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## **The Use of Translation from a Communicative Perspective as an Effective Strategy to Teach and Learn Vocabulary in English**

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## **Introduction**

English teaching in Chile has been shown to be ineffective since students' competence has not reached the international standards of the foreign language. Despite the fact that being competent in English represents a fundamental requirement to take part in the current English globalized world, the Cambridge ESOL Examinations revealed that Chilean students do not have the basic English skills expected for their level (Matear, 2008, p. 136), which leads to the assumption that the real problem relies on the way English is being taught. In this regard, research has shown that the majority of English teachers use Spanish in their classes (Matear, 2008, p. 138); in fact, it has been exposed that more than half of the lessons are carried out in the students' mother tongue (Sheehan, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). Moreover, it has been observed that most of the classes are grammar-centered and that vocabulary instruction, which is essential for learning a language, has been left aside.

Regarding the teaching methodologies, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), focused on the teaching of grammar rules and translations of literary texts, is the most used in the Chilean classrooms. This method was used for the study of dead languages such as Latin and Greek, in which the main aim was to develop the reading and writing skills. However, the GTM was not effective for the teaching of foreign languages and started to be strongly criticized among scholars, generating a lot of debate around the use of translation. For this reason, several methods focused on the development of the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), emerged within the English teaching field (Raouf, 2010, p. 1).

One of the most worldwide accepted English teaching approaches is the Communicative Language Teaching Approach because its central foundation is communicative competence (Hanak-Hammerl & Newby, 2003, p.9), which is said to be the main objective when learning a language. On the other hand, even though the use of translation for teaching a foreign language has been rejected, it is also believed to have many benefits. In the field of vocabulary teaching, it has been shown that the use of translation enhances vocabulary learning, especially when it is used from a communicative perspective (Hayati & Mohammadi, 2009, as cited in Jahangard et al., 2010, p. 5).

Therefore, a research study was carried out through a descriptive case study in order to answer the following questions:

1. What methodologies do teachers use for teaching English?
2. Do teachers use translation in English classes?
3. Do students use translation as a tool for learning the English language?
4. How do teachers teach vocabulary? Do they use translation or communicative activities?
5. Is there any relationship between the use of translation and vocabulary learning?

For that purpose, three ninth grades of three different schools in Valdivia were studied, with the aim of observing the methodologies used for teaching English in each of them, specifically in terms of vocabulary instruction. Besides, the students' level of English was observed in order to determine how effective the English teaching was. Then, considering the fact that translation was commonly used in the studied Chilean classrooms and that it was not efficient for learning the foreign language, a teaching proposal was developed. This consists in a set of activities based on a mixture of translation and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, which are aimed to emphasize vocabulary learning.

Consequently, this paper is organized as follows: Chapter I deals with the Chilean reality in terms of English education and competence, the use of translation and the different approaches in the Chilean classrooms. Chapter II describes the theoretical framework, which reviews the main characteristics and principles of the Grammar-Translation Method and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Besides, it defines translation, describes its use for pedagogical purposes –considering advantages and disadvantages,– and exposes the usefulness of translation as a tool for teaching vocabulary. Next, Chapter III describes the methodology used for identifying the main approaches used in the three schools observed and Chapter IV, the results. Chapter V illustrates the discussion of the results and Chapter VI, the general conclusions. Finally, chapter VII presents the teaching proposal with the description of the activities designed.

## 1. Chapter I: State of the Art: English Teaching in Chile

Nowadays, English is considered the most spoken language in the world because of the growing number of speakers who have acquired it as their second or foreign language (Mckay, 2003, p. 139). The English language has spread in Latin America for three main reasons (Matear, 200, pp. 132-133). The first reason is economic globalization, which has raised the need of having a common language to establish economic relationships among countries that do not share the same mother tongue. Thus, English was chosen as the *lingua franca* and the need of learning it emerged. Secondly, governments' initiatives arose to promote an equal education of English, which is related to the enhancement of "employment opportunities and social mobility" (Matear, 2008, pp. 132). That is, English competence helps people to find better jobs and positions in the social hierarchy. The third reason is that societies are increasingly knowledge-based and that most scientific and technical knowledge is presented in English. Therefore, not having appropriate knowledge of the language can result in "info-exclusion" (Matear, 2008, p. 133).

In Chile, being competent in English is considered as a basic and indispensable requirement for getting new job opportunities that result from the internationalization of the Chilean economy. That is, people who have a good command of the language have better job opportunities, better salaries, more access to getting scholarships and studying abroad, among other advantages. This is reinforced by a study that was carried out in 2004 by the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo Educativo, which revealed that "90% of high school students surveyed considered it important to learn English in school, and 85% indicated that they were keen to do so" (Matear, 2008, p. 137). It was also shown that students thought that there was a strong relation between knowing the English language and having better employment opportunities in the future. Thus, Chilean students' motivation for learning English is centered on instrumental reasons (Matear, 2008, p. 139). In addition, parents (93%) and teachers (88%) agreed with this point of view arguing that English skills are important for "their children future educational development and employment opportunities" (Matear, 2008, p. 137).



In 1998, the Chilean Ministry of Education introduced a reform in the overall curriculum, which also involved the field of English teaching for primary and secondary schools (from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade). A group of objectives was defined for each level based on the role that English had at that time, “the scope of worldwide communication networks, the geographical and regional characteristics of Chile, and the demands of the Chilean labor market” (Mckay, 2003, p. 141). This reform was mainly focused on emphasizing the receptive skills (reading and listening) over the productive ones (speaking and writing) because the Ministry considered that Chilean people needed English mainly to have access to information and be part of the globalized world. Thus, the new curriculum demanded that the development of reading and listening comprehension must represent 40% of the course whereas speaking and writing must cover only a 20% (*ibid*). Nevertheless, a diagnostic test applied six years later revealed that this reform had been ineffective.

In October 2004, a National Diagnostic Test for Competence in English was carried out by the Ministry of Education to measure the Chilean students’ level of English. The test was designed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) especially for Chile, considering students’ ages, language-learning experience, cultural background, etc. It was applied to about 12,000 students from 299 schools (Sheehan, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009), consisting in a representative group of eighth and twelfth graders.

The test results revealed that most of the students did not reach the Cambridge ESOL examinations basic level of English; in fact, two extra levels (pre-breakthrough and lower breakthrough) had to be created to place Chilean students’ results (Matear, 2008, p. 136). Moreover, it was shown that the level of English required for future employment or studying abroad was achieved by only 5% of students at the end of secondary education (Ministerio de Educación/SIMCE/Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2004, as cited in Matear, 2008, p. 136). The results of the Diagnostic Test are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Results of the National Diagnostic Test for Competence in English, 2004.

	Level of performance	Student abilities	Percentage at each level	
			Grade 8 (Primary)	Grade 4 (Secondary)
Autonomous user	Autonomous (Threshold/ALTE2)	Understand key ideas on familiar themes such as work, school, and free time. Get by on holiday or while travelling.	1%	4%
Basic User	Upper Basic (Waystage/ALTE 1)	Understand sentences and everyday expressions. Understand simple descriptions of their surroundings and of themselves. Handle information on familiar and routine topics.	2%	9%
Basic User	Lower basic (Breakthrough)	Understand everyday expressions and basic phrases for specific needs. Understand if they are spoken to clearly and slowly. Extract the key ideas from a text.	20%	37%
Level devised for Chilean study	Elementary comprehension (Lower breakthrough)	Understand simple oral and written instructions. Read short texts. Recognise words and expressions (aural).	67%	45%
Level devised for Chilean study	Does not understand English (Pre-breakthrough)	Students have not yet reached the above level.	10%	4%

Adapted from: Ministerio de Educación/SIMCE/Cambridge ESOL (2004).

(Matear, 2008, p. 137)

Moreover, a questionnaire was applied to teachers, and it was found that the majority of the teachers spoke in English during less than half of their lessons, as shown in the following table (Sheehan, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009).

How often do you use English in the classroom ?	% of teachers
Never/almost never	14.7
Less than half the lesson	54.6
More than half the lesson	26.1
All the lesson	4.6

Based on the Diagnostic Test results, a correlation was established between the teachers' levels of study and the students' scores. Thus, it was found that students who scored best had been taught by teachers who had a degree in English, whereas students who scored worst had teachers who did not have “neither a degree in English nor an alternative form of language study” (Ministerio de Educación/SIMCE/Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2004, as cited in Matear, 2008, p. 138).

### **1.1. English Opens Doors Programme**

The English Opens Doors Programme was created in 2004. The main modification was to introduce compulsory education of English from fifth grade to the end of secondary school, which included 2 to 3 hours per week for the English subject. This resulted in a total of 900 hours of English learning, which according to the Ministry of Education, should be enough to reach the expected command of the language (Walker, 2003, as cited in Matear, 2008, p. 139). In addition, national standards were defined following the international standards of English learning (Ministerio de Educación, 2005, as cited in Matear, 2008, p. 137), being the Ministry of Education the “responsible for the administration and coordination of the programme at the national, regional, and municipal levels, the provision of infrastructure and resources, and the evaluation of the programme” (Matear, 2008, p. 137). Regarding the resources, this programme included the distribution of English text books to students from fifth to twelfth grade, along with handouts and audio tapes for teachers.

The Ministry of Education designed four specific actions that were expected to be carried out within this programme:

- 1) Defining learning standards: Standards had to be designed according to international levels but based on the national curriculum. Several learning standards had to be developed to offer teachers and students a learning map of progress, in order to clarify the way in which the language must be taught. At the same time, national tests had to be elaborated to measure the learning achievements in relation to the English subject.

- 2) Reinforcing the teachers' professional development: Directed to teachers who do not have a specialty in English but teach mainly in fifth and sixth grade, and to English teachers in general. The purpose of this action was to update teachers, both in the language and in teaching methodologies. During 2004, 400 teachers had to take an advanced course for professional development. In addition, 600 teachers had to complete a correspondence course, which had started in 2003; a trial experience had to be developed for mentors' training, and 20 teacher local networks had to be created across the country.
  
- 3) Reinforcing school teaching: The purpose was to promote a set of actions to reinforce the school resources to improve English learning. In 2004, a "National Center for Volunteers" (Matear, 2008, p.137) was created to support teachers and motivate students in language classes. The volunteers had to be native speakers who were hired as language assistants to "help develop the oral proficiency of teachers and students and to engage in extra-curricular activities using music, drama, and games in English" (Ministerio de Educación, 2005; Ministerio de Educación/Programa Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2005, as cited in Matear, 2008, p.138). The volunteers were going to be recruited by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) in English speaking countries. Moreover, the UNDP had to make agreements with different Chilean universities to promote students' exchanges and to help with the administration of the programme (Matear, 2008, p.138). Furthermore, new textbooks had to be delivered to seventh and eighth grades.
  
- 4) Supporting the creation of employments: In order to accomplish this aim, more and improved English courses were offered for technicians in the intermediate and advanced levels and for entrepreneurs (*Anexo 6 Plan Inglés Chile*, pp.1-2).

### **1.1.1. English Opens Doors Programme Objectives**

- In 2005 the country was going to have national standards designed according to international ones regarding skills in English.
- In 2004, a diagnostic test was going to be applied to 3,000 students of eighth and twelfth grade. In 2006, the first national test was going to be applied with the purpose of evaluating English learning achievements in contrast to the test taken in 2004.
- In 2007, about 1,500 teachers who taught English in elementary school and had a specialty in the language, had to have a certification aligned to international standards, which had to be equivalent to the level of the Preliminary English Test (which is the second level of competence defined by The Association of Language Testers in Europe). A programme with advanced courses was going to be designed to be given by universities and institutes.
- In 2011, around 12,000 English teachers in elementary and high schools must count with a certification aligned to international standards, which had to be equivalent to the First Certificate in English (which is the third level of competence established by The Association of Language Testers in Europe). Universities must make sure that every graduated teacher of English had to have this minimum level.
- In 2013, all students must reach standards equivalent to the Key English Test in eighth grade and the Preliminary English Test in twelfth grade, especially in reading and listening comprehension.
- The country will have an appropriate English teaching methodology to support the technicians' training because the instrumental command of the language opens more employment and business opportunities.

Up to date, only some of the exposed objectives have been fulfilled. The Ministry of Education established the levels of English required for both students, from eight and twelfth grade, and teachers according to international standards defined by the Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE), which were developed based on the parameters set by the Common European Framework. Moreover, in October of 2004, a diagnostic test designed by the University of Cambridge was carried out to measure the listening and reading skills in English. This test was applied to a representative national sample of 6,000 students in eight and twelfth grade. In addition, teachers of English have been benefitted since 2004 with scholarships offered by the Ministry of Education to improve their English competence and pedagogical practices through the “Cursos de Inglés y Metodología” programme. These courses were given by institutes and universities which participated in a selection process every year (Fábrega, 2005, pp. 18-19).

## **1.2. SIMCE**

During the last week of October 2010, the first English SIMCE Test was applied to 240,000 Chilean students from eleventh grade with the purpose of knowing the Chilean students' reality regarding their English competence and comparing Chile to other non-bilingual countries. Moreover, students who reach the expected level will receive a certificate that shows their English knowledge, which could help them to have more opportunities when applying for employments or scholarships in the future (Gobierno de Chile, 2010).

The students were evaluated with an adapted version of the TOEIC Bridge Exam developed by the Educational Testing Service, which measures listening and reading skills. The results will be published during the first semester of 2011 (*ibid*).

## **1.3. English Teaching Methodologies in Chile**

Before the educational reform of 1998, the Ministry of Education had encouraged English teachers to use the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in their classes by using group work regularly. However, research showed that this methodology was never

adopted by teachers, since they thought it was not appropriate for the Chilean context (Mckay, 2003, p. 143). According to Mckay (2003), “most teachers refer to the problem of the large number of students in the classes, the lack of physical space, the lack of time, discipline problems, and the tendency of students to go off-task” (p. 144). Moreover, group work was seen as unnecessary since teachers stated that only two people, teacher and student, were needed to establish a communicative provision classroom. Thus, according to a survey, the majority of teachers affirmed that they rarely used group work in their lessons (Mckay, 2003, p. 143). In fact, the British teacher who worked as an advisor for the Ministry of Education in the English Opens Doors Programme, Andrew Sheehan, pointed out that the Communicative Language Teaching Approach never came to Chile and that having pair work and group work activities is not CA (Sheehan, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009).

In our experience as students, it is possible to affirm that English classes were carried out through grammatical rules explanations in Spanish, followed by the completion of worksheets, translations of paragraphs from English into Spanish, and the memorization of long vocabulary lists with their equivalents in the L1. In addition, group work was not part of the methodologies used by the teachers. Similarly, Sheehan (2008) posed that English teaching in Chile is still basically focused on teaching the grammatical rules of English, in Spanish. Furthermore, the common methodologies used in Chilean schools are the Audiolingual Method, the Grammar-Translation Method, and The Reading Approach (sonaples.cl).

## **2. Chapter II: Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. The Grammar-Translation Method**

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) has its origin at the end of the eighteenth century in Greece and Rome, where it was used to teach dead or classical languages such as Latin and Greek (Mallol, 2006, p. 32). Sharing the belief that modern languages could be learnt through this method, German scholars introduced it in public schools in Prussia, Germany; that is why it was also known as the “Prussian Method” in the United States (Coady & Huckin, 1997, p. 5; Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.5). By the late nineteenth century, the GTM was strongly criticized and “blamed for the failure of teaching foreign languages” (Raouf, 2010, p. 1) and several other methods emerged with the purpose of offering new alternatives to foreign language teaching. However, GTM is still being used in TESL/TEFL contexts.

The main objectives of GTM are to prepare students to have access to literature, to develop reading and writing skills, to pass standardized exams, and to allow them to benefit from intellectual development and mental discipline (Raouf, 2010, p. 2; Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 6). Thus, it is focused on a detailed and deductive analysis of literary texts in terms of grammatical structures and on the production of subsequent translations from the foreign language (FL) into the first language (L1) and vice versa. Consequently, this method is classified into the “structural view” of language, which gives no space for the development of listening and speaking skills; thus, leaving aside the aim of using the language for communicative purposes (*ibid*).

This method is centered on the teacher; that is, teachers are the only speakers and authorities in the class. Consequently, they do not offer opportunities for students to participate nor to interact with their peers (Raouf, 2010, p.2). Moreover, teachers use the students’ mother tongue as the medium of instruction since the L1 is used as a reference to the learning of the FL. They also give a lot of emphasis to accuracy over content, and mistakes are always corrected directly. In relation to the study of texts, the teacher uses the sentence as “the basic unit of teaching and language practice” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 6), since the detailed analysis of large paragraphs is thought to be too difficult for



secondary students. In addition, the literary texts are the source from which teachers get all the vocabulary words that are studied, which are explicitly taught only when they illustrate a grammatical structure (Coady & Huckin, 1997, p. 6).

GTM activities and techniques are centered on difficult literary or teacher-made texts since early stages and they consist in: translations of literary passages and/or sentences from L1 to FL and vice versa, memorization of long bilingual vocabulary word lists and grammar rules, and the constant use of bilingual dictionaries. In a typical class focused on GTM, the teacher gives a text which is read and analyzed by the students through three groups of questions. The first question is based on the text content, the second question is meant to make students infer, and the last one is intended to make students reflect and relate the text with their own life experiences. Furthermore, the study of the text is focused on particular grammar rules, which are taught explicitly and deductively, and vocabulary given by the teacher in bilingual lists of isolated words. Also, students work with their dictionaries looking up synonyms, antonyms, and the definition of given words. Besides, exercises like fill-in the blanks and translation of sentences or small texts from L1 to FL and vice versa are common (Raouf, 2010, p.2).

The Grammar-Translation Method was once considered, as Kroeh says, “an important advance in the art of teaching languages” (as cited in Raouf, 2010, p.1). According to Medrano & Rodríguez (2004), it is easier for teachers to use the GTM because it does not require effective lesson plans or diverse teaching materials, since the text book is the main resource for the development of the activities. Likewise, this method has one main advantage for students: it makes them feel less stressed since the lesson is taught in the mother tongue and they are not asked to speak in the foreign language (Medrano & Rodríguez, 2004). However, this method started to receive a lot of criticism by the end of the nineteenth century.

The GTM is considered to be a method that lacks a supportive theory since it has no relation to linguistic, psychological, or educational matters (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 7). Furthermore, GTM does not develop the listening and speaking skills, so students do not reach an appropriate language competence. Moreover, students do not learn to think in the foreign language, which causes interference that leads them to believe that there is always a one-to-one correspondence between the L1 and the FL (Mallol, 2006, p. 33). In relation to

vocabulary acquisition, literary texts are considered as archaic sources from which students can learn only obsolete and contextless words (Coady & Huckin, 1997; House, 1997). From the students' point of view, this method is seen as monotonous and dull since they have to memorize long lists of atypical vocabulary words and grammar rules and produce accurate translations of complex literary texts. Students also feel frustrated as a consequence of the teacher's direct corrections and the strict accuracy required.

Despite the fact that GTM has no advocates, it is still widely used in many classrooms, principally because it does not require high levels of proficiency neither hard work from teachers (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 7).

## **2.2. The Communicative Language Teaching Approach**

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) emerged in the late 60's in England in a time until which language teaching had been centered on the Situational Method, which considered language as a set of fixed structures to be applied in different situations. The American linguist Noam Chomsky was one of the main critics against this method; he stated that it did not take into account the "creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences," which was one of the fundamental characteristics of language (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 153). Moreover, the arrival of immigrants and guest workers in Europe generated the need of using the language with communicative purposes. Thus, a new proposal in terms of language teaching emerged with the development of a new syllabus. Wilkins was one of the first in creating a new model of syllabus which specified "the semantic-grammatical categories and the categories of communicative function that learners needed to express" (Quinghong, 2009, p.47). That is, it was very different from the typical grammar-based syllabus because it was designed based on content and meaning rather than on grammatical structures only. Some years later, the Council of Europe adapted and expanded it throughout most of the European countries (Savignon, 2002, p. 1). Therefore, the Communicative Approach meant a replacement for the old traditional methodologies in language teaching, gaining support from several "applied linguists, language specialists, publishers, as well as institutions such as The British Council" (Richards, 1985, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 172).

The principal aim of this approach is to develop what Hymes calls “communicative competence”, which includes “both knowledge and ability for language use” (Savignon, 2002, p. 2). This is related to a communicative view of language which has four main characteristics, according to Richards & Rodgers:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse (2001, p. 161).

Taking this point of view into consideration, the CLT was developed following three main principles. The first one is related to communication and states that communicative activities in real contexts facilitate learning. The second one is the task principle, supported by the idea that activities with the purpose of developing meaningful assignments facilitate learning. Finally, the third one is the meaningfulness principle which affirms that meaningful language facilitates learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 161).

These principles are related to Stephen Krashen’s theory about language learning and acquisition. He points out that learning and acquisition are two different processes. The first one refers to a conscious process which results in “knowing about the language” while the second one involves a subconscious process in which the result is “knowing the language”. This linguist affirms that language acquisition is “more successful and longer lasting than learning” (as cited in Quinghong, 2009, p.51). Moreover, Krashen suggests that second or foreign language learning should be more similar to the way in which people acquire their first language. He also explains that to know the language one needs to be exposed to it and use it. Consequently, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach encourages the subconscious process that allows acquisition, by making learners involved in meaningful activities in which they have to use the foreign language in real contexts (Quinghong, 2009, p.51).

A typical CLT-based lesson is not centered on accuracy but on effective communication, where having a comprehensible pronunciation and fluency is fundamental. Both structure and meaning are considered as important aspects of communication, since communication cannot occur with the absence of structures. However, learners’

grammatical knowledge must be included within their communicative competence. In addition, contextualization is essential, since it is necessary to create a meaningful learning environment in order to learn a language. For this purpose, group and pair work are encouraged as a way of generating opportunities for interaction. Thus, a CLT class is not as quiet as the traditional classroom. Furthermore, attempts to communicate in oral or written form are expected to arise from the beginning, resorting to the native language knowledge if necessary (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 156 - 157).

Regarding the activities developed in a CLT class, they are centered on interaction among students using language as a mean to develop tasks that involve communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 156 - 157). Considering that its center is the “communication of meaning”, their success depends on how effective the message is transmitted (Quinghong, 2009, p.53). According to Littlewood (1981), there are two main types of activities in the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, the “functional communication” and “the social-interaction” activities. In the first type, learners may use sets of pictures for comparing and noticing their differences and similarities, organizing them as a sequence of events, or discovering missing characteristics on them. In addition, students may be asked to develop tasks based on following directions and solving problems. The second type includes conversation and discussions, simulations, dialogues and role plays, etc. (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 166). These activities are developed around language items that are present in available resources, that is, the learning objectives derive from pre-existent teaching materials. Drills are used only if necessary (Quinghong, 2009, p.53).

The teaching materials in CLT have a paramount role in encouraging communication in the foreign language. There are three main kinds of materials: text-based materials, task-based materials, and realia. The text-based materials are different kinds of texts designed or adapted to support Communicative Language Teaching. Some of them present visual resources and audio files to generate conversation, whereas others contain two different texts for working in pairs by exchanging information and carrying out role plays and other kind of activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 169). On the other hand, task based-materials such as exercise handbooks, cue cards, and pair-communication practice materials, are designed to carry out communicative activities among students.

Finally, realia includes real-life materials such as objects, authentic leaflets, signs, magazines, advertisements, newspapers, maps, charts, graphics, etc. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 169-170).

The roles of teachers and learners are different from the ones in other traditional methods. Teachers do not play a central role in this approach but students are the greatest participants and users of the target language during the lesson (Quinghong, 2009, p.50). Thus, students gain more confidence as a consequence of being responsible for their own learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, as cited in Quinghong, 2009, p.50). Regarding teachers' role, they act as facilitators in the communication process between all students in the different tasks, activities, and texts. They are independent participants in the learning teaching group, that is, teachers do not interfere in students' interaction; they observe and guide them. Furthermore, they are expected to help students' learning in terms of knowledge and abilities, acting as researchers and learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 167). In summary, a CLT teacher:

- a) Plans the lessons according to the learner's needs.
- b) Advises and guides learner in the communication process.
- c) Organizes the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities (Quinghong, 2009, p.50).

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach emerged after the failure of the Situational Methods, at a time in which learning a language was understood as necessary for the purpose of communication. As time has passed, it has been supported by a variety of experts and has gone through different stages in order to satisfy learners' needs. However, in spite of having a lot advocates, it is still not widely used in EFL classrooms.

### **2.3. Translation**

Translation is a broad concept that several authors have tried to define in relation to what it involves. According to Mallol (2006) "the word 'translation' comes from an old Latin verb: "*transfere*" (p. 137), whose equivalent in English is "to transfer, to convey" (Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid). This is related to the definition of translation

presented by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2006), which is "the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language" (p. 1573).

Nida & Taber (1969) expose that translation is the reproduction of a "source language message" in "the receptor language" through the best equivalents considering meaning and style (as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 138). Moreover, Toury (1995) defines translation as "communication between messages integrated in a given linguistic-cultural system; that means they are regulated by norms and through them a society controls the importation and exportation of its culture" (as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 137). Likewise, Shiyab & Abdullateef (2001) state that translation is a process in which meaning is transferred between two languages considering "textual, grammatical and pragmatic meanings" (p.1), in which linguistic and non-linguistic features, such as thought, situation, cultural knowledge, intention, and use are taken into account.

Similarly, House (1977) affirms that the center of translation lies on the "preservation of meaning" which includes semantic and pragmatic aspects (p. 25). Firstly, the semantic aspect is the relationship between "linguistic units or symbols" and what they represent in the world (House, 1977, p. 25). That is, semantics has to do with the concrete meaning of "linguistic units or symbols" without influences of intention, context, etc. Secondly, pragmatics deals with the "purposes for which sentences are used, of the real world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used as an utterance" (Stalnaker, 1973, as cited in House, 1977, p. 26). Thus, the intention underlying the message and the context in which it is immersed, play a central role in the pragmatic aspect. On the other hand, Widdowson (1983) points out that translation is a reconstruction of the message taking into account the author's intentions and the translator's cultural knowledge (as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 137). In addition, translation is also defined as the transmission of sense from the source language to the target language, in spoken, written, or signed forms (Crystal, 1998, as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 138).

According to García Yebra (1984), the translation process involves two phases: the comprehension of the original text and the expression of its message (content) in the target language (p. 30). In the first phase, the translator looks for the content, the sense of the original text; whereas in the second phase, the translator looks for the words and expressions to reproduce the content in the target language (*ibid*). Likewise, Seleskovitch

and Lederer describe translation as a cognitive activity carried out in the translator's mind which consists of three phases. The first phase is understanding, which relies on the comprehension of the language in which the message has been expressed and its sense in relation to the context. The second phase is deverbalization, which represents a mental process in which the translator has understood the message but has not associated it to any linguistic signs yet. Finally, in the re-expression phase the message is expressed through the target language (as cited in Guarda & Lizasoain, 2004).

In summary, translation is a process in which linguistic units of the source language are transferred into the target language with a communicative drive; therefore, its result is a new text that is developed based on several factors such as content, culture, style, etc. Although translation is most commonly seen as a discipline, it is also used for pedagogical purposes in the field of foreign language teaching.

## **2.4. Pedagogical Translation**

Translation for pedagogical purposes has a long history. It was first used at the end of the Middle Ages when vernaculars started to be taught in schools, and translations into the classical languages became popular. In this approach, students were asked to select isolated sentences and analyzed them word by word to find the vernacular equivalents. Then, the resulting "literal" translation was adapted and improved to get a final and acceptable version in the vernacular. At the end of the eighteenth century, Latin was formally taught through "grammar rules and their application" and the use of translation (House, 1977, pp. 212-213). This way of teaching was also used for the instruction of the few modern languages that were learned in schools at that time. At the beginning, translation from the foreign language (FL) was the most predominant exercise until Meidinger (as cited in Mackey, 1965, p.142) proposed the use of translation into the foreign language based on the application of grammar rules, as well. Thus, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) emerged.

During the nineteenth century, the GTM was the only methodology used for teaching foreign languages. Textbooks were based on translation exercises of isolated sentences, where students had to analyze their grammatical structures and used the

grammar rules to translate from and into the foreign language. However, at the end of the century, this method was rejected as a result of the emergence of sciences such as linguistics and psychology, and the idea of teaching a language in a more natural way, following the way first language is acquired, arose. This was supported by several methodologists, such as Marcel, Sauveur, Gouin, and Viëtor, who also stated the importance of developing speaking skills in the foreign language. Consequently, the Direct Method movement emerged in the teaching of a foreign language field. This method was based on the assumption that “it is mainly translation which prevents a direct association of foreign language items with their extra-linguistic referents” (House, 1977, pp. 214-215); thus, any form of translation was discarded. Despite the influence that this method had in Europe, it did not gain advocates in North America.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the teaching of foreign languages was developed through a type of Grammar-Translation methodology called the Reading Method, in which the main aim was to improve reading skills. This method was centered on teaching vocabulary items through translations of written texts. After the beginning of the Second World War, a new methodology was created to prepare American government personnel to speak the foreign language in a fluent manner: the Structural Linguists’ Method. This method was based on the belief that languages are mainly oral, and that oral communication in the foreign language should be the final goal; therefore, the native language was left aside almost completely: translation was only used for explanations and to find equivalences in the native language (House, 1977, pp. 218-219).

In the late 50’s, the effectiveness of the Structural Linguists’ Method started to be taken into question since it did not have a methodological basis for teaching a foreign language. At the same time, the United States had become a “major international power” and many people interested in studying at universities needed to learn English as a requirement. Thus, linguists and applied linguists created a new method with a methodological basis for this purpose: the Audiolingual Method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 51). This method was influenced by the Behaviorist Learning Theory which established that “language mastery is represented as acquiring a set of appropriate language stimulus-response chains” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 56). That is, learning a language involves the acquisition of a set of habits that are needed to manage in different situations.



Therefore, in the Audiolingual Method, mimicry, memorization, and pattern drills are used as the main strategies. Although translation did not have a prominent role here, it was still used in some exercises such as translation drills, translation of foreign language dialogues, and even translations of continuous passages (paragraphs) into the foreign language (House, 1977, pp. 219).

In the 70's, Charles Curran, a specialist in counseling and a professor of psychology, developed a new method known as Community Language Learning (CLL), based on the idea that the classroom environment has a powerful influence on students' learning is the basis of this method. The teacher acts as a counselor who guides students, whereas students learn through interaction with the class community (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 94). The most common activities in the CLL are carried out through translation. A student produces a message in L1 which is directed to a classmate. Then, this message is translated by the teacher into the foreign language for being later reproduced by the same student. This is done for students to be able to understand all the messages their classmates communicate, until translation is no longer necessary (pp. 90-91).

During the same decade, the arrival of immigrants to Europe generated the need to learn the foreign language with the purpose of communication, and the Communicative Language Learning Approach was the response to it. This method is based on the belief that the FL must be used from the beginning of the learning process to enable students to solve authentic tasks through communication. In the CLT approach, it is stated that "translation of L1 gets in the way with the acquisition of L2" (Liao, 2006, p. 193); consequently, it is not considered as a good learning strategy because it causes interference. However, translation may be used when students benefit from it (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 156).

#### **2.4.1. Disadvantages of the Use of Translation in the EFL Classroom**

The use of translation in the EFL class has been widely criticized since the failure of the Grammar Translation Method. Rivers and Temperly (1978), affirmed that the use of translation impedes the development of the ability of thinking in the foreign language (as cited in Weschler, 1997, para. 8), which is related to what Shiyab & Abdullateef (2001) stated as another disadvantage: the impossibility of achieving a natural use of the FL.

Furthermore, the learner tends to think just in the L1 and to apply its rules to the foreign language, a process known as interference (Mallol, 2006, p. 168). Likewise, Selinker (1992) affirms that “too much reliance on the first language will result in the fossilization of an interlanguage” (as cited in Weschler, 1997, para. 8). Moreover, the use of translation makes learners pay attention to structure rather than meaning, giving more importance to formal properties of the foreign language instead of focusing on communication (Shiyab & Abdullateef, 2001, p. 4). In addition, translation would lead to the false assumption that there exists an exact equivalence for every word between L1 and FL (Shiyab & Abdullateef, 2001, p. 4) and would impede the achievement of fluency and accuracy (Mallol, 2006, p. 168). Regarding appropriate materials when using translation for teaching a foreign language, it is said that it is difficult to find teaching resources “for the learners’ level and for the time available” (Koppe, 2008, p. 7) and that this kind of materials approach only reading and writing skills (Mallol, 2006, p. 168).

#### **2.4.2. Advantages of the Use of Translation in the EFL Classroom**

Despite the fact that several linguists and teachers affirm that translation is detrimental for students learning a foreign language, many benefits are associated with it if it is used as a resource rather than as a methodology (Mallol, 2006, p. 169). Popovic (2001) agrees with translation criticisms “only if translation practice amounts the regular combination of grammar rules with translation into the target language as the principal practice technique” (p. 1). Similarly, Koppe poses that translation practice and theory should be approached from a perspective that has no relation with the traditional approaches, such as the Grammar-Translation Method (2008, p. 1). If so, the use of translation allows students to be central and active participants in the class, thus making the learning process meaningful (Shiyab & Mohamad, 2001, p. 4).

According to Duff (as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 169), translation is useful since it makes the learners aware of the influence that L1 has on the FL, and that it allows them to understand the differences and similarities between both languages (González, 2002, as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 170). Thus, translation enables students to realize that there exist different patterns and structures for each language (Davies & Celaya, 1992, p. 171). This is

related to the idea that translation “allows conscious learning and control of the foreign language” (Shiyab & Mohamad, 2001, p. 4) which helps to diminish interference from the L1. Moreover, translation enhances the following skills: cognitive, linguistic, and communicative. In the development of the cognitive skills, “problem-spotting and problem-solving”, mental agility, and memory (González, 2002; Godayol, 1996, as cited in Mallol, 2006, pp. 170-171) are involved. On the other hand, it has been shown that the use of translation facilitates the development of linguistic skills like reading and writing. As it was found in a research carried out by Hsieh (2000) with his Taiwanese students, translation enhances reading comprehension, reading strategies, and vocabulary learning (as cited in Liao, 2006, p. 195). Likewise, Prince (1996) discovered “the superiority of using translation in learning vocabulary in terms of quantity of words learned” (as cited in Liao, 2006, p. 196). On the other hand, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) found that Japanese college students who used translation had a higher level of writing skills than those who wrote directly in the FL (as cited in Liao, 2006, p.196). Regarding communicative skills, translation gives learners the opportunity of interaction by sharing and negotiating meaning, and at the same time it promotes speculation and discussion. Moreover, it favors the development of “interpretation, negotiation, and expression of meaning, basic abilities for communication” (Koppe, 2008, p. 6). Furthermore, flexibility, accuracy, and fluency are enhanced (Duff, 1989, as cited in Popovic, 2001, p. 1) .

Translation is also considered as a necessary and natural activity since it is constantly used by learners, even outside the classroom (Duff, 1992; González & Celaya, 2002, as cited in Mallol, 2006, pp. 169, 171). They use translation in an unconscious and indirect way to learn a language, which is related to the fact that, according to some authors, there is a high probability that students, no matter their level, will always rely on their L1 when learning the FL (Shiyab & Mohamad, 2001, p. 4; Mahmoud, 2006, as cited in Kavaliauskienė & Kaminskienė, 2007, p. 134) at least in the first stages of the process. Moreover, Welscher (1997) says that the influence of L1 on the FL is an unavoidable phenomenon that should be seen as an aid or tool (para. 9). The previous statements are supported by several studies that point out that despite the fact that many teachers have rejected the use of translation as a teaching tool, learners are still using it. Naiman *et al.* (1978) found that people who do well in language learning often use translation by making

comparisons between L1 and FL (as cited in Liao, 2006, p. 192). In addition, Prince (1996) discovered that students tend to resort to translation when learning vocabulary instead of learning it in context, as it is suggested by their teachers (as cited in Liao, 2006, p. 195). Moreover, they think that it is easier for them to write using translation as a tool since that way they are able to develop ideas, express opinions, and find words (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992, as cited in Liao, 2006, p. 196). More recently, research revealed that “students believed that the adoption of translation had positive effects on their English reading and vocabulary learning” (Hsieh, 2000, as cited in Liao, 2006, p. 196).

Finally, even though translation has many benefits for learners, it is important to avoid overuse, since, according to Atkinson (2001), it could cause:

1. The feel of not understanding till a word has been translated.
2. Students oversimplifying the use of translation, to prevent them from not seeing the form, semantic or pragmatic equivalence anymore.
3. Students not expressing themselves in their FL but in their L1, even if they are capable of doing so.
4. Students not realising they should use the FL for most of the classroom activities (as cited in Mallol, 2006, pp. 170-171).

## **2.5. Teaching Vocabulary through Translation**

“We do not first have thoughts, ideas, feelings, and then put them into a verbal framework. We think in words, by means of words.” (Pyle, 2009, p. 1); therefore, lexicon is the pivotal point in language, since words are the means by which one is able to think, feel, and express oneself. This is reinforced by Chomsky’s (1957) idea that “words and idioms are as indispensable to our thoughts and experiences as are colors and tints to a painting” (as cited in Pyle, 2009, p. 1). Similarly, Hunt & Belgar (2005), state that “the heart of language comprehension and use is the lexicon” (as cited in Jahangard, Moinszadeh & Tavakoli, 2010, p. 2). In other words, vocabulary is the central part of language learning, since it is through its acquisition that people are able to understand the meaning of language (Coady & Huckin, 1997, p. 5; Pyle, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, several studies have been carried out with the purpose of finding a suitable tool for teaching vocabulary. In this regard, translation has been very controversial.

Lotto and de Groot (1998) carried out a study to compare the effectiveness of two different strategies for learning vocabulary. The subjects were exposed to 80 L2 words; some of them were associated with a picture and the others with their L1 translations. The results showed that most of the words recalled were those which had been taught by means of translation (as cited in Jahangard et al., 2010, p. 4). This is related to Daught's suggestion that "learners do not attach new L2 words directly to the concepts that they represent, but to L1 words which represent L1 concepts that learners possess" (as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 699). Likewise, Hayati & Mohammadi (2009) developed a research study whose purpose was to compare task-based activities and translation in terms of efficacy in vocabulary learning. They came to the conclusion that "in EFL contexts, using translation in a communicative framework enhances vocabulary learning at deeper levels of cognitive processing leading to deeper vocabulary gains for unknown words" (as cited in Jahangard et al., 2010, p. 5).

Jahangard, Moinszadeh & Tavakoli investigated the degree to which words learned through translation could be applied to L2 reading comprehension. It was revealed that if translations of lexical items were executed in a meaningful manner, language learners could transfer that new vocabulary to reading comprehension tasks (2010, p. 20). In a similar trend, Melati (2007) researched the use of translation and English only for learning low frequency and abstract vocabulary. The results revealed that the use of translation is more effective than using English only (p. 6). Additionally, a study carried by Laufer and Girsai (2008), which focuses was on the teaching of unfamiliar words and collocations, compared the usefulness of reading plus developing translation activities versus reading plus answering comprehension questions in the target language. The findings were that the reading plus translation activities group had better results than the reading plus comprehension questions group (pp. 700-701).

Added to the studies that expose the benefits of translation for learning lexicon, there are three vocabulary learning hypotheses that support the use of translation in this area. These are the concepts of "noticing", "pushed output", and "task-induced involvement load" (Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 697).

The "noticing" hypothesis sets out that "learners must consciously notice forms and the meanings these forms realize in the input in order to convert input into intake for

learning” (Schmidt 1990, 1994, as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 697). That is, learners need to develop a strategy that enables them to detect certain vocabulary items intentionally and to understand them, in order to accomplish retention. Thus, translation could be used as a strategy because providing the translation of a word makes the target items “noticeable or salient in the input” (Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 697).

The “pushed output” hypothesis states that “when learners produce language and stretch their linguistic resources in the process, they improve their language production and their language development” (Swain 1985; Swain and Lapkin 1995; as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 697). In other words, it is necessary to expose learners to tasks that involve production because this makes them expand their linguistic knowledge and enhance their productive skills. In fact, it has been shown that output tasks are better than input tasks for learning lexicon (Ellis and He 1999; De la Fuente 2002, as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 698). Hence, translation could be beneficial for learning vocabulary because learners produce through it, and what is more, they are required to face problematic words and structures (Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 698).

Finally, the “task-induced involvement load” theory affirms that “the learning of words is best achieved by means of tasks with a high involvement load, that is tasks which combine three elements with regard to the words being practiced: ‘need’, ‘search’, and ‘evaluation’” (Laufer and Hulstijn, 2001, as cited in Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 698). The first one, ‘need’, emerges when the learner has the necessity of using certain words for specific tasks. The second element, ‘search’, involves the process of looking for the meaning or L2 form of a lexical item. The third one, ‘evaluation’, entails making decisions about the most appropriate word meaning or form to include within a particular context (Laufer & Girsai, 2008, p. 698). Accordingly, translation could be effective for vocabulary learning since it embodies the three elements. ‘Need’ is present in translation tasks when the learner needs to know the L1 meaning or L2 form of lexicon, depending on the task to translate. At the same time, the element of ‘search’ arises when the learner looks for the L1 meaning or L2 form of the words. Finally, ‘evaluation’ takes place when the learner chooses the best option in relation to the lexical item that s/he wants to include in his or her translated version. Therefore, translation has a high involvement load, which leads to the conclusion that it can favor vocabulary learning (pp. 698-699).

In summary, vocabulary represents one of the central aspects of language since lexicon is the basis for understanding and producing in the foreign language. Therefore, vocabulary learning strategies have been under the spotlight of researchers being translation the focus of study for many of them. In this regard, results have shown that translation may be useful since learners associate new L2 words to concepts that belong to their previous knowledge in their mother tongue. In addition, the benefits of translation have been supported by three hypotheses that describe how vocabulary is learned. In this sense, translation is seen as a suitable strategy since it counts with the fundamental characteristics that facilitate vocabulary learning.

To sum up, translation, which has been defined as the reproduction of a “source language message” in “the receptor language” through the best equivalents considering meaning and style (Nida & Taber, 1969, as cited in Mallol, 2006, p. 138) for the purpose of communication, has a long history for being used for pedagogical purposes. Although some authors have identified some disadvantages of the use of translation, such as the inhibition of thinking directly in the foreign language and an increase of transference from L1 to L2, many advantages have also been discussed. The awareness of the differences between L1 and L2 that makes learners able to prevent transference, and the development of skills, such as linguistic, cognitive, and communicative skills, are some of its advantages . Likewise, translation as a strategy for vocabulary learning has been studied by many researchers, who have shown that it may be helpful in this field.

Now, bringing all this background to our context, it is known that Chilean students do not reach the basic level of English defined in international standards despite the measures that have been taken by the Ministry of Education. Thus, it can be said that the teaching methodologies that have been used for English teaching are not appropriate for this purpose. In 1998, the Ministry of Education attempted to introduce the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Nevertheless, this approach, which has as main principle to involve students in meaningful tasks that entail communication, was never implemented in the Chilean classrooms. Quite on the contrary, it has been observed that the Grammar-Translation Method, based on the teaching of explicit grammar rules, memorization of bilingual vocabulary lists and translations, is nowadays the most popular among Chilean teachers. However, this method has not achieved the expected goals in

terms of English competence in Chile and many other countries. Consequently, translation, which is the central aspect of this method, has been widely criticized.



### **3. Methodology**

This study was developed with the aim of offering a new alternative in the field of English teaching methodologies in response to the current situation of Chilean students in terms of English competence. Thus, taking into account the different benefits that pedagogical translation and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach have, a teaching proposal consisting in using translation from a communicative approach was designed with the purpose of enhancing a fundamental aspect of language learning: vocabulary. Consequently, the first step was to have an overview of the teaching practice of schools in Valdivia through a case study.

This case study was carried out to identify the different methodologies used for teaching English as a foreign language, and more specifically, the use of translation and communicative activities for vocabulary learning. For this purpose, observations, interviews to teachers, and questionnaires to students were applied. In relation to observations, five classes of 90 minutes were observed in two of the schools studied (Martin Luther King College and Colegio San Luis de Alba) and five classes of forty five minutes in the remaining school (Liceo Santa María la Blanca), during the first semester of 2010. Observations were based on the format used by the English Pedagogy School of Universidad Austral de Chile (see Appendix 1) for evaluating students' teaching practices, and they were focused on the teachers' methodologies and the students' competence in English. On the other hand, an interview was applied to the English teachers in charge of the three ninth grades observed in order to know how they taught vocabulary. It was carried out during an appointment that was set for this purpose in November 2010. During the same month, a questionnaire was applied to students at the beginning of a class to determine how they perceived their learning and teaching of vocabulary in terms of the methodologies used.

### **3.1. Subjects of Study**

The case study involved 77 ninth graders and their teachers of three schools of Valdivia; one public school, Liceo Santa María la Blanca; one subsidized public school, Martin Luther King College; and one private school, Colegio San Luis de Alba.

### **3.2. Schools description**

#### **3.2.1. Liceo Santa María la Blanca:**

This public school consists of classes from seventh to twelfth grade, and it has 650 students approximately. English is a mandatory subject for all levels; thus, students from seventh to twelfth grade have three hours of English, being ninth grade the exception with four hours, per week. Consequently, the average amount of hours of English is 3.2 hours per week.

#### **3.2.2. Martin Luther King College:**

This is a subsidized public school which counts with classes from pre-kinder to twelfth grade, and it has 350 students approximately. This school has English as an intensive subject, which is reflected on the amount of hours students have per week. Pre-kinder and kinder students have 1 hour of English per week, from first to fourth grade, the amount of hours increases to four hours, and from fifth to twelfth grade, students have six hours. Therefore, the average amount of hours of English is 4.7 hours per week.

#### **3.2.3. Colegio San Luis de Alba:**

This is a private school which teaches English from play group to twelfth grade, and it has 350 students approximately. The importance given to English is one of the hallmarks that make this school stand out, since the students' English competence development is considered as a fundamental need. Therefore, students from pre-kinder and kinder have

three hours; from first to tenth grade students have seven hours; and eleventh and twelfth grade have five hours per week. The average amount of hours of English is 6.1 hours per week. Table 2 summarizes these descriptions.

**Table 2. Schools general description**

	<b>Liceo Santa María la Blanca</b>	<b>Martin Luther King College</b>	<b>Colegio San Luis de Alba</b>
<b>Number of students</b>	650	350	350
<b>Average of hours of English per week</b>	3.2	4.7	6.1

### **3.3. Class description**

#### **3.3.1. 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Liceo Santa María la Blanca:**

This class was made up of 31 students; 2 were boys and 29 were girls. It was observed that students did not manage basic grammatical structures and vocabulary since they were not able to comprehend the foreign language speech produced by the teacher. Neither could they produce it using the expected level of English for 9th grade according to the Plans and Programs stated by the Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup>. Production was not natural but mechanical (following grammatical rules), and very few students developed the activities given by the teacher. In addition, participation was scarce since less than half of students paid attention and responded to what the teacher asked while the rest were

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<sup>1</sup> Waystage user: Students understand sentences and expressions that are frequently used related to personal, familiar, and environmental aspects. They describe aspects about their lives and environment using simple terms. They develop simple daily tasks that require a basic and direct exchange of information about known topics.

constantly talking. Moreover, just a few students seemed interested on the class and asked questions in relation to the contents.

### **3.3.2. 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Martin Luther King College:**

This class was made up of 29 students; 14 were boys and 13, girls. The group demonstrated partial comprehension of the foreign language speech, but they were not able to produce in a natural way. Students managed basic grammatical structures according to their level, but they did not have the ability of being creative with them. Also, it was observed that students were not familiarized with the amount of words they should know at their level. Regarding students' participation, just half of them paid attention, responded to what the teacher asked, and asked questions about the contents or the activities to develop; the rest of them was distracted or talking with their classmates, showing little interest towards the class. However, the class had good behavior in general; despite being noisy sometimes, they respected and obeyed the teacher.

### **3.3.3. 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Colegio San Luis de Alba:**

This class consisted of 28 students divided into two groups according to their level of English. In fifth grade, students had to take a test to be placed in one of the levels. The group observed corresponded to level 1 (students with better proficiency) and it consisted of 17 students: 12 boys and 6, girls. All of them were able to understand the foreign language speech and most of them were able to produce it in a natural way. Students managed simple and sometimes complex structures and a wide range of vocabulary, and many of them demonstrated fluency. In terms of participation, most of students actively participated in class by paying attention, asking questions, answering to what the teacher asked, and developing activities provided. Furthermore, students seemed interested and engaged in the lesson, enabling an efficient development of the class. Table 3 summarizes the description of the three classes observed.

**Table 3. Class description**

	<b>Liceo Santa María la Blanca</b>	<b>Martin Luther King College</b>	<b>Colegio San Luis de Alba</b>
<b>Number of students</b>	31	29	17
<b>Comprehension of foreign language speech</b>	Inexistent	Moderate	High
<b>Natural production</b>	Inexistent	Inexistent	Always present
<b>Class participation</b>	Scarce	Moderate	High
<b>Discipline</b>	Scarcely present	Sometimes present	Always present

## **4. Chapter IV: Results**

### **4.1. Observations: Teaching Methodologies**

#### **4.1.1. Liceo Santa María la Blanca:**

The lessons were carried out mostly in Spanish, and when English was used, the teacher translated her speech for students to understand it. Therefore, messages were always comprehensible for them. In relation to the development of the four skills, activities were mainly focused on reading skills; thus, students had to read brief texts and to carry out activities based on them.

The contents were focused on the teaching of explicit grammar and vocabulary. Regarding the teaching of grammar, the teacher presented new structures by showing grammar rules and giving examples on the whiteboard. The teacher used translation to facilitate students' understanding of the structures, comparing sentences in English with their translations in the mother tongue. Then, students were asked to develop exercises from the whiteboard or from worksheets handed out by the teacher (they did not have textbooks) in which they had to complete or elaborate sentences based on the structures taught. Although activities were short, students were given long periods of time to develop them; thus, there were few activities per class and this led to boredom and lack of discipline.

Regarding vocabulary, it was taught through pictures that the teacher drew on the whiteboard to exemplify the meanings of the words. Then, she asked them for the Spanish equivalents of the words to check if they had understood their meanings. In addition, to reinforce the lexical items taught, the teacher provided students with a variety of activities (individual, pair, and group work) supported by different teaching materials such as videos, cardboard, software, among others. The activities consisted in labeling pictures, making vocabulary posters, solving letter soups, identifying vocabulary from videos, playing interactive games on the computer, etc. In relation to the activities length, it varied; however, the teacher gave students a lot of time to develop them. Therefore, there were not

many activities per class. It is worth to mention that activities in general were not based on real life situations, but they were unreal and isolated tasks.

In short, the methodology applied highly resembled the Grammar-Translation Method, since grammar and vocabulary were taught explicitly and translation was a central resource to facilitate students' comprehension.

#### **4.1.2. Martin Luther King College:**

Classes were developed in English most of the time, but always using Spanish translations to make speech comprehensible. First, the teacher spoke in English when presenting new contents, and then she reproduced the same explanation in the students' mother tongue. However, the instructions for the activities were always given in Spanish. Consequently, students clearly understood the teacher's speech. In regards to the development of the four skills, activities were centered on listening and reading. Therefore, students had to listen to short recordings and answer questions about them, besides reading texts and answering comprehension questions.

The contents were focused on grammar structures and very little vocabulary. Grammar was taught explicitly through the explanation of grammar rules and the use of translation. After the teacher's instruction, she asked students questions to check whether they had understood, and asked them to answer orally short exercises from the whiteboard. In order to practice grammar, students worked most of the times developing activities from their textbook; few group work activities based on different materials (for example, the creation of a horoscope for practicing *predictions* with *will*) were observed. The activities were short, but the teacher gave students a lot of time to develop them; consequently, students worked on few activities each class and got bored, which sometimes led to indiscipline.

In relation to vocabulary teaching, there was no instruction of new lexicon. The teacher gave the equivalents of the new words in Spanish only when students asked for them. Regarding vocabulary activities, the teacher asked students to work on the book, which involved writing the equivalents of a group of words in Spanish. Therefore, exercises were decontextualized and not related to real-life situations.

In summary, the methodology observed in this class has several features of the Grammar-Translation Method since the classes were centered on the teaching of grammar structures with their translations in Spanish.

#### **4.1.3. Colegio San Luis de Alba**

Classes were carried out only in English without the use of translation; nevertheless, messages were always comprehensible for students. This was noticeable since they properly responded to what the teacher asked and developed the activities in an effective way. The classes observed were entirely centered on the teaching of grammar. At the beginning of each unit, the teacher presented the new content implicitly through texts which contained certain grammatical structures constantly repeated. Moreover, the teacher showed examples of sentences on slides. Thus, students read the texts and the sentences and inferred, supported by the teacher, the new grammatical structure. Then, students completed handouts and their workbooks. Explicit teaching of vocabulary was not observed, so it must have been implicit, since students showed a command of wide vocabulary.

In relation to the development of the four skills, the teacher gave students the opportunity of enhancing all of them through different activities, such as reading books, writing reports, oral discussions, listening to speeches in the foreign language, etc.

In summary, a mixture between the Direct Method and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach was observed. The Direct Method was reflected through the use of English as the only language of instruction and the way the teacher conducted the class. He was the main authority in the class, but students were provided with opportunities to participate and produce in the foreign language. On the other hand, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach was observed when students were asked to carry out activities involving interaction. Table 4 summarizes what it was observed in the three schools during the English lessons.



**Table 4. Observations: Teaching Methodologies.**

	<b>Liceo Santa María la Blanca</b>	<b>Martin Luther King College</b>	<b>Colegio San Luis de Alba</b>
<b>Classes are carried out in English</b>	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
<b>Use of translation</b>	Always	Always	Never
<b>Comprehension of the teacher's speech</b>	Always	Always	Always
<b>Contents</b>	Grammar and vocabulary	Grammar	Grammar
<b>Methodologies</b>	Grammar-Translation Method, Audiolingual Method	Grammar-Translation Method	Communicative Language Teaching Approach, Direct Method

## 4.2. Interviews to Teachers

An interview was applied to the English teachers of the ninth grades observed, in order to find out the way in which they taught vocabulary. The interview consisted in six questions focused on the following aspects: the approach they gave to vocabulary teaching, the organization of lexical units, the kind of activities applied, the teaching materials used, and the use of translation (see Appendix 2).

### 4.2.1. Liceo Santa María la Blanca

The teacher affirmed that she taught vocabulary explicitly or implicitly, depending on the contents to cover. Regarding the organization of the lexical units, the teacher selects vocabulary contents from the textbook “Interchange”, in which units are structured to make students learn new words based on their previous knowledge. However, students did not have this textbook, but they only received some photocopied worksheets of it. In relation to the activities, she applies contests, games, handicrafts, and interactive activities from videos and computers. Thus, the teaching materials utilized are videos, computers, realia, flashcards, and the whiteboard. Moreover, she believes that using translation is beneficial for students, because it helps them to understand complex words in

a better way. She added that the use of translation is important in vocabulary teaching since sometimes students do not know the meaning of some words even in Spanish.

#### **4.2.2. Martin Luther King College**

The teacher stated that she teaches vocabulary explicitly because she believes there is not an effective way of teaching vocabulary implicitly (for example, teaching words related to feelings with flashcards) to high school students. She argues that students find it tedious and boring when they have to infer the meaning of new words through games or flashcards. Thus, she presents new vocabulary items through images on slides. In relation to the organization of lexical units, the teacher follows the sequence of contents from a book chosen by the school, which is called “Can Do”, from Richmond Publishing. In addition, she affirmed that vocabulary is reinforced within each unit; that is, all the new vocabulary words are used during the time the unit lasts. Then, at the end of each unit, a final review is made with the new lexicon studied. Regarding the activities carried out by the teacher, students write the Spanish equivalents for the new words with the help of a bilingual dictionary. The teaching materials used are the slide projector, the students’ book, the dictionary, and the whiteboard. Finally, the teacher said that she used translation because she thinks older students prefer a more direct way of learning vocabulary to be able to apply it right away instead of “wasting time on developing other activities for learning it”.

#### **4.2.3. Colegio San Luis de Alba**

The approach used by the teacher is implicit for teaching concrete words, and explicit for abstract ones. Regarding the organization of lexicon, the teacher covers the contents exposed by the English book, Laser B1+ from Macmillan Publishing, chosen by the school. The vocabulary items learned are constantly reinforced since the teacher believes that having previous knowledge is fundamental for learning new vocabulary. The most common activity used by the teacher to introduce vocabulary is reading texts in which the new words are included, so students can infer their meanings and get familiarized with their use. Next, the teacher asks students to describe images presented in PowerPoint

presentations and create stories to apply them. Writing tasks are strongly emphasized. Thus, the teaching materials used are flashcards, PowerPoint presentations with pictures, texts, and the students' textbook. In relation to the use of translation, the teacher stated that he does not use it; however, he supports it by saying that translation may help students to clarify certain lexical items of which they have just a slight idea. Nevertheless, he highlights that after giving students the translation of the new words, it is important to put them into context for them to know their use. Table 5 summarizes the information drawn from the interviews.

**Table 5. Interviews to teachers.**

	<b>Liceo Santa María la Blanca</b>	<b>Martin Luther King College</b>	<b>Colegio San Luis de Alba</b>
<b>Approach</b>	Explicit and implicit	Explicit	Explicit and implicit
<b>Organization of lexical units</b>	Textbook	Textbook	Textbook
<b>Activities</b>	Contests, games, handicrafts, etc.	Writing translations of the words	Writing tasks
<b>Teaching materials</b>	Realia, drawings, videos, flashcards, posters	Slides, bilingual dictionary, students' textbook	Slides, texts, students' textbooks
<b>Use of Translation</b>	Yes	Yes	No

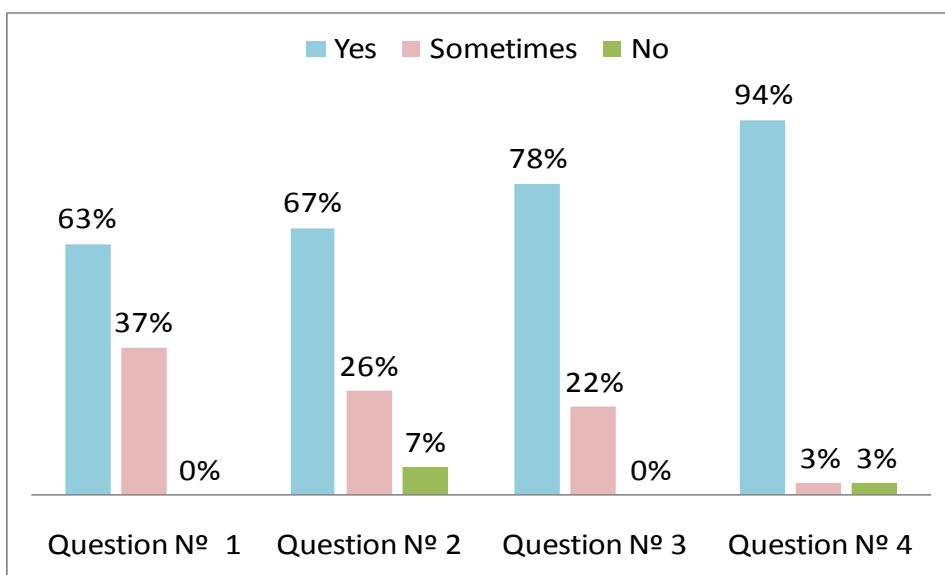
### 4.3. Students' Questionnaire

A questionnaire was applied to the ninth grades of each of the schools observed with the purpose of knowing how vocabulary is taught from the students' point of view. Thus, the ninth graders had to answer the following questions:

1. Do you use word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a personal strategy for learning new vocabulary?
2. Do you develop different and varied activities during class? For example: a game, handouts, puzzles, etc.
3. Are there activities in which you can interact with your classmates? For example: role plays, interviews, dialogues, oral presentations, etc.

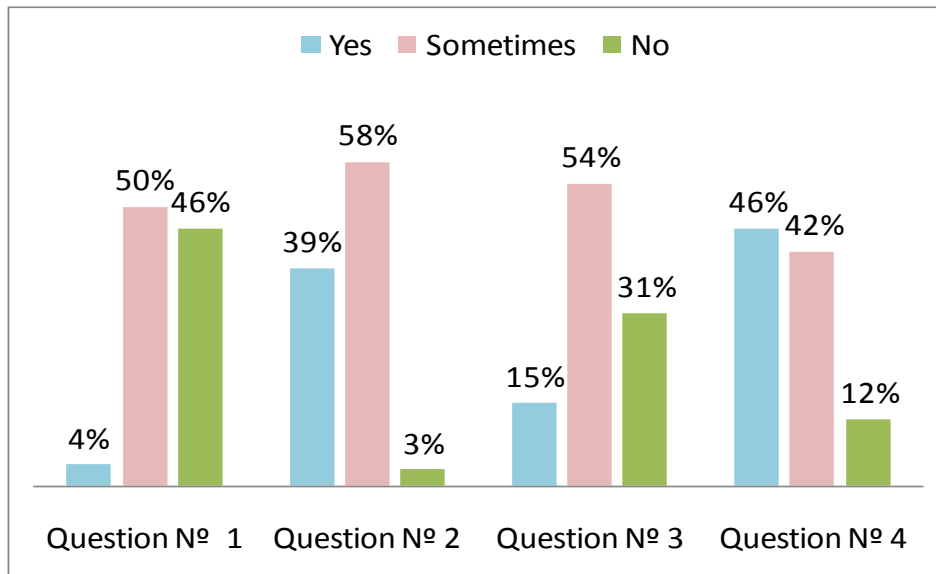
4. Do you think the activities you develop in class are effective for English learning?

#### 4.3.1. Liceo Santa María la Blanca



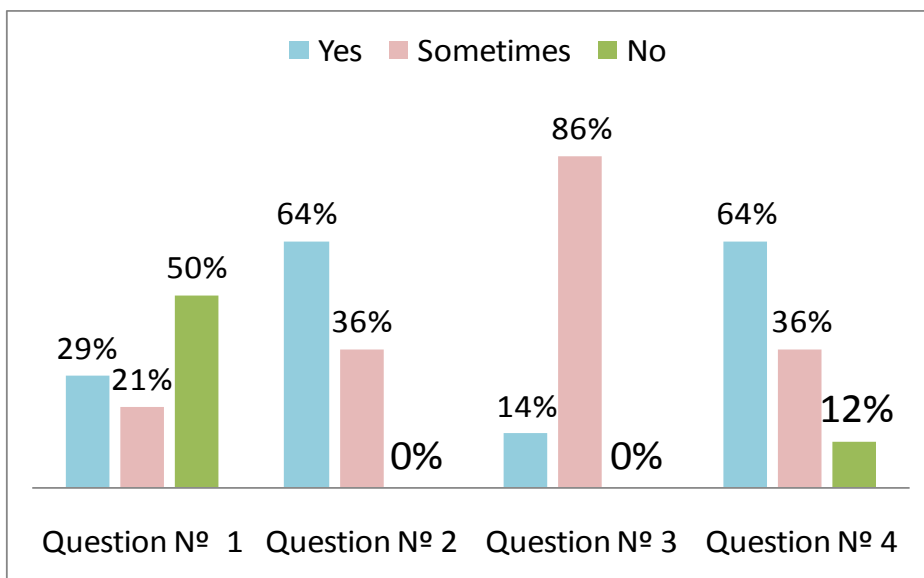
In relation to question 1, answers were divided into two groups, “Yes” and “Sometimes”. Consequently, the majority of the students (63%) stated that they always used word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a personal strategy for learning new vocabulary. Question 2 results showed that most of the students (67%) affirmed they always developed different and varied activities during classes; some of them (26%) assured that they sometimes developed diverse activities, and just few of them (7%) said that there were not varied activities during lessons. Regarding question 3, 78% of students answered that the teacher provided them with activities in which they could interact with their classmates, whereas the remaining 22% affirmed that such activities were sometimes present during class. Finally, question 4 showed that a high majority (94%) of students thought that the activities they developed in class were effective for English learning, while the remaining 6% was equally divided into “Sometimes” and “No” answers.

### 4.3.2. Martin Luther King College



Regarding question 1, students' answers were mainly divided into "Sometimes" and "No". A 50% affirmed that they sometimes used world lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish for learning vocabulary; whereas a 46% said that they did not use this strategy. On the contrary, only a 4% stated that they always resorted to the mentioned strategy. Question 2 revealed that most of the students answered that they developed different and varied activities during classes (always 39% and sometimes 58%); while the rest of them said that activities were never varied (3%). In relation to question 3, half of the students approximately stated that they sometimes carried out activities based on interaction. On the other hand, only 15% of the students answered that they always developed that kind of activities, and 31% said they were never provided with them. Finally, question 4 results showed that most students thought that the activities they developed in class were effective for English learning (46% answered "yes" and 42% answered "sometimes"). In contrast, a 12% of students stated that the activities were not effective.

### 4.3.3. Colegio San Luis de Alba



In regards to question 1, half of the students said that they did not use word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish. The other half is divided into students who answered that they always (29%) and sometimes (21%) used such strategy. Question 2 revealed that the majority of students (64%) stated they developed varied activities during classes; while the rest of them (36%) affirmed they sometimes carried out different activities. In relation to question 3, a high majority (86%) answered that they were sometimes provided with activities in which they could interact; whereas the remaining 14% assured that such activities were always present in classes. Finally, question 4 results revealed that most of the students (64%) thought activities they developed in classes were effective for English learning; the rest of them said that activities were sometimes or never effective (36% and 12% respectively).

## **5. Chapter V: Discussion**

The results yielded by the observations, the interview to teachers, and the questionnaire applied to students, have been analyzed and contrasted separately with the students' level of English of each school. This is presented in the three following sections considering the reality of each school: (1) Teachers' methodologies and students' command of English (based on observations), (2) Teachers' perception of vocabulary teaching and students' command of English (based on interviews), and (3) Students' perception and students' command of English (based on questionnaires). Next, a fourth section was developed integrating the three aspects previously mentioned.

### **5.1. Liceo Santa María la Blanca**

#### **5.1.1. Teachers' methodologies and students' command of English**

The methodology used by the teacher resembled the Grammar-Translation Method which was observable through the explicit instruction of grammar in Spanish. However, translation was present only in the teacher's speech, since students were not asked to carry out tasks based on it as in this traditional method. At the same time, it was observed that students do not possess a basic level of English; they were not able to understand and neither produce in the foreign language. In addition, the Communicative approach was not implemented either since the kind of activities that students developed did not involve interaction, which did not promote students' natural production. Thus, it is possible to infer that the methodology used might not be effective due to the following reasons: an inappropriate use of translation and the lack of communicative tasks.

In relation to the first reason, translation was constantly used by the teacher to facilitate students' comprehension of the foreign language speech. This made students get used to waiting for the translation of the messages instead of trying to understand them in English, which impeded the development of their listening skills. Moreover, translation activities were not used as a strategy, which hindered students from making a good use of translation. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the inappropriate use of translation has

deprived students from the benefits it possesses for learning a foreign language, which could explain their inability to speak in English. What is more, it may also be concluded that translation could have been detrimental for students' language acquisition since it was overused.

Regarding the lack of communicative tasks, students had to develop activities in which the language was learnt as separate units of knowledge and that did not involve communication. That is, specific contents were enhanced through isolated activities that were not contextualized to their reality and neither required interaction among students. Therefore, tasks were not meaningful since they did not resemble real-life situations and students were not asked to produce oral language. Consequently, it is possible to assume that the students' low command of English results from the fact that this kind of activities, unlike communicative activities, did not facilitate their language acquisition.

### **5.1.2. Teachers' perception of vocabulary teaching and students' command of English**

The teacher affirmed that translation was a fundamental tool for vocabulary teaching; however, she stated that she used it for clarifying the meaning of new words. That is, she did not provide students with translation activities. On the other hand, activities were varied and dynamic and were supported by different teaching materials, according to the teacher. Nevertheless, the tasks described by her did not involve students' interaction in the target language. Consequently, students' low level of English could have resulted from two main reasons: the lack of translation activities and the inexistence of communicative activities.

In relation to the use of translation, although the teacher said that it was important in students' vocabulary learning, she did not apply activities based on it. Thus, students' did not benefit from the use of translation in terms of new words retention, even though it helped them to understand unfamiliar lexicon. This could explain their low command of English and, more specifically, their little vocabulary knowledge.

Regarding the inexistence of communicative activities, despite the fact that the teacher affirmed she provided students with a great variety of dynamic tasks, none of them



were based on interaction among students. Therefore, the absence of interactive activities could have influenced students' low level of English and vocabulary.

### **5.1.3. Students' perception of vocabulary learning and students' command of English**

The questionnaire results showed that all students used word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a personal strategy for learning vocabulary (63% always, 37% sometimes). Nevertheless, although all the benefits that translation offers, students had a low command of the target language. This could be explained by the fact that the only way they said they used translation was not the most appropriate for learning vocabulary, since the words studied were decontextualized. On the other hand, a high percentage of students affirmed they used a wide variety of activities which allowed them to interact during classes; however, the benefits this kind of activities may have were not reflected on the students' level of English. This leads to the conclusion that interaction may have been developed in Spanish and in an unnatural way through mechanical production and decontextualized activities, which could have impeded an improvement of students' proficiency in the foreign language.

### **5.1.4. Vocabulary teaching and students' command of English**

Students' low command of English and reduced vocabulary knowledge could have resulted from inappropriate use of translation and lack of communicative activities. As the observations and the interview revealed, translation was overused by the teacher to make their speech comprehensible to students. Besides, she used it to teach vocabulary, since she affirmed it was a fundamental tool for presenting new lexicon. Thus, new words were taught through the use of word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish in a decontextualized way, which was also a common strategy among students. Consequently, translation could have negatively affected students' vocabulary learning, which is observable in their low level of English, as a result of being overused and utilized in an inappropriate manner. That is, the teacher could have deprived students from the possibility

to acquire vocabulary; since she was constantly translating her speech, students were not exposed to the foreign language. Moreover, the fact that the only activity that involved translation was the introduction of new vocabulary through word lists may have impeded that students could benefit from the positive aspects of translation.

On the other hand, although students identified the use of interactive activities, these were not mentioned by the teacher as part of the activities she applied, and neither observed in classes by the researchers. Therefore, students did not develop communicative activities, which could have given them the possibility of learning new vocabulary by producing the target language in a natural way. In other words, it is possible to infer that students were not able to acquire new lexicon, since activities were not meaningful for them. Furthermore, the fact that activities did not involve interaction could have hindered students from knowing new words. That is, since they did not need to express themselves or interpret their classmates' messages in English, they did not have the possibility to look for and learn different words to do it. In summary, the absence of communicative activities may have impeded students' vocabulary learning, which could have also caused their low command of English. It is worth to mention that the reduced amount of hours of English per week, the lack of discipline, and the high number of students could have also interfered in the learning process.

## **5.2. Martin Luther King College**

### **5.2.1. Teachers' methodologies and students' command of English**

The methodology used by the teacher was similar to the Grammar-Translation Method, since it presented all its features with the exception of the translation of literary texts. The lessons were centered on grammar structures and, although the teacher spoke in English, she always used translation to make students understand her speech. Regarding students, it was observed that they possessed a basic level of English that did not correspond with the expected by the Ministry of Education; they were able to understand and produce sentences with basic grammatical structures only if the teacher guided them.

Moreover, activities were based on the development of grammatical exercises with little group work, which deprived them from opportunities to communicate. Consequently, it is possible to infer that the methodology used was not appropriate due to the following factors: translation was used ineffectively, communicative activities were not carried out, classes were centered on grammar and vocabulary teaching was not emphasized, and grammar was taught explicitly and in a decontextualized way.

Regarding the first factor, the overuse of translation was detrimental to the development of students' language skills. The teacher spoke in English most of the times and students were able to understand most of her speech. However, the fact that she translated everything she said could have hindered students from the benefits of translation, since students only paid attention to the Spanish speech instead of comparing both versions. Consequently, the abuse of translation could have been detrimental to students' improvement of their listening skill.

In respect to the absence of communicative activities, the teacher did not promote students' natural production of the target language. That is, students' production was mechanical, since they had few opportunities to communicate in English. The teacher asked questions that they answered following grammatical rules, and students had to develop exercises on their textbooks. Moreover, group work was scarce, as the lessons were teacher-centered, and the few times in which they worked in groups, the teacher did not encourage them to communicate in the target language. Thus, activities were not meaningful for students because they could not see and neither apply the language in contexts that were close to reality, which impeded an appropriate acquisition. This could have caused that students were not able to develop a good command of the language.

In relation to the third factor, grammar-centered lessons without considering vocabulary instruction, it could have caused students' inability to understand and produce the foreign language without the teacher's support. That is, when students read a text they were constantly asking about the meanings of words to be able to understand it. Moreover, when they were asked to produce short sentences in the foreign language, they asked the teacher for word equivalents. In short, their low command of English may be a result of the lack of emphasis given to vocabulary, since lexicon is essential for communication.

Finally, the last factor, the explicit and decontextualized instruction of grammar, could have generated students' inability to be creative with the language. That is, although students were familiarized with several grammar structures, they were not able to produce natural language because they could not apply them in real contexts. Furthermore, students were not able to understand how to use their knowledge about grammar when facing tasks that required natural production. Moreover, the fact that it is not possible to completely understand structures when they are not presented in context could have been harmful to students' retention of them. This was observed in occasions in which the teacher asked them to apply a structure that had been previously studied, and they were not able to do it.

### **5.2.2. Teachers' perception of vocabulary teaching and students' command of English**

The teacher affirmed that translation was the only way of teaching vocabulary to high school students, since they preferred a direct way of learning new words. Thus, translation was always used for the instruction of lexicon. Moreover, the teacher stated that the main activity developed by students was to look for the equivalents in Spanish of a list of new words on the textbook, using a bilingual dictionary. Consequently, the teacher did not use an alternative teaching resource, apart from translation, for vocabulary teaching. This leads to the conclusion students' low command of English could have resulted from the overuse of translation and the lack of communicative activities.

### **5.2.3. Students' perception of vocabulary learning and students' command of English**

Students' answers revealed that the majority of students either sometimes or never used word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a strategy for vocabulary learning. Hence, considering that students had a low command of English, it is possible to conclude that none of the strategies utilized were useful for vocabulary learning. Regarding the use of translation, it could have been ineffective since it was used just with decontextualized words. In addition, most of the students stated that they always or

sometimes developed varied activities during classes; nevertheless, students' low level of English suggests that such activities were not efficient. In short, it is possible to infer that the presence of different tasks during classes is not enough by itself to contribute to English learning. Furthermore, a high percentage of students affirmed that they sometimes or never carried out activities that involved interaction, which could have been detrimental for students' competence in English. Additionally, it could be inferred that the few activities in which there was interaction were carried out in Spanish, another factor that could have impeded that students developed an appropriate command of the target language according to their expected level.

#### **5.2.4. Vocabulary teaching and students' command of English**

The low level of English presented by students could have resulted from the following factors: the inappropriate use of translation, the scarce vocabulary instruction, and the lack of communicative activities. According to the interview and the observations carried out, it was possible to realize that the teacher misused translation to make her speech comprehensible to students. Consequently, the fact that the teacher always translated her speech could have made students get used to waiting for the translation. Thus, as students did not compare the Spanish and English version of the teacher's speech, they did not have the opportunity to learn new words, which could explain their reduced vocabulary knowledge.

On the other hand, according to the observations and interview results, it is possible to conclude that vocabulary instruction was scarce, even though students affirmed that there was a variety of activities to learn new lexicon. Classes were grammar-centered and the only activity in which vocabulary was exercised was to translate a list of isolated words into the mother tongue. Therefore, the fact that the only activity students developed to learn new lexicon did not give them the possibility to identify the use of the words in context, could have caused that students were not able to retain them.

In addition, according to the observations and the questionnaire, the teacher did not provide students with communicative activities in which they could interact and develop meaningful tasks. Even though some group work activities were observed, it is possible to

infer that students did not benefit from them, since they were not encouraged to speak in the foreign language. Thus, since students were not required to express or interpret ideas in English, they did not have the need to look for words to do it; therefore, they were hindered from the benefits this could generate in terms of vocabulary learning. Moreover, activities in general were not meaningful for students since they were mechanical exercises that were not related to real-life situations, which did not favor students' retention of new vocabulary. Furthermore, despite of the fact that there were not different activities centered on vocabulary learning, students could have learnt vocabulary in an implicit way through the grammar activities they were provided with. Nevertheless, this was not possible due to the lack of communicative activities. Besides, it is worth to mention that the lack of discipline, and the high number of students could have also interfered in the learning process.

### **5.3. Colegio San Luis de Alba**

#### **5.3.1. Teachers' methodologies and students' command of English**

The methodology used in this school was a mixture of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach and the Direct Method. English was the only language used for instruction, and grammar was taught implicitly, which are common characteristics of these two methods. In relation to the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, many activities required interaction among students, since they had to carry out discussions, and group work exercises. On the other hand, the Direct Method was reflected on the way the teacher directed the class when he exposed new contents. In this regard, he showed them implicitly and then asked questions to promote oral production and verify whether the contents had been understood. Regarding students' proficiency in the foreign language, they had a high command, since they were able to understand and produce the language in a natural way. This leads to the conclusion that the methodologies used could have contributed to students' level of English.

### **5.3.2. Teachers' perception of vocabulary teaching and students' command of English**

The teacher stated that he supported the use of translation to teach vocabulary, but when used in context; however he did not use it, since it was not among the teaching strategies proposed by the school. According to the teacher, the main activities students developed were to infer the meanings of new words included in texts. Then, he said he showed them images for students to describe them and to create stories applying the new lexicon, always using the target language. Consequently, the fact that activities involved vocabulary learning in context could have helped them to develop a broad vocabulary knowledge and a high command of English.

### **5.3.3. Students' perception of vocabulary learning and students' command of English**

The questionnaire results showed that half of students used word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a personal strategy for learning vocabulary. Moreover, most of them stated that activities were varied and provided them with opportunities to interact in the foreign language. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that their good level of English could have resulted from both their personal learning strategies and the effectiveness of the activities they developed. Consequently, this suggests that the use of translation could be beneficial when used together with communicative activities.

### **5.3.4. Vocabulary teaching and students' command of English**

Students' high command of English could have resulted from the presence of communicative activities, the fact that the teacher always spoke in the foreign language, and the importance given to vocabulary teaching. According to the observations and the questionnaire, students developed contextualized activities that involved interaction; therefore, since students had the need to express and interpret ideas in English to develop meaningful tasks, they had the opportunity of looking for new words and apply them in a natural way. This could have favored that students learned a high amount of lexicon.

Moreover, the fact that the teacher's speech was always in English, and that students were able to understand it, may have contributed to students' learning of new words since they could deduce the meaning of new lexicon from context. Besides, through the teacher's speech, students could identify the correct use of words in general, which may have enabled them to produce the language in a natural way. On the other hand, according to the interview, the teacher provided students with several activities in which they could learn vocabulary in an implicit way. Furthermore, the observations results revealed that activities in general gave students the possibility of learning vocabulary implicitly, since they constantly had to look for new words to be able to understand or produce written or oral texts.

In addition, the questionnaire showed that half of the students used word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish, which, together with the communicative activities they developed in classes, could have also benefited them in terms of vocabulary learning. It is important to mention that students' high command of English could have also resulted from the following aspects: students were exposed to the foreign language from an early age in classes, they had many hours of English per week, they were disciplined, classes were small, and in fifth grade, students were divided into two groups according to their English level.



## **6. Chapter VI: General Conclusion**

The results of this case study reaffirmed that Chilean students do not have the expected English competence according to the standards defined by the Ministry of Education. This situation had been revealed in 2004, when a national diagnostic test designed by Cambridge ESOL Examinations was applied to a representative sample of students from eighth and twelfth grade. Moreover, this research shows that the Grammar-Translation Method, which is focused on the teaching of grammar rules and the translation of literary passages, is still the main methodology used by Chilean teachers of English in spite of not having produced positive results. On the other hand, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, which is widely accepted as one of the best methodologies to teach a foreign language, has not been implemented in most Chilean classrooms.

Through this study, it was possible to identify the different methodologies used in three schools in Valdivia. The methodology used in Liceo Santa María la Blanca was similar to the Grammar-Translation Method, since the teacher used translation as a main strategy to facilitate students' comprehension of the foreign language and grammar and vocabulary instruction was explicit. Likewise, all students affirmed that they used translation in the form of word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a personal strategy to learn vocabulary. In relation to vocabulary teaching, the teacher overused translation to present new lexicon, but students did not develop vocabulary activities based on translation. Moreover, students did not carry out tasks in which they could interact and produce the foreign language in a natural way. Similarly, the methodology used in Martin Luther King College resembled the Grammar-Translation Method since classes were grammar-centered and the teacher made most of her explanations in Spanish, misusing translation to make her speech comprehensible when she in English. In addition, half of the students said that they used translation (word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish) as a personal strategy to learn vocabulary. Regarding vocabulary teaching, there was not instruction of lexicon; the teacher only clarified the meanings of words when she was asked to do it. Moreover, communicative activities were not present since students did not develop contextualized tasks which involved interaction. Finally, Colegio San Luis de Alba presented two main methodologies:

the Direct Method and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. It was possible to identify the use of the first method since the teacher directed the class and generated students' production in English by asking them questions. The Communicative Language Teaching Approach was seen when students developed meaningful activities in which they had to interact in the foreign language. Two main features that these methods had in common are that the teacher's speech was always in English and that grammar was taught implicitly. In relation to translation, although the teacher never used it, half of the students assured that they utilized word lists in English with their equivalents in Spanish as a personal strategy to learn vocabulary.

In summary, the three schools presented different methodologies that could have had an influence on students' vocabulary knowledge and their command of English. The expected level of English set by the Ministry of Education was not reached by the students from Liceo Santa María la Blanca and Martin Luther King College, which leads to the conclusion that the methodologies they used were not effective. The overuse of translation and the lack of communicative activities could have deprived students from learning new lexicon and acquiring a good command of the foreign language. On the contrary, students from Colegio San Luis de Alba showed a high command of English, which could be explained by the following factors: communicative activities were frequently present during classes and the students' constant exposure to the English language. It is important to mention that the fact that students use translation as a personal strategy mixed with the communicative activities they developed during classes could have also contributed to their English competence.

This research showed that translation was ineffective in both schools in which it was used, as a consequence of being utilized in an inappropriate way. However, it could have yielded positive results if used from a different perspective, since there are many benefits associated to the use of translation as a strategy rather than as a main methodology. Conversely, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach resulted to be effective in the remaining school, since students were able to communicate naturally in the foreign language. Therefore, considering that in two of the schools translation was used as a main methodology for teaching English and that in spite of its several benefits it has not been effective, a change in the way translation is used can be suggested. Moreover, considering

the success that the Communicative Language Teaching Approach has had, it would be helpful to mix translation with some features of this approach. Taking this into account, the set of activities below has been developed with the aim of offering an alternative of the use of translation for students who are accustomed to it.

Finally, it may be suggested for further research to study if the benefits of translation, in terms of language learning, could be achieved if it was used from a communicative perspective. Furthermore, as there are many other factors that could influence students' competence in English, such as discipline, number of students, amount of hours of English per week, etc., it may be helpful to investigate the degree in which these factors can affect students' learning process of the foreign language.

## **7. Chapter VII: Teaching Proposal**

### **7.1. Description**

The following group of activities has been developed with the purpose of promoting the use of translation in meaningful activities that involve communication. This initiative has arisen based on the fact that translation, which is used as a main methodology for teaching English in most of the Chilean classrooms, has not been effective in spite of its several benefits. Moreover, considering that students are used to working with translation in most schools, it may be beneficial not to discard its use, but to modify it. That is why it seems appropriate to make a good use of translation by mixing it with a methodology that has gained popularity in the English teaching field because it promotes students' natural production of the foreign language: the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. This mixture could provide students with the opportunity of using a familiar strategy (translation) to develop meaningful activities based on communication, which could facilitate students' acquisition of the foreign language.

## **7.2. Activities**

### **7.2.1. Bilingual Dialogues**

Aim:

The aim of this activity is to give students the opportunity to discuss meaning and to try to produce the foreign language in a natural way based on a given situation.

Time:

40 minutes.

Materials:

- Two worksheets with the same dialogue; one with the English version, and the other with the Spanish one.

Steps:

1. The students gather in pairs and each of them receives a different role: student A and student B.
2. The teacher gives each pair two versions of a dialogue, where student A receives the English version, and student B receives the Spanish one.
3. Each student has to translate his/her dialogue into Spanish or English.
4. Once they have finished, students compare their translations with the originals of each language, discuss about the different ways of expressing the same idea, and make the appropriate corrections.
5. Finally, students have to present the situation on the dialogue by improvising a natural interaction based on the former in front of their classmates.

Suggestions:

To adjust this activity to different levels, the teacher may adapt the difficulty of the text according to his/her students' command of the foreign language. In addition, he/she may support the improvisation of students in low levels.

Example:

*Student A:*

Luisa: Hey Pablo, my friends have just invited me to go to a karaoke night. Would you like to come along?

Pablo: Luisa, I feel nervous when someone hands me a microphone. I freeze. I know I'm not a very good singer.

Luisa: That's strange! I thought you were very outgoing.

Pablo: No! I'm very shy, especially in front of a group of strangers. Was it easy for you to sing the first time you went to karaoke?

Luisa: For me it was very easy, I love singing! But now that you mention it, some of my friends were very shy the first time they went. It's normal if you feel nervous the first time. Give it a try!

Pablo: Okay, I'll give it a try.

*At the karaoke club...*

Pablo: Oh, it's a private room! I thought we'd be singing in a crowded bar or restaurant.

Luisa: No, we have this room all to ourselves.

Pablo: That will make it easier maybe. Now, how does this work?

Luisa: It's simple. Just choose a song and sing. Do you know "Hotel California"?

Pablo: Sure, everybody knows it.

Luisa: Great, here it comes now! Good luck Pablo!

Pablo: What do you mean? I'm not ready to sing yet!

Luisa: You'll just have to do your best. You know what they say: "Just do it!"

*Pablo starts to sing. Two hours later...*

Luisa: Pablo, how many songs have you sung?

Pablo: Oh, at least 10.

Luisa: I think it's been more like 20. Time to go home! We'll come back some other night.

Jerry: Great! How about tomorrow?

*Student B:*

Luisa: Hey Pablo, mis amigos me invitaron para que fuera con ellos a un karaoke esta noche. ¿Te gustaría venir con nosotros?

Pablo: Luisa, me pongo nervioso cuando alguien me pasa un micrófono. Me congelo. Sé que no soy un muy buen cantante.

Luisa: ¡Qué raro! Pensé que eras bastante extrovertido.

Pablo: ¡No! Soy muy tímido, especialmente frente a un grupo de extraños. ¿Fue fácil cantar para ti la primera vez que fuiste a un karaoke?

Luisa: Para mí fue muy fácil, ¡me encanta cantar! Pero ahora que lo mencionas, algunos de mis amigos estaban muy tímidos la primera vez que fueron a un karaoke. Es normal si te sientes nervioso la primera vez. ¡Inténtalo!

Pablo: Bueno, lo intentaré.

*En el club de karaoke...*

Pablo: Oh, ¡es una habitación privada! Pensé que estaríamos cantando en un pub o restaurant con mucha gente.

Luisa: No, tenemos esto sólo para nosotros.

Pablo: Eso lo hará más fácil tal vez. ¿Y cómo funciona esto?

Luisa: Es fácil. Sólo elige una canción. ¿Conoces "Hotel California"?

Pablo: Por supuesto, todos la conocen.

Luisa: Genial, ¡Aquí viene! ¡Buena suerte Pablo!

Pablo: ¿A qué te refieres? ¡No estoy listo para cantar todavía!

Luisa: Sólo tendrás que hacerlo lo mejor que puedas. Ya sabes lo que dicen: “¡Sólo hazlo!”

*Pablo comienza a cantar. Dos horas después...*

Luisa: Pablo, ¿Cuántas canciones has cantado?

Pablo: Oh, al menos 10.

Luisa: Yo creo que han sido más de 20. ¡Es hora de irse a casa! Volveremos alguna otra noche.

Jerry: ¡Genial! ¿Qué te parece mañana?



### 7.2.2. Lost in Translation

**Aim:**

The aim of this activity is to realize about the different ways in which the same expression can be translated into the native and the foreign languages.

**Time:**

15 minutes.

**Materials:**

-A piece of paper per group with an expression in English written on the top of it.

**Steps:**

1. The students gather in groups of five or six people forming circles.
2. The teacher gives each of them one piece of paper per group with an expression in English written on the top of it.
3. One of the students translates the expression into Spanish, and then folds the top of the paper over so only the translation is visible.
4. The student passes the piece of paper to the classmate of his/her right for he/she to translate it again into English.
5. The process continues with translations on the same piece of paper, going back and forth between English and Spanish, until each member of the group has done the exercise.
6. Finally, the piece of paper is unfolded, and the group reads and compares the different translations in order to realize how the meaning can be lost through this process and to find the best English and Spanish translated versions.
7. The activity can be repeated with two or three sentences.
8. Teachers should always encourage discussion in English.

Suggestions:

The teacher may adapt this activity to different levels by selecting different expressions according to their complexity.

Example:

- Teenagers enjoy chatting to and texting friends on their mobiles, hanging out with their mates, listening to the latest music on their MP3 players, shopping for the latest fashions or just watching movies on the television or at the cinema (movie house).
- Video games are a unique form of entertainment, because they encourage players to become a part of the game's script.
- Children can learn the importance of responsibility at an early age by acting as a caretaker for a pet. Fish are a terrific first pet because children can play a large role in caring for them.

\*The expressions could be related to different contexts according to the students' preferences.

### 7.2.3. Leaflets Elaboration

**Aim:**

The aim of this activity is to familiarize students with authentic material from the foreign language and to make them realize about the differences between both languages when expressing the same message.

**Time:**

30-40 minutes.

**Materials:**

Leaflets in English (downloadable from the Internet), cardboard, pencils, glue, scissors.

**Steps:**

1. Students gather in groups of four people.
2. Each group receives an authentic leaflet in English given by the teacher and a piece of cardboard.
3. Students translate the leaflet into their mother tongue.
4. Using the cardboard, they elaborate a bilingual version of the leaflet including both texts: the English and the Spanish one.

**Suggestions:**

- The teacher may choose different types of leaflets according to the students' level of English.
- Students can create an original leaflet by adapting it to their context.
- The same activity can be developed with labels of different products such as cereals, chocolate bars, etc.

Example:

**DARE TO RIDE CAMELOT'S FAMOUS WHITE KNUCKLE RIDES**

In Camelot, the very air echoes with screams of families braving one blood-curdling ride after another. And with over 100 rides, shows and attractions to choose from the fun and thrills last from morning till night.

**The GALLEON**  
mum I feel sick!

To and fro swings the great Pirate Galleon, to and fro. Tummies tremble as it heaves... Help!...

**THE BEAST**  
GULP

Picture a coaster ride that sends knees knocking and jaws juddering, then cloak it in inky blackness. That's what we've done. That's the beauty of the Beast. Ride it once – and you'll scream for more!

**SCREEN A LOT!**  
Help!

**BLACK KNIGHT'S Revenge**  
The NEW

Behold! A dark ride hatched by evil minds. It takes you to hell and back – into the very heart of the Black Knight's vile domain – past dungeons and ghoulish apparitions. Will you cry for mercy here?

**Tower of TERROR**

A castle ruin is home to a truly terrifying creation – a looping, twisting roller coaster like no other. Into the air you'll rise one hundred giddy feet before plummeting to earth.

**IT'S NEW AND IT'S NASTY**

#### **7.2.4. The telephone game**

**Aim:**

The aim of this activity is to produce in the foreign language in a natural way and to realize about the different variations that can emerge from a message when it is translated.

**Time:**

15 minutes

**Materials:**

-A piece of paper per group, each of them with the same expression in English.

**Steps:**

1. The class is divided into three groups and each of them forms a row.
2. The first students of the rows receive a piece of paper with an expression in English written on it (all the pieces of paper present the same expression) and they read them in silence.
3. The same students tell secretly their classmates behind them the Spanish version of the original expression.
4. They translate it into English and secretly tell the students behind them the new version.
5. The message is transmitted from the front to the back of the row, being translated into English and Spanish, until the last student of each row has received it.
6. The last students of each row write the message they have received on a piece of paper, and the teacher compares the three new versions to the original one.
7. The group which message better resembles the original expression wins a point.
8. This activity can be repeated three or four times to make the competence longer.

Suggestions:

-The teacher may adapt the activity to different levels by selecting different expressions according their complexity.

-The second time this activity is applied, it may start with expressions in Spanish, so that all students can do the exercise of translating into their mother tongue and the foreign language.

Examples:

- Schools and universities are being pressured more and more to train students for the world of work.
- Some people believe that friendship is a transaction in which each partner gives something to the other.
- All students are required or at least encouraged to take physical education classes along with academic courses. Strength, energy and concentration are needed for academic success.
- People feel that life in the suburbs is quieter and more peaceful than in the city: it is supposed to be like country life.

### 7.2.5. Story telling

#### Aim:

The aim of this activity is to produce in the foreign language in a natural way in order to retell a story and to identify the main ideas of an oral text, through the use of translation.

#### Time:

60 minutes

#### Materials:

6-7 short stories in Spanish, each of them with a set of cards that expose the main events of each story in Spanish.

#### Steps:

1. The class is divided into groups of 5 people, and each group receives one short story in Spanish with its set of images.
2. One student of each group reads the short story to himself/herself in Spanish and retells a summary of it to the rest of the group, in English.
3. While the story is being told, the listeners order the set of cards in a sequence, based on the events they hear.
4. When the story has finished, the students check if the sequence is correct by reading the original text in Spanish.
5. The stories are exchanged so that each group starts working with a different one with a new story teller.
6. The short stories rotate among the groups until all students in each group have had the opportunity of being story tellers.

#### Suggestions:

The teacher may adjust this activity to different groups of students by selecting different short stories according to the students' level.

Example:

### **La anciana y el médico**

Una anciana enferma de la vista llamó con la promesa de pagarle, a un médico. Este se presentó en su casa, y cada vez que le aplicaba la medicina no dejaba, mientras la anciana tenía los ojos cerrados, de robarle los muebles poco a poco.

Cuando ya no quedaba nada, terminó también la cura, y el médico reclamó el salario convenido. Se negó a pagar la anciana, y aquél la llevó ante los jueces. La anciana declaró que, en efecto, le había prometido el pago si le curaba la vista, pero que su estado, después de la cura del médico había empeorado.

-Porque antes - dijo - veía todos los muebles que había en mi casa, y ahora no veo ninguno.

#### Cards with events

Una anciana  
enferma llama al  
médico.

El médico robaba  
los muebles de la  
anciana.

El tratamiento  
terminó y el  
médico le cobró a  
la anciana.

La anciana se negó  
a pagar el  
tratamiento.

El médico llevó a  
la anciana a juicio.

La anciana dijo  
que su vista había  
empeorado.



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## **Appendix 1**

### **OBSERVATION GUIDELINES**

Teacher observed:.....

Grade:.....

School:.....Date:.....

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLASS**

1. Presents challenging and attractive learning situations appropriate for students.

SÍ: NO: MED:

2. Stimulates students to ask questions and/or clarify doubts.

SÍ: NO: MED:

3. Provides opportunities of participation to all students.

SÍ: NO: MED:

4. Maintains a flexible attitude when facing new ideas from students.

SÍ: NO: MED:

5. Responds in an effective and assertive manner when confronted with misconduct and maintains discipline during class.

SÍ: NO: MED:

## **ABOUT THE SUBJECT (ENGLISH)**

1. The teacher communicates in the foreign language.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

2. Messages are comprehensible to students.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

3. The affective filter is low.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

4. The teacher uses diverse materials in the different activities

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

5. The application of different methods is observed.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

6. The lesson focuses on communicative goals.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

7. Grammar is taught implicitly.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

8. Errors are corrected indirectly.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

9. The language is taught in a natural way.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

## **ABOUT THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE**

1. There is a high amount of participation during the English class.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

2.Students ask questions during the lesson.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

3.Students pay attention to the class.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

4.Students develop the activities given in a proper manner.

SÍ:    NO:    MED:

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview to teachers**

1. Do you teach vocabulary implicitly or explicitly?
2. Do you use any kind of teaching materials? If so, name them.
3. Do you “recycle” vocabulary? How do you organize lexical units?
4. Do you use translation for teaching vocabulary? (Why or why not?).
5. What kind of activities do you use to teach vocabulary? Describe some of them.
6. Do you think those activities are effective for students to learn vocabulary? Why?