



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TITULACIÓN DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
MENCIÓN EN INGLÉS

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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN.

AUTOR: Moreno Rodríguez, Martha Evelyn

DIRECTOR: Paredes Zúñiga, Marcelo Fabián, Mgs.

CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO QUITO

2014

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Autor: Martha Evelyn Moreno Rodríguez

Cédula No. 1708644214

DEDICATION

To my Father, my mom Eli, my husband and beloved kids Josué and Karolina. Thank you for all your love and support and for never letting me down. And, especially to my beautiful and most precious angel, MOM Marthita, I love you and miss you with all my heart and wish you were here with me to share the joy of this accomplishment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to thank my family, especially Eli and Israel for being behind me, pushing me to keep on and never give up. And thanks to my Director Marcelo Paredes because without his advice, fulfilling this goal, wouldn't have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Most of the Ecuadorian public schools and high-schools teach English as part of their curriculum. However, when the time to see results comes, a lack of knowledge is evidenced. A research was carried out in order to compile enough information about the factors that affect the English-teaching learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools. In this research, these factors will be identified and analyzed. Public school teachers and students, who random ages between thirteen and seventeen, were observed and were given questionnaires which dealt with factors concerning students, teachers, classrooms and educational institutions. The results of these observations show that these factors are in crisis which means that they are not affecting this process in a positive way, therefor, students are not learning as much English as they should or they are not learning it at all. Teacher's knowledge has to be improved, students need more motivation, classrooms require better and more resources and authorities have to get more involved in this process.

KEY WORDS: knowledge, planning, methodology, classroom space, classroom resources, classroom observation and learning styles.

RESUMEN

La mayoría de los colegios públicos ecuatorianos enseñan inglés como parte de su currículo. Sin embargo, cuando llega el momento de ver resultados, la falta de conocimiento es evidente. Esta investigación fue llevada a cabo con el fin de compilar información suficiente acerca de los factores que influyen en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés en los colegios públicos ecuatorianos. Por lo tanto, este trabajo nos permitirá identificar y analizar estos factores a través de las observaciones realizadas a maestros y estudiantes de colegios públicos cuyas edades oscilan entre los 13 y 17 años. Dichos estudiantes y maestros respondieron cuestionarios con factores referentes a los estudiantes, maestros, aulas de clase e instituciones educativas. Los resultados de dichas observaciones muestran que los factores antes mencionados se encuentran en crisis, lo que significa que no existe un efecto positivo y consecuentemente, los estudiantes, no están aprendiendo inglés como deberían o no lo están aprendiendo de ninguna manera.

Indiscutiblemente, los maestros deben prepararse mejor, los estudiantes necesitan de más motivación, las aulas de clase deben ser dotadas de mejores y más recursos y las autoridades deberían involucrarse más en este proceso.

PALABRAS CLAVE: conocimiento, planificación, metodología, tamaño del grupo, recursos del aula, observación de la clase y estilos de aprendizaje.

INTRODUCTION

The English teaching-learning process in Ecuador has been affected by several factors. During years, English has been taught in a way that does not allow students to learn much or anything at all. Despite English has been officially stated as mandatory in Ecuadorian public schools and students spend at least twelve years “learning” it, when they finish their high school and they take a test to enter to university, the results are, usually, not good. Many students who want to study abroad are limited because of their low English level, so, this is why the factors that cause this deficiency need to be studied and investigated. According to this need, the following objectives have been established: To determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place, identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers and determine teachers’ instructional competence.

Many discussions about the correct methodologies and techniques have taken place but not much has been done or achieved. Therefore, the importance of this research is great as it will contribute ideas to improve the English teaching-learning process in our public high schools.

To promote Ecuadorian students’ performance in English, it is important to determine which factors influence the English teaching-learning process in public high schools. Such understanding will aid in the development of new interventions for influencing these factors as well as enhancing student achievement in English.

In an effort to improve students' performance, some educational researches have been made. In the year 2011 a research about the factors that affect the English teaching-learning process was conducted in Venezuela by Joan Acosta. The purpose of this study was to find out which are the main factors that affect the English- teaching-learning process in Venezuelan public schools and develop some strategies to improve English language teaching and consequently, English language learning. In his study, Acosta (2011) found that the most relevant aspects of English teaching-learning process is students' motivation, classroom space, size and resources. He clearly noticed that a lack of motivation, the fact of not having enough space inside a classroom, using insufficient classroom resources or having large groups of students will bring negative consequences to the teaching learning process because it does not allow students acquire knowledge or it makes it more difficult. The biggest limitations Acosta faced were a lack of research, analysis and systematization of experiences or debates on this subject. Standardized tests are not applied to students from public institutions to measure the development of the communicative competence of the English language. Therefore, there is no data nor results that indicate the level of domain or that give clues about the learning process. There is also an absence of supervision, support, monitoring or systematic evaluation of the English teachers' performance. Additionally, the English program, as a curriculum guide that guides the processes of learning English, has remained in use and without review since it was implemented over thirty years ago.

Another study about factors concerning teachers was conducted in Nebraska-Lincoln, USA by Olha Ketsman and it showed that foreign language teachers need to create an environment where they communicate in the language they teach. Numerous studies revealed that teacher's knowledge and their ability to share it are among the most important

teacher qualities that contribute to high student achievement outcomes (Young & Shaw, 1999).

The first limitation of the study is the fact that data was collected over a short period of time due to the time constraints for which the project needed to be completed and the second limitation of this study is the fact that although the study produced rich data, there is a fear that some data was neglected.

The present study and findings seek to benefit students by giving the teachers information about students' needs, therefore, teachers will be aware of their students' needs in the classroom and will be able to fulfill them. English language educators will benefit from findings of this study by enhancing their understanding of teacher expectations as a potential source of student academic achievement. Administrators and state teacher education policy makers will benefit from findings of this study by receiving a better understanding of expectations in an English language classroom. Consequently, this will help them in making decisions regarding preparation, development and hiring of English language teachers and will lead to a development of well-suited curricula to prepare successful future teachers and to meet current student learning needs.

This study aims to demonstrate the importance of English teaching in Ecuador and identify the limitations that currently exist for teaching this language. In this way we can help future English teachers' to manage and deal with the factors that influence English teaching-learning process and improve it.

The biggest limitation while conducting this study was finding schools and teachers who were willing to cooperate and letting someone observe their classes as well as interviewing them.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This research was carried out in six different public high schools of Quito. These public high-schools teach between two and three hours of English per week. Its students attend school in the afternoon or night. Those who attend school at night are adults that for some reason were not able to finish their secondary studies before. Those who attend school in the afternoon are between thirteen and seventeen years old. Most of these students have a low economic level and live under hard circumstances.

Procedure

Once literature about methodologies, teaching techniques, classroom management, lesson design, classroom resources and student's needs were reviewed, six public high-schools were visited to observe different English teachers, teaching their lessons, at different high-school levels. While teaching their lessons notes were taken in an observation sheet, drawing particular attention to the most relevant aspects. These observation sheets included questions related to teachers' and authorities' performance as well as students' needs. After each class observation, the teacher was asked to answer a questionnaire that dealt with factors concerning students, teachers, classrooms and educational institutions. Also, a randomly chosen student of each observed class received a questionnaire and was asked to answer it. This questionnaire dealt with factors concerning students, teachers and classrooms. Students answered these questions according to their personal point of view about each topic and were able to express their criteria about

teachers' performance inside the classroom. As soon as all the observation sheets and questionnaires had been filled in, the responses were compared and recorded in order to make graphs that showed the results and percentages. Finally, an analysis based on teachers' and students' answers plus the notes taken on the observation sheets was made and then written in order to explain how each factor affects the English teaching-learning process.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

In Ecuador, as well as in many countries, English is the language which is officially taught in various public and private educational schools. The reason why this language has always been given priority among others is because of the practical benefits that are obtained from its learning. As it is the most disseminated language around the world (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2009). In the framework of technical cooperation which the Ecuadorian Government maintains with Great Britain, the Ministry of Education encourages the development of the Curricular Reform of English project, whose objective is to establish strong bases in the handling of the English language. This is why the Ministry of Education placed English learning as the priority in the new curriculum of basic, middle and specialization education. Their main objective is the “achievement of substantial and lasting improvement of English teaching at the secondary level in the public sector” However, there is still some problems with the motivation for learning English in secondary level students. The aim of this document is to analyze the different teaching approaches, methods and techniques, the managing of learning, lesson design, class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, teaching resources, classroom’s observation, student’s motivation, learning styles and student’s intelligence or aptitude to learn English in order to understand the actual situation.

There are great challenges in Ecuador. Ashner (2007) considers that it is important to generate a good quality education, with the commitment and active participation of

stakeholders in the English language teaching- learning process. It is absolutely necessary for teachers, authorities and students to understand the importance of this language acquisition and work together to fulfill everybody's expectancies. This is where questions about the true role of educators and the applied methodologies for the achievement of meaningful learning for individuals arise. Under the teaching perspective in Ecuador, there is the need to work for a change and improvement in the English teaching process, which, many times because of its little acceptance among students and society, creates obstacles in its learning process.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

During years, experts have discussed about the “right” way to teach a second language. In fact, there was once consensus on the “right” way but now teachers agree that there a single “right” way does not exist and that there are different approaches and methods to do so. Here is a summary of eight language teaching methods in practice today: the Direct Method, Silent Way Method, Grammar-Translation Method, Suggestopedia, the Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Approach, Community Language Learning, and the Total Physical Response Method. Of course, what is described here of each one is only an abstraction. The way a method is used in the classroom will heavily depend on the individual teacher's view and interpretation of its principles.

Some teachers prefer to practice one of the methods and exclude others. Other teachers prefer to choose some or a little bit of each one, creating their own unique blend. One of the most common or known methods are: Direct Method also known as “Berlitz” and which was derived from the “Natural Method”. It does not allow translation so it helps students to perceive meaning directly through the language (Richard, 1985). Visual aids and mimics are used to explain and clarify the meaning of vocabulary items and concepts.

Reading and writing are taught from the beginning, though speaking in the target language, role-playing real life situations and listening skills are emphasized. Grammar is learned inductively.

A method which mentions that teaching will depend on learning and that students must develop their own inner criteria for correctness is the Silent Way. All four skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – are taught from the beginning. Richards & Rodgers (1986) mention that students' errors are expected as a normal part of learning: the teacher's silence helps improve self-reliance and student initiative. Therefore students do most of the talking and interacting as the teacher is active in setting up situations. The authors also say that a good silent way learner is a good problem solver and that the teacher's role resides only in giving minimum repetitions and correction, remaining *silent* most of the times and leaving the learner struggling to solve problems about the language and get a grasp of its mechanism.

The Grammar-Translation Method focuses on developing students' appreciation of the target language's literature as well as teaching the language. Richard (1985) says that the goal of this method is to produce students who read and write in the target language by teaching students rules and applications. The most common activities are: translating literary passages from one language into the other, memorizing grammar rules, and memorizing native-language equivalents of target language vocabulary. Class work is highly structured where the teacher controls all the activities.

A method which is considered the strangest of the so-called “humanistic approaches” is suggestopedia. It was based on the power of suggestion in learning and it seeks to help learners eliminate psychological barriers to learning (Herrel, 2012). The author also mentions that the learning environment is totally different from what is usually

seen. The classroom is relaxed, with low lighting and soft music in the background. Students choose a name and character in the target language and imagine that person. Dialogues are presented to the accompaniment of music. Students listen to them being read and later practice the language during an “activation” phase.

In contrast, the Audio-Lingual Method appears as the new “scientific” oral method that was developed to replace or enhance grammar translation. Through the use of this method, structures of the target language were carefully ordered and dialogues were repeated in attempt to develop correct habits of speaking (Richard, 1985). This method states that learning is the acquisition of a set of correct language habits. The learners repeat patterns until they are able to produce them on their own. Once a given pattern is learned, the speaker can substitute words to make new sentences. Here the teacher also directs and controls students' behavior, provides a model, and reinforces correct responses (Richards & Rodgers 1986).

Similarly, the Communicative Approach makes an emphasis on the need to teach communicative competence. Richards & Rodgers (1986) say that it is based on the idea that learning a language successfully comes from needing to communicate real meaning. It has been proved that when students are involved in real communication their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used and this will allow them to learn how to use the language.

Another method is the Community Language Method. Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007) says this is where teachers consider students as “whole persons,” with intellect, feelings, instincts, physical responses, and desire to learn. Teachers think about learning as something that can be threatening so teachers help students feel secure and overcome their fears. Also, Herrel (2012) mentions that the teachers’ goal is the students learn how to use

target language communicatively. In addition, they want their student to learn about their own learning, to take increasing responsibility of it, and learn how to learn from another.

It is believed that students should choose what they want to learn in the target language if positive results are wanted.

Finally, Richards & Rodgers (2001) say that the Total Physical Response approach is one where the first skill to be developed is listening comprehension by emulating the early stages of mother tongue acquisition, and then moving to speaking, reading, and writing. Students show their comprehension by acting out commands issued by the teacher. Gradually, teachers' demonstrations are removed and the students respond to the verbal commands only. Fun activities are designed to allow students assume active learning roles (Herrel, 2012). Activities eventually include games and skits.

Teaching Techniques

Spaulding (2003) says that a good teacher knows that not all students learn in the same way. Learning a second language can become easier or more difficult depending on the different factors related to the English language teaching-learning process. In addition, it is common for a class of students to be at different levels so teachers need to use different teaching techniques in order to reach all students effectively. Additionally, Wisegeek (2012) mentions that a variety of teaching techniques, the knowledge of students' levels, and the implementation of which strategies are best for particular students can help teachers know which teaching techniques will be most effective for their class.

There are different techniques to teach English. Here is an abstraction of some of the most commonly used for general purposes in second language acquisition.

Dialogues: once an initial set of vocabulary is understood, dialogues are a very useful teaching technique. Richard (1985) says that the purpose of using a dialogue is to present a

real life situation in which the student role-plays in a safe environment before being met by the real thing.

Another is Language Experience, here, the student is asked to talk, read or write about his/her experience. The "experience" which will be written, spoken or read about may be a drawing, something the student brought from home, a group experience planned by the teacher (Praveen, 2012).

There is also Shared Reading where the teacher chooses a text--a story, song, poem, or other reading and enlarges the text so all students can see it at once. Herrel (2012) states that the teacher reads the text to the students, pointing to each word as it is read and encourages prediction by covering words that are easy to predict and has students guess them.

Managing Learning

There are basically three very important aspects to consider in Managing Learning, these are instructions, timing and feedback. Richard-Amato (1996) says that clear instructions and proper classroom explanation is needed by the students and the teacher, so the students can understand perfectly well what they are expected to do. He also says that in an ESL or EFL classroom this is more likely to create anxiety because the explanations are given in a different language so it takes even more effort by the students to understand. In addition, Tokuhamma (2007) states that having a well-planned lesson is vital, the teacher should be as creative and flexible as possible and that depending on the nature of the class and the students' level, the dynamics of the class must be appropriate.

Another important aspect to be considered is timing. Time should never be underestimated because if teachers do not have every aspect of their lesson planned and timed, students will take advantage of that, start playing, and the teacher will lose control of

his/her class (Tokuhamu, 2007) Therefore, teachers must take their time planning what will be done in the classroom and let their students know how much time they have to do what they are expected.

The third aspect to be considered is feedback. Spaulding (2003) observed:

Despite grades help evaluate students' performances, they do not show if students have done well or poorly. On the contrary, feedback, provides the student a general idea about quality of its performances, both, what they have done well and what they have done poorly, without making any judgment about the merit of the piece. Unfortunately, many times, some teachers get confused between grading and giving feedback or even think they are exactly the same thing. The function of grades however, is very different from functions of feedback. Grades are meant to classify students according to their competence. Feedback, in contrast, is meant to help students learn to be more competent. (p. 83)

Considering this, grades can be delayed until students have completed their assignments, but feedback has to be provided for students before they have completed their assignments because they will still be on time to make corrections and use that information to improve their performance.

Lesson Design

About lesson design, Stronge (2007) states that whether a lesson plan is in a particular format is not as relevant as whether or not the plan actually describes what the teacher expects the students' to know, understand and be able to do, how the student will be

engaged in the learning, and what evidence the teacher will accept that the student has demonstrated mastery of the identified knowledge, skills and concepts noted.

There are many different types of plans which are used according to the school's or teachers' necessities but those plans that can be interpreted or implemented in many different ways will probably contain not well-designed lessons. Felder (2000) says that a key component of a good quality lesson plan is specificity and it contains a set of elements that are descriptive in process. Concerning this Wisegeek (2012) mentions that successful teachers take their time to think and plan carefully which lesson will be taught and how goals will be accomplished. The author also mentions that using lesson plans for each class help teachers incorporate better practices in teaching and learning in every lesson, it provides the teacher many ways to keep the teaching process not monotonous and redundant, it allows teachers to manage their time, effort and resources efficiently, and will easily help teachers to achieve their goals and objectives. It is true that there is no "best way" to plan lessons, there are basic elements found in quality lesson plans. A careful review of the most common planning styles indicate that most contain the following component: General and specific objectives, content to be covered within the lesson, several activities for a class period, resources and materials needed with technology noted, recommended time for each activity, and assessment method (Felder, 2000).

Class Size

It is very difficult to summarize the different studies there are about this topic. Is interesting to know that while in other countries a group of twenty or twenty-two students is considered a large group, in Ecuador this could be considered small or medium. What is true is that most experts agree that the smaller the group of students is, the faster or easier the language learning process will be. Most of these studies have taken place in the United

States but can surely be applied to us as it refers to the learning process itself. As Blatchford(2008) states that when secondary students are placed in smaller classes, much greater time is spent “on task” and focused on learning, with far lower rates of negative behavior and especially large benefits for high-needs students.

In addition, Krueger (1999) observed:

Other elements were analyzed and the only objective factor that was found to be correlated with higher student success was class size, not school size, not teacher qualifications, nor any other variable that the researchers could identify. What was even more striking is that these achievement gains were more strongly linked to smaller classes in the upper rather than the lower grades. However, in spite of all the studies that show a relationship between small class size and increased student achievement, researchers disagree on how to interpret the results.

Classroom Space

Research has demonstrated that the learning environment affects the engagement, motivation, self-esteem, attendance, wellbeing and achievement of students (Higgins, 2005). A classroom should be arranged to help teachers meet their pedagogical goals and schools need to pay attention to spatial issues and need to be aware of the impact it has on the learning environment. McGregor (2007) says that school authorities are responsible for giving students an environment where there are different spaces for different activities and forms of learning. ‘Learning spaces’ and ‘spaces of dialogue’ are increasingly employed as it is suggested that the learning that takes place in those spaces has the potential to transform relationships.

Lenderman (2012) says that the environment can also close off spaces for learning. Most teachers know it is easier to focus attention on the middle of the classroom, rather than the sides, with the result that those students who are not willing to take part of the class, sit at the side, and those who usually misbehave try to sit at the back. Good environments are frequently flexible ones. The author also mentions that teachers should feel free to have students move their chairs several times during a class. In other words, an uncomfortable environment can jeopardize the good things the teacher is trying to create (Tokuhama, 2007)

Seating Arrangement

One of the most important decisions a teacher can make is choosing the seating arrangement for her classroom. Lenderman (2012) says that if a good decision is made, the teacher will be facilitating the learning process but if a bad decision is made this process might fail. There are several options when it comes to arranging a class but three are most common: traditional, horseshoe, and modular.

The traditional seating arrangement is the one which arrangement for classrooms that consists of about five or six perfectly straight rows, each one containing five to seven chairs equidistant from each other. Even though this arrangement is very old and traditional, it persists, in fact dominates. A recent survey of classrooms on a university campus found over 90 percent of the classrooms to have this arrangement (McCorskey&McVetta, 1978).

The second one is the horseshoe or semi-circular arrangement which is more commonly used in smaller classes, as well as in seminars. Some classrooms are too big for this type of arrangement because of the “dead space” in the middle. Consequently a "double

horseshoe", two semi-circular rows with one inside the other, is also frequently observed (Lenderman, 2012).

The third one is the modular or table rows are basically a halfway point between desk rows and clusters. They are often used in science type classes as they allow for lectures, then group work. The groups are larger than in clusters, allowing more space for projects (McCorskey&McVetta, 1978).

Classroom and/or Teaching Resources

In a foreign language teaching class, visual and audio aids have many effects and importance on providing permanent learning. Spaulding (2003) says that the more a learning activity addresses to the five senses the more the learning event becomes effective and permanent, and forgetting becomes less. In addition, Richard-Amato (1996) states that resources help the students understand the object of the lesson the teacher is conveying. Additionally, it helps the teacher to test whether the students have improved their understanding of the given subject.

Tokuhamma (2007) says that it is vital that the teacher prepares the visual and audio materials that will be used while preparing the lesson plan and must also know how and when to use those materials, because the more he/she uses visual and audio materials during the course, the better students concentrate on the lesson. The most important consideration is that the materials should meet our students' needs. Mumford (2005) also mentions that students need to feel that the materials from which they are learning are somehow connected with the real world and at the same time they must be positively related to the aspects of their inner make up such as age, level of education, social attitudes, intellectual ability and emotional maturity level.

Another important teaching resource that has to be mentioned is `relia` or authentic material. Wisegeek (2012) says that when used effectively, authentic materials help bring the real world into the classroom and expose students to cultural features that bring a better understanding of the topic and language. He also mentions that students learn to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, notice their individual strengths and gain confidence in being able to function in an English-speaking society.

Classroom Observation

Even though some teachers might feel a little uncomfortable by being observed, a classroom observation made by the supervisor is absolutely necessary for the school, the teachers and the students. Galton (1996) says that observing teachers in action is the primary method of assessing teaching. This is how supervisors and coaches gain insights into classroom practices: teaching methods; learning activities, assessments, planning; the taught curriculum; and the types of teacher-student interactions there are inside the classroom. Informal classroom observations and instructional supervision are two types of assessment that must be seen by the teacher as a growth opportunity and the possibility to improve the teaching skills that will benefit the student's learning. Classroom observations also demonstrate that the supervisor or coach cares about the teachers and the work they do. Additionally, Galton (1996) mentions that the presence of a supervisor or coach in the classroom promotes a healthy climate and creates conditions for the ongoing discussion, reflection, and reinforcement of existing practices, as well as the adoption of new teaching techniques.

Classroom observation has several relevant educational purposes. Here, three important purposes or areas where systematic classroom observation has been used have been summarized: (1) description of instructional practices; (2) investigation of

instructional inequities for different groups of students; and (3) improvement of teachers' classroom instruction based on feedback from individual classroom or school profiles (Good, 2000). Observations can be collected in any number of ways and there are a numerous observation instruments and method. However, whatever system is chosen, the major criteria should be that the approach provides for the fullest description possible of the classroom events under study with the least amount of observer inference and judgment required (Galton, 1988).

Student's Motivation

There is probably one thing that all teachers would ask for in a student; motivation. Pintrich (1996) says that a motivated student is great for the learning process because it makes teaching easier and learning enjoyable. So a motivated learner is someone who is willing to invest time and effort in learning activities to progress. Gardner and Lambert (1972) though, came up with something more than simply motivation and this is integrative motivation. Integrative motivation refers to the desire of learning a new language and integrated successfully into the target language community. Oxford and Shearin (1994) analyzed a total of twelve motivational theories or models, including those from socio-psychology, cognitive development, and socio-cultural psychology, and identified six factors that impact motivation in language learning: attitudes, beliefs about self, goals, involvement, environmental support, and personal attributes.

Additionally, Oxford & Shearin (1994) says:

Based on this it is believed that teachers are able to guide and encourage students to learn a new language and to keep students' interest in language learning if they provide activities that are: communicative (game type), integrative (short/small activities form larger activities), pleasant, safe

and non-threatening, enthusiastic, group-based, meaningful or relevant, challenging as they will help develop student's self-confidence, experiences of success, learning satisfaction and good relationships among learners and between teacher and students. So, learner motivation makes teaching and learning immeasurably easier and more pleasant, as well as more productive.

What is clear from studies that support many motivation theories is that when we learn successfully, motivation has provided the initiation and energy that led us to pursuing a goal, persist in the face of distractions and competing goals and invest adequate mental effort to master a range of complex cognitive operation needed to achieve the goal (Harris, 2001).

Learning Styles

The way students assimilate and process information is varied, in other words they have different "learning styles". Woolfolk (2007) mention that some learn through auditory channels; others learn visually. Some learn inductively and others deductively. The author also mentions that research on learning styles show us that we can present material in multiple ways: with visual aids--such as charts, graphs, tables, film clips, and illustrations--demonstrations, hands-on activities, small group discussions, and simulations because not everybody learns the same way. Every person needs and deserves to be taught according to their learning style. Reid (1987) puts it this way, that learners have four basic perceptual learning channels: visual learning, auditory learning, kinesthetic learning and tactile learning.

After years of research and analysis, Gardener (1990) identified these four learning styles. He observed that innovative learners look for personal meaning, draw on their

values, enjoy social interaction, cooperate and want to make the world a better place, while learning. He also observed that Analytic learners: want to develop intellectually and draw on facts, while learning. The author also mentioned that common sense learners want to find solutions, they value things if they are useful, they are kinesthetic, practical and straightforward, and want to make things happen. Finally, the author states that Dynamic learners look for hidden possibilities, judge things by gut reactions, synthesize information from different sources are enthusiastic and adventurous.

Student's Intelligence or Aptitude to Learn English

Learners are viewed as possessing individual learning styles, preferences or intelligences. Woolfolk (2007) says that the teaching-learning process is more successful when learner differences are acknowledged, analyzed and accommodated in teaching. There is no doubt that a correlation between intelligence, language aptitude, and academic achievements in foreign language learners, exists. The author also says that an adequate diagnosis got from psychological testing can lead to adopting an appropriate teaching method, which may help the student achieve a greater amount of success in their foreign language endeavors.

Academic intelligence is only one of the skills a person can have – it is a good overall logical thinking indicator. It may be characterized as analytical and goal-oriented. A child will seek a single problem solution which meets all the conditions of a task at hand. In other words, the child will use its ability to bring together several pieces of information to a focal point of a single correct answer (Saville-Troik, 2006).

On the other hand, aptitude is also a very important factor in the process of language learning. Firstly, linguistic aptitude is a universal human characteristic when L1 acquisition is in question. Secondly, despite the claims that it is undemocratic, aptitude does play a

very significant role in L2 learning. Everyday teaching practice confirms this (Woolfolk, 2007).

Now, it is important to pay close attention to some previous studies that have been made by linguistics and other experts in order to clarify what is known and, consequently, learn some more about them.

Firstly, a group of researchers lead by Phurutse (2005) conducted a study in different public schools of South Africa. The purpose of the study was to determine how classroom resources, classroom size and family's economy affect the teaching-learning process. They spoke to students, parents and teachers, observed several and different classes in order to see students' and teachers' performance inside the classroom. The conclusions were that without adequate learning infrastructure, children cannot properly learn English because classrooms are overcrowded which makes concentration more difficult. There is not enough space for everybody and this makes them feel uncomfortable and some, simply, cannot afford to go to school. (Makola, 2005).

In the same way, a research carried out in Thailand by Khamkhien (2010) had as its main purpose to determine how motivation affects the English language teaching-learning process. The research had about one hundred twenty students from grade seventh to twelfth taking part in it. They answered a questionnaire. The conclusions were that there is a significant effect on the use of language learning strategies due to motivation between the two groups of students in general, and in Thai students in particular. The results of this study are congruent with a number of the previous SILL research findings, such as the study conducted by Dreyer and Oxford in 1996 which supported that motivation is one of the most important factors in the teaching-learning process.

Also, Saricoban&Sakizli (2006) carried out a study about factors influencing how teachers manage their classrooms. They say that the purpose of this study was to analyze the factors that influence successful classroom management and the possible solutions to these problems. The instruments which were used were books and journals. The conclusion is that the classroom management will always be affected by many factors. So, teachers have to analyze, understand and know what is going on in the classroom in order to overcome these problems and avoid some others.

Similarly, a research about how teaching resources and techniques affect the English teaching learning process was conducted by Teresa Silva in Spain. The purpose of this study was to demonstrate that learning a new language is achieved through the use of different resources and different activities such as the use of songs, assuming they help students develop a good listening and reading comprehension as well as a good production when speaking and writing. During her research Silva (2006) found that songs provide valuable information regarding the customs of English-speaking societies and at the same time allow the students the analysis of different linguistic varieties. She says that teachers can utilize songs as presentation contexts, as reinforcement material, as vehicles through which to teach all of the language skills —and as medium through which to present some of the most important cultural themes of language and modern life. The main limitation for this study was the fact that many teachers rather teaching the traditional or the old way and were not willing to try any other method which they consider a loss of time or a game.

The same way, Sergio Osejo carried out a research in Colombia about the importance of developing a good listening ability in English as a foreign language. With this research, Osejo pretends to prove that developing a listening ability in English is one of the major success factors in the English learning process and that this can be achieved by

using the new technologies in the classroom. Osejo (2011) says that the use of technology is becoming more important each day not only in a language teaching- learning process, but also in other fields of knowledge. The two limitations to carry out this research were the lack of interest students showed towards the English class and their very low listening comprehension level to follow instructions.

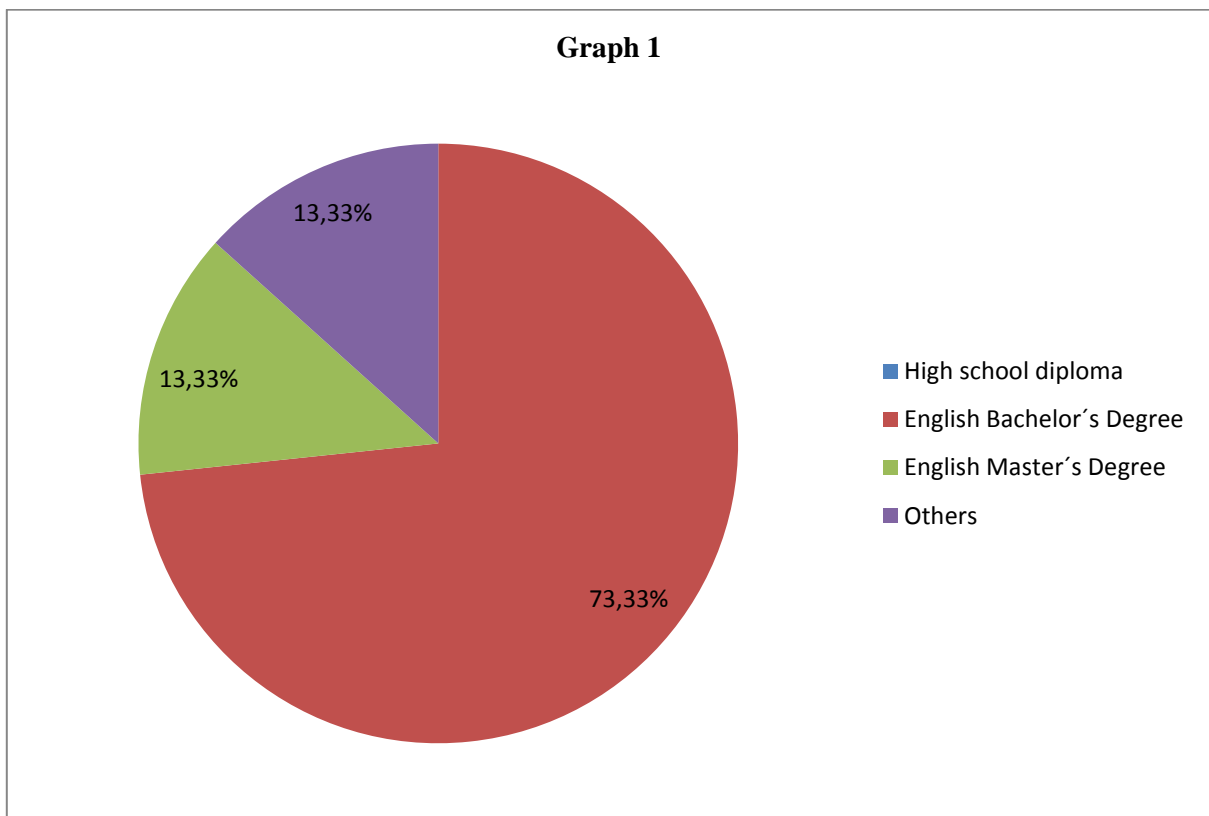
DISCUSSION

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

It is known that there are several factors that affect the English-teaching learning process and that some of these factors are not helping this process. Class observations and interviews to teachers and students have been made in six different public high schools in Ecuador in order to understand the role of these factors in the process.

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

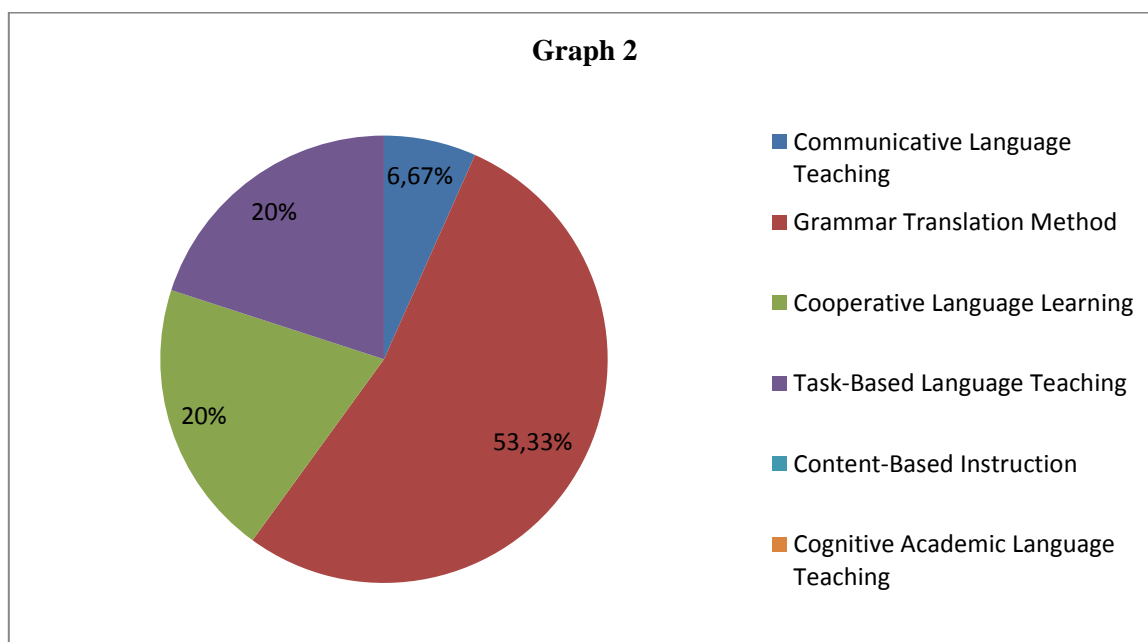
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-Schools

The result of the first question can be observed in graph 1 where 73.33% of the teachers said they have an English Bachelor's degree, 13.33% have an English Master's degree and the other 13.33% have a Proficiency diploma in the English language. As we

can see, most public school teachers have a bachelor teaching degree, however, this does not mean they have a good English level or that their knowledge about teaching is wide. During the observed classes, a low English level and a poor pronunciation was evidenced. Teachers speak English with a strong accent and with lots of hesitation. Most teachers made mistakes such as wrong grammar structures and inappropriate tenses. A lack of vocabulary was also evidenced as they repeated the same words over and over while teaching. The question is how a person with a degree in English teaching has such a low level and how can they be teaching English. Well, it is because university English teachers also have a very low level and consequently, the English teaching-learning process is being affected by this low teacher quality since, as we know, learners pick up languages as they are taught and if a teacher teaches wrong the student learns wrong. Plus, since most teachers were taught the same way in the university, they all have about the same English level. Therefore, there are not many options to choose from and those teachers were and are being hired.

Teacher experience and teacher education level have always been viewed as two features which are related to teacher quality and may also be viewed as an important criteria in selecting teachers. Teacher education level refers to the highest educational degree obtained by a teacher. The actual government specifies that highly qualified teachers must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. However, because most of the teachers in Ecuador have a bachelor's degree, more recent studies have focused on whether teachers with a master's degree or greater have a significantly greater impact on student's achievement (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2011).

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



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

Despite the fact that several different methods were listed, most teachers picked the same four: 20% chose the Task-Based Language Learning Method, 20% picked the Cooperative Language Learning, 6.67% chose the Communicative Language Teaching Method and 53.33% picked the Grammar Translation Method. However, after observing the different teachers and classes, it became clear that the method they use the most is the Grammar Translation Method.

Those who said they use the Task-based language learning method never asked their students to do meaningful tasks in the classroom or outside using the target language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that the Task-based language learning method focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language. Such tasks can include visiting a doctor, conducting an interview,

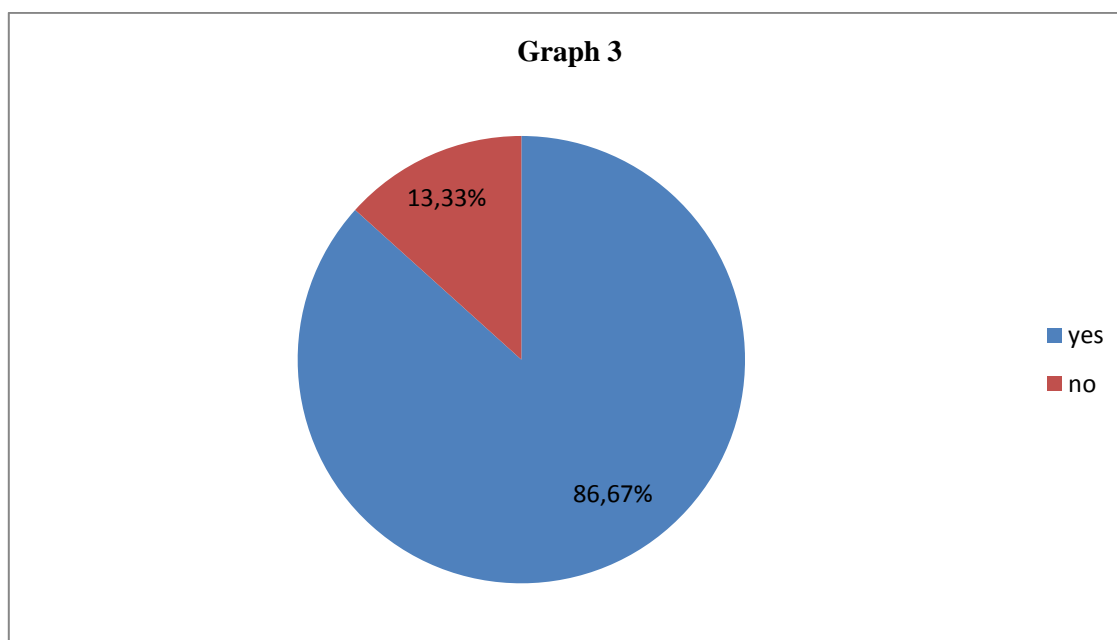
or calling customer service for help. This clearly does not happen with these public high school students. They do not have the opportunity to do meaningful tasks in the target language because most of them do not know people who speak English which makes this method practically impossible to be applied.

Teachers who mentioned that the method they most frequently use is the Cooperative language learning did not do it either, they did not give the students the chance to work in a cooperative way. This method is focused on the idea that teaching should make maximum use of cooperative activities and interactions and these teachers stood in front of the class all the time, speaking to their students, writing information on the board and not letting them interact. This method fights against older ideas that teaching should be teacher-fronted and that strong and weak students should be educated separately, cooperative language learning maintains that in cooperative group work students are likely to scaffold each other and therefore raise the language level of the class(Richards and Rodgers, 2001).Some teachers understand Cooperative language learning as group work, no matter what language is used and they allow students do group work in Spanish. Consequently, no language level will be raised.

A few teachers also said they constantly use the Communicative Language teaching Method which encourages students to speak in the target language between them through different exercises like role-plays, interviews, surveys, games, etc. Some teachers tried to use this method by asking their students´ to act out a dialogue in different groups but the problem was that when they got in groups to do any of the activities mentioned above, they did not speak in English because their level is very low. As a result, students are not able to practice the target language or improve their level.

More than half of the observed teachers said they use the Grammar Translation method but the truth is that all the observed teachers' do. This is one of the most traditional methods. It focuses on learning and memorizing the rules of grammar, vocabulary in the target language is learned through direct translation from the native language and it is taught in the form of isolated word lists (Richard, 1985). In the observed classes every taught word was translated it to the students, grammar rules were usually given in both Spanish and English and students had to memorize them. Therefore students do not really learn to think in English. When they read or listen, they translate in order to understand and if they write or speak, they think in Spanish first and then they produce.

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



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High- schools

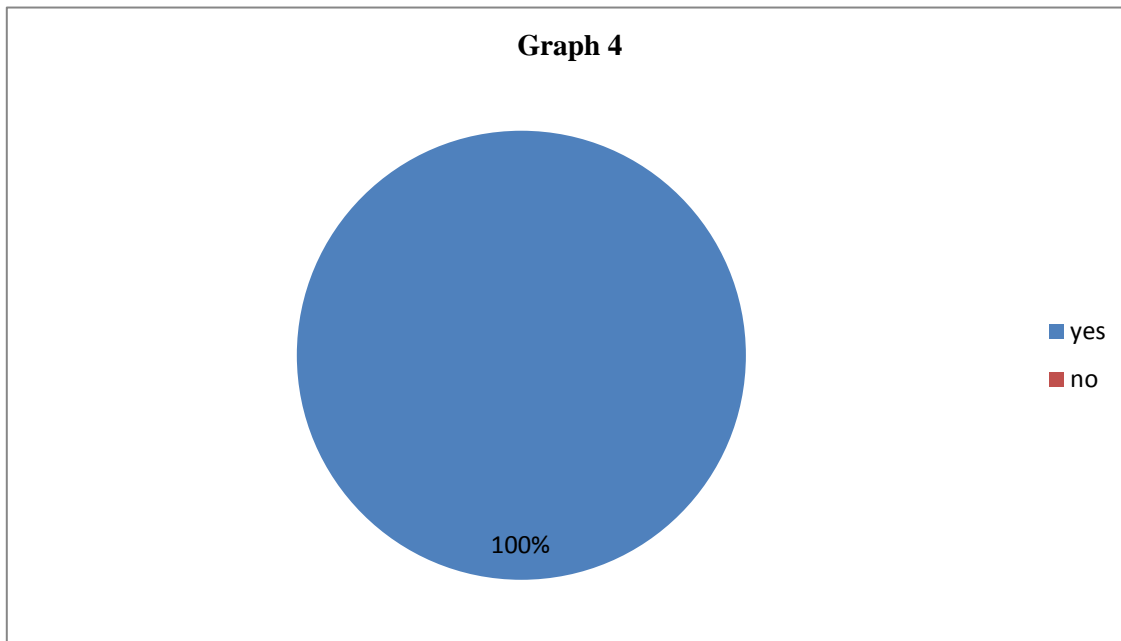
As shown in the graph above, 86.67% of the teachers said they use whole group activities. The other 13.33% of the teachers who said they do not use them are surely confused with what this activity is about because they actually did use whole group

activities. All the observed teachers made questions to their students after they taught their lesson in order to make sure they had understood. Some teachers also asked them to do pair or group work and then they had to share with the rest of the class what they had done. Other teachers asked their students to pass to the board and write some examples so the rest of their classmates could observe and notice what mistakes they were making and which things were well done. Some teachers gave their students worksheets and exercises, others had conversations or discussions and others were asked to explain things to the class. So if teachers say they do not use this activity and they do is simply because they are not sure about what this activity is. Some teachers only did whole-group discussion which did not bring much variety into the classroom and the problem was that not all the students participated and the few students' who participated all the time, spoke very little and showed a lot of L1 interference.

On the contrary, students mentioned that during the observation, teachers did more whole-group activities and that they usually have classes where the teacher does all the talking and then they have to do individual work.

The purpose of whole group activities is that all students are presented with a series of learning tasks to allow them to acquire or practice their learning. Whole group activities are very useful for teachers if what they want is feedback from taught lessons. These activities are also helpful for students because they enable them to participate in a more active way.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

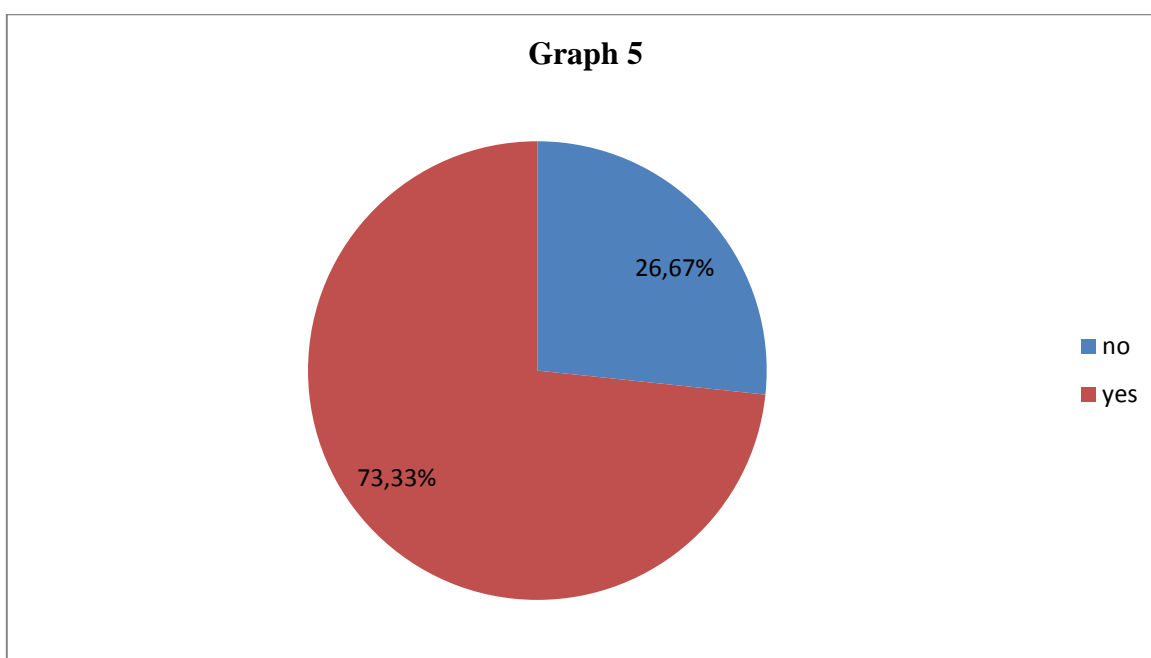
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

For this question, 100% of the teachers said they use individual activities. During the observed classes, teachers used this activity all the time. Different individual activities were given to them in order to practice and reinforce what they had learnt. The problem is that all the practice they had was written and not spoken. Every language has four main skills which are reading, writing, listening and speaking and teachers did not take this into account. This is why it is common to find students who know grammar rules and vocabulary by heart but are not able to interact, express ideas or understand instructions. Many teachers say they use this method a lot because they consider that this activity helps teachers control discipline, this way, students listen, pay attention and do not get distracted. Most teachers feel comfortable with this type of activity because it gives them confidence as they do not have to speak much and they just walk around monitoring and guiding. Teachers prefer to have their students busy and working rather than having them running

around the classroom making noise and bothering their classmates so they limit their students.

Individual activities are the most common activities teachers use to give their lessons or assess what has been taught. There is a wide variety of them, most of which are grammar, vocabulary and spelling exercises. These activities are good for every age and level. However, using only individual exercises does not bring good results, especially for the oral skills. Students who are only given individual activities, have no interaction and do not develop their language skills as they should.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

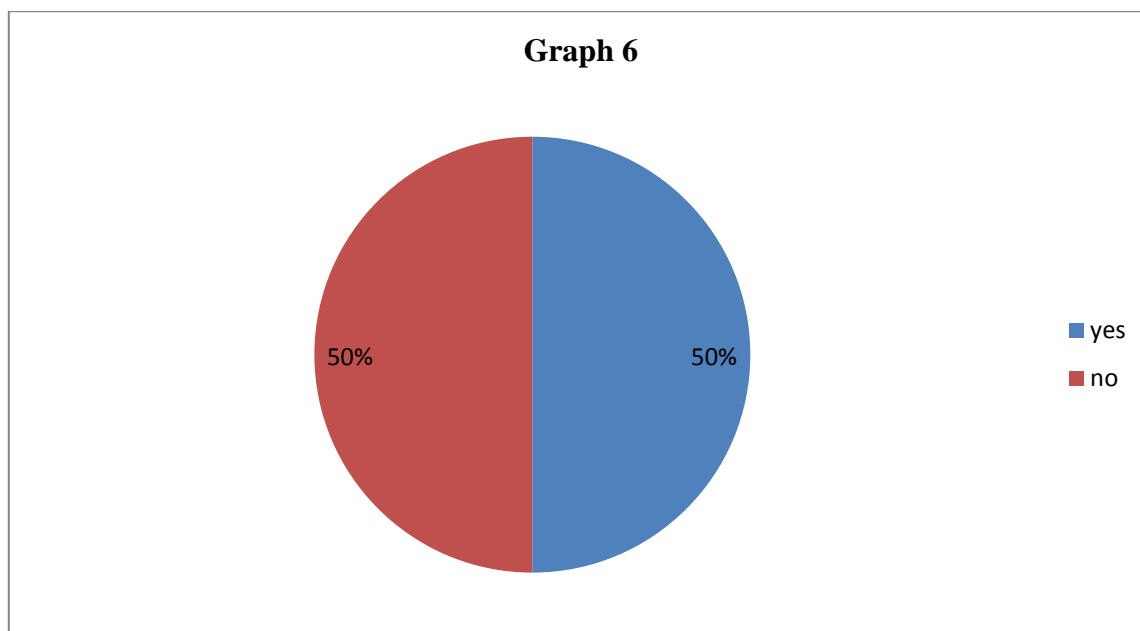
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

The chart above shows that 73.33% of the teachers said they use group-work activities and 26.67% said they do not. During the observation it was noticed that, thus, many teachers do group activities, they are not careful enough with its preparation and

assessment as well. Teachers do group activities for the wrong reasons as adding variety to their classes or to save time grading. Some of the observed teachers, after teaching their lesson, gave their students instructions for an individual class work but made it be a group activity just because their students asked if they could do it in groups. This shows a lack of planning or preparation and an absence of clear teaching objectives. Group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills. But without careful planning and facilitation, group work can frustrate students and instructors and feel like a waste of time (Silberman, 1996). These students felt happy because they got what they wanted from the teacher but at the same time it made them feel lost and confused because the instructions they had was for an individual activity that now had to be made in groups. Students need to know exactly what the teacher expects from them but also what to expect from the teacher. If they notice that their teacher does not plan carefully and changes activities so easily they will not take his/her classes seriously and the learning either. So teachers must have good reasons and a clear goal to do group activities or else, the effectiveness of the method and its possible results won't be seen.

On the other hand, some teachers would like to practice these activities and they consider them important but one of the main reasons for not doing group work activities is discipline. Teachers fear that students might lose track of the subject, get distracted on other things and end up doing something totally different. Plus, there is always that one student who always keeps focused and ends up all the work alone. So this stops them from using these activities that if it they are used accurately, they bring excellent results.

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



Author: Evelyn Moreno

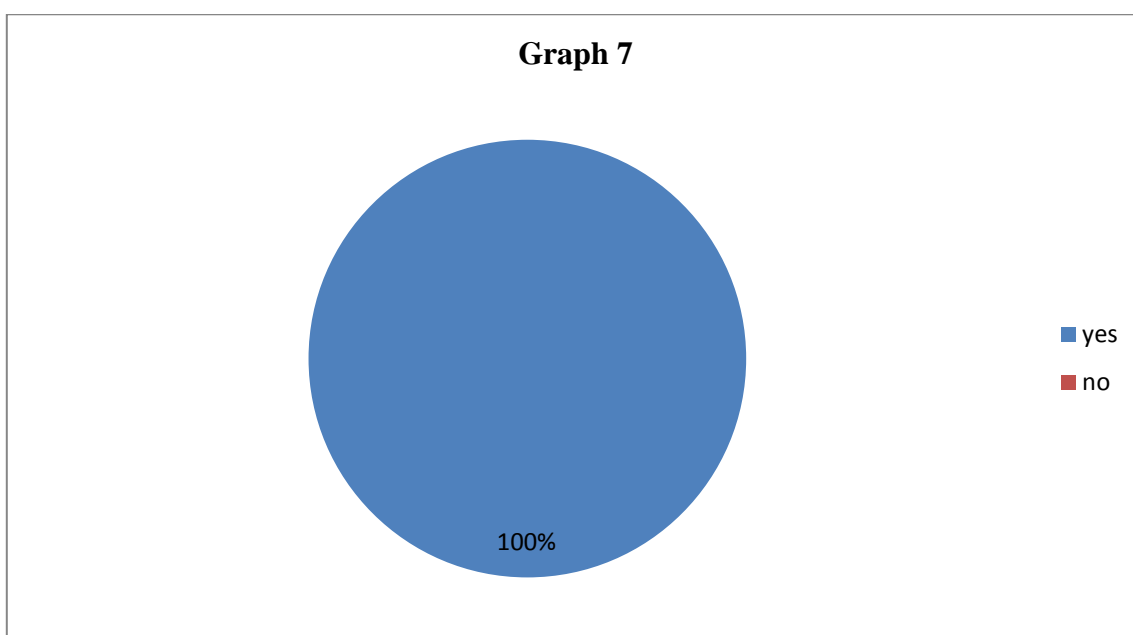
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

For this question, 50% of the teachers said they use English most of the time and the other 50% said they do not. But the fact is that most of the teachers use Spanish almost all the time while teaching. During the observation, many of the students who were asked to speak in English or had to answer questions in English, felt very nervous and ran out of words. It was clear that they had trouble understanding and even more speaking. Some teachers taught in English but repeated the most relevant points in Spanish because they needed to make sure everything was understood and avoid possible misunderstandings. Some other teachers explained directly in Spanish because they said their students' English level was so low that trying to do it in English was a loss of time because if they did they had to repeat everything again in Spanish. Students also say they do not understand English very much and they feel frustrated when they are asked to speak in English. They consider

this happens because during all their lives they have been taught English in Spanish and their teachers speak in English to them only when they are being observed by someone else.

There are different points of view about how a foreign or second language should be taught. This is directly related with teaching methodologies or techniques. Teachers usually choose one or two methods with which they feel more comfortable or which they consider are the most suitable for their students. Unfortunately, the way English is being taught in Ecuadorian public schools is not helping the students' production.

Do teachers plan their lessons?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

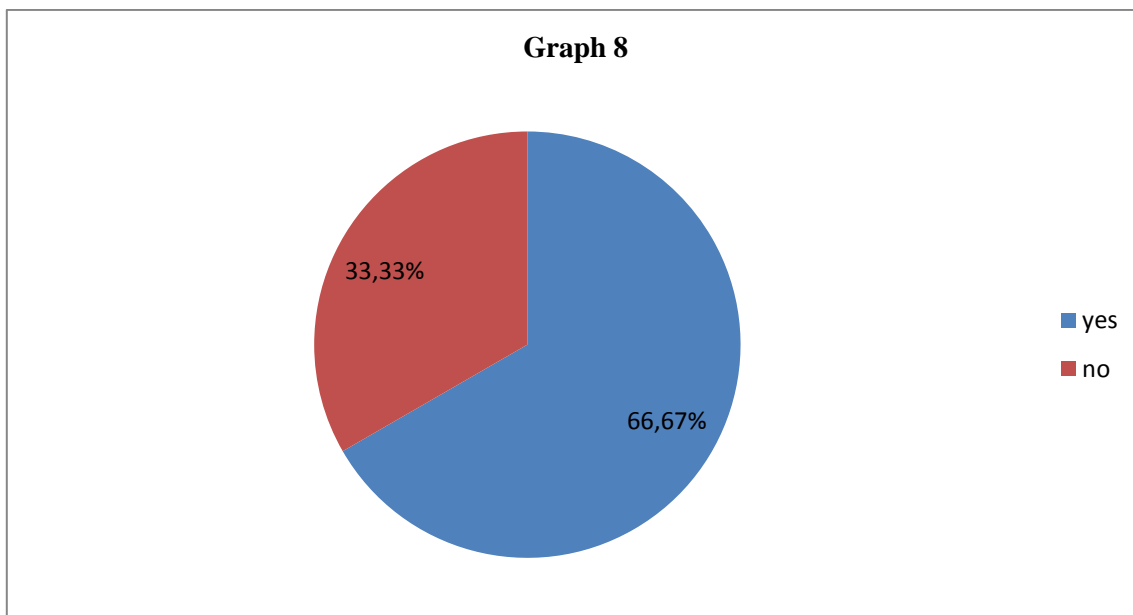
As shown in the graph above, 100% of the observed teachers affirmed they plan their lessons before they teach. Some of them mentioned that they consider planning a very important step in the teaching-learning process. However, most of them admit that they

plan only because it is a requirement they have to fulfill. They do not use their plans as the useful tool it is. As a matter of fact, none of the observed teachers had their lesson plans with them at the moment of teaching in spite of the fact that these documents contain the information about what students have done and where they have to go next.

Most of the observed classes showed some type of disorganization. Teachers entered the class and asked their students what had been the last thing they spoke about in class or which was the last page they had worked on. At that moment students started to think about the last class, trying to remember what they were taught and others started to check their books to see what had been the last activities they completed. It was clear that teacher and students were lost. They spent several, valuable minutes, they could have used to practice or learn something new, trying to remember where were they. Students mentioned this happens almost all the time and they even felt it was normal for the teacher to ask instead of the teacher knowing exactly what had been covered already and what things need to be taught.

As Stronge (2007) states that teachers create lesson plans to serve as guides in helping students achieve intended learning outcomes. Before the lesson is prepared, the teacher should have a clear idea of what the teaching objectives are. What, specifically, should the student be able to do, understand and care about as the result of teaching (Tokuhamu, 2007). There are a few things teachers should take into account before they plan, this is: number of learners, level, topic, teaching and learning method, time, resources, assessment and feedback from learners.

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



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

The results for question 8 can be observed on the graph above where 66.67% of the teachers said they do take these aspects into account and the other 33.33% said they do not. Still, while being observed it was evident that those who said yes did not consider some or any of these aspects. In some cases teachers gave too much time to their students to complete a task that only needed a few minutes to be completed. It is clear that an appropriate use of time at school starts with a good organization and classroom management. Much of the relevant issues in the classroom have to do with time management. Problems often occur in the classroom when students do not know what to expect; are bored, confused or frustrated; feel hurried; experience wait time between activities; or are over-stimulated and lack time to relax and refocus (Docking, 2002; Miller, 1984). Problems can also arise when students do not know what is expected of them (Walker & Walker, 1991). Most students benefit from a consistent and predictable learning environment that limits surprises (Kerr & Nelson, 2002; Reinhart, 1991). A predictable

schedule of what to expect during the school day cultivates more productive students and therefore greater learning (Burden, 1995; Kamps, 2002).

Other teachers did not give importance to instruction or gave instructions too fast, others did not give clear instructions or did not give instructions at all. None of them mentioned how much time students had to complete a task which made them feel confused and unsure about what and how to do it. Proper classroom instruction is needed by the teacher, so the students can well understand what is expected of them. In EFL classrooms this is more apt to create anxiety because the explanations are given in another language. This takes even more effort by the student to comprehend than their own language (Tokuhamma, 2007). However, teachers should always make sure they give instructions and make them clear before students start the task or else they won't be able to accomplish it correctly.

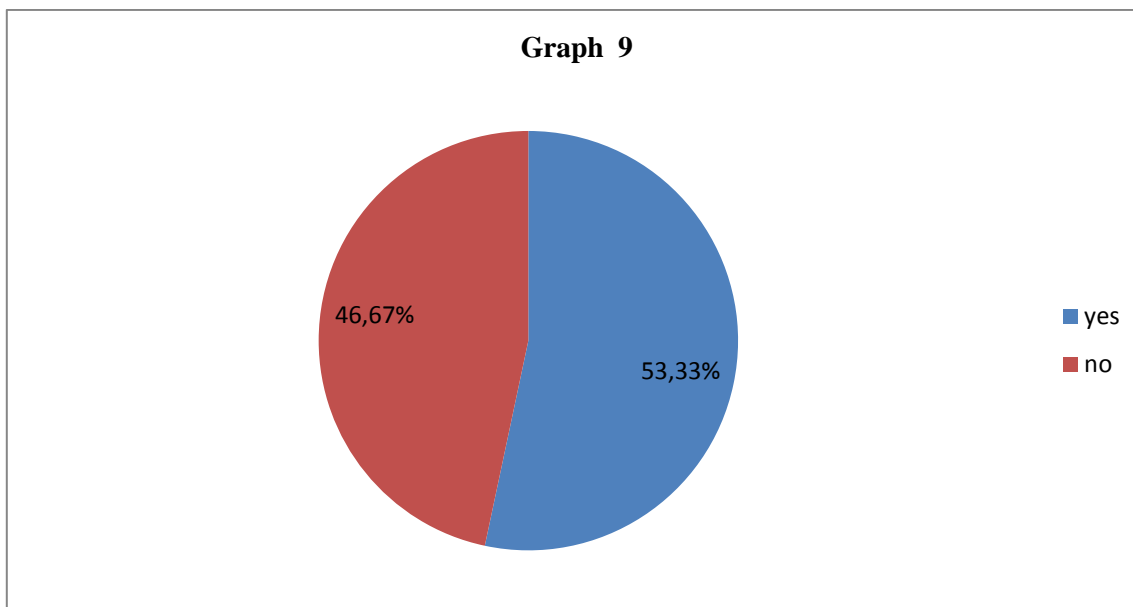
Another very important aspect is feedback and which, practically, does not occur in most cases. Most teachers' just correct tests, homework and papers, but do not let the students know what and why the answer is wrong and what is expected from them after that. Feedback provides students with information about the quality of their performance, including both what they have done well and what they have done poorly. The observed teachers which had sent homework, asked their students to show it to them and, surprisingly, all they did was sign it. How do they expect students to know if they did right or wrong, if they understood or not, and how will teachers know if they accomplished their objectives or if they should repeat the class. Students say that unfortunately, teachers' usually correct tests but, still, they do not give them any type of feedback. Actually, students did not know what feedback is because they never receive it. Studies have found that the amount of time between the activity and the feedback has a critical effect on

student achievement. In fact, the longer is the delay in giving feedback, the less likely students will respond to the feedback and the less likely learning will be enhanced (Stronge, 2007). It is absolutely necessary both for teachers and students to give feedback. That way, students will know what they are doing right or wrong, what skills must be learned and which must be improved.

Finally, the aspect that most teachers care about is discipline. They consider this is the most frequent problem they have in class. The observed teachers mentioned that it is very difficult to work with an undisciplined class because it wastes, both, students' and teachers' time and energy, it stops students from having a quality education and it decreases the effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom control. This is why teachers say they need to have well behaved students in order to deliver effective lesson presentations without classroom disruption, and, students can receive a quality education without continuous distractions.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

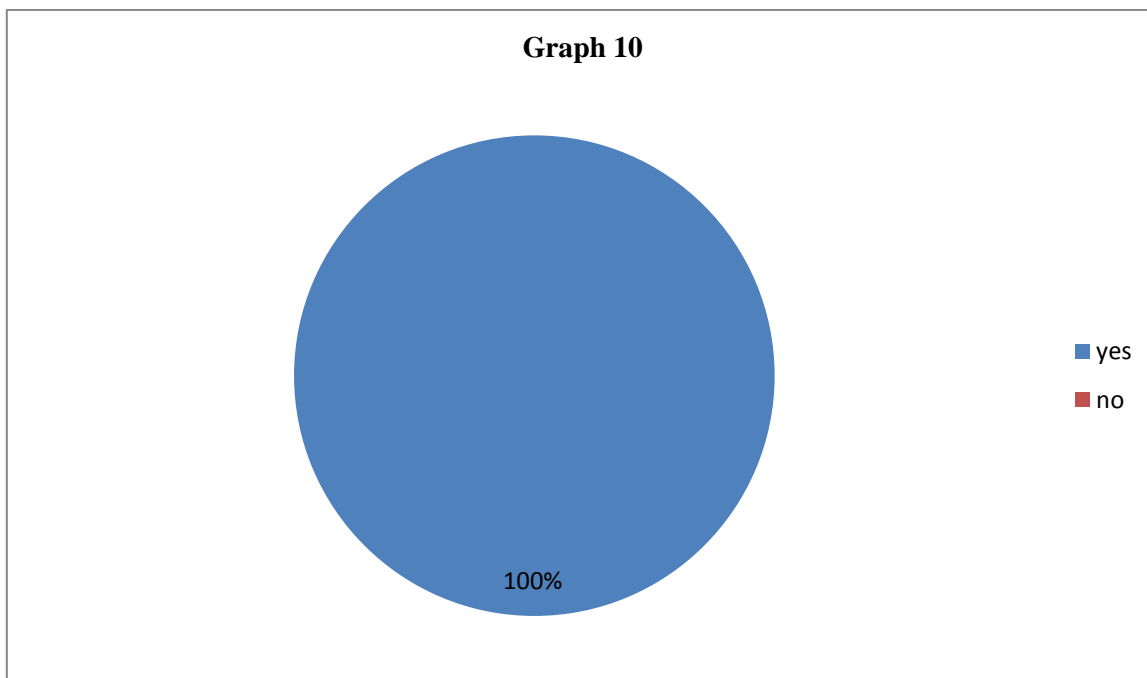
As shown in the graph for question 9, 53.33% of the observed teachers said they do consider students' needs, and 46.67% said they do not. However, the observation and students' questionnaire showed that those who said they take students' needs into account really do not. It became evident that teachers know what their students' needs are or some of them but do not care much. The importance of taking students' needs into account while designing the lesson plans and classroom activities, as well as choosing material is vital. Some teachers assume that all their students have the exact same needs and treat them all the same way. Nevertheless, it was easy to notice that each student was different and they needed to be treated differently. Some students understood fast, some did not. Some had difficulties in reading comprehension others in writing. Most had a lack of vocabulary. Some students had a lower economic level than others and in some cases there were students of different ages in the same classroom. All these differences are students' needs which need to be taken into account and are not. Some teachers justify themselves by

saying that they know their students have different needs but that since they have so many students and very few hours to teach, they do not have time to consider this at all.

Spaulding (2003) states that depending on the nature of the class and the students' levels, the dynamics of the class must be appropriate. So, teachers have to learn things about their students such as age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation and learning styles if they want the teaching-learning process to be successful.

On the other hand, students mentioned that lessons are very repetitive and boring, activities are always the same and they feel they do not learn much or do not learn at all. They think that if teachers would consider their needs, they would have better results in class. The problems students face in the classroom would be less if teachers keep students needs in mind. Considering students' needs will increase their learning motivation and consequently teachers will have motivated learners. Learner motivation makes teaching and learning immeasurably easier and more pleasant, as well as more productive. (Gardner and Lambert, 1972)

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?



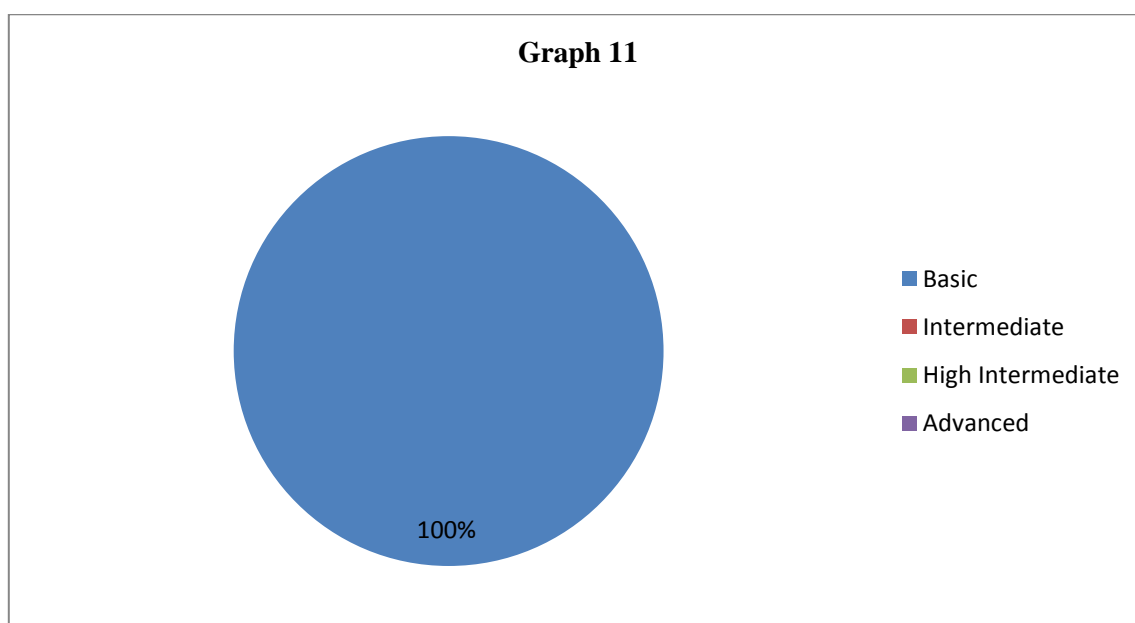
Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

As shown in the graph for question 10, 100% of the observed teachers mentioned that they consider student's level and that due to the fact that the big majority of students have a basic level, they use the Grammar- Translation Method. They think this is the only way they can help their students learn and understand what is being taught. During the class observations, teachers explain most things in Spanish instead of taking advantage that most have the same level and they could teach English in English using simple vocabulary and grammar structures. This way, they all can listen to English during their English classes. But, the fact is that most teachers use a lot of Spanish and do not allow their students learn and practice. It is also important to mention that student in public schools are not divided by levels, they are all together in the same classroom, using the same book despite their English level.

Teachers must consider their students' level when they teach. If students have a low level, teachers cannot speak too fast or use complex vocabulary because students will not understand and will feel frustrated. If students have a good level, they need to be taught at a faster pace or else they will get bored and lose motivation and interest. It is important, however, to challenge students. No matter what level they have, they need to know that something more is always expected from them. This way they will have a goal to reach and will keep focused.

Which is the level of your students?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

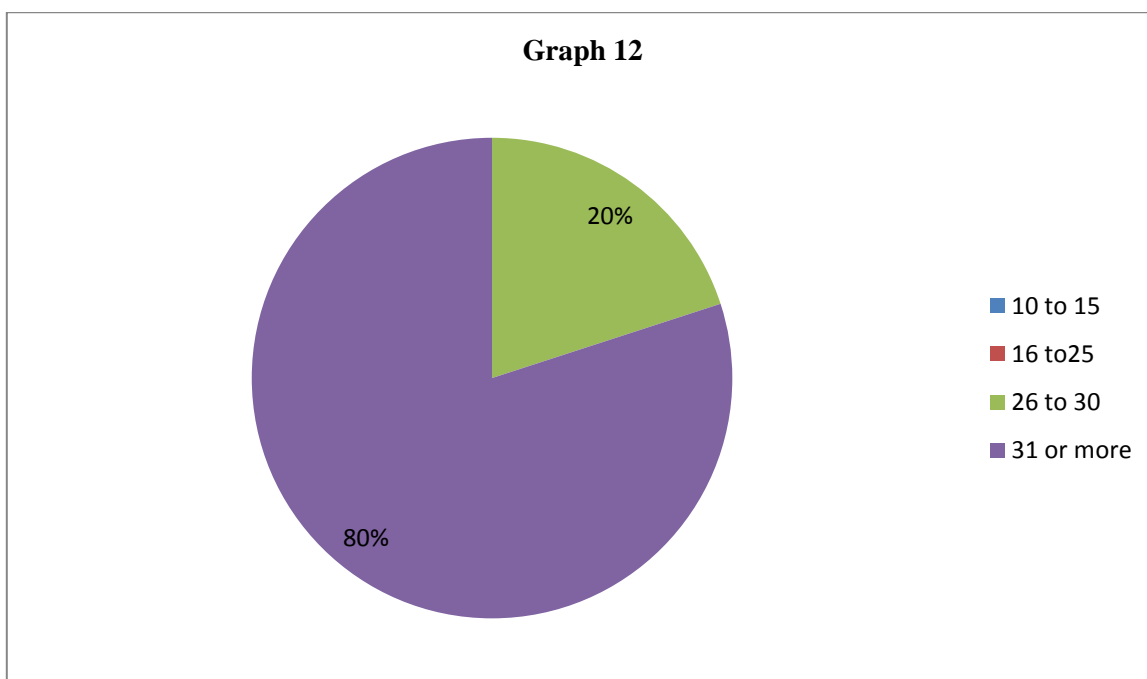
For question 11, 100% of the teachers agreed that their students have a basic level. This is the consequence of different facts such as the reduced number of hours of English classes per week, the teachers' English level, teaching methods or the limited classroom resources in schools. Teachers are aware of their student's level and have gotten used to it

so they do not do much to improve it. All they say is that they all have a low level and that it has always been that way. Students, for their part, blame teachers and the education system of their low level and consider that if teachers would do a better job, their level would be higher. Students also mentioned how frustrated they feel when they listen to music and do not understand.

About this Diaz (1995) states that a basic level student is one that has little or no ability to understand, speak, read, or write English and is unable to function independently using the language. In listening, the learner can comprehend only short utterances, simple courtesy expressions, and main themes. This reader recognizes a minimal sight-word vocabulary. In writing, this learner is able to copy, list, and label concrete terms or fill in simple autobiographical information.

Factors Concerning Classrooms

How many students do teachers have in their class?

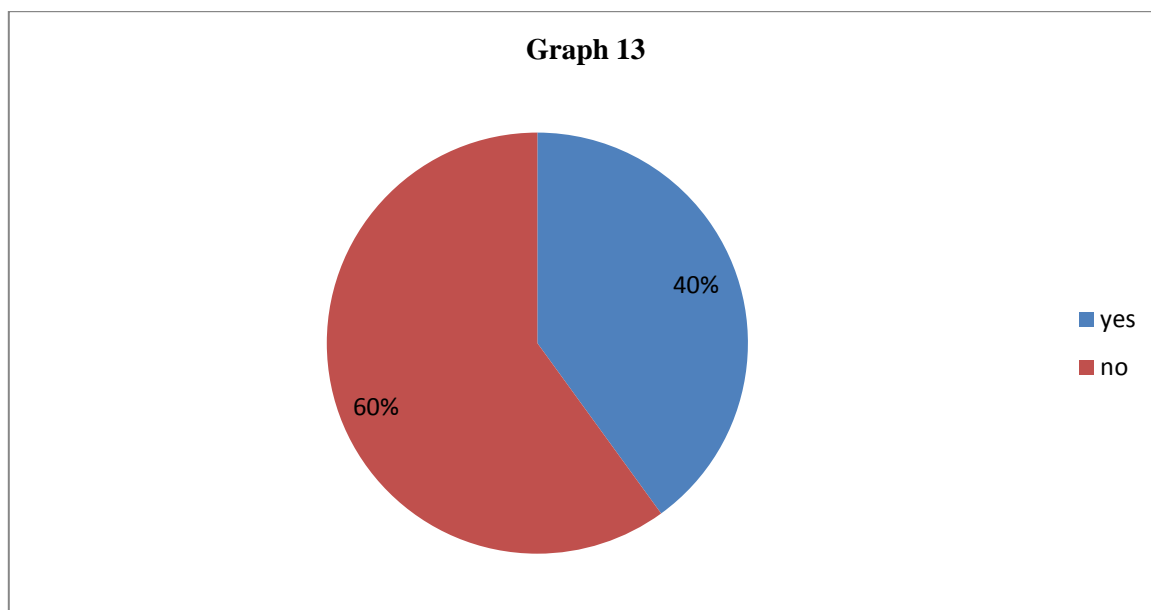


Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

Ecuadorian public high schools have classrooms with a large number of students. 80% of the observed classes have more than thirty one students and a 20% have between twenty six and thirty students. Those classrooms which have over thirty one students have between forty five and sixty students. Teachers' say they find it difficult to teach such large groups with a basic level. They consider that large groups help increase discipline problems and generate a distracting and noisy environment. During the observation, these problems were not evidenced because students behave a lot better when a stranger is visiting their class. However, in some cases, before the observation started it became clear that a great misbehavior existed because of the number of students. It is believed that teaching to large groups does not allow much interaction, variety of communication activities and reduces the teacher's possibility of having time for correction and grading. Some teachers consider that the teaching-learning process becomes more difficult with large groups because teachers cannot keep track of each students needs and advances. Felder (2001) mentions that in a larger class, students are less likely to understand what is expected of them and more likely to feel socially isolated. This may lead them to adopt a surface approach to learning, rather than attempting to develop a meaningful understanding, or deep approach, to the subject content. On the other hand, Mackenzie (2003) says that small group teaching is a type of teaching that allows for interaction between students and the teacher, and students with their peers. This contact allows students to develop skills, such as problem solving and communication that they may not be able to develop in their larger courses. Speaking about this, observed teachers are sure that with small groups it is also easier to keep students motivated, create an active learning environment, and increase attendance.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with this number of students?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

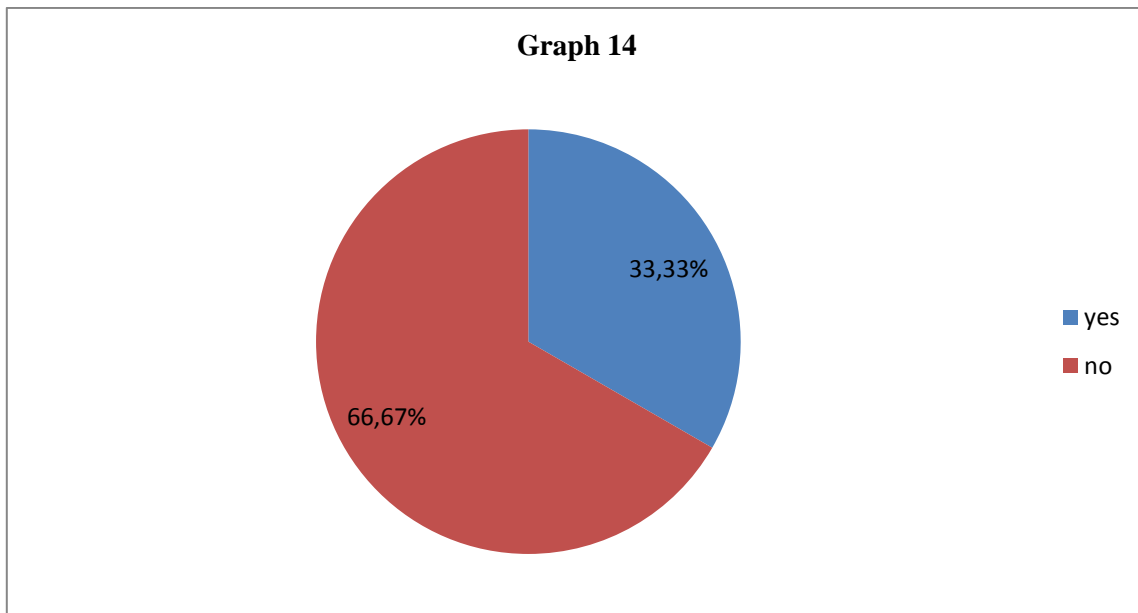
For question 13, 60% of the observed teachers say they do not feel comfortable working with this number of students, the other 40% said they do, however, it is possible that these teachers are getting confused between feeling comfortable and being used to something. Public- school teachers are used to teaching to large groups but that does not mean they are comfortable. Teachers are sure that the teaching-learning process would be more successful if their groups were smaller. They consider that the large number of students they have affects their motivation towards learning English and makes classes less active. Studies have shown that teaching to smaller groups is easier for the teacher because they give the teacher the opportunity to know and work with each student individually. This allows for the professor to give individualized feedback and attention to each student (Krueger, 1999). Most of the observed classes had around 50 students and it became

evident that it caused some discipline issues, which made teachers search for individual and tedious activities.

Students, also consider that such large groups affect their comprehension and performance. They said that being part of a smaller class would allow them do more interesting activities as well as having the opportunity to interact a little bit more with their peers. The interviewed students mentioned that every time they ask their Teachers to give them something fun or different to do, the most common answer they get is that they are too many and that it would be impossible to do something that encourage them to misbehave.

Still, teachers could take advantages of the benefits of teaching to large groups but they simply do not try or do not know these advantages exist. Felder (2000) states that having many students in the class means that projects that require big groups can be completed because students of all ages enjoy art projects, theater, and video projects. The point is that teachers who really want to help these students need more creativity as well as time and dedication.

Do teachers have enough space to work with this number of students?



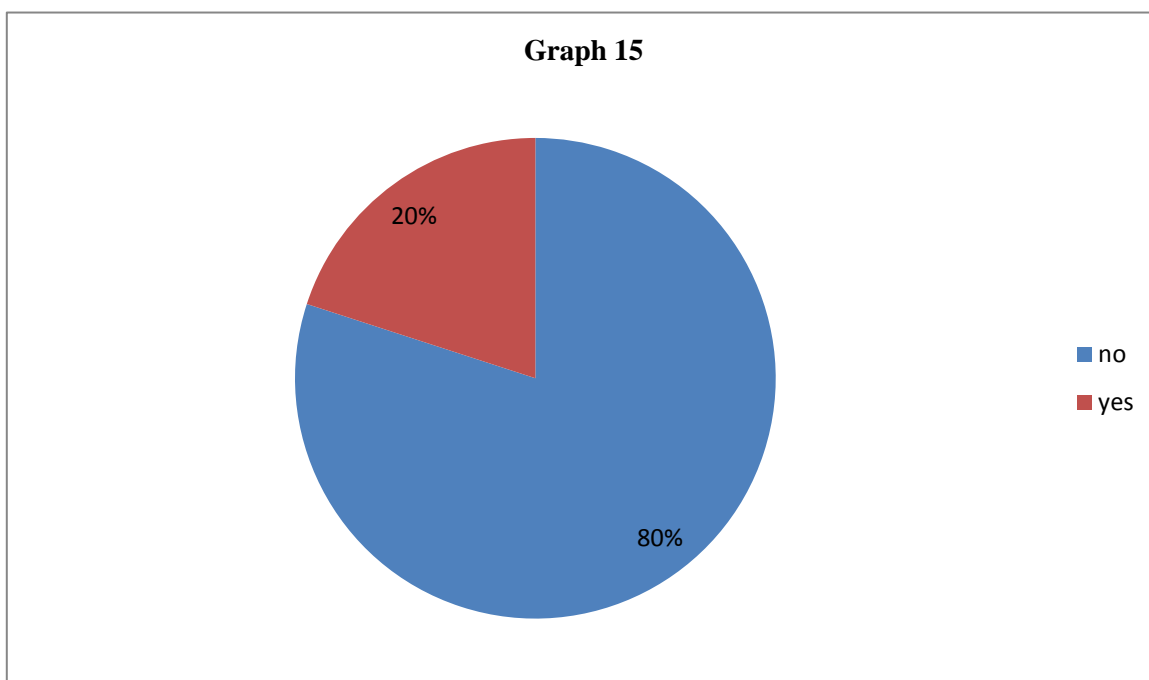
Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

As shown in the graph above, 66.67% of the teachers said they do not have enough space and the other 33.33% said they do. Most of the Ecuadorian public high schools have big classrooms but at the same time they have a large number of students. This makes classrooms a little uncomfortable and difficult to manage. Most classroom spaces are reduced for moving and arranging purposes. They do not offer the enough space to move seats or students from one place to another. Students remain in the same seat, in the same spot during the whole school year. In two of the observed classes, students were asked to work in groups but it became impossible to move and arrange the seats.

Spaces for learning should invite and support the activities teachers plan in the classroom, and they should respect the inhabitants of the space (Woolfolk, 2007). An uncomfortable environment can jeopardize the very climate teacher is trying to create. Good environments are frequently flexible ones (Kirschener, 2004).

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



Author: Evelyn Moreno

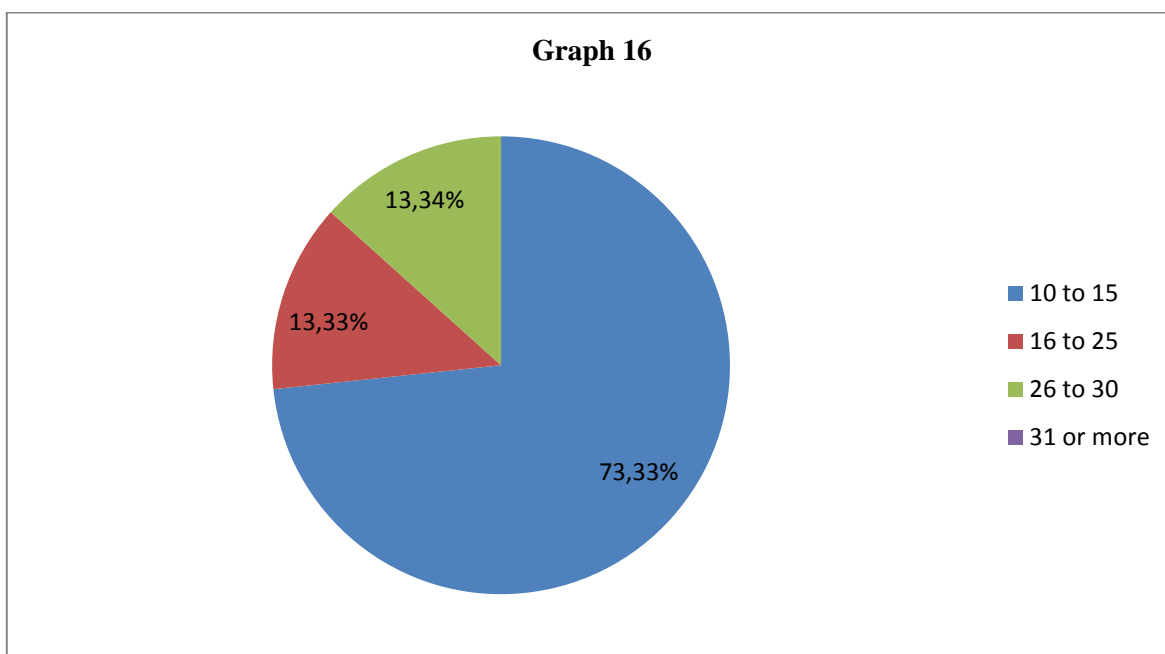
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

80% of the teachers said they do not arrange students' seats in relation to the activity planned for their classes and the other 20% said they do. During the class observations, very few teachers did activities that demanded seat arrangement but when they tried to move the seats and rearrange them it was difficult. There was not enough space because there were around 50 students. The other impediment was time. Students took very long trying to move the seats and, that, of course is not good. Teachers rather save that time up for some more teaching and working. Besides, most teachers do not consider seating arrangement important. They think seating arrangement is irrelevant and does not influence the teaching-learning process. Lenderman (2012) says that choosing a seating arrangement for a classroom is one of the most important decisions a teacher can make and they should feel free to have their students move their chairs several times during

a class, depending on which activities are taking place. There are several options when it comes to arranging a class including rows, circles, clusters, activity zones and pairs.

Teachers should feel free to have their students move their chairs several times during a class, depending on which activities are taking place.

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



Author: Evelyn Moreno

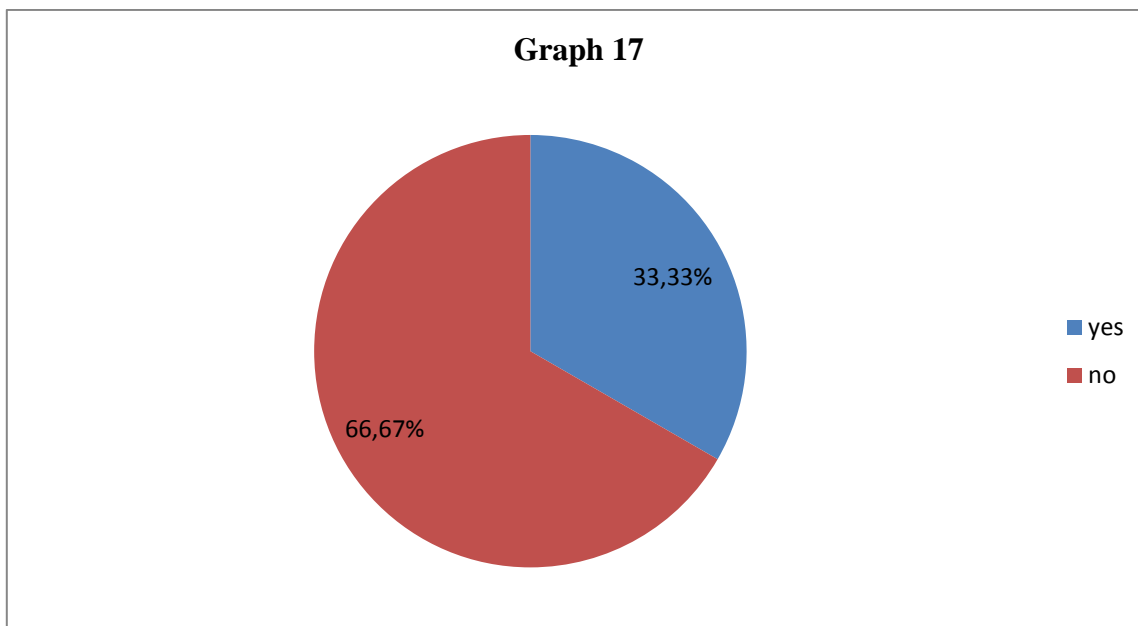
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

For question 16, 73.33% of the observed teachers would rather teaching groups of ten to fifteen students, 13.33% are more realistic and explained they would be happy teaching to groups of sixteen to twenty-five students and the other 13.34% said they would like to teach to groups of twenty-six to thirty students. The reason is that they consider it would be more productive for their students and easier for them to keep track of students' progress and performance. They highly believe smaller groups allow teachers get a more

detailed feedback and offers comfort in different ways. Besides, assignments are more likely to be completed as teachers are more able to check them. Most teachers justify some of their failures by saying that if they would have smaller classes their students would have a higher level and that they would be more likely to speak in English.

Students also mentioned they would like to be in smaller groups because they think they could learn more and better. They also said smaller groups are less noisy and this would make listening and reading comprehension easier. Some students mentioned that large groups make their teachers lose motivation and not wanting to try new things. However, teaching large or small groups have advantages and disadvantages, the important thing is to identify them and benefit from it. Teaching small groups can be both rewarding and a great learning experience. Blatchford (2008) says that this type of teaching allows for more active teaching and learning strategies than large courses, but can also be unproductive if the group is not managed properly. Knowing what you want to achieve from the group and understanding the different teaching techniques available is crucial to making each group meeting successful.

Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, Tape/CD recorder, Computer(s), Projector(s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)?



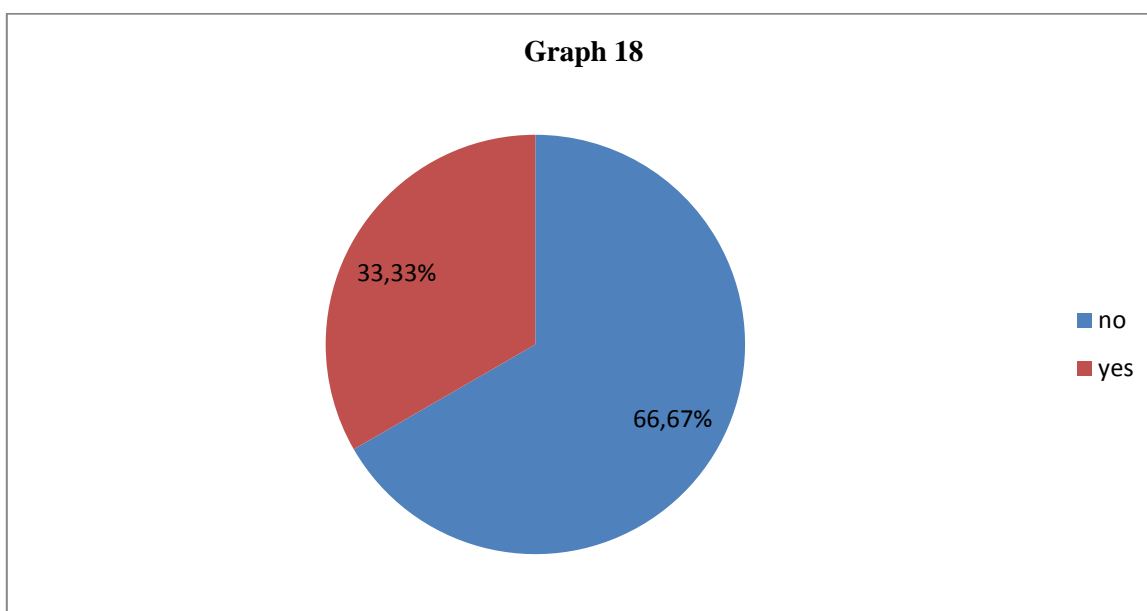
Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

In this question, 66.67% of the observed teachers mentioned that all they have is an old tape recorder which they use when they can because they share them with other teachers so they cannot use teacher resources as well. They also mentioned they would like to have more modern resources but that this is something only the school can manage with the Ministry of Education. Most teachers are glad about the fact that in a short time most schools will have excellent resources and they will finally be able to use technology for teaching. Students complain about not having enough teaching resources and they consider they could improve their English level if they had them. Students said they would like to watch movies in English or do listening exercises more often. The other 33.33% of the observed teachers say they use teaching resources. These teachers work in some of the schools which have already received new resources from the government and they try to use them all the time because they consider it is an amazingly helpful tool for teaching and learning. Teachers affirm they have already seen results in their students learning process.

They consider that having good teaching resources makes the teaching process easier and the learning process more interesting. Resources help students understand the object of the lesson the teacher is conveying. Additionally, it helps the teacher to test whether the students have improved their understanding of the given subject or not (Richard, 1996). Resources can also help reliability of a teacher to their student. It is important for teachers to count with classroom resources such as a tape or CD recorder or a TV.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

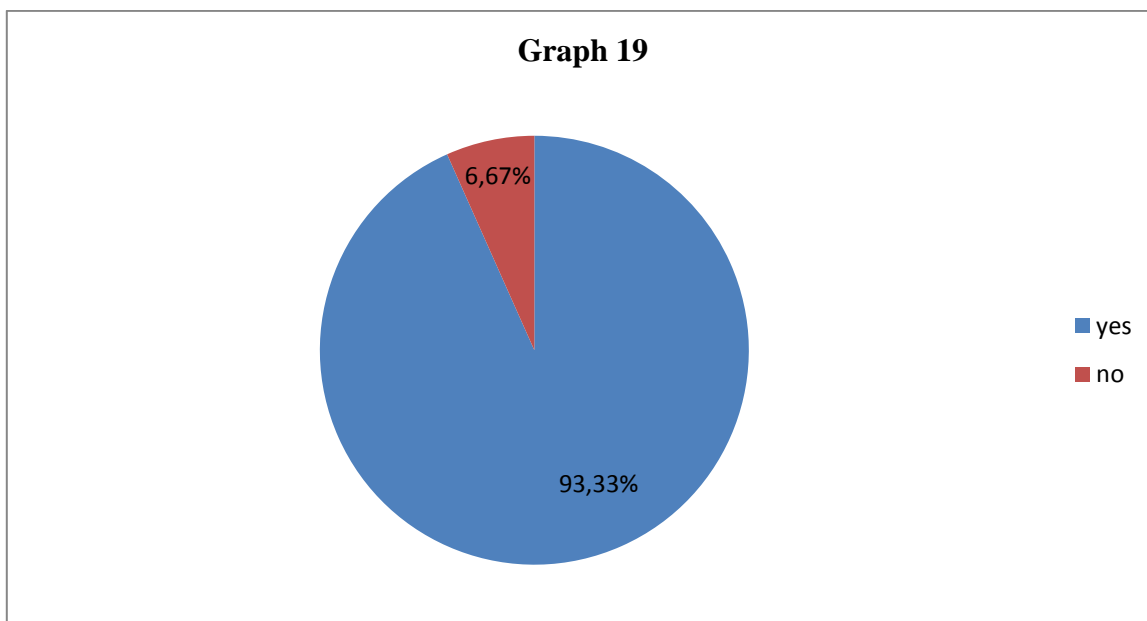
In the graph above it can be observed that 66.67% of the observed teachers consider that the resources they have in their classrooms are not appropriate. These teachers are worried about not having enough teaching resources because they consider they are way behind from those who do. They consider is not much what they can do with only some seats and a board because they think that to learn a language it is vital to at least have a tape

recorder and a TV. Students also mentioned they need to have resources available for them because they are sure this will help them improve their level learn more.

Without resources, the whole teaching process could be very boring, and there would be no information that backs up the topic that the teacher would be working on (Richard, 1996). Classroom resources play a very important role in English teaching. They help students improve their skills and performance. And help the teachers make their classes more varied and dynamic.

Factors concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review teachers' lesson plans?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

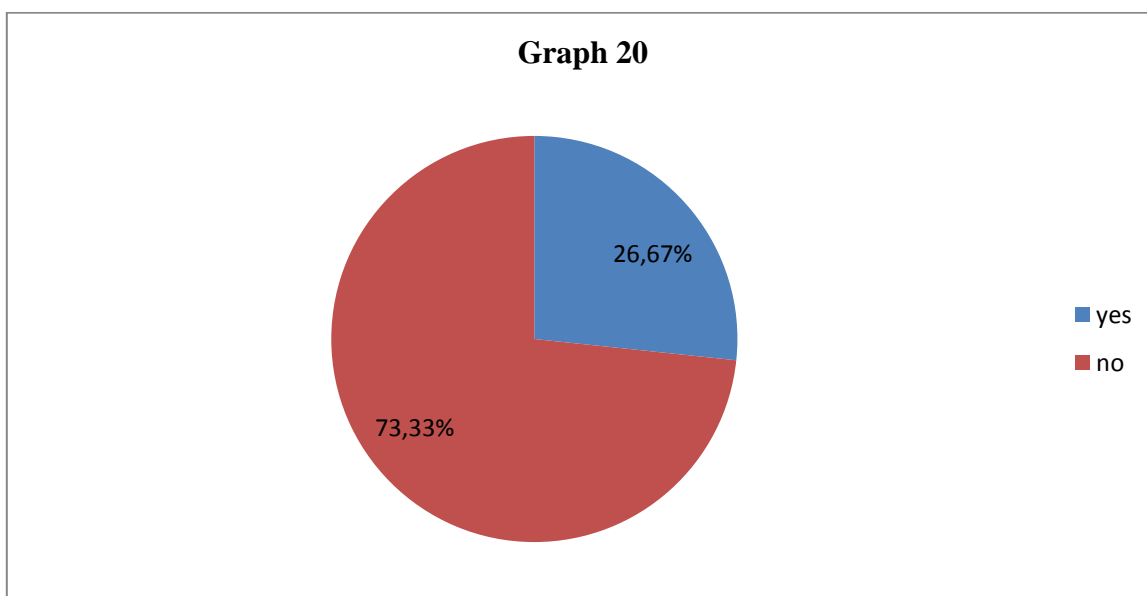
Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

For question 19, 93.33% of the observed teachers said that the institution checks their lesson plans. It means that they hand in their lesson plans to the supervisor and they usually get it back with no feedback, observations or recommendations. Teachers are sure

that supervisors check their lesson plans as part of their job but they do not really go through it and review it as they are supposed to. Teachers say that at the beginning of the school year, they are always asked to hand in their lesson plans but most supervisors ask teachers for their lesson plans once a month or once every three months.

The Ministry of Education in Ecuador says that one of the roles of a school principal is to supervise the contents and objectives of the lesson plans the teachers elaborate. The problem here is that most school principals do not know English and have to delegate this role to the English area director. In many cases the English area director is also a teacher and does not have enough time to do its work as a teacher and review or supervise others work. This is why some supervisor just sign other teachers' lesson plans and does not take time to read them and give teachers some feedback.

Does the institution monitor teachers' teaching?



Author: Evelyn Moreno

Source: Ecuadorian Public High-schools

In the graph shown above, 26.67% of the observed teachers say their supervisor monitors their classes at least once a year. The Ministry of Education in Ecuador says that one of the roles of a school principal is to monitor classes. One of the reasons why supervisors do not monitor so often or monitor at all is because public school principals do not know English and it is impossible to know if a class is given right or wrong if the language this class is taking place in is unknown, consequently, they have to delegate this to English directors or supervisors. As mentioned before, they are also teachers and have no time for monitoring and supervision. So, they evaluate only a tiny amount of teaching. If a teacher has five classes a day, that's 900 periods each school year. A supervisor who formally evaluates a teacher for one full class period a year sees 0.1% of the teacher's instruction. The other 99.9% of the time, the teacher was working with students unobserved. Even if the principal made three full-class evaluation visits a year as required by the Ministry of Education it would still leave the teacher alone with students 99.7% of the time. No matter how observant and well trained the supervisor is, no matter how comprehensive the evaluation criteria are, and no matter how detailed the feedback is afterwards, this is totally thin supervision of the school's most important employees (Kappan, 2005). Supervisors who spend this little evaluative time in classrooms are basically hoping that teachers will think they know more than they really do.

Let's face it: teachers are on their own most of the time, and our schools depend heavily on their competence and professionalism.

CONCLUSIONS

- In spite of what most teachers say, the 100% of the observed teachers used the Grammar Translation Method. Consequently, students do not learn to speak in English because they are taught in Spanish.
- Teachers are not aware of the importance of planning. They plan to fulfill the schools or Ministry's requirements instead of using it as a tool that allows teachers to know what to do, how to do it and in what time.
- The vast majority of teachers have a degree in English teaching, however, most of them have a low English level and a poor pronunciation which makes some teachers use more Spanish than English in the class. Therefore, public school students have a very low English level too.
- Reviewing and monitoring the English classes has become each time more difficult for institutions. Therefore, teachers do not get feedback to help improve their classes.
- Public school students have a very low English level because of the poor English level of their teachers.
- Teachers do not consider students' needs to teach their lessons. Therefore, there is a lack of motivation when learning.
- Public school classrooms are spacious but due to the large number of students, that space becomes reduced and uncomfortable. As a result, this also affects motivation when learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should start to get more interested on students' needs if they want to improve results. They have to start taking into account every aspect that affects the teaching learning process. That way students' motivation will increase and their performance will improve.
- Teachers need to be trained on teaching methods and techniques. They must learn about large group management and what kind of activities must be carried out to achieve the desired results.
- Institutions have to make a great effort on improving classroom spaces and teaching resources. Students need to be in comfortable spaces and have the adequate resources in order to acquire knowledge. Authorities need to work harder to provide the necessary back-up and feed-back to teachers.

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.

Annexes



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:	

21. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

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

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

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

23. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

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

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

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

¿Porqué?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34. ¿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	()
Group work activities	()

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

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

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

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

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

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

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

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

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

YES ()	NO ()
NOTES: _____	

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

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

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

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

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

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

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