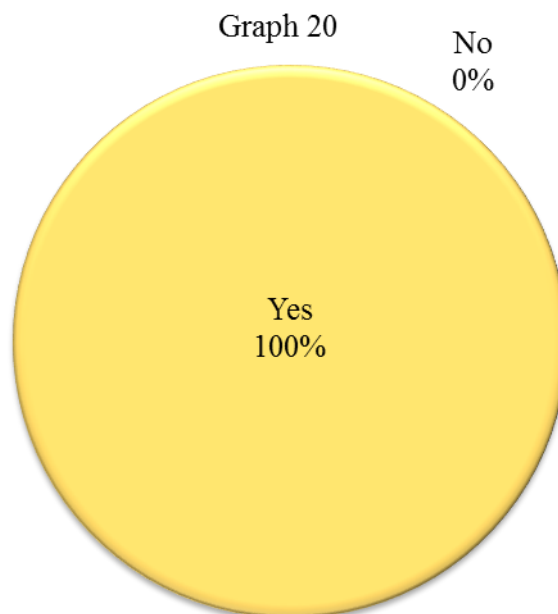
Other teachers mentioned that schools review their teacher's plans twice or three times a year, meaning that there's definitely very little or no control or interest on behalf of the institution in knowing how their teachers carry out their class processes.

Planning their class is vital for the teachers because it will help them to be

ready for any unexpected situation that might happen in class. In fact, there should be several alternatives of class plans in case something prevents the teacher to use the tools (sometimes technological) already chosen for the class, and in one way or another to be able to reach the desired objective.

It must be quoted that no plan was shown during the class observation; therefore the validity of the information relied on the teachers' claims.

Does the institution monitor your teaching?



Authors: Xavier Alfredo Diaz Martinez, Enrique Teodoro González Maldonado
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The previous graph shows that according to the 15 teachers observed (100%) in the 5 schools visited their classes are constantly monitored. Most of the teachers claim that the reviews are made once a month, meaning that there is a regular interest and control shown by the institutions with the aim of knowing how well prepared and organized are the teachers when giving their classes, and also as a way to know which methods, techniques or strategies are chosen by teachers to reach the desired goals.

Some of the teachers claimed that they are monitored once a week, in which

case there is a normal control in their teacher's preparation when giving classes.

Finally, a small group of teachers said that their schools monitor them twice or three times a year, meaning that there's very little control or interest on behalf of the institution in knowing how their teachers carry out their class processes.

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) state that "class observation has become part of a regular procedure in educational institutions, being observed by a supervisor or by a teacher in trainee is common. The supervisor normally will sit separately from the rest and most of the time will not take part in the class process, but sure will write what is going on within the classroom."

The important thing is that, throughout observations, teachers should become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and that through the corresponding feedback; they have a chance to correct their lacks and improve professionally to be better trainers.

Conclusions

- The lack of technology in the classroom prevents teachers from achieving the best results. These tools are an essential complement to make the teaching learning process more engaging and meaningful for the students.
- The number of students per classroom is not a factor that influences on the teaching-learning process, most of the teachers (60%) said the number is suitable to undertake the desired results.
- The majority of teachers did not hold a Bachelor's degree in English. This is a factor that actually does not influence the teaching-learning process.
- Teaching methods were properly applied in favor of the class development even though teachers did not have a complete knowledge of them.
- The constant class monitoring from the English coordination departments guarantees the quality of education in the schools.
- The students level of knowledge is taken into consideration when teachers plan lessons and activities, which makes the English classes more productive.

Recommendations

- In order to reach success in the teaching learning process, it is necessary to use a variety of resources.
- It is suggested to keep the number of students in thirty or below; according to the results, teachers feel comfortable managing this number of students, because this number of students helps them to achieve the goals set.
- Teachers should have university degrees in teaching, so that their classes accomplish acceptable teaching standards.
- It is recommended that teachers take continuous training to improve their English proficiency and get a high level of knowledge of the language.

Institutional monitoring should be constantly carried out. It is one important element to improve the teaching-learning process.

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ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

OBSERVATION SHEET

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR (desde 8vo básica a 3ro bachillerato):	

1. Does the teacher consider Students' needs to teach English?

***Students' Needs** (*age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles*)

YES	(NO	()
)				

* It can be recognized based on the variety of activities (visual, audio, audiovisual, realia, and on-line) applied, and students' reaction to them.

2. Which is the level of the students? (Check 1)

*Students' Level				
Basic	(Intermediate	(High Intermediate
)				
		()		()
				Advanced
				()

* It can be recognized based on the material they are using or placement done by the institution.

3. Which of the following methods are used?

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()
Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()

Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others _____	()

4. Which of the following activities are used?

Whole-group activities	()
Individual activities	()
Group work activities	()

5. Which of the following aspects of the lesson plan were applied in the class?

Time	()
Lesson topic	()
Objectives	()
Warm-up activities	()
Introduction of the new topic	()
Guided or individual practice	()
Review/Assessment/Feedback	()
Materials and resources	()

6. Which of the following aspects have been considered by the teacher?

Discipline	()
Feedback	()
Activities management	()
Time management	()

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

10 - 15	16 - 25	26 - 30	31 - more
()	()	()	()

8. Do students have enough space to move and participate in dynamic activities?

YES	()	NO	()
-----	-----	----	-----

9. Is the seating arrangement appropriate for the teaching-learning process?

YES	()	NO	()
-----	-----	----	-----

NOTES:

10. Which of the following resources are there in the classroom to facilitate teaching?

TV	()
Tape/Cd recorder	()
Computer(s)	()
Projector(s)	()
Smartboard	()
Supplementary materials	()
Others	()

11. In which percentage does the teacher use English in class?

25 % ()	50 % ()	75 % ()	100 % ()
-------------	-------------	-------------	--------------

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

A1	Where are you from? Where do you live?
A2	Where did you learn English? How long have you studied English? Which subject was the most difficult during your major?
B1	How long have you been teaching English? Which skill is easier for you to teach? Would you like to continue studying? Why?
B2	What are the advantages or disadvantages of teaching English in a “non-English speaking country”? What are the main problems a teacher faces when teaching English in Ecuador?
C1	What social benefits are derived from learning English? What is the most important reward of teaching English as a profession?
C2	What are the benefits that come from teachers staying more time in the educational institutions? What is the difference between teaching English as foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL)?

TEACHER'S LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY:					
C2	C1	B2	B1	A2	A1
()	()	()	()	()	()



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

2. ¿Las actividades (juegos, trabajos en grupo y trabajos individuales) que se realizan en clase te motivan a aprender Inglés?

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

3. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

Muy fáciles ()	Fáciles ()	Difíciles ()	Muy difíciles ()
-----------------	-------------	---------------	-------------------

4. ¿Te gusta la forma de enseñanza del idioma Inglés que usa tu profesor?

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

5. ¿Tu profesor realiza actividades variadas que te permiten interactuar con tus compañeros de clase?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

6. ¿Tu profesor utiliza Inglés la mayor parte del tiempo en la clase?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

7. ¿Tu profesor controla la disciplina en la clase?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

8. ¿Tu profesor les asigna un tiempo determinado para el desarrollo de cada actividad?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

9. ¿Luego de cada actividad realizada, tu profesor te explica en qué fallaste y en qué debes mejorar?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

10. ¿Las instrucciones que da el profesor para realizar las actividades en clase y extra clase son claras?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

11. ¿Consideras que el tamaño del salón de clase te permite trabajar de una manera cómoda?

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

12. ¿Consideras que el número de estudiantes te favorece para aprender de mejor manera el Inglés?

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

13. ¿Te gusta la forma en la que el profesor adecúa los pupitres para trabajar en los diferentes tipos de actividades?

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

14. ¿Se utilizan en clase recursos tales como televisión, grabadora, computadora, pizarras inteligentes, etc.?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

GRACIAS!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
CARRERA DE INGLES
TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

High school diploma ()	English Bachelor's Degree ()	English Master's degree ()
Others: _____		

2. Do you consider Students' needs to teach English successfully?

Students' Needs (<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____ _____ _____ _____	

3. Do you consider Students' level to teach English successfully?

Students' Level (<i>Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____ _____	

4. Which is the level of your students?

*Students' Level			
Basic ()	Intermediate ()	High Intermediate ()	Advanced ()

5. Which of the following methods was used in this class? (check only 1)

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()

Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()
Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others _____	()

6. Do you use whole- group activities to teach your lessons?

YES	()	NO	()
Why? _____			

7. Do you use individual activities to teach your lessons?

YES	()	NO	()
Why? _____			

8. Do you use group work activities to teach your lessons?

YES	()	NO	()
Why? _____			

9. Do you use English most of the time in your classes?

YES	()	NO	()
-----	-----	----	-----

10. Do you plan your lessons?

YES	()	NO	()
Why? _____			

11. Do you consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach your lessons?

YES	()	NO	()
Why? _____			

12. How many students do you have in this class?

10 - 15	16 - 25	26 - 30	31 - more
()	()	()	()

13. Do you feel comfortable working with this number of students?

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

14. Do you have enough space to work with this group of students?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

15. Do you arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for your classes?

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

16. How many students do you think is the appropriate number to teach English?
(check only 1)

10 - 15 ()	16 - 25 ()	26 - 30 ()	31 - more ()
Why? - _____			

17. Do you use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer(s), Projector(s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?

YES ()	NO ()
Which ones? _____	

18. Do you consider appropriate the resources you have in class?

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

19. Does the institution review your lesson plans?

YES ()	NO ()
If yes, how frequently?	
Once a week	Once a month
Other _____	

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other_____

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!