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

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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Loja, febrero de 2016

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**ABSTRACT**

Learning a second language can be influenced by several factors, such as class size, seating arrangement, teaching techniques, teachers' instructional competence, and others. This thesis was intended to establish the relationship between these factors and their influence in both teachers and students from private high schools in the city of Loja, Ecuador.

The sample included fifteen students and fifteen teachers from five different private high schools in the urban area of the city of Loja. They were given a questionnaire (specific for each population) that included questions regarding the teaching methods and techniques, and their opinion about the effects in the learning process.

After a deep analysis of the results, the authors concluded that, among different private high schools, the teacher's formal education and experience in the field, as well as class size and the hours per week dedicated for the English subject were the most important factors that influenced the teaching-learning process. Other factors such as teaching methods and techniques were related to the teacher's experience.

**KEY WORDS:** English teaching - learning process, class size, seating arrangement, teaching techniques, high school students.

**RESUMEN**

El aprendizaje de un segundo idioma puede estar influenciado por varios factores, como por ejemplo el tamaño de la clase, la disposición de los asientos, las técnicas de enseñanza, los docentes, las competencias de instrucción entre otros. Esta tesis pretende establecer la relación entre estos factores y su influencia, tanto en los profesores como en los estudiantes de los Colegios privados de la ciudad de Loja, Ecuador.

La investigación incluyó a quince estudiantes y quince profesores de cinco escuelas secundarias privadas de la zona urbana de la ciudad de Loja. Se entregó un cuestionario (específico para cada población) que incluyó preguntas acerca de los métodos y técnicas de enseñanza, así como su opinión acerca de los efectos en el proceso de aprendizaje.

Después de un análisis exhaustivo de los resultados, los autores concluyeron que, entre las diferentes escuelas secundarias privadas, la educación del profesor y experiencia en el campo, así como el tamaño de la clase y las horas semanales dedicadas a las clases de inglés eran los factores más importantes que influyeron el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Otros factores, como los métodos y técnicas de enseñanza, estaban relacionados con la experiencia del maestro.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** proceso de aprendizaje de inglés, tamaño de la clase, disposición de los asientos, técnicas de enseñanza, estudiantes de las instituciones secundarias.

# INTRODUCTION

English is considered "the world language", because of its wide use in topics related to science, technology, business, medicine, and education. Some countries use English as a second and third official language, however, in some developing countries; it is not part of the school syllabus, which limits students and their relationship with the world around them.

Our country, through the national education policies has included English as a mandatory subject in high schools, regardless their geographic location, student population, or learning methodology. For public high schools, there is an outlined planning for English courses, imposed by the government, while in private high schools this is not always the case. These differences influence the final outcome in English language acquisition, hence the benefit for students in their lives.

This research project analyzed the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools in order to determine if the methods used by the teachers are effective and accepted positively by students, thus guaranteeing language acquisition and its benefits in the development of the individuals as members of the society.

The objectives set for this research were: to identify the 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 the institutional facilities and norms regarding quality education.

Considering these aspects, there have been several studies held in different countries, contributing to the improvement of government policies regarding education and English language acquisition. Aduwa-Ogiegbaen (2006), in a study with 3000 students in Nigeria, demonstrated that despite the teacher's experience and effort to improve the learning process, the physical conditions (building structure, geographic location of the school) of the classrooms, as well as the lack of instructional material, number of students per class, level of motivation in students (influenced by families economic conditions, religion beliefs, and cultural background), diminished the quality of the teaching process, thus compromising learning acquisition. Many of the students included in the study did not approve the evaluations held at the end of the school period.

Additionally, Chepkoech (2012) held a study in Kenya, where she performed an assessment about the teaching strategies used in a public high school. The researcher interviewed 180 teachers through questionnaires about their preferences regarding teaching techniques during the classes. The results showed that many teachers did not use any of the resources available in their classrooms, limiting their students' performance and language acquisition. The author finally concludes that the

use of the same techniques affects the learning process. The conclusions made from these, and other studies supported the objectives of this research project.

Another important aspect that has been studied is the implementation of additional teaching techniques in order to catch students' attention. To support this notion, Chen & Chen (2009) introduced a study where teachers included in their teaching plan four English popular songs during the whole semester. One hundred and sixty six six-grade students from 5 different classes in an elementary school in Taiwan where observed. The authors concluded that overall class motivation had significantly increased after creative teaching, students were motivated to become more active learners.

As it was mentioned before, implementing new teaching techniques and using technology to make classes more interesting, help students to maintain the interest in the class and acquired the target language. The final results of this research will benefit students from private high schools in the city of Loja, and could be used to improve the way English is being taught, in order to guarantee language acquisition and to benefit students' lives. The possible changes made by private high schools could reach the public high schools' authorities, and; therefore, generalize the proposal, changing the national approach for this matter. Other researchers could use the information provided in this thesis to complement their reviews as well as to compare the results with their own, and draw wider and consistent conclusions.

The results of this research will help teachers, students and the community in general to determine what the strengths and weaknesses of the education system in our country and, according to them, look for ways to improve and strengthen the system.

Finally, some of the limitations of this research were that some high schools refused being observed and surveyed because they feared a hidden government evaluation, while others did not allow us to access to the students. In addition, some teachers did not fill the questionnaires, even though anonymity was maintained.

Regarding bibliographic research, it was difficult to find updated books, and the access to online articles was limited. Efforts must be made to guarantee the student's access to this information, as well as to recommend other search engines related to the investigation topic.

## METHOD

**Settings and Participants**

This research was held in Ecuador from May to July 2013, in five private high schools in the city of Loja. The population included fifteen English teachers, aged between 25 to 50 years old and fifteen students aged between 15 to 18 years old. They all lived in the urban area of the city and belonged to a middle/upper socio-economic status. They were Ecuadorian students who did not have additional training in English language acquisition.

**Procedures**

The investigation process began with the literature review. The information was gathered from different sources and language-based search resources from the UTPL library. The collection criteria followed the objectives, the variables and the guidelines provided by the University.

This descriptive study included qualitative and quantitative methods. To start with the data collection process, the University sent out an authorization request to each school principal in order to access to the different classrooms (their teachers and students). For this purpose, the researchers handed out a questionnaire, followed by a personal interview with the students and the teacher. The final stage of this research process included an observation check list during a class period that was used to evaluate the teacher-student's interaction and possible factors influencing the learning process.

The information obtained was analyzed according to the guidelines set by the University. The researchers used a frequency-based chart for each variable, a pie chart and the data analysis, comparing their results with other studies (previously included in the literature review).

The aspects considered for the analysis of the results included the objectives of the research, as well as the instructions provided by the thesis tutor and the thesis-project hand out. Finally, the researchers drew the conclusions and wrote different recommendations.

**DISCUSSION**

**Literature Review**

The English learning process is affected by several factors that can influence the final outcome deeply. Identifying these factors and addressing them properly can guarantee a successful and useful learning. In Ecuador, English teaching is part of the Curriculum of the General Basic Education program, held by the Ministry of Education. It can be reinforced according to the needs and resource availability for each particular institution (Diario Hoy, 2005). However, in order for the institution to improve the program, some recommendations are necessary, including those related with the learning process and the factors that can affect it.

**Importance of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador**

According to the curriculum provided by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, English as a Foreign Language is mandatory from 8th to senior grade in public high schools during five hours a week. If an institution wants to improve its English program, it is necessary to take into account the availability of resources in order to satisfy all the requirements of the Ministry (Ministerio de Educación, 2012).

Ecuador, through the Ministry of Education has developed an important project for strengthening the teaching of English as a foreign language; the main objective of this program is that Ecuadorian students reach a functional level of use of the target language. The specific initiatives are aimed at updating the national curriculum for English, the delivery of textbooks aligned to this curriculum, the professional development of English teachers exercise, and improving training in this career (Ministerio de Educación, 2015).

The English Language Learning Standards are developed by the Ministry of Education taking into consideration the communicative language components and the language skills as a core part of the program: (a) listening, (b) speaking, (c) reading, and (d) writing (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). The Ministry also mentions the level of knowledge that students must have at the end of their secondary instruction: level A1: At the end of 9th year; level A2: At the end of 1st year of bachelorship and level B1: At the end of 3rd year of bachelorship.

After the program for teaching English is installed, different components that will affect the learning process should be identified, including methods and techniques for teaching the language, evaluate the students, find out what motivates them and include all those results to know their strengths and interests and determine the best way to bond with them

**Teaching Approaches and Methods**

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There are several approaches and methods to teach English as a foreign language. Each approach may be more effective than the other, depending on the classroom environment. For instance, Galloway (1993), states that Communicative Language Teaching allows students to engage in real-life situations as subjects of a conversation. The teacher could also introduce the subject and students participate in discussing it. The teacher would choose the subject according to the age and interests of his students in order to allow them to participate equally. The learning process comes from the students' desire to communicate in meaningful ways. This method considers what Margie Burns explained about language in 1984 (Galloway, 1993):

> Language is interaction; it is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship
> with society. In this light, language study has to look at the use (function) of
> language in context, both its linguistic context (what is uttered before and after a
> given piece of discourse) and its social, or situational, context (who is speaking,
> what their social roles are, why they have come together to speak).

The Natural Approach, described by Krashen and Terrel (1988) is part of the methods that attempt to imitate the process of learning a first language (Thornbury, 2012). The central hypothesis of the theory is that language acquisition occurs by understanding messages. The students obtain comprehensible input when they understand what they hear or read in other language. Then, the goal of elementary language classes, according to this view, is to supply comprehensible input, the crucial ingredient in language acquisition, and to bring the student to the point where he or she can understand language outside the classroom. When this happens, the acquirer can use the real world for progress (Krashen and Terrel, 1988). Thornbury (2012) mentions that, in this approach, translation and grammar explanations were rejected and students were asked to speak only when they were ready. The Natural Approach shares some features from other approaches, such as Total Physical Response, and Communicative Language Teaching. The complexity and length of the input would depend on the level of the class, but it would always include some aspects from an advanced level as an introduction to the next level, thus preparing the students for what is to come (Descher, 2012).

Another teaching method includes Cooperative Language Learning. According to Teflpedia (2011), this method focuses on language learning in natural settings through group interaction. Considering that in a heterogeneous group, each person would have different skills and knowledge, when interacting as a group, all of the students on it will beneficiate from those skills and knowledge. This method also uses the premise that students working in a group would focus on achieving the proposed assignment, and in doing so, they acquire the language. Hirst & Slavik (1990) state that the students do not stress with learning the lessons. Instead, they enjoy working in groups developing the task. Also, students use multiple functions of the language, they criticize each other's work and learn

from this experience. They can also negotiate the meaning of phrases at different points during the group work, and employ all their senses to increase learning connections.

Perhaps one of the methods that is involved in language teaching is the Total Physical Response, which involves students in physical activities to acquire the language. The method was developed by James Asher in 1969 (Teflpedia, 2011). The class begins with the teacher giving the students basic physical commands in English to perform. The teacher continues giving English commands, but each time the commands become more complex. This continues until the ability level of most of the students is increased. The method then shifts: students take turns giving each other physical commands in English to perform. If capable, they make their commands increasingly difficult. This method is designed to be fun and help reduce the stress involved in learning another language. It also gives the students the opportunity to use English vocabulary and motor skills to help enhance the learning process (Hamilton, 2012). The basis for the development of this method come from several branches of psychology, among which, behaviorism is perhaps the strongest one (Teflpedia, 2011).   Behaviorism supports that in imitation, the person can acquire a habit, by reinforcing this action. This principle can be extrapolated to learning acquisition, where the students imitate what the teacher does or has taught before. If recalled later, that action will be easily understood and performed by the student.  According to Asher (1969) the method is better used in combination with other approaches.

Another method that is important to mention is the Grammar-Translation Method. In this respect Word Press (2012) states that the Grammar Translation Method is a cross lingual technique. It is used in language learning. Grammar is given more importance in this method. Learners understand the grammar rules better. The exercises in this method put the learner into an active problem-solving situation. In the schools, the teachers often follow the traditional method of translation technique. It is an easy way to explain things. Reading and writing are the major focus. Vocabulary selection is based solely on the text used. The words are introduced through bilingual word lists dictionary and memorization. The grammar rules are presented. A list of vocabulary items is presented with their translation meanings. Translation exercises are prescribed. Grammar is taught inductively. Mother tongue is the medium of instruction.

There are many methods and techniques, but just some of them should be taken into account when teaching the target language.

**Learning Management**

In a classroom there are some aspects that need to be addressed in order for the teacher to succeed at teaching one class at a time, and during the school year. One of these aspects is related to giving instructions to the class.

Considering that students would have a limited knowledge of the target language, the teacher must improve his skills to make himself clear and get the instructions understood. The importance of this task is to get the students' attention, allow them to learn new vocabulary, and finally, get the job done. Taking this into account, identifying the English level of the class would be necessary before addressing it with instructions. Once it has been identified, the teacher must use simple or more complex phrases during instructions (Swift, 2012).

If the activity planned has two or more parts, the teacher should not explain everything at once. Also, the class must pay full attention to the teacher before initiating the instructions, otherwise, they will have to be repeated and the interest in the activity could be lost. The teacher can use a Total Physical Response method to make students understand when giving instructions, getting them to complete the tasks successfully.

Once instructions were given, the teacher has to set a specific time for the students to complete it. This timing would also help the teacher to organize his class and get everything done by the end of the day. Another important aspect of timing also relies on the fact that students would not get tired or lose interest in what has been taught (Danielson, 2012). Perhaps the most effective way to manage time during the class is to establish a good lesson plan, and carefully take the previously assigned time for each activity (British Council, 2006). The ESL teacher must keep in mind some "distractions" that may come along, such as questions from the students, explaining them who are far behind the class learning speed, etc. The lesson plan should be designed in a flexible manner in order it to be suddenly rearranged. The students' questions and doubts must always be met and, if possible, answered (Mckenzie, 2006).

Once the instructions and the time for each activity had been settled, the teacher must get and give feedback from and to the class. It is recommended to do it as soon as the activity or the class is completed (British Council, 2006). The teacher may also ask the class to give feedback on each other's work; however, some studies have shown that this is not well accepted by them, as they preferred to be corrected or receiving comments from the teacher himself (Hiroko, 1994). Feedback is important not only to evaluate the success of the learning process, but also to better understand the students' needs regarding the lesson plan, the instructions giving, and the methods and techniques used for the class. It

allows the teacher to let the students know how well are they doing, and prize them for their effort (British Council, 2006).

Considering the factors described above, it is important for the teacher to design a proper and specific lesson plans for each class.

**Lesson design**

The success of a lesson relies on its planning and design. The importance of timing and feedback during a class has been explained above, thus the design of the lesson is the key to an effective lesson plan. Planning for a class must include certain aspects, such as considering the learning needs of the class, making each task meaningful and inspiring students to compromise (Woodward, 2001). The teacher can start the design by identifying the aims of the particular class, developing the different procedures to achieve such goals, obtaining the right materials and resources, and establishing an evaluation system at the end of the lesson as feedback of the class (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005). There are several approaches regarding the lesson design, but most of them coincide on having an anticipatory phase, a developing activity frame and finally an evaluation time for content understanding to overcome the difficulties that students could have experienced. All these aspects must be met by the teacher for the next day lesson.

Lesson planning is a very important daily work in order to reach success in teaching, since this depends on the teachers to get the full attention of students and make learning effective. About this matter, the West Virginia Department of Education (2014) states that teachers create lesson plans to serve as guides in helping students achieve intended learning outcomes. Whether a lesson plan is a particular format is not as relevant as whether or not plan actually describes what the teacher expects the student to know, understand and be able to do, how the student will be engaged in the learning, and what evidence the teacher will accept that the student has demonstrated mastery on the identified knowledge, skills and concepts noted. Plans that can be interpreted or implemented in many different ways are probably not well-designed lessons. A key component to developing a quality lesson plan is specificity. A well-written lesson plan contains a set of elements that are descriptive in process.

Successful teachers are good planners and thinkers. By thinking carefully about that which the lesson is to accomplish, we improve our lesson planning skills. Using lesson plans for each class helps teachers incorporate best practices in teaching and learning in every lesson; this, in turn, helps students meet learning objectives for the identified course. While there in no one "best way" to plan lessons, there are fundamental components found in quality lesson plans. A careful review of the most common styles indicates that most styles contain the following elements linked is known about the promotion of student learning:

- 3-5 lesson objectives with connection to the broader course objective

- Identification of the content to be covered within the lesson
- Multiple activities for a class period (group work, problem-solving, think-pair-share, lecture, etc.)
- Resources and materials needed with technology noted
- Recommended time allotment for each activity within the lesson
- Work to be completed outside of class
- Method of assessment

Once the lesson plan has been designed, the teacher must also consider some physical aspects of the classroom that can affect the students' learning process.

**Class size**

There are several opinions regarding the size of the class. Many studies have been conducted on this matter and there is no evidence on whether larger classes are worse than small classes. Al-Madany (2009) developed a literature review on several studies done on class size and its influence in learning and performing. Among several studies, some of them reported that capable teachers could handle a large or small class effectively, regardless of class size. By this assumption, less experienced or capable teachers would struggle in a large classroom (Al-Madany, 2009). Most of the studies reviews by Al-Madany (2009) stated that the success of a class relies on the ability of the teacher to handle the lesson plan and the materials, adding some entertaining and enthusiastic activities and attitudes. Other reviews showed the advantages and challenges of teaching both in a large or a small class, not defining which one is better (English Club, 2012).

Regarding class size, the National Council of Teachers of English (2006), stated that:
- Smaller classes result in increased teacher-student contact.
- Students in smaller classes show more desire to participate in classroom activities.
- In smaller classes, more learning activities take place.
- Smaller classes foster greater interaction among students, helping them understand one another and increasing their desire to assist one another.
- Smaller classes allow for potential disciplinary problems to be identified and resolved more quickly.
- Smaller classes result in higher teacher morale and reduced stress.
- Fewer retentions, fewer referrals to special education, and fewer dropouts are the ultimate rewards of class-size reduction.

There is not a definitive conclusion on this matter. Apart from class size, there are influences concerning the classroom space for large or small classes.

**Classroom Space**

Learning spaces should invite and support the activities the teacher plans in his classroom, and they should respect inhabitants (Woolfolk, 2007). Spaces can be created to invite quiet reading, group collaboration, or independent research. If students use materials, they should be able to reach them easily. To "spread the action around", Woolfolk (2007) suggests that teachers move around the room when possible, establishing eye contact with and direct questions to students seated far away, and vary the seating so the same students are not always consigned to the back. These approaches reflect the need for a proper classroom size, allowing the teacher, and the students, to move around the classroom without bumping with desks, book shelves, etc., thus determining a pleasant space to work and learn, hence, the classroom space would depend on the class size.

Once the classroom space has been established, the teacher must consider a proper seating arrangement.

**Seating arrangement**

The desks distribution would depend on the method/approach used by the teacher. Some models have been established according to this premise. For example, Telfpedia (2011) mentions that rows are related to a teacher-centered classroom and individual learning, whereas the cabaret style, allows better group activities. The circle formation is a comfortable arrangement for the teacher to monitor students as they work as one group and debate may arise. The theater organization is useful when a lecture is planned or to display information in slides (Teflpedia, 2011). The horseshoe layout is as useful as the circle arrangement, but for a larger number of students. The teacher, according to the class size and classroom space, would choose the best arrangement and distribution of the desks, also influenced by the method/approach to be used and the activities that have been planned (Teflpedia, 2011).

Pellowe (2007) reviewed the opinions and experience from several ESL teachers regarding seating arrangement. Most of the teachers agreed that keeping students close to the front of the class allows the teacher to look at his students' faces for feedback, as well as having every student to listen his instructions properly. This author considers that a "large physical distance is also a psychological distance", interfering with the teacher-student relationship.

**Classroom and/or teaching resources**

For the class to take place, the teacher has an infinite number of resources. There are some basic elements, common to each class, that are useful resources. For instance, the board is one of the most important pieces of classroom (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005). Some teachers use different areas of the board for different subjects – e.g. pronunciation, homework, etc. Another teaching resource are cards (often called flashcards) which can be used with either pictures or words for cue response work or as aids in pair work and group work (Fisher, 2005). According to Harmer (1988), an

additional teaching instrument is the flip chart. A flip chart is a pad of outsize paper on a frame like an artist's easel, and is a good tool for brainstorming ideas.

Perhaps the most useful piece of equipment a student can ever own or use is a good dictionary. Modern dictionaries are clearly designed, have a wealth of information, and help students to understand what words mean, how they are used, how common they are, and what phrases they occur in. Besides all the classic instruments used in the classroom, the use of technology, in terms of computers, tablets, TV and audio equipment, allow the teacher to interact with the class and successfully teach a lesson (Harmer,1988). Once the teacher has initiated an activity, it is important to monitor the students work.

**Classroom observation**

When students are engaged in an activity, especially if the teacher remains aside, he will need to monitor the students' work, what they are saying or glance at what they are doing. The teacher can evaluate if they understood the instructions, assess how well they are performing the task and, evaluate particular language strengths and weaknesses. Whether the teacher would help or correct the students will depend on the task and the effect of these actions on the students (Gower, Phillips & Walters, S, 2005). Monitoring what students are doing is just as important as teaching. Often, just being in the room and giving the students the feeling that they are being supervised is enough motivation for them to keep the good work, but, there are other areas and approaches that also motivate students.

In order to be able to meet individual needs within a class, teachers have to find ways to reduce the teaching aspects that limit their freedom to respond to needs as they arise. This means finding ways of managing the classroom (learners, resources, tasks, relationships, responsibilities, etc.) to create opportunities for working closely with individuals or small groups of learners.

In essence, this means finding ways to counteract dependency. In freeing learners from teacher-talk-dependency, the teacher gains freedom to interact with individuals and groups on a more personal and therefore more targeted basis (Languages Without Limits, 2012).

The teacher's labor is to find the most appropriate way of keeping the students attention in order to accomplish the main objective: Make the students learn English.

**Learning Styles**

A learning style or learning preference refers to how a student learns best. It involves the teacher preferred method of taking in, organizing, and making sense of the information they have about their students. Learning styles do not relate to a person's abilities or intelligence, but they can help the teacher to understand why some tasks seem easier for some students than for others (University of Western Ontario, 2011).

According to Woolfolk (2007), the way a person approaches learning and studying describes his or her learning style. Although many different learning styles have been described, one theme that unites most of the styles is the differences between deep and surface approaches to processing information in learning situations. Individuals who have a deep-processing approach see the learning activities as a means for understanding some underlying concepts or meanings. They tend to learn for the sake of learning and are less concerned about how their performance is evaluated, so motivation plays a role as well. These students tend to be motivated by rewards, grades, external standards, and the desire to be evaluated positively by others. Of course, the situation can encourage deep or surface processing, but there is evidence that individuals have tendencies to approach a learning situation in specific ways.

Learning styles have been studied for decades and there are several models that have been proposed by various researchers. While the finer distinctions are still debated, most authorities in the field generally agree upon four basic learning styles: auditory learners, visual learners, kinesthetic learners, and tactile learners (Vernon, 2006). The concept of learning styles focuses on the learner, demanding in the teacher a better approach on maximizing class achievement, including the aptitudes and intelligence of the students, to learn English.

Harmer (1988) states that we need to find out whether there are any generalizations which will help us to encourage habits in students. We might say, for example, that homework is good for everyone as much as reading is for pleasure. Certain activities are good for all the students in the class, though the way we organize them (and the precise things we ask students to do) may vary for exactly the same reasons we have been discussing.

**Student's aptitude to learn English**

Haskvitz (2007) claims that students learn in different ways and there are certain ways of teaching that help them to learn better. Most teaching programs only focus on two of the eight intelligences. These two intelligences are linguistic and logical/mathematical. Most of the material developed for the English classes is related to these two intelligences, limiting a teacher when facing a student with a different intelligence. The need to implement all eight teaching/learning styles is greatly needed because it would allow the students to succeed in the process of learning more effectively. Smith (2008) proposed the theory of multiple intelligences, identifying eight different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults. The eight intelligences are: Verbal-Linguistic (word smart), Logical-Mathematical (number smart), Visual-Spatial (picture smart), Bodily-Kinesthetic (body smart), Musical (music smart), Interpersonal (people smart), Intrapersonal (self-smart), and Naturalist (nature smart). These eight different "smarts" show and tell how individual children learn, giving the teacher an important tool when planning a lesson.

As it has been mentioned during the development of this literature review, there are many factors that can influence the teaching-learning process. In the next section there is a description of some studies performed in this field, regarding the theme of the thesis.

**Previous studies**

It has been mentioned that there are many factors that influence the teaching-learning process but it is important to take into account the findings of experts about the theory mentioned above. In this respect, Dekeyser, Alfi-Shabtay & Ravid (2008) tried to differentiate the learning process between adolescents and adults involved in a second language acquisition class in order to understand the exact shape of the age-attainment function and its interpretation, concluding that they do not learn different, they also accomplish proficiency in different nature (manner). This study presents two parallel studies with native speakers of Russian: one on the acquisition of English as a second language in North America, and one on the acquisition of Hebrew as a second language in Israel. Despite the very different nature of the languages being learned, the two studies show very similar results. Both groups show a significant correlation between ultimate attainment and verbal aptitude for the adult learners, but not for the early learners. This is interpreted as further evidence that the learning processes in childhood and adulthood not only yield different levels of proficiency but are also different in nature.

Rahimi, Riazi & Saif (2004) in an observational study to post-secondary level Persian EFL learners about the use of language learning strategies have determined that second-language acquisition is affected by the motivation of a student towards different learning strategies and the influences between these strategies. They concluded that most students choose metacognitive strategies based on their needs for second language acquisition, as well as their initial and final motivation (job, travelling, studying abroad, etc.). Data were gathered from 196 low-, mid- and high proficiency learners and two questionnaires of attitude, motivation and learning style.

Another important aspect that has been studied is the implementation of additional teaching techniques in order to catch students' attention. To support this notion, Chen & Chen (2009) carried out a study where teachers included in their teaching plan four English popular songs during the whole semester. The rationale of incorporating these English popular songs into the school curriculum was that they not only motivate students to learn but also provide a context to help them review sight vocabulary. To understand the improvement of students' abilities through English song learning, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself for a further study. One hundred and sixty six six-grade students from 5 different classes in an elementary school in Taiwan where observed. The authors concluded that overall class motivation had significantly increased after creative teaching. Students were motivated to become more active learners. According to students' responses, it could be elicited that most of the students were fond of learning English popular songs and they were interested

to learn more after this activity. As for what aspects did students find motivating, listening, speaking and reading abilities were the ones that students wanted improving. It was also important to note that students felt that their English abilities had improved after learning these English popular songs.

Continuing with these ideas of introducing new teaching strategies in order to make the class more attractive to students, Williams & Lutes (2007) carried out a study in the Takamatsu University with second year students. The subjects were members of four ESL classes, which were part of the breadth component of their required courses. All classes were comprised of 30 students. The idea was to use videos in the ESL classroom to increase students' attention. The members of the classes were randomly chosen by the registration office when assigning students to the class. Both groups covered the same materials, but the test group had a video component added to the teaching materials. The course consisted of fifteen 90-minute classes. The test group used a video component in eight classes.

The video materials used were the Grapevine Video 1, which consisted on eight comedic sketches covering basic grammar patterns and functions. Both groups had the same instructor and followed the same curriculum, with the exception of the supplemental video component, and the same evaluation through tests and assignments. Student´s interest in the video lessons was significantly higher when compared to the standard lessons (course book only). Eighty percent of the students found the classes more interesting when using videos. All teachers agreed that the attention in class increased when using the video. The researchers concluded that Videos can be a powerful tool as an engaging delivery system, especially when used as part of an active learning approach. Video can be an extremely intrinsic motivator.

In another study, Al-Jarf ( 2005) reveals the effects of online grammar instruction on low proficiency EFL College Students' Achievement. A total of 238 female freshman students were enrolled in their first grammar course. All the students were majoring in translation at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT) at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They were concurrently taking listening (3 hours per week), speaking (3 hours), reading (4 hours), writing (4 hours) and vocabulary building (3 hours) courses in English as a Foreign Language. The subjects were all Saudi nationals and were all native speakers of Arabic. Their median age was 18 years, and the range was 17-19. They all had 6 years of EFL instruction in grades 6-12 prior to their admission to COLT. They were all studying English in a segregated environment where all of the students and instructors were females. Analysis of student´s comments and responses to the post-treatment questionnaires revealed positive attitudes towards online learning and the grammar course under study. All the students found the online grammar course useful and fun, and considered it a new way of leaning English grammar and doing homework. It heightened their motivation and raised their self-

esteem. It created a warm-climate between the students and instructor and among the students themselves.

It was shown before, there are many ways to improve the teaching-learning process, taking into consideration that this way is not an absolute because the resources are unlimited and educators´ commitment is to find out the best way to reach students interest; therefore, it is important to make them understand that acquiring a new language allows them to embrace the entire world, that the opportunities of getting a better job or having a lot of experiences in other countries increase with the knowledge of another language, especially English.

## DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

### Factors Concerning Teachers

1. What level of education do teachers have?

Graph N° 1
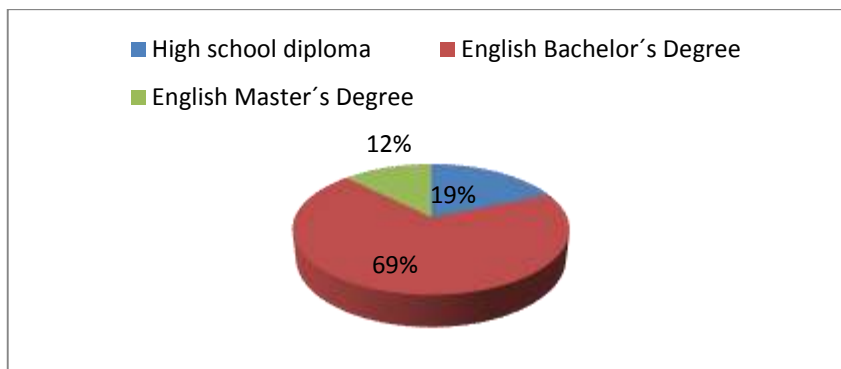


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Among all the teachers interviewed, 69% had an English bachelor's degree, 19% had a high school diploma, and 12% had an English master's degree. This chart identifies that most of the English teachers interviewed have a formal education, but there are still some teachers who need to obtain their degree and certification. It was observed that the class dynamic is not determined by the teacher's degree, it was determined by the experience of the teacher. It is important to mention that teachers who have more experience used more teaching techniques than the teachers that are beginners and managed the class appropriately.

2. Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?

Graph N° 2
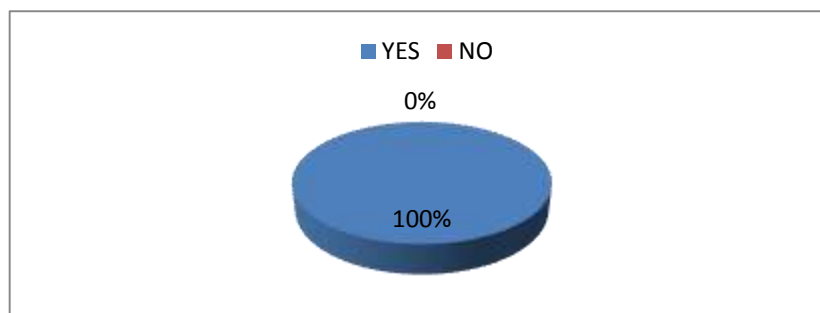


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

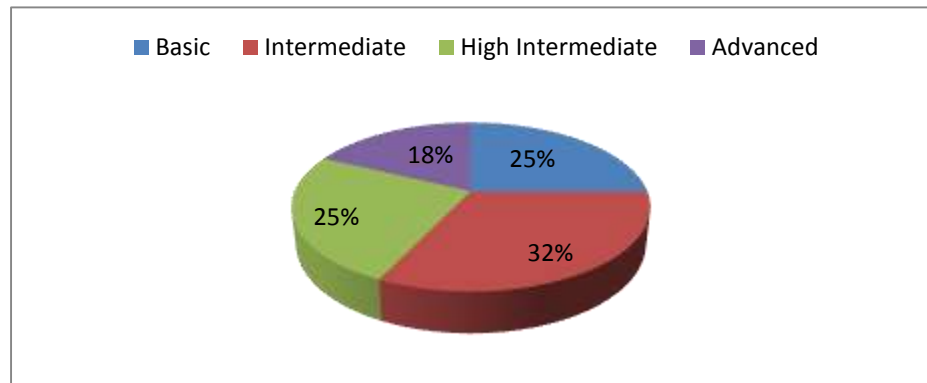Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Graph number 2 shows that 100% of the interviewed teachers consider students' needs in order to teach English successfully. According to these results, it was observed that teachers were concerned about the needs that students have, by identifying the strengths and weaknesses during the class, especially of those students that showed a lower level of knowledge, because in some high schools not all the students had the same English level.

About this matter, CIRTL Network (2013) claims that the more the teachers are familiarized with the students' background, preferences and particular needs, the more effective the teaching process is. Knowing these differences would help teachers to better plan their classes.

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

Graph N° 3
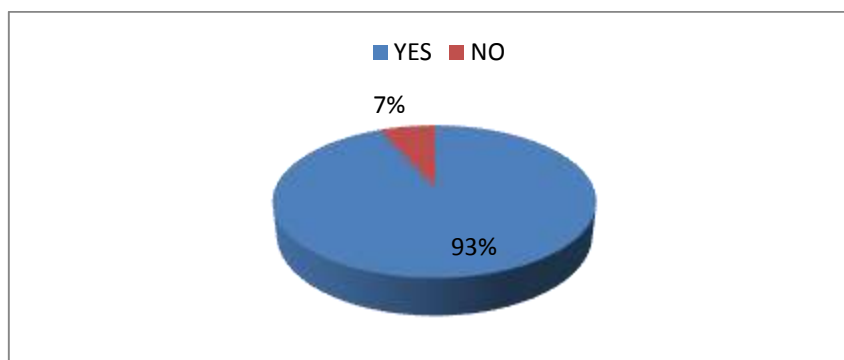


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Graph number 3 shows that 93% of the teachers consider the previous level of the students in order to plan their classes. Only 7% of them do not consider it. During the observation, it was notorious that many teachers had to work with multi-level classes, this requires that they determined the background that each student had in order to design an appropriate lesson plan to attain the students' best interests. It is also important to mention that some of the participant high schools assessed students to know the level of knowledge they had, and assigned them at the basic, medium or advanced level.

According to Almeida (2011) at the beginning level, students have very little language "behind" them. The teacher may, therefore, be tempted to go along with the popular misconception that the target language cannot be directly taught; the teacher will have to resort to a good deal of talking "about" the second language in the students' native language.

Additionally, the teacher could keep in mind the presentation of material in simple segments that do not overwhelm the students.

4. What level of English do students have?

Graph N° 4
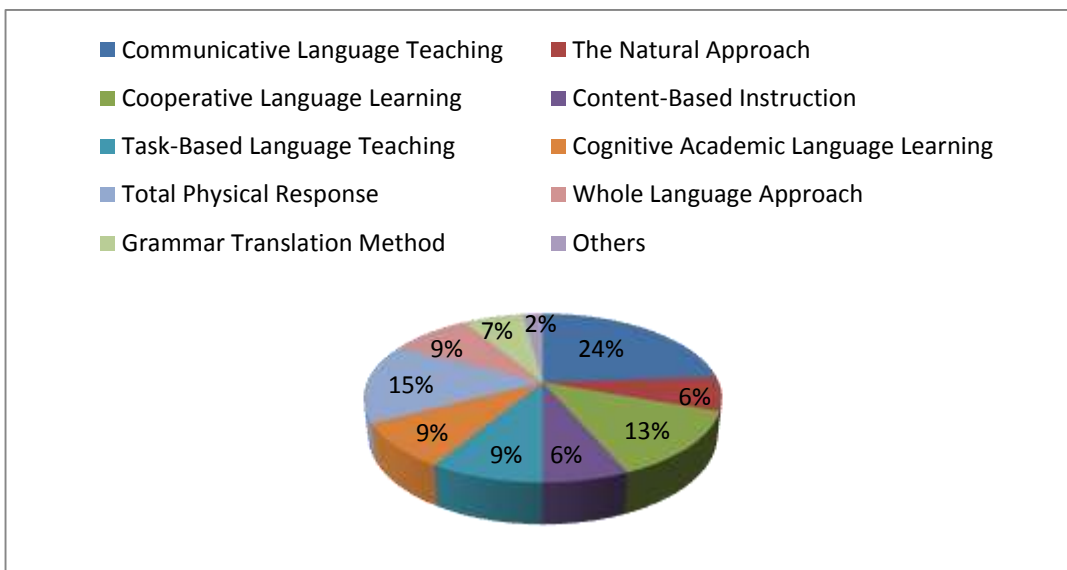


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Regarding the English level of the students, 32% of them had an intermediate level, 25% had a high intermediate level, 25% had a basic level, and only 18% had an advanced level of English. These results show that in private high schools, most of the students had a good English level. According to the observational records, these results could be influenced by their teachers' skills, their family and social background or their previous English classes in other schools. It is important to consider that some of the schools included in this study have been recently opened, and some of the students had just been transferred from other schools or cities.

On this matter, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) remark that it is important for teachers to embrace the differences of their students (level of English, interest in learning, desire to learn) to plan their classes, to be able to make progress during the class and to be aware of the tools and techniques they need to use to achieve these objectives.

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

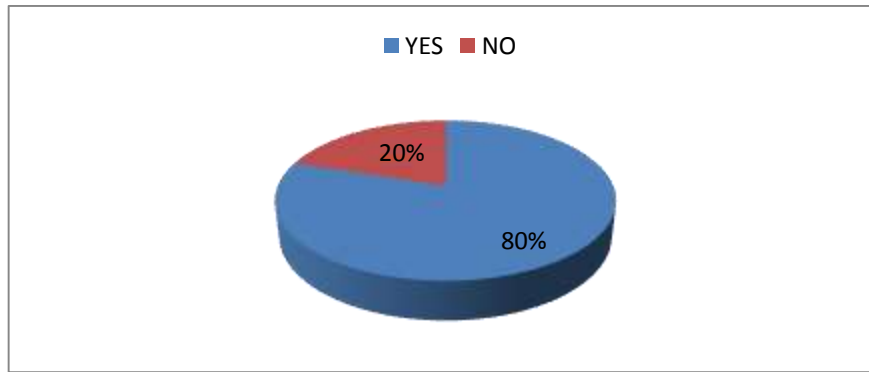Graph N°5

Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

The most frequent methods for teaching English in private high schools were: Communicative Language Teaching with 24%, 15% for Total Physical Response, 13% for Cooperative Language Learning, 9% for Cognitive Academic Language Learning, Task-Based Language Learning, and Whole Language Approach and 2% for other methods that were not included in the survey. These results show the different approaches used by teachers, and, according to the observation, most of them feel very comfortable with each method. Some of them even use two or three methods in a week period, depending on the lesson plan. According to the results, the Communicative Language Teaching Method is the most used by teachers.

Galloway (1993) states that the Communicative Language Teaching method allows a student to engage in real-life situations as subjects of a conversation. According to the observation, the teacher could also introduce the subject and students participate in discussing it. The teacher would choose the subject according to the age and interests of students in order to allow them to participate equally. The learning process comes from the students' desire to communicate in meaningful ways. However, it was observed that some methods were not appropriate for the class that was being taught, it was not even adequate for the students' level of English.

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

Graph N°6

Eighty percent of the teachers use whole-group activities during their classes. This not only reflects the teachers' preference, but also the size of the class. The observers deduced that the smaller the class, the more the teacher used whole-group activities. On this matter the web site gooverseas.com (2013) mentions that one of the major advantages of teaching small groups is that the teacher can easily vary the types of activities used. For example teachers may choose to lead an activity, then split the class into pairs or smaller groups. Teamwork can also be successful since many students like to be competitive.

The remaining 20% of students mentioned that their teachers did not use whole-group activities because they preferred other teaching techniques. Another reason for not using these kinds of activities is because they manage too many students which represent a challenge to monitor the students work. Most teachers agree that teaching a small group of students is easier, more enjoyable, and less time consuming than teaching a large group. It is also mentioned that teachers may find challenging to keep students on task as they monitor pair and group work (English Club, 2012).

7. Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph N°7
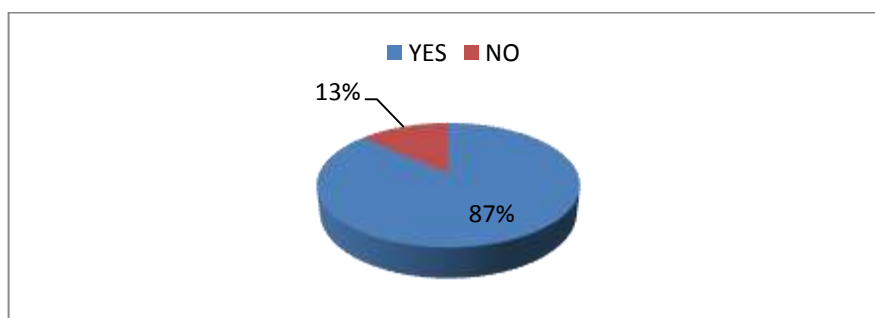
Eighty seven percent of the teachers used individual activities during their classes, while 13% did not. It was observed that when the group is small, it is easier to use individual activities during the class, and when the tasks are finished, teachers can review each student's work and point out the mistakes that were found. The English Club (2012) recognizes individual activities as useful in small classrooms, but they could be very time-consuming and time-demanding in larger classes.

8. Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

Graph N°8
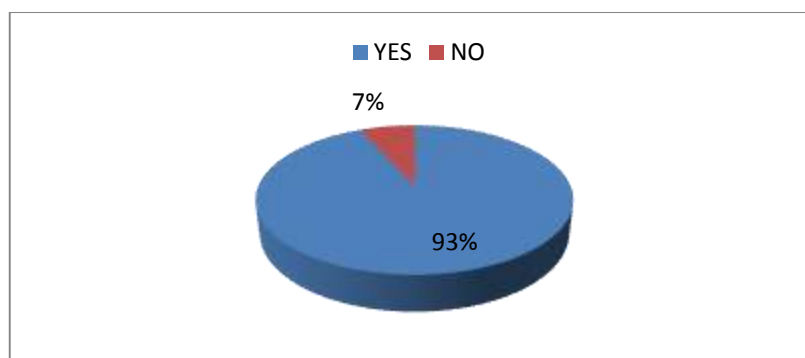


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Ninety three percent of the teachers used group work activities. It was observed that during the group activities, the students had the opportunity to bond and learn from each other, making this kind of activity useful to prompt students work collaboratively.

Seven percent of teachers did not use group work activities because in a classroom where there were students with different levels of English, group activities did not work appropriately since the groups where very heterogeneous regarding the level of the language. The use of group work activities could be a problem for the teacher, since it discriminates some of the students within the group, and, does not allow an equal evaluation of the work done.

Regarding this matter, group work in classrooms has become more and more common over the last years. Many teachers use it to help students learn from each other, build community, and teach cooperation (Bright Education, 2010). Like anything in education, group work is the best tool when it is planned and used thoughtfully. Simply seating students in groups of four or five does not mean they are engaged with each other. It could just mean

they are going to play and talk, rather than complete regular class work. For this reason, it is important to plan group work and the types of groups the teacher will be using.

Grouping students should allow, and even force students to work together. It should build their communication skills, and help them learn how to be respectful and hold each other accountable (Bright Education, 2010).

9. Do teachers use English most of the time in the class?

Graph N°9
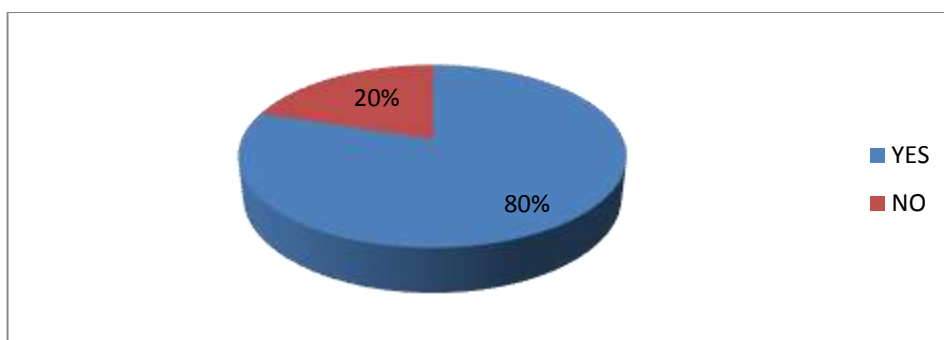


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

This chart demonstrates that 80% of the teachers spoke in English during their classes. It was inferred that teachers who spoke the target language during the entire class had better results (students' performance) at the end of the lesson.

Twenty percent spoke Spanish during the class. It was observed that this tendency was directly related to the academic background of the teacher (school degree), and also, in some high schools, with the students' level of English. Nevertheless, teachers who spoke Spanish during most of the lesson had good results too.

Ontesol (2012), quoting several authors, mentions that the use of the mother tongue in the class helps teachers to accomplish activities more efficiently and avoid frustrations to the students that do not understand teachers´ instructions. However, this tendency may increase the fear to communicate in the target language and significantly compromise the opportunities to engage in a dialogue within the classroom.

10. Do teachers plan their lessons?

Graph N°10

YES ■ NO

100%

All teachers (100%) plan their lessons before a class. This was seen not only as part of the rules set by the school's authorities, but also as part of the teachers' training skills. During the observed classes it was perceived that all the teachers followed a sequence of activities according to the content of the book, and only if the lesson theme required an additional explanation the teacher used alternative activities that were not part of the lesson plan. According to Kalyan (2012), it is important to plan lessons ahead because it increases efficiency regarding time frames, the use of media and other resources, as well as with the students' mood. This author also mentions that teachers, who plan ahead properly, achieve all their set objectives, improving the students' knowledge in shorter time.

Finally, Kalyan (2012) also refers to the benefits of planning when discussing the inspiration and motivation that creates in students, allowing them to express themselves better, bond with their classmates, and feel confident enough to share their fears and doubts at the end of the class.

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

Graph N° 11
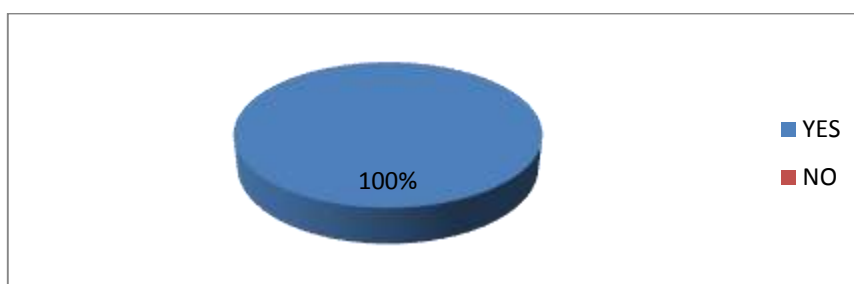


YES
■ NO

100%

Graph 11 shows that 100% of teachers consider discipline, timing, feedback and instruction during their lessons, reflecting their knowledge about lesson planning. This ensures a better management of the time assigned for each activity during the class. Students enjoy every part of the lesson, learn more and feel motivated to participate. This factor is important because according to Moskowitz (1976), once teachers lose control of their classroom, it becomes increasingly more difficult for them to regain that control. Also, Berliner (1988) shows that the time a teacher uses to the correct misbehavior caused by poor classroom management skills results in a lower rate of academic engagement in the classroom.

12. How many students do teachers have in the class?

Graph N°12
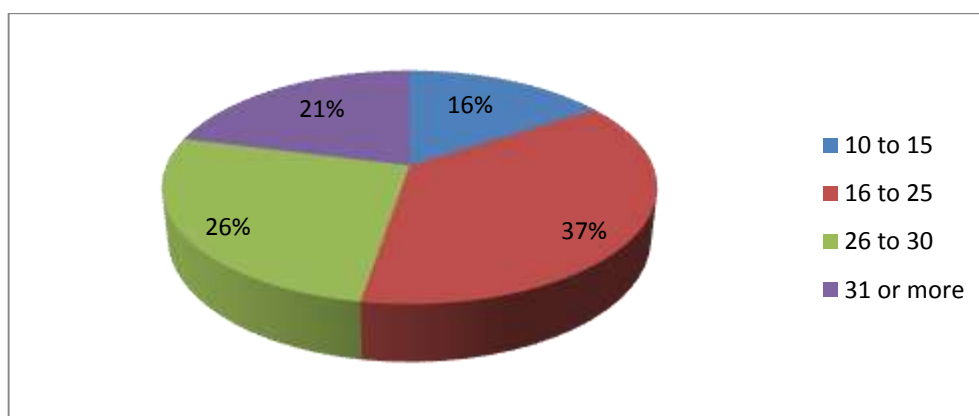


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

It was observed that 37% of the classes had up to 25 students per class, 26% had 30 students, 21% had more than 31 students, and 16% had only 15 students.

The National Council of Teachers of English (2006) recommends and defines the number of students per class, based on their experience across the United States of America (25 students per class). This statement relates to the efficacy of the different teaching techniques applied in small classes and how they assure an adequate learning process.

While in some high schools students were sorted by the levels of knowledge, others were divided by the course year. The first group had no more than 20 students per classroom and the observers noticed that the teacher could manage the class more efficiently. The teacher of this group could manage the discipline, but it was observed that some students did not pay enough attention and it was more difficult to monitor all students´ work.

13. Do teachers feel comfortable working with this number of students?
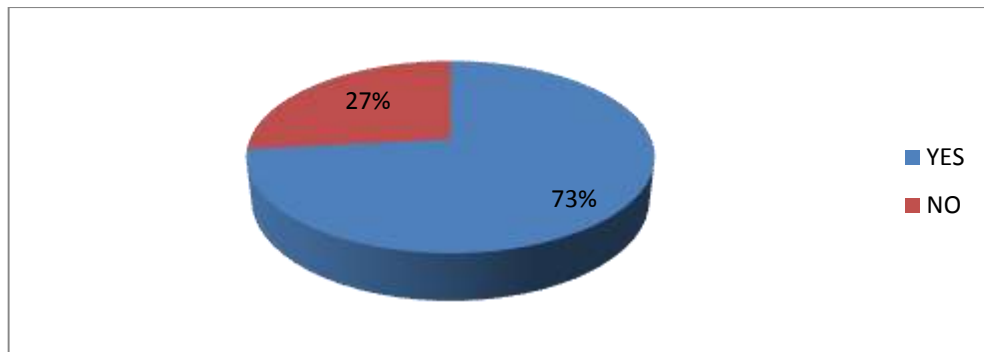
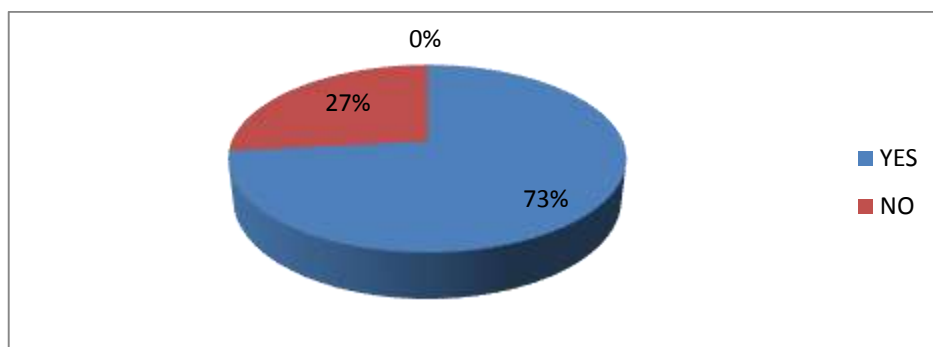Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Seventy three percent of the teachers surveyed felt comfortable when working with the assigned number of students per class. It was observed that these teachers had a Bachelor's English Degree, and had over 20 years of experience. Twenty seven percent of teachers were not comfortable with the number of students they had to manage in their class. This last result corresponds to those teachers with more than 20 students per classroom. It was observed that younger and less prepared teachers could not manage a classroom with more than 15 students properly.

These results match with Al-Madany´s (2009) findings which mention that less experienced or capable teachers would struggle in a large classroom.

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

Graph N°14



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

This graph shows that 73% of teachers had a classroom that was big enough for the number of students assigned. Most of teachers had their own classroom and they felt more

comfortable in their own space. It was also observed that students attend to class in a better mood and they can work more efficiently. All of the above was observed in classrooms with less than 25 students.

Twenty seven percent of teachers are not comfortable with the classroom space. Teachers who did not have enough space had trouble managing the classroom. Some of the groups did not finish their tasks, and the teacher could not reach every group in the class compromising feedback and personal supervision of every student's work. This was observed in classrooms with more than 25 students.

According to Teacher vision (2014), every teacher knows that a safe, clean, comfortable and attractive classroom can stimulate learning and help build a classroom community. But for many teachers, setting up the physical environment of their classrooms can be quite daunting, especially when faced with older buildings, crowded classrooms and insufficient storage space. It is possible to create a nice classroom environment by carefully considering teachers and students´ needs.

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

Graph N°15
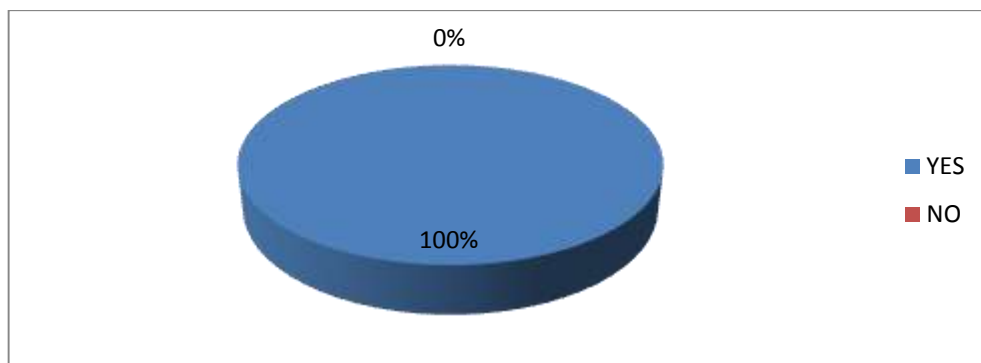
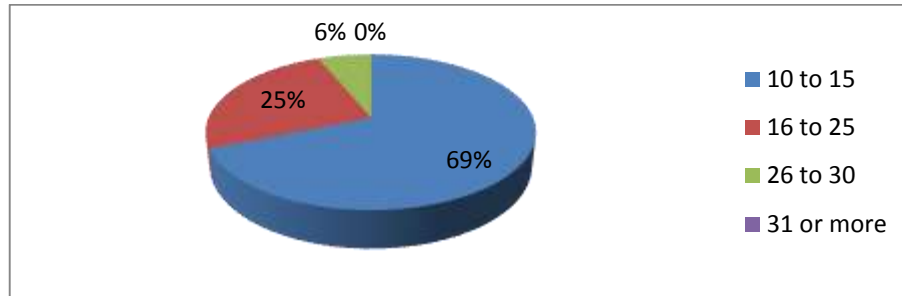

Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

One hundred percent of the teachers interviewed arrange the seats in their classrooms depending on the activities planned. As Huston, McMiller, Miller & Miller (2009) said, the seating arrangement in the classroom is very important and relates to its management. Teachers must guarantee that their classroom is arranged for the students to be productive. In the observed classes, in high schools were teachers have their own classroom, the seats were appropriately arranged, and the environment was adapted for the exclusive purpose of learning English. Those teachers who do not have the facilities mentioned above find it difficult to

arrange seats according to the planned activities. It was also observed that the seating arrangement depends on the number of students.

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

Graph N°16
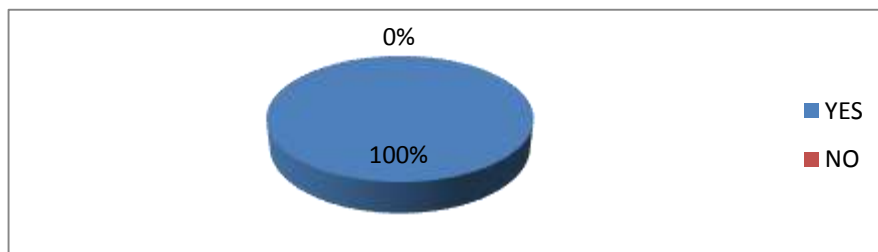


Authors: Borrero Carola, Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Sixty nine percent of the teachers interviewed think that up to 15 students per class is an appropriate number of students, 25% consider that 25 students is the right number, and only 6% think that a class could be properly managed with up to 30 students. It was observed that some teachers could handle bigger classrooms depending on their experience and academic level.

The National Council of Teachers of English (2006) has recommended 25 students per class as a maximum. It was observed that it is possible to manage more students per class than the recommended ones; however, the institution must provide an appropriate space and a good teaching method.

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

Graph N°17



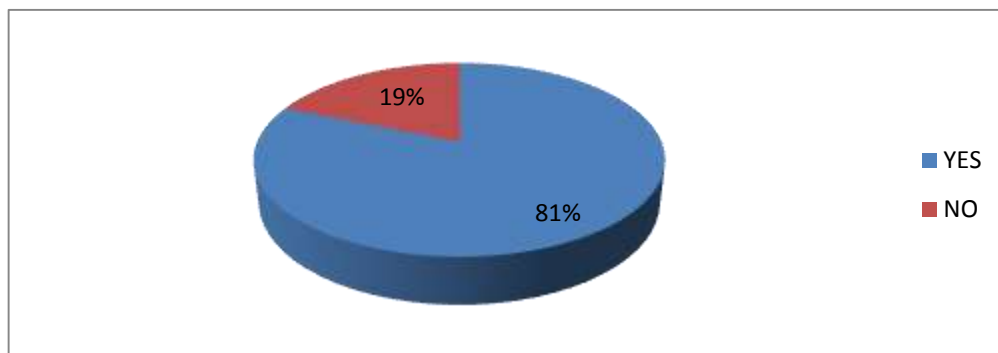Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

In this graph, 100% of private high school teachers use several teaching resources that lead students to a better language acquisition. The teachers' experience allows them to better use each resource. It was observed that some schools did not have some of the resources recommended by the experts, thus, students' learning is not appropriate.

Iteslj (2014) quoting some experts, emphasizes that materials control learning and teaching; it is also suggested that materials should help students to learn, and be the main resource for the designing of ideas and activities for instruction/learning, and that they should give teachers the foundations for what they do. The web site also mentioned that materials include textbooks, video and audio tapes, computer software, and visual aids. Those materials influence the content and the learning procedures. The choice of deductive vs inductive learning, the role of memorization, the use of creativity and problem solving, production vs. reception, and the order in which materials are presented are all influenced by the materials.

18. Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph N°18



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

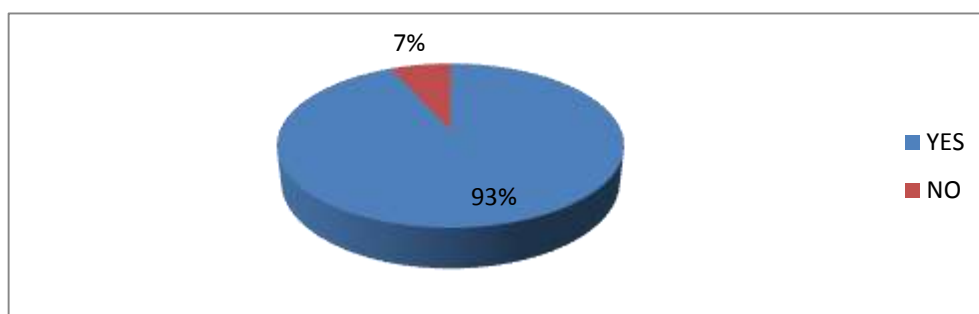Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Eighty one percent of the teachers thought that the material provided by the school's authorities is appropriate for teaching English. They had different tools to work and they were used to improve the learning process.

Nineteen percent did not agree. The observers perceived that the teachers who think that the material is not appropriate had more experience in the teaching field and were able to maximize the use of additional media and technological material, but the school did not provide these items. It was also observed that less experienced teachers, even though they had every resource available, limited their use of technology to tape recorders and video. The observers related this finding to their lack of experience and limited academic studies.

In this respect, Marwan (2008) states that many schools do not have enough resources for every classroom, limiting the use of such tools for teaching and helping students develop their skills in second language acquisition.

19. Does the institution review teachers´ lesson plans?

Graph N°19
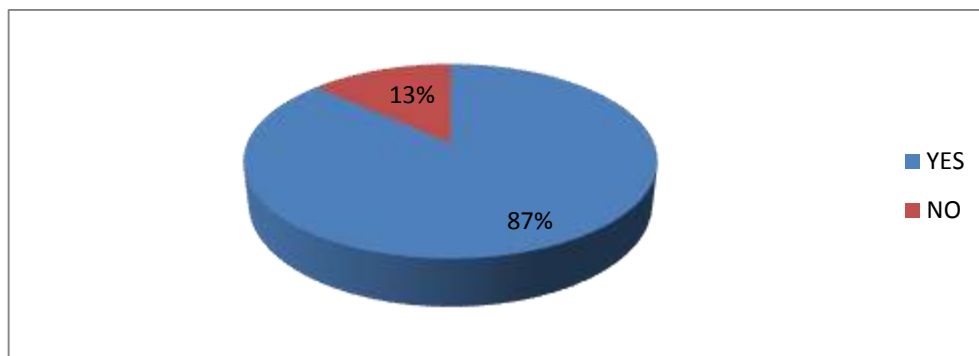


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Graph N°19 shows that 93% of high schools (Head of departments, Academic Principal, etc.) reviewed the teachers' lesson plans at the beginning of the school year and sometimes monthly or weekly. In the remaining 7%, the institution did not review their lesson plans. It was observed that newly opened schools did not have an academic principal or academic committee to review the teacher´s syllabus, thus compromising the quality of education provided by their faculty. It is important that the authorities of every educational institution review the lesson plan teachers design as often as possible in order to verify if the content is being followed as planned and corroborate if the goal is reached.

In order to succeed in the teaching-learning process, the institution must monitor teachers work, In this respect, Edutopia (2013) proposes some tools that help teachers accomplish the main goal that is to make the students to learn, so it is mentioned that teachers should performance assessments that integrate evidence of teaching practices and student learning measured in a variety of ways such as student work, lesson plans, assignments etc.; superintendents, principals, and others in positions of authority in school systems are instrumental in providing the vision, time, and resources to support continual professional learning, a positive school climate, and success for all students.

20. Does the institution monitor teachers work?

Graph N°20

Authors: Borrero Carola, Borrero Melina.

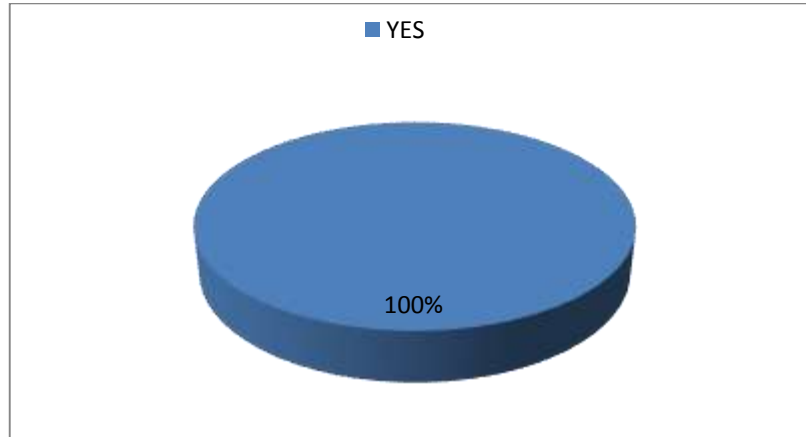Sources: Surveys and interviews applied to English teachers.

Eighty seven percent of the schools monitored the teachers' work. Only 13% did not do it. These findings relate to those observed by the investigators in the question above. The educational institution has the obligation of monitoring teachers in order to determine if they are accomplishing the school goals. This also helps teachers to improve their teaching techniques in order to obtain better results in their work.

Vetserbia (2008) argues that the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teachers' delivery is necessary to ensure that the interests of the students come first and are of paramount importance. The intention is to place students, their needs, experiences and achievements at the heart of monitoring and improvement. Furthermore all provision for students should be responsive to the needs of employers and the local community.

**Factors Concerning Students**

1. Do students like to learn English?

Graph N°21
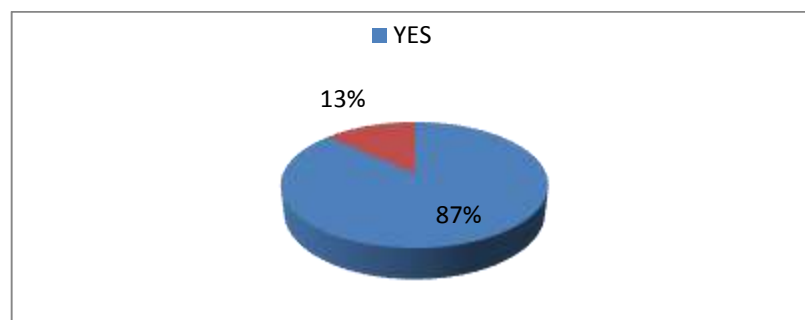


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Graph 21 indicates that all the interviewed students enjoyed learning English. This result shows the motivation and interest that students have to learn English as a foreign language. Despite the results it was observed that not all the students showed interest in the class probably because they were not placed in the appropriate level or because actually they did not have interest in learning English. It was also observed that the majority of the students showed a lot of interest in the class, especially when the topic of the lesson is common to their interests.

In this respect, Graham (2008) remarks that many students enjoy learning English because it allows them to enter into different communities (Internet, mail, school groups, etc.) and activities outside school.

2. Are students motivated by the activities (games, group and single work) planned for each English class?

Graph N°22



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.
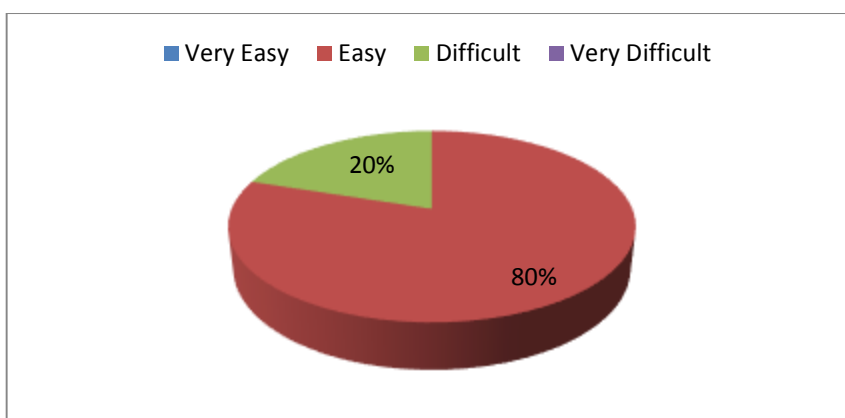
Sources: Survey applied to students.

Graph 22 shows that 87% of the students were motivated by the activities planned for each class, proving that those activities were appropriate to the topic of the lesson and the level of knowledge of the students. These results were observed in classes where students had a higher understanding of English.

On the other hand, the remaining percentage said they were not motivated with the planned activities. The observers witnessed that this group of learners, belonged to classrooms that had students with different levels of knowledge of the target language working together, thus making it difficult for the language acquisition process to happen normally and effectively.

Motivation plays a significant role in the process of learning a language. Language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on language acquisition. The core of motivation is what might be called passion, which relates to a person's intrinsic goals and desires. Successful learners know their preferences, their strengths and weaknesses, and effectively utilize strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Successful language learning is linked to the learner's passion. And instructors should find ways to connect to this passion (Tesol, 2008).

3. What do students think about their class activities are?

Graph N°23



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Graph N°23 shows that 80% of the students said their activities during the class were easy, while 20% said they were difficult. It was observed that some of the students in the group belonged to a classroom that had more than 30 students, with an unexperienced teacher. In this matter it is not easy to establish what is difficult for one student or what is easy for another, considering that there are factors such as the level of knowledge, motivation, and the topic of the lesson.

According to the information above, Bada and Okan (2000) state that many ESL teachers experience student resistance when they introduce an instructional activity in the classroom without considering their preferences and needs. It means that students feel more open to acquire new knowledge when the teacher considers their needs and make them feel comfortable.

4. Do students like the methodology that their teachers use when teaching English?

Graph N°24
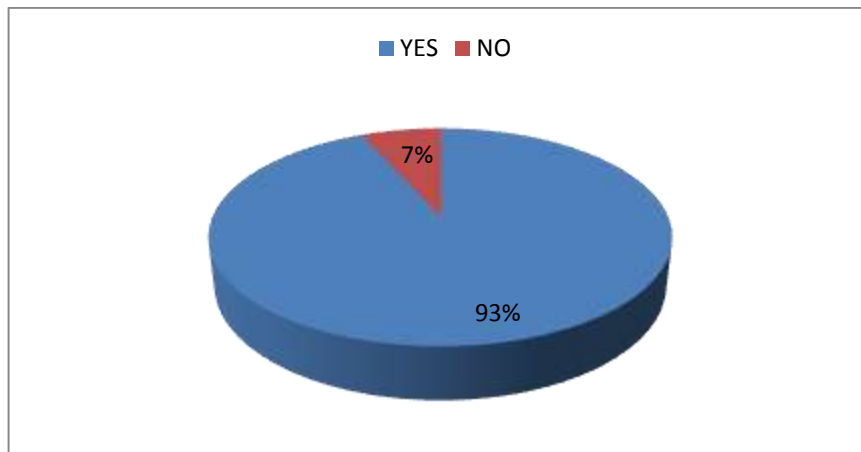


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.
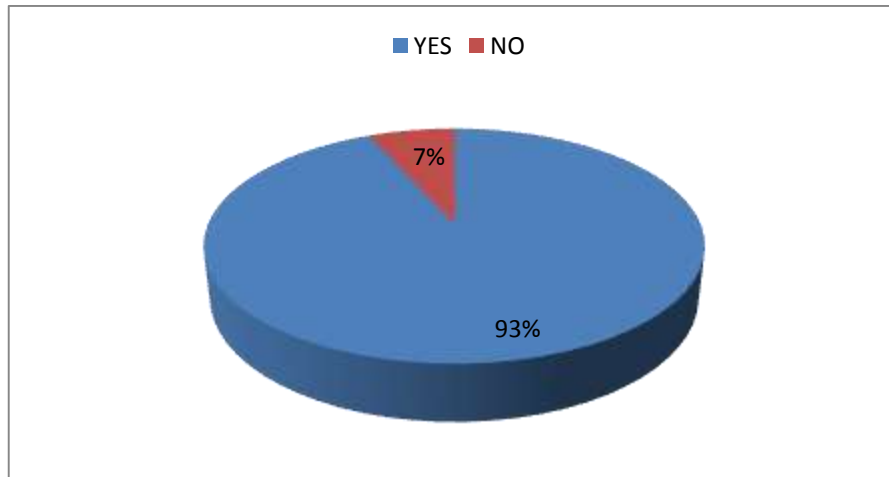
Sources: Survey applied to students.

Ninety three percent of the students liked the methodology used by their teachers in the class. This was observed in classes where the students felt comfortable in the level of English they were placed. It was observed that the remaining 7% of the interviewed students had an advanced English level, and their teacher was not prepared to teach such a complex group, thus turning the class in a "waste of time".

It should be taking into account that the level of English that each student has, will depend on his/her perception about the methodology used, since this level affects the degree of satisfaction of students.

In this respect, Middlecamp (2011) claims that, if the student does not feel comfortable with the teacher's approach, it could compromise not only his/her learning process, but it would influence in the whole class.

5. Does the teacher use different techniques during the class, allowing students to interact with their classmates?

Graph N°25

Graph 25 shows that 93% of the students said yes to the question. These results are probably not accurate, because in this kind of research the interviewed people not always told the truth, however it was observed that some students actually enjoyed the class.

The other 7% of the students considered that the teachers should allow them to interact more with their classmates. Among these students were the ones with a basic level of English mixed in a class with advanced-level students. In these classrooms, it was observed that the teacher could not achieve interaction among students because they did not have the same level or the topic of the class was not interesting enough.

It is unfortunately true because according to Teaching English (2006), some learners are not enthusiastic about pair and group work, particularly in mono-lingual classes in which it is a little unnatural to communicate to someone in a language you are both less proficient in.

6.  Does the teacher use English most of the time?

Graph N°26
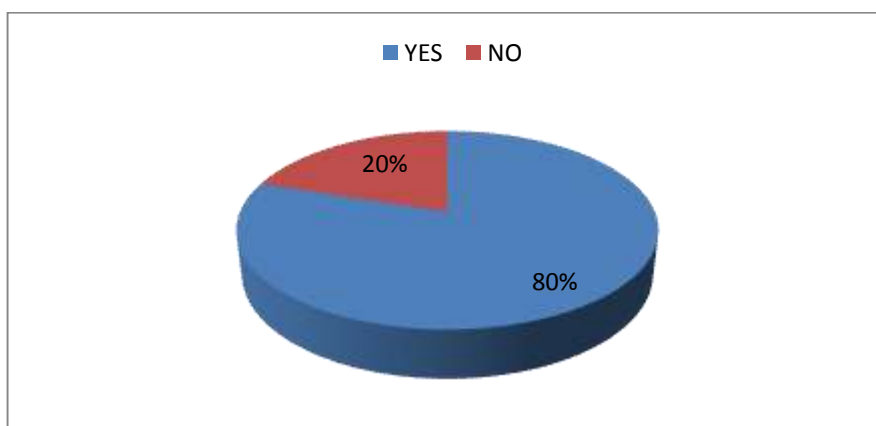
The graphic above shows that 80% of the teachers used English during the entire class period while 20% did not use it because the teachers in these classrooms had students with a basic level of English, forcing them to use Spanish most of the time.

The use of the mother tongue in EFL classes is debatable in the foreign language classroom. My English Pages (2009) mentions that some people suggest that the target language should be the only medium of communication, believing that the prohibition of the native language would maximize the effectiveness of learning the target language. The page also states that some teachers believe that the use of the mother tongue can be helpful in learning new vocabulary items and explaining complex ideas and grammar rules. They contend that teachers who master the students' native language have far more advantages over the ones who do not.

7. Does the teacher control the class behavior?

Graph N°27
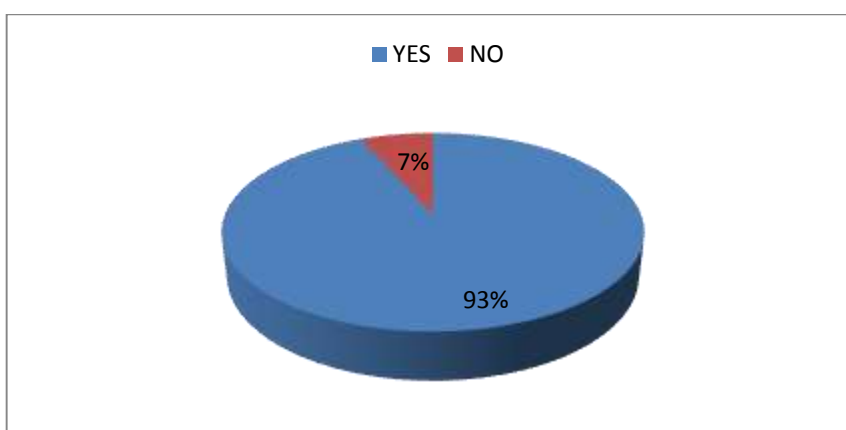


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Ninety three percent of the students said their teachers could handle the class in a proper manner. This was observed in small classes, where the teacher had enough space.

The rest of the students (7%) said their teachers did manage the class appropriately. This last group belonged to the schools with a class with more than 30 students, and those schools with classrooms in which students had a different level of English.

According to E-how (2010), classroom behavior has two connotations, positive or negative. The first is defined by the ability of the students to follow direction, to complete the assignments in and out of the classroom, as well as paying attention during class. The classrooms with a negative behavior do the opposite. The last one affects the language acquisition process dramatically, and most of the time the class must be reorganized; the students must be reassigned to different teachers or

schedules, or even change the entire syllabus. This kind of problem also relates to the teacher's experience and academic background.

8. Does the teacher give students enough time to develop the class activities?

Graph N°28



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

The entire group of students said their teachers gave them enough time to complete their activities. This result reflected a proper setting and class planning. It was observed that most of the teachers followed what is known about lesson timing and length. It would depend on the class' level of English, size and type of activities. Planning the class ahead could help the teacher to optimize the time during the class and allowing the students to complete their assignments on time.

To this matter, Bartel (2013) said that students need time to understand first and then perform. However, this author also proved that teachers must plan ahead so time could be used wisely and properly.

It is also mentioned by Busy Teacher (2008) that time is important in order to gain the proficiency the students need to work and to progress as fast as possible. To accomplish this objective, teachers must analyze time and goals and set a frame of time for each activity.

9. After students do their class work, does the teacher tell them the right and wrong things they did?

Graph N°29
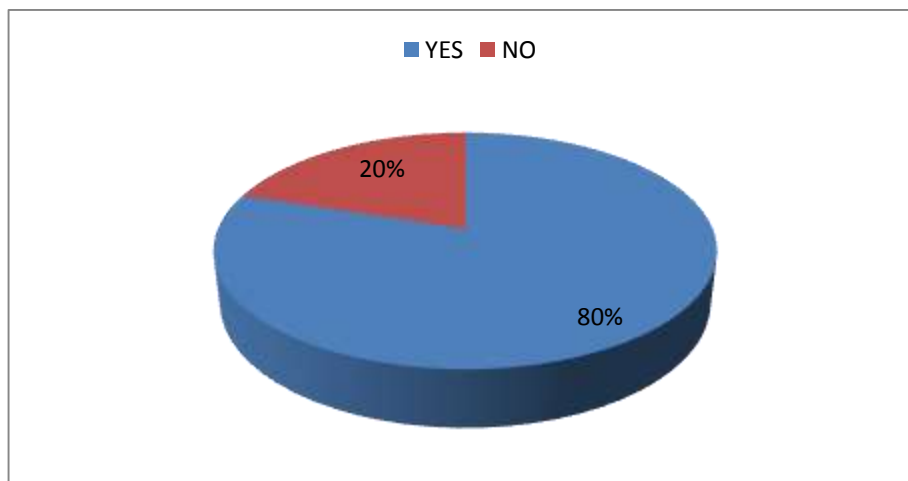
Graph N°29 shows that 80% of the students said their teachers pointed out what was right and wrong about their work during class, while 20% said their teachers did not. It was observed that feedback depended on the type of activity. If, for example, the activity was a test, it would take too much time to grade the papers during the class period and give the results to the students.

The ESL official web site (2008) mentions that it is a very important issue to know when and how to correct the students regarding their work. The type of error would determine the time at which it should be corrected. For example, grammatical and vocabulary mistakes should be corrected as they are made, because the student can instantly learn from that error, as well as the rest of the class. Perhaps, those errors related to composition could be corrected later, or the teacher could develop more activities focusing on that particular matter to show the students the right way to do it.

10. Are the teacher's instructions for class activities or homework clear?

Graph N°30
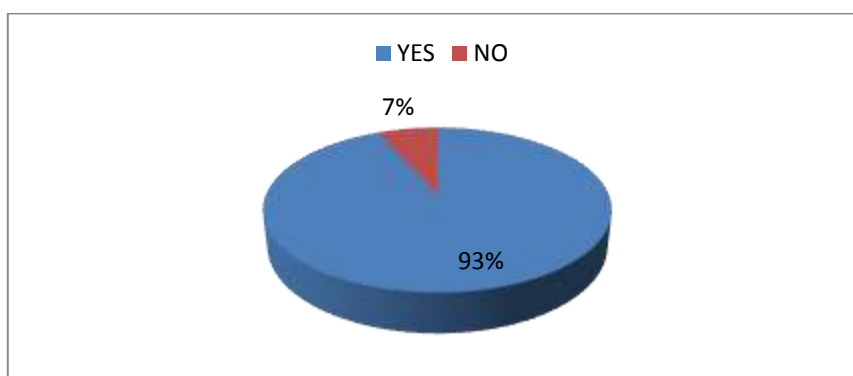
Ninety three percent of the students said that the teachers' instructions for homework and class work were clear, while 7% said they were not. As it was mentioned before, this relates to the level of English of the students in a particular classroom, the experience of the teacher, if the teacher speaks in English during the entire class, and the class size.

Aguilar (2010) stated that teachers must check for understanding, but they should include this assessment in their lesson plan. Performing this activity enables teachers to check for understanding at a right time, not only to use the class time properly, but also, not to interrupt with the students' natural process of learning, and to allow them to be able to understand the instructions by themselves.

11. Do students think that the classroom size lets them work properly?
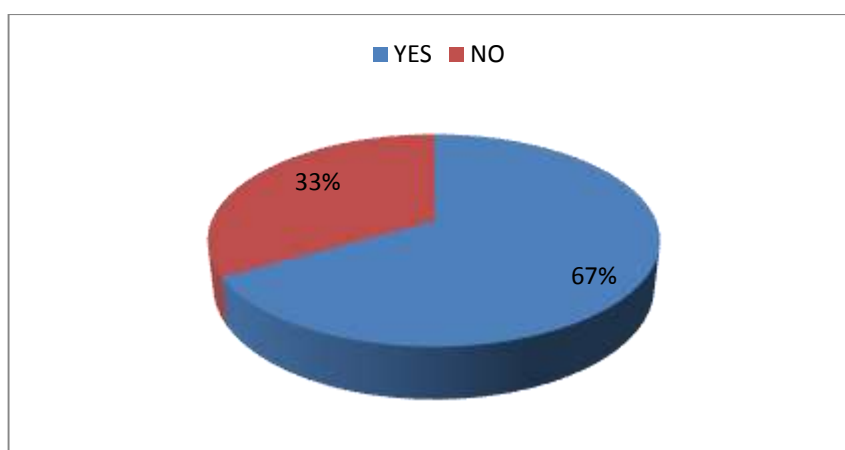
Graph N°31



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Graph N°31 shows that 67% of the students were comfortable with the size of the class regarding group activities, while 33% were not comfortable with it. These last results were observed in schools with more than 30 students per class, especially those classes with an unexperienced teacher. It is far known that class size has an important impact in the learning process, as well as in the teachers' and students' motivation to work and learn.

MNSU (2008) showed that smaller classes acquire more skills than students in larger classes. However, some authors think that it depends mostly on the experience of the teacher to handle a large class, as well as the students' motivation.

12. Do students think that the class size influence in the English learning process?

Graph N°32
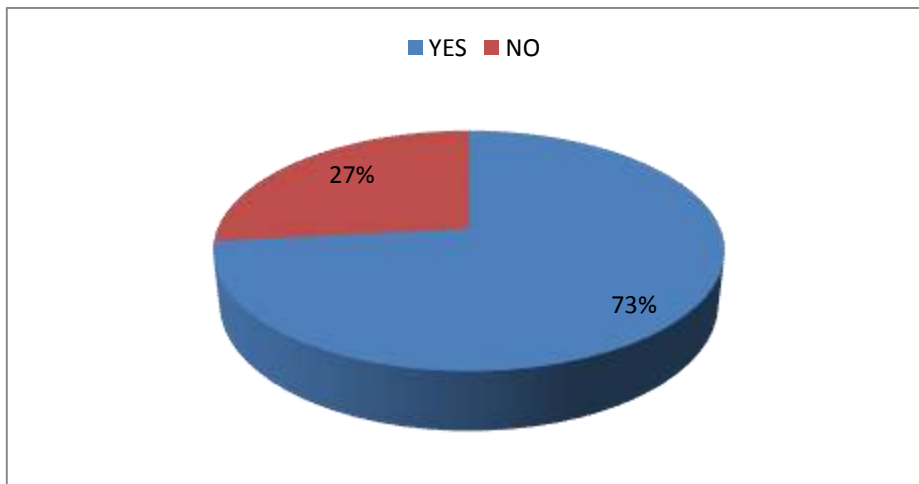
Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Seventy three percent of the students think that the number of students in a classroom influences the learning process; in contrast, the 27% said that the size of the class did not interfere with the learning process. This last result was seen in classes with advanced-level students and experienced teachers.

In the area of student engagement, findings consistently show the value of small classes. Students talk and participate more in smaller classes. They are much more likely to interact with the teacher rather than listen passively during class. Not surprisingly, students describe themselves as having better relationships with their teachers in smaller classes and evaluate both these classes and their teachers more positively than do their peers in larger classes. Students display less disruptive behavior in small classes, and teachers spend less time on discipline, leaving more time for instruction (NCTE, 2015).

13. Do students like how the teacher organizes seats to work in class?

Chart N°33
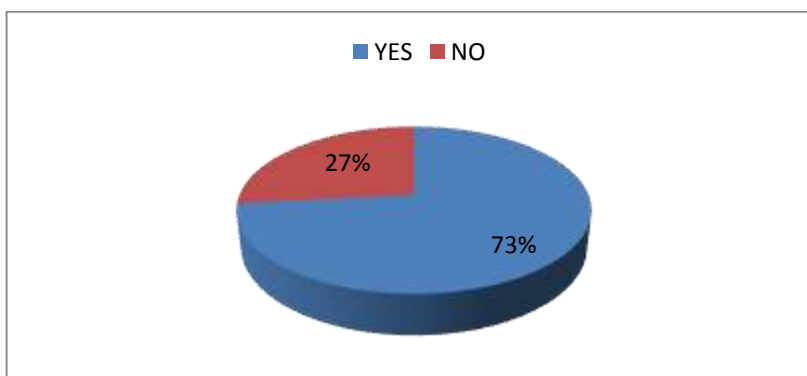


Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Graph N°33 shows that 73% of students were satisfied with the seating arrangement made for their classes, while 27% were not. The positive results were obtained from schools with classrooms organized according to the students' level of English, and had a special classroom for English classes only. Some of the students in the 27% group belonged to schools with poor facilities and unexperienced teachers.

The teacher, depending on factors such as the class size and classroom space, would choose the best arrangement and distribution of the desks, also influenced by the method/approach to be used and the activities that have been planned (Teflpedia, 2011)

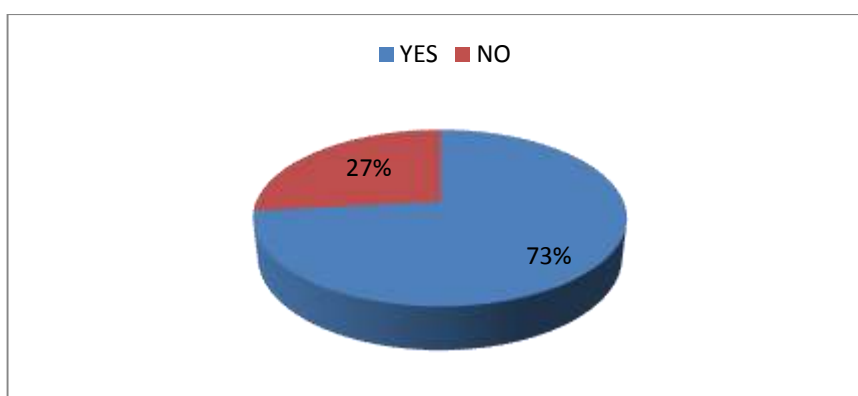14. Does the teacher use technological resources during the class?

Graph N°34



Authors: Borrero Carola and Borrero Melina.

Sources: Survey applied to students.

Seventy three percent of the students said that their teachers use technological resources during their classes. The "technology" used in class is mainly the tape recorder and maybe a projector. That technology is mostly used by teachers when preparing the class and by students when they have homework. Remaining 27% mentioned their teachers did not use technology during the class. It was observed that, despite the technology teachers had, if they cannot use it or the topic of the lesson does not let them use it, all those resources are useless.

In today´s educational world, the availability of technology for the classroom provides teachers the capability to substantially enhance their pupils´ cognitive and language building skills. Unfortunately, far too often available technology is simply not used in ESL classrooms; and even when it is used, it is often not used effectively. More training is required in order to provide models and to encourage effective uses of technology (Saundz, 2013).

**CONCLUSIONS**

After careful consideration and analysis of the results, the following conclusions were drawn:

There are several factors such as class size, classroom space, learning managing, lesson design, seating arrangement and learning styles that influence the teaching - learning process. These factors were observed in all the classrooms regardless of the English level. It was also observed that experience of the teachers was closely involved in these factors.

Some of the high schools that were part of this research did not use technological resources accordingly, even though nowadays these resources could be used by the teachers in order to improve the English teaching – learning process. Additionally, it is important to consider that the English teaching- learning process in private high schools has improved over the last few years because of the time assigned to English classes (8-10 hours a week), in this way students can acquire a better English level.

The teachers' knowledge allows students to get the best education, which guarantees their success in the process of English learning. This aspect reflects the teachers' capacity to teach a foreign language because teachers who have at least an English Bachelor's degree handled the classroom in a more appropriate way. The learning skills were managed according to the students' level and their personal interests, and they also had a better approach in the teaching of the target language.

High schools have enough and good resources to work with; the authorities made a radical change in the facilities of the school. These schools had special classrooms designed for English teaching, equipped with all the media recommended to guarantee the English-language acquisition.

Teachers in private high schools are more organized in designing their lesson plans as well as time management. They plan ahead with the support of other departments and the school authorities so they can teach following the syllabus formulated at the beginning of the school year, which assures the quality of education.

The level of English among students was intermediate and high intermediate. The minority of the students included in this research had an advanced level of English.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Private high schools should have among their faculty members, teachers with at least a Bachelor's degree in English, considering that their level of education and experience when managing a classroom influences the quality of education in these schools.

Teachers should organize students according to their level of English knowledge in order to maximize their potential. In doing so, their classes would be more successful and goal-driven.

Schools should update their equipment in technological resources. These can help students to make the learning process faster and efficient.

Teachers should try to increase the use of adequate techniques and correct evaluation of students´ needs in order to reach a successful teaching language process.

Teachers should devote some of the time in their lesson plan to give feedback. Knowing the students' doubts and fears would allow teachers to improve their syllabus, reinforce their plans, and change their approaches and methods accordingly. It will also give teachers the opportunity to get to know their students better.

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**ANNEXES**

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

**MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA**
**CARRERA DE INGLÉS**

**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** *(age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles)*

YES    ( )              NO      ( )

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

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

YES    ( )              NO      ( )

4.  **Which 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                            ( )

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

YES ( )          NO ( )

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

YES ( )          NO ( )

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

YES ( )          NO ( )

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

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

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

YES ( )          NO ( )

Which ones? _____

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

YES ( )          NO ( )

Why? _____

19. **Does the institution review your lesson plans?**

YES ( )          NO ( )

If yes, how frequently?

Once a week          Once a month          Other_____

20. **Does the institution monitor your teaching?**

YES ( )          NO ( )

If yes, how frequently?

Once a week          Once a month          Other_____

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!

## TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

| A1 | Where are you from? <br> Where do you live? |
|----|---------------------------------------------|
| A2 | Where did you learn English? <br> How long have you studied English? <br> Which subject was the most difficult during your major? |
| B1 | How long have you been teaching English? <br> Which skill is easier for you to teach? <br> Would you like to continue studying? Why? |
| B2 | What are the advantages or disadvantages of teaching English in a "non-English speaking country"? <br> What are the main problems a teacher faces when teaching English in Ecuador? |
| C1 | What social benefits are derived from learning English? <br> 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? <br> 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     (  )

# UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

## MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
## CARRERA DE INGLÉS

### STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:**

**DATE:**

**YEAR:**

**1.** **¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?**

YES     (  )          NO     (  )

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

YES     (  )          NO     (  )

**3.** **Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:**

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

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

YES     (  )          NO     (  )
¿Por qué? _____
_____
_____

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

YES     (  )          NO     (  )

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

YES     (  )          NO     (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    ·(  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )

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

YES    (  )              NO    (  )


GRACIAS!!!!!