

**THE STATE OF THE ART OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THREE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PEREIRA**

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2014

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**Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de
Licenciadas en Lengua Inglesa**

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2014

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1. RESUMEN

Este proyecto de investigación describe un estudio centrado en el Estado del arte de la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en tres colegios públicos de Pereira. Este estudio fue parte de un macro proyecto el cual buscaba identificar cómo se enseña el idioma en toda la ciudad.

El objetivo general de este estudio es diagnosticar cómo se enseña el inglés en los colegios, cuáles son las metodologías más implementadas, las percepciones de estudiantes y profesores acerca del proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera y los materiales empleados en el salón de clase. Para poder obtener la información para completar el estudio, los investigadores implementaron dos métodos para recolectar los datos, los cuales fueron observaciones y entrevistas. Una vez los datos fueron recolectados, los investigadores procedieron a analizarlos usando diferentes estrategias, una de las cuales fue agruparlos usando una tabla de datos para codificar, agrupar y analizar la información. Después de pasar por el proceso de analizar la información, el estudio arrojó resultados los cuales demostraron que los profesores usan el método de traducción gramatical para enseñar inglés, dar explicaciones y clarificar instrucciones. También, el uso de rutinas es una metodología implementada para incrementar vocabulario. Por último, se evidenció la importancia del inglés para estudiantes y profesores.

Este estudio demostró la necesidad de implementar nuevas metodologías que impliquen exposición de los estudiantes al uso del inglés, ya que fue evidenciado que los métodos que son usados ahora son los mismos usados en las décadas pasadas.

2. ABSTRACT

This research project describes a study centered on the art of the English language teaching in three public schools of Pereira. This study was part of a macro project which was looking for identify how the language is taught in the whole city.

The general objective of this study is to diagnose how English is taught in the schools, which the most implemented methodologies are, which are students' and teacher's perceptions about the English learning process as a foreign language and which are the materials employed in the classroom. For being able to obtain the information needed to complete the study, researchers implemented two methods to collect data, and do the observations and interviews. Once the data was collected, researchers proceeded to analyze the data by using different strategies, one of which was to group the information using a data grid for coding, grouping and analyzing the information gathered. After going through the process of analyzing the information, the study yielded some results which demonstrated that teachers use Grammar Translation Method (GTM) for teaching English, giving explanations and clarifying instructions. Also, it was found that the use of routines is a methodology implemented to increase vocabulary, and last but not least, interviews supported how important is learning a second language for students and teachers.

This study showed the necessity of implementing new methodologies that imply exposure of students to the use of English since it was evidenced that the methods that are used now are the same ones used in the past decades.

3. ACNOWLEDGMENT

Firstly, we want to express gratitude to The Sublime God for providing us with the enough wisdom and patience required for carrying out this project. We also thank our families for their support and teaching us great values which were necessary to complete this process; we want to show appreciation to our advisor Professor Clara Ines Gonzalez for her engagement giving us all the facilities to arrive to the aim of the research. Finally, we also want to thank each other for our mutual commitment, courage and patience.

4. INTRODUCTION

The state of the art of English language teaching in three public schools of Pereira is a qualitative study focused on the analysis and diagnosis of how English as a foreign language is taught in the three public schools that were part of the research. The main objective of the research is to describe the most implemented methodologies and materials used in the classroom and the perceptions of teachers and students about how the language is taught in those public institutions.

Three public schools of the city were part of this research. Among these institutions, students from sixth, ninth, tenth grades were observed while the English classes took place. Moreover, teachers and students were interviewed. Observations were carried out through field notes and were used to identify which were the most implemented methodologies in the language classes. Interviews were audio recorded and used for knowing how students and teachers perceived the development of English language teaching and the importance of speaking a foreign language nowadays. Researchers had the role of non-participant observers. It means that there was not any intervention in the development of the classes, they just observed and took note about what happened in the classes.

At the end of the research, it was found that some of the methodologies used years ago are still used in the three public schools (Tribunas, Instituto Tecnológico and Maraya); a common example of which was grammar translation and the overuse of L1 to convey

meaning and clarify students' misunderstandings. Along the observations, routines were identified as a useful strategy to use L2 in the English language classroom (without using L1). Even though most of the teachers used the methods mentioned above, it was found that there was one teacher who used different strategies such as online exercises, video recordings, and visual material to improve learning and teaching, and exposed students to use the language.

Finally, teachers need to avoid the overuse of the mother tongue, challenging students to take the risk to speak English during the lessons, be autonomous and use internet and technological devices as tools to facilitate the development of the communicative competences, having as a result people capable to fulfill the requirements of the globalized world.

5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Basic Standards of Competence in Foreign Languages: English, published by the Colombian Ministry of Education, state that being bilingual is essential in a globalized world. Thus, a person who speaks English, is not only able to get better academic and labor opportunities but also to contribute to the development of his/her country by helping national companies and institutions to be more competitive in the international context. According to the MEN, teaching English in Colombia has evolved over the past ten years, and many people from all social status have been involved in the process of learning, teaching, and assessing the English language competences of the Colombian population.

Consequently, the Colombian government and local institutions have made significant efforts to improve the teaching of English as a foreign language in the country. The Government, through the MEN (2004) formulated the program “Proyecto de Fortalecimiento de las Competencias en Lengua Extranjera” to carry out the following actions:

- Implementing the standards of competence in English language through innovative educational approaches.
- Encouraging English teachers training strategies.
- Integrating new technologies as well as other resources for teaching and learning English.

- Developing regional projects to extend English learning to diverse populations.

At the local level, the Municipal Secretary of Education (Secretaría de Educación Municipal -SEM) has been developing two projects. To improve the methodological and linguistic competences of the teachers, the first project is about professional development courses which have been offered to in-service-teachers. Those courses have been oriented by educational institutions with wide experience in the teaching of English. The second project has targeted the students; the program called “Jornada Escolar Extendida” (JEEEX) provides students of non-certificated towns the opportunity to take part in an English program. In year 2010, 330 students took part of the program and 2430 students in the year 2011.

However, apparently the efforts made by the Government and the local entities previously mentioned did not have the expected impact. An English Proficiency index test made to voluntary adults from Latin America who wanted to rate their English proficiency in terms of grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening comprehension skills, which was made by the International Private Education Company, known as Education First (2011), revealed that Latin America obtained the lowest results in this test placing Colombia in the last position with a very low proficiency English level.

Also, the MEN revealed some statistics related to the English level of the Colombian population in which they affirmed that just 1% of the inhabitants achieved a B1 level and hardly the 0,08% obtained a C1 level of competence. These results demonstrate that despite the ten years that have passed, and the efforts carried out, teachers and learners still require developing linguistic competences in the English language which are not being

achieved in the current educational system. In addition to this, others statistics provided by the “Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior” (ICFES) and supported in yearly tests taken by students of 11th grade, point out that the population tested during the period 2007-2010 reached barely the A1 level of competence. The “Proyecto de Ordenanza” evidenced the low performance in English of students from 11th grade in the ICFES test in Risaralda. The statistics showed that approximately 54% of these students achieved an -A1 level, 32.4% reached the level A1, only 7% obtained an A2, 5% got a B1, and just a 1.6% actually achieved a B2 level according to the standards proposed by the MEN.

More evidence that points towards the lack of improvement in the educational field of English as a foreign language is the fact that the Ministry of Education, in agreement with the British Council, tested, in 2006, seven public schools in Risaralda in relation with the students’ mastery of English. These schools were selected because their “Proyecto Educativo Institucional” (PEI) had an emphasis on communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language. The results showed that 98,5% of students did not reach further than the A1-A2 level (45,7% belonged to an initial -A1level, 39.4% A1, 13.4% A2) and only the 1.6% of the students achieved B1 level.

Risaralda teachers of English were also tested to find out their level of competence in English. According to the results of the test, only 12% of them reached a B2 level. These results were taken as a base for the development plan “Risaralda: Sentimiento de todos, 2008-2011”, in which the Secretary of Education in Risaralda has carried out different actions with the aim of training both teachers and learners in English as a foreign language.

These statistics gave a general view of the proficiency level in English of teachers and students in the Risaralda region. In the capital of the Department, Pereira, the ICFES test of the period 2007- 2010 showed that 7.8% of students reached an A2 level; 32.9% of them were placed in an A1 level; 52% of students obtained an A-; and only 5.5% of students achieved a B1 level; it is important to highlight that only 1.5% of students achieved the level B+.

A possible cause for the poor results mentioned could be the implementation of traditional teaching methods which are not appropriate for the development of students' communicative competence in English, since according to Walia (2012) traditional methodology focuses and emphasizes mainly the grammatical competence and the acquisition of vocabulary and does not pay much attention to the improvement of fluency or communicative skills. For this reason, this study endeavors to describe the realities of the English teaching in three public institutions in Pereira with the purpose of establishing a diagnosis that may guide the formulation of new projects and solutions to the current situations in the field of English language teaching. Furthermore, this study will inform readers about the methods and approaches used in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Pereira.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Which are the approaches, methods, and techniques implemented for teaching English in Maraya, Tribunas, and Instituto Tecnologico schools?
2. What are teachers' and stakeholders' perceptions towards English Language Teaching in Maraya, Tribunas, and Instituto Tecnologico schools ?

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, concepts such as, Approach, approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT), Methods, Methods in ELT, Techniques in ELT, studies about approaches and methods used for teaching English in Colombia, syllabus, studies about teachers' perceptions towards teaching English, will be exposed to serve as a support and introduce readers into the current study. The aforementioned concepts are illustrated structurally according to their relevance, for the readers to understand the purpose of the study.

Theory of language

This theory is derived from the approach that is related with the elements by which students learn and what teachers can do to help them to achieve successful language learning. In this part some aspects of the theory of language will be mentioned which involve some approaches and methods of language teaching, which are important to bear in mind because of their implementation in English language scenarios. According to Anthony (1963, cited by Richards & Rogers, 2005), the most important theory is the structural view; this is a series of elements integrated in a language system which allows to create meaning. This view is generally integrated by elements such as phonological units, grammatical units, grammatical operations, and lexical items.

The second is the functional view which is more focused on the function of the message rather than the form. One of the implications of this view is the Wilkins's Notional Syllabuses which consists of including in language lessons not also grammatical and lexical patterns, but also topics that learners will need to communicate in real life situations. In

other words, in the functional view, learners are expected to get the message clear instead of focusing on grammar and also it is based on learning how to interact in daily life events.

Finally, an interactional view promotes the language as a fundamental tool that helps people to be involved in interpersonal relations; that is to say that the only mechanism in charge of the development of interactional patterns in people is language. This view in terms of teaching may be seen as a vehicle of interaction between learners who are seen as interactors. Rivers (1987 cited by Richards & Rodgers 2005), states that through interaction, not only listeners but also speakers can increase their language thanks to the authentic linguistic material. It is needless to say that interaction plays an essential role in the theories of second language learning; specially, when interactivity is directly connected to the communicative language skills (reading, writing, listening speaking). Nevertheless, language interaction has not been structured like other models of language teaching. As the author says, the interactional view consists on building language through an interactional environment by which people communicate among others.

As a conclusion, it is important to highlight that the structural, functional, and interactional view should be complemented with other theories of language, approaches or teaching methods. In the following section, the term approach will be defined as one of the main concepts that will help to the development of the findings as well as the most types of approaches used in English language teaching.

Approach

Richards & Rodgers (cited by Brown, 2005) state that “an approach defines assumptions, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and language learning”.

According to this, an approach shows what is believed about the basis of language and language learning.

Anthony (1963; cited by Richards & Rogers, 2005) defines approach as a series of theories that serve as a basis of practices and resources for language teaching. Based on this, an approach encompasses all the principles that are implemented to teach a language. Furthermore, there are more authors who contribute to the definitions of approach; for instance, Harmer (2001) states that “an approach describes how people acquire their knowledge of the language and makes statements about the conditions which will promote successful language learning”. It can be concluded that an approach refers to the means used in language acquisition in order to succeed in language learning. Besides, it refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning which are the sources that are implemented in the classroom and that provide the reasons for their usage.

However, according to Murcia (2001), some teachers are not aware of the bases and roots of language teaching; as a result, they do not take into account methodological sources and current theories in the field that they could hopefully apply in language learning scenarios, so that, this project seeks to investigate how school teachers deal with their classes.

In order to provide a wider view on the importance of approach in language learning, approaches related to English language teaching will be addressed.

Approaches in English Language Teaching

An approach then, displays specific assumptions and beliefs on language and language learning (Anthony 1963; cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2005). Taking into

consideration the conception of approach, there are some significant, wide and known approaches in the field of English Language teaching which are used in language teaching: The communicative Approach, Lexical approach, The natural Approach, The oral approach, Content based approach, Task based approach, which are going to be presented throughout this section in order to support the current study.

The Oral Approach, which is also called Situational Language Teaching, had its origins with the work of British Applied Linguists in the 1920s and 1930s. The linguists Harold Palmer and A.S Hornby wanted to develop an oral approach to teaching English similar to the Direct Method but with a more methodical basis. At the end, they established a study with a set of principles and procedures such as vocabulary control, which plays an important role for learning a language, and grammar control, which is focused on the grammatical structures of a language.

Pattison (1964, cited by Richards and Rodgers, 2001) says that the Oral approach should not be compared with the Direct method in which the learner was confused with a series of speeches, facing hurdles and he was not able to contextualize it in different situations in learning a language.

In the Oral Approach the meaning of the words or grammar structures are not given through explanation neither in the native language nor target language, but they are induced from the way the form is used in a situation. Therefore, explanation is dejected, and the learner is expected to apply the language learned in a classroom to situations outside of it.

The oral approach is a very significant approach due to the fact that it promotes the autonomy in the students, since instructions are not given and learners are required to induce grammar structures and vocabulary items.

In the Oral approach the learners are expected to infer the structures of the language in the oral speech; likewise, it is tied with the fact that words should not be taught as isolated items but how the word is used in context as it is stated in the **lexical approach**.

The **Lexical Approach**, in which Michael Lewis (cited in Whong, 2011) states that learners need to increase their stores of knowledge in order to develop specifically, teachers, should teach words, but not vocabulary elements in isolation. Instead, all words should be taught in terms of how they are used and, remarkably, in the context of the other words with which they are likely to appear.

Harwood (2002) also uses the term Lexical Approach to mean that lexis plays the central role in the ELT classroom. The approach stresses the necessity of using materials to reinforce the importance of regularly recycling and reviewing the language taught.

Lewis (1997), remarks that the key principle of a lexical approach is that “language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar.” In other words, grammar is not the central role in managing the meaning; lexis is in charge on creating meaning. When this principle is accepted, teachers should focus on facilitating learners to create and produce language such as short sentences or phrases, instead of encourage them to memorize grammatical structures.

As Michael Lewis (1997) presents, vocabulary and lexis can be distinguished by certain characteristics. Vocabulary is related with single elements, and lexis integrates those single

words with some words that are stored in peoples' brains. These two characteristics combined produce coherent and complete spoken sentences. Michael Lewis (1997) presents this taxonomy of Lexical items:

- Words (e.g., book, pen)
- Polywords (e.g., by the way, on the other hand)
- Collocations, or word partnerships (e.g., community service, absolutely convinced)
- Institutionalized utterances (e.g., I'll get it; We'll see; That'll do; If I were you . . .; Would you like a cup of coffee?)
- Sentence frames and heads (e.g., that is not as...as you think; the fact/suggestion/problem/danger was...) and even text frames (e.g., In this paper we explore...; Firstly...; Secondly...; Finally...)

The Lexical Approach pays attention not only to single words but more importantly to collocations, known utterances and sentence frames. Michael Lewis (1997) states that “instead of words, we consciously try to think of collocations, and to present these in expressions. Rather than trying to break things into ever smaller pieces, there is a conscious effort to see things in larger, more holistic, ways”. With the support of this approach, teachers take advantage of it by providing students with common expressions which allow them to communicate their usual school needs.

Other relevant approach that is widely used by EFL teachers worldwide is the **Natural approach** which focuses on comprehensible input rather than practice.

The Natural Approach emerged in 1977 created by Tracy Terrel, a teacher of Spanish in California; he suggested a new philosophy of language teaching, which he called

the Natural Approach. He tried to include the naturalistic principles researchers had encountered in studies of second language acquisition in a teaching proposal.

Additionally, Richards and Rogers (2001) argue that the Natural Approach is based on providing input as a first step on the process of learning before exposing learners to practice it, increasing emotional willingness in learners, motivating learners to pay attention to what they hear before they take the risk to produce language, and a disposition to use materials as a foundation of comprehensible input.

According to Krashen and Terrel (1983, cited by Richards and Rogers, 2001) the natural approach is similar to other communicative approaches being developed today. They argued that in other words, “the authors see communication as the primary function of language, and since their approach focuses on teaching communicative abilities, they refer to the natural approach as an example of communicative approach.”

Some of the characteristics of the Natural Approach described by Thornbury (2006) are that translations and grammar explanations are not implemented, learners are exposed to sequences of actions, and they learn first the spoken form and then the written form. He also states that the approach is characterized by a lot of talk from the teacher, who makes him or herself understood by the use of visual aids and actions.

The application of this approach starts by presenting comprehensible input in the target language. Learners are not forced to participate until they feel ready; however, they are expected to respond to commands in other ways. Thus, when the students are ready to talk, the teacher starts the lesson with yes/no questions to questions that students can answer by

saying the words they have been taught by the teacher. The students are not expected to use a word until they have heard it many times before.

Furthermore, Krashen and Terrel (1983, cited by Richards and Rodgers, 2001) suggest techniques to implement in the Natural Approach such as: command-based activities from Total Physical Response and Direct Method activities in which mime, gesture, and context are used to elicit questions and answers. Also, group work activities are often identical to those used in Communicative Language teaching.

It is major to highlight the Natural Approach in this study since by the implementation of this approach in language teaching, in which sharing information in order to complete a task is emphasized; with it you can provide the students with comprehensible input before they take the risk and produce language. In this way, according to Richards and Rogers (2001), it minimizes learners' anxiety and increases learners' self- confidence.

The Natural approach emphasizes on teaching communicative abilities, likewise, the **communicative approach** is based on the development of communicative competences in which the interaction plays an important role.

As the language theories underlying the Audiolingual method and the Situational Language Teaching method were questioned by prominent linguists like Chomsky (1957) during the 1960s, a new trend of language teaching paved its way into classrooms. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) the **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**, which is also referred as “Communicative Approach”, is an approach in the foreign and second language teaching that highlights interaction in learning a language. Moreover, Richards (2006) states that Communicative language teaching can be

understood as a set of principles: One can be called as the *communication principle*, which involves real life situations activities that promote learning; the second one is the *task principle* in which language is used to produce meaningful tasks that promote learning, and in the *meaningfulness principle* the language that is significant to the learner supports learning process. These principles encompass the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.

The nature of the communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes explores this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence. Chomsky (1965) states that "linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance."

In this manner, Piepho (1981), suggested some objectives in a communicative approach. One objective states that the students will learn to use language as a means of expression, **another essential objective is that the** students will use language as a means of expressing values and judgments **and finally the** students will learn to express the functions that best meet their own communication needs by implementing the communicative language approach.

The classroom activities are focused on information sharing, negotiation of information as well as interaction. Littlewood (1981) proposes two different kinds of activities, the functional communication activities and the social interaction activities. In the *functional communication activities* learners are involved in the kind of activities by which they compare set of pictures noticing similarities and differences; also, through the use of the communicative classroom activities learners can recognize some missing features in a map or they can solve problems in pair work. In the *social interaction activities*, learners work together in discussions, dialogues, role plays and debates.

Richards (2006) adds that the type of classroom activities proposed in CLT also implies new roles in the classroom for teachers and learners. Learners now have to participate and cooperate with their peers rather than working individually. Students have to get used to listening their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher as a model. Learners are autonomous individuals and are responsible for their own learning process; furthermore, the teachers act as facilitators and models.

In view of the fact that communication is a goal to achieve in language teaching lessons, it is relevant to include this term within the current project since the aim of this investigation is to identify the state of the English teacher and learners' communicative abilities.

Meaningful communication is the nature of the communicative approach; while, the **Content Based Approach** draws its function in the use of the language through content of a specific subject.

The Content Based Instruction approach (CBI) draws its principles on the Communicative Language Teaching approach as both emerged in the 1980s. As Widdowson (1978) commented, the main purpose of this approach is that the target language that would be taught could be used to present some other academic content; as a result, language will be the focus study of this learning process.

Richards and Rogers (2001) define Content-Based Instruction as an approach to language teaching that focuses not only on the language itself but also on the subject matter that is taught through the language; thus, language is the mean to teach the academic subject. As the authors argue, the academic subject is used as a vehicle for teaching the target language. In addition, Stoller (2004) mentions that, in the CBI approach the student learns the target language by using it to learn some other new content. Besides, Krahne (1987, cited by in Richards and Rogers 2001) defines Content Based Instruction as "the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught". In other words, the target language in this approach is taught through teaching a specific academic content, hence students acquire the new language in a natural way while they are learning a particular subject.

According to Curtain and Pesola (1994, Cited in Pessoa, Hendry, Donato, Tucker, Lee 2007) “. . . in content-related instruction, the foreign language teacher uses concepts from the regular curriculum to enrich the program with academic content (. . .) The curriculum content is chosen to provide a vehicle for language learning and to reinforce the academic skills needed by the students” (p. 35). As the authors argue, in CBI the teachers use the curriculum as a guide to develop their second language lessons, taking some concepts and reinforcing them according to the student’s needs. Stoller (2002) mentions that Content-

based instruction is intended to promote the integration of language and content, viewing “language as a medium for learning content and content as a resource for learning and improving language” Then, CBI encourages teachers to use the content as a way for teaching the target language and vice versa. In addition, content-based instruction is beneficial because classroom tasks provide a context for language learning, they are more cognitively demanding and reinforce the existing school curriculum.

Richards and Rogers (2001) state, that in Content Based Instruction the use of language is based on integrated skills. Thus, a content based class is characterized by the fact that the students are involved in activities that link the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, which means that students participate in them and they also should respond orally to things they have read or written. Richards and Rogers (2001) also argue that in CBI grammar is seen as a component of other skills and "teachers have the responsibility to identify relevant grammatical and other linguistic focuses to complement the topic of theme of the activities". As the previously authors mention, teachers should take into account not only the skills that encompass a language, they also should complement the topic with activities that involve the grammatical and linguistic aspects. Additionally, Madrid and García (2001) mention that the CBI involves students in developing their academic tasks using the target language, in this way they acquire the language in a natural way. In other words, teachers who use CBI should involve students in tasks which encourage them to use the second language, so they learn it in an implicit way.

Ayari (2008) argues that using CBI, the teacher can take advantage of tools and materials such as videotapes, texts, audio recorders, websites, computer games, and other visual aids that can complement or sometimes supplement a textbook instruction. Ayari

(2008) suggests that "in this way the students are able to learn in an environment that supports a complex and diverse use of the language to prepare them for its continual usage in everyday life". Thus, students who are involved in those learning environments have the opportunity to practice and master the language and use it in their real life.

The relevance of this approach is presented on the grounds that by integrating content based classes students can develop a more proficient level in English while learning the foreign language using the content of any subject matter. According to Raphan and Moser (1994, cited by Quincannon and Naves, 2000) "in a content-based approach, students simultaneously acquire subject matter expertise and greater proficiency in English, the medium of instruction. Additionally, they learn to master skills necessary for academic success." As the authors mention, in CBI, students gain knowledge in the academic subject while they learn and master the target language.

The significance of this approach in the current study is related to teachers that use it in their lessons as a way to teach a language through the content in a natural way.

On the one hand, in the Content Based approach the language is learned through a specific subject matter, and on the other hand, **the task based language instruction (TBLT)** approach refers to learning the language through developing a task. Richards and Rogers (2001) refer to TBLT as "an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching". It can be concluded that in this approach tasks play an important role to students in the process of learning a foreign language.

In addition, Prabhu (1987, cited by Sanchez in, 2004) defines task as "an activity which require learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allow teachers to control and regulate that process ". In other words, a task shows to teachers closed results about learners understanding of a topic and also

teachers can supervise their learning processes. Besides, Long (1985, cited by Sanchez, 2004) defines task as "the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between". As the authors said, tasks are related to any activity that people develop in their daily life and teachers can take advantage of them to make students be involved in the target language with real life activities.

The goals in TBLT are mainly determined by particular needs of the learners. According to Long and Crookes (1993, cited by Richards and Rogers, 2001) selection of tasks should be based on a careful analysis of the real life needs of learners. As the authors say, to analyze and choose the correct task for a determined group of students should be the labor of the teacher; thereby, learners will adapt their new language with the context they are facing.

Nunan et al (2004) state that, as this approach encourages meaningful communication, and it is student centered, some characteristics of it are that "students are encouraged to use language creatively and spontaneously through task and problem solving. Also, students focus on a relationship that is comparable to real world activities. In addition, assessment is primarily based on task outcome". It can be concluded that, students are expected to use the target language based on tasks that contain real life situations and needs and assessment is only based on what the student learns in those tasks.

In addition Nunan (2001) states that, "the central role of the teacher is in selecting, adapting and/or creating the tasks themselves and then forming these into an instructional sequence in keeping with learners needs, interests, and language skill level". As the author mentions, teachers are in charge on designing and including meaningful and significant tasks according to the students' context to achieve the expected results.

The importance of this approach in this research study, deals with facilitators that take advantage of tasks according to their interests, needs, and context to encourage students to practice and learn the target language as an important learning tool.

Method

It is relevant for us as investigators that school teachers have clarity about the existing methods to implement in English learning classrooms in order to provide quality classes and to help students to be proficient learners. In this part will be presented the definition of the term method, the types of methods used in language teaching and their characteristics. The study of past and present teaching methods continues to shape a significant component of teacher preparation programs.

A method “consists of a single set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a single set of classroom procedure directed at classroom teachers” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). With regards to this statement, method is constituted by a series of classrooms practices that teachers perform and develop in their classes.

Drawing from Cook (1989), “a method is a prescriptive concept that articulates a positivist, progressivist, and patriarchal understanding of teaching and plays an important role in maintaining inequities between, on the one hand, predominantly male academics and, on the other, female teachers and language classrooms on the international power periphery”. Once the teachers have examined, explored and analyzed, they are able to identify which methods implement in their classes. The method is important since by means of this one, the teacher transmits his/her knowledge to the

students, as well as also to reach the aims proposed in the subject. Consequently, Antony (1963) states that a method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught and the order in which the content will be presented. In reference to the statement of the author, teachers have the decision of what to teach, how to teach the theory to be practiced in the classroom.

Methods in English Language Teaching

LIU Qing-xue and SHI Jin-fang (2007) state that language teaching methods have cast light on the language teaching theory and practice and name some wide known and used methods: Grammar-translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method, Total Physical Response in order to have a better understanding and application in the future teaching practice.

As Richards and Rodgers (2006) point out The **Grammar Translation Method** was dominant in foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s, and surprisingly still continues to be used in the world nowadays. As modern languages were taking place into the European schools in the eighteenth century, Latin was taught by following the same procedures to learn the language by translating sentences and studying grammar and rhetoric. Books were implemented to study grammar rules, vocabulary lists, and translation of sentences.

This method by the nineteenth century was considered the primary way of studying foreign languages in schools. Moreover, communication between students was limited and oral interaction was reduced by the minimum to concentrate on written work. As the need to teach other European languages apart from Latin, teachers looked for other teaching practices so the grammar translation method was adapted to teach and learn other languages of Europe including English. Richards and Rodgers (2006).

Harmer (2007), states that the Grammar Translation Method did exactly what it said. Students were given explanations of specific patterns of grammar, and then, they were given sentences which exemplified these points. These sentences have to be translated from the target language (L2) to the students' first language (L1) and vice versa.

In practice, reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening. The student's native language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language. Language learners are passive in language learning and teachers are regarded as an authority, i.e. it is a teacher-centered model.

Richards and Rodgers (2006) set some main characteristics of the GTM

- GTM has as primary goal learning a language in order to be emerged on its literature and to obtain intellectual benefits that are important for learning development.
- The major focus of this method concentrates on reading and writing skills.
- Vocabulary lists, the use of the dictionary, translations of exercises, and memorization are the most common activities that are performed in the lesson.
- The focus of the Grammar Translation lesson is dedicated to the translation of sentences into and out of the target language.

- The use of the native language of the learner is used to clarify instructions, explain items and to make parallels between the foreign language and the students' native language.

The Grammar-Translation Method has faced various attacks from reformers. Some criticize that this method often creates frustration for students by a tedious experience of memorizing lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary, and the limitations of practice techniques never give the opportunities to the learner to reduce use of the first language; others say that this method pays little attention to the student's communicative competence.

The GTM is one of the long-standing methods and also the most commonly used by teachers in their lessons and nowadays it is still implemented. One of the main complaints about GTM is the lack of exposure to the spoken language, which led to the development of the **Direct method**.

The direct method was also referred as natural method on the grounds that reformers of the nineteenth century turned their attention on child language learning and naturalistic principles (Richards and Rogers, 2001). The direct method is a radical change from Grammar-Translation Method. It was introduced firstly in France and Germany and it became known in the United States by Sauveur and Berlitz (1860) for their use in language schools.

Sauveur and other believers of the direct method (cited in Richards and Rogers, 2001) argue that, learners of a foreign language do not have the necessity of using translation or their native language; therefore, their lessons are developed through

demonstration and action. It can be concluded that, in this method students are more exposed to interaction and communication, rather than translation or the use of their native language. Franke (cited by Richards and Rogers, 2001) argues that, instead of teaching a foreign language through explanation of grammatical rules, the facilitator can take advantage of actively activities and encourage students to spontaneous and direct language use. Thus, it is supposed that learners should induce the grammar rules. In other words, teachers should design active and communicative lessons to introduce the target language avoiding translation to the native language.

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), the direct method is characterized because the teachers tend to replace the textbook at the beginning of the learning process; also, pronunciation is a key factor while speaking, and vocabulary can increase by using known words. Besides, the use of mime, demonstration, and pictures is relevant to avoid translation. As the authors mention, in this method the use of body language and teachers' activities play significant part of the learning process of a student in view of the fact that they help learners to understand and to learn the language without using their target language.

The significance of this method in the current study is that English teachers tend to use communicative methods in their lessons and sometimes encourage their students to speak in the target language.

The direct method is based on developing oral skills on the grounds that it attempts to learn the foreign language in a natural way as humans do with their native language. In contrast, in **the audio lingual method**, learners are expected to speak after they listen to dialogues, emphasizing error free learning.

In addition, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), **The Audio Lingual method** had its origin at the end of 1950 in the United States. The US government saw the need to create a method for learning the language in a rapidly form, all this not to be left behind from other countries in technological and scientific advances.

Its psychological basis is behaviorism, which interprets language learning in terms of stimulus and response, operant conditioning, and reinforcement with an emphasis on successful error-free learning. In other words, the audio lingual method consists of mastering the basic elements of a language until learning all the elements that entail the correct usage of it.

Therefore, it was characterized by the separation of the skills: Listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and the primacy of the audio-lingual over the graphic skills. This method uses dialogues as the chief means of presenting the language and stresses certain practice techniques, such as pattern drills, imitation and so on. Listening and speaking were now brought right into the center of the stage in this method; tape recordings, and language laboratory drills were offered in practice.

Brooks (1964), states that a typical audio-lingual lesson would be:

- Learners listen to a dialogue that is repeated individually and chorally and the teacher corrects pronunciation and grammar mistakes immediately.
- The dialogue is performed by the learners and is adapted to real life situations.
- The teacher selects some grammar structures from the dialogue to use them as drills; then, learners repeat them in chorus and individually. Little grammatical explanation is given.

- Learners practice in their workbooks reading, writing or vocabulary activities. The teacher provides the students some questions with a specific topic in order to write short texts that will help them to increase their proficiency level.
- The teacher takes advantage of the audio-interactive room to practice the dialogues and drills implemented in class.

Thus, this method has its relevance with the current study in view of the fact that is based on the oral speech and translation is prohibited, thus, learners are able to communicate in the target language and master the basic elements of the language. Thanks to this, learners are involved with the language and they have more chances to practice and interact with it.

Since the Audio-lingual method emphasizes on teaching through stimulus and response in which learners proof understanding by providing oral speech, the **Total Physical Response** attempts to teach the language through commands that the students respond by making actions.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method in which language teaching is based on physical activity. It was developed in the 1970s by a professor of psychology at San Jose State University, California named James Asher. He took as base for the design of this method developmental psychology, learning theory, and humanistic pedagogy, as well as on language teaching procedures suggested by Harold and Dorothy Palmer in 1925.

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), Total Physical Response consists of a grammar-based view of language. In fact, Asher says that “most of the grammatical

structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor”. He sees commands as a manner to internalize language learning, so that the input and the output are physical.

In the TPR method the class is conducted in the target language. It consists of listening and then responding physically and verbal answer is not required. Besides, as the students are supposed to pay attention to meaning instead of structural forms, grammar is taught inductively. In a typical lesson implementing the Total Physical Response method the teacher and the students take the roles of parents and children, since the teacher says a command and the students respond physically to it. Some of the activities used in TPR are command drills and role plays.

The Total Physical Response Method is a fundamental part of the current study, since the focus of this method in the Colombian Institutions is to acquire the language through imperative commands given by the teacher, which the students respond with motor activity. This means that it promotes language acquisition as it is evidenced when children acquire their mother tongue responding physically to what the parents say.

Taking as a reference the afore mentioned methods, it is necessary to present the concept of technique and the different kind of techniques that can be implemented in the Language Teaching classes in view of the fact they are an important instrument to practice the language in a didactic way.

Techniques in English Language Teaching

Antony (1963) determines that a technique actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular strategy used to achieve an immediate objective. In addition, a technique is

used by teachers as a tool to introduce a specific task or activity in order to achieve the goals of a lesson; also, with the use of motivational techniques, teachers can develop a successful class and make learners get interested in learning.

Antony (1963) argues that there are three types of techniques, namely controlled technique, semi controlled technique and free techniques. Controlled techniques are mostly teacher centered. Both the teacher and students know what they will do during the activities. In semi-controlled techniques the teacher interferes only when necessary. On the other hand, in free techniques the teacher does not direct, so that, the students are freely to work in their activities.

Examples of controlled techniques are **drills**. Tice (2004) states that drilling means listening to a model, provided by the teacher, or a tape or another student, and repeating what is heard. This is a **repetition drill**, a technique that is still used by many teachers when introducing new language items to their students. The teacher says (models) the word or phrase and the students repeat it.

According to **Tran Lam Son (2009)**, **information gaps** are activities of Semi controlled techniques in which learners lack the information they need to complete a task and need to talk to each other to find it.

Finally, examples of free techniques are **role-plays**. According to Brown (2001), "role-play minimally involves (a) giving a role to one or more members of a group and (b) assigning an objective or purpose that participants must accomplish." Brown suggested that role-plays can be conducted with a single person, in pairs or in groups, with each person being assigned a role to accomplish an objective.

Another categorization of techniques according to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), is developed by different methods such as Grammar Translation, Direct, Audio-lingual and Total physical Respond method to take as a reference to guide the teachers' actions in their language teaching lessons.

In the above section are going to be introduced some techniques implemented in the Grammar Translation Method:

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) highlights the **Translation of a literally passage technique**, the learners are supposed to translate a short paper work into their mother tongue. This passage is studied throughout several classes using its vocabulary and grammatical instructions. In addition, the **Fill-in-the-blanks** technique, challenges learners to fill in blanks using some vocabulary to complete a text. The vocabulary can be adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, nouns and verbs. Furthermore, in the **Memorization** technique, learners are expected to memorize lists of vocabulary words as well as memorize grammatical structures.

The Direct Method techniques are presented in the following fragment also defined by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011).

Reading aloud students read out loud short sections of a text; when they finish the teacher make use of his/her body language and other examples to help learners understand the section. **Question and answers exercise** learners ask and answer questions in order to practice the topic of the current lesson, these questions are made in the target language introducing new grammar and vocabulary.

Using commands to direct behavior, this technique is the most commonly used by the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, the teacher performs some commands to help learners understand better the idea instead of translating the meaning, then, the learners through an action show understanding.

Being explored the teaching techniques on the ELT ground, opens a space to postulate the syllabus concept which contains the components that makes possible an organized course.

Syllabus

Planning a course involves taking as reference the information of the school program which is called syllabus. The concept of syllabus keeps a significant part into this project because it is essential for the facilitators to recognize that all the contents to be presented to the learners should be organized into sequences explaining the objectives that the learners should achieve at the end of a course. So, Ur (1996) refers to syllabus as a list that specifies all the things which are to be taught in the course for which the syllabus was designed. Richards (2005) complements by saying that a syllabus is an inventory of topics to teach and test based on the specific content of a course.

Similarly, Harmer (2007) agrees that syllabus design involves the grading of previously selected linguistic items to be learnt in a proper order. Furthermore, Richards & Rodgers (2001) present a similar concept regarding the specification of linguistic content within a course, but arguing that the concept of syllabus has been meaningfully connected to product-centered methods instead of process centered focuses, and for that reason, this concept is not employed with regularity within process based methods. In this way, Nunan

(1988) argues that syllabuses are highly influenced on contextual statements and events that occur in the classroom, regarding the application of a given curriculum in a local situation. In other words, syllabuses are based on educational background regarding the applicability of a curriculum in a determined context.

In addition, Harmer (2007) specifies this concept by stating that syllabus design is different from curriculum design, and the designer is not exclusively linked to lists of what will be taught and its order but beyond, as it implies requirements as implementation, planning, evaluation, management, and administration of institutional programs. Furthermore, Nunan (2001) explains that syllabus is a selection, sequencing, and justification of the content of the curriculum.

After presenting a variety of relevant definitions about syllabus, it is important to mention some of the elements by which it is conformed.

As Boye (2010) remarks a *basic course information* paragraph should be included in the course syllabus because it tells students what to expect from the course, what the course is about and the pedagogical goals of it. This part also includes the schedule of the course, and place where is going to be conducted. Besides, it is recommended to include what the students require to be prepared for being in that course such as student's abilities or competences.

In *The Basic instructor information*, the teacher provides an email or a phone number in case students need to clarify doubts or problems related to the course. In this information the teacher should present the time available for the students to contact him/her.

The teacher must include in *texts, readings and other materials* information the textbooks that the students require from the course it is fundamental that the teacher distinguish them between the ones that are mandatory and the ones that are for students practice. The teacher might advise about the different places where they can find those texts and the other materials that are going to be used through the course such as calculators and other equipment.

In the *course schedule*, it is appropriated to highlight in the course syllabus the due days for the evaluations and tasks deliveries, also the content that is going to be explore in the class, week or period.

Assessment methods paragraph includes how students are going to be evaluated during the course and the types of evaluation that are going to be implemented to assess learners' competences such as exams, essays, reports, presentations etc, taking into account the learning goals established for the course.

The criteria to evaluate students' work or process during the course is reflected in *Criteria for grade determination* paragraph, which encompasses the percentages for each work and evaluation as well as the basis of how each grade is going to be joined to the others to provide the final grade.

According to Boye (2010), the course syllabus is the bridge between the students and facilitators which determine the role of each participant during the course; also it serves as a guideline for learners to understand the outcomes of it. As this term is significant for the current study, **Conceptions in ELT** offers a wide range of consciousness about the concepts that some educational community has in the ELT field.

Perceptions in ELT

Before discussing teachers and students' perceptions, it is necessary to clarify the concept of perception itself. According to Rahul Kumar (2010), a perception is the process by which people interpret mentally their view of the world around them. Besides, Molly Chandy (2012), remarks that "perception is the process by which the sounds of language are heard, assimilated and understood." In other words, a language can be perceived through different kind of stimulating activities.

Wesely, (2012) directed a research which examines learners' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs in language learning which was carried out in the University of Iowa, she came to the conclusion that exist two types of learners' perceptions. On one hand, according to Liskin-Gasparro, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1999, and Brown (2009), perceptions of themselves can be defined as how the students perceive their own language learning. On the other hand, perceptions of the learning situation, which are interpreted as how learners appreciate the classroom environment and teachers' behaviors. Mills et al. (2007) remarks that learners' beliefs are frequently related to the way they judge their own knowledge and proficiency to accomplish and master the language tasks.

On the other hand, teachers know about how important is to include communicative approaches in their teaching fields. Liao (2001, cited by Hughes and Chen, 2008). Some teachers in the ELT matter are linked to their own beliefs and attitudes towards their experience as learners. Xiao (1998, cited by Hughes and Chen, 2008) affirms that teachers think that English is taught by the same way they were in the past, for example, if they were

taught with the Grammar Translation Method, they will continue with the same chain using the exact same method.

As a way of conclusion, in this research, learners play an important role due to the fact that they are the main key of our study. Hence, it is essential that one knows about perceptions that learners have about the practices they have experienced in their English lessons. These perceptions may affect students' motivation, attitudes and learning development. (Arredondo y Rucinski, 1996, Brown, 2009; Horwitz, 1988; Schulz, 2001; Woods, 2003). Moreover, it can be said that teachers have strong perceptions about what how language can be taught taking as reference their past experiences which also can serve as a guideline to identify in the current study the issues related with perceptions in ELT.

8. METHODOLOGY

9.1 Type of study

The current study drew on the use of qualitative methods for the data collection stage. With reference to qualitative methods, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 3), stated that “qualitative research involves collecting information about personal experiences, introspection, life story, interviews, observations, historical, interactions and visual text, which are significant moments and meaningful in peoples' lives”. The goal of qualitative research is to provide richness and intensity of detailed information emerging from participant’s reactions and responses. Furthermore, Pope (2006) states that qualitative research encompasses a range of philosophies, research designs and specific techniques including in-depth qualitative interviews, participant and non-participant observation, focus groups, document analyses and a number of other methods of data collection. A qualitative research method provides plenty of instruments to improve the reliability of the aimed data since the participant’s background and natural development offer a significant amount of information in terms of teaching and learning a second language.

Consequently, this study aimed to make use of qualitative research in order to obtain deeper understandings and perceptions from observable and non- observable issues in a particular setting. The researchers intended to collect data related to teachers’ performance, their perceptions about the importance of learning English, and students’ attitudes and behaviors about teachers’ performance in the classroom; those aspects included features such as: How the class was carried out, and the most implemented

techniques by educators, classroom management, the way students perceived and also received English sessions. In accordance to Ray (2011), a qualitative study is one of the methods used to observe and record the actions and behaviors of each single person or individual through the course of their daily lives. Therefore, the data collection was done in natural setting, in this case the classroom, to gather information of the realities that English language teachers face in these three public institutions of Pereira.

9.2 Context and setting

This research project was carried in three public institutions; due to ethical considerations, these schools were named in a different way as they are currently known. The first school is placed in a rural area of the city; this school was named as Tribunas School; in this school, there are 1500 students in high school and six English teachers, four of whom had a degree on English teaching programs, the other two studied in language institutes. The observations and interviews were done in sixth and tenth grades. The other school is placed at la Julita neighborhood; it has 2800 students and four English teachers all of whom graduated from English programs. All the data collected by the researchers was obtained in sixth and ninth grades. This school was named as Instituto Tecnológico. The last school, which was named as Maraya School, has 4800 students, and it has 15 English teachers, most of whom have the degree of English teachers. The school is located in a medium status of the city, and only sixth graders were observed. Finally, among the three

schools there was a range of seventy classrooms, all of which counted with computers room, coliseum, audiovisual room, teachers' room and bathrooms with running water.

9.3 Participants

The current study had two groups of participants:

1. Teachers from secondary education within sixth, ninth and tenth grades, from Tribunas School, Instituto Tecnológico, and Maraya School.
2. Students from sixth, ninth and tenth grades, from Tribunas School, Instituto Tecnológico, and Maraya School.

The first group of participants for this study was the teachers from secondary education within sixth, ninth, and tenth grades from Pereira, who were currently working at Tribunas School, Instituto Tecnológico, and Maraya School. In total in the three schools there were twenty eight English teachers, twelve of whom had a degree on English Language Teaching and the other sixteen studied in English institutes. The second group of participants was female and male students from the mentioned schools within sixth, ninth and tenth grades;

they were between eleven and seventeen years old, and their socio-economic status did not have distinction between low or high rank. Before this study started, teachers were informed and asked to allow researchers to observe the classes and do the interviews. Lastly, students were told about the project and how their information in the interviews was to be used; they shared relevant information about their learning process, their opinions about language learning and teaching, and what their role was in English classes. In terms of English proficiency, teachers from these schools mentioned that students' English level was low.

9.4 Researcher's role

This project had three active researchers who were non-participant observers. A non-participant observer is defined by Diane Larsen-Freeman and Michael H. Long (1991) as a person who observes, takes notes and records activities without taking part of them in order to collect firsthand information. The researchers gathered data from the public institutions that were participating on the study. It means that researchers just observed the classes without interacting and interfering.

9.5 Data collection

The purpose of this study was to collect data related to educator's teaching methodologies and the most implemented tendencies by teachers from three specific public institutions: Tribunas School, Instituto Tecnológico, and Maraya School by using different techniques such as observation, questionnaires and interviews. These techniques were helpful to know which the most implemented methodologies by the teachers were and to

get information about the students and teachers perceptions about the English language learning.

9.5.1 Observations

Merriam (2009) states that the observation method involves the complete analysis of people's behavior, perceptions and assimilations to acquire data from the field that is under research (p. 94). On the other hand, Burns, A. & Hood, S. (1995) cited in Freeman (1998) argue that the observation *is a closely watching classroom event*, either as a participant in the classroom, or as an observer of another teacher's classroom. (p. 94). In addition, the observations in this study were done in the selected public schools of Pereira for approximately five weeks. Each observation lasted one hour per class. In this particular case, the observations were mainly focused on taking field notes to collect data about the classes and the situations that took place on them, teachers' performance, and students' attitude and reactions toward the English class.

9.5.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and principals of the institutions that were part of the research about professional profile, teacher's academic background, methodology and lesson plans design, among other relevant information. Herbert, W. (1989) indicates that "questionnaires are printed forms for data collection, which include questions for statement to which the subject is expected to response, of them anonymously". The questionnaires were delivered to the in service teachers to be answered.

Then they were given back to the researchers for being analyzed. The questionnaires included seventeen open and closed questions about teachers' academic background, how they evaluated students, what resources they used to plan classes and what methodologies were used in the lessons.

9.5.3 Interviews

Merriam (1998, p. 196), argues that interviews is a common means of collecting qualitative data, which allows to enter into the other person's perspectives. In this study, interviews were used to gather information from the respondent's behaviors, feelings, thoughts and how they perceive the teaching/learning process. The interviews were implemented in the two groups of participants involved in this study.

With the purpose to know students and teacher spontaneous and real perceptions, the students were interviewed through a structured interview, which had eleven questions about the materials used in the language classes, how they used what they learnt in the English classes, suggestions for teachers and how important was for them to learn the language. Teachers were also exposed to a structured interview which consisted of a unique question about the perception of teaching English as foreign language in the country.

Data analysis

To accomplish the specific objectives of this study, researchers started to analyze the data obtained through the observations, questionnaires and interviews by classifying information that was relevant to answer the research questions. According to Glesser 2001, when comparing many incidents in a certain area, the emerging concepts and their relationships are probably statements.

Once the data was collected, the analysis began. First of all, the tape recorded interviews were transcribed for being analyzed. Field notes and interviews were also analyzed in the same way. To start with the analysis of the data gathered, the relevant information was classified into different steps; the first one was to read the field notes and the interviews with the purpose to find similarities and classify them. The second one was to highlight those events by using different colors per each similar event; each similar event provided some categories for the findings and was grouped in a chart designed by the researchers. Finally, researchers triangulated the information gathered during this process to determine the final findings for answering the research questions.

9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Different procedures were followed in order to complete the research in a professional way.

First, an introduction of the project was presented to the teachers of the schools that were supposed to be involved in the research for them to know the aim and the whole procedure of the study. Then, a letter was sent to the principal of every school for them to know the initiation of the process and to introduce the researcher who was in charge of the data collection in the campus (*see appendix 1*). After, the principals were informed about the initiation of the study, the researchers met with the teachers who were observed and interviewed in order to agree with the date the researchers could start gathering the data. Finally, when researchers ended with the stage of collection of the data in the institutions, they showed gratitude to the participants for their contribution. Additionally, pseudonyms were given to the participants and institutions to keep the dignity and privacy of each one of them.

10. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter describes the findings of the current study and the discussion with other studies conducted on the field. It is important to highlight that the last finding is an unexpected finding. The obtained information reveals that Grammar Translation Method is still used to conduct the English classes; also, L1 is overused during the sessions. Teachers and students are aware of the importance of learning English as a foreign language for future challenges, and finally, a special case in which a teacher did not use grammar translation method.

10.1. Grammar Translation Method as the most implemented method in the EFL classroom

Grammar translation is known as one of the most traditional methods, and it is focused on learning grammatical rules through direct translation. On the other hand, the main objective of learning a foreign language in current scenarios is to enhance the communicative competences rather than learning strictly the grammatical rules of the target language; however, during the observations, it was evidenced that this method is still used in the three public schools through the translation of sentences, words, and text.

This finding refers to the most implemented methodology by the five of the six observed teachers of the three schools under this research, who mainly based their sessions

on grammar translation method. Five of the six observed teachers used the board to write sentences in English for students to translate them into Spanish by using a bilingual dictionary. The following evidence was taken from an observation done in Maraya School in sixth grade:

Teacher writes a reflection on the board “kind words can be short and easy to say, but their echoes are aimless” the teacher writes the following reflection. Then, the teacher asks students to translate it using the English Chicago dictionary, and then, the first student who finishes the classwork has to socialize the sentence with their classmates explaining the meaning of the sentence in Spanish.

The previous piece of field notes evidences how a teacher from Maraya school makes use of GTM by asking students to use the dictionary to translate a short paragraph from the target language to the mother tongue. The following is another extract from field notes obtained in observations:

In the previous class, students write some sentences in Spanish on their notebooks, so the teacher asks students to translate those sentences into English, and then, he says “if you need some help, raise your hand, si necesitan ayuda levanten la mano”

In the second extract, it could be noticed that a teacher from Tribunas school used not only the method in the class activities, but also, when giving instructions, he says the instructions in English, and immediately, he translates them into Spanish, exposing students to depend on the first language to be able to understand what is said and taught in class. Up to this point, it is important to highlight that a similar project conducted in three public

institutions of Pereira revealed that the grammar translation method is also used by the English teachers of the city. Castaño, Mayoral and Pulgarin (2013) found that the main activities done in the classes by the learners were based on the translation of sentences and texts from Spanish into English and vice versa making use of the bilingual dictionary . The following extract was taken from Castaño, Mayoral and Pulgarin's research to focus similarities between what was observed in their study and in the current study.

Sample # 1 from teachers' observations

IBO7-1: "The teacher writes on the board a list of English vocabulary related to some classroom supplies. Example: classroom, board, table, chair, eraser, etc. The teacher says that students have to look up the vocabulary in the dictionary and write in front of that vocabulary list the corresponding word in Spanish"

This means that in the observed classes of this study, and the study carried out in Santa Rosa de Cabal, students are exposed to learn English using the grammar translation method... According to Harmer (2009), a full immersion on grammar translation does not allow students to acquire naturally the language and it also impedes the development of other skills such as listening and speaking. Harmer's assumption gives a brief support of the consequences the intensive use of grammar translation could bring to students; even if teachers reinforce vocabulary, grammar rules and structure, they are limiting the achievement of different communicative competences.

10.2. Overuse in classroom of L1 as the principal source to convey meaning

When talking about the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, it is thought that its use is going to decline the process of learning. Teachers make use of the first language in order to make instructions and explanations clearer for students to understand. The following example shows how some teachers use the L1 in the classroom.

Okay now you have to describe some of these monsters, look for an adjective to say how they look. Students are confused and say: teacher, adjective? And the T says, si muchachos, adjetivos, ¿no lo han visto en español? Son las palabras que usamos para describir personas o cosas tal cual como en inglés.

This extract of an observation shows how teachers take advantage of the use of Spanish in order to make easier the students' understanding; also they make use of it for making a comparison between the grammatical rules in Spanish and English. The following extract also shows evidence of the use of L1 in public schools in Pereira.

Then, the teacher writes on the board "prepositions of places" and immediately he switches into Spanish and says ¿saben porqué se llaman preposiciones de lugar? Porque nos dan información de donde están las cosas"

In some cases it is good for teachers to use the L1 as a tool for showing the similarities or differences between the target language and the mother tongue. Nevertheless,

this strategy has to be taken into consideration in some specific situations that can be presented in learning scenarios, not in the whole development of the lesson. As Tang (2009) says, the use of L1 in the foreign classroom plays the role of supporting and facilitating the teaching of some issues of the language, but it does not have to be taken as the primary tool of communication. Yet, it was evidenced that the use of L1 is being utilized as a primary source for conveying meaning in the English classes by teachers as well as students. Mattioli (2004) points out that teachers' perspective of the use of the mother tongue is influenced by their professional growth process. Thus, it could be inferred that some teachers use the L1 because of their experiences obtained along their preparation at the university.

In spite of the fact that many researchers agree that the use of the first language in the classroom should be avoided or use as minimum as possible, in some public schools of Risaralda there is a tendency to overuse it. As a support of it, in accordance with a research project carried out in Pueblo Rico Risaralda, Arroyave and Puerta (2013) assure that in the schools of that town, classes were developed with a constant use of Spanish. They also argue that students indicate that there was a propensity to speak Spanish rather than English in the classroom. In brief, L1 is a valuable tool for explaining complex concepts and checking comprehension, but there should be awareness on teachers about the importance of keeping a balance between the use of the native and target language.

10.3. The use of routine in class to engage students

Routine was a tool used by the six teachers that were under this research. They used routines to teach new vocabulary, to review what was taught previously and to inform learners about what was going to be carried out during the lessons. Moreover, Patterson, K. B. (2010), states that establishing routines helps students to recall expectations, interact in classroom procedures, enhance independence and reduce interruption. Examples of the common routines used by the teachers are checking students' attendance, writing the date on the board, and telling students about the aim of the class and the activities to be done in the class; these routines helped students to use vocabulary into a real context, to practice numbers, learn the days of the week and the months of the year. The following extract of an observation illustrates what was already mentioned in terms of using vocabulary in context:

Teacher enters to the classroom and greets students saying good morning, she checks attendance and students answer: "yes madam", "It's me", "here I am", etc

As it can be seen, checking students' attendance is a strategy used for students to practice different vocabulary as "yes Madame", "it's me", "here I am" among others. Routines cannot be only an excuse for teachers to spend time during the session since it was evidenced that the teachers who were observed in this research used them to improve vocabulary, contextualize students with what was going to happen during the class and

enhance learning and communicative skills. The following piece of observation shows another case in which teachers use routines in classroom

The teacher checks the attendance and explains what they will do in the class; he says that they will check the sentences that students have already translated in the last class, thus: a person reads a sentence in Spanish, and then another person reads the sentence translated into English.

This extract gives evidence of how teacher informs students about what is going to be carried out in the session. To support this assumption, Glasser and Dotson (1998) argue that routines help students to know what will take place during the session and what is expected of them. Routines also are going to help teacher to control discipline and behavior problems and the class is going to flow more smoothly. This reason is why teachers should be careful when deciding to use routines in their lessons since this simple procedure can be helpful and full of purposes to enrich the learning process of students.

10.4.Students and teachers in agreement of the importance of learning English

One of the aims of this project is to know which are the perceptions of students and teachers of three public schools about learning English as the foreign language of the country. For knowing it, some interviews were done addresses to both students and teachers. The teachers were interviewed with only one question: what is your perception

about the English language teaching in our country? Most of the interviewed participants agreed that being proficient in speaking English helps people to have good opportunities to work in the current competent society. Students were interviewed with an structured interview which had eleven questions some of them were about their perception of the importance of learning English. The following information taken from an interview done in Maraya School to a sixth grader shows one of the students' answers:

Interviewer: ¿En qué les puede ser útil aprendizaje del inglés en su vida diaria?

Sixth grade Student: Es que hoy en día se ve mucho en los trabajos donde piden más de un idioma, por ejemplo para cualquier tipo de profesión ya tiene que estar enterados de los idiomas y estar actualizándose últimamente.

Being able to speak a foreign language gives good opportunities not only in our country but also in other countries is another perception found in students of the three institutions under research. The next piece of an interview done in Tribunas School gives clear evidence about what was already mentioned

Interviwer: ¿En que cree le puede ser útil el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua?

Tenth grade student: Tendríamos más oportunidades en otras partes, en otros países donde usan este idioma.

Through the perceptions of the students, it can be inferred that they are absolutely aware of the importance of learning a foreign language regardless the low results illustrated

in Pruebas Saber Pro 11. Also, they are motivated for learning English since they believe that acquiring the skills for being proficient and competent in the language will increase the possibilities to have a good job. Talking about students motivation, K.L, Bochner, S, & Duchesne, S., 2003 state that “the concept of motivation is linked closely to other constructs in education, needs, goals and interests which contribute to stimulate students’ interest in learning and their intention to engage in particular activities and achieve various goals.”

Teachers should take advantage of those students’ perceptions by keeping them working for increasing their motivation to learn in and outside the classroom as well as to make them recognize the responsibilities they have to face in future professional goals since universities from other countries offer higher study programs conducted in the English language.

As students, teachers’ perceptions of the importance of learning English in the country (Colombia) are the same; they were in agreement that it is important for realizing the new occupational challenges, this assumption can be evidenced in the second part of the interview, teachers were exposed to a unique question for obtaining their perceptions about English language teaching in the country (Colombia).

In the next piece of the interview the perception of a teacher from Maraya School will be shown

Interviewer: cuál es su percepción acerca de la enseñanza y aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras en nuestra ciudad?

Teacher: “...Tengo entendido o sabemos, que en esta ciudad cada día van llegando empresas extranjeras, entonces van a necesitar de los jóvenes que se preparen, o que estudien mas el idioma inglés, por eso me parece importante que, que motivemos a nuestros estudiantes para que, para el estudio del idioma inglés como debe ser”.

Through this interview emerges a connection between English language learning awareness and perceptions between teachers and students of the three selected schools in Pereira, and also gives evidence that as teachers are also conscious of the significance of acquiring this language,. In a research carried out by Avella and Camargo (2010) in Cundinamarca Colombia, the same students’ perceptions about the importance of learning a foreign language in the country were found; Avella and Camargo concluded that students see English as means of having good professional opportunities and obtaining good quality jobs. It can be concluded that not only in Pereira students are aware of the importance or learning English since it is seen as a skill that balances them in the current professional world.

10.5. A case in which one of the six observed teachers did not make use of grammar translation

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this is the special case that was found in this research which was considered as an unexpected finding. One of the six

teachers that were participants of this research used different methodologies for avoiding the use of the grammar translation method.

In spite of the results that the observations illustrated, it is significant to underline that GTM was not totally used by the six observed teacher; there was a teacher who guided her lessons with different materials and methodologies, examples of which are computer, online exercises, listening exercises, books, tasks among others. During the observations, it was evidenced that this particular teacher carried out her lessons in a different way from the other five teachers; she started introducing the topic by writing the aim of the class on the board in English, she explained the topic only in English, and all the commands that were given in the class by the teacher were merely in English. When the students were asked to participate or give responses, they did it in English. An observation done at Instituto Tecnológico exemplifies what was already mentioned.

Teacher says: *ok students get in pairs and solve the activity in page 62. You have 10 minutes to do it*

After ten minutes, teacher says: *ok, who has question number one? One of the students says: teacher me!*

In other cases students tended to ask some questions in Spanish, but the teacher pushed them to speak in English, saying that she did not answer until they spoke English; the following evidence illustrates what was said

Student says: ¿Profe como es que se dice vestir?

Teacher answers: no, no... you have to ask in English

Student: *¿teacher puedo ir al baño?* Teacher answers: no, *you are not allowed to go if you do not ask me in English*

As it can be seen, the teacher is aware that encouraging learners to use the target language allows a good development of the communicative competences, and also, it demonstrates that she tries to create a learning environment in which the tasks are challenging and engaging for students. The following evidence from an observation demonstrated what was done in class

The teacher talks in English about her favorite vacation in order to encourage students to talk about their dreamed vacation and illustrate them on a piece paper using the vocabulary used by the teacher

It was also seen that the teacher had structured her lesson before taking action on the class due to the fact that she had a notebook in which there were written all the activities carried out in class. Also, it was evidenced that she elicits students' prior knowledge and checks students' work. With regard to this, Rosenshine and Stevens (1986), cited in Richards Lockhart (1994), states that teachers who plan their classes in advanced are able to give clear instruction, guide group work activities and monitor students' learning. Having planned structured and organized classes gives sense of professionalism, seriousness and a perception of respect to students. Following the idea of the mentioned authors, it is considered that teachers definitely should prepare structured lessons, material and activities before starting their classes in order to improve the quality of education and obtain better results for future bilingual projects.

During the observations, it was noticed that the classroom was equipped with different technological devices, examples of which were a TV, a computer and speakers, and also she designed a webpage for students to practice what they learnt in the classes (*see appendix 2*). During the observation, it was noticed that those resources were used to give students an opportunity to practice adjectives pronouns through activities such as filling in the gaps, selecting the correct answer, and listening to recordings and songs to learn new vocabulary; moreover, through these exercises, teacher aimed to reinforce students' lowest grades. Harmer (2007) argues that having technological classrooms supply students a fascinating and attractive learning and helps to increase students' motivation. The webpage also evidences that teacher uploads homework and exercises to activate students outcomes. This means that students not only practice inside the classroom, but also they reinforce their autonomy studying outside the classroom. They are getting into the new world of internet and changing the conventional learning environment into a more useful, different and enjoyable way of enhancing their role of foreign language learners.

11. RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

It is important to be aware about the importance that learning a second language has. Being proficient in the second language generates high quality professional opportunities not only in other countries but also in Colombia.

This research project recommends some implications for the art of English language teaching in Pereira to have better results and thus achieve the communicative competences. Teachers should expose students to use the language for communicative purposes trying to activate the four skills making use of the new technologies such as computers, online exercises as well as pedagogical games, for giving students to learn and use the language within real contexts.

The traditional methodologies used for teaching the language should be replaced since it arises new needs such as learning the language for communicative purposes and that old methodologies are used for learning more the grammar of the language rather than communicate, thus the learning process will become meaningful and contextualized and the language will be learnt for being used in real contexts, which implies that lessons will not only focus on using methods to teach grammar issues through the grammar translation method, but focused on achieving the communicative competences.

Government should sponsor more training programs for English language teachers to be updated with the new methodologies and to learn how to implement them in the classroom and how they can be used for improving and increasing the quality of English language teaching, empower their knowledge and professional background, and provide material such as technological devices and access to internet, for having the learning scenarios needed to face the new challenges.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter some limitations that were evidenced in the development of the research project will be revealed.

First of all, It was difficult for the researchers to start collecting the data due to the fact that there were some troubles to be accepted as researchers in the schools since, according to some teachers, we did not have yet the title of “Licenciadas en Ingles” and some of them expressed their disagreement for being observed by students who did not have the professional criterion to say if their lessons were good or not.

During the time of collecting data, when researchers went to school to observe the classes some issues did not permit to carry out the observations in the dates agreed with teachers, due to strikes, cultural days, and holydays. At the stage of data analysis, one of the researchers decided to leave this research project and keep working on another. Nevertheless, she gave to the other two researchers all the information she had gathered for continuing with the process.

Finally, it is relevant to mention a big issue that changed during the research project. At the beginning, this project was part of a macro project of Secretary of education of Pereira. The results obtained from this research were going to be shown to Secretary of

education of Pereira and they were going to be used for the improvement of the art of teaching English in the city. Unfortunately, it could not be as it was expected because Secretary of education of Pereira cancelled the agreement with the university. Nevertheless, researchers decided to continue with the realization of the project. On the other hand, as it was mentioned in previous chapters, three methods to collect data were used to gather the needed information for carrying out the research project, observations, questionnaires and interviews, but only the interviews and the observations were useful to answer the research questions. Finally, in spite of having the above mentioned difficulties, the research project could be concluded.

13. CONCLUSIONS

It is important to prepare students for being competent at the basic sciences. Nevertheless, in this globalized world having the basic competences is not enough. It is vital to train students for being proficient in a second or foreign language as a matter of the fact that around the world the amount of people that are able to speak more than one language and the academic and professional opportunities are increasing in a significant quantity. This is why this study is taking a look around three public schools in Pereira trying to have a diagnosis of what kind of methodologies teachers use to carry out their classes and which are the perceptions students have about learning English and how they both teachers and students are getting prepared for what the globalized world is holding for them.

As a result of the observations and data analysis, it was concluded that grammar translation method is still used in the classrooms by most of the teachers that were part of this study. Asking students to translate from English into Spanish and from Spanish into English is the most common activity assigned during the sessions and using the first language as reference to explain grammar is the principal resource to avoid tortuous explanations, complicated instructions and misunderstandings in students learning. This kind of methods still used by some of the teachers could not permit students to develop all the communicative skills required by the Common European Framework and adapted by the Ministry of Education of Colombia; this could be one of the reasons why, eleventh graders are not obtaining the results and the proficiency level expected.

The use of the L1 was another fact found during the observations. Most of the teachers that were under research are inclined to use L1 as a tool to clarify students' doubts and to show similarities and differences between the target language and the mother tongue, but it was concluded after analyzing observations' field notes that a large amount of the teachers use Spanish for giving feedback, calling students' attention, giving explanation, and teaching the language, which means that the L1 is being used more than the target language, and the knowledge learnt of the target language is not being applied even in classroom.

In spite of the fact that some methodologies as grammar translation and strategies like the use of L1 are leaving gaps in students' learning, it was found that there are teachers who are implementing procedures, as classroom routines, within a real context in the classroom for letting not only students, but also teachers to use the language during a short period of the classes. This common procedure employed by all the observed teachers is a good strategy for increasing vocabulary in case of asking students to give responses using the target language, for contextualizing students to what happened in previous classes and what is going to happen during the lesson and permit to see students' outcomes and how much they have learned during the whole development of the school year.

This research project aimed to know which were the teachers and students' perceptions about the importance of learning English. The interviews yield that all of them

are absolutely aware that English, as a mean of communication, is challenging students and professionals to be proficient in this language and being part of a competent world. Through this research, it was found a case among the six teachers who were under this research of a teacher that used to guide her lessons using English, implementing technological devices and use internet apart from books to enhance students understanding autonomy and motivation; hence, it can be said that in Pereira, not only there are teachers who used old methodologies but also there are a few amount of teachers who are doing the teaching process in the way the already mentioned teacher does.

With this diagnosis it can be deduced that the system in which English has been taught in the city is not effective enough to fulfill the expected results and to achieve the communicative competences. It demands to change the old methods to the ones proposed for this last decade guiding people to speak the language for communicating; it is not going to be easy but neither impossible to reach it, thanks to the case of the teacher who demonstrated that teachers can use totally the second language during their lessons. This is the challenge for the Ministry of Education and the Colombian government who have proposed a certain number of years to raise the proficiency level of English in students from high school until the university.

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15. APPENDICES

Appendix 1



Universidad
Tecnológica
de Pereira

01-2144- 03

Pereira, 4 de febrero de 2013

Señor Rector

Institución Educativa

Pereira

(2144-0000-0)

Cordial saludo:

Dentro de las exigencias de la modernidad está el manejo de un idioma común que les permita a los ciudadanos acceder a la información de un mundo globalizado. En Colombia según información del ICES en el año 2004, el 99% de los estudiantes eligieron el inglés en las pruebas Pre-SABER 11, razón por la cual las instituciones educativas han optado por la enseñanza de este idioma.

Es por ello la Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira a través de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa, han emprendido acciones para el fortalecimiento del inglés como segunda lengua.

Por tal razón se requiere su colaboración y disposición, de acuerdo al compromiso asumido en la visita a cada uno de los núcleos donde se presentó la naturaleza del proyecto, para dar inicio a las entrevistas y observaciones que se realizarán a los coordinadores académicos, profesores del área de inglés, las cuales estarán a cargo del grupo de estudiantes seleccionadas de la Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, de la licenciatura referida, quienes harán presencia en las Instituciones durante los primeros meses del año 2013.

Le agradezco su colaboración con la cual contribuye al logro de nuestros objetivos académicos.

Coordinador
Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa

Anexo: Un folio



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Appendix 2

ITS English lab for x

www.itspereiraingles.blogspot.com

Ok

Página principal

EDUBLOG DE INGLES PARA GRADOS 7, 8 y 9

14:03

"Welcome to the magic world of English for 7th, 8th and 9th graders"

"Interacting with the Technology, I can improve my Knowledge in English".

Welcome to this site!

It has been designed especially for you my dear ITS student. In order to help you in your process of Learning English through the ICT's. I hope you enjoy it. I suggest you to take a look around... Come on!!!!



Welcome

My Site to practice English!

Dear students: This blogger is especially for you in order to improve your process of Learning English through the ICT's. Have Fun!!

INTRO INFO



Eighth Grades, Pereira, Colombia

Ver todo mi perfil

My HOMEWORK

- Future Simple 1
- Present Perfect Tense Exercises