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Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian
public high schools

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Autor:
Granda Miranda, Jhon Edison

Mención:
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Directora:
Camacho Minuche Gina Karina, M.S.Ed.

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Gina Camacho Minuche

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Jhon Edison Granda Miranda

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my lovely daughter Pamela, my son John Junior, and my boy Jose Antonio. Through this paper, I want to give testimony of my love to them.

Also my dedication to Mary, the most charming and beautiful blessing of my life, she is my support, and the reason of my daily effort.

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I would like to thank God for the life, for everything I have and for the person I am, for keeping me healthy and for having helped me to reach my goals and make my dreams come true.

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Abstract

This research is about the factors that affect the English Language teaching – learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools. The aim is to analyze the relevant factors concerning students, teachers, classroom, and educational institutions that affect the teaching process; which are conducted by the teachers in the public schools. Four methods were involved: class observations, teachers' interviews, teachers' questionnaires, and students' questionnaire. The current research was completed in Riobamba, Chimborazo province. It took place in six schools; this research surveyed and analyzed fifteen teachers' classes with their respective interviews and questionnaires; besides this, one student per class to fill the questionnaire as well.

Quantitative analysis was applied in this research; the main sources of data collection were the interviews, the questionnaires, and the class observations, some others sources were also applied.

The results of the observation and from the interpretation of questionnaires and interviews drew the conclusion that the classroom design and the number of students' main difficulties during the teaching - learning process. Also, the public high schools teachers spoke Spanish more than English during their lessons.

Introduction

English is a language that among other significant purposes sets itself up as essential means of universal communication for the development of science, business, and technology.

The view of language teaching has been changing; as a consequence, English teachers need to continue improving their English level knowledge in order to face different factors that interact and affect the English language teaching-learning process.

New methods and approaches have been created in response to the learners' needs. That is why it is necessary for English teachers to make conscious decisions about the methods they use. These kinds of approaches might depend on types of activities they do. It also depends on their decision to use them.

The factors that affect English language teaching and learning process are an important issue, particularly in Ecuadorian public high schools; therefore through this research the teaching-learning process could be improved.

This research includes some specific objectives that are to determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place, to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers; finally, to determine teachers' instructional competence.

Teaching-learning resources play an important role in the teaching-learning process in all levels of learning in a public school. There are resources specially designed to allow learners to study by themselves, and some resources prepared to support teachers in the teaching process.

This study includes some previous researches about this topic which involves the one of Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu (2006) who worked out in three important questions regarding the teaching English: Do secondary school teachers use instructional resources frequently in teaching English language?, Do the English Language teachers use appropriate methods in teaching English Language frequently? Finally, the last purpose was: Do secondary school students in Nigeria learn English language in environment favorable to learning?

The limitations of this research were the bad situation in most of the schools in the six geographical zones in the country, due to poor background and preparation in language education.

Another study done by Khamkhien (2010) consisted of determining 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 difficulties that this research faced were: a limitation in using the SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) to elicit language learning strategies, which should be supplemented with other research tools and techniques such as think-aloud protocols concurrent with conducting interviews, written diaries, and other methods which might provide and support the current use of strategies and more sample-specific data.

The study made by Tsai (2008) was based on the observing classroom practice observation and the purpose of this study was: First, it attempted to conceptualize through classroom observations the activity structure and instruction patterns of an EFL class in a junior high school in Taiwan to identify the existing problems.

Second, it tried to seek out feasible interventions to improve the class and to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions taken in different research questions.

According to the investigator, the limitations of the present study are still in discussion.

The main beneficiary of this research will be the students of English. This investigation will help to draw attention for improvements in the teaching-learning process in public high schools in Ecuador. It invites teachers to improve their methodologies, help students with their needs, and improves their teaching.

This research had only one limitation. There was no way to verify if the institution has monitored the teachers' performance during class or if the institution reviewed their lesson plans for each of the classes.

As a result of this research the teaching-learning environment in public schools in Ecuador should be given special attention by the government so that the educational level shows good results.

The English education in Ecuador is improving; however, to increase the quality of teaching, it is necessary to make advances in the mentioned factors that affect the progress of the English teaching-learning process.

Method

Setting and Participants

This investigation took place in six public high schools in Riobamba City. Fifteen teachers participated in this research; some of them had high school diplomas, other teachers had English bachelor degrees, and a few teachers had English master degrees or other degrees.

Procedure

This research project includes some information regarding literature review of topics related to factors affecting the English language teaching-learning process, and five previous studies related to the theme too.

Next, a deep field research of the theme, which contributed to the completion of literature review, was done. The quantitative method was used to collect information. The information obtained was organized in graphics and those graphics were organized by variables.

For this study, fifteen English classes were observed in a public high school, the students who participate were students from 8th, 9th, and 10th of basic general education, and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd from secondary education, with an average number of 25-31 students per class.

An observation sheet to take notes of the interaction between teachers and students during classes was used, this information was applied to interpret the results. As soon as the classes ended, teachers and students were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Also, teachers were interviewed with the purpose to get important information about their experience, education level, and finally, the way they felt as teachers.

In the student's questionnaire the questions were related to the way they were instructed by their teachers. The teacher's questionnaire was associated with the way the teachers educated their students.

The information was collected and organized according to the different variables, then, the results were presented in graphics. The variables include information about the factors concerning students, teachers, classroom, and finally, factors concerning the educational institution.

The graphics include the description, quantitative analyses, and interpretation of results which were useful to draw the conclusions.

DISCUSSION

This section is the most interesting part of this research. It has been divided and comprises three parts:

The first part is Literature Review, which covers the most significant and important topics related to this study, the second part is the description, analysis and interpretation of results based on the research applying a quantitative analysis. Finally, the last part includes conclusions from the results and recommendations in order to improve the educational level.

Literature Review

English is a universal communicative language. It has played a central role in globalization, and has become the language that enables communication and interchange of information in all of the areas.

The fast growing tourism industry and the government politics related to tourism have contributed to a greater importance of the English language teaching in Ecuador. In addition, students can always increase and develop their language skills to become competent in different fields.

The government plan of education includes ideas to improve the way English is taught in our country, helping students to enroll in university with more English language knowledge and be qualified to apply for investigation programs offered at national and international level. However, there are several factors that affect the process of teaching English as a second language which needs to be carefully attended to obtain good results.

Focused on how learning and teaching are developed in our education system, we present the most common teaching approaches, methods, and techniques to be used in the teaching process.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

Different researches in history have created and facilitated the best ways to teach English. It is important to integrate diverse approaches and methods providing the teachers new directions to develop students' needs, making classes interactive and dynamic lessons.

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) new philosophy called "The Natural Approach", supports the idea of learning English in a traditional way, this happens when a child inherits a language from his mother for example.

Natural Approach was created by Krashen & Terrel (1977), they both identified and call it "traditional approaches of language teaching".

Cooperative Language Learning is a successful teaching approach in which small groups use cooperative activities to improve their understanding about the subject. Each group is responsible not only for learning but also for helping others to learn.

Talking about Content-based Instruction, Richards & Rodgers (2001) mention that "Teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus. This approach is significant in language education because it considers the use of the substance or subject matter as a vehicle to learn second language, rather than the language used to convey it. Also, the students will learn the language successfully using the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than as an end in itself.

Communicative Approach is supported on the theory of language from the communicative point of view mostly used in introductory conversation. When we communicate we do it through the language to give information. Harmer (2007) states that communicative language teaching has two main guiding principles: first, “language is not just patterns of grammar with vocabulary items slotted in”, and second, “students get enough exposure to language, and opportunities for language use and if they are motivated, then language learning will take care of itself” (p.50).

Harmer (2007) mentions, “Task-Based Learning is a natural extension of communicative language teaching”. So task based is an approach which involves students to connect in interaction in order to perform a task to get results.

According to Torres (2008) the Grammar Translation Method “was the dominant foreign language teaching method around the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries”. The aim of this method was to prepare students to read literature written in the foreign language and to write it correctly, also the main point was to memorize verbs, grammar, and vocabulary.

Torres (2008) states that “child develops listening competence before they develop the ability to speak” It is clear that this method is based on orders: Students learn the language by listening and responding physically to invitations for movement like play the guitar or let’s run as examples. The teachings physically respond method concerns this.

Teaching Techniques

All the tasks and activities that follow an order and are used in the teaching-learning-process are considered to be a teaching technique.

With technology of these days, looking through books, magazines, and the use of the Internet, we can find many techniques about how to teach English. All this information can be valuable for teachers who are responsible to choose and apply it in class, taking into consideration students' needs, students' interests, and level of knowledge.

In relation to this topic, Finocchiaro (1974) suggests that, the teacher should first meet his students. Then, teachers have to discover in some way students' needs and interest for learning English. Finally, they have to find some interesting topics for discussion; to be able to explain why and what they are doing. Teachers should offer different materials, a variety of topics, and teaching techniques to the students.

Teachers can be aware of students' progress through different techniques, according to Brown (2001). Through his book "Teaching by Principles", he describes three types of teaching techniques. Those are: controlled, semi-controlled, and free techniques.

First, in the controlled technique, the teacher in the center as organizer, manipulate, consolidate, pre planning objectives, and setting curriculum. Second, semi-control techniques include brainstorming, storytelling, questions-answers, referential, information transfer, etc. Finally, as free techniques where the students are the center of teaching, giving unpredicted responses, or role-play, games, drama, interview, etc.

Managing Learning

The responsibility of educating the students is on the teacher's shoulders: how to give instruction to do class activities, to offer feedback on performance, and to control the time during each activity in classes.

Gower, Philips, & Walters, (1995) mentioned “giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher”. It is important to bring up the positive points on the utilization of feedback, taking into consideration that this activity depends on different factors including the way how students respond to different types of feedback, the culture where it is being taught, and the way activities are done.

Teachers as managers promote and organize the interaction into the classroom as Dunkin & Biddle (1974) point out “...it seems to us that adequate management of the classroom environment forms a necessary condition for cognitive learning; and if the teacher cannot solve problems in this sphere, we can give the rest of teaching away.”(P.128)

The concept of classroom management has shifted to words “establishing an atmosphere for learning” (Everstone and Emmer, 1982). A correct classroom management provides a good environment for teaching, but a poor classroom management marks on the learning process.

In conclusion, Yi (2012) says “In a traditional EFL class, the teacher tends to achieve a control over the whole class by strict discipline so that he can convey his instructions and the students can copy them down”.

Therefore, teaching English as a second language needs to be over strict control. Depending on the kind of relationship between teacher and student we could expect more success in the teaching-learning process.

Lesson Design

Lesson design is the basis for effective teaching, it is a flexible guide, and it is considered a map that helps teachers along the teaching process.

As stated by Harmer (2007), the ability to produce a lesson plan is part of teacher assessment. It has become an essential part of teaching English. Finally, most of the authors Scrivener (1988), Harmer (2007), and Gower, Philips, & Walters (1995) maintain and suggest some considerations above general ideas before planning a class.

The authors above mentioned agree to include the following elements when planning a lesson: the reaction of learners, the aims and objectives, the goal of the courses, the teaching points and the procedures, approaches and activities, materials, aids and equipment, and class management.

Harmer (2007) mentions that not all the teachers present a lesson plan directly; they assume responsibilities on their experience considering unnecessary planning, while other teachers follow an order for preparing a lesson.

Class Size

The term classroom size does not refer to the physical size of the classroom. It refers to the amount of students in the class.

Harmer (2007) states “English language classes vary greatly in size”. Class size is an important factor in the process of teaching English. Some schools have too many students in their classes, and their amount of students determines the class size. There are three different types of class sizes, first type is one to one, next type is a medium class, and the last type is a large class.

Teachers have to adequate and use techniques according to the number of students, a smaller class size will be better for students to learn.

In this value, Warner & Meyers (2002) indicates. “The ideal language classes should have no more than 25 students”. It should be large enough to provide variety

on students' interaction, and should be small enough in order to give students plenty opportunity to practice and to get individual attention.

Reason enough for Lewit & Bakers (1997) to consider: "Having fewer children in a class is attractive to both parents and teachers". Moreover, students prefer small class size, because they feel comfortable. Parents should support their needs and be involved in the educational reform in order to obtain better results.

Classroom Space

Classroom space is another important factor that affects the education system. This aspect has been reflected especially in public schools because there are standard constructions, same classroom designs, and their implements are part of the poor government programs.

Lack of communication between authorities, parents, teachers, and students affects the design and the building of classrooms according to teachers' and students' requirements. People who had designed the furniture, the classroom space, and the materials have not consulted teachers or students about their preferences. For example: chairs are the same for boys and girls. There is no difference for children, adolescents, or adults.

To argue this affecting factor, Clayton & Forton (2011) state "the sad fact is that most classroom spaces are far from ideal". This means, "This room was not made for you". That is to say, that a classroom needs to be a comfortable place to learn. Students will respond better if they feel motivated and learn in a nice environment, having enough space to move around, for doing different activities.

On the other hand, Sullemberg (2011) suggests some ways of classroom set up: starting with defining a whole group area, creating small group areas, deciding

the teacher's space, establishing classroom walking, and finally visualizing purposeful and relevant wall space.

Seating Arrangement

Talking about seating arrangement Gower, Philips, & Walters (1995) present "The isolation students can usually get in a language laboratory is a clear example of how useful this can be".

According to the exposed above it is necessary to move desks around the classroom, creating enough space and comfortable environment for the teacher and their students, generating a happy place to work in.

Indeed the seating arrangement depends on the activities or topics that the teacher has to do during a class; it also depends on the student's background as well.

Scrivener (1988) points out that "Changing seating arrangements can help students interact with different people". That is, change students' place avoids the boredom by seating them in the same place all the time; teacher has the opportunity to allocate the appropriate seating and grouping arrangement.

Finally, Harmer (2007) says that "having the students sit in rows can appear somewhat restrictive", at the same time, he points some advantages over this arrangement. One of the most important advantages is that, students can easily see the teacher and the teacher can have absolute control over the students.

Classroom and/or Teaching Resources

Teaching resources make classes more effective and interesting. It also saves time improving methodologies and creating a nice atmosphere too. This can be applied in all levels of teaching process.

Interesting materials increase curiosity and reinforce intrinsic motivation, being these visuals, audio-visuals, cassette recorder, realia, video or audio cassettes, etc.

As mentioned by Gower, Philips, & Walters (1995) “the cassette recorder is one of the language teacher's most useful tools” (p.73). In fact, not only cassette records but also CD that comes along with books and methodology systems.

In the teaching process, all materials are very helpful, but the board is one of the most useful materials of all the visual aids. Besides, this is a primitive tool; most of schools have one in front of the classroom; boards vary from black, green, or white. Nowadays with the new technology, we even have electronic boards.

Considering the function of audio visual resource as another important tool, cited by Avalos (2010), Alien & Cordon (1979) emphasize that there are five important stages in the teaching and learning sequences: the recognition, the repetition, the reproduction, the manipulation and the production.

In reference to the web teaching and learning resource, Cabello (2007) suggests “the type of web resources to be used depending on the kind of activity to be developed”. When we use the Internet we can find articles, texts, books, graphics, images, videos, etc. Any material can be very helpful to do school activities.

Classroom Observation

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2008) considers classroom observation as an important tool used in different purposes. They emphasize that the observation has to be three hours or less depending on the circumstances. Also, observation needs to follow an order.

The observation is a great tool; it helps to improve teaching methodologies. The observation focuses on qualitative or quantitative description observed in the classroom. Finally, it is important to establish a good relation between the observer and the observed subject.

Wajnryb (1992) says that “Being in the classroom as an observer opens up a range of experiences and processes which can become part of the raw material of a teacher’s professional growth”(p.1).

In fact, the observation makes right conditions for students to learn. This involves how teachers rapport with students: calling them by their names, having eye contact, touching, and facial expression. Observation can also be learned and improved with specific techniques by watching what happens; the observer teacher may get more information by watching students than by asking them.

For classroom observation, Kral (1994) suggests different ways to observe: taking notes, making dialogues, doing sketches, using a check list, and one of the most important is using video or audio tapes.

Student’s Motivation

Motivation is another factor that makes differences between learners. To motivate a student, teachers need to take into consideration learners’ background, culture, age range, etc.

Being motivated is exciting; as stated by Harmer (2007) “Motivation is some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action” (p.3). In fact, motivation is to help learners to reach a goal; motivation can be internal or external. Based on this Harmer (2007), and Woolfolk (2004) agree that “A classic distinction in motivation is between intrinsic and extrinsic” (p.351).

The intrinsic motivation has a natural tendency; this motivation does not need incentives. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is opposite; this motivation requires orders and impulses.

In contrast, Wajnryb (1992) states “In trying to understand the motivation that drives language learning, major studies have in the past tended to divide motivation into two broad categories: instrumental and integrative”(p.9) Instrumental motivation has the purpose to learn English. While, integrative motivation means learners want to be part of the purpose.

Motivation is an important tool for both: teachers and students. For teachers, this motivation makes the teaching process easy, and for students it promotes successful learning.

Learning Styles

Every student responds differently during the application of particular learning styles; in fact, people learn differently because of their biological, psychological, educational, and cultural characteristics. It also depends on how they have developed their senses.

So, why teach everyone the same way? The answer to this interrogation is probably because teachers do not consider their students own style. This is why it is important to know well the students. Tafany (2011) mentions the definition of learning styles as “characteristic cognitive and psychological behaviors, which serve as indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment”.

Depending on the stimuli, all learners respond differently: some can react well when they see what they are learning, watching movies, and video tapes. Others react

positively to the noise: listen to music and pronunciation in tapes. Finally, others do well in touching activities because they learn by doing.

Researchers and methodologists agree on the types of learning styles which are more related with our senses and help as in the teaching-learning process. Erickson (2012) states that there are: Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic. Those are the three main popular model of sensory receiver in order to determine the dominant learning style.

As another way to perceive the learners reaction, Harmer (2007) mentions, the multiple intelligences concept articulated by Howard Gardner which reveal “we all have a number of different intelligences”(p.16). That means some students need more attention than others. Teachers at this point need to understand that learners have different styles of learning and it is vital to organize activities according to their preferences.

Student's Intelligence or Aptitude to Learn English

Our level of learning is related to our learning styles. We use our specific learning styles in order to develop our intelligence and aptitudes.

Regarding this, Saville-Troike (2006) say "It is concerned with the extent to which the input which impinges on the learner can become input that is worth processing, as opposed to input which may simply be an auditory blur or alternatively only partially processed"(p.85).

For example, a less experienced learner acquires knowledge under the guidance of an expert. This means that students observe and learn from experts (teachers) model the performance.

Based on that some students learn more than others within similar circumstances it is necessary to consider their intelligence level and their aptitudes. Harmer (2007) expressed that “it was possible to predict a student's future progress on the basis of linguistic aptitude tests” (p.85).

Part of this study, which uses information from previous studies, includes that information which stimulates and incentives to solve problems related to factors that affect the teaching – learning process.

Tsai (2008) did an interesting research based on the belief that observing existing classroom practice could bring fourth insights into improving a language teacher’s instruction. The purpose of the current study was: first, it attempted to conceptualize through classroom observations the activity structure and instruction patterns of an EFL class in a junior high school in Taiwan to identify the existing problems. Second, it tried to seek out feasible interventions to improve the class and evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions take in different research questions.

The methods of data collection in this study included videotaped classroom observations, the classroom observation protocol, the post-study interview with the teacher, and the post-study questionnaire to the students.

As a consequence the observation protocol was partly adapted from the COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) scheme and designed once several times of discussion were held with the teacher. The research objective and procedure were then explained to the students. After this, classroom activities and instruction were videotaped four times according to the protocol.

In short, classroom observations are of great value to language education because classrooms are where actions take place (Nunan, 1989). By observing and

recording the actions, we can have a richer understanding of language learning and teaching and how interaction between the teacher and students as well as among the students themselves goes through a lesson.

Riasati (2007) the present study intended to investigate the language learning preferences of the Iranian EFL students and the extent of teachers' awareness for them. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

What are the learning style preferences of the Iranian EFL learners? To what extent, if any, are teachers aware of their students' learning preferences? How can these students be categorized in terms of learning styles typologies?

The instrument used in this study was a 13-item language learning preference questionnaire adopted from Brindley (1984). It consisted of two versions: version 1 was designed for students and version 2 for teachers. In the students' version, the students were supposed to state how they prefer to learn the language. In the teachers' version, the teachers were asked to express their opinions as to how they feel their students prefer to learn the language.

As a result the required data was collected in one session. The questionnaire was given to students during their class session. Instruction as to how to complete the questionnaire was given in Persian. At the same time and during the same session, the teachers were provided with the questionnaire to complete.

The data obtained through the questionnaire were subjected to Chi-square tests in order to define the significance of the difference between the responses.

In conclusion the students would feel satisfied with their achievement in English, only if they could use the language effectively in real-life situations.

Aduwa- Ogiegbaen & Iyamu (2006) formulated the following questions to do their guide research: The first question was: Do secondary school teachers use instructional resources frequently in teaching English language? The second question was: Do the English Language teachers use appropriate methods in teaching English Language frequently? Finally, and the last one was: Do secondary school students in Nigeria learn English language, in environment conducive to learning?

The main instruments used for this study were a questionnaire and observation schedules. Also, the researchers designed the questionnaire by generating a list of items, which asked for students' responses on teaching strategies, instructional resources/media used by the teachers and the teaching/learning environment. Similarly, the items in the questionnaire were derived from literature and the researchers' experience in the field. Finally, the range of data collection instruments employed increased the researchers' ability to examine the nature and frequency with which certain variables occurred in the research setting.

A conclusion drawn in this research was, first, the public secondary schools in Nigeria are far behind time in offering multiple pathways to the teaching and learning. Besides, if teachers in public secondary schools in Nigeria are to assume new roles and use new technology-supported instructional tools, they should become familiar with a variety of instructional delivery methods, rather than relying on textbooks, chalkboard and lecture method.

Khamkhien (2010) did an interesting research where he determined three factors how gender, motivation, and experience and how they affect the choices of language learning strategies. He compared the roles of these factors and the pattern of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students.

The motivation survey used in this study was adopted from the questionnaires developed by Gardner (1985)

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by Oxford (1990). The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning contains 80 items of learning classified into six categories: memory category, compensation category, cognitive category, meta cognitive category, affective category, and social category. Scores for each item were assigned on a Likert scale, ranking from (1) never or almost never did this to (5) always or almost always do this.

This research draw the following conclusion, gender is not a factor that affects the choices of learning strategies; regarding motivation, the analysis showed a significant effect on the use of language learning strategies due to motivation of the two groups of students in general; the more experienced students obtained significantly higher mean scores for cognitive strategies and for memory strategies than those who had less experience.

Meihua Liu (2007) the research questions in this study were: What are Chinese third-year university students' attitudes towards learning English? What are the English-learning motivation level and types of Chinese third-year university students? Is there any relationship between students' attitudes and motivation types on the one hand, and their achievement in English on the other?

The motivation survey used in this study was adopted from the questionnaires developed by Gardner (1985) and Clement et al. (1994) respectively under the condition that repetition was avoided. To fit the present situation, only items about students' attitudes towards learning English and their learning orientations were

retained; other items such as classroom anxiety were omitted because the students did not take any English courses when they participated in the study.

As a conclusion, the statistical analyses reveal that these third-year students had positive attitudes toward learning English and were highly motivated to learn the language as well; the correlation analysis revealed that the students who had more positive attitudes towards learning English tended to score higher in the proficiency test.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

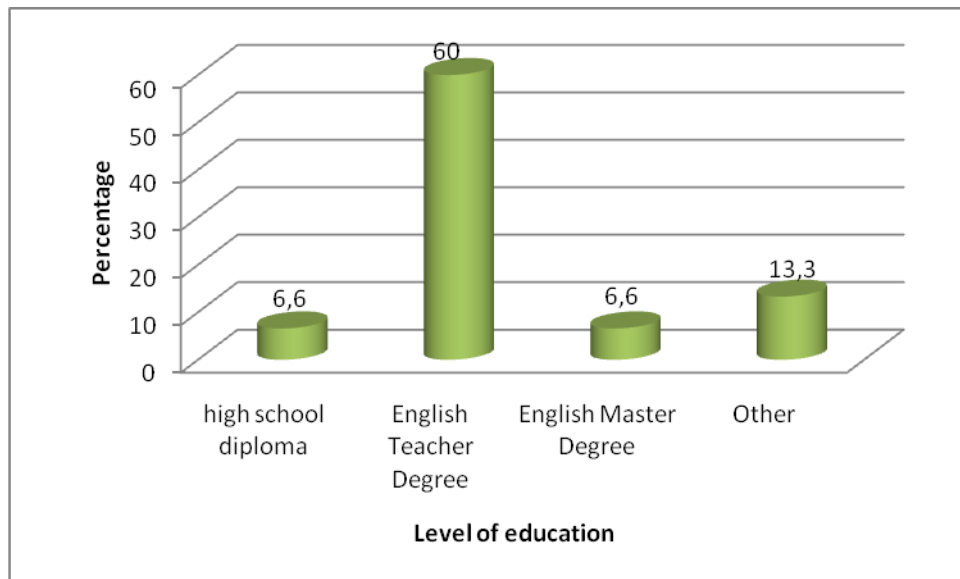
Quantitative analysis

This section will focus on the description, analysis, and interpretation of the results about the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools.

The factors that were considered for the quantitative analysis were: factors concerning teachers' level of education, language proficiency, teaching methods, techniques, percentage of the English language used in class, lesson design, and managing learning. Other factors are the ones concerning students' needs and their English levels. The next set of factors concern the classroom size, classroom space, seating arrangement, and teaching resources. Finally, the factors that concern the educational institutions such as classroom observation and lesson design monitoring using questionnaires for 15 students and 15 teachers, and the observation of 15 classroom. These factors were the argument for the analysis based on observations, interviews, and the investigator own opinion.

Factors concerning teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?



Author: Jhon Granda

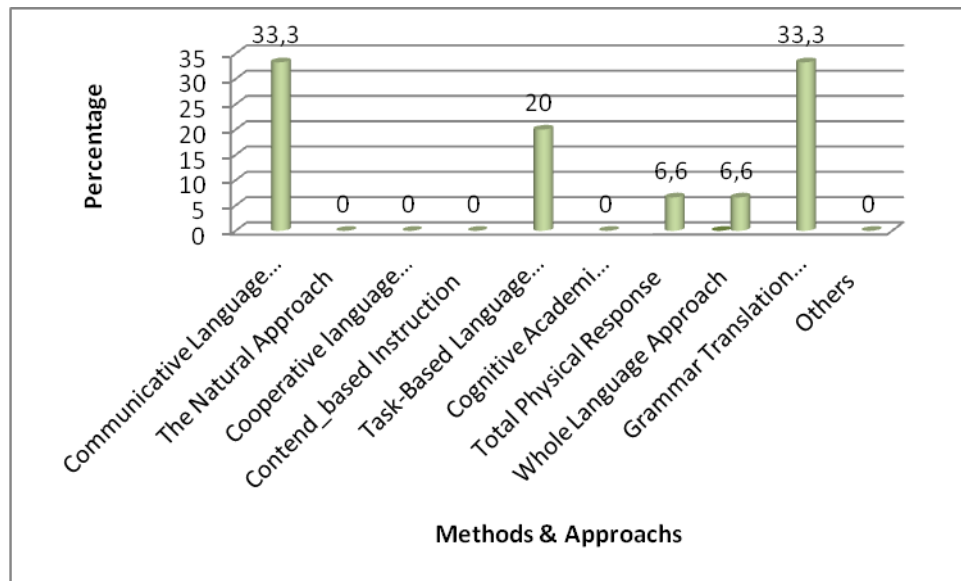
Source: Teachers questionnaire

This graphic represents the teacher's level of education, 60 % of them had an English Teacher Degree, others have improved their academic level since one is Master and the rest are Doctors; they demonstrated their effective preparation for teaching during the activities in the class.

The high level of education that teachers have were observed in the use of the different methodologies considering the students' needs and styles, motivating the students during the class activities. Teachers spoke in English during the whole class which benefitted and helped students to develop their abilities to speak in English.

The answers from the teachers' interviews reveal that teachers agree in continue studying and improving their English. They mentioned that the advantage to teach English will cause social benefits in the education and prepare them for other degrees, creating in this way a better impact in the educational system.

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



Author: Jhon Granda

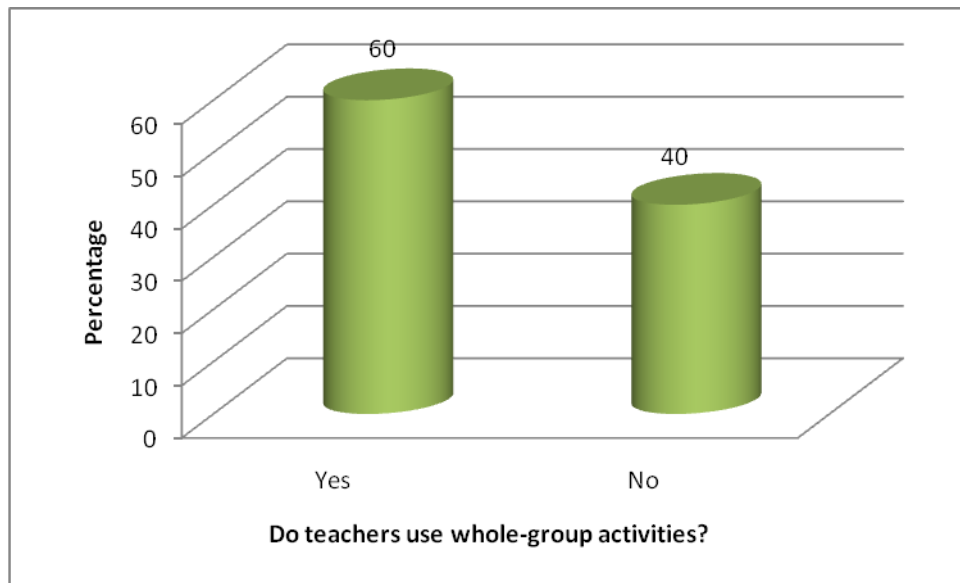
Source: Teachers questionnaire

The graphic above clearly shows that only five methods were used by the observed teachers. This demonstrates that communicative language and grammar translation are the most used methods in the teaching–learning process, with a percentage of 33%. Task-based Language is represented with the 20%. Finally, the lowest methods used were Total Physical Response and Whole Language Approach which only make up 6.6%.

The most successful methods used in this research were revealed through the observed classroom activities focused on learner’s genuine communicative needs; these methods include peer group activities, conversations, and interviews.

In other observed classes, students demonstrated a poor grammar skill, having difficulties doing sentences, spelling wrong the words, failing in compositions. Teacher’s at this point were translating to the students from the target language to their native language.

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



Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

In this graphic 60 % of the teachers did whole group activities like playing games, singing songs, pictograph description, pronunciation, dictation, etc.

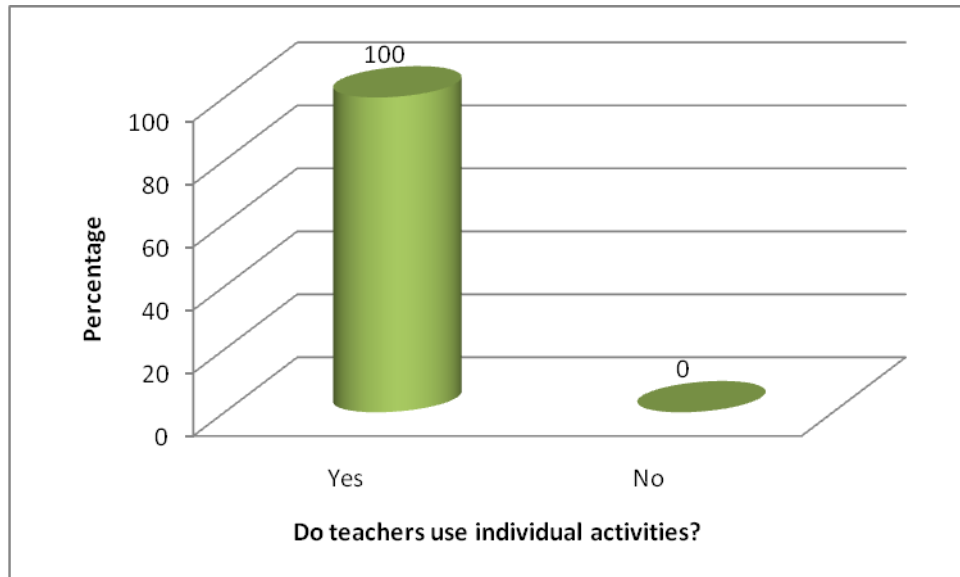
Students and teachers performed well when the whole group was working in their activities, under the teacher's direction. Reinforcing this interpretation Harmer (2007 p.161.) states the following "whole group it is suitable for activities where the teacher is acting as a controller".

Through the classroom observation, it was identified that the students enjoyed doing these kinds of activities. They felt motivated and they found the activities to be quite easy. Also, in the student's questionnaire 90 % of students confirmed the above to be true.

According to the teachers' suggestions some of them think they should do just group activities because students enjoy working in groups. They get more confident

when speaking to their partners, feeling less anxious when speaking in groups, then in front of the whole class.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?



Author: Jhon Granda

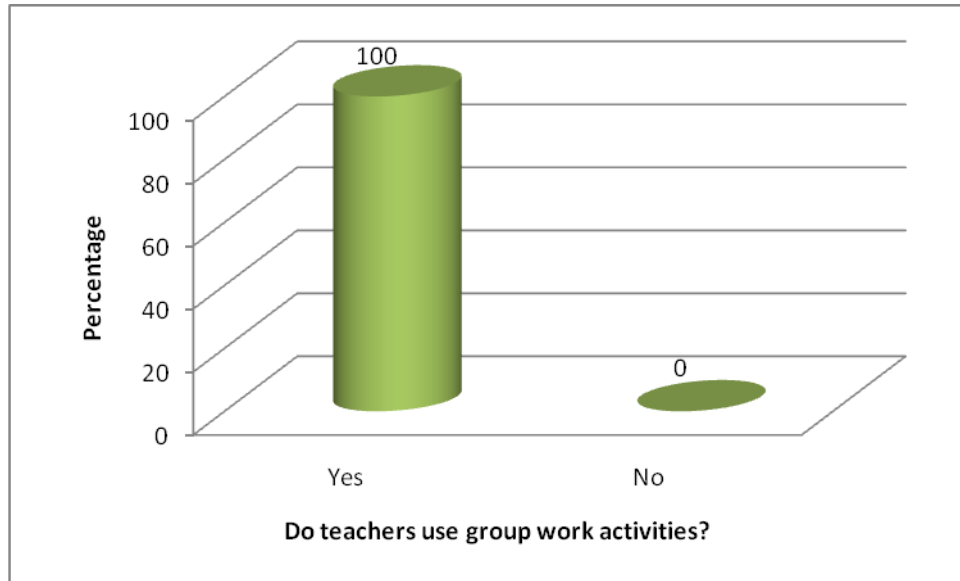
Source: Teachers questionnaire

The graphic above confirms that 100% of teachers interviewed use individual activities in class. They mentioned that individual activities including homework, studying, and making projects are less traumatic for students. There is less pressure to perform them and students have more time to complete such activities. Most of these activities are reading, writing, doing summaries, and answering questions.

It was observed that students worked their activities at their own speed, taking their time, relaxing, and considering their own needs focusing on doing the best they could.

Students' individual activities consist in matching tasks, making notes, writing sentences, drawing, and coloring pictures, etc. The teachers monitored students' work and helped them with some answers.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?



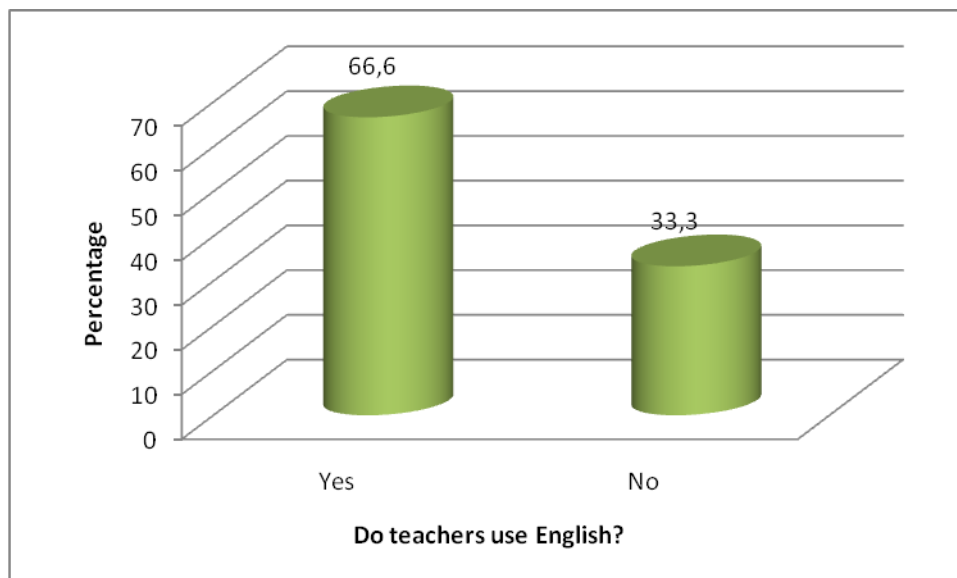
Author: Jhon Granda

Source: Teachers questionnaire

The use of group work activities is shown in the graphic above. It states that 100% of the interviewees used group activities. The interviews, questionnaires, and observations provided the results represented in the graphic.

During the class observation there were large and small groups doing a range of tasks. There were students writing a group story scenario, which involved four people, preparing a presentation in a group discussion. In order to form the groups the teacher took into consideration the students' affinity. By doing this, they made sure the students were happy while working. The problem, of course, is that our observation may not always be accurate, and affinity can change over time.

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



Author: Jhon Granda

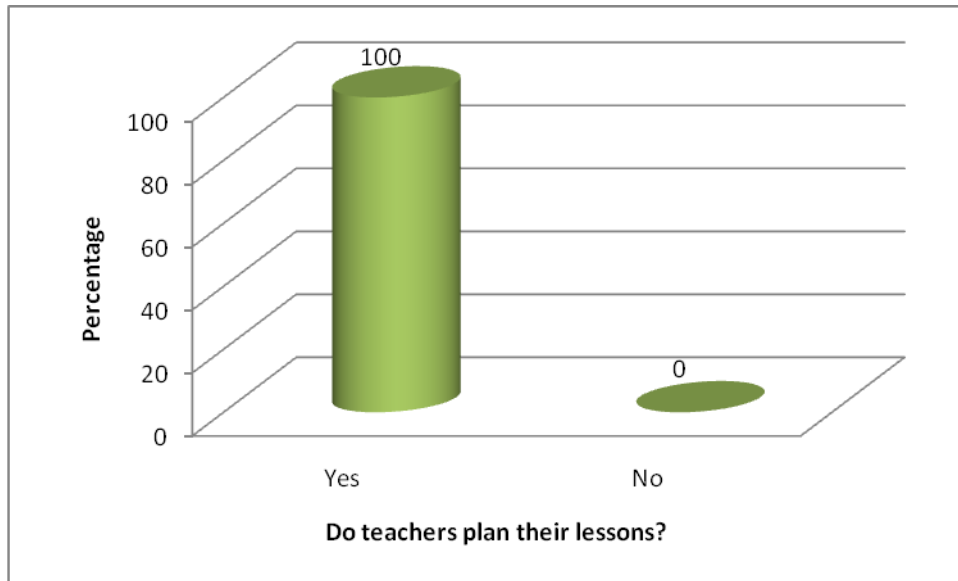
Source: Teachers questionnaire

In this graphic, 10 teachers which represent 66,6% mentioned that they speak English most of the time in class. However, through my observation I noticed that the teachers speak more Spanish than English. Perhaps it was a coincidence because there was only one day of observation. The teachers' answers created an inaccuracy when compared with the students' questionnaire and the results from the observation.

The rest of teachers represented in the percentage of 33% considered that it is vital to speak Spanish do to the limited and poor English knowledge of the majority of students. They also commented about the necessity to combine Spanish and English at the same time in order to get more comprehension from the students.

Results from the class observation agree with the 33% teachers' opinion, ratifying that some students do not speak English, and teachers are forced to speak Spanish in order to make sure students understand the class and the instructions.

Do teachers plan their lessons?

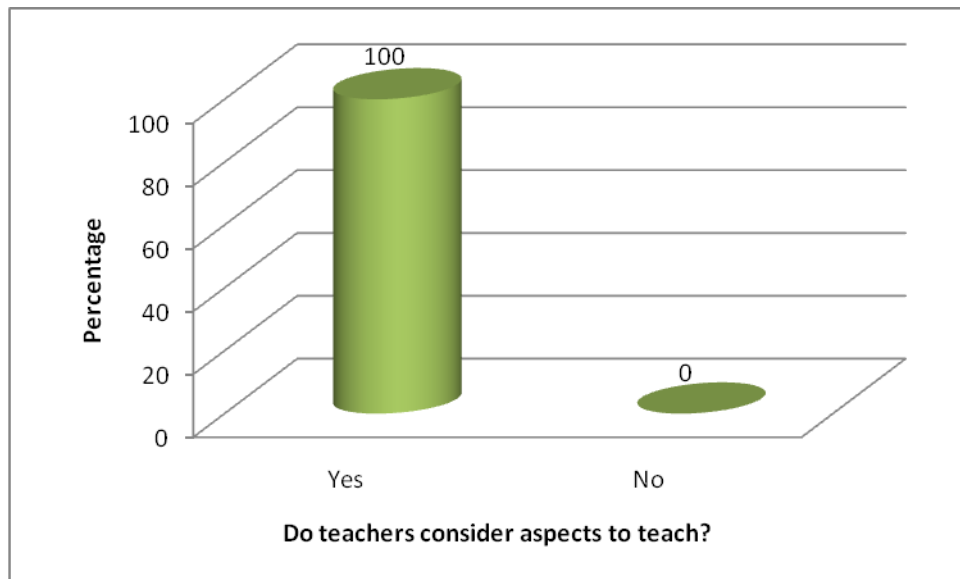


Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

Interpreting this graphic, 100% of teachers stated that they do plan their lessons. Some experienced teachers believe that lesson planning is unnecessary, but in the interviews teachers mentioned that they plan lessons because they have supervisors and they are obligated to do it.

As far as planning lesson refers, teachers with more experience had an easier time planning, while for the new teachers it usually took more time to write complete lesson plan. All the plans follow the similar pattern starting with the description of the students, the objectives, the procedures, and the materials. The difference in the plans depends on teachers' experience, students' needs, the number of the students, as well as the subject, the different types of materials, and the extra activities teachers considered to do.

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



Author: Jhon Granda

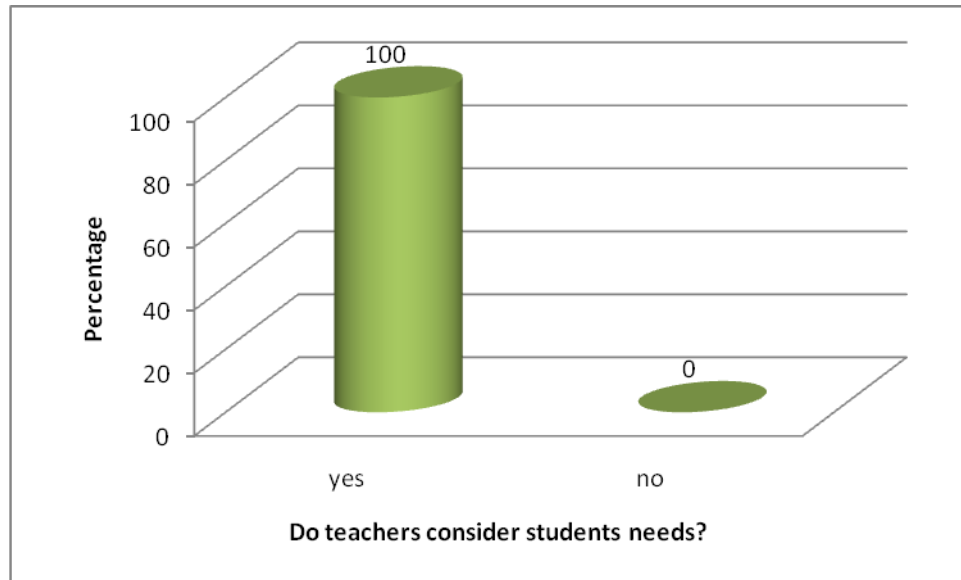
Source: Teachers questionnaire

The graphic relating to the aspects concerning teachers in their lessons shows that 100% of teachers consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction in order to teach English lessons.

Throughout the observation, the main concern of most of the teachers was the discipline. The manner in which the teachers conducted discipline depended on the activities and the number of students. The teachers commented, gave advice, and suggested feedback. The student's questionnaire revealed that students found the discipline to be challenging, but essential. The majority of the students agreed that discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction were vital to the classroom productivity, as well. Also, most of the students confirmed that the teacher did maintain strict control over the class.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?



Author: Jhon Granda

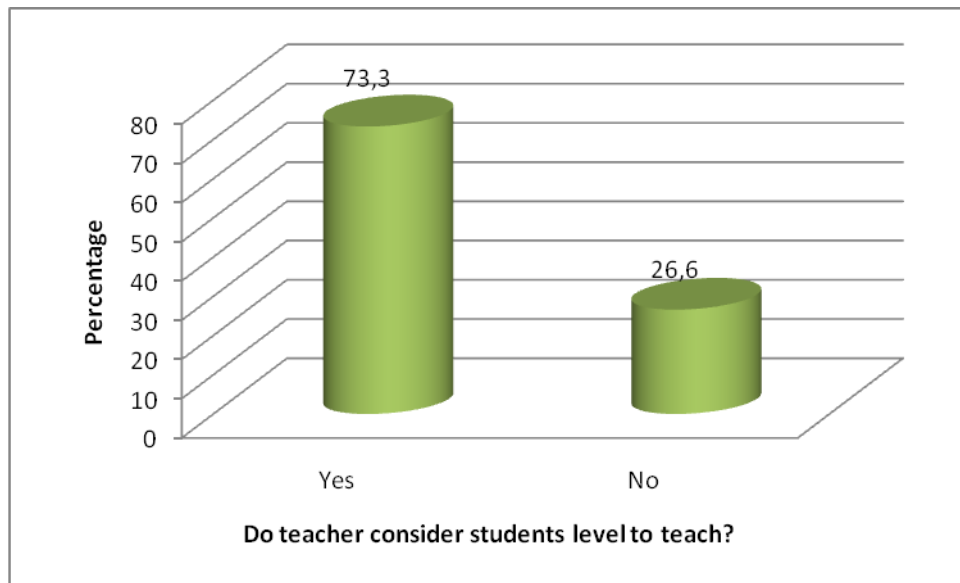
Source: Teachers questionnaire

According to this graphic, the interviewed teachers are all in agreement that the students' needs must be considered in order to teach English successfully. This result was obtained through the teachers' questionnaire.

During an interview some teachers mentioned that even when they motivated their students, they received a negative response from them because some just do not like English and they study only to pass this school subject.

Another phenomenon occurs when teachers use the same learning style and some students respond differently. Some react well to hearing auditory learning songs, listening to music; some are happy describing pictures, maps, graphics, some enjoy watching movies; and some enjoy hands-on activities.

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?



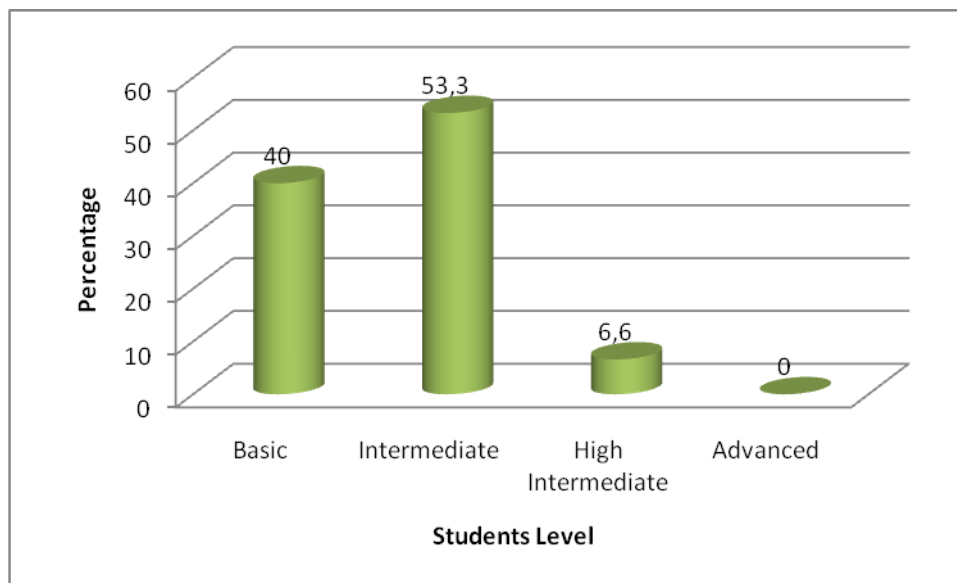
Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

From the graphic we can tell that 73.3% of the teachers said that they considered their students' level of English while teaching and 26.6% did not consider students level.

In the interview some teachers said the higher level of English, the faster they could move along with their lessons. Furthermore, they had more opportunities to do extra activities. Also teachers were selective in the activities and placed more emphasis on teaching the special students that had a lower level of English.

Through the class observation, it was noticed that many students were afraid of reading aloud a text; in the basic level some students were too slow in reading, so in order to reinforce their reading they required to do an intensive practice of pronunciation.

Which is the level of the students?



Author: Jhon Granda

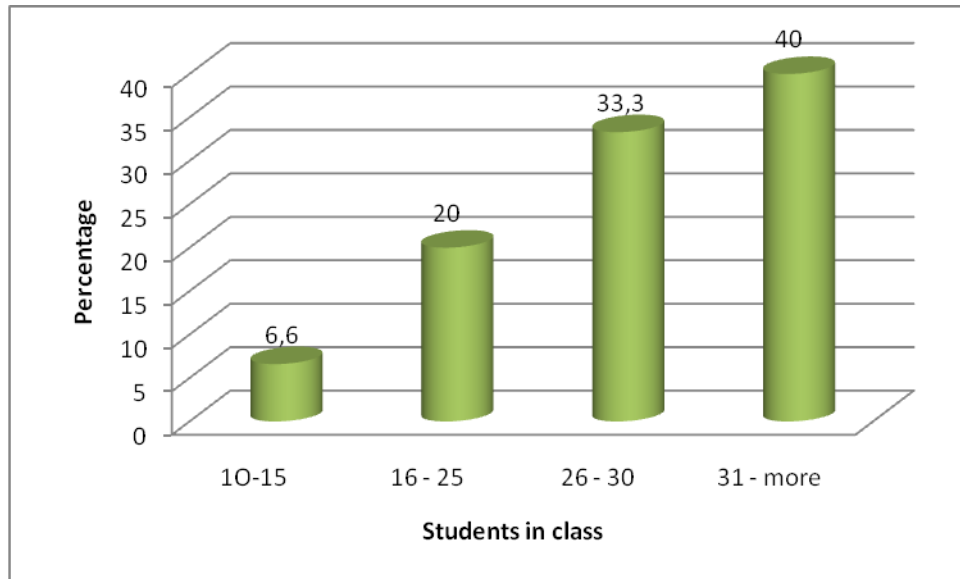
Source: Teachers questionnaire

This graphic shows the English level of the students. The level of education in public schools in Ecuador goes from basic to high intermediate. Thus, 53.3 % of the students have an intermediate level, which represent the larger part of the students; 40 % of the students are in the basic level; only 6.6% of the students achieve the high intermediate level. It is interesting to notice that 0% of the students don't reach to an advanced level.

The results for the basic level of education represent the students who came from rural areas. The questionnaire revealed a major problem that occurs in the rural high schools. There are several social problems: students natively speak Quichua, they have to travel great distances, and often face financial difficulties which could make learning English more complicated for them. While high intermediate level results came from an accredited institution, where there were less social problems.

Factors concerning classrooms

How many students are there in the observed classroom?



Author: Jhon Granda

Source: Teachers questionnaire

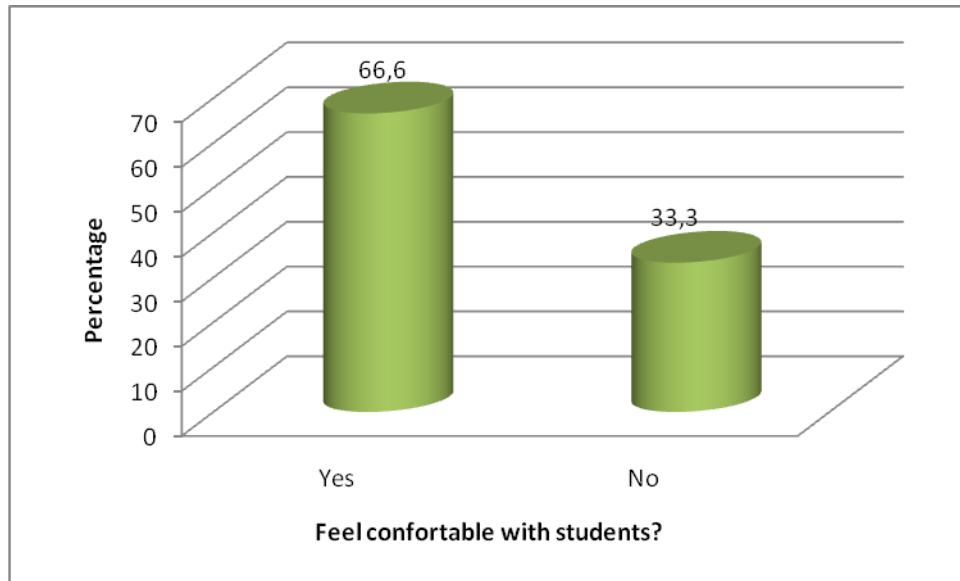
The percentage reflected on the graphic is that 40 % of the classrooms contain 31 or more students, and 33.3 % of the class groups consist of a number between 26 – 30 students. The majority of public schools have over 31 students in each class.

The results from this graphic came from 15 schools, one rural school had 10 to 15 students, the others two had between 16 to 25 students in each classroom; and the rest had an average of 33 students.

The process of class observations reflected that public schools located in the urban sector had 33 or more students. While in one of the observed classroom there were 53 students which is considered to be overcrowded.

Evidently, the urban schools had a larger amount of students than the rural schools. It merely has to do with population differences, and the new district distribution.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with this number of students?



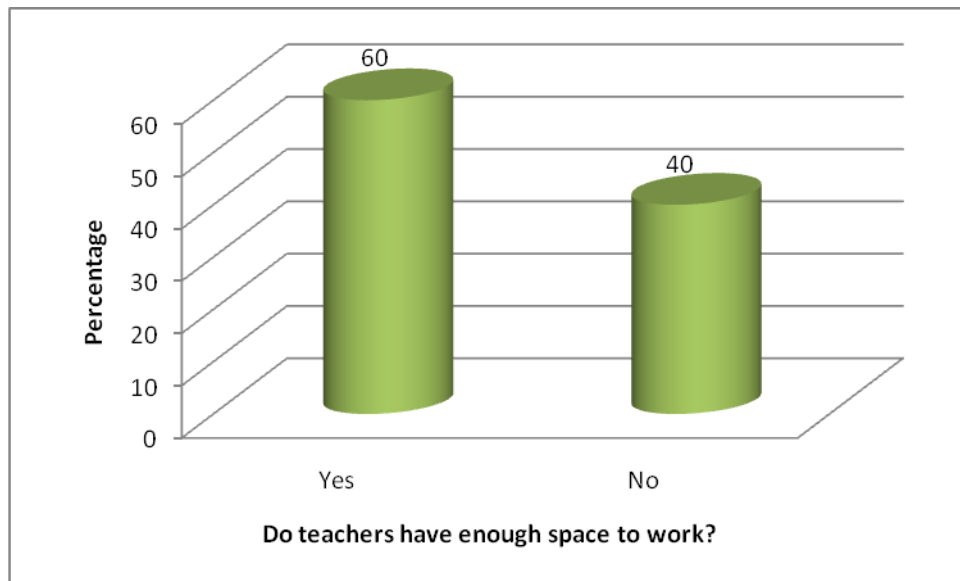
Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

This graphic reflects the result of teachers' feeling over working with certain amount of students. 66.6 % of them answered positively and 33.3 % negatively. The experienced teachers worked well with large amount of students. According to the teachers that were interviewed they are accustomed to work in this way which has not been changed for years.

Teachers with less experience found more problems managing large classes; they preferred teaching in small groups.

From the observation, one of the factors that affected teaching was class size. In some large classes it was observed that only the brightest students interacted and the rest were lost in the crowd. While in the small ones the students were working together closely. The students in the smaller classes achieved greater success than those in the larger classes.

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



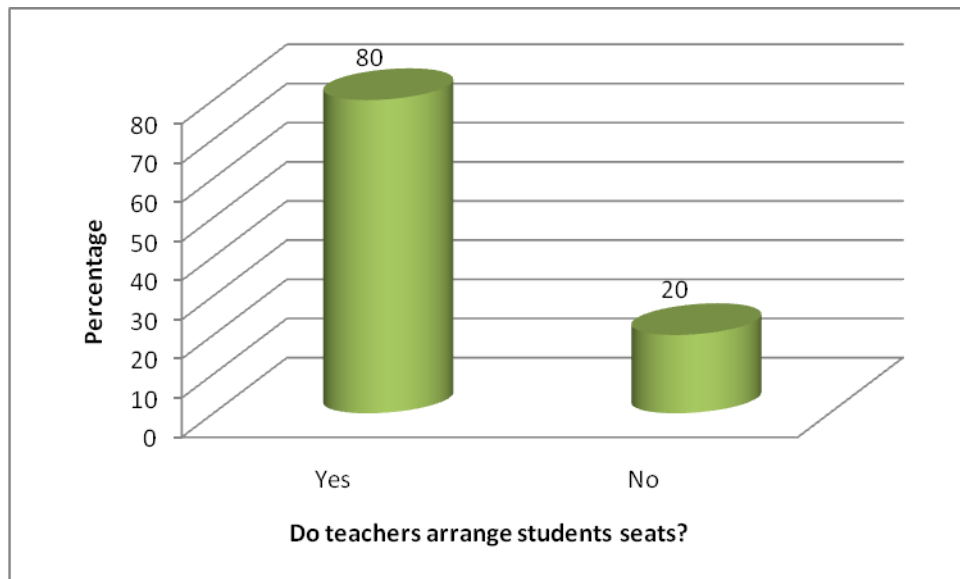
Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

Reading the answers in the graphic we can see that 60% of the teachers said yes and 40 % said no. Several factors have influenced those results. Those influences consist of teachers' experience. The investigation was based only on the public schools, where the classrooms have the same design: square shaped walls and cool floor with individual desks. Some of teachers' have difficulties doing group activities because of the reduced space.

During teachers' interview, most of them remarked that the main problem teachers face when teaching English in Ecuador is the small space they had to work. In reference to this problematic Clayton & Forton (2011) state "the sad fact is that most classroom spaces are far from ideal".

Some classrooms are overcrowded, this situation makes it difficult for the teacher to control and monitor students. This is a negative influence in the teaching-learning process.

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



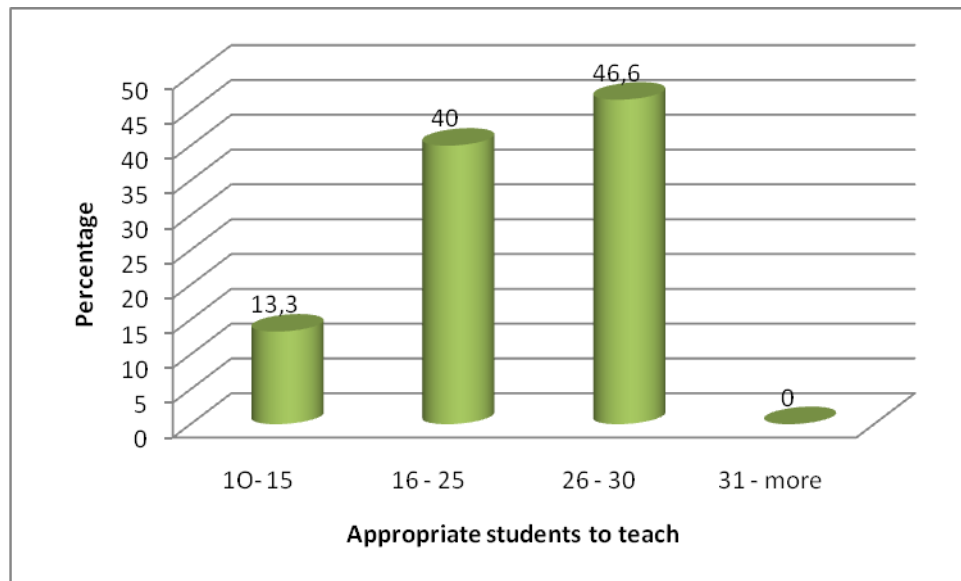
Author: Jhon Granda

Source: Teachers questionnaire

In the graphic 80 % of teachers do arrange the seats according to the class activities. The other 20 % cannot move the seats because of the lack of space.

In two of the observed classes, teachers told the students they have to arrange the seats before teachers appear in the class. They must maintain this order for the whole year. In a smaller class, I observed the teacher making a circle or horseshoe formation of desks. I noticed another way of seating classes by making columns facing each other. The rest of the observed classes used the usual way, which is having students sit in an orderly row.

How many students do teachers think is the appropriate number to teach English?



Author: Jhon Granda

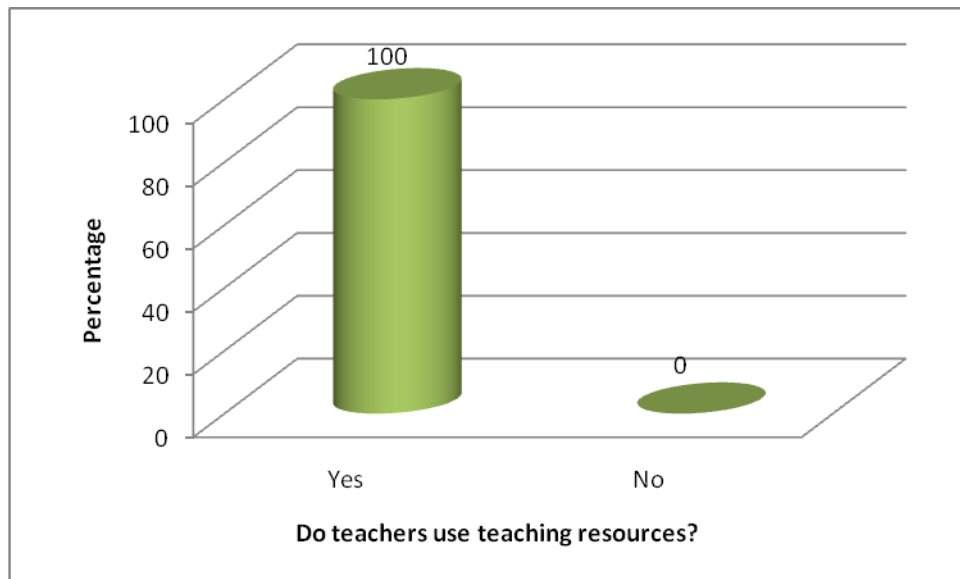
Source: Teachers questionnaire

In this graphic 46.6 % represents the teachers who consider the appropriate number of students per class to be between 26 and 30. Another 40 % of teachers agree that 16 – 25 students per class is an ideal classroom size.

The rest of the teachers mention that 10 – 15 students would be the perfect size in order to have successful teaching-learning process. During their interview they said that they hope someday in a new education reform, classroom size would be reduced. None of the teachers agreed that 31 or more students were acceptable.

Another piece of information obtained from this research during the observed classes is that the time is limited in the class hour; the overcrowded classes make it difficult for the teacher to review classroom activities and to give the corresponding feedback. This is the reason why they cannot go at the planned speed and carry out the initial school year planning.

Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer(s), Projector(s), Smart board, and supplementary materials)?



Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

The graphic represents the use of the teaching resources. All of the teachers said they used teaching resources for their classes' activities.

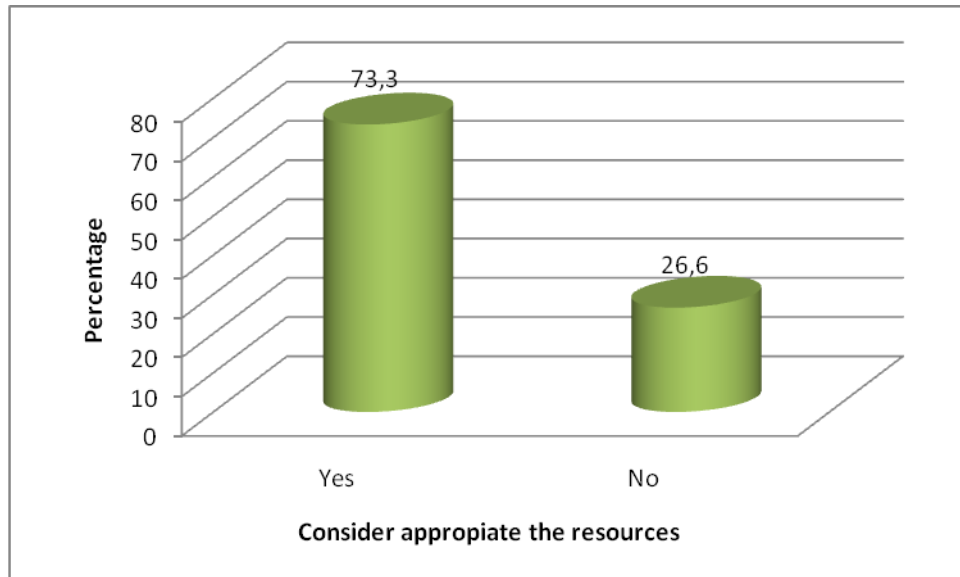
In the teacher's questionnaire responses and in the observations, most of the teachers used a CD recorder. Some used projectors, and only in one observed school they had a computer laboratory and other resources such as computers, audiovisual screens, head phones, TV, etc. The only problem is that this institution had only one laboratory and it was not enough to meet all students' demands.

According to teachers from the mentioned institution, they are afraid to use this laboratory because they do not want to be responsible for any damages to the resources there. If anything crashed or smashed they would have to pay for it.

Besides, having 40 or 50 students' in a laboratory it results hard to control. Another

problem that the teacher faced was scheduling appropriate times to use the laboratory between twelve grades.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?



Author: Jhon Granda

Source: Teachers questionnaire

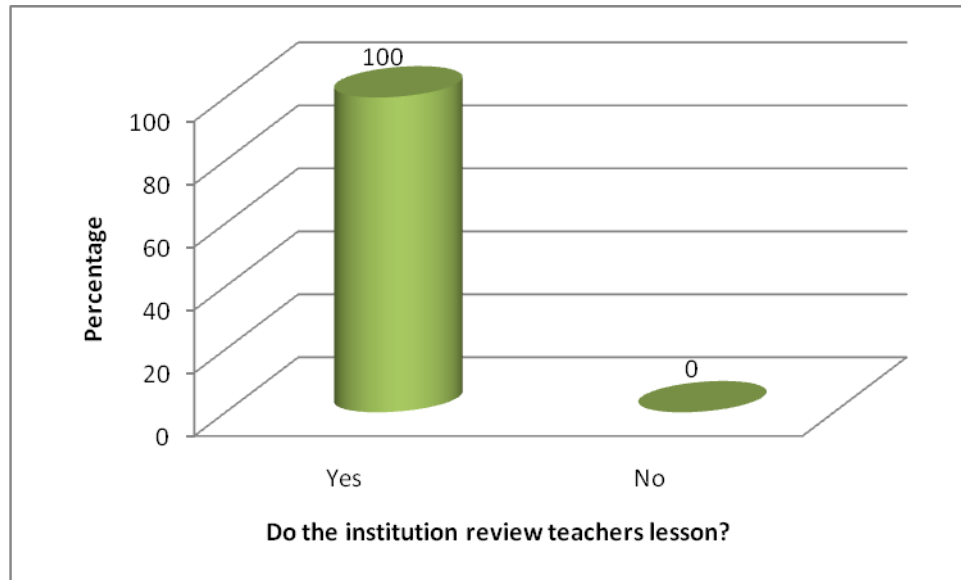
This graphic shows that 73.3% of the teachers are satisfied with their classroom resources. However, 26.6 % are not happy with the resources they have in class.

Some of the classrooms incorporated a projector. There are TVs and DVDS in some others.

The unsatisfied teachers claimed for resources to be provided by the institution. When teaching, they brought their own extra materials to work with such as, pictures, maps, flash cards, posters, etc. The only resource that was available to everyone was a DVD and cd player.

Factors concerning educational institutions

Do the institutions review teacher's lesson plans?



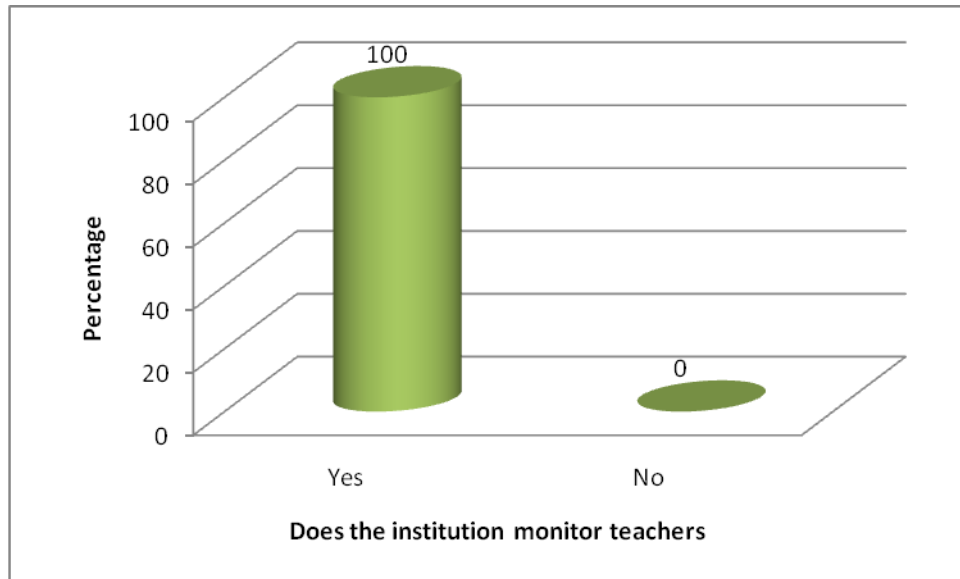
Author: Jhon Granda
Source: Teachers questionnaire

From the graphic we easily see that all of the teachers have their lesson plans revised. Teachers do plan their classes opportunely.

It is important to emphasize that the answer reflected in the graphic is based on the teacher's response; as an investigator I did not have access to verify if the answers were true. During the only one class observation it was impossible to confirm if teachers had planned or not their lessons.

From the teacher's replies the only difference is the frequency of the lesson plans checking; some are revised every week and others every month.

Does the institution monitor teacher's classes?



Author: Jhon Granda

Source: Teachers questionnaire

This last graphic shows the teachers positive answers. All 15 teachers admitted that their institution monitors their teaching. Once again for this question, as investigator, I did not have sufficient access to verify if the institutions do indeed monitor their teaching. Like for the previous graphic the only difference is the frequency in which teachers were monitored. According to the teachers' responses some were monitored once a month, others every two months, some every three months, and only one teacher twice a year.

Conclusion

- This research demonstrates that there are many factors that affect the teaching-learning process. The main factor is the class size; others are the classroom space, and the teaching resources.
- This study reveals that extreme overcrowded classrooms make it impossible to arrange students in a suitable way. The results determined that students were attending classes that were in poor condition. Also, the results identified that the teachers are accustomed to work and teach in such poor conditions.
- The students' questionnaire reveals that, the factors affecting the students and their English levels were considered by the teachers when planning during the teaching process. However, most of the students are happy doing their activities; they found them easy to be done. The majority of them agreed with the methodology and techniques used by the teachers.
- This study clarifies that it is important for teachers to have a high education level, to speak English frequently during the class, to assert useful methods in teaching, to create an effective lesson plan and, finally, to organize classroom management with the aim to create a good interaction between teachers and students.
- This research reveals that classroom space and class size are the two major problems in the teaching-learning process; because it is hard to organize large classes, which makes it difficult to do group work activities. Besides, large classes limit the use of laboratories and some other teaching resources.

- During class observations, the public high school teachers spoke Spanish more than English during their classes, which resulted into inaccuracy between the teachers' asseveration and the reality.

Recommendations

- After identifying the factors and characteristics that affect the teaching-learning process, it is necessary to make improvements in the current classroom and teaching conditions, in order to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process.
- The public high schools in Ecuador should provide classrooms with adequate space. Also, they should implement teaching resources like laboratories, more computers, electronic boards, and projectors for every single school and classroom.
- Until the educational institutions give solution to the factors that affect teaching-learning process, teachers in public schools in Ecuador need to assume new roles and use new activities to work with large classes.
- It is recommended for English teachers to speak more English during the classes and reduce the use of Spanish, so students can improve their language skills through exposure to the language.
- The educational authorities must promote a new education reform concerning classroom size, and the reduction of the amount of students per class.
- In order to increase the students' English level, teachers should use different methodology that includes more reading strategies and techniques to improve their English language skills.

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ANNEXES



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 ()

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

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

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 ()
---------	--------

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

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

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 ()
---------	--------

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 ()

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 ()
-------------	-------------	-------------	---------------

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 _____



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:	

21. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

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

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

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

23. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

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

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

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

¿Por qué?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

YES ()	NO ()
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GRACIAS!!!!!!



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 ()
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* 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 ()
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* 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	()
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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	()
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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 %	()
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