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

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DEDICATION

With all my love and affection, I dedicate this thesis to my God for giving me the opportunity to live and have a wonderful family and friends.

I also thanks to my parents who have taught me the most important values for my life and who have always supported and encouraged me to achieve my goals. They have been my source of inspiration and have given me their unconditional love and care every day. Finally, the culmination of this thesis would not have been possible without the absolute and constant support of my lovely brothers and sisters who have stood by me in good and bad times.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This research is about "Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools" and its purpose is to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process. In addition, main variables studied were related to factors such as, teachers, students, classroom and educational institutions.

This study was conducted in five public high schools in the city of Chone, province of Manabí. The sample consisted of 15 experienced English teachers and 15 students of different grades, ranging from 12 to 16 years old.

The method applied in this study was Quantitative and the techniques used in this research were surveys and note taking. Also, instruments such as observation formats and questionnaires were used for observing and interviewing teachers and students.

The analysis of results showed that class size and classroom space affect the English teaching-learning process making the development and management of the class difficult due to the great number of learners in a small classroom with a single teacher conducting a large group of students.

INTRODUCTION

English is a universal language spoken, taught, and applied for diverse purposes and areas around the world such as business, technology, political, and education; likewise, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language has become highly important into the educational context due to the fact that this language is broadly used by people in all fields; however, in our country the lack of English knowledge is a problem that has been widely perceived and limits Ecuadorian students' academic performance, making them unqualified to immersion programs or scholarships offered internationally.

For that reason, it is important to analyze and investigate the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high school since they can render a guide to find better solutions to this problem and improve students' English proficiency level. With that purpose, three specific objectives are considered in order to begin this study. The primary specific objective is to determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place; the secondary one is to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers, and the third one is to determine the teachers' instructional competence.

In Ecuador, minimal research attention has been directed toward the factors that affect the language teaching-learning process; however, in 1992 Ecuadorian and British governments came to an agreement in order to innovate the method in which English is taught in public high schools, where English was designated as a mandatory material. Additionally, the government emphasized in the same way the importance of teaching English in elementary schools; nevertheless, at this level, English was not established as obligatory. Despite the application of the above

policies, there are still a lot of aspects which need to be improved in order to reach the desired proficiency language in Ecuadorian students.

On the other hand, previous researches on factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process agree that students, teachers, and environment, are the major aspects, which need to be considered in the searching of good outcomes into the educational field. Regarding this Saricoban & Salkisli (2006, p.1) state that "teaching and learning a foreign language is a social process which requires the interaction of the two important parts of the process, the teachers and the students in a social environment" so a "careful analysis and understanding of these factors and their effects on student learning and motivation will enable teachers to be able to prevent disruptive behaviors or cope with them when they occur" (p.14).

Some studies concerning the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process had been conducted, each of which had contributed to the educational field. Kizildag (2009) investigated the problems and challenges encountered by English language teachers teaching at public primary schools in Turkey such as having a poor institutional planning, instructional methods, and socio-cultural problems. This study concluded that the problems and challenges identified by the school teachers in Turkey were highly interrelated. It appears to be that one problem results into another through a chain reaction, giving as a result, ineffective teaching and learning activities. It is well documented that foreign language teachers start over from the beginning during each academic year. They re-teach what they had taught the previous year due to the limited use of language in context and learners eventually forget what they learn.

The next study was carried out by Aduwa & Iyamu (2006), whose purpose was to determine three variables: first, the frequency of the use of instructional media;

second, the frequency of the use of instructional techniques, and finally the school´s learning environment. The conclusion, of this investigation was that the public secondary schools in Nigeria are far behind in time offering multiple pathways to the teaching and learning English as a second language. Consequently, the effect of this is that secondary school students who find their way into the university are already at a disadvantage, due to poor background and preparation in language education.

Finally, Khamkhien (2010) carried out a research that was based on two main purposes: first, to determine three factors: how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies; and second to compare the roles of these factors and the pattern of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students.

The results of the study confirmed, that the more experienced students obtained significantly higher mean scores for cognitive strategies and for memory strategies, than those who had less experience.

It is important that students, teachers, and institutions take advantage of this study, in order to address students' needs, teacher training, and institutional equipment purchases. In this way, our students will be prepared to deal effectively with the future challenges in the modern world.

Regarding the benefits of this study, it will be of great importance for future research; because it shows the difficulties that Ecuadorian public high schools confront in relation to the English teaching-learning process; therefore, it offers important guidance for authorities and teachers in order to improve the students' development of their language skills.

It is also significant to know that there was a limitation encountered in this research; the number of students interviewed for this investigation.One student's

opinion does not give enough statistical information about the English learning

process in the observed high schools.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This research was developed in five public schools in the city of Chone, province of Manabí. The participants were fifteen experienced teachers in the English area and fifteen students of six different grades from 8th, 9th, 10th years of basic education, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd senior high school students; there were girls and boys whose ages range from 12 to 16 years old.

Procedures

This research started out by seeking scientific information for the theoretical support on topics such as: Importance of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador, Teaching Approaches and Methods, Teaching Techniques, Class Size, Classroom Spaces, and five previous studies concerning the researched topic. This information was obtained through resources made available from the Internet, journals, scientific articles, and books.

The method applied in this study was Quantitative, by means of which the information was described, analyzed, and interpreted in order to obtain the results of this investigation; similarly, the data was collected and analyzed according to four variables that were: factors concerning teachers, factors concerning students, factors concerning classrooms, and factors concerning educational institution.

The research process was conducted according to the following steps. First, five public high schools in the city of Chone, where English is taught as a foreign language, were selected; also, fifteen experienced teachers in the English area and fifteen students of different grades were chosen for this study.

It is important to state that the techniques used for the data collection were surveys and note-taking along with instruments such as observation sheets and

questionnaires. Surveys were applied to teachers and students, and note taking was used to collected details of the observation process and teacher's interview.

The second step of the research process consisted on applying instruments for gathering data during a period of 4 weeks in which fifteen classes were observed; the details were recorded in observation sheets by taking 11 items corresponded to the development of the fifteen classes. When the classes finished, a students was selected randomly to answer a questionnaire with 14 yes/no questions related to the English language teaching-learning process. Similarly, the observed teachers responded a questionnaire of 20 items about the factors investigated in this process. Finally, the teachers were interviewed using a questionnaire of 15 items that were classified according to the level of the Common European Framework of Reference in order to determine their English proficiency level; the interview was used to collect information about teachers' professional background.

After the data was collected in the five public high schools, only the teachers' questionnaire was taken into account in order to; first, tabulate the 20 questions; second, calculate the percentage of each one; and finally, present these results through graphs. The teachers' questionnaires questions were carefully chosen and selected with the purpose to analyze and tabulate the results in the following order: one, questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, were applied in order to analyze the factors concerning teachers; two, questions 2, 3 and 4 were used in order to analyze the factors concerning students; three, the factors concerning classroom were analyzed according to the questions 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18; finally, the factors concerning educational institutions were supported by the questions 19 and 20.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Nowadays, English is a universal language spoken for most people around the world. Due to its popularity, this language is used in different areas for diverse purposes such as: education, commerce, science, technology, and so on, because the majority of information is presented in English.

In our country, English is considered as a tool of work for future professionals, who in these days are preparing. For that reason, the importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador is turning relevant and significant. Regarding to this basis since 1992 the Ministry of Education (MinEduc) through the Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of English (CRADLE) has applied plans and study programs, evaluation systems, teaching resources, and a permanent teacher-training program centered on a functional-communicative approach in order to improve and re-enforce the English teaching and learning process, to pupils of eighth, ninth, and tenth years of Basic Education (EGB) and first, second, and third years of senior high school. (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador 2011, p.3-4).

Despite of the actions taken by the Ecuadorian government, there are factors that still affect students' English learning process. Therefore, this literature review presents definitions and concepts related to teaching a foreign language, different methods and approaches, teaching techniques, learning style, motivation, etc., which are aspects that deserve to be studied in order to comprehend their level of influence in the English language teaching-learning progression. In addition, this section reviews five studies carried out by different researchers in order to identify and

analyze the impact of the factors mentioned previously in the teaching-learning process.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

Methods and approaches influence the current state of English language teaching and some of them will be described below:

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), the grammar translation method dominated European and foreign language teaching from the1840s to the 1940s, it has been used by language educators for many years and in modified form it continues to be widely practice in some parts of the world today. About it, Freeman (2000, p. 11) states that "This method was used for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature". Furthermore, the classes in the grammar translation method as Brown (2001) suggests, are taught in the mother tongue, with a slight use of the target language, the vocabulary is showed in the structure of isolated words, and finally little attention is paid to the content of the text and the pronunciation.

Another method is Total Physical Response (TPR) that it was developed by James Asher and built around the coordination of speech and action; it tries to stretch language trough physical activity. One of the main characteristic of the TPR, as Freeman (2000) suggests, was to reduce the stress people feel when are studying a foreign language, by the use of a variety of instructions and amusing skits making, in these way the language learning as enjoyable as possible. Furthermore, Richards & Rodgers (2001) state that the general objectives of this method, are to teach orally skills at a beginning level, and imperative drills are the main classroom activities.

More description of methods is given by Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 172) who describe the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as, "Is best considered

an approach rather than a method, it refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning, and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures". Similarly, the CLT intend broadly, as Freeman (2000) suggests, submitting an application to the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach by structuring: communicative competence, the goal of language teaching, and by recognizing the interdependence of language and communication.

However, Brown (2001) claims that it is difficult to present a definition of CLT, but there are some interconnected characteristic that can offer a description about the CLT as: classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence goals; therefore, must intertwine the organizational aspect of language techniques considered to involve learners in the pragmatic and functional use of language for meaningful purpose, the fluency and accuracy are considered as a complementary principles, the role of the educators is that of facilitator and guide, and students are encourage to create meaning through linguistic communication with others.

Another important approach is the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which as Richards & Rodgers (2001) define offer the notion of "task" as a fundamental unit of planning and teaching. However, definitions of task vary on TBLT, because there is a commonsensical understanding that a task is an activity or goal that is conducted using language, such as reading a map and giving directions, finding a solution to a puzzle, or making a phone call and with these activities the students have the opportunity to interact, to work, to understand each other, and to express their own meaning. In addition, Freeman (2000) suggests that the purpose of TBLT is to supply learners with a natural context for language use; for her, the

language practiced in the classroom is not pre-determinate, but rather originates from the nature of a particular project that students elect to do.

Finally, there is a method known as Content based instruction that Freeman (2000) describes as a way of learning language naturally because the contents for language instruction are taught through academic content. This method has originated a recent movement known as language across the curriculum because it integrates reading, writing, and grammar into different subjects' areas. However, the same author mentions that this method may represent a challenge for both, teachers and students, since it requires that they have great knowledge of terms and contents related to the topic. Thus learners would need extra support to comprehend lessons and teachers must design clear objectives for their classes.

Teaching Techniques

Teaching techniques could be defined in several ways, along with the theories behind it. Brown (2001) argues that: "The language teaching literature, considers technique as a super-ordinate term, to refer to various activities that either teachers or learners perform in the classroom". In other words, teaching techniques are the day to day activities planned and applied by the teacher for a particular lesson. It can be either student-centered or teacher-centered, and it can be active or passive depending on how they are used, or applied by the educator.

In addition, Harmer (2001) states that there is a wide variety of techniques which teachers can employ to ensure that students not only grasp the meaning of a language form, or how it is used in exchange or texts, but also be clear about its instructions. According to this, Brown (2001) explains there are two types of techniques; the first one, being the manipulative side, a technique that is completely controlled by the teacher and requires a predicted response from students, examples

of this technique are: choral repetition, dictation, reading aloud, and cued substitution drill; and to the very communicative side, where teachers are put into a less control role, as student become free to be creative with their responses and interaction with their classmates, examples of this technique include: storytelling, brainstorming, role plays, certain games, among others. Thus, it is important that techniques to be applied must have the potential to enhance and improve the students' learning experience. In this sense, Dhand (2008, p. 13) says, "A teaching tecnique can be thought of as an activity which affect the leaners encoding process, that is, how the learner will learn the desired information, concept, generalization and-or skills".

Since there are many factors that can determine the success or failure of any tecnique, teachers must be aware of the appropiateness of the teaching technique they need to apply in their classes. Therefore, Dhand (2008, p. 14) suggests, "with virtually an unlimited supply of techniques from which to choose, the teachers should establish the criteria on which to base his/her choice for using specific techniques during the learning process".

Managing Learning

One of the teacher's key roles is the management of learning, and is, in this part of the language teaching and learning process where teachers have to ensure the best use of the available time and resources.

One of these resources as Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005) point out, is feedback; it focuses on learners' language skills, the ideas in their work, their behavior, and their attitude to learning. The aims of feedback are: to stimulate learners, to help them understand, what their problems are and how they can improve or overcome it.

Regarding time, Harmer (2007) explains that teachers must assign time in some stages of communicative activities when they want to present corrections or suggest alternatives, because the students' communication is at risk, or this might be just the correct moment to draw the students' attention to a problem. That is why teachers need to be particularly sensitive about the way they give feedback, and the way they correct. For this reason, The same author says, "To make sure that the feedback we give; is appropriate to the students concerned and to the activity they are involving in, and that we recognize feedback as a crucial part of the learning process." (p. 137)

Similarly, Fenstermacher & Soltis (2004) suggest that it is also significant to take into consideration the time-managing skills, as it intended to add to the percentage of engaged time, relative to allocated time, and include such techniques as monitoring seat work, reducing leisure chatter, and providing students with an essay, comfortable means to signal their position confusion with the material under consideration.

Lesson Design

The key of a successful teaching, purposeful class management, and the achievement of sustained educational progress, lies in effective lesson planning. Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005) define a lesson plan as a set of annotations that help teachers to think through what they are going to teach, how they are going to teach, and also how can it guide them, during and after the lesson. In other words, Butt (2006, p. 2) says, "A lesson plan is a concise, working document which outlines the teaching and learning, that will be conducted within a single lesson".

Furthermore, Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005) consider essential for teachers to identify the most imperative components of a lesson plan by thinking carefully about what they want their learners to do, and how they want them to do it.

The form of the adopted lesson plan is a very much personal teachers' choice; and, the same authors suggest that all lesson plans enclose similar common elements such as: aims, learning objectives, teaching-learning activities, timings, assessment and evaluation.

In short, using a plan means having a usual dialogue between what teachers planned to do and what is actually happening. Likewise, effective lesson planning, according to Butt (2006), takes time and a range of skills that all teachers have to master quickly no matter whether they are in their period of early training or working as a new teacher at a school. Thus, it is totally right and proper to design learning outcomes which teachers hope their students will achieve during the class.

Class Size

Class size is one of the features that influence the English teaching and learning process. Brown (2001) suggests that ideally language classes should have no more than a dozen students or so; the classroom should be large enough for allowing diversity of learning activities as well as student interaction. Also, it should be small enough for offering students the opportunity to practice and to obtain individual attention. The same author explains that many teachers consider large classes as a problem and it is certainly true; because, there are several challenges they need to overcome, for instance: How can they offer students personal attention? How can they get students interact with each other? How can they organize dynamics and creative teaching and learning lessons?

Nevertheless as Harmer (2007, p.177) says, "Big groups have disadvantages of course, but they also have one main advantage, they are bigger, so that humor, for example, is funnier, drama is more dramatic, a good class feeling is warmer and

more enveloping". He adds that experienced teachers can use this potential to organize exciting and involving classes.

Additionally, Harmer (2007) states that classroom activities as whole group, pair-group and group-work play an important part in large classes, since they maximize student participation. Likewise, Hess (2001) points out that in large classes there are always enough students to get interaction going, and there is a rich variety of human resources for asking collaboration.

On the other hand, Harmer (2007) explains that small classes have considerable advantages over large classes. Stating that, while in a group an individual student only gets a part of the teacher attention, in a small class the teacher focuses exclusively on one person at a time; in this sense, students get deeply enhanced feedback from their teacher, and last but not least, teachers enter into a really dialogic relationship with their pupils in a way that is considerable less possible in a large group situation. However, the same author mentions that students and teachers in small classes may be affected by monotony since the active interaction of large classrooms it is not present.

Classroom Space

Ideally, classrooms should have enough space to allow teachers and students interact adequately. About it, Tabassum (2006) explains that most teachers dream with a classroom where they walk in and can find all the materials required to develop their whole-group teaching, where everything that is necessary to impart their lesson are organized and ready to be applied into the classroom space. In addition, the same author adds that the spatial organization of the classroom also reflect how the teachers want to lay out the curriculum and pedagogy, thus it is necessary for a teacher to examine the partners and meditations of classroom space

before it becomes irrevocable. The organizational control over the classroom space also need to be seen as a form of power that a teacher possess, the educators organization of classroom time and space determinate what kind of social interactions are put in into effect in the classroom.

Seating Arrangement

Muijs & Reynolds (2005) point out that one essential aspect of a successful classroom management is the way teachers arrange seats in class. One general principle is that students should have an adequate space to work comfortably. That is, if movement in the class is desired or required, students should be capable to do this easily and without too much trouble. For that reason, the authors consider that it is important to select seating arrangements in relation to the goals of the lesson, as well as the way students are positioned.

According to Savage, T. V. & Savage, M. K. (2010), there are three basic seating arrangements models most frequently used in classroom: rows, clusters and circular or semicircular patterns. These models may be helpful, as Bender (2004) explains, for controlling serious behavior problems that usually turn into classroom crises. The same author suggests some strategies such as seating the constantly angry, verbally abusive, anti-authority student near a classroom door; seating the fidgety hyperactive student on the periphery of the room, preferably at the back; and seating the insecure student who needs constant encouragement close to you at the beginning of the school year.

In sum, Savage, T. V. & Savage, M. K. (2010, pg. 68) suggest, "Attending to seating arrangements can have an important payoff by influencing student behavior, classroom participation, and student attitudes"

Classroom and / or Teaching Resources

Teachers can use different resources to make lessons more interesting and effective and according to Harmer (2007), they include anything that is used to support the learning process. In this sense, he proposes teachers to use several materials, or classroom resources such as the listed below:

First of all, the board: which is the most versatile piece of teaching equipment use to provide a motivational focal point during whole-class activities. Second, cards (often called flashcards) they are smallish pieces of cardboard which teachers can hold up for their students to see; they can be applied with either pictures or words for cue-response work or as aids in pair and group work. Third, the cassette recorder is one of the language teacher's most useful tools and they are usually provided as part of the EFL materials of course books. Next, the overhead projector is an extremaly useful equipement since they allow teachers to prepare visual or demonstration material. Last, and perhaps the most useful piece of 'equipment' a student can ever own or use is a good dictionary.

Teaching resources offer important benefits for students and some of them are described by Thornbury (2006) as: they relieve the teacher of having to do copious training; they allow learners to continue internalize acquired knowledge; and finally they stimulate language production.

It is significant, therefore, to select and use materials thoughtfully, taking into consideration the learners' needs and interests, so that the resources are a help rather than a limitation, as Thornbury (2006) states.

Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is a common feature of teacher-training courses and it constituted a part of in service teacher support in many schools. In addition Wragg et

al (1996) state that several forms of classroom observation have been developed in part because of the varied of context in which lessons may be observed and analyzed; for instance, a primary teacher being appraised by the deputy manager, who comes on the afternoon to look at the language and number work; a secondary science teacher watched by the head of department during a one-and-a-half hour laboratory session as a part of school's assessment exercise, in both of these cases the observer is watching lessons, the purpose and approaches are different.

Also, Wragg et al (1996) consider that a skillful handled classroom observation can benefit both: the observer and the observed person, helping to inform and improve the professional abilities of both people. However, badly handled, becomes counterproductive, at its worst arousing hostility, resistance and suspicion. Similarly, Brown (2001, p. 429) refers to another disadvantage of classroom observation as, "One of the most neglected areas of professional growth among teachers is the mutual exchange of classroom observations", but it occurs, because once teachers get into a teaching custom, it is very difficult to make time to go and observe other teachers and to ask the same in return.

In spite of some of the difficulties teachers may have of visiting classroom and observing lessons, it is a worthwhile-enterprise and one that should be undertaken in a thoughtful and professional manner.

Student Motivation

Teacher should be kept in mind that students' motivation is an essential part into the teaching and learning process. In this sense, Harmer (2007, p. 20) says, "Motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something". Similarly, Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005)

suggest that motivation plays an important role into the language education, because it helps make learning successful.

Nonetheless, Lightbown & Spada (1999) explains that certain factors influence students' motivation to learn a determinate language. These factors include: first, the usefulness to them of knowing the language well, e.g. getting on to courses of study, getting good marks from the teacher, second, the interest in the target language culture, third, encouragement and support from others, e.g. teacher, parents, classmates, school, society, and finally their interest in the learning process: the interest and relevance of the course content, classroom activities, the teacher's personality, and teaching methods. The same authors argue that motivation in second language learning is a multifaceted phenomenon which can be described in terms of two issues: learners' communicative requests and their attitudes towards the second language community.

Regarding the types of the most widely recognized types of motivation, Harmer (2007) describes extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is the result of any number of outside factors; for instance, the need to pass an exam, the hope of financial reward or the possibility of a future car. And intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual; therefore, a person may be motivated by the gratification of the learning process itself or by the desire to feel better.

Learning Styles

It is perceptible to many of those who have experienced language learning, that we learn in a singular or different way from each other, and we often decide to use what has become identified as a ' learning style'. Pritchard (2009), defines learning style as the prefered or a particular way in which an individual learns and study,

apliying differents strategies or procedures, for example: using pictures instead of text; working alone as opposed as working in groups, and so on.

Another definition is also proposed by Murphy (2008), who states that "when we talk about learning styles, we are talking about how you get a job done" according to this author, learning styles are related to the five senses and the learning channels, some of them are: hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling and tasting, so when more than one of the senses is used, it is known as multi-sensory learning, and those interrelated with the senses make up the learning channels known as: visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

Furthemore, one learning style is not better than another one, people frequently employ the learning styles they are tough in, and evade using the ones that are weaker. Though,it is certainly an excellent idea to learn and do things using a strong style, but also is noteworthy to strengthen the weaker styles by using them in every day situations.

Students Intelligence or Aptitude to Learning

Since 1905, when psychologists Theodore Simon and Alfred Binet originally developed an intelligence scale, in order to categorize those students who would most benefit from special education; schools have placed much importance on measuring and reporting students' levels of intelligence.

The term "intelligence" as Lightbown & Spada (1999) suggest, has traditionally been used to refer to a performance on certain kinds of tests, which are often associated with success in school, and a link between intelligence and second language learning. Additionally, Partin (2009) stated that Gardner in his theory known as Multiple Intelligence, recognized eight different kind of intelligence, these

are: logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and naturalist.

However, traditional education system may have tended to focus on some intelligence over others, especially on language and logical intelligence, this narrow conception of intelligence has short chanced those students, whose talents lie in other forms of intelligence, that is; for example, one student might be strong in musical and bodily intelligence, while another may be strong in language and understanding other people. For that reason, it is essential for teachers to recognize and develop the student's individual patterns of multiple intelligences; because, it consent them to help all students to maximize their learning success, both in and out of school, as Partin (2009) suggests.

To conclude, another important point in this investigation is the treatment of the theoretical support on previous studies that will be presented below.

First of all, the study conducted by Kizildag (2009) whose objective was to identify the problems and challenges faced by English language teachers in public primary schools in Turkey; these problems were identified as having: poor institutional planning, instructional methods, and socio-cultural problems.

The study was carried out via semi-structured interview protocol, where participants were interviewed either face to face or through mailing some questions directly to the participants between January-March 2009. Moreover, in the data analysis procedure descriptive and content analysis techniques were applied.

Kizildag (2009) concludes in his research that the problems and challenges identified by the school teachers in Turkey (institutional, instructional and socio-economic), were highly interrelated, it seems that one problem results in another

through a chain reaction, which cause ineffective English teaching and learning activities.

The next study was carried out by Aduwa & Iyamu (2006), whose purpose was to determine three variables: first, the frequency of the use of instructional media; second, the frequency of the use of instructional techniques; and finally the school learning environment. The methodology applied in this study was based in the use of a questionnaire and observation schedules. The researchers designed the questionnaires by generating a list of items, which solicited students' responses on teaching strategies, instructional resources/media used by the teachers and the teaching/learning environment. The items in the questionnaires were derived from literature and the researcher's experiences in the field.

The conclusion of this investigation was that the public secondary schools in Nigeria are far behind time in offering multiple pathways to the teaching and learning English as a second language. Consequently, the effect of this is that secondary school students who find their way into the university are already at a disadvantage, due to poor background and preparation in language education.

The next study was conducted by Khamkhien (2010) which is based in two main purposes. First, to determine how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies; and second to compare the roles of these factors and the pattern of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students.

The method applied in this study consisted in recruit participants from two public universities (Thailand and Vietnam), where 200 copies of questionnaires were distributed to first and second-year students of each university. This paper tested the roles of three variables; namely, gender difference, motivation and experience in

studying English, and how this affected the selections of language learning strategies reported by Thai and Vietnamese undergraduate students.

The author conclude, that additional experience in studying English has a great influence on the two groups of students, especially on Thai students. Moreover, when compared to the Vietnamese students without additional experience, the Thai students without additional experience applied the six categories of language learning strategies less than Vietnamese counterparts. The results of the study confirmed, that the more experienced students obtained significantly higher mean scores for Cognitive strategies and for Memory strategies, than those who had less experience.

Continuing, the next study carried out by Chang (2011) stated as a purpose: to explore the factors that promote or hinder Taiwanese college teachers' implementation of Communicative Language Teaching.

The methods applied for this study were conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to investigate the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the research questions. The interviews were directed in Mandarin Chinese, which is the native language of the interviewees.

The conclusion of this study indicated that: the CLT is an emerging teaching method in college English classes in Taiwan, and despite certain limitations and hindrances to the optimal implementation of CLT in Taiwan, teachers are cognizant of its benefits to students wishing to improve their English skills, and are supportive of institutional efforts to facilitate the implementation of CLT.

Finally, Narayanan, Rajasekaran & Iyyappan, (2008) carried out a research, with the purpose of studying some factors that affect the learning of English as a second language at the tertiary level. Among the diverse and composite individual

differences and learner variables in learning a second language, factors such as attitude, language-anxiety, motivation, gender and so on play vital roles.

The methodology applied in this research consisted in the use of questionnaires which have been prepared and the data have been collected mainly in writing modes.

To conclude, the findings from this study have important and relevant implications in the theory, and to certain extend the classroom practices in regard to socio-psychological factors. The authors conclude that factors such as: motivation, attitude, language anxiety and gender have a great impact or affecting students' English learning.

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section presents a quantitative analysis of the factors concerning teachers, students, classroom and educational institutions, which are involved in the English language teaching-learning process. The results were quantified from the answers given by teachers and students; then they were contrasted with the information gathered during the observations carried out in classes. This information is used in order to present the interpretation of the following results.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?
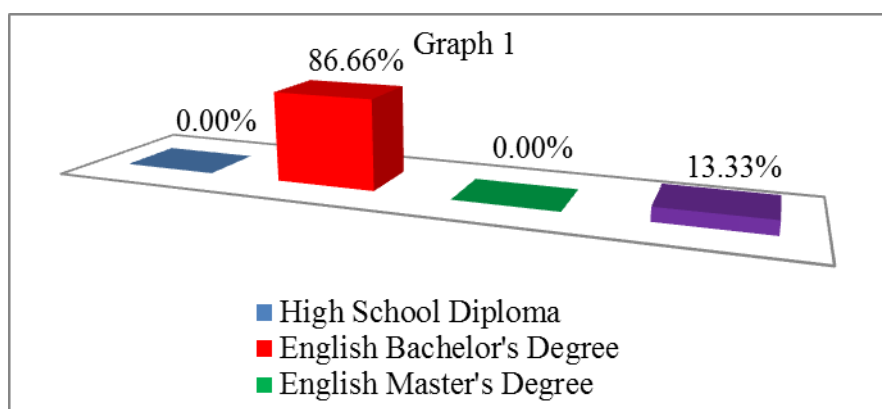
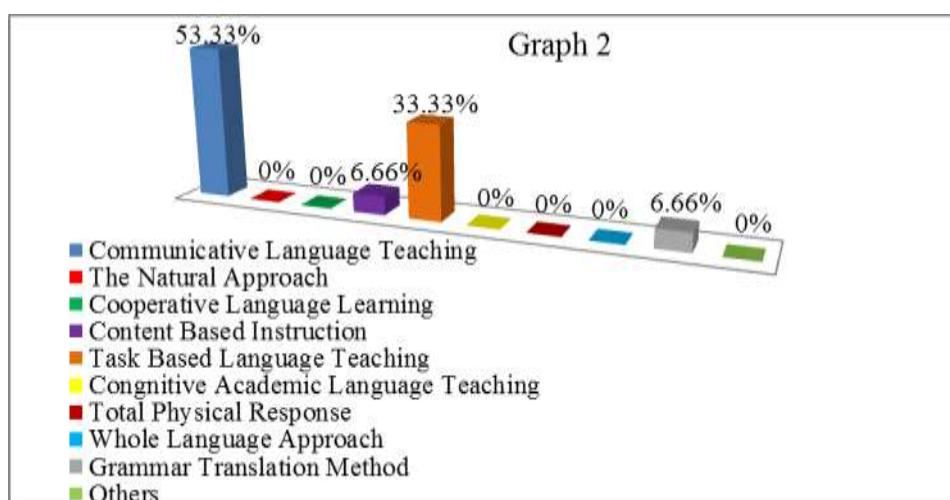Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph number 1 shows that 13 out of 15 teachers, which represent 86.66% of the sample, answered that they have an English Bachelor's Degree. On other hand, 2 out of 15 teachers that represent 13.33% of the participants have degrees in other areas such as Pedagogy or Literature and they worked in the English field because the institutions did not have enough English trained teachers to teach the target language.

Likewise, 10 out of the 15 surveyed teachers commented that they could not continue with training to get another degree, because of the work schedule and the economic situation.

It is also important to take into consideration that through the interview applied on teachers, their English proficiency level was verified according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Ten out of the fifteen teachers interviewed have B1 English language proficiency level; 2 teachers have A2 English level, and 3 are in different language proficiency levels like A1, B2 and C1. In this sense, the teachers who have B1, A2, and A1 levels were not able to interact with students using appropriate language fluency. Moreover, the teachers switched to Spanish very frequently during the interview because they did not comprehend the questions appropriately. This means that teachers have basic language skills for interacting with others and they cannot use English for social and academic purposes. Therefore, it affects students' language learning negatively because they do not receive good English input.

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

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 2 depicts that 53.33% represents 8 teachers who indicated that they apply the Communicative Language Teaching method in their classes since this method provides students activities to develop their productive skills, engaging learners into communication, sharing and interacting with classmates. Authors as Brown (2007) and Richards & Rodgers (2001) agree that this method presents a wide variety of classroom activities, which encourage teachers to involve students in real-life situations, in order to improve leaners' skills as reading, listening, and speaking.

It was corroborated during the direct observation that a teacher asked his students to work in pairs for talking about their lives and their desires when they grow up; they also exchange information about personal interests in order to show their teacher what they know; in that way, the students and the teacher interacted between them. However, the teacher spoke in Spanish to explain the activities to the students; this situation was observed in 9 of the 15 classes where the teachers use both languages alternatively to explain the use of grammar structures and meaning of words.

Another results in graph 2 show that 33.33% represents 5 out of the 15 surveyed teachers who said that they use Task Based Language Teaching in their classes, because this method offers students the opportunity for a 'natural' learning inside the classroom, as Freeman (2001) explains, students can receive knowledge, improving their linguistic abilities in the target language, by provoking a natural situation. For example, it was demonstrated during the direct observation of classes that a teacher asked his students to work in pairs for describing a picture and filling a chart with the correct information.

About other methods, another teacher, that represents 6.66% answered that he uses the Content Based Instruction Method in his class. In fact, it was observed that

this teacher taught a social studies lesson and he spoke in English most of the time; in this sense, this teacher provides a natural input through subject content just as Freeman (2000) mentions. However, some students did not comprehended terms and expressions related to the subject due to their basic level of English. This situation corroborates what the same author explains, when students learn academic subjects by means of non-native language, they need extra support and understanding.

In contrast to the other methods, one teacher, that is 6.66%, answered that he uses the Grammar Translation Method in his classes. It was confirmed during the observation that he and the majority of teachers spoke in Spanish 50% of the time. Applying this method in classes, pupils' motivation was affected, since lessons, as Brown (2001) suggests, were taught in the mother tongue, the vocabulary was taught as isolated words, little attention is paid to the content of the text and the pronunciation; and as a consequence, it seemed there was no need for students to master the four skills of English (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Likewise, observations done in classes evidenced that the grammar-translation method is the easiest for a teacher to employ; because it is not necessary to speak good English.

To conclude, the results show that a high percentage of teachers indicated that they applied the Communicative Language Teaching method in their classes since this method helps students to improve their language skills and communicative competences. However, this result contrasts with the information obtained during the classroom observations, where it was plain the use of the Grammar Translation Method.

Do you use whole-group activities to teach your lesson?
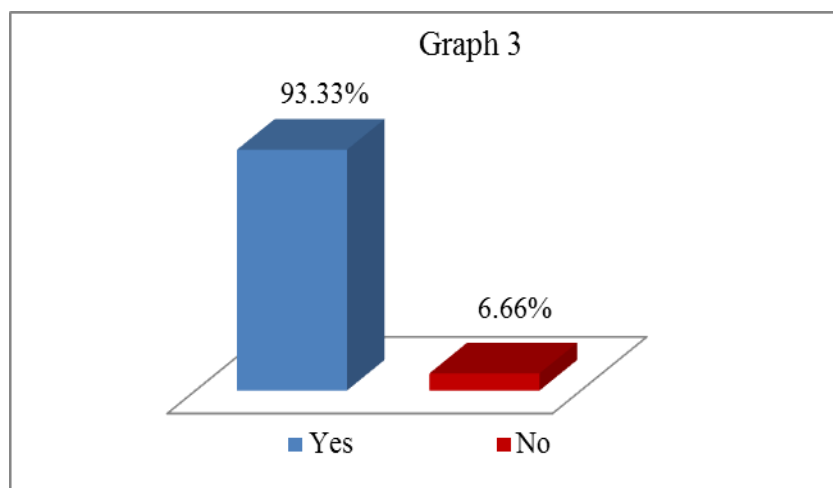
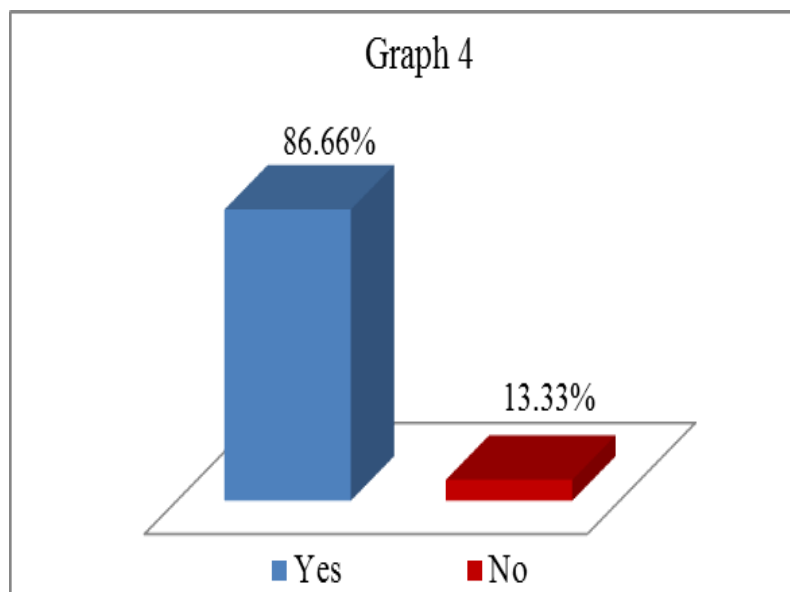Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire.

This graph shows that 93.33% that represents 14 out of the 15 surveyed teachers answered that they use whole group activities to teach English since this teaching strategy helps them to make classes more effective and interactive, so students feel motivated to learn English. In addition, they explained that through whole group activities all the students have more opportunity to participate in classes. However, direct observation showed that only 4 teachers used this type of teaching activity in their classes.

An important characteristic of this type of teaching activity, as Harmer (2007) explains, refers to the importance of giving clear instructions when teachers are working with large classes, to know how to stop the activity and be able to provide students good feedback.

In contrast, one teacher representing the 6.66% answered that he does not apply this teaching strategy in class because students' attempt for participating at the same time increases the level of the noise in the classroom. In addition, he explains that it is not easy to provide individualized attention to the student making it a waste of time working with the whole group

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lesson?
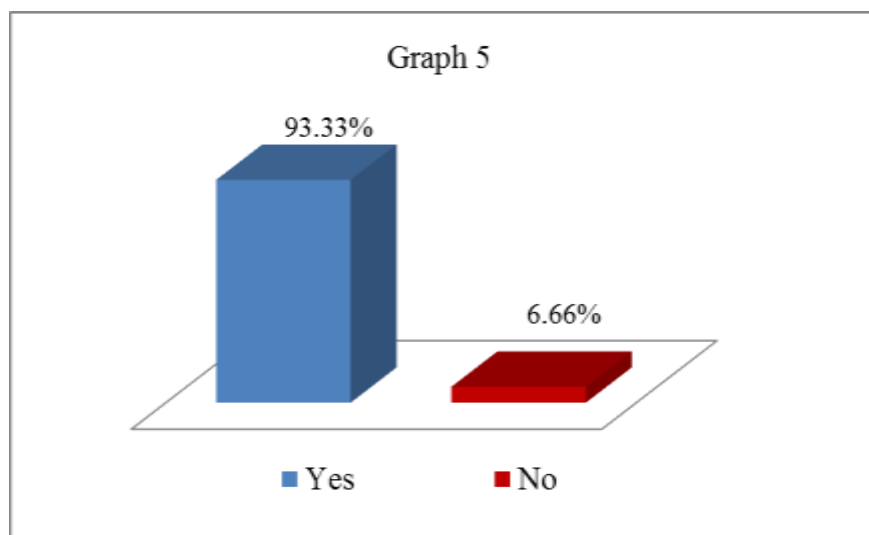
Graph 4

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As graph 4 depicts, 86.66%, which represents 13 surveyed teachers responded that they use individual activities in classes since individualized learning is an essential step in the development of learner autonomy; and this kind of technique stimulate students' knowledge and interest in a better way. In fact, the direct observation showed that 13 teachers used independent work and it gave students the opportunity to perform the task by themselves increasing their confidence, and it can be a way of reinstating peace and tranquility to a noisy and untidy classroom.

In contrast, 13.33% that correspond to 2 out of the 15 participant teachers who answered that they do not use individual activities since students cannot interact with their classmates. For these teachers, individual work may turn deadening if it is overused by teachers, a less motivated advance student may underachieve or exhibit lack of commitment and it takes more time than interacting with the whole class.

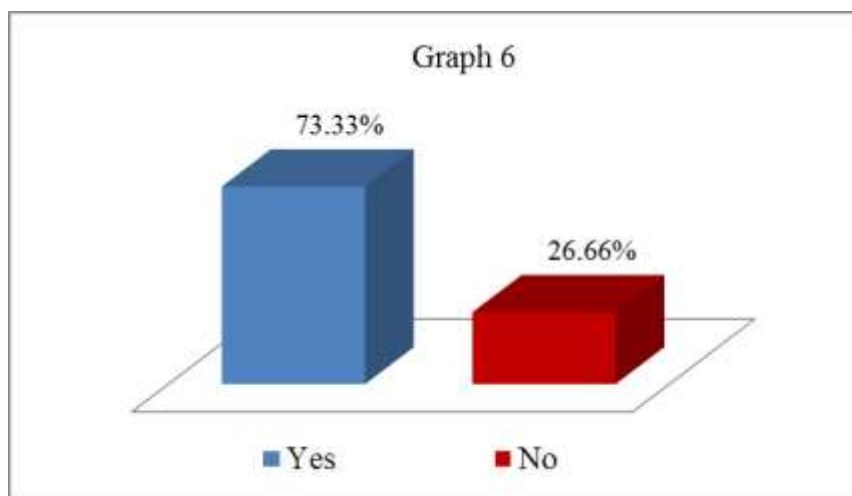*Do teachers use group work to teach their lessons?*

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 5 shows that 14 teachers represented by 93.33%, answered that they use group work activities to teach their lessons. This teaching strategy is used by educators as a way to motivate students, to encourage active learning, teach cooperation, develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills in their students as Harmer (2007) suggests. However, through the direct observation it was confirmed that 6 out of 15 teachers used group work activities. In two of those classes students were more cooperative, participative, and engaged during the lessons since the activity was planned correctly; the effectiveness of group work as teaching technique was affected by lack of lesson design in the other two classes as the analysis of the results in graph 7 will show.

One teacher represented 6.66% of the sample, answered that he does not use this activity because lack of space and high number of students impede him to arrange seats and organize students in groups. Also, this teacher considers that it is not possible to monitor groups' work in large classes and learners take advantage of it talking a lot between them and they do not focus on the learning activities; this situation was observed in almost all classes.

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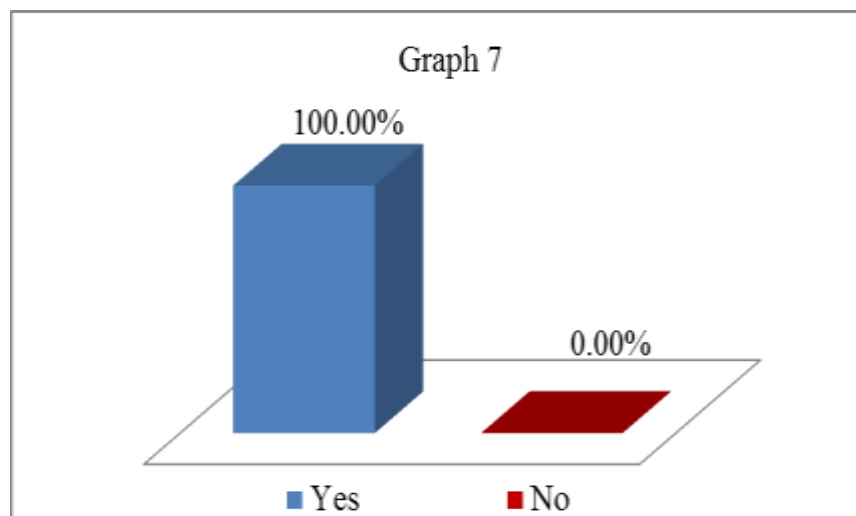

Graph 6

73.33%

26.66%

■ Yes   ■ No

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 6 above shows 73.33% which represents 11 out of the 15 surveyed educators who stated that they use English most of the time in their classes. Some of them commented that using the target language in class helps and encourages students to develop the four basic skills, specially listening and speaking, and to feel more familiarized and self-confidence. This information was verified through the questionnaire applied to students, who answered that their teachers speak in English the majority of the time. However, through the observation it was verified that teachers do not speak English most of the time in their classes and they used the mother tongue 25% to 50% of the time to explain grammar and instructions.

On the other hand, 26.66% that represents 4 out of the15 participants answered that they do not speak English in classes because of the level of difficulty in some lessons; for that reason, the use of the mother tongue is really necessary in order to check students' understanding. In fact, during the direct observation performed in classes, at some stage students asked the teacher to speak Spanish because they did not understand the task or the instruction given by the teacher.

Do teachers plan their lesson?

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

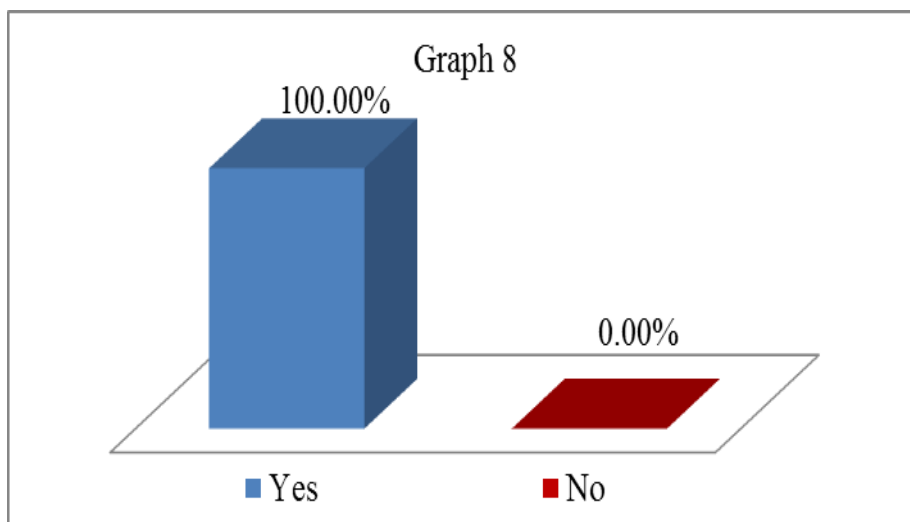Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As graph 7 presents, 100.00% of teachers indicated they plan their lesson, because it is considered a useful tool which helps them to decide what and how to teach contents of lessons; also they stated that a plan guides them during and after the lesson. However, during the direct observation of the classes 13 out of the 15 teachers followed only the instructions from teacher' books and they did not have a lesson plan for teaching the class. Moreover, six teachers used group work in their lessons to increase students' participation and enthusiasm for the topic; but 4 of them did not outlined their lesson plans as Butt (2006) suggests. Even though students were more collaborative, they were not engaged and motivated to learn the topics because the teaching activity was not planned and groups did not work effectively.

On the other hand, it was observed that only 2 out of the 15 teachers designed their lessons plans correctly and their classes were more interesting because they applied some elements described by Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005) such as aim, learning objectives, teaching-learning activities, timing, assessment, and

evaluation. In this sense, direct observation showed that the teaching-learning process, in these two classes, flew smoothly and students worked properly in each stage of the lessons. Besides, the teachers used group work as part of the teaching activities and students participated actively because all the elements of the lesson plan were designed well.

Therefore, the teachers who planned their lessons carefully, took in consideration what Butt (2006, p. 2) states, "A lesson plan is a concise working document which outlines the teaching and learning process that will be conducted within a single lesson". Clearly, lesson design helped teachers to achieve the objectives of their lessons and the types of teaching-learning activities selected for the lessons gave the expected results.

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

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As graph 8 shows, 100.00% which represents a total of 15 surveyed teachers indicated that they consider aspects such as: discipline, timing, feedback and

instruction to teach their lessons. Similarly, almost all students indicated that teachers explain activities, control discipline, assign timing, and give feedback.

However, classroom observation showed that 13 out of the 15 teachers taught their classes without considering important aspects of managing learning.

Regarding discipline, teachers had difficulties to control students' behavior due to the high number of learners in the class since class size was over 31. As a result, teachers were not able to apply discipline strategies such as separate students to stop talking between them because lack of space.

Similarly, lack of space impeded teachers to monitor students' activities for providing appropriate feedback. It was observed that teachers tried to help students in their learning process while they worked on the board but there were many students and little time to give feedback to all of them in one class.

Timing was applied effectively in the majority of the classes because teachers usually indicated students the amount of time to complete each of the assigned activities.

Finally, direct observation showed that only two teachers gave clear and accurate instructions about learning activities and students were able to work effectively. The other teachers assigned activities directly and explained instructions as students developed tasks; as a result, learners asked teachers for clarifications very frequently in order to complete their work.

The analysis above shows that many teachers do not consider that managing learning is one of the teacher's key roles for ensuring the success of lessons.

Factors Concerning Students

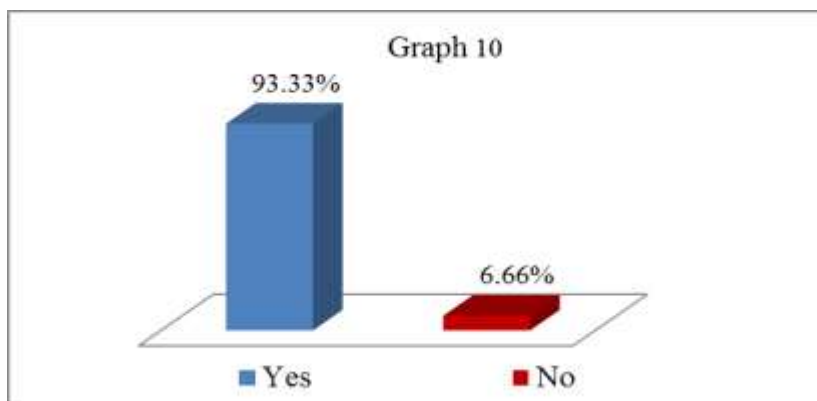*Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?*
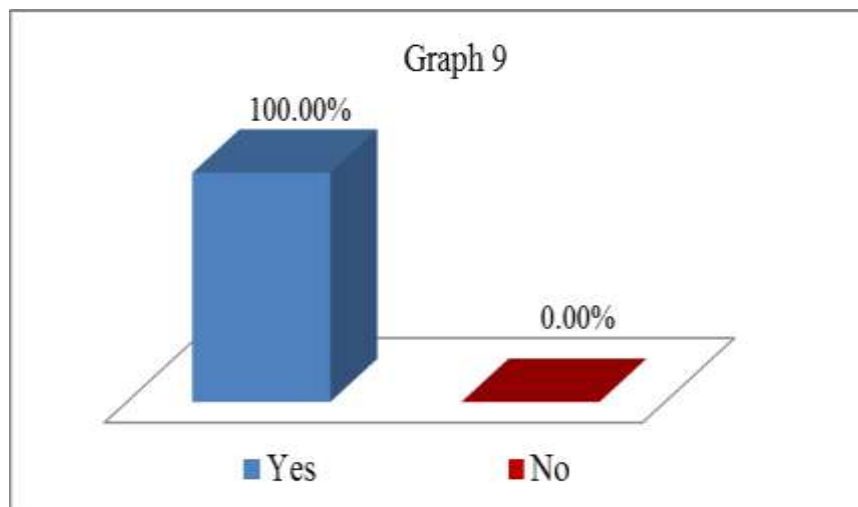
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 9 indicates that 100.00% represents 15 interviewed teachers who answered that they consider students' needs such as: age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles to teach English. However, during the observation, teachers did not apply activities or used resources in relation to their students' needs due to the fact that the necessary resources were not available in the institutions; the only resources used were the whiteboard and the textbook. In this sense, Harmer (2007) suggests that teachers can apply a variety of activities and resources in relation to students' needs, to make lessons more interesting and effective; for example: visual, audio, realia, and on-line exercises to motivate students depending of course on age and personality.

Likewise, the students' learning style is an important aspect that must be considered by teacher in order to improve the students' skills. Pritchard (2009) defines learning style as the prefered or a particular way in which an individual learns and study, applying different strategies or procedures; for example, using pictures instead of text; working alone as opposed to working in groups, and so on.

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successful?

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano
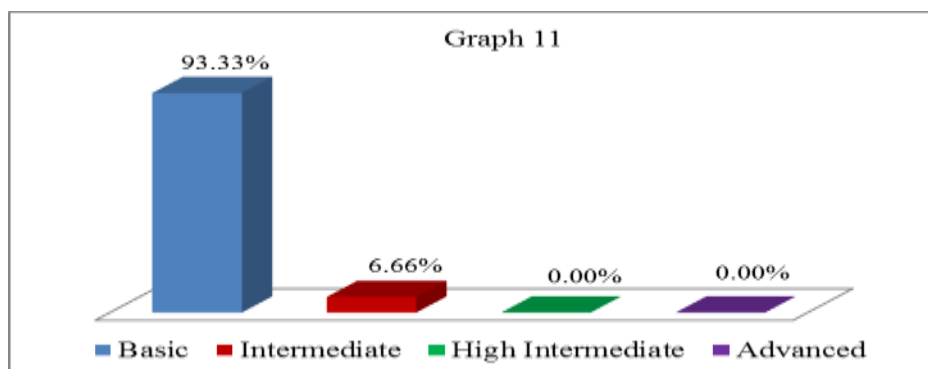
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 10 depicts that 93.33% corresponds to 14 out of the 15 teachers who answered that they consider students' level to teach the target language effectively in class. Similarly, students stated that the type of activities assigned by teachers were easy for them.

Certainly, it was observed that the students' English level was considered by teachers because learning tasks consisted mainly on asking and answering questions about personal information, filling on the blanks, matching pictures to meaning of words, repeating pronunciation of words, etc. Those activities were identified during observations as features of a basic level that students were able to complete correctly. Moreover, teachers sometimes completed activities for learners because they did not know how to proceed. In addition, some activities were translated to Spanish because they represented a challenge for students such as reading a text for practicing comprehension.

On the other hand, 6.66% represent 1 out of the 15 surveyed teachers who answered that he does not consider students' level to teach the lesson; subsequently, leading to not knowing how to work or develop projects in the classes according to

the proficiency level of each student. This occurs sometimes because teachers do not know well the students' individual learning ability, and also they are unaware about how to plan or design specific tasks according to each level.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 11

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano
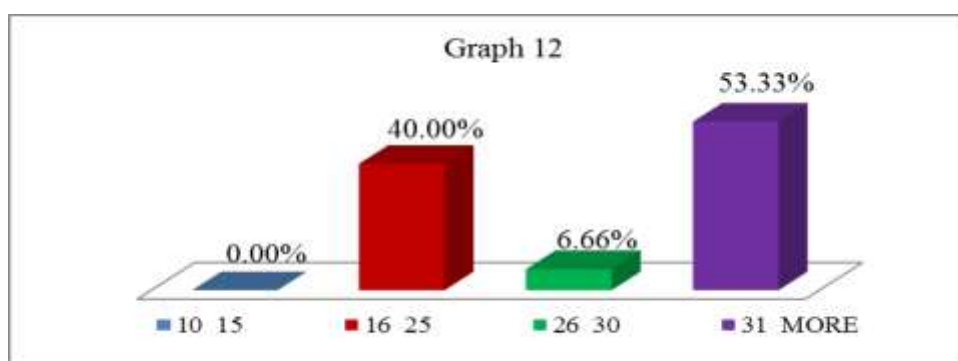
Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As it is shown on graph number 11, fourteen out of the fifteen educators that correspond to the 93.33% of the surveyed ones answered that they consider that students' English proficiency level is basic. Another result that allows confirming this is the answers given by students that indicated that learning activities were easy for them. During observations, the level of students was identified as basic because teaching activities consisted on question/answer exercises, filling on the blanks with the correct tense of verbs, matching pictures to the correct meaning. In addition, grammar structures taught in the observed classes were mainly related to the use of present and past simple that students practiced by doing repetition drills or changing tense of sentences. Moreover, teachers translated instructions or expressions very frequently because students did not understand; it does not help them to improve their English level knowledge to develop the four basic skills, their fluency and accuracy.

On the other hand, 6.66% correspond to 1 out of the 15 teachers, who responded that the English proficiency level of some of his students is intermediate; it seems that there were students who had acquired previous knowledge in English at language institutes. In fact, it was observed in those classes that some learners were able to use English correctly and they did not show difficulty for completing activities as they majority of students in the classroom. Moreover, those students who had better knowledge of the language than their peers helped others with their activities; they also helped teachers to copy activities on the whiteboard or to check their classmates work.

In sum, the majority of observed students were identified with a basic level independently of the course they belong to. It is important to mention, that teachers' frequent use of the mother tongue did not contribute to improve learners' language level.

Factors Concerning Classroom

How many students are there in the observed classes?

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As graph 12 shows, 53.33% which correspond to 8 out of the 15 teachers indicated that they have to work with 31 or more students each day and throughout the whole year; this means that a high number of students is studying in the same

classroom, without the adequate space to work comfortably and to develop successful knowledge. During the interview, teachers expressed that they consider large classes as a problem and it is certainly true; because, it was observed that there were several challenges teachers needed to overcome such as behavior, students' aptitude, seating arrangement, etc.

In addition, 40.00% represents 6 out of the 15 surveyed teachers that answered that they have classes with 16 to 25 students. Through the survey done, educators stated that working with this number of students let them interact, control discipline, and give the correct feedback to each student.

Finally, 6.66% corresponds to 1 out of the 15 educators that has classes with 26 to 30 students per grade.

Regarding the previous results, Brown (2001) suggests that ideally language classes should have no more than a dozen students or so and the size of the class should be large enough for having students working in groups and interacting between them. However, in the direct observation performed in class, it was found that seven classrooms have less than 31 students. This means that the majority of teachers work in large classes; it is a big problem for educators since monitoring activities and correcting the students' mistakes turns very hard in crowded classes. The number of the students in language classes should be reduced, in order to make monitoring easy for the purpose of an effective language teaching.

Certainly, big groups have disadvantages, but they also have one main advantage, as Harmer (2007) points out, they are bigger, so that humor; for instance, is funnier, and drama is more dramatic, a good class feeling is warmer and more enveloping; for these reasons, experience educators should use this potential to organize exciting and involving classes. Nevertheless, the observed teachers did not

take advantage of large classes because there were groups of 40 and 50 students; this constitute a great challenge for teachers because it was extremely hard to engage students in the lesson and control discipline. Only the students who were sit at the first 10 rows participated actively in the class and the other pupils were focused in talking between them or doing activities not related to the lesson.

These results give evidence of a common problem in Ecuadorian public high schools that make difficult the English language teaching. It is unfeasible for students to learn the target language appropriately without an appropriate learning environment.

Do teachers feel comfortable with the numbers of students they are working with?
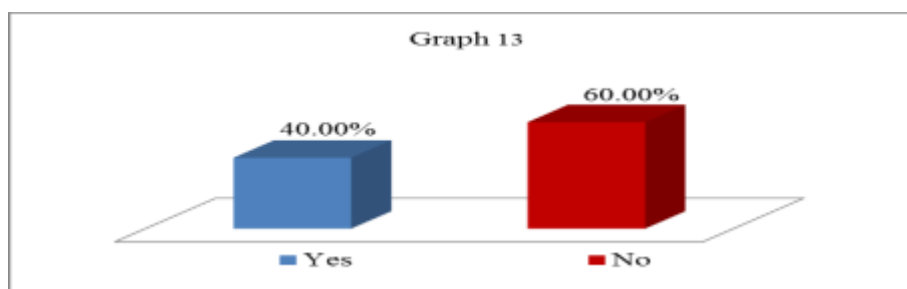
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 13, depicts that 60.00% corresponds to 9 out of the15 participants teachers who do not feel comfortable with the number of students they are working with inside the classroom. As it was commented by one teacher, working with large classes is very demanding because it is not easy to control discipline and it affects students' learning, instructors' ability to teach, and the quality of education.

Moreover, another teacher added that managing a large class requires good planning; however, they do not have or give themselves time for the kind of planning needed. Through the observation, it was verified that teachers had difficulties for monitoring students' work and learners got little individual attention or feedback;

this situation did not help them to improve their language knowledge. And, also discipline and control of the classes at some stage become troublesome.

In contrast, 40.00% of the sample represents 6 out of 15 surveyed teachers who answered that they are comfortable with their number of students in their class, because the institution where they work does not have a great demand of students as in other institutions; therefore, it is easy to work with around 16 to 25 students per class. Similarly, students indicated that class size helps them to learn English better; they perceive that learning flows easily in small classes because interaction between students and teachers occurs appropriately. In fact, it was observed that teachers were able to monitor learners' activities and control discipline in seven classes that had less than 31 students.

Teachers must consider that class size is one of the features that influence the English teaching and learning process; Brown (2001) suggests that language classes should be large enough to present diversity as well as student interaction, and small enough to offer students the opportunity to practice and to obtain individualize attention.

Do teachers have enough space to work with the group of students they have been assigned?
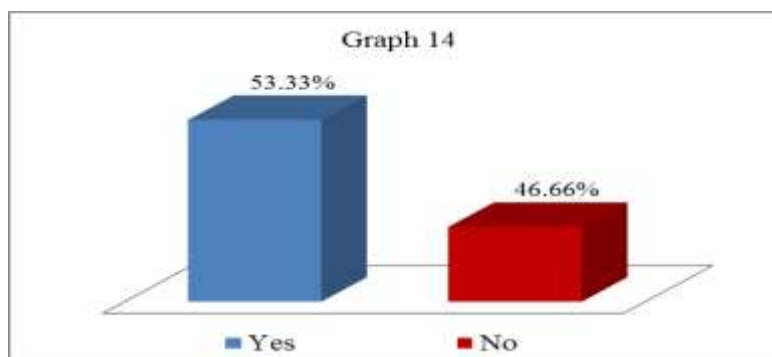
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In the information detailed above in graph 14, we can see that 53.33% corresponds to 8 out of the 15 teachers who had stated that they do not have the appropriate space to work with the group assigned. It was verified during the observation that 9 out of the 15 classes had more than 31 students; the great number of students did not allow teachers and students to move freely in the classroom; therefore, it was difficult to maintain learners' attention in class, or monitoring tasks, and at some stage classes tended to be noisy.

For those reasons above, it is important that educators take into consideration that the organizational control over the classroom space also needs to be seen as a form of power that a teacher possess. About it, Tabassum (2006) explains that educators' organization of classroom space determines what kind of social interactions are put in into effect in the classroom.

However, teachers need to observe how the space divides subjects and objects from one another, the gaps separating material objects from one another, the rifts between subjects, and in turn how that space can be reconstructed differently.

On the other hand, 46.66% represents 7 out of the 15 surveyed teachers who stated that classroom is appropriate in relation to the number of students; making it easier to conduct their classes successfully. Similarly, students also stated that classroom space helps them to learn better; this group of students belongs to classrooms that had 16 to 25 students. The information gathered through observations in these classrooms, allowed confirming that students and teachers were able of walking freely, because there was much space between rows. In addition, it was possible for 6 teachers to arrange students' seats for working in groups.

The events observed in both, large and small classrooms, give enough evidence that classroom space is an important factor that affect the English teaching-learning

process because the more the space in the classroom the more students are able to work appropriately on their learning activities. In addition, rates of bad behaviors are low and teachers and students are able to interact well.

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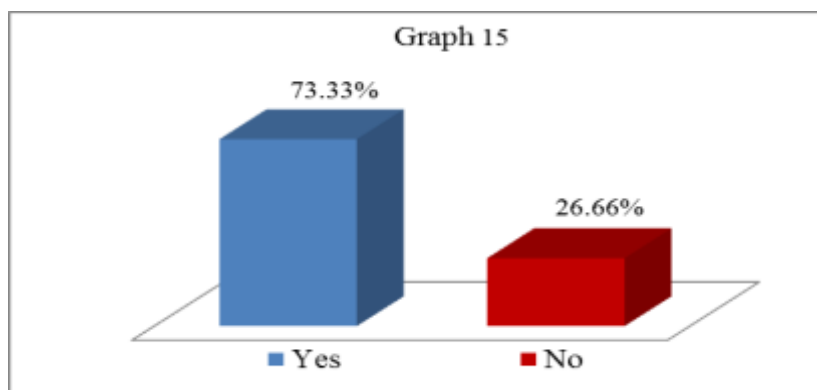
Graph 15

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graph 15 shows that 73.33% corresponds to 11 out of the 15 interviewed teachers who stated that they arrange their students' seats according to the activities planned for the lesson, they explained that seating arrangement allows them to control students' behavior, level of attention, and participation in the activities proposed for the lesson.

Despite of teachers expressed positively about seating arrangement, it was observed that they did not arranged seats using some of the models described by Savage, T. V. & Savage, M. K. (2012) such as rows, clusters, and circular or semicircular pattern. In this sense, the observed facts were not in accordance with the general principle given by Muijs & Reynolds (2005) about the suitability of an adequate space to work comfortably.

On the other hand, 26.66% represents 4 out of 15 surveyed teachers stated that they do not arrange students' seats according to planned activities for classes due to

the large number of students in the classroom. It was observed that in 9 classrooms there was not enough space to move the seats because they were placed too close to each other due to lack of space. Therefore, teachers were not able to apply some of the strategies proposed by Bender (2004) such as seating hyperactive students on the periphery or at the back of the room because it was not possible to monitor their behavior.

In addition, the reduced space in the classroom made that teachers used always row seating arrangement and it impeded students to develop their learning activities in an appropriate environment, because it was really difficult for teachers to keep students engaged in the topic of the lesson; due to the low distance between seats, it increase the frequency of talking and distraction between students and they did not pay attention to the teacher as they should.

Another situation observed in some of the high schools showed that some warehouses were used as classrooms because there were not enough rooms for the number of students. Certainly, students in those conditions are not able to learn correctly because lack of space impedes teachers to arrange seats in relation to activities.

However, 13 out of 15 learners indicated in the questionnaire that they like the way their teachers arrange seats in relation to learning activities. These results may give evidence that students consider that traditional row format is appropriate for them.

But, direct observations showed that there were not enough seats for the number of students in some classes; sometimes there were two learners sit together in the same chair. This situation was observed in almost half of the classes; therefore,

an important number of teachers were not able to arrange seats in relation to learning activities.

How many students do teachers think is the appropriate numbers to teach English?
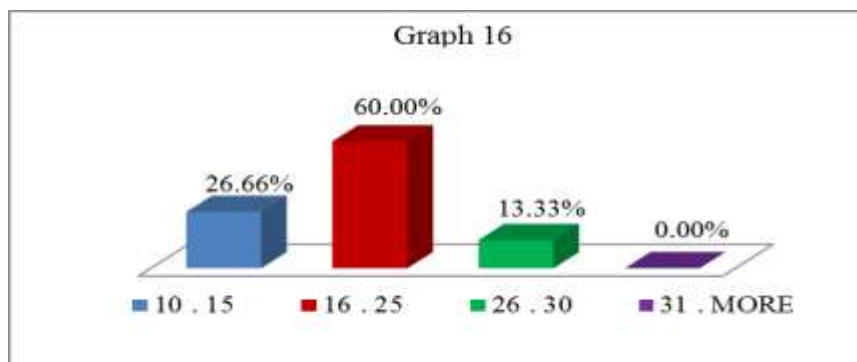
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The 60.00% of the graph 16 corresponds to 9 out of the 15 surveyed teachers who considered that the ideal number of learners in the classroom is between 16 and 25 students, according to them, small classes are manageable and some aspects such as discipline and class arrangement can be controlled easily; most students have the opportunity to interact and socialize together and feedback is more effective. In the observed classes, five of them had less than 25 students.

Another result shown in graph 16 is the 26.66 % represents 4 out of the 15 teachers consider that the correct number of students in a classroom is between 10 and 15 since they can personalize the teaching-learning process, giving the necessary feedback and opportunities to improve and interact together.

And finally, 13.33% represents 2 out of the 15 participants, who believe that the appropriate number of students in a classroom is between 26 and 30 students. According to the information taken from teachers' interviews and the observation did in classes, working with this number of students represented a challenge for teachers because they have to spent much time trying to control discipline and awaking

students' interest in the lesson; so it requires that teachers plan good intervention strategies for managing learning in large classes. Also, other aspects such as seating arrangement and type of learning activities need to be seriously considered in dealing with over 26 students.

In contrast with teachers' answers, 10 out of 15 students indicated that the number of students in classes helps them to learn well. These results do not agree with the situation observed during the research because 9 out of 15 classes had over 31 students; it was possible to count 40 to 50 students in a class whose learning was affected by lack of space and seats. Therefore, it is not possible to consider that 31 or more is an appropriate number of pupils to teach English, in those conditions.

Do teachers use teachers' resource (tv, tapes, cd recorder, computers, projector (s), smart board and supplementary materials?
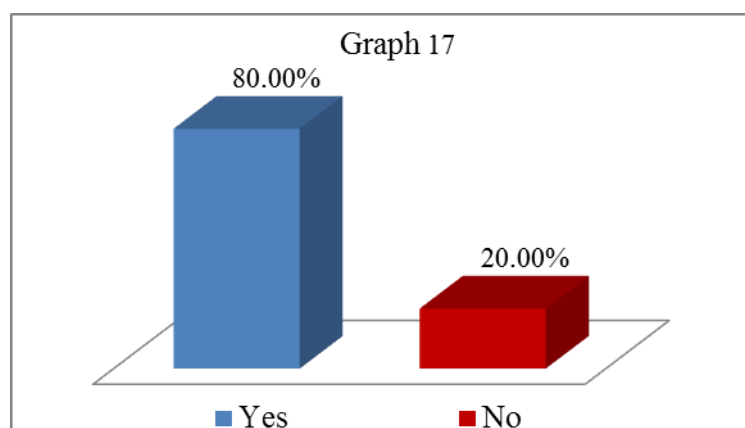
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

In Graph 17, 80.00% of teachers stated that they use different resources and supplementary materials for supporting, teaching, motivating and enhancing students' attention in the class in an active and attractive way. Likewise, it is important to remark that 12 of the 15 teachers just point the following resources or materials used in classes: cd recorders, book, and tapes, and supplementary materials

such as realia and visual aids. However, students indicated that teachers do not use teaching resources in classes and it was verified through direct observation because teachers used scarce amount of didactic materials; institutions are not equipped with the necessary teaching resources for enhancing the teaching learning process.

In contrast, 20.00% corresponds to 3 out of the 15 surveyed teachers who answered that they do not use any kind of resources or supplementary materials to teach their lesson; due to the institutions where they work do not have the necessary resources for teachers to develop students' skills and to teach English effectively.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?
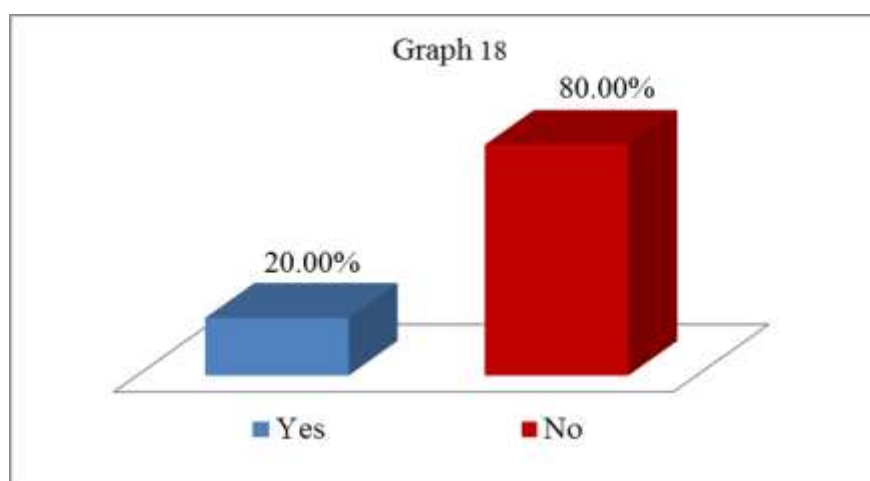
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As it is shown in graph 18, the 80.00% corresponds to 12 out of the 15 surveyed educators who indicated that they do not feel comfortable with the resources they are working with, because there are not enough materials available for teaching their lessons.

On the contrary, 20.00% represents 3 out of the 15 teachers who consider that the resources they have in class are appropriate and are suitable to the objectives of the planned or designed lesson. However, in the observed classes only two teachers

applied teaching resources during the development of the class; besides, 3 students corroborated that teachers used only a tape recorder in classes. This results show that high schools are not equipped with the necessary resources for improving the students' language skills. Also, it was observed that 13 out of the 15 observed teachers used traditional supplementary materials such as textbooks and whiteboard.

Certainly, the use of teaching resources and supplementary materials increases students' motivation, stimulate their language production, and allows learners to internalize the acquired knowledge. As Thornbury (2006) suggests, teachers have to select and use materials thoughtfully, taking into consideration the learners' needs and interests.

Factors Concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review teachers' lesson plan?
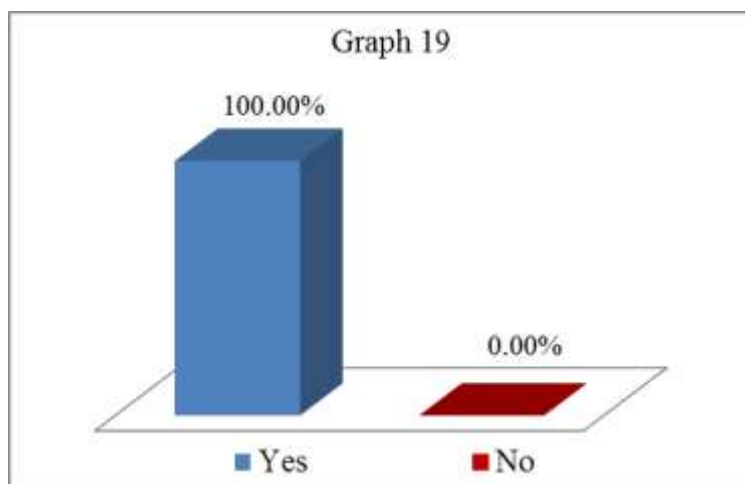
Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

It can be observed in graph 19 that 100.00% represents 15 of the surveyed teachers who indicated that their institutions review their lesson plans in order to check how the process is running out. Besides, 11 out of the 15 teachers told that their lesson plans are reviewed once a week by vice principals where they work. In

contrast, 3 out of the 15 teachers indicated that their lesson plan is reviewed once a month and another teacher stated that the institution reviews his lesson plan only during English staff meetings. Even though it was not possible to confirm the information given by teachers, the processes observed in class showed that lessons plans are not correctly designed and teachers follow only instructions from textbooks; they do not receive appropriate feedback about lesson planning.
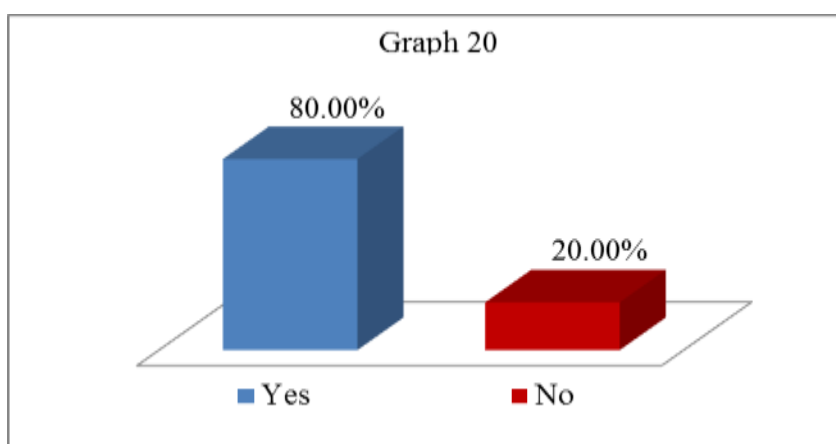
Does the institution monitor teachers' teaching?

Graph 20

Authors: María Alexandra Saltos Vivas and Mirian Xiomara Chávez Zambrano

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

As graph number 20 presents, 80.00% represents 12 out of the 15 surveyed teachers answered that their institutions monitor their classes; 7 participants explained that their classes are monitored once a week by the head of the English area and 8 teachers indicated that class monitoring takes place once a month and it is carried out by the English coordinator.

In contrast, 20.00% represents 3 out of the 15 teachers stated that their institution do not monitor their classes. Actually, class observations corroborated that institutions do not monitor the English teaching process because no authority went to the classrooms to observe teachers' performance.

Regarding class monitoring, it is important to consider what White & Poster (2005 p, 32.) suggest, "The only sure way to see that the pupils are receiving the learning they should, in the way they should, is through monitoring in the classroom"

However, according to Brown (2001) "One of the most neglected areas of professional growth among teachers is the mutual exchange of classroom observations"; he states that it occurs because once teachers get into a teaching custom it is very difficult to make time to go and observe other teachers and to ask the same in return. The same author explains that in spite of some of the difficulties teachers may have of visiting classroom and observing lessons, it is a worthwhile-enterprise and one that should be undertaken in a thoughtful and professional manner.

Conclusions

- This research shows that teachers speak in English around 50% of class time and it affects learners' language learning. They do not receive enough input and it impedes them to progress successfully; their level was identified as basic.

- Regarding the teaching methods and techniques applied by teachers in classes, Communicative Language Teaching and Grammar Translation Method were frequently used. The former was used by teachers to teach students communicative language skills and the later helped teachers to explain structures that students do not comprehended well due to their basic level of English.

- In most instances teachers do not consider the different learning styles of their students, making the development of the teaching learning English process difficult, thus affecting students' knowledge.

- Teachers do not use appropriate teaching resources and they rely frequently on traditional materials such as textbooks and the whiteboard since institutions are not equipped with the necessary resources to improve the quality of the English teaching-learning process.

- Class size and classroom space affect the English teaching-learning process, making difficult the development and management of the class due to the great number of learners in a small classroom and a single teacher conducting large group of students.

- Institutions do not carry out class monitoring. This affect the English teaching process because teachers do not receive appropriate feedback about the aspects that need to be improved in relation to methodological procedures, objectives, goals, discipline and content.

Recommendations

- It is highly recommended for the teachers to use English more frequently in their classes for creating an environment where students use the target language and encouraging them to speak English in and outside class.

- Teachers must use supplementary materials and other resource such as videos, audio, flash cards, realia, overhead projector, etc during their class in order to get students' attention; because, in few classes teachers only used the board to introduce the topic of the class and went straight to the book; consequently, students did not feel motivated; as a result, they started doing something else like talking to their partners.

- It is advisable for teachers to vary the type of learning activities in order to awake students' interest and motivation. There are a lot of communicative activities such as debates, interviews, picture description that teachers can use in their classes to encourage students to practice language skills.

- Finally, it is strongly recommendable for the authorities of the observed institution to take into consideration the adequate number of students in a classroom; it should not be more than 25 students per class.

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ANNEXES

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

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

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

Students' Needs *(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	( )
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!!!!!!

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!!!!!

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDAD ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

OBSERVATION SHEET

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

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

*Students' Needs *(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)*

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

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

3. Which of the following methods are used?

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

Grammar Translation Method	( )
Others _____	( )

4. Which of the following activities are used?

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

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

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

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

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

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

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

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )
NOTES: _____	

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

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

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

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

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 ( )