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**“PROBLEMS IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN
TENTH GRADE IN TECNICO SALESIANO HIGH SCHOOL”**

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RESUMEN

De acuerdo al Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, el currículo de Inglés para octavo, noveno y décimo año de Educación Básica está representado por dos características principales:

En primer lugar, se centran en contextos del mundo real: Los estudiantes tendrán que utilizar el idioma de manera productiva al hablar y escribir y de manera receptiva al escuchar y leer fuera del aula mientras demuestran que poseen las habilidades necesarias para la comunicación en situaciones cotidianas. En segundo lugar, la relación de las formas lingüísticas, como la gramática, el vocabulario y la pronunciación, con la función (uso): "Técnicas de idiomas están diseñados para involucrar a los estudiantes en el auténtico uso, funcional del lenguaje con fines significativos" (Brown, 2007, p .46) apoyado por el conocimiento de las estructuras de la lengua. Como resultado del enfoque mencionado anteriormente para la enseñanza del idioma Inglés y el aprendizaje, se espera que los estudiantes ecuatorianos en el sistema de educación pública sean capaces de alcanzar objetivos significativos, tales como el acceso a la información publicada en Inglés en diferentes campos. Algunas teorías ayudarán a lograr nuestros objetivos, tales como el constructivismo, que se basa fundamentalmente en la observación y estudio científico acerca de cómo las personas aprenden, la teoría de la evaluación cognitiva, lo que sugiere tres puntos de vista del aprendizaje: cuantitativos, cualitativos y conductistas y por último, la teoría de las inteligencias múltiples, en los que la metodología del profesor sirve como hoja de reflexión sobre la percepción consciente de sus acciones durante el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

Palabras claves: Constructivism, Multiple Intelligences, Motivation



ABSTRACT

According to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, the curriculum of English for eighth, ninth, and tenth years of *Educación General Básica* is characterized by two main features:

First, focus on real-world contexts: Students will have to use the language productively when speaking and writing and receptively when listening and reading outside the classroom while showing that they possess the necessary skills for communication in everyday contexts. Second, the relationship of language forms, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, with the function (use): “Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes” (Brown, 2007, p.46) supported by knowledge of the language structures. As a result of the above mentioned approach to English language teaching and learning, it is expected that Ecuadorian students in the public educational system will be able to achieve meaningful objectives, such as accessing information published in English in different fields. Some theories will help to accomplish our objectives, such as **Constructivism**, which is basically based on observation and scientific study about how people learn, **the Cognitive evaluation theory**, which suggests three views of learning: quantitative, qualitative, and behaviorist; finally, the **Multiple Intelligence theory**, in which the teacher’s methodology serves as a foil for reflection about conscious awareness of their actions during the teaching-learning process.

Key words: Constructivism, Multiple Intelligence, Motivation



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DEDICATION

Returning to the classroom was not an easy road, but the unconditional support of my family and friends was very important, so I dedicate this Project to all of you who, in one way or another, were in my days of university adventures.

I dedicate this work:

To God, for giving me the opportunity to wake up every day and take shelter overnight.

To my parents, for their financial and moral support;

To my children, Ed and Hamilton, for being the engine that drove me to not giving up.



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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is considered a universal language; however, some students learn it with more ease than others. The aim for teachers and students is to understand why this happens and what the best perspectives to solve this issue are. The whole teaching/learning process is not only influenced by the language itself but by student's motivation, classroom environment, and teachers' methodology. With this idea in mind, we decided to do some research to find out what the negative aspects in the acquisition of English as a foreign language in the classroom of tenth grade in Técnico Salesiano High School in the City of Cuenca are.

In order to analyze this problem, we considered some theories which helped us carry out this research. We can mention the following theories: The Constructivist Approach, where students are asked to construct their knowledge in the external world through active learning (Kurt, 2006). This learning can be combined with statements which indicate that students should adapt previous knowledge with the new information in order to achieve a meaningful learning.

The Cognitive Evaluation Theory is another key for this research, considering this theory suggests three views of learning: quantitative, qualitative, and behaviorist. This last aspect has to do with the study of two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.



How can teachers accomplish it? There are many methods which can help teachers engage students in the acquisition of the English language, but, which one is the best? As time passes, new methods are created and others fall into disfavor. However, teachers should be aware of the different types of intelligences, such as bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, etc., in order to use the best method to deal with this problem, because students have different kinds of minds and abilities so they can learn, remember, perform, and understand things in different ways.

As a conclusion, this project employed a quantitative approach. All research instruments, such as observations and surveys, had as a main purpose to quantify the number of students, parents, and teachers in different scenarios of the teaching/learning process. It is imperative to explain that the analysis of the results was done through a statistical study using a SPSS 22 program. During this process, the aim was to identify the negative aspects that may or may not influence on the learning of the English language in all 10th graders at the Técnico Salesiano high school. The results of the quantitative research show that the negative aspects that influence on this problem are the lack of pressure from teachers; in other words, the teachers' methodology must be improved. Teachers will stimulate students' environment if they avoid translation because students expect the easy way to understand any kind of instruction or grammar point. At doing so, no doubt the student's performance is going to be higher.



CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Background and Justification

In the old school, teachers were the main model for students. They used to use discipline and punishment as part of the teaching/learning process, not only in English but also in the rest of subjects. The relation between teachers and students was based on the predominance of authority without giving students the opportunity to express their critical thinking. Nowadays, however, the teaching pedagogy has changed completely because students are the center of learning and teachers are the mediators who guide the process of their learning.

According to López and Miño-Garcés (2009), the learner is the center of the process and becomes the creator of his/her own knowledge. In the Learning for Life Philosophy, the student is considered a unique individual and a whole. The teacher should know all the aspects about his/her students' life: likes and dislikes, hobbies, family environment, etc. (Mino-Garces, 2009)

Being consistent with what was discussed above, constructivism will be a key part of this research considering the fact that teachers need to establish goals



and expectations with their students, so as to design an efficient and appropriate methodology. The question is: How will they accomplish this goal?

First of all, teachers should set up objectives as professionals of the teaching world and then think about the resources they are going to need in order to meet those goals. Even though there are many methods which enclose this aspect, teachers cannot concentrate in one method only. Teachers should include more than one method in their classes so that they can improve the effectiveness of the learning process.

Nevertheless, there are many other aspects that need to be considered when dealing with the acquisition of the English language; as teachers, we must not only focus on the teaching of a language but also take into consideration that the information we share with our students is very significant and valuable to them. Teachers must help students realize that this knowledge satisfies their expectations and is useful because learners incorporate their own thoughts and feelings, so that it may be meaningful to them.

1.2 Delimitation of the problem

English is considered a universal language, but nowadays people face many problems when trying to acquire English as a foreign language. Some students seem to learn this language more easily than others who have to fight to learn it. However, what are the students' expectations when acquiring a new language and what does the teacher's behavior have to do with this? In many cases, students show a lack of interest in the English language as they feel frustrated because of



the difficulties this language presents to the learner without knowing why this is happening to them.

If we take these aspects into consideration, the question which will guide this research will be the following: What are the negative aspects in the acquisition of English as a foreign language in all the 10th graders in Técnico Salesiano High School of the city of Cuenca?

A deep analysis will provide the negative aspects to teachers so that they may be aware of the problem and work towards the improvement of the whole teaching/learning process. As mentioned before, this research will be focused on tenth grade students and teachers at “Técnico Salesiano High School”.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Aim

- To analyze the negative aspects which cause problems in the acquisition of English as a foreign language in 10th graders in Técnico Salesiano High School in the city of Cuenca.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To determine what aspects interfere in the acquisition of the English language through interviews, surveys, and questionnaires administered to teachers, students and parents.
- To show the percentages of the most influential negative aspects in the teaching/learning process



- To present the problem and offer possible solutions for future improvement in the teachers' task.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, the English curriculum for eighth, ninth, and tenth years of *Basic General Education* is characterized by two main features:

First, focus on real-world contexts; because students will ultimately have to use the language productively (through speaking and writing) and receptively (through listening and reading) outside the classroom. Classroom tasks/activities must equip students with the necessary skills for communication in everyday contexts. Second, the relationship of language forms (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and function (use): “Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes” (Brown, 2007, p.46) supported by knowledge of the language structures. (Educacion, 2014)

As a result of the above mentioned approach to English language teaching and learning, it is expected that Ecuadorian students in the public educational system will be able to achieve meaningful objectives, such as accessing information published in



English in different fields. (Educacion, 2014, p. 6) In other words, current education has the challenge of contributing towards the development of students' skills to live together in their local communities, and to take a more proactive role as world citizens.

2.1 CONSTRUCTIVISM

This theory is a great help for this research, which is basically based on observation and scientific study of how people learn. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. In other words, students will learn *How to learn*. However, some criticisms from conservative or traditional educators who are against this theory state that the role of the teacher will disappear, but constructivism does not dismiss the active role of the teacher or the value of expert knowledge; it reinforces it!

Constructivism transforms students from passive recipient of information to active participants in the learning process, always guided by the teacher. The question here is: What is a constructivist classroom? Audrey Gray (1995) explains through an example what the characteristics of a constructivist classroom are. In the constructivist classroom, students work primarily in groups in an interactive and dynamic way. There is a great focus and emphasis on social-communication skills, as well as collaboration and exchange of ideas. This is contrary to the traditional classroom in which students work primarily alone and learning is achieved through repetition. The subjects are strictly adhered to and are guided by a textbook. However, in our experience as observers during our pre-professional practices, we witnessed that this theory is not applied in the classroom. Teachers still continue with the old teaching methods in which students have to follow what the book says.



On the other hand, constructivist classrooms should encourage these activities:

- a. Experimentation, in which students individually perform an experiment and then come together as a class to discuss the results.
- b. Research Projects, in which students research a topic and present their knowledge in front of the class.
- c. Field Trips, where students are allowed to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real world context; this should be often followed by class discussions.
- d. Films: these provide visual context and thus bring another element into the learning experience.
- e. Class Discussions: this technique is used in all the methods described above and it is one of the most important distinctions of constructivist teaching methods. (Methods, 2015)

Constructivist classrooms are structured so that learners are immersed in experiences which they may engage in meaning-making inquiry, action, imagination, invention, interaction, hypothesizing, and personal reflection. Teachers need to recognize how people use their own experiences, prior knowledge, and perceptions, as well as their physical and interpersonal environments to construct knowledge and meaning. The goal is to produce a democratic classroom environment that provides meaningful learning experiences for autonomous learners.

This perspective of learning presents an alternative view of what is regarded as knowledge, suggesting that there may be many ways of interpreting or understanding the world. The teacher is no longer seen as the expert who knows the answers to all the



questions she or he has constructed himself/herself, while students are asked to identify the teacher's constructions rather than their own.

2.1.1 Constructivist Teaching Involves Negotiation

Negotiation is an important aspect of a constructivist classroom. It unites teachers and students in a common purpose. Smith (1993) confirms that a negotiating curriculum means "custom-building classes every day to fit the individuals who attend" (p. 1). Boomer (1992) explains that it is important for teachers to negotiate because teachers talk openly about how new information may be learned and about constraints, such as obligatory curriculum (Gray, 1995) He comments that negotiating the curriculum means deliberately planning to invite students to contribute and to modify the educational program, so that they will have a real investment in both the learning journey and the outcomes. Negotiation also means making explicit and then confronting the constraints of the learning context and the non-negotiable requirements that apply.

Furthermore, Cook (1992) explains why negotiating the curriculum with students is important: Learners will work harder and better, and what they learn will mean more to them if they are discovering their own ideas, asking their own questions, and fighting hard to answer them by themselves. They must be educational decision makers. Out of negotiation comes a sense of ownership in learners for the work they are doing, and therefore a commitment to it.



Richard Mayer (2004) is against this theory; he argues that active learning is often suggested by those subscribing to this philosophy. He states that constructivism educators produce materials that require learning to be behaviorally active rather than cognitively active. He suggests using guided discovery through instructions and hands-on activities, rather than pure discovery.

A second important cognitive factor, presumably affecting the learning and retention of a potentially meaningful learning task, is the extent to which the relevant ideas in cognitive structure are discriminated from it. This is a reasonable statement stated by Ausubel; he says that students should combine the previous knowledge with the new information received in order to achieve a meaningful learning. However, in order to successfully pursue the goal of teaching students how to learn, it is useful to understand how the learning process occurs. Learning strategies can be defined as learners' behaviors that are intended to influence on how the learner processes information. For example, underlining key ideas in a passage, outlining the ideas in a lecture, or trying to put some recently learned information into their own words.

As a conclusion, constructivist classrooms are structured in a way in which learners are immersed in experiences and not guided by a textbook as it occurs in a traditional classroom. Second, a constructivist classroom means negotiation in which it unites teachers and students in a common purpose that results into custom-building classes. Third, constructivism transforms students from passive recipient of information to active participants in the learning process. But, how can we teachers engage our students in this teaching/learning process? The cognitive evaluation theory will clarify it through the use of three models of learning.



2.2 THE COGNITIVE EVALUATION THEORY

This theory suggests three views of learning: quantitative, qualitative, and behaviorist. The quantitative view or how much is learned, according to Weinstein (2015), consists of four main elements: instruction, learning process, learning outcome, and performance. First, instruction is presented to the learner. Second, the learner processes the incoming information. Third, this information is encoded in memory. If the learner processes the information less successfully, then less will be learned.

The qualitative view or what is learned involves the same elements mentioned above, that is to say, an association of how a learner processes information; this will result in a different kind of learning outcome. For example, a verbatim reciting of each word in a lesson might lead to a better performance on a test of verbatim recognition, while active paraphrasing might lead to better performance on a test requiring inferences from the lesson. The behaviorist model ignores the two cognitive elements: the learning process and the learning outcomes. According to this model, the performance on a post-test depends solely on the amount of instruction that is presented.

As mentioned before, the four components in learning: Instruction, Learning-Processes, Learning Outcomes, and Performance - are important within this theory and it is necessary to explain each of them. How are learning strategies related to these four components? First of all, ***Instruction*** refers to any sequence of events that is intended to help a person learn something. In this case, Mayer (1986) has distinguished between teaching of learning strategies for basic kinds of tasks and for complex kinds of tasks.



Basic learning refers to learn isolated facts, i.e., “ $2+2=4$ ”; on the other hand, complex learning refers to the learning of integrated bodies of knowledge, i.e., how a radar works. Second, *Learning Processes*, which include three memory stores (sensory, short-term and long-term memory) as well as four control processes (attention, rehearsal, encoding, and retrieval) (Weinstein, 2015). Going deeper into these last elements, attention is related to the information from the outside world, instructional materials that enter through sensory memory. Once the information enters in the short-term memory and if it declines, it is necessary to actively rehearse the material. According to the quantitative model, learning strategies can influence on how much rehearsal takes place. More rehearsal leads to more information being available for storage. Encoding is the step in which information is transferred from short-term memory into long-term memory. According to the quantitative model, learning strategies can influence on how fast and how much information is encoded. Moreover, according to the qualitative model, learning strategies can also influence on the quality of the encoding process, that is, the degree to which the new information is integrated with existing knowledge. (Weinstein, 2015) Finally, retrieval refers to transferring knowledge from long-term memory to short-term memory. According to the quantitative model, retrieval of prior knowledge during learning could affect the overall amount learned, but would not affect how the information is stored in long-term memory. According to the qualitative model, the outcome of learning depends on what is presented and the existing knowledge with which it is assimilated. (Weinstein, 2015)

Third, *Learning outcomes* involve a contrastive analysis between the quantitative and the qualitative model. The first one suggests that the amount of attention paid the



amount of rehearsal and the strength of encoding can affect how much is learned. On the other hand, the qualitative model suggests that attentional processes can affect the selection of information, rehearsal processes can affect the internal connections that are built within this new information, and encoding processes can affect the integration of new information with existing knowledge. For that reason, learning outcomes are discussed in three aspects of the learning outcome: the number of nodes, internal connections, and external connections. (Weinstein, 2015).

The number of nodes refers to the easy way of describing what is learned; in other words, each unit is considered to be a node. The internal connections refer to the internal structure of relations among the nodes. And the external connections refer to how well the new information is related to existing knowledge.

Finally, the last component of learning strategies is *Performance*, which is opposite to learning processes while learning outcomes are cognitive events that can be only indirectly studied. However, there are two types of performance measures: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative measure refers to the way of evaluating the outcome of learning; in other words, to provide the learner with a test (recall test) in which it will show how much is learned. In contrast, the qualitative measure predicts that differences in processing will lead to differences in the quality of learning outcomes. To measure differences in selective attention, recall or recognition tests can be scored by category, with special focus on which types of information are learned. (Weinstein, 2015)

Other cognitive factors suggested by The Cognitive Evaluation Theory are the two types of **Motivation Systems**: Intrinsic and Extrinsic. With Intrinsic motivation,



individuals perform tasks for their own achievement and satisfaction, which will be the goal of teachers. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is related to what students will get after their effort, which leads into a stage where they begin to lose motivation. (Meer, 2013). To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered to be motivated. Most theories of motivation reflect these concerns by viewing motivation as a unitary phenomenon, one that varies from very little motivation to act to a great deal of it. (Ryan, 2000) As an example, a student can be highly motivated to do homework because of his/ her curiosity and interest for something alternatively, or because he or she wants to procure teacher's or parent's approval. Another possibility is that a student could be motivated to learn a new set of skills because he or she understands their potential utility and value or because learning the skills will produce a good grade and the privileges a good grade affords. In these examples, the amount of motivation does not necessarily vary, but the nature and focus of the motivation being evidenced certainly do. The most basic distinction between *intrinsic and extrinsic motivation* is that the first one refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, while the second one refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome.

The phenomenon of intrinsic motivation was first acknowledged within experimental studies of animal behavior, where it was discovered that many organisms engaged in exploratory, playful, and curiosity-driven behaviors even in the absence of reinforcement or reward (White, 1959). These spontaneous behaviors, although clearly presenting adaptive benefits on the organism, appear not to be done for any such



instrumental reason, but rather for the positive experiences associated with exercising and extending ones capacities. (Ryan, 2000)

As intrinsic motivation exists in the connection between a person and a task, some authors have defined intrinsic motivation in terms of the task being interesting while others have defined it in terms of the satisfactions a person gains from intrinsically motivated task engagement.

There are some advantages in which intrinsic motivation can be long-lasting and self-sustaining. Efforts to build this kind of motivation are also typically efforts for promoting student learning. Such efforts often focus on the subject rather than on rewards or punishments. On the other hand, and these could be considered to be disadvantages, efforts at fostering intrinsic motivation can be slow to affect behavior and can require special and lengthy preparation. Students are individuals, so a variety of approaches may be needed to motivate different types of learners. It is often helpful to know what students' interests are in order to connect these interests with the subject matter. This requires getting to know students; also, it helps if the instructor is interested in the subject to begin with. (DeLong, 2002)

As mentioned before, there is the other side of the cognitive theory of the motivation system, which is extrinsic motivation. According to Matt DeLong (2002), students who are extrinsically motivated might say things like the following:

“I need a B- in Statistics to get into business school.”

“If I flunk Chemistry, I will lose my scholarship.”



“Our instructor will bring us donuts if we do well on today’s quiz.”

Extrinsic motivators more readily produce behavior changes and typically involve relatively little effort or preparation. Also, efforts at applying extrinsic motivators often do not require extensive knowledge of individual students. These characteristics can be called advantages of extrinsic motivation. However, there are some disadvantages in this respect; for example, extrinsic motivators can often distract students from learning the subject at hand. It can be challenging to devise appropriate rewards and punishments for student behaviors. Often, one needs to escalate the rewards and punishments over time to maintain a certain effect level. Also, extrinsic motivators typically do not work over the long term. Once the rewards or punishments are removed, students lose their motivation again.

Furthermore, there are some effects of motivation on learning styles:

Deep learners respond well to the challenge of mastering a difficult and complex subject. These are intrinsically motivated students who are often a joy to teach.

Strategic learners are motivated primarily by rewards. They react well to competition and the opportunity to outperform others. They often make good grades but never engage deeply with a subject unless there is a clear reward for doing so. They are sometimes called “bulimic learners,” which means learning as much as they need to do well on a test or exam and then promptly forgetting the material once the assessment is over.

Surface learners are often motivated by a desire to avoid failure. They typically avoid deep learning because if they see it as inherently risky behavior, they will often do what it takes to pass an exam or course, but they never choose to go beyond the minimum required for fear of failure. Teachers could handle surface learners by helping them gain



confidence in their abilities to learn and perform. “Scaffold” course material and assignments by designing a series of activities or assignments that build on each other over time in complexity and challenge; encourage these learners often and help them reflect on what they have learned and what they have accomplished. (Bain, 2004)

Matt DeLong (2002) cited some aspects that deal with a model of Intrinsic Motivation. First, if a student is given the opportunity to engage in a learning activity, he/she determines if the activity is one that is known to be **interesting**. If so, the student engages in the activity. If not, the student evaluates the activity on two factors—the **stimulation** (e.g. challenge, curiosity, fantasy) it provides and the **personal control** (e.g. free choice, not too difficult) it affords. If the student perceives the activity as stimulating and controllable, the student tentatively labels the activity as interesting and engages in it. If either condition becomes insufficient, then the student disengages from the activity—unless some extrinsic motivator influences him/her to continue. If the activity is repeatedly deemed stimulating and controllable, then the student may consider the activity interesting. As a result the student will be more likely to engage in the activity in the future, so our challenge, then, is to provide activities that are both stimulating and offer students a degree of personal control.

Also, Matt DeLong (2002) provides some strategies for motivating students to learn:

- **Become a role model for student’s interest.** Deliver your presentations with energy and enthusiasm. As a display of your motivation, your passion motivates your students. Make the course personal, showing why you are interested in the material.



- **Get to know your students.** You will be able to better tailor your instruction to students' concerns and backgrounds, and your personal interest in them will inspire their personal loyalty to you. Display a strong interest in students' learning and lots of faith in their abilities.
- **Use examples freely.** Many students want to be shown why a concept or technique is useful before they want to study it further. Inform students about how your course prepares students for future opportunities.
- **Use a variety of student-active teaching activities.** These activities directly engage students in the material and give them opportunities to achieve a level of mastery.
 - Teach by discovery. Students feel satisfaction when he or she, by reasoning a problem, can discover the underlying principle on their own.
 - Cooperative learning activities are particularly effective as they also provide positive social pressure.
- **Set realistic performance goals.** Help students achieve these goals by encouraging them to set their own reasonable goals. Design assignments that are appropriately challenging in view of the experience and aptitude of the class.
- **Place appropriate emphasis on testing and grading.** Tests should be a means of showing what students have mastered, not what they have not. Avoid grading on the curve and give everyone the opportunity to achieve the highest standard and grades.
- **Be free with praise and constructive in criticism.** Negative comments should pertain to particular performances, not the performer. Offer nonjudgmental feedback on students' work, stress opportunities to improve, look for ways to stimulate



advancement, and avoid dividing students into the best students and the worst students.

- **Give students as much control over their own education as possible.** Let students choose paper and project topics that interest them. Assess them in a variety of ways (tests, papers, projects, presentations, etc.) to give students more control over how they show their understanding to you. Give students options for how these assignments are weighed.

To sum up, it is important to review the Cognitive Evaluation Theory, which considers three views of learning: quantitative (how much is learned), qualitative (what is learned), and behaviorist (how is learned). By doing so, teachers will have a broader understanding of how students learn and how they face the whole teaching-learning process. Also, this theory refers to the importance and the types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, in which the individual/learner performs tasks on their own, reaching objectives, goals, and rewards. Finally, this theory will allow English teachers focus on the methods which serve as a foil for reflection and awareness throughout the teaching process. In this respect, the Multiple Intelligence Theory will be a great aid to understand how students learn.

2.3 MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE THEORY

As it was mentioned before teachers use different methods as a tool in which teachers come up with ideas about the teaching/learning process formed from the years they spent



as students, so either they can apply into classes or they can choose differently ways of using certain methods in order to satisfy students' expectations.

There are many methods which can help teachers engage students in the acquisition of the English language, but, which one is the best? As time passes, new methods are created and others fall into disfavor. In other words, there is no certain method which teachers can stick into their classrooms. Different methodologies and techniques will help teachers accomplish their goals as teachers and students' perceptions. Unfortunately, some students seem to learn a foreign language easily, while others have to fight with it, and, according to Gardner (1993) in his theory of Multiple Intelligence, there are different types of intelligences: Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Visual-Spatial, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, so students possess different kinds of minds/abilities and, therefore, students learn, remember, perform, and understand things in different ways (Felder, 2010)

Adapting Gardner's theory to this research, the importance of learning a foreign language is based not only on gaining knowledge but also on communicating with others. This language will be considered part of their lives since it does not mean just to learn skills and grammar rules. It means the assumption of new social and educational manners, and it has a significant influence on students. Also, Gardner claims that "languages are unlike any other subject taught in a classroom, in that they involve the acquisitions of skills and behavior patterns which are characteristics of another community" (Burden, 2015).



Lastly, as it was mentioned before, it is expected that Ecuadorian students in the public educational system will be able to achieve meaningful objectives, such as accessing information published in English in different fields. Focus on real-world contexts and language techniques are designed to engage learners in the authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. It is worth mentioning that these theories are a guide to understand the problem in the teaching/learning process of English as a foreign language.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This project employed a quantitative approach, as all research instruments had the aim to quantify the number of students, parents, or teachers in different scenarios of the teaching/learning process. First, observation was done to all 5 teachers, and 400 students of all the 10th grades at Técnico Salesiano high school. It was necessary to have an observation rubric which allowed the researcher to collect data in an objective manner. Some of the observed parameters in teachers were: the use of Spanish in the English class, the use of resources, the teaching methodology, to mention a few. In the case of students, we were able to observe their understanding of English, motivation, and the way language was used within the classroom. All the parameters in teachers and students observation rubrics were based on quantifiers (always, sometimes, never) and with percentages (-10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%) respectively.



Once observation was done, 353 students and 103 parents had to complete a survey where the information obtained helped to see if they agreed or disagreed with teachers' methodologies and attitudes towards the learning process. Again, the model for measuring results was based on quantifiers (always, sometimes, never) in the case of students, and an agreement scale for parents (agree, neutral, not agree).

It is imperative to explain that the analysis of the results had to be done through a statistical study, as the sample taken during the process was too broad and could not be done only by interpreting results shown in simple graphics. For this reason, the SPSS 22 program was used and, in addition, it was necessary to have an appropriate guidance for the understanding of statistical terms. During this process, the main goal was to identify the negative aspects that may or may not influence on the learning of the English language in the abovementioned group, so as to be able to write the most appropriate solutions to the problems that were identified.

In order to analyze the data collected with the SPSS 22, it was necessary to set ordinal scales of the results with a standard deviation, accompanied by the average and the p value. It was also necessary to establish which teachers and students caused more problems in the language acquisition process. This resulted into two groups, the *Low Group* and the *High Group*. The term *Low Group* refers to those groups with more problems within the classroom. On the other hand, the *High Group* refers to the ones with fewer problems and may have more successful results in the English classroom.

In order to determine the p value, it was necessary to use the Mann Whitney test and the *Chi square* or *Yates correction* test to compare frequencies, as they help to determine how significant the difference between the two groups is in all the aspects



considered in the research instruments. If the p value is less than 0.05, it indicates that there is an association between students' and teachers' observation results and parents' and students' responses regarding to English classes. Whereas, if the p value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no association between the answers obtained from all the participants.

Concluding this chapter, this research was focused on discovering the problem or aspects affecting the acquisition of the English language. As it was mentioned before, this project employed a quantitative approach, using all research instruments, such as observations and surveys which purpose was to quantify the number of students, parents, or teachers in different scenarios of the teaching/learning process and it was necessary to have an appropriate guidance in order to accomplish this process using the SPSS 22 program. This program helps to identify the negative aspects that may cause problems in the acquisition of the English language.



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

As it was mentioned in Chapter III, with the purpose of presenting the results objectively, it was necessary to use a SPSS 22 statistical program in which it was indispensable to use the Mann Whitney test and the *Chi square* or *Yates correction* test to determine the *p* value and compare frequencies respectively. In order to understand the results obtained in the surveys administered to students and parents, and the observations to teachers and students, it was imperative to establish a Low Group and a High Group. These two groups allowed us to analyze all the parameters set in the abovementioned instruments in a much more concise and simple way. The idea is to help future readers feel less overwhelmed and reduce the ambiguity of the results.

It is important to bring back the purpose of this study, which was to identify the negative aspects in the acquisition of English as a foreign language. The parameters considered for the analysis are those that in the *p value* were less than 0,05 (5%) between



the High and Low Group. It is important to clarify that the *p value* only shows if the difference between the groups is significant enough to consider them for this study. Also, this value was calculated automatically by the SPSS 22.

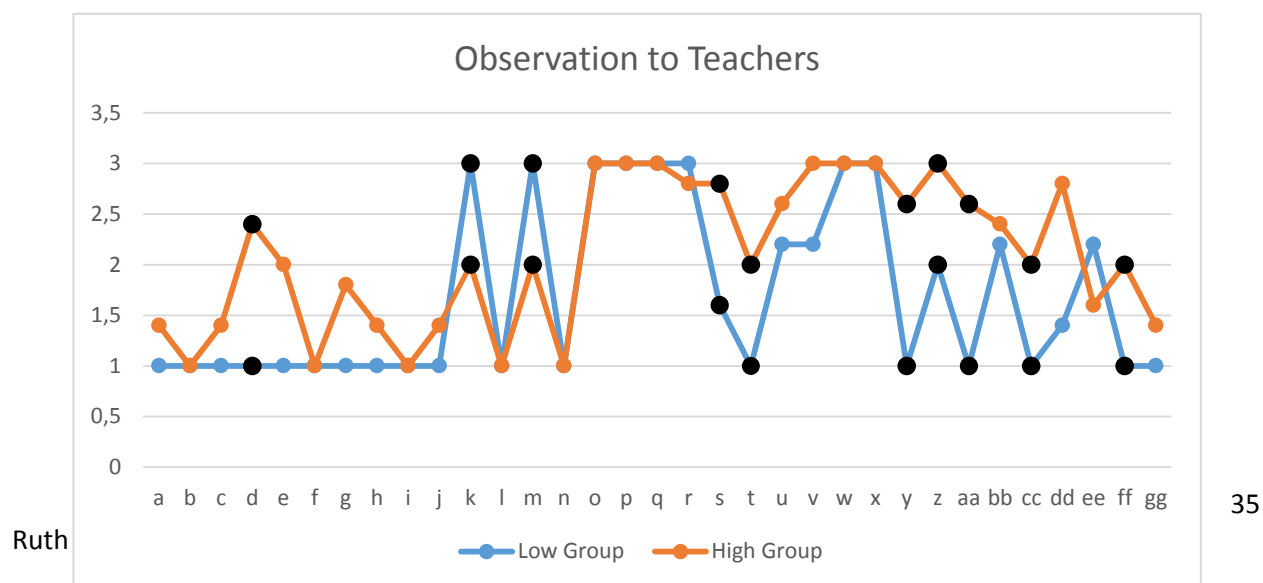
When doing the observation to teachers, a lot of parameters were considered, among which we highlight the following:

- a. Giving definitions
- b. Synonyms
- c. No Translation
- d. Having students guess from context
- e. Writing the word in a sentence
- f. Demonstrating meaning through gestures
- g. Others
- h. Realia
- i. Tape recorder
- j. Flash cards
- k. Projector
- l. Handouts
- m. Computer
- n. CD player
- o. Provides instructions
- p. Explains grammar
- q. Clarifies vocabulary
- r. Re explains a topic students did not understand
- s. Corrects students' mistakes
- t. No use of translation
- u. Asks questions
- v. Answers questions
- w. Controls behavior
- x. Follows a lesson plan
- y. Focuses on making connections with students' background experiences
- z. Interacts with students using appropriate language
- aa. Provides activities to practice and extend language and content learning
- bb. Uses real context while explaining a topic
- cc. Uses humor
- dd. Controls time
- ee. Engages students to work in pairs
- ff. Motivates students to work in groups
- gg. Motivates students to improve their language skills



In order to know which parameters are the most influential ones in a negative manner in the teaching/learning process, the graphs below have been designed in different sizes/colors. As it was mentioned before in this statistical study, to have a significant difference between the above mentioned groups, a scale from 0 to 3 was considered. 0 represents not using the parameters listed and 3 represents using them most of the time. This first graph and chart show the parameters related to teachers' methodology. Ten of the thirty three observed aspects showed significant differences (*p value*) between the two groups. These ten aspects represent 30,% of negative influence on the teaching learning process. According to these results, the aspects to consider for the study are the following: Having students guess from context (1,7%), projector usage (0,3%), computer usage (0,3%), correction of students' mistakes (1,4%), avoiding translation (0,3%), being aware of students' background experiences (0,5%), appropriate language interaction with students (0,3%), practicing activities to extend and to learn the target language (0,5%), humor (0,3%), and motivating cooperative learning (0,3%).

Observing teachers: Analysis





| Observing teachers | Low Group | High Group | P | % |
|--|-----------|------------|--------|------|
| | Mean | Mean | | |
| d. Having students guess from context | 1,00 | 2,40 | 0,017* | 1,7% |
| k. Projector | 3,00 | 2,00 | 0,003* | 0,3% |
| m. Computer | 3,00 | 2,00 | 0,003* | 0,3% |
| s. Corrects students' mistakes | 1,60 | 2,80 | 0,014* | 1,4% |
| t. No use of translation | 1,00 | 2,00 | 0,003* | 0,3% |
| y. Focuses on making connections with students' background experiences | 1,00 | 2,60 | 0,005* | 0,5% |
| z. Interacts with students using appropriate language | 2,00 | 3,00 | 0,003* | 0,3% |
| aa. Provides activities to practice and extend language and content learning | 1,00 | 2,60 | 0,005* | 0,5% |
| cc. Uses humor | 1,00 | 2,00 | 0,003* | 0,3% |
| ff. Motivates students to work in groups | 1,00 | 2,00 | 0,003* | 0,3% |

Meanwhile, during the observation to students, the parameters considered were:

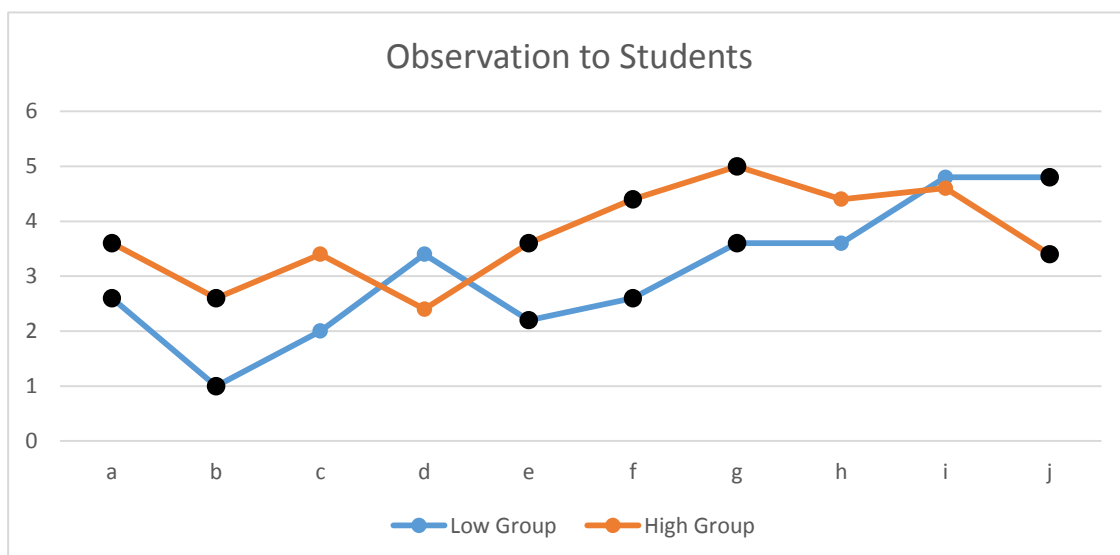
- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| a. Knowledge of vocabulary | e. Show motivated in class |
| b. Ability to use the target language in a conversation | f. Show confidence to ask questions |
| c. Participation in classroom exercises | g. Follow directions from teacher |
| d. Show bored in class | h. Able to work in groups |
| | i. Hyperactive student |



j. Shots off easily

In this part of the statistical study, a scale from 1 to 5 was used, and the results obtained from the observation allowed us to identify the risky aspects in the learning process. It was necessary, however, to compare the set of teachers scored below the median in the test (Low Group) with all those who obtained a score above the median (High Group). Thus, it has been found that there are significant differences with regards to vocabulary knowledge (4,2%), usage of the appropriate language in a conversation (1,8%), show motivation in class (1,1%), show confidence to ask questions (2,4%), follow directions from the teacher (1,7%), and get easily distracted (1,1%). As a result, six of the ten observed aspects showed risks; therefore, it can be concluded that the percentage of the negative aspects in students is 60%.

Observation to students: Analysis





| Observation to students | Low Group | High Group | P | % |
|---|-----------|------------|--------|------|
| | Mean | Mean | | |
| a. Knowledge of vocabulary | 2,60 | 3,60 | 0,042* | 4,2% |
| b. Ability to use the target language in a conversation | 1,00 | 2,60 | 0,018* | 1,8% |
| e. Show motivated in class | 2,20 | 3,60 | 0,011* | 1,1% |
| f. Show confidence to ask questions | 2,60 | 4,40 | 0,024* | 2,4% |
| g. Follow directions from teacher | 3,60 | 5,00 | 0,017* | 1,7% |
| j. Shots off easily | 4,80 | 3,40 | 0,011* | 1,1% |

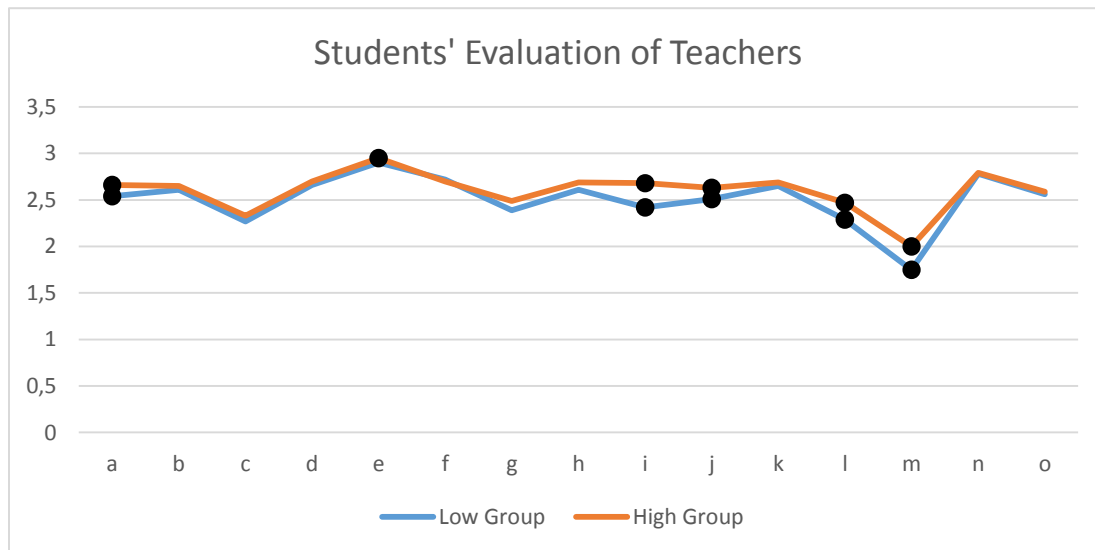
Following with this study, there is another research instrument with which students evaluated their teachers. The parameters considered were:

- a) Clearly explains the objectives, requirements, and grading system of the course
- b) Explains assignments clearly
- c) Makes classes interesting and relevant
- d) Uses class time effectively
- e) Knows the subject matter
- f) Uses aids (computer, projector, flash cards)
- g) Recognizes and acknowledges effort
- h) Is approachable and willing to help students



- i) Encourages and accepts different opinions
- j) Enforces rules fairly and consistently
- k) Encourages cooperation and participation
- l) Provides opportunities for students' choice
- m) Communicates with parents
- n) Talks to students respectfully
- o) Encourages students to think for themselves

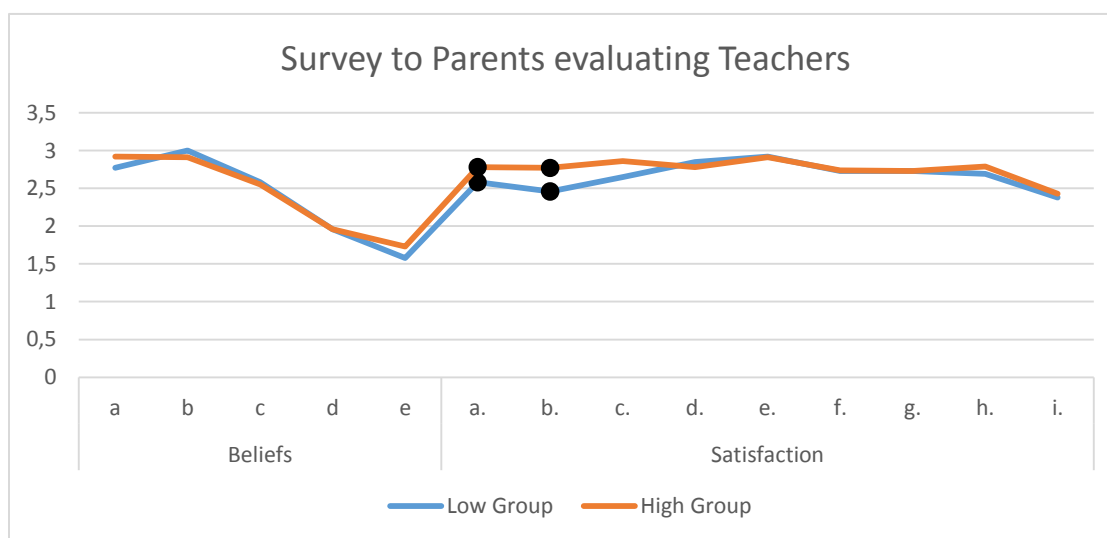
In this group, the results of the surveys with which students evaluated their teachers were designed on a scale from 1 to 3 (1 always, 2 sometimes, 3 never). It was possible to identify those six parameters which almost coincided with the Low and High group. These parameters are: Clear Explanation of the Objectives (4,0%), Encourages and accepts different opinions (0,0%), Enforces rules fairly and consistently (2,9%), Provides opportunities for students' choice (1,7%), Communication with parents (0,1%). To conclude, it is worth mentioning that students themselves recognize some factors, positive or negative, in the process of acquiring English as a foreign language.



| Students' evaluation of Teachers | | N | Media | p | % |
|---|------------|-----|-------|--------|------|
| a) Clearly explains the objectives, requirements and grading system of the course | Low Group | 153 | 2,54 | 0,040* | 4,0% |
| | High Group | 200 | 2,66 | | |
| | Total | 353 | 2,60 | | |
| e) Knows the subject matter | Low Group | 153 | 2,90 | 0,050* | 5,0% |
| | High Group | 200 | 2,95 | | |
| | Total | 353 | 2,93 | | |
| i) Encourages and accepts different opinions | Low Group | 153 | 2,42 | 0,000* | 0% |
| | High Group | 200 | 2,68 | | |
| | Total | 353 | 2,57 | | |
| j) Enforces rules fairly and consistently | Low Group | 153 | 2,51 | 0,029* | 2,9% |
| | High Group | 200 | 2,63 | | |
| | Total | 353 | 2,58 | | |
| l) Provides opportunities for students' choice | Low Group | 153 | 2,29 | 0,017* | 1,7% |
| | High Group | 200 | 2,47 | | |
| | Total | 353 | 2,39 | | |
| m) Communicates with parents | Low Group | 153 | 1,75 | 0,001* | 0,1% |
| | High Group | 200 | 2,00 | | |
| | Total | 353 | 1,89 | | |



Lastly, there was a survey in which parents evaluated their children's teachers, using the same scale and representation of the previous surveys (1 no answering, 3 agree). Only two aspects were identified with a minor difference between the High group parents with the Low group parents. These parameters were: Satisfaction with the teacher as he/she provides instructions and Satisfaction with the teacher as he/she re-explains a topic students did not understand.



| | | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|------|------|--------|
| a) I am satisfied with the teacher because he/she provides instructions | Low Group | 26 | 2,58 | 0,50 | 0,037* |
| | High Group | 77 | 2,78 | 0,45 | |
| | Total | 103 | 2,73 | 0,47 | |
| b) I am satisfied with the teacher because he/she re-explains a topic students did not understand | Low Group | 26 | 2,46 | 0,58 | 0,007* |
| | High Group | 77 | 2,77 | 0,46 | |
| | High Group | 77 | 2,63 | 0,22 | |
| | Total | 103 | 2,61 | 0,23 | |

Finally, mostly all respondents in this survey are mothers; in fact, they constituted 63% of the groups. After reviewing these results, it was imperative to establish a Low Group and a High Group. These two groups allowed us to analyze all the parameters set in the abovementioned instruments in a much more concise and simple way. These results



show that these parameters are related to the teachers' methodology and satisfaction with the teacher from the parents' side.

The parameters considered for the analysis are those that in the *p value* were less than 0,05 (5%) between the High and Low Group. It is important to clarify that the *p value* only shows if the difference between the groups is significant enough to consider them for this study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of this quantitative research, we can see that the negative aspects that influence on the teaching-learning process in 10th grades at Tecnico



Salesiano High School is the lack of pressure from teachers; in other words, the teacher's methodology must be improved. For that reason, we suggest the following:

- a. Teachers must speak in English most of the class time, even if students do not understand everything at the beginning of the lessons; by doing so, teachers will stimulate students' environment. Teachers must avoid translation because students know that translation is coming one way or the other, so they expect the easy way to come in order to understand any instruction or grammar point.
- b. Teachers should focus on work in groups more often. Teachers are aware that students are not allowed to meet after class, so teachers should be more understandable and give them some time during class to coordinate and prepare a project under their supervision. Teachers should grade the students' effort during class time.
- c. Teachers should motivate students to participate in class, even if students do not have a fluent pronunciation. Teachers should stimulate them to get away from fears and give them confidence. After students make mistakes, teachers should repeat those in the right way so students can realize what those mistakes were.
- d. Teachers should use fun activities in order to get students' attention. As it was mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.3, which deals with the Multiple Intelligence Theory, it could be a good way to share this knowledge once in a while so that students can experience having classes outside the classroom.
- e. Technology is very important, but it could be a good aid for reinforcement if teachers bring some realia into class or ask students to bring some real things. As an example, if the topic is about food, students can bring some food and together they can prepare a recipe. Or if the topic is about professions they can bring some clothes and use them as a



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custom. In other words, after a brief introduction about the topic, teachers should reinforce that topic with real participation from students. Finally, interaction is the key for students to improve their knowledge. Students may take advantage if the environment turns into an English environment where students can use the target language productively by speaking and writing and receptively by listening and reading outside the classroom with the necessary skills for communication in everyday contexts.

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APPENDICES