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**Factors that influence the learning of English as a second language from  
the perspective of high school graduates, Quito, 2022**

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**Maestría de Enseñanza de Inglés como Segundo Idioma**

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the perspective of high school graduates, Quito, 2022**

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## **DEDICATION**

Este trabajo de investigación lo dedico a mis padres y de manera especial a mi hermana, por su motivación y apoyo para iniciar este proceso académico y culminarlo con éxito.

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## RESUMEN

El aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera es obligatorio en el sistema educativo de Ecuador. Se han destinado varios recursos para mejorar la enseñanza del inglés. Al finalizar los estudios de bachillerato, los estudiantes deben obtener el nivel B1. A pesar de los esfuerzos públicos, los resultados no son los esperados. Los resultados muestran que el nivel de inglés en Ecuador es Bajo. Por lo tanto, se propuso estudiar los factores que ayudan o dificultan el aprendizaje del inglés desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes. Los factores que inhiben el aprendizaje del inglés son la motivación mal dirigida, el elevado filtro afectivo, el uso limitado de recursos digitales y tecnológicos en las aulas y la falta de actividades que fomenten la producción oral. Sin embargo, lo que se puede destacar es la actitud hacia el inglés, los estudiantes tienen la iniciativa de buscar alternativas que mejoren las habilidades que reconocen como sus debilidades es gratificante para su aprendizaje. En esta investigación cualitativa participaron 8 estudiantes recién egresados del bachillerato, con niveles A1 y A2. La información de las experiencias narradas fue examinada utilizando el método de análisis narrativo. Hay poca información que proviene de los estudiantes con respecto al tema. El insumo de esta investigación busca promover que quienes están en el sistema educativo inglés incluyan la opinión de los estudiantes con el propósito de incorporar actividades que les permitan mejorar sus habilidades, repasar los contenidos y manejar el filtro afectivo en el salón de clases.

**Palabras clave:** Factores, influencia en el aprendizaje del Inglés, bachilleres, investigación cualitativa, motivación, recursos didácticos

## ABSTRACT

Learning English as foreign language is mandatory in the education system in Ecuador. Several resources have been allocated to improve English teaching. Upon completion of high school studies, students must obtain level B1. Despite the public efforts, the results are not as expected. The results show that the English level in Ecuador is low. Therefore, it was proposed to study the factors that help or impede the learning of English from the perspective of students. The factors that inhibit the English learning are the misdirected motivation, the high affective filter, the the limited use of digital and technological resources in the classrooms, and the lack of activities that encourages oral production. Nonetheless, what can be highlighted is the attitude towards English. The students have the initiative to look for alternatives that improve the abilities that they recognize as their weaknesses is rewarding for their learning. In this qualitative research, 8 students recently graduated from the high school participated, with levels A1 and A2. The information from the narrated experiences was examined using the narrative analysis method. There is little information that comes from students regarding the subject. The input of this research seeks to promote that those who are in the English education system include the opinion of the students with the purpose and incorporate activities that allow them to improve their skills, review the contents, and manage the affective filter in the classroom.

**Key words:** factors, influence English learning, high school graduate students, qualitative research, motivation, didactic resources



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning English as foreign language begins from an early age and is mandatory in the combined government/religious, public, and private education system in Ecuador; in the public educational system, this subject is taught since the 2nd grade of Basic General Education, when children are around the age of 6 (Ministry of Education, 2014). Within the national curriculum, several resources have been developed and made available for teachers, including textbooks and teacher training (Ministry of Education, n.d), to achieve the goals of the national English language teaching system.

The educational project of Ministry of Education in Ecuador is embodied in its curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2019), designed for schools and high schools, which shows in it the guidelines for action and the verification mechanism that demonstrate that the objectives have been achieved. Furthermore, the curriculum guides the teachers to develop in their students linguistic and sociolinguistic skills, including the four basic language proficiencies of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Upon completion of high school studies, students must obtain level B1 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) that the Ministry of Education uses as a standard reference to design the English curriculum.

Nevertheless, despite extensive public investment, educational policies, and content development, the results are not as expected. Since 2011 Ecuador has participated in the international evaluation carried out by the English First (EF) organization. The trend since that year showed that the English proficiency has transitioned from Low Level to Very Low Level, remaining in the latter from 2019 to 2021; although in 2022, Ecuador was classified at the level of proficiency: low (EF, 2022). The above led me to ask whether the efforts (economic and political) are sufficient or incorrectly directed, or the English teaching system has a structural

problem. Such questions become research opportunities that help me to understand where the faults are.

It was then necessary to find out if anyone (authorities, teachers, students, etc.) had commented on the subject. It was then that I found that according to the authorities of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, lack of teachers and teachers with low English proficiency within the public education system, are the reason for the low results (Guerra, 2019). From the point of view of teachers interviewed in the same write-up, they believe the reasons for the (students') low level of aptitude are due to traditional teaching methodologies. Attempts to understand the factors contributing to low English proficiency in the country are ongoing.

While much attention about English education has been given to the perspective of policy makers and teachers, students' viewpoints are often ignored. My concern in this study arises from questions about the perspective of the students, particularly those who graduate from high school with low English proficiency. I attempt to understand the factors they believe facilitate or impede the acquisition of the English language, despite having learned English as foreign language as part of the established educational curriculum. For this reason, students' descriptions and interpretations of their English learning experiences can give insights about the problems in English education in Ecuador that are often excluded from the research. Through interviews, they describe their experiences in English classes, their proximity to the language outside the classroom, and the influence of their interest and willingness to learn the English language.

This study uses narrative inquiry that allows students to describe their academic journey and their experiences with English both inside and outside the classroom. Specifically, I interviewed first-semester university students who recently graduate from high school with low English proficiency levels. For the purposes of this study, "low" proficiency refers to those

whose English proficiency is A1 and A2, referred to as basic users on the Common European Framework of Reference for the Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). From these stories, the present study identifies factors that influenced the learning of English as a second language from the perspective of high school graduates. The specific objectives were to describe students' perception towards English as foreign language inside and outside of high school facilities, understand their affinity with or aversion to the English language, and analyze these first-hand accounts to understand which factors, from students' viewpoints, facilitated or impeded their acquisition of the English language.

This study is structured as follows. First, I survey the literature on the non-linguistic factors that influence the learning of second languages such as students' social context, beliefs and experiences while learning a second language, and emotions that can influence language learning outcomes. Then, I present the research methodology, which deploys narrative inquiry to elicit stories of language learning experiences from eight Ecuadorian high-school graduates with a low English proficiency level. Afterwards, I analyze their narratives to identify factors these students perceive to have facilitated or impeded their acquisition of English leading up to their high school graduation. Finally, the findings of this research offer relevant information based on the students' experiences that should be taken into account, in order to improve the process of teaching English. From my perspective, what students perceive as weaknesses both in their skills and regarding the repetitive English content, can be seen as opportunities to improve the teaching methodologies and redesign in-class activities based on students' needs. It is also important to point out that students express the use of technological tools to improve their knowledge of English and that have been relegated or prohibited inside the class.

Based on the stories considered in this study, the participants agreed that even though English contents were repeated year after year, few activities allowed them to develop their sociolinguistic skills, so the interviewees felt insecure if speaking English was required in a real-life social context. It was interesting to discover that the interviewees are wary of speaking English in class showing that their affective filter is high, but they look for opportunities and people outside the classroom to speak English, which shows that their affective filter is low with people they trust. About their attitude towards the language reflected that they are aware that English is important personally, academically, and professionally. Being aware of their English proficiency, the interviewees have looked for accessible options such as virtual applications, internet platforms with visual and auditory content, books, and friends with whom to practice English. Such initiatives indicate that low-performing students are not only self-motivated to learn English but also are aware of the opportunities they would have with more advanced English proficiency. Therefore, the interviewees showed language awareness by focusing on the language skills that they perceive to be their weaknesses.

The findings of this research imply that the teaching system has become stuck in the routine repetition of content, and maintains the same teacher-centered teaching methods. However, despite the fact that students question this model, which by the way is demotivating, the initiative to improve their skills, especially speaking, draws them. Speaking implies to be developed inside and outside of class. In the first case, despite being offered the environment for it, the students refuse to speak because the affective filter is high, while outside of class, the opposite happens with limited options, the students look for moments to practice, also using tools that are prohibited in class, such as technology and the internet, which the students themselves find more useful than homework.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on students' perceptions of the factors that influence students' experiences learning English, show the factors that these can positively or negatively affect second language acquisition outcomes. Some of the factors are attributed to linguistic influences, and others to the learning environment both inside and outside of the classroom. In this research, I focused on non-linguistic factors that influence English language learning, as the learners' social context, resources and emotional factors because to a greater or lesser extent they can influence the second language learner to form an opinion, facilitate learning, and influence their motivation to learn a second language.

Non-linguistic factors have been studied and explained in the literature, so their contribution would explain why the interviewees did not reach their proficiency levels, thus becoming impediments to learning. The theoretical model on which I based my research was that of the authors Dunkel and Biddle (1974), who identified several factors that intervene in the learning and teaching of the English language, focusing on the actors, students and teachers, and the teaching tools in the classroom. Despite being an older study, it gave me a holistic and structured look at the process of teaching English, who the actors are (important for that time), what characteristics those actors bring with them before and during teaching, aspects of the actors' environment in each part of the process, and at the end of the process what is expected as a product. Dunkel and Biddle's (1974) model, can be compared with the assembly of a product in a factory, in which achieving excellence depends on the manufacture input materials (e.g., technology), and process that leads to a product. If any one of them fails, the product loses its integrity and quality. Therefore, tracing elements that cause the failure of the final product is the challenge. In the case of teaching and learning, the most relevant ingredient from my point of

view is the student, because in the end it is the student who goes through a molding process and leaves this process. In language learning, the quality achieved of the "final product" is measured through learners' proficiency, and it is on whom the fact of having received the necessary cognitive tools to achieve their academic and professional goals has an impact. Therefore, knowing students' point of view regarding the system that formed them is important to identify which part of the process can be improved.

Other theories that were developed after Dunkel and Biddle's proposal, such as that of Stephen Krashen, who explained with his theory how the process of language learning and acquisition occurs, are also considered in this study. Krashen's contribution is reflected in the understanding that emotions have an effect on learning. The analysis in this study starts from (my) understanding that learning and acquiring a language are two different cognitive processes and that each is affected by different factors. This study analyzes learning as such, as a process subject to the monitoring or correction of linguistic production, derived from the learning of rules and grammatical structures of the language being learned. Unlike Dunkin and Biddle, Krashen was more specific in his study and understanding of these elements (affective and learning). In this study, it is relevant to incorporate the concepts of learning and the affective dimension because they are closely related, the alteration of the affective aspect has its sequel in learning. Therefore, if part of my goal is to understand what factors affect learning, I must include the affective element.

## **2.1 VARIABLES AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Dunkin and Biddle (1974) propose a set of variables that intervene in the learning and teaching process of a foreign language. Their model presents a linear learning process that

involves the actors (for example, teachers and students), their characteristics (social, and formative experiences), the elements that intervene in the process (regarding the classroom, and the community contexts), the events that occur within the same process, and the "final" result of the learning process. The variables shown in the model were categorized into four areas: presage, context, process, and product.

According to Dunkin and Biddle (1974, p. 38), **the presage variables** involve the teacher formative experiences and training, and the teacher skills and personality. **Context variables** include learners' formative experiences, abilities, and attitudes, as well as the school, community, and classroom contexts. **Process variables** include the teacher's didactic performance in the classroom, learners' classroom behavior, and learning processes. Finally, **product variables** consist of the outcomes: the final competence or proficiency level achieved.

The variables proposed by the authors Dunkin and Biddle, can be translated into three moments: before learning, during learning, and after learning. The first one, refers to the characteristics of the actors -students and teachers- such as prior formation, mental structure, criterion, and social environment; all of these shaped who the actors are. The second moment, is the moment in which teaching and learning takes place and is the key moment because what happens here will determine whether the student achieves a level of proficiency in the L2. The third moment, is the effect of the learning process on the student, the skills the student achieved after the process, if he/she developed language skills and in the long run, if what he/she learned allowed him/her to achieve professional success. Dunkin and Biddle (1974) lay the groundwork for many of the variables considered in this study, those are Context variables, Process variables, and Product variables.



### 2.1.1 CONTEXT, PROCESS AND PRODUCT VARIABLES

The variables of the Context that were analyzed in this study from Dunkin and Biddle (1974) were the learners' personal characteristics, and their environment inside and outside the classroom. Regarding the Process, the variable analyzed was students' behavior during the English class, and from the Product, the learners' attitude towards the subject variable was considered. For the analysis of these variables, studies conducted by other authors on these variables were used.

### 2.1.2 CONTEXT VARIABLES

The context records all those factors that are part of the learner's social and academic life, that is, his or her social environment, and the knowledge previously acquired. Madrid (1995) states that learners' individual characteristics can help to explain their individual outcomes, these individual characteristics are gender, their social contexts, beliefs and experiences, age, aptitude and cognitive characteristics, and affective states.

Learners are surrounded by a social environment; they interact regularly with members of their society and form relationships. According to these conditions, they are identified with the groups to which they belong. Madrid (1995) indicates that the **social context** is determined by a set of social factors associated with social class, cultural level, home language, ethnicity, religious context, and environmental language. The aforementioned factors shape the idiosyncrasies of the learner and under which they direct how they speak and act in society.

The stereotypes about a language can also influence the predisposition to learn that language and the elements that underlie it. Regarding the **beliefs and experiences** of students about some aspects when learning a L2, these differ according to age and have to do with their

reaction to tasks or class activities and their opinion if these are relevant or useful. According to Gardner (2006), a language is part of a social and cultural setting and when is learnt, it brings its own contexts, becoming part of what the learner internalizes from the language culture.

However, it should not be forgotten that the learner brings his own culture, beliefs, experiences and previous knowledge, which can inevitably influence the learning of the L2, and when a language captures the attention of a learner and he also absorbs the elements related to that language, the learning experience can be effective.

The way parents raise their children has a direct impact on their behavior and educational performance, and their main function is to promote the learning of social customs and norms. A part of the training that people receive, parallel to formal education, is that which comes from their parents. According to Seo (2021), the cultural capital of parents, their command of the language, and the availability of resources for learning, cause positive results in learning an L2. In this sense, Butler (2014) adds that the academic level of the parents and their orientation so that their children learn English, infer in the domain of the L2. Parenting style is another part of the culture factor mentioned in Vyas and Sharma (2022). In this study, parenting style shapes children's motivation to learn new English.

Motivation can come from different sources, not only from parents, but also from teachers, friends, and one's own motivation. Madrid et al. (1994) argue that motivation can derive from the self interest in learning tasks, and is closely related to the learner's self-perception and self-esteem, and can increase or decrease due to environmental or social factors. Therefore, students' motivation is conditioned by what is received externally, and how is transmitted to them. Finally, motivation is present in the three moments in which learning takes place: before, during and after. Therefore, this factor is complex to place as a variable of presage,

process or product. Consequently, this is vital in Dunkin and Biddle's model, because it shows that is a factor that should be kept active in every step of the learning process.

### **2.1.3 PROCESS VARIABLES**

Understand as a process, the situation where the teacher and student actors are present in a classroom, and the action of teaching and learning takes place. One of the authors who explains learning and who elaborates the theory about how language learning occurs was Stephen Krashen. In the 1980s, Stephen Krashen, one of the most recognized exponents of the language acquisition-learning theory, identified five hypotheses regarding the acquisition of second languages that attempted to account for more intrinsic factors that may affect language learning, such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits, as well as L2 exposure and language input; the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, the Affective Filter hypothesis, and the Natural Order hypothesis, are part of what is known as the Monitor Model (Krashen, 1982, p.9-30).

Considering the factors mentioned by Krashen, the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis and the Affective Filter hypothesis provide a useful framework for considering students' own narratives about their experiences learning English. With reference to the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, Krashen (1982, p. 10-11) established that there are two ways to develop second-language competence: acquisition and learning. The former was described as a natural process which occurs when the learners acquire language competence by exposure to a language which is understandable and meaningful to them. To acquire language competence depends on the learner's attitude to interact with others due to his/her need to communicate. Learning, on the other hand, involves a more conscious manipulation of language elements; learning competence

is gained through the formal study of L2 rules, patterns, and conventions in a controlled environment where the learner consciously applies the knowledge gained. L2 learned competence is related to learner's cognitive ability.

Nonetheless, language learning will not occur if the emotional responses that impede comprehension of meaning are raised. Therefore, the other hypothesis of Krashen relevant to this study was the Affective Filter, which shows that the acquisition can face blockages caused when the learner's emotions are affected. The Affective Filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982, p. 31) explains how affective factors can facilitate or impede second language acquisition. Krashen affirms that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, with low levels of anxiety, and extroversion have a high probability for success in L2 acquisition. Otherwise, the affective filter may trigger the formation of a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is up, it impedes language acquisition. In addition to affective filter theory, Krashen (1982, p. 32) assures that inside the classroom how teachers stimulate the learner's emotional state -in a positive or negative way-, leads either to fixation of the language or to a cognitive block. Therefore, this demonstrates that the teacher plays a relevant role in the classroom, therefore his/her pedagogy and teaching methodology must have an effect that does not raise the affective filter in the classroom.

Other factors that can cause learning block are stress and anxiety and depending on the personality of who suffers from it, it is possible to control it or submit to it. According to MacIntyre (2007, p. 78), emotions like anxiety and stress are present in the classroom, but the way in which they arouse in each individual makes the difference in learning a L2; this author includes negative emotions, and explains that those who experience anger more often, tend to have higher anxiety, which is reflected in lower scores, shows low effort in learning, have low

confidence that could even lead to a lower quality of intergroup contact. Horwitz (2001) has noted that anxiety in learning a L2 is unique in relation to other types of anxiety that can arise in people. Regarding personality traits and stress, Dewaele and Furnham (1999) have identified that extraverted learners have greater fluency when speaking in the L2, even in stressful situations. However, van Daele et al. (2006), Zafar and Meenakshi (2012) stated that learners' extraversion and introversion traits have their advantages depending on the context and the linguistic approach for carrying out certain types of activities or tasks, or the application of teaching methods of language. Therefore, when people are learning an L2, emotional responses are produced in them either towards the language, due to the culture in which that language is spoken, or simply due to the environment in which L2 learning is in process.

Much research asserts similar views that positive experiences lead to positive results. Abraham and Vann (1987), Horwitz (2001), McLaughlin (1990), and Ehrman et al. (1990), suggest that if the learners had prior language-learning experience, they will have a positive effect on language learning which will be revealed in a better learning, or better development of language-learning strategies. This factor could be key during the teaching of the languages because teachers should know the positive or negative perceptions of the student regarding the language, as such perceptions could create pathways to learning or blockages to overcome.

It is inevitable that emotions are present in the classroom; they emerge depending on the environment in which the teaching takes place, or come in some cases predisposed. According to Madrid (1995), when learning a language, **emotions** are implicitly involved, which can influence a positive or negative outcome. The reactions to the teacher's performance in class, the teacher's personality, and the type of tasks/activities provoke enthusiasm or rejection in the student for learning the L2. Madrid's assertion agrees with Krashen's Affective Filter thesis, in this study,

emotions flourished in the interviewees' stories when explaining how they felt during some stages of the L2 learning process such as fear when they were orally assessed or when they had to speak in public, but despite being present, it does not discourage their motivation to improve their language skills.

The motivation factor is also present in the process variable, because it provokes expectations of the new knowledge that is going to be acquired. A key element to understand the affective state of the student is motivation. According to Madrid et al. (1994), the motivation regarding the acquisition of the L2, can be defined as an individual state that reflects the interest and desire to learn a language, which implies both, a positive attitude, and also the effort in learning, which produces satisfaction, and enjoyment during the learning of the L2. According to Gass et al. (2013), motivation is considered as a sociopsychological factor which is utilized to explain the success of learning in this case of a L2, rapidly or to a greater degree. The author maintains that there are studies which are evidence that motivation is "predictor of language-learning success". Skehan (1989) considers that motivation is the second predictor of English learning after aptitude. Gardner and Lambert (1972) affirmed that motivation in second language learning involves: 1) a goal, 2) effortful behavior, 3) a desire to attain the goal, and 4) favorable attitudes toward the activities that are part of the language that is sought to learn. Authors such as Gardner (1985) refers to motivation is instrumental orientation, which has to do with the motivation that learners feel for the L2 due to the practical value of being an instrument of social communication, and because of the advantages it offers in various areas (professional, travelling, business, education, etc.) (Gardner, 1985). Motivation was a factor to be considered in this study, because it predicts students' willingness to learn an L2, which in any case is a parallel element to cognitive capacity.

The role of personal traits in L2 learning is a subject under continuous study, and reaching a conclusion is difficult because they are subjective and difficult to generalize. According to Madrid (1994), Zhang (2009), and Sharp (2009), there are no conclusive results that indicate a relationship between the personality traits of the learners and the effective learning of the L2. However, Madrid et al. (1995) showed, based on a study carried out with Andalusian students of English as a L2, that there was some relationship between the achievement of learning the L2 and the student's personality. Even though, this factor is still perceived as ambiguous and apparently requires further study in order to find its effect on learning.

#### **2.1.4 PRODUCT VARIABLES**

After having gone through the L2 learning process during school and college, there comes a time when the student has defined his or her position with respect to the language, in which other factors inside and outside the classroom have also intervened. According to Dunkin and Biddle (1974), there are effects after the learning process. Some are immediate such as having learned the L2, the development of skills, and the attitude created towards the subject. On the other hand, the authors mention the long-term effects, such as the adult personality, and the professional and occupational skills that the L2 provides. The final product of the learning process allows to identify the effect of the variables that intervened in the previous stages and this effect can be evidenced immediately and in the long term.

#### **2.2 CURRENT THEORIES OF INFLUENCES ON LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Dunkin and Biddle's learning model, and Krashen's model about the factors influencing the acquisition of an L2, had their supporters and critics at the time. Krashen's work especially

was of great significance because it was the starting point for the investigation of (modern) linguists regarding the factors or aspects of the individual and the environment that influence when a L2 is acquired. Many authors have studied, added and reorganized the factors/variables that are part of language learning based on Krashen's work. Henter (2014), for example, names additional factors that take into account the learners' cognition, behavioral, among others; and also indicates that many researchers have tried to classify the inter-individual variables involved in learning a foreign language. This author classifies the variables as: cognitive factors that include the components language aptitude, learning strategies; affective factors which involve attitudes, motivation, anxiety; metacognitive factors; and demographic factors. Although the factors and their components have a different arrangement than the aforementioned authors, Henter's work reaffirms the influence of many non-linguistic factors that influence language acquisition, and adds other factors such as the structural nature of the population.

There are coincidences between the models and theories of Dunkin and Biddle, Krashen, and Henter. The authors recognize the actors in the learning process are the learner and teacher and that they have their individual characteristics such as personality, motivation, aptitude, cognition, and training experiences. Likewise, the learning process takes place in a context, which can be in a facility, or in a community, and at the end of the process there is a final result (a competence acquired).

Nevertheless, these authors in their work clearly do not recognize other actors such as the parents, the authorities in educational institutions, or the government authorities in the field of education, or the curriculum design (considered the subjects' route map).

Other modern studies examine socio-cultural factors that influence the acquisition of a second language. Gass et al. (2013), for example, categorizes factors that influence L2



acquisition as the non-language factors which include age, aptitude, motivation, attitude, and social influences, and the psycholinguistic factor which explore how humans acquire language through the cognitive mechanism. Similarly, Vyas and Sharma (2022) propose a schematic structure in order to visualize the factors that influence Second Language achievement. These authors identify two factors at the same level: psychological and socio-demographic. The former includes the elements of attitude, motivation and anxiety. The second includes socio-economic and cultural factors. The income of the parents, and their social class, are part of the socio-economic factors, while cultural awareness and parenting style are part of the cultural factors. It is worth mentioning that this proposed structure is broader than the previous ones and provides a reorganization of the variables and their components. It also takes into consideration aspects that are part of the learner's environment outside the classroom. Vyas and Sharma (2022) mention that in research on the acquisition of an L2, there are few studies of a theoretical nature regarding the role played by sociodemographic and psychological factors in learning the English language.

### **2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGLISH-LEARNING IN ECUADOR**

Having reviewed the main factors related to this study, it was also necessary to review the current situation in Ecuador with respect to the characteristics of English language teaching in the educational system, and the level of student proficiency achieved. Much of the research on the factors that influence the learning of English as a second language in Ecuador has been carried out considering the teachers' criteria, but in a little proportion from the students. The following are the studies found on the subject in question. Among the main factors that impede the learning of English and that were mentioned in the studies performed in Ecuador, the lack of motivation on the part of the teachers, the teachers' low proficiency, obsolete teaching

methodologies, little use of technological resources, overcrowding in the classrooms, and little exposure to language are identified. Only in the study carried out in the region, the interviewees incorporated part of the factors within the class, others outside the classroom and with which the students have a relationship, such as the community, and others such as national education policies.

According to Calle et al. (2012) the main reason why high school graduates finished with a limited knowledge and use of English is due to teaching strategies considered “traditional.” The authors carried out a study monitoring 92 teachers during the lesson 54 teachers were interviewed, and 168 teachers answered a survey. The teachers worked in public schools in Cuenca-Ecuador. The results showed that the teaching methodologies were teacher-centered; there was little interaction between the students speaking in English, and the teacher showed confusion if they were asked to use different communication strategies, all of which had a negative effect on learning.

One of the few studies that considers the viewpoints of students was conducted by the British Council (BC) in 2015. This organization assessed the policies, perceptions and factors that influence English language learning. 1,004 Ecuadorians were interviewed. More than half of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years old, 26.5% were between 16 and 24 years old and 17.8% between 35 and 44 years old (British Council, 2015). The results show that it is not yet clear how well English learners acquire English. Reported problems with learning the language include classrooms with up to 60 students, lack of space, and poorly qualified or unqualified teachers. In the case of private schools, in Latin America and of course in Ecuador, the trend is that the English language in private schools is of higher quality; they have more resources, higher qualified and trained teachers, and the classrooms have fewer students (British Council,

2015). According to the same study, 52% of students report that they learn the language because it is compulsory, and 42% because they need it for university; even though all the students interviewed are aware that knowing English increases their chances of getting a job. In addition, according to the interviewees the teacher's methodology do not improve due to the limited programs financed by the State. Therefore, it is distinguished that along with teachers who are poorly qualified both in knowledge and in their teaching methodology, there are students who do not show motivation to study the language; both situations play against the learning process

Language use in the classroom, and population conditions also have an impact on L2 learning. Cruz (2015), performed an investigation in which 15 teachers and 15 students participated. They were part of 6 high schools in Guayaquil, and a high school in Cuenca. Information was collected from classroom observations, interviews, and surveys. According to the studies, the factors that affected the students' learning of English were that the teachers spoke in their mother tongue most of the time and translated much of what they spoke in class. The students mentioned that the teachers did not take their needs into account. Lastly, in the facilities, the class resources were not limited, and the classes were too crowded. This study coincides with that of the British Council, on the impact of overpopulation, and the results come from observation, without the views of students as direct stakeholders. In this case, from the point of view of the researchers, the limiting factor was the continuous translation in the mother tongue.

Other studies indicate that lack of motivation present a major obstacle to language learning. For example, Subía (2015) carried out a study in private high schools in the Pichincha and Cotopaxi provinces. Based on observations and questionnaires about the factors that affect the English language and the teaching-learning process, the results reveal that although 60% of in-service English teachers have an English Bachelor's Degree, the students were not sufficiently

motivated, and the learning process became slow and hard for them. Another study regarding motivation is from Andrade-Molina et al. (2021), who compared the motivation in learning English between secondary school students whose context is urban and rural. The results show that students from rural areas show low levels of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, which negatively affects their academic performance. In other words, students who did not experience satisfaction in learning another language, did not engage in the tasks/activities, and did not receive rewards for not completing them. Another effect of motivation is seen in Dilshad et al. (2019), who affirm that when students show lack of confidence derived of English-speaking problems, associated with poor grammar knowledge, provoke English learning demotivation. The authors, recommend to apply, in order to increase students' interest in L2 in the classroom, different motivational strategies, as well as readjust the language teaching methodology. This means, substantially adding listening and speaking practices and teaching grammar in an inductive way. Therefore, motivation is associated with the certainty that knowledge is handled properly and displayed when the appropriate terms are used according to the context; otherwise, a student who is not sure that is skilled enough in an L2 will be unmotivated to learn, show a negative attitude towards the L2, lack of interest in the subject, dropout, and become frustrated.

The practice of the learned language is necessary to reinforce the learning, but it depends on certain personal and environmental variables. Méndez (2018) researched the socio-educational factors that affect the learning of English in the northern sector of Quito. According to his findings, the main social factors that the students agreed on, were little exposure to the language, and lack of family support due to economic conditions. Among the educational factors, classrooms with an excessive number of students, the basic content of the books, and the lack of

practicality to apply the content were mentioned. Part of learning is practice; by restricting production, language skills are not developed.

It should be noted that the studies offered do not represent the country's overall situation, because there are very few studies in the provinces of the coast or the east of Ecuador. From the bibliographic review of the studies carried out in some public and private high schools in Ecuador, it is evident that the results coincide in that the classrooms are overcrowded, that there is little exposure to the English language, and in the institutions, there is limited access to resources and technology. Also, it is interesting to know that the perceptions of the teachers are different from those of the students. The latter feel that the teaching methodology is not adapted to their needs. Therefore, the researches concur in that teaching practices are largely centered on the teacher.

Of the aforementioned studies, few speak of the external factors that affect teaching from the stakeholders' point of view. Nonetheless, Bastidas and Ibarra (2020) carried out a study described as "empirical-analytical" in which they analyzed the factors that have a greater influence on the level of learning English as foreign language, based on the perceptions of high school students and teachers from Pasto, Colombia. 113 high school graduates and 25 teachers participated. The authors conclude from the interviewees' point of view, that the most relevant were the external factors are the learning environment inside of the classroom, the institutional curriculum, the teachers' professional preparation, the role of the local community, and the role of national educational policies. This study is important because the authors did not limit the research to the teachers' criteria and but also included student participation, being one of the few articles found that has done so. In addition, it was not restricted to what happens in the

classroom, so it was fascinating to see that the participants went beyond incorporating external factors.

In conclusion, the opinions mentioned by teachers (as the majority) and students show that the teaching methodology is centered on teachers because in the end, they are the ones who direct what is learned and how. Consequently, the activities are perceived as poor because teachers follow the contents of the textbooks, and do not take into account the needs and deficiencies that students perceive in them. This situation causes the learning process to become flawed, and if we add to the above the overcrowded classrooms, teachers with low proficiency, limited resources, and motivation strategies, demotivation in students to learn the language, frustration, blockage, and drop-out. The aforementioned factors serve as a reference, either linking them, contrasting them, or adding new findings according to the responses that arise from my interviewees in the following chapters.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodological approach to be used in this research is a multiple case study, which was chosen because it offers evidence “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information...and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2017, p. 97) trying to understand the differences and similarities between cases. Specifically in this study, the contexts of real-life people who learned English as a second language either in the public or private system. The case study presented is mainly qualitative to help me, as the researcher, analyze and describe the situation to incite a better understanding of the topic.

The subjects of the research were eight (8) students who just enrolled in a private university in Quito, immediately after graduating from high school. The inclusion criteria were that the participants must be 18 years of age or older and have been placed in basic levels of English as a Second Language courses (A1 and A2) during their first semester of university study. The level of English proficiency mentioned was chosen like this, because it is not the objective level that the Ministry of Education has determined is the one that a bachelor must graduate, that is, B1. On the other hand, individuals under 18 years of age, students from other universities in Ecuador, or those who demonstrated higher English proficiencies, were not included.

The steps followed were using the suggestion of The Narrative Research Design of Colorado State University (2019), and after having established the research parameters and built the data collection instrument for the interviews, the following procedure was followed. First, I requested authorization to carry out research (Appendix I). I met the Coordinator of the English as a Second Language program at the university to explain the purpose and relevance of the research, how the research was going to be conducted, and requested authorization for its

execution and the issuance of a database with the contact information (email) of the newly enrolled students at the university who met the inclusion criteria. The Coordinator issued a letter by email authorizing the execution of the research and sent the requested database.

Once I received the database, I requested the students to participate in the interview by email addressed to each of the potential research subjects. In the email, the purpose and relevance of the research was explained (see Appendix 1). The 8 students interested in participating in the research responded by email by agreeing to participate. Both, the informed consent process and the interviews were conducted in Spanish, their mother tongue, to reduce tension and for the interviewee to feel calm when answering the questions. All participants were between 18 to 20 years old. From the 8 interviewees, 5 of them graduated from a private high school, and 3 from a public high school. The little age difference among the participants, does not affect the study. To each of them a pseudonym was assigned.

In response to the acceptance, I arranged an individual virtual meeting, on the date and time that the students deemed appropriate. Once in the meeting, the researcher read the informed consent to the interviewed students, explained the purpose, relevance, risks, and benefits of the research. I explained to the students that the interview was anonymous. Therefore, identification data was not requested; I asked the student to turn off the camera. Afterwards, I clarified all doubts and concerns of the students and asked for their consent to continue. Once participation of the student was consented, I proceeded with the interview. This was conducted through the Zoom platform, and the audio was recorded.

The interview had three stages. In the first, they talked about events in the classroom of the English subject; in the second, we talked about the experiences lived with the English language outside the classroom. Finally, in the third stage, personal aspects related to the student



were asked. In order to guide the interview a protocol of questions was followed (see Appendix III).

At the beginning of the interview, they were asked about the type of high school they graduated from and their level of English proficiency. Demographic categories such as gender and socioeconomic background were not considered. The students were asked about the physical conditions of their classroom, high school resources (didactic material, technology availability, and internet access), students' resources (books, technology availability, and internet access), class (previous) preparation by teachers, the students' opinion towards learning English, their exposure to the language outside of school, students' interest in learning the language. The interview took approximately one hour to complete.

After the interviews concluded, in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, their names were anonymized both in the files corresponding to their recordings and when the contents were transcribed. Once the transcription was finished, this was translated into English for my readers.

Then, the interviewees narratives were studied employing the narrative analysis method. Franzosi (1998), and Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2015), explained this method by referring that the researcher has a previous knowledge of stands outside the narrated story, and limits himself/herself to narrating the observed facts; therefore, narrative cognition is a fundamental characteristic of researchers, because it allows us (as researchers) to analyze how humans reason and make sense of their experiences. Therefore, personal narratives that are produced from life events become a resource for future knowledge, shaping beliefs and forging reasoning. Sharp et al. (2019) suggest that, through narrative cognition, it is possible for the researcher to understand complex stories that go beyond a simple enumeration of a series of events, and facilitates the

selection, from among the multitude of data collected (of events and actions), of those that are related to each other and relevant to answer the research question.

To analyze the data, I followed the guidelines from Syed and Nelson (2015), which determine that once the narratives are collected, I have to tag the themes by blocks of text, and then group them by figuring out how they fit together. Then, I relate the themes to a theory that explained these findings.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis shows factors, as part of the English learning that are present in the classroom, that are related of the process and context variables mentioned by Dunkin & Biddle (1974). Those are teacher methodology, motivation, the English content, and activities, and the student's attitude in class regarding the use of language, class population, and teaching resources. From the factors identified outside the classroom, some coincide with those of context variables from Dunkin & Biddle's model, those were motivation from third parties (e. g. parents, community, etc.), students' exposure to the language, and (technological) resources accessibility. Finally, the factors that emerged from the interviews and are specific to the students, were related to the presage, context and product variables of Dunkin & Biddle (1974), those were self-motivation, attitude towards the language, emotions towards assessments, self-recognition of language skills to work on. All of them are part of the learning experience that were shared by the interviewees.

In order to keep the confidentiality of the students, they are identified in the analysis as Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

##### 4.1 In-class factors

During the interview, students were asked about the number of hours of English they received per week. According to the data obtained, the hours of English received vary between 2 hours/week to 6 hours/week in private schools; in the case of public schools, the interviewees mentioned that they received from 2 hours/week to 5 hours/week. In both cases, interviewees received the hours established by Ministry of Education in the National Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2019). Therefore, the schools comply with it. However, this does not ensure that students achieve the expected B1 proficiency. The interviewees did not make further comments;

they believe that they are proficient. They agreed the fact they did not achieve the B1 level is not a matter of the English subject lasting more or less hours.

On the other hand, a fundamental part of teaching English is the content, because much of the learning depends on how it is learned and the used by the students. The participants expressed general dissatisfaction with teaching methodologies used by their English teachers, because year after year the grammatical content is repeated, mainly the grammar. Participant 1 mentioned that "I think the methodology was not good at all, they didn't do it thinking that the students would learn. We used textbooks and I feel that every year we learned the same thing from what we were given in the first year. We used different textbooks every year but it was the same content". The same mentioned Participant 5 by referring that "The methodology was lousy, what we learnt was repetitive, they [the teachers] always taught us the same grammar every year the verb To Be, the structures, and in the end, we never learned anything". The perception is that there is no progress in terms of content acquisition. Students' minds are saturated with content that is not channeled and transformed into a linguistic product. Content is the main input in the classroom, where the language learning process takes place. The repetitive contents, especially those related to grammar, and the lack of motivation caused the students not to assimilate components of the English language.

Participants also observed that these monotonous and systematic forms of teaching diminished their motivation and caused the students to not give importance to learning the language. In fact, several participants commented that they wanted more opportunities to speak and practice the language, rather than receive passive and repetitive lessons. Participant 3 indicated that "during the classes we did a lot of filling exercises, and few speaking exercises". Participant 6 stated that "during the classes we did a lot of writing exercises, very repetitive such

as filling in the blanks, and what is most useful for us to learn English is to practice speaking and listening". The interviewees' statements are interesting, because the students believe that the dynamization of the classes is achieved by incorporating and developing activities that improve their weak skills other than those to which they are accustomed. The teacher's methodology is also judged on its variety of activities performed during the class, which this leads to generating motivation and arouses the interest to learn English, the opposite of monotony.

Another factor in which the interviewees agreed was that the teachers did not give importance to whether the students learned the language or not. In addition, they coincided that the teachers organized few activities where they could practice their English skills or use vocabulary and that when they were faced with real situations to produce the language, they did not succeed. Here some examples that support this claim are for example Participant 4 mentioned that "If we talk about my education in the whole school, it was very bad, very mediocre. For years I saw exactly the same subjects, the teachers didn't care so much about me learning. There were kids in the third year of high school who literally knew nothing, they didn't know how to defend themselves". The feeling of the interviewees, that teachers show disinterest in whether they learn or not, brings the demotivation of the students for the subject, especially if it is a foreign language. At the end of their academic life at school, the result is students with gaps and deficiencies in the language reflected in a low proficiency that result in the short term, in academic impediments (university entrance) or in the long term, in the professional field.

Regarding the factor compulsory use of English in class, is a consistent way to meet the needs of the students, a space to practice the language. Nonetheless, Participant 2 said, "We were required to speak English in class, but in the end we didn't." Likewise, Participant 5 affirmed, "At the beginning of the class some teachers made it a class rule, but many times even the

teachers didn't do it." Conversely, Participant 6 mentioned "My teacher would tell us that as soon as we saw her it was automatically English with her, change your chip. I remember one time I met her in the street and she made me speak English to her and that actually helped me."

Although the use of English is mandatory or established as a rule, it is not always followed either because teachers do not intensify it and its meaning is lost, or because in some cases students do not feel sufficiently prepared in the language to produce their doubts in English. However, it is possible to see a case where the student accepts and perceives that being motivated (with some pressure) to speak in English pays off in the end.

Part of learning English is the use of didactic material to accompany the textbooks, both to vary class activities, as well as to create other methodological mechanisms to introduce the content. Hence, the perception of the students about the extra didactic material was that the teachers only brought worksheets that served as an accompaniment for the teaching of L2. In some cases, this material was part of the English textbook, in others, the teachers brought it on their own to reinforce knowledge. For example, Participant 7 stated that "They [the teachers] would just bring the book and that was it, they would explain the class, but they didn't bring something extra to make a change, so to speak." In addition, Participant 3 said "No, we only had the Cambridge books and the audios of the books and so they were rarely worksheets." However, Participant 5 had a slightly different experience, "There were teachers who did not bring any extra material, but I had an English teacher who was not so boring, so to speak. She always came with material prepared for us to play with, that is, she was a very dynamic teacher."

Consequently, the extra teaching materials that teachers might have brought were very basic, and did not seem to promote critical thinking, development of ideas, initiative or creativity. They were materials that could be termed static and mechanical. Moreover, in some cases it is still

evident that the teaching materials are still the tape recorders that accompany the English subject textbooks, which do not enliven other senses to develop L2 skills.

In addition to the teaching materials, there is also the internet and technology devices as learning tools. Regarding this factor, the information that emerged shows that in public high schools did not have computer rooms or projectors to show slides, time to time the teachers used to bring a CD player; that was not the case in private high schools. However, one of the interviewees from the public high school mentioned that in recent years a computer room was installed but the teacher used the equipment for 10 minutes and continued the class as she had traditionally done. In this matter, Participant 7 stated the importance of technology use, "The use of the internet for students was not allowed. In recent years they installed a projector because they implemented it as a platform for an online book. The platform was more useful than the recordings we listened to in class, because I could repeat it every time, I needed it". In addition, Participant 2 mentioned "We had a projector to transmit videos. We used the recorders to complete the worksheets. In the school there was a computer lab to give exams in English. I believe that these resources were useful for learning English." Despite having diverse content on the internet, digital platforms to learn English, in general these mechanisms are of restricted use. On the other hand, even though educational institutions have laboratory rooms, their use is limited. These conditions seem out of date with current generations, because young people interact acquire much of what they know from the internet and not using it valuable and useful content for teaching L2 is lost. If students acquire knowledge on their own through virtual platforms, it is not enough if it is not practiced or (re)produced through activities that require the information they already have in their minds.

Students can be harsh judges of whether or not a teacher is proficient in the language. Regarding the teacher's English proficiency, students agreed that their teachers in general had between a good and high level, and when they explained the grammar rules the students understood. In addition, the interviewees associated language proficiency with the ability to answer questions/doubts during class. For example, Participant 1 stated that "I think the teachers had a good level of English, what I think is that they did not know how to teach the class." Participant 3 added "I would say that my teachers had a high level of English, because to teach another person you need to be sure, that is, to know more than them. To be a teacher you must know the subject completely". In contrast, Participant 5 mentioned "I think I would rate the level of my teachers between intermediate and high. The teachers did know several things. Only once it happened to me with a teacher who asked her some things that she did not understand and she did not know how to answer. The other teachers did, they knew how answer and if they didn't understand them, they would explain it to me in another way, they would try to see the way to explain it to me". This factor suggests a confusion among the interviewees, language is not linked to the methodology used by teachers. Based on the students' responses, it appears that the teachers have a good level of English, but this does not guarantee a good teaching methodology.

Participants also associated the social atmosphere of the classroom with the conditions that allows students to make connections with their teacher, with other peers using the language they are learning. This factor is about when the teachers tried to set an relax environmental to raise the confidence among the students when they asked questions or spoke in English, the students did not hold back, or felt afraid of bullying. Most mentioned that they did not feel confident in speaking the language in class for fear of mispronouncing, or that the teacher ridiculed them for their lack of knowledge. In general, the participants feared and hesitated



before speaking because they did not know if they were doing it right or wrong. One of them preferred to wait until the end of the class to clear up doubts for fear of being teased by the classmates if he mispronounced. That was the case of Participant 8, who affirmed: "I was nervous when speaking English, I felt that I spoke it badly. I had once a teacher who had an angry mood, I was afraid to speak in English, that is the truth." Likewise, Participant 2 mentioned "My teacher encouraged us to speak in English when we were in his class, but I was afraid to speak in English in front of everyone, I was afraid to pronounce a word and everyone would make fun of me". In contrast, Participant 7 a self-confident person, assured that "I have always had in my mind that we are here to learn, right? So, I would go and talk and whatever, my teacher would correct me if I was wrong because if I speak and she doesn't correct me, I prefer the teacher corrects me than to look bad when I'm talking [in a real life situation] with someone in an airport for example [...] sometimes I did have nerves, but I let them go of me and if I knew I was going to make a mistake, I was sure that my teacher was going to correct me and that mistake didn't get far". Therefore, exposure in public, and the character of the English teachers, were factors that could have caused anxiety and fear of speaking English, blocking the participants being that reflected in other learning. On the other hand, it was perceived a generalized fear of not pronouncing English correctly, which shows that this event increases the levels of insecurity showing that it is not a skill that is being worked on in classes.

#### **4.2 Out of class factors**

Although inside the classroom Internet access and use was restricted, outside of the classroom, things were different. All interviewees stated that they had access to a computer and a cell phone that allowed them to access resources such as translators, videos, music, and movies. On the other hand, access to the Internet allowed them to download applications that provided

them with written exercises, podcasts, and audiovisual material. From the data collected, the interviewees showed great interest in audiovisual materials (films and music) because they can add subtitles that the interviewees set in Spanish and English, which the Internet connection offered them.

Some students also turned to physical resources at home. They found useful those where the words were accompanied by images that allowed learning the meaning by association. The search in this type of didactic material provoked in the interviewees the motivation to learn more words. Another interviewee mentioned his fondness for literature books in English. Participant 1 asserted that, "I learned with courses that are on YouTube, the short ones. This was for my own motivation, because I knew I had to take the university exam and I was aware that I did not have a good level"; Participant 4 stated "I did have my own computer, Internet and cell phone to download content in English, and to learn I set my devices to English."

For some students, the virtual or technological resources by themselves are good enough to learn English, even though one student mentioned the importance of having a guide/person who can explain the rules of the English language in greater detail. This was participant 3, who said "Yes, I had technological resources. However, I think it is more useful to have a person who knows more at hand and go to him to ask him anything that I did not understand and he would explain it to me in greater detail, unlike the internet that gives just the answer." The position on technology benefit varies from person to person, there are those who consider as Participant 3 that someone presence is essential for error correction, because there are students who are not satisfied just getting the answers to exercises on the internet or watching the use of a word without an explanation of the grammar rule, this type of students need someone to give them a more in-depth explanation of the grammar rules, or be explained in different ways or several

times if possible, it is a fact that does not exist on the internet for them, or if they find the explanation that is not enough.

Another social factor is the family and social environment for learning or practice English. Regarding this factor, most of the interviewees did not have people in their family circle who spoke English. Even though, one of them took advantage of the visit of North Americans volunteers of his church to practice the language. The same did Participant 6, who said, "I used to talk with a cousin who was visiting, she lives in the US and we practiced, she clarified doubts about grammatical structures that they had not understood in class."

On the other hand, as Participant 4 stated, "I did have people to practice with, but I put it aside. At school I was very discouraged by English and I didn't practice it. I only came in the English hours of the school. I regret very much not having practiced it outside of class"; Participant 8 mention that her father's mother tongue is English, but they speak in Spanish. The interviewed that did not have someone close to them to practice the language, looked for someone to practice English. Many of them request help to understand the grammatical structures, and others take advantage of the timing of their visit to speak the language. These intentions show that the interviewees are motivated and in a more trusting environment they tried to speak English more calmly, without feeling the pressure, or shame that are generally experienced in the classroom. In other words, the affective filter of the students is lower outside of the class environment.

Part of the teaching method is to send the students homework. The reports showed that for most of the interviewees, the tasks were habitually filling in blanks activities. They were very mechanical, and did not provide mental exercise. Only one of the interviewees, who graduated from the International Baccalaureate, described that when she was going to be evaluated in either

one of the English skills, the teacher usually sent related tasks to promote the development of that specific English skill. About this factor, Participant 5 mentioned that "Regarding the homework, I could say that it doesn't work that they sent trying to encouraged me to learn English. The homework was repetitive, for example, making the typical sentences for such a topic". Moreover, Participant 3 stated that "A good short piece of work in which you can understand the material, a single page in which you can do it conscientiously would be good to learn, but if it is page after page, what you are going to do is copy and try to finish on time". There is no doubt that if the content is repetitive, the same happens with the homework because it is based on the content of the class. Most agree that homework is not a learning mechanism because the material is monotonous, and in some cases if it is long, students prefer to copy and not develop it. Short, precise and consistent homework is what students consider would have the best results at the time of doing it, and that the type of activities sent as homework has to be varied, in order not to fall into monotony.

Other motivational factors come mainly from parents/guardians who encourage them to study in private institutes in order to strengthen their English language proficiency. From the stories of the interviewees, it stands out that there was family motivation to attend a private English institute. However, Participant 4, who does not like the language, was forced to attend these courses by her parents. None of those who mentioned having attended private courses spent more than three months, mainly for academic reasons. Some of the answers of this factors were: Participant 2 mentioned that "I had some cousins who studied at an institute and they recommended it to me, their father is clear about the importance of English (relationships, friends) and he encouraged my father to enroll me in that institute. However, I did not finish, because I needed to enter the university". In the case of Participant 6, stated that "I spent a month

in an institute, and I was motivated by the fact that I was aware that I don't know any English and I am very interested in learning it". According to the responses of the interviewees, many attended private classes at the insistence of parents and relatives. None did not finish for academic reasons. Parents or relatives' motivation is the result of their understanding that English is the key that opens the doors to academic or professional opportunities. It is clear that there is a risk behind the pressure exerted by parents or relatives on students if they are forced to attend private courses. Usually, young people take these courses as extracurricular activities such as sports, attending such activities arises out of affinity, but if forced the outcome may not be as expected. Moreover, the support to access private classes is not only moral, but also economic.

#### **4.3 Personal factors associated with interviewees**

Although factors inside and outside the classroom were differentiated, there are factors that are specific to the students, which I called personal factors. These factors are: criteria on learning English, feelings and reactions during assessments, and self- motivation to learn English. These factors were separated because they are part of what emerged from within the students and are the responses to external factors, or are the products of their maturity or idiosyncrasy.

Regarding the criteria for learning English all the interviewees except one reported that they like the language, that they feel motivated to learn and that they consider it important because of the social relationships they can achieve, as well as the work and study opportunities they can access if they dominate the language. The Participant 4, who does not like English indicated that "Honestly, I don't like it, I feel frustrated with this language because I had a teacher who was more demanding with me. My dad pressed me with his reasons for learning the

language and I felt even more frustrated. Other people made me feel like I couldn't learn it". On the contrary, Participant 8 mentioned that "English opens doors to everything: jobs, trips, meeting people"; Participant 3 said "Since I was little, it has opened up the possibility of meeting many people and English is totally essential not only to be able to pass the levels at the university and graduate, but also to communicate. Personally, I have quite a few American friends and it has been that I speak English, otherwise I don't think I would not have had the opportunity or I would have gotten a little shy and the truth is I would not have done it". For the vast majority of those interviewed, English is the universal language, and offers of all kinds of academic, professional and personal opportunities. However, the case of Participant 4 is devastated because she has a block caused by a teacher's wrongful motivation, and being put under the spotlight and also from the pressure from her parents. Participant 4 said "I really don't like English, the origin of this is because I just changed schools and the teacher told me every chance he got and in front of the whole class that my level is very low, that I should study twice as much if I want to reach the level of my peers. At home, my parents, due to my teacher's comment, believed that I was not studying and they lectured me (every time) that if I don't learn English I will lose opportunities, that I will not have access to a good education or a good job, and simply this situation makes me thwarted Learn the language out of obligation, but without pleasure for it". Therefore, the negative motivation people gave Participant 4, the less interest she showed in learning it since then; and it is difficult to know if it is possible to reverse it.

Another factor is feelings and reactions during assessments. According to the interviewees, when they carried out evaluations on paper (i.e., grammar, or writing tests) the tension and anxiety was lower, because for this type of test the pressure was reduced by exercising mechanicalness and using memory. On the other hand, the speaking evaluations

caused them anxiety because they did not feel safe when using the language. When facing a speaking situation, they were not used to due to lack of practice in class. Nevertheless, when the topic for the oral assessment was established in advance, they did not have to improvise and the tension was reduced because the content was previously memorized. For example, Participant 3 mentioned that "My teacher evaluated us, for example, if the week was reading, she sent us, for example, to read 5 texts and we had to answer questions to find out if we had comprehensive reading, if it was speaking, the teacher commanded us to have a dialogue with our classmate, in the next 5 minutes to talk about any topic to practice the vocabulary and the topic of the week. If it was writing, the teacher sent us to write letters, she corrected them and if there were mistakes, we had to repeat them". On the other hand, Participant 7 stated that "I felt quite nervous because I was afraid of not speaking English well, I was afraid of speaking in public and apart from the fact that it is a different language I am afraid of speaking badly. I am embarrassed to speak in English, as it has a different pronunciation that I don't usually get there, so I am embarrassed for not speaking it well". Interviewees have shown that in situations where assessments do not require speaking in public, pronouncing words in English, and there is time to develop ideas, anxiety is reduced. If it is the opposite, students enter oral exams with high levels of stress and anxiety. This effect is due to what the interviewees have repeatedly mentioned, during class hours there were not enough activities for students to practice speaking. When students have to make a speech and have previously prepared it, and memorize it, anxiety levels decrease when they have to present it because they feel more confident speaking English in public.

All of the interviewees sought to learn English on their own; this is what I called the factor of self- motivation to learn English. Nowadays, the students use platforms such as YouTube to watch series and movies with and without English subtitles, and to watch classes

offered on the platform. Others preferred to download applications to perform grammar exercises and improve their listening skills; others read books and dictionaries with images, and another interviewee mentioned that he set his mobile device and computer in English and thus learn vocabulary. What motivated them to learn on their own was to teach a family member, to improve their level, or they realized that teaching their peers is a way to learn. In one of the cases, like Participant 2, mentioned that "I tried to learn English by my own, because I realized that I learned the structures of English, achieved good grades, but I did not learn the language at all, because I just memorized all". Another interviewee, Participant 5 said "Something that motivated me to learn English, was to communicate with more foreign people since that helped me a lot. I have a younger brother and I explained his English homework to him and he liked how I explained it to him, and I am like his personal English teacher and that is what motivated to learn more to be able to teach him. The mechanisms I use to learn English are watching movies in English, listening to music, sometimes reading books in English, and sometimes I set my cell phone and my computer to English to learn new words that you may know, but you don't practice". In the case of Participant 7, stated that "I tried to learn English on my own. My mom gave me the idea to watch movies, and listen to songs in English, and I did. I also downloaded applications like Duolingo, and I learned some writing and listening". It is noteworthy that the interviewees (except Participant 4, due to her bad experience learning English), have sought to learn on their own, mostly using virtual and technological, and physical resources (e.g., books and dictionaries). This initiative demonstrates that there is a personal motivation that pushes them to find ways to improve their pronunciation, learn the rules, increase their vocabulary, develop their writing, and sharpen their ears, all in order to master the English language. The decision was always up to them to take action and carry out the learning by their own means, and



what is noticeable from behind is that something always motivates them, but in the end, whether they did it or not depended on the interviewees.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

From the literature and the findings resulting from the interviews, it is concluded that the model proposed by Dunkin & Biddle (1974) is represented mainly by teachers and students, who according to the interviewees and in accordance with the model, teachers express their knowledge by explain the content in class and answering questions. The Dunkin & Biddle (1974) model is linear, however. Thanks to what was mentioned by the interviewees, I deduced that learning is a cyclical event because students throughout their training process repeatedly introduce themselves to the model, taking with them what previously learned, which also gives them the necessary perception to judge the model, its content, and the methods used.

Likewise, a factor that it was possible to identify in each of the phases of the Dunkin & Biddle (1974) model was motivation, which is an active factor before starting the learning process and which comes from those who surround the students, during the process. of learning that comes from the teachers and after the process that develops in the students themselves. Nonetheless, motivation can be well or misdirected. Motivation is conditioned by how it is transmitted as Madrid et al. (1994) mentioned being an example of this, Participant 4.

Another reason for demotivation in the interviewees, is repetitive content because their expectations were not in accordance with the contents that they assumed would be different, as well as the activities that did not vary from the traditional ones. That is the case of the homework, since the tasks are so long and monotonous, students do not do them, and prefer to copy them, therefore the sense of homework is lost. I agree with the interviewees that the situation has not changed. Two decades have passed since I graduated from high school and if I had been asked the same question, I would surely have answered that the issues are repeated year after year.

On the other hand, Krashen's theory (1982) about the affective filter is fulfilled again. When the affective dimension alters learning; in others it reaches a point that can generate rejection guaranteed that learning does not take place and, on the contrary, an attitude of rejection for the language is produced (case Participant 4). Conversely, in contexts where students feel more confident, the attitude towards learning is positive, to the point where students are enthusiastic about improving their English skills.

The attitude towards the importance of studying English in general was positive regarding its usefulness. With the exception of one interviewee whose experience showed that the pressure, exposure under the spotlight in front of the rest of the group was disastrous and left a dent, causing a level of anxiety that was expressed when remembering the bad experience and blocked future improvement of the language. In the mid-term this is what Dunkin and Biddle (1984) expected to happen as the product of the learning process, either a positive or negative attitude towards the language based on the students' experience.

In relation to the affective filter, the interviewees demonstrated that they feel more confident when speaking when they are orally evaluated if what they were going to say was learned in advance, thus reducing the tension. The pressure was even lower during the written evaluations, and it is understandable because the pressure of facing or performing in a social environment is reduced to a minimum, there is only the student and the test paper. Students who showed a positive attitude towards the language are on track for language acquisition as indicated by Krashen, to acquire language competence depends on the learner's attitude, to interact with others due to his/her need to communicate.

Although the affective filter is high in class, it is interesting that students believe it is necessary to increase activities that allow them to simulate every day or real-life events in order to improve what they consider to be their weakness, the ability to speak in English.

Regarding the didactic materials, during the time that the interviewees attended high school, the didactic materials that the teachers or the school could offer were limited to the blackboard and worksheets (in the best of cases). Access to the internet and technological items was restricted, which limited access to virtual material that allows them to practice the knowledge learned, however, as mentioned before, if the knowledge, whatever the source, is not practiced or produced, it may have little effectiveness. This reaffirms what was indicated by Seo (2021), about the availability of resources for learning and its positive effect on the results of L2 learning. Nevertheless, one must be careful with the type of activities that are carried out, because one could fall into the error that in the attempt to learn the information that is received does not generate the space for production. In other words, watching videos or listening to music are not activities that develop the skill of English speaking.

To finish, listening more to what students require could be a mechanism for students to achieve the expected proficiency once they finish their academic activity in high school. For now, it is evident that there is an imbalance of the skills that are taught in the subject of English. It is notorious that the interviewees request more oral activities that prepare them to face real life events, and what this implicitly entails the adequate use of vocabulary, pronunciation, and tuning the ear to the native pronunciation. In addition, all the content that they consider repetitive should become oral production.

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## 7. APPENDIXES

### Appendix I. Research protocol approval

1/23/23, 11:55 PM

Mail - María Gabriela Almeida Tamayo - Outlook

#### RE: Documentos para revisión tesis de maestría. V2.0

Ceish Riesgo Minimo USFQ <ceish\_riesgominimo@usfq.edu.ec>

Mon 10/3/2022 2:27 PM

To: María Gabriela Almeida Tamayo <mgalmeidat@estud.usfq.edu.ec>

 3 attachments (2 MB)

Of. 126-2022-CAM-CEISH-USFQ\_2022-26TPG.pdf; 1. IM01-EX195-2022-CEISH-USFQ.pdf; 2. Protocolo Aprobado.pdf;

Estimada  
María Almeida

Por medio del presente el CEISH-USFQ remite carta de aprobación de la enmienda uno (M01) a la investigación **2022-026TPG**, e informe de evaluación para sus archivos. La carta de aprobación habilita para que la investigación continúe hasta diciembre de 2022.

Recordamos que, usted deberá notificar de la finalización de la investigación emitiendo un correo.

Saludos cordiales

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Appendix II. Letter sent to the students by email to request their participation in the interview

Estimado/a estudiante:

Mi nombre es Gabriela Almeida, soy estudiante de la Maestría de Enseñanza de Inglés como Segundo Idioma en la USFQ, y me dirijo a ti para solicitar tu apoyo en la realización de mi tesis que se titula **Factores que influyen en el aprendizaje de inglés como segundo idioma desde la perspectiva de estudiantes graduados de colegio**.

Para tal fin, realizaré entrevistas a estudiantes de la USFQ es por ello que te he contactado. Dichas entrevistas durarán alrededor de 45 minutos y conversaremos sobre tu experiencia en el aula mientras recibías clases de inglés en el colegio. Tanto la información que entregues como tu identidad se mantendrá anónimas.

Cristhian Andres

Si estás dispuesto a participar, escribe un correo de respuesta a [mgalmeidat@estud.usfq.edu.ec](mailto:mgalmeidat@estud.usfq.edu.ec) indicando la siguiente información:

1.- Semestre que cursas actualmente:

Primer semestre \_\_\_\_\_ Segundo semestre en adelante \_\_\_\_\_

2.- Colegio en el que te graduaste: público \_\_\_ privado \_\_\_

3.- Horario disponible para realizar la entrevista:

Te agradecería tu respuesta hasta el 13 de abril de 2022.

Atentos saludos,  
Ma. Gabriela Almeida

## Appendix III. Interview protocol

2022-026TPG  
VE2.0, 28 marzo 2022

**ENTREVISTA**

**Edad:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Género:**

**Tipo de colegio al que asistió:** \_\_\_\_\_ público      \_\_\_\_\_ privado

**Nivel de inglés que cursa:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Para responder a las siguientes preguntas, el entrevistado debe remontarse al tiempo en el que cursaba el colegio durante las horas de inglés.**

**SET DE PREGUNTAS**

**1.- ¿Cuántas horas de inglés recibía por semana?**

**2.- ¿Qué opina sobre a la metodología que empleaban los profesores de inglés cuando impartían sus clases?**

**3.- ¿Utilizaban sus profesores material didáctico para enseñar inglés? ¿De qué tipo?**

3.1.- ¿Cuál de los recursos didácticos que mencionó considera que facilitó su aprendizaje del inglés? ¿Por qué?

3.2.- ¿Hubo alguno que no consideró adecuado? ¿Por qué?

**4.- Describa cómo era el ambiente físico en su salón de clases para aprender inglés**

4.1.- ¿Cuántos alumnos había en el salón?

4.2.- ¿Era cómodo, tenía buena ventilación y luz?

4.3.- Describa si empleaban algún medio virtual o equipos (tecnológicos) durante las clases de inglés (internet, computadoras, tabletas, grabadoras, proyector, entre otros) ¿Le fueron útiles estos recursos para aprender inglés?

**5.- ¿Considera que sus profesores preparaban las clases de inglés previo a la lección? ¿En qué se basa su respuesta?**

**6.- ¿Cómo calificaría el nivel de inglés de sus profesores? ¿En qué se basa para otorgar tal calificación?**

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**7.- ¿A su criterio los deberes de inglés que enviaban en el colegio, le ayudaron en el aprendizaje del idioma? Explique su respuesta.**

**8.- ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre aprender el idioma inglés? ¿Considera necesario aprenderlo? ¿Por qué?**

**9.- ¿Se exigía hablar en inglés durante sus clases en el colegio?**

9.1.- De ser afirmativa su respuesta ¿sentía seguridad o nerviosismo hablarlo? ¿Por qué?

9.2.- ¿Considera que hablar **sólo** inglés en clase es necesario para aprender el idioma? ¿En qué ayudaría?

9.3.- ¿Se debería alternar con el español? ¿En qué ayudaría?

**10.- El ambiente durante sus clases de inglés en el colegio, ¿le brindaba la confianza para realizar preguntas y despejar dudas? Explique su respuesta.**

**11.- En el colegio, durante las evaluaciones orales, o las escritas en inglés ¿Qué tipo de emociones le provocaban estas evaluaciones? ¿Alguna le causaba mayor nerviosismo o seguridad? ¿Qué piensa usted que desencadenaban estos sentimientos/emociones?**

**12.- ¿Tenía acceso en casa a recursos virtuales, tecnológicos, ayuda familiar/amistades, o material didáctico para realizar los deberes de inglés?**

12.1.- De ser afirmativa su respuesta: ¿Cuál de ellos considera le fue de mayor utilidad para aprender inglés? ¿Por qué?

12.2.- De ser negativa su respuesta: ¿Cuál cree que sería de mayor utilidad? ¿Por qué?

**13.- ¿Existía en su entorno familiar o de amigos personas con quienes podía practicar el idioma inglés?**

13.1.- De ser afirmativa la respuesta, ¿cómo le ayudaron a aprender inglés?

13.2.- De ser negativa la respuesta, ¿los considera útiles? ¿por qué?

**14.- ¿Estudió inglés en institutos/escuelas de manera particular? ¿qué lo motivó a hacerlo?**

14.1.- Si estuvo en un instituto particular ¿llegó al último nivel? ¿obtuvo algún diploma?

14.2.- Si no llegó al último nivel ¿cuáles fueron los motivos?

**15.- ¿Buscó aprender por su cuenta el idioma inglés? ¿Qué lo motivó?**

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15.1.- ¿Qué mecanismos empleó?

15.2.- ¿Cuál considera fue el más efectivo? ¿Cuál fue el menos efectivo?