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‘THE RELATION BETWEEN YEARS OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTION AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH READING AND LISTENING  
COMPREHENSION. A CASE STUDY’.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this research the relation in the level of English language in two different schools was measured. This research was focused on two eighth grade classes in two different schools, in which ten students of each school were selected, naming the classes as group one and group two respectively. Group one had seven years of English instruction and group two three years. A sample was designed to measure two abilities: reading and listening comprehension to obtain the results and subsequently to analyze the results in order to know if there is a relation between the performances in both groups.

## INTRODUCTION

The following research will debate the idea that the amount of years of English instruction has a direct impact in the level of the students in terms of their performance in the second language.

The English language has a big influence these days in this country. Chile is gradually becoming a developed country, which involves an integration of new and necessary competences for our development in this globalized world. For this reason, integrating the English language as a Foreign Language is essential, because English is the predominant language in the world.

The Chilean government has implemented different policies for the development of English in students, teachers, and professionals in general. For instance: The English Opens Doors Program, The CORFO Scholarships, and Winter and Summer Camps, among others. Since the English language was integrated to the national curriculum, it has been a problem for Chilean students because it is not completely internalized. It means, it is not a vital necessity to Chilean population but is very important for the development of the country.

The English language has been gradually incorporated into our society but it is still insufficient as it is not required to be used in the daily activities of the Chilean families. Although, a considerable number of Anglo-Saxon words have been adopted by our own culture and have become a part of our idiosyncrasy, there is not exists a continuous interaction with this language, complicating the practice and, consequently, the learning of English.

In Chile, and according to the Ministry of Education (2011), studying English is optional from first grade to fourth grade and it is stated that English is obligatory from fifth grade of primary school to twelfth grade of secondary school. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education posits that students have to learn English in an early age since they can learn more easily.

Regarding this, Curtain and Dahlberg (2010) refer to several studies. According to them, they conclude that one of the most important factors to master a foreign language is the amount of time spent studying it. They postulate that learning the language at an early age allows a better practice and experiences, as well as producing an enhancement on the fluency and effectiveness of the language in the long term.

According to the Ministry of Education (2011), age is not the only factor that influences the effectiveness of learning a foreign language. Factors such as the development of the mother tongue, methodological preparation, linguistics competences and opportunities of exposure to a foreign language should be carefully considered at the moment of deciding on the importance of beginning the teaching of the English language at an early age.. There is a contradiction about the Ministry of Education postulates, considering that, it says students who start study sooner have major cognitive capacities to accelerate the process of learning, and is more effective to learn a new language in an early age.



**CHAPTER I:**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## **Problem Statement**

In Chile, primary and secondary educations are administered by three types of schools: public schools, subsidized private schools (that receives public funding and parents' contribution) and private schools. The impact of the privatization of the education system has been significant and unequal. The less-accommodated children have concentrated in public schools, middle-class families make great efforts to contribute to the financing of privately subsidized schools, while the children of the wealthiest sectors are in private schools, putting them in a better position for learning. Another difference of these three types of schools is that public schools have no autonomy in the development of the curriculum; they have to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education. Private subsidized schools have a certain margin of autonomy, while private schools are entirely autonomous as they have no restrictions by the Ministry of Education. Differences do not exist only among these sectors as we have seen that there are differences in public schools too. There are schools in which students start studying English since first grade and others in which they start in the fifth grade of primary school. We think that there are not the same conditions for learning.

However, it is very difficult to realize what is the amount and the quality of exposure to the target language that students have in the classroom; for instance, in certain schools teachers take some time in roll-calling, in Catholic schools teachers spend some time praying and so forth. Teachers use different methodologies too and some schools are interested in training their teachers, and as a consequence it may cause differences in the input that students receive.

Our goal is to conduct an investigation in order to know if there are differences in the level of English in students who have studied since their first grade and students who have studied since their fifth grade of primary school.

## **Research Question**

Finally the research question is presented as follows:

Are there any differences between the levels of English of two different schools in students of eighth grades with three years and seven years of English instruction?

## **Hypothesis**

There are differences in the acquisition of English between students who started learning English in first grade of primary education and students who started studying English in fifth grade primary education. The success of the results of students depends on the years of studying English, in which the dependent variable is the result, and the independent variable is the amount of years that they have been studying.

### **1. Objectives**

#### **1.1 General Objective**

- To analyze the relationship between two eighth grade classes, one of them with seven years of English instruction and the other one with only three years learning the language.

## 1.2 Specific Objectives

- To check whether the level of English in both eighth grades are equal.
- To measure the level of English of both groups.

## **Justification**

Nowadays it is important to learn another language. Considering that we are part of a globalized world and all is connected by the media, the access to Internet, and the increase of tourism. It means that there is a need for communication with people of other countries because in Chile there is a big amount of commercial relations with developed countries such as the Unites States and England. English has become the predominant language in the world and Chile is not out of this. For this reason, our society needs professionals with a high knowledge of English to contribute with the development of the Chilean economy.

According to the Ministry of Education, it is important to learn a foreign language at an early age because very young learners (from five to ten years old) do not feel ashamed of being exposed in a situation of pronunciation of English. They have more fluency and effectiveness in the pronunciation of the English language compared to that of adult learners and they can learn grammar effectively. For this reason the Ministry of Education states that very young learners are better in pronunciation than adult learners.

The Ministry of Education is aware of the importance of learning English from first grade, but even so, the Ministry of Education is not stated the obligatory of teaching English since first grade, it is only obligatory from fifth to twelfth grade, but between first and fourth grade it is optional for schools.

This research is contingent to the national reality considering that the results obtained in different international evaluation have reflected the poor performance in the English language learning in Chile. This can be explained due to the low amount of years of obligatory English students have. This study can also support the public policies that are supposed to implement the mandatory start of English lessons from first grade.



## **Viability**

To carry out this investigation we had the aid of the two schools where the sample was taken for this study.

For the investigation, we used an instrument that was an English test. It was taken in two eighth grades classes. Not much money was spent on this process because only certain resources was needed, such as paper for the tests, a radio to perform the listening comprehension and classrooms that was provided by schools. To elaborate the instrument we used the national curriculum of study provided by the Ministry of Education, to know what students of both schools selected for this research should know in eighth grade.

This investigation is viable because it was presented a formal letter provided by the University to both schools requesting permission to carry out the English test. The headmasters gave us the opportunity to obtain the information for our investigation.

To carry out this investigation we have four months in which we have to take a sample and attain the results.

**CHAPTER II:**  
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the most relevant theories will be mentioned and described in order to state each concept to provide a clear understanding of the literature selected to this research.

## **2.2. Theories of Language Acquisition and Learning**

Second language acquisition (L2) is a process in which people learn another language. According to Krashen (1982), there are two independent systems in the process of appropriation of a second language acquisition:

Acquisition: this is an automatic process that develops in an unconscious level, which refers to natural assimilation, because people need to communicate with their peers. For this reason, this process must have a vast learners' interaction. For instance, Chilean people learn their mother tongue unconsciously.

Learning: this is a conscious process. Students are going to learn new grammatical rules of the target language. This process emphasizes the written language and produces knowledge. The process of learning a second language is progressive and increasing. E.g. Students learn by school or teacher instructions.

According to Krashen (1982), second language acquisition is possible at any age. He says that if the student is a young learner he can learn in a good way, but in adults it is more difficult to learn but it is possible. On the other hand, Chomsky (1986) states that the learner is going to acquire a second language in their childhood in an effective way, because the human has an internal black box, which closes by their puberty, and after that period, they cannot acquire a second language in an effective manner, this is called the language acquisition device.

The language acquisition device of the human language: Children are born with the language acquisition device, which is activated when they are aware of basic grammatical structures. On the other hand, Universal Grammar refers to a group of rules and conditions that are shared across all languages. Universal Grammar is innate and unconscious in each person.

“The Universal Grammar explains ‘the essential human language’. The Universal Grammar is an invariant amongst human beings and it will specify what the linguistic learning must achieve in order to obtain good results.” (Chomsky, 1986, p.32)

The Universal Grammar is denominated UG, which means that grammar structures are not going to be the same in all the languages, but there is going to be a structure, though. The environment in which a person is merged, is essential in order to use this structure. If the environment is not appropriate, it will affect the construction of this structure.

### **2.3. Input Hypothesis**

According to Krashen (1982), input is a process of acquisition of another language. Learners do not need to understand the meaning of each word since there is a message, which can be written or heard, that let the students understand the context of a situation. The students have to infer the content of the message.

"Understanding means that the acquirer is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message." (Krashen, 1982, p. 21)

In order to produce input, students need to use the assumption knowledge and then they have to move onto another level; as Krashen (1982) posits learners acquire language when they are exposed to 'i+1', where 'i' is current competence and '1' is the new knowledge.

Comprehensible input is produced by information of the context, situations, and extra linguistic factors. It is relevant to mention that the environment in which the children are involved in is the appropriate one so they can learn, and do not check their own mistakes, but adults correct them in an unconscious manner in which children can self-correct. One example of Krashen is: “If a child says “dat Harry” and the parent says “No, that’s John”, the child might readily self-correct.” (Brown, 2007, p. 47)

On the other hand, Ellis (1997) says that to acquire a second language the students have to know their own mother tongue already, because they recognize communication strategies and that makes their knowledge about L2 beneficial. Acquisition is impossible to occur without some input, because input refers to everything that we can learn, not only a second language, since we can find input in pictures, when parents teach their children something, in media, etc.

According to Ellis (1997), social conditions are important to acquire a second language because they influence the input and children can have more contact with an adequate environment and practice and listen to the other language, so they can develop the listening and speaking skills.

“L2 acquisition can be explained in part by these external factors but we also need to consider internal factors” (Ellis, 1997, p.5)

Krashen (1982) postulates five hypotheses and the most important is the input hypothesis. This hypothesis goes hand in hand with the affective filter hypothesis because the students are not able to acquire the second language if they do not have motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. This hypothesis is called the affective filter.

The affective filter refers to three categories: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Students need high motivation, self- image, and a low level of anxiety. If these three categories are met, then students can acquire the second language in a better way.

The affective filter refers to create a pleasant atmosphere without tension, where students do not feel under pressure and are able to produce another language. When the filter is high it provokes a mental block that prevents students from using intelligible output and therefore the acquisition is not obtained. The filter has to be low, because the student is going to be exposed to a new language.

“The affective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation.” (Krashen, 1982, p.32)

For this reason, the comprehensible input translates into meaningful learning, because children trust their peers. We can explain that when children have been with the same classmates all their school life; they do not feel ashamed if they do not know something, they ask without fear. Therefore, the affective filter proves to be a positive factor to acquire comprehensible input.

#### **2.4. Theories of Language Learning**

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the process of learning a nonnative language (L2) after the learning of the native language (L1) in the environment in which that language is spoken. This may or may not occur in a classroom situation.

The significant aspect is that learning in a L2 environment takes place with important contact to speakers of the target language. On the other hand, foreign language learning is divergent from second language acquisition; thus referring to the learning of a nonnative language in the environment of one's native language. Learning in this environment may be difficult because the amount of interaction is lower.



On the other hand, according to Gass and Selinker (2008), second language acquisition may occur in a context of natural exposure situations in which the target language is spoken, e.g. a Chilean, who learns English at United States with native teachers, and second language learning may take place in a nonnative environment where the target language is not spoken. For instance a Chilean who learns English in Chile with nonnative teachers.

According to Krashen (1982), Language acquisition is comparable to the process children use to acquire the first and second languages. It requires important interaction in the target language and communication has to be natural, in an environment in which speakers are not concerned about the form of their utterances, only about the messages, and they are passing and understanding the information.

“Error correction and explicit teaching of rules are not relevant to language acquisition (Brown and Hanlon, 1970; Brown, Cazden, and Bellugi, 1973), but caretakers and native speakers can modify their utterances addressed to acquirers to help them understand, and these modifications are thought to help the acquisition process (Snow and Ferguson, 1977)” (Krashen, 2002, p.1)

They posit that there are not acquisition of structures in language acquisition; acquirers do not need to have a conscious knowledge of the ‘rules’ they use and may self-correct only on the basis of a ‘feel’ for grammaticality.

According to Krashen (1982), conscious language learning has to be helped by error correction and the management of explicit rules. Error correction assists the learner to come to the correct mental illustration of the linguistic generalization. The progression that they learn may not be identical to the acquisition order.

Krashen’s monitor theory (1982) argues that conscious learning is attainable to the performer only as a Monitor. Commonly, utterances are initiated by what is already acquired; our fluency in production is based on what we get through active communication. Our conscious learning may be used to modify the output of what we have acquired now, sometimes before or after the utterance is produced. We formulate these changes to improve accuracy, and the use of the Monitor often has this effect.

There are other authors who postulate different ideas:

Lawler and Selinker (1971) propose that by the rule of internalization, one can postulate two distinct types of cognitive structures: (1) those mechanisms that guide 'automatic' language performance (...) that is, performance (...) where speed and spontaneity are crucial and the learner has no time to consciously apply linguistic mechanisms (...) and (2) those mechanisms that guide puzzle- or problem-solving performance. (Krashen, 2002, p.2)

“Corder (1967), citing an unpublished paper by Lambert, also discusses the acquisition-learning distinction and the possibility that acquisition is available to the adult second language performer”. (Krashen, 2002, p.3)

Taking into account the differences between the two language theories SLA and SLL, it is more appropriate to consider SLL because of the context in which Chile is immersed. For instance, in Chile English language is only practiced in a classroom context. Concerning this subject, it was necessary to mention the aforementioned differences to clarify that in this research learning is going to be the concept studied.

## 2.5. The Critical Period Hypothesis

A second notion that plays an important role in this investigation is the critical period hypothesis, according to the Ministry of Education (2011):

"Algunas investigaciones plantean que no existe esa etapa o “período crítico”: si se detecta mayores niveles de dominio al aprender el idioma más tempranamente – indican–, ello obedecería a factores sociales, psicológicos o educativos asociados al contexto de aprendizaje". (Ministerio de Educación, 2011, p.1)

The critical period hypothesis (CPH) states that there is a moment in the life of a person around puberty (between twelve and thirteen years old) called “critical period”. It is necessary to mention that the CPH is related to the first language (L1).

According to Brown (1997):

"The critical period hypothesis states that there is a period during which language acquisition is easy and complete (native-speaker ability is achieved) and beyond which it is difficult and typically incomplete". (Brown, 1997, p. 67)

Just to make the situation more difficult, it also declares that if you lose your linguistic capacity in an accident, you can retrieve what you had learned before, though this has to be done before the ending of critical period.

From the above, it can be demonstrated that when a learner is in their childhood, it is easier for him or her to acquire a language, since it is natural. The young learner learns to speak without realizing what he is doing, it is innate, and for this reason, when the young learner learns a language before the critical period, the language acquisition becomes much easier for them, thus the learner captures the complexity of the language without knowing what they are learning, and in this way, the language is learned faster and better, it is because, before the critical period the organism is more sensitive to the stimulus to the development of a particular ability.

According to Singleton (2004) he states that “For example, that children are of their nature equipped to learn a foreign language with much less effort and in a generally more competent manner than they themselves are able to manage.” (Singleton, 2004, p.31)

For people who have already passed the critical period, it becomes more difficult and complex to acquire a language as a native speaker. Older learners can study many years and never acquire the language level of a native speaker, since the critical period takes place around puberty.

“There is considerable evidence to support the claim that L2 learners who begin learning as adults are unable to achieve native-speakers competence in either grammar or pronunciation”. (Ellis, 1997, p. 68)

A second notion that plays an important role in the CPH is the neuroplasticity. This neuroplasticity is related to the nervous system and its functions. It allows the brain to adopt internal and external changes. Moreover, the neuroplasticity allows the brain to change its associations and purposes in relation to the environment.

## **2.6. The Importance to Learn a Foreign Language from First Grade**

The world has been changing so fast during the last twenty years. Requirements of new competences regarding the development of the countries are taking the lead in the entire world and English has taken an important role in these variations in terms of communication.

It is said that people are interested in learning English because of the economy and the globalization of the world. Some people are interested in learning English to do business among other things. For that reason, they need to learn another language in a way that they can have a fluent communication with other people; and the governments are aware of this. This is why some governments around the world are implementing types of strategies to teach English in an effective way.

“In a globalized, postmodern world a rather different model of education has emerged. An individual, to participate fully in the new economy – as worker, consumer and responsible citizen – needs to be even better informed (about global as well as local issues) and needs higher-order and more flexible skills. But the age-old tension in the relationship between state and citizen, between rights and responsibilities, remains.” (Graddol, 2006, p.71)

Graddol (2006) postulates three new global approaches to learn English that are trends in some places in the world in recent years. The author believes that they represent significant departures from both traditional English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL).

The first one is “Content and Language Integrated Learning” (CLIL), which refers to a type of teaching strategy towards teaching a subject through a foreign language. It says learners receive instructions of a specific subject, e.g. history, in other language different from the mother language of the learner.

The second one is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) which refers to the use of English as a means of communication of non-native speakers. E.g A Turkish speaking with a Chilean person by using English language.



The third one is English for young learners (EYL) which refers to learn English in early years, between the age of four and six. This is the most relevant approach for this investigation of the three, because to learn English at an early age has a big amount of benefits; one of them is that young children can find the process of learning another language easier.

Graddol (2006) postulates that children do not feel ashamed at the moment of talking in public, contrary to older students. Young children can face obstacles that older learners are not able to because they can master their language and they will have more years of instructions that older learners will miss. On the other hand, young learners will have more opportunities to learn English as a second language.

“In the practice, young learners face obstacles that older students do not. They are still developing physically and intellectually; their emotional needs may be higher, they are less able to take responsibility for their own learning. One of the practical reasons for introducing English to younger learners is to ensure that they have longer in their school careers to master the language” (Graddol, 2006, p.89)

Another idea by Graddol (2006) states that:

“English learners are getting younger. Across the world, from Chile to Mongolia, from China to Portugal, English is being introduced in primary schools, with greater compulsion, and at steadily lowering ages.” (Graddol, 2006, p.88)

In Chile, English language is used as a global tool of communication, and it allows access to a major level of knowledge, information, and actual technologies, in addition to be a means of communication with other realities. Learning English contributes to the understanding and appreciation of the mother tongue, culture, and the development of cognitive abilities.

English in Chile is defined as a foreign language, because students do not use it immediately at the moment they finish their English classes. In fact, the contact with the foreign language is the English teacher inside the classroom adding occasional expositions to TV programs and video games. It represents a major challenge to the motivation of students to learn English.

Furthermore, a lot of educational establishments teach English to young learners, in order to take advantage of the benefits brought by learning a foreign language in the early years.

The Ministry of Education concludes that one of the most important factors to dominate a foreign language is the amount of time a person has been studying the target language.

“Asimismo, Curtain y Dahlberg (2010) se refieren a varios estudios y, de acuerdo a ellos, concluyen que uno de los factores más importantes para dominar un idioma extranjero es la cantidad de tiempo dedicada a estudiarlo. Plantean que el aprendizaje temprano del idioma permite mayor práctica y experiencias, lo que en el largo plazo conduce a una mayor fluidez y efectividad.” (Ministerio de Educacion,2011, p.1).

Johnstone (2002) postulates that some of the advantages of Young learners about learning a foreign language are:

- Young learners present a major capacity to acquire the system of sound of the target language.
- Less anxiety about the new language.
- A major amount of time of exposure about the new language.
- An early start allows establishing connections between the native and target language, which can help to develop awareness about language.

The Ministry of Education (2011) states that the purpose of teaching English from first grade is to contribute students with the acquisition of basic communicative abilities about the target language. It is expected that students learn the English language in a significant and contextualized form to support the development of the four language skills, and additionally, as a way to enhance a positive attitude towards English language.

El desarrollo de habilidades comunicativas se traduce en que los estudiantes al terminar cuarto año de educación básica son capaces de comprender palabras simples y los puntos principales de un texto simple y breve; comprenden y siguen instrucciones (...) Lo descrito anteriormente equivale a alcanzar un nivel de dominio del idioma cercano al nivel A12 de acuerdo a las descripciones del Marco común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas (CEFR). (Ministerio de Educación, 2011, p.3).

### **2.6.1. Listening Comprehension**

According to the Ministry of Education (2012), listening comprehension consists on hearing the language and gives meaning to the sounds to identify and comprehend the information expressed orally with the support of context and the knowledge of the world.

In the same way mother tongue is acquired, in order to learn a second language, it is very important to have a lot of opportunities to get oral input. Actually, it is considered that listening comprehension is the most important skill in the first stages of learning a foreign language, being that through it, contact is made with the language and their culture. This constitutes a base to the development to the rest of the language skills.

The development of this ability is not reduced to simple decoding of sounds. To listen, students need to have an active role in the construction of the message giving meaning to what is heard.

## **2.6.2. Reading Comprehension**

According to the Ministry of Education (2012) Reading Comprehension refers to the construction of meaning from written information expressed in different types of texts, in addition to the knowledge of the reader.

According to the Ministry of Education (2011), it is a fact that young learners have to acquire their mother tongue first in order to learn a new language. It is because in that way, they develop knowledge, skills, and basic strategies of reading comprehension in their mother tongue, which means that it could be easier to learn a new language. Nevertheless, this does not mean that young learners will avoid having any contact with the new language in a written form, due to, reading can improve the development of the alphabetization in the second language.

To learn a second language at the first school stages, it is required to have contact with the oral part of the language, because it constitutes the base of the development of alphabetization in the students. The first experience improves the phonology awareness. For this reason, it supports the further develop of reading. It is constituted by the listening and repeating of chants and songs which have words which rhyme, it includes the repetition of words and patterns that are related to known topics by the children. On the other hand, children listen to their English teacher reading aloud in front of the class, and participate in shared reading and guided reading.

Leer permite que los alumnos ahonden temas, funciones, estructuras y vocabulario integrados a un todo y en forma contextualizada. La lectura frecuente y variada de textos en inglés los ayuda a desarrollar la competencia lectora y los acerca al placer de leer y a la experiencia de informarse por medio de un nuevo idioma. Usar estrategias, conocer de palabras de uso frecuente previamente aprendidas e identificar los patrones ortográficos más comunes les servirá para comprender lo que leen. (Ministerio de Educación, 2011, p.9).



**CHAPTER III:**  
**METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The main objective of this chapter is to explain the procedure of this research in detail and how the tests were applied in two eighth grade classes of different schools to obtain the sample for this investigation.

For this research, an evaluation of listening and reading comprehension were applied in twenty subjects of study from eighth grade, who were divided into two groups of ten students, one of them with seven years of English instruction, and the other group had three years of the aforementioned schooling, respectively.

Before the evaluation, one class was observed in order to identify the strategies of teaching and the behavior of the students.

To obtain the sample of this investigation a written test was applied by the researchers. This test was taken by ten students from eighth grade classes in two different schools, “Parque Asunción” school and “Centro Politécnico Particular de Conchalí” school.

A research group attended both schools to observe one English lesson. This was done a week before the tests were applied in order to take notes about the strategies used by teacher and the students' behavior.

The observation of group one took place on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In this group, it could be noticed that the relation between teacher-students was cordial. Teacher caught the students' attention, they were motivated, and consequently the students could understand the topics. For instance, the teacher explained the contents, then the teacher asked if there were any doubts about the contents; that is to say, the teacher supervised them in order to identify if they understood what was being taught.

The class observed consisted of sixty percent English and forty percent Spanish, this based on teacher-students interactions, questions, and activities.

Students paid attention during the lesson and they were cooperative with the activities given by the teacher.

It is relevant to mention that mobile phones were forbidden inside the classroom in order to promote the use of a conventional dictionary; this caused students' performance to be better during the development of the activities.

The observation of group two was performed on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The researchers took notes of group two; they could notice that the relation teacher-students were distant. The teacher taught the subject topic without a close contact with students. An example that could be mentioned was that when the teacher explained the contents of the class, students raised their hands when they had doubts, the teacher answered the mentioned doubts, but the teacher never monitored the student's work.

The teacher did not speak the whole class in English; instead, the teacher used eighty percent of Spanish and twenty percent of English.

Students were distracted but at the same time they were trying to cooperate with the development of the class, a sixty percent of the class did the activities. It is necessary to mention that the students used their mobile phones during the lesson as a support to translate words and phrases to do the activities instead of using a dictionary. Some students had wrong answers, given that students used an online translator to do the activities.

## **3.2. Methodological Procedure**

### **3.2.1. Type of Research Study**

This investigation is quantitative, non-experimental and correlational.

According to the design of this investigation, the nature of this research and the data collection needed to obtain the required results, it was most appropriate to use the quantitative approach, being that the goal was to measure the level of English of two different groups in two different schools.

Secondly, it is non-experimental because the main variable selected to be measured – the amount of years learning English related to the results- was not modified.

It is also correlational due to the required measure between the relations of the variables in order to demonstrate the existence or absence of differences in the results.

### **3.2.2. Subject of the Study**

Parque Asunción school -labeled as group one has six hundred and thirty students of primary school, and Centro Particular Politécnico de Conchalí school called group two has about one thousand and five hundred and forty one students of primary and secondary school. These schools are subsidized private schools, and both are located in the Conchalí district, where the middle-to-low socio-economic class is the average.

Group one, who has been studying English since first grade, has had seven years of English schooling in total, as on the other hand, group two, who has been studying English since fifth grade, they have had a total of three years of English lessons.

The subjects of this research were twenty students; these students were in eighth grade during the year this research took place. Additionally, the students who took part in this study have been in the same school from their first grade and they were selected in order to make a comparable sample.

There are three different eighth grades in each school and, furthermore, both are full time schools. The age range in both schools is between thirteen and fourteen years old.

This sample was made with ten students of each school. Both groups were composed of six girls and four boys. The classes chosen for this research were chosen randomly.

### **3.2.3. Procedure**

As a means to obtain the sample, a written test was applied to ten students of eighth grade in two different schools, being these labeled as group one and group two. The data collection was obtained from twenty students in total.

Three researchers observed one lesson from each class, where the students' behavior and the teacher's strategies were witnessed.

A week later, the test was taken; the students were led into a classroom in their respective schools. Both classrooms had good illumination and were noise isolated, in order to allow students to be well concentrated during the test.

The aforementioned test was taken in classrooms where each student had an individual desk which were assigned alphabetically. Subsequently, when each student was in their respective place, the teacher in charge of applying the test explained its guidelines and the topics contained.



The teacher mentioned to the students that this test, it was only for investigation purposes, and it was not detrimental for their academic performance. In addition to this, the teacher stated that the students had forty-five minutes to develop the test and it was divided in two parts: a thirty-five-minute period for the reading comprehension section and fifteen minutes for the listening comprehension, the duration of the test (50 minutes) was recommended by the teacher of the school of group one. Afterwards, the teacher handed the test to the students.

After the first thirty-five-minute period for the reading comprehension part, the teacher began the listening part by turning on the radio and eventually playing its corresponding audio track, which was repeated four times in sequence.

The test was elaborated according to the 'Programas de Estudio' from the Ministry of Education, specifically the one of eighth grade. The contents included in the test were: Present simple for the listening part and past simple for the reading comprehension.

The purpose of this investigation was to measure the level of English of students of eighth grade who have had English during seven continuous years (group one) in contrast with the students of eighth grade who have been studying English during three constant years (group two).

For this research, students who have been at school from first grade at the same school were chosen. Their marks ranged from 4.9 to 7.0 and these students were not failing the school year and they did not have private teachers. After results of the tests were obtained, the information regarding the level of English of the students in both schools was analyzed.

In order to analyze the results obtained, it was decided to use a program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences or SPSS to be able not only to check the real existence of a relation but also to measure the correlational level between the chosen variables.

In statistics, and for the purpose of this study, the coefficient of correlation by Pearson, which is a means of measurement of the linear relation of two random quantitative variables, was selected. The Pearson's correlation is independent from the scale of measurement of variables.

In other words, the Pearson's correlation can be defined as an index that can be utilized to quantify the existence and amount of relation of two variables only if both were quantitative.

**CHAPTER IV:  
DATA COLLECTION**

#### **4. Data Collection**

In the following charts, the data collected was organized in order to present the results obtained in two different eight-grade classes in a reading and listening test. Firstly, the average results of the tests from school one and school two can be seen and afterwards the percentage of approval in each test applied. Lastly the test is going to be divided into its two parts: reading and listening comprehension.

#### 4.1. Grade Average

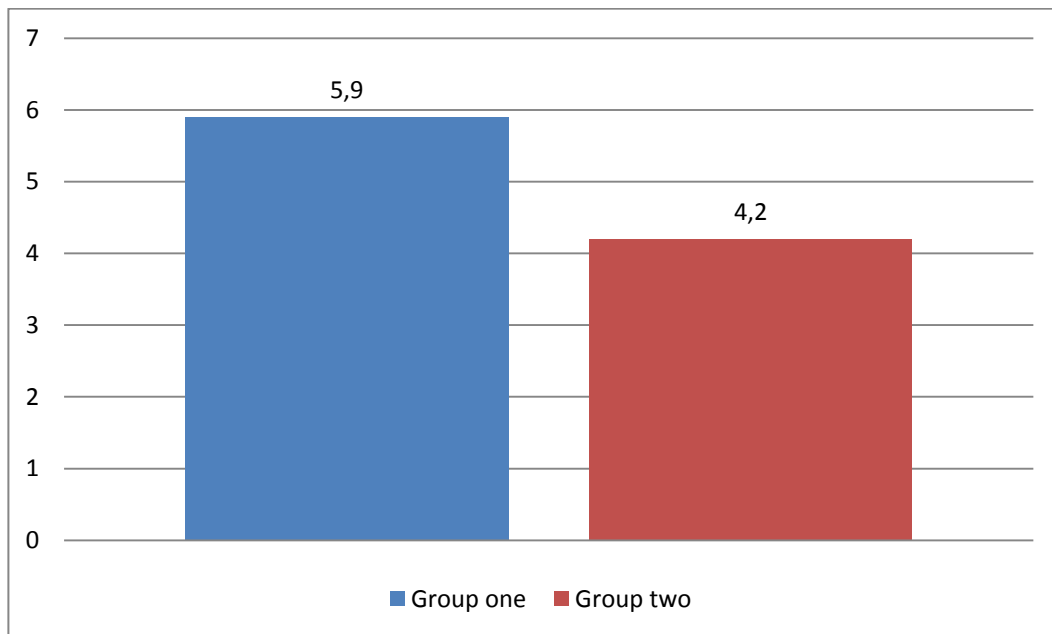


Figure 1. Average in grades from group one and group two.

The graph presented in figure 1, displays the average obtained from the reading and listening tests applied to the study subjects. Group one represented by ‘Parque Asuncion’ school obtained a 5,9 as an average. On the other hand, group two represented by ‘Centro Particular Politécnico de Conchalí’ school obtained an average of 4, 2.

The results previously stated demonstrate that group one attained 24,2 percent more than group two.

## 4.2. General Analysis in Reading and Listening Comprehension

The graph to be presented below depicts the comparison and contrast between the result attained in the reading and listening comprehension in both study cases.

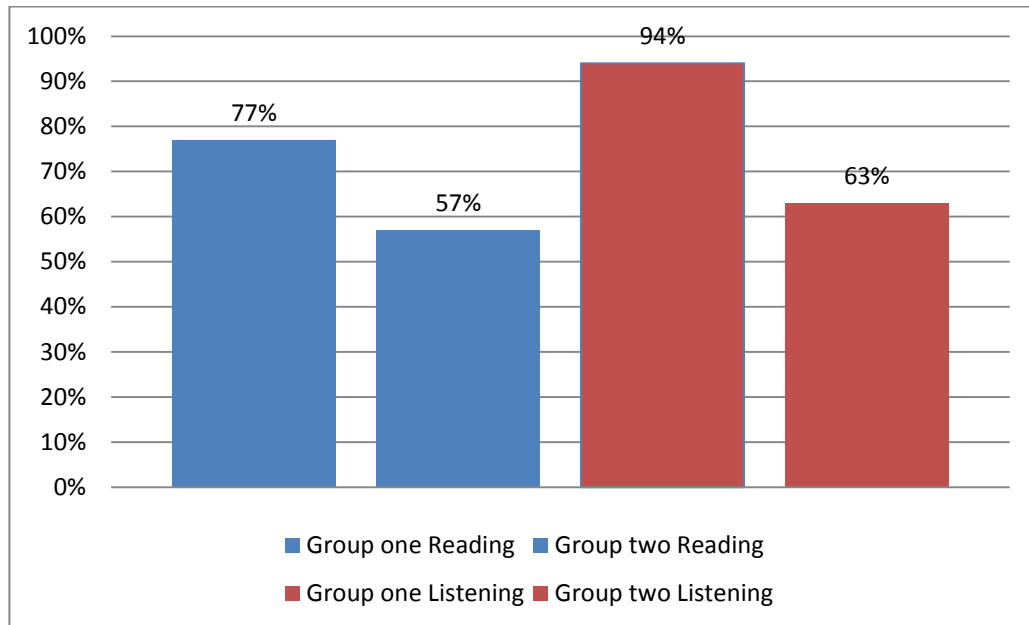


Figure 2. Side-by-side percentage of approval in group one and group two.

In figure 2 the percentage of approval obtained in each case is presented side-by-side to provide a better perspective of the situation.

Regarding the reading comprehension test, group one achieved seventy-seven percent more correct answers. On the other hand, group two showed a lower performance, scoring fifty-seven percent of correct answers.

Concerning the listening comprehension test, group one attained thirty-one percent more correct answers than group two.

### 4.3. Reading Comprehension Average

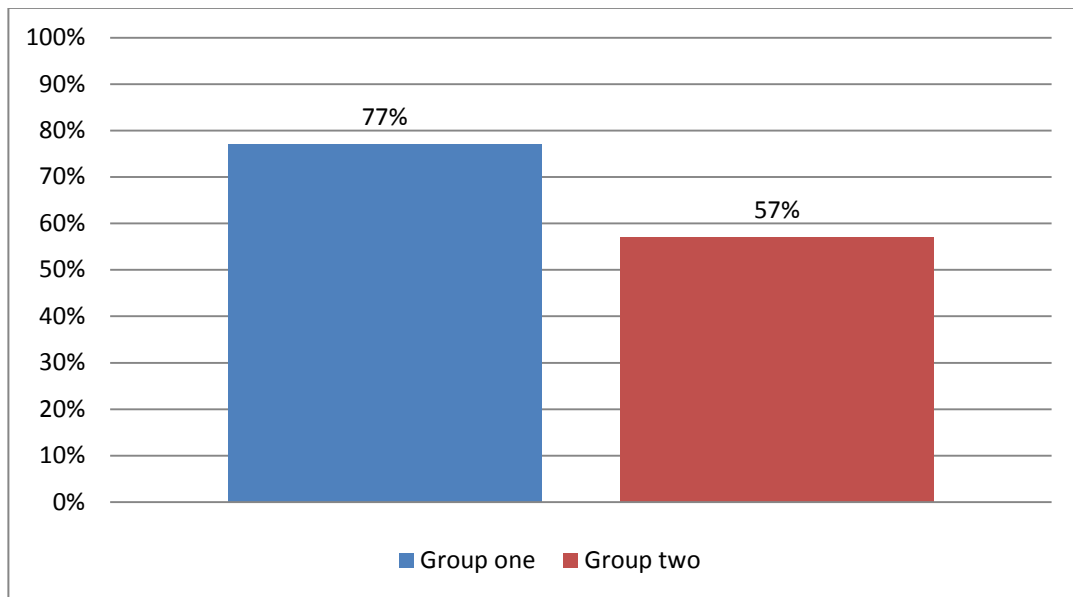


Figure 3. Average percentage of approval from group one and group two. Reading comprehension.

The chart presented in figure 3 represents the general percentage of correct answers from the reading comprehension test applied to the study subjects. Group one obtained a seventy-seven percentage of correct answers, while group two obtained a fifty-seven percentage of correct answers.

The results previously stated demonstrate that group one attained twenty percent more than group two.



#### 4.4. Listening Comprehension Average

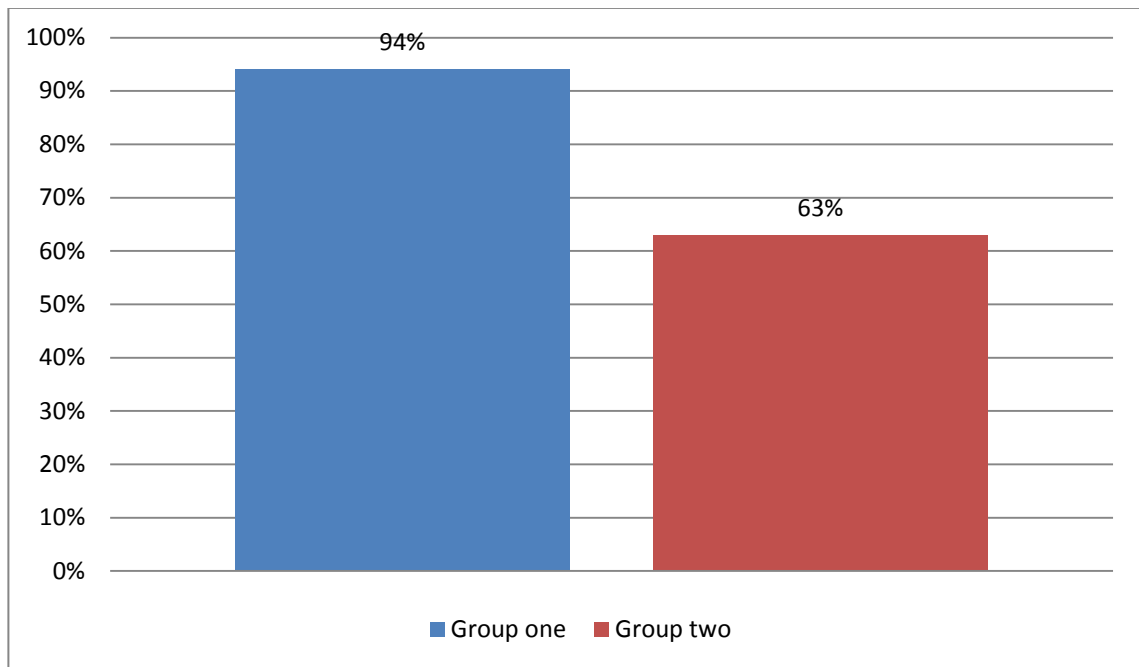


Figure 4. Average percentage of approval in group one and group two. Listening comprehension

The diagram presented in figure 4 represents the general percentage of correct answers from the listening comprehension test applied to the study subjects. Group one obtained a ninety-four percentage of correct answers. Although group two, obtained a sixty-three percentage of correct answers.

The results previously stated demonstrate that group one attained thirty-one percent more than group two.

#### 4.5. Listening and Reading Comprehension Results from Group One

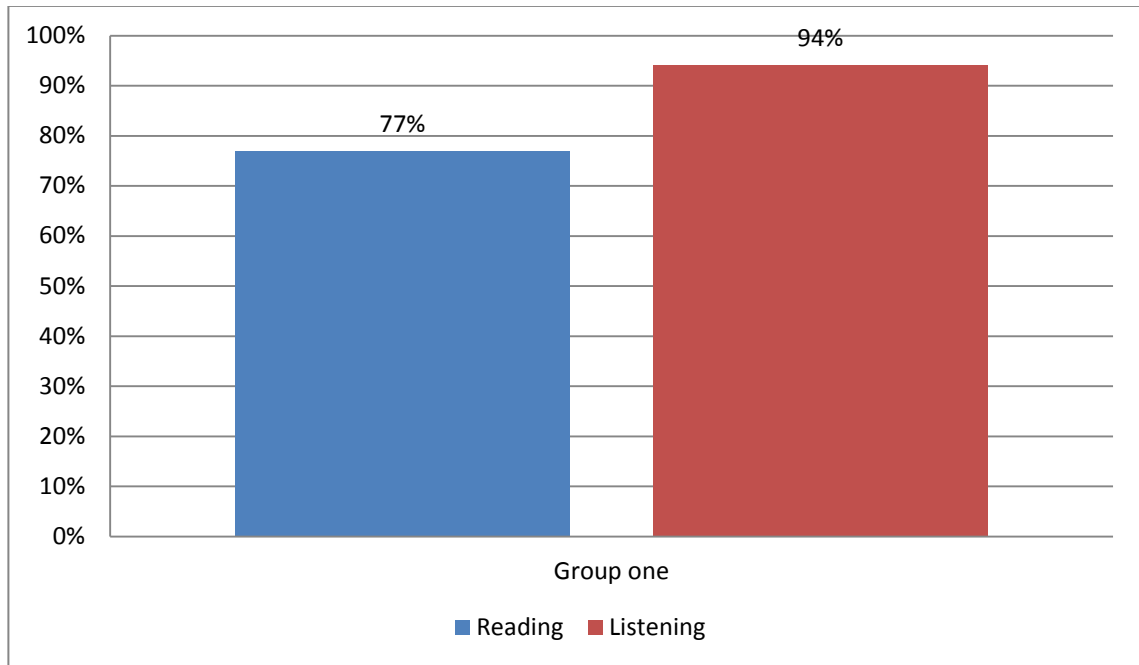


Figure 5. Average percentage of approval in group one. Reading and listening comprehension.

The chart presented in figure 5, demonstrates the general percentage of correct answers obtained in the reading and listening comprehension tests applied to the study subjects.

In the reading test group one scored an average of seventy-seven percent of correct answers, whereas in the listening test the medium was of ninety-four percent.

#### 4.6. Listening and Reading Comprehension Results from Group Two

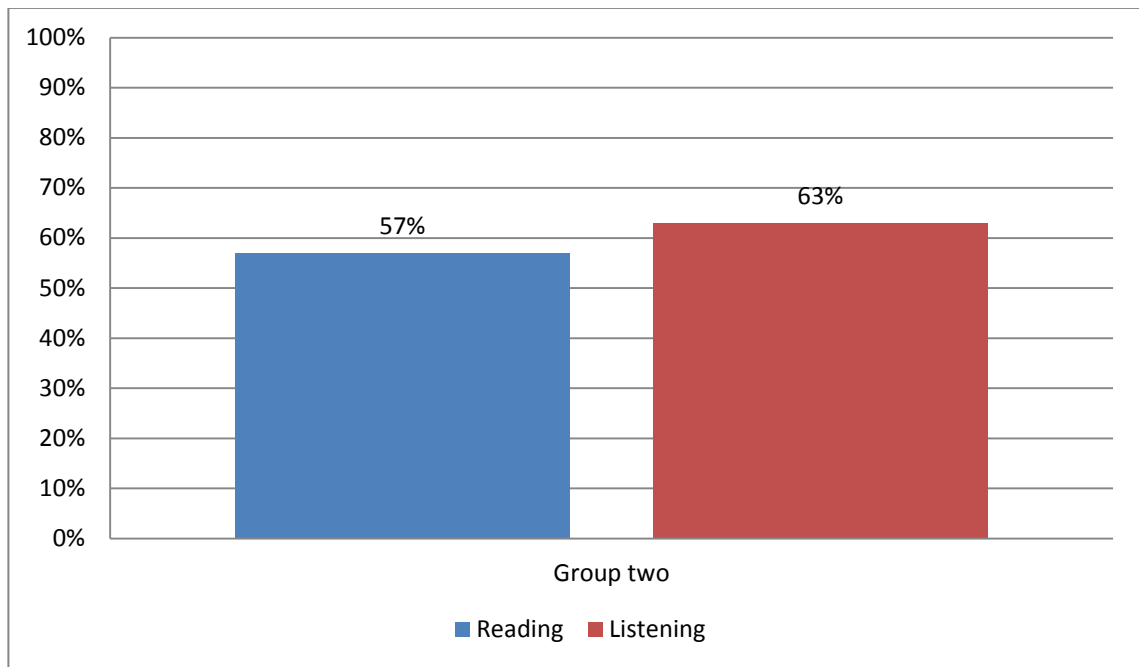


Figure 6. Average percentage of approval in group two. Reading and listening comprehension.

As represented in figure 6, the graph depicts the average percentage of questions answered in a correct manner in reading and listening comprehension tests.

Group two attained an average of fifty-seven percent of correct answers of reading comprehension, whereas in the listening test the medium was of sixty-three percent.

#### **4.7. Correlation Results**

As a means to measure the correlation between variables, a statistic program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. This program is commonly used by researchers, survey companies, and governments as a way to do statistical analysis.

The correlation demonstrated in the chart below was made using the following variables:

- Test results obtained from group one and group two.
- Amount of years of English class that students have had since first grade.

		Marks	Years of English
Marks	Pearson's correlation	1	,715(**)
	N	20	20
Years of English	Pearson's correlation	,715(**)	1
	N	20	20

**\*\*correlation is meaningful at the 0, 01 level**

Figure 7. Pearson's correlation results.

It is important to note that the results presented in figure 7 correspond to a high Pearson correlation, considering it is a relation of 0,715; being 1 a perfect correlation while 0 represents no correlation at all.

It can also be stated that the relation between the variables utilized, (marks and Years of English) namely, grades obtained in both groups and the amount of years of English they had had in their respective schools. These correlations, as previously stated, correspond to a 0,715; that is to say, students from group one are 0,715 out of 1 similar to group two, leaving a 0,285 dissimilar, related to variables outside of the scope of the study.

For the reasons stated above, it can be effectively established that school grades obtained by the students are a seventy-one percent dependent on the amount of years of English the students have, which -taking into account the results presented in figure 1 can be translated into a result twenty-four point four percent better. It is also worth mentioning that considering the extent of the research there is a twenty-nine percent that cannot be explained within the investigation's scope because these external variables were not considered as a measured factor when designing this study.

Although, it can be mentioned that this twenty-nine percent can be possibly explained considering the factors like level of English that the parents have, socio-economic factors, socio-cultural variables, and the level of motivation the students have.

**CHAPTER V:  
CONCLUSIONS**

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter will concentrate on the elaboration of conclusions about this research; the conclusions are referred to different theories of second language acquisition, on the other hand it will be confirmed if the general objective was accomplished, and the correlation between years of study and group marks of the study subjects will be established, according to the results obtained during the course of this investigation, and in relation to the input hypothesis postulated by Krashen that states that English can be learned at any age but is more effective the longer the learner has been receiving input.

Considering the investigation's hypothesis, it can be demonstrated that there is a significant difference between the longer the students have been exposed to the input at their schools to the test demonstrated that level of English is higher and the results are better whether students have major years studying English.



Following the same idea, and taking into account what is posited by Chomsky (1965), it can also support the results acquired through this research, since the author states that there will be a better understanding of the target language at early ages, while the 'Black box' is still present. The results attained can also be supported by what is stated in the Critical period hypothesis which suggested that before puberty it is easier and more effective to acquire a second language, because it is natural. The young learner learns to speak without realizing what he is doing, being this innate.

In relation to the general objective of this study, and based on the analysis of the results obtained it can be concluded that, within the scope of this research, the group that has been studying English during seven years (group one) has a better knowledge of the language than the group who has been studying English for the last three years (group two). This performance is expressed in a difference of a twenty-four point two percent.

Even with the efforts of the Ministry of Education, Chilean population is far from having a good level of English. To achieve this goal, solid public policies are required inside of the curricular framework in the early stages of English language at pre-school, primary, and secondary education.

Nowadays teaching English is obligatory starting at the fifth grade of primary school up to twelfth grade of secondary school. In this sense, the English elective curricular proposal postulates the idea of starting the teaching of English in the first year of primary school in order to improve their level of English. This plan constitutes a significant effort to approach the language learning in a context in which opportunities to interact with Anglo-Saxon speakers are very low, and though that the new technologies can support in a meaningful manner the reading and listening language skills, these strategies alone are not enough to make a significant change.

“La enseñanza del Inglés en edad temprana supone la utilización de metodologías y estrategias pedagógicas diversas que aborden el idioma de manera lúdica y fluida, y aprovechen la alta motivación de los estudiantes por aprender y su entusiasmo por lo Nuevo. A ésta edad, los niños/as se involucran rápidamente en las tareas, se interesan por los desafíos a todo lo que puedan recibir del ambiente, enriquecen su pronunciación y se motivan fácilmente a las áreas. En suma, comenzar la enseñanza del inglés desde una edad temprana, consigue que los estudiantes enfrenten el idioma de forma más natural”. (Díaz, 2012, December 20)

According to an article published in La Segunda newspaper (2013), in the year 2011 when former Minister of Education Joaquin Lavin was head of the Ministry, the MINEDUC increased from two to three the amount of hours in fifth and sixth grade. Subsequently in 2012, it started to encourage that public schools and private subsidized schools to begin the teaching of English in the first four years of primary education, giving free students' books to all the students of the country.

According to the data collected during this investigation, it is demonstrated that group one had a better performance in the test than group two in terms of reading and listening comprehension, due to the four more years that group one had been studying compared with group two. In other words, group one have been studying seven years, and group two have been studying three years of English.

The correlation attained between years of study and marks in twenty study subjects (group one and group two) was a seventy-one percent. According to SPSS a seventy-one percent is a high correlation between the two variables.

On the other hand, the twenty-nine percent left cannot be explained, because it depends on other external factors, which were not studied in this research.

According to this investigation, it can be concluded that the results attained concur with the hypothesis postulated through this research, being that there are differences in the acquisition of English in students who started learning the language in first grade of primary school, with students who have been studying English since fifth grade of primary education

As researchers it can be established that the performance of the students is more effective if they start to learn a new language since first grade, being that all the investigation demonstrates that the more years studying English, the better the level of English acquired.

In this case the Ministry of Education has a contradiction with its stance, since it postulates an obligatory English program from fifth grade, in spite of positing the importance of teaching a new language to young learners since first grade.

### **Suggestions for further studies**

Due to the extent of our investigation, it was difficult to include more schools, classes, and numbers of students, to provide a bigger sample. Additionally it would give another perspective to consider other external factors such as level of education of parents, their level of English, socio-economic status, and student's motivation.

The motivational factors that influence the learning of a foreign language are of essential importance in the process of teaching/learning a language. The motivational aspects could be determined by the teaching strategies used during the lesson. To apply certain strategies of teaching, firstly, teachers must know how language students use these learning strategies before designing, planning, and finally applying adequate methodologies of teaching. These could be important factors to consider in further studies.

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<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/JohnstoneEN.pdf>



## **APPENDIX**

## **Appendix 2: Audio transcript from the second item of the test**

I. - Clare Casey

“I live with my Friends. Lizz and Maria, in a flat. I’m a childminder. I look after a baby called Joshua. I also take him to visit his dad, Ashley, at work”

II. - Danny Baldwin

“I’m from London but now I live in Manchester. I’m the manager of a clothes factory. The workers don’t like me. They think I’m very strict because I shout at them all the time!”

III. - Roy Cropper

“I’m married to Hayley. We own a café in the street. It opens early every day. My wife doesn’t work there – she works in the clothes factory. We go camping once or twice a year”

IV. - Hayley Cropper

“Roy’s a good husband. We don’t work together. I work in a factory and he manages our café. He doesn’t cook brilliant food but he’s a very good manager”

V. - Ashley Peacock

“I’m a butcher. Clare looks after my baby, Josh. She also cleans, irons and does the shopping every day for me”

VI. - Tyrone Dobbs

“I’m a mechanic and I work in the local garage. I don’t live with my family. I’ve got a dog called Monica – I take her out for a walk twice a day. My best friends are Fizz and Kirk – we go out every weekend”