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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

Magister

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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 GALARZA CHAVEZ ALFREDO ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all people who have become teachers in my life. My beloved parents, my sisters, my friends and especially those generous and magnificent teachers who have led me to achieve my personal goals. I will always be grateful for all they have taught me.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools. There are several factors and variables to be considered when teaching English as a second language in high school. This study focuses on how factors related to teachers, students, classrooms and educational institutions affect the English language teaching-learning process. The research was conducted in six high schools located in Quito, Ecuador. Fifteen English teachers and fifteen students from these schools were selected for observation and asked about the factors related to the English language teaching-learning process. Questionnaires about factors related to English teaching-learning were administered to these fifteen teachers and students. The questionnaire results were analyzed, presented graphically and compared with information gathered from classroom observations and interviews with individual teachers. The results of this analysis indicate that teacher education level, classroom methodologies, lesson planning, class size, availability of classroom resources, and sophistication of institutional facilities were the most important factors in achieving a successful English teaching-learning process in high school.

Key words: teaching English, factors, students, teachers, high-schools.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio investigó los factores que influyen en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en colegios privados del Ecuador. Existen varios factores y variables a ser considerados cuando se enseña inglés como segunda lengua en la etapa escolar del colegio. Este estudio se enfoca en cómo los factores relacionados con los profesores, estudiantes, aulas, e instituciones educativas afectan el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés. La investigación fue realizada en seis colegios localizados en Quito, Ecuador. Quince profesores de inglés y quince estudiantes de estos colegios fueron seleccionados para ser observados y encuestados acerca de temas relacionados con los factores que intervienen en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés. Cuestionarios con preguntas relacionadas con este proceso fueron aplicados a estos profesores y alumnos. Los resultados de los mismos fueron analizados, presentados gráficamente y comparados con información obtenida de la observación de las clases y las entrevistas realizadas a los profesores. Los resultados de este análisis indicaron que el nivel de educación de los profesores, las metodologías de clases, la planificación de las clases, el número de estudiantes por aula, la disponibilidad de los recursos de las clases y la sofisticación de las instalaciones de las instituciones educativas fueron los factores más importantes a la hora de obtener un proceso exitoso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en el colegio.

Palabras clave: enseñanza del inglés, factores, estudiantes, profesores, instituciones educativas.

INTRODUCTION

Ecuadorian education policies have been changing in recent years and they are focused on improving the academic level of Ecuadorian students. Many scholarships have been created to offer to students who reach high scores on the test to apply to universities. Nevertheless, the English language knowledge of graduate high school students is often not sufficient for them to participate directly in university studies where English is the language of instruction.” Moreover, the lack of English language knowledge of high school graduates limits the access to global information available on the internet or in other sources. This justifies a study to present and analyze the factors that influence the teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools, and the potential solutions to improve this process.

The specific objectives of this study are to identify students’ English level and their needs in the classroom, determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place, identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers, and determine institutional facilities and norms regarding quality education.

Some previous studies about factors affecting the English learning process in schools around the world have obtained interesting information that can be contrasted with this study. For instance, Saricoban and Sakizli (2006) studied the factors that influence successful classroom management. They found that teachers experienced some troubles with their students due to their different needs, level and interest. They organize their study in factors divided in three categories: factors concerning students, factors concerning teachers and factors concerning school environment. They assert that the

analyses and understanding of each one of these factors will allow teachers to succeed in the teaching learning process.

Also, Burns, Copland, and Garton (2011) investigated global practices in teaching English to young learners. In this research the investigators aimed to discover policies, major pedagogies and syllabi as they are applied in teaching around the world. The investigators recommend that ideas and experiences in this field should be shared globally, and appropriate educational policies should be developed taking into account these kinds of studies in order to improve the learning experience of children all around the world.

Furthermore, Bala and Bamba (2012) conducted a study to investigate the major causes of low level of English reading ability in Haryana, India. Investigators said that they found limitations such as “the lack of English-speaking and listening environment, frequent change of government policy in education, and lack of language labs and lack of scientific approach in teaching English.” They conclude that it should be mandatory that teachers be trained methodically, technically and systematically, as well as that the latest technologies be implemented in all levels of school.

The study of these factors will benefit all participants involved in the educational process: institutions, teachers, and students from our country and will offer them strategies to improve their skills in English language management. Through this investigation it will be clarified how factors involved in this process can be modified or adapted to improve the educational level of English. For instance, educational institutions can better adapt their facilities and provide support material to their teachers.

Also, teachers can find this information useful to develop their methodologies and improve their skills in teaching, and students will benefit from the acquisition of better English knowledge.

In addition, this research can be useful in formulating other investigations related to all English teaching-learning processes. Ongoing research on this theme can build on these data and analysis.

Some methodological limitations exist, such as the lack of prior research studies focused on English teaching-learning processes in Ecuador. Only a few studies were found on the Internet and at universities, even though the government policies are intended to improve the level of English knowledge in high schools.

METHOD

Setting and participants

This research was conducted in six private high schools in the area of Quito, Ecuador. Three of these educational institutions are located in Quito, the other two in the valleys of Tumbaco and Cumbayá. One of these institutions admits only female students, while the other 4 admit male and female students. The chosen institutions were those that allowed access to observe classes and administer questionnaires to their secondary teachers and students.

In order to develop this research 15 students were polled. The number of students in observed classes was from 15 to 32. Polled students were 12 to 18 years old, and they were in high school from 8th grade of basic education to 3rd grade of *bachillerato*. Due to the fact that this study was focused on private high schools, it could be inferred that students belong to the middle or upper class.

English in all of these institutions is considered as a subject and it is taught as a foreign language (i.e., these were not bilingual schools teaching other subjects in English). In three of these schools there are 10 hours of English per week whereas in the other two there are 9 hours. Observed courses in the basic section were two from 8th grade, one from 9th and one from 10th. In the *bachillerato* section there were three classes from 1st grade, four from 2nd grade, and four from 3rd grade.

The 15 observed teachers showed a level of English proficiency between medium and high. The range of age of the observed teachers was from 30 to 55 years old. Seven teachers are men, and 8 are women. Two of these teachers are foreigners (USA and

England), and the other are from Ecuador. Four of these teachers have done English studies abroad.

Procedures

The first stage of this project was a review of scientific literature about factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process around the world. Ten topics related to these factors were established based on the literature review. Each one of these topics was investigated in two different scientific books in order to have diverse criteria, and to summarize and contrast the available information. The information related to each topic was organized and transcribed in tables to present it clearly and then used to construct an academic literature review. Also, theoretical support was sought on five previous studies about the researched topic. The review of these studies is included at the end of the literature review section.

After the literature review was written, a field investigation was carried out. A sample size of 15 teachers was established for the study. Teachers were chosen as volunteers upon request and approval by their supervisors. The main instrument of the field research was a questionnaire applied to teachers and students. Teachers and students answered these questionnaires during a classroom observation by the researcher. In order to measure the English proficiency of teachers, each was interviewed. According to this interview, teachers were classified in level from C2 to A1 Language Proficiency (See Annexes).

The process of investigation in the six schools took two weeks. All participating teachers and high school directors were collaborative and participated willingly in this

research. They allowed the researcher to observe their classes without limitations. A student of every observed class was chosen by the teacher to answer the student questionnaire. At the end of each observed class, teachers answered the teacher questionnaire and were orally interviewed.

The applied design for this investigation was qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative and qualitative analysis was made taking into account the obtained results in each question in the questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to ask teachers and students questions about the teaching-learning process. These questionnaires contained questions related to factors being analyzed in this study. The teacher's questionnaire, student's questionnaire, and observation sheet contained similar questions that provided contrast and different points of view on the analyzed topics. Some questions had a single answer, but in some cases these answers requested a comment in order to make them more clear, explicit and specific. On the other hand, the teachers' interview did not have a written record, because its only purpose was to determine the teacher's language proficiency.

Once the field investigation was finished, data were tabulated and shown in graphs. The data source for all graphs is the teacher questionnaire. In order to better visualize the gathered data, the information from the teacher questionnaire is presented as pie charts in which the answers are analyzed in percentages. The observation sheet and student questionnaire were only used to interpret, contrast and make comparisons with the teacher-based data. In the description and analysis of data, four variables affecting the teaching-learning process were considered: factors related to teachers,

factors related to students, factors related to classrooms, and factors related to institutions. Each one of them is analyzed in different topics related to the questions of the teacher's questionnaire.

Moreover, every topic presented in the Literature Review section was considered when results were presented. Every question analyzed is supported with the scientific information presented in the Literature Review related to it. Once each topic is presented appropriately and described with scientific support, statistical results are described, analyzed and contrasted with the information from the teacher interview, student questionnaire, comments, and observation notes. This process was used for each question and finally used to arrive at conclusions and recommendations.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

This section will focus on themes specifically related to factors such as English as a foreign language, teaching methodologies and management, classroom issues, and student characteristics and abilities. All of these main topics will be presented in this literature review by dividing each one in different and specific matters.

Importance of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador

In Ecuador, English has been a subject in the general education program for several years, and some programs have been established in order to improve and monitor the teaching of this language. One of these programs is CRADLE (Curriculum Reform and Development for the Learning of English), whose main purpose is to give secondary students a solid knowledge in English language (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1997).

English teaching in Ecuador has had several problems. A study conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in 2011 showed that the majority of secondary English teachers did not achieve the minimum proficiency level established by the government. As a result, the Ecuadorian government has offered hundreds of scholarships for secondary English teachers to improve their language, methodology and teaching techniques. This program aimed to improve the quality of English teaching in Ecuadorian public schools in order to reach internationally-defined technical standards in student language acquisition (SENESCYT, 2012)

Teaching Approaches and Methods

Littlewood (1981) states that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is based on language function and its structural aspects. The focus of this approach lies in the processes of communication instead of features such as the expertise in language forms. Learners using this approach learn language through communication, using a process in which trial and error are part of learning. In fact, Richards and Rodgers (2001) assert that integrating language skills through creativity and activities that develop the main function of language, which is communication, makes CLT a practical approach to English teaching.

Harmer (2001) says that the Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) involves cooperative activities, such as group work, discussion groups, reflections, and comments. They say that these are activities that “facilitate” the learning process. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT gives students the possibility of acquiring a second language developing strategies for communication in a natural and positive environment, and make it possible for teachers to apply their curricula in diverse settings by using interactive tasks.

On the other hand, the Natural Approach has been used as an approach that is related to the natural way of how people acquire the language skills when they learn to speak and communicate with others. Grammar and structures are not important here and it can be used with satisfactory results on young people and beginners. The strength of this method does not lie on his techniques but in its significant and practical activities, which emphasizes the language production and communications rather than perfectly structured grammar sentences construction (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

In addition, Task Based Language Teaching (TBL) has to do with performing tasks and activities such as problem - solving, developing English learning in three linking stages: a topic introduction, tasking and planning, and analysis and practice (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Complementing the information about this method, Harmer (2001) states that once the tasks are completed by students, teachers intercede in order to clarify the language used, and correct the possible mistakes students have committed during the activities. This author also describes the three stages of TBL: the pretask, in which the topic and task are introduced, the task cycle, when the planning, task-performing and reporting are done, and finally, the language focus, in which the teacher analysis is done with the students' participation.

Harmer (2001) states that in the decade of the 1970's, James Asher developed an approach based on the results that command statements trigger in humans, especially children. This approach is known by the name of Total Physical Response (TPR). A command causes a physical response, and this can be used as a way of learning grammar structures and vocabulary. The learner in this approach has to perform two important roles: listener and performer, in which the teacher decides what to teach and present to the class. It is significant to state that teachers should know about these approaches, not in order to focus on only one, but in order to combine their methodologies depending on the students' results.

Managing Learning

Managing classes means generating attention, creativity, and motivation from learners. Giving instructions is a matter in which teachers have to take a lot of care.

First, teachers have to gain the students' attention, making sure that every student is involved in the topic of the class. Gower, Philips and Walters (2005), say that the use of the voice is very important for instructions and it should be used at a softer level than the language being taught. Also, instructions can be supported with visual aids, gestures and examples. Teachers always have to verify that instructions have been understood.

According to Gower, Philips, and Walters (2005), feedback is an important tool that completes the student's learning development, and assures that he or she has successfully accomplished the lesson. The authors also say that "feedback takes a number of forms: giving praise and encouragement; correcting; setting regular tests; having discussions about how the group as a whole is doing; giving individual tutorials." Every teacher should evaluate his or her class and apply feedback according to this evaluation.

Furthermore, the time students spend in doing tasks should be considered, planned and organized by the teacher. When planning lessons, teachers ought to consider the chronological development of a lesson; this is the beginning, the middle and the end. In every class stage, the teacher should be conscious of the time left and structure the remaining class time accordingly (Woodward, 2001).

Lesson Design

Another feature that teachers should learn to use is lesson design. A lesson design can be visualized through a lesson plan. A lesson plan is a written class plan which includes the following parts: the aims, the procedure, the approach, and the

activities for the class, as well the material, resources, and equipment that will be used (Gower, Philips, and Walters, 2005).

Writing a lesson plan has a lot of benefits for teachers because it generates confidence, clarity and coherence, besides to keeping the class engaged and focused on a target. The way teachers specify their class objectives or aims is very important because these objectives, aims or goals are going to be the engine moving class progress and will assess the students' performance. A lesson design can incorporate the ideas of students, making a lesson more interesting and motivating. In short, teachers should try to get students involved not only in the lesson but in all the learning process. Time is a matter that always must be considered when planning a lesson, and every planned activity must be timed in order to avoid running out of time and disorganization in the class. Writing lesson notes help to improve the teaching skills because it can allow one to better organize thoughts about a class, before and after the class is given. (Gower, Philips, and Walters, 2005).

In fact, Woodward (2001) says that making a lesson plan can contribute to developing a personal teacher style because it permits one to examine all the materials, resources, spaces, time, ideas and activities that are useful in classes.

Class Size

Woodward (2001) says that large classes may suffer from problems including noise, limited space for the number of students, fixed objects in the available space, insufficient materials for every student, and the lack of time to answer and solve the assigned tasks. In addition, Harmer (2001) suggested that some disadvantages of

working with large classes include limited time for individual styles, which forces every student in the class to perform the same activities as others, and that students do not feel comfortable speaking and participating in front of the class due to the anxiety generated by public failure. On the other hand, Woodward (2001) states that using clear eye contact, establishing some general class routines, taking advantage of the group's high energy to get students involved, and using pair and group work to make students practice speaking and listening in English.

According to Harmer (2001), working with small or individualized classes also has several advantages, such as the possibility of adapting to the different student's choices and learning styles, reducing stress and optimizing student performance when they work in pairs or groups, and encouraging students to develop an independent attitude and work by themselves. Besides these advantages, Woodard (2001) proposes some practical principles to improve working in small classes. For instance, to assign students responsibilities according to their personal interests, to constantly request that students demonstrate their learning improvement, to enhance and adapt the way materials are used, and to recap, summarize and make plans more often than large classes allow.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

Although the concept of personal space can be different depending on the culture, classroom space and seating arrangement is a very important matter in the teaching-learning process. In fact, the position of students can determine the students' attitudes, their interaction and the kind of activities that can be performed (Woodward,

2001). According to Harmer (2001), there are some different possibilities for arranging seats and tables, and each one of these possibilities present advantages. For example, orderly rows allow the teacher to keep eye contact with students while they perform activities such as reading and speaking; circles and horseshoes permit the teacher to better manage a projector or recording, and separate tables reduces the hierarchical arrangement in order to generate better organization, responsibility and independence in students.

On the other hand, Gower, Philips, and Walters (2005) say that the way seating and space in classrooms is managed should depend on factors such as the learners' age, personality and speaking skills. For instance, a café style arrangement guarantees a comfortable position for debates, pair work and group work. Also, in order to create a better ambiance for student concentration when they are taking tests, as well as to avoid cheating, the students can be seated in every other desk, leaving empty seats between each student.

Classroom and /or Teaching Resources

English teachers can use several resources to make lessons more interesting and useful. According to Harmer (2001), teachers may use the board as an important resource in which there will be clearly written reference material, lesson material, notes and reminders. An overhead projector has some advantages such as the possibility of giving students photocopies of the teacher's materials, in addition to allowing teachers to look at students directly. Pictures and photographs are a useful tool for teaching because they better illustrate the meaning of ideas, catch the students' attention, and improve the

process of memorization. Sound recordings are, according to this author, “one of the language teacher’s most useful tools” because every course book has a CD for practicing listening and speaking skills (Harmer, 2001, p. 73). Videos can be used as well to develop those skills. Computers and photocopiers are also tools that are very useful in teaching English. Woodward (2001) proposes some materials for developing teaching in a better way. For example, dictionaries in all of their varieties can be very handy not only to look up meanings, synonyms, and word uses but to confirm spelling, pronunciation, and the correct use of words.

Furthermore, special tools like rods (little sticks in different colors) may be used to represent prepositions, pronouns, and phonology features as a creative way to work with language. Another tool this author suggests in order to bring the outside world to the class and develop learners’ vocabulary is the picture pack, which is a collection of fifty selected pictures extracted from magazines that can be used to play character games.

Classroom Observation

According to Wajnryb (2005), observation is an important tool for the teaching-learning process. In some cases, this instrument could be initiated by the teachers themselves, but in most cases it is supervised by the school, as part of a school based support program for all the teachers, principally for trainee teachers and beginner teachers involved in an induction period. Gower, Philips, and Walters (2001) state some positive aspects of classroom observation such as helping with lesson preparation and giving helpful feedback.

Trainee teachers should benefit from the experience of tutors, avoiding being dependent on them but trying to clarify and check every unclear aspect of the class.

The authors also suggest that trainee teachers should be open to observers' suggestions and proposals in order to improve their skills, plans and methodologies, assuming completely the responsibility of teaching in front of a whole class.

Learning Styles

Lightbown and Spada (2006), assert that people have different ways of learning. They classify these learners according to the sense they prefer to use in order to learn something. That is, visual learners are those who need to visualize things to learn something, aural learners are those whose learning is optimal when they listen to the things they want to learn, and kinesthetic learners are those in which mimics, role-plays, and performing activities help to develop the learning process. In addition, these authors describe learning skills in individuals as field-independent and -dependent according to the way learners confront the information. The field-independent skills, in which the learners separate details from general information, were related with success in the learning process of a second language.

Furthermore, Harmer (2001), summarizing a study of adult students in Australia, affirms that language learners can be classified in four groups. This classification describes learners as convergers, conformists, concrete learners and communicative learners. Convergers are solitary and analytic people who prefer develop their own methodology for studying. Conformists are comfortable working with non-communicative classrooms, doing what teachers say, giving emphasis on the language

learning process instead of using it. Concrete learners enjoy working with communicative classes and using the social aspects of language in direct experiences. Communicative learners are the most interested in the social interactions of language instead of the language analysis, taking risks and working without the supervision of teachers.

Language Aptitude

According to Carroll (1991), aptitude is characterized in terms of the ability to learn quickly. This means that learners can be divided in two groups, depending on the ease with which students learn and the amount of effort they have to put into this process. Lightbown and Spada (2006), declare that tests measuring aptitude of learners are based on some components such as the ability to memorize and identify new sounds, the understanding of functions of words, the discovering of grammatical rules from the language use, and the facility to memorize new words. There are different types of learners' strengths and weaknesses that teachers have to consider before concluding if the learning process is going to be successful or not. A student's aptitude profile, that can be measured in some available tests, does not necessarily determine if the student will be strong in all the language learning process, but if he or she is more talented to specific subjects such as grammatical structures or the functional use of language.

On the other hand, Harmer (2001), expresses his disagreement with the idea that "holistic" learners, those whose analytical abilities are not so developed but their learning is of a more general view, have fewer possibilities of achieving success than

analytical learners. In the learning process, aspects like having a good memory for retention are more important than others related to analytical skills.

Having examined and analyzed the theoretical support presented by several authors in specialized books of English teaching, pedagogy, linguistics and education, it is necessary to review some previous studies in which the main subject of research have been the factors that influence the English language teaching – learning process all around the world. These previous studies focus on actual experiences of teaching in different places and circumstances. The next paragraphs will present information about the information of five important and useful studies.

Bala and Bamba (2012) conducted a study whose purpose was to analyze the factors influencing teaching and learning of reading ability of English language in secondary schools. They investigated the effect of factors related to methods/techniques of teaching on the reading ability of English language as well as studying the effect of socio cultural factors on the reading ability on English language reading ability. The methodology they used was the survey method, in which they used a tool known as the teachers' opinionnaire. This tool can be defined as a questionnaire designed to elicit views on matters of opinion from which generalizations may be abstracted. Solicited teachers responded to a questionnaire about the state education system, methods of teaching they used and socio-cultural factors affecting the teaching learning environment in order to generate and design an opinionnaire. According to Bala and Bamba (2012), once analyzed the results, researches encountered that the major causes of low level of English reading ability in Haryana, the location in India where the study was made, was

“due to lack of English-speaking and listening environment, frequent change of government policy in education, lack of language labs and lack of scientific approach in teaching English”. Moreover, the researchers also conclude that it should be mandatory that teachers be trained methodically, technically and systematically, as well as that the latest technologies be implemented in all levels of school.

Pourhossein and Reza (2011) performed a study of factors affecting English as Foreign Language learners' skills and how to improve them. The skill on which they focused their study was listening comprehension. According to these authors, this skill has been frequently ignored in language teaching. The main purpose of their study was to enhance the final results of learners when they used their oral and aural skills related to listening understanding. The investigators used a methodology based on analysis of listening comprehension, its definition, and the strategies for listening comprehension.

They also investigated ways of solving problems with listening comprehension and how to apply different methodologies, activities and principles in teaching listening for improving the listening comprehension in second language learners. The conclusions and recommendations made by the authors are mainly related to the way teachers interact with their students. For instance, teachers should create a positive class ambiance by listening actively to their students, avoiding sarcasm, condescendence and interruptions. In order for students to achieve a complete and successful process of English learning, the teacher should combine listening strategies highlighting the importance of listening comprehension. Additionally, the authors conclude that the model of a teacher-centered class should be changed to the student-based one, in which

students' needs and requests are first. Finally, they recommend that textbooks and teachers' books need to include information about how to guide teachers to better develop the listening comprehension of students.

Burns, Copland, and Garton (2011) investigated global practices in teaching English to young learners. In this research the investigators aimed to discover policies, major pedagogies and syllabus as they are applied in teaching around the world. They also wanted to understand how teachers perceive their roles, responsibilities and challenges, as well as identify the most effective solutions to different pedagogical issues that can be applied to teaching practices in a globalized world. The investigators studied cases of teaching practice to young learners, age 7 -11, from macro and micro perspectives in Colombia, Italy, Korea, Tanzania and the United Arab Emirates using quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers used a mixed method of investigation; in addition to opinion surveys from a global sample of English teachers they conducted five exhaustive case studies of teachers across several continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America), using a cross – sectional observational methodology.

What is more, in the research process, the methodology applied was consistent in all its stages. This means that the methodology followed the same process in all the five cases: teachers volunteered to be observed; they provided relevant information including syllabus and classroom material, observations were registered in recordings and fields' notes, and after observations were made the interviews were transcribed. The authors concluded that teachers of young learners need pre-service and in-service training to

reinforce and expand material for teaching young learners. Also, the investigators recommend that ideas and experiences in this field should be shared globally in order to improve the learning experience of children all around the world.

Atanda and Jaiyeoba (2011) conducted a study whose purpose was to investigate the effect of school-based quality factors on secondary school students' achievement in English language in South-Western and North-Central Nigeria. This study was based on three hypotheses related to the relationships, relevance and contribution that some factors have on the achievement of senior English language public school students in Nigeria. This study adopted a methodology in which surveys, using the *ex post facto* type, were used. These surveys were applied to 507 school principals and English teachers of selected areas of Nigeria. Once finished the surveys, the results were tabled and analyzed, leading the investigators to some important factors that can enhance the process of English teaching programs. Some of these conclusions are: that using adequate material is very significant in the success of English language achievement; the supervision of instruction should be made stronger in order to improve teachers' efficiency to generate accomplishment in English language; the appropriate management of instructional materials makes teaching real and facilitates learners' comprehension; and teachers should develop skills to improvise and create instructional material besides those given by governments or educational systems.

Saricoban and Sakizli (2006) studied the factors that influence successful classroom management. While teaching, teachers experience some troubles with their students due to their different needs, level and interest. The main purpose of this

research was to find possible solutions to these problems, taking into account the factors related to the teaching – learning process. In order to better organize the answers of this study, researchers divided factors in three categories: factors concerning students, factors concerning teachers and factors concerning school environment. This methodology allows researchers to investigate in different stages, revealing appropriate answers for each question presented and related with the three fundamental axes of the teaching – learning process: students, teachers and school ambiance. The investigators conclude that factors related to students should be analyzed and managed considering the students' personal, developmental and cultural setting. The factors concerning social environment have to do with social factors such as large, small and mixed classes, educational factors such as the methodologies and the way of giving instructions, and physical factors such as equipment, materials, and seating arrangement. Lastly, the researchers say that factors concerning teachers are related to the way they use their skills to motivate students to learn English, using a proper style when managing the class, and the possibility of improving and training these skills if is required in order to succeed in the teaching-learning process

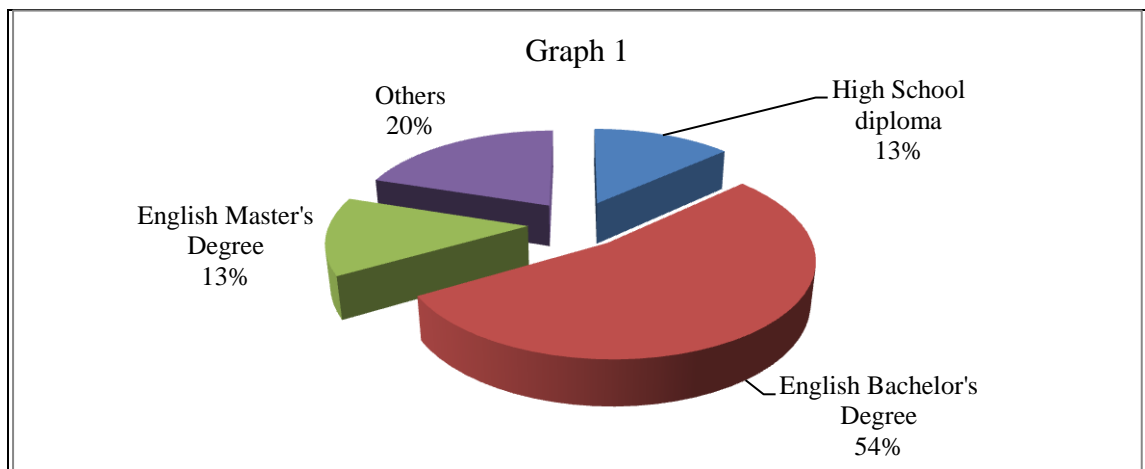
Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

Quantitative Analysis

The information gathered from the questionnaires was tabulated and is shown in pie charts in order to better visualize the options that were chosen by the participants for each question or topic. Related information from the Literature Review is presented in order to establish theoretical support for each question. Then, results are described and analyzed taking into account the information from observation sheets, the teacher's questionnaire and the student's questionnaire. The results are divided into four categories depending on different factors: teachers, students, classrooms, and educational institutions.

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

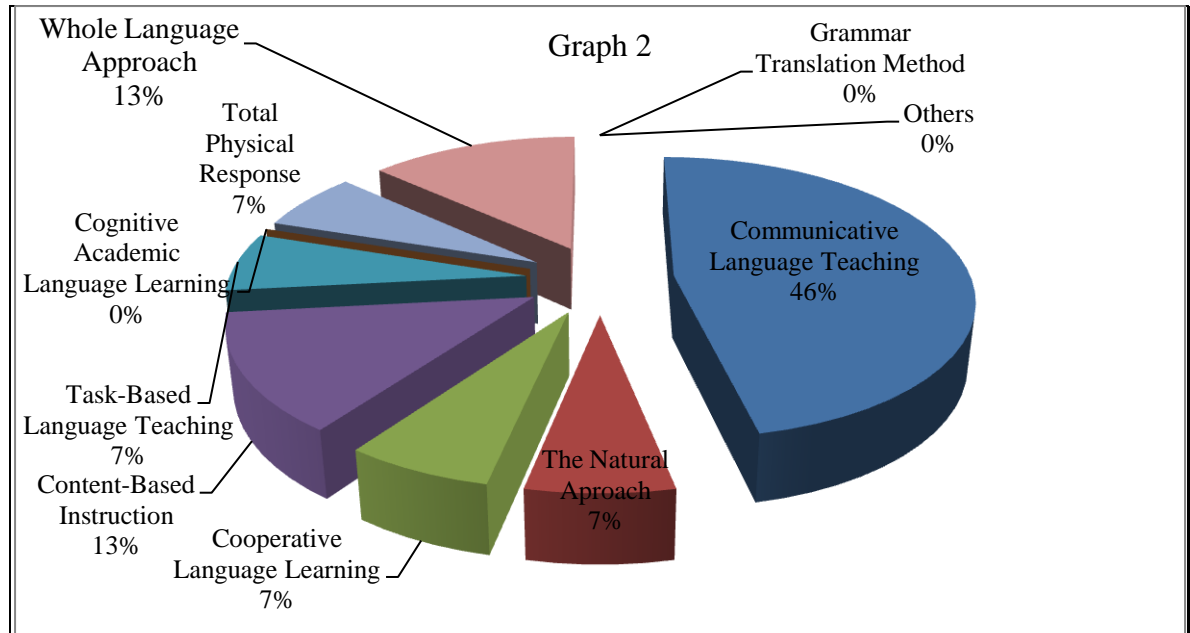
The education level of English teachers working in schools in Ecuador is a matter that the Ministry of Education has been concerned with in recent years. Studies have been conducted to measure the English proficiency level of students and teachers. Results have shown that the English proficiency of most teachers is under the minimum requirement of international standards (SENESCYT, 2012). Showing how the educational level of teachers is related to the English proficiency may help to better understand this analysis. As shown in this graph, 54% of interviewed teachers have a bachelor's degree in English, which is the most common degree for teachers in Ecuador at present. This responds to recent policy changes enacted by the Ministry of Education to improve the English teacher profile. In order to improve English teachers' skills and the level of secondary education in Ecuador, the government offered, in 2012, a scholarship program for Ecuadorian English teachers from eighth grade of basic education to third grade of high school (SENESCYT, 2012). Thirteen percent of interviewed teachers have a master's degree in English, and consequently, have better language proficiency than teachers with only bachelor-level education. Teachers with master level teachers also report having access to higher salaries and positions. In addition, 13% of interviewed teachers have bachelor's degrees in areas other than English, such as early childhood education and business management; however, they reported feeling that their skills in English combined with their teaching experience is enough to succeed as English teachers. Also, 13% of teachers have only a high school diploma, which represents a disadvantage compared to university-educated teachers, because high school graduates have no specific training in either English or teaching.

Furthermore, teachers who have obtained a Master's Degree in English were those who better managed pedagogical tools and better kept their students focused and encouraged to learn English. They used a lot of didactic material and they managed aspects like discipline and class objectives better than teachers who do not have a master's degree.

Nevertheless, teachers without graduate degrees claimed that this disadvantage could be overcome by studying English with private teachers or by living in English-speaking countries. In effect, the interviews with these teachers supported the effectiveness of such alternative training opportunities because their English reached the C1 language proficiency level. Furthermore, the interviews showed that language proficiency varied independently of formal education levels, especially for teachers with English bachelor's degrees. Teachers who demonstrated a high proficiency (between C1 and C2) had studied English abroad and in local institutions such as Cambridge Institution and the Fulbright Commission. On the other hand, teachers who reached B1 or B2 proficiency were those who obtained bachelor's degrees in English teaching in different universities in Ecuador without significant foreign experience.

Finally, observed teachers who had a master's degree demonstrated better use of instructive tools and developed didactic skills. These teachers used resources in their classes, managed time efficiently and controlled groups by using fun and interesting activities.

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



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

English teaching methods have been developed to improve English learning as foreign language. These methods use different approaches based on features such as communication, content, grammar, language structures and language functions (Littlewood, 1981). Of the nine different methods of English teaching considered for this study, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was the most used by fifteen observed teachers. In fact, 46 % of teachers have chosen this method to teach English in order to achieve aspects they consider important. It was noted in observed classes that communicative aspects are the main goal of this method. For example, teachers used lots of exercises in which students have to create sentences to describe situations, answer questions and communicate thoughts. In fact, according to Richards and Rodgers

(2001), integrating language skills through creativity and activities develops the main function of language, which is communication. The students of teachers who use this method said that they are very comfortable with the methodology their teachers use.

Content – Based Instruction was used by 13 % of surveyed teachers. When teachers applied this method, it was observed that they focused on topics they are teaching rather than on grammar or English structure. For instance, some teachers planned lessons in which current news was discussed and analyzed in English. According to Stryker and Leaver (1993), teachers should elicit the information according to the students' skills, use group work techniques and use appropriate error correction systems. In fact, these features were observed, and students were encouraged to use English in speaking and writing, mainly.

Whole Language Approach was the methodology chosen by 13 % of polled teachers. "Whole Language instruction advocates the use of real-world materials rather than commercial texts." (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.110). In fact, teachers who used this approach used material such as storybooks, pieces of literature and newspapers. One interesting activity chosen by one of these teachers was the construction of a piece of writing whose purpose was not only to practice writing skills but to publish the document.

Seven per cent of teachers chose Cooperative Language Learning as their methodology. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLL gives students the possibility of acquiring a foreign language by developing strategies for communication in a natural and positive environment, and makes it possible for teachers to apply their

curricula in diverse settings by using interactive tasks. Observed teachers using CLL made students interact with group and individual activities such as debates, topic discussions and role-playing games. In these classes students felt very encouraged and comfortable to interact with teacher and classmates, developing their English skills in a fun way.

Task-Based Language Teaching was also chosen by 7 % of observed teachers. This means that only one teacher used this approach. This method is “based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 223). Harmer (2001) states that once the tasks are completed by students, teachers intercede in order to clarify the language used, and correct the possible mistakes students have committed in the development of activities. Activities that this teacher used involved tasks like filling out bank papers. Students used their personal information in order to complete the process of asking for a loan in a role play in class. It is important to mention the input and the output provided by the teacher during this process to their students.

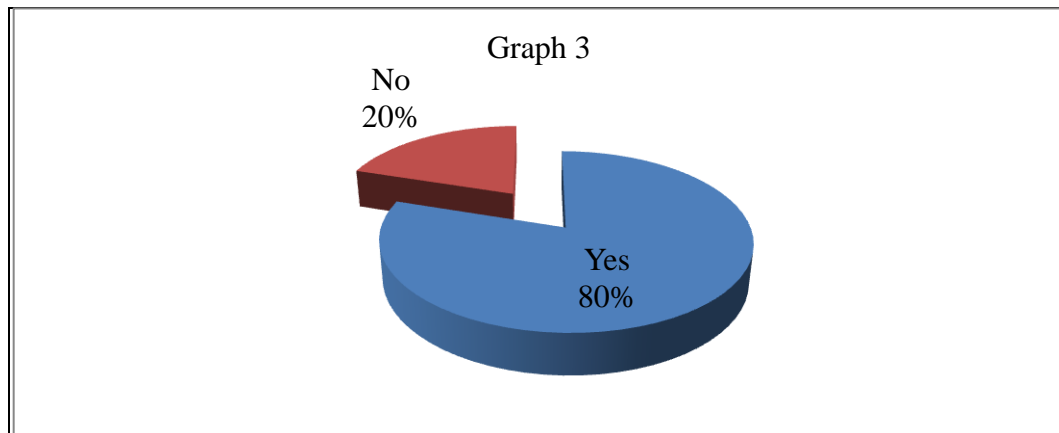
One of the observed teachers said he used the Total Physical Response method to teach his class. According to Harmer (2001), in the TPR approach a command causes a physical response, and this can be used as a way of learning grammar structures and vocabulary. Students in this approach have to perform two important roles: listener and performer, in which the teacher decides what to teach and present to the class. Observed activities in this class used materials to play a game in which commands are given to students. In this game some students said the command and the other students performed

the command. When the teacher was interviewed about the use of this method, he said he used it as a complement to other activities in order to develop English comprehension in his students.

In addition, the Natural Approach method was chosen by one observed teacher. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the Natural Approach uses methods based on the natural way languages are acquired. Activities performed in this class used pictures in order to develop sentences and describe objects. Students used as much vocabulary as they knew when they performed this activity. In fact, “pictures and other visual aids are essential, because they supply the content for communication” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 188). In fact, classes with students learning with this method said they were very enthusiastic and motivated to learn English.

Lastly, methods such as Cognitive Academic Language –Learning and Whole Language Approach were not chosen by observed teachers.

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



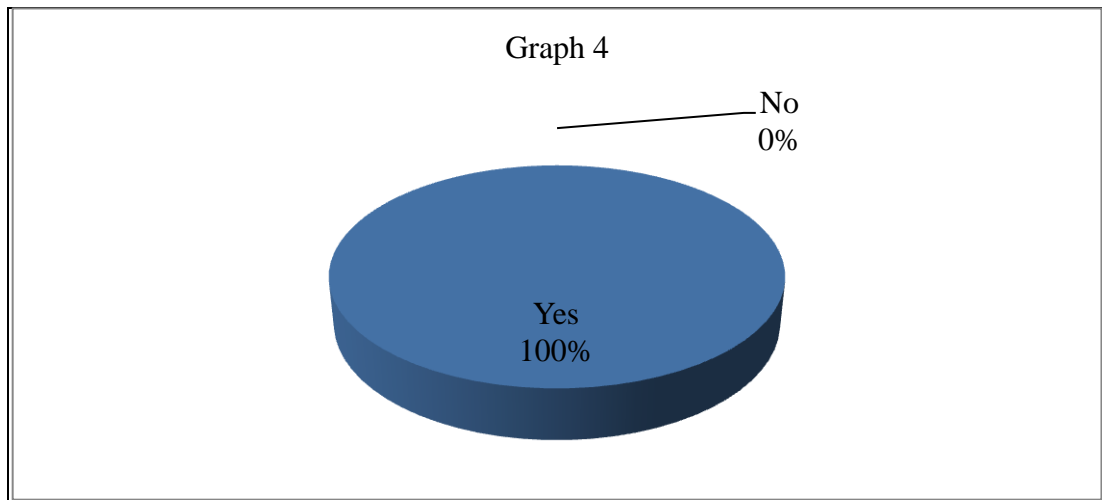
Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

English activities for students in classes can use different forms according to the way students interact with each other and the way they are involved in the activities. Teachers can use whole-group, small-group and individual activities to achieve their class aims. According to Williams and Burden (1997), whole-group activities allow teachers to give instructions and explanations in a better way because all the class is involved in the activity. Also, these authors say when whole-group activities are performed, students develop more confidence about themselves and a positive feeling of belonging to the class.

From 15 teachers that were surveyed in the current study, 80% answered that they do use whole group activities to teach their lessons; 20 % answered they do not use whole group activities. When teachers that use whole group activities were asked why they use these kinds of activities they stated different reasons such as that students share their thoughts and become more helpful, the group is unified and collaborative, discussions can be encouraged, whole group activities improve group skills and student participation and allowing the teacher to analyze grammar with different criteria. On the other hand, teachers not using whole group activities argued that when groups are not homogeneous, doing this method is not recommendable for teaching purposes. In classes whose teachers use whole group activities better integration of the group was observed and the students participated actively. In effect, students in these classes were more involved and encouraged than students in classes not using whole group work.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

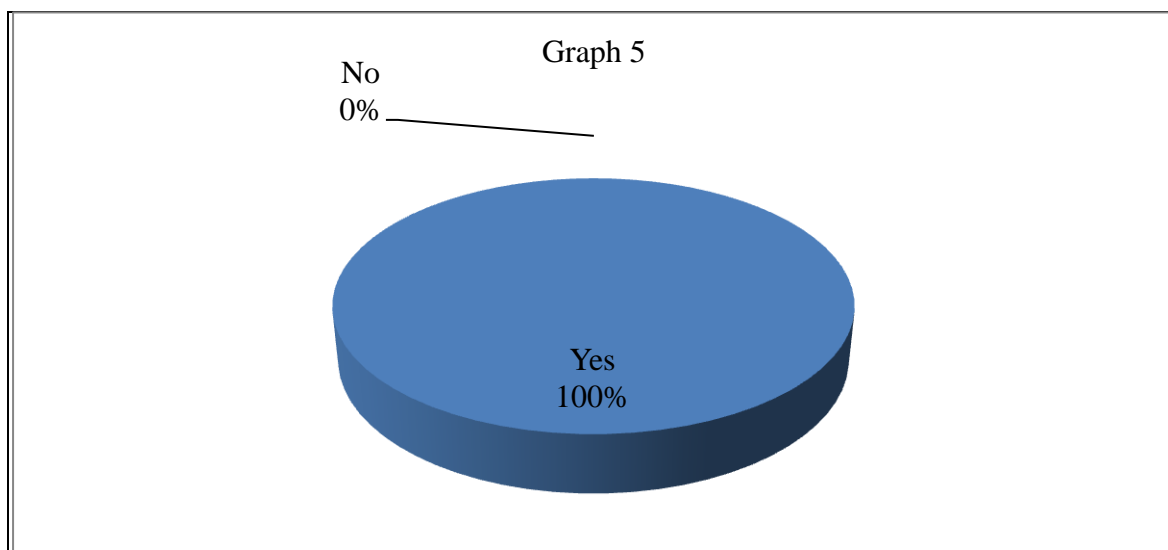


Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

Individualized activities can have some advantages in classes, such as student independence and stress control, while at the same time focusing on individual learning styles and building the skills of students (Harmer, 2001). In this study, from 15 teachers who were surveyed, 100% use individual activities to teach their lessons. Individual activities that the observed teachers chose were writing sentences, answering questions, and filling in worksheets. Teachers argued that individual activities help students to reinforce knowledge and solve personal doubts, recognize differences between learning skills, promote interaction and attention from the teacher, and that these activities are optimal for evaluating and grading. Students felt comfortable when they were given feedback in activities they performed individually.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?



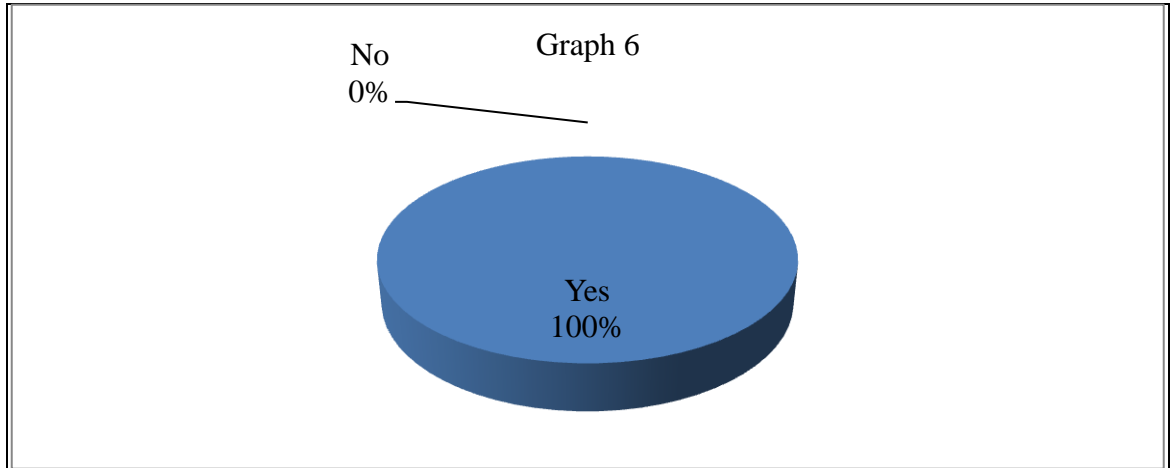
Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

Group activities can be less stressful for students when they work in pairs or small groups that perform activities in front of the whole group (Harmer, 2001). In this research, from the 15 teachers who were polled, 100% answered they use group activities to teach their lessons; however, the classroom observations did not match with these results because only 46, 6% of teachers (7) used group activities in their classes. It was observed that classes in which teachers used group work activities, aspects such as discipline and timing were not well controlled.

Group work activities were accomplished well when teachers planned every stage of them, and students were motivated to develop and achieve their learning goals. Teachers claimed that group work activities are useful because they allow students to learn from each other, exchange and share their thoughts, practice their speaking skills and clarify doubts in a friendly way.

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



Author: Alfredo Galarza

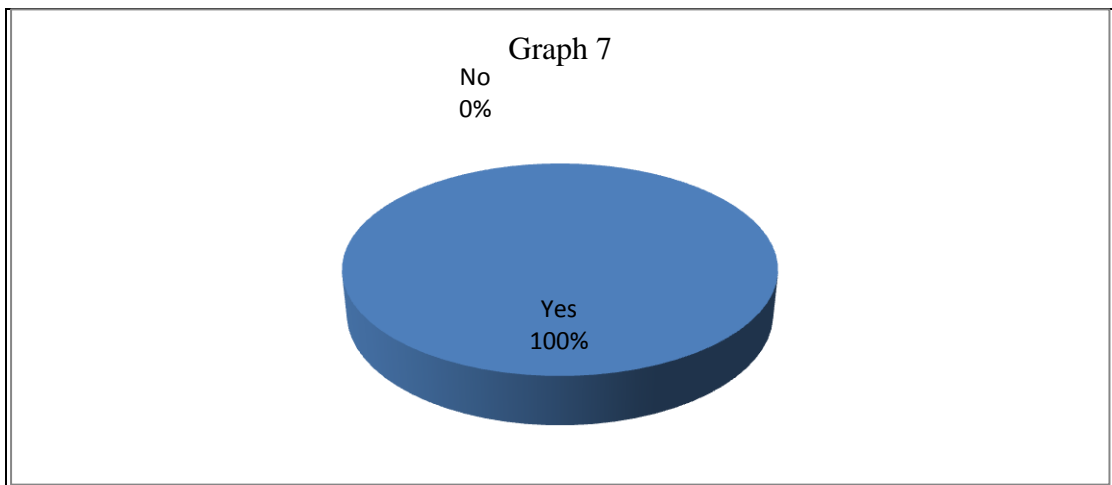
Source: Teacher questionnaire

There are English teaching methods in which the target language is not always used 100% in the classes. In fact, in Ecuador, English teachers do not always use only English to teach their classes, especially in basic levels. It is sometimes useful to give explanations and instructions using the native language of students. As shown in the graph, in the current study, the 15 teachers who were observed and polled all answered that they use English most of the time in their classes. These answers are in accordance with the notes taken during classroom observation.

According to Chastain (1998), the most important resource that students receive from their English teachers is the communicative skills when they give instructions. Surveyed teachers said that if they use English most of the time, students are encouraged to speak English most of the time and to develop their communicative skills. Students said that they felt very comfortable using English most of the time. They should ask their questions, and give comments in English; otherwise teachers do not answer them.

It was observed that in the early years of high-school (8th and 9th grades) students presented more difficulties at the time of understanding commands, explanations and directions from the teachers. In contrast, students of high school years (2nd and 3rd grade of high school) are more familiar with using English most of the time, and they are accustomed to asking, commenting, and even making jokes in English when they are in classes.

Do teachers plan their lessons?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

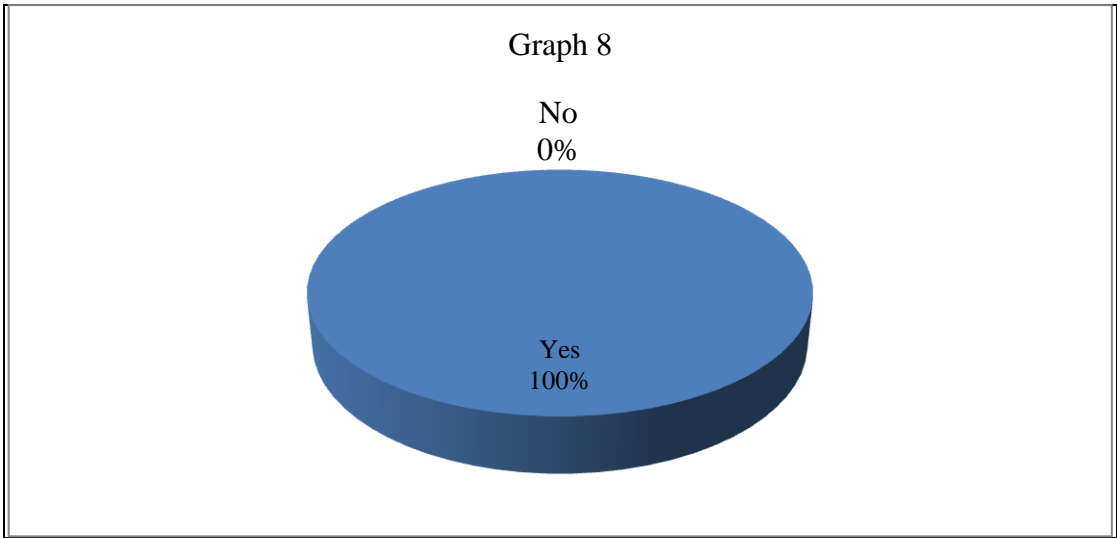
Source: Teacher questionnaires

Preparing a lesson plan can contribute to developing a personal teacher style because it permits one to examine all the materials, resources, spaces, time, ideas, and activities that are useful in classes (Woodwart, 2001). At present, institutions require teachers to present lesson plans periodically in order to organize their classes by following the parameters of the Ministry of Education. As shown in the graph, from 15 teachers who were surveyed about lesson planning, 100% answered they plan their

lessons. According to Gower, Philips, and Walters (2005), a lesson plan includes the aims, the procedure, the approach, and the activities for the class, as well the materials, resources, and equipment that will be used. This is a very important resource that teachers must consider in order to achieve their goals in every class, giving as a result a successful teaching- learning process in which every step of the lesson is successfully accomplished.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that not all the lessons and activities done in the observed classes were well planned. Some teachers had to improvise some extra activities in order to complete the time of the class. All the activities that were used with this purpose were those presented in English textbooks like writing sentences, underlining text pieces and filling in blanks. On the other hand, some teachers did not have enough time to complete all the planned activities and tasks. While this lack of plan completion was not easily assessable with the questionnaire, it was evident when teachers voluntarily shared their lesson plans. In spite of this, the main objectives of the lessons were achieved with alternative activities and tasks, which demonstrate that lesson plans were flexible and adaptable.

Do teachers consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach their lessons? (Management of classes)



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

Managing classes means generating attention, creativity, and motivation from learners. Discipline control, timing management and giving instructions and feedback are features that demonstrate how efficient a teacher can be in a class (Gower, Philips and Walters, 2005). In this study, 15 teachers answered positively when they were asked about considering aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach their lessons. This means that every teacher has considered these aspects.

Nevertheless, student opinions about their teachers' classroom management varied widely, but only one student (representing 7% of the polled population) said that his teacher did not maintain disciplinary control over the class. According to Charles (2005), each discipline problem in class can be viewed as an opportunity for learning and this is a positive reinforcement on students, for they help each other find solutions to problems. The polled student argued his teacher did not control the group when other

students speak aloud, which causes disorganization in the class. Nevertheless, the teacher managed discipline well in the observed class.

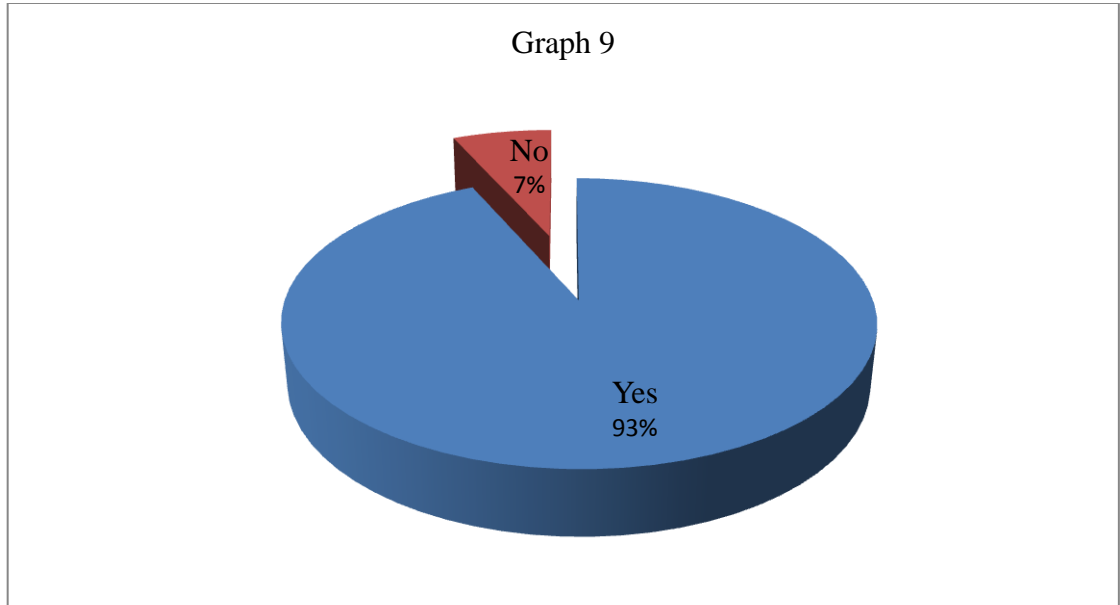
According to McLeod, Fisher and Hoover (2000), students have short attention spans and teachers should plan activities mixed with listening, movements, individual and group work. The authors assert that teachers need to plan the time of every mentioned activity. In the observed classes teachers demonstrated a high level of good management of timing in the classroom. They used appropriate times for developing every stage of the class, making students stay focused on class topics.

Referring to the instruction aspect, it was observed that teachers used some strategies to develop their lessons. According to Tanner and Bottoms (2001, p. 3), “teachers need time to make informed decisions about instruction, analyze data, learn new instructional strategies and develop integrated units of study.” In effect, all the instruction given by observed teachers used interesting and varied activities. Only one student (7 %) said his teacher did not give an appropriate instruction because he used only the text book for developing the lesson.

Otherwise, 4 students said their teachers did not give them appropriate feedback, error correction review, and techniques to improve their skills on English language. This aspect is important to underline, even if the number of students with this point of view is not high (26 % of surveyed students), because feedback is an important tool that completes the student’s learning development, and assures that he or she has successfully accomplished the lesson (Gower, Philips and Walters, 2005).

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

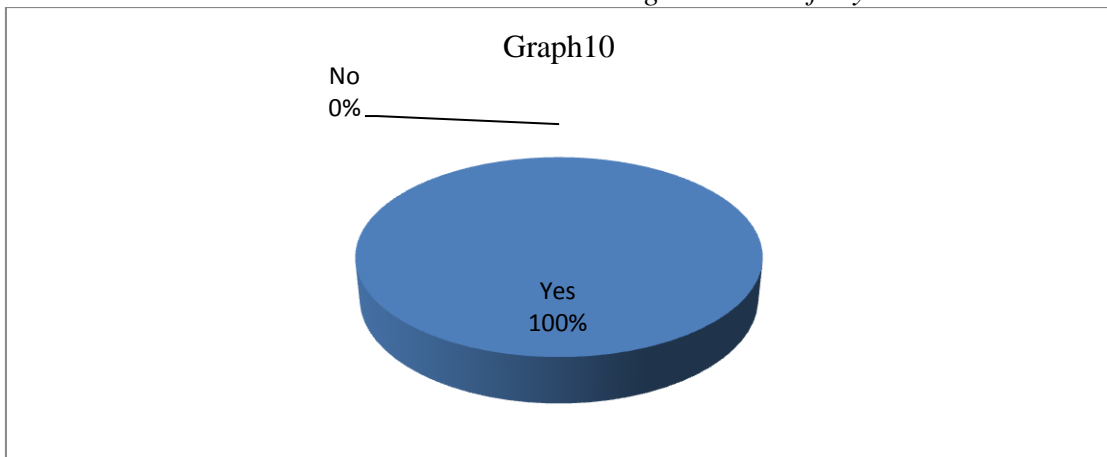
Source: Teacher questionnaires

Every student in class has a different personality, aptitude, and needs. It is important to recognize differences in learners when teaching. In effect, there are different types of learner strengths and weaknesses that teachers should consider before concluding if the learning process is successful or not (Harmer, 2001). In this survey, of the 15 teachers who were asked about their consideration of students' needs in order to teach English successfully, only one teacher (7%) answered negatively. The rest of the total sample said they consider aspects such as age, personality, attitude, aptitude, learning styles and motivation. Indeed, observed and interviewed teachers said they have to adapt methodologies and teaching resources depending on their students' age. This can be easily done since school classes usually group students by age.

Also, teachers said that personality, attitude and aptitude of students are the three characteristics that are most variable between them, even if they have similar ages and interests. Teachers indicated that these features need to be treated individually and can be managed by giving especial activities and responsibilities according to student behavior and observing how they respond. Similarly, teachers asserted that motivation is a difficult matter that needs to be considered every class in order to keep students focused and teachers encouraged to develop a successful teaching – learning process.

Additionally, all teachers said they knew about learning style theories and have successfully applied these when they teach in order to identify which activities and methods are better to enhance their students' knowledge and learning, and achieve their goals.

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

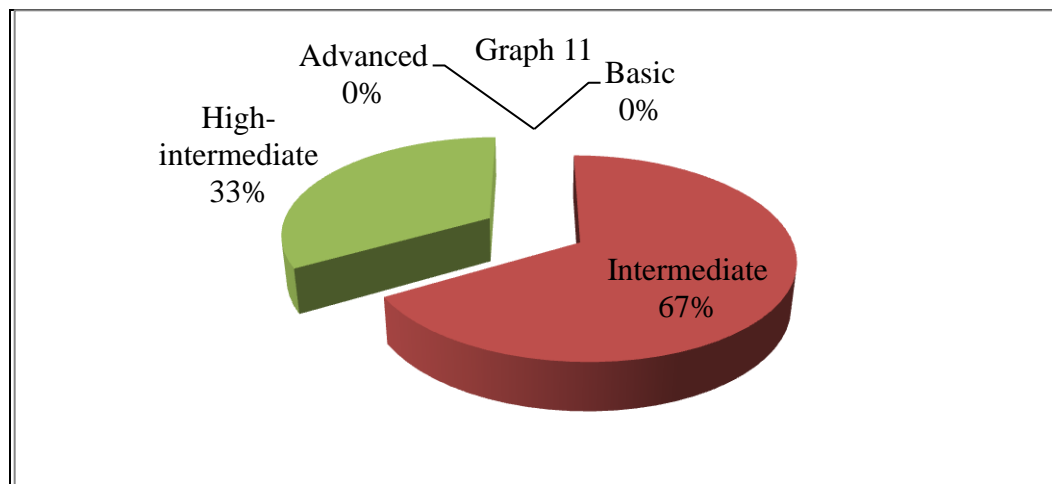
When people choose to learn English in specialized institutions, they usually take an admission test. This kind of test attempts to measure the student's level and place them in an appropriate course. Nevertheless, in most general schools, this assessment is

not applied and classes are not homogeneous in English knowledge level. In this study, of the 15 surveyed teachers, all of them responded yes to the question of whether they consider student level to teach English successfully. According to Roberts (2007), even though most students can have the same level, generally there are students whose performance in English can be above or below the standard level. Some strategies to work with this “multilevel class” include grouping students with leveled tasking assignments and practicing extra writing and speaking activities with students with low performance.

It was observed that teachers whose classes have significant differences in English level of their students applied different tasks and grouping activities. Some teachers grouped students with low level in order to develop extra activities that allow them to keep up with the subjects they are teaching. Grammar content and vocabulary was reinforced through the application of extra activities.

Which is the level of students?

Student’s Level (Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced)



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

Classes with learners with different levels of English can provide some opportunities to learners. For instance, those students with limited proficiency can interact with those having high levels, acquiring benefits to improve their skills (Mathews-Aydni & Van Horne, 2006). In this research, teachers were asked about students' level of English in order to determine differences when they teach, plan classes and elaborate syllabi. The present question is complementary with the last question and presents the classification according to the teachers' criteria of the students' level. The most students, 67 %, are classified as intermediate level. There are some institutions in which students are divided in different groups according their English level in order to develop different processes of teaching and use different material.

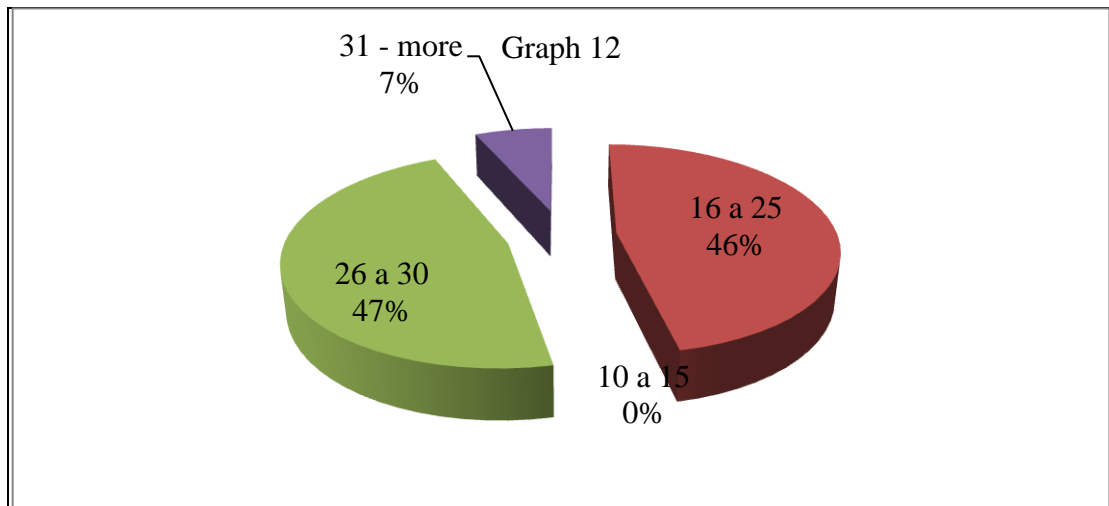
Also, in institutions in which students' level was graded as intermediate, English language is the only subject students learn in English while in other institutions, with higher student level of English, they get additional subjects in English such as social studies, sciences and mathematics. Indeed, these kinds of institutions (represented by 33% of the teachers surveyed) reported a generally higher classification of their students as high intermediate level. None of the surveyed teachers classified their students as basic or advanced.

In order to establish an analysis of student level, students were surveyed about their perceptions of the difficulty level of activities performed in classes. They had to choose between four categories: very easy, easy, difficult, and too difficult. Results of these

questionnaires yielded three different answers: 20 % said activities are too easy, 67 % of them said activities are easy, and 13 % said activities are difficult. None of the students said activities in classes were too difficult. These results show that teachers are concerned about the student's level when they teach, because a great majority of students (87%) consider activities appropriate and easy to execute in classes.

Factors Concerning Classroom

How many students do teachers have in this class?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

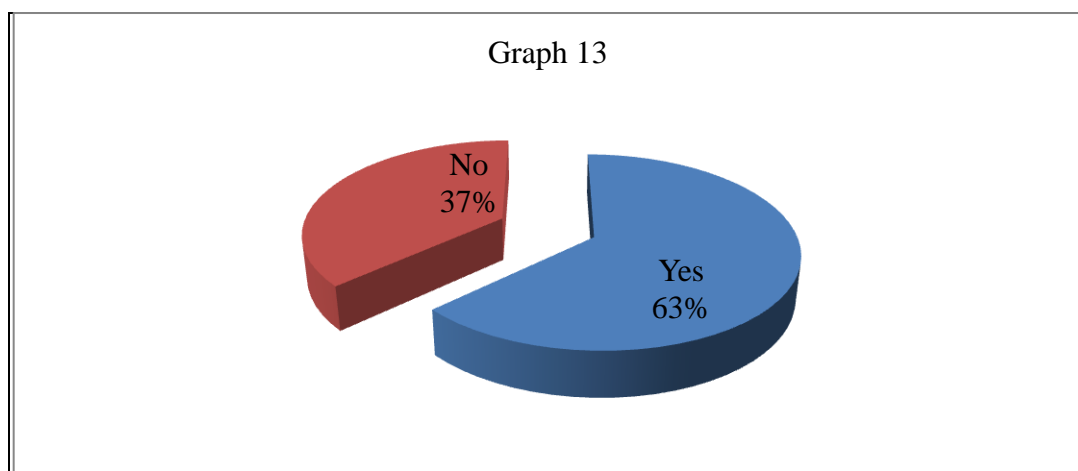
Source: Teacher questionnaire

Class size or number of students is an important matter that should be taken into account when teaching English because there are some important advantages and disadvantages related to this feature. In order to analyze this, the number of students in every class observed was counted. From 15 observed classes, 7% have more than 31 students. This is a large number of students, which represents some disadvantages. Harmer (2001) says that one important disadvantage that large classes have is the time

limitation when it is necessary to control and focus on every student according to her/his own learning style and personality. This could be appreciated in large classes with more than 31 students in this study. Teachers with more than 31 students per class said they were uncomfortable working with this number of students. They said it is too difficult to keep discipline and focus in the classes.

The majority of observed classes (47%) had between 26 and 30 students. This number of students allowed teachers to control aspects such as discipline, but it was observed that not all the students were focused and involved in class. On the other hand, 46% of classes had 16 to 25 students, which represents the smallest observed class size; that is to say, no class had fewer than 15 students. It was observed that these classes were more dynamic and participative than others in which the number of students is more than 25. Teachers working with this number of students said they felt comfortable and encouraged to work with these classes.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with this number of students?

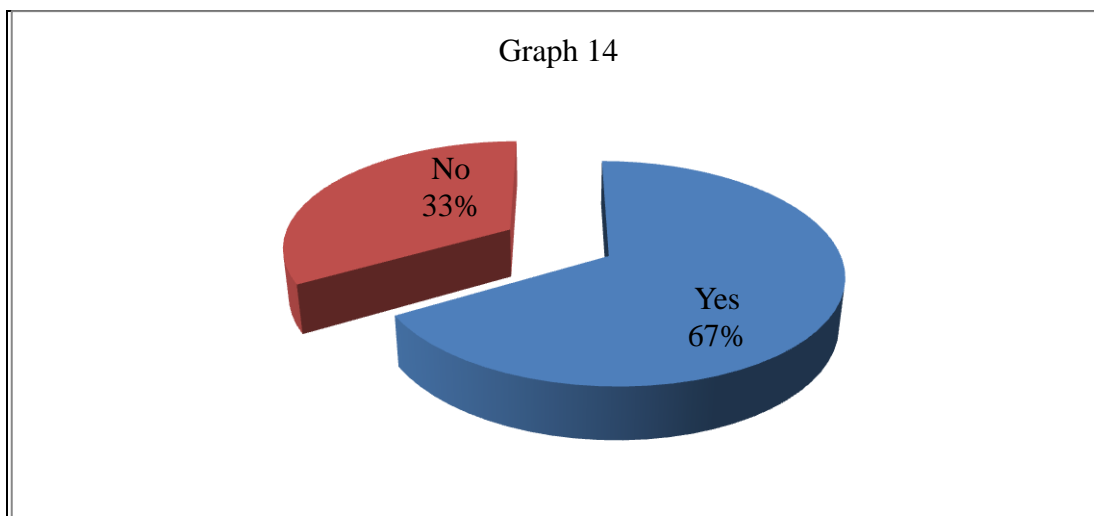


Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

Generally teachers do not feel comfortable with large classes. In this type of classes there are often problems such as noise, too many people in a restricted space, lack of class materials, and the incapability to recognize and respond to everyone's needs (Woodwart, 2001). From the total of interviewed teachers, 63% of them said they feel comfortable working with the number of students in their classes; 37 % of them said they do not feel comfortable with the number of students in their classes. Once the questionnaires were analyzed, it was perceived that all the teachers whose classes are smaller in number of students (from 16 to 25 students), were comfortable working with that number of students. In fact, those classes were the most interesting to watch and were the most participative. Only two teachers whose classes have 16 to 25 students said they were not comfortable with that number of students. The other seven said they were comfortable, and it was noted that these teachers were those who had more experience managing this number of students. Additionally, the only polled teacher whose class had more than 31 students said he did not feel comfortable working with that number of students, and it was observed that, in fact, he could not manage the entire group, and some students were not immersed and encouraged in class.

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



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

Classroom space and seating arrangement is a very important matter in the teaching-learning process. In fact, the position of students can determine the students' attitudes, their interaction and the kind of activities that can be performed (Woodward, 2001).

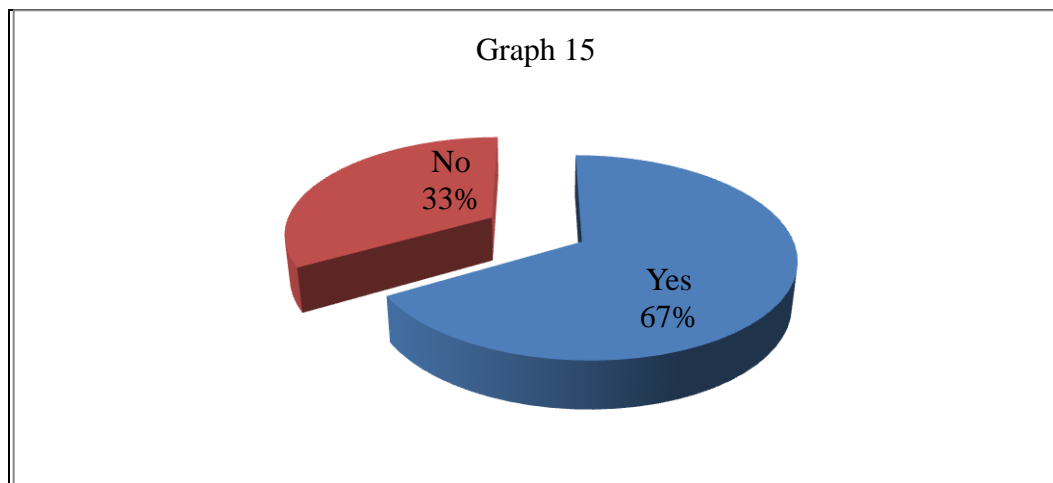
From 15 surveyed teachers, 67% said they have enough space to work with the number of students they have in class; 33% said they do not have enough space. All teachers working in classes bigger than 30 students and 50% of teachers who have more than 25 students said they do not have enough space. It is important to remark that the area of was not always the same for all classrooms, even in the same institution; some classrooms are too small to comfortably develop classes and locate students with enough space to work on activities that require movement and dynamic performance.

There are some institutions that have adapted small rooms not designed to be classrooms in order to solve space problems caused by the increase in their number of

students. Additionally, although in some institutions the classroom area was originally designed for a maximum of 20 students, the observed classes were closer to 25. The 66 % of teachers who were comfortable with their classroom space did not always have more space than others who were not comfortable. This could be appreciated by observing and comparing classroom spaces and number of students, but it was observed that the methodology of these teachers never included activities in which students should interact and move from their chairs and desks.

When students were asked if they felt comfortable with the classroom space, 67 % of them said they are comfortable, whereas the 33 % said they don't have enough space to work comfortably in their classrooms. Students who said they do not feel comfortable match with teachers who said the same.

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



Author: Alfredo Galarza

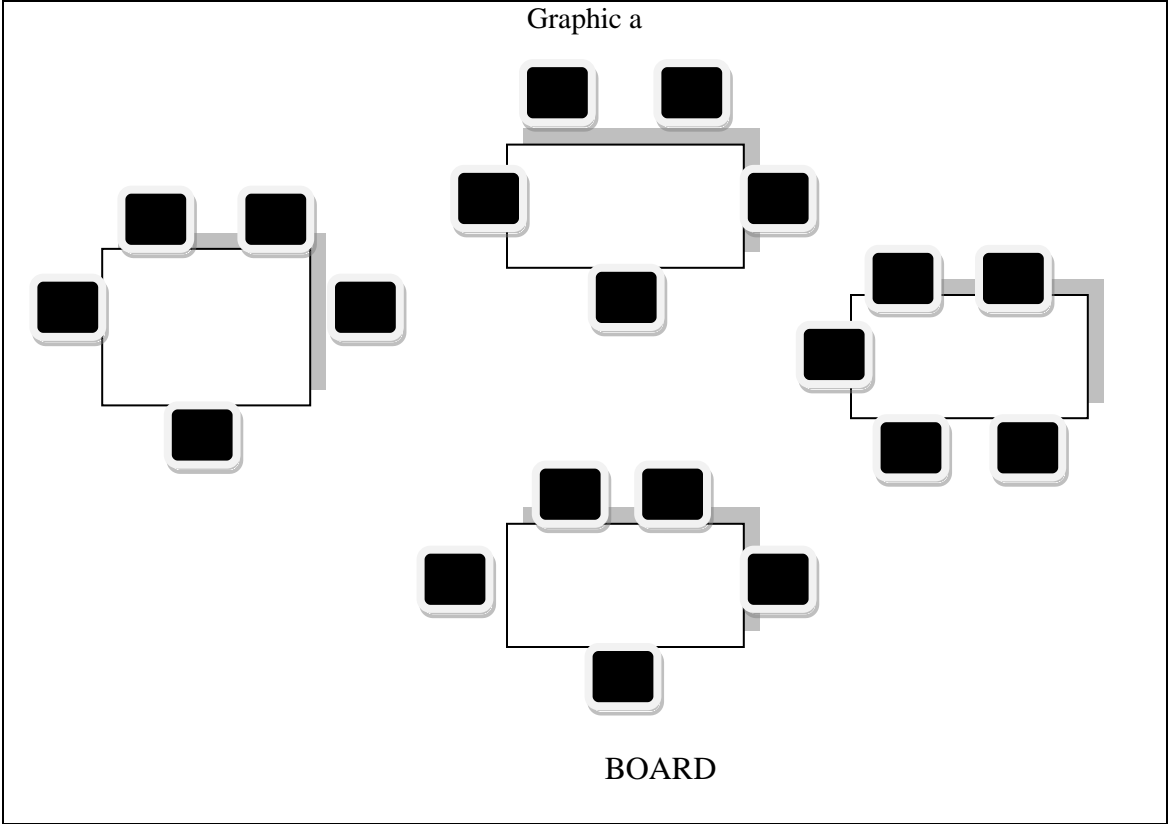
Source: Teacher questionnaire

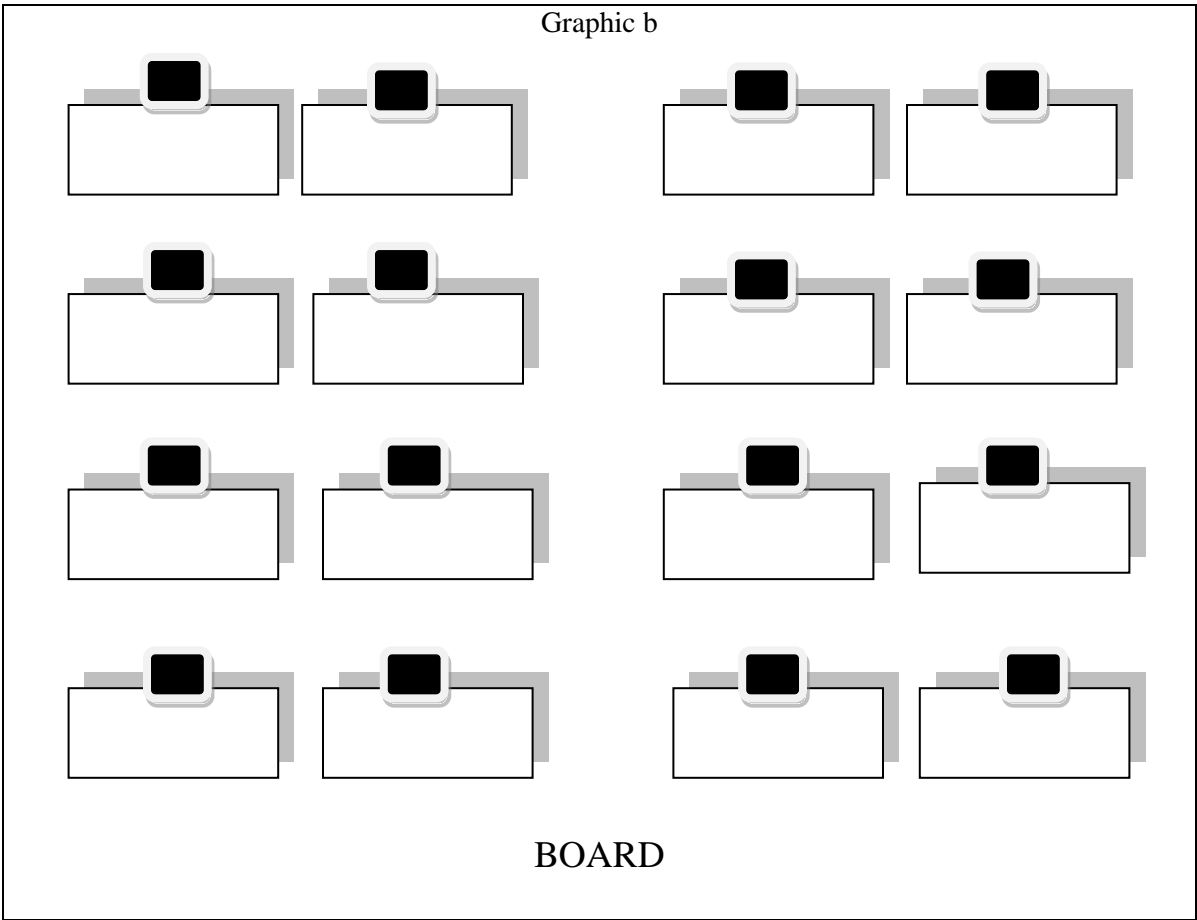
From 15 surveyed teachers, 67% said they arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes; 33% said they never do this in their classes. According to McCroskey and McVetta (1978), the effectiveness of communication among teacher and students is related to the type of seating arrangement teachers choose. When classes were observed, only two of the teachers who said they arrange seats in order to do group work activities actually rearranged the students' seats in their classes.

One teacher organized an activity in which students should create sentences and pieces of text in groups of five students by interchanging ideas about a current fact in the news. Students were seated in groups of five people and they had to arrange their seats in a circle (Graphic a). At the end of the activity, one student from each group should read the text and the rest of the class should make comments on it. It was observed that using this methodology is very fun for students, who were enthusiastic to participate. This kind of arrangement is called "modular arrangement", and "it is advocated for classes in which student-student interaction is most important" (McCroskey & McVetta, 1978, p.103).

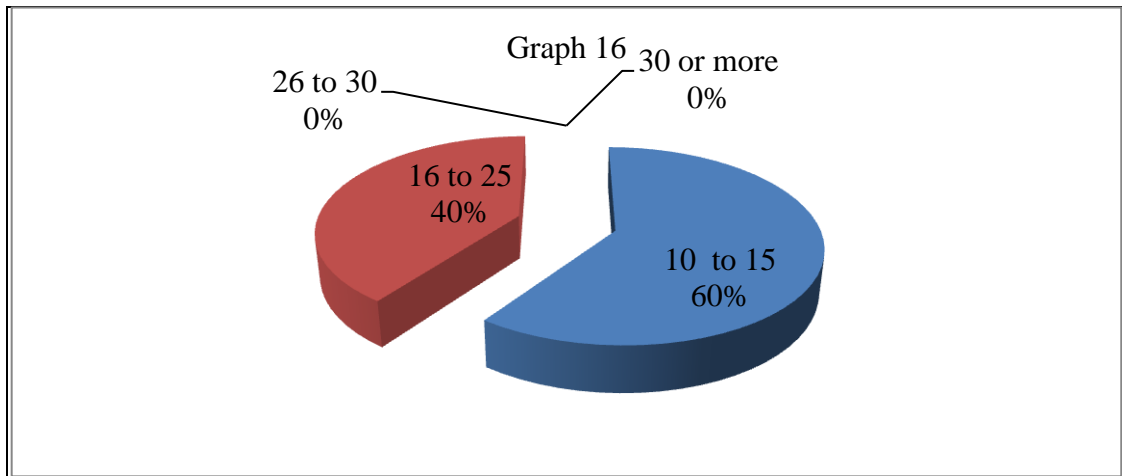
The other teacher did an activity in which students should solve some questions presented in their textbook in pairs (Graphic b). This arrangement matches with the "traditional arrangement", but the students group in pairs by approaching them in their seats. McCroskey and McVetta (1978) suggest that the traditional arrangement reduces the interaction between students and focuses the interaction with the teacher. The activity the teacher assigned was performed in silence and the teacher monitored by

approaching each pair of students and assessing at that moment. It was observed that working in class using different seating arrangements can give dynamics to the class and students are encouraged to participate and be involved, even when the subjects can seem difficult or boring. Moreover, students in classes where seats were never rearranged reported on their questionnaires that they were less motivated to participate in class. A significant consideration related to the possibility of arranging seats is the classroom space and number of students. It is obvious that small classrooms with many students do not allow for arranging seats to perform group activities. The distribution of seats that observed teachers used in classes were as the next graphics describe:





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



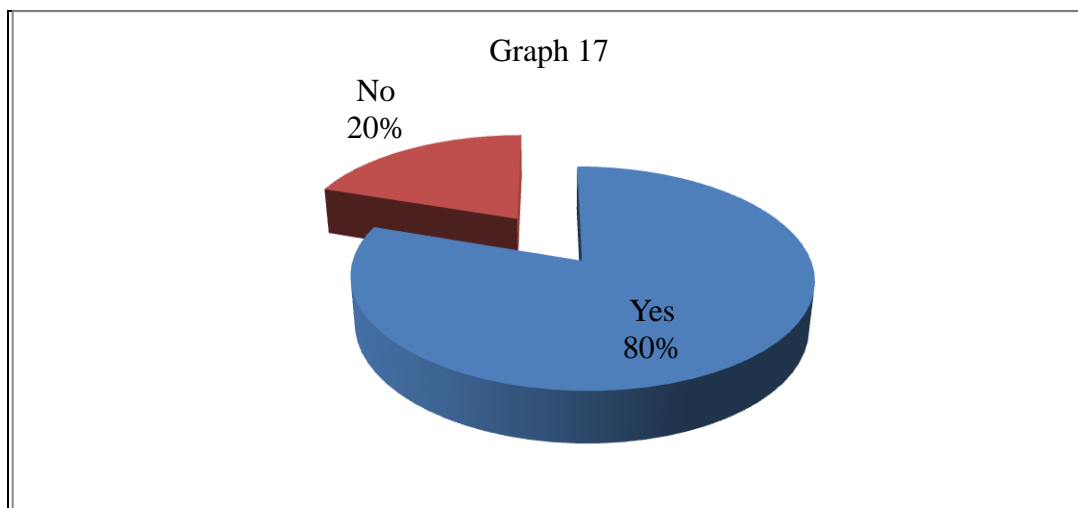
Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

From 15 surveyed teachers asked about the appropriate number of students to teach English, 60% chose the option between 10 to 15 students per class; 40% selected 16 to 25 as the appropriate number of students in class to teach English. None of the teachers prefer the options that are above than 25 students. This illustrates what was viewed in all classes: the fewer students there are in English classes, the more successful the teaching-learning process. All teachers who said that the appropriate number of students is 10 to 15 were those whose classrooms were small and do not have space to perform dynamic activities with students. During observation, it was clear that in their classes students do not have enough space to participate by moving or interacting with others in active ways. Students were limited to reading, writing and speaking from their seats without much interaction.

Conversely, most of the teachers who were comfortable with the number of students they have in class were those whose classes had 16 to 25 students. In observations of these classes, it was clear that students have space to move, interact with each other, walk to the board to write, and even present little sketches in front of the class. Furthermore, teachers were more comfortable with this number of students because they can better control aspects such as discipline and feedback.

Do teachers use teaching resources? (Teaching resources)



Author: Alfredo Galarza

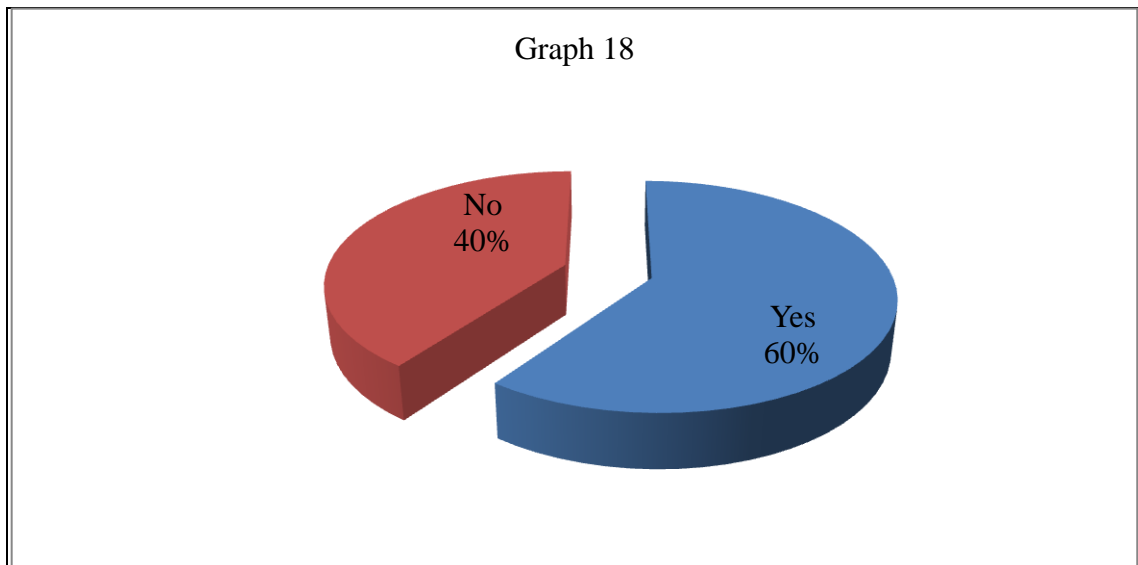
Source: Teacher questionnaire

English teachers can employ several resources to make lessons more appealing and useful. There are many teaching resources that can be used creatively by teachers in order to take advantage of students' needs and learning styles. From the 15 teachers who were asked about the use of teaching resources such as TV, tape/cd player, computer(s), projector(s), smartboards, and supplementary materials to teach their classes, 80% said they use some of these resources; 20% of teachers said they never use these kinds of resources. During observations, the only media resources observed were TVs and tape/cd players. Some institutions have special classrooms called "laboratories" equipped with computers and smartboards. Nevertheless, these classrooms are not used for every class but only one class per week because there is only one in the institution and every teacher has access to it. Some teachers said they use *e devices*, such as laptops, tablets and smartphones, as a resource for teaching. When classes were observed, only two teachers out of the 80% who said they use resources, used these

resources in class. One of them conducted an activity in which students must write what they hear from a conversation on a CD, and the other teacher showed a TV show in English without captions. The 20% of teachers who did not use resources said they preferred only to use the activities proposed in books without extra resources.

From 15 students who were asked if their teachers used resources, 2 said their teachers do not use any resource. The other 13 said their teachers have used some resources in their classes. However, students who answered negatively do not match with the teachers who said they used resources. Students did not say anything else about this point.

Do teachers consider the resources they have in class to be appropriate?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher questionnaire

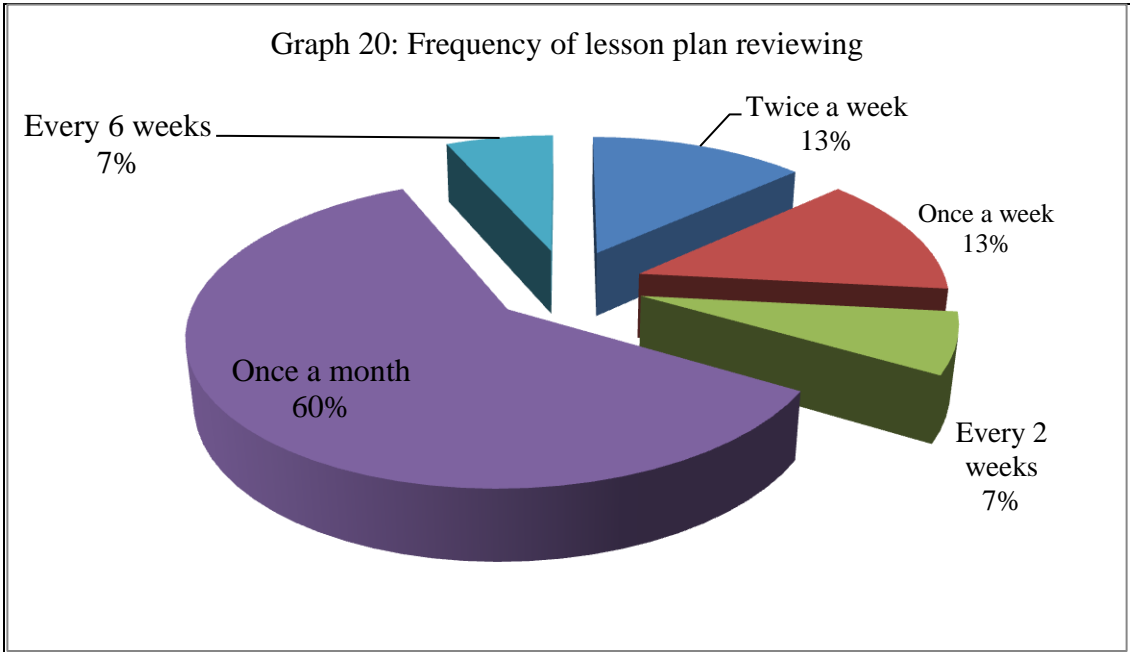
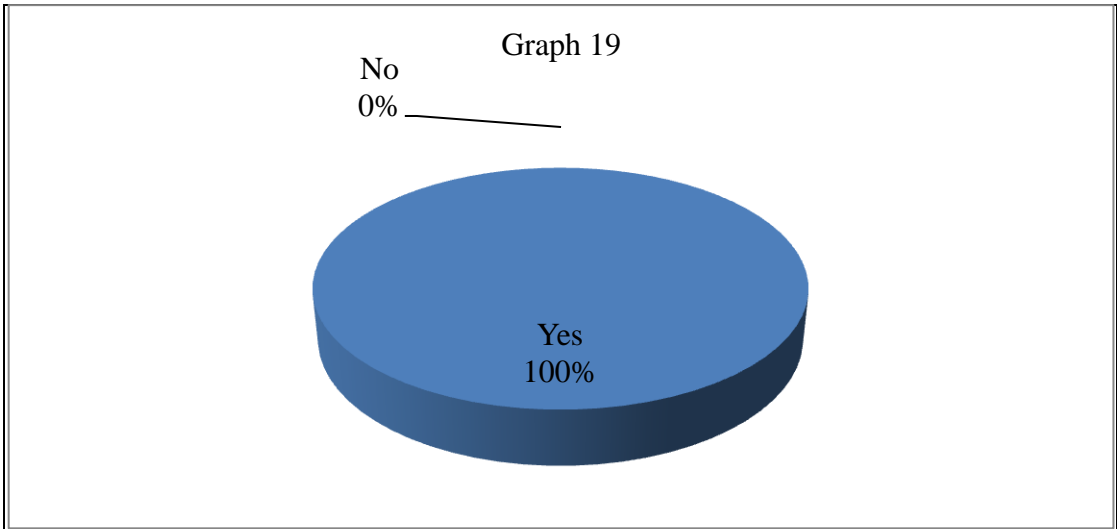
Woodwart (2001) asserts that teachers can improve their job when teaching by using several tools available that enhance the attainment of learners' goals. There are a

lot of tools used as pedagogic resources in class. In this study, teachers also were asked if they considered the resources they have in classes to be appropriate. 60% thought the resources in class are appropriate; 40 % said they do not have resources or the resources are not appropriate. Teachers who said the resources are appropriate claimed that the resources they have in classes are used according to students' age and necessities. The main resources chosen by these teachers were TVs, CD and DVD players, and projectors. However, some of these teachers complained about not having computers as resources for their classes, or not having more time to have lab exercises. On the other hand, the 40 % of teachers who did not consider they have appropriate resources in class claimed they would improve their classes if their institutions would provide the appropriate resources. They also argued that they need more technology appliances for teaching and improving their students' skills.

86% of students said their teachers used resources to improve the teaching-learning process in their classes. However, 33 % of students said they do not like the way their teachers teach. These students argued that they do not like the methodology of their teachers, and that their classes are boring.

Factors Concerning Educational Institutions

Do the institutions review teachers' lesson plans?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher's questionnaires

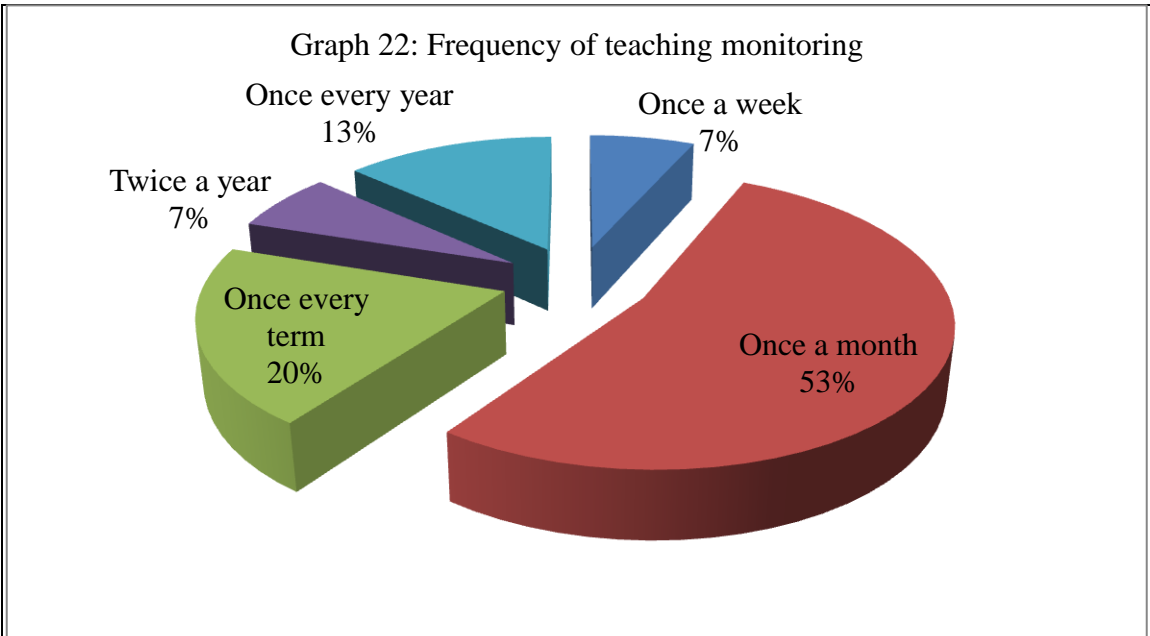
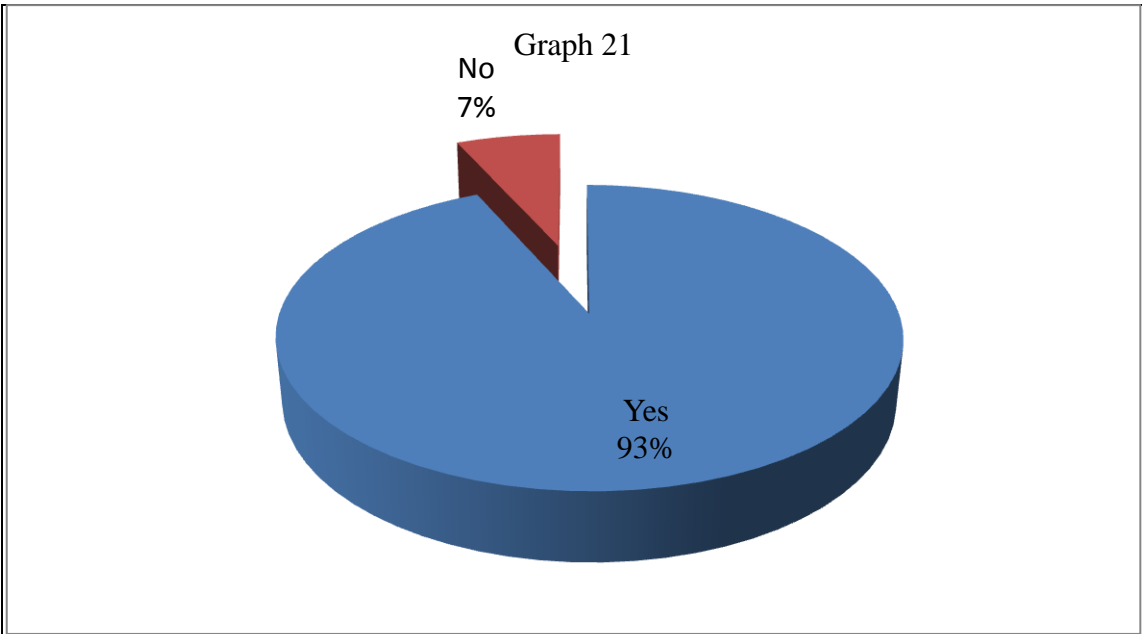
From 15 polled teachers, 100% said their institutions reviewed their lesson plans. This occurs since the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has implemented rules about controlling curriculum and lesson design of every subject in basic, middle, and high schools in the last reform in 2012 (MINEDUC, 2012). According to Johnson-Gerard

(2012), when monitoring lesson plans all parts of the lesson plan submitted should be present. If there is not all the adequate information in lesson plans, institutions can return them to teacher for revisions.

Frequency of lesson plan review was variable depending on the institutions. 60% of teachers reported that their institutions reviewed their lesson plans once a month. In their institutions, each area has a monthly meeting in order to review lesson plans, analyze student development and solve class problems.

The same percentage of teachers (13%) said their institutions reviewed their lesson plans either once or twice a week. They said this happens because in their institutions the English area director requested their lesson plans once or twice a week, which means every four classes or every two classes. 7% of teachers said their institutions reviewed their lesson plans once every two weeks, which they consider is the estimated time for accomplishing a unit of study proposed by the book. The last 7% of teachers said their institutions reviewed their lesson plans every 6 weeks, which represents the preparation time for each major exam. In observations, some teachers agreed to show their lesson plans in order to compare activities performed in classes with the activities presented in the lesson plans. In effect, most of the activities in classes were performed by following their lesson plans.

Do the institutions monitor the teaching?



Author: Alfredo Galarza

Source: Teacher’s questionnaire

Of the 15 teachers interviewed and observed, 93% said their institutions monitored their teaching; the remaining 7% said their institution never monitored their teaching.

According to Gower, Philips, and Walters (2001), some positive aspects of classroom monitoring are helping with lesson preparation and giving helpful feedback.

The frequency of monitoring also varies between institutions. From the total of monitored teachers, 53% said they were monitored once a month; 20% said they were monitored once every term or *parcial*; 13% claimed they were monitored once every year, usually in the middle of the school year; 7% answered they are monitored twice a year, one time in the first month of classes and the other time near to the first term of the second period from February to March. The last 7% said they were monitored once a week, but they claimed the institution has this rule only for new or trainee teachers. In fact, in the institution in question, there were head teachers and assistant teachers.

When teachers were observed, only one class was monitored by their principals or was attended by other teachers. In this class, what Gower, Philips, and Walters (2001) suggest was observed: trainee teachers were open to observers' suggestions and proposals in order to improve their skills, plans and methodologies.

Conclusions

- According to this study, English teaching- learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools is not consistent. Not all the high schools have qualified teachers with adequate knowledge of English teaching methodologies. Furthermore, private Ecuadorian high schools do not have enough supporting materials and aids for teaching of English.
- Teacher education level is a relevant factor when the teaching-learning process is analyzed. In the observed high schools, teachers who have achieved a masters' degree and have a high proficiency English level are those whose classes were more efficient and successful.
- Methods and didactic activities are also important factors that influence the English teaching- learning process. These factors are deeply related to students' level, learning styles, and personality. Teachers that applied more varied and creative and didactic activities are those who better accomplished their class objectives.
- The number of students is a significant factor in the teaching-learning process. This study put in evidence that classes with a maximum of 15 students are more successful than overcrowded classes.
- Observed institutions that were concerned about classroom space, implementation and resources were those whose teachers better managed their classes. Indeed, students of these institutions stated they felt more comfortable and encouraged to learn English when the classroom facilities are appropriate.

- According to this study, lesson planning is an important tool for achieving the goals of English classes. Observed classes in which there was evidence of lesson plans were well managed and developed. Teachers who better planned a class and adapted their lesson plans taking into consideration class circumstances were those who achieved their accomplishments and made the English classes more productive.

Recommendations

- Government resolutions about improving the education level in Ecuador should facilitate programs in which teachers achieve master's degrees. Definitely, this kind of educational policy will improve the English proficiency and skills of teachers and, consequently, of students.
- Educational institutions must be aware that the English level of their students can be improved by adapting their facilities with appropriate classrooms, English labs and supporting material.
- Institutions should consider the number of students in each class when they learn English. Classes should be organized with a maximum of 15 students to achieve successful English learning processes.
- Lesson planning, methodologies and consideration of learning styles are variables that teachers must be aware during the whole teaching process. An appropriate and accurate handling of these teaching variables allows teachers to better develop and manage their classes.

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ANNEXES