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**The level achieved by graduated students of two English language
learning academies in Loja**

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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Septiembre, 2015

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Magister.

Alexandra Zúñiga Ojeda

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación: The level achieved by graduated students of two English language learning academies in Loja, realizado por Sarango Rivas Sara Salomé, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, Noviembre de 2015

f).

DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, Sarango Rivas Sara Salomé declaro ser autor (a) del presente trabajo de titulación: “The level achieved by graduated students of two English language learning academies in Loja” de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo la Mgtr. Alexandra Zúñiga Ojeda, 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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Sarango Rivas Sara Salomé

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Gloria and Marcos for their endless love and encouragement, without whose caring support, it would not have been possible. To my beloved sisters, particularly my dearest sister, Gabriela, who stands by me when things go wrong.

I also dedicate this research study to my friends Fanny, Pablo, and Maria Augusta who have been so supportive along the way of doing my thesis. I will always appreciate what my relatives have done, especially my aunt Rosa and my uncle Luis who helped me to make my dreams come true.

Sara Sarango

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Sara Sarango

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this research is “The level achieved by graduated students of two English language learning academies in Loja”. Its main objective is to identify the English level achieved by students in these institutions.

The sample consisted of 14 students who have already finished their English learning program in two academies in Loja. The age of the students, varies from 20 to 23 years old.

The information was gathered through two instruments; a questionnaire with open and close-ended questions and an English Proficiency Test. In the former, participants provided information about their English learning experiences and its benefits. The latter collected numeric data about their English proficiency level.

The qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study. After analyzing the data, the findings revealed that students achieved a high-intermediate level of English, which is not the level that academies established for students to reach at the end of the program. In addition, the level achieved allows students to perform in the four main English skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

KEY WORDS: English proficiency, EFL, students.

RESUMEN

El tema de esta investigación es "El nivel alcanzado por estudiantes de dos academias de aprendizaje del idioma inglés en la ciudad de Loja". El objetivo principal es determinar el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes en estas instituciones.

La muestra consistió en 14 estudiantes que terminaron su programa de aprendizaje del idioma inglés en las academias, la edad de los estudiantes es de 20 a 23 años. La información se obtuvo a través de dos instrumentos, un cuestionario con preguntas abiertas y cerradas y un examen de aptitud en el idioma inglés. En el primer caso, los participantes proporcionaron información sobre sus experiencias al aprender el idioma inglés y sus beneficios. El segundo recoge datos numéricos acerca de sus conocimientos de inglés.

Se utilizaron los métodos cualitativo y cuantitativo. Los resultados revelaron que los alumnos alcanzaron un nivel intermedio-alto de inglés, lo cual no es el nivel de egreso que las academias establecen al final del programa. Adicionalmente, los estudiantes son capaces de desempeñarse con eficiencia en las cuatro principales habilidades del inglés, (escuchar, hablar, leer y escribir).

PALABRAS CLAVES: Aptitud en el idioma inglés-enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera- Estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. It is used everywhere and in every country. Nowadays, English is called the international language and it is also the second language of many countries around the world. The use of this international language is helpful to succeed in life. In addition, English is used in many areas such as business, travelling, technology, communication, education, among others. The importance of this language in countries where it is not the primary spoken language has increased gradually. Consequently, learning English has many advantages for adults, teenagers, and children as well. For these reasons, in Ecuador, high schools have included English in their teaching programs, including some elementary schools. However, students face many difficulties when they are learning English and they are not pleased with the level achieved in school or high school. As a result, these students who have different characteristics have seen the necessity to study and reinforce the language in academies which are prepared with all resources and staff needed to teach English.

These English learning academies offer society different methods and strategies that help students to acquire a foreign language easily. This is achieved by providing students with the support of well trained teachers and native speakers, which are useful support for learners because they can practice the correct pronunciation of the words and at the same time students learn about the culture of different English speaking countries, and other aspects that English implies. Furthermore, these academies have sufficient materials and didactic resources that are well equipped to help all students to learn, practice and develop English skills; thus, it allows them to achieve the different established goals to learn the target language.

There are many aspects in an English classroom that are relevant to consider in order to obtain good results, for instance, Talis (2009) affirms that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are important in the educational process for understanding and providing learning. In addition, the

attitude of the students when they are learning English is also important, if they want to learn this new foreign language, they will be strongly motivated in class and it will be easy to teach. Gardner (1985) hypothesized that EFL students with a positive attitudes in the classroom toward the knowledge, culture, and people will learn the target language more effectively than those who do not have such positive attitudes. In the same way, learners have different kinds of motivation, for teenagers it may be choosing one subject over another for special study. But good teachers know how to modify their teaching strategies according to the students' attitudes. A positive aspect of the teacher is to use a variety of learning strategies that can facilitate skill development in language learning.

Therefore, there are many reasons to determine if these academies have been providing the expected service to the society of our city; hence, the need to conduct this research whose general objective is to identify the level of English achieved by graduated students in the institutions where English is taught as foreign language. Its specific objectives are, to determine students' English level at the end of the program, to examine the English entrance background to the institute, and analyze students' preferred methodologies, techniques, strategies, or activities realized in class by the teachers.

Regarding the present research, it is worth mentioning that it will benefit students, teachers, educational institutions and English academies. Moreover, this research will facilitate a better understanding to the people who are involved in the teaching-learning process of this foreign language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language education may take place as a general school subject in every country, in specialized language schools or learning centers. In Ecuador as in other countries around the world, teaching English as a foreign language is part of the education curriculum, but for the majority of the students, it is a challenge because of the difficulties that English brings in its own.

To make the teaching process easier, there are some methods and approaches of which help teachers. According to Richards and Roberts (2014) an approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language learning are specified while a method is the level at which theory is put into practice at which choices are made about the particular skill to be taught and presented. Some methods and approaches have been forgotten, others are used and others have little used, but they still contribute to the English teaching and learning process.

Larsen (2003) mentions that when teachers use teaching methods in the classroom and reflect them on their principles and dynamically engages with their techniques, they can become clearer about why they do and what they do. Furthermore, the teachers' knowledge of methods helps to expand teachers' variety of techniques.

In fact, there are some methods, which are most commonly used in an English language classroom; many of them have been developed specially to face students' needs, lacks and wants. In this way, it is vital that language learners and teachers understand how important and useful are the various methods and techniques that are used to teach English. Depending on the teaching circumstances and available resources in the classroom, any one of these methods and approaches could be right for teachers and students. Due to this fact, in the next pages some of these methods and approaches will be discussed.

Natural approach

According to Khattak and Asrar (2007) in this approach the real communication is the base of class activities in which the learners after study a foreign language, they can communicate with native speakers of that language in a very short time.

Terrell (2010) considers that the natural approach is the incorporation of the knowledge of the native language into the new language context. In this sense, it is important to mention that teachers play an important role in this process because the natural approach allows them to provide students with opportunities to use both languages. To this respect, Bhaskara (2007) affirms that this approach benefits students to learn the foreign language as the same way as the mother tongue was learned. The same author mentions that the natural approach allows teachers to teach the language without translation and without the study of formal grammar.

Grammar Translation Method

Considering that the grammar translation method represents a relevant support into the language learning process, this method has been used for helping students to appreciate language literature. Nagaraj (2005) defines this method as a way of learning a language where learners apply the rules of grammar in translating sentences and parts of text from the mother tongue into the target language and vice versa.

Similarity, Larsen (2003) states that the study of the target-language grammar helps students to familiarize with the grammar of their native language. As a result, this helps students to grow intellectually to strengthen their speaking and writing skills of their native as well as target language.

In the same fashion, Trugul (2013) highlights that the use of grammar translation method contributes to the use of the target language effectively, that is why through focusing

on the rules of the grammar of the target language students will recognize the features of the new language making the language learning process easier.

Total Physical Response

Baker and Prys (1998) define that the Total Physical Response (TPS) method is based on the coordination of the speech and action that attempts to teach language through physical activity. Thus, it is worth to mention that this method contributes students to learn the new linguistics structures and allowing them to retain the contents longer than other methods.

According to Morretta and Francisci (2014) TPS is successful used with many languages such as English, Spanish, Japanese, French and so on. Likewise, Kuo, Hsu, Fangm and Chen (2014) affirm that this method emphasizes the learning through the coordination of spoken and physical movements while the new language is acquired.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is another approach that also strengthens the target language learning as well as the role of the teachers in classroom. Cui and Zhao (2014) define CLT as a style of method of language teaching that involves learning to communicate by interaction in the foreign language and which has interaction as its vital aim.

This approach stresses the importance of using the language in communication rather than mastering the rules of the language (Manish & Yogesh, 2009).

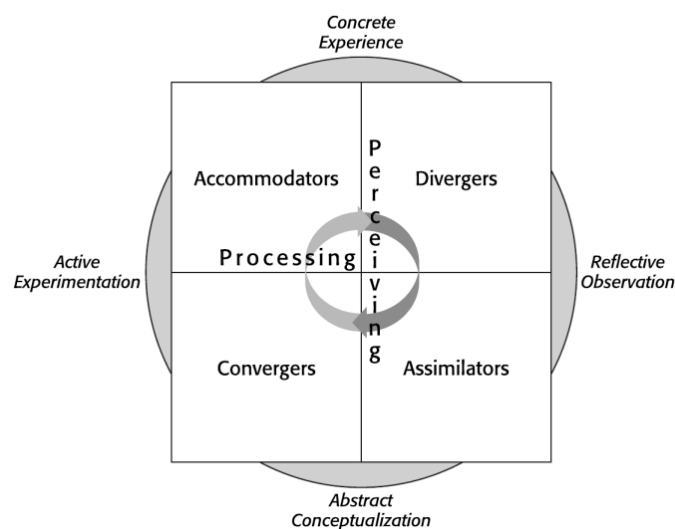
Therefore, Littlewood (2007) mentions CLT combine new functional view with the traditional structural of the language allowing learners to use strategies for relating and performance the grammatical structures to their communicative functions in a real situation and time.

In order to achieve the successful use of this approach, it is important to mention that teachers need to implement programs with suitable methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability where teachers and learners can participate in real communicative interaction.

Learning Styles

Lefever (2004) defines learning styles as a cycle where learners are most comfortable and it contributes them to do an excellent work while learning. Furthermore, language learning styles help to determine how well students learn a foreign language. Kolb (1984) as cited in Lowy and Hood (2004, p. 276) argues “learning involved process has four phases: concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (reflection), abstract conceptualization (thinking) and active experimentation (doing)”; this process could be represented by the following graphic that shows the cycle in the four learning phases.

Graph 1



Author: David Kolb (2004)

Source: Learning styles Inventory.

This graph illustrates the four different orientation of learning and explores two dimensions; perceiving which describes our preferred means of acquiring new information and processing that refers to the way that we make sense of things.

In the relation to learning styles, Rayment (2006) and Lengel and Kuczala (2010) distinguish three styles which help students to learn in a better way; these are visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Visual learners are the group of learners who learn through using images,

pictures, colors, and maps to organize the information; auditory learners are who retain information easily when they hear through sound; kinesthetic learners are the students who use their bodies when they participate in the classroom activities.

Ganschow and Sparks (2001) conducted a study about the learning difficulties and foreign language learning, they found that for young adults learning a new language is extremely difficult. In addition, in this study the researcher found that these learners have problems with certain kinds of verbal skills, even in their native language. The most important part of this study was that, with a good effort, methodology, instructional support from teachers and the learning styles, students succeed learning a new language.

Teaching Teens

Regarding this topic Burns and Richards (2012, p. 112) state that: “Teenagers constitute by far the largest subpopulation of English language learners in the world” however, it does not matter what culture students are, all teenagers are in the process of changing from childhood to adulthood. Thus, teaching to teenager learners is a really challenge for teachers, especially EFL learners who have already acquired at least one language in this case Spanish.

In the same way, Harmer (2007) claims that one of the advantages of teaching adolescents is that they have a great capacity for abstract thought; consequently, they have a great capacity for learning, enormous potential for creative thought and they are able to give abstract ideas. On the other hand, at this age learners are expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning that is why teachers have to adopt the role of facilitator and monitor.

Teenagers are a varied and fascinating group of individuals. Harmer (2007, p.15) states “if a teacher has the challenge of teaching teenagers, they need to be flexible and patient

with each individual to teach linguistic content. Teenagers, if they are engaged, they have a great capacity to learn and to do things which interest them”.

Motivation

Motivation in teaching English plays an important role today, learning a new language without motivation will not be successful. Nakata (2006) defines motivation as internal and external factors that present the desire and energy in learners to be interested in doing something to achieve a goal. Also, motivation lies in the relationship between some elements such as cognition, feelings, emotions that will help learners to have a deeper interest in the learning process. Dornyei (1998, p. 117) states “motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate in success of second language learning. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals”.

According to Burden (2000) there are two broad categories of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Referring to the intrinsic motivation, it is a response that is within the learner which involves engaging the internal desire of competence and growth. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation comes from outside the learner and has to do with external rewards to do something.

Similarly, Reid (2007) argue that motivation is a key factor in the successful learning; therefore, teachers have to develop the skill of recognizing learners ‘motivators and help students to use their natural resource and integrating this in their lessons

Material and Resources

It is widely recognized that materials and resources for teaching English are a key component in most language program. McGrath (2013) notes that whether the teachers use textbooks, institutionally prepared material, or their own materials, these resources serve as a basis for much of the language learning. In addition, Garton and Graves (2014) mention that

teaching resources help to foster communicative language learning skills in students; also, it benefits learners providing cultural information of the target language and it prepares them to communicate in a real world contexts.

However, the challenge for a teacher is to find the most adequate material for students.

Harmer (2001) claims that in today's world there are several course books and websites that are available but usually teachers do not know which the best resources are for their kind of students.

Characteristic and importance of two proficiency tests

First of all, Brown and Douglas (2010, p. 3) state that “a test is the one which occur at specific time when learners muster all faculties to show performance and knowledge and their responses are going to be measure and evaluated”. On the other hand, the same authors mentioned that a Proficiency test is the one that tests overall ability which consist of instruments, techniques and procedures that are well structured to evaluated students' knowledge.

TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is used to measure the ability of a nonnative English speakers' proficiency in the English language in academic setting. This test measures how well learners can read, listen, speak and write in English (Gear, 2006).

The TOEFL is accepted by many English speaking academic and professional institutions; also this test is widely recognized by more than 9,000 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, TOELF (2015).

The First Certificate in English Test

Brown and Douglas (2010) argued that The First Certificate in English Test (FCE) is the most important proficiency test of the Cambridge exams, which tests all areas of the

English language and the abilities with this language. Approving the test means that the student is proficient in the English language at the level B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference. A student with this level is able to interact socially efficiently in English.

Previous studies

Some previous studies have been analyzed to support this research, such is the case of Razmjoo and Riazi (2006), whose study's purposes were to examine the language methodologies used in Shiraz EFL institutions and explore which of these teaching methods were effective from the directors', teachers', and students' view. The results found through this study revealed that the most used methodology was the Communicative Approach.

During the classes, it was observed that the highest amount of time was spent on speaking and vocabulary, these activities were taken from lectures which allowed students to interact with each other, it happened in all institutions. In the same way, most of the students expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the lack availability of supplementary materials and equipment especially language laboratories. In addition, the majority of the students appreciated the importance given to language skills and components (except writing) because of its difficulty. Finally, educational directors claimed that in addition to the textbooks, films, short stories, tapes, and CDs were used for teaching and learners were assessed based on the following criteria: class activity; quizzes; mid-term; and final exam.

Similarly, another study, done by Ansarey (2012), was related to the Communicative Language Teaching-CLT in EFL contexts and the teachers' attitude and perception about it in their classrooms. This study aimed to know the difficulties and challenges that EFL teachers face in implementing CLT in their English classrooms and to find out the contribution of communicative language teaching in Bangladesh. The results showed that a number of constraints have made it difficult for CLT to be integrated in the classroom; the main reasons

is lack of time and energy to formulate communicative teaching materials and activities due to teacher heavy workload, also some teachers mentioned that the resources are not sufficient to meet the needs of such a huge program.

The investigation done by Khamkhien (2010) about the factors that affect language learning strategies use by Thai and Vietnamese university students. Two objectives were established the first one to determine how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies; the second one to compare the roles of these factors and the pattern of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students. Concerning to the results it was showed that among these three factors gender, motivation and experience in studying English, motivation is the most significant factor affecting the choice of the strategies, followed by experience in studying English, and gender, respectively.

Bokyoung and Haedong (2014) conducted a study whose purposes were to investigate Korean university-level EFL learners' learning style preferences and implications for effective English learning. The sample for this research required a total of 496 EFL students from four different universities in Korea, who were asked to respond 30 statements from a survey related to learning styles and a term-end performances. In addition, the students were scheduled to take the TOEIC test as the final exam for the course at the end of the semester, thus; their final TOEIC scores represent exam scores. Once the findings were analyzed, results indicated that Korean learners' auditory style preference is noticeable, and visual and individual learning styles are also considered to be primary learning styles, whereas tactile, kinesthetic, and group learning styles are less favored.

Bahous (2011) conducted a study whose purpose was to find out the views of the teachers and students of what hinder students' language learning in the English language classroom in discussing engagingly, critical thinking, and academic writing.

The methodology for this research involved the qualitative method using questionnaires and semi structured interviews to obtain the information needed. The participants were thirty students attending the different English language courses in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) program and twenty full-time teachers involved in the program at the University of Lebanon. The data collection tools were used in order to know the perceptions of teachers and students of student motivation during the English language classes. Furthermore, the researcher kept notes on the general discussions and meetings regarding the English language courses that students took at the university. Additionally, all the items for interviews and questionnaires were derived from the literature review on motivation in language classes and all informal comments of students and teachers during the English courses were recorded.

The results showed that learners were not motivated to learn English because of an over-focus on writing skills with very little new learning experiences, uninteresting materials, and unclear links between language courses and their majors or future careers. Results also indicate that teachers complain of unmotivated students and pre-structured syllabi leaving little period of time during the lesson for communicative methods. To conclude, the researcher mentioned that teachers should motivate learners by choosing topics that interest students and not teachers.

METHOD

Setting and participants

The present study was conducted in the city of Loja which is located in the south part of Ecuador. The sample consisted of 14 graduated students between 20 and 23 years old from two of the most demanding English-language academies.

Procedure

In order to gather the specific information for this research, it was necessary to design a survey with 14 items (multiple choice and open-ended questions). This survey was designed by the researcher and completed by the participants. Within the survey there were some questions with the aim of knowing the students' experiences in the academies and other important aspects of their training and learning process in these institutions.

In addition, with the purpose of determining the level of English achieved by the graduated students, it was required that students complete an English Proficiency Test that shows the students' knowledge about the language. This exam is a free online sample test called *Test my English*, which is divided into two parts, listening comprehension and reading comprehension. Within the first section, there are four parts where students have the opportunity to show how well they understand the spoken English through the following activities: description of photographs, question-response, short conversations, and short talks.

In the same way, the second section has three parts, such as incomplete sentences, text completion, and reading comprehension where students have the chance to demonstrate how good they learned the written English. The purpose of this test was to measure the level of English language and the skills acquired in the academies by the participants to certificate them as graduated students.

Furthermore, four students from each academy were interviewed face to face by the researcher to obtain extra useful information for this investigation.

The data in this research were analyzed with the quantitative and qualitative method. In the quantitative method, it was practical to use some tools to measure the results in percentages and create the corresponding statistical graphs. On the other hand, with the qualitative method some questions from the survey were codified and analyzed by the researcher.

Initially, for the selection of the participants, snowball sampling was applied: Black (2010, p. 226) states “this technique occurs when survey subjects are selected based on referral from other survey respondents”. By the use of this technique the researcher first identified some graduated students from the academies, asking them to identify others, asking those to identify yet others: in this way, 14 students were selected as the sample of this research.

Subsequently, the instruments were applied to collect the information needed. The participants were asked to complete the survey in order to know their background before they started to study English and their experiences learning the foreign language. The time for completing the survey was 10 to 15 minutes and most of the participants were able to complete it physically, just 3 of them due to lack of time did it digitally.

In the same way, the English proficiency test was completed by the participants, 7 students from each academy in total 14 students. The length of time that approximately lasted this test was 30-40 minutes. After students finished completing the four parts in the test, the results were sent through email to the participant and researcher; these contained the correct and wrong answers in a graph and the final results in percentages from each section.

Once all the data were collected, the results of the student's proficiency test were analyzed through the combination of the qualitative method and quantitative method; hence, the final results were obtained.

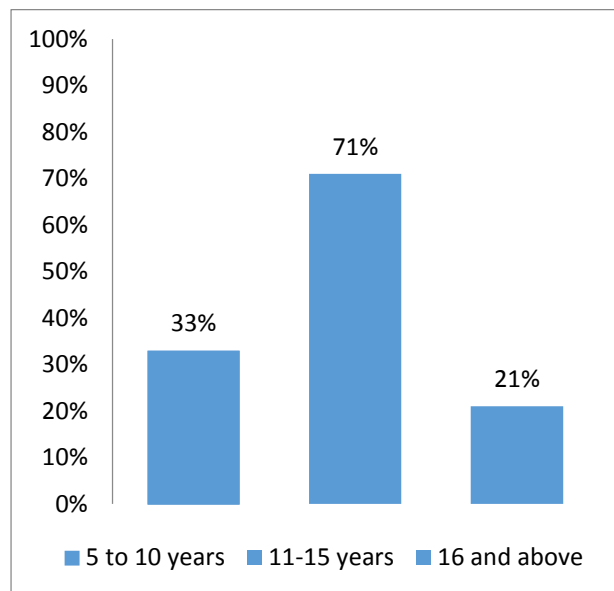
Discussion

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

In this section, the researcher presents the analysis and interpretation of the results from the collected data; the English proficiency tests, the statements from the survey, and the opened-ended questions will be discussed by using a mixed-method approach, which involves both quantitative and qualitative procedures. For this analysis, the most relevant percentages (either low or high) were considered and discussed.

Students' age when they began to study in the academy

Graph 1



Author: Sara Salomé Sarango R.

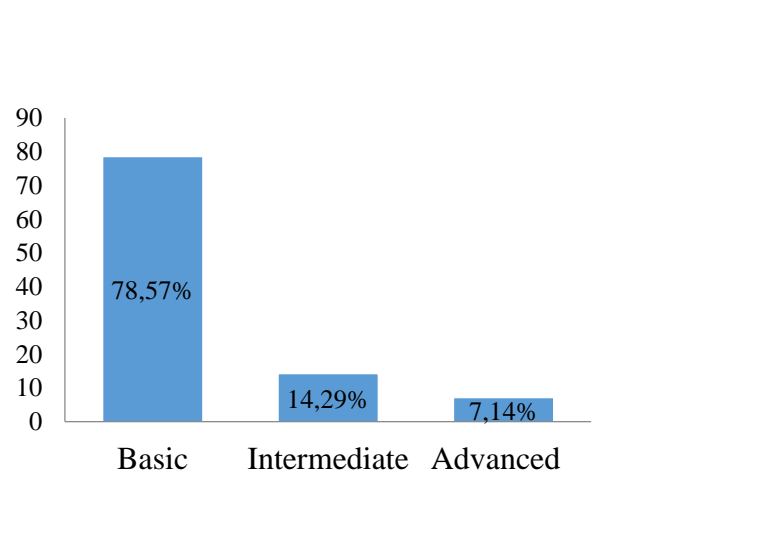
Source: Student's questionnaire

In accordance with the results observed in graph 1, 71% of the students started to study English at the age of 11-15 years old. Generally, when teenagers are 11 or 12 years old they begin high school; that is why, most of the participants started to study English in the ninth year of general basic education as a reinforcement of the school requirements. The whole program in the academies lasts 5 years (8 levels of learning and 2 levels of preparation for the final exam), the time they spend in High School is almost the same in the academy,

then at the end of this period students will graduate from high school and from the academy. On the other hand, 33% of the participants mentioned that they initiate their studies in the academy at the age of 5-10 years, at this age kids may not want to learn a new language; however, their parents know the innumerable benefits of learning English; consequently, they were the ones who encouraged them to study English. According to the survey, two of the participants mentioned that their parents were the ones who cheered them to start learning a new language. There are many benefits of studying English in an early age; for instance, an international empirical research has shown that “students who start learning English at an earlier age (5-6) attain higher level of proficiency than those who start at later stage (age 12/13)”(Khalifa, 2012). Finally, as shown in graph 1 only the 21% of the participant started the English Learning program at the age of 16 in the academy of their preferences.

The student’s level when they enrolled in the institution.

Graph 2



Author: Sara Salomé Sarango R.

Source: Student’s questionnaire

Both academies have 8 levels of English in their curriculums. Graph 2 summarizes these levels into beginners (1st, 2nd and 3rd level); intermediate (4th and 5th levels); and advanced (6th, 7th and 8th levels). Most of the students, who begin to study in these

academies, started as beginners, 71% in the 1st level, 7 % in the 2nd level and 14% in the 3rd level, and 7% in the 8th level. These results show that 92% of the students began to study with a very basic or no knowledge of the language. Moreover, 7% of the participants, which represents 1 student, informed that she entered to study at the 8th level because she was living for a year in the USA where she acquired some knowledge of the language; however, she had to take a placement test to determine her specific knowledge and proficiency in English with the purpose of being placed in the appropriate level and class.

To support these results, an additional open question was asked about where they had learned English. A great part of the ones who answered that they had a basic level of English mentioned that the knowledge they had about English was acquired in school and high school, where they usually have little or no exposure to English in their classrooms. Most of the students said that they studied in public institutions where the English is not considered the most important subject. For instance, in public schools students only had two hours of English classes per week; consequently, this length of time is not enough for teachers to present a lesson with the activities that help student to develop the English skills.

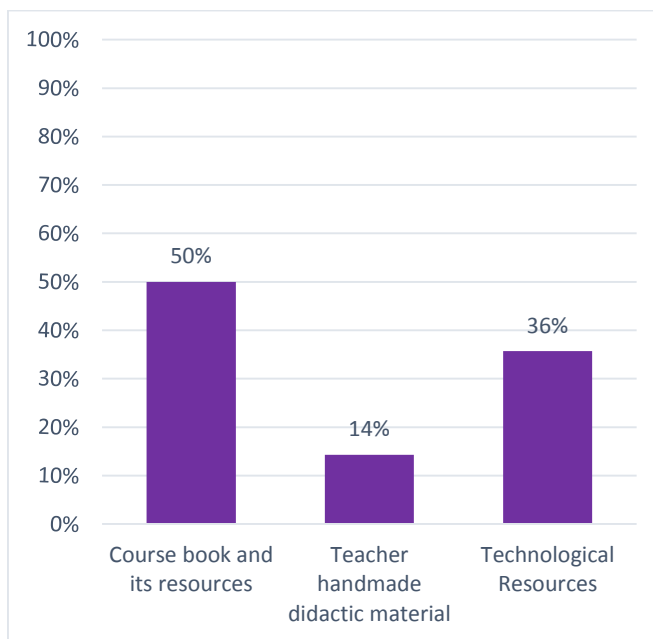
Furthermore, the participants who were in the 2nd and 3rd level mentioned that they were studying in a private elementary school and high school, where students have 7 hours of English weekly unlike public high schools, where students have 2 to 4 hours. This amount of hours in private institutions allows them to study, practice and learn more the foreign language. Certainly, in these kinds of institutions the English language is very important among other subjects of the program; this is the main reason why they had a higher level when they just enrolled in the English learning institute.

Another important characteristic of these private institutions is that they count with English- native teachers, which is a great advantage for students. For example, native speakers feel extremely comfortable teaching and using their language because they possess a

natural and fluent use of it; however, teachers' knowledge does not certify the students' successful learning of the language.

Resources and materials that teachers used in the classroom

Graph 3



Author: Sara Salomé Sarango R.

Source: Student's questionnaire

According to the student's responses, the graph above shows that 50% of teachers in the academies use the course book as the primary resource to teach; commonly, the course book tends to be the main resource that teachers use in deciding what to teach because they include relevant ideas and methodologies for teachers to use in the classroom. Moreover, the course book is the only resource to which all students have access during a lesson, in addition to the teacher; however, it is appropriate to remember that the course book is an important tool for teaching, but not the only one.

On the other hand, 36% of the participants answered that their teachers used technological resources to teach. According to Motteram (p.22, 2013) "The internet can be a rich source of authentic oral models via recorded songs, talking electronic books, podcasts

and video clips that help learners with pronunciation as well as acquisition and reinforcement of new vocabulary". The technology in the classroom generally has a good effect in student's motivation and learning interest, which is a practical way to get them involved in the language learning process.

It is important to note that only one of the academies involved in this study has an English laboratory where students can use computers to practice the target language in diverse ways. Academy A, in its program, has one day in the week dedicated to the use of the English Lab; consequently, it requires from teachers to plan a lesson that includes computer exercises and activities to enhance the learning process. Additionally, one of the students from academy A stated that the use of the technology in the lessons was one of her favorite activity because it was essential in the development of her listening skills. Indeed, this is an evidence of the results from the English proficiency tests where students from the academy A had better results in the Listening Comprehension part than the students from academy B.

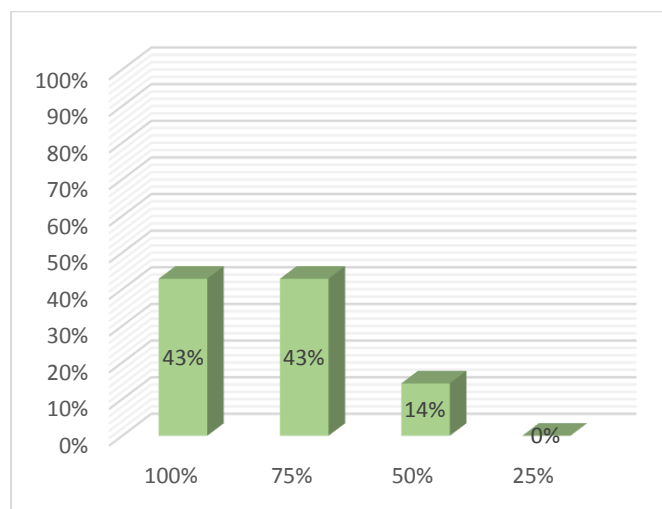
On the other hand, academy B has an especial classroom where students can practice their speaking and listening skills with native teachers. With this kind of conversation activity students have a natural experience with the language thus helps a lot in their growth as English speakers.

Finally, 14% of the students answered that their teachers used handmade didactic materials in the lesson to teach the language. Vadillo and Klingler (2005) argue that the didactic strategies, that involved handmade didactic material, are presented to the learners for helping them to developed activities about not only their ideas of the information but also a mutual relationship among specific information and any other particular activity, as general rule of input. Furthermore, the most popular didactic resources for TEFL is realia or real objects, which are used in many ways, for instance; teachers can use real objects as a source for vocabulary and students can improve pronunciation and spelling. Furthermore, one of the

main advantages of using didactic material into the classroom is to make the learning experience more memorable for the student. Moreover, with the use of this resource students can practice the definitions of some words and through them teachers can engage the Total Physical Response approach, which is also an elementary aid in order to provide realism and fun in a lesson.

Percentage of English required to speak in class.

Graph 4



Author: Sara Salomé Sarango R.

Source: Student's questionnaire

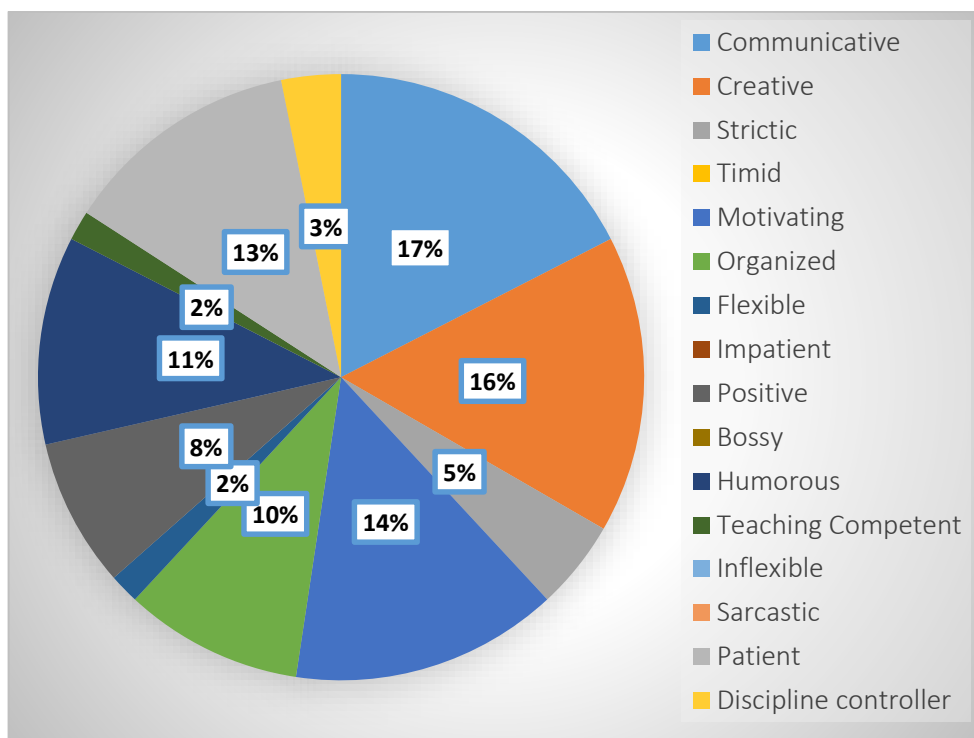
The graph above shows that 43% of the students answered that they were required to speak English in a 100% during class. It means that students have to speak and communicate in English from the beginning of the lesson right through to the end. In the same way, 43% of the participants said that the percentage of spoken English in the classroom is 75%. It can be noticed that teachers showed the importance of Speaking English in the classroom because both percentages required some effort from students to speak the target language. As it is known for everyone, in order to learn a new language it is relevant to develop the ability of communication. This ability helps learners to communicate with others, expressing their ideas and to know others' ideas as well. On the other hand, 14% of the students reported that in

their classroom the English spoken required was 50%. This indicates that students expressed their thoughts and ideas in both languages, half in English and the other half in Spanish.

Even though, in both academies the main goal of EFL program is to help learners to become competent in the four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing, the group that mentioned that they were required to speak in the target language almost all the time by the end of the program, they will speak English fluently; on the contrary, the students who said that they speak only 50% during class they will not have the same results. Therefore, the goal of these academies only will succeed if the students fully develop the listening and speaking skill in the classroom.

Teachers' qualities

Graph 6



Author: Sara Salomé Sarango R.
Source: Student's questionnaire

The role of the teacher in the English learning process is really important. For instance, some students see the teacher as a role model who inspires and encourages them to

study more; that is why, some teachers possess qualities that make students enjoy while learning in the classroom. The responses to the question *what qualities do you believe that a good teacher should possess?* showed that they all agree that being communicative is a relevant quality for an English teacher. As Stronge (2007, p.4,) states “because communication skills are part of verbal ability, teachers with better verbal abilities can more effectively convey ideas to the students and communicate with them in a clear and compelling manner”. Being a good communicative teacher requires some work since they have to be able to transmit knowledge, skills, and values and at the same time they teach the new language. Furthermore, communication is one of the main skills that EFL students have to develop in order to learn the target language.

Being creative is another quality that participants mentioned that a good teacher should possess. Starbuck (2007) mentioned that creativity in the classroom is one stage where teachers motivate students to take responsibility of their work; it helps to keep learners deeply engage of what is coming next. Also, creativity is important while teaching because it inspires students to learn new content through a creative presentation without making the learning difficult and it gets students’ attention. However, EFL teachers have a constant fight between teaching content and incorporating creativity into daily teaching instruction because of the students’ learning styles that are different. Although, it is the teachers’ responsibility to prepare lessons that encourage students to be creative and different ways to learn.

Furthermore, to be patient is another quality that students mentioned a good teacher should possess. It is sure that when learning another language sometimes students tend to make mistakes and usually they forget what they have learned; however, a patient teacher has to explain the same concept over and over until the students understand it. Likewise, patience should be the most important characteristic that all teachers must possess, especially when

students are learning a foreign language. For instance, some students can comprehend the lesson presented easily with a minimal effort while others may need a deeper explanation.

Moreover, participants think that motivation is another relevant quality for English Teachers. Being a motivated teacher in EFL classroom is one of the most important aspects in the learning process, that is why Dornyei (p.117, 2001) states “teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness”. Some of the EFL students are trying extremely hard to learn the new language; consequently, they need someone who encourages them to keep on in this learning process.

In addition, another quality that students chose was humorous. Humor in the classroom helps students in many ways for instance, Weimer (p.207, 2013) states “humor can make the teacher seem more sociable, particularly humor increases motivation and reduce anxiety, enhances the classroom environment, increases students’ responsiveness, creates a positive instructor-student relationship and promotes learning.”. Also, teacher’ humor affects in the attention and interest from students to teachers; it helps learners to keep in mind the information presented in the lessons. Even though, humor in classroom has many benefits at the moment when students learn and practice a foreign language only some of the participants believe this quality is essential for teachers.

On the other hand, there are some qualities that students did not choose but some of them think that they are relevant, these are: positive, organized, stricter, discipline controller and teaching competent. Since teaching is one of the most challenging jobs because it demands from teachers not only knowledge of the subject but also some qualities, being a positive teacher creates a positive classroom environment; as result, students are respectful of themselves and others which will help reduce the risk of conflict and promote communication and participation in the classroom. In addition, a teacher who is organized is early in their classroom and ready to present lessons in a clear and structured way: thus, helps students to

be on time and prepare to learn. Finally, being stricter and discipliner controller involved classroom management, which is important in the classroom because teachers' physical presences play a large part in the well development of students. Harmer (2007) mentioned that the way that teachers are able to respond to what happens in the class and the degree to which they are aware of what is going on, often marks the difference in successful teaching.

The opened-ended questions answered in the survey by students also showed some relevant aspects that were considered in order to find the results of this research work.

According to the answers provided by the participants, it was seen that 10 of the 13 participants agreed with the fact that learning English helps to *communicate* with people from all over the world. Also, they mentioned that they can make new friends who speak English. English may not be the most spoken language in the world but according to Schneider (2011 p.2) "No doubt English is truly the world's leading language today. It is used in all continents; English is learned by hundreds of millions of people in all countries simply because it is useful."

Another benefit of speaking English mentioned by students is having more opportunities to work. It is worth to appreciate that the participants who answered this question are 20 years old or more, but even if they are young, they recognize that speaking another language will give them more job opportunities in the future. Nowadays, English is recognized as the main business international language and it has become almost a need for people to speak English if they want to enter an international business; thus, when someone looks for a job, being able to read and speak English is one of the most valuable skills you must have.

The data collected in the questionnaires could also determine that the majority of the students think that one of the benefits of being able to speak English is to travel around the world and study in a country where the native language is English. Two of the fourteen

students who are involved in this study could share several experiences about the participation in an exchange program. They had the opportunity to travel through the Work and Travel program for two months in the United States. They mentioned that living for a while in an English country helped them in different ways, as students they could observe, learn and experience a new lifestyle and culture while practicing their English skills. Additionally, it gave them the opportunity not only to improve English skills but also social skills in order to get along with others as long as they were with people from all over the world.

It is important to see that 3 of the 14 students who participated in the survey said that another benefit of understanding English is that they can read journals, academic papers and information, as it is known for everyone, almost all the content published on the Internet is in English. Furthermore, being able to read English allow them to access to an unbelievable quantity of information which may not be otherwise available. Also, one of the participants said that reading the instructions of the use of the electronic devices is another advantage of understanding English. Today, one of the problems that students face when learning English is reading and writing but if the students practice these skills frequently, it will be easier to learn. In addition, it is relevant to mention that some educational researchers have found a strong correlation between reading and academic success. The students' academic success is shown in the results of the English proficiency tests that participants should took to enter in the University, all of them passed the test.

English Proficiency Test Results

RESULTS	Listening Comprehension	Reading Comprehension	Final Score
Academy A	80 %	70%	75%
Academy B	65.71 %	54.28%	59.99%

Author: Sara Salomé Sarango R.
Source: Students' Proficiency Test

The results from the proficiency tests showed that students from *Academy A* had better results than students from *Academy B*. Within the test there were some sections that students had to complete in order to get the final results. Even though, it is one of the most difficult parts about learning a new language, students from *Academy A* obtained good results in listening comprehension, they obtained 80% of understanding in listening skills. It demonstrates that during the lessons their teachers gave the appropriate importance to the development of listening skills indeed they used activities, strategies and techniques that contributed to the learning of listening input. As it was mentioned before two students of this group had the opportunity to travel and be involved in a country where English is the first language, surely, they had a significant advantage over the other participants. Then it is also one of the reasons why students from *Academy A* rate a better score.

On the other hand, students from *Academy B* obtained 65.71%, which is not bad. Despite that this group had more English native speakers in their institutions this interaction was not enough; generally, teenagers do not take advantage of the benefits they have in the English Academy.

In the same way, students from *Academy A* achieved good results in Reading Comprehension they obtained 70% in this component. It demonstrates that students were able to read and comprehend written texts. Additionally, vocabulary and grammar knowledge is part of the elements within reading comprehension that students proved to be able to respond. This indicates that during the lessons they developed all the activities of reading and writing skills when teachers asked them to complete.

Furthermore, when students have to work on tasks teachers' assessment is relevant because they guide explaining them the specific skills that students have to apply. As a result, students from *Academy A* showed their good level of writing when they completed some

open-ended question in the survey. They answered the questions writing clearly and using appropriate words in each question.

On the other hand, Students from *Academy B* scored a 54.28% in reading comprehension. These results are not good as Graduated students of an English academy because it shows that only they understand half of what they read in the text.

Contrary to the goal of the academies, which is "students will understand and use English in a creative way without neglecting the correct use of grammar in both speaking and writing", this result shows that it was not possible that the students reach this goal because their level of written and understanding of the language was not satisfactory.

CONCLUSIONS

After having finished with the quantitative and qualitative analysis and taking into consideration the findings of the research, it can be concluded that:

- ✓ Graduated students from both Academies did not reach the goals established at the beginning of the program in the institutions.
- ✓ The results of the English Proficiency Test completed by graduated students demonstrate that they are able to listen, speak, read and write in English in a high-intermediate level.
- ✓ In addition, the results obtained from the Proficiency Tests show that students from Academy A in the final score have better English level than students from Academy B.
- ✓ Two of the students from Academy A participated in an exchange program which was an important fact in the development of the language knowledge and the results of the proficiency test.
- ✓ The background of the students demonstrates that those who studied in private high schools had a basic knowledge of the language before they enrolled in the Academy, in comparison to the students who studied in public institutions.
- ✓ When students started to study in the Academies were teenagers, thus it helped them to easily learn the new language and practice without being ashamed of making mistakes.
- ✓ Supplementary materials were used as good source in the class in order to practice, introduce and reinforce reading, writing, speaking and listening skills with students.
- ✓ The findings reveal that the primary material used in the classroom by teacher was the course book nevertheless as secondary resources teachers used handmade didactic material and technological resources.

- ✓ English - native teachers in the English learning process was a relevant element for students to teach them the correct pronunciation of the words in the target language.
- ✓ Finally, the most frequent method that teachers applied with the students in the classroom was the Communicative Approach. Communication was the central technique that students use to practice and learn English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Based on the results, it is recommended that Academies should have more English-native teachers in the classroom to help students to learn the language correctly but also share about their culture with them.
- ✓ Nowadays on the Internet there are diverse activities that a teacher can use as an extra resource in the classroom then students should have more hours to practice English with the Internet in the computer center of the academy. Then the academies should build a computer center for students, surely it is beneficial to the development of the English skills.
- ✓ Even though teachers use the Communicative Approach, there are other approaches which also help students to learn the new language. Therefore, teacher should use other approaches depending on the students' needs and learning styles.
- ✓ The didactic materials and resources should not be limited to use only the course book. It is necessary to use a variety of material concerning the students learning.
- ✓ Academies must allocate more time to practice listening and speaking skills through conversation between students-teacher or students-students.

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ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

OBJECTIVE: The aim of this questionnaire is to find out about your experiences of learning English in an English Language Academy.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- ❖ It is important to read each question carefully, and then select the answer which corresponds best to yourself.

1. How old were you when you began studying in the institute?
 - a. 5-10 years old
 - b. 11-15 years old
 - c. 16 and above

2. Which English level did you have before you enrolled in the institution?
 - a. Basic
 - b. Intermediate
 - c. Advanced

Where did you learn it?

3. In which level did you start to study English?
 - a. 1st level
 - b. 2nd level
 - c. 3rd level
 - d. 4th level
 - e. 5th level
 - f. 6th level
 - g. 7th level
 - h. 8th level

4. Write the name of the high school that you attended?

5. Why did you decide to study a foreign language?

- a. Because my parents encouraged me to study English.
- b. Because I liked the English language.
- c. Because I found it difficult to learn English solely in high school.
- d. To be able to communicate with others in English.
- e. Because I was going to travel.
- f. Another reason:

6. Which of the following materials did your teachers use that you liked the most?

- a. Course book and its resources
- b. Teacher handmade didactic material
- c. Technological resources

7. Which of the following do you believe are qualities that a “good” teacher should possess?

a. Communicative	i. Positive
b. Creative	j. Bossy
c. Strict	k. Humorous
d. Timid	l. Teaching competent
e. Motivating	m. Inflexible
f. Organized	n. Sarcastic
g. Flexible	o. Patient
h. Impatient	p. Discipline controller

8. How many teachers did you have with the characteristics you chose above?

9. How many English native speakers did you have?

10. How much English were you required to speak in the class?

- a. 100%
- b. 75%
- c. 50%
- d. 25%

11. Do you think that the time spent in the academy was worth it?

Yes ()

No ()

Why?

12. Write some of the benefits of being able to speak English.

13. Are you able to remember one teacher you liked in particular? If so, please describe your favorite teacher in a paragraph explaining why he/she was the best.

14. Was it necessary for you take a final exam in order to graduate from your academy? Please choose one of the following options.

- a. Cambridge
- b. TOEFL
- c. There was no need to take an exam.
- d. One merely one had to pass all the academy levels.
- e. The institution gave us a final exam.

THANKS FOR YOUR COOPERATION