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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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DEDICATION

To father and mother

ACNOWLEDGMENT

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Many thanks to my parents and brothers who endured this long process with me, always offering support and love. Also thanks to the teachers who were always willing to collaborate by sharing their valuable time to obtain the information for this thesis. And finally, thanks to my Thesis Director, who read my revisions and helped me complete this project successfully.

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ABSTRACT

This research proposes a Descriptive Analysis of the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools and it was done using a quantitative approach.

Information was gathered in five public high schools in the city of Machala. Three teachers for each high school were observed during their classes and they answered a questionnaire and a survey. Fifteen students, one from each observed class, were chosen also to answer a questionnaire.

The data were collected taking into account the list of factors concerning students, teachers, and environment where the English teaching-learning takes place. The results were processed and represented graphically to facilitate the subsequent analysis.

Main findings show that teachers' low language proficiency, low percentage of language used in class, teachers' poor skills in managing learning, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of teaching resources are factors affecting the English teaching-learning process in the public high schools observed in this research.

KEY WORDS: analysis, observation, results

RESUMEN

Esta investigación propone un análisis descriptivo de los factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje de la lengua Inglés en las escuelas secundarias públicas del Ecuador y fue realizado utilizando un enfoque cuantitativo.

La información se obtuvo en cinco escuelas secundarias públicas en la ciudad de Machala. Se observaron tres maestros de cada escuela secundaria durante sus clases y respondieron un cuestionario y una encuesta. Quince estudiantes, uno de cada clase observada, fueron elegidos también para responder a un cuestionario.

Los datos fueron recogidos teniendo en cuenta la lista de factores relativos a estudiantes, maestros y el entorno en el que el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje del idioma Inglés se lleva a cabo. Los resultados fueron procesados y representados gráficamente para facilitar el análisis posterior.

Las conclusiones que se hallaron a partir de la investigación muestran que el poco dominio del idioma, el bajo porcentaje del idioma inglés utilizado en clase, los maestros quienes no poseen suficientes habilidades para el dominio del aprendizaje, aulas superpobladas, y la falta de recursos para la enseñanza, son factores que influyen en el proceso de enseñanza - aprendizaje de Inglés en las escuelas secundarias públicas según se observó en esta investigación.

PALABRAS CLAVES: análisis, observación, resultados.

INTRODUCTION

The use of the English language around the world is a must nowadays. Therefore it is relevant to acquire knowledge to facilitate communication. However, public high school students do not use the English language as they should due to their low language proficiency; this situation does not allow them to access to up to date English information or have academic performance in other countries. Therefore, this research is proposed in order to analyze main factors that affect the English teaching- learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools.

This study is titled “Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools” and three main aims are part of it: to determine the classroom condition in which English lesson take place; to identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers; to determine teachers’ instructional competence. The achievement of the objectives will help to take urgent actions with the intention of improving the teaching-learning process in public high schools and providing Ecuadorian students good English language skills.

Several studies have been carried out by different researchers about the factors that affect the English teaching-learning process; among them it can be mentioned three that are relevant for this research. The first study was done by Snow (2002) to know the perceptions of a group of teachers about the influence of classroom space on learning. Main conclusions showed that overcrowded classrooms developed a sense of frustration in teachers and they considered that this also affected students’ behavior. However, this study was limited by the fact that only large classes were considered for being observed.

The second study was done by Kokkelenberg (2005) to investigate the effects of class size in students' achievement. Despite the fact the researcher were able to prove that the amount of students in a class can influence students' performance, the results were affected by students' attitude and their likelihood to obtain good grades.

The last study that is worth to mention was done by Ruso (2007). He studied the effects of using Task-Based learning in EFL classes and he found that tasks increase students' performance. However, students did not agree with the pre-task stage because tasks were not varied and this fact limited this investigation.

This research will be of great help in the English teaching field because it offers a clear perspective of main problems affecting the process. In that way, authorities of public educational institutions will be able to improve the quality of English language teaching-learning process, implement institutional equipment purchases, and develop policies to provide effective language teaching. Additionally, this research will direct teachers' attention to the importance of making classes more effective and reflecting about their teaching

During the development of this research some limitations were found. In some classes, students did not behave naturally because of the presence of the researcher. As a result, interaction between teachers and students was not consistent with the answers given by teachers and students in the questionnaires in some classes. Moreover, most of the teachers did not understand the meaning of some questions due to their low language proficiency. Therefore, they did not give true answers about some questions related to teaching resources, methods, and students' needs.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

This research was carried out in five public high schools in the city of Machala. Three institutions have a morning schedule and the rest have a night schedule. In each institution three teachers were interviewed and observed during their classes. This gave a total sample of fifteen teachers from which nine teachers work in the morning and six of them work in the night. Also, fifteen students from eighth basic to third senior year participated in this investigation. Learners who attended classes in morning high schools were all teenagers between twelve to seventeenth years old. On the contrary, students from night high schools were young adults who worked in different places and whose ages were ranged between 18 and 20 years old. All learners' social and economic background was medium to low.

Procedures

For writing the literature review it was necessary to read and search for information in different books, journals, and web pages in Internet about the importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador, as well as teaching approaches, teaching methods, teaching techniques, managing learning, lesson design, class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, teaching resources, classroom observation, students' motivation, learning styles, students intelligence or aptitude to learn English. Also, it was necessary to review five previous studies about factors that affect the English language acquisition in other countries.

The general approach of this study is Quantitative, so the collected data was computed, represented in graphs, and analyzed. In addition, some instruments such as

observation formats and questionnaires were used. Also, techniques such as surveys and note-taking were applied. All of them were valuable tools for gathering the necessary data that was later analyzed.

The collection of the data was gathered by observing teachers' classes and applying questionnaires to teachers and students. Some of the aspects observed in the classes were related to factors concerning students' needs and their English level, factors concerning teachers, such as their level of education, their language proficiency, methods and techniques they use, the percentage of English used in classes, lesson plans design, as well as the discipline management. Also factors such as class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, and teaching resources used by teachers were observed. Finally, factors concerning educational institutions such as teaching monitoring and lesson plans reviewing were also parts of the details observed in classes. All classes were observed in period of time that ranged from thirty five to forty minutes and details were written to record important aspects of the teaching-learning process.

In this study, teachers answered questionnaires that consisted of twenty questions related to factors such as students, teachers, classroom and educational institutions. In addition, teachers answered an interview that allowed the researcher to know their professional background and determine their English language proficiency level in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Interviews took place at various times, including after classroom observations, recess time or teacher's free hour time. Additionally, students answered also a questionnaire consisting of fourteen questions in Spanish. This procedure allowed the researcher to confirm the accuracy of teachers' answers and events recorded during observation time.

After gathering all the necessary information needed for this research, data was analyzed and tabulated to write the quantitative analysis. It was necessary to elaborate statistical charts in order to visualize the percentage of teachers' responses given in each of the twenty questions. The analysis was corroborated with information from observation formats, notes, and students' questionnaires.

Finally, the analysis was the basis for elaborating conclusions and recommendations.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

English language is considered as an important tool for the development of countries because it provides people better opportunities to communicate in different fields and to have access to information. In Ecuador, citizens' interest on learning English has increased during the last years. But a research done by the Ministry of Ecuador in 2005 had put into evidence that learners' English level is low. Moreover, teachers' language proficiency is under the required standards according to the Common European Framework. Therefore, the Ecuadorian government is supporting different programs to improve the quality of teaching-learning English in Ecuador. Thus SENESCYT has launched a training program for teachers denominated "Enseña Ingles" that consists on bringing scholarships to teachers of public and private high schools. They will travel to Universities in the United States and England to receive training in methodologies and techniques for teaching English.

Even though many teachers have been receiving training to improve their teaching skills, there are some deficiencies affecting the teaching process that deserve to be investigated because not all teachers have access to the training program offered by the Ecuadorian government. Therefore, this section brings a revision of the most important literature related to the English language teaching and learning process. In addition, the revision of the literature contains also five relevant studies because there is extensive research done about the topic. In sum, this literature review will present relevant information not only for people interested in the topic but also to carry out the posterior analysis of the gathered results.

Teaching approaches and methods

Teachers can use different approaches and methods for teaching English. For instance, Nunan (1999) refers to the task-based language teaching (TBL) as an approach that focuses more in using the language to explain different tasks rather than teach the linguistics features. According to this author, learners are provided with opportunities to produce language using grammar structures to describe sorts of tasks that they do outside the classroom. Thus the task acquires a communicative dimension and some examples are: listening to a weather forecast, responding to a party invitation, completing a banking application, etc.

Other approaches such as the Whole language, Natural, and Content-Based Instruction are described by Richards & Rodgers (2001). With regard to the Whole language approach, these authors mention that it emphasizes learning of reading and writing from a natural and communicative point of view. Teachers who use this approach teach learners the target language in the same way that the mother tongue is acquired. In relation to the Natural approach, the authors remark that exposure to the target language and the amount of input received by learners is an important issue in this approach. Students are first trained on listening skills before they can produce the target language; they receive also additional input by means of writing and materials. About the last approach mentioned by these authors, the Content-Based Instruction, it is used to teach a second or foreign language by means of academic contents; here, motivation for learning makes the process more effective. This approach is mainly used to prepare students for academic success at high schools or university levels. Within academic contexts it is common to use the Cooperative Language Learning approach because as

Woolkfolk (2007, p. 419) says, “Information processing theorists point to the value of group discussion in helping participants rehearse, elaborate, and expand their knowledge”. This approach supports interaction in groups because by means of social exchange learners use their thinking skills and comprehend better what others try to communicate. This author points out also that children learn effectively from groups and it helps them to perform tasks alone later. In consequence, the CLL approach is a good source of support and scaffolding in the pathway to learn.

With regard to methods, Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Gordon (2007) disagree about Total Physical Response, the former refer to this as a method and the latter describe it as an approach. However, the authors agree explaining that it emphasizes the use of motor skills to teach language especially at beginner levels. Learners acquire speaking skills once they comprehend language meaning and physical activities help them to internalize knowledge in order to recall it at any stage of the learning process.

Teaching techniques

All the available methods and approaches for teaching English offer teachers a vast repertoire of techniques. Brown (2002) & Dhand (2008) define techniques as the activities used by teachers in the classrooms. Besides, Dhand expresses that teaching techniques influence the way students learn and process information.

About the variety of techniques existing, Brown agrees with Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2007) on listing these techniques that allow teachers to get responses from students in a controlled way: choral repetition, cued substitution drills, dictation, and reading aloud. Role play is other technique explained by these authors that allow learners to use language in a communicative way by assuming a character’s role in a

determined setting. Moreover, the last authors suggest that group work has been thought of as one of the best methods for initiating communicative activities, such as talk to one another, ask questions, reorganize the answers and use of *communicative expressions* that are essentially part of the conversational English.

Similarly, Mukalel (2007) proposes some techniques that encourage learners to use language communicatively. For instance, group work brings interactive exchange among students while they use language to complete an assigned task. Work on model, according to this author, brings students opportunity to carefully observe teacher doing a task that they will explained later by using the target language. Creativity, imagination, and language skills are developed by students when teachers use the making a guess technique. Finally, reporting TV / video scenes is another technique that can be used to promote communicative use of language because students observe and report what they look at each played scene.

Another teaching technique proposed by Burns (2006) is whole-group instruction. According to her, it is preferred by teachers because is easy to design and handle. During lessons, teachers guide students and provide them opportunities to explain their ideas. However, as this author explains, a whole-approach may be frustrating for some students who do not like to participate actively.

There is a technique suitable for students who do not like to participate in whole-class activities. This is described by Granström (2006) as a piece of work that has evolved through years. Individual activities were used years ago to develop students' reading skills, and currently this technique is an essential tool that helps teachers to

reduce troublesome behavior and improve students' concentration skills and self development in language learning process because learners work independently.

A last set of techniques is described by Dhand (2008) and they are: brainstorming, case study, and debate. Brainstorming is a technique used to elicit from students ideas about a topic and it brings students opportunity of being creative. About case study, the author comment that it is a technique in which students apply inquiry skills to draw conclusions about an issue set by the teacher. Finally, debate is another technique used in the language classroom to promote learners' argumentative skills on defending a point of view.

Managing learning

The giving instructions, correct use of time, feedback are some of the aspects related to managing learning. Regarding instructions, Dixie & Bell (2009) remark the importance of giving clear instructions for avoiding students to lose interest and get disconnected from learning tasks. In addition, Savage & Savage (2010) state that clarity implies not only what teacher says but also what he/her does. These authors mention that written explanations and asking students to repeat instructions are two useful strategies to improve the clarity of instructions.

Other strategies to give instructions effectively are mentioned by Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005). They suggest teachers to be sure of students' attention before giving instructions and use short expressions consistently; in that way, students will understand and remember instructions easily. These authors also add that through demonstration and breaking down directions is possible to achieve clarity.

About time, Richards & Lockhart (1996) explain that it affects students' learning greatly and teachers' daily challenge is to exploit wisely the time students spend working on learning tasks – that is known as academic time . A similar point of view is presented by Stronge (2007) who explains evidence of effective learning when teaching time is adequately used. Good use of time results on smooth transition between learning activities.

In addition to class time, another factor in managing learning is feedback. Askew (2000, p. 95) cites Loughborough (1998) and says, “The fundamental purpose behind feedback is to enhance the quality of students' educational experience”. However, that definition seems to show feedback as a simple process in which the learner is a passive receptor. Therefore, Brookhart (2008) describes a model proposed by Hattie and Timperley (2007) that identifies four levels.

Feedback about the task is more effective when it clarifies misconceptions rather than adding more information about the assignment but the disadvantage is that it is only used in one task at a time. Feedback about the processing of the task guide students to do the activity; it is necessary that students assume roles to complete the given assignment.

In Feedback about self-regulation, students are responsible for their own learning. Main problem is that this type of feedback is effective with learners that demonstrate and internal disposition to require more information in order to complete the task.

Finally, feedback about the person shows several disadvantages because, as the author explains, it is not focused on the learning process. In addition, the use of this type of feedback tend to create a false believe on students that intelligence is a fixed characteristic.

Lesson design

Many authors remark the importance of good lesson planning as a characteristic of effective teaching; Killen (2006) states that it establishes a specific purpose in learning and process becomes efficient and effective. In addition, a lesson plan allows teachers to specify students' learning path and at the same time help students to complete learning goals successfully. Moreover, through careful planning is easier for students to achieve the general goals of the syllabus. Finally, lesson planning saves class time and teaching purpose is clear for others. More points about the importance of lesson planning are mentioned by Dionisio-Arabit, Feliciano-Inlayo & Castillon-Boiser (2003). They explain that changes in students' abilities, information, and attitudes are due to good lesson planning. Besides, lesson planning ensures the achievement of learning objectives and the progress of the class is continue and accurate because repetition of content is avoided; lesson planning define a concrete connection between learning units.

Turning to the elements of a lesson plan, Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) agree with Harmer (2007) and mention six components. The first part refers to the aims that represent what students are going to do or learn. The second is the procedure in which the teacher details the steps to follow in order to achieve the goals of the plan. The third component is the set of activities designed for each stage of the lesson. Materials, aid and equipment are the fourth component of the lesson plan, these are aids that teacher will use according to the planned activities. A fifth component refers to information about students and the class such as language level, class size, textbook, class composition, etc. Finally, the sixth element of the lesson plan describes probable problems that may hinder the teaching process and how to solve them.

From a more interactive point of view, Skowron (2001) add an opening element at the beginning of a lesson plan in order to catch students' attention before teaching main content. Another element describes the activities that students will performed during the lesson followed by a description of the group of learners' abilities. In the last place, this author describes the assessment as the component in which the teacher specifies students' strengths and weaknesses in order to define future strategies for coming lessons.

Class size

The amount of students in a classroom is another aspect of the teaching-learning process. Even though Mayer (2000) mentions that there is not enough studies about the effects of class size on students' learning, he considers that teachers can achieve better results in a small size class because students demonstrate more engagement and collaboration. He expresses that main point about small size classes is that behavior problems are better controlled by teachers and this promotes an effective use of teaching and learning time. Agreeing with this author, Benjamin (2000) states that small classes are always preferred by students and teachers because methods and techniques for teaching and evaluation are applied better. In general, in a small class management is an easy task. But this author considers that small classes are economically hard to maintain therefore large classes will continue existing even they show some disadvantages. For instance, the author explains that teachers use the lecture technique eighty percent of the time in large classes. Besides, shy and non-collaborative students prefer usually large classes since teachers rarely ask them to participate. Continuing with this debate, Blatchford (2003) argues that many people do not believe in the effectiveness of small

classes mainly because of the costs of implementation. Moreover, this author mentions that there is low interest on the effects of contextual factors in the teaching-learning process since some researchers consider that teacher's influence in learners' achievement is more relevant.

Classroom space (physical space)

There are different approaches about the influence of classroom space in learners' achievement. One of those is provided by Gifford, Steg & Reser (2011) who remark that the physical space within learners interact daily influence performance and behavior. They explain that classrooms with higher density of students affect learning since teachers and learners experience the sensation of an overcrowded place. These authors give reference of other theorists' work that mentions some effects of the classroom space such as alteration of time and activities, high levels of aggression among students. In addition, Savage & Savage (2010) consider also that the physical context influence behavior and performance of students and teachers because some individuals may feel tense by a stretch contact derived from a crowded classroom. Main consequence is increase of social interaction that usually provokes conflict among students and they get involved in a continuous competition in order to obtain teacher's attention; this also affects achievement.

A final point of view is presented by Mcleod, Fisher & Hoover (2003) who believes that learners' practices are increased or decreased by the influence of the physical surroundings within the classroom. Therefore, teachers should try to enrich the space where students work as for example workspaces, materials storage, wall spaces, etc.

Seating arrangement

The physical arrangement of seats in the classroom is another factor that could affect the process of teaching and learning as Bray & Kehle (2011) explains. According to them, seating arrangement is a factor that influence students' behavior because the chair position determine the level of learners' participation, possibility of observing classroom resources well, and responses to teachers' questions. Furthermore, the model of seating arrangement chosen will depend on the type of learning tasks designed for a lesson. For instance, individual work will be performed by students sitting in rows while collaborative activities are performed better in group seats.

As Doyle (2006) explains, the way in which teachers arrange desks and seats in the classroom will influence behavior more than achievement since desks, furniture and other objects are moved according to the required activities. Thus, the flow of interaction among students will change positively or negatively depending on the density of the classroom. Similarly, Curtis (2009, p. 251) says, "Although you may not have control over whether you have desks or tables, how you place furniture will influence what students do in the classroom". He explains that students sitting in a semi-circle tend to ask more questions than others sitting in rows because they feel an equilibrated interaction rather than a hierarchical one.

Another seating model mentioned by Curtis (2009) is cluster, it is recommended for cooperative activities. But if the teacher needs to have students working independently, row seats are the best option. In addition, Maxom (2009) states that the horseshoe model allows teachers to arrange seats for group work activities and students are able to look at each other and the contents on the board.

Classroom and/or teaching resources

Classroom resources are important tools in the teaching process. In fact, Tomlinson (2008) explains that materials have the power of engage students cognitively and affectively in the learning process making possible to expose them to authentic content. Besides, Maxom (2009) remarks that bringing something interesting to the class allows pupils to experience excitement and curiosity for learning and he also explains that students have different learning styles for that reason there is a variety of materials than can be used in the classroom.

Materials can be classified into visual, audio, and audiovisuals. Patel & Praveen (2008) list some examples of visuals such as: pictures, maps, boards, drawings. They remark that those types of materials are very useful to motivate and activate learners' minds. In addition, audio materials offer opportunities to exposed students to great amount of language; some examples are audio cassette player and radio. And, audiovisual resources develop learners' interest on topics by using sight and hearing senses; videos are examples of this category.

Similarly, Maxom (2009) mentions that some funny and practical resources are flashcards and drawings because they stimulate pupils' speaking skills. And, realia is a valuable resource to awake students' interest on real language and they learn better because have opportunity to manipulate things.

Other resources mentioned by Scrivener (2005) are storytelling and songs. He remarks the value of storytelling as an important resource for teaching grammar. In addition, this author explains that songs or video/DVD are useful for changing the atmosphere of a lesson.

Classroom observation

Some authors consider classroom observation a valuable tool to evaluate the learning process. For instance, Mackey & Gass (2005, p. 186) says, “observations are a useful means for gathering in-depth information about such phenomena as the types of language, activities, interactions, instruction, and events that occur in second and foreign language classroom”.

From a similar point of view, Hoover & Nolan (2011) explain that teacher observation is an element in the cycle of schools supervision. In the cycle, the cornerstone element is teachers’ ability to reflect and inquiry about their own teaching practice. The authors add that teachers demonstrate mistrust and apprehension towards the process of observation when institutions try to separate evaluation from supervision. Finally, the authors point out that teaching observation is an important tool because teachers become aware of their work in the classroom and events are reported as they occur.

Regarding the positive aspects of classroom observation, Kothari (2004) mentions three advantages of classroom observation. First, accurate observation reduces subjective bias. Secondly, observation allows gathering information about current events. Third, it is easier to obtain collaboration from the observed participants. However, this author comments that this method is expensive and some aspects may be overlooked for the observer.

The positive and negative aspects of classroom observation depend also on the diversity of used models. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007) agree with Kothari (2004) about the advantages of participant observation. According to these authors, the

participation of the observer makes possible to gather information of non-verbal and current behaviors. Besides, the use of participant information allows observer gathering of important characteristics of the participants using accurate instruments. On the other hand, the observers' subjectivity and lack of experience may affect the results. In addition, Mackey & Gass (2005) confirm the possibility that observer's participation may compromise the natural development of the process. On the point of view of Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007), spontaneity is the main advantage of non-participant information but once again subjectivity is a disadvantage. In this kind of observation, the observer looks at events without taking part in the observed group.

Students' motivation

There are a lot of opinions about the importance of motivation in language learning. An interesting approach is the one by Lightbown & Spada (1999) who explains that motivation is related to learners' communicative requirements and feelings toward the target language community. According to them, it is easy to identify a motivated student because he/she demonstrated interest on the lessons and shows good disposition towards study. In addition to this opinion, Woolkfolk (2007) considers that students' motivation determines their internal state and behavior. And, the amount of effort done by students during language development is, on the point of view of Saville-Troike (2006), determined by motivation.

Learners' needs, attitude, and effort had originated to different types of motivation. For instance, Lightbown & Spada (1999) and Saville-Troike (2006) identify Gardner & Lamber (1972)'s integrative and instrumental motivation. The first type encourages students to learn for individual development and cultural improvement. And

the second type motivates students to learn because of realistic goals. Other types of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic. About them, Woolfolk (2007, p. 373) says, “Intrinsic motivation is the natural tendency to seek out and conquer challenges. When we are intrinsically motivated, we do not need incentives or punishments, because the activity itself is rewarding”.

Learning styles

Some authors explain that learners’ ways of learning are best known as learning styles. Woolfolk (2007, p. 124) says, “The way a person approaches learning and studying is his or her learning style”. Another definition is given by Brown (2000) who cites Keefe (1979) and explains this concept in terms of people’s traits which indicate how they distinguish and react to the learning context. Similarly, Pritchard (2009) describes learning styles as a way, habits, mental behaviors, strategies, manners, etc., to acquire information.

All the authors above describe different types of learning styles. Woolfolk (2007) describes two categories: deep-processing and surface-processing. The former corresponds to learners’ ways of comprehending meaning and concepts and the latter identifies students who learn contents by memorizing them. Brown (2000) also defines other learning styles such as reflective, it is learning as a result of thoughtful personality; impulsive, it is encouraged by an emotional state; field independent, it is learning by paying attention to relevant information; and, field depend style that is learning from general details of a given topic. Finally, Pritchard (2009) describes activists learners who learn by doing; theorists learners who learn by relating different theories; reflectors

learners who analyze information previous to learn it; and, pragmatics who evaluate connotations of information before evaluate its value.

Students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English

Some theories consider that students are able to learn English because special abilities or intelligence. To clarify that idea, Lightbown & Spada (1999) explains that language aptitude is composed of talent for recognizing new sounds easily, capacity of identifying structures within a sentence, ability for learning grammar rules, and ability for learning new words easily. Those features are also described by Saville-Troike (2006) and they are identified as: phonemic ability, inductive language ability, grammatical sensitivity, and associate memory capacity.

According to Lightbown & Spada (1999), the variety of learners' abilities determines the complexity of intelligence. For that reason, intelligence tests had failed on measuring intelligence rates. With time, as MacKey & Gass (2005) comment, Gardners' theory of multiple intelligences has come to change the concept of learners' intelligence by stating that it is a human characteristic that has various dimensions and they can be combined in different ways. For instance, some aspects of language such as tone or pitch are associated to theory of music but belong also to a linguistic intelligence.

In order to provide strong evidence to support all the theories described above, five studies have been selected for that purpose.

The first study was done by Snow (2002) to know the perceptions of a group of teachers about the influence of classroom space on learning. Six teachers from 6 to 12 grades participated in this research and they were formally and informally interviewed to

know their opinions. In addition, the researcher performed six observations of each of the teachers and took note of the details. The results showed that teachers used the expressions “scrunched” or “terrible” to describe the lack of space in the institution. The participants mentioned also that reduced space affect the execution of the lesson plans. Main conclusions showed that overcrowded classrooms developed a sense of frustration in teachers and they considered that this also affected students’ behavior.

The second study was conducted by Kokkelenberg, Dillon, & Christy (2005) to investigate the effects of class size on students’ achievement. The researchers performed one observation per student and the total amount was of 998, 898 participants. This study used a logistic regression to determine the level of influence of class size in students’ grades. The results showed that class size affected negatively learners’ scores. As a result, the researcher concluded that learners’ performance was affected by class size. Besides, there was an economical and social impact on the institution due to loss of reputation as consequence of lower graduation rates.

A third study was carried out by Ruso (2007) to determine the influence of Task-Based Language approach (TBL) on EFL students’ performance. The participants were 54 students divided in two groups. The TBL approach was applied in the classes and researchers performed an action research, evaluated students’ diaries, and used interviews and questionnaires to gather the necessary information. The results demonstrated that the variety of tasks used in the classroom had positive influence on learners’ achievement because they described on their diaries an increase in their performance. Therefore, the investigator concluded that TBL influenced positively in students and they enjoyed the variety of activities.

The fourth study was done by Rajasekaran, Nayanaran, & Iyyappan (2008) to determine among other variables the influence of motivation in students. The group of participants was of 408 students who answered questionnaires to know their opinion about how motivation, attitude, and anxiety influenced their achievement. With regard to motivation, it was found that females were more motivated than males and they considered as a positive factor. In addition, women were also less anxious than males and it made possible to perform better in English tests. In consequence, researchers concluded that motivation, attitude, an anxiety have a significant effect on learners' achievement.

The fifth and last study was performed by Chang (2010) in order to investigate the factors impeding the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the classroom. Participants were eight college teachers who were interviewed to know their opinions. In addition, the researcher observed the classes performed by each teacher to gather information. The results showed that teachers consider materials as important tool in the CLT implementation. Moreover, students' willingness to communicate using the English language also affected the process. Finally, teachers complained about class size because it did not allowed them to monitor students and language practice was a hard task. The researchers concluded CLT implementation is affected by class size, physical environment of the classroom, and lack of resources.

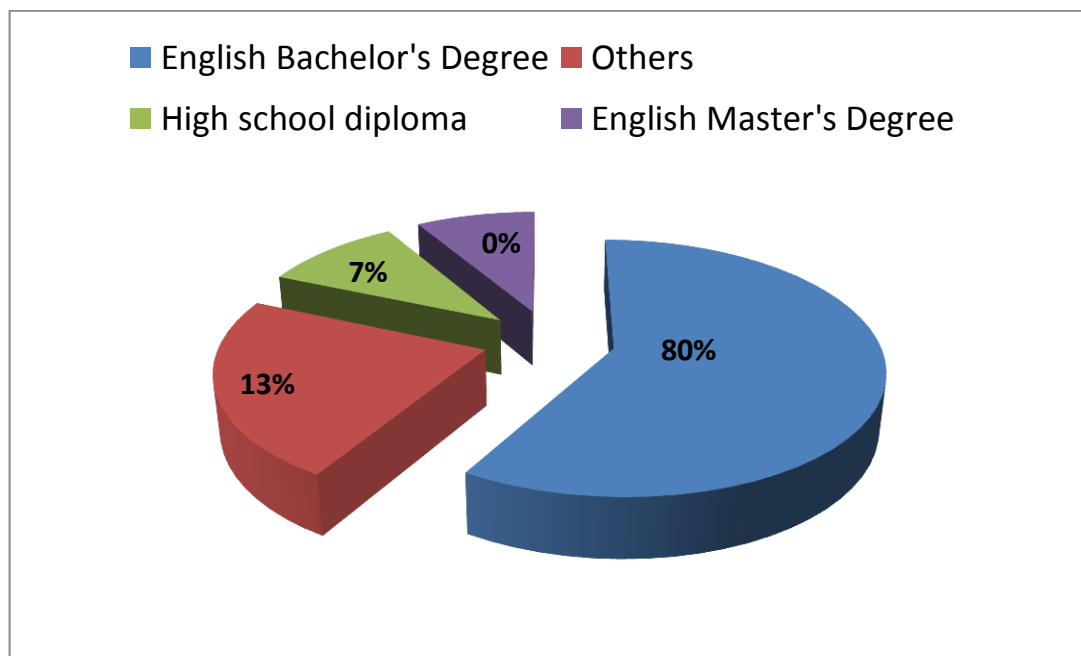
Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This analysis uses a quantitative approach based in the results of the questionnaire applied to the observed teachers. Thus, the information gathered will be presented, described, and analyzed in relation to factors concerning teachers, students, classroom and educational institutions. All the analysis will be done considering that the purpose of this analysis is to determine the factors that affect the English teaching learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools.

Factors concerning teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

In relation to teachers' level of education, it was found that 80% of the teachers have English Bachelor's Degree. This group of teachers has been teaching English for

seven to twenty six years. During the interview, teachers answered they would like to continue studying for different reasons such as improving their English language and job skills, or to have access to the scholarships offered by government.

Other results shown in graph 1 indicate that 13% have other degree such as Natural Science Bachelor's Degree or some of them did not finish University. Those teachers have been teaching English during fifteen years and they have no time and economic resources to continue studying.

Regarding the 7% of teachers who have High school diploma, they would like to continue studying to have better opportunities in the teaching field. In addition, they have been teaching English for three to five years. A common aspect among all the interviewed teachers was that all of them have learned English in Ecuador.

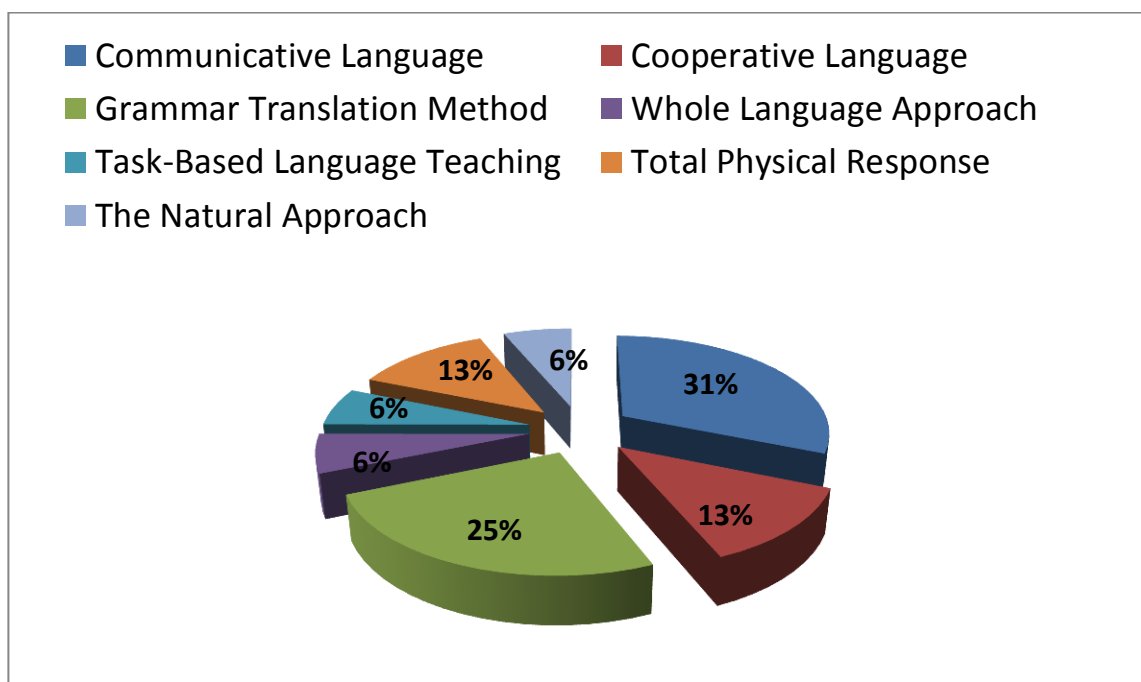
Finally, the results in graph 1 show that no teacher has obtained an English Master's degree. Teachers agreed saying that they have not enough economic resources to study a Master's Degree in English. Moreover, they expressed that if they would get such a Degree they will continue receiving the same salary.

It is important to mention that the questions in the interview were grouped according to the CEFR levels of language proficiency and most of the teachers were able to understand only the five preliminary questions that correspond to A1 and A2 level. Therefore, teachers' language proficiency was identified as A2 level. It was noticed that the more complex the question, the more teachers had difficulties for answering correctly; most of them comprehend the questions but they were not able to give precise and accurate responses. Moreover, most of the teachers mix English and Spanish to answer or gave responses totally in Spanish.

In this sense, the Ecuadorian Government is aware that teachers' language proficiency is under the required standards, for this, different programs to improve the quality of teaching-learning English in Ecuador have been developed. Thus SENESCYT has launched a training program for teachers denominated "Enseña Ingles" that consists on bringing scholarships to teachers of public and private high schools. Also, those participating in this research also can apply to these programs and travel to Universities in the United States and England to receive training in methodologies and techniques for teaching English.

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

Graph 2



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Graph 2 shows the percentages of responses given in relation to the methods used in the observed classes. It was found that 31% of teacher use the Communicative Language Method in class; 25% use the Grammar Translation Teaching Method; 13% of teachers use the Cooperative Language Method and Total Physical Response Method; and 6% of teachers use the Task Based Language Teaching Method, Whole Language Method, and the Natural Approach.

Regarding the results above, before explaining the results of observations did in the observed classes it is important to describe characteristics of some of the methods that teachers indicated to use in class. Nunan (1999) refers to the Task-Based language teaching (TBL) as an approach that focuses more in the use of language to explain different tasks rather than teach the linguistics features. In the observed classes, teachers assigned tasks to students such as completing charts, filling in the blanks, read texts and discuss answers, etc. However, teachers neither used English to explain the tasks nor students used the language to develop the activities; both used the Spanish language.

About the Natural Approach, Richards & Rodgers (2001) remark that exposure to the target language and the amount of input received by learners is an important issue in this approach. Students in the observed classes did not receive appropriate language input because their teachers spoke in Spanish and only read instructions and pronounce vocabulary using the English language.

Interaction in groups as a mean of social exchange is used by learners in the Cooperative Language method because students can use their thinking skills and comprehend better what others try to communicate. It was observed that sometimes

students worked in groups to develop activities but teachers did not encourage them to use the target language to interact between them.

Generally speaking, it was observed that teachers did not use methods as they indicated in the questionnaires. Teaching activities consisted mainly in listening and fill in the blanks activities that were assigned as the instructions on the book indicated; this means that teachers worked always using the textbook assigned to them. Moreover, they spoke in Spanish most of the time and only read instructions from the books and vocabulary in English.

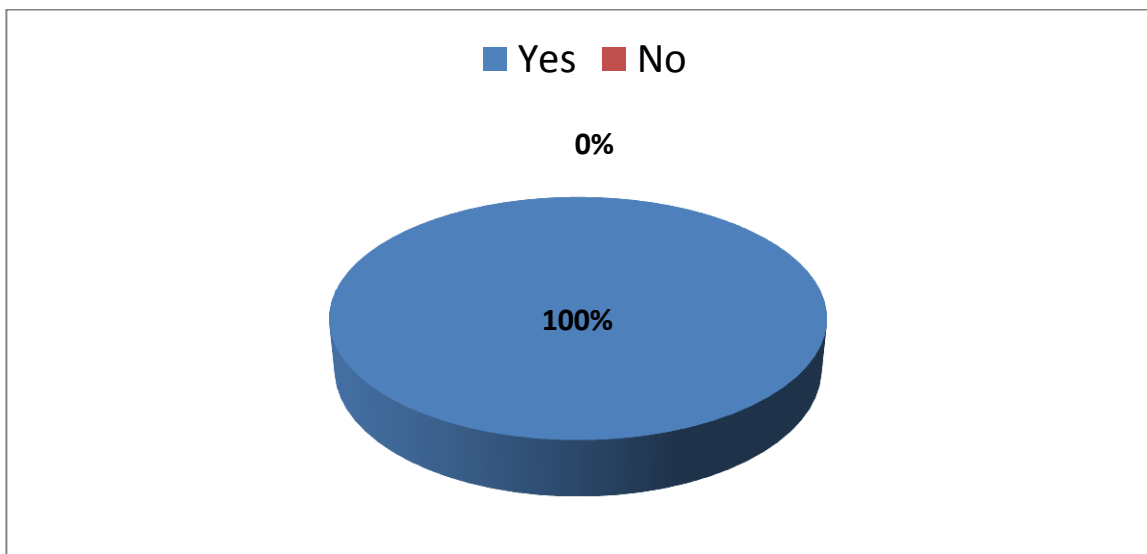
Regarding methods, they neither assigned tasks, develop communicative activities, use physical actions to explain meaning, nor involved students in cooperative activities in English. However, student's questionnaires shows that learners like the way teachers teach the English language because teachers help them to understand the topics and explain classes in an easy way. Others indicated that teachers make them all to participate in class doing activities that allow them to improve their vocabulary. In addition, students indicated that teachers design dynamic activities and had a lot of patience to explain contents. Only one student said he does not like they way teachers teach classes because he does not understand English. The results of students' questionnaires are affected by the use of Spanish language in the class. Since teachers translated all the English contents into the mother tongue, students obviously understand all contents.

In order to explain better the results above it is important to describe what happened during the time teachers answered the questionnaires. Many teachers asked for clarification of the characteristics of the methods they had to choose. Moreover, some

of them recognized that they did not remember whether they learned those methods at university, and for that reason they selected options at a random. In consequence, this situation gives evidence that the observed teachers do not have good knowledge of English teaching methods. It affects the students' learning process because teachers do not get results from their students in terms of comprehension and reproduction of English language.

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

Graph 3



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

The results in graph 3 show that 100% of teachers use whole-group activities to teach their classes. According to the answers given by some teachers, whole group activities allow students to communicate in oral practice; they also provide students opportunities to speak or to socialize knowledge and learning experiences among them. Other answers indicated that all students participate in class, as well as they have the

experience of practicing and evaluating whether they all have understood the class.

Moreover, one teacher expressed that whole-group activity is necessary because students need a lot of listening experiences to become familiar with English language before they can produce significant amounts of language.

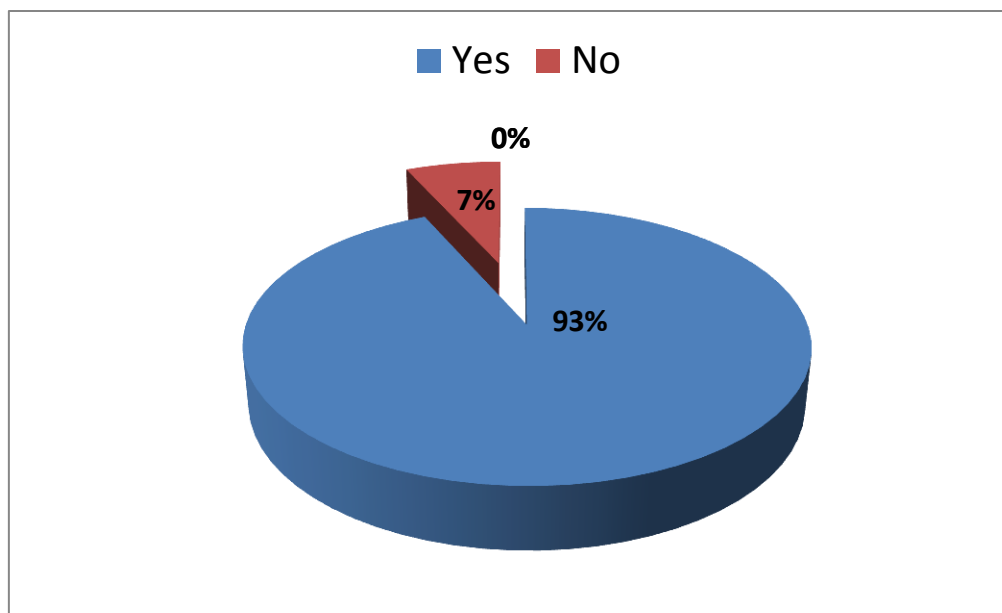
The findings obtained in the student's questionnaires showed that teachers let them make different activities to interact with their classmates. In fact, it was observed in some of the classes that teachers had students repeating the pronunciation of vocabulary in a whole group. In other classes, teachers asked questions for students to think about and all of them participated by rising their hands and explaining their ideas. However, interaction took place mainly using the Spanish language and teachers did not encourage students to use English in the class; even teachers spoke in Spanish and they mixed both languages during activities.

According to Burns (2006), whole-group instruction is a technique preferred by many teachers because it is easy to design and handle. Besides, students receive guidance from their teachers, and they provide learners opportunities to explain their ideas. The observations did in classes corroborate what this author explains about this technique because teachers guided students during activities.

However, the fact that teachers used whole-group activities in the observed classes does not guarantee that learners use the English language to express their ideas and exchange their opinions because, as it was mentioned previously, teachers used mostly the mother tongue to teach their classes. In that way, whole-group activities do not help students to progress in language learning because they do not receive appropriate training using the English language.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 4



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

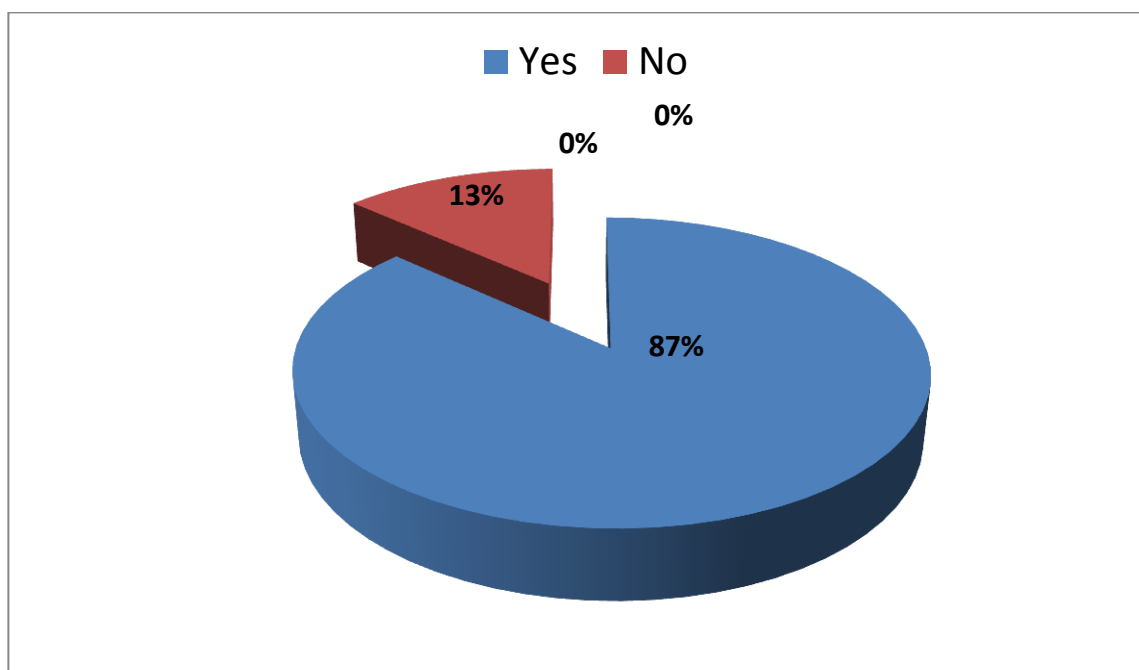
About individual activities, graph 4 shows that the 93% of teachers use individual activities to teach the English language, while only the 7% of them do not use individual tasks. Information in the observation sheets indicates that all the teachers use individual activities such as filling in the blanks activities in textbooks; writing sentences or completing activities on the board; and, translating sentences by their own using the dictionary.

It was observed that students worked correctly doing their assignments. In that way, individual work helped them to increase their level of knowledge and gave them a sense of independence that motivated learners to complete their work alone. In addition, teachers gave positive opinions about individual activities expressing that these types of activities allow them to evaluate the level of learners' development. Therefore, the

information gathered in the observed classes agrees with the theory provided by Granström (2006). He mentions that individual work is an essential tool that helps teachers to reduce troublesome behavior and improve students' concentration skills and self development in language learning process because learners work independently.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 5



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

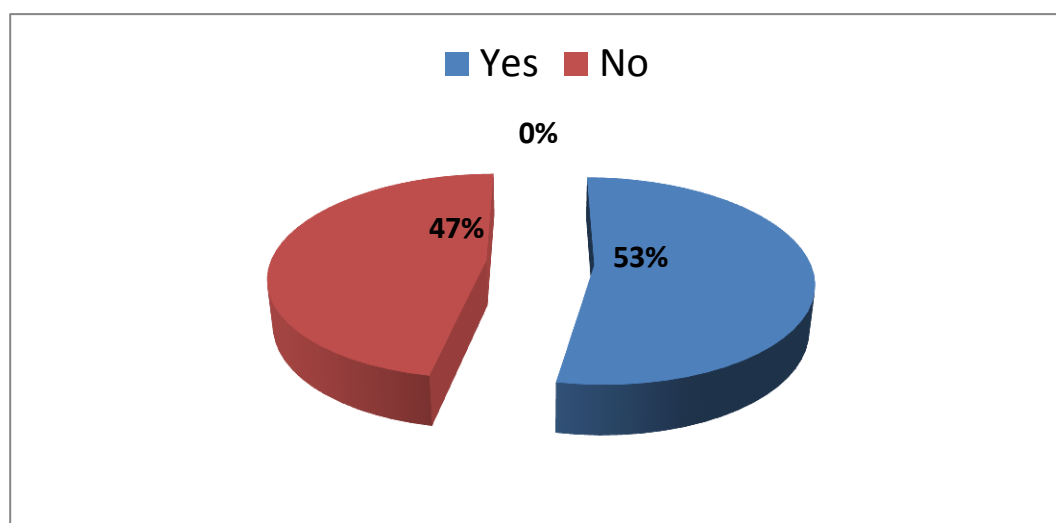
The results in graph 5 show that the 80% of teachers use group work activities to teach the lessons and only 13% of them do not use this technique. The answers of students' questionnaire indicated that teachers used activities that allow students to interact with their partners. In the same way, teachers expressed that group work allow students to take a central and active role in learning because they increase their knowledge by sharing ideas and thoughts. These answers coincide with information

given by Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2007) who suggest that group work has been thought of as one of the best methods for initiating communicative activities, such as talk to one another, ask questions, reorganize the answers and use of *communicative expressions* that are essentially part of the conversational English.

On the other hand, there were teachers who did not agree in using group work activities in class because, as they commented, only one or two of the student work and the others do not help. Moreover, it was observed that group work was used only in three classes; in fact, not all students worked as they should because the majority of them talked between them and did activities not related to the class. About this, teachers who used group work activities failed in organizing students, giving clear rules, and monitoring groups. Therefore, students without appropriate supervision of their group activities did not take advantage of the benefits of the technique for their own learning.

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

Graph 6



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

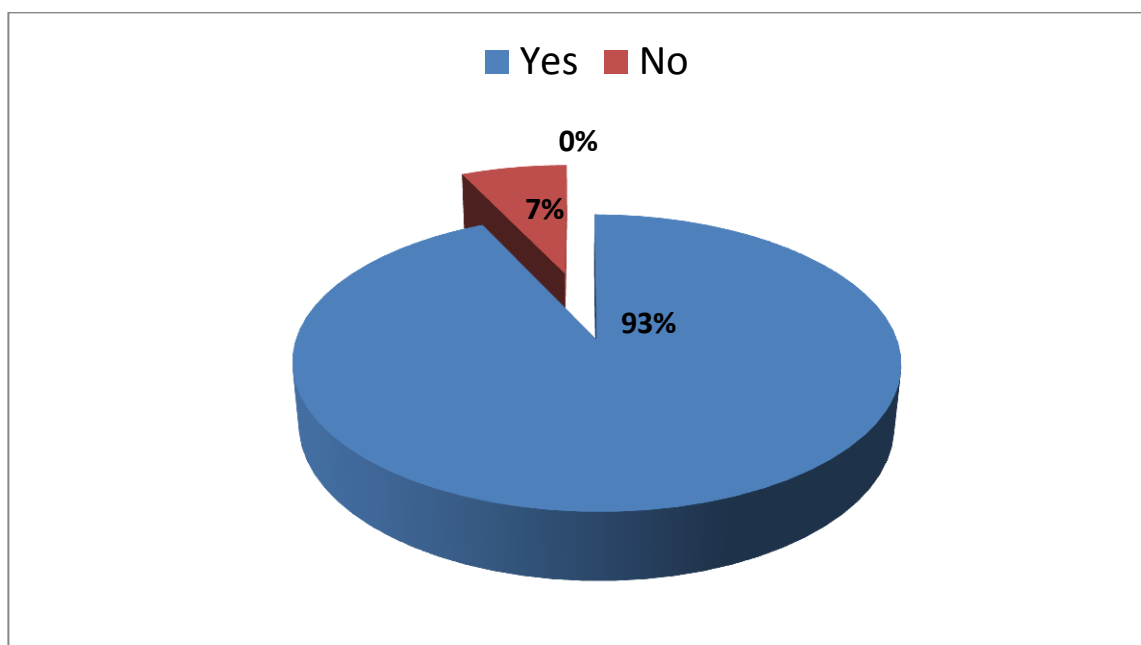
Results in graph 6 show that 53% of the teachers use English most of the time in classes and 47% of them do not speak in English for teaching. It can be observed that the teachers who spoke English in class did not have good fluency and they switched to Spanish each time they did not find appropriate expressions to explain contents or vocabulary meaning. In addition, teachers gave instructions, called students' attention, and greeted students using the Spanish language. Only two of the observed teachers were able to use English 75% of the time but their pronunciation and fluency was not good. Though, students perceive that their teachers speak English well because most of them indicated in the questionnaires that instructors used the language great part of the time.

Even though some teachers used English in the observed classes, their language proficiency was not good because they were assigned an A2 level during the interview applied after observing classes. The majority of teachers were able to answer only the questions in A1 and A2 level and they showed difficulty as the complexity of questions increases. Therefore, it was necessary to translate many of the questions that teachers did not understand. Even with translated questions, teachers were not able to give accurate answers. For instance, when they were asked to explain the difference between teaching English as foreign language and teaching English as a second language teachers gave responses such as one is more direct and the other is in natural way; it is used as foreign language because the other is not used; the students understand by translating and teaching second language is more difficult.

This situation confirms the results obtained in a research done by the Ministry of Ecuador in 2005 that had put into evidence that learners' English level is low. Moreover, teachers' language proficiency is under the required standards according to the Common European Framework.

Do teachers plan their lessons?

Graph 7



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

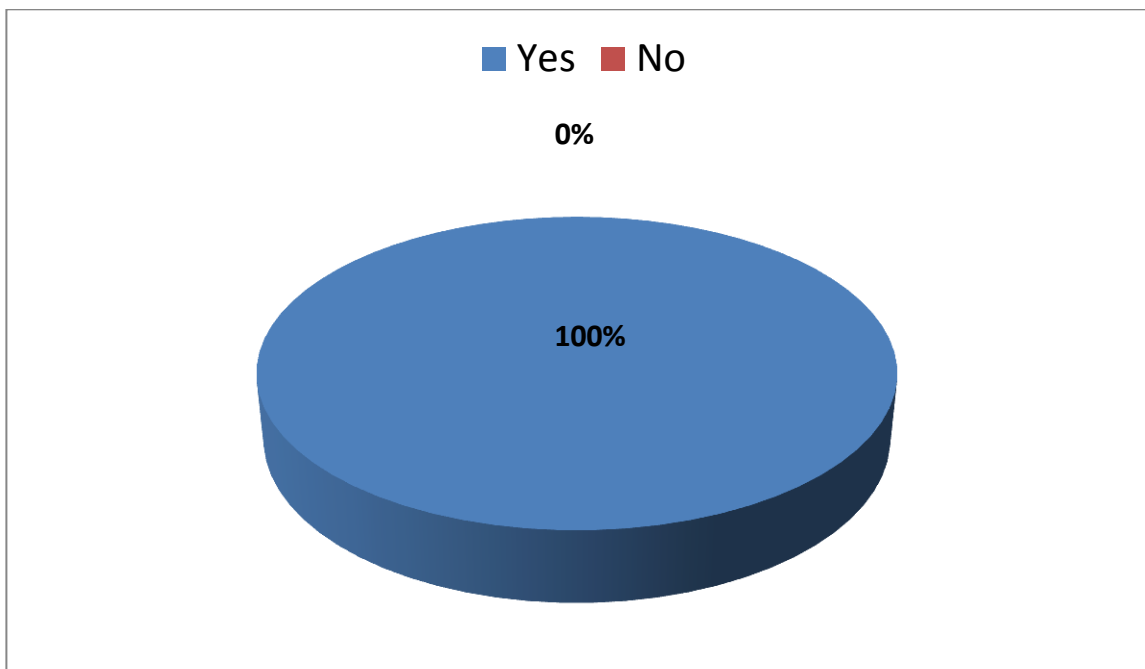
Graph 7 shows that 93% teachers plan their lessons and 7% do not apply lesson design in their classes. During observations, it was possible to perceive that some teachers did not take lesson plans with them and they only followed teachers' book instructions. However, there were some aspects of lesson plans that were applied such as topic, objectives, guided practice, review, assessment, feedback, teaching resources. Even though not all teachers put into practice the parts of lesson plans, classes were

taught with certain kind of organization. These results are confirmed by students' answers because some learners indicated that they like the way teachers teach their classes. This means that students perceive that classes are to some extent organized.

It can be said that the teaching process in the observed classes was not as efficient and effective as it should be because teachers did not apply all the aspects of lesson plans. Here, it is important to review what Killen (2006) explains about the benefits of lesson planning; lesson planning saves class time and teaching purpose is clear for others.

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

Graph 8



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Regarding the use of discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach lessons, it was found that 100% of teachers answered positively to this question which means that all of them applied those aspects of managing learning in their classes. However, it was observed that the majority of teachers did not control discipline because most of them did not pay attention while students were laughing and speaking aloud between them. Moreover, it was observed that even though the teachers gave clear instructions, they use native language because students did not understand when teachers spoke in English. In fact, some students indicated that they did not understand the instructions given in English.

A different situation was observed in other classrooms in which three teachers considered aspects such as time, lesson topic, objectives, introduction of the new topic, guided or individual practice, feedback, and materials. In those classes, although the high amount of students, the teaching-learning process produced better results because students were focused in the activities and the level of noise and bad behaviors diminishes greatly. In addition, the teachers spoke in English and used different ways such as gestures and visual aids to facilitate students' comprehension of contents and instructions. In these classes, students indicated in the questionnaires that teachers did assign time to activities, they provided correct feedback, and instructions were clear.

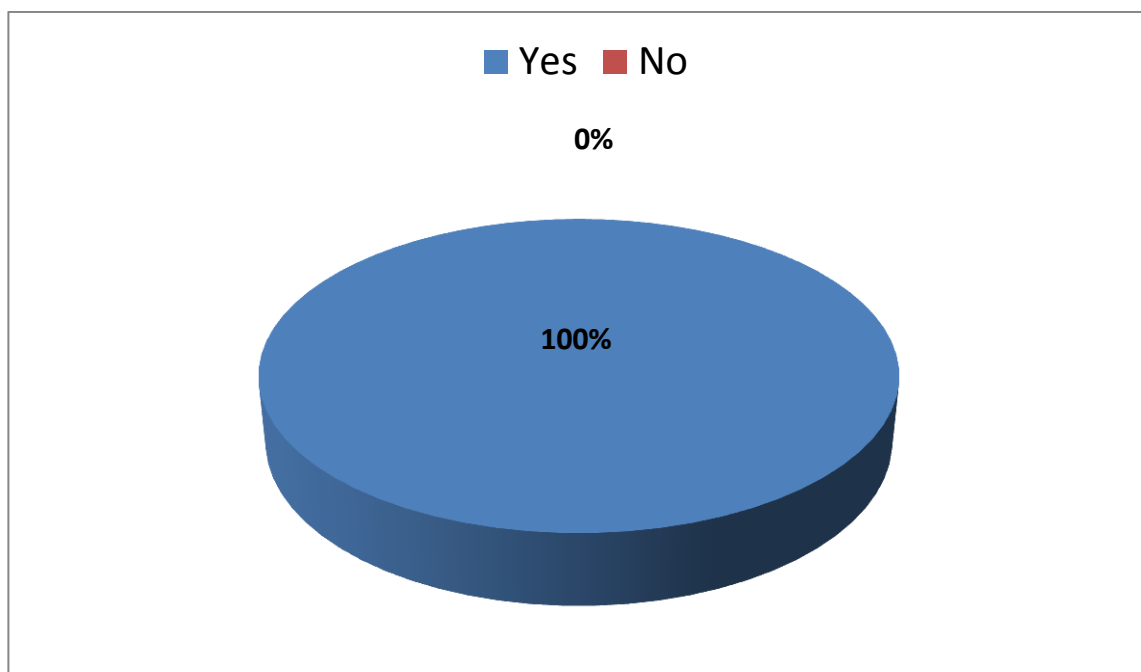
Therefore, it is confirmed what authors such as Dixie & Bell (2009), Richards & Lockhart (1996), and Askew (2000) explain about instructions, time, and feedback respectively: instructions were clear, teachers used time wisely, and correct feedback help learners to improve the quality of their learning process.

In sum, while some students' progress diminishes and they did not acquire good knowledge because teachers' poor skills in managing learning affect the teaching-learning process; others learners were benefited because their teachers demonstrated good skills in managing learning.

Factors concerning students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?

Graph 9



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Information in graph 9 shows that 100% of teachers consider students' needs to teach English. This result was confirmed by students' answers because they indicated in the questionnaires that they enjoy the activities that teachers use in classes and they motivate them to learn. However, the observed classes indicated the opposite because in almost all classes students did not demonstrate motivation toward lessons because

teachers did not teach in relation to learners' needs. Only in three classes, teachers were able to motivate students by using visual aids and gestures. In most of the classes teachers had problems controlling students' behavior and it was difficult for them to raise students' interest on the topics. It was observed that those teachers looked stressed and did not use their creativity to involve students in the learning process. Moreover, teachers did not know how to address topics of the lesson in relation to students' age or learning styles. Activities were carried out using the whiteboard and the textbook and the same routine occurred in all the observed classes.

There were two teachers who used supplementary materials such as drawings and audio materials to have students filling in the blanks with information. In these classes, students' motivation increased and there were less disciplinary problems; this means that audio learning styles were also present among many students.

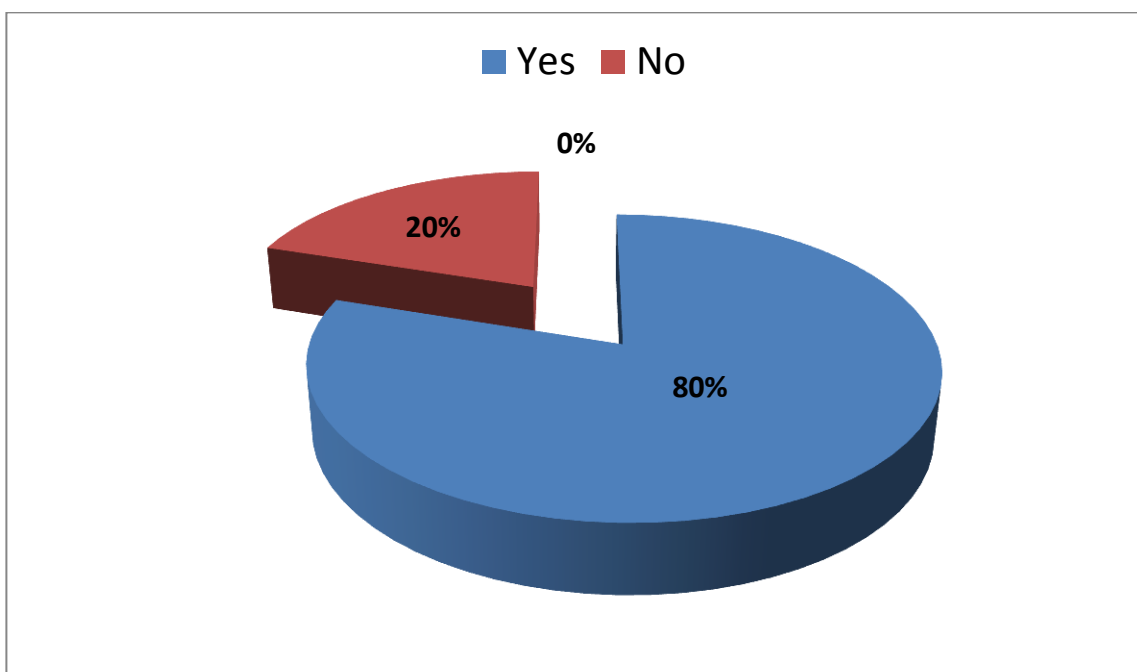
Regarding learners, it was observed that few students worked silently and they did not need that teachers guided them; they were identified as reflective learners who, according to Brown (2000), are individuals whose learning is related to thoughtful personality. The approach used by teachers in classes was good for those students because they analyzed information and completed activities well.

However, other students were bored and demonstrated to have impulsive learning styles that demanded more energy from teachers; Brown (2000) mentions that these types of learners are encouraged by emotional state. In fact, these students were more energetic, talk a lot, and interrupted classes frequently. Besides, sometimes students were bored and asked teachers for more active tasks but teachers only assigned activities from the textbook and they did not add variety to the classes.

In sum, there were students with different learning styles in the observed classes but not all teachers considered this aspect to teach their lessons. This situation affected the teaching learning process because many students were not motivated to learn and they were bored and interrupted classes with their bad behavior.

Do teachers consider Students' level to teach English successfully?

Graph 10



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

The results show that the 80% of teachers consider students' level to teach English while 20% of them do not consider it. Information gathered from observations revealed that each grade had assigned a textbook and it was used by teachers to teach the classes. The type of activities consisted on using mimics to help students to understand meaning and it was done mainly in 8th, 9th, and 10th grade that were basic levels. In senior years, there were some teachers who tried to introduce new structures in English using mimics

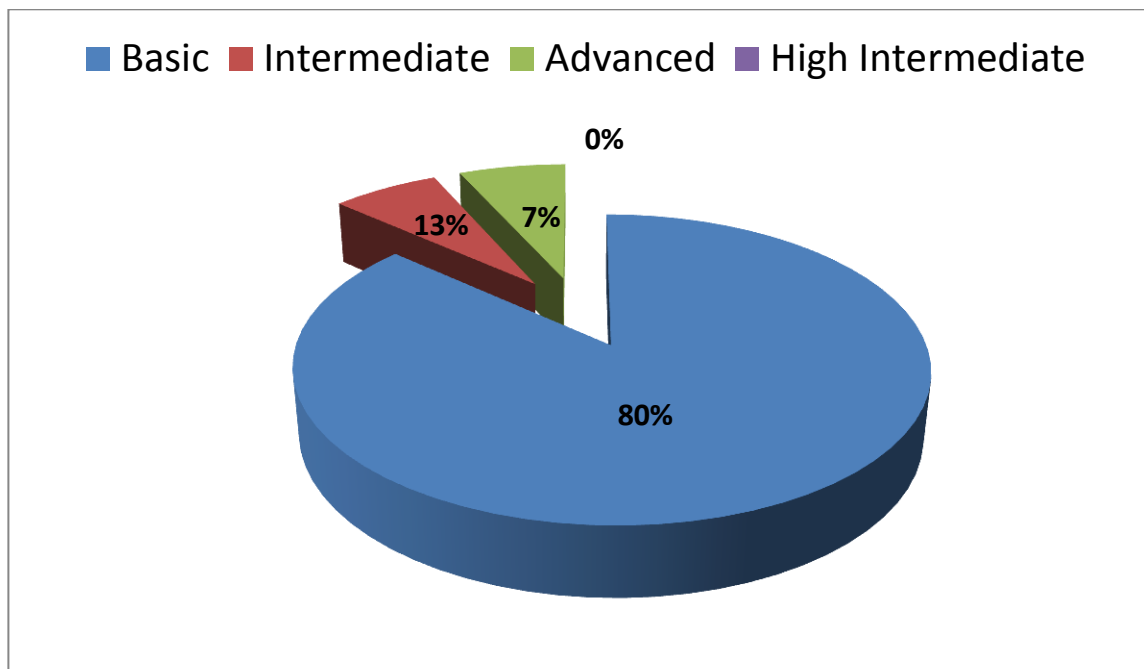
but students did not understand. Moreover, in those classes students showed difficulty using language structures because their level of knowledge was basic and intermediate in some cases.

The results of teachers' questionnaire was confirmed by students' answers that indicated their opinion about the complexity of the activities; most of them considered that activities were very easy while other think that tasks are difficult.

It can be concluded that most of the teachers considered students' level to teach their classes because students were able to complete the activities in great part of the observed classes.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 11



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Information about the level of students can be observed in graph 11. According to teachers, 80% of students had basic level, 13% are in an intermediate level, and only 7% have advanced level. Some of the activities assigned by teachers in class were repeating phrases; translating sentences or words from English into Spanish using dictionaries; filling in the blanks tasks with the vocabulary studied; as well as writing sentences in affirmative and negative forms. In addition, it was observed that even in senior years the activities consisted on writing sentences using structures such as There is and There are, as well as writing numbers in letters. In those classes, teachers simplified the contents of the books to make possible that students can complete the activities.

Other activities assigned by teachers consisted on reading comprehension of short texts and completing sentences with expressions from the texts; writing the answers in the board and comparing them. Also, they changed verbs in present tense into past and past participle tense; described features of animals to practice the use of adjectives; differentiated the sounds in English; and, repeated the correct pronunciation of the words following the phonetic rules.

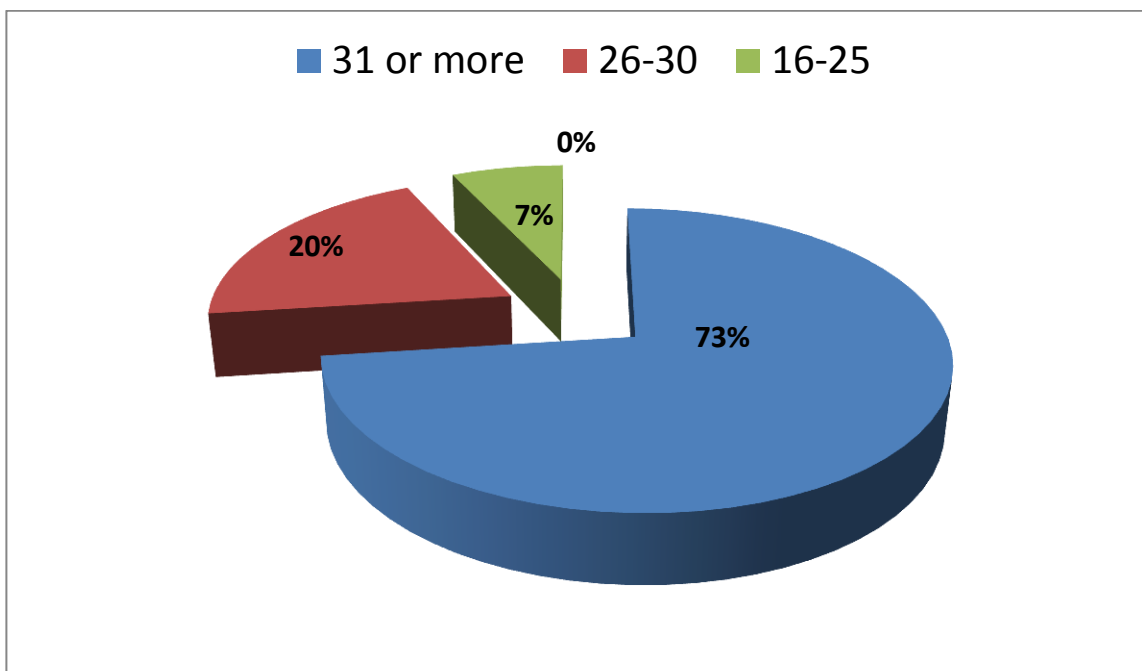
There are important points to consider in relation to the teaching process observed in classes. First, teachers do not encourage learners to do more complex activities and they always adapt the contents of the textbooks to the level of students rather than introducing progressively more advanced structures. Second, the excessive use of Spanish language does not help students to improve their language learning. Third, teachers did not use methods and approaches that allow them to explain contents and meaning of expressions and vocabulary. Instead, teachers only followed instructions from the textbook and have students completing the activities. Therefore, almost all

students in the observed classes had basic level because teachers did not encourage them to progress in their language learning process.

Factors concerning classrooms

How many students are there in the observed classes?

Graph 12



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

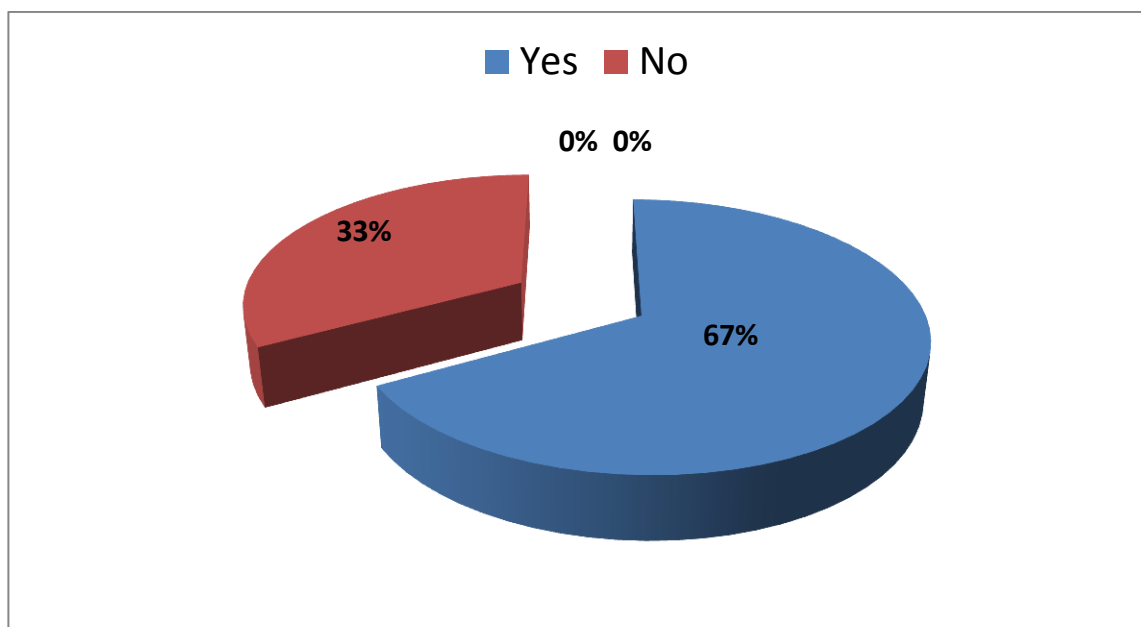
Author: Nancy Naguas

The results of this question are represented in graph 12 and they are influenced by the time when observations were done because this research was carried out during the morning and evening hours. Therefore, 73% of teachers who indicated that there are 31 or more students in the classrooms worked in morning hours. In those high schools, students were young people between 12 and 17 years old who attended classes from 7 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. In these high schools, classes had an average of 40 students per class.

On the contrary, the 20% of teachers who answered that there were 26 to 30 students worked at night. In the same way, 7% of teachers who indicated that classes have between 16 to 25 students also worked in evening hours. In the observed public high schools with night schedules there were adult students who work during the morning, they have not completed their studies, and need a High School Diploma to enter the university. Similarly, there were young students who help their parents at home or private business and they study at night. An important aspect observed in these classes was the high amount of absent students. That fact influenced class size because there were fewer students than usually and it was not possible to observe the teaching-learning process under real conditions.

Do teachers feel comfortable with the number of students they are working with?

Graph 13



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Graph 13 shows that 67% of teachers feel comfortable with number of students they have and 33% answered that the number of students teachers work with is not appropriate for teaching English. Similarly, a great percentage of students indicated that the number of learners in the class help them to learn English better.

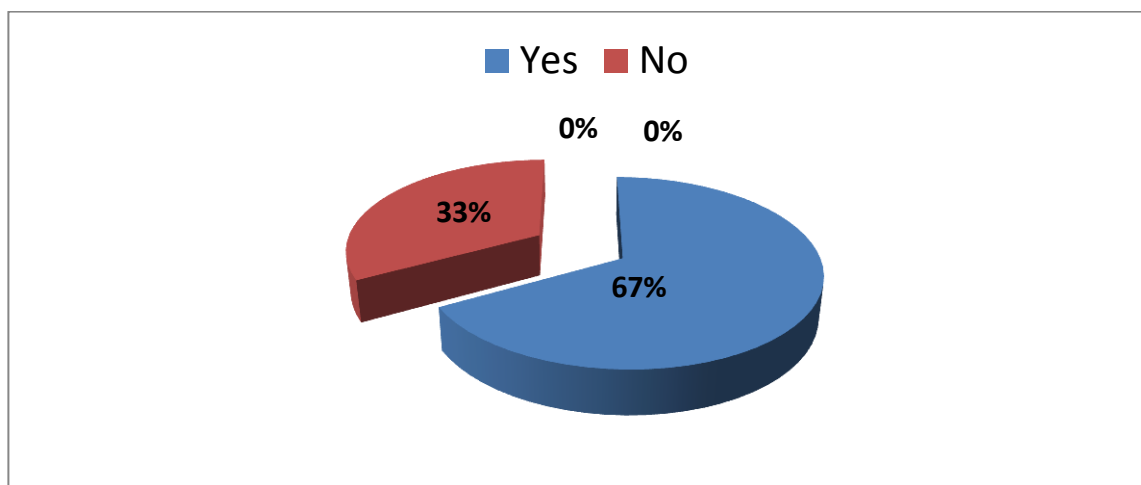
In relation to the results described above, it is important to take into consideration what Weinstein (1979) explains about class size. He indicates that high density may affect learning space in classrooms and influences student and teacher feelings. Most students and teachers prefer lower-density classrooms, because lower densities usually feel less crowded. Actually, it was observed that more than half of teachers worked with an average of 40 students; they had difficulties to control behavior and they were not able to monitor all students' work. In consequence, students' learning process was not effective in crowded classrooms.

On the other hand, teachers who work in classrooms with less than 26 students were able to guide and monitor students in their learning process. In addition, teachers and students look relaxed and interaction between them flew smoothly.

Therefore, the percentage of teachers who indicated feeling comfortable with the number of students they work with does not coincide with the number of observed teachers who really looked and felt good teaching English in their classes. In the same way, students' answers do not match the events observed in classes because in crowded classrooms the majority of learners did not pay attention to the class and talked a lot between them. In addition, they were not able to work well in relation to activities because the number of students was not appropriate for classroom space. In that way, it is evident that crowded classrooms neither benefit teachers nor students.

Do teachers have enough space to work with the group of students you have been assigned?

Graph 14



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

The results in graph 14 show that 67% percent of the teachers consider that classroom space is not enough to work with the group of students they have. Besides, 33% of teachers consider the space they have to work with the students is not appropriate.

It was observed that classroom space was appropriate for the number of students in the classroom in public high schools with night schedule. In those classes there were less than 26 students and the space was good enough to work correctly. In addition, teachers were able to control students' discipline and the teaching-learning process was conducive for learning. The answers of the students' questionnaires indicated that learners consider that classroom space is adequate for working in learning activities. It can be said that the teaching-learning process in these institutions increased by the

influence of the physical surroundings within the classroom, as Mcleod, Fisher & Hoover (2003) mention.

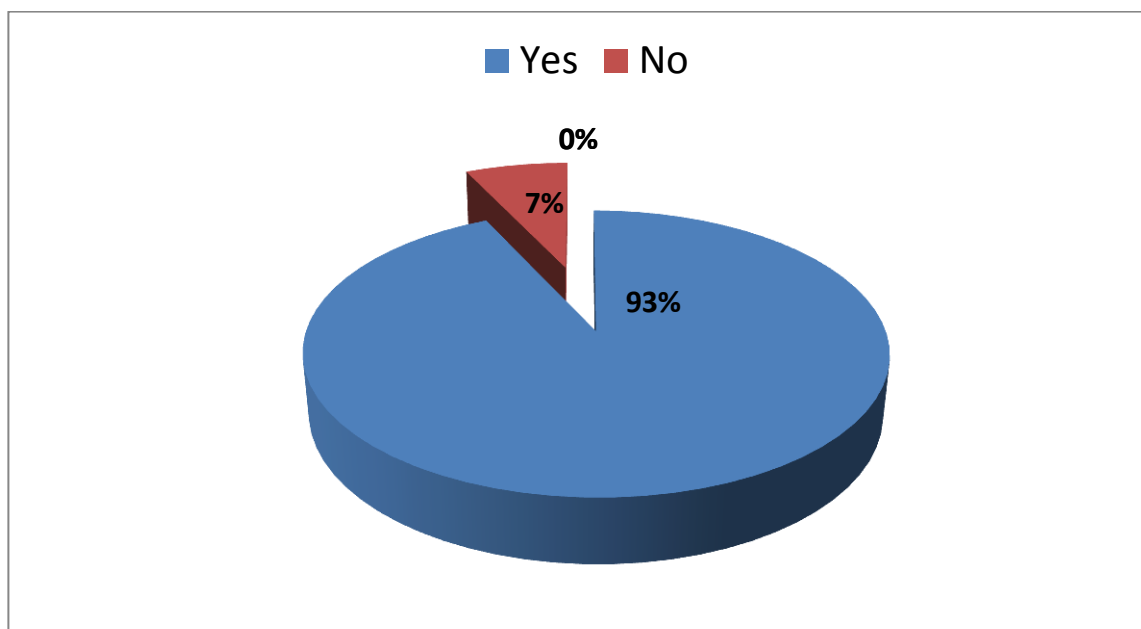
On the other hand, public high schools with morning schedule had overcrowded classrooms with an average of 40 students in a space designed for a maximum capacity of 30 students. In these classes, teachers were not able to teach lessons because students did not focus on lessons and they talked a lot between them. The reduced space influenced also seating arrangement because rows were too close and neither teachers nor students have enough space to move. This situation confirms what Savage & Savage (2010) explain about classroom space. They consider that the physical context influence behavior and performance of students and teachers because some individuals may feel tense by a stretch contact derived from a crowded classroom. However, students who answered the questionnaires in these high schools indicated that classroom space helps them to learn better.

About the results explained above, it is important to mention that teachers and students' answers contradict the facts observed in classes. Nine teachers (60%) who teach English in morning high schools worked in overcrowded classrooms. In those classes, teachers looked stressed and they were not able for monitoring students' work during lesson time. In addition, the reduced space between rows made difficult for teachers and students to walk freely.

On the contrary, six teachers (40%) teach English in night institutions and there were less than 26 students in classes. The teachers in small classes had enough space to work and they were able to walk around the classroom without difficulty for checking students' work. Similarly, students had also enough space to accommodate their seats.

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

Graph 15



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Graph 15 shows that 93% of teachers arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes and 7% of teachers do not do it. These results agree with students' questionnaires because they indicated that their teachers arrange seats in relation to learning activities. However, data gathered in observation formats and direct observation shows that no teacher arranged students' seats; all of them use row format to work in classes because of lack of space and large number of seats in the classroom. Moreover, seats were arranged in some classes according to the students' desires and not in relation to the activities they had to do in classes. The position of seats in some cases, impeded students to pay attention to the teacher because they were sat in groups without

working in group activities; teachers did not do anything and let students to sit in that way.

It was observed that only high schools with night schedule had enough space because of absent students and a few teachers asked students for arrange seats in groups or in pairs to work in activities assigned to them. In addition, students in night high schools indicated in the questionnaire that they like the way teachers arrange seats in relation to learning activities.

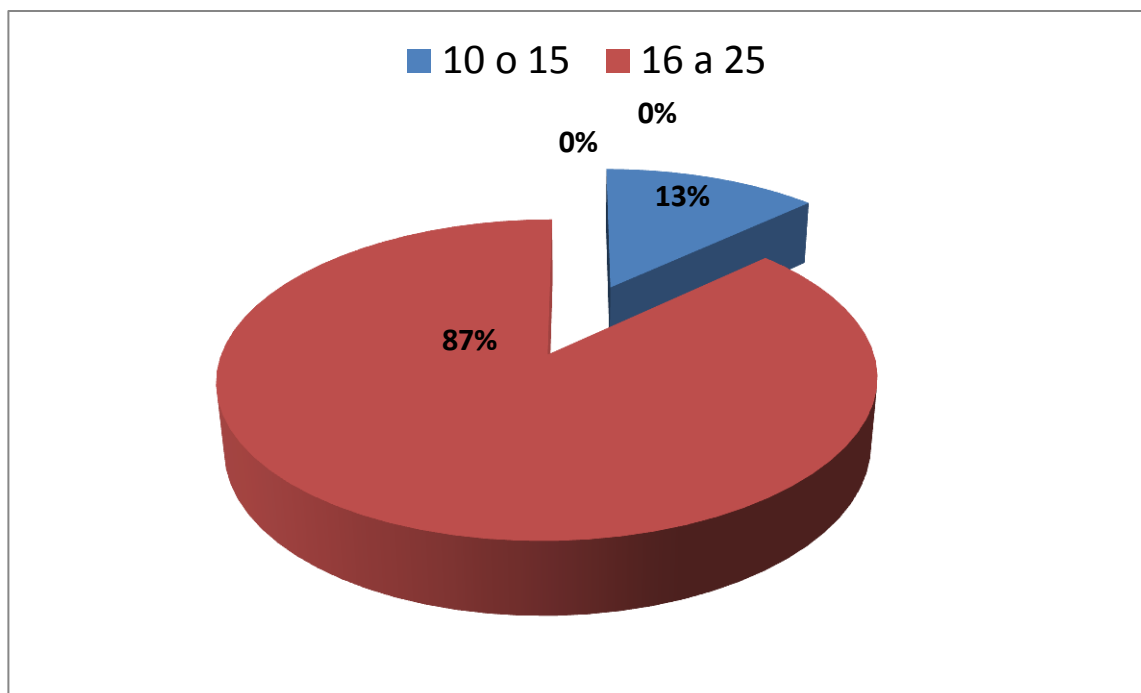
About seating arrangement, Doyle (2006) explains that the way in which teachers arrange desks and seats in the classroom will influence behavior more than achievement since desks, furniture and other objects are moved according to the required activities. Actually, it was observed that learners in night high schools worked better than learners in morning classes because they demonstrated motivation when teachers asked them for moving seats in relation to the activities.

On the other hand, students in morning classes do not change their seats and they always had to work seating in rows because of lack of space. Those learners seemed bored and they were not motivated to learn; instead of paying attention they were always making noise and interrupting classes with their bad behavior. In some opportunities, there were students who asked their teachers to arrange their seats in groups because the activity was designed for that, but teachers did not do it and adapted the tasks to work in rows.

Therefore, it can be said that many teachers did not arrange students' seats in relation to activities; it affected students' behavior and there were not real learning in the observed classes.

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

Graph 16



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

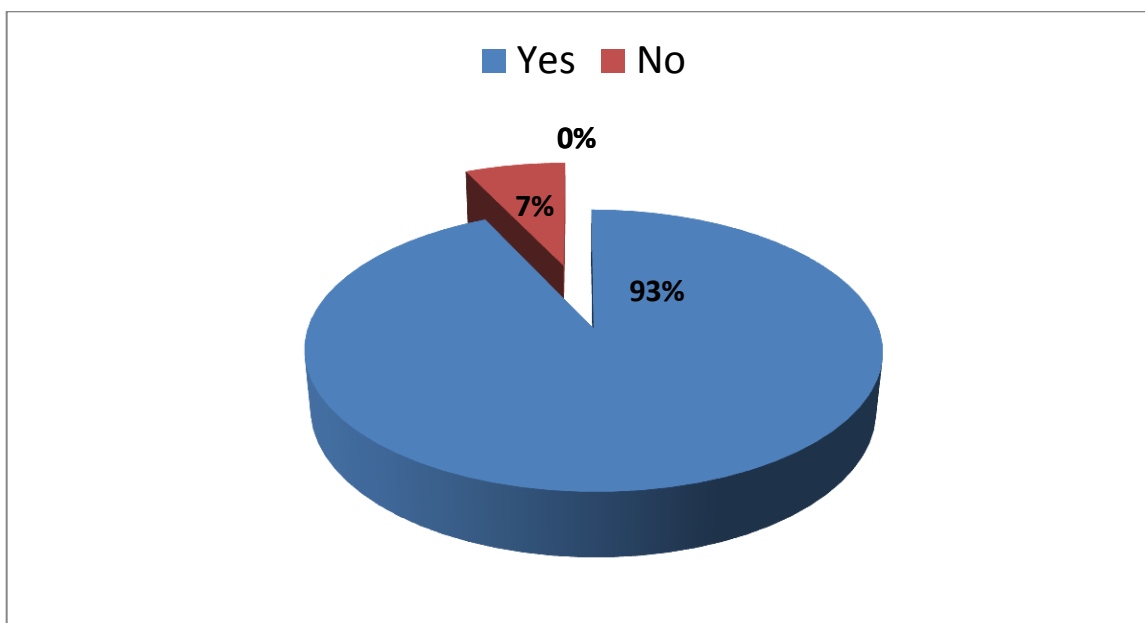
As can be seen from the graph above, 87% of teachers agree that 16 to 25 students is the appropriate number to teach English while only the 13% consider that 10 to 15 is a good amount of students for teaching the target language. This result shows that teachers prefer small than large classes and it is confirmed by data gathered in the observed classes because teachers who teach less than 26 students performed better than their peers who teach more than 31 students. In the small observed classes, teachers demonstrated more confidence and patience with students. In addition, students were focused in the activities and they behave well. On the other hand, observations in large classes showed that teachers worked hard trying to motivate students and controlling discipline; learners who were sat at the back of the class did not pay attention and

teachers did not have enough time to monitor the whole class and review all the activities; teachers usually spent a lot of time checking activities or students' homework in some classes.

More engagement and collaboration are some of the characteristics of small classrooms mentioned by Mayer (2000). He expresses that main point about small size classes is that behavior problems are better controlled by teachers and this promotes an effective use of teaching and learning time. Accordingly, observations corroborated what the author above explains about small classes.

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

Graph 17



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

The results represented in graph 17 shows that 93% of teachers use teaching resources, and 7% do not use teaching materials. It was observed that some teachers

used CD players to provide students practice in listening skills. For Patel & Praveen (2008), audio materials offer opportunities to exposed students to great amount of language; some examples are audio cassette player and radio. However, the quality of the material was not appropriate because the volume was too low and level of noise in the classroom did not allow students to listen well.

Another teacher used visual materials to motivate students to comprehend meaning; this called some students' attention but most learners did not pay attention because they were talking about other topics and teachers did not involve them in the activity. Even though Patel & Praveen (2008) remark that visual materials are very useful to motivate and activate learners' minds, teachers did not take advantage of the benefits because of their poor skills to motivate students to focus on the topics.

Generally, all the observed teachers used the whiteboard to teach their classes that consisted on explaining contents and modeling the use of grammar structures. Besides, the textbook assigned to teachers was another material used in all classes and students worked always doing activities assigned by their teachers from the book.

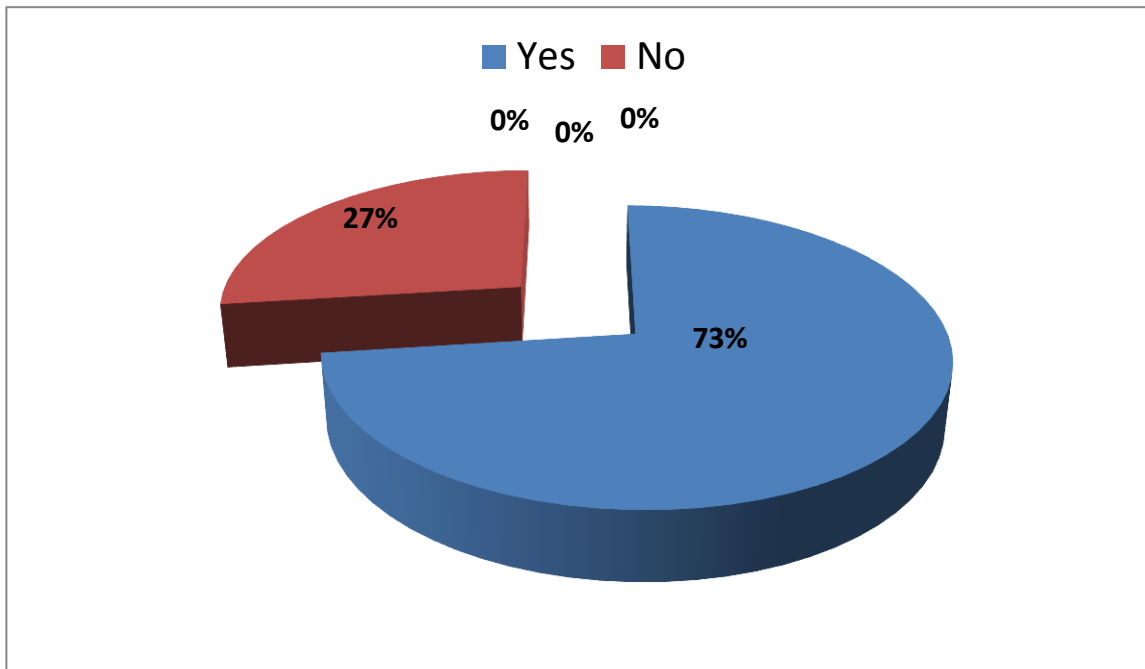
It was observed that classrooms did not have resources such as maps, posters, TV, or any visual material; the only type of resource available in the classes was the whiteboard. Only one of the classrooms had a projector and a computer, however, this was not used by the teacher. About materials, the majority of learners answered that teachers only use audio materials such as tape recorders.

As Tomlinson (2008) explains, materials have the power of engaging students cognitively and affectively in the learning process making possible to expose them to authentic content. But lack of materials and the inappropriate use of the available

resources in classes made that learners did not receive the benefits of teaching resources as the author mentions.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph 18



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

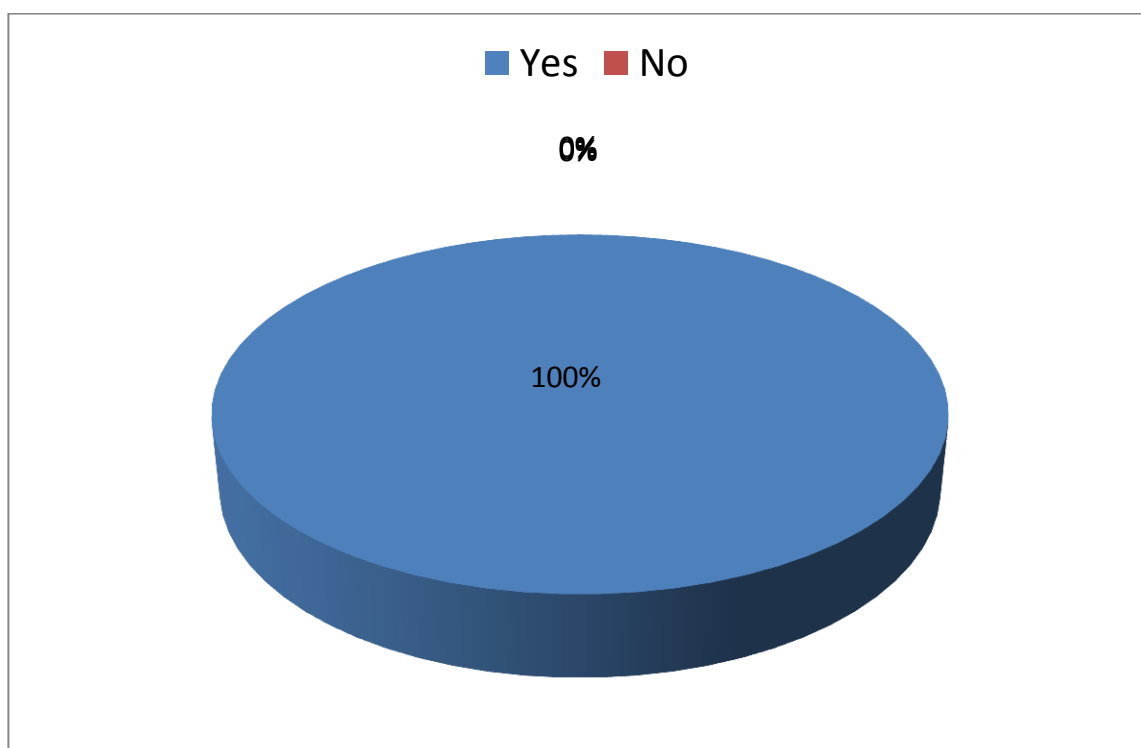
It can be seen in graph 18 that 73% of teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in classes, and 27% of the participants consider that materials are not proper for the teaching process. In relation to this question, students only indicated that teachers use only audio materials such as tape recorders, but this type of resources are not used frequently in classes. Through the observations it was possible to find that classrooms were not equipped with appropriate materials and the whiteboard was the only available resource in the classroom. Besides, there were not materials such as posters or maps in the classrooms. Therefore, it seems that teachers' opinion about the suitability

of materials make reference to the use of the whiteboard, audio materials, and textbooks in the observed classes. Indeed, Maxom (2009) remarks that bringing something interesting to the class allows pupils to experience excitement and curiosity for learning. However, the materials mentioned previously were not used to increase students' interests in the topics because teachers followed the same routine in all the classes.

Factors Concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review your lesson plans?

Graph 19



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

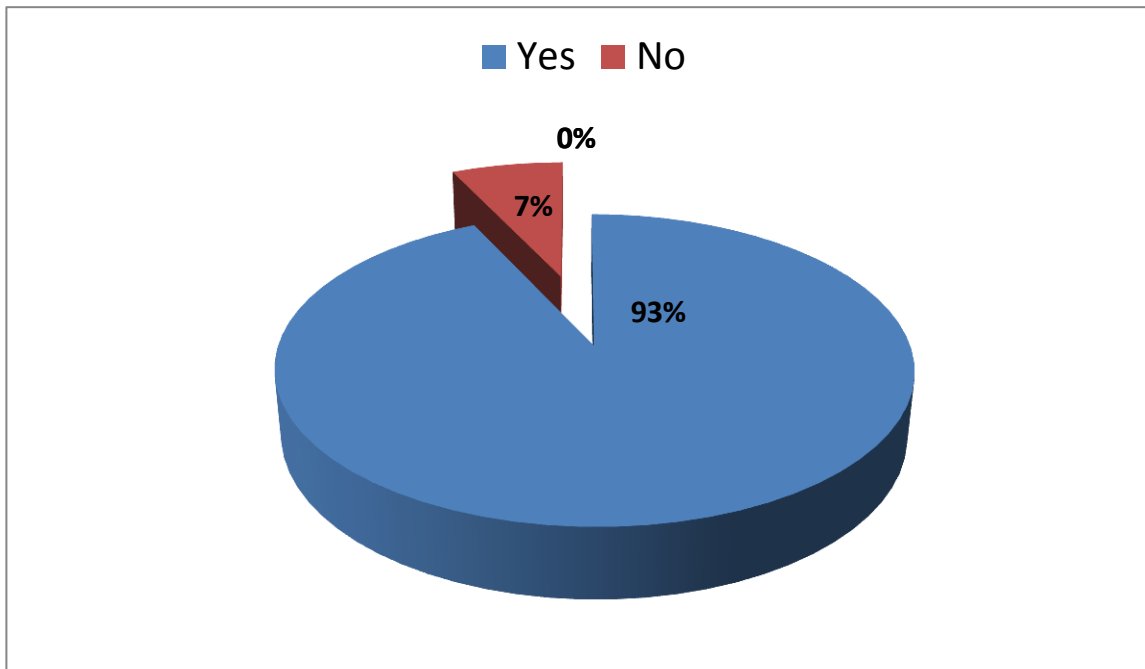
Author: Nancy Naguas

About revision of lesson plans in the observed institutions, all teachers (100%) indicated that their lesson plans are checked by an authority in different periods of time.

However, it was not possible to confirm what teachers indicated because they did not take their lesson plans to the class and authorities were not interviewed about this topic.

Does the institution monitor your teaching?

Graph 20



Source: Teacher's questionnaire

Author: Nancy Naguas

Graph 20 shows that 93% of institutions monitor teachers' teaching and 7% of high schools do not observe teachers' classes. The greater part of teachers indicated that their classes are observed once a week and others said that observations take place only once a year. In addition, a minority of teachers explained that institution never monitor their teaching. During the time classes were observed no monitoring process took place in the high schools and it was not possible to confirm teachers' answers because no authority was interviewed about this question.

Since Mackey & Gass (2005, p. 186) says, “observations are a useful means for gathering in-depth information about such phenomena as the types of language, activities, interactions, instruction, and events that occur in second and foreign language classroom”, it would be interesting to know how the process is carried out in public high schools and its effects in teaching improvement.

Conclusions

- The analysis of results shows that language proficiency, percentage of language used in class, managing learning, class size, classroom space, and teaching resources are main factors affecting the English teaching-learning process in the public high schools observed in this research.
- Language proficiency and percentage of language used in class affect students' language skills because teachers had bad pronunciation and they spoke in Spanish frequently. In that way, learners do not receive appropriate language input and they do not learn how to pronounce and use language structures correctly.
- Teachers do not have good skills in managing learning in large classes because they were not able to control students' behavior and motivate learners. In fact, teachers indicated in the questionnaires that they prefer to work with small classes.
- Class size was not appropriate for classroom space because in some classes the number of students was over 31. In those classes, teachers and students were not able to work and move appropriately. In addition, the rate of bad behaviors increases a lot causing that the learning process was not effective.
- Lack of materials and inappropriate use of the available teaching resources make that learners do not engage cognitively in the learning process because teachers do not teach and use resources in relation to students' needs.
- The answers gathered during teachers' interview show that an important amount of teachers have English Bachelor's Degree and they have been working in the

field for seven to twenty years. In addition, all of them have learned English in Ecuador.

- The interview applied to teachers also revealed that their language proficiency was A2 in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CFR) because the majority of participants were not able to answer correctly all the questions and they mixed frequently English and Spanish to express meaning.
- Teachers' poor knowledge of English methods and inappropriate use of teaching techniques impede that students learn the target language correctly through active practice. Even though teachers indicated that they use methods such as Communicative Language Teaching or Grammar translation method, they did not apply any particular method and followed only instructions from teachers' English textbook.

Recommendations

- Teachers must improve their English language proficiency and pronunciation to promote in learners good language skills. Therefore, it is important that English teachers receive classes with focus in learning the communicative aspects of language.
- Institutions must provide teachers seminars and workshops about how to manage learning in large classes in order to make classes effective and increase the quality of learners' attention in lessons.
- It is a must for Ecuadorian government to continue building and improving public high schools with the purpose of reducing the number of students in classrooms and avoiding overcrowded spaces.
- Teachers need to find information about creative ways of using teaching materials because not all students learn in the same way. Since resources bring learners unforgettable experiences, it is recommendable that teachers search the Internet to find interesting links with original ideas about the use of supplementary materials.
- It is urgent that English teachers update their knowledge of teaching methods and techniques. Therefore, government, universities and other institutions related to the field must provide teachers more training about last trends in English teaching.

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

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

Students' Level (<i>Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate , and Advanced</i>)	
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_____



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 básicaa 3ro bachillerato):	

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

*Students' Needs(<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
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 ()



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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

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

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

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

3. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

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

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

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

¿Por qué?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. ¿Consideras que el número de estudiantes te favorece para aprender de mejor manera el Inglés?

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

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

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

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

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

GRACIAS!!!!



