UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIO HUMANÍSTICA

TITULACIÓN DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN MENCIÓN INGLÉS

Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

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CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO GUAYAQUIL

2014

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De mi consideración:

El presente trabajo de fin de titulación: "Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools" realizado por: Zurita Rosado Tanya Magali; ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, febrero de 2014

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"Yo, Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado, declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de fin de titulación: "Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools", de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo la Magister Eva Ulehlova, 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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Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

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DEDICATION

With all my love, I have dedicated this work and my career…

To my best friend, God, for his help, promises, blessing, for everything.

To my parents, for all advices and support I have received from them.

To my husband, for his kind insistence I continue studying and his
unconditional support to achieve it.

To my children, my endless source of inspiration. Thanks God for sending me
such beautiful gifts.

I love you with all my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Deseo expresar mi sincero agradecimiento a cada una de las personas que han hecho posible que este sueño se convierta en una hermosa realidad.

Particularmente a mis tutores –y de manera especial la Magister Eva Ulehlova–, una persona muy inteligente y amable-. Aprendí mucho de sus consejos.

De manera personal, a mi amiga la Ing. Rosa Andrade, de quien recibí la guía e instrucciones para dar los primeros pasos en mi educación a distancia.

Rosita, tú formas parte de este esfuerzo. Realmente te aprecio.

Infinitas gracias a todos.

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RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

Al mencionar el tema de esta investigación "Factores que influyen el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en las escuelas secundarias privadas ecuatorianas" es fácil imaginar su propósito valioso en pro de la educación. Esta investigación tiene por objeto proporcionar una visión general sobre las necesidades de la población educativa enfocándose en cómo manejar la falta de recursos apropiados y sus efectos negativos en la calidad de la enseñanza. Por estas razones, la actual investigación se llevó a cabo con gran responsabilidad en seis escuelas secundarias en Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Observaciones de clase y preguntas a profesores y jóvenes estudiantes de educación secundaria se hicieron a través de instrumentos tales como hojas de observación, cuestionarios del profesor y cuestionarios del estudiante, respectivamente.

Las preguntas se centraron en los métodos utilizados en las aulas, espacios, disposición de los asientos, las necesidades, niveles y número de alumnos, actividades individuales y de todo el grupo y así sucesivamente. Todos los datos obtenidos se clasificaron en función del porcentaje y los resultados fueron analizados a través de método cuantitativo.

El método aplicado, la cooperación brindada por los participantes y los resultados de este proceso de investigación permitió consolidar datos importantes que servirán de referencia para mejorar las condiciones en las cuales la educación se lleva a cabo.

PALABRAS CLAVES: investigación, educación, recursos, escuelas secundarias, observaciones de clase, instrumentos, métodos, datos, participantes

ABSTRACT

By mentioning the topic of this research "Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools" it is easy to imagine its valuable purpose in pro of education. This research is intended to provide an overview about the needs of educational population focusing on how to manage the lack of appropriate resources and their negative effects on the quality of teaching. For these reasons, the current research was conducted with great responsibility in 6 high schools in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Class observations and questions to teachers and young students of secondary education were made through instruments such as observation sheets, teacher´s questionnaires and student´s questionnaires, respectively.

The questions were focused on methods used in the classrooms, spaces, seating arrangements, needs, levels and number of students, individual and whole-group activities and so on. All data obtained were classified by percentage and the results were analyzed through quantitative method.

The method applied, the cooperation provided by the participants and the results of this process of investigation allowed to consolidate important data that will serve as a reference to improve the conditions in which education takes place.

KEYWORDS: research, education, resources, high schools, class observations, instruments, methods, data, participants

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role of preparing the human being for his/her best development in society. If the educational process is strengthened it will ensure the best education for learners. In the Ecuadorian curriculum is scheduled teaching English language, for this reason it must be assigned the importance it deserves. English is a predominant language because it is one of the most spoken languages and it keeps in touch with each other around the world.

Several educational groups and even websites are dedicated to teaching this language to people of all ages. But there are factors in classrooms that do not allow developing the English language teaching-learning process in all its magnitude. This research seeks to identify them and to find some possible solutions.

Many researchers have tried to get into the field of education through in-depth studies that reveal the problems involved in the educational process. It is cited some of these studies that have given support to the language teaching-learning.

Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, Iyamu (2006) carried out a study to determine the factors affecting the quality of English language teaching-learning in secondary schools in Nigeria. The participants, 3000 senior secondary school students selected among 30 public secondary schools. The results showed that the learning environment in Nigerian public schools should be given priority of attention by state and federal governments providing students with the use of technology and language laboratory.

Azhar (2004) researched the management of large size English language teaching classes: a study at high school level in District Abbottabad, Pakistan. The participants were 100 English teachers and 300 students of a high school. The recommendations were among others: English language curriculum needs to be modified, teachers should be given a special training in the management of large size

ELT classes, modern teaching aids should be available as well as effective and individual attention should be given to weak students.

KhamKhien (2010) performed a research about factors affecting language learning strategy - reported usage by Thai and Vietnamese EFL learners. There were 136 undergraduates participants from two public universities in Thailand and Vietnam. The result highlights the significance of language learning strategies in learning process. The Thai students who had less experience in studying English should be taught how to use strategies to promote their English learning.

A great effort has been made to conclude this work due to time constraints and amount of surveyed population. First of all, time, because visits were suspended for two weeks while tests were carried out so there was no continuity in the process during that time. Besides, the sample had to be wider, in the sense of having more students and more teachers to analyze each level existing in high schools.

In the present research "Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools" were considered specific objectives: Identify students´ English level and their needs in the classroom, determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place, identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers and determine institutional facilities and norms regarding quality education. Additionally, it was established a general objective: Analyze the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process. The objectives have been accomplished because teachers and students will have a lot of first-hand information to improve academic conditions and optimize the resources available in education. Education has gone a long way towards establishing a high level of language proficiency from elementary school to university students but more needs to be done to reach the desired level.

METHOD

Setting and Participants

The present research was developed between Nov. 20th, 2012 and Dec. 27th, 2012, in 6 private high schools in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in 15 designated classrooms of which 4 classes were composed of female students and 11 classes composed of students of both genders. Previously, it was obtained the corresponding permission of high schools´ authorities.

Procedures

As soon as the teachers gave the information about their schedules it was started the investigation; meanwhile, the instruments to be used were prepared. These instruments were an observation sheet, a teacher´s questionnaire and a student´s questionnaire, one for each class observed.

The content of the questions was related to students, teachers, classrooms and educational institutions, as follows:

Students: their needs in the classroom (age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation and learning styles) and their English level (basic, intermediate, high intermediate and advanced).

Teachers: level of education, language proficiency, teaching methods and techniques, percentage of English language used in class, lesson design, and managing learning.

Classrooms: how the class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, classroom and teaching resources influence the development of activities for students and teachers.

Educational institutions: Positive and negative aspects from class observation and lesson design monitoring.

To conduct this research it was necessary to consult diverse bibliographical sources among them books of educational psychology, planning lessons, methods in language teaching, materials used for teaching, and so on. Additionally, information about the importance of English language in Ecuador and some research studies were obtained from the internet. They were carefully chosen in order to support the topic "Factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian private high schools".

Class observation was performed from the back of the classroom, without interruptions, while teachers were managing their classes. At the end, a student was selected to answer the questions contained in student´s questionnaire and teachers provided their collaboration very kindly.

Besides equipment and materials used in the classroom procedures in laboratory classes were observed. Videos using projectors, conversations through CD recorders and techniques about the internet management were part of the instruction that students received in those classes.

Next, with all data collected including the updated and accurate information obtained from the bibliographical sources, there was performed the data compilation and tabulation. The method used was quantitative allowing percentage analysis of each variable and facilitating the understanding of the results.

The interpretation of results was performed by analyzing the data obtained and taking into account theories and opinions from the bibliographical sources selected as well as from the general and specific objectives forming part of the investigation. As a consequence, this work published to our knowledge is undoubtedly based on previous studies and scientific properly referenced concepts.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

Nobody can deny the great importance of the English language and its corresponding study and development around the world. This language opens international borders in many fields such as commerce, education, medicine, science and technology, and it offers a great number of opportunities to improve the lifestyle. English language is called "opened door" to the world. All of the reasons that confirm it are important but there is one that is relevant to people of all ages, it is education.

Machado (2012) stated that it would be positive that every university student reaches a high level of English mastering to increase the socioeconomic development of Ecuador. On the other hand, he suggested that educational systems should promote meaningful curriculum reforms in TEFL.

An example of curriculum reforms can be seen in the Ten-Year Education Plan (Plan Decenal de Educación) that includes among its policies, widespread basic general education, the improvement of quality and equity of education, revaluation of the educational profession and others. Authorities must create a beneficial learning environment for everybody. Good news for Ecuador is the emphasis that the government is taking into advance of learning English language.

According to Ecuador Universitario.com (2012, June 27) SENESCYT (Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación) through the program "Teaching English" are given scholarships to Ecuadorian English teachers to improve the level of teaching English in Ecuador so a great deal of teachers may have the opportunity to become the best English teachers.

These scholarships will allow not only the training for Ecuadorian teachers but as well the accessibility for students in most remote areas of Ecuador to learn this important language promoting the social inclusion. Obviously, it also requires an adequate educational infrastructure that allows normal and effective activities development. Because of the importance of language learning it is necessary to focus on the scenario where the exchange of information takes place. Materials, space, methodology, all must be taken into account when establishing the guidelines and parameters for this learning.

Aspects that will be considered in this research are the teaching approaches and methods, managing learning, lesson design, class size, classroom space and seating arrangement, classroom and teaching resources, classroom observation, learning styles and language aptitude. As reinforcement to this analysis there will be reviewed five previous studies about the subject selected for this research.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

Gradually, students are introduced to the language knowledge using different methods according to their age, level and aptitude. These teaching techniques must be applied carefully so that students can adapt themselves to the different activities to be performed. Consequently, our children, youth, and adults may use a full capacity, the tools that let them to achieve the required objectives ensuring that teachers use the best techniques and methods in order to receive an excellent education for students in an easy and clear way.

It would be relevant to check some of the most frequently used teaching approaches and methods in terms of strategies, procedures and techniques for presenting activities and lessons in order to develop an effective teaching and learning process.

Communicative Language Teaching

Based on the premise that Communicative Language is holistic it could be said that this approach places the knowledge into a dynamic communication where new relations occur generating new events in a constant interaction.

Teachers establish the set for the classroom communication. Students receive the instructions and begin to develop activities. Immediately, communication is activated and students become communicators.

This interaction becomes more effective with the help of didactic materials that spark the imagination of the participants. Otherwise, the class would be boring, monotonous, and could not get the desired target.

Researchers agree that "authentic" materials must be used in the classroom. That is to say, there is a need to work with realistic materials that enclose communicative activities, for example maps, magazines and newspaper articles. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2008)

The Natural Approach

As its name implies, the Natural Approach is framed in naturalistic principles. It is characterized by a prior attention time during which students only hear the teacher commands and instructions. When they have learnt the new words and understood the message and they are prepared to speak in these conditions then they will speak, not before.

Brown (2000) says that if the teacher insists that the student talks as fast as possible it creates a feeling of anxiety on student which decreases the possibility of trying to advance in their learning progress.

Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (2001) argue that a teacher should talk in a comprehensive way, slowly, with Yes/No questions, and students respond with words that they have heard many times. As a result, stress is avoided.

For these reasons, teachers must be prepared with a planned class and they must be fluent and give appropriate and interesting guidelines. The activities should include conversations related to everyday events.

Content-Based Instruction

CBI is a method that combines language and contents learning with an emphasis on the content. Interest will increase when students during learning process focus on something particular rather than just studying the language.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) assert that CBI tries to bring meaningful knowledge as a student´s previous experience. In this way, students benefit themselves with a greater understanding of the class.

It is important to choose effective and authentic texts and speeches. Students will be more committed to teaching. While students are involved in lessons with topics of their interest they will find it easier and funnier to learn. Then, teachers will decide which material their students will enjoy.

In addition, Larsen-Freeman (2008) suggests that teachers should provide assistance to students so that they can understand the purposes and contents of text material after integrate both learning of language and learning of academic subject matter.

Task-Based Language Teaching

On Task-Based Language Teaching the lessons are constructed according to the language needed to perform specific tasks rather than according to the input like

vocabulary. When students perform the task they are exchanging information they have received previously.

Because its focus is on meaning it is appropriate to all-age students. Tasks are characterized by clear orientation, feedback, practice and participation. Also, tasks are designed on the base of interaction among small groups.

Larsen-Freeman (2008) writes that during the interaction among students they have to work to understand each other in order to express their own meaning and to check if they have comprehend correctly. In case of misunderstanding, they have to seek explanation.

Total Physical Response

TPR is a method of teaching language where physical movement is the basis to react to verbal input without thinking too much and helping to reduce feeling of anxiety and stress.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) suggest that before students begin to produce speech and other productive skills, they should internalize a "cognitive map" through listening exercises in the same form as children acquire the first language.

Meanwhile, Larsen-Freeman (2008) asserts that through TPR method students may learn without anxiety because a low anxiety is required to facilitate learning. As a result, students may continue with higher English levels.

As it has been already stated, TPR promotes learning in the same way as children learn their native language, stress-free, and practicing a lot of listening before they speak. Commands are said in a simple way, for instance, open the door, open your book on page 5, sit down. It is not necessary that students respond immediately. Later, more complex structures are emphasized.

Whole-Language Approach

Whole Language is an approach to teaching reading and writing based on principles that the language is a whole of learning integrating writing, reading, listening and speaking. In the context of a whole language class, problem solving is done in cooperative groups and the tasks are focused on the lives of students. Many activities can be done with the integration of the four skills taking into account the usage of authentic and natural material.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) declare that the setting of WLA is the "authenticity" addressing learning to student´s needs, experience and interests.

Subsequently, Larsen-Freeman (2008) expresses that learning the text as a whole is better than learning piece by piece. In other words, students try to understand the meaning of completed text not in part, like vocabulary, grammar, etc.

Managing Learning

Classroom management is a noble activity because it encloses the relationship among students and teacher and their participation between teaching and learning for example, capturing the student´s attention and holding it during the class is a difficult task for the teacher but it´s not impossible.

Woolfolk (2007) writes that an efficient teacher prepares students for transitions so the new activity does not lose the interest of the students.

Classroom effectiveness focusses on both teacher´s efficacy and positive student´s behavior. With relation to the teacher, it is important to be animated, be humorist and enthusiastic and be able to provide a variety of relevant and meaningful activities.

At this respect, Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005) name several guidelines to teachers that conduct an appropriate teaching. They mention: to be consistent, to use supporting materials e.g. visual clues.

Another classroom strategy is to obtain feedback: what students did right (success) or wrong (error). Demonstrations of learning are greater if the feedback is more effective. In other words, mistakes are going to continue if positive feedback is not carried out.

One more time, citing Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005) it is mentioned there are different forms of feedback process: giving tutorials, having discussions, providing explanation, correcting mistakes, etc.

Another classroom resource related to managing learning is time.

Goodman (1990) states that the vital time is the time students spend on practicing meaningful tasks.

Aspects seen above are considered to be key issues for the positive classroom atmosphere.

Lesson Design

Lesson preparation is an important point in a well-managed classroom.

As expressed Woodward (2001) there are many reasons why to plan our lessons such as feelings of insecurity. For that reason it is good to collect everything you need in order to avoid confusions.

Although you cannot be sure how students will respond to class preparation you must have a plan. Just make sure to include on it all necessary resources and information in order to keep attention of learners.

Another point of view, Woolfolk (2007) reports that planning determines what students will learn and this planning must be done at the beginning of the year

and by teachers themselves. On the other hand, planning in group is better because some valuable opinions can be received from experienced teachers.

It is necessary to choose carefully what kind of information the lesson will contain. As Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005) say, aims, procedure, activities, materials, aids, etc. should be considered.

In contrast, Woodward (2001) suggests a model design for planning, as follows:

Before the lesson or course

What do students know?

What resources do I have?

What shall I do?

During the lesson or course

Watch and listen to the students

Ask: How´s the time going?

Note down questions and reactions

After the lesson or course

What´s left over?

Hmm, I need to change that

How has what we did shifted student perception and skill?

I need to calm down and think!   (Woodward 2001, p. 210)

Class Size

Class size related to the number of students in the classroom is transcendent because there is implicit the way that students will receive and develop their learning as well as the classroom discipline. It is said that for more than 40 students the class

is considered to be large. The average class size is 25 students. The acceptable classroom size would be 15 students.

Woodward (2001) claims there are many problems in large size classes such as noise, lack of materials for everybody, and so on. Therefore, teachers need a special planning for the class.

On the contrary, smaller classes have more opportunities to satisfy students´ needs and promote communicative interaction.

Classroom Space and Seating Arrangement

The space is organized depending on the activities, the class size, the activity types, and the furniture style. It is not convenient that students have their back to the board. Moreover, some students who like to seat at the back have little participation in class, for this reason several experienced teachers think that a horseshoe arrangement is better and the purpose of that interaction and better results are realized during the whole class.

Clayton & Forton (2001) mention three goals have to arrange the classroom: it should enclose the length of group sizes, and should provide facilitates to children with special needs and in this way support emotional and social development of students.

On the other hand, Woolfolk (2007) says there are two basic ways to arrange space: personal territories and interest areas, for example, students desks –their personal territories- arranged in the center with their interest areas around the periphery of the room or in the back.

Effective teachers organize from the beginning their classroom with access for all students and they arrange the desks thinking in promoting activities and interaction. Consequently, there will be more attention paid among students.

Classroom and/or Teaching Resources

Teachers and students have the opportunity to make use of a wide variety of resources to teaching in a successful way. Language teaching is not efficient without adequate classroom resources. The most indispensable aid is the board.

Flashcards are useful to improve vocabulary, and laboratory enables to improve pronunciation. The use of technology is motivating for students and necessary for teachers.

Gower (2005) mentions a lot of necessary items: a board, overhead projector, visual materials, computers and others. Nevertheless, students prefer authentic material while developing their learning. It is more interesting for them.

Classroom Observation (Institution Monitoring)

Education has a valuable resource: classroom observation. Through it teachers can know their strengths and weaknesses, they may improve their teaching cause of the evaluation and obviously, knowing how to focus on opening and closing the lesson, application of techniques, planning a lesson, etc.

About this subject, Richards (2000) writes:

The use of guidelines such as the following is going toward minimizing

the negative consequences of having an observer in the classroom:

1) Observation should have a focus.

2) Observers should use specific procedures.

3) Observer should remain an observer. (Richards 2000, p. 143)

Observation may be addressed by the teacher or by the school. What is the point of the observation? Schools and students need that supervisors and administrators are constantly monitoring teacher´s growth as a professional and as a part of the educational community.

Learning Styles

In education, learning styles refer to the preferences that students have to learn in an easier way and according to their environment and have to find reason logically and intuitively. Active learners understand better by doing something actively, and reflective learners prefer to think quietly.

In this aspect, Saville (2008) maintains that personality factors are sometimes related to cognitive style as well as to a sensory preference for processing visual and auditory input. It is said there are three basic types of learning styles namely: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. -Visual: usually, people learn by seeing visual images, as well as writing and reading tasks. -Auditory learners prefer listening rather than reading or writing. They enjoy music and chants. -Kinesthetic (tactile) style is characterized by body movements and by touching objects.

Language Aptitude

Teaching and learning foreign language does not depend only on teaching methods planning, lessons design or using classroom resources but it also depends on the student aptitude.

Saville-Troike (2008) mentions that language learning is characterized for a component called talent. But the talent is not a requisite for success in L2 learning. Success can be achieved by linguistic-analytic abilities or memory aptitude.

Alternatively, another researcher proposed four components:

1) Phonemic coding ability,

2) inductive language learning ability,

3) grammatical sensitive capacity,

4) associative memory capacity,

that provide the bases for most aptitude tests. (Carroll, 1965, p. 105)

At this point, it can be concluded that concepts related to language aptitude are something ambiguous. They do not coincide widely. In general terms, it cannot predict completely the rate of student progress although problems on language aptitude are seen in several fields of English teaching.

According to the factors that influence teaching, important researches have been conducted in many ways and sceneries. Next, some of them are shared for analysis and better understanding about this field of study.

One of the studies was carried out by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, Iyamu (2006) to determine the factors affecting quality of English language teaching and learning in some secondary schools in Nigeria.

This study was conducted with the participation of 3000 senior secondary school students randomly selected among 30 public secondary schools in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. At the same time, three questions were chosen to examine the following three variables:

1) frequency of the use of instructional media,

2) frequency of the use of instructional techniques, and

3) the school learning environment.

The instrument used was a questionnaire. It had four sections dealing with demographic items such as school type and location; instructional resources/media used by the teacher frequently, methods teachers frequently adopted to teaching English language and the school environment.

Researchers could conclude that public secondary schools in Nigeria should be provided with adequate and varied instructional media. It was strongly recommended that to learning environment in public schools in Nigeria should be

given prior attention by governmental entities so that children can learn well and it was suggested providing them with the use of technology and language laboratories.

The next important study that may be mentioned was developed by Azhar (2004) in Pakistan. It was about the management of large size English language teaching classes analyzing English language teaching situation in the country with its historical perspective.

There was a necessity of the collaboration of 100 teachers of English language and 300 students of high school classes selected randomly. This research involved seventy Government higher secondary and high schools in District Abbottabad.

Azhar used three different sets of questionnaires, informal discussions and interviews, analysis and interpretation of data.

The results of the study indicated that there were many problems being faced by the teachers, students and administrators in the large size ELT classes. The findings showed high percentage of the problems to maintain discipline, check homework, lack of modern teaching aids and motivation.

The conclusion was that most of the teachers do not feel comfortable while they are teaching in large classes and effective class management is difficult to maintain. The worst problem is that there is no provision of financial/administrative support by the authorities. Azhar suggests that teachers must be checked regularly, modern teaching aids must be available and the curriculum must be modified.

KhamKhien (2010) studied the factors affecting language learning strategy reported usage by Thai and Vietnamese EFL learners having the objective to determine and to compare how gender, motivation and experience in studying English affect the choices of language learning strategies.

With the participation of two groups of university students from two public universities in Thailand and Vietnam, KhamKhien used 200 copies of questionnaires that he distributed to first and second-year students of each university.

Although the results of the present are not claimed to be exhaustive, the study highlights the significance of language learning strategies in learning process. Identifying learning strategies use and understanding factors that might affect their learning strategies pattern is one of the many possible ways that classroom teachers are employed to help students to become more successful learners.

Gordon (2006) conducted an important study about "Authentic" language vs. English language teaching recommendations and predictions. The aim of this study was to compare language produced by native speakers to the language presented in ESL materials and language predicted by ESL teachers in relations to giving directions and giving advice tasks.

Participants were 16 native speakers ranged in age from 20 to 65 with different occupations. There were 7 men and 9 women, plus 19 ESL teachers. The research took place in three schools in the State of Maine, USA.

Two types of language elicitation prompts were used in this study: one which included ESL tasks used to elicit the native speaker corpus data and the second one used to elicit ESL teacher predictions. This included six ESL tasks and questionnaires.

From the results of this study, says Gordon, it does appear that giving directions is a more predictable task than giving advice since the language is produced by native speakers while giving directions contains a significant amount of formulas. With the results of this study, Gordon suggests "that more materials based on native speaker corpus are desired. ESL materials that are written and lessons that

are taught based on intuition may not provide students with communicatively useful language since textbook language often does not conform to the native-like patterns of use."

As a last reference, Palacios (1995) conducted a study about the learning strategies used by secondary schools and University students of English in Spain. Its aim was to identify the type and range of the language learning strategies used by Spanish secondary and university learners in their study of English.

This research was developed with the participation of eighty students and twenty five teachers both educational levels were interviewed, for the collection of data. Interview were carried out with 50 secondary school students, aged 14 to 20, from six different high-schools located in urban and rural setting of Galicia and with 30 English Philology students, aged 18 to 24, from the University of Santiago de Compostela. The methods used were a student interview form and a teacher interview form.

About the Results and Conclusions Palacios says: The majority of the interviewees appeared to be aware of the use of learning strategies and they were also able to verbalize them. The interview was a useful instrument to investigate the area of language learning strategies as it simulated learner´s reflection upon their learning process and the number of strategies reported was quite high. The main findings of this study indicated that the majority of the secondary school and university students interviewed were able to identify and report the use of a wide range of learning strategies. This means that most learners at an intermediate and advanced level of English proficiency in a foreign language environment use strategies.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

The following data give a clear idea about the importance of education in Ecuador and several factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process. To achieve this purpose were used questionnaires containing some questions for both teachers and students in different high schools in Guayaquil.

Below there are shown the results obtained from the investigation and their corresponding analysis and interpretation. Every graph represents the percentage assigned to each variable that was considered in the fifteen observed classes.

Quantitative Analysis

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

GRAPH 1
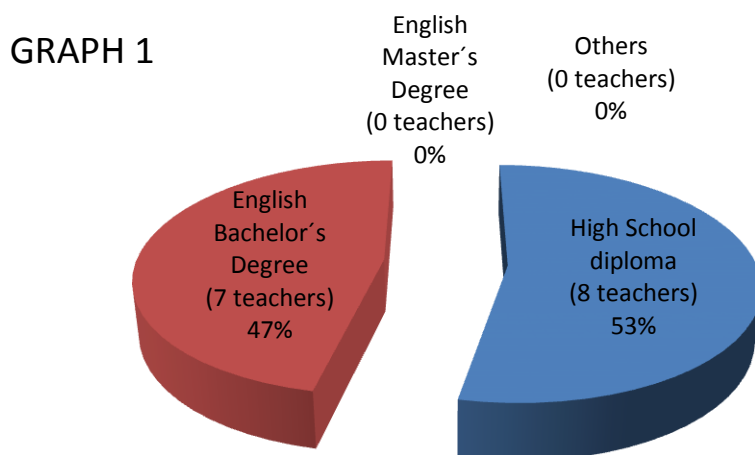
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire

As it is observed, from a total of 15 teachers who were part of the sample, 8 of them have High School Diploma and 7 of them have English Bachelor´s Degree. In the case of English Master´s Degree and Others, they represent 0%.

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Despite these results, it is not possible detract the experience and intellectual capacity of most teachers. All of them combined a great number of strategies and skills that students need to enhance in their learning. A particular case was about a very young teacher who is in the last year of college. She transmitted to her students a lot of vitality, knowledge, and warmth in her teaching combining the lesson with activities that students performed happily. That class was very participatory.
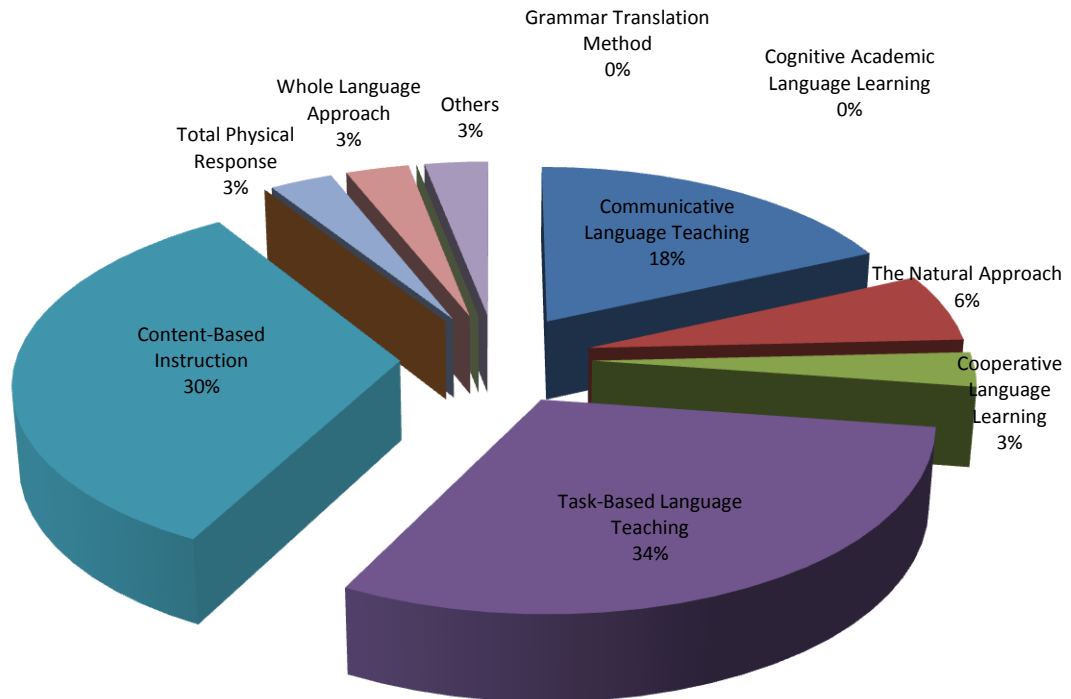
In contrast, another case was about a teacher who has lived for many years in the United States but he has not studied the techniques of teaching. The students claimed they hear an excellent pronunciation but they do not understand what the teacher was saying. Their concern increases when they think about how to solve the tests. For these reasons, more trained teachers, professional men and women are required for the education in general to contribute to the successful development of student´s career by providing to learners higher ranges of excellence in their education and updated technical classes appropriate to their level of learning.

It is necessary to consider that if teachers are more qualified, students will have more opportunities to receive higher quality education. It would be beneficial that a great deal of private high schools teachers may have access to scholarships offered by the Ecuadorian government. As stated by Woolfolk (2007, p.15) *"Most teachers, with experience, hard work, and good support, may experiment with new methods or materials and focus on the students´ needs".* Moreover, teachers should try to continue their university studies or masters, respectively, as well as keep themselves informed of the latest development in education.

In brief, private and public schools must maintain a same level of proficiency in English teaching. As a result, the students, regardless socioeconomic status become excellent professionals.

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

GRAPH 2

Grammar Translation
Method
0%

Cognitive Academic
Language Learning
0%

Whole Language
Approach
3%

Others
3%

Total Physical
Response
3%

Communicative
Language Teaching
18%

The Natural Approach
6%

Content-Based
Instruction
30%

Cooperative
Language
Learning
3%

Task-Based Language
Teaching
34%

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

Although all the methods mentioned in this graph have a degree of importance when they are applied in teaching, not all of them are used by teachers. In fact, among those methods, some of them are used more frequently than others.

In most of the observed classes has been shown that the same class use more than one method at a time which is beneficial considering that students have different levels not only by their language capacity but also by their aptitude.

At this point it is important to highlight the case of a teacher who has in her classroom 2 children with special needs. One girl had a low percentage of hearing. For this reason the teacher had to speak very close to her ear and explain the topic

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what was developed during the class. The other girl had more serious problems of hearing. To teach the class the teacher had to use gestures and signs and keep herself always in front of the student in order to see what her lips say. In both cases it could be seen that this method gave excellent results although it was evident the effort for both the teacher and the students.

The role of a teacher is worthy. It is vocation. The time spent in educational activities must be developed carefully. A teacher should always keep in mind that more important than teaching a class is to provide knowledge in a warm and friendly environment to encourage students to continue learning. Richards & Rodgers (2001, p.29) claimed: *"..the success of a method depend on the degree to which the teacher provide the content or create the conditions for successful language learning"*

Students must perceive that their gradual overcoming is the main objective of teaching. Factors such as motivation have to be considered.

Returning to the sample, the method that achieved the highest percentage in this research was Task-Based Language Teaching followed by Content-Based Instruction and Communicative Language Teaching.

In this choice it was notorious that the texts used in the classroom are realistic and authentic and exchanging useful information not only for general knowledge but to apply it day-to-day facilitating the learning because the students awake the imagination and enthusiasm when they work with material which they are interested in and it focuses on their needs. How valuable it is also to be able to change the typical classroom activities by working in the classroom with real-life objects that can be observed as well as felt by the students´ hands. Vocabulary of each observed object is to learn in a simple way because its meaning is implicit. Those objects should be used in classroom whenever possible.

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It is also worth of mentioning that the activities carried out in the classroom like role plays where the teacher always acts as facilitator in a dynamic way are very popular by students. Richards & Rodgers (2001, p.161) said: *"Activities that involve real communication promote learning"*.

The 6% of observed classes used The Natural Approach. These classes take place in a relaxed atmosphere. Students are limited to listening to the teacher who has to do more in terms of explanations and discussions. Students become familiar with words already learnt and new words and their corresponding pronunciation. Meanwhile students increase vocabulary and comprehension of the message conveyed. This method requires continuity to obtain the expected results and students are able to express themselves naturally.

Total Physical Response, Whole Language Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, and Others (gestures) were used in the 3% of the observed classes.

The classes using Cooperative Language Learning were developed through collaborative activities of groups of students in the classroom. It is beneficial when students work together, as a teamwork.

An aspect that emphasized in the classes using Total Physical Response was the actions of the teachers: teachers talking a lot and giving instructions to students. And students listening to and responding according to the teacher´s commands.

In one of the classes was evident the use of Whole Language Approach because the reading and writing of a text was relevant. The subject was related to a social context and the exercises were appropriate to practice the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Teachers used many body expressions and they accompanied their teaching in some cases, with resources like audio, video, pictures, among the others.

There is a great importance in the use of teaching resources to support the process to acquire the foreign language. It is true that educational institutions must provide those resources but the lack of those should not be a constraint to facilitate learning. The responsibility of teachers goes beyond the limitations, in these conditions the imagination and creativity should be present.

In all cases, teachers shared their knowledge with their students in a clear and funny way. The resources were more than welcomed to help to achieve these goals.

On the contrary, Grammar Translation Method and Cognitive Academic Language Learning were not used in any classroom.

It could be said that nowadays teaching is focused on the communication and interaction as a main activity in the learning process and in its later phase, it appears the grammatical rules and translation exercises. First listening and speaking and then reading and writing take place. It is easy to understand this choice because young students prefer to interact with each other through activities such as games and conversations even though some of them are not prepared to hold a conversation. Both enthusiasm and energy of students should be used by teachers to connect them with the text to teach on any given day.

In general, all observed classes were developed in a collaborative environment and collective interest. In other words, each method, to a greater or lesser degree, involved a participatory approach that increased the knowledge and understanding of the objectives taught. It was beneficial for students. That is the most important objective!

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

GRAPH 3

NO
(2 teachers)
13%

YES
(13 teachers)
87%
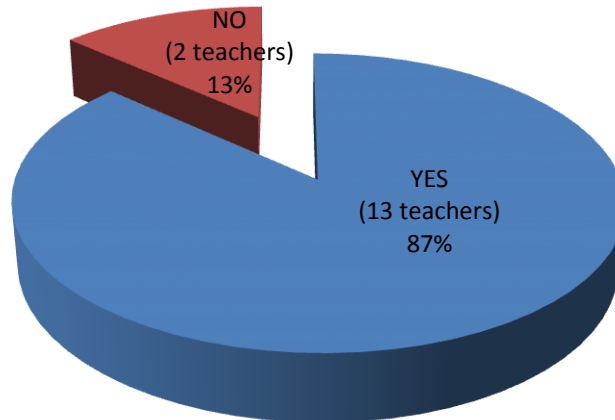
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

The graph shows that 13 out of the 15 teachers surveyed in the classes use whole-group activities to teach their lessons. This represents 87% which means that most of the teachers obtain good results through this method since all students participate in each activity.

It should be emphasized the importance of management of this class. It is important to be careful that all students receive the same level of knowledge; every task must be performed at the same rate as each student can follow whatever level he/she is.

One of the teachers in the classes surveyed said that working with whole-group activities is the best way to get the attention of all students. Another teacher said that this allows and promotes more interaction among students. On the contrary, careful attention should be given to unpleasant behaviors of some students therefore communication is essential when the problems appear. Every day there are new situations and problems to solve, unfortunately.

One of the classes was talking about environment, certainly a current topic with a great number of approaches and opinions that were developed throughout the entire class. No one left without their contribution to the class, but beyond that, each student understood the importance of protecting the environment for the present and the future of the earth.

The teacher acted as a facilitator asking questions, expressing and clarifying ideas to the understanding of the subject. This method promotes a topic discussion encouraging the mental activity of the students. Similarly, students can freely express their ideas, their general and particular overview about a specific topic allowing the teacher to know a little more of their students, their way of thinking, their reasoning, and to perform fully the role as an educator.

One aspect that should be highlighted in the whole-group activities is that people express their ideas and opinions freely and this process would be resulted as brainstorming. Brainstorming is important because in this informal and friendly atmosphere simple and ordinary ideas arise but also it arises suddenly a brilliant, creative and beneficial idea.

According to Woolfolk (2007, p.310) *"The basic tenet of brainstorming is to separate the process of creating ideas from the process of evaluating them because evaluation often inhibits creativity" (Osborn, 1963).*

Finally, the teacher presents a summary of everything discussed in class and expresses the results. These results may also be discussed and leading to a definitive conclusion.

Because of the time, the conclusions and suggestions of each student cannot be heard but they can be performed on a task for the next class reinforcing the knowledge acquired.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

GRAPH 4
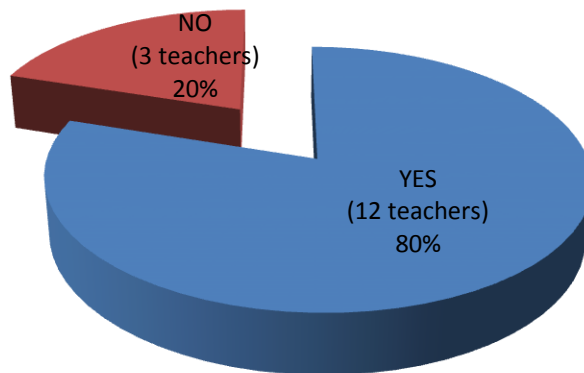
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

This sample´s score is 80% Yes versus 20% No. Some teachers do not use individual activities in the classes. The reasons are various. A teacher said it is not motivating for students.

Among the reasons for using individual activities in the classroom is mentioned to know the individual development as each student has a different level. It is important to work more with low-performing students. They need to understand their own learning process.

One of the teachers that taught under this scheme said that sometimes students need to express personal opinions. By the way, the activity performed by students in this class was to write a commercial letter to a local TV channel reporting a problem that happened in their community like garbage collection, crime, noise, or not finished municipal work. Teacher gave instructions about the letter such as to develop and organize the ideas as clearly as possible in a short time giving details of

each problem and asking for a fast solution from the authorities. Finally, students revised coherence and punctuation and read the letter in front of their partners.

Teachers also gave their students effective feedback through a comprehensive explanation focused on the mistakes made by students both in vocabulary and in pronunciation.

Applying individual activities in the classroom, some students are more interested in the topic assigned and learn faster by listening to their classmates observing how they behave and work and talk about the same task. This subject well addressed can achieve significant success in learning. However, because students have different levels it is sometime difficult for students who have a low level to interact with the most advanced students and they are embarrassed by being compared to other performers and for that reason the weaker ones prefer listening. In this situation teacher has to work encouraging them to continue their efforts but adapting the teaching methodology to the diversity in the learning styles.

If the teachers manage the activities, the time and resources in a professional way, the students will learn how to identify their capabilities and limitations, they will know how to strengthen their knowledge and therefore they will raise their self-esteem that will help them to achieve their goals.

Communication and interest of the teachers must ensure maximum interaction with the student. All that must be done in an environment where the motivation is developed entirely. At this point, it is important to mention Woolfolk (2007, p.376) who said: *"Some classrooms are intentionally structured as learning communities… The challenge is to be sure that all students are fully participating members of the community, because motivation comes from both identity and legitimate participation"*

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

GRAPH 5
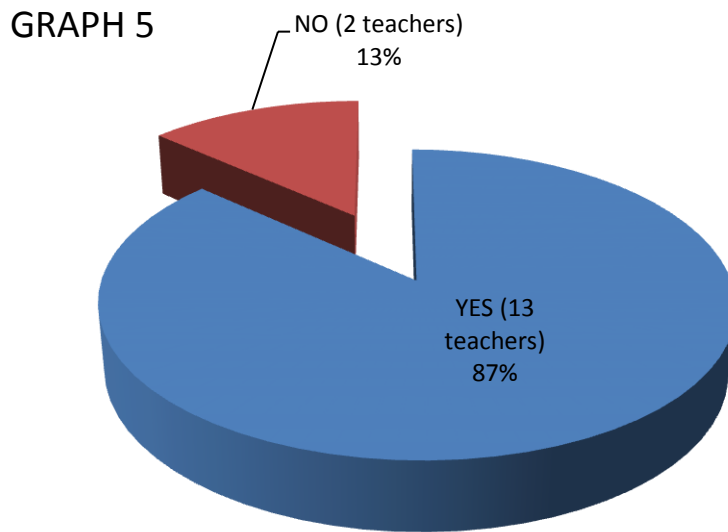
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire /Observation Sheet

The result of this survey shows a significantly higher percentage of teachers using group activities. This is 87% in contrast to 13% of teachers who prefer not using them.

With group work activities, students can share experiences, they can be more confident to express their ideas to the group because they are working with a minimum of people and therefore they are more willing to receive correction even if the task has to be shared with the entire class.

As an example it is necessary to cite the sketches performed in one of the observed classes whose main theme was a pregnant woman who needed an ambulance because she was already in labor. On this occasion was evident the teamwork while preparing the scene, then each group made an appearance in front of everyone; at one point the entire class became a jovial atmosphere but with respect.

However, at the beginning of the activity some students remained only as observers but later they were already part of the cast.

While working in groups a teacher said that it involves sharing knowledge and help each other. Another opinion was that the cooperative learning promotes interdependence.

An important issue was addressed to another class that applied the individual activity. The topic was about crime, violence and insecurity. Students worked in pairs listing the problems that existed in cities and neighborhoods while they were detailing possible solutions. This class was very productive because students treated the topic in the last class and the next class students continued with the lesson. As a consequence, they developed their tasks faster, more agile and with more confidence in their responses. The teacher was attentive to students to complete the task on their own interchanging opinions with peers.

The group work activities help students relate to each other, to develop skills in planning, to formulate new ideas and to solve problems.

Besides, it is important for the student that the teacher recognizes the effort of all members of the group regardless how much each of them has contributed.

Woolfolk (2007, p.399) argued *"Students should be recognized for improving on their own personal best, for tackling difficult tasks, for persistence, and for creativity –not just for performing better than others"*.

It is true that teamwork could lead some students to work harder than others or sometimes the task develops more slowly due to diversity of ideas and opinions but always remains in the memory of the participants that they were part of a process of making decisions and the construction and organization of ideas no matter how small they have been.

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

GRAPH 6
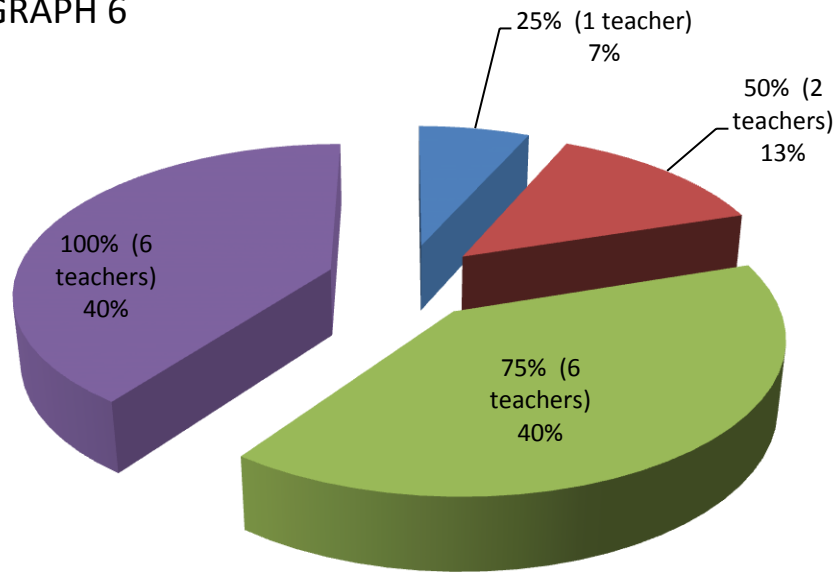
- 25% (1 teacher) 7%
- 50% (2 teachers) 13%
- 100% (6 teachers) 40%
- 75% (6 teachers) 40%

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

Forty percent of the teachers surveyed (6 teachers) use 100% English in their classes, another 50% (6 teachers) speak English in 75% in their classes, 50% of English is spoken in class by 13% (2 teachers), and 7% (1 teacher) speaks English in 25% in his/her classes.

It was interesting what was said by one of the teachers who recently returned from the United States because she won a scholarship granted by the government of Ecuador. She said that the instructor taught them that even when students need to hear the English language permanently to learn it, it is necessary that they mostly receive their classes in their mother tongue because they will understand better the guidelines.

Of course this has to be complemented with the respective audio tasks to be carried out in the classroom, lab and inclusive at home.

An essential point is that everything the students listen to during an English class enclose topics of interest that motivate them to continue studying the language and the teacher explain the lessons in an attractive way for listeners.

About this, Woodward (2001, p.157) declares *"When we´re using language normally, we´re not usually sitting behind a desk as students are in class. Instead, we´re often moving, turning, glancing here or there, making gestures and moderating our volume depending on the circumstances."*

In summary, students reach the level of understanding according to the way the teacher is communicating in the lessons and when the knowledge transfer occurs. It does not depend on how often the teacher speaks English in class.

The most important thing that teachers can do for their students is to balance the time for pronunciation and the teaching itself.

For a long time dominated the teaching of the four skills reading, writing, listening and speaking but with emphasis on the first two.

Today, more importance has been given to the continuous improvement and the domain of listening and speaking so students understand the messages discovering the techniques of receiving them.

In addition, all of the teachers use a lot of commands and repeat them over and over. It is beneficial to students who are later ready to hear more structured sentences.

Gradually, teachers must incorporate to their teaching other resources such as real storytelling, literary novels and so forth.

Do teachers plan their lessons?
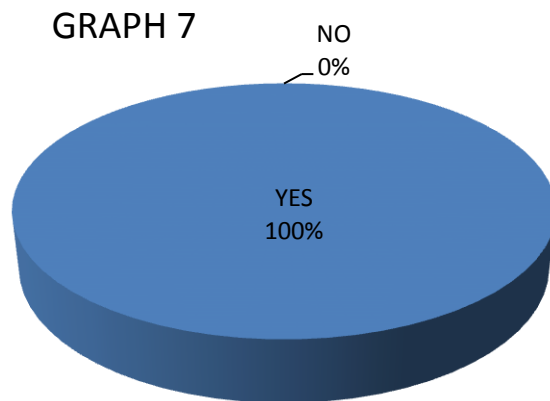
GRAPH 7

NO
0%

YES
100%

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

A whole universe of teachers in the classes surveyed said that they plan their classes previously and this was confirmed by observing them.

Why do teachers plan their lessons? This question was responded by the teachers of the following way: because it is necessary to follow an order, it is important to include all the details for a successful teaching, it is an obligation, not to improvise, to follow a sequence, to teach properly, it is the way to do a great work, it is essential.

If in other circumstances it is necessary to plan, in education it is even more important. When planning a lesson is decreasing feelings of insecurity caused by the great responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the teacher. According to Woodward (2001, p.182) *"Most teachers take planning to be an integral part of the job and do it for individual lessons and for courses"*

Looking inside the classroom this issue should be handled with care because the basis of the student´s academic training depends on what the teacher teaches. It is

the key element to establish primarily the present and the future of the childhood, youth and adolescence.

In each class was evident the correct organization of the teachers. The materials were well chosen. The activities were developed at the exact time and at the end of the class was time for feedback.

One of them said it is easy for expert teachers to plan classes. The main thing to keep in mind is to consider the general and specific objectives and then details arise spontaneously.

Also it is important to choose the best method to be used effectively in each class and decide how many groups will work, if applicable.

Lesson plans were developed following an order and grouping everything that teachers considered helpful for students such as materials, equipment, questions, examples and so on.

It is vital that teachers evaluate themselves at the end of the class in order to make corrections and to identify whether the resources and strategies established in the lesson plan were met, and if not, what methodology can be applied to students according to their level. This will serve as a reference for the next classes.

It should be clear that education cannot be left to chance. All details are important, including the teacher has to be prepared to deal with discouragement and laziness that are present early in the morning.

The texts used for English teaching are very showy and they have collective interest themes but it depends on teachers that classes become dynamic or boring.

The organization of the class and therefore the understanding and assimilation of them by students depend on effective teachers planning lessons in a very good way. Indeed, all of the teachers in the observed classes achieved those goals.

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

GRAPH 8
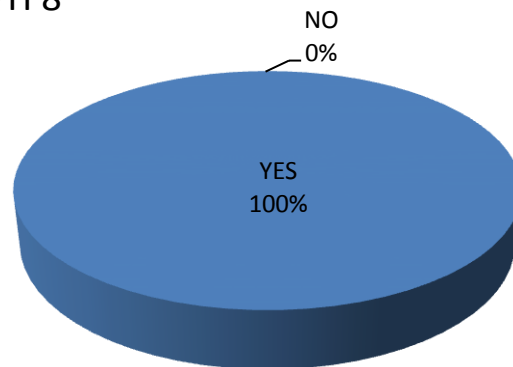
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

The answer to this question is 100% Yes, not only by the results of the survey but also by the results of class observations. This is part of the planning that teachers make for their classes and lessons. It is their complement.

The success of a class is derived from a good planning and optimization of the time which every teacher wants to achieve before the bell rings. This includes control of the discipline. The more discipline is, the greater attention and more reception of knowledge is obtained, not only individually but as the whole class.

In some observed classes a poster with the class rules was placed on the wall. These rules must be established from the first day of class to avoid discipline problems. Subsequently, students have two options, one is to follow the rules or they have to accept the consequences if they do not comply.

In the majority of classrooms was not necessary to exercise disciplinary control; in fact, a couple of teachers established discipline in their classes but moderately because a group of students was a bit of effusive but respectful.

A lot of teachers plan their teaching making themselves the question "Which are the concepts and skills they want to build on the students on that day?" With that clear idea teachers are directed to develop their class and achieve the proposed goal.

A very important factor is the feedback. It was used in almost all visited classrooms. Every teacher made naturally the necessary corrections to reinforce the strengths and to overcome the weaknesses of the students. After that, some teachers did a summary of what was taught that day, they drew their own conclusions about what did students learn through this class, the obtained results and how to do it better next time.

Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005, p.163) declared: *"Giving feedback is one of the most important responsibilities of a teacher. By providing ongoing feedback you can help your students evaluate their success and progress"*.

Even in this feedback time the students showed respect and coordination. The teaching was personalized. On several occasions, the teacher approached each student individually to reinforce knowledge, if needed.

Teachers must be careful in their tone of voice so students can interpret the message correctly, in other words not too low, so students can hear, neither too high, so students do not misunderstand.

Teachers did not give many instructions at once to prevent students from making mistakes but all of them were always clear, teachers made eye contact with students, students had not been unnoticed by the teacher, and the teachers took the time to explain in detail the task for the next day.
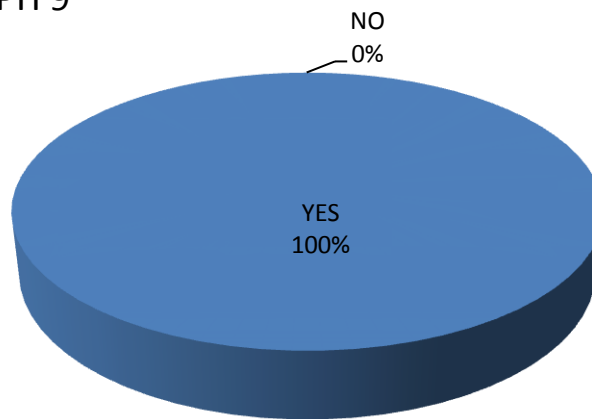
The aspects considered in this theme fully integrated in the classroom offer a student-focused education. Students should be guided step-by-step in their instruction.

Factors Concerning Students

Do teachers consider students´ needs to teach English successfully?

Student´s Needs (age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivations and learning styles)

GRAPH 9

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

In teaching, students´ needs should be considered as one of the main factors when talking, giving instructions, assigning tasks and grading students.

All the teachers surveyed in the classes consider the students´ needs to teach English. The reasons given by teachers to take into account this are various such as not taking into account students´ needs can stop their learning process, each student is an individual world and they need different treatment in the classroom to improve a successful learning, when they feel confident about development of their own abilities they will be able to motivate themselves to apply their knowledge.

In previous chapter there were mentioned 2 girls with special needs. Both girls had impaired problems and studied in the same classroom. While the class was observed it was impossible to stop looking at scenes in which the teacher was trying

to provide more attention to the girls. They normally read and then wrote the sentences in their notebook, in contrast their hearing problem limited their abilities.

The teacher´s attitude and the class management were plausible. The teacher stood near to the desks, used gestures and spoke very close to the ear of the students. Surely this action not only benefits the two girls but the other students who are motivated by the effort and desire to study from their partners.

If motivation is right teachers capture the attention of students. As a result, learning will be more productive.

Unfortunately, there are teachers who choose to ignore these important aspects. Woolfolk (2007, p.2) states, *"The proportion of "unqualified" teachers is greatest for poor and minority group students, students with special needs, and students in rural schools."* Although currently there are more educational institutions that are promoting social inclusions for students with special needs.

On the other hand, some students have little or no support from home, not only financially but also emotionally.

In addition, while some students disregard studying and have little interest in the activities and participation in class, there are students with positive attitude towards learning looking for new opportunities in each class to improve their skills.

Even though all students in the observed classes were young, it is noteworthy that personality and aptitude play an essential role. Also, it is probable that teachers find students with unacceptable behaviors. Teachers must be careful and they must discern the problem because some students can come across the personality disorders, as not only a simple behavior problem.

Beyond interesting classes, teachers must deal with the problems of students with respect and consideration.

Do teachers consider students´ level to teach English successfully?

Students´ Level (Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate, Advanced)

GRAPH 10

NO
0%

YES
100%
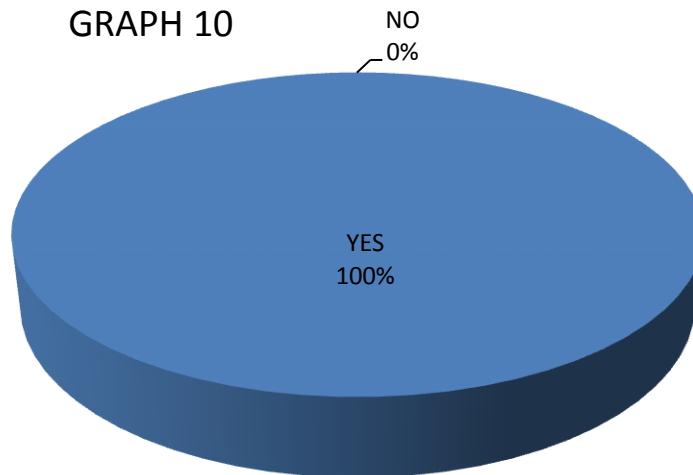
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

Although there is no teacher in this sample who does not consider the students´ level to teach English successfully they give diverse opinions about that: according to the students´ level they learn; it is important to reduce their affective filter; they must focus their attention on those who have more difficulties; because when they understand the level they are, they know what parts of learning process they have to work on and reinforce.

It is important to highlight that inside each class even though it is considered, for instance, an intermediate class, the students have different levels and different abilities but the teachers´ success will depend on effective managing of their classes and the appropriate use of materials and techniques to monitor the students´ progress.

Some students choose not to complete the study of a language other than their mother tongue because they feel embarrassed and insecure when they interact with students of different learning levels. This matter should be handled by the teacher

carefully establishing an education system that does not allow a student to be left behind.

The strategies and methods for teaching to be applied should be the most appropriate. About that, Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005, p.120) argued *"It is important to note that students of a certain age or from certain educational backgrounds may be more resistant to the notion of learner responsibility than others. In this case discussion and the gradual introduction of change is needed."* Motivation and self-confidence or high self-esteem will help to a better and a faster acquisition of languages.

Students with emotional barriers and learning disabilities will have greater difficulty in acquiring the knowledge. They cannot pay attention in class and data cannot be processed properly.

Alternatively, teachers should provide students whenever possible with the opportunities to foster positive peer relationships and encourage their participation in group activities.

Despite the different levels of academic preparation, teachers have the challenge of avoiding routine and maintaining participatory classes without moving students to a degree of anxiety. A low level of anxiety allows better understanding of the language.

For this reason, teachers should choose learning activities, methods, materials and tasks for listening, speaking, reading and writing by establishing the level differences among students but taking care of low-ability students or students with less knowledge of English language. They should not be criticized or ignored.

Which is the level of the observed classes´ students?
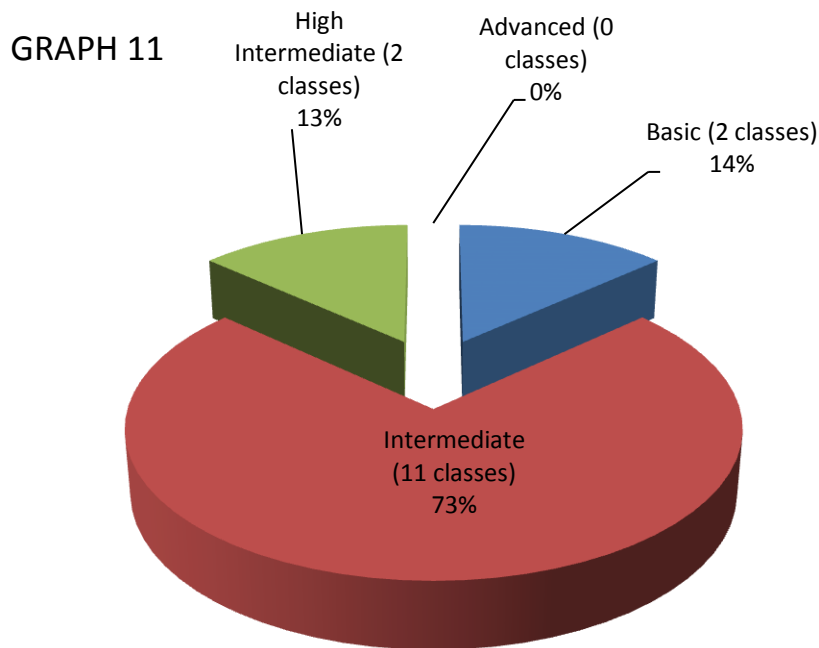
GRAPH 11

High Intermediate (2 classes) 13%

Advanced (0 classes) 0%

Basic (2 classes) 14%

Intermediate (11 classes) 73%

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

In this sample there were considered all students in 15 classes observed, classifying 4 levels with the following results: 2 classes of basic level, 11 classes of intermediate level, 2 classes of high intermediate level, and 0 classes of advanced level. It represents 14%, 73%, 13%, and 0%, respectively.

Quantity and quality in English learning depends on many factors and these are crucial when identifying the students´ level.

An important opinion is the following:

What is learned in acquiring a second language, as well as *how* it is learned, is often influenced by whether the situation involves informal exposure to speakers of other languages, immersion in a setting where one needs a new language to meet basic needs, or formal instruction in school, and these learning conditions are often profoundly influenced by

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powerful social, cultural, and economic factors affecting the status of both languages and learners. (Saville-Troike 2008, p.5)

One of the fields in which differences among people are reflected is in the education field. Interactions between peers are likely to be relaxed as long as there are not operating conditions that demonstrate learning differences.

Teachers should be conscious that students are able to learn at their own pace and in these cases teachers should implement a virtue: patience.

Factors Concerning Classroom

How many students are there in the observed classrooms?

GRAPH 12
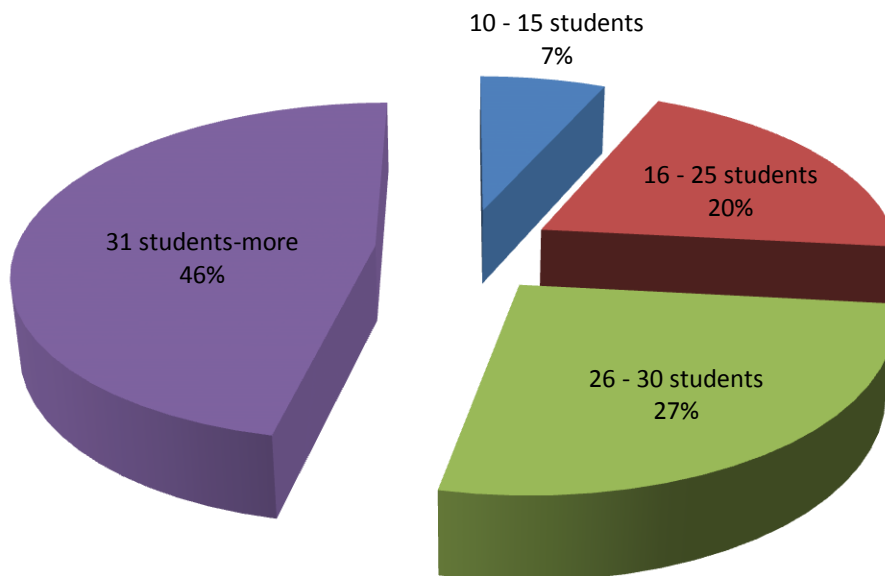
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

The observed classrooms had different number of students. According to the results: 1 classroom of 10-15 students, 3 classrooms of 16-25 students, 4 classrooms of 26-30 students, and 7 classrooms of 31 students -more representing 7%, 20%, 27%, and 46%, respectively.

As can be seen, less percentage has the class with fewer students and higher percentage has the class with more students.

Based on the sample obtained in this investigation, only four classes consisted of a minority of pupils. But, certainly that number could increase if more students would had been enrolled in the school records that year therefore it is possible to conclude that the patterns of classrooms of large number of students remains.

Related to the number of students, Woodward (2001, p.19) asserted *"Very large (50+) and very small (1-3) classes necessitate even more careful activity planning than usual if you are not used to these numbers."*

Additionally, many studies have concluded that smaller classes are more effective than larger classes but reducing class size is not sufficient to improve the education system.

Solution goes beyond. It is improving the quality of teachers and providing appropriate resources for teaching.

Do teachers feel comfortable working with this group of students?

GRAPH 13
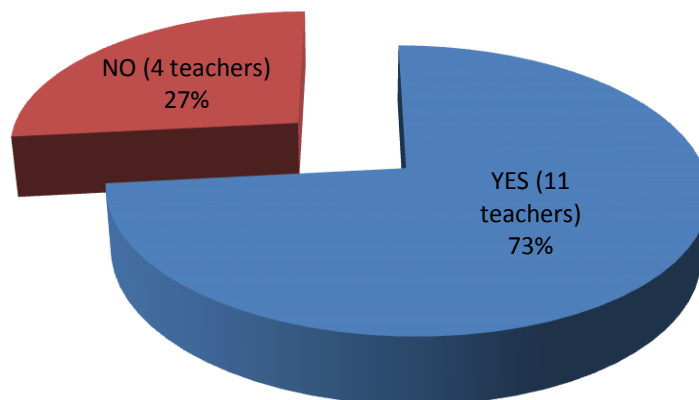
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

As can be seen in the graph, 11 teachers (73%) feel comfortable working with the group of students with references to previous graph; in contrast, 4 teachers (27%) do not.

During the development of the classes it could be observed there are advantages and disadvantages working with both small and large classes such as more or less attention to students, quantity of interaction between teacher and student, more or less discussion about topics, maintaining discipline and others.

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) stated that maintaining discipline in the classroom depends on the age of the students, the reasons and motivation for learning – if they are obliged or they are ´volunteers´ –, the size of the class – keeping an orderly atmosphere is more difficult in a large class –, furthermore, institution atmosphere and ethos – the respect of the members of the class –.

There are many resources within education to overcome the disadvantages of large classes. Set up rules from the first day is a good option to avoid undisciplined students but when discipline problems are difficult to solve within stated limits, as a last option, intervention from the authority is necessary. In both cases, students must be heard with a lot of attention.

It is true that there are many disadvantages of working with large classes such as stress, too much noise, not enough seats, and so on. However, the effort provides greater experience to the novice teacher.

Factors for a successful development of a small or large class are numerous and all of them are worthy to be revised carefully.

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

GRAPH 14
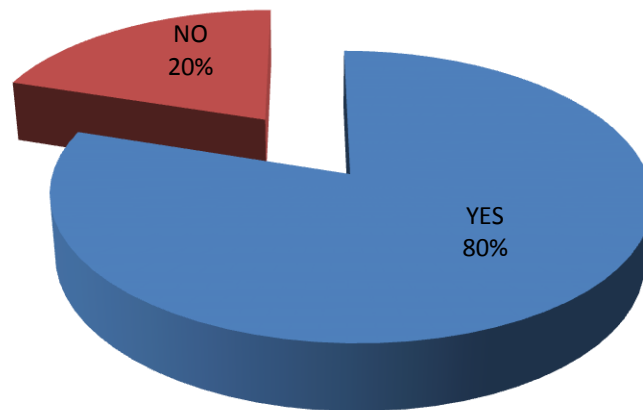
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

According to the teachers´ answers corroborated with the class observation, 20% of the teachers consider not having enough space to work in their classrooms while the 80% are opposite meaning.

Regardless good teaching and excellent methods used by the teacher in the class, the space available for the development of activities is an important complement to better teaching but not all educational institutions have this physical resource.

Each student should have space to work not only individually but also interact with peers and in this way learners are able to practice the four skills. The best use of space depends on educational needs.

Along with the lack of space there is insufficient time to make the changes in the location of the seats when a task needs to be done through group activity. Woodward (2001) suggests to study the space and to see if it is possible to improve the seats location in the classroom but if you have colleagues who do not like those

changes it should be coordinated with the students to move things quickly and easily at the beginning and at the end of each lesson.

In a classroom, the seats become a means of communication between teacher and students and among students. The exchange of information takes place during the whole class. Consequently it is necessary to make students feel comfortable in the classroom or where the class is being developed.

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

GRAPH 15
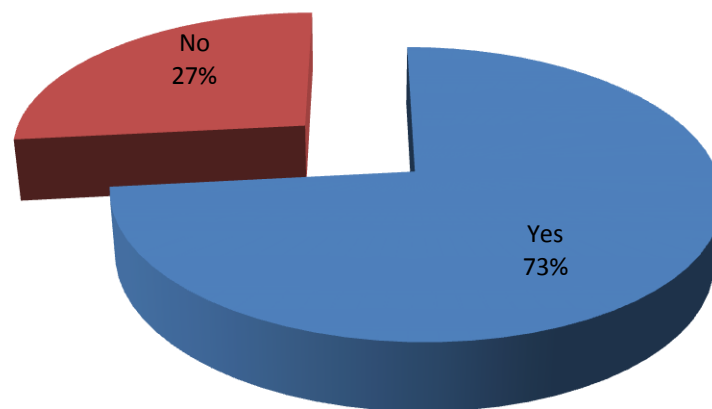
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

Even though the position of seats and students was not changed during the observed classes, 73% of the teachers said they had arranged students´ seats in relation to the activities planned for their classes and 27% said they had not arranged the seats in relation to planned activities. It is favorable to arrange work areas when needed but as stated above, generally, there is not enough time or space to make changes in the classroom furniture. Sometimes, the typical organization of seats in rows minimizes the interaction among students.

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) express that where students are placed in the classroom can determine their attitude to each other, how they interact, and the activity they can do. Besides where the teachers are placed it tells them the type of activity to be performed, teacher and student´s role, who teachers are attending to and not attending to, whether teachers expect a student to talk to them or not.

In terms of seating arrangement, aspects should be considered such as safety, individual needs, ease of access and movement. By all means teachers should avoid any kind of discrimination.

Class design should facilitate the implementation of a wide variety of activities and the students can interact harmoniously. A simple change makes the difference.

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

GRAPH 16
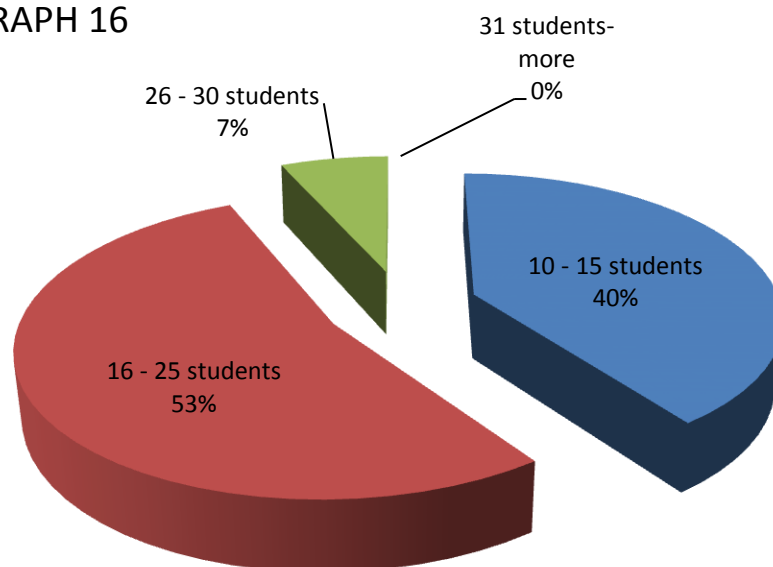
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado
Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire

The result is the following: 40% of teachers said that 10 - 15 students are the appropriate number to teach English, 53% of teachers said that appropriate number would be among 16 - 25 students, only 7% of teachers expressed the requirement of 26 - 30 students. Nobody chose 31 students or more as the best alternative. This suggests, that according to the experience of teachers in the classes observed, it is not convenient working with a large number of students.

Regardless the number of students in a class the teacher should establish an excellent communication with students.

To the extent that teachers communicate regularly with students it will be improved the quality of teacher-student interaction.

Gower, Phillips & Walters (2005) argued that no matter how big is a class, most of students want to be listened or addressed directly by the teacher. Students should participate in class and receive individual attention.

On the other hand, while there are more students in the classrooms the more distraction among them will appear, as a consequence teachers should pay more attention to classroom management rather than instruction. Otherwise, it is not possible to achieve the objectives desired with relation to teaching.

Smaller classes result in fewer discipline problems. Larger classes must have teachers who have the ability to control and maintain discipline. Additionally, teachers must continuously monitor the association among students to avoid situations that harm social relations in class.

Another important aspect to be taken into account when directing large classes is organizing time for activities making an effort to manage the class in an interesting and interactive way.

Teachers of larger classes spend less time correcting tasks. There is no time to review details as content, grammar and style. They can only focus on the fulfillment of the tasks.

Teachers should provide students greater individual attention and opportunities to participate in class such as quality time and frequent feedback.

In brief, class management largely depends on the teachers. They have a great responsibility on their shoulders.

Teachers are challenged to become the most effective teachers that students need. For success, they have to love and enjoy what they do.

Likewise, the teacher should act as facilitator, guiding students, not only being a transmitter of knowledge.

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

GRAPH 17 (a)
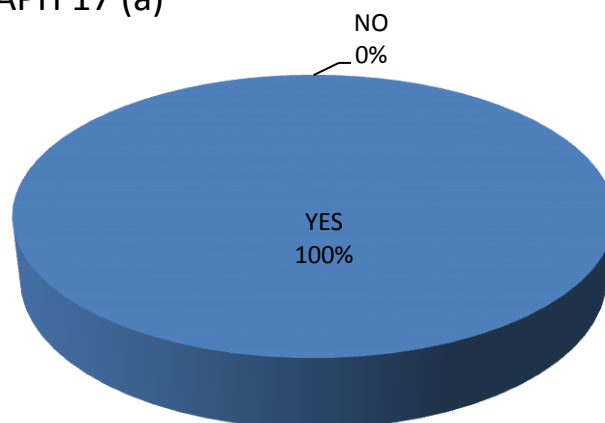
NO
0%

YES
100%

GRAPH 17 (b)

TV
12%

Tape / CD
recorder
23%

Computer(s)
15%

Projector(s)
15%

Smartboard
0%

Supplementary
materials
25%

Others
10%

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire / Student´s Questionnaire / Observation Sheet

Do teachers use teaching resources (TV, Tape/CD recorder, Computer(s), Projector(s), Smartboard, and supplementary materials)? Definitely yes, teaching resources 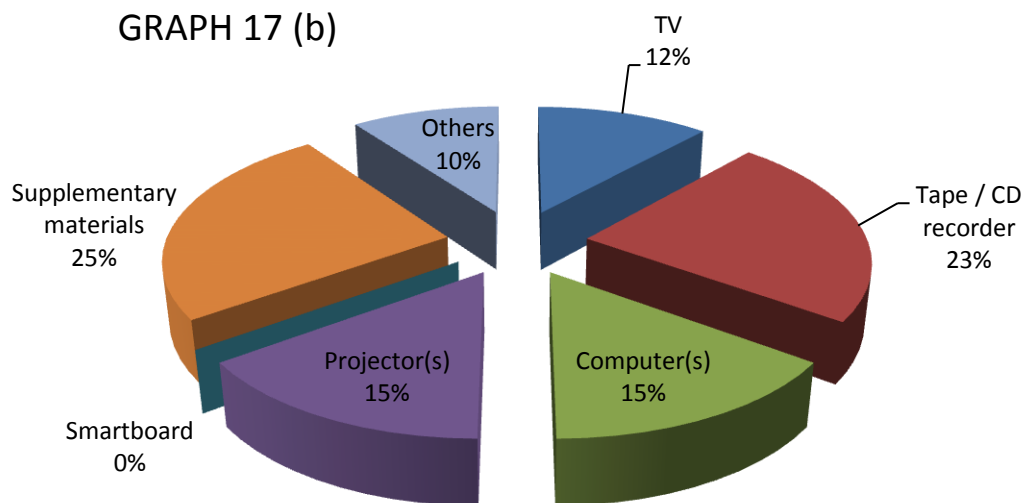are used by all teachers to enhance learning. For better understanding of the results two graphs were considered, the first tabulates the answer yes/no and the second one indicates what resources use the teachers in observed classes. Consequently, the result is the following: 12% of teachers use TV, 23% use Tape/CD recorder, 15% use computers and projectors, 25% use supplementary materials, nobody use smartboard, and when referring to others it means that 10% use MP3, DVD, cellphones, and wireless landscapes. It is necessary to mention that sometimes teachers use many teaching resources at once.

All these didactic materials facilitate the learning of skills but they are not effective by themselves. Those depend on their appropriate use. Both teachers and students should get the most out of existing resources in the classroom.

Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to use the available resources at home (audio and video equipment) to reinforce the knowledge and practice the language.

Richards & Rodgers, for example (2001, p.253) expressed that the Internet, the World Wide Web, and other computer interfaces and technological innovations will capture the imagination of the teaching profession and will influence both the content and the form of instructional delivery in language teaching.

Students cannot listen without listening and to read without reading, therefore other than audio and video resources teachers should choose excellent literary works and encourage students through tasks to read at home. Alternatively, there can be included newspapers and magazines articles.

A teacher in an observed class commented a method that has been successful for her. She teaches with literary works comprising book, CDs, and DVDs. First, students read the book, several pages in each class. Second, they listen to the audio. Third, they answer questions about the topic and draw scenes related to the story according to their interpretation of the theme. Finally, they watch the movie. At this stage the students fully understand the storyline and make corrections in their respective tasks and drawings. All these tasks took time but contributed significantly to language learning.

Thinking of either equipment or materials used in class will not be in vain. Some more, some less, but all of them attract the student attention and the class becomes more interesting.

Do teachers consider appropriately the resources they have in class?

GRAPH 18
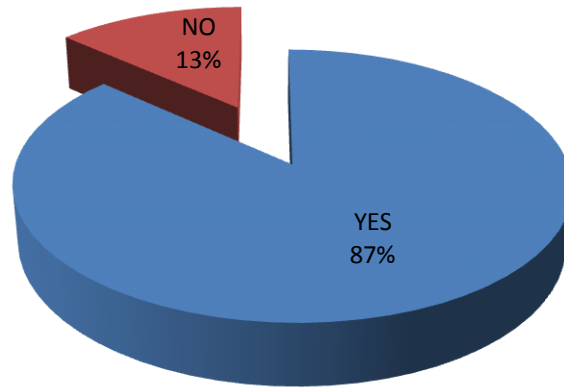
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire

Eighty-seven percent of teachers answered yes, and 13% answered no. It cannot be ignored that teaching resources constitute a valuable contribution to education and each of them fulfills its function in each activity assigned; as a result, it is important to have the appropriate resources to perform. The number of resources and their quality differ among educational institutions but undoubtedly, students need them. Well-equipped laboratories, more technology and so forth are required for teaching but if educational institutions do not have the appropriate resources teachers should use the resources that they have on hands, for instance:

> If you use any reward or incentive systems, be sure the goal you set
>
> is to *learn and improve* in some area, not just to perform well or look
>
> smart. And be sure the goal is not too difficult. Students, like adults,
>
> are unlikely to stick with tasks or respond well to teachers who make
>
> them feel insecure or incompetent. (Woolfolk, 2007, p.383)

When teachers introduce the topic or select a task it is necessary to choose materials and activities to make lessons more effective and attractive. Alternatively, a resource other than materials and equipment to strengthen teaching is related to awards and incentives given to students who have demonstrated good performance and behavior. This is important because it motivates all students and creates a positive classroom climate.

Factors Concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review teachers´ lesson plans?

GRAPH 19 (a)
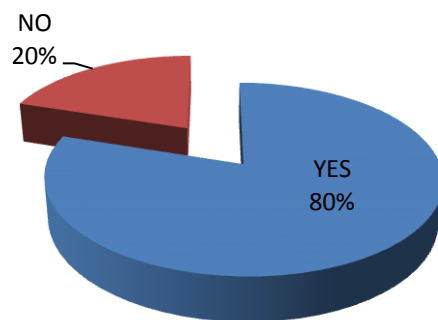
If yes, how frequently?

GRAPH 19 (b)

Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire

The institution reviews teachers´ lesson plans. This is the answer for 80% of teachers. Among them, 42% of teachers say that the institution reviews their lesson plans once a week, 25% say once a month and 33% of answers are diverse such as every term, quarterly, or always.
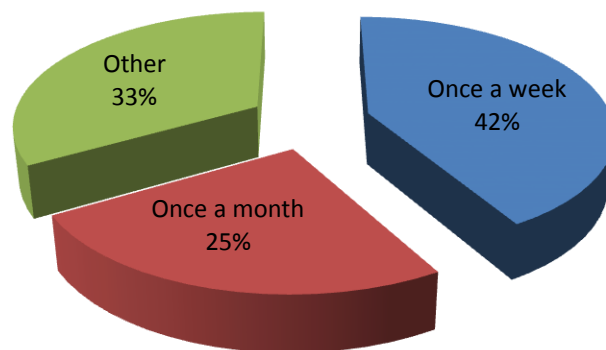
Teachers´ lesson plans should be reviewed permanently to establish perspectivity between the desired and the achieved and determine the causes which prevented from carrying out the objectives that were raised.

Today, the process of learning language is based on a communicative view of language and a vision of the learner as central to the educational process.

In addition, parents may be observers. Woolfolk (2007, p. 472) stated *"...families are important partners in education. This statement applies to classroom management as well. When parents and teachers share the same expectations and support each other, they can create a more positive classroom environment and more time for learning."*

Institutions, whose function is obviously to provide the resources to improve teaching, are working with teachers to ensure that appropriate lessons are received by students.

It is seen by some teachers and parents as a support rather than lost time.

Does the institution monitor the teaching?

GRAPH 20 (a)
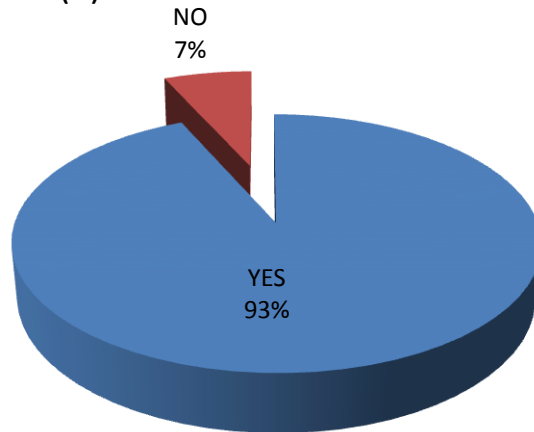
If yes, how frequently?

GRAPH 20 (b)
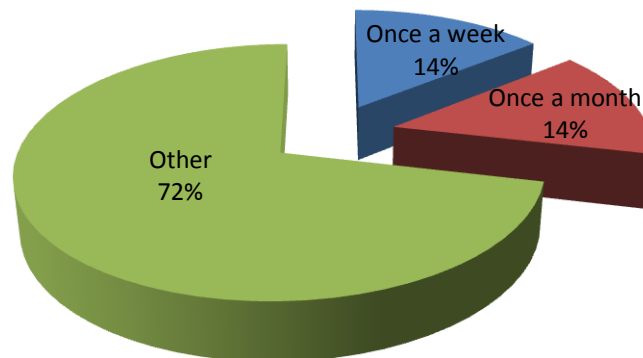
Author: Tanya Magali Zurita Rosado

Source: Teacher´s Questionnaire

From 93% of teachers that answered that the institution monitors the teaching, 14% said that it occurs once a week, another 14% said once a month, and 72% of them said the following: daily, always, once every two weeks, every term, quarterly, and when needed.

Monitoring by educational institutions has several important reasons:

This allows to identify strengths, weaknesses and limitations in the implementation and development of teaching.

Check the efficiency in the tasks performed.

Visualizing if the expected results will be achieved or not.

Establish a working compromise between institution and teacher and student-centered.

It provides to the institution with first-hand information for making decisions.

Strengthen the capacities of human capital, teachers toward students.

There are many negative factors that can be found as a result of the teaching monitoring: lack or bad lesson plan, little knowledge and/or strategies, lack of equipment and/or materials, discomfort, excessive heat or cold, lack of space, and so on.

Moreover, because institutions have expectations about teachers´ behavior and personal appearance, Gower, Phillips, & Walters (2005) suggest that certain informality may be acceptable; on the contrary, a lack of cleanliness and tidiness is not acceptable. But keeping respect for the cultural differences with the purpose to gain the respect of the students and do not embarrass them.

Analyzing the factors listed and no existence of shortcomings will help to make the changes and adjustments necessary by school authorities.

Conclusions

Although the number of classes included in this study does not determine accurately the actual academic situation in Guayaquil, it is important to express the following conclusions:

- Students are not classified by levels to receive their English classes contributing to a sense of fear of making mistakes or insecurity and anxiety related to the lack of knowledge and speaking skill. As a consequence, weaker students get embarrassed when they interact with each other.

- The teaching methods were used conveniently by teachers facilitating the language comprehension.

- Despite the effort, not all teachers have the academic level required to provide quality education that enhance students learning and avoid problems with lack of knowledge at the university.

- Some educational institutions do not have an established frequency for reviewing the teacher´s lesson plans. In other words, measuring the quality of teaching through this process is not a priority.

- A few educational institutions do not have all the appropriate resources to give a high grade of support to students that motivate to continue studying. This problem also applies to the most novice and experienced teachers.

- The vast majority of classrooms are crowded making difficult person-to-person teaching. In some educational institutions does not exist the necessary infrastructure that allows students to develop their activities.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this research it is possible to address these problems to find the solutions that are needed:

- It is especially important that authorities and teachers provide their students with the more appropriate resources not only in a printed form but also in a digital form for an excellent education including creative tools as well as adequate equipment. Everything can be useful when it is held in a friendly atmosphere therefore investing in infrastructure should be reflected on the well-being of students.

- For good teaching-learning process teachers need to be updated in knowledge, strategies, and technology. This will allow authorities to provide opportunities for students more precisely by knowing which resources are available and which methods are more effective for them. Teachers should pay special attention to students to discover their strengths and limitations in order to help them to become successful professionals.

- Everyone involved in education should contribute to the emotional and intellectual growth of students and by adopting an excellent classroom management and adequate infrastructure students will react positively. As a consequence, the benefit will be for the present and future of themselves, their families and society.

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

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

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

*Students' Needs *(age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles)*
YES   ( )   NO   ( )

* It can be recognized based on the variety of activities (visual, audio, audiovisual, realia, and on-line) applied, and students' reaction to them.

2. Which is the level of the students? *(Check 1)*

*Students' Level			
Basic ( )	Intermediate ( )	High Intermediate ( )	Advanced ( )

* It can be recognized based on the material they are using or placement done by the institution.

3. Which of the following methods are used?

Communicative Language Teaching	( )
The Natural Approach	( )
Cooperative Language Learning	( )
Content-Based Instruction	( )
Task-Based Language Teaching	( )
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	( )
Total Physical Response	( )
Whole Language Approach	( )
Grammar Translation Method	( )
Others _____	( )

4. Which of the following activities are used?

Whole-group activities	( )
Individual activities	( )
Group work activities	( )

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

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

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

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

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

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

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )
NOTES: _____	

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

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

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

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

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

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

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

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

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

Students' Needs *(age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles)*
YES   ( )   NO   ( )
Why? _____ _____ _____

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

Students' Level *(Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate , and Advanced)*
YES   ( )   NO   ( )
Why?_____

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 ( )
Why? _____	

11. Do you consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach your lessons?

YES ( )	NO ( )
Why? _____	

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 ( )
Why? _____	

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 ( )
Why? _____	

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 ( )
Why? - _____			

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

YES ( )	NO ( )
Which ones? _____	

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

YES ( )	NO ( )
Why? _____	

19. Does the institution review your lesson plans?

YES ( )	NO ( )	
If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other_____

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?

YES ( )	NO ( )	
If yes, how frequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other_____

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. **¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?**

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )
¿Por qué? _____	

3. **Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:**

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

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

SI ( )	NO ( )
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

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

SI ( )	NO ( )
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ( )	NO ( )
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ( )	NO ( )
¿Por qué? _____	

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

SI ( )	NO ( )

GRACIAS!!!!!