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**English learning strategies that boost the development
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CERTIFICACIÓN

We certify that this research project was presented by Gianella Tamara Tumbaco Vega as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Bachelor Degree in English Language with a Minor in Educational Management**.

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DEDICATION

To my mother, the most holy and lovely person, who has always been my support and has constantly inspired me to work hard, to follow my dreams and to achieve my goals.

To my beloved father, for being my best teacher along this journey and for encouraging me with his wise words to go forward and to not give up.

To my brothers, who have motivated me with love, affection and care.

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this research project is to determine English learning strategies that boost the development of communicative skills of pre-school students level 2 in San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil. The specific objectives are to define English learning strategies for young learners and to identify how to boost the development of communicative skills in pre-school children. The research method in this study was a quantitative approach. The data collection was made with a survey to know about students' learning experiences and through observations for both teachers and students to assess learners' communicative abilities and to determine teachers' techniques and strategies. Observations were recorded in rubrics. It is concluded that the poor use of English learning strategies affects students' communicative skills since they are not involved in activities that boost their communicative skills.

Keywords: (English learning strategies, young learners, communicative skills, teaching strategies, communicative activities, teaching English.)

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most important objectives language teachers want to develop when teaching a foreign language. They plan activities, look for effective techniques, and assess students' performance thinking on how to get their students to become fluent in the target language. Working with children in particular could be especially challenging but at the same time very rewarding. Children are different in many ways and they do not learn in the same manner as adults (Nunan, 2010). They adopt different learning styles and strategies in the learning process in order to acquire new knowledge. The style children choose will depend on their personality types, thus, one child can be careful and reflective while another can be a more interactive child. Accordingly, learning styles are related to personality features and describe cognitive categories such as analytic, global, reflective and impulsive. Moreover, there are styles that describe perceptual differences such as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners (Pinter, 2017). It is important to mention that education must be based on the students' needs; teachers of young learners should take into account that children need a good atmosphere, enjoyable activities, and require more motivation and enthusiasm than adults (Bland, 2015). The European Commission as cited by Shin & Crandall, (2014) states that there are several benefits for language learners when they start at early stages of their lives, such as better language skills and favourable attitudes to people who speak different languages and belong to different cultures.

Research increasingly shows that most young children are capable of learning two languages and that bilingualism is a good way to improve their cognitive, cultural, and economic function (Bialystok, 2011). Learning a second language does not cause disorder, on the contrary, children who learn another language show improvements on standardized tests of basic skills, and derive additional cognitive, social and effective benefits (Pinter, 2017).

Pre-school students level 2 who are learning English as a foreign language in San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil have difficulty communicating in

English because of the teaching strategies that have been used with them in the past. Their education has been based on memorization of dialogues and repetition of words that they are not able to use in simple regular interactions with their peers or with the teacher. This research paper is focused in presenting effective teaching techniques that lead to the appropriate development of their communicative skills.

Statement of the problem

Pre-school students level 2 in San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil show problems when communicating in English with their classmates and their teacher. This could happen because teachers may not be focused on using English learning strategies that boost the development of their communicative skills. They could be teaching the traditional way with little or no interactive activities which would cause students do not work in pairs or groups in tasks that demand communication. Additionally, the activities used in class may not be encouraging learners to develop speaking skills.

Research questions

What does theory say about first and second language acquisition?

What are the challenges when teaching English to young learners?

What principles and strategies are good for teaching English to young learners?

What kind of activities should teachers use to encourage communication in young learners?

General objective

To determine English learning strategies that boost the development of communicative skills of Pre-school students, level 2, in San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil by doing a literature review of current work made on teaching English to young learners.

Specific objectives

1.-To define English language learning strategies for young learners.

2.-To identify how to boost the development of communicative skills in pre-school children.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Language acquisition is one of the most interesting aspects of human development (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). There are various theories on how a language is acquired. Nativism for example, assumes that some important aspects of children's linguistic knowledge are not acquired but are innate (Ben Ambridge, 2011). This theory claims that babies are born with the knowledge that languages have patterns and with the ability to seek out and identify those patterns (Bergmann, 2007). Noah Chomsky, who is the author of that theory, assumes that the acquisition of the first language happens entirely in the brain (Nunan, 2010). Additionally, cognitivists believe that learning results from organizing and processing information effectively (Jordan, Carlile and Stack, 2008). Moreover, according to the cognitive perspective, people learn best when encouraged to discover information pertinent to their own needs. Thus, teachers should design material that stimulates learners' cognitive processes and encourages learners to make mental connections for themselves. Jean Piaget for instance, sustains that children learn best the natural way: through experimentation and interaction with the environment (Fleming, 2004). For Piaget children are active learners who construct their own knowledge working with objects or ideas (Cameron, 2008). Moreover, Vygotsky considers children as active learners in a world full of people, where language is developed from social interaction. He argued that in a supportive interactive environment children are able to advance to a higher level of knowledge and performance (Spada, 2006); thus, the way in which older children and adults talk to infants play a crucial role in how a child acquire languages (Bergmann, 2007).

Evidence is growing that learning has more durable retention when taught using active, constructivist methods (Hunt, 2013). According to the constructivism view, language is made by the child using natural mental equipment but working on information provided by the environment (Hoff, 2014). Constructivism holds that people build knowledge and understanding by integrating the knowledge they already possess with new information. For constructivists, learning is an active process through which learners build new meaning (Jordan, Carlile and Stack, 2008).

Second language learning

In the field of second language learning, Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2013), mention that language is an elaborated communication system that has several levels of analysis which are phonology, syntax, morphology, lexis, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse. Over the years, numerous researchers have given their view of how these fields are interconnected. For example, Skinner (2014) believed that learning is the result of habits that are formed through repeated trial, error and reward. Additionally, Chomsky argued that even if a sentence is grammatically correct, it does not mean it has meaning (Chomsky, 2002). All and all, the relationship between syntax and morphology is somehow central to language learning, and it has been a topic of interest of many second language learning theories that have tried to explain how second language is acquired.

Hall (2004) explains that the process of second language acquisition is similar to the process by which children acquire L1. Through the years, research in second language acquisition has yielded that language learning is not just rote memorization, but it involves learning to express communicative needs (Gass, 2013). In Van Patten and Williams's viewpoint, input is necessary for acquiring a second language (2014). They also explain that various aspects of language enter learners' minds when they are focused on communicative interaction. Additionally, second language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language; the teaching space may function as an informal environment for getting input as well as a formal linguistic atmosphere where language acquisition takes place. According to McLaughlin (2013), children appear to be directed in second language learning, as in first language learning through strategies that lead them to formulate certain types of hypotheses about the linguistic system to be learned. Basic principles and procedures for teaching a second or foreign language, are theoretically connected and include a method with a collection of strategies and learning activities designed to obtain certain goals and achieve specific learning outcomes of the teaching and learning processes. Methods denote a kind of educational set; each method has a label or brand, and each is differentiated from other methods by the theory of

language, theory of learning, tasks, activities, exercise types, learner roles and teacher roles (Nunan, 2010).

Choosing a method depends a great deal on the context (Sowden, 2007). It should be noted that while the choice of a method is important, it is just one part in successful language learning. The effectiveness of a method will depend on several factors such as; the aims and goals of a teaching program, the age of the learners, the learners' styles and strategies, and the learners' previous learning experiences and expectations (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

There are several methods to use in terms of teaching the English language. Nunan (2010) describes some of them. The silent way, is a method based on the idea that teachers should be as silent as possible, but learners should be encouraged to speak during class. In this method the learning is facilitated when learners discover and create rather than remember and repeat what they are going to learn. It is facilitated when it is accompanied by physical objects and when learners have to solve problems involving the material to be learned. Richards and Rodgers (2014) add that the silent way views learning as a problem solving, creative, discovering activity in which the role of the learner is an active one. Learners are responsible for their own learning and must develop independence, responsibility and autonomy, while the teachers' role is to teach, guide, assess and then get out of the way.

According to Spada (2006) learners, in an informal second language-learning environment, are usually allowed to be silent until they are ready to speak. This is one of the pillars of the total physical response method (TPR). TPR encourages learners to listen and then respond to the spoken target language commands of the teacher; in other words, its main purpose is to teach language through physical activity. TPR is effective because learners enjoy it, thus, it lifts the pace and the mood (Widodo, (2005). Nunan (2010) adds that TPR is one of the most popular methods that teachers use because it is effective for both teenagers and young learners. Thus, it focused on input and physical action, and also because it lacks of any formal

focus on grammar. The role of the learner is to listen and perform and the role of the teacher is an active and direct one. According to Al Harrasi (2014) TPR produces a good atmosphere because it encourages students' participation, involves themselves in actions and it builds their enthusiasm and interest as they feel free to move around.

"Communicative Language Teaching" method (CLT) has a learner-centered approach that states that language is not only a set of rules to be memorized but it is a system for communication where students are considered as a "whole person", and the teachers are perceived as counselors (Brown, 2014). In a learner-centered approach, the students do the learning and the teacher's role is of a facilitator (Thomson, 2001). The goal of student-centered learning is to bring the classroom and students to life. The teacher supports, assists and guides students to meet the goals that have been set by the students and the teacher (Overby, 2011). When the student-centered learning approach is used correctly, it can change the face of education into a permanent learning process in which the learner strive for solutions to problems without dependency of an instructor. In the learner-centered classroom, experiential learning plays an important role. A lot of pair and group work characterizes this approach, so the students have the opportunity to interact with each other (Nunan, 2010). The use of this approach can improve students' participation, facilitate retention of knowledge and encourage the development of problem-solving skills (Pinter, 2017).

Lessons could involve group work, translation, recording, transcription, reflection and observation, listening or free conversation. Another approach stated by Brown (2014), is the Natural approach, which focuses on teaching communicative abilities. It is viewed as a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages. The most important role of the teacher is to act as a source of understandable input. They must create a low-anxiety atmosphere for learning, and must select a mixture of classroom activities (Nunan, 2010). Besides, Richards and Rodgers, (2014) state that this approach is characterized by a selection of communicative activities and topics that result from the learner needs.

Teaching English to young learners

Children learn in accordance to specific stages of development that present some challenges for the teacher. Piaget develops a framework in which he suggests four universal stages that all children get through (Pinter, 2017). The first one is the Sensori-motor stage in which the child learns to interact with the environment by manipulating objects. This stage is characterized by the fast growth of the child's vocabulary (Nunan, 2010). At stage two, the pre-operational stage, children start to develop their thoughts. It is characterized by egocentrism (Piaget, 2013). At the next stage, the concrete-operational stage, the child begins to develop the ability to separate the self from the environment, their thinking becomes more coherent and organized but it is still very concrete. And finally, what marks the end of the developmental process of the child is the formal-operational stage. Pinter (2017) argues that at this stage children are able to think about abstracts ideas and situations. It is considered that they achieve formal logic.

It is really important for children to learn English since it give them a wider range of opportunities for their future lives. However, teaching English to young learners faces some challenges in cognitive development, in motivation, in attention, in multi-level groups and in assessment (Nunan, 2010).

One of the challenges is that teachers should remember that children go through considerable developmental, psychological and social changes, and those stages have to be taken into consideration at the time of creating tasks and materials and designing learning experiences for them. At the initial stages, the child can follow one-step instructions followed by two step instructions and three- step instructions. Then the child can understand symbolic concepts like numbers and letters before learning reading; they can play with activities such as rearranging scrambled letters to make words, followed by the ability to grasp abstract concepts.

Another challenge teachers have is to give importance to the enthusiastic and positive traits of young children, and keep praising them to have them motivated and ready to participate. In addition, teachers should

develop strategies that help to maintain motivation in the students; they should make learning goals explicit, select content that learners can relate, personalize the learning process, encourage group or collaborative learning, provide opportunities for authentic communication and provide evidence of progress Dornyei, (2001).

Another important thing to consider is that teachers should vary activities so children do not turn off. The activities that teachers use must maintain motivation and they should be focused on the different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Additionally, teachers should be aware of the physical and mental difficulties of individual learners such as attention deficit disorder, hearing problems and visual problems. (Pinter, 2017)

Finally, teachers of young learners should think beyond proficiency since children differ in many ways including personality, aptitude, attitude, motivation, learning styles and strategies. For that reason, teachers should modify tasks so that they can be done with students at different levels of proficiency and with different learning styles. Accordingly, teachers need to be constantly aware of what the children know, what difficulties they are experiencing and how best to help them (Loannou, 2003).

Principles, techniques and strategies in teaching English to young learners.

The key to teaching English to young learners is to comprehend the principles of language acquisition and apply them in ways that keep children motivated to learn (Hashemi and Azizinezhad, 2011).

Language learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning (Jordan, Carlile and Stack, 2008). Another definition given by Cohen (2014) says that language-learning strategies are thoughts and actions that students choose to help them develop different tasks. He also explains that language-learning strategies are developed to enhance learning, to perform specific tasks, to solve specific problems, and to make

learning easier, faster and more enjoyable. Teachers should be aware that these learning strategies are particularly important for learning a language since they are tools for active and self-directed participation, which is crucial for developing communicative competence (Brown, 2014). Additionally, Hismanoglu (2000) mentions that teachers who are interested in preparing learners in using language learning strategies should know their students and their interests, motivations and learning styles.

Oxford (2003) defines learning strategies as special ways for processing new information that improve comprehension, learning and the retention of information. She also believes that learning strategies influence learning in a positive way. She proposes six groups of learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective, and social. Cognitive strategies are the skills that involve manipulations or transformation of the language in direct ways, through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining and reorganizing information with structures and sounds. Metacognitive strategies, on the other hand, are used to provide executive control over the learning process. These strategies are strong predictor of L2 proficiency. Memory-related strategies are techniques that help the learners to store new information in memory and retrieve it later. There are also strategies that are used to guess from the context in listening and reading which are called Compensatory strategies. Thus, there are techniques that help learners to gain better control over their emotions, attitudes and motivations related to language learning. These techniques are the Affective strategies. Finally, the social strategies are actions that involve others in the language learning process.

Teaching languages to children is different from teaching languages to adults. The age factor plays a major role because the needs of children are different than the needs of adults, and the language competences and the cognitive skills addressed are also different. Thus, it is important to differentiate how to teach the different language skills to children (Harmer, 2007).

Listening

For Moon (2005), children acquire first the listening skill, particularly if they do not read yet, so what they hear is their main source of the language. According to Nunan (2010), listening is fundamental for language acquisition because it offers input to the learners. Without opportunities to see and hear the target language, acquisition will not take place. In addition, Nunan also mentions that listening gives the students a model they can follow when they have the opportunity to speak. When we teach listening to children, it is key to give students as many visual aids as possible, through facial expressions, through movement, mime and pictures, and by having them to carry out commands.

It is essential to highlight that young learners can hardly understand anything at all, unless the speaker is talking about things the learner is observing. Accordingly, teachers should also use many listening activities in which students have to move about. Moon (2005) explains that the younger the students are, the more physical activities they need, the more language children learn, and the more teachers can ask them to do. For example, teachers can use listening activities to get children to follow instructions in a game, in miming a song or rhyme and in acting out a role-play (Wright, 2001). For this reason, the teacher is a very significant source of listening material, consequently teachers should speak in animated, energetic and interesting manner so that children have interest in the lesson (Pinter, 2017). It is important to remember that most of the students have little or no opportunity to practice English outside the classroom, so the need of lots of practice when they are in class is imperative. The activities to use with children should be simple enough for them to understand what the teacher expects of them, explains Linse and Nunan (2006). The listening activities should be achievable and stimulating for them to feel satisfied with their work that is why they should take a large proportion of time. Additionally, they explain that the kind of listening activities that work better with children involve giving instructions for games, action songs, total physical response activities and tasks in which children have to color, cut and stick. Johnstone

(2002) claims that one of the most effective ways to teach listening is through using songs.

Speaking

In the words of Phillips (2013), listening is the foundation of other skills; by listening children are preparing to imitate the sounds when they speak. The relationship between listening and speaking is important since they are both oral skills. According to Nunan (2010), we need to have an adequate mastery of the three systems of language: the system of sounds, the vocabulary or the lexical system and the grammar system, to be able to communicate. When teaching speaking to young learners, it is vital to know that teachers must create fun activities that keep learners active; even when using repetition it has to be meaningful. Nunan classifies speaking tasks into reproductive and creative tasks; the reproductive tasks are the ones in which the students reproduce the language following the models provided by the teacher and the creative tasks are the ones in which students have the freedom to use the language according to their knowledge and they are also encouraged to use their initiative. In addition teachers must build classroom routines in English because it helps the learner to use the language communicatively, as it happens when the teacher greet the students every day, say the day's date, share some experiences and say farewells to everyone (Shin & Crandall, 2014). Additionally, Pinter (2017) says that the speaking skill is developed as students work on drilling phrases and repeating models; after young learners have been exposed to English through listening, they soon want and are able to participate in interactions with the teacher and with each other. Children love language play; they even enjoy poems, rhymes and tongue twisters which can help the learners to learn vocabulary and structures. Pinter adds that what help children to move from listening to speaking and to begin to interact with each other are the unanalyzed chunks. This means that the young learners can remember words or phrases from previously heard input and use them unconsciously.

Another activity that help young learner to develop speaking skills is the one in which students take on new identities and talk to a finger puppet

and act out a character. These are called “Drama activities”. (Bland, 2015). Using drama has a strong advantage as it gives students the chance to communicate, even with limited language, and it becomes a powerful tool since acting out a dialogue is different from reading it. Thus, Bland adds that drama is multidimensional because it involves the use of sensory images and it allows for emotional engagement and participating with others.

Additionally, Kurniasih, (2011) describes two more types of speaking activities. The first type is using songs, chants and poems to encourage students to mimic the model they hear. The second type is the use of games and pair work activities which encourage young learners to manipulate the language. For example, teachers can use information gap activities in which pairs of students are given a picture; the pictures should contain some missing elements that students have to describe to their pair mates.

Pronunciation

Kelly (2006) explains that a successful production of the language comes after acquiring receptive skills. As mentioned before, what help students to develop speaking is listening; accordingly, listening plays an important role in teaching pronunciation. Phillips (2013) states that native English-speaking children learn how to pronounce words correctly by using rhymes, action songs, chants and finger-plays; thus, using these sources can be of great help when teaching pronunciation to young learners. Through this, children develop the ability to imitate and produce sounds. Furthermore, they will acquire some important features such as word stress, sentence stress, weak forms, rhythm and intonation, although with young learners all this happens unconsciously.

Another effective form of practicing pronunciation is drilling. It involves students in repeating words after a model; this allows students in training both receptive and productive skills. It is recommendable not to use only audios that come along with textbooks but also authentic material that shows students a variety of English. The more variation of pronunciation they hear, the better it will be for the learners. It is important to mention that teachers

should combine drilling with other activities so that it will not be monotonous (Kelly, 2006).

Vocabulary

It is important to highlight that for students to develop their writing skills they need to develop first their reading skills. However, Přibilová (2006) explains that knowing vocabulary is the key for reading comprehension. The more words children learn, the better it will be for them to understand a text. Using effective teaching methods will increase the students' ability to learn new words. Thornbury (2002) mentions that children need very concrete vocabulary that are connected to objects they can handle or see. Cameron (2008) says that to help the learners understand what they are learning, it is vital to visualize the item and get the students to repeat and use the item dynamically. Additionally, he argues that vocabulary is fundamental to using the foreign language. Teachers can have children make their own vocabulary books because it can provide them with opportunities to develop a variety of vocabulary acquisition strategies (Phillips, 2013).

Children learn through doing things and applying, for them learning new words is incidental. They love playing with language sounds, imitating and making funny noises. Teachers should teach new words and phrases with songs or by exaggerating their expressions; as children are not able to write or read in their mother tongue it is important to recycle new words and expressions through talk and play (Slattery and Willis 2001).

Grammar

Learning words can take students a long way into grammar. Cameron (2008) explains that along with vocabulary grammar should be taught as well, because they are stored together in the mental lexicon. Pinter (2017) argues that when teaching vocabulary teachers need to consider grammatical choices and when teaching grammar, they need to consider typical context and lexical combinations. Furthermore, Pinter adds that vocabulary and grammar should be taught in a holistic way and stories are an excellent resource for doing so. Children love learning new vocabulary and teachers

must introduce it with things they can play with, see or touch or with the use of puppets to act out when reading a story. In addition Nunan (2010) comments that when teaching a word, it is good to teach more words related to the one students are learning. If we give a high priority to vocabulary development, we are not abandoning grammar.

Reading

Young learners need a good background in auditory and oral skills before developing the skills of reading and writing. Accordingly, language development involves hearing a word before saying it, saying a word before reading it, reading a word before writing it (Linse, 2005). Teachers can use different strategies to teach reading. Pinter (2017) mentions several of them. One way of teaching reading is using the phonics approach, in which we teach the students the letters of the alphabet and how to combine them to form words. The phonics approach teaches learners the correspondence between letters and sounds (Nunan, 2010). Additionally, teachers can use the *look and say* approach. Here, students are taught words and phrases written on flashcards that are shown while pointing to an object that is represented in the flashcards. Thus, reading familiar nursery rhymes or songs is good when teaching children. Some nursery rhymes are produced as books so children can read what they already know by heart. This is called the language experience approach (Pinter, 2017). And finally, when children are learning how to read it is relevant to select books that really interest them. For example, if they like cars or dolls, teachers can choose books with pictures and simple words about dolls and cars because it will encourage enthusiasm as they are actually looking at something they can relate to. This is called the context support method. (Shin and Crandall, 2014)

Writing

Good reading skills are the base for good writing skills. Writing is an essential part of language development; the learner needs to recognize words in order to write and use them comprehensibly (Linse, 2005). Writing activities can be referred as guided, controlled or free. The objective of guided activities is to help learners to learn the relationship between their

ideas, words and writing, the objective of controlled activities is to have students practice writing, and finally free activities encourage creativity by allowing students choose what to write. Some examples of the activities to use with young learners are: forming letters by tracing, creating letter physically with arms or hands, connecting dots and fill in the blank with letters (Shin and Crandall, 2014). These activities can be fun specially if teachers use games, but the most important thing is that they can reinforce reading skills (Nunan, 2010). Besides that, students can be asked to match letters with the picture whose name start with that letter (Pinter, 2017). Copying is also a good way for teaching writing. The teachers can write a word on the board and ask the students to write it in their notebooks. Writing adds another physical dimension to the learning process, since hands are added to eyes and ears. (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This research project includes characteristics of a quantitative method. A quantitative research is focused on explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data, which are analyzed using mathematical methods (Muijs, 2010). Another definition stated by McMillan and Schumacher (2014) says that quantitative research methods are methods dealing with numbers and anything that is measurable. It is used to answer questions with the intention to clarify, predict and control a phenomena. This kind of method typically begins with data collection based on a theory and then is followed with application of descriptive statistics. A quantitative data collection produces results that are easy to summarize, compare and generalize. Surveys and observations are the most common sources of quantitative data, although focus group and individual interviews can be used as well. According to Denscombe (2014), quantitative research uses numbers as the unit of analysis, additionally it tends to be associated to researcher detachment, which means that the information collected is objective, in the way that they exist independently of the researcher and are not the result of undue influence on the part of the researcher. Furthermore, Denscombe explains that quantitative research tends to be associated with large-scale studies, with analyzing specific variables and with data analysis after data collection. The presentation of research findings is an important element of the research process. Visual aids such as figures, tables or graphs are most commonly used to report the results of a quantitative study (Creswell, 2013). In this paper, graphs have been used to present the results.

Participants

The people involved in this research project were 28 students from pre-school level 2 students at San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil and 10 English teachers.

Instruments

The instruments used to collect data were a survey applied to the students, and two observation rubrics, one for teachers and one for the students.

Surveys

According to Check and Schutt (2011), surveys are used to gather information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. Surveys are useful for documenting existing community conditions, characteristics of a population and community opinion. In this kind of instruments, the researcher possess a series of questions that participants have to respond, then, the researcher summarizes their responses in percentages, frequency distribution and some other statistical approach using questionnaires. According to Denscombe (2014), researchers use survey research because it offers a flexible design and it is appropriate for gathering a large amount of data from many different types and sizes of populations.

This research used a survey to investigate what was producing the lack of communicative competence in pre-school level 2 students at San Jose La Salle of Guayaquil. The student's survey was adapted from Chou (2014) and the teachers' survey was adapted from Garton, Copland and Burns (2011).

Students' observation Rubric

A rubric is an assessment tool use to promote the consistent application of learning expectations and learning standards in the classroom against a consistent set of criteria (Stevens and Levi, 2013). Since rubrics are used to establish consistent set of learning expectations that students need to demonstrate, they can also be used by school leaders in order to assess their teachers. Formats of a rubric can be classified as analytical rubric, in which each criteria is evaluated separately and holistic rubric in which all criteria are evaluated simultaneously (Arter and McTighe, 2000). Additionally, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) argue that observations can be involved in both quantitative and qualitative research methods, with

the difference that in quantitative methods, it is focused on a particular factor of behavior and it is quantified.

One of the main purposes of observations is describing the existing status of instructional practices and identifying instructional problems (Jones, 2010). When planning observations the researcher has to consider when, where, how and what to observe. He has to consider also the timing, the context and the duration of the observation period.

The observation rubric used in this research was adapted from Al Hosni (2014). It was used to evaluate students' communication and interaction as they had to work in pairs, and to assess their performance working in several communicative activities. The observations were made to the participants in some sessions due to the number of students.

Two information gap activities were created. In the first activity students had to work in pairs. They were given a picture of a house with some missing objects that appeared below the pictures. Student A had to ask her/his partner where the missing objects were and then draw them on the paper. Then, student B had to ask the other one as well.

The second information gap activity was similar to the previous one. Students were given two pictures numbered from one to six and next to the numbers there was supposed to be a shape. Students had to describe the shape that was in a specific number and the other student had to draw it in his/her paper.

In another activity students were asked to match pictures with their initial letters, naming the letters and describing the pictures; and finally, students were involved in a role play where they had to simulate one day in class, one student being the teacher and the other ones, the students.

Teachers' observation rubric

According to Andrade (2005), observations for teachers can be enormously effective in helping to enhance teaching performance. Additionally, Nolan (2011) explains that the observation criteria should be focused on skills that

can be directly observed in the classroom. Moreover, Marshall (2009) clarifies that the observation should be based on clear standards that prioritize student learning, and it should use four to five rating levels to describe differences in teacher efficiency and effectiveness. The rubric for assessing teachers used in this research was adapted from Allen and Tanner (2006). It was made to three English teachers and it was used to triangulate the information that came from the teacher' survey.

RESULTS

Students' survey

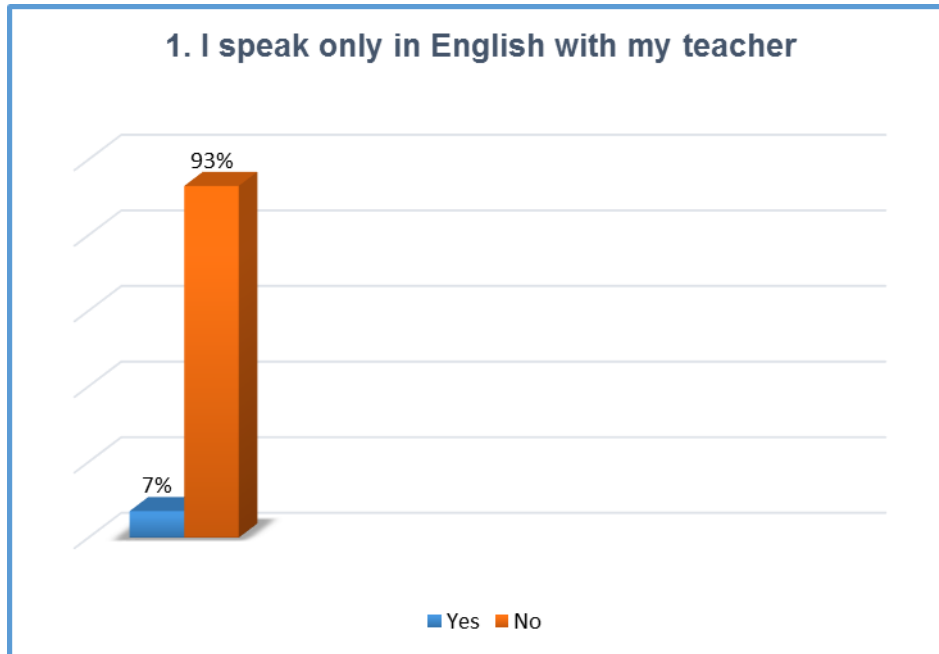


Figure 1. Survey for students. Question1: I speak only in English with my teacher.

Most of the students do not speak in English with the teacher because they do not need to do so. When the teachers ask something in English, the answer is in the first language. According to Tuan and Mai (2015) students use their mother tongue in class because it is easier for them and because there is no encouragement from the teachers to use the target language. Additionally, if teachers frequently use L1, the students will feel comfortable using it. Thus, the lack of communicative activities is one of the main reasons why students do not speak the target language.

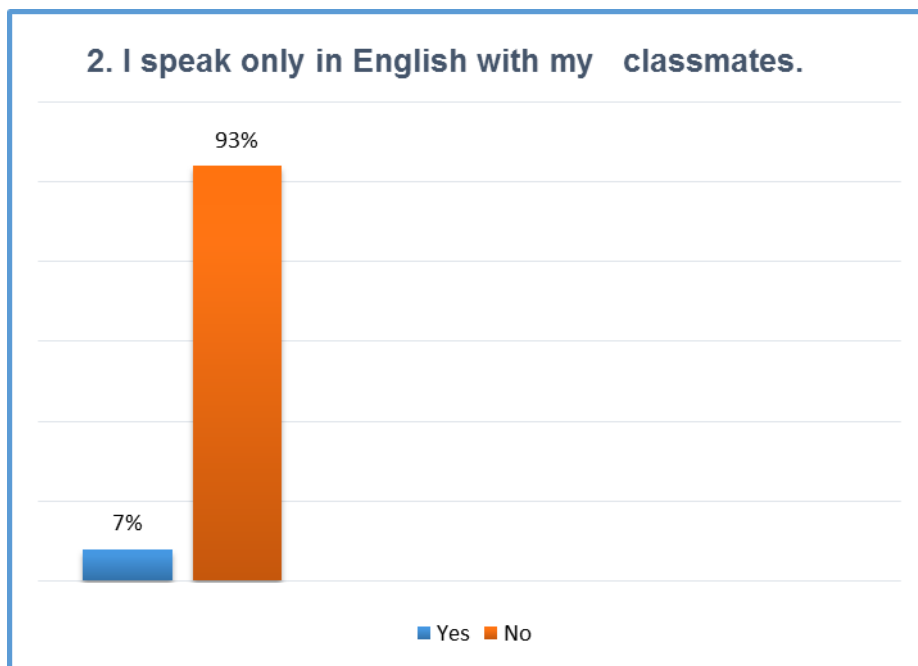


Figure 2. Survey for students. Question2: I speak only in English with my classmates.

Most of the students do not speak English with their classmates. One of the reasons is that they do not have opportunities to do so; they are not involved in collaborative learning where they would have the chance of interacting not only with the teacher, but with each other. According to Nunan (2012) in a collaborative environment students work together, share their experiences and interact using the target language. Additionally, students have little opportunities to work in solving problem activities which should be incorporated in learning. Another reason why they do not communicate in English with their classmates is that they are not encouraged to use it since when they ask something in Spanish the teachers attend their requests.

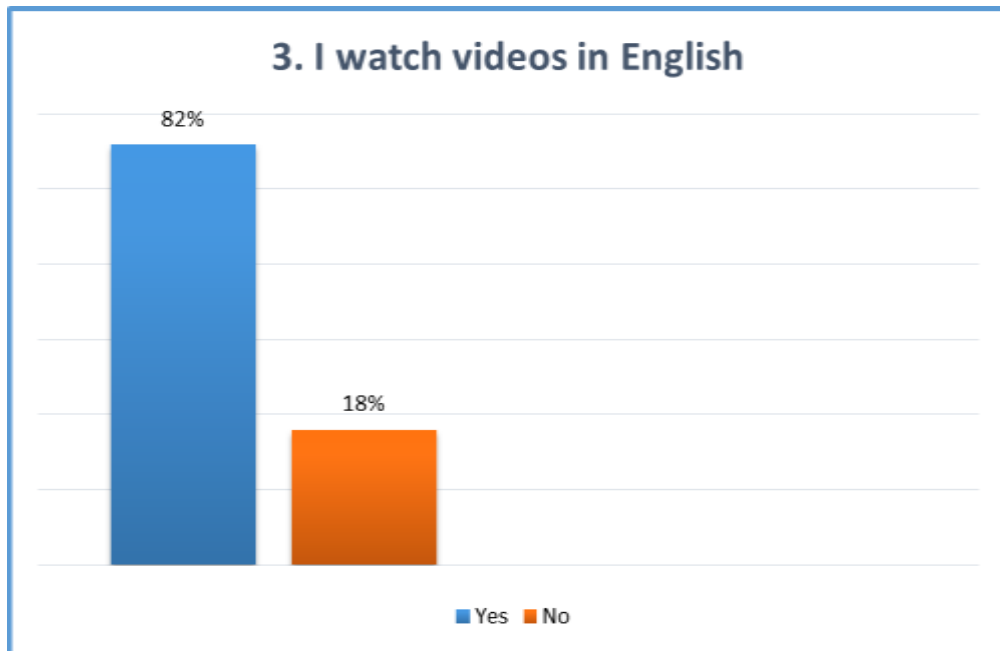


Figure 3. Survey for students. Question 3: I watch videos in English.

Most of the students acknowledged watching videos in English. Rammal (2015) argues that using videos with young learners helps to increase students' motivation, it enhances learning experiences and it improves teamwork and communication skills. Additionally, Tomalin (2013) explains that working with videos create an attractive enjoyable learning environment; it gives students the idea that language learning is a happy experience; audiovisual aids communicate meaning better than other media.

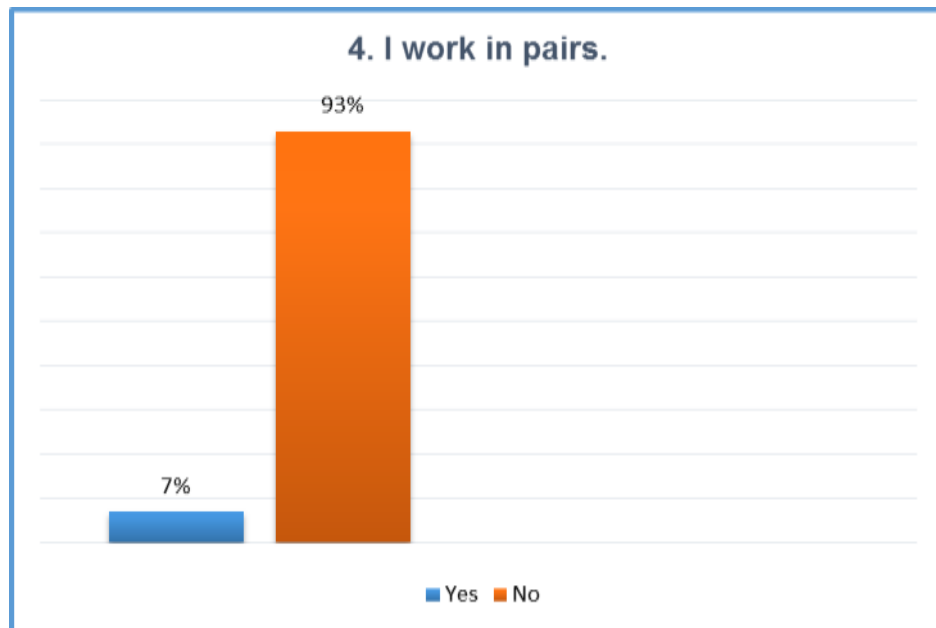


Figure 4. Survey for students. Question 4: I work in pairs.

93% of the students said that they do not work in pairs. This is the result of having a teacher-center classroom where the students passively receive information and do not have the opportunity to learn important communicative and collaborative skills through pair and group work. Barkley, Cross and Major (2014) explain that through group work students can develop and practice skills such as decision making, negotiation, problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork. For that reason, it is important for teachers to create or plan activities that involve students in pair or group work.

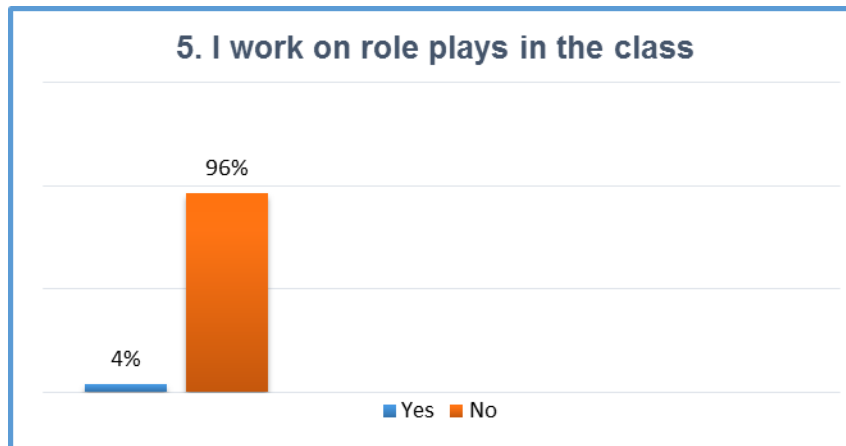


Figure 5. Survey for students. Question 5: I work on role plays in the class.

Students recognized that they do not work on role play activities. According to Holmes (2015), it is important to provide children with role play activities in which they are going to develop mainly speaking skills. Role play involves language competence, problem solving and encourages turn taking and negotiation. This can be one of the reason why they do not speak in English with the teacher and their classmates.

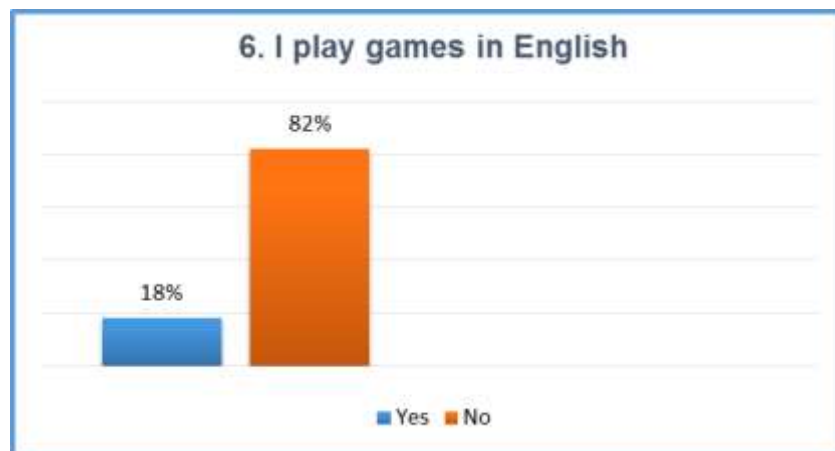


Figure 6. Survey for students. Question 6: I play games in English

82% of the students answered that they do not play games to practice English in the classroom. One of the advantages of using games, as mentioned by Ersoz (2016), is that they increase students' interest and motivation, which is one of the challenges in teaching young learners. Additionally, games can be used to practice all language skills; speaking, writing, listening and reading. Thus, it encourages learners to interact and communicate.

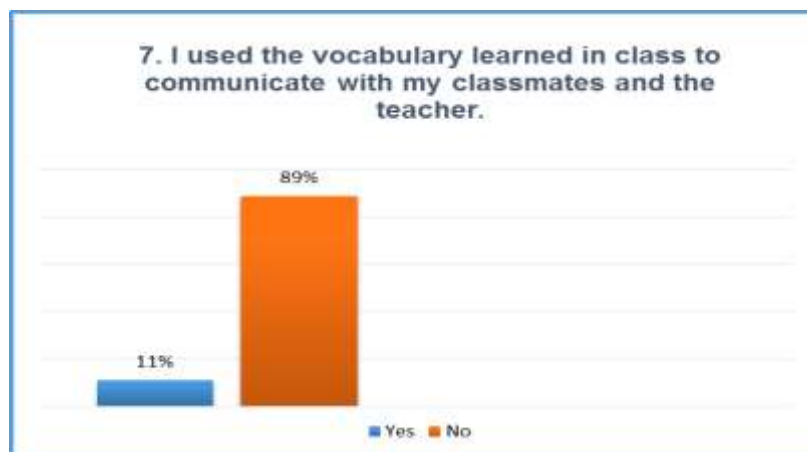


Figure 7. Survey for students. Question 7: I use the vocabulary learned in class to communicate with my classmates and the teacher.

89% of the students do not use the vocabulary learned with their classmates and the teacher. Though students are taught a lot of vocabulary through pictures and songs every day, they are not encouraged to use it. Learning vocabulary is important for language production. Children should learn and use the words in relevant contexts in order to fix them in their minds (Pinter, 2017). Pinter adds that one effective way to practice the vocabulary learned is using “drama activities.”

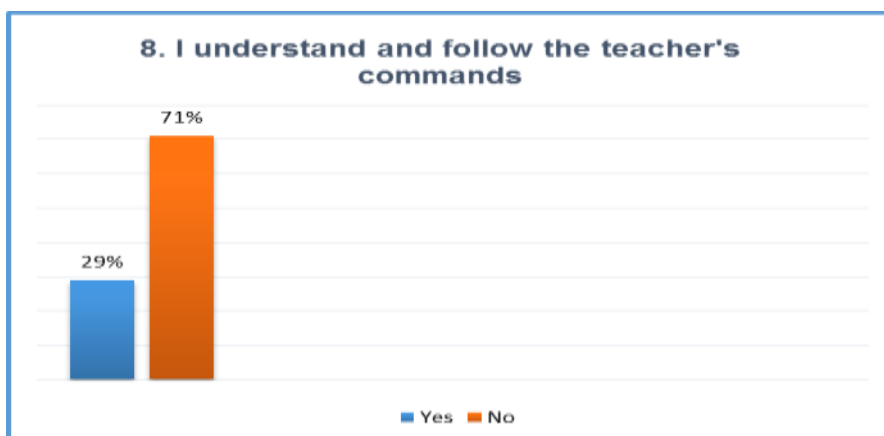


Figure 8. Survey for students. Question 8: I understand and follow the teacher's commands.

71% of the students do not understand and follow the teacher's commands. This is due to the poor application of interactive activities in the classroom in which students can develop their communicative and listening skills. According to Moon (2015), students learn through their participation in the achievement of knowledge by collecting information and processing it by

solving problems and articulating what they have discovered. Just 29% of the students said that they understood and so followed what the teacher commanded.

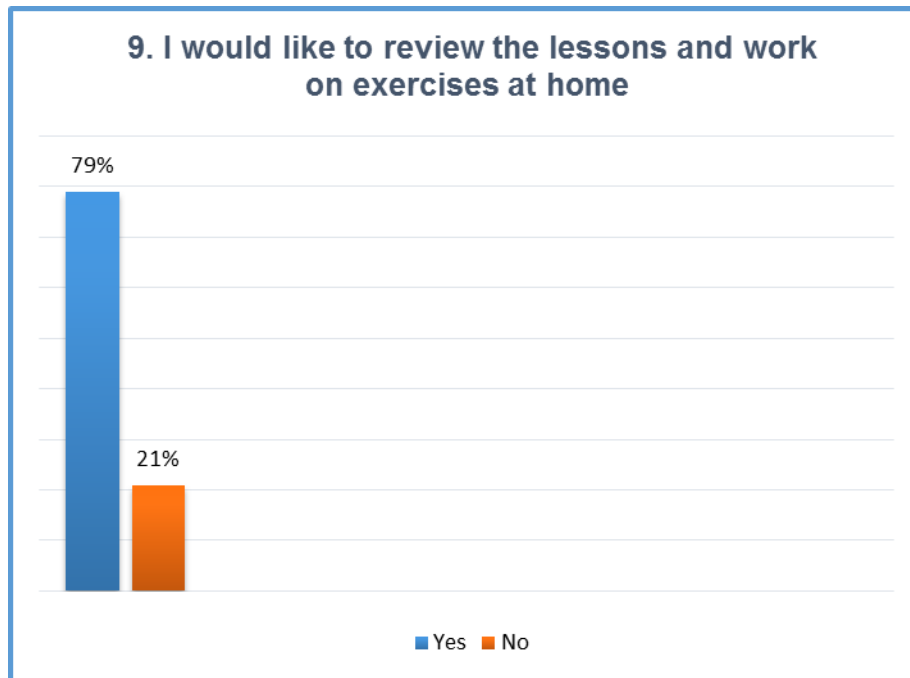


Figure 9. Survey for students. Question 9: I would like to review the lessons and work on exercises at home.

79% of the students recognized they would like to review lessons at home. We know that students need a lot of practice and review to keep new ideas in their long-term memory. In accordance to Sousa (2016), children will often forget material if they don't keep practicing it, because learning styles and retention are different. We can learn something in few minutes and then forget it forever. Teachers can work with parents encouraging them in active participation in their children's learning environment.

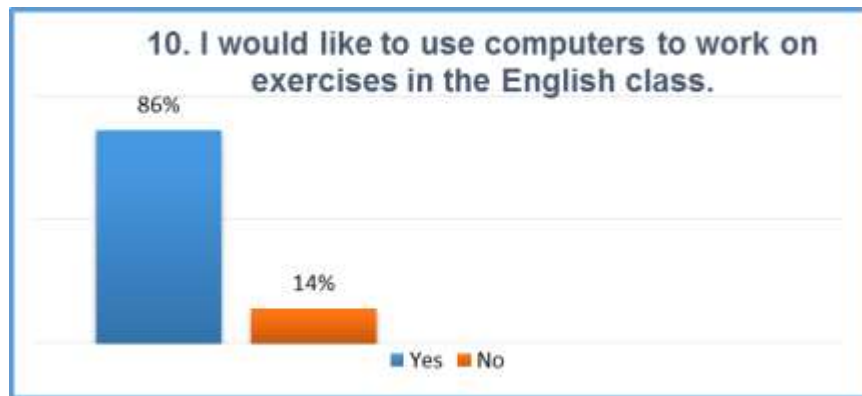


Figure 10. Survey for students. Question 10: I would like to use computers to work on exercises in the English class.

Most of the students would like to use computers in the English class. Pinter (2016) adds that using computers in the classroom can open up authentic opportunities for children to engage with others and learn the language in an exciting and motivating way.

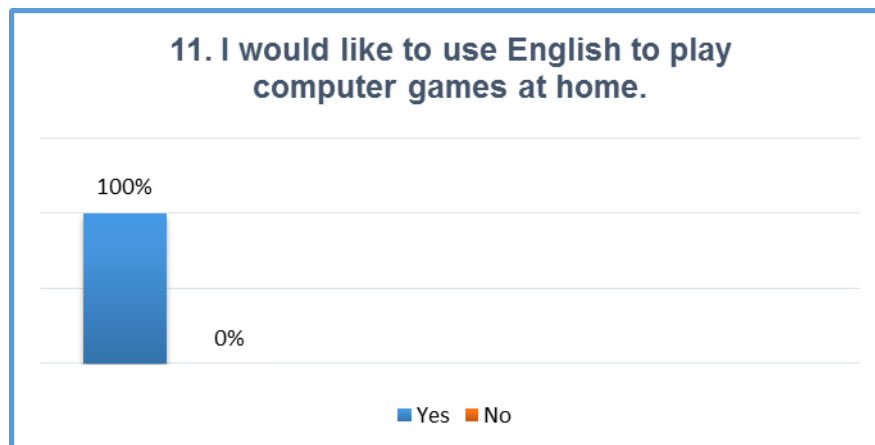


Figure 11. Survey for students. Question 11: I would like to use English to play computer games at home.

The students said they would like to use English to play computer games. As stated by Turgut and İrgin (2009), computer games show potential engaging and entertaining users and also in promoting learning. Through computer games, students can learn; vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and speaking. Games give the students the opportunity to learn a language without feeling ashamed or shy about making mistakes with the language in front of other people.

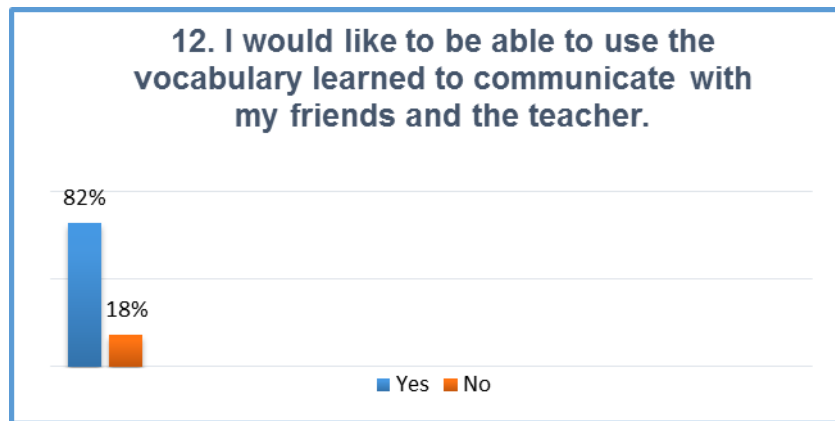


Figure 12. Survey for students. Question 12: I would like to be able to use the vocabulary learned to communicate with my friends and the teacher.

This graph shows that most of the students would like to be able to communicate in English. Therefore, the teacher should create or plan activities that give students the opportunity to use the vocabulary learned. Lessard-Clouston (2013) argues that vocabulary is important to English language teaching. Without enough vocabulary, students cannot understand others or express their ideas, but it is relevant too for teachers to prepare communicative activities or lead students to work in pairs or in groups.



Figure 13. Survey for students. Question 13: I would like to sing in English using materials provided by the teacher.

The students would like to sing in English. Singing is an activity that will help students to develop their pronunciation skills. Coyle and Gómez (2014) comment that songs help students to remember the language and they allow for a lot of repetition of the language without kids getting bored.

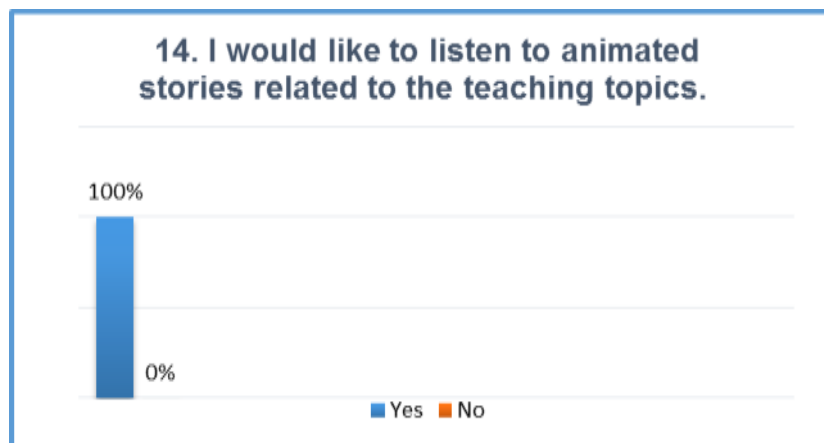


Figure 14. Survey for students. Question 14: I would like to listen to animated stories related to the teaching topics.

All of the students would like to listen to animated stories. As reported by Yildirim and Torun (2014), the use of animated stories to teach English is an effective and significant language technique. It helps to contextualize the vocabulary learned providing audio-visual input along with the story narration.



Figure 15. Survey for students. Question 14: I would like to play games related to the teaching topics.

Most of the students would like to play games in the classroom. Deesri (2002) claims that games, when used in the classroom, provides learners with an opportunity to use the language. Besides, learners are motivated and willing to learn quickly. When playing games students learn words that they will not learn in class. Sometimes games come with subtitles, hearing and seeing words at the same time will make language comprehension much easier.

Teacher's survey

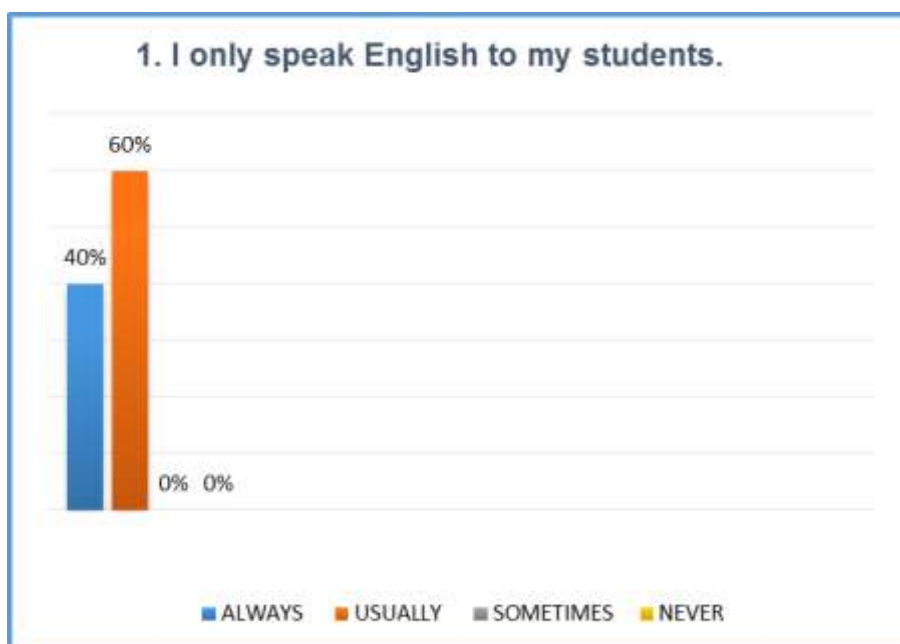


Figure 1. Survey for teachers. Question 1: I only speak English to my students.

According to these results, only 40% of the teachers speak only in English to the students. The other 60% said they usually use the target language, which means that there are cases in which they use L1. As cited by Turnbull (2009), teachers consider it is important to use L1 to give instructions, explain meaning of words or to explain complex ideas. At the same time, many teachers find that the use of L1 offers more time to practice L2 because understanding is achieved more quickly (Tang, 2002). However, Xhemaili (2016) explains that students must be exposed to a significant amount of target language input in order to develop fluency and proficiency.

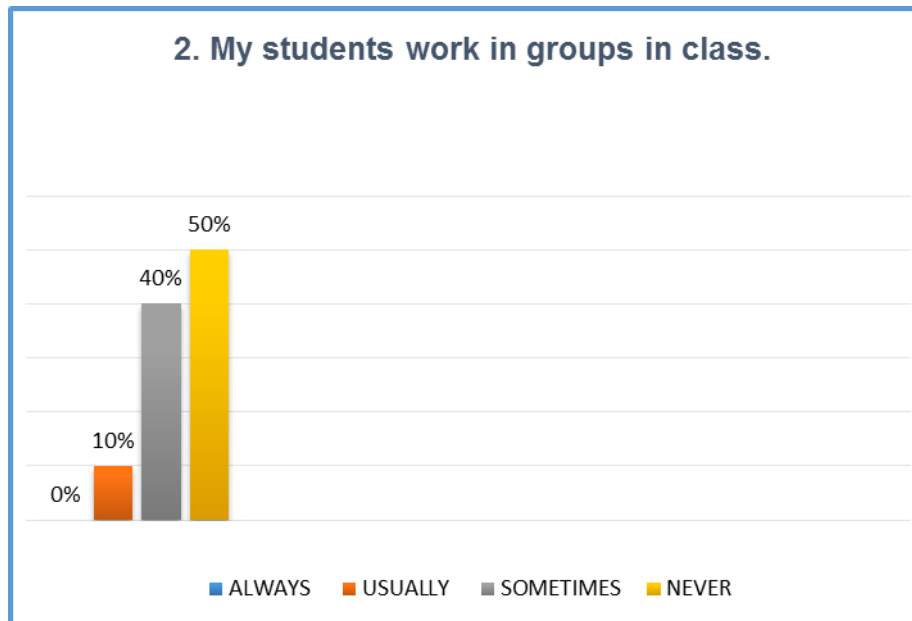


Figure 2. Survey for teachers. Question 2: My students work in groups in class.

50% of the teachers answered their students never work in groups, 40% of them answered they do it sometimes, and 10% said they usually work in groups. The tendency with primary teachers is to treat the class as a whole group and undervalue the students' capacity to work in pairs or in small groups (Dobao, 2014). There are several benefits of group work. As stated by Storch and Aldosari (2013), group work has a great potential because students are encouraged to become active rather than passive learners; it promotes students' learning and achievement, it enhances social skills and interaction, and it give students the chance to learn from and to teach each other.

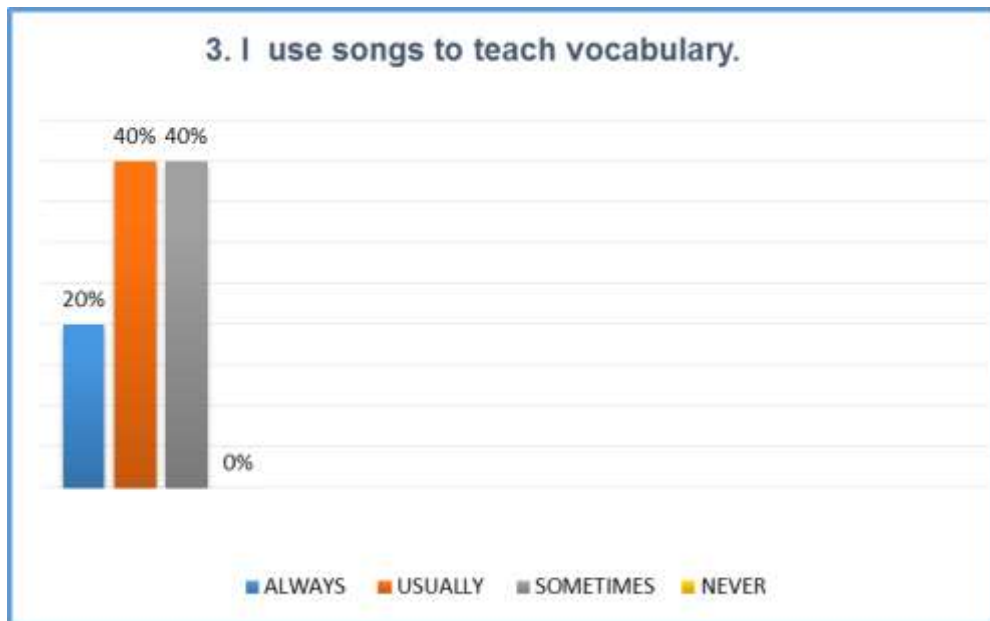


Figure 3. Survey for teachers. Question 3: I use songs to teach vocabulary.

Only 20% of the teachers mentioned they always use songs, the rest of the teachers do it only with some frequency. Songs can be used for several purposes not only for teaching vocabulary. Pinter (2017) argues that songs can help children improve their listening skills and pronunciation, furthermore, it helps students to develop their speaking skills.

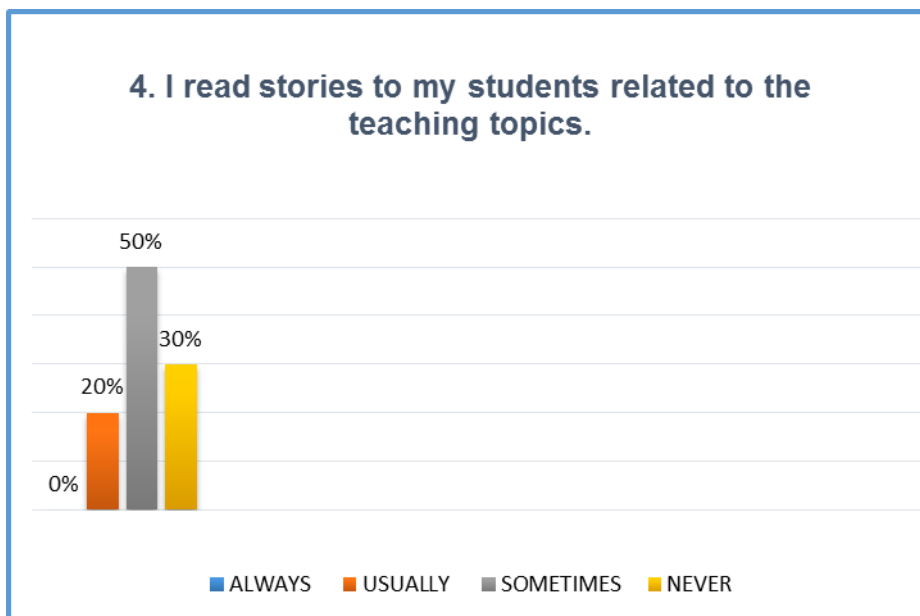


Figure 4. Survey for teachers. Question 4: I read stories to my students related to the teaching topics.

20% of the teachers usually read stories to their students, 50% of them do it sometimes and 30% never do it. Porras González (2010) mentions that teaching should be focused on children and on their development of communicative skills. Two main sources from which children obtain input is through listening and reading, therefore, teachers should consider reading animated stories in the class to provide learners with a lot of interesting and enriching input. Moreover, according to Castro (2002), stories are effective because they are believable, and entertaining. Thus, it helps students to develop the capacity to understand spoken language and involve in thinking skills.

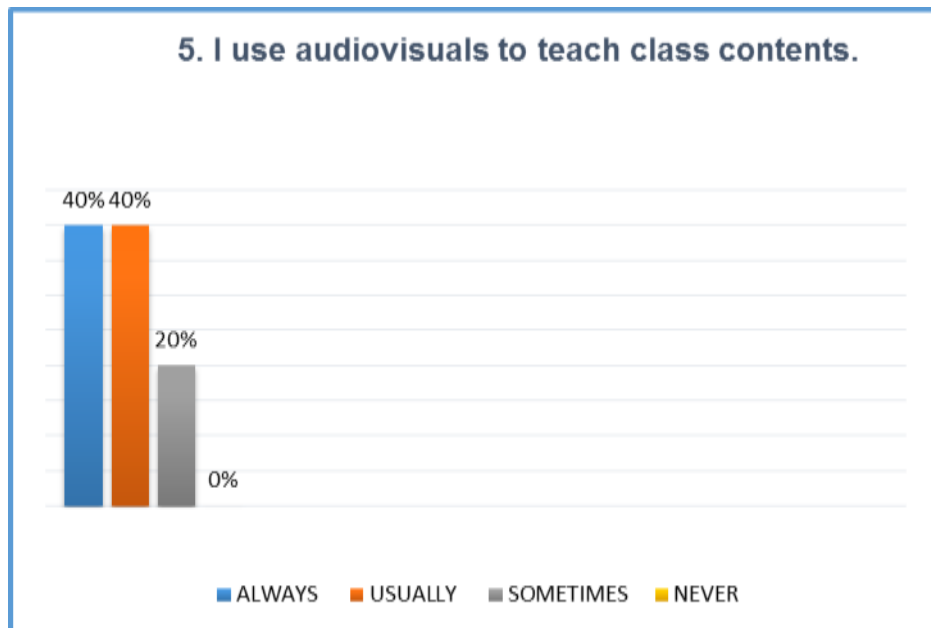


Figure 5. Survey for teachers. Question 5: I use audiovisuals to teach class contents.

The results show that 40% of the teachers use audiovisuals, 40% usually do it and 20% do it sometimes. As cited by Mathew and Alidmat (2013), using audiovisual materials increase students' motivation and help learners to develop listening skills. When teachers use videos, children are focused on the images, the language and the intonation. Although young learners do not understand the meaning, the pictures provide information to comprehend the story. Furthermore, audiovisual aids help the teacher to bring an important change in the class environment as well as in the teaching process.

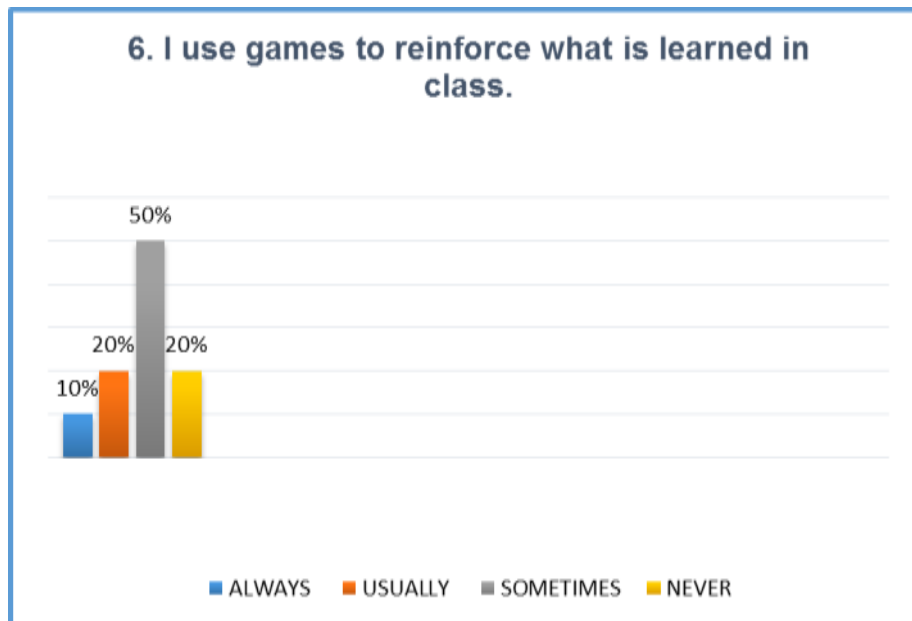


Figure 6. Survey for teachers. Question 6: I use games to reinforce what is learned in class.

10% of the teachers answered they always use games to reinforce what is learned, 20% of them said they usually do, 50% said they sometimes use games and the other 20% answered they never use games in class. According to Ersoz (2000), games are not to be used when there is some time left or at the end of the lesson or when the teacher and class have nothing else to do. Games can be used as warm up activities or to review specific language material, giving learners the opportunity to practice the language in the various skills. Additionally, Pinter (2017) mentions that games are motivating, challenging and encourage students to interact and communicate.

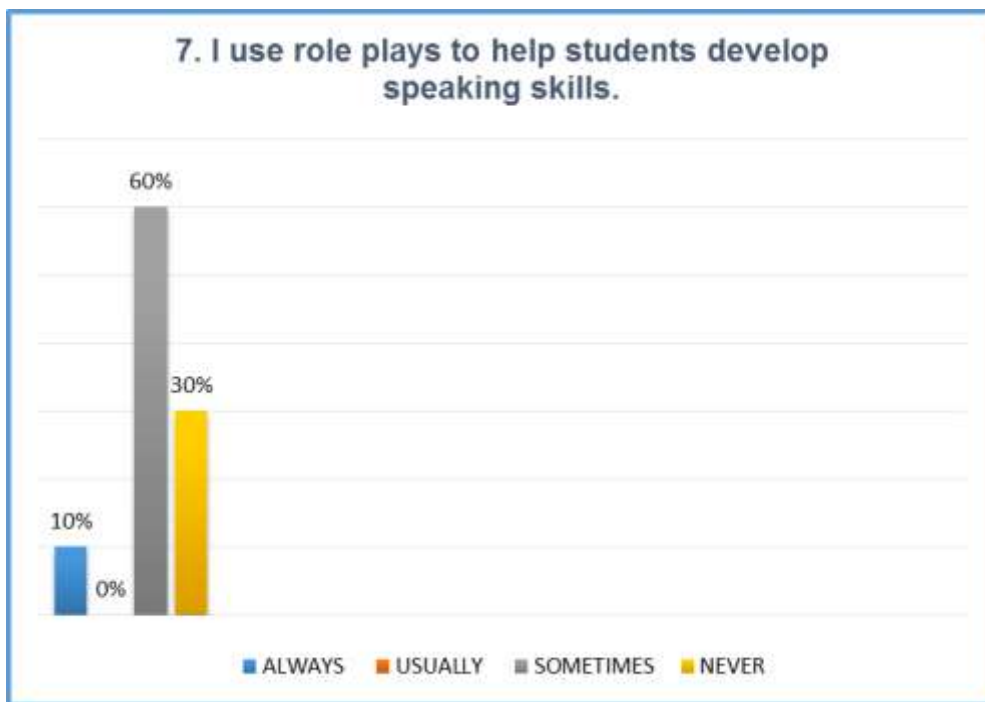


Figure 7. Survey for teachers. Question 7: I use role plays to help students develop speaking skills.

In these results it is observed that just 10% of the teachers always use role play in the classroom, 60% of them sometimes use role plays and 30% mentioned they never use this strategy. As well as using videos, using role play animates the teaching and the learning atmosphere but the most important thing is that it helps students to develop their communicative skills. Not using this strategy affects the students' speaking performance (Holmes, 2015).

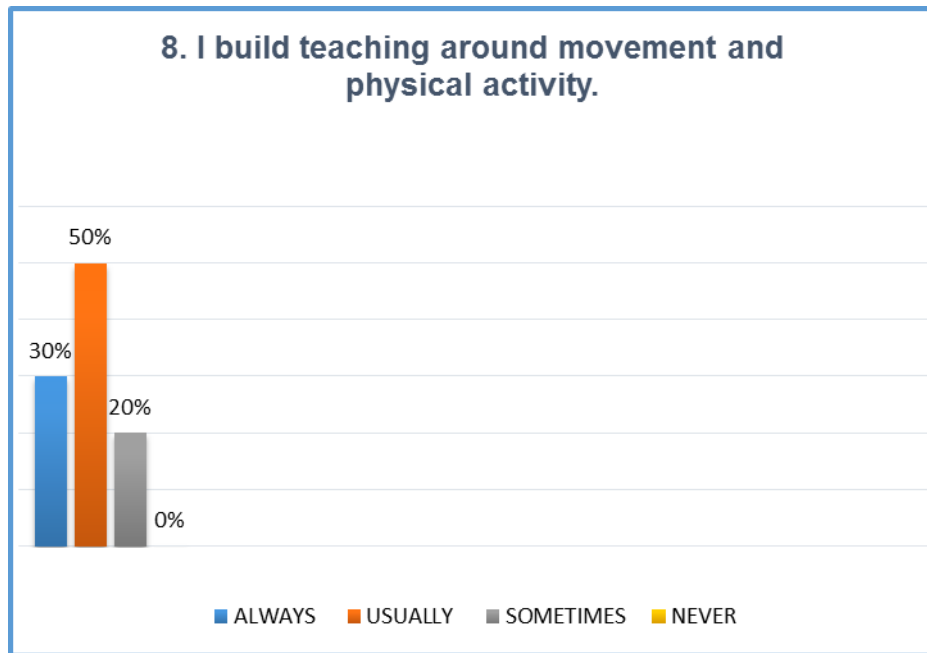


Figure 8. Survey for teachers. Question 8: I build teaching around movement and physical activity.

30% of the teachers said they always build teaching around movement and physical activities, 50% said they usually do that; the rest of the teachers do it sometimes. Physical activities are good for children since they have little attention span. Nunan (2010) argues that one of the most common methods to use with young learners is the Total Physical Response method (TPR) that involves teaching the language through physical activity. Furthermore, Widodo (2005) mentions that TPR is good for kinesthetic learners who are very active in the class. Children enjoy using it as it lifts the pace and the mood. Additionally, it helps students to remember phrases and words (Pinter, 2017).

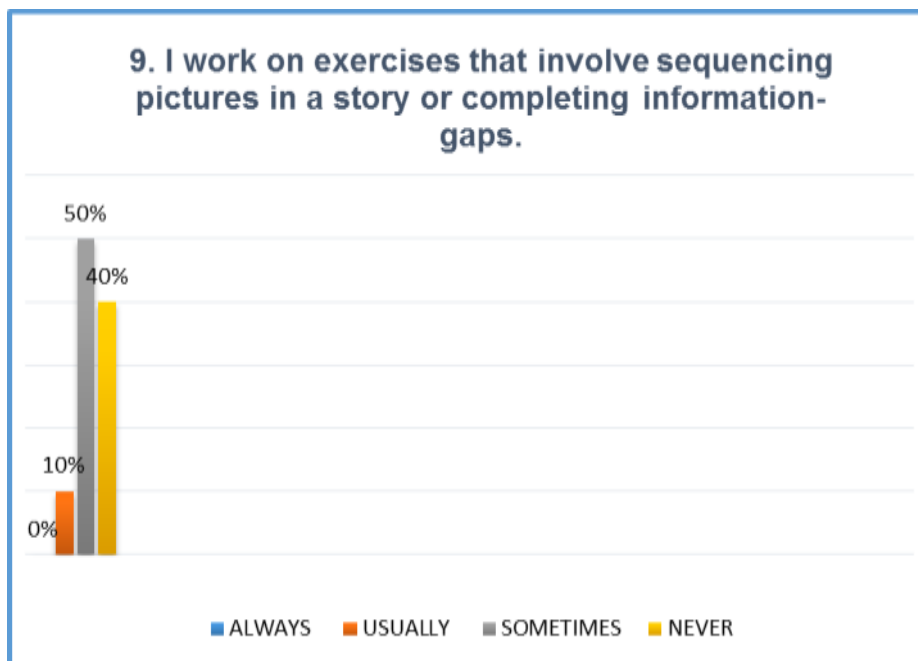


Figure 9. Survey for teachers. Question 9: I work on exercises that involve sequencing pictures in a story or completing information-gaps.

10% of teachers mentioned they usually work on exercises that involve sequencing pictures in a story or completing information-gaps. 50% of them said they sometimes do it and 40% never do it. Teachers should consider using these kind of activities as they are usually looking for activities to make the classroom more interactive. Especially if the teacher wants to develop in the students communicative skills, information gap activities are good for doing so (Putri, Yufrizal and Hasan, 2015). Additionally, Ismaili and Bajrami (2016) say that activities that are really communicative have three features in common: information gap, choice and feedback.

Observations

Students' observation

60.72% of the students have a satisfactory pronunciation, which means they have regular pronunciation mistakes that sometimes interfere with comprehension. 25% have good pronunciation, which shows that they have clear pronunciation that helps comprehension. Some pronunciation mistakes were made. Finally, 14.28 % has frequent pronunciation errors that make it difficult to understand them. Their pronunciation skills need improvement.

75% of the students have a satisfactory use of vocabulary which implies they use limited vocabulary and expressions. 25 % of them needs improvement as they lack vocabulary knowledge and use only basic terms or expressions and misspell words.

60.72% of the students need improvement in interacting with others because they required prompting and support to interact in class. 39.28% maintain simple exchanges with some difficulty. They have a satisfactory interaction.

57.14% of the students need improvement in grammar which means they use basic structures and make frequent errors. 42.86% use basic structures with only occasional errors, which is satisfactory.

46.42% of the students have a satisfactory fluency in using the language. They spoke with some hesitation, which often interfered with communication. 53.58% hesitate too often when speaking, which interfered with communication. They need improvement.

Teachers' observation

From the observation, several conclusions were made. When class started, teachers did not give importance to checking understanding of previous topics of study. None of the teachers gave significance to using classroom materials such as flashcards, songs, and videos to present the class contents. The instructors did not have a communicative approach to present new material since they only used drills to introduce new words which were

not used in context, but separately, with the intention of only learning the pronunciation and partially the meaning. None of the teachers used games to reinforce concepts, nor they read stories to the students on the day of the observation. There were times in which teachers used L1 in the class, especially when giving instructions to students for completing a task. There was no time for students to interact with each other or working in groups. The interaction with the teacher did not take place because students are allowed to speak in Spanish. Finally, it can be concluded that teachers follow a lesson plan that is not focused on students' needs, but on accomplishing the curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

- Pre-school students at San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil communicate mainly using their mother tongue during English classes.
- The role of the teacher is active, while the role of the learner is a passive one; the teacher-centered approach was mainly used. Teachers use poor techniques and they do not concentrate on learning strategies.
- Students have little or no opportunity to work in pairs or groups which causes a poor communicative class. They are not involved in interactive activities in which they can develop their social and speaking skills.
- Students learn mainly vocabulary but they are not encouraged to use it in real settings.
- Teachers do not encourage communication in the students since learners are not involved to participate in games or role plays which are effective in order to develop speaking skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended teachers use the communicative language teaching approach so that students can have opportunities to communicate in the target language.
- It is recommended teachers divide the class into periods, in which they can teach the different skills. They can start with listening activities using songs or chants as warm up, then they can read stories using several pictures to make it easier to understand and finally students can be asked to work in role plays using the vocabulary learned in class. To make it more interesting, students can use puppets.
- It is advisable teachers encourage students to use the vocabulary learned using games that promote students' participation. Or with the

use of “Drama activities” in which learners have the opportunity to develop their communicative skills.

- It is suggested teachers plan activities and use interactive material that promotes the development of spoken skills.
- It is advisable students work in groups or pairs to discuss about the teaching topics. It will help students to develop and practice skills such as problem solving, decision making and negotiation. Group work can be done before learners complete a written activity.
- The use of games plays an important role in teaching young learners as well as role play activities. It is a good idea for teachers to use games and role plays in order to involve students in meaningful interaction.

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APPENDIX

ANNEX 1

Student's survey

		
	YES	NO
1.-I speak only in English with my teacher.		
2.-I speak only in English with my classmates.		
3.-I watch videos in English.		
4.- I work in pairs.		
5.-I work on role plays in the class.		
6.- I play games in English.		
7- I use the vocabulary learned in class to communicate with my classmates and the teacher.		
8.-I understand and follow the teacher's directions.		
9.- I would like to use computers to work on exercises in the English class.		
10.- I would like to review the lessons and work on exercises at home		

11.- I would like to use English to play computer games at home		
12.-I would like to be able to use vocabulary to communicate with my friends and the teacher		
13.-I would like to sing in English using materials provided by the teacher.		
14.- I would like to listen animated stories related to the teaching topics		
15.- I would like to play games related to the teaching topics.		

Adapted from Chou (2014)

ANNEX 2

Teacher's survey

Criteria	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1- I only speak English to my students				
2.-My students work in groups in class				
3.- I use songs to teach vocabulary				
4.- I read stories to my students related to the teaching topics				
5. -I use audiovisuals to teach class contents				
6. -I ask my students to memorize words and phrases.				
7. -I use games to reinforce what is learned in class				
8.- I use role play to help students develop speaking skills.				
9. I build teaching around movement and physical activities				
10. I work on exercises that involve sequencing pictures in a story or completing information-gaps				

Adapted from Garton, Copland & Burns (2011)

ANNEX 3

Rubric to evaluate teachers

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1- The teacher checks students' previous understanding				
2.- The teacher uses classroom materials and media when appropriate				
3.- The teacher delivers the lesson clearly in an effective style				
4. – The teacher uses audiovisuals to teach class contents				
5. – The teacher uses games in the classroom				
6.- The teacher involves learners in role play activities				
7. The teacher reads stories to the students.				
8.- The teacher only speaks English in the class.				
9.- The students interact with the teacher and classmates in English.				
10.- The teacher follows a lesson plan.				

Adapted from Allen and Tanner, (2006)

ANNEX 4

Rubric for observing students.	Excellent (4 points)	Good (3 points)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Needs improvement (1 point)
Pronunciation	Excellent pronunciation of vocabulary. Easy to understand.	Clear pronunciation that helps comprehension. Some pronunciation mistakes are made.	Regular pronunciation mistakes that sometimes interfere with comprehension	Frequent pronunciation errors that make it difficult to understand the student.
Vocabulary	Uses a variety of vocabulary and expressions.	Uses a variety of vocabulary and expressions but make some errors in word choice	Uses limited vocabulary and expressions.	Lack of vocabulary knowledge. Uses only basic vocabulary. Misspelled words
Interactive communication	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates.	Keeps the interaction with very little support.	Maintains simple exchanges. Despite some difficulty	Requires prompting and support.
Grammar	Uses a variety of structures with only occasional errors.	Uses a variety of grammar structures but makes some errors.	Uses basic structures with only occasional errors.	Uses basic structures. Makes frequent errors
Fluency	Speaks smoothly with little hesitation that does not interfere with communication.	Speaks with some hesitation, but it does not usually interfere with communication.	Speaks with some hesitation, which often interfere with communication.	Hesitates too often when speaking, which often interferes with communication.

Adapted from Al Hosni (2014).

ANNEX 5

Observation rubric results

Pronunciation

Code	Indicators	Students	Percentage
4	Excellent	0	0%
3	Good	7	25%
2	Satisfactory	17	60.72%
1	Needs improvement	4	14.28%

Vocabulary

Code	Indicators	Students	Percentage
4	Excellent	0	0%
3	Good	0	0%
2	Satisfactory	21	75%
1	Needs improvement	7	25%

Interactive communication

Code	Indicators	Students	Percentage
4	Excellent	0	0%
3	Good	0	0%
2	Satisfactory	11	39.28%
1	Needs improvement	17	60.72%

Grammar

Code	Indicators	Students	Percentage
4	Excellent	0	0%
3	Good	0	0%
2	Satisfactory	12	42.86%
1	Needs improvement	16	57.14%

Fluency

Code	Indicators	Students	Percentage
4	Excellent	0	0%
3	Good	0	0%
2	Satisfactory	13	46.42%
1	Needs improvement	15	53.58%

DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Yo, **Tumbaco Vega, Gianella Tamara**, con C.C: # **2400110298** autora del trabajo de titulación: **English learning strategies that boost the development of communicative skills of pre-school students level 2 in San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil** previo a la obtención del título de **Licenciada en Lengua Inglesa con mención en Gestión Educativa Bilingüe** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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RESUMEN/ABSTRACT		
<p>The main goal of this research project is to determine English learning strategies that boost the development of communicative skills of pre-school students level 2 in San Jose La Salle de Guayaquil. The specific objectives are to define English learning strategies for young learners and to identify how to boost the development of communicative skills in pre-school children. The research method in this study was a quantitative approach. The data collection was made with a survey to know about students' learning experiences and through observations for both teachers and students to asses learners' communicative abilities and to determine teachers' techniques and strategies. Observations were recorded in rubrics. It is concluded that the poor use of English learning strategies affects students' communicative skills since they are not involved in activities that boost their communicative skills.</p>		
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