



## THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ECUADOR HISTORIA DE LA ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS EN ECUADOR

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### ABSTRACT

Nowadays in Latin American countries, learning English has become a requirement for many different activities in people's life, especially the ones who want to increase professional status and personal development. Thus, Ecuador's government has changed the policies and laws to improve the way of English language teaching, and it has also invested in resources, training and educational programs for teachers, as well as, scholarships for students. Those teachers-students come from public and private schools. The purpose of this study is to provide a knowledge about the evolution of the English teaching process and how it was developed through the last decades. The findings of this research showed that the methods applied by the teachers varied according to the governments' schemes of possible needs making shifts in the methodology and ways of planning the English classes. Perhaps, those changes did not cover the real students' necessity.

KEYWORDS: professional status; personal development; policies and laws; English language Teaching; educational programs.

### RESUMEN

Hoy en día en países latinoamericanos, el aprendizaje del inglés se ha convertido en un requisito para muchas diferentes actividades en la vida de las personas, en especial de aquellas que desean un mejor estatus y desarrollo profesional. Por lo tanto, el gobierno ecuatoriano ha cambiado las políticas y leyes para mejorar la enseñanza de este idioma, y ha invertido en

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recursos, capacitaciones y programas educativos para profesores, así como también en becas para estudiantes y profesores del sector público y privado. El propósito de este estudio es dar a conocer sobre la evolución y el desarrollo de la enseñanza del inglés como idioma extranjero desde sus inicios. Los resultados de esta investigación mostraron que los métodos aplicados por los docentes variaban de acuerdo con los esquemas de las posibles necesidades analizadas por los gobiernos lo que produjo cambios en la metodología de planificación de las clases de inglés. Esos cambios que posiblemente no cubrieron la necesidad real de los estudiantes.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** estatus profesional; desarrollo personal; políticas y leyes; enseñanza del idioma Inglés; programas educativos.

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching of a language has been very important through the different ages in the mankind history because of the need to communicate to get a goal. The wars, political and religious events have originated the need to learn and to teach another language. Although, teaching a language began to be developed in the middle age, it was considered a science after the second world war. Nowadays, due to globalization and the technological advance people around the world have to make use of a common language to communicate, since English among other factors, has been easy to learn the countries has adopted this language for the international communication.

Ecuador is a country where the learning of English has not been seen as an important matter because it was part of the high level of education for people with a high status in the society. However, this point of view has changed, to know English offers many advantages in the academic and work field. This change of mind is the result of an evolution process in the history of English Language Teaching in Ecuador. Gordon Andrea (2015) said in the Comercio advisement that this is concerns Ecuador is located in 35th of 63 as one of the countries with low level English based on the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) 2014. This is because the adult's English proficiency is weak in Latin America. Therefore, to know how this process took place is really important to understand the aspects that has interfered in the development and learning of this language, and the reasons why until now, it has not got a high level of proficiency.

As regards to the factors which has impeded the development of the English Teaching the methodology applied by the teachers through the learning process history is another fact of a quite great importance. Methodology is the tools used to build up the knowledge, to choose the materials and resources to teach, if it is understood how the methodological process was carried out through the time, it would be understood what have to be changed and how it has to be changed. The main goal for this research

which will be to set the changes that the English Teaching in Ecuador has suffered since it was done by first time.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Changes in a globalized world requires that Ecuadorian students have an acceptable level of English proficiency to be able to opt to international scholarships to compete efficiently in any work field. Despite the need for the application of methodologies which help students to acquire a high level of English, the process which has been accomplished through many years has failed and nowadays, there is a significant deficiency in the teaching process in special in the public institutions, although the private school have tried to offer better results in many cases the experience of many students have shown that they are also affected with the same deficiency.

The base for this situation can be found in the English Teaching process done since the beginning of this process in Ecuador. According to an article published by El Comercio diary (2014:1), the following is a timeline of the Teaching of English in Ecuador.

In 1912, the educative Institutions around the country began to teach English and in 1950, the subject of English began to be part of the curriculum in the Government of the president Galo Plaza Lasso. In that time the lack of English teachers was a big problem, therefore the students received only an hour a week in the high schools and nothing in the primary schools. As regard to this fact, the Minister of Education (2014) said in the Comercio online newspaper that English as a subject was considered as optional in the school's curriculum taught by special teachers who were paid by the student's parents until the year 2007, with a progress increase of two and three hours after it was part of the curriculum. The teachers who were part of this process were not real English teachers because the English career had just been included in the curriculum of the Central University, the English career is one of the oldest in the country. It is evidenced that the Teaching of English was born in Ecuador without strategies to develop the learning process, the same as any training to the makeshift teachers. From 1942 the British Council Academy was founded. It closed in 1948 and reopened in 1978 to close again in 2001. In 1972, a memorandum of technical cooperation between the government of Great Britain and Ecuador made possible the beginning of a training project for the English Teachers by distance in 1989 called Curricular Reform and Distance Learning English (CRADLE PROJECT), but the project changes and became in a curricular reform and Development for the Learning of English (CRADLE PROECT) based on the Development of competences. In 1951 the CEN academy began to work until now, many academics have been opened thenceforth.

As regards to the public schools, there was a long period where the teachers taught English as they wanted to do it until 1992

when it was signed a bilateral-technical cooperation agreement between the governments of Ecuador and Great Britain to implement the CRADLE Project in order to achieve a substantial and lasting improvement of English learning in public high schools. The main goals in the Cradle Project were the innovation of the English language Learning and Teaching process, to produce didactic materials, and perform training for the teachers among others. The most outstanding change in the major curriculum was the increase of hours to five per week in the high school, the legal disposition and resolution N° 2271 was set on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1993. Chuisaca & Paucar (2010:15).

There were three phases in this project, the first was from 1992 to 1998, the second from 1998 to 2004, and the last one from 2004 to 2006. The textbook created to be used in the classes was "Our world Through English" which was a series of six books created by the British Paul Barry and an Ecuadorian teamwork. According to Silvano Muñoz an English teacher who was coordinator of the Cradle Project in Los Rios Province, the books were created with the goal to show the Ecuadorian culture through the English Language with Ecuadorian topics and characters. In 2000, there was another legal disposition N° 746 where English was implemented as an optional subject in elementary schools and the application of the National Exam for students of tenth year of Basic Education and senior students of high schools. Furthermore, in the law No. 16. RO/ 77, article 3, (g) of The Organic Law on Higher Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior) that

"The institutions of the National System of Higher Education of Ecuador, at different levels, have the following fundamental objectives and strategies: g) Preserve and strengthen intercultural bilingual education, solidarity and peace."; "Las instituciones del Sistema Nacional de Educación Superior ecuatoriano, en sus diferentes niveles, tienen los siguientes objetivos y Estrategias fundamentales: g) Preservar y fortalecer la interculturalidad, la educación bilingüe, la solidaridad y la paz".

In 2001, according to a research done by Bastida Mafla, (2013:41). The British Council left the country and the coordination of the Cradle Project with the different support in Masters degrees, capacitation, specialization courses was done from Bogotá-Colombia, where the British council had other headquarters.

In 2005, The Organic Law on Higher Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior) in the article 44 stated that

"It is the responsibility of the institutions of the Ecuadorian National System of Higher Education adequacy attesting knowledge of foreign languages, business management, oral and written expression, handling tools and socio-economic, cultural and ecological realities"; "Es responsabilidad de las instituciones

que conforman el Sistema Nacional de Educación Superior ecuatoriano que acrediten suficiencia de conocimientos de un idioma extranjero, gestión empresarial, expresión oral y escrita, manejo de herramientas informáticas y realidad socioeconómica, cultural y ecológica del país”.

Since 2006, the current Education governance headed by Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador and the Ministry of Education consisted of a Ten-year Education Plan 2006 - 2015 with the aim of addressing the quality and equality issues in the school guidelines. In the same year, The British government stopped giving support and cooperation with the English programme for teachers. In 2008 the British government finished all the collaboration with the Ecuadorian English program. During the eighteen years from 1993 to 2008 many evaluations to students were done to follow the program and evaluate the results. In addition to this, the new Constitution in 2008 stated that the government would provide professional development for public servants, including teachers.

In 2009, the first evaluation to English teachers were done in the beginning of the government of Rafael Correa. The evaluations made by the Ministry of Education in the years 2009-2010 showed that the level of the teacher according to the European Framework was that more than 50% of teachers had a level of A2 which represents a basic beginner level. These results boosted the creation of the strengthening project in the TEFL process. (Ministry of Education, 2010).

In 2010, The Organic Law on Higher Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior) made further changes to the higher education system to increase the equality and quality which has been affected since its beginning.

In 2011, the government create a ministerial agreement 306-11 and 0041-14 through which the curriculum for 1° to 7° do not have English as an obligatory subject in schools but the public and private institutions can have English as an optional subject. English is obligatory from the 8° to 3° level of Bachillerato with five hours a week. As well as it was launched the Organic Law on Intercultural Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural), which is in charge of the Ministry of Education and generated many changes in the public education. According to the agreement 0016-13 in the LOEI, by the Minister of Education (Vidal, G., 2013).

"The legislation N 003-12, the board of the National Institute of Educational Evaluation, determines the mandatory assessment of teacher performance in fiscal Teaching English through the Test of Inglés as a Foreign Language exam - Internet Based test (TOEFL iBT)"; "La normativa N 003-12, de la junta directiva del Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, determina la obligatoriedad de la evaluación de desempeño de docentes de

Ingles en el Magisterio fiscal, a través del examen Test of English as a Foreign Language – Internet Based Test (TOEFL iBT)”.

In addition, in the articles 1 and 2 of this normative indicates that English Educators from public schools who belonged to the Fiscal Magisterium should be trained in linguistic competences during the term 2012-2013 through an intensive online and face-to-face training program, in order to raise teacher's English level of proficiency to get B2 based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). Therefore, it pointed out the improvement of the Teaching-Learning approach and student's learning achievements, the same as to promote the culture of continuous training in the English area and articulate the English teacher proficient standards in the curriculum guidelines. Another strategy applied for the government was the program GO TEACHER that was designed with the purpose to train teachers overseas. The SENESCYT, the department that is in charge of the high level of education in Ecuador, signed an agreement with the State University of Kansas to make possible the teacher get the scholarship to study in the United States new strategies to teach English. The main goal for this program was to increase the English Teachers' level of proficiency to B1 or B2, at the same time to improve the methodology and strategies to teach English.

In 2012, a new National English curriculum design was launched based on the Communicative-Functional Language Approach and CEFR which is administrated by a newly formed English section within the ministry to enhance the quality of English Language learning where the guidelines disposed English optional for Grades 2-7 and mandatory for Grade 8. The purposed was that students from secondary achieved a minimum of B1 and on that way to build up learners' competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing. But from 2016-2017 will be compulsory from Grade 2° which indicates that students from secondary should reach B2 stated by UNESCO Institute of Statistics (as cited in British Council & Education Intelligence, 2015).

Regarding to the normative in the Ministerial agreement 0041-14 which indicated that English teachers who are going to be hired to work in public schools, they should have at least B2 and get the appropriate pedagogical resources to encourage students to be participants in the teaching-learning process. Additionally, students would be evaluated every year and the learning achievements in public, private schools and fiscomisionales will be submitted to the sub-secretary of educational to establish the minimum standard that students should achieve in the High lands schools since 2016-2017 term. Also, this normative stated that

"The teaching of English, from the academic year 2016-2017, 2017-2018 regime Sierra and Costa mandatory regime since second grade of General Basic Education through third year of high school for all public institutions, and individuals fiscomisionales the country."; "La enseñanza de Inglés, a partir del año lectivo

2016-2017, régimen Sierra y 2017-2018 régimen Costa sea obligatorio desde Segundo grado de Educación General Básica hasta tercer curso de Bachillerato para todas las instituciones públicas, fiscomisionales y particulares del país”.

In 2014, it is set as compulsory the curriculum of English only from the 8<sup>o</sup> level of Basic Education in the ministerial agreement 0044-14. There were many disagreements with this curriculum reform in English education which were exposed in different newspapers and social networks because it was considered that English should be taught since the beginning of the basic education to be consolidated. The government immediately change the view of the agreement and added a resolution N<sup>o</sup> 0052 where English was compulsory from the 2<sup>o</sup> level of the Basic Education since 2016 in the Sierra Region and 2017 in the Coast Region, this disposition is for all the educational institutions in Ecuador.

Furthermore, in the agreement 0052-14 in the LOEI by the Surrogate Minister of Education Freddy Peñafiel Herrera (2014, as cited in El Universo, 2014) disposed that a foreign language as English should be promoted since early ages in order to be able to communicate and get access to the demanding of global issues such as technology and scientific researches. On the other hand, to be certificated as “bilingual” schools, they must have the 40% of English subjects, as well as it was issued the normative to implement the program of international Bachillerato to public, private and fiscomisionales schools.

The process of Higher Education Curriculum designed began in 2009-2013 with the need to find out the way to improve the English Teaching process in Ecuador, throughout this process some Universities and politechnical institutions were closed because some pedagogy careers with English were offered but the professional did not know English. The Embassy of U.S. supported the Ecuadorian government with the recruitment of Dr. Nathalie Khulman who is an International expertise in the Evaluation of English programmes as a representative of TESOL. The SENESCYT together with Dr. Khulman worked with a great amount of Universities in Ecuador, CEAACES and CES to build up a standard curriculum for all the Universities where the career of English teachers will have the same contents and rules to have new teachers with a high level of English and with new methodologies to teach subjects in English and take the students to high level of proficiency in the process of learning of the foreign language.

As regard to the results of the work Dr, Khulman did in Ecuador, she helped to design the curriculum with international standards for the high schools in the project English Language Specialists, she worked with the Ecuadorian Universities to give advices in the incorporation of international standard in the formation of English Teachers and support the creation of the English Program Net. The article 30 (Higher Education Council, 2014) about

learning a Foreign Language through resolution RPC-SO-45-No.535-2014 stated that "The subjects aimed at learning a foreign language may or may not part in the curriculum of the career" but it also means that students should have passed the 60% of their subjects to continue with their studies. In addition, technical and technological careers should have English level of A2, while careers of third level should have B1 meanwhile the CEFR. By getting the students those certificates, the Higher Education Institutions may or may not make agreement with centers which promote programs or courses of language and being internationally recognized. As well as, the Higher Education institutions apart of their English educators, they could have technical teachers to work with regular courses; and finally, to study a postgraduate program, students should have the certificate.

These changes in the TEFL process have shown that despite of the evolution in the building of new curriculum, the result has always been the same, Ecuadorian people still have a great deficiency of English as a Foreign Language. The reason for this failure has been the mixture of factors like the changes of methodology which were not suitable for the needs of the students in the moment when they were applied. Roberto Calderón (2010) student of Industrial engineering with 23 years old, had difficulties in understanding some books in the university which were in English and to be able he looked for them online and translated them. He remembered that since he was a child he wanted to learn English but in the elementary and high school English teacher taught me just basic things". In contrast, Nadia Bastidas, a retired English Teacher, in a personal interview said:" The methodologies were experiments applied according to what the educational system of the moment wants to get". Alfonso Ruiz an English Teacher for 35 years expressed that although there was a methodology to follow, most of the time the teaching process was made in the way the teacher wanted or thought was the correct for the teacher's need.

According to the interviews conducted to students, retired teachers, and the information got from some thesis the teaching and learning process of English has some stages. The first stage in this methodological process was the way through which the Greek and Latin was taught with the use of the Grammar Translation method in the nineteen century until the middle of the twenty century. In that time there main need was to read the written literature so it was necessary to know the grammatical rules and vocabulary. Although, it is recognized by the teachers that this method is obsolete for the nowadays needs of the students, the reality is that it is still used by most teachers.

Another stage began between 1940-1950 with the conductive psychology and the creation of the Audio-Lingual Method. The students listen and repeat what was taught by the teacher without any possibility of reflexion, explanation or opinion based on a comprehensive reading to develop other knowledge areas. At the



end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s the Community Approach created the Natural Method. The interaction between the teacher and the students is part of the class, there is more reflexion and the development of the English skills (Reading, Listening, Writing and Reading) appeared as a goal in the learning process.

Twenty years ago, a curriculum reform in the English teaching process began with the CRADLE project. The methodology used followed a functional-communicative approach through which the students developed linguistic competences, therefore there was a significant learning where the students knew about the Ecuadorian culture with aspects of socializing. In spite of the course book, material and resources, teacher training in the methodology used in the book, the English deficiency continues being part of Ecuadorian students. There are some factors explained by Silvano Muñoz, who was the coordinator in Los Rios province of the CRADLE project. One of the factors was that teacher did not have the open mind to change the old way of English instruction because it was much more comfortable to keep the discipline with a lot of exercises in class of translation of readings from the OWTE, the textbook used in this course, instead of applying new strategies which required more energy, classroom management and use of English in class. It is important to say that in that moment many of the English teachers in service did not have any pedagogical formation. Thus, many of the strategies in the book were not well done, although the project gave some training about the use of this methodology even the young teachers preferred avoiding the communicative strategies.

Other English teacher said “the amount of students in the public school for each classroom was quite big (between 40 to 50 students) that to do such an activity was very difficult since when the students talk made noise and in that time it was not acceptable for a good teacher.” These factors together with the fact that the English teachers had a low level of English knowledge, the incorrect used of the strategies in the textbook, and the confused with some concepts related to pedagogical factors created lack of motivation in the students who saw English as a torture, instead of a tool to be used in a professional or academic life. Regarding to this, Bruno Stornaiolo (2015) coordinator of Marketing ‘online’ in EF Education indicated that motivate students in learning English was not the problem in the country because they were enrolled in private language institutes; the core of the problem is because of the methodology that is being imparted in the schools and the teacher’s fluency has not been good.

The communicative Approach method is based on the interaction, the group work where strategies like the role-play is very important for the development of the communication in English. The methodology is the one spread out around the world. In Ecuador, this method has begun to be applied with the new

curriculum, but a mixture of traditional methodology continues being part of the English classes.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to provide guidance to the question about how the TEFL was developed since the beginning of the Foreign Language Teaching in Ecuador, the present research is focused in the development of a chronological teaching process. The factors which determine the cause of the persistent deficiency in the evolution of the teaching process, in spite of the different changes in the curriculum and methodology are also considered of a significant interest. According to this point of view and in the line to provide guidance in this research the following questions have to be considered:

1. How was developed the English Language Teaching process in Ecuador?
2. What were the main factors that cause deficiency in the teaching process development in Ecuador?

#### RESEARCH PLAN

The information gathered for the present History Research was collected from some Newspaper articles about the English Education in Ecuador. The method applied was the qualitative with the help of interviews to English teachers about the methodology and factors that determine a deficiency level in the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador. Besides the study of some Ministerial agreement with reforms of the Curriculum helped to understand and create a timeline with the most important events in the evolution of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language.

#### RESEARCH RESULTS

The results for this research were got in based to the information gathered from the different sources analyzed which have given light to the way how as performed the Teaching Process since the beginning in Ecuador. As a country where English was not considered so relevant for the citizens to be learned, the process of Teaching began very early as an optional subject with an hour a week, through the process of Teaching and Learning have had many changes in methodology, programs of training, agreements with other countries such as Great Britain and U.S. which have helped in the acquisition of high level of proficiency in public education where this research was focused on.

British Council, Education Intelligence, Latin America Databank (2015) interviewed to 502 people which indicated that the most significant reasons for not learning English were the lack of government-funded English programmes following by the cost barriers, the public system, and also because they did not travel to English-speaking countries, which could reflect a lack of need

to learn English or a lack of exposure to English language learning opportunities abroad.

In spite of all these aspects, the final result after about one hundred years is a great amount of deficiency in the level of English proficiency in students and English Teachers. At the present time, Ecuador is on the forty-eight positions among the countries with low level of English. The possible factors found in this research which have caused the low level of English acquisition have been the incorrect use of methodologies by the teachers that become English in a boring subject for the students without any apparent purpose to be learned. Big classes and the lack of interest in the teachers who prefer to apply much more the traditional methods of translation with a lot of grammar exercises to keep the students busy were the perfect mixture in this terrible recipe which flavor is really bitter nowadays.

#### CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that even though many changes were made in the English Teaching process to develop a new and better way to increase the students' level of proficiency in the students form public education, the mix of different factors created the perfect conditions to avoid getting good results. Since the use of the Grammar Translation Method until the Community Language approach there have been many methodologies which in the timeline have been incorporated in the TEFL process to cover the needs of the moment, but the key factor to come to a solution to the deficiency of English in Ecuador.

The CRADLE project was the first attempt to begin the change in the methodology with the implement of a significant learning for the students and a new curriculum together with a textbook with communicative strategies and topics related to the values and Ecuadorian culture. However, the principle tool, the teacher, was not motivated to change and did not receive the training to improve the lack of a high level in the English knowledge. As it was seen, in the past even people who was not a professional teacher could give English classes and this person learned in the classroom the tools to keep going, although these tools were not the most suitable for the students' needs. Thus, even young teachers continue using the traditional methods in class. According to one of the interviewed teachers "we learned in the classroom to be a teacher, we saw how the other teachers worked and we did the same."

This project worked in Ecuador for almost 20 years and some changes helped to improve the process, but in spite of not so good results, the first step was made and nowadays a new perspective is in our country with a more interactive methodology, international standards integrated to the Ecuadorian English curriculum which will be the same for all the Universities in order to form English teachers under the same quality standards and the same teaching-learning process for

private and public schools where English will be obligatory since the primary school (2° level of basic education). The training for the teachers to improve the level of English and methodology, and the need of the teachers to get a high level of English to be certificated through the TOEFL test in the public schools and with other similar certification in the private sector in order to assure that the TEFL process is for the first time in the Ecuadorian History of English made by good professionals who really have the English level required to teach, which according to the European Framework has to be a B2.

The greatest challenge in Ecuadorian TEFL is the change of mind in the students, teachers and community, to get this impressive goal motivation have to be the sword to clear the path and to create a new opportunity to rewrite the new English History of Teaching in Ecuador, learning from the past, incorporating the new knowledge and attitude to the present to get a better future with more opportunities and best prepared professionals able to compete in the called "globalized world".

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