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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACION DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE TITULACION

Doctora.

Rosario María Burneo Burneo.

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de titulación: Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools realizado por Granda Cisneros Jessica Alexandra, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, septiembre de 2015

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo Granda Cisneros Jessica Alexandra declaro ser autor(a) del presente trabajo de titulación: Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools, de la Titulación de Licenciado Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Dra. Rosario María Burneo Burneo director(a) 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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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate the current achievement, principally, to God who has given me the gift of life; to my parents Victor Granda and Tarcila Cisneros who encouraged me to become a professional; to my husband Franklin Espinosa who has supported me at every moment, during the process of my career; I also want to dedicate this achievement to my children Guillermo Andres, and Francesca Antonella, who were my inspiration to finish my career; finally, to my parents in-law who were always ready to help.

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ABSTRACT

The current study was a research carried out about '*Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools*'.

Hence, the main purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the main factors that impact the English language teaching-learning processes in private high schools in Loja-Ecuador.

In order to achieve this goal, five private high schools of Loja city were chosen; a total number of fifteen teachers, and fifteen students were the participants of this study. To gather the necessary information, some questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and observation sheets were used and applied to both teachers and students; afterwards, the information was tabulated and analyzed to obtain results, conclusions and recommendations.

To accomplish this whole process, the quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. At the end of this process, it was concluded that factors concerning teachers, students, classroom and institutions do really affect the teaching-learning process of the English language.

Keywords: Teaching –learning process, English language.

RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

El presente estudio se basa en una investigación realizada sobre los “Factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés en Colegios privados del Ecuador”.

El propósito principal de este estudio fue identificar y analizar los factores principales que impiden el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en colegios particulares de la ciudad de Loja-Ecuador. Para alcanzar este objetivo, cinco colegios particulares de la ciudad de Loja fueron escogidos; un total de quince profesores y quince estudiantes fueron quienes participaron en el desarrollo de este estudio.

Para obtener la información necesaria, se hizo uso de herramientas adecuadas como: cuestionarios, encuestas, entrevistas and observaciones de clase aplicadas tanto a profesores como a estudiantes; después esta información fue tabulada y analizada para obtener resultados, conclusiones, y recomendaciones pertinentes. En la realización de todo este proceso se aplicó el método cuantitativo y cualitativo.

Al término de este proceso, se pudo concluir que, ciertamente, existen factores concernientes a profesores, estudiantes, e instituciones que afectan el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.

Palabras Clave: proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.

INTRODUCTION

The English language has been taught in our country for approximately 19 years under an agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and Ecuador. The project began in July 1992 according to newspaper 'Hoy' from Quito, published on the 30th of October 2007. Considering all these years of work in teaching the English language in public high schools of Ecuador; it is unfortunate to note that the project has not achieved its goal of improving the teaching- learning process of English in Ecuador.

It is also important to remark that the Ecuadorian government is genuinely concerned about the poor performance of high schools in terms of English learning. Therefore, the government has signed a new agreement with the United Kingdom to launch a new program for the improvement of the English language; this program is called '*Fortalecimiento del Ingles*'. The most relevant feature of this program is that the material used is aligned with the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). Working with a program which has international standards to help teachers and students achieve a good level of proficiency. Moreover, teachers can develop accurate plans to improve students' language knowledge. The official letter signed, for this educational development program is lodged at the offices of SENPLADES-SIP-dap-2011-655.

The development of this current study concerning the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process aims to achieve the following specific objectives: to identify student's English level and their needs in the classroom; to determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place; to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers; and to determine institutional facilities and norms regarding quality of education. The importance of this study lies in

improving the teaching-learning process taking into account factors concerning students, teachers, classroom, and educational institution.

Regarding the topic of this research, previous studies have been undertaken to analyze the factors that influence the English language teaching- learning process.

The first study was done by Aduwa, S.E., and Iyamu, E. O.S. (2006) about factors that affect the quality of English Language Teaching; this study was conducted in Nigeria in Secondary public schools, the population participating in this study were 3.000 senior students across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria; the participants were randomly selected to respond a questionnaire; Also an observation sheet was filled out with information about classroom procedures and the learning environment. With the help of these instruments, the authors Aduwa, S.E., and Iyamu, E. O.S. (2006) were able to reach the conclusion that teachers adopted a very traditional method of teaching, in which, they gave priority to the use of textbooks, dictionaries, chalkboards, and workbooks, without giving any opportunity to the use of modern media.

The second study presented in this research, was the study made by Carless (2003); he carried out the study about the influence in the implementation of task-based teaching in primary schools. The main purpose of this research was to discover an answer to the questions: What is the teacher's attitude and understanding towards task-based teaching? What factors impact on the planning for the implementation of task-based teaching? For this study which was conducted in Hong Kong; three teachers were chosen, taking into consideration age, attitude, interest and willingness to innovate. As well as interviews and observation; seventeen periods of class were observed per teacher. At the end of this study, Carless concluded that innovations such as task-based teaching need to be adapted to local contextual conditions. Finally, Carless also admitted that the population selected for this case study was not the most appropriate;

therefore, he suggested researchers to go deeper into this field and try to get some more relevant information.

The third study analyzed was the one carried out by Cockburn (2007). He developed a study focusing on the use of internet in language laboratory. The participants for this study were six well-qualified ESOL teachers who agreed to use internet in their language classes, students, and the Head of the Languages Department. The instruments used to collect information were interviews, questionnaires, observation sheets, and a teacher's lesson plans. For the analysis and interpretation of the results, the quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The most remarkable result of this case study, was, as Alexander noted, that initially, the teachers seemed to be willing to use ICT during their classes, but they were losing interest as the study progressed; what is even worse, the teachers doubted that the use of the internet could be useful for the practice of skills such as speaking and listening.

The idea of the current research is of great importance because the results of this study will benefit the educational community by giving them a broader view of factors that influence the teaching-learning process of the English language in private high schools of Loja city; also, this knowledge will help teachers to make better decisions at the moment of planning and delivering a lesson.

However, the development of the current research had to deal with several difficulties, such as limited time for data collection and limited observation because only one lesson per class was observed, which was not sufficient to obtain accurate results or conclusions.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The current study was conducted in the city of Loja. Loja is a small city located in the southern region of Ecuador; five private high schools of Loja were chosen to carry out this study. The population for the study was made up of two groups: the first group was a compound of 15 teachers from grades 8th to 10th of basic education, and 1st to 3rd of high school; the second group was made of 15 students from grades 8th to 10th of basic education, and 1st to 3rd of high school as well.

It is important to note that most teachers had a bachelor's, and only one of them had a master's degree; it is also important to mention that most of them are experienced teachers. On the other hand, the students who participated in the study were teenagers of ages 13 to 18 years old.

Regarding this group of participants, it is important to mention that the students who attend classes in private high schools receive from 8 to 10 hours of English per week. This fact clearly shows that students from private high schools have more opportunities to use the English language compared to students from public high schools.

Procedures

The first step in the development of this study was to undertake a literature review in order to obtain relevant information related to the theme being studied; to gather the information, it was necessary to search information from books, journal articles and previous studies.

Once the information was gathered, it was analyzed in order to determine the variables which were going to be considered for the study. Among the variables that were determined, were factors concerning: teachers, students,

classrooms, and educational institutions.

In addition to the information mentioned above, five preliminary studies, related to factors that influence the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language were also searched. All the information gathered was analyzed in a qualitative and quantitative way; the results of the analysis served to draw reliable conclusions and recommendations.

With regard the teacher's questionnaire, it was written in English, and was made up of twenty questions which were mixed, objective, and open; the purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain some important information related to teacher's level of education, the teacher's concern for student's needs, the teacher's favorite method for teaching lessons, the teacher's lesson plan, the teacher's specific activities for teaching a lesson, the teacher's classroom management aspects (discipline, timing, feedback, clear instructions) when teaching a lesson, and finally, the teacher's resources for teaching a lesson.

Regarding the students' questionnaire, it was delivered in Spanish (to ensure that the students understood and answered the questions correctly). It comprised 14 questions which were multiple choice questions only; the purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information to discover if students feel comfortable with the manner in which the teacher manages the class.

The observation sheet was made up of eleven questions in English. The purpose of this observation sheet was to collect specific information that could help the researcher contrast what teachers and students answered in their questionnaires with what really happens during the development of the lesson.

The final instrument used in this study was the teacher's interview; this was made up of 14 questions written in English in order to identify the teacher's

proficiency in the English language.

The next step in the current research process was to apply the given instruments. After obtaining permission from the authorities of the five private institutions a meeting with the participating teachers was held in order to coordinate the day and time for classroom observations.

Once the formal aspects for the research were concluded, it was necessary to start applying teacher's questionnaires, students' questionnaires and observation sheets, and carry out teacher's interviews. Three class-performances were observed at each school, from the five participating schools. The teacher's questionnaires were applied to three English teachers of each school (one per class). In the same way, the students' questionnaires were applied to three students of each school (one per class).

The students' questionnaires were applied during the lesson; while the teacher's questionnaires and the teacher's interviews were applied after the lesson was taught. At this point, it is important to emphasize that the sample for this study were high school teachers and students from grades 8th to 10th of basic education, and 1st to 3rd of high school.

Once the information was collated, it was time for the analysis and interpretation of the results to take place. Before getting to the analysis and interpretation of the results, it is really important to clarify that the unique information that was taken into consideration for the analysis and interpretation of the results was the information related to the teacher's questionnaire; the logic of this decision, is that the teacher's questionnaire was the unique instrument that refers to the four variables: factors concerning teachers, questions: 1,5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11; factors concerning students, questions 2,3, 4; factors concerning

classroom, questions from 12 to 18; finally, factors concerning institutions, questions 19 and 20.

Once the information was gathered and tabulated, it was ready to be interpreted and obtain the results. In order to organize the information, two main methods were used: the qualitative, and the quantitative methods. The former method was used at the moment of making interpretations of the participants' behaviors and attitudes; the quantitative method was used throughout the collection of the information which was counted and turned into statistical figures.

At the end of the research study, it was necessary to analyze, describe, and interpret the results. In order to analyze the information, it was necessary to describe the statistical information, support the figures with theoretical concepts, and finally interpret the results based on a comparative analysis of statistics, theoretical support and researcher's perspective.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, the teaching-learning process of the English language has not shown significant improvement in our country, therefore it is evident that the current study is of great importance as it will help to identify and solve the problems regarding factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools.

In order to develop this research, a wide literature research was conducted. The aim of this literature review was to become familiar with the topic, and to have a better idea of what the experts say concerning this issue. Some of the topics searched were the importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador, teaching approaches and methods, managing learning, lesson design, class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, classroom and/or teaching resources, class observation, learning styles, and language aptitude. At the end of this literature review, five previous studies, related to the current topic, will be reviewed.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

In order to teach a language, it is necessary to search for the teaching and learning principles and methods that are going to be applied in the teaching- learning process.

The proliferation of various teaching-learning approaches was more evident in the 1990's; the diversity of the different approaches has been the result of the different perspectives of teaching learning principles (Richards & Rodgers 2001).

This section is going to discuss some of the most common methods used for teaching and learning English throughout history.

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was one of the first methods used in the United States. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) the GTM is a way of

teaching and learning the language under two principles; first, through detailed analysis of its grammatical rules; second, by application of grammatical rules to the task of translating sentences from and to the target language.

In this respect, Brown (2001) states that one of the major characteristics about the grammar translation method is that classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. In fact, this method is oriented to memorize rules in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language; these rules help students use the language in an easy manner.

Nsambatcoumar (2010) and Richards & Rodgers (2001) agree that reading and writing are the major focus in this method; whilst little attention is paid to speaking, listening, or vocabulary building.

The second approach to be mentioned is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); it is an approach that allows learners to communicate accurately in the target language. Brown (2001) says that CLT provides the students with authentic and meaningful interaction.

It is well known by experience that high school students do not participate in conversation or speaking activities as they should; this is often due to the fact that as they do not have a fluent pronunciation of some words; they feel that their fluency is very poor; therefore, they are afraid to express their ideas or opinions in front of others or ask for explanation during class. To help students overcome these communicative drawbacks, Brown (2001) says that to make communication a grateful experience, it is necessary motivate students all the time, to build a positive attitude towards the language, when these elements (aptitude and motivation) are met, students are able to understand and produce language in real life contexts.

Regarding communicative activities, Harmer (2009) says that activities in CLT typically involve student's interaction in real or realistic communication where the successful achievement of the communicative task being performed, is as important as the accuracy of their language use.

The next approaches being discussed in this theoretical frame is The Total Physical Response (TPR). It is a method based on the relation between speech and actions. TPR is useful in all the activities applied in class; in fact, teachers provide instructions, and students perform the requested instruction by applying physically actions; this method requires the use of the whole body to express ideas, opinions, meanings, and so on.

Harmer (2009) says TPR allows students to react to language without thinking too much; it facilitates long term retention, and reduces student anxiety and stress.

Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (2001) say that TPR is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activities; teachers use this method to teach vocabulary that is not easy to explain through words, especially with young learners, because they need more motivation, dynamic activities, and interesting resources to pay attention during the class.

On the other hand, Brown (2001) says that TPR seems to be especially effective in the beginning levels of languages proficiency, but it loses its distinctiveness as learners advanced in their competence; in fact, for advanced levels this method requires the support of other methods and strategies to help students learn to communicate fluently instead of just using physical movement.

The Whole Language Approach (WLA) takes the fourth place in this discussion of teaching-learning approaches. It is a method based on the principle that foreign

languages should be learned as a whole, not dividing it into components (grammar, vocabulary, phonology...etc.).

On the other hand, WLA is also based on the principle that languages should be learnt by giving more importance to meaning rather than to form (Richard and Rodger 2001). The same authors argue that Whole Language Approach emphasizes learning to read and write naturally with a focus on real communication and reading and writing for pleasure.

In addition, Richards & Rodgers (2001) state that advantages for WLA are that it focuses on experiences and activities that are relevant to learners' lives and needs; WLA uses authentic materials which facilitate the development of all aspects of a second language.

Similarly, Brown (2001) says that WLA is an educational way of life; it helps people to build meaningful connections between everyday learning and school learning.

Regarding teaching learning approaches, another important approach to be mentioned is the Content-Based Instruction (CBI). Brown (2001) says that this CBI approach aims to integrate content-learning with language teaching goals.

According to this approach, Richards & Rodgers (2001) claim that teaching is organized around the content or information that the students will acquire rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus. Besides, the authors also state that Content-Based Instruction is more useful when the topics are related to real situations where learners make connection with their prior experience, and with their own context.

Regarding the same approach, Brown (2001) affirms that CBI-classroom may yield an increase in intrinsic motivation and empowerment since students are focused on subject matter that is meaningful to their lives. When students are motivated in the topic that they are learning, they produce more, and they pay more attention to the class, so

students retain the information acquired for longer time; in contrast, when the teacher gives students topics that they are not interested in, the teaching-learning process does not have good results.

Managing Learning

Additional to the research of teaching approaches, it is necessary to go further and search for information that provides insights about successful learning management.

In this regard, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) assert that in order to be successful in language learning, it is important that teachers know their students and the environment where lessons are taught; these two aspects are considered the general basis for a good learning management; the authors also referred to the objectives of the lesson; they mention that when the teachers set the objectives of the class, they are avoiding confusion and boredom on one hand, and they are gaining commitment and motivation on the other.

Another important factor to consider into managing learning is the way of giving instructions, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) state some tips to make the instructions effective: use simple language and short expressions; be consistent; use visual or written clues; give a demonstration or example; break the instructions down.

Regarding simple language and short expression, it means that the instructions need to be given at a lower speed in the language being “taught”, to avoid confusion and uncertainty.

Giving a demonstration or an example means showing what to do; it is more effective than telling what to do. During speaking activities, the teacher can play the scene alone, or the teacher can choose strong students to role play the scene, or both the teacher and the student can play it.

Feedback is another important factor in teaching- learning process. Harmer (2009) claims that during the teaching learning process, students make mistakes, and it is the teacher's role to make students aware of the fact that errors should not be as something potentially negative; instead, mistakes should be seen as challenges for improvement; also he thinks that during the teaching learning process it is important to assess students work, and at the same time it is important to know when it is necessary to give feedback; feedback will help students to confirm their knowledge, or to correct errors.

To the same regard, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) mention some ways of providing feedback: provide praise and encouragement; provide positive correction; set regular tests; hold discussion about how the group, as a whole, is doing; provide individual tutorials. Feedback is an important principle that contributes to improve the classroom management and the teaching learning process, consequently.

An additional principle to improve classroom management is the importance of setting time for every activity assigned during the development of the lesson. To this regard, Shalaway (1998) affirms that in order to have a successful lesson plan, it is important to establish time for every activity planned because an effective management of the time contributes to avoid misbehavior, and waste of time, mainly.

Lesson Design

Lesson design is a set of steps that a teacher plans in order to have a clear idea of how he or she is going to present a lesson; the lesson design helps teachers to set some activities and strategies to achieve the goals of the lesson; a lesson design/plan, can be considered as a useful guide for teachers to avoid getting lost during the lesson.

Considering the importance of a lesson plan, it is important to know the elements that make up a lesson plan. As Brown (2001) states a format for a lesson plan includes: goals, objectives, materials, procedures, evaluations, and extra-class activities. The author states that, at the beginning of every lesson, it is important to start with a warm up activity which helps teachers to identify what the students know and what the students need to know about the specific topic to be taught; regarding the objectives, the author affirms that the objectives help to deal with the points that are going to be taught during the lesson; about the methodology, Brown (2001) believes that a lesson is successful if an appropriate methodology is used; besides, teachers can catch the student's attention; an additional element from the lesson design is the material which has to be interesting and motivating for students; another important element is the assessment.

Brown (2001) considers that this element is vital in the lesson design because the teacher can notice how well the students understood the class; finally, extra class activities are considered necessary because students can practice and reinforce the knowledge acquired during the lesson (Brown 2001).

Regarding the importance of designing a well-taught lesson plan, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) state that by applying well planned strategies, materials and activities, teachers might need to do very little in the classroom.

As a final thought regarding lesson plan, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) highlight the importance of planning in order to have a very successful and productive class; he says that when teachers plan a lesson, they know what, how and when to execute the different activities that were selected to teach the lesson.

Class Size

Class size is a relevant aspect in the teaching-learning process; therefore, teachers need to know the total number of students that they have in each class in order to plan their classes and activities in an effective manner.

The number of students in class plays an important role for a lesson design. As Harmer (2009) affirms English language classes vary greatly in size, and the size depends of the particular education system that a teacher is working in; based on the number of students in class, a couple of different strategies are suggested by Harmer(2009) pair work and short-presentation to maximize students talking time. Similarly, Woodward (2001) considers that teachers of large classes need to use pair and group work activities, a lot, in order to give students natural oral/aural target language practice and use.

Regarding large classes, some difficulties can be identified; in this regard, Woodward (2001) states that in large classes some difficulties become evident; noise production, lack of opportunities to participate in class, lack of space, lack of material for all learners, and lack of time.

Woodward concludes that class size is an important factor at the moment of planning a lesson because this fact will help to decide the most successful activities to be applied in each class.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

Classroom space (physical space) and seating arrangement are important aspects that need to be considered at the beginning of a teaching-learning course since these elements influence the success or failure of a teaching learning course.

Considering the importance of classroom space and seating arrangement, Brown (2001) asserts that the physical space of a classroom and seating arrangement are facts

that need to be analyzed before to start the course because teachers have to check students' development every time to find the right place for each one since these two aspects influence significantly the students learning progress. Therefore, when classroom space is big enough, students can move easily from one side to other to perform tasks or activities which involve movement; on the other hand, when the space is not big enough, teachers are limited of applying activities which involve movement.

For a successful teaching learning course, an adequate classroom-space needs to be complemented with an adequate seating arrangement. To this concern, Brown (2001) asserts that seats for each student need to be organized in an adequate manner to make students feel relaxed and motivated to develop the activities established for the teacher. Brown (2001) suggests that if the classroom has movable desk-chairs, it is a good idea to consider patterns of semi-circles, U-shapes, concentric circles; on the other hand, if the classroom space is too small, it is a good idea to arrange seats in a single circle so that students are not all squarely facing the teacher; instead, they will be facing one another which contributes to improve teachers and students' interaction, interpersonal relationship; and what is more, learning also improves.

In the same fashion, Harmer (2009) states that there are many ways of seating arrangements to choose from; they depend of the number of the students existing in a classroom; among this variety of seating arrangements we have orderly rows and columns, in a horseshoe, in a circle. Harmer emphasizes that a circle manner is less dominant and permit students and teacher have plenty of interaction.

Classroom and Teaching Resources

Classroom and teaching resources are the keys to obtain excellent teaching results, in a teaching-learning course, it is necessary for teachers to have a good lesson

plan and pertinent materials, the good combination of these elements can help students get engaged in the teaching learning-process.

There are many materials to apply or use in the class. Woodward (2001, p. 132-160) mentioned some of the once he considers to be the most common and useful: pictures, videos, worksheet, realia, over-head projectors, computer games, tapes, CD, flashcards, etc.; the author suggests that to use any of those materials, it is necessary to consider the content being studied, and the students level; the author also says that the creativity and accuracy, on the use of materials, help teachers to present a topic in an interactive, easy and motivating manner. On the other hand, when interactive task, and bored materials are presented, the discipline comes down because students get bored and start making noise around the class.

Regarding teaching appropriate classroom resources, Lan (2012) says that if existing material is provided for a teaching learning course, it's the teacher's responsibility to choose the appropriate material to be used, at the right time; the use of the material should not to be bound by the order and sequence laid out in the textbook itself.

Concerning accurate and creative classroom resources, Harmer (2009) says students themselves are one of the best resources that a teacher can have in the class. Through their thoughts and experiences they bring the outside world into the room, and this is a powerful resource for teachers to draw on.

As a result, classroom and/or teachers resources are the key to introduce a topic to catch student's attention or to motivate students in the class; as mentioned above, there are materials for all kinds of topics, but it is the teacher who has the responsibility to choose the best material to be applied in the class.

Classroom Observation (institution monitoring)

Classroom observation is an activity that is aimed to help teachers, especially new teachers, to get a clear idea of the weak and strong points of his/her own performance. The classroom observation is a process that needs to be planned in order to make, out of this experience, a productive one. Regarding this, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) suggest some guidance, for the observer behavior, inside the classroom; he states that the observer should seat apart from the students; the observer must be quiet, and should not talk to anyone; the observer should not make eye contact with the teacher in duty; and finally, the observer should never interrupt the class.

Classroom observation is an activity that produces different reactions in students and teachers being observed; this fact may cause a negative influence in the results gotten from the observation process. About the negative influence of class observation, Brown (2001) says too often, teachers tend to view observations as necessary while “in training”, but it is seen unnecessary thereafter unless a supervisor is forced by regulation to visit their class in order to write up a recommendation for rehiring.

Taking into consideration the opinion of the authors above, it can be concluded that classroom observations are tools to be applied before, during, and after the teaching process because they help in-service teachers to identify weak and strong points; thereafter, the observed teacher will be able to create a plan that may contribute to overcome the weak points and reinforce the strong once in order to make the teaching activity more creative and productive.

Learning Styles

Considering the fact that every single individual is different from one another, Lightbown & Spada (2006), state the term ‘Learning style’ has been used to describe an

individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills.

Learning styles are used to describe the learner's natural and preferred way of observing, processing, and understanding new information and skills. Perceptually, learner styles are based on how the students use their senses to learn. Visual learners are the ones that learn something by seeing such things; aural learners are the ones that learn better when they are exposed to an auditory input; kinesthetic learners prefer to be involved in role playing since it involves physical action (Shalaway, 1998).

It is important to consider Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. He mentions eight different types of intelligences. He says that humans do not have all the eight intelligences fully developed; instead, he says that some of them are more developed than others. These intelligences are described as the abilities humans have in determined areas, such as logical-mathematical, spatial, linguistic, bodily-Kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Students would be more productive if teachers exploit their highlighted intelligence with specific tasks that will lead to productive learning.

Harmer (2007) agreed with the opinion of Tony Wright, who described four different learner styles within a group: "the enthusiast" looks to the teacher as a point of reference; this group tries to reach goals as a team; "the oracular" also focuses attention on the teacher, but towards satisfaction of personal goals; "the participator" tends to concentrate on groups; the "rebel" is concerned with the satisfaction of meeting their own goals. Teachers should do as much as they can in order to understand the individual differences within a group, and they should struggle to teach individuals as well as groups.

Considering that there are different learning styles as well as different teaching-learning strategies, it is necessary to know the best learning style and strategy to teach. Brown (2001) says that one of the best ways of getting students intrinsically involved in their language learning is to offer them the opportunity to identify their own learning styles and strategies; it will enhance students acquisition.

Students' Aptitude to Learn English

Learning a language is a process that involves students' aptitude. Lightbown & Spada (2010) define aptitude as having special skills for something. It is thought that a learner with greater aptitude to learning will learn faster and easily than others. In the same way, Gordon (1980) and Lett & O'Mara (1990) refer to language aptitude as "the potential that a person has for learning languages". This potential is evaluated using a formal aptitude test that includes evaluation of ability to manage sounds, grammatical structures, infer rules, and memory. These tests are useful tools that help teachers to estimate and plan the appropriate training that students need in order to improve their language performance.

Regarding learner's aptitude, Lightbown & Spada (2006, p.185) assure that a "Learner with a wide variety of intellectual abilities can be a successful language learner. This is especially true if the emphasis is on oral communication skills rather than metalinguistic knowledge."

A final thought concerning the importance of considering *learner's aptitude* in the teaching-learning process is the one stated by Lightbown & Spada (2006), who states that teachers may be able to ensure that their teaching activities are sufficiently varied to satisfy learners with different aptitudes.

Once a great deal of specific information related to the topic: 'Factors that influence teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools' has been

described; it is also necessary to present information from previous studies related to the current topic. Therefore, the following information corresponds to five previous studies.

The first study was made by Aduwa, S.E., and Iyamu, E. O.S. (2006), the purpose of this study was to identify factors that affect the quality of English language teaching and learning in different secondary schools in Nigeria; the population which participated in this study were 3.000 senior students across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

The instruments to collect information were a questionnaire, an observation sheet. With the help of these instruments the authors Aduwa, S.E., and Iyamu, E. O.S. (2006) were able to reach the conclusion that teachers adopted a very traditional method of teaching in which they gave priority to the use of textbooks, dictionaries, chalkboards, workbooks. Unfortunately, teachers did not have any opportunity to the use of modern media.

The author strongly recommended that the learning environment in public schools in Nigeria should be given more attention by the state and federal governments, so that children can learn well.

An additional recommendation states that teachers should be more student-centered rather than teacher-centered, thinking more on using audio visual aids than just following textbooks.

The second study was made by Carless (2003) the main purpose of the study was to find an answer to the following research questions: What is the teacher's attitude and understanding towards task-based teaching? What factors impact on the planning for the implementation of task-based teaching?

In this study, the participants were three teachers from three primary school classrooms in Hong Kong, the selection of the teachers was done by taking into consideration age, attitude, interest and willingness for innovation.

The instruments to obtain information in this study were classroom observation, interviews, and an attitude scale.

By analyzing the information obtained from those instruments, Carless (2003) arrived at the conclusion that an innovation, such as task-based teaching needs to be adapted to local contextual conditions. Based on that reason, he suggested researchers to go deep into this field and try to get some more relevant information about:

1. The complexity of the change process, in view of the numerous factors impacting on implementation.
2. An innovation, such as task-based teaching, needs to be adapted to local contextual conditions and the characteristics of the target learners; and
3. The need to build change processes on the existing values, understandings and prior experiences of the teachers who will implement an innovation.

The third study analyzed was the one done by Cockburn (2007) the purpose of this study was to evaluate the use of internet in the teaching- learning process. The participants for this study were six well-qualified ESOL teachers. The instruments used to collect information were interviews, questionnaires, observation sheets, and a teacher's lesson plans.

For the analysis and interpretation of the results, the quantitative and qualitative methods were used.

As a result of this case study, Alexander demonstrated that; teachers did not make use of internet because they doubted that the use of the internet could be useful for the practice of skills such as speaking and listening.

The fourth study done by Moiiinvaziri, M. & Branch, S. (2007) the purpose of this study was to identify if undergraduate students needed to be motivated during the teaching-learning process.

The participants for this study were 255 university students (male and female) selected by stratified random sampling from the total population of university students of Sirjan (758 students).

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire, which was analyzed through the quantitative and qualitative methods.

The results of this study showed that university students are both instrumentally and integrative motivated.

A limitation described about this study was that the participant institutions consisted of only three universities; therefore, the conclusions of this study did not allow for the making of generalizations.

The last study was done by Farlex (2005) the purpose of this study was to analyze how cultural activities influence in learning second language. This study was conducted in a Southern California high school.

The population which participated in this study was more than 30 immigrant students of a local high school.

The unique instrument applied in this study was the interview. After analyzing the information gathered, the author reached the conclusion that teachers need strategies to adapt with particular students on how to build effective support systems and healthy activities in the new setting. In fact, teachers needed to be well involved in the cultural activities and connections students were making, or needed to make, in order to be successful in their new culture.

All the information previously presented, in general terms, refers to the facts that prevent learning a second or foreign language in different parts of the world. It was important to refer to these studies since all of them provide anticipated information that helped to widen the view of the current study 'Factors that influence the English teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools'.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

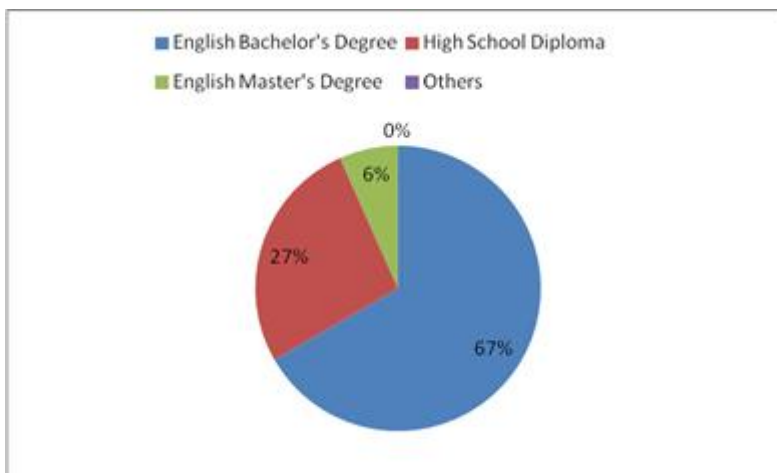
The aim of the present section is to describe, interpret and analyze the results obtained by means of observations and questionnaires applied to teachers and students concerning factors which influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools. In order to carry out this analysis the quantitative analysis approach will be used at the moment of describing statistical information and the qualitative analysis approach used to interpret statistical data.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1



Author: Jessica Granda

Source: Teacher's questionnaires

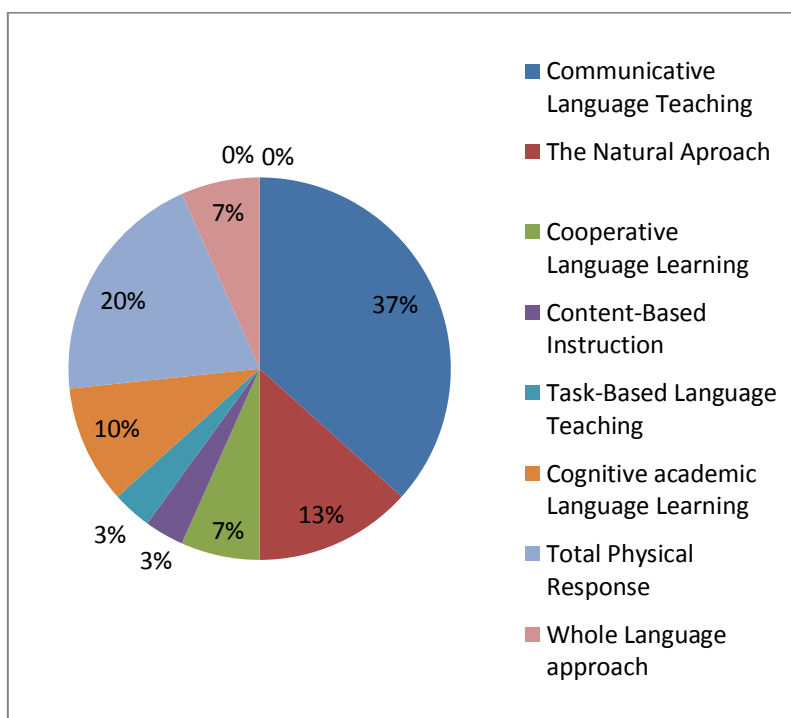
As illustrated in the graph: 67% of the sample holds an English Bachelor's Degree and it is important to mention that based on the interviews they showed an interest in continuing furthering their studies, 27% of participants have a High School Diploma and 6% represents teachers who have an English Master's Degree, this last being the lowest percentage.

Another relevant situation has to do with their level since most of them

demonstrated that they have an English level which ranges from B1 to B2 level. According to the Ministry of Education all English teachers need to hold a Bachelor's Degree in the subject and reach a minimum of a B2 level in the Common European Framework in order to become a certified English teacher. This is why it is absolutely necessary for teachers to pursue their professional development in order to be up-to-date with the latest changes demanded by the national curriculum.

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

Graph 2



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

Graph 2 displays information about the methods which teachers apply in class, 37% of teachers relied on the Communicative Language Approach (CLA), the second highest percentage was Total Physical Response with nearly 20%, 13% of the participants used The Natural approach, 10% was for The Cognitive Academic

Language Learning, the Cooperative Language Learning and the Whole Language Approach accounted for a much smaller percentage which was 7% for both.

The least popular methods were The Task-Based Language Teaching and Content Based Instruction with only 3%.

Analyzing the chart deeper it can be seen that the teaching methods used more frequently were the Communicative Language Approach (37%), and the Total Physical Response (20%). Of The Communicative Language Approach, Brown (2001) says the CLA provides students with authentic and meaningful interaction; for that reason, students need to receive and produce language in a real life context. Brown (2001) also points out that to make this interaction useful; students' motivation and attitude are required.

With respect to the Total Physical Response method, Shearon (2009) confirms that TPR allows students to react to language without thinking too much in structures; it facilitates long term retention, and reduces students' anxiety and stress. Brown (2007, p.31) also points out that "It seemed to be especially effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, but it lost its distinctiveness as learners advanced in their competence".

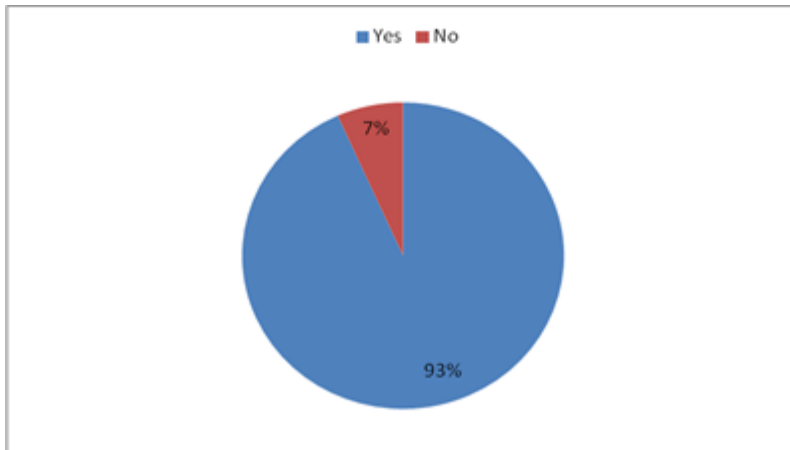
During observations teachers did not apply methods such as "Total Physical Response or Communicative Language Teaching", because most of the interaction with the students was based on teacher-student question and answer practices, where the students did not have the opportunity to use the language in a communicative way. Teachers basically used Content-Based Task and Grammar Translation.

Relating statistical results with Richards & Rodgers (2001) it can be said that the use of a unique method is impossible; instead, a combination of some methods is

required in order to teach accurately; the selection of the teaching methods to be used depends on the activities that are going to be developed during the lesson.

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

Graph 3



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

Whole group activities are the activities performed with the total number of students in a class.

Regarding this question, the results reflected that a great majority of teachers surveyed, approximately 93% use whole group activities in their lessons; whereas 7% do not apply this method because the class period is too short to allow students to participate as a group.

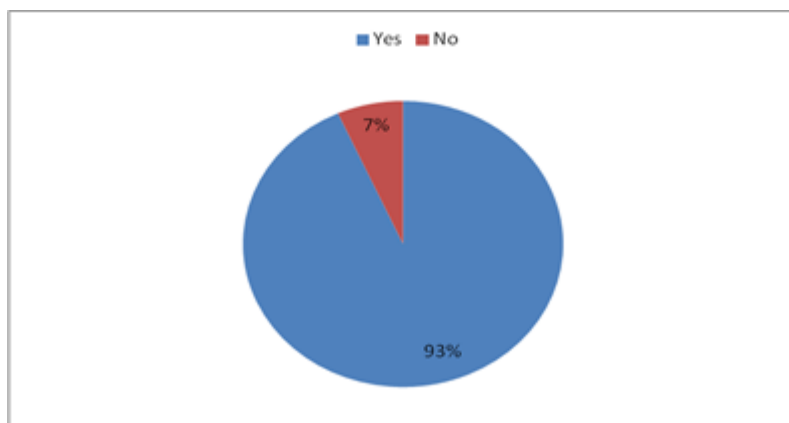
The findings demonstrated that the percentage of teachers, who affirmed not to use whole group activities, did not know exactly what it means and what it involves because they were not actually using them. This could be evidenced through the class observation.

At this point, it is important to know what experts say about whole class group; Harmer (2007) mentions that whole class group reinforces a sense of belonging among the group members, and that it is suitable for activities where the teacher is acting as a

controller. However, he also mentions that using whole class group is not the best environment to organize communicative language teaching.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 4



Author: Jessica Granda

Source: Teacher's questionnaires

Figure 4 presents information about the use of individual activities used to teach lessons. According to the graph, the majority of teachers, 93%, stated that they use them and only 7% answered "no".

Concerning this question, Harmer (2007) notes several facts about individualized learning; for example, individualized learning is essential in the development of learner autonomy; it is less stressful for students than performing activities in groups or in pairs; it allows teachers to respond differently with each student according to their learning styles and preferences; it can be a way of restoring peace and tranquility in a noisy and chaotic classroom.

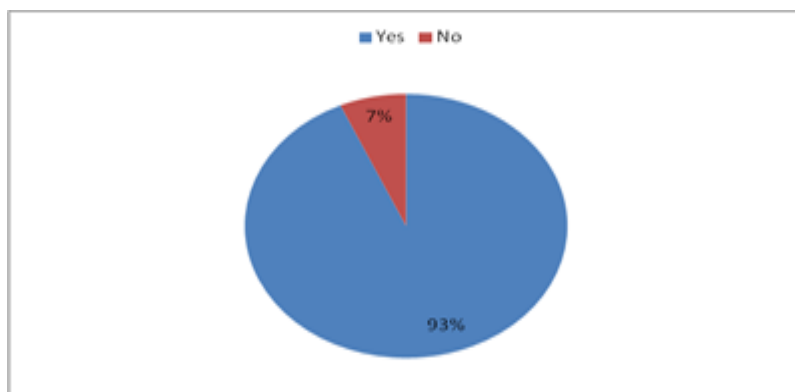
The use of this type of strategy allows both teachers and students to ensure that the teaching learning process is making progress. In addition, it enables them to work out a plan in case the expected results are not being achieved.

Even though the findings show that most teachers use individual activities, observations revealed that individual work was avoided and only a few students

worked individually. Thus, teachers applied whole group activities with the rest of students because their classes were large and they were aware that working with individual activities were very time consuming.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 5



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The results reflect that a 93% of teachers used group work activities to teach their lessons. On the other hand, 7% of teachers do not undertake group work activities because the physical space for each classroom is not adequate. Also, due to the high number of students the teacher is often unable to arrange the seats differently.

Regarding group work activities, Woodward (2001) claims that teachers who have large classes, should use pair and group work activities more in order to give students natural oral/aural target language practice in actual language communication.

Harmer (2007) also points out some of the advantages of group work activities: they increase the number of talking opportunities between students; also students share different opinions and receive contributions from others.

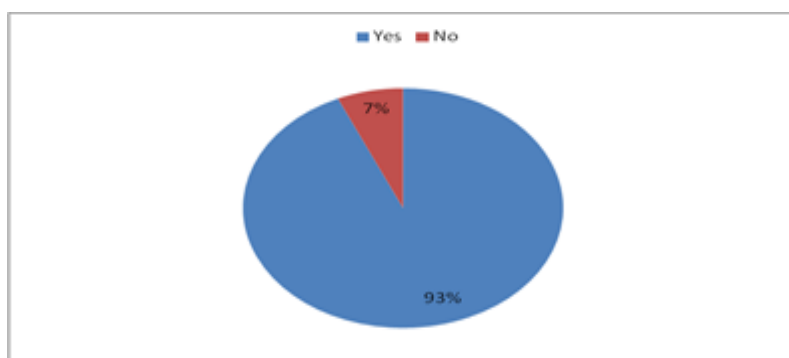
Analyzing the statistical results and the theoretical frame, it can be said that group work activities provide opportunities to increase the amount of talking time (for individual students, or in groups), promote social skills (sharing ideas, and

stating points of view), provide plenty of opportunities to improve communicative skills, provide confidence to students, and increase students motivation.

During the observed classes, it was noted that few teachers made group work activities; which were interesting as the classes were dynamic and gave priority to student's participation and creativity. Conversely, there were some classes where students worked as a whole group, following the teacher's instructions. This stopped students from sharing experiences and learning from their classmates.

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

Graph 6



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

Graph 6 displays information about the use of English in the class. A significant 93% of teachers answered that they use English in class all the time.

In contrast, 7% of the observed teachers commented that they do not use English a lot because the majority of students have a low proficiency level and often do not understand the instructions; hence they combine English and Spanish.

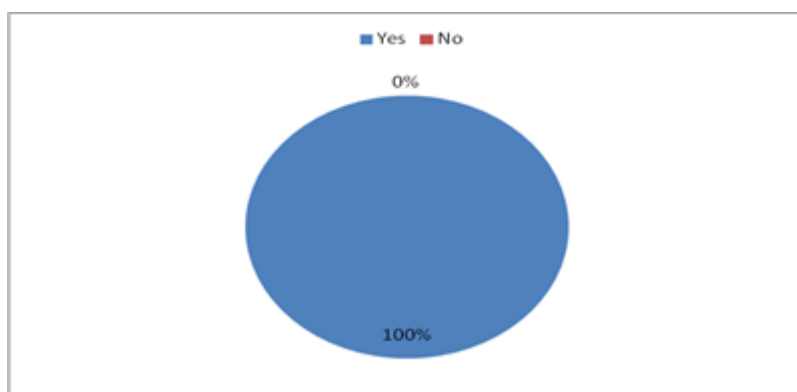
The use of the target language in the class helps students in the understanding of vocabulary and pronunciation. In this respect, Harmer (2007) mentions English is the main way of communication in the classroom. Students should be motivated to use the language all the time to improve their communicative competence.

Although 14 out of 15 teachers said that they use only English during the lesson, it is a contradiction which was noted during observations that not all the teachers used the target language to teach. They often used Spanish to clarify instructions. This situation is often the cause of poor communicative skills development as it affects students' ability to learn because the best way to learn a language is by total immersion and teachers should promote it and encourage students to use the target language.

By the same token, Harmer (2007) states the more English the teacher uses in class, the more English the students acquire.

Do teachers plan their lessons?

Graph 7



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

With regard to lesson plans, 100% of teachers answered that they plan their lessons. This finding is positive because when a teacher plans a lesson the objectives can be easily accomplished.

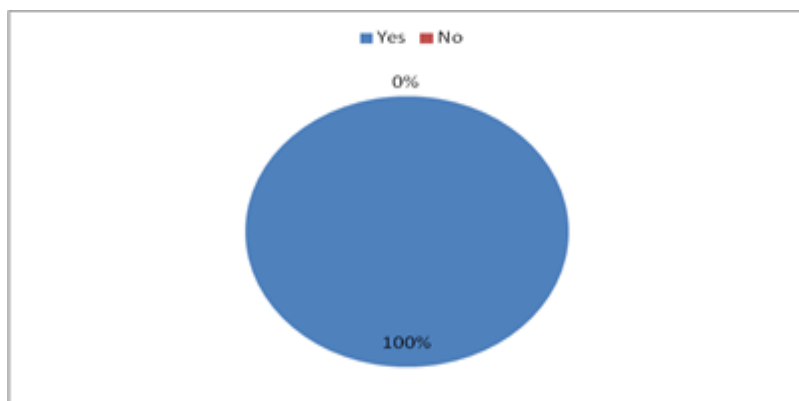
The importance of a lesson plan is evident in the teaching learning process, it helps teachers to be organized in the use of methods and techniques; it makes teachers feel more confident in the development of a class, and provides information for future plans. Hence, it is necessary that everyone understands what elements are included in the lesson plan; Brown (2001) states that the format of the lesson plans should include at least

the following elements: the objectives, materials, procedures, evaluation, and extra- class work.

Unfortunately, the statistical results are far different from the results shown on the observation sheet since it was noted that some teachers did not have a lesson plan and merely followed the teacher's guide book.

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

Graph 8



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The results of this investigation show that 100% of teachers do consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction as they teach their lessons. Teachers stated that these aspects are very essential to develop a lesson plan because they help teachers to accomplish the objectives without limitations.

Classroom management is necessary all the time; discipline is a factor that should not be overlooked. Thus, Brown (2007) comments that an appropriate control of discipline helps teachers to gain respect from their students; rules related to turn taking, respect between students, should be encouraged from the very beginning.

Additionally, Harmer (2009) states that feedback is necessary to avoid future mistakes in speech, conversations, or writing. He also highlights that teachers need to

take into account students' levels at the moment of providing feedback.

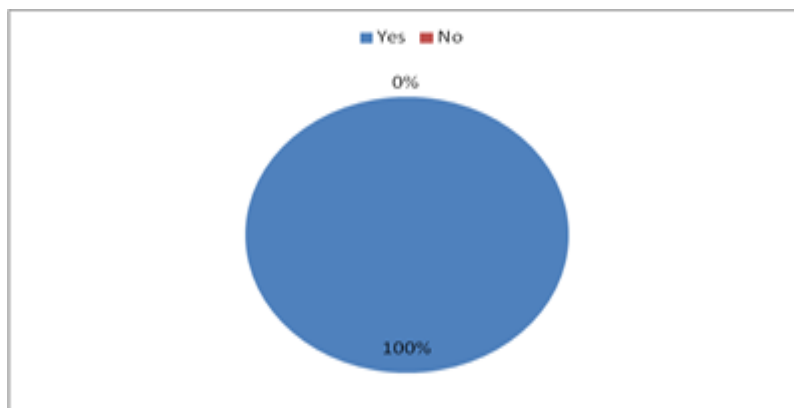
On the other hand, the lack of clear instructions can lead to confusion in the sense that students will not understand the directions of any assignment and as a result the objectives demanded by the task will not be achieved.

Despite prior knowledge, class observations showed that only 10 out of 15 teachers considered aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach their classes. They established specific rules at the beginning of the class; consequently, the classroom management allows both teacher and students to take advantage of it. Conversely, 5 teachers did not consider the above aspects.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?

Graph 9



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

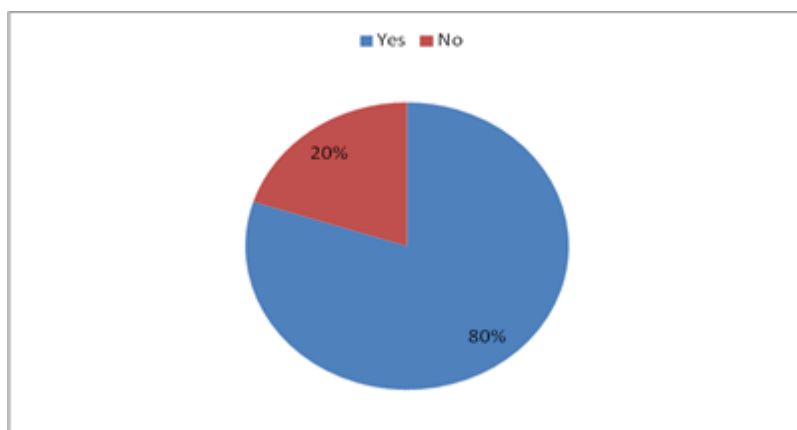
The graph indicates that 100% of teachers are focused on students' needs to teach English successfully. They stated that they follow the objectives determined in the curriculum as well as factors such as age, personality, interests, and aptitudes when teaching. However, interestingly, the observation revealed that most of the time teachers did not consider those factors because they follow the textbook they have, they did not

select the contents for their lessons or prepare extra activities to take into account students' different learning needs.

Brown (2007) pointed that teachers need to be aware of the academic background of the students as it is key to fitting their needs in terms of contents, objectives, methodology and resources.

Do teachers consider student's level to teach English successfully?

Graph 10



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The graph above shows that 80% of teachers consider students' level when organizing and planning their classes. On the other hand, 20% of teachers did not consider students' level when planning their lessons.

According to Brown (2007) the consideration of students' proficiency levels depends on the institutions' criteria; classifying a student's level is subjective, that is why he suggests having a certain sense of relativity in terms of beginners, intermediate and advanced levels because he says "What is beginning level for some may not be for others".

Brown (2007) also lists three levels of learners; beginner students who are highly dependent on the teacher. In fact, "beginners" is considered the most

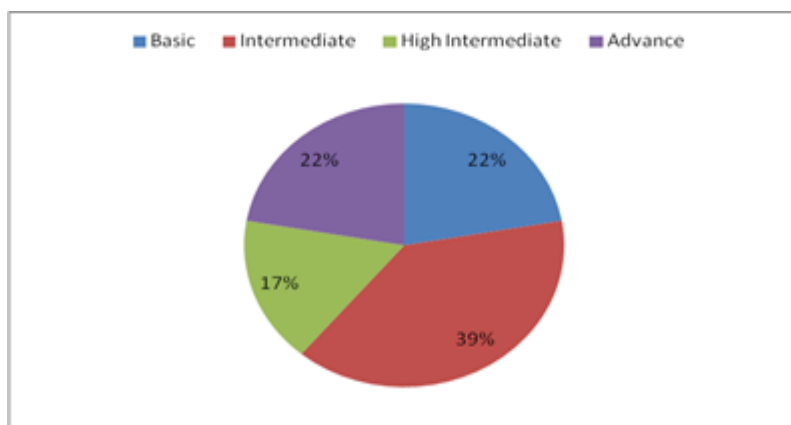
challenging level to teach. In intermediate levels, there are students who have progressed for an ability to sustain basic communicative tasks, to practice some minimal fluency, to deal with improvised circumstances, to self-correct on occasion. Last but not least, advanced levels develop fluency with great of degree of accuracy; students in this level can handle almost every situation, are more independent, the role of teacher as a provider of feedback takes less prominence.

During the observed classes it was noticed that some teachers did not consider student's levels, because they taught all of them as if they all had the same level of proficiency.

Recent studies confirm that in order to have an effective and productive class it is crucial to consider students' levels at the moment of planning a lesson, since teachers will be able to include a wide variety of activities addressed to different learners.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 11



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The graph above provides information about the level of proficiency students have attained. Looking closely at the graph, it can be seen that approximately 39% of students are placed in an Intermediate level, 22% of students have an advanced level

and the same percentage accounts for a basic level whilst 7% have a High level.

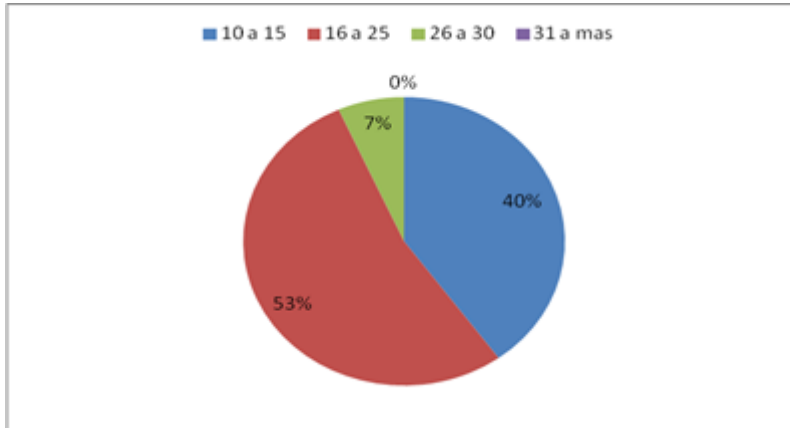
In 2001, Brown classified the proficiency levels: he referred to beginners' level as one of the most challenging levels in language instruction due to the fact, that students at this level have little or no prior knowledge of the target language; with reference to the intermediate English proficiency level, Brown (2001) states that students from this group are able to develop many activities in an adequate time; students from this group are able to hold a basic communicative task with an acceptable fluency. The last group defined by Brown (2001) is the advanced English proficiency level. He defined this group of students as the once who are able to understand instructions and perform activities correctly. Advanced students are able to hold communicative tasks with teacher and classmates showing excellent fluency.

The observations confirmed that students have different levels of proficiency; basic, intermediate, and advanced. As the class was developed teachers gave instructions and explanations to students and which did not understand. They required extra explanations in order to work on the exercises. Another group of students needed to read the instruction more than once to do the activity. There was also a group of learners who could do the task immediately after the teacher's instructions. Taking into account statistical results and observation of classes it is confirmed that there is a mixed-ability level of knowledge in every class observed.

Factors Concerning Classroom

How many students are there in the observed classes?

Graph 12



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The number of students in a classroom is a key factor which influences the teaching learning process.

The pie chart shows that 53% of teachers work with groups, which range from 16 to 25 students per class; they indicated that working with this number of students is appropriate because they can monitor and interact with almost all of them. Moreover, they can make group work activities avoiding discipline problems.

40% of the teachers stated that the number of students in their classrooms ranges from 10 to 15. They find this number of students perfect to work with because it allows them to have a good class performance and they can easily monitor students' learning and personalize information.

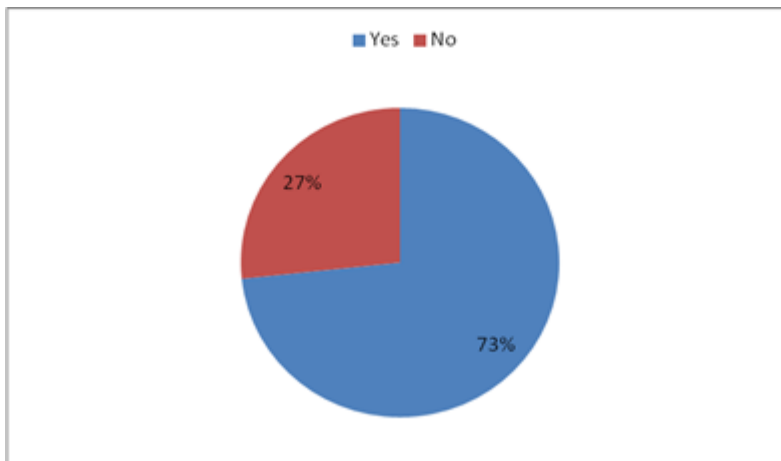
A small percentage noted that they have between 26 and 30 students in each classroom. This situation hugely impacts on classroom management since it is difficult to organize group work activities, play interactive games and arrange the classroom in several ways.

Trying to diminish the number of difficulties represented by working with large number of students, Harmer (2009) states that English language classes vary greatly in size; therefore, he suggested activities such as pair work, mini-presentations and any cooperative activity for classrooms with large numbers of students because they may contribute to accomplish the objectives of the lesson.

The data and the information gathered demonstrated that working with more than 25 students should not be academically accepted because teachers cannot provide support for all of them and it mostly affects the physical environment, which is crucial to enhance the teaching learning process. Alternatively, classes with fewer students are by far the most beneficial for both teachers and students in terms of methodology, didactic activities and physical space.

Do teachers feel comfortable with the number of students they are working with?

Graph 13



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

Graph 13 depicts information on how teachers feel about the number of students per class. It can be seen that 73% of teachers feel comfortable as they have a reduced number of learners which facilitates a better development of the class as well as

working on a variety of activities (in groups or individually) and allows the monitoring of students constantly.

On the other hand, 27% of teachers expressed that the number of students they have in each classroom (from 25 to 30) is not appropriate because large classes do not let them help students effectively, do not allow them to give feedback after assignments, do not allow them to develop all the activities planned, do not allow them to check classwork and homework; and what is worse the interaction between teachers and students becomes poor.

Regarding this issue, Woodward (2001) says that common problems associated with large classes are noise, too many people, restricted space, insufficient materials for everyone, not being able to respond to the needs of all students.

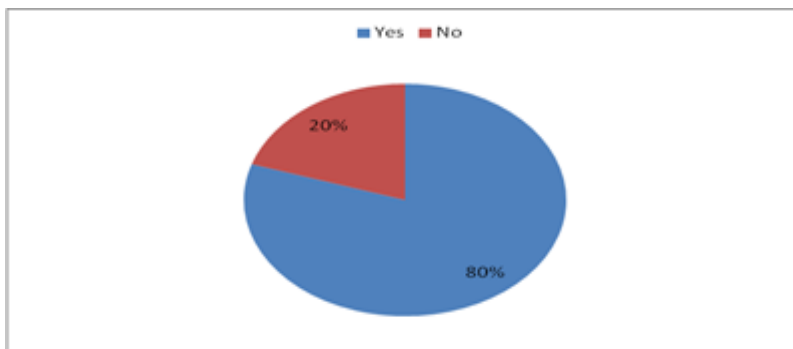
In the same way, Brown (2001) states that large classes present some problems where proficiency and ability vary widely among students; personalized teacher-student attention is minimized; students' opportunities to speak are lessened; and teacher's feedback on students' written work is limited.

The observations showed that teachers who worked with more than 25 students faced some difficulties because they could not control the discipline very well; the noise levels did not allow teacher and students to interact; and they could not complete all the activities which they have planned for those classes.

In relation to statistical results and the observed classes, it could be evidenced that the number of students varied in some classes; and teachers were able to achieve most academic goals with small classes.

Do teachers have enough space to work with the group of students they have been assigned?

Graph 14



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The relationship between physical space and number of students has been widely investigated and the results show that 80% work in a proper classroom which has enough space. On the other hand, 20% of teachers claimed that the classroom they have is not physically appropriate because of the high number of students.

With reference to classroom space and group size, Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) state the way the seats are arranged depends on the size of the class, the sizes of the group, the types of activities, and the style of the furniture.

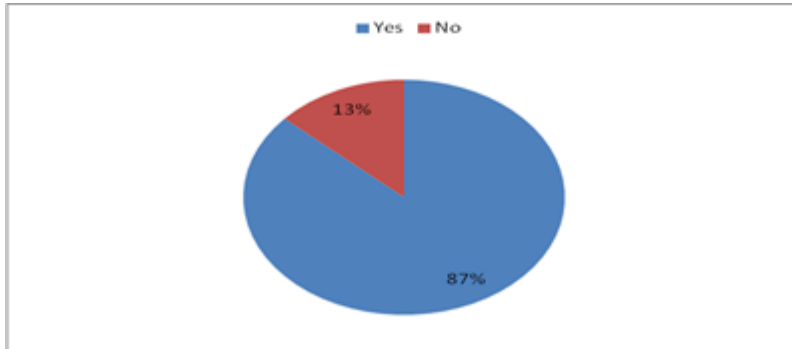
The observations provided a clear insight about the physical environment in each classroom, it was noted that most classrooms were not big enough in relation to the number of the students; consequently, teachers avoided some activities which involved physical movements. Conversely, institutions which are equipped with comfortable classrooms pointed out that this is an advantage since they can organize group work, role plays, games, projects, interviews, brainstorming, and several activities which helped students to understand the lesson.

Based on the data provided by the observations and contrasting with the statistical results, it can be seen, that teachers need enough space to apply the appropriate

activities which allow for a better teaching performance.

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

Graph 15



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

Graph 15, presents data about arrangement of the seating according to the activities previously selected by teachers. 87% of teachers confirmed that they arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes. While, 13% of teachers do not arrange students' seats because the classroom they use is not big enough to develop activities which involve movements of students and seats, also the control of the discipline becomes difficult.

With respect to this, Harmer (2009) affirms that there are many ways of arranging classes; it depends on the number of the students in the classroom; some of the most common ways to arrange a class are orderly rows, horseshoe, and in a circle.

Furthermore, Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) suggest some ways to place students to have excellent results in class, including a weak student with a strong one, a quieter student with one who is more outgoing, or weaker students together in activities where the teacher can provide them extra support.

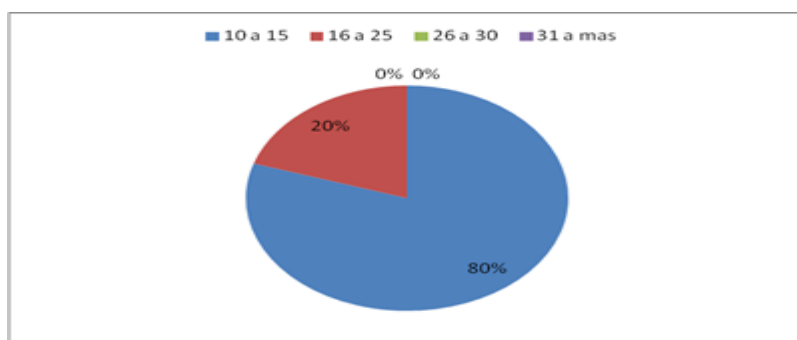
It is important to note that even though the 87% of teachers answered that they

agree on the fact that it is necessary to arrange seats according to the number of students, they did not put this into practice.

Comparing and contrasting the statistical results to the theoretical frame, it can be observed that both are in favor of arranging seats according to the space, number of students, and also according to students features (weak/strong, quiet/outgoing). These aspects can help to improve the quality of the instruction, and the student's production.

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

Graph 16



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

It can be seen from graph 16 that 80 % of teachers consider that 10 to 15 students are appropriate for the successful development of a class. This number of students enables teachers to apply dynamic activities either in group or individual, which contribute to enhance the teaching learning process.

By the same token, 20% of teachers think that 16 to 25 students in a classroom is an appropriate number to work well.

These findings shows that in general, working with small groups broadens the chances of carrying out different activities which benefit directly both teachers and students when it comes to academic issues.

Harmer (2009) found differences suggesting that the bigger the group is, the more

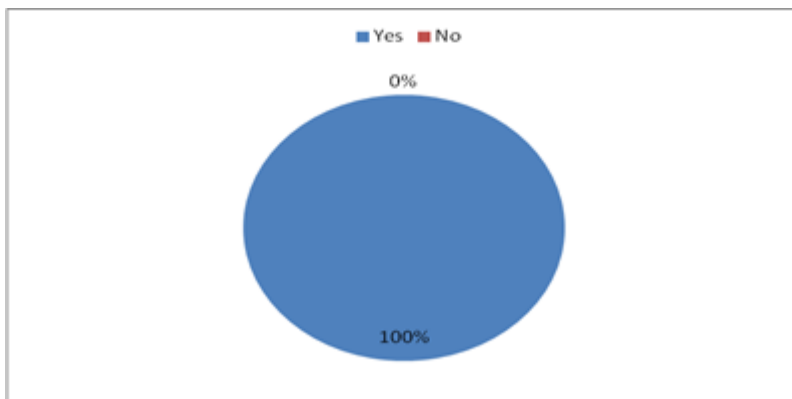
teachers have to be organized and know what they are going to do before the lesson starts. Furthermore, the same author states that teachers must be organized and prepared with a detailed plan in order to manage large group classes properly.

During the interview, teachers stated that in spite of the number of students, the most relevant point is to be well organized, and establish rules at the beginning of the course in order to avoid future inconveniences.

The current findings and the statistical results confirmed that working with no more than 25 students helps to achieve the academic goals as greater opportunities for individual interaction between students and teacher are more likely to appear.

Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, tape, CD recorder, computer(s), projector, smart boards, and supplementary materials)?

Graph 17



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The pie chart shows that 100% of teachers use teaching resources such as TV, tape-recorder, CD-player, computers, over-head projector(s), smart board, and supplementary materials (flash card, books, cut outs, internet, online resources, and blogs).

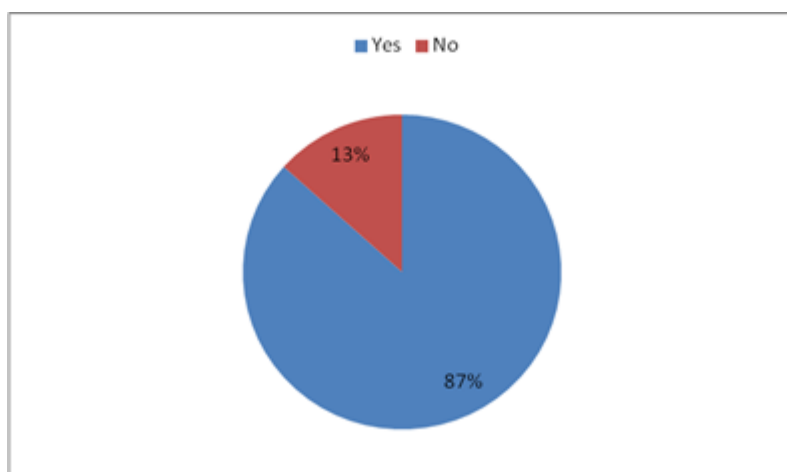
Regarding the usefulness of teaching resources, Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) states that visual resources have a number of advantages: they often illustrate meaning more directly and quickly than verbal explanation- cutting down unnecessary teacher talking time; they attract the student's attention and aid concentration; visual resources add variety and interest to a lesson, and they also help to make the associated language memorable.

The observations reflected that the majority of institutions provide teachers with the necessary technological resources such as projectors, computers, internet connection, interactive programs and applications in order to get an effective learning.

However, interestingly, some teachers do not use the aforementioned resources as they prefer to work with their books wherein they find lots of activities. Moreover, they stated that they do not rely on technology to teach their classes.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph 18



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The pie chart indicates that 87% of teachers consider the resources they have in class suitable and useful to help students in learning this language. While, 13% of

teachers claim that the resources they are provided are not adequate. They stated that institutions should invest more in order to achieve more innovative and engaging resources which support the teaching learning process. Additionally, they suggest that teachers should be involved in the selection of these resources.

Regarding this issue, Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) note that the teacher should select the material carefully, and attend the needs and interests of the students, and also decide what the students are expected to do with the material.

An additional point of view regarding sources that help to improve English learning, is the opinion stated by Harmer (2009) who claims that students themselves are one of the best resources that a teacher can have in the class. Through their thoughts and experiences they bring the outside world into the room, and this is a powerful resource for teachers to draw on.

Direct observations showed that the resources used were not the best to activate, engage and consolidate students' knowledge. Students' participation was simply addressed to work on their books and complete exercises on the board. As a consequence of that, some students did not show interest in the class.

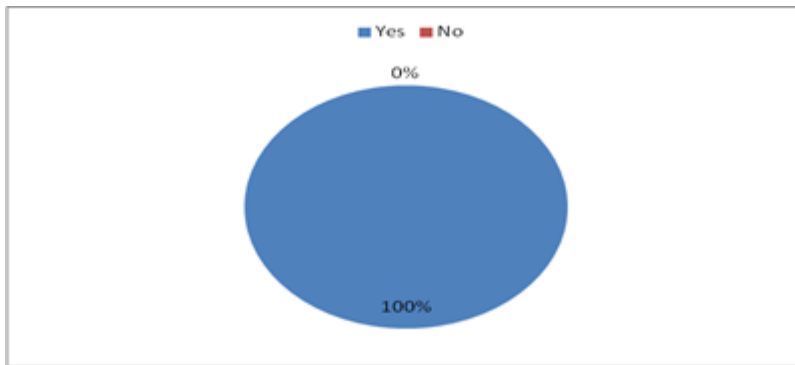
The study demonstrated that teachers need to have a plan in advance in order to include and prepare new activities using attractive resources rather than textbooks and the board.

Taking into account observations and the author's opinion, it is obvious that teachers need to select the appropriate resources to motivate and engage students to learn the language.

Factors Concerning Educational Institutions

Does the institution review lesson plans?

Graph 19



Author: Jessica Granda
 Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The results show that 100% of teachers have to present their lesson plans for a review which is carried out by academic coordinators.

The interviewed teachers confirmed that their lesson plans are checked periodically by a special commission which also sets the due dates when each teacher has to submit this assignment. Teachers have to present a weekly, monthly and termly planning and it has to cover all the main parts of the curriculum. After which they receive feedback or advice to improve their teaching-learning process.

Regarding this issue, Brown (2007) states that collaborative curriculum development and revision warrant a collaborative effort to program development. Also, he states teachers and coordinators should be involved in the process of putting the programs together; supervisors should be in daily communication with teachers who need help with lesson design, textbook adaptation, and pedagogical innovations.

According to the observed classes, only a few teachers planned their lessons in a proper way which includes extra activities to make all the students participate and understand the lesson; these teachers believed that planning in advance guides and support teachers to accomplish the objectives established for each class.

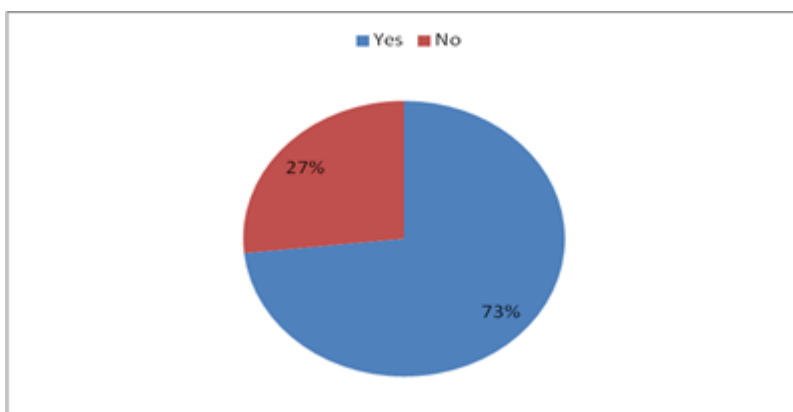
On the other hand, there was a significant group of teachers who did not plan their classes; they just followed the course book, developing the activities suggested there.

They were often centered on covering the grammar topics and they did not include any different activities.

In respect to observed classes, it could be evidenced that teachers need to devote more time to planning and by the same token authorities have to be more demanding and ensure that teachers put their plans into practice.

Does the institution monitor teaching?

Graph 20



Author: Jessica Granda
Source: Teacher's questionnaires

The graph above depicts information about the frequency of class observation the authorities carry out. It shows that 73% of the teachers are observed. These observations vary according to the demand of the academic advisors and they may be once a month, a week or at any time. Teachers need to be permanently prepared because they are not warned when they will be monitored.

A fewer percentage of participants, it is a 27%, answered that the institutions do not monitor their classes. They commented that they only have to present their lesson plans considering all aspects required by the authorities. This group of teachers also expressed that they feel comfortable not being observed because they know that the students' behavior may change if they are observed by someone else.

Mackey & Gass (2005) state although the goal of most observational

research is to collect data as unobtrusively as possible, the presence of an observer influences the linguistic behavior of those being observed.

In spite of this, the majority of the teachers maintained that authorities monitor their classes; there was no evidence of authorities during the process of observation of the current study.

Relating statistical results with observed classes, it can be seen that class observation plays an important role here because after the observation the advisors offer them appropriate feedback which helps teachers to correct and improve a situation in the teaching learning process.

Conclusions

- ❖ This study showed that most teachers have an English Bachelor's Degree; however, their English proficiency level still needs to be improved.
- ❖ Even though the majority of teachers stated that they use English the whole class, the observations revealed that some professors use Spanish to clarify instructions and explanations.
- ❖ Most of the institutions that participated in this study showed to have enough technological and didactic resources, but the observation and data collection confirmed that they are not taking advantage of them; in some classrooms teachers use only the book.
- ❖ The study revealed that most of the institutions have appropriate and equipped classrooms to hold a maximum of 25 students. Nevertheless, a few group of teachers had to deal with an excessive number of student in a small space.
- ❖ Private educational institutions are not monitoring classes as frequent as they should be. The lack of this monitoring process is slowing-down the teaching learning process.
- ❖ The communicative approach method is not used by the majority of the teachers which limits students to learn the language in a communicative way.

Recommendations

- ❖ English teachers ought to dedicate time to professional development programs.
- ❖ English teachers should lessen the amount of Spanish used in the English class in order to help students become more familiar with the target language.
- ❖ Teachers should use all the technological and the didactic resources that they have in the institutions to help students improve their skills.
- ❖ Private educational Institutions ought to place emphasis on monitoring teaching lessons; because it helps in-service teachers to identify weak and strong points during the teaching- learning process; the frequency of this monitoring activity should be, at least, every other week, to check if teachers are fulfilling their roles.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
CARRERA DE INGLES
TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

High school diploma ()	English Bachelor's Degree ()	English Master's degree ()
Others: _____		

2. Do you consider Students' needs to teach English successfully?

Students' Needs (<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____ _____ _____	

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

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

4. What is the level of your students?

*Students' Level			
Basic ()	Intermediate ()	High Intermediate ()	Advanced ()

5. Which of the following methods was used in this class? (check only 1)

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()

Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()
Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others _____	()

6. Do you use whole- group activities to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

7. Do you use individual activities to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

8. Do you use group work activities to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

9. Do you use English most of the time in your classes?

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

10. Do you plan your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

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

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

12. How many students do you have in this class?

10 - 15 ()	16 - 25 ()	26 - 30 ()	31 - more ()
-------------	-------------	-------------	---------------

13. Do you feel comfortable working with this number of students?

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

Why? _____

14. Do you have enough space to work with this group of students?

YES () NO ()

15. Do you arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for your classes?

YES () NO ()

Why? _____

16. How many students do you think is the appropriate number to teach English? (check only 1)

10 - 15 ()	16 - 25 ()	26 - 30 ()	31 - more ()
-------------	-------------	-------------	---------------

Why? -

17. Do you use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer(s), Projector(s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?

YES () NO ()

Which once? _____

18. Do you consider the resources you have appropriate in class?

YES () NO ()

Why? _____

19. Does the institution review your lesson plans?

YES ()	NO ()	
If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other _____

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?

YES ()	NO ()	
If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other _____

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

21. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

23. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

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

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

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

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

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ()	NO ()
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ()	NO ()
--------	--------

GRACIAS!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

OBSERVATION SHEET

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

1. Does the teacher consider Students' needs to teach English?

*Students' Needs (<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()

* It can be recognized based on the variety of activities (visual, audio, audiovisual, realia, and on-line) applied, and students' reaction to them.

2. What is the level of the students? (Check 1)

*Students' Level			
Basic ()	Intermediate ()	High Intermediate ()	Advanced ()

* It can be recognized based on the material they are using or placement done by the institution.

3. Which of the following methods are used?

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()
Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()
Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others _____	()

4. Which of the following activities are used?

Whole-group activities	()
Individual activities	()
Group work activities	()

5. Which of the following aspects of the lesson plan were applied in the class?

Time	()
Lesson topic	()
Objectives	()
Warm-up activities	()
Introduction of the new topic	()
Guided or individual practice	()
Review/Assessment/Feedback	()
Materials and resources	()

6. Which of the following aspects have been considered by the teacher?

Discipline	()
Feedback	()
Activities management	()
Time management	()

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

10 - 15	()	16 - 25	()	26 - 30	()	31 - more	()
---------	-----	---------	-----	---------	-----	-----------	-----

8. Do students have enough space to move and participate in dynamic activities?

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

9. Is the seating arrangement appropriate for the teaching-learning process?

YES	()	NO	()
NOTES:			

10. Which of the following resources are there in the classroom to facilitate teaching?

TV	()
Tape/Cd recorder	()
Computer(s)	()
Projector(s)	()
Smartboard	()
Supplementary materials	()
Others	()

11. In which percentage does the teacher use English in class?

25 %	()	50 %	()	75 %	()	100 %	()
------	-----	------	-----	------	-----	-------	-----

Annex4

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
A1	Where are you from? Where do you live?
A2	Where did you learn English? How long have you studied English? Which subject was the most difficult during your major?
B1	How long have you been teaching English? Which skill is easier for you to teach? Would you like to continue studying? Why?
B2	What are the advantages or disadvantages of teaching English in a “non-English speaking country”? What are the main problems a teacher faces when teaching English in Ecuador?
C1	What social benefits are derived from learning English? What is the most important reward of teaching English as a profession?
C2	What are the benefits that come from teachers staying more time in the educational institutions? What is the difference between teaching English as foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL)?

TEACHER'S LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY:											
C2	()	C1	()	B2	()	B1	()	A2	()	A1	()