

Teachers' beliefs and their influence on methodological choices in high schools

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study was focused on teachers' beliefs and their influence on methodological choices in high schools in San Juan de Pasto.

The instruments used to collect the data were the class observation and an interview to five English teachers who belonged to different public institutions. The results show that English teachers continue still using the traditional methods. Besides, at the end of the study, it is established some conclusions and recommendations about the result found along the development of this study. Then, these results could help future studies related to this topic.

Key words

English- teaching

## REUMEN

Este estudio cualitativo se centró en las creencias de los profesores y su influencia en la selección de las diferentes opciones metodológicas en las escuelas secundarias de San Juan de Pasto.

Los instrumentos utilizados para recolectar los datos fueron observación de clases de inglés y una entrevista a cinco profesores de Inglés quienes pertenecen a diferentes instituciones públicas. Los resultados muestran que los profesores Inglés continúan utilizando los métodos tradicionales. Además, al final del estudio, se establece algunas conclusiones y recomendaciones sobre los resultados encontrados a lo largo de la elaboración de este estudio. Finalmente, estos resultados podrían ayudar a futuros estudios relacionados con este tema.

Palabras claves

Enseñanza del Inglés

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the learning and teaching process of English as a foreign language, it is important to take into account aspects such as students, teachers, methodology, motivation, the environment and others. In an EFL context such as Pasto, it is very common for learners to think erroneously that the teacher is the only one who must give them all the information and instruction that they need in order to develop their abilities in the foreign language. Besides these cultural aspects,



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there are relevant factors that can affect the whole learning process such as the lack of responsibility, attitude, motivation and collaboration between both learners and teachers.

One important factor that might affect language learning is the beliefs that teachers have concerning the methodology implemented in the English classes so, English teachers continue using methods such as the grammar translation method which may impede the development of skills such as listening and speaking because they focus on grammar and vocabulary and could cause faults in the student's oral and aural proficiency of English.

### *Description of the problem*

According to Bastidas (2003), the language learning and language teaching process of English as a foreign language can be positively or negatively influenced by many factors related to the teacher, the learner, the internal policies, and national policies.

It is important to take into account that the teachers and students in a context like Pasto may not understand the importance of a real practice of language because in many English classes the teacher only presents and practices grammar and decontextualized sentences. It would be useful to try to offer a general perspective on how language teachers manage the complex array of instructional and interactional decisions that they confront in every teaching day, in particular, those decisions that contribute to create effective contexts and conditions for learning in the second or foreign language classroom, and, which should be focused on their students needs, expectations, and requirements (standards). Another important element that deserves analysis is teacher's training because training must take into account the change of environment and many schools in San Juan de Pasto have English teachers who provide a lot of material for students but they never develop and refine their own distinctive teaching style in order to take advantage from the materials. Here the teachers adopt the simple position that whatever factors

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affect the effort on learning, it is not teachers' problems because there is a conception that we are in an educational "regime" where the Ministry of National Education has, in some way, influenced on the teaching and learning process. This regime, somehow, states that only very few students can fail the subject. Thus, the teaching of a second language is bound to the combination of national policies and teacher's effort plus the students' desire to learn because the goal of learning the language must involve social and cultural aspects. With this overview, it is easy to see why the decisions that teachers make are crucial for the adequate or efficient development of foreign language proficiency in students. If teachers do not make informed decisions or if they have erroneous conceptions about what teaching and learning is then the students will be affected by them.

### *Problem Statement*

How do teachers' beliefs influence their choices regarding EFL methodology of the teaching-learning process in public high schools in Pasto?

### *Analysis of the Problem*

This study permits us to be updated on the frequent problems in the teaching-learning process, making emphasis in the teachers' beliefs about their methodology in the teaching-learning English process. When teachers, representing an educational system, seek to intervene in learning as they do by definition when they teach, they need to be able to justify themselves on two main counts. First, they need to be able to show that what is being taught is desirable, directly or indirectly, and second, they need to show that the procedures being used relate explicitly to students as they actually are, to the teaching situation as it actually is, and to the desired objectives.

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Most institutions do not have a clear philosophy about English teaching. The Ministry of National Education formulates general objectives that cannot be accomplished in the English area and the teachers of English have recently been interested much more, in what should be taught than in how. According to Bastidas (2002), Oviedo (1980) and my experience obtained as high school student years ago; there are several aspects that have a direct relation with the teacher of English, that could be found 1) the methodology that the teacher of English uses is not the most suitable in the English classes because the fact that teachers always use traditional methods like grammar Translation Method, does not allow learners to improve the four skills, 2) the low mastery of English due to the lack of adequate teacher training, 3) there are teachers who are authoritarian, who intend to develop their classes in a very strict way, it means they allow learners to become passive recipients of knowledge. Permissive teachers who permit students to do what they want affect the language learning process, 4) it is important to take into consideration the learner's personalities and the different learning styles because the fact that teachers teach in a general manner without considering the learner's needs and interests. Students want their teachers to know who they are, they would like their teachers to know their names, of course, but they also appreciate it when teachers have some understanding of their characters.

The research can reveal the main weaknesses and strengths of the teachers' beliefs on methodology face to the classroom because the teacher of English as a foreign language should analyze the real situation of his/her students in the classes before beginning the curriculum design and she/he should take into account the needs of his students.

### *Evaluation of the Problem*

This research is considered to be relevant because it could be said that there is a direct relationship between the English teachers' methodology and a low L2 proficiency in the high

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school students. This affirmation can be supported by the low use of the foreign language in the English classes that can be observed in high school in Pasto. This research will intend to give a clear idea about the current English teaching methodology. This information might help improve the L2 teaching-learning process in the high schools of Pasto since teachers may become aware of the elements that influence their decisions and to also be more conscious about the effectiveness of these decisions.

The problem needs a serious and well-organized research work, which facilitates the collection of the necessary information in order to achieve the objectives proposed. Besides there are useful sources such as specialized books, journals and internet articles to develop this study.

Finally, people who are going to be involved in this research have a genuine interest for helping to develop it and the high schools selected for this study do not impose any barrier in order to develop the research.

### ***General Objective***

To analyze how teacher's beliefs influence the choice of a certain method or approach to tackle the learning process of English as a foreign language.

### ***Specific Objectives***

The specific objectives that this study has are described next:

To identify the beliefs teachers have regarding the teaching-learning process.

To analyze how teachers' communicative competence concept influences the methodological aspects of the English teaching-learning process since according to the government regulations, the goal of the teaching-learning process should be to achieve communicative competence.

To describe the reasons why teachers apply certain methodological practices in public

high schools in Pasto.

### *Significance*

This is an important research because it represents not only the need of the novice language teachers to get informed about possible problems that they will have to face and help to resolve from the beginning of their professional life, but also because it represents the needs of the expert English teachers to acknowledge their weaknesses and to understand how these can be affecting the foreign language instruction process and, in turn, the overall proficiency attained by high school students.

Also, the study might be useful for English teachers who could know the needs of the learners and try to change the way of teaching English; and in this way to motivate the students in order to get an active participation in learning English. In addition, it is possible that teachers and students can make efforts to create a suitable environment to improve the management of foreign language through practice and with a communicative interaction between the teacher and the students and students to students.

Finally, the English language tends to become a second language in our country; therefore it is time to look for a better foreign language teaching in the high schools.

### *Limitations*

The possible limitations that might arise while carrying this research out are explained as follows:

One of the possible limitations may be the apathy of teachers, who would be the main participants in this research. If teachers do not have enough time or the willingness to answer the questions in an interview the information would be incomplete.

Another possible limitation is that the answers provided by the participants are not true since they do not want others to know about the way decisions are made in some classrooms.

Also, this research does not intend to provide information generalizable to all public high schools in Pasto because it is not possible to collect information about all the English teachers of the public high schools in this city.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter shows the main literature related to this study because it contextualizes the problem in order to understand the problematic situation from an academic point of view. Additionally, it presents a theoretical framework for this study which will be used to analyze the information once it has been collected. The most important topics here are related with what is L2 acquisition, teacher's roles, methodology, communicative competence and cognition

### *L2 Learning Theories*

According to Lightbow and Spada (1999) second language learners from different ages have dissimilar characteristics and access to different conditions of learning.

Language learning acquisition is a complex process which has been explained by many approaches; after studying all L2 learning theories, it has concluded that there are two of them having a relationship with the research item; the monitor hypothesis and the connectionism.

*The Monitor Hypothesis by Stephe Krashen.*

1. *The Acquisition/learning hypothesis.* According to Krashen (quoted by Lighbown & Spada,1999) we acquire language as we engage interacting with the second language. There are two ways to acquire a language. These are: acquisition( when we are in interaction with the language which we understand) and learning (when we form learning rules as a way of conscious study).

2. *The Monitor Hypothesis.* Krashen (quoted by Lighbown & Spada, 1999) argues that the humans being's brain is prepared in order to work as a monitor or editor that checks and repairs the output of the learning system. Besides the author has established three conditions to the successful use of the monitor; sufficient time, focus on form and knowledge of the rules.

3. *The Natural Order Hypothesis.* According to Krashen (quoted by Lighbown & Spada, 1999) we acquire the rules of a language in a productive sequence; some rules are acquired earlier than others. Therefore, there are rules that are not acquired necessarily in an automatic way.

4. *The Input Hypothesis.* Krashen (quoted by Lighbown & Spada, 1999) argues that we acquire language in only one way: by receiving comprehensible input, that is, by understanding messages. The language can be comprehensible in part because of clues as gestures, situations or prior information.

5. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis.* According to Krashen (quoted by Lighbown & Spada, 1999) everything has to do with the emotional state or the attitudes of learners. An imaginary barrier prevents learners from using input, which is available in the environment.

These hypotheses are theoretical support for this study in relation to the motivation level and interaction between teachers and learners in the classroom.

*Connectionism*

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According to Lighbown & Spada(1999) connectionists argue that there is a need to hypothesize the existence of a neurological device that is designed for language acquisition alone. This theory gives a greater importance to the role of the environment than to any innate knowledge in the learner be said that there is just one innate thing which is the capacity to learn.

This theory emphasizes that students build gradually their knowledge of the language thanks to exposure to a lot of instances of the linguistic features students eventually learn.

This theory is included because it supports one of the main tasks of the L2 teachers; the creation of an adequate environment inside the classroom through the usage of a meaningful and current language input. It is believed that the only way to polish oral and aural skills is to practice, however from my point of view the student not only must hear language features again and again, but also they must read and write them in order to achieve a complete linguistic learning.

### *Teaching the Second Language*

In the book “reflective teaching in a second language classroom”. Richards and Lockhart (1994) establish that teaching is a complex process that can be contextualized in a number of ways. Basically; language teaching is described by means of what teachers do, this is, in terms of the actions and the behaviors, which teachers carry out in the classroom and the effects of these on learning. The assumption about what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe. This view of teaching involves a cognitive and effective, and behavioral dimension (Clark and Paterson 1986; Lynch 1989).

According to Bastidas (2002) in the teaching-learning process, there are a set of variables such as: learner, teacher, the subject matter, the aims of learning and instruction, the methodology and the community.

For the purpose of this research paper, it is important to refer to those variables, which seem to



be more critical according to the teachers who are going to be surveyed in public high school of Pasto.

### *The Teacher*

In the book “teoría y práctica de la enseñanza del inglés” Bastidas (2002) establishes that the teacher is another important component in the teaching-learning event, because this component includes variables such as: characteristics of the teacher, training and preparation, personality, roles, age, etc. in order to clarify them it is relevant to analyze some of them.

#### *Characteristics of the teacher*

Bastidas (1991) refers to a crucial variable, which contributes to the students' success or failure in learning a foreign language. This variable refers to teacher's personality.

For Bastidas, personality is the total sum of what characterizes someone as an individual. It means that the effectiveness of the teacher's work sometimes depends on the personality because it can improve the learning environment and give themselves the opportunity of getting the students confidence.

According to Borg (2003) the notion of language teachers' characteristics is defined from a number of perspectives such as; personal qualities, pedagogical skills, classroom practices, subject matter and psychological constructs such as knowledge and attitudes.

Borg (2003) states that there are five factors that distinguish the experience of foreign language teachers from that of teachers of other subjects. These factors are as follows:

1) *The nature of the subject matter itself.* FL teaching is the only subject where effective instruction requires the teacher to use a medium the students do not yet understand.

2) *The interaction patterns necessary to provide instruction.* Effective FL instruction requires interaction patterns such as group work which are desirable, but not necessary

for effective instruction in other subjects.

3) *The challenge for teachers of increasing their knowledge of the subject.* Language teachers teach communication, not facts. In other subjects, teachers can increase their subject matter knowledge through books, but it is harder for FL teachers to maintain and increase their knowledge of the FL because doing so requires regular opportunities for them to engage in FL communication.

4) *Isolation.* FL teachers experience more than teachers of other subjects feelings of isolation resulting from the absence of colleagues teaching the same subject.

5) *The need for outside support for learning the subject.* For effective instruction, FL teachers must seek ways of providing extracurricular activities through which naturalistic learning environments can be created. Such activities are less of a necessity in other subjects.

According to Borg (2003) every one of these factors makes a distinctive good language teacher; additionally, there are many references to characteristics related to teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the learner.

### *Training and preparation*

Bastidas (2002) states that teachers' training embraces both initial training and further training. Initial training involves an appropriate combination of principle and theory, methodology and practical skills to teach a foreign language. Further training can be done as "in-service" training or being withdrawn from teaching in order to be given additional full-time training. In this way, he says that teachers can keep up with new ideas, share their experiences, consider the future, and give a professional dynamism to foreign language teaching.

### *Roles of the teacher*

Bastidas (1991) suggests that a teacher must assume several roles such as: facilitator of the communication process, organizer of resources, researcher and learner, needs analyst, group process manager, curriculum planer, researcher in the classroom, materials designer, dynamic classroom manager and the humanistic teacher must be a guide, friend and counselor.

## Teacher's Beliefs

According to Harmer (2007) the teacher of English should be able to adopt a variety of roles within the classroom which facilitate learning. Some of these roles come naturally and others have to be thought more carefully. The possible roles are explained as follows: (a) facilitator; teachers who are more of a resource than a transmitter of knowledge, he/she facilitates learning, (b) controller; teachers who view their jobs as the transmission of the knowledge from themselves to their students are usually very comfortable, (c) teacher who is a prompter encourage the students to think creatively, (d) the teacher who joins in an activity not only as a teacher, but also as a participant, (e) the teacher of English does not know everything about the language, so he/she should be able to offer guidance where students can look for the information; teacher who is resource encourage students to use resource material, (f) teaches as a tutor is the teacher who is in more personal contact with learners.

Harmer (2007) states that the roles that teachers take depends on what it are teachers wish students to achieve, so teachers need to be able to switch the various roles, judging when it is appropriate to use one or other of them.

According to Nunan (1996) teachers of English who work in high schools often complain about the difficulty of motivating their students because the students do not have immediate need to use the language. In fact it could be said that learners' motivation will mainly determined by their attitude toward the target culture, language and learning environment.

### ***Teacher cognition in language teaching***

Borg (2003) uses the term teacher cognition to refer to the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching, what teachers know, believe, and think. According to Borg language teacher cognition involves three themes:

1) *Cognition and prior language learning experience*. Teachers learn a lot about teaching through their vast experience as learners. As a result, Borg identified several factors related to

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teaching and learning situations which had made their own language learning experiences positive: (1) teacher personality and style mattered more than methodology; (2) teachers were caring and committed, and had clear expectations of their students; (3) teachers respected, and were respected by, the students; (4) as students, their motivation to learn enabled them to overcome inadequacies in the teaching; and (5) learning was facilitated by a positive classroom environment.

Borg (2003) found that teachers decide to promote or to avoid specific instructional strategies on the basis of their positive or negative experiences of these respective strategies as learners.

2) *Cognition and teacher education*. It shows that at the start of teacher education programmes, students may have inappropriate, unrealistic or naïve understandings of teaching and learning. The process of professional development is one in which new information and new experiences lead student teachers to add to, reflect upon and restructure their ideas in a progressive, complex and non-linear way, leading towards clearer organization of their personal theories into thematically distinct clusters of ideas. It is therefore inappropriate to conceptualize student teacher cognitive development in terms of a simple process of aggregation of new ideas.

3) *Cognition and classroom practice*. This suggests that with experience teachers learn to automatise the routines associated with managing the class, and can thus focus more attention on issues of content. Borg (2003) also found that experienced teachers engaged in more improvisational teaching than inexperienced teachers. He argues that 'this suggests that as teachers develop their teaching skills, they are able to draw less on proactive decision-making (the type of planning that occurs prior to teaching) and make greater use of interactive decision-making as a source of their improvisational performance.'

## *Methodology*

Bastidas (2002) says that methodology has been considered as the most central element of the language learning and teaching process. Methodology embraces the whole range of methods and techniques developed in the TESOL field. Many and diverse methods have been proposed for teaching second or foreign language, and methods appear to be based on very

different views of what language is and how a language is learnt.

*Methodological Knowledge:* It differentiates a native speaker from a teacher of the same language. The teacher of English not only has to be proficient in the language he/she is teaching, but also has to know how to teach it. This last condition implies a complex and depth study of teaching methods and activities which lead teachers to develop their classes taking into account variables such as; learners age, teaching proposal, available time for the classes, teaching materials, and so on. In summary, a good methodological knowledge is represented by the ability of choosing and developing the right L2 teaching method for every single context given.

According to Borg (2003) English language teaching methodology is more progressive than other subjects. The field of English language teaching is more advanced and innovative in its approach to teaching and learning.

For the purpose of this research, it is a relevant to study current methods and approaches such as the ones presented next:

*Communicative Approach.* Larsen-Freeman (2000) says that some students can produce sentences correctly and accurately in a lesson, but they can not use them appropriately when they really face a real communicative situation in and outside the classroom. So, learners communicative competence not only needs knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings, and functions, but also needs to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can serve a variety of functions. According to Hymes (quoted by Larsen-Freeman, 2000) being able to communicate requires more than a linguistic competence; it requires communicative competence.

*Characteristics.*

1. Language is used in a real context.
2. Grammar and vocabulary are learnt from the function, situational context, and the

role of the interlocutors.

3. Students in small groups often carry out activities.

#### *Learner's Role*

According to Larsen-Freeman (2002) students are communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiating meaning, in trying to make themselves understood even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete. Students learn to communicate by communicating; they are seen as more responsible managers of their own learning.

#### *Teacher's Role*

Larsen-Freeman (2000) establishes that the teachers are facilitator of their students' learning; teachers are managers of classroom activities. In this role, one of their major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.

The primary goal in this method is the acquisition of the communicative competence. According to Savignon (2001) the communicative competence has four sub-competences, which are: The grammatical, sociocultural, strategic, and discursive competences.

Teachers act as advisor during the activities because one important feature of this approach is the integration of the four linguistic skills to get a real context that demonstrates the appropriate use of the language.

#### ***Teacher's Communicative Competence***

When people hear something about communication most of the time they think of speaking. Savignon (2001) argues that there are a series of components which have to work

together in order to build an ideal concept of communicative competence, those components could be defined like this:

*Grammatical Competence.* It refers to the mastery of the linguistic code which could be represented through the ability of recognizing all the syntactic, morphological, lexical, and phonological features of a specific language to form meaningful words and sentences.

Having a grammatical competence is to use linguistic rules implicitly, not state them.

*Sociocultural Competence.* The ability of mastering the social rules of language use. These rules are learnt through a complex process which demands not only the study of words and their corresponding synonyms, but also the study of different social context where they can be used. It is to know what to say in a specific situation and to know how to say it in order to assure the comprehension of the message sent.

*Discourse Competence.* It has to do with the ability to successfully interpret and associate a series of sentences or utterances in order to find meaningful and to achieve coherent texts that are relevant to a given context. Sometimes, the connections between sentences are not explicit, so a person discourse competence is demonstrated when they are able to establish a global meaning of a passage, conversation or book, by using their capacity to focus the interpretation of every sentence of the text through a complete and coherent meaning which explains everything.

*Strategic Competence.* It is the ability to use what we do know associated to the experience acquired of the contexts we have experienced in order to get our messages across. Common life is full of dialogues where human beings have to use their oral and aural skills to interact each other. The question is how L2 learners keep alive their dialogues when they do not understand a sentence or do not find a specific word to convey their message; the answer is the use of strategies of communication such as; paraphrasing, repetition, hesitation, and guessing

which must be mastered by the learner in order to avoid possible communication misconceptions.

These components must be known by every single L2 teacher because they suggest a model of communicative competence as a basis for curriculum design and classroom practice. They show that methodological training learnt by teachers at the university must be supported by a communicative competence giving them confidence to develop a professional work whose L2 teaching can be developed through communicative activities where students learn and improve all the language skills; listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

### *Language Use in the Classroom*

According to Jack C. Richards et al there is a distinguishing feature of the language classrooms which has to do usually with both the goal of the lesson and the means by which this goal is achieved. This point of view is associated with what teaching strategies or methods a teacher uses, it is necessary to give directions, explain activities, clarify the procedures students should use on an activity, and check students understanding.

Here, Jack C. Richards et al (1994) say that there are some strategies that teachers can use in order to make their directions and instructions understandable to the learners.

1. Speaking More Slowly. Teachers often use a slower rate of speech that they would use in other normal situations.
2. Using Pauses. This strategy gives learners more time to process what the teacher says and facilitates their comprehension.
3. Changing Pronunciation. It has to do with how teachers use a clear articulation or more standard style of speech; teachers have to avoid reductions and contractions.
4. Modifying Vocabulary. Teachers often replace a difficult word with a more commonly used word.



5. Modifying Grammar. Simplify the grammatical structure of sentences.
6. Modifying Discourse. When teachers have to repeat themselves or answer their own question.

#### *Learners Language Use in the Classroom*

Jack C. Richards et al (1994) affirms that the classroom is the primary situation in which language learners have the opportunity to use the target language, because they use the language for a variety of purposes within lessons including interacting with the teacher and with other learners. So, it is one approach to understanding learners' language in terms of communicative functions which occur during the class.

According to Borg (2003) oral production plays a central role more than in any other subject, speaking is fundamental to language teaching because incorrect learner output in language teaching is more acceptable because language teachers accept learners' errors more than teachers of other subjects.

Rosenshine and Steven quoted by Jack C. Richards et al (1994) identify six fundamental instructional functions.

1. Review and check previous work.
2. presenting new content/skills
3. Guiding students practice.
4. Giving feedback.
5. Providing independent student practice.
6. Assessing students learning.

These kinds of functions vary according to the age of the learners, the content of the class, and the kind of activities and learning arrangements that are used.

### *The Learner*

Stevens (quoted by Bastidas, 1978) affirmed that every learner is an individual with his/her own profile of characteristics that mark him as different from all other learners even though he obviously also share the universal characteristics of all humans.

Nunan (1996) says that the attitude of learners toward the language, the learning situation, and the roles that they are expected to play within that learning situation will have an important effect on the learning process. If learners have a negative attitude toward the language, the culture, the classroom, or the teacher, learning can be impaired ineffective.

#### *Role of the learner*

The different methods of teaching English imply different roles for the learners. According to Nunan learners expect that their attitude in learning English is to be passive

recipient of wisdom dispensed by the teacher, while the teacher expects the learners to be active participants in their own learning process.

### *Cultural aspects*

#### *Beliefs about teaching English*

Richards and Lockhart (1994) claim that teaching is a personal activity and every teacher brings to teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes an effective teaching. English represents different connotations to different people. English is represented by literature, English-speaking, the language of colonialism, business language. In the case of English that teachers teach these connotations vary significantly from one individual to another, but it is important to examine the underlying beliefs about culture.

Cultural features are part of the life style of a community and, therefore, of the

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communication process. The English teaching and learning process must consider this aspect and incorporate it through its different activities according to the social context including cultural features, typical simulations of each community that speaks the second language. Thus, the students have the opportunity to appreciate them and as far as possible, develop a positive attitude towards the other culture and also appreciate their own culture.

Richards and Lockhart (1994) found that teachers of English believe that their primary role in the classroom is to: a) provide useful learning experiences, b) provide a model of correct language use, c) answer learner's questions, and d) correct learner's errors. Most teachers believe that their main role as an English teacher is to: a) help students discover effective approaches to learning, b) pass on knowledge and skills to their pupils, and c) adapt teaching approaches to match their students' needs. All these aspects contribute to teacher who has been exposed to

thousands of hours of teaching from a variety of different students to define views about what constitutes effective or ineffective teaching.

### *Beliefs about learning English*

Brindley, quoted by Richards and Lockhart (1994), argues that learners and teachers bring with them different expectations concerning not only the learning process in general, but also concerning what will be learned in a common English class. Teachers' beliefs about learning English may be based on their training, their experience, or their own experience as language learners.

The teacher of English must be a learning facilitator in the English teaching learning process and for this reason his responsibilities are multiplied in different ways such as:

- Analyzer of student's needs and interests.

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- Organizer of the course contents according to the needs and objectives of the syllabus.
- Observer of the activities developed by students.
- Adviser during the development of the English activities.

Taking into account all these aspects mentioned above the teachers of English might value some language strategies in order to improve learners' strengths and weaknesses. Richards and Lockhart (1994) state that learners often have specific beliefs about their own abilities as language learners and the teacher must help them to achieve their goals. Here the teachers are a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Teachers have the primary task of encouraging the language use.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The method used to develop the research study together with the participants, procedure, sample, data analysis and the ethical issues is presented in this chapter.

These aspects are important to be known in order to understand the procedures followed while carrying out this research.

### *Research Design*

This research is going to be descriptive and qualitative, which is considered an active process in which the researcher interacts with the subject being researched by means of observation and interviews. Researchers have to be present to describe and to understand the different phenomena, therefore the importance of observation.

Qualitative research is composed by a specific design: it is the ethnographic one, which is

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based on the description of places, people and objects through analysis of the environment.

About people, the ethnographic study let us examine their classroom behavior, and ways of life; through the observation and description we can show other people's cultural aspects. The importance of ethnography is that the researcher is a participant observer by means of immersion in the group.

This kind of investigation was chosen because it allows the interaction with people. This paper follows the steps that the qualitative research offers: the identification of the problem, and its corresponding description; taking into account some parameters and the point of view of some authors.

### *Participants, Setting and Sample*

These aspects are fundamental in qualitative and ethnographic research because the readers of this paper have to know in some way the people, places and sample entailed in this research.

#### *Participants and Sample*

For this research, a group of English teachers from five public high schools who teach ninth English level in the city of Pasto is going to be selected. Teachers' age ranges from 30 to 50 years old; they are both female and male who belong to a medium socio-economic level. These institutions were chosen because some observations of English classes and the practicum were developed there. The results of this research are going to be obtained with the collaboration of these participants.

#### *Setting*

The schools are public institutions which are located in the South West part of the city. These schools have the basic necessary resources for education, and these institutions belong to a middle social class. The characteristics of these schools are very similar to other public schools,

it has big buildings, wide and colorful playgrounds, their classrooms have many pictures and they are roomy, but the number of students is very large, so these places seem small.

### *Procedure*

First, permission is going to be asked in the institutions. Different schedules are going to be used to develop class observations; it is possible that the class observation takes two hours of classes. Participation in the English classes is going to be the first stage. Notes are going to be taken about the different lesson plans, the steps, the activities, etc. but emphasizing every observation on the way the teacher carries them out.

### *Data collection*

In this paper, the necessary information is going to be collected through different means such as classroom observation, interviews, books and readings about the chosen topic.

Open questionnaires are practical tools which consist on a series of written questions which are answered by the subjects in their own words. This type of technique is going to be used in order to obtain truthful written data which facilitates the research process and which can provide teachers with questions that allow them to freely express their ideas, beliefs and conceptions regarding the reasons why they decide to apply a certain type of methodology over other methods and approaches in public schools in Pasto.

### *Data Analysis*

Qualitative data is taken into account as a result of observations and interviews, which are going to be analyzed, ranked and interpreted according to Bastidas (2002) analysis model.

Bastidas (2002) proposes an analysis of the information which allows the researcher to make a spiral, because he/she takes the information, analyzes it, and if there are some doubts he/she should focus on the research and he/she has to repeat the procedure. Bastidas proposes some categories, themes or patterns, the analysis of the emergent hypotheses, the

interpretation of the information and, finally, the writing of the results. This is a systematic and ordered process which lets the researcher have an excellent management of the collected data.

### *Ethical Issues*

The principals of the schools are going to be requested for permission to carry out the observation. Teachers' participation will be voluntary, so they could leave the research whenever they want. This study will avoid any physical or psychological damage against teachers, students and institutions.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, all the results that were obtained through the use of classroom observations and interviews are reported and analyzed. The organization of all this information helped to illustrate the problematic situation according to the aims and objectives that were pointed out at the beginning of the study; this data will determine how teacher's beliefs influence the choice of a certain method or approach to tackle the learning process of English as a foreign language.

In order to organize the data, the results of this research, starting with the category, subcategories and the objectives which are related to them are presented. Moreover, the answers were grouped and categorizes according to the replies of every teacher in order to have a more accurate interpretation of the data.

### *Subcategories Analysis*

For this research study, the answers of the teachers were categorized regarding the main aspects that have to do with the specific objectives proposed in chapter one.

#### *Beliefs about English.*

To analyze this category it is necessary to mention the first specific objective "To identify

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the beliefs teachers have regarding the teaching-learning process” and this category has three sub-categories that are beliefs about English, teachers’ beliefs renewal, and teachers’ beliefs and achievement.

### *Beliefs about English*

This sub-category is related to what teachers think about English in public high schools. For this sub-category the following question was asked: why do you think English is an important language?

Five English teachers answered these questions as follows:

Teacher 1 (T1): the English language is important because it is the international language. If you want to study a career at the university, you need English; if you want a postgraduate scholarship, you need English.

Teacher 2 (T2): because it is an international language and it is used for communicating with different kind of people around the world, specially talking about business.

Teacher 3 (T3): because you have the opportunity to travel and have the opportunity to get an excellent job, besides if you wanna go to another country is more easy.

Teacher 4 (T4): English is important because it is the language that is spoken in whole world and English is necessary for whatever job.

Teacher 5 (T5): it is the most important language in the world and it is necessary a compulsory to learn English because the world is changing and every thing is new.

According to these answers, English represents different connotations to different people. English is represented by literature, English-speaking, the language of colonialism, or business language. In the case of the English that teachers teach these connotations vary significantly from one individual to another, but it is important to examine the underlying beliefs about



culture.

*Teachers' beliefs renewal*

This sub-category attempts to show how much teachers' beliefs about English teaching and learning last and how these beliefs evolve in some public high schools in Pasto. The gathered information was obtained through the question: What changes would you like to see in the school English program?

Teacher 1 (T1): The number of students: they are too many, or there are too many, anyway it is really difficult to work with 53 Ss in a classroom, I mean, in a small classroom.

Teacher 2 (T2): Some topics in different levels, different kind of activities, extra activities, no the normal ones.

Teacher 3 (T3): the students should learn only conversational English, but for that it needs to change the methodology of ICFES exam.

Teacher 4 (T4): we have only 3 hours in the week and there are many students in the classroom and it would be a good idea to change the English classes at the start of the day.

Teacher 5 (T5): we need some material for example a tape recorder, TV, DVD, because these materials will help us to create a new teaching environment.

Regarding the answers provided by the interviewed teachers, I can see that the teachers' beliefs about teaching-learning English process, in most of the cases, have a little adjustment every year. Nonetheless, in some high schools teachers agree that the number of students in the English classes is too many and the time table is not the suitable one because most of the schools just only have three hours per week and these English classes are placed at the end of the school day. These aspects have an incidence in the English teaching and learning process and it must be taken into consideration by administrators since this can affect the English teaching-learning

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process. According to the answers and with the help of the class observation it is important to notice that it does not matter the lack of material or number of students; English teachers are always trying to implement new things to the English program. They try to include cultural features, typical simulations of each community where the second language is spoken. Thus, the students will have the opportunity to appreciate them and as far as possible, develop a positive attitude towards the other culture and also appreciate their own culture.

### *Teachers' beliefs and achievement*

This sub-category intends to identify the possible influence of teachers' beliefs about teaching-learning process at the end of every academic year and at the end of high school. I gather the information through the question: What do you think are the most important elements in an effective language teaching program in the school where you work?

Teacher 1 (T1): Organization, agreement between co-workers, qualification of the teachers, some resources.

Teacher 2 (T2): the program is especially according to the standards, it is good because the goals are advanced.

Teacher 3 (T3): a tape recorder, a cd, English laboratory, books with short stories, computers.

Teacher 4 (T4): the program is good but there is a problem with the schedule because the classes are at the end of the schedule so many students are bored and no motivate.

Teacher 5 (T5): in the school we are two teachers and we prepare the program and I think it is good because we try to give a complete program for each course.

According to these opinions of the teachers, I can say that they consider that the English program is very important and relevant instrument, but it is necessary to add some important things in order to get a complete English program development. Teachers think that the better the

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English program is, the better the results will be at the end of every grade and at the end of the high school. However, English teachers do not mention that they are essential elements in the goals achievement, but in some high schools do not strive for giving the best of their knowledge, or to make an agreeable class, most of them do not have interest in students' progress. Therefore, teachers should keep in mind which is their role and how it can influence students' learning.

According to Harmer (2001), a teacher can be controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant, tutor and a resource. The adoption of one of these roles depends on the activities that which also determine a varied and interesting class.

Another important aspect has to do with planning or syllabus design because some teachers show a lack of information related to this aspect. Strevens (1977) states that syllabus design refers to a set of items to be taught taking into account the audience and the schedule time. The first purpose of the creation of a syllabus is to reach all the goals at the end of the course. Moreover, two aspects are mainly considered in syllabus design: the selection of themes, its grading, and materials of instruction. Some of the reasons why the implementation of syllabus design in education has given an important value to teachers are due to the fact that it gives major organization and status to the language learning-language teaching process. It is also important to mention that a syllabus should be realistic and relevant. Galeano (1986) states that the teachers should previously plan their syllabi in order to organize aims, materials, content, methodology, and evaluation taking into account the learners' needs and characteristics, and their previous knowledge of English.

Finally it is necessary to talk about the importance of the methodology because nobody mentions it. Pedagogy, methodology, instruction, teaching are terms closely related among them

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due to the fact that pedagogy in a very general way refers to studying the teaching methods which are widely explained inside of the methodology field. At the same time, instruction embodies knowing and understanding the different kinds of methods what will be practice in teaching by a professional. All of these aspects should be focus on the learners' needs and the context where these four aspects take place.

Brown (1987) states that one of the first methods that has emerged in the teaching

field was Grammar Translation Method based on reading, writing activities, and translation until arriving to methods such as Communicative Language Teaching which intend to give students basis to communicate genuinely, spontaneously, and meaningfully.

### *Beliefs about teaching English*

This second category is based on the way how teachers develop their English classes and modify their methodology. This section intends to collect the information about how teachers' communicative competence concept influences the methodological aspects of the English teaching-learning process since according to the government regulations, the goal of the teaching-learning process should be to achieve communicative competence which is the second specific objective.

I have considered four sub-categories. They are methodological knowledge, method selection criteria, communicative competence concept, and teachers' role.

### *Methodological knowledge*

In this sub-category, the process to carry out the English classes was analyzed. Besides this sub-category intends to know how much influence has the English teacher in the teaching-learning process. I asked the following question: what are, in your opinion, the qualities of a

good teacher?

Teacher 1 (T1): Nowadays a “good” teacher must know what he teaches, how he teaches it, he must be in permanent contact with his students’ world: what they listen to, what they watch, what they wear, what they say. The information and the communication technologies are important, but not so. A teacher is a human being in contact with other human beings, both deserve respect.

Teacher 2 (T2): Responsible, patient, good senses of humor, love their work, and love children, enthusiastic.

Teacher 3 (T3): creative, interested in the change, responsible and a little mood.

Teacher 4 (T4): in my opinion a good teacher has to know very good the things that he is going to teach and he has to know the new things about his profession.

Teacher 5 (T5): a good teacher is a person who is responsible in the development of the classes because students see the teacher as an example for their future.

After analyzing all propositions presented to this question and with the help of the class observation I can say that teachers’ statements are true. However, I believe that teachers’ answers do not describe adequately the teaching methods applied in the English classes, because the quality of the teacher can present either positive or negative qualities which influence on the language learning and language teaching process. The authors describe some characteristics about poor teachers such as: not showing an encouraging personality, not showing a correct knowledge and mastery of the language that he is teaching, and not showing any strong sense of vocation as a teacher. Contrary to an excellent teacher who has all the characteristics above mentioned, and he also is capable to improve the learners’ progress, and to create his own materials for teaching. However, all these constraints can become key aspects to effectiveness

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for the language learning and language teaching process if they are focused on a positive way.

Method applying has to do with two main facts; the first one is the methodological knowledge, through which English teachers evaluate contexts where classes will be developed, and second one is the teachers' personalities, which has to do with the human being conception regarding a specific selection of the method to convey his knowledge. This is supported Richards

and Rodgers (1994) who explain that the teaching process is a personal activity which could explain why some teachers prefer a specific method to develop their classes.

According to this I can conclude that learners sometimes feel inhibited when they pronounce the language and they use it in order to communicate in an oral way, teachers play a fundamental role because they should create a safe atmosphere that stimulates learners' self-confidence, and encourage them to try to discover all the aspects of the target language.

### *Method selection criteria*

This sub-category is related to the criteria that teachers consider selecting their methodology. To get this information, this question was used: How do you decide which method is more suitable for each teaching situation?

Teacher 1 (T1): It depends on the topic, the classroom conditions, and the resources.

Teacher 2 (T2): It depends on the age, attitude and behavior of the students. And also different kind of skills they have.

Teacher 3 (T3): well, if you prepare for icfes you need the students can interpret, if you think in a real life you need students speak for a real communication so, you think in each situation and you decide.

Teacher 4 (T4): I prepare the classes according to the topic and the resources that I have

for example textbook, cd.

Teacher 5 (T5) I like to prepare the grammar rules about the topic that I have to teach and I prepare the exercises according to the topic because in the exercises I include the new vocabulary.

According to the answers of the teachers and the class observation process they chose the method taking into account the knowledge of the students, the topics to be taught, the activities that will be used, the textbook, and the schedule. Even though they have two or three courses that that belong to the same level, they plan every class according to the knowledge of each group. Moreover, the interviewed teachers take into consideration aspects that let the lesson plans be varied and flexible. That is why they think about the use of different and additional activities that are implemented depending on time and English knowledge of learners.

Regarding teachers' answers, it could be pointed out that teachers are right when they look for additional and diverse activities to include variety in their English classes and the chosen approaches and methods depend on the content they will and the kind of students they have.

#### *Communicative competence concept*

In this sub-category I identify how much is important the English methodology in public high school in Pasto. Besides, this sub-category intends to show what teaching methods teachers attempt to implement in the English classes. The question was: What teaching methods do you attempt to implement in your L2 classes?

Teacher 1 (T1): I work with the communicative approach and I try to develop the content based approach and the task based approach.

Teacher 2 (T2): TPR, and communicative approach.

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Teacher 3 (T3): well, there are five or six methods that I learned, but I work with my own methods “listening and real talk” I don't like grammar, I like to learn in context and teaching in context “ I teach grammar in context, it is different”.

Teacher 4 (T4): I use a little communicative approach but it is difficult to keep it because there are many students in the classroom which is a barrier to teach in a right way.

Teacher 5 (T5): I like to teach the grammatical structures and vocabulary about the topic, after that I give students some copies related to the topic and we develop the in the course.

Taking into consideration the answers given by the teachers, it could be said that they are autonomous to make the decisions about the development, the implementation and the renewal of their methodology. For the purpose of this sub-category and taking into account the class observation it is important to clarify every single aspect about communicative competence.

*Grammatical competence. After developing the process and analyzed the answers presented to this question it could be said that teachers' statements are true. To include lexical, morphological, and syntactical aspects is important because through these ones students can develop essential features to develop writing skills. Concerning to this, T5 said that he likes to teach grammar and vocabulary.*

*I believe that theory must be used. English knowledge not only has to be demonstrated by stating grammatical rules or translating words, but also applying them in comprehensible texts. This idea is supported by Savignon (2001) who states that teachers must have the mastery of a linguistic code represented through syntactic, morphological, lexical, and phonological features of a specific language to form meaningful words and sentences which*



not only has to be taught, but encouraged to use in real context by the students.

After analyzing the answers I conclude that teachers' concept about grammatical competence affect the students' proficiency because this type of competence is considered as a very important part in the teaching and learning process which is looking for teaching a linguistic code not for stating grammatical rules, but apply them in real context through the development of short passages by students.

*Sociolinguistic competence. I believe that sociolinguistic competence is very important because through its development students can not only clearly understand written and spoken discourses, but using the adequate lexicon to create them according to the contexts given. The concept is supported by Savignon (2001) who argues that it is important to know how to apply the right words in the right contexts through the use of linguistic features such as the synonyms because they assure the comprehension of the message.*

After analyzing the answers I conclude that sociolinguistic competence importance is well known by almost all teachers but it is not developed in English classes which do affect students' proficiency. It is necessary to know how to compare the linguistic features of a language according to the context to have success in the communicative process. I think that teachers must design activities dealing with this kind of competence in order to promote the English understanding in formal and informal situations which prepares students to face linguistic challenges in real context.

*Discourse competence. Even most of the people associate discourse competence with speech ability, it has to do with how well a human interprets the discourse to give a correct response to it. This idea is shared by Savignon (2001) who argues that the coherence in a text is*

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hashed on, to interpret and to associate series of sentences in order to find a meaningful whole. Besides, it could measure when the student establishes a global meaning in a book, using interpretation abilities of every sentence of a text.

I conclude that discourse competence ability is important for teachers who develop and measure it through an acceptable way which is the reading analysis. This concept does not affect students' proficiency because teachers are looking for establishing a good level of interpretation by students which is an indispensable part in the communicative process.

*Strategic competence.* I believe that strategic competence is important because it looks for a specific objective; to convey linguistic messages. If a student can not find the right words to explain what he wants to say, there are ways such as paraphrasing or hesitation which can be useful to do it. This concept is shared by Savignon (2001) who says strategies of communication such as paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, and guessing are valid when a person wants to understand and convey a message successfully.

Taking into account this, and with the support of the class observation I conclude that teachers' conception about strategic competence is not clear enough. The human being has tools such as paraphrasing or hesitation which is useful to understand and convey information. However, I think that they are not being developed by teachers who prefer to do an explanation which affects negatively the students' proficiency.

### *Teachers' role*

This sub-category pretends to show the real importance of the English teacher has in the teaching-learning process talking about their role in the English classes. The following question was asked: What is, in your opinion, the teacher's role in the L2 classroom?

Teacher 1 (T1): The teacher must be a sort of guide, he must show the path, but he must

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not walk over it. The teacher has to make his students walk that path and make other paths.

Teacher 2 (T2): identifying the necessities that students have to learn a second language and motivate the students to practice in class as much as possible.

Teacher 3 (T3): The teacher share with the class a real talk and permit their children grew up in knowledge. I can be sure they learn English practicing and practicing so, they need motivation.

Teacher 4 (T4): the teacher of English has to be a friend because today students are different, so the teacher needs to know what students like it means teacher must know the students' world.

Teacher 5 (T5) in my case I work with adolescents so I have to be a guide and a friend because in this age student think that teachers can help them with the problems, but in the English classes is important to be strict because the classes are different to the break or the street.

Borg (2003) states that there are five factors that distinguish the experience of foreign language teachers from those teachers of other subjects. These factors are as follows:

- 1) the nature of the subject matter itself; FL teaching is the only subject where effective

instruction requires the teacher to use a medium the students do not yet understand. (2) The interaction patterns necessary to provide instruction. Effective FL instruction requires interaction patterns such as group work which are desirable, but not necessary for effective instruction in other subjects. (3) The challenge for teachers of increasing their knowledge of the subject. Language teachers teach communication, not facts. In other subjects, teachers can increase their subject matter knowledge through books, but it is harder for FL teachers to maintain and increase

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their knowledge of the FL because doing so requires regular opportunities for them to engage in FL communication. (4) Isolation. FL teachers experience more than teachers of other subjects feelings of isolation resulting from the absence of colleagues teaching the same subject. (5) The need for outside support for learning the subject. For effective instruction, FL teachers must seek ways of providing extracurricular activities through which naturalistic learning environments can be created. Such activities are less of a necessity in other subjects.

According to Borg (2003) every one of these factors makes a distinctive good language teacher; additionally, there are many references to characteristics related to teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the learner.

### *Beliefs about learning English*

This third category looks for the opinions of teachers about the diverse aspects that are considered by the teachers in order to improve their teaching styles and the way how learners act in the English classes. This section intends to collect the information about the reasons why teachers apply certain methodological practices in public high schools which are the third specific objective. There are four sub-categories as follow: learning a foreign language, teachers' training, learners' role and relevance of learning.

### *Learning a foreign language*

This sub-category, it is considered the different points of view that teachers have about learning in order to plan every teaching situation. To gather the information for this sub-category, it was asked: How do you define learning?

Teacher 1 (T1): In my opinion and according to my experience and what I learned at the

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university, learning is a complex process which involves motivation of the student, knowledge and methodology of the teacher, personal conditions of the students (social status, divorced parents, age, psychological situation, sociological situation, family role), teacher qualification, institutional resources, classroom conditions (number of students), hours per week, etc.

Teacher 2 (T2): It is a process that a person has to follow to know about something new.

Teacher 3 (T3): when students get a real talk.

Teacher 4 (T4): for me learning is a process that a person faces in order to know new things and it involves many aspects such as environment, teachers, students and personality and many other.

Teacher 5 (T5): learning requires many things and talking about English it is necessary the collaboration between teachers, students and the directors of the school because in many schools there are much more students in the English courses.

According to answers of the teachers, they have a clear idea about learning because most of them consider that learning is a process which involves many aspects such as; students, knowledge and methodology of the teacher, personal conditions of the students. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999) second language learners from different ages have dissimilar characteristics and access to different conditions of learning; language learning acquisition is a complex process which has been explained by many approaches and it involves many aspects and factors.

### *Teachers' training*

In this sub-category, I pretend to know how much important is for English teachers their

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daily preparation about new methodologies and about what are the most important components or skills teachers consider to be learned . For this sub-category two questions was asked; the first question was: What kind of training do you think language teachers need?

Teacher 1 (T1): I think teachers need psychological and sociological training.

Teacher 2 (T2): Conferences about new methods, new material.

Teacher 3 (T3): Teachers need training about new methodologies to teach and only practice and listening.

Teacher 4 (T4): we need congresses or seminars about the new methodologies.

Teacher 5 (T5): the English textbooks are so old it is a good idea that any person gives information about the new books and about any kind of English events because in some cases we receive the information too late.

After analyzing all the propositions presented by teachers to this question I can say that teachers' statements are true. Despite knowing about the updating processes importance, most of the teachers do not develop them adequately because of personal reasons which avoid the improvement of their classes according to the students.

I believe that updating process is very important for teachers because they provide new and useful ideas about how to improve their knowledge. Despite updating can be done through current reading of English teaching methodology books where the L2 teacher can learn from whatever type of updated concepts helping to improve his/her classes, it is more important a direct contact to congresses or seminars having an intrinsic motivation, it is an active part of teachers' role, who must demonstrate their professional conduct through the implementation of curricula and methods updated. This ides is supported by Bastidas (2002) who argues that updating process of training received from college studies never ends because the English

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teacher has to modify his/her approach to fit the ever-changing factors in the field of learning and teaching.

According to this, I can conclude that even though the updating process concept is well known by the teacher, it is not well developed because of reasons such as “lack of time” which are not consistent. Most of the teachers develop self-actualization processes through books and articles reading which are very important, but not enough to be updated in the teaching field.

Teachers have to assist to events such as congresses or seminars where not only is possible to

improve methodological knowledge, but interchange experiences with colleagues in the language taught.

The second question that helps to support this sub-category was the following question: What do you consider are the most important skills or components to be learned (e.g. Grammar, vocabulary, Pronunciation)?

Teacher1 (T1): The four skills are absolutely necessary, as well as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Nevertheless reading comprehension is a key to success, not only in L1, but also in L2.

Teacher 2 (T2): All of them.

Teacher 3 (T3): well, I consider the pronunciation is the most important, but you need practice and practice, so first of all you need listening.

Teacher 4 (T4): every skill is important and necessary, but I consider that listening is so important because students need to learn to listen first; after that they can improve the other skills.

Teacher 5 (T5): for me is important grammar and vocabulary because if students know

well these things they can learn in an easy way the rest of the skills.

Bastidas (2002) states that teachers' training embraces initial training that involves an appropriate combination of principle and theory, methodology and practical skills to teach a foreign language. Further training can be done as "in-service" training or being withdrawn from teaching in order to be given additional full-time training. In this way, teachers can keep up with new ideas, share their experiences, consider the future, and give a professional dynamism to foreign language teaching. Borg (2003) also found that experienced teachers engaged in more improvisational teaching than inexperienced teachers. He argues that 'this suggests that as teachers develop their teaching skills, they are able to draw less on proactive decision-making (the type of planning that occurs prior to teaching) and make greater use of interactive decision-making as a source of their improvisational performance.

#### *Learners' role*

This sub-category refers to the role that the learners have in the teaching-learning English process and the English level that students get at the end of the high school. To collect the data the following questions were used: What role are student expected to assume in your classroom?

Teacher 1 (T1): They are supposed to pay attention, to practice, to do the exercises, to check them out, to correct the workshops, to study and to practice over.

Teacher 2 (T2): If they are motivated participate a lot, especially with videos or cartoons.

Teacher 3 (T3): well, their attitudes day by day are changing, they want teacher gives them opportunities in which the act can be real, and just the teacher needs to work with different methodologies.

Teacher 4(T4): in my classes the students participate but in some cases they just only sit and pay attention to the teacher; it depends on how interesting is the class or the theme.



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Teacher 5 (T5): most students pay attention to my classes when I do an interesting class, but I say students pay attention when I explain the grammar rules because about this explanation depends the other exercises in the class.

According to all interviewed teachers and with the help of observations, the role that students assume is basically to pay attention to the teachers' explanation, but this attention depends on how teachers develop their classes, if the classes are interesting students do not pay attention to the teachers. The class observation helps to clarify that most students do not like that the teachers speak in English they prefer the classes in Spanish, so the real role that is supposed that students have to carry out in the classroom it is not the right one, because there are a minimal use of the second language. According to Borg (2003) oral production plays a central role more than in any other subject, speaking is fundamental to language teaching because incorrect learner output in language teaching is more acceptable because language teachers accept learners' errors more than teachers of other subjects.

The second question supports the first one; the question was: What attitudes do you think your students associate with English?

Teacher 1 (T1): Most of the students are not aware of the importance of this language, until it is too late. They think English is not necessary, not important, it is boring and difficult, but they make it this way.

Teacher 2 (T2): Some of them think about future and they are really interested in learning English some of them, they don't care about it because they don't like the subject.

Teacher 3 (T3): When you talk about Americans, when you talk about Icfes, when you talk about their future, when you talk about traveling some students like the subject.

Teacher 4 (T4): many students do not like English classes because they think that English is

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not important, not necessary and they basically think that English is difficult to learn.

Teacher 5 (T5): in my classes I can see that many students do not like English classes because they think English, but some students like English when I talk to them about the American culture or about any actor or singer from an English country students seem like English.

Learners and teachers bring with them different expectations concerning not only the learning process in general, but also concerning what will be learned in a common English class. Strevens (quoted by Bastidas, 1978) affirmed that every learner is an individual with his/her own profile of characteristics that mark him as different from all other learners even though he obviously also share the universal characteristics of all humans.

### *Relevance of learning*

In this sub-category, teachers gave their opinions about the effective ways to learn a foreign language. The question used to gather the information was: what are, in your opinion, the most effective ways to learn a foreign language?

Teacher1 (T1): By studying it. If you want to learn, you learn; if you need to learn, you will learn. In our environment it is impossible to learn a foreign language without studying it.

Teacher 2 (T2): Using different kind of materials specially those which are related to the real life (computers, videos, news, music, technology).

Teacher 3 (T3): First of all listening and interact with their mates and teacher, the worst thing learning grammar, next thing is practice and practice, as you learn to play the guitar.

Teacher 4 (T4): the only way to learn a foreign language is by studying it. There is not an easy way to learn English if you do not study and practice the things that you learned.

Teacher 5 (T5): it is a good idea to practice every thing that students learn because they

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need to remember the new vocabulary and the grammar structures, and one of the effective ways is the practice.

According to the opinions of the teachers, all of them agree that the only way to learn a language is practicing it. But a distinction between mother tongue, second language and foreign language should be done in the educational field. Since, a second language is considered as an official language in its community and is also mainly related to language teaching. Opposed to a foreign language that is not considered as official in the community but it is also mainly related to language learning. A) mother tongue refers to the language that is acquired in the early stage of life in a natural way. In this process, there is a close link between the children and the context where they are involved in. b) Second language refers to the language that is learned after acquiring the mother tongue in order to communicate daily. This kind of language takes place where one speaks this language (the case of immigrants who travel to another country) and also in bilingual educative institutions where such factors as pupil age, the level of academic studies, the intensity of hours dedicated to communicate, the formal instruction in the language are considered as relevant in the language learning/language teaching process. C) Foreign language refers to the language that is learned in a place where it is not used to communicate daily. This kind of language is only used in particular circumstances.

Learning refers to a conscious process. For Krashen, learning is less important than acquisition because when people learn a language these people cannot totally develop their fluency in the communication. Besides, learning process cannot become an acquisition process due to the fact that when people learn a language, they worry about the grammatical rules and do not pay attention to how they are expressing their ideas, while when people acquire a language, their ideas are more fluent. And learning refers to a conscious process. Stevens (1977) states that

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the language learning/language teaching process is determined by six important aspects such as pupil age, stage of proficiency, educational aims, learner involvement, language of instruction status, and target language status.

It could be said that a teacher should dispose of a great deal of materials which helps to practice and provides learners with relevant activities for language learning-language teaching process and. These materials need to be realistic, that is, they should be usable and understandable; relevant, that is, materials should be created according to learners' characteristics; interesting; encouraging, that is, they should make learners feel their progress; and finally, compatible with the methodology that teachers use inside the classroom. Although, materials are important for the language learning/language teaching process, some countries do not have enough educational budgets to access to a wide range of materials.

### *Relationship to the English teaching and learning process*

In relation to this category it is necessary to divide it into two sub-categories as follow: teaching as a profession, English classroom.

#### *Teaching as a profession*

This sub-category intends to show some possible aspects that may influence the English teaching-learning process in public high schools in San Juan de Pasto. To gather this information the following question was asked: What changes do you think are necessary in the language teaching profession?

Teacher 1 (T1): Salaries are too low, they need to be increased. A cop earns more.

Teacher 2 (T2): That all teachers should change their mind and speak English in their classes, use different kind of materials for classes, not the normal ones.

Teacher 3 (T3): well, teachers need to practice so; they need an institution where they

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can share all activities in English, not grammar “a kind of English club”.

Teacher 4 (T4): the teacher of English should speak English and he has to teach in a different ways; he has to change the way how he teaches.

Teacher 5 (T5): we need the help from the government because some schools in Pasto are not so good talking about buildings and the most important thing has to do with the problems about salary that all teachers have.

Regarding the opinions of the teachers and the class observation, it could be said that they think that some possible factors affecting the learning process are the lack of materials and resources, the economical problems of students and teachers, the big number of students in just one class, few hours for English classes, the preparation of the teachers, and the demotivation of students.

It could be pointed out that teachers are aware of the situation of their profession and of their high schools. They know that it is difficult to aim for good outcomes if students do not have the disposition to learn a new language; they just want to pass the subject, students do not really see the importance of English for their future life. Also, some institutions do not have enough and available resources to guarantee a better education.

To sum up, most of the teachers interviewed consider that the main factors that influence the teaching profession in public high school in Pasto are the lack of materials and resources, economical problems, number of students. However T1 and T5 state that salary is fundamental so, if teachers have good salaries it is possible they become a little more motivate to change their mind about the way how they teach and students will get good outcomes. These teachers estimate that if teachers get a good salary it is possible that they achieve their goals.

### *English in the classroom*

This sub-category refers to how English teachers develop their classes talking about

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discipline in the classroom and talking about what teachers' attitude produces in their students.

To gather these information two questions were used; the first one question was: Are you responsible in any way for the discipline problems students might have?

Teacher 1 (T1): Of course, the teacher must keep the control in his classroom; it doesn't mean the students have to be quite and dumb like statues or mummies.

Teacher 2 (T2): Yes, because all teachers are responsible for it. The classes are our responsibility and the students need to be attending the classes and not doing a different thing.

Teacher 3 (T3): Yes, because if I can't get a good class the students do indiscipline, the students in these times are different; they need more action.

Teacher 4 (T4): yes, the teacher of English has to keep the discipline but it is difficult because there are a lot of students it makes difficult those students are quite.

Teacher 5 (T5): the discipline is one of the responsibilities of the teacher because if the teacher can't keep the discipline it is difficult to develop the class in a right way.

With regard to this question, teachers assumed that the number of students directly affects the learning – teaching, process because teachers and the class observation hold that in most of the classroom there are between forty – five and fifty students, when prevent teachers from being aware of their students' true performance in the target language. Moreover, if there are many students in a classroom, they tend to show discipline problems.

In order to corroborate the perception of the teachers, a question about their attitude in the classroom was also asked. To collect this information the following question was asked: What effect do you think your attitude produces in the students?

Teacher 1 (T1): the example is a very important in front of the students, if they realize

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that you really know what you teach, they will follow you and respect what you do, they will be confident of following you.

Teacher 2 (T2): This teacher did not answer this question.

Teacher 3 (T3): They like to listen and speak, but they don't like to do boring activities.

Teacher 4 (T4): when you are in the class students want to listen to you for that reason the teacher of English must be the example if you know your students believe you.

Teacher 5 (T5): the teachers must be sure about the things that he teaches because if you teach in a wrong way, you lost your students confidence.

According to Harmer (2007) the teacher of English should be able to adopt a variety of roles within the classroom which facilitate learning. Some of these roles come naturally and others have to be thought more carefully. So teachers need to be able to switch the various roles, judging when it is appropriate to use one or other of them. According to this point of view and with the class observation help it is important to clarify that most teachers assume various roles facing the teaching process, but they need to apply other kind of methodology in order to avoid the monotony.

According to Nunan (1996), attitude is closely related to motivation; the attitude toward target language will also be colored by the environment in which the learning take place. Foreign language teachers working in high schools often complain about the difficulty of motivating their students because students have no immediate need to use the language.

With the observations teachers have daily deal with different learners and different forms of affective factors influencing their learning process; so, teachers should be flexible and understand these differences in order to guide learners towards meaningful learning of the foreign or second language. Teacher almost never has a positive attitude when learners make a

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mistake because they correct them in a harmful way making students joke among them. So when another learner has to participate he or she feels nervous, anxious and cannot answer the question accurately. Learners almost always feel apprehension and fear to contradict teachers when they make a mistake while developing the class. They prefer to keep silent even when they have the correct answer. On the other hand, teacher does not take into account the learners' problems for instance when they forget their notebooks even if the learners state that they are able to answer a written multiple choice questionnaire on the board. Teacher does not consider these aspects; they only take into account learners' difficulties if they have any kind of health problem. (T 1) does not understand the differences among learners because he always makes comparison between good and bad learners provoking an environment that is not appropriated to promote meaningful learning. Even, English teacher has divided the classroom into two learners groups: the first one is formed by learners who get excellent grades and the second one is formed by learners who get bad grades. Teacher always states that learners who have bad grades have to demonstrate him they master the foreign language taking into account the four skills However, it is important to mention that learners are so friendly and they help among them when they are not under teacher's supervision.

It could be concluded that most of the English teachers have as primary goal to be the example, and show their knowledge, but they do it by means of their own conception and they do not take into account their students it is the case of (T2) who did not answer the question. This attitude let me imagine that this teacher continues thinking she is the main character in the classroom.



## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

In the language and teaching process, there are some factors that could influence in a positive or negative way the language teaching and learning process developed by teachers and learners. Among these factors it could be found: teachers, lack of motivation, methodology, number of hour per week, and quality of English.

It could be concluded that in most of the cases the teachers still continuous using the same methodologies such as translation, grammar explanations, fill in the blanks because they do not develop a continuous training in order to get new knowledge in the TESOL field. In this way students could practice the four skills in an equal way.

Also, it could be useful to take into account that some teachers interviewed think that experience acquired through the years is sufficient to develop their job in an adequate way. Then, it could be said that the English knowledge has a continuous evolution and the teachers have to develop an actualization to provide to the learners knowledge with a high quality according to the changes in the TESOL field. The quality of knowledge acquired by learners could depend on

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the teachers training and her/his interest to apply new methodologies implemented in the TESOL field. The English teacher has to develop a continuous training to provide the learner a high quality of knowledge and search for new alternatives to avoid learning problems, monotony and to improve motivation on learners.

Strevens (quoted by Bastidas, 1978) affirmed that every learner is an individual with his/her own profile of characteristics that mark him as different from all other learners even though he obviously also share the universal characteristics of all humans. Jack C. Richards et al (1994) affirm that the classroom is the primary situation in which language learners have the opportunity to use the target language, so taking into account these conceptions English teachers have to use the update methodologies where students take a more important role.

It can be demonstrated by means of the use of interviews and observations that the elements that matter the most when teachers are doing methodological choices are materials because most of the academic activities in which learners are involved the most are (a) reading texts aloud, (b) giving short answers about grammar, (c) pronouncing some sentences, (d) writing on the whiteboard, (e) taking oral and written tests, (f) completing multiple choice formats (g) writing short paragraphs, and (h) translating some phrases. In addition, it could be said that learners' reactions to these situations are related to regret, suffering, insecurity, lack of comprehension, uneasiness, low self esteem, resentment, and lack of interest for the English class. It shows the low level of updating about the methods in the TESOL field.

English teachers do not pay attention to students' age which is a commonly cited determinant factor in the language learning/language teaching process because teachers should account the learners' age (young children, adolescents, and adults) in order to provide them with the best teaching according to each kind of learning in which they are involved in. Stage of proficiency

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that each of the learners has obtained plays an important role on the type of learning they develop. First of all, the learner only depends on the teacher for learning (teacher-centre stage). Educational aims intend to encourage learners in order to learn all the aspects that are involved in the learning process of a foreign language, to increase the learners' cultural experiences by means of readings in order to provide them with a wide vision of the world, understand the cultural differences and interests between our community and the foreign community. Learner involvement; in this aspect, the intrinsic motivation of learners plays a fundamental role in learning process. That is, a motivated learner learns in an easier way than a demotivated learner does. So the teacher should consider these factors in order to accommodate his/her form of teaching. Language of instruction status, this aspect considers the means of instruction as primordial in the language learning/language teaching process because each one of the forms of instruction (use of the native tongue, the foreign language or another language) affect in different way the learning and teaching process.

Furthermore, teacher have to take into account the affective side of the learners, being sensitive to learners' fears and insecurities and help them to confront these situations due to the fact that education not only does refer to transmitting knowledge, but it also refers to taking into account the learners' feelings and emotions. Teachers should use non threatening methods of error correctness on contrary teacher should be patient and tolerant and offer learners words of encouragement without compare learners among them. These situations are intended to increase the risk-taking, self confidence, self esteem and motivation in the foreign language classes.

It could be useful if teachers create a low stress, friendly, and supportive learning environment which will influence students' participation in the English classes, it means avoid the monotony. Effective teachers create learning atmospheres which are cognitively and

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affectively expanding; learning atmospheres which enable the learner to become a more adequate and knowledgeable person. Besides, an effective teacher has to adopt several roles in the classroom. The English teacher also needs to consider the different learner styles inside the classroom, that is to say he or she has to design a variety of language learning activities that are meaningful for all the learners. A teacher also should consider help learners to find out the best learning strategies, in ways that are useful to them, to foster to discover their own styles and transform their weakness into strengths in the learning process. So in order to achieve these goals

is important an essential that teachers have a continuous update about the different methods in the teaching and learning process.

According to Borg (2003) English language teaching methodology is more progressive than other subjects. The field of English language teaching is more advanced and innovative in its approach to teaching and learning. So that, the methodological choices of teachers are not adequate for the context and students' needs because taking into account the observations in some cases students get so nervous when they do not understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language and teachers do not really care about it. The same thing happens about the oral production most students get so nervous and confused when they are expected to speak in English when the language teacher asks questions which they have not prepare in advance. It could be concluded that most of teachers try to adopt a communicative approach but they have a lack about the theoretical foundations about this method and about the real use of the English skills (listening, reading writing and speaking). Not only the teacher plays an outstanding role in the learning process but also are the learners who build their own knowledge. So that, teachers

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have to be conscious of the responsibility in the learning process of learning a foreign language.

## Recommendations

After having done this research project and confronted the collected data and the ideas proposed by specialized authors in TESOL field, it can be concluded that this research can constitute a relevant reference for future researches about teachers' beliefs and their influence on methodological choices in high schools.

The first recommendation is related to the use of a communicative competence implemented in the English classes. It is true that the reduced number of hours per week could have negative effects on the teaching and learning process, but this is not an excuse to carry out a suitable English class. It could be suggested that the English teachers implement in a gradual way the English use when they are carrying out their classes. Teachers can increase the English level taking into account the course or the topic level that is going to be used in the development of the class. Besides, they should encourage the students to develop the four skills in an equal way. The teachers could implement new phrases, greetings, commands, among others which might be applied inside and outside the classroom. In this way students could practice the foreign language using contextualized phrases; and at the same time this might help avoid monotony during the development of the classes.

The second recommendation has to do with the English teaching quality. It is indispensable that teachers develop a continuous training in order to carry out the English teaching. The teachers might be actualized in the TESOL field taking courses, and attending seminars or meetings which could contribute to the English teaching actualization. This teacher

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training could also contribute to the change of English teaching methodology used by the teachers for several years. Teachers should know what they need to adopt new methods to encourage the learners to use foreign language. Teachers should emphasize not only grammar, vocabulary, or the exams, but also communication. Therefore, the teachers should take practical courses related to new methodology and to apply this new knowledge in the development of the classes.

Galeano (1986) point out that the teacher might take into account some factors such as attitude, training, method, aims and objectives to carry out the teaching process. However, this process could not be carried out satisfactorily if some teachers do not have clear definitions about educational objectives and instruction. In this way, the lack of knowledge about these terms could create confusion in the method and techniques determination.

Finally, it would be advisable to keep on researching about the diverse factors that have an influence on the English teaching and learning process in public high schools in Pasto including the field of methodology. For example, it would be important to conduct similar studies in other public institutions in order to see if the results are similar or different.

## Teacher's Beliefs

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# **APPENDIX**



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**Teachers' survey**

This questionnaire has been only created for research purposes. It is anonymous and it has the purpose of finding out information related to your methodological choices in L2 instruction. Your answers will be very valuable in reaching this objective.

**I. General Information**

Date. \_\_\_\_\_

Age. \_\_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been teaching English as a foreign language?

\_\_\_\_\_

**II. About English**

Why do you think English is an important language?

What do you consider are the most important skills or components to be learned (e.g. Grammar, vocabulary, Pronunciation)?

What attitudes do you think your students associate with English?

**III. About Learning**

How do you define learning?

What are, in your opinion, the most effective ways to learn a foreign language?

What role are student expected to assume in your classroom?

**IV. About Teaching**

What is, in your opinion, the teacher's role in the L2 classroom?

What teaching methods do you attempt to implement in your L2 classes?

How do you decide which method is more suitable for each teaching situation?

What are, in your opinion, the qualities of a good teacher?

**V. About curriculum**

What do you think are the most important elements in an effective language teaching program in the school where you work?

What changes would you like to see in the school English program?

**VI. About Teaching as a Profession**

What kind of training do you think language teachers need?

What changes do you think are necessary in the language teaching profession?

**VII. About classroom**

Are you responsible in any way for the discipline problems students might have?

What effect do you think your attitude produces in the students?

Classroom Observation Format

Institution. \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many students are there in the English class?
2. How long does the English class last?
3. What kind of resources does the English teacher use for English teaching?
4. Does the English teacher integrate the four skills in the class?
5. What strategies does the teacher use as to make the class appealing for the students?
6. Do students seem to enjoy the English class? How do they demonstrate that they like it or not?
7. Does the teacher favor the development of group or individual activities? What could be the reason for that?
8. Judging by the materials, the teacher role, the use of the L2, the activities used and the students' role, the most evident method (or methods) used in the class observed is (are):
9. The type of feedback commonly used by the teacher to address the learners' mistakes is:
10. The beliefs that may have influenced the decisions taken for teaching this class regarding the choice of materials, activities, method(s) and feedback may be the following: (make a list of beliefs that teachers commonly have and that you observe in the class).

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