UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

AREA SOCIOHUMANÍSTICA

TITULACIÓN DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN MENCIÓN INGLÉS

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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO GUAYAQUIL

2013

CERTIFICACIÓN

Doctora.

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Que el presente trabajo, denominado: "Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools" realizado por el profesional en formación: Castillo Noriega Martha Amelia; cumple con los requisitos establecidos en las normas generales para la Graduación en la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, tanto en el aspecto de forma como de contenido, por lo cual me permito autorizar su presentación para los fines pertinentes.

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Martha Amelia Castillo Noriega

Cédula 0909004483

DEDICATION

The present work is dedicated to my family, friends and students who have

permanently supported me through the years.

Martha

CONTENTS

RESUMEN

El nombre del presente trabajo es "Factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje en los colegios ecuatorianos". Esta investigación se realizó en cinco colegios del norte de la ciudad de Guayaquil, en donde cinco maestros y cinco estudiantes fueron entrevistados para responder preguntas específicas relacionadas con el tema.

Para esta investigación se tomó en cuenta el método cuantitativo. La información fue recogida a través de observaciones, encuestas y entrevistas.

Se evidencia que no todos los profesores considerados para este estudio poseen título de tercer nivel en especialidad o mención en Inglés; como consecuencia, muchos de estos profesores no poseen las herramientas ni las competencias necesarias para la enseñanza de un idioma extranjero.

Cabe recalcar que el gobierno ecuatoriano busca que todos los docentes de enseñanza del idioma inglés manejen las destrezas de este idioma en sus cinco dominios. Adicionalmente, se necesita un compromiso, por parte de autoridades y docentes, para lograr que los estudiantes logren adquirir este idioma una vez que terminen sus estudios secundarios; así como también, mejorar el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje de este idioma como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: factores   inglés   colegios

ABSTRACT

The name of the present research is "Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools". The general purpose of this study is to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process. This study was done on five different public schools in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Three teachers per school were interviewed, and one student per class, from eighth to twelfth grade, had to answer specific questions related to this study.

The quantitative method was used in this study. The information collected from teachers came from a survey and an interview. Each student from each class was also surveyed.

The main conclusion is that not all of the instructors observed had an English Bachelor's degree and as a consequence most of these teachers had competence and performance problems. It is the purpose of the Ecuadorian government that all teachers reach the Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards in its five domains; besides, it involves a commitment from authorities and teachers to get students to achieve a successful English learning process after they graduate from high school, as well as to improve the teaching learning process of English as a Foreign Language.

Key words: factors   English   high schools

INTRODUCTION

According to information given by the Ministry of Education, only 8.2% of public teachers reach the B2 level of knowledge of English in 2011. 39.1% are only basic users of English. This reality is reflected in the academic performance of students in Ecuador who have difficulties in getting scholarships offered internationally and getting updated sources is also a problem, since they come in English.

Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools is the topic of this research. The specific objectives of this work are to verify the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place; to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers; and to determine teachers' instructional competence.

Teaching a foreign language is a complex task that involves the use of several techniques. Not only it is necessary to have linguistic knowledge of the target language, but it is also to know how to make our classes more communicative and useful in some way in real life. According to Brown (2001), Communicative competence involves having organizational competence (grammatical and discourse), pragmatic competence (functional and sociolinguistic), strategic competence and psychomotor skills.

Knowing the causes why teachers do not perform at the expected level is important. This research investigates the methods teachers use in their classes, the techniques used to present them, the number of students there are in a classroom, and planning processes they are involved in. All these aspects reflect the characteristics of the teachers' practices inside the classroom.

Methods are based on teaching and learning theories and reflect the trends in education at different times during the evolution of teaching methodology. Several approaches have been tried, but the communicative approach is the one that is used nowadays by most book editors, because it is constructed according to Brown (2001) on teaching classes based on meaning more than in grammar; in a communicative class students learn thinking directly in the target language; teachers need to be more gentle and empathetic; feedback must be given frequently; a communicative class should give special attention to fluency; moreover, it should be student-centered and interactive. It is the purpose of this study to get to know how teachers deal with their practices as was said before, reflect on their environment and to find out about their competence.

This research was also supported by other studies done in countries such as Nigeria, Taiwan and Turkey. These studies demonstrate different factors as determinants for high school students' performance when acquiring a target language. For instance, Fabunmi, Brai-Abu, and Adeyink (2007) worked on a research to ponder how class factors like class size and student –classroom space determine secondary school students' academic performance in The Oyo, State of Nigeria. As a matter of fact, they manifested no limitations were found during the study.

Similarly, the purpose of Chang and Goswami's study research (2011) was to notice what factors promote and hinder the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching CLT by Taiwanese college English teachers, which presented no limitations during the research. In addition, several facts in common were also found with Saricoban and Sakizli (2006) whose research analyzed what influences

good classroom management. Likewise, the main limitation faced was the lack of discipline of the chosen students for the study.

The main beneficiaries are the people who belong to the school communities, such as headmasters, teachers, students and government educational entities since it is evident of how the English language is currently taught in public high schools.

The limitation of this study was the teachers' rejection towards the observation process in general. Even having the principal's permission to observe the teachers, it was difficult to get to an agreement with them on the days and time. The observer was seen as an intimidating presence.

It is suggested that the number of educational institutions involved in the study increases in number, because having a larger sample of teachers to observe will give us more representative results on which to base conclusions and recommendations.

General Objective:

The general objective of this research is to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools.

Specific Objectives:

- To verify the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place.

- To identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers.

- To determine teachers' instructional competence.

1. METHOD

1.1 Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in five public high schools located in the north of Guayaquil, Ecuador. All of the institutions visited have a great demand of students whose ages are between 11 and 17 years old approximately and their socioeconomic background is low. Three English teachers per institution were observed and surveyed after their classes were finished. These classes lasted forty-five minutes and were observed while the students were working.

1.2 Procedures

This study research started with the data gathering, based not only on fourteen themes, but also on five previous studies related to the main theme which were consulted in magazines, books, journals, articles and information from the internet in order to gather extra information related to the research. With this reference background, the literature review was elaborated as a previous step for the field research. (See Annexes)

The research method used for this study was the quantitative method, which relies on interviews, observations, questionnaires, surveys, and the collection of information to analyze the numerical data. The interrelation between the variables was examined, to see if they were associated or correlated.

Fifteen teachers and fifteen students were selected as participants for this research. One student per classroom was randomly chosen for the surveys which were carried out at the end of each class. The anonymity was guaranteed with the purpose of allowing them to speak freely during the research.

Once the field research was done, tabulation was made based on twenty questions asked the teachers. The information gotten from the surveys made to the

teachers was analyzed and contrasted with the results from the observation made by the observer and the evidence gotten from the surveys made to the students. Finally, some relevant conclusions and recommendations are explained in detail in further sections.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Literature Review

There are several factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process. They are related to teachers, students, the curriculum, and the institution. In Ecuador, for example, according to the information given by the Ministry of Education, only 8.2 % of the teachers have the B2 level of English, which qualifies them as independent users. Having this level of proficiency is the minimum necessary to work as an English Teacher. Most of them are only basic users of the language. This clearly shows that the teachers are not able to provide high-quality English teaching. They show difficulty speaking English and of course are unable to teach English to others. On the other hand, not giving appropriate encouragement to learn to students, and the fact that curriculum is not made based on the students' needs, styles, and interests, affect their academic performance. In addition, supplementary schools resources like posters, dictionaries, CD recorders and audiovisuals are not available in the schools campuses. Class size is another factor that adversely affects the quality of English language instruction.

The importance of this research relies on considering how the factors mentioned affect the assimilation of English as a foreign language in our country. Investigating about the factors mentioned will help teachers, authorities, and educational institutions to plan interventions in order to address students' needs, teachers training, institutional equipment and development of policies that will improve our situation and help us through the process of giving a better instruction to our students in the future.

Importance of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador

División Nacional de Idiomas Extranjeros in Ecuador (2008) states that the knowledge of a foreign language is relevant for everyone because 900 million

people around the world speak English, 75% of worldwide mail and 80% of receptive information in computers is also in English. For this reason, The Ministry of Education and Culture has recognized English as a useful tool for students to become future professionals, and considered it as an important element in students' holistic formation.

Due to this recognition, the Ecuadorian national government through ¨Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación¨ - SENESCYT - grants scholarships to Ecuadorian English teachers who wish to acquire better teaching methods with the purpose of improving the quality of English taught in Ecuador. In fact, according to this institution, there are more than one hundred Ecuadorians who are currently enrolled as scholarship holders in the best universities of the United States updating their English teaching knowledge in order to come back to work as teachers of English as a foreign language.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) involves negotiation of meaning. Larsen-Freeman (2000, p. 164) states, "The goal of CLT is to enable students in the target language." This is achievable when the teacher works as an advisor and facilitator of communication by answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. On the other hand, the students' role is to be engaged in negotiating meaning when the target language is incomplete.

In the same way, Cooperative Learning is a method that deals with interchange by involving students learning in groups. As Larsen-Freeman (2000 p.64) pointed out, "It is not the group configuration that makes cooperative learning distinctive; it is the *way* that students and teachers work together that is important".

As a matter of fact, students think in terms of "positive interdependence", which means that students are not thinking competitively and individualistically, but rather cooperatively.

Another method applied is Total Physical Response (TPR) which was developed with the purpose of avoiding stress when learning a new language. Richards & Rodgers (2001) argued that learners are exposed to input by the use of commands, drills or role plays directed by the teacher, this requires only physical responses. For this method, the main role of teachers is to provide the best language exposure to assure that learners can speak naturally after many hours of instruction.

Whole Language Approach is centered on experiences and activities that are relevant to learners' lives and needs by using authentic materials with natural literature. The purpose of this approach is to present a whole language focused on the social nature of language. Larsen-Freeman (2000) also argued that it is designed to help students learn a foreign language the same way they learn their mother tongue. As a result, teachers are free to apply the approaches needed for students' particular purposes and necessities.

Content-Based Instruction is focused on the information or content that students will acquire. The language could be used to present relevant subject matter and the students would learn a language with a general intellectual development. In fact, the content is a selection of individual grammar points and lexis that help learners to acquire the learning skills needed to employ in upcoming occasions.

Task-Based Language Teaching emphasizes the central role of meaning in language use, through well planned tasks in order to engage learners in fruitful activities to get a better context for the activation of the learning process. Richards and Rodgers (1986) suggested that tasks should contain very clear educational

objectives as well as vocabulary which should also be included in routines and not as isolated words; as a consequence, the activities follow the instruction of getting meaningful language to be used and involving learners in real communication.

Another relevant method to be considered is the Grammar-Translation Method, which involves learning languages in the traditional way of translating isolated sentences to be later practiced and tested. Grammar classes are taught deductively in the mother tongue with very little use of target language. In addition, this method requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers due to the facilities to make and score tests. However, Richards and Rodgers (1986) argued that one disadvantage is that this method may create anger and frustration in students who work in unending exercises of translation without reaching the target language they are trying to acquire.

Teaching techniques

Taking into consideration that lower levels need a lot of attention in the new language, presentation and practice techniques are really useful. Learners need important areas of language to be highlighted by the teacher in order to help them with their practice. Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995) argue that according to the structure teachers decide to teach with, some factors may be considered such as the nature of language, the controlled practice needed, the students' level, age and learning styles, etc.

Most students appreciate opportunities to activate their language knowledge by using techniques such as drills, debates and role plays. Drills allow students to reinforce specific structures; debates involve a number of activities where students are asked to discuss or argue different points of view; finally, in role play, students are asked to imagine themselves in a situation and are given roles to

play in that situation; games, which is an enjoyable activity for both teacher and students, include information gap, matching, combining, searching and other techniques. Applying these techniques involves a lot of time in one lesson, so teachers may not interrupt the flow with a study stage.

Managing Learning

Woodward (2001) reports that the information gotten from students helps teachers adjust planning; in other words, the number of students in a class demands a more careful planning design. At the moment of planning, Harmer (2007) suggests that the best activity in the world is such a waste of time if learners do not understand what they are asked to do. The two main rules for instructions are: they must be simple and logical. Teachers can be assured that students will know what to do when a student explains or shows how the activity works as well as when someone translates the instruction into their mother tongue.

Moreover, it is part of students' role to be responsible for their learning as well as for the class processes without needing the teacher. Nevertheless, as feedback, it is relevant that teachers give students time to develop the activities asked for. According to Gower, Phillips, & Walters (1995), timing and format of feedback can vary, depending on the situation; and monitoring is mandatory because it helps teachers to notice if the lesson needs feedback and more time; if instructions need to be given again or if the lesson is done and progress can continue to the next stage of what was planned.

Unless teachers notice students' performance through monitoring, students must get clear ideas receiving as much feedback as they can from their teachers in order to succeed in the target language. As a result, feedback should be seen as an aid to acquire improvement.

Lesson Design

A lesson plan has several parts that give teachers an overall view of what it is supposed to be planned. Harmer, (2007) stated that the first part includes the description of students, their profiles, arrangement of timetable and the knowledge the students may bring to the lesson. The second part is related to aims and objectives, where the achievements to be gotten at the end of the lesson are documented. The third part involves the procedures which can include time limit, activities and patterns or interaction, for example, teacher to the whole class (T-SS), pair work (S-S) or group work (SSS-SSS).

Harmer (2007) also argued that anticipated problems are a relevant part to be incorporated in the lesson design because unexpected situations may take part in the lesson. Also, extra activities or materials should be included or considered if the lesson goes more quickly than estimated. Finally, some sample of materials should be attached if teachers are about to be observed.

In the same way, Gower, Phillips, & Walters (1995) report that the writing of plans is important because they act as an aid to planning; to consider what to expect from students and how one can help them think logically; as a useful working document; to help teachers if they have something to refer to in the lesson; and as a record, to confirm what the class was about and what may be included in upcoming plans.

Class size

Woodward (2001) observes that problems with big classes include noise, little contact with the students at the back, not enough materials for everyone, use of first language instead of target language, and others. Even inexperienced teachers

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may be afraid of big classes. For this reason, eye contact is suggested to keep students' attention instead of shouting.

Furthermore, Roeders (2006) reports that the amount of members in a group depends on the number of students in the class and the assignments they have to work on. Besides, he also suggests that some activities can be better done in pair work or group work because they help students to encourage them to use content learnt. It is advisable to make shy students work in small groups to avoid having them hide; also, extroverted students need to work in large groups to avoid the pressure of their classmates.

On the other hand, Harmer (2007 p.177) also remarks disadvantages in large groups. He asserts, "They also have one main advantage: they are bigger, so that humor is funnier, drama is more dramatic, a good class feeling is warmer and more enveloping, so experienced teachers use this to plan exciting and involving classes."

Classroom Space

Spaces for learning should invite and support the activities teachers plan for their classes. The design of open areas is suggested to help groups work without interruptions. According to Woolfolk (2010), there are two basic ways of organizing space: personal territories and interest areas. Personal territories are related to the location of students and their influence in learning. An interest area is related to the design of areas that could influence in students. She also states that it depends on teachers to make use of these types of organization.

However, Malamah-Thomas (1987) stated that overcrowded classrooms with limited free space are the result of the tendency to have an education system geared to social development.

Seating Arrangement

The distribution of students in group work requires some organization because each group must have its own place in the classroom. One of the seating arrangements is orderly rows where the teacher and all the students can see each other. It is suitable for explaining grammar, watching a video and monitoring because it helps the teacher move round encouraging students to participate randomly in order to keep them involved.

Another seating arrangement is circles and horseshoes, which is perfect for smaller classes. The teacher's position is less dominating since the classroom is a more familiar place for students to interact with each other without interruptions. On the other hand, separate tables are useful in mixed-ability classes where different groups of students can benefit from concentrating on different tasks. In addition, it is easier for the teacher to work one table at a time while the others get on with their own work. However, Harmer, (2007) argued that one of the disadvantages is that students may not always want to be with the same classmates; certainly, their preferences may change over time.

Classroom and Teaching Resources

Twenty-first century classrooms around the world have a wide range of equipment and technology available. The board is an interactive whiteboard (IWB) which has a great number of features; therefore, students' writing, drawing, sticking, and more can be saved or printed because the board acts as a large computer monitor. The board is still one of the most important pieces of classroom technology.

Dictionaries and pictures are also important. Dictionaries help students to understand what words mean, while pictures provide a variety of tasks and a focus

of interest for students. Raimes (1983) notes that a picture can be the basis of not just one task but many like fairly mechanical controlled compositions, sentence-combining exercises, or sequencing of sentences to the writing of original dialogs, letters, reports, essays or for speaking activities.

On the other hand, Harmer (2007) stated that language laboratories have both audio and computer monitors and keyboards. They allow students to listen, process words; watch video clips, and more. Data projectors allow students and teachers to access the internet and project web pages for the class as a whole.

Besides, video and DVD players allow teachers to show student films, TV programs, coursebook excerpts and home-produced efforts; additionally, the quality of the machines and the monitors is a must; otherwise their use would not be successful.

Classroom Observations

Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995 p.6) note that "Observing how others perform can be very useful". Teachers are observed by supervisors or other teachers, by asking for permission, with the purpose of gathering information about activities, language activities, aims, classroom management, and events that may occur for professional development.

An example of schemes used to observe second language classrooms is COLT –Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching–. Lightbown & Spada (2010) argue that COLT is divided into two parts: First, the observer records if activities are teacher or student – centered. It also focuses on language form or meaning and opportunities for students to choose the topics for discussion. Second, the focus is on specific aspects of the language produced by teachers and students; for example language production and its restrictions and questions that teachers ask

and give feedback regarding errors. For feedback, the observer should check from whom the students receive feedback. Mackey & Gass (2005) suggest that The Hawthorne Effect may affect the real development of a lesson because it shows a positive productivity which cannot be the same without the observation.

An appropriate observation involves making notes discreetly as much as possible to avoid unwelcome pressure as well as giving feedback on specific aspects of the lesson which is often given as soon as the teacher finished. The time and format of feedback depends on the situation. Most important, the comments and suggestions of the lesson must be thoughtful and supportive, without overpraising a lesson or being overly critical.

Students' Motivation

Woodward (2001 p.14) states that "motivation is the main reason why people do things". Moreover, Diaz Barriga (2002 p.57) notes that "pedagogically, motivation is the stimulation to learn." As a matter of fact, there are 2 types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. People might do things for their own satisfaction with intrinsic motivation. They enjoy the task or activity or a goal they might have set for themselves. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is referred to an influence from outside the classroom like environment, society's attitude, family and friends.

In order to strengthen intrinsic motivation, teachers' main responsibility is to work on different activities such as asking the students what to do, involving and exciting their curiosity in order to keep them interested in the subject. In order to reinforce students' extrinsic motivation, teachers may vary their class activities to improve motivation in learning.

There are three main purposes in school motivation: First, to increase students' interest and guide their attention. Second, to encourage the enthusiasm of

learning to approach effort and constancy and finally, to guide those interests and efforts to achieve meaningful goals and accomplishment of defined purposes.

Learning Styles

This term is used to describe the way people get new information when learning and studying. There are different styles that affect learning. Woolfolk (2010) classifies them as an Intellectual style, a Visual style and a Verbal style. The Intellectual style is sub-divided into three types: Type I captures individual preferences for organization, complexity, conformity, and autonomy. Type II deals with structured, straightforward tasks that follow established traditional ways to authoritative answers; and finally, in Type III individuals pick and choose from the other two styles, depending on the situation and their own interests. The Visual style prefers instruction using pictures or graphs and the Verbal style prefers oral instruction.

In contrast, Herrera & Pinkley (2009) claim that young learners take knowledge of the world through their senses, and their learning styles include the visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic senses. Visual learners are supported through a wide range of illustrations, graphic organizers, colors and shapes that help them carry information. Another style is formed by auditory learners, who have many opportunities to both hear and repeat key learning targets. Due to their lack of shyness they are good at giving and sharing ideas as well as and involving others. On the other hand, tactile learners are good at manipulating things; therefore, they need to see, hear, and physically carry out a set of directions to understand a task. Finally, kinesthetic learners share some characteristics with tactile learners: they are good at manipulating objects and working with their hands, and enjoy physical tasks and sports. Also they learn best with quiet periods followed by active periods.

As a result, teachers should take into consideration that a method or textbook would not be suitable to satisfy all their learners' needs. Besides, some students may have a good academic performance but may feel frustrated in their attempts to learn a new language which is extremely difficult most of the time. In addition, some people's ability to learn a second language is out of predictions.

These independent learners suggest that an aptitude for language learning is associated to cognitive, social, and personality characteristics which are most of the time related to successful learning.

Students Intelligence or Aptitude to Learn English

Because language is the most important element to interact with others, Verbal Linguistic Intelligence is a key instrument to "survive". It has a limited variety of vocabulary which makes it hard to express by using complex ways of communication. In fact, it is found in a part of the brain called *broca's area.* According to Antunes (2000), researchers recommend that story telling is an effective and applicable way to practice and develop their verbal linguistic intelligence.

The Neuro-Linguistic Programming model argues that all students respond to various stimuli; for example, pictures, sounds, movement, etc. that enable them to learn and remember what they have learnt. Although we all respond to stimuli, one of them (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) is more powerful than the others and lead us to learn. Harmer (2007) points out that experienced teachers know this and try to offer a wide range of different activity types in order to assist individual differences and needs.

On the other hand, Gardner's theory of intelligence has divided a person's eight separate abilities into eight different intelligences: linguistic (verbal); musical;

spatial; logical-mathematical; bodily-kinesthetic (movement); interpersonal (understanding others); intrapersonal (understanding self), and naturalist (observing and understanding natural and human-made patterns and systems). Although, Gardner argues there could be more kinds of intelligence. Woolfolk (2010) suggests that a better way to use this theory is to focus on six Entry Points: narrative, logical-quantitative, aesthetic, experiential, interpersonal, and existential foundational in designing a curriculum. She also argues that multiple intelligences increase success for all students and improve both student discipline and parent participation.

In addition to considering and researching how students increase their learning achievement, other authors have researched different aspects to be considered when learning a target language.

Saricoban & Sakizli (2006) conducted a study to analyze the factors that influence good classroom management and introduce possible solutions to these problems. Furthermore, they used a questionnaire covering the subject areas included during the training programs.

As a result, two factors were considered relevant. First, factors concerning students; for example, sounds, seating arrangement, class resources, and other physical influences in the environment. Second, social factors such as effective lesson design, students' motivation, and teachers' roles and styles as well as their voice and body language which play a great role in classroom management.

Due to the factors found, it is advisable for teachers to make a careful analysis of the factors mentioned and their effects in students' learning process. Indeed, with the purpose of improving their class management, it is also strongly suggested for teachers with a lack of certain management skills to be enrolled in teacher training programs in order to get effective strategies to use in class.

In order to analyze other features, Chang & Goswami (2011) researched factors that promoted or hindered the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching in Taiwanese college English classes. For this reason, they conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in Mandarin Chinese which is the native language of the interviewees.

Consequently, the study provided both theoretical and practical implications. First, colleagues' support for generating useful teaching ideas, as well as adequate teacher-training for CLT teachers are needed to acquire special knowledge and skills. Second, it is suggested to accommodate the differences between Taiwanese and Western cultures when engaging students in communicative activities. In fact, classes must be student-centered. Third, it is strongly recommended for Taiwanese students, teachers, school administrators, and parents to adjust their educational values if CLT is to be executed because students' competences need to be encouraged and developed.

On the contrary, a descriptive survey research was used by Fabunmi, Brai-Abu, & Adeyink (2007) to research if class factors such as class size, student-classroom space and utilization rate, either taken together or in isolation, do not determine significantly secondary school students' academic performance.

The study revealed that when taken together, the class factors resolved significantly their academic performance; however, when taken separately, all except student - classroom space, determined significantly their performance. So, both federal and state governments should be conscious of these factors while distributing resources to education as well as educational planners who also have to consider these factors when conducting school mapping exercises.

Another study about factors affecting the process of learning was researched by Jagero (2011) whose purpose was to establish school environmental factors affecting both girls and boys in boarding secondary schools in an attempt to achieve academic excellence by applying a descriptive survey and ex post facto designs.

As a result, two factors were identified: parental support for education of the student and social economic status of the parents. Parental support was the main factor for the girls rather than the boys. The main problems facing boarding students was lack of discipline during prep time, lack of adequate reading facilities, and poor boarding facilities such as bathrooms, toilets, and water. Parents Teachers Associations and other school related bodies should be strengthened so they can contribute to the provision of physical facilities of secondary schools.

Moreover, Raj Subedi (2003) researched about factors influencing high school students' achievement in Nepal. For example, mean resources, class size, and teacher-to-teacher variation by the use of a survey questionnaire.

This study found a positive and a negative effect of class size on average classroom achievement. The positive availability of resources and use of such resources by teachers contributed to an adverse impact on class size effect, and in turn, class size influenced negatively average classroom achievement.

A negative effect of class size suggested that a classroom with a large number of students is likely to decrease the average level of achievement. Major variations were found when taken separately, all except student – classroom space, determined significantly secondary school students' academic performance. Consequently, the critical issue for education is how to induce the most productive

use of school resources through governance, finance, and management structures that enhance student achievement.

2.2 Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

        This section presents the quantitative analysis of the results obtained from the surveys completed by teachers and students, the interviews to teachers and the observations done during classes. With the purpose of getting a better interpretation of these results, they were classified into four factors concerning teachers, students, classrooms, and educational institutions.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Gráfico No.1 Which level of education do you have?
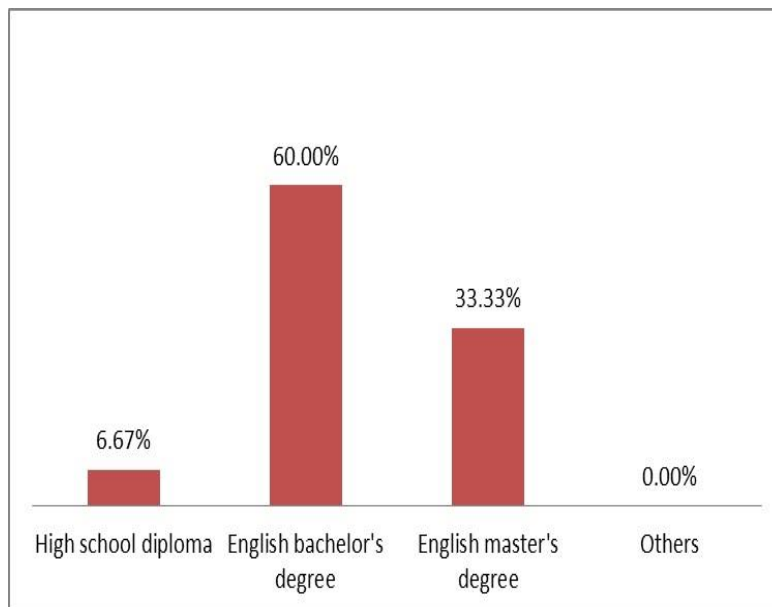
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

        According to the graphic shown above, 60% of the teachers have an English Bachelor's Degree which implies that they had pedagogical and academic knowledge of English. This also means that they have a proficient level and are linguistically competent to use the four skills of this language.

However, according to what was expressed by the students surveyed, most of them liked the way their English classes were given and also how their English teachers presented the content in every lesson because the content was either clarified by using Spanish or explained many times, so almost everyone could understand what was to be done.

On the other hand, 6.67% of the teachers had a high school diploma, which suggests their academic level of pedagogical knowledge in the English language is lower than the ones who had an English Bachelor`s Degree; however, it was observed that this teacher was able to make students interact more actively than the other teachers observed. She made them practice the vocabulary learnt by dictation, oral practice and a game which was given at the end of the class. As a matter of fact, during the interview she said she was enrolled in a pre-intermediate level of an English academy but could no longer attend it because she was not able to afford the expenses of the courses on her own.

None of the teachers observed had an English Master's Degree and 33.33% declared to have other third or fourth level degrees such as Architecture, Language Arts, Psychopedagogy Master's Degree, etc. Many of these teachers said they belonged to the English staff because they had some knowledge of the language and worked in partnership with the institutions as English teachers.

In contrast to the results obtained, most of the teachers observed presented competence and pedagogical problems. For instance, they had a limited use of English which made them give very simple instructions or classroom expressions in Spanish because they were more focused on offering specific language structures as the aim of the class they had to teach instead of creating a natural interaction among the students.
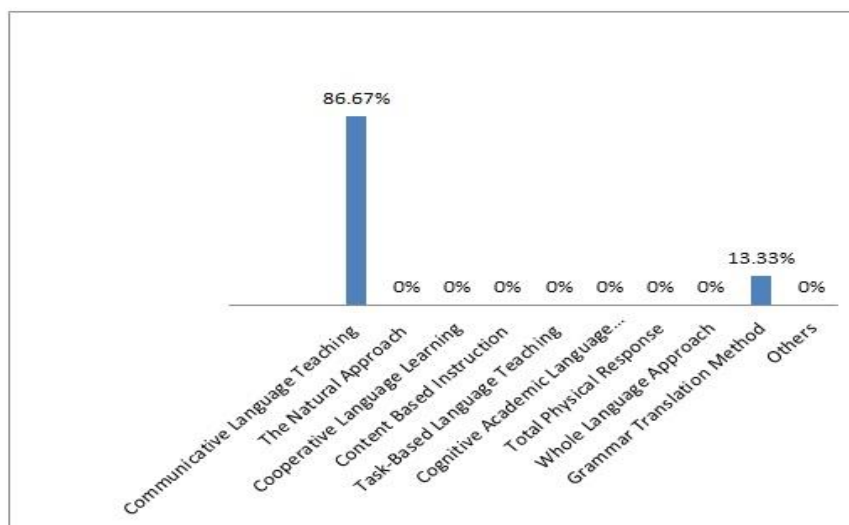
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph above shows that 86.67 % of the teachers said they used the Communicative Language Teaching Method in their classes; while 13.33 % said they used the Grammar Translation Method. The other methods show 0% because according to what was manifested by the teachers surveyed, they did not know or they were not certain about the other methods listed; although the textbook used in these public high schools is based on a functional communicative approach.

In contrast to the results shown, it was observed that almost 70% of the teachers applied the Grammar Translation method during classes; as an illustration, instructions, commands, grammar rules and other basic features were explained in both the English and the Spanish language. This implies that students did not have the opportunity to interact using their target language and develop its four skills.

Brown (2001) mentions that the Grammar Translation Method does not enhance the students' communicative ability in the foreign language. This method requires few specialized skills on the part of the teachers who just present the topics in class in the mother tongue and test their students skills based on grammar tests

which are not communicative at all. Besides, the Grammar Translation Method is not founded in any theory of language or learning. There is no literature that relates this method to any educational theory.

Despite of these facts, this method is widely accepted by the students surveyed who manifested not only that they enjoyed English, but also that they liked their teachers' methodology because they explained the contents many times as it was necessary and used Spanish translation to clarify the classes given.

The teachers who said they used the Communicative Method were not really using it. Brown (2001) mentions the characteristics of this method. A communicative class must be student-centered, where the contents are chosen according to the students' interests, needs and styles; it must be interactive, where there is pair and group work; it hast to be cooperative and collaborative, where information is shared and students come to each other's help; and also, a communicative class must work on meaningful, real-world tasks. As a matter of fact, these characteristics were not developed in a desirable way to be considered as part of a Communicative method.

Gráfico No. 3 Do you use whole-group activities to teach your lessons?
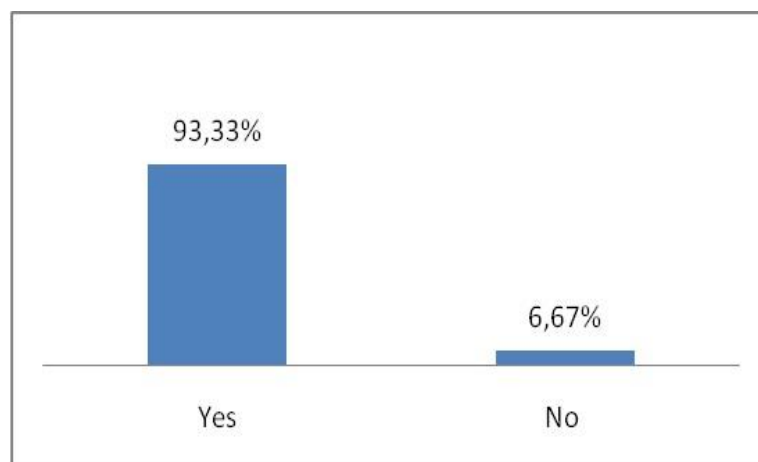
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 93.33% of the teachers observed said they used whole-group activities to teach their lessons, while 6.67 % declared they did not use them.

According to the teachers, whole-group activities are relevant and meaningful because students have the opportunity to share their learned knowledge, express their opinions and improve their class participation. It was observed that some teachers made their students repeat new words or expressions as a whole group, until they felt sure the students had the correct pronunciation.
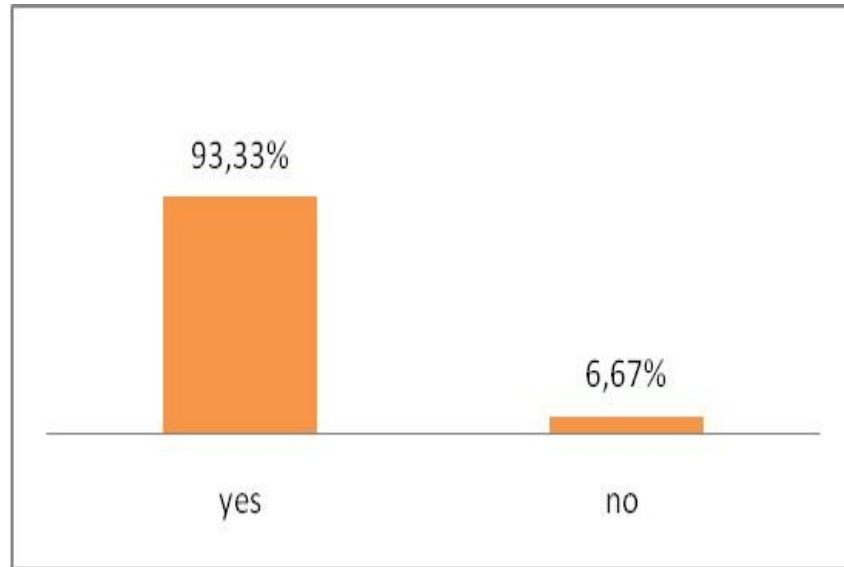
On the other hand, the teachers who said not to work on whole-group activities declared two main reasons to be reluctant: wasting of teaching time and effort to apply a variety of activities and to hold everyone's attention.

It was also observed that many teachers, especially the ones who had to deal with big classes, were not able to work on different tasks, neither to give accurate feedback; as a consequence, some students tried to organize themselves with group leaders in order to help each other; while others just ignored what was being done in class. For these reasons, students lost the chance to participate in whole-group activities.

It is important to mention that according to Harmer J. (2007), one of the advantages of whole-group activities is the reinforcement of a sense of belonging among the group members that teachers need to foster; in this way, everyone is involved in the same activity at the same time.

In addition, Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995), giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of teachers. The aim of feedback is to bring self-awareness and improvement in order to help students evaluate their success and progress.

Gráfico No. 4 Do you use individual activities to teach your lessons?

Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph above shows that 93.33% of the teachers said they used individual activities in class to teach their lessons. On the other hand, 6.67 % expressed they did not use individual activities because of the limited time and the large number of students in class.

It was observed that a few of the activities developed in class were arranged to be done individually. Not all of the students had their textbooks, so the teachers had to use duplicates or asked students to copy exercises from the board. Unfortunately, many of the students at the back of the classrooms, especially in overcrowded classes, were not encouraged to participate individually.

Harmer (2007) notes challenges that large classes present to teachers. He suggests some key elements that can bring successful large group teaching. For example, a teacher with big classes has to be organized, establish routines that students have to recognize; they should use different pace for different activities because every group is different; finally, they need to maximize individual work,

because the more the students have to work individually, the more teachers can mitigate misbehavior. The point is to respond to the needs of the individual even though they are part of a group.

He also argues that some of the strategies to use in individual activities are worksheets with different tasks, writing tasks, researching on their own or deciding what to read or listen to. These individual activities allow teachers to ensure individual needs, such as pace of learning and learning styles; moreover, it is less stressful for students than performing as a whole-group; finally, it can be a way to restore peace in a noisy classroom.

Gráfico No.5 Do you use group work activities to teach your lessons?
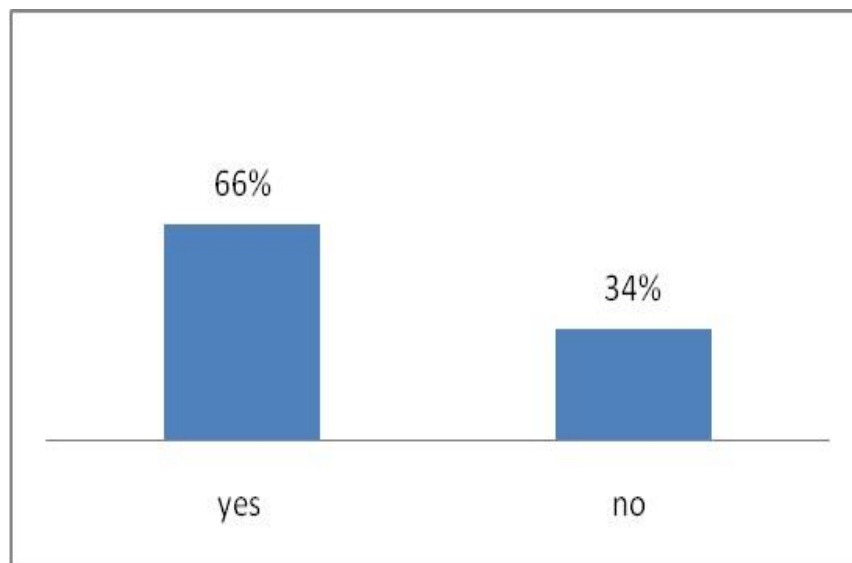
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

As shown in the graph above, 66 percent of the teachers surveyed said they used group work activities during class. They also explained they support the use of groupwork activities as a technique students have to help one another, increase their confidence, share ideas and opinions, improve their knowledge, as well as to have students participate actively in large classes.

On the contrary, 34% of the surveyed teachers argued they did not use these kinds of activities because of different reasons: the lack of shared responsibility that makes some students participate more dynamically than others in the same group, the class size, discipline issues and finally the limited time for interaction and to give feedback.

As a matter of fact, no group work activities were made in the classes observed because their teachers presented just two or three individual activities during class periods, considering that their students are easily distracted, and that they find the activities too demanding.

It was also observed that these public high school teachers had issues when dealing with class management, especially with Eighth, Ninth and Tenth grade of Basic Education. They said the main cause is the large number of students they have to work with, so teachers have to design class sessions with very limited interaction in order to avoid misbehavior and distraction.

In accordance with Brown (2000), group work activities help to solve the problem of large classes because it involves collaboration and self-initiated language, practice in negotiation of meaning and many opportunities to speak through adoption of different roles.

Harmer (2007) also argues that group-work activities reinforce a sense of belonging, which teachers need to foster in order to help students share emotions and thoughts in a collective environment; moreover, they are suitable for giving instructions and explanations in activities where the teacher acts as a controller in order to have a general overview of their students' progress.

Gráfico No.6 Do you use English most of the time in your classes?
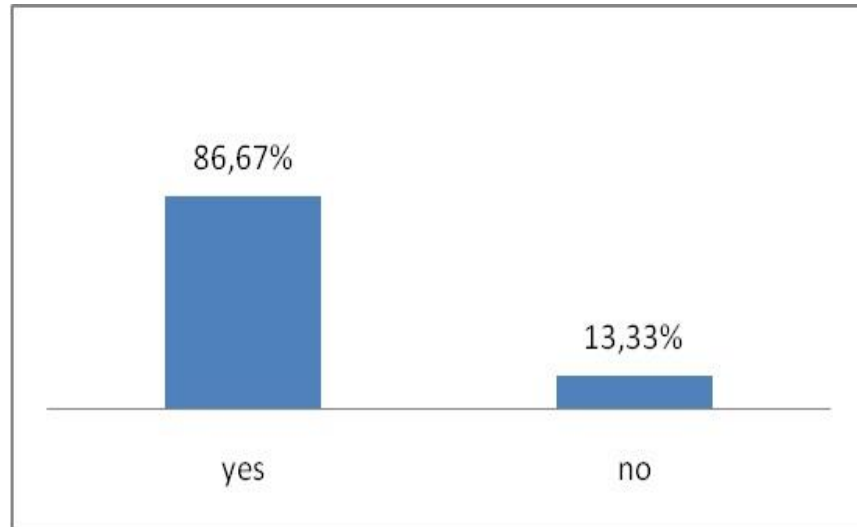
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 86.67 % of the teachers surveyed said they used English most of the time in their classes. However, less than 15% expressed they did not use English most of the time in class.

In spite of these facts mentioned in the surveys, most of these teachers used the English language just for giving basic commands or instructions to their students, such as "sit down", "please" or "pay attention" because the teachers claimed their students can not follow a class given only in English.

It was observed that in a presentation students of a class had to give about the use of indefinite articles, the rules were displayed on a cardboard, and the examples were given in English and Spanish; in addition, the oral explanation of this content was given in Spanish.

According to the results gotten from the interviews to teachers, most of them could not reach the B1 level, which qualifies them as independent users, according to The Common European Framework. This was reflected in the performance of these teachers and in their limited fluency. Additionally, they said

they did not practice English outside their institutions nor could they afford any English training programs to update their linguistic competence.

There are several benefits to having a class given only in English. At the beginning it may be hard for our students but learning a new language is a process that takes time and patience. When students are exposed only to the target language they can develop a sense of confidence and will feel more comfortable when they have to try their abilities. Brown (2000) mentions that teachers need a plan of how to keep their students interested in the class content and how to help them lead with their frustration when they find something difficult to understand. In addition, teachers are a model to learn intonation, to learn stress, and all basic and relevant aspects of the communicative competence.

Harmer (2007) also states that in order to resolve the difficulty of unknown words of the foreign language, teachers can apply some strategies, such as improvising, which means trying any word or phrase; discarding, which involves leaving the ideas planned because they cannot find the words to say; finally, paraphrasing, which means a lexical substitution to give more information about the substituted word.

Gráfico No. 7 Do you plan your lessons?
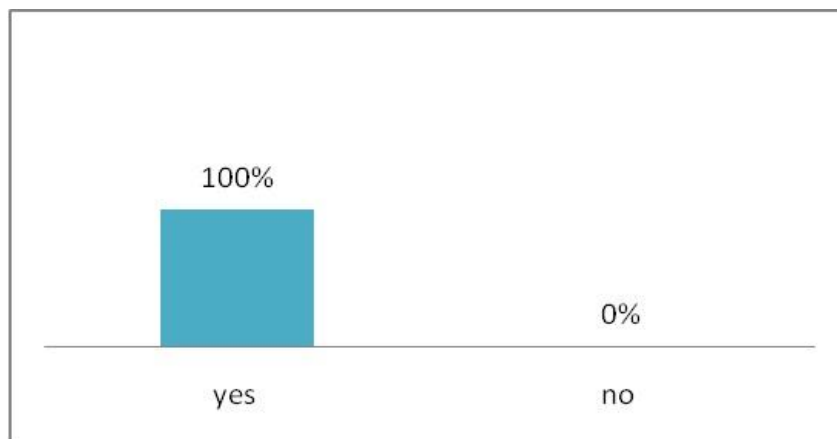
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 100 % of the surveyed teachers expressed they planned their lessons. Besides, they said the content to be taught is based on the textbook "Our World Through English" which is the mandatory textbook used in these public high schools.

Furthermore, students declared their teachers presented different activities for each class which made them have a varied understanding of the presentation of the second language. Although, they manifested most of their teachers did not tell them the time assigned for each activity presented.

It was witnessed that none of the classes observed started with a warm-up activity; most of these teachers wrote down the topic on the board, explained the grammar involved in the lesson, but they did not make sure the students understood how to work during the lesson.

There was a teacher who was observed spending more than fifty percent of the class time on practicing basic greetings and introductions with her students instead of spending time encouraging students to interact with each other; in that respect, the teacher could have approached her students more actively by giving accurate feedback for each pair group assigned.

Additionally, it was observed that timing was not well managed. While in some classes time was not enough to complete the activities, in other classes activities were developed in a short time. Most of these teachers did not monitor all of their students, but just waited for them to finish the tasks by themselves.

According to Harmer (2001), planning allows teachers to think about what they are going to present and give them enough time to prepare the activities they are going to work on the class; planning also is used to remind teachers what they

are intended to do; finally, when teachers plan, students feel confident because they can tell by their teachers' performance that they have thought about the content of the class, and as a result, students respond actively and positively to teachers.

Gráfico No. 8 Do you consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach your lessons?
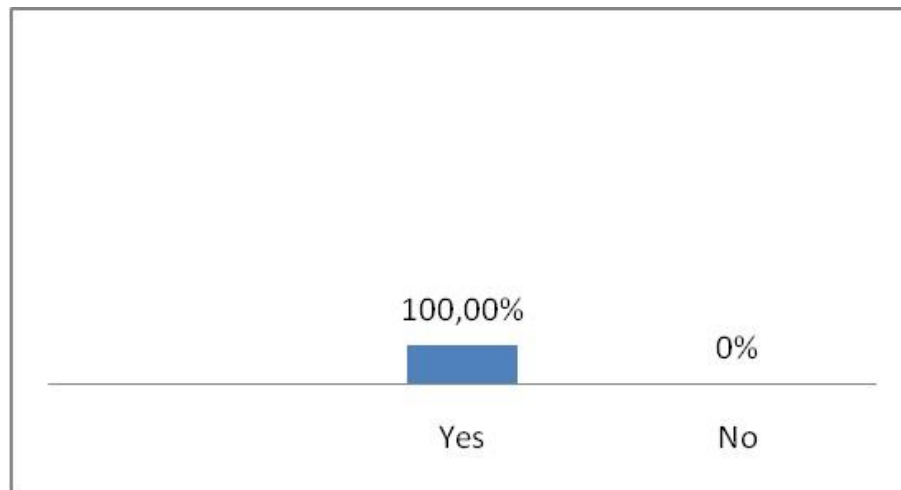
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

A hundred percent of the educators observed expressed they considered aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to when teaching their lessons. Likewise, all of the students manifested their teachers had control of discipline in the classroom. However, during the research it was found that less than 30 % of the teachers observed could not manage discipline properly.

It was witnessed that discipline is one of the main concerns which Ecuadorian public schools have to deal with. Some teachers made great efforts to take control of the class. Sometimes they were even helped by school inspectors while others just went along with the situation and preferred to ignore disciplinary issues.

Harmer (2007) notes that most of the discipline difficulties are created before the lesson starts if teachers do not come to class with something interesting to

do; besides, students lose interest and become disconnected with what is going on. According to him, this is when behavior issues often manifest themselves.

It was observed that some groups had low motivation and concentration because the classes were not fruitful or appealing enough, especially for students sitting at the back of the class who were ignored most of time or received less support from teachers, which made them get bored and distracted easily. As a result, they showed a disrespectful attitude. (Annex 6)

Additionally, 40 % of the students declared their teachers did not assign enough time to finish class activities. Actually, timing was not considered when planning since these teachers could not manage it well.

During the observations, class time was not well managed since in some classes, some activities took a short time; while in others, the activities presented could not be covered during the class period assigned and the teacher had to reschedule them.

According to Brown (2000), timing is one of the most difficult aspects of lesson planning to control because it involves considering the number of minutes in the class hour. He also argues that timing involves offering some time to students for real and productive interaction. However, it also deals with having some backup activity ready to insert when planned lessons end early.

Furthermore, it was observed that trying to make students understand what a task was about and what they were supposed to do was time consuming. As an illustration, almost 30% of the interviewed students declared they did not understand instructions because they were not clear enough. This was observed, especially while teachers were waiting for the assignments to be done, students were actually trying to understand what the exercises were about. Despite of many students giving

support and feeling comfortable about assisting their classmates, there was no evidence of teachers checking students' understanding of instructions neither any strategy used like asking someone to explain the instructions to the class in order to both clarify what was requested and avoid wasting time.

Harmer (2007, p. 37) argues that "The best activity in the world is a waste of time if students do not understand what it is supposed to do." He also suggests that instructions should be simple and logical. It is similarly relevant that teachers check students' understanding of the instructions given.

On the other hand, even though all of the surveyed students said their teachers did explain to them what went wrong and how to improve it, feedback was not properly given in all of the classes observed. As Gower, Phillips, & Walters (1995) establish, "The timing and format of feedback can vary, depending on the situation". Harmer (2007) also adds that giving feedback may help students to see how well they have responded to the content of the task and not just to the language they used.

Factors Concerning Students

Gráfico No.9 Do you consider Students' needs to teach English successfully?
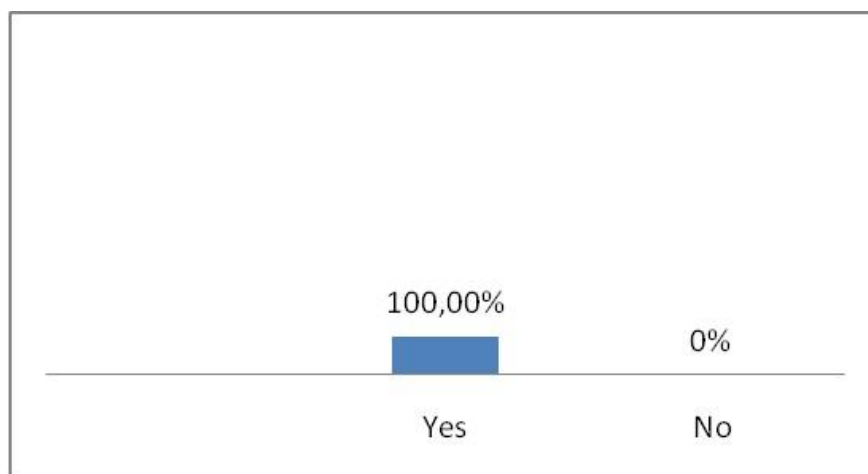
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

Not only 100% of the teachers affirmed to take into consideration students' needs when teaching English successfully, but many of the students observed also manifested their enjoyment at learning English as well. They felt motivated because of the diverse activities their teachers developed throughout the classes.

In contrast, it was observed that more than 60% of the teachers did not take into consideration students' needs such as age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles. In particular, most of the teachers just followed the examples provided in the textbook without presenting attractive or creative activities that could catch students' attention more effectively. As a matter of fact, 70% of the students surveyed said the activities done in class were not demanding, while the others considered them too difficult to be done with accuracy.

Although, 13% of the students surveyed said assertively they did not feel motivated because the activities given in class were not significant to continue learning the language; for example, during an evening class, a student was observed lying down while the teacher was explaining the content. This situation was just ignored by everyone in the class, including the teacher.

Different activities are the results of a consideration of students' needs, especially if they are applied in order to perceive how students react to them. As Herrera (2009) notes, there are different learning styles that affect learning, such as visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic. In light of this statement, during the observations most of the language practiced was done through visual exercises in both notebook or copies which is a characteristic of how visual learners acquire knowledge. In contrast, auditory learners did not have enough opportunities to hear and repeat key content learned since Spanish was primarily used and limited resources for listening skills were applied. Similarly, kinesthetic tactile learners

missed the chance to see, hear and physically carry out directions to understand a task because projects or hands on activities were not presented in the classes observed.

Additionally, Díaz Barriga (2002) states that teachers' role is to provoke reasoning in their students regarding their learning and behavior and to encourage them to work voluntarily. This is called motivation in learning and it depends on what happens in the classroom to make students take part in and sustain their intrinsic motivation. Fortunately, it was evident that most of eighth, ninth and tenth graders enjoyed the tasks given without complaining, which is part of their intrinsic motivation because they did whatever they were asked for without hesitation.

To summarize, learners did not share the same characteristics when learning something new and it was observed that different activity types were not presented in teachers' lessons to attend individual differences and needs through a variety of activities. As a result, students got bored with the routine of their English classes.

Gráfico No. 10 Do you consider Students' level to teach English successfully?
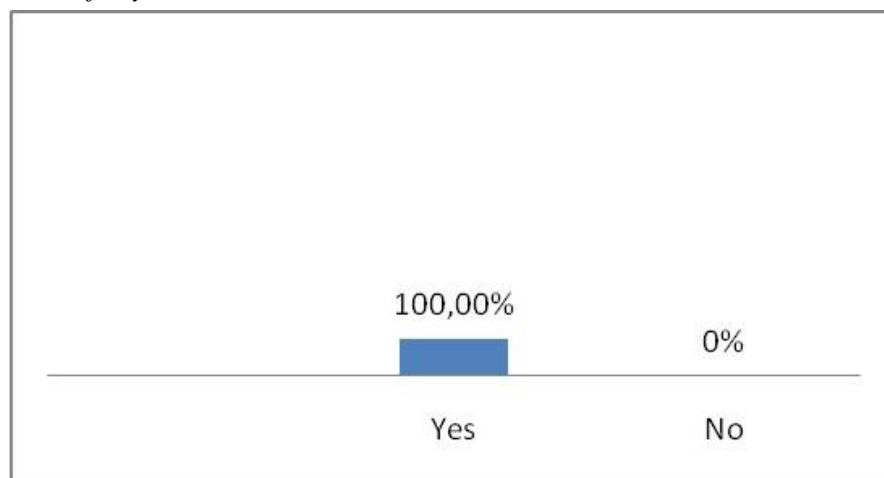
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

A hundred percent of the teachers declared considering students' level when teaching English. This also agreed with 73% of the students who declared that the tasks presented in class were easy enough to be developed and that they liked English classes because their teachers explained the content well and let them even use translation for comprehension.

Despite the positive rapport observed between teachers and pupils, it was seen that teachers managed students as if all of them were ranged at the same level. They all received the same brief explanation and time limit, if it was previously established, in order to develop the activities asked; consequently, the tasks presented were considered too demanding or too simple by the students. In fact, during the observations there was no evidence of applying assorted strategies for working with different levels with the purpose of reaching the aim of the class lesson.

According to Harmer J. (2007), classes which have students at different levels can work in three ways: doing different tasks with the same material, using students as helpers or ignoring the problem. To begin with, doing different tasks with the same material involves making students work actively according to their levels: for some students, basic or simple repetitions could be desirable; but for others, complex and comprehensive sentences can be more demanding. As a matter of fact, neither of the observed teachers applied these strategies in class since everyone had to work on the same assignments in a similar way.

For example, students had to repeat the answers in chorus, copy the exercises from the board, or answer some questions, which were very demanding for some of them. It was evident that leading classes in this way made these students unable to acquire knowledge at their own pace.

On the other hand, peer to peer work is a strategy applied when better students help and teach their classmates who are not as good at learning English as they are. Moreover, when working with mixed-ability classes, students can be arranged in different small groups designed for different ability levels with the purpose of giving each group particular assignments according to their needs.

Unfortunately, none of the observed teachers took the lead to adopt these strategies, although they are meant to be supportive. In fact, it was witnessed how students arranged themselves in order to either give or receive help, depending on the tasks assigned. Most of the time, this peer assistance was given with the purpose of achieving the content given without any judgment.

Ignoring the different levels of students in class may have different consequences and reactions; for instance, students can either get bored more quickly leading to disciplinary issues or they could feel embarrassed by receiving help from others, making them feel frustrated with their own limitations. Unfortunately, both reactions were observed in class due to the lack of interest from these teachers in recognizing students with different levels as well as applying any meaningful and worthwhile strategy in order to assist their students to succeed in class.

According to Woodward (2001 p.216), "Preparation in class before all task work should be detailed so that everybody, including the weaker students, know what to do". She also argues that teachers' attitude should be to help students to produce successful work rather than wait to correct it.

As a matter of fact, it was observed that some teachers, especially the ones who work the evening shift, tried to solve the problem of having a class with different levels by using a more practical textbook instead of the one set as mandatory, so they could make decisions about the topics and skills to work on. As

a result, students got involved in an English grammar class where the aim was to apply the grammar forms presented with accuracy.

Under this circumstance, the lack of motivation, feelings of frustration and the problems of having activities considered too simple or too demanding to develop persisted after all in the classes observed. (Annex 7)

Gráfico No.11 Which is the level of your students?
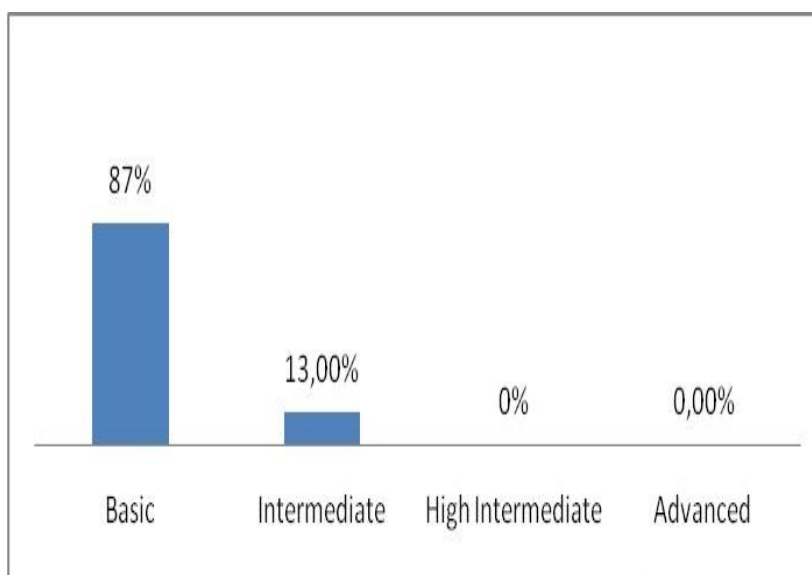
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 87% of the teachers surveyed said their students were placed in a basic level; and 13% expressed they had intermediate level students. In accordance to the grammar content of the textbook ¨Our World through English¨ which first level is taught in Eighth Grade, students will master the simple present tense, as well as adjectives, vocabulary such as colors, numbers, furniture, days of the week, months of the year as well as other contents.

However, during the research it was observed that Eighth grade students had some problems recognizing the correct basic language structure to be applied in the tasks assigned where even spelling doubts were uncovered accurately. For

example, the word "brown" was spelled "brow" and pronounced the same way as well as the adjective "beautiful" which was written "beatiful", and so on.

Besides, there was no evidence of helping students be involved in target language through cognitive strategies such as repetition of patterns or inferring meaning from context, which helps students be able to process logical conclusions from ideas expressed in English language. Neither was there any transfer strategies in order to help students make connections before or during the class with the purpose of using a critical comprehension unconsciously.

To summarize, most of the teachers surveyed said their students had a basic level of English, and translation was disproportionately allowed to use in class without being stimulated to use target language in context. This lack of encouragement came from their own teachers despite the English project for Ecuadorian public high schools demands to have an English speaking environment to have better results in the students' performance.

Harmer (2007) argues that beginner or intermediate students will need more support from teachers because at lower levels they have to repeat sentences or phrases chorally due to their difficulty in hearing the sounds and intonation patterns that later allows them to practice in a stress-free way. Besides, he also states that students' abilities within any particular level may be varied which involves an effect on their motivation. For example, students who had trouble understanding or producing target language at a basic level, could not see progress of their abilities and fail to progress at a higher level; which could also end in demotivating effect. For this reason, teachers have to be sensitive to this effect in students' level, giving students a clear target language to aim at and making sure the activities presented engage students' interest in the language being used.

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Factors Concerning Classrooms

Gráfico No. 12 How many students do you have in class?
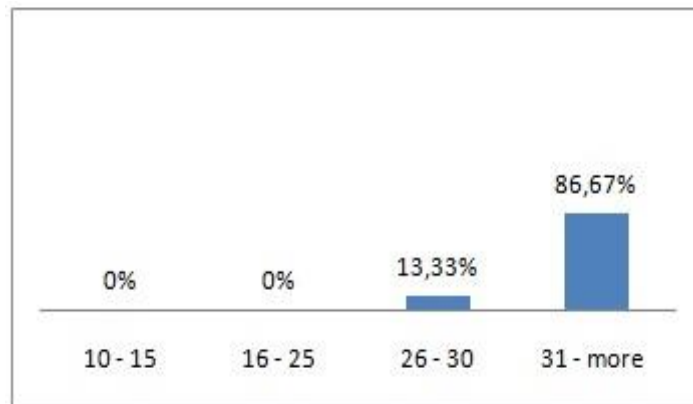
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

All of the public high schools observed had a large number of students in their classrooms. As the graph shows, more than eighty-five percent of the classes had more than 31 students while less than fifteen percent had a range of 16-25 students. Some of the classrooms, especially Eighth grade had more than 40 students; different from the upper levels of Baccalaureate which had a reduction in the number of students enrolled.

In addition to the results obtained, 80 % of the interviewed students said that the number of students had helped them learn English in a more suitable way. Most of this percentage of agreement is based on their experience in previous school years when they were enrolled in classrooms with a big amount of students; consequently, it was familiar for them to interact in large classes.

On the other hand, 20 % of the surveyed students declared they did not consider a large number of students in a class as suitable to learn a foreign language. Some of these learners declared that one of the main unsolved issues is discipline which leads to several situations that may interrupt the flow of the class. In addition, the number of students and the noise they make are also main concerns when

dealing with big classes; as a result, the larger the class, the more difficult it is to achieve the objectives.

In fact, some student limitations were observed when they had to interact in large classes. First, they had limited chances for individual repetition and controlled practice. For example, during an observation, a teacher chose three or four students to interact with her in order to clarify the content given; while the others were left aside in order to continue with the class without running out of time. It was also observed there was little effort of keeping them engaged from the beginning of the class; for example, by encouraging them to read the instructions in the book or giving them a chance to produce their own ideas in order to have something useful to do instead of feeling uninvolved .

Second, with the purpose of making students follow the class and guarantee knowledge, chorus repetition was used by more than 30% of the teachers observed to make sure that at least everyone repeated the new language. In order to emphasize what was observed in one of the classes, students had to repeat sentences that were written on the board in reference of the verb "can", for example: "I can read. I can't fly", and so on. The more they practiced chorus repetition, the more time they got for going through the tasks with the whole class so all of the students received suitable feedback.

Third, despite the fact that the teachers wanted to check the students' responses, it was difficult for them to have interaction with all of them; especially the ones sitting at the back, since, neither of them could not even receive eye contact from their teachers. Under these circumstances, the results observed were classes with students lost in content and eager to distract others.

Harmer (2001) argues that there are some key elements teachers need to consider in successful large-group teaching; for example, being organized, because it is more difficult to respond to individual concerns with a large class than a small one; giving peace for different activities, since different activities need to be carefully organized; giving individual work so students work on their own without working in a class a whole; assigning students to collect homework, hand out worksheets; finally, establishing routines, because the daily management will lead to establish order and good routines which might take some time in the beginning but it will save time later on.

Gráfico No. 13 Do you feel comfortable working with the number of students you are working with?
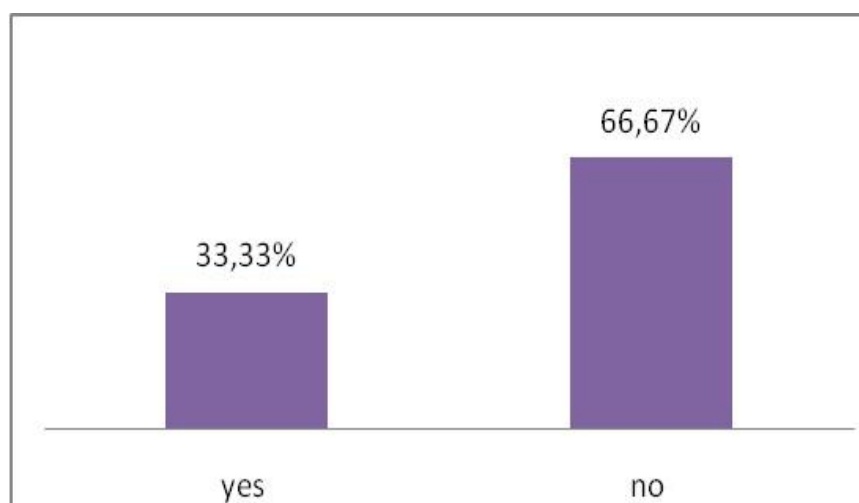
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

As is shown in the graph, 66.67% of the surveyed teachers expressed they did not feel comfortable working with the number of students they had; on the contrary, 33.33% manifested they managed this situation with confidence.

Despite the fact that there is no standardization about the desirable number of students in a classroom, it was seen that it is difficult for teachers to make contact

with all of the students in the classrooms. In addition, it is also hard for students to receive individual attention, especially in big classes.

Considering the limitations observed, the teachers who could not guide their classes through individual practice said they would spend more than the 45 minute class established for English sessions on trying to have short one on one exchanges with their students. This is impractical and uncomfortable for most of the teachers, as well as frustrating for all of the students who miss the opportunity to interact when class runs out of time.

In addition, despite the fact that chorus repetition is used to guarantee feedback for everyone in the class, it was detected that most of the teachers observed did not walk to the back of the class and monitored what the students were working on, because they only monitored the first rows and just called students' attention from time to time to later ignore them.

As a result, leaving these students unattended brought two consequences observed: in the first place, students who found someone to explain the content to them; second, students who were not supported enough to follow the class surrendered immediately making noise and distracting the others.

Whenever these situations concluded with disciplinary issues, the same pattern was applied by all of the teachers observed: they used Spanish to either call students' attention or simply just yelled at them in order to regain control of the class. Besides, it was also seen that the Spanish language was used to make sure students understood class rules reminders.

Gráfico No. 14 Do you have enough space to work with this group of students?
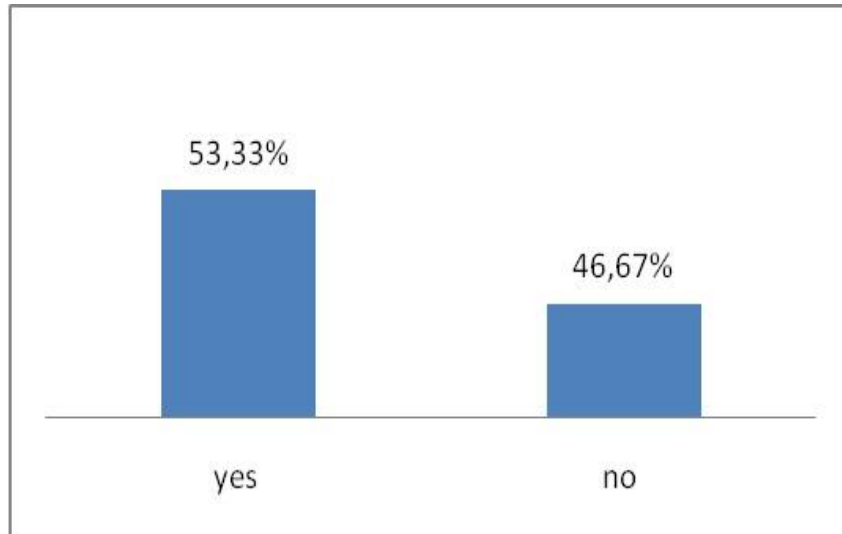
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 53.33% of the teachers said they had enough space to work with the group of students assigned; while 46.67% manifested they did not have enough space in classes to work.

As a matter of fact, it was observed that at the back of some of the classrooms there were several old broken metal chairs or plastic chairs with no armrest that students had to use to write on, which made it difficult to arrange the class in a more suitable way, making students and teachers feel frustrated about the physical environment where English classes were given.

In addition, it is important to realize that there are elementary necessities to supply in order to have an effective class, such as natural light which is useful to read and write with no inconvenience; walls which should be painted with pale colors as well as open classrooms, especially in tropical locations, such as Guayaquil.

During the observations it was witnessed that most of the classes needed Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs) because extra light was needed in morning and evening shifts; besides, the walls of some of the classrooms observed were too dirty and had graffiti on them. Moreover, it was seen that there was approximately a square meter of free space at the top of the walls that permitted air circulation; however, sunlight and noise from the other classrooms constantly interrupted the natural flow of any class given. (Annex 8)

Regardless the inadequate class furniture and the space limitations, a hundred percent of the surveyed students declared the size of the class made them work in a comfortable way and as shown above; it was also observed that students got used to the reality in their classrooms since it is something they deal with day after day. According to Malamah-Thomas (1987), that the main consequence of the tendency to arrange an education system geared to social development is having overcrowded classrooms with limited free space.

Gráfico No. 15 Do you arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for your classes?
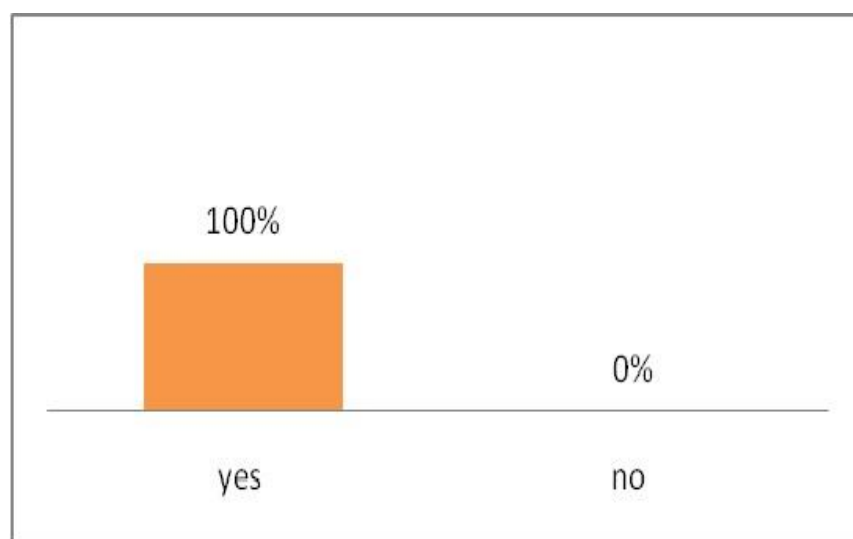
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph above shows that 100% of the surveyed teachers said they arranged students' seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes. Similarly, the students surveyed expressed they liked the way their teachers arranged their seats to make them work in class.

However, there were no seating arrangements planned for any of the activities presented in the classes observed and the orderly row was the only one applied in these classrooms. In fact, it is considered as the most suitable for large groups because some of the advantages of the facilities that both teacher and students have to see each other, as well as making teachers have eye contact to the students they are talking to; besides, it is considered appropriate for monitoring around and making students participate randomly to keep them focused.

Unfortunately, not many of these teachers could manage their classes by taking advantage of this seating arrangement. Some of them just stayed at the front of the class and monitored the first rows; others spent the 45 minute class hour sitting at their desks while others just made some students participate without giving the others chances to do so. Moreover, during the evening shift classes observed, it was seen that despite having fewer students, the teacher did not arrange them with accuracy. For example, there was a group of 20 students who just sat wherever they wanted to. As a result, there were rows of seven students but others just had three.

To summarize, no seating changes were applied by the surveyed teachers during the observations and classes were all organized in orderly rows, despite the availability of different seating arrangements in order to reach different students' needs.

According to Harmer (2001), separate tables are recommended for working with big classes due to the facilities of giving feedback at one table while the others

get on with their own work, especially when dealing with mixed-ability classes. Brown (2001) also argues that patterns of semi-circles, U-shapes and concentric circles can be considered for use according to the activities planned to avoid chaos when possible by facilitating the interaction among students.

Gráfico No. 16 How many students do you think is the appropriate number to teach English?
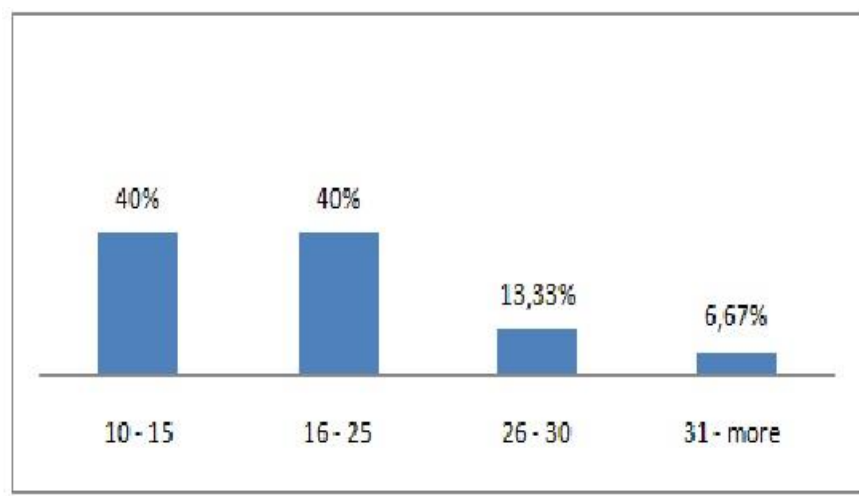
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 80% of the teachers surveyed said that between 10 to 25 students was the appropriate number to teach English; while 20% of the teachers surveyed, expressed that having more than 26 students was the ideal number of pupils to work with.

Most of these teachers supported the advantages of working with small groups based on organizing lesson plans which could include individual and group work activities by giving every student the chance to practice the target language while the others could complement their ideas and thoughts at the same time; presenting more varied activities in class, to give more accurate feedback to students; organizing the students in separate tables could also help them produce according to their ability levels; finally, arranging timing for each activity to give

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students enough time to practice in the target language, as well as chances for greater independence since they decided what language to use to complete a task without their teacher's control. As a result, motivation in learning would increase by giving many opportunities for discipline issues to be presented during the English classes. On the other hand, the teachers who expressed that the appropriate number to teach English was more than 26 students argued that dealing with large classes is the average pattern found in public high schools, and their experience had made them capable of dealing with these large classes despite of the limitations presented in class.

In addition, these teachers declared that it was difficult to find classes with very few students, especially during the senior years of basic education in public high schools. For instance, it was observed that morning and evening classes had the largest amount of students enrolled in high schools. On the other hand, few students enrolled at nightshift in upper levels of Baccalaureate were older than the other groups observed and their interaction was more productive in a classroom where even their teacher' had a better attitude with limited noise and chaos.

Gráfico No. 17 Do you use teaching resources (TV, Tape/ CD recorder, computer(s), Projector(s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?
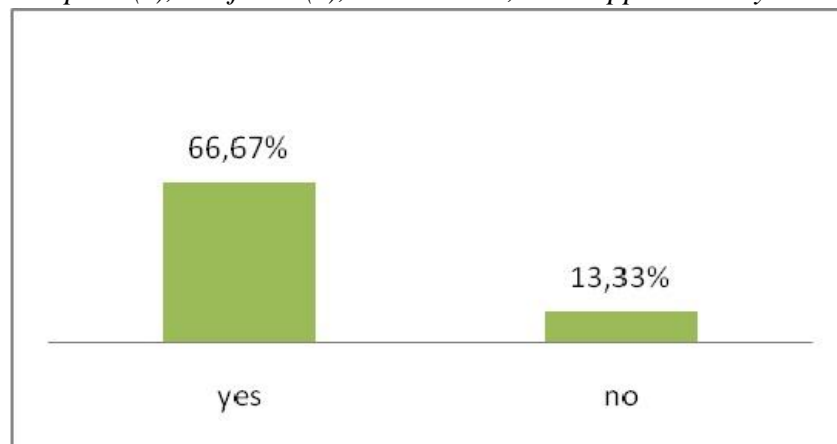
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

As shown above, 66.67% of the teachers surveyed said they used teaching resources and 13.33% declared not to use any supplementary materials.

These teachers manifested to use resources such as CD recorders, which is the most frequently used, while computers or projectors are rarely used during the school year. Similarly, the same percentage of students manifested that CD recorders were the most used resource in class, especially during the first trimester. In another case, a student manifested that his teacher was not able to use his CD recorder in the classroom because there were no electric outlets in the walls to plug it into.

Additionally, there was one class observed whose teacher used a TV, a computer and an in focus projector to play a video of "Hello!", a TV program for learning English sponsored by the Mayor of the city of Guayaquil. In this program, English and Spanish are both used to teach some very basic functions of English, considered as survival. Despite of the fact the teacher wanted her students to focus on what the video was about, the speakers did not work well; as a result, most of the students observed were more interested in talking to each other rather than watching the video. However, the last part of the program ended with a song which was chanted by most of the students who got more interested in repeating the lyrics instead of following the program.

However, it was observed that the computer laboratories of two public high schools were out of service. These laboratories were also used as a resource for students to practice any English task, a situation which did not allow them to do interactive exercises; instead, they were forced to spend more time with their teachers on just using the whiteboard to work on as if all of the students were visual learners.

Harmer (2001) suggests computers and the Internet offer opportunities for students and teachers to practice language and to compose material in ways other than using pencils, pens and paper. He also argues that adopting any of them would require significant investment and time how to make best use of it. Besides, with so much technology and software options available, it is sometimes difficult for teachers, directors of study and curriculum planner to decide what to choose because all of them are very attractive.

Gráfico No. 18 Do you consider appropriate the resources you have in class?
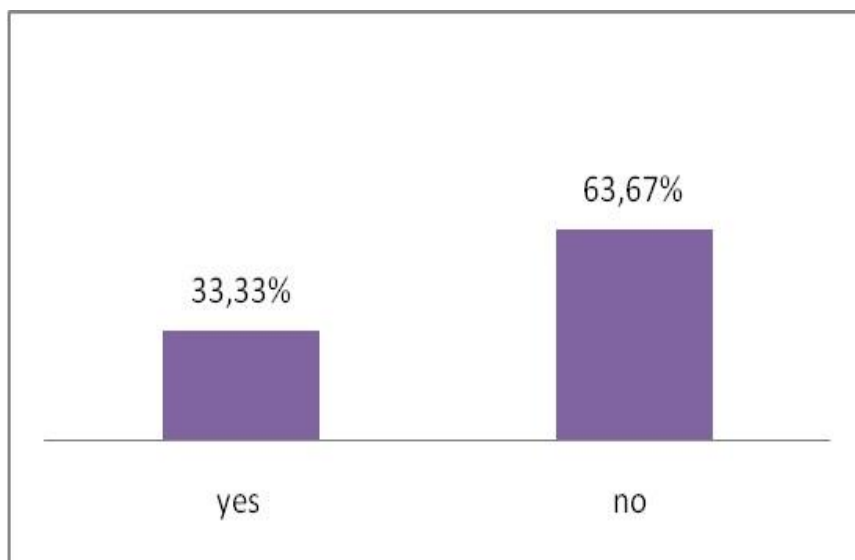
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that more than 33.33% of the teachers surveyed considered the resources they had in class as appropriate for learning. In contrast, 63.67% declared not to feel comfortable with the resources they had to work with.

On the other hand, students said their teachers only used CD recorders because those were the only resources they had at their disposal; also, there were very few occasions when teacher took their own materials such as picture cards or personal laptops to have a more dynamic and enjoyable class. As a matter of fact,

neither of the teachers observed used CD recorders and the use of other resources such as audiovisuals were very limited. For instance, pictures and posters which were displayed in class observed were brought by the students who had to use them a visual aid for an oral exposition. Unfortunately, neither of the public high schools where this study was conducted had been given smart boards in order to help teachers not only to have a more interactive class, but also to improve the academic performance of their students.

Harmer (2007) states that twenty-first century classrooms around the world have a wide range of equipment and technology available to them; for instance, interactive whiteboards (IWB) which have a great number of features. He also argues that dictionaries are useful "equipment" because they are clearly designed to help students to understand what words mean. Furthermore, Raimes (1983) states that photographs, posters, magazine advertisements, etc. bring the outside word into the classroom in a vivid way that provide a focus of interest for students and lead them to many language activities to use in class.

Factors Concerning Educational Institutions

Gráfico No. 19 Does the institution review your lesson plans?
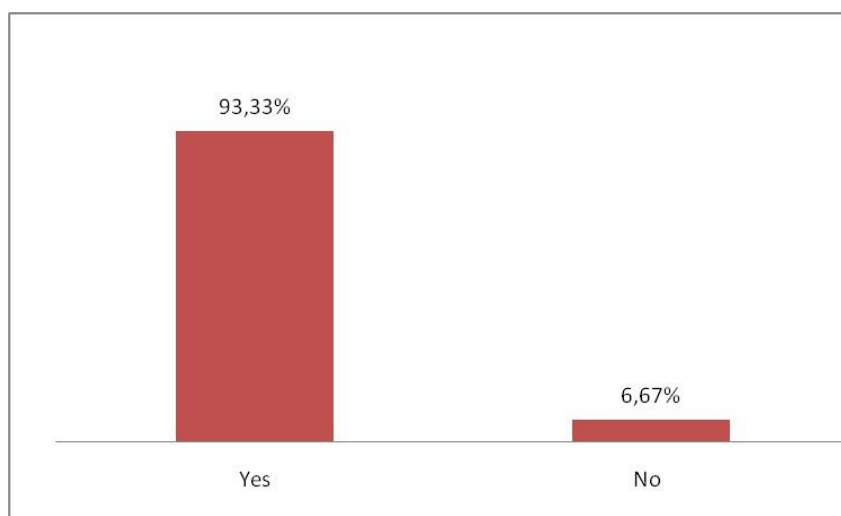
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The graph shows that 93.33% of the teachers considered for this study manifested that their institutions reviewed their plans, while 6.67% declared that their lessons plans were not reviewed by anyone but themselves. Regarding the frequency that lesson plans were reviewed, more than 20% manifested they were reviewed once a week; 60% declared once a month, while the others said they were reviewed every two or three months.

During the class observed, it was noticed that most of the teachers had their lesson plans in a special folder which is the one to be checked with some determined frequency. However, during the observations it was found that not all of the public schools where this study was conducted had an English Area Coordinator or Director, so the lesson plans had to be given to inspectors or Vice Principals in order to get them checked.

It was observed that these people in charge of checking and monitoring plans did not have any pedagogical knowledge of teaching English; as a result, checking plans became a formal procedure, instead of monitoring how teachers accomplish their classes based on the basic requirements.

Moreover, it was seen that classes at public high schools were exposed to being canceled due to different reasons, such as cultural events or scheduled changes on short notice, which caused delays for what was already planned. For example, one of the teachers observed had the last class hour after a cultural presentation in school. Despite the fact the inspector ordered the teachers to go back to the classrooms with their pupils; this teacher had only half of the students inside the class. She tried to take control of these students and gave a short review of the previous class. Unfortunately, she did not succeed because students got more

interested in chitchatting; neither could she make the students who were outside to come back to the classroom because they were hiding from her and waiting for the bell to go home. Although she was not the only teacher in this situation, it was observed that public high school teachers had to deal with these unplanned events and taking control back after the events was difficult to achieve.

Gráfico No. 20 Does the institution monitor your teaching?
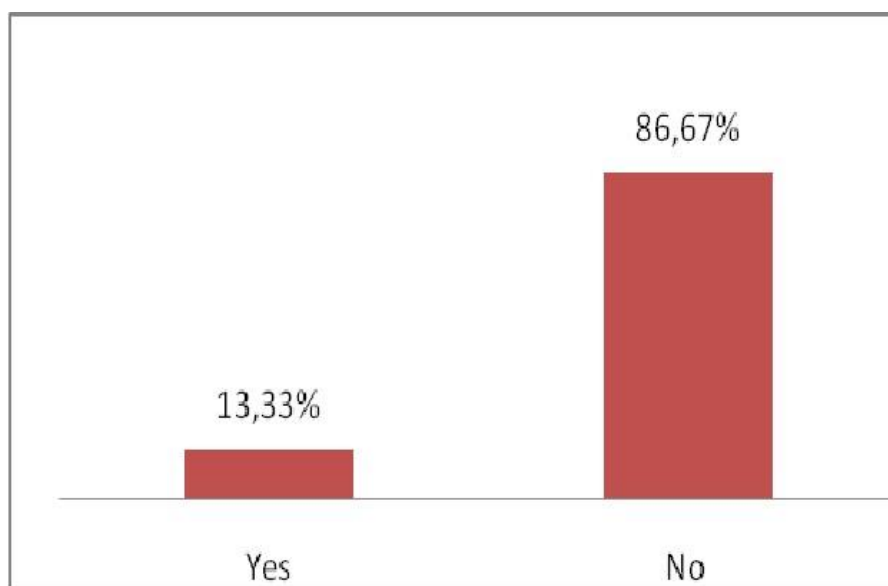
Author: Martha Castillo
Source: Teachers' questionnaire

It was observed that 13.33% of the teachers expressed their institutions monitored their teaching which is done once a month or at least, every two or three months; while 86.67% declared they received no monitoring from the institutions. Although they said they received very little monitoring, they also declared that this monitoring was done once a month or at least every two or three months.

The teachers who said they were monitored explained that this monitoring was organized and done by inspectors or head teachers who were not linguistically and academically experienced to give proper feedback because they did not know

the language and approaches to be taught. Coincidentally, no monitoring was verified during the class observations.

The surveyed teachers also recognized monitoring is essential not only to follow students' performance in class, but also to know how they can improve as teachers. However, all of them worked based on their own decisions because there was no one to give proper feedback in order to improve their class plans and class management. Besides, these teachers did not have any weekly meeting with their peers, which would be a great opportunity to share ideas and give some advice about how to improve their teaching strategies, as well as increasing the level of English language being taught in Ecuadorian public high schools.

Conclusions

- ✓ 70% of the teachers observed used the Grammar Translation method to teach English.

- ✓ Several of the students observed did not have the opportunity to interact with others using the English language since Spanish is spoken in class most of the time.

- ✓ 93.33% of the teachers observed used very simple instructions in English because of the level of their students.

- ✓ Students were not organized to sit in different seating arrangements so they were considered as a whole group without being classified in levels or specific needs.

- ✓ Timing and feedback were not consciously planned and executed because many of the activities presented in the classes observed were either done too quickly or could not be finished before the end of the class.

- ✓ All of the observed teachers counted with two supplementary resources, making their classes too teacher-centered without presenting any attractive pictures, listening exercises or projects that could benefit different learning styles.

- ✓ There was a large amount of students in most of the classes observed. This involved several disciplinary problems making English teaching a difficult task because teachers spent a lot of time taking control of their classes.

- ✓ In all of the public high schools where this study was conducted, English classes were not constantly monitored; neither their teachers had received

appropriate feedback; as a result, English teachers work according to their

own decisions.

Recommendations

- ✓ Public educational institutions should include a person or a team in charge of revising and monitoring how lessons plans are designed and executed in class in order to achieve the objectives established.

- ✓ Peer observation should be done in order to give solid and positive feedback and suggestions about the pedagogical performance of each teacher.

- ✓ Timing and feedback should be considered as relevant when planning in order to present different and fruitful tasks that permit students assimilate content learned by giving enough time to work on and provide accurate feedback of what is done.

- ✓ Teachers should encourage students to be able to understand basic instructions in order to help them be immersed in the foreign language they are supposed to learn without translating into Spanish.

- ✓ It is advisable for teachers to separate large classes by levels or specific needs in order to supply specific tasks that could reinforce what is taught.

- ✓ It is suggested that teachers use techniques and varied activities outside the book with the purpose of getting a more dynamic and productive interaction of students using their target language.

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ANNEX 1

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

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

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

Students' Needs*(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!!!!!!

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 aprender de mejor manera el Inglés?**

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

GRACIAS!!!!!

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

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

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

Students' Needs(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	( )
Groupwork activities	( )

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

Time	( )

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

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

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

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

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

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

NOTES:
_____

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

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

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

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

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

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

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

ANNEX 4

Author: Martha Castillo

ANNEX 5

Author: Martha Castillo

ANNEX 6

The following text is visible on the paper in the image:

5. Which of the following aspects of the lesson plan were a...

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

6. Which o...

Author: Martha Castillo