UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÒNOMA DE NICARAGUA

FAREM-MATAGALPA

GRADUATION SEMINAR

Theme:

"Difficulties in the teaching   and learning process of English as a foreign language in high schools of Matagalpa and Jinotega, during the second semester 2011".

Sub-theme:

Causes of the low   academic performance of seventh grade students at the Nacional Dario in the city of Dario during the second semester 2011.

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February, 4th 2012

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"Difficulties in the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language in high Schools, of Matagalpa and Jinotega, during the second semester 2011".

Sub-theme:

Causes of the low academic performance of seventh grade students at theNational Dario School, of Dario City, during the second semester 2011.

Dedication

This seminar is dedicated to God because he is our spiritual guide in our lives and has given the wisdom to finish our research.

To our parents and family for their inconditional support and our daughters who have been patient during these five years.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to all students of National Dario School, who have been part of this seminar, as well as to English teachers and a Peace Corps volunteer who share their experiences with us.

We also appreciate the effort of our teacher, Professor Marisela Coronado.

"2012, Hacia la Acreditaciòn Universitaria"

PROFESSOR`S VALUATION

With the Graduation Seminar **" Difficulties in the Teaching and Learning Process of English as a foreign language in high schools of Matagalpa and Jinotega, during the second semester, 2011"** The authors Diana Angelica Molinares Sobalvarro and Guadalupe del Carmen Valle Sequeira complete their Bachelor's   degree   in   English   at   the   UNAN-Managua. The authors present a final report that meets the requirements of the Regulations of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua- UNAN Managua and they have applied the proposed methodology for developing the Graduation Seminar. Its structure is according to what is required in the regulations for this type of graduation.

The authors of this research have shown consistency, discipline and dedication to the subject investigated, present a topic of current teaching interest and it will serve greatly to English teachers of National Dario School, of Dario city and all teachers who teach this subject in High School.

As tutor of the seminar Causes of the low   academic performance of seventh grade students at the Nacional Dario School, of Dario city, during the second semester 2011. I consider that it fulfills with the objectives and the requirements of a Graduation Seminar, therefore it is ready to be defended.

_____
Lic. Marisela Coronado

Summary

This research pretends to help and improve the English teaching and learning process with some alternatives of solution, taking into account the academic performance.When teaching a second language, it is important to use appropriate methodological strategies, because they are ways that facilitate the learning in students and the teaching for the English teachers.English teachers must be careful when planning a daily lesson plan and thinking about appropriate methodological strategies for using in each content.

Some English teachers don't use communicative activities and are using traditional ways to teach English, for example; the most common activities areto write on the board, fill in the blanks, and other activities where students don't practice interactive activities.For this reason, the objective of the present research is toevaluate causes of the low academic performance of seventh grade at National School Dario of Dario City.

It is necessary that teachers practice communicative activities with students such as: role plays, tours, dramas, dialogs, real situations (go shopping travel).It is important to mention that large classes are difficult for the teacher. The teachermust dedicate enough time to the lessonplan with a lot of motivating activities where students feel interested in class and permits an interaction between teacher-students.

 One of the main conclusion that we found in research is that the teacher´s evaluation for students have high scores, another one is that parents are not involved with the educative system.

Introduction

This research is about difficulties in the English teaching process as a foreign language in the schools of Matagalpa and Jinotega, during the second semester 2011.

The sub-theme for this seminar is causes of the low academic performance of seventh grade "C" English students at the National School Dario, of Dario city during the second semester 2011.

This research pretends to evaluate the causes of the low academic performance because it is considered that academic performance of the seventh grade "C"English students is low.

This work is based on causes of the low academic performance because it is considered that the academic performance is affected by different causes such as: Teacher's methodology, lesson plan, social family factors and Evaluation System.

This research proposes some alternatives that can be used as solutions in order to improve the academic performance.

The main impact of this work will be for teachers who teach English to learn how to make a meaningful evaluation using rubrics.

The methods used in this research were: Scientific method and Analyzes.

Taking a pool of forty –five Students of seventh grade section "C".

This research has the following Variable:

Causes of the low academic performance

To measure the variable, it was applied instruments such as: interview, survey and observation guide.

Justification

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the causes of the low academic performance of 7th grade English students at the National School Dario of Dario City, during the second semester 2011.

This research will identify the causes of the low academic performance of 7th grade English students at the National Dario School, of Dario City, during the second semester 2011, suggest alternative of solutions to this problem.

This research will be useful to improve the low academic performance of 7th grade English students at the National School Dario of Dario City and teachers will have possible answers to many questions about causes low academic performance in English the class are:

This research pretends to help teachers to know different causes of the low academic performance of the seventh grade English students at the National School Dario, in Dario city and take it as a good reference to improve students learning.

On the other hand, this material contains some alternatives of solutions which will be helpful to solve difficulties that the teacher faces in the English class.

In this research, the pool is 100% students and the sample is forty five students of seventh grade and an English teacher that teach them at National Dario School,The qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

General Objective

To evaluate causes of the low academic performance of the seventh grade "C" English students of morning shift at the National School Dario, in Dario city during the second semester 2011.

Specifics objectives

1) To identify the causes of the low academic performance of the seventh grade "C" English students at the National School Dario, in Dario city during the second semester 2011.

2) To explain the causes of the low academic performance of the seventh grade English students at the National School Dario, in Dario city, during the second semester 2011.

3) To propose some alternatives to improve the academic performance of the seventh grade English students at the National School Dario, in Dario city, during the second semester 2011.

Development

Academic Performance

One of the main tasks of teachers in high schools is to develop different skills to get a better academic performance. The objective of the learning process is to make students practice their skills in order to improve their English as a foreign language.

"Academic performance is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or write down on paper."(Lorente   Guardione; 1990)

It is a way to express the knowledge oral and written,
Also refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers.

According to the observation guide, the teacher sometimes promotes activities ofparticipation during class because she attends a lot of students at the same time. The English teacher expressed that activities of participation during class is interesting and important, but she doesn't have enough time with her students.

According to the survey applied to forty - five students, forty of them, equivalent to eighty – nine percent said that the teacher promotes active participation in class. One of them equivalent to two percent expresses that the teacher doesn't promote active participation in class.

Does the teacher prepare activities that promote participation in class?

Activities of Participation

- YES 89%
- SOMETIMES 9%
- NO 2%
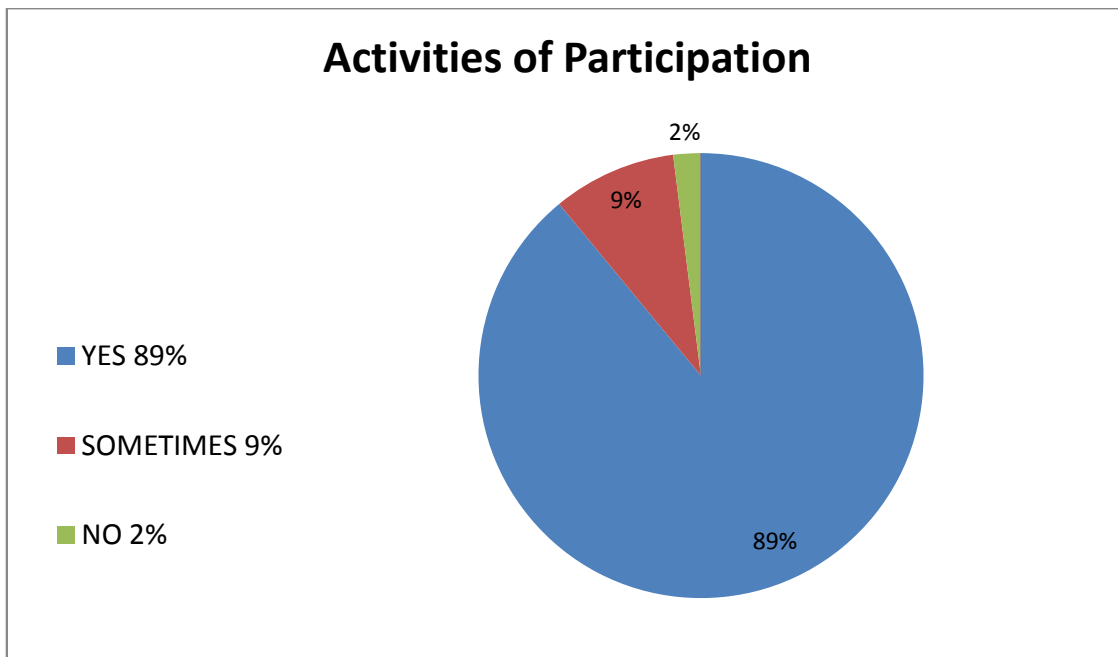
According to Doff the teacher must decide whether the class assignments are whole – class, small groups, workshops, independent work, peer learning, or contractual:

Whole class: the teacher lectures the class as a whole and has the class collectively participate in class discussion.
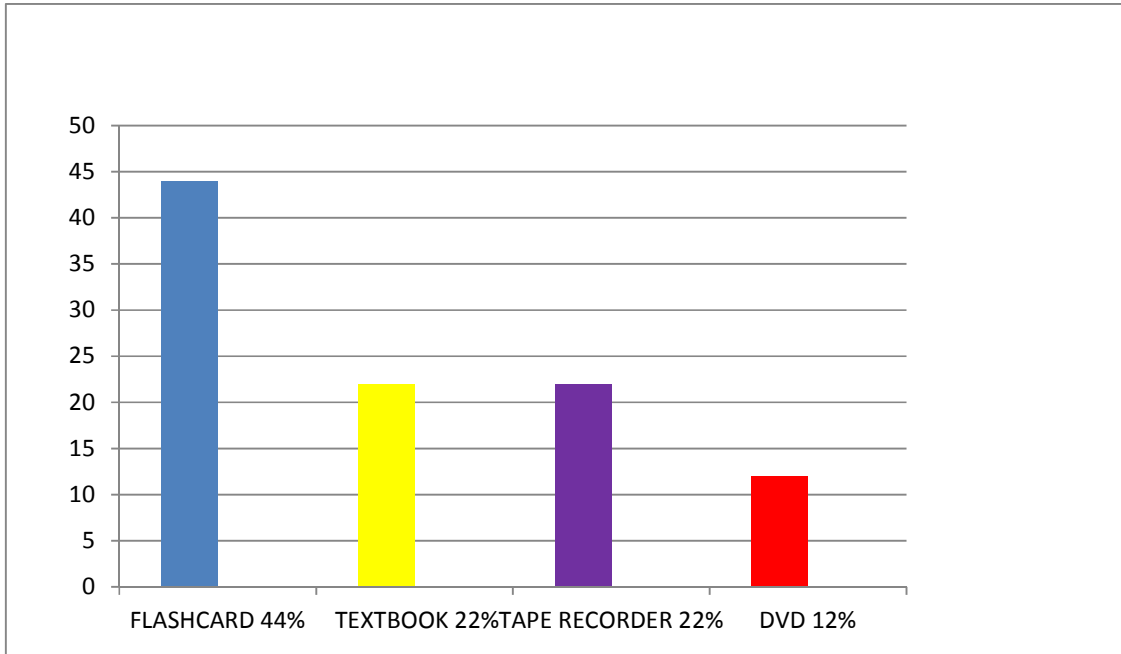
Small groups: students work on assignments in groups of three or four.

Workshops: students perform various tasks simultaneously. Workshop activities must be tailored to the lesson plan.

Independent work: students complete assignments individually.

What kind of material does the teacher use?

The most common materials used in seventh grade are: TV, DVD, Flashcards, Text books, and Tape recorder.

12% of students expressed that the teacher uses DVD.

 22% of students expressed that the teachers uses text books.

44% of students expressed that the teacher uses flashcards.

22% student expressed that the teacher uses tape recorder.

Teacher´s Methodology.

According to Stanovich over the last 20 years, ELT methodology has developed very rapidly and has been subject to changes and controversies that teachers often find bewildering. The methods and techniques included in teaching English are intended to represent a common core; drawing on what is of value both in traditional and in more recent approaches.

"Methodological strategies are the different ways of planning teaching. Teachers use them to close the knowledge to the students. It must be a support, advising or to shed light a bibliography content" (Stanovich; 1986:301).

The teacher has a big responsibility when teaching English. Therefore; he/she should use different strategies to teach students.

Sometimes, English teachers do not take care about the application of good methodological strategies to be successful in teaching and learning.

"When teaching a second language, it is important for all of us to stop for a while and reflect about the way we are applying methodological strategies, the time we spend when planning our lesson, the way our students feel when we ask them to do different things, the causes of their failure and success, etc" (Brown; 2002:22).

It is very important to reflect about how teachers are teaching and the level of knowledge students reached with the different methodological strategies used.

Nowadays, the Nicaraguan educational system has been changing constantly. These changes have contributed to develop better teaching opportunities in the education field, but it's very important to mention that students have to learn and practice some values that are tools for developing a better education. It is important to make interesting activities to engage them on these, when students attention is attracted within these activities teachers will be able to carry out all methodological strategies that help them improve different skills.

Some English teacher's don´t take care about the application of good methodological strategies to be successful in teaching and learning.

According to the survey made to students, the majority of them do not always understand the English class. This is a problem that the teacher faces because of the large classes and the time that is not enough to give individual attention.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE TEACHER EXPLANATION?

- YES
- SOMETIMES
- NO

8%

12%

80%
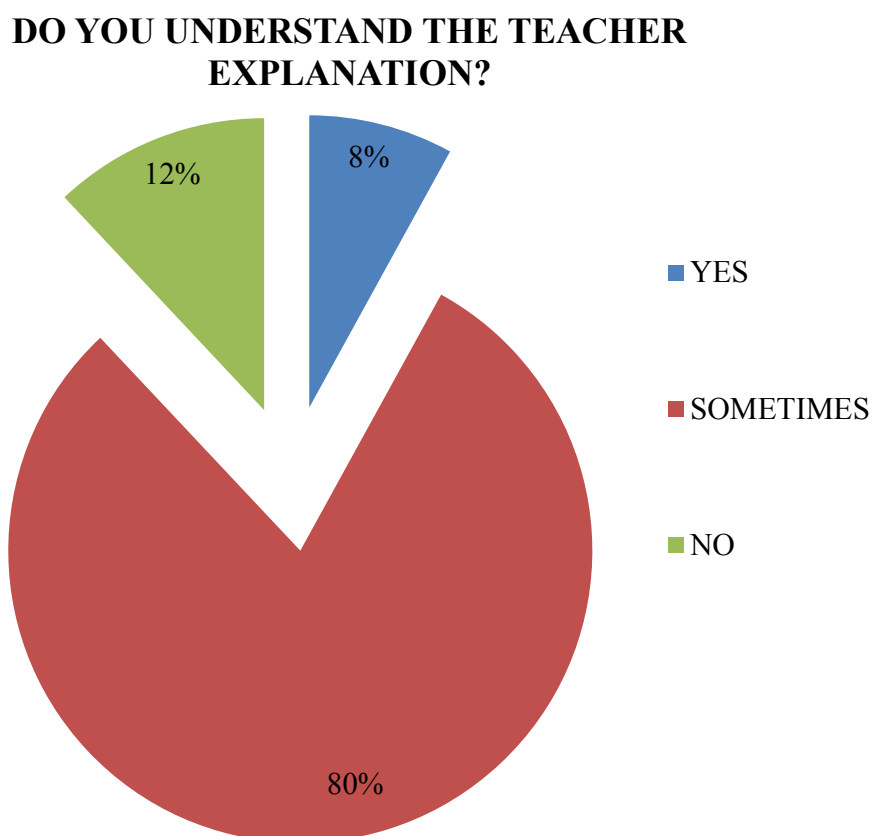
Language learning strategy

The term language learning strategy has been defined by many researchers. Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) define learning strategies as any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information. Richards and Platt (1992:209) state that learning strategies are intentional behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information, stress that a learning strategy is an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.

According to Stern (1992;261), the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques. All language learners use language learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the language classroom. Since language classroom is like a problem-solving environment in which language learners are likely to face new input and difficult tasks given by their instructors, learners attempts to find the quickest or easiest way to do what is required, that is, using language learning strategies is inescapable.

In addition this is a very important way to know what is necessary to achieve certain goal and students will obtain a better knowledge.

Types of language strategies:

There are two main types of strategies contributing directly to the development of the language system constructed by the learner:

Cognitive learning strategies refers to the steps or operations used in learning or problem solving that requires direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin identified 6 main cognitive learning strategies contributing directly to language learning: clarification/verification, guessing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization and monitoring.

Meta cognitive learning strategies: These strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self direct language. They involve various processes as planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self management.

"Social strategies are those activities learners engage in which afford them opportunities to be exposed to and practise their knowledge. Although these strategies provide exposure to the target language, they contribute indirectly to learning since they do not lead directly to the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language" (Rubin and Wenden 1987:23:27).

It is meaningful that teachers of foreign language try to apply different kind of language strategies to get a better motivation in his/ her students.

Strategies to teach English as a foreign language.

Communication Strategies:

They are less directly related to language learning since their focus is on the process of participating in a conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intended. Communication strategies are used by speakers when faced with some difficulty due to the fact that their communication ends outrun their communication means or when confronted with misunderstanding by co-speaker

Direct strategies

Memory: creating mental linkages, Applying images and sounds, reviewing well and employing action.

Cognitive: practicing, receiving and sending messages strategies, analyzing and reasoning, creating structure for input and output.

Compensation strategies: Guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

Indirect strategies

Metacognitive strategies: Centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning and evaluating your learning

Affective strategies: Lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself and taking your emotional temperature.

Social strategies: Asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others.

It can be seen that much of the recent work in this area has been underpinned by a broad concept of language learning strategies that goes beyond cognitive processes to include social and communicative strategies.

Teacher´s and student's Role.

"The teacher is like an orchestra leader directing and controlling the language behavior of her/his student. She also responsible for providing her students with a good model for imitation. Students are imitators of the teacher's model speakers. They follow the teacher's directions and respond as accurately and as rapidly as possible" (Larsen – freeman, Diane: 1450)

The teacher is the main actor of the learning process. She/he must be motivated by herself/himself to wake up in the students the interest for learning driving them to get a better knowledge in the second language.

For this reason, motivation is very important because when the teacher is motivated with his/her students. In other words, the teacher is a manager during the teaching learning process, and his/her role is to lead and to provide the learning, guiding students in the use of materials, leading them to the critical reflection and a deep learning.

Lesson plan

"Lesson plan is teachers detailed description of the course of instruction for one class. A daily lesson plan is developed by a teacher to guide class instruction. Details will vary depending on the preference of the teacher, subject being covered and the need and/or curiosity of children. There may be requirements mandated by the school system regarding the plan" (Lorente Guardione; 1990:34).

In addition,a lesson plan is an important material if teachers want to develop good classes. These must be developed according to the students` level, students' age, topic and the achievement indicator.

Nowadays, some teachers do not devote enough time to the lesson plan, this happens perhaps because they have many jobs or do not practice the stages of the lesson plan.

While there are many formats for a lesson plan, most lesson plans contains some or all of these elements, typically in this order. Titles of the lesson, time required to complete the lesson, list of required materials, list of objectives which may be behavioral objectives (what the students can do at lesson completion) knowledge objectives (what the students knows at lesson completion) the set(or lead-in, or bridge-in) that focuses students on the lesson´s skills or concepts-these include showing pictures or models asking leading questions or reviewing previous lesson, An instructional component that describe the sequence of events that make up the lesson; Independent practice that allows students skills or knowledge on their own; A summary where the teacher wraps up the discussion and answers questions; An evaluation component, test for mastery of the instructed skills or concepts-such as a set or questions to answer or a set of the instructions to follow, analysis component the teacher uses to reflect on the lesson itself-such as what worked what needs improving(www.longman.com/worldview).

Teachers must take into account basic elements to develop a lesson plan follow specifics steps, to get a better academic performance in English classes. This will allow a successful teaching learning process.

Stages of a lesson plan

According to Doff (1998) any lesson we teach naturally is divided into different stages of activity such as:

Presentation: The teacher presents new words or structures, give examples, writes them on the board. Practice using words or structures in a controlled way e.g. making sentences from prompts, asking and answering questions, giving sentences based on a picture. Practice can be oral or written. Production; students use language they have learnt to express themselves more freely; e.g. to talk or write about their own lives and interests to express opinions to imagine themselves in different situations.

Production can be oral or written Reading: students read a text and answer questions or do a simple "task" (e.g. complete a table) listening, the teacher reads a text or dialogue while students listen and answer questions, or the students listen to a cassette. Review; the teacher reviews language learnt in an earlier lesson to refresh students' memories, or as a preparation for a new presentation.

A single lesson would not, of course, normally include all these stages. The stages are in no fixed order, but a teacher might, for example, present a structure, practice it quickly; then present and practice something else before going on to a final production activity.

One of the most principal duties of a teacher is to prepare his/her lesson plan every day taking into account the three moments of it and also to make constantly evaluations for students verifying their knowledge.

Here is a 45 minutes lesson plan which shows different stages of a lesson. It begins with a warming-up activity, then moves quickly on to the presentation stage and the practice of the new structure in a controlled way, and to a free stage where students freely practice the new structure using their own experiences. Note that the presentation only takes 10 minutes and can be done using English Rather than lengthy grammatical explanations in Spanish. The emphasis is on the students practicing the structure which takes up approximately 30 minutes of the total lesson.

Stage 1: Warming-up, 5 minutes:

- Revision of relevant vocabulary, using pictures in the textbook, mime, drawing on the blackboard.

Stage 2: Presentation, 10 minutes:

- Use mime to show that Lupita Reyes gets up 7 o' clock.
- Say " Lupita" gets up at 7 o' clock in the morning and ask the class to repeat phrase bye phrase-

- Demonstrate other situation and examples: "Lupita leaves the house at 8.30", "She arrives at school at 9 o´ clock, etc.
- Ask individual students to say what "Lupita does every day".
- Write the sentences on the board.
- Explain how the structure is formed.
- Ask the class to copy the sentence in their notebooks.
- Use mime to show someone eating his or her breakfast. Draw a clock on the board to show 8 o´clock.
- Ask the question "What does Lupita eat for breakfast?"
- Ask the students to repeat the questions using different times.

Stage 3: Controlled practice, 5 minutes:

- Ask individual students to ask the teacher questions about Lupita.
- Ask individual students what Lupita does at particular times during the day.

Stage 4: Further practice, 10 minutes:

- Ask the students to work in pairs using the textbook.
- Get the students to ask each other questions about Lupita Reyes´s daily schedule.
- Ask the students to take turns asking and answering questions.

Stage 5: Free Production, 15 minutes.

- Get the students to note down their daily schedule and that of their family.
- Get the students to ask each other questions about their own life and their family members; For example: "What do you usually do on Saturday?" What do your parents do on Sunday?"

An important lesson helps the teacher to develop a good class and to achieve his/her goals. It also provides to the teacher to make criteria about the learning and comprehension level in the students.

A very dynamic class keeps students interested in it and it also motivates students to learn English to the teacher to achieve his/her goals.

Parent's attention

"The benefits of parent involvement in education, has positive behavior Schielfbaum and Simmons" (Cited by Adel 2002:53)

According to the Schielfbaum and Simmons, Parental involvement results in more positive behavior, such as improved attendance and class participation, and significant decrease in suspension rates, violent behavior.

Parents concern and involvement in their child's education can result in students having better self-esteem, better grades, and higher test. Scores and an increase in graduation rates, regardless of the students socioeconomic status, background or other factors. Schools that work well with families have better teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents, and school programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.

Parent and family involvement in education has significant, positive effects. Parent involvement is a very important aspect of children´s education. Parents can share information essential for children's development, discipline and progress, which teachers can use as effective tools for their education.

Well-planned parent-teacher collaboration proves to have several long-lasting, positive effects on students.

Students who have open communication with their parents are also more likely to do better.

Students who feel they can draw on the knowledge and wisdom of their parents will be more willing to come to their parents for help on assignments or school problems. These students will do better because they are tapping into the resources that they have.

In addition, students with involved parents have better attendance records at school and complete more of their assignments than those with parents who take a passive approach to their child's education.

Are your Parents involved in the meeting programmed by teacher?
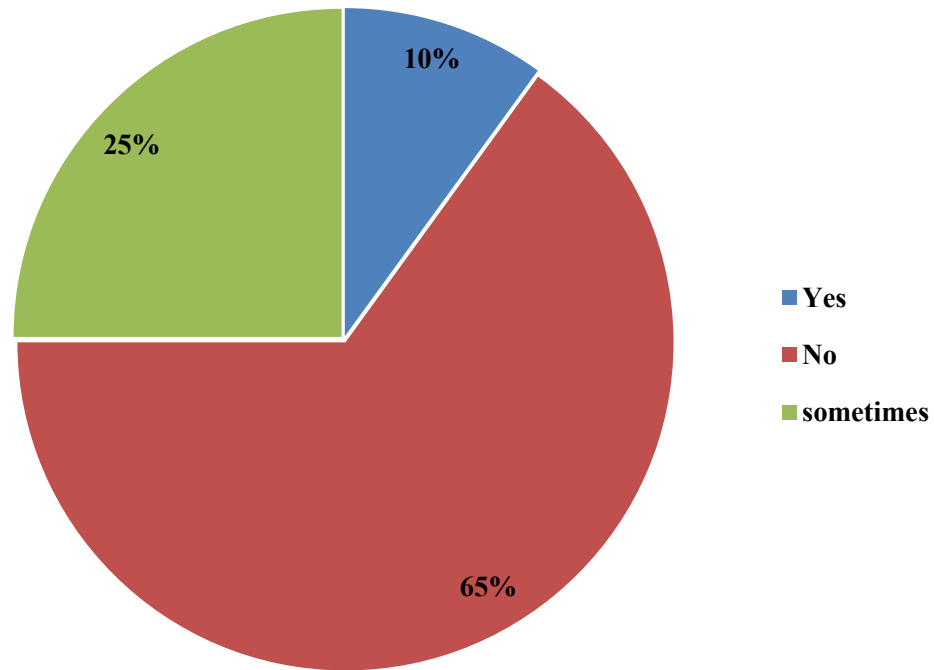
Only five out of forty five students expressed that their parents attend meetings programmed by the English teacher.

"Another group of performance-determining factors are the social/family. The educational condition attributed to the family is beyond all doubt or discussion, as these is an ever-increasing awareness of the importance of the parents' role in the progress and educational development of their children. Schiefelbaum and Simmons" (Cited by Adel, 2002, p.91)

Consider family background the most important and most weighty factor in determining the academic performance attained by the student. Among family factor of greatest influence are social class variables and the educational and family environment.

In addition, parents must be involved in child´s academic performance in this way students will get a high academic performance.

According to LlorenteGuardione(1990) motivation depends more on the parents' level of learning than on their level of income find that the child's perception of family support directly affects performance, while the mother's level of studies does so indirectly. Other research indicates that the most influential family components on performance are not social-cultural or economic, but rather those pertaining to the affective or psychological dimension; that is, although good academic preparation in the parents, especially the mother, and a positive cultural environment, favor scholastic performance, it is affective and relational variables which most stand out as factors in performance.

For this reason, the influence of the family educational climate is defined by the style of help that children receive from the family; this is determined by elements of the family context, like the dynamic of communication and affective relationships, attitudes towards values expectation.

Evaluation system

Evaluation is a part of life, in education evaluation is very important because only through evaluation a teacher can judge the growth and development of students, the changes taking place in their behavior; in fact evaluation plays a pivotal role in deciding what the learners learn and what the teachers teach.

"Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some objectsor it is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about object Larsen – freeman, Diane" (Cited by Tyler: 1450:120).

Both definitions agree that evaluation is a systematic endeavor and both use the deliberately ambiguous term 'object' which refer to a program, policy, technology, person, need, activity, and so on.

The goals of Evaluation: The generic goal of most evaluations is to provide "useful feedback" to a variety of audiences including sponsors, donors, staff and other relevant constituencies. Most often, feedback is perceived as "useful" if it aids in decision making.

In addition the major goal of evaluation should be to influence decision-making or policy formulation through the provision of empirically-driven feedback.

According to Gronlund (1981) Evaluation is not always at the end of a course. Teachers not only want to know whether a student has developed a certain ability stated in the educational objectives or not but teachers need to know about the progress during the course of teaching and learning.

In addition, students´ assessment is important, and not only because students must receive grades. Assessment allowed students to monitor their own progress as English learners, and for teachers to see whether they are effectively transmitting the information to students. Assessment tells us whether or not the teachers have reached their destination the achievement indicator. But in order to reach this destination, Teachers have to start planning their journey from the beginning, always keeping the ending goal in mind.

For this reason, teachers have to write objectives that are specific to their classes and that are easy to measure.

As learners and teachers of the English language, Nicaraguan professors know from experience that communication is the ultimate goal of the classes. Teachers dream that their students will graduate from high school with the ability of communicating in English with one another and with native speakers.

This is the reason teachers write objectives.

-Objectives are landmarks along the road to the Achievement Indicator.

-Objectives are clear, specific and measurable, so they help them assess whether or not teachers are moving closer to the Achievement Indicator.

In other words, a well-written objective tells you, the teacher, exactly what to assess. Now that you have written a clear, specific, measurable objective, the next step is choosing an assessment tool that actually measures the objective.

Types of Evaluation.

According to Bloom (1970), there are three types of evaluation used in the classroom. These are summative evaluation, formative evaluation and diagnostic evaluation.

-Summative Evaluation is the commonly known type of evaluation. It comes at the end of the term, course or programme of teaching. It involves a formal testing of pupil´s achievement.

The purpose of this kind of evaluation is to grade, rank, classify, compare and promote the pupils. it is also used for the purpose of certification.

-Formative Evaluation Is inbuilt with the process of teaching and learning. It is done during the course of instruction with a view to improving students´ learning.

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide feedback regarding the students´ progress, by finding out the learning gaps and the weak points. The teacher can organize remedial programs for them; it also provides the teacher feedback regarding the efficiency of the teaching methods, so that the teaching can be improved. It can also provide clues to the effectiveness of the course content and teaching materials. For example, after teaching and testing a unit, the teachers can evaluate whether the content taught was appropriate for that level and whether the text book had dealt with that content in an appropriate manner which the students could understand easily.

Another reason why it is important for teachers to know about the students´ attitudes, interests, values and general make up is that this knowledge can be used to remove their learning difficulties and enhance their academic achievement.

-Diagnostic Evaluation is another kind of Evaluation which is more closely related to formative than the summative evaluation.

The main purpose of diagnostic evaluation is to find out the underlying causes of weaknesses in a student's properly by looking at his/her level of achievement. Thus, diagnostic evaluation provides a starting to carry out the instruction.

Diagnostic evaluation is important for classroom teaching for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is relevant to know the entry behavior of the students, for example whether they are ready to learn or they have the basic skills and information required for continuing the new learning. Secondly, it helps in knowing the level to which the students already have learnt a particular unit. After knowing the level, the teacher can decide whether the instruction. Thirdly, diagnostic helps the teacher classify students according to their level of mastery and this in turn will help his/her to work out a remedial instruction programmed for the low achievers and slow learners.

According to the survey applied to the English teacher, she expressed that she does not apply the formative evaluation.

In fact, a teacher who would like to confirm student's progress and his/her learning must put in to practice different kinds of evaluation that had been suggested by the Ministry of Education has suggested the formative evaluation.

Rubric

A rubric is a scoring guide that seeks to evaluate a student's performance based on the sum of a full of criteria rather than a single numerical score, it is an authentic assessment tool used to measure students work (cited by Validez Pierce1998).

In other words a rubric is a working guide for students and teachers, usually handed out before the assignment begins in order to get students to think about the criteria on which their work will be judged, it enhances the quality of direct instruction, rubrics standardize the way teachers evaluate and eliminate arbitrary scoring. An established rubric can be used or slightly modified and applied to many activities. Once you learn to use a rubric, grading becomes easier and more efficient.

Example of Rubric

Grade: seventh

Unit I: The classroom

Instruction for the project: find a picture with at least three different people in it. It can be from the newspaper, a magazine, and poster. Say simple commands of each person. The heading should include a title your name, your section and the date.

Scale	Excellent (10)marks	Fair (5) marks	Needs improvement(0)marks	Score
presentation	Complete heading, good writing, neat, includes simple commands at least three.	Complete heading, legible handwriting, missing simple commands.	Heading incomplete, not neat, messy handwriting, unclear simple commands.	

Advantages of using rubrics:

According to Validez Pierce there are many advantages to using rubrics:

- Teachers can increase the quality of their direct instruction by providing emphasis and attention to particular details as a model for students.
- Students have explicit guidelines regarding teacher expectations.
- Students can use rubrics as a tool to develop their abilities.
- Teachers can reuse rubrics for various activities.

Conclusions

After researching carefully about causes that promote low academic performance in 7th grade, it was concluded the fallowing:

1. Overall assessment contains high stake tests and quizzes.
2. Formative assessment is not used.
3. Parents` involvement and guidance in their children's educational system is very low.
4. Lack of interest by students.
5. Large classes affect students´ achievement.

The present research paper suggests the fallowing recommendations to increase students' academic performance:

1. Assessment must be based on the achievement indicator.
2. Teachers need to be trained about how to use alternative assessment.
3. Teachers must fallow the parameters created by the Ministry of Education.
4. Parents need to help their children in their assignments.
5. Teachers and school administrators need to seek new alternative assessment that suit students' level of learning.

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APPENDICES

National University Autonomous of Nicaragua

FAREM –Matagalpa.

Observation guide.

General Data:

ObserverName: _____

Grade:_____ Date:_____

School_____ Subject_____

Time_____

A) Are students interested in the class?

Yes_____ No_____ Some of them _____

B) Dostudents attend to class early?

Yes_____ No_____ Some of them_____

C) Students do activities of participation during class?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

D) Students and teacher have interactive communication into English.Yes_____
No_____ Some of them _____

E) Students are motivated in class.

 Yes_____ No_____ Someof them_____

F) Students do their homework at home.

Yes_____ No_____ Some of them_____

g. Students are paying attention during the class.

   Yes_____ No_____ Some of them_____

H) Students understand teacher explanation.

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

II Teacher

A) The class isaccording to the plan.

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

B) The teaching method is according to the level.

 Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

C) The teacher gives the aim and topic.

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

D) The teacher speaks only English during the class.

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

E) The teacher motivates the students to speak English.

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

F) The teacher explain English test before apply it.
Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

g) The teacher prepares some useful material to teach English class.
Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

 h) What kind of teaching material does the teacher prepare?
Handouts_____ Worksheets_____ Flashcards_____Papelografos_____

Interview.

General Dates:

Name: _____   Date: _____

Institute:

Dear teacher:

We are students of English career making a research about causes of the low academic performance the information that you give us, will be very useful.

Please, answer the questions according to your knowledge.

1- What kind of strategies do you use in your English class?

2- Do you practice English communication with your students? How?

3-Are you graduated in English career?

4- Do you plan your lesson every day?

5- Do you use visual aids in your English class?

6-what are your suggestions to improve English?

7- What kind of material do you use in your English class?

8-How is your relationship with your students?

9-Do you consider that your activities are useful for students?

10- Do you consider that all students understand your explanation? Why?

General Dates

Name_____

Grade:_____

Date:

Dear Students:

We are students of English career, doing a research about causesof the low academic performance. The information that you give us, will be very useful.

Choose the correct answer for you.

1-Do you feel motivated in English class?

Yes_____ No_____Sometimes_____

2-Do you share English phrases or words with your classmates?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes _____

3- Does your English teacher speak just English during the class?Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

4-Do your parents attends the meeting programmed by the teacher?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

5-Are you agree with the scores assigned of each activity evaluated?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

6-Does your teacher explain English tests before apply it?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

7- Does the teacher   promote activities of participation in the class?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

8- Does the teacher use activities for teaching English in class?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes _____

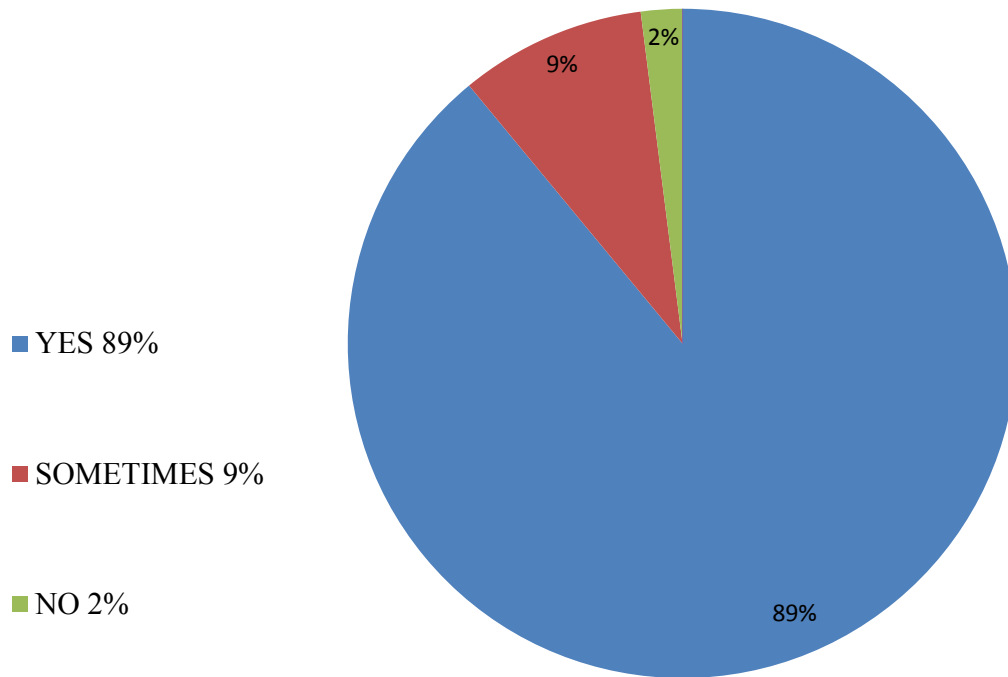9- Do you understand the teacher ´s explanation?

Yes_____ No_____ Sometimes_____

10- Which of these activities are common in your English class?

Dialogs_____ Participation_____ Writing work _____
Minibook_____ Oral quizes_____ Fill in the blank_____

Does the teacher promote activities of participation in class?
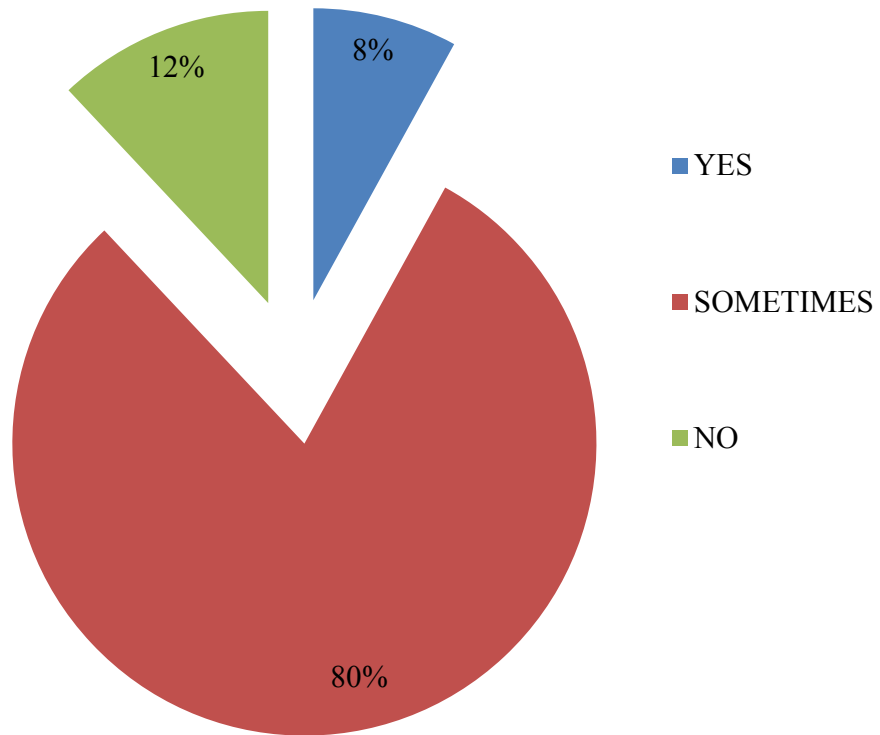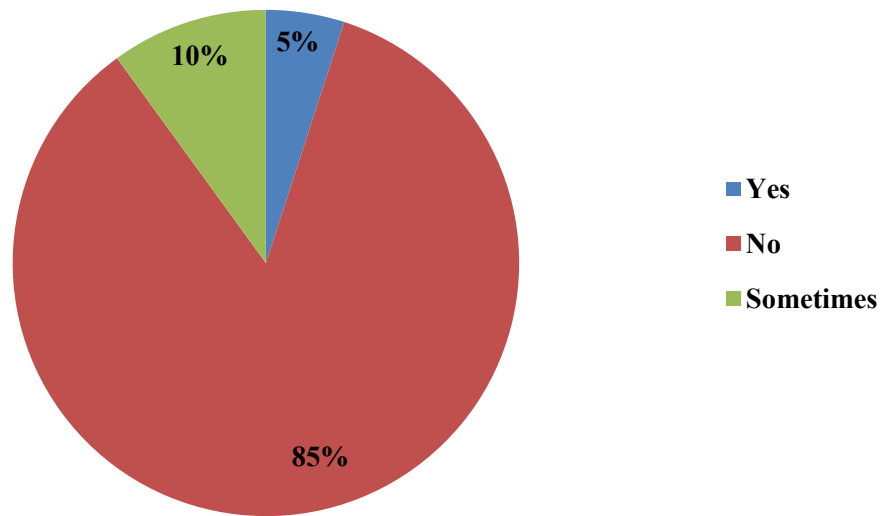
Activities of Participation

- YES 89%
- SOMETIMES 9%
- NO 2%

MATERIALS

What kind of materials do you use in your English class?

FLASHCARD 44%	TEXTBOOK 22%
TAPE RECORDER 22%	DVD 12%

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE TEACHER`S EXPLANATION?

8%

12%

YES

SOMETIMES

NO

80%
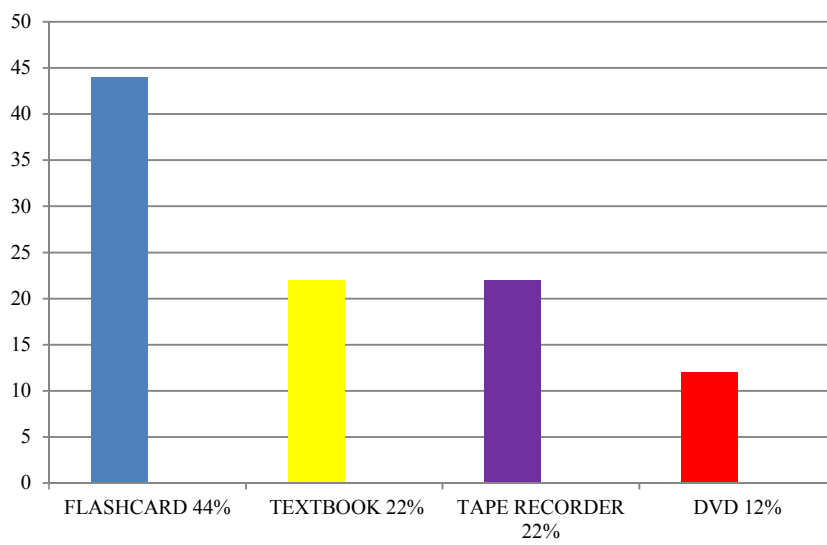
DO YOU AGREE WITH SCORES ASSIGNED TO EACH EVALUATED ACTIVITY?

5%

10%

85%

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

ARE YOUR PARENTS INVOLVED IN THE MEETINGS PROGRAMMED BY THE TEACHER?

10%

25%

65%

■ Yes

■ No

■ Sometimes
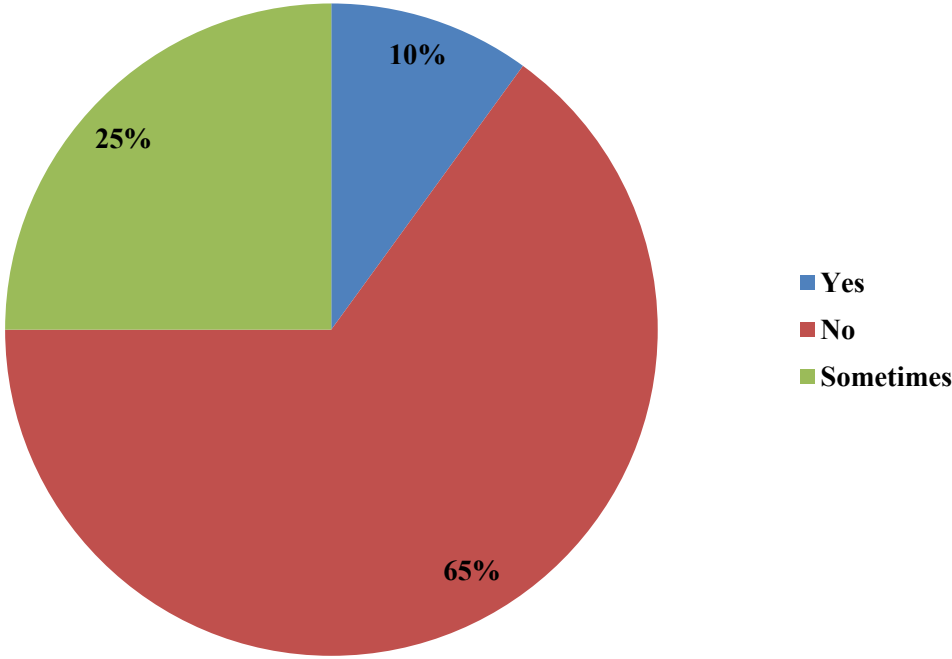
DO YOU CONSIDER THAT THE TIME IS ENOUGH FOR ENGLISH CLASS?

11%

89%

- Yes
- No
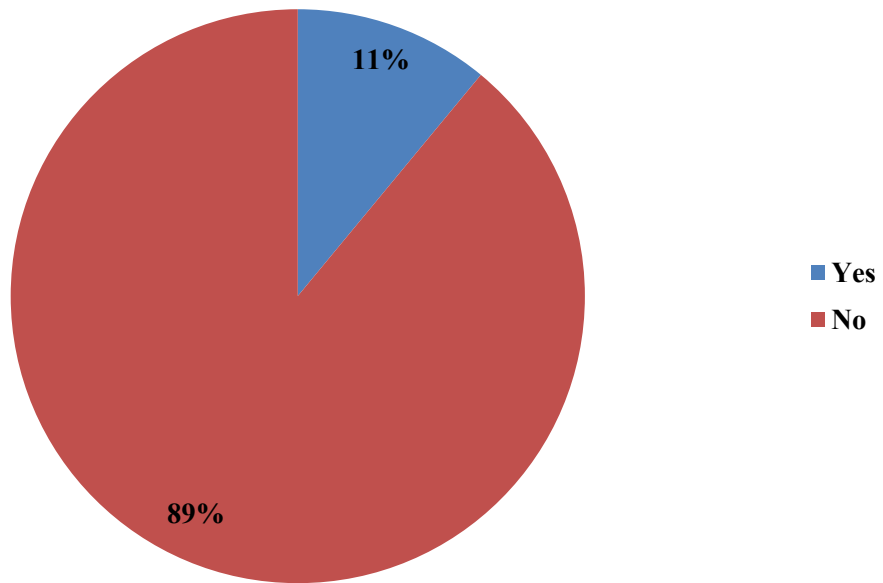
WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON ACTIVITY THAT YOUR TEACHER USE TO EVALUATE?

0% 0%

30%

70%

- Papelografos
- Handout
- Participation
- Written quizes

DOES YOUR TEACHER EXPLAIN ENGLISH TESTS BEFORE APPLYING IT?

0%

22%

78%

- No
- Sometimes
- Yes