UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE CHIMBORAZO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN, HUMANAS Y TECNOLOGÍAS
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Title of Research Work

A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers.

Degree's Work to obtain the Bachelor´s Degree of Licenciada en Pedagogía del Idioma Inglés

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Riobamba, Ecuador. *2022*

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade with ID number 0604785642, author of the research work titled: A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers, certify that the production of ideas, opinions, criteria, content, and conclusions exposed are my sole responsibility.

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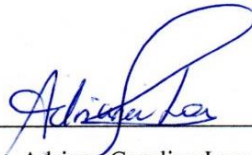
Riobamba, August 16th, 2022

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FAVORABLE OPINION OF THE TUTOR

The undersigned, Adriana Carolina Lara Velarde, professor attached to the Faculty of Ciencias de la Educación, Humanas y Tecnologías, herby certify that I have advised and reviewed the development of the research work: "A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers", under the authorship of Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade. Consequently, it is authorized to execute the legal procedures for its socialization.

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The undersigned, professors assigned "Members of the Board" for the evaluation of the research work "A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers", presented by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade, with ID number 0604785642, under the tutorship of Mgs. Adriana Carolina Lara Velarde; certify that we recommend its APPROVAL for graduation purposes. Previously, the research work has been evaluated and after the author's socialization, there are no observations.

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Que, **MÁRQUEZ ANDRADE KAREN ALEJANDRA con CC:0604785642,**, estudiante de la Carrera **de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjueros**, Facultad Ciencias de la Educación, Humanas y Tecnologías; ha trabajado bajo mi tutoría el trabajo de investigación titulado " **"The Education-First Standard English Test and the English level in Ecuador; a critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba, in the city of Riobamba, Chimborazo province, in the academic period 2021-2022""**, cumple con el 1%, de acuerdo al reporte del sistema Anti plagio **Urkund**, porcentaje aceptado de acuerdo a la reglamentación institucional, por consiguiente autorizo continuar con el proceso.

Riobamba, 29 de julio de 2022

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Mgs. Adriana Lara
TUTOR(A)

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents; Mario Márquez and Norma Andrade, who have been my biggest inspiration. Furthermore, this achievement is addressed to my siblings; Kevin and Ana María Márquez, and the rest of my family and friends, who have supported me from the beginning.

Finally, this work is a tribute to my grandparents; María Dolores Castelo and Alejandro Andrade, who unfortunately are not with me but they will always be my role models.

Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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RESUMEN

Márquez Andrade, K (2022). Un análisis crítico del Índice de Proficiencia del inglés 2020 desde la perspectiva de los docentes de inglés (Tesis de grado). Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. Riobamba, Ecuador.

El proyecto de investigación titulado "Un análisis crítico del Índice de Proficiencia del inglés 2020 desde la perspectiva de los docentes de inglés" fue realizado con el principal objetivo de analizar los resultados del Examen Estandarizado de Inglés de Education First sobre el nivel de Ecuador presentados en el Índice de Proficiencia de Inglés 2020; desde la perspectiva de los docentes de inglés de la Unidad Educativa "Riobamba". Esta Investigación presenta un alcance cualitativo de naturaleza descriptivo-explicativa. Adicionalmente, guías de entrevistas y encuestas fueron diseñadas para recolectar la información necesaria de la población constituida por 14 docentes del área de inglés de la institución educativa seleccionada y un representante del programa Education First. Dichos instrumentos pretendieron identificar los factores que influyen en el nivel de inglés de Ecuador y la opinión de los docentes sobre la confiabilidad de los resultados del Índice de Proficiencia del Inglés 2020. Los resultados obtenidos indicaron que tanto la inversión en la educación, las políticas educativas, los lineamientos curriculares y el nivel y metodologías de los docentes son los principales factores influyentes en el nivel de inglés en nuestro país. Además, los resultados del Índice de Proficiencia de Inglés 2020 son considerados como una referencia confiable de la realidad del idioma inglés en Ecuador. Sin embargo, la idea de crear un examen contextualizado que mida la proficiencia del idioma tomando en cuenta el contexto ecuatoriano es una idea aceptada por varios docentes.

Palabras claves: inglés en Ecuador, Education First, Examen Estandarizado de Inglés, Índice de Proficiencia del Inglés 2020, EPI 2020

ABSTRACT

Márquez Andrade, K (2022). A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers (Degree's Thesis). Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. Riobamba, Ecuador.

The research project "A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers" was developed with the main objective of analyzing the results of the Standard English Test presented in the English Proficiency Index 2020 from the view of English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba. This research presents a qualitative approach and a descriptive-explanatory level. Additionally, interview guides and surveys were designed so as to collect the necessary data from the population, which was formed by 14 English teachers from the selected institution alongside a representative of the Education First program. The mentioned instruments aimed to identify the factors that influence the English level of Ecuador and the view of the teachers regarding the reliability of the results from the EPI 2020. The obtained results indicate factors such as education investment, educational policies, curricular guidelines, and the English teachers' training and methodology are the main factors that influenced the level of English in our country. Furthermore, the results from the EPI 2020 are considered a reliable reference for the English level in our country. However, the creation of a contextualized test that measures language proficiency while considering the Ecuadorian context is a proposal well received by most of these educators.

Keywords: English in Ecuador, Education First, Standard English Test, English Proficiency Index 2020, EPI 2020

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CHAPTER I

REFERENCIAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From the second half of the 20th century, large-scale assessment has gained strength in Latin America. These national and international assessment processes have questioned the quality of the education system in the different countries around the world (Padilla, 2019). The purpose of this type of assessment has been to present results to encourage the governments to diagnose the mistakes in their education systems so they can make decisions to treat them. For the assessment of the English Language around the world, the application of the Standard English Test by Education First as a large-scale test has been carried out since 2010. Ecuador has been one of the participating countries since the first edition. Unfortunately, the results displayed by the English Proficiency Index 2020 have indicated that our country can be considered the area with the lowest level of English in Latin America.

Facing the mentioned situation, the analysis of this type of test is feasible due to the need to know if the results of the international large-scale assessment, such as the Standard English Test by Education First, and the results presented in the EPI 2020 is reflecting the reality of the English level in Ecuador by studying factors of this test, like its methodology, participants, results, and others. Additionally, the identification of the views that the teachers from the Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" have regarding the results presented in the EPI 2020 about the level of English in Ecuador, will be an important complement in the development of this research due to the important role that the educators have in the English language teaching process.

The interpretative paradigm and the qualitative approach will be used due to the nature of this research. Additionally, the objectives proposed will be developed with the document analysis and phenomenological methods along with the application of bibliography cards for collecting information about the EPI 2020. On the other hand, a survey and interviews will be carried out to identify the determinant factors of the English level in Ecuador and the point of view of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba about the process and methodology of the EPI 2020.

Furthermore, the present research will be developed in the following order; first, **CHAPTER 1: THE REFERENTIAL FRAMEWORK** will comprehend the problem statement, the justification of the problem, and the general and specific objectives. In the second place, **CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** will cover the information obtained from the literature review to support this research. Following, **CHAPTER 3: THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK** will include the selected methodology for the development of the present research along with the techniques and instruments used for the data collection. Additionally, **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS** will present the more relevant results obtained from the analysis of the data collected and the literature review. Finally, the **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS** will be presented

1.2   RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Education-First Standard English Test and the English level in Ecuador; a critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba, in the city of Riobamba, Chimborazo province, in the academic period 2021-2022.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Due to the relevance and attention given to the large-scale assessment, experts started analyzing it and the impact on the changes of the education system. This aspect can be seen in researches that have been carried out in Spain, Mexico, and Argentina. These countries have in common a large-scale test called PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). This test is implemented to evaluate the knowledge of the students in areas, such as Mathematics, Science, and Reading Comprehension (Rodrigo,2019, Jornet 2016, & Padilla, 2009). The researches carried out in the aforementioned countries have questioned the reliability of these test results based on the idea that the nature of this type of assessment seeks to assign a number to the knowledge instead of evaluating all the factors that influence it.

The assessment of the knowledge areas by PISA and the analysis of its results were crucial for evaluating the application of the knowledge in a real-life context. Subsequently, the English language started to become a relevant area as a consequence of globalization, therefore it started to be necessary to evaluate the level of this language around the world. As an answer to this problem, international large-scale tests have been applied. To illustrate this situation, the Standard English Test (SET) was elaborated and executed by Education First. The results of this test are presented annually in the English Proficiency Index, which aim is to help the different governments to identify how the English teaching and learning process is being carried out in their respective countries so they can look for solutions if required (Education First, 2020).

Ecuador has participated in the English Proficiency Test by Education First since its first edition in 2010. Along this time, the results have constantly indicated that our country has a low or very low level of English. The English Proficiency Index 2020 presented the results from the evaluation process applied in 2019 to participants from one hundred countries. These results portrayed Ecuador as one of the countries with the lowest English level, occupying the 93rd place from all the one hundred participating countries and the 19th position from the nineteen Latin American countries that participated in this process. Nevertheless, the reliability of these results has been challenged due to the EPI's methodology, the decontextualization of this type of test, and the decisions made by the government in light of these results.

Based on those circumstances, it has been decided to develop this research which aims to present information about the process and methodology of the EPI 2020 and the reliability of its results regarding the reality of the level of English in Ecuador taking into consideration the views of different English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba"

who are aware of the English teaching current situation in our country and who also are aware of the results in the English Proficiency Index 2020.

Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" is a public educational institution located in Riobamba, specifically in the north area of this city. It belongs to the Chambo-Riobamba district. The offer of this institution involves all the educational levels established in the Ecuadorian curriculum: Educación Elemental, Educación General Básica Media, Educación General Básica Superior, and Bachillerato General Unificado. There are 154 teachers in this alma mater, 14 of them belong to the English as a Foreign Language Area.

1.4 PROBLEM FORMULATION

How is the English level in Ecuador reflected in the Education-First Standard English Test and what are the views of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba regarding the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020?

1.5 JUSTIFICATION

The present research reflects an original essence since there are no similar studies in the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo and the study of this problem pretends to benefit all the institutions, authorities, teachers, students, and families involved in the English language teaching and learning process in Ecuador. As well, this research will constitute a starting point for the further development of research studies focused on analyzing the reliability of international large-scale assessment and the impact of its results concerning the reflection of the reality and the use given to them. Certainly, there will be the necessary economic recourses to carry out this study, as well as, there will be presented truthful and updated information obtained from reliable sources about the topics that will ease the comprehension of the topic to be studied.

1.6 OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 General Objective:

To analyze the results of the Standard English Test by Education First presented in the English Proficiency Index 2020 regarding the English level in Ecuador from the view of English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives:

- To describe the methodology and evaluation process carried out in the English Proficiency Index by Education First.
- To identify the determinant factors of the English level in Ecuador in the EPI 2020 according to a representative of Education First and the teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba.
- To determine the view of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Based on the review of digital repositories from different universities, it was found that there is a study carried out in 2000 at the University of Dayton in Ohio, the researcher Joseph K. Ballengee developed research called "An Analysis of Elementary Teachers' Attitudes Toward and the Instructional Impact of Standardized Tests". The main objective was to determine the relationship between the attitudes of the teachers towards the standardized tests and how the results affect the instructional decisions. The methodology employed was based on descriptive and qualitative research. The participants were 20 teachers from 2nd through 6th, learning disabled students, and the Art area. All of them indicated that they needed to make changes in their classrooms to accommodate standardized tests. Also, it was identified a relationship between attitudes and test preparation. In conclusion, if the teachers had a positive attitude towards the standardized exam, then the exam preparation took less time. On the contrary, a negative attitude caused more time spent on exam preparation (Ballengee, 2000).

Another research was developed in 2010 at Universidad del Valle by Harvey Tejada and Nelson Castillo. This research is called "El backwash effect "efectos colaterales" del examen ECAES, Prueba de inglés 2009. Un análisis crítico". The main objective was to carry out a critical analysis regarding the English Test "ECAES 2009" by the Ministry of Education. The methodology applied was based on a holistic and theoretical framework. Moreover, four samples of the ECAES test were selected to be analyzed. The results indicated that this test does not take into consideration the real English level of the students. Secondly, there are categories from the Common European Framework that have been omitted. Then, the questions do not reflect the content taught in the schools and high schools. Finally, the English test presents less complexity and consistency than the ones designed for the other areas. In conclusion, it was established that the results of this test caused a negative impact on the participants, processes, and products of the English teaching and learning process (Tejada & Castillo, 2010).

Finally, the study "Evaluación del Inglés Curricular Mediante el Examen en Línea en la BUAP: Opinión de Estudiantes y Profesores" by Jacobo Isidro de Jesús, took place in 2017 at Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. This study aimed to determine the views of the students and teachers regarding the evaluation of the curricular English courses through an online test at the BUAP. This research is quantitative, descriptive, and non-experimental. The population considered for the application of the surveys was made of 116 students and 20 English teachers. The results reflected that the majority of the students agreed that the current evaluation technique was appropriate. At the same time, half of the teachers claimed the same acceptance while the other half proposed the portfolio as another method of evaluation of the English courses. Moreover, regarding the percentages used for the punctuation, the students indicated that these needed to be changed and improved, on the contrary, the teachers showed agreement with the percentages employed. Furthermore, the general conclusion

determined that the population had positive opinions regarding the test and its format (Isidro de Jesús, 2017).

2.2   THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.2.1   AN OVERVIEW ABOUT THE STANDARDIZED TESTS

A standardized test in education is a process based on determining the knowledge, abilities, aptitudes, and competences of a person in a specific area. It is also a measurement and assessment tool that is administrated and graded in a predeterminate way. The results of these tests are compared with a referential group and the main characteristics are reliability and validity. These standardized tests have two important stages in history, the first one is related to its popularity in the '20s where this type of test started to be used in North America to measure the intelligence quotient. The main problem of these tests was the lack of reliability. The second stage starts with the incursion of standardized tests in the educational and psychological areas. In this stage, those were improved and became more integral (Benavides, 2020).

Additionally, people started to get interested in studying the elaboration and application of these tests. The difference between this type of test and a common test applied by a teacher in a regular class is the fact that the first one is formal, which means that it is designed with the main purpose of assessing the teaching and learning system focusing on specific competencies and knowledge. There have been lots of speculations about the impact of the standardized language learning process through the control over the quality and efficacy of the educational system focused on this area (Tristan & Pedraza, 2017).

2.2.1.1   PROGRAM FOR INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT

According to Patiño (2017), the definition of standardized tests has changed over time. In the nineties, they were tests used as an instrument to measure results for accountability. At the end of the 1950s, educational assessment began to gain relevance internationally, an example of this is the appearance of the International Association for the Evaluation of School Performance (IEA). The idea about the learning measure and the application for international standard tests started with the development of the Programme for Institutional Student Assessment (PISA). This test has the main objective to indicate the statistics to improve the quality of education. This test was applied for the first time in 2000 to 32 countries with voluntary participation focusing on evaluating areas like Mathematics, Reading Comprehension, and Science (Bordoli & Márquez, 2019).

2.2.2   EDUCATION FIRST AND THE STANDARD ENGLISH TEST

English started to take the same importance as the other areas since is one of the languages with more impact worldwide. To assess the level of this language, the development and application of large-scale standardized tests started to be carried out and the Standard English Test by Education First was an example of it. Education First is an education international company created in 1965, which focuses on the language, the academic degree programs, cultural interchange, and educational travels. It started to

evaluate the English level through a large-scale and free online test called the Standard English Test, which is adaptable and covers only the receptive English linguistic skills; reading and writing. The results of this test have been compared to others from tests like TOEFL or IELTS, and the standard error of measurement was low, which reflected reliability.   Furthermore, the results of the EF SET are presented using the English Proficiency Index published by Signum International AG (Education First, 2020c).

2.2.2.1   ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX 2020

The EF EPI 2020 methodology is based on the results obtained in the Standard English Test applied to more than 2.2. million participants in 2019. Moreover, the test is free, open-access, and it is carried out online so people who do not have an internet connection are automatically excluded. The population to be evaluated was volunteers which do not guarantee to be representative. Each participating country needs to have a minimum of 400 participants. Most of the participants decide to do the test because they have an interest in learning English and others want to know at which level they are. The score parameters are based on an 800 points scale, which is related to the English levels established by the CEFR; A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The countries are scored and placed in one of those parameters (Education First, 2020a).

The EPI scores the countries using language proficiency bands; Very High (C1 and C2), High and Moderate (B2), Low (Upper half B1), and Very Low (Low half B1 and A2). The countries that reach a very high level reflect their dominance in all the English language skills, which help them to communicate effectively. The countries that acquire a high level reflect their ability to develop presentations and participate in complex conversations. The countries with a moderate level can participate in meetings, understand songs, and write professional e-mails. The ones placed at a low level, reflect skills related to understanding basic things and developing simple conversations. Last, the countries that have been defined with a very low level, present very basic skills like introducing themselves or providing simple addresses.

2.2.2.2   LATIN AMERICA IN THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX

The EPI 2020 executive report covers different aspects regarding the results obtained by the participating countries in the SET. For instance, in the Latin America results analysis, the situation is studied through certain parameters; investment, stability, and inequality. Regarding, the investment part, Education First (2020b) indicates that 12 of the 19 participating countries showed an important improvement in the English level after the increase in the investment in the education sector; Uruguay and its English teaching programs in 2015 are shown as an example of the mentioned situation since 80% of the secondary students obtained an A2 English level. Based on the effects of the stability in those countries, the ones that present the highest crime rates also have poor results in the SET.

On the other hand, the countries that have decreased their crime rates have presented an improvement in the results of the test, such as Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Additionally, unequal access to education is considered another factor to be analyzed in the current situation of English language teaching in Latin America; México and Ecuador are examples of it, because in 2014 only 10% and 7% of the educational institutions respectively, offered English classes (Education First, 2020b).

2.2.2.3 ECUADOR IN THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDEX

According to the EPI (2020c), Ecuador's score is 411 which places it in the 93rd position, establishing its English level as Very Low. Besides, from the nineteen Latin American countries that participated in this process, Ecuador ranked in position 19th, which defined it as the Latin American country with the lowest English level. Moreover, these results indicate that the Ecuadorian participants have only basic knowledge of English, which involves skills such as introducing themselves and giving addresses (El Universo, 2020).

2.2.3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ECUADOR

According to Erreyes & García (2017) in Ecuador specifically, the education system started to give more attention to the idea that the students and teachers needed to dominate the English language so they can be able to develop the necessary linguistic competence and that is how different programs started to be executed. In the year 2016, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador presented new curricular reforms for the different knowledge areas, one of which was English as a foreign language. This new curriculum was designed for students in Educación General Básica (2nd to 10th) and Bachillerato General Unificado (1st to 3rd), whose mother tongue is not English. This plan recognizes Ecuadorians as L1 speakers (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). One of the reforms was reflected in the Acuerdo Ministerial No. MINEDUC-ME-2016-00020-A, issued on February 17th, 2016, indicated that the English teaching process will be carried out since Segundo Grado de Educación Básica by the means of the provision (Erreyes & García, 2017).

A year later the Acuerdo No. Mineduc-Mineduc-2017-00065-A: Normativa Para Obtener La Calidad De Elegible Y Del Concurso De Méritos Y Oposición Para Llenar Vacantes De Docentes En El Magisterio Nacional, was presented. This policy addressed article 7, which established the recognition of the B2 level as a mandatory requirement to exercise the teaching profession in the educational institutions of Ecuador (Fander Malconí Benitez, Former Education Minister, 2017). Other changes in the English teaching process could be witnessed with the creation of English teaching training programs, such as CRADLE, Go Teacher, and Time to Teach.

In the first place, CRADLE one was a project aimed to train over 8000 English teachers and create books according to the context of our country (Bastida, 2013). Then, Go Teacher's main objective was to send Ecuadorian English teachers to Kansas State University to be trained in English language teaching and learning (Kansas State University, 2012). Finally, Time to Teach was based on bringing foreign teachers to Ecuador as volunteers for teaching English in public Ecuadorian schools (El Telégrafo, 2018). The first project mentioned, CRADLE, was a project executed on July 9th, 1992 so this one was not a

result of the curricular reforms in the year 2016 as the other programs and projects are. However, this program is a clear example of the standardization in the English teaching and learning process in Ecuador.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Following Rehman and Alharthi (2016), this study fulfilled the characteristics of the interpretative paradigm due to the principle of not accepting a single universal truth but trying to study the plausible interpretations of a specific phenomenon. This thought fits with the objective of this research because the results presented by the English Proficiency Index 2020 regarding Ecuador's English level could not be taken as a single truth. It was essential to discover the different perceptions about it or at least it was important to analyze how those results were obtained and if they are reliable.

3.1 THE APPROACH OF THE RESEARCH

For the development of this study, the qualitative approach was the most appropriate to adopt. The analysis of the results presented by the EPI 2020 did not require the establishment of a hypothesis with a defined process with quantitative data to prove it; on the contrary, it followed an inductive process based on exploring and describing the process and methodology of this standardized test and then generating theoretical perspectives about its reflection of the reality of the English Level in Ecuador (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista-Lucio, 2014).

3.2 METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

Due to the nature of the first objective proposed for this research, the method of document analysis was used. This method is applicable for qualitative research that seeks to provide a detailed description of the topic to be studied, in this case, the process and methodology of the EPI 2020. Furthermore, this method allowed the interpretation of information to give it meaning and develop understanding by applying techniques like reading, re-reading data, and constructing categories from it. Objectivity and sensibility were important qualities that were present at the time of analyzing the documents for the results of the research to be valid and reliable (Bowen, 2009).

Additionally, the phenomenological method was employed for the second and third objectives which are based on identifying the factors that have an effect on the results regarding the English level of Ecuador and also determining the teachers' views about the EPI 2020. The method selected allowed the analysis of the different interpretations or perceptions from individuals regarding a specific phenomenon and as Hernández Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista-Lucio (2014) claim, this type of research explores and comprehends the experiences of the individuals regarding the object of the study and the common aspects that could emerge from it.

3.3 Level of the research

This research was based on a descriptive-explanatory approach because it describes the process of evaluation and methodology applied by the Education-First Standard English Test. Furthermore, the English Proficiency Index 2020 was analyzed alongside the perspectives of the English teachers in order to achieve an understanding of the English level in Ecuador.

3.4   POPULATION

The population considered for this study was one representative of the Education First Program in Ecuador and fourteen high school English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba". The expertise of this population about the topic and the view that they provided were essential components for the development of the research. Another reason why this population was chosen is that the researcher studied in this educational institution and this person is familiar with the English teaching and learning process carried out there. Moreover, a factor that facilitated the development of the research is the good relationship between the researcher and the authorities of Unidad Educativa Riobamba.

3.5   SAMPLE

From the chosen population, the sample was made of the representative of the Education First Program and fourteen English teachers from the selected institution. The sample for the development of the interviews was selected after analyzing the results from the close-ended questions survey applied to the fourteen English teachers from the Unidad Educativa "Riobamba". Based on that, it was identified that only eight of those educators were familiarized with the EPI 2020 results; consequently, they could be interviewed.

In addition, in order to obtain reliable information from the selected population is important to bear in mind the ethical principles to protect the human subjects; in this light, the Belmont Report plays an important role in the data collection process. Beauchamp (2008) indicates that this report consists of the following three main moral principles appropriate for the development of research: respect for persons (informed consent), beneficence (risk-benefit assessment), and justice (selection of the participants). Based on the principles, this research protects the participants by not revealing their identities.

3.6   DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

The present research follows three important stages:

In the first stage, the document analysis was carried out by using bibliography cards for collecting and analyzing information from bibliographical sources about the process and methodology of the EPI 2020 and the determinant factors regarding the English level in Ecuador. The main objective was to collect data about the evaluation process and methodology of the EPI 2020 from reliable sources to have vast knowledge about it so it could be studied appropriately.

In the second stage, for reaching the main aim of recognizing the influencing factors on the English level of Ecuador according to the results in the EPI 2020, a semi-structured interview based on an interview guide was developed with a representative of the Education First in Ecuador. This instrument contained open questions that allowed the participant to provide extended answers by explaining details that were considered relevant.

The process of validity and reliability was carried out through Experts Reviews; the thesis tutor (expert in the methodology) indicated the coherence between the questions and the objectives and the representative of the EF program (expert in the content) ensured the level of relevance and consistency of the questions.

Furthermore, a survey was applied to all the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba in order to determine the factors that influence the level of English in Ecuador according to their experience and also to identify who of them were familiar with the results of the English Proficiency Index 2020

This survey was validated also through Expert Reviews, the thesis tutor and the representative of the participants indicated that the questionnaire reflected effectively the main purpose of the instrument.

Finally, for the third stage, a semi-structured interview was applied using an interview guide with open-ended questions to the eight high school English teachers that were selected in the previous stage. This phase aimed to determine the views of the English teachers about the process and methodology of the EPI 2020, and the reliability of its results regarding the level of English in Ecuador.

Similarly, this instrument was defined as reliable through Experts Reviews; the thesis tutor (expert in the methodology) who indicated the coherence between the questions and the objectives, and a representative of the participants (expert in the content) who indicated the level of satisfaction and comfort that the participants would feel while answering the questions.

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUES

For analyzing and interpreting the collected information, the following process was carried out. Firstly, the data obtained from the survey was presented in graphics and interpreted. On the contrary, the data obtained from the representative of Education First was organized, established in categories, and displayed on a table. Similarly, the information obtained from the teachers' interviews was also organized and categorized, then the different English teachers' views regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020 were contrasted.

Principally, a methodological triangulation inside methods was executed. Vallejo and de Franco (2009) indicate that this type of triangulation is the combination of two or more data collection (qualitative measures or approximations) about a phenomenon. In this light, this process allowed the contrast between the information obtained from the different instruments (questionnaires and interviews) and participants (English teachers and EF representative); consequently, an analysis of the data obtained from different sources was carried out, which reflected important facts regarding the treated topic considering multiple perspectives.

RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Specific Objective: To identify the determinant factors of the English level in Ecuador in the EPI 2020 according to a representative of Education First and the teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba.

For this objective, the answers from the survey were analyzed alongside the results from the interview applied to the EF representative.

A. ENGLISH TEACHERS AND THE ENGLISH LEVEL IN ECUADOR

Teacher personal and vocational information

Figure 1: *Unidad Educativa Riobamba English Teachers' Age*
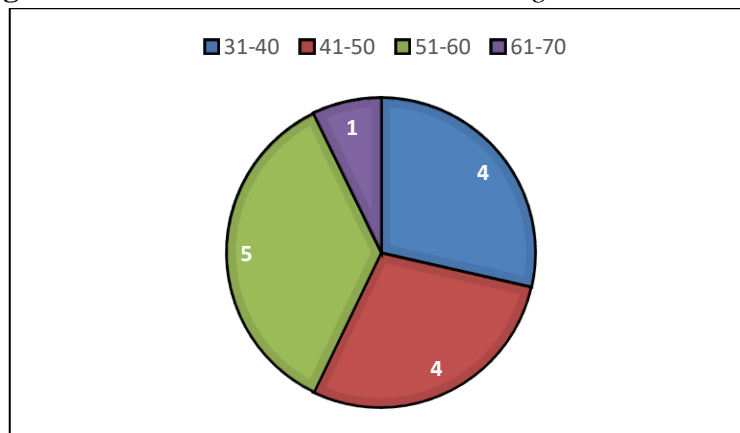
Elaborated by: Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The age of the majority of English teachers that work in the Unidad Educativa Riobamba ranges from 30 to 60 years old approximately.

Figure 2: *Unidad Educativa Riobamba English Teachers' Gender*

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

According to the results, 11 of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" are women; on the contrary, the remaining percentage belong to male teachers, which is equivalent to 3 teachers.

Figure 3: *Unidad Educativa Riobamba English Teachers' Vocational Level*

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The majority of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" has a Master's Degree**,** while the remaining percentage belongs to teachers who have as vocational levels a bachelor's degree or a *tecnólogico* level

Figure 4: *Unidad Educativa Riobamba English Teachers' English Level*

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

Half of the English teachers working in the Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" meet one of the main requirements as English teachers, having a B2 level. On the other hand, more than a quarter of the teachers have achieved the B1 level and 14% of them present a basic level of English.

Education First and the English Proficiency Index

Figure 5: *Awareness of the existence of the EF Program*

Note. The figure reflects the answers to the question from the survey:
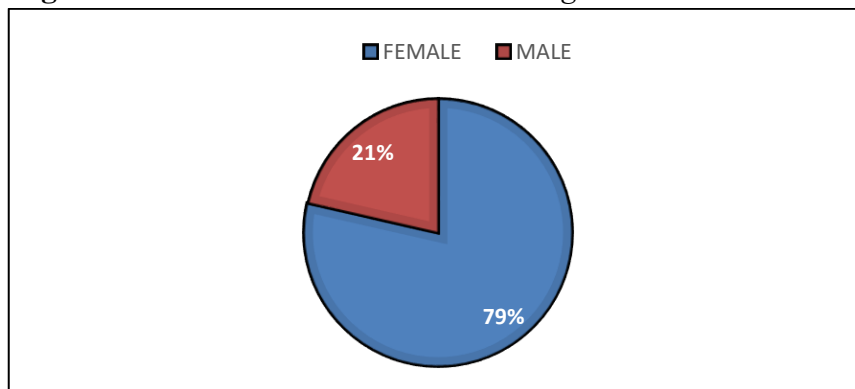Are you aware of the existence of the Education First Program?
Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The majority of English teachers know about the Education First program in our country.

Figure 6: *Awareness of the existence of the SET by EF*
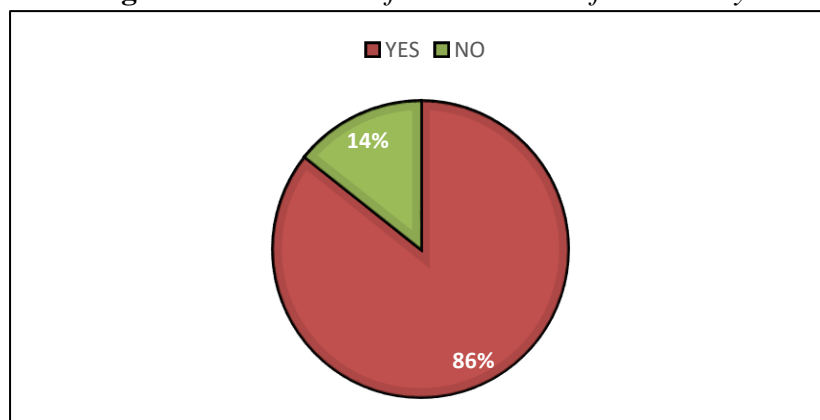
Note. The figure reflects the answers to the question: Are you familiar with the Standard English Test by Education First?
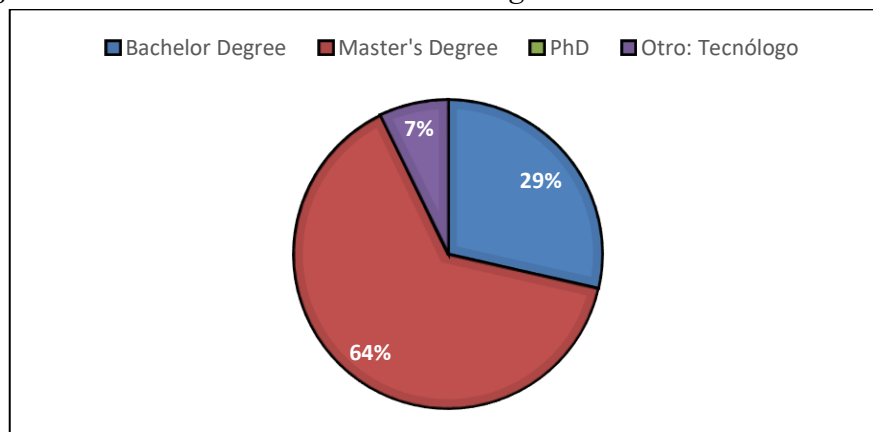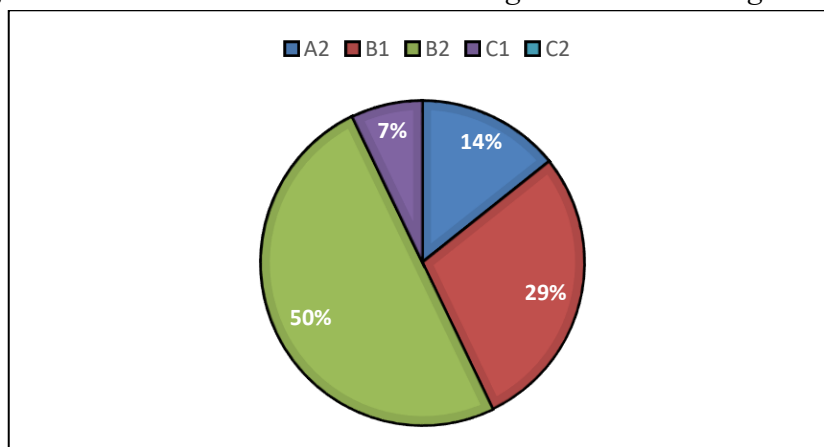Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The majority of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba are aware of the Standard English Test created and applied by Education First.

Figure 7: *Awareness of the results presented in the English Proficiency Index by Education First in 2020 regarding Ecuador's English Level*
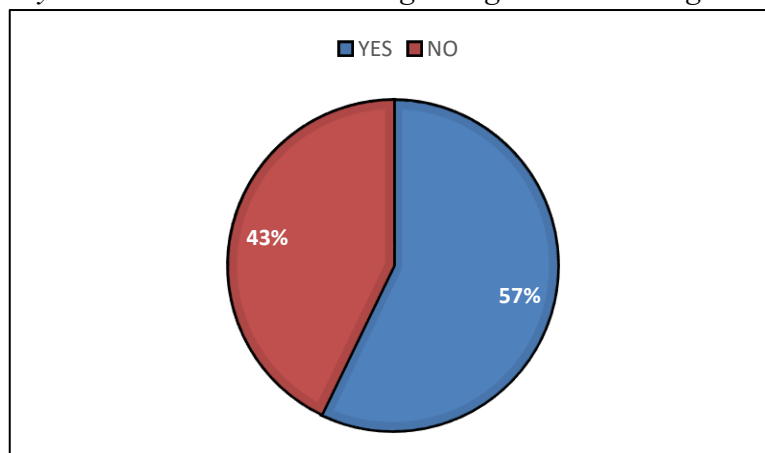
Note. The figure reflects the answers to the question: Are you familiar with the results presented by the English Proficiency Index by Education First in 2020 regarding Ecuador's English Level?

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

A little more than half of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba are familiar with the results of the English level in Ecuador, which were presented in the English Proficiency Index 2020.

Figure 8: *EPI 2020 results and the reality of Ecuador according to English teachers*
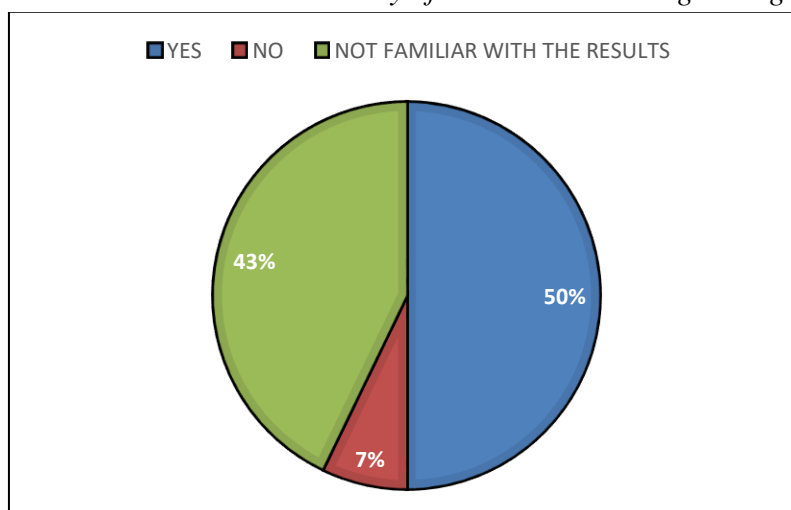
Note. The figure reflects the answers to the question: If you are familiar with the results, do you think that they reflect the reality of our country.

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

From the 57.1% of the teacher who is familiar with the results of Ecuador in the EPI 2020, 8 of them consider that this information reflects the real English level of our country, while the other remaining does not share this opinion.
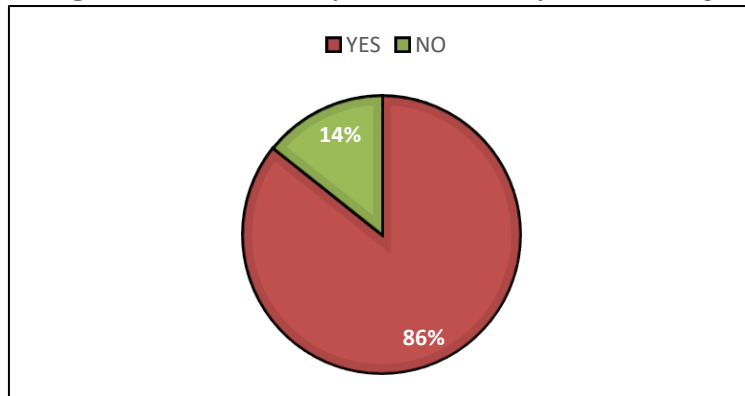
English in Ecuador
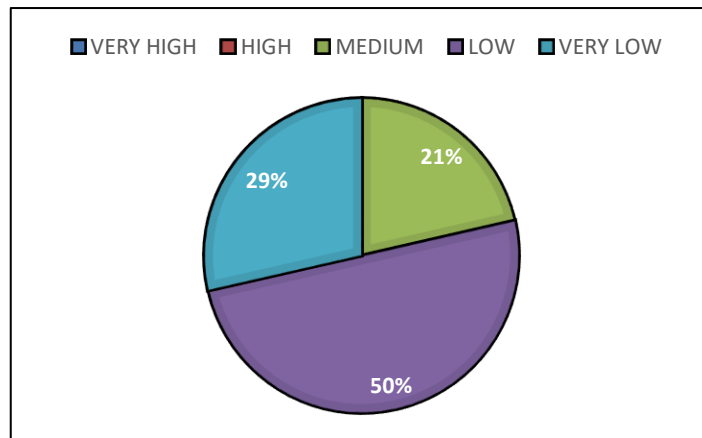
Elaborated by: Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

Half of the English teachers working in the Unidad Educativa Riobamba consider that Ecuador presents a low English level, while the other rest present a somewhat contrasting position by establishing that Ecuador has a very low level, while others believe that the English level in pour country is no high but neither low.

Figure 10: *Causes of the level of English in Ecuador*

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The majority of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba indicated that factors, such as educational policies, the English teaching methodologies, the economic

situation of our country, and the lack of teaching training programs are the principal causes of the low English level in Ecuador.

Figure 11: *Solutions towards the low English level in Ecuador*

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

Most of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba consider that the government and the corresponding entities should create more programs to train English teachers. Moreover, other solutions for them are related to the evaluation of English teachers, changes in the curricular Guidelines, and the management of the economic resources employed in the English teaching process.

English level of the Ecuadorian students and teachers

Figure 12: *English level reached by the Ecuadorian students after finishing high school*

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

Regarding the level achieved by students at the end of high school, the majority of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba indicate that students achieve only the A1 or A2 level. On the contrary, only 7.1% remaining consider that students meet the B1 level as it is stated in the guidelines of the Ecuadorian curriculum.

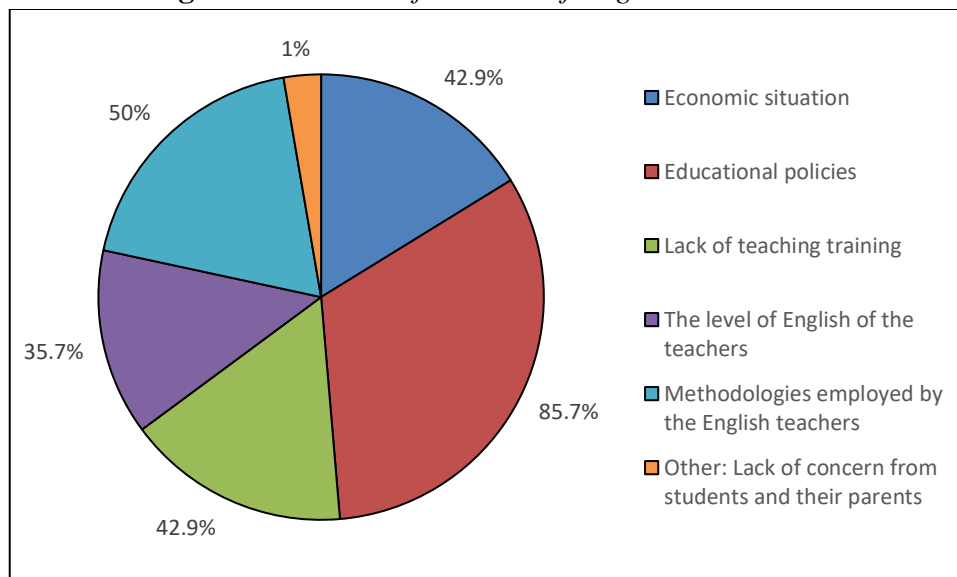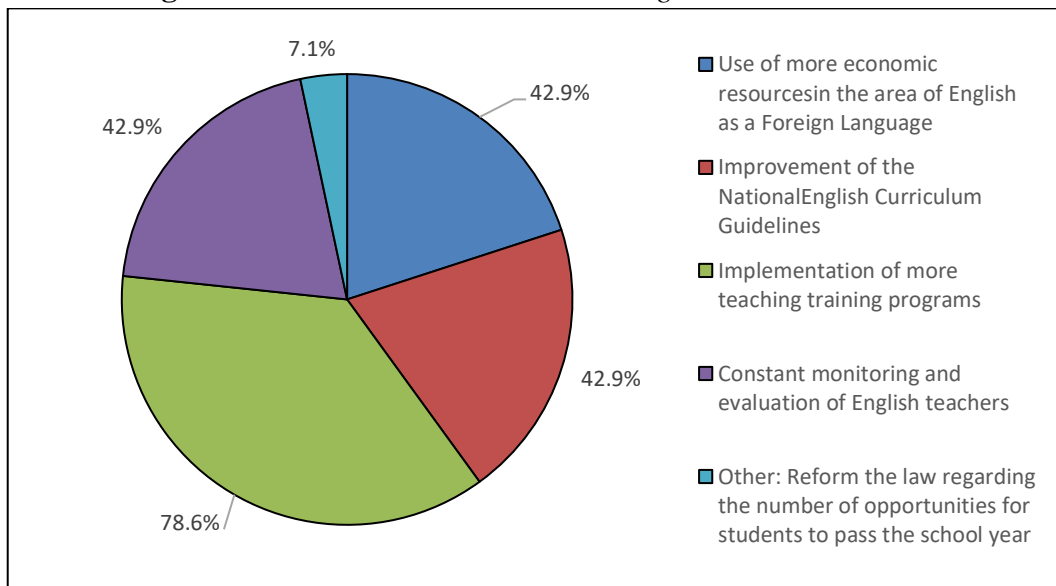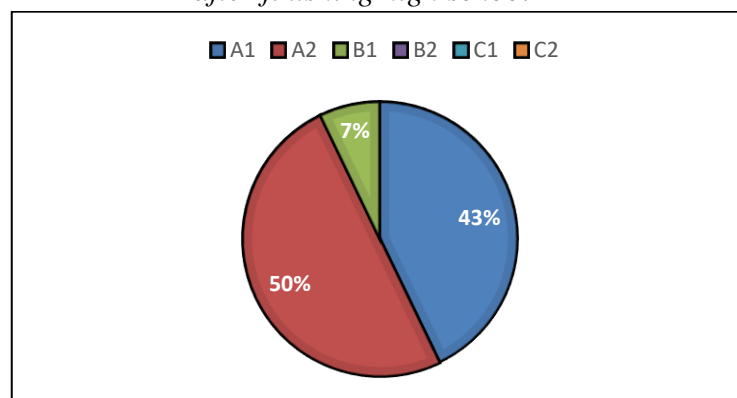**Figure 13**: *B2 English level as a requirement for English teachers*
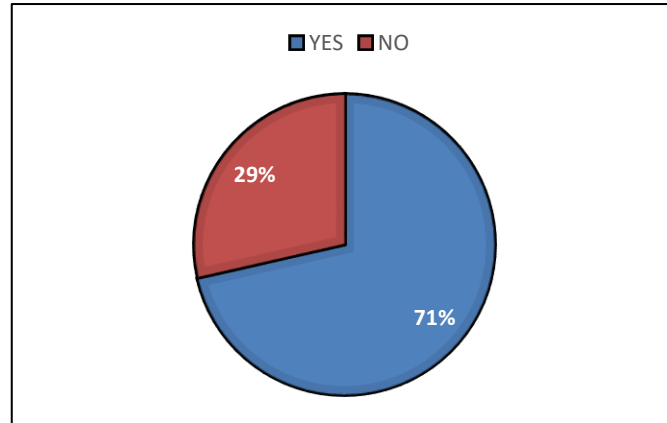
Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

More than half of English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba agree that the B2 should be a mandatory requirement for English teachers in Ecuador.

B. EDUCATION FIRST REPRESENTATIVE AND THE ENGLISH LEVEL IN ECUADOR

Table 1: *Education First and the English Level in Ecuador*

QUESTIONS	Do you think the results presented in the EPI 2020 regarding the English Level in Ecuador reflect the reality of our country?	Do you think the economic situation of our country influenced the results presented in the EPI 2020? How?	Do you consider that the degree of effectiveness of the educational policies established for the development of the English teaching and learning process is questioned by the results obtained by Ecuador in the EPI 2020? Why?	Do you think that teaching efficiency is being questioned due to those results? Why?	What other factors do you think influenced the results obtained?	What do you think are the possible solutions for improving the low level of English?
CATEGORIES	EPI 2020 and the Reality in Ecuador	Economic Situation and the English Level	Educational Policies and the English Level	Teaching Efficiency and the English Level	Other factors that influence the English level in Ecuador	Solutions for improving the English level in our country
Education First Representative	I can tell you that an exact percentage cannot be said because only segments of people are considered. A sample can be taken but if you go deeper; for example, in the	Totally, the economic situation involves everything that the government has to invest in education,	More than questioning, EF pretends to give recommendations. It is different education between the countries around the world, and between	When we teach Language, vocabulary is the biggest focus, but speaking is not taught, which is more difficult for people. This does	The government needs to invest in education, teacher training, and the necessary resources so the students can increase their	Getting to know the Language, all people should have access to this test so they can know their level because lots of improvement are

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	year where we applied the test in public high schools, you can notice that the English level if you get to people with less access to the internet, less acquisition power to take classes, our level will be even much lower. We are considering people who have internet, sometimes they see our web page and they want to measure the English level. We go to institutions or universities, where most of them are private, and invest in teachers and their training. This test gives you a real sample of how is the education generally but if you	English as a foreign language, and the teachers' training. In the tests that we have applied, we have seen that there are teachers that have A1 or A2 as their English level. They are the ones who teach the language and it is obvious that their level is very low. The students will not increase their English level because their teachers do not have the correct language domain.	the continents; however, what EF wants is to provide recommendations, and the principal one is to identify the starting point, which means measuring the students' levels so improvements can be developed by the institutions, the government, so they can train teachers and do everything they can to improve.	not help people to speak fluently because putting together sentences is complicated for them. This is something that has been analyzed in some seminaries, and the principal recommendation has been that methodology, as in other countries, is not only focused on grammar, it has to be deeper than that so people can learn to speak English.	English domain. This is related to the acquisition of the power of the people and the state. We can see that the countries that have a high English level are First world countries, where education has great value and they invest a lot in it. Furthermore, we have identified that the schooling years also have a big influence, not all countries have the same schooling years (Elementary or secondary). Access to the internet goes hand in hand with	needed. Training teachers so they can increase the English level of their students. Investing more in education. Increasing the English hours in the curriculum so students can improve because practice and training will help them.

con to rural areas, the level will be lower.				acquisition power and it is related to the English domain. The level of Education and the investment are aspects that are related to language learning.

Note: The information presented in the table was obtained from the interview applied with a representative of the Education First Program.

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

First of all, the EF representative pointed out that the SET Participants are; people with the internet, individuals interested in identifying their English level, and private educational institutions. Furthermore, the interviewee claimed that the results in the EPI 2020 do not reflect the entire reality of the English level in our country due to its characteristics. However, if a representative sample would be considered, the results will be lower than what is displayed in the EPI 2020.

Additionally, the representative from Education First Program in Ecuador indicated that the actors in the English teaching and learning process, such as the government, the Ministry of Education, and the teachers, alongside factors, such as the economic situation, educational policies, teaching efficiency, and English teaching methodology, have a significant influence on the English level in Ecuador.

Finally, the representative indicates that the Standard English Test should continue being applied in order to identify the English level of Ecuadorian students. Like the English teachers surveyed previously, the representative considers the increment of the teachers' training programs, more investment in education, and more hours of English class in the Ecuadorian curriculum as the main solutions to improve the English level in our country.

Specific Objective: To determine the view of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

For this objective, it will be analyzed the answers given by the teachers who were participants in the interviews. The name of the educators will be changed (TEACHER "letter") to respect their confidentiality

C. ENGLISH TEACHERS AND THE RELIABILITY OF THE RESULTS OF THE EPI 2020

Table 2 English Teachers' Perspective Regarding the EPI 2020 Results

QUESTIONS	Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?	Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?	Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?	Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?	Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?	Do you that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?
CATEGORIES	**SET Evaluation Process and Methodology**	**SET Characteristics (standardization, free access, internet-dependent)**	**Use of the EPI by Ecuadorian authorities and teachers**	**Reliability of the EPI 2020 results**	**EPI 2020 results and a propaganda connotation**	**SET vs a new and contextualized test for measuring the English level in Ecuador**

TEACHER A	It is correct, in the first place, it is correct because is based on the precepts and principles from the CEFR, and in the second place, if it is standardized, then it means that is approved by international institutions; consequently, it is correct.	Ecuadorians are not curious, we do not research, and we are not interested in reading, for this reason, the fact that this test is free-access does not influence us because even teachers do not use this test or socialize it, with our students.	I use the results frequently because is a documental reference that allows us to talk about the issues that we have on education. I develop educative research constantly; consequently, and as you know, in educative research we cannot establish a problem only because we consider it as it. On the contrary, we must reference it correctly and the EPI results are a useful and trustworthy tool for researching	Yes, I think that we should be at a lower level, because. It does reflect reality. I trust those results because it presents the reality that we have in our classrooms. I work in a public institution and I have the same reality that I witness in a town, such as Chunchi, Alausí, or Colta. For this reason, we have a low, very low, English level.	This organization is commercial so I guess that it does have something behind it, but in Ecuador at least we do not use the EF's services as much. At least, I do not know anyone who has been in a course from this program. Furthermore, having lucrative purposes is fine.	Creating a new test would be good, this could be an object of study in research. Because, the standardized test is not for a specific population, and in Ecuador, we have a specific curriculum with an Ecuadorian teaching approach, for this reason, it will be good to create a standardized test for Ecuador only. However, I do not want to be too pessimist but I think the results will be the same.

			purposes, not for other aspects.			
TEACHER B	I think they are not correct because at all times the entities should know the reality before making any type of test.	I think it has a negative point because not only a test determines of knowledge of the students or the teachers. It is a process, but at all moments the Ministry of Education is in constant interaction with the students to know if they are good or not.	I think the Ministry of Education of Press should not take this information to give an opinion because they do not have another source and they should have other sources, such as papers to express their ideas regarding the level of the students.	I do not think is reliable because as similar to other sciences, such as Math, Language, and Natural Sciences, depending on the state, because it does not have a specific or standardized test to obtain information. For example, nowadays students must have a 7 score to pass to the next level, and these students do not know the necessary to pass to the following level.	Yes, of course, that is the main objective of a job but doing this by identifying the students' English level is not only a propaganda connotation but bad propaganda.	We need to take into account the real situation, and the real level of the students to get better results in the future. I do not think a test, but another kind of way to identify the English in the classes.

TEACHER C	I think it is correct because this methodology strengthens the knowledge of the students. It seeks to value the quality of what the learner obtained.	I think it has positive and negative effects. Standardization has a positive effect because it provides valuable data for students and teachers and based on that we can provide a good environment for the students. On the other hand, a negative effect because in my case as a teacher, in real life is not multiple-choice and students at that moment can have a bad day or probably institution can identify the students from lower classes.	I think it is because the EPI has been committed to putting teachers who have the most interest in students. For example, when EPI puts a country above another country, you can realize that little improvement is being carried out in your country.	Yes, they are reliable because the EPI 2020 was displayed in a challenging year, presenting data from 20.2 million non-native speakers. The Government and Education authorities can start considering the English hours in the curriculum and the level of achievement.	Yes, I do think that, but I supposed that this process continues bringing people and I supposed is also important to plan another type of activity because the level is low.	Yes, I think this standardized test is enough but I think that also teachers need to have high English significantly higher than the students' level to support them with communication and methodology to increase the methodology. Also, remember that education is for students. They need to practice English because it is very important in real-life.
TEACHER D	Standardized exams are endorsed by the Common	The results are very accurate because the skills and levels have been measured	Because it is a justification based on an endorsed study to identify	Yes, these are very reliable because it resembles what has already been	Well, this stuff has always had a political connotation,	Taking standardized tests is quite real because it measures the test-

(see above)

European Framework and other experts and companies, which justify the results obtained; consequently, there are accurate.	exactly. The level obtained by our country, which is worrying, is an indicator that allows us to realize everything that we have to do. The result is negative but it can turn the situation into a positive aspect due to the goals that English teachers can establish. Moreover, the characteristics of the test have no significant influence because if they were different, the results would not have varied much. Tests like the one applied by Pearson have indicated the alarming English level in students.	the real situation. Other tests, like the TOEFL, have been applied, where approximately 90% of the teacher did not achieve a basic English level. Consequently, the Ministry of Education keeps considering this type of evaluation to look for new solutions or to justify what is going on. Until now, there have been lots of changes, which makes teachers stop trusting in those processes.	experienced. We have taken tests like TOEFL or First Certificate and a few of us have exceeded the B2 LEVEL. Less than 50 English teachers in the whole country have a C1 level. For this reason, the results reflect what has been experienced and this is a situation where the university should be involved so it can improve its formation process.	programs like GO TEACHER with high costs per teacher, in which each of them had to create programs and train other teachers, were not successful. This is a clear political strategy between the government and the universities because high-cost projects are involved. These alliances with large enterprises have a certain economic and political connotation	taker English level. Working with Ecuadorian contexts is more aimed at students, like the modules with the CLIL methodology that we have. On the other hand, for someone who wants to demonstrate their English level, the references taken from other countries are effective indicators to realize that standardized tests serve to measure their English level.

TEACHE R E	In my point of view, the methodology and evaluation process is correct because this test was designed for non-native English speakers. Moreover, I think that this test has been evaluated and verified since it was analyzed before being put into practice. Also, this test has been compared to other international tests like the TOEFL	The fact that is standardized has a positive impact because students can compare their scores to the ones obtained by other students internationally. The free-access influence positively because in our context other English tests are expensive. However, the internet is a negative aspect because in most of the locations in our country there is no high-quality internet connection. Also, is important to consider that Computing is not a subject in the Ecuadorian curriculum, so lots of students have	The first reason is that this test has a lot of advantages and benefits for the students and teachers. Also, the cost is important, if the Ministry of Education decided to take another type of test, they will be higher, especially when applying these tests in public institutions. Moreover, I think that they focus on these results because the authorities think that the scores obtained by the students in the test are the result of the teaching performance	I think that generally, a score does not define the learning process. A score is not the result of the content and knowledge obtained by the students. In lots of cases, it has been witnessed that students are good inside the classroom. They participate and complete their tasks but at the moment of taking a test, they may forget what they know due to nervousness, connectivity problems, or device malfunctions. For this reason, the results of this test do not define the	In this time of tests, we can talk about economic purposes. If the students obtain a low score, then they will look for training. Similarly, when the students have lower results, teachers look for new methodologies and resources, and most of the time they have to pay because some of these services are not free in our country. If students want to study a specific English course or if we as teachers want to improve their English skills, we have to invest. So, these results may have propaganda	I think that the creation of a contextualized test is necessary because students will understand and develop this test effectively. These tests are designed according to what students know because generally standardized tests involve the American or British culture, and students are not related to this reality. They may know certain words but they have a hard time understanding because the test is not based on their reality; as consequence, what

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		problems when using computers for tests.	carried out in the whole process. Unfortunately, these results of the students define our job as teachers,	real students' knowledge. Moreover, this test only evaluates the reading and writing skills and English should be evaluated as a whole.	purposes to get more students into their program.	students know is not being evaluated.
TEACHER F	I think in some parts, it is correct. For instance, the evaluation process and the test design are appropriate. It is free which is a benefit in the current economic situation where not everyone can pay for an English exam due to its high costs.	I think that according to what we are living, these characteristics influenced negatively the results; specifically, the internet because it is one constraint in our country. Only students from private institutions and the ones of high economic status have a high-quality internet connection, which allows them to take courses and attend classes. In this case, students with	They use these data because it is from a test that has been applied a long time ago and is accepted worldwide. For that reason, the results should be reliable. The problem is that they focus on these results instead of our reality, which is the correct thing to do.	These are not completely reliable or real because there are sociocultural and emotional factors that prevent students to perform effectively on a test. Also, the cultural mindset is a factor because in our context, especially, in the public sector, in a course with 35 students, only 5 of them are interested in learning all the subjects, while the	I think yes, this is the background of this whole process because the lower the English level of the students is, these companies have more chance to create strategies and present programs to make deals with the government; as a consequence, they assure their economic income.	I agree with the application of the Standard English test, it is not a deficient test. It has positive aspects, such as free access and gratuity. However, I do think that another text should be designed according to our reality. For example, nowadays we are going through a pandemic and when the time to go back to normality arrives,

		low economic resources have to take this test in cybers or other places where the connection is not that good. Regarding standardization, it also had a negative impact because a test never evaluates the real knowledge of a student. A learner may know a lot but certain factors can affect their performance.		others are not. Moreover, we do not have interactive platforms that allow us to teach appropriately, and also, we are not trained constantly.		the evaluation, planning, and reinforcement will be adapted to the new reality. This process will be carried out for each course, not only for each level.
TEACHER G	I think it is correct because they evaluate the four skills and is similar to other international tests. However, sometimes, it does not pay attention to the	Lots of people have taken this internet online so it has become a problem because the sore does not represent the score of people. However, sometimes influences positively because they need to	It is because this is the last research. I think other companies evaluate the English level around the world, but the use of these results may be there in	First of all, I think I should analyze deeply the EPI evaluation and selection process so I can understand how they got the results and based on that I can stand a more concise	I think there is a business behind this. Like all companies, they present the world side of something and they also offer solutions. However, sometimes I think	I think that an Ecuadorian company directed by some professionals can create a test that takes into consideration our reality. For example, I took a

	real level of the students. The test is not divided into students' levels like intermediate or advanced.	get a certificate because to study a Master's program you need to achieve a B2 level at least. The fact that depends on the internet has a negative influence because test-takers can cheat so the results are not real.	business hidden. For example, Ecuador has the last position in Latin America, so the company offers some certification or training.	position. These results around the world are relative because I work at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo too and I have very good students over there, they know how to communicate in English, not perfectly because it is not their mother tongue, but they can do it, which means that we are doing a good job.	they are not taking into account the reality of our country. There are some high expectations once finishing high school but education involves different kinds of situations. For example, most of our student belongs to low economic status and this is a problem sometimes companies like this one do not take into account this reality. It only grades all the situations at the same level.	test months ago and it involved all about the Anglo-Saxon countries but what happens with our context and culture? Language is for sharing our culture and students can be the best ambassadors to share our culture with the world. That is why I think we should create a new where we evaluate all the skills and also the context of the country.
TEACHER H	The purpose of a test, whether standardized or not, is to measure the	It is well known that we obtained low scores which had a negative impact on students and teachers	Because This test has been already applied to students from public institutions	As a teacher, I have evidence that the results reflect the reality because most of the students	It can be, they may use this as propaganda that aims to motivate teachers to take	I do not think it is necessary to design that test because a standardized one is aimed to measure

	students' knowledge to improve the learning process. If this test fails or if the results are not expected, then it means that we should change the methodology or techniques. It is true that not only the test-takers will exceed the expected results but 70% should do it. Also, this test only evaluates the reading and writing skills	because it means that we are not using adequate techniques, this demotivated us. However, the characteristics did not influence the results, the English teachers' methodology did.	and this directly involves the Ministry of Education because if the results are low, it means that there are flaws in the system.	do not have a good English Level. According to the curricular guidelines, it is supposed that learners achieve a B1 level after finishing high school but this does not happen, most of the students only achieve an A2 level.	their courses and be trained, despite that this should be a decision made by ourselves. It also pursues students to study in their programs. For this reason, these results may have a propaganda connotation but I cannot assure this.	the students' knowledge of the English language, not their context. For example, when they are working with reading, it does not matter if this involves content from Peru, Colombia, Brazil, or Ecuador, what matters is the students' capacity to recognize stuff like the main idea or the supporting ideas of reading. For the mentioned reasons, I do not think that including our context in a test would change the results.

Note: The information presented in the table was obtained from the interview applied with a representative of the Education First Program.

Elaborated by Karen Alejandra Márquez Andrade

Data Interpretation and Analysis

Regarding the SET methodology and evaluation process, most of the English Teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba think that how this test is carried out is appropriate because the fact that is a standardized test has been designed carefully designed by professionals and it also is recognized by the CEFR and other international organizations. However, the rest of these educators consider that this evaluation process is not correct because it does not involve the reality of our country and the students' needs.

In addition, most of the interviewees reflect different attitudes towards the SET characteristics. Firstly, standardization is an aspect that some of the teachers think had a negative impact because it does not consider the Ecuadorian context. On the contrary, other teachers argue that standardized tests measure the real English level of test-takers. In the second place, most of the participants agree that free access influenced positively the results because it gave opportunities to students from low economic status. Apart from the mentioned positions, there were a few teachers who believe that the characteristics did not influence at all the results, they claimed that the flaws in the Ecuadorian teaching and learning process did.

Moreover, a representative percentage of the teachers indicated that these results are used for the press, Ministry of Education, and English teachers for the following reasons; the test is recognized worldwide, it is the most updated and probably the only research about the English level in our country, and also because the results are clear evidence of the constraints in the English teaching and learning process.

Following the last premise, the majority of the participants argued that the EPI 2020 results are reliable enough to be considered as the main reference when talking about the issues in the English level teaching in our country. The rest of the teachers countered this point by saying that the results are not reliable because Ecuadorian reality was not considered in the test.

Additionally, all the teachers agree that the results presented by Education First have a propaganda connotation behind them. Nevertheless, the position toward this thought is different among the participants. Some of them think that the fact that the socialization of these results is based on economic purposes is not a negative aspect because companies like Education First need to receive an economic income to continue with their work. At the same time, other teachers believe that the use of these results as a propaganda means that the EF program cares more about promoting its courses and not the students´ alarming English levels.

Finally, the interviewees have different thoughts about the creation of a contextualized test instead of the Standard English test. While some of them indicate that this is necessary because students need to learn the language based on their context, others believe that a test should measure the knowledge that students have about English and not about their context.

4.2   RESULTS DISCUSSION

Factors influencing the English level in Ecuador according to English Teacher and Education First

The low English level in Ecuador has been analyzed for a long time ago. Based on that, different factors were analyzed as the main causes of that problem. For instance, Ecuadorian educational policies have been constantly reformed. Unfortunately, according to Education First and the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba, the decisions made by the government and the Ministry of Education have not been enough to improve the English teaching and learning process in our country. For instance, it was claimed that the lack of training programs and the few economic resources that have been allocated to the English as a Foreign Language Area are the main causes of the low level of this language in Ecuadorian students. Furthermore, the curricular guidelines, such as the schooling years and the English class hours are also being criticized.

Similarly, the English level and methodology of the teachers are established as also as important factors. The representative from Education First pointed out that most of the English teachers in Ecuador do not meet the requirement of having a B2 level. This also can be evidenced by the information obtained from the surveys applied to the teachers, which reflects that there are still educators with B1 or even worst, with an A2 English level. In the same way, the use of traditional and grammar-based methodologies is still being mentioned. More attention is given to the grammatical structures of the language and not to its use in a real context. This may happen for the lack of training programs that were mentioned before. However, teachers can start training themselves and updating their teaching strategies based on the needs of this new society.

Additionally, the students' economic situation and their attitude toward the language are also considered essential factors. Based on teachers' experiences, most of their students belong to low economic status families, so they do not have enough resources. For instance, according to some English teachers interviewed, not all learners can take private English courses due to the high cost. However, even though the economy has a big influence on the students' learning process, it is important to acknowledge that they do not have the obligation to look for extra English classes because it is expected that they acquire and develop their English skills on their specific educational institutions. This last situation may indicate that there are flaws in the English teaching process, especially in public institutions.

English Teachers' and the EPI 2020 results

Teachers present different perspectives regarding the use of the results of the English Proficiency Index as the main reference for the English level in our country. First of all, the methodology and evaluation process of the Standard English Test is supported by most educators due to its worldwide recognition and its basis on standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. On the other hand, some teachers do not consider that this test is carried out effectively for the following reasons; it does not consider the Ecuadorian reality and it only evaluates receptive English skills.

Furthermore, some English educators do not think that the characteristics of the EF SET influence the results obtained, for them, the government's actions, and the

methodologies used by teachers did. Following, the fact that the EF SET is free is one of the most important characteristics for the teachers, because most of their students belong to a low socioeconomic status.

On the other hand, internet dependency is something that is not well perceived by educators because, in our country, the quality of the internet connection is an issue. This last characteristic can be questioned because according to the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, in 2019, the year in which the SET was applied, in Ecuador only 59.2% of the population used the internet, which indicates that a large part of the Ecuadorian population was excluded from the test and therefore the results could not reflect the reality of that group.

The use of the EPI results by the press, the Ministry of Education, and even English teachers can be related to the international popularity that this test alongside the fact that contains updated data. Moreover, teachers share the ideas that the socialization of these results by Education First may have economic purposes behind but opinions regarding this propaganda connotation differ among the educators. The majority believe that focusing on the economic incomes while presenting the results is not detrimental,

Finally, the EPI 2020 results are reliable for most of the participants in this research. Nevertheless, the majority of them expressed that if a representative population of Ecuadorian students would be considered, the results will probably be lower. Despite that, the SET and EPI results are not enough to identify the English level in our country; for this reason, the designing of a contextualized test is necessary for most English teachers, so the students can reflect on the knowledge that they have about English without forgetting about their context.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   CONCLUSIONS

- The results of the Standard English Test by Education First presented in the EPI 2020 indicate that Ecuador presents a very low level of English. Similarly, most of the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba who are familiarized with these results consider that the reality in our country is reflected in those results. However, if the test would consider a representative sample for the evaluation, Ecuador's level will be even lower.

- The Standard English Test applied by Education First is a large-scale, free, and online test that aims to identify the level of English of the participant countries. The population is not significant because the participants are volunteers that pretend to know their English level. Furthermore, the parameters of this evaluation are based on the proficiency bands established by the Common European Framework (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 & C2). Finally, the results are presented using a classification system (Very High, High, Moderate, Low, and Very Low) in which each country occupies a place according to the score that they obtained.

- The English teachers and the representatives of Education First establish the educational policies, the investment in education, the teacher's English level and methodology, and the lack of teaching training as the main factors that influenced the low English level in Ecuador.

- The majority of English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba who are familiar with the EPI 2020, consider that the methodology and evaluation process of the SET by Education First is appropriate to measure the English level of Ecuadorian students. Furthermore, some educators claimed that if the SET characteristics would be different, the results corresponding to Ecuador will probably be the same or worst. However, for them, the creation of a contextualized test could be helpful.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Ecuadorian government alongside the Ministry of Education should develop an analysis between the assessment process and methodologies of large-scale standard tests like the SET, with the English teachers' perspectives in contemplation in order to find new techniques for identifying the English level in our country but taking into consideration a representative sample of the population.

- The Education First program should reconsider a new methodology at the moment of selecting the participants for the Standard English Test to obtain a representative population. This factor could guarantee the presentation of more reliable results, which can be helpful for the countries that use EPI as a guide to identify their English teaching quality and develop the corresponding improvements if necessary.

- English teachers play an important role in the English teaching and learning process in Ecuador; consequently, they ought to carry out a constant analysis to identify the factors that have an impact on the level of English in our country. On the other hand, programs like Education First, which pretends to identify the English proficiency in Ecuador, should consider all the elements that influence the learning of this language in Ecuador, so they can design an assessment instrument that is adapted to the reality of the participant countries.

- It is highly recommended for English teachers to continue with an analysis of the upcoming results of the Standard English Test in the English Proficiency Index so as to identify the plausible reasons for the maintenance or decrement in the English level of our country.

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ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1: Example of the bibliographic cards used for collecting information for the theoretical framework

BIBLIOGRAPHY CARD N° 6

TITLE: Sobre Education First English Proficiency Index
AUTHOR: Education First
PLACE: -
DATE: 2020
REFERENCE: Education First (2020). Sobre Education First English Proficiency Index. Executive Report. Retrieved from: https://www.ef.com.ec/epi/downloads/
TYPE OF DOCUMENT: Executive Report
CONTENT

SUMMARY	**METHODOLOGY** The EF EPI 2020 edition is based on the results obtained from the Standard English Test administered to more than 2.2 million participants in 2019. **THE EF ENGLISH STANDARD TEST (EF SET)** The English Standard Test is adaptable and conducted online, it covers the language skills of the language, which have been established by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The same test is free and freely accessible, **PARTICIPANTS** "Although the sample of examinees for the EF EPI is biased towards participants who are interested in pursuing the study of the language and young adults…" (Education First, 2020). The main data on the participants are: 54% of the resulting population were women, the mean age was 26 years, 79% were under 35 years, 94% were under 60 years, the mean age for men was 27 years and for women, it was 25. Only countries with a minimum of 400 participants are included. **SAMPLE BIAS** "The test population represented in this index chose to do the test themselves and is not guaranteed to be representative" (Education First, 2020).

	The participants who took part in this study were those who were interested in learning the language or wanted to know their level of knowledge of it.
	Because this test was online and freely accessible, it could only be performed by those who have access to it, those who do not are automatically excluded.
	SCORE CALCULATION
	The 2019 English exams and EF EPI are taken into account to calculate the score. The indices from previous years are included in order to stabilize the score for each year.
	The scoring parameters are related to the levels of English established by the CEFR (Pre A1, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). Countries are scored and placed on one of these parameters.
	OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION
	The EF EPI does not compete with the results of national tests; however, it displays results that will allow us to discuss how the teaching and learning process is carried out in each country.
	EF EDUCATION FIRST
	EF Education First (www.ef.com) is an international education company that focuses on language, academia, cultural exchange, and educational travel. Established in 1965, EF's mission is to "open the world through education". EF is the Official Language Teaching Partner for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. EF's English Proficiency Index is published by Signum International AG (Education First, 2020)
PERSONAL REFLECTION	The test has been developed only by people interested in learning the English language or knowing its level, in addition, the sample was not representative, this factor shows that the test results are not reflecting the reality of the country. For a test to be representative, it must have all the characteristics of the population and must also be proportional to it.
	In addition, this test excludes those people who do not have internet access, and according to the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, it indicated that in 2019 Ecuador only 59.2% of the population used the internet during the 12 months of said year, which indicates that a large part of the Ecuadorian population was excluded from the test and therefore the results do not reflect the reality of the test.

ANNEXE 2:

Survey to be applied to the high school English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba"

Project: A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers.

SURVEY

This survey aims to identify the high school English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" who are aware of the results obtained by Ecuador in the English Proficiency Index 2020.

Please be honest with your answers.

Personal and Vocational Information

1. Full Name:

_____

2. Age

_____ years old

3. Gender

a. Female

b. Male

4. Vocational Level

a. Bachelor Degree

b. Master's Degree

c. PhD

d. Other:_____

5. English Level:

a. A1

b. A2

c. B1

d. B2

e. C1

f. C2

Education First and English Proficiency Index

6. Are you aware of the existence of the Education First Program?

1. Yes

2. No

7. Are you familiar with the Standard English Test by Education First?

1. Yes

2. No

8. Are you familiar with the results presented by the English Proficiency Index by Education First in 2020 regarding Ecuador's English Level?

a. Yes

b. No

9. Do you think the therefore mentioned results reflect the reality of our country?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I am not familiar with the results.

English in Ecuador

10. In your opinion, the level of English in Ecuador is:

a. Very High

b. High

c. Medium

d. Low

e. Very Low

11. From the causes below, select the ones that contribute to having a low level of English in our country:

a. Economic situation

b. Educational policies

c. Lack of teaching training

d. The level of English of the teachers

e. Methodologies employed by the English teachers

f. Other: _____

12. Which of the following do you consider as the most appropriate solutions for improving the low level of English in our country:

a. Use of more economic resources in the area of English as a Foreign Language

b. Improvement of the National English Curriculum Guidelines

c. Implementation of more teaching training programs.

d. Constant monitoring and evaluation of the English teachers.

e. Other: _____

English level of the students and teacher

13. Based on your experience and according to the levels of proficiency presented by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), What English level do Ecuadorian students reach when they finish high school?

a. A1

b. A2

c. B1

d. B2

e. C1

f. C2

14. From your point of view, do you agree that teachers must have a B2 English level to be able to teach classes?

a. Yes

b. No

ANNEXE 3: Interview guide to be applied to the representative of the Education First Program

Project: A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers.

Interview Guide

This interview aims to identify the determinant factors of the English level in Ecuador in the EPI 2020 according to a representative of Education First

1. Do you think the results presented in the EPI 2020 regarding the English Level in Ecuador reflect the reality of our country?
2. Do you think the economic situation of our country influenced the results presented in the EPI 2020? How?
3. Do you consider that the degree of effectiveness of the educational policies established for the development of the English teaching and learning process is questioned by the results obtained by Ecuador in the EPI 2020? Why?
4. Do you think that teaching efficiency is being questioned due to those results? Why?
5. What other factors do you think influenced the results obtained?
6. What do you think are the possible solutions for improving the low level of English?

ANNEXE 4:

Interview guide to be applied to the high school English teachers from Unidad Educativa "Riobamba"

Project: A critical analysis of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) 2020 from the view of high school English teachers.

Interview Guide

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. Do you think the evaluation process and methodology carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?
2. Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?
3. Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?
4. Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?
5. Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?
6. Do you that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?

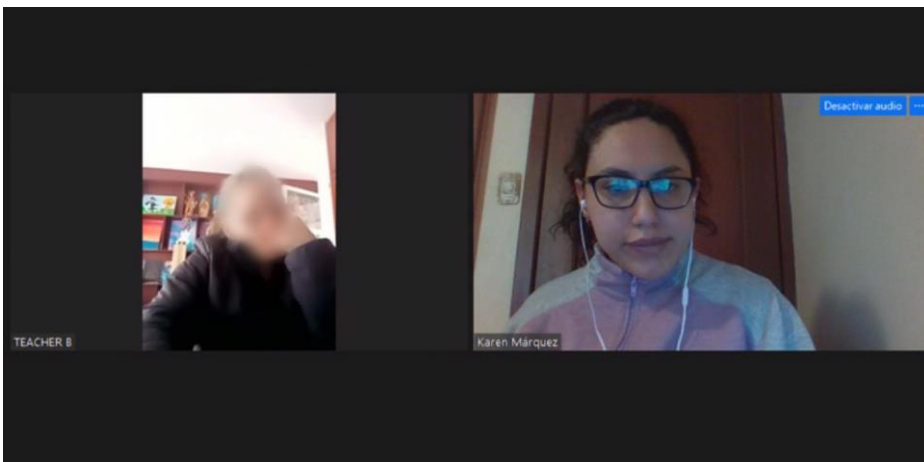**ANNEXE 7:**

Screenshot of the interview developed with the representative of the Education First Program in Ecuador via Zoom.
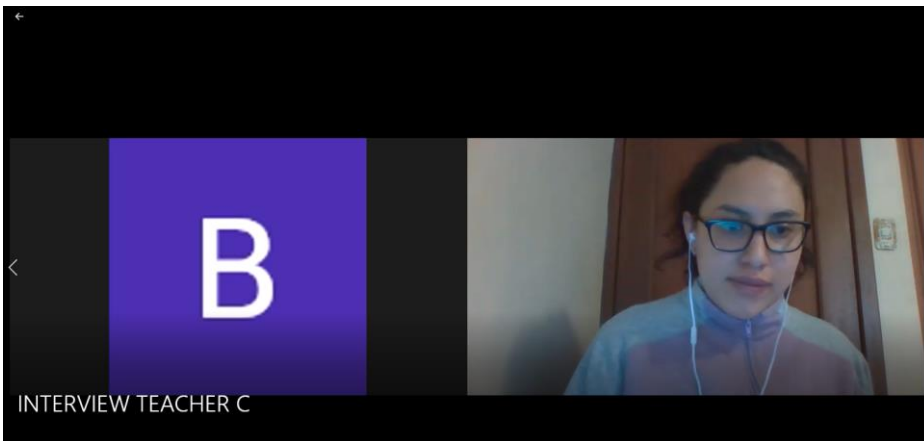

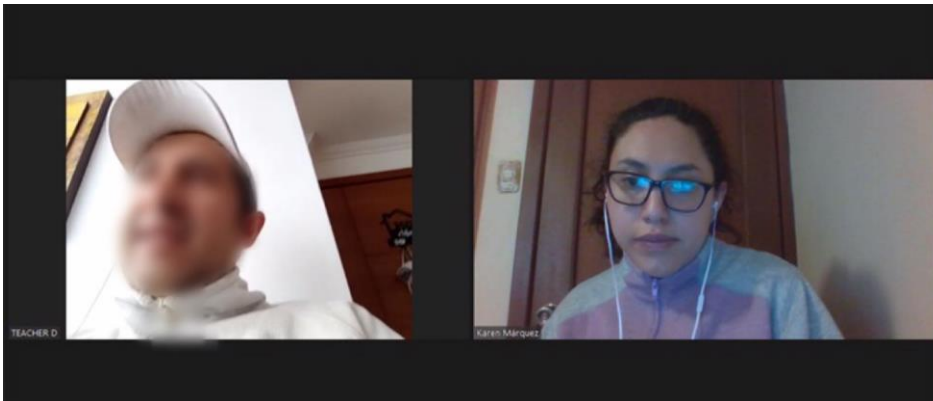**ANNEXE 8:** Screenshots of the interviews developed with the English teachers from Unidad Educativa Riobamba via Zoom
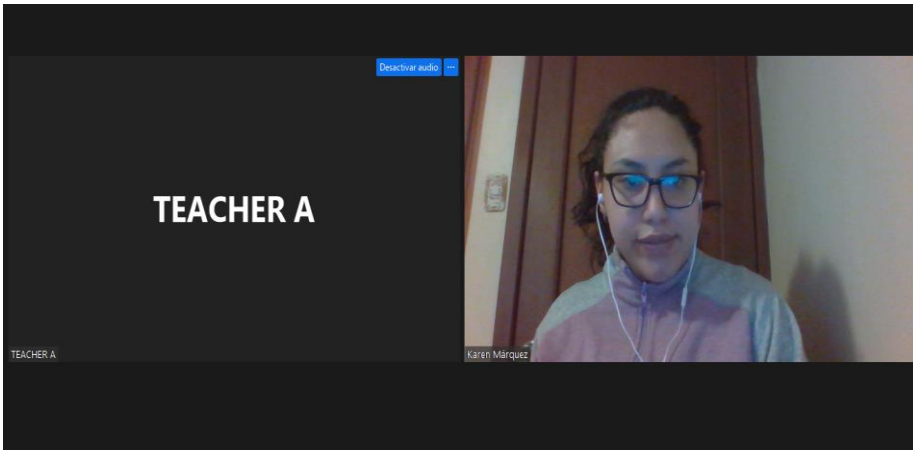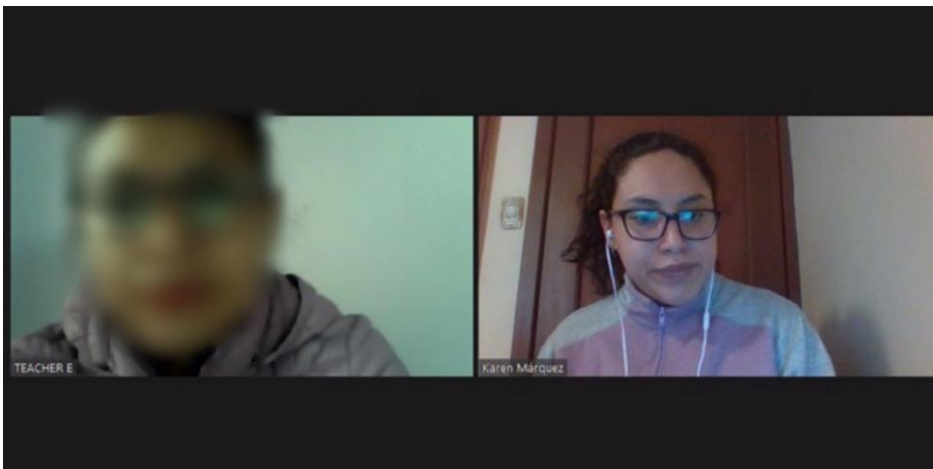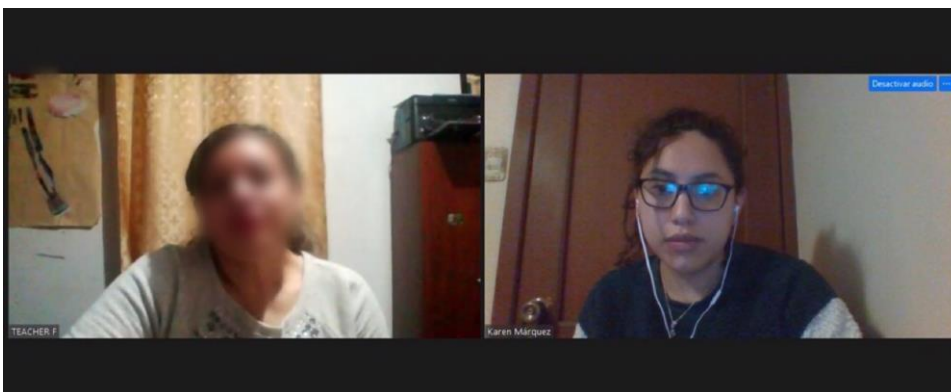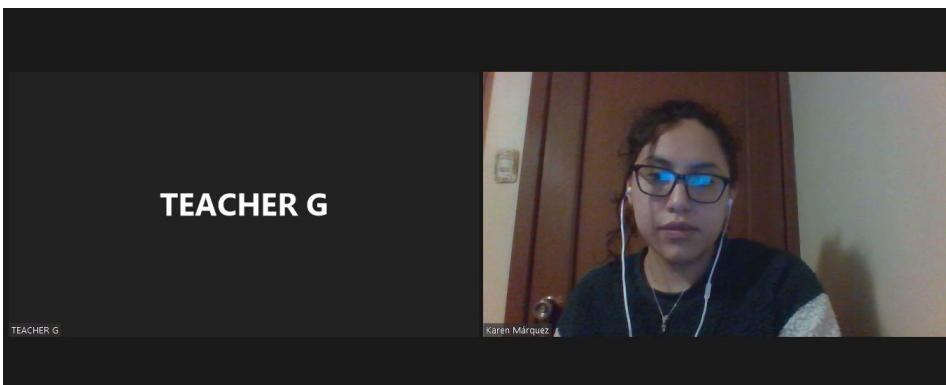
Interview Teacher A

Interview Teacher B

Interview Teacher C

Interview Teacher D

Interview Teacher E

Interview Teacher F

Interview Teacher G

Interview Teacher H

ANNEXE 9:
Transcription of the interview developed with the representative of the Education First Program in Ecuador

1. **Do you think the results presented in the EPI 2020 regarding the English Level in Ecuador reflect the reality of our country?**
   I can tell you that an exact percentage cannot be said because only segments of people are considered. A sample can be taken but if you go deeper; for example, in the year where we applied the test in public high schools, you can notice that the English level if you get to people with less access to the internet, less acquisition power to take classes, our level will be even much lower. We are considering people who have internet, sometimes they see our web page and they want to measure the English level. We go to institutions or universities, where most of them are private, and invest in teachers and their training. This test gives you a real sample of how is the education generally but if you con to rural areas, the level will be lower.

2. **Do you think the economic situation of our country influenced the results presented in the EPI 2020? How?**
   The economic situation involves everything that the government has to invest in education, English as a foreign language, and the teachers' training. In the tests that we have applied, we have seen that there are teachers that have A1 or A2 as their English level. They are the ones who teach the language and it is obvious that their level is very low. The students will not increase their English level because their teachers do not have the correct language domain.

3. **Do you consider that the degree of effectiveness of the educational policies established for the development of the English teaching and learning process is questioned by the results obtained by Ecuador in the EPI 2020? Why?**
   More than questioning, EF pretends to give recommendations. It is different education between the countries around the world, and between the continents; however, what EF wants is to provide recommendations, and the principal one is to identify the starting point, which means measuring the students' levels so improvements can be developed by the institutions, the government, so they can train teachers and do everything they can to improve.

4. **Do you think that teaching efficiency is being questioned due to those results? Why?**

When we teach the language, vocabulary is the biggest focus, but speaking is not taught, which is more difficult for people. This does not help people to speak fluently because putting together sentences is complicated for them. This is something that has been analyzed in some seminaries, and the principal recommendation has been that methodology, as in other countries, is not only focused on grammar, it has to be deeper than that so people can learn to speak English.

5. **What other factors do you think influenced the results obtained?**

The government needs to invest in education, teacher training, and the necessary resources so the students can increase their English domain. This is related to the acquisition of the power of the people and the state. We can see that the countries that have a high English level are First world countries, where education has great value and they invest a lot in it. Furthermore, we have identified that the schooling years also have a big influence, not all countries have the same schooling years (Elementary or secondary). Access to the internet goes hand in hand with acquisition power and it is related to the English domain. The level of Education and the investment are aspects that are related to language learning.

6. **What do you think are the possible solutions for improving the low level of English?**

Getting to know the Language, all people should have access to this test so they can know… (well, the level is low) their level because lots of improvement are needed. Training teachers so they can increase the English level of their students. Investing more in education. Increasing the English hours in the curriculum so students can improve because practice and training will help them.

ANNEXE 10: Teachers' Interviews Schedule

PARTICIPANTS	10-01-2022	11-01-2022	12-01-2022
Teacher A	7:00		
Teacher B	11:20		
Teacher C	11:45		
Teacher D	12:30		
Teacher E	13:00		
Teacher F		18:30	
Teacher G		19:30	
Teacher H			17:00

ANNEXE 12: Transcriptions of the English teachers' interviews
Interview Guide Teacher A

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

7. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

   It is correct, in the first place, it is correct because is based on the precepts and principles from the CEFR, and in the second place, if it is standardized, then it means that is approved by international institutions; consequently, it is correct.

8. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

   I have to be very emphatic in this party, unfortunately, Ecuadorians are not curious, we do not research, and we are not interested in reading, for this reason, the fact that this test is free-access does not influence because even teachers do not use this test or socialize it we our students. Moreover, our culture and ideology do not allow us to read, become curious and prepare ourselves more, if the situation would be different, the results will be higher starting with the teachers' level.

   Nowadays we all have the internet due to the current pandemic; however, we still prefer using social networks instead of focusing on our self-preparation.

9. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

   I use the results frequently because is a documental reference that allows us to talk about the issues that we have on education. I develop educative research constantly; consequently, and as you know, in educative research we cannot establish a problem only because we consider it as it. On the contrary, we must reference it correctly and the EPI results are a useful and trustworthy tool for researching purposes, not for other aspects. Being sincere, I do not think that people use them for other aspects than developing thesis works or scientific articles.

10. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

    o Colta y tengo la misma realidad acá, o sea tenemos un nivel bajo, muy bajo del idioma inglés.

    Yes, I think that we should be at a lower level, because. It does reflect reality. I trust those results because it presents the reality that we have in our classrooms. I work in a public institution and I have the same reality that I witness in a town, such as Chunchi, Alausí, or Colta. For this reason, we have a low, very low, English level

11. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

Suponga que cada organización, todas las organizaciones tienen un fin ¿verdad?
This organization is commercial so I guess that it does have something behind it, but in Ecuador at least we do not use the EF's services as much. At least, I do not know anyone who has been in a course from this program. Furthermore, having lucrative purposes is fine.

12. **Do you that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

    Creating a new test would be good, this could be an object of study in research. Because, the standardized test is not for a specific population, and in Ecuador, we have a specific curriculum with an Ecuadorian teaching approach, for this reason, it will be good to create a standardized test for Ecuador only. However, I do not want to be too pessimist but I think the results will be the same.

Interview Guide Teacher B

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

    I think they are not correct because at all times the entities should know the reality before making any type of test.

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

    I think it has a negative point because not only a test determines of knowledge of the students or the teachers. It is a process, but at all moments the Ministry of Education is in constant interaction with the students to know if they are good or not.

3. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

    I think the Ministry of Education of Press should not take this information to give an opinion because they do not have another source and they should have other sources, such as papers in order to express their ideas regarding the level of the students.

4. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

    I do not think is reliable because as similar to other sciences, such as Math, Language, and Natural Sciences, depending on the state, because it does not have a specific or standardized test to obtain information. For example, nowadays students must have a 7 score to pass to the next level, and these students do not know the necessary to pass to the following level. I think this is a problem of the State, nor the teacher or

students, because they have to solve the problems to find the right way for students to be located in the following course.

5. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

Yes, of course, that is the main objective of a job but doing this by identifying the students' English level is not only a propaganda connotation but bad propaganda.

6. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

We need to take into account the real situation, and the real level of the students to get better results in the future. I do not think a test, but another kind of way to identify the English in the classes.

Interview Guide Teacher C

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

I think it is correct because this methodology strengthens the knowledge of the students. It seeks to value the quality of what the learner obtained.

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

I think it has positive and negative effects. Standardization has a positive effect because it provides valuable data for students and teachers and based on that we can provide a good environment for the students. On the other hand, a negative effect because in my case as a teacher, in real life is not multiple-choice and students at that moment can have a bad day or probably institution can identify the students from lower classes.

3. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

I think it is because the EPI has been committed to putting teachers who have the most interest in students. For example, when EPI puts a country above another country, you can realize that little improvement is being carried out in your country.

4. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

Yes, they are reliable because the EPI 2020 was displayed in a challenging year, presenting data from 20.2 million non-native speakers. The Government and Education authorities can start considering the English hours in the curriculum and the level of achievement.

5. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

Yes, I do think that, but I supposed that this process continues bringing people and I supposed is also important to plan another type of activity because the level is low.

6. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

Yes, I think this standardized test is enough but I think that also teachers need to have high English significantly higher than the students' level to support them with communication and methodology in order to increase the methodology. Also, remember that education is for students. They need to practice English because it is very important in real-life.

Interview Guide Teacher D

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

Standardized exams are endorsed by the Common European Framework and other experts and companies, which justify the results obtained; consequently, there are accurate.

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

The results are very accurate because the skills and levels have been measured exactly. The level obtained by our country, which is worrying, is an indicator that allows us to realize everything that we have to do. The result is negative but it can turn the situation into a positive aspect due to the goals that English teachers can establish. Moreover, the characteristics of the test have no significant influence because if they were different, the results would not have varied much. Tests like the one applied by Pearson have indicated the alarming English level in students.

3. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

Because it is a justification based on an endorsed study to identify the real situation. Other tests, like the TOEFL, have been applied, where approximately 90% of the teacher did not achieve a basic English level. Consequently, the Ministry of Education keeps considering this type of evaluation to look for new solutions or to justify what is going on. Until now, there have been lots of changes, which makes teachers stop trusting in those processes.

4. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

   Yes, these are very reliable because it resembles what has already been experienced. We have taken tests like TOEFL or First Certificate and a few of us have exceeded the B2 LEVEL. Less than 50 English teachers in the whole country have a C1 level. For this reason, the results reflect what has been experienced and this is a situation where the university should be involved so it can improve its formation process.

5. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

   Well, this stuff has always had a political connotation, programs like GO teacher with high costs per teacher, in which each of them had to create programs and train other teachers, were not successful. This is a clear political strategy between the government and the universities because high-cost projects are involved. These alliances with large enterprises have a certain economic and political connotation.

6. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

   Taking standardized tests is quite real because these measure the test-taker English level. Working with Ecuadorian contexts is more aimed at students, like the modules with the CLIL methodology that we have. On the other hand, for someone who wants to demonstrate their English level, the references taken from other countries are effective indicators to realize that standardized tests serve to measure their English level.

Interview Guide Teacher E

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

   In my point of view, the methodology and evaluation process is correct because this test was designed for non-native English speakers. Moreover, I think that this test has been evaluated and verified since it was analyzed before being put into practice. Also, this test has been compared to other international tests like the TOEFL

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

   The fact that is standardized has a positive impact because students can compare their scores to the ones obtained by other students internationally. The free-access influence positively because in our context other English tests are expensive. However, the internet is a negative aspect because in most of the locations in our country there is no high-quality internet connection. Also, is important to consider

that Computing is not a subject in the Ecuadorian curriculum, so lots of students ts have problems when using computers for tests.

3. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

   The first reason is that this test has a lot of advantages and benefits for the students and teachers. Also, the cost is important, if the Ministry of Education decided to take another type of test, they will be higher, especially when applying these tests in public institutions. Moreover, I think that they focus on these results because the authorities think that the scores obtained by the students in the test are the result of the teaching performance carried out in the whole process. Unfortunately, these results of the students define our job as teachers,

4. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

   I think that generally, a score does not define the learning process. A score is not the result of the content and knowledge obtained by the students. In lots of cases, it has been witnessed that students are good inside the classroom. They participate and complete their tasks but at the moment of taking a test, they may forget what they know due to nervousness, connectivity problems, or device malfunctions. For this reason, the results of this test do not define the real students' knowledge. Moreover, this test only evaluates the reading and writing skills and English should be evaluated as a whole.

5. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

   In this time of tests, we can talk about economic purposes. If the students obtain a low score, then they will look for training. Similarly, when the students have lower results, teachers look for new methodologies and resources, and most of the time they have to pay because some of these services are not free in our country. If students want to study a specific English course or if we as teachers want to improve their English skills, we have to invest. So, these results may have propaganda purposes to get more students into their program.

6. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

   I think that the creation of a contextualized test is necessary because students will understand and develop this test effectively. These tests are designed according to what students know because generally standardized tests involve the American or British culture, and students are not related to this reality. They may know certain words but they have a hard time understanding because the test is not based on their reality; as consequence, what students know is not being evaluated.

Interview Guide Teacher F

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

   I think in some parts, it is correct. For instance, the evaluation process and the test design are appropriate. It is free which is a benefit in the current economic situation where not everyone can pay for an English exam due to its high costs.

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

   I think that according to what we are living, these characteristics influenced negatively the results; specifically, the internet because it is one constraint in our country. Only students from private institutions and the ones of high economic status have a high-quality internet connection, which allows them to take courses and attend classes. In this case, students with low economic resources have to take this test in cybers or other places where the connection is not that good. Regarding standardization, it also had a negative impact because a test never evaluates the real knowledge of a student. A learner may know a lot but certain factors can affect their performance.

   Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?

   They use these data because it is from a test that has been applied a long time ago and is accepted worldwide. For that reason, the results should be reliable. The problem is that they focus on these results instead of our reality, which is the correct thing to do.

3. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

   These are not completely reliable or real because there are sociocultural and emotional factors that prevent students to perform effectively on a test. Also, the cultural mindset is a factor because in our context, especially, in the public sector, in a course with 35 students, only 5 of them are interested in learning all the subjects, while the others are not. Moreover, we do not have interactive platforms that allow us to teach appropriately, and also we are not trained constantly.

4. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

   I think yes, this is the background of this whole process because the lower the English level of the students is, these companies have more chance to create strategies and present programs to make deals with the government; as a consequence, they assure their economic income.

5. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

   I agree with the application of the Standard English test, it is not a deficient test. It has positive aspects, such as free access and gratuity. However, I do think that another text should be designed according to our reality. For example, nowadays we are going through a pandemic and when the time to go back to normality arrives, the evaluation, planning, and reinforcement will be adapted to the new reality. This process will be carried out for each course, not only for each level.

Interview Guide Teacher G

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**

   I think it is correct because they evaluate the four skills and is similar to other international tests. However, sometimes, it does not pay attention to the real level of the students. The test is not divided into students' levels like intermediate or advanced.

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**

   Lots of people have taken this internet online so it has become a problem because the sore does not represent the score of people. However, sometimes influences positively because they need to get a certificate because to study a Master's program you need to achieve a B2 level at least. The fact that depends on the internet has a negative influence because test-takers can cheat so the results are not real.

3. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

   It is because this is the last research. I think other companies evaluate the English level around the world, but the use of these results maybe there is a business hidden. For example, Ecuador has the last position in Latin America, so the company offers some certification or training.

4. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

   First of all, I think I should analyze deeply the EPI evaluation and selection process so I can understand how they got the results and based on that I can stand a more concise position. These results around the world are relative because I work at ESPOCH and I have very good students over there, they know how to communicate

in English, not perfectly because it is not their mother tongue, but they can do it, which means that we are doing a good job.

5. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

   I think there is a business behind this. Like all companies, they present the world side of something and they also offer solutions. However, sometimes I think they are not taking into account the reality of our country. There are some high expectations once finishing high school but education involves different kinds of situations. For example, most of our student belongs to low economic status and this is a problem sometimes companies like this one do not take into account this reality. It only grades all the situations at the same level.

6. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

   I think that an Ecuadorian company directed by some professionals can create a test that takes into consideration our reality. For example, I took a test months ago and it involved all about the Anglo-Saxon countries but what happens with our context and culture? Language is for sharing our culture and students can be the best ambassadors to share our culture with the world. That is why I think we should create a new where we evaluate all the skills and also the context of the country.

Interview Guide Teacher H

This interview aims to determine the views of the high school English teacher regarding the reliability of the results presented in the EPI 2020.

1. **Do you think the evaluation process and methodology (standardized test) carried out in the Standard English Test by Education First are correct? Why?**
   The purpose of a test, whether standardized or not, is to measure the students' knowledge in order to improve the learning process. If this test fails or if the results are not expected, then it means that we should change the methodology or techniques. It is true that not only the test-takers will exceed the expected results but 70% should do it.

2. **Do you think the characteristics of the Standard English Test (standardization, free access, internet-dependent) had a positive or negative influence on the results obtained by Ecuador? Why?**
   It is well known that we obtained low scores which had a negative impact on students and teachers because it means that we are not using adequate techniques, this demotivated us. However, the characteristics did not influence the results, the English teachers' methodology did.

3. **Why do you think the press, the Ministry of Education, and some teachers use the results of the EPI 2020 regarding the English level of Ecuador as a reference when talking about the issues of the English teaching and learning process in our country?**

Because this test has been already applied to students from public institutions and this directly involves the Ministry of Education because if the results are low, it means that there are flaws in the system.

4. **Do you think that the results presented in the EPI 2020 are reliable enough to be used as a reference to the reality of our country regarding that educational field? Why?**

    As a teacher, I have evidence that the results reflect the reality because most of the students do not have a good English Level. According to the curricular guidelines, it is supposed that learners achieve a B1 level after finishing high school but this does not happen, most of the students only achieve an A2 level.

5. **Do you think the results presented by the EPI 2020 have a propaganda connotation?**

    It can be, they may use this as propaganda that aims to motivate teachers to take their courses and be trained, despite that this should be a decision made by ourselves. It also pursues students to study in their programs. For this reason, these results may have a propaganda connotation but I cannot assure this.

6. **Do you consider that the Standard English Test is enough to evaluate the English level in our country or is it necessary to create a test that takes into consideration the Ecuadorian context? Why?**

    I do not think it is necessary to design that test because a standardized one is aimed to measure the students' knowledge of the English language, not their context. For example, when they are working with reading, it does not matter if this involves content from Peru, Colombia, Brazil, or Ecuador, what matters is the students' capacity to recognize stuff like the main idea or the supporting ideas of reading. For the mentioned reasons, I do not think that including our context in a test would change the results.