



**THE
TURKISH ONLINE
JOURNAL
OF
EDUCATIONAL
TECHNOLOGY**

December, 2017
Special Issue for ITEC 2017

Prof. Dr. Aytekin İşman
Editor-in-Chief

Editors

Prof. Dr. Jerry Willis
Prof. Dr. J. Ana Donaldson

Associate Editor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Fahme Dabaj

Assistant Editor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Eric Zhi - Feng Liu

ISSN: 2146 - 7242

Indexed by

Education Resources Information Center – **ERIC**
SCOPUS - ELSEVIER

Copyright © THE TURKISH ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

All rights reserved. No part of TOJET's articles may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in TURKEY

Contact Address:
Prof. Dr. Aytekin İŞMAN
TOJET, Editor in Chief
Sakarya-Turkey

English as Foreign Language in Ecuadorian Primary Schools Before its Official Introduction into the National Curriculum. What Have We Learned from it?

Eder INTRIAGO

*ELT Innovators Research Group
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador
eder.intriago@gmail.com*

Sandy T. SOTO

*ELT Innovators Research Group
Universidad Técnica de Machala, Ecuador
<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2314-654X>
stsoto@utmachala.edu.ec*

Estefanía VARGAS CAICEDO

*ELT Innovators Research Group
Universidad de Guayaquil, Ecuador
vargasnestefania@gmail.com*

Maricela CAJAMARCA ILLESCAS

*ELT Innovators Research Group
Universidad Nacional de Educación – UNAE, Ecuador
cajamarcam1@gmail.com*

Silvia CARDENAS

*Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Ecuador
silvyelizabethcs@hotmail.com*

Paolo FABRE MERCHAN

*ELT Innovators Research Group
Universidad Estatal de Milagro, Ecuador
mrpibe23@gmail.com*

Israel BRAVO

*Universidad de Guayaquil, Ecuador
bravo.israelgt@gmail.com*

María Antonieta MORALES

*Universidad de Guayaquil, Ecuador
antonieta.moralesj@ug.edu.ec*

Jhonny VILLAFUERTE

*Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador
University of the Basque Country, Spain
Fellow of Senescyt, Ecuador
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6053-6307>*

ABSTRACT

Between 2016 and 2017, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was officially introduced as a compulsory subject in primary schools. Prior to this, EFL teaching in primary schools held the status of an elective subject or complementary activity, to the point that its inclusion in the school curriculum depended, among other aspects, on the school principal's decision. In view of this, this paper sets to reveal the ups and downs that EFL in the primary underwent before acquiring official status. To do so, one hundred and twenty-one primary EFL teachers from several provinces of Ecuador were surveyed, and eight school principals were interviewed. The most salient features observed had to do with absence of trained teachers, nonexistence of a curriculum for this subject, deficient infrastructure and insufficient knowledge in terms of methodology. This investigation has touched on some curriculum, logistical, technical and policy-making aspects that the government should pay attention to. The introduction of EFL in primary schools since 2016 presents new challenges and concerns, as well as hope for stakeholders. In this sense, educators and researchers have an opportunity to help along the change Ecuadorians want for their children.

Keywords: English as Foreign Language, primary schools, new curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The first University English Language Program in Ecuador was founded in 1928 at the Central University of Quito. During the 30s and 40s, other English language programs were opened in Guayaquil, Cuenca and Portoviejo. Espinosa (2007) explained that in the mid-40s, English replaced French as the foreign language of the middle and upper social classes in Ecuador. *Colegio Americano* was founded in Quito during the presidency of Galo Plaza Lazo to promote English as a global language. However, only students in the upper secondary benefited from learning English at that time. English language was not mandatory in any public primary schools and it only happened at private primary schools. In secondary public schools', principals included it in the curriculum depending on the human and economic resources availability. This condition contrasted with private elitist high schools because English-Spanish Bilingualism learning became the most important elements for trading their educational services during the 1980s.

Significant changes have been made in the education system after the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008. However, English language teachers of public schools demonstrated proficiency in English at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (MCER) which was evidenced via a series of tests given by (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). Also, English Foreign Language learning (EFL) in public primary schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2014) was proposed to be incorporated officially from 2016 in all schools in Ecuador. In addition to this, Ecuadorian universities have adopted the legislative mandate to introduce English into the entire public education system thus, from 2015 they worked on the redesign of vocational programs that respond to the identified national demand of English Language teachers. This paper sets to reveal the chronological evolution of the EFL in the primary schools underwent before acquiring official status in Ecuador.

Evolution of English Teaching Curriculum in Ecuador

The evolution of English teaching as part of the core curriculum in Ecuador has four key periods: the CRADLE project (1992-2006), the national educational reform (2006-2012), the project Advance for education (2012-2015), and the current period for the massive teaching of English in Ecuador from 2016.

The CRADLE Project (1992-2005)

Having as an objective to offer a better access to English language instruction in all public schools, the Ministry of Education created the Foreign Language Administration Division [*División Nacional de Idiomas Extranjeros*] in 1992, under an agreement established with the British Council. Thus, the project for Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of the English (CRADLE) was set (Haboud, 2009).

English as Foreign Language (EFL) was introduced in Ecuador as a relevant curriculum reform in public secondary schools from 1993, whose main objective was to "innovate and strengthen the process of teaching and learning the English language, and to provide adequate infrastructure for the development of the new curriculum" (López, 2011, p. 41); offering "secondary students a solid foundation in EFL, with an emphasis on developing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Caizaluisa, 2012). So, educational levels in Ecuador were divided in three different sections from 1996: a kindergarten, primary school (from 1st to 6th grade), and high school divided in two sections lower secondary (from 7th to 9th grade) and upper secondary (10th grade to 12th grade) (Ministerio de Educación, 2011).

In addition, the Model for Intercultural Bilingual Education (MOSEIB) was also launched in Ecuador in 1993; and it was put in place to recover the language and culture of the Ecuadorian ethnic populations (Conejo, 2008; Oviedo & Wildemeersch, 2008). To achieve this goal, indigenous people had to receive an education in their native language, resulting in the offer of the Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB). "The EIB is a subsystem of MOSEIB for both the ethnic groups as well as for the rest of the population" (Actores del Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, 2013; Aguerrondo, Crespo, Robalino, & Van Damme, 2013; Soto, 2015).

However, the globalization tendency led the government to the decision of improving the Ecuadorian population competitively in the region which reaffirmed the necessity of developing English language curriculum in Ecuador. Thus, the main contributions of CRADLE project were:

- Ecuadorian teacher's professional training by the British Council under the sponsorship of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education.
- Production and distribution of a set of books named: Our world through English (OWTE); which was developed considering the Ecuadorian context to be used in the secondary.
- Inclusion of five hours of English classes per week in the curriculum map in all public secondary schools.

The increase of English hours per week was intended to be done in a progressive manner, starting from eighth grade of Basic General Education system BGE in the *Sierra* and Amazon regions regime in October 1993 and in May 1994 in the provinces of the coast. Nonetheless, this did not happen and by 1997 the number of periods of English class was still three classes week.

The national educational reform (2006-2011)

The results of the examination applied to the students of public schools in Cuenca city in Ecuador during 2004, showed the low results of 10.3 points out of 20 points. According to Calle (2012), these results were related to the fact that "public school teachers did not use strategies that strengthen communicative competence" (p.2).

During the same year, the secondary was introduced the constructivist model in teaching English which meant 5 hours of class per week, and some private schools even more.

The main objective of the new curriculum was to introduce technology innovation in educational system. It also promoted the development of the human condition, intercultural identity, multi-nationality aspects, and inclusion. The reform gave major emphasis to Spanish language and Literature, Mathematics, and Social and Natural Sciences. At this point, English was not yet officially part of the primary schools' curriculum.

From 2009 the Ministry of Education established on the agreement 0611-99, a new curriculum which included five periods per week of English class (45 minutes per class). Such reform was not applied uniformly, especially in the high School *bachillerato*, because many secondary schools lacked EFL teachers, many high school principals considered that English was not an important subject and parents were not able to pay for extra English language texts for their kids. Finally, in July 2011 through the Government Agreement No. 242-11, the number of periods for EFL classes in the *bachillerato* was regulated as five mandatory class periods per week in every private and public institutions (Ministerio de Educación, 2011).

The project Advance for education (2012-2015)

The Foreign Language Administration launched in 2012 the Advance English Project (AEP) as a way to provide support and guidance towards English teaching and learning processes in the public schools in Ecuador (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). It consisted in the publication of the English Language Learning Standards (ELLS) in 2012. This curriculum was aligned to a cognitive and constructivist teaching approach with a social and pedagogical view, which established the outcomes expected to achieve at the end of a proficiency level, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). It also delineated the knowledge and skills to be mastered by in-service teachers (Equipo Técnico de Proyecto Inglés, 2012).

The Ministry of Education assessed 5000 English teachers at the national level in 2013. The results indicated that only 2.4% of those evaluated obtained a B2 CEFR and according to the international program Education First, Ecuador ranked in 2015 in position 38 of 70 countries in the world where the English language is taught.

The number of students that were admitted at the tertiary level of education in Ecuador doubled during 2014; (preschool 317.701; primary 1.825.288; secondary 1.801.918; tertiary 1.458.762) which increased the English teachers demand whose number was 213,886 in 2014 (Antamba, 2015). Of that, 67% of the teachers were in the public segment, 27% in private schools, 5% in *fiscomisional* (combined government and religious schools), and 1% in municipal schools.

The program *Quiero ser Maestro* [I want to become a teacher] offered the opportunity to become an English teacher of the Ecuadorian educational system. The candidates had to demonstrate proficiency in English at the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 level. They also had to approve evaluations about content-area knowledge, logical and verbal reasoning; and the execution of a demonstration class. The current English language teachers should also reach the same standard. This program also facilitated the training of English teachers through immersion programs in the United States and the Caribbean (Instituto Talento Humano, 2015). According to Paez (2013) this plan raised the work in mastery of the language that involves the development of the teachers' capacities as they know, understand and use the main theories and research related to language structure and acquisition, curriculum, assessment procedures, and ethical commitment. As a result of the program, the number of university professors with a master's degree increased from 7,899 to 11,307 in 2008-2012 (Gallegos, 2015). However, this educational project was financed with the oil exports revenues until 2014 when the reduction of oil world price affected the national economy (Villafuerte and Intriago, 2016).

The beginning of Massive English Language Teaching in Ecuador 2016

In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Ecuadorian universities network began a process of curriculum standardization in cooperation with the US Embassy. This new curriculum for teaching English had 3 objectives summarized in (1) Development in the learners of understanding of the world and other cultures, the communication of their thoughts through English. (2) The development of the personal, social and intellectual skills required to assume their potential productive participation in the growth of the world, and finally; (3) creation of a taste for language learning at an early age, through positive learning experiences.

At the beginning of 2016, skills acquired in English were expected to be developed from the components of communication (a) listening, (b) speaking, (c) reading, and (d) writing, based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (MCER). However, many tasks are still pending to be completed as the EFL teachers are being trained, teaching material are being developed, and educational centers are equipped with the required technology.

Stakeholders' perceptions about scenario for English language teaching in Ecuador

Here are exposed the results of a survey in which participated 120 Ecuadorian English language teachers and educational institutions administrators. The 60.6% of participants work in the coastal region and 39.4% in the Sierra. Similarly, a 75.5% of the people surveyed work in the urban areas while 24.4% work in the rural areas. Finally, 76% of participants were female, 20% were masculine and 4% declared other genders.

Throughout the analysis of data collected, it was possible to identify a **wide** variety of realities from region to region. In the Amazon region, for example, teachers in a public primary school are not required to be qualified as an EFL teacher, as long as they demonstrate proficiency in any of the language skills.

Table 1
Current situation for massive English teaching in Ecuador

Categories	Subcategories	Statistic
Kind of teacher	All subjects' teacher (including English)	85.90%
	Only English teacher	14.10%
Number of hours class/week	5 hours class/week per course	50.70%
	3 hours class/week per course	17.00%
	Less than 3 hours class/week per course	32.30%
Teachers' English level (CEFR)	A2	10.00%
	B1	42.90%
	B2	24.30%
	C1	1.50%
Teaching approach preferred for teaching	Grammatical-translation	43.70%
	Natural	29.60%
	Reading	36.6%
	Audio-lingual	39.40%
	Cognitive	33.80%
	Communicative	64.80%

Source: Survey applied / 2016.

A typical EFL lesson in primary school has been limited to the teaching and memorizing of a few segments of vocabulary: the alphabet, numbers from one to ten, colors, days of the week, months of the year, parts of the body, and in some advanced classes the names of some vegetables and fruits. Very rarely, the class involves hands-on activities to address the resolution of a problem in a group. Most of these vocabulary lessons have been given without context and have lacked meaning and relevance for the learners.

CONCLUSION

ELT in primary schools is critical since it may become a key factor in determining where English language education will go from the basic elementary to the tertiary level. This research findings revealed the following challenges:

- (1) Setting clear goals for learning English, in the national curriculum for primary schools that are aligned with language proficiency standards of the CEFR,
- (2) Articulating the curriculum of English in a way that promotes gradual continuity from the basic elementary grades to the lower and upper secondary levels,
- (3) Developing an effective teaching methodology and adequate textbooks

It is crucial for the universities to prepare teachers as reflective practitioners that analyze their teaching and keep innovating their practice.

(4) Establishing an effective system of pre- and in-service training for primary school teachers of English as well as a recruitment system for quality teachers.

(5) It must be noted, especially, that to date most universities train students to work as EFL teachers in the secondary, opening the opportunity for undergraduate and graduate English language programs that target the primary to be created.

REFERENCES

- Actores del Sistema de Educacion Intercultural Bilingue. (2013). MOISEB: Modelo del sistema de educación intercultural bilingue. Quito: MinEduc. 07.12.2017. In: <http://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/03/MOISEB.pdf>.
- Aguerrondo, I., Crespo, C., Robalino, M., & Van Damme, W. (2013). A story of change: How Ecuador seeks to sustain its development agenda through large scale education reform. UKFIET International Conference on Education and Development – Education and Development 2015: Reflecting, Oxford.
- Antamba, L. (2015). *Estadística educativa, reporte de indicadores*. Quito: Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador.
- Calle, A., Calle, S., Argudo, J., Moscoso, E., Smith, A., and Cabrera, P. (2012). Los profesores de inglés y su práctica docente- *MASKANA*, Vol. 3, No. 2. In: <https://www.ucuenca.edu.ec/ojs/index.php/maskana/article/viewFile/397/341>.
- Caizaluisa, N. (2012). *Estrategias metodológicas alternativas para el aprendizaje del idioma inglés como segunda lengua* (Master's thesis, Univ. Técnica Equinoccial). Retrieved from <http://repositorio.ute.edu.ec/handle/123456789/12362>
- Conejo, A. (2008). Educacion intercultural bilingue en el Ecuador: La propuesta educativa y su proceso. *Revista Académica Alteridad*, 3(5), 64-82.
- Instituto del Talento Humano de Ecuador. (2015). Go teacher. Programa de Becas para entrenamiento de profesores de inglés en Ecuador. (06.11.2017) In: http://www.fomentoacademico.gob.ec/wpcontent/uploads/downloads/2015/02/boletin_mensual_enero_2015.pdf
- Páez, J. (2013). El nuevo plan de enseñanza de inglés en Ecuador http://educacion.gob.ec/wpcontent/uploads/downloads/2013/03/estandares_2012
- División Nacional de Idiomas Extranjeros. (2008). *Programa Nacional de Inglés Diseño Curricular por Competencias*. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office.
- Espinosa, C. (2007). Las relaciones entre el Ecuador y los Estados Unidos en los años 1930 y 1940 [PDF]. Quito: Embajada Americana.
- Equipo Técnico de Proyecto Inglés. (2012). *Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards & The English Language Learning Standards* (pp. 1-11, Rep.). Quito, Ecuador: Ministerio de Educación. Retrieved May 30, 2016, from http://educacion.gob.ec/wpcontent/uploads/downloads/2012/09/estandares_2012_ingles_opt.pdf
- Gallegos, D. (2015, June 1). Ecuador leads investment in higher education. *El Ciudadano*. Retrieved 12.013.2017. from: <http://www.elciudadano.gob.ec/en/ecuador-leads-investment-in-higher-education/>
- Haboud, M. (2009). Teaching foreign languages: A challenge to ecuadorian bilingual intercultural education. *International Journal of English Studies*, 9(1), 63-80.
- López, B. (2011). Diseño de ejercicios aplicados en aula virtual para la capacitación y refuerzo de la pronunciación del inglés a profesores del área de inglés de las unidades educativas del milenio. Universidad PUCE. In: <http://repositorio.puce.edu.ec/bitstream/handle/22000/8249/T-PUCE-5282.pdf?sequence=1>
- Ministerio de Educación. (2006). *Ten Year Education Plan in Ecuador 2006-2015*. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office.
- Ministerio de Educación. (2010). *Actualización y Fortalecimiento Curricular de la Educación General Básica*. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office.
- Ministerio de Educación. (2011). *Acuerdo Ministerial No. 242-11*. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office
- Ministerio de Educación. (2012). *Marco Legal Educativo. Constitución de la República, Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural y Reglamento General*. Quito: Gov. printing office.

- Ministerio de Educación. (2014). *Acuerdo Ministerial No. 0041-14*. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office.
- Ministerio de Educación, Dirección Nacional de Currículo, & División de Idiomas Extranjeros. (2007). *Programa Nacional de inglés para los años 1o. a 7o. de la Educación Básica. Diseño Curricular por Competencias*. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office.
- Ministerio de Educación y Cultura del Ecuador, & Consejo Nacional de Educación. (2007). *Hacia el Plan Decenal de Educación del Ecuador* [PDF]. Quito, Ecuador: Government Printing Office.
- Oviedo, A., & Wildemeersch, D. (2008). Intercultural education and curricular diversification: the case of the Ecuadorian Intercultural Bilingual Education Model (MOSEIB). *Routledge*, 38, 455-470.
- Soto, S. (2015). An analysis of curriculum development. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(6), 1129-1139. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0506.02>
- The CRADLE Project, Ecuador (n.d.). In British Council website. Captures 11.02.2017. In: <http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/consultancy/our-track-record/cradle-project-ecuador>.
- Villafuerte, J. & Intriago, E. (2016). Productive Matrix Change in Ecuador and the Petroleum Crisis. Case Study: Entrepreneurs and Productive Associations. *Journal of Business*, Vol 1, No 1
- UNESCO. (2010-2011, July). World Data on Education. Retrieved (02. 27. 2016) In: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Ecuador.pdf
- World Bank. (2014). The world bank. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/ecuador>