UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

TITULACIÓN DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

MENCION INGLÈS

AREA SOCIO HUMANISTICA

Factors that affect the English language teaching- learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools. Study realized in Quevedo y Mocache cities, Provincia Los Ríos 2012.

TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACION

AUTORA: Montoya Aguirre, Fátima Narcisa

DIRECTOR: **Paredes Zúñiga, Fabián Marcelo, Mgs.**

CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO QUEVEDO

2014

Septiembre, 2018

Magister.

Paredes Zúñiga Fabián Marcelo.

DIRECTOR DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE TITULACIÓN

CERTIFICA:

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

Loja,…………………………

f)……………………………
CI:……………………………

DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

"Yo, Fátima MontoyaAguirre declaro ser la autora del presente trabajo Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high School de la titulación Ciencias de la Educaciòn Menciòn Inglès, siendo Paredes Zùñiga Fàbian Marcelo director del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Adicionalmente declaro conocer y aceptar la disposición del Art. 67 del Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja que en su parte pertinente textualmente dice: "formar parte del patrimonio de la Universidad la propiedad intelectual de investigaciones, trabajos científicos o técnicos y tesis de grado que se realicen a través, o que el apoyo financiero, académico o institucional (operativo) de la Universidad".

f)…………………………..

Fátima Narcisa Montoya Aguirre

CI: 120284410-4

DEDICATION

To God, who has provided me with health and courage in the most difficult moments of my life.

To my husband, because he always has given me support, time, affection, and love; his patience and love have inspired me to continue forward.

To my beloved sons, because I took great amount of our family time for studying and doing the projects of the English career; I hope my experience will develop in my sons a sense of responsibility and encouragement to achieve their goals in life.

To my sisters, whohave given me their unconditional support, friendship, and love when they saw me discouraged. Their advice has been an important source of motivation and strength to achieve my goals.

Thanks to all my family.

FátimaNarcisa Montoya Aguirre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The title of this research is "Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools". The purpose of this research is the analysis of aspects related to teachers, students, classrooms, and institutions that influence the teaching-learning progress. To achieve its main goal, this research used the quantitative method because it brought a clear view of the results obtained. Information was gathered by means of some instruments such as questionnaires and interviews. In addition, it was necessary to use the note – taking technique to record details of observations. The participants were fifteen teachers and students from six Ecuadorian public high schools in Quevedo and Mocache cities, they were observed to have a better approach of the factors that influence the teaching- learning process. In addition, each teacher was interviewed to evaluate their language proficiency.

The most important conclusion derived from the analysis allowed to indicate that main factors affecting the English language teaching-learning process are percentage of language used by teachers, classroom space, class size, and lack of teaching resources.

KEY WORDS: Language proficiency, classroom space, class size, and lack of teaching resources

RESUMEN

El titulo de esta investigación es "Factores que afectan el idioma inglés en los procesos de enseñanza en los colegios públicos Ecuatoriano". El propósito de esta investigación es el análisis de aspectos relacionados a profesores, estudiantes, aulas, e instituciones que influencian el progreso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Para lograr esta meta principal, esta investigación usó los métodos cuantitativos porque estos traen una clara visión de los resultados obtenidos. La información fue recopilada por medio de algunos instrumentos tal como cuestionarios y entrevistas. Además, fue necesario usar la técnica de tomar notas para grabar detalles de las observaciones. Los participantes fueron quince profesores y estudiantes de seis colegios públicos Ecuatorianos en la ciudad de Quevedo y Mocache, fueron observados para tener un mejor acercamiento de los factores que influencian el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Además, cada maestro fue entrevistado para evaluar su destreza del idioma.

La más importante conclusión derivada del análisis permitió indicar que los factores que afectan el idioma inglés en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje son porcentaje del idioma usado por los profesores, espacio del aula, tamaño de la clase, y falta de recursos de enseñanza.

Palabras Claves: habilidad del idioma, espacio del aula, tamaño de la clase, y falta de recursos para enseñar.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, educational authorities have been worried about the high number of students who are not able to enter the university because of their poor skills in the English language. This situation has put the English language teaching-process in public school under scrutiny. In consequence, the purpose of this research is to find out and analyze the factors related to teachers, students, classrooms, and institutions affecting the English language teaching- learning process.

The title of this research is "Factors affecting the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools" and the main objectives are: determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place; identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers; and, determine teachers' instructional competences. This investigation is important because it will give references of the factors that teachers, students, and authorities need to improve the English language teaching-learning process in public education.

Other countries all over the world have experimented difficulties in the English language teaching-learning process. For that reason, researchers have carried out studies that had brought interesting results; three, among others, are worthily to review.

The first study was done by Ramirez &Piñeiro (2010) to know teachers' level of English language and the types of methods used in teaching English as foreign language in Costa Rica. The results showed that teachers had vocation for teaching and good knowledge of methods but poor skills in managing learning. This research was limited by the teachers' low academic instructions.

The second study was carried out by Khamkhien (2010) who wanted to determine whether gender, motivation, and experience in learning English influence learning strategies in Thai and Vietnamese students. The results showed that Thai students had more experience than Vietnamese students applying English language learning out of the classroom. However, Vietnamese students demonstrated more motivation because they did not have many opportunities to speak English out of the classroom. This investigation was limited by the small amount of participants and the influence of factors such as nationality, field of study, etc. in students' learning strategies.

The third study was done by Zu (2001) to investigate the problems of teaching English in large classes in China. It was found that 77 % of the participants did not complain about large classes though there were a considerable amount of behavior problems. Chinese students' cultural characteristics in favor of large classes limited this research because they did not complain about class size thought the results found.

The beneficiaries of the present research will be people involved in English language teaching-learning process because it will be possible to design strategic plans to correct the pitfalls pointed out by the findings of this research.

However, this research had some limitations such as the fact that teachers did not allowed the researcher to check the lesson plans to verify the application of their elements. In addition, some teachers did not answer the questionnaire correctly because they left questions in blanks and they did not give accurate reasons when they had to. It would be advisable to group all the teachers who were interviewed to explain them better the purpose of the research and to advise them not to leave questions in blanks.

METHODS

Setting and participants

      This research was carried out in six public high schools in the cities of Quevedo and Mocache, Ecuador. In each of those institutions, three teachers and their students were selected to participate in the investigation. Students attended classes four hours per week, they were teenagers between 12 and 17 years old and they had a medium-to-low economic and social class. Regarding teachers, they worked eight hours daily and had assigned different courses. The number of teachers varied in each high school, there were 6 teachers in some high schools, three in others, and one in another.

Procedure

The method applied in this research is quantitative because it makes possible to calculate the quantities and percentages of the data obtained in order to analyze and provide accurate results.

This research started with the literature review of important topics related to teachers, students, classrooms, and institutions. In addition, five studies were considered to sustain the theoretical framework.

After revising the literature, the research field was carried out in six public high schools to analyze and describe the teaching-learning process in the natural context of the classes. Three teachers and one of their students were selected to participate in the investigation; they were interviewed with questionnaires and surveys. The questionnaire consisted of 20 open-ended questions to gather teachers and students' opinions about factors such as participants' language level, percentage of language used in classes, class size, classroom space, teaching activities, lesson design, etc. Besides, teachers

wereinterviewed to identify their language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); they also were observed while teaching their classes in order to determine their instructional competences. All information about teachers' instruction in the classes was recorded in observation formats and additional details were written down using note-taking technique.

Once the process of gathering of results finished, teachers' answers were counted and their percentages were calculated quantitatively and using Microsoft Excel to obtain statistical graphs. The obtained information was used to perform a quantitative analysis.

In order to perform the quantitative analysis, the items of the teachers' questionnaire were grouped together and analyzed according to these aspects: factors related to teachers, factors related to students, factors related to classroom, and factors related to institutions. The analysis of the factors related to teachers included: level of education, language proficiency, teaching methods and techniques, percentage of language used in the classroom, lesson design, managing learning. The factors related to students analyzed in this research were: students' needs and English level. With regard to the classroom these factors were studied: class size, classroom space, seating arrangement, classroom and teaching resources. And, the analysis of the factors related to institutions included: class observation and lesson design monitoring. Then, each of the questions was included with its graph and the results shown in them were analyzed according to the data obtained by means of observation formats and students' questionnaires. In addition, important theories of the literature review were considered to support main findings.

DISCUSSION

Literature Review

English is used by people for many purposes around the world. In our country, citizens learn English to improve their live style and have better opportunities in the professional field. However, the process of English learning is affected by different factors that are going to be reviewed in this section. In addition, five studies support this literature review.

Much attention has been focused on improving the teaching-learning process in Ecuador. Some initiatives have been proposed such as the CRADLE project which is a program developed by the Foreign Language Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. By means of this program the Ecuadorian government signed an agreement with the British government to give English language an important place within Ecuadorian education. The project consists on establishing a study plan of five hours of English in secondary schools; this is complemented with English textbooks which provide material for teachers and students. In consequence, the Ministry of Education informed in 2011 that high schools will benefit because the program will improve the quality of English teaching and learning.

According to a report in Hoy newspaper published in 2005, the cooperation between Ecuador and England is important because learning English benefits people in many ways since this language provides opportunities of multicultural interaction and exchange. Therefore, the CRADLE project is a good initiative that aims to reinforce values of ethnic groups by teaching them issues related to Ecuadorian identity, sexual education, and moral values.

Teaching approaches and methods

There are different theories and ideas about English teaching that are well known as approaches and methods. Fenstermacher (2004) explains a first approach that considers the teacher as an executive within the classroom that manages the teaching process by means of different types of techniques. A second approach presented by the author gives the teacher a facilitator role that helps learners to achieve their learning goals. Finally, the author mentions the liberationist approach that sees the teachers as someone who teaches learners how to be a human being.

From a more linguistic point of view there are some methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR), Whole Language Approach, Natural Approach, and Cooperative language learning. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 73), teachers who use the TPR method "teach language through physical (motor) activity" because they make gestures using their body to teach concepts of structures and vocabulary. They also explain that this method is used for beginner students who learn by means of instructions and commands given by the teacher. With regard to the Whole Language Approach method, the authors describe that it is focused on teaching students reading skills in a natural way by emphasizing real communication. The teacher facilitates learning using real materials and giving classroom activities a purpose. Concerning the Natural approach, the authors express that this method is focused in the amount of language learned by students. Teaching is centered on using objects in the classroom and pictures. In addition, learners are always pushed to a level beyond their capabilities by asking them questions and using a clear language. Teacher repeats items several times until learners master them. The last method revised by these authors is the

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL). This method remarks group work to promote a cooperative classroom environment in which teacher motivates students to be responsible of their own learning and to help classmates to learn better. The authors comment that the teaching-learning process depends on the teachers' skills to manage and organize the classroom.

There are other methods presented by Mukalel (2007) such as the Grammar-translation method and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). According to this author the Grammar- translation method is the most traditional of all methods and it focuses on teaching grammar structures using the students' mother tongue without using any kind of supportive material. Also, this author explains that the CLT method highlights the use of English language to foster communication. Classes are students centered and teachers teach structures used in daily interactions.

Finally, Stryker & Leaver (1997) give some characteristics of other methods such as Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Task Based Approach (TBA). These authors explain that teachers who use CBI teach language by means of a subject matter and using authentic language and texts. The authors remark that a CBI curriculum changes according to students' needs. With regard to TBA, the authors explicate that cognitive skills are the core of this method and students have to develop different types of tasks using the target language.

To sum up, RaoBahskara (2007) considers that all methods have advantages and disadvantages and the use of one or another depends on different aspects such as learners' capacity and interest, teachers' training, teaching objectives, resources available, class size, etc.

Teaching techniques

Teachers have to use different types of techniques in order to help students to learn more effectively. Brown (2002, p. 128) defines a technique as, "a super ordinate term to refer to various activities that either teachers or learners perform in the classroom. In other words, techniques include all tasks and activities." Besides, as Richards & Rodgers (2001) explain, techniques must be related to the method and approach used in the classroom.

About the different types of techniques, Brown (2002) mentions questions, group and pair work as useful techniques to encourage students at first stages of language learning. Chain stories, surveys and polls, role-plays, and storytelling are ideal for promoting interactive exchange of information among students. And, group debates, argumentation, and complex role-playing are techniques for developing intellectual skills by means of target language usage. In addition, this author refers to choral repetition, cued substitution drills and dictation as a set of techniques that allow teachers to guide students' responses. Brainstorming and certain games are techniques in which students use the target language to bring new ideas and to interact with each other.

More examples of techniques are mentioned by Spratt et al (2007) such as discussion; solving problems through exchanging ideas; sharing, experiences; writing emails, stories, letters, invitations or compositions. They refer also to drills,Wh-questions, multiple choice questions, true/false questions, form filling, role-play, and survey as other types of useful techniques for the teaching process.

Other techniques are listed by Patel & Praveen (2008) to promote oral work such as oral composition, picture presentation, story completion, dramatization, debates, and

language games. The authors also present teaching techniques that are useful for improving students' skills of the written language such as picture, guided, controlled, and free composition.

Managing learning

Three important aspects of managing learning are: instructions, feedback, and timing. Orange. (2008, p. 159) mentions that giving clear instructions is part of classroom strategies for managing behavior because, according to her, "Clear directions are imperative for students success." Additional aspects related to giving good instructions mentioned by this author refer to paying attention to students' body language and behavior after instructions are given in order to determine whether they understood. On the point of view of this author, students comprehend better when teachers speak slowly, demonstrate or use visuals to explain instructions. Another point of view about instructions is provided by Brookfield (2006, p. 28) who says, "Wherever students experience ambiguity or confusion regarding teachers' expectations, resistance is the predictable consequence." He explains that receiving unclear instructions make students feel that they are going to fail in the task assigned therefore students' behavior turn into resistance to perform assigned activities.

Concerning timing, Richards & Lockhart (1996, p. 171) say, "The amount of time that students spend on classroom activities has been identified as one of the most important factors affecting student learning." The authors name three factors related to timing activities: allocated time, time-on task, and academic learning time. Allocated time refers to the amount of time that teachers assign to perform a task. Time-on task is the real time that students spend on doing an activity. And, academic learning time is the

proportional time-task in which students complete the activity correctly. In addition to those aspects, Maxom (2009) mentions that timing a lesson mostly concerns to the amount of time devoted to teach new information, to give the necessary practice about new information, and to give students freedom to demonstrate that they master the recent acquired knowledge. Finally, Thompson (2011) explains that teachers who do not use class time effectively are more likely to have problems with classroom discipline and students experienced academic failures; all of these would result in an exhausted teacher.

A last aspect in managing learning is feedback. Brookhart (2008) considers that it brings information about the degree of students' success in performing activities and it enables teacher to guide students and shows them their place in the learning process. In addition, the author states that effective feedback must be applied immediately, prioritizing points, giving accurate information, and considering classroom audience.

Lesson design

Lesson design is, without doubt, an important component in English teaching. As Richards &Renandya (2002, p. 31) point out, "Lesson plans are systematic records of a teacher's thoughts about what will be covered during a lesson". They comment that when designing a lesson teachers decide on learning aims, techniques, timing, resources, etc. Besides, Butt (2006, p. 1) declares, "The key to good teaching, purposeful class management and the achievement of sustained educational progress lies in effective planning"

There are different approaches to define the components of a lesson plan. According to Richards &Renandya (2002), a lesson plan has five components:

description of the class, recent work, objectives, contents, additional possibilities. In addition, a lesson plan also must include strategies to handle lesson time and students' needs and doubts about lesson content. Similarly, Butt (2006) mentions also five components of lesson planning: purpose or aims of the lesson, this helps teachers to guide learning in a specific direction; the substance of the lesson, that refers to the subject knowledge and learners' ability required for the lesson; methods that are the set of teaching strategies that will be used in the lesson, and evaluation of students' learning.

Finally, Price & Nelson (2011) mention eight components of lesson planning such as: preparing tasks, lesson setup, lesson opening, lesson body, extended practice, lesson closing, evaluation, and editing task. The first component contains descriptions of the tasks that students will do during lesson time. In the second component teachers describe the strategies that they will use to call students' attention. The third component require that teachers perform activities to begin the lesson such as tell them the learning objectives. In the fourth component, the lesson body, teachers consider the necessary steps to present information, monitor learning, and manage behavior. The purpose of the fifth component, extended practice, is to provide students opportunities for practicing acquired knowledge. The content of the sixth component, lesson closing, refers to activities to review main points of the lesson such as drawing conclusions, students presenting their work, checking future knowledge, etc. Evaluation is the seventh component in lesson planning and its purpose is to bring teachers evidence of students' learning. Finally, in the eighth component teachers edit tasks in order to improve failures occurred during lesson time.

Class size

There are different points of view about the influence of class size in the English teaching-learning process. In the first place, Westwood (2004) states that it seems that the ratings of the course decreased when class size increases. According to him, teachers in small classes are able to control discipline and it is easier to provide students better support in relation to their needs. The author considers that small classes are not a synonym of success because the quality of the teaching-learning process depends also on students' behavior and teachers' skills. He mentions that small classes are suitable for students in early years and learners with special needs.

Another opinion is provided by Reisert (2001) who favors small classes since this model could improve outcomes of students' learning. He thinks that class size is as a basic aspect in education and it is necessary to evaluate the costs and benefits of implementing small classes because it demands more personnel and new spaces. Guriam (2011) considers also that small classes offer certain kind of benefits especially with behavior problems. He recommends small classes in classrooms dominated by the presence of male students and for teaching girls working in tasks that require abstract and spatial intellect skills.

With regard to large classes, Sharan (2003) points out that a classroom with over thirty five students is considered to be large in western countries. According to him, large classes need enough space for students to work well and move around without difficulties. In addition, this author considers that large classes are not easy to control with only one teacher leading the process therefore the use of a team of teachers would be an ideal solution. The author states also that is irrefutable that variety of instructional

methods adds motivation and interaction to the learning process in large classes but it requires changes in the classroom structure. Usually, teachers' lack of skills in using cooperative techniques in large classes is the main impediment. Finally, the author explains that duration of class session is a factor that affects teaching, particularly in large classes because many teachers argue that students have short periods of attention and behavior problems are always arousing during lessons. He favors reduction of time with rigid discipline controls to keep order in the classroom.

Classroom space

Classroom space as a component of the teaching- learning process has been studied by different authors. McLeod, Fisher, & Hoover (2003) consider that classroom space influences directly the process of instruction because students' experiences in the classroom are affected by the space where they interact daily. For this reason, the authors explain that teachers must organize working areas according to the type of work (individual or group) that is going to be developed during lessons. That organization of spaces will help students to achieve learning goals in interesting and communicative ways.

Similar ideas are given by Dudek (2005, p. 29) who declares, "The classroom is a shared space and a balance needs to be struck between the needs of the teaching staff, the needs of children and the resources available."; he recommends assigning enough space to teachers' possessions, group organization, circulation routes, etc.

Another author that gives important opinions about classroom space is Woolner (2010, p.15) who says, "Instinctively people tend to feel that a poor physical environment will have a detrimental effect on the activities that take place there." In

addition, she mentions that recent studies have proved that learners show distress when they work in restricted spaces. Moreover, this author reports a research done by Horne-Martin (2006) who found that even though teachers try to organize overcrowded classrooms, there is not a visible compensation. However, the author explains that problems with reduced space could be overcome by distributing furniture adequately to maximize space.

Seating arrangement

Distribution of seats in the classroom is a factor that according to some authors also influences the teaching-learning process. Woolkfolk (2007, p. 453) suggests teachers to think about, "Can the physical setting influence teaching and learning in classrooms organized by territories? Similarly, Tollefson& Osborn (2008) recommend teachers to ask themselves: What is the seating arrangement like? What does it help students to see, to focus, and to do? According to those authors, it is important to take into account those questions before start a lesson because, as Bray&Kehle (2011) explain, seating arrangement is a factor that influences students' behavior. In addition, these authors cite Wannarka&Ruhl (2008) to explicate that there is not a particular seating arrangement that motivates students to behave well or to improve their learning because the position of seats depends on the type of tasks that teachers assign to learners.

About the different types of seating arrangement, Waterhouse (2001) proposes that the cabaret style promotes collaborative work among students working in groups. The dining room style is also useful for students working in groups but it can provoke behavior problems as students sit facing each other. And, Workstation style allows teacher to work with students using an individual or group scheme.

More examples of seating arrangement are provided by Woolkfolk (2007) who explains that horizontal rows promote pair work but they are not useful for large groups. Clusters are considered ideal for collaborative work and discussions but this model may complicate classroom management. Finally, this author mentions that fishbowl or stack formation make create cohesion among students but it also can cause behavior problems. Finally, Tollefson& Osborn (2008) propose a learner-centered approach to guide teachers to design seating plans that benefits both teachers and learners to achieve learning goals.

Classroom and teaching resources

The type of teaching resources used in the classroom may have different effects on students. Felix (2009) argues that teaching aids benefits interaction among students. In addition, Dash & Dash (2007, p. 122) says, "Teaching aids are those materials which are quite helpful in improving the quality of teaching and learning." They remark that teaching resources provide learners a sensory experience, help teachers to reduce oral work and to explain abstract concepts associating them with concrete experiences.

There are different types of materials that teachers can use to provide students with concrete experiences. Felix (2009) classifies them into visual and audiovisual. He explains that visual materials stimulate learners' sense of vision and some examples are pictures, flashcards, blackboard, overhead projector. The author explains that pictures and flashcards show images that are useful to explain meaning of words or concepts. Audiovisual materials promote learning through the use of hearing and some of them include radio, tape recorder, etc. He mentions that tape recorder help teachers to teach students the correct pronunciation of words. In the same way, Patel & Praveen (2008)

list some teaching materials such as charts, drawings, pictures and maps; all of them create interest on students and prepared students for learning. These authors mention that audiovisual materials such as films or videos offer students great exposure to language by using the senses of sight and hearing. He explains that Videos and films offer students opportunities to watch interaction among people while they use the target language.

Classroom observation

Classroom observation is a useful tool to evaluate the teaching-learning process. It is used to monitor the complex interaction that takes place in the language classroom as Genese& Upshur (1996) mentions. For these authors classroom observation provides valuable ideas about the problems affecting the achievement of educational objectives therefore this process requires carefully planning of activities. In the same way, Slack (1997, p. 83) explicates, "Classroom monitoring will inform teachers on the extent to which the school's organization is geared primarily to the improvement of the children's learning."

Classroom observation takes place for different reasons and it is carried out by different persons. Saéz (1993) identifies two types of observation: external (or non participant) and internal (or participant). He mentions that a positive aspect of external observation is the possibility of observing events as they occur. On the contrary, results may be affected when participants do not know that they are being observed. With regard to internal participation, the observer can access to important information because he/she belongs to the observed group though this fact may affect the reliability of data due to observer's subjectivity. Similarly, Cohen, Manion, &Morrison (2007) classify

observation into participant and non-participant and describe three advantages of

participant observation given by Bailey (1994). In the first place, this type of observation

is more recommended than surveys or experiments to gather information of non-verbal

activities. Second, observers can record behaviors at the moment of observation. Third,

investigators can interact actively with the members of the observed group.

Student's motivation

It is said that students' motivation is a powerful factor in determining the level of

learning achievement in language teaching. Richards &Bredfeldt (1998, p. 230) defines

motivation as, "the student's overall attitude towards learning." In addition, McLean

(2009, p. 7) says, "Motivation is all the reasons behind why we behave as we do and

revolves around intentionally". Another definition of motivation is given by Dörnyei

(2001) who expresses, "…motivation explains *why* people decide to do something, *how

hard* they are going to pursue it and *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity".

All those authors mentioned above also explain different types of motivation. In

the first place, Richards &Bredfeldt (1998) refers to general, specific, extrinsic, and

intrinsic motivation. General motivation is hard to change and remains steady with time

while specific motivation can change according to a topic or class. Extrinsic motivation

arouses from external factors and intrinsic motivation is driven by students' internal

goals or desires.

It is important also to refer to Dörnyei (2001), who mentions two other types of

motivation, the first type refers to positive attitudes towards the target language while

the second type of motivation comes from the practical rewards of learning a second or

foreign language such as work opportunities.

Learning styles

A challenging aspect in language teaching is the diversity of learning styles in the classroom. On the point of view of Sprenger (2008), teachers can help students identifying the learning styles that are suitable for their learning. Another approach is brought by Gross (2009) who remarks that learning styles determine the way in which learners organize, gather, interpret, and recall information.

There are different types of learning styles. In the first place Sprenger (2008) lists these: conditional response, kinesthetic, episodic, emotional, procedural, and semantic. Each of those styles has subcategories such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. People with auditory style learn better by means of music, sounds of field trips. And kinesthetic individuals learn by dancing or role-playing.

Other categorization of learning styles is provided by Woolkfolk (2008). She refers to deep-processing learners as those who enjoy learning while other students need rewards and external evaluation; these are surface- processing learners. Finally, Gross (2009) lists the most popular classification of learning styles known as Gardner's multiple intelligence, they are: verbal- linguistic, mathematical- logical, musical, visual - spatial, bodily - kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. She explains that current teaching trends try to design activities in order to mix different learners' styles as for example, reading, listening and role-playing. Verbal-linguistic learners are those who like to learn by and using language structures (reading, writing, analyzing texts, etc.). Bodily – kinesthetic learners prefer to touch or use their body to acquire knowledge (write on the board, manipulating objects, etc.). Interpersonal learners like to communicate their ideas and learn from others.

Students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English

Students' intelligence or aptitude to learn English has been widely studied in trying to determine to what extent it affects the process of teaching and learning the language. According to Harmer (2001), aptitude determines learning advantages of some students over others and this can be assessed by applying aptitude tests. But this author considers that those tests are discriminatory because they intend to classify students into more and less intelligent. Another point of view is given by Dörnyei (2005) who states that aptitude, intelligence, and ability are synonyms and they refers to individuals' ability to acquire new information. Similarly, Ellis (1999) describes language aptitude as a set of students' abilities that allow them to learn faster than others. This author mentions that aptitude is sometimes considered as an aspect related to learners' cognition and combination of different characteristics of personality. He explains that Carroll (1981) defines a model of language in which are described four important abilities. The first is phonemic coding that helps learners to identify sounds. The second is known as grammatical sensitivity, it allows learners to recognize structures within sentences. The third is inductive language learning, ability to relate meaning and patterns. And the four is rote learning that allows learners to make associations between stimuli.

After revising important literature about the factors that may influence the English language-teaching process, five studies will be described in order to give evidence to support this research.

One of the studies was done by Wright & Sanders (1997). To examine the relative magnitude of teacher effects on student achievement while simultaneously

considering the influences of classroom heterogeneity, student achievement level, and class size on academic growth. The research was applied in three grades from an elementary school. Students were classified into four achievement level groups of roughly equal size using the achievement level scores.The analyses reported here are based on student academic gain that is, the student's scale score this year minus that student's scale score last year. Thirty separate analyses were done. Each of the fifteen subjects –grade combinations was analyzed separately, and each of these fifteen analyses was carried out on two different sets of school systems. The results showed that two most important factors impacting student gain are the teacher and the achievement level for the student. Class size and context had little effect on students' achievement but the teacher effect is highly significant in every analysis and has a larger effect size than any other factor in twenty of the thirty analyses. The achievement-level effect is significant in twenty-six of the thirty analyses and has the largest effect size in ten of the thirty analyses.

Therefore, the researchers concluded that a notably no significant factor was class size. The main effect for class size was significant in only three of the thirty analyses. In two of these three instances, the smaller-size class had the higher gains; in the other case, the larger-size class had higher gains.

Next study was done by Zu (2001) to investigate the problems of teaching English in large classes in China. A questionnaire was used to analyze students' opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of large classes. It was found that 77 % of the participants did not complain about large classes though there were a considerable amount of behavior problems. The researcher concluded that large classes are

challenging for teachers because of discipline problems but they must adapt their teaching in order to make classes more effective.

In another study, Aduwa-Ogiegbaen&Iyamu (2006) wanted to prove if the use of instructional resources and teaching methods along with physical conditions affect students' learning. Participants in this study were 3000 students from 30 schools in Nigeria who answered a questionnaire to gather information about teaching resources, teaching methods, and school environment. The results showed that students did not learn English well because of overcrowded classrooms, inefficient use of classroom space, and poor lighting and air conditions in the classroom. In addition, teachers did not vary their instructional methods and use mainly textbooks. In conclusion, the researchers state that those results affect future students' performance at University level.

Another study is the one by Khamkhien (2010) who aimed to determine whether gender, motivation, and experience in learning English influence learning strategies in Thai and Vietnamese students. In order to gather the necessary information about the variables to be investigated, a questionnaire was designed and applied to the participants. As a result, the answers showed that Thai students had more experience than Vietnamese students applying English language learning out of the classroom. However, Vietnamese students demonstrated more motivation because they did not have many opportunities to speak English out of the classroom. The researcher concluded that motivation affect learners' choice of learning strategies and development of language tasks.

The last study was done by Ramirez &Piñeiro (2010) to know teachers' level of

English language and the types of methods used in teaching English as foreign language

in Costa Rica. In order to perform this research, five participants from a group of eleven

teachers were randomly selected to observe their teaching practices and answer

questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that teachers were able to deal with

multicultural factors in the classroom and demonstrated vocation for teaching. Fourth of

the five observed teachers demonstrated a passive attitude in the classroom even though

they were young people. All observed teachers had good knowledge of methods

however they did not apply teaching strategies correctly because they used L1 to explain

instructions in all the classes: they also did not show good skills in language

pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition, teachers complained about class size even

though classroom space was appropriate in relation to classroom density. Researchers

observed that students demonstrated motivation for learning English but teachers' lack

of ability in classroom management diminished level of learners' interest. The

researchers concluded that teachers need more training in teaching methods, language

skills, and classroom management.

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

In this section the quantitative analysis of the teachers' questionnaire will be presented in order to determine and analyze the factors that may affect the English language teaching – learning process in public high schools. The results of the teachers´ questionnaire will be presented graphically and the analysis will be supported with information gathered in observation sheets and students´ questionnaires.

Factors concerning teachers

Which level of education do teachers have?

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

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

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

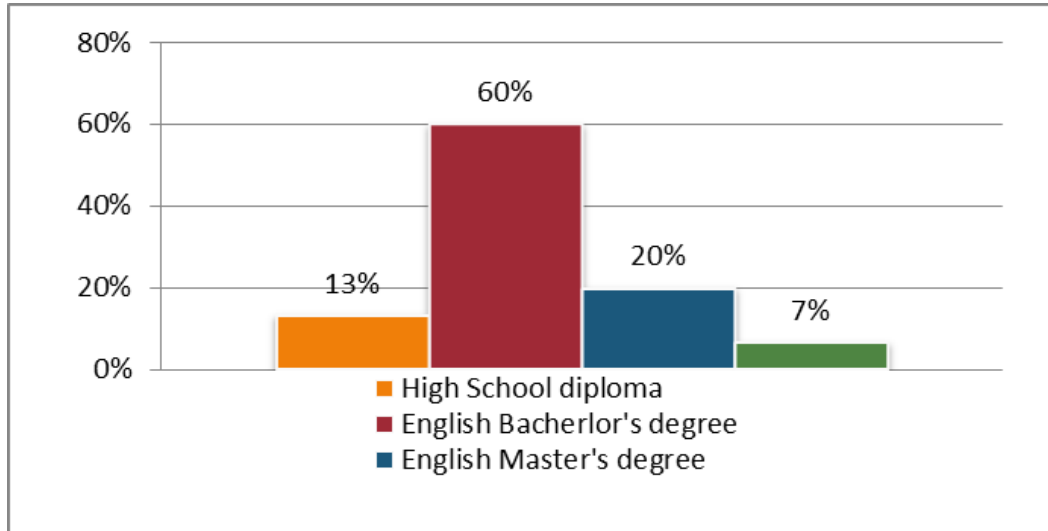*Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?*

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

Do teachers plan their lessons?

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

Which level of education do teachers have?

Graph 1

Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The results of the first question can be observed in graph 1. It was found that 60% of teachers have an English bachelor´ degree. Those teachers were interviewed to know more about their teaching profile and to determine their level according to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). Teachers indicated that they learned English in Ecuador, at different universities in the cities where they live or in Guayaquil. Almost all of them have studied English for an average of 5 years and others have studied the language for 10 years, since they were at high school. Concerning their work as English teachers, the answers varied, some of them have been working for 10 years, others for 13 years or 15 years. Similarly, the responses differ when teachers were asked about what skill is easier for them to teach, some of them mentioned grammar, and listening. During the interview, the teachers evidenced low language proficiency because most of them answered only the two first questions correctly. Those questions

correspond to an A1 level in the CEFR, and required that teachers mentioned where they are from and where they live. When teachers were asked for other questions such as "Where did you learn English?" some answers were: "in University technical", "in high school and in university". In addition, another question was "How long have you studied English?" and some answers were: "20 years old", "13 years", "17". Furthermore, they always asked the interviewer to repeat the questions using the native language.

The graph above shows also that 20% of the teachers have an English master´s degree. Those teachers explained that they learned English in Ecuador and studied for 8 years. The most difficult subject during teachers' major was phonetic, listening, grammar, etc. In addition, those teachers have been teaching English for 17, 10, or 6 years and considered that reading and writing are easy skills to teach because the most difficult are speaking and listening. About whether they like to continue studying they only responded yes and they did not give more reasons. When those teachers were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of teaching English in a non-speaking country, they referred only to lack of time with their families. According to them, teachers must overcome students' low motivation for learning English as an important problem to face in the English teaching field. Additionally, they reported that learning English offers social benefits for learners because they can travel to another country and communicate in the target language. They agreed also that the most important reward of teaching English is the salary. Finally, this group of teachers expressed that there are no benefits for teachers staying more time in educational institutions and there is no difference between teaching English as a foreign language and as a second language. The

important characteristic of the teachers who have an English master's degree was their language proficiency; the three teachers obtained a C1 level.

About the 13% of teachers who only have a high school diploma, they expressed that they learned English at the high school and they had 4 and 2 years of experience working as teachers. It was not possible to continue to the interview do their A1 level of language proficiency.

There were a 7% of teachers who have other types of degree such as secretary or engineers. Even though they did not speak English, they comprehended the contents and taught the subject using the Spanish language. They copied the contents from the textbook on the board and following the instructions of the teachers' book.

In sum, there is an important segment of teachers with an English bachelor´s degree; this gives evidence that the public high schools selected for this research have hired teachers with formal teaching skills in English language. Even though the proportion of teachers with a master´s degree is low, it is also an important indicator that some teachers are interested on improving their teaching skills. However, the percentage of teachers who has an English bachelor's degree does not guarantee the quality of language teaching due to their low language proficiency.

Factors concerning students

Do teachers consider students' needs to teach English successfully?

Graph 2
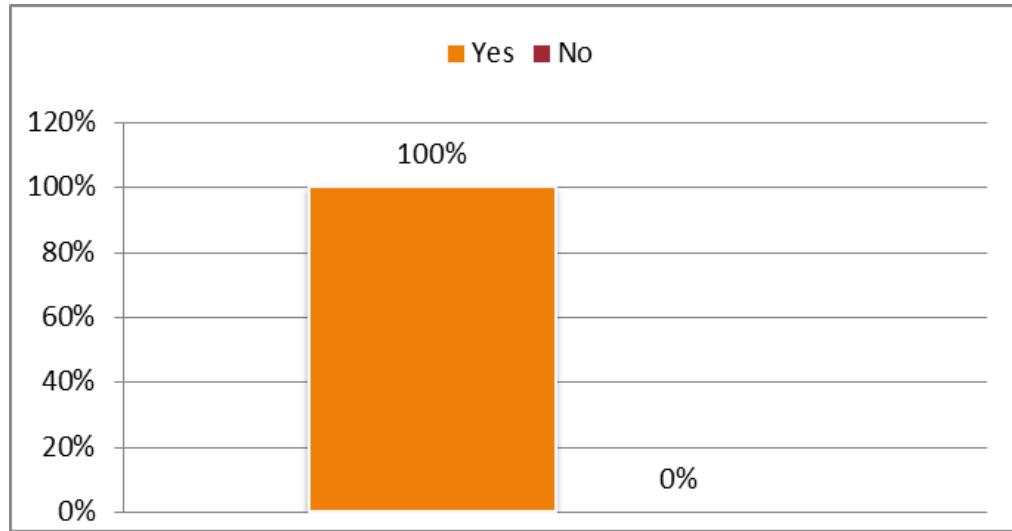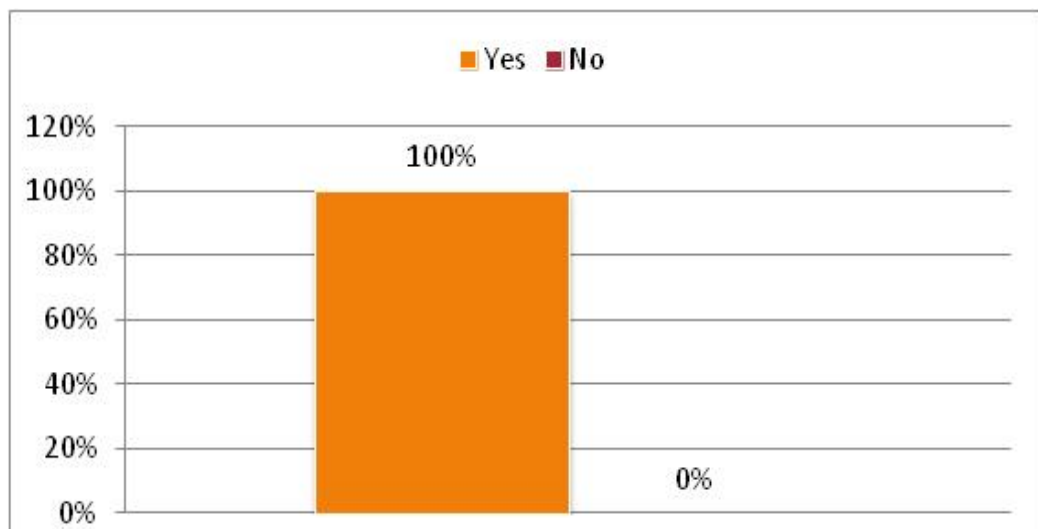

Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

When teachers were asked whether they consider students´ needs to teach English, all of them answered affirmatively as graph 2 shows. This result indicates that teachers frequently consider factors such as age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles to teach the classes. Students confirmed this result because all of them answered that they liked the way teachers teach English. According to those learners, teachers help them to understand classes in an easy way and repeat contents when students do not comprehend well. Some of the responses given by the students were: "yes, we understand her/his explanations"; "when we do not understand he/she explains again the class"; "she motivates us to learn and her teaching style is good;" classes are fun and she uses interesting methods". An important aspect here is the fact that more than the half of students answered that teachers do not use supplementary materials for teaching English. The observations carried out in the public high schools allowed to confirm that although teachers demonstrated good skills for

explaining contents, they did not use varied teaching aids according to students' learning styles and instruction was done using textbooks and the whiteboard. According to Dhand&Dhand (2007), the use of teaching resources provides learners a sensory experience. And, Sprenger (2008) explains that students learn better by means of their learning styles which are determined by the type of sense that is mostly used by learners, such as auditory or visual. Therefore, teachers only considered two types of learning styles in the observed classes.

Do teachers consider students' level to teach English successfully?

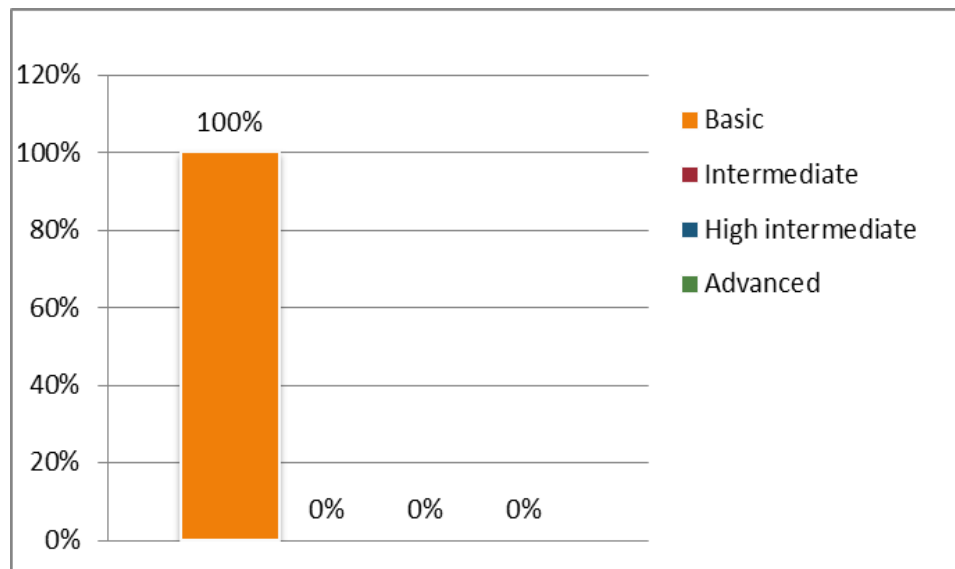**Graph 3**

Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

All teachers answered positively to the question stated above because graph 10 shows that 100% of teachers responded "yes". Teachers in the observed classes used textbooks that were graded according to each course. In addition, teachers used the blackboard to explain grammar rules, and to write sentences. Students worked frequently in fill on the blank exercises, guided practice that consisted on writing model sentences

that students imitated, repetition drills, translating simple sentences from native language into English. In addition, learners worked also in group and individual activities that according to Brown (2002) are useful techniques to encourage students at first stages of language learning. About that, an important amount of the interviewed students indicated that teaching activities were easy. Therefore, teachers considered students' level to teach English.

Which is the level of the students?

Graph 4

Author: Fatima Montoya
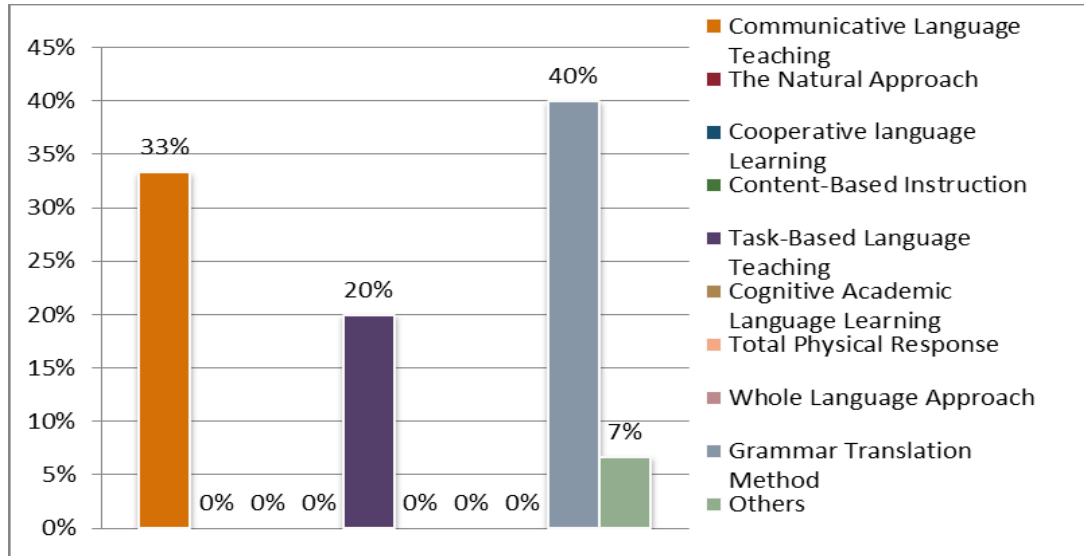
Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The basic level of students was confirmed by teachers' answers and the observations carried out in the classes. It is possible to observe in graph 11 that all the interviewed teachers indicated that students have a basic level. The observed teachers used copies of the textbook assigned by the Ministry of Education and the CRADLE project according to each course. About that, it is important to mention that Ecuadorian

government and the Foreign Language Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture have tried to give the English language a special place within the educational curriculum by establishing a study plan of five hours of English in secondary schools. However, the results showed here give evidence of the lower language level of students. It seems that inappropriate language proficiency of teachers is affecting the students' learning process since learners receive language input from occasional audio materials and they are daily exposed to teachers' bad pronunciation and poor communicative skills. In addition, the types of activities used in the classroom were focused on repeating drills orally or translating Spanish sentences into English which does not favored a communicative use of language.

Most of the observed teachers spoke in English and then translate everything into Spanish; this affects students' language production because they are not encouraged and motivated to use the language to communicate and exchange information. Only a minority of teachers, who have good language skills, were able to stimulate students to correct their errors and mistakes. In addition, these teachers use Communicative Language Teaching method and Task-Based language to promote in students the language usage. Therefore, the amount of students with basic level is affected by the frequency of use of the Spanish language in the classroom due to teachers' low language proficiency.

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

Graph 5

Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The graph above shows the teachers' answers in relation to the method used in the observed classes. It can be seen that the grammar translation method obtained the 40% of teachers' preferences; it is followed by Communicative language teaching with the 33%. Next method selected by teachers was the Task-Based Language Teaching with the 20%. Finally, the 7% of teachers' answers correspond to other methods which were not specified by the interviewed instructors.

The results presented above agree with the observations done in each class since teachers use their native language to explain the grammar structures or complex meaning of words. First, teachers explained classes and instructions in English and after that they translate everything to ensure students' comprehension. According to Mukalel (2007), the Grammar- translation method is the most traditional of all methods and it focuses on teaching grammar structures using the students' mother tongue without using any kind of supportive material. It was observed that students interacted between them

using their mother tongue and only few students tried to use English in the classes. Moreover, students indicated that they liked the activities designed for the class and they allowed them to interact with their peers. Obviously, learners enjoyed the activities because the use of their native language allowed them to exchange information without difficulty. However, the excessive use of Spanish in the classroom does not help students to progress appropriately in their learning process.

Another method preferred by teachers was the Communicative Language teaching that according to Mukalel (2007) highlights the use of English language to foster communication. Classes are students centered and teachers teach structures used in daily interactions. However, as it was mentioned previously, students did not communicate between them using English and classes were teacher centered. It was observed that teachers were always source of information and students were not encouraged to use the target language to express their ideas because teachers allowed them to speak in Spanish very frequently.

Task-Based language was another method selected by the interviewed teachers. Stryker & Leaver (1997) explicate that cognitive skills are the core of this method and students have to develop different types of tasks using the target language. But the observed students did not use the language to develop tasks; they only read and write exercises from the textbook in English or copied sentences on the board to check whether they were correct.

Summarizing, the grammar translation method was used in the observed classes and it does not foster communication between students as teachers indicated.

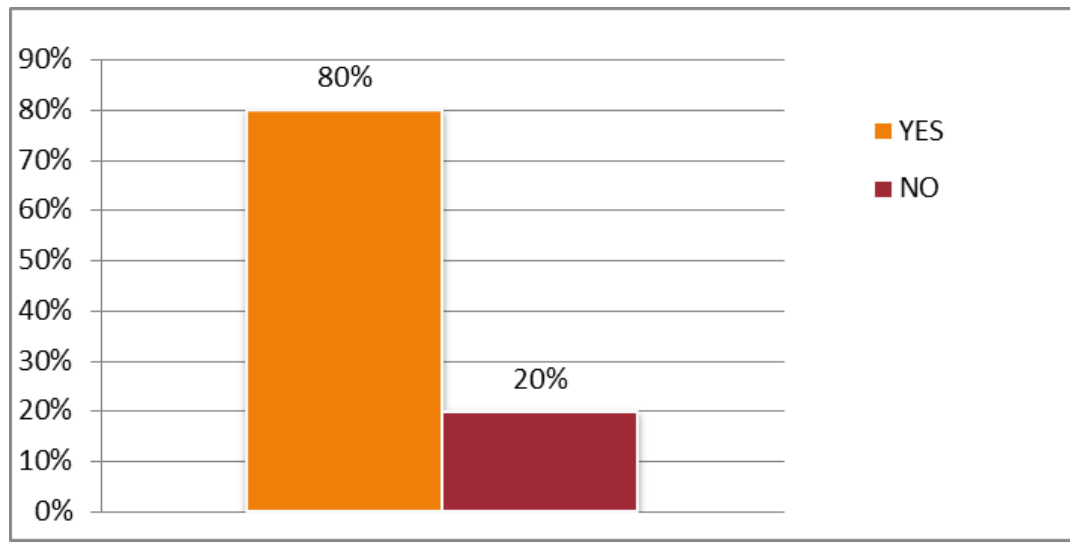*Do teachers use whole- group activities to teach their lessons?*

Graph 6
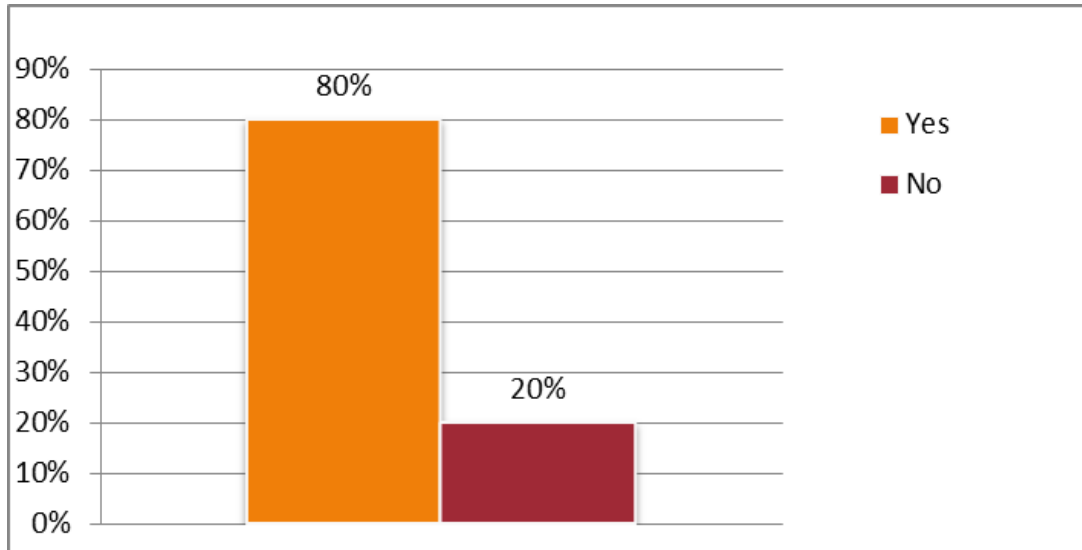
Author: Fatima Montoya
Source: teachers´ questionnaire

Regarding the use of whole-group activities in the classroom, 80% of teachers

answered in favor of this type of technique and the other 20% of responses indicated that

teachers do not use it. In fact, the teachers worked mainly with the whole class

involving students in the contents by using brainstorming or asking them questions.

Those teachers said that they used whole group activities by different reasons such as:

"because it's a way they can help each other", "because is more easy to teach", "to

improve and motivate students participating", "because the students learn to participate

with ideas". On the point of view of Brown (2002), questions and group work are useful

techniques to encourage students at first stages of language learning; the techniques

were used according to students' basic level of English. In addition, students confirmed

that this type of techniques motivates them to learn English because all learners

answered positively to the question: "Do the activities done by your teacher motivate

you to learn English? However, most of the time interaction between students and the teacher was done using the native language.

Do teachers use individual activities to teach their lessons?

Graph7
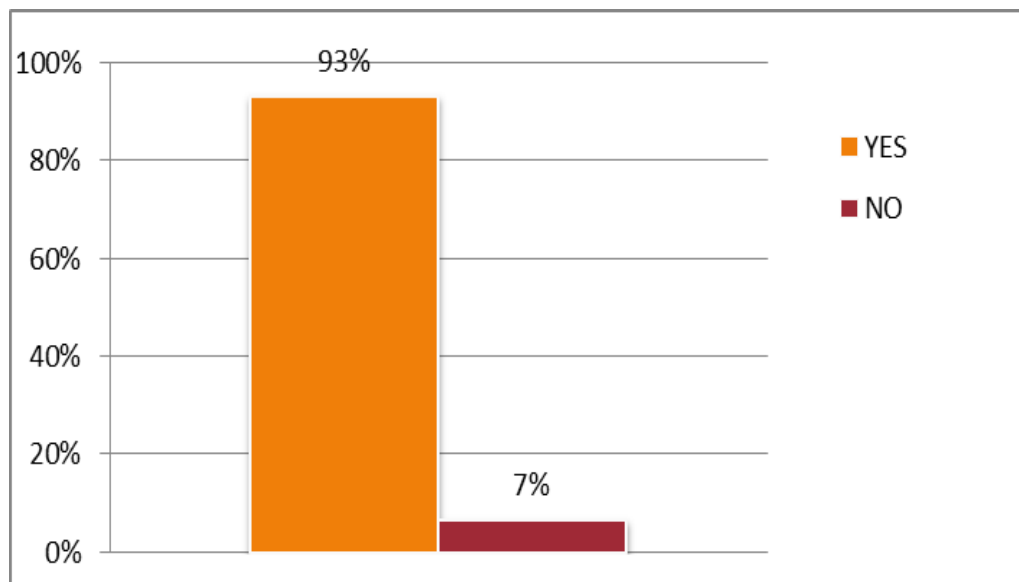

Author: Fatima Montoya
Source: teachers´ questionnaire

It can be seen in the graph above that 80% of the interviewed teachers declared to use individual activities to teach English, and 20% of them answered negatively. The group of teachers who preferred to use individual activities gave some reasons as for example: "Because in specific tasks they have to work alone", "Because students work and practice more the language", "Because it's necessary for learning". Those results evidence that teachers frequently had students working individually in the lessons; in fact, that was confirmed during the observation process. Students worked individually in activities that were mainly related to the textbook such as fill on the blanks, true/false sentences, reading, writing, questions and answers, etc. Those activities affected positively the students' learning process because learners completed the tasks correctly

and their opinions of the types of activities done in class were positive. Therefore, as Spratt et al (2007) explains, the types of activities done by students in the observed classes were useful techniques for the teaching process.

Do teachers use group work activities to teach their lessons?

Graph8

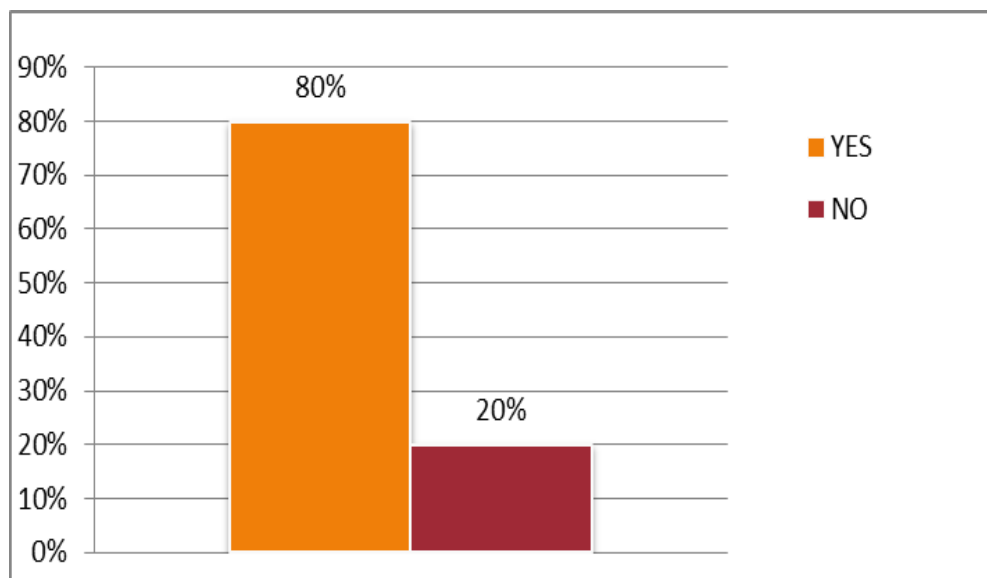Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The graph above shows that 93% of the interviewed teachers use group activities to teach their lessons and 7% of teachers do not use those types of activities. The teachers justified their selections giving reasons as for example: "Because is important to work in teams", "Because is interesting and students exchange opinions", "Because the students develop skills", "Because is necessary to do it", "Because they need help with other people". As Brown (2002) mentions, group work is a useful technique to encourage students at first stages of language learning.

In addition, teachers considered that group work developed in students the exchange of opinions and skills. However, in the observation carried out in the classrooms teachers

used group work a few times. It was observed that almost all classrooms had more than 31 students and they did not work well in the classes in which teachers used group work activities due to lack of physical space; it was difficult to arrange seats to work in groups. Furthermore, only few students exchanged ideas and worked together in the activities assigned to each group but using their native language while other learners talked between them about topics not related to the lesson. In consequence, group work was not suitable for all the students in the observed classes.

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

Graph9

Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

It can be seen above that 80% of the teachers use English most of the time in the classes while the 20% of them mentioned that they did not use the language in class. About that, an important amount of students expressed in the questionnaire that teachers use English most of the time to teach the lessons. On the contrary, it was observed that

many teachers used English only the half of the time in the classes because of their low language proficiency. Specifically, those teachers wrote and gave instructions in English but they explained the grammar structures and meaning of words using their native language. Moreover, the instructions given were not clear because they frequently mixed English with Spanish and students frequently imitated them. Therefore, the teachers' language usage in the classroom affected students' learning since learners did not have good models that guided them to produce the target language effectively.

There were a group of teachers who did not speak in English to teach the classes, they only wrote the contents on the board in English and explained the use of the language structures using the native language. Students spoke only in English when the teachers asked them for reading texts or sentences from the book or the board. Both, teachers and learners interacted all the time using the Spanish language. The observed situation affects students' learning process negatively because they do not have the guidance of the teachers to use English correctly.

On the other hand, there were only two observed classes in which the teachers used English 75% of the time because of their good language proficiency. In those classes, students seemed more motivated to speak in English although their basic level. Teachers encouraged students to speak in English by repeating correctly what students said, and learners reacted well because they corrected their errors. This is evidence that the more teachers use English in the classroom, the more students are motivated to use the language.

In sum, the observations conducted in classrooms showed that teachers' poor use of English wasfactors that affect the students' learning process greatly and negatively because assimilation and production of language is inappropriate.

Do teachers plan their lessons?
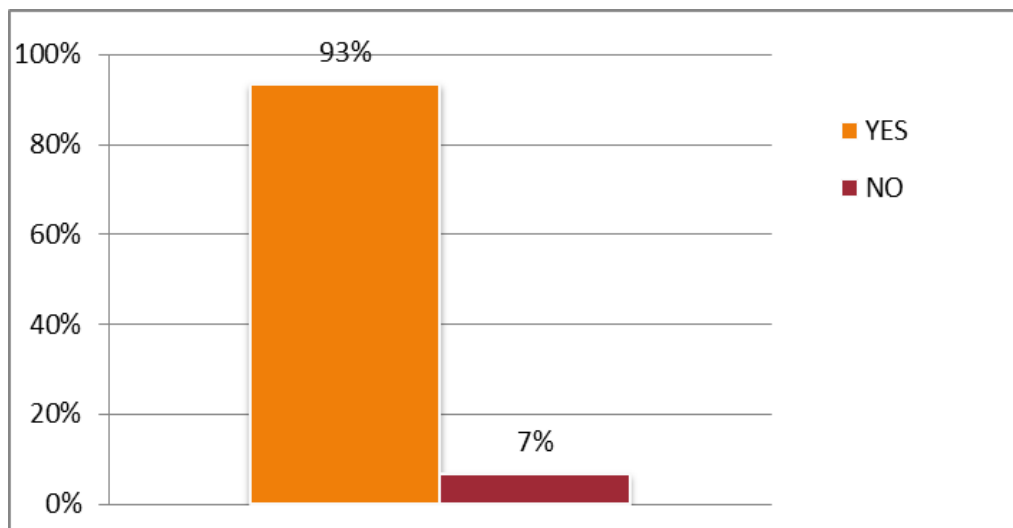
Graph 10
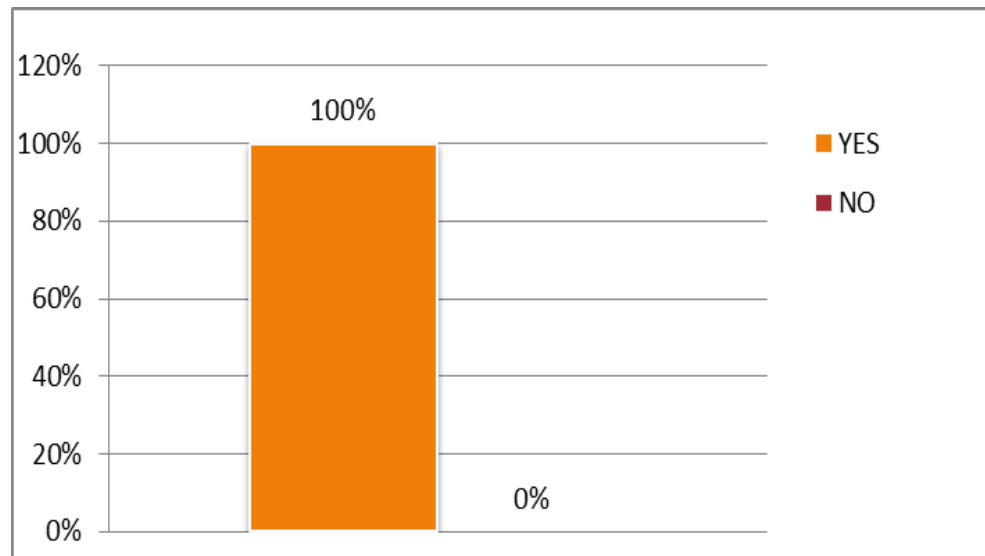
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The results in the graph above show that all the interviewed teachers plan their lessons. Although it was not possible to check some samples of teachers' lesson plan, teachers usually applied these aspects of lesson plan: time, lesson topic, objectives, introduction to the new topic, material and resources, and guided or individual practice. Teachers usually started the classes by writing the date and topic of the lesson on the board. After that they reviewed previous contents or introduced new topics. Then, they explained grammar rules and wrote examples applying the rules or vocabulary. Next, they assigned activities and indicated the time that students need to complete the tasks. After the whole class worked in the activities some learners came to the board to write

exercises in order to check responses. It was observed that teachers walked between the

rows to check whether students worked correctly and tried to help them when they

needed it; feedback was general rather than individual. In consequence, the observed

teachers applied some aspects of their lesson plans and achieved, in some way,

educational goals because classes progressed without difficulties. According to Butt

(2006) effective planning is the key to good teaching and class management.

Do teachers consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to

teach their lessons?

Graph 11

Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

Graph 11 lets us observe that 93% of the teachers consider aspects such as

discipline, timing, feedback, and instructions to teach their lessons. On the other hand,

7% of the interviewed teachers answered negatively to the question. With frequency,

the observed teachers focused mainly in ensuring discipline in the classes because of the

amount of students per classroom (more than 31 students per class). That, on the point of

view of Sharan (2003) occurs because it is not easy for a single teacher to control discipline in large classes; according to him, a team for teachers is an ideal solution. However, the author's suggestion is not applicable to Ecuadorian classrooms in public high schools because it will suppose an increase of the amount of teachers hired to work in public education. A better solution would be a continuous training in leading with large classes that allow teachers to improve management of discipline in the classroom.

Regarding other aspects such as feedback, timing, and activities management, it was possible to observe that a few teachers provided students feedback about their errors or progress in the learning process because almost all of them gave general indications to the whole class about errors and mistakes done by the students. In addition, those teachers assigned time to the activities before students start to work. In general, activities management was correctly carried out and students understood instructions because teachers spoke more in Spanish than in English.

Only the teachers with good language proficiency were able to give appropriate feedback. They encouraged students to write their responses on the board and asked other students to give their opinions in English. Although students' production of language was not good, these teachers always helped and motivated them to speak in English. These teachers used the English language as a means of instruction and communication because they found creative ways to have students understood contents and instructions. In fact, methods such as Communicative language teaching, and Task-Based language were preferred by the teachers with good language skills and they were able to guide students in the activities to promote in them a better use of language.

Therefore, students whose teachers use the language correctly received good feedback and language input.

Factors concerning classroom

How many students are there in the observed classes?

Graph 12
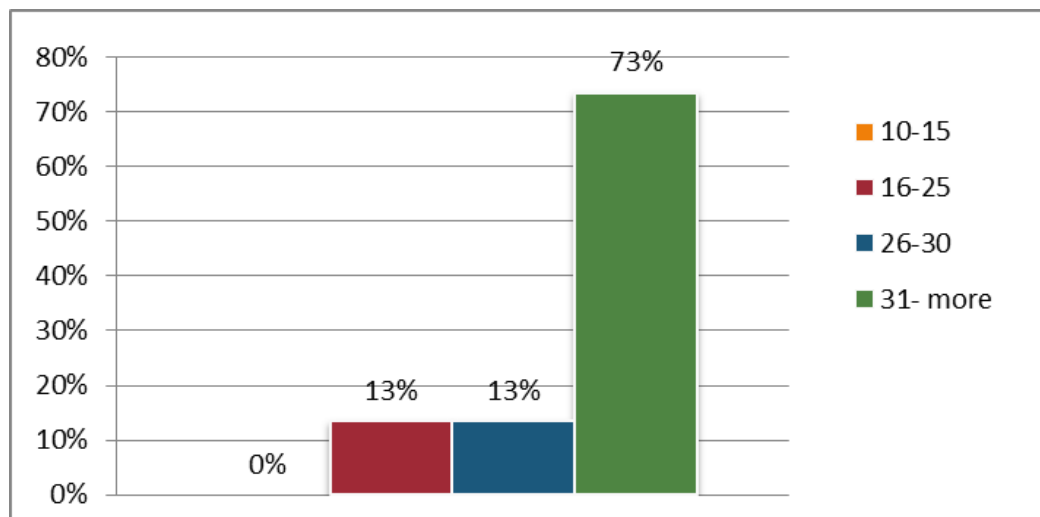
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The results showed above lets see that 73% of the interviewed teachers reported that there were more than 31 students in the classes; 13% of the teachers said that there were between 26 and 30 students in the classrooms; and, 13 % of the teachers worked with classes of 16 to 25 learners. Those results coincide with the situation in the observed classrooms because there was an average of 40 students in each class. According to Sharan (2003), classes with more than 35 classes are considered large andaffect the learning process. Some of the observed students in the large classrooms behaved well and followed teachers' instruction without difficulty but sometimes they looked stressed because of the hot temperature and this situation influenced their behavior. Teachers

spoke mainly in Spanish and walked along the classroom to be sure that students behave well each time they noticed that students did not feel comfortable. Even though, Gibbs & Jenkins (1992) state that it seems that the ratings of the course decreased when class size increases, the opposite situation occurred in the observed classes because students collaborated actively in the teaching-learning process. However, students' behavior changed because of the high temperatures within large classes.

The amount of learners was more appropriate for the physical space in those classrooms with 16 to 25 and 26 to 30students because the process of teaching-learning was less stressed than the other observed classes. About that, Reisert (2001) favors small classes since this model could improve outcomes of students' learning. The observed students in the small classrooms worked well and they had more space to interact between them. The process of teaching-learning worked well with the two small classes because students' behavior was more relaxed than their peers in large classes and they were not affected by the high temperatures inside the classroom. These classes favored language learning because teachers had better opportunities to focus on individual needs.

Summarizing, a common factor in the observed public high schools was the high amount of students. Large classes demanded from teachers more time to control discipline and to monitor students' works than smaller classes because they had to walk around the classroom to manage learning. However, it was observed that the process of English language teaching-learning process did not differ between the two types of observed classrooms.

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

Graph 13
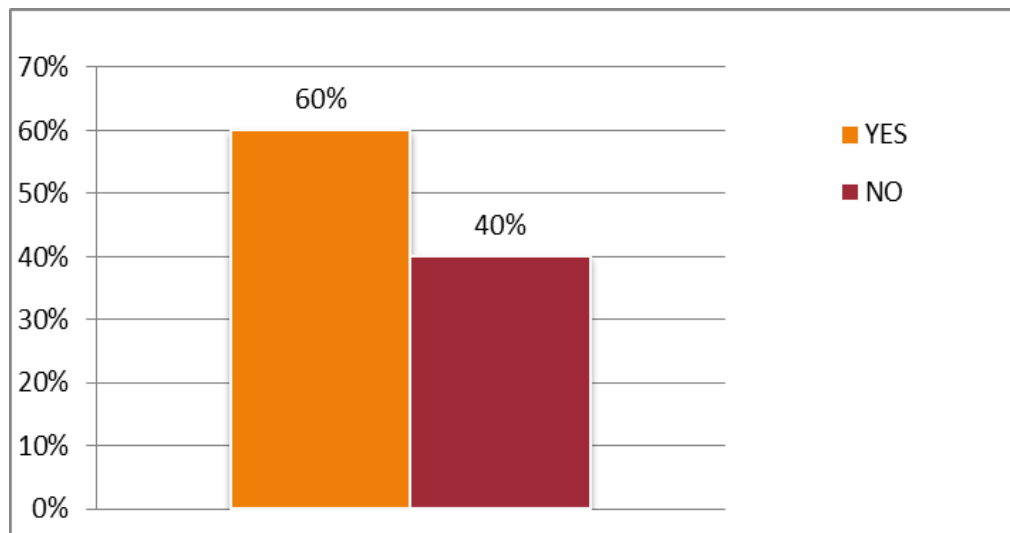
The results above are related to the previous question about the amount of students in the classroom. 60 % of the teachers felt comfortable with the number of students they were working with (more than 31) and 40% of the teachers had an opposite opinion. The observations done showed that teachers spent more time ensuring students' behavior in large classes but students followed instructions well. Besides, it was difficult for teachers to organize students to work in groups. There were seven to eight members in each team and the amount of tasks assigned was not enough for all; only a few students worked responsibly and the others were doing other activities. Maybe, that behavior was the reason for which students responded positively to the question *Do you consider that the number of students helps you to learn English better?*

On the other hand, there were teachers who worked with small classes, 16 to 25 and 26 to 30. In those classrooms, teachers spent less time trying to ensure students' good behavior than their peers in the classes described above. It was easier for teachers to involve students in collaborative activities and manage learning. That is just what

Guriam (2011) recognizes as the benefits of small classes, especially when teachers need to deal with behavior problems.

In consequence, the difficulties experienced by the observed teachers are the result of the high amount of students in the observed classes. As Sharan (2003) states, it is irrefutable that variety of instructional methods adds motivation and interaction to the learning process in large classes but it requires changes in the classroom structure. *Do teachers have enough space to work with the group of students they have been assigned?*

Graph 14
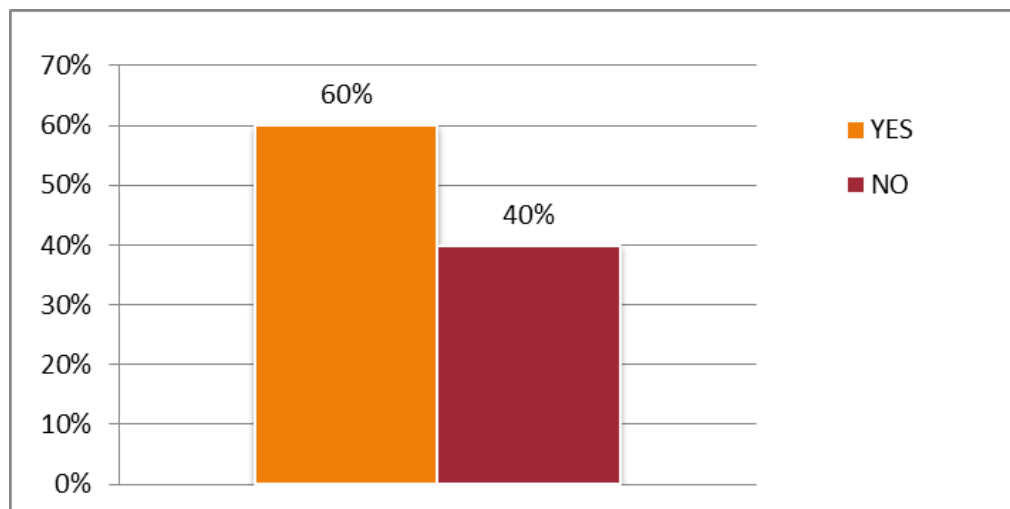
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The teachers' responses to the question stated above were positive in a 60% and negative in a 40%. According to that, more than the half of the interviewed teachers reported that they had enough space to work with the group of students they have been assigned. Similarly, the majority of the interviewed students reported that classroom space allowed them to work comfortably. However, the observation process showed a

different situation because in almost all classrooms the physical space was not suitable

for the amount of students. Each of the observed classrooms had a maximum capacity

for 30 students but the number of pupils exceeded that limit because there was an

average of 40 students per class. That situation influenced the teaching-learning process

negatively since the amount of seats did not fit well in the physical space and this caused

that seats were distributed in columns and rows that were very near each other. Teachers

and students had difficulties moving around because the reduced space between columns

was occupied by students' backpacks. In addition, students had problems arranging

seats to work in groups because lack of space restricted them to place their teams with

the appropriate distance.

Only two classrooms were suitable for the number of learners since there were 10

to 15 students in one class and 16 to 25 in the other. In those classrooms, teachers and

students had enough space to move around and to distribute seats in different positions.

In addition, columns and rows were more separated and the classrooms looked more

organized since students had more space to place their backpacks. For that reason, the

teaching-learning process was better in those classrooms. However, teachers only used

individual and group work activities in these classrooms. Teachers did not take more

advantage of the available space to vary the types of learning activities.

In brief, McLeod et al. (2003) consider that classroom space influences directly the

process of instruction because students' experiences in the classroom are affected by the

space where they interact daily. Therefore, classroom space affected the process of

instructions in the observed classes because the more space students had the more they

were able to work better. In addition, classrooms with appropriate space look organized

and teachers were able to monitor students easily.

Do you arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for your classes?

Graph 15
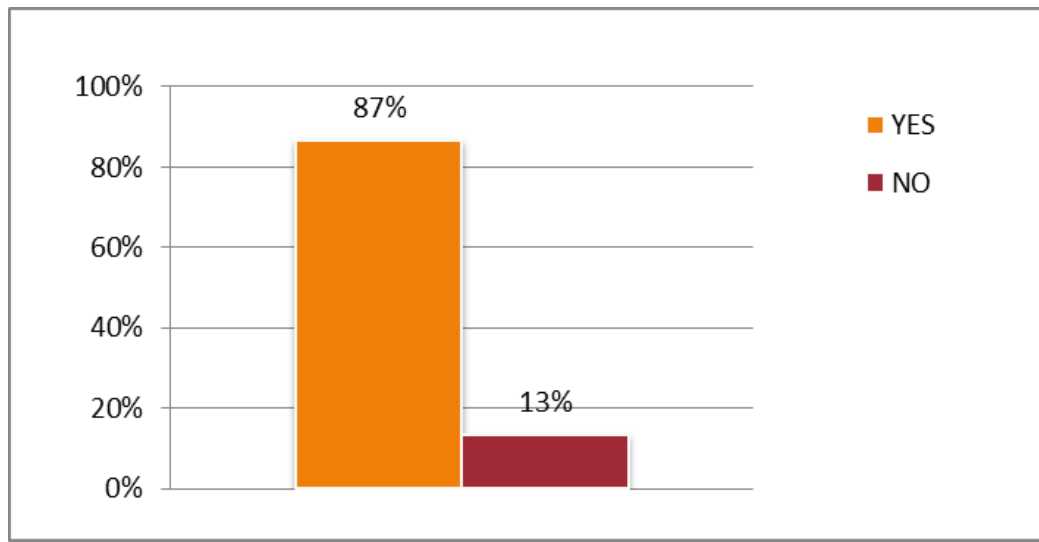
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

According to 87% of the interviewed teachers, they arranged students' seats in

relation to the activities planned for their classes. Only a 13% answered negatively to the

question. In the same way, almost all students reported in the questionnaire that they

liked the seating arrangement in relation to the activities planned for the classes. All the

observed classrooms had the traditional row format seating arrangement and rarely

teachers asked students to change the position of the seats since a lot of activities

consisted on whole-group and individual work; in those classes students worked

correctly. In large classes, sometimes students were required to arrange seats in group

but the lack of classroom space made difficult to do it appropriately. In those classes, it

was observed and increase of disciplinary problems generated from crowed teams that

were too closed to each other. The observed situation proves what Woolkfolk (2007) explains about horizontal rows and clusters, they promote pair work but they are not useful for large groups. Clusters are considered ideal for collaborative work and discussions but this model may complicate classroom management

On the other hand, the observed teachers in small classes had enough classroom space to arrange seats in different positions but they used only row format and clusters and they did not take advantage of the available space because they only followed instructions provided on the textbook about the learning activities.

A common feature shared by public Ecuadorian high schools is the amount of students per class. This situation impedes teachers to change students' seats due to lack of space. Besides, as in the observed high school, sometimes students are not equally distributed according to the number of students and it is possible to find overcrowded classrooms or small classes. Specifically, small classes allow teachers to try different types of seating arrangement according to the type of learning activity. For that reason, Tollefson& Osborn (2008) recommend teachers to analyze some points such as the level of students' attention needed for the activity or the contents that learners have to observe from their seats.

In sum, some of the observed teachers arranged seats according to the types of activities designed for each lesson. That is whatWannarka and Ruhl (2008) cited by Bray&Kehle(2011) explain, there is not a particular seating arrangement that motivates students to behave well or to improve their learning because the position of seats depends on the type of tasks that teachers assign to learners.

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

Graph 16

50%

47%

40%

30%   27%

20%   20%

10%   7%

0%

■ 10-15
■ 16-25
■ 26-30
■ 31- more
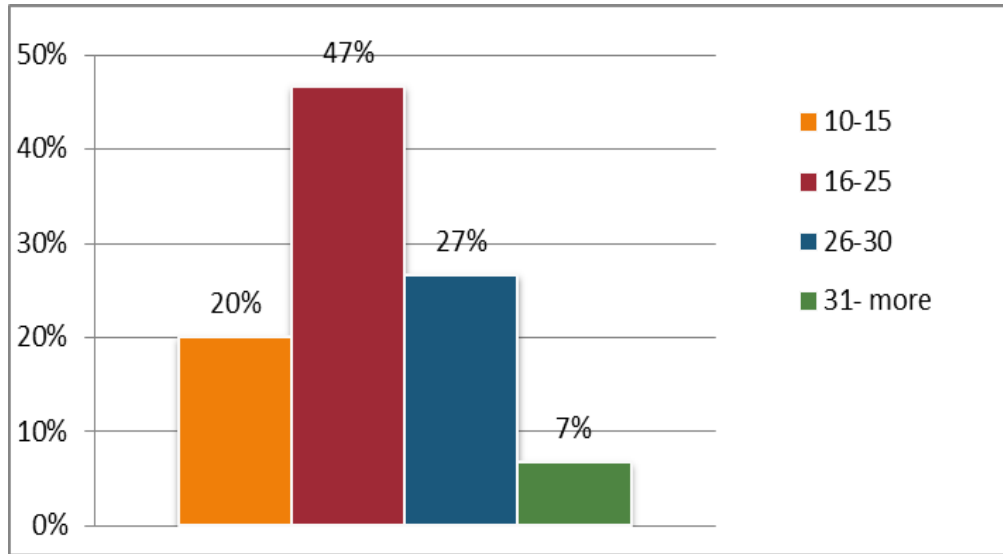
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The graphic above shows that 47% of the teachers think that 16-25 is the appropriate number of students to teach English; 27% of the teachers consider that 26-30 is better; 20 % of the participants preferred to work with 10-15 students; and 7% of the teachers think that 31 and more students is the appropriate number to work with. The answers demonstrate that an important group of teachers consider that small groups of students are more suitable to work with. Probably, teachers know that small classes are better for teaching English because they deal with behavior problems less frequently and learning goals are achieved easily, as Guriam (2011) and Reisert (2001) explain. It was observed that teachers spent a lot of time trying to control discipline and organizing learning activities in the large classes. On the other hand, observations conducted in the small classes showed that the teaching-learning process benefited both teachers and

learners because interaction between them occurred without interruptions and students were more focused in the learning activities.

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

Graph 17
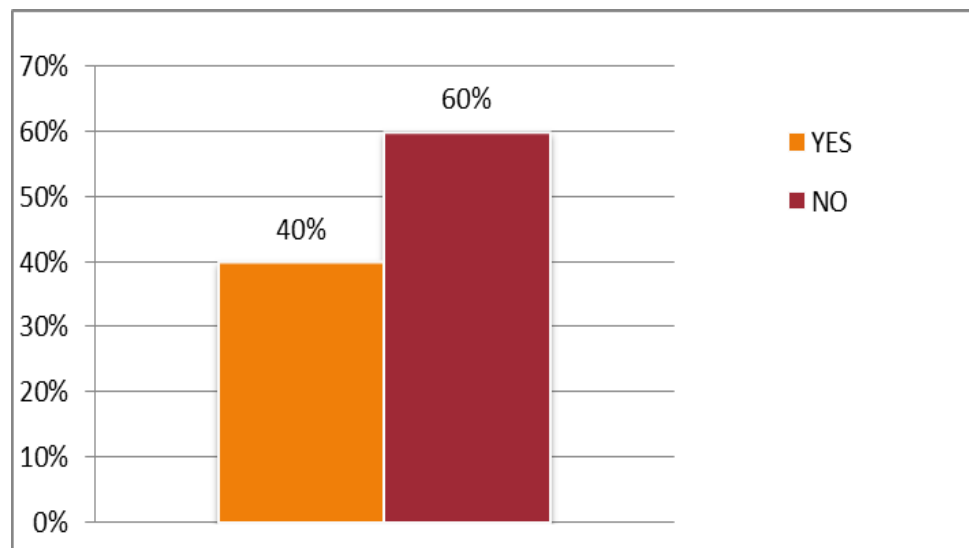
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

It is possible to observe that 60% of the interviewed teachers do not use teaching resources and 40% of them use teaching aids. The first group of teachers represents more than the half of the participants and their answers prove the results of the observations carried out in the classrooms, teachers used only the whiteboard and the textbook. Lack of resources was a common factor in the observed high schools and it influenced the teaching-learning process because teachers and students are not benefited by the use of materials in classes. On the point of view of Dash & Dash (2007), teaching resources provide learners a sensory experience, help teachers to reduce oral work and to explain abstract concepts associating them with concrete experiences.

About the second group of teachers, those who used teaching resources in class, they mentioned cd-players, TV, smart board, and pictures as some of the materials commonly used by them to teach. However, the whiteboard and the assigned textbook for each course was the only material used by teachers in the observed classes.

Do teachers consider appropriate the resources they have in class?

Graph 18
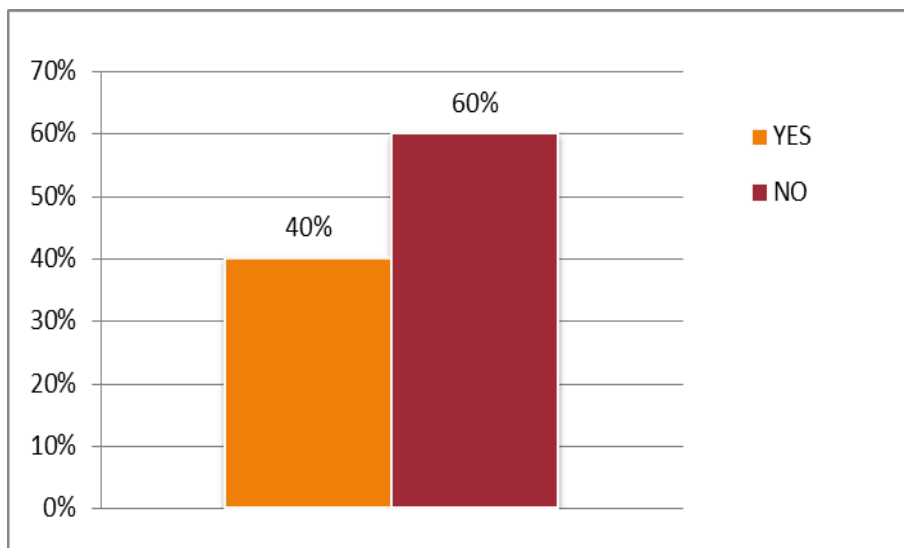
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

The graph above shows that 60% of the interviewed teachers consider that the teaching resources they have in class are not appropriate. Some of those teachers gave some comments such as "Because we don't have", "Institution does not have any materials to use in the classroom", "Because don´t have materials". In consequence, teachers' explanations confirm that they do not use materials because institutions are not well equiped with the required resources. Similarly, students indicated in the questionnaire that teachers do not use supplementary materials in classes. Only a few

students commented that sometimes teachers bring CD-players to the class but in the observed classes teachers used only the board and the assigned textbook.

Factors Concerning Educational Institution

Does the institution review your lesson plans?

Graph 19
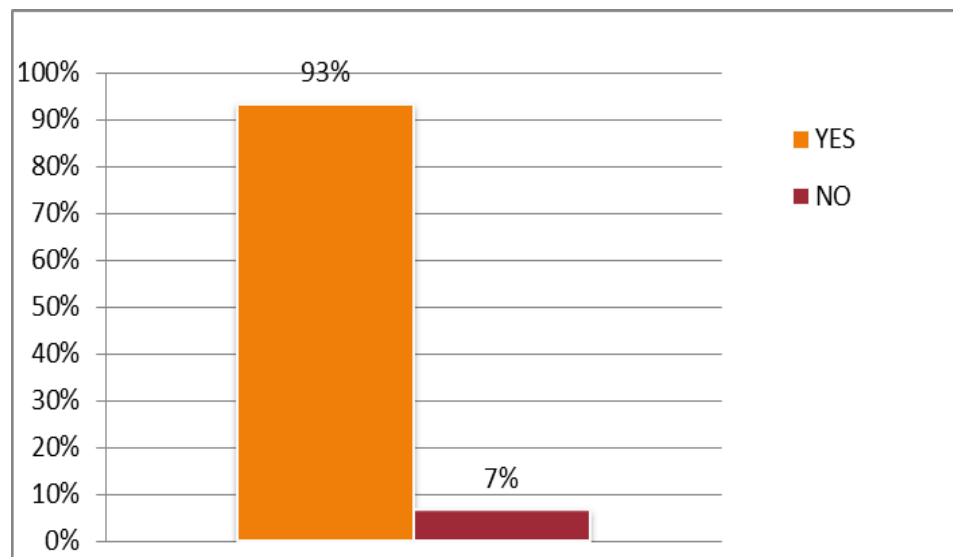
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

Regarding the revision of lessons plans by authorities of the observed high schools, 93% of the teachers affirmed that their plans are checked mainly once a month. And, 7% of the teachers indicated that their lesson plans are not revised at any moment. Almost all of the observed institutions had an English coordinator who was responsible for checking the teachers' lesson plans but it was not possible to confirm that fact. In addition, teachers said that they used and followed their lesson plans but they did not show them during the observed classes. Despite of that, many teachers demonstrated

good teaching skills and the only inconvenient was related to discipline management in large classes.

Does the institution monitor your teaching?

Graph 20
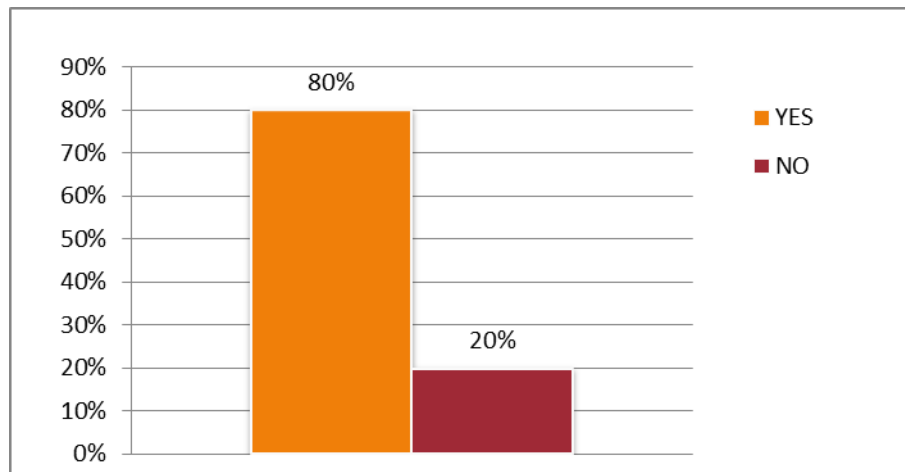
Author: Fatima Montoya

Source: teachers´ questionnaire

About the question stated to teachers to know whether institutions monitor their teaching, 80% answered positively and 20% responded negatively. Almost all the teachers whose teaching process is monitored commented that authorities observed the classes once a month. Those teachers added that monitoring helps them to know which aspects of their teaching process need to be improved. That is just what Genese& Upshur (1996) mentions, classroom observation provides valuable ideas about the problems affecting the achievement of educational objectives.

On the other hand, the group of teachers whose teaching process is not monitored expressed that they would like that happens because sometimes they assume that all works well in the classroom. However, the possibility that monitoring occurs make

them feel a sense of fear since they think their jobs could be affected; these teachers added that some public high schools are in process of monitoring teaching implementation. In this case, it is important to take into consideration information given by Slack (1997, p. 83) who says, "Classroom monitoring will inform teachers on the extent to which the school's organization is geared primarily to the improvement of the children's learning."

CONCLUSIONS

- Main findings of this research show that factors affecting the teaching-learning process in the observed public high schools are: the percentage of language used by teachers, classroom space, class size, and lack of teaching resources.

- The percentage of language used in class was low because of the high amount of teachers with A1 language proficiency. The observed teachers were not able to speak in English as they should and this caused that learners do not have good source of language input.

- Teachers' low language proficiency affects students' language level because teachers speak in English only some time and mix their native language with the target language to give instructions. Therefore, students imitated teachers' language usage and it hinders their progress in language learning.

- There were many teachers whoused the Grammar translation method to teach the lessons since their low language proficiency did not allow them to explain contents in English.

- Even though the observed classrooms were built to have at least 30 students, the number of students exceeded the limit in almost all the observed public high schools. That affects the teaching-learning process since teachers and students had problems moving around the classroom and it was difficult to arrange seats to work according to the designed activities.

- The observed teachers expressed that they feel comfortable with the number of students they work with. However, it was observed that class size affected the

teaching-learning process because teachers spent a lot of time trying to control students' behavior and sometimes that interrupted the teaching process.

- It was observed that many teachers used only the whiteboard and textbooks. That affects the teaching-learning process because those resources were not used to motivate students to learn and they lose their interest on the lesson easily and frequently.

- Teachers managed learning appropriately in almost all the observed classes, they assigned time and give clear instructions. However, feedback was too general in large classes and sometimes not all students' questions were solved according to their requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is highly recommended that teachers in the observed high schools improve their language proficiency in order to help students to progress in their path of language learning.

- Teachers should improve their teaching skills in large classes. In that way, they will have more control over students' behavior and the teaching-learning process will progress smoothly.

- Teachers who worked with small classes must take advantage of the available space to vary the types of seating arrangement in relation to learning activities because students will work in a better collaborative way.

- It is important that teachers improve their skills in providing feedback to students in order that they progress in the learning process adequately.

REFERENCES

Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, S.E. &Iyamu, E.O.S. (2006, June 20).*Factors affecting quality of English language teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nigeria.*Retrieved fromhttp://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FCR/is_3_40/ai_n16726393/?tag=content;col1

Bray, M. &Kehle, T. (2011). *The Oxford handbook of psychology.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Brookfield, S. (2006).*The skillful teacher: on techniques, trust, and responsiveness in the classroom* (2nd Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass books.

Brookhart, S. (2008).*How to give effective feedback to your students*.Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Brown, D. (2002). *Teaching by principles: and interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd Ed.).New York: Pearson Education.

Butt, G. (2006).*Lesson planning.* London: Continuum International Publishing group.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007).*Research methods in education.* New York: Routledge.

Dash, N., & Dash, M. (2007).*Teaching English as an additional language.*New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors Ltd.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom.*Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Dudek, M. (2005).*Children's spaces*. Burlington: Architectural Press.

Ellis, R. (1999). *Learning a second language through interaction.*Amsterdam: John

Benjamin Publishing Co.

Felix, M, T. (2009*). The use of instructional Material in Teaching language arts*. Cape

Code: Winston Publishers.

Fenstermacher, G. (2004). *Approaches to teaching.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Genese, F. & Upshur, J. (1996).*Classroom-based evaluation in second language

education.*Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Gross, B. (2009).*Tools for teaching.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Gurian, M. (2011).*Boys and girls learn differently! A guide for teachers and parents*.San

Francisco: Josey- Bass.

Harmer, J. (2001).*The practice of English language teaching.*Malasya: Pearson

education limited.

Hoy. (2005, May 19). *Proyecto CRADLE extiende la enseñanza del inglés*. Retrieved

from http://www.hoy.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/proyecto-cradle-extiende-la-

ensenanza-del-ingles-217122.html

Khamkhien, A. (2010). Factors affecting Language Learning Strategy**.***Reported Usage

by Thai and Vietnamese EFL Learners.Electronic Journal of Foreign Language

Teaching.Vol. 7*.1,66-65.

Maxom, M. (2009).*Teaching English as foreign language for dummies.*West Sussex:

John Wiley & Sons.

McLean, A. (2009). *Motivating every learner.*London: SAGE publications Ltd.

Mcleod, J., Fisher, J., & Hoover, G. (2003).*The key element of classroom management: managing time and space, student behavior and instructional strategies.* Alexandria: ASCD.

Ministerio de Educación y Culturas. (2001, May 19). *Proyecto CRADLE*. Retrieved from http://www.fronesis.org/mec/cradle/p1.htm

Mukalel, J. (2007).*Approaches to English language teaching.* New Delhi: Discovering Publishing House.

Orange, C. (2008). *25 biggest mistakes teachers make and how to avoid them.*Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Patel, M. & Praveen, M. (2008).*English language teaching.*Jaipur: Sunrise publishers & distributors.

Phung Van, T. (2010, June 20).*An investigation into techniques to overcome factors affecting the participation in classroom oral activities of the second year of tourism at CSSH*. Retrieved from http://www.data.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/jspui/bitstream/123456789/2057/1/Phung%20Van%20Than.pdf

Price, K. & Nelson, K. (2011).*Planning effective instruction: diversity responsive methods and management* (2nd Ed.).Belmont: Cengage learning.

Ramirez, D. & Piñeiro, M.(2010, June 22). Teaching and learning a foreign language: a case study. *Retrieved fromhttp://estrategiaol.com/revista/index.php/patria_grande/article/view/6/*

RaoBhaskara, E. (2007). *Methods of teaching English.* New Delhi: Discovery publishing house.

Reisert, J. E. (2001). *Class size: encyclopedia of education* (1sted.). New York:

    Macmillan and Free Press.

Richards, J. & Lockhart, C. (1996).*Reflective teaching in second language*

    classrooms.New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. &Renandya, W. (2002).*Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of*

    *current practice.*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. & Rodgers, T. (2001).*Approaches and methods in language*

    teaching.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, L. &Bredfeldt, G. (1998).*Creative bible teaching*.Chicago: Moody publishers.

Saéz, J. (1993). *El educador social.*Murcia: Universidad de Murcia.

Sharan, S. (2003). Large classes, small groups: a social systems approach. In Gillies, R.

    & Ashman, A. (Eds.), *Cooperative learning: the social and intellectual outcomes*

    of learning in (pp. 210-223). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Spratt, M., Pulverness, A. & Williams, M. (2007).*The TKT course.* Cambridge:

    Cambridge University Press.

Sprenger, M. (2008).*Differentiation Through Learning Styles and Memory*

    (2nded.).Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Stryker, S. & Leaver, B. (1997).*Content-based instruction in foreign language*

    *education: models and methods.*Washington: Georgetown university press.

Thompson, J. (2011). *First year teachers' survival guide: ready to use strategies.*

    Thousan Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Tollefson, K. & Osborn, M. (2008).*Cultivating the learner-centered classroom: from*

    *theory to practice.*London: Corwin Press.

Waterhouse, P. (2001). *Classroom management.* Stafford: Network Educational Press.

Westwood, P. (2004). *Learning and learning difficulties: a handbook for teachers.*
Victoria: ACER Press.

Woolfolk, A. (2007). *Educational Psychology*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.

Woolner, P. (2010).*The design of learning spaces*. London: Continuum international
publishing group.

Zu, Z. (2001, July 05). *Problems and strategies of teaching English in large classes in*
the People's Republic of China. Retrieved from
https://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2001/xu.html

ANNEXES

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

High school diploma ( )	English Bachelor'sDegree ( )	English Master'sdegree ( )
Others: _____		

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

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

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

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

4. Which is the level of your students?

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

5. Which of the following methods was used in this class? *(check only 1)*

CommunicativeLanguageTeaching	( )
The Natural Approach	( )
CooperativeLanguageLearning	( )
Content-BasedInstruction	( )
Task-BasedLanguageTeaching	( )
CognitiveAcademicLanguageLearning	( )
Total Physical Response	( )
WholeLanguageApproach	( )

GrammarTranslationMethod	( )
Others _____	( )

6. Do you use whole- group activities to teach your lessons?

YES ( )	NO ( )	
Why? _____ _____		

7. Do you use individual activities to teach your lessons?

YES ( )	NO ( )	
Why? _____ _____		

8. Do you use group work activities to teach your lessons?

YES ( )	NO ( )	
Why? _____ _____		

9. Do you use English most of the time in your classes?

YES ( )	NO ( )

10. Do you plan your lessons?

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

12. How many students do you have in this class?

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

			)

13. Do you feel comfortable working with this number of students?

YES ( )	NO ( )

14. Do you have enough space to work with this group of students?

YES ( )	NO ( )

15. Do you arrange students' seats in relation to the activities planned for your classes?

YES ( )	NO ( )

16. How many students do you think is the appropriate number to teach English? *(check only 1)*

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

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

YES ( )	NO ( )
Whichones? _____ _____	

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, howfrequently?		
Once a week	Once a month	Other_____ _____

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?

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

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR(desde 8vo básicaa 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?

CommunicativeLanguageTeaching	( )
The Natural Approach	( )
CooperativeLanguageLearning	( )
Content-BasedInstruction	( )
Task-BasedLanguageTeaching	( )

CognitiveAcademicLanguageLearning	( )
Total Physical Response	( )
WholeLanguageApproach	( )
GrammarTranslationMethod	( )
Others _____	( )

4. Which of the following activities are used?

Whole-groupactivities	( )
Individual activities	( )
Groupworkactivities	( )

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

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

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

Discipline	( )
Feedback	( )

Activitiesmanagement	( )
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	( )
Supplementarymaterials	( )
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. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

3. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

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

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

¿Porqué?
_____
_____
_____
__

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES ( )	NO ( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

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

YES	( )	NO	( )

GRACIAS!!!!!