REVISTA INVECOM "Estudios transdisciplinarios en comunicación y sociedad" / ISSN 2739-0063 / www.revistainvecom.org. Vol. 5, # 1, 2025. Licencia CC BY. Studies on motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador. Sandy T. Soto, Ligia Fernanda Espinosa Cevallos & María Asunción Rojas Encalada.

Studies on motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador

Estudios sobre motivación y enseñanza-aprendizaje de inglés en Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to document the investigations on motivation and EFL teaching and learning in elementary school, secondary school, and university settings in Ecuador that have been published since 2010 until November 2023. The literature review technique was used to answer the three research questions formulated for this study. The questions inquired into what has been investigated, the main findings, and the research gaps of the literature concerning motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador. 19 research articles and 1 book chapter composed the unit of analysis. Overall findings reveal that studies have focused on investigating the factors that impact students' motivation to learn EFL as well as the strategies, techniques and methods that motivate students to learn this language. Motivation on EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador has been highly explored in higher education. Yet, there is little literature on the topic in relation to primary and secondary school. Research gaps indicate the need for longitudinal studies as well as studies that focus on: motivation and cultural factors, the implementation of appropriate strategies to make the integration of supplemental resources more motivating for students, training of teachers on motivation-based teaching practices, motivation and higher-order thinking, reading and motivation, learning content adjustment to motivate learners, and motivation and language learning in virtual settings.

Keywords: Motivation, EFL teaching, EFL learning, Ecuador.

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RESUMEN

El propósito de este trabajo es documentar las investigaciones sobre motivación y enseñanza-aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera en entornos de educación primaria, secundaria y universitaria en Ecuador, publicadas desde 2010 hasta noviembre de 2023. Se utilizó la técnica de revisión de literatura para dar respuesta a las preguntas de investigación. Las preguntas indagaron sobre lo que se ha investigado, los principales hallazgos y los vacíos en la literatura sobre el tema. La unidad de análisis estuvo compuesta por 19 artículos de investigación y 1 capítulo de

libro. Los hallazgos generales revelan que los estudios se han centrado en investigar los factores que impactan la motivación de los estudiantes para aprender inglés como lengua extranjera, así como las estrategias, técnicas y métodos que motivan a los estudiantes a aprender este idioma. La motivación en la enseñanza-aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera en Ecuador ha sido ampliamente explorada en la educación superior. Sin embargo, hay poca literatura sobre el tema para los niveles de primaria y secundaria. Las lagunas en la investigación indican la necesidad de estudios longitudinales, así como estudios que se centren en: motivación y factores culturales, la implementación de estrategias apropiadas para hacer que la integración de recursos suplementarios sea más motivadora para los estudiantes, la capacitación de los docentes en prácticas de enseñanza basadas en la motivación, motivación y pensamiento de orden superior, lectura y motivación, adaptación del contenido de aprendizaje para motivar a los alumnos y motivación y aprendizaje de idiomas en entornos virtuales.

Palabras clave: Motivación, enseñanza de inglés, aprendizaje de inglés, Ecuador.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a topic studied by psychology that focuses on understanding what drives people to act. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), motivation encompasses a set of factors that result in energy or strength that drive or direct the behavior and actions of an individual, being essential for the achievement of goals and objectives. Likewise, Robbins and Judge (2018) explain that motivation refers to the process that influences the achievement of individual goals by defining the direction, intensity and persistence of the subject. In this sense, key elements of motivation include self-determination, competence, and social connection. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), self-determination is given by the individual's sense of control and decision over their behavior; competence refers to the skill and knowledge necessary to achieve a goal, while social connection refers to the human need for belonging and connection with other individuals.

Meanwhile, a study conducted by Gagné and Deci (2005) shows that satisfying these three basic needs (self-determination, competence and social connection) leads to higher levels of motivation and psychological well-being. Furthermore, another study by Van den Broeck et al. (2010) found that intrinsic motivation (motivation based on personal interest and satisfaction) is related to self-determination and competence, while extrinsic motivation (motivation based on external rewards) is related to social connectedness. On the other hand, the need for achievement also appears as one of the key elements of motivation, which refers to the desire to achieve challenging goals and succeed in difficult tasks (McClelland, 1987). Therefore, people who have a high need for achievement tend to be more motivated to achieve their goals and are more persistent in the effort they put into achieving them. In turn, motivation is also influenced by the expectation of success, which refers to the belief that a goal can be achieved, and that the effort put into it will be successful (Bandura, 1977).

In terms of language learning, Luna-Hernández (2016) and Azogue and Barrera (2020) indicate that motivation is an essential factor in the teaching-learning process of the English language. In this sense, Álvarez and Rojas (2021) explain that motivation generates an improvement in the academic performance of students, resulting in improved language skills such as their oral production (Gil et al., 2019). Learners who are motivated show the greatest efforts for learning a new language. They have the more positive attitude towards language acquisition. Even if it is a lengthy process, language acquiring is simply enjoyed by them more than by their peers who are demotivated. Considering that motivation plays an important role in foreign language learning, this work documents the studies that have been published in relation to motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador since 2010 until November 2023 to answer the following research questions:

RQ-1: What has been investigated regarding motivation and EFL teaching and learning (in elementary/primary school, secondary / high school, and university settings) in Ecuador since 2010 up to November 2023?

RQ-2: What are the main findings of the investigations regarding motivation and EFL teaching and learning (in elementary/primary school, secondary / high school, and university settings) in Ecuador since 2010 up to November 2023?

RQ-3: What are some of the gaps in the literature concerning motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador?

METHODOLOGY

This work is based on the qualitative research paradigm, following the literature review approach (Guirao, 2015). As per the Saunders et al. (2015), the guiding paradigm of choice allows for an interpretive assessment of the existing literature on the topic. The data sources, search strategy, and synthesis process criteria are as follows:

Data sources

The data sources include 19 research articles and 1 book chapter reporting empirical research on motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador. These works were accessed through Google Scholar and met the following criteria:

- reported original research
- published in English or Spanish
- published between 2010 and November 2023
- motivation in any aspect of EFL teaching / learning was one of the variables studied in the investigations or it was reported in the findings
- addressed the topic in relation to elementary/primary school, secondary / high school, and university settings

Search strategy

Based on the inclusion criteria above, this work utilised a Boolean operator (AND, and OR) and keyword-focused search. As Bello (2017) noted information retrieval is considerably enhanced and improved using a Boolean search strategy. The search string for the present research is as follows:

- "Motivation" AND "EFL" AND "Ecuador"
- ("Motivate" OR "Motivational") AND "EFL" AND "Ecuador"

Data grouping and synthesis

The grouping and synthesis of the data was conducted as follows:

- *Data grouping:* the sources were organized in three themes: 1) Empiric studies on motivation in elementary schools, 2) Empiric studies on motivation in secondary schools, and 3) Empiric studies on motivation in higher education.
- *Data synthesis:*
    - Data from the sources selected was synthetized considering the objective, methodology, and findings of the investigations.
    - A brief analysis of the main findings of the investigations that comprise each theme is included at the end of each segment.
    - A list of research gaps found in the literature of each theme is also included.

This organization allowed to answer the three research questions proposed for this study.

RESULTS

Empiric studies on motivation in elementary schools

Work 1. The study by Cabrera-Solano et al. (2019) aimed to ascertain how educators and learners of a partially-state subsidized institution in the southern part of Ecuador perceive the internal factors influencing the study of English as a foreign language. Data was collected through: 1) a questionnaire administered to two hundred fifty-seven children enrolled in first to fourth years of elementary school - the instrument was about motivation, anxiety, willingness, self-efficacy, and memorization while acquiring English skills; 2) the observation of the English classes that these students attended for over three months; and, 3) interviews to eight teachers to get their opinions on the internal factors that influence students' language learning.

Following quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the findings show that participants believed motivation declined with students' age and ability level. Additionally, as kids age, they become more nervous when participating in listening exercises and speaking in front of the class. In the classroom, students exhibit self-efficiency and retain their acquired knowledge. To ensure that pupils are successful in the learning process, educational stakeholders should carefully consider all the implications that may be drawn from these aspects.

Work 2. The study conducted by Pacheco at al. (2022) examined how teachers use physical activity to motivate young children in Ecuador to learn English as a foreign language. With 75 participants, 65 children, and 10 teachers from three primary public schools in the province of Manabí, the study employed a hybrid, post-modern research methodology.

The study reveals that when teachers exposed students to English-language lyric videos with dancing and singing, there were substantial differences in the learners' desire for learning and vocabulary acquisition between the pretest and post-test. The findings also demonstrate that incorporating dancing into Total Physical Response exercises helped enhance participants' willingness to learn new terminology. Nevertheless, despite the significance of physical exercise in the learning process, traditional approaches may still be seen as maintaining class control.

What are the main findings?

Both studies contribute valuable insights into motivation in elementary school settings in Ecuador, particularly regarding EFL learning. While Cabrera-Solano et al. (2019) emphasize the decline in motivation with age and the importance of addressing student anxiety, Pacheco et al. (2022) highlight the effectiveness of incorporating physical activities like dancing to enhance motivation and vocabulary acquisition. These findings suggest that innovative pedagogical approaches, such as incorporating music and movement, could effectively counteract declining motivation and anxiety among students as they progress through elementary school.

What are some research gaps?

Taking into consideration the purposes of the studies selected for this investigation, the following research gaps are found in the literature that addresses motivation and English language learning in elementary school settings:

1) Both studies offer snapshots of motivation but lack longitudinal data. Longitudinal research could provide insights into how motivation changes over time and its long-term effects on language proficiency.
2) Since cultural factors may influence motivation differently, further research should consider the cultural context of Ecuadorian elementary schools.
3) With the purpose of providing a more holistic understanding of the dynamics at play, further research could delve into teachers' perceptions, challenges, and strategies in motivating students.

Empiric studies on motivation in secondary schools

Work 1. The mixed- method study by Dodd et al. (2015) examined the usage of supplemental resources by EFL teachers in Ecuadorian secondary schools. Data was collected through interviews with 12 teachers and the administration of a questionnaire to 695 secondary school students.

Main findings indicate that: 1) teachers think that supplemental resources improve students' learning opportunities by raising their motivation; 2) students prefer additional materials; 3) using specific supplemental materials improves students' motivation, comprehension, and engagement in their English language studies; 4) teachers' classes become more dynamic and participatory when they employ supplemental materials; 5) the teacher's primary goal in using the resources was to pique students' interests. 6) students feel most inspired when their teachers use flashcards, pictures, music, realia, and videos; 7) educators and education specialists may consider these findings when designing lesson plans and course schedules.

Work 2. The study by Ochoa et al. (2016) aimed to clarify the connection between communicative activities and how they affect students' desire to learn English as a foreign language. In a community in Ecuador's Amazon region, 180 senior high school students as well as 8 EFL teachers answered a questionnaire. In-person interviews with a subset of these pupils and each teacher were conducted. Both tools were used to collect information about the usage of communicative activities in the classroom and how they relate to student motivation.

The findings indicate that teachers and students view communication activities as stimulating. Furthermore, because communicative activities improve students' fluency, they feel encouraged to participate. Students feel more confident when they support one another through group projects, role plays, class debates, games, pair and group work, and oral presentations. Both students and teachers rated games, pair work, small group work, and role plays

as the most engaging communicative activities in the EFL classroom. They believe that these kinds of exercises improve the ability to use English in a fun and realistic manner.

Work 3. The study of Cirocky et al. (2019) observed the motivational techniques in Ecuadorian classrooms teaching English as a foreign language. The sample comprised 350 randomly selected pupils and 80 secondary school teachers. Employing a mixed-methods strategy that included semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.
The findings indicate that the teachers used different incentive tactics in their educational activities; promoting Learner Autonomy was the least common category while Displaying Appropriate Teacher Behaviours was the most frequent. Similarly, the collected data reveals that the teachers used various techniques to encourage their students to learn English; they demonstrated acceptable behaviours, such as being kind to students, speaking loudly and clearly, listening to students when they had issues, and providing individualized assistance. Both participant groups agreed that the tactics in the areas of "Encouraging Positive Self-evaluation," "Promoting Learners Autonomy," and "Making Learning Stimulating and Attractive" needed to take precedence over all other techniques. Ecuadorian teachers employed various motivational techniques; however, many of them needed to be more utilized, which may suggest that EFL teachers needed to place a higher value on inspiring their pupils.

Work 4. Through reading nooks and workshops, the study by Jaramillo-Ponton et al. (2019) sought to ascertain students' reading habits in English as a foreign language and how parents and teachers encourage students to improve their reading habits. Participants included 1300 students from eighth, ninth, and tenth grade high schools in Ecuador's coast, Sierra, and Amazon areas, along with 63 English teachers and 374 parents. Data was gathered and analyzed for six months using a mixed-method approach that combined qualitative and quantitative techniques. The instruments employed were observation sheets, teacher and authority interviews, and questionnaires completed by students, instructors, and parents.
The study's findings demonstrate how poor the EFL students' reading habits were before the intervention. While seminars and reading nooks were implemented, most teachers and some parents encouraged students to enhance their EFL reading skills through various tactics, strategies, activities, and educational materials. The approaches used to teach and study English as a foreign language need to be improved. For pupils to effectively communicate, these educational approaches should promote the development of reading, listening, speaking, and writing abilities. Despite their belief that reading is essential to the language, EFL students need better reading habits. Although most kids do not possess the necessary skills to comprehend primary ideas and pertinent facts from context, they nonetheless view reading as necessary. Creating EFL reading workshops and putting reading corners in place helped students become more proficient readers and more intrinsically motivated. Through these seminars, students gained proficiency in reading strategies and increased frequency of proper and frequent use of reading material. To create more exciting reading exercises and support the EFL learning process, teachers also enhanced their pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, reading corners gave instructors and students enough room to move around and maintain their motivation to practice their EFL reading skills.

Work 5. The paper regarding code-switching by Intriago and Hidalgo (2021) aimed to identify and characterize the variables that drive Ecuadorian EFL teachers to code-switch in their classes. A Likert-scale-format survey and an interview were used to collect data for this descriptive, mixed, and ethnographic study. The research population consisted of English as foreign language teachers working in *Bachillerato General Unificado* (high school); seventeen teachers completed the survey and five were interviewed.
The findings indicate that the variables driving their motivation to code-switch are related to affective and pedagogical goals; the participants strongly support using code-switching for educational goals, such as providing examples and conducting classes in the mother language. However, code-switching is implemented based on the instructor's perspective without any apparent logic or structure. This appears to counter established theories that clarify the implications of frequent mother tongue use in acquiring a second language. According to the survey's findings and conclusions, most teachers employ code-switching to teach grammar and vocabulary, connect L1 and

L2, and give students personalized feedback at lower levels. This explains why code-switching is seen as an instructional strategy employed to provide instructions and outline the regulations of the course.

Work 6. The study by Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) explored Language Learning Motivated Behaviour in the EFL context of Ecuador by analyzing the impact that each of its three main components - Ideal L2 self, Ought to L2 self, and Learning experience - have on secondary school students. The ideal L2 Self refers to a student's image of who he would like to become (proficient in speaking English). The ought-to L2 Self refers to all those expectations that others have about who the student should become. The L2 Learning experience refers to all class experiences such as the teacher, the curriculum, among others. This exploratory analysis was carried out with 128 students between 16 and 18 years old, from 2 schools in the city of Ibarra, Ecuador. They completed a questionnaire composed by several five-point Likert-scale-type questionnaire items: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree. The study focused specifically on analyzing what characterizes the motivational disposition of Ecuadorian students to learn English; what relationships exist among the three motivational components - deal L2 self, Ought to L2 self, and Learning experience; and which of these factors influences students' motivated learning behavior the most. It is also important to mention that the survey focused not only on classroom learning, but also on learning experiences outside the classroom.

The results show that the Ideal L2 Self is one of the best predictors of student motivation, and that the learning experience also has an important impact on student motivation. However, the study reveals that Ought to L2 self does not have a significant impact on motivation for EFL learning. This allows us to deduce that the simple fact of imposing a level of English with which students must complete their high school studies does not motivate them to learn the language more. The results also show that, when students have positive learning experiences, they develop a better future vision of themselves, and the same happens when students spend time outside of their classes learning or using the language. Nevertheless, more studies could be done on how we can improve each of these three components - Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 self, and L2 Learning Experience, so that we can help students be more motivated to learn.

What are the main findings?

The research conducted across the six distinct studies selected for this section sheds light on various facets of motivation in secondary school settings in Ecuador, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Dodd et al. (2015) demonstrate the positive impact of supplemental resources, such as flashcards and videos, on students' motivation and engagement, while Ochoa et al. (2016) highlight the effectiveness of communicative activities like group projects and role plays in fostering a desire to learn English. Additionally, Cirocky et al. (2019) underscore the importance of teacher behaviors and motivational techniques, emphasizing the need for promoting learner autonomy. Jaramillo-Ponton at al. (2019) emphasize the crucial role of supportive environments created by teachers and parents in enhancing students' reading habits and intrinsic motivation. Moreover, Intriago and Hidalgo (2021) discuss the use of code-switching as an instructional strategy, revealing its potential to support language acquisition. Finally, Andrade-Molina at al. (2022) explore the impact of motivational components like ideal L2 self and learning experience on students' motivation, highlighting the significance of positive learning environments both inside and outside the classroom. Together, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing motivation in elementary school settings in Ecuador, offering insights for educators and policymakers to enhance students' motivation and engagement in EFL learning.

What are some research gaps?

Taking into consideration the purposes of the studies selected for this investigation, the following research gaps are found in the literature that addresses motivation and English language learning in secondary school settings:

1) There is a need to explore optimal strategies for integrating supplementary materials into the curriculum.
2) Enhancement of teacher training focused on motivation in language teaching is another are that needs exploration, focusing on the promotion of learner autonomy and the utilization of motivational techniques effectively.

3) The discrepancy between support for code-switching and its implementation suggests a gap in understanding how to structure code-switching effectively to support language acquisition without hindering proficiency.
4) There is a need for more research to understand the interplay between the ideal L2 self and the learning experience and how they can be enhanced to boost motivation effectively.

Empiric studies on motivation in higher education

Work 1. The quantitative study conducted by Cevallos et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between undergraduate students' frequency of autonomous language learning activities and their varying motivation levels. Eight hundred sixty-two college students from 10 vocational training programs at a public university in Ecuador participated in this study by completing a Likert scale questionnaire.

The findings demonstrate a strong correlation between the participants' attitudes toward learning and the professors' stimulation of language acquisition. In the category motivation, most participants selected a position between motivated and highly motivated for EFL learning. Furthermore, it was found that the most common language practices in which the participants demonstrated the highest degree of autonomy were caring about pronouncing words correctly, taking notes on exciting words or expressions in English, and listening to English-language songs. Conversely, taking an online English language course, conversing with a foreigner online in English, and writing an essay in English were the tasks that Ecuadorian EFL learners performed the least frequently. Regarding academic writing, which is primarily expressed as essays, there is hardly any culture that promotes higher order thinking and reflection through this type of writing.

Work 2. The action research by Villafuerte et al. (2018) studied Ecuadorian university students' learning styles and motivations to practice English as a foreign language through role-play. The sample comprised 158 students from two public universities in Ecuador's Coastal region. From 2016 to 2017, students participated in role-playing exercises in the English as a Foreign Language course. The Social Software Survey Used with Undergraduate Students by Anderson, Poellhuber, and Ross (2009) as cited in Villafuerte et al. (2018) and an ad hoc questionnaire created by the researchers of this study were the tools used.

The findings demonstrate how receptive participants were to task-based learning and cooperative learning. It was determined that working in groups is the preferred learning style for participants, which is advantageous for using English as a foreign language. In addition, the findings of this study demonstrate that role-playing games allow students to participate in a non-competitive setting. Additionally, when people search for opportunities to participate in the many stages of role-play production, their creative faculties are activated. Role play can increase students' teamwork more effectively when the cooperative learning strategy accompanies it. Although participants thought that role play was a challenging language practice, the motives of both intrinsic and extrinsic learners showed that participants were accessible for use as a task-based learning exercise for EFL practice.

Work 3. The exploratory research study conducted by Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2019) ascertained the driving forces behind Ecuadorian university students' decision to acquire English. To that end, a survey was sent to 422 undergraduate students enrolled in various programs across three public universities. The questions aimed to determine how much the study participants agreed with statements about instrumental and integrative motivation. Furthermore, an open-ended inquiry was developed to ascertain the primary motivations behind their English language acquisition.

The results demonstrate that many research participants are driven to acquire the language to achieve short-term goals, such as traveling and communicating in the target language, as well as long-term goals that include earning academic degrees and obtaining better job opportunities. Even though some students desire to speak English to communicate with others appropriately, very few utilize the language outside of the classroom. In addition, the results show that over 50% of students believe that nations that speak English are developed and prioritize increasing their spending on technology and education. Students desire to be able to appreciate and understand English-language literature, music, and film. The image of a community they wish to be a part of has been shaped by desires for things like travel, graduate degrees, improved career chances, and future postgraduate degrees. Finally,

according to this study's findings, university students view studying the English language as crucial to achieving both their short- and long-term objectives in today's globalized world.

Work 4. Since there are few possibilities for Ecuadorian university EFL students to practice their English outside of the classroom, the study conducted by Sevy-Biloon and Chroman (2019) aimed to allow students to practice their English-to-spoken communication and increase internal motivation. This study used a mixed-method approach that included questionnaires, unstructured interviews, and observations. Seventeen students enrolled in a beginner language proficiency course of an Ecuadorian university participated in the study. These students took part of an initiative that included their interaction with native speakers through video chat platforms for over five weeks.
Findings indicate that students' general communication abilities increased fluency, speaking confidence, and intrinsic motivation to develop. The group's instructor discovered that most members needed more communication skills when using EFL. They were reticent, needed more fluency in their speech, mispronounced words, and ultimately felt uneasy using the English language in the classroom. Most students responded negatively when the teacher inquired if they had any access to or interaction with the English language outside of class. They also believed that since none of the students utilized English daily, social oral engagement was not a driving force behind their decision to study the language. Nonetheless, these students recognized that oral communication was vital because they were training to become English instructors.

Work 5. Hidalgo and Villacis (2020) conducted a study in which the analysis and comparison of the perceptions of the students and teachers regarding the influence of motivational strategies on the learners' desire to study a target language was performed. The impact about those strategies on their academic performance at university level was also observed. The sample population was 317 students and 30 foreign language teachers of a public university in Ecuador, who completed questionnaires designed for each population group.
Results of the study indicate that most students qualify their teacher's motivational strategies just as acceptable while most teachers think they are good. Most students and teachers agree that the lack of motivation is the main reason for the surveyed students' academic failure in EFL learning. Similarly, teachers and students mainly agree that obtaining the certificate of proficiency in a foreign language to fulfil a graduation requirement is the main motivation for the students to enroll in EFL courses.

Work 6. In their study, Borja-Torresano et al. (2020) analyzed the use of the podcast for the development of communicative skills in English language learning. The researchers followed a mixed design, combining the analysis of documents and empirical data obtained from twenty-two students enrolled in a private higher education institution. Empirical data was collected through a pre and post-test (to assess the efficacy of an intervention based on the use of podcasts), a rubric (to assess students' communicative skills), and a questionnaire (to examine students' motivation toward the use of podcasts).
The results show that the use of the Podcast had a significant effect in improving the oral production of the students who participated in the intervention. Regarding students' motivation toward the use of podcasts to learn English, findings show that those students who felt highly motivated to use podcasts demonstrated better performance in oral activities and conversely. Finally, in addition to improving students' oral skills, podcasts also provide other advantages such as the development of cognitive and collaborative skills.

Work 7. The action research-based study by Almache et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of a gamified formative assessment process through Factile (a jeopardy game maker) on learners' skills in speaking accuracy and to increase their motivation to communicate in English. The data for the research was gathered from two groups composed of 20 university students each, the control and the intervention group. Participants completed a pre- and a post-test as well as a pre- and post-survey.
Findings demonstrate that the use of Factile as a means of gamified formative assessment produced positive effects. Both speaking accuracy and motivation improved in the students who participated in the intervention group. It was

reported that these students felt less anxious when speaking after the intervention concluded. Students in the control group did not perceive those benefits.

Work 8. The preliminary exploratory study conducted by Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2020) was undertaken to identify and examine the factors that play a pivotal role in encouraging students at Ecuadorian universities to acquire English language skills. The data for the investigation was collected through a survey completed by a diverse group of 422 undergraduate students representing various universities in Ecuador.
Findings reveal that many of the surveyed students strongly desire to learn English, primarily driven by their need to communicate effectively with others. However, despite their expressed desire, a stark contrast emerges. Only a mere fraction of these students can apply their English skills beyond the classroom setting. Similarly, a mere fraction of them actively seeks opportunities to use English outside the classroom, whether it is through reading, watching movies, or conversing with native speakers. According to over 50% of the pupils in this study, teachers are the primary forces behind their learning. This number is linked to the 46.5% of student respondents who said they thought their teachers used an engaging and motivational teaching technique. For many participants, learning English is just a requirement for passing tests and graduating from universities. Others view learning English as a tool that will open up additional career options and pay, as well as the ability to access superior knowledge and scientific research publications.

Work 9. The study by Sevy-Biloon (2022) aimed at determining if and how the use of extensive reading could improve the writing skills, vocabulary and motivation of EFL students to achieve a B2 proficiency level. This is an exploratory and qualitative action research study carried out in a B2 level class with students from UNAE University over the course of a semester (16 weeks of class) in virtual mode. During the study, the teacher first observed the areas that the students needed to improve, implemented the extensive reading strategy, and at the end, gave the students a test to see if they had improved their reading skills. The test results were compared to the results of previous groups who had taken that class but had not used this strategy. In addition, the teacher used a survey which included information about students' perception regarding if and how the strategy had affected their reading skills and their motivation to learn English. A reflection diary was also used by the teacher to record her perceptions weekly. The teacher's weekly observations included aspects such as what the students did, how it affected their reading skills and vocabulary, as well as ideas on how to improve the strategy used.
The study shows positive results from the implementation of extensive reading. Students improved their reading skills and vocabulary retention. In addition, their autonomous learning was fostered and their general motivation to learn English improved. These results show that students tend to be more motivated and autonomous when they are given choices as it occurs in extensive reading. Furthermore, the more students practice reading, the more familiar they become with applying practical reading strategies, such as guessing meaning from context, and the more internalized their ability to comprehend reading becomes. However, this study mentioned that there were some students who did not like the activity because they did not like reading or because they did not have time to read; therefore, more research is required to know how to motivate these students who do not like reading or do not have time to read because of their busy university schedules.

Work 10. The study conducted by Ortega-Auquilla, Soto, and Espinosa (2022) focused on analyzing the initiatives that both institutions and teachers can take to make English language teaching at the university level more motivating and effective. For this paper, a mixed-methods research was carried out, which included two stages. The first stage was a quantitative stage where a survey was applied to 2,077 students and 109 professors from public universities in the country. The second stage was qualitative, and for this, focus groups were carried out with students and individual interviews with 8 EFL university teachers, 8 language centre directors, and 9 national and international experts in EFL teaching at the university level. This paper presents the results of the second stage, which is the qualitative stage. For this stage specifically, the research focused on identifying what initiatives should be implemented and strengthened by both authorities and teachers within public universities, to motivate students to learn English. In addition, it focused on determining what methodological practices of teaching English would

motivate university students to learn the language, and what benefits it could have on student motivation, making English a transversal axis in all academic programs.

The results show that students' motivation to learn English not only depends on the teaching strategies that each teacher uses in the classroom. In fact, their greatest motivation comes from how useful students consider learning English to be for their life, whether for their university studies or for their future professional career. This shows that it is essential that higher education institutions encourage the practical use of English and connect the language with the students' careers, through academic events and conferences in English, scholarships and international exchanges, the implementation of CLIL (English learning and integrated content), among others. These types of strategies can increase the motivation of university students to learn English, so that they see the language, not as a requirement to be met, but as a useful tool for their life. Hence, more analysis is necessary to see how these types of initiatives put into practice can influence not only motivation but also the effectiveness of teaching/learning.

Work 11. The paper by Ortega-Auquilla, Siguenza-Garzon, et al. (2022) had the objective to determine which are the most important factors that motivate university students in the Ecuadorian educational context to learn English, from the perspective and experience of teachers, directors of language centres, and national and international experts. This study was part of a two-year research project, which followed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. The study included a questionnaire administered to 109 EFL University teachers (quantitative stage), followed by a qualitative stage, which consisted of 25 interviews conducted with key-stakeholders, in this case, university professors, directors of language centres, and national and international experts. The survey considered some factors that motivate students to learn English. It had closed questions that required teachers to choose on a Likert scale: totally agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or totally disagree, to determine the factors that most respondents considered had the greatest impact on motivation of university students to learn English. Regarding the interviews, their objective was to obtain more information to better understand the results obtained in the survey. The integration of the information obtained in the interviews and the questionnaire allowed to obtain an in-depth understanding in relation to the motivational factors that are most important for learning the English language in the university context of Ecuador.

The results show that the factors associated with instrumental and intrinsic motivation are considered key to student learning. This implies that students are motivated to learn English because this language provides them practical benefits in different areas of their lives. For example, most participants agreed that students are motivated to learn English because it can give them future advantages in their jobs, can boost their careers, allows them to achieve academic goals more easily, and provides them access to academic and cultural information and entertainment, allowing intercultural exchange and communication. From this we can conclude that it is important that the content of EFL classes is meaningful for the career or daily life of the students. To do this, it is necessary for teachers to know their students well, their interests, objectives and priorities. This is critical to develop activities that maintain their motivation and interest in the subject. Now, more studies could be carried out on how to motivate students when there are learning topics that may not seem relevant to the students but are necessary for their learning.

Work 12. The study by Argudo-Serrano et al. (2023) explored the perception of university students towards virtual learning during the pandemic and how students' gender, schedule and major (career) influence the level of motivation they have in their online EFL classes. This is a correlational and quantitative study that sought to analyses the connections between the different variables (gender, schedule and major/career) with motivation. These relationships were analyzed statistically. A survey consisting of two sections was used. The first part collected demographic information from the students, while the second part was composed of 22 closed questions. The surveys were completed by 703 EFL students from the University of Cuenca in Ecuador.

The results reveal that most students were motivated to learn in their online classes. Furthermore, it was determined that the factor that made the most difference in motivation issues was their major/career, followed by gender and finally, the schedule. For example, students in Social Science fields enjoyed online learning more than students enrolled in Engineering. Also, the study show that female students are more motivated in online classes than male students. Finally, the students in the morning and afternoon schedules exhibited more engagement than those with

classes at night. These are very interesting findings that indicate that there are certain factors which teachers cannot control, that influence and make certain students with certain characteristics have a stronger desire/motivation to learn than others. Now, that does not mean that the strategies used by teachers are not important. Thus, more research may be needed to determine what factors activities, tools, and strategies used in class can motivate students more during online learning.

What are the main findings?

The exploration of motivation in higher education settings in Ecuador, particularly in English language learning contexts, reveals a diverse array of factors influencing students' engagement and enthusiasm. Cevallos et al. (2017) demonstrate the correlation between autonomous language learning activities and motivation levels among undergraduate students, highlighting the significance of intrinsic motivation in tasks such as pronunciation practice and note-taking, while also pointing out the lack of higher-order thinking promotion in academic writing tasks. Villafuerte et al. (2018) underscore the effectiveness of role-playing exercises in fostering motivation and cooperative learning among university students, emphasizing the preference for task-based learning and the activation of creative faculties through non-competitive participation. Similarly, Borja-Torresano et al. (2020) and Almache et al. (2020) highlight the positive impact of innovative teaching methodologies such as podcast usage and gamifies assessments in enhancing motivation, oral production skills, and speaking accuracy among EFL learners.

Furthermore, studies like Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2019) and Ortega-Auquilla, Siguenza-Garzon, et al. (2022) delve into the driving forces behind students' decision to acquire English, revealing a complex interplay of short-term goals like travel and communication and long-term aspirations for academic and career advancement. The importance of meaningful content and relevance to students' goals emerges as a crucial factor in sustaining motivation, as highlighted by Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2020) and Ortega-Auquilla, Soto, and Espinosa (2022). Additionally, Sevy-Biloon (2019) and Hidalgo and Villacis (2020) shed light on the challenges of providing opportunities for English practice outside the classroom and the discrepancy between students' and teachers' perceptions of motivational strategies, emphasizing the need for more effective integration of motivational initiatives into teaching practices.

Finally, Argudo-Serrano et al. (2023) explore the influence of gender, schedule, and major on students' motivation in online learning contexts, revealing nuanced dynamics that warrant further investigation to tailor strategies effectively to diverse student profiles and needs. Overall, while existing research offers valuable insights into motivation in higher education settings in Ecuador, further exploration is needed to address gaps in promoting higher-order thinking, engaging non-reading enthusiasts, and effectively integrating motivational initiatives into teaching practices to enhance student engagement and language learning outcomes.

What are some research gaps?

Taking into consideration the purposes of the studies selected for this investigation, the following research gaps are found in the literature that addresses motivation and English language learning in higher education settings:

1) There is limited exploration of motivation to promote higher order thinking skills in academic writing tasks. Further research could investigate motivational strategies to promote critical thinking and reflection in EFL writing instruction.
2) While extensive reading programs show promise in improving motivation and language skills, challenges remain in motivating students who do not enjoy reading. Future research could explore effective strategies for engaging reluctant readers in language learning activities.
3) Some students may struggle with motivation when learning topics, they perceive as irrelevant. Further research could investigate approaches to make content more meaningful and engaging to enhance motivation and learning outcomes.
4) While studies acknowledge the impact of external factors on motivation in online classes, there is a need for further exploration of effective strategies to motivate students in virtual environments. Further research

could focus on identifying pedagogical approaches and technological tools that foster engagement and motivation in online learning contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This work brings together the studies on motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador conducted over the last thirteen years. The study sought to synthesize the relevant points in the literature to identify what has been investigated, differences and commonalities in the findings of the studies as well as areas where research had yet to address gaps in knowledge.

Research conducted on motivation and English as a Foreign Language teaching and learning in Ecuador since 2010 up to November 2023 reveals a multifaceted landscape across different educational settings. In general, the results show that in Ecuador motivation remains an important but poorly explored variable specially in elementary and secondary levels of education. In elementary schools, studies by Cabrera-Solano et al. (2019) and Pacheco et al. (2022) underscore the importance of addressing declining motivation with age and utilizing innovative pedagogical approaches such as incorporating physical activities to enhance motivation and vocabulary acquisition. However, the lack of longitudinal data and consideration of cultural factors suggests a need for further research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of motivation dynamics in this context.

In secondary school settings, research by Dodd et al. (2015), Ochoa et al. (2016), Cirocky et al. (2019), Jaramillo-Ponton et al. (2019), Intriago and Hidalgo (2021), and Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) delves into various motivational techniques and their impact on EFL learning. These studies highlight the positive effects of supplemental resources, communicative activities, supportive environments, code-switching, and motivational components on student engagement and language acquisition. However, gaps exist in understanding optimal strategies for integrating supplementary materials, enhancing teacher training, and structuring code-switching effectively to support language proficiency.

In higher education, studies by Cevallos et al. (2017), Villafuerte et al. (2018), Borja-Torresano et al. (2020), Almache et al. (2020), Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2019, 2020), Sevy-Biloon (2019, 2022), Hidalgo and Villacis (2020), Ortega-Auquilla, Siguenza-Garzon, et al. (2022), and Argudo-Serrano et al. (2023) explore factors influencing motivation and engagement towards EFL learning among university students. These factors include autonomous learning activities, innovative teaching methodologies, meaningful content, career advancement purposes, challenges in online learning environments, among others. Nonetheless, gaps remain in promoting higher-order thinking, engaging reluctant readers, making content relevant, and motivating students in virtual settings, warranting further investigation and the development of tailored strategies.

In conclusion, while existing research provides valuable insights into motivation and EFL teaching and learning in Ecuador, addressing identified gaps through longitudinal studies, cultural considerations, and pedagogical innovations is essential for enhancing student motivation and language learning outcomes across educational levels.

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