English Language Education in Ecuador:

Assessing Opportunities for Teaching and Learning in a Developing Nation

Editors
Sara Joanne Newman
Scott Thomas Gibson
Diego Cajas
Hazel Acosta

USFQ PRESS

USFQ PRESS
Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ
Campus Cumbayá USFQ, Quito 170901, Ecuador.
https://usfqpress.com/
We are the publishing house of Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ. We promote the mission of the university by disseminating knowledge to train, educate, research and serve the community within the philosophy of the Liberal Arts.

English Language Education in Ecuador: Assessing Opportunities for Teaching and Learning in a Developing Nation

Contributors:

Hazel Acosta
Universidad Nacional de Educación
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0281-2681

Evelyn Almeida
Universidad Central del Ecuador
Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE
http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0543-3131

María José Barragán Camacho
Universidad de Guayaquil
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2835-6319

Carmen Maricela Cajamarca Illesca
Universidad Nacional de Educación
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1048-2018

Diego Cajas
Universidad Nacional de Educación
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6792-1443

José Miguel Campuzano Díaz
Universidad de Guayaquil
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6568-3311

Ítalo Carabajo Romero
Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9592-1659

Carlos Daniel Cazco Maldonado
Universidad de Investigación de Tecnología Experimental Yachay
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4671-4546

Sara Karina Cherres Fajardo
Universidad Nacional de Educación
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5150-8881

Verónica Elizabeth Chicaiza Redin
Universidad Técnica de Ambato
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2880-5842

Marcia Iliana Criollo Vargas
Universidad Nacional de Loja
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5326-2456

Edgar Guadia Encalada Trujillo
Universidad Técnica de Ambato
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8843-4804

Tatiana García Villao
Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1756-7439

Scott Thomas Gibson
Universidad San Francisco de Quito
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0023-1664

Verónica Alexandra Herrera Caldas
Universidad Nacional de Educación
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6848-2657

Sarah Jacqueline Iza Pazmiño
Universidad Técnica de Ambato
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8059-7868

Cristina Jordán Buenaño
Universidad Técnica de Ambato
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1938-1379

Eliana León Abad
Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7437-6276

Orlando Vicente Lizaldes Espinosa
Universidad Nacional de Loja
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7426-5840

Heidi Marlen Marriott Toledo
Universidad de Guayaquil
Universidad Internacional del Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5871-1840

Mirdelio Esteban Monzón Gómez
Universidad Nacional de Educación del Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7831-0963

Sara Joanne Newman
Universidad San Francisco de Quito
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6387-4819

Dolores del Rocío Ortega Andrade
Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5774-5459

Victor Hugo Romero García
Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8975-5818

Andrea Rosero Morales
Universidad Central del Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7007-8589

Katherine Anabelle Salvador Cisneros
Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0414-3597

Edison Santiago Sanguña
Universidad Central del Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4007-6910

Mónica Tamayo-Maggi
Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2775-2483

Mónica Elva Vaca-Cárdenas
Universidad Técnica de Manabí
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6436-3538

Ketty Zoraida Vergara Mendoza
Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9910-3522

David Ramón Villagómez Pacheco
Universidad Nacional de Educación de Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1968-6319

Karen Yambay de Armijos
Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5917-8044

Editorial Production: **Andrea Naranjo**
Editors: Sara Joanne Newman, Scott Thomas Gibson, Diego Cajas, Hazel Acosta
Design and layout: Krushenka Bayas
Cover design: Krushenka Bayas
Professional proofreading: Oswaldo Reyes

De esta edición USFQ PRESS, Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ, 2023

eISBN-USFQ PRESS: 978-9978-68-280-7
Registro de autor:
Primera edición: December, 2023

Cataloging in the source Library of the Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ.

It is suggested to cite this work as follows:
Newman, S.J., Gibson, S.T., Cajas, D. and Acosta, H. (Eds.) (2023). English Language Education in Ecuador: Assessing Opportunities for Teaching and Learning in a Developing Nation. USFQ PRESS.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors and authors wish to thank all who made this volume possible. This work represents a major milestone for a collaboration that began among a consortium of scholars, originally conceived as the English Leaders Network (ELN) nearly four years ago.

Hazel Acosta and Diego Cajas from the National Education University of Ecuador (UNAE) led this initiative, which has since been reinvented as the Leadership in English and Research Network (LEARN), comprised of teachers and scholars from around Ecuador who share a common commitment to English education. Given the extraordinary circumstances over the *longue durée* of this project, including severe disruptions of education at all levels during a global pandemic, we can say without hesitation that the publication of this work is testament to the determination and commitment of everyone involved.

The United States Embassy in Quito provided the generous grant that supported this research. Special thanks go to Anna Casey, the Embassy's English Programs Coordinator, and Lauren Perlaza, the Cultural Affairs Officer. Their advocacy for English education has been instrumental not only in the development of this study but also in transforming English education throughout Ecuador. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education also provided support for this project, which included authorizing and facilitating the research with public-school English teachers.

The collaboration among researchers and institutions involved in this study would not have been possible without the work of Hugo Velasco and Deborah Chiriboga from the Centro Ecuatoriano-Norteamericano (CEN), who provided the logistical support necessary to keep the team working on time and within budget. Their judicious and effective management of the project helped bring this work to fruition.

Research training was provided by several international experts who guided authors through data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing. Our special thanks to Jenna R. Cushing-Leubner from the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater for facilitating the survey design workshop and to Jorge Bernal from the University of Quevedo for training on statistical analysis. Deborah Balzhiser, along with the volume co-editor Sara Newman, facilitated the research writing workshops that produced the first drafts of this volume. In addition, the authors would like to thank Don Hones from the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, whose training on narrative inquiry methods, while not directly reflected in this volume, led to complementary projects that encouraged both teachers and researchers to share and reflect upon their experiences as participants in this project.

Lastly, thanks go to Hilda Flor for being instrumental in the initial phases of planning and development, including the coordination of the research team gatherings and research training workshops that laid the groundwork for the present volume.

A NOTE ON AUTHORSHIP

This project was authored by a team of researchers who are part of a national academic consortium entitled Leadership in English Academic Research Network (LEARN). The network serves not only to produce scholarships to train researchers but to promote academic inquiry on English language teaching and learning in Ecuador. Both the design and implementation of this project —since its inception— were horizontal and local, meaning that researchers were organized into groups according to geographical zones that are used by the Ministry of Education to organize educational institutions across the country. Decisions were made through consensus among all participating members, with administrative leadership provided by a designated member of each regional team. Given the collaborative and democratic organization of the research groups, the authors of this volume agreed that the order of naming for their respective chapters should be alphabetical. Thus, readers should not interpret name order as indicative of primary or secondary authorship roles.

INTRODUCTION

Sara Newman
Scott Thomas Gibson

Ecuador's public education system —especially its programs in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL)— is key to the country's current and future socioeconomic sustainability. National leaders have long recognized that without nation-wide proficiency in English language the country is unprepared to participate in the economic, political, and social milieu of an increasingly globalized world culture and economy. Nonetheless, most indicators suggest a nationwide deficiency in English language use. Attempts to address this deficit have a relatively long history of curricular reform and educational law (Ministerio de Educación, 2012, 2014, 2017). English teaching was first included in Ecuadorian education in 1912 and later formalized as a required subject in the national curriculum in 1950 under the administration of President Galo Plaza Lasso. By the 1990s, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) had made English education a national priority and implemented corresponding curricular reforms to improve English outcomes (Cifuentes-Rojas et al., 2019). After three decades of reforms, however, these sweeping efforts have fallen far short of meeting Ecuador's needs and expectations.

English proficiency in Ecuador remains limited, even among English teachers themselves. According to the results of a 2012 English proficiency study conducted by the MINEDUC, fewer than 12% of the 4089 teachers scored a B1 or higher on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Ureña, 2014). That is to stay, just over 1 out of 10 teachers held the minimum English proficiency that

was expected of their students by graduation, according to national standards. Recognizing the need to address the lack of English proficiency among teachers, the MINEDUC and the United States Embassy in Ecuador signed an agreement in 2020 to launch the *Ecuador Habla Inglés* (Ecuador Speaks English) initiative, which provides virtual English proficiency courses for teachers. By 2023, over 2400 teachers completed at least English proficiency module (United States Embassy, 2023), but validating their proficiency through a standardized exam recognized by the MINEDUC proves difficult. While around one third of the participants complete proficiency training to a B2 level, fewer than 10% have demonstrated the B2 proficiency through iTEP Certification, as the cost and responsibility for taking the exam falls on the teacher themselves (A. Casey, personal correspondence, November 22, 2023).

Such programs are promising but still in their infancy, and translating teacher English proficiency into general English competency across the Ecuadorian population through the public education system remains an ongoing challenge. Global rankings of English language proficiency for Ecuadorians overall, such as the Education First Proficiency Index (EFPI), consistently indicate that Ecuador trails other countries within Latin America and globally. The 2023 EFPI results rank Ecuador in 18th place out of 20 ranked countries in Latin America, trailed only by Mexico and Haiti. Worldwide, Ecuador is ranked at 80 out of 113 countries surveyed (Education First, 2023). These results have been relatively unchanged for decades. While such metrics tell only a partial story about the reality of English proficiency in Ecuador (De Angelis, 2022), much work is still needed to better understand the underlying factors contributing to the language deficit and to evaluate potential strategies that will at last improve English language proficiency outcomes in Ecuador.

At present, no systematic, book-length treatment exists of the English language curriculum, its implementation, and teacher training in the Ecuadorian public school system. This is a surprising gap given the breadth and depth of contemporary, interdisciplinary interests in English language education in Latin America, generally; as well as the pressing need for improving English education in Ecuador, specifically. This volume, the first of its kind to systematically address the factors affecting English teaching and learning in Ecuador, approaches such dilemma by turning to the key resource in this pedagogical context: the teachers themselves. To that end, this study analyzes the results of a national survey distributed by the MINEDUC in October 2020 to all registered primary and secondary public-school teachers in Ecuador. We situate the analysis of the 3,813 survey responses received

within the economic, cultural, and institutional contexts of English teaching and learning in Ecuador, including the educational policy and reforms that have prioritized English as a central concern within the Ecuadorian educational system.

To orient subsequent chapters within the local and regional contexts, this introductory chapter sketches a composite picture of teaching and learning English in Ecuadorian public schools, including the linguistic and cultural dimensions of the Ecuadorian population, the history and character of the current Ecuadorian English language education, and the role of the MINEDUC in the national education model. Offering this background familiarizes Ecuadorian and non-Ecuadorian readers within the local context and provides a critical framework for understanding and addressing longstanding concerns for Ecuador's educational model and its emphasis on English as a resource for educational and economic inclusion. Ultimately, the study exposes possible future pathways for intervention and transformation through a combination of teacher training, curricular, and language proficiency initiatives.

English Educational Reforms in Ecuador

For better or for worse, English is essential for any nation to compete on the world stage (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017, p.1). Unfortunately, as indicated above, the state of Ecuadorian English education lags both regionally and globally. Because the public-school system plays a critical role in educating most of the Ecuadorian population, the MINEDUC has long sought international partnerships and implemented significant educational reforms to improve the English proficiency level of Ecuadorian students and English teachers. Even after English became a required subject in the national curriculum, the lack of qualified teachers, unclear standards, and limited instructional resources left English proficiency an abstract requirement rather than an achievable outcome.

The first national initiative began in 1992 through a collaboration between MINEDUC and the British Council to integrate English into the country's curriculum (British Council, 2015). The joint project, the Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of English (CRADLE), focused on developing English proficiency at the secondary level in public schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2009). More specifically, CRADLE sought to remediate these issues by providing required teacher training and pedagogical materials; these materials included teachers' guides and the textbook series *Our World Through English*, which attempted to transition teacher

methodologies away from traditional grammatical instruction into a more communicative approach (Mafla, 2013) that focuses less on explicit linguistic knowledge and more on using the language in both oral and written communication. In the case of CRADLE, the curriculum compelled students to develop communicative competencies by exploring content related to regional culture and history in English. Upon closure of the CRADLE program, the MINEDUC reported generally positive results (Ministerio de Educación, 2009). Nonetheless, other assessment measures call those outcomes into question. Both large-scale studies, such as the EF Proficiency Index, and more localized research showed that —following the CRADLE initiative— English proficiency remained below expectations, particularly in rural areas (Auquilla and Fernández, 2017).

Concurrent with and following CRADLE, several initiatives, particularly during the administration of President Rafael Correa (2007-2017), attempted to strengthen English education in Ecuador. The Citizens' Revolution projects included massive, systematic reforms to all levels of the Ecuadorian educational system, starting in 2006 with the *Plan Decenal de Educación* (10-year Education Plan). One of the issues that this plan addressed was teacher English proficiency. These reforms standardized English outcomes by aligning proficiency measures with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with clear proficiency guidelines established for students upon their exit of each educational level, culminating in B1 proficiency by the final year of the *bachillerato* (Ministerio de Educación, 2014).[1] Formal proficiency levels for all English teachers were also established, they had to demonstrate a minimum of B2 through an internationally recognized exam such as TOEFL, IELTS, or Cambridge English test, among others.

Despite the curricular inclusion of English at the national level and attempts to require a certified English proficiency for teachers, Ecuador was unable to staff classrooms with qualified teachers, leaving recruitment to rely on less rigid criteria (Jaramillo, 2014). In 2016, the MINEDUC implemented another systematic reform of the EFL curriculum, based on the previously mentioned state-of-the-art communicative language pedagogy. With yet unresolved issues in mind, this curricular restructuring included professional development for English teachers; these programs were designed to strengthen teacher pedagogical and linguistic

1 In the Spanish education system, bachillerato refers to the final two years of high school, equivalent to the sixth form course in the United Kingdom, or a high school diploma in the United States. It prepares students for professional life or future academic training, including university study.

competence within and across five domains: language, culture, curriculum development, assessment, and professional and ethical commitment. Unfortunately, the training courses did not sufficiently enhance EFL teacher pedagogical competence. Only 3,506 out of approximately 9,500 educators participated, and the results of the training for those who participated were mixed (Mendoza and Castellanos, 2018).

Other initiatives have focused on attracting new talent to public school classrooms, among them the ongoing *Quiero Ser Maestro* (I Want to be a Teacher) recruitment program, designed to address the teacher deficit across subject areas. This initiative has two stages, recruitment and evaluation, to ensure that the most qualified candidates become eligible for a public teaching position.

First, potential candidates register. Then, their credentials are reviewed and validated. In this stage, moreover, candidates take a subject-related standardized test and conduct an oral presentation and teaching demonstration. Unfortunately, English proficiency is considered secondary to the subject-related test requirement in the process's second stage. Furthermore, and in contrast to other subjects, the MINEDUC has not yet established any other mechanism for content-related testing for English teacher candidates.

Such recruitment and certification initiatives have also been complemented with affirmative action measures. The revised 2011 *Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural* (Organic Law of Intercultural Education), for example, sought to improve outcomes and establish equity across the population by guaranteeing all citizens the right to a formal education (Ministerio de Educación, 2017. Significantly, the law embraced multilingualism, particularly by including Indigenous languages in public education, languages that had been systematically excluded (and even legally prohibited) under previous education models. In fact, the first iteration of the *Quiero Ser Maestro* initiative in 2020-2021 specifically intended to diversify the linguistic, cultural, and ideological composition of public-school teachers through recruitment policies by considering nationality and ethnicity in the selection process.

Despite such diverse and sustained efforts, much work remains to improve English education in the country. To that end, this study investigates what factors have consistently prevented Ecuadorian reforms from attaining their goals by examining teachers' perceptions about their own training, methods, and the contexts in which they teach. In this way, the study considers not only teachers' language proficiency

and training but also the lived reality of teaching amid other dimensions related to the national curriculum and ongoing education reform.

Designing the National Survey

The survey was structured around 21 questions categorized around key concerns that would provide insight into the extant realities of English teaching in the country. The first set of questions solicit incidental demographic information related to gender, ethnicity, and geographical region, as well as professional demographic indicators related to the highest degree of educational attainment, English proficiency and certification, and years of teaching experience. The second set of questions turns toward the classroom context in which teachers work, gleaning insights about their perceptions of their workload and the effects of classroom conditions on teaching and learning. The third group of questions queries teachers on their methodologies and the national curriculum and expose the ways in which teachers apply (or not) the teaching strategies and curricular objectives in their own classrooms. The next set of questions explores teachers' perspectives on professional training, including courses they have already received through the MINEDUC's training programs, as well as their expressed needs and interest for future training opportunities. The fifth and final set of questions solicits information related to teacher accountability to institutional authorities, exploring how their behaviors and perceptions through evaluation methods, such as supervisor observations, affects their teaching.

Eligible participants included English teachers working in public schools at the primary or secondary level, drawn from a database of personnel maintained by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, which authorized the research. A total of 3,813 teachers responded to the survey, which was administered online through a digital platform. However, the response rate for each question varies as participants had the option to not answer. Such variations in sample size are accounted for in subsequent chapters. Responses were collected anonymously, and the general nature of the demographic questions assures their anonymity. Through this design, the survey attempted to capture a broadly representative sample of viewpoints of English teachers, samples that reflect the diversity both within the profession and of the Ecuadorian population overall.

The design and implementation of the survey, as well as the analysis and development of each chapter of this volume, deploys a participatory research model

that seeks to link educational research, still very much in its infancy in Ecuadorian universities, with educational policy and practice. Around two dozen researchers from various Ecuadorian universities, organized in regional teams, crafted the survey questions based on their understanding of local needs among English teachers. After receiving the survey results, the complete LEARN team participated in data analysis and research writing workshops that were intended to provide researchers —many of whom are new to scholarly publishing— with the knowledge and tools to develop their respective chapters. Each chapter was drafted by members of a regional team, usually comprised of 5 to 6 researchers. As a result, this project represents not only a systemic analysis of English teaching in Ecuador but also a model for organically linking university research with educational policy and teacher training. Accordingly, the editors took responsibility for striking a balance that respects the unique analytical approaches of each regional team, while also striving for coherence across the volume. As such, this project tows the line between a single, comprehensive study and a volume of collected, discrete essays. It attempts to allow each chapter to present its own findings, seeking connections where possible, while also recognizing the inevitable limitations and complications of analyzing a single yet robust dataset through the theoretical lenses and analytic methodologies deployed by each regional group.

The analysis of this data revealed that Ecuadoran curricular problems are not simply linked to poor materials, teachers, and resources but also to systematic disjunctures between internal, classroom teaching practices and external administration, political, and economic circumstances that affect Ecuadorian EFL education. Based on these conflicts and data analyses, this volume recommends strategic interventions to better prepare experienced and aspiring English teachers to improve English learning outcomes. In addition, the study identifies potential reforms in the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum that help evaluate English learning outcomes inclusively and consistently. Through these systematic approaches and practical solutions, stakeholders can genuinely confront Ecuador's demand for improving English proficiency across its population and reevaluate the role that public education can and should play in this transformation.

Book Outline

The organization of this volume reflects the thematic areas of inquiry that structured the survey: teacher demographics, classroom contexts, curriculum and teaching methodologies, teacher training, and future professional development needs. While

each chapter focuses on specific professional concerns, the study synthesizes these analyses to identify relationships between the internal and external pedagogical issues explored. Only by understanding these relationships can Ecuador expose and address the systematic disjunctures in its national English education programs.

Chapter 1, "The Tapestry of EFL Teachers in Ecuador," covers the demographic issues that are central to the Ecuadorian EFL programs and to the problematic situation faced by Ecuadorian teachers, families, students, and administrators; these include, gender, race, educational background, English language proficiency and its certification, and geographic location. The analysis compares the survey results with existing national census data and reports from the Ministry of Education to understand the demographic composition of English teachers in relation to the overall Ecuadorian population and their peers who teach other subjects. In addition, the analysis examines professional training indicators, such as English proficiency levels and educational attainment, across ethnicities, region, and gender. The results find little difference between teacher preparedness and English proficiency across demographic groups. Moreover, English teachers do not yet represent the diversity of the Ecuadorian population, and fewer than half of all English teachers are properly trained and possess the requisite English proficiency. The chapter concludes by recommending policy and initiatives that will improve English proficiency among teachers as well as systemic accountability in the training, certification, hiring, and retention processes. These actions should be the priority across all demographic subsets, regardless of the highest degree of educational attainment or specific training in language teaching.

Chapter 2, "Teaching in Context: The Perceived Effects of Workload, Class Size, and Teacher Proficiency on EFL Learning," moves from broader demographics to teachers' perceptions of their actual classroom environments and situations, specifically, perceptions of teaching load, class sizes, teachers' English proficiency, and student learning achievement. Through a Likert scale of agreement and a correlational analysis, the chapter examines relationships between questions related to teachers' classroom situations as well as demographic data examined in the previous chapter. Teachers identify class size as the single greatest factor influencing student English proficiency; they also express confidence in their abilities to adapt to the national curriculum and to use their own methodological knowledge to help their students achieve the required English proficiency. Nonetheless, teachers seem to attribute poor educational outcomes to more systemic problems, such as unreasonable curricular goals, rather than to their own knowledge and practices. These results raise various

questions involving the apparent conflict between teacher perception of their abilities and student proficiency outcomes.

Chapter 3, "Methodologies and Curriculum: Incongruence in Teachers' Knowledge and Practice" investigates this systemic disjuncture between the national curriculum, teacher training and methodologies, and the everyday realities of English teachers and learners in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms. These efforts consider the methodological and curricular issues facing Ecuadorian EFL education within the unique political and cultural challenges that hinder the nation's transition from traditional and objective-based learning to critical and inquiry-based pedagogy (Fabre et al., 2015). The survey questions related to methodology and curricular design highlight teachers' perceptions about their practices both in the classroom and in relation to national curriculum standards. According to the analysis, teachers believe that their methods align with the communicative teaching approach mandated by the national curriculum; but their self-reporting on the pedagogical methods exposes a far more varied approach, one which still relies heavily on traditional, objective-based methods. The results therefore expose gaps between teachers' explicit knowledge of communicative-based teaching methods and their own classroom practices. Thus, this chapter confirms the claim from Chapter 2, which states that teachers attribute students' lack of English proficiency to systemic problems, such as the implementation of unreasonable curricular goals, rather than their own classroom practice. As such, the analysis identifies specific discrepancies between the curriculum, practice, and outcomes that can be used to develop targeted teacher training initiatives.

Chapter 4, "Teacher Training and Professional Development: Connecting the Past, Present, and Future", examines teachers' perceptions of their future training and more immediate professional development needs. The survey results indicate that teachers are generally pleased with currently available training opportunities and feel that they are particularly well equipped to use the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which are essential to contemporary modern connected classroom, yet some indicators suggest that teacher training does not clearly align with curricular goals or result in better outcomes. Teachers also remain motivated to pursue future professional development opportunities. While their preferences are largely defined by their perceptions of their students' needs, teachers do not significantly connect those needs to the socioeconomic circumstances in which their students live. As such, the chapter recommends that teacher training should include opportunities for teachers to develop critical awareness of

how external influences may affect second language learning in the classroom and to provide strategies for creating greater equity in students' learning experiences.

Chapter 5, "The Accommodating Behavior of Ecuadorian English Teachers," considers survey data involving teacher responses to in-service observations of their classroom practices and examines those responses within the context of the expectations mandated in the national curriculum. The results reveal that the relationship between teacher practices and the mandated curriculum is less important to teachers than the relationship between their classroom practices and institutional requirements. Moreover, the survey responses demonstrate that there is little relationship between teachers' practices and their affective response to being observed. Finally, the survey identifies disjunctures between teacher practices and external requirements that point to additional systematic problems in the Ecuadorian educational system.

The volume concludes with a synthesis of the preceding analyses and presents an overall argument and potential solutions to improve English language learning outcomes across Ecuador, calling for a holistic approach that considers teachers' needs and expectations, as interpreted from the data. The study's immediate hope is to enhance prospects for social and economic development within subgroups that represent the complex composition of Ecuadorian society. The synthesis provides an integrated picture of the relationship between internal and external EFL issues as well as their relationships with the broader social and cultural contexts in which the teachers live and work. In addition to identifying targeted strategies for raising teachers' English proficiency and providing culturally relevant training, the study also addresses how other educational systems may benefit from this study's approach and model. As such, it concludes by emphasizing the global significance of this neglected topic and recommends theoretical and practical strategies for implementing this research model for continuing inquiry.

Ultimately, this study offers not only insights to the systemic factors that affect the successful achievement of English learning outcomes in a public education system in a developing country, but also a flexible, collaborative researcher and writer model that can be used for analysis and assessment, and that can be adapted to different educational systems in Latin America and other regions that prioritize English language education in schools yet struggle to achieve their desired outcomes. Together, these components build stronger relationships between educational practitioners and researchers across education levels and disciplines, offering a shared language

and perspective with which they can communicate and, thereby, act. By exposing systematic inequities and disjuncture in English education in Ecuador, our study's methodology and design constitute an inclusive participatory model for conducting large-scale educational research and for examining issues of access and resources in EFL education more broadly.

References

Auquilla, D. P. O., & Fernández, R. A. (2017). La educación ecuatoriana en inglés: Nivel de dominio y competencias lingüísticas de los estudiantes rurales. *Revista Scientific*, 2(6), 52-73. https://doi.org/10.29394/scientific.issn.2542-2987.2017.2.6.3.52-73

British Council. (2015). *English in Ecuador: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors.* https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/English%20in%20Ecuador.pdf

Cifuentes-Rojas, M. T., Contreras-Jordán, R. M., and Beltrán-Moreno, M. E. (2019). The development of English language teaching in the high schools of Ecuador during the last two decades." *Polo de Conocimiento*, 4(10), 89-98. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/7164384.pdf

Cronquist, K., & Fiszbein, A. (2017). English language learning in Latin America. [white paper] *The Dialogue: Leadership in the Americas.* https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/English-Language-Learning-in-Latin-America-Final-1.pdf

De Angelis, A. (2022). EF English Proficiency Index and English in Ecuador: Uncertain assumptions of the international ranking. *Revista Andina de Educación.* 5(2). Online. https://doi.org/10.32719/26312816.2022.5.2.11

Education First English Proficiency Index (2023). https://www.ef.com/assetscdn/WIBIwq6RdJvcD9bc8RMd/cefcom-epi-site/reports/2023/ef-epi-2023-english.pdf

Jaramillo, R. (2014). Sistema educativo ecuatoriano: Una revisión histórica hasta nuestros días. http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4401.7047

Mafla, Rosa. (2013). El eslabón débil de la cooperación internacional, una reflexión a partir del proyecto de inglés cradle. [Master's Thesis, FLACSO-Ecuador.] https://1library.co/document/dy4x71vz-eslabon-debil-cooperacion-internacional-reflexion-partir-proyecto-ingles.html.

Ministerio de Educación. (2009). *El proyecto CRADLE: Informe final*. Quito, Ecuador.

Ministerio de Educación. (2014). National curriculum specifications: English as a foreign language. https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/09/01-National-Curriculum-Guidelines-EFL-Agosto-2014.pdf

Ministerio de Educación. (2017). *Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural.* https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/05/Ley-Organica-Educacion-Intercultural-Codificado.pdf

United States Embassy and Consulate in Ecuador. (2023). Programa Ecuador habla inglés. https://ec.usembassy.gov/es/slide/programa-ecuador-habla-ingles/

Ureña, N. (2014). English education in the Ecuadorian public sector: Gaps y recommendations. *University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education Policy Brief*. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/8068288/English_Education_in_the_Ecuadorian_Public_Sector_Gaps_and_Recommendations

CHAPTER 1

The Tapestry of EFL Teachers in Ecuador

María José Barragán Camacho
José Miguel Campuzano Díaz
Heidi Marlen Marriott Toledo
Karen Anabella Yambay
Katherine Anabelle Salvador Cisneros
Mónica Elva Vaca Cárdenas

Introduction

Many Latin American countries include English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs in their educational curriculum to prepare students to work and live in a globalized world (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017; Stanton and Fiszbein, 2019). In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has implemented systematic program reforms for over three decades, attempting to improve the country's English proficiency through implementing curricular restructuring, recruiting new teachers, and establishing a minimum required English proficiency as well as standardizing English learning outcomes, developing instructional materials, and improving infrastructure. Nonetheless, large-scale surveys —like the Education First Proficiency Index— suggest that such reforms have yielded limited results (see Introduction). In addition to issues of English certification and proficiency, education authorities face considerable challenges with respect to gender parity and ethnic representation. Language teachers in Ecuador, as in much of Latin America and the Western hemisphere overall, are mostly women. Existing research on gender highlights gender inequities in the teaching profession as well as the profound impact of gender on teacher-student interaction and student attitudes and performance. By situating the case of Ecuador —both within broader concerns about EFL education in Latin America and within specific demographic tendencies pertaining to the Ecuadorian context— this chapter can help better understand the social and pedagogical implications of the demographic composition of Ecuadorian EFL teachers and provide a foundation for specific policy recommendations.

This first analytical chapter examines data elicited in the national survey related to teacher demographics. The analysis is supported and contextualized by census and other public data, allowing us to describe the social composition of Ecuadorian EFL teachers and compare them to the Ecuadorian population more generally. In the absence of long-term data, the analysis constructs a pseudo-longitudinal framework that attempts to identify demographic shifts over time by tracing patterns according to the years of teaching experience reported by participants. This composite demographic framework integrates and charts the relationships between incidental demographic factors —such as ethnicity, gender, and geographical region— and indicators of professionalization in EFL teaching —including language proficiency, certification, educational profile, and years of experience in the field. This data not only provides information on teacher composition but also helps the analysis identify key concerns about diversity,

inclusion, equity, and teacher preparation within which subsequent chapters are situated. This comparative approach illuminates the case of Ecuador in relation to regional trends and broader theoretical frameworks, specifically the roles of race, gender, ethnicity, location, and proficiency, as they pertain to teacher satisfaction and student success in the EFL classroom.

At first glance, the results suggest that Ecuadorian EFL teachers constitute a relatively homogenous group. The majority of EFL teachers identify as *mestiza* (mixed-race) with a teaching experience between six and ten years and intermediate English proficiencies. However, upon further examination, the survey reveals gradual diversification of English teachers and movement toward gender parity and, at the same time, gaps and contradictions across these trends. Positive trends aside, the low level of professional qualifications and English proficiency certifications across teachers of all demographic categories and experience levels raises concerns. Ultimately, English language proficiency for teachers across all demographic indicators must be prioritized above other professionalization factors.

Ideally, this chapter's analysis offers broad and contextualized conclusions and recommendations for policy makers, stakeholders, and teacher trainers to ground and design future EFL policies, training programs, and recruiting efforts. The recommendations include expanding inclusive recruitment practices that assure EFL teachers reflect the overall Ecuadorian population. With this, a more consistent application of professional standards that provide teachers with the requisite pedagogical knowledge and language proficiency for effective EFL teaching is imperative. Finally, administrators and teachers across all demographic indicators must prioritize English language proficiency training among teachers while attending to recruitment and retention issues and providing more opportunities for professional development, even among the most experienced teachers, which address curricular matters.

Our analysis provides specific, context-based recommendations to initiate the building of a ground-up structure that attends to and is based on the particular problems uncovered in our study. These problems represent the everyday realities in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms and the recommendations address these problems in ways that are much more relevant and accomplishable than broad reform.

English Teachers in Latin America: A Critical Overview

In Latin America, and globally, teaching is generally considered a woman's profession and, as women's work, is typically undervalued. Such feminization of woman's work and language teaching reflects broader gender stereotypes. Women are more inclined toward the profession presumably because of their inherently maternal instincts and associated interactive abilities (UNESCO, 2002, p. 20) and because they are also better at learning languages than men. These assumptions intertwine essentialist ideas of women's inherent social sensitivity and expressiveness with language acquisition (Schmenk, 2004, p. 519).

The feminization of teaching in Latin America is especially pronounced. Early in the twentieth century, emerging nationalist movements in the region obligated men to depart classrooms to join their nation's political and economic struggles (Cortina, 2006, pp. 107-108). Thus began a dramatic regional shift toward teaching as a women's profession. Current estimates indicate that nearly three out of four teachers in Latin America are women and that their numbers are especially high in preschool and primary education. Reflecting stereotypes, women are also more likely to teach English than other subjects (Stanton and Fiszbein, 2019, pp. 10-11).

In Ecuador, women represent the overwhelming majority of teachers (INEVAL, 2016). According to the MINEDUC's annual statistics report, 71.55% of teachers in primary and secondary schools were women in the 2020-2021 academic year, up nearly 5% from 66.66% during the 2009-2010 academic year (MINEDUC 2021). Such tendencies toward gender imparity have significant implications for classroom practice, student engagement, and achieving second language proficiency outcomes (Decke-Cornill, 2007; Dewaele, 2018; Drudy, 2008; Jule, 2016; Gkonou and Mercer, 2018). Regarding classroom practice, teaching materials typically have gendered aspects. Texts, worksheets, and other materials often perpetuate gendered work as in "She cleaned the house" and "She cooked the dinner." Although women are still the primary party responsible for domestic work in Ecuador (i.e., in one's own household), student practice material can always be non-gender specific.

These stereotypes have real-world consequences; female teachers earn lower salaries than men who opt for positions in higher paying and higher status fields. In Ecuador,

women are entering the labor force in greater numbers, but they are undervalued and experience job insecurity. Indeed, Ecuadorian public school teachers not only earn relatively low salaries, but women EFL teachers also earn lower salaries than their male counterparts. Public school teachers usually earn less than private school teachers; the former also have limited assurance for job continuity because they do not have tenurable positions. Only 52.49% of public school teachers have a labor contract; moreover, 47.51% work through temporary appointments or other arrangements (MINEDUC, 2021). In contrast, nearly all (98%) private school teachers hold long-term contracts. As women represent more than 7 out of 10 teachers in Ecuador, those who work in the public sector are disproportionally affected by lower salaries, job insecurity, and attendant economic instability than their male and private-sector peers.

Gender issues and stereotypes are inextricable from matters of race and ethnicity in EFL teaching (Grant and Sleeter, 1986), given that gender, racial and ethnic identity are strongly linked to traditional values involving language use and acquisition (De Jesus Ferreira, 2007; Kubota and Lin, 2009). Existing research considers teachers racial or ethnic identity in relation to that of their students and overall community population. In Mexico, for example, *mestizo* Oaxacan EFL teachers report feeling undervalued during the hiring process because of their ethnicity (Sayer et al, 2013). Language itself plays a dominant role in social and ethnic identity formation, and English teaching in particular is closely associated with imperial domination (Canagarajah, 1999). In addition, teaching materials, especially in EFL contexts, are rife with stereotypes that construct racial knowledge through the process of language learning (Taylor-Mendes, 2009, p. 66). To address these issues, scholars have called for new critical and theoretical approaches to examining race in EFL learning (Ruecker, 2011); these approaches would recognize the longstanding association between native speakerism and racism as well as the need to understand how language, power, and race conspire to perpetuate inequities in EFL teaching and learning.

These considerations are compounded with respect to EFL teaching in Ecuador where the population is ethnically diverse, composed of people from European, African, and Indigenous ancestries as well as people who recognize the intermixture of these varied origins. In general, mestizo in Ecuador refers to people of mixed European and Indigenous ancestries. The category mulato (mulatto) was used in the national census in 2001 to denote people of mixed African ancestry, as opposed to negro (black), blanco (white), or mestizo. However, the 2010 census radically

changed these color-centric racial categories to more culturally and community-oriented identities, including afroecuatoriano (Afro-Ecuadorian) instead of negro and mulato. The 2010 census also recognized montuvios, a term that refers to the people who comprise the self-sustaining agricultural communities of coastal Ecuador, following their official recognition as a distinctive group by the national government in late 2001. This identity signals a communal identity among people whose identity is constructed primarily through their collective agricultural practices rather than ethnic or racial origin.

According to the 2010 census, most Ecuadorians (72%) self-identify as mixed-race or *mestizo.* Historical census data also indicates shifts in ethnic identification during recent decades. Those identifying as *mestizo* in 2010, for example, dropped from 86.5% in 2001, due in part to changes in the ethnic and racial categories used in the 2001 and 2010 census forms. Nonetheless, the category of *mestizo* remains closely tied to upper-class notions of whiteness rather than recognition and acceptance of the nation's history of ethnic intermingling and plurality (Roitman, 2016).

While the national census recommends greater recognition of ethnic diversity, reports published by MINEDUC show that teachers have become more ethnically homogenous over the past decade. In the 2009-2010 school year, 88.4% of teachers self-reported being *mestizo*, a number that has increased to 91.0% in 2020-2021. Yet, as discussed below, our survey shows a countertrend indicating a decline in the number of *mestizos* among EFL teachers as well as gains among minority ethnic groups. Little, if any, work has accounted for these dynamics or considered how the ethnicity of EFL teachers affects English teaching.

In addition to incidental demographics such as gender, race, and geography, Ecuadorian EFL teacher demographics involve teacher professionalization aspects that fall under the banner of education background, years of experience, and English proficiency and certification. Existing scholarship consistently identifies language proficiency as critical for improved teaching ability (Faez and Karas, 2017, p. 136; Renandya, p. 69). It is significant because effective teaching does not come from high proficiency alone but also teacher knowledge and use of the language in teaching situations (Canh and Renandya, 2017; Faez and Karas, 2011 p.135; Tsang, 2017 p. 99). Some studies have found a positive correlation between language proficiency and teachers' classroom confidence in their

instructional abilities. Certainly, providing teachers with training practices to develop a positive attitude can help teachers with lower proficiency to be more effective (Freeman, 2017, p. 31; Nguyen, 2017, p. 83). Still, teacher confidence does not alone or always equate with better teaching. Better teaching is in many ways tied to interactive teaching practices.

Although MINEDUC has implemented clear standards for EFL teacher proficiency in recent years, our analysis shows that relatively few teachers have achieved the B2 benchmark on the Common European Framework. As such, this study not only considers the need to improve language proficiency but also efforts to better understand how teachers with different proficiency levels use language to maximize their contributions to student success (Renandya, p. 69). Given this circumstance, we must identify the appropriate proficiency levels for non-native teachers regarding grade level and other instructional matters, develop and implement appropriate means of testing, and train teachers to use interactive teaching. However, EFL teachers' language proficiency is notoriously difficult to measure. Moreover, although self-reporting is neither ideal nor does it present a complete assessment, it is often the only available option (Tsang, 2017 p. 99; Faez and Karas, 2017, p. 145). In the present study, therefore, we consider teachers' self-reported language ability and also whether they hold a valid certification of language proficiency. In some small measure, then, the analysis here can identify tendencies in self-reported proficiency and the role that certification plays among different demographic indicators.

Given the problems with attaining and testing proficiency, formal training in language instruction is just as imperative as demonstrating language proficiency. In Brazil, a greater percentage of EFL teachers hold master's degrees and PhDs than their peers in other countries such as Mexico or Colombia (Howard et al., 2016). In contrast, 76% of EFL teachers in Mexico hold a bachelor's degree, yet only 28% have taken a language proficiency test (Sayer, Mercau, and Blanco López, 2013). Higher educational attainment correlates to other indicators in teacher preparedness. Brazilian EFL teachers, for example, were more confident in their proficiency level than EFL teachers in Mexico or Colombia. These results suggest, but do not demonstrate, that more experienced English teachers develop more reflective as well as interactive teaching practices and confidence in their language use.

At present, more questions than answers exist about demographics in EFL contexts in Latin America and Ecuador in particular. Clearly, further work is needed to understand demographic factors related to EFL teaching and to adapt teacher classroom practices to specific Ecuadorian contexts. By illuminating the demographic profile of EFL teachers and understanding the relationships between incidental demographic markers and indicators of professional preparedness, we can design initiatives directed toward equity and inclusion and, thereby, prepare Ecuadorian EFL teachers who are better trained and more representative of the communities they serve.

Framework for Analyzing EFL Teacher Demographics

To characterize the composition of EFL teachers we examined the results of self-reported demographic indicators such as gender, ethnicity, and geographic region in which they work. In addition, teachers were queried about their years of experience as EFL teachers, educational attainment, English proficiency on the Common European Framework, and their attainment of a certificate recognized by the MINEDUC to validate their proficiency. We considered the responses to these questions and compared the EFL teacher survey results to current and historical national census data as well as to more general data on teachers published in a report by MINEDUC.

In addition to frequency distribution analysis and comparison, our analysis used cross-tabulations to identify relationships between different demographic indicators —including those between personal demographic characteristics of race, gender, and region and those external ones related to professional training, experience, and language proficiency. In addition, we examined potential relationships between geographical location and gender and ethnic representation to determine whether shifts in teacher demographics are regionally localized or can be generalized across Ecuador. The analysis uncovered relationships that help us better understand how English proficiency and training depend, in great part, on social factors related to class and gender as well as to access to professional training and exposure to the English language. While the analysis does not fully account for why some EFL teachers are better prepared than others, it sheds

light on differences in training needs and English proficiency certification among teachers regardless of their years of experience in the field.

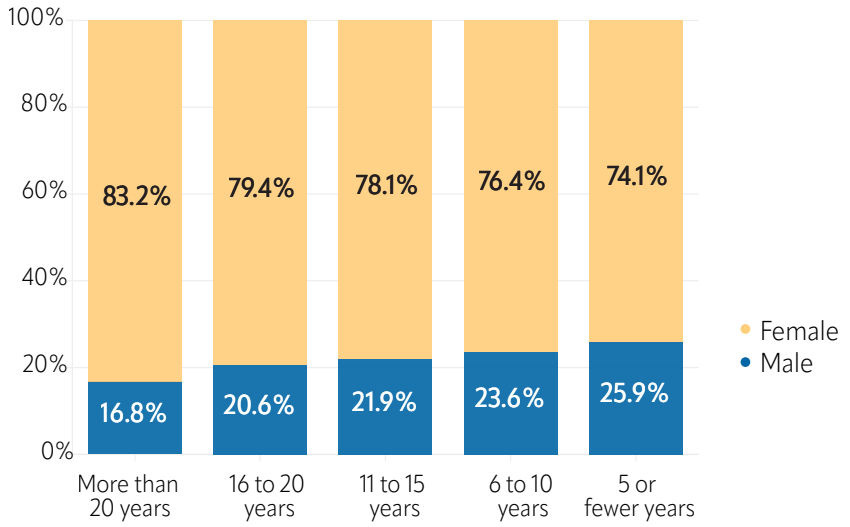
Countercurrents in Gender and Ethnicity

The number of women teachers in Ecuador and Latin American overall is growing. With respect to gender and ethnicity, the results reveal several individual tendencies among EFL teachers. As a group, however, these trends lead to further questions that cannot be resolved with this data but suggest pathways for subsequent research. For instance, mestizas are overrepresented in EFL compared to teachers in other fields and the overall Ecuadorian population. Ecuadorian women represent an even larger proportion of EFL teachers (77.9%) than the national data for teachers across all disciplines (71.55%).[1]

Moreover, the results show movement toward greater gender parity and ethnic diversity in relationship to other demographic factors. Comparing gender ratios with total years of teaching experience revealed a trend among EFL teachers which has significant consequences for the current high proportion of female EFL teachers. Men are gradually occupying a greater share of EFL teaching positions. As Figure 1 illustrates, women represent 83.2% of the most experienced EFL teachers (20 or more years), while the number of men at the same experience level are noticeably fewer at 16.8%. However, the percentage of male teachers increases to 25.9% among those with 5 or fewer years of experience, overall, a gain of 9.1%. Thus, men are currently entering the field of EFL teaching at higher rates than twenty years ago. This movement toward gender parity vis-à-vis years of teaching experience is a positive development; at the current rate of change, however, parity will not be achieved for at least two more decades. Moreover, the overrepresentation of men at lower levels of teaching longevity might not be, at least in part, a matter of new recruits in a field historically dominated by women. Perhaps, gender parity would be greater if men did not leave the profession at a relatively high rate. But data on this possibility must be collected and analyzed.

1 The options for gender identification were masculino (male), femenino (female), and otro (other). Of the 3,813 valid responses, only one participant chose "other." Therefore, this analysis considers only those who identify as male or female.

Figure 1. Gender Representation as a Function of Years of Teaching Experience



Regarding ethnicity, the survey percentages of EFL teachers align closely with those in MINEDUC's national report (2021) of teachers across all disciplines. In this report, 90.7% of teachers identify as Mestizo, followed by Indigenous peoples at 4.1%, White as 2.6%, Montuvio at 1.3%, and Afro-Ecuadorian at 2.0%. Similarly, our survey found that 91.9% of EFL teachers identify as mestizo, while only 3.7% identify as Montuvio, 2.0% as Indigenous, 1.3% as Afro-Ecuadorian, and 0.9% as White. The greatest differences in ethnic representation between EFL teachers and teachers overall involves Montuvios, who represent a greater share of the former teachers than of the latter. In contrast, Indigenous Afro-Ecuadorians and Whites are less likely to teach EFL teachers other subjects. Significantly each of these ethnicities is underrepresented within the overall Ecuadorian population. The data thus indicates that EFL teachers, as the general teaching population, are more ethnically homogenous than the Ecuadorian population with more than 9 out of 10 identifying as Mestizo. Moreover, ethnic diversity among Ecuadorian EFL teachers is trending toward greater representation of the overall population. Here, too, several reasons are possible. Perhaps more teachers are now self-identifying as Mestizo as a means of obtaining racial capital.

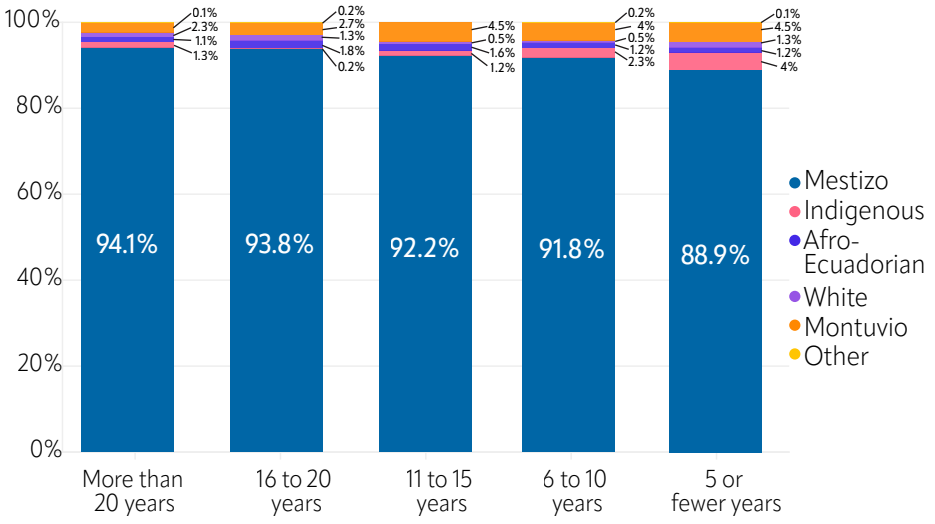
Figure 2. Ethnicity of EFL Teachers Compared with Public School Teachers and Ecuadorian Population

	Ethnicity of English Teachers, National Survey	Ethnicity of Public-School Teachers, 2021 MINEDUC Report	Ethnicity of Ecuadorians, 2010 Census
Mestizo/a	91.9%	90.7%	71.9%
Montuvio/a	3.7%	1.3%	7.4%
Indigenous	2.0%	4.1%	7.0%
Afroecuatoriano/a	1.3%	2.0%	4.2%
Blanco/a	0.9%	2.6%	6.1%

Ethnic composition and professional experience are trending gradually toward greater diversity, particularly among Indigenous and Montuvio EFL teachers, despite this many groups remain underrepresented. The representation of Indigenous EFL teachers, for example, is only 1.3% of teachers with more than 20 years of experience, while 4.0% of those with fewer than 5 years of experience claim that identity (see Figure 3). In other words, over the past two decades, the Indigenous representation among EFL teachers has tripled. Further, the proportion of Montuvios nearly doubles from 2.3% of the most experienced teachers to 4.5% among newer teachers while mestizos decline 5.1% by the same measure. White and Afro-Ecuadorians remain relatively consistent across the most and least experienced teachers.[2]

2 Neither the EFL national survey nor the MINEDUC report on general teacher demographics considered the ethnic categories of Negro/a or Mulato/a, which were categories included in the 2010 census. These categories represent 1.0% and 1.9% of the Ecuadorian population, respectively. Their exclusion from both educational surveys does not significantly affect the findings, which if anything understates the disparities in ethnic representation among Ecuadorians who identify as black or Afro-descendent.

Figure 3. Ethnicity of EFL Teachers as a Function of Years of Teaching Experience



In the absence of dependable longitudinal data, measuring ethnic representation in terms of teaching experience provides a reasonable estimate of changes in the ethnic composition of EFL teachers. These results suggest a gradual increase in ethnic diversity, particularly as Montuvios and Indigenous peoples comprise a larger share of newer EFL teachers. But teachers in all fields are more ethnically homogenous than the general Ecuadorian population. Furthermore, representation among newer Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and Montuvio EFL teachers remains below national census figures; here, each of these groups represent just over 7% of the population. These gradual shifts toward ethnic diversity are promising, especially when considered against the contradictory tendency toward ethnic homogenization among teachers; representation of mestizo, Montuvio, and Indigenous teachers has held steady or declined over the past decade (Ministerio de Educación, 2021, p. 35). Because the data shows movement toward gender parity, it will take several decades to reach numbers among EFL teachers that are more representative of the Ecuadorian population. Much more ethnic diversity is needed, but additional data is also necessary to move forward on understanding and responding.

Geographical Indicators of Teacher Preparedness

After completing the gender and ethnic analysis, we also considered if the lower representation of certain ethnic groups, particularly of Indigenous peoples, was related to their geographic region in terms of access to teacher training and/or to English certification programs. In general, the proportion of teachers working in urban communities is higher than the overall number of Ecuadorians who report living in urban areas. This data suggests that rural communities are comparably underserved, and survey responses bare out this claim. For example, the survey finds that 69.1% of EFL teachers work in urban schools, while only 62.8% of Ecuadorians reported living in urban communities in the 2010 census.[3] Similarly, only 30.9% of EFL teachers report working in rural areas, compared with 37.2% of Ecuadorians who reside there. However, according to the 2010 census, 78.5% of Indigenous people live in rural areas, while only 33.7% of mestizos and 18.6% of whites report living in these communities.

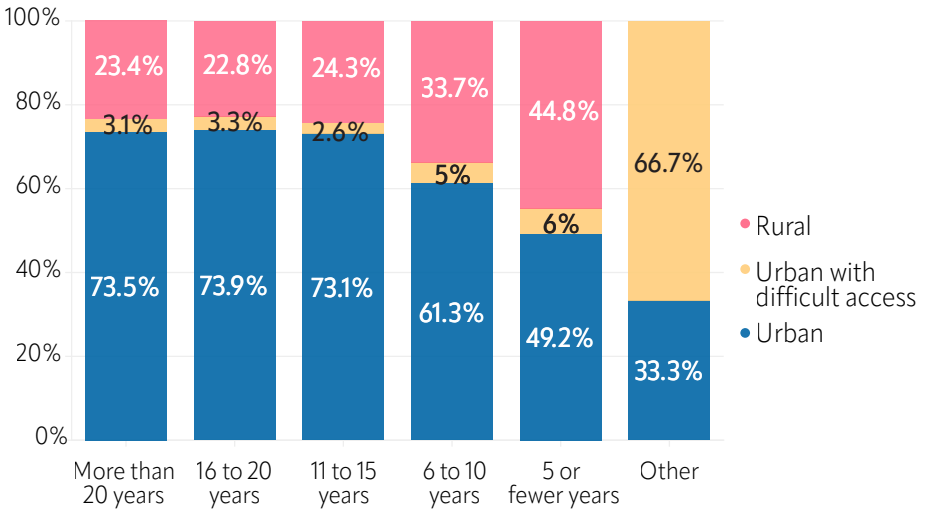
Regional access alone is not sufficient to explain inequities in ethnic composition. For example, most Afro-Ecuadorians, who are also underrepresented among EFL teachers, live in urban areas (74.3%); yet this population is largely concentrated around the cities of Esmeraldas on the northern coast rather than in the political and economic centers in cities such as Quito and Guayaquil. Therefore, these groups cluster in areas considered urban but are rural in practice because they are isolated from other populations in their region.

To better understand the relationships between these demographic factors and their implications for teacher training, we examined current shifts in gender with respect to regional distribution and ethnic representation. As with gender and ethnicity, tracking the region of practicing EFL teachers according to years of experience revealed important demographic shifts. In fact, 44.8% of teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience report working in rural areas, compared with just 23.4% of their most experienced peers with more than 20 years of experience. In

3 In the national survey, a third category of "urban areas with difficult access" was included as third option beyond "rural" and "urban". Of the 69.1% of EFL teachers working in urban schools, 4.2% chose the "urban with difficult access" category. For the purposes of this study, the results of both urban categories (regular and difficult access) were combined for the

other words, the proportion of newer teachers working in rural areas approximates the proportion of Ecuadorians who reside there. The data also raises questions and suggests further research to be conducted. We do not know the demographic composition of new EFL teachers in rural locations. Are they men or women? What are their ethnicities, level of proficiency, and educational attainment?

Figure 4. Geographic Region of English Teachers as a Function of Years of Teaching Experience



While these comparative results suggest that access to EFL is growing among Ecuador's diverse population, they do not explain relationships between such trends in the gender, ethnic, and regional profiles of EFL teachers. As mentioned above, the survey revealed a three-fold increase among Indigenous teachers based on years of experience. Similarly, the proportion of men among newer EFL teachers is higher than their more experienced peers. Nonetheless, correlation analysis revealed that the relationships between geographic location, gender, and ethnicity are negligible. An individual element is not a strong predictor of the changing demographics of EFL teachers. But when taken in the aggregate, such changes indicate movement toward a more diverse and equitable composition.

Challenges in Certifying Language Proficiency Among English Teachers

Unlike the gradual diversification of EFL teachers vis-à-vis gender, ethnicity, and experience, the data shows little development in the relationships between qualifications and teaching experience. Moreover, the data on low teacher English proficiency and lack of certification evidence is alarming. Only slightly more than one third (35.3%) of EFL teachers report holding the minimum B2 proficiency in English required by the MINEDUC; even fewer teachers (31.3%) have a certificate to validate their proficiency.[4]

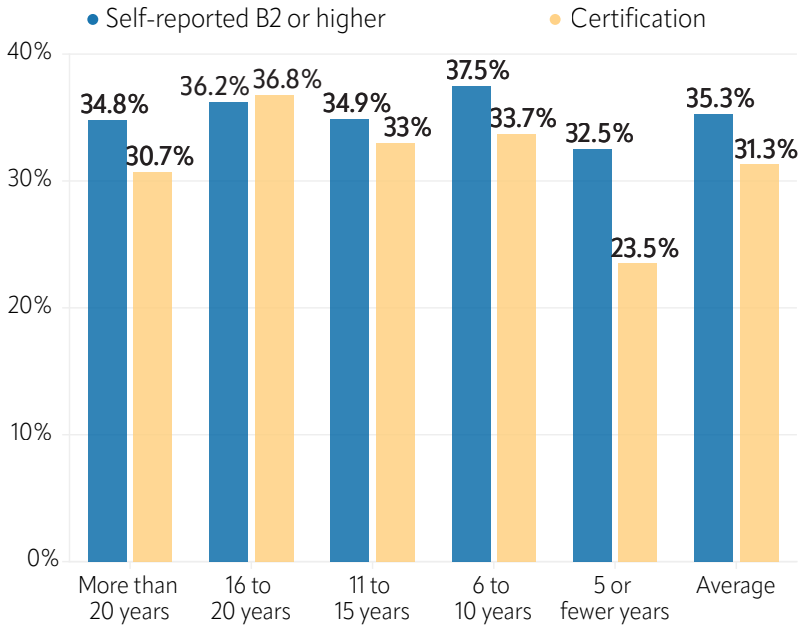
Within that lower percentage, newer teachers validate their English proficiency levels at lower rates than their more experienced peers; specifically, certification jumps from 23.5% for teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience to 33.7% for those with 6 to 10 years of experience, a difference of 10.2%. For mid-career teachers, the certification rate ranges between 33.0% and 36.8%, and it drops down again to 30.7% among the most experienced teachers. Such indicators suggest that most new EFL teachers enter the field without certifying their English proficiency and that very few achieve certification by mid-career. Furthermore, the most experienced teachers do not appear inclined to pursue certification later in their careers. Obviously, if we do not have certification information, but only self-reports, we cannot know who is in fact proficient. Still, some hypotheses can be drawn from these results. For instance, only one third of all EFL teachers declare the required B2 level, whether they hold certification or not. In addition, self-reported proficiency levels are relatively consistent across all experience groups (see Figure 5). When compared with self-reported proficiency levels, the results show no significant relationship between English proficiency, certification, and professional experience beyond the threshold of the first five years.

Problematic as they are individually, the consistency of the data indicates that EFL teacher proficiency does not improve incidentally over time. For example, 32.5% of the least experienced teachers report having the minimum B2 proficiency, while 34.8% among the most experienced teachers report the same. Teachers with 6 to 10 years of teaching experience are somewhat more likely to report B2 or higher

4 The MINEDUC recognizes international certificates including the TOEFL iBT, IELTS, Cambridge, iTEP, among others. Certification, for the purposes of this study, refers to these recognized exams.

proficiencies (37.5%). Thus, EFL teachers across all experience levels report very similar language abilities, and only slightly more than one-third (35.3%) meet the required B2 level on the CEFR. Such results suggest that teachers substantially improve their English proficiency as they gain more teaching experience. But we do not know for certain because of gaps in the dataset. Less proficient newer teachers will likely reflect poorer student outcomes. Then again, even if the self-reported data is consistent across the group, it is not reliable proof of proficiency. Having valid certification, now regrettably absent, would not only indicate whether teachers overestimate or underestimate their proficiency levels but also help measure English proficiency more accurately.[5] It is clear, however, that lower proficiency can be mitigated by using interactive methodologies.

Figure 5. Self-Reported and Certified English Proficiency as a Function of Years of Teaching Experience



Without any demonstrable evidence that certification yields higher proficiency, we looked for other indicators of teacher preparation and professionalization. As indicated, the survey results clearly indicate that English proficiency does not significantly improve with teaching experience. But, surprisingly, whether EFL teachers

5 Further discussion of certifying EFL proficiency will be taken up in the final chapter, in which we discuss the Ecuador Habla Inglés initiative and its long-term implications for improving this metric.

hold a degree in a language-related field makes little difference. In fact, 37.1% of teachers with a university degree (undergraduate or graduate) in a relevant field report a minimum B2 proficiency, a rate not much higher than the 33.5% of those with degrees in other fields. Certification levels are similarly low across disciplines; 33.6% hold a certificate in a relevant field, compared with 28.6% of those in other fields. While just over half of all EFL teachers (53.8%) have a university degree in a field related to languages, such lack of formal training may not be as critical as other more generalized inadequacies related to language competency including curricular knowledge. Thus, subject area has little bearing on language proficiency and certification; even those who formally studied languages or language pedagogy are not necessarily more proficient in the language itself.

A far better indicator of English proficiency than certification or field of study is the highest degree obtained, regardless of the discipline. In particular, 51.7% of those holding a graduate degree in any field report a B2 or higher proficiency, and 47.3% of the same group report holding a certificate. These rates are higher than those who hold an undergraduate degree, among whom only 32.1% report a B2 or higher proficiency, with only 28.1% holding a valid English proficiency certificate. The survey cannot explain the reasons for the higher rate, although a few inferences can be made. First, it seems likely that those who pursue graduate studies are, in the aggregate, more academically and professionally ambitious than their peers who stop at undergraduate studies; they are presumably, but not necessarily, better prepared. In addition, and a matter involving economic status, Ecuadorians with the means pursue graduate studies abroad; admission to those programs often requires certification of an intermediate or high level of English. Once again, subject matter seems inconsequential: only 22.6% of EFL teachers with a graduate degree completed programs in a language-related field, compared with 64.0% of those with an undergraduate degree. Whatever the reasons, the results indicate that higher degree of educational attainment is a better predictor of English proficiency than teaching experience or certification.

Gender and ethnicity are also better predictors of proficiency, though less reliable than the highest degree obtained. For example, men are substantially more likely to report a minimum B2 proficiency than women, 46.4% and 32.2%, respectively. To a lesser extent, albeit self-reported, men also report holding a certificate at higher rates than women (36% compared to 30%). At first glance, this suggests that men are both more proficient and better certified than their women peers. However, the difference

between self-reported proficiency and certification is far greater among men than women: 10.4% for men versus 2.2% for women. Thus, although men are somewhat more likely than women to hold a certification, they are also much more likely to report a higher proficiency level without necessarily having a certificate to confirm it.

Similar tendencies are evident in relation to ethnicity. Whites and mestizos are most likely to report a B2 or higher proficiency (50% and 35.8%, respectively), while Afro-Ecuadorians are least likely to report this level (23.5%). Nonetheless, all ethnic groups except Montuvios report certifications of their knowledge at rates lower than they report holding the B2 minimum proficiency. In contrast, 26.8% of Montuvios report a B2 or higher, while 30.3% hold a certificate. The analysis indicates that whites, mestizos, and males overestimate their English abilities to some degree, while women and Montuvios are most likely to underestimate their English proficiency or rely on testing and certification to verify it. Again, we have no data on actual proficiency levels.

In sum, according to the data, regardless of social demographic indicators, years of professional experience, or teaching subject, specialized training in language education appears to have very little bearing on English teacher proficiency in Ecuador; the best predictors of language ability are highest degree attained, gender, and ethnicity. Our results also show a more tenuous relationship between experience, educational background, and language proficiency than indicated in prior research on Latin America and elsewhere. Specifically, more experienced teachers outperform less experienced ones; thus, teaching experience has limited influence on proficiency. Finally, solely holding a subject-related advanced degree is not enough to assure proficiency within the pool of English teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, our analysis of the survey data reveals homogeneity among Ecuadorian EFL teachers across incidental demographic categories of race and gender, particularly when considered in relation to the general Ecuadorian population. Out of this relative consistency, the data offers a clear profile of the typical Ecuadorian EFL teacher: she is a mestiza who works in urban areas. She has a lower-intermediate level of English proficiency, and her proficiency most likely has not been certified by MINEDUC. Although she likely holds an undergraduate degree, her academic training is not necessarily in a field related to language teaching.

Beneath this composite image, however, the analysis reveals far more complexity. When we compared incidental demographic factors about ethnicity, gender, and geographic region with years of teaching experience, we found several trends for which we have no simple explanations. With regard to gender, for instance, one trend shows gradual movement toward gender parity and another trend toward greater ethnic diversity; specifically, men are overrepresented at lower levels of teaching longevity. But would there be greater gender parity if men did not leave the profession after a short time? From this perspective, the issue is not, or not only, that more women are teachers but that fewer men remain in the profession. If so, another interesting dimension of questioning emerges and identifies new data to collect. Also, with respect to gender, teaching materials are typically gendered to perpetuate stereotypes (see above). Again, even if Ecuadorian woman undertake most of the domestic work, our materials and student practices do not have to reflect these norms. New data on student recognition of these stereotypes and examining teaching materials would be helpful, especially in revising existing materials.

This chapter also addressed the racialization of teaching materials, attitudes, and practices. Self-reported data on proficiency is higher from male, whites, and mestizo; other races, women and Montuvios are less confident. Reflecting existing and longstanding racial hierarchies, this data may indicate that the former racial groups are, indeed, more proficient. But, given the privilege males, whites, and mestizos have in Ecuadorian culture, it is no surprise they exhibit higher confidence levels. Is it possible that more teachers are self-identifying as mestizo now than they did before as a way of obtaining racial capital? Other questions emerge. What role does the subject area of the undergraduate and/or graduate degree has in self-reported and achieved B2 status? Are some EFL teachers "playing" the system by reporting a higher degree status than actually earned? Again, we have no data on actual proficiency levels let alone with respect to these issues.

Other questions about race emerge. Is there a statistically significant relationship among years of teaching experience and gender, or between years of teaching experience and ethnicity/race, or the years of teaching experience and school location? The data on location suggests that access to EFL education in rural locations is increasing. But we cannot confirm this hypothesis because we do not know if class sizes or other practical scheduling issues change in response to the presence of more teachers. If class sizes increase with the number of teachers, then the educational benefit would be mitigated. Moreover, we do not know the demographic

composition of new EFL teachers in rural locations. Are they men or women? What are their ethnicity, level of proficiency, and highest degree earned?

Although the analysis has uncovered positive trends, much information is needed. As such, this chapter showed the limitations of analyzing change in teacher demographics over time, or at least the limitations of assuming that one pass through the data will yield sufficient data to achieve statistical significance. Accordingly, longitudinal tracking of teachers would clarify whether these results indicate problems in recruitment, retention, or both or other matters. In addition, interviews and/or case studies would provide further understanding of, among other issues, teachers' reasons for entering or leaving the field.

The Ecuadorian educational system overall and its EFL curriculum need systematic reform. However, implemented reforms have not worked. Instead, and rather repeating failed proposals to effect systematic reform, our analysis provides specific, context-based suggestions to initiate the building of a ground-up context structure that attends to —in a much more relevant and accomplishable manner— the particular problems uncovered in our study; problems that represent the everyday realities in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms.

References

Canh, L. V., and W. A. Renandya. (2017). Teachers' English proficiency and classroom language use: A conversation analysis study." *RELC Journal,* 48(1), 67– 81. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690935

Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Cortina, R. (2006). Women teachers in Mexico: Asymmetries of power in public education. In R. Cortina and S. San Román (Eds.), *Women and teaching: Global perspectives on the feminization of a profession.* Palgrave-Macmillan.

Cronquist, K., and Fiszbein, A. (2017). El aprendizaje del inglés en América Latina. *El Diálogo: Liderazgo para las Américas.* https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/El-aprendizaje-del-ingl%C3%A9s-en-Am%C3%A9rica-Latina-1.pdf

Decke-Cornill, H. (2007). The issue of gender and interaction in the L2 classroom. In H. Decke-Cornill and L. Volkmann (Eds.) *Gender studies and foreign language teaching*, (pp. 77-90). Gunter Narr Verlag.

De Jesus Ferreira, A. (2007). What has race/ethnicity got to do with ELL teaching? *Linguagem and Ensino*, 10(1), 211-233.

Dewaele, J. M., Gkonou, C., and Mercer, S. (2018). Do ESL/ELL teachers' emotional intelligence, teaching experience, proficiency and gender affect their classroom practice? In J. Martínez Agudo (Ed.), *Emotions in second language teaching: Theory, research, and teacher education.* (pp. 125-141). Springer.

Drudy, S. (2008) Gender balance/gender bias: The teaching profession and the impact of feminisation, *Gender and education* (20.4), 309-323. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250802190156

Elacqua, G., Hincapié, D., Vegas, E., Alfonso, M., Montalva, V., and Paredes, D. (2018). Profesor en América Latina: ¿Por qué se perdió el prestigio docente y cómo recuperarlo? Inter-American Development Bank. http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0001172

Faez F., and M. Karas. (2017). Connecting language proficiency to (self-reported) teaching ability: A review and analysis of research. *RELC Journal*, 48(1) 135-151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217694755

Freeman, D. (2017). The case for teachers' classroom English. *RELC Journal*, 48(1) 31-52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217691073

Grant, C. A., and Sleeter, C. E. (1986). Race, class, and gender in education research: An argument for integrative analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56(2), 195-211. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543056002195

Howard, A., Basurto-Santos, N. M., Gimenez, T., Gonzáles Moncada, A. M., and McMurray, M. (2016). *A comparative study of English language teacher recruitment, in-service education and retention in Latin America and the Middle East*. British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/en/publications/case-studies-insights-and-research/comparative-study-english-language-teacher

INEVAL. (2016). *Resultados educativos, retos hacia la excelencia*. Quito: INEVAL. https://www.evaluacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2016/12/CIE_ResultadosEducativos-RetosExcelencia201611301.pdf

Julé, A. (2016). *Gender, participation, and silence in the language classroom: Sh-shushing the girls.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Kubota, R., and Lin, A. (2009). *Race, culture, and identities in second language education: Exploring critically engaged practice*. Routledge.

Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador (2021). *Normativa para el concurso de méritos y oposición Quiero Ser Maestro 7 para llenar vacantes docentes en el Magisterio Nacional*. https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2021/02/MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2021-00007-A.pdf

Nguyen, M. X., and Nguyen, N.C. (2107). TESOL Teachers' engagement with the native speaker model: How Does Teacher Education Impact on Their Beliefs? *RELC Journal*, 48(1), 83–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690066

Renandya, W. A. (2013). Essential Factors Affecting ELL Learning Outcomes. *English Teaching*, 68(4), 23-41. https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti_id=ART001827512

Roitman, K., and Oviedo, A. (2017). Mestizo racism in Ecuador. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(15), 2768-2786. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1260749

Ruecker, T. Challenging the native and non-native English speaker hierarchy in ELT: New directions from race theory. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 8(4), 400-422. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2011.615709

Sayer, P., Mercau, M. V., and Blanco López, G. (2013). PNIEB teachers' profiles and professional development: A needs analysis. *MexTESOL Journal*, 37(3), 1-14. https://www.mextesol.net/journal/index.php?page=journal&id_article=485

Schmenk, B. (2004). Language learning: A feminine domain? The role of stereotyping in constructing gendered learner identities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(3), 514–524. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588352

Stanton, S., and Fiszbein, A. (2019). Work in progress: English teaching and teachers in Latin America [white paper]. *The Dialogue: Leadership for the Americas*. https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/white-paper-2019-comple-to-final.pdf

Taylor-Mendes, C. (2009). Construction of racial stereotypes in English as a foreign language (EFL) textbook: images as discourse. In R. Kubota, and A. Lin (Eds.), *Race, culture, and identities in second language education: exploring critically engaged practice*. (pp. 64-80). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203876657

Tsang, A. (2017). EFL/ESL Teachers' general language proficiency and learners' engagement. *RELC Journal* 48(1), 99–113. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690060

UNESCO. (2002). *Gender equality in basic education in Latin America and the Caribbean.* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000131040/PDF/131040eng.pdf.multi

World Economic Forum. (2021). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021

CHAPTER 2

The Perceived Effects of Workload, Class Size, and Teacher English Proficiency on EFL Learning

Ítalo Carabajo Romero
Marcia Criollo Vargas
Tatiana García Villao
Eliana León Abad
Orlando Lizaldes

Introduction

During the past four decades, Ecuador has implemented a variety of curricular and pedagogical reforms with the goal of improving English language proficiency nationwide (see Introduction). These classroom-oriented initiatives have frequently coincided with broader educational reforms designed to update institutional infrastructure as well as to recruit and train more public-school teachers. Given this overlap of internal and external concerns, efforts to improve public proficiency have turned by and large to national standardization. Some progress has been made in broader programmatic and institutional issues to diversify English teachers and create gender parity, at least with regard to technology, with modernizing infrastructure.[1] But efforts to address overall English language proficiency vis-à-vis classroom practices involving workload, class size, and teacher proficiency have proven less successful.

While broader concerns of physical infrastructure and access are not addressed within this chapter, this lack of coverage is not merely because they are, as proverbially stated, beyond the chapter's scope. Because this volume advocates a ground-up, contextualized approach to reforming the Ecuadorian EFL educational system, this chapter —and the future research and efforts to which it points— must start with the day-to-day working conditions. As such, this chapter considers the problem of English teacher language proficiency degree by considering the degree to which class size, overall workload, and access to teaching materials influence student learning and overall teaching quality. Thus, this chapter considers questions from the national survey designed to assess teachers' workload, their perceptions about the impact of class size on teaching and learning, and the relationship between teacher English proficiency and student achievement. Teachers indicate that class sizes are too large to promote effective teaching. Yet, they do not significantly adapt their teaching practices according to the demands of larger classes. Teachers, moreover, question the claim that teacher English language proficiency is a prerequisite for developing student language competency. As such, this survey data reveals additional discrepancies between teachers' perceptions of their lived classroom experiences and external requirements, discrepancies that suggest several responses within a ground-up, situated approach.

1 Announced by President Rafael Correa in 2007, the Escuela del Milenio (Millennial School) initiative, for example, promised the construction of hundreds of modernized schools, a promise that has yet to be fulfilled. Communities complained that such schools were located too far for students to attend without difficulty, while others saw projects abandoned or never started. Meanwhile, small community schools, often with only one or two teachers, were closed.

The Conditions of EFL Teaching: Class Size/Workload, Teacher Proficiency, and Outcomes

In addition to curricular/methodological matters, individual classroom practices depend on class size, workload, and teacher EFL proficiency. The latter is in part determined by the individual teacher and in part by authorities, while the former two are largely beyond the teachers' control. As such, determining best and/or most reasonable possible classroom practices, especially in EFL, requires considering class size/workload and teacher proficiency holistically and also in terms of accepted interactive methodologies and Ecuadorian national mandates (see Introduction).

Workload, i.e., number of sections, class size, and student-teacher ratios are a standard means of considering the relationships between student, teacher, and effectiveness issues. Although past scholarship has considered these components individually, at present, they are understood as interrelated, context-bound, complex, and contested issues.[2] These contexts comprise a variety of managerial, pedagogical, and administrative aspects (Blatchford and Russell, 2020) and include class subject and resources (the presence of aids and technologies); teacher and student gender and ethnicity; student age and level, teacher training and experience; and the school's geographic location.

Of the workload components, class size is the current measure for workload issues. Experienced teachers may be more effective in large classes. Students may be more susceptible to the negative effects of large class size in required courses as opposed to elective courses (Karas, 2021). Students in disadvantaged regions are less likely to have small classes but would benefit from them the most (ACTFL). Some studies have examined how class size effects income (Leuven 2020; Wang 2022). EFL, with its need for direct dialoguing, tends to benefit more from smaller classes than certain other subjects (Shen and Konstantopoulos, 2021). Clearly, it is impossible to determine precise, standardized workload numbers. What is large in one context is not in another. That said, Tennessee's 1985-89 STAR project made the following recommendations: small 13-17, regular 22-26, large >30 (Harris and Mikaye 2017, pp. 237). UNESCO endorses having a 25

2 Student-teacher ratio has borne too much significance in global assessment measure of instructional quality (Bennell, 2022).

to 1 student-teacher ratio in secondary school in developing countries such as Ecuador (Bennell, 2022, p. 4).

By and large, the scholarship takes two positions on workload, again framing them in terms of class size. For advocates of the first position, large class sizes have negative consequences for effective teaching, in EFL specifically. The negative impacts include discomfort (physical constraints), control, individual attention, evaluation, and learning effectiveness (Hayes, 1997). Teachers are typically negative about class size (Watanapokakul, 2020, p. 209), noting that large classes hinder their ability to provide individual attention to students; to shape class to all student needs; and to retain student attention (Blatchford and Russell, 2020). Moreover, large classes expand teacher administrative and management responsibilities and, thereby, rob teachers of sufficient time to develop, explain, and present materials to students (Bennell, 2022, p. 2). Large class size effects EFL in particular ways; big classes, for instance, increase the difficulty of providing opportunities to practice speaking and receive feedback (Blatchford and Russell, 2020, 208)

According to the second position, large class size is not necessarily disadvantageous but indeed offers various advantages; reducing class size, therefore, does not necessarily improve student outcomes (Karas, 2021; Koc and Celik, 2015; Shen and Konstantopoulos, 2021; Watanapokakul, 2016, p. 199). The key to maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages of large classes is for teachers to use interactive learning approaches while adapting their practices to context (see Introduction; Blatchford and Russell, 2020; Karas, 2021; Richards, 2017; Ujir et al., 2020; Wang and Calvano, 2022). Communicative approaches include having students work collaboratively in groups and engage in games and flipped classes; significantly for EFL practices in Ecuador, these practices do not involve technology. In a large speaking/listening class, EFL teachers can use a variety of activities that allow students to mix according to proficiency levels for different purposes. "Therefore, an eclectic approach utilizing principles and approaches from various theoretical perspectives has an important role for teaching large EFL classes" (Blatchford and Russell, 2020, p. 212). The positive position on large classes offers hope to most courses worldwide since classes are generally getting larger and large classes are often unavoidable.

Like class size, teacher proficiency is critical to effective EFL learning. Similarly, it is neither a direct cause of poor student outcomes nor a matter embraced within

strict numerical boundaries. Instead, it is a context-based matter; although all teachers would, ideally, be highly proficient as would all classes be small, such high proficiency alone does not guarantee good outcomes. The key to enhancing teacher language proficiency in the classroom is, again, communicative teaching (Canh and Renandya, 2017; Faez and Karas, 2017; Richards, 2017, p. 125; Tsang, 2017). Shifting from teacher lectures and substitution workshop style exercises to student engaged activities empowers students and maximizes their abilities to learn from each other. Thus, non-native English teachers (NETs), nearly the exclusive situation in Ecuador, are not necessarily less effective.

As the scholarship indicates, class size, teaching materials and methods, and teacher proficiency must be considered holistically to understand how they influence student learning (Blatchford and Russell, 2020). The most effective classroom configurations of these elements consider context and use interactive methodologies to create environments within which teachers can adapt to better teach the language, manage the students, and provide feedback (Freeman, 2017, p. 33). Teachers and administrators can harness these complex, dynamic interactions to improve EFL within their walls even when most teaching programs are hampered by large classes, undertrained teachers, and poor access to state-of-the art technologies.

In sum, class size and teacher curriculum and English proficiency are important factors that contribute to student learning achievement, especially in foreign language learning contexts. In most parts of the world, Ecuador included, class size and teacher workload far exceed those recommended by foreign language teaching organizations, and those that the scholarship suggests are most effective for EFL teaching and learning. Surveyed EFL teachers share these concerns. In the Ecuadorian context, as Chapter 1 shows, these challenges are compounded by low English proficiency among teachers.

As detailed in the subsequent sections, teachers were surveyed on the number of students they teach, as well as the number of sections they teach during a regular academic period. In addition, they were queried about the extent to which they believe class size and teacher English proficiency affects student learning. The agreement questions were structured on a 5-point Likert scale, in which 1 represents strong disagreement and 5 represents strong agreement. Following these tabulations, a correlational analysis was conducted to test for statistical significance, strength, and directionality, revealing the ways in which class size and teacher English proficiency

may affect teaching and learning. The results indicate that —despite teachers' beliefs that class size and English proficiency affect learning— little evidence shows that teachers are adapting their practices to address these concerns. Given the significance of context and the complexity of making decisions about class size on numerous levels, top-down, from administrative practices to classroom practices, the study recommends a ground-up approach to workload and teacher proficiency.

Distribution of Workload Among EFL Teachers

According to survey results, EFL teachers face a relatively high workload both in terms of the number of students and the sections they teach. More than half (59%) report teaching more than 150 students, and 79.1% report teaching 6 or more sections (see Figure 1). Although the survey did not address average class size, the results provide insight into the typical English teacher's workload. Based on the threshold numbers, the survey suggests that the teacher with 150 or more students across 6 sections would have a minimum of 25 students per class. This number stands at the upper thresholds of the STAR Project's and UNESCO's recommendations for developing countries. But their numbers are generic rather than topic specific. Most teachers, therefore, must spend their day in the classroom, leaving little time available to prepare classes, evaluate student work, and participate in critical non-teaching related activities at their institutions. Given the demands of EFL classrooms, this rough average class size is not ideal.

Figure 1. EFL Teacher Workload by Number of Students and Number of Sections Taught (N = 3183)

Number of students	50 or fewer students	51-100 students	101-150 students	More than 150 students
Frequency	395	434	734	2250
Percent	10.4%	11.4%	19.2%	59.0%

Number of sections	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6
Frequency	91	76	100	179	353	1414	1600
Percent	2.4%	2.0%	2.6%	4.7%	9.3%	37.1%	42.0%

Moreover, the data suggests that the high workload is disproportionately distributed. A correlational analysis reveals a positive relationship in which those who teach more sections also teach more students overall, $r(3811) = .360$, $p = .010$. As such, teachers with more students also teach more sections, which increases their instructional hours and lessens their attentiveness to students in larger classes. Conversely, the minority of teachers have small classes across fewer sections, allowing them time that could be dedicated to other professional activities.

The data also provides no insight into the degree to which these workloads are specific to particular EFL teaching contexts or whether they are generalizable to Ecuadorian EFL teachers as a whole. Further analysis reveals no relationship, for example, between ethnicity and teaching load, but it does show that women are somewhat more likely than men to have more students, $r(3811) = .052$, $p = .001$. Teachers who report higher levels of English proficiency also have heavier teaching loads according to the total number of students they teach, $r(3811) = .111$, $p = <.001$, as do teachers with more experience, $r(3811) = .075$, $p = <.001$, and those with higher educational attainment, $r(3811) = .070$, $p = <.001$. In contrast, teachers in rural areas are somewhat less likely to teach as many students as their peers in urban schools, $r(3811) = -.137$, $p = .010$; they also teach fewer sections, $r(3811) = -.045$, $p = .010$.

These statistics indicate that teacher workloads are highest for teachers in urban areas, especially women and teachers with higher qualifications and more experience in the field. This profile is consistent with those in Chapter 1. That demographic analysis determined that women comprise most teachers with more experience and professional training, even as the percentage of rural English teachers and male teachers is growing among younger teachers.

Teachers' Beliefs Regarding Factors Influencing EFL Teaching and Learning

In addition to tabulating relative number and size of workloads, the analysis considered the relationships between these tabulations and teachers' perceptions of their influence on effective teaching. The survey results clearly indicate that most teachers agree that class size is an important factor on student

achievement. When asked whether class size affects the quality of English education, 77.6% reported agreement or strong agreement on a 5-point Likert scale, with only 22.4% expressing disagreement or indifference (n = 3519). It also appears that the teaching workload of EFL teachers influences their perceptions about outcomes. Those who report teaching a greater number of students are more likely to agree with the statement regarding the effects of class size on quality, $r(3517) = .098$, $p = <.001$, than those who teach fewer students. To some extent, then, teachers base their opinions about the effects of class size on their own experiences (see Figure 2).

Given the heavy teaching loads, very few teachers believe that students achieve the expected English language proficiency (a topic that will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4). Specifically, only 15.9% of teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement (N = 3519) that students reach the B1 proficiency required by the national curriculum. Teacher responses are considerably more positive about whether their own students achieve curricular outcomes; 37.4% agree or strongly agree (N = 3310). No direct relationship exists between teachers' self-reported teaching load, their views on student achievement, or the attainability of nationally mandated curricular outcomes. Thus, teachers do not overtly connect their views about curricular objectives to their immediate teaching context. Mirroring teacher self-confidence in Chapter 4, these figures suggest that many teachers feel they are doing a better job than their peers and calls for more inquiry into the relationship between self-confidence and teacher effectiveness. Self-confidence aside, the results do not offer an optimistic view of teaching effectiveness.

At first glance, the relationship between teaching load, student achievement, and teacher practice appears simple: teachers blame poor outcomes, to some extent, on their heavy teaching workload, but some believe they are doing a better job at managing it than others. The data, however, reveals discrepancies between everyday realities and teachers' beliefs. For example, the responses disclose relationships between teachers who agree that class size affects student learning outcomes and their views on the attainability of curricular goals. That is, teachers who recognize the effects of class size on teaching are less likely to agree that the curricular objectives are reasonable or that their students achieve those outcomes.

Figure 2. Beliefs About Student Achievement as a Factor of the Perceived Effects of Class Size

		The curricular objectives are reasonable and obtainable	In general, my students achieve the curricular learning objectives	The students in public institutions achieve the B1 level in English by graduation
The total number of students per class affects the quality of English education	r	−0.101	−0.094	−0.083
	p	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	3310	3310	3519

Thus, teachers who are most exposed to higher work demands are not necessarily conscious of the impediments such workload presents to effective teaching and learning. However, those teachers who are aware of these effects are also, to an extent, more cognizant of the systematic failings of the EFL educational framework. Should the results hold consistent, those teachers who are more conscious of the effects of class size should also be more likely than their peers to adapt their teaching methods to achieve better results. There is little evidence to suggest this is the case. Overall, these results call for greater teacher awareness of the influence of workload demands on their teaching.

A similar disconnect appears between teacher belief about workload, teaching, and teaching methodology. A correlational analysis considered teaching workload alongside the teaching methodologies they report using in their classes. Both teachers with high workload and those who believe that class size affects student achievement are more likely to describe their methodologies as communicative in accordance with national curricular guidelines $r(3517) = .141$, $p = <.001$ (an issue discussed in greater detail in the next chapter). The only increase for teachers with larger classes involves the use of interactive games $r(3304) = .037$, $p = .033$ and of reading and audio activities $r(3296) = .068$, $p = <.001$. Moreover, teachers who believe that class size affects student achievement depend more on group work $r(3305) = .055$, $p = <.001$ but only to a small extent. In other words, teachers who recognize the effects of class size are more likely to report using communicative teaching methods; but, overall, teachers are not adapting their teaching methodologies to apply communicative teaching strategies. As such, although many teachers understand the effects of class size on teaching and learning, few are doing anything about it.

The data also discloses discrepancies between teachers' beliefs about their English proficiency and teacher preparation, practice, and learning outcomes. Teachers were asked if they agreed that having the mandated B2 English proficiency guarantees the quality of English teaching. On a 5-point Likert scale of agreement, 49. 4% agree or strongly agree with the statement, while 50.6% are indifferent or disagree. Thus, only around half of English teachers believe that the B2 language proficiency requirement is indispensable for effective EFL teaching.

These results have complex relationships with other aspects of teacher preparation and experience (see Chapter 1). On the one hand, the B2 proficiency requirement is inversely related to the number of years of teaching experience, $r(3517) = -.07$, $p = <.000$); this implies that newer teachers are somewhat more likely to value English proficiency as a condition for effective teaching and learning than their more experienced peers. The same relationship holds true for the highest degree of educational attainment, $r(3517) = -.045$, $p = .008$. However, those who consider teacher English proficiency important are also likely to self-report higher proficiency levels $r(3517) = .171$, $p = <.001$ and holding a certification verifying the teacher's proficiency, $v = .122$, $p = <.001$. Therefore, this analysis reveals greater consistency between teachers' beliefs about the importance of language proficiency and their own proficiency; in contrast, higher educational attainment and experience indicate greater doubts about the role that English proficiency plays in effective teaching. Thus, an inverse relationship exists between teachers' beliefs about proficiency and the impact of class size on achieving learning objectives. Teachers who think it is important to have the required B2 proficiency hold more positive views about the curriculum and student outcomes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Beliefs About Student Achievement as a Factor of the Perceived Effects Teacher English Proficiency

		The curricular objectives are reasonable and obtainable	In general, my students achieve the curricular learning objectives	The students in public institutions achieve the B1 level in English by graduation
Having the required B2 English proficiency guarantees the quality of English teaching	r	0.206	0.171	0.136
	p	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	3310	3310	3519

These results about relationships between teacher language proficiency and outcomes contradict those in the analysis of workload and class size. Teachers' beliefs about class size revealed negligible relationships with self-reported teaching methods; more consistent relationships emerged when methods are considered in relation to teachers' beliefs about English proficiency. Both sets indicate a positive relationship with describing their teaching methods as communicative, r (3517) = .171, p = <.001 (it was .141 when correlated with views on class size); but the difference appears when teachers describe their teaching methods. Whereas class size held positive relationships with only two of the twelve methods measured in the survey, oter teachers' perceptions about English proficiency showed positive relationships with nine of them. Significantly, the relationship between English proficiency align with a greater variety of methodologies that are used are communicative approaches, even though the strength of the relationships overall are weak (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Teaching Methodologies as a Factor of the Perceived Effects of Teachers' English Proficiency

	r	p	N
Working in pairs or groups	**.040***	0.021	3307
Interactive games and songs	**.046****	0.008	3306
Dramatizations, interviews, roleplay, and simulations	**.049****	0.005	3300
Thematic exploration (for example, math, social studies, natural sciences) in the context of English teaching.	**.051****	0.003	3305
Homework based on readings and audio	**.053****	0.002	3298
Group research and/or projects	**.045***	0.010	3301
Cooperative reading and writing	**.049****	0.005	3282
Dialogues and exercises with controlled grammatical patterns	**.046****	0.008	3295
Narration and/or retelling experiences, stories, and events	**.043***	0.014	3285
Repetition and substitution exercises	0.004	0.829	3301
Completion and ordering of texts and phrases	0.020	0.248	3292
Memorization exercises: exercises, verses, riddles, dialogues	0.031	0.075	3302

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter's analysis of Ecuadorian English teachers' perceptions of class size, English proficiency level, and methodology usage uncovers disconnects, once again, between teacher views of their everyday classroom experiences and the external resources available and higher-level requirements over which they have little control.

Teachers by and large, and no doubt rightly, consider their workloads greater than is generally considered effective, especially for foreign language learning environments. Yet, they seem unaware of how it effects their teaching and how to adapt. Moreover, the data prevents drawing any conclusions about average class size or the institutional reasons for such demanding workloads, for example, the availability of classroom space, personnel, and financial resources. Further inquiry must address these class average issues and the institutional factors individually but more significantly how they affect each other in specific contexts.

At first glance, the relationships between teaching load, student achievement, and teacher practice appears simple: teachers tend to blame poor student outcomes on their heavy teaching workloads, and some also believe that they are doing a better job at managing their workload than their peers. The data, however, indicates that the situation is more complex. For example, the data exposed discrepancies between teachers who recognize the effects of class size on their teaching and those who do not. Moreover, teacher workloads are highest for teachers in urban areas, especially for women and teachers with higher qualifications and more experience. More data must be collected and analyzed to better understand how the factors interact and affect teaching in context. Also, teachers claim they use communicative teaching practices, although that does not seem to be the case.

Overall, these results indicate that teachers must acquire greater awareness of how teaching demands effect their teaching in terms of their classroom realities and more abstract notions of curriculum design and student achievement. As part of these acquisitions, more inquiry is needed into the relationship between self-confidence and teacher effectiveness. Additionally, teachers must learn more about communicative methodologies and improve their English proficiency.

Professional development is one key to helping teachers enhance their awareness. This is especially important in the wake of COVID-19 when such development was

limited. The pandemic has made training in their specialties, including English, difficult at best. This professional development must be designed according to teacher contexts, needs and experiences as well as aligned with the group needs, mission, goals, and context. Given the significance of context and the complexity of making decisions about class size on numerous levels, top-down, from administrative practices to classroom practices, the study recommends a ground-up approach to workload and teacher proficiency rather than the previously advocated standardized one.

References

ACTFL (2021). *Position Statement: Class Size as a Factor Influencing Language Learning.* https://www.actfl.org/news /class-size-as-a-factor-influencing-language-learning.

Bennell, P. (2022). Teaching too little to too many: Teaching loads and class size in secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa, *International Journal of Educational Development.* (94), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102651

Blatchford, P., and Russell, A. (2020). *Rethinking class size: The complex story of impact on teaching and learning.* UCL Press.

Canh, L. V., and W. A. Renandya. (2017). Teachers' English proficiency and classroom language use: A conversation analysis study." *RELC Journal,* 48(1), 67– 81. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690935

Faez F., and M. Karas. (2017). Connecting language proficiency to (self-reported) teaching ability: A review and analysis of research. *RELC Journal,* 48(1), 135-151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217694755

Freeman, D. (2017). The case for teachers' classroom English. *RELC Journal,* 48(1) 31-52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217691073

Harris, H.W., and Miyake, S. (2017). Student numbers in the SLA conversation classroom. (Review of the Hakuoh University Faculty of Education) 11(1), 231-44.

Hayes, D. (1997). Helping teachers to cope with large classes. *ELT Journal* 51(2), 106-116. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/51.2.106

Karas, A. (2021). The effect of class size on grades and course evaluations: Evidence from multi-section courses. *Bulletin of Economic Research* 73(4), 624–642. https://doi.org/10.1111/boer.12274

Koc, N. and Celik B. (2015). The impact of number of students per teacher on student achievement. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 177, 65–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.335

Leuven, E. and Løkken, S.A. (2020) Long-term impacts of class size in compulsory school. *Journal of Human Resources*, 55(1), 309-348. https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.55.2.0217.8574R2

Locastro, V. (1989). *Large size classes: The situation in Japan.* Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project Report No. 5. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED322758

Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and performance. *RELC Journal,* 48(1), 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690059

Shen, T., and Konstantopoulos, S. (2021). Estimating causal effects of class size in secondary education: Evidence from TIMSS. *Research Papers in Education*, 36(5), 507-541. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1697733

Tsang, A. (2017). EFL/ESL Teachers' general language proficiency and learners' engagement. *RELC Journal* 48(1), 99-113. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690060

Ujir, H., Shanti, F. S., Hashim, H. F.; Ade Syaheda, A. S. W., and Aidil, A. A., (2020). Teaching workload in 21st century higher education learning setting. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 9(1), 221-227. http://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i1.20419

Wang, L., and Calvano, L., (2022). Class size, student behaviors and educational outcomes. *Organizational Management Journal.* 19(4), 126-142. https://doi.org/10.1108/OMJ-01-2021-1139

Watanapokakul, S. (2016). The perceptions and experience of English teachers regarding large EFL classes. *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (LEARN) Journal* 9(2), 199-219. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1229521

CHAPTER 3

Methodologies and Curriculum: Incongruence in Teachers' Knowledge and Practices

Evelyn Almeida
Scott Thomas Gibson
Dolores del Rocío Ortega Andrade
Mónica Tamayo-Maggi
Andrea Rosero Morales
Santiago Sanguña

Introduction

As Chapter 1 detailed, English proficiency is paramount to the economic development of Latin American countries. As such, many countries in this region have implemented large-scale curricular reforms designed to improve English education with varying degrees of success. Chile, for example, has implemented orderly, effective curricular reforms with respect to language teaching (Dussel, 2005). Ecuador, however, is among those countries that has seen less success. Despite decades of reforms that prioritize English in the national curriculum, Ecuador consistently ranks among nations with the lowest English proficiency in Latin America (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017; *El Universo*, 2020).

Compelling as that generalization may be, it provides little insight into how curricular goals are approached, if not met, in the classroom, and how these teacher practices relate to outcomes. Recent anecdotal evidence from one Ecuadorian school suggests that implementing the mandated English curriculum at the national level has stalled, at best, because curricular goals do not match either teachers' or students' needs (Burgin and Daniel, 2017). As discussed in Chapter 2, moreover, poor student outcomes can be attributed, at least in part, to limited EFL teacher language proficiency and the varying degrees of formal training those teachers hold. To gain some insight into the relationships between such deficiencies, teacher practices, and student outcomes this chapter considers teachers' perceptions of their methodologies and classroom practices vis-à-vis the national curriculum that emphasizes communicative competencies.

Aligning teacher and curricular expectations and outcomes in Ecuadorian education, of course, is an ongoing process. As detailed in the Introduction, the MINEDUC has introduced a complete, holistic educational system that includes second language education as part of the national curriculum, but the EFL curriculum has not been successful (Cronquist and Fiszbein, 2017). Some of the problems have been linked to teacher methodologies and class practices and in particular to inadequate implementation of communicative approaches. Because teachers tend to offer grammar and vocabulary to students in non-interactive ways, students have inadequate opportunities to practice and absorb their English (Morales Rios and Ferreira Cabrera, 2008). Although such limited studies are hardly demonstrative, the consistent underperformance of Ecuador among its regional peers in English language proficiency speaks to the nationwide discrepancy between the stated curricular goals and measurable outcomes. Thus, improving outcomes

depends on exposing and understanding misalignments between Ecuadorian teaching methods and the national curriculum and, accordingly, identifying and implementing opportunities for improvement.

With this background in mind, this chapter examines the systemic disjuncture between the Ecuadorian national curriculum, teacher methodologies, and EFL classroom practices. These efforts to align policy with practice must be situated within the unique political and cultural challenges that hinder Ecuador's transition from traditional and objective-based learning to critical and inquiry-based pedagogy (Soto, 2015). Accordingly, the survey questions related to methodology and curricular design highlight teachers' perceptions about their practices both in the classroom and in relation to national curriculum standards. The resulting analysis creates a picture of teachers' constructed knowledge of their teaching methods and practice vis-à-vis the curricular expectations and constraints in which they work.

Principles and Practice in the National EFL Curriculum

To ground this chapter's inquiry into the relationships between teacher practices, outcomes, and reform, the next section briefly reviews the scholarship addressing how teachers construct curricular knowledge, how they teach, and how these issues relate to each other. Thus framed, the methodology traces dominant tendencies in teachers' self-reported methodologies and perceptions of the national curriculum. The analysis reveals contradictory results between teachers' reported methods and practices and mandated ones. Although teachers report that they align their methods with national curricular standards and goals, they are not in fact doing so. Despite the teachers' best efforts, their classrooms cannot or do not fulfill these goals.

Teacher knowledge and experience of methodology and practice are essential elements of curricular design and implementation and, thus, essential to reform efforts (Aksu, 2012; East, 2014; Lira, 2012; Mussawy, 2009; Sugesti, 2019; Winke, 2011; Xu and Liu, 2009). In the scholarship, "knowledge" refers to the combination of beliefs, viewpoints, and perceptions that collectively inform teachers' understanding of their own practice; experiences include viewpoints, educational backgrounds, self-awareness, and self-reflection and experiences (Alghanmi and Shukri, 2016; Borg, 2006).

Both knowledge and experience, moreover, combine objective and subject elements, which evolve over time in stages as teachers practice their craft (Yap and Tam, 2008). During this evolution, new teachers integrate their present, available knowledge and experience with newly acquired information. Thus, the nascent teachers start the process of professional development by drawing on their personal needs and expanding their use of resources, including institutional ones, in critical ways to construct their teaching worlds (Yap and Tan, 2008, p. 3).

Knowledge, experience, and their growth is thoroughly context-based and should be considered in terms of internal and external factors (Alghanmi and Shukri, 2016; Borg, 2003). Internal, or tacit, factors are those that teachers hold within and are articulated in relatively subjective terms; external, or explicit, factors are those codified and expressed in more conventional terms (Alghanmi and Shukri, 2016; Borg, 2003). Through on-the-job practice, as indicated above, teachers acquire and adapt knowledge and experience to their specific curricular contexts (Westbrook et al., 2013; Williams and Burden, 1997; Xu, 2012; Yap and Tam, 2008). Together and over time, these factors mediate how teaching practices interact with the curriculum in day-to-day classroom experience (Johnson, 1994; Handler, 2010). As such, teachers not only implement and validate the curriculum with their pedagogical approaches and practices, but they also transform the curriculum as they interpret and modify it based on their knowledge, experiences, and beliefs (Sugesti, 2019; Westbrook et al., 2013).

Certain circumstances, however, can hinder teacher interaction between what happens in the classroom and what affects those activities beyond it. Curriculum is frequently encoded in official textbooks and teacher guides, and these materials are often the only resources available to teachers. This is certainly the case in Ecuador where, since the 1990s, the educational reforms implemented by the Ministry of Education have attempted to standardize English language educational outcomes and the curricular and methodological guidelines through which those standards must be achieved. Standardization, however, precludes teacher involvement in the design. Teachers therefore appear to have little influence over the curriculum they use and its implementation, let alone influence over class size, teaching load, and other administrative matters. Still, teachers shape the curriculum through their daily practice, even if the teachers are not involved explicitly in curriculum development in the Ecuadorian EFL system. Hence, it is critical that teachers be aware of the various aspects of teacher knowledge and experience as well as develop and revise this awareness as they acquire more teaching experience.

Thus grounded, this chapter's analysis of Ecuadorian EFL teachers' beliefs about the curriculum and their own practices will provide insights that can inform the design and implementation of future national systematic reform efforts. As detailed in the results and discussion sections, the survey responses present a panorama of teaching methods across Ecuador, one that reveals points of convergence and divergence with national curricular goals and expectations.

The present study draws on teachers' perceptions of their methodologies and curriculum as revealed in responses to two sets of survey questions. As the other chapters in this volume, results were tabulated and analyzed by means of a mixed methods approach, based on frequency counts to individual questions and the central tendencies of responses as well as comparisons and correlations between and across the questions in this chapter and beyond.

The first set elicited teachers' perceptions about applying their own teaching methodologies. Some of these teaching methods focus on memorization and explicit linguistic knowledge and are, therefore, considered traditional, objective-based approaches to language instruction. Other approaches are aligned with the communicative methodologies specified in the Ecuadorian national curriculum, methodologies including activities such as interactive games, role-playing, collaborative, task-based, project-based, cooperative, and content and language integrated learning (CLIL). Using 5-point Likert scales, with 1 representing the lowest frequency of use and 5 representing the highest, the analysis counted the respondents' self-reported replies to how often they use specific teaching methodologies. The second set of questions pertained to the national English curriculum and its perceived influence on classroom practice and student learning. Once again, the methodology used a 5-point Likert scale of agreement to indicate degrees of agreement and disagreement with each statement about the national curriculum. The responses were coded into numeric values that permitted statistical analysis.

The frequency of responses to questions helped determine which views were most prevalent among teacher responses and to rank them accordingly. The analysis not only identified the dominant perspectives on specific topics, but it also compared these tendencies across questions to construct a more general profile of teacher views and practices. Through cross-tabulations, the analysis also explores the relationship between teacher's views on their methodologies and the curriculum, as well as other datasets from the survey, including demographics indicators (see Chapter 1). In so

doing, correlation provided the means to evaluate the degree to which generalizations regarding about English teaching practices could be posited to determine which demographic factors relate to the construction of curricular and methodological knowledge, and to hypothesize how this knowledge may vary across the variety of English teaching contexts and situations in Ecuador. Testing for statistical dependence was determined by applying Kendall's coefficient to the qualitative multi-categorical variables with the statistical significance evaluated at 0.05 (5%). Lastly, to determine overall trends in the relationship between teaching methodologies and the curriculum, the analysis calculated a simple average of Kendall's tau-b coefficient across each category.

Based on this methodology, this chapter's analysis of Ecuadorian EFL teachers' beliefs about the curriculum and their own practices will inform the design and implementation of future national systematic reform efforts. By taking teachers' perceptions as a valid source of knowledge about teaching methods and the curriculum, this chapter identifies significant disjuncture between teachers' beliefs about their teaching methodologies, the national curriculum, and student learning outcomes.

Understanding Consensus and Contradictions in EFL Teachers' Methodologies

In response to questions about methodologies, teachers reported combining traditional and objective-based methods with more communicative and content-oriented approaches. As detailed in the Introduction to this volume, methodologies considered "objective-based" include those which do not overtly engage the communicative and content-integrated approaches emphasized within the current national curriculum. As identified in the survey, those activities include completion exercises, homework based on readings and audio, as well as grammar, repetition, substitution, and memorization exercises. In contrast, activities aligned with the communicative focus of the national curriculum include interactive games and songs, pair and group work, cooperative reading and writing, interactive activities (dramatizations, interviews, and roleplay), and integrating thematic content. Figure 1 classifies these types of activities as objective-based activities (represented with striped bars) and communicative activities (represented with solid bars). They are sorted in descending order according to the frequency with which teachers report their use.

Figure 1. Frequency of Use of Objective and Communicative Teaching Methodologies

A simple mean average revealed that teachers depend on methodologies classified as traditional, objective-based only slightly more than communicative methods (3.60 vs. 3.48). The most frequently used methods are objective-based activities, such as completing and ordering of texts and phrases (3.90) as well as homework based on readings and audio (3.89); they are followed by more communicative activities including interactive games (3.79) and working in pairs or groups (3.77). The least used methods are narration and storytelling (3.31), group projects and research (3.26), integration of thematic content (3.25), and memorization activities (3.13); they are primarily communicative but the last one is traditional. Still, as the mean average of all activities falls within a narrow range of 0.77 on the 5-point frequency of use scale, the results suggest that no particular methodology is used to a greater or lesser extent than others. Therefore, the results reveal no compelling evidence that teachers in the aggregate depend on a particular methodology or approach; instead, they draw on a variety of resources and methodological knowledge across the spectrum of objective-based and communicative activities.

However, some evidence suggests that individual teachers tend to use similar methodologies across their repertoire of class practices; methodologies that are similar in design and purpose. That is, teachers who rely on one kind of objective-based method are somewhat more likely to rely on other similar methods, and the same is true for those who use more communicative strategies. For example, a correlational analysis using Kendall's tau-b found the strongest relationship between teachers who use completion and ordering exercises with other traditional practices such as grammatical pattern exercises ($\tau = 0.523$). Similar relationships can be found among teachers who combine collaborative activities such as group research projects and collaborative reading and writing ($\tau = 0.482$), as well as other communicative such as interactive games, dramatizations, interviews, and role-playing ($\tau = 0.480$). Interactive activities involving narration and storytelling are also moderately related with dramatic performances and simulations ($\tau = 0.445$), collaborative research ($\tau = 0.424$), and collaborative reading and writing ($\tau = 0.452$).

Conversely, the results show negligible relationships between strikingly disparate teaching methods. Specifically, teachers who tend to use traditional repetition and substitution exercises are least likely to use communicative dramatizations and roleplaying ($\tau = 0.085$), content integrated teaching ($\tau = 0.095$), group research

projects ($\tau = 0.104$), or interactive games ($\tau = 0.138$). The results indicate consistently that individual teachers cultivate their approaches and styles according to similar types, without necessarily eschewing other methods.

Furthermore, the methodologies teachers apply depend more on individual preferences than training, experience, or English proficiency. Correlations between these variables and teaching methodologies reveal only weak relationships. Teachers with higher English proficiency, for instance, are only slightly more likely to use communicative methods such as interactive games ($\tau = 0.77$) and dramatizations ($\tau = 0.102$), while they are less likely to use objective-based methods such as repetition exercises ($\tau = -0.081$). Other factors such as gender, ethnicity, geographic location, and years of experience showed relationships weaker than those related to English proficiency or showed no relationship at all.

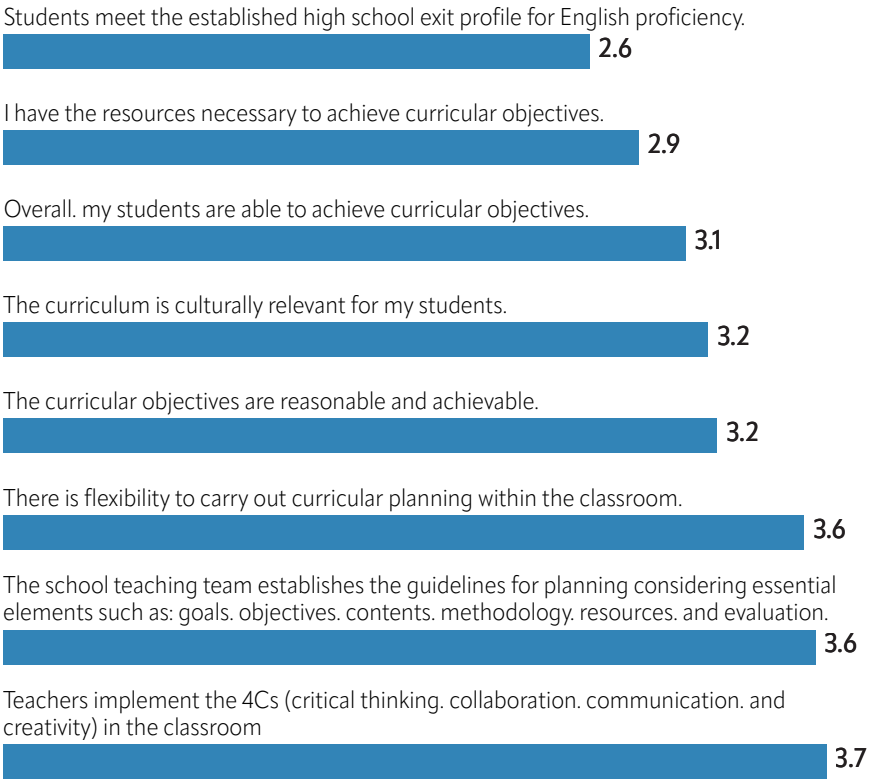
Aligning Teaching Methodologies to Curricular Goals

Teachers' perceptions of the English curriculum also fall into a narrow range within which teachers express general ambivalence about the curriculum and their students' abilities to achieve stated curricular goals. On the 5-point Likert scale of agreement, the mean average response to questions regarding the curriculum is 3.23, wherein 3 represents "Neither Agree nor Disagree." As illustrated in Table 2, teachers agree most strongly with statements about themselves and their peers when it comes to meeting curricular expectations. For example, teachers agree (mean = 3.69, mode = 4) with the statement that they implement the four "Cs" of a connected classroom (critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity) and that they plan their teaching according to essential curricular elements (mean = 3.64, mode = 4). Such planning, teachers also agree, is carried out in ways that allow for flexibility within the classroom (mean = 3.59, mode = 4). These results suggest that teachers generally feel confident in their own knowledge, methods, and resources to fulfill curricular expectations; a subject that will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

The results are somewhat less generous with respect to teachers' perceptions of their students and more systemic issues related to curricular design and student achievement. Teachers are ambivalent about achieving curricular goals (mean = 3.20, mode

= 3), the cultural relevance of the curriculum for their students (mean = 3.16, mode = 3), and their students' ability to meet general curricular objectives (mean = 3.06, mode = 3). They also express slight disagreement when asked about the availability of resources necessary to meet curricular goals (mean = 2.85, mode = 3). Lastly, teachers most strongly disagree with the specific curricular outcomes related to English proficiency; most believe that students do not meet the established profile for a high school student's knowledge of English upon graduation (mean = 2.63, mode = 2).

Figure 2. Teachers' Agreement with Statements about the National Curriculum



While teachers express general ambivalence or weak disagreement with statements about the curriculum and achieving learner outcomes, teachers who use more objective-based methodologies are somewhat less likely to agree with statements about the curriculum and student outcomes. The use of traditional methodologies reveals an overall relationship of $\tau = 0.13$, while teachers who use more communicative methods show stronger agreement with statements about

the curriculum ($\tau = 0.178$). When ranked, 4 out of the 5 objective-based methods demonstrate the weakest relationship with curricular statements. Such results are predictable, as the national curriculum itself privileges communicative and content-based methodologies.

Little evidence suggests that training or teaching experience shape teachers' perceptions of the curriculum. Only class size, discussed at length in the previous chapter, consistently offers a significant statistical relationship with responses about the curriculum and learning outcomes. Those with the largest class sizes are least likely to agree that students can achieve curricular outcomes for English proficiency ($\tau = -0.168$); they are also least likely to agree that the curricular goals are achievable ($\tau = -0.127$). Teacher's English proficiency and highest educational attainment show significant yet weaker dependency by these measures; other factors such as gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and years of experience reveal at best only negligible relationships. The total number of students and number of class sections do not appear to influence views of the curriculum.

The responses reveal certain discrepancies between teacher internal knowledge and external curricular matters. In addition, teacher responses tend toward ambivalence and toward numbers revolving around the mediate, even when they show some degree of agreement or disagreement with the questions. The contradictory as well as ambivalent results provide insight into the seeming insignificant results and thus into misguided and ineffective EFL teaching and lead to recommendations across the board to reform the system.

Conclusions

Overall, Ecuadorian EFL teachers believe they are implementing appropriate teaching methodologies that align with the national curriculum and promote communicative competency among their students. More specifically, teachers by and large respond that their methods are communicative and their curricular knowledge sufficient to their teaching task. Although, as it follows, teachers are confident about their teaching, student proficiency is low, and teachers are generally ambivalent about their students' ability to improve. Teachers recognize the disjuncture between the national curriculum and student learning outcomes. But their perceptions of and confidence about their curriculum and practices indicate tacitly that it

is the students who are not making the grade, so to speak. In other words, teachers attribute the systemic curricular failure to students and to external issues rather than to their own teaching practices.

The data supports this thinking. The frequency result counts notwithstanding, significant discrepancies exist within and across teacher perceptions of the curriculum and the relationships between them. As the data shows, Ecuadorian teachers report using communicative-based approaches, including the reflective and critical thinking strategies required by the national English curriculum. But, in fact, they also use objective-based strategies at least as much as communicative strategies. Moreover, teachers do not prefer one methodology over another. These circumstances suggest that teachers are uncertain both tacitly and explicitly about the distinctions between communicative and objective-based approaches. This lack of certainty is reflected negatively in teacher inability to implement the curriculum and meet their goals; a circumstance which correlates with actual outcomes. Teachers are planning classes based on inaccurate understanding of mandated methodologies and means of achieving their goals. As such, teachers and students alike are engaged in teacher-centered education, despite the prevailing belief among teachers exposed in this study that their methods are primarily communicative and student-centered, and thereby conform to national guidelines.

These problems in misunderstanding and misusing curricular methodologies are compounded in the classroom by the fact that individual teachers tend to use the same methodological practices across their assigned classes. Pedagogical consistency can benefit students in the sense that it creates a framework for student expectation; but variety, not typical in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms, constitutes best teaching practices. Teachers not only describe their methodologies as communicative, but they feel generally confident that they have the knowledge, methods, and resources to fulfill curricular expectations.

Although teachers express general ambivalence or weak disagreement with statements about the curriculum and achieving learner outcomes, teachers who use more objective-based methodologies are somewhat less likely to agree with statements about the curriculum and student outcomes. Their higher disagreement might reflect the fact that the national curriculum supports communicative approaches; it might also reflect tacit knowledge about the natures of communicative and objective methods. Nevertheless, the ambivalence in responses suggests similar ambivalence about

available methodologies. Since the students perform poorly, even with the teachers and methods they think are appropriate, the inference once again is that they do not understand what is expected and how to achieve these expectations. From the holistic results of the participants' responses, teachers tend to think that they are deploying the communicative best practices required by the national curriculum. Nonetheless, teachers are generally confident in themselves and generally ambivalent about the curriculum and students' ability to achieve it. Implicitly, they justify poor student outcomes without looking to the needs of the students. They attribute these shortcomings not to their training or methodological approaches but to unrealistic curricular expectations, the cultural irrelevance of the established curriculum, and limited material resources. If students do not meet the standards, the fault lies in these institutional failings, not in their own teaching.

Addressing these issues requires further research on Ecuadorian EFL teachers' perceptions of curriculum and practice. More information is needed about what effects these teachers' methodological choices and practice. What do teachers think communicative and objective-based approaches are? Moreover, the only strong relationship this survey revealed is class size, not number of students and sessions nor experience issues. In addition, little data is currently available about what relationships exist between curriculum and gender, ethnicity, and geographic location as well as on teacher background. And, of course, there is no data on what Ecuadorian students think about learning EFL or about how this information correlates with, contradicts with, and otherwise informs teacher responses and other data. It is critical that teachers use student-centered activities and think about their students while being able to reflect on these activities and evolve professionally. One key element of these efforts where intervention is possible is professional development for teachers once they enter the practice, which is the subject of the next chapter.

References

Aksu Ataç, B. (2012). Foreign language teachers' attitude toward authentic assessment in language teaching. *The Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 8(2), 7-19. https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/128

Alghanmi, B., and Shukri, N. (2016). The relationship between teachers' beliefs of grammar instruction and classroom practices in the Saudi context. *English Language Teaching*, 9(7), 70-86. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1101743.pdf

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444803001903

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice.* Continuum.

Burgin, X., and Daniel, M. C. (2017). Language teaching in an Ecuadorian urban secondary institution. *GIST Education and Learning Research Journal,* 14, 107-134. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1146669.pdf

Cronquist, K., & Fiszbein, A. (2017). English language learning in Latin America. [white paper] *The Dialogue: Leadership in the Americas.* https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/English-Language-Learning-in-Latin-America-Final-1.pdf

Dussel, I. (2005). *Las Políticas Curriculares de la Última Década en América Latina: Nuevos Actores, Nuevos Problemas.* FLACSO Argentina.

East, M. (2014). Coming to terms with innovative high-stakes assessment practice: teachers' viewpoints on assessment reform. *Language Testing,* 32(1), 101-120. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532214544393

Handler, B. (2010). Teacher as curriculum leader: A consideration of the appropriateness of that role assignment to classroom-based practitioners. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership.* 3, 32-42. https://www.cpp.edu/ceis/education/international-journal-teacher-leadership/documents/teacher-as-curriculum-leader.pdf

Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of pre-service English as second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10(4), 439-452. https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X(94)90024-8

Lira Gonzales, M. L. (2012). *A Teacher's Formative Assessment Perceptions and Practices in Oral Intermediate English Courses at the Université de Montréal.* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Montreal] https://dam-oclc.bac-lac.gc.ca/download?is_thesis=1&oclc_number=969911612&id=3b966878-fd65-4b97-b641-1505181ee2e0&fileName=Lira_Gonzales_Maria_Lourdes_2012_these.pdf

Morales Ríos, S., and Ferreira Cabrera, A. (2008). La efectividad de un modelo de aprendizaje combinado para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera estudio empírico. *RLA Revista de Lingüística Teórica y Aplicada*, 46(2), 95-118. http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-48832008000200006

Mussawy, S. A. J. (2009). *Assessment Practices: Student's and Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Assessment.* [Master's Capstone Project, University of Massachusetts, Amherst] https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=cie_capstones

Sugesti, I., Rukmini, D., Faridi, A., and Fitriati, S. W. (2019). Teachers' cognition and their teaching practices in an EFL classroom: A correlational study. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Science and Education and Technology,* (pp. 563-566). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200620.113

Westbrook, J. Durrani, N., Brown, R. Orr, D., Pryor, J., Boddy, J., and Salvi, F. (2013). *Pedagogy, Curriculum, Teaching Practices and Teacher Education in Developing Countries.* University of Sussex Center for International Education. https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/

Williams, M., and Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach.* Cambridge University Press.

Winke, P. (2011). Evaluating the validity of a high-stakes ESL test: Why teachers' perceptions matter. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(4), 628-660. https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2011.268063

Xu, Y., and Liu, Y. (2009). Teacher assessment knowledge and practice: A narrative inquiry of a Chinese college EFL teacher's experience. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(3), 493-513. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00246.x

Xu, L. (2012). The role of teachers' beliefs in the language teaching-learning process. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(7), 1397-1402. doi:10.4304/tpls.2.7.1397-1402

Yap, F. H, and Tam, W. (2008). Construction of teacher's knowledge: A developmental approach. In J. Chi-kin Lee and L. Shiu (Eds.). *Developing Teachers and Developing Schools in Changing Contexts.* (pp. 47-69). Chinese University of Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 4

Teacher Professional Development: Connecting the Past, Present, and Future

Verónica Chicaiza
Edgar Encalada
Sarah Iza
Cristina Jordan
Victor-Hugo Romero

Introduction

The teaching profession undergoes continual change to ensure that teachers remain current in new pedagogical thinking and practices. Teachers must not only acquire and apply new knowledge and skills but also reflect on what they are doing and discuss their teaching with peers. Such acquisition, reflection, and sharing means teachers should be flexible and responsive to change. While teachers are introduced to these professionalization activities during their university education degree programs, effective and engaged teachers will participate in this essential learning process throughout their careers. Perhaps the most effective, inclusive means of serving these needs is professional development for practicing teachers. Such supplemental training is particularly important for EFL teachers in Ecuador, where university education curricula are underdeveloped. As shown in Chapter 1, the majority of EFL teachers in Ecuador do not have field-specific training or adequate proficiency in English; these deficits lead to compromised hiring practices and poor student outcomes (Sevy-Biloon, Recino and Muñoz, 2020, p. 277). For this reason, relevant and effective EFL teacher professional development opportunities are essential in the Ecuadorian context.

Long aware of the situation, the MINEDUC has provided ample training and recruitment initiatives for new teachers, as well as professional development programs for practicing teachers, alongside the robust curricular reforms that were addressed in the previous chapter. The development of such programs came about following earlier data from 2009 suggesting the problem of low English proficiency of teachers. For example, in 2012, the "GO TEACHER" program provided scholarships to EFL teachers at the intermediate level to learn new teaching methodologies in the United States and then return to Ecuador and share their acquisitions with Ecuadorian EFL colleagues. After the MINEDUC instituted mandatory EFL learning in Ecuadorian public schools, the EDIFICAR Foundation[1] developed and implemented the "Tiempo de Enseñar/Time to Teach" program in 2016 to improve EFL learning through teacher support from outside of Ecuador. But the program experienced organizational problems, failed to achieve its goals, and was summarily canceled (Ortiz, Fabara, Villagómez,

1 The EDIFICAR Foundation is a nonprofit Private Foundation which runs the "TIME TO TEACH" program, an official program created by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador designed to improve English teaching in public schools. Specifically, the project's goal is to strengthen the knowledge and methodologies of Ecuadorian public-school EFL teachers.

Hidalgo, and Lucía, 2017). Also, in 2016, with the support of the Undersecretariat of Professional Development, the MINEDUC promoted the professional development virtual platform MECAPACITO to teachers at no cost. In 2019, the United States Embassy and MINEDUC signed a 5-year agreement for the program "Ecuador Habla Inglés" to improve Ecuadorian English language proficiency. Through this program, 200 teachers from 13 provinces, public schools, and universities received training in language and teaching methodologies (Ortiz, Fabara, Villagómez, Hidalgo, and Lucia, 2017). Finally, the Peace Corps and MINEDUC signed a memorandum of understanding to support Ecuadorian EFL teaching by offering innovative methods that improve EFL teacher proficiency as well as increase general and English specific teaching skills (Peace Corps, 2022).

Other MINEDUC affiliated projects support EFL teachers by strengthening their networks throughout the country: the SIT TESOL Best Practices (English language teaching best practices course endorsed by SIT Graduate Institute, implemented by EFL Ecuador, Experimento de Convivencia Internacional del Ecuador); Education for Sustainability in the Galapagos Islands, carried out by the Galapagos Conservancy; and the Leaders Network for English Education offered by the Ecuadorian-North American Center (Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano) and the National Education University of Ecuador (UNAE), in which this project is a part of (Ortiz, et al. 2017).

Against this background, this chapter considers Ecuadorian EFL teachers' attitudes toward their professional development opportunities and experiences, looking at teacher motivation, training content and effectiveness, and teacher preparation and background. Data analysis uncovers gaps between teachers' perceptions of their individual abilities and needs and the external matters affecting the classroom experience such as the national curriculum and socioeconomic factors, echoing the disjunctures exposed in previous chapters. The devil, as it is said, is in the details; here apparent uniformity across results obscures significant gaps that our data elucidates in the following analysis. These problems are consistent with and inform those revealed from other perspectives in the book and support this chapter's recommendations for designing and implementing future professional development to mend the gaps.

Assessing Professional Development Experience

Generally, as the research summarizes, professional training aims at improving individual teacher knowledge, classroom practices, English proficiency, and teachers' personal, intellectual, and social satisfaction (Creemers and Kyriakides, 2006; Nicolaidoua and Petrido, 2011). Training, moreover, allows teachers to reflect on their practices, share ideas, and collaborate with peers. As part of these benefits, professional development should facilitate teacher participation within the curriculum development process that aligns curriculum with teacher classroom approaches and student needs (Alsubaie, 2016; Abudu and Mensah, 2016). In short, teacher training updates teachers on the substance of their professional efforts in ways that accountability and/or compliance alone cannot accomplish (Rodríguez, 2017). Teachers, for the most part, understand these purposes and support such opportunities.

Teacher motivation is critical to professional development and associated classwork efforts, planning, and implementation (Rodríguez, 2017). Undoubtedly, motivated teachers are much more likely to be efficacious, while unmotivated teachers may neither attend nor engage in training sessions nor be effective in their classes (Ringelhan, Wollersheim, Welpe, Fiedler and Spörrle, 2013). Motivation, moreover, relies heavily on each teachers' estimation of their own professional knowledge and abilities, even if individuals think that their knowledge and abilities are better than any tangible evidence demonstrates (Rodriquez, 2017). It is difficult to determine, however, whether, or to what extent, this confidence affects professional development selection and effective teaching, but certainly the relationship is not causal.

Factors that motivate teachers to pursue training is another concern. By and large, teachers pick training opportunities based on their individual interests and needs such as learning about interactive teaching strategies, new technological resources, inclusive education, or international certifications (González Torres, 2003; Rodríguez, Núñez, Valle, Blas and Rosario, 2009). Teachers, moreover, choose professional development opportunities based on their students' needs (Nicolaidoua and Petrido, 2011, p. 58), although, significantly, the latter is not the case in the following results.

Before the advent of communicative methodologies in EFL teaching, the literature treated professional development for EFL teachers, and language teaching more generally, in terms of two traditional pedagogical issues: content and

teacher methodology, in both general and practical terms. As recent EFL research has turned to communicative methodologies, it has integrated these discrete professional development issues with each other and associated factors in two complementary paths. First, various studies have considered the design and implementation of holistic professional development models, models for use with systematic curricular reform efforts. Other current undertakings consider specific, though systematic, methodologies and practices in content areas such as math, science (Supovitz, Meyer and Kahle, 2000), and EFL.

Taking a communicative perspective, current research on professional development for language teachers consistently demonstrates that large-scale, system inquiry-based models are effective in the short and long terms (Desimone, 2009; Orosz, Monzón and Velasco, 2021; Supovitz, Meyer and Kahle 2000). Moreover, the consensus is that effective professional development is characterized by several features, including adapting to the needs of participants and contexts, utilizing interactive and collaborative techniques, and allowing for networking. In addition, effective professional development allows enough time for teachers to become habituated to the content in practice, time provides the opportunity to assess teachers and students (Richards, 2017, p. 23). Finally, in developing systematic approaches to professional development, designers should use educational research, including educational effectiveness research (EER), to support their approaches.

In addition to and blended with holistic models for professional development, research is addressing context specific approaches. Each subject, of course, has its own best practices. Unlike math, science, or disciplines taught in the students' native language, teaching English or other foreign languages requires general knowledge of language methodologies as well as multiple and/or native language learning. Another context-related consideration, especially related to EFL teaching, is geographic, cultural context. Languages reflect and shape cultural values and practices, and cultural values and practices reflect and shape languages. Effective teachers must adapt their practices to local context. Holistic models aside, situations differ substantially (Richards, 2017, p. 23). Such adaptation is critical to professional development.[2]

2 Obviously, socioeconomic circumstances should not preclude teachers with less means from attending professional development opportunities. Similarly, learning English is too significant to deny any student access to opportunities based on socioeconomic issues (Richards, 2017). Adjusting teacher to context is particularly relevant to EFL.

Several factors influence how teachers acquire the expertise to adapt their teaching practices to context. As discussed in Chapter 1, high language proficiency is essential in EFL teaching. That significance aside, research shows that high proficiency is no guarantee of effective teaching. Effective EFL and language teaching are enhanced through teaching methodologies that are communicative, focused on student's proficiency and background, and create student-teacher relationships. Even teachers with high proficiency can benefit greatly through communicative teaching as it can do a great deal to make up for teacher proficiency problems (Richards, 2017, p. 125).

Two recent studies situated in Ecuador are relevant to EFL professional development; both address systematic educational reform along with Ecuador's specific national characteristics and educational needs. Daniel and Burgin (2017) consider Ecuadorian EFL students at the UNAE. The study focused on how students, who were finishing their education programs through teaching internships, responded to learning first-hand about students of local diverse ethnicities and languages whose native language was not Spanish. According to the data, the intern teachers learned substantively —especially about languages— responded positively to the new, cultural knowledge and changed their attitudes about indigenous students. Rather than perceiving them as a monolith, the student-teachers realized that each community has its own values, which shape the students and must be reflected in lesson plans and classroom practices. Unfortunately, no data is yet available on how these students fared in their subsequent teaching practices. Nonetheless, the study supports the premise that teaching methodologies should be built on sociocultural framework, which facilitates student-teacher interaction and concern for the individual student in the local context.

Along these lines, Collado and Ruano (2019) developed an inclusive, holistic yet Ecuador-specific teaching framework to guide reform efforts, which would include professional development opportunities.[3] The approach was based in local Ecuadorian cultural values and, thereby, challenged the Western politics and culture through education. The model depends on *Sumak Kawsay* (Good Living), a concept central to Andean, Kichwa communities.[4] According to Sumak Kawsay, all elements of the land: flora, fauna, and land formations are equal and connected

3 The model was developed starting in 2015 at the UNAE in Ecuador.

4 Significantly, in 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to recognize the rights of nature in its Constitution, which is based on Sumak Kawsay.

with each other. The health of the community, therefore, requires maintaining balance between all its constituent parts. Balance is ensured by treating all elements with equity; and equity is mediated by embracing local Indigenous cultures and languages, which are oral, embodied, and performative. The educational model developed from this perspective is inherently communicative rather than traditional in context-specific ways. The model emerges from the oral, interactive, and participatory practices of Sumak Kawsay within a framework inclusive of local histories and geography, rather than the traditional top-down Western lecture format.

In sum, recent research on teacher professional development points toward the development of inclusive, systematic models and to culturally and linguistically specific applications of them. Still, teacher training research has not sufficiently addressed teachers' feelings about or input regarding such training content, external and administrative matters, or the impact of different approaches and programs on student learning outcomes and accountability (Antoniou, 2016). Given this background, this chapter looks at EFL teachers' attitudes toward development effectiveness, teachers' feelings about training content and engagement. Examining teachers' views of their professional development experiences, as well as their aspirations for further training, provides insight into the opportunities for future EFL teacher training programming with attention to the specific contexts in which they work.

Perceptions and Aspirations for Teacher Training

In this chapter, as with the rest of this volume, the quantitative analytic methodology aimed to capture how teachers perceived the professional development opportunities provided by the MINEDUC. The questions were framed to elicit teachers' perspectives on their reasons for picking training options, workshop quality/effectiveness, and teacher background and self-evaluations of key aspects of their teaching. The teachers' responses were measured on the following Likert scale: 1) Strongly disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Neither agree nor disagree, 4) Agree, and 5) Strongly agree. The responses were coded as ordinal variables.

The data was analyzed by means of frequency distribution of their Likert scale responses, which allowed the ranking and comparison of results. First, the frequencies

of responses to the individual questions were counted and ranked. Such an approach allowed us to organize data according to what teachers said they learned from the training with each of the other questions about professional development. These comparisons provided data about the degrees to which teachers agreed or not across critical issues. The results of the comparisons between the questions formed three groups of data: 1) motivational, why they chose training; 2) self-evaluative, how they estimated knowledge issues; and 3) predetermined matters of teacher background. Finally, correlations were conducted using cross-tabulations, testing for statistical significance and intensity, which exposed possible relationships between issues related to professional development as well as factors discussed in other chapters, such as their English language proficiency and views on the national curriculum.

Examining the mean average of responses on the Likert scale revealed important patterns in teachers' perceptions of training that suggest intrinsic values, such as opportunities for professional growth and reflection, are powerful motivating factors. Teachers expressed the strongest agreement with the statements that training provides new opportunities for professional growth ($\mu = 4.49$) and to reflect on their teaching practice ($\mu = 4.49$), while agreeing to a slightly lesser extent that high academic demands motivate them to pursue additional training ($\mu = 3.86$).

Figure 1. Ranking of Agreement on Statements Related to Teacher Training According to Mean

	N		Mean (μ)	Median	Mode
	Valid	Missing			
Training provides me with new opportunities for professional growth.	3177	636	**4.49**	5.00	5
I can reflect on my teaching practice through training.	3170	643	**4.44**	5.00	5
High academic expectations motivate me to continue to prepare myself.	3165	648	**3.86**	4.00	4
The training that I have received from the Ministry of Education or my institution has helped me improve my teaching practice.	3177	636	**3.15**	3.00	4
I have difficulties applying technological tools in my academic activities.	3178	635	**2.65**	2.00	2

	N		Mean (μ)	Median	Mode
	Valid	Missing			
The socioeconomic level of my students influences my decision to participate in training.	3187	626	**2.65**	2.00	2
My knowledge of teaching methods is sufficient for the level at which I permanently work.	3182	631	**2.54**	2.00	2
The training that I choose depends on my interests and not on the academic needs of my students.	3180	633	**2.42**	2.00	2
The training that I choose to improve my teaching practice depends on the level of English of my students.	3184	629	**2.35**	2.00	2
I have all the necessary knowledge to perform my job and do not need additional training.	3179	634	**1.98**	2.00	2

That is not to say, however, that teachers are seeking self-gratification through training opportunities. They express some disagreement, for example, with a statement privileging their own interests over the needs of their students (μ = 2.54). Nonetheless, the data also suggests that teachers are not necessarily considering critical student-centered factors as part of their professional development needs. They express slight disagreement with the statement that their students' socioeconomic status influences their decision to participate in teacher training (μ = 2.54) and with the role that their students' English proficiency influences their training decisions (μ = 2. 42). They also articulate slight disagreement with the statement about difficulties with technological resources (μ = 2.65), indicating that training focusing on the use of ICTs and related technologies should not be priorities in future training initiatives.

The results also indicate that teachers recognize the need for continuous professional development, even while their needs are not being fully met by available training opportunities. Two metrics indicate that teachers believe in the value of additional training opportunities. In general, they strongly disagree with the statement that they do not need additional training (μ = 1.98), and to a lesser extent that they have adequate knowledge for the level at which they work (μ = 2.54). However, and perhaps most importantly, they are generally ambivalent about the value of training they have received from the MINEDUC and their institutions (μ = 3.15). As

such, it can be surmised that such official training programs are not aligned with teacher perceived professional development needs.

Correlational analysis found no significant relationships between EFL teachers' views on professional development and their years of teaching experience. The same can be said for their educational attainment. However, teachers' self-reported English proficiency level shows some evidence that suggests potentially instructive tendencies. Teachers with a higher degree of English proficiency, for example, are somewhat more likely to agree that professional development promotes self-reflection (Somers' D .088) and is motivated by academic rigor (.053). Associations between English proficiency and a sense of the adequacy of their own training are also visible through correlations with two variables: a sense that their methodological knowledge is sufficient for the level at which they work (.051) and that they have the necessary knowledge to perform their job more generally (.041). Conversely, teachers with higher English proficiency overall are somewhat less likely to consider their students' socioeconomic needs (–.050) or their students' English abilities (–.089) when deciding on which professional development opportunities to pursue. Yet curiously the same teachers overall do not emphasize their own interests over their students'; the relationship is almost null (.01). They also report being less likely to consider technological difficulties (–.097) and are less likely to report the training received from MINEDUC as helpful (–.074). The fact that self-reported higher English proficiencies are negatively correlated with students' needs, socioeconomic background, and attitudes toward MINEDUC trainings is significant, as these also tend to be the strongest indicators that link professional training with the application of more diverse teaching methods and greater willingness to receive further training, as discussed later in this chapter.

A far better indicator is the certification of English proficiency. In contrast to self-reported English proficiency levels alone, which showed divergent relationships with views on professional development, a correlational analysis of teachers' English certification revealed more positive relationships with the professional development queries in most cases. That is to say, English certification is consistently associated with more favorable views of teacher professional development. As with most correlational analyses in this volume, the relationships are generally weak yet reveal instructive tendencies. Those who have an English certificate, for example, are also more likely to agree that professional development promotes self-reflection (V = .090) and academic rigor (V = .057) and provides opportunities for professional

growth (V = .077). However, English proficiency certification presents somewhat positive associations with teachers' consideration for their students' English level (V = .077). They also consider training more relevant for facing technological difficulties (V = .072), and when considering the socioeconomic status of their students (V = .068). These results present a contrast to the negative or void relationships uncovered when considered in relation to their English proficiency alone. Those with English certification also report somewhat more favorable impressions of the MINEDUC trainings overall (V = .058). Importantly, however, no relationship was found between English certification and teachers' sense that they have adequate methodological knowledge, either specific to their level or generally.

As Chapter 1 indicates, teachers most likely overestimate their English proficiency when they do not have a certificate to validate their abilities. It appears from these results, then, that these same teachers are somewhat overconfident in their teaching knowledge as well, showing less motivation toward pursuing professional development opportunities and experiences, and less favorable attitudes toward the trainings in which they do participate. The possible effects of these views on student learning outcomes are discussed in the following section. Although we cannot deduce for certain that English proficiency certification makes teachers more aware of any specific gaps in their knowledge, the results indicate that teachers with certified English levels are more inclined to view training opportunities through a variety of perspectives than their uncertified peers; more specifically, they not only consider their own interests but also technological knowledge, student's needs, and extracurricular factors that may affect student performance. In sum, English language certification may not be a strong indicator of greater motivation or favorability of any one aspect of professional development training, but when taken in the aggregate they show a more robust view of the benefits of teacher training overall.

Teaching Methods and Student Learning Outcomes as Factors of Professional Development

In addition to understanding the factors that affect teachers' views on professional development, the analysis must also consider how their attitudes toward professional development influence their classroom practice and perceptions of

student learning outcomes. Understanding both dimensions of the role of professional development opportunities, directly and indirectly, helps identify areas in which future teacher training initiatives can strategically intervene to generate the greatest impact.

For example, when teachers consider the socioeconomic status of students, they are somewhat more likely to agree that students achieve the required B1 proficiency level in the bachillerato programs by graduation (Somers' D = .069). In addition, teachers are slightly more likely to agree that they have the necessary resources to achieve curricular goals (.046) and that their students achieve these outcomes (.051). They are also slightly more likely to agree that curricular goals are reasonable (.058) and that the curriculum is culturally relevant (.043). Those who consider their students' English proficiency when choosing training present similar results: they are somewhat more likely to report better outcomes in their own classes (Somers' D = .077) and agree that they have the necessary resources to achieve curricular goals (Somers' D = .098). These teachers also report that their students are somewhat more likely to reach the required B1 proficiency of the bachillerato degree more generally (.099). Such results indicate that attention to both students' educational needs as well as extracurricular contexts generate more positive views of achieving curricular goals. However, no such relationships were found between considering students' socioeconomic background and their reported teaching practices. As such, it can be said that socioeconomic sensitivity can impact teachers' views on achieving curricular goals but not necessarily change the way they teach.

Such a disjuncture between professional development, teaching methods, and learning outcomes can also be seen among those who feel that they do not need further professional training. Teachers who report having adequate teaching knowledge are also somewhat more likely to agree that students achieve the B1 proficiency required in the bachillerato program (.107) and that their students meet curricular goals (.123). They are also more likely to concur that they have the resources necessary to achieve curricular goals (.136), that the curricular goals are reasonable (.075), and that the curriculum is culturally relevant (.061). Nonetheless, these teachers do not apply communicative methodologies to any greater or lesser degree than their peers. While teachers who feel they are adequately trained are somewhat more likely to implement group activities in their classes (.076), no other relationship was found to suggest that these teachers use more dynamic

and communicative methodologies, such as those discussed in Chapter 3. Similar results were found for those reporting greater concern for their students' socio-economic status when choosing training. They report a slightly increased focus on group projects and activities (.036) but, otherwise, no differences in their self-reported methodological approaches were noted. The results overall show that views on professional development that impact perceptions of learning outcomes do not necessarily indicate that students truly achieve those goals nor do they necessarily influence actual classroom practice.

The one professional development factor that appears to be associated both with changing views on student learning outcomes and on teaching methodologies are those teachers who reported more favorable views on the helpfulness of MINEDUC trainings. Teachers who hold these views are more likely to report a belief that their students meet curricular goals (.216), that they have the resources necessary to achieve those goals (.242), and that students overall achieve the B1 level required by the bachillerato program (.182). More importantly, however, they also indicate a positive relationship between favorable views on MINEDUC training and their own teaching practices, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 2. Use of Teaching Methodologies as a Factor of Perceived Usefulness of MINEDUC Trainings

Methodology	Somers' D
Cooperative reading and writing	0.137
Thematic exploration (for example, math, social studies, natural sciences) in the context of English teaching	0.123
Group research and/or projects	0.119
Working in pairs or groups	0.107
Narration and/or retelling experiences, stories, and events	0.107
Dialogues and exercised with controlled grammatical patterns	0.092
Dramatizations, interviews, roleplay, and simulations	0.091
Homework based on readings and audio	0.084
Memorization exercises: verses, riddles, dialogues	0.081
Interactive games and songs	0.077
Completion and ordering of phrases	0.077
Repetition and substitution exercises	0.041

This analysis shows that teachers who view their past training more favorably are also more inclined to use a greater variety of teaching methods, with the greatest gains in communicative practices. In Figure 2, methods that appear in bold are those identified as communicative. Further supporting this analysis, teachers who view MINEDUC trainings more favorably are somewhat more likely to describe their methodologies as varied and communicative overall (.094). They are also less likely to agree that class size affects the quality of English education (–.112), which may indicate that more varied approaches learned through the MINEDUC trainings can be deployed to help ameliorate some of the effects of class size on learning.

Cultivating Awareness through Professional Development

Overall, participant teachers are strongly motivated to pursue teacher training, the strongest motivating factors being to enhance their own professional growth and gain opportunities for reflection. The teachers feel, moreover, that the training sessions improved their teaching and have given them time to share and reflect on their pedagogy and own development; teachers who are most positive about training are also most likely to use communicative methods. The participants also believe that they have the knowledge and skills to teach their students at the latter's appropriate proficiency levels; in this case, those most confident are also more likely to think their students achieve the desired outcomes. However, the teachers are relatively uninterested in their students' proficiency level or background, although teachers who do consider socioeconomic matters seem somewhat more optimistic that their students' learning needs are being met. This analysis shows that teachers who view their past training more favorably are also more inclined to use a greater variety of teaching methods, with the greatest gains in communicative practices. Significantly, teachers also express a sense of self-awareness of gaps in their own knowledge but, as shown in Chapter 3, their descriptions of their teaching methodologies indicate they are not aware of specific ways in which their knowledge and practices diverge from their overly expressed ideals. By the large, the data reveals many inconsistencies between teacher knowledge, practice, and student outcomes.

More favorable responses aside, the participants express ambivalence about the usefulness of MINEDUC teacher training (mean = 3.15). Those who found the MINEDUC trainings less helpful are those who report higher levels of English proficiency (–.074); but no relationship exists between their views on the MINEDUC trainings and their educational attainment or years of experience. Another disjuncture appears between professional development, teaching methods, and learning outcomes among those who feel that they do not need further professional training. Teachers who report having adequate teaching knowledge are also somewhat more likely to agree that students achieve the expected learning outcomes. Thus, teachers' views on professional development and their perceived impact perceptions of learning outcomes do not necessarily indicate that students truly achieve those goals. Moreover, teachers' English certification and favorable attitudes toward MINEDUC training present the strongest evidence about how teachers link their teaching methods to achieving desired learning outcomes.

Ecuadorian EFL teachers are unaware of the bigger ESL pedagogical picture and are motivated by inaccurate thinking, perhaps false optimism, about what they know and do. While teachers claim they are aware of the mandated communicative practices, they do not seem to use them. Our data suggests that many teachers project an exaggerated view of their language proficiency and teaching knowledge that disincentivizes them from participating in teacher training and limits their ability to extract value from these experiences. Moreover, the respondents do not seem to know what professional development is and does. They appear to think of it as resumé improvement, whereas training involves multiple factors, among them, working with peers within a communicative methodology and continuous learning process. Presumably, teachers who are aware of and use communicative methodologies would be concerned with student proficiency and socioeconomic/geographic context. But the respondents are more concerned with personal motivations and matters. No wonder that the training courses do not meet teachers' needs and the teachers need them more than they indicated.

Taken together, teachers' perceptions and associated ambivalence about the training they received suggest that the sessions are not relevant to their needs or, at the very least, the majority of teachers are not seeing the relevance in them. But Ecuadorian EFL teachers must understand and use communicative methodologies in all its dimensions; teachers must be able to adapt to and reflect on their students' interests and needs and to elements of the local school context influencing

the daily realities of their classrooms. In turn, such knowledge would encourage participants to be truly self-reflective about the what, how, and why of their teaching practices (Carbonero et al., 2010).

At present, it would be difficult at best as well as irresponsible for Ecuador to respond to these problems by planning another systematic reform of professional development (let alone the entire educational system). Instead, the results and analysis in this chapter point to a ground-up approach, which is centered on the principles of communicative methodology and student-centered teaching practices. The research shows that the lack of resources, large class size, and low teacher proficiency, among other factors, can be compensated for and enhanced by teaching that is communicative, focused on student's proficiency and background, and by creating relationships.

As previous chapters demonstrated, the communicative approach supports teachers to link course content to the students' worlds and to develop close relationships with their students that are essential for effective teaching outcomes. Adapting their pedagogy to the geographic and socioeconomic characteristics that mark their students is especially necessary with foreign language teaching, since students' backgrounds vary. In Ecuador, many students speak Indigenous languages at home, and schools have students from different Indigenous communities. Such adaptation will motivate students, then teachers, to the benefit of all. It is precisely the teachers' motivation and good attitude in their teaching and learning processes that allows them to manage the extra work and working conditions.

This ground-up training must be planned with sufficient effort to ensure teacher participation. Clearly, efforts are wasted if teachers cannot attend. Training sessions should be organized and scheduled at convenient times and places, considering teachers' availability. Regional workshops should mitigate some of the attendance issues as well as help teachers adapt to the context in which they teach. Moreover, teachers should be involved in the curriculum development process both to acquire new knowledge and to contribute with their own input (Alsubaie, 2016; Abudu and Mensah, 2016; see chapter 2).

Ecuadorian EFL education has many challenges involving technology, infrastructure, and access; given that classes vary in size, duration, number of sessions, and

resources. In the meantime, and while working on these issues, local efforts can enhance current teaching outcomes. The teachers are motivated; situation-specific professional development will not only improve their motivation but the resulting positive changes in their teaching will lead to continuous learning.

This study was, as is often the case, limited by the questions included in the survey. With these limitations and gaps in mind, and the call to use EER research in future EFL work, the insights in this study should be used to conduct another round of surveys that would capture deeper insights into the problems identified here. To ground these surveys, as well as future research into ESL teaching in Ecuador, additional work must be conducted on the kinds of training that MINEDUC has provided to English teachers. These follow-up surveys should be designed to connect problems revealed by this study's survey with research on external factors that can facilitate/impede foreign language acquisition; this research could determine what teachers might be missing by overlooking these issues, study motivation among teachers, link intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and identify how appropriate teacher training improves educational outcomes, job satisfaction, and so forth.

Current training courses do not meet teachers' needs. Yet, this chapter makes it clear that Ecuadorian EFL teachers remain motivated and are committed to teaching and learning more and doing better. They want to be more self-reflecting and effective. They simply must learn what communicative practices are and link them with student needs and interests. This ground-up approach will help and lead to better outcomes.

References

Alsubaie, M. A. (2016). Curriculum development: Teacher involvement in curriculum development. *Journal of Education and Practice* 7(9), 106-107. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1095725.pdf

Antoniou, P. (2016). Characteristics of Effective Teacher Training and Professional Development. In T. Norton (Ed.) *Professional Development: Recent Advances and Future Directions.* (pp. 121-136), Nova Science Publishers.

Carbonero, M. Á., Martín-Antón, L. J., Román, J. M., and Reoyo, N. (2010). Efecto de un programa de entrenamiento al profesorado en la motivación, clima de aula y estrategias de aprendizaje de su alumnado. Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología y Salud, 1(2), 117-138. http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=245116406001

Collado-Ruano, J., Madroñero, M., and Álvarez, F. (2019). Training Transdisciplinary Educators: Intercultural Learning and Regenerative Practices in Ecuador. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38(2), 177-194. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11217-019-09652-5

Creemers, B. P. M. and Kyriakides. l. (2006). Critical analysis of the current approaches to modelling educational effectiveness: The importance of establishing a dynamic model, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(3), 347-366. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243450600697242

Daniel, M., and Burgin, X. (2016). Investigating future educators training to teach English in Ecuador: An examination of one university's program. *Athens Journal of Education* 6(1), 33-52. https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.6-1-3

Desimone, L. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures *Educational Researcher,* 38(3), 181–199. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140

González Torres, M. (2003). Claves para favorecer la motivación de los profesores ante los retos educativos actuales. *Estudios Sobre Educación,* 5, 61-83. https://dadun.unav.edu/bitstream/10171/8471/1/Estudios%20Ed.pdf

Nicolaidou, M., and Petrido, A. (2011). Evaluation of CPD programmes: Challenges and implications for leader and leadership development. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 22(1), 51-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2010.547344

Orosz, A., Monzón, M., and Velasco, P. (2021). Ecuadorian teachers' perceptions of teaching English: Challenges in the public education sector. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 20(3), 229-249. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.20.3.14

Ortiz, M. E., Fabara, E., Villagómez, M. S., and Hidalgo, L. (2017). *La formación y el trabajo docente en el Ecuador*. Abya Yala.

Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and performance. *RELC Journal*, 48(1), 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217690059

Ringelhan, S., Wollersheim, J., Welpe, I. M., Fiedler, M., and Spörrle, M. (2013). Work motivation and job satisfaction as antecedents of research performance: Investigation of different mediation models. In A. Dilger, H. Dyckhoff, and G. Fandel (Eds.), *Performance Management im Hochschulbereich* (pp. 7-38). Springer. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-03348-4_2

Rodríguez, H. (2017). Importance of teacher training in educational institutions. *Huasteca Science Scientific Bulletin of the Higher School of Huejutla*, 5(9). https://www.uaeh.edu.mx/scige/boletin/huejutla/n9/e2.html

Rodríguez, S., Núñez, J. C., Valle, A., Blas, R., and Rosario, P. (2009). Autoeficacia docente, motivación del profesor y estrategias de enseñanza. *Escritos de Psicología*, 3(1), 1-7. http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=271020403001

Sevy-Biloon, J., Recino, U., and Muñoz, C. (2020). Factors affecting English language teaching in public schools in Ecuador. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(3), 276-294. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.3.15

Supovitz, J., Mayerm D., and Kahle, J. B., Promoting inquiry-based instructional practice: The longitudinal impact of professional development in the context of systemic reform. *Educational Policy*, 14(3), 331-356. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904800014003001

CHAPTER 5

The Accomodating Behavior of Ecuadorian English Teachers

Verónica Herrera
David Villagómez
Karina Cherres
Mirdelio Monzón
Maricela Cajamarca
Daniel Cazco

Introduction

Teacher classroom practices are evaluated on a regular basis to ensure accountability throughout the educational system. Students, of course, must receive the best teaching possible, while school administrators must make certain that these practices are in place in individual classrooms as well as provide higher administration with aggregate institutional assessment data for systematic use. This assessment comes full circle when teachers are provided with this data to improve their practice (Acar, Akgün Özpolat, and Çomoğlu, 2023).

Observation has become a standard means of evaluating teachers and an essential component of educational systems worldwide. It is, after all, among the few direct means through which authorities can measure ongoing activities in the classroom. But observation is also a complicated issue that can influence typical class activities and observation of them. To be reliable, observation procedures typically follow relatively standard protocols. At the same time, observation must also capture the more subjective, context-based elements that shape individual teaching dynamics within the classroom. As a result, participants may not trust the results or want to participate.

Accordingly, this chapter considers survey data involving Ecuadorian EFL teachers' responses to in-service observations of their classroom practices. Such an analysis investigates the links between the approaches teachers prioritize during classroom observations and those mandated by the MINEDUC. This inquiry leads to insights about how observation is related to and affects power relations, and also how the observation procedure influences the teachers' views of their own practices and the curricular and instructional paradigms in which they work. Such insights provide yet another way to address the clear disjuncture between teaching practices and curricular outcomes examined in earlier chapters. By better understanding these concerns, this chapter also illuminates opportunities for change in the observation procedure as a practice that promotes teacher accountability and as a potential data collection tool, which assures institutional quality.

To those ends, the survey asked teachers to describe the approaches they used when observed by supervisors, their responses to the follow-up feedback, and their perceptions of their classroom practices vis-á-vis the recommended national methodologies and other curricular concerns. Significantly, the results reveal that

the relationship between teacher practices and the mandated curriculum is less important to teachers than the relationship between their classroom practices and institutional requirements. Furthermore, the analysis shows that teachers who believe that the students are reaching nationally mandated curricular goals also feel greater degrees of comfort and confidence when being observed, even as overwhelming data suggests that students largely do not achieve such outcomes. As such, this chapter discloses the limitations of current observation practices as a tool for teacher evaluation and quality assurance, while also pointing toward opportunities to revise such practices for better outcomes.

Navigating Issues of Compliance and Teacher Agency

Globally, the 1960s ushered in widespread concerns with systematic institutional accountability. For education, these concerns were manifested in efforts to monitor and improve teaching methodology and practice within a centralized, standardized structure. The result was the traditional objective-based approach to provide best teaching practices for pre-service and active teachers (Cockburn, 2005; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 20). Observation emerged as a tool to teach, measure, and monitor these practices. In the name of accountability, the early forms of observation were simple, unsophisticated, and often randomly constructed as well as applied (Ozdemir, 2011, pp.1594-1596). With the development of communicative methodologies in language education, observation procedures shifted in kind and attempted to capture the more subtle individual, subjective elements of teacher practices with systematicity as well as flexibility.[1] This approach, as discussed below, is this chapter's focus.

The observation process can vary in different geographical and disciplinary contexts, EFL among them (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2011). But, overall, the process is similar in its design to teach, monitor, and evaluate teacher performance throughout and across a teacher's career. The key to the process is the observation dialogue between observer and observed, a dialogue which should promote collaboration, reflection, and enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills. To ensure that observation is successful and beneficial, observers must know what to look for, how to provide effective feedback, and how to remain non-judgmental (Gebhard,

1984). Using a standardized checklist, for example, presumably mitigates biased results and represents assessment data (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2011).

Observation practices are also built into the teacher training and professional development process as appropriate to different stages of the teacher's career. Most commonly, observation is carried out in three consecutive forms (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2011; Merç, 2015; Sha and Al Harthi, 2014). Mentors first observe student-teachers as part of the learning process during their initial training and teacher preparation. Later, in-service teachers are observed in turn by supervisors. Within the ongoing learning process, professional development includes observation-based peer review, which helps colleagues share knowledge and practices (Merç, 2015). The types of observation share a relatively standard protocol but also vary in purpose and perspective; as mentors use observations to guide and train teachers for their initial preparation, while supervisors and institutions may use observations by supervisors as critical data in evaluating instructors, and in turn making personnel decisions (hiring, firing, promotion), informing program design, and assuring quality of instruction.

Properly conducted, observation can be a useful tool. However, when the procedure neglects or defies any of the central precepts named above it is less than useful. In those cases, feedback may be anywhere from non-existent to unhelpful or even harmful to students, instructors, and institutions. Supervisors may not be trained or prepared to observe and might take a random and/or one-and-done approach. All too frequently, then, observation is carried out on a top-down, observer-dominated model that is unreliable, intimidating, and counter-productive. Accordingly, many teachers resent the intrusion on their classroom, feeling a loss of autonomy and negativity toward the observation process more generally (Cockburn 2005; Merç, 2015; Sha and Al Harthi, 2014).

Current research agrees that top-down approaches to teacher observation must be overturned as part of systematic reform by embracing the communicative approaches on which the current curriculum is based. In such an environment, observation is initiated and carried out by teachers with collegial collaboration in their institutions and seeks equity for all (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2011). The key to this restructuring is still the relationship between observer and observed (Sha and Al Harthi, 2015; Özdemir, 2020). Administrators must earn teacher confidence through knowledge and professionalism, and teachers must gain helpful feedback

(Dos Santos, 2017). Trust, transparency, and opportunities for shared knowledge-building among teachers and supervisors are therefore essential features of effective observation practices.

With this theoretical framework in mind, this chapter deploys a quantitative, analytic methodology to EFL teacher responses regarding their experiences in the observation process. Here, the questions tested the relationships between teacher observation and classroom practices. This goal was actualized in three research questions. The first question queries how in-service EFL teachers prioritize their behaviors while being observed (survey question #19). The responses were collected on a scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 represents aspects of their teaching that are least prioritized and 5 represents the most prioritized aspects of their teaching when being observed by their supervisors. This question considered perfunctory elements of classroom teaching, such as completing planned activities and ability to use classroom technology, the application of different teaching strategies, and complying with rules, regulations, and curricular expectations. In this way, these survey responses provide insights into a constellation of issues related to teachers' beliefs about what they should be seen doing in the classroom as well as behaviors that they believe will be viewed favorably by their supervisors.

The second question queries EFL teachers' affective responses upon receiving feedback from their supervisors based on classroom observations. Teachers were given options of "grateful," "indifferent," or "frustrated" to specify their responses to the feedback process. The third question elicits information about EFL teachers' affective responses while being observed; the goal of this question was understanding how the presence of supervisors in the classroom influences the power dynamics between teachers and authorities. Teachers selected between five options (confident, relaxed, nervous, uncomfortable, and impatient) designed to capture common affective responses to in situ observations. Such responses reveal indirectly how teachers perceive authority in relation to their classroom practices.

As with previous chapters, frequencies to the three individual questions covered in this chapter were first tabulated and ranked. The ensuing correlational analysis attempts to establish the presence or absence of relationships with demographic indicators, as well as beliefs about teaching practices and the national curricular guidelines that were discussed earlier. Similar to those results, demographics reveal little influence on teachers' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, suggesting that

our results are generalizable to the overall EFL teaching population in Ecuador. Whereas other chapters revealed English certification as a consistent predictor of these tendencies, it serves as a less reliable indicator here when it comes to how teachers feel and perform when confronted with institutional authorities in the classroom observation process. Instead, the analysis turns attention to other indicators, such as teachers' understanding of their own methodologies and beliefs about student achievement as well as how such understanding is reflected (or not) in what they reveal to their supervisors when being observed. Ultimately, this analysis reveals possibilities for intervention designed to improve observation as a tool for bettering both teacher practice and learning outcomes.

Accommodation and Affect in EFL Teacher Observations

Taken together, the survey questions related to EFL teacher observations point toward a context in which teachers demonstrate compliance and appear accommodating to institutional hierarchies. Such assertions are based on evidence from the survey that indicate that teachers prioritize easily observable behaviors in their teaching to gain supervisor approval (see Figure 1). For example, the rankings for question 19 indicate that teachers report the completion of prepared activities as their highest priority (m = 4.40), followed by promoting a good relationship with students (m = 4.38), and student discipline (m = 4.29). These priorities share the fact that they are immediately visible to the observer and can easily be verified. Compliance with institutional rules also rank highly (m = 4.25) and likewise are relatively easy to measure according to established guidelines familiar to both teacher and supervisor.

Teaching elements that are more difficult to quantify or that require more abstract knowledge of effective teaching practices fall in the middle of the rankings; these include use of general English teaching strategies (m = 4.23), the type of feedback provided to students (m = 4.17), and the use of English in the classroom (m = 4.03) and of group work (m = 3.97). Perhaps more importantly, though, the nationally mandated teaching methodologies fall within the bottom third of ranked items (m = 3.93), along with the time that teachers speak in the class (m = 3.48). Such comparatively low rankings indicate that teachers do not consciously rely on the national curriculum guidelines in their practice, even when observed by a

supervisor who presumably should also measure teaching competence according to that framework. In addition, the limited emphasis on teacher speaking time affirms assertions made in previous chapters about misalignments between teachers' beliefs about their own practices as communicative and the comparatively mixed bag of teaching methods they use.

Figure 1. Ranking of Teachers' Priorities When Being Observed

	N		Mean
	Valid	Missing	
Completing prepared activities	2980	833	4.40
Promoting a good relationship with students	2972	841	4.38
Student discipline	2983	830	4.29
Compliance with institutional rules	2971	842	4.25
Use of general English teaching strategies	2977	836	4.23
Type of feedback given to students	2978	835	4.17
Use of English in the classroom both by the teacher and students	2979	834	4.03
Group work	2978	835	3.97
Use of English teaching methodologies established in the national curriculum	2982	831	3.93
Use of technological resources and equipment	2967	846	3.60
The amount of time the teacher speaks	2966	847	3.48

As with most other variables tested in previous chapters, correlational analysis reveals few relationships between teacher beliefs and key demographic indicators, suggesting these results are generalizable across the sample of EFL teachers. Once again, the strongest predictions among demographic indicators can be made based on English certification, which corresponds to somewhat greater attention to managing student discipline (Somers' D = .070), the amount of time the teacher speaks (.094), the use of English in the classroom (.087), the kinds of feedback provided to students (.062), and their use of general English teaching strategies (.098). Years of teaching experience present fewer indicators of increased teacher awareness to

these concerns during teacher observations; they show relationships only with the management of student discipline (.029), group activities (.055), and attention to national curriculum guidelines (.045). Relationships between educational attainment and self-reported English proficiency with teacher priorities while being observed were not revealed in the analysis; this finding is consistent with the influence of these demographic indicators on other variables related to teacher practice that were examined in earlier chapters.

These results suggest that EFL teachers overall prioritize highly visible elements of their practice that are comparatively easy to quantify, but they do not provide insights about why. Additional answers may lie in teachers' response to questions 20 and 21 about how they feel toward their supervisor's feedback, and their own affective response to being observed (see Figure 2). On the first question, most teachers (92.8%) expressed gratitude, while only 7.2% felt frustrated or indifferent (n = 2987). On the second question, most EFL teachers report feeling relaxed or confident while being observed (63%), with comparatively few expressing feelings of discomfort, nervousness, or impatience (37%), as illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 2. Teachers' Feelings While Being Observed

			Frequency	Percent
N	Valid	Relaxed	876	23.0%
		Confident	1524	40.0%
		Uncomfortable	165	4.3%
		Nervous	62	1.6%
		Impatient	360	9.4%
		Total	2987	78.3%
	Missing		826	21.7%

From this data, it seems likely that teachers avoid the discomfort inherent in the observation process and seek gratification from their supervisors by showing them what is most easy to see and measure; the result is disproportionate emphasis on compliance rather than effectiveness. The results therefore indicate teacher deference to institutional authority, deference that could be reflected in their prioritization of easily measurable features of their teaching, resulting in a mutually reinforcing cycle of accommodation to institutional expectations. Put

another way, most EFL teachers appear to take few risks when being observed. Such avoidance may inhibit their willingness to deploy more varied methodologies that would more closely align with national curricular guidelines or to create space for meaningful communicative activities in their classroom. Such features are symptomatic of issues and are related to power and authority under a top-down evaluation paradigm, and with these come the attending problems of reliability in the teacher observation process.

Teaching Observations, Institutional Hierarchies, and Learning Outcomes

Not surprisingly, cross-tabulation analysis reveals few, if any, significant relationships with their formal professional training or English proficiency, in keeping with most of the findings of previous chapters. English proficiency certification is less relevant here as a predictor than in other parts of this study ($p = .002$, $x^2 = .076$), and only the years of teaching experience corresponds with greater feelings of relaxation and confidence ($p = <.001$, $x2 = .103$) while being observed. Overall, then, formal training or incidental demographic indicators provide little insight into how teachers respond to observations as a mechanism for teacher evaluation and quality assurance.

However, relationships between teachers' priorities during supervisor observations are better predicted by teachers' beliefs about their own teaching methodologies, which have been explored in greater depth in Chapter 3. Specifically, those who believe their teaching methods are varied and communicative are consistently more likely to place greater emphasis on all the variables related to their priorities while being observed, as illustrated in Figure 3. Here, tests of statistical significance and intensity reveal consistent relationships between these variables. Teachers who believe their methods are communicative are more likely to report that they prioritize their use of English teaching strategies, feedback to students, use of English in the classroom, and application of nationally mandated teaching methods when being observed; each of these priorities can be associated with more communicative approaches to EFL teaching. When ranked, perfunctory teaching issues become less important, although overall they reveal heightened concern for all variables among those who consider their methods to be communicative.

Figure 3. Priorities While Being Observed as Factor of Beliefs About Use of Communicative Methodologies

	Chi-square	p	Somers' D
Use of general English teaching strategies	479.766	<.001	.286
Type of feedback given to students	356.385	<.001	.261
Use of English in the classroom both by the teacher and students	304.478	<.001	.231
Use of English teaching methodologies established in the national curriculum	302.194	<.001	.226
Completing prepared activities	216.353	<.001	.190
Use of technological resources and equipment	203.003	<.001	.184
Compliance with institutional rules	165.504	<.001	.178
Promoting a good relationship with students	199.686	<.001	.173
Group work	192.816	<.001	.167
Student discipline	164.801	<.001	.131
The amount of time the teacher speaks	79.859	<.001	.060

These results indicate that teachers' beliefs about their own practices, whether they reflect the realities of their classrooms or not, may increase their awareness of both overt institutional requirements and indirect measures of their teaching effectiveness under observation conditions. Teachers who believe they use communicative teaching strategies demonstrate more attention to practices that allow for greater communicative teaching contexts. In contrast to the findings of Chapter 3, which showed clear discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and overt communicative practices, the findings here suggest some opportunity for intervention among teachers who demonstrate greater awareness of general classroom conditions; such interventions are prerequisites for the application of more specific EFL communicative teaching methods and include limiting teacher speaking time and providing greater exposure to and use of English in the classroom context.

The analysis also points to important relationships between teachers' views on the national curriculum, student achievement, and their experiences during teacher observations. Teachers who report greater levels of comfort and confidence during

observations are somewhat more likely to agree that the objectives of the national curriculum are achievable (.275). They are also more likely to agree that students achieve the English proficiency levels expected by the national curriculum, both for their own students (.255) and in general (.216). Responses in which teachers perceive that the curriculum is culturally relevant to their students and that the curriculum is flexible also correlate to greater feelings of comfort and confidence during the observation process (.225 and .185, respectively). The confidence and comfort when being observed, then, perhaps indicate as much about teachers' sense of accomplishment and autonomy in general as it does about the dynamics of teacher performance under supervisory observation.

Surprisingly, however, teachers' experiences during observations seem relatively unaffected by their workload, this despite the findings presented in Chapter 2 that indicate workload is an important factor in teacher performance and student achievement. Neither the number of students per class nor the overall teaching load calculated by the total number of students or sections appear to have any significant relationship with teachers' affective responses while being observed. The only factor related to classroom conditions or workload that appears to influence teachers' attitudes during observations is access to adequate resources, which correlates to greater confidence and relaxation in the observation process (.222). Overall, if teachers are feeling stressed or overwhelmed at work, they do not let it show to their supervisors. Instead, they broadly accommodate their observers, projecting confidence through emphasizing perfunctory teaching practices, which cycles back to them as positive feedback from authorities.

Based on these results, the analysis identifies and investigates inconsistencies between the teacher responses to questions involving observation and questions involving the curriculum covered in other chapters of this book. Specifically, the data exposes disconnects in teachers' responses between how they feel when observed teaching and what they teach, both when observed and in their daily classroom. Again, the responses suggest that teachers are receiving mixed messages and are accommodating authorities in various ways. These inconsistencies suggest that institutional expectations and national expectations are not well aligned. Theoretically, they should both be prioritized around the same level. Again, there is reason to be concerned about teacher knowledge of the methodologies and their use in the classroom. Taken together, these results suggest that the observed teachers want to please their local administrators.

This kind of accommodation indicates that the observation procedure rests on a problematic and confusing top-down model. As indicated, when teachers are observed, they say that they prioritize the institutional rules; this suggests that immediate school authorities are more present in teachers' minds at the time they are observed than national authorities. Yet, in responses to questions about what methods they used, teacher responses indicate that they use the mandated curriculum, even though the data suggests they do not. Instead of exposing and resolving these issues through dialogue among teachers and supervisors, observations of Ecuadorian EFL teachers appear more adept at creating a culture of complacency.

These concerns involving observation lead to others about the observation procedure, especially as instantiated here for teaching EFL. As indicated, the observation depends on a generic checklist of 25 items; one, in fact, used to evaluate all observations in all subjects in this case. Such a generic sheet is problematic in several ways. First, checklists are designed to assess groups for placement purposes but not to evaluate what individual people know. Given that such checklists should only collect quantitative data, they should not be the sole means of observing teachers to rate individual performance. This checklist, or this checklist alone, is therefore not appropriate to evaluate individual Ecuadorian EFL teachers in action.

Of note, the MINEDUC's observation tool does not include aspects of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach on which the EFL curriculum depends; for example, teachers' use of authentic language, teaching English through English, using small student work groups to include interactive communicative practice, creating activities that allow students to express their ideas and opinions, and establishing real-world and context-based situations to promote communication and monitoring. The observation procedure must be revised to include these EFL criteria as well as capture subjective elements that can then be used for feedback. To those ends, the process could include teacher surveys with open-ended questions and/or focus groups. Although these efforts are considered time-consuming and expensive, they are quite effective and efficient and, in the long run, address the actual problems and needs the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum has. Acquiring subjective elements would help ascertain what teachers know about the methodologies available and how they apply them. Moreover, a new method of class observation should take advantage of teachers' openness to observation.

The top-down observation is faulty in many respects and must be replaced. It does not, in fact, achieve its goals of providing continuous professional development through collaboration, mentoring, and appropriate and consistent feedback (Cockburn, 2005b; Sha and Al Harthi, 2014). This shift must encourage trust between observer and observed. To that end, supervisors must have content and pedagogy knowledge and be trained to observe (Özdemir, 2020). Observation must be a process that starts with pre-service learning and continues throughout the lifespan of all teachers.

The observation procedure must be reformed to use ground-up approaches, both in dealing with this chapter's topic as well as those discussed in other chapters. More research is needed as well as more surveys based on the research to respond to the following questions: What are the institutional guidelines? They are unknown and likely vary. What were the results of the checklists? Are teachers trying to please instead of being candid in the surveys? Do teachers know about communicative and objective-based methodologies and practices? Do supervisors understand the process and apply it continuously and systematically, while explaining it to teachers and giving them feedback? The goal is a teacher-centered form of observation and evaluation as part of an overall student-centered curriculum integrated throughout the Ecuadorian systematic curriculum and reforms.

References

Acar S. P., Akgün Özpolat E., and Çomoğlu, İ. (2023) Teacher-tailored classroom observation for professional growth of EFL instructors: An exploratory case study. *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 16(1), 26-35. https://doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2023.160103

Cockburn, J. (2005) Perspectives and politics of classroom observation research. *Post-Compulsory Education*, 10(3), 373-388. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596740500200211

Dos Santos, L. M. (2017) How do teachers make sense of peer observation professional development in an urban school. *International Education Studies*. 10(1), 255-265. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n1p255

Gebhard, J. G. (1984). Models of supervision: Choices. *TESOL Quarterly* 18(3), 501-514. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586717

Lasagabaster, D., and Sierra, J. M. (2011). Classroom observation: Desirable conditions established by teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 34(4), 449-463. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2011.587113

Merç, A. (2015). The potential of general classroom observation: Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions, sentiments, and readiness for action. *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 3(4), 193-205. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v3i4.821

Özdemir, N. (2020). How to improve teachers' instructional practices: The role of professional learning activities, classroom observation and leadership content knowledge in Turkey. *Journal of Educational Administration* 58(6), 85-603.

Sha, R. S., and Al Harthi, K. (2014). TESOL classroom observations: A boon or a bane? An exploratory study at a Saudi Arabian university. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(8), 1593-1602. http://dx.doi.org/10.4304/tpls.4.8.1593-1602

Zhang, Q., Liao, J., Liu, G., and Ke, Y. (2022). A review of technology-supported classroom

observation in teaching evaluation. *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Educational Innovation through Technology (EITT),* 132-136. https://doi-org.proxy.library.kent.edu/10.1109/EITT57407.2022.00029

CONCLUSION

Implications and Outlooks for EFL Teaching In Ecuador

A WOMAN WHO HAD TWO CHILDREN

> And the old people tell it like that. Those old people who grew up without writing or schooling, saying that story is from times before; that is how they told it…. That's how it was told to me (the way) those children ended up, they say. Now--they "know" it all, the whites, the priests whatever you might know whatever. The people are this way; the old people like that were tellers of the stories. Those children ended up, they say, climbing up above …Like that the old people were ones who told those stories and those I heard. Not--, how do you say--, not knowing Castillian, the Avila old man, his grandparents telling stories this way were those that lived, they say, saying he told me stories that old person. Just all alone; Having it this way telling the stories he was one that raised me hearing them. Remembering (to myself alone), I live. (Carpenter, 1985, pp. 54-56)

As this volume has stressed, and as the survey has told us, the next steps in improving EFL teaching and outcomes in Ecuador must start with specific contexts and recognize the inherent, reciprocal relationships that link language, culture, thought, and action. Accordingly, we have listened to the voices of the teachers and emphasized that Ecuador is grounded in Indigenous cultures, cultures which are diverse yet grounded in oral tradition. That shared tradition, as the quotation above highlights, is rooted in stories told in the local language. Such story-telling expresses and passes on values which shape the community, generation by generation. This linguistic tradition contrasts with the Western linguistic tradition which fixes words in conventionalized letters on pages. Teaching English in Ecuador must accommodate both traditions.

This journey into the territory of Ecuadorian EFL teaching began with the strong commitment of many concerned educators to work together on behalf of many audiences —teachers, administrators, and government organizations— to advance educational knowledge and practice in Ecuador in EFL education and, as it is said, to make a difference. The critical recipients of this research, and the heart of the endeavor, are the Ecuadorian public-school students themselves. Without the ability to use English, these students and all Ecuadorian citizens have diminished capacities to take advantage of opportunities to participate in global entrepreneurial

activities that support their personal livelihoods and the Ecuadorian economy. Moreover, learning languages, English especially, helps humans develop into global citizens who are empathetic toward others and are interested in collaborative decision-making with them. This humanistic bearing, it seems, has never been more important in our fractious, polarized world.

EFL teachers have a key role in shaping such humanistic individuals; it is their mission to instruct students while modeling how good citizens communicate. But such empathetic instruction requires Ecuadorian EFL teachers to adopt student-centered teaching, which depends on communicative, interactive, and context-specific methodologies and applications. Despite best efforts, the Ecuadorian educational system and its EFL teachers to a great extent are stuck in a teacher-centered model. As such, this volume calls for the aggregate of Ecuadorian educators to design and implement a truly inclusive, systematic educational system. Overturning the existing structure and constructing a new one must be a united effort that links all participants, from top to bottom, across all subjects, grade levels, and abilities to contribute to the reform process with equality and equity.

To support these efforts, this chapter ties together all that precedes in the spirit in which the narrative began, listening to the unheard voices of those most intimately involved in Ecuadorian EFL education: the teachers themselves. This chapter situates and responds to these voices within the historical, linguistic, and social context of Ecuadorian education policy and reform.

The Data: What the Teachers Told Us and What We Take from It

Clearly, Ecuadorian EFL teachers are committed to using best practices and, to that end, improving their teaching within a process of reform. Indeed, the data demonstrates that these teachers are deeply aware of and concerned about poor student outcomes. But their sense of why these outcomes have occurred and what measures might improve the situation are not entirely consistent; in particular, the results reveal misunderstandings from respondents involving their knowledge and practice of the mandated curriculum. On the one hand, frequencies in teachers' responses are relatively straightforward; they indicate that teachers want fewer

students in their classes and more technology and resources to improve student outcomes. On the other hand, comparisons and correlations across these counts expose confusion, gaps, and disconnects between individual teachers' perceptions and practices and nationally mandated guidelines. Teachers focus on their own needs and interests, an understandable situation given the difficult circumstances under which they teach. At the same time, they do not appear to understand or use the required communicative teaching practices; teachers are modestly concerned about low student proficiency but only consider external factors to a limited extent, especially those involving student needs. Given these circumstances and without careful changes, Ecuadorian EFL teachers will continue to struggle uphill.

The reality is that teacher proficiency and class size, among other issues, will not improve quickly. Their significance notwithstanding, the research has demonstrated that neither increasing teacher proficiency alone nor reducing class size can lead directly to good teaching. Rather, best practices are embraced within the student-centered teaching model. Such communicative, interactive, and context-specific teaching provides a flexible structure, yet one which accommodates all classroom situations, teachers, and students. When located in their specific contexts, class activities can be adapted to students' needs, this includes considering students' interests, ages, abilities, ethnicity, and gender. Interactive, communicative teaching, moreover, allows students to participate in the learning process rather than to memorize, substitute, and repeat cherry-picked examples and/or answers. Thus, students own their learning. Students also develop and use their imagination and problem-solving skills; they help each other learn. And, significantly, students learn how to speak English in situations they may actually face, and they can do so without fear of being wrong. In turn, learning English becomes more interesting and important for these students. Finally, such interactive teaching allows teachers and students to connect and develop educational relationships. These students are better equipped to participate in the world beyond the specific context of their Ecuadorian EFL class.

In addition to adopting this approach, teachers and administrators must confront the following language teaching myths that conflict with student-centered teaching and inhibit effective learning:

- ESL teachers must speak English all the time in the classroom.
- ESL teachers must focus on grammar, spelling, and other mechanical, low-order concerns.

- Large classes are inevitably unsuccessful or less successful.
- Classes with non-native speaking teachers are inevitably unsuccessful or less successful.
- High teacher proficiency alone leads to high student outcomes.

As every chapter of this book has made clear, an interactive, context-specific approach not only provides the structure to accommodate, adjust, and work with the many complicated and interrelated matters of ESL teaching but does so in ways that support best practices.

What We Must Do

Tacitly or explicitly, the teachers participating in this national survey are demonstrating that they are, despite their individual years of experience, in the early stages of their professional development. That is, their concerns remain focused on themselves and have not extended into external factors beyond that context. These factors, of course, are vital to effective teaching. These circumstances reflect the top-down, objective-based approach to teaching that dominates the Ecuadorian EFL and general education system. Accordingly, as the survey demonstrates, Ecuadorian EFL teachers have received mixed messages and little opportunity to speak for themselves and their teaching. It is no wonder that they focus on their own needs.

Ecuadorian EFL teachers must be allowed to develop into more mature teachers through better degree programs and ongoing professional development. To develop their expertise, teachers must learn such critical thinking skills as being self-reflective and flexible and must also be able to integrate internal personal needs and knowledge with external factors, particularly student-oriented concerns (Chapter 2). Clearly, acquiring these skills depends on reforming the educational system, on structuring it throughout as a communicative, interactive whole. Many broader external factors are undergoing reform (class size, infrastructure, well-planned degree programs and professional development plans; proficiency reporting and testing). But these changes will take time to situate in an inclusive, systematic reform of the current educational structure. For practical purposes and to ground all external factors, this systematic reform must be built from the ground up, moving from teachers and classrooms up, including methodology, curriculum, and professional

development, as well as teacher participation in this, infrastructure and resources, and undergraduate and graduate education programs. Teachers must be included in every step of this reform.

In support of this reform, researchers must investigate the concerns that this survey uncovered. Some of these issues are broad and include, for example, examining the relationships between education and gender, race, ethnicity, geographic location, and the like. Other research must look deeper into the Ecuadorian EFL system, based on this study's efforts. This research should investigate, among other concerns, what Ecuadorian EFL teachers know about teaching methodologies and what they use in their classes, what guidelines and requirements do local authorities impose on EFL teachers, and how the students perceive the curriculum. Finally, the methodology and analysis used here serves as a model for this research and for assessing and improving English proficiency outcomes in Ecuador and in other developing nations. Adapted to each educational context, the model will contribute systematically to local matters as well as to global efforts involving best EFL teaching practices.

To celebrate this work, this chapter speaks in a collective voice while anticipating a better educational future for Ecuador. One more possible misconception must be exposed. Despite thinking of their own needs, Ecuadorian EFL teachers are not self-centered, anything but. Though they need support to step beyond working from their preferences (and those of peers) to include the context beyond their classrooms and to develop their critical thinking skills, their professional knowledge, their ability to self-reflect, and their classroom practices. Only then can EFL teaching in Ecuador provide a bridge from local to global efforts. In completing this leg of the journey and looking ahead to others, the research team has worked in the spirit of interactivity, self-reflection and, perhaps most significantly, inclusive of context. Adelante!

References

Carpenter, L. K. (1985). Notes from an Ecuadorian lowland Quechua. *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 1, 47-62.

CENTRO ECUATORIANO NORTEAMERICANO

ISBN: 978-9978-68-280-7

@usfqpress