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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACION DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN TITULACIÓN

Doctora.

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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 Sosa García Ritha Maritza, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, febrero de 2014

f)……………………………

DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

"Yo Sosa García Ritha Maritza declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: "Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian prívate high schools", de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Dra. Arias Córdoba María Olivia directora 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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f. …………………………..
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DEDICATION

To Raul, who encouraged me through this project and motivated me when I felt disappointed. His love and optimism are the supports of my live.

To David and Daphne for their love, comprehension, fondness, and forgiveness during the developing or this research work.

To Lucy who taught me perseverance, dedication and devotion when reaching a profession. Without her help, it would have been a lot more difficult.

Ritha Maritza

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This research work aims to investigate and expound the factors that influence the English language learning-process in Ecuadorian private high schools. The variables that were considered to develop this research were: (1) factors concerning students; (2) factors concerning teachers; (3) factors concerning classrooms and; (4) factors concerning educational institutions. The general objective proposed was to analyze all these factors and their effects in the English language teaching-learning process.

The investigation took place in six private high schools in Quito in November last year. Fifteen English teachers and fifteen students attending 8th of basic education to 3rd of high school were selected as a sample. This study applied basically the quantitative method and the qualitative method. A questionnaire with closed ended and open ended questions to survey teachers and students, observation sheets, notes, and tabulations were applied.

The most relevant conclusion is concerning to quality of education. It is evident that mostly of private high schools have done important efforts for improving the English language teaching. Private high schools have concerned about the technological equipment and implantation of facilities with this purpose.

KEYWORDS: English, teaching-learning process, factors-influence.

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RESUMEN

Este trabajo de investigación tiene como propósito indagar y exponer los factores que influyen en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en colegios privados del Ecuador. Las variables que fueron consideradas para desarrollar esta investigación fueron: (1) factores concernientes a los estudiantes; (2) factores concernientes a los profesores; (3) factores concernientes a las aulas; (4) factores concernientes a las instituciones educativas. El objetivo general propuesto fue analizar todos estos factores y sus efectos en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.

La investigación se realizó en seis colegios privados en Quito en Noviembre del año pasado. Quince profesores de Inglés y quince estudiantes del octavo año de educación básica hasta el tercer año de bachillerato fueron seleccionados como muestra. En este estudio se aplicó básicamente el método cuantitativo y el método cualitativo. Un cuestionario con preguntas abiertas y cerradas para entrevistar a profesores y estudiantes, hojas de observación, notas, y tabulaciones fueron aplicados.

La conclusión más relevante está relacionada a la calidad de la educación. Es evidente que la mayoría de los colegios privados han realizado importantes esfuerzos por mejorar la enseñanza del idioma. Los colegios privados se han preocupado del equipamiento tecnológico y la implementación de instalaciones para este propósito.

PALABLAS CLAVES: proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje, Inglés, factores- influencia.

INTRODUCCTION

Bilingual education in Ecuador has not been developed appropriately since kinder garden until high schools. This deficiency is evident when students enter the university with poor knowledge of the language. Because of this lack of proficiency students are affected in several aspects: for example: less opportunities to communicate with people of different culture, less employable in the country and outside, difficulties to access science, arts, literature, and less chance to get an international scholarship. Clearly, learning English will open student´s personal and professional prospects and will increase standard of living.

On the other hand, in the last years the Ministry of Education and Culture in Ecuador has been done huge efforts to overcome the necessities in the English subject area. One of these intents aimed to improve syllabus and in 1992 was established an agreement between the Ministry of Education and the British Council. The project was called CRADLE (Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of Learning). The main objective of CRADLE project was to provide secondary students with the supports in the knowledge and handing of the language. Public education was provided of renovated books which contains topics related to the Ecuadorian reality. The strategy was to use contents with focus on real world context through the development of the four skills of English: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Another important effort to improve English education in the country is the design and implementation of a curriculum adapted from a standardized model known as Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The main purpose of this curriculum implies high school graduates develop a communicative competence in the language. In order to achieve this objective the curriculum states different levels of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and

writing applicable in the Ecuadorian educational system. Moreover, it describes the profile and skills that students have to reach in each level from 8th EGB until 3rd BACH. Thus, students of 8th to 1st BACH are designed as "Basic Users" and students of 3rd BACH are considered "Independent Users".

Nevertheless these advances, there are others aspects in the process of teaching English that have not even been considered. In addition, the low English level of graduate students attending universities demands for more investigation in this field. That was the motivation for researching the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high school. The specific objectives were: (1) identify student´s English level and their needs in the classroom, (2) diagnose the classroom environment in which English lessons take place, (3) define the characteristics of in-service English teachers, (4) investigate institutional facilities and norms regarding quality education. The value of this research consists on discovering the situation of the teaching English language in high schools. Through the analysis from different perspectives: teacher, students, classrooms and institutions; this study has tried to meet how all these interrelated factors influence in the teaching.

Previous research has been conducted about the factors affecting the English language teaching-learning process. Three studies reinforce this study. The first was undertaken by Pattamawan Jimakorn & Wareesiri Singhasiri (2006). The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher´s opinions toward teaching English in large classes. The second study was done by Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani (2011) who accomplished a research in the Islamic Azad University. The objective for doing this study was to become aware of the influence of learning styles on the teaching process.

Ogiegbaen & Iyamu (2006) guided a study which tried to determine three aspects: (1) if the secondary school teachers use instructional material frequently in their English class, (2) if teachers use appropriate methods in teaching English; (3) if students in secondary schools in Nigeria learn the language in a favorable environment to learning. These investigations did not report any kind of limitations during the research process.

Due the fact that in English of teaching learning process intervene many people; the expectancy is that this work be useful in some way for them: authorities, teachers, students, investigators. Moreover, this study attempts to contribute as a source of information for future investigations. Finally, with references to the results of this research is quite essential for beneficiaries reinforce fortresses and correct weaknesses.

During the research the time of observations was insufficient. Some important variables of the study were difficult to perceive in one-hour class, for example: teaching methods and techniques, managing learning, student´s personality, aptitude, and attitude. Each aspect is very important and it deserves to be treated individually. Thus, it was hard to determine if teachers consider these aspects for delivering instruction.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in Quito, during the last days of October and the first days of November in 2012. The investigation took place in six private high schools located in the south of the city. The subjects were 15 teachers and 15 students from 8th, 9th, 10th EGB and 1st, 2nd and 3rd BACH. The majority of these teachers held bachelor´s degree. They were made up of 11 females and 4 males. Most of the classes had boys and girls with age ranged from 12 to 18 years old. The maximum class size which was observed had 36 students, and the smallest had 15 students. Most of the classrooms were spacious enough, illuminated, and welcoming.

Procedures

In order to develop this research work, it was required to follow these phases: the first step was the reviewing of the literature that consisted on the search in books, journals, the Internet, and government documents of the issues proposed. Moreover, the reading the literature and writing a summary focusing on the most pertinent aspects. The approach used in this research was quantitative method and qualitative methods. The qualitative method was used for the narrative data in all the process and the quantitative method was used for the numerical data. The techniques used to access the opinions and impressions of the teachers and students were questionnaires, interviews, observational sheets, and notes.

The second phase was the field research that consisted in observing how teachers and students interact in classrooms. Also, it was necessary noticing on classrooms´ environment: size, conditions, needs, and materials. To discover the students´ perceptions´ regarding the English teaching-learning process, one student

was chosen at random and a survey was applied after each observed class. Similarly, the teacher was interviewed and given a survey to gather information about the aspects related with the investigated theme.

The third phase was the tabulation and analysis of data gathered. The questions in the teacher´s instrument were classified according the four variables: teachers, students, classrooms and institutions.   Teacher´s responses were analyzed descriptively by calculating percentages using pie charts to graph them. Finally, the analysis was completed by arguing the findings and contrasting with scientific information and data from field observation.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Throughout the world when people with different languages come together they commonly use English to communicate. Currently, the acquisition not only of native languages but also of foreign languages is an important skill for communication. In today´s globalized world, the language used most is English. This language has become a worldwide phenomenon because of its uses and applications and it also has been considered as a second language in many countries. In Ecuador, English has played a very important role since it has been part of the curriculum for many years. An effective curriculum assures the accomplishment of goals, activities, and provides a structure to apply in the English teaching- learning process. Ecuador´s Ministry of Education designed an English curriculum that contains standards based on to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

The CEFR is a guide for people related to English teaching that explains and proposes a scale of six language proficiency levels and specifies the skills that learners should develop in each stage of learning. Furthermore, the CEFR delineates the knowledge and the skills that learners require in order to communicate effectively. Also, the CEFR is a guide for the evaluation of English skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

Besides the curriculum, teachers are vital in the process of learning English. They are the main characters involved in education. Their skills to identify different contexts and apply new and motivating strategies help students to acquire the language. However, there are other factors that participate in the process of second language learning. These factors contribute and influence on the achievement of learning a second language successfully.

The first factor refers to the content of ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and concepts of how language should be taught and acquired. In language teaching these concepts has shifted from one method to another. Moreover, each approach and method sustain own systematic techniques.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

According to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching learners should be prepared for using language in the real world. Harmer (2007) argues that language should be learned taking into account its utility. This method emphasizes the spoken functions of the language, for example how to invite, apologize, agree, and disagree. In Communicative Language Teaching´s view a learner should acquire the notions of when and how it is opportune to use appropriate words and phrases. Thus, this method engages students in tasks that require a real purpose of conveying message facilitating real communication. Trying real communication impels using several structures and impels the learning of a language.

The Hymes´ theory (1972 cited in Richards & Rodgers 2001, p 157) of Communicative Language Teaching proposes that language should be approached considering it as a way for conveying thoughts or feelings. Moreover, according to this theory, the most important function of language is to facilitate interaction and communication. The use of language structures depends on the functional and communicative purposes.

The Natural Approach is founded on the observation and explanation of the ways people learn languages in nonformal environments. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) this method emphasizes comprehensible and meaningful input of information. The reaction to this input should be understandable and significant practice activities. Therefore, the production of perfect grammatical structures is rejected.

Reflecting similar ideas Brown (2001) believes that a second language should be acquired and developed similar to the first or native language. In addition, the author states the importance of providing to the learner comprehensive input and meaningful communication during the beginning stage. After this unspoken stage, production of language should emerge as the native language does.

Cooperative Language Learning is rooted in the constructivist theory that concentrates on the function of social interaction in learning. This interaction using the mechanism of language implies cooperation between learners. The authors Richards & Rodgers (2001) identified cooperative learning and competitive learning. Cooperative learning involves learning through the collaboration of learners who work together to get the same objectives.

Instead, in competitive learning students "compete" against each other in order to obtain individual objectives. Moreover, these authors believe in an organized system of learning for students and teachers. The appropriate system consists of interactive structures that allow communication. Brown (2001, p. 47) claims "learning activity is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners." In this community of learners; they are responsible of their own learning and are assisted by teachers and advanced peers.

Assuming that language learning should focus not on the language itself but rather on what is taught the language Content Based Instruction method emerges. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) Content Based Instruction is the method that uses language forms with the purpose of acquiring specific and meaningful content to the learner. On the other hand, Brown (2001) states that motivation is an important factor in learning a second language. When language serves as getting knowledge and this knowledge is meaningful, interesting, and useful to the learner,

the learner will feel motivated and involved in a more effective and authentic learning of a language.

Regarding materials and syllabus the authors consider that these aspects have to be meaningful and contextualized. Content Based Instruction "is the integration of content learning with language teaching aims". Brinton, Snow & Wesche (1989, cited in Brown 2001, p 49). In other words, the syllabus of the course should be adapted taking into account stimulating and valuable content for the learner. Moreover, materials and syllabi have to be designed considering the eventual use of the language that learners will apply in their lives.

Task Based Learning is intrinsically related to Communicative Language Teaching. This method emphasizes the accomplishment of tasks applying communicative activities. Richard & Rodgers (2001) reveal if learners use the techniques of Communicative Language Teaching, they could develop the tasks required in the Task Based Learning method. Also, the author Harmer (2007) argues that activities and tasks have to be focused on getting communication and meaning rather than emphasizing language itself.

In addition, the tasks might be related to situations in real life, or they might have pedagogical objectives. Real-world tasks are designed imitating situations that could happen in reality. Tasks with pedagogical objectives do not necessarily reflect real situations, for example, jigsaw tasks and information-gap tasks. Therefore, the syllabus of Task Based Learning according to Harmer has to include series of tasks and activities; while Richard & Rodgers (2001, p. 224) consider the task or the activity as a "central unit of planning and teaching"

Total Physical Response consists of learning a second language by eliciting physical reply to aural stimulus. Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 73) states that "is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it

attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity." In addition, Total Physical Response method has the influence from psychological and humanistic theories. One of these theories refers to the process of learning a second language. They explain learners acquire a foreign language in the same manner as they acquire the native one. This way, learning begins with listening comprehension through commands or orders and afterward achieving objectives with physical activities.

Grammar Translation Method is a predictable approach that means an academic teaching style which applies two teaching techniques: grammatical explanation and sentence translation. Nagaraj (1996) proposes the concept of grammatical explanation saying that this technique is the analysis of language forms and the detailed study of grammar rules. Therefore, grammar may be applied in translating sentences or fragments of texts. The sentence translation technique involves converting codes from target language into mother tongue and vice versa. Also, according to Cook (1996, p. 176) mother tongue is a "reference system in the acquisition of second language." Accuracy in sentence translation is given importance because it is considered indispensable to achieve precision.

Managing Learning

Managing Learning refers to the means which teachers employ in their class in order to accomplish the objectives of a lesson plan. Within this context, three factors are important: instructions, feedback, and pacing. Harmer (2007) as well as Nunan (1996) emphasize the importance of setting clear oral instructions about the activities students are supposed to do; even more so if the instructions are given in the target language. Harmer (2007) claims instruction must be sequential, according to the level of students, and explained back from students in their native language. In addition, the author emphasizes a manner to facilitate the teacher

giving instructions. Doing demonstrations is way to ensure that students have clear idea of the activity required by the teacher.

Regarding feedback Harmer (2007) considers that teachers should deal with students´ errors. This is an important stage of the lesson because it includes the "summarizing comments" of the lesson. Teachers can ensure comprehension using either a simple but elemental question like: ¿did you understand? or giving a detailed explanation of a particular topic. Both authors Hammer (2007, p.111) and Nunan (1996, p. 96) recognize two types of feedback: "content feedback which focus on rules of usage of language, and form and use feedback which focus on the message of language"

Pacing is an important aspect in managing learning too because it deals with the time lesson should last. According to these authors, teachers require setting the time that each activity will take. In the same way students require knowing the time the task will take and the time they should start. In addition, they recommend when it is appropriate to stop the tasks. In fact, the activity stops when students have finished it. However, there are others cues that suggest teacher finishing the activities; for example, when students are bored, when some of them have completed before the rest of the class and when the task is not motivational for learners. In the contrary, Nunan (1996) suggests extending time when learners are interested in the activity or when the type of the task demands additional minutes. Nunan (1996, p. 105) says "Experienced teachers are able to pick up from students that indicate their levels of interest or boredom." Moreover, teachers could have the need to explain better certain aspects of the lesson. Thus, this could be another reason for extending time.

Lesson Design

Lesson plans are structured and registers sequential of stages that teachers should apply during a lesson. Planning a lesson is an important manner to guide teachers in a classroom. Regarding this factor, Farrell (2007) makes a distinction between internal and external reasons for planning. Internal reasons refer to the necessity of teachers feeling secure and efficient. Consequently, some internal motivations are: to improve learning, to let the lesson flows, to avoid difficulties, and to be in control.

On the other hand, external reasons imply the necessity of the teacher to satisfy "expectations" from superiors and to serve as a reference for others teachers. Farrell states the components of a lesson plan as: (1) perspective or opening; (2) stimulation; (3) instruction- participation; (4) closure and follow up.

Harmer (2007) states the reasons for planning taking into account points of view from students and teachers. Students appreciate the dedication and time teachers devote to thinking about the class showing competence and commitment. Teachers have a framework, a design, a reference, and a route to follow. As an alternative to Farrell´s plan, Harmer proposes the following format: (1) description of the students, (2) aims and objectives, (3) procedures, (4) anticipated problems, (5) extra activities, (6) material to be used in the lesson.

Class Size

Although several studies have been conducted on the appropriate class size, there is no consensus about the ideal number of students to optimize the process of teaching and learning language. However, Squire (1987) states his conclusions about this factor based on a study and experience. These findings try to limit a number of students considered as "large-group instruction" as well a number

considered "small-group instruction." According this research he states groups from fifty to one hundred fifty as large classes. Furthermore, the author finds groups of thirty to one hundred as acceptable for transferring knowledge through lectures and films. Surprisingly groups of fifty to seventy seem to be handled for confident teachers.

In contrast, small groups of six to twelve students who experienced personalized instruction show an important difference in academic achievement. This difference was evident even in the student´s character compared with learners subjected to standard class groups of twenty and thirty.

Sarawathi (2004) focus her analysis on the limitations of teaching in large classes such as: propitiating inattention, demanding extra work for teachers, and disabling personalized instruction. However, she recognizes mechanisms for dealing with large classes. If the instruction focus on student- centered, the experience for teachers might be less exhausting and for students more motivating.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

Seating arrangement is mentioned in Brown`s (2001) ideas as a way of organization that facilitates interaction and talk among the learners. These ways are: semicircles, u-shapes, concentric circles, tables in groups, small clusters and workstations. Brown suggests arranging tables adapted for two or more students, in a way that facilitates interaction among students. However these qualities, Bradshaw,Grainger and Konza (2001) state limitations in these styles of seating arrangement. For instance for teachers the disposition of tables in groups interfere the visual contact and increase noise. For students the disposition in U shape form hinders the eye contact among them.

On the other hand, special attention is mentioned the traditional disposition of tables in rows. Brown (2001, p. 193) express disagreement with this style "Students are members of a team and should be able to see one another, to talk to one another (in English!), and no be made to feel like they just walked into a military formation". Nevertheless, Bradshaw, Grainger & Konza mention positive aspects of working with tables in rows. Two of these aspects are the usefulness for teacher demonstrations and the facility of monitoring activities.

Classroom and/or Teaching Resources

Harmer (2007, p.175) designed a structure that he called "technology pyramid" with the purpose of classifying all the appropriate audio-visual devices for teaching and learning English. On the top of this pyramid are included the resources considered as educational technology such as: fixed data projectors, interactive whiteboards, computers, the Internet. The next scale is formed by traditional material like whiteboard, overhead projector (OHP), tape recorder, blackboard and exercises books. At the bottom of the pyramid there are not resources related to educational technology or other learning aids. There are hardly any boards and books. However, Harmer believes that even with minimal aids learning is possible if the teacher use creativity.

According to Dash (2007, p.123) the audio-visual aids "can be used to make the learning experiences more concrete, realistic, and dynamic." She classifies in detailed manner the material in five categories according it´s characteristics. The first classification includes projected materials like films, slides, and OHP and non projected materials like pictures and charts. The second classification contain audio materials: radio, tape recorder, record player, visual materials: models, picture cut-outs, and audio visual materials like TV, and sound film strips. The third consists of hardware (computer) and software (books). The next category includes big media

and little media (VCR, TV, radio, audio, cassette). And the last classification includes two and three dimensional materials (printed materials, chalk board, static model, and dynamic model).

Classroom Observation

While Richards & Farrell (2011) emphasize the nature and the limitations of classroom observation, Zepeda (2008) stresses the benefits of this experience for teachers and observers. The limitations are related to the difficulty of the observers noticing some aspects of the lesson. Moreover, the observer might interpret student´s behaviors in a wrong way. Observation can be a stressful experience for teachers too because they can feel not assisted but evaluated by the observer. Finally, the lesson observed may not be a typical lesson due to the pressure to do it the best.

The benefits of classroom observation imply a better understanding of the conditions of teaching and learning for teachers and supervisors. Teachers receive support, learn more, talk about teaching, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Supervisors gain an impression of the process of teaching, share strategies, provide assistance, and acquire information about teaching and learning.

Learning Styles

The perception of learning styles is related in Cook (1996, p.105) with the concept of "cognitive learning strategies" which describes how the learner acquires language through mental process. Research in this field has shown three interrelated ways of approaching learning: metacognitive, cognitive and social styles. This localized perspective is expanded by Lightbown & Spada (2006, p. 59) who recognize cognitive learning styles and propose the "perceptually based learning." Concerning this classification of learning style, the authors discover the

intervention of sensory experiences in the process of acquiring a second language. These styles are: visual that means acquiring knowledge by seeing, aural by ear and kinaesthetic by doing.

Moreover, it is important to state the difficulty of classifying learners in one or other style or to assure that one strategy is suitable for all learners. Although there is considerable research relating this factor, there is a consensus in opinions that more investigation is necessary.

Language Aptitude

The concept of language aptitude refers to the capacity specific to acquiring a second language. According to Cook (1996) although some people have a natural ability to acquire a second language more easily than others in the same circumstances there is a general agreement that language aptitude by itself does not predict whether a learner can acquire a foreign language. The author also states other factors linked with aptitude: conditions of motivation, opportunity to learn, quality of instruction, intelligence, and age of learners. Moreover, Bryam (2004) argues that in foreign language learning this aptitude may influence achievement. However, he recognizes that aptitude is not enough to predict success in learning a second language.

On the other hand, this overview of concepts, postulates, theories, and propositions based on scientific knowledge needs an experimental facet or further studies. A study is a systematic and structured investigation of an issue and can extend experience, reinforce what is already known through previous research, or discover something new. Consequently, as a support of this review five studies will be explained.

The first study belongs to Nunan (1996) who performed an action research study with the purpose of learning whether a "learning strategy and self-monitory dimension" in the classroom would improve learners´ self-awareness of their capacity for learning. The methodology applied for this purpose was employing guided journals that included eight questions. The questions were oriented to discover in students their own strategies and personal goals. Regarding the results, these were analyzed question by question. Some of them include the following: students discovered language as a tool to be used,   realized how they learned as well what they learned, felt more prepared to speak to strangers, and investigated causes of failure in communication.

The second study was accomplished by Jimakorn & Singhasiri (2006). This research was oriented towards teachers and their perceptions, personal views, and ideas towards teaching English in large classes. In order to approach the perceptions and opinions of the teachers a questionnaire was used which was adapted from previous studies. The questionnaire was arranged in three sections with open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, and rating scales. Part I, closed –ended questions contained questions about teacher´s personal details, gender, experience, education, and work. Part II included questions related to the teacher´s knowledge about their university´s policy on class size. Part III, the core of the questionnaire, was divided into four sections and asked for facts and opinions about large classes. Results obtained from this investigation include: most of teachers were not conscious of any policy in their institutions about teaching large classes. In addition, teachers say it is difficult to teach and learn in large classes because of that it is less effective too. However, they believe that teaching English in large classes is possible with different conditions and teaching methods. For example, teaching in large classes may be suitable for teaching receptive skills such as reading and listening. Furthermore, if it is inevitable teaching in large classes,

teachers can organize students in small groups where they can consult their teacher.

The third study was undertaken by Pourhossein (2011). It planned to get students assimilated and to comprehend the influence of learning styles on the teaching process. The method applied was a questionnaire with fifteen questions chosen from the instrument called Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). These questions were related to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences and each item included a scale from 1 to 5 to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement. The results showed that 50% of learners preferred visual learning style, 35 % of learners chose auditory learning style and 15% of the learners preferred kinesthetic learning style.

The next research was performed by Peacock (1997). The goal of this study was to probe whether using authentic materials on task behavior, observer motivation and self-reported motivation would increase or decrease. The method included three data collection instruments: observational sheets 1 and 2, questionnaires, and interviews. Observational sheet 1 measured if learners were on task or if they were off task; observational sheet 2 measured the level of interest, enthusiasm, activity concentration, and enjoyment of learners produced by the materials during a class. Questionnaires consisted of seven closed inquires including a scale with adjectives to measure motivation. Interviews about personal appreciation of the material used were collected after class. The overall results showed authentic materials kept the learner on task 86% of the time while artificial materials did 78% of the time. Moreover, overall class motivation increased greatly when the learner used authentic materials; however, there was no significant difference in self reported motivation.

The last investigation to be included in this report was conducted by Aduwa-Ogiegabaen & Iyamu (2006). The objective of this study was implied in three research questions. The first one aimed to determine if secondary school teachers use instructional material frequently in their English classes. The second question aimed to find out if teachers use appropriate methods in teaching English frequently. The third question tried to investigate if students in secondary schools in Nigeria learn the language in a favorable environment to learning. Questionnaires and observational schedules were used in order to accomplish this study.   The questionnaire was composed of four sections with items like school type and location, instructional materials/media, methods used by teachers frequently, and school environment.

The observation consisted of noticing all the aspects related to the learning environment in classroom. Regarding the results, these were classified according to each research question. Question number 1 yielded this conclusion: the materials used by the teacher most were chalkboards, English workbooks, posters, English textbooks and dictionaries. Charts were sometimes used and other items were almost never used.

Question number 2 showed that the strategy frequently used by teachers in public schools in Nigeria was the lecture method and intensive reading of textbooks. In addition, the group and debate methods were used occasionally. Finally, question number 3 produced these results: students in Nigeria struggled to learn English in an unfavorable environment. Students agreed schools were overcrowded, did not have good libraries, and did not have comfortable furniture nor appropriate ventilation and lighting in the classrooms.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section intends to describe the responses of English teachers concerning the factors that intervene in the process of teaching and learning. In order to access these answers three instruments were used: (1) observation sheet (2); a student´s questionnaire and (3) a teacher´s questionnaire. The teacher´s questionnaire with closed and open ended questions was applied to 15 English teachers chosen from private high schools in Quito.

The questionnaire was divided taking into account the four variables of this study: factors concerning teachers, factors concerning students, factors concerning classrooms, and factors concerning institutions. The data obtained from the questionnaire were described using graphs. Additionally, results were analyzed and interpreted using the data gathered from the others instruments: the student´s questionnaire and the observation sheet.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1
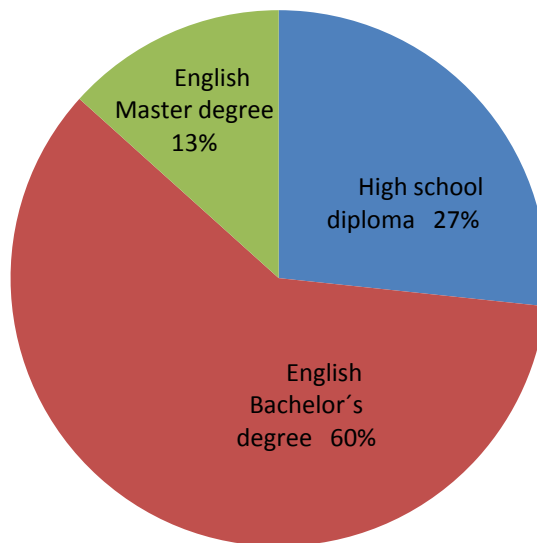
Author: Maritza Sosa

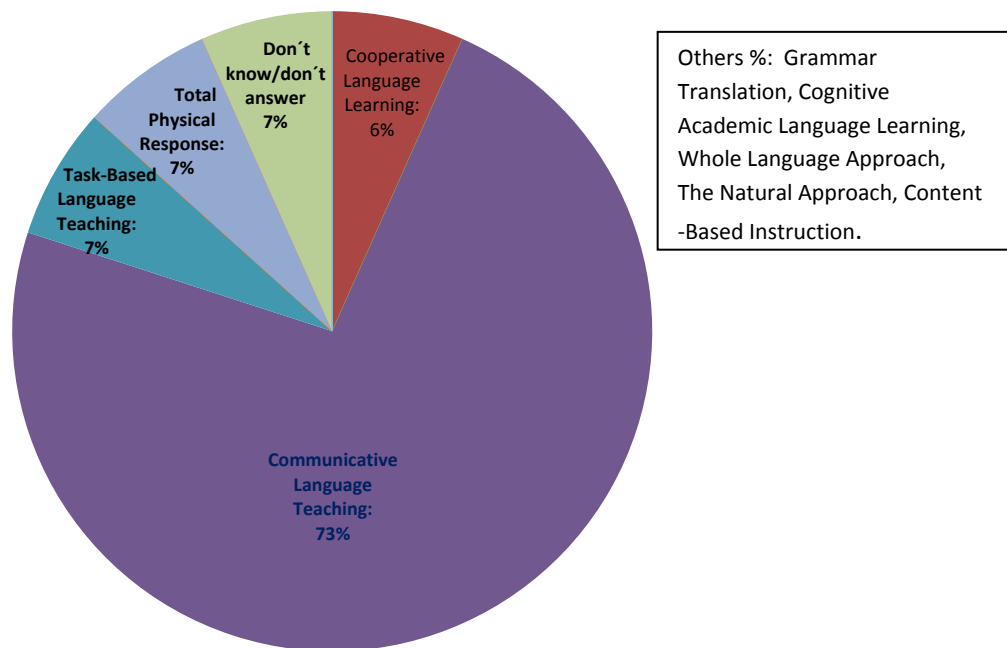Source: Private High Schools in Quito

Results established from this question show clearly that the majority of teachers obtained an English Bachelor´s degree (9). The lowest percentage (13%) corresponds to 2 teachers who obtained an English Master degree. The remaining 27% corresponds to 4 teachers who obtained a High School diploma.

These results reflect the level of language proficiency of teachers. Most of them are classified in the C2 level; consequently they are competent using English almost 100 % of the time. Some of them use Spanish for clarifying aspects of grammar only. Although 4 teachers do not have a degree they have an acceptable level of English proficiency. They mentioned that the foreign language was acquired in other countries and learned in English courses. Moreover 100% of the students interviewed corroborate that their teachers use English most of the time.

In fact, during the observed classes the teachers spoke only in English, most of them showed fluency and accuracy. Moreover, teachers modified their speech to negotiate the meaning. Thus, the teachers simplified talk using utterances according to their students´ level, sometimes changing the usual flow of speech to slower, using simple vocabulary, more repetition, and ample gesturing. It was difficult to know whether these adjustments were made consciously or unconsciously, however, it was perceptible that the students felt comfortable and seemed adapted to listen to the teacher speaking in English most the time.

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

Graph 2

Others %: Grammar Translation, Cognitive Academic Language Learning, Whole Language Approach, The Natural Approach, Content -Based Instruction.

Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High

According to this graph, the largest percentage of teachers (73%) which represents 11 of them declared they apply Communicative Language Teaching as the method of teaching English in their classes. Cooperative Language Learning, Total Physical Response, and Task Based Language Teaching methods are dispersed with 7 %. Methods such as Grammar Translation, Cognitive Academic Language Learning, The Natural Approach, and Content- Based Instruction did not report any results. The particular case in this question was a teacher who did not know about methods.

The consensus among teachers who assure that they used Communicative Language Teaching in their classroom deserves be discussed.   The Communicative Approach in language teaching considers communication as the core of language. Furthermore, according to Richards & Rodgers (2001, p.161) the theory of learning of this method is supported by principles such as "activities that involve real communication promote learning." and "activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning." "Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process."

Therefore, the syllabus should focus on communicative objectives incorporating activities that involve learners in real communication. Littlewood (1981) cited in Richards & Rodgers 2001, p 166, states two types of communicational activities: functional and social interaction activities. Functional communication involves activities such as comparing pictures, resolving difficulties, discovering things, giving instructions, and following directions. Social interaction activities contain conversations, skits, dialogues, improvisations, debates, and discussions.

Although teachers said they use this method many aspects of the Direct Method were evident in the classrooms. Some examples include: emphasis on listening activities, not speaking, use of target language, not allowed translation,

methods for repetition, feedback from teachers, teacher centered instruction, new vocabulary introduced with demonstrations, exercises in books consisting of filling in the blanks, and different topics of the lessons. Regarding the use of resources except one teacher who used infocus, most teachers depended on their guide books and boards to develop lessons. Nothing more than usual was applied in the class.

Communicative Language Teaching involves a variety of games, role plays, simulations, cue cards, activity cards, jigsaws, information gaps, realia, magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, charts, signs, and advertisements. Nevertheless, none of these valuable materials were found in the classrooms.

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

Graph 3
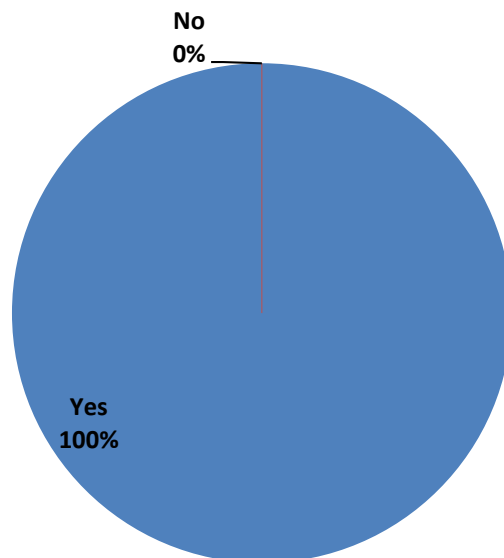
No
0%

Yes
100%

Author: Maritza Sosa

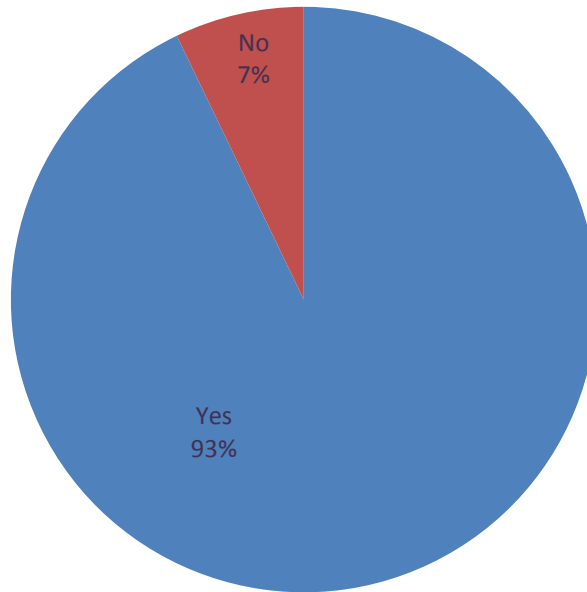Source: Private High Schools in Quito

Results obtained from this question reveal the totality of teachers applying whole group activities to teach their lessons. Different reasons supporting the use of this type of activities were expressed. Teachers found this way of imparting knowledge productive and many of them expressed the word "participation." They believe that whole-group activities facilitate all students taking part in the lesson. Moreover, they agree that this strategy can be used to provide support for the lesson. Another common reason mentioned by teachers refers students being able to communicate and share ideas, experiences, and feelings to the rest of the class.

This research work showed that most of the instruction in the classroom consisted of whole-group activities. The common pattern used by teachers was presenting a lesson to the whole class with little differentiation in either content or assessment for any student's ability. The learning tasks allowed students to practice literacy but all of them at the same pace. Moreover, teachers ensure comprehension by asking questions to the whole group and eliciting answers from students. In this way some students participate and many had little opportunity to receive direct instruction from the teacher. In addition, students´ personality can be another factor of the inactive participation of them in front of the class.   This was the general form of working in English classrooms.

Regarding this topic, the author Mehan (1979 cited in Helman 2009, p 28) explained "Whole class instruction typically includes a significant component of teacher talk, with student participation being conducted according to the teacher initiation, students´ response, and teacher evaluation." Most classes observed were developed with all this components. It is important to draw attention to the fact that not only in large classes but also in small ones teachers practiced mainly whole group activities.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 4

Author: Maritza Sosa
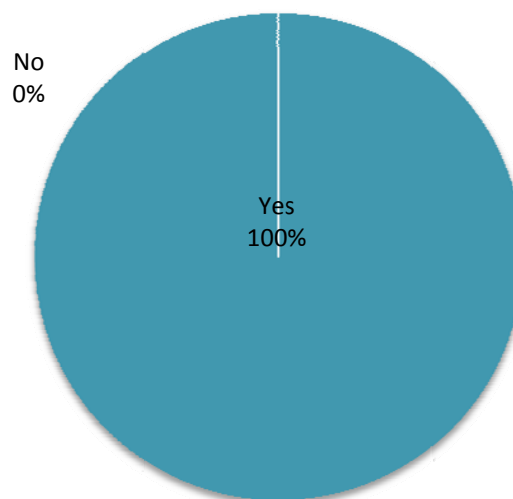
Source: Private High Schools in Quito

According to the graph, the greatest number of teachers (93 %) perceives individual activities as an efficient manner to reinforce and rehearse understanding of specific concepts being taught.

Teachers expressed some reasons about the convenience of applying these activities in classrooms. One of the reasons expressed is that during individual activities teachers can realize the progress of each student and identify skill problems. Also, teachers know their students´ ability in which point they may find learning problems. Another shared reason expressed was related to the special necessities of students; individual activities focus on their deficiencies. Finally, teachers believe individual activities uncover the learners´ thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, during the research it was noticeable that individual activities seemed the most suitable for students in these classes with different level of English for several reasons. They allow students to work at their own pace, and students were not stressed by a better or worse performance of others during the activity. Students had to rely on themselves, on their own knowledge in order to complete the task. Inevitably because the students worked at their own speed, some finished sooner than others. Although there were a variety of individual activities, the tasks used most were reduced to fill-in-the blanks exercises using the workbooks, homework, and individual oral presentations.

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

Graph 5

Author: Maritza Sosa

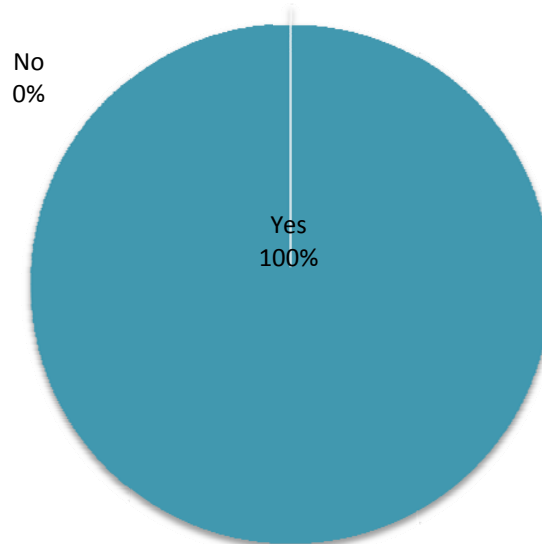Source: Private High Schools in Quito

The results displayed in Graph 5 show a surprising agreement among teachers on this issue. During the investigation and questions posed, some common words emerged like: "cooperation," "participation," "motivation," and "support".

Teachers found working with group-work activities foster cooperative attitude and great participation in students. This way learners share knowledge and ideas as well as help each other. This social interaction is proposed by Cooperative Language Learning Method. Regarding this method Brown (2001) states "as students work together in pairs and groups, they share information and come to each others´ aid." Besides the attribute of cooperation, teachers expressed group-work activities involve heightening motivation and self esteem.

Although teachers emphasize the benefits of working in groups, only one applied this kind of activity inside the classroom. The teacher used groups with the tasks consisting of answering the questions from a reading. Throughout this class observation, it was evident that group-work activities are a source of intrinsic motivation for students. Moreover they found amusement working in groups and it was an opportunity to share information and support each other.

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

Graph 6

No
0%

Yes
100%

Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

The findings obtained from this question show clearly all the totality of the teachers use English most of time in their instruction. Teachers and students agreed in this aspect; all students interviewed assured that their teachers speak mainly English in the classrooms.

The observation corroborates teachers use English for imparting lessons. In addition, teacher talk exceeded students talk and time speech was analyzed using percentages. The range of these percentages oscillated from 25% to 100%. Therefore, the teachers observed used from 75% to 100% of target language in class. Moreover, the mother tongue was spoken only in specific cases, for example when the teacher needed to explain points of grammar or when students felt lost

and confused in an English environment. This "atmosphere" of instruction strictly in English is due the rule of completely banned speaking Spanish in English classes.

Getting used to listening to the language is a way to learn it, and students were accustomed to hearing English especially from their teacher. Moreover, listening only to English seemed a relaxed experience for majority of them. Students did not feel nervous or anxious about listening to English.

Do teachers plan your lessons?

Graph 7
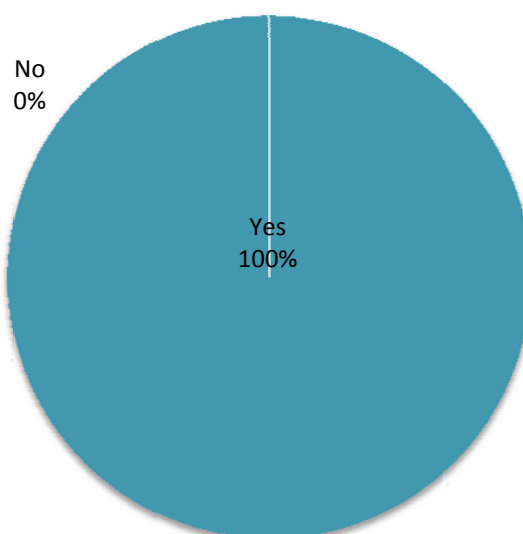
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

Results obtained from this graph demonstrate that all the teachers plan their lessons. Teachers affirmed that they prepare their classes in advance. In addition,

during the class observation several aspects related to this issue were considered. These aspects included: time, lesson topic, objectives, warm-up activities, introduction to the new topic, guided or individual practice, review/assessment/feedback and materials and resources.

The aspect most outstanding applied in the lessons observed was the lesson topic. The majority of the lessons began with the following: Teachers helped students to focus on the topic of the lesson by eliciting their existing knowledge related to grammar and language. After this stage teachers moved from preparation into presentation of the linguistic and topic content of the lesson using a learning strategy.

The next stage of the lesson focused on the shift of the students of receivers of knowledge to completers of a designated task. The teachers observed the students´ practice and guided them when they need his or her help. Finally, the feedback was applied which reinforced the content of the lesson and enabled the teacher monitors comprehension and learning. These noticeable parts of the lessons: preparation, presentation, practice, and evaluation can be compared to the components that Farrell (2007) proposes, "(1) perspective or opening, (2) stimulation, (3) instruction- participation, (4) closure and follow up."

Nevertheless this structure of the lesson was developed by the majority of teachers. It was evident they did not have daily written plans. Instead they followed the instructions and activities suggested by their text guides.

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

Graph 8

No
0%

Yes
100%
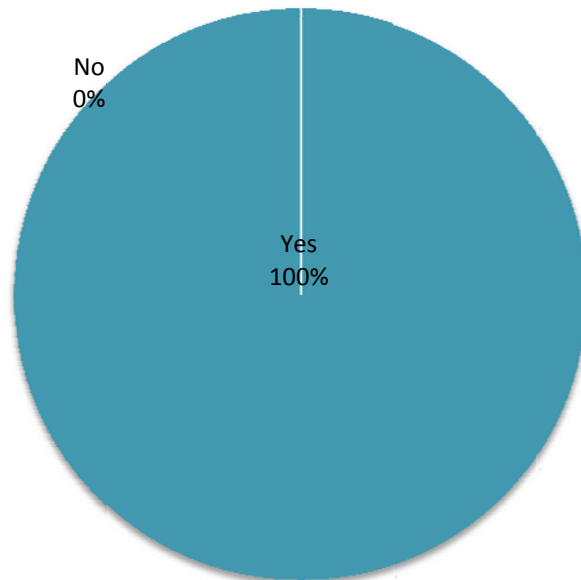
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

From the graph number 8, clearly 100% of the teachers assured they take into account aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach their lessons. Moreover, most of the students answered affirmatively when they were asked about this issue. Only four of them replied opposite to questions related to these aspects. Thus, when they were asked if the teacher controls discipline in the class, one student of the fifteen said no. Regarding one question asked about the time teachers assign for developing each activity, two students said teachers did not determine it. Regarding the feedback, three students considered that teachers do not reinforce the lesson. Another question asked about the unambiguousness of the instructions given by teachers. All students declared teachers provide clear instructions for developing activities in class and extra classes.

Furthermore some of these perceptions were confirmed during the research. Regarding discipline, it was obvious that teachers controlled this aspect in class. Maybe it was because the small number of students in some cases or because of the observer´s presence.

Aspects such as feedback and instruction were considered by teachers. Feedback provided students an opportunity to raise questions about language usage and teachers checked comprehension of new knowledge. According to Harmer (2007), feedback can be either a simple but elemental question or a detailed explanation of a particular topic. Instruction was implied in the management of activities. These activities for the practice segment of the lesson came from the textbooks.

Therefore, students had to follow the written instructions in order to accomplish the activities. The role of teachers in this part of the lesson was to assure understanding of the requirements of the task. Some teachers asked students to read the instructions before the activity. About this aspect, Nunan (1996) emphasize the importance of setting clear oral instructions even more so than if the instructions were given in the target language.

In contrast, timing in the practice stage of the lesson was not considered by teachers. According to Harmmer (2007) and Nunan (1996) teachers have to set the time for doing activities as well establish when students should start them. Also, students have to know how long each activity should last. Although this is an important aspect in a lesson, any teacher should set the time before beginning the activities.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers considerer Students´ needs to teach successfully?

Graph 9
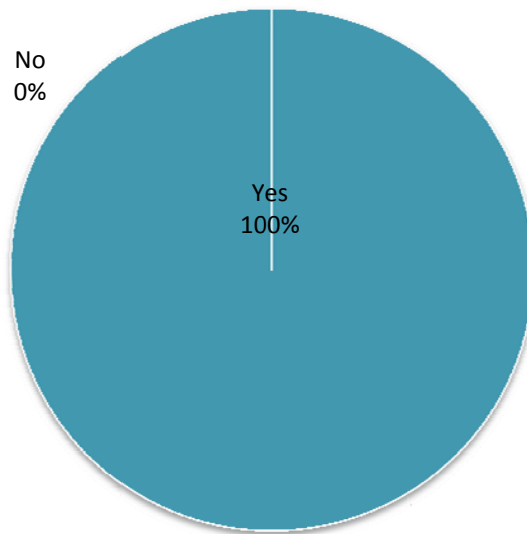
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito.

This question reports on the responses of the teachers regarding if they take into account the age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles of their students. Graph 9 shows at all of the teachers answered affirmatively o this question.

However, during the phase of observation it was evident that excluding age and motivation these factors were not appreciated. Age and motivation were linked in textbooks. The readings included interesting and relevant content to the student´s age. Thus, students were motivated by the activities and tasks suggested in books.

Teachers motivate learners by prompting them to achieve these tasks. Moreover, students seemed to follow a routine, a pattern in their English lessons. Although students felt less anxious or worried with this experience, they should be involved in a variety of activities, materials, tasks, which will increase the motivation for learning English.

There is no strong research which shows that students´ personality affects the acquisition of a second language. However, studies have found that achievement in language learning is related to certain kinds of personalities. Inside a classroom teachers met extroverted and introverted personalities and the role of teachers is to find a balance to integrate all students in the process of learning. During the investigation, this aspect was not detectable easily.

Regarding attitude, the fifteen students answered positively to the question of if they like to learn English. These results evidence a willingness and interest to keep learning. The majority of teachers took advantage of this predisposition not only for fulfilling a syllabus but also for training students with a valuable tool. Nevertheless, on some occasions this student´s attitude towards the second language needed more motivation. This lack of enthusiasm led to a decrease in attention and increase in boredom. The role of the teacher as a motivator was demonstrated during the lesson. There was a correlation with the attitude and enthusiasm of the teacher associated with the attitude and enthusiasm of the students.

Learning styles is understood as the natural ability of perceiving, processing and retaining information and knowledge. Regarding the acquisition of a second language, Lightbown & Spada (2006) states three "perceptually-based learning styles: aural, visual and kinesthetic." Aural learners acquire information through listening and inferring the meaning by the means of pitch, emphasis, and speed.

Visual learners need stimulus by visual images and non verbal cues to understand meaning. The kinesthetic learner needs interaction, thought, physical action and movement. Although there are different learning styles, the teachers observed considered strategies only for aural learners. The aural input of students was the speech of teachers and themselves in activities of readings and oral presentations. Only one teacher applied aural and visual techniques using the images generated by in-focus. Students of this class concentrated on the topic of the lesson and more willing to participate.

Do teachers consider students´ level to teach English successfully?

Graph 10
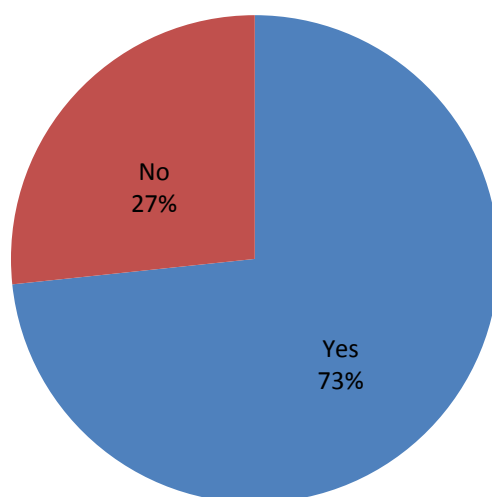
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

From Graph 10, basically the percentages show that while 11 teachers believed they consider the level of their students to teach English successfully, 4

teachers thought the opposite. Although the majority of teachers expressed they consider the level of their students, among teachers who said no emerged a common argument.

Although it was difficult to determine the level of students in a one hour class, during the observation aspects like the contents and topics were taken into account. Moreover, it was necessary to consider teachers´ speech that was adapted in order to be understood by students. Thus, teachers used utterances less complicated than ones that they were learning. They used simple present and simple past tense especially. Teachers also applied feedback in the form of questions. For example they ensure the subject was assimilated when they asked questions such as, "Did you understand?" Also teachers provided several exercises using the target structure.

In contrast, teachers who admitted not considering the level of their students for imparting knowledge are convinced that their classes are multi-level. They said their classrooms included students with different learning backgrounds. Thus, teaching English successfully in these conditions can be a challenge.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 11
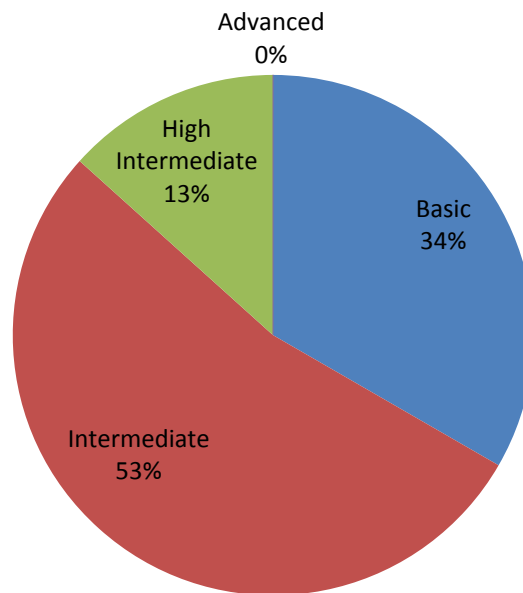
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

The outcomes of this question reflect the teacher´s view about the level of their students. More than half of the level of students 53% was as intermediate. More than a third of the teachers define this level at 34%. Less than a fifth classified their students as in the in the high intermediate level at 13 %, while the advanced level was not mentioned by any teacher. In sum, many teachers categorized their students as intermediate, five teachers thought the level of students as basic, two teachers believed the students had high intermediate level and no one considered the advanced level.

This data was corroborated by the process of observation. According to the Common European Framework or References for Languages; the intermediate level

is denominated as B (Independent User) and it involves two categories B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage). The majority of students from 10th to the third year of high School have the profile defined as the B1 level. As determined by CEFR, students in this level had "the ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with nonroutine information."

Learners of the lower intermediate level could understand the language of teachers, their instructions, and the general topics of readings. Furthermore, they could participate in short conversations, respond if spoken to directly, and carefully give elementary answers and requests, and ask simple questions. The learner could read and understand simple readings and practice oral presentations with effort.

Learners of the basic level could understand when the teacher was talking, but showed difficult to say their ideas. These students did simple questions employing useful phrases learned to practice in English classes. Moreover, the participation of these students was not noticeable. They passively receive instruction and speaking lesson consisted of repeating in chorus what teacher said. The CEFR states these students have "an ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts."

Factors Concerning Classrooms

How many students do teachers have in their classes?

Graph 12
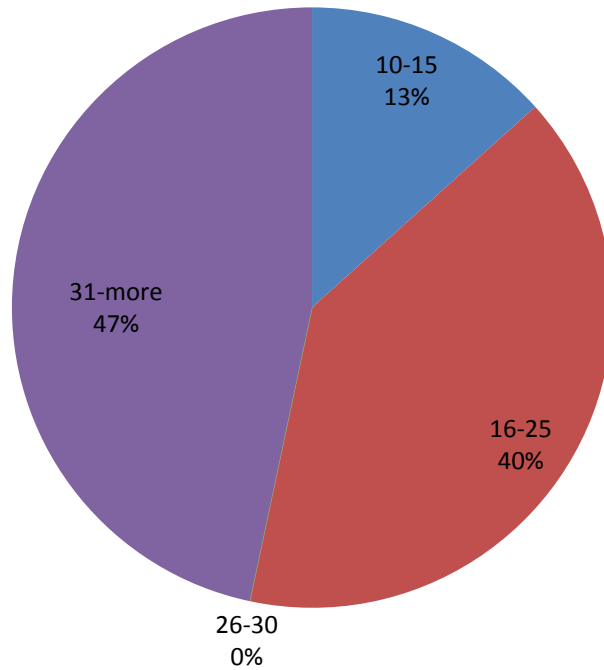
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

The results from this question reveal that 47 % or seven classrooms of the total investigated had 31 and more students. Forty percent or six classrooms had from 16 to 25 students. The number ranging from 10 to 15 students in a classroom was equal to 13%.

Although there is no consensus among researchers about the ideal class size for teaching English, Squire (1987) states classrooms as "large-group instruction" to groups from fifty to one hundred fifty learners. The other category is considered "small-group instruction" with groups of six to twelve students. Moreover, Saraswathi (2004, p 154) says "The notion of large classes has no uniform connotation in all parts of the world. In the West, a class of forty is regarded as

large." This statement confirms that perceptions of class size are subjective and may also depend on a number of variables.

On the other hand, among students interviewed different perceptions arose about this issue. The majority of students found that the number of pupils in their classrooms favor English learning in a better way. Half of these students attended classes of 10 to 25 partners. The other half of students participated in classrooms of 31 or more classmates. According to this data, students perceived that they were receiving instruction inside an acceptable class size. In contrast, the three students who did not consider that the number of students as appropriate for receiving instruction belonged to classes from 36 or more students. These results evidence the impression of students related to the minimum size of what would be considered a large class. Students judged that a large class has at least 40 learners.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with the number of their students?

Graph 13
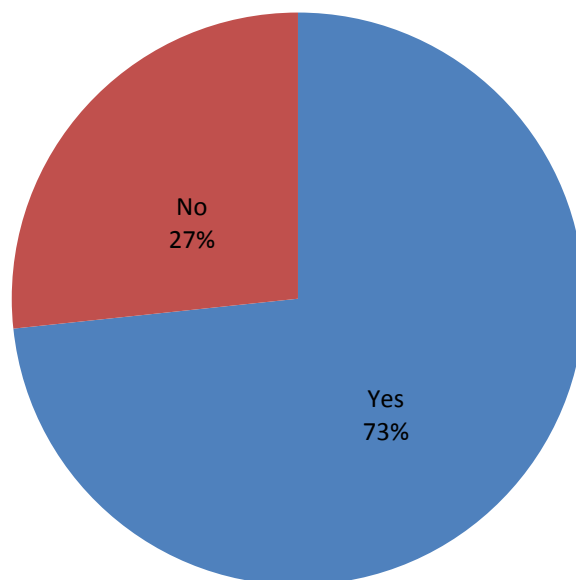
Author: Maritza Sosa
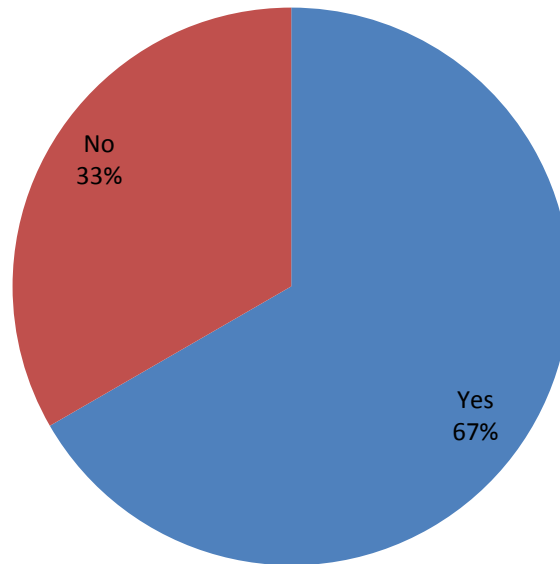
Source: Private High Schools in Quito

From Graph 13, the results showed that the participants said feeling comfortable working with their number of students. Most of teachers, 73% (11 participants) showed agreement with their class size. Inside these classrooms the students range from 10 to 36. The remainder, 27% (4 participants), it found inappropriate to teach English with more than 31 students in their classes.   In addition, half of the teachers who had more than 31 students were comfortable working with this number while the others did not feel satisfied with their class size.

According to the field investigation it was noticeable that teachers and students felt more comfortable when the class size was smaller (considering a group from 10 to 25 students). Teachers could interact in a better way with students, provide detailed feedback when a student needed, and had more time to answer questions in class. Oral presentations were assessed individually and homework was checked. On the other hand, students had more chances to speak. They felt comfortable voicing their questions and opinions. Furthermore students interacted among them and with the teacher. They received more attention and interest from their teachers.

Regarding these aspects, the fifteen students were asked after the observation. The question aimed to know if they considered the size of the classroom as comfortable for working. Ten students believed that their classrooms had adequate space to work in. However, among the five students who thought the opposite, there was a surprising agreement on this issue. All expressed the word "narrow" to define the size of their classrooms in relation to the number of students. Although in some classrooms there were 16 to 25 students, they found the physical space uncomfortable for learning.

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

Graph 14

Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

Graph 14 displays the findings about the teachers´ perceptions towards the physical space of their classrooms. The majority, 67 % which is equal to 10 teachers, expressed to having enough space to work in concordance with the number of students. In addition, eight teachers worked with classes from 10 to 25 individuals. Only two teachers found their physical area enough for more than 31 students. In contrast, 33% or 5 teachers, found that the classroom space was not adequate for instruction.

Consequently, this question implies analyzing the classroom space of the observed classrooms. In general, these were well designed considering necessities of students and teachers. This design facilitated the teacher´s efforts to have visual contact with the whole class. Students and teachers moved freely around the

classroom except in a few of these with more than 30 students. Moreover, the physical environment allowed students to access teachers easily. The structure of the classroom space facilitated the individual and group interaction of students.

In fact, the results obtained from teachers´ interviews agree substantially with the impressions gathered in classrooms observation. Thus, most of the classes observed which had 10 to 25 students were considered comfortable enough for instruction. In addition, almost all classrooms with more than 31 students did not have adequate space. In some of these classrooms teachers and students could walk hardly. There was no area to arrange the furniture in another way. Because of that it was difficult working in groups or preparing activities which demanded more space. Moreover, in these spaces students did not have easy access to their teachers.

On the other hand, the fifteen students were also asked about the physical space after the observations. Most of them (12 students) considered that their classrooms were enough wide for working in a comfortable way. Furthermore, six students belonged to classrooms of more than 31 students. The remaining students thought they received instruction in "narrow" spaces. These students attended classes from 24 to 36 individuals.

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

Graph 15
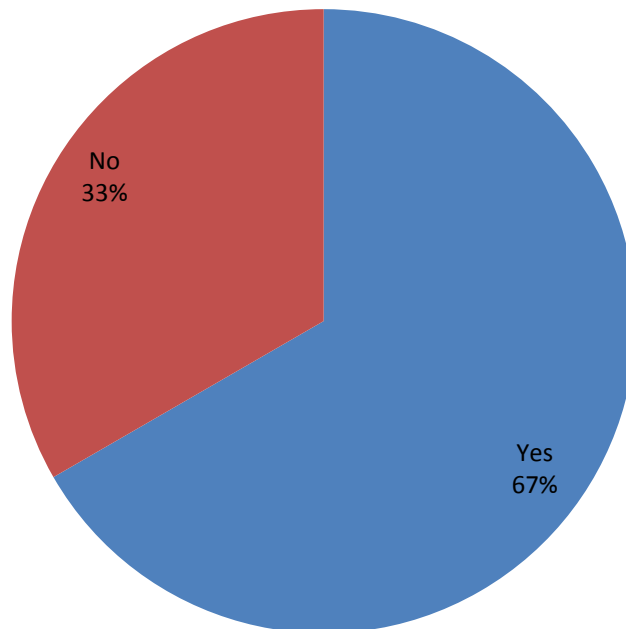
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito

This question about the students´ seating arrangement yielded the following findings. While 67% of teachers said they arrange students´ seats taking into account the activities planned for their classes, 33% of teachers answered negatively to this issue. In addition, these percentages coincide with those questions related to the space of classrooms. In other words: having enough space in classrooms implies arranging students´ seats. Most of teachers who said they had enough space in their classrooms arranged the seats according to the activities planned. Furthermore, this question showed a singular situation. Although two teachers did not have enough space in their classrooms, they moved furniture. On the other hand, there was a surprising agreement among students in relation to this

aspect. One hundred percent of the students liked the way teachers arranged seats for working in different kinds of tasks and activities.

Bradshaw, Grainger & Knoza (2001, pg 25) claim "tables in rows, small clusters, larger blocks, U-shapes or work stations have advantages and disadvantages. Each style of desk arrangement will encourage certain behaviors and discourage others." In fact, during the research in many classrooms was obvious the traditional disposition of larger blocks and U-shapes. In classrooms having 31 and more students, the movable desks were all lined up in columns. In classrooms of 10 to 25 students, the seats were arranged in an appropriate U-shapes disposition. The organization of seats in larger blocks facilitates teacher demonstrations and individual tasks. Teachers had easy visual contact with students, too. This kind of arrangement was typical of teacher-centered instruction. Nevertheless these advantages, larger blocks did not motivate student-to student interaction.

U shaped arrangements seemed more comfortable for students and teachers. Teachers had control of the class from any place they were standing up. In addition, they could monitor the activities in most of students. The interaction among students was feasible and interaction of students with teachers flowed naturally.

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

Graph 16
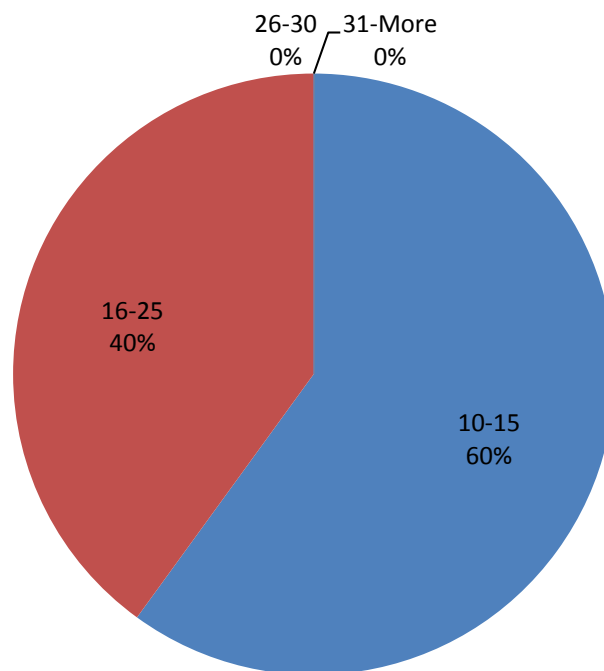
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito.

The outcomes established for this question show clearly that the majority of teachers (60% that or nine teachers) thought 10-15 students was the appropriate number to teach English. The other percentage (40%) corresponds to 6 teachers who believe 16 -25 students are a suitable number to work with. These results reflect that smaller classes are important for English teachers, and a desirable situation in their classrooms.

Additionally, teachers associated class size with students´ achievement. The students in small classes observed (classrooms with 10 to 25 pupils) had frequent opportunities for oral expression. In small classes students received opportune feedback from teacher. Furthermore learners interacted effectively with their partners and received assessment of their written activities or tasks from teachers.

The easy access to teachers developed individual relationship with their teacher. The number of students facilitated visual contact among them and with the teacher.

Moreover, the small classes were arranged according to the number of students in a single or double semicircle. This disposition of seats and the physical space were appropriate to move furniture and participate in dynamic activities. In contrast, larger classes in limited spaces did not facilitate the moving of seats. The unique possible disposition was in columns of seven or eight students in each one. Inside these classrooms students seemed not very comfortable. Teacher and students did not move around the class easily.

Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, tape / Cd recorder, Computer(s), Projector (s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?

Graph 17
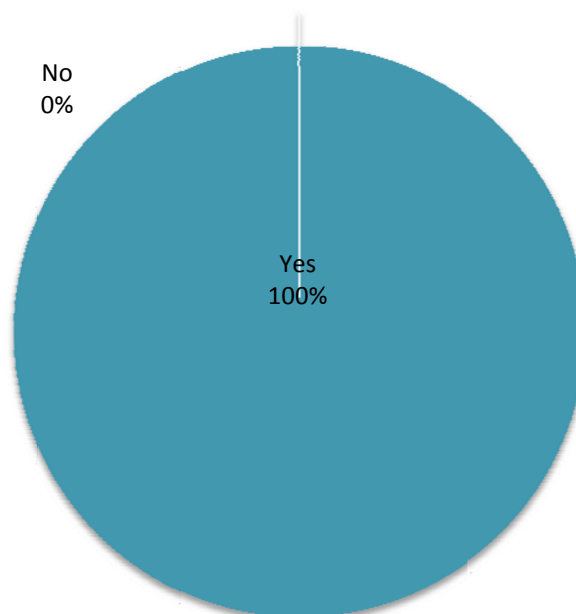
Graph 17 demonstrates that the totality of the participant teachers employed a variety of teaching resources in their classrooms. The technological resources most used by teachers as follows: CD recorders, computers, and projectors. Television, supplementary materials, and smartboard are used less according to the answers given in the interview. Furthermore, all students answered affirmatively when they were asked about the use of instructional material. The students and teachers agreed about the resources used frequently. They said CD recorders and computers were utilized most for learning English.

Harmer (2007) called these resources and others (interactive whiteboards, and the Internet) as educational technology. He identified traditional material like whiteboards, overhead projectors (OHP), tape recorders, blackboard and exercise books. Moreover, Harmer considers the books and boards as elemental material for learning and emphasizes even with minimal aids, instruction is possible if the teacher use creativity.

Throughout the research inside the classrooms´ environment it was verified that only two classrooms had a television and a CD recorder as permanent devices. Additionally, three institutions had a computer laboratory but students admitted they seldom practice in them. There was a school that included in its facilities a virtual room with a smartboard, in focus, and a computer laboratory. Another institution only had a whiteboard for teaching English.

Supplementary material is all the visual and interactive aids which have a motivator role in learning. Thus, teachers can incorporate and adapt into the contents of the course book pictures, photos, flash cards, charts, posters, word

cards, stories, videos, movies, cartoons, crossword puzzles, folk tales, songs, poems, proverbs, riddles, maps, etc. Nevertheless the importance of this substantial resource, this material was not found in any classroom. The majority of classrooms hardly had English course signs on the doors and schedules on the walls. Consequently teachers rely mainly on the traditional boards and used textbooks to impart knowledge and guide the curricular activities.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph 18

No
7%

Yes
93%
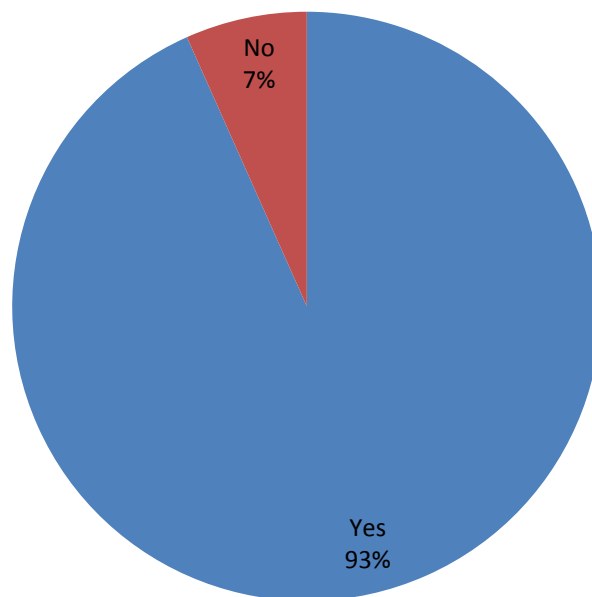
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: High Private Schools in Quito.

According to this diagram almost all the teachers (14) considered the resources they have in classrooms appropriate. Only one teacher disagreed with the

suitability of his resources for teaching English. Although the teacher is himself or herself the most important resource in class, using adequate teaching materials can support learning and increase student success. When teachers were asked about this issue they expressed shared reasons to support their answers. First, using these resources helps teachers to keep the students´ attention. Learners focus on what is being taught and they are involved in the lesson topic. Second, language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing can be better developed by manipulating or exploring these resources. Third, when students´ senses are stimulated through interesting elements, they fell motivated to learn a language. Fourth, teachers found it easier for them deliver instruction and that were relaxed to students. Finally, some teachers indicated that they used technology and other materials because of the availability in their schools.

In addition to these responses, teachers expressed suggestions in order to optimize the utilization of the resources in their institutions. Some emphasize that they used technological resources only in English laboratories. They preferred to have them in their classrooms. Moreover, one teacher said the resources are "all gathered" in these rooms and their use is reduced.

From the students' point of view, the educational resources for learning inside classrooms and English laboratories are appropriate. All students answered affirmatively to the question related to the use of televisions, CD recorders, computers, smart-boards, etc. According to students, CD recorders are the teaching equipment most easily available and used by teachers.

Factors Concerning Educational Institutions

Does the institution review teachers´ lesson plans?

Graph 19

No
0%

Yes
100%

If yes, how frequently?

Once a week
13%

Other
33%

Once a Month
54%
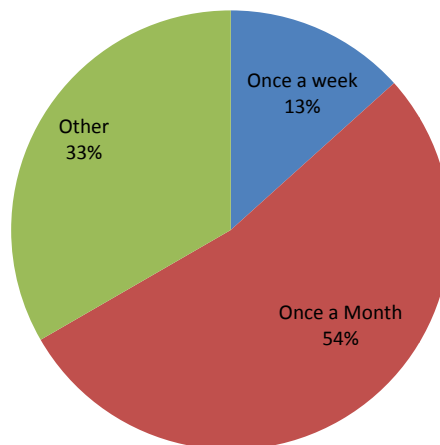
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: High Private Schools in Quito

These charts show detailed information about the policy of reviewing lesson plans in the investigated schools. The left chart indicates that the totality of institutions checking lesson plans to ensure the achievement of the syllabus. The right chart describes the frequency which these plans are reviewed. The lesson

plans that belonged to 8 teachers were reviewed once a month (54%). Two teachers stated their lessons plans were checked once a week (13%). The percentage of (33%) was determined by 4 teachers who said the frequency was in terms such as: everyday, each 6 weeks, and once a year.

Farrell (2007, p. 27) states, "Planning is often viewed as a key aspect of teaching a successful lesson. During the planning phase, the teacher makes decisions about goals, activities, resources, timing, grouping, and other aspects of the lesson" In addition, lesson plans are linked to a curriculum. Teachers said they designed lesson plans following a determined curriculum.

On the other hand, teachers expressed opinions of the institutions´ reasons for reviewing their lesson plans. They argued that reviewing lesson plan first: ensures that the lesson actually touch on all of the required topics. Second, this control is an easy way for teachers and schools to monitor learning. Third, teachers are not working in isolation. They teach alongside others who are covering similar aspects. Schools want to ensure teachers of the same grade teach the same things. Finally, authorities assure that the lesson plans meet school or governmental requirements and standards of education.

Does the institution monitor teachers?

Graph 20
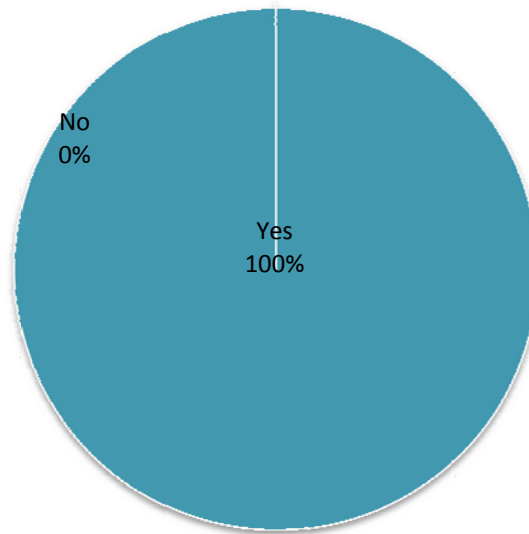
If yes, how frequently?
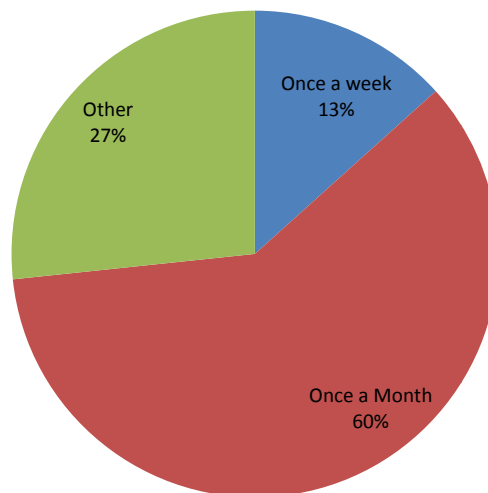
Author: Maritza Sosa

Source: Private High Schools in Quito.

For the charts above it could said that all the researched institutions regularly control the way teachers impart knowledge. The left graph demonstrates that all of

the institutions monitor teachers; the right one illustrates the frequency of

monitoring.   The greater number of institutions monitors teachers once a month (60

%). The smallest percentage of schools supervises teachers once a week (13%).

The remaining percentage represents institutions that oversee teachers every three,

or five months.

Zepeda (2008, p. 16) writes "The intent of supervision is to improve teaching

and to lend assistance to teachers as they move throughout their careers. To this

end, supervision is a proactive, ongoing set of processes and procedures."

Therefore, supervision broadly refers to the professional guidance and support

provided by authorities in schools. Supervision is the mean to offer the teacher help

that will enhance and improve teacher motivation and classroom instruction. Inside

this context, teachers interviewed expressed the purposes that schools have for

conducting supervision. They said these motivations would be for identifying needs

of physical and pedagogical conditions inside classrooms, for instance material and

furniture.

Another reason for monitoring would be to ensure teachers accomplish the

goals and objectives of the syllabus. Staff management in schools supervises

teachers to determine if they are applying a suitable method in their instruction.

Nevertheless, some teachers said that it is expected that monitoring provides

professional support and guidance to the teacher, too. They feel institutions need to

systematize this assessment in order to optimize results.

CONCLUSIONS

- The research reveals that visual and kinesthetic learning styles were relegated. Teachers did not use visual aids like handouts which help students to retain more information. Neither physical activity nor some kind of movement for learning English took place in the classrooms. The learning style mostly used was aural; teachers´ speech was the main auditory stimulus.

- English learning in most high schools took place with classes from 16 to 36 students. The physical spaces which welcomed these students were big enough in the majority of classrooms. Moreover, the seating arrangement in these spaces depended on the number of students. U shape-form was the disposition of seats in classes with 10 to 25 students while in larger classes seats were organized in the traditional blocks or columns.

- Teachers´ language proficiency, the level of education and the percentage of the English language used in class shaped the instruction of learners. The majority of teachers showed an adequate proficiency according to their level of education. This skill facilitated teachers for imparting lessons using the target language only.

- This research uncovers characteristics of teacher-centered instruction. Instruction occurred frequently with the whole class. Knowledge was transmitted from professor to students who passively receive information. Assessment is used to monitor learning and teacher talk exceeded student talk during instruction.

- In most of the cases, teachers followed a lesson design that consisted of perspective or opening, stimulation, instruction-participation, closure, and follow up activities. Moreover, during the lesson the teachers controlled discipline, provide feedback, and give instructions to students. Timing may

be considered by teachers, but they did not explain to learners when they should start an activity and when to finish it.

- This study indicates all of the institutions had the policy of controlling lesson plans and monitoring English classes. This policy aims to ensure that instruction supports optimum learning according school and government standards. More than half of the high schools reviewed lesson plans and supervised teachers once a month.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Peers can play an important role in academic achievement during adolescence in the support they provide regarding high achievement. Moreover, advanced friends can motivate others to work hard, or they can convince peers to do it the best. Therefore, teachers should consider activities that group their students in pairs according to this point of view.

- There are educational technologies inside English laboratories in most high schools. This technology should enhance learning and there is no value in just having it but more important is having easy access to it. Schools should provide optimal conditions for the use of technology.

- Supplementary materials refer to any substantial additional aid which teachers use at their discretion to supplement the main textbook. It is advisable that teachers do not depend on boards and books only; they should add and adapt these materials to support teaching and motivating learning. Moreover, teachers can provide classrooms with material from their students, for example, asking them to bring English magazines, posters, novels, poems, etc. Teachers can even design and make their own material.

- A welcoming classroom environment is essential for success in the classrooms. Teachers should create a welcoming atmosphere where students feel relaxed and willing to learn. For example posting motivational phases in English, daily homework, and announcements.

- Institutions should consider students in the same class have different knowledge of the language. Schools should assessment students´ knowledge in order to determine their level and impart lessons according this aspect.

- Supervising teaching by institutions´ management staff involves a structured observation for assessing how teachers provide lessons to their students.

- Institutions should focus the objective on the opportunity to provide teachers with valuable feedback on how their teachers practice could be improved.

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ANNEXES

OBSERVATION SHEET

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

1. Does the teacher considerer 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, 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 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 to 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 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	( )
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 profesion?
	What are the benefits that come from teachers staying more time in the educational institutions?
	What is the difference between teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL)

TEACHER´S LANGUAGE PROFIENCY:
C2 ( ) C1 ( ) B2 ( ) B1 ( ) A2 ( ) A1 ( )

STUDENT´S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés ?

YES ( )   NO   (   )

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

YES   (   )   NO   (   )

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?

YES   (   )   NO (   )

¿Por qué? _____

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

YES   (   )   NO   ( )

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

YES   (   )   NO   ( )

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

```
YES (   )            NO (  )
```

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

```
YES (   )            NO (  )
```

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

```
YES (   )            NO (   )
```

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

```
YES (   )            NO (   )
```

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

```
YES (    )            NO (    )
```

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

```
YES (    )            NO (    )
```

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

```
YES  (    )            NO  (   )
```

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

```
YES (   )            NO (    )
```

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?

| Student´s Needs (*age, personality, attitude, motivation, and learning style)* |
| YES ( )   NO   (   ) |

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

| Student´s Level *(Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced)* |
| YES ( )   NO   (   ) |

4. Which is the level of your students?

| Student´s 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), Smarboard, 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!!!!!!!!!