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

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my husband Javier, my love and
my forever friend, who has been my support in reaching
my dream of becoming a professional. To my children
Mary and Javi, who have shared my long studying
afternoons, encouraging me step by step during this time;
and to my parents Leonardo and Ruth, because I know
they will be proud of their daughter, and through me,
their dream too.

María Dolores

To my father Gualberto and to my whole family, who
have always supported and encouraged me to achieve
my dream of becoming a professional. I love you
dear dad. With all my love to my dear husband
Christian, who in spite of the distance, has been my
support to continue and to finish my studies.

Martha Jhamiled

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine and analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in public high schools in the city of Cuenca.

Five public schools were selected for the study; the sample included fifteen teachers and fifteen students. The data were gathered through class observations, teachers' interviews, and a survey to both teachers and students about the four variables of the study: factors concerning teachers, factors concerning students, factors concerning classrooms, and factors concerning educational institutions.

The findings demonstrate that the factors that mostly affect the English teaching – learning process are the level of knowledge of the teachers, the number of students in each classroom, physical space in the classrooms in relation to the number of students, and the teaching resources available for the teaching – learning process.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a foreign language is mandatory in public high schools in Ecuador. In 1992, the Ecuadorian and the British government came to an agreement to improve the way English was taught in public high schools. In spite of this agreement and the efforts conducted by the educational authorities, the teaching of English continues being a challenging task for teachers.

One of the biggest obstacles for high school students who decide to enter the university is the lack of English language knowledge. Additionally, when these students want to apply for exchange programs or scholarships offered worldwide, they are no linguistically competent; and, not being able to know English as a foreign language has prevented people from obtaining a better professional position in this country since many posts require that the candidates to be proficient at this language.

From all the above mentioned a question that deserves to be researched and answered immediately arises, that is why students are not skilled enough at English if they have studied this language for at least six years in high school. Therefore, this study attempts to describe some of the major factors that affect the teaching-learning process in the Ecuadorian public high schools, by determining the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place; identifying the characteristics of English teachers currently in-service; and by determining teachers' instructional competence.

In Ecuador, there has been little research with respect to the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process; therefore, it is necessary to identify the factors that impede the success of English language teaching in Ecuadorian public high schools. The findings obtained from this research will be valuable for

institutions to develop plans and programs taking into consideration the students´ environment and needs.

Nevertheless, in countries different from Ecuador, there are authors that have already researched about the factors that affect the learning of a second language. For instance, Saricoban & Sakizli (2006) state that students, teachers, and environment are the major factors which have to be considered to reach good results.

Likewise, Narayanan, Rajasekaran & Iyyappan (2008) conducted a study with the purpose of analyzing factors related to motivation, attitude and language anxiety. In this study, some of the limitations pointed out were that, because of economical limitations, the study was conducted only in a specific area; consequently, the results were based purely on questionnaire surveys, without an English language ability test, and there were no effective statistical calculations.

Besides, Khamkhien (2010) conducted a study to determine how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies, and to compare the roles of these factors and the patterns of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students. In this study, some of the limitations found were the following: the results remained inconclusive because of the limited number of students. The identified findings about learning strategies might have been influenced by other variables such as nationality, age, field of study, etc. There was also a limitation in using the SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) questionnaire to elicit language-learning strategies, suggesting the use of other research tools and techniques.

On the other hand, Akbari & Allvar (2010) conducted a study with the purpose of studying three teacher-related variables: teaching style, teachers' sense of efficacy, and teacher reflectivity, focusing on how these variables are related to

students' achievement in an English-language teaching context. The authors did not establish limitations in the study, confirming that the variables (teaching style, teachers' sense of efficacy, and teacher reflectivity) are key teacher-related factors, which can significantly predict students' achievement.

The findings of the present study benefits teachers, students, educational institutions, and authorities, because being aware of the factors that affect the English language teaching – learning process helps to implement changes and actions to diminish the negative impact of those factors or to propose new procedures to cope with the current situation.

Some limitations were found during the development of this study. First of all, the number of observations in each class was not enough since it was possible to observe only one class per teacher. Second, it was difficult to know the method that the teachers generally use in their classrooms with only one observed class. Furthermore, the teachers who participated in the research were chosen by the coordinators of the English areas or by the authorities of the institutions. Consequently, they knew beforehand, they were going to be observed. Thus, they might have had time to prepare their classes in a better way, and not how they usually teach.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The present study was conducted in the city of Cuenca. Three teachers and three students from five public high schools were chosen as participants. The total sample for the study included fifteen teachers and fifteen students. The teachers and the students were from basic education (eighth, ninth, and tenth years) and secondary education (first, second, and third years), as well.

Procedures

The first step to conduct this study was to review literature on the topic, obtaining information from different sources like books and the Internet to provide theoretical foundation to the research. Some of the topics researched included the importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador; teaching approaches and teaching methods; teaching techniques; managing learning; lesson design; class size; classroom space; seating arrangement; classroom and/or teaching resources; classroom observation; students' motivation; learning styles; and students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English. Additionally, previous studies related to the factors affecting the foreign language learning were included.

The general approach of the present study is quantitative and the techniques used to gather data for the field research were surveys, note-taking, visual observations, and personal interviews to English teachers. The instruments used were observation formats, questionnaires filled in by teachers and students, and a set of questions used to interview teachers; to analyze the data gathered were used a computer and the excel program. For the literature review, the resources used were books and the Internet.

The field research started with the authorization obtained from the principals of the institutions where the observations took place. After that, the principals of each high school (5 in total) selected three classes to be observed.

The teachers were contacted in advance to schedule the observation of their classes according to their availability. Before the observation of each class, a personal interview with each teacher was held with the intention of gathering personal information from them; these interviews included questions prepared beforehand about their education and proficiency at English as well.

An observation sheet was used in each class observed to take notes about aspects related to the level of knowledge of students, the methodology, the materials and techniques the teacher used in that specific class. After the class, a survey was applied to each teacher. At the same time, a student in each class was randomly chosen to fill in a questionnaire. To prevent the students' misunderstanding, the questionnaire was designed in Spanish.

Once the data were gathered, the results were classified and analyzed according to the teachers' questions and supported with the answers provided by the students, and direct observation. The results were presented using graphs and percentages.

The aspects considered for the analysis of the results were the factors concerning teachers, factors concerning students, factors concerning classrooms, and factors concerning educational institutions.

Within the factors concerning teachers, the aspects considered were the level of education, language proficiency, teaching methods and techniques, percentage of the English language used in class, lesson design, and managing learning.

The factors concerning students were students' needs and students' English level.

Related to classrooms, the aspects taken into account were classroom size, classroom space, seating arrangement, and classroom and teaching resources.

Among the factors within educational institutions, the aspects taken into account were class observation and lesson design monitoring.

Finally, conclusions related to the main factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process were drawn in order to show the reality of Ecuadorian public high schools.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Tenorio (2009, April 7) states that the knowledge of English language has become a necessity in a globalized world, considering that it is not a privilege for few people, but a requirement for everybody who wants to be competitive in labor and cultural situations.

In Ecuador, English is taught as a foreign language in all public schools, but when students finish their studies in public high schools and enter the university, they have poor or no knowledge of English language. Because of this, students miss opportunities such as applying for scholarships to study in countries where English is used as a mother tongue, and what is worse, it is also difficult for them to find a job because, nowadays, the knowledge of English language is required to apply for a post.

According to SENESCYT (n.d.), the results obtained in the evaluations conducted in 2011 to both students and teachers are indicators that show the low English knowledge and domain in Ecuadorian educational settings. The results also showed that teachers reached an average between A1 and A2, which means an initial level in the English knowledge according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); on the other hand, students obtained an average of 13.13 out of 20, reflecting the poor students' language competence. Other aspect mentioned by the SENESCYT, which influences the low performance in English, is the lack of enough professionals for teaching the English language in Ecuador.

According to Agencia Pública de Noticias del Ecuador y Suramérica ANDES. (2012, March 8) the Ecuadorian government is going to invest $10 million during this year in five hundred scholarships for English teachers, in the program

"Enseña Inglés", with the intention of improving students' learning and teaching quality.

In order to sustain this study, it is important to include in this literature review important concepts and theories related to foreign language teaching and learning. The first topic to be analyzed is Teaching Approaches and Methods.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

Different approaches and methods have been used to improve the English language teaching – learning process. Richards & Rodgers (2001) suggest that a way to understand how the field of language teaching has evolved is by means of the study of approaches and methods. Thus, it is important to know their characteristics.

One of the methods that was widely used is the Grammar-Translation method, which according to Rosenthal (2000) was focused on enabling students to read English literature, so they learn grammar rules and vocabulary to reach this goal, while listening and speaking are given less attention.

A second approach is The Total Physical Response method, and according to Davies & Pearse (2000) and Rosenthal (2000) it is a useful method only with beginners, where students listen to the teacher´s commands and respond to them physically by using movements or actions to show their understanding.

The Communicative Language Teaching or Communicative Approach is an approach explained by Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Rosenthal (2000) who state that it can be used in various classroom procedures. Students work on the four skills through the use of authentic and meaningful activities involving trial and error in creative constructions.

Natural Approach is described by Richards & Rodgers (2001), who explain that it is focused on comprehension and meaningful communication, but providing

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the right comprehensible input and enough conditions to reach a successful second and foreign language acquisition in the classroom. Davies & Pearse (2000) complement this idea and state that by using this method, the language is acquired by hearing it in communicative situations, applying the used of comprehensible listening input only on the beginning levels, and relating it to actions. At the same time, they consider conscious learning as a minor role, arguing that what works is the promotion of subconscious acquisition.

An approach in which group activities and group teaching are used for learning is the Cooperative Language Learning which is also known as Collaborative Learning according to Richards & Rodgers (2001). To exploit students' interaction and ease their participation among them, the group activities are carefully planned.

The Content-based Instruction approach is described by Richards & Rodgers (2001), who state that the teaching of the language is arranged around the content or information that students will learn, so the language learning is incidental while learning the content. At the same time, Stryker & Leaver (1997) suggest that, Content-based foreign language instruction motivates students to use the language as a real means of communication, which helps to the integration of language learning and content learning, because the language is learned through the study of subject matters.

Finally, another method used by foreign language teachers is the Task-Based Language Teaching. As it has been stated by Richards &Rodgers (2001), this method focuses the use of tasks as the essential part of planning and instruction for the language teaching. They explain that the learning depends on giving students both in "comprehensible input" and in tasks requiring negotiation of the meaning to immerse them in naturalistic and meaningful communication.

Teaching Techniques

Teaching techniques are the different strategies that teachers use to improve their students learning and to motivate them in class. The following authors explain different techniques that teachers can use in their classes.

Dhand (2008) define techniques as the day-to-day activities designed and planned by teachers for a particular lesson, like group discussions, projects, and the use of textbooks or field tripping. For Dhand, a technique can affect the students' encoding process, suggesting that techniques can be student-centered or teacher-centered, active or passive according to how they are used.

Mukalel (2004), on the other hand, describes teaching techniques as well-defined acts, devices or stimulus that teachers perform according to a particular lesson or objective. Some of the techniques suggested by this author are questioning, narration, demonstration, and illustration.

Maxom (2010) suggests some teaching techniques to use in teaching English as a foreign language. One of them is bringing in real-world objects, for example clothes, food and household items to the classroom; these objects can be used to teach new vocabulary or to practice what students already know. Surfing the Internet is another useful technique because students can take advantage of resources to improve the language learning such as reading and listening.

Another technique suggested by Maxom (2010) is story-telling that can be used to practice speaking, thinking, writing, and listening skills, encouraging students to tell stories about themselves or some tales. Other technique that can help to stimulate the students' curiosity is the one called Open Up Your Life, which consists on sharing some personal information like hobbies or interests to start a discussion, conversation, or writing activity.

To conclude this topic, Nagaraj (1996) suggests that techniques do not guarantee success by themselves. The author states that it is necessary for the teacher to know when to use each one of them according to his/her students and situations. It is important to have a repertoire of techniques for the different skills, than just a limited number of them.

Managing Learning

Managing learning is related to the ways of arranging the classroom, and it includes instructions, feedback, timing, and keeping students´ motivation and attention for the different tasks developed in a class.

Concerning motivation, Leach (2006) suggests that for keeping students' motivation and attention, it is advisable to vary the activities, avoiding overloading students with too many things to do. The author also suggests that it is important to bear in mind the managing of transition between tasks; feedback must be included in all lessons, to evaluate students' learning.

In the same way, Wright (2005, p. 65) states, "Brilliant class management comes through the work", claiming the importance of good planning to make the work accessible, purposeful, and pleasant. The author also suggests that good teachers only plan activities, but the fact of paying close attention to the connections between the different activities, is only developed by brilliant teachers. Wright also mentions that these kinds of teachers use a routine called QDO, which is - Questions, Deadline and Outcome, for solving problems with the whole class.

On the other hand, Heacox (2002) argues that to apply multiple learning tasks simultaneously in the classroom may be overwhelming for a whole-group or cooperative groups. This author suggests that it is necessary to decide how to move students for suitable learning activities, giving the necessary instructions, support and

clarification, sharing time with each group of students. Additionally, Heacox proposes some ideas for teachers to work with groups. For example, it is important to bear in mind the number of students in each group - being groups of four or five easier to manage and suitable for effective learning. It is also necessary to dedicate time for feedback for each group according to its needs.

Lesson Design

Lesson design refers to planning a lesson for a specific class. A lesson plan is like the teacher's road map and includes what students will learn in a specific class, and how the teaching will be developed.

Nunan & Lamb (1996) claim, that the planning and preparation of lessons determine their success or failure in the class. This plan has to be connected with the teacher's overall pedagogical goals.

For Goodwyn & Branson (2005), what is essential in all the stages of the process of planning a lesson is flexibility combined with a good design. They state that a lesson plan must begin with short warm up activities to engage students, followed by a longer task for the whole class, including group activities, and finally independent tasks for students to work individually to reinforce and apply what they have learned.

Briggs, Gustafson & Tillman (1991) state that a lesson plan includes the actions of both teachers and students, including teachers' presentations such as a learning guidance, feedback, and assistance to learners in recalling prerequisites, and the students' responses to the learning instructions, paying attention to what is presented. The authors suggest that the critical task about designing a lesson is to plan the right amount of activities, determine the right sequence, and create instructional events appropriate for the objectives of the lesson.

Class Size

Class size refers to the number of students in the classroom. There are different opinions given by experts, but in general, it is suggested to work with smaller classes than with larger ones.

For instance, Flood, International Reading Association & the National Council of Teachers of English (2003) reported the need of teachers about the insistence of working with smaller classes to get a best learning environment, what, in their opinion, results in better students' achievement, and teachers' own professional lives more rewarding. The authors also suggest that in smaller classes discipline is better, and students show greater self-control with more progress on their attitudinal responses and keep working on their tasks while their participation and engagement increase.

Likewise, Farrel (1999) explains that it is evident that for effective teaching, it is better smaller classes than larger ones, being a factor that contributes to students' achievement. The author also states that other issues are likely to be influential, such as leadership, effective management and the quality of teaching

Although most teachers claim for class size reduction to succeed in their classes, it is clear that this issue is not the unique factor that affects the teaching-learning process. F. Kemerer, Sansom & J. Kemerer (2005) report different results regarding class size reduction. In fact, according to some evaluations the improvement in students' achievement with class reduction was minimal; though, other studies showed that discipline problems improved. However, it is important to mention that teachers are able to give more attention to each student in smaller classes.

Classroom Space

Classroom space is related to the physical space of classrooms in relation to the number of students in a class. Taking advantage of the space can help teachers to arrange the classroom furniture for students to interact in a better way.

According to Robles de Melendez & Beck (2009) because classroom space is assigned by the school administrators, teachers may not have control or decision over the space in the classroom. The authors report that the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has the criteria that the number of children enrolled must be according to the space assigned for them. They also claim that the environment influences on how children behave and acquire knowledge in class.

Regarding the number of students and the space in classrooms, Frumkin (2006) states that crowded classrooms may affect the process of interaction between students because it becomes difficult for teachers to maintain the students' concentration in high-density classrooms, especially when the tasks evolve complex material, causing sometimes an overload of attention or cognitive fatigue.

Moore and Lackney, (cited in Frumkin, 2006), state that in classrooms with enough space for students, it is possible for teachers to interact more with them, being easier to encourage students to work together in projects or tasks. Frumkin also argues that in classrooms with too many students and little space, it is difficult to arrange furniture for learning activities.

Additionally, according to Partin (2009) the students' behavior and learning can be influenced by classroom physical arrangement, because the location of desks and other furniture in the classroom can be a problem for students' interaction, causing noise, lack of attention, and disorder.

Seating Arrangement

Seating arrangement is the way in which teachers arrange their students' desks for different activities. The seating arrangement can vary according the activities the teacher wants to develop. For example, group activities, individual tasks and discussions.

Both Kelly (2010) and Lane, Menzies, Bruhn & Crnobori (2010) agree that a traditional way to arrange students in class is in rows. However, Lane, Menzies, Bruhn & Crnobori also mention that there is an advantage of this arrangement because it can provide a better view to the board and at the same time the teacher can have more control to supervise all students. Kelly suggests that it is possible to use other kinds of seating arrangements if the teacher considers appropriate, such as seating in a circle or in blocks, but this means that the teacher needs to have a strong control of the students' discipline. Equally, Lane, Menzies, Bruhn & Crnobori suggest a U-shaped design or the use of several rows adjacent to combine features of traditional rows with cooperative groups.

Additionally, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) state that students' seating arrangement can determine the students' attitude to each other and to the teacher, the teacher attitude to students, the students' interaction and the kind of tasks they can do. They suggest the horseshoe or the café-style designs for direct front-to-front tasks.

Classroom and/or Teaching Resources

Classroom and/or teaching resources refer to the tools, objects, materials, and equipment that teachers can use in their classes to improve the teaching – learning process.

To this respect, Nunan & Lamb (1996) argue that anything in the classroom can be a tool for learning, including human resources (teachers and students), besides software, books, hardware, videos and tapes can be used. They mention that there are great deals of textbooks available today, but their use depends on teachers' training and environment.

On the other hand, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) state that, the resources available for teachers can vary according to the teaching institutions. For instance, some resources described by these authors include the board and the cork-board to display information on walls. Other materials are visual materials such pictures, photographs, or overhead projectors. There are also worksheets and work-cards photocopied or produced as cue cards or role cards; CD players; videos to add variety and develop listening skills; and authentic materials as newspapers, magazines, poems, songs and menus.

Khan (2008) states that teaching resources make the teaching task more effective, giving support to the teaching method and learning experiences. This author explains that most teachers use a textbook as the main element for teaching. Nevertheless, there are other materials suggested by this author like workbooks, which offer practice in different areas; also, audio-visual materials that are effective to gain students attention; cassettes or video-cassettes which allow more flexibility for the teacher; bulletin boards that can be used inside or outside the classroom; posters, which capture students' attention and give the message quickly. Finally, there are some resources described as collateral materials that include dictionaries, almanacs, encyclopedias, journals, magazines, newspapers, atlases and books.

Classroom Observation

Classroom observation refers to the monitoring that institutions or researchers carry out in order to evaluate the teachers' development and effectiveness in the teaching – learning process.

Gasskow (2006) claims that, teaching and learning cannot be separated. In other words, if teachers are doing well, their students are learning, and the results can be shown on the students' grades. However, the author suggests that, observations can be carried out in classes in order to obtain a snapshot of the staff efficiency and the teaching skills. The author also recommends that after observations, feedback and a written record with conclusions should be given to the teachers.

Additionally, Flood, the International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English (2003) reports that all teachers, including English teachers, are concerned about observation-evaluations because there are many factors inside the classroom that affect teaching, having no control of them. Other concern for English teachers is that observers, who frequently are principals, do not have documented evidence to judge the English teaching observed process, according to the level in which it occurs, being necessary that English teachers evaluators should be well schooled and experienced about English teaching.

On the other hand, White & Poster (1997) claim that specific criteria needs to be shared before monitoring and observing a class. The authors believe that the monitoring value should not be purely critical because it is also important to recognize and celebrate what is good and share it with other classes in school. Besides, the authors state that the observations should be useful in order to know the teachers´ weaknesses to change them into strengths.

Students' Motivation

Students' motivation naturally has to do with students' desire to participate in the learning process. However, it also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie their involvement or noninvolvement in academic activities. Although students may be equally motivated to perform a task, the sources of their motivation may differ.

With reference to this topic, Nesterenko (2010) considers that motivation is essential in language learning for most teachers, but it is difficult to measure and define. It is necessary to recognize that not all students react in the same way to teaching because motivation is a complex phenomenon. She argues that in spite of the use of carefully planned activities, learners will be motivated only if these activities are related to their interests, needs and aspirations. She recommends asking or consulting students about topics of their interest.

On the other hand, Woolfolk (2010) reports that motivation has been explained as personal or individual characteristics by some psychologists; others distinguish motivation as a temporary situation or state. She explains that at any time, the motivation that people feel is a combination of trait and state. The author also distinguishes two kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. 'Intrinsic motivation' is the human tendency to seek out and reach a goal pursued using our aptitude and for personal significance, and 'extrinsic motivation' occurs when people do something not by their own desire, but only thinking in gaining a reward because of that.

Ginsberg & Wlodkowski (2009) describe motivation as a concern for most educators because inside the teaching environments they understand that concentration, effort, and the desire are greatly influenced by students' feelings about their environment, the respect they receive, and their ability to trust in their own

thinking and experiences. The authors argue that people who often do not feel motivated to learn are those who feel unsafe, unconnected and consequently are not respected.

Learning Styles

Learning styles refer to the different ways and preferences that students have to learn easier. There are some kinds of learning styles, being important for teachers to know about them to facilitate their students' learning.

Haggart (2004) explain that sensory learning styles deal with how students' use their senses, suggesting that learners' sensory preferences determine how students behave, learn, and respond to discipline in the classroom. He states four sensory styles categories: Kinesthetic, tactual, auditory and visual.

Regarding kinesthetic style, Haggart (2004), Lightbown & Spada (2006), and Murray & Christison (2010) state that students who prefer this style, perform physical action for learning, such as role-play, miming, and so forth.

Referring to tactual learners, Haggart (2004) describes them as sensitive ones. These students feel everything deeply. Additionally, Murray & Christison (2010) describe tactual learners as those who prefer the manipulation of resources like flashcards.

With respect to auditory learners Haggart (2004) and Murray & Christison (2010) describe these students as those who learn better by performing listening and speaking activities; at the same time, Lightbown & Spada (2006) mention that auditory learners could be called 'aural' learners since they learn 'by ear'.

About visual learners, Haggart (2004, p. 10) states "The visual learner is the 'seeing-is believing' student". The author also claims that they learn by observing, examining and reviewing. In the same way, Lightbown & Spada (2006)

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affirm that visual students learn after they have seen. Similarly, Murray & Christison (2010) consider that visual learners work better with written language and visual forms such as pictures, charts, and graphs

Students' Intelligence or Aptitude to Learn English

Referring to students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English, it is important to know the definitions of intelligence and aptitude. Intelligence is the capacity to learn and understand information. Aptitude is defined as a natural skill or talent to do something or to learn faster. If a teacher is aware of the students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English, he/she can apply specific methods or techniques to improve students' competence.

According to Littlejohn & Hicks (1998), a teacher should consider the students' intelligence or intelligences, because in that way, learning will be deeper and longer lasting. The authors exemplify the use of coherent and significant topics to make students participate in multiple tasks using their background knowledge. They also argue that to find tasks that involve thinking is the key when working with language.

On the other hand, Lightbown & Spada (2006) suggest that the term intelligence has been used to give the description of the performance of certain type of tests, relating them to school success and reporting occasionally a connection between second language learning and intelligence. About language learning aptitude, the authors explain that it is refers to specific abilities that can predict success in language. From their point of view, aptitude has several components, and the different aptitude tests can measure these components. For example, to identify and memorize sounds, understand the function of particular words in sentences, figure out grammatical rules from language samples, and remember new words.

In addition, Heacox (2002) refers to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Thanks to this theory, the definition of intelligence has broadened, because it suggests that students' thinking strengths and limitations affect not only what they know, but also the easiness to learn. Heacox also reports that in differentiated instruction, with the intention of supporting students' learning preferences and strengths, teachers design various activities, while other tasks are presented to encourage growth in weaker areas.

After revising relevant information about different aspects of the teaching-learning process, it is important to refer to some studies conducted by some educational researchers, with the intention of finding out what factors and how they can affect such process.

Narayanan, Rajasekaran & Iyyappan (2008), for instance, conducted a study with the purpose of analyzing the factors related to motivation, attitude and language anxiety. The data were gathered by using questionnaires previously piloted to get the feedback needed for the study. A random sampling method was applied for determining the population, and a quantitative analysis, using mean-average and percentage, was applied to analyze the influence of factors such as motivation, attitude, language anxiety and gender.

The results of their study showed that motivation, attitude, language anxiety and gender have a great impact, affecting students' English learning, and to foster linguistic skills effectively, a learner needs to be highly motivated, with a positive attitude towards the language, and feel low language anxiety.

Akbari & Allvar (2010) researched about three teacher-related variables: teaching style, teachers' sense of efficacy, and teacher reflectivity, focusing on how

these variables are related to students' achievement in an English-language teaching context.

The instruments used in this study were a teacher reflectivity questionnaire, teacher sense of efficacy scale, Lowman's two-dimensional teaching style scale, and the end-of-the-year achievement test. The first step was to get the students' final English-language exam scores without including the class participation scores; the second step was to get the names of the students' teachers, and then the teachers were contacted and asked to fill in the instruments. Finally, the teachers' scores were matched against their students' final English scores, and the statistical procedures were run to interpret the results. To examine the hypothesis, and due to the fact that the study had three independent variables and one dependent variable, multiple regression analysis was used as the main statistical procedure.

The authors' conclusions in this study were that regarding students' achievement, it was confirmed that the variables (teaching style, teachers' sense of efficacy, and teacher reflectivity) are key teacher-related factors and can predict significantly student achievement. As a component of teaching style, teachers' intellectual excitement includes what is taught and how it is presented in class, contributing to, smooth, clear classroom organization, and an engaging well-structured lesson presentation. In teachers' opinions, reflection is a passionate desire to transform problematic classroom situations into opportunities for students to learn and grow. Regarding teachers' sense of efficacy, teachers with high efficacy beliefs generate stronger students' achievement rather than teachers with lower teacher efficacy.

Likewise, Adebayo (2008) conducted a study with the purpose of examining how the mother tongue could affect students' learning of English language. To gather

the information the author designed and reported a self-scale "Mother Tongue Effect on English language Scale" (MTEES) questionnaire, which was given to the participants to fill in. The analysis of the data was done using simple percentages; it was done to facilitate the explanation of basic differences or similarities that could exist between or among the variables under observation.

The author of the study concluded that, although, students' mother tongue influences their poor performance in English, there are other factors that contribute the students' performance, such as a poor teaching method, lack of textbooks, language background, and a lack of teachers' development and professional growth.

Wei (2007) conducted a study with the purpose of evaluating motivation and anxiety in English classrooms in Chinese colleges. To obtain the information the author used an anxiety, a motivational, and a background questionnaire, which were administered to students. The data were coded for statistical analysis, and to obtain aggregate views of the demographic information from the background questionnaire, a descriptive statistical analysis was used.

Wei concluded that the participants in the study showed two prominent factors on motivation scale: instrumentality, in a higher degree, and integrativeness. A significant relationship between anxiety and motivation was not found. The author states that if learners have more desire to learn about the target language, they will put more effort in classroom and will feel less anxious, demonstrating that learning English only for pragmatic concerns does not necessarily contribute to a positive attitude towards English classes. However, what helps the reduction of learners' anxiety is an integrative orientation, which is particularly important in language settings, where students do not have enough exposure to the target language, taking

into account that English teachers tend to attach excessive importance to English acquisition as a requirement or as a tool for attaining instrumental goals.

Khamkhien (2010) conducted a study with two main objectives. 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 patterns of language learning strategy used by Thai and Vietnamese students.

The data were gathered using an 80-item Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990), and a background questionnaire, being the background questionnaire adapted to obtain information about factors affecting the choices of language learning strategies; the data were analyzed to establish the three factors. To obtain descriptive and inferential statistics, the SPSS 15 statistical program for data analysis was used. In addition, a t-test was used to find out the influence of gender, motivation, and experience on studying English in the strategies and to determine if there were any significant differences among learners respect to strategy use.

Khamkhien's conclusions were that the results highlighted the significance of language learning strategies in the learning process, suggesting that one of the ways teachers could employ to help their students to become successful learners is identifying learning strategies used and factors that might affect learning. Finally, in the author's opinion these study findings could help Thai and Vietnamese language teachers with deeper insights about how they should be aware of the use of students´ learning strategies and how to design more effective learning tasks as well as activities to suit Thai and Vietnamese university students.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This section presents the quantitative analysis, description, and interpretation of the results collected. The variables analyzed include factors concerning teachers, students, classrooms, and the educational institution.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1
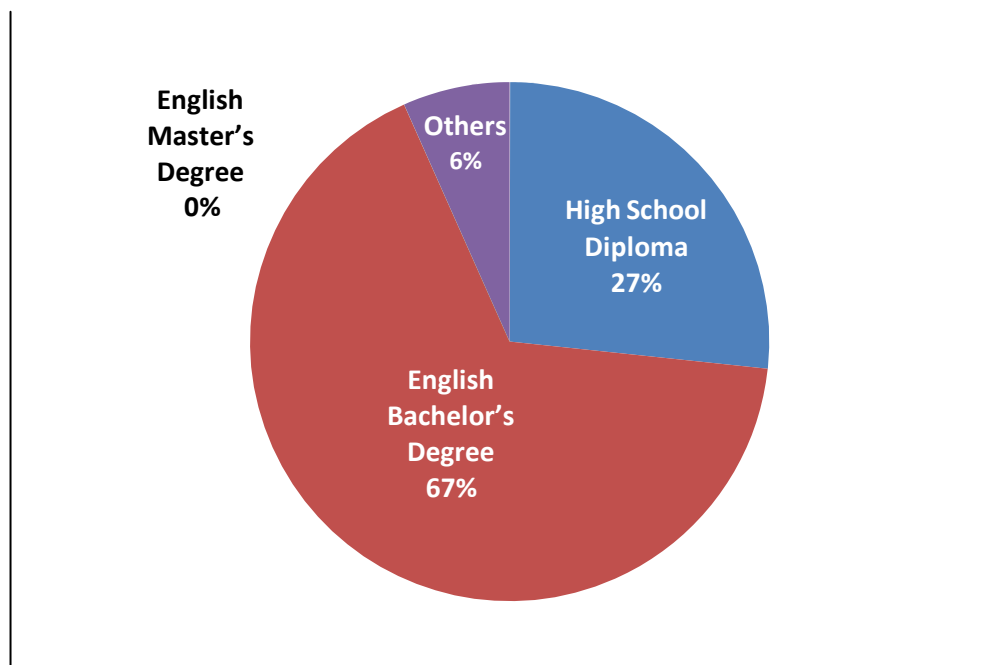
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 1 shows the level of education of the teachers interviewed. As it can be observed, the 67% of the teachers (10 teachers) have an English Bachelor's Degree, the 27% of the teachers (4 teachers) have only High School Diploma, the 6% of the teachers (1 teacher) have a different degree such as Bilingual Secretariat Bachelor´s Degree, and none of the teachers has an English Master's Degree. It is

evident that most of the teachers have a degree in language teaching, so they are well-prepared to teach the English language.

Although the results from the teachers' questionnaires show that most of the teachers have an English Bachelor's degree, from the class observation and the information obtained in the oral interview, it was seen that their level of English proficiency in general is low, as it was evident in the pronunciation and lack of fluency while speaking. This, in spite of the several years of teaching experience teachers said to have in the interview.

The evaluations conducted by the SENESCYT in 2011 to both students and teachers support the results obtained in this study, because they also show the teachers' low English knowledge and domain in Ecuadorian educational settings. *Which of the following methods were used in the observed classes?*

Graph 2
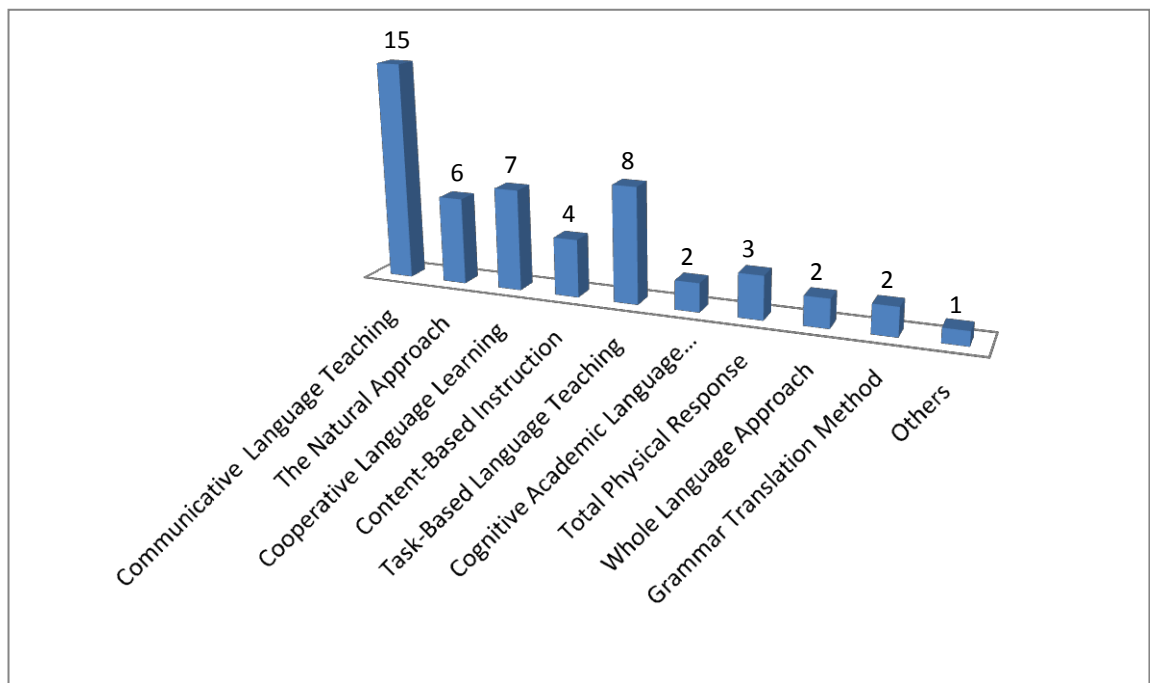
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
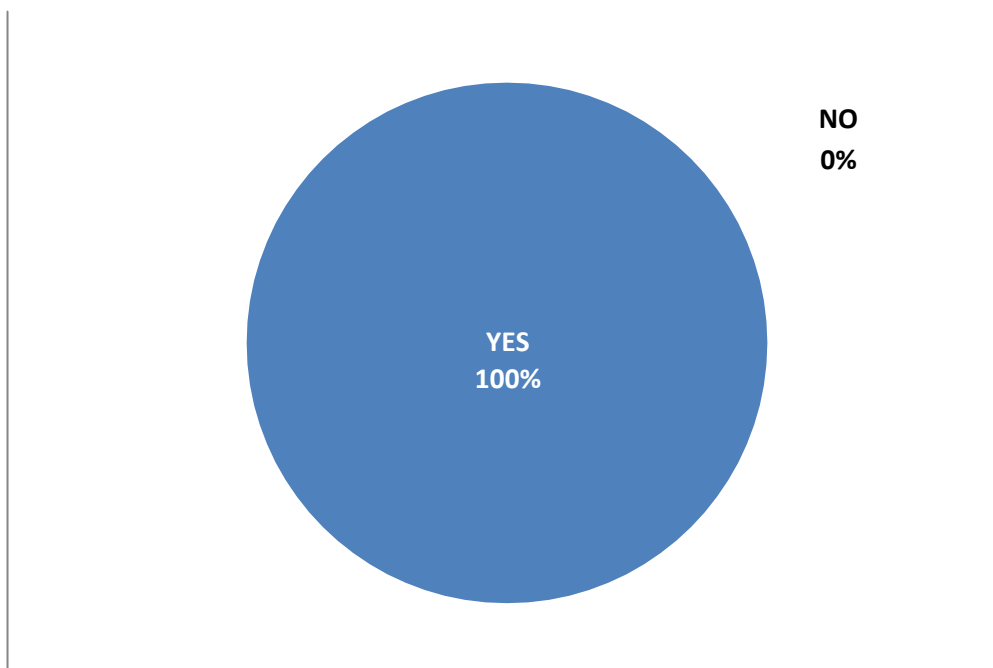Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Throughout the years, many teaching approaches and methods have been proposed and used to improve the English language teaching-learning process, being important for teachers to know them, in order to choose and apply the best ones in their classes. Richards & Rodgers (2001) suggest that a way to understand how the field of language teaching has evolved is by means of studying approaches and methods. This is the reason why teachers were asked to tick the method they used mostly in their classes, but as it can be seen in graph 2, most of them chose two or more methods, even though it was clearly stated that they had to select only one. This shows that there is no a specific or unique method that a teacher can apply within his or her teaching, but a great variety of approaches which are mixed according to the students' needs and the environment in which they are involved.

However, the data obtained from the observation of the classes, revels that most of the teachers use Communicative Language Teaching, and the rest of them use Task-Based Instruction. The use of Task-Based Instruction was mainly observed in the eighth, ninth, and tenth years; while in first, second, and third years the Communicative Language Teaching method was used.

Regarding to the method used by the teachers in their classes, the students answered that most of them like the way their instructors teach.

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

Graph 3

Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
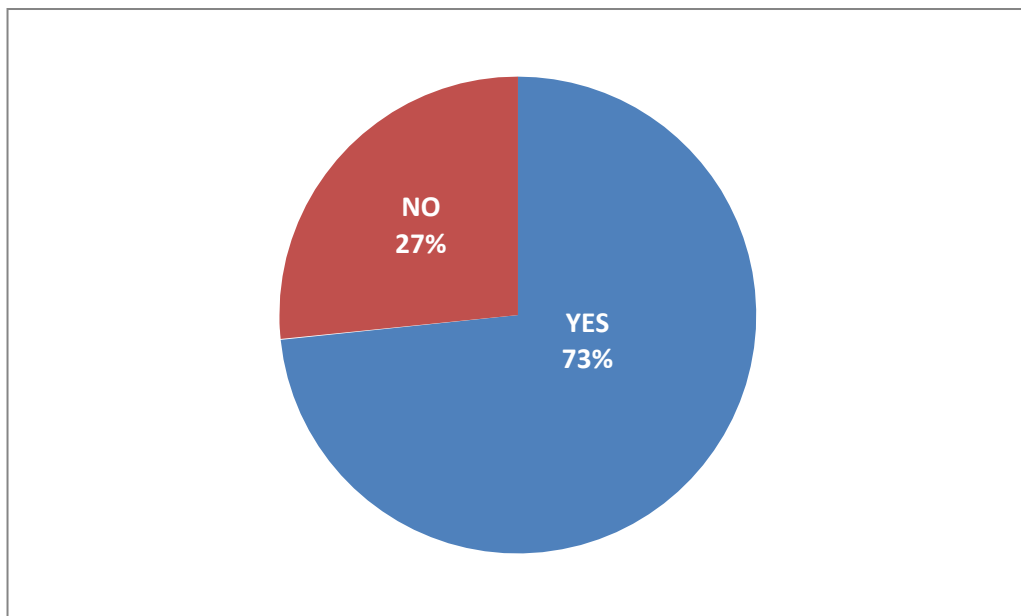Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 3 shows that 100% of the teachers observed, that are 15 of them, use whole-group activities as it was confirmed during the observation of the classes. In fact, they used activities such as brainstorming to motivate their students and to engage them in the topic of the lessons. Another whole-group activity was to provide feedback, reinforcing this way the students' knowledge. Finally, the teachers gave grammar explanations to the whole class.

Some of the reasons why the teachers said they use whole group activities were that these activities enhance interaction among the whole class. Besides, applying these activities makes it easy to control discipline, and they are useful when dealing with broad topics. Another reason is that this kind of activities give the opportunity for both, students and teachers to share experiences, habits and emotions.

Concerning class activities, Heacox (2002) argues that managing multiple learning tasks simultaneously for the classroom may seem overwhelming for a whole-group instruction or for cooperative groups, which do the same task. This author also suggests that it is necessary to decide how to move students to suitable learning activities, giving the necessary instructions, support and clarification, sharing time with each group of students.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 4

Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

When the teachers were asked if they use individual activities to teach their lessons, the 73% of them (11 teachers) answered that they use individual activities to teach their lessons, while the 27% (4 teachers) said that they do not apply these activities.

According to the surveys applied to the teachers, the main reason why they used individual activities to teach their lessons was that this kind of activities allows

them to know the strengths and weaknesses of each one of the students, and it is useful because they can also provide individual feedback.

On the other hand, the teachers who answered that they do not use these kinds of activities argued that their students work better in teams. Therefore, they preferred to plan group or pair work activities. However, they also stated that whole-class activities were also used.

During the class observation, it was confirmed that most of the teachers observed used individual activities for specific tasks. However, after these activities, the teachers supplemented their classes by using pair or whole-class activities to provide feedback, and in that why to assure the students' understanding.

About the application of activities in class, Leach (2006) suggests that for keeping students' motivation and attention, it is practical to vary the activities, without overloading students with too many things to do. The author also suggests that it is important to bear in mind the managing of transition between tasks; feedback must be included in all lessons, to evaluate students' learning.

Regarding the use of individual activities Burnett & Myers (2004) report that teachers often feel pressurized because they try to ensure that all independent activities developed by their students will result in a recorded outcome, but they mention that it is important to provide opportunities for students to work without adult support in practicing reading, writing, speaking and listening.

On the other hand, Wharton & Race (1999) refer to pair and group work as a synonymous of 'communicative' language classroom, because this kind of tasks provide the opportunity to exchange genuine information or opinions, encouraging a very useful language practice between students.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 5
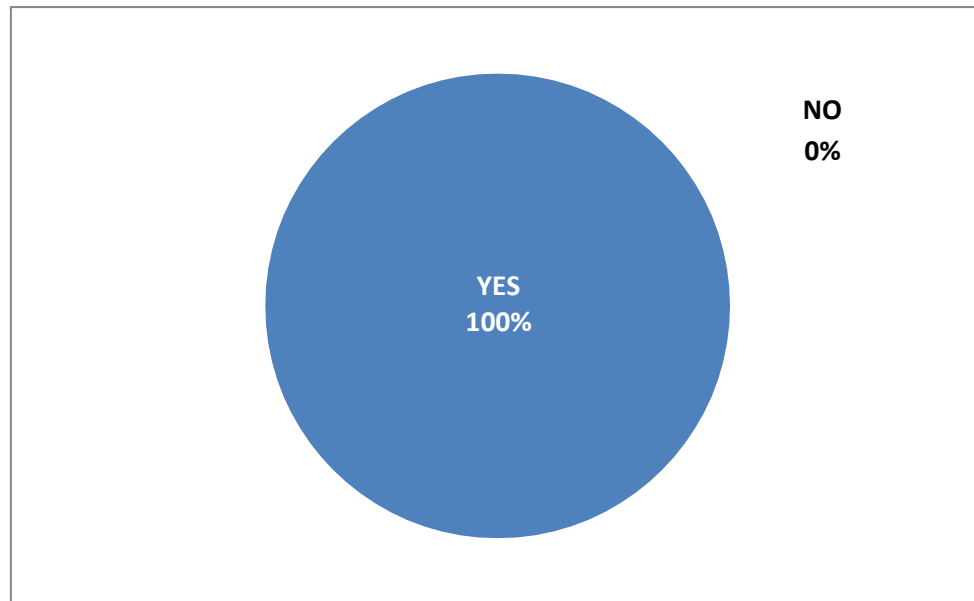
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 5 shows that all of the 15 observed teachers (100%) use group work activities to teach their lessons, because, according to their opinion, by working in groups, students can practice and interact between them, giving support and helping weaker learners. At the same time, some teachers expressed that group activities encourage students to share opinions, ideas, abilities, feelings, and knowledge.

During the observations of the classes, it was seen that students enjoyed the tasks that involved group work. With these kinds of activities, students seemed to be more relaxed and self-confident to practice English with their classmates, interacting among them. Some examples of the activities done during the observed classes were working in groups of 4 or five to talk about the family members; in other class, the students worked in groups to write and prepare a business project.

The observations agreed with the data obtained from the students' questionnaire, which demonstrated that their teachers tend to use varied activities

that let them interact with their classmates. In fact, most of the students answered yes (14 vs. 1 students) to the question "Does your teacher use varied activities in class?"

The effectiveness of group work in class depends on different aspects like the number of students in each group. Thus, Heacox (2002) considers that teachers have to bear in mind the number of students in each group, being groups of four or five easier to manage and suitable for effective learning and dedicate time for feedback in each group according to its needs.

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

Graph 6
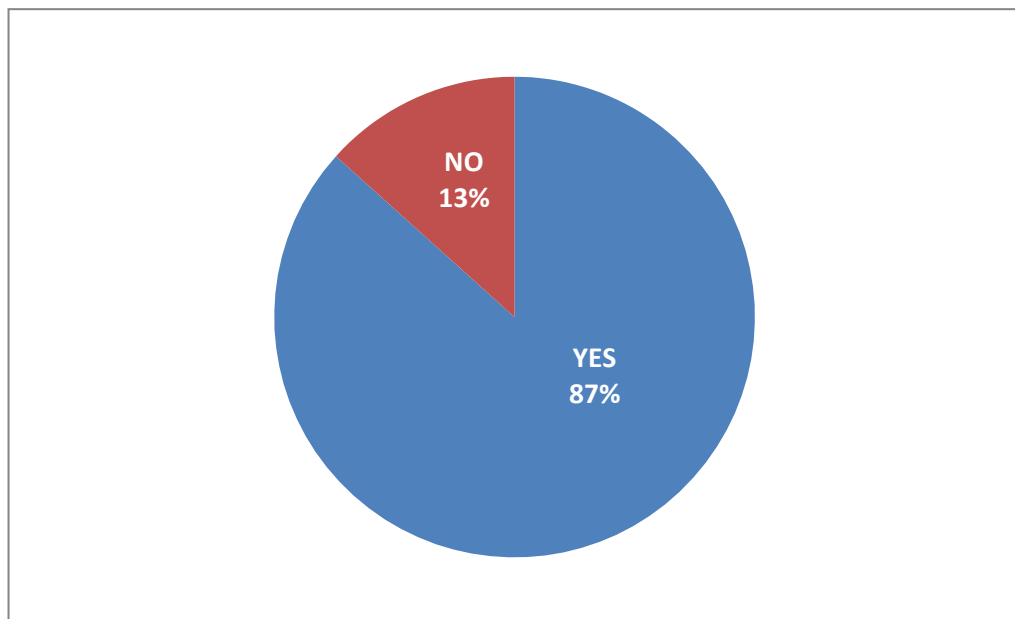
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
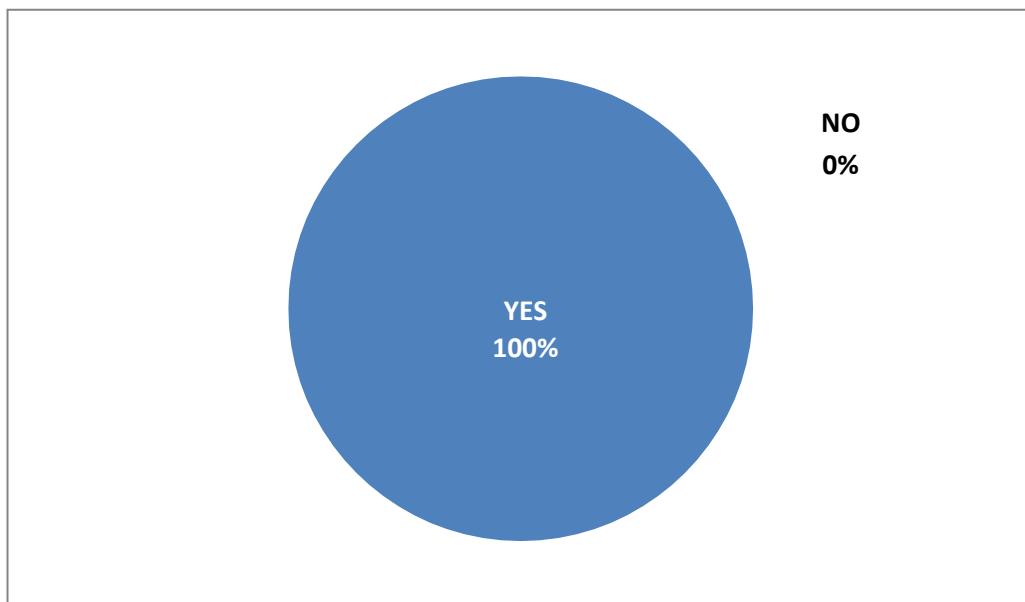Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Regarding teachers' use of English in class, graph 6 shows that 87% of the teachers (13 teachers) answered that they use English most of the time in their classes, while the 13% of them(2 teachers) answered that they do not use English most of the time for teaching.

However, the information of the teachers' surveys contrasts with the information obtained from the observations because during the observations it was shown that very few teachers used English all the time during their classes. Other part of the teachers used English in a 75% of the time, and the half of the observed teachers used English 50% of the time during their classes. It is also important to mention that, during the observations, the English language was more used in the secondary education (first, second, and third years); while, in basic education (eighth, ninth, and tenth years) teachers generally translated gave instructions and explained tasks in Spanish.

Although it seems contradictory, all the students surveyed answered that their teacher use English most of the time.

Do teachers plan their lessons?

Graph 7

Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 7 shows that all the 15 teachers surveyed (100%), answered that they plan their lessons. This information was confirmed during class observation because

the teachers assigned a specific time to the different tasks developed by the students, providing feedback and assistance when it was necessary. In addition, it was observed that teachers prepared warm-up activities to engage their students in the planned topic for the lesson. In other cases, the teachers performed a fast review about the last lesson to refresh the students' knowledge and to introduce the new topic.

The planning of the lessons implies setting specific time to each activity, and according to the students surveyed, most of them answered that their teacher assigns a specific period of time to develop each task, while few of the students think that their teacher does not do this.

About lesson planning, Goodwyn & Branson (2005) state what is essential in all the stages of the process of planning a lesson is flexibility, combined with good planning. They state that a lesson plan must begin with short warm up activities to engage students, followed by a longer task led by the teacher for the whole class, including group activities, and finally independent tasks to work individually to reinforce and apply what students have learned.

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

Graph 8
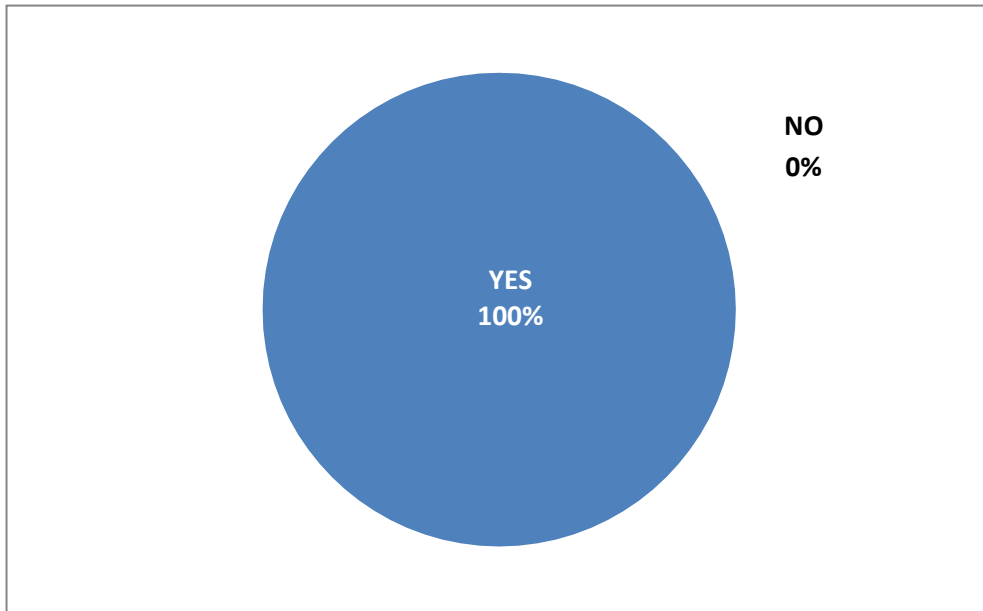
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 8 illustrates that the 100% (15 teachers) of teachers surveyed consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback and instruction to teach their lessons. These results were confirmed in class observation because all the teachers maintained discipline during their classes, setting a specific period of time to each task and giving feedback and instructions when it was necessary.

Regarding discipline, all the students surveyed answered that their teacher controls discipline during the classes. Referring to timing, feedback, and instructions, most of the students answered that their teachers assign enough time for the tasks, give clear instructions, and provide feedback when it is necessary. It was confirmed during the observations that the teachers gave clear instructions during the classes and in some cases when the students did not understand the tasks or instructions in English, the teachers translated them.

Regarding lesson planning, Briggs, Gustafson & Tillman (1991) state that a lesson plan should include the actions of both teachers and students, including teachers' presentations such as a learning guidance, feedback, and assistance to learners in recalling prerequisites; the students' responses to the learning instructions, paying attention to what is presented or providing answers. They also suggest that the critical task in designing a lesson is to plan the right amount of activities, determine the right sequence, and that the instructional events be appropriate for the objectives of the lesson and to the learners.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully? (age, personality, attitude, motivation, and learning styles)

Graph 9
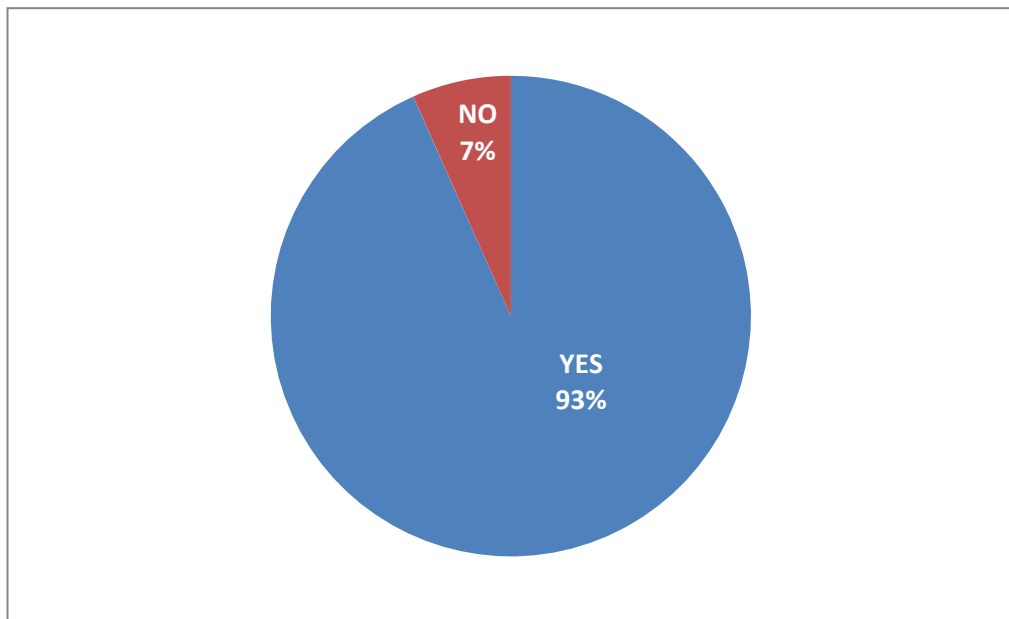
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' answers, regarding if they consider their students' needs to teach English successfully, demonstrate that a 93% of them (14 teachers) consider their students' needs, while a 7% of them (1 teachers) do not consider their students' needs, as it is illustrated in graph 9.

However, during the observation of the classes, it was seen that most of the teachers do not consider their students' needs because it is difficult to focus on individuals on a 30-student class. This is the cause why students who have the best attitude to learn the language lose motivation, because they have to follow the class according to their partners' level; at the same time, in classes too crowded, it is difficult to teach according to the students' personality or preferred learning styles.

This is why to keep students' motivation, the teachers preferred to use activities for the whole group to engage them in the learning process.

On the other hand, most of the students surveyed expressed that they liked how their teachers teach the English language, because the classes were dynamic and fun; and the teachers helped them to understand better with some explanations when they asked for help or did not understand. Consequently, it demonstrates that teachers take care about keeping students' motivation.

Regarding motivation, Nesterenko (2010) considers that it is essential in language learning for most teachers, but that is difficult to measure and define. She argues that in spite of the use of carefully planned activities, learners will be motivated only if these activities are related to their interests, needs and aspirations. *Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?*
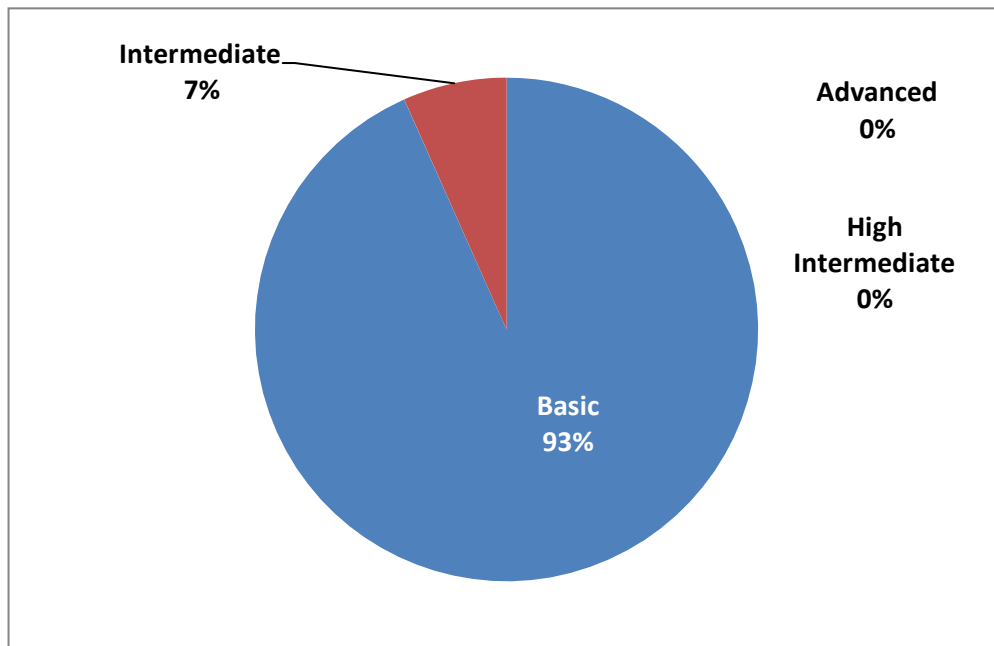
Graph 10
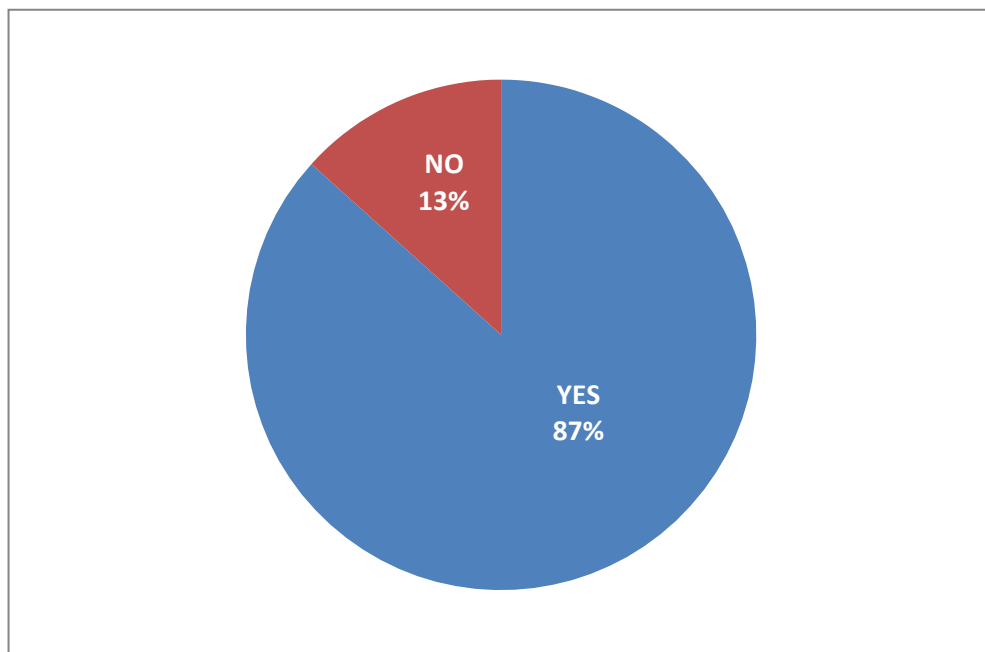
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 10 shows the results to the question, "Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?" According to the data from the teachers'

questionnaire, the result is that the 87% of the teachers (13 teachers) consider students' level to plan their classes and to teach English successfully, while 13% of them (2 teachers) do not consider this aspect when teaching. However, during the observation of the classes, it was noticed that the teachers did not consider the level of each student individually. It occurred because few students had a better level than most of their classmates, but the teacher could not support their needs since the classrooms were too crowded. Instead, teachers had to assist average students.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 11

Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Concerning the level of English knowledge of high school students, graph 11 shows that the 93% of the teachers (14 teachers) consider that their English students have a basic level; conversely, the 7% of the teachers (1 teacher) think that their students have an intermediate level; none of the teachers surveyed considered their students' level as high intermediate or advanced.

Teachers' answers agree with what was observed in the classes, because it was shown that most of the students had a basic English level. An intermediate level was observed only in the third years of Secondary education.

On the other hand, during the interviews with the teachers, they stated that most of the students who begin high school (eighth grades) have little or no knowledge of the English language at all. The teachers affirmed this situation affects the teaching – learning process, because teachers spend a lot of time of their classes trying to level up their students to continue with the programmed curriculum for each course.

The students' English level was determined during class observation, taking into consideration the interaction between teachers and students, students' performance on the different tasks and activities in the class, and the interaction and conversations among students when group activities were developed.

At the same time, it was observed that teachers used basic vocabulary to help their students understand the instructions for the tasks. Besides, in the years of basic education (eighth, ninth, and tenth) the teachers sometimes translated the instructions into Spanish, because of the low English level of their students.

The students' low English level agrees with the results obtained by the SENESCYT (n.d.) in the evaluations developed in 2011 to both students and teachers; where students obtained an average of 13.13 out of 20, being a low grade.

How many students do teachers have in their classes?

Graph 12
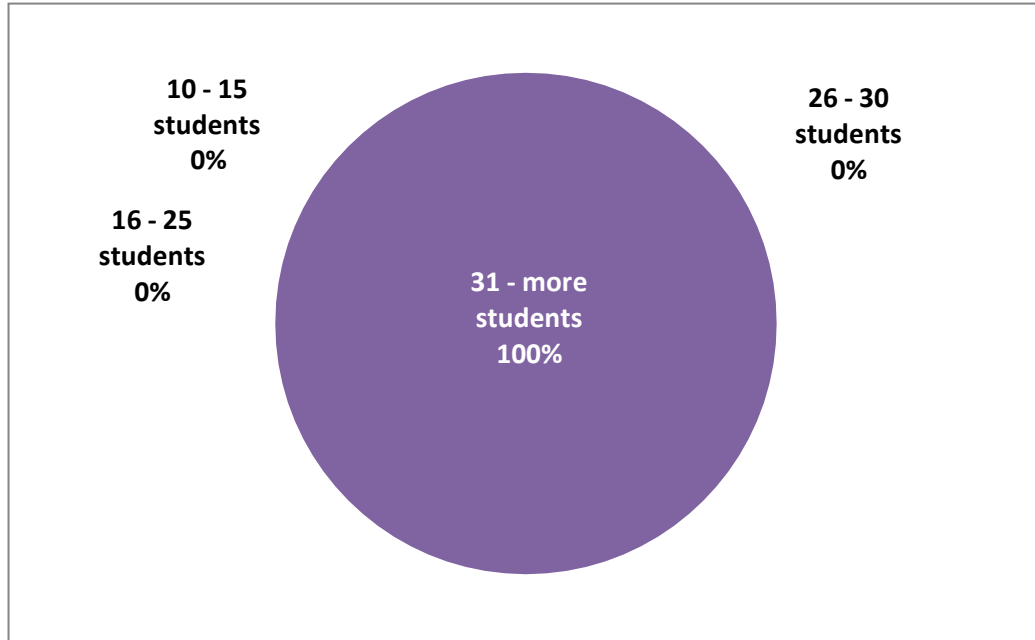
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
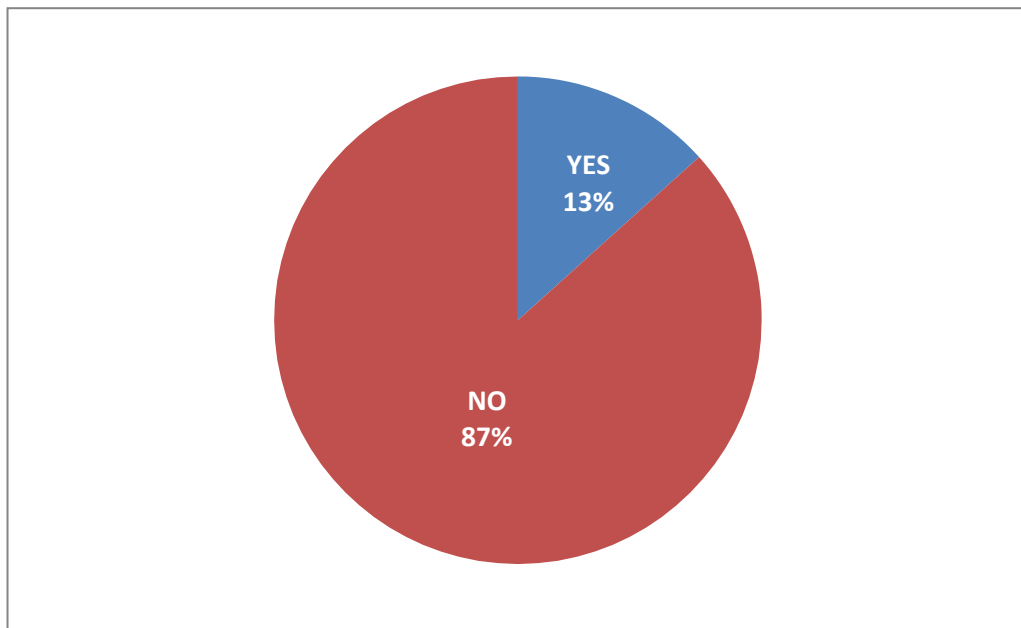Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

As it can be seen in the graph 12, all the teachers (100%) answered that they have 31 or more students in their classes. During the observations, it was possible to notice that in some courses, there were more than 40 students, being classes too crowded to teach successfully, and being difficult for teachers to walk around the classrooms to check students' work. Besides, it was observed that the teachers had to speak aloud to get the students attention, and in some cases, it was necessary to repeat the instructions wasting time; this was because the students who were sitting at the back of the classroom could not clearly listen to the teacher.

Regarding the number of students in each class, Farrel (1999) affirms that it is evident that smaller classes are better than larger ones for effective teaching because it contributes to students' achievement. However, although the classes were crowded,

it was possible to observe that the teachers did not have any difficulty at controlling students' behavior.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with their number of students?

Graph 13

Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

In graph 13, it can be observed that only the 13% of the teachers (2 teachers) feel comfortable when working with their number of students, while most of them (87% of the teachers) do not feel comfortable.

In the oral interview with teachers, most of them expressed their discomfort because of the number of students in their classes. Teachers also explained that for them the teaching process is difficult, because in crowded classes it is not easy to determine the students' learning styles or aptitudes to learn the language. At the same time, during the observations, it was noticed that the environment was felt heavy and uncomfortable; this was because there were too many students in small classrooms, taking into account that some classrooms were big in space, but small according to the number of students.

On the other hand, from the students' questionnaire, the students' feelings regarding the number of students in their classrooms, most of them think that the number of students does not help them to learn English, but few students think that the number of students in their classrooms helps them to learn the language.

Regarding class size (number of students in each class), Flood, the International Reading Association & the National Council of Teachers of English (2003) reported the claiming of teachers on working with smaller classes to get a best learning environment, which results in better students' achievement, and teachers' own professional lives more rewarding.

Do teachers have enough space to work with their group of students?

Graph 14
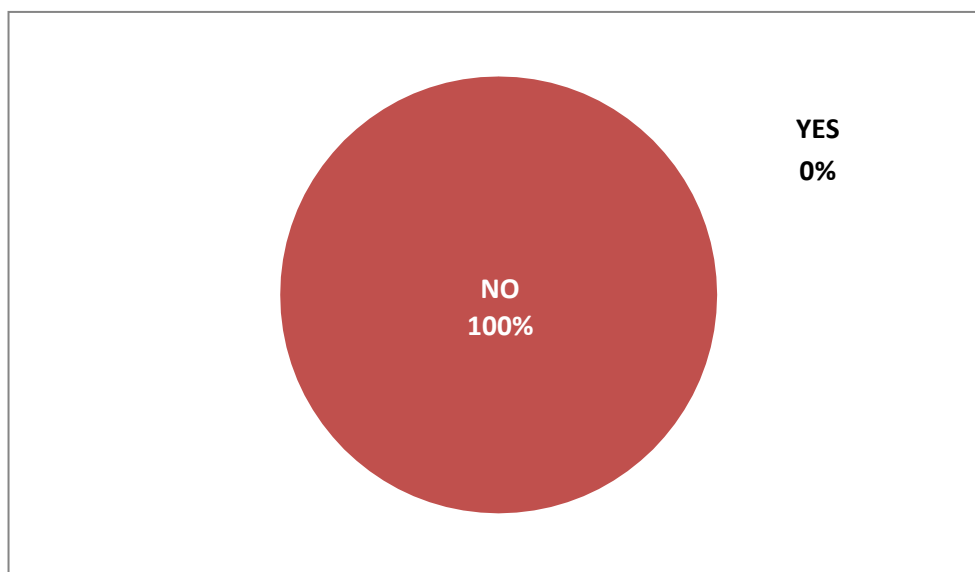
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

As it can be seen in graph 14, all the teachers surveyed (100%) answered that they do not have enough space to work with their group of students; this was confirmed during class observation. There were too many students in each classroom and the physical space was reduced, which made difficult for teachers to work, walk around, control discipline and tasks. Consequently, the lack of space in small

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classrooms with more than thirty students makes the environment become heavy and the teaching-learning process slower. Besides, the physical space in the classrooms does not allow the teachers to practice dynamic activities as games, where students would need to move freely to participate on them.

According to the students' survey, it was revealed that almost the half of the students do not feel comfortable with the physical size of the classrooms, while the rest of the students feel comfortable with the space of their classrooms.

Experts like Moore and Lackney (as cited in Frumkin, 2006) think that classroom space is important because they state that in classrooms with enough space for students, it is possible for teachers to interact more with them, being easier to encourage students to work together in projects or tasks. Frumkin also argues that in classrooms with too many students and little space, it is difficult to arrange furniture for learning activities.

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

Graph 15
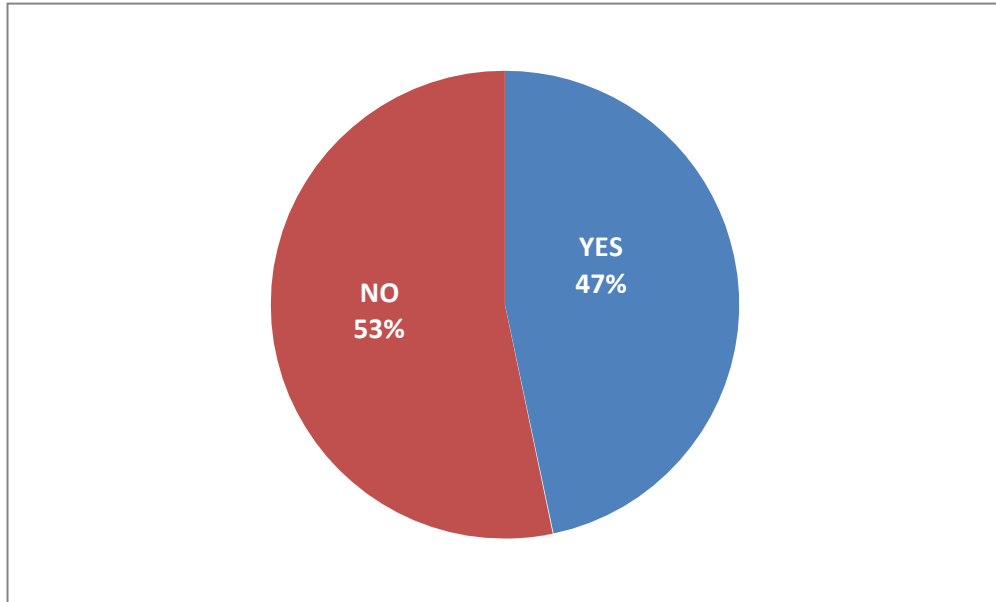
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

As it can be seen in graph 15, the data from the teachers' questionnaire show that the 53% of the teachers (8 teachers) do not arrange students' seats for the activities planned for their classes; while the 47% of them (7 teachers) answered that they arrange the students' seats.

However, in the students' questionnaire, the students' answers regarding the arrangement of the seats for the different activities showed that most of them liked the way their teachers arrange the seats, and very few of them do not like the seating arrangement.

The teachers and students answers seem contradictory, but it could be because the students have not experienced a different way to arrange their seats to work in different activities, and they have accustomed to work in a unique way.

Although the 47% of the teachers (7 teachers) answered that they arrange the seats for the activities planned for the lessons, during the observation of the classes none of them made a special or different seating arrangement. The students were seated in rows; and, when they had to work in groups (4 or 5 students maximum), they did not move their seats, but they only turned back to work with their partners behind them, or worked with their partners sitting next to them.

About seating arrangements, both Kelly (2010) and Lane, Menzies, Bruhn & Crnobori (2010) agree that a traditional way to arrange students in class is in rows. However, Lane, Menzies, Bruhn & Crnobori also mention the advantages of this kind of seating: it provides a better sight to the board and at the same time, the teacher has more control to supervise all students. However, Kelly suggests that it is possible to use other kinds of seating if the teacher considers appropriate, like seating in a circle or in blocks, but this should mean that the teacher has a strong control of the students' discipline. Equally, Lane, Menzies, Bruhn & Crnobori suggest a U-shaped design or the use of several rows adjacent to combine features of traditional rows with cooperative groups.

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

Graph 16
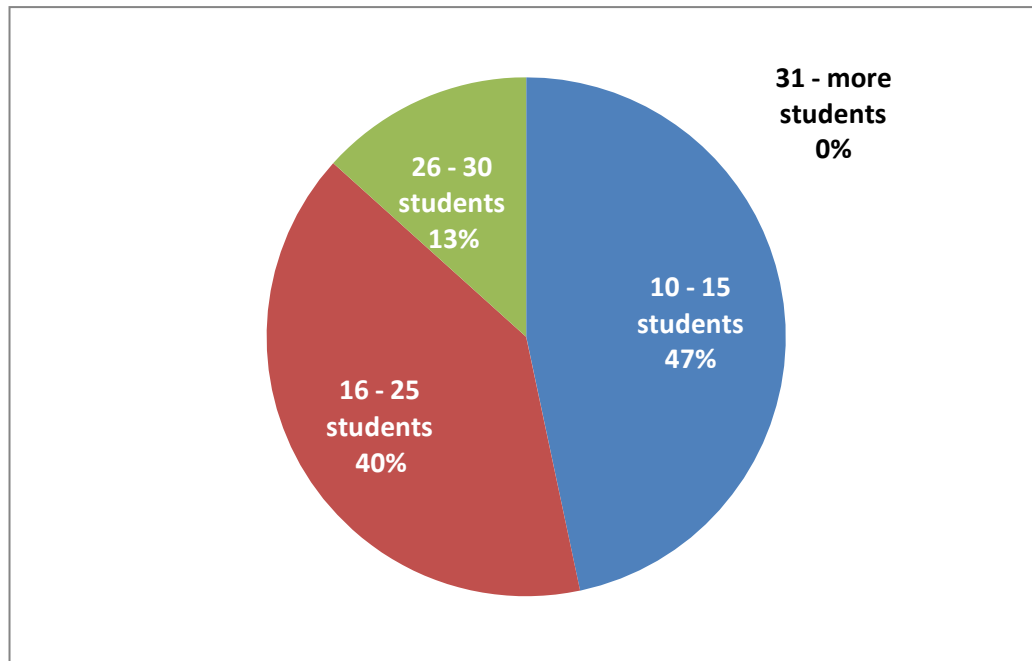
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Graph 16 shows that the 47% of the teachers (7 teachers) think that the appropriate number of students would be betwen10 and 15. The 40% of the teachers (6 teachers) think that a number of 16 - 25 students would be appropriate. On the other hand, the 13% of the teachers (2 teachers) think that it would be appropriate to have 26 - 30 students. All the teachers agreed that to have 31 or more students in a class to teach English is inappropriate and uncomfortable.

During class observation, it was evident that all classes had more than 31 students, being difficult for teachers to interact with each student, or to check the tasks completely, taking into account that the time for each class was 40 or 45 minutes. Besides, during the oral interviews with the teachers, some of them expressed that it is difficult to teach in too crowded classrooms, because they cannot satisfy their students' needs nor reach their goals as teachers.

Regarding the appropriate number of students to teach English language
Frumkin (2006) claims that crowding in classrooms may affect the process of
interaction between students. It becomes difficult for teachers to maintain the
students' concentration in high-density classrooms, especially when the tasks evolve
complex material, causing sometimes an overload of attention or cognitive fatigue.
Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, Tape/Cd recorder, Computer(s),
Projector(s), Smart board, and Supplementary materials)?

Graph 17
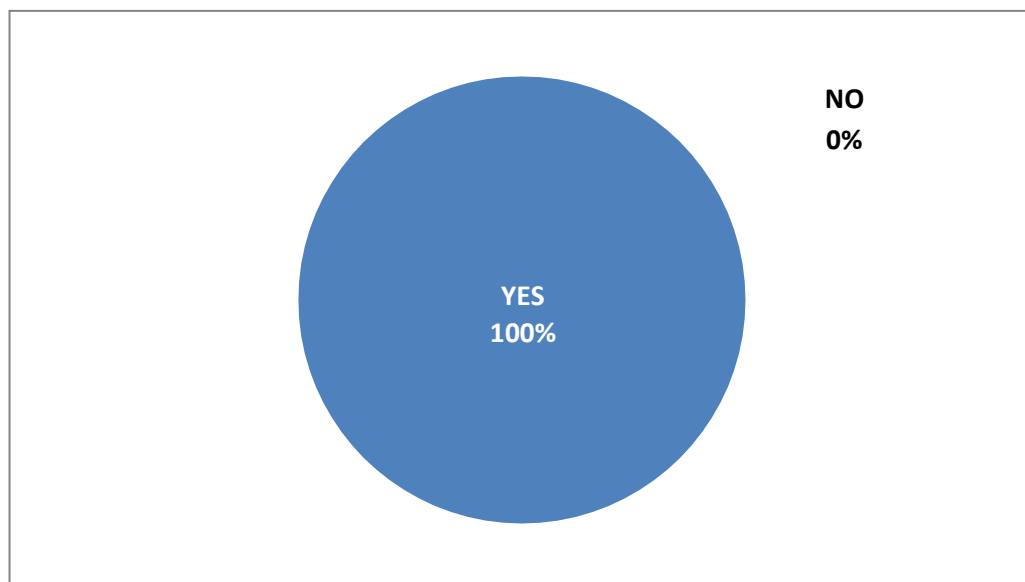
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Khan (2008) states that teaching resources make the teaching task more
effective, giving support to the teaching method and learning experiences. This
author argues that most teachers use a textbook like basis for the teaching, being an
effective resource.

Graph 17 illustrates that according to the data obtained from the teachers'
questionnaire, the 100% of the surveyed teachers (all the 15 teachers) use teaching
resources in their classes.

However, from the information gathered from the students' questionnaire, most of the students answered that their teacher uses teaching resources, while the rest of them answered that teaching resources were not used.

Conversely, during class observation, few teachers used resources like tape/CD recorders or supplementary materials. The teachers who did not use resources stated that they used them when the topic and objectives of a class demand their use. On the other hand, some teachers affirmed that when they wanted their students to watch a movie or for presenting special works, their institutions had a classroom with TV and Projector for these activities.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph 18
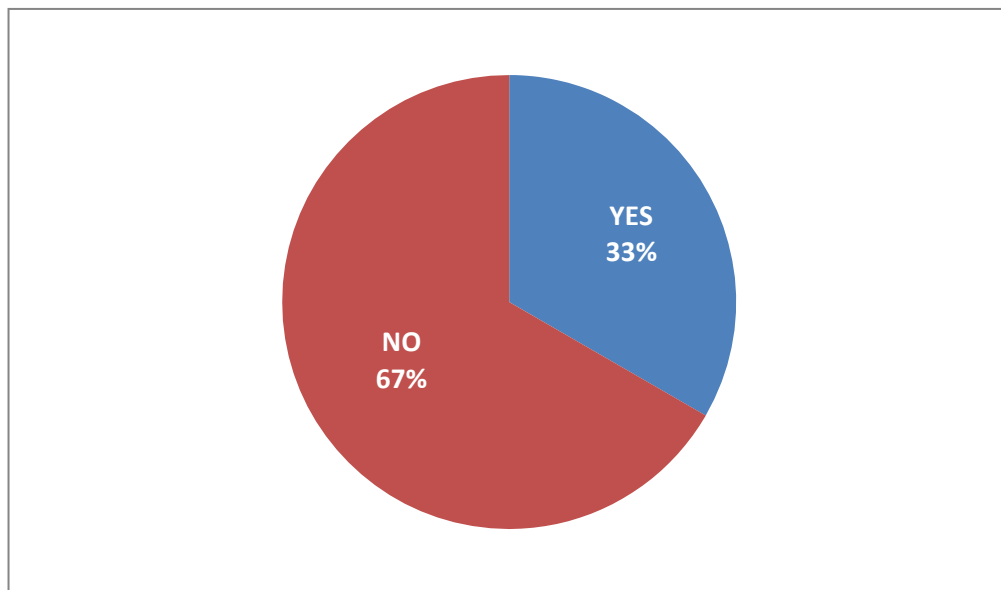
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

Concerning resources in class, Nunan & Lamb (1996) state that anything in the classroom can be a tool for learning, including human resources (teachers and students), besides software, books, hardware, videos and tapes. They mention that there are great deals of textbooks available today, but their use depends on teachers'

training, environment, etc. stating that these and other supplementary materials offer invaluable support and help for teachers.

Graph 18 shows that the 67% of the surveyed teachers (10 teachers) do not consider appropriate the resources they have in their classes; while the 33% of them (5 teachers) consider appropriate the resources they have.

The teachers, who think the resources in their classrooms are appropriate, justified their answers arguing that these resources encourage the students' learning and help with their concentration and attention, serving as support for the teaching - learning process.

On the other hand, teachers who think that the resources they have in their classes are not appropriate argued that they are not enough, and the lack of multimedia resources for the teaching – learning process is a disadvantage for them.

Do institutions review teachers' lesson plans?

Graph 19
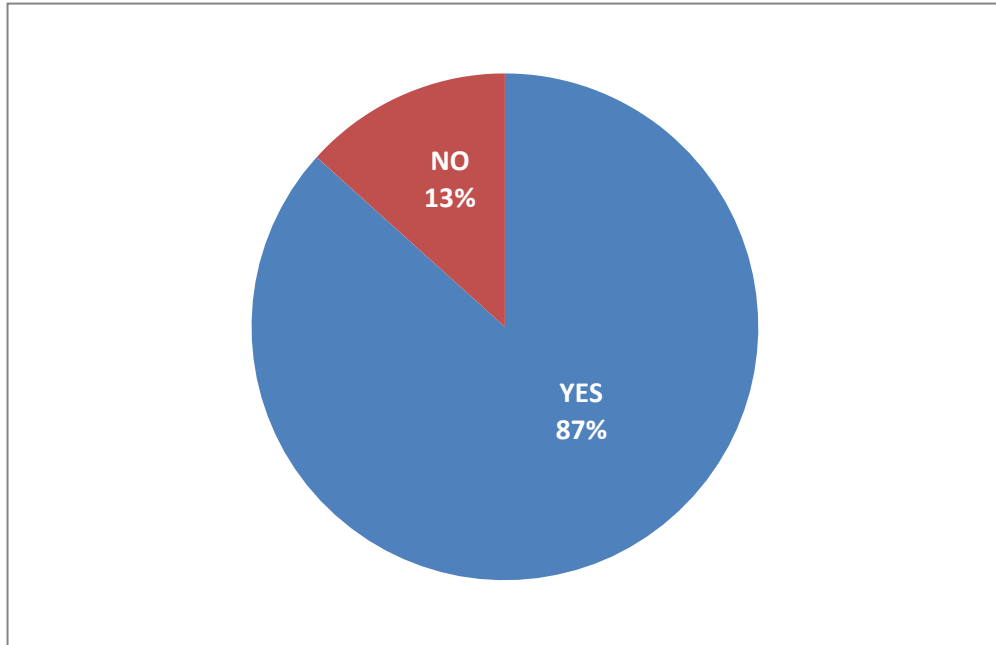
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

In graph 19, the teachers' questionnaire reflects that the 87% of the institutions (13 teachers) have set policies to review teachers' lesson plans, while the 13% of the institutions (2 teachers) do not review teachers' lesson plans.

Regarding the frequency of lesson plans reviewed, the results of the survey show that the 69% of the teachers (9 from the 13 teachers) answered that their lesson plans are reviewed by the institutions stated that it is done once a week. The 16% of the teachers (2 teachers from the 13) on the other hand stated that the review of the lesson plans is done once a month, and the 15% of the teachers (2 teachers from the 13) answered that the review takes place each semester.

The 13% of the teachers (2 teachers) who answered that the institutions do not review their lesson plans explained that although their plans are not evaluated,

they have English teachers´ meetings every week to check the progress of their classes.

It is important to point out that there were some contradictions found in the teachers 'questionnaires related to the review of lesson plans because some teachers belonging to the same institution had different answers regarding the frequency of the lesson plans review.

On the other hand, during class observation, it was noticed that teachers give their classes following their course books, and none of the teachers had a written lesson plan for each lesson. However, when they were asked about their lesson plans, all of them answered that they prepared them beforehand. In spite of the fact that teachers did not have a written lesson plan at the moment of the class, there was no problem with the development of different activities.

Do institutions monitor teachers' teaching?

Graph 20
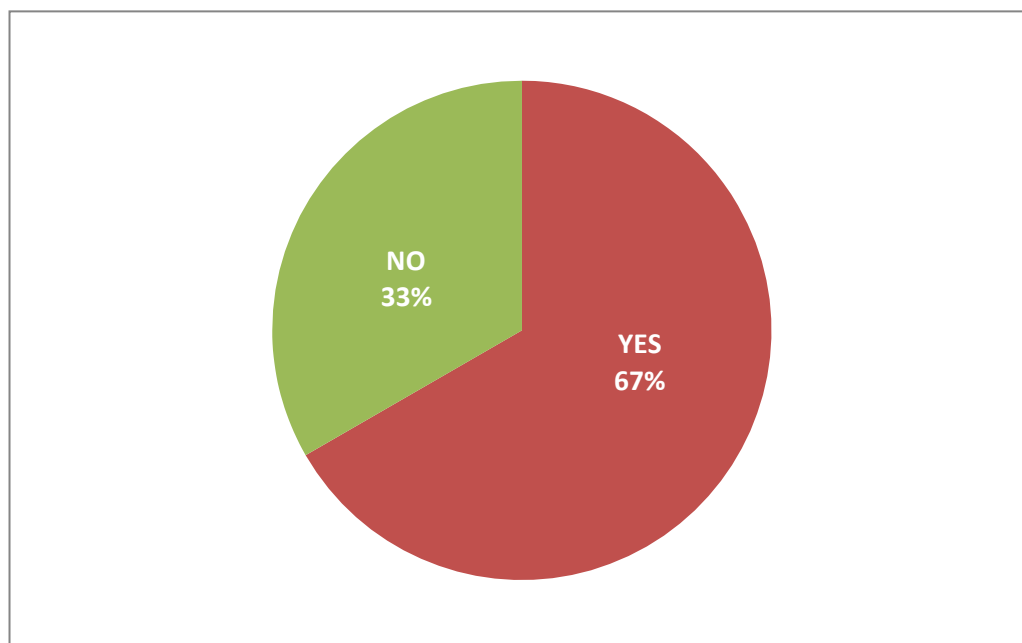
Authors: María Dolores Serrano & Jhamiled Tapia
Source: Teachers' Questionnaire

When teachers were asked if institutions monitor their teaching, their answers reflected that the 67% of the institutions (10 teachers answered Yes) monitor the teachers' teaching, while the 33% of the institutions (5 teachers answered No) do not apply teaching monitoring.

From the total number of teachers (10) who answered that the institutions where they work monitor the teachers' teaching, the 50% (5 teachers out of 10) stated that this monitoring is held once a month. The 30% of them (3 teachers) answered that this monitoring is done once a year, and the 20% (2 teachers) pointed out that the monitoring is held once a week.

Although most of the observed teachers answered that the institutions monitor their teaching, during the observation of the classes there was no monitoring performed by the institutions. However, when the analysis of the results was done, it was observed that the data were contradictory, because the teachers' answers from a same institution were different with respect to the frequency of monitoring, and whether they were monitored or not.

Regarding teachers' monitoring, Flood, International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English (2003) report that all teachers including English teachers are worried about observation-evaluations, because there are many factors inside the classroom that affect teaching, having no control of them.

Additionally, White & Poster (1997) claim that specific criteria needs to be shared before monitoring and it has to be adhered. The authors believe that monitoring value is not purely critical, but it is important to recognize and celebrate what is good, and share it with other classes in the school. They pointed out the importance for schools of knowing their weaknesses to change them into strengths.

Conclusions

➤ The majority of the teachers, who participated in the study, have an English Bachelor's degree; but it was observed that teachers' English level and fluency needs improvement.

➤ The number of students in each class is a factor that affects the teaching-learning process, because in crowded classes, teachers cannot address students' individual needs to enhance learning and to improve the learners' level.

➤ Teachers can manage discipline, timing, feedback, and instructions adequately, because the years of experience that they have teaching in crowded classrooms.

➤ The physical space of the classrooms affects the teaching-learning process. The classrooms observed were small compared to the number of students. This issue made it difficult to have different seating arrangements to help learners interact with their teacher and classmates in a better way.

➤ Regarding the planning of the lessons, teachers use as basis for their planning the course books the institution provides. This fact restricts the topics and activities that can be applied in a class. If teachers used interesting topics for students, they would be more motivated and encouraged to learn.

➤ The teaching resources are important means for students to reinforce their learning. However, it was shown that institutions do not provide teachers with enough teaching resources to diversify the activities that teachers could develop with their students to improve the teaching – learning process.

Recommendations

- ➢ Authorities of educational institutions should implement permanent monitoring and classroom observation to evaluate the teaching learning process, and with the intention of keeping track of the teachers' teaching performance.

- ➢ It is necessary to promote and encourage teachers to enroll in English programs or courses to improve their knowledge of the language and teaching techniques.

- ➢ To avoid the lack of balance among the learners, students should be divided into groups according to their English level; because in a single class there are students who learn faster than others do.

- ➢ The physical space in each classroom should be determined according to the number of students, to facilitate the teaching – learning process; thus, improving the environment and comfort for both teachers and students. In classrooms with enough space, it is easier to arrange seats for creative and motivational activities, and teachers could check their students' progress in a better way.

- ➢ Teachers should try to use more supplementary materials according to the topics of the lessons; making the classes more active and interesting for their students.

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Annexes

Annex A

Questionnaire used to the survey carried out to the teachers.

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:
DATE: --
YEAR: --
----

1. Which level of education do you have?

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

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

Students' Needs *(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!!!!!!

Annex B

Questionnaire used to the survey carried out to the students.

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

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!!!!!

Annex C

Format of the observation sheet used to gather data during the observation of the classes.

UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
CARRERA DE INGLES
OBSERVATION SHEET

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR[desde 8vo básica a 3ro bachillerato]:	

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

| *Students' Needs *(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 %	( )

Annex D

Set of questions used for the personal interview to the teachers.

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

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

TEACHER'S LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY:

C2	( )	C1	( )	B2	( )	B1	( )	A2	( )	A1	( )

Annex E

Samples of the questionnaires filled out during the study.

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: _Hanuela Garaicoa_
DATE: _May 30, 2012._
YEAR: _8th_

1. Which level of education do you have?

High school diploma ( )   English Bachelor's Degree (X)   English Master's degree ( )

Others: _Lcda. Ciencias de la Educación. (Foreing Language)._

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? _The Interaction_

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

YES (✓)   NO (✓)

Why? _All the groups work in team._

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

YES (✓)   NO ( )

Why? _Because They help themselves._

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? _Computer._

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

YES ( )   NO (✓)

Why? _Because There isn't enough material_

19. Does the institution review your lesson plans?
YES ( )   NO (✓)

If yes, how frequently?

Once a week   Once a month   Other_____

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?
YES ( )   NO (✓)

If yes, how frequently?

Once a week   Once a month   Other_____

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: Miguel Merchan Ochoa
DATE: Mayo 22 de 2012
YEAR: 10mo

1. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

YES ($\sqrt{}$) NO ( )

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

YES ($\sqrt{}$) NO ( )

3. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

Muy fáciles ( ) Fáciles ($\sqrt{}$) Difíciles ( ) Muy difíciles ( )

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

YES ($\sqrt{}$) NO ( )
¿Por qué?
Porque a mi me gusta como mi profesora nos indica la
clase con ejemplo ella sabe mucho y ella pone emperño en eseñar.

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

YES ($\sqrt{}$) NO ( )

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

YES ($\sqrt{}$) NO ( )

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

YES ($\sqrt{}$) NO ( )

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

YES ($\sqrt{}$) 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   (√)

Pero ella utiliza material Didactico.

GRACIAS!!!!!

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA
CARRERA DE INGLES
OBSERVATION SHEET

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: Miguel Merchan
DATE: May - 22 - 2012
YEAR(desde 8vo básica a 3ro bachillerato): 10th

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	(✓)

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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 %   ( )