

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE NICARAGUA

UNAN – MANAGUA

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN E IDIOMA

DEPARTAMENTO DE INGLÉS



Graduation Seminary

**Analysis of students' lack of understanding in the English class in the eighth grade,
at Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Public School, Diriomo-Granada, in the first
semester of 2015.**

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Managua, Saturday January 22nd, 2016

Carta Aval

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Dedication

We dedicate this research to our families, teachers and classmates. A special thank you to our loving children Ramses Sánchez Brizuela and Jassirys Picado Navarrete, who have inspired us to go ahead and keep working when we felt tired. Our wives Eva Brizuela and Elianor Navarrete whose support and understanding never left of our side.

We also dedicate this research to our close friends who have supported us throughout the process. We will always appreciate all they have done, especially Laura Christ for helping us to check the final document.

Above all we dedicate this work and give special thanks to our Lord from who come knowledge and understanding and gave us the strength and the enthusiasm to finish our major.

Acknowledgements

First of all, we wish to thank to our Lord for having given us health and force to finish our work. For having given us understanding and knowledge during the long process of collecting and analyzing the data. We also want to thank to all the teachers from the school we were working with who were more than generous with their expertise and precious time. A special thanks to teacher Maria José Martínez, for her countless hours of letting us check her classes, for having given us the chance to work with her group, and for all her patience throughout the entire process.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the head of the institute we were working with for allowing us to conduct our research and providing any assistance requested. A special thanks goes to all the students involved in the study for having been willing to help us all the time we required.

Finally we would like to thank our tutor Dr. Raúl Ruíz Carrión for his guidance in all the process of this research. His excitement and willingness to provide feedback made the completion of this research an enjoyable experience.

Abstract

The main objective of this research is to analyze the Students' lack of understanding in the English class, in the eighth grade at Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes public school, Diriomo city-Granada department in the first semester of 2015. In order to carry out this research, it was used a wide variety of instruments that facilitated the compilation of useful data for the achievement of the objectives. Among the instruments, it is mentioned interviews with the English teachers from the school in question, survey and class observation.

The teachers' interviews, survey and class observation were meaningful for the purpose of finding out relevant data, important facts and at the same time weaknesses (such as: low performance, low motivation, lack of didactic materials, short term class and low understanding) that either the teachers or students have in the Teaching –Learning process. However, this research was focused on how students understand and deal with the English class and how they feel in relation with spoken English.

In order to gather necessary data, it was prudent to give a survey to the 34 students of eighth grade and, it was administered two interviews to the English teachers. To enhance the relevance of the research and provide better understanding of students' behavior, how they embrace the English class, classroom observations were made. This also allowed for observations of the teachers' proficiency, her methodology, and the appropriateness of the subjects to the students' level. All of this research was gathered to discover the main reasons why students have low understanding in their English classes as well as how these reasons affect their performance.

In conclusion, the low understanding of the English class is due to: short class sessions, lack of supporting material, low motivation, and low contact with the target language.

I. Introduction

English understanding has been and will continue to be one of the most important skills for which English students should be proficient; however, there are certain difficulties that make this unreachable for them. For this reason there are many workshops for English teachers with the objective of helping students overcome these difficulties.

The intent of this research was to identify what are the most influential factors that cause low understanding in English classes. It was decided to do this research based on this problem because the researchers themselves had seen and experienced these difficulties in understanding English in the first three years of high school.

To carry out this research, a public school called Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes located in Diriomo city-Granada department was chosen. About 2,000 students coming from rural and urban areas attend this school. Most of these students receive their classes either in the morning or afternoon shift, but there is also a Saturday shift for those students who work during the week.

From the total amount of students and their different grade levels, the eighth grade students in the morning shift were selected. This group was made up of 34 students in total with 21 girls and 13 boys. The girls represent the 62% of the total group and the boys represent the 38% remaining. The researchers worked with the total group in order to know the girls' as well as boys' perception of their English class.

Each student was given a survey of 13 multiple choice questions related to English understanding and difficulties they may encounter in their English class. Interviews were also given to the teacher in charge and the one who was a foreign English volunteer. Two interviews consisted of a series of questions meant to elicit data related to difficulties in English understanding, how the teachers deal with them, and how these difficulties affect the students' understanding in their English class.

After administering the survey and the interviews, three observation classes were made, one per month, to observe the students' behavior and attitudes, to check the teachers' methodology, and gain a broader idea of how classes are carried out and to see what is

the students' attitude toward them. Each of these research components culminated to determine the answer to our main question: whether or not the students understood the class and spoken English.

During the process of collecting data, the researchers encountered an obstacle that caused them some difficulties. They had to ask for permission in order to utilize their research methods. This took a long time since they had to send two letters to the head of the public school and wait for a response. Even so, their objectives were achieved, and the researchers were glad to make the effort to materialize their work.

With all the data-information collected the conclusion was made that the students' attitude, the teachers' methodology, the didactic material, short class sessions, and the classroom environment play an essential role in understanding English classes. The absence of any of these components makes a class ineffective and the students less proficient.

II. Problem Background

Over the years the English language has become more widespread and used in Nicaragua. The main reason why this language is gaining popularity is because of the constant development of tourism, international investment, and personal growth. Another contributing factor is that the MINED (Ministerio de Educación) has been implementing English classes in high schools in which teachers put students in contact with the target language. However, teachers have failed in achieving an intermediate understanding of the classes for their students since there are many factors that affect the acquisition of this skill.

Noted Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner, commented in interview in 1993 that studies show that many students, even at the college level, “do not *understand*, in the most basic sense of that term. That is, they lack the capacity to take knowledge learned in one setting and apply it appropriately in a different setting” (Brandt, 1993, p 3).

As a result of this lack of understanding, the number of students who fail in the English classes in the Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Public School Diriomo-Granada has increased in the last few years. Furthermore, the students who passed the class did not even have a basic understanding of what had been taught by the teachers.

From the reasons just mentioned, the researchers found something to be investigated and dealt with profoundly. At the same time; they wanted to know what was going wrong with the English classes at this public school. They also wanted to discover if the teacher attributes this problem as a complex situation that is out of his/her control or not. And finally, they wanted to know how much influence the students’ motivation toward their English class has on their level of understanding.

Motivation “energizes” human behavior and “gives it direction” (Dornyei, 1998, p. 117) and is a significant dimension in language learning (Gardner, 1985; Gardner et al. 2004; Lightbown & Spada, 1993).

III. Previous Studies

Teaching for Understanding *By Christine D. Bremer and Catherine Cobb Morocco.* National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. November 2003. Vol. 2. Issue 4.

Experiences of Japanese University Students' Willingness to Speak English in Class: A Multiple Case Study. Grant L. Osterman. July- September 2014. Population: The sample was purposely chosen from a private university in southern Japan to establish a manageable scope of the study. The criteria for selecting this university were based on three basic considerations. First, the university had to have mandatory oral English classes for freshmen, with a native English speaker as instructor. Second, the university needed to be close enough to the researcher's house to allow for daily exposure to students to conduct classroom observation and interviews. Finally, low motivation and low English ability were desired due to the nature of the study exploring a students' WTC.

Understanding and Meeting The Needs of ESL Students. By Paul Chamness Miller and Hidehiro Endo. Paul Chamness Miller will be an assistant professor of foreign language education in the Division of Teacher Education at the University of Cincinnati this coming fall. Hidehiro Endo is completing a master's degree in foreign language education with an emphasis on ESL and multicultural education at Purdue University, West Lafayette, *Ind.* June 2004.

Factors Causes Students Low English Language Learning: A Case Study in the National University of Laos. Thongma Souriyavongsa (Corresponding author), Sam Rany, Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin, Leong Lai Mei of School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. Received: December 6, 2012 Accepted: January 21, 2013 Published: January 22, 2013

IV. Justification

The reason why the researchers carried out this work is due to the fact that they have seen that in many schools there are students who do not really understand their English classes. Consequently, they fail the course. So they felt motivated to find out what are the main factors that affect the students' understanding and low performance in their English classes. At the same time, they wanted to collect data that can be useful not only for this research, but also for those who are interested in doing more research in relation with English language understanding.

The intent of this research was to provide information that can be used for future generations and researchers, as well as to reinforce previous studies of this subject area.

The hope is that results can be useful for teachers, directors and institutions in general to find solutions and enhance the English teaching process. Students should also be encouraged to change their attitude toward the English class by giving them some recommendations how to become more active and proficient.

V. Research Questions

1. Why do students lack understanding in their English classes?
2. What are the reasons students have a lack of understanding in their English classes?
3. How does the teacher carry out his/her methodology while teaching English classes?
4. Are teachers using new visual aids to enhance English classes?
5. Are teacher motivating students to learn English?
6. Is the content of the English class suitable for the eighth grade?
7. What is the environment of the classroom where the students are receiving English class like?

VI. Objectives

General objective:

To analyze students' lack of understanding their English class in the eighth grade at Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Public School, Diriomo-Granada, in the first semester of 2015.

Specific objectives:

1. To identify the reasons, students have a lack of understanding in their English classes.
2. To determine the appropriateness of the content of the English class for the eighth grade.
3. To discover the methodology that teacher uses to teach English.

VII. Research Matrix

Specific Objectives	Variables	Indicators	Information Sources	Gathering Data Technique
1. To identify the reasons students have a lack of understanding in their English classes.	Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lack of understanding ✓ Student's attitude ✓ Teacher methodology ✓ Classroom environment ✓ Exposure to the target language ✓ Real life topic discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Classroom observation ✓ Teaching for understanding by Christine D. Bremer and Catherine Cobb Morocco ✓ Understanding and Meeting the Needs of ESL Students. Paul Chamness Miller and Hidehiro Endo. June 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey Documentary Analysis Diary Lesson plan
2. To determine the appropriateness of the content of the English class for the eighth grade.	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appropriateness of contents ✓ Teacher performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Public School. ✓ Teacher interviews ✓ MINED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview
3. To discover the methodology that teacher uses to teach English.	Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Teacher style ✓ Availability of didactic material ✓ The use of visual aids ✓ Classroom management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Teacher interviews ✓ Classroom Observation ✓ Students survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview Class Observations

VIII. Theoretical Framework

Most people would agree that in education area should be about teaching for understanding, but fewer would say that in our schools are regularly accomplishing this goal. While outdated lectures, exercises, routine class, and drills may help students memorize facts and rules and get the right answers on tests, this habitual style of teaching does not help students achieve the depth of understanding. Students need to understand multifaceted ideas and apply knowledge in new settings or real situations.

Harold Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain, a book project finished in 1956 by Dr. Benjamin Bloom and colleagues. Quoted by Wiggins and McTighe, Dr. Bloom explains:

“. . . some teachers believe their students should 'really understand,' others desire their students to 'internalize knowledge,' still others want their students to 'grasp the core or essence.' Do they all mean the same thing? Specifically, what does a student do who 'really understands' which he does not do when he does not understand? Through reference to the Taxonomy . . . teachers should be able to define such nebulous terms."

Understanding is a really difficult term to define since each person has a different assumption of what understanding is. So the question is again, what is understanding?

The word understanding is used in diverse ways. "Definitions of understanding include "the capacity to apprehend general relations of particulars," and "the power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories" (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2002).

The Teaching for Understanding Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Blythe & Perkins, 1998, p.12) developed a definition of understanding that it calls the performance perspective. In this view, "understanding is a matter of being able to do a variety of thought-provoking things with a topic, such as explaining, finding evidence in

examples, generalizing, applying, making analogies, and representing the topic in new ways" (p. 12).

The Cambridge dictionary states that understanding is "knowledge about a subject, situation, etc. or about how something works". However, this definition is so broad, that's why Wiggins and McTighe provide what they call "6 Facets of Understanding," a sort of alternative (or supplement) to Bloom's Taxonomy. In this system, learners prove they "understand" if they can:

1. Explain
2. Interpret
3. Apply
4. Have perspective
5. Empathize
6. Have self-knowledge

Types of understanding

The issue of what understands is a difficult one. One view is that there are two major kinds of understanding: understanding things (concepts), and understanding how things change (principles, or causal models).

Conceptual understanding

Concepts are understood by establishing relationships with prior knowledge. But what are the kinds of relationships which help lend meaning to new concepts? Norman identified the "is a", "has a", "cause", "act", "is when", "location", and "object" relationships, among others.

Causal understanding

Principles, or interrelated sets of principles called causal models, are a very different kind of understanding. The water cycle is a causal model in which various changes (evaporation, condensation, and precipitation) occur, and a variety of other changes (events) influence them (temperature, humidity, wind, convection currents, and so forth). Causal models are understood primarily by: (1) establishing relationships between the real events that constitute a causal model and the generalities (principles or causal models) that represent them, and (2) learning about the network of causal relationships among those events (changes).

Taking into account the concept of understanding, its facets and the two kinds of understanding, it can be pointed out its importance in the teaching and learning process. This importance radicates itself in developing English skills in the classroom. Also in a much longer retention of the English subject, so the students can apply either this knowledge or the skills in real life situations.

Lack of understanding can be either in speaking, grammar, writing, listening or in the other sub skills; however, this work is going to be focused on understanding spoken English and the difficulties students encounter when listening to their teachers or a native speaker.

Understanding Spoken English

“Spoken language understanding (SLU) is the interpretation of signs conveyed by a speech signal. SLU and natural language understanding (NLU) share the goal of obtaining a conceptual representation of natural language sentences. Specific to SLU is the fact that signs to be used for interpretation are coded into signals along with other information such as speaker identity. Furthermore, spoken sentences often do not follow the grammar of a language; they exhibit self-corrections, hesitations, repetitions, and other irregular phenomena. SLU systems contain an automatic speech recognition (ASR) component and must be robust to noise due to the spontaneous nature of spoken language and the errors

introduced by ASR. Moreover, ASR components output a stream of words with no structure information like punctuation and sentence boundaries. Therefore, SLU systems cannot rely on such markers and must perform text segmentation and understanding at the same time". (De Mori, Béchet, Hakkani-Tür, McTear, Riccardi, and Tur, 2008: p 50)

"Models of spoken language have traditionally focused on two disparate of speech recognition; the acoustic phonetic properties of the speech signal and the psychological processes associated with lexical access. Such traditional models assume that speech can be characterized merely as a sequence of words containing strings of phonemic constituents. Within this traditional "beads-on-string" framework the process of lexical recognition is primarily one of decoding the phonemes associated with the speech signal, attempting to deduce the sequence of words uttered by the speaker via a process of phonetic characterization. Such phonetic-segment models possess a building simplicity and directness-words recognition is merely a matter of decoding the sequence of phones uttered and then proceeding to "look up" the word in a mental lexicon, akin to the process by which a reader retrieves an entry in a dictionary.

However attractive such sequential models may be in the abstract, they fail to account for many properties of spoken language such as (1) the ability of listener to understand speech under a broad range of conditions that distort many of the acoustic-phonetic properties of the signal via such interference as reverberation and background noise, and (2) the remarkable degree of pronunciation variation observed at the phonetic level in every day speech. These two signatures of "real-world" speech-acoustic distortion and pronunciation variability-render untenable many contemporary models of speech recognition, as well as wreak havoc with current-generation automatic (machine) speech recognition systems. An alternative theoretical formulation is required; one capable of accounting for the patters of pronunciation variation in causal speech, and that provides a principal mechanism for the stability of intelligibility under the broad constellation of acoustics conditions characteristic of the real world. Moreover, the theoretical formulation should be capable of accounting for the importance of visible speech information,

particularly under conditions of acoustic interference and non-native familiarity with the language spoken". (Greenberg, 2004: p 1059).

In foreign language teaching and learning, importance of Spoken English has its distinctive position (Ur, 1991; Nunan, 1991; Brown and Yule, 1983; Bygate, 1987). Ur (1991, p.120) argues that, 'Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important...as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak. But 'One of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is to prepare learners to be able to use the language' (Bygate, 1987, p. 3).

As it can be seen, understanding spoken English is not only to interpret but also to use the language in order to become proficient in speaking as well as in the development of the other skills.

How Can We Teach For Understanding?

We've looked at learning for understanding from the standpoint of the learner. But what does learning for understanding mean from the standpoint of the teacher? What does teaching for understanding involve? While teaching for understanding is not terribly hard, it is not terribly easy, either. Teaching for understanding is not simply another way of teaching, just as manageable as the usual lecture-exercise-test method. It involves genuinely more intricate classroom choreography. To elaborate, here are six priorities for teachers who teach for understanding:

1. Make learning a long-term, thinking-centered process.

From the standpoint of the teacher, the message about performances of understanding boils down to this: Teaching is less about what the teacher does than about what the teacher gets the students to do. The teacher must arrange for the students to think with and about the ideas they are learning for an extended period of time, so that they learn

their way around a topic. unless students are thinking with and about the ideas they are learning for a while, they are not likely to build up a flexible repertoire of performances of understanding.

Imagine, if you will, a period of weeks or even months committed to some rich theme--the nature of life, the origin of revolutions, the art of mathematical modeling. Imagine a group of students engaged over time in a variety of understanding performances focused on that topic and a few chosen goals. The students face progressively more subtle but still accessible challenges. At the end there may be some culminating understanding performance such as an essay or an exhibition as in TheodoreSizer's (1984) concept of "essential schools." Such a long term, thinking-centered process seems central to building students' understanding.

2. Provide for rich ongoing assessment.

I emphasized earlier that students need criteria, feedback, and opportunities for reflection in order to learn performances of understanding well. Traditionally, assessment comes at the end of a topic and focuses on grading and accountability. These are important functions that need to be honored in many contexts. But they do not serve students' immediate learning needs very well. To learn effectively, students need criteria, feedback, and opportunities for reflection from the beginning of any sequence of instruction (cf. Baron, 1990; Gifford and O'Connor, 1991; Perrone, 1991b).

This means that occasions of assessment should occur throughout the learning process from beginning to end. Sometimes they may involve feedback from the teacher, sometimes from peers, sometimes from students' self evaluation. Sometimes the teacher may give criteria, sometimes engage students in defining their own criteria. While there are many reasonable approaches to ongoing assessment, the constant factor is the frequent focus on criteria, feedback, and reflection throughout the learning process.

3. Support learning with powerful representations.

Research shows that how information is represented can influence enormously how well that information supports understanding performances. For instance Richard Mayer (1989) has demonstrated repeatedly that what he terms "conceptual models"--usually in the form of diagrams with accompanying story lines carefully crafted according to several principles--can help students to solve nonroutine problems that ask them to apply new ideas in unexpected ways. For another example, computer environments that show objects moving in frictionless Newtonian ways we rarely encounter in the world can help students understand what Newton's laws really say about the way objects move (White, 1984). For yet another example, well-chosen analogies often serve to illuminate concepts in science, history, English, and other domains (e.g. Brown, 1989; Clement, 1991; Royer and Cable, 1976).

Many of the conventional representations employed in schooling--for instance, formal dictionary definitions of concepts or formal notational representations as in Ohm's law, $I = E/R$ --in themselves leave students confused or only narrowly informed (Perkins and Unger, in press). The teacher teaching for understanding needs to add more imagistic, intuitive, and evocative representations to support students' understanding performances. Besides supplying powerful representations, teachers can often ask students to construct their own representations, an understanding performance in itself.

4. Pay heed to developmental factors.

The theory devised by the seminal developmental psychologist Jean Piaget averred that children's understanding was limited by the general schemata they had evolved. For instance, children who had not attained "formal operations" would find certain concepts inaccessible--notions of control of variables and formal proof, for example (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958). Many student teachers today still learn this scheme and come to believe that fundamental aspects of reasoning and understanding are lost on children until late adolescence. They are unaware that 30 years of research have forced fundamental

revisions in the Piagetian conception. Again and again, studies have shown that, under supportive conditions, children can understand much more than was thought much earlier than was thought.

The "neo-Piagetian" theories of Robbie Case (1985), Kurt Fischer (1980), and others offer a better picture of intellectual development. Understanding complex concepts may often depend on what Case calls a "central conceptual structure," i.e., certain patterns of quantitative organization, narrative structure, and more that cut across disciplines (Case, 1992). The right kind of instruction can help learners to attain these central conceptual structures. More broadly, considerable developmental research shows that complexity is a critical variable. For several reasons, younger children cannot readily understand concepts that involve two or three sources of variation at once, as in concepts such as balance, density, or pressure (Case, 1985, 1992; Fischer, 1980).

The picture of intellectual development emerging today is less constrained, more nuanced, and ultimately more optimistic regarding the prospects of education.

Teachers teaching for understanding do well to bear in mind factors like complexity, but without rigid conceptions of what students can and cannot learn at certain ages.

5. Induct students into the discipline.

Analyses of understanding emphasize that concepts and principles in a discipline are not understood in isolation (Perkins, 1992; Perkins and Simmons, 1988; Schwab, 1978). Grasping what a concept or principle means depends in considerable part on recognizing how it functions within the discipline. And this in turn requires developing a sense of how the discipline works as a system of thought. For example, all disciplines have ways of testing claims and mustering proof--but the way that's done is often quite different from discipline to discipline. In science, experiments can be conducted, but in history evidence must be mined from the historical record. In literature, we look to the text for evidence of an interpretation, but in mathematics we justify a theorem by formal deduction from the givens.

Conventional teaching introduces students to plenty of facts, concepts, and routines from a discipline such as mathematics, English, or history. But it typically does much less to awaken students to the way the discipline works--how one justifies, explains, solves problems, and manages inquiry within the discipline. Yet in just such patterns of thinking lie the performances of understanding that make up what it is to understand those facts, concepts, and routines in a rich and generative way. Accordingly, the teacher teaching for understanding needs to undertake an extended mission of explicit consciousness raising about the structure and logic of the disciplines taught.

6. Teach for transfer.

Research shows that very often students do not carry over facts and principles they acquire in one context into other contexts. They fail to use in science class or at the supermarket the math they learned in math class. They fail to apply the writing skills that they mastered in English on a history essay. Knowledge tends to get glued to the narrow circumstances of initial acquisition. If we want transfer of learning from students--and we certainly do, because we want them to be putting to work in diverse settings the understandings they acquire--we need to teach explicitly for transfer, helping students to make the connections they otherwise might not make, and helping them to cultivate mental habits of connection-making (Brown, 1989; Perkins and Salomon, 1988; Salomon and Perkins, 1989).

Teaching for transfer is an agenda closely allied to teaching for understanding. Indeed, an understanding performance virtually by definition requires a modicum of transfer, because it asks the learner to go beyond the information given, tackling some task of justification, explanation, example-finding or the like that reaches further than anything in the textbook or the lecture. Moreover, many understanding performances transcend the boundaries of the topic, the discipline, or the class room--applying school math to stock market figures or perspectives on history to casting your vote in the current election. Teachers teaching for a full and rich understanding need to include understanding performances that reach well beyond the obvious and conventional boundaries of the topic.

Certainly much more can be said about the art and craft of teaching for understanding. However, this may suffice to make the case that plenty can be done. Teachers need not feel paralyzed for lack of means. On the contrary, a plethora of classroom moves suggest themselves in service of building students' understanding. The teacher who makes learning thinking-centered, arranges for rich ongoing assessment, supports learning with powerful representations, pays heed to developmental factors, inducts students into the disciplines taught, and teaches for transfer far and wide has mobilized a powerful armamentum for building students' understanding.

IX. Research Methodology

The main purpose of this research was to describe and analyze the reasons why the students in 8th grade do not understand their English class. According to the objectives, this research has a quantitative approach since statistical methods were applied to elicit the data. The data has been interpreted qualitatively so that a response could be given based on the real scenario where the classes took place. It is really important to mention that this research is focused on describing a phenomenon that affects a group of individuals in a specific place in real time as well as giving the reasons for which students have a poor English understanding level.

9.1. Participants

The population in the study was a group of 8th graders from the public school Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes located in Diriomo City-Granada department. This group was made up of 34 students and most of them come from rural communities. The group in question was also formed from 21 girls and 13 boys, with an average of age of 13 years old.

All the participants of this study came from public primary schools where English classes were not included in the MINED (Ministerio de Educación) program to be imparted. For this reason 100% of this group was considered false beginners in the English subject. These students met three 45 minute class sessions during the week.

9.2. Instruments(research methods)

The researchers applied three different instruments in order to elicit the necessary information. The aim of doing this was to gather accurate information concerning the lack of English understanding. For instance, a survey with 13 questions related to their real English level understanding, the influence of both the number of students and classroom

environment and finally, the teacher methodology and didactical resources were given to the students. This instrument was applied on May 6th, 2015.

9.3. Teacher interview

The main aim of doing these interviews was to know the students' English level of understanding taking into account the teacher's point of view. The interviews were composed of 13 questions concerning the causes of the students' low performance, the major difficulties students encounter, and most important, the lack of understanding. Researchers also included some questions related to the appropriateness of the content used in that level, teacher's methodology, classroom environment and didactical material. All this was made to complement the content of the interviews.

9.4. Classroom Observation

In addition to surveys and teacher interviews, researchers also went three times to the classroom to observe, take notes and take pictures of students' participation in different activities during the English class.

They designed a close-ended questionnaire that served as a guide for them in carrying out the observation classes. The main objective of this was to realize which activities were the students involved, what was their performance with regard to understanding the class, what was the attitude toward the class, and in what way they were taken as the main element of the learning process. At the same time, they wanted to focus their observation in the difficulties students have with respect to English understanding during the class, the weaknesses not only in the students' performance, but also in the teachers' methodology and performance.

The frequency of class observation was from April 29th to June 17th 2015. Every session was of 45 minutes where the first thing the teacher did was to take the attendance in about 5 minutes, checked the homework in about 10 minutes, and introduced the new topic and class development in 30 minutes.

9.5. Analysis Plan

First, the researchers administered a survey to the students of eighth grade in Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Institute, Diriomo City-Granada department. There were 34 in total. They took the whole group as a sample. From this survey on, they processed this information in calculating the percentage of male and female, frequency, average age, standard deviation, first deviation, median, range and mode.

Second, during the process of calculating the percentage in gender, they found that 62% represents females and the other 38% represents males; this means that the frequency is 21 students for female and 13 males.

In the case of average ages, they took the total number of students and applied a formula to calculate the average of age. The formula is \bar{x} (average) = \sum^n / N (number of students). As a result of this, they had the total amount of ages and they divided into the total number of students to get the average age that is 13 years old. This means that the group is homogeneous because there is not much variation in the students' ages.

In the third case, they calculated the standard deviation and represented it in a graphic. At first, they took the values of the different ages the group and then they subtracted the average age respectively in order to have the standard deviation that is 2. This means that the youngest age is 12 years old and there is only a 2 years difference between the youngest and the oldest age which is 14.

In the case of the median, they ordered the ages from the youngest to the oldest and counted the number of cases to find the location of half of number of cases that is between the position number 13 and 13. The median in this position is 13. As a result of this, they saw that between the ages of 13 and 14 the students can experience the same psychological, pedagogical, intellectual experiences. At the same time, they can even say that at these ages the students can encounter the same learning difficulties in the English class.

To calculate the range, they subtracted the maximum age minus minimum age to get the number 1 that in our case it represents the difference within the ages of the sample. In

numerical terms, there is not much difference, so they can say that the teacher can apply the same methodological and pedagogical strategies and get a similar performance from the students.

Finally, they calculated the mode which is the number of the most repeated ages in the group that was chosen to carry out the survey. The most repeated age is 13 with 24 cases. It represents 74% of 100% of the whole group studied.

X. Results and Analysis

According to the information, taken from the eighth grade students, from the public school Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes, located at Diriomo-Granada department, they made the following analysis and interpretation.

The interpretation of results was done by means of three different instruments that gave a broad idea of how students understanding in the English class take place. On one hand, they applied a survey with questions related to students' English level of understanding. However, when they refer to English level of understanding, their approach is based on the real level of understanding for their ages and grade.

on the other hand, they also held an interview with the English teacher as well as English teacher volunteer from the United States. They did this with the aim of having a different interpretation and view point from another source.

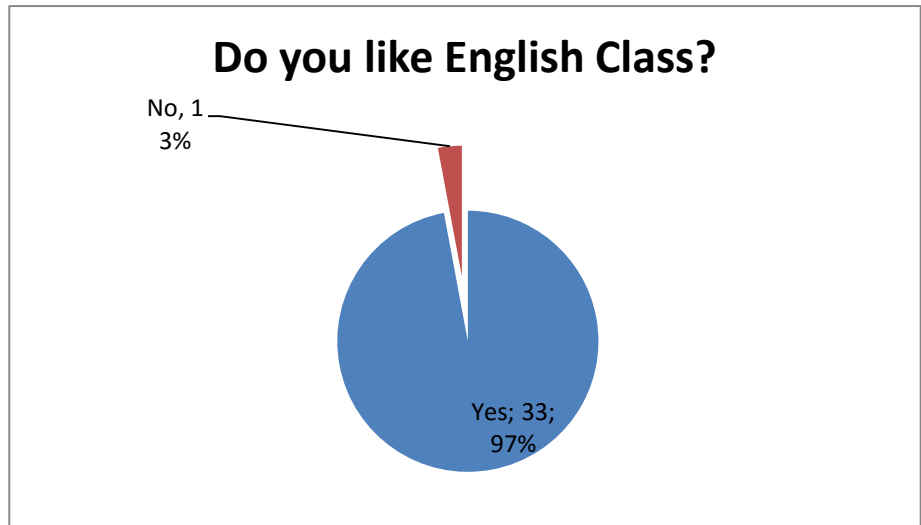
They also completed three sessions of class observations to be in contact with the students with whom they were working. In this observation they aimed at seeing the students' behavior toward the class, the classroom environment and most importantly, the students' English level of understanding toward the class.

The types of instruments (research methods) that they used were as follows:

1. Student surveys
2. Teacher interview
3. English teacher volunteer interview
4. Class observations

10.1 Survey Analysis

In general terms, it can be said that from the total group to whom the survey was given, most of students liked the English class. Of the whole group, (made up of 34 students), only 1 student said that he did not like his English class. The graphic below represents the corresponding percentage of the students whose answers were yes and no.



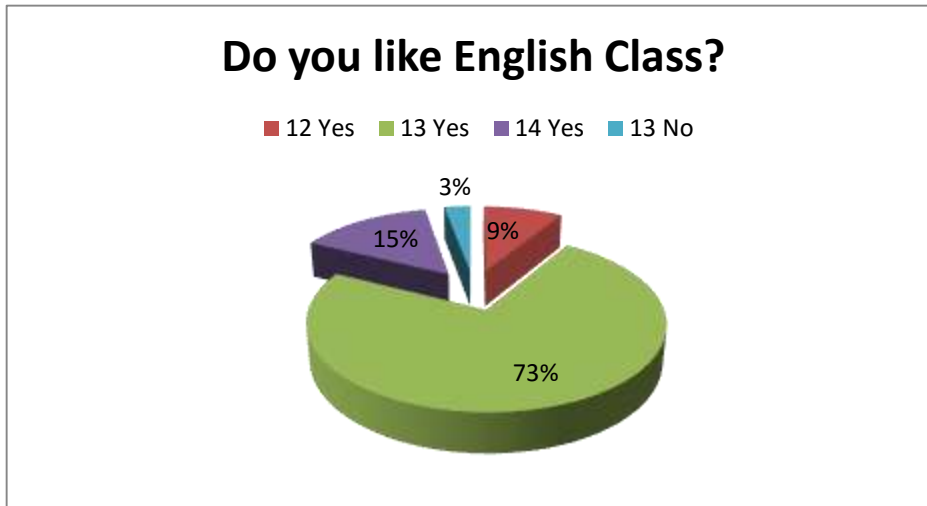
1. Student Surveys

With regard to the first question it was asked to the 34 students (Do you like English Class?) We formed an analysis based on the three ranges of age whose group was composed. We had different answers in the three different students' ages from which the second grade group was formed. For example, the 3 12-years-old students answered that they like English class. This represents 9% of the total group. However, it is noticed a great difference among the students who were 13 years old. For example, 25 out of the 26 who were 13 years old answered yes, they did like the English class. Nevertheless, one of them answered he/she did not like English class. Thus 25 students represent 73%, and the one who did not like the English class represents only 3% of the whole group. In the last case of five students who were 14 years old, all of them liked the English class. This represents 15% of the total group.

With this in mind, it can be said that in this group most of the students liked their English class. We found this data really interesting since students of this grade and age do not normally care for English being considered one of the most difficult subjects in high school. Besides they have others priorities subjects such as math, language-literature and science.

See graphic:

With regard to the question “what is your English level of Understanding?” We have that of the students who were 12 years old. One of them answered that he liked a lot the English

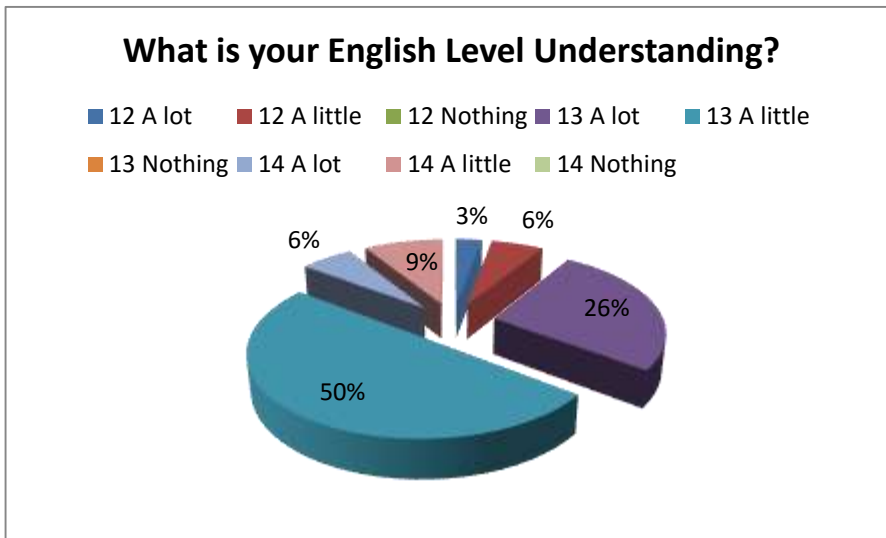


classes and two of them liked a few. This claims that one student of 12 years old is 3% of the total group and the other two represents 6% of the students who like the English classes a little bit. The next

case is more representative since the majority is concentrated in the group of students who were 13 years old. In this group we can see that out of the 26 students who were 13, nine of them said they like a lot the English classes. That represents 26 % of the total group. The rest of 17 students said they liked the English class a little bit, which represents 50% of the total group. In the case of the students who were 14 years old, it was found that out of the five, two of them liked the class a lot; it represents 6% of the total group. Three of them said they liked the class just a little; it represents the 9% of the total group.

In the analysis of these answers given by all the students with regard to the question mentioned above, it can be said that the students English level of understanding is low since the 65% of the whole group said that their understanding is “a little bit” and only 35% said that they understand a lot.

See graphic below:



With regard to the question, “what is your major difficulty in the English Class?” we had a great variance in answers. For instance, of the students who were 12 years old, one of them said that his major difficulty is reading. However, two of

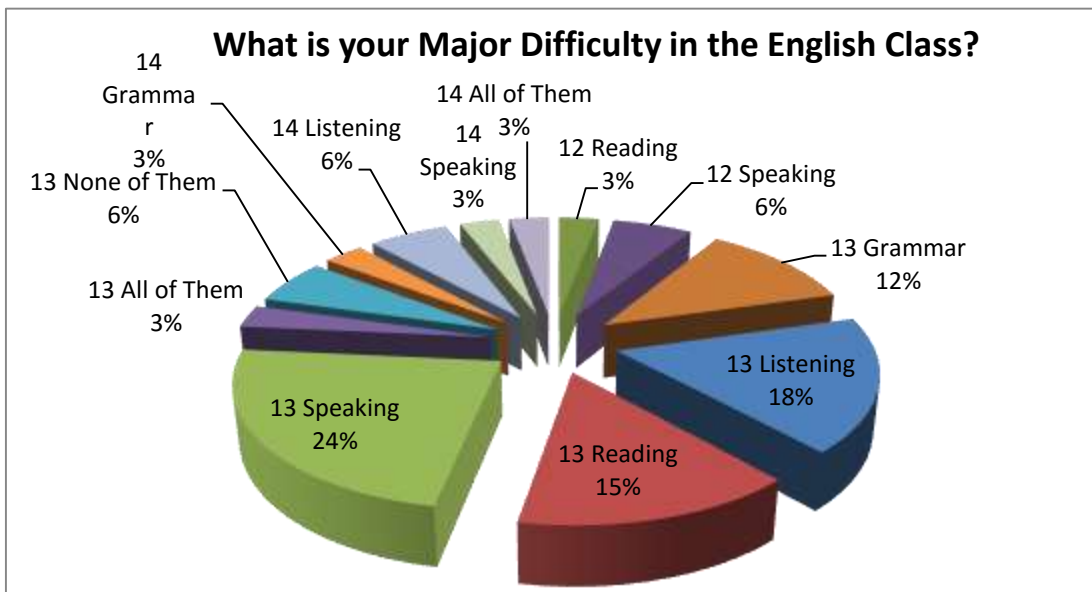
them said that their major difficulty is speaking. This data, in terms of percentage, represent 3% and 6% respectively.

In the case of students who were 13 years old, we still see the same variance, but in this case the answers are shared in all the possible choices. Explicitly speaking, four of the 26 students in this group answered that grammar has been their most difficult subject in their English class. That makes 12% of the total group. Six students in the group said that listening is harder than the other skills; that makes 18%. The other five students in the group answered that they have serious difficulties in reading; that is the 15% of the group. Eight of them said that speaking is one of the most difficult topics for them; this represents 24%. On the other hand from the total group, we have two students whose answers were that none of the English skills are difficulties for them. Contrary to these students’ answers, one student said that all the English skills are difficult for him. This data in terms of percentage represent 3% and 6% respectively.

In the case of students who were 14 years old, one out of the five said that grammar is a major difficulty, and two of them answered that they have problems in listening; that makes 3% and 6% respectively. And finally, one of them said that speaking is his major difficulty in the English class which represents 3% of the total group. Also, one of them said to have problems in all of the English skills. This represents 3% of the total group.

Taking into account all this information, it can be said that the students' difficulties vary in each case and age. It can clearly be seen that students who are 14 years old are the ones who have more difficulties. For example, most of the students have problems in speaking (32%); the next highest percentage is listening with 24%, then reading with 18%, and finally, grammar with 15%.

See Graphic:



10.2 Analysis of the teacher's Interview

English understanding is one of the main difficulties that students encounter during high school. There can be a series of factors that can prevent students from becoming proficient in this skill. For example, a teacher's technique plays an important role in the acquisition of this skill as well as the didactic material used by the teacher, and the exposure of the students to the target language. But on the other hand, students' attitude toward the class is deciding when learning English.

One important aspect to mention in order to understand English class was something mentioned by teacher Maria José Martínez. She said that the lack of self-study of the students prevents them from having a better understanding of their English class. As she

continued, she mentioned that not all the techniques and methods used by them fit for all the students since most of them have different learning styles and attitudes.

In the interview given to the teacher just mentioned, it was asked her about the activities she had been carrying out to improve the students understanding. She suggested that there should be reinforcement plans in collaboration with monitoring students in order to strengthen the weaknesses of students with poor performance. She suggested making use of technology and other supporting material to enhance the students' performance and understanding.

According to the volunteer teacher, to improve the students' English level of understanding, it is necessary to include a lot of fun and interactive activities during the class (Cott Stefanie, September 23rd, 2015). At the same time, she recommended letting students work as a team to enable them to be creative with the language. It is necessary to keep students in real contact with the language and use of gestures to help students understand.

She also said that the lack of understanding is mainly caused by the lack of interest on the part of the students, missing too many classes and apathy toward the class. In general, students do not effort themselves to understand.

There are also other reasons that prevent the students from accomplishing a really good level of English understanding. For instance, students are profoundly affected by what they see and hear. Noisy places impact the students negatively when they are exposed to the target language. Furthermore, distractions outside the classroom cause the students to understand less and this becomes even worse when students are not sufficiently motivated.

In the case of the content used by teachers, it can be seen that not all of the content is suitable for the students. It is fairly evident that there is content way above the students' level and that consequently makes it quite difficult for the students to understand. So, the Ministerio de Educación (MINED) should design a syllabus focused on the students' real level of understanding while providing techniques and methods to help the students understand.

Finally, yet no less interesting, is the importance of imparting the class by using speaking and listening role playing since, by means of these two skills, English understanding is better stimulated. There are also a lot of weaknesses that need to be strengthened such as: focusing the class on real-life situations, and challenging to hear and speak the native language because students are often embarrassed to speak English since they are not used to doing so.

10.3 Analysis of English class observation

We know that students are profoundly affected by what they see, hear and feel when they enter the classroom. Keeping this in mind, the researchers started out by observing the classroom atmosphere. They saw that the seats were arranged properly-neatly so that, students had enough space to stand up and move if the teacher call them.

As soon as the teacher entered the classroom, they saw she was wearing formal clothing, not too much makeup, and showing a wide smile. She brought all the didactical material she needed to start her class. Then, she put everything in her desk and started the class by taking attendance. During this time they could see and hear that students answered the teacher in English every time they heard their name by saying “here” or “present”. This took about three minutes.

Then, the teacher moved on to the next part. She wrote down the date on the whiteboard, then, jotted down the topic that had been imparted in the previous class. Before continuing the class, she checked the homework she had assigned the previous day in an oral manner. Researchers saw massive participation of students but there were more girls participating than boys. All of the students answered correctly or according to what they had been asked; however, when the teacher asked about vocabulary they saw students look at each other as a sign of confusion. The teacher had to speak in the native language or used body language, facial expressions, and point at the textbook the students were using to facilitate comprehension. All of this took place within five minutes.

Once the teacher had finished reviewing the homework, she moved to a new topic by asking some questions related to the students' knowledge of something concerning the new topic. Some students, for their part, answered satisfactorily while others could not.

During the development of this activity, researchers saw how the teacher did not move too much from one place to the other with her textbook in the hand to promote participation.

Later time, the teacher continued the class by making use of the whiteboard. She wrote a list of countries and asked the students to write the nationality of each country. There was participation this time from the boys; there were a few mistakes in their answers. After that, the teacher assigned a short reading related to the topic they were studying and some questions about it.

Another activity that she guided was one where the students had to match a country with its respective nationality. During the process of this activity she helped students with the spelling and pronunciation. The teacher moved more than before, so students were more relaxed.

Finally, the class finished with the assignment of new homework for the next class and the teacher thanked the students for their participation and great performance during the class.

XI. Conclusion

The present research was conducted to find out the factors affecting the lack of understanding of the 8th grade English students from the secondary school Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Institute Diriomo-Granada. In addition, researchers wanted to know whether the content was suitable or not for the students' level.

It is important to mention that one thing that affects the students' understanding is their attitude toward the class as well as their behavior and priorities in their life. No less important are the effects that the didactical material, the use of technology in the class, and the methodology teachers have in the development of understanding.

According to the data analysis, researchers drew the conclusion that the lack of understanding of the English class in the eighth grade from Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes Institute from Diriomo was caused by:

1. Monotonous English classes
2. Use of old books
3. Outdated methodology
4. Lack of contact with the target language
5. Students' low motivation to learn
6. Absence of proper didactic material and role playing
7. A poor classroom environment
8. Lack of listening activities during the class
9. Boring classes
10. Lack of real-life activities involving the students
11. Lack of vocabulary on the part of the students
12. Use of complex words on the part of the teacher

Drawn from the aspects just mentioned, it is strongly believed that if the students, the head of the institute, as well as teachers do not make their best effort to overcome these serious problems with the English classes, this situation will persist and keep on affecting the students' and teachers' performance.

XII. Recommendations

1. School should provide English Teaching training and workshops to improve their English teaching strategies and methods.
2. Teachers should use visual aids for students to have a better understanding of the class.
3. There should be more contact with the English language.
4. Content should be checked to see if it is appropriate for the students' level.
5. Teachers should encourage students to take part in the everyday activities of the classroom.
6. There should be more role playing to motivate students to try to understand.
7. The MINED (Ministerio de Educación) should provide update materials for public high schools.
8. Teachers should incorporate more listening activities, the use of tape recorder, new devices, and technology to enhance the learning process.
9. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the students should be raised.
10. Elderly teachers in need of retirement should be replaced by the new generation of teachers.

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XIV. Anexes

Diriá, Granada, 30 de Abril del 2015

Lic. Rosario Sevilla
Directora del Instituto Monseñor Ángel Reyes-Diriomo

Sus manos:

Reciba cordiales saludos en nombre de Holman Eduardo Picado Muñoz y Bladimir Sánchez Quiroz, estudiantes de la carrera de Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación con mención en inglés, de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua UNAN-Managua del turno sabatino.

Nos dirigimos a usted para solicitar de su colaboración en la aplicación de algunos instrumentos de investigación que usaremos en nuestro trabajo investigativo que se titula, "Analices de la falta de entendimiento de la clase de inglés de los estudiantes del octavo grado del instituto público Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes-Diriomo, durante el primer semestre del 2015.

Por las razones antes expuestas nosotros, solicitamos de su autorización para la realización de encuestas a estudiantes del octavo grado, entrevista a profesores de inglés y a su persona.

Agradecemos de antemano su colaboración y sin más a que hacer referencia, le deseamos éxito en sus labores diarias.

Adjuntamos copias de cédulas y carnet.

Atentamente,

Holman Picado Muñoz

Bladimir Sánchez Quiroz

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE NICARAGUA
RECINTO UNIVERSITARIO RUBEN DARIO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN E IDIOMAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE INGLES**

ENTREVISTA A DOCENTE

Estimado(a) docente somos estudiantes de la carrera de Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación con mención en inglés de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua UNAN-Managua del turno sabatino. El objetivo de nuestra entrevista, es conocer el nivel de comprensión que tienen sus alumnos del octavo grado del Instituto Monseñor Rafael Ángel Reyes del municipio de Diriomo departamento de Granada, al recibir la clase de inglés, según su punto de vista.

Por esta razón solicitamos de su colaboración a través de la contestación de las siguientes preguntas. Las cuales nos darán pautas acerca del nivel de comprensión de sus estudiantes. Le agradecemos de antemano su grata colaboración y sinceridad para con nosotros.

I. Datos Generales:

Nombre completo: _____

Género:

F____ M____

Edad: _____

Años de servicio: _____

Nivel Académico: _____

Títulos obtenidos: _____

II. Contesta las siguientes preguntas según sus consideraciones.

1. ¿Qué lo(a) motivo a estudiar inglés?
2. ¿Obtuvo algún título de licenciatura en la clase de inglés?
3. ¿Siente usted que enseñar inglés es su vocación?
4. ¿Cuáles son sus mayores dificultades en la enseñanza del inglés?
5. ¿Qué recursos didácticos utiliza en su clase?
6. ¿Según su punto de vista cuales son las mayores dificultades que tienen sus alumnos al recibir su clase?
7. ¿Considera usted que estas dificultades son determinantes para la buena comprensión de la clase de inglés?
8. ¿A qué atribuye la falta de comprensión de sus alumnos en la clase de inglés?
9. ¿Qué haría usted para mejorar ese nivel de entendimiento de sus estudiantes en la clase?

10. ¿Cómo influye el ambiente escolar en el entendimiento de la clase de inglés?

11. ¿Cree usted que su metodología, actividades y estrategias de enseñanza son adecuadas para el nivel de sus estudiantes?

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TEACHER INTERVIEW

Dear Mrs. Stephanie Cott. We are students from UNAN-Managua National University. We are doing an English degree focused on teaching English as foreign language. The aim of this interview is to know more about your own experiences as a volunteer English teacher in the Institute Monseñor Rafael Angel Reyes- Diriomo; at the same time, we want to find out what are the greatest difficulties the students have with regard to understanding spoken English during the teaching and learning process.

For the reasons just mentioned, we humbly request for your collaboration and help by answering the next questions since it will be useful for us to finish our final report. We really thank beforehand your willingness and enthusiasm to give us a helping hand in carrying out this work.

III. General Information:

Gender:

F____ M____

Age: _____

Years of Experience: _____

Academic Level: _____

Degree: _____

IV. Answers the followings questions according to your considerations

1. When did you first become interested in teaching?
2. What does make you an effective teacher?
3. Describe your experience(s) working with Spanish speaker students?
4. What is your knowledge and experience teaching English as a foreign language in Nicaragua?

5. What techniques do you use to improve the students understanding?

6. To what do you attribute the lack of understanding of your students in the English class?

7. How does the environment affect or impact the students understanding?

8. Do you consider that the contents used by the English teacher are suitable for the students' level?

9. What are the greatest weaknesses that you have noticed in your students with regard to understanding spoken English?

10. Do you think that understanding spoken English is the main problem in teaching English as a foreign language? Why?

No. Encuesta: _____

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TITULO: Falta de entendimiento del idioma inglés

ENCUESTA A ESTUDIANTES

Estimados(a) alumnos somos estudiantes de la carrera de Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación con mención en inglés de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua UNAN-Managua del turno sabatino. El objetivo de nuestra encuesta, es para conocer el nivel de comprensión que tienen ustedes al recibir la clase de inglés y del mismo modo sobre sus mayores dificultades durante el desarrollo de la misma.

Por esta razón solicitamos de su colaboración a través de la contestación de las siguientes preguntas. Las cuales nos ayudaran a comprender mejor su grado de asimilación del idioma inglés. Les agradecemos de antemano su grata colaboración y sinceridad para con nosotros.

I. Datos Generales:

Género: F _____ M _____

Edad: _____

Lugar de precedencia: Urbano _____ Rural _____

Eres repitente: Sí _____ No _____

II. Contesta las siguientes preguntas marcando con una X la opción que prefieras, puedes marcar varias.

1. ¿Te gusta la clase de inglés?

Sí____ No____

2. ¿Cuánto te gusta la clase de inglés?

Bastante____ Un poco____ Nada____

3. ¿Cómo consideras la clase de inglés?

Excelente____ Muy buena____ Buena ____ Regular____ Deficiente____

4. ¿Cómo valoras el desempeño de tu maestro(a)?

Excelente____ Bueno____ Regular ____ Deficiente____

5. ¿Entiendes la clase de inglés?

Si____ No____ Un Poco____ Nada____

6. ¿Cuál es tu mayor dificultad en el idioma inglés?

Gramática____ Escucha____ Lectura____ Habla____ Todas____ Ninguna____

7. ¿Qué tipos de actividades realiza tu maestro(a) durante la clase?

Dinámicas____ Cantos____ Actividades orales____ Trabajos grupales____
Ninguna de las anteriores____

8. ¿Qué tipos de artículos visuales usa tu maestro(a) en la clase? (puedes marcar más de una opción)

Fotos_____ Data Show_____ Papelógrafos_____ Fichas de vocabularios_____
Otras_____ Ninguna de las anteriores_____

9. ¿Sientes que tienes un buen entendimiento de la clase de inglés?

Sí_____ No_____

10. ¿Cuál es tu nivel de entendimiento de la clase de inglés?

Mucho_____ Un poco_____ Nada_____

11. ¿Cuántos alumnos reciben la clase de inglés?

Más de 20_____ Más de 30_____ Más 40_____ 50 o mas_____

12. ¿Cómo son las condiciones del aula de clase?

Excelente_____ Muy buena_____ Buena_____ Regular_____ Deficiente_____

13. ¿Referente a la pregunta 9 y 19 que efecto tienen el número de alumnos y las condiciones del aula de clases en tu nivel de entendimiento del inglés?

Positivo _____ Negativo _____

Script Comparing Teachers Interviews

Codewords	Source1	Source2	Patters	Islands
	Teacher In Charge	Foreign Volunteer Teacher		
Lacresour	Amount of students, lack of interest to learn the language, and lack of resources and aids of teaching	Lack of supporting materials	Lack of resources and supporting materials	Amount of students
Insbo	Whiteboard, markers, paper, tape recorder, up to date books, and songs	Peace Corps' handouts, MINED's books. Strategies and methodology	Books	Whiteboard, markers, paper, Tape recorder, and songs. Strategies and methodology
Lanat	Many students in class, too much use of native language, and short time classes	Negative attitude towards the English subject	-	Many students in class, too much use of native language, and short time classes. Negative attitude towards the English subject
Pracpro	Practicing English enough time	The best attitude, the best product	-	Practicing English enough time. The best attitude, the best product.
Timint	Lack of practice and few time during the English class	Lack of self-study, learning styles, lack of interest, and absence of the ability to acquire the language	Lack of interest	Lack of self-study, learning styles, few time in class, and absence of the ability to acquire the language
Reinpro	More practical classes and take advantage of more	Class reinforcement and take advantage of	Take advantage of more proficient	Class reinforcement

	proficient students	more proficient students	students	
Suitdef	Negative way because: not suitable classroom, deficient program, and lack of English lab	-	-	-
Diapre	Of course I make short dialogue, oral presentations, so they can understand	-	-	-
Techla	New technology, internet, and systematized books	English lab, dictionaries, and supporting materials	New technology	Internet, systematized books and dictionaries
Writora	Written and oral test	Written and oral test	Written and oral test	-

Book of Codewords and Its Meaning

Lacresour: Lack of resources and supporting materials.

Insbo: Didactic resources used by the teachers during the English class for better understanding.

Lanat: Excessive use of native language and negative attitude.

Pracpro: More practice to get more productive understanding.

Timint: Short time English classes and little interest on the part of students.

Reinpro: The use of more proficient students to reinforce the less proficient students.

Suitdef: Not suitable classroom and deficient English program.

Diapre: Dialogue and oral presentations for best understanding.

Techla: Using new technology and laboratory to improve the understanding.

Writora: Written and oral test to assess understanding.

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GUIDE FOR ENGLISH CLASS OBSERVATIONS

1. What is the teacher's appearance like?
2. What is the classroom environment like?
3. What does the teacher do to motivate students?
4. What does the teacher do to enhance his/her students understanding?
5. How does teacher carry out her class?
6. How do the students embrace their English class?

Research Schedule

Months		August		September				October				November				December	January
No.	Activities	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	
1	Handing over the protocole																
2	Checking of the general objective, specific objectives, and the research questions																
3	Make the Matrix Research and design the research instruments																
4	Checking the research instruments																
5	Applying the instruments in the field (survey and interview)																
6	Applying the instruments in the field (observation class)																
7	Data processing and classifying information																
8	Calculate central tendency measures																
9	Quantitative analysis																
10	Qualitative analysis																
11	Handing qualitative analysis of interview																
12	Handing first draft of research																
13	Feedback for teacher about the first draft of research																
14	Pre-defense																
15	Handing final document of research																
16	Final defense																



Teacher developing English Class



Students' Participation in the English Class



Observation English Class



Applying the Survey to the Students