



ESCUELA SUPERIOR POLITECNICA DEL LITORAL

Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas

"EXPLORING GENDER IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE EFL CLASSROOM AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL"

THESIS SUBMITTED

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In

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By

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DEDICATION

**To my parents.
To Alfredo and our children.**

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So many people have been involved in the realization of this thesis, and the fulfillment of this personal dream of mine...

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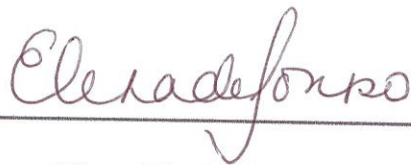
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EXPRESS STATEMENT

The responsibility for the contents of this Dissertation Thesis exclusively belongs to its author and to the intellectual patrimony of said ESCUELA SUPERIOR POLITECNICA DEL LITORAL.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Elena Maria Peña Figari', is written over a horizontal line.

Elena Maria Peña Figari

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades, several investigations have been carried out with relation to the way gender differences may impact the learning process. The present study seeks to clarify, not only such effect, but also what intervention tools and strategies teachers apply to handle gender diversity in the EFL classroom. With this purpose, the researcher worked with six specific groups of students, whose ages ranged between six and eleven years old, and their respective Language teachers together with the English Coordinator, the School Psychologist and the Discipline Inspector at an Ecuadorian bilingual school in the city of Guayaquil. Data was collected by means of a classroom observation instrument, students' and teachers' questionnaires, interviews and the analysis of school documents. Findings rendered and confirmed valuable information with relation to gender differences between boys and girls in aspects such as: attention span, class participation, need for supervision, students' perceptions of their Language teacher, types of activities male and female pupils like or dislike, interaction with the opposite gender and teacher, to name a few. Likewise, this research has evinced the urgent need to provide special training to EFL educators with relation to the topic in question since the participating schoolteachers manifested not having been capacitated in this area.

Key words: gender, bias, stereotypes, EFL, interaction, stimuli, discipline, merit, motivation, perception, strategy, praise, remediate, criticize, feedback

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List of Abbreviations

AAUW	American Association of University Women
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CEFR	Common European Framework of Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
INTERSECT	Interactions for Sex Equity in Classroom Teaching
KET	Key English Test
L1	first language
L2	second language
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TKT	Teaching Knowledge Test
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
YLE	Young Learners' Examinations

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

According to previous research carried out until recently mainly in developed countries, teachers unconsciously provide male students more energy, time and attention, both positive and negative, in class, leaving girls' needs behind and making them passive witnesses in the learning process.

Sadker and Sadker (1994) for example, alerted educators in American schools nationwide that girls, because of their gender, were victims of unequal treatment in their classes. Diverse forms of sexist disparity were detected in the language spoken, the materials used, and the textbooks read. Academically, female potential was being undermined.

These authors explain female students start growing silent as they grow older and cease to try to engage in classroom discussions. Little by little, they are no longer noticed or taken into account by teachers, moreover if they are not within their teacher's sight so they turn to be "invisible" members in the classrooms. On the other hand, due to their personality and behavior, boys demand more of their teacher's attention and supervision. They are given more opportunities to talk, are more frequently provided with constructive feedback and are more often reprimanded for misbehavior. Maher and Ward (2002) added on this point stating that in the elementary years, even though girls start losing confidence in themselves, their academic performance is still higher than the boys. Booth, Elliott-Johns and Bruce, (2009) point out that boys stand out in Science and Math, whereas girls prefer reading and writing and boys do not develop these skills as much.

Given the fact that all elementary schools in Ecuador host, by law, children of both genders (Ecuadorian Constitution, 2008), there is a clear need at this level to clarify how female and male students relate among themselves and whether their needs are being adequately attended to by current teaching practices in the English language class so as to sustain, in this area of the curriculum, the education of quality all children are entitled to.

Thus, this research intends to verify if this type of gap between male and female achievement also happens during the teaching of English as a foreign language and how interrelations, together with group management and the methodology applied, could result in such disadvantages.

Hruska (2002) cited in Davis and Skilton-Sylvester (2004) exposes that “teacher researchers are often more willing to engage in research and to accept findings that emerge from analyzing their own local contexts and configurations” (p.389). In addition, Davis and Skilton-Sylvester express that practitioners should produce knowledge to help remediate the incongruences between theory and applied teaching. They suggest that researching allows teachers to develop professionally and to understand the complexity of “how gender, language and education work in their own classrooms” (p. 398).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study will research and analyze how gender interplays in the dynamics of the EFL class at a Bilingual Elementary School, with the purpose of determining if there exists inequity in the way children’s needs are fulfilled and the impact that such differences may produce on the students’ role within the learning process.

1.3 Justification:

The researcher is particularly interested in the theme because in her capacity of school principal it is her responsibility to ensure a fair treatment to all students in her institution regardless of their gender. This study will add information that will be useful for future research in other Ecuadorian educational contexts, and also for designing a course on gender concerns for elementary English teachers of the institution mentioned and from neighboring schools too, so as to build a network of properly trained professionals who will share their knowledge with a positive multiplying effect. The findings may also arise the need for including and reinforcing the topic of gender equity within the EFL elementary school curriculum, as a theme to work on with learners since an early age (Lara, 2010).

1.3 Objectives

General Objective:

- To determine the impact that gender may have on students' learning of English as a foreign language at the elementary level.

Specific Objectives:

-To carry out a review of update literature on the matter of gender inequity in education.

-To describe student-teacher and student-student interactions inside the English classroom.

-To analyze the teaching practice in the English class with regard to methodology, resources, strategies and group management.

-To observe and register the students' participation and involvement in the class dynamics.

-To compare the level of success achieved by male and female students and their perceptions about the English class.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Its importance relies on the need to make teachers aware of this educational aspect so they may effect the corrections required for their students' benefit. Also to incentivize professionals to constantly capacitate themselves and update their knowledge and to reflect upon the effectiveness of their daily practice with the intention of bettering it (Stronge, Wards and Grant, 2011).

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The present study was completed with the participation of six English teachers and their respective groups in a coeducational bilingual elementary school of a high socioeconomic stratus located in the northern zone of Guayaquil. Consequently, its results should not be generalized to other realities or contexts but are intended to serve as an initial source of experience which may ignite other practitioners to question whether or not some type of gender bias may be occurring in their own classrooms and institutions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Definition of Gender

Glasser and Smith (2008) argue that the concept of gender has not been clearly defined. It is often used as a synonym for biological sex and also to address the different experiences of being male or female in social groups. Gender is a cultural and changing attribute which “intersects with other factors such as ethnicity, race, class, sexuality and biography in the construction of identity.” (p. 345) Ridgeway (2009) concurs that “gender is a primary cultural frame for coordinating behavior and organizing social relations.” (p.45)

Hruska (2004) expands on this concept stating that gender varies “over time and from event to event” (p. 481) so that TESOL professionals can encourage changes in students’ gender ideologies applying adequate pedagogical strategies in their classrooms.

Connell (2002) cited in Davis and Skilton-Sylvester (2004) refers that when considering gender, attention should center on established modes of behavior in social relations, on how people comport individually and inside groups. “It (gender) is a pattern in our social arrangements and in everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern (p. 386).”

Accordingly, Ken expresses that “Anthropologists believe the forming of gender identities of children is actually part of the socialization process”, and that, “. School education is, without a doubt one of the important venues where children are socialized” (pp . 4-5).

Davis and Skilton-Sylvester (2004) also draw on Schmenk (2004) to pose what critics argue with relation to gender generalizations and second language acquisition. Research emphasis should not be put on the differences between males and females but on remembering that students who learn a language constitute a group whose identity is permanently evolving.

Glasser and Smith (2008) add that there exists an urgent need for clarification of the terms “gender” and “sex” if educators want to fully comprehend students’ relationships and engagement in school. (Shaw, 2000; Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004).

Butler cited in Boldt (2002) describes gender as “performative,” that is, “as doing, rather than being.” Boldt aggregates to this respect that “Masculinity and femininity do not exist in anybody but are ideas that we more or less approximate in our performances of gender” (p.11). Again, quoting Butler, Boldt (2002) highlights that “it is not possible to talk about true or natural gender but only to describe the acts that constitute the illusion of natural gender” (p.11).

Sexism in education

In the preface of their controversial book “Failing at Fairness: How America’s schools fail girls”. Sadker and Sadker (1994) explain that in the 70’s the term sexism was little known or used in education and that it did not bear the discriminative meaning of bias it has today. They state it has been a long journey since Betty Frieddan referred to it with the phrase “problem that has no name.”

In the eighties and nineties, with the influence of the feminist movement that re-examined the role of women in society, focus was centered on female pupils and research claimed their lack of opportunities in their professional lives derived from gender bias which left them in a disadvantaged position throughout their schooling (Sadker, Sadker & Hicks, 1980; Tschumy, 1995; Maher & Ward, 2002).

Among other authors, Sadker and Sadker (1994) claimed that teachers provided females with less of their time, energy and attention, fewer opportunities of intervention in class, flatter feedback and that, when compared to what boys received, such imbalanced situation, affected girls both academically and emotionally. Females suffered from eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive conditions, fell behind in subjects like Math or Science and failed examinations required to be admitted in college.

On the other hand, Weaver-Hightower (2003) exposes that around 1995, the focus of educational research shifted to what he calls “The Boys’ Turn”. This mainly happened in countries like UK and Australia where researchers reached the conclusion that boys’ were actually the group who was being unattended in schools based on the large amount of evidence they found. Boys’ literacy skills proved to be poorer. Male students were more frequently suspended or expelled from class and referred as having learning difficulties. An

interesting view cited by Weaver-Hightower (2003) is Michael Gurian's claim that because their brains are physically unlike the girls', boys learn otherwise and present different needs in class.

"The Boys' Turn" concern rapidly spread to other parts of the world, as the United States, due to diverse factors. Weaver-Hightower highlights the "feminization of work" (p.477). Parents, particularly fathers, have become extremely worried about their sons' professional future witnessing how women are dominating the labor force. They feel their sons are being threatened by better qualified women taking decision-making positions at work.

Another relevant cause for this change of focus in education research has arisen from the multiple incidents, in recent years, largely publicized by media, which portray males as violent individuals capable of atrocities such as school shootings and sexual abuse, building up society's moral panic. The question now relies on what educational reforms need to be accomplished to ensure boys' psychological and physical well-being.

UNESCO (2011), in a report evaluating gender bias in Ecuadorian elementary and middle school education, (Educación Básica) explains that schools unperceptively endorse sexism within their walls, either by omission or action, in the decisions that are taken regarding their organizational structure, the language and materials utilized and the curriculum and pedagogy applied. Teachers and administrators follow generalizations or stereotypes constructed by society categorizing values, beliefs, qualities, roles as pertaining to one or the other gender, labelling them as feminine or masculine.

Shaw (2000), for instance concluded, in her study of cross-cultural gender dynamics in the adult ESOL class, that the observed teachers believed they gave the men and women in their groups an equitable treatment. This researcher utilized twelve items of criteria recommended for gender fair practices in schools to measure this aspect during her observations and the educator who best performed only applied five of these principles. Another example of inequity evinced in a pair of the classes observed men felt invisible and were ignored by their instructor twice as much as women.

Female and male stereotypes

Hruska (2004) carried out a year-long ethnographic study in a kindergarten in the United States with the purpose of observing how young ‘Spanish-bilingual students’ (p. 464) interacted with their English native speaking peers. Despite the teacher’s effort to promote a more equitable setting gender wise for language learners to integrate and communicate in English with the native speakers, the children’s locally constructed stereotypes negatively affected their behavioral patterns and their possibilities of second language use. In their verbal discourses, boys appeared as competitive and placed themselves in a position of power and superiority compared to girls who had romantic thoughts and liked dolls. (p. 465)

Boldt (2002) also develops the concept of how power claims mold children’s relationships, she purposes that,

Girls and boys at schools find themselves in environments shaped by the profession of education, their families, and their teachers, and by race, class, sexuality and history, that support or invalidate the children’s attempts to do power or to resist power claims (p.13).

Schlossberg and Goodman cited in Narahara (1998), expose that around the age of five, infants have already internalized firm preconceived notions of gender roles which are far from being accurate but are largely accepted as true. Such concepts picture males as powerful and women as having an inferior condition.

Likewise, Schneider (2001) coincides that children in the kindergarten class behave according to previously conceived gender stereotyped roles, especially boys in terms of the toys they choose and the activities they prefer to engage in (p. 4240).

The teaching of English as a foreign language

Yule (2014) (p. 187) explicates that the term “foreign” is applied when a language is not learned in the environment where it is commonly spoken or used, while the term “second” marks that the students are learning the language of the community around them. Therefore,

English may be learned as a foreign language (EFL) or as a second language (ESL) depending on the setting where it is taught. The same writer stresses the fact that in both situations people are acquiring another language, thus, on many occasions the phrase “second language learning” is used interchangeably denoting any of the two cases.

Brown (1994) (pp. 120 – 121) signals that instructors in EFL environments face greater challenges than those in an ESL context because the first ones need to make up for the lack of real communicative situations once their students leave their English school. EFL teachers require to optimize the quantity and quality of the input their learners receive and the time their pupils are exposed to the new language. This author shares some guidelines to offer learners communicative occasions outside the EFL classroom, some of which are listed below

Use class time for optimal authentic language input and interaction...

Help them to see genuine uses for English in their own lives.

Provide plenty of extra-class learning opportunities, such as:

- assigning an English –speaking movie,
- having them listen to an English speaking TV or radio program,
- getting an English-speaking conversation partner,
- doing outside reading (news, magazines, books),
- writing a journal o diary, in English, on their learning process.

Encourage the use of learning strategies outside the class

Form a Language club and schedule regular activities (pp.121-122)

On the contrary, students who are immersed in an ESL context, the same writer reinforces, have the advantage of counting at all times with a “laboratory” permanently at hand for them where they can fully interact with native speakers of English.

Delgado (2008) explored a bilingual teacher’s beliefs about her English language learners at the University stage. The researcher reports that said teacher noticed that Hispanics improved their conversation skills and attained higher academic results on standardized tests when English was profusely spoken during the lessons both by the instructor and among the students themselves.

When clarifying the uses of terms, Shaw (2000) considers that utilizing the denomination ESL constitutes a mistake because frequently learners manage not only one second language but more than one and that, therefore, a more precise name would be ESOL which means English for Speakers of Other Languages. Shaw adds that TESOL, on the other hand, refers to the field of studies or discipline which is called Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Teacher role in the class

Teacher-student interaction

Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) confirmed, in their evaluation of teacher-student interactions in the English language class at college level in Iran, that educators initiate more frequently exchanges with male pupils providing them with more feedback and speaking opportunities than their female peers. The authors draw on the work of Streitmatter (1994) who concluded that males dominate classroom interaction.(p.2) They also refer to Jones and Dindia (2004) (p. 9) to remind us of some of the many aspects that influence teacher-initiated exchanges with students. Among these factors, they recall on the students' part: their gender, race, behavior in class and academic performance, while on the teachers' part: their gender and their gender stereotypes.

Koca (2009) cited in Hassaskhah and Roshan - Zamir (2013) (p.2) sets forth that teachers and students interact with each other according to their personal "stereotyped beliefs". Stiles (2002) expands on this point explaining that prejudice comes along after stereotyping and that the former often constitutes an automatic response that happens even when somebody intends to evade it. Nevertheless, her study of six student teachers, half of which were advised beforehand that their practice would be watched for gender inequity, evinced that those instructors who knew the observers' intention could consciously inhibit their biases, thus providing their female and male students with fairer opportunities of interaction with respect to the quantity of initiated exchanges, their content and type.

Contrary to the above-mentioned case and supporting Stiles' stand, Perry (1996) considered the need to make teachers' aware of their inequity towards their female pupils

when, at a conference of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the videotapes of lessons imparted by experienced practitioners clearly presented their bias disfavored girls, even after said teachers had been informed that the ways they managed gender differences in their classrooms were in question

Brophy and Good (1969) created and described, in their observer's manual, a coding system to record classroom behavior taking the individual child as a unit of study to be analyzed separately. Shaw (2000) applied instead Sadker's INTERSECT (Interactions for Sex Equity in Classroom Teaching) coding instruments to capture the behavioral patterns found in her study of cross-cultural gender dynamics in the Adult ESOL classroom. Both systems require training to be effective tools of class observation.

Teacher strategies

Resources

Palardy and Rumberger (2008) cited in Stronge, Wards and Grant L.(2011) set forth that "a string of highly effective or ineffective teachers will have an enormous impact on a child's learning trajectory during the course of Grades K-12" (p. 348) In their analysis of the connection between student achievement and teacher instructional practices and behavior, Stronge, Wards and Grant (2011) found a significant difference of 30 percentile points in student achievement in mathematics and reading for more effective and less effective teachers. Such finding may be explained by the fact that, according to various authors, effective teachers have a set of attributes, approaches and a caring, encouraging non-academic bonding with their students that promote higher levels of performance. (pp. 341, 348)

On the other hand, Enright (1984) cited in Chaudron (1988) details that teachers guide the nature of interactions according to the speaking norms they have set in their classrooms. The same author compared two second language practitioners and discovered that there were variances in the students' opportunities to engage and negotiate depending on whether their instructor had a traditional-centered posture of "do not speak unless you are spoken to" or an

open child-centered vision of “if you have something to say it” (pp.118-119) The latter promoted more frequent and extensive speech exchanges within their lessons.

Feedback

Larsen-Freeman (2003) refers to feedback as an opportunity for learners to receive teachers’ input appraising their performance and for teachers and researchers as a path to learners’ way of thinking and developmental stage. She chooses to utilize the term “negative feedback” rather than error correction implying the former has a wider “less punitive connotation” allowing the learner the possibility to do what they can with the information received. (pp. 124 -125)

Larsen-Freeman mentions that plenty of controversy has arisen around the topic of feedback in language acquisition. Behaviorism states error occurrences should be anticipated and prevented by teachers to avoid the establishment of incorrect habits in language usage and the opposing view who sustain it is not necessary for teachers to immediately correct errors since this action makes children anxious impairing their learning and that, in the end, learners in SLA will self-correct their mistakes and acquire language from the positive input they are being exposed to. (p.124)

Hattie and Timberley (2007) define feedback as “information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding”(p.81). They add that for feedback to be effective, it should focus on the goals of the activity evaluated, on the progress the student is making and on the further steps the pupil should follow in order to continue progressing. Giving feedback is the part of the learning cycle that helps setting new forthcoming challenges once initial objectives have been met. (p.85)

Sadker and Sadker (1994) among others conducted studies on sexism in classroom dynamics and alerted educators about how teachers’ feedback affects student performance and self-confidence, categorizing teacher responses as of praise, remediation, criticism or acceptance. (p. 54) Regarding this aspect, Stiles (2002) points out that voice plays an especially determining role when typifying feedback, for instance, a teacher may respond “Right!” praising a student’s contribution or “Right,” merely accepting it. This author’s

previously mentioned study on teachers 'inhibition of gender bias' supports the Sadkers' findings that, in the classroom, boys' interventions are most frequently praised or remediated by the teacher while girls' productions are mostly accepted or criticized. This becomes a very serious issue since it is through remediating that pupils are encouraged to produce better and to develop their thinking skills.

Regarding feedback, Burnett (2001) investigated the type of praise children preferred to receive with very interesting outcomes. He found that, out of 747 Australian children, 91% wanted to receive recognition for their accomplishments and behaviors and a majority of 52% favored being praised quietly and individually rather than loudly and in front of their classmates.

An extremely illuminating sample of how the students' gender may mark a difference in the educators' perception of their academic advancement is clearly portrayed by Boldt's (2002) reflection on the school reports she delivered to her children's parents:

Reading through the narrative progress reports I had written each quarter for the children and their parents, I realized that I did indeed speak of girls and boys differently. I praised boys in my class more highly than girls. I spoke of boys as having potential even when there was little performance evidence to point that. I admired girls 'successes less. I saved my highest praise for girls' personalities rather than their accomplishments (p.8)

Discipline Management

"Classroom management is based on respect, fairness, and trust, wherein a positive climate is cultivated and maintained (Tschannen-Moran, 2000).

Cameron Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman, Brock and Nathanson (2009) studied among other aspects, the relationship between classroom organization climate and literacy gains in children adjusting to the transition stage of first grade in rural schools. In their paper, the researchers define classroom organization "as a set of observed teacher strategies for promoting good behavior, using classroom time well, and focusing students' attention on learning goals

”(p.145). They expose that, when teachers organize their classroom effectively, they are able to anticipate problems, manage disruptive situations quickly and redirect their efforts to involve students actively in learning. Their findings correlated, regardless of their gender, first graders’ poorer literacy advances with chaotic classroom environments. (pp.156-157)

Lara (2010) describes the classrooms as living spaces and proposes instructional strategies for educators to build more democratic, equitable classrooms, like cooperative work and shared learning and the reinforcement of values such as tolerance, honesty, respect, effort, responsibility, among others.

Chaudron (1998) emphasizes that students in the foreign language classroom become fully competent when the teacher utilizes the target language extensively both to instruct and to practice and also to manage administrative and disciplinary procedures. (p.121)

Teacher Attention

It has been repeatedly stated that boys receive more of the teachers’ attention in language class. Regarding this matter, Sunderland (2004) highlights an important point reminding us that this may be due to other factors associated rather than gender, for example, ethnicity, age or proficiency, like Good et al. (1973) cited in Sunderland (2004) found in a study of a mixed-sex class where the teacher devoted more of her attention to the most proficient boys and the least to the less achieving boys, thus favoring a subgroup. (p.231) Sunderland J. (2004) speaks of a “differential teacher treatment by gender” exposing that any uneven proportion of attention is unintentional on the teacher’s part and responds to the fact that teachers react to the diverse demands that boys and girls present.(p.225) Among her findings when evaluating gender and classroom interaction in a secondary school having German as a foreign language, she acknowledges that although boys may have dominated the interaction, the girls were the ones asked more academic “solicits”.(p.228)

Sadker and Sadker (1992) cited in Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) mention the way a segregated classroom seat pattern affects the amount of attention the teacher provides one group or the other, and that those who are farther from the educator’s sight become

invisible members who have fewer chances to be invited to intervene in the discussions and that such unfair distribution results in the students' performance detriment. (p.9)

Student role in class

Differences in learning

Reid (1995) cited in Lightbown and Spada (1999) defines the term learning style' as an individual habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills." (p.58)

Booth, Elliot-Johns and Bruce (2009) using PISA data in their report about student performance in Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand set forth that male elementary and secondary students do not do as well as girls in reading and writing. The National Literacy Trust's review on boys' literacy in the UK elaborated by Clark (2012) confirmed some important facts that apply not only nationally but also internationally. Concerns detailed in this document can be summarized in the following points:

Results on National Curriculum reading tests show girls perform higher than boys. Because most schoolteachers are women, boys view reading as a feminine activity. Boys and girls are interested in different types of reading materials and topics. Girls find pleasure in reading so they read longer and more frequently than their male partners. (pp.4-5)

As reported in the document previously mentioned, teachers involved in a national survey in 2011 described boys' and girls' different learning styles as one of the main reasons why females outperformed males in reading. They concurred that boys are more active and find it harder to sit long while working, they are noisier, can concentrate for shorter periods of time, get bored easily and are more disorganized. Whereas, girls mature earlier, are well comported and can stay seated to work.

Nevertheless on this point, Weaver-Hightower (2010) challenges gender stereotypes and warns us that generalizations regarding female and male interests or skills may wrongly assume that all boys or all girls are in trouble when some of them are successful, so the question should be which boys or which girls?

Cameron Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman , Brock L.L and Nathanson (2009) when examining gender differences in the early adjustment of first graders, distinguish that by nature girls conform faster to student roles than their male partners. Girls obey directions and can stay longer in their seats completing activities that require fine motor skills while boys´ find it harder to fit in traditional classroom settings and their disorderly behavior demands more of the teacher´s attention. Nevertheless the results from their study of a first grade in a rural context, evidenced that it was difficult for both genders to work with autonomy and to follow instructions. (p.144)

Schneider (2001) cites Kleinfield (2000) to point out that girls are no longer victims in schools and that in reality they do better on tests and achieve higher academically. He expands on this point adding that compared to males, females begin formal instruction earlier and with advantages since by the time they start kindergarten they have already developed small muscle and verbal skills that teachers appreciate greatly (p. 4240).

Participation

Tschumy (1995) marks a difference between boys and girls at the time of answering an open question. She sets forth teachers should allow some time before selecting a respondent since boys will usually raise their hands faster and girls will take longer to process the information and produce the answer. (p.60) Concurrently, Chaudron (1998) points out “wait time” as a relevant factor that enables second language learners to construct their response and citing Holley and King (1971) who suggest a minimum 5-minute halt to encourage student participation.

When comparing how girls behave in single-sex and co-educational learning environments, Margolis and Lazarus (1996) set forth it has been evident that girls act with

much more confidence and become more inquisitive and active taking leading roles when boys are not around. (p.236)

Margolis and Lazarus (1996) draw on a report on how the brain works while reading, which was published massively in 1995 by the New York Post and informed that “females used both sides of the brain” while “males used only the left side” (p. 242).

Christina Sommers (2000) cited in Maher and Ward (2002, p. 79) denotes that the situation has turned round as many studies have concluded because presently boys are those most badly affected by educational bias. While girls are outstanding in humanities and languages and moving into college in increasing numbers, boys most often quit school, are referred for disciplinary issues (Sunderland , 2004, p.233) or for having learning difficulties. In support of this view Sciutto, Nolfi and Bluhm (2004) investigated if a child’s gender affected the decisions that elementary school teachers made when referring students showing (ADHD) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and determined, using fictional student profiles, that due to their biased perceptions of male disruptive behavior, teachers were more likely to refer boys than girls for all the described symptoms.

Ken (n/d) questioned himself as to whether gender imbalance still persisted in the interactions of the elementary classroom and applied a simplified version of the Sadkers’ INTERSECT instrument to assess this aspect. An outstanding finding from his study was that males and females concentrate more during different parts of a lesson. Boys showed themselves much more engaged during the early period of the class and their concentration dropped later while girls gain more attention during the second half. (pp.14-17)

Motivation

Regarding second language acquisition, Lightbown and Spada (1999) explain that according to Stephen Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis there is “an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from acquiring language from the available input”. Learners become emotionally blocked when their motivation or self-esteem are low or when they feel anger and anxiety. (pp. 39, 40)

An illuminating perspective cited in Mates and Joaquin (2013) is Scovel’s (1978) idea that a little anxiety may facilitate language acquisition when the learner is drawn to complete a

task viewed as achievable. Nevertheless, a person being excessively anxious about a demand will reject or quit trying to accomplish.

Stroud and Wee (2006) on their part distinguish two types of anxiety that may hinder student participation in the second language class: competence-based anxiety, when a student is worried about how a teacher will evaluate their ability using the target language, and identity-based anxiety, when a student's use of the language jeopardizes their position within the group of peers. An example of the latter is a pupil who sits in the back of the room not to be perceived by his classmates as hardworking at the risk of being segregated by the group.

Porkaew (2004) cites two authors to differentiate motivation from attitude. First, she draws on Brown who defines motivation as "an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action" (p.). Then, she refers to Lambert who describes attitude as "an original and consistent manner of thinking, feeling, and reacting to people, groups, social issues or, more generally, to any event in the environment" (p.). Porkaew concludes that although different, both affective factors are interrelated when considering L2 learning.

Alongside, Schumman (cited in Mates and Joaquin, 2013) in order to explain how affect and motivation interplay in second language acquisition, suggests a "stimulus appraisal approach" and categorizes how students evaluate the stimuli they perceive from the surroundings, as follows:

Whether the situation is novel or pleasant, whether it contributes to one's goals or needs, whether we feel we have the coping potential to deal with its consequences, and how our engagement within a situation may affect our self and social image.

(p.421)

Each brain will assess the stimulus differently causing acceptance or rejection on the learner's part. As a result of these appraisals a student will or will not be motivated to learn.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) point out that no-one can deny that success in learning a second language greatly depends on the learner's will to learn but that there are other factors that affect this process such as age, aptitude, personal background and life stories. These individual differences are aspects over which educators have no control but the authors remark that there are other factors that teachers can manipulate to foster a positive attitude and

motivation towards the target language. One of them is classroom climate. They add that in order to enhance students' intrinsic motivation teachers should "make the classroom a positive environment in which students are stimulated, engaged in activities which are appropriate to their age, interests and cultural backgrounds, and most importantly where students can experience success." (p.163)

Academic Achievement

Sunderland (2004) denounces that in the United Kingdom girls prefer to study languages and exceed boys' achievement in this subject which remains a prominent issue related to gender. (p. 233) When trying to answer the question why few boys choose to study languages, Sunderland says that the cause may be that language bears a feminine connotation for males, and so it has been evident in single-sex boys' schools in the United Kingdom that students undertake learning languages and do well only because girls are not around. (p. 235)

Yalcinkaya and Abu (2012) conducted a study to examine differences in academic achievement in two single-sex schools and one coeducational school in Kazakhstan finding grade point averages were similar across these institutions. These results refuted previous works cited by the authors concluding that academically girls in single-sex schools achieved higher than their counterparts in coed schools. Nevertheless participating students reported there were specific advantages in each system. In single-sex schools, without the distraction of the opposite sex, students could concentrate better and rendered more homework. On the other hand, students perceived mixed schools provided an environment closer to the real world and allowed learning how to behave and communicate with the other gender.

Clark C. (2012) mentions the actual debate about whether or not there exists a relationship between teacher gender and student achievement. Ammermuller and Dolton (2006) cited in Clark (2012) support this conjecture explicating that when boys are 13, they attain a little higher in maths if their instructor is their same gender and that something alike happens with girls in English if the person who teaches them is a woman. Nevertheless, when children are 9 this minimal difference does not occur. Among other researchers, Clark emphasizes that there is no conclusive evidence relating it is an advantage or disadvantage for boys or girls to count with a teacher of their same sex.

Student-student interaction

Hruska (2004) explored the complex interplay between second language learners' ideologies and social relationships in an English dominant kindergarten, finding for instance, that children separated themselves by gender when they decided what to do or where to go. Some activities were identified as belonging within a particular gender, for example, building blocks, climbing trees and soccer for boys, playing with dolls and housekeeping for girls.

Margolis and Lazarus (1996) express that sometimes with the intention of insulting, a boy calls another boy, "a girl". (p.240). The same circumstance is exposed by Boldt (2002) who examined the relation between gender and power among her third and fourth graders in her language class. The girls' lack of reaction towards the denigrating usage of "You're such a girl" (p.7) from one male to another in her group, made the teacher question her pupils' gendered behaviors.

In her study of how gender boundaries were set among her elementary pupils, Boldt (2002) discovered that both males and females acknowledged there were certain things the other gender were naturally better at. For instance, they believed girls would show much more interest in "art, music, reading, writing, dancing, certain kind of imaginary play, ... animals, and being helpful and cooperative with the teacher" (p.15). On the other hand, children recognized there were areas that came more naturally to boys like, "sports, 'being rascally', interested in gross things and violence, math and science" (p.15). Most frequently pupils were inclined to comport within socially accepted and imposed gendered norms of behavior but there were occasions when children demanded more flexibility for their expected roles and would express themselves like, "Boys and girls can do whatever they want" (p. 15) in their attempt for established gender boundaries to widen or shift.

Ethnography

As opposed to more rigid controlled forms of investigation, Whitehead, (2005) conceives ethnography as "a process of discovery, making inferences, and continuing inquiry" (p.9) and takes the child as a model for ethnographic study. He sustains that an ethnographer approaches a social- cultural group just as a toddler learns from their surroundings, absorbing

information through all the senses not only the sight, while observing, interviewing, participating and interpreting. (p.10)

Whitehead (2005) refers that many times there is a difference between what people say and what people actually perform and that precisely the “objective of focused observation is to be able to discern the real from the ideal, the tacit from the explicit, and the back from the front.” (p.15)

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

In the sources consulted to review the literature, the referred authors discussed gender matters in relation to students' achievement in various academic areas. Findings tell that as children move from elementary to high school, boys become keener in subjects like Math and Science while girls develop strongly in language and literature. Also that such differences result from teachers' uneven treatment of their pupils, males capturing most of the attention and opportunities to participate in class and females growing quieter and apart.

The intention in this research was to look for evidence that could help conclude whether similar gaps were occurring with young learners within an EFL program in an Ecuadorian educational context.

This chapter details the design and methodology applied to collect and analyze the information required to carry out the present study.

3.1 Research questions

The two main questions which guided the researcher's work on this qualitative study were the following:

How does the students' gender affect their learning of English as a foreign language?

How do EFL teachers deal with gender differences within the class dynamics?

3.2. Qualitative research

This study is of a qualitative kind and used ethnographic techniques to collect the information required.

Qualitative inquiry was chosen because as Richards, K. (2003) explains the same is perfectly suited for researching TESOL classroom practices because it focuses on the person and on the complex social relationships of the world we live in. This author adds that, among other qualitative traditions, ethnography tries to "describe and understand the behavior of a

particular social or cultural group.”(p.14) In order to achieve this, Richards states that the researcher needs to enter the research setting and interpret the participants’ perspectives.

- Setting

The present study was performed in a prestigious Ecuadorian private bilingual school in northern Guayaquil with more than thirty years of existence. The researcher had labored in such institution for eighteen years. Having been first an English teacher in high school for two years and later English Coordinator of the elementary grades for six years, she held at the time of the study the position of School Principal of the Elementary Section. This is the reason why her focus of attention was to analyze whether gender was in any way affecting the students’ achievement in the primary years of schooling.

Being the school principal facilitated the researcher’s access to the different settings and participants involved without the need of requesting for her interventions permission from any school authority. Yet in a conversation she informed the Director General of her coming research and got the latter’s explicit approval and support. Both coincided on that notifying parents was not deemed convenient since the investigation would happen discreetly during the regular schedule of classes and alerting parents could bring about gratuitous concerns or questioning.

In this school English is taught as a foreign language in a fully bilingual program adding 16 hours of class a week divided into four different subjects: Language and Literature, Maths, Science and Social Studies. It is important to note that the school in search of academic excellence has its students periodically sit for international evaluations by the University of Cambridge in the four basic language skills that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Such examinations are the YLE Starters, Movers and Flyers and the KET and the results rendered every year are highly satisfactory. For the purpose of this work on EFL, the researcher concentrated on class dynamics only during the language activities.

The period of time was chosen considering the school calendar and lasted four months within one academic term (Quimestre) towards the end of the school year between the months of October and January.

- Participants

The participants were six English teachers with their corresponding groups of students. Classes held between 20 and 23 students both female and male aged 6 to 11 belonging to a medium-high socioeconomic and cultural stratus. For the aim of this study, the researcher selected the English teachers and students in first, third and fifth grades what would provide her with a general overview of the level of incidence gender had in the learning process of the students under her direction.

- The Teachers

The researcher summoned all the English staff to a meeting in the principal's session room in order to give an brief explanation of the investigation she would be engaging in, telling them that she would be studying both the interactions occurring between male and female students and the interactions going on between the teachers and their male and female students during certain language periods. She openly asked for their collaboration during the procedures and received a general positive response from head teachers and teacher helpers.

It was necessary for the researcher to decide on a sample of the subjects to be studied, so in order to retrieve data from sequential grades and various teachers, the researcher determined the most suitable classes and teachers to study were those in classrooms 1A and 1B; 3B and 3C; 5B and 5C. After some doubts that the researcher had to clarify mainly regarding the aspect of the confidentiality of the participants' names, the appointed teachers proceeded to voluntarily sign the correspondent Consent Form. (Please see Appendix A: Consent Form)

All six educators were female, Ecuadorian, nonnative speakers of English. Four were in their thirties with the exception of 1B and 3B teachers who were in their twenties. All of them, except for the 3B class teacher who had recently become a head teacher, were certified by the University of Cambridge as being at a B2 or a C1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Languages (CEFR) and had also successfully accomplished the teaching qualification of the Teaching Knowledge Test from the same British University. The educators in 1B, 3C and 5C groups had earned a College degree in Marketing and Business, Social Communication and Clinical Psychology respectively. The 1A teacher was

about to conclude her B.A. in TEFL. The 3B teacher was half way her BA in Marketing. The 5B teacher, who was also the English Coordinator, was planning to retake her studies in Early Childhood Education. Three women were married, three single. (Please see Appendix B: Teachers' Profiles)

- The Students

The institution in question received students of both sexes in a coeducational system made mandatory for all schools nationwide the Ministry of Education in the last years. The number of children in a group ranged from 20 to 26. It is relevant to signal at this point that this educational center has been an inclusive one since its foundation more than thirty years ago, hence admitting children with special needs who do not follow the English program and are pulled out of their groups and referred to the Educational Psychology Department on a permanent or temporary basis in order to receive their individual recovery therapies. These specific students did not participate in and were not accounted for in the study.

Students were boys and girls from 6 to 11 years old, mostly of Ecuadorian origin, learners of English as a foreign language, the majority of them had entered the institution at their preschool stage. They were regularly exposed to the language for 16 periods of instruction a week which also included subject matter like Maths, Science and Social Studies (both History and Geography). Children worked at beginners' – elementary level.

- Observations

Class observations were carried out at three levels of the elementary school (grades 1, 3 and 5). For the sake of reliability, two groups from the same level, each with a different teacher, were observed, summing six groups in all. The teacher helper at each grade was directed to videotape the two groups assigned at her level, on three different occasions for at least thirty minutes of class. Having a teacher helper quietly recording from the back of the room with a small device was less intruding for the teacher and for the students themselves than experiencing having their school principal or a third person taking notes while observing.

Thus, during a period of approximately six weeks or one short term (parcial), the researcher was able to collect three class extracts per teacher totalizing eighteen videos.

Classes were videotaped to give the researcher the opportunity to watch them thoroughly and at the required pace with the possibility of stopping or repeating the sections that could render relevant information for this study. Stiles (2002) concurred that this methodology seemed suitable for the observer to overcome the difficulty encountered when trying to keep record of every exchange that could happen between the teacher and the group of students during the observed periods.

Such observations were registered by hand on a form the researcher designed to that end after examining some coding systems previously used to record classroom interactions, as seen in Brophy and Good, (1969); Shaw, (2000); Creative Associates International (2014).

The format accounts for the number of exchanges occurring between teacher and student during one class observation, specifying who initiates and who responds in the interaction, the quality of the response and the teacher's reaction to what the student said. (See Appendix C: Exchanges)

If the teacher initiated with a direct question addressing a particular child, the observer should mark a 'B' if it was a boy or a 'G' if it was a girl. If the teacher's initial question was thrown to the group or open, the observer should consider how many girls and how many boys put their hands up and jot down the number in the reserved spaces and then identify who was called on to respond, either a boy (B) or a Girl (G).

After evaluating the student's response, the observer should write an X under one of the following headings: 'correct', 'partially correct', 'incorrect' or 'no response'.

A student initiating the exchange could ask a question, comment or ask for help, the observer should mark with a cross in the appropriate space.

Whether the student initiated or responded in the interaction, the teacher would somehow react to accept, praise, remediate or criticize, or could give no response. The four first categories follow Sadker and Sadker's (1994) typification of teachers' feedback. Practitioners might also have a physical response by approaching the student what should be noted down with a cross under 'closeness'.

There exists a myriad of unpredictable behaviors and situations that may develop within classroom dynamics. The observer could add those as well as any other detail worth mentioning for later analysis in the column headed 'Other Observations'.

- Interview

Another technique to gather data consisted in individual interviews with the English Coordinator, the School Psychologist and the Discipline Inspector in order to construct a more complete picture of boys' and girls' attitudes and performance during language class, addressing the issue of gender equity from different professional points of view.

The interview questions were mailed to the mentioned members of the staff who forwarded the answers to the researcher through the same via. The Psychologist and the Inspector responded to seven open questions and the English Coordinator to eight. (Please see Appendixes G, H, I: Interviews)

First, the interviewees had to refer some personal information relative their academic studies, professional experience and years of work in the institution. All three were questioned about the advantages and disadvantages of being in a mixed sex school, the impact on students' learning of having mostly female educators in the institution, and whether both boys and girls received a fair treatment in their lessons and in disciplinary incidents.

Besides, the Psychologist shared if the discourse children brought to her therapy about their relations with their peers, was in any way permeated by gendered differences or socially constructed stereotypes. The Discipline Inspector on the other hand, extended on disciplinary matters like her views on connections between gender and behavior and on children's position with respect to authority. Finally the English Coordinator broadened the researcher's perspective by responding on the implications of gender in the school's EFL program discussing among other points the presence of stereotypes in textbooks, gender considerations in lesson planning and the need for specific teacher training on this matter.

- Questionnaire

At the end of a school day, the researcher met with the six participating teachers and handed them out the questionnaire she had elaborated for them to fill in personal information: their age, gender, academic background, and years of teaching experience, teaching hours, classrooms, number and gender of the students in their groups.

The teachers' format included 10 questions of which 8 were open-ended and 2 were structured. Teachers had to respond according to their knowledge and experience about gender

differences and factors influencing learning, the benefits and disadvantages of mixed classes, the teaching resources and strategies, discipline management, characteristics of male and female students, group work organization. (Please see Appendix D: Teacher Questionnaire)

The students, on the other hand, responded to a set of questions about their teachers, classmates, their own experiences and feelings in the English class. There were two versions of questionnaires collecting the same data, a simpler one distributed to first and third graders being more visual and with shorter instructions, and another one for fifth graders containing longer statements and the opportunity for children to explain their reasons. An English teacher other than the class's own was in charge of delivering the papers and monitoring the students. The researcher occasionally checked if the process was duly carried out. Both the teachers and the students answered anonymously, although the first ones' questionnaires allowed identifying the respondents by the classroom they taught. (Please see Appendixes E and F: Let's Talk about School)

- Analysis of documents

Certain documentation was selected for analysis with the intention of enriching the data necessitated for the completion of this paper. The researcher elaborated four different instruments to enter the information gathered from the various sources. One was utilized with the students' report cards where the final averages in the subject of Language were compared by gender to find common traits in achievement. (Please see Appendix M: Language Final Average – Gender Record) In order to evaluate the children's involvement and behavior during the Language hours, the school agendas in the six classes were studied carefully and the students' merits and discipline calls of attention were noted down on two separate formats for further codification by gender. (See Annexes ...) Finally, three written activities from each grade's notebooks were chosen and analyzed in terms of work presentation, teacher's scores and type of feedback and the findings recorded accordingly.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Results from the Teachers' Questionnaires

Six participant teachers shared their perceptions and experiences when responding to a questionnaire that touched aspects related to gender considerations in learning. To ensure their anonymity, the instructors are identified by the role they perform, that is the class they teach. The selected grades were first A and B, third B and C, and fifth B and C six, so as to concur different educators. This selection provided the researcher with a richer view from the teachers' perspective of what was happening in the school relative gender matters.

Knowledge about Differences in learning

When asked what they knew about gender differences in learning, the responses received shared many points of coincidence. Answers are quoted as they were given, without correcting any errors incurred.

All teachers somehow expressed that girls and boys learned differently, 1B, 5B and 5C instructors literally expressed "boys and girls learn in different ways." Three said that girls were stronger in language. 1A Teacher expanded on this, "For me girls are better in language, they tend to write more, use more details, describing things or events. They work nice and pay attention to details and presentation." 1B Teacher agreed, "... girls work with more order and better presentation. For girls it is easier to express orally and in writing what they feel or what to say." As shown in these two sample quotes, all teachers also associated girls with good presentation and as being careful about details.

Four out of six instructors described boys as being fast and more practical. 3C Teacher believed that "Girls are better with details. Boys like to finish faster despite details." 1A Teacher concurs. "They (Boys) always want to finish first and don't care about details or their presentation." Additionally, 3B Teacher explained, "I consider girls and boys learn in different ways. They use different methods when they do an activity. Girls are more shy than

boys, they need to be sure of an answer to say it out loud and boys just give a try when they answer a question.”

Half of the educators believed boys did better in math or subjects regarding numbers. 5C Teacher stated, “... (it) is possible that boys like more working with numbers ‘cause (it) is more practical and girls like more describing, using details. In Science boys and girls love doing experiments but girls enjoy more writing observations and conclusions.” 1B teacher supported, “Boys are better with numbers.”

Benefits of mixed-gender classes

The teachers in question were requested to reflect upon the benefits of having both girls and boys sharing the same class.

Four out of six educators believed it is beneficial to have a variety of points of view and opinions. In this respect for instance, 5C Teacher posed ‘There are always different opinions. They learn to respect their differences in everything. They learn from each other. As a teacher (it) is better to have all sorts of comments and points of view to check if the lesson is clear or needs changes.’ 3C Teacher added, “You can have more experiences from different genders points of view. Boys and girls are seen equal by each other. They learn to interact with each other,... the reactions are different and that enriches your class.”

Three instructors highlighted the aspect that children were learning to respect. For example, 1B Teacher illustrated this point, “They learn to respect their differences; share their different interests; girls lead boys to work better.”

Two participant educators said discipline was better when there were boys and girls in the same group. To this respect, 3B Teacher referred us a sample, “Boys and girls learn how to interact with the other gender. There are different points of view. The discipline is better when there are boys and girls. 3 C Teacher confirmed “...when they are with another gender next to (them) they behave better.”

In addition, four out of the six instructors believed students learned how to behave and interact with the other gender. 1A Teacher illustrated this idea, “...that they learn how to behave around the other gender; the interaction is different with the teacher- boys have more confidence with me, girls keep a certain distance from me. 5B Teacher reinforced this

aspect, “That they are learning to live, share in a place with both genders just like the real world, to treat people as an equal; getting used to be(ing) together and feel relaxed in a class with girls. (I’ve heard that girls from “girls only” schools get nervous around boys.)”

Disadvantages of mixed-gender classes

When evaluating the positive and negative sides of classes containing both male and female pupils, teachers mentioned particulars that interfered with the regular running of their lessons.

Half of the educators considered that boys showed certain characteristics that disfavored group management. As an example, 1A Teacher illustrated this, “ Sometimes boys are rude so discipline in the class is affected.” Furthermore, half of the instructors spoke of situations affecting the class climate. 1B Teacher asserted, “Girls talk a lot and sometimes this annoys boys; boys tend to disturb more so the class harmony may be affected, they don’t like to sit next to someone of a different gender... boys tend to disturb more so the class harmony may be affected.” 3B Teacher exemplified, “The class is messier when there are boys and girls. Girls make the class neat.” And she included at the end, the phrase “Physical confrontations.”

Two of the six educators said that arranging how children sat in the room wasn’t a simple task. 1A Teacher, for instance, indicated that “... they do not want to sit next to a girl/boy; it’s difficult to form groups, they always want to be with the same gender.” 1B Teacher claimed that “they don’t like to sit next to someone of a different gender.”

Two instructors referred difficulties regarding the rhythm in the completion of certain activities. For example, 5B Teacher expressed the following, “Since there’s a difference in gender, in learning there will be disadvantages such as one group not allowing the other to continue because one will slow down the other; not learning at the same pace; too much competition sometimes.” Likewise, 5C Teacher manifested, “There are times when one of the two groups finishes first.”

Two educators expressed concern about how the presence of male classmates results in a change of behavior on the part of the female students. 3B Teacher set forth, “Sometimes the point of the class is lost. They (Girls) don’t act normally, girls are shy when there are boys

around. Similarly, 5C Teacher explains, “Sometimes they (boys and girls) get into long debates. They could be embarrassed to talk about personal things.”

Only one instructor disagreed with the rest of the educators when questioned about working with both genders together. 3C Teacher stated, “I don’t think there are disadvantages.”

Opinion about boys and girls learning differently

Instructors were asked whether they considered boys and girls learned differently.

All six women agreed that learning is not the same for every child. Four of them mentioned gender is not a crucial factor in instruction, rather a student’s personality, background or interests may be more determining at the time of acquiring language. As a sample, 3B Teacher exposed her point of view like this, “I consider every boy and girl learns differently because everyone is different and use different methods while learning. They search the best way to understand the class and activity.” 1B Teacher coincided on this matter, “I think it depends more on their personality and their interests, both boys and girls are different worlds.”

Half of the educators generalized how students were and performed in class in accord with their gender. As an illustration, 1A Teacher’s words are quoted, “But I can say that boys are not shy and are not afraid of making mistakes, so sometimes they participate more in the class. Girls tend to be always attentive.” 5B Teacher complements the previous descriptions with, “... because girls tend to be more mature than boys, for example, girls are more responsible in completing activities than boys.” Finally 5C teacher expands on male and female unlikeness contending, “...boys are more practical. They like to solve things, to follow steps, Girls are more likely to describe, tell a story. They too use numbers and more to use adjectives and express an opinion.”

Factors influencing the learning process

Question number 5 of the teachers’ questionnaire included a list of factors that can affect the students’ learning process. The six professionals had share their opinion about this

respect by grading each option from 1 to 5, knowing that 1 marks the most influential factor and 5 the least influential.

The information gathered in this question was summarized on the chart that follows:

Table 4.1

Factors influencing the learning process

	1A	1B	3B	3C	5B	5C
BEHAVIOR	2	1	1	1	3	2
ATTENTION PERIODS	1	4	4	4	2	1
NEED FOR TEACHER'S SUPPORT OR SUPERVISION	4	5	2	5	1	5
ORDER AND ORGANIZATION TO WORK	3	3	3	2	4	3
PERSONAL INTERESTS	5	2	5	3	5	4

As shown above, half of the schoolteachers believed that a student's behavior was the most influential factor in their learning process. Two instructors more shared the opinion that behavior was the second most influential aspect in this sense.

On the other hand, four out of the six educators ranked the pupil's order and organization to work in third place.

Half of the participating teachers thought that in fourth place came the student's attention period. When deciding which element had the least influence in the learning process, the opinions were equally divided in two groups. Half of the women esteemed it was the need for teacher's support or supervision whereas the other half deemed it was the learner's personal interests.

Statements relative boys' and girls' performance

The six professionals in question were required to tell, according to their opinion and experience, if each of the following statements described either boys or girls by writing G or B respectively.

Table 4.2

Statements relative boys' and girls' performance

	1A	1B	3B	3C	5B	5C
They enjoy reading and writing more.	G	B/G	B	G	G	G
It is harder to motivate them to participate actively during Language class.	G	B	B	B	B	B
They present neater work.	G	G	G	G	G	G
They require more of my support and supervision.	B	B	G	B	B	B
Their attention scope in Language class is longer.	G	G	G	G	G	G
They show more leadership skills.	B	G	B	B	G	B
They usually show responsibility on the roles assigned.	G	G	G	G	G	G

All schoolteachers related girls as presenting neater work, having longer attention scope in language class and usually showing responsibilities on the roles assigned.

Five out of six educators referred that girls enjoyed reading and writing more.

As for the boys, except for one, the remaining five teachers agreed that it was harder to motivate boys to participate actively during Language class and that they required more of the teacher's support and supervision.

Finally, with the exception of two educators, four associated boys with showing more leadership skills than girls.

Discipline

The selected instructors had to respond if, in general terms, they handled discipline differently between boys and girls.

Although two of the educators in 1B and 3C expressed that the classroom rules were intended for everyone and that children were "all treated equally" regardless of their gender, in their discourse, all schoolteachers except one, marked dissimilarities in the ways they approached their male and female pupils' behavior during their lessons.

Four teachers believed they had to be softer with girls because they appeared to be more emotional, while they had to speak firmer to boys because they were disobedient and

didn't seem to care when they were reprimanded. 1A Teacher as a sample described, "I have to be more firm (tone of voice) towards boys, with girls I have to pay more attention to their feelings." 3B Teacher consequently indicated "...girls are more easy to handle. They do what they are told and when talking to a boy, you need to repeatedly tell them what to do. Girls need to be talked gentle and kind and they are offended when you raise your voice to them. For boys you need to be a bit firm." 1B Teacher's discourse also exemplifies this matter, "...I tend to be more strict with boys because when they disobey and I try to talk to them it doesn't work..."

Three educators' concurred girls rapidly reacted to the calls of attention given when they are disciplined. For example, 5B Teacher stated, "...girls are more manageable than boys. They will follow instructions easily. The boys are more centered or finishing first so they can go play football. "And 5C Teacher completed this thought,"...girls are told once ... if they talk to each other or are distracted. I need to repeat again and again...with boys"

Motivation

Upon consideration of the strategies they applied in class which had proven to be the most effective to encourage their pupils' engagement and work, the six mentioned educators listed an assortment of motivating choices some of which coincided for both genders while others did not.

In the case of stimuli suiting girls, five teachers agreed that females appreciated being assigned responsibilities as their helper in class. Three recurring responses related to letting girls do crafts, draw or color after concluding due classwork. Being first in line and reading storybooks were also signaled by two teachers as positive external motivators with female students.

Four instructors promoted boys' participation in language lessons by allowing them to bring toys to play or take part in games once they have finished the activities planned. As incentives, two teachers gave male pupils the chance to be first in the line when coming out of the room and three out of six educators sent boys a few minutes early to recess or to sports practice. In the same line, one teacher offered boys the opportunity to talk about football at the end of the language period.

Among the strategies used with both girls and boys, three teachers in the case of girls, and four in the case of boys, found it fruitful to give out merits which, in this school, are written records in the students' agendas leading to certificates of achievement. Finally, one fifth grade teacher indicated that moving out of the regular classroom and going outside to work was a convenient stimulus for both girls and boys.

Responsibilities Assigned

The researcher asked the participant teachers if they assigned responsibilities differently according to gender when they divided their class for group activities,

Half of the educators manifested that they preferred to assign responsibilities to girls because among other characteristics, they were helpful, better organized and more knowledgeable than boys. 1A Teacher, as an example, expresses her concern, "I try to be equal but sometimes I tend to give responsibilities more to girls because I know that they will help the group, check discipline or take care of the presentations." Despite dealing with older students, 5C Teacher also concurs on this point, "Yes, girls are much more organized; they know what to do, so they are great, very trustful leaders." 5B coincides, "Yes, I usually assign more responsibilities to girls than boys."

Only 5C Teacher detailed how male pupils contributed to collaborative work. She explained, "Boys (in 5th grades) help completing the tasks, gathering info and doing charts."

The other half of instructors thought otherwise pertaining the distribution of responsibilities when working in groups. 3C Teacher for instance set forth, "...I divide it according to their personalities and skills for example, the person that is in charge of drawing is the one that draws better." 3B Teacher explained, "No, when there are groups every boy and girl shares responsibilities. I make mixed groups where they have to choose who makes what and who is the leader of the team."

Lesson Planning

Five out of six teachers asserted that they did consider different aspects when they planned their language lessons. One of them referred she took into account the level of demand of the activity designed and the time of the day. Thus, 1A Teacher exposed, "I tend to

plan activities that I know are going to be demanding for the first period of class and things that are “lighter” like reading activities or coloring for the last periods.” 3C Teacher was also aware that certain on-the-go adaptations might be suitable depending on the mood of the group. She exposed, “I check the timing, the content and if it is the case I make a shorter class or activity.” Moreover, 5C Teacher described some of the resources she resorted to, to ensure her practice was effective. She communicated, “...if there’s a class that they didn’t fully understand I need to do it again changing the method maybe using more materials, changing the order of chairs, more visual aids, videos , etc.”

Two instructors explicitly touched the issue of gender when responding this point. 1B Teacher explicitly related, “Sometimes I try to use topics that boys are more interested in to call their attention.” 3B Teacher added, “...sometimes I plan classes where girls and boys compete against each other. They have to answer questions related to the subject and the group that answers the most is the one that wins.

Just one educator stated she hadn’t thought of this theme until the receipt of this questionnaire.

4.2 Results from the Students’ Questionnaires

Teacher’s description

In the lower classrooms, first grade, the larger amount of girls associate their teacher with characteristics such as BEAUTIFUL related to their physical aspect. This may result from the possibility that bonding responds more to a relationship of identification and motherly and the fact that the teacher is a woman may have a stronger impact on the girls than on the boys. This corroborates what the English Coordinator exposed in the interview, “I feel that they (children) see us in a maternal way and that empowers us to discipline them and for them to respect us”.

On the other hand, boys at that age (1st) relate their favorite teacher with personality features like FUNNY or HAPPY.

In 3rd grade, both boys and girls in a significant percentage link their teacher to qualities such as, GOOD/PATIENT/TENDER, and FUNNY too. In both groups, there is an association of the teacher as a kind, protective, noble figure.

At the higher levels (5th) we can identify a tendency in genders to relate the good teacher with aptitudes such as TEACHES WELL. We can infer that as children grow older the concept of a good teacher is no longer linked to personality or motherly characteristics (although these still appear as important in lower percentages) and turns to be conditioned to their ability to transmit academic knowledge and concepts in an understandable and attractive way to students. The teacher is viewed as a bearer of information.

Ideal teacher

Gives merit

Table 4.3
Gives merit

	1A		1B		3B		3C		5B		5C
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
0	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	33%	64%	15%	10%	0%
1/Very Imp	73%	80%	50%	50%	50%	25%	50%	18%	8%	20%	0%
2/Quite Imp	9%	20%	0%	33%	30%	17%	0%	9%	38%	0%	23%
3/Important	18%	0%	12%	17%	10%	25%	0%	9%	8%	10%	31%
4/Not so Imp	0%	0%	38%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	23%	30%	8%
5/Not Imp at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	17%	0%	8%	30%	38%

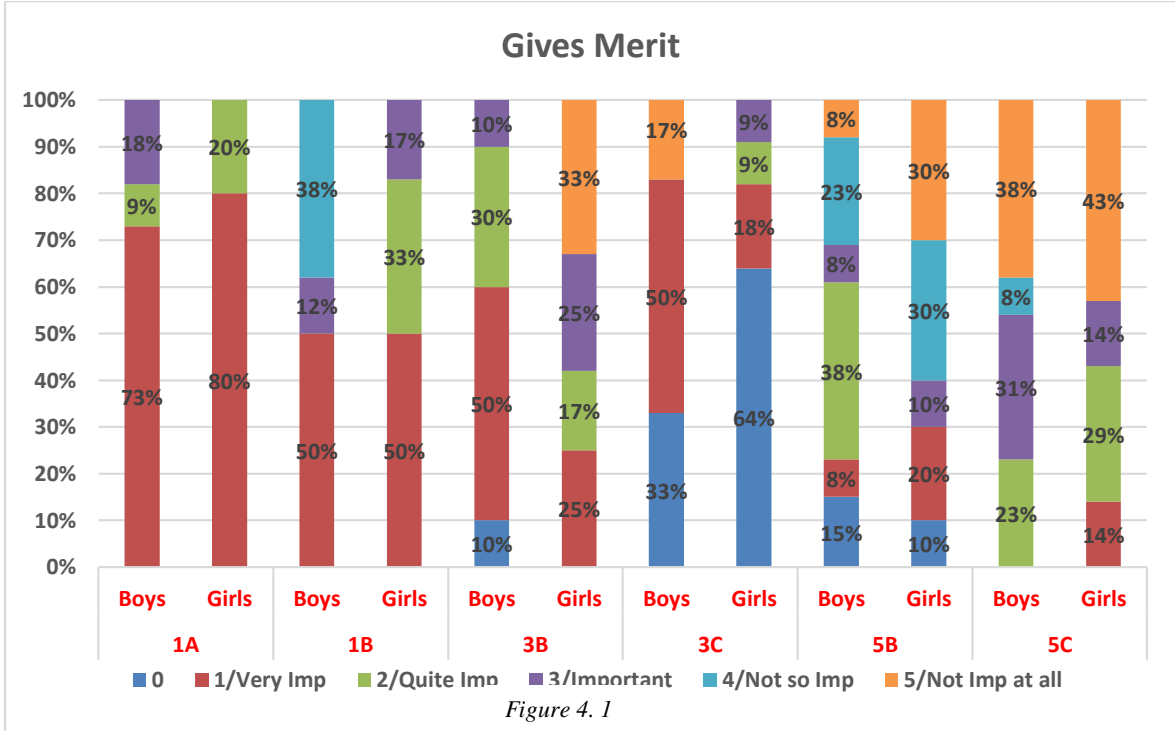


Figure 4. 1

Male pupils in grades 1st to 3rd give a marked importance to merits as strategies of recognition. In the superior levels, (5th) merits are losing relevance. The same happens with the girls who in first and third grades largely perceive merits as important but in the higher grades, this tendency weakens. This is an important point for teachers to take into account since they should acknowledge that while pupils grow older, strategies that were successful at an early age would cease to be at higher grades. Teachers will have to explore other resources to engage pupils according to their age and particular interests of the group.

Fun activities

Table 4.4
Fun activities

	1A		1B		3B		3C		5B		5C	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0	0%	0%	0%	8%	10%	0%	42%	73%	15%	10%	0%	0%
1/Very Imp	18%	10%	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%	9%	15%	40%	23%	43%
2/Quite Imp	64%	40%	50%	33%	20%	50%	25%	9%	15%	10%	38%	0%
3/Important	18%	30%	38%	17%	20%	17%	25%	0%	15%	0%	31%	29%
4/Not so Imp	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	8%	8%	9%	32%	10%	8%	14%
5/Not Imp at all	0%	10%	12%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	30%	0%	14%

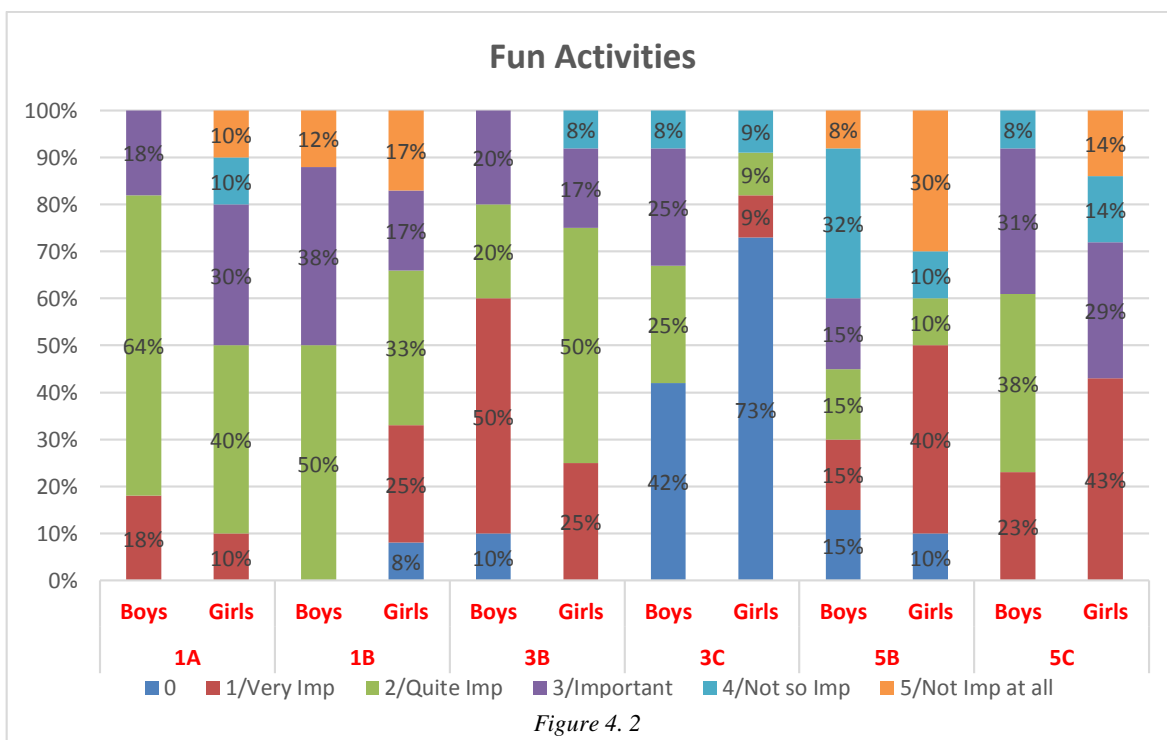


Figure 4. 2

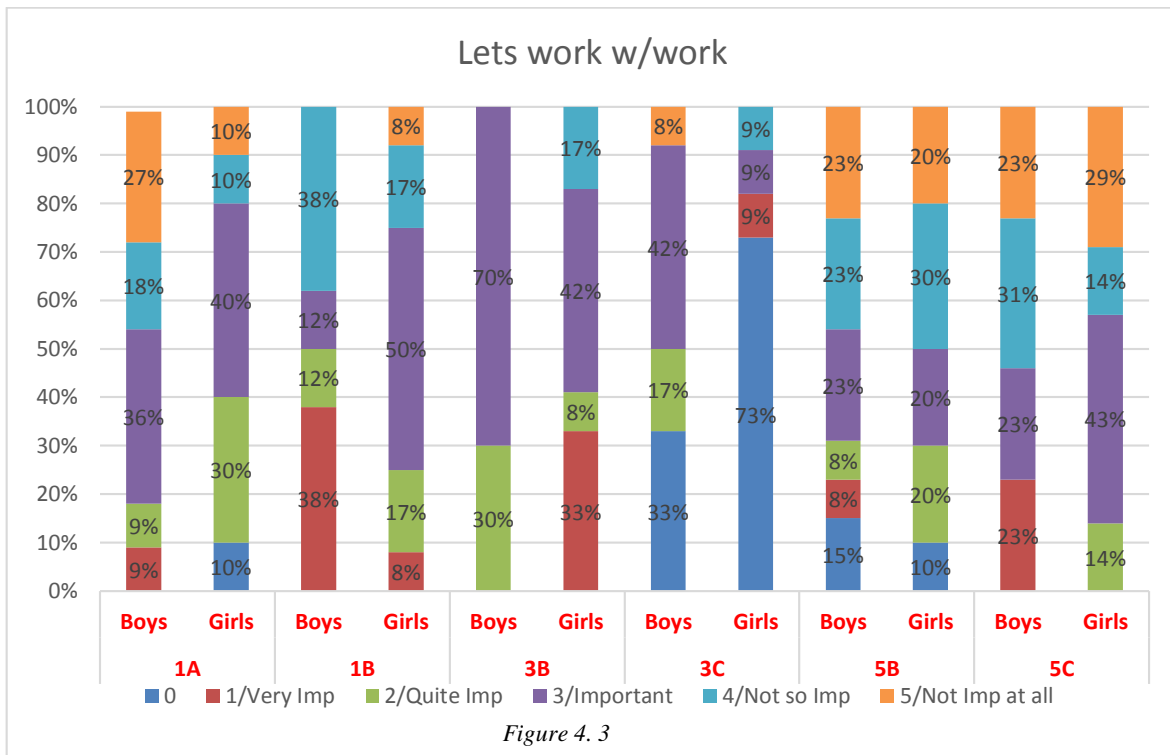
In all the grades, boys give importance to counting with fun activities. Percentages are higher with the lower classrooms (from 1st to 3rd). In fifth grade classes it remains being important but the percentages decrease a little. This becomes evident in the younger groups where activities must be dynamic and entertaining due to their shorter attention periods. As students grow older, they hook on activities which need not be so dynamic but deal with topics arising their curiosity or interest and which are meaningful or useful for them. As for the girls, there is a similar situation since in all the grades except for one 1st grade class, half or more than half of the students consider it is important to do fun activities. In the lower grades, the percentages increase, as in the case of the boys.

Lets work with a friend

Table 4.5

Lets work w/friend

	1A		1B		3B		3C		5B		5C	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	73%	15%	10%	0%	0%
1/Very Imp	9%	0%	38%	8%	0%	33%	0%	9%	8%	0%	23%	0%
2/Quite Imp	9%	30%	12%	17%	30%	8%	17%	0%	8%	20%	0%	14%
3/Important	36%	40%	12%	50%	70%	42%	42%	9%	23%	20%	23%	43%
4/Not so Imp	18%	10%	38%	17%	0%	17%	0%	9%	23%	30%	31%	14%
5/Not Imp at all	27%	10%	0%	8%	0%	0%	8%	0%	23%	20%	23%	29%



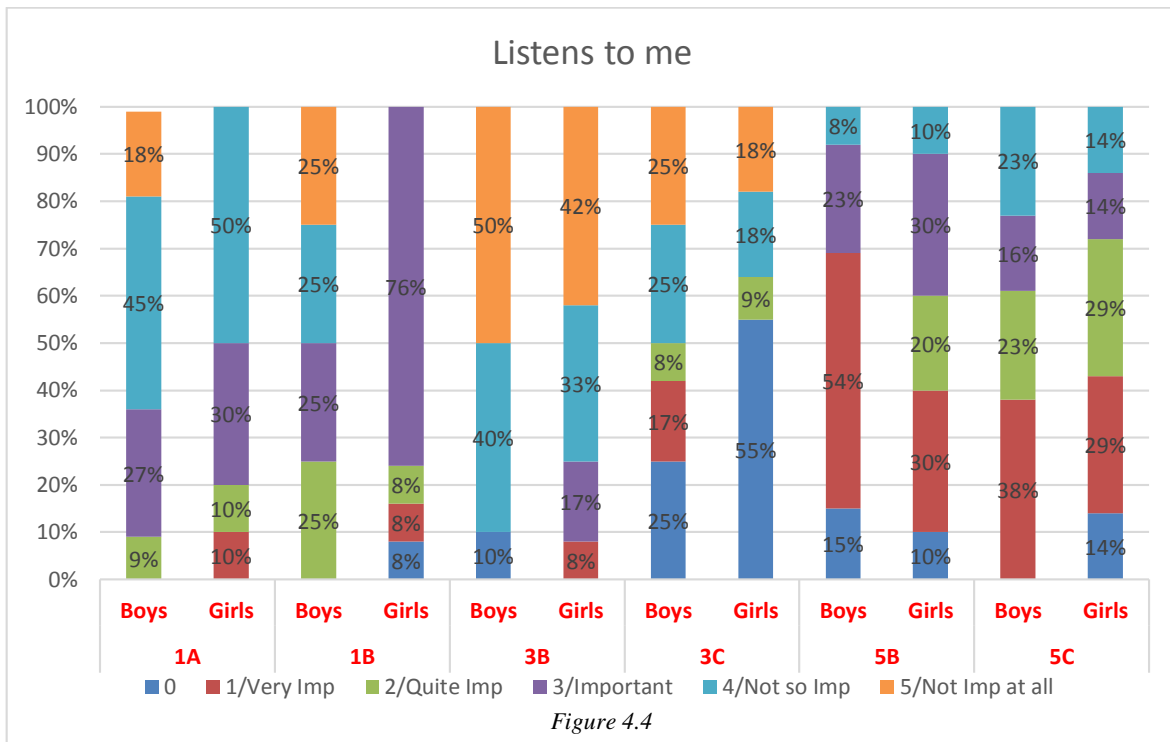
For both male and female students, percentages relative working with a friend are higher at the inferior and middle years (1st – 3rd). Once they reach 5th grade, there are significant percentages for the two genders, showing this point is not important at all. This factor became evident in the previously described points, when considering that at such age both girls and boys show more interest to relate with their peers of the opposite sex, what leads them to work in groups which do not necessarily include friends of their same gender.

Listens to me

Table 4.6

Listens to me

		1A		1B		3B		3C		5B		5C	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	0	0%	0%	0%	8%	10%	0%	25%	55%	15%	10%	0%	14%
	1/Very Imp	0%	10%	0%	8%	0%	8%	17%	0%	54%	30%	38%	29%
	2/Quite Imp	9%	10%	25%	8%	0%	0%	8%	9%	0%	20%	23%	29%
	3/Important	27%	30%	25%	76%	0%	17%	0%	0%	23%	30%	16%	14%
	4/Not so Imp	45%	50%	25%	0%	40%	33%	25%	18%	8%	10%	23%	14%
	5/Not Imp at all	18%	0%	25%	0%	50%	42%	25%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%



The importance students allot to the fact their teacher listens to them or not varies noticeably according to gender. Results evince that in the lower and middle grades, boys tend to perceive this as unimportant as the high percentages consequently manifest. Said situation changes in the superior grades, where higher percentages show it is important for them to be listened to, by their teacher. This could originate from the tendency of students to be more passive during the lower years (the teacher is the person who transmits knowledge and they receive it) and to share their opinions in the higher grades. With respect to the girls, the importance of being heard, is manifest in the lower and higher grades (1st and 5th). Percentages are high both in the first grades and in the fifth grades. This result may be correlated with what teachers expresses in their questionnaires, in the sense that it is harder to keep boys motivated to participate actively in Language class.

Names me helper

Table 4.7

Names me helper

	1A		1B		3B		3C		5B		5C	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	55%	15%	10%	8%	0%
1/Very Imp	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	23%	14%
2/Quite Imp	9%	0%	0%	0%	10%	17%	17%	18%	23%	50%	23%	14%
3/Important	0%	0%	25%	8%	0%	0%	0%	27%	15%	20%	8%	0%
4/Not so Imp	36%	20%	0%	17%	40%	42%	33%	0%	0%	10%	8%	58%
5/Not Imp at all	55%	70%	75%	67%	50%	33%	25%	0%	47%	10%	23%	14%

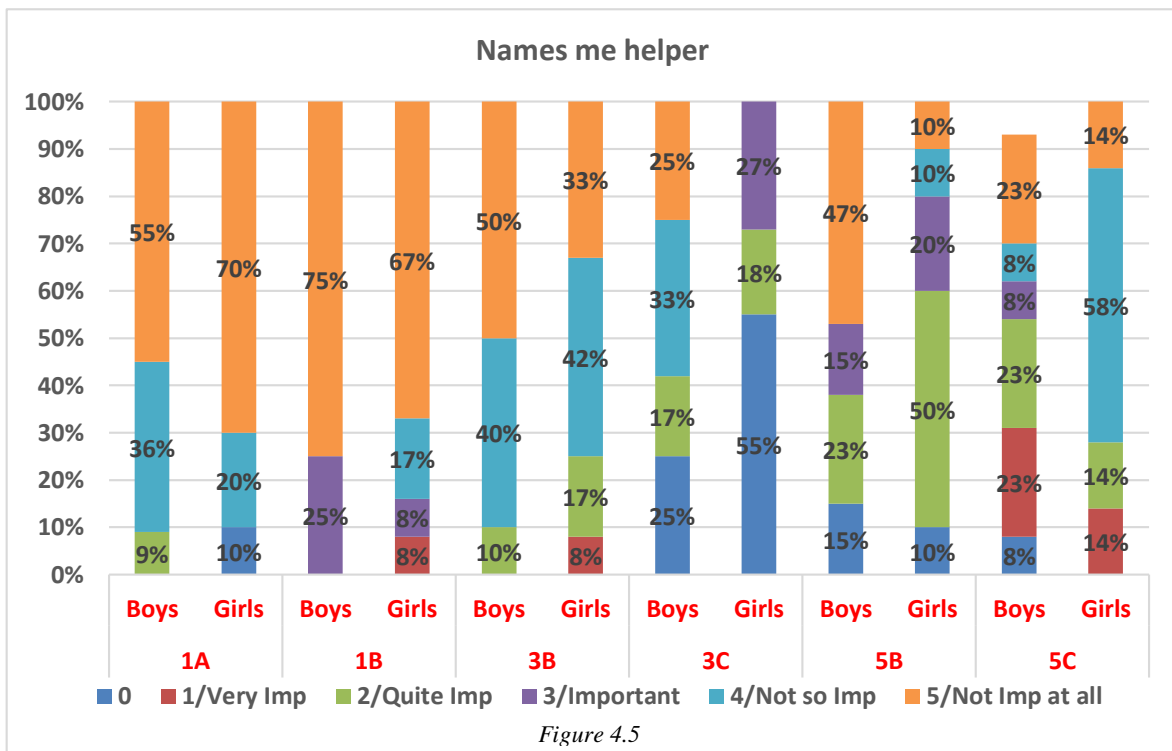


Figure 4.5

Boys show a marked tendency of not giving importance to being named as teacher helper. In 4 out of 6 courses, percentages not considering this important exceed the 50%. In the other two courses, such percentages are also high, 47% and 31%. respectively.

Girls also tend not to perceive this point as important. 4 classes out of 6 reach percentages over 50% confirming this aspect is not relevant for girls.

Children's Opinion

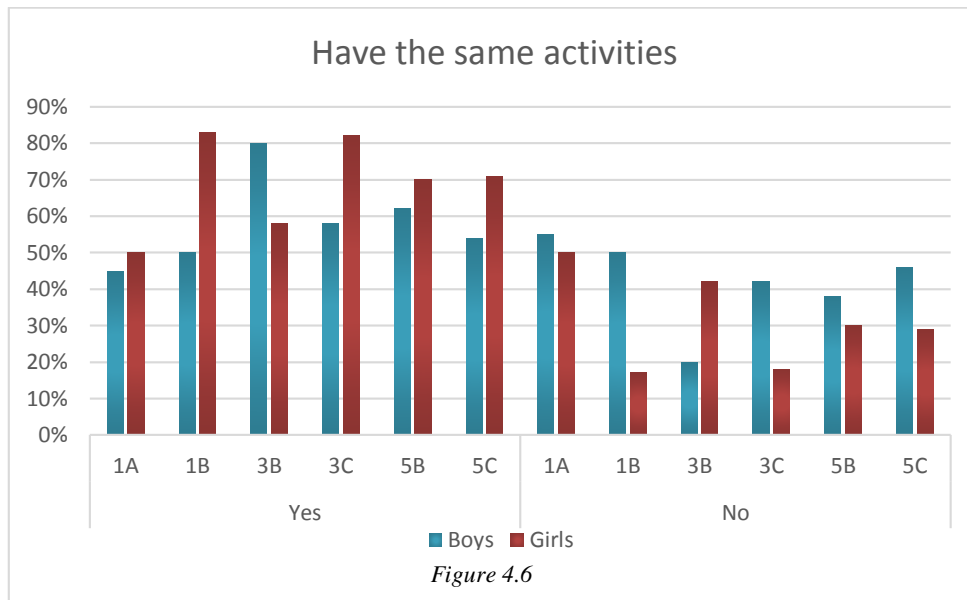
Mixed classes

In the lower and middle years, boys' opinion about being in mixed gender classes is distributed almost 50/50. Some consider this idea as positive, others as negative. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the percentage corresponding to NO appears as important in the results, a situation that did not happen with girls who mostly favor YES. As for the boys, only in one class (3B) they clearly tend to see sharing mixed sex classes as positive. In the older groups (5th) we can notice a positive perception about being both genders in a room (in one classroom 85% said YES and in the other one 92%). We can infer that is divergence between lower and higher grades responds to changes typical of that age and in their growing interest in the opposite sex. It seems such interest appears earlier in girls than in boys (this point is also reflected on the results from the question on working in mixed-sex groups. Girls in only one classroom rendered a higher percentage to NO evidencing they do not prefer having mixed classes. In the other 5 groups, females show a marked tendency for the YES expressing they like being grouped with both girls and boys (two courses, one out of 3 and one out of 5 a 100% answered YES). Consequently, we could infer that girls are more tolerant when sharing the school space with boys and this reflects since an early age.

Have the same activities

Table 4.8
Have the same activities

Grade	Yes		No	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	45%	50%	55%	50%
1B	50%	83%	50%	17%
3B	80%	58%	20%	42%
3C	58%	82%	42%	18%
5B	62%	70%	38%	30%
5C	54%	71%	46%	29%



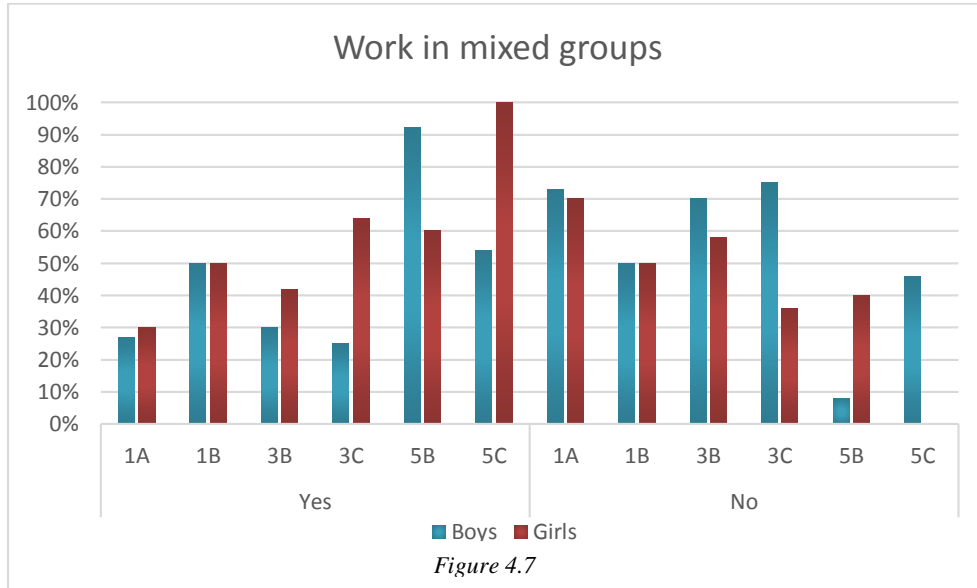
Differences between males and females are also reflected in whether they like or do not like to carry out the same activities. Looking at the boys' percentages, half of the courses show an important share who manifest NO and the other 3 classes indicate that YES they enjoy performing the same activities. On the contrary, girls 5 out of 6 grades reach high percentages stating that YES they like doing the same activities. In the remaining group, 50% express that YES and 50% say NO. This situation may indicate that girls tend to integrate in a better way to the type of activity planned by the teacher, while boys would prefer a distinction made, relative the work to accomplish.

Opinions are divided more evenly among boys and with an inclination towards the NO, indicating in general terms that they do not like to complete the same activities. Girls clearly reflect since an early age that YES, they do like it.

Work in mixed groups

Table 4.9
Work in mixed groups

Grade	Yes		No	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	27%	30%	73%	70%
1B	50%	50%	50%	50%
3B	30%	42%	70%	58%
3C	25%	64%	75%	36%
5B	92%	60%	8%	40%
5C	54%	100%	46%	0%

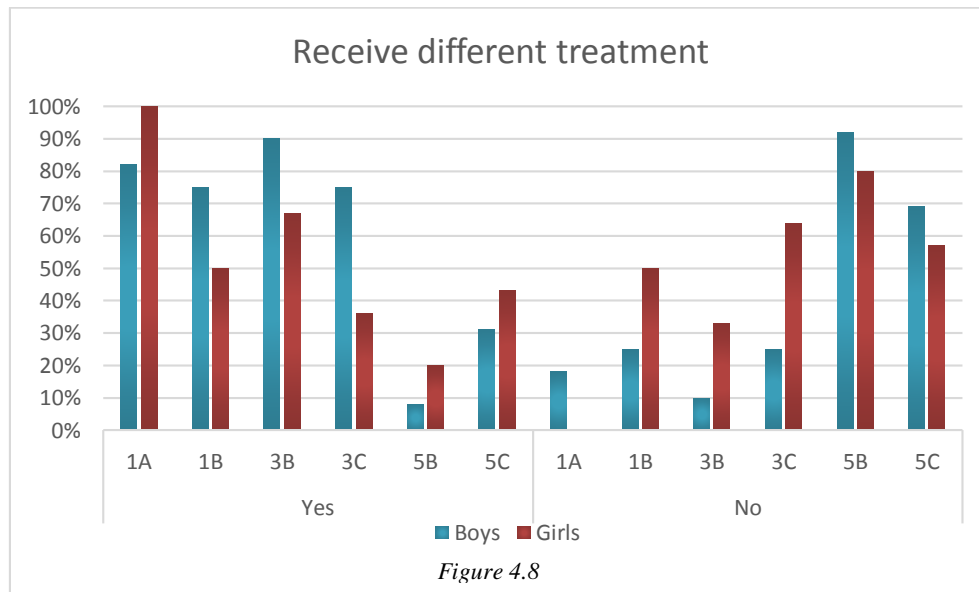


Boys show a marked tendency not to want to work in mixed groups. This preference repeats in all courses from 1st to 3rd. In 5th, the highest percentages indicate that YES they like to work in mixed groups. This, as mentioned before, may be due to the age and interest to relate with the opposite sex. Girls have a more even opinion of working in mixed groups, although in the beginning years, there exists a tendency to dislike it. Different from boys who incline for YES in 5th grade, girls begin much earlier (3rd grade) to prefer to share in group with boys, a situation turning even more distinguishable in the percentages referring to 5th grade.

Receive different treatment

Table 4.10
Receive different treatment

Grade	Yes		No	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	82%	100%	18%	0%
1B	75%	50%	25%	50%
3B	90%	67%	10%	33%
3C	75%	36%	25%	64%
5B	8%	20%	92%	80%
5C	31%	43%	69%	57%



There exists a marked difference in boys' and girls' perceptions about whether their teacher's treatment differs depending on gender. With regard to boys, 4 out of 6 classes consider in a greater percentage that the teacher does treat boys and girls differently. This perception changes in the top grades where the highest percentage refers to NO. This may be attributed to the fact that, as previously pointed out, in the initial levels, girls and teachers may relate more closely due to an identification process because the woman teacher is viewed from a motherly role. This could place boys at a disadvantage with respect to girls at the moment of establishing a bond with their teachers, and at the same time, make them perceive they are treated in a different manner for being boys. It could also be related to disciplinary aspects in

the sense that, just as the Discipline Inspector refers, very often “with boys I need to use a stronger tone to capture their attention and I can deal with girls in a different way, speaking and making them reason”, a situation that generally translates within the classroom also when educators need to be firmer with the boys to make them obey orders. This point is also explicitly found in the teachers’ questionnaire. Thus the English Coordinator also explains, “I do think that most English teachers treat boys and girls differently whether they are conscious of the gender differences or not. There are very few teachers who don’t make that difference’. The girls’ perception as to whether their teacher treats them differently or not, according to their gender, tends to incline towards NO. 4 out of 6 groups show a high percentage which tells NO (1 of them 50%), what could let us infer that girls in general terms, do not feel the difference so strongly marked as the boys feel. This could have deep incidences not only in the teacher/student relationship but also in student achievement respective of academic demands.

Activities they like

Both girls and boys clearly prefer reading books and stories. In 4 out of 6 classes boys mention this activity as one they enjoy and with high percentages (44%, 55%, 29% and 44%). In the top grades, there is an emphasis on group activities (47% if the percentages of both fifth grade classrooms are added) which may be linked to the point treated before relating that both boys and girls are more prone/open to working in mixed groups as they become older. (See Annex)

Girls also highlight their pleasure for reading stories, displaying in this point the most elevated percentages in 3 out of 6 groups (47%, 38% and 58%). As with the boys, in one of the top courses 5B, the highest percentage falls on group work. In one of the intermediate grades 3B, the highest percentage falls on drawing and coloring. This point can be related to what teachers answered in their questionnaires with regard to girls enjoying work that require coloring, taking care of details and neatness, whereas “boys are more practical and do better with numbers”).

Activities they don't like

Regarding boys in the younger groups, in both classrooms, the greater percentages are given to evaluations (36 and 36). In intermediate and top grades, the highest percentages are related to copying and writing (40%, 34% and 54%) (See Annex)

In the case of the girls, the same difference appears. In the lower grades, in both classes, what they like less are evaluations and studying (55% and 50%). In middle and top courses, the greater percentages are associated with writing (50%, 64% and 50%).

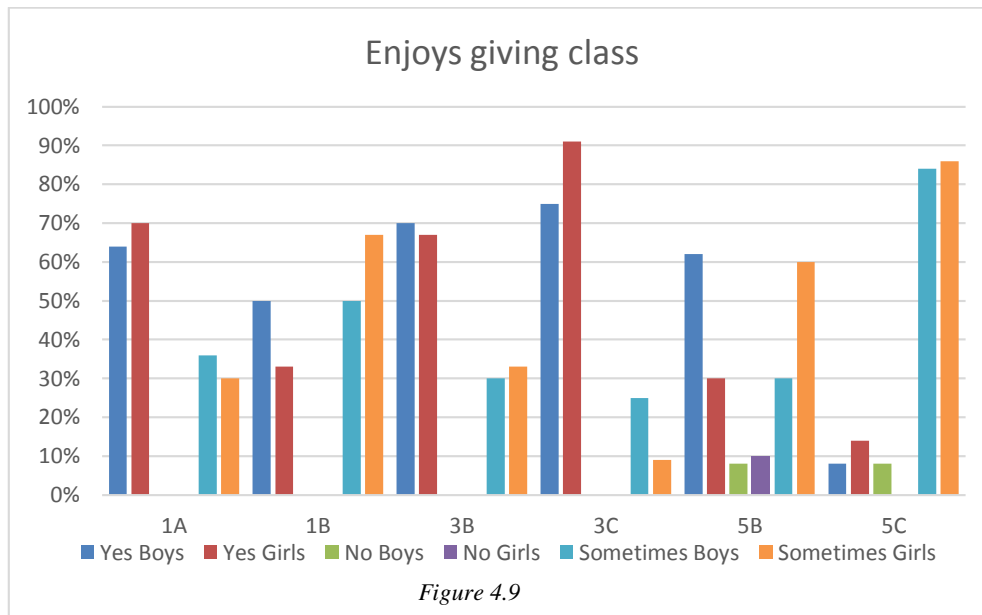
Their Language Teacher

Students answered about how their Language teacher performed.

Likes/ enjoys giving class

Table 4.11
Enjoys giving class

	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>		<u>Sometimes</u>	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	64%	70%	0%	0%	36%	30%
1B	50%	33%	0%	0%	50%	67%
3B	70%	67%	0%	0%	30%	33%
3C	75%	91%	0%	0%	25%	9%
5B	62%	30%	8%	10%	30%	60%
5C	8%	14%	8%	0%	84%	86%



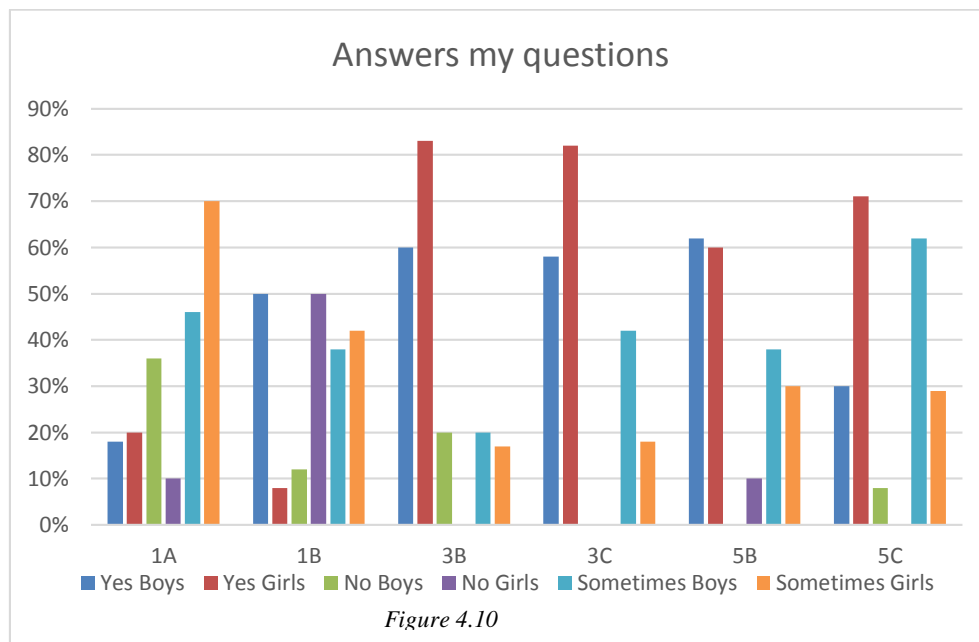
Boys in 4 out of 6 courses, the highest percentage considers that the teacher always enjoys giving class (64%, 70%, 75% and 62%). In one of the other two classes left, percentages are 50/50 for ALWAYS and SOMETIMES enjoys giving class, and in the other, 84% for SOMETIMES likes giving class. In general terms, the majority of boys along all levels estimates their teacher ALWAYS enjoys imparting class.

When examining the girls' responses, the percentages are divided more equally. T out of 6 classes present the top percentages in the category of ALWAYS enjoys giving class (70%, 67% and 91%).

Answers my questions

Table 4.12
Answers my questions

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	18%	20%	36%	10%	46%	70%
1B	50%	8%	12%	50%	38%	42%
3B	60%	83%	20%	0%	20%	17%
3C	58%	82%	0%	0%	42%	18%
5B	62%	60%	0%	10%	38%	30%
5C	30%	71%	8%	0%	62%	29%



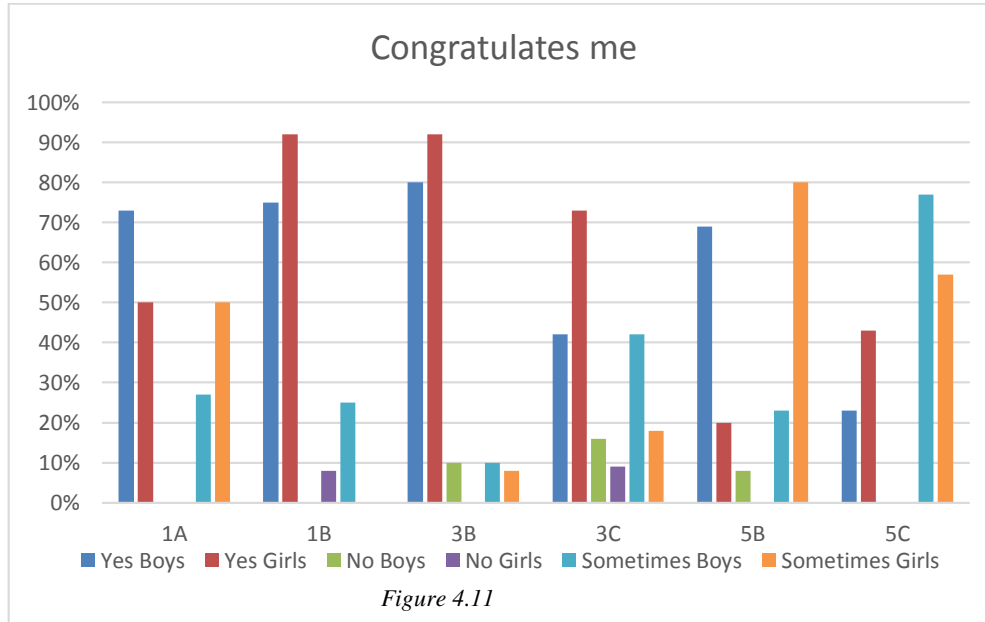
Respecting males, 4 out of the 6 courses (1B, 3B, 3C and 5B) maintain the highest percentages in the category of YES/ALWAYS, their teacher responds to their doubts and questions. It is worth mentioning that in the four cases, the second largest percentages is SOMETIMES she responds to your questions and doubts, leaving the percentage of NO, as not significant. The two remaining courses (1A and 5C), sustain the greater percentages in the category of SOMETIMES the teacher answer the boys' questions. Only in one course (1A) the second largest percentage represents NO, which is 36% of the boys believe the teacher doesn't answer their questions. Generally speaking it can be deduced that students perceive their teacher as an accessible figure who responds to their concerns.

As to the girls' appreciations, the pattern for this aspect is very similar to the boys'. In 4 out of 6 courses (3B, 3C, 5B and 5C), the tallest percentage appears in the rank YES/ALWAYS the teacher listens to me. In all the cases, the percentages are over 50%, as in all the 4 courses, the second largest percentage belongs to SOMETIMES (70%) she cares about my opinion. Just in one classroom (1A) the highest percentage show in SOMETIMES (70%) while in the last course that remains, 1B, 50% is the greatest percentage and it marks NO, nevertheless such amount is quite close to the percentages established in SOMETIMES (42%). As with the boys, it appears that girls deem their teacher does answer their questions.

Congratulates me

Table 4.13
Congratulates me

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	73%	50%	0%	0%	27%	50%
1B	75%	92%	0%	8%	25%	0%
3B	80%	92%	10%	0%	10%	8%
3C	42%	73%	16%	9%	42%	18%
5B	69%	20%	8%	0%	23%	80%
5C	23%	43%	0%	0%	77%	57%



Four out of 6 classes (1A, 1B, 3B and 5B) over half of the boys (73%, 75%, 80% and 69% respectively) perceive their teacher YES/ALWAYS congratulates them. And the percentage in second place corresponds to SOMETIMES she congratulates me. One course only (3C) percentages are levelled (42% in each) between the categories of YES/ALWAYS and SOMETIMES. Just in 1 course (5C) the percentage of SOMETIMES she congratulates me triples YES/ALWAYS.

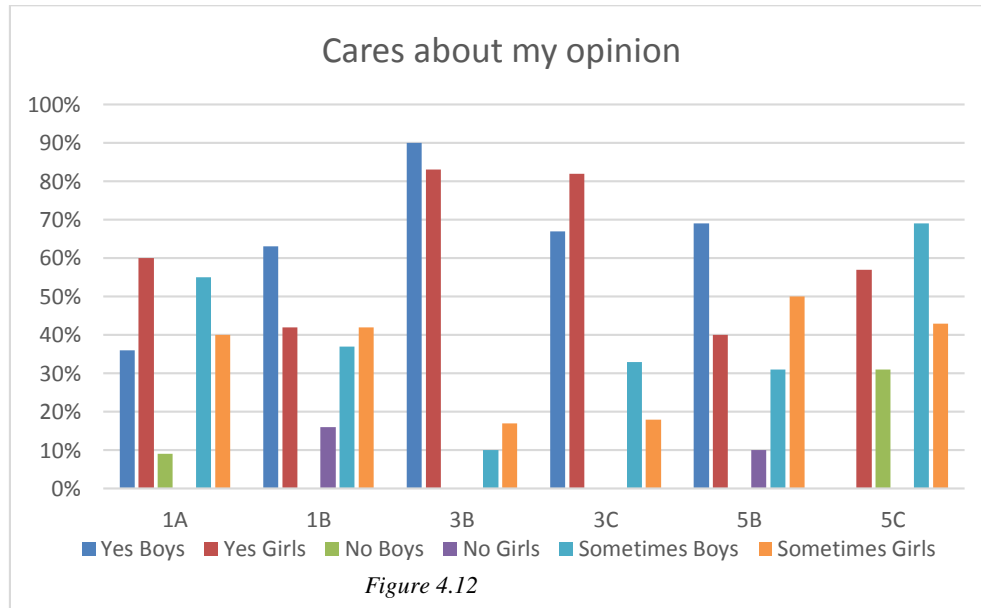
Girls' opinions in three classes (1B, 3B, 3C) produced the highest percentages in the category of YES/ALWAYS my teacher congratulates me. The other two classes (5B and 5C) have even percentages (50/50) between the categories YES/ALWAYS and SOMETIMES,

It is important to emphasize that neither for girls nor boys there is any percentage respective the NO option, what implies that to a lesser or greater extent, children feel their teacher recognizes their effort.

Listens to me/cares about my opinions

Table 4.14
Cares about my opinion

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	36%	60%	9%	0%	55%	40%
1B	63%	42%	0%	16%	37%	42%
3B	90%	83%	0%	0%	10%	17%
3C	67%	82%	0%	0%	33%	18%
5B	69%	40%	0%	10%	31%	50%
5C	0%	57%	31%	0%	69%	43%



In the case of the boys 4 out of 6 courses (1B, 3B, 3C, 5B) show the largest percentages over 50% in the YES category and in all these grades the second largest

percentages point **SOMETIMES**. Just in one group (5C) the major percentage represents **SOMETIMES** and the second place is for **NEVER**. Finally 1A indicates that here most of the boys opted for **SOMETIMES**. Generally speaking boys perceive their teacher listens to them what could correlate with the previous point where boys indicated that they feel their teacher listens to them.

Something alike is seen with the girls, in 5 out of 6 classrooms (1A, 3B, 3C and 5C) the two largest percentages belong to **YES/ALWAYS** and **SOMETIMES**. In one class the percentages are evenly distributed between **YES/ALWAYS** and **SOMETIMES**. Girls along with boys refer feeling the teacher cares about their opinions and needs.

Explains clearly

Table 4.15
Explains clearly

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	82%	90%	0%	0%	18%	10%
1B	88%	75%	0%	0%	12%	25%
3B	90%	75%	10%	0%	0%	25%
3C	92%	100%	0%	0%	8%	0%
5B	77%	80%	8%	0%	15%	20%
5C	77%	86%	8%	0%	15%	14%

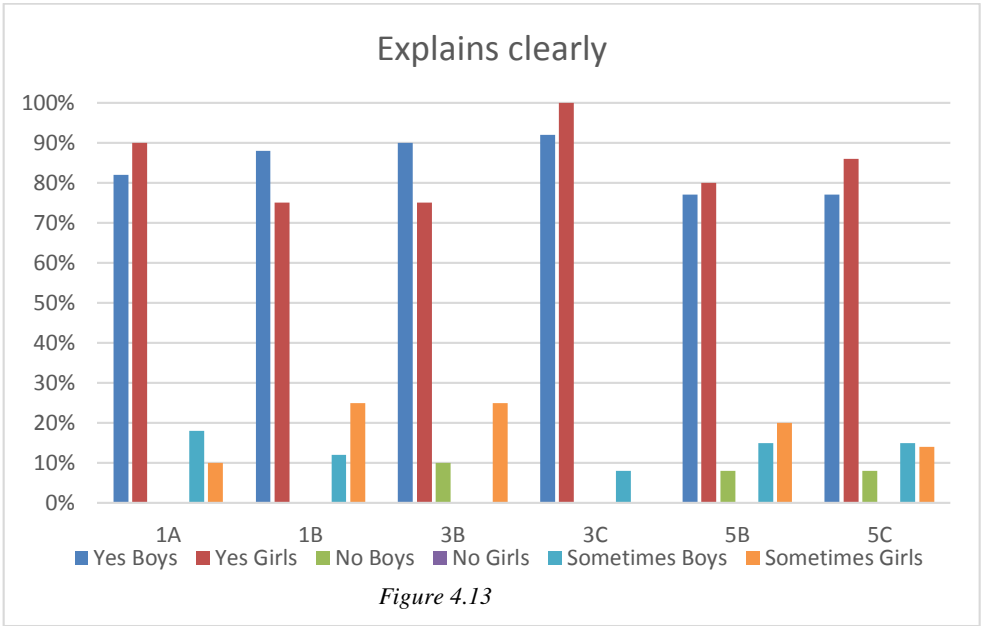


Figure 4.13

In this category, all of the students in the appointed classes, regardless of their gender, produced high percentages for YES/ALWAYS that reveal children sense their teacher is very clear when dealing with a topic or instruction.

Makes/plans fun classes

Table 4.16
Plans fun activities

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	27%	10%	9%	0%	64%	90%
1B	63%	92%	0%	0%	27%	8%
3B	90%	58%	0%	0%	10%	42%
3C	67%	82%	0%	0%	33%	18%
5B	38%	20%	24%	10%	38%	70%
5C	23%	14%	15%	0%	62%	86%

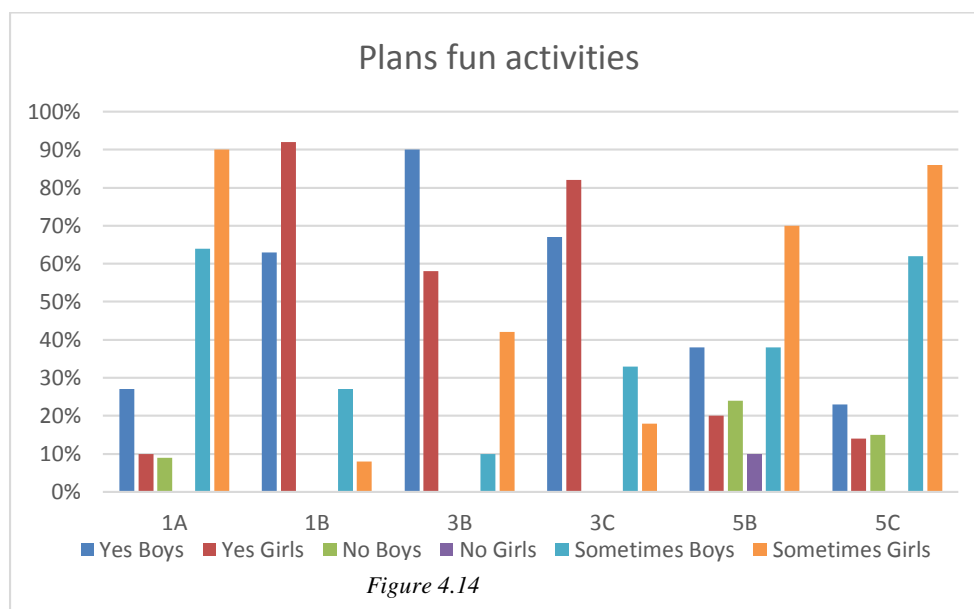


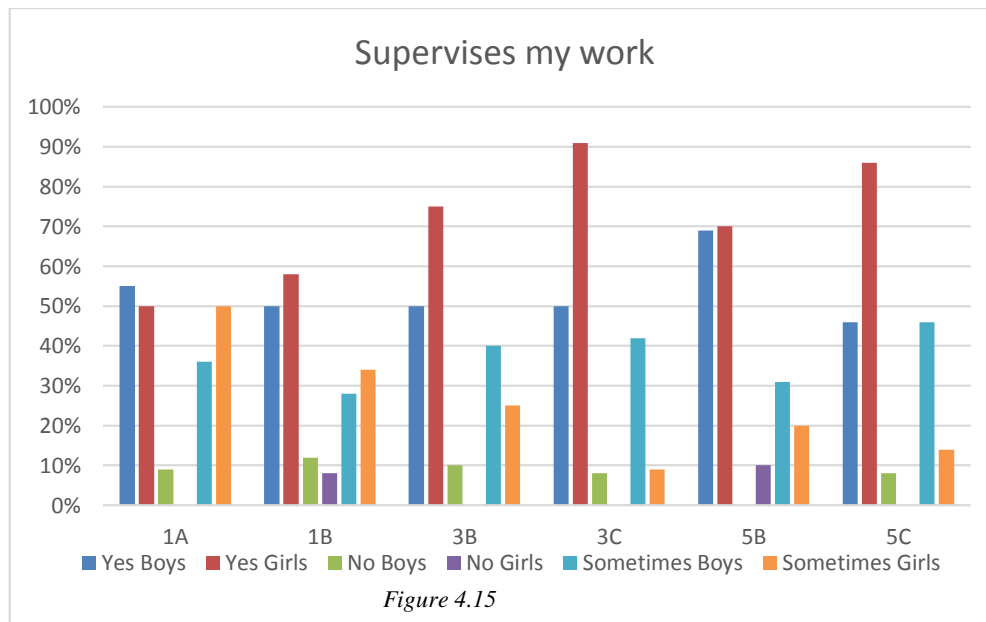
Figure 4.14

In 1A, most boys and girls believe teachers SOMETIMES give them activities they enjoy. Both for females and males in 1B, 3B and 3C the majority of students chose YES to express they like the class activities. In the top grades, 5B and 5C, the largest share of pupils of both genders selected they are SOMETIMES happy with what is done in class. This shows that as students grow older it is more demanding for the teachers to capture their interest in the lessons.

Helps me with / supervises my work

Table 4.17
Supervises my work

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	55%	50%	9%	0%	36%	50%
1B	50%	58%	12%	8%	28%	34%
3B	50%	75%	10%	0%	40%	25%
3C	50%	91%	8%	0%	42%	9%
5B	69%	70%	0%	10%	31%	20%
5C	46%	86%	8%	0%	46%	14%



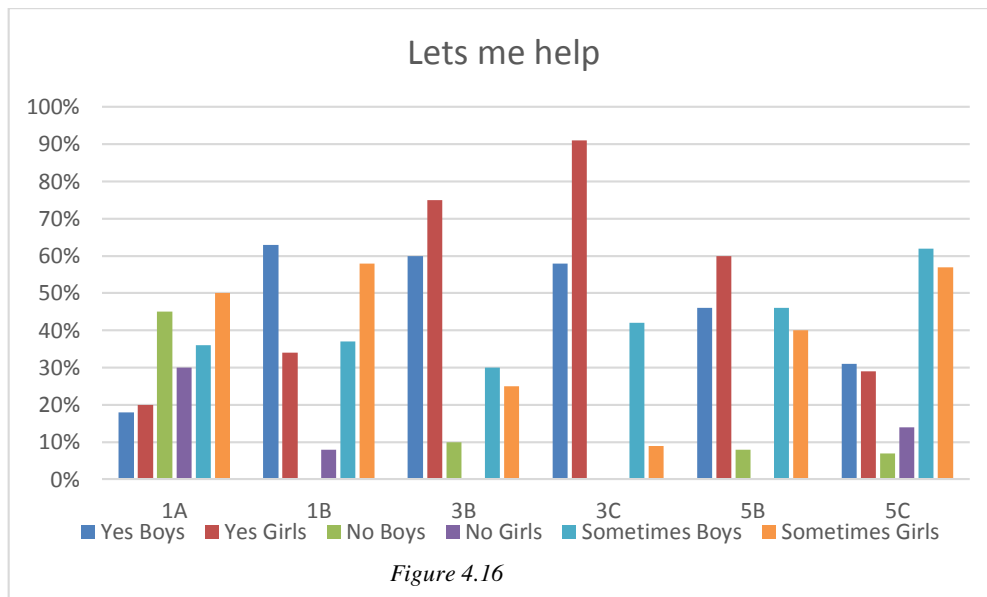
Only in 5C, the tallest percentages produced by boys' responses are equally shared between ALWAYS and SOMETIMES. In the other five groups the greatest portion of boys responded YES, that the teacher attends to their needs.

Pertaining girls, also only one groups renders even percentages 50/50 for YES and SOMETIMES. In the five classrooms left the majority of females selected YES, their teacher aided them.

Makes me helper/ lets me help

Table 4.18
Lets me help

	Yes		No		Sometimes	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	18%	20%	45%	30%	36%	50%
1B	63%	34%	0%	8%	37%	58%
3B	60%	75%	10%	0%	30%	25%
3C	58%	91%	0%	0%	42%	9%
5B	46%	60%	8%	0%	46%	40%
5C	31%	29%	7%	14%	62%	57%



Children were asked if their teacher assigned them responsibilities to help out with classroom chores. With respect to what boys answered, 1B, 3B and 3C mostly gave a YES stating their teacher appointed them as their helper. Only in 1A the largest amount of boys agreed on NO, their teacher does not give them this chance. In 5B percentages for ALWAYS and SOMETIMES evenly account for 46% in each category. At last, in 5C most boys decided that only SOMETIMES they can assume these duties.

Girls on their part in 1A, 1B and 5C decided by large that teacher SOMETIMES appoints them as helpers. In the remaining classes 3B, 3C and 5B the highest percentages fall on YES/ALWAYS referring to how frequently they take up the responsibilities.

From what has been exposed, it can be inferred that, with the exception of the boys in one class who at large denied being ever appointed helper, the rest of the students were totally or partially satisfied with the frequency with which they could help out in class. Half of the pupils regardless their sex would expect more chances of involvement in chores.

4.3 Results from the Interviews with the Department Heads

Three departmental directors were questioned about their perceptions about gender aspects in the school from the stand of the role they performed.. The interview protocol with questions prepared by the researcher was answered by email due to schedule constrains. All three members expressly manifested they would rather contribute information through this means. Still, all three approached in brief personal encounters the researcher to clarify doubts regarding the topics in question before responding.

The Psychologist and Discipline inspector agreed many are the advantages for students being in a mixed gender class. This way, not only they "learn how to relate and behave in a mixed gender world" but it also "it contributes to the identity building process (man-woman)". It also allows them to be understanding about and tolerant with what is different from them. As pointed out by the Psychologist, recognition given by the other becomes transcendental in both the student relation with their teachers and with their peers. This not only makes them feel important and respected but it also allows them to find, in a different setting, the same recognition and safety initially provided in the family context. This can be strongly related with what the English Coordinator states as a great plus for having a majority of women teachers in school "I feel that they see us in a maternal way and that empowers us to discipline them and for them to respect us."

Even when it is true that there exist shared points of view, we also find aspects on which opinions diverge according to the assigned role and the academic background of each of the professionals in question. The Discipline Inspector deems that, despite the fact that all students independently from their gender should demonstrate respect towards the figures of authority, reality shows there are significant differences in this respect.

Boys usually behave more effusively and questioning towards the authority figures. This is the reason why she points out the need to be firmer at the time of transmitting rules to

boys, utilizing stronger and more final tones of voice that in the case of the girls who tend to respond to the calls of attention immediately. This aspect does relate to with the fact that most Language teachers refer on their questionnaires that when dealing with disciplinary issues, they had to be stronger with the boys than with the girls, it can be inferred that, to some extent, gender difference conditions the disciplinary performance of the authority figures of this institution.

As Ridgeway (2009) points out, “primary categories of personal or person perception, including sex category, work as cultural frames for coordinating behavior by associating category membership with widely shared cultural beliefs about how people in one category are likely to behave compared to those in a contrasting category. These cultural beliefs are shared stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are our beliefs about how 'most people' view the typical man or woman” (p.148)

This point is touched by the School Psychologist when she mentions “ I consider that responding to social discourse, without being conscious of the same, boys are assumed as more impulsive, as needing to use their bodies to account for their discomfort, whatever this may be, therefore their reactions are more physical.” She explains that the transmission of regulations and limits should not be conditioned by gender difference. She adds that its importance does not lie on this aspect but on the manner the authority figure places themselves with respect to the girl or boy, and the relation that both actors establish. She emphasizes that the daily performance of such authorities transmits, through their example, the norms to follow.

Both the psychologist and the Discipline Inspector coincide in that the way of resolving the problems is distinct with boys and girls, the former being more physical and prone to impulsivity, while the latter appearing more verbal, expressing with words what afflicts them. As a result of these aspects, both professionals refer there exists a major demand of attention from boys in each of their spaces. Nevertheless, the cause they tell differs. Just as it was explained above, the Discipline Inspector associates referrals with an aspect linked with the gender characteristics of boys who tend to be more aggressive and troublesome at the time of relating with others or following norms, whereas the School Psychologist associates these derivations with the result of social discourse pressure which, somehow, categorizes boys as

being more undisciplined or showing behaviors that discord with school demands what makes them take that position.

All three professionals believe that the fact that the majority of teachers are female should not impact negatively the learning process. The Discipline Inspector adds that, if there exists respect towards the instructor, the latter's gender should neither affect the relation with the students or the classroom dynamics. The Coordinator explicates that for her it is an advantage that practitioners are by large women as long as, as it was indicated previously, such condition makes children view them in a maternal stand which empowers them with tools to obtain their pupils' respect at the moment of exercising their role. The Psychologist manifests that the real conditioning factor constitutes the place in which the practitioner stands, regardless of being a man or a woman, and if from that place they can reach students and transmit the knowledge in question. Both she and the English Coordinator make emphasis on the relevance of taking into account methodology and resources which result effective to work with each group of students. This is why the Coordinator explicates that, even when they have not received a formal training regarding the role of gender difference in learning, this is an aspect they intend to take into account at the moment of realizing their planning.

Lastly, the Coordinator refers there exists a close relation between the students' gender and academic achievement, in the sense that boys tend to be more disordered on their work, standing out in subjects like Math, while girls appear as better listeners, they follow instructions and complete neat assignments. This point is also touched by the Inspector who estimates that girls usually lead the planning and execution of school projects. The psychologist, nevertheless, pronounces that it is important to capture each student's individualism, not allowing gender to determine their performance, but rather to favor each pupil's construction, for this depends on each one's potential and the context from where their motivation to learn comes. The psychologist considers that each context (family, school, society) may exercise great influence on a child's learning process, but it should not permit gender difference to affect what is learned or not. This last aspect may be connected with what Perry (1996) proposes, "We wish to establish a school climate that would allow all students to make academic and occupational decisions based upon natural ability and interest without interference of gender bias". Relevance relies then on not categorizing the child solely in certain activities because one considers that their gender maintains greater affinity with the

same but to allow them, from their strengths, to learn. Jones (1989) expresses that “Ebbeck (1994) has shown that teachers may channel children into sex-stereotyped activities as early as the preschool levels” (p. 34)

4.4 Results from the Analysis of School Documents

The researcher collected valuable data from the revision of a set of available documentation that included the all of the students’ agendas, language notebooks and final report cards in each of the grades chosen.

Students’ agendas

The researcher relied on the aid of three teacher helpers, each at a grade level, who periodically checked the students’ merit and discipline cards contained in individual agendas and kept a clear record per student per month of both the academic recognitions (merits) and the behavioral calls of attention (indisciplines) in a school format.

Merits Record by Gender

For the purpose of this study only the merits granted to students in the subject of Language were taken into account. Nevertheless, it is important to mark out that these totals represented a slim share of all the merits allotted throughout the school year in the English area which also comprised the study of Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in this bilingual school.

The information gathered from said revision is presented on the following tables. The two sample classes belonging to the same grade level and with students at similar ages have been paired in order to track commonalities or discrepancies between the groups. Because the quantity of male and female pupils in each classroom varied, the researcher calculated the median between the number of boys or girls and the amount of merits awarded to each gender, as the case was, in order to utilize this result as a parameter of comparison.

In first grade A, there were 28 merits for boys and 22 merits for girls. In first grade B, 26 merits given to boys and 6 merits to girls.

Table 4.19

Merits 1A and 1B

1A	Number	Language Merits	Median	1B	Number	Language Merits	Median
Boys	12	28	2.33	Boys	8	26	3.25
Girls	9	22	2.44	Girls	12	6	0.5
Total Merits		50		Total Merits		32	

As seen above, according to the median, in first grade A the share of merits granted to girls and boys is similar, whereas in first grade B, although the number of girls exceeds the number of boys, male pupils got a larger amount of merits.

Examining the information about third graders, in third grade B, boys received 7 merits and girls 15 while in third grade C boys got 19 merits and girls 8.

Table 4.20

Merits 3B and 3C

3B	Number	Language Merits	Median	3C	Number	Language Merits	Median
Boys	10	7	0.7	Boys	12	19	1.58
Girls	12	15	1.25	Girls	11	8	0.73
Total Merits		22		Total Merits		27	

The table evidences that in third grade B, even though boys and girls were about the same number, girls doubled the amount of merits received by boys. As opposed to this, in third grade C, in relation to the number of male students in the class, it was the boys who doubled the amount of merits girls got.

Finally, in fifth grade B, 2 merits were awarded to boys and 3 merits to girls. In fifth grade C, the Language teacher gave boys 4 merits and girls 2.

Table 4.21

Merits 5B and 5C

5B				5C			
	Number	Language Merits	Median		Number	Language Merits	Median
Boys	13	2	0.15	Boys	13	4	0.30
Girls	10	3	0.3	Girls	7	2	0.28
Total Merits		5		Total Merits		6	

Compared to the lower grades previously presented, the higher ones received fewer merits. In fifth grade B the proportion between boys and girls is levelled. In fifth grade C despite the fact that the amount of boys is almost the double of the quantity of girls, the share per student is the same.

Indisciplines Record by Gender

Just as with the merits, only the indisciplines registered by the Language teacher while pupils were under her supervision both inside and outside of the classroom were taken into account. The median between the amount of calls of attention and the number of students per gender was calculated considering the share of boys and girls in each group was unequal.

In every class without exception boys received more sanctions for their misbehavior than girls did.

Comparing the two courses in each grade, similarities were detected regarding pupils at the same age.

Table 4.22

Indiscipline 1A and 1B

1A	Number	Indisciplines	Median	1B	Number	Indisciplines	Median
Boys	12	38	3.16	Boys	8	20	2.5
Girls	9	5	0.56	Girls	12	9	1.3
Total Indisciplines		43		Total Indisciplines		29	

Table 4.23

Indiscipline 3B and 3C

3B	Number	Indisciplines	Median	3C	Number	Indisciplines	Median
Boys	10	8	0.8	Boys	12	18	1.5
Girls	12	4	0.33	Girls	11	16	1.45
Total Indisciplines		12		Total Indisciplines		34	

In first grade A boys got 38 indiscipline and girls only 5. The median shows a clear disproportion between the two genders, 3.16 calls of attention per boy against 0.56 per girl. In first grade B the teacher registered 20 indiscipline for her male students while females account for only 9. The median again evidences a greater proportion of calls of attention belong to boys, 2.5 against 1.3 for girls.

At the intermediate levels, the table continues to present boys as the more frequent recipients of teachers' notes for improper conduct. The number of boys (10) and girls (12) is quite even and still boys were given twice as many indiscipline the girls were. In third grade C, the records appear more levelled. Boys added 18 indiscipline and girls a little less, 16. Even so, according to the medians, the share of calls of attention per male was 1.5 and for each female, 1.45. The difference rendered between genders is narrow but girls were reprimanded less often, as in the previous grades.

Table 4.24

Indiscipline 5B and 5C

5B	Number	Indisciplines	Median	5C	Number	Indisciplines	Median
Boys	13	27	2.08	Boys	13	48	3.7
Girls	10	4	0.4	Girls	7	0	0
Total Indisciplines				Total Indisciplines			
				31			
				48			

Observing the table, one can easily identify the disproportion between the share of calls of attention registered for males and females in both 5B and 5C with a larger portion received by boys in the two classrooms.

It is important to note that the largest divergence between the quantity of indisciplines granted to each gender happens with the younger pupils, that is, in first grade, and the older students, who belong to fifth grades.

4.5 Results from the revision of students' notebooks

The notebooks from each of the six classes appointed were collected and examined as valuable sources of data respective pupils' level of achievement, work presentation and teachers' feedback. Three same activities were selected as sample at each grade in order to compare how students of the same age performed on their written work moreover when they had different Language teachers.

In first grades A and B the activities chosen were: writing sentences according to pictures given, describing animals and answering questions about a text. For the third grades B and C the activities selected were: completing sentences with vocabulary words, finding and describing differences and making a book report. In fifth grades B and C the researcher picked up a worksheet based on a book read, writing a paragraph about a story and completing a sea animals' fact file.

Students' written work

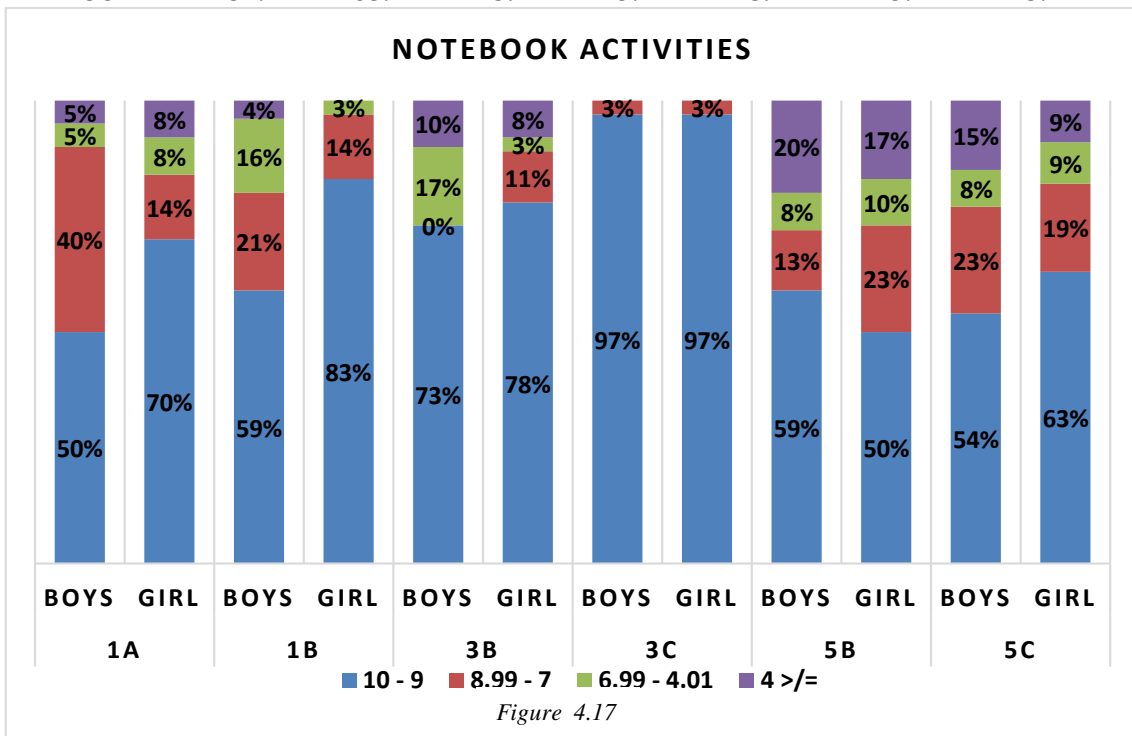
Scores

In order to handle comparable data per classroom, the researcher calculated the percentage of students per gender in each activity that fell in each of the four possible score ranks, that is, 10 – 9, 8.99 – 7, 6.99 – 4.01 and 4 or less, and then averaged the percentages of boys' scores and girl's scores separately.

According to the present educational legislation, the minimum passing score is 7/10, so any piece of work graded 6.99 or less deserves improvement.

Table 4.25
Notebook activities

GRADE	10 - 9		8.99 - 7		6.99 - 4.01		4 >/=	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
1 ^a	50%	70%	40%	14%	5%	8%	5%	8%
1B	59%	83%	21%	14%	16%	3%	4%	0%
3B	73%	78%	0%	11%	17%	3%	10%	8%
3C	97%	97%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5B	59%	50%	13%	23%	8%	10%	20%	17%
5C	54%	63%	23%	19%	8%	9%	15%	9%



As it can be observed in the preceding table, across the different levels, the tendency is of the girls outperforming the boys.

In grades 1A, 1B, 3B, and 5C there is a larger share of girls achieving scores within the top rank of 10 – 9. In 3C an equal percentage of girls and boys got the highest scores and only in 5B the proportion of girls is slightly lower being 50% against boys 59%.

When analyzing the results in the second rank, that is 8.99 – 7, we find that in grades 1A, 1B and 5C more boys received scores within this rank whereas in 3B and 5B the girls did, and again in 3C, the percentage of boys and girls who were awarded these scores is levelled.

Nevertheless, if we consider how many students received the passing score of 7 or higher, the addition of percentages show that in four out of six classrooms, the girls did and in the remaining, two groups 1A and 3C the difference is minimal, boys 90% and girls 84% in both classes.

On the other hand, if we examine the percentages of children's activities that required improvement, that is with scores from 6.99 to 4 or less, in four classes out of six, more of the boys' work got the lower scores and only in 1A and 3C the girls presented a greater proportion of unsatisfactory work although once again the difference is not so significant, boys 10% and girls 16% coincidentally for both groups.

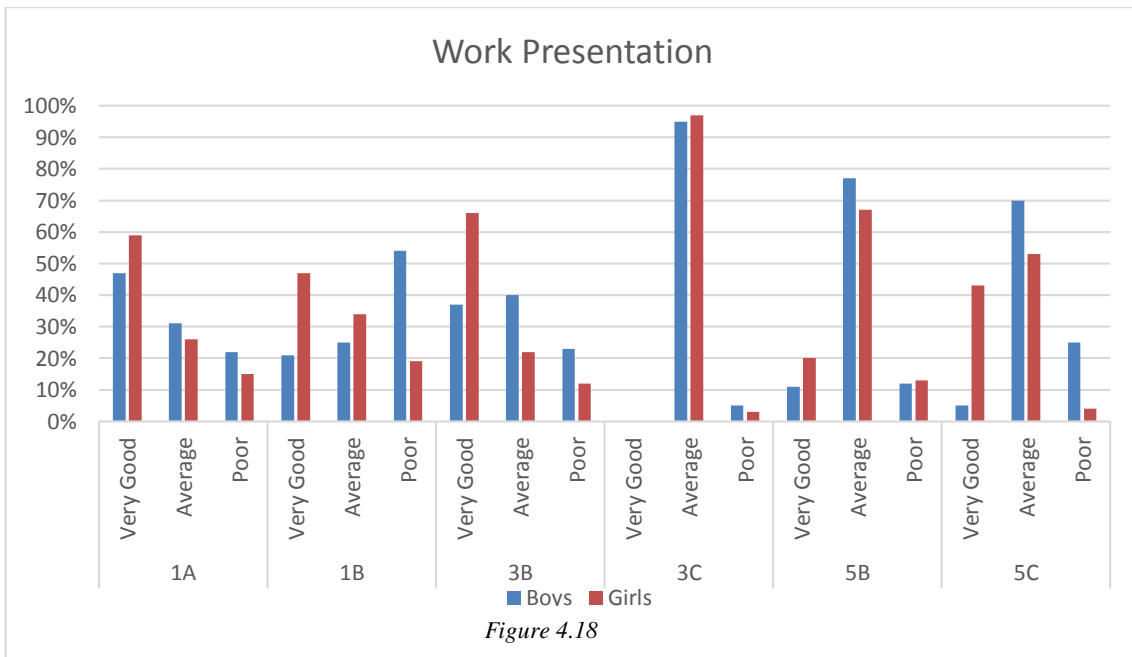
Work presentation

At the time of checking the students' activities, the researcher took the opportunity to evaluate neatness on work presentation, an aspect which could mark discrepancies closely related to student gender.

Table 4.26

Work Presentation

Grade	Very good		Average		Poor	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
1A	47%	59%	31%	26%	22%	15%
1B	21%	47%	25%	34%	54%	19%
3B	37%	66%	40%	22%	23%	12%
3C	0%	0%	95%	97%	5%	3%
5B	11%	20%	77%	67%	12%	13%
5C	5%	43%	70%	53%	25%	4%



From the percentages presented above, one can conclude that throughout all the levels and classrooms, the girls completed the activities more neatly since according to the researcher’s appreciation a larger share of female students finished work with very good presentation.

On the other hand, in all of the classrooms except one, boys' presentation on their activities was poorer. Only in 5B, girls' percentage is slightly higher, 13%, when compared to boys who represent 12%.

As regards, students delivering work with average or merely acceptable presentation, in four classes, the proportion of boys exceed the girls, while in two, 1B and 3C, it is the contrary.

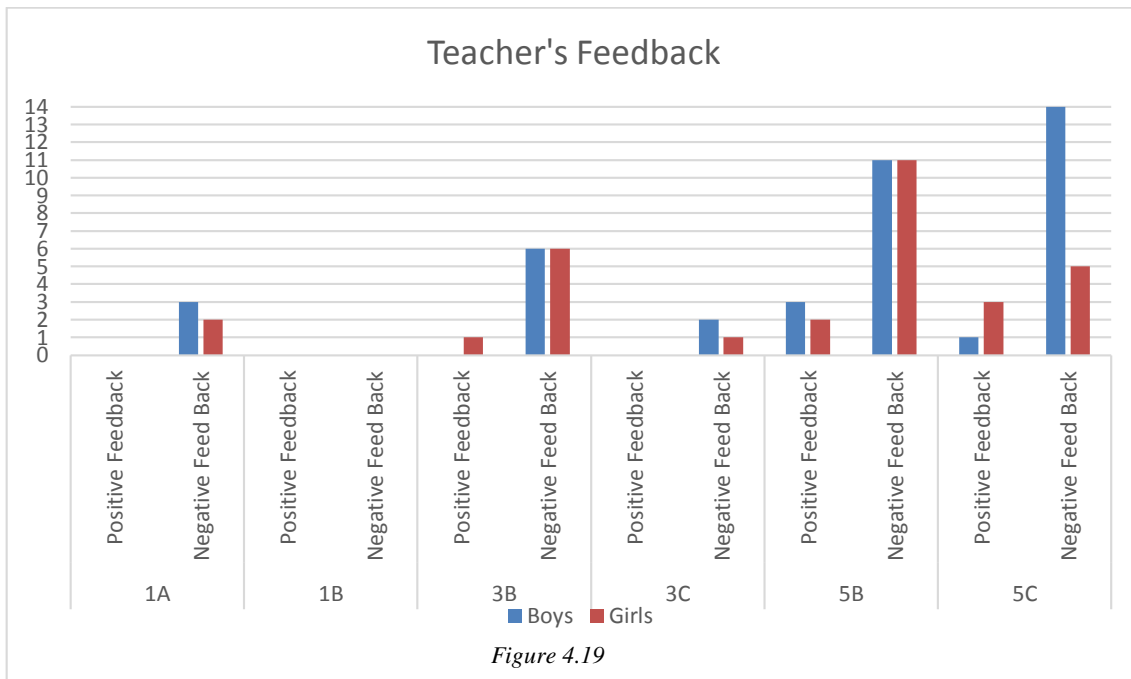
Teachers' feedback

One aspect the researcher focused on when looking through the notebook activities was the type of feedback that children were given besides the numerical score. A common feature was that teachers did not comment much on the way their pupils accomplished the assignments and if any, teachers' reactions to students' written performance on sampled work was by large negative.

Table 4.27

Teacher's Feedback

Grade	Positive Feedback		Negative Feedback	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1A	0	0	3	2
1B	0	0	0	0
3B	0	1	6	6
3C	0	0	2	1
5B	3	2	11	11
5C	1	3	14	5
Total	4	6	36	25



At a first glance, it can be noticed that positive annotations by the teachers were scarce on pupils' chosen activities. Only half of the classes got some commendations, the other 3 had none. In 3B, only 1 girl's activity had a positive comment, in 5B there was slightly more positive feedback for boys (3) than girls (2) and in 5C it was the contrary, 1 for boys and 3 for girls.

Regarding the negative annotations found, the amounts per grade were quite balanced between boys and girls with the exception of fifth C where boys outnumbered girls (14, 5).

Most comments merely pointed out the exercise was incomplete or undone. From all the exercises checked, the researcher only encountered five instances that somehow guided the child as to how to improve what was wrongly done. One teacher wrote, "You need to choose a verb tense: past or present." Two other examples were, "You had to write the comparisons!", or "You confused the vocabulary words. Check the book!"

In first B notebooks, children received no indications from their teacher besides their score.

Teachers remarked outstanding work with a happy face or the words "good" or "great".

4.6 Results from Students' Report cards

The researcher looked through the students' final report cards to check if the level of achievement of any of the two groups, girls or boys, dramatically exceeded the other showing an imbalance between genders.

It is important to punctuate that at the end of the past school year, all of the pupils in the sample classes had attained the passing grade of 7/10 or more in the subject of Language. Once again due to the fact that this school develops a bilingual program, students must complete the minimum score of 7 in other three subjects imparted in English that are Math, Social Studies (History and Geography) and Science. Nevertheless, only the final scores in the subject of Language have been examined for this study.

Only in the lower classes, 1A and 1B, the percentages of boys and girls within the top rank of 10 – 9 and the following rank 8.99 – 7 are fairly equivalently distributed.

In half of the classrooms left (3B and 5C) a greater percentage of girls fall in the top rank of 10-9. In the remaining groups, (3C and 5B), it is the reverse, a higher percentage of boys do.

The percentages corresponding to the second rank (8.99-7) favor girls in two classes and boys in the other two.

We can infer that across the elementary grades selected, there is no substantial difference between how well both genders performed.

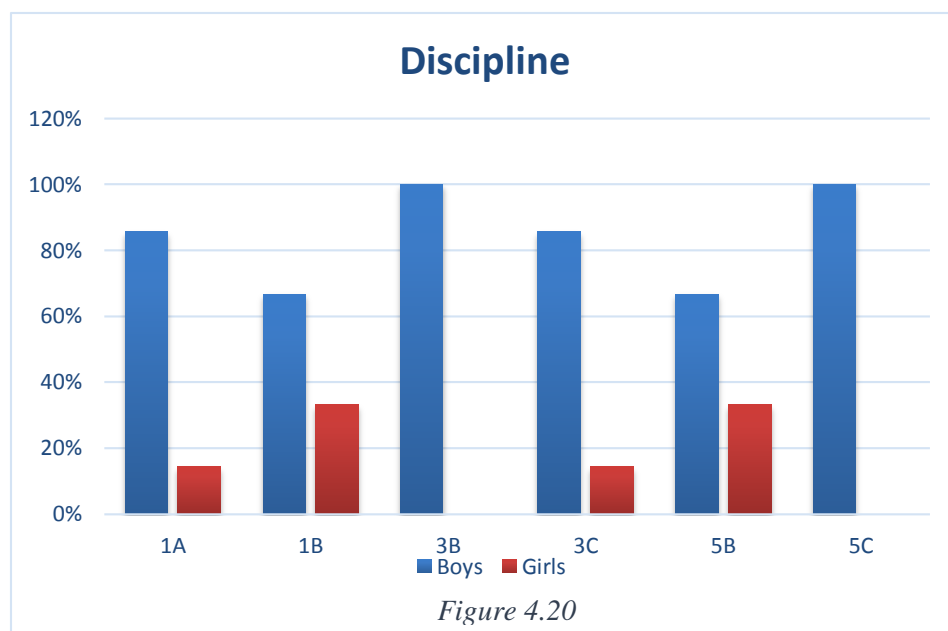
4.7 Results from Classroom Observations

The researcher requested teacher helpers to record 30 minute extracts of language lessons, three in each of the six participating classrooms summing eighteen pieces of material to be subsequently observed and analyzed.

Table 4.28

Discipline

	Boys	Girls
1A	86%	14%
1B	67%	33%
3B	100%	0%
3C	86%	14%
5B	67%	33%
5C	100%	0%



In all classrooms the percentage of call of attention is significantly higher with regard to boys than girls. In two courses (1A and 3C) the percentage corresponding to boys (86%) is more than six times the one belonging to girls (14%).

In two other classes, 1B and 5B, the percentage of disciplinary interventions directed to boys (67%) is double the amount of those addressing girls (33%).

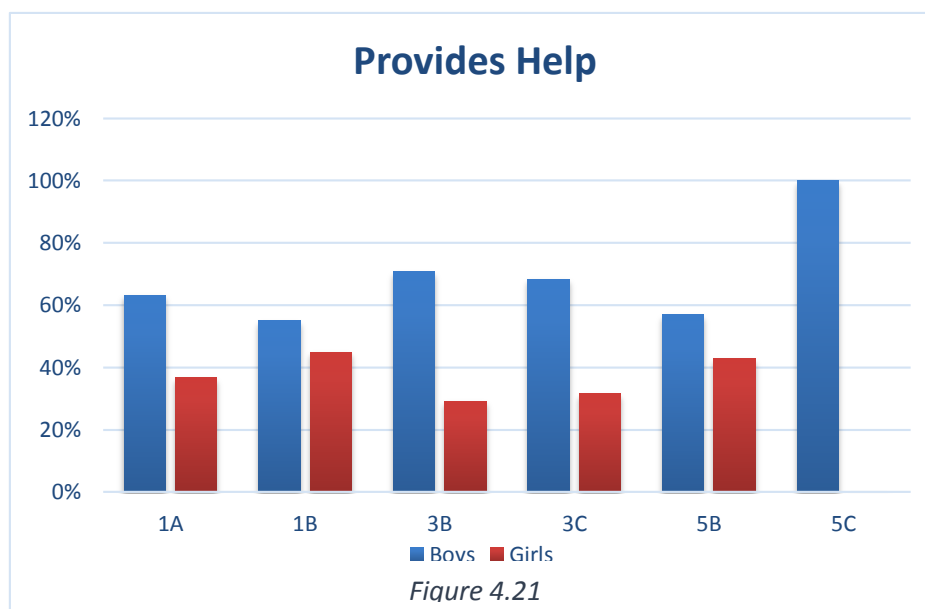
In the remaining groups (3B and 5C) the gap between genders is remarkable since 100% of the calls of attention belong to boys and none to girls.

Numbers corroborate what teachers, discipline inspector and English Coordinator sustain when they express that boys are more often called the attention and that when dealing with them they need to show more firmness than when handling girls' misconduct. The results

from classroom observations and records of indiscipline allow us to infer that this condition is maintained regardless the age rank.

Table 4.29
Provides Help

	Boys	Girls
1A	63%	37%
1B	55%	45%
3B	71%	29%
3C	68%	32%
5B	57%	43%
5C	100%	0%



In all classrooms the percentage of help provided by the teacher is larger for boys than girls. In two courses (1A and 3C), the percentage of assistance given to boys (63%) exceeds, in 1A, in a little less than twice the amount provided to girls (37%) and in 3C boys' percentage (68%) is more than double the girls' share (32%).

In 3B, the percentage of help boys received (71%) is almost 2.5 times greater than the girls' portion (29%).

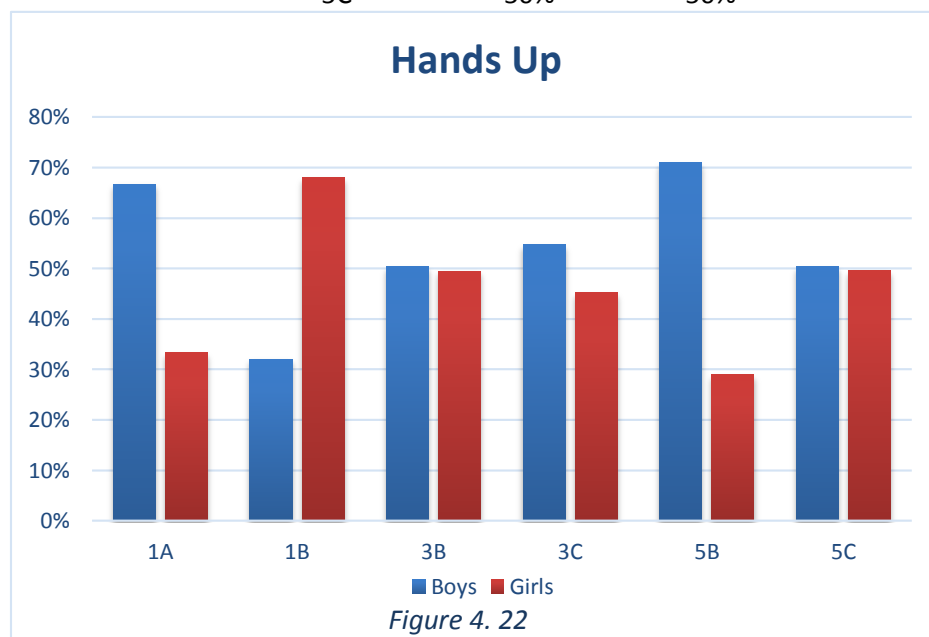
Both in 1B and 5B, the percentage of help given is more balanced between genders with relation to the other courses. Nevertheless, it is important to mark out that still the percentage belonging to boys in these two classes continues to appear higher with respect to the girls in a 10% or more

In 5C the difference is much more evident for 100% of the help given was directed to boys.

It can be inferred that boys demand more supervision and guidance while girls work more independently. As Sadker and Sadker (1994), among others, posed, teachers usually forget about girls' needs while covering the excess of attention required by boys. In this sense, girls are placed at a disadvantage.

Table 4.30
Hands Up

	Boys	Girls
1A	67%	33%
1B	32%	68%
3B	50%	50%
3C	55%	45%
5B	71%	29%
5C	50%	50%



In half of the courses (1A, 3C and 5C) the percentage of boys' participation surpasses the girls'. In 1A, compared to the girls (33%) boys' share is the double (67%). In 3C, boys' intervention exceeds in 10%. In 5B, the percentage corresponding to boys is almost 2.5 the girls' portion. Both in 3B and 5C the percentages are levelled. Only in 1B, the percentage of girls raising hands is more than double the times boys did.

Findings reflect in general terms that boys usually maintain a more active participation in class comparison with the girls. This pattern repeats in all age ranks. This may be associated with what teachers indicate who refer girls are more shy at the time of participating while boys manifest in a more spontaneous manner their opinion and are less afraid of incurring errors.

Table 4.31

Accepts

	Boys	Girls
1A	80%	20%
1B	52%	48%
3B	74%	26%
3C	67%	33%
5B	64%	36%
5C	71%	29%

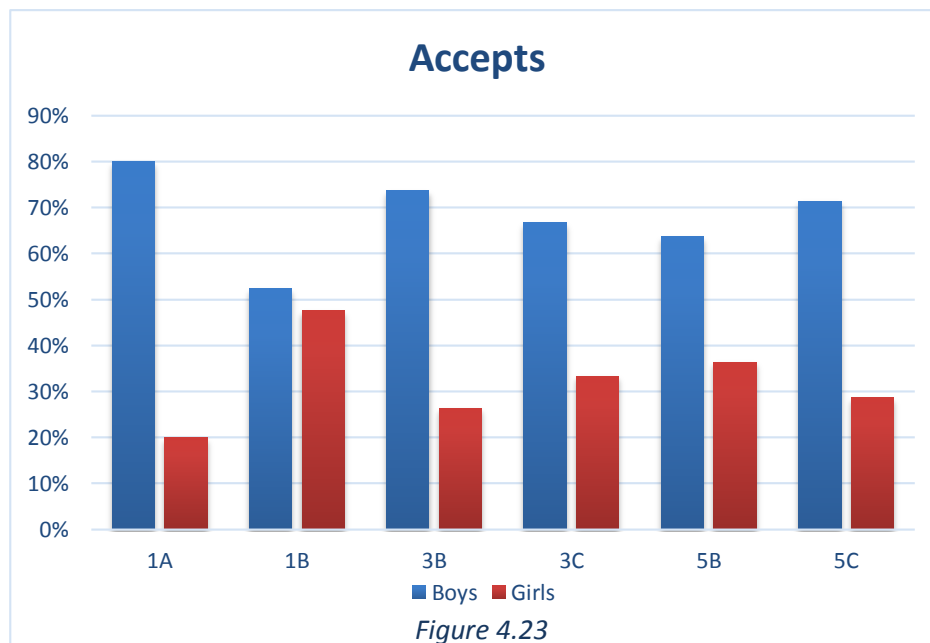


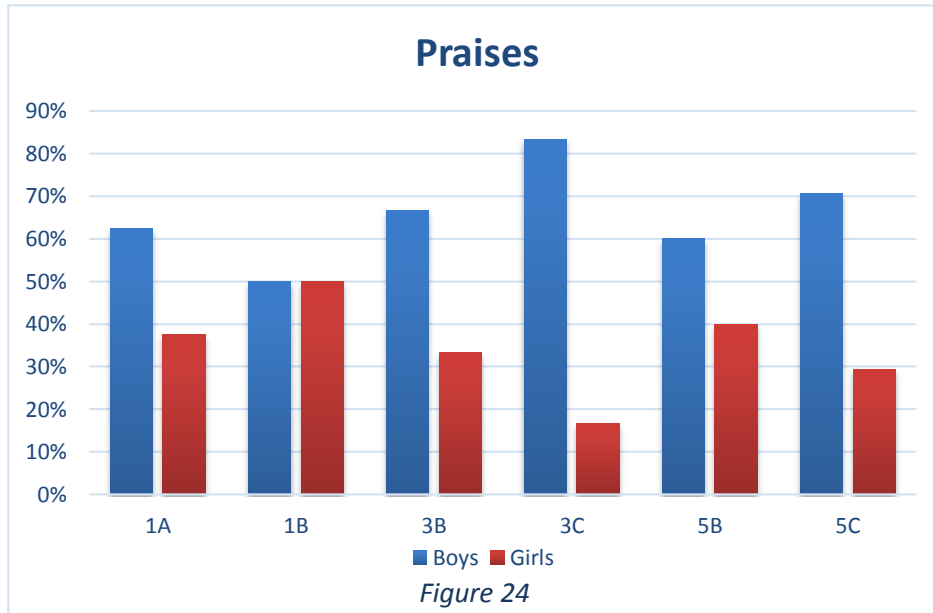
Figure 4.23

In all classrooms, the percentage of responses accepted by the teacher is larger for boys than girls. In 1A, the percentage of answers accepted from boys (80%) is 4 times more than the girls' (20%). In 1B percentages are more balanced, despite this, the percentage belonging to boys surpasses in 4% the girls' share. In 3B the percentage pertaining boys (74%) is almost three times the girls' (26%). In 3C the percentage produced by boys (67%) is about the double of the girls' (33%). In 5B the percentage of accepted responses from boys is almost the double (64%) of the girls' portion (32%). Finally in 5C boys' percentage exceeds 2.5 times the girls' accepted responses.

Table 4.32

Praises

	Boys	Girls
1A	63%	38%
1B	50%	50%
3B	67%	33%
3C	83%	17%
5B	60%	40%
5C	71%	29%

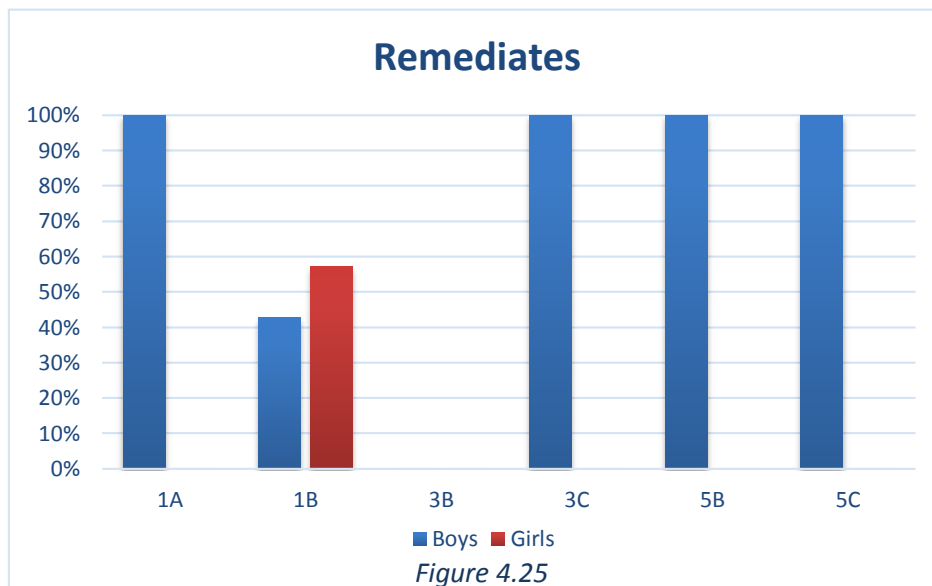


In 5 out of 6 groups, the teacher praised a larger percentage of boys' responses and in the classroom left, the percentages are even. In 1A, 3B and 5C boys' percentages are from almost 2 to 3 times the girls' share. In 1B percentages are evenly distributed 50/50 and in 5B 60/40. The largest disparity happens in 3C where the boys' percentage (83%) is almost 5 times the girls' (17%).

Somehow teachers assume that girls work better and, for this cause, they provide children with more opportunities.

Table 4.33
Remediate

	Boys	Girls
1A	100%	0%
1B	43%	57%
3B	0%	0%
3C	100%	0%
5B	100%	0%
5C	100%	0%



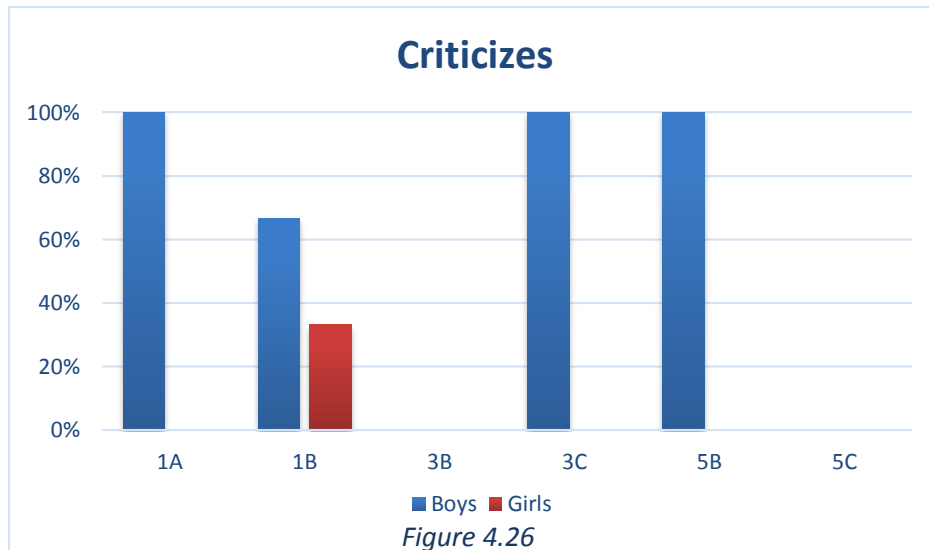
In 4 out of 6 classes, teachers corrected boys' productions and only in one class, girls received more of this type of feedback. In 3B neither of the two genders needed remediation.

This may occur because boys engage more actively but this does not imply they do so in the right way, rushing into answering like a teacher shared.

Table 4.34

Criticizes

	Boys	Girls
1A	100%	0%
1B	67%	33%
3B	0%	0%
3C	100%	0%
5B	100%	0%
5C	0%	0%

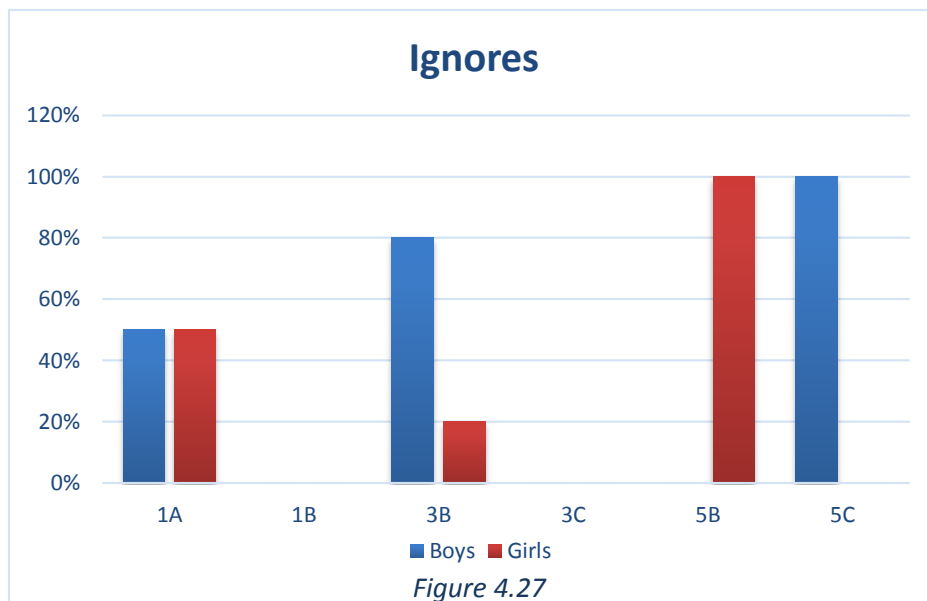


In two classes (3B and 5C) the teacher did not criticize any of the students' interventions. Only in 1B children both genders received some criticism, boys in a greater percentage (67%) compared to girls (33%). In the remaining groups (1A, 3C and 5B) the teacher only criticized boys' responses.

Table 4.35

Ignores

	Boys	Girls
1A	50%	50%
1B	0%	0%
3B	80%	20%
3C	0%	0%
5B	0%	100%
5C	100%	0%



In 2 out of 6 classrooms (1B and 3C), the teacher did not ignore any student response.

In 1A the percentages between boys and girls are equal. In 3B the teacher ignored a larger amount of boys' responses (80%) against 20% girls'. In two classrooms only one gender was ignored, girls in 5B and boys in 5C.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In the following paragraphs, the researcher analyzes and relates the data collected through questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and the inspection of school documents in order to find repeated traits or common patterns that help unify and prioritize all the information gathered. Questions orienting the present work are: How does the students' gender affect their learning of a foreign language? And, how do EFL teachers deal with gender differences within the class dynamics? In order to be able to appropriately answer these two research questions posted at the beginning of this study, the researcher organized the information collected through the mentioned means into six general topics which are classroom interactions, teaching practice, group management, student participation, student achievement and students' perceptions of the English class.

Classroom Interactions

Teacher-student interactions

During the class observations, the vast majority of exchanges between the teacher and the students were teacher initiated. This corresponds with Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) appreciation that in EFL learning environments most exchanges happen in an IRF pattern, which follows this sequence "teachers Initiate; students Respond; teachers' Feedback" (p.21). Likewise, De Bot (2001) showed concern after examining the data from a project on class interaction at university level because EFL teachers who knew they were observed for this aspect did not encourage student participation but basically questioned and learners only sometimes responded.

As previously detailed in Chapter 3 , in order to assess the manner in which teachers reacted to students' productions and the impact such reactions may have on student performance and self- confidence, the researcher typified teacher feedback following Sadker and Sadker's (1994) categorizations which contemplate that a teacher "praises", "remediates", "criticizes" or "accepts" students' responses (p.54).

Eighteen segments of language lessons were observed, three per teacher and group. The data collected from the same, rendered that teachers directed most feedback, both positive and negative, to boys. For instance, in all classes, the greater percentage of accepted responses pertained to the boys. Five out of 6 instructors praised a larger percentage of boys' responses. In 4 out of 6 classrooms, teachers remediated boys' productions more. In half of the groups, teachers criticized only boys and in one more males received negative comments and finally along the grades most ignored replies belonged to boys too.

This data supports what Sadker and Sadker (1994) contended that "Male students control classroom conversation...They receive more praise for the intellectual quality of their ideas...They get criticized..." (p.42)

In their quantitative study of teacher-student interactions in English Language Classrooms in an Iranian College Context, Hassaskhah J and Roshan-Zamir S. (2013) concluded that boys engaged in more than half of all teacher-initiated exchanges including the 3 types of teacher feedback where they accept, praise or criticize student productions. (p.3)

Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) recount that more exchanges in the classroom happen between teachers and male students, both when the teacher or the student initiate the interaction. This idea is supported by Jones and Dindia (2004) cited in Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) based on the results from over a hundred empirical studies referred to the impact of student gender on teacher-initiated exchanges which tells that, notwithstanding their sex, tendency shows that teachers interact more with boys than with girls in all types of exchanges. (p.2) Duffy et al (2001) found in Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) contribute on this aspect clarifying that such inclination varies depending on the subject.

A teacher described her relation was different with girls and boys. The first group show themselves more distant from her, the second group appear closer and more confident.

Student-student interactions

Teachers believed it is important for students to share with the other gender because they learn to behave and interact with the opposite sex.

Most teachers, 4 out of 6, thought having children of both sexes was beneficial. All teachers coincided that there are various advantages resulting from daily interaction between

girls and boys in the classroom. They consider this allows each other to enrich themselves, exchange different interests, provide different points of view in the lessons, respect and tolerate diversity. All these aspects prepare them for future relationships in the world outside. As one of the teachers refers "... they are learning to live, share in a place with both genders just like the real world, to treat people as an equal", and another one adds, "There are always different opinions. They learn to respect their differences (in everything) They learn from each other."

In her interview, the school Psychologist also manifested that there are distinguishable benefits in mixed classrooms. "This environment contributes to a child's identity-building process since kids have the opportunity to share in their daily activities with children at their same stage of development but who feel, think, like, differently and have other interests." The same professional remarked that "Children's potentials and limitations are also recognized by the "other", and such recognition when a child enters school should come not only from the adults or teachers but also from their peers who share their successes and failures." Ridgeway (2009) agrees on this view of

...gender as a primary frame for making sense of the *self* and the *other* and the cultural definition of this frame as a difference that implies inequality create two distinct sets for individuals. These interests affect the extent to which individuals actively gender their behavior (p.149)

Children also transmitted their opinions about sharing with members of the opposite sex when they were asked if they liked to be in mixed classes and also if they liked to complete cooperative assignments in mixed groups. Largely, in 5 out of 6 classrooms, girls preferred to be in mixed classes. Older boys who were in third and fifth grades also favored this situation. In 1A and 1B, half of the boys accepted and half of them rejected this circumstance. Looking at the responses about doing group work in mixed arrangements, a similar pattern arises. Males in lower and intermediate grades definitely refused to have girls in their groups and only older, 5th grade boys opted favorably. One salient aspect that a teacher mentioned was that girls tend to talk too much and this annoys boys. This somehow concurs with Thorne(1993) cited in Schneider(2001) who poses that very young male students adhere to fixed gender stereotypes when they choose toys or activities to engage in. The author

extends this thought saying that, although when infants reach 10 years old, they appear to have gained in flexibility regarding the integration with children of the opposite sex, most students will prefer to share with partners of their same gender. This would explain why most males in initial and middle years disliked the idea of sharing the same class and collaborating with females. Teachers affirmed this makes it difficult to organize group activities, projects and even seat arrangements because most of the time children do not want to be side by side with somebody of the opposite sex.

As for the girls, only two grades chose negatively, three classes agreed on working with boys and, in 1B, decisions were 50/50. Again this confirms that from an earlier age, most girls accept dealing with boys' behavior, probably because they are more mature and take leading roles in the group. One instructor spoke of this, "... girls lead boys to work better."

Clark (2012) also validates this aspect, "...they (girls) seem to be more mature. The maturity allows them to realise the importance of school and education a lot earlier than boys."

The manner boys and girls coexist in these courses is also reflected by the responses children gave relative everybody completing the same activities. Generally speaking, the tendency for both genders is of acceptance. In 4 out of 6 groups, boys expressed it was fine and in the remaining two classes about half of boys agreed. As for the girls, in all but one group they coincided it was ok and in the one left opinions for and against were 50/50.

Teaching practice

All six teachers in the study accorded that children have different learning styles. Most expressed boys tend to finish their work faster without caring about details, being more practical.

All teachers indicated girls present neater work; they can stay on focus for longer periods and perform the duties assigned to them more responsibly.

During the observations, it became apparent that teachers many times recur to girls as a support for slower, less able or more inattentive male students who take longer to complete the given tasks.

In the class videos, it was noticed that teachers tend to arrange how students sit in gendered patterns, placing girls as “talk neutralizers” next to or between restless boys. On one occasion observed in 1A classroom, a boy defiantly expressed his disgust and questioned the teacher why he was seated surrounded by girls and the lady immediately replied, “Because you talk too much!” Concurrently, Sadker and Sadker (1994) set forth that numerous teachers who, as children, suffered the consequences of gender inequity in their schools, unexplainably humiliate loud boys when they punish their improper conduct throwing threats like “If you don’t behave, I’m going to make you sit with the girls.”(p. 62)

Children were requested to evaluate their Language teacher telling how frequently she performed certain duties. Overall responses about their practice was highly favorable.

Group Management

The School psychologist exposed that, Coeducation may be disadvantageous if administrators and practitioners, who should both transmit knowledge and serve as identity models in social relations, are not conveniently capacitated to handle everyday situations between boys and girls. If a teacher cannot manage a classroom with students of both genders, he or she will not know how to meet their demands.

Regarding group management, the majority of instructors, 5 out of 6, agreed it is harder to motivate boys and they require more support and supervision. The same amount of teachers indicates they deal with discipline differently according to the pupil’s gender. Boys are more disobedient and need to be called the attention repeatedly. The Discipline Inspector corroborated this by saying,

Either boys or girls should have respect towards the authority but on a daily basis we notice differences between boys and girls. Girls tend to talk in a more subtle and soft way while boys are more effusive questioning authority and refusing to accept their faults. In my experience talking with boys about their actions, making them think about them, it’s easier.” “With boys I have to use a higher voice tone to get their attention. With girls depending on the problem, I intervene in a different manner, making them talk and think about the situation until they apologize to each other.”

When interviewed and questioned how differently boys and girls place themselves with regard to authority, the Head of the Psychology Department pointed out that “a child’s posture is not determined by gender but by the manner he or she establishes the relationship with the authority figure and by how such figure transmits a rule, sets a limit and so forth.” Nevertheless, in practice, questionnaires, observations, interviews and school records have evinced that these figures of authority are to some extent predisposed by previous experience and concepts at the time of managing misbehavior differently with boys and girls. This concept coincides with Ridgeway (2009) who states that “Social cognition studies show that we automatically and nearly instantly sex categorize any specific person to whom we attempt to relate”(p.148). In accord, the same author pronounces that “Research shows that sex categorization unconsciously primes gender stereotypes in our minds and makes them cognitively available to shape behavior and judgments.”(pp.150-151)

Children also contribute with their perceptions on this matter. As stated in their questionnaires, the majority of boys, 4 out of 6 classes, perceive their Language teacher treats male and female students differently. On the contrary, the greater share of girls, again 4 out of 6 groups, feel treatment is fair to all students. This dualism may result from the fact that, because they are often reprimanded, boys perceive their teachers as stricter and less tolerant with them. Teachers and even the Inspector frontally acknowledged that they address male pupils with a stronger tone of voice. The English coordinator admits that the obvious reason for treating boys and girls differently is that “they both react differently.”

The participant psychologist and discipline inspector both concur that more boys are referred to their attention by teachers. The former explains that social discourse assumes that boys react impulsively using their body to express discomfort, anger or frustration. These physical reactions are often misinterpreted by the adult and as a result her intervention is requested. The discipline inspector on her part asserts that “Boys definitely have more disciplinary referrals. Girls tend to manage differences among themselves.”

Student participation and motivation

The analysis of the results obtained through the evaluation instruments and class observations allow to make certain inferences with relation to the students in the Language

class. Even when 5 of the 6 teachers associated boys with the statement "it is harder to motivate them to participate actively during Language class", class observations indicate that in 3 out of 6 groups the percentage of participation is higher for boys than for girls. These are groups at different ages (1A, 3C and 5B), what makes us infer this is a pattern that remains indistinctly of age. Other two courses maintain a 50/50 percentage between boys and girls and only one course 1B shows a larger percentage for girls. This reflects clearly that, generally speaking, boys raise their hand more than girls during Language class. "Girls are more shy when they have to answer a question", a teacher shared. Accordingly, Perry (1996) while on the initial evaluation of an experimental program on gender-based instruction in a public middle-school in Virginia, reported, "Girls informed us that they felt freer to speak out in their all-girl classes because they didn't feel the need to try to impress the boys with clever remarks." (p.33)

During the classroom observations, it was noticed that, even when boys' interventions not always correspond to what the teacher requests, they usually tell their opinion in a more open and spontaneous manner than the girls who are more methodic and careful about what they elaborate. Boys appear to be less afraid of making mistakes. Sadker and Sadker (1994) corroborate this point when saying, "Our research shows that boys call out eight times more than girls. Sometimes what they say has nothing or little to do with the teachers' questions" (p. 43). The percentages of interventions that the teacher corrects (remediates) are largely for the boys at the higher grades (3C, 5B, 5C). Just as teachers point out when they mention, "but I can say that boys are not shy and are not afraid of making mistakes, so sometimes they participate more in the class. Girls tend to be always attentive.", "Yes, boys are more practical. They like to solve things". Ridgeway (2009) emphasizes the duality between male and female behavior stating that "The content of our gender stereotypes shows the characteristic pattern of status inequality in which the higher status group is perceived as more proactive and agentically...and the lower status group is seen as more reactive and more emotionally expressive." (p. 149)

It is important to highlight that such dynamics could be influenced by the teachers' perceptions of the girls' student profile. As quoted before, the 6 teachers from the different grades relate girls with a neater work presentation, a longer attention span than the boys' and higher levels of responsibility at the time of assuming the roles assigned. This could make

teachers to prioritize boys' active participation, somehow delaying to a certain extent the girls' engagement because teachers take for granted that the girls will produce what is requested without needing their constant supervision. Kelly (1986) cited in Jones (1989, p. 34) pronounces

Over the length of student's school career (about 15,000 hours), males would average 1800 more hours with the teacher than females. When that attention is divided up among 30 students the average girl would end up with 60 fewer hours of individual attention than the average boy.

Practitioners clearly expose this. One refers, "They (girls) work nice and pay attention to details and presentation". A second teacher affirms, "for me girls are better in language, they tend to write more, use more details, describing things or events. They work nice and pay attention to details and presentation". Finally another one adds, "Yes, because girls tend to be more mature than boys, for example girls are more responsible in completing activities than boys."

These conceptions are undoubtedly reflected in the frequency results with which the teacher provides help to students which in all levels it is higher for boys than girls. Teachers seem to consider that girls' work better than boys, so they not only supervise boys' work more but they also accept (in all classes) and praise (in 5 out of 6) boys' interventions more often than the girls'. After researching over a hundred learning contexts, Sadker and Sadker (1994) detected that "Boys were more likely to be praised, corrected, helped, and criticized – all reactions that foster student achievement. Girls received the more superficial "Okay" reaction." (p.55) In the same line, Jones (1989, p.34) cites Serbin – O'Leary, Kent and Tonick (1973) who effected an investigation at the preschool level concluding that " boys received more responses to solicitation, more detailed instruction and more praise and hugging than girls." According to the researcher, teachers were more likely to ignore girls.

Teachers express in a majority, 5 out of 6, that student behavior is a very influential factor in the process of learning a second language. They signaled order and organization on the work as the second in importance. This can be associated with the registers of classroom observations, on which in all 6 courses, boys were by large called the attention for indiscipline more times.

Teachers utilized different kinds of strategies to motivate and engage their pupils in the activities. Some of these stimuli were applied with both girls and boys, others with one or the other gender. When reflecting upon the use of merits, a written encouragement note in the students' individual agendas, half of the teachers thought these worked out well with the girls and even more instructors, 4 out of 6, mentioned merits as a form of rewarding boys. Nevertheless it is important to take into consideration that children respond differently to motivators according to their age. In this institution, merits are largely promoted by authorities throughout the elementary school and constitute the most popular and commonly used reward. The reason is that upon accumulating twenty, forty or sixty merits, children publicly receive a blue, silver or golden certificate respectively. Despite of this, from the students' perspective merits lose relevance as pupils reach fifth grades. This lack of interest in achieving them is clearly evident in the short number of merits registered in the students' agendas at this level. Therefore, practitioners need to be aware of this loss of effectiveness and should come up with other kinds of strategies to involve older learners.

Responsibilities assigned to students

A responsibility frequently given by participant teachers to enhance motivation in their classroom is being their helper or "secretary", for a day or a week. In their questionnaires 5 teachers recognized girls enjoyed a lot performing this function. All groups regardless of their gender feel they were given the chance to help their teacher at least sometimes. Nevertheless the teachers' perception contradicts how important the students manifested functioning as a helper was, when the largest share of boys, 5 out of 6 classrooms and also girls, 4 out 6, deemed being a helper was not so relevant for them. This circumstance was noticed more in the initial grades.

At the time of forming groups for collaborative assignments, teachers' points of view were varied. Half of the teachers acknowledged assigning more duties to girls but the other half told they considered personal skills and talents for the distribution of tasks. Here it is important to recall that the two first grade teachers pronounced that in their courses "they (children) didn't want to sit next to someone of a different gender" what may impair group making and seat arrangement.

Student achievement

Through the teachers' opinions, we learn that all instructors except one think more girls than boys enjoy reading and writing. An unexpected outcome from students' questionnaires was that most males agreed they preferred reading books or stories whereas only half of the girls considered this activity as one they liked. This contradicts what Clark (2012) found with the literacy survey carried out in UK in 2011 in which boys most likely disagreed with the statement that reading was cool. On the other hand, the results of the present study on the matter of reading as a male preferred choice, aligns with Weaver-Hightower's (2010) research article challenging stereotypes in Australia. The teachers who participated in his investigation were "shocked and surprised by findings that boys...liked reading and...had passion and skill with language" (p. 341). This expert insists that practitioners should not generalize that all boys dislike reading and writing when this situation applies only to some of them, so the proper question should be "Which boys?"(p.341) As for the item of writing in the present study, teachers' perceptions were not quite accurate either, since the majority of pupils, notwithstanding their gender, pointed out they didn't find pleasure in writing.

Because the questions on the activities they liked and disliked were open, responses to these two items were multiple and varied but another pattern was detected at the top grades where all the boys and half of the girls indicated they appreciated working in groups. Related to this aspect, Tschumy (1995) suggests that, generally speaking, girls prefer collaborative work because they like to help each other so teachers should evaluate if their classroom seat arrangement fosters or disfavors these types of interactions. Finally, drawing and coloring, largely associated to female preferences, was only signaled as especially enjoyable by almost half (46%) of the pupils, both genders, in 1A classroom and around half of the females in 3B (47%).

As mentioned previously teachers referred that boys outperformed their female peers in subjects like Math or Science because they understand and do well with numbers. Girls, they said, use language better writing longer pieces and transmitting their feelings on paper. Jones (1989) suggests on this matter, "The teacher plays a critical role in breaking the traditional pattern that suggests that mathematics and physics are subjects for boys. Likewise,

Ridgeway (2009) sets forth that, “In either mixed or same-sex contexts, gender stereotypes implicitly shape behavior and judgments to the extent that gender is culturally defined as relevant to the situation, as, for instance, with a gender-typed task such as Math.

Students’ perceptions of the English class

In general, students’ perceptions of their Language teacher were very positive. None of them indicates she never likes giving class. Quite the opposite, most of the pupils, the boys in all but two courses and half of the girls, sustain she enjoys doing so.

All third and fifth graders accord their Language teacher answers their questions. Boys in 1A and girls in 1B showed dissatisfaction in this respect and we may infer this relates with the fact that they are going through the transition between kindergarten and elementary school and their demands should be higher, being more dependent on their teacher than the older children are. Relative this aspect, Cameron Ponitz et al. (2009) encountered, when studying the adjustment stage of first graders in rural schools, that obeying instructions and working with independence were the two most salient difficulties.

This next point is centered on whether teachers listen to their students or care about their opinions, and goes hand in hand with the previous item of answering children’s questions because both have to do with the amount of attention practitioners deliver their pupils. Once again the greater amount of learners, of both genders, feels their teacher attends to their requests. Only 5C boys answered their teacher never listened to them. We can infer this perception responds to the fact that male students at that age tend to interrupt the class, more than girls, with their demands for attention and the teacher, so as not to interrupt the class, is forced to ignore them or to discipline the child, thus the children feel unattended. We may compare and contrast the data collected in the class observations where in 4 out of 6 groups, the teacher ignored responses. In one of these classrooms, 3B, a greater amount of interventions from boys were not heard by the teacher, in 1A ignored answers were levelled between the two genders. In fifth grade the situation was balanced, in 5B only girls’ replies were disregarded and in 5C, the other gender prevailed.

An additional point to remark is that nobody felt their Language teacher never congratulated them. The majority of boys, 4 out of 6 classrooms, and half of the girls sensed

their teacher always congratulated them. One group of boys and one of girls had divided opinions between ALWAYS and SOMETIMES, and the rest perceived they were sometimes commended.

All teachers but one acknowledged taking into account several factors at the time of planning their Language classes. They pronounced the students' mood and the time of the day as two of the elements that could result in changes in the length or level of demand of the activities prepared. Two practitioners in particular mentioned they took advantage of the natural competitive drive children have and organized games or contests in which boys played against girls, utilizing gender competitiveness as motivator.

When the students were asked whether their Language teacher made fun activities for them, the tendency showed was that, in the lower and intermediate grades, both boys and girls agreed she always planned interesting tasks, while in the top grades the tendency evinces most girls and boys believe she sometimes does. We can infer this variation of opinion in fifth graders reflects the need for teachers to constantly renew strategies to maintain their students' attention and engagement. These findings totally concur with how fifth grade students rated having fun activities in terms of importance in a different section of their questionnaire. As for the other part, all males and females agreed that their teacher was clear when explaining the lessons.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

After analyzing, relating and discussing the data obtained through the methodology and instruments applied, the researcher can proceed to answer the two questions presented at the beginning of the study. With relation to the first of them: “How does the students’ gender affect their learning of a foreign language?” some conclusions have been reached. The effect of gender differences impacted several aspects within the learning process. With regard to teacher-student interactions, practitioners engaged much more frequently with male pupils due to preconceived beliefs that boys require greater supervision, constant motivation and stimuli to successfully complete their tasks as opposed to girls who work more independently. Besides, boys in the study participated actively in class in much more spontaneous ways than girls who tended to listen rather than speak. This imbalance left girls at a disadvantage when considering that language acquisition requires repeated practice so, the less females involve in oral discussions, the less they will develop their communicative skills. This correlates with Hedge’s (2001) explanation on how languages are learned. Said writer makes the point that students who engage in interactions are pushed to produce language with more accuracy and appropriateness and that their output benefits other learners who receive such productions as input.

It became evident that girls showed more tolerance when sharing groups and space with boys and their interest to be with the opposite gender appeared at an earlier age. Sometimes girls talked excessively among themselves disturbing boys but, on the other hand, the latter often reacted aggressively or physically causing discomfort within the classroom. Girls followed instructions and rules more easily while boys questioned authority figures. Their improper behavior required frequent and firmer calls of attention from the teacher and many times male disruptive conduct derived in referrals to the School Psychologist for emotional support or to the Discipline Inspector who intervened to moderate their

disobedience to the school's norms. Elementary pupils, in general terms did not like sitting with a student of the other gender and this circumstance hindered integration.

Girls tended to contribute largely in the planning and organization of projects, being especially careful about details, whereas their male peers disregarded this aspect and showed different working styles.

The gender differences detailed above did not necessarily affect students' final academic achievement as evinced in the children's report-cards. Both girls and boys maintained similar averages within the passing scores.

Concerning the second question posted: "how do EFL teachers deal with gender differences within the class dynamics?" it is important to highlight that, as Sadker and Sadker (1992) cited in Hassaskhah and Roshan-Zamir (2013) express, teachers believe they provide a fair treatment to all their students but research contradicts their claim. Practitioners are immersed in the complexity of classroom dynamics totally unaware of this biased situation. Such is the case of the instructors in this institution who consistently devoted more attention and energy to the boys in their classrooms. Teachers provided male pupils with larger amounts of positive and negative feedback both orally and in writing. All of the practitioners, including the English Coordinator, were handling this diversity based on their experience and criterion as they had not received any formal training with respect to gender issues.

Two interesting findings related to this matter constituted the facts that instructors resorted to female students as support for boys who needed extra guidance on their work and also that teachers distributed the seating spots strategically so girls could neutralize their noisy male classmates, something that was not always welcome on the part of the boys.

Even though teachers tried to compensate gender discrepancies in interests at the time of planning their lessons, activities did not always appear attractive to any of the two genders. Practitioners also manifested certain lack of knowledge as to what their students preferences were relative their language class, since they took for granted that girls took more pleasure in reading and writing than their male partners did and findings in this research contradicted this concept evidencing that boys also appreciated reading stories and that neither of the two groups liked writing. As Weaver-Hightower (2010) indicates when referring to "The Boys' Turn", teachers and administrators should be cautious about the myths and stereotypes that

circulate regarding boys' education because not all boys are disadvantaged at reading and writing.

Finally, instructors applied diverse stimuli to engage children in their practice but said strategies did not always result effective. It became clear from the findings their effect varied according to the pupils' age and gender.

Recommendations

Instructors should reflect upon their daily teaching practices to effect the necessary adjustments to encourage equal participation in class. For instance, as stated before, female EFL learners who are not given the word have less chance to speak and practice English so their language skills develop later or less. One strategy teachers could apply in order to counteract the effect of this disparity is to call on girls even when they have not raised their hands in search of participation, remembering that female students tend to become quieter or less visible particularly if they are seated away from the teacher's "visual zone"

The present study disclosed the need for constant professional training versing gender issues so that practitioners may become more knowledgeable on the subject and may handle everyday situations with boys and girls in a fairer way. Following what Stiles (2002) refers, instructors should constantly be reminded of their responsibility to ensure equitable opportunities in their classroom. Administrators should consider including the aspect of gender equity in their class observations and later report teachers on behaviors or resources that may be promoting the disparities detected. Besides capacitating teachers through workshops, school managers and English Coordinators should permanently update educators' expertise on this matter by sharing newly published articles and papers that analyze gender questions.

As Perry (1996) points out it is demanding to raise awareness among teachers, parents, students and administrators regarding the impairment brought by gender inequity practices in schools and to consider curriculum reform as a successful way to confront the problem. Language educators must remember there is a fine line between attending diversity and bringing about inequality in the classroom.

The researcher's intention when sharing these results has been for her study to serve as a starting point that may encourage teachers to carry out similar investigations in their own EFL classes and with their own students in order to evaluate whether gender is, in any way, affecting their pupils' learning and achievement, and whether their own behavior and practice might be contributing to such detrimental effect.

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APPENDIXES

I _____ have been invited by Ms. Elena Peña to participate in a study she will carry out to complete her thesis to obtain the degree of Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. The topic of her research is "Exploring Gender in the Dynamics of the EFL Classroom in the Elementary School". The results will provide teachers with relevant information in order to improve both their practice and their student's learning process. Data obtained will remain confidential and will only be used for the purpose of analyzing the way gender interplays in the learning of English as a foreign language. The methodology applied will consist of:

- English Teacher questionnaires;
- Student Questionnaires;
- Class observations;
- Interviews to the English Coordinator; School Psychologist; Discipline Inspector
- Merit and Discipline entries;
- Report Cards;
- Others.

The conclusions will be shared with the teachers who participate in the study for the phase of reflection upon their practice.

I am free to withdraw from this research with no penalty.

I understand and accept the terms explained therefor I sign on this day this form of concern.

Name:

Date:

Table

Teachers' Profiles

Grade	Age	Gender	Education	English Level*	Years Experience	Nationality	Other
1A	37	Female	TEFL student TKT	B2	9	Ecuadorian	Married/ Mother
1B	28	Female	BA Marketing and Business TKT	C1	6	Ecuadorian	Single
3B	23	Female	BA Marketing	B2	1	Ecuadorian	Single
3C	39	Female	BA Social Communication TKT	B2	1	Ecuadorian	Married/ Mother
5B	39	Female	Child education student TKT	C1	14	Ecuadorian	Married/ Mother English Coordinator
5C	31	Female	Clinical Psychologist TKT	B2	12	Ecuadorian	Single

*TKT= Teaching KnowledgeTest (University Of Cambridge)

*English level as per the Common European Framework

EXCHANGES	TEACHER INITIATES		STUDENT INITIATES			STUDENT RESPONDS				TEACHER RESPONDS					OTHER INFORMATION	
	DIRECT Q	OPEN Q	ASKS QUESTION	COMMENTS	ASKS FOR HELP	CORRECT	PARTIALLY CORRECT	INCORRECT	NO RESPONSE	ACCEPTS	PRAISES	REMIEDIATES	CRITICIZES	NO RESPONSE		CLOSENESS
		HANDS UP														
1		B														
		G														
2		B														
		G														
3		B														
		G														
4		B														
		G														
5		B														
		G														
6		B														
		G														
7		B														
		G														
8		B														
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9		B														
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10		B														
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11		B														
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14		B														
		G														
15		B														
		G														
16		B														
		G														
17		B														
		G														
18		B														
		G														

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Age:	Gender: Male/ Female
Years of teaching experience:	Academic Degree:
Teaching grades: Teaching hours:	Number of students in each class:
Number of <u>male</u> students in each class:	Number of <u>female</u> students in each class:

1. What do you know about gender differences in learning?

2. Which do you consider are the benefits of having both, girls and boys, sharing the same class? Name 3 at least.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

3. Which do you consider are the disadvantages of having both, girls and boys, sharing the same class? Name 3 at least.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

4. Do you consider that boys and girls learn differently? Explain your answer.

5. If so, number the following factors influencing the learning process from 1 to 5 (being 1 the most influential)

- ❖ BEHAVIOR
- ❖ ATTENTION PERIODS
- ❖ NEED FOR TEACHER'S SUPPORT OR SUPERVISION
- ❖ ORDER AND ORGANIZATION TO WORK
- ❖ PERSONAL INTERESTS

6. Do you consider such differences when planning your classes and preparing your teaching resources? If so, how?

7. Tell, according to your opinion and experience, if each of the following statements describes either boys or girls. Write G/B.

- ❖ They enjoy reading and writing more.
- ❖ It is harder to motivate them to participate actively during Language class.
- ❖ They present neater work.
- ❖ They require more of my support and supervision.
- ❖ Their attention scope in Language class is longer.
- ❖ They show more leadership skills.
- ❖ They usually show responsibility on the roles assigned.

8. In general terms, do you handle discipline differently between boys and girls? Explain your reasons.

9. What kind of stimuli results more effectively for you to motivate your male and female students?

MALE STUDENTS	FEMALE STUDENTS
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)

10. When you divide your class for group activities do you assign responsibilities differently according to gender? Explain your answer.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SCHOOL!

Age: _____

Gender: Boy/Girl

1. Describe your favorite teacher.

2. Match to show what makes you more and less happy about your teacher.

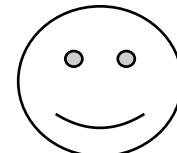
Gives merits

Makes fun activities

Lets me work with my friend

Listens to me

Names me helper



3. Circle Yes or No

I like to have boys and girls in my class

YES/ NO

I'm happy boys and girls do the same activities

YES/ NO

I like to work with boys and girls in my group

YES/ NO

My teacher treats boys and girls differently

YES/ NO

4. What activities do you like to do in your Language class?

5. What activities you don't like about your Language class?

6. Think about your Language teacher. Circle your choice in each statement.

1) She LIKES giving the class.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
2) She ANSWERS my questions.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
3) She CONGRATULATES me for good work.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
4) She LISTENS to me.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
5) She EXPLAINS clearly.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
6) Her classes are FUN .	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
7) She HELPS me with my work.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES
8) She lets me HELP her in class.	YES/ NO/ SOMETIMES

LET'S TALK ABOUT SCHOOL!

Age:

Gender: Boy/Girl

1. Describe your favorite teacher.

2. According to your opinion, what things should a good teacher do? Match according to the order of importance. (NUMBER 1 IS WHAT YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT)

- Lets you choose your working partner when making group activities.
- Motivates you by giving you merits and recognition for your work.
- Pays attention when you raise your hand or have a question.
- Makes fun and interactive activities.
- Gives you responsibilities such as being the teacher helper.

1

2

3

4

5

3. What do you think? Circle one statement and explain why.

It is good to be in a class with **both girls and boys** / I would prefer to be in a **single-gendered** class.

WHY?

I like that we all do the **same activities** even if you are a boy or a girl /
I would prefer the teacher plans **different activities** for boys and girls

WHY?

When doing group projects, I prefer working with students of my **own gender** /
I think it is ok to work with **both boys and girls**.

WHY?

WHY?	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> My teacher treats us all equally / I think my teacher treats boys and girls differently. </div> <hr/> <hr/>
4. Which type of activities do you <u>enjoy</u> the most during Language class? Why?	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
5. Which activities <u>you don't like</u> ? Why?	
<hr/> <hr/>	
6. Think about your Language teacher. Circle your choice in each statement.	
She enjoys giving the class.	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She answers my questions and doubts.	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She congratulates me for good work.	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She cares about my opinion.	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She explains new topics clearly .	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She remembers to plan fun activities .	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She supervises my work.	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER
She lets me help her in class.	ALWAYS/ SOMETIMES/ NEVER

- What is your academic background? _____
- How many years of experience do you have as a teacher and a coordinator? _____
- (How long have you worked in this institution? _____)

1) In what ways do you think the school's EFL program provides for gender differences in the classroom?

2) Have you received any special training on the management of gender differences in the classroom?

3) How does the fact that all of the school's English teachers are women affect the students learning?

4) Have you ever looked through the English textbooks used here to verify if there is any gender bias? (Like stereotypes regarding male and female roles, recurrence of male or female main characters, relevance given to male or female achievements, etc.) If so, what have you found?

5) Do you think it is important to explicitly deal with the matter of gender differences with the EFL learners?

6) How do you believe teachers should take into account their student's gender when doing their lesson plans?

7) As Coordinator of a mixed sex school have you found any type of relation between gender and academic performance?

8) Do you deem teachers should be trained specifically on the subject of gender to ensure a fair treatment of their students? Do you think English teachers treat boys and girls differently in their class?

ENTREVISTA DEPARTAMENTO DE PSICOLOGÍA

- Años de experiencia profesional: _____
- Años de experiencia en la institución: _____
- Preparación académica: _____

1) ¿Cuáles cree usted son algunas de las ventajas y desventajas de que la escuela sea mixta?

2) Desde una perspectiva psicológica, ¿cómo considera que afecta la diferencia de género en el aprendizaje?

3) Teniendo en cuenta que la mayoría de los docentes de la institución son mujeres, ¿cómo cree usted que esto impacta el aprendizaje tanto de niños como de niñas? (*¿Considera que el vínculo maestra-alumno/a se puede ver influenciado por la diferencia de género? ¿Cómo?*)

4) En aquellos casos derivados a psicología, ¿suelen traer a consulta los alumnos aspectos ligados a la diferencia de género? (por ejemplo: malestar dentro del grupo, excesiva competitividad, sentimiento de frustración frente al fracaso escolar, etc.)

5) ¿Cuál cree usted que suele ser la diferencia entre la postura de los niños y las niñas frente a las figuras de autoridad?

6) De acuerdo a su experiencia, ¿suelen haber mayores porcentajes de derivaciones de niños o de niñas? ¿A qué podrían atribuirse dichas diferencias?

7) ¿Considera que las relaciones entre niños y niñas se ven influenciadas por los estereotipos construidos desde sus entornos más cercanos?

ENTREVISTA PRECEPTORA

- Años de experiencia profesional: _____
- Años de experiencia en la institución: _____
- Preparación académica: _____

1) ¿Cuáles cree usted son algunas de las ventajas y desventajas de que la escuela sea mixta?

2) Desde el punto de vista disciplinario, ¿ha encontrado alguna relación entre género y comportamiento?

3) Teniendo en cuenta que la mayoría de los docentes de la institución son mujeres, ¿cómo cree usted que esto impacta el manejo disciplinario tanto de niños como de niñas? *(¿Considera que el vínculo maestra-alumno/a se puede ver influenciado por la diferencia de género? ¿Cómo?)*

4) ¿Cuáles son de acuerdo a su experiencia las razones más frecuentes de las derivaciones disciplinarias?

5) ¿Cuál cree usted que suele ser la diferencia entre la postura de los niños y las niñas frente a las figuras de autoridad?

6) De acuerdo a su experiencia, ¿suelen haber mayores porcentajes de derivaciones disciplinarias de niños o de niñas? ¿A qué podrían atribuirse dichas diferencias?

7) ¿Considera las diferencias de género al momento de manejar situaciones disciplinarias entre niños y niñas?

MERITS RECORD 2014 - 2015**GRADE:****Name:**

Merits	Reason	Date	Teacher

Name:

Merits	Reason	Date	Teacher

Name:

Merits	Reason	Date	Teacher

Name:

Merits	Reason	Date	Teacher

Name:

Merits	Reason	Date	Teacher

LANGUAGE FINAL AVERAGE

GENDER RECORD

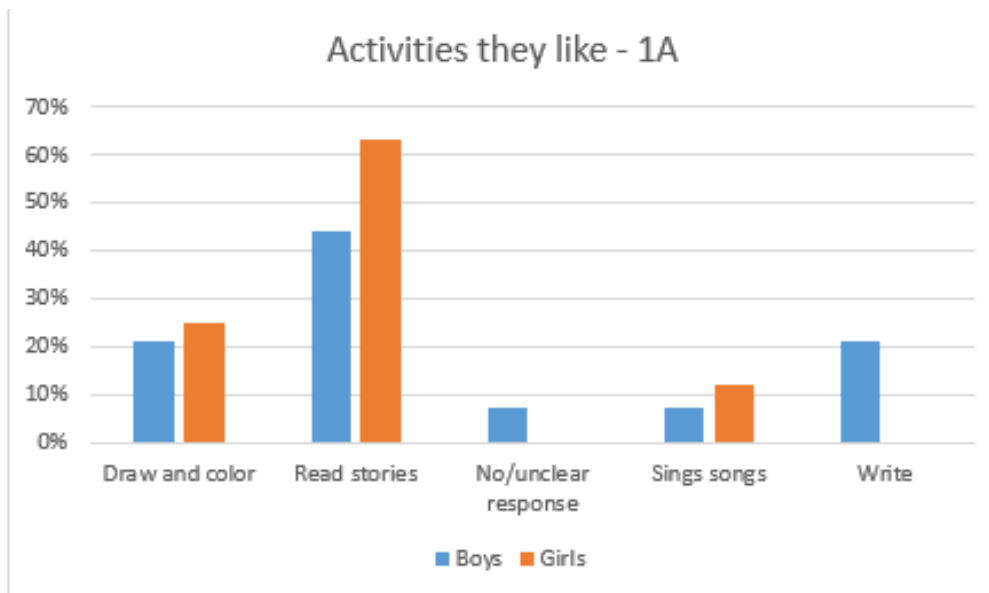
GRADE _____	BOYS	GIRLS
10-9		
8.99-7		
6.99-4.01		
4 or less		
TOTAL STUDENTS		

GRADE _____	BOYS	GIRLS
10-9		
8.99-7		
6.99-4.01		
4 or less		
TOTAL STUDENTS		

TABLES AND FIGURES

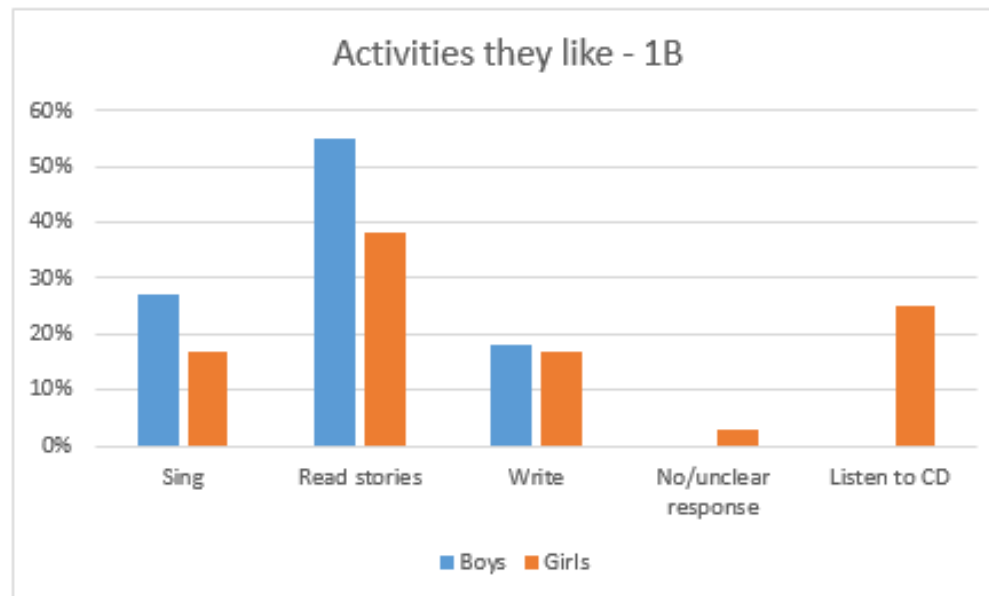
Activities they like - 1A

	Boys	Girls
Draw and color	21%	25%
Read stories	44%	63%
No/unclear response	7%	0%
Sings songs	7%	12%
Write	21%	0%



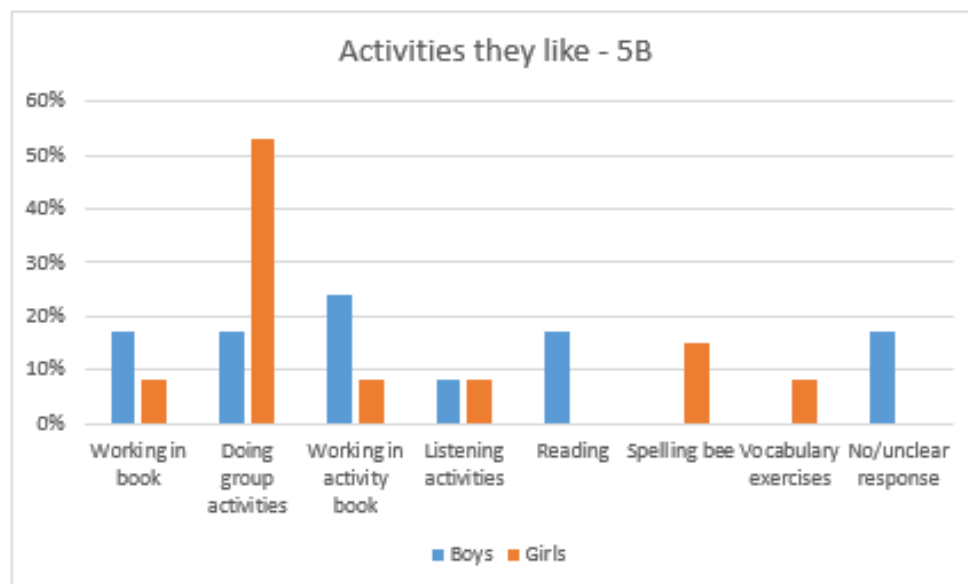
Activities they like - 1B

	Boys	Girls
Sing	27%	17%
Read stories	55%	38%
Write	18%	17%
No/unclear response	0%	3%
Listen to CD	0%	25%



Activities they like - 5B

	Boys	Girls
Working in book	17%	8%
Doing group activities	17%	53%
Working in activity book	24%	8%
Listening activities	8%	8%
Reading	17%	0%
Spelling bee	0%	15%
Vocabulary exercises	0%	8%
No/unclear response	17%	0%



Activities they like - 5C

	Boys	Girls
Doing group activities	30%	14%
Working in book	15%	14%
Spelling bee	8%	14%
Vocabulary exercises	8%	30%
Reading	23%	14%
Listening activities	8%	14%
No/unclear response	8%	0%

