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

**Trabajo de fin de titulación**

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children, Natalie and Danny, who have always been my inspiration and my joy, the reason why I seek new challenges and new horizons; to my mother, a constant testimony of self improvement and strength. A special thank you to Hüseyin, my husband, who filled in for me - at home and with our children, during the time I have dedicated to this research work and to study this major. I want to express my thanks to them for their love, their support, and mainly for believing that I could do this.

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## ABSTRACT

This research work investigates the factors that affect the English language teaching/learning process in the Ecuadorian public high schools. The study was conducted in five public high schools in Quito and Cumbaya. The author observed fifteen classes and evaluated several parameters such as the factors concerning teachers, factors concerning students, factors concerning schools and factors concerning institutions. The age of the students in this study ranged between 13 and 19. A quantitative analysis was done tabulating the surveys filled in by each observed teacher and by one randomly chosen student in each class. An observation form for each observed class was filled in, tabulated, and contrasted with what the teacher and students stated about the teaching/learning process. The results of this study show that the situation of the teaching-learning process in the selected public schools is very primitive due a lack of resources, teachers with very low levels of English language command, class size, and students' interest and motivation

## INTRODUCTION

English is a universal language, people all over the world need to perform in this language at an increasingly higher level. A good level of command in the English language is nowadays a need more than a choice. Phenomena like globalization, technology quick changes, more demanding research and education standards, emerging labor markets, and fast communication standards, make English proficiency a mandatory requirement in any field of expertise. Our high school seniors in Ecuador have to be prepared to face all these challenges when they graduate from high school. Nowadays this is not the case; they cannot perform in the English language at all.

Therefore, it is extremely important that we have a clear view of how our schools are preparing students for this global demand, we should learn why our high school new graduates amongst public schools are not reaching the appropriate level of command of the English language, and be ready to solve this situation.

The general objective of this research work is to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process. The specific objectives of this research work are: to determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place, to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers, and to determine teachers' instructional competence.

There are several factors that affect English language teaching and learning, it is important to establish which are these factors, and how each one of them affect the process in our country. Serious research on this field is recent in our country, but finally the Ecuadorian government is taking thoughtful steps in order to change this situation.

Previous studies show that there are several factors that affect the process of learning English as a second language. The first one was carried on by Bhela (1999), who mentioned that there is a high influence of our native language in the acquisition of a second language; the author explains how students always tend to go back to their native language to model and perform in L2, the most important mistakes that an English language student makes when performing in L1 are closely related to the structure, pronunciation, and culture of their mother tongue. The limitation that Bhela identified in his study focuses mainly on the fact that the sample involved was too small, therefore only a limited range of languages were analyzed.

Akbari, Ramin, & Allvar (2010) researched on three teacher's characteristics as predictors of students' academic achievement, and analyzed how these characteristics have a direct relationship with students' achievement in the English language classroom. These important qualities are: teacher efficiency, teacher reflectivity, and teaching style. This study confirms that these characteristics among teachers can highly predict achievement among students.

Narayanan, Rajasekaran, & Iyyappan (2008) researched about factors affecting English learning such as motivation, attitude, language anxiety, and the relationship between gender and each one of these factors. These aspects can negatively affect the English language learning, reducing their influence should improve motivation among students. The study suggested focusing on creating a friendly and supportive environment in the classroom in order to foster the learning process. In this research work the authors also determined that female students scored higher levels of performance than male students. The attitude towards English language, and the levels of anxiety were lower in female students when comparing them to their male peers, this fact gave the higher level of performance to female



students in English Proficiency tests. The authors of this study did not point any limitations for their work.

Hamada (2011) researched on different demotivators in junior high and high school learners, he recommended that the primary goal of the learning process should be the acquisition of language from a communication stand point. He identified lesson style, teachers, tests, reduced self-confidence, and textbooks as the most important demotivators among students. Hamada mentions that his research work focus more on what demotivates learners and less on how to prevent it; he mentions that this fact might be seen as a weakness for his study and suggests further investigation on this point.

Policy makers, school authorities and the Ecuadorian Government should benefit from this study. Ministry of Education officials who are aiming to change the education law and procedures should pay special attention to this study because it could give some insight on the current state of the English teaching-learning process in our public high schools; as it will be shown, urgent measures are needed to be taken. Teachers can highly benefit from the present work in order to understand how they could improve as educators, incorporating new techniques and using English all the time in their classrooms, and motivating their students to learn the language with a real life application.

## METHOD

### *Setting and Participants:*

This research work was done in Quito and Cumbaya, Pichincha Province, Ecuador. It was carried out in five randomly chosen public schools, throughout fifteen class observations, the students' age and grade ranged from 13 to 18-19 years old, 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades of high school, respectively.

### *Procedures:*

This research study commenced with a literature review of the available information on the most important topics of English Language teaching-learning. The observed teachers filled in the teacher's questionnaire. One randomly chosen student from the observed class was asked to fill in the student's questionnaire. So, both the teacher and one student from each observed class completed a survey form; the observer filled in an observation sheet. (See annexes for samples of the survey forms).

After finishing the observation visits to the schools, the above mentioned information, was tabulated and analyzed, but it was also used to establish the interconnections between the different factors that affect the teaching-learning process and the relationship among all the factors in this process.

The process used to tabulate was simple, the observer counted the number of occurrences in each factor and criteria, and then found a corresponding percentage for each case. Therefore, this study is based on a quantitative analysis. The criteria for the tabulation and the result analysis were four: factors concerning teachers,

factors concerning students, factors concerning classroom, and factors concerning institutions.

The Common European Framework was used to establish English language command among teachers and students. Set standards and widely accepted criteria of class preparation and planning were also considered while tabulating these aspects of the observed classes.

## DISCUSSION

### Literature Review

Nowadays English is a language widely spoken all over the world, but this is not what really makes it so important; it is used as the official language in commerce, education, diplomacy, international business, technical and technological activities of any kind. Joanne Welling, an English expert in ESOL teaching, teacher's trainer specialist, and a Cambridge ESOL examiner, who has lived in Ecuador for several years and has acted as the Cambridge Exams Coordinator for Ecuador, highlights the importance of English as the "world language", she says that "whatever career you choose, you are going to need a little bit of English at least to get by, for your training and for your travel needs" (Welling, 2012).

The Ecuadorian government has realized the importance of having our high school graduates be able to use the English language at the same level as those of the rest of the world. The Ministry of Education has launched a project to improve the knowledge of English as a foreign language. This program will be aiming at three main aspects: Ecuadorian students will be able to reach a functional level of command of this language, the standards for this program will be aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); new evaluation parameters will be set for English Language for English teachers entering the public school system, and a continuous training system will be established for English teachers. These steps will be in their working order by December 2013. (Ministerio de Educación, 2012).

The Senescyt (National Secretariat of Superior Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation) (2012) on its webpage has also announced that together

with the Ministry of Education, they will be promoting a teacher's scholarship program called "Teach English". Its objective is to provide intensive education and training to English teachers. The beneficiaries will be trained, for fourteen weeks, in some prestigious US universities. The training will have two main components: first, intensive English teaching in order to have its participants to reach a B2 level (CEFR standards), and second on a certification on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Welling (2012) when comparing private and public schools, said that there are some pluses of private schools such as: smaller classes, more available resources, and a higher level of teacher's training. She goes on explaining that students and teachers in private schools are usually more computer literate – a big advantage in English teaching/learning, and that they are more likely to have an additional exposure to the English Language than those in public schools. Welling (2012) says that the Ministry of Education is planning on requesting the TKT (Cambridge Teacher Knowledge Test) certification to teachers, this program trains educators on how to put a lesson plan and how to execute an actual class, she thinks that this would be a "a big step forward by the Ministry of Education" because this could be a very important step for teachers towards having a "standard to measure up to".

### *Teaching Approaches and Methods*

As in any field, second language teaching has gone through a process with a wide range of theories and methods for approaching this important field. One of the earliest methods of language teaching was the Grammar-translation, also called as Traditional Method. Celce-Murcia (2001) says that this method used the student's mother tongue in class with almost no use of the target language for communication; it focused on grammar and on translating sentences from the target language into the

mother tongue (or vice versa), and by no means on the ability to communicate.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) said that it “was the offspring of German scholarship”, and that the goal of this method was to “read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study”. Stern (2001) establishes that grammar and translation was viewed “as a mandatory preliminary study of literary works”, or that it was even “regarded as educationally valid mental discipline in its own right”.

Then the Direct Approach came about; it was viewed as a rejection of the rigidity of the Grammar Translation Approach and its failure to have students communicating in the foreign language. The Direct Method banned the use of the mother tongue, grammar was learned inductively, literature was read for pleasure, and the target culture was also taught inductively, the teacher had to be a native speaker or to have a native like fluency in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Stern (2001) explains that in the Direct Method students were strongly encouraged to discover for themselves the grammatical principle involved in a given class or exercise.

On the same token, the Reading Approach emerged as a reaction to the problems that the Direct Approach had. This method focused on reading texts, which was the most usable skill to have in a foreign language because not a lot of people traveled in those days (mid 1960s) (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Stern (2001) explains that this method limits the objective of language teaching to a focus on reading comprehension, use of translation in class was allowed and the teacher did not have to be a native speaker.

Celce-Murcia (2001) explains that the Communicative Approach emerged due to the work of Hymes and Firthian, two linguists who paid a whole lot of

attention to communication as a system. In this approach, language is taught to develop an ability to communicate in the L2, focusing on the social aspect of this language. Richards & Rodgers (2001) said that this method was the beginning of a paradigm in language teaching; it is still used today.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) also mentioned The Natural Approach. This method came about thanks to the work of Krashen and Terrell (1980s), they made five hypotheses to explain their ideas: the acquisition/learning hypothesis says that the natural way to learn replicates the language development in children; the monitor hypothesis explains that people do learn to correct themselves when communicating; the natural order hypothesis claims that there is an order in which we learn grammatical structures, some are learned before others; the input hypothesis says that the learning process is made possible by the amount of language input the student is exposed to; the affective filter hypothesis explains that the learners' emotional state or attitude works as a filter that adjusts itself to letting pass/facilitating or blocking the necessary input in order for learning to take place or not.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) described other methods. The Cooperative Language Learning method says that interaction and cooperation are basically the nature of language; that there are some premises that establish conversation, these premises are the starting point for speech, which is done based on support and cooperative rules and interaction. Content-Based Instruction says that learning a second language is done when the student has a purpose to learn it, a need rather than "an end in itself", through this method; students learn a broad array of topics. Content Based Instruction prepares ESL students for a wide range of broad academic activities and for studying in a foreign country. Total Physical Response relates speech and action, teaches language through physical (motor) activity.

Celce-Mucia (2001) mentions that the Cognitive Approach is viewed not as a habit formation process like in other methods, grammar is taught inductively, pronunciation is not emphasized, perfection is not realistic therefore errors are inevitable and constructive; learners are responsible for their own learning, and the teacher should have a good proficiency level of the target language. Stern (2001) says there are some authors that have highlighted the fact that the Cognitive approach emphasizes the “conscious acquisition of language” and that this assumption is based on cognitive psychology (emphasizing internal mental processes).

### *Teaching techniques*

Nunan (2000) classifies the teaching techniques into cognitive, interpersonal, linguistic, affective and creative. The cognitive teaching technique aims to make the student think, students can do activities like classifying, inferencing, discriminating, diagramming. Interpersonal teaching techniques aim to cooperate, to share ideas and to learn with other students. The linguistic technique could be for example using expressions in different circumstances or practicing in controlled exercises, using context, summarizing, skimming while reading, among others. The affective technique, when learners share opinions, feelings, and ideas about a subject. Creative technique like when the students are brainstorming.

Spratt et al., (2005) on the other hand, mention other teaching techniques for the English classroom such as: instructing, explaining, narrating, eliciting, prompting, correcting, checking learning, and conveying the meaning. Instructing and explaining are techniques used by teachers all the time. Teachers use narrating when telling something that has happened or when they are telling a story. Eliciting is getting any kind of information from the students, prompting is giving students hints in order to help them get a word or a phrase. Teachers need to correct students



by indicating them their mistakes or to check on their learning process, these can be done at any time. Conveying meaning is showing students the connotation of new words or structures, it can be done by bringing in realia, using mime, or by asking questions.

A very important teaching technique in the English classroom focuses on correction. Gower, et al. (2005) says that in order to correct students first teachers need to maintain a cooperative and non-threatening working atmosphere, echoing the error might be negative for the student and could reinforce the mistake. The students need to get the idea that there is something wrong, and then they need to be guided to correct themselves in order to understand why they made the mistake and how to correct it, in a way that they will be able to remember and to fix the mistake or not make it again in the future. (Gower et.al. 2005)

### *Managing learning*

Giving feedback is very important in order to bring self-awareness and improvement in any activity, in the classroom students constantly need to know how they are doing, so providing feedback to students is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher. A teacher can give feedback by praising and encouraging the students, by correcting them or by testing them; having open discussions can be also a form of feedback. Feedback should always be done in a positive way. (Gower, et al, 2005).

Brookhart (2008) says that feedback requires practice, it needs to be targeted specifically to the audience you have as a teacher and to the type of students you have. Mackenzie (2000) explains that students need structure in the classroom because it “paves the way for cooperation and learning by defining the path you want your students to stay on”. This author also explains that in a well structured

classroom, problems and conflicts can be avoided because rules and procedures are clear. Enough time should be devoted in order to set these standards in class, especially at the beginning of the school year; the pay off would be less struggling and more time to be dedicated to the learning process. Some authors have proposed a four level model for feedback: (1) feedback about the task, if it was right or wrong, (2) feedback about the processing of the task, strategies that were used or can be used, (3) feedback about self-regulation, and (4) feedback about the student as a person; all these four types of feedback should be addressed by the teacher in order to provide adequate feedback to students. (Brookhart, 2008).

### *Lesson design*

There are different ideas on what a lesson plan or lesson designing is. Spratt, et al., (2005) says that a lesson plan is a set of notes that makes you think what and how you are going to teach a lesson; that it guides you and makes you identify all the components of what and how you will bring the students about in a given activity.

In an English class there should be a lot of language learning and practicing, so planning should focus on these activities. Students and teacher need to feel they have a relaxed atmosphere physically, socially and psychologically. (Woodward, 2001). The main components of a lesson plan are the aims and the procedures. The aims tell us what the lesson is for, the procedures are the roles of the teacher and the learners will be, and how they both will take on their role. (Spratt, et al, 2005).

Celce-Murcia (2001) says that a good lesson planning has to be coherent, has to show variety, to be predictable, and to be flexible. The teacher needs to be familiar with all the principles of second language learning/teaching, with the needs of the students and those of the institution. The teacher should keep in mind the objectives for the entire term when planning for weekly and/or daily activities; these

pieces of independent planning should be connected as a whole in order to make the learning process a meaningful one throughout the whole school year.

There is a lot of information that aims to give guidelines to teacher on what a lesson plan should have, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has published a document called Planning Guidelines for Teachers, this document is directed specifically for English teachers, it establishes that a lesson plan should have: the introduction which explains the key issues that shape the curriculum design; the objectives that explain what the student should accomplish after the class, the term, or the year; the exit profile that details what is expected from students per communicative component and language skill; and the assessment indicators per language skill (listening, speaking, writing and reading).

Spratt, et.al, say that there is a clear structure of a lesson plan which is related to the phases a class should have, these phases are: presentation, practice and performance. The presentation will introduce the topic/structure/function to be taught, the practice should let the student “play” with the topic/structure/function that is being taught, the performance should let the student use the topic/structure/function in a context and reach the required level of mastery of it.

### *Class size*

The US Economic Policy Institute in its book called The Class Size Debate (Mishel & Rothstein, 2002), says that there is an ongoing debate on class size in schools; this book analyses the two current positions on this issue. Some authors like Alan Krueger (Princeton University) say that smaller classes are a determining factor for student achievement. Erick Hanishek (Stanford University), on the other hand, says that other factors such as teacher’s quality are more important to focus on, that

class size reduction is too expensive, and that those resources should be assigned to teacher training, which will automatically improve students' performance.

Blatchford (2003) also mentions this debate, explains that skeptics say that there should be other more cost-effective strategies for improving educational standards. This author explains that there is a consensus among education specialists that smaller classes allowed a better quality of teaching and learning, mentions a report made by an observer who visited a small infant school class of just 15 pupils. In this class, the general atmosphere was very positive, the teacher joked with the children, and there was a lot of personal interaction. The observer also visited a large class with 30 students, and he found out that there was a very noticeable difference, in the smaller class the teacher spent very little time controlling the class, in the large class the majority of the time she just tried to get students' attention to the task, there the teacher was a lot more severe and the children looked unresponsive. In the small class the teacher knew each of the students individually.

Achilles (2000) in his book "Let's put kids first, finally: Getting class size right" highlights the importance of class size, he cites President Clinton during a State of Union speech (1998): "Now we must make our public elementary and secondary schools the best in the world... and every parent already knows the key, good teachers and small classes. Tonight I propose the first-ever national effort to reduce class size in the early grades... With these teachers, we will reduce class size in the first, second, and third grades to an average of 18 students in a class".

### *Classroom space*

Tanner (2009) mentions a research work done in the University of Georgia, School Design and Planning, he says that classroom space is a factor in school achievement, that there is evidence that students need to have natural light and

“overlook life”. He mentions that trends of violence in schools are related to dark, crowded and closed spaces; that an excess level of stimulation on an inadequate environment is related to stress, arousal and loss of control. The author explains that there is an acceptable social distance with other people that will keep students out of trouble, for elementary school students it was determined that 49 square feet is needed per person, larger students need about 64 square feet per student.

Savage & Savage (2010) argue that environments send messages and create expectations, they cite an example of how a funeral site should have dimmed down lights and be very quiet, these are also the characteristics of the behavior that would be expected in this setting. In a more open and joyful environment you will be able to run, to be louder, and to look happier. Teachers need to have the right setting and space for their classes in order to send the students the message of what they are supposed to do or not do in their classrooms. Silfast (2011) says that different types of educational settings have different demands, for example, conference rooms; pre-school, elementary, and high school areas; vocational or technical areas they all have different educational purposes and all of them have to have specific space demands.

#### *Seating arrangement*

Nunan, D. (2000) explains that the traditional seating arrangement was “a teacher-fronted one”, that in these settings students do not express themselves too much. In other settings like group or peer work students become more cooperative among each other, they can voice their opinions, ideas, and feelings. Sitting arrangement in the classroom depends on the type of interaction that the teacher needs to take place during a certain activity, they can be: open class, group work, pair work and individual work. Another way to arrange their places would be according to the student’s levels, learning styles, needs, personalities and relationships among

each other. Class arrangement is going to aim to fulfill the best learning environment for everybody. (Spratt, et al., 2005). Gower, et al., (2005) say that teachers should determine who sits next to whom depending on some factors, the age of the students, strong vs. weak students, personalities, and shy vs. outgoing students.

#### *Classroom and or teaching resources*

Teaching resources and materials aid teachers in their daily activities, there can be CD players, video recorders, and visual aids; realia and the teacher her/himself can be considered a resource as well; teachers should select and use these aids thinking carefully on which to choose based on the aims of the lesson. (Spratt, et al., 2005). Gower, et al., (2005) say that the board is an essential element in any classroom, but that a teacher should use it wisely by keeping it organized, neat, and clean. They also mention course books and skills books as important material to work in class; usually they have a broad amount of reference material such as CDs or cassettes, flashcards, etc.

Computers are also a very important resource in class, especially nowadays with networked computers which is a tool of communication between users; this interaction nowadays can be done through several tools, e-mail, chat, social networking, etc. Currently multi media can also be used for ESL classes, for example digital video in which digital multimedia tools are used to construct, edit, and produce different resources. (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

#### *Classroom observation*

There are several methods and organizations that work with peer observation for improving teaching skills; peer observation has been highlighted as an assessment and as a development tool in language teaching. The University of Nottingham (2009) says that peer observation is an effective way to improve and to build

teaching skills; teachers discuss teaching techniques before sitting in each other's classes, afterwards they provide feedback to each other in order to improve their teaching skills. The MET (Measures of Effective Teaching) Project was established in 2010 with an idea to improve teaching abilities by observing classes; observers typically watch a lesson and then score it and give feedback to the teacher. The Imperial College London (2011) explains that the main purpose of observing teachers is to "enhance practice", after being observed, teachers have the opportunity to engage into constructive analysis of their class, discussing teaching practices in an analytical, reflective way; it has been proven that peer observing is very useful due to the fact that benefits of this exercise often come to both the observer and the one being observed, both can learn from the process.

#### *Student's motivation*

"Motivation is the thoughts and feelings we have which make us want to do something, continue to want to do it and turn our wishes into action" (Spratt, et al., 2005). Motivation in language learning is very important; it can change with age, time, setting, even with different teachers; there are factors that influence it like, the usefulness of knowing the language, our interest in the culture of the target language, support and encouragement from others, like teachers, classmates or even the society. Teachers need to foster motivation and to help the student create it and keep it. (Spratt, et al., 2005).

Stern (2001) says that studies on personality, suggest that the attitudes to countries, ethnic groups and languages, help understand why people are more motivated than others to learn a language, there are certain personalities who can be more successful than others in language acquisition, these characteristics can foster or be detrimental when learning a language. After classroom observation, this author

says that students who “have histrionic talents are more successful language learners than more inhibited or introverted students”. (Stern, 2001). Affect is also related to language learning, Gardner (1975) says that attitude, motivation, and personality are a big clue to successful language learning. Shalaway (2005) says that it is not enough to plan your lessons focusing on the student’s interest; you should facilitate the process of raising students’ motivation to learn the language, nurture the value of getting the skills to an ongoing learning process.

Many authors make a clear definition between two types of motivation, the intrinsic and the extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because the person clearly likes it and enjoys it; extrinsic motivation is when something is done because it has some kind of purpose, a clear outcome. Intrinsic motivation is said to result into high-quality learning, extrinsic motivation might sometimes be demotivating because it cannot reflect a clear drive of the student to accomplish a given task. (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

### *Learning styles*

Woolfolk, A. (2010) says that learning style is the way a person approaches learning. Spratt, et al. (2005) explains that there are several learning styles: the visual learner, the kinesthetic learner, the group learner, the individual learner learns, the reflective learner, and the impulsive learner. Celce-Murcia (2001) on the other hand says that personality types affect learning, like extroverted versus introverted; intuitive versus sensing sequential; thinking versus feeling; and closure-oriented/judging versus open/perceiving. This author also mentions another criteria called the desired degree of generality, which contrasts the student’s focus when learning; the one who focuses on the main idea or the big picture, the holistic or the analytical one who tends to concentrate on grammatical details.



### *Student's intelligence or aptitude to learn English*

Woolfolk (2010) explains that there are different theories of what intelligence is, it can be explained in three aspects: the capacity to learn, the knowledge a person has, and the ability to successfully adapt to the environment. Stern (2001) says that some students seem to have a “gift” for languages, so there are tests that measure language ability, but these tests should be applied cautiously, more towards placement tools to put students into the right classes or for employment purposes, rather than for diagnosis or prognosis of language learning, in these fields they are not as reliable as they claim to be.

Saville-Troike (2008) talks about aspects that influence the language learning outcome, like age, aptitude, and motivation. This author clarifies that there is evidence that older learners have an advantage towards younger ones because they are more motivated and have a real need/interest/drive to learn a second language. Aptitude is defined as a set of characteristics such as: phonemic coding ability to analyze incoming speech, break it into phonemes in order to recognize morphemes; a grammatical sensitivity is also needed to learn a language; central processing skills which are crucial in order to infer structures, identify patterns, make generalizations, recognize the grammatical function of elements, and finally to formulate and generalize rules in the target language; and the associative memory capacity which is needed in order to store linguistic items and then recall them when output happens, this process determines speaker fluency.

There are some studies available on the importance of some factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process; we will cite five of them. These studies give a clear definition and analyze some important aspects that affect English

teaching and learning, they were taken from journals specialized on the English language teaching and learning.

The first study was conducted by Bhela (1999), who highlights the influence of native language in second language learning. In this study this author demonstrates that when speaking and writing in L2, students tend to go back to their mother tongue.

The subjects in this research work were four adults of different ages and from different language backgrounds. The four learners were assessed in their English language mastery. They were given two sets of sequential pictures, one at a time, with which they were supposed to write a story in English, beginning with the first picture and ending with the last one. Next the learners were asked to write the same story in their native language. A second set of pictures was given to them to write a second story both in English and in their native language. After the writing tasks, the four learners were video-taped while they were individually interviewed. They were asked to explain why and how they used a specific L1 or L2 structure in identified errors; they also needed to self-correct these identified errors in the L2 text. The Analysis of the learners' L1 written texts was done with the help of native language experts.

The results showed that the four learners were at a level where simple social exchange could be done in the English language; they made several mistakes but generally got their ideas across. A comparison of the analyses of L1 and L2 showed eight syntactical areas showing signs of direct interference of L1 on L2, errors were made by the four learners in both their L1 and L2 texts, L1 errors were transferred to the L2 texts.

The author concluded that in using the L1 structures, the learners have taken some risks that include guessing of a more or less informed kind. When the learners experienced gaps in their L2 syntactical structures, they adjusted the form of their L2 written responses by using syntactical items which are part of their L1. The four learners related L2 syntax to what they already know about language. When writing in the target language, these learners rely on their native language structures to produce a response. The author explains that “there is an assumption of L2 and hence a translation process has taken place... there has been a relatively high frequency of errors occurring in the target language, thus indicating an interference of their native language on the target language”. (30-31).

Bhela identified some limitations in his study, he said that the sample involved was too small, so only a limited range of languages was analyzed; therefore no generalizations for all second language learners could be made.

Akbari, Ramin, & Allvar (2010) researched on the L2 teacher characteristics as predictors of students’ academic achievement. The study investigated three teacher-related characteristics: teaching style, teachers’ sense of efficacy, and teacher reflectivity. This analysis aims to establish how these characteristics relate to student achievement in an English-language class. The subjects were 30 EFL teachers and their students, 630 male and female eleventh graders. This research work was carried on in several public schools in the Iliam Province in Iran.

The instruments that were used in the study are: The Teacher reflectivity questionnaire, the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, the Lowman’s Two Dimensional Teaching Style Scale, and an end-of-the-year achievement test for eleventh graders in high schools in Iran. The scores of the teachers on each of the three questionnaires

were matched against their students' final English scores, and finally statistical procedures were run to interpret the results.

The results showed a high correlation between teacher reflectivity and student achievement outcomes. Reflective teachers seem interested in growing and learning but not for learning's sake or necessarily for increased pedagogical skills, but to help them help their students. There is a positive relationship between a teacher's sense of efficacy and student achievement, teachers with high efficacy believes generate stronger student achievement than teachers with lower teacher efficacy. The results of the present study did not indicate a high correlation between interpersonal rapport as a component of the teachers' teaching style and student achievement.

The authors concluded that their study provided some ideas on the need of some specific characteristics among teachers when viewed through the students' achievement perspective. These important qualities are: teacher efficacy, teacher reflectivity, and teaching style. The results of the study confirmed that these three variables can significantly predict student achievement.

Hamada, Y. (2011) researched on different demotivators for Japanese junior high and high school learners with the idea of providing a deeper understanding of demotivation for Japanese junior and senior high school learners. The participants in this study were 234 first year Japanese students from two public high schools in Northern Japan, and 217 freshmen from two universities, eight of those students were interviewed. The setting for this study was the Kanto Region in Japan.

The study used a forty four item with a one to five Linkert Scale in order to find out demotivation levels among learners. The results showed that "the nature of English" is more demotivating for junior high school learners, "lessons style and teachers" are also demotivating for high school learners. Among junior high school

“learners, tests, nature of English and reduced self-confidence” are more demotivating than other factors. Among high school learners, “reduced self – confidence, lesson style and textbooks” are more demotivating than other factors. Since nature of English, lesson style, teachers, tests, reduced self-confidence, and textbooks were identified as prominent demotivators, the author considered that these factors needed to be investigated during the interviews. As a conclusion it is recommended that the primary focus of the learning process should be the acquisition of language, but with an aim to setting the basis for the communication skills to be developed.

The main limitation of the study mentioned by the author is that only eight students were interviewed, so due to the small size of the sample, the results are not as trustworthy, for a more reliable study the sample number must be larger. Hamada also says that this study primarily focuses on what demotivates learners and focuses less on how to prevent those phenomena, suggests carrying on future research on preventing demotivation among students.

The last study to be cited is the one done by Narayanan, Rajasekaran, & Iyyappan (2008) about factors affecting English learning at tertiary level. This study aimed to analyze the most important socio-psychological factors such as motivation, attitude, language anxiety, and the relationship between gender and each one of these factors. The participants were 408 (138 female and 270 male) first year engineering and technology students from five engineering colleges; the research work took place on Chennai, India.

This research was carried on through questionnaires that were given to participants. The mean, the average and percentage of factors such as motivation,

attitude, language anxiety, language and gender was calculated, the questionnaires' answers were classified into five point scales.

The results indicated that female students scored higher mean average than male students. In the attitude towards English language factor, female students had more positive attitudes towards learning than male students. Male students had higher levels of anxiety when taking tests than women did, female students who had low levels of anxiety performed better in English Proficiency tests.

The authors said that this study is an attempt to address some factors that are negatively affecting the English learning process. Anxiety, motivation and attitude towards the language learning experience can negatively affect the language learning experience in numerous ways, reducing these factors may enhance learner motivation. Their recommendations focused on creating a low stress, friendly and supportive learning environment, being sensitive to students' fears and insecurities, and helping them confront those fears. Attending to the learning styles or preferences of the students, listening and appreciating the voices of students for valuable insights, ideas and suggestions, must be a priority for teachers.

The authors said that English language ability tests were not performed, so the results of this study are only conducted as a purely questionnaire-survey-based type of research. They explained that the findings and observations of this study are experimentally based, therefore are by no means conclusive.

## Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

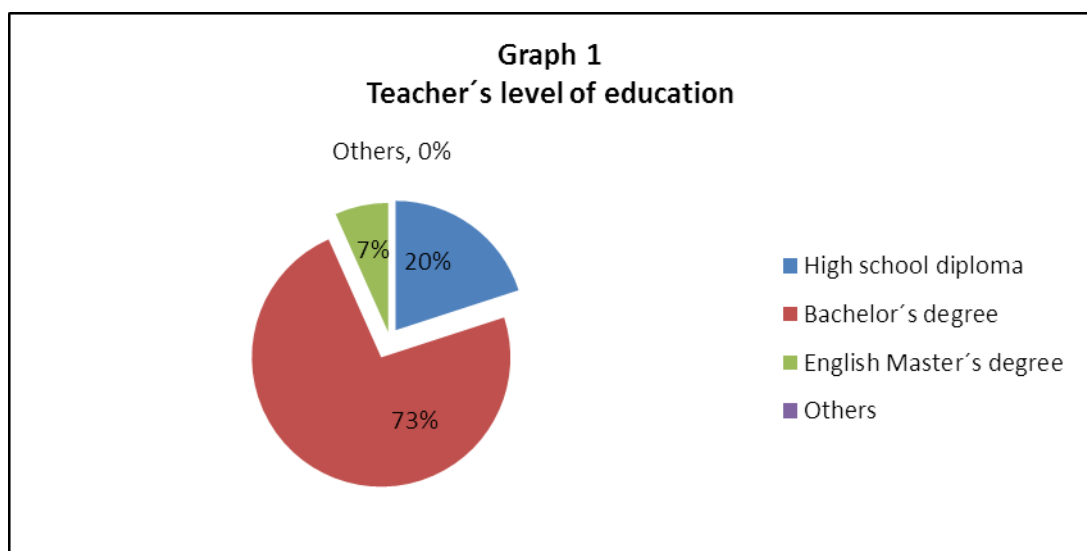
The following section describes, analyzes and interprets the author's findings during her observations of the public high schools visited for this study. It will include a quantitative analysis of the different aspects that affect the English language learning-teaching process; these aspects include factors concerning teachers, factors concerning students, and factors concerning the classroom and educational institutions.

As a result of the tabulation of the data, a graphic will show the results in each investigated factor; these results were drawn from the sample population surveys – both teachers' and students' - and from the results of the class observations. The analysis and interpretation of the results will aim to give some light on the status of these important aspects of the teaching-learning process among the teachers and students from the sample population in Quito and Cumbaya.

### *Quantitative Analysis*

#### *Factors Concerning Teachers*

*Which level of education do teachers have?*



Graph 1 shows that one teacher has a Master's degree, which corresponds to the 7% of the population. Three teachers have a High School diploma (20%); and eleven, which is the 73% of the participants, have a English Teaching Bachelor's degree; a clear majority of the participants have an English Teaching Bachelor's Degree.

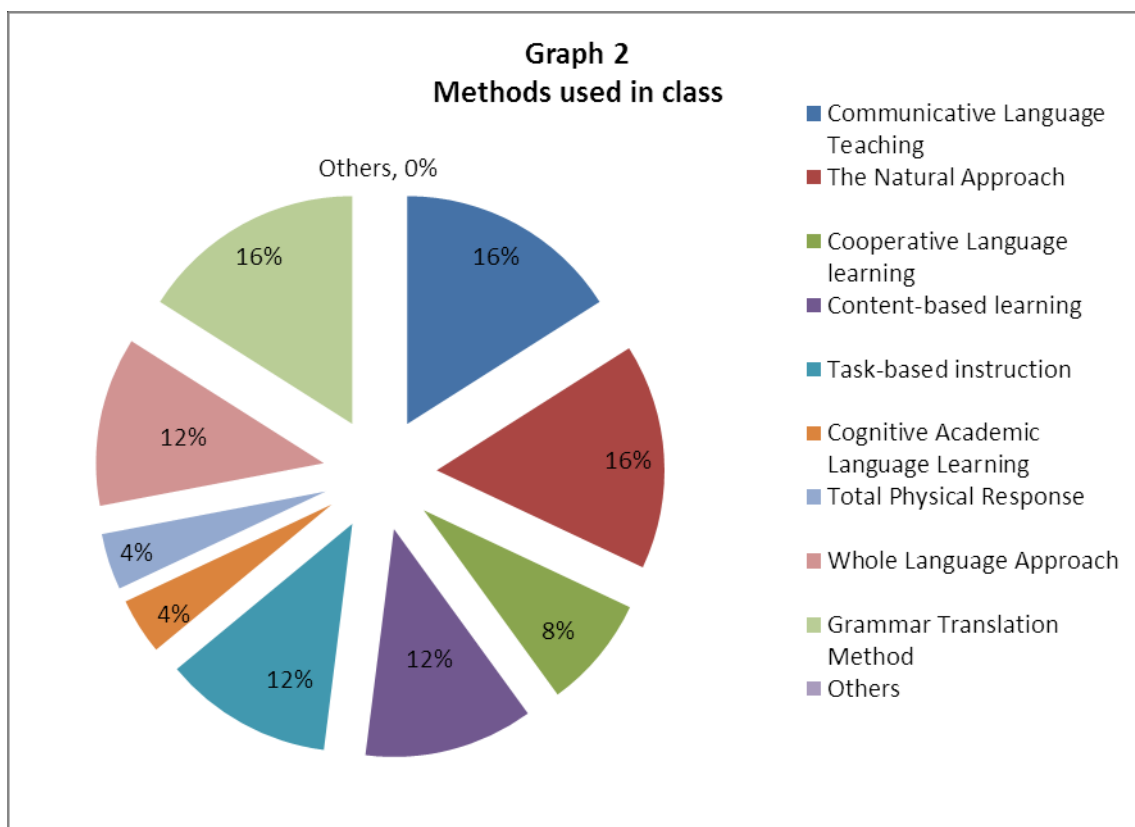
Among the high schools visited during this study, teachers' level of preparation was clearly shown to be acceptable; most of them have an English Teaching Bachelor's degree, nevertheless, most of them could not perform in the English language.

Those teachers who have just a high school diploma were observed to perform at an extremely low level during their classes, their classes lacked of teaching techniques and class management skills. Students in these classes also performed at a very low level. These teachers were not able to carry on the class in English; they had a very low level of English language command.

The only teacher with a Master's degree was also the only one who scored a B1 level of English knowledge (as per the Common European Framework). This class was observed to have a very interesting and motivating environment; the teacher seemed secured and knowledgeable in order to manage the class successfully.

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





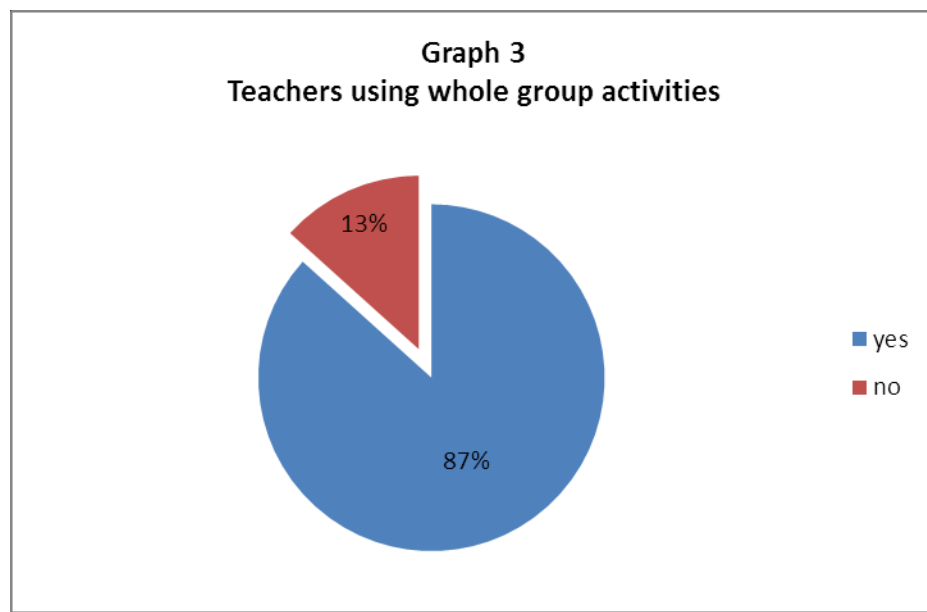
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's questionnaire

As shown on graph 2, 16% of the surveyed teachers reported that they used Communicative language teaching in their classes, a 16% reported using the Natural approach, also 16% of the teachers said to have used the Grammar Translation Method. Three teachers, which represent the 12% of the population, said that they used the Whole Language Approach; Task based instruction, and the Content-based learning approach. Cooperative Language learning was reported to be used by two teachers (8%). One teacher, a 4%, said that she used Total Physical Response; one teacher reported using Cognitive Academic Language Learning, this also corresponds to a 4% of the population.

The results from the classroom observations show that the great majority of the teachers who were observed used the Grammar Translation method. Only two teachers used the Task based approach during their classes. Moreover, most of the

interviewed teachers asked a lot of questions about this topic when they were filling their questionnaires, so it was concluded that they did not know about methods or teaching approaches; they just chose the answer randomly.

*Do teacher use whole-group activities to teach their lessons?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

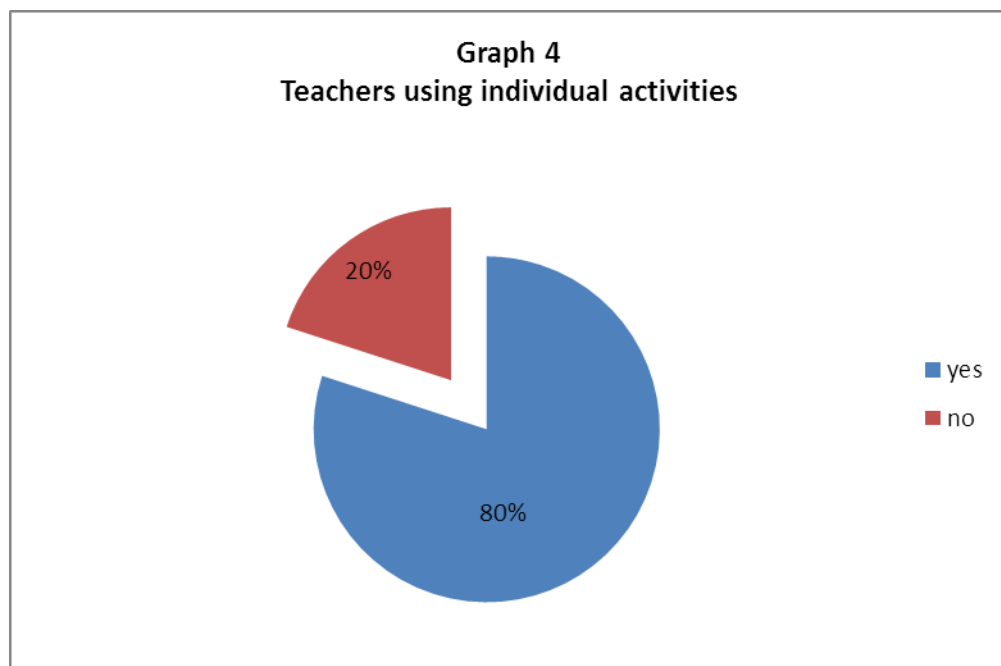
Eighty seven percent of the teachers said that they use whole-group activities in their classes, 2.13% of them said that they do not use this kind of activities.

Smith, et al. (2004) explain that whole class activities are a set of “active teaching” strategies that encompass a high quality dialogue and discussion between teachers and students. Students are supposed to have an active part in discussion by asking questions, contributing ideas, and explaining and demonstrating their thinking or knowledge to the class. Among the witnessed classes, none of them had any of these characteristics; consequently the students in our study are not actively learning, no dialogue or discussion was carried on during these classes, no participating in any interactive activity was observed.

Comments that teachers made on the written explanation of their answer confirm their lack of understanding of what a whole-group activity entails. They wrote comments like: “Yes, because they need to participate”, “Yes, because I have many students”, or “Yes, because the group is too big”.

In conclusion, even though the eighty seven percent of the interviewed teachers reported using whole-group activities, teachers actually taught their classes like a monologue without the students’ participation, thus no meaningful learning process was carried on during the observed classes.

*Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher’s Questionnaire

Twelve teachers, which represent the 80% of the teachers in our study, explained that they do work on individual activities while 20% (3 teachers) said that they do not mainly because of a lack of time during the class. Teachers seemed to get confused with this question; at least three of them asked if the question meant that the teacher would work individually with each student.

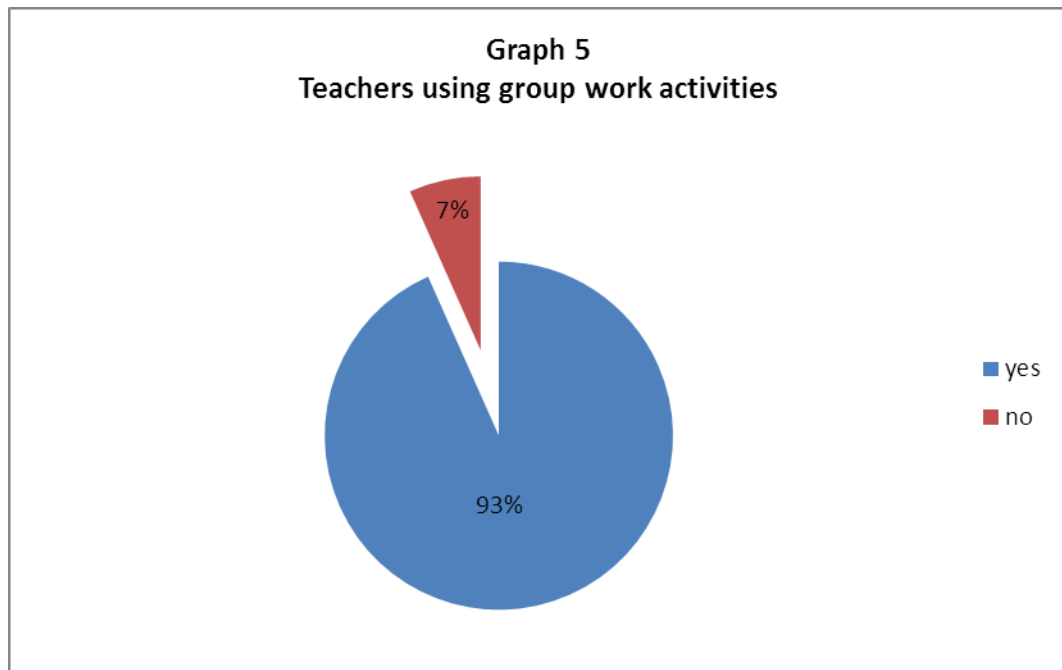
Most of the observed teachers, in fact, used some kind of individual work during their class. Only two observed individuals did not do this type of activity.

Students in their survey said that they enjoy their English classes, but the observer saw no motivation among the different groups, students in more than one observed class were not doing the teacher's suggested activity. The teacher could not – or chose not to – address this situation.

The University of Washington on its “Teaching and Learning Bulletin of Spring 2009”, establishes that most students learn best when they are actively engaged with the class and its material. An individual activity in class clearly demands a dynamic participation; this article explains that some strategies to accomplish this task include: developing rapport between teacher and students and among students, creating opportunities of engagement and student's participation, and managing interaction among all the class participants. The observation showed that there was no rapport among class participants, there were little to no opportunities for student's participation, teachers did not manage class participation.

In conclusion, although some teachers work on individual activities with their students, the atmosphere in the observed classes was not the ideal one for these activities.

*Do teachers use group work activities?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Ninety three percent of the teachers, that is 14 teachers, reported that they perform group work activities; only 1 teacher said that she/he does not do group activities. The observation gives a different result; none of the teachers broke their classes into groups or ask the students to work among themselves cooperatively.

The interviewed teachers consider that the use of group work activities is important because students need to increase their chance to collaborate among each other, or that this activity gives them the opportunity to do something different and freely; whereas there are also contrasting comments from other teachers who answer this question saying that there are too many students in the class or that they do it depending on the topic of the class.

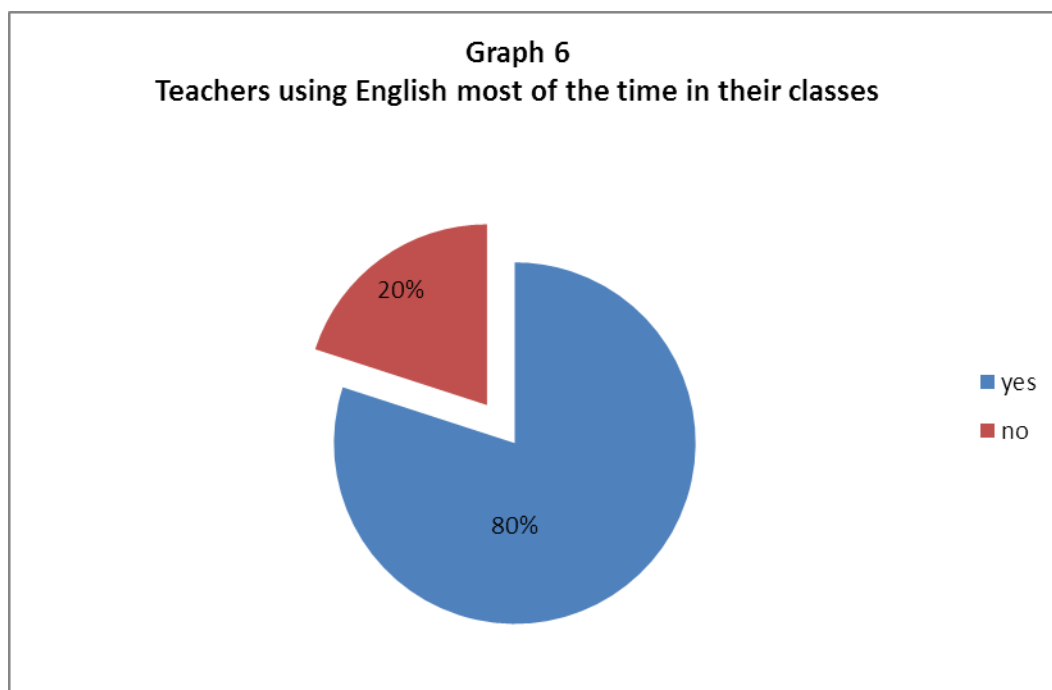
Anwar (2012) explains that group work helps the learners to carry on more cooperative interaction among each other, he says that they seem to do it in a more natural way, losing the pressure that they might feel when interacting with a teacher. He also says that "Group work helps students to improve their cognitive and affective

aspects”. According to what teachers report on their surveys, they are aware of these benefits, therefore that it is not a lack of knowledge the reason why teachers choose not to have group work for their classes.

Another aspect to consider regarding the use of group work is the lack of space; physical space in the observed classes is extremely limited and does not let the teachers change the setting in the classroom.

Consequently, due to the teachers’ choice or because of a lack of space, students were not broken into cooperative group work, which has a negative impact in the teaching-learning process.

*Do teachers use English in class most of the time?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher’s Questionnaire

Twelve (80%) out of fifteen interviewed teachers said that they use English during the class, 20% of the teachers, 3 teachers, say they do not use English most of the time in their classes . The results of the observations with the actual use of English during a class show that 10 teachers (67%) used English for 25% of the

class, 3 teachers used English 50% of the time, and only 2 teachers, 13%, used English throughout the whole lesson. The survey also shows that most of the teachers fall within A1 and A2 level of English knowledge (as per the European Framework); with this level of mastery of the language it is understandable that the teachers were not able to perform in English during the class.

When the students were asked if their teachers use English most of the time, 11 out of 15 students, said yes, when in fact this was not the case. Some questions arise from these results: Are students able to evaluate how the teachers should deliver their classes? Did they fill in the questionnaire truthfully due to the presence of school officials? The answers to these questions seem to be obviously no.

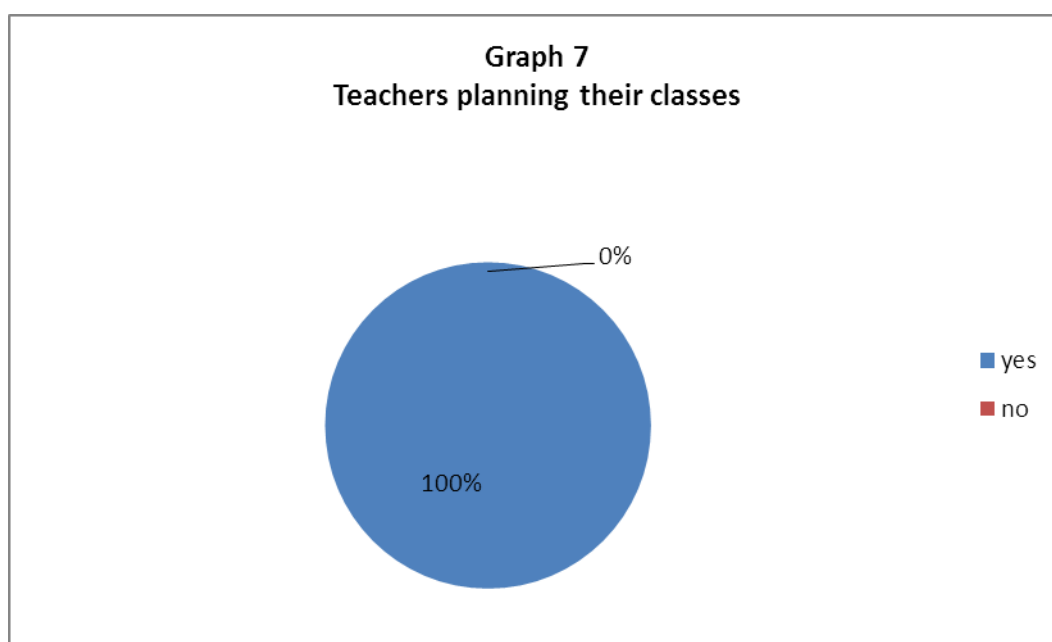
In the observations, it was seen that the higher the teachers' English level is, the better they could perform in this language. In the cases where the teacher could perform better in English he/she was able to carry out the class in English, and to be demanding with the students on their level of performance, which also was shown to produce students who could perform at a higher level compared to those who did poorly in class.

During the observed classes, no pronunciation modeling or grammar/structure correction was performed, the vocabulary used was basic (when English was used in classes); teachers in most of the classes were in no position to achieve these tasks due to their low level of command of the English language. The topics taught were very similar among all the classes, most of them, nine classes out of the fifteen, covered variations of very simple exercises of the Simple Present structure, including verb To Be, auxiliary verbs, sentence formation, have/has difference, among others. At this rate it would be impossible for the students to reach a good level of communication.

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, in its document “National English Curriculum Guidelines” (2012) explains that a communicative approach should be attained in the English classes, aiming the language to be a “system for the expression and conveyance of meaning”, that the “primary function of language is interaction and communication, and that the structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses”. None of these considerations were applied during the observed classes.

Therefore, according to the results of the observation, a cascade effect could be accomplished with a better and higher level of preparation among teachers. This higher level of preparation among teachers should have the students perform more and better. In other words, we cannot expect the students to have a good level of command of the English Language if their teachers cannot speak English fluently.

*Do teachers plan their lessons?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire



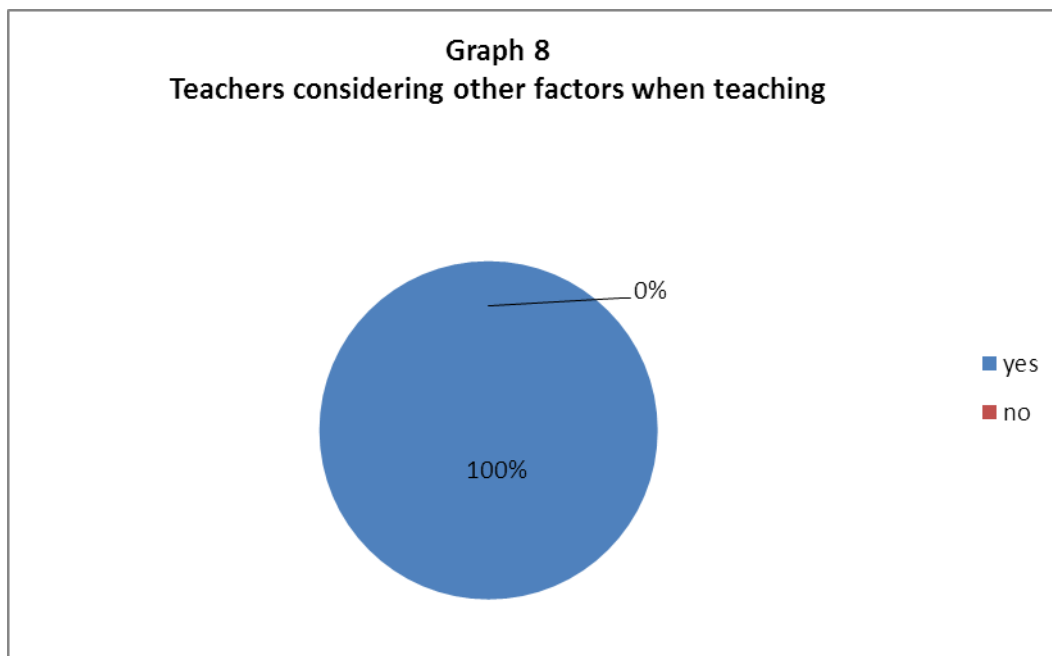
Hundred percent of the teachers said that they do plan their classes. During class observation, only five out of the fifteen teachers showed a clear evidence of class preparation and planning, the rest of the teachers improvised during their classes. This lack of preparation was seen in many aspects of the class, for example, with the type of examples or sentences that were introduced to the students, like: "Paul and Mary are a good tennis player", "Are they children thirsty? ".

Enerson et al. (2004) say that planning is extremely important for a teacher, on the contrary, "entering a classroom without planning is like heading cross country without a map". They explain that planning is crucial because it gives a clear sense of what has to be accomplished and how to do it, the what and the how to do things in class. In some cases during the observed classes, at the beginning of the session, it seemed like the teacher was aiming for some specific purpose, which was changed in the middle of the class.

Three students mentioned in their surveys that the classes tend to be boring; this could also be translated into a lack of planning. With a "clear road map" of what to do in class, with the appropriate techniques and resources, it should flow smoothly and dynamically.

We mentioned before that Spratt, et.al, (2005) say that there should be a structure for a given class; this structure was not kept during most of the observed classes, this is an indicator that there is no lesson planning. No introduction to the topic was seen during the classes, and no checking of the previous learned material either. Most of the classes focused only on practicing a grammar structure that was not even introduced previously to the students.

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



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

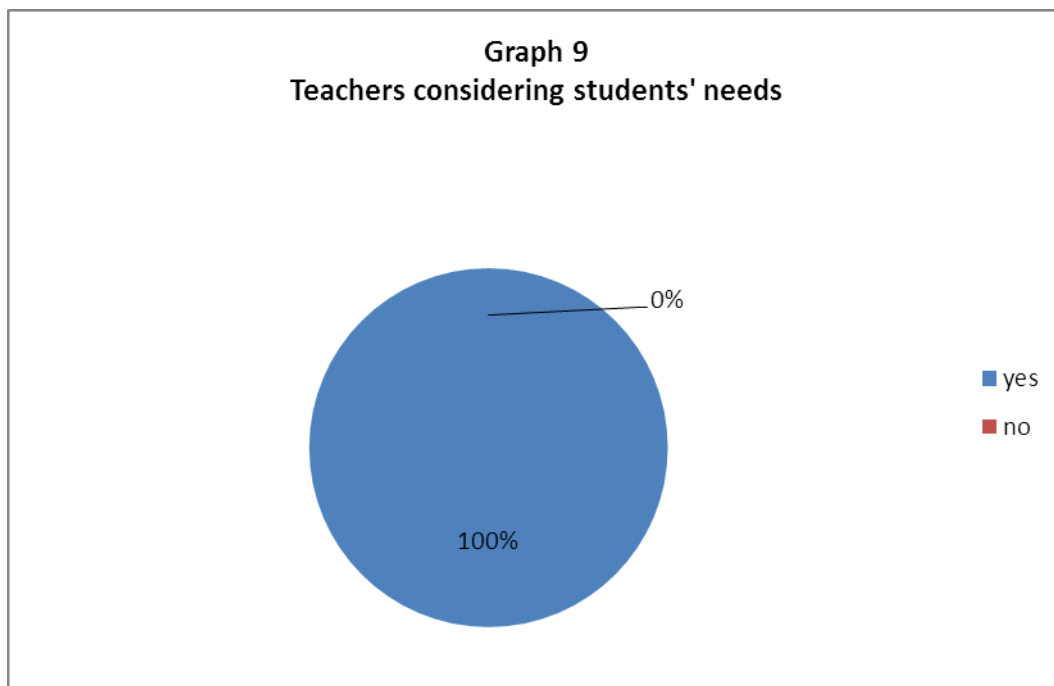
All the teachers in the survey reported that they consider other factors such as discipline, feedback and instruction when teaching their classes. According to the results of the observation, we can conclude that discipline, instruction and time management were taken into consideration in all the classes. Feedback was limited to reviewing assigned exercises by choosing the correct answers; no additional feedback from the teacher was given to students during these sessions.

Discipline and time management were reported to be well taken care of by the students in our sample population. In contrast, 60% of the students say that the teachers provide them with feedback, while 40% say that they do not have any pointers from their instructor on their performance.

Not providing feedback to students prevents them from knowing how to improve their performance and clearly affects the learning process.

#### *Factors concerning students*

*Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?*



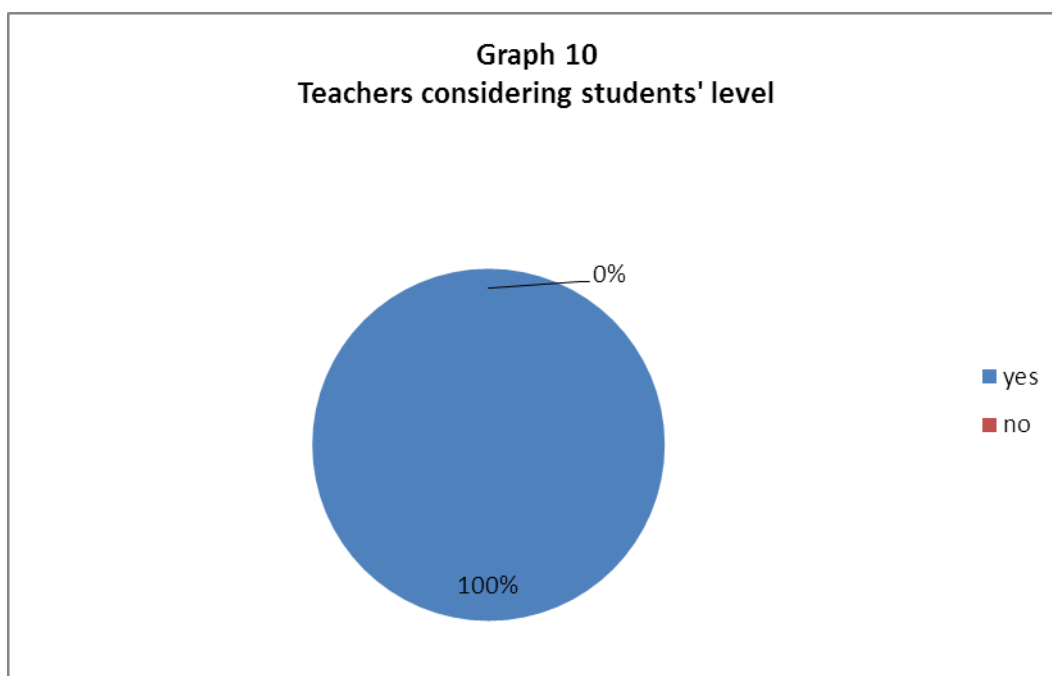
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

All the teachers in the survey report that they consider students needs such as age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation and learning styles; during the class observation it was not seen that any of the observed teachers did any special consideration for any of the students. The average group size in a classroom was of about 40 students, with this amount of students, as seen in these classes, it becomes impossible for the teacher to consider these factors from each student, most of the time the teachers did not even know the students names.

A 67% of the students in our sample say that they do like to learn English, 33% say that they do not. 60% of the students say that the activities done in class motivate them, but a 40% say that these activities do not inspire them. During the class observations the sessions did not show that they were interesting or motivating for the students.

Albeit the fact that the observed teachers reported considering students needs, it was observed that age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles were not considered by the teachers in our study when delivering their classes.

*Do teachers consider students level to teach English successfully?*

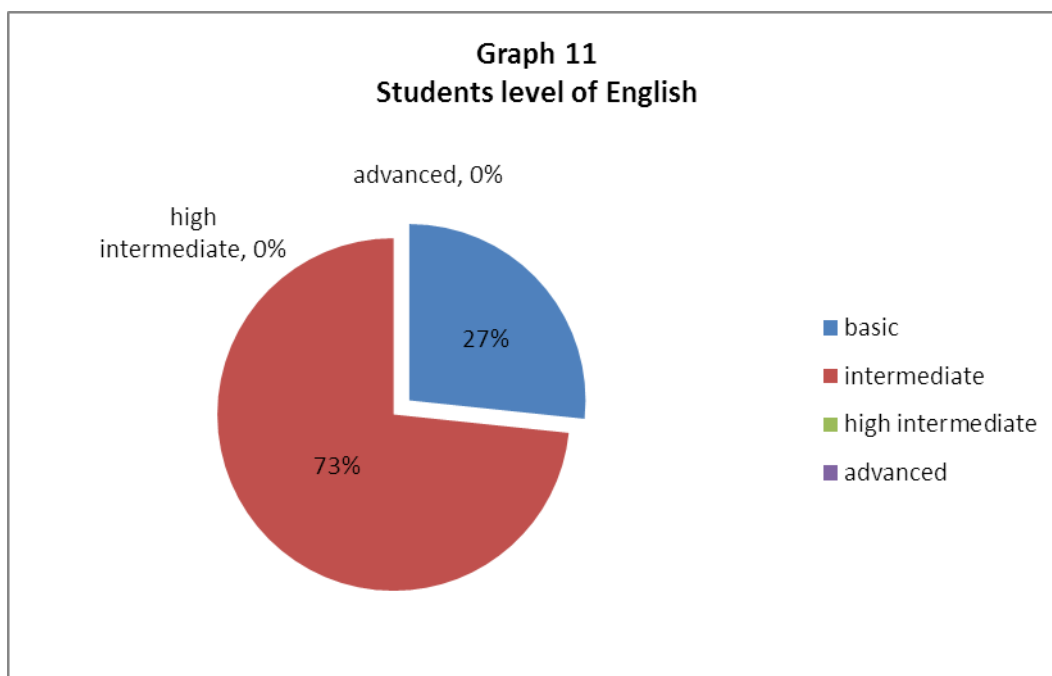


Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

All the teachers reported that they consider students' English level. During the class observation it was not observed any accommodation or distinction done for students who had a different level of English language command.

Fifty three percent of the students, eight out of the fifteen students, said that the activities developed in class are too difficult for them, this was actually confirmed by the observer, some of the vocabulary or structures used in some of the classes were not adequate for the students' level of English knowledge.

*Which is the level of the students in the observed classes?*



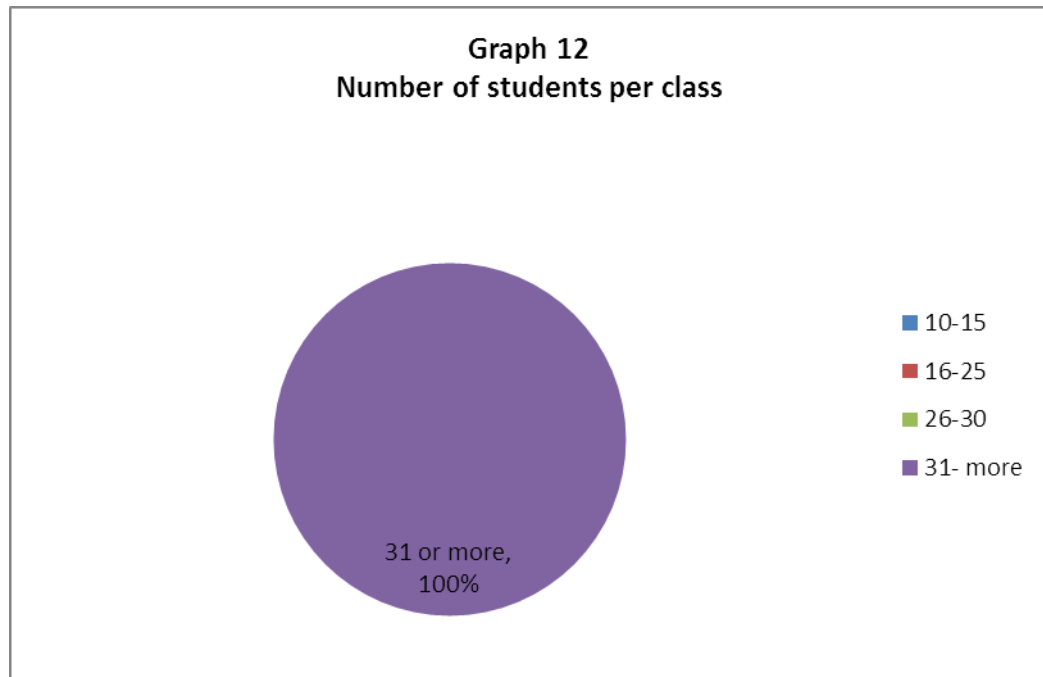
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Eleven of the observed teachers, corresponding to the 73%, report having intermediate level students; four said that they have basic level students, which is a 27 percent. Not one teacher reported having intermediate or advanced students in their classes.

During the class observation, two main factors were considered in order to place students in different levels of English command: students' ability to understand English and students' ability to answer questions or perform in class using English language. As per these factors students were placed mainly in a basic level or intermediate level. The basic level students as per the observation were 13 classes, corresponding to an 87% of the sample classes. The intermediate level groups were two classes, corresponding to a 13% of the sample taken. It is important to take note that the classes that were identified by the observer as intermediate level groups, are the same as those who had teachers using English 100% of the time.

### *Factors concerning classrooms*

*How many students are there in the observed classrooms?*



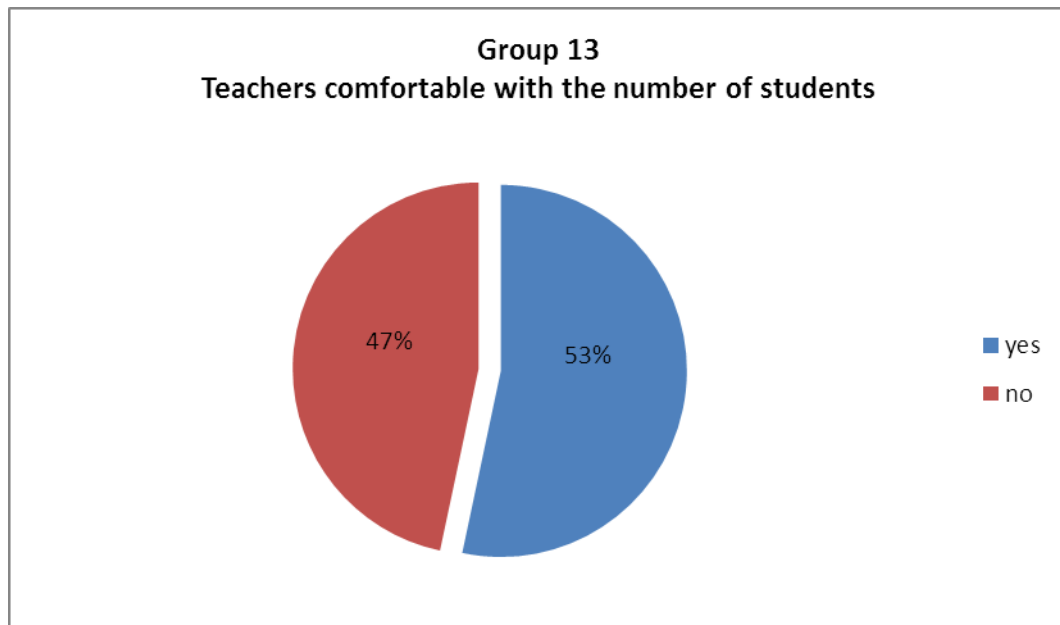
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

All the classes in the observed groups were very large, 100% of the teachers report having more than 30 students. An average of 45 students per class was established by the observer.

When students were asked if they consider that the number of students in the classroom foster their English learning process, 60% of the surveyed students say that the number of students in the class does not favor their learning process, 40% of the students say that it does.

It was observed that the teacher in these groups does not have a total control of the group and cannot individually address the learning process of each student in the group; these classes are too large to manage.

*Do teachers feel comfortable working with the number of students they have in their classrooms?*



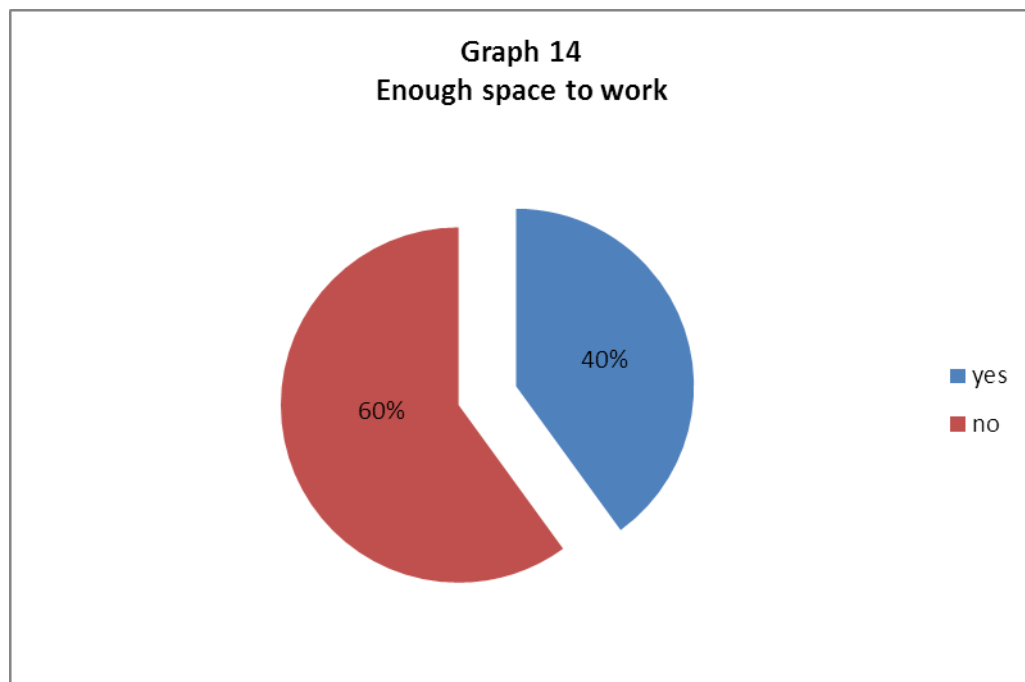
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

It is difficult to understand why eight teachers or 53% of the interviewed teachers said that they feel comfortable working with the number of students they have been assigned, when in fact during the observation it was seen that they had difficulties reaching their students. Teachers limit themselves to teaching their topic in front of the classroom and had no real interaction with their students; this was mainly due to the large groups that they had to teach.

Students in the observed classes were also asked if they consider the number of students a favorable factor to learn English, 9 students, corresponding to a 60% of the sample students said it was not.

Authors like Achilles (2000), and Blatchford (2003) have concluded that small size classrooms, are better environments for teaching a class; they explain that the interaction between teacher/students is more feasible in this environment. The students among the observed classes do not have small group classes, the interaction of all students with the teacher is not possible within these groups; this situation actually impedes a proper learning-teaching process.

*Do teachers have enough space to work with their students?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

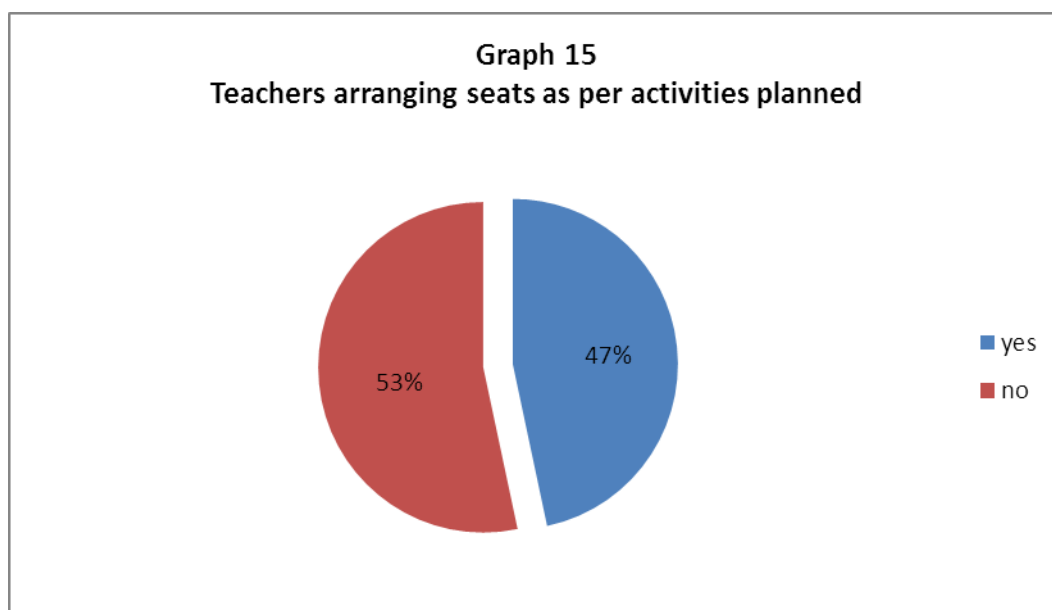
Sixty percent of the teachers said that they do not have enough space to work with their students. During the observation it was seen that the class space is highly an inadequate setting in most of the classrooms, in one of them some of its space was destined to keep supplies for the “Consejo Estudiantil”. In another classroom, students did not have desks; they had to put their books/notebooks on their laps, their backpacks were kept in a pile outside the classroom, they mentioned that if it rains they have to ask the janitor to put the backpacks in a storage room. In one of the classes the student next to the door needed to move his desk in order to close or open the door.

Nevertheless, students gave an opposite opinion about this topic in their survey; eleven students, corresponding to a 73% said that their classroom has an adequate size for the teaching-learning process.



Tanner (2009) mentions that, depending on the size and age of the students, 4.55 to 6 square meters is the minimum necessary space within a classroom, per student. According to Tanner, if we do the calculations, for 45 students in the upper levels, teaching in an optimum physical space should be carried in a class the size of an auditorium; therefore the classes' physical space in the observed groups is highly inadequate for the teaching-learning process.

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



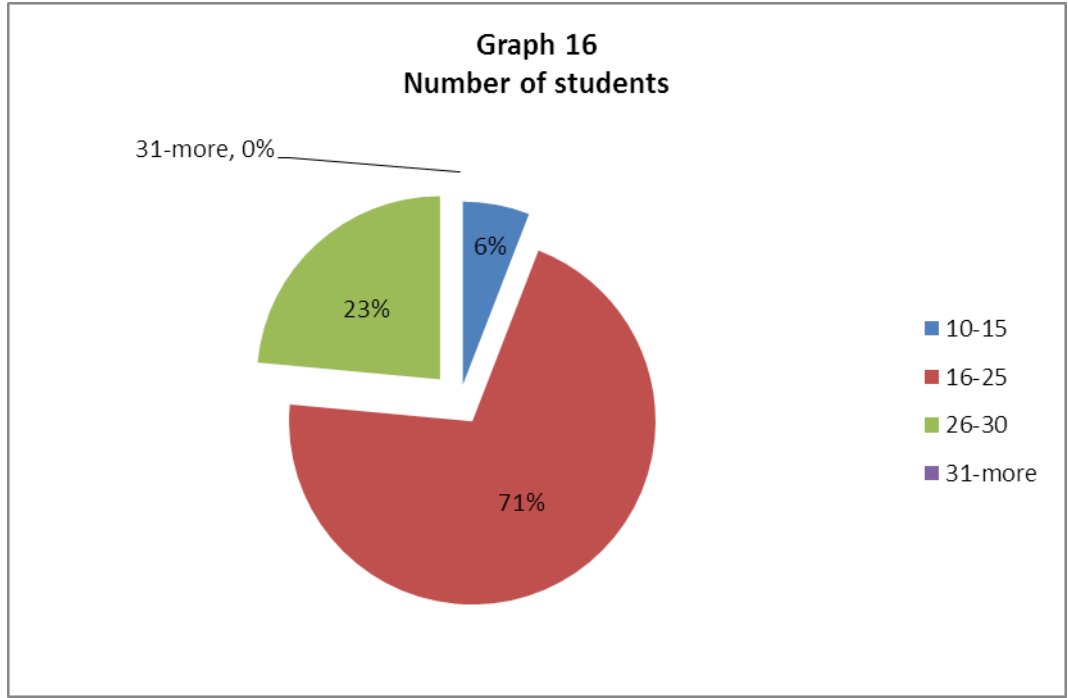
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Fifty three percent of the teachers, of 53% of the sample teachers, said that they do not arrange the classroom according to the activities they perform; forty seven percent, seven teachers said they do. In contrast, 67% of the interviewed students said that teachers do arrange the class according to their activities during their lessons.

Despite the fact that 53% of the interviewed teachers say that they feel comfortable with the number of students that they work with, and that 67% of the

students feel comfortable with the way teachers arrange the class according to the activities that they perform in class, during the class observations it was evident that in most of the schools visited, there was no way for teachers to be able to do any kind of moving desks around or even breaking the class into small groups, the classes are so crowded that teachers are physically unable to move anything around within the classroom.

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

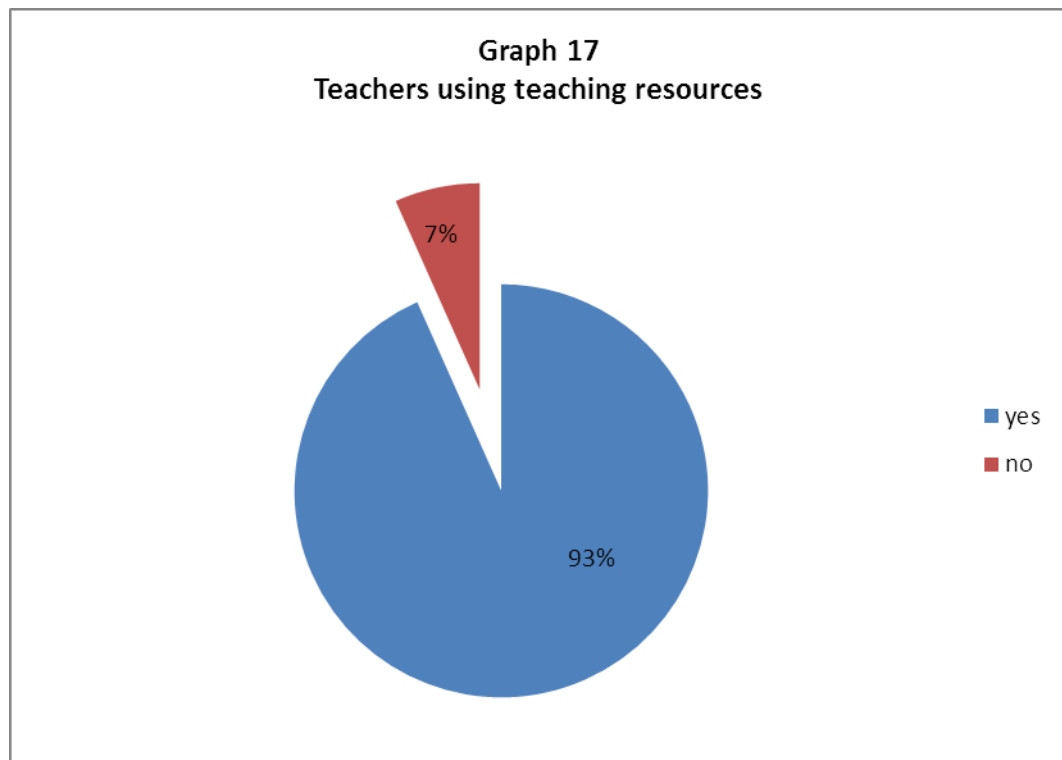


Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The majority of teachers in our research work, seventy one percent of them, or 12 teachers, say that the ideal number of students to teach a class is 16 to 25 students in a class. Twenty three percent, 4 teachers, say that 26 to 30 students is an adequate number of students per classroom, one teacher, 6%, said that 10 to 15 students is the ideal number. Nine students, corresponding to the 60% in the survey said that the number of students is not adequate, but six (40%) students said that the number of students in their class was fine.

Keeping in mind that the average number of students in our sample classes were 45 students per class, it is interesting to set our attention to what Blatchford (2003) said about large classes. This author mentions that in a large class teachers spend more time into tasks that are not necessarily related to the topic being taught, they have to control discipline and attention; he also says that in bigger classes teachers do not know their students and cannot respond or interact with them individually. This fact was confirmed during the observation; teachers did not know the students' names. In at least two or three of the observed classes, teachers would choose randomly students' names from their grading book in order to pick who answers a question or who performs a given task in class.

*Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer, projector, smart board, and supplementary material)?*

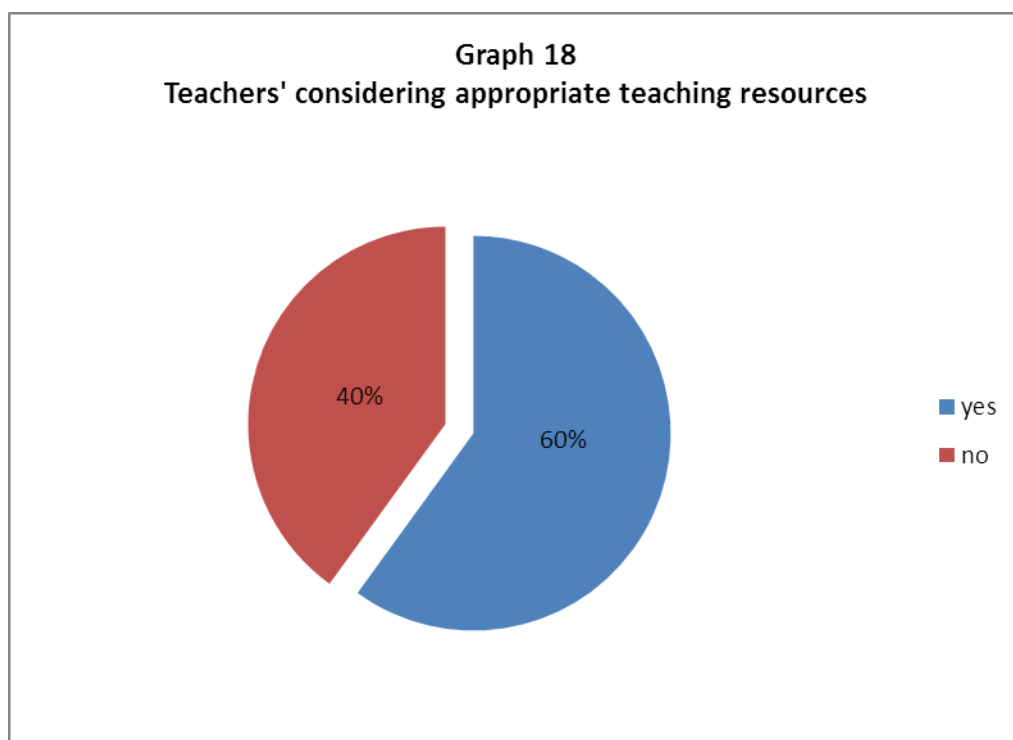


Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Ninety three percent of the observed teachers, 14 teachers, said that they do use resources as TV, CD player, computer, projector, etc.; just one teacher, which is the seven percent of the sample, reported not using these resources. Most of the teachers said that they use mainly CD player, and it was observed that most of the textbooks used in class do have a CD that comes with the student's book.

On the other hand, eleven students, 73%, say that no resources are used in the classroom. During the observation no teaching resources were used at all in any of the classes, no teaching equipment was available in any in any of the classes.

*Do teachers consider appropriate the resources that they have in class?*



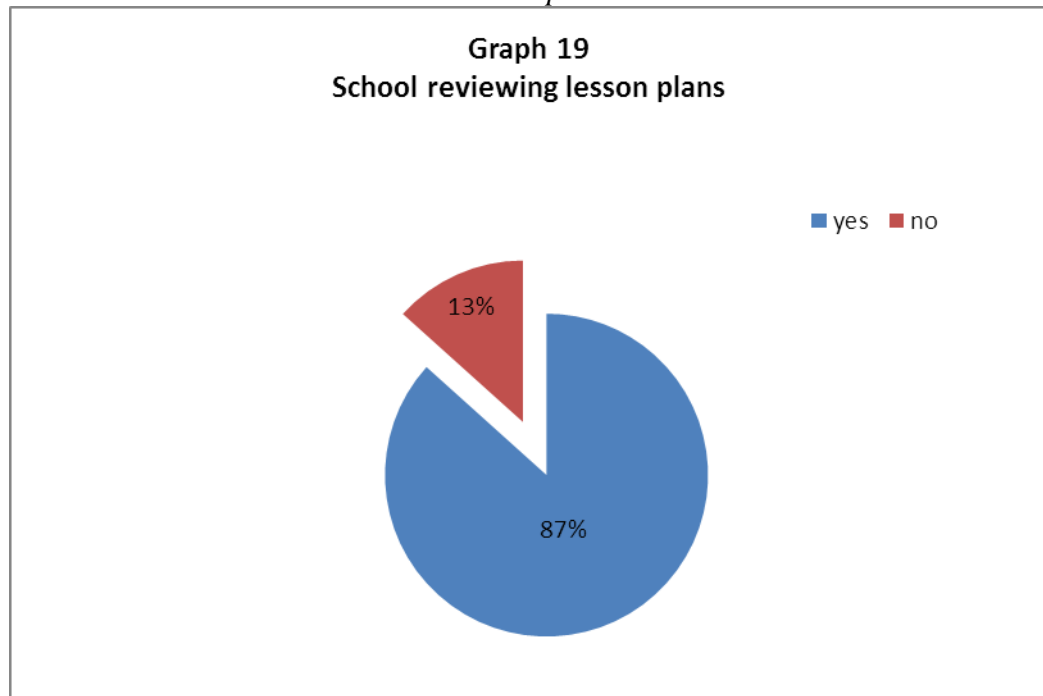
Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Sixty percent of the teachers reported that they do have appropriate teaching resources; but surprisingly, it was confirmed during observations that there are no teaching resources in the classrooms. One of the teachers charged five cents to the students per each handout; the observer also paid the fee in order to get the material.

Students were also asked to tell if resources such as TV, recorder, computer or smart boards were used in class, 73% of them said that no resources were used during their classes.

### *Factors Concerning Institutions*

*Does the institution review teacher's lesson plans?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

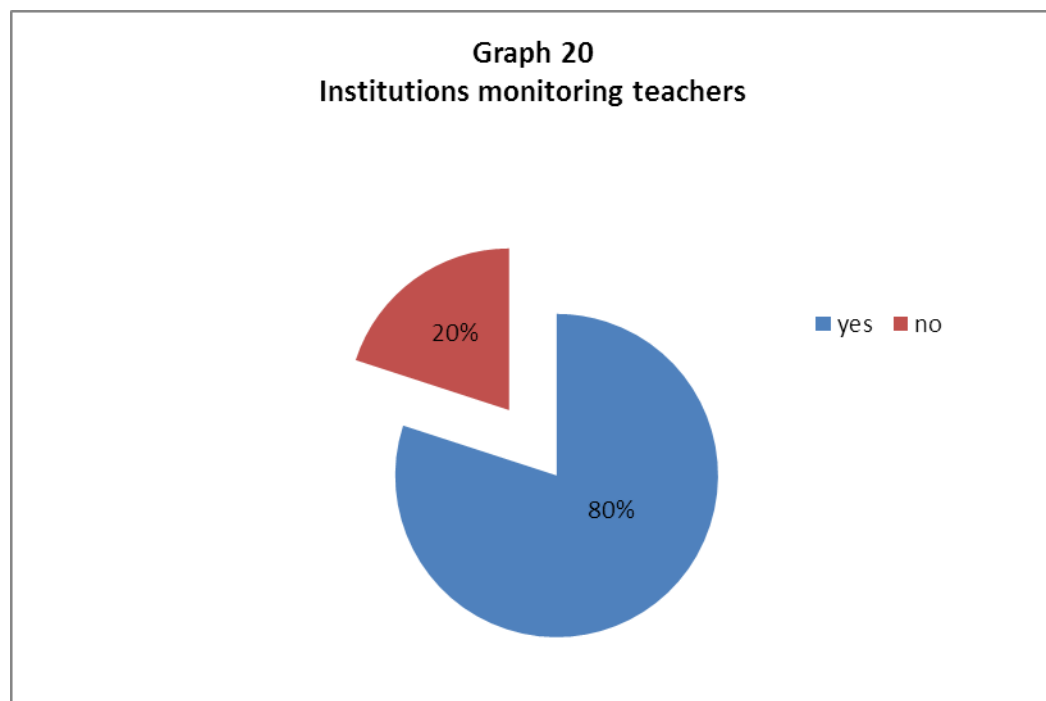
Eighty seven percent of the teachers, 13 teachers, say that their lesson plans are checked, 2 teachers, and a 13% say that school officials do not check them.

When teachers were asked how often their plans were checked, the following data was tabulated: 67% of the teachers report that their lesson plans are checked only once a month, one percent said that they have theirs checked once a week. A 13% of the teachers checked the box "other", and wrote notes as "eventually, sometimes, almost never".

Butt (2006) says that it is important to monitor teacher's lesson plans on a regular basis. He explains that positive feedback on lesson plans can improve

teaching techniques and even give fresh ideas on resources; the end result would obviously be practice improvement. This author says that planning is very personal, but it needs to follow specific guidelines and techniques, these techniques and guidelines need to be checked; comments should be raised on this practice, otherwise it is possible to fall into the “routine trap” that will bore students and will frustrate the teacher. During class observation, there was no evidence of lesson planning; as a result, no teaching techniques and guidelines were observed to be kept, and practice improvement or fresh ideas for teaching are very likely not to occur in these classes. The learning-teaching process is greatly affected by the lack of planning among the observed classes.

*Does the institution monitor your teaching?*



Author: María Ivonne León Loza  
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 20 shows that 80%, 13 teachers, reported that school officials monitor their teaching; meanwhile 20%, 2 teachers, said that nobody observes their classes.

Forty seven percent of the teachers said that their classes are monitored once a month, thirty three percent said that they were monitored “every now and then”, “sometimes”, “almost never”, or “once a term”.

The observer asked those teachers who checked the once a month box if there was evidence of this monitoring, most of them said no, so the veracity of this assertion could not be proven.

Stallings (2000) says that systematic information about class observation can indeed improve teaching practices, it makes teacher aware of the areas they need to improve and enhance. She has found that teachers change their attitude and behaviors towards their students after receiving feedback from classroom observations. She mentions that the feedback given from the observer, intends to create “imbalance” in teachers’ perceptions of their own behavior. The new behavior usually is an improvement of techniques and resources for the class.

Consequently, if there is no evidence of class monitoring during the classes among the observed schools, and, as analyzed before, no class planning is done, teachers do not have the need or the opportunity to improve their practice or to receive any feedback. The teaching-learning process is therefore affected or not improved by the lack of teaching monitoring during their classes.

## Conclusions

- There are several factors that clearly affect the teaching-learning process among the sample students, those are: teacher's level of English language command, teacher's education, teaching methods and techniques, percentage of English language used in class, class size and physical space, seating arrangement, and resources used in the classroom.
- Among the observed groups of students, when delivering a class, their needs were not taken into consideration, nor were their level of English or motivation. Classes were taught aiming to cover a topic rather than paying attention to specific students' needs or level of English knowledge.
- Teachers' level of education was acceptable; most of them hold a Bachelors degree, but there still the teachers who only have a high school diploma.
- The level of English language command among teachers was not the optimal, most of them fall into the A1 and A2 level as per the Common European Framework, therefore they could not deliver their class in English, English was not used in most of the observed classes.
- Very little to no input of the English language was provided in the observed classes.
- There is no evidence of lesson planning among the observed teachers. Class observation and lesson design monitoring is not a common practice among the school authorities in the observed schools.
- The resources that our sample teachers have are minimal. They are not able to access to photocopied material, the use of technology or video/audio material was not evident in any of the observed classes.



- Classroom sizes and physical conditions in the observed classes are critical. The number of students per class was an average of 45 students per class. Most of the observed classrooms have broken windows, busted doors, or a lack of ventilation. The students or the teacher cannot move around because of space limitations.
- The interviewed students did not express much interest or motivation to learn English. They do not understand the purpose or the importance of learning English; they said that they will never use it and that it is a waste of time and effort.
- Observed teachers did not follow teaching techniques or learning-teaching cycles. Most of the observed teachers just started the class by presenting new material; activities like introduction techniques, warm-ups, or wrapping up were not done at all with the students.

## Recommendations

- It is crucial to have a thorough training process for English teachers who are teaching in the public sector. Good and demanding programs should be implemented for certifying entry level English teachers. A good level of English knowledge will ensure that students will get a better opportunity to be exposed to a good English language level of instruction.
- More resources should be allocated to the English program for public schools in Ecuador. This will provide more resources so that teachers will be able to work at an optimum level.
- Lots of input should be provided to students in order to have them exposed to the English language, it should be a priority within the teaching-learning process.
- English language should be taught on a more realistic way, using English in class and exposing students to the culture should be a priority. Students should be able to be motivated to learn English by being exposed to real daily life situations of their interest.
- Performance of the English language in class should be crucial, but aiming communication, not just grammar application of language structures. A use of all language skills should be implemented at all times, that is reading, writing, reading and speaking, in English.
- A teachers' monitoring program should be implemented, this way high standards could be enforced. Class planning also should be mandatory and should be regularly checked, teachers should not be improvising their classes but executing and following carefully planned programs.

- A reward system should be implemented to motivate teachers for accomplishments in the teaching-learning process.

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Annexes

Annex 1



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

OBSERVATION SHEET

<b>EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>YEAR</b> (desde 8vo básica a 3ro bachillerato):	

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

**\*Students' Needs** (*age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles*)

YES ( ) NO ( )

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

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

<b>*Students' Level</b>			
Basic ( )	Intermediate ( )	High Intermediate ( )	Advanced ( )

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

**3. Which of the following methods are used?**

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

_____	
-------	--

**4. Which of the following activities are used?**

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

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

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

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

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

**7. How many students are there in the classroom?**

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

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

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

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

YES	( )	NO	( )
NOTES:			
_____			

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

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

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

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

### TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

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

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

Annex 2



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

**MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA**

**CARRERA DE INGLES**

**TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

<b>EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>YEAR:</b>	

**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?**

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

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

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

**4. Which is the level of your students?**

<b>*Students' Level</b>			
Basic ( )	Intermediate ( )	High Intermediate ( )	Advanced ( )

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

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

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

YES ( )	NO ( )	
Why?		
_____		

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

YES ( )	NO ( )	
Why?		
_____		

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

YES ( )	NO ( )	
Why?		
_____		

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

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

**10. Do you plan your lessons?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**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**



Annex 3



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA**

*La Universidad Católica de Loja*

**MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA**

**CARRERA DE INGLES**

**STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

<b>EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>YEAR:</b>	

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

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

**¿Por qué?**

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**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 aprender 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!!!!**