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**Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa**

Analysis of English Teachers' perceptions related to strategies studied  
in an in-service course in Cuenca

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obtención del Título de Licenciado  
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## Resumen

El presente estudio describe las percepciones de los profesores fiscales de inglés en relación a las estrategias aprendidas durante una capacitación realizada en el año 2012 por un grupo de investigadores de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Cuenca. En el año 2014, este grupo de investigadores inició un proyecto para analizar el impacto de dicha capacitación. Este es el marco contextual en el cual se desarrolla el análisis de la percepción docente. La propuesta está basada en el método exploratorio. El instrumento de investigación fue la entrevista personal a diez profesores que participaron de la capacitación en el año 2012. Los resultados fueron analizados con la ayuda del Software Atlas ti. Se identificaron catorce códigos diferentes que fueron agrupados en cuatro grupos de familias: estrategias comunicativas, aprendizaje significativo, percepciones de las necesidades e inconsistencias. Todas estas familias de códigos convergieron alrededor del Aprendizaje Basado en Tareas (ABT), el cual permitía generar un *outcome*, cuyo significado específico es la generación de un producto a partir del uso del idioma inglés por parte de los estudiantes. Un hallazgo importante fue que casi todos los profesores recordaron varias estrategias aprendidas en la capacitación, mismas que sumaron un total de nueve, además la mitad de docentes estaba usando el *outcome* en sus clases, ello da cuenta de la percepción positiva que tienen los docentes sobre el curso, a pesar de haber transcurrido dos años de su clausura.

**Palabras clave:** Capacitación en servicio, profesores fiscales de inglés, percepciones docentes, *outcome*, estrategias comunicativas



## Abstract

This study describes the English Public High School Teachers' perceptions related to strategies studied in an in-service training in Cuenca during the year 2012 by a research group of the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Cuenca. As a follow up, the same research group started a project in 2014 in order to analyze the impact of this training program. This is the framework of the present study. It is based on the exploratory level of researching. The instrument of the research was a personal interview with ten teachers that participated in the in-service course. The software Atlas ti analyzed the interviews. Fourteen hermeneutical codes were identified, grouped into four different families: communicative strategies, significant knowledge, perceptions of needs, and inconsistencies. All of the family codes have something relating to the Task Based Learning Teaching (TBLT), hence the generation of an outcome. Here, "outcome" has the specific meaning of a product of communication of students. An important finding is that most of the teachers remember explicitly nine communicative strategies and half of the teachers are using the outcome as the major aim of their classes. The results show teacher's positive perceptions regarding the in-service training program, even after two years from when the training ended.

**Key words:** In-service training, TBLT, English Public High School Teachers, Teachers' perceptions, outcome, communicative strategies



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## Dedication

To my parents, for their great example as teachers.



## Acknowledgment

To Mgs. Ana María Calle for her invaluable help in this research project and to Mgs. Kenneth Lewis for correcting my blunders linguistic.



## Introduction

Recently, higher training of English language teachers was not necessary in Ecuadorian public education because there was a shortage of professionals in this field. Consequently, the general “perception”<sup>1</sup> about English teachers was not highly appreciated nor sufficiently valued. A teacher with minimal knowledge of the English language could be eligible for appointment to teach English as easily as the teachers who had a university degree to teach the language. Becoming an English teacher was not very difficult.

However, this perception changed in 2012 due to an evaluation of the English Language proficiency of Ecuadorian teachers of English by the Ministry of Education through the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The evaluation showed very low levels in the four language skills. Since that time, being an English teacher in Ecuador became the most difficult of the teaching professions within public education.

However, instead of balancing English language proficiency with teaching aptitude, the new standards focused solely on language proficiency.

It is in this context that 32 prominent Ecuadorian public teachers of English language received an in-service course on TBLT (Task Based Language Teaching). During this in-service course, with the help of researchers from the University of Cuenca, the teachers proposed alternative strategies to improve the CRADLE project (official textbooks from the Ministry of Education until the 2012-2013 scholar year). During that process, the teachers had very mixed

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<sup>1</sup> According to the American Heritage Dictionary, 'perception' means "the process, act, or result of perceiving", while 'perceiving' means, "to become aware through the senses." Therefore, when we talk about teacher's perceptions, it means the way that they understand the implementation of TBLT strategies, which includes the institutional context and the personal feelings about their job.



feelings. On one hand, they were excited to be co-authors of strategies designed in a textbook called “Speak Out With Task-Based Activities”, while on the other hand, they received both government and media criticism about their language proficiency.

Two years later, the group of researchers from the University of Cuenca decided to evaluate the effects of training on TBLT. They found significant improvements immediately finished the in-service course; however, after two years, the training only showed that teachers use or adapt the original teaching material. This study complements this evaluation exploring the use and adaptation of teaching materials as qualitative perceptions on the professional practice of Ecuadorian teachers of English.

This study contains four chapters. The first chapter studies the research problem, the research questions, and the specific objectives. The second chapter involves a summary of the main theoretical contributions on English language teacher training, Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Communicative Strategies and Resources, Focus group as a tool to share information, and Studies on teachers' perceptions. The third chapter discusses the materials and methods used for the implementation of the interviews and the processing of the information. Here, the results are interpreted by the author using comments regarding the theoretical framework.

In the following exploratory analysis, the reader will discover that the findings form the prelude to measure English language teaching proficiency.



## Chapter 1

### Scope of the study

During 2012 a group of researchers at the University of Cuenca sponsored by the Research Directory, proposed an in-service course, which was delivered to a focus group of 23 English teachers of public high schools in Cuenca. This project lasted for more than 110 hours and addressed the following issues: communicative strategies, student-centered approach, classroom management, and development of language skills. Through this in-service course, the participants and the research team designed a booklet called “Speak Out With Task-Based Activities” for the project OWTE (Our World Through English). The issues addressed in this project have not been considered by English teachers since the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) changed from the CRADLE textbooks to the English books in 2013. Nevertheless, it is necessary to explore these issues because they deal with the development of competencies for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

Regarding the strategies used to design the aforementioned material by the focus group, it is unknown whether they have contributed to improving teaching methods in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) of the high school teachers. In addition, the results of the in-service course, which ended up in the booklet, have not been monitored. Also, it is important to mention the context and difficult conditions in which these teachers work. Namely, the participants are not native English speakers, and do not work in small, flexible classes with adequate resources. However, in the in-service training program the teachers in the focus group were responsible for improving and considering new methodology according to the aims of the Ministry of



Education. These difficult conditions have not limited their ability to teach. On the contrary, the teachers were often able to visualize techniques that could improve pedagogy, while also learning successful classroom procedures, such as the stages of Task Based Language Teaching. Consequently, this research project is relevant in order to explore the effects of this training course in the teaching strategies of the participants in their current classroom instruction. This research project could shed light on how to overcome the traditional strategies that, according to the group of researchers at the University of Cuenca, are still being used by English teachers (Calle, y otros, 2012). In addition, this proposal could provide significant support to the project, "The impact of an in-service training on EFL teachers of public high schools in Cuenca" (Calle, Argudo, & Moscoso, 2013), which is being carried out in the Philosophy Faculty regarding the impact of teacher training.

During the in-service training program, teachers discussed communicative strategies, which could be used to teach English. One of the in-service courses based in communicative strategies was the course on Task Based Language Teaching TBLT offered by the University of Cuenca in 2012. This course not only taught, but also provided an opportunity for teachers to invent activities for EFL teaching. Additionally, after inventing the activities, the teachers improved those activities according to the results of the class. At the end of the course they compiled the activities in the booklet called "Speak Out with Task-Based Activities" (Calle, et. al., 2012). This is the first booklet created by a group of EFL teachers from public schools. TBLT helps to motivate the students because they not only produce language but they accomplish an outcome.

Using a qualitative method, this study aims to determine what strategies the 23 high school teachers from the original focus group employ in their classes according to their judgment. In order to accomplish this, I plan to get an overview of the perceptions of these instructors regarding their teaching



strategies by conducting recorded interviews. The software, Atlas ti, will then analyze the interviews. In this analysis, the variables measured in the interviews are going to be compared with the strategies that these teachers used two years ago. Finally, the analysis will show the sustainability of “Speak Out Task-Based Activities” of the EFL teachers.

## **Objectives and researching questions**

**Primary question:** To what extent has the in-service training program stimulated the use of communicative strategies?

**Secondary questions:** What are the main communicative strategies used by the public high school teachers?

- Do the teachers forget all/some strategies of the in-service course?
- Does the in-service course have some benefits after two years?

### **a. General objectives**

- To analyze the English Teachers' perceptions related to strategies studied in an in-service training in Cuenca.

### **b. Specific objectives**

- To identify the different types of strategies TBLT teachers continue using in their classes today.
- To describe the English teachers' significant knowledge that has helped them adapt strategies to their context and needs.
- To determine the English teachers' perceptions of strategies in their teaching needs.



## Chapter II Literature review

### 1.1. English Language Teacher Training

In 1967 the first English language teacher training course was introduced in Britain by the RSA (Royal Society of Arts), designed specifically for in-service training to provide the TEFL Certificate (Brandt, 2006). This initial training developed as a formal education program by the University of Cambridge. However, subsequent programs encouraged reflective and self-critical thinking to teach English in different countries around the world (Chalabi, 1976). It is important to mention that some EFL teachers in many colonial territories of the U.K. and some independent African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) and in America used the British in-service method (Howatt, 2004). As the English language became the lingua franca, many countries adopted this kind of teacher training course, including Ecuador.

This system has been successful in the world of native-speaking teachers and teacher trainers, who work in small, flexible classes with adequate resources, but not with non-native English teachers, who work in large school classes, who have a rigid syllabus, and who attempt to apply the new methodology to their own teaching.

It is the great difference between these two worlds that accounts for the failure of much teacher training; they are different not only in resources and physical conditions, but also in underlying assumptions (e.g. about language, about learning, about teacher's role) and in degree of freedom (e.g. freedom to experiment, to create material, to approach class relationships in a new way). (Doff, 2007)

There are some researchers like Noom-ura (2013), who explain these teacher's resources limitations in terms of factors that reduce the success of



teaching EFL. Addressing this situation, Ogane (1998) explains that with junior high school students who are learning English as a foreign language, the chances to communicate in English are mainly in English classes. In other words, they need communication strategies in broader learning situations. "This means that the use of communication strategies can help students learn English more effectively as well as solve the problems they face in communicating. Therefore, I regard the strategies helpful both as communication strategies and as learning strategies."(Ogane, 1998). Communicative strategies are based in language use; Skehan, quoted by Richards and Rodgers (2004) argued that speech processing is very frequently lexical in nature, "... language speech processing is based on the production and reception of whole phrase units larger than the word which does not require any internal processing..." Many teachers are aware of their role in learning communicative process and they try to improve their classes using some experiences that they learned in the in-service training programs.

The in-service course could be a process that is used to solve problems in reaching a communicative goal. Therefore, the use of in-service courses seems appropriate. However, there is research that "have seen compelling evidence that teacher development programs or processes do not cause change, but that we need to talk instead of multiple reasons for change or lack thereof, and, equally, multiple routes of development" (Kubanyiova, 2012). According to this theory, big changes do not always have big consequences and insignificant movements do not imply insignificant effects. Borg (2011) claims that there are many studies which focused on teaching students that are in English language programs, but few studies focused on the influence of in-service teacher training programs. Nevertheless, according to Calle, Argudo, & Moscoso (2013) "In Ecuador we do not have publications about the impact of training teachers", so we cannot draw specific conclusions regarding the situation in the Ecuadorian context. The University of Cuenca Philosophy



Faculty, in their research project “The impact of an in-service training on EFL teachers of public high schools in Cuenca” (Calle, y otros, 2012), tries to identify if the teachers make use of TBLT in their public high schools. A foreign research group said that when they asked teachers “How useful are in-service teacher training courses in planning your lessons, most teachers answered: ‘very useful’” (Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2013).

## 1.2. Task Based Language Teaching

It is important to analyze what Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) involves. “A task must have a connection with the real world, and the assessment to the task is in terms of outcome” (Calle D., 2014). Also, according to Van den Branden (2006), “A task is an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language.... In task-based language teaching, the ‘task’ is used as the basic unit of analysis at the levels of goals (‘syllabus’), educational activities (‘methodology’) and assessment”. Therefore, tasks are “the central unit of planning and teaching” (Richards & Rodgers, 2004).

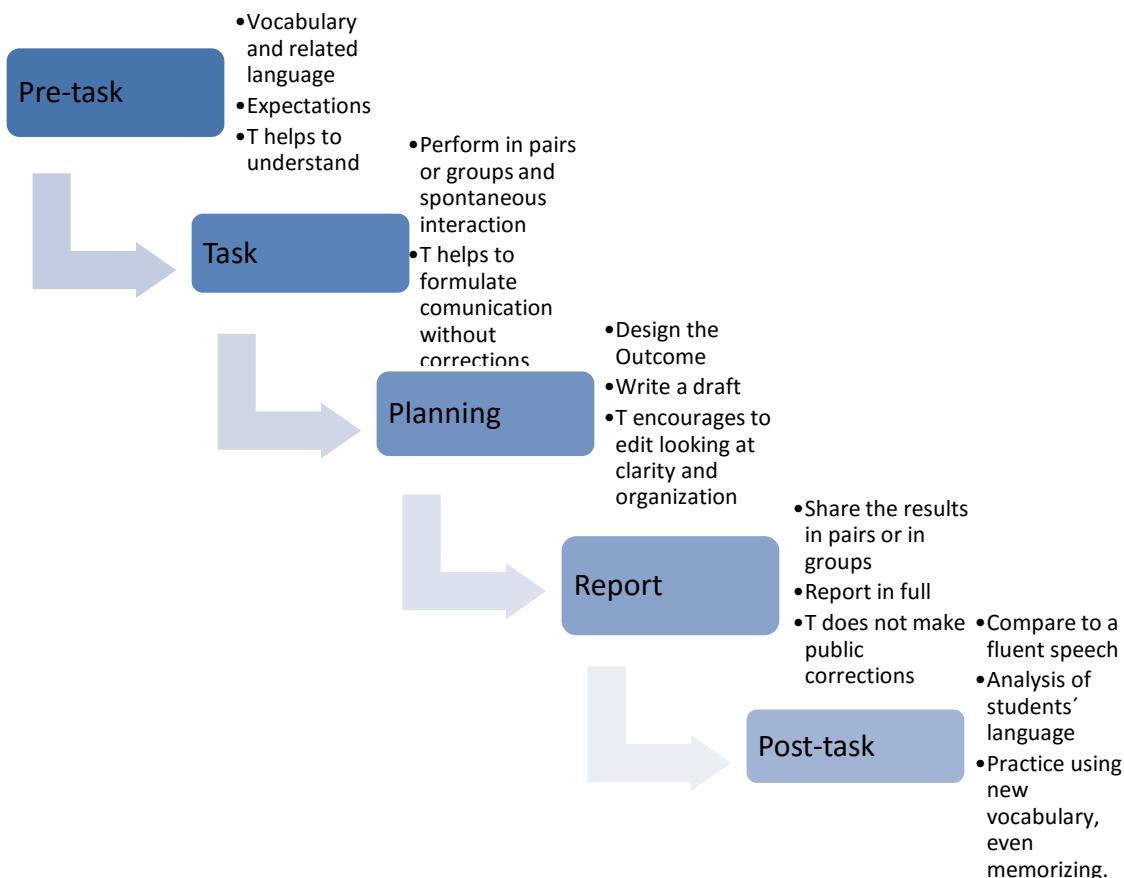
What are tasks? According to Nunan quoted by Richards and Rodgers (2004) tasks are activities, which have meanings as their primary focus, so these authors proposed that, “Success in tasks is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use.” In this way, most activities involve interaction and conversation. Pica, Kanagy, and Falodum quoted by Richards and Rodgers (2004) proposed some specific teaching activities<sup>2</sup> like Jigsaw tasks (involve learners who build a whole, like a story, using pieces of information), Information

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<sup>2</sup> These teaching activities and teaching strategies will be used within this document as equivalent concepts.

Gap (a student looks for information from other student and vice versa), or Problem Solving (students have to solve a problem using some information).

The TBL uses teaching activities but it is not centered in the activities, rather in the outcome. To arrive at an outcome, the method uses organized activities. This organization has to follow a complete process suggested by Willis, quoted by Richards and Rodgers (2004):



**Note:** T denotes teacher.



The pre-task activity involves a preliminary activity that introduces the topic, vocabulary, related language, and creates expectations about the theme providing examples of the kind of language that could be used. During the development of the tasks, in the second step, the teacher only works as a monitor leaving the spontaneous creation of interaction between the students. Students are the main character of the activities achieving goals. The third step includes planning an outcome. For example, the students prepare a report writing a draft or something along those lines, and the teacher encourages the students to edit it in order to improve the plan. The fourth step includes the presentation of the reports, which could be given in pairs, or by the entire group to the class. The teacher avoids making public corrections. Finally, the post-task focuses on the language in order to analyze the language used and in the improvement of the target language by making corrections. Some teachers include practicing using memorization to acquire the new language in this last step.

### 1.3. Communicative Strategies and Resources

It is important to point out that within the process of TBLT, teachers attending the in-service program used a series of resources and communicative teaching strategies which contribute to communication. All of the resources and strategies turn around the performance of communication in real life activities, which enhance the development of interaction in the target language. Performance and interaction were the concerns of the teachers that participated during the training process. Therefore, they used some specific teaching resources (Flashcards and Charts) from the TBLT as well as communicative strategies such as:, Onion Ring, Jigsaw, Information Gap, , Warm-ups, Mimics, Matching, and Jokes. These resources were adapted to the different circumstances, which they experience daily in their classrooms and the correct way to apply them inside their teaching process.



#### 1.4. Focus group as a tool to share information

How did the researchers encourage teachers to invent strategies to use TBLT for EFL classes in public schools in Cuenca? Were not they training rather than researching? The answer to the first question involves the technique used by the researchers: the focus group. According to Minaya-Rowe (2002), the focus group could "...encourage her second language learners to develop higher order thinking skills." According to Krueger and Casey (2009), "A focus group isn't just getting a bunch of people together to talk. A focus group is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedures." Focus groups are helpful for some teachers, especially after surveys have been made (Peterson, 2000). Following the same logic, the researchers supported activities designed by the teachers from high schools. As for the second question, it is related to what Erling, Sargeant, Solly, and Hasan (2013) refer to as Action-Research trend: "This model of linking research and in-service teacher education can be effective in supporting institutional development in relation to a wide range of issues in foreign language learning." So, the researchers considered the focus group not only as a rich source of information, but also as an effective communicative tool to determine if the teachers could propose solutions to their methodological limitations.

Moreover, this kind of in-service course was not imposed on the teachers. Rather, it was extended as an invitation to be part of an experiment to learn about TBLT and fundamentally to be Communicative Strategy Designers. According to Kennedy (1987), the programs that are not imposed on teachers "will be sufficient to effect the change in belief that is necessary for long-lasting change in the classroom." Kennedy suggested to integrate theory and practice to create a material-design blueprint. He has further suggested ways in which the materials project might serve the dual function of both producing appropriate



and relevant materials and providing opportunities for teacher development (Kennedy, 1987).

### 1.5. Studies on teachers' perceptions

According to Mañú and Goyarrola (2011) quoted by Montijano Cabrera & Leggot (2014), a competent EFL teacher is someone who possesses

...an on-going desire to grow professionally, keep up-to-date with techniques and principles, to have a positive attitude, motivation, patience, empathy and good communication skills, plus the technological skills to keep abreast with the new requirements of our era, fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

It is important to say that Montijano Cabrera & Leggot (2014) showed that trainees' perception of teacher training in Spain should not be limited to the competencies because it is important to include theoretical considerations to provide a deeper understanding to EFL teachers. They showed that Spain teacher's careers have more theoretical training than UK teacher's careers, which have a more practice-led system. Therefore, they consider that there is necessary a balance between the theory and practice to guarantee knowledge and competencies.

Another study, which established a ranking of English teaching problems in Thailand analyzed teacher's perceptions. Teachers expressed that the main problem concerns the students not having enough practice in English on their own as well as insufficient background of the language. Consequently, they lack confidence in using English for communication. In the ranking, teachers are the last problem. However, the author suggests that the teachers are concerned about their own English proficiency and instructional/pedagogical strategies for teaching (Noom-ura, 2013).

A similar concern was shown by another quantitative study. This study explained that the highest mean of the practitioner's perceptions of the



importance of the key elements of ESL/EFL teacher training is “an accurate and fluent command of the English language”; after that they consider “An open mind towards new methods, new ideas and experimentation with what is new in the field” (Alshuaifan, 2009).

Another study compared results of teachers with more positive attitudes versus teachers with less positive attitudes to teach English Language Learners (ELL), showing that positive attitudes help to acquire and use English language as a second language in American high schools (Karabenick & Clemens, 2004).

A Chilean research study concluded that good teachers inspire their students despite the context in which they are teaching. They try to find solutions for negative situations; for example, looking for and designing their own material to improve teaching (Guzmán Valenzuela, 2013). Another study, conducted in China, suggests that effective EFL teaching is based on good decisions to promote classroom interaction, as well as on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs (Li & Walsh, 2014).

One study involving a sample of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in English Language Arts/Adolescence through Young Adulthood—who teach more than three years and held an official teaching license in language arts—analyzed the beliefs of teachers and their teaching strategies. After the analysis of traditional methods, traditional beliefs, beliefs about technology, teacher’s beliefs, beliefs about progressive instructional methods, and beliefs about cooperative learning, the author of the study discovered that the central component of teacher’s instructional strategy activities was the class discussion. Teachers emphasize and facilitate student’s interactions, develop positive relationships with the students, challenged pupils intellectually, and were themselves enthusiastic permanent learners (Lee Dinnon, 2008).



## Chapter III

### Materials and methods

The current study is exploratory because it defines and classifies teachers' opinions in order to highlight what are the different strategies that teachers used within the framework of TBLT. This study is qualitative because teachers do not remember the exact technique or strategy learned during the training course, but can remember the uses of those strategies and techniques. Therefore, it is more possible to identify strategies based on the clues that teachers showed during a dialogue moderated as an interview.

The first step of this study was to design the interview, which was conducted by the director of the research project accompanied by research colleagues and the author of this study. The interview contained twelve questions regarding the strategies, significant knowledge, and teaching limitations. The interview was given to ten different teachers from different public high schools. The criterion of the sample selection was to be an EFL teacher who participated in the in-service course during 2012. The selected teachers were interviewed for a period of 10 to 30 minutes and asked about their perceptions. The format of the interviews involved a dialogue rather than a strict question/answer format, so teachers would feel free to express their perceptions of teaching EFL. In other words, a semi-structured interview was used.

All interviews were recorded, and then transcribed in Microsoft Word. The Software Atlas ti 6<sup>th</sup> Edition analyzed the ten different interviews. Fourteen different codes were identified, which grouped four family codes: specific strategies, significant knowledge, limitations of teaching, and a new group named, contradictions. Consequently, the three groups of questions designed at the beginning helped to identify the use of TBLT method in order to achieve an outcome and to identify inconsistencies in the teachers' lectures.



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For purposes of confidentiality, the names of the teachers have been changed to letters of the alphabet in the following discussion.

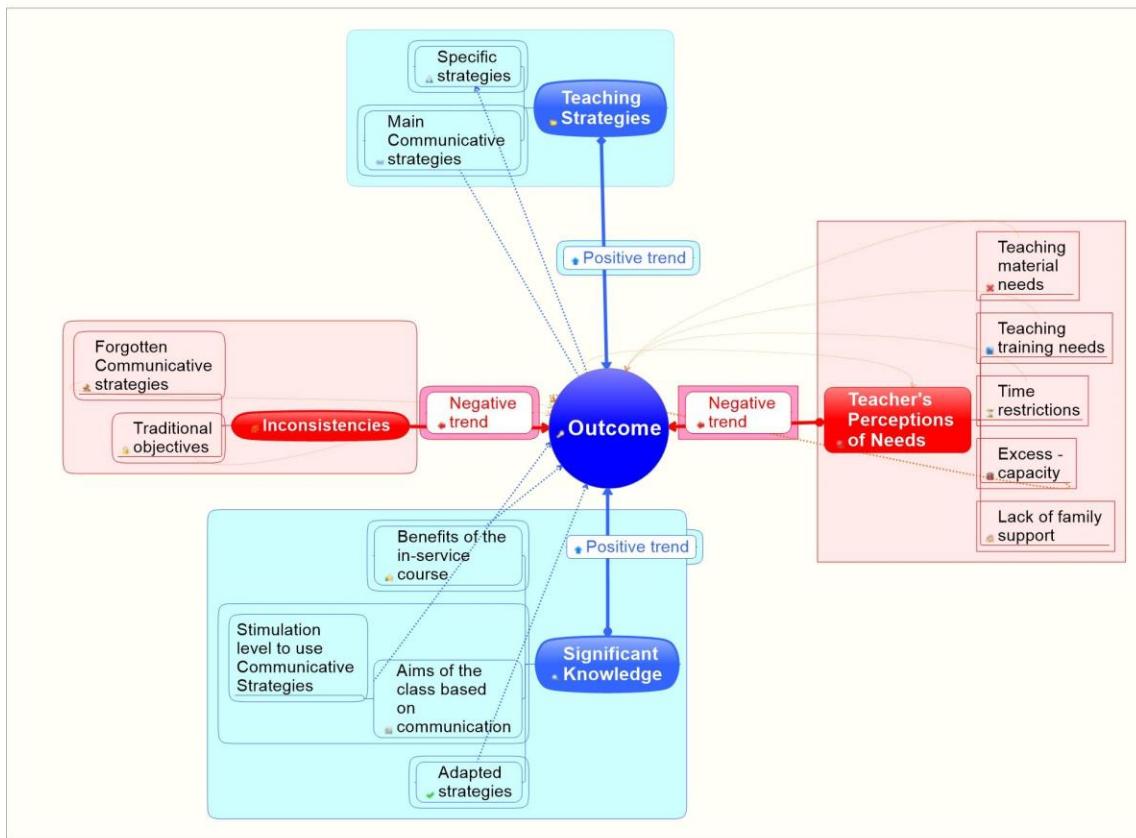


## Chapter IV Results and discussion

Teachers' perceptions are based on all of the opinions around the implementation of the communicative strategies studied in the in-service course, which included 30 lessons during 110 hours of classes, the application of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and/or the booklet called "Speak Out With Task-Based Activities" for the project OWTE (Our World Through English). These features were part of the training developed by the University of Cuenca during the year 2012, so the teachers talk about their professional practices from that year. In addition, their opinions are related to the last class that they taught their students that year. It is important to communicate that researchers of the university were allowed to observe this class before the interview, as evidence that teachers were telling the truth.

There are two trends identified in the teachers' perceptions, one positive and one negative; each of them, at the same time, is subdivided into two groups. The positive trend involves Significant Knowledge and Teaching Strategies; the negative trend includes Perceptions of Needs and Inconsistencies. All of them have some relationship with the "outcome" which was the fundamental purpose of the course, as well as TBLT.

The general structure of the relationship of each family of codes is



illustrated in the following graph:

The outcome, as the main purpose of the course, is located in the center of the graph and maintains a close association with the communicative strategies because they help to achieve it. Even the outcome has a more close relationship with significant learning because it is not limited to replicating the strategies learned, but to improve or create others that have not been studied in the course, keeping the consistency with the learned model. The outcome has a positive vertical relationship with the aims of the course.

On the other hand, there is a negative horizontal relationship with two different groups. There is an explicit group named perceptions of needs, which



involves material or equipment needs, training needs, time restrictions, excess of capacity, and lack of family support, which contradicts limiting the performance of the outcome. Similarly, there is a group of inconsistencies that obstruct the success of the purposes because it contradicts the communicative strategies using traditional procedures, even including traditional objectives focused on grammar.

Of course, not all the teachers remember the outcome explicitly because it has been more than two years since the training, but they remember many things as evidence that they used the communicative aim of the outcome or strategies around it.

### 3.1 Outcome

Following, one can see examples, which illustrate the appropriate understanding of outcome within TBL.

Teacher *B* used many strategies that allowed the students at the end of the class to "...talk about their families and write about their families." Teacher *C* explained that, after more lessons, her students were going to participate in a dialogue with native English speaking students from New Jersey by Skype. Additionally, she explained that the students were going to write recipes that they would prepare later; as an outcome, she said, "...they will be filming; filming how they are going to be cooking, how they will be serving..." When employing useful expressions, teacher *D* said that the aim of the class was to write a conversation in pairs in order to "...know what they are writing or how to use certain phrases which are interesting", for that, she follows a long feedback process. Teacher *E* was concerned with context because she said that the foreign information does not reflect the real world in which students live. Therefore, she prepared a class based on Ecuadorian typical food. In this class,



each student had to prepare a different dish. At the end she said, “The most important thing is to reach the outcome, otherwise the class is unfinished and the objective is not met.” Teacher *H* used some activities and then she asked the students to imagine what they were going to do during the afternoon, “So the outcome is achieved, we learned to follow a process (talking about the in-service course) starting from the warm-up, pre-teaching, the activity, and, at the end, the production with the outcome.”

According to Daniela Calle (2014), “A solid advantage that TBLT offers is that tasks have a clear outcome so that the teacher and students know whether or not the communication has been successful.” An outcome is not always achieved during a class; teachers sometimes need a week or two weeks to achieve it. “For example, a folk tale needs many steps before producing a moral at the end ... so, the common process is: pre-task, task, post-task, and outcome” (Calle D. , 2014). Therefore, these five teachers not only practiced English Language based on communicative strategies, but they applied the process of TBLT and produced outcomes according to the real situation.

### 3.2 Teaching strategies

Two groups of teaching strategies have been identified: specific strategies and main communicative strategies. Teachers remember some specific strategies acknowledged explicitly or implicitly during the interview. Three different teachers remember the use of visual aids such as Flashcards. “I use Flashcards because what I learned at the in-service course; it is very important to begin a class this way because the student learns best visually” (*E*); “...practically, to take the Flashcards I have to go look at my home on the Internet to download the images and then print” (*A*); “Flashcards are what I use more” (*C*).



One of the strategies learned in the course is Onion Ring. It can be observed how teachers use this strategy with the following quotes: “I remember the games of Onion Ring ... that we adapt, modifying a bit to change routine” (A); “Onion Ring is good because the same student stands up and walks in circle, it gives me the chance to hear that they are practicing English really ..., this strategy gives me results, good results” (I).

Another strategy used during the in-service course is Jigsaw. Following, are some examples: “...we have Jigsaw; I like it very much. I work a lot with this” (C); “Last year I adapted some strategies as the Jigsaw for example, personally I like the Jigsaw” (D).

Information Gap is a strategy used by the teachers, as one can observe in these instances: “Information Gap and Word Map, when I went to the training at the in-service course, I learned what a Word Map is. It is very important before finishing the class” (E); Through the use of information gaps, “students have to move inside the classroom, making questions, looking for information” (I).

Some other strategies and resources remembered by a different teacher were the use of Charts, Warm-Ups, Mimics, Matching, and Jokes. “ I use the Charts hanging on the wall a lot because there are too many students” (E). “I use warm ups to encourage the students at the beginning of the class” (H). “Students love crosswords” (I); “I remember a technique from the in-service course which uses Mimics, the students have to guess the word that represents the Mimic” (J). “English also must be a tool to have fun. Another thing that I learned are the Jokes; they are very good and produce interesting results” (C). Teacher J used Matching to practice the past-tense verbs.

The teachers learned or reinforced during the in-service course the aforementioned strategies and resources. Therefore, Flashcards, Onion Ring, Jigsaw, Information Gap, Flip Charts, Warm-ups, Mimics, Matching, and Jokes



are included inside the lesson plans of teachers. An exact number of nine strategies from thirty were learned. According to Garton, Copland, & Burns (2013), an in-service course produces a “very useful” application of learning in planning lessons.

The other group of teaching strategies is main communicative strategies; this one involves some communicative activities they use to teach English as a foreign language. Teacher *A* says that she uses group work because the students like to work together when she combines high skills of some students with the low skills of some others, “...they cooperate and lose their inhibition to talk, and then I believe that this strategy works better than others.” Teacher *G* also likes to work in groups instead of working alone; she is sure that “if they work in pairs or in groups, they help each other.” Teacher *H* also prefers to work in pairs or in groups because “they feel comfortable trying to talk together.” *I* is one of the teachers that commonly uses group work because she wants to hear her students talking, “...then they begin to make questions because the main objective is to talk.” Teacher *D* is looking for strategies to help the students to talk because they do not want to talk

*B* considers that it is important to take advantage of the context, so she uses the green area outside the classroom to teach many different things from nature. “When they are learning ‘there is’ and ‘there are’, for example, we go out and walk around describing the view and the landscape” (*B*). Another teacher who considers the importance of context said, “I adapt the book to the reality of the students, even to their learning style, life style, so the education is not static, it is a dynamic process of research and experimentation in order to find good results.” (*C*) As a result, she is working in real communication with foreign native speakers or preparing food, using English.

It is important to recognize that all of these opinions show a good relationship between teacher and students. It means that the students have the



possibility to talk, dialogue and discuss in class using English. As previously noted, Lee Dinnon (2008) analyzed the teachers beliefs and discovered that successful EFL teachers emphasize student's interactions, so good teachers do not lecture, they facilitate; consequently, the communicative method develops positive relationships with the students, challenges students academically, and students are enthusiastic of being permanent learners.

### 3.3 Significant knowledge

Significant knowledge refers to the ability of adapting strategies, which consists of adjusting the original strategies of the in-service course to the class circumstances. Sometimes the teachers do not remember exactly the use of a strategy, so they do a similar strategy to the original one.

For instances, *B* said that she adapted some activities of the family from the booklet to the lesson plan that she practiced on the interview day. *F* said that she took advantage of the pictures related to the sentences from the booklet, but in general she said, "I really adapt, adapt the activities according to the students' reality." *A* has a similar opinion because she said that it was necessary to adapt to the new content and to the number of the students. *E* also agrees with the strategies even when the MINEDUC changed the book, "but there is no problem, I use the same techniques." Another teacher said, "I never follow textually the book from the MINEDUC ..., sometimes I take some activities from the booklet" (*G*). This group of teachers explained how they adapt; Teacher *J*, for example, showed some material, which is part of the booklet that he was using to produce an outcome, "if something is easy, I adapt to the level of the students." On the other hand, a teacher could not explain what she adapts, "I tried to adapt the themes, I tried to use" (*I*); and, only one teacher said the contrary, "The truth is that I have not adapted any of these activities from the booklet because it was from an earlier book (OWTE)."



Of course, teachers do not always use exactly the strategies or techniques learned during a course because they adapt what they learn to their context. However, the teachers identified some specific strategies and said that they also adapt to their specific situation. Ogane (1998) explains that with junior high school students who are learning English as a foreign language, the chances to communicate in English are mainly in English classes, so the teachers need to use effective strategies to solve the problems they face in communicating.

Some teachers explain how they teach expressing the benefits of the in-service course. A said that she takes risks implementing new activities in order to achieve her students' interests. C explained that she was implementing interdisciplinary activities with other subjects such as science. D and G said that they used information from different sources; one of the most frequent was the booklet. Teacher I thanked the in-service course saying that she changed some situations of teaching, "...maybe I have been wrong and I have tried to improve my classes (with the booklet)". J explained that the in-service course was very good because "...the face, the interaction, and the reality are much better than the work by a machine (online courses imposed by the MINEDUC); we have a real communication." In addition, some teachers identified several stimuli in the in-service course. B tells that the booklet is an important part of her life, "I like it very much because I know how to use it because I was a member of the group that created it", and so she feels very committed to improve her classes. C said that it was an alternative to break the routine, "...looking for many other alternatives." E said that she learned how to teach in the In-service course, "I feel lucky that I have been part of the group selected to participate in the in-service course." F explained that courses like the in-service are "...constantly innovating in English with new ideas, new suggestions, methodologies; it is always good to be reviewing, checking."



It is important to see how teachers have been empowered by the strategies and the method. If they are not enough empowered about the method and strategies, it is possible that their cognition, behavior, and attitudes end all of the innovation possibilities or the creation of new techniques (Kennedy, 1987). It shows that the group of teachers believes in the in-service course and that they feel they are creators of the strategies, which was the most important outcome of the in-service course, to produce appropriate and relevant materials.

The entire positive trend based its aims on communication, not on grammar. In this way, we could identify some objectives according to the trend and to the practices of the teachers:

- The objective of my class was somehow to develop students to speak even a little (A).
- To speak about students' families describing its members (B).
- To use English, it does not matter if they combine Spanish but try to speak only English (C).
- To know the typical food from Ecuador (E).
- To speak (I)
- To speak, speak even a little (J)

All of these objectives allow instructors to apply communicative and specific strategies and contribute to generate an outcome.

It is evident that these teachers do not establish limits on their objectives; they want to communicate, to see their students speaking in English. Karabenick & Clemens (2004) identified that positive attitudes about communication help a lot to acquire and use English as a second language. A positive attitude, motivation, patience, empathy and good communications skills are requirements of competent EFL teachers (Montijano Cabrera & Leggot, 2014).



### 3.4 Teachers' perceptions of needs

The teacher could not control five external difficulties: materials, time, space, training, and family support. These aspects are limitations to developing strategies based in communication, so they indirectly affect the production of an outcome in class.

Teacher *A* said that there are not didactic materials in her institution, "This is always a cost to the teacher: prints, cards, etc." Another teacher explained, "We have no technology, no Internet, no projector, no record player, etc." (*B*). *D* argues that she needs a laboratory for English to implement technology "...that really would be excellent for girls." *F* said that she needed "...audiovisuals but the institution has limitations to acquire that." *G* explained that she did not have a record player, so "I have to bring from my house to listen to something in English." Finally, there is a teacher who explained that she could not use the laboratory because there was a big number of students and she was afraid of damaging the computers "...if something is damaged, I have to pay for it from my salary", but she is talking about the computer laboratory, not about an English Language Laboratory.

Compared to Thai Teachers who identified most of materials needs as limitations, "They saw large classes as less problematic as inadequacy of teaching aids." Ecuadorian teachers agree saying that they have inadequate supplies of computers and language laboratories to aid teaching (Noom-ura, 2013).

Most teachers said that they had time restrictions. *A*, *J* and *H* agreed stating, "...the most important constraint is time." Some teachers explained that they were not talking only about the hour class but the time in general because today teachers have too much paperwork apart from teaching "...the lesson plans are daily and time is short ..., the schedule is too small". *C* says that she



cannot look for information to teach; “I have to prepare most of my lesson plans in my house” because the eight hours are not enough to work in the institution. *D* said, “If I have time I apply new techniques but not all the time.” “We do not have time to study for TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language); we have to complete more than 500 activities in 20 days in the online course” (*E*). “I’m trying to do the best I can, but we have too many different things to do, such as planning, preparation for evaluations, we are in check” (*G*). Teacher *I* said that the excessive work caused a stress crisis that seriously damaged her health.

In addition, Noom-ura (2013) identified limited time-allocation for English classes as a big problem. In this way, he recommends providing more time-allocation for English classes. However, Ecuadorian teachers are not just talking about class hours; they are talking about limited time. They are saying that they have many different responsibilities at school that do not allow them to prepare material to teach as they learned during the in-service course.

According to classroom space, there are eight affirmations that explain the excess of work which surpasses the capacity of teachers. Some of these assertions are explained in the following chart.

General students number	Students per class	Statements
A: 240 students to teach.	H: 45 students per classroom.	I: “The student’s number is too much”.
B: 195 students to teach.	E: 42 students per classroom at the beginning of the year.	J: “I’m teaching all the School, from first to ten year”
C: 164 students to teach.	D: 30 students per small classroom.	

Large class size does not help to establish good control or monitoring of the activities of the students. Teachers cannot be sure that all of the students are exposed to English even inside the class time. Dhanasobhon (2006) and ONEC (2003) quoted by Noom-ura (2013), said that large classes are one of the causes of English education failure.



Only three teachers talk about the training needs. *B* for example said that she would love to study for a master's degree but that she had some economic limitations; also, she said that she wanted to learn about ICT (Information and Communication Technology) "I'm a migrant from the technology, I have to renew somehow." *C* said that she wanted to be part of events to use her second language; she proposes to have social appointments to speak in English together with other teachers of English language. Finally, *F* said that she needed training to practice the speaking of English "...not only in courses, we need to practice daily."

All of the EFL teachers during the interview were participating in a TOEFL course to improve their proficiency of English Language, so no one seeks additional training because they are very busy. According to Erling, Sargeant, Solly, & Hasan (2013) linking research and in-service can support a wide range of issues in foreign language learning.

The last component of the teacher's need expressed by teachers is about students' family support. *B* said, "If we do not have help from the family, it is complicated" because many students from the rural area work with their parents. *C* said that the students had to receive help at home but some family situations were difficult. *F* teaches in the night section, "...the boys come unmotivated because they work, are parents, mothers and have little time to do the work; I cannot submit homework from one day to the other because they do not do the work." Teacher *I* says that she was careful dealing with the students: "They do not cooperate, sometimes the discipline is another problem, and we cannot say anything because of the Children and Adolescents Code." *J* said, "There are disorganized families, few are those who live with parents, most have gone to the United States, and they stay with the neighbor, uncle, sometimes with friends; it makes us so hard, it's pretty hard."



Research by Lee Dinnon shows that teachers need to analyze their own beliefs to gain a good understanding of the student's family's beliefs. Often, teachers need to take on a parental role with the students. The author said that some students need teachers to fill parental roles because they do not receive family support. "More evidence exists to connect teacher's personal experiences with family and school to beliefs and actions in the classroom than anything else" (Lee Dinnon, 2008).

Regardless of troubled and complex contexts, teachers are conscious of the skills of young people and encourage them to learn and become better people. These perceptions are close to the Chilean research result, which concluded that good teachers inspire their students despite the context. For example, they look for solutions for negative situations (Guzmán Valenzuela, 2013). In addition, it is close to the Chinese research results, which suggests that effective EFL teaching is based on good decisions to promote classroom interaction, as well as on teachers' pedagogical beliefs (Li & Walsh, 2014).

### 3.5 Inconsistencies

There were three different teachers who seem to have forgotten that the purpose of all of the strategies learned during the in-service course was for communication aims. *E*, for example, said how she used the Flashcards, "I use them to memorize irregular verbs; students love to memorize using Flashcards because they prepare the material with their own hands." *J* said that he liked speaking but he used memorization to construct phrases. *H* said many times during the interview that she used some strategies from the booklet, but she could not explain what exactly, she said "...Flashcards and filling in the blanks", no more. However, she used other terms that did not contradict the communicative aims that occurred even in the rest of teachers.



Some teachers combine the advantages of the communicative system with the traditional system of teaching. *D* for example said, “The objective of my last class was reading, dialog, and pronunciation, also grammar.” *F* explained that her objectives were “...to help students associate personal pronoun with the possessive adjective.” Similarly, *H* explained her objectives in terms of grammar; she said her objectives aimed “To use present continuous”. Along the same lines, *J* emphasized her objectives were, “To have a perfect pronunciation of the past tense verbs”; of course, this strategy does not help to generate an outcome, but maybe it could help indirectly in an outcome.

Authors like Mattheoudakis and Nicolaidis (2008), showed that the motivation to apply new strategies in class are not lasting. After some time, teachers come back to the strategies that they used before the training. However, it does not occur with all the teachers. Some teachers like *E* and *D* expressed inconsistencies to the TBL objectives or to the communicative method, but they are using communicative strategies and implicitly or explicitly are looking for an outcome.



## Conclusions

The extent that the in-service course stimulated the use of communicative strategies two years after the program ended is important. Teachers are very enthusiastic when they remember the in-service course and showed many things that they continue using. The group of teachers remembers nine of the thirty strategies: Flashcards, Onion Ring, Jigsaw, Information Gap, Charts, Warm-ups, Mimics, Matching, and Jokes are included inside the lesson plans of teachers. In this way, the in-service course had a good impact in the EFL teaching because after a long interval, they continue applying some strategies that they consider good and necessary. The primary significance of the Significant Knowledge is that all of the teachers feel that they were not only attending to training, but also they feel that they were creators or designers of the Task Based Activities to produce outcomes in their own classes; so, it is easy to identify their commitment with the booklet. However, most of the teachers do not use the booklet "Speak Out With Task-Based Activities" daily, because the booklet had activities to improve the old text OWTE. In fact, the teachers say that they only adapt the strategies when they consider appropriate. Finally, some limitations like technological supplies, time restrictions, large classes, and lack of family support make teachers feel that there are external factors they are powerless to change. Only three of the teachers interviewed did not implement the communicative strategies, TBL, and outcome. Instead, they returned to teaching using traditional objectives and methods.



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