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Ecuadorian high school teachers' perceptions on ICT use in their EFL classes

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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Mgtr.

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DOCENTE UTPL

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación "Ecuadorian high school teachers' perceptions on ICT use in their EFL classes" realizado por Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por lo tanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, febrero de 2018.

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

Yo, Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez, declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de titulación: "Ecuadorian high school teachers' perceptions on ICT use in their EFL classes", de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación, Mención Inglés, siendo la Mgtr. Cristina Kathalina Morocho Pintado, 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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Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez.

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DEDICATION

To God for giving me enough strength and understanding capacity in order to achieve this new educational challenge that began some years ago and little by little was consolidated.

To my dear husband for his great support throughout this study time in which he also had to sacrifice his leisure time or his time to visit his beloved parents, brothers and nephews to accompany me and be in charge of many of the household chores . To him, who constituted a huge support on which I could sustain confidently goes this affectionate dedicatory, because he has gained it silently.

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To all my family, the most motivating people in my life.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

Graciela.

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to analyze Ecuadorian high school teachers' perceptions about ICT usage in their EFL classes. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied to gather information. Therefore, an 18-statement questionnaire on the characteristics of English teachers considered by them as barriers to use ICT in their classes, and another 17-statement questionnaire about the characteristic factor that mainly influences the use of ICT in their classes were applied. The sample of 20 teachers was determined at random, and consisted of 10 teachers from privateand 10 from public institutions in Azogues and Cañar cities. Besides, 6 from the 20 teachers were chosen at random to be interviewed.

As a conclusion this research determined that the majority of teachers are aware of the importance of ICT usage in education. Regarding the teachers' gender, it was established that female EFL teachers are more cautious in their opinions on ICT usage than male ones; however, it was also clear that both groups want to learn more about technology.

Key words: teachers' perceptions, ICT use, barriers, teachers' characteristics, teachers' gender, Ecuadorian high schools.

RESUMEN

Este estudio se realizó para analizar las percepciones de los profesores de secundaria de Ecuador sobre el uso de las TIC en sus clases de EFL. Para recopilar información se aplicaron métodos de investigación cualitativa y cuantitativa, de modo que se usó un cuestionario de 18 declaraciones sobre las características de los profesores de inglés considerados por ellos como barreras para usar TIC en sus clases, y otro cuestionario de 17 declaraciones sobre el factor característico que influye principalmente en el aplicación de TIC en clases. La muestra de 20 docentes se determinó al azar y consistió en 10 docentes de instituciones privadas y 10 de públicas de Azogues y Cañar. Además, 6 de los 20 maestros fueron elegidos al azar para ser entrevistados.

Como conclusión, esta investigación determinó que la mayoría de los profesores son conscientes de la importancia del uso de las TIC en la educación. En cuanto al género, se estableció que las docentes son más cautelosas en sus opiniones sobre el uso de las TIC que los docentes; sin embargo, también quedó claro que ambos grupos desean aprender más sobre tecnología.

Palabras clave: percepciones de los docentes, uso de TICs, barreras, características de los docentes, género de los docentes, escuelas secundarias ecuatorianas.

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the process of learning the English language awakens reflections and discussions. On one hand, some people see in ICT, the solution to the problems of teaching and learning, while others see it as a contribution rather than as a didactic resource. In this context there are three positions: skepticism, indifference, and optimism.

This research work related to the EFL teachers' perceptions on ICT use in EFL classes intends to establish the EFL teachers' characteristics which are considered as barriers to the ICT use in English classes, and at the same time the factor regarding to teachers' characteristics which influence the most on teachers ICT use in classes.

In order to achieve this goal, a study applied to 20 participants (10 teachers from public secondary schools and 10 teachers from private secondary schools in two Ecuadorian cities: Azogues and Cañar) has been carried out. These participants were selected randomly, and they were invited to fill in two questionnaires; the first one was an 18-statement questionnaire related to the teachers' characteristics considered as barriers to the ICT use, and the second one was a 17-statement questionnaire to determine the factor related to teachers' characteristics which influence the most on teachers to use ICT in class. Both groups of study were divided into two subgroups: 5 female teachers and 5 male teachers.

The analysis of the results obtained through these research instruments was done on the basis of the comments provided by 6 of the same teachers who were part of the survey, 3 from public secondary schools (one male teacher and two female teachers), and 3 from private secondary schools (two male teachers and one female teacher), who were also chosen at random.

This research work was based on three important research questions:

- Which aspects related to teachers' characteristics are considered by most of the EFL teachers as barriers to use ICT in their classroom?
- Which factor regarding to teachers' characteristics does influence the most on teachers to use ICT in their classroom?
- How is ICT use perceived by EFL teachers in relation to their gender?

Regarding these topics, some investigations were conducted. One study by Hismanoglu (2012) had as objective to study the prospective of distance EFL teachers' perceptions on ICT integration. Its conclusion was that ICT presents a powerful learning environment for learners in the classroom and that teachers should be trained on how ICT can be integrated into the teaching process. Likewise, Gebremedhim and Fenta (2015) conducted a study aimed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards ICT integration into

teaching- learning process. These authors concluded that most teachers are unable to use ICTs in the teaching-learning process due to lack of resources and lack of support; although this may be true, according to the present study it was possible to conclude that teachers are positive towards ICT implementation. Considering one last study by Aworanti (2016) in which the main purpose was to find out what the emerging challenges in the application of ICT are; the conclusion on this last study was that technological bang demands improvements on the teaching-learning process.

To conclude, it is important to mention that the beneficiaries of this research are, on the one hand, Ecuadorian EFL high school teachers, since on the basis of the results obtained through it; it will be possible to plan better teaching activities which let them include ICT strategies in their English classes; and of course, the other part is also an important beneficiary, the students because they will have more motivating and active experiences through the teachers' new ICT applications.

Finally, let me point out that, although time was one of the biggest limitations when doing this research, it was not a definitive constraint, since I always counted with the support of people around me that is why I want to mention them within this important part of my work.

CHAPTER I:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter covers important information on aspects related to the use of ICT in EFL teaching. Thus, here you will find a review of the scientific literature on the definition of ICT, its importance in the specific field of education, and the advantages and disadvantages of using ICT to teach English as a foreign language. This document also provides information on the role and competences of EFL teachers regarding to the use of ICT, as well as on EFL teachers' gender influence on the use of ICT in their classes. On the other hand, this work takes into account the psychological, educational, professional and personal EFL teachers' characteristics considered by most of them either as barriers or as positive influences for the use of ICT in their classrooms. Lastly, it is important to mention that in order to give a greater scientific sustenance to this work, it includes six scientific articles related to the aspects noted above which have been taken from scientific journals.

ICT use in EFL teaching

According to Troudi and A-Mahrooqi (2014), technology has been present in education since 1960 thanks to the CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), and it represented a great help for teachers due to its advantages to work.

Definition.

Considering the definition of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Sallai (2012) states that this concept refers to all types of telecommunication services and devices such as computers, software, networks, databases, etc., that come together with media technology in order to access information, for communication and for problem solving.

In addition, according to Perron, Taylor, Glass, and Margerum-Leys (2010), information and communication technologies are generally defined as technologies used to handle and store data by electronic means. This can include e-mail, SMS text messaging, video chat, and online social media through the use of all the computing devices that carry out communication and information. These same authors state that ICTs are rapidly growing and they are modeling today's society and education. This technology is turning into a low-cost, effective and productive tool that allows the construction of networks used every day throughout the world. For instance, ICT in society is an implement for business and industry; and in education, this technology allows distance education and other online courses which includes EFL education as well.

Importance.

Regarding the importance of ICT use, there are numerous reasons why EFL teachers must include technology in their classes. ICT is important as an educational tool since it helps learners to improve their skills of research, information assessment, communication and problem solving. In fact, innovative use of ICTs can facilitate student centered learning. In other words, it promotes students' autonomy and independence. Second, ICT also enhances the quality and accessibility of education because it potentiates opportunities for

learners to gain equality in education within diverse perspectives and services. For instance, the Internet and the computers make possible for all researchers to have access to the same information throughout the world (Noor-Ul-Amin, 2013).

Also, according to Tedla (2012), the use of ICT in EFL teaching and particularly the use of a computer motivate the development of a learning environment in a different atmosphere where teachers and students interact and work as a team to learn new skills of language and its complex structures, thus classrooms turn into constructivist environments. Similarly, the same author mentions ICT has some objectives in education: discipline, organization and as a means of teaching and learning. Therefore, ICT is important for students to develop reasoning skills, to organize disciplines and as a tool to promote a positive EFL learning environment among teachers and students. Hence, the use of ICT improves the learning process by helping students to engage in decision making and reasoning. In addition, ICT is important for fast and easy learning process, since it lets an efficient storage and an effective information retrieve, which helps students to develop cognitive skills and reasoning behaviors directed to solve problems.

Advantages.

When talking about the use of ICT in EFL teaching, there are a lot of advantages which can promote its use inside or outside the classroom. Tools such as blogs, AWV and the Internet are of tremendous help when the target is the development of different skills within language learning.

One popular ICT tool, which is frequently used in the teaching of reading and writing is the use of blogs. Blogging is basically a medium for communication; it is not just a place where writers can save their works but it offers the possibility of different audiences who can give every writer useful feedback in many aspects of EFL writing. Online blogs also allow students to have different access points; this means that the work can be edited at anytime and anywhere. In this regard, some researchers have concluded that the blog's communicative network might enable young students to expose and defend their reasoning and thoughts. Besides, since the audience is no longer only the teacher, but instead there are many other people, the text comes to be a piece of work where writing for the audience, and understanding are the main objectives.

Another useful advantage of ICT in EFL teaching is Authoring With Video (AWV) which enables students to get started writing by using videos. AWV also promotes organization, video comprehension abilities and tests students as publishers and producers. In addition, according to Talebian, Mohammadi and Rezvanfar (2014), another advantage of ICT is e-learning or online education. They state that the combination of information and communication technology provides more opportunities for learners and increases the speed

of learning and generating a person as an autonomous active learner. In this leaning style, teachers and students interact actively to construct knowledge in an analytical manner.

Likewise, ICT offers a platform for active and meaningful learning within the wide variety of Internet resources. Even more, the Internet itself is an easy access tool that gives students control of their own learning experience because they analyze and select the information that best suits their study. Besides Beatty (2013) claims the implementation of computer assisted language learning (CALL) cannot longer be ignored because it is as important as other skills such as mathematics, speech, science and writing. CALL creates a supportive and motivating setting where learners work at their own linguistic developmental pace.

Disadvantages.

ICT has broadened educational opportunities and while it brings many advantages with its implementation there are some disadvantages that cannot be ignored. Integrating technology into curricula has not been an easy task and it continues to be an issue for academics. ICT integration must be taken into consideration in scholar programs since it supports research, communication and problem solving in academic matters. However, two important factors of reluctance when applying ICTs are financial costs and resource availability (Yanus, Nordin, Salehi, Sun, & Embi, 2013).

Thus, regarding financial costs, economic school realities are an important issue to be considered, as Temitope (2015) states, ICT implementation requires big investments and many institutions do not count with enough money for these purposes. This author argues that the issue of cost is a big problem when using ICTs for teaching and learning. Extra money is necessary to buy, maintain and repair ICTs; in addition to the training and support needed for educators. This is generally one of the main factors for a successful integration of ICT into education; and when it is not available, funding becomes a disadvantage in this task.

Additionally, lack of familiarity on ICTs among teachers, is another disadvantage; even though this fact is in changing process, the reality is that many teachers do not master ICTs and in that logic the use of ICTs turns into a weakness that they must overcome to deal with curricula nowadays.

Another type of disadvantages may be students' distraction. Frequently, computers draw students' attention more than teachers' instructions do during class and this represents a worrying issue for teachers. In addition, another disadvantage of ICT use in EFL is the shortage of time because EFL is always scheduled for less time than other subjects. Most institutions have their labs for EFL and by the time students are ready to start, half of their period has gone.

The aforementioned facts can be considered barriers that society, teachers and learners must overcome so ICT can become part of the teaching-learning process (Yanus et al., 2013).

Teachers and ICT usage

Teachers' role.

Regarding the role of teachers in the use of ICT in EFL classrooms, teachers are expected to include ICT in their programs in order to accomplish the educational changes according to which students are better prepared for a modern society. However, a teacher's role may vary depending on students' levels and limitations.

According to Cviko, McKenney and Voogt (2014), it is important that teachers take an active role and involvement in the design of technology integrated activities in order to implement them effectively in their EFL classrooms. They argue that on ICT teachers play roles as executors for ready-made plans, re-designers for existing activities and materials, and designers for new activities.

These authors also claim that the most common role among teachers is the redesigning, in comparison to designer, because it is a natural activity which requires less work from teachers. Similarly, executors, re-designers and co-designers may differ in their expectation of the benefit of implementation for their pupils. In the same way, these authors also point out that teachers must work as facilitators because once the vision has been successfully created and accepted, the next step is to apply an ICT integration plan, in which the teacher's responsibilities on how to integrate technology are well defined.

On the other hand, Chemmar (2012) claims that the role of a teacher may vary according to the activities, the learners and the stage of the lesson. At different times, EFL teachers may act as controllers, organizers, assessors, prompters, participants, resources, tutors, and observers. As controllers, teachers must supervise at all times students' attention and progress. As organizers, teachers must have all activities and materials ready for class. As assessors, teachers give learners opportunities for learning and the appropriate feedback. As prompters, teachers encourage students to apply themselves to promote active learning; besides, when a teacher presents new language to the class, his/her role is to inform and explain to the learners. As participants, teachers share the learning experience with learners. As resources, teachers should be ready to act as a guide for students. As tutors, they must direct students so they feel supported. As observers, teachers can evaluate students' improvement.

Undoubtedly, all the aforementioned teachers' roles can be applied to EFL learning when using ICTs in its process.

Teachers' competence.

Prendes, Castañeda and Guitierrez, (2010) refer that being competent, includes not only knowing how to do things, but knowing why things are done in this way. In this regard, there are numerous competencies that EFL teachers must fulfill; Rossner (2017) proposes three main areas: intercultural competences, language awareness and use of digital media. Intercultural competencies are important in EFL classes because they link learners with another culture; students should become familiar with English culture and its backgrounds. Language awareness is a required competence on EFL teachers because they must be able to manage the different resources available such as books, handouts, etc.; and also they should be able to suit students' needs in language.

Regarding teachers' competence on the use of digital media, it can be said that this is the most important ability required on a teachers' profile when implementing ICTs for the obvious reason that they must know how to handle technology in order to use it in class. Moreover, teaching and learning tools are changing constantly and teachers must appreciate the availability of new technology and learn to use it correctly. In addition, most of them must learn to deal with deep anxiety feeling about ICTs.

On the other hand, technology competency must not be seen only in terms of hardware and software but as the development of a set of competencies that will help teachers access, gather, present and communicate, and manipulate the information that is available in the form of text, images, sound, title page, references and designs. In other words, learning word processing, spread sheets or accessing the web.

Teachers will have to develop skills on how to operate projectors, handheld devices and smart boards, just to mention some of the new devices available for teaching. They must also be able to solve trouble-shooting problems and logical problems. Besides, they should have competencies related to communication, and information analysis and processing in order to be able to locate relevant information, collect and evaluate data, store and manage data, among others. In general, teachers must develop competencies to handle information from many sites and sources by using general and special search tools.

In addition, the authors Dowling and Lai (2012) argue that teacher must have many competences.They must be able to use and work with new ICT tools; they must be able to construct the adequate material, and finally they must be prepared for new knowledge and new expectations.

In conclusion, when using ICTs teachers must be capable to manage any situation that comes up in and outside the classroom.

Teachers' gender.

According to Mahdi and Al-Dera (2013), there are some gender differences when using ICT. They argue that male teachers use Internet more than female teachers; when teaching they use computers more than female teachers do as well; besides they take more ICT training courses than what female teachers do. Nevertheless, when referring to the acceptance of ICT integration, these authors claim that there are no significant difference between men and women. In addition, they state that when discussing capabilities, situational and longitudinal sustainability, male teachers score higher than female teachers. This study also implies that this same pattern does not help female teachers to get the maximum benefits of ICT in language teaching and learning.

On the other hand, other authors agree on that gender among teachers is not a factor that lessens importance to the awareness of usefulness, ease of use, and positive attitude towards using computers. This statement is relative with their intention to use ICTs in class. However, women take positive perception as a significant encouragement for the use of technology. The same attitude towards ICT defines computer teaching efficacy. In other words, female teachers are more influenced by their capacity and their beliefs of using computers as effective teaching method than male teachers are. Men are more likely to have higher computer self-efficacy, and thus computer teaching ability does not influence their perceptions towards perceived usefulness and attitude toward computer use.

In sum, women should be taking more ICT courses in order to gain self-confidence, and reassure their beliefs on computer usefulness to enhance teaching and learning (Wong, Teo and Russo, 2012).

Finally, Shiboko (2015) on her study argues that on the basis of gender, there is no significant relationship established between gender and ICT implementation. In other words, there is no connection between gender of teachers and the adoption of ICT in education.

Teachers' characteristics regarding ICT use

Referring to teachers' characteristics about ICT use, the implementation of technology in an EFL classroom must be seen from different views. Personal, psychological, educational and professional characteristics of EFL teachers in the application of ICTs are closely linked to external and internal factors. The external factors could be: time, resources, reliable technologies, support and training. On the other hand, the internal factors are: attitude, confidence, computer anxiety, subjective norm and incentive (Lin, Zhang and Zheng, 2016). Some teachers' characteristics turn into as barriers and others are of great assistance in the implementation of ICTs in EFL classrooms.

Psychological characteristics.

The psychological characteristics of EFL teachers regarding ICT use deal with the way they might feel about applying technology in their classrooms. On the one hand, external factors like the lack of time or resources may make teachers feel uncertain whether they will be able to accomplish the anticipated goals; on the contrary, factors such as enough support and training give teachers' confidence to apply ICT in their classrooms. On the other hand, internal factors such as attitude, confidence, computer anxiety, subjective norm and motivation also affect the EFL teachers' psychological characteristics towards the use of ICT.

Certain external and internal factors which affect the way teachers implement ICTs in their EFL classes are directly linked; for instance, computer anxiety is definitely a result of training deficiency. Identically, teachers' attitude towards the use of ICT in EFL classrooms is a critical factor which may enhance or restrict the integration of this technological tool. Teachers' positive attitude and competence ensure ICT implementation and guarantee its further innovation. Proficient teachers help improve methodologies, promote standards and organization on ICT tasks, encourage awareness on ICT equity, influence the utilization and maintenance of ICT, persuade assessment and development of ICT, etc.

Similarly, teachers' positive attitudes on ICT usage in the classroom promote its effective use in the teaching process; therefore, it is crucial to involve teachers and allow them to contribute with their knowledge and skills. In addition teachers must be trained to interact, communicate and collaborate during the time of instruction, since these characteristics together with the presence of ICT in EFL teaching will make students enjoy instruction, feel motivated to participate in class and have a deep understanding of the material. Finally, another factor to be observed is the subjective norm. This factor is about how EFL teachers feel about the social opinion of their work; in this case how society sees technology implementation (Lin et al., 2016).

Educational characteristics.

Teachers are considered as one of the most important users of ICT in the educational field, for this reason they must have a clear belief of the importance of including the use of ICT in their classes; as well as be deeply aware about its constant innovation. Taking into account that due to the introduction of ICT in the educational field, constant changes are evident, teachers should develop significant ICT's skills and need to be assessed permanently, so that their needs can be immediately satisfied.

Mumtaz (2006) claims that when teachers participate regularly in professional conferences, seminars and other type of training courses beyond their classroom, they teach in better ways than those teachers who have minimal contact with their peers of profession. This author claims that the more participation in professional activities teachers have, the more they adopt compatible teaching ideas with constructivist learning theories, and this is

when they get more cooperative students willing to build concepts and ideas. Moreover, continual education help teachers because they feel encouraged to participate in discussions about how to use technology in teaching and this may raise their willingness to adopt ICTs in their classes.

To complement the above mentioned facts, it is necessary to refer once again to factors such as: availability of time, resources and training; attitude and confidence; which affect directly on EFL teachers' characteristics when using ICTs. For instance, time is a necessity when teachers are striving to update on ICTs through courses. Unfortunately, some teachers do not have enough time to extend their knowledge on the technological field due to work responsibilities. Therefore, mindfulness on ICTs' importance in education is required in order to create in teachers a confident attitude towards continuous education which is substantial to contribute to a better level of education both in teachers and students.

Related to this theme, a research about teachers' abilities on the use of ICTs came up, with the conclusion that there are conditions and requirements teachers have to meet on ICT use. On this regards, teachers must be evaluated continuously on ICT proficiency. However, the first step for this adjustment would be the understanding and support among teachers, methodologists, administration agencies and ICT trainers for skill upgrading in regards to manage the materials elaborated during a research. This is such an arduous task but a rewarding one as well for the entire pedagogical community (Avdeevaa, Zaichkinaa and Khapaevaa, 2016).

Professional characteristics.

Regarding professional characteristics in EFL teachers who are willing to apply ICTs, there are some observations to make. First, teachers as professionals must always project themselves to reach more advanced technology concepts, techniques and methodologies. Second, EFL teachers must be able to handle all implications that come with the implementation of ICTs. Although social, economic, systematical barriers which make the teaching task even harder will always exist; as proficient professionals, teachers must be ready to overcome these obstacles.

According to Mumtaz (2006), lack of time is one of the barriers that prevent the use of ICT in the classroom. Without doubt, availability of time is a decisive factor for the correct technological integration, but if during the class hours there are not well prepared activities to be developed, lack of time will not be the unique constraint to develop the activities with the students; therefore, the main objective will be very far to be reached.

One of the objectives of the use of ICT in the classroom must be enable teachers to improve student learning. Therefore, the teacher's professional development on ICT usage is necessary in order to improve their abilities which will let them implement changes in teaching. In this regard a great commitment from the lead structure of the institutions is

required to prepare teachers on these professional issues and encourage them to take charge of changes in an effective way (Afshari, Bakar, Luan, Samah & Fooi, 2009).

Certainly successful integration of technology to achieve language learning requires the authorities of the institutions to take into account the importance of their support in order to achieve a correct linkage of technology with teaching methods. With this in mind, teachers should be aware of the importance of incorporating technology in the classroom as a means to achieve greater efficiency in the learning process (Al-Kahtani, 2001).

Personal characteristics.

Concerning personal characteristics there are some factors that may influence on how teachers use ICTs in their EFL classes. Internal factors such as attitude and motivation play an important role when describing personal characteristics; for instance, sometimes approach that professors take when teaching, is relative to their own learning style. Likewise, a teacher whose personality shows traditional tendencies will probably prefer to transfer the same material to a computer format instead of looking for new concepts and examples. Furthermore, teachers who like lonely study habits may tend not to apply collaborative activities in their classrooms.

Another key point to take into consideration within teachers' personal characteristics is enthusiasm. According to Gilakjani, Branch, and Iran (2012) enthusiastic teachers look for many ways to enhance their learners' motivation when learning the target language. In addition, they state: "motivated learners are every teacher's dream" since they try to achieve their goals in every possible way and they even stimulate other learners. It is also important to realize that motivation is needed among teachers, because it promotes creativity and responsibility. According to McGrath (2013) these personal characteristics in teachers contribute to face and give solution to difficult circumstances such as: large classes and limited material or other resources.

Additionally, there are other personal factors such as teachers' age and years of experience which determine the use of ICTs in classrooms. For instance, young and inexperienced teachers are more willing to use ICTs in EFL teaching (Mehrak, 2015). After they have reached certain age or years of experience, most teachers take their responsibilities and roles in a more relaxed way. They take the easy way out by assuming that new methodology and pedagogy is for young teachers who are just starting. Unfortunately, this type of passive behaviors affects students.

Teacher's Perceptions on ICT use in EFL classes

In order to give greater scientific support to the present work, some scientific studies related to the proposed topic have been investigated, and they will be included below.

The following study was conducted by Silviyanti and Yusuf (2015) in Indonesia and it was intended to answer the following question: What are the EFL teachers' perceptions on

the use of ICT in their ELT (English language teaching) contexts? In this study a questionnaire related to usefulness and ease of use was considered. The respondents were divided into: users and non-users strictly. An interview was held with the respondents and the questions inquired their beliefs on the use of ICT in ELT and barriers that restrict teachers from adopting them. This study concluded that the teachers as users are motivated to use ICT in language learning activities even when they must face cost and technical problems. Meanwhile the non-user teachers consider that implementing ICTs needs a lot more work and even though they are aware of the positive results of using ICTs still feel not capable of using them because their lack of support and training.

Regarding the same topic, an investigation on EFL teachers' perceptions related to ICT integration was directed by Hismanoglu (2012). The objective of this research was to study the prospective of distance EFL teachers' perceptions of ICT integration by utilizing a questionnaire about technology acceptance on teachers. The study also discovered factors preventing EFL teachers' positive feelings about future expectations regarding ICT. This study was carried out with 85 EFL prospective teachers in distance higher education in Turkey. The questions were about personal information and their perception and experience on ICT. The data analysis was made by using descriptive statistics.

The conclusion was that ICT presents a powerful learning environment which renovates the teaching process. Sadly, many institutions cannot provide technological experiences and this affects negatively to learners. In this regards, it was also concluded that solutions and special attention should be given to revising and updating the curricula, equipment and educational materials on a permanent basis. Moreover, conclusions determined that distance higher education can be benefited by ICT training which must be offered within the first two years of the program.

A research about assessing teachers' perceptions on ICT integration was made by Gebremedhim and Fenta (2015) in Ethiopia. The general objective for this study was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards ICT integration into teaching - learning process. First-hand information was gathered from 74 respondents through questionnaires. The questionnaires evaluated teachers' proficiency on ICT, the preferences on information gathering and support, the factors that encourage teachers' usage of technology, their perceptions of self-efficacy, and their obstacles on technology utilization in class. In the analysis they employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition, they analyzed the relationships between variables.

As conclusions they had that most teachers are unable to use ICTs in teaching-learning process due to lack of resources and lack of support. Most teachers are able use search engines but others complain about deficiency of resources and training. The perception of teachers on ICT usage in teaching is positive and it increases productiveness

on ICT. In addition, a significant relationship was found between ICT integration and technology encouragement.

Another study about teachers' perception on ICT use was carried out in Nigeria by Aworanti (2016). In that study, he proposed the following research questions: To what extent has ICT been applied to the Nigeria educational assessment system? What are the emerging challenges in the application of ICT to the Nigeria educational assessment system? What are the perceived remedies for overcoming the emerging challenges in ICT? For this research a survey was applied. The instrument for data collection was designed to find out information related to ICT in educational assessment system and its possible challenges, and it inquired some personal information as well. Descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the data collected. The conclusions on this study were that the present technological bang demands the use of ICT to improve the teaching-learning process and also the assessment and certification on it, which brought up the importance of a deep study on ICTs barriers and their respective solution so that population do not feel discourage to implement technology in the education field.

Another research was done by Garcia (2013) in Philippines. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of secondary school language teachers on the integration of ICT in language teaching; as well as, compare the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of a new and an experienced language teacher towards the utilization of ICT. The methodology used for this research was qualitative because the analysis was based on the participants' answers. The instrument used in order to collect information was, a questionnaire divided in two parts: the first part provided questions about ICT access, use and impact; and the second part was a semi-structured interview.

After data collection and analysis, the conclusions were that, firstly, ICT use in language teaching in Philippines is considered vital. Secondly, the lack of ICT resources impedes an adequate integration of these technologies in pedagogy. Besides, the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of the teachers revealed that there is deficiency on ICT training, and at the same time teachers' hopes on future use of ICTs.

Another study related to teachers' beliefs about the integration of technology in EFL classes was done by Obillos (2016). The main objective set for this research was to uncover how these perceptions affect the implementation of technology-based activities in class. The qualitative method was used for this study since it was a description of teachers' beliefs about technology and its implementation. Besides, three instruments were used: class observation, teacher surveys and teacher interviews. The conclusions were: Teachers are certain about the great impact technology is having today in the process of teaching and learning a language. Teachers believe technology mediated tasks contribute to the

development of the four skill and language learning due to their variety. Society cannot deny that technology can be either a distractor or a success tool. Teachers are aware that ICT implementation depends more on the way they use technology than on the equipment they might have.

CHAPTER II:

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The sample for the study was composed of 20 teachers from the province of Cañar, in the cities of Azogues and Cañar, these teachers worked at a secondary level in both public and private schools located in the urban area. Ten participant teachers were female and the other ten were male. All professors performed in a very cooperative manner during the whole process of the research. They were given a survey about the teachers' characteristics considered by EFL teachers as barriers when using ICTs in their classes. In addition, they responded to another questionnaire about the characteristics of teachers that mostly influence teachers in the use of ICT in their classrooms.

The sample was divided into 5 men and 5 women from the public sector; and 5 men and 5 women from the private sector. The teachers who collaborated for this research were between the ages of 21 and 57 years old. In private schools, the age ranges were from 26 to 41 years; while in public schools the teachers are older, since it is between 41 and 57 years. All of them had a third level degree related to the field of education. In terms of experience, it was established that in the public sector most of them had more than 10 years of experience teaching English. In contrast, in the private sector the majority of teachers had between 3 and 5 years of experience, with two exceptional cases that exceed 15 years of experience.

Procedures

This research was conducted to analyze Ecuadorian high school teachers' perceptions on ICT in their EFL classes. Firstly, the Literature Review was made through on-line research, in this way some scientific literature related to ICT use in EFL teaching, its definition, importance, advantages and disadvantages was included. The literature background also included information concerning to teachers ICT use, paying special attention to teachers' roles, competences and gender when implementing ICTs. Some information related to the psychological, educational, professional, and personal teachers' characteristics regarding ICT use was also included. In addition and in order to strengthen this research some previous studies in relation to Teachers' perceptions on ICT use in their EFL classes were reviewed as well.

Secondly, this research was made on the basis of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method instrument was a questionnaire; meanwhile an interview was applied as an instrument for the qualitative method. This research was conducted in some public and private high schools in the Ecuadorian cities of Azogues and Cañar. The participant English teachers filled in an18-statement questionnaire about the characteristics of English teachers considered as barriers to use ICT in their classes; and answered another 17-item questionnaire about the factors related to the characteristics of teachers that mainly influence them for the application of ICT in their classes. Besides, teachers also answered to an 8 open-question interview to collect information related to teachers' opinions on the topic.

The information obtained through these research instruments was tabulated in a separated way. Thus, the surveys administrated to the public teachers and the ones administrated to the private teachers were classified, then answers provided by surveyed teachers were counted in order to obtain the corresponding percentages. The same procedure was applied to analyze teachers' answers in the interviews. After counting the answers from the surveys, the results were presented in three tables. This information was analyzed in order to answer the three research questions proposed for this study. Lastly, this information was also used to present conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER III:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This section provides the description, analysis, and interpretation of the results of a research about the Ecuadorian teachers' perceptions on ICT use in their EFL classes obtained through the application of two research instruments which were applied in public and private high schools. This information is divided in three tables, which have been included according to the research questions. Finally, a description of the results was written taking into consideration the statements in which teachers coincided. In this way the three research questions were answered and the explanations about these results were included on the basis of the opinions shared by the interviewed teachers and the literature reviewed in the corresponding section.

Which aspects related to teachers' characteristics are considered by most of the EFL teachers as barriers to use ICT in their classroom?

Table 1. Teachers' characteristics considered by EFL teachers as barriers to use ICT in their classroom.

Nº	STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO ANSWER
		%	%	%	%	%
1	I feel insecure about my ability to use ICT as a resource to teach.	10	25	55	10	0
2	I do not think I would be able to learn how to use ICT in my classroom.	0	20	20	60	0
3	3 I am afraid that if I begin to use ICT, I will become dependent upon them.	0	20	55	25	0
4	I dislike working with machines that are smarter than I am.	5	0	45	50	0
5	I feel apprehensive about using ICT.	0	10	75	15	0
6	I have difficulty in understanding the technical aspects of ICT.	0	25	65	10	0
7	It scares me to think that I could cause the computer to destroy a large amount of data by hitting the wrong key.	0	20	45	35	0
8	I hesitate to use ICT for fear of making mistakes that I cannot correct.	0	25	60	15	0
9	You have to be master to understand how to use ICT.	0	15	40	45	0

#	Statement					
10	I have avoided ICT use because they are unfamiliar.	0	10	55	35	0
11	I have not attended any ICT training courses.	10	20	35	30	5
12	I have attended some ICT training courses; however, I prefer not to use ICT because they somewhat intimidate to me.	5	5	50	40	0
13	I am not interested in attending any ICT course.	10	5	30	50	5
14	I do not know how to use any ICT resource.	0	10	60	30	0
15	I do not use any ICT resource in class because I think that ICT are not necessary to teach English.	0	5	50	45	0
16	I prefer not to use ICT because my teaching experience is the most crucial factor in teaching process.	0	10	50	40	0
17	I think that age is a factor that determines the ICT use in class.	5	30	40	25	0
18	In my opinion, younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones.	25	35	20	20	0

N=20

Author: Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez
Source: Ecuadorian high school EFL teachers

Individual aspects on teachers such as psychological, personal, professional and educational characteristics can grow to be barriers when implementing ICTs in an EFL class. With regard to the question: Which aspects related to teachers' characteristics are considered by most of the EFL teachers as barriers to use ICT in their classroom? it was found that 25% of surveyed teachers strongly agree that *younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones.* In addition, during the interviews some teachers spoke about reasons that support this statement. For example, one teacher stated: "some people feel insecure about using ICT, others dislike working with machines or they think they would not be able to learn how to use ICT". According to Afshari et al., (2009), the fact that some

people feel insecure about using ICT is an internal psychological characteristic. This author also argues that computer anxiety affects directly to the way teachers embrace ICT practice and in consequence reflects on the use of technology as a barrier.

Continuing with the analysis of information on table 1, we can see that 10% of participant teachers *feel insecure about their ability to use ICT as a resource to teach*. For example, an interviewee said: "teachers who are not in touch with technology may be afraid of using ICT in the classroom". On this line, teachers' educational characteristics play an important role on ICT use; as Mumtaz (2006) mentions, teachers who are more acquainted to ICT teach better and therefore they feel more secure and willing to apply this technology in class. They use new ideas and creative activities in class, which encourage students to participate.

Also, as noticed on the table, a high percentage is a 10% of the surveyed teachers who declare that they *are not interested in attending any ICT course*. This is an unfortunate but true fact since these teachers are not aware of the advantages of ICTs when teaching. Furthermore, some authors emphasize the importance of continuous training and updates on ICT for the better development of teaching and learning (Avdeevaa et al., 2016).

In addition, among the aspects that EFL teachers marked the option "agree", 35% of them think that *younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones*; then, they see age as a barrier for the ICT use in class. As an illustration, an interviewed teacher answered: "I don't know like a young teacher". This statement may be true; however, these feelings of inferiority may be linked to psychological and personal characteristics of teachers. According to Gilakjani et al., (2012), a teacher with an enthusiastic personality looks for all possible ways to motivate their students and this has positive effects in the whole class performance; promoting creativity and responsibility.

Besides, another 30% agree that *age is a factor that determines the ICT use in class*. An example of this is one teacher's opinion which was: "my age don't let me use in the best form". This type of opinions is common among older teachers; most of them feel that they are left behind and that young and inexperienced teachers are the only responsible for new technologies and methodologies applications. However, older as much as young teachers are accountable for what is taught inside EFL and other classes (Rahimi, 2015).

The last high percentage to be analyzed is a 25% of teachers that say: *I hesitate to use ICT for fear of making mistakes that I cannot correct*. A lot of people and teachers think alike because they have not been trained to use ICT; therefore, this can be considered an educational characteristic on teachers. When trying to use technological tools in class they feel uncertain because they are not well skilled on the basics. Once again and according to Mumtaz (2006), teachers must participate frequently in any type training on ICT in order to

improve their teaching methodologies. As a consequence, their students will get the maximum benefit from EFL classes.

Which factor regarding to teachers' characteristics does influence the most on teachers to use ICT in their classroom?

Table 2. Teachers' characteristics that influence the most on teachers to use ICT in their classroom.

Nº	STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NO ANSWER
		%	%	%	%	%
1	The challenge of learning about ICT use is exciting.	15	80	5	0	0
2	I am confident that I can learn technological skills.	45	55	0	0	0
3	I feel motivated to use ICT in my class.	35	55	10	0	0
4	Learning to use ICT is like learning any new skill – the more you practice, the better you become.	15	30	5	0	0
5	I am sure that with time and practice I will be comfortable working with ICT.	30	70	0	0	0
6	I feel that I will be able to keep up with the advances happening in the ICT field.	10	85	5	0	0
7	If given the opportunity, I would like to learn about and use ICT.	40	55	0	5	0
8	I think that ICT are necessary tools in educational settings.	50	50	0	0	0
9	I like to use ICT because they help me innovate my teaching. methodology.	35	65	0	0	0
10	ICT help me motivate my students to learn English.	35	65	0	0	0
11	If I had any technical problem with ICT during my class, I would continue doing the planned activities.	15	80	5	0	0

12	When I have any technical problem with ICT, I do not feel frustrated.	20	50	30	0	0
13	Age is not an obstacle to learn about and use ICT in my classes.	45	35	15	5	0
14	I know a lot about ICT use because I have attended some ICT training courses.	15	45	30	10	0
15	I have learned to use ICT resources by myself.	25	55	20	0	0
16	I think ICT has a positive impact on teaching process.	45	55	0	0	0
17	ICT use has more advantages than disadvantages in EFL teaching.	30	70	0	0	0

N=20

Author: Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez
Source: Ecuadorian high school EFL teachers

On the other hand, it is noticeable how sometimes teachers' characteristics work as a positive influence for ICT usage; on this respect, the results obtained through the application of a survey indicate that 50% of the teachers strongly agree on that *ICT are necessary tools in educational settings*. For example, one teacher stated: "some teachers feel motivated to use technology in their classes because they are a complement for the traditional learning methods". Motivation is a personal characteristic on teachers which inspires them to produce new and more creative teaching material. Furthermore, it helps teachers overcome a variety of circumstances that may come up during class (McGrath, 2013). Characteristics like this encourage students' responsibility and enthusiasm.

In addition, a 45% of teachers strongly agree on the statement that says: *I am confident that I can learn technological skills.* For instance, a teacher answered: "…because having confidence helps me use ICT". Internal psychological factors such as attitude and confidence affect EFL teachers' ability on the use of ICT. Self-confidence on the use of technology in the classroom promotes effective use of ICT in the teaching process; therefore, it is crucial to involve teachers and allow them to contribute with their knowledge and skills (Afshari et al., 2009). So that, EFL learners will also get a best knowledge acquisition way, working in a collaborative and dynamic ICT classroom.

To end, the table also shows a 45% of teachers who think that *age is not an obstacle to learn about and use ICT in their classes.* This fact is supported by other answers such as: "I like to learn and try new things" (teacher with 23 years of experience). Although age is a

personal characteristic that undeniably plays an important role in the teaching and learning process, an appropriate motivation and a positive attitude will be useful habits especially among elder teachers. These characteristics can lead to effective EFL lessons through the use of dynamic and engaging ICT classes, which will let students communicate through the use of fun activities that will make learning an easy task (Gilakjani et al., 2012).

Related to the teachers' opinion on the "agree column" the first high percentage evidences a great teachers' confidence on their capabilities to learn about ICT use since 85% of them agree on the statement which says: "*I feel that I will able to keep up with the advances happening in the ICT field."* This is a real positive psychological and professional characteristic in teachers which demonstrates that in spite of the existence of negative external factors like lack of time or resources their strong internal factors such as attitude, confidence and motivation can ensure ICT implementation and guarantee its further innovation through a correct linkage of technology with teaching methods (Al-kahtan, 2011).

There are two statements which were chosen by teachers and became the second highest percentages (80%). The first one suggests that personal characteristics also influence on teachers to use ICT in their classroom. These teachers consider that *the challenge of learning about ICT use is exciting.* An important comment expressed by an interviewed teacher supports this criterion since he mentioned: "I feel very confident because the implementation of technology in and outside the classrooms has fostered autonomous learning and students become more independent."

The another percentage proposes that once again teacher's professional characteristics are associated to ICT and their use in class, these teachers considered that *if they had any technical problem with ICT during their classes, they would continue doing the planned activities."* As Mumtaz (2006) stated, lack of time is one of the barriers that prevent the use of ICT, however it will not be the only one. If during the classes teachers do not have well prepared activities to work with students, technical ICT problems could also be an obstacle in order to reach the learning objectives.

The last percentage to be analyzed in this column is a 70% of teachers who expressed: "*I am sure that with time and practice I will be as comfortable working with ICT."* As stated in the literature review, psychological characteristics of teachers regarding ICT use deal with the way they might feel about applying technology in their classrooms, therefore teachers' self-confidence about their ability to learn and practice with ICT is a very important characteristic which will promote the teachers' ICT use in class. To this respect interviewed teachers expressed: "I try to learn and try new things", "…their ability to use technology help teachers become more confident at the time of using ICT in the classroom." These characteristics unquestionably will help teachers promote standards and organization on ICT tasks with the consequent improving of their methodologies and benefit for students.

How is ICT use perceived by EFL teachers in relation to their gender?

Table 3. Teachers' perceptions by gender in relation to the aspects that they consider as barriers to use ICT in their classroom.

Nº	STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		NO ANSWER	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1	I feel insecure about my ability to use ICT as a resource to teach.	20	0	30	20	30	80	20	0	0	0
2	I do not think I would be able to learn how to use ICT in my classroom.	0	0	30	10	20	20	50	70	0	0
3	3 I am afraid that if I begin to use ICT, I will become dependent upon them.	0	0	30	10	60	50	10	40	0	0
4	I dislike working with machines that are smarter than I am.	0	10	0	0	70	20	30	70	0	0
5	I feel apprehensive about using ICT.	0	0	10	10	70	8	20	10	0	0
6	I have difficulty in understanding the technical aspects of ICT.	0	0	20	30	70	60	10	10	0	0
7	It scares me to think that I could cause the computer to destroy a large amount of data by hitting the wrong key.	0	0	0	40	70	20	30	40	0	0
8	I hesitate to use ICT for fear of making mistakes that I cannot correct.	0	0	20	30	60	60	20	10	0	0
9	You have to be master to understand how to use ICT.	0	0	20	10	30	50	50	40	0	0
10	I have avoided ICT use because they are unfamiliar.	0	0	10	10	50	60	40	30	0	0
11	I have not attended any ICT training courses.	10	10	20	20	20	50	40	20	10	0
12	I have attended some ICT training courses; however, I prefer not to use ICT because they somewhat intimidate to me.	10	0	0	10	60	40	30	50	0	0
13	I am not interested in attending any ICT course.	0	20	0	10	40	20	60	40	0	10

Nº	STATEMENT										
14	I do not know how to use any ICT resource.	0	0	0	20	70	50	30	30	0	0
15	I do not use any ICT resource in class because I think that ICT are not necessary to teach English.	0	0	0	10	50	50	50	40	0	0
16	I prefer not to use ICT because my teaching experience is the most crucial factor in teaching process.	0	0	10	10	50	50	40	40	0	0
17	I think that age is a factor that determines the ICT use in class.	10	0	30	30	50	30	10	40	0	0
18	In my opinion, younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones.	30	20	40	30	20	20	10	30	0	0

N=20

Author: Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez
Source: Ecuadorian high school EFL teachers

Table 4. Teachers' perceptions by gender in relation to the aspects that they consider the most influential to use ICT in their classroom.

Nº	STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		NO ANSWER	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1	The challenge of learning about ICT use is exciting.	20	10	80	80	0	10	0	0	0	0
2	I am confident that I can learn technological skills.	40	50	60	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	I feel motivated to use ICT in my class.	40	30	60	50	0	20	0	0	0	0
4	Learning to use ICT is like learning any new skill – the more you practice, the better you become.	30	0	60	10	10	0	0	0	0	0
5	I am sure that with time and practice I will be as comfortable working with ICT.	30	30	70	70	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	I feel that I will be able to keep up with the advances happening in the ICT field.	10	10	80	90	10	0	0	0	0	0
7	If given the opportunity, I would like to learn about and use ICT.	60	20	40	70	0	0	0	10	0	0
8	I think that ICT are necessary tools in educational settings.	70	30	30	70	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	I like to use ICT because they help me innovate my teaching methodology.	30	40	70	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	ICT help me motivate my students to learn English.	30	40	70	60	0	0	0	0	0	0

#	Statement										
11	If I had any technical problem with ICT during my class, I would continue doing the planned activities.	10	20	80	80	10	0	0	0	0	0
12	When I have any technical problem with ICT, I do not feel frustrated.	10	30	40	60	50	10	0	0	0	0
13	Age is not an obstacle to learn about and use ICT in my classes.	40	50	40	30	20	10	0	10	0	0
14	I know a lot about ICT use because I have attended some ICT training courses.	10	20	40	50	50	10	0	20	0	0
15	I have learned to use ICT resources by myself.	30	20	40	70	30	10	0	0	0	0
16	I think ICT has a positive impact on teaching process.	40	50	60	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	ICT use has more advantages than disadvantages in EFL teaching.	30	30	70	70	0	0	0	0	0	0

N=20

Author: Nelly Graciela Palacios Alvarez.
Source: Ecuadorian high school EFL teachers

According to the third table, which evaluates the effect of teachers' gender on the application of ICT, 20% of female EFL teachers strongly agree that they *are not interested in attending to any ICT course.* In addition, when applied the same questionnaire to male teachers no one coincided with this statement.The lack of interest for attending new ICT courses is a personal characteristic on teachers that, affects negatively to the educational system. Men are usually more interested in technology and have more time to attend seminars and courses, but female teachers regardless of their awareness on the importance of ICTs, do not have enough time for attending to new training courses.Also, 20% of female EFL teachers strongly agree that *younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones.* Comparing these results to the ones obtained about male teachers' opinion, we found that 30% of them strongly agreed with this same fact. This lack of self-assurance is basically a psychological characteristic among teachers. Moreover, these high percentages in male and female teachers' opinion must be a consequence of their age since most of them are middle aged.At last, 10% of the female EFL teachers mention that they *dislike working with machines that are smarter than them*. On the other hand, no one of male teachers considered this statement as a valid option to express agreement. These types of opinions reflect professional characteristics of teachers, and it is clear that, although in a low percentage, female teachers are not enough convinced that they would be in control of all activities going on in class including the ones that involve ICT use. But again, male teachers do not think in the same way; probably because they see computers as tools and do not feel intimidated by technology.

However, it is also important to notice that in spite of the fact mentioned in the previous paragraph, 20% of male teachers strongly agreed, and 30% of them agreed with the following statement: *I feel insecure about my ability to use ICT as a resource to teach*; adding to these results a 10% who emphatically reveal (strongly agree) and a 20% of the same male teachers who also reveal (agree) that *they have not attended any ICT training courses*. These are puzzling data since they could be the evidence of a basic teachers' training on ICT use, which could have been acquired by own training; however, they could be not enough in order to make teachers feel secure on their abilities to use ICT as a resource to teach.

Taking into consideration the other statements on which teachers agreed, we have that 40% of female EFL teachers went for the option: *it scares me to think that I could cause the computer to destroy a large amount of data by hitting the wrong key*, whereas no one of men teachers, agreed on this option. The anxiety expressed on this statement is directly linked to educational profiles of female teachers because if they had more training on computers and ICT, they would learn how to use a computer instead of be afraid of it. The item with the second highest percentage among females was: *I hesitate to use ICT for fear of making mistakes that I cannot correct,* a 30% of female teachers agreed on this statement. Regarding to this item, a 20% of males agreed to it. This statement also reflects teachers' educational characteristics because people who have had the basic training on ICTs are aware of how to manage computers without causing permanent damages to it.

Finally, the last highest percentage to analyze will be the one that says: *I think thatage is a factor that determines the ICT use in class*. A 30% of female as well as a 30% of male teachers agreed with this statement.As previously stated on this analysis, age is an important personal characteristic of teachers that may become an obstacle for the use of ICTs. The older teachers are, the less they are willing to attend training courses and/or practice on technological tools, thus their use in class will be minimal.

In order to complement this analysis, it is also important to consider some significant percentages that reflect male EFL teachers' opinions. The statements on which they demonstrated more agreement were: *younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones* (40%); I *do not think I would be able to learn how to use ICT in my classroom* (30%), and *I am afraid that if I begin to use ICT, I will become dependent upon them* (30%).

In the same order, to analyze the "strongly disagree" items, we are going to take the first percentage on which EFL teachers marked as strongly disagree. For instance, a 70% of females and 50% of males marked the declaration that stated: *I do not think I would be able to learn how to use ICT in my classroom*. This datum may be a sign of self-confidence within the psychological aspect of teachers. Besides it could have a positive effect on their

teaching performance as well as on their students' learning thanks to the optimistic attitude that it reflects.

The next statement was other item on which females strongly disagreed: *I dislike working with machines that are smarter than I am* (70%). This is a high percentage among women; but for this item only a 30% of male teachers showed disagreement. As stated before in this analysis, this psychological characteristic has to do with how comfortable EFL teachers feel with computers and how they could overcome many obstacles by being aware of the utility of ICTs.

Finally, 50% of females strongly disagreed to the statement: *I have attended some ICT training courses; however, I prefer not to use ICT because they somewhat intimidate me*. Only a 30% of men checked off "strongly disagree" on this point. This means that in comparison to men, females feel much more psychological comfortable with the use of computers. In addition, other noticeable percentages on which male EFL teachers strongly disagree were the following items: *you have to be master to understand how to use ICT* (50%) and *I am not interested in attending any ICT courses* (60%).

Statements which teachers marked as "disagree" are important as well, thus they must be analyzed. Regarding females, one of the statements with an 80% of occurrence was: *I feel insecure about my ability to use ICT as a resource to teach*, whereas only a 30% of male teachers marked disagree on this item. The second highest item on the same column is: *I feel apprehensive about using ICT*; this time 70% of male teachers marked this item, while 80% of female teachers checked off it. Finally, the last high percentage on females' opinion was: *I have avoided ICT use because they are unfamiliar*. In other words, women feel more secure at using ICT as a resource for teaching. This means that as a personal characteristic, female EFL teachers may be more open to learn and use new technology in their classrooms.

Regarding the factors which are considered the most influential to use ICT in class according to EFL teachers' gender, in Table 4 the same process was followed for their analysis.Thus, on the statement: *I am confident that I can learn technological skills*, 50% of female EFL teachers and 40% of male EFL teachers marked off strongly agree. As mentioned in before paragraphs, this type of opinions require psychological strength, that is why this judgment was expected especially from female teachers, since as it has become clear through this research female teachers are more conscious of the importance of ICT usage within educational fields.

The next point on which teachers marked "strongly agree" was a 50% of female teachers and a 40% of male teachers on the item: *age is not an obstacle to learn about and use ICT in my classes*. The motivation needed for older people to continue learning about ICTs is on their personality, they must always feel interested for continual learning, and this

will benefit their EFL classes. Based on this result it could be noted that most of the times women feel more encouraged than men to learn new things regardless of their age.

The last item to be analyzed because of its recurrence is: *I think ICT has a positive impact on teaching process.* 50% of female EFL teachers and 40% of male EFL teachers marked strongly agree. These positive behaviors are connected to EFL teachers' psychological characteristics and once again, female more than male teachers happily accept ICT and have very positive hopes on it.

As seen on the analyzed percentages, this time female and male teachers have almost coincided on their opinions. However, there are some significant percentages that represent a variant on male perceptions. For instance, on the statements: *I think that ICT are necessary tools in educational settings*, 70% of males; and, *if given the opportunity, I would like to learn about and use ICT*, 60% of them strongly agreed.

Taking into consideration the items that teachers marked as "agree" to, we have that 90% of female EFL teachers went for the option: *I feel that I will be able to keep up with the advances happening in the ICT field.* For male teachers, this statement is almost as important as the one evidenced by female teachers (80%). This positive attitude towards the use of ICT reflects that teachers are psychologically strong and they are aware of the continuous changes in technological field; however they are willing to do their best effort to keep up with these changes.

The item with the second highest percentage among females was: *the challenge of learning about ICT is exciting* (80%). For male teachers this statement is important as well (80%). Once again, teachers' enthusiastic personality is evidenced since they take teaching responsibilities and tasks with such a positive approach.

Moreover, the last highest percentage (80%) among female EFL teachers is the one that states: *if I had technical problems with ICT during my class, I would continue doing the planned activities.* An 80% of men teachers agreed to this item as well. This is an important professional characteristic on teachers, since they must be ready to face any trouble that may come up during class.

As seen, the three highest percentages on female teachers' opinion agreed with the ones for males' as well. In other words, teachers in general feel motivated on ICT and they have a positive attitude towards new learning and trainings to use ICT. Regarding their opinions during the interviews, a female teacher stated: "I consider ICT a very good skill to learn", another one alleged "ICT helps students to communicate ideas and thoughts in a more free way". Male teachers also made comments such as: "ICT is a collaborative way of teaching" or "with ICT, teachers don't have to make much effort trying to get students' attention".

In the same order, to analyze the strongly disagree items we are going to take the first percentage where female EFL teachers marked off as strongly disagree. A 20% of them marked the following item: *I know a lot about ICT because I have attended some ICT training courses.* No male teachers have considered this option (0%) This is a negative fact for teachers' educational profile. This means that some teachers have not taken ICT training regardless of how much they know about this technology.

Another 10% of women marked the item that stated: *If given the opportunity, I would like to learn about and use ICT*; and again male teachers did not consider this as an option (0%). As a matter of fact, this percentage is very low among women's opinion; perhaps these few participants are teachers who do not have time for training and did not want to be possible candidates for it. Any way this opinion lessens value to the EFL teachers' educational characteristics.

The next item selected by a 10% of females is: *age is not an obstacle to learn about and use ICT in my classes.* In other words, this small percentage of women considers age, as an obstacle to learn and use ICT in classrooms. On the contrary, male teachers have not opted for this choice (0%). Furthermore, as seen on the table, no male teacher marked any option on the strongly disagree column. This may be because all of them support ICT role in education and encourage ICT training as well.

The last part of the table to be analyzed is the one with the "disagree" option. 20% of female EFL teachers marked they did not agree on: *I feel motivated to use ICT in my class.* None male teachers marked off to this option. Luckily, only a small percentage of women feel no motivation to use ICT. This is a personal characteristic which EFL teachers must work on because students need encouragement from their teachers when using ICT in class. Moreover, a 10% of women went for the option: *the challenge of learning about ICT use is exciting.* This statement was not an option for male teachers, since no one of them chose this item. However, this is another personal characteristic among EFL teachers that in this case indicates that some female teachers do not feel that ICT preparation is something they are looking forward to have. Finally, a 10% of females opted for the item: *when I have any technical problem with ICT, I do not feel frustrated.* In contrast with the other statements, this was a good option for 50% of male teachers. Notice how this professional characteristic is more evident on male than in female EFL teachers. Teachers who are well-prepared must be able to improvise when odd situations take place during class.

To conclude this analysis it is necessary to compare the results with other studies that had similar outcomes. For example, a research from the reviewed literature states that in general male teachers use the Internet and computers more than female teachers when teaching. However, there are not significant differences between men and women in regards to ICT implementation (Mahdi and Al-Dera, 2013). On the other hand, Wong, Teo and Russo

(2012) agree that both men and women are aware of the usefulness and the ease of use of computers. However, female teachers are more likely to involve their beliefs and self-stem on the use of ICT. Male teachers usually feel more confident of their ICT abilities. Thus, women need more ICT courses in order to gain self-confidence in the use of technology.

CONCLUSIONS

According to this study, among the aspects related to teachers' characteristics that are considered by most of EFL teachers as barriers to use ICT in their classroom we have personal characteristics such as age and motivation. A few EFL teachers believe that younger teachers are more competent in the usage of ICT than older teachers are. Regarding motivation, few of them are not interested in attending ICT courses and others just afraid of using ICT because they may make mistakes.

Educational and professional characteristics of teachers are considered barriers as well. An educational characteristic such as the lack of training on ICT is an obstacle for teachers. Some of them agreed on that they have difficulty understanding ICT, while others mentioned that they have not attended this type of courses. Additionally, a professional characteristic is reflected on their worries about not being able to control their dependency on ICT.

Regarding to teachers' characteristics that promote the use of ICT in classrooms, this study has found that the psychological characteristic such as self-confidence on ability to learn new technology is common among EFL teachers. In addition, it was found that an educational characteristic such the awareness about the necessity of ICT tools in learning settings promote technology implementation as well. Referring to personal characteristics, most teachers expressed to feel motivated to use and learn about ICTs.

In regard to EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of ICT in respect to their gender, we have that female teachers are more aware of the importance of ICT in the educational field than male teachers are. Besides, women are more open to ICT training than men. Female EFL teachers are also more cautious about the usage of ICT and on the other hand male teachers are not afraid of handling a computer, since they feel more secure about their knowledge on ICT usage.

Teachers' propensity to acquire or improve their skill to use ICT is one of the most important factors regarding to their personal characteristics. This characteristic influences on teachers to use ICT in their classroom, since most of them state that they feel that they will be able to keep up with the advances happening in the ICT field.

Although through this research, it was stated that ICT use in class provides more advantages than disadvantages, an important aspect to consider is the one related to improper use of them in class. According to interviewed teachers, if there are no clear rules to proper use of ICT in class, they will provoke students' distraction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EFL teachers must become conscious of the importance of ICT usage in the pedagogy field and leave behind obstacles such as age and lack of motivation which are part of their personal characteristics. It is undeniable that older teachers could need more training to use ICT; however, nowadays this type of preparation is under teachers' responsibility since technology is a must in any profession much more in education.

Educational characteristics should not represent barriers for teachers since they must feel self-encouraged to continuous education. Nowadays the National Board of Education is often organizing courses and seminars on every field and teachers must feel obligated to participate in them. However, if it was not in this way, EFL teachers should invest on ICT courses since they are a necessity in education. Likewise, teachers should enhance their professional profile by taking courses on abilities to manage new technology.

Teachers must adequately fit in every professional aspect. This is why within the technological field they must look for opportunities to educational improvements which let them enhance their self-confidence in the application of ICT. Furthermore, motivation for the use of ICTs should not be only a positive feeling but it should be applied to many aspects in a teacher's life. Teachers must be looking forward to using new activities and innovating material to improve teaching.

In regard to EFL teachers' perceptions on the use of ICT in respect to their gender, the National Board of Education must evaluate teachers' general competences on ICT usage. This must be done with the purpose of presenting ICT courses. This information would also make EFL teachers more aware of their weaknesses on technology in order to increase their commitment to look for training opportunities.

The teachers' propensity to learn or improve their ability to use ICT should be utilized through the implementation of adequate computing rooms and an adequate registration plan that allows easy and quick access for teachers to the technological equipment implemented in institutions.

Related to a possible lack of clear rules to the ICT use in class, a useful recommendation would be that teachers and students make agreements about the correct use of ICT in class at the beginning of the school year, so that everyone is aware about what is expected regarding to the correct use of ICT in class.

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ANNEXES

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

TEACHERS' SURVEY

Gender: M (   )   F (   )

Years of EFL teaching experience: _____

Age: _____

1. Read attentively the 18 statements below, and decide whether you agree or disagree with each one of them. Use the four-point ranking scale; from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Nº	STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
		%	%	%	%
1	I feel insecure about my ability to use ICT as a resource to teach.				
2	I do not think I would be able to learn how to use ICT in my classroom.				
3	3 I am afraid that if I begin to use ICT, I will become dependent upon them.				
4	I dislike working with machines that are smarter than I am.				
5	I feel apprehensive about using ICT.				
6	I have difficulty in understanding the technical aspects of ICT.				
7	It scares me to think that I could cause the computer to destroy a large amount of data by hitting the wrong key.				
8	I hesitate to use ICT for fear of making mistakes that I cannot correct.				
9	You have to be master to understand				

Nº		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
	how to use ICT.				
10	I have avoided ICT use because they are unfamiliar.				
11	I have not attended any ICT training courses.				
12	I have attended some ICT training courses; however, I prefer not to use ICT because they somewhat intimidate to me.				
13	I am not interested in attending any ICT course.				
14	I do not know how to use any ICT resource.				
15	I do not use any ICT resource in class because I think that ICT are not necessary to teach English.				
16	I prefer not to use ICT because my teaching experience is the most crucial factor in teaching process.				
17	I think that age is a factor that determines the ICT use in class.				
18	In my opinion, younger teachers are more skillful to use ICT than the older ones.				

2. Read attentively the 17 statements below, and decide whether you agree or disagree with each one of them. Use the four-point ranking scale; from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Nº	STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	The challenge of learning about ICT use is exciting.				
2	I am confident that I can learn technological skills.				
3	I feel motivated to use ICT in my class.				
4	Learning to use ICT is like learning any new skill – the more you practice, the better you become.				
5	I am sure that with time and practice I will be comfortable working with ICT.				
6	I feel that I will be able to keep up with the advances happening in the ICT field.				
7	If given the opportunity, I would like to				

	learn about and use ICT.	45			
8	I think that ICT are necessary tools in educational settings.				
9	I like to use ICT because they help meinnovatemy teaching methodology.				
10	ICT help me motivate my students to learn English.				
11	If I had any technical problem with ICT during my class, I would continue doing the planned activities.				
12	When I have any technical problem with ICT, I do not feel frustrated.				
13	Age is not an obstacle to learn about and use ICT in my classes.				
14	I know a lot about ICT use because I have attended some ICT training courses.				
15	I have learned to use ICT resources by myself.				
16	I think ICT has a positive impact on teaching process.				
17	ICT use has more advantages than disadvantages in EFL teaching.				

Thanks for your collaboration!

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

Gender: M ( )   F ( )

Years of EFL teaching experience: _____

1. Do you think the use of ICT is important to teach English?

YES ( )   NO ( )

Why?

_____

_____

_____

2. Do you use ICT in your English classes?

YES ( )   NO ( )

Why?

_____

_____

_____

3. If your answer was affirmative in the previous question, how do you feel (afraid, nervous, relaxed, confident, etc.) when you use ICT?

Why?

_____

_____

_____

4. Do you consider that factors such as psychological, personal, etc., which are related to your characteristics as a teacher, are barriers to use ICT in your classes? (If it is necessary, use some of the statements in the teachers' survey to explain these factors)

YES (   )   NO (   )

Why?

_____

_____

_____

5. Do you consider that factors such as psychological, personal, etc., which are related to your characteristics as a teacher, have a positive influence on you to use ICT in your classes? (If it is necessary, use some of the statements in the teachers' survey to explain these factors)

YES (   )   NO (   )

Why?

_____

_____

_____

6. Is there any advantage to use ICT in EFL teaching?

YES (   )   NO (   )

Why?

_____

_____

_____

7. Is there any disadvantage to use ICT in EFL teaching?

YES (   )   NO (   )

Why?

_____

_____

_____

8. According to your opinion, who uses more frequently ICT in EFL classes, male or female teachers?

Male (   )   Female (   )

Why?

_____

_____

_____