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Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools, research carried out at “Colegio Nacional Calderón”, “Colegio Nacional Luxemburgo”, “Colegio Nacional Técnico Nicolás Jiménez”, “Colegio Helena Cortés Bedoya” y Colegio Técnico Salesiano Don Bosco” from Quito, Pichincha province in the school year 2012-2013.

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CERTIFICACION

Doctora.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God, my guidance and light; to Rebeca and Luis my parents, who have been my support and example; and to my family Ivan, Jonathan, Maria and Alice, my motivation to face and overcome every obstacle found during my life.

With all my love and from the heart, Thanks for being part of my life you all.

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ABSTRACT

This research was directed to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools. The sample analyzed consisted of fifteen students and fifteen teachers, who were surveyed and interviewed to determine their skills and competences and a similar number of classrooms observed to find out their physical conditions. The research was carried out at daytime and evening in four public high schools and one “fiscomisional” in rural and urban areas of Quito. To collect data, the techniques used were surveys and note taking; additionally, the applied instruments were observation forms, interviews and questionnaires. The quantitative analysis, description and interpretation of results were based on the information gotten from: Teacher’s and Student’s Questionnaires and Interviews, Observation Sheets and researcher’s field observations. The most relevant factors found were students’ basic level of English knowledge, use of few teaching resources and a high percentage of Spanish use in class, the overcrowded classrooms and inappropriate physical conditions, which affected negatively. Contrasting, the frequent lessons design monitoring and teachers’ commitment and experience influenced positively the English language teaching-learning process.

1. INTRODUCTION

An important problem for Ecuadorian students of secondary high schools is their basic-intermediate English knowledge. This deficiency is clearly reflected when students apply for national and international scholarships or jobs which have as a requirement a high English level. It constitutes a constraint that limits the students' possibilities of academic and professional development. Moreover, the huge amount of information available in English, including daily updates on the Internet, is inaccessible for students who do not master this language. These are some reasons determining that the basic and intermediate English knowledge constitutes a disadvantage for Ecuadorian students.

For the above mentioned, the purpose of this research is to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools. In addition, analyzing the current situation is aimed to promote future studies to complement and enrich the present research and be a starting point that would bring changes and improvements to strengthen the English teaching-learning quality to benefit Ecuadorian students in a closer future.

Considering the importance to know in deep the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process, this research is focused on the following specific objectives. First, determine the classroom conditions in which English lessons take place; second, identify the academic characteristics of in-service English teachers; finally, determine teachers' instructional competence, all of which constitute the main factors that affect English language teaching-learning process.

Researching the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process would benefit not only to the Ecuadorian students from public high schools, but also, teachers and institutions. The in-service teachers would be benefited,

because the conditions in which they develop their everyday teaching practices are uncovered even the necessity of periodic training courses and evaluation. In addition, the budget allotted to institutions would be increased to improve and implement language labs, teaching resources and changes in the structure of the current EFL programs; as a result, the English teaching-learning process would be benefited, but specifically the students.

After the analysis, four factors were considered influential; however, the teachers' role was pointed out as the most determining factor due to their direct influence over students. This influence can be positive encouraging students to acquire and apply learning strategies; furthermore, they can foster motivation and self-confidence to learn English language successfully or a contrary effect.

In addition, the students' basic-intermediate level of English knowledge, the large number of students and the physical classroom conditions all were considered as factors that directly affect the English language teaching- learning process.

Relating to the mentioned factors, the following previous studies show that these are similar in other countries.

Khamkhien (2010) after a study in order to determine students' different language-learning strategies and the factors that affect them, such as gender, motivation and experience in studying English found that motivation was the most significant factor affecting the choice of strategies, followed by experience in studying English and gender respectively. For this reason, language teachers need to develop deeper insights about how they should be aware of the use of students' learning strategies and how to design effective learning tasks to benefit them.

Narayanan, Rajasekaran, & Iyyappan (2008) found distinct attitudes such as, language-anxiety, motivation and gender as vital roles in learning English as second

language. The main recommendations suggested in this study were to create a low stress, friendly and supportive learning environment that fosters a proactive role, group, solidarity and confidence. Teachers should be sensitive to students' fears and insecurities and use gentle or non-threatening methods of error correction and offer words of encouragement.

Saengboon (2011) suggested that students believed in exemplary and efficient teachers and felt confident of their EFL teaching. His study results were focused on the importance of trust building, teacher as an inspirer, English curriculum and learning assessment. The ability to build trust and confidence among learners was highly valued; in addition, students believed that teaching methods should be chosen with care and assessment should be a tool to help students to learn from their errors. Moreover, the interaction that takes place between the teacher and the learner was pointed as important. Teachers were considered the students' inspiration and guide through a successful learning process or the opposite.

Regarding the limitations this research faced, three were considered. First, principals of "prestigious" high schools denied the possibility to do the field observations, adducing that the English teachers were overwhelmed of work, studies, or training courses. Second, the time assigned to lessons observation was limited especially, at evening (30 minutes long each). Third, the information that teacher and student's questionnaires provided was limited.

Although, the sample of fifteen observed English lessons was small, the specific objectives previously mentioned were reached at a high level, due to the factors that affect English language teaching-learning process were common among the surveyed students, teachers and institutions. In addition, the collaborative spirit of participants contributed to accomplish this research successfully.

2. METHOD

The research process described in this section consists of two parts. The first describes the main characteristics of setting and participants. The second details the research procedures carried out such as, the literature review of the topic, the method applied (quantitative), the field research process, the techniques and instruments utilized to collect data, the tabulation process and a brief explanation about the aspects considered for the quantitative results analysis.

Setting and Participants

The current research took place in five high schools of Quito, Pichincha province, in Ecuador. Four are located in the rural area, whereas, one of them in the urban. The four institutions mentioned first are public and one is “fiscomisional”.

The field observations were done in schedules from 7:00 AM to 18:40 PM at daytime; while at evening from 19:00 to 22:00 PM from Monday to Friday, in order to complete fifteen observed English lessons. The English lessons at daytime were of 40 minutes while at evening of 30 minutes. During this time, the teachers and students were observed, interviewed each one asked to fill out questionnaires..

The teachers' age ranged from 24 to 58 years for teachers and from 13 to 35 for students (approximately). They were male and female.

There were over forty students per classroom; the seats arrangement was in rows with no much space between them; in addition, the observed classrooms conditions had neither a good ventilation nor good illumination; especially at evening due to it was artificial. The students' characteristics in relation to age, marital status and social-economic conditions were different from daytime to evening; finally, the students' English knowledge level was basic and intermediate.

Procedures

By April 2012, the theme for the present research was determined as “Factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools”; subsequently, the investigation related to theoretical support began.

The bibliographical information researched involved the following topics: importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador, teaching approaches, methods and techniques, managing learning, lesson design, class size, classroom space, observation and teaching resources, students’ motivation and intelligence and their learning styles.

The most relevant information, concepts and definitions were collected in index cards from three authors by topic. It was extracted from books, manuals, dictionaries, Ecuadorian Official Register, e-books, journals among others, which are referenced at the end of this paper; furthermore, the main source of information were PUCE and UTPL libraries, the searching tool used was google to look for information in the internet.

The method applied was bibliographic in order to locate, organize and process systematically the information collected from the mentioned sources; after that, it was classified in relation to the factors concerning students, teachers, classrooms and educational institutions. The collected information supports, defines and clarifies the concepts utilized throughout the research process, its description and the analysis of results.

After collecting, classifying and organizing the information in fourteen core topics, five previous studies related to the factors that affect the teaching-learning process were selected and included for enriching the scientific background of the present research.

Once finished the literature review section, the data collection process began.

First selecting the field, around ten high schools were visited asking for permission to carry out the research, in four public and one fiscomisional high schools the request was accepted.

Second selecting the sample, to carry out the field observations three English classes, teachers and students were randomly selected to. The researcher observed the teachers' performance and class management, classroom physical conditions, class size and the students' level knowledge of English; in addition, notes about all relevant details were taken. After that, teachers and students filled out questionnaires, each one; finally, an interview to determinate the teacher' language proficiency took place.

The instruments and techniques used for collecting data were denominated as follow: "Observation Sheets", "Teacher's Questionnaires," Teacher's Interview and Student's Questionnaire; in addition, note taking as technique served to collect details and information about relevant events occurred during the observations and interviews.

The researcher, as passive observer used the Observation Sheet to fill out the stated questions according to the observed English lessons and wrote down the most relevant information and details.

On the Teacher's Questionnaire, each observed teacher filled out twenty questions. The questions were related to his/her education level, considerations about students such as needs and level; the use of methods, whole- group, individual and group activities; the use of English language and resources in class; besides, the number and of students, class size, seats arrangement and institution's monitoring, regarding their own judgment. The information collected from those questionnaires

was tabulated, analyzed, graphed and described in the “Discussion Section” of this paper.

Similarly, the Student’s Questionnaire was filled out by one student randomly selected from the observed group. There were fourteen questions related to students their like or dislike towards the English Language; in addition, considerations about the English teacher’ performance in class; finally, students’ appreciation about class size, number of students, students’ seats arrangement and teaching resources. The information provided by students and teachers was contrasted against researcher’s observations. The Student’s Questionnaire was written in Spanish to avoid misunderstandings and confusions; furthermore, students were advised to ask the researcher to clarify whichever question.

The Teacher’s Interview consisted of fourteen questions that teachers answered orally to determine their English level according to the CEFR. The questions ranged from very basic to complex ones. In this way, the teachers’ level of proficiency were placed into categories, from A1 the lowest to C2 the highest.

However, the “Observation Sheet, Student’s Questionnaire and Teacher’s Interview” were not graphed, these served as fundamental information to determine and analyze the factors that affect The English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian high schools surveyed.

When the field survey finished, the data classified and tabulated separately, in order to compare and contrast. Then, a process to analyze, describe and interpret, these results were carefully done to determine the classroom conditions in which lessons take place, identify the characteristics of in-service English teachers and to determine teachers’ competence which are the specifics objectives of the present research.

Subsequently in the Quantitative Analysis section, the data collected were analyzed, compared and graphed in relation to four variables. These variables considered the factors concerning students, teachers, classrooms and educational institutions. The data source was the answers from the Teacher's Questionnaire which served as a base to contrast against the ones from Student's Questionnaire, Observation Sheet, and the notes taken by the researcher. Having compared and contrasted the data, the results were interpreted, and presented in terms of percentage in graphs.

The analysis of the most important factors that affect English teaching–learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools, which was the objective of the present research was reached in a high level due to the collaborative spirit of participants, students, teachers and administrative authorities from the high schools where the current research took place. The participants were aware of its importance and provided support, time and facilities to carry out it. However, the social factors, which strongly affect students' performance, are still opened to be researched.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Literature Review

The importance of teaching- learning English as foreign language in Ecuador has been widely recognized in the last years due to its everyday use in all fields. Having an advanced level of English has become into a tool, which allows facing the accelerated advance of globalization and the galloping development of technology. The unlimited access to the countless educational resources published in this language, as well as, to the information available in internet, updated every day; furthermore, a great deal of scholarships offered abroad directed toward students who master English language are the strongest reasons for students to achieve a B1.2 (CEFR) level at the end of third year of high school.

Unfortunately, in Ecuadorian public high schools the English knowledge level of students is basic reaching an intermediate-level of English knowledge as the highest. This is clearly an important constraint for the students' personal and professional development who have the urgent necessity to improve their English level. For these reasons, the aim of the present research is to analyze the factors that affect the English language teaching- learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools.

In this section are found the supporting concepts and definitions used throughout for the present research.

The literature review is related to the four variables: factors concerning students' (needs and English level); in addition, factors concerning teachers' (level of education, language proficiency, teaching methods and techniques, percentage of English language used in class, lesson design and managing learning); besides, factors concerning classrooms: (size, space, seats arrangement and teaching

resources); finally, the factors concerning educational institutions: (class observation and lesson design monitoring); moreover, the importance of teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador is documented below.

Currently, the aim of The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education is focused on improving the English teaching quality; this is the reason why the teachers' level of proficiency and knowledge has been evaluated, as well as, training courses and scholarships have been offered to them; moreover, the lesson design monitoring is more frequent to assure positive results and high teaching quality.

About the mentioned respect, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (MinEduc) has emphasized on improving the treatment pedagogic curricular of EFL. So much so that, the Ministerial Agreement No. 746 dated, March 9, 2000 ratifies a teaching load of five class periods per week for English language, from eighth to tenth grade of basic general education (EGB) and from first to third year of high school (BGU). It means that, these students are guaranteed to learn English as foreign language in better conditions than in the past; consequently, their English level would be higher in a closer future.

In addition, the National Institute of Educational Assessment of Ecuador in the norm N° 003-12 April 4th2012, considering the necessity to find out teachers' level knowledge and domain of the English language has asked teachers from public high schools to take the "TOEFL" exam as part of the Project for Strengthening the Teaching of English. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (MinEduc) states that future students will have an improvement in the quality of learning in the English area, which is a B1.2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), allowing better education in the future and consequently more job opportunities for them.

In addition, the Reform by Resolution No.2012-018 July 6, 2012 published by the SENECYT states the importance to ensure the quality of English language instruction received by the students in Ecuadorian public high schools. Thus, a scholarship program called “Go Teacher” was presented, with the aim to intensively train teachers in the four English language skills and reinforce knowledge of teaching and learning methodologies to get an optimal level according to international standards.

In sum, teaching English as foreign language gives students a wide range of opportunities to grow in educational, professional and technological fields. For that purpose, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (MinEduc) and the SENECYT have given small but important steps to improve the English teaching process benefiting students and teachers, who will increase and spread English knowledge throughout the country although there is a lot to do still.

Teaching Approaches and Methods

Richards & Rodgers (2001) suggested that, in Communicative Language Teaching a goal was to develop communicative competences by using language variations accurately in distinct situations, purposes and settings with different participants. Furthermore, it was cited that CLT characteristics are directed to produce clear and understandable types of texts in written form and maintain oral communication despite of limitations using diverse strategies. A fluent communication results from interaction, creation and negotiation among learners; moreover, the communication process involves learning through feedback, incorporating forms, developing competencies and experimenting language between the learner and his or her interlocutor.

Another goal of CLT is to develop fluency that is the use of language in a natural way in different kinds of practices such as mechanical, meaningful and communicative. In CTL, clear and understandable language variations and strategies are frequently used, which make the distinction of this method.

Content Based Instruction is an approach not a method that balances and integrates language and content instruction. Larsen-Freeman (2000) quotes Wesche (1993, p. 57-58), in content based language teaching; the claim in a sense is that students get “two for one” – both content knowledge and language proficiency.”

The following CBI principles are focused on engaging students in the language-learning process. First, language is learned more successfully when it is mean to purposefully and meaningfully information acquisition. Second, CBI reflects learners’ needs to construct knowledge and develop understandings about a topic and learning tasks. Finally, a principle elicits learning about language in the context from learning through language.

In sum, CBI gives learners an extra benefit when learning English language content and context at the same time.

The Grammar Translation is considered the first method that has been used since the beginner of the century XIX, based on Greek and Latin origin of languages, which have the same linguistic structure. By that time, this method was initially applied to learn literature, nowadays, it is focused on reading, grammar rules, using vocabulary and writing translations.

Goodman (1986, p. 4) states, “Whole Language programs put it all together: the language, culture, community and teacher.” Although, children were at the beginner the objective of this approach, middle and secondary levels of ESL have been benefited by Whole-Language approach. When students are encouraged to learn

by doing, experiencing, creating and working together, they understand the authentic meaning of communication, share and enjoy class activities.

Then, teacher can allow students to talk about personal issues, plans, likes, dislikes in dramatic, mysterious or funny tasks. These activities encourage students not only to write but also to read their own and classmates' assignments. The following characteristics among others distinct this approach: easy, real, natural, whole, sensible, interesting, relevant, belonging and useful. Additionally, the learner is the one who chooses the purpose, topic and use to focus.

In sum, this method gives learners the power to work with information, which is meaningful and interesting for them.

When speaking about Task Based Language Teaching the principal components identified in core task-structured-lessons are real-world-task, group performance, resulting product of learning and real-world- content.

In TBLT approach, group students' performance is enhanced when working as a team; then, a core comprehensible input is activated and total learning process takes place. Meaningful content from a proposed task is achieved because students negotiate for meaning, organize processes and adapt each other skills, accomplishing successfully the core task proposed. In addition, these interactions create a real, natural and continuous oral communication; moreover, students learn to manage, follow and analyze instructions as well as to organize time and resources; consequently, communication meaning and fluency, which are the main goals, are acquired.

TBLT is suitable for all ages and backgrounds groups of learners who share similar range of lexical phrases, collocations and patterns for whom is easier to interact. The direct exposure to language makes students to feel free to apply

vocabulary, grammar and resources mastered by them; for these reasons, lessons are structured in terms of sequenced real-world-tasks linked each other to give students meaningful content.

Teaching Techniques

Brown (2007, p. 16) states, “Technique any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives.” Techniques are bounded with method, derived from approach and design, according to Richards and Rodgers (1986) who also names techniques as procedure. In sum, techniques are all kinds of tasks, practices and activities applied by a teacher when developing a lesson.

The most important are: sounds, patterns, gestures, maps, jigsaws, summaries, symbols, multimedia, stories, computers programs and visual aids, asking and answering questions, sharing experiences, stating concepts, role playing, among others. Integrating and keeping students engaged are the primary goals of using varied teaching techniques.

To sum up, teaching techniques variations and combinations are endless as imagination can create. All these variances improve teachers’ performance and enhance learners’ understanding especially when age, topic, mod, difficulty of the lesson, level of students and even day of the week are taken into account.

Managing Learning

Teaching a second language embraces planning for success in a classroom, command and management control. As in whichever well-done activity, this process requires a careful systematic planning due to precious time is saved when planning; moreover, it is important to integrate learners into plans considering their needs and goals; in addition, clear commands make students to find the path to work,

feel guided and encourage learning by their own. Referring to managing learning in a constructivist world Dias & Alfonso (2006, p.14) state, “Is, thus, a mixed approach of prescription and emergence: prescription, to provide directions that create the vision, clarify aims and maintain coherence, relevance and appeal; emergence, to leave room for visionary initiatives and the emergence of creative trajectories.”

In the classroom, it is essential to define components and roles for students and instructor for the school year. Students have different needs and behave unpredictably, for this reason is imperative to set rules and establish control before troubles appear. Instructors form groups, divide time, create tasks, provide checklists and rubrics, provide guidance and feedback, establish procedures, create vision and clarify aims. (Heacox 2002, p. 89)

However, the most important activity is to engage students into learning to learn plan. This process has to be shown in an easy and simple way for them to find it useful and meaningful eliciting to study by their own. The teachers must be ready to face unforeseen events, decide and act simultaneously as in a battlefield, in this case, the classroom.

On the other hand, part of managing learning instructor’s job is to guide students to achieve general and specific objectives through a learning to learn process. For example: teaching how to find useful information and key words, dividing tasks in chunks, making easy for them the access to information, keeping oral and written instructions available for them.

In brief, managing learning is focused on students’ needs. The teachers provide their students the guidance for them to find solutions and follow the right way for a successful learning. In addition, giving feedback to overcome obstacles,

planning and setting rules are everyday practices to achieve the goals established at the beginning of the period.

Lesson Design

Farrell (2006) suggested that events during a lesson are unpredictable; this are the reasons why teachers have to design lessons to prevent problems, developing teachers' confidence and organizing the lesson elements to run smoothly. Designing a lesson is to take advantage of the time and resources available; in addition, pressure is taken off because tasks and objectives are target in the right amount, sequence and aimed to reach objectives of instruction. To define a lesson design Briggs (1991, p. 193) states, "Sets forth the instructional events that will occur during instruction, shows the order or sequence in which they will take place and describe how lesson can be produced that have highest probability of helping learners to achieve outcomes."

In Madeline Hunter's and Douglas Russell's (1977) model, these lesson stages are presented: Opening stage, teacher brings to student's mind what they have learned previously; this stage shows a preview of what is going to be taught during the lesson. Stimulation stage, teacher prepares students for new activities presenting an attention grabber, this stage awakes students' interest. Instruction stage, teacher presents the main activity checks for understanding and encourages the involvement of students into the lesson. Closure stage, questions related to the lesson given are asked and a brief preview of the following lesson is given. Follow up stage; teacher gives homework to reinforce same concepts.

In sum, four basic stages compose well-designed lessons. First, waking up students' interest; second, bringing to mind previous knowledge allowing an

involvement into the coming topic; third, activities to reinforce previous and new knowledge; finally, providing positive feedback and homework.

Class Size

Referring to class size Kaplan & Owings (2002, p.49) state, “Class-size effects vary grade by grade level, pupil characteristics, subject areas, teachings methods and other variables. Thus, reducing class size without simultaneously improving teacher and teaching quality appears to be both an expensive and often unproductive option.”

Contrasting with opinions and believes that smaller classes have better academic results it can be concluded that it is not always true. This factor is not the unique affecting teaching learning quality. Teacher as one of the components should be highly prepared to handle students’ needs requirements and expectations; besides, when teacher is well qualified interacts and gives individualized support in smaller class as well as in larger ones.

On the other hand, when the students’ number overwhelms 30 then it can be considered a problem that really affects; even more; this factor unable teacher to give personalized attention to students. Additionally, teacher spends more time trying to keep students under control, than teaching them. Smaller size class allows more attention, time and energy from teacher to students and their tasks. Consequently, the teaching learning process becomes easier to be achieved. In addition, feedback is immediately provided and students’ attention is individualized. Thus, students develop higher grade of confidence and stronger affect between class members.

Hammer (1991) suggested that class size highly depends on particular education system. For example: one to one for business students in private classes, 80 students were teacher can keep a varied interaction going during long periods

were teacher never get bored but challenged Steven (2012, p.33) states “Students in larger classes outperform those in smaller classes would reflect preexisting differences in students preparation rather than perverse effects of class size”.

To sum up, teacher’s preparation and organization are the most influential factors affecting the teaching – learning process more than class size.

Classroom Space

The majority of activities of students are developed in a classroom, which can be of different sizes for example, large 30 students or small 10, although in many countries a class can be over 40; Clayton & Forton (2001, p.14) state, “ It is best to allow about nine inches between each child.” For this reason, teacher should consider carefully students’ needs, goals and resources available before planning a class, because every element highly influences the teaching-learning process; additionally, before arranging furniture, walls, floor and materials to take advantage of physical space available, students’ comfort and safety have to be the priority. When students have eye contact with classmates and feel teacher’s proximity, meaningful communication and pleasant interactive learning is achieved. In addition, depending on the kind of activity students sometimes need to move, play, sing, act, or simply be quiet; consequently, these changing factors determine also a meticulous plan of classroom space.

About classroom space, Hadi-Tabassun (2006, p. 67) defines, “all dynamic places in classroom taken together simultaneously as a whole: the seating area, the centers, board area... Physical space of the classroom is essentially a space, in which movement change and casual processes and events occur.”

In sum, when a creative visionary teacher fixes classroom space and physical space, it is transformed in a useful place, which encourages movement; creates

cooperation and links among the elements of the learning process to achieve successful learning.

Seating Arrangement

Partin (2009) suggested that class environment is influenced by students' seating arrangement. Teacher ideally, purposeful, flexibly and favorably arranges seating in rows, horseshoe, circular and semicircular according to the goal of the class. Rows have advantages such as functionality and higher level of focus on task and teacher. In addition, when there is big distance between students increases the discipline in class. On the other hand, rows limit students' interaction each other; additionally, the teacher focuses on the nearest students. Horseshoe arrangement gives teacher vision and attention of whole class as well as students' movements and actions. This arrangement is useful when students interact in a debate.

Circular and semicircular arrangements encourage students to talk each other, class discussion and story classes where students need to have teacher in center who enrich explanation with gestures and all body movements. Seating and furniture arrangement needs to be dynamic, functional, attractive and easy to move. Thus, teacher skills are applied to generate an environment plenty of space without barriers to create a discipline climate.

Thompson (2011) suggested that configuration of student desk can give alternatives to enhance motivation, interest and discipline in tasks. In contrast, there are class activities that are better developed on the carpet, without any arrangement at all; for example reading a drama English story. These activities give students time to relax and allow pressure break. Physical space creatively arranged, encourage students to use materials, talk each other and allow easy movement in and around the class. Moreover, students learn how to cooperate when organizing space.

Summarizing, a skillful seating arrangement is a basic characteristic of a purposeful class environment; through which students and teacher easily interact giving as a result a disciplined productive class.

Classroom and /or Teaching Resources

Around the world, all kind of resources are going to be found from the most advanced-last-generation-data projector to the used-small-pencils and notebooks with no sheets to write.

In Harmer (2001, p. 175) Jill & Charles Hadfield represents “reversed pyramid” of resources that easily are identifying both extremes. In a world in which the pace of technological change is breathtakingly fast, creativity plays the most important role.

There is a lot that can be done with minimal or even no resources. Speaking about resources the list is long, almost everything can be considered a resource to teach: stones, flowers, animals, environment, pictures from magazine and newspaper, realia, plastic, wood, recycled materials, food, music, clothes, card games, games, prediction, discussion, news, weather and so on. In addition, bibliographical resources course book, workbook and dictionary among the principals.

There are many ways to show and explain the board and notice board are the most common in almost all classrooms. Technological resources allow the teacher to give the most real, colorful and varied classes. For example, tape recorder, TV, CD player, CDs with native-speakers’ audios, movie-trailers, power point presentations, electronic board, individualized computers, among other teaching resources, motivate students’ interaction and understanding. Moreover, Internet is a useful aid

when finding out information, visual and audio resources. Because teacher manages resources they have to know how to use it very well.

In brief, resources and teachers' creativity are the keys to increase students' motivation on the learning process.

Classroom Observation

Wajnryb (1992) suggested that a new learning tool for teachers is observation. Among the main purposes of observation are; first, the necessity from trainee teacher to gain experience by observing experienced teachers. Second, teacher trainers whose job is observe development and performance in teaching process. Third, teacher developers who are part of a school-based support system are also observers to monitor quality with a variety of ways. The main purposes when observing class are teachers' professional growth and development. In addition, in pre-service teacher trainee courses, as well as in periods of employment-related matters assessment.

Observation in learning process furthermore being a useful tool it is an important activity that begins with preparation; however, it does not finish after leaving the classroom but it continues after recollecting information until showing results. Moreover, depending on the kind of motive that originates the observation. It is important to define the focus, purpose and method to analyze, discuss and interpret the data, experiences and reflection acquired. Observation is a skill that tends to be learned and improved, according to the time devoted and practice, taking into account that the key guiding element is intuition.

Wang (2011, p.102) states, "Class teaching quality monitoring and evaluation must meet internal regularity of teaching activities and quality requirements through the whole teaching operating link."

To conclude, observation is the newest tool to develop and improve trainee teachers' development; indeed, it is part of school-based support system to monitor and evaluate classroom-teaching quality, teaching quality information and feedback.

Students Motivation

Students immersed in learning process are recognized to have both, intrinsic or extrinsic motivation or both. Brophy (2004) suggested that there are theories about the evolution beginner from reactive responses to pressure, to an emphasis on intrinsically, self-determined actions. Intrinsic motivation allows students to learn without expecting any reward. Tasks, lessons, solving problems and even self-learning are done by their own desire only because it is enjoyable for them; furthermore, they will not ask for a reward after they finish doing the activity. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation gives students motivation from outside.

Students are always expecting a hug, a clap, a lollipop a prize or even more, a car the graduation day. This kind of motivation sometimes gives students the reward that the task itself does not. The motivator pleasure works during the process of leaning and may stop when the reward stop; in addition, this kind of motivation is anticipated before doing the task and students are encouraged because of that. An extrinsically factor is also considered punishment; as a result students perform activities to avoid punishment investing minimum effort and interest to achieve it.

Dörnyei, & Ushioda, (2009) cite Deci and Ryan's (1995) self-determination theory, identifies four stages of the process:

First, external regulation is the least self-determined from extrinsic motivation, coming entirely from external sources. Second, introjected regulation, externally imposes rules that the individuals accept as norms. Third, identified regulation, when people are engaged in an activity they highly value and identify the

behavior and see its usefulness. Finally, integrated regulation with the involving behavior, which is fully assimilated with the individuals other values, needs and identity.

Learning Styles

The success or failure of student has a lot to do with the way information is handled; in addition, biological and developmental characteristics influence greatly how knowledge is acquired, processed, remembered and internalized. Each student develops certain style that may work well in a subject although would not work in other; in the same way no all styles fit all students.

LeFever (1995) cites Bernice Mc Carty's four primary learning styles: Imaginative learners are involved in learning by sensing, feeling, watching and seeing all sides of the issue presented to work on it. Curious are learners whose main characteristics are the skills to listen and share ideas. Analytic learners learn by traditional methods used by teachers, it means, having teacher as primary resource giver. As characteristics are mentioned perfectionism and the necessity to have all information assessed before deciding.

Common sense learners use their own ideas to solve or fix problems. Dynamic Learners are mainly risk takers who enjoy action more than rationally thinking. They are characterized by flexibility, joy changes and personalizing their original ideas. The reason why identical instructions are effective for a group of students and ineffective for others is attributed to biological and developmental characteristics.

Cognitive-style theory and brain-lateralization suggest that each student has an own way to process information that is different from other due to the basis of inherent traits. In short, learning styles have to be identified, proved and used until

finding the best fit each student. First, teacher should help students in these tasks observing and guiding during the learning process. Second, teacher can help students by giving different kind tasks that allow students themselves recognize and develop their styles. Finally, teacher has to stimulate styles that enhance students' cognitive process every day.

Students Intelligence or Aptitude to Learn English

When second language is learned with noticeable speed, it is clear that students have aptitude to learn. Skehan (1989, p.38) states, "Aptitude is consistently the best predictor of language learning success." Four components of aptitude are considered by Carroll (1965) in second language learning, which is widely different from learning mother tongue, these are: phonetic coding ability, rote memory, grammatical sensibility and grammatical analysis. In contrast, intelligence to learn second language has many other connotations: Murray & Christison (2011) state, "Psychometric view of intelligence is also a static one, meaning that one's score on an IQ test should not change significantly no matter what one learns, what experiences one has or how many times one takes throughout one's life."

Gardners' (1985a, 1985b) & Robert Sternberg (1985, 1990) suggested that intelligence is changing as product of learning, due to it is dynamic; smartness a set of abilities directly related to solve genuine problems. Sternberg's major types of intelligence are known as: componential, experiential and contextual intelligence focused on learning new concepts or skills or on solving problems. In contrast, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences proposes that; however, intelligences work together in a complex way; they act different in each individual. In addition, when skills and concepts are learned or something new or different is learned by a person, intelligence is developed, consequently, changed and increased, Christison (2005).

To sum up, aptitude is a good predictor of language learning; in contrast, intelligence seems to be complex and works differently depending on each individual.

In the following previous studies, the most relevant factors affecting English teaching learning are summarized:

Khamkhien (2010) in his study suggested that motivation is the most significant factor affecting the language-learning strategy use, followed by previous experience on learning English and gender respectively. These results were found in a comparative study done with Tai and Vietnamese undergraduate students where gender difference was not one of the variables contributing to language-learning choice strategies; however, female students showed higher motivation. The quantitative method was employed for the study where 200 80-items Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) written questionnaires were distributed and 138 recovered using t-test through means and standard deviations. The recommendations given were the following: language teachers need to develop deeper insights into how they should aware students about the use of learning strategies and how to design effective learning tasks.

Narayanan, Rajasekaran, & Iyyappan (2008) state: that successful language learning entails a complete participation of the learner. Learning a second language is a total physical, intellectual and emotional involvement needed to successfully send and interpret linguistic messages. Among other factors, these were found students' gender, motivation, attitude and language-anxiety that play as vital roles in learning English as second language. The quantitative method was used and questionnaires were prepared to collect data, mainly in written mode in a sample of 405 students. Mean, average and percentage were applied to check the influence of

factors. The results showed that factors such as motivation, attitude, language anxiety and gender had a strong impact on students.

The main recommendations in this study suggested that, if learners want to foster linguistic skills effectively, he or she needs to be highly motivated, have a positive attitude towards the language, low language anxiety and supposed to have a good amount of TL exposures.

Matsumoto (2009) in his study states that, approximately 280 students were studied to find how their perception of teachers' level of commitment to teach them affects their own motivation to study English. A questionnaire survey was administered to the learners at three different levels of proficiency to also identify the relationship between the levels of study and the learners' perception of the teacher as a factor affecting the learners' motivation. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between the learners' motivation and their perception of their teachers' commitment to teach; though, there were some differences among the three levels. The results also found that the level of study was an important variable which affected the learners' perception of three major teacher-related factors; behavior, personality and teaching introduced by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998). These findings support the general claim that language teachers were one of the most important factors influential learners' motivation, but the learners' level of proficiency may need to be taken into consideration for a further discussion regarding the validity of a certain teaching strategy to motivate second language learners.

Zainol, Majid, Wongchana & Mun (2012) found students' motivation and attitudes towards self-access language learning center, to explore how the SALLC promotes learners' attitudes and motivation in using it to learn English and how the center supports learners' autonomy and to provide feedback. These findings indicate

that users can be self-access learners by generating SAL towards their learning. It is a balance between the learner and the environment; it may not be successful if learners lack the resources. Learning at the SALLC enabled students to work on things they were really interested in. It can be assumed that the users were favorably tending to learn by themselves and that they seem to be satisfied with the SALLC and have positive attitudes towards it.

Ahmad, Ahmed, Bukhara, & Bukhari (2011) in a comparative study applied a test of eight items, to a sample of 654 students to find out the level of difficulties of secondary schools' students and to compare the level of difficulties in learning English at a secondary level of Provincial and Federal government schools. The issues researched were about grammar tenses, active and passive voice, direct and indirect narrations, conjunctions, prepositions, articles, construction of sentences and reading with comprehension. After analyzing results, it was concluded that the students of Federal government schools showed significantly better performance than students of Provincial government schools in learning English at a secondary level in the use of the grammar elements of sentences. Previous researches Westwood (2006), Farkota (2005), Kersher (2000) state that learning difficulties in memory or not enough motivation were related to curriculum; thus, teachers should improve on teaching techniques by preparing systematic material in order to reinforce comprehension.

3.2 Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

In this section, a detailed description, analysis and interpretation of results reached after field observations will be found. The aim is to analyze the most relevant factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools.

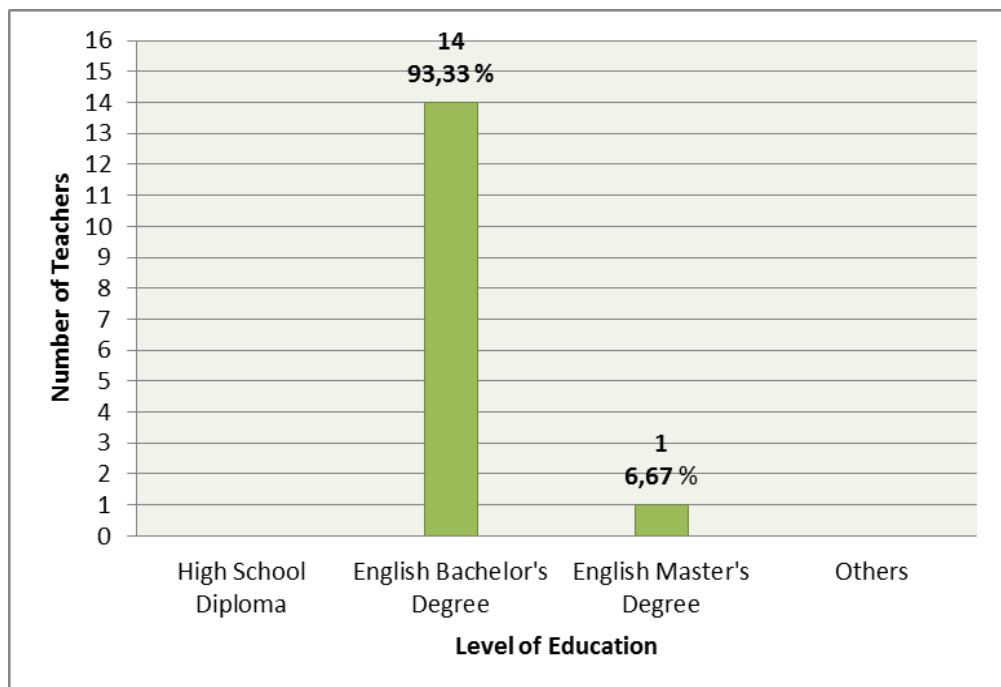
Quantitative Analysis

The current quantitative analysis is based on results obtained from surveys to teachers and students, as well as the researcher's direct observation during fifteen English lessons. Observation forms, interviews and questionnaires were the main instruments applied to collect data.

Factors Concerning Teachers

Which level of education do you have?

Graphic No 1



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

After applying the survey to find out the level of education of fifteen in-service English teachers in Ecuadorian public high schools, the results showed that a 93.33 % fourteen of them had an English Bachelor's degree, while one teacher had an English Master's degree a 7.67%, according to answers checked on the Teacher's Questionnaire.

The teachers' level of education influences the tasks variety according to Rowan (2002 , p. 109) who states, “ This leads to the expectation that teachers with a higher level of education will be more likely to report high levels of task variety and low levels of uncertainty than less educated teachers.” Rowan' statement was evidenced during the field research. From the fifteen observed English teachers, fourteen of them had a similar level of education, English Bachelor's degree, whereas one teacher had an English Master's degree; the last outperformed the fourteen.

The teachers were divided in three groups according to their performance, it is detailed below.

Nine teachers integrated the first group; all of them had English Bachelor's Degrees, their lessons were presented in a dynamic and creative way; besides, they showed command of the subject, oral fluency and high performance during the explanation of the theme, which grabbed students' attention and interest.

Contrasting, a second group of five teachers, with the same level of education, English Bachelor's Degree, did not taught dynamic and creative lessons; the lessons were teachers' centered and students did not participate actively, neither oral nor in a written way. The five teachers classified in this group explained the class on board, then, wrote grammar structures; and finally, they asked students to copy, those lessons lacked of enthusiasm and motivation.

The teacher who had a Master's degree was classified in the third group. This teacher's lesson organization was highlighted because there were group leaders, who were responsible for checking of their classmates' homework as well as class-work. The class was explained completely in English and students seemed to understand properly. In short, this class was correctly conducted, especially because all students were involved not only doing exercises and answering questions, but also coordinating and collaborating with the teacher during the whole class. The students manifested to feel active part of the class.

Regarding the teachers' level of education, six teachers reflected their performance and language proficiency in groups of students' intermediate level of English knowledge, from first to third year of high school, due to the majority of the class was delivery in English. In contrast, due to the very basic-level English knowledge showed by the students, from the eighth to tenth grade of general basic education (EGB), the teachers' use of Spanish ranged from 50% to 75% of the time; consequently, it did not allow teachers showing their language proficiency.

About this respect, the use of Spanish in English lessons was not new; it was found in a study of the SENECYT in 2011 based on a previous test applied by the CRADLE project in November 2009. The results announced that the majority of teachers were at a level A1- initial in a 39.1%, A2- initial in a 35%, B1- intermediate in a 17.4 % and B1+ intermediate in an 8.2% from a sample of 5022 English teachers surveyed. According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), by 2011, this trend was ratified. That study and the mentioned test uncovered the basic-level knowledge of in-service English teachers in Ecuadorian high schools; however, the teachers expressed that Spanish was used as an aid to help students to understand the English Language, due to their basic-level.

To improve the teachers' level of education and teaching quality, scholarships are offered to allow teachers being specialized in universities abroad for a period of around nine months. The participant teachers expressed that it was a good option; however, it was complicated for them to travel abroad for more than two months due to personal and job constraints, as a result few teachers are benefited from government scholarships.

Concerning teachers' training , the Ecuadorian Minister of Education is focused on improving English teaching quality and teachers academic level; thus, English teacher's standards were published, which are focused on five domains: Language, Culture, Curriculum Development, Assessment, Professionalism, and Ethical commitment. The teachers agreed with this policy and considered it helpful; although, they expressed the difficulties to reach them in short time.

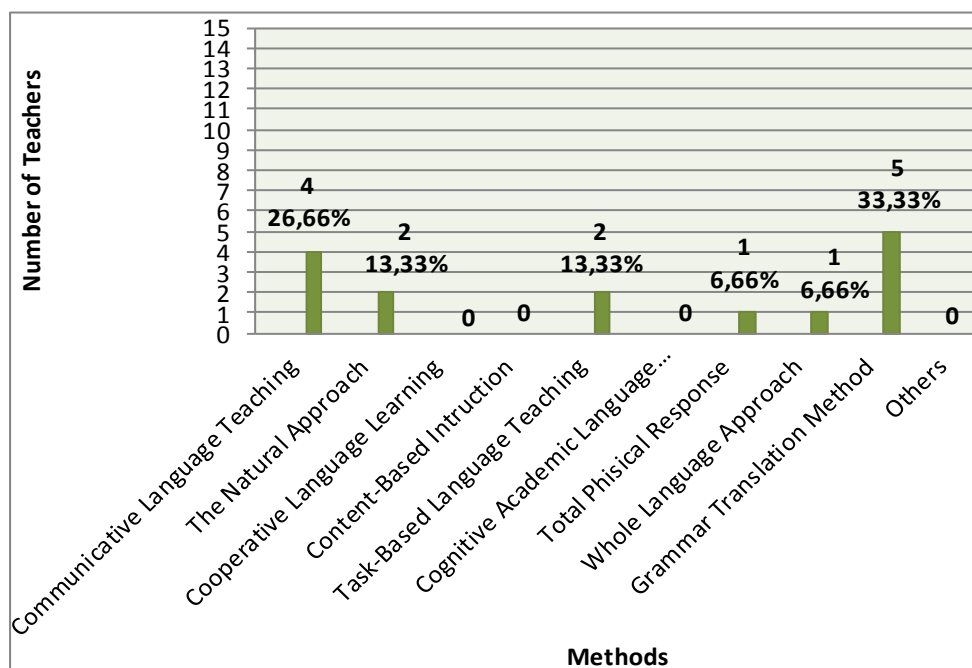
In relation to the above mentioned, the scholarships and the English Teachers' Standards, the surveyed teachers commented that the offered training was not enough. They believed that continuous courses to update methods, techniques and language proficiency are necessary. Furthermore, those training courses have to be periodically dictated in the principal cities of Ecuador; in order to guarantee the teachers' participation to improve their performance, update their knowledge and reach the standards required.

In addition to the academic formation to get an English Bachelor's, Master's Degrees and training courses, the teachers pointed out the everyday practice as the major source of training. Because all groups of students are different and their needs are changing, teachers' skills to manage those groups are learned in the teaching practice field; besides, learning how to implement creativity, dynamism and variety to increase students' interest and motivation on learning the English language.

In sum, the teachers expressed the level of education acquired and the experience acquired on handling groups of teenagers through everyday teaching practice allow them to develop skills to motivate and integrate students in the teaching-learning process.

Which of the following methods was used in this class?

Graph No 2



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding the results from Teacher's Questionnaire, a 26.66 % of teachers used the Grammar Translation Method , which was the most used during the observed lessons. In addition, a 13.33% used the Natural Approach and a similar percentage of teachers used the Task-Based Language Teaching; finally, a 6.66% used the Total Physical Response and the Whole-language Approach each one, to teach English language lessons.

Considering the methods used in class, six surveyed teachers expressed that the Grammar Translation Method was more frequently used from eighth to tenth grades of (EGB) because this group of students presented learning difficulties and a zero or basic level of English language knowledge. Although it was recognized that this method is not the best to deal with learning difficulties, which were evident among students at evening classes, teachers used this method to help students to understand and comprehend the English language in a better way.

About this respect, teachers pointed out that the students' learning difficulties were brought from the elementary school. Those difficulties involve copying, reading and writing in Spanish; thus, due to the basic skills in the mother tongue were not properly acquired during previous grades; these deficiencies become complicated the teaching- learning English language. For this reason, the use of the Grammar Translation Method was considered an aid to facilitate students' learning; otherwise, it would had been more complicated for them.

Another reason for using the Grammar Translation Method was the basic-level of English knowledge that students presented. Likewise learning difficulties, it was brought from elementary schools where the English language is not considered a compulsory subject but optional, as a result, the time allotted for it ranges from one to five hours per week, which is not enough to reach an appropriate level. Consequently, the basic-level English knowledge affects students when they are in middle or high school.

Regarding time, an English lesson at evening is thirty minutes while at daytime forty minutes long and five periods by week were designed for elementary, middle and high schools. Since this time is extremely short, the Grammar Translation Method was considered highly helpful for both, teachers and students. Thus, teachers

take advantage of the time explaining the lessons in Spanish and students understand better, then it was another reason to use the Grammar Translation Method, the small time allotted to teach the English subject.

As was already mentioned, the current survey was done in public high schools that work at daytime as well as evening time. At daytime the English lessons presented the characteristics above described and the situation was quite similar in all high schools researched. However, at evening schedule, the difficulties to teach English were considered even more challenging due to the short time allotted for each class.

For the above exposed, the Grammar Translation Method use was not less than 33.3% in the observed classes. The described method was aimed to provide a clear and useful support to students with learning difficulties and basic-level of English knowledge through their native language. Students expressed to feel confident when their teachers explained the lesson in Spanish.

Furthermore, the teachers commented that the Grammar Translation Method was the most frequently used because it was focused on meeting students' needs and to improve their understanding as much as possible. This method was considered familiar and friendly for students who faced difficulties in learning the native and foreign language.

The students added that this method was very helpful in aspects such as basic short conversations and simple grammar structures because they were clearly understood in Spanish and therefore easier to replicate in English. Corroborating the reasons given by teachers, students confirmed the usefulness of this method.

Although, the Natural Approach, Task-Based Teaching, Whole-Language Approach and Total Physical Response were checked on Teacher's Questionnaire, as

the methods used; these were neither clearly presented by teachers nor identified by students during the observed lessons.

Concerning the Communicative Language Teaching Method, a 26.6% of teachers marked it as the method used by them from first to third year of high school (BGU). The orientation of the Communicative Language Teaching Method was directed to increase students' interest on everyday communication. The students could speak about famous people, sports and general information in order to develop a basic conversation related to topics which are familiar for them.

About this respect, the teachers commented that the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has done improvements in the education field providing training courses and evaluation to teachers and textbooks, uniforms, scholarships to students; however, what the English area needs the most is training courses focused on the development of the Communicative Language Teaching Method.

According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the National English Curriculum Guidelines (2012, p.3) "The Communicative Approach is currently the most recognized, accepted norm in the field of language teaching and learning worldwide because it comprises a theoretically well-informed set of principles about the nature of language learning and teaching."

In addition, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education published the guidelines to standardize the teaching learning approach, which is guided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. During the interviews, teachers mentioned that a new textbook was going to be delivered, but no one knew neither the name nor the method that was going to be used.

According to teachers, this aspect needs an especial treatment due to the previously mentioned guidelines did not reflected the Ecuadorian reality; thus, the

published standards would take more time to be applied than it was planned; even if, they are started from roots, the elementary schools, where the English language learning difficulties begin.

Regarding effective changes, they seem to be far from reality; because, as teachers explained, those changes have to start from public elementary schools and continue with middle and high schools. For example those changes would be, increasing the number of English classes and their quality, setting up language laboratories, increasing the number of class periods by week and reducing the number of students per classroom.

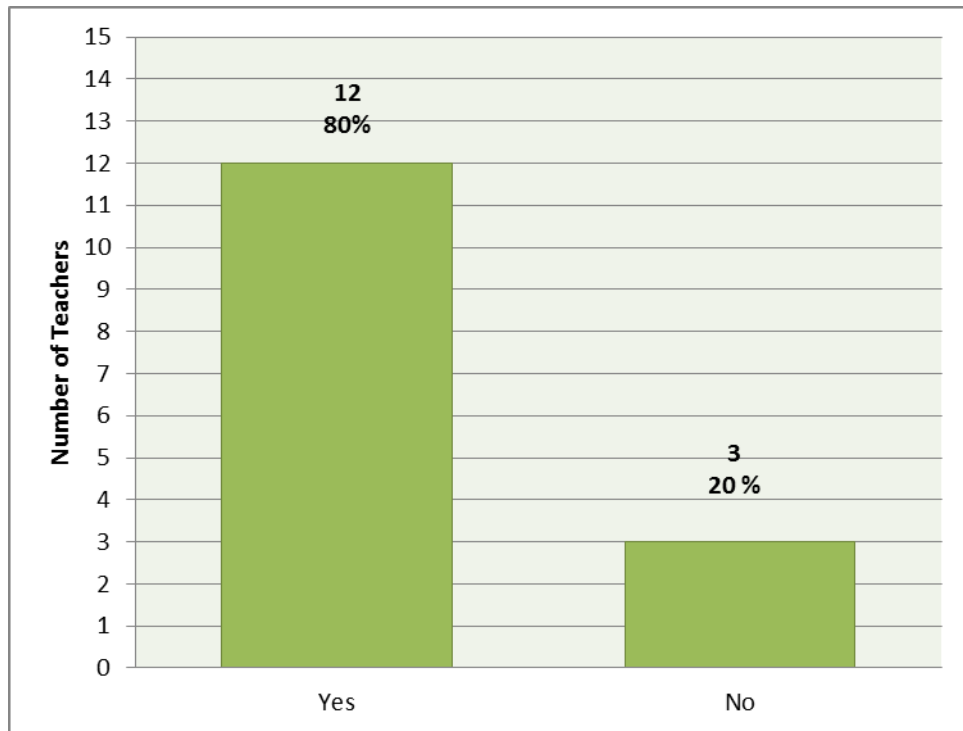
Students highlighted professionalism, kindness, dynamism and patience of their teachers. However, what they recognized the most was their commitment. The participants felt more confidence when teachers mastered the subject, method and teaching techniques besides, understanding their needs.

Finally, an interviewed teacher expressed that the information available in the internet serves for teachers to be up- dated constantly and optimize use of methods and techniques to teach successfully and effectively. In that way methods could be changed, mixed, enriched or adopted to overcome learning difficulties whenever it was required in order to be a guide for them to acquire English knowledge.

To sum up, the teachers were aware of the responsibility to apply the best method to benefit students according to their level; even though, the Grammar Translation Method is not the recommended by the Ecuadorian Minister of Education but Communicative Language Approach, it was used to meet students' needs. In addition, participant teachers expressed the urgency to improve the current program increasing the load of English lessons in elementary, middle and in high schools to improve students' English language level.

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

Graphic No 3



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

For this question, an 80% of teachers (twelve), expressed to use whole- group activities to teach English lessons; in contrast, a 20% of teachers (three) did not use this activity. The results showed that whole- group activities were frequently used during English classes due to the large number of students in public high schools classrooms, forty-five as average.

Regarding whole- group activities, Brodie & Mottram (2005) suggested that whole-group activities allow students to work together on the same assignment and at the same rate; in addition, these activities permit teacher to know the complete group' outcomes besides favoring students learning from each other and having control of students' behavior.

However, the teachers who use whole- group activities found them useful and integrative; it was pointed out that using this strategy had two constrains; first, rating and assessing students' individual work and second, the students' lack of interest when whole-group activities were challenging. Despite of using whole- group activities to have all the students working on the same task at the same time, only some of them were integrative leaving out some students.

Considering teachers' difficulty to rate and assess students' individual work, when applying whole- group activities, it was mentioned that, although there is a to benefit to keep all students working on the proposed task until its accomplishment, as a whole group, it is not possible to identify the percentage that each student contribute to it individually. Due to it is common that few students perform the task and the others just copy or repeat it; at the end of the class, all of them have the task done, but the student who had worked harder has the same work and grade as the ones who did not. This was pointed out as a constraint of whole- group activities.

The second constraint pointed out was the notorious students' lack of interest toward the whole- group activities even more when those were challenging. The limited English language knowledge makes students to have a marked apathy toward those tasks because they did not understand enough how to do it; for that reason, they expressed to feel frustrated and indifferent directing their attention to other stuffs, such as drawing, coloring or using electronic devices. The above mentioned, were constraints for using whole- group activity.

Referring to whole- group activities, thirteen interviewed students expressed that whole- group activities; for example, written and oral exercises, sentences and grammar structures on the board and notebook were frequently performed during

lessons. Moreover, the students expressed that, songs, games, puzzles, brainstorming and eliciting were used in class as whole-group activities but less frequently.

Considering whole-group activities Pollard (2005, p.237) states, “using whole-class activity organizational procedures may give the teacher a chance to instruct the class more directly and economically.” which is beneficial due to the large number of students and the short time.

Although other activities such as discussions to encourage students’ speaking furthermore, organizing basic ideas, applying new vocabulary, grammatical tenses and structures were sporadically, students recognized these activities as performed in class. On the other hand, two students expressed that no whole-group activities were used at all. It is important to mention that all students were explained about the characteristics of whole-group activities to make concept and characteristics clear.

As examples of whole- group activities observed during the field research the following were considered: in three observed classes, students were asked to write five to ten sentences and in two of them a short paragraph (ten lines long). In two cases, a CD was played, the students read and sang the lyrics of popular songs, “Lemmon Tree” and “Gummy Bear”, all together. In two, students read short stories, “Brian’s Typical Day” and “Rafael Correa’s physical description”; finally, in four observed English lessons, the teacher asked students to repeat questions and answers orally. In this way, the majority of students worked at the same time.

Furthermore, during two observations another whole- group activity was evidenced. The teachers asked all students to follow and repeat some instructions as warming up using grammatical structures in present progressive, in order to exemplify action verbs. Although, it was not easy for teachers to have all students participating actively, due to the large number and the classroom space, these

activities allowed students to practice what they have learned previously. Warming up, make students to relax and prepare for the topic of the class; additionally, it served for the teacher to make students to experience the English knowledge.

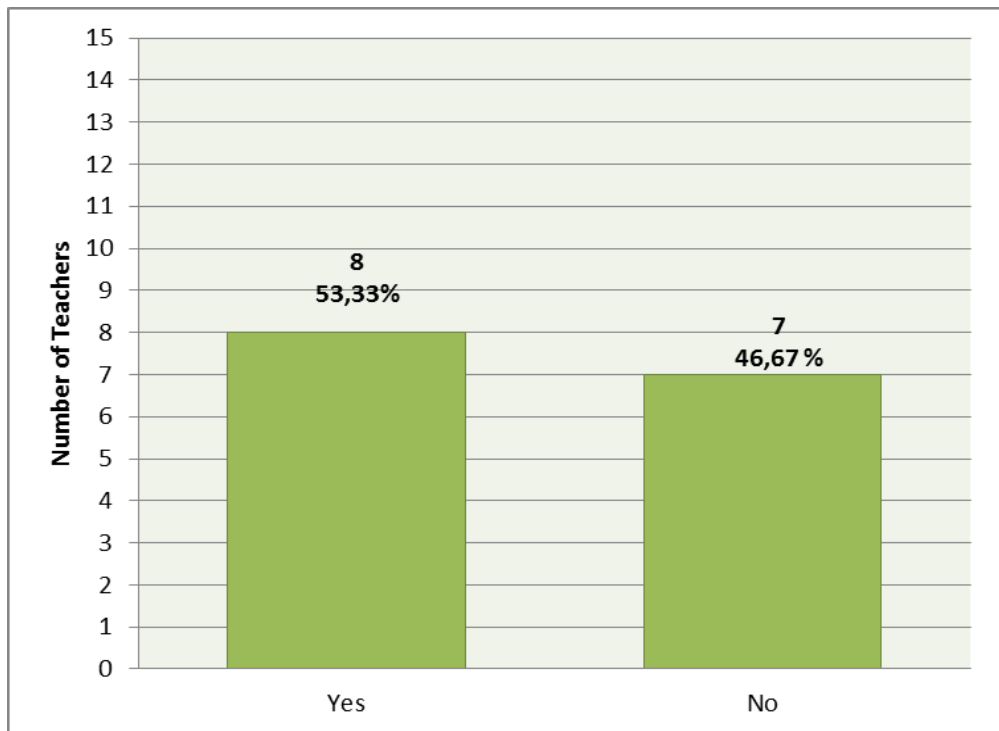
However, a 33.33% of teachers (five) did not write the reasons why whole-group activities were taught in their classes on the Teacher's Questionnaire those were given orally during the personal interview. The comments were about the necessity to involve as many students as possible into the topics, create interest, give variety to the lessons and avoid shyness that caused individual participation. About that issue, the teachers explained that some students had faced huge problems on oral individual exercises, those students felt more confident speaking into the group.

On the other hand, the limited time restricted the individual participation of students. Thus, teachers took advantage of the time, involve shy students and foment confidence applying whole- group activities.

In sum, the use of whole- group activities as strategy to involve students into the English as a foreign language learning process was evident. The teachers and students confirmed it. For the teachers, it was a great strategy to keep the majority of the students working at the same time and pace on the same assignment, due to the large number of students and the difficulty to make students' to perform written and oral exercises one by one during the limited lesson time. In addition, students considered the whole- group activities integrative; especially, for shy students who feel fear when they have to speak or write in front of their classmates; furthermore, they were confident and encouraged working among classmates. For the above described teachers and students considered whole- group activities helpful, integrative and frequently used despite of the constraints it carries, such as the time invested in forming groups and indiscipline generated.

Do you use individual activities to teach your lessons?

Graphic No 4



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Considering teachers' answers to this question these were the results, a 53.33% (eight teachers) manifested that individual activities were the best way to assess students' knowledge individually. Furthermore, it was added that through individual activities was possible to give them feedback, encourage and enhance students' wiliness to improve and learn by they own; for these reasons, teachers used individual activities often.

On the other hand, a 46.67% of surveyed teachers (seven) answer that individual activities during classes were not frequent due to the large number of students and the limited time. Thus, although individual activities were the best way to assess, give feedback, and encourage students' self-study to improve their English knowledge, these activities were not used by all the teachers.

About this respect, Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2011, p. 14) state: “Individual activities give students a chance to work at their own pace and to focus and organize their thoughts.”

The teachers 53.33% of teachers, commented that despite of the fact that time is short; they try to integrate tasks and activities involving individual performance; for example assessing five students per class each time in oral or written exercises. In addition, the referred teachers considered that the individual assessment is extremely important to know how each student is assimilating and learning the English language; after that, a group evaluation can show a clearer frame of teachers and students’ performance. Additionally, teachers could implement changes and improvements on technics and methods could be done in order to benefit the group. Thus, when students’ are evaluated individually it reflects also teacher’ skills, techniques and methods applying an along the class.

Contrasting thee were surveyed teachers who expressed that individual activities were not frequent and they gave the following reasons:

First, the large number of students made difficult to monitor students’ work one by one. Second, the students’ basic-level of English knowledge did not allow answering oral or written questions by their own. Third, individual speaking activities woke students’ fears besides being highly time consuming. Finally, the short time assigned for English classes, only five periods weekly of thirty minutes at evening and forty minutes at daytime had become individual activities difficult to be carried out. Consequently, limitations of time, the basic-level English knowledge and students’ fears to speak in front of classmates were reasons for not using individual activities in class exposed by seven teachers who represented a 46.67% of the total surveyed sample.

Referring to this aspect, five students manifested that individual activities such as homework and classwork was not often; consequently, individual feedback was sporadic. On the other hand, another group of two students from third grade performed individual activities during the researcher's observation. They wrote and read aloud in front of their classmates a short essay, which was quite well. Furthermore, those students expressed that it was easier to write about topics, which were familiar and well known; in addition, they expressed that an immediate feedback and teachers' encouragement motivate them. Unfortunately, there were only two oral individual participations from more that forty-five students who were present at that moment in that classroom.

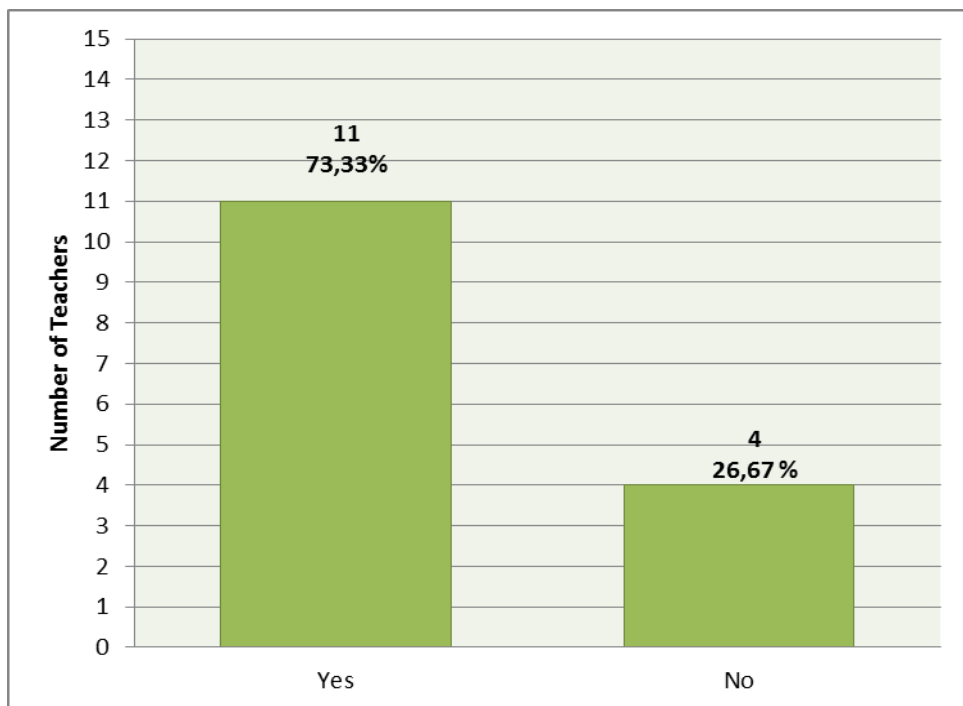
Finally, during personal interviews, eight students considered their basic-level of English knowledge as a limiting to perform individual activities, which were led by students with higher level, the risk takers; moreover, students with lower level of English knowledge felt frustrated and demotivated showing lack of interest and boredom during individual activities.

Having expressed their respective positions about individual activities in class teachers and students recognized the necessity to include individual activities to fill the requirement of the new assessment system established in the LOEI memorandum No MinEduc-SECED-2012-0584-M August 17 2012, Art. 209, which states that individual-activities in class are considered as the 20% of formative assessment. Currently, there are two assessment components in a curricular partial block grade, a summative and a formative both form a partial; three partials constitute "quimestre" and two of them constitute a school year. Then, according to the Ecuadorian Minister of Education a student need to have registered at least six individual activities along a school year, which represents a 20% of the partial assessment.

In sum, the large number of students was pointed out as a constraint to the frequent use of individual activities, because it was not easy to control, monitor or provide feedback one by one; furthermore, oral individual activities were considered highly time consuming. Over forty-five students in a class and less than forty minutes assigned by each lesson did not allow teachers correcting exercises done as classwork and homework one by one. Oral and written individual activities in front of the class were considered fire proofs for students who, in many cases feel afraid of failing, consequently, they refused to participate. These aspects were mentioned as negative for individual activities daily. Despite of that the MinEduc had considered individual activities as a 20% of partial assessment; thus, individual activities have to be planned and included in English lessons.

Do you use group-work activities to teach your lesson?

Graphic No 5



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

According to the survey results from the Teacher's Questionnaire, a 73.33% of teachers (eleven) used the group-work activities to teach their English lessons, contrasting to a group of four teachers a 26.67% who expressed the contrary.

It is important to point out that, besides the observed group- work activities during the field research were few (two), students as well as teachers provided additional information and details about this topic during the interview.

In each case, teachers and students exposed their supporting reasons related to the use of work-group activities.

Eleven teachers who use group- work activities found this activity enriching and productive especially to develop speaking and writing skills, in addition, they reported that students learn better because they help, interact and provide corrections each other; then, students felt confident interacting in a group with similar level of English knowledge.

Related to the mentioned above, Stotz (1991, p. 14) states, "Group work activities have been among the favorite techniques in this respect, to promote human values and relationships as well as learner independence from the teacher and to increase the time students spend interacting in the non-native language."

The group-work activities aimed to help students developing their writing and speaking skills; for this reason, three interviewed teachers explained that, the they form groups to write short paragraphs, draw and expose topics related to their preferences such as, the favorite soccer team, singer, actor or actress using the tenses and structures learned previously.

Additionally, three interviewed teachers said that, they used group- work activities such as the translation of short tales and pop songs; after that, they asked students to comment or sing respectively in groups in front of the classmates; as a

result, students speak and share ideas each other to accomplish the required activity. Finally, five teachers expressed that they used group- work activities for students to do exercises form their textbooks.

On the other hand, the four teachers who do not use group-activities in class expressed the following as the main reasons students' basic-level and the indiscipline caused when forming groups. The students' basic-level of English knowledge from eighth, ninth and tenth grade of (EGB), caused immediate students' distraction toward other activities such as, talking to each other in Spanish using electronic devices, which are common and varied among students and disturbing classmates. In addition, the indiscipline generated when basic-level students did not know how to perform the assigned activity, or simply did not show any interest; then, these students distract and foment indiscipline among the others.

Another constraint was the small physical space limiting the work-group activities due to the large number of chairs and tables, which are difficult to move from one position to another, crashing, making noise and wasting precious time. In those conditions, students can turn the class into a chaos instead of a place to work peacefully on the proposed assignment.

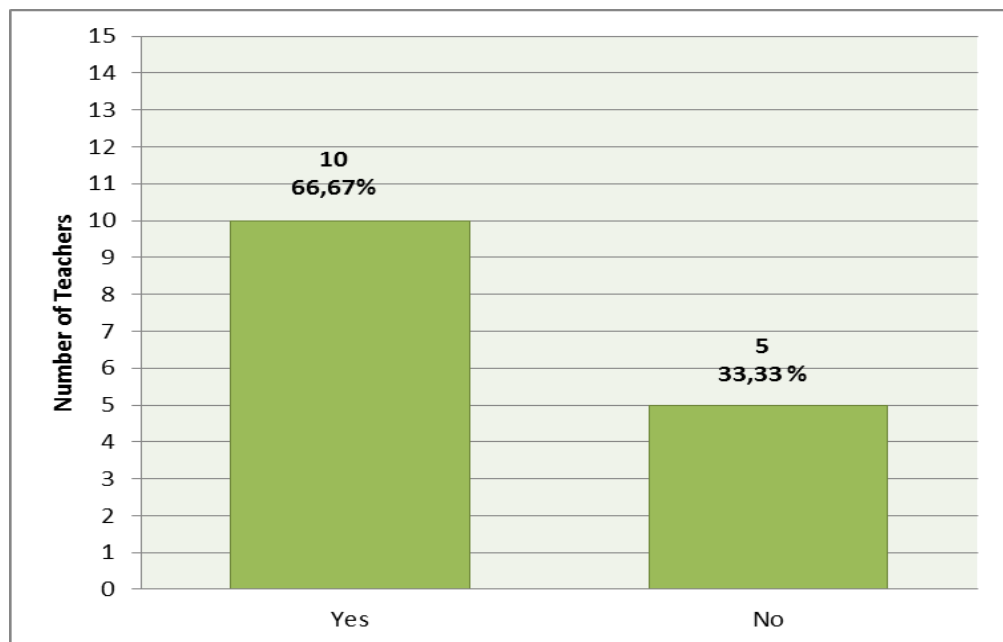
Moreover, another constraint found by four teachers against the use of work-group activities was related to shyness and fears. It interferes with the group activity because shy students did not do any efforts to speak or interact in the group; on the other hand, the benefited from work- group activities were the natural leaders and students who had advanced speaking skills, although they were the minority. Consequently, students' fears and shyness were reasons given by four teachers for not using group –work activities.

Teachers should use group- activities very often according to the LOEI memorandum No MinEduc-SECED-2012-0584-M August 17 2012, Art. 209, group-activities in class are considered the 20% of formative assessment grade, similarly to individual activities, described previously. The teachers expressed that changes are urgent to reach the requirements of the resolution.

To conclude, the majority of teachers a 73.33% (eleven), from a total of fifteen qualified group-work activity as easy to apply; on the other hand, four teachers 26.67% considered the opposite, students recognized positive the use of group-work activities. Despite the pros and cons, both students and teachers expressed the necessity to increase the load of English periods of class, in order to have more time to develop the group- work activities and practice of the four basic skills interacting with classmates.

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

Graphic No 6



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding the results obtained from Teacher's Questionnaire, a 66.66% (ten) teachers used English to teach their lessons most of the time, but a 33.33% (five) from fifteen expressed variances in its use, which are detailed below.

Supporting these results, the researcher's observations confirmed that the first group of ten teachers used English accurately and fluently. It was observed that, six teachers explained, give instructions, ask questions and delivered the lessons in English and students seemed to understand in a high percent because they reacted and answered immediately; moreover, this group of students handled, dictionaries, flash cards and had grammar structures written on their notebooks as an aid, during the observed English lessons.

Here it is important to remark that this group of students had an intermediate-level of English knowledge, which allowed teachers to use English most of the time; furthermore, engagement and willingness to participate in the activities proposed by the teacher were common, students showed interest raising hands and trying to use English as much as it possible. As a result, the teachers' use of English stimulated students to speak.

The second group of nine teachers was divided in two subgroups A and B. In the subgroup "A" were four teachers who used English as well as Spanish in around a 50%. They explained the lesson in English and when it was necessary to complement the ideas, give examples, explain complex meanings or give interpretations Spanish was used. Similarly, the teachers used drawings, body language and grammar structures to clarify the concepts; furthermore, students inferred the meanings from the contexts; however, the use dictionaries, flash cards during the observed English lessons were less frequent the students participate actively.

In the subgroup “B” were five teachers, they used Spanish to explain the English lessons in around a 75% because they considered its use an aid to help students to understand the subject, due to the zero or basic level of English knowledge presented by students.

During those English lessons, students did not show good previous knowledge of English, even worse; some students had a zero English level because they did not learn English in the elementary school.

Additionally, some students forming part of this group not only had problems in English, but also in Spanish in activities such as copying, reading, comprehending and taking a dictation. The researcher verified this situation, when a supervisor interrupted an observed lesson to ask students with problems to attend a special leveling course in a schedule different from normal. Those leveling classes aimed to help students with serious learning problems; the supervisor explained it; unfortunately, these leveling classes were not evidenced in other high schools; however, the mentioned learning problems were similar among students.

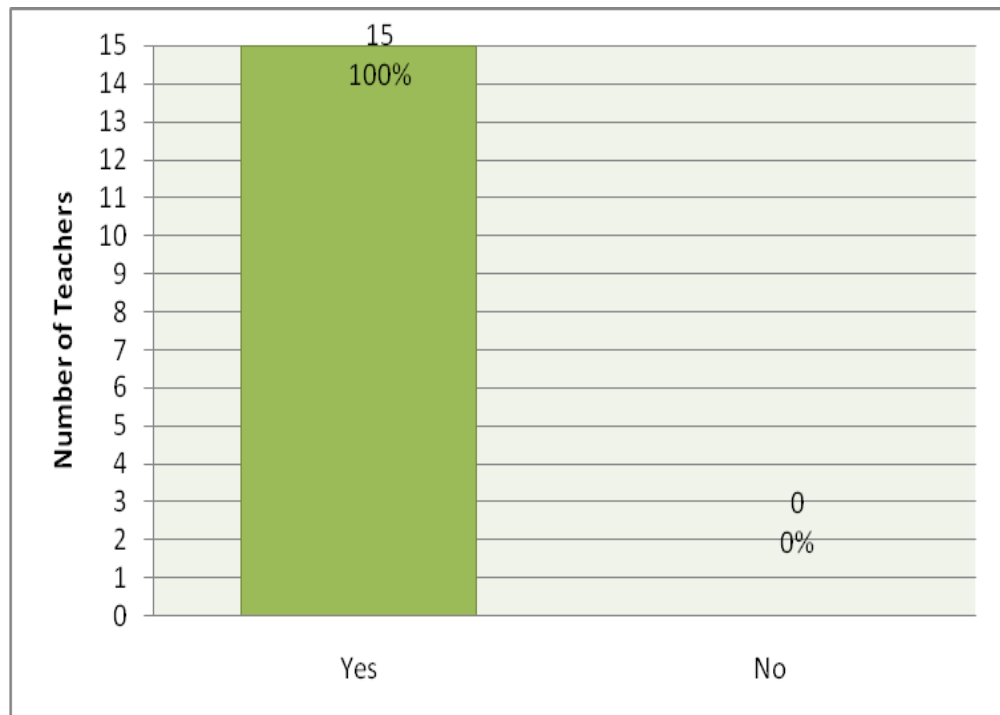
Moreover, there was a group of basic-level English knowledge students, who were always silent, just copying and having struggles when they had to speak; for that reason, the teachers used drawings and charts to explain the lessons and expressed the necessity to be creative to motivate students to grab their attention.

Although, for students the use of Spanish was an aid, examples, grammar structures and concepts were written in English on the board, in addition to some basic structures and instructions. Students and teachers were aware of the problem that caused the learning difficulties and basic-level of English knowledge presented, as a result, both agreed on the necessity of using Spanish during English lessons; otherwise, the students’ difficulties would had been greater. On the other hand, the

students whose teachers used English most of the time were pleased because they were the unique source to learn and imitate.

Do you plan your lessons?

Graphic No 7



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

For the question No 7 related to lesson design a 100% (fifteen) teachers answered yes; it was a synonym that all the surveyed teachers plan their English lessons.

According to MinEduc, teachers have to design one annual, six block and daily lesson plans as part of their personal portfolio.

The researcher could not have direct access to the teachers' planning; however, during the interview, the teachers cataloged the plans design as an important guide to organize their lessons in advance. Moreover, teachers considered

the lesson, block and annual plans as the base, which allows them going forward, backward, or even remain more time than planned on a determined lessons to review, repeat and reinforce, if it was necessary. In addition, since a plan gives a wide view of the total school year, the lessons can continue faster depending on the level of students assimilating the topics. Moreover, planning permits teachers to have a historical report of the past and coming lessons, besides having a complete view of the whole year, considering teachers and students' roles and needs to adjust changes and improvements to have a successful teaching- learning process. About this Butt (2009, p. 1-2) states, "The key to good teaching, purposeful class management and the achievement of sustained educational progress lies in effective planning. Learning does not occur by chance"

Although, the teachers did not have a specific plan on the desk, the observed lessons were organized and dynamic; all of them had a similar structure. First, teachers checked attendance; second, a little warming up, followed by a short explanation about the last class; third, the teacher wrote a grammatical structure on the board to explain the new topic and wrote some examples. The teachers explained the lesson using drawings, realia, charts, or examples; fourth, the students wrote examples by their own; and finally, the teachers checked classwork and assigned homework. In some cases, group leaders helped teachers to check both class work and homework.

The five-phase lesson structure Freeman (2007) was followed by an 80% of the participant teachers: presentation, preparation, practice, evaluation and expansion, in the majority of the observed lessons.

The 20% variation in the class structure involved the use of readings, songs and personal descriptions instead of grammar explanations and exercises. In addition,

there were students responsible to help the teachers, a group of leaders, checking the classmates' homework and class work, while the teacher corrected those students' work. With some variations, the class structure was the similar in the fifteen observed classes.

The most experienced teachers expressed that they could deliver classes without a written plan because they had repeated the same lesson dozens of times. However, they did planning to fill MinEduc requirement. About the importance of planning Farell (2006) suggested that the events during a lesson are unpredictable; this is the reason why teachers have to design lessons to prevent problems, develop teachers' confidence, and organize lesson elements smoothly. Lesson design is to take advantage of the time and resources available; in addition, pressure is taken off because tasks and objectives are target in the right amount, sequence aimed to reach the previously established objectives; furthermore, planning gives teachers extra tools to overcome sudden events and unexpected situations successfully, which are common when dealing with teenagers.

A general review of the previous knowledge was the theme of the three first weeks since the school year began. By that time, neither the students had textbooks, nor did the teachers have a teacher's guide, although the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education had offered, both, textbooks and guides. For that reason, the themes of the before year were the base of the first three week of classes. As teachers commented, a new English textbook was going to be introduced that school year, but until this paper was redacted, the name of the mentioned textbook was unknown.

Related to this fact the Ecuadorian in-service English Teachers Standards 2012 published a lesson plan model, which includes five domains related to the following: The first domain was "Language" structure and communication, language

acquisition and development and language fluency. The second domain includes “Culture” that involves the knowledge of other cultures and its effects on learning English in Ecuador. The third, “Curriculum Development,” related to planning for standards-based English, implementing and managing standards and using resources and technology. The fourth, “Assessment,” learners as well as those related to language proficiency and classroom-based assessment. The fifth, embodies “Professionalism and Ethical Commitment” to keep teachers up-dated with new instructional techniques, research results and advances in the teaching field for professional development. The standards allow planning from a common base following the same pattern to designing lessons.

The teachers agreed that, planning is a guide to work in an organized way and they recognized the necessity to plan because new goals have to be established according to each group of students’ level and specific characteristics; in addition, objectives need to be reconsidered, evaluated, and even improved to benefit students.

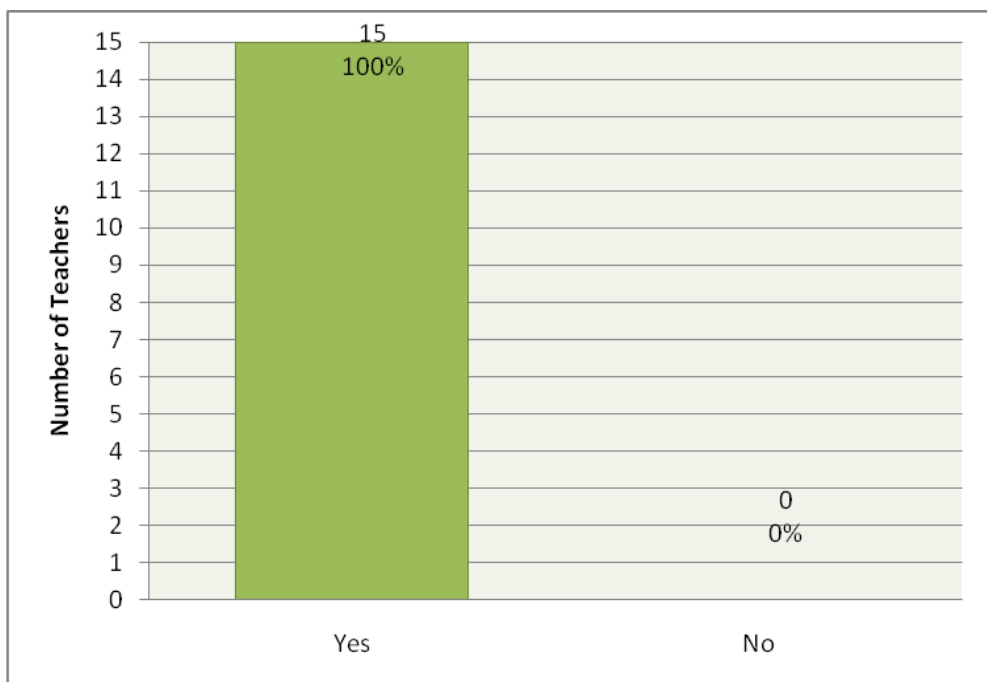
On the other hand, the teachers pointed out a disadvantage of planning, which was the amount of time invested in its design, which sometimes resulted long, tiring and boring especially because teachers are responsible of many courses. Planning around forty lessons by week was an additional workload for teachers, taking into account that they had to check homework, classwork and tests, tutoring students among others tasks related to teaching the practice. Fortunately, once a well-structured lesson plan was designed it was easily adapted, revised and modified.

Beyond the benefits, that planning brings to the everyday teaching practice, it reflects teachers’ instructional competence. Because plans not only reveal the teachers’ ability to administer and provide knowledge and assessment, but also it shows the adequate use and application of techniques, methods and skills

To summarize, teachers considered planning a fundamental activity in the teaching- learning process; planning serves teachers' as a guide and self-evaluation; moreover, planning allowed them to have a written record of the techniques, methods and strategies applied and its results in a determined period of time. Furthermore, the teachers can recognize their weak and strong skills as well as their students' development and achievements to do opportune modifications and changes; In addition, plans reflect the class management and assessment application. The teachers considered this activity highly time consuming and tiring due to the number of plans they have to do. Clearly, a well-structured plan is a factor that affects the teaching learning process positively.

Do you considered aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback and instruction to teach your lesson?

Graphic No 8



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

For this question, the results revealed that, a 100% of surveyed teachers (fifteen), considered aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback and instruction to teach their lessons.

During the field research, well-behaved and disciplined students were observed. The participant teachers mentioned that, keeping discipline was the key to manage a large group of students; for that reason, both, teachers and students, established clear rules since the beginner of the school year; thus, students knew the appropriate behavior expected into the classroom.

Notes, drawings and graffiti about respect, friendship and good behavior pasted on the walls of twelve classrooms showed students' agreement about the theme. The students commented that it was necessary to be quiet and pay attention during the lessons to avoid academic problems. Although, in three classrooms, there were not notes on the wall, students had good behavior along the observed lessons.

Regarding discipline Tauber (2007, p. 16) states, "Ineffective disciplinarians make it to look hard and get few results. Effective disciplinarians make it to look easy, as if they really are not doing anything at all." Teachers kept disciplined classes, although they were learning to manage groups of teenagers in everyday teaching practice, due to students' differences.

The lesson sequence followed during the observation field was theme presentation, development, explanation, oral and written exercises, feedback and delivering homework. Predictions about what stage was coming next were easy to make; in addition, homework and final instructions were delivered before the ring belled. However, feedback was not frequent; teachers said that it occurred depending on the students' requirements. The time assigned to each stage was short and teachers fit activities in it.

Regarding feedback, Richards (1998, p. ix) states: “It is better to give occasional but focused feedback on one thing at a time than to overwhelm a student with too much information. There will be many opportunities to give individual feedback when students are working in pairs or groups.” In fact, feedback was occasionally while students were doing exercises on the board or on the notebooks and the teacher realized that something was not clear. When teacher provided feedback, not only the student towards whom the feedback was directed was received it, but also interested and curious students around who were interested on teacher’s explanation.

In thirteen observed English classes an 86.67%, the activities fit in time exactly; but in a 13.33 % did not. In one case, the teacher did not hear the bell and the class lasted longer than established. In the second case, the teacher arrived to the class 10 minutes late, in both cases; the order of the lessons activities changed. The surveyed teachers expressed the importance to fit activities into the established time, because it allowed teachers and students to work in an organized way. When a teacher did not begin or finish activities on time, the coming class order was altered too. The same occurred when a teacher arrived late or did not attend to classes.

Related to teachers’ attendance, it was evidenced two absences during the fifteen observations, it means a 13.33%, and both teachers were reported sick. In one class, a substitute teacher different from English conducted the class; in the other class students did exercises previously established by the English teacher.

About timing, the load allotted for English subject was five class periods per week. At daytime classes lasted forty minutes; however, at evening, a lesson was thirty minutes long and five periods a week in both daytime and evening. In order to take advantage of the short time, two hours were arranged together, two days and one

in a distinct day until completing five hours per week, in the majority of cases. The teachers agreed that, it was better to have two hours each day to avoid wasting time changing classrooms, taking attendance and organizing the group, although it was not always possible to arrange two hours together. The teachers commented that the time allotted was not enough and it would be ideal to have more than five periods per week. It is important to point out that teachers controlled timing well.

Considering the time assigned for each activity in class, fourteen students believed that it was well delimited; they commented that teachers dedicated enough time to develop all the stages in the class. One student expressed the opposite; he commented that, it was necessary more time to do exercises oral and written.

Regarding instruction, Benjamin (2003, p.1) states. "It involves a balance between the content and the competencies expected on the mandated assessment and various pedagogical options to maximize durable learning." The teachers expressed English instruction is like a recipe to be carefully followed in order to link students and knowledge. First, beginner a lesson with a short review of previous learning; second, presenting new material as simple as possible; third, providing clear instructions; fourth, asking questions to students to assure their understanding; fifth, monitoring students' practice; sixth, providing feedback; seventh, allowing students to do exercises by their own. The teachers considered instruction steps fundamental for learning due to students need a guide to do exercises and tasks by their own.

Related to feedback, thirteen students 86.67% considered that feedback was opportune; in contrast, two of them a 13.33 % considered that it was not. The first group of students expressed that teachers were continuously providing feedback especially when the topic was new or it was not clear. The students who manifested that feedback was not opportune explained that the teacher delivered feedback in

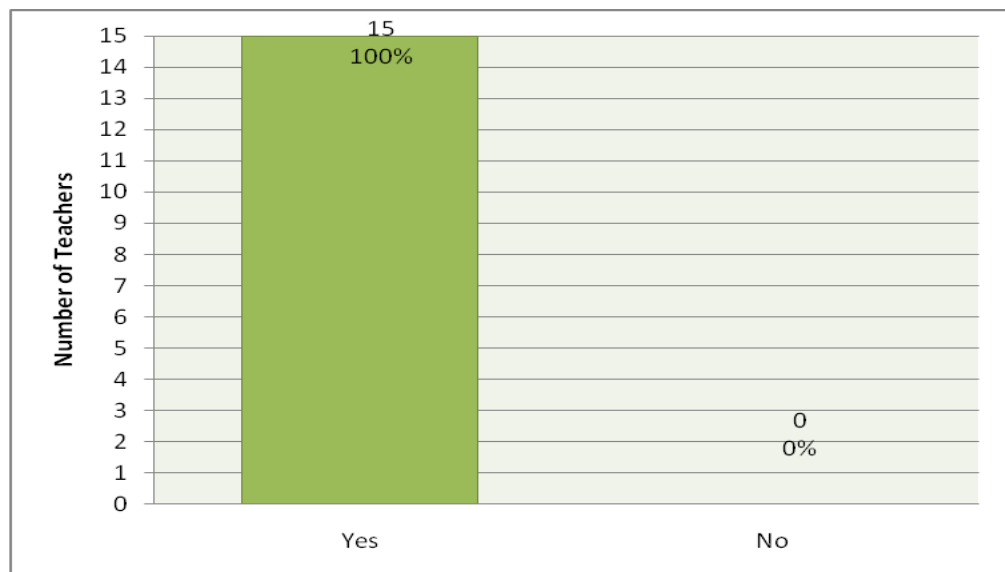
English and they did not understand. Those students would prefer a Spanish feedback; however, due to the level of the majority of the students, in those classes was intermediate, their teacher used English most of the time, which was not, helpful for those students who were not benefited from teacher's feedback.

As summary, it can be mention that, aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback and instruction were considered in a high percent; additionally, lesson structure were easy to predict due to all teachers follow the lesson instruction pattern. The teachers provided feedback when students required, especially when students wrote exercises on the board, read aloud, or gave oral examples, although it was not frequent. In general, classes were organized; discipline and good behavior among students was common; despite of the large number of students, they obeyed the rules stipulated at the beginner of the school year, allowing a friendly class environment.

Factors Concerning Students

Do you consider students' needs to teach English successfully?

Graphic No 9



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding this question a 100% (fifteen) teachers answered “yes”, it showed that all surveyed teachers considered students’ needs for planning lessons, teaching and assessing students in English classes.

Supporting these results, a 66.67 % of students (ten); expressed that teachers considered their needs such as, age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation and language learning styles; in addition, those lessons were qualified as interesting and dynamic due to the teachers interacted with them the majority of the time.

Contrasting, a 33.33 % of students (five) commented that, their teachers did not care about individual differences and needs, In addition, the lessons were taught in an incomprehensible manner for them. Those were the students’ comments: “teacher speaks very fast and I cannot understand”; “explanations are written on the board only and nobody can ask for repetitions”; “classes are boring.” “I feel unsecure and afraid to ask questions”, among others. For those students, teachers did not consider their needs.

The group of five teachers was toughly criticized for their students, they expressed that those English lessons were neither dynamic nor interesting because the class was teacher centered; the teachers explained the grammar structures, wrote some examples on the board and asked students to copy. Those teachers did not do any other activity to motivate students; even worse, while teachers were explaining the lesson some students were playing, drawing or sleeping, others seemed to be bored. The lack of students’ engagement into the lessons made them to feel distant from the teacher; consequently, they lost the interest on learning English.

The students were willing to see a change on teaching methodology and attitude towards them .They considered that, topics according to their age and interests such as music, likes and curiosities should be included in the lessons.

In contrast, the comments for the second group of ten teachers were positive. According to students, these teachers dictated the lesson in a dynamic and interesting way, involving students in the class-activities, using teaching resources, techniques and motivations, such as warming up, songs, providing positive and encouraging words and offering extra points for students' achievements. Furthermore, two teachers promised different activities, such as song lyrics, movies and popcorn at the end of the week as a good behavior prize. Those motivations, besides teachers' positive attitude kept students interested and engaged.

The field observation confirmed what students said in both cases and the existence of two groups of teachers. Although, at the beginning of the interview, students did not want to speak about teachers' methods, techniques and performance, when the researcher explained that names were not required, their attitude changed and students described the teachers' performance.

Considering students' needs, the use of Spanish as aid to was pointed out. In addition, teachers expressed that it occurred in order to meet the students' basic-level of English knowledge and learning difficulties related to social and economic problems, which were constraints for their learning process. Surveyed teachers added that, although, very few teaching materials were available, even less a student's textbook, they did all efforts to deliver understandable, dynamic and interesting English lessons. For this reason, charts, examples, drawings, body language among others teaching resources were used to supply students' needs.

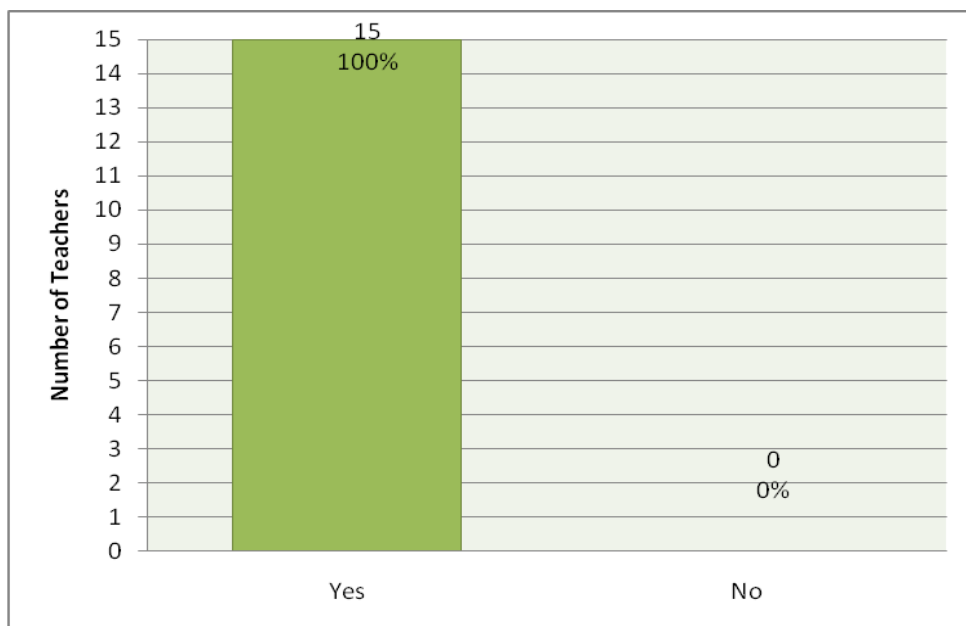
Regarding students' needs Hyland (1996, p. 32) states, "No two learners are the same and their different learning backgrounds and personality will influence how quickly and how well they learn." The teachers did efforts to deliver well-structured, interesting and dynamic lessons that integrate all students; however, they believed

that large number of students, the basic-level of knowledge, and learning difficulties of students made hard for students to learn English.

To summarize, two teachers groups were clearly differentiated by students. First, five teachers a 33.33 % did not considered students' needs; in those lessons students did not feel motivated to learn English; moreover, a contrary effect was caused giving as a result a marked indifference from students towards teachers and English Language. Second, ten students a 66.67% considered their teachers' classes dynamic, interesting and creative and teachers meet students' needs. The survey results from teachers' answers showed a 100% of teachers who expressed to consider students' needs; however, students' comments and researcher's observation ratified that not all teachers considered students' needs to teach their English lesson. It was considered a factor that affects the teaching-learning process.

Do you considered students' level to teach English successfully?

Graphic No 10



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

According to the results from the Teacher's Questionnaire the 100% of teachers considered the level of students to teach English successfully. Fifteen teachers answered "yes" to the stated question.

The level of students was the first consideration taken into account to plan lessons, organize material, resources as well as setting goals and objectives. Maxom (2009, p. 49) states, "select information to teach in your lessons, you need to think about what level of students are at and how well your lesson fits into what they already know and what they need to know." In order to know the initial students' level, teachers applied diagnostic tests at beginner of the school year, in order to determine the English level-knowledge of the students.

According to the survey results, a 60% of students (nine) had a basic- level of English knowledge while a 40% (six) an intermediate level. After the diagnostic test, a period of two weeks for leveling took place to review and reinforce students' previous knowledge and those activities were focused on written and oral exercises in class.

For the teachers, the goal was to reach the 100% of students in the same level of knowledge and all interested and motivated. However, due to educational, social and economic factors the students' level was different. Thus, according to the Teacher's Questionnaire and the researcher's observations, two groups of students were identified. First, in the basic-level English knowledge group were students could use few expressions to communicate. Second, a group of students who had an intermediate level they could understand sentences and express their thoughts with certain fluency.

In basic-level classrooms were observed differences among students. These differences showed students who participate actively and were engaged all the time.

Unfortunately, there were students who were indifferent and did not show any interest. About this respect, the teachers commented that they consider those differences and the necessity to involve and work with all students at same time, especially integrating the ones who presented more difficulties to learn the English language. The teachers had to avoid boring the ones and not challenging the others. Under those circumstances, teachers applied strategies to overcome these differences.

An observed teacher organized a group of tutors, which consisted on giving support to students with more problems. The tutors helped them checking their homework and class notes; as a result, both were busy working collaboratively.

In addition, to reach an average level in class, the teachers were constantly reviewing and leveling previous knowledge in different aspects: grammar structures, questions and answers, oral and written exercises in class and assigning exercises as homework. As teachers explained, educational, economic and social factors directly affected the level of students; consequently, teachers and students had to work together harmonically.

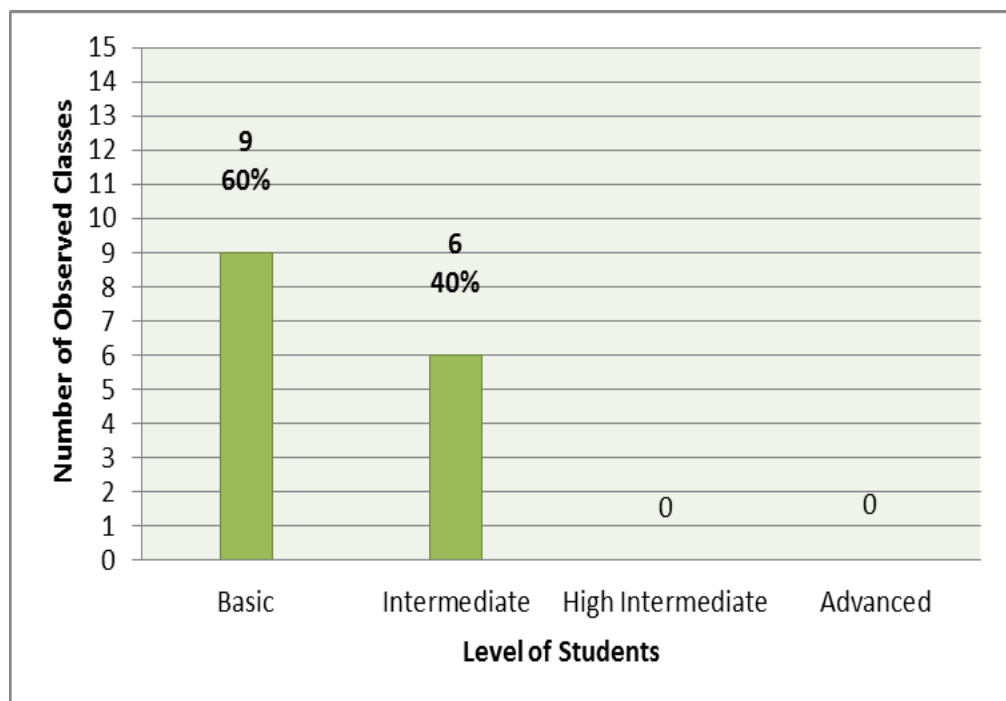
Students pointed out that the teachers considered their level to teach lessons, in a 73.33 %, (eleven) although a 26.67% (four) considered the contrary. For example, the use of Spanish to explain the lessons was the aid most recognized by students; in addition, drawings and grammar structures helped them to understand the lessons.

For the students in the intermediate level group, the use of English in class most of the time was a way to encourage them to speak using the English language, besides the use of other resources. For example, songs, flash cards, besides, oral and written exercises were directed to develop their writing, reading, listening and speaking skills to make easier the learning process.

In brief, the level of students was widely considered by teachers to teach English successfully; for this reason, diagnostic tests were applied to determine students' level at the beginner of the school year. After that, a review and leveling period was the focus of the first weeks aimed to reach the most homogenous level possible within the group. In order to help students with learning difficulties, a group of tutors was assigned in one observed class. Finally, the teachers worked with students according to their level, going at the same pace with the whole group. The teachers tried not to bore ones and not challenging the others. Both, the teachers and students considered that the basic-level of English knowledge was a factor that affected negatively the English language teaching- learning process in the surveyed public high schools.

Which is the level of your students?

Graphic No 11



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

The research results showed that teachers divided their students in two levels basic and intermediate. First, in a basic-level were students from the eighth to tenth grade (EGB) a 60% of students (nine), the lowest level presented the students from eighth grade at evening- time classes. Second, a 40 % (six) students were in an intermediate-level of English knowledge from first to third year (BGU), similarly, the lowest level presented students at evening time, due to constrains bellow described.

The teachers commented that, the main reason was the weak basis of English language knowledge brought from previous school years. Students who were the eighth grade came from different public elementary schools where students received five or fewer English class-hour by week; worse still; in some cases students did not receive English subject, because it is not compulsory but optional in elementary public schools. Currently, there are institutions which budget did not allow contracting teachers for especial subjects such as Computing and English.

Even worse, in some extreme cases, students had not learned any single word in English. Thus, teachers' in-charge of those groups had to start from cero to integrate all students in the learning process.

Regarding to the number of class periods, the Ministerial Agreement 306-11, 2011, from the MinEduc states that, English is not considered a compulsory part of the curriculum from second to seventh grades in elementary school (EGB). For this reason, in some schools especially in the rural area, where the current research took place, the budget allotted for English as Foreign Language was not enough; consequently, the English language teaching was limited.

On the other hand, five periods of English classes, of forty minutes each were assigned compulsorily from the eighth to tenth grades of middle school and from first

to third courses of high school. The teachers and students considered that it was not enough; moreover, the surveyed teachers pointed it out as an important constraining to reach a higher intermediate or superior English level.

Despite of this fact, the teachers learned how to manage these difficulties. For example, in courses where students had a basic-level, the teacher used Spanish to explain the lesson and simple commands in English were introduced gradually; after that, new vocabulary and grammar structures; finally, questions and its answers; it in order not to overwhelm students.

Considering students' level and the gradual integration of English learning process, Maxom (2009, p. 61) states, "if you chose language at the right level for your students there's a good chance that they have heard it before. Or it may be that some students recognize it." About this respect, teachers expressed that, depending on the groups' level, students' development could be faster or slower; furthermore, motivation, variety and enthusiasm during classes would increase students' interest and attention. For this reason, the majority of teachers were focused on applying innovative teaching techniques, resources and materials to integrate students and foster their active participation.

Students' comments followed the same line; moreover, patience, joy and creativity, among others, were pointed out as the best ways used by teachers to help them to overcome the basic and intermediate-level of English knowledge they had.

Apart from that, when teachers were asked about the National English Curriculum Guidelines and the level aimed to be reached at the end of the high school, the comments were skeptical and pessimistic. On one side, the National English Curriculum Guidelines (20, p.5) describes the six levels proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as follows: A1-A2: basic users

of the language; B1.2-B2: independent users of the language; and C1-C2: proficient users of the language. The Ecuadorian students from public high schools have to reach the “B1.2” level by the end of the third course. On the other side, the teachers explained that there is a huge difference between what is required by MinEduc and the reality that the teachers face every day, especially in public high schools in rural areas.

The researcher evidenced the basic-level English knowledge and the serious learning problems existed among a considerable number of observed students.

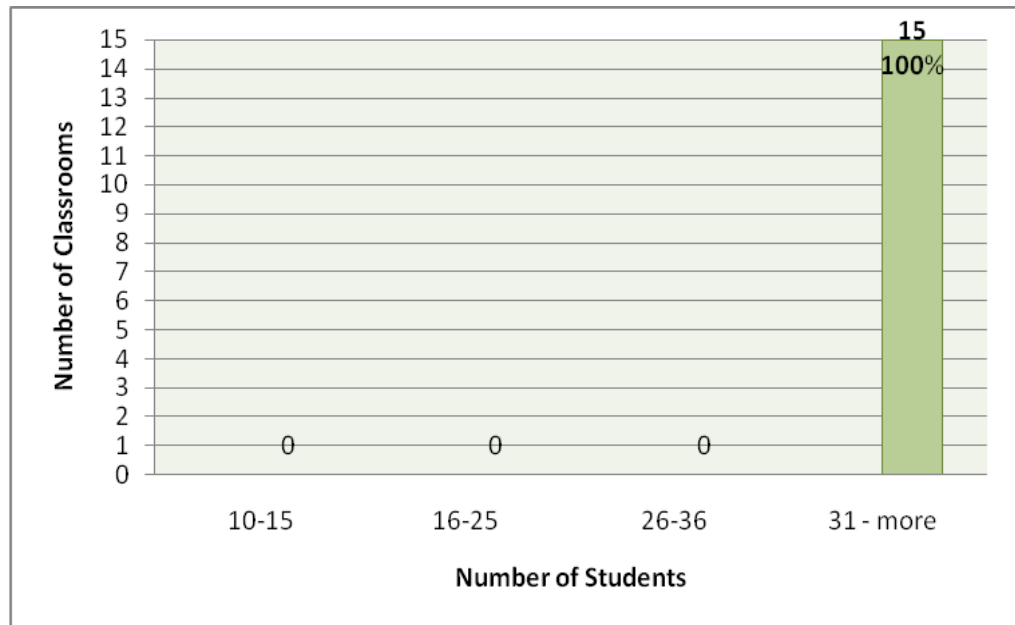
A remarkable point during observations was that students as well as teachers were aware of the basic-level English knowledge and the necessity to work hard, to reach the CEFR level required. Both coincided in the necessity to focus on oral and written practices, clear explanations, directed homework and feedback to start improvements and see changes in the closer future. Furthermore, the teachers considered that new policies have to be adopted on this respect by MinEduc to reach the exit profile required; in addition, students’ basic and intermediate level would be overcome if students dedicate extra time and effort, attending to leveling courses.

To sum up, students placed in a basic-level English knowledge were the majority (nine) their English base was weak; on the other hand, in the intermediate-level of English knowledge were six students from first to third course of high school. Due to, the budget allotted to elementary schools, the small number of class-hour by week in middle and high schools and students’ learning difficulties did not allow reaching a higher level, as is required by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, which stated as exit profile by the end of third course (BGU) the B1.2 level. The students’ level was considered a factor that affects the English language teaching- learning process.

Factors Concerning Classrooms

How many students do you have in this class?

Graphic No12



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding this question, the results showed that, there were more than forty-five students per classroom as average. The teachers, students and researcher's observations ratified it.

Despite of this fact, the teachers from public high schools researched were working with this number of students effectively; thus, the class management, discipline and well-structured lessons were evidenced.

Considering the number of students in a class Byram (2000, p. 345) states, "Large classes are widely considered problematic for language learning and yet some teachers effectively manage large classes in which students learn successfully. Class size itself does not necessarily have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning."

According to the teachers' comments, working with large number of students in public high schools was challenging. For this reason, students and teachers established clear rules since the beginner of the school year. The students agreed these rules, which involved students' good behavior, requests, permissions, class work and homework accomplishment and other aspects to have a harmonious coexistence, respect, consideration and friendship among students and teachers.

All the surveyed teachers recognized that EFL should be taught to a small number of students, twenty as maximum, in an appropriate language lab applying innovative teaching techniques methods and resources and modern technology improvements to provide variety and dynamism to the English lessons. Contrasting, the EFL teaching-learning process in the surveyed Ecuadorian public high schools counts with a teacher, a marker, a board, a desire to improve and lots of creativity.

The teachers expressed that, the short time assigned to EFL teaching, the large number of students and the basic-level of English knowledge limited students' oral and written activities. Lamentably, the practices of these activities, which are the base to learn the English language, were sporadic. On the other hand, some teachers applied alternatives such as, speaking practice in pairs or groups trying to provide an approach closer to the real one. Despite of the fact that, speaking practices and role-plays to foster communication are important they involve lots of invested time and the number of benefited students is small.

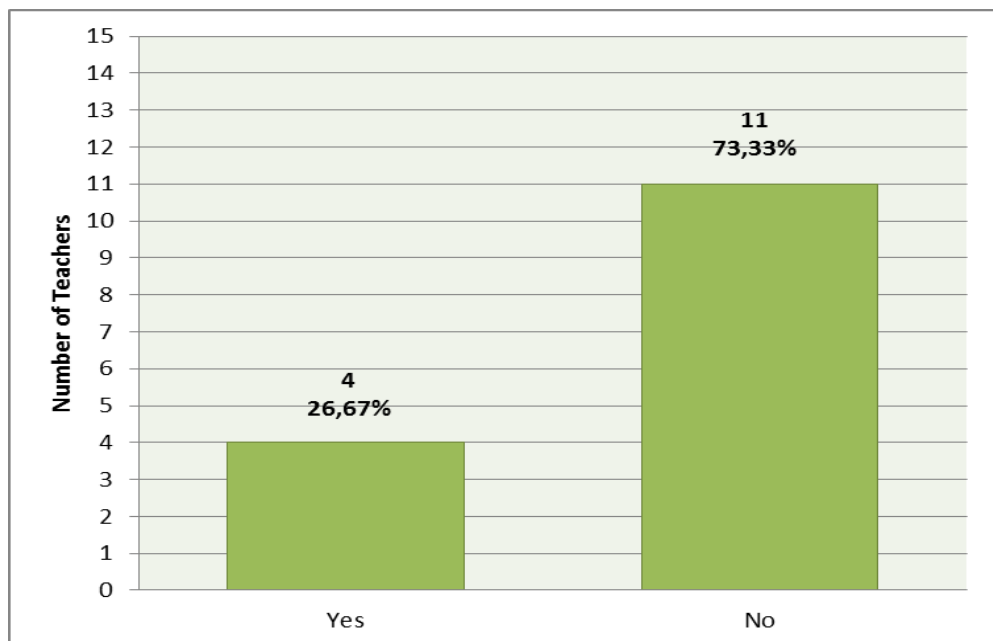
For teachers, the biggest difficulty of working with a large number of students was checking homework, class work and correcting tests, besides other activities such as tutoring students, talking to parents, area meetings and planning. Thus, over two hundreds of students in charge and similar amount of homework to check daily, in two hours assigned to this activity were huge tasks.

A 66.67% (ten) surveyed students commented that, it would be good for them to be in classrooms with no more than twenty students. They felt uncomfortable due to the lack of good ventilation, not much natural and/or artificial light and the noise produced. On the other hand, 33.33% (five) students expressed that they did not have any problem having a large number of classmates.

To summarize, however, teachers conducted the class satisfactorily, they found challenging to work with a large number of students who followed rules established since the beginner of the school year. The short time designated influenced negatively because activities such as speaking, listening, writing and reading practices were infrequent during classes of 40 and 30 minutes at evening. The number of students was considered a factor that affected the English teaching-learning language process.

Do you feel comfortable working with this number of students?

Graphic No 13



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

About this question, the results showed that, 26.67% (4) of teachers answered “yes” and 73.33% (eleven) teachers manifested to feel uncomfortable working with more than 45 students.

About this respect, Nayak & Rao (2004, p. 228) state: “There is nothing like a large class. The large class is only in the mind of the orthodox teacher. A large class is one with more students than available facilities can support. Large classes have more than 100 students enrolled.” The surveyed teachers expressed that handling more than forty students implied hard work. However, they had learned how to manage large number of students and how to face difficulties in the teaching-learning process through the everyday teaching practice.

The teachers expressed that, there was no such thing as a perfect group, all groups were different and those differences make the profession of being a teacher a synonym of vocation and service. Teachers added that, the connection established between students and knowledge was in their hands, having the faculty to increase or destroy it forever.

Teachers receive students’ confidence and sympathy showing respect and consideration toward them. Although, the groups were numerous, students were called by their names creating a feeling of closeness and friendship among the group. On the other hand, teachers were firm and clear about rules into the educational institution, besides respect and good behavior in the classroom. In that way, students and teachers worked pacifically and harmoniously.

Students look for role models to follow and the majority of times these models are their teachers. For this reason, teachers pointed out the necessity to show organization, responsibility, professionalism and ethical commitment, values which students would reflect in a closer future.

According to students comments, although five teachers did not considered students' needs and level to teach English lessons, the other ten teachers showed enthusiasm, joy and domain of the subject, these characteristics were mentioned by students as factor which motivated them throughout the learning process.

In addition, two surveyed teachers compared students' behavior from public school against the students from private schools they teach at and they concluded that it was less difficult to handle 45 students from public schools than working with 20 students in a private one. Although, students from public schools showed a higher level of discipline, respect and consideration, both teachers agreed that it depends on teacher' abilities to manage the class in a great percentage.

Related to this issue, Hammer (1991, p. 104) states: "Many commentators use the term facilitator to describe a particular kind of teacher, one of who is democratic rather than autocratic, one who fosters learner's autonomy through the use of group work and pair work as acting as ... transmitter of knowledge." This is the way to describe a teacher, who is not only committed to facilitate learning, but also interested on awaking students' interest and desire to learn, at the same time to transform class time in an enjoying learning process.

Experienced and beginner teachers stated that, the basic- level English knowledge of students was the most difficult obstacle to overcome, they considered that the large number of student was manageable; however, the students' basic-level was not. Due to overcome that deficiency it was necessary English leveling courses and students have to be committed to attend but both options were not considered in any institution. Despite the fact that, the teachers felt uncomfortable working with more than forty-five students; they conducted the classes in an organized way involving students in the English teaching-learning process.

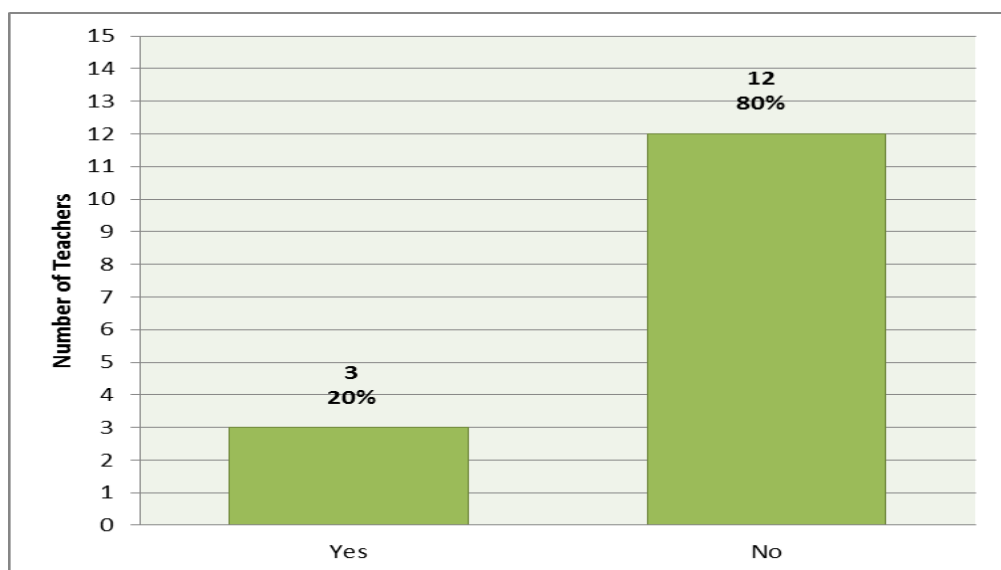
In addition, teachers manifested to be constantly attending to training courses and learning by their own, in order to update the teaching techniques, strategies and methods to improve their teaching quality.

According to students, the 66.67% (ten) would hope that the number of students was small to have more opportunities to participate in class. The rest of students a 33.33% (five) expressed to be comfortable with the number of classmates they had.

To sum up, eleven teachers were uncomfortable working with over forty-five students; moreover, they manifested that their commitment and vocation allowed them handling those groups quite well in despite of constrains mentioned through the research analysis. Students supported teachers' positions, although, ten students would hope there were fewer students per class. For the exposed, the overcrowded classrooms were considered a factor that affects the teaching- learning process.

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

Graphic No 14



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding the results from Teachers' Questionnaire the answers about having enough space to work with students were "yes" in a 20% (3 teachers) and "no" in a 80% (12 teachers).

The majority of teachers considered that classrooms were overcrowded and the students did not have an ideal physical space to learn, in addition to the small space, the lack of enough light and ventilation was pointed out, especially at evening time when artificial light was used.

Neither the space available in relation to the number of students was enough nor the light and scarce ventilation in the observed classrooms. Additionally, due to, the majority of students were tall; it was necessary a platform that allowed students to have a complete view of teacher and board. Due to the narrow space between rows, basic movements such as going and coming from the students' seats to the board were slow. Moreover, physical activities, dynamics or warnings up were even more difficult to develop in those conditions.

In an observed high school, two classrooms had the smallest size. Because of the lack of classrooms, a wider room was divided in two classrooms with an improvised wall made of wood. In those conditions, it was unpleasant to work, not only for teachers but also for students, who faced annoying moments of indiscipline caused by students from the next-door classroom, where an episode of indiscipline was evidenced while observing the lesson. However, the students commented that noise from both sides disturbed students' concentration frequently.

It is important to point out that 60% of classrooms (nine) were big enough; they were quite comfortable, chairs and big windows allowed good ventilation. On the other hand, a 40% of classrooms (six) the conditions were not good at all, the physical space and the windows were small; consequently, ventilation and

illumination was not enough. Students, from evening classes had the biggest problems due to the darkness in the classrooms and a prohibition to connect more bulb lights made the classroom dark.

In the classrooms where physical conditions were uncomfortable students' self-confidence was dismissed. Those students commented that they had to be there because they had a low-income level. In other words, it seemed that these students were resigned to be there because they did not deserve better conditions. In contrast to that, Clayton & Forton (2001, p.14) states: "It is best to allow about nine inches between each child." Depending on the kind of activities students had to move, play, sing, act, or simply go to the board, these activities have to be meticulously planned to avoid accidents due to the small classroom space. For this reason, teachers considered carefully students' needs, goals and resources available to develop the most organized lesson possible.

It occurred in contrast to government educational policies, which state that classrooms are aimed to foment high-quality education for all Ecuadorians in especial for the poor people; however, it did not occur completely. About that respect, teachers could do not much. The authorities are called to solve these problems enlarging space or decreasing the number of students in classrooms, which is difficult due to the numerous students in public high schools.

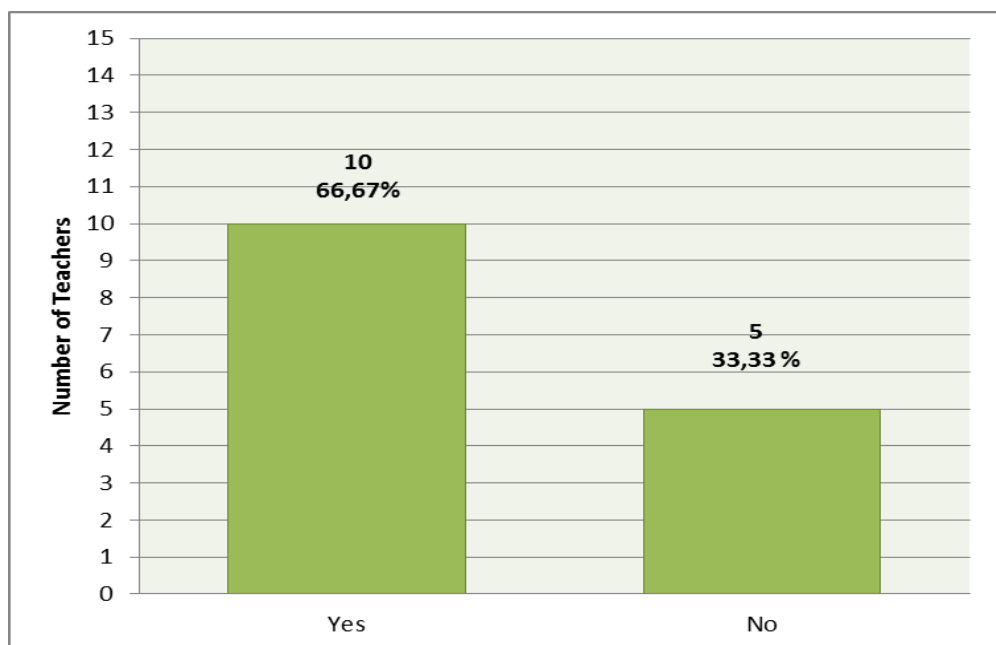
Regarding this fact Khalsa (1999, p. 22) states, "Classroom space is scarce in many of our overcrowded schools. Due to space restrictions, it is often difficult to be creative with seating arrangements and learning centers. Nevertheless, it is important to evaluate how you set up your classroom" in despite of that fact, interesting and well-planned activities, full of matters that grabbed students' attention were observed in thirteen cases. In that manner, the teachers tried to overcome that situation

planning and teaching their lessons accurately. Additionally, in twelve observed classrooms there were posters and motivational passages pasted on the walls creating a friendly environment for students and teachers.

To summarize the physical space was a factor that affected the teaching-learning English language. The lack of enough natural and artificial light affected students' performance. The small physical space limited activities such as going and coming from the board. Despite of those constraints, teachers' ability to manage the class, motivate students and enhance their self-confidence, well-motivated students worked better no matter the conditions. About space, teachers could not do much, due to the number of students who requires public education. The physical space was considered an influential factor, which affected the teaching- learning process.

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

Graphic No 15



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Considering the results from the survey, a 66.67% (ten teachers) manifested to arrange students' seats from straight rows to different positions depending on the activities planned. In contrast, a 33.33% (five teachers) answered that they did not arranged seats, due to the small physical space and the limited time.

During the field observations, the arrangement of students' seats changed in two observed classes. The teachers asked students to make circles of five in order to complete reading exercises. These arrangements allowed students to work collaboratively.

Referring to the constraints to arrange seats differently those were mentioned, the large number of students, the similar structure of the classes and the limited time to change students' seats position. The teachers explained that they avoided movements that cause students' distractions.

The 66.67% (ten) commented that, the large number of students and the small space limited the possibilities to change students' seats positions frequently. In addition, moving that large number of seats from one position to another was neither easy nor fast; for this reason, face-to-face position, shoe horse, or circles were not often, although those were quite recommendable to increase speaking communication practice and interaction Hammer (2007).

The observed English classes had the same structure in relation of time, from forty to eighty minutes, at daytime and from thirty to sixty minutes at evening classes. Teachers explained that during this short time, many activities had to be accomplished, starting from taking attendance, to a briefly reviewing the last class, introducing new topic, oral and written exercises and checking homework accomplishment and assigning new one for the next class. This class structure was usual and helped teachers to follow the lesson plan designed.

In some exceptional cases, this class structure changed to form groups work. This activity, that was not very frequent, had to be closely checked in order to keep students disciplined and focused on the assignment; because students got distracted easily when they work in groups than individually in rows.

Teachers had to establish previously clear work rules, time and features expected from students working in groups. As Baines, Blatchford, Kutnick, Chowne, & Berdondini, (2009, p.8-14) state “Using and coordinating the physical layout, seating arrangement and space to encourage pupil interaction in different working situations is the key.”

On the other hand, the two teachers who arranged students’ seats frequently agreed and expressed that, with lots of practice, students move and arrange seats faster than at the beginning, organize group work and interact and each other to perform assigned activities in less time with better quality. Then students needed to be encouraged to work in groups despite the time invested arranging seats because benefits were more.

In general, the teachers had expressed that changes in seating arrangement have not been often, because activities during a week were organized in the same scheme and discipline was easier to be controlled in straight rows. Moreover, students’ distractions were avoided when working in rows; in addition, the movements of students and teachers’ through the classroom aisles were faster, as well as the class work control. Seating arrangements in rows were used in all classrooms during researcher’s observation.

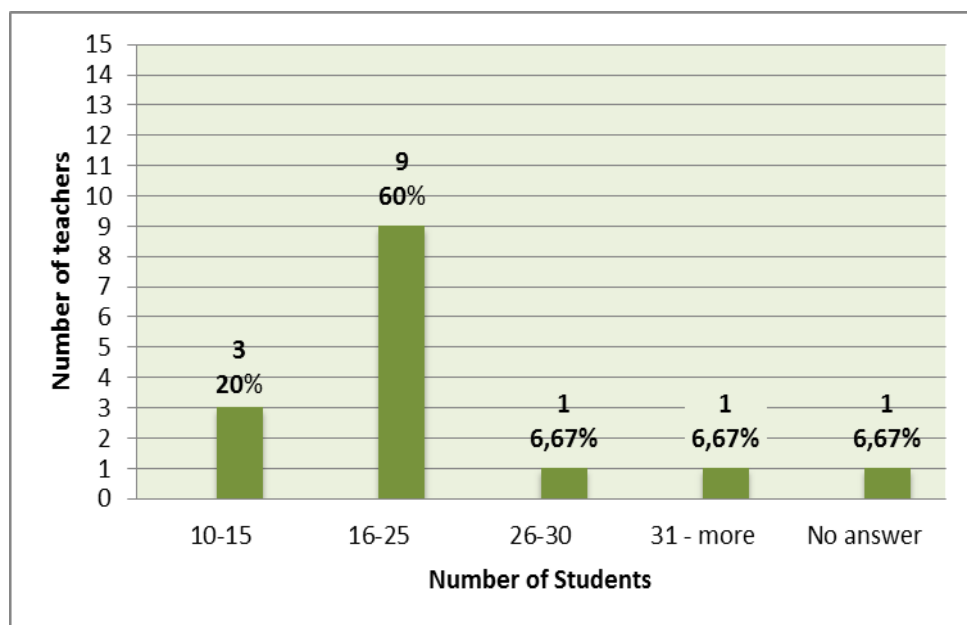
However, thirteen surveyed teachers manifested that seats were not arranged in relation to planned activities for their classes; fifteen students answered that they liked the seats were arranged in rows. Although they would hope that, those

arrangements could have taken place occasionally to give variety to the class. Eleven students, commented that, teachers had not changed the seats arrangement since the school year started.

In brief, teachers arranged students' seats in seven straight rows of seven students each, as average, for everyday activities due to the large number of students and the limited space and time. However, for group activities, which were not very often, two teachers had arranged students' seats in circles. Students commented they liked the seats in row arrangement; in addition, according to eleven students, seats were not arranged since the school year started. Both teachers and students did not considered the seats arrangement as an influential factor that affects teaching-learning process.

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

Graphic No16



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding the survey results, the teachers considered the following numbers of students were appropriate in a class. From 10 -15 students a 20% three teachers; from 16 - 25 a 60% nine teachers; from 26 – 30 and 31- more a 6.67%; in addition one teacher did not answer to this question. According to teachers' majority, the ideal number of students into an English class was ranged from 16-25.

However, considering the reality of the researched public high schools, where the number of classrooms and teachers, have not been increased at the same rate as the number of students; the surveyed teachers considered the appropriate number to teach EFL 30 students per class in public high schools. Although the mentioned number is far to be applied due to the increasing demand of public education; thus, teachers are in the need to find creative ways to teach successfully to this growing number of students.

Three teachers considered that 10-15 students an appropriate number, in order to provide personalized attention and daily practice on the four English language skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking; contrasting to the current limited practice in public high schools, due to the large number of students, more than 45 students in each classroom.

Nine teachers answered that the ideal number of students within a classroom to achieve an exit profile “B1.2” by the end of third grade of the BGU, as required by MinEduc should range from 16-25. This number was considered the most pedagogically recommended, but still far to be adopted in Ecuadorian public high schools.

One teacher answered that an appropriate number to teach English was a group of students ranged from 26-30 as the maximum. The teacher considered this number after a brief analysis in relation to the Ecuadorian reality; similarly, one

teacher considered that 31 or more was appropriate; finally, one teacher did not marked any answer.

The participant teachers commented that, students needed to have a teacher close in order to help them to understand, identify and imitate sound variations, grammar rules and writing styles, for that reason, the teachers were training to improve their teaching level, plans, techniques and methods. However, the number of students and the classrooms conditions has been the same and the number of students is increasing until the physical space did not allow anyone else. This was considered an important factor that direct affected the students' learning process, because, oral and written practices in class were limited, group-work and individual class sporadic and feedback scarce.

Speaking about teachers' desires in large classrooms Craig (1988, p.114) estates: "they still want the same outcomes that they prize in classes with fewer students. They want students to understand the material. They want students who think critically. They want students who are able to apply and integrate new knowledge." contrarily, the reality is different; students' high performance was quite difficult to achieve in overcrowded classrooms besides other problems such as the basic and intermediate-level of English knowledge of students and the physical classroom conditions.

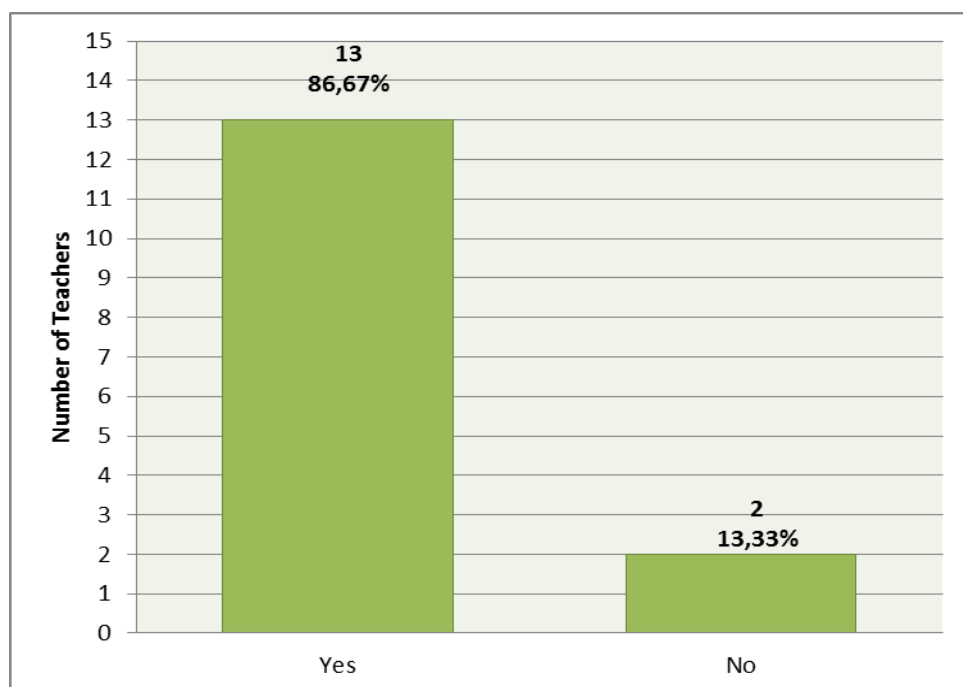
In addition, Byram (2000, p.345) states: "The problems experienced in large classes include issues about management and classroom control, how to ensure students' involvement in interaction for effective language learning, how to assess individual learners and affective consequences of classes of large numbers of teachers and students." About this respect all teachers agreed and seven teachers had expectations that the current situation change in short term to benefit students' level.

The another eight teachers were not optimist and expressed that the overcrowded classrooms in Ecuadorian high schools will not change and one thing was their hope about the ideal number of students and other different thing was the current reality.

In sum, teachers' vision about the number of students recognized that small number of students was better to teach EFL; although, changes related to reach an ideal number of students would take long time. Thus, the teachers will be focused on working hard to give their students a feeling of security, domain of the subject and self-control, which are the key points to manage whichever number of students successfully. The large number of students in classrooms was considered a factor that affected the teaching-learning process in the Ecuadorian public high schools.

Do you use teaching resources (TV, tape/CD recorder, computer(s), projector, smart board and supplementary materials.)?

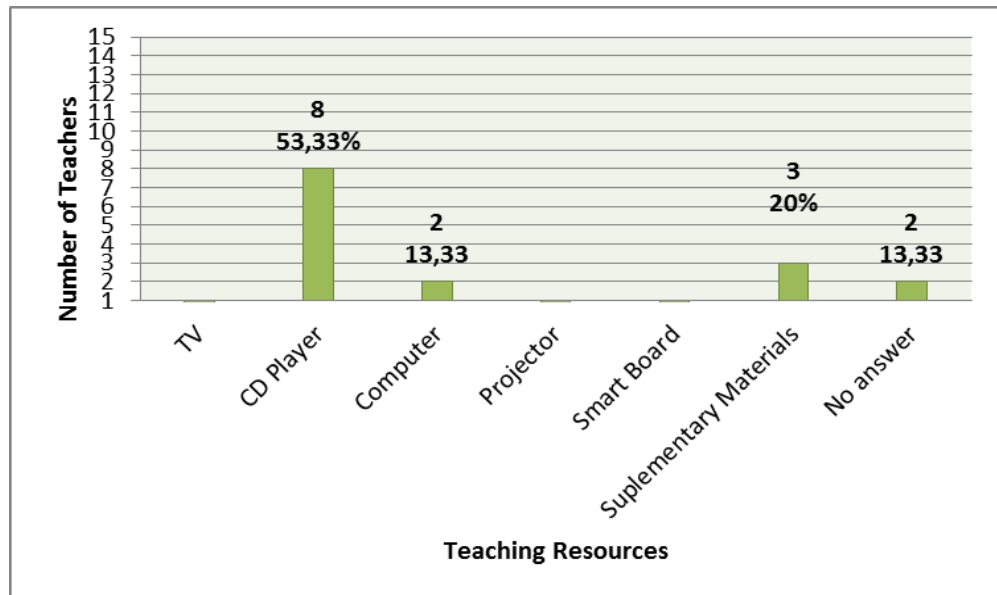
Graphic No 17



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graphic No 18



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding the use of teaching materials, the following were the results from Teacher's Questionnaire an 86.67% (thirteen) teachers answered that they used them; while a 13.33% (two) expressed that they did not use teaching resources. According to the survey, the CD player was the most used, eight teachers expressed it; two teachers used computers and three teachers supplementary materials, such as flash cards. Those were the most used according to teachers' answers.

About this respect, De Moura (2002, p.53) states: "Learning materials and tools optimize learning experience and help in the systematic acquisition of skills competence. They may take the forms of books, reading games, flash cards, math games, charts and other." Thirteen participant teachers agreed and they used teaching resources in English classes frequently due to the importance and positive influence on students. Moreover, the students' creativity and interest were enhanced when

teaching resources were used; thus, they felt motivated when variety was added to the English lessons; for example, when flash cards and CD players were used.

Contrasting with teachers' answers, during the observation, there were few electronic devices observed during the field research. Although, students commented that, teachers used CD players to do listening and speaking exercises, sing songs with lyrics, computer to watch movies and flash cards to learn new vocabulary.

In one high school, three interviewed teachers commented that there were available only two CD players and teachers had to take turns to use it; consequently, the CD player could not be used every day.

In the fifteen researched institutions, there were not evidenced the use of students' textbooks, teachers' guides, even less, language laboratories. According to teachers' comments, the limited budget of educational institutions was the main cause to that situation.

Students confirmed that they made supplementary materials by their own, which were very helpful. For example, flash cards, verb lists, grammar structure charts, drawings, puppets and others, depending on the type of lesson they were learning. The use of the mentioned supplementary materials enhanced students' interest, attention, concentration and retention, because when using them English language was easier to learn for them.

Unfortunately, the supplementary materials and teaching resources were not the unique lack in rural public high schools researched; but teachers were too. For example, while looking for institutions to do the current field research, in two rural high schools there was the position of English teachers vacant; as the respective principals commented, teachers did not go to work to those high schools, because of the distance from the center of the city and physical and environmental conditions.

In addition, in two institutions surveyed located in the rural area of Quito, the low economic conditions of students and their families, were considered a big problem; as a result, teachers were prohibited to ask extra material to their students. A memo was sent giving this disposition, even less, in public high schools at evening classes, where the economic conditions were the toughest. Unfortunately, this situation was common in the rural area surveyed.

Contrasting to the mentioned disposition, in the English lessons where students used supplementary materials, they performed better in oral as well in written activities; furthermore, students wrote exercises on the board and notebooks and spoke in pairs showing more accuracy, motivation and dynamism than the ones who did not use them.

In general, students expressed that visual aids were very helpful for them; thus, in an observed class, as students were reviewing to-be verb, sentences, positive and negative, WH questions and answers; the teachers invited a “guest” who was interviewed for students to practice questions and answers; then, students’ natural curiosity arose and the class was enriched with the interview. The responsible teacher commented that, she used many teaching resources to motivate her students.

Related to this aspect, students commented that, when the activities performed in classes were funny and dynamic, those motivated them to pay attention and participate actively; in addition, students felt an active part of the learning process when the teacher asked them to collaborate.

Teachers’ creativity played an important role to enhance students’ interest and participation: Although not all teachers showed the skill, only ten, to transform everything into a resource. Baker & Vestrup (2000, p.156) states: “Resources are books, any person, animal, plant or any object that makes teaching and learning

easier clearer and more interesting. Look around your classroom, maybe you have a room full of walls, floor and ceiling with windows and door.”

Teachers added that, the budget assigned to the high schools they worked at, was not enough to buy any electrical device or audiovisual aids to help students to experiment the English language. The ten surveyed teachers asked students for drawings, posters, graffiti and flash cards among others to help students to learn vocabulary as well as grammatical structures and new vocabulary.

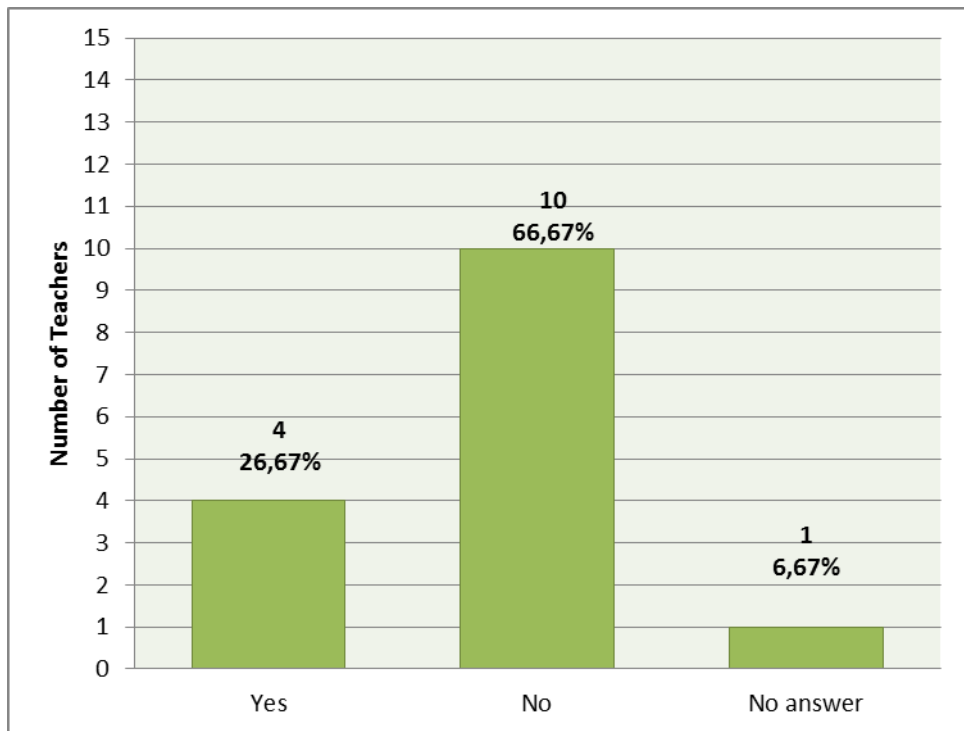
However, teaching resources such as TV, computer, projector, smart board were not used during the observations, the majority of teachers (ten) showed a great deal of creativity, that motivated students’ participation in class avoiding students’ boredom and tiredness caused by the large number of students, the limited ventilation and the low light.

As was mentioned before, in five observed lessons the focus of the lessons was grammar structures of sentences, questions and answers; then students only answer some questions and copy the exercises from the board. Those lessons were not dynamic and any teaching resource was used.

To sum up, the use of teaching materials, (CD player, flash cards and computers) not only increased students’ interest, but also comprehension and better learning. Students were involved in tasks easily even more when activities were integrative, dynamic and design according to students’ interest and expectations, they reacted positively and immediately. In addition, English lessons were much productive and engaging when students helped teacher making their own supplementary materials. Thus, the use of teaching resources and supplementary materials in English lessons were considered an important factor that positively affects the English teaching- learning process in the Ecuadorian public high schools.

Do you considered appropriate the resources you have in class?

Graphic No 19



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Regarding this question, a 26.67%, four teachers considered the resources they had in class were appropriate; while the 66.67% ten teachers considered the contrary and a 6.67% one teacher did not answer, to describe the results the teachers were divided in three groups.

In the first group, a 66.67% ten teachers identified teaching resources such as, TV, tape recorder, CD players, computer, projector, smart board besides recognizing supplementary materials; for example, flash cards, pictures, collages, posters; however, they expressed that the resources available to use were few. For this reason, these teachers encouraged their students to elaborate and use flash cards, collages, porters and grammar structure charts. In addition, according to the teacher's comments, songs, movies, seals, tales, dictionaries and stories were used too.

Although, movies, videos, computers were not evidenced during the field research observations.

In this group, the teacher with masters' degree and nine other teachers, whom despite of the fact that TICs were not available to be used during English lessons, all of them motivated their students to bring and use supplementary materials. These students used the flash cards, to make descriptions in oral and written exercises; furthermore, during the interview, students felt motivated to learn and expressed that using supplementary materials was easier to write sentences and answer questions.

In the second group, were placed four teachers who expressed that resources were not available referring to electronic devices such as, TV, CD player, computers and smart boards, but they did not recognized other teaching resources such as pictures and drawings, school materials, cell phones, ring tones and others, which could be used to enhance students' motivation for learning.

About the appropriate resources used in class, an experienced teacher commented that, almost everything could be considered a resource, from a flying mosquito to a pop star; the aim was to motivate students to speak, listen, read or write about certain things that they knew or they could see.

According to teachers, for students is easier to speak and write about things, which are meaningful for them, they can write simple sentences and short paragraphs to describe their favorite pop star as classwork easily because they can show their knowledge about it. Moreover, these teachers explained that, it was possible for students to notice differences and similarities form objects they could see and touch; then, they write descriptions and comparisons using colors, numbers and adjectives, to form sentences in whichever tense using objects that are around. Finally, the consideration of appropriateness of resources depends on teachers' point of view and

creativity in order to grab students' interest and involvement in the English learning process. The appropriateness of resources considered not only having the newest technology but also using all the resources available.

Fortunately, the majority of interviewed teachers thought in that way and their lessons were developed considering students' real needs and economic situation, motivating them to create and to be active part of teaching-learning process in which the use of teaching resources were fundamental basis.

About it, all teachers agreed that students learn better, when they are involved, experiment and create during the teaching- learning process.

On the other hand, the four teachers from the second group expressed that the lack of students' textbooks was a big limitation due to it was a source of pictures, grammatical structures, vocabulary, readings and listening exercises, in sum, an aid to work with order and organization. In contrast, one teacher, who seemed to be very experienced, said that textbooks were not necessary, but they were a tie, a prison and straightjacket, which did not allow inventing and developing lesson according to students' real needs and environment, the mentioned teacher expressed that textbooks were killing teachers' creativity.

In the third group was one teacher who did not answer this question; however, in his class he did magic tricks and his students' were fascinated. The use of magic was a resource, which engaged students.

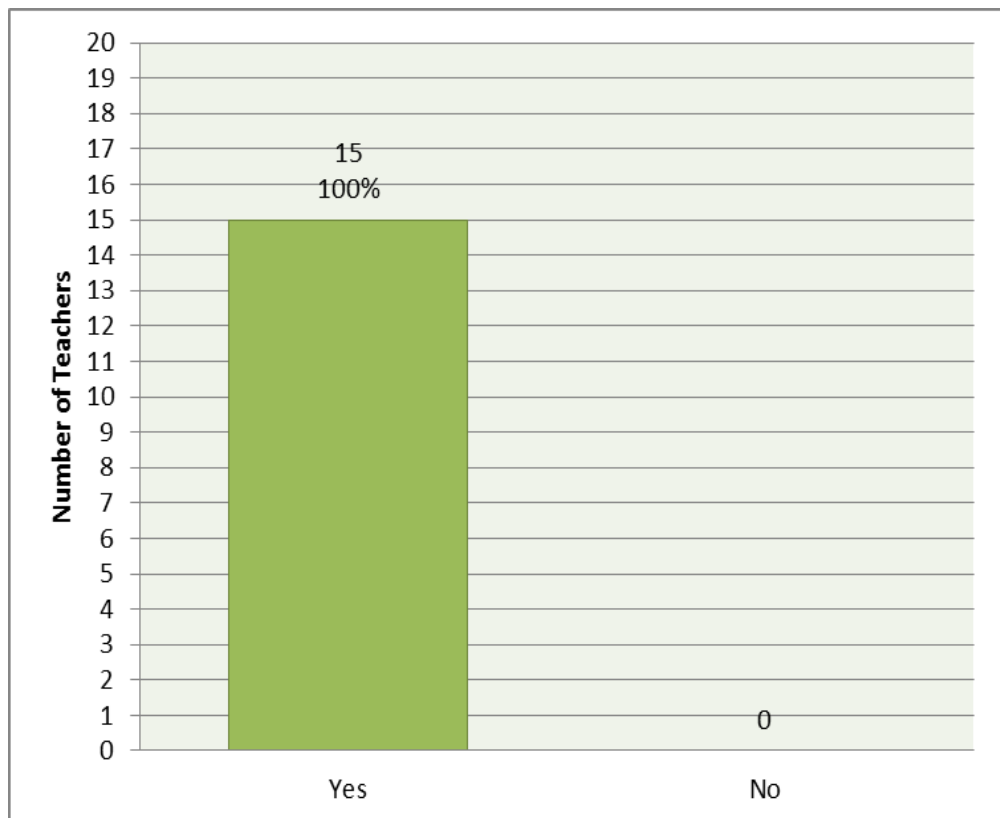
To summarize, the teachers who expressed having the appropriate teaching resources were those teachers who motivate the students to create handmade cards, posters, and things based on pencil, paper, scissors and glue. This group of teachers was aware of students' needs and skills and they direct their efforts to increase students' interest and creativity. On the other hand, the second group of teachers who

manifested that the recourses available in class were not appropriate was not far from the reality because English as a language is better assimilated if classes are imparted in language laboratories with visual and audio aids transforming the teaching language process in a living experience. Unfortunately, in the researched public high schools this kind of devices and technology were not implemented yet; consequently, teachers used what was close to their hands and took advantage of students' creativity. The use of appropriate resources in English classes was considered a factor, which affected the teaching-learning process.

Factors Concerning Educational Institutions

Does the institution review your lesson plans?

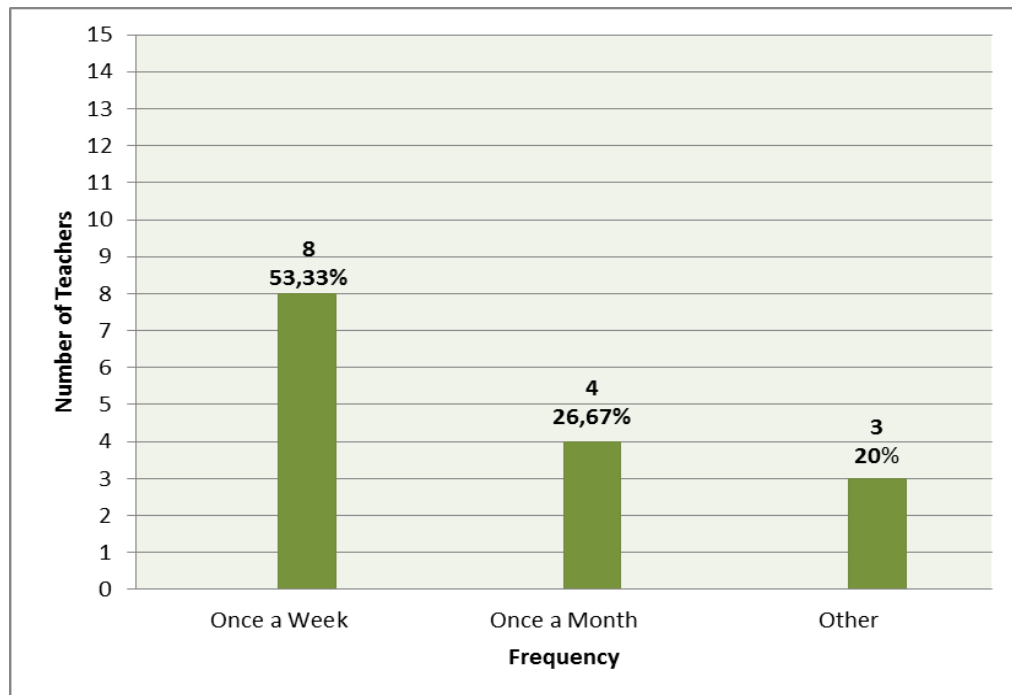
Graphic No 20



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graphic No 20



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

For this question, the 53.33% (eight teachers) mentioned that the institution monitors their teaching once in week; while a 26.67% (four teachers) once a month; and 20% (three teacher) mentioned other frequency such as once a term, once a year and one did no answer.

The surveyed teachers had manifested that, controls over plans were intensive since the school year started. At the beginner of the school year, teachers already had an annual plan; in addition, six block plans (three for the first “quimestre” and three for the second) and dozens of class plans, which were part of teachers’ personal portfolio required by Ecuadorian Minister of Education.

Teachers commented during the personal interview that, designing those plans was a proof fire for them; due to, knowledge, teaching techniques, methods and skills used along the teaching process were reflected in a written form in their

plans; moreover, plans show the background and skills mastered by teachers.

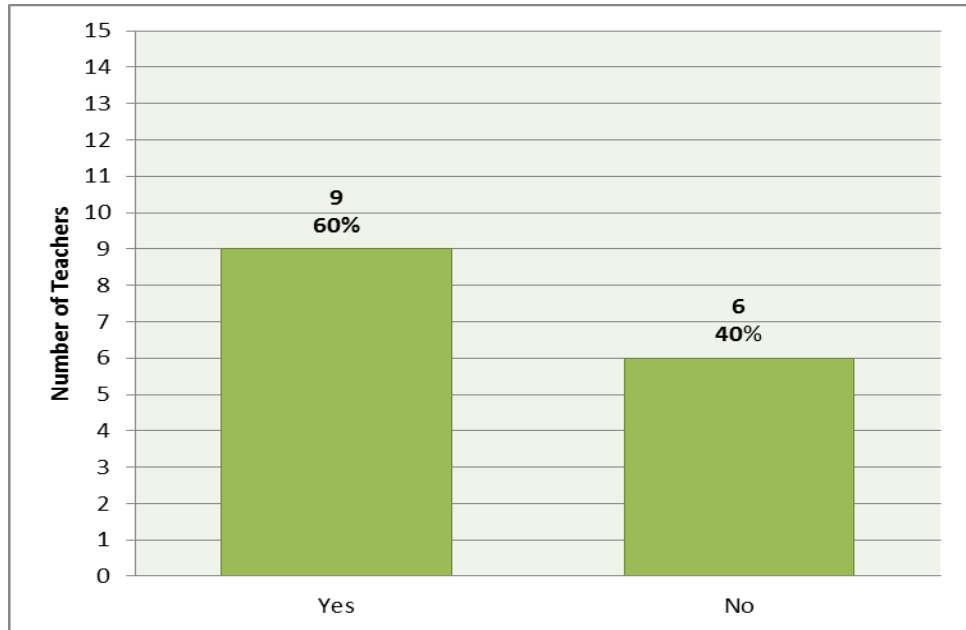
Planning is compulsory for the teachers of public high schools. The teachers commented they received periodic training on planning to design well-structured plans, which were going to be the teachers' guide throughout the teaching process and improving their performance, which is the main aim of planning. Although, planning was considered a long, boring and tiring task, all teachers agreed that having a well-done plan helped them to organize lessons and save time and resources.

In addition, planning allowed having a wider view of the complete school year; thus, the strong and weak themes were considered beforehand; for instance, a focused work on students' weakness would be done on time. Students, teachers and authorities were benefited from well-done planning; for this reason, Ecuadorian Ministry of Education' authorities are frequently monitoring to reassure the teaching quality even more institution' authorities whose work is to coordinate , train and guide teachers throughout the planning process as part of the educational program.

To summarize, the teachers expressed that their institution frequently reviewed their lessons plans as well as block and annual plans in order to assure teaching quality, improvements and the correct application of teaching methods, strategies and techniques used in the English classes. In addition, plans keep teachers focused on the goals established previously and continue pursuing them during the whole school year besides having summarized information about the class members, the characteristics of students and the whole process. Planning was considered a determining factor that affects the teaching- learning, due to its importance and influence on well-conducted and structured lessons.

Does the institution monitor your teaching?

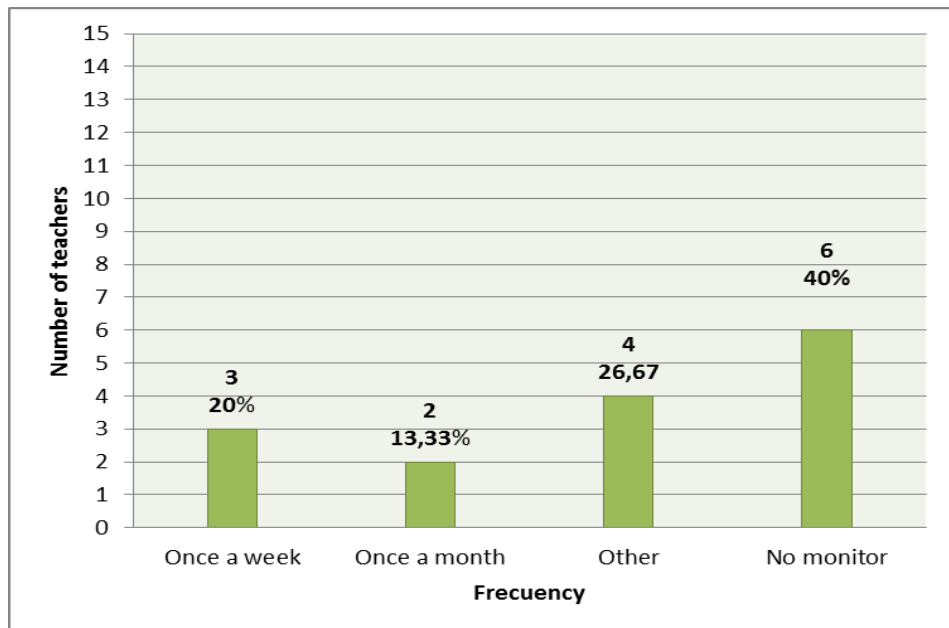
Graphic No 21



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

Graphic No 22



Author: Anabel Portero

Source: Teacher's Questionnaire

According to teachers' answers, the results showed that 60% of institutions (nine) monitor teaching activity, contrasting, a 40% of institutions (six) manifested not to monitor teaching. Related to this respect, three teachers indicated that the monitoring occurred once a week; two teachers were monitored once a month; and, six teachers expressed to be monitored in other frequencies different from the mentioned before.

In addition, two beginner teachers expressed that their teaching was monitoring weekly when they began teaching until the supervisor was sure of the correct management of the class, after that the monitoring was less frequent.

During the interview, the teachers commented that an intensive monitoring was implemented recently, since the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has restructured some aspects of education incrementing budget for all areas of education and especially for the ones related to the improvement of learning EFL. Due to, the English language is the worldwide mean of communication and the globalization official language, emphasis teaching monitoring is much frequent.

Through monitoring, the effectiveness and the correct application of teaching methods, techniques and strategies were determined; besides, the teachers' performance, not to point out if it is done well or bad, but to motivate a continuous improvement of teachers' performance.

In addition, monitoring is aimed to provide support, guidance, encouragement and cooperation between authorities and teachers to reach desirable goals and determined objectives as well as changes directed to innovate the teaching-learning processes to benefit of the educational community, creating links and bounds among its members.

According to the National Education Monitoring Model (2012) monitoring is considered as a service and the first step of a process directed to solve current educational problems; for example: physical space needs, lack of educational resources, excessive number of students in classrooms and their basic-level knowledge, teachers' necessities of constant trainings, among others.

By monitoring, learning necessities are diagnosed and reported to authorities in command to solve them. Otherwise, educational deficiencies will be permanently present and never known or solved by responsible authorities.

Being a service, monitoring is directed to help teachers, providing training and advices according to their development in class, especially in the cases of beginner teachers, advising them to carry out their professional activities with proficiency and efficiency. By monitoring, opportunities to improve are revealed, avoiding intellectual isolation and ensuring respect for teachers' personality and their ideas, besides, encouraging teachers to take initiatives that make evolve teaching English language into an innovative process. In sum, these were presented as main aims of monitoring on educational institutions.

The school administrators was responsible to monitor, evaluate and inform the advances and constrains found during teaching process. About this respect, Wang (2011, p. 100) states: "Quality monitoring and evaluation of classroom teaching are on the implementation of an effective monitoring through a variety of ways to input from the teaching resources, teaching links, to the output of the qualified status of the whole process of teaching information." In the educational field as in other areas, monitoring is necessary in order find out if the established goals had been reached and keep teachers focused on them.

To summarize, teachers expressed that institutions frequently monitor their teaching quality, but more specifically and closely in the cases of beginner teachers, to provide them a guide about class structure and management respecting teachers' individual personality and encouraging them to make changes in order to go evolving them into the educational process. Another aim of monitoring was to keep all teachers focused on reaching the objectives pre-established at the beginning of the school year. On the other hand, the monitoring process is not aimed to point out if teaching was done good or bad, but to give support and encouragement for teachers to continue improving their performance.

3.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions have resulted after finish researching and analyzing the factors that affect the English language teaching-learning process in Ecuadorian public high schools:

- The Ecuadorian students surveyed did not have solid basis of English knowledge, which was reflected afterwards, in the high schools researched.
- The students' basic- intermediate level of English knowledge obliged teachers to advance slowly through elemental grammar structures and limited vocabulary.
- Due to basic- level English knowledge of students, the teachers used Spanish in a high percentage to teach their lessons, although it is not a recommended method, the teachers considered it as an aid to help students to understand and at the same time take advantage of the short time allotted for English lessons.
- The students' basic-intermediate level of English knowledge limits their access to up-to-date English information available, reducing their possibilities to reach the requirements to apply for international scholarships or jobs abroad.
- A small group of teachers used very few teaching techniques and resources; moreover, this group of teachers only delivered the lesson but did not worry about helping students to overcome their level English knowledge.
- The majority of teachers performed the class in a creative and dynamic way, increasing students' motivation for learning, which was reflected on their active participation in class.
- Speaking in terms of mastering the English subject, language proficiency, organization and instructional competence, the majority of surveyed teachers

showed these characteristics, which were widely, noticed when teachers worked with intermediate level students.

- The mixture of teachers' instructional competence and the teaching experience, gave as a result well-structured English lessons characterized by discipline, respect and creativity. Teacher and students interacted most of the time and the lessons were dynamic and varied, in its majority, which motivated students' participation.
- The observed classroom conditions in which English lessons took place were inappropriate. The lack of good ventilation, noise and lights distribution, especially at evening classes, affected students' performance.
- The overcrowded classrooms did not allow implementing varied activities. Because of the large number of students, oral, written, individual and pair work practices were very few; moreover, feedbacks were limited, in its majority, to students who participated in written and oral exercises, the take risks. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for students to have enough practice in order to ensure their proficiency and fluency.
- Due to the limitation of space, students' seat arrangement did not change in the majority of class observed. For some teachers moving seats from one place to another was not easy but highly time consuming and distracting; consequently, the activities, which involved seats movement, were not frequent and students were sitting in the same uncomfortable position, for hours increasing their tiredness and lack of concentration.
- The educational institution lesson design monitoring was not evidenced. However, the surveyed teachers commented that it was frequent. In addition, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has a requirement that all teachers who

work in public educational institutions have to design annual plan, lessons and blocks among others; thus, under these circumstances the lessons design is a requirement to be accomplished.

3.4 Recommendations

- Due to the importance of the English language for the worldwide communication, the English subject should be taught in primary schools as part of the curriculum; in addition, the class periods should be incremented from five to ten, in order to guarantee students' adequate learning.
- For students to reach a B1.2 level, there should be implemented language laboratories and provided of enough teaching resources to make students experience the English language; in addition, extra leveling courses should be opened to strength the four skills by practicing during extra time.
- Students' motivation to learn is an important factor for teachers to focus on; for this reason, it is advisable for teachers to add topics that grasp students' interest to work actively. For instance, topics should be selected carefully according to students' age, interests, likes and dislikes.
- The teachers should be role models creating an environment of respect, consideration and providing words of encouragement where students can develop their language skills.
- Despite of the students' basic-intermediate level, the use of Spanish should be avoided to accustom students to use English, fostering students to infer meaning from the context and express ideas, thoughts and needs.
- Students' basic-level of English knowledge should be considered seriously. Because it was the most influential factor that affected the performance of surveyed students in middle, high schools and later in academic and professional life. Thus, new policies, changes and improvements should be done to increase the English language teaching quality beginning from elementary to high schools.

- The teachers' instructional skills were evidenced when they were innovative, varied and dynamically conducted in order to benefit students' learning; for this reason, continuous training courses are urgent to be offered by the Ecuadorian Minister of Education for in-service teachers, directed to improve their teaching ability.
- The classroom conditions should be improved reducing the number of students per classroom; no more than thirty students per classroom as maximum. In that way more and frequent oral and written practices would take place; in addition, individual, pair and work group activities would be implemented, besides, personalized attention and feedback would become habitual because these practices are the cornerstones for students to acquire language competences and communicative skills properly.
- The physical classroom conditions should be changed allowing more space, to different seats arrangement, varied activities, good ventilation, brightness with natural and artificial light to increase students' concentration and lessen their tiredness and boredom.
- Being a tool to obtain data, the class observations should be permitted, not only for researching purposes but also as a way to monitor teaching quality.
- The educational institutions should implement a mean that favors researchers and public the access to lessons design, in order to determine if the teaching-learning process is going according to the goals established to reach the students' needs.

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5. ANNEXES



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

1. Which level of education do you have?

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

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

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

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

Students' Level (<i>Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()

4. Which is the level of your students?

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

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

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

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

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

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

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

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

YES ()	NO ()	
Why? _____		

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

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

10. Do you plan your lessons?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16. How many students do you think is the appropriate number to teach English?

(check only 1)

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

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

YES ()	NO ()
Which ones? _____	

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

YES ()	NO ()
Why? _____	

19. Does the institution review your lesson plans?

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

20. Does the institution monitor your teaching?

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

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

21. ¿Te gusta aprender Inglés?

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

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

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

23. Consideras que las actividades realizadas en clase son:

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

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

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

¿Por qué?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GRACIAS!!!!



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

MODALIDA ABIERTA Y A DISTANCIA

CARRERA DE INGLES

OBSERVATION SHEET

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

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

***Students' Needs** (*age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles*)

YES () NO ()

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

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

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

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

3. Which of the following methods are used?

Communicative Language Teaching	()
The Natural Approach	()
Cooperative Language Learning	()
Content-Based Instruction	()
Task-Based Language Teaching	()
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	()
Total Physical Response	()

Whole Language Approach	()
Grammar Translation Method	()
Others _____	()

4. Which of the following activities are used?

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

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

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

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

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

7. How many students are there in the classroom?

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES:

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

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

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

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

TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

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

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

C2	()	C1	()	B2	()	B1	()	A2	()	A1	()
----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----