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MENCIÓN INGLÉS

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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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APROBACIÓN DEL DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

Doctora.

María Rosario Burneo Burneo.

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools realizado por Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar, ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación de mismo.

Loja, febrero de 2014

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo, Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar declaro ser la autora del presente trabajo de titulación: Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Ingles siendo María Rosario Burneo Burneo directora del presente trabajo y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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f).....

Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

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DEDICATION

I thank God and my parents for guiding and providing me all the necessary support to complete my studies.

I dedicate this work to my husband and son who are the reason of my existence, for them, all my love and affection.

Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

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I thank my beloved parents for being the mainstay in my life and my dear husband and son for giving all their support, patience, love, a thousand thanks to you all for being with me.

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ABSTRACT

This research is concerned with “Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools” and its purpose is to identify and analyze main factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process.

The research was carried out in five public high schools in Santa Rosa, near the city of Machala, Ecuador. The participants were fifteen English teachers who were interviewed and observed during the teaching process. Also, fifteen students participated in this research.

The method used in this research is quantitative and it made possible to obtain numerical data of factors related to teachers, students, classroom, and institution that affect the English educational process. For gathering information, techniques as surveys and note-taking were used. Also, instruments as observation formats and questionnaires were applied in this investigation.

Regarding the results, class size, classroom space, classroom and teaching resources, lessons design monitoring, and managing learning were identified as the factors that mostly influence the English language teaching-learning process in the observed high schools.

KEYWORDS: Factors, Teaching-learning, Public high schools.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tiene que ver con " Factores que afectan el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje de la lengua Inglés en las escuelas secundarias públicas del Ecuador ", y su propósito es identificar y analizar los factores principales que influyen en el proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje del idioma Inglés.

La investigación se llevó a cabo en cinco escuelas secundarias públicas en Santa Rosa, cerca de la ciudad de Machala, Ecuador. Participaron quince profesores de inglés que fueron entrevistados y observados durante el proceso de enseñanza. Además, quince estudiantes participaron en esta investigación.

El método utilizado en esta investigación es cuantitativa y que hizo posible obtener datos numéricos de los factores relacionados con los profesores, estudiantes, aula, e instituciones que inciden en el proceso educativo Inglés. Para la recolección de información, se utilizaron técnicas como las encuestas y la toma de notas. Además, se aplicaron instrumentos como formularios de observación y cuestionarios en esta investigación.

En cuanto a los resultados, el tamaño de la clase, el espacio del aula, aula y recursos didácticos, clases de supervisión de diseño y gestión de aprendizaje fueron identificados como los factores que influyen sobre todo el proceso de enseñanza - aprendizaje de idiomas de Inglés en las escuelas secundarias observadas.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Factores, enseñanza-aprendizaje, Escuelas secundarias públicas.

INTRODUCTION

English is a language that allows learners to have access to important and up to date information and provide them with better opportunities to achieve success in academic and job fields. In Ecuador, this language is taught in public schools in order to grant students' admission to the university and make them competent to obtain scholarships offered by other countries. However, it has been found that students graduate from high schools with poor English knowledge that limits their academic performance.

For the reasons mentioned above, this research titled "Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process" had been carried out with three specific objectives. First, this research set out to determine the classrooms conditions in which English lessons take place. This objective was totally achieved, because it was found that students received classes in overcrowded classrooms where reduced space did not allowed teachers to change seating arrangement. In addition, there were not teaching resources such as posters, maps, pictures for helping teachers to make classes attractive and fun. The second objective, the identification of the characteristics of in-service English teachers, was successfully completed. Almost all of teachers were professionals with long teaching experience; a high number of teachers learned English in Ecuador; and, their level of language proficiency was B1. However they did not use the language for encourage students to communicate effectively. The last objective, to determine teachers' instructional competence, was also completed. The results showed that an important number of teachers used methods such as CLT, TBI, but classes were teacher

centered and students had few opportunities to interact between them using the language. Besides, teachers had some kind of problems trying to manage discipline, however their classroom management skills were appropriate and they were able to manage time and feedback correctly.

It is important to identify the factors that affect the teaching-learning process and cause students' poor language skills because educational authorities will have concrete evidence and will be able to implement new plans and policies to improve the situation of English teaching-learning in Ecuador.

Like Ecuador, other countries have experienced similar difficulties in the English language teaching-learning process. For that reason, many studies have been done about the topic and three has been selected to be presented here.

The first investigation was done by Khamkhien (2010) to study the influence of motivation, experience in language learning, and gender in learning. The researcher found that motivation in studying English could lead some benefits to learning a language. However, these findings were limited by the small number of participants and the influence of other factors such as nationality or age.

The second research was done by Rolin-Ianziti (2006) to describe teachers' strategic use of feedback after learners' completed learning communicative activities. This study demonstrated that provision of feedback after the completion of a communicative activity avoids interrupting the students as they are speaking. Main weaknesses of this study were related to lack of analysis of delayed feedback and effects of teacher initiation on learners' perception and language development.

The third study was carried out by Sadighi & Zarafshan (2006) to determine the use of language learning strategies in relation to the factors of attitude and motivation. The researchers found that learners with positive attitude tried to become a member of the target language community and they did their best to know more about the techniques or strategies which can help them acquire a better command of the target language. One source of limitation in this study was that most students were unfamiliar with the efficiency of learning strategies.

The results of this research will benefit teachers and educational authorities involved in the process of English language teaching because they will have a better approach of the actions that need to be implemented to improve the English-learning process.

Finally, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, the answers of the students' questionnaires were subject to learners' concerns of the effects that their responses would have in teachers. Even though students were informed that those results were confidential, some findings made possible to prove that they did not give accurate answers. A similar situation occurred with teachers because some contradictions were found in their responses. Second, another limitation is related to the subjectivity in evaluating students' level of language because the observed institutions did not have formal instruments to evaluate students' knowledge of English.

Further work needs to be done to establish whether students' background influence their level of motivation toward English language learning because the observed students indicated that they like to study English but demonstrated lack of interest.

METHOD

Setting and participants

This research was carried out in five public high schools in Santa Rosa, near the city of Machala, Ecuador. Three teachers per school were selected to participate in this research giving a total of fifteen English teachers who were interviewed and observed during the teaching process. Also, fifteen students from 8th course of basic education to 3rd senior year participated in this investigation. They were selected at random in each of the observed teachers' class and were aged from 12 to 17 years old. Classes took place from Monday to Friday; two hours per day that gives a total of 10 hours per class.

Procedure

It was considered that quantitative measures would usefully supplement and extend the observations carried out in the observed classes. In addition, surveys and note-taking were the techniques, and observation formats and questionnaires were the instruments used in this research.

Prior to carry out the field research, it was necessary to write the literature review. For that purpose, books, articles, newspapers, magazines, and Internet were considered as source of important information to support the findings of this research.

Once the revision of the literature was completed, the field research was done and it began by asking for permission to observe the classes in the selected high schools. After that, teachers were informed of the process and received the questionnaires. In addition, three teachers were observed in each selected high school to record details of the teaching-learning process in the observation formats. At the end of each class one student was selected at random to answer a questionnaire. Besides, the observed teachers

answered a survey to identify their professional background and their opinions of teaching English in Ecuador. The survey was used also to determine teachers' language proficiency level within the Common European Framework for Language Reference (CEFR) in order to relate teachers' language proficiency with their ability to use language in the classroom.

After collecting the results, statistical graphs were elaborated for visualizing the percentages of responses given by the teachers in order to analyze them. Main variables studied in this research were teachers' level of education, language proficiency, teaching methods and techniques used by teachers in class, percentage of the English used by teachers in class, lesson design, and managing learning. Besides, factors concerning students were analyzed and they were these: learners' need and English level. Factors concerning classroom also were considered as variables in this research and they were class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, and classroom and teaching resources. Finally, factors concerning institutions were also part of the group of variables analyzed in this research and they were these: class observation and lesson design monitoring.

The variables described previously were analyzed using the gathered information of the observed classes, students' questionnaires, and note-taking. In this analysis, the literature review was of great importance in providing support to the findings of this research. The evidence found as a result of the analysis constituted the foundation for elaborating conclusions and recommendations.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Teaching English in Ecuador is important because citizens learn a language that is used in many fields such as business and technology around the world. In that way, Ecuadorian people will contribute to their country's development. However, a lot of research has proved that there are factors related to teachers, students, and classroom that affect English teaching as foreign language. In Ecuador, there are different voices claiming that students' level of English is affected by the lack of teaching skills of Ecuadorian teachers. About this, El Universo (2010) published an interview with John Nelson, a teacher from University of Maryland who came to Ecuador to train teachers in teaching methods; this report state that students' level of success in the English language is affected greatly by lack of teaching skills. The interviewed teacher mentions that U.S. is providing training all over the world about teaching methodologies including Ecuador because it is necessary that citizens master English language to access information. Moreover, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and Culture considers that citizens who learn English language collaborate with the development of the country. However, an article published by EcuadorUniversitario (2012) reports that an analysis done by the Ministry of Education has found a low average in students' academic performance in English. It seems that the problem is caused by teachers' low language proficiency because SENESCYT informed that an evaluation done to public high school teachers showed that most of them had A1 or A2 level according to the Common European Framework of reference for Languages (CEFR).

Other factors mentioned on the article published by EcuadorUniversitario (2012) that SENESCYT reports as main causes for students' low performance in English are: teachers' inappropriate language sufficiency and the fact that the National Curriculum has not been designed according to international standards. Therefore, SENESCYT has developed a training program that consists on offering international scholarships to Ecuadorian teacher who need to improve their teaching and language skills.

For the reasons mentioned above, this section explores main factors that affect the process of teaching-learning English in the classroom. Also, five studies are presented here to give evidence that supports the theory.

Teaching approaches and methods

Teachers can use different types of methods and approaches to teach English. Richards & Rodgers (2001) describe characteristics of the Total Physical response (TPR) and Whole language. About TPR, the authors agree with Snider (2010) who mentions that this method requires the use of speech and physical actions. For him, learning is organized around three main aspects. First, learners understand spoken language before they speak by themselves. Next, teachers' instructions are given using imperative forms. The last aspect refers to the combinations of skills through the use of kinesthetic sensory system.

Regarding Whole language approach, Richards & Rodgers (2001) explain some characteristics of this method such as authentic use of literature, teachers use real and natural events to teach language, students practice reading with a specific purpose, etc. Other approaches that emphasize communicative skills are Task-Based Instruction, Cooperative language teaching, and Communicative language teaching. Larsen-

Freeman (2000) explains that Task-Based language promotes language use by means of tasks in which learners need to use the language to describe results and interact between them. In that way, students acquire the language while they work to understand others' points of view and express their own opinions. Similarly, this author indicates that Communicative language teaching also fosters interaction between students and use of activities in which learners need to convey and express meaning. According to her, teachers who use this approach aim to teach students how to communicate in the target language by using a variety of functions. Finally, this author refers to Cooperative language teaching as an approach in which learners work in groups and interact between them to complete activities assigned to them. An important aspect about this approach is the way in which teachers and students work together. That means, students learn from teachers how to work collaboratively and effectively.

More methods are described by Snider (2010) such as Grammar-Translation method, Natural Approach, and Cognitive Academic Language. About Grammar-translation method, the author and Perez & Roig (2004) indicate that it highlights the importance of learning grammar structures over other functions of the language. Besides, activities are developed using translation and complex meanings are explained using the mother tongue. On the other hand, the authors mention that in teaching English with the Natural Approach, learners acquire language through experience and language is not extremely focused on grammar structures. In addition, Perez & Roig (2004) argue that this approach is commonly used in the first days of class, teachers do not correct errors, and students are able to use native language in order to communicate.

There is a recent approach known as Cognitive Academic Language. About that approach Perez & Roig (2004) explain that is mainly used in bilingual programs; students learn by means on contents that increase in complexity according to learners' need.

Teaching techniques

There are different definitions of teaching techniques. One is described by Brown (2006, p. 14) as, "the specific activities manifested in the classroom that were consistent with a method and therefore in harmony with an approach as well". A similar point is given by Fleming & Stevens (2010) who allege that techniques are daily activities performed in the classroom. A last concept about teaching techniques is given by Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown (2007) who state that techniques are important because they help learners to make connections with real life and to organize their own learning.

Turning to the different types of teaching techniques, Brown (2006) classifies techniques according to teachers' purpose in the classroom and list choral repetition and drills as a mean of obtaining a controlled response from students. He mentions other techniques as brainstorming, role plays, and some games. Brainstorming stimulates students' thinking process because they give original ideas. Role-play motivates learners to achieve certain objective. And games are activities in which students are scored for their participation.

Other techniques are listed by Fleming & Stevens (2010) as for example: jigsaw for doing research works; pair combinations and statement- arrangement for encouraging students to discuss and issue; storytelling for having students telling each

other stories; just a minute that develop students' fluency; Chinese whispers for teaching learners how messages are changed by oral transmission.

A final group of techniques are described by Orlich et al (2007). They mention questioning as an important tool to arouse students' thinking skills. Tutorial is a technique that help students with special needs; their activities are monitored while working in groups. Task-directed discussion is a technique for encouraging students to contribute in a discussion activity. Simulation is used to have students recreating real events. And Inquiry centered discussion is ideal for developing students' problem solving skills.

Managing learning

Teachers manage learning in order to create opportunities for working with group of learners in the classroom. Allwright & Bailey (1991) declare that managing learning is closely related to managing classroom interaction because students learn from all the experiences that take place during the process of teaching and learning; they learn from teachers to ask question or to solve problems.

During the normal development of activities in the classroom it is expected that students follow teachers' instructions in order to complete tasks correctly. Everston & Winstein (2006) comment that even teachers give appropriate instructions, students are responsible for their actions. With this, the authors explain that the process of giving instructions involves delegation of functions to students; once they demonstrate engagement and quality in doing their assignments it can be said that delegation of authority was successful. Therefore, instructions as a mean of assigning responsibilities are important because they promote efficiently management of groups.

Feedback is another aspect in managing learning. Nicol & McFarlane-Dick (2006, p. 204) say, “There is considerable research evidence to show that effective feedback leads to learning gains.” In order that feedback gives positive results on learners it is necessary that students understand what good performance is, compare their current performance with the good performance, proceed correctly in closing the distance between current performance and good performance. This author mentions also seven principles of a good feedback practice: (1) clarifies good performance; (2) facilitates reflection; (3) gives concrete information to students about their learning; (4) motivates interaction between students and teachers; (5) promotes self-esteem; (6) reduce the distance between current and desired performance; (7) gives teachers information to model learning.

Assigning time to learning activities is part of the teaching process. Shalaway (1997) explains that time brings students opportunities to learn and she mentions three types of classroom time. The first type is allocation time; it is the amount of time given to subjects and topics in a lesson or in assigning work to students. The second type is instructional time in which the teaching process takes place. Finally, the engaged time or on-task time refers to the moments that students pay attention to instructions or perform the assigned activities. Similarly, Fenstermacher & Soltis (2004) also distinguish between allocated and engaged time. They mention that the amount of allocated time determines students’ opportunities to learn. In addition, the authors state that the more time students spend in studying the more they learn therefore teachers have to use time wisely.

Lesson design

Several authors remark the importance of lesson design in English teaching and learning. Marlowe & Canestrari (2006) and Richards & Farrell (2011) agree in saying that lesson design is fundamental in ensuring successful teaching. Furthermore, Mishra (2008) defines lesson planning as a set of instructions designed for a lesson.

The elements of a lesson plan vary according to different authors' point of view. Thus Marlowe & Canestrari (2006) remarks three important components of a lesson plan: (1) tools for diagnose and teaching according to the content being taught such as brainstorming or separating facts; (2) target objectives which set what students are going to learn in the class; (3) instructions for groups and subgroups which refers to the activities that students will perform during class time.

Other six components are described by Richards & Farrell (2011) as follow: (1) goals, the general objectives of the lesson; (2) Activities, it refers to the type of techniques used in the lesson; (3) Sequencing, the sequence in which the techniques will be applied; (4) Timing, the amount of time assigned on the variety of activities; (5) Grouping, they way students will work in the class; (6) Resources, the materials used in the lesson.

A final set of lesson plan elements are presented by Mishra (2008). This author explains that a lesson must define a title for the lesson; the amount of time required to complete the lesson; list of required materials; a list of objectives that explain what students will be able to do or learn; the set or lead-in to the lesson, this is the beginning strategy used by the teacher to engage students in the lesson; the instructional component that details the succession of activities that the teacher will perform during

the lesson; independent practice that specifies students' practice to learn contents; the summary that defines ways of clear students' doubts about the lesson; evaluation that details how to check students' knowledge.

Class size

When it comes to class sizes, many points are under consideration by different authors. Regarding class size Clauss-Ehlers (2010, p. 222) says, "Class size refers to the number of children taught within a single classroom." He mentions that people consider that small classes offer more opportunities for achieving learning goals, but it is important to evaluate the relationship between objectives and costs.

Even though small classes demands higher costs, Canady & Rettig (2008) mention that they offer many benefits to students who present academic difficulties. In addition, small size classrooms reflect less behavior problems than big classrooms, this has been proved as a factor that influence students' learning. Therefore, students tend to learn better in small classrooms where disciplinary problems are controlled well.

On the contrary, Gillies & Ashman (2003) declare that large classes are characterized for having more than twenty five students and they need ample space to interact. The authors add that large classrooms are considered as a challenge by teachers because it is difficult to teach big groups of students. This type of classes usually turns on a discussion of the effects that the amount of students leaded by one teacher has on teachers' methodology, cooperative learning in groups, project development, etc. For these authors, teachers' pedagogy is more significant than the quantity of students in the classroom.

Classroom space

It is important that teachers count with an adequate space to work. Jones (2009) remarks that teachers need to organize classroom space and make enough room to accommodate furniture according to the activities that are going to be developed. Similarly, Savage & Savage (2010) consider important the dimensions, size, shape, and organization of classroom space because these aspects influence the development of activities during lessons. In addition, classroom space it is also important for students and teachers because they need to circulate freely.

About the physical conditions of the classroom, Shalaway & Beech (1998) mention that teachers' style are reflected by the physical space of the classroom but this place needs to be warm and well organized. It is necessary that seats and materials are well organized. In addition, the authors mention that teachers must take into account temperature, lighting, and noise level because these factors affect students in different ways. Finally, the authors state that students behave well and achieve academic goals when teachers provide them a good classroom space according to learners' needs.

Specifically about the relationship between classroom space and the number of students, Gifford, Steg & Reser (2011) explain that the physical space affect students' performance and behavior as well as interaction between them. The authors indicate that overcrowded classrooms affect the students' learning process and the interaction between teachers and learners because they feel uncomfortable and anxious. Other effects mentioned by these authors are alteration of time and activities and high levels of aggression between students.

Seating arrangement

There are different ways of organizing students' seat in the classroom. Stone (2010) mentions some of them as for example: desks in row, two-side-up, U-shaped classroom, clusters, and learning stations. Desks in row are the more traditional model though the author mentions that currently they are not used much today; this type of seating arrangement is useful for individual work. In the two-side-up model, the teacher places students' desk in rows in both sides of the classroom with a space in the middle; the author explains that this model allows teacher to work as facilitator of learning and they can have more control over students. Discussions are favored with the U-shape model, students can debate and discuss looking each other, and teachers have a better view of all learners. Clusters refer to arrangement of desks in groups of four or six group together, this classroom model is ideal to work in groups. Finally, learning stations are used to individual work; schools use this arrangement for students with in-school suspensions.

More characteristics of seating arrangement are explained by Partin (2009). According to him, some ways of helping students with independent work, lecture, or tests is through row seating. Clusters are ideal for group interaction and cooperative learning but it also promotes chatting and socializing. In addition, to facilitate discussions or debates this author recommends semicircular or open-ended rectangular seating arrangement.

Finally, to make effective seating arrangement, Thompson (2011) suggests teachers to plan the position of desks at the beginning of the year. A good organization

of seats helps students to feel secure in the classroom, it is also important to consider some physical needs of students such as poor vision and students 'size.

Classroom or teaching resources

Teaching resources help teachers to facilitate their work in the classroom explaining difficult concepts. About this, Verial (2001) says, "Teachers of ESL rely on their teaching materials to improve the language ability of non-native speakers of English". For Calvo (2006), a successful use of teaching resources relies on some aspects that teachers must consider such as the subject to teach, students' needs, conditions of the environment, time needed to use the material. This author also explain that teaching resources must help teachers to establish similarities, differences, and belonging in order to facilitate learning and develop students' interest in the topics of lessons.

With regard to the different types of teaching resources Verial (2001) mentions the Internet as a tool that offers many possibilities to students and teachers because, as the author explains, there are many free resources available for learning English. Textbook is also considered as a teaching resource and the author comments that currently this type of material offers many exercises to practice language. Hernández (1999) list other types of materials. Flipcharts are useful to design outlines and mind maps and billboards are source of creativity and help students to summarize information.

Other types of resources are the board, video, worksheets, overhead projector (OHP) and computers. Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) describe the board as a common tool in the classroom that teachers may use to write information or stick materials such as notes or reminders; it must be used with equity and using colors to

catch up students' attention. Also, Dobbs (2001) explains that the board can be used to provide learners a sensory experience as follow: when teachers write on the board, visual learners are benefited; kinesthetic learners enjoy writing on the board; and competitive styles are strengthened when students write on the board and others do it simultaneously on their notebooks. Videos are described by these authors as a type of material that students understood easily because of visual contents. In addition, overhead projector is a material that allows teachers and students to share information using transparencies. Other materials are worksheets which can be home made and students can use them in pair or group work. Finally, the authors explain that computers provide teachers with computer assisted learning programs but it is necessary to know how computers work in order to use them effectively.

Classroom observation

Classroom observation is a means of evaluating teacher's performance in the classroom. According to Mackey & Gass (2005) and Langley (2005), observation brings a deep approach of the activities and interaction that takes place in the classroom. In addition, observers can give support to teachers immediately after the process concluded. However, a negative aspect of this process is that observers may hamper the process of observation because individuals may change their behavior while being observed. Another obstacle that affects the process of observation is the observers' level of subjectivity or objectivity because their personal experiences and beliefs may influence the results.

Classroom observation may vary depending on the degree of observer's participation. Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2009) describe two types of observation in

which the observer has different roles. In participant observation, the observer is part of the group being investigated and he/she can be overt, this means that all the participants know his/her role. The advantage here is that the results gathered are reliable and not affected by the observer. However, participants could not behave in a natural way by the fact of being observed. In the case of covert participation, the subjects do not know that the evaluator is in the group and the results obtained are more realistic. But to observe individuals without their permission is considered by some people as a questionable practice.

The second type of observation mentioned by Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2009) is non-participant. Here the observer has two roles, observer-participant, this means that his role is known by the subjects but he does not participate as a member of the group. And as a complete observer he remains out of the observed group and only looks at the events. Main disadvantage of this type of observation is that results may be influenced by the presence of the observer because he could make that activities happen in a different way.

Student's motivation

Motivation is an important factor in the learning process because, as Woolfolk (2004, p. 350) says, "Motivation is usually defined as an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior." In addition, Burden (2000) remarks that motivation is important to engage students in the learning process to avoid behavior problems in the classroom. Therefore, as Lumsden (1994) considers, teachers must be aware of this and they have to create an adequate learning environment to raise motivation in students.

There are different types of motivation. Woolfolk (2004) explains that motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation directs students to achieve their goals because of personal interests and intentions. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is a characteristic of learners who do things because they want to receive rewards, to avoid punishment, or to please teachers.

Another classification of motivation is related to learners' goal in learning a language, Lightbown & Spada (1999) report that Gardner & Lambert (1972) created the terms integrative and instrumental motivation. The first type of motivation is related to students' personal goals and the second type of motivation refers to practical goals.

Learning styles

Teachers can maximize the learning process by understanding students' learning styles. Kelly (2004) and Sprenger (2008) describe a variety of learning styles that are classified into visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. The authors explain that visual learners like to learn by pictures, handouts, etc. and usually they follow the teacher with their eyes, speak rapidly, and use words with "graphic" meaning such as "I see" or "picture it". Auditory students prefer to learn by listening and the kinds of activities suitable for them are: lecture, discussion, or reading aloud; these students are easily distracted by sounds and like to talk a lot. The last type of learners is kinesthetic, these students like to learn new information by touching and experiencing with things; they usually sit very comfortably, speak slowly, use their hands, and are easily disturbed by environmental conditions. Wong (2009, p. 5) refers to those learning styles described previously as cognitive styles because as he says, "Cognitive learning styles refer to the

general way people prefers to have information presented in order to problem-solve, process, learn, and remember new information.”

Students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English

It is said that learners are different and they learn at diverse rates. In relation to this, Nikolov (2009, p. 48) says, “Aptitude implies an individual difference in language learning and refers to the natural ability to acquire language at a fast and easy rate.” According to this author, language aptitude has been considered as a separate skill because there are subcomponents that together express the meaning of aptitude. He considers also that aptitude is neither related to motivation or personality type nor attained to a specific language. Learners may have aptitude for different languages and it can change in accordance to their intellectual development.

An additional definition about aptitude is given by Ellis (2010). He mentions that ability for learning a second language is something that establishes differences among learners and there are different components of language aptitude that John Carroll defines as: phonemic ability, grammatical sensivity, inductive language learning ability, rote learning ability. According to the author, interlanguage as a stage of language development is influenced by the different components of language aptitude.

Considerations about intelligence are provided by Murado (2010, p. 20) who argues, “Along with the natural evolution and the existence of different theories that try to explain mechanisms through which you learn another language, is in set of determinants that influence the degree or learning a second language.” He explains that those factors are: intelligence, aptitude, personality, motivation, and age. From those aspects, intelligence traditionally has been considered as the ability of learners to solve

tests but currently the theory of multiple intelligences considers it as a learner's characteristic that develops in different ways. Thus Dörnyei (2005) explains that in the field of multiple intelligences, the term is used broadly to refer to spatial or verbal intelligence. This means that intelligence is considered as a learners' aptitude to perform many sorts of activities such as speaking or thinking in objects of different dimensions.

This last part of the literature review shows five important studies that prove the influences of different factors in the process of teaching-learning English language.

A first study was done by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu (2006) to analyze the influence of instructional materials, teaching methods, and classroom environment in the process of learning a foreign language. These researchers applied a questionnaire to students from public high schools in Nigeria to know their opinion in relation to use of teaching resources and methods. In the same way, the questionnaire had items that allowed learners to know students' view of the effects of classroom space in their learning. Finally, the researchers also performed observation to evaluate the use of teaching strategies in the classroom. The results of the questionnaire and observations showed that students' English learning was poor because three main reasons. The first reason was related to the use of traditional teaching resources such as chalkboard and textbooks; teachers did not use them creatively and they did not use other type of materials. The second aspect showed that teachers did not vary the teaching techniques used in the classroom. And the third reason concerned with class size, students expressed that classroom environment was not of good quality and noisy; that aspect did not facilitate their learning. Based on those results, the researchers concluded that

students' English learning was affected significantly by the use of old teaching methods, materials, and lack of innovation of teaching techniques.

An analysis of teachers' strengths in relation to methodology, pedagogy, and assessment strategies was done by Navarro & Piñeiro (2010). The researchers observed a group of teachers and asked them to answer questionnaires to determine their level of knowledge about methods and assessment strategies. The results demonstrated that teachers do not have good knowledge of teaching and assessment methods and concluded that knowledge of teaching methods influence students' language learning.

In order to study the influence of motivation, experience in language learning, and gender in learning; Khamkhien (2010) used questionnaires to assess students' opinion of their language learning process. The main results showed that gender difference was not one of the variables contributing to the differences in the choices of language learning strategies. In addition, the different pattern and frequency of strategies use by gender in the current study are probably affected by other variables such as ethnic background, cultural background, language learning environment, etc. Based on that evidences, researchers concluded that the consistency of the finding designates that motivation in studying English could lead some benefits to learning a language.

The main goal of the next study was to describe teachers' strategic use of feedback after learners' completed learning communicative activities. This study was done by Rolin-Ianziti (2006) and consisted on observing students' participation in communicative activities that included dialogues, pair works, role play, etc and determining the effectiveness of feedback in the process of learning. The results confirmed that highest percentage of uptake instances as well as repairs follows teaching

initiation of repair. The author concluded that provision of feedback after the completion of a communicative activity avoids interrupting the students as they are speaking

Next and last study was done by Sadighi & Zarafshan (2006) that aimed to determine the use of language learning strategies in relation to the factors of attitude and motivation. The participants were asked to complete the strategy inventory concurrently with the background questionnaire in their regular classes. The results showed that high scores in the social and affective areas, as compared with the lower results in cognitive strategy use, suggest that Iranian EFL learners are more feeling-oriented rather than thinking-oriented. Since learners with positive attitude try to become a member of the target language community, they do their best to know more about the techniques or strategies which can help them acquire a better command of the target language. In conclusion, researchers stated that learners who had positive attitude used these strategies more frequently than those with negative attitude and motivation was not found to have a significant effect on language learning strategies.

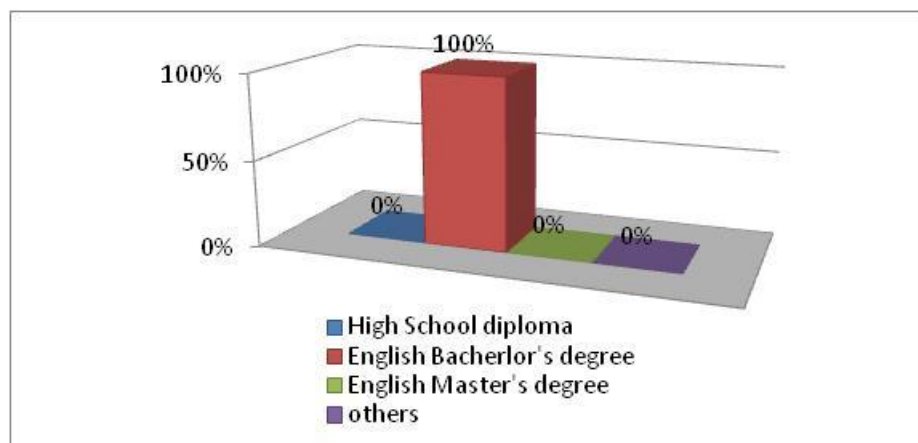
Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

For describing, analyzing, and interpretation of results, the quantitative method will be applied in order to obtain percentages of the teachers' answers about factors related to teachers, students, classroom, and institution that may affect the English language teaching-learning process. The analysis of the results is sustained with the answers given by students in the questionnaires and the details recorded in observation sheets. Main aspects considered in this analysis are classified into factors related to teachers, students, classroom, and institutions.

Factors concerning teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1



Source: teachers' questionnaire

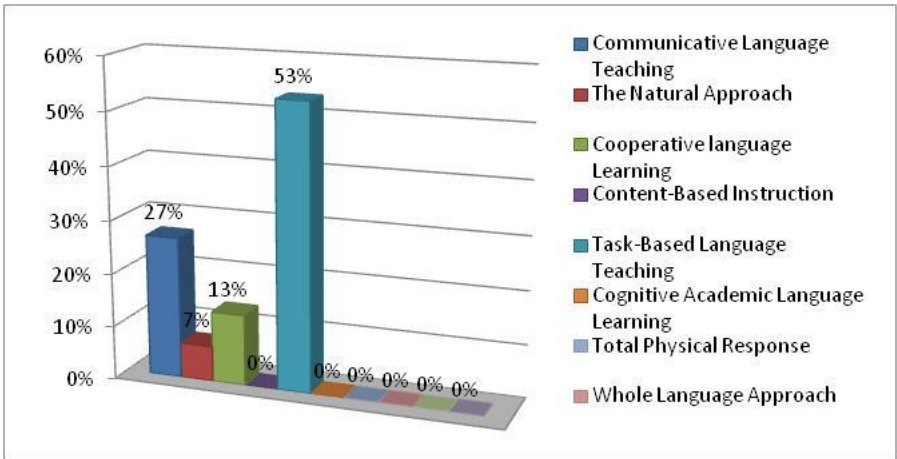
Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

Graph 1 indicates that all the interviewed teachers had an English Bachelor's Degree, and there were not any teachers with English Master's degree. It is important to explain that all teachers with an English Bachelor's Degree had high school diploma, but they did not check that option in the questionnaire, because they considered only the Degree obtained at University. This result is important evidence that Ecuadorian public

high schools have a staff of teachers with formal education of 3rd level in English language teaching. The survey applied to those teachers showed that they are professionals with long experience in the teaching field, because they have been working an average of 10 years in secondary education. Another characteristic of the interviewed teachers is the place where they learned English; all of them had learned the language in Ecuador at different institutions such as high school, private language institutes, and university. In addition, teachers agreed in saying that reading is the skill easier for them to teach and that they would like to continue studying because according to some of them, it is necessary to improve their teaching skills.

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

Graph 2



Source: teachers' questionnaire
 Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

In response to the question about the methods used in class, 53% of the respondents chose Task-Based language; 27% selected Communicative language teaching; and 13% of teachers preferred Cooperative language learning. Teachers used only the first two methods but not the last one in the observed classes; details about it are presented as follows.

Teachers used Task-Based-Language, because they assigned to students different tasks such as reading and classifying information, completing charts or schedules with information, writing short texts, drawing maps, etc. All those activities were related to the textbook assigned to each course, and correspond with the description given by Larsen-Freeman (2000) about the characteristics of this approach. But rather than interact between them, students worked individually doing the tasks assigned to them. In that way, learners rarely used the target language to exchange opinions or learn from each other. The observed teachers did not take advantage of the characteristics of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method, because of the number of students in the classroom. It is not easy for students and teachers to work in classes where the level of noise is not adequately controlled. Since TBLT demands that learners use speaking skills to exchange information and explain the development of activities, teachers did not collaborate adequately to implement the method in the observed classes.

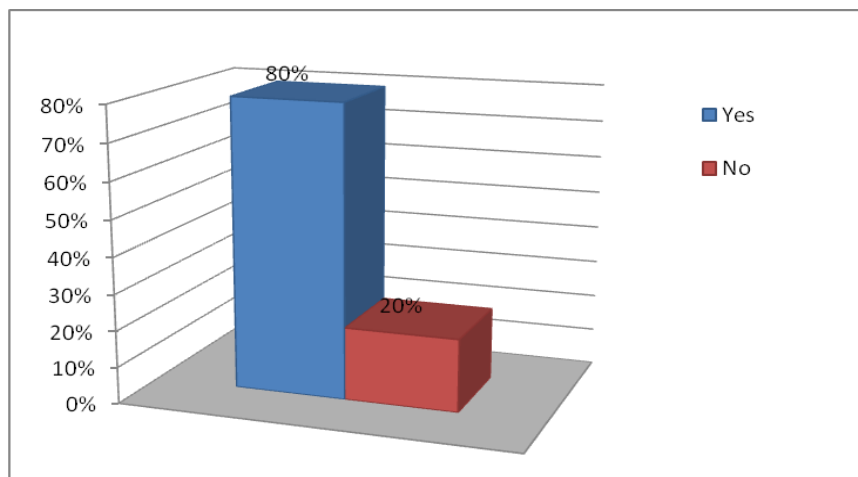
About the use of Communicative Language teaching (CLT) in the observed classes, students performed activities in which they used language functions such as greetings and introductions. They also gave different type of information about their families and personal interests. Other types of communicative activities involved also giving and asking for direction. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), CLT fosters communication by the use of language functions that learners need to convey to express meaning interactively. The type of activities done by students in the observed classes had similar characteristics as those mentioned by Larsen-Freeman (2000), but interaction took place mainly between teachers and students rather than among learners. That occurred because teachers neither used group work nor encouraged students to use

language for communication. In addition, the activities were always related to the exercises described in the book assigned to each course and teachers did not design learning activities related to the method because they did not teach classes based on their lesson plans.

Finally, teachers indicated that they use Cooperative language learning for teaching their lessons, but students never worked in groups in the observed classes because teachers used individual activities only. A common factor in the observed classrooms was the high number of students, and it impeded teachers to use group work and cooperative techniques because lack of space made difficult to arrange seats according to the activities.

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

Graph 3



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

Graph 3 shows that 89% of the teachers use whole-group activities to teach their lessons and 20% of them do not use this type of activity. The type of activities developed by students in the observed classrooms was individual and assigned by the

teachers in relation to the textbook. The activities were assigned according to the lessons of the textbook and teachers monitored students' work and asked them questions to find out the results. Interaction between teachers and students was not good because many students were talking between them or doing other activities and they did not pay attention to the teacher. Sometimes, teachers asked questions and nobody answered because they were not working on the activities.

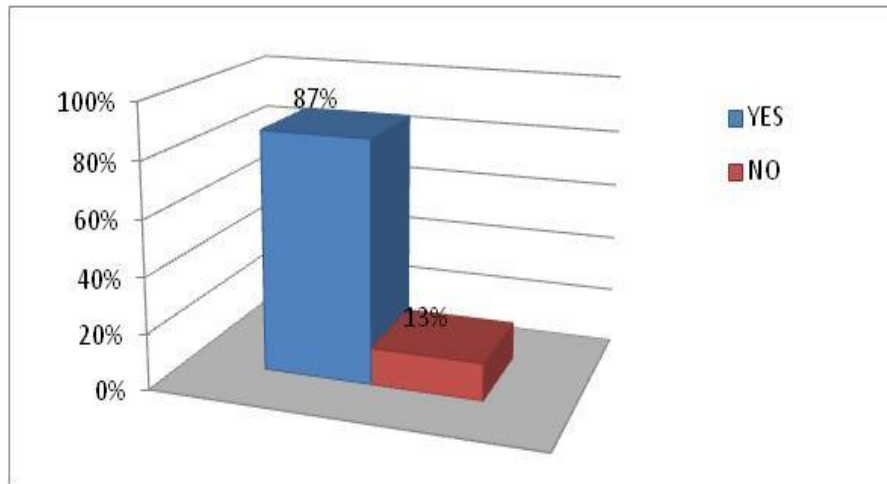
In relation to the activities, learners indicated that they like them. However, the situation observed in the class and mentioned previously indicates that students were not engaged in the learning process. Therefore, students' answers do not bring reliable evidence to support the analysis of this question.

In order to explain better the events observed in relation to whole-group activities, it is important to refer to the theory about motivation. Burden (2000) remarks that motivation is important to engage students in the learning process to avoid behavior problems in the classroom. In this case, the observed teachers did not develop any kind of motivating activity to raise students' attention in the topics. Moreover, teachers only followed instructions from the course book and used the board as part of the class routine without involving students in games or brainstorming sessions. This situation is related to two main aspects: lack of teaching resources and overcrowded classrooms. About teaching resources, Calvo (2006) explains that they facilitate learning and develop students' interest in the topics of the lesson. Concerning overcrowded classrooms, it increases opportunities of interaction among students due to the reduced space between seats making difficult for learners to focus on the class, and therefore lack of attention.

In conclusion, the two factors described above and teachers' lack of creativity to teach classes effectively affects greatly the quality of students' engagement in the observed lessons.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 4



Source: teachers' questionnaire

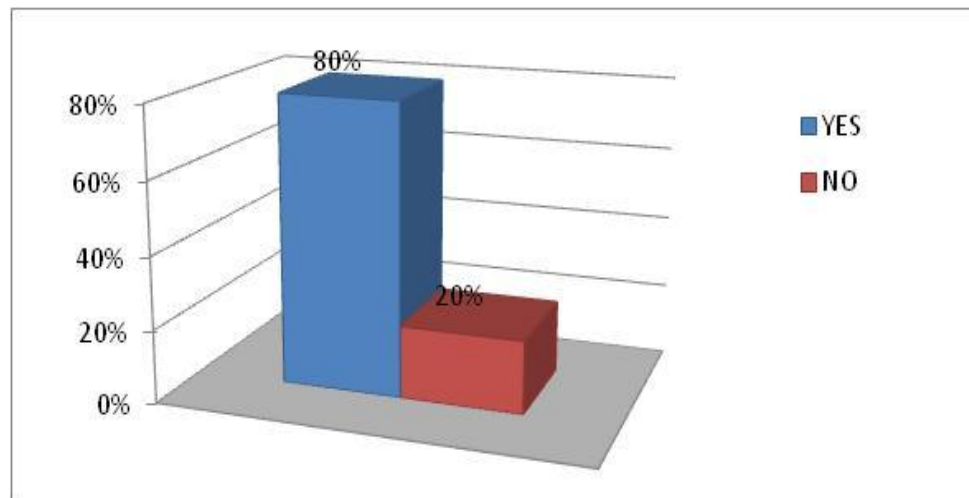
Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

The responses to the question showed in graph 1 were 87% positive and 13% negative. These results coincide with the observations done in classes because all teachers used individual activities to teach their lesson. Students worked individually in the activities and some of them went to the board to write their results. Sometimes, learners worked in pairs depending on the task assigned by the teacher but it occurred rarely. Moreover, some teachers commented about this question that they prefer to use individual activities because in whole-group activities or group work students do not work well and they only cause trouble and talk a lot because their seats are too closed to each other due to the high number of students in the classroom; this caused difficulty in changing seats arrangement to work in groups. Therefore, teachers used individual

activities because learners work better and they had less opportunities to talk between them. In that way, activities were used as a mean of control discipline rather than help students to learn and practice language structures.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

Graph 5



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

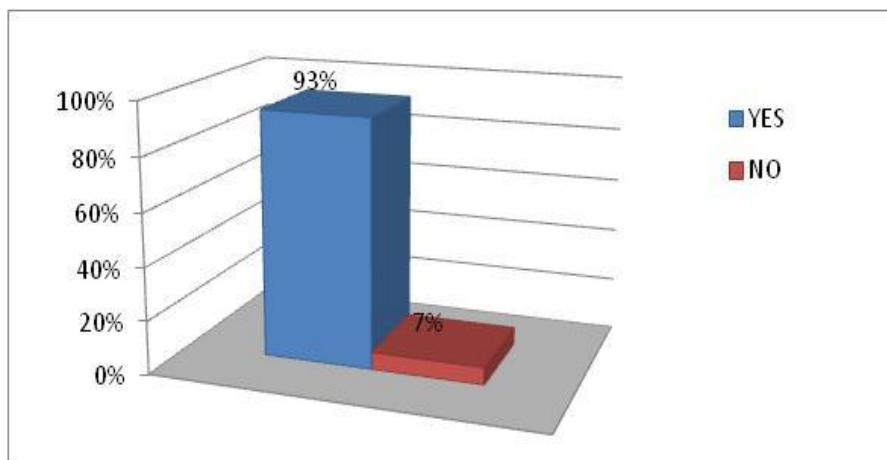
Concerning the use of group work activities to teach the lessons, 80% of teachers answered positively and 20% of them gave negative answers. Even though many teachers indicated that they use group work activities to teach their lessons, the observations done in each class showed that this type of activity was not used because students worked in individual activities all the time. This result shows a contradiction in teachers' opinions because almost all of them commented that they do not use group work activities because of disciplinary problems with students. According to those teachers, they had tried to organize students in groups but it increases the frequency of

bad behavior and students only spend time talking between them and they do not focus on working as they should.

The results showed in graph 5 are in some way related to the type of methods teachers use to teach, because the most preferred ones aim to teach learners to use language for communication. However, students did not use English to communicate and exchange opinions between them because teachers neither used group work nor designed activities to encourage learners to use the target language for communication. Even though most of the activities were suitable for having students exchanging information among them, teachers asked learners to work individually because high number of students in the classroom did not make possible to change the position of the seats to work in communicative activities.

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

Graph 6



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

The question about the use of English in class was answered affirmatively by 93% of the teachers, and only, 7% indicated that they do not use English most of the time in

class. About this, all students pointed out that teachers speak in English in all the classes. In fact, the observed teachers used the target language in all the classes and their pronunciation and use of language structures was satisfactory. Those teachers spoke in English to explain the contents, to give instructions, to ask questions, and to respond to students' inquiries about aspects of the lesson that were not clear to them. It was observed that in some classes, teachers spoke in Spanish, because some students did not understand complex meaning. After clarifying students' doubts, teachers continued the rest of class speaking in the target language. Similarly, teachers used their native language to deal with disciplinary problems.

An important aspect about this result is that students had good source of input from teachers because they used English to explain the classes and to model the activities and exercises that students had to do. Teachers' language proficiency was identified as B1 within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). That is, teachers are able of describing experiences and actions, ideas, wishes, and give brief explanations for opinions and plans.

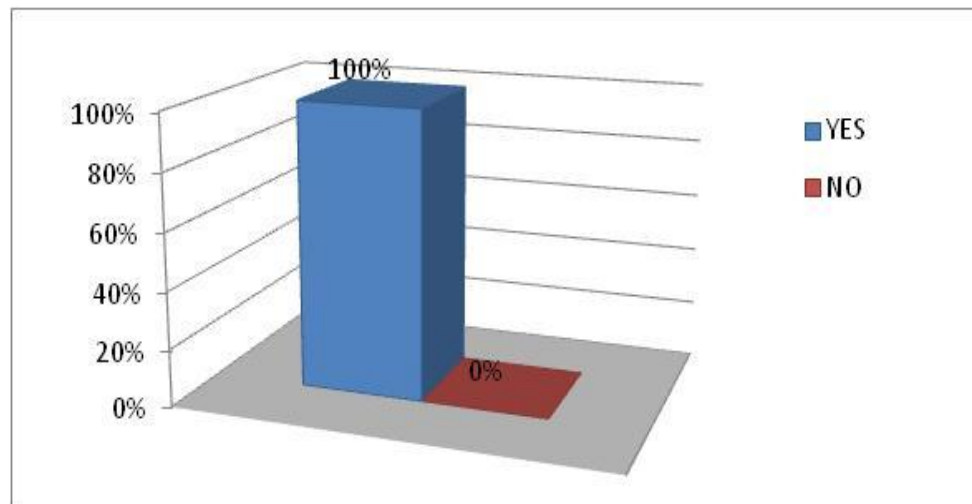
However, a small number of learners did not use the language correctly to interact with the teacher because most of them were not focused in the activities. Even more, many students did not pay attention, and were totally lost about the tasks they had to do; when teachers asked them to participate they did not know what to respond. It was observed that students talked a lot between them easily because seats were too closed to each other due to the high number of students in the classroom. In addition, teachers did not motivate students to use language for communication and most of the activities were

developed individually, because lack of space impeded teachers to change students' seats to work in groups.

Lack of space is a serious problem in public education in Ecuador. It has exists for decades, because of the high demand of educational needs on the part of medium-to-low social classes. Therefore, it is not easy for teachers to speak English in overcrowded classes, and students cannot listen adequately because of the level of noise.

Do teachers plan their lessons?

Graph 7



Source: teachers' questionnaire
Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

Graph 7 shows that the majority of respondents plan their lessons. In the observed classes, teachers applied frequently some aspects of lesson design such as time, objectives, introduction of the new topic, guided or individual practice, and feedback. Usually, the observed teachers explained students what they were going to in that class. Then, they introduced new topics or reviewed previous concepts given in other lessons. After that, teachers assigned activities and indicated students the time given for each task. Once students were working in the activities, teachers monitored and checked

what students did by asking them to go to the board to write their results. While that occurred, teachers reviewed students' work individually and provided feedback if they did not understand something. All those aspects of the lesson plan gave the class a sense of organized teaching process. That, according to Marlowe & Canestrari (2006) and Richards & Farrell (2011) ensures successful teaching.

However, the observed classes were frequently interrupted by disciplinary problems caused by students' bad behaviors. About that situation, it is important to mention that teachers did not use warm-up activities and the only type of material used in the classrooms was the board. In addition, students' answers give evidence that teachers did not use any type of teaching resource because almost all of them gave negative responses about the use of supplementary materials in the classes.

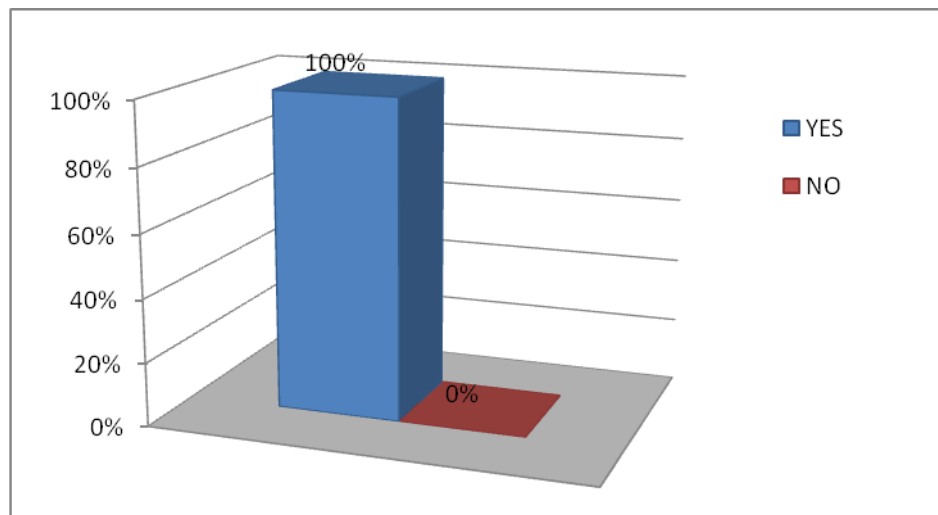
In order to analyze those results mentioned above, it is important to cite some authors. Mishra (2008) explains that the set or lead-in to the lesson is an important element of a lesson plan, and it is the beginning strategy used by the teacher to engage students in the topic of the class; it is known as "warm up" and consists on activities that teachers develop to grasp students' attention to the topics. Some warm ups consist on games, brainstorming, or displaying attractive pictures and flashcards related to the topic or content of the lesson.

Regarding supplementary materials, Richards & Farrell (2011) state that they are important elements in a lesson plan; and, Calvo (2006) explains that teaching resources are useful tools that facilitate learning and develop students' interest in the topics of lessons. Therefore, teachers were not able to engage students in the topics of the lessons

through warm up and attractive materials. In that way, learners showed disruptive behavior because they were bored and not focused in the topic.

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

Graph 8



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

From the data in graph 8, it can be observed that 100% of the teachers reported applying aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instructions to teach their lessons. Similarly, students indicated that teachers controlled discipline, assigned time to the activities, provided feedback, and gave clear instructions.

One of the aspects that demanded more effort from teachers was discipline. The observed teachers spent most of the time trying to control students' behavior and asking learners to be silent. Students' attention was focused on the lessons only at the beginning when teachers arrived to the class and called the roll. After that, the noise of students' talking invaded the classroom and it impeded teachers to work adequately.

Despite of disciplinary problems and level of noise, it was possible to hear how teachers explained the task to students and assigned time. They used clear language to give concise explanations in loud voice and with good accent; only the students sit in the first rows were able to listen to the teachers and the others at the back of the classrooms were impeded to do it because of the distance and the continuous conversation of their peers. In that context, it can be applied what Everston & Winstein (2006) explain, even teachers give appropriate instructions; students are responsible for their actions. Nevertheless, the instructions given by the teacher helped the students, who demonstrated interest in learning, to complete their tasks successfully. In consequence, those students learned from teachers how to solve problems; that is what Allwright & Bailey (1991) explain about instructions.

About feedback, teachers were observed giving explanations to students when they needed, not only to the whole-class but also individually. They monitored students' work and asked them to go to the board to check their understanding and explained how to correct errors. There were students who participated with enthusiasm and they demonstrated good performance as a result of teachers' feedback. In consequence, those students' learning was benefited because as Nicol & McFarlane-Dick (2006, p. 204) say, "Effective feedback leads to learning gains". However, other students were not interested in learning, and they did not have all the necessary material. For that reason, they did not work well and it was impossible for teachers to provide them appropriate feedback.

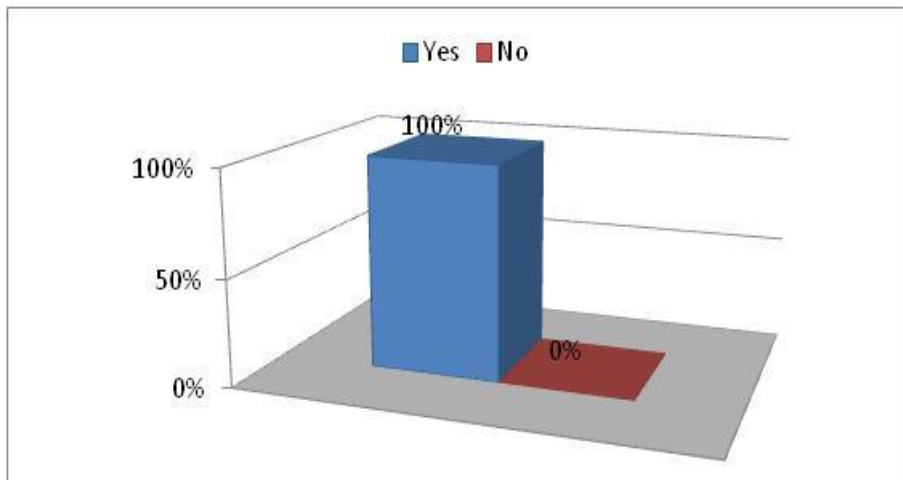
Broadly speaking, teachers did their best effort trying to manage learning but they failed in controlling discipline. Maybe, teachers had had more success if they would

have delegated functions to students such as help their peers and collaborate with the learning process. Everston & Winstein (2006) explain that instructions as a mean of assigning responsibilities are important because they promote efficient management of groups.

Factors concerning students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?

Graph 9



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

As shown in graph 9, 100% of the teachers said considering students' needs to teach English successfully. About students' needs, Kelly (2004) and Sprenger (2008) refer to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Visual learners like to learn by pictures, handouts, etc. Auditory students prefer to learn by listening, and the activities suitable for them are for example: lecture, discussion, or reading aloud. And, the last type of learners is kinesthetic; these students like to learn new information by touching and experiencing with things; they usually sit very comfortably, speak slowly, use their hands, and are easily disturbed by environmental conditions.

In the observed classes, teachers used mainly the board to have students working on writing sentences to correct their errors. In addition, students were asked to read aloud or to listen to text read by their teachers. Other resources such as pictures or audio never were used in the observed class. Students' answers confirmed what was observed in classes, because they indicated that teachers did not use any kind of material to teach their classes. In that way, the observed public high school teachers did not consider students' needs to teach their classes. Moreover, most of the activities were based on the textbook assigned to each course and teachers did not assign other types of tasks to add variety to the class and to motivate students to learn.

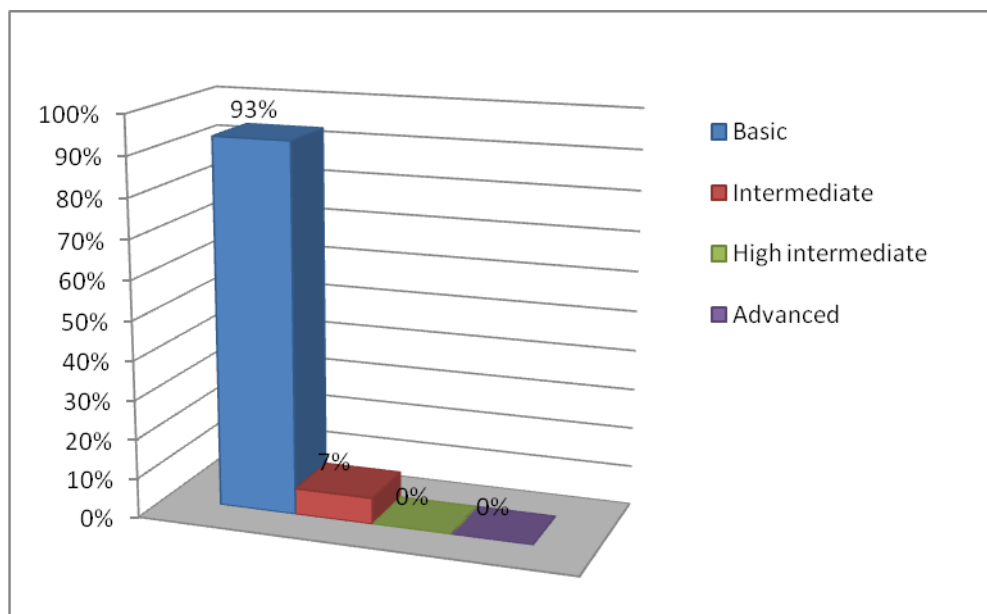
According to Burden (2000), motivation is important to engage students in the learning process and to avoid behavior problems in the classroom. And, Lumsden (1994) considers, teachers must be aware of this and they have to create an adequate learning environment to raise motivation in students. Moreover, For Calvo (2006), a successful use of teaching resources relies on some aspects that teachers must consider such as the subject to teach, students' needs, conditions of the environment, time needed to use the material.

Since the board was the only resource available in the classrooms, it would have been used by teachers to provide learners with sensory experiences. According to Dobbs (2001), visual and kinesthetic learners are benefited by the activities done on the board by teachers and students. Learners use sight to see the contents and writing is a physical activity that involves the body because students walk to the board and use hands to write.

As a result of the observations done in the classes and the theoretical information of the authors mentioned above, teachers did not consider all students' need to teach English successfully. For that reason, they experienced difficulties in their teaching process such as students' low interest in the lesson and bad behaviors.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 10



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

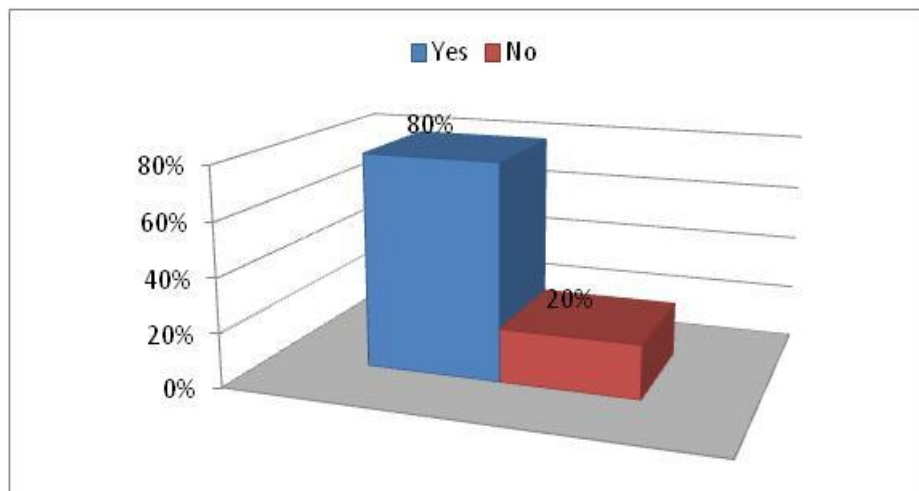
In graph 10 it is clearly that 93% of the teachers indicated that students had a basic level, and only 7% of the teachers specified that learners had an intermediate level.

These results can be explained in part by the activities done by students in the observed classes which consisted on writing sentences on the board, reading texts, filling charts with information, completing sentences, etc. In addition, the types of structures studied in the lessons were mainly simple present and past tenses, present and past progressive, imperatives, and other types of grammar structures that corresponded to a basic level

due to their simplicity. About that, students perceived that the activities were easy for them, and it was observed that they did not have difficulty to work with that type of structures. In addition, there were students who were not able to complete some activities mainly because they did not have all their learning material complete. As a result, students did not demonstrate interest in learning, because teachers did not motivate them to go beyond their level.

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?

Graph 11



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

When the teachers were asked whether they consider students' level to teach English successfully, 80% answered positively and 20% gave negative responses. The majority of teachers were observed assigning simple activities that were always in relation to the textbook assigned to the course. Students worked individually completing charts, filling on the blanks, and other tasks specified in the book. Some of the functions they were taught consisted on basic greetings, giving and asking for basic information,

describing people and objects, and talking about routines, etc. Students perceived that those activities were easy for them, according to the answers that they gave in the questionnaire.

About the minority of teachers who reported not considering students' level to teach English, the information given by them on the questionnaires corresponded to senior years. Those teachers taught more complex structures such as first conditional, passive voice, modal verbs, etc. In the observed classes, not all the students were able to use grammar structures correctly and the teacher had to guide them to complete the activities. In those courses, learners also were not focused on the lesson and did not have all their materials to work adequately.

In sum, the observed teachers did consider students' level to teach English, but students did not show interest on learning the target language.

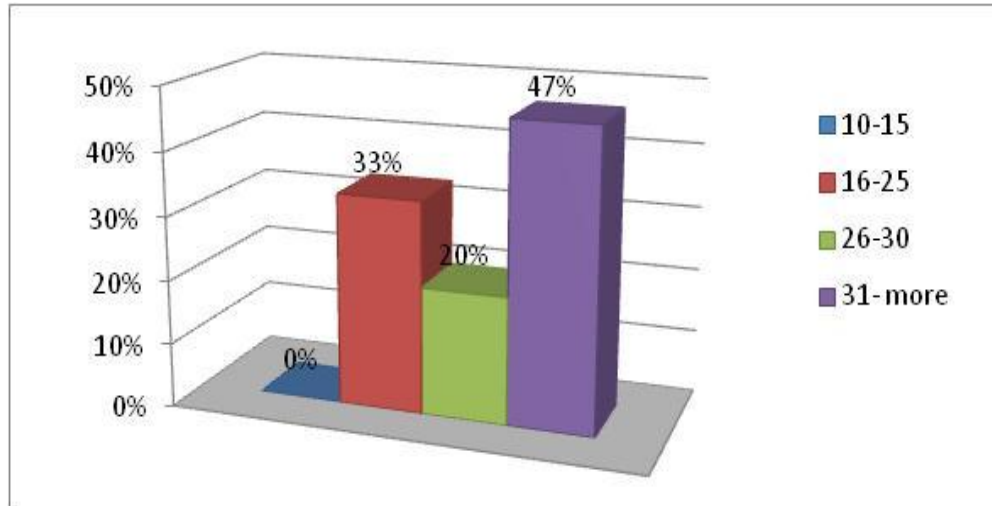
Teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador is a challenge for teachers, as some of them expressed in the interview. Medium-to-low social classes has few opportunities to use the English language, because not all learners enter the university; therefore, they neither will have a job nor will use the target language. Moreover, Ecuadorians do not use English in their daily life to communicate, and for that reason all the knowledge acquired in high schools or language institutes cannot be applied in real life.

Despite of English is a global language, and people around the world use this language to be up-to-date about information, a few percentages of Ecuadorians have access to technology and Internet. As a result, learners in public high schools are not motivated to learn English, and it influences their level of progress in language learning.

Factors concerning classroom

How many students are there in the observed classes?

Graph 12



Source: teachers' questionnaire

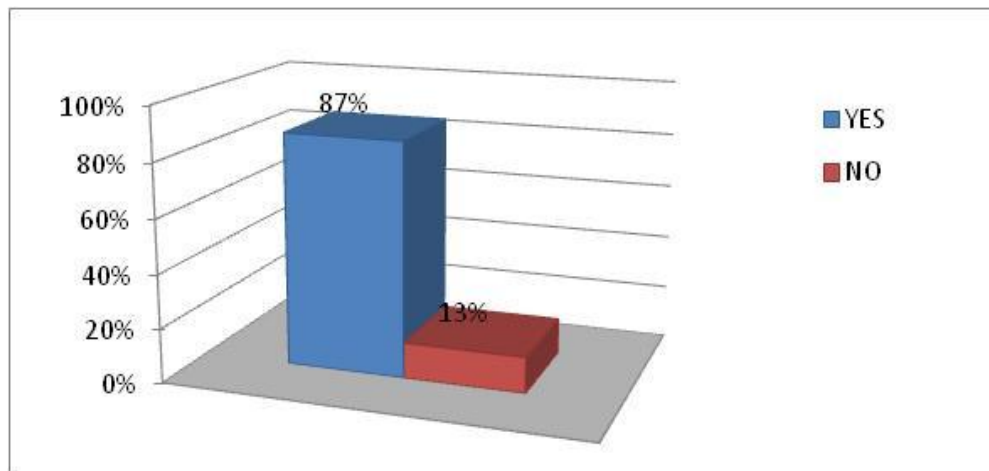
Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

When teachers were asked about the number of students in their classes, they gave varied answers. 47% of teachers indicated 31 or more students, 33% of the participants pointed out that there were 16 to 25 students, and 20% indicated 26 to 30. However, the number of students in each observed class was verified by checking the list and it indicated 35 students per class. This number was also confirmed by counting students before start the process of observation in each class and sometimes the number varied because some students were not present; in those cases class size decrease to 26 or 30. Gillies & Ashman (2003) declare that large classes are characterized for having more than twenty five students. In consequence, the observed classes were large; it is a common characteristic of public Ecuadorian high schools, because there is a high number of students that require to attend classes as part of their development.

In order to decrease the number of students per classrooms in public high schools, the current government has been building new institutions with comfortable classrooms in which students will learn appropriately.

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

Graph 13



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

The results shown in graph 13 are interesting because 87% of the teachers indicated feeling comfortable with the number of students they were working with and only 13% of them answered the opposite. However, it was observed that teachers had difficulty teaching that number of students because they spent a lot of time controlling discipline and that situation limited academic time. Even more, during the interview many teachers commented that main problems a teacher faces when teaching English in Ecuador is the number of students in the classrooms. According to those teachers, it is not easy to control discipline and they would like that supervisors help them to deal with that situation. Even more, students indicated that the number of students in the classroom does not help them to learn better.

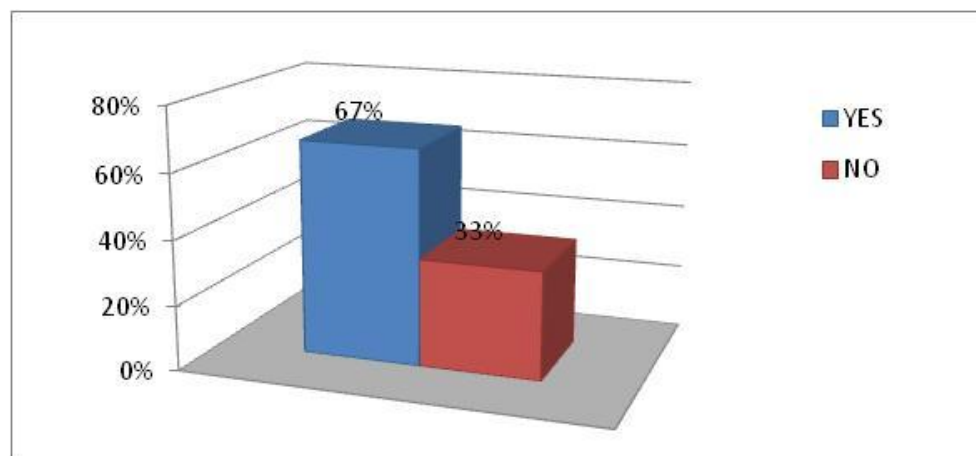
The observations done in the observed classes showed that teachers need to improve their pedagogy to teach large classes. It was observed that teachers followed the same routine in all the classes because they explain grammar structures and have students to work in the textbook or the whiteboard. Thus, teachers do not make classes more interesting; students were bored and talk a lot between them.

Regarding large classes, Gillies & Ashman (2003) explain that this type of classes usually turns on a discussion of the effects that the number of students led by one teacher has on teachers' methodology, cooperative learning in groups, project development, etc. For these authors, teachers' pedagogy is more significant than the number of students in the classroom. This means that the types of teaching techniques, methods, and other pedagogical strategies used in the classroom, help teachers to create the appropriate learning environment no matter whether the class is large or small. Each method provides teachers with a variety of techniques and procedures that can be combined with appropriate materials. But, it is necessary also that teachers use a great amount of creativity in order to get students involved in the topic.

Certainly, class size has been a challenge for Ecuadorian educational authorities. In fact, teachers complained about this situation during the interview, and pointed it out as an obstacle for the English teaching-learning process. Teachers argued that large classes influence students' behavior and affect interaction between teachers and students. Despite of these reasons, teachers' answers do not coincide with real facts; maybe, because teachers are afraid of authorities' reaction. That concern was related to the evaluation programs carried out by the Ministry of Education for ensuring the quality of education in Ecuadorian public high schools.

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

Graph 14



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

From graph 14, it can be seen that 67% of the interviewed teachers considered that they have enough space to work with the group of students assigned to them; and, 33% of the teachers indicated the opposite. In each class, classroom space was carefully observed and it looked overcrowded due to the number of students. Seats were arranged in rows and students' desks were too close to each other. There was not enough space to walk between the rows and students' backpacks made more difficult to move freely inside the classroom. During the classes, teachers walked along the classroom to monitor students' work and they always asked students to accommodate their stuffs. It seems that teachers perceive that, although the reduced space, they are able to move in some way inside the classroom; therefore, for them, there is enough space.

According to Savage & Savage (2010), the dimensions, size, shape, and organization of classroom space are aspects that influence the development of activities

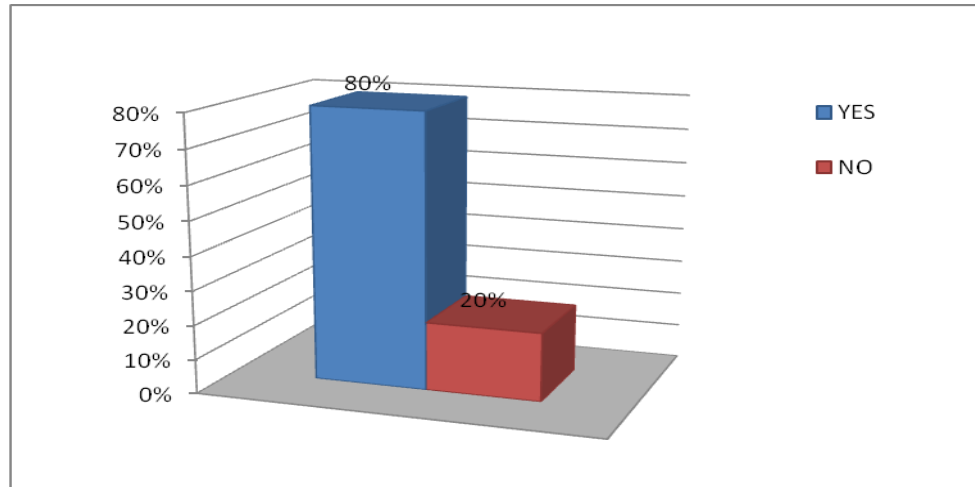
during lessons. In fact, the observed classes look overcrowded because the dimensions of the classroom were not suitable for the number of students. As a result, interaction between teachers and students was not good because teachers spent a lot of time trying to control discipline and students did not pay attention to them. About that, Gifford, Steg & Reser (2011) explain that overcrowded classrooms affect the students' learning process and the interaction between teachers and learners because they feel uncomfortable and anxious.

Another consequence of the reduced space was the level of noise in the classroom. Since students' seats were too close to each other, learners talked a lot between them and it impeded teachers to teach classes adequately, students did not behave well and their level of attention was poor. In consequence, the reduced space affected the teaching-learning process. Regarding that, Shalaway & Beech (1998) mention that students behave well and achieve academic goals when teachers provide them a good classroom space according to learners' needs. But in Ecuador, teachers do not choose a classroom, they are assigned one. Moreover, lack of classroom space is a problem that has been affecting public Ecuadorian high schools since a long time. Even though classrooms in public institutions are designed to hold up to 30 students, class size usually exceeds that limit. This situation is caused by the high demand of educational needs among Ecuadorian population, especially in low social classes. Consequently, the number of available public high schools is not enough for the number of students that try to have access to education each year.

For all the reasons mentioned above, it can be concluded that classroom space is a factor that affects the English language teaching-process in the observed classes.

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

Graph 15



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

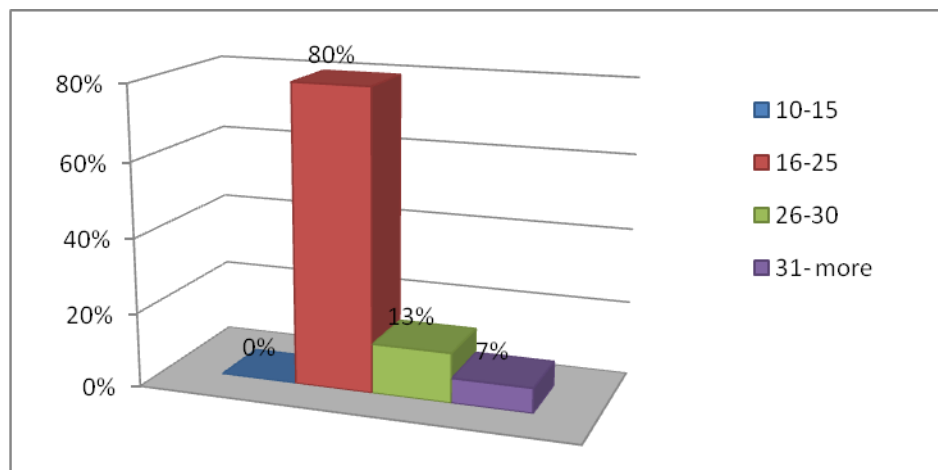
About seating arrangement, 80% of the teachers indicated that they place seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes, and 20% of them answered the opposite. In addition, students indicated that they like the way teachers arrange seats to work according to the different types of activities. In the observed classes, none of the teachers asked students to arrange seats because the type of work was individual. All students' desks were arranged in rows and teachers did not change that scheme in any of the activities. According to Stone (2010), desks in row are the more traditional model and teachers use that arrangement for individual work. Actually, some of the activities assigned by teachers needed that students worked individually. But, there were some tasks that required another type of model. For instance, there was an observed class in which students had to find out what their classmates watch most on television and they needed to ask each other information and write about their results. In that class, the

teacher did not organize students in groups because of lack of space. And, students left their desk to ask each other for information. That situation created disorder and a lot of noise that the teacher was not able to control. Many of the students took advantage of the situation and used the assigned time for the activity to make jokes to their classmates and to talk about topics not related to the task.

It was observed that teachers did not arrange students' seats because of lack of space. Classrooms were suitable for less than 30 students, but there were 35 to 40 learners in each room. Therefore, teachers used only row format because students did not have to change position of desks; in that way, learners worked better.

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

Graph 16



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

Graph 16 shows that 80% of the interviewed teachers prefer to teach groups of 16 to 25 students; 13% of the teachers consider that 26 to 30 students is a good number of learners to teaching; and, only 7% of teachers consider that 31 or more is an appropriate number of students to teach English. Since Gillies & Ashman (2003) declare that large

classes are characterized for having more than twenty five students, these results give evidence that teachers prefer to work with small classes because the majority of them selected groups of 16 to 25 students. In addition, the number of students in observed classes demanded from teachers more effort to control discipline, it seems that their selection is related to what Canady & Rettig (2008) mention, small classes reflect less behavior problems than big classrooms, this has been proved as a factor that influence students' learning.

Clearly, the results above demonstrate teachers' feelings about one of the most important problems of public education in Ecuador. It was mentioned before that class size is considered by the interviewed teachers, as a common problem in teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador. It was observed that interaction between teachers and students is greatly affected by the number of students in the classroom, because it was difficult for the majority of teachers to speak and give instructions in English in a crowded room where learners chat a lot and did not pay attention to the class.

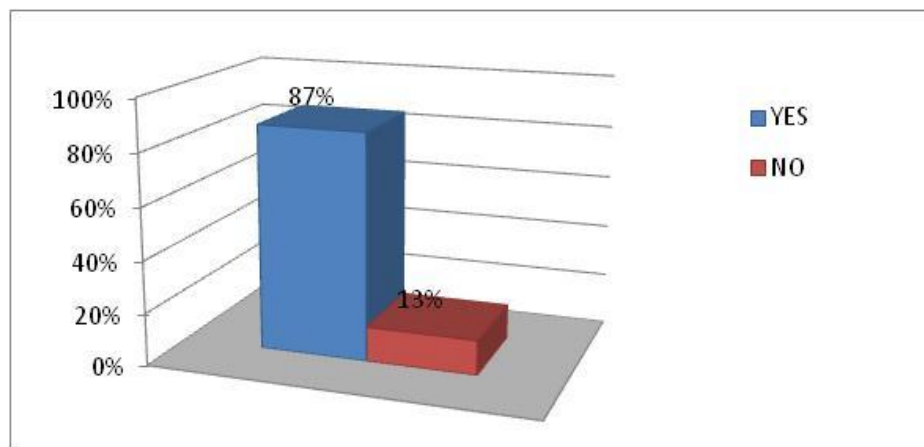
Teachers' responses show that they consider small classes with less than 25 students as an ideal setting for teaching English. In that way, teachers would be able to organize students in groups to work in communicative activities, and students would have more and better opportunities to interact with their teachers without the constant interruption of their peers. Besides, teachers would pronounce English better, because they would not need to speak loud, and students would listen appropriately.

To conclude, it is important to mention that although the Ecuadorian government is trying to find a solution to the problem of class size in public education, and new institutions are being building for providing better conditions to students, the number of

high schools in the country is not enough for the amount of students who need to receive secondary education. Therefore, teachers' expectations about the ideal number of students for teaching English is far from became a reality yet.

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

Graph 17



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

When teachers were asked if they use teaching resources to teach their classes, 87% of them responded that they do, and 13% of them answered negatively. The majority of teachers indicated that they used materials such as computer, CD-recorder, flashcards, charts, and posters. On the contrary, students indicated in the questionnaire that teachers do not use teaching resources in the classroom. Students' answers were confirmed by means of observation, because there was not any type of materials in the classroom. Only a CD player was used once in a class, but students were not able to listen anything because of the bad quality of the audio and the level of noise made by the students. The board was the most used material in the observed classes, and it was used

mainly by teachers and students to write sentences and to draw charts in order to fill them with information.

About the board, Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) describe it as a common tool in the classroom that teachers may use to write information. In addition, Dobbs (2001) explains that the board can be used to provide learners a sensory experience because visual and kinesthetic learners are benefited when they see what teachers and other learners write on the board.

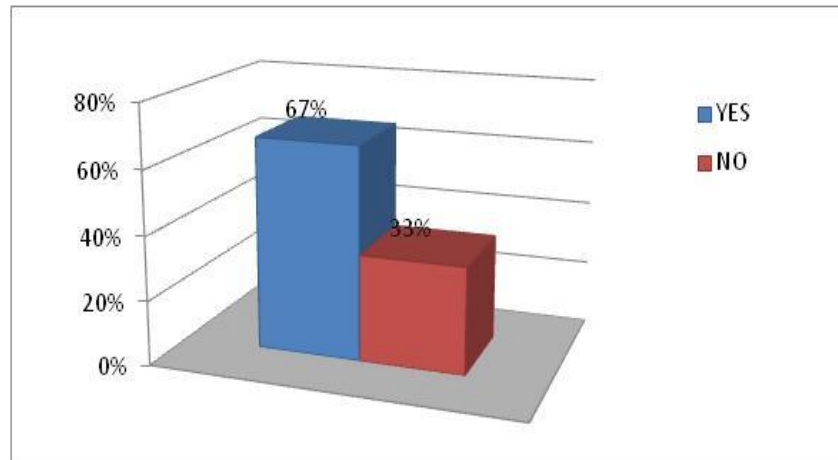
In the observed classrooms, the board was used as it was described by the authors mentioned above. Here, it is worth to indicate that the high schools selected for this research did not have the necessary material that teachers need in the classroom. Besides, teachers did not bring to the class any type of supplementary material such as pictures from magazines or newspapers. Teachers indicated also that they used computers; however, none of the institutions had any kind of technology. That situation raises a question, why did teachers indicate that they use teaching resources? It seems that teachers indicated that they use supplementary materials, because they consider the whiteboard and course books as part of teaching resources. In addition, some of them declared their concern about lack of materials for teach their classes. According to them, this is a common problem in public institutions, because there are not enough economic resources to buy the necessary materials.

Going further, it seems that teachers' answers give evidence of an adverse attitude to the observation process; some of them asked if the results of the research will be analyzed by authorities. Therefore, teachers' concerns corroborate what Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2009) explain about non-participant observation; results may be

influenced by the presence of the observer because he could make that activities happen in a different way.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph 18



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

In response to the question about the appropriateness of the resources available in the classroom, 67% of the teachers responded affirmatively and 33% gave negative answers. It was observed that only resource available in the classroom was the whiteboard, and it was used mainly to write sentences or to complete charts with information related to the learning activities. All the boards were in good conditions and teachers used red and black markers to write information.

Lack of resources was a common feature of the public high schools selected for this research. In the observed classrooms, there were not pictures or posters related to the English language. In addition, students' desks were in bad conditions and some classrooms looked deteriorated.

In consequence, the results shown in graph 18 are not consistent with the reality observed in the classrooms in all high schools. In this case, teachers' answers could be influenced by the process of observation because some of them seem worried about the effects of the research in their teaching activities. About that, it is important to mention that at the moment when this research was carried out, teachers and authorities in this and other public high schools were aware that the Ministry of Education was planning an evaluation of the teaching process. Therefore, teachers believed that authorities will consider the results of the investigation as an evaluation of the quality of the teaching process. It can be said that teachers' sense of discomfort about the process of observation was influenced by the presence of the observer; this is what Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2009) explain about non-participant observation.

Since this and other results were affected by teachers' attitude toward the process of observation, it is important to explain that classroom observation has also some advantages. According to Mackey & Gass (2005) and Langley (2005), observation brings a deep approach of the activities and interaction that takes place in the classroom.

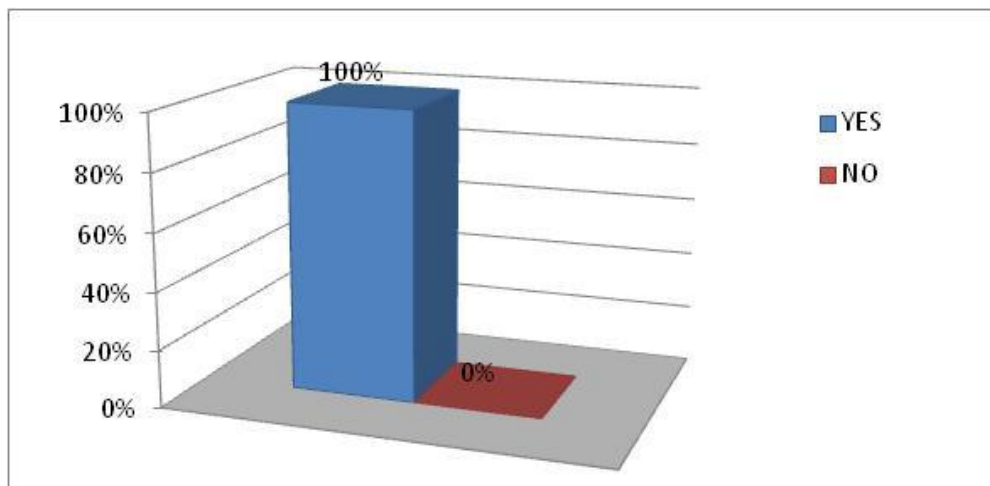
Until now, the observation process carried out in each of the classes has given account of the many failures in Ecuadorian public high schools that influence the English teaching-learning process. Specifically, lack of resources is another problem that has affected public educational institutions for years. Classrooms do not have appropriate materials such as posters, pictures, or any type of material to make learning environment more attractive for students. Instead, each year students receive classes in uncomfortable rooms where the only teaching resource is the board and the textbook; the latter is assigned to teachers and learners at the beginning of the school year. Moreover,

teachers rarely receive supplementary materials with the teachers' book, and sometimes there are not enough books for learners and teachers. More precisely, the majority of public high schools do not have an English department in which a coordinator take responsibility of the resources needed for the development of the classes.

Factors Concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review teachers' lesson plans?

Graph 19



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

All teachers indicated that their lesson plans are reviewed by authorities of the high schools selected for this task. They indicated that at the beginning of the scholar year authorities review annual plans to check whether they take into account the didactic units of the textbook. In addition, the revision of lesson plans takes place once a week. A supervisor in each high school is in charge of the review, but that person neither has knowledge of the English language nor language teaching methodology because he is a general administrator of the academic issues in those high schools.

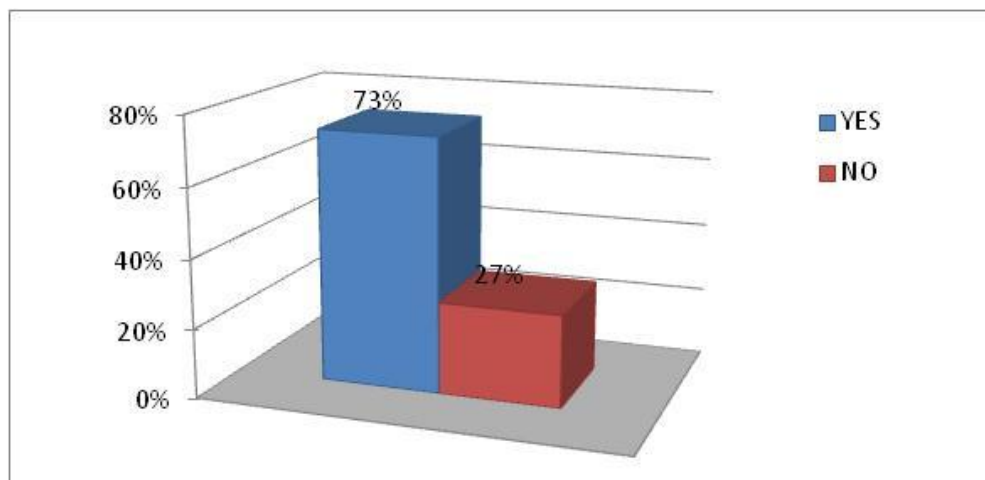
In consequence, there are not professionals with enough experience in English language teaching, in the observed high schools, which could provide feedback to teachers about the appropriateness of their lesson plans. Since Canestrari (2006) and Richards & Farrell (2011) consider that lesson design is fundamental in ensuring successful teaching, lack of appropriate feedback in lesson planning does not allow teachers to raise awareness about the weak points of their teaching process.

The main weak points in the observed teaching process were related to the inappropriate use of teaching methods. Teachers used Communicative Language teaching but they did not encourage learners to communicate between them. Moreover, teachers argued that the excessive number of students in the classroom do not allow them to implement communicative activities because they talk a lot between them and do not focus in the activities. However, the problem was that teachers did not know how to deal with large classes and they teach classes using the whiteboard and the course book as a routine. This shows that, although the teaching process seemed organized, because teachers applied the basic elements of a lesson plan, teachers did not consider motivation as an important element in lesson design and they have not received feedback about that aspect.

Another aspect that may influence teachers' development of lesson plans is the lack of an English standard curriculum. Only Spanish teachers have a national standard that is used to elaborate the annual and monthly lesson plan. As a common practice, English teachers elaborate their lesson plans using the textbook as a guide, or they follow the indications given in teachers' books. Therefore, English teachers do not follow any type of standard in order to organize and plan their classes.

Does the institution monitor teachers' teaching?

Graph 20



Source: teachers' questionnaire

Author: Mónica Viviana Ramírez Aguilar

Regarding the last question of the questionnaire applied to the teachers in this research, 73% of teachers indicated that their teaching is monitored, and 27% of them answered the opposite. The majority of teachers, who indicated that their teaching is monitored, explained that it happens once a month. According to them, a supervisor observes their classes, because it is a requirement of the current government in order to ensure the quality of education in public high schools. About observation, Mackey & Gass (2005), and Langley (2005) explain that it brings a deep approach of the activities and interaction that takes place in the classroom. In addition, observers can give support to teachers immediately after the process concluded. In effect, teachers commented that supervisors have oriented them in some aspects that need to be improved in their teaching process but that support is too general and it is not related to the field of English language teaching.

Conclusions

- One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in the observed high schools are: class size, classroom space, classroom and teaching resources, lessons design monitoring, and managing learning.
- Class size was of 35 average students in all the observed classrooms; it demanded more effort from teachers to control discipline; because of the amount of students, there were a lot of disciplinary problems. There were students who constantly talked between them or bothered others, and the level of noise impeded teachers to teach their classes.
- Classroom space was not appropriate for the number of students in all the observed classrooms. For that reason, seats were too close to each other and the space between rows was not enough to move freely in the classroom. In addition, teachers circulate with difficulty to monitor students' work because the available space between the rows was sometimes occupied by students' backpacks. Because of classroom space was not appropriate for the number of students; teachers did not arrange seats according to the activities to be carried out, and the most preferred seating configuration was row format.
- Lack of classroom and teaching resources was a common feature of the institutions selected for this research. There were not teaching resources available for teachers such as flashcards, posters, or computers; the only available material was the whiteboard. Besides, classrooms looked deteriorated and desks were in bad conditions.

- The observed teachers reported that their lessons plans are reviewed by a supervisor who neither possesses knowledge of the target language nor language methodology. For that reason, they do not have feedback about the appropriateness of their lesson plans.
- All the observed teachers have enough experience in English language teaching and showed good skills in assigning time, providing feedback, and giving instructions. But teachers showed difficulties in dealing with large classes, because they were not able to control students' behavior, and spent much time asking students to behave well.

Recommendations

- It is a must for teachers to improve their skills in managing learning, specifically in dealing with large classes because a controlled discipline is a factor that warrants effective teaching. Therefore, institutions should provide teachers with training in teaching large classes.
- Teachers should find better ways to organize students according to the learning activities in order to help them to work and interact effectively. If students are not able to arrange seats to work in groups, at least they could work in pairs. In that way, learners would use language for communication.
- It is recommendable that teachers develop their creativity in using the whiteboard since it is the only resource available in the classroom; for instance: teachers could use the board to elicit students' prior knowledge, to draw conclusions about a topic, to play spelling games such as noughts and crosses. There is a lot of available information about the use of the board on the Internet and in books
- The observed high schools must have professionals with knowledge in English language teaching and methodology to supervise teachers' lesson plans and teaching. In that way, teachers will obtain good feedback about the aspects that need to be improved.

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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?

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

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

<i>Students' Level (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?

<i>*Students' Needs(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*)

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

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 ()
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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 ()
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GRACIAS!!!!