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**The use of technology to enhance Students' Motivation and Attitudes
Toward EFL learning in a Rural High-School in Ecuador**

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RESUMEN

El mundo moderno presenta cada vez más procesos de integración logrados mediante la difusión del inglés como medio de comunicación, por lo que existe una necesidad primordial de estudiarlo en países donde no es el idioma oficial, especialmente en zonas remotas, su estudio puede representar un desafío. Actualmente, el uso de recursos tecnológicos es fundamental para el aprendizaje de muchos idiomas, incluyendo el inglés como lengua extranjera. Los instrumentos más importantes utilizados en estos procesos son la computadora y el Smart TV, los cuales a su vez facilitan el acceso a páginas web interactivas y videos.

Por otro lado, el acceso a una educación de calidad en el ámbito del aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera es limitado en las zonas rurales de Ecuador. Específicamente, este artículo presenta el proceso de investigación realizado con el método cuantitativo para estudiar el problema de la falta de motivación y actitudes hacia el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en una parte del alumnado de una escuela secundaria rural ubicada en la región Costa. Los resultados obtenidos demuestran que el uso de estas herramientas tecnológicas en el aula ha podido enriquecer el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés de forma interactiva y dinámica, mejorando las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes en esta materia.

PALABRAS CLAVES

E.F.L.; tecnología; escuela rural; motivación.

ABSTRACT

The modern world increasingly presents integration processes achieved through the diffusion of English as a tool for communication, due to this there is a primary need to study it in countries where it is not the official language. Especially in remote areas of the population, its study can represent a challenge. Currently, using the resources of technology is a fundamental part of learning many languages, including the study of English as a foreign language. The most important instruments used in these processes are the computer and the smart TV, providing easy access to interactive web pages as well as videos. On the other hand, access to quality education in the field of learning English as a foreign language is limited in rural areas of Ecuador. Specifically, this article presents the research process achieved with the quantitative method to study the problem of the lack of motivation and attitudes towards EFL learning of a part of the students of a rural school located in the coastal region. The results obtained demonstrate that using these technological tools in the classroom can enrich the English learning process in an interactive and dynamic way, improving learners' communication skills in this subject.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Technology is a set of tools that essentially facilitate teaching (Marwan & Padmarani, 2013, p.5). Therefore, in the current era of EFL education, effective methods are required to encourage student motivation by influencing them to maintain a receptive mind and a willing attitude to learn. Moreover, globalization and the increasing world development have made communication in foreign languages something fundamental in different professional contexts. Due to this, the need to study English as a foreign language is evident (Almache & Ley, 2023). However, this urgency is not solved equally in the states, specifically geographically with regard to rural schools, which unlike urban areas do not have basic technological equipment to educate students in the English language, added to this the lack of qualified professionals, absent or low-quality study resources, and the unmotivated attitude of students, all this prevents achieving this objective.

One of the most controversial issues in education is related to the factors that influence students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language in a rural high school in Ecuador. In addition, students from non-urban areas often face significant barriers that obstruct their progress. These limitations manifest themselves from several aspects, including poor resources, sociocultural challenges, and academic inequities (Ramos & Aguirre, 2016). This research helps identify the main factors that impede the normal development of the target language learning process which sometimes cannot be met by the teachers of those kinds of institutions. The application of technology while learning a foreign language has significantly managed to improve the effectiveness of the teaching process.

Studying a new language in rural school seems to be demanding for students to engage in the learning process and develop necessary skills for effective language use. According to recent studies, rural students often lack exposure to English outside the classroom, limiting their opportunities to practice and appreciate the language (Monroy, 2022). Additionally, socio-cultural factors, such as community perceptions of English and its relevance, further influence students' willingness to learn. Teachers in rural schools also face challenges such as limited resources, large class sizes, and insufficient training to implement strategies that foster positive attitudes and sustained motivation. Despite these barriers, understanding why students like or

dislike English can provide valuable insights into their learning experiences and help address these motivational challenges.

This study explores factors influencing students' motivation and attitudes toward EFL learning in a rural school in Ecuador by contributing to more targeted and effective teaching strategies adding to the use of technology. Understanding students' motivation and attitudes toward EFL scenarios is something essential for improving language education in rural institutions (Ramos & Aguirre, 2016). Positive motivation and attitudes are closely linked to better learning outcomes, while negative attitudes can lead to disengagement and poor performance. In rural Ecuadorian schools, socio-economic constraints, cultural perceptions of English, and limited exposure to the language create significant barriers to fostering motivation.

This research is particularly relevant for teachers and policymakers aiming to create engaging and culturally relevant learning environments. By investigating the reason students may like or dislike studying English in an institution using all methods. This study provides insights into their perceptions and identifies factors that influence the learners´ attitudes (Ziaee et al., 2021). In addition, these findings inform teaching strategies, resource allocation, and curriculum design to enhance EFL education in rural schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In rural communities, poor English language teaching negatively affects students' development and reduces their chances of success in a potentially competitive and globalized world (Singh, 2021). Other elements that hinder the progress of English language learning in these areas include a lack of educational resources, inadequate facilities, and unmotivated students. Due to these problems, rural schools are considered inferior to urban schools (Shahnaz & Saleha, 2021). Another common problem in rural schools is the shortage of teachers. Hiring a teacher is difficult as they have to adapt to the teaching circumstances, culture, and social environment of the area. When it comes to teaching English in rural schools, learning the language is not a priority for residents (Izquierdo et al., 2021). For people in rural areas, English is still not considered a foreign language that brings immediate benefits to their life progress.

"Some families do not see the need to learn more than the basics of reading, writing, and math" (Ramos & Aguirre, 2016, p. 213). As a result, students in rural communities are at a disadvantage compared to urban students as they "often lack motivation to learn English because they rarely use the language in their daily activities" (Shahnaz & Saleha, 2021, p. 335). In the context of communities isolated from society, the lack of school infrastructure hinders successful learning. According to Calderón et al. (2015), "School infrastructure has a positive impact on students' academic performance and behavior modification" (p. 9). However, "the lack of an adequate environment prevents foreign language learners from learning the language in an easy and accessible way" (Arfan et al., 2019, p. 2).

There are many factors that affect the learning process of English as a foreign language, particularly in rural areas, where infrastructure, use of technology, and educational resources are sometimes insufficient (Shahnaz & Saleha, 2021). Added to this, the lack of English language teachers, inadequate training of current professionals, and lack of sufficient teaching hours dedicated to this subject are the main problems. In order to understand the effects causing students' unmotivated attitude, a number of interconnected issues make it difficult for students in rural schools to learn English as a foreign language. Public schools in Ecuador generally do not have sufficient educational resources. Since 2019, rural schools hardly ever receive books, materials or access to the English modules, which are essential in the process of acquiring communication skills.

In addition, the authorities of these institutions consider EFL teaching as just another subject in the study plan without considering the essential importance that private schools give to learning this language (Vukosi & Collins, 2021). All of this creates a difficult environment for both students and teachers. Systemic changes are needed to address these problems, such as better professional development initiatives, hiring specific and specialized teachers in English teaching, as well as providing technological equipment and necessary modifications to the curriculum that prioritize this approach.

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador must train both educators in the field and directors to provide attention, monitoring and assistance to new guidelines in search of improving the learning of English as a foreign language in public schools. This approach should investigate

creative and affair-specific outcomes, as well as improving relationships between teachers and students to avoid anxiety during learning time in the classroom. Moreover, including utilizing technology and community engagement minimizes the problem of the lack of certified English teachers, which is one of the most common problems in rural schools. Therefore, a considerable number of variables contribute to the shortage; Low Attraction to Rural Posts: Because metropolitan schools offer greater resources, possibilities for professional growth, and better living hi conditions, English-trained teachers frequently choose them over rural ones (UNESCO, 2024); Low Hiring Capacity: Due to financial limitations, rural schools frequently are unable to hire specialized teachers for topics like English (Gao & Wang, 2020).

Dependency on General instructors; most of them are only high school graduates who are frequently tasked with teaching English in rural schools without the necessary training, which results in gaps in education. Students' capacity to learn the language, especially in speaking and listening, which call for supervised practice and correction, is strongly impacted by the shortage of the use of technological tools during the input acquisition in EFL education. As for the authority that plays the role of influencing students in learning a foreign language, the critical challenge is the motivation that must be received from parents and teachers. In addition, students claim that some students are motivated to learn English while others are not.

However, from the teacher's perspective, in school institutions, they lack interest in learning the language, especially grammar. In the classrooms, stimulation in the teaching-learning process is essential to achieve appropriate behavior and progress. The study by Alousif & Alsuhaibani (2021) shows that demotivation in learning a second language can be related to many factors, but it does not mean that the student completely loses interest in learning the language.

Therefore, they conclude that demotivation can be closely related to the teacher's attitude and teaching skills, the learning context, and even the student himself; it confirms that students' lack of interest in learning can be influenced by internal or external factors of the social environment in which they live. This means that if students receive positive incentives from teachers and parents, or even from themselves, they will be able to improve their behavior, values, perceptions, skills, and attitude towards this challenge (Mosquera & Melendez, O.,

2021) With these statements, it is important to highlight that the desire to acquire a foreign language can be a crucial element for those students who need to overcome difficulties and seek opportunities for success and significance.

Many English teachers lack the necessary training to effectively teach EFL, even nowadays when access to technology is available. The following problems are frequently brought to light:Outdated Pedagogical Methods: Due to a lack of exposure to contemporary, communicative teaching practices, teachers in rural areas frequently employ antiquated rote learning strategies (Mahmadun, N., & Hasan, R., 2020). Inadequate Opportunities for Professional Development: Workshops and training sessions, which are more frequently held in urban areas, are rarely accessible to teachers in rural areas.

This restricts their capacity to keep up with the latest developments in their field and pedagogy (Dutta, & Mukherjee, 2018). Teachers' Lack of Language Proficiency: It can be difficult to deliver high-quality instruction when teachers themselves struggle with their English (Kim et al., 2017). A less engaging and language-skill-development-friendly classroom atmosphere is a result of inadequate teacher preparation.

Early English education seems to be inconsistent across the country, as rural areas face greater challenges in accessing qualified teachers and resources compared to urban schools. This disparity highlights the need for equitable policies to ensure young learners nationwide benefit from early exposure to the language. In Ecuador, the lack of teaching resources significantly affects the quality of English language education. Limited access to textbooks, audiovisual materials, and technological tools impedes the implementation of interactive teaching strategies (Ortiz, M., & Romero, E. 2020). Consequently, many teachers lack professional development opportunities to adapt to modern methodologies. Addressing these issues requires investment in infrastructure, teacher training programs, and equitable distribution of resources over all regions of the republic.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This research aims to demonstrate that the use of technological resources can motivate the students, and make them improve their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language in rural areas where the lack of resources becomes a problem as time passes by. This study involves 47 students from a rural public school in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. The age of the students ranged from 12 to 15 years old, and they belong to eighth, ninth, and tenth grade. Moreover, all of them have a low economic situation, while the remaining part come from families with high economic income resulting from agriculture and livestock, all of them speak Spanish as their first language. The participants have an A1.1 level of English. During this research, all the participants had supervised access to the Internet during the English classes; due to internal regulations at the institution they were not allowed to use their smartphones without the control of an educator.

Internet access was stable at the time of forming study groups to work on class activities with computers, and participants had no problems listening to songs, videos, or working on some educational apps to practice the target language. In addition, the teacher organized open-door activities, integrating the community and parents in events such as exhibitions, presentations, and singing presentations. All the learners had the opportunity to practice their speaking, demonstrating their achievements during these programs. Finally, the exam and survey carried out at the end of the school year in February 2025 showed that most students managed to obtain A2.1 English proficiency, being able to form basic sentences and express short ideas in the language of study.

Instruments

This study was applied through the use of quantitative tools. A pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the research; and, a post-test was conducted to compare the outcomes at the end of the school year. The case lasted for a full school year. The teaching methodology was student-centered, focusing on the use of technology in the classroom. Despite the existence of many challenges and disinterest at the beginning of the study, the students were required to use

online resources at home as homework by giving them the opportunity to create creative assignments that were aligned to practice communicative competences. Castro, S. revealed that integrating technological elements in the classroom motivates students to develop communicative skills. On the other hand, participants may experience anxiety, lack of concentration, and other factors that influence negative attitudes toward learning English in a non-virtual environment. (as cited in Cevallos Vélez, K. G. et al., 2020, vol. 5).

Survey: Participants answered a questionnaire about their main motivations and the factors that influence their attitude to learn English as a foreign language, and other aspects about the use of technological tools with Internet access in their learning process. Pre-survey: This was applied at the beginning of the first quarter to evaluate the participants' level of English proficiency and their language skills. The survey was designed to find out their prior knowledge of the English language. *Post-survey:* During the post-survey, students were evaluated at the end of the school year based on a Likert scale containing the following criteria: very poor, poor, fair, good and excellent.

Design, Procedure, and Data Analysis

During one school year, students in a public school located in a rural area were encouraged to voluntarily participate in the use of technology to improve their attitude and motivate them to learn English in the classroom. First, students had the opportunity to watch videos, presentations, complete online activities, and write assignments. They also posted their projects, recordings, and presentations about their achieved skills after each study module and collaborated with their group members to complete the short film. Finally, they became slightly motivated to learn English after using technology. Each month, it could be seen that students began to be more participative in class time.

At first, their negative attitudes were influenced by their environment, and the lack of academic resources. Having a computer, projector, and television replaced the monotonous use of traditional materials such as books. They showed great interest in watching English cartoons and answering listening activities that increased their comprehension by being visual as well. The participants had to adapt to the new learning method, different from the one proposed in

previous years. To accomplish their communicative achievements, they used all the resources available to them, which increased their motivation and significantly improved their attitude towards learning (Lizasoain et al., 2018).

At the beginning and at the end of this research, the students completed two surveys. One was done after the first quarter. On the other hand, the post-survey was applied at the end of the school year. Both surveys were applied based on a questionnaire that consisted of some closed and open items. The questions were related to language acquisition, the factors that motivate them to learn, the use of technological tools, their attitudes influencing the improvement of their oral and written communication. Students responded to each question using a 5-point Likert scale that was based on Sampieri's (2006) criteria, where 1 represented very poor and 5 represented excellent.

RESULTS

Data Analysis

This research relied on quantitative tools to conduct data analysis. Data were collected and analyzed using SPSS to represent the collected data through statistical information such as variance and standard deviation. For data analysis, the effect size was calculated. The results showed a significant improvement in the language skills of the experimental group.

The baseline and post-test data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure the differences. These values were represented in tables that demonstrated the main items on the positive impact of using technological resources for students' English learning. The students' values, perceptions, and beliefs toward each item significantly improved their English attitudes and skills, primarily in their output skills.

Table 1: Pre-survey and Post-survey

Criteria	Pre-survey Mean	Post-survey Mean
Understands teacher's explanations and follows instructions during classes, especially when using technological tools for their development.	1.21	2.44
Acquires a general comprehension of expressions and vocabulary, both oral and written.	1.13	2.07
Uses words and forms simple sentences to communicate when describing people, activities, plants, places, and things.	1.01	2.13
Captures essential written information as well as solve quizzes and other online activities.	1.07	2.29
By being motivated to leverage EFL learning, creates both digital and physical projects using the acquired vocabulary.	1.56	4.12
Develops critical thinking as well as attitudes toward improving learning.	2.08	4.30
Interacts with classmates in the classroom and identifies main ideas during reading activities	2.14	4.12
Listens effectively, analyzes, and reflects on the most relevant information learned.	1.93	4.46
Pays minute attention to the message shared through videos.	2.21	4.59
Produces language through short conversations, songs and dialogue practice.	2.00	4.43
Performs writing exercises respecting grammatical rules in different verb tenses.	1.03	2.44
Raises awareness about values, beliefs and perspectives aimed at truthfulness.	1.21	2.51

Source: Ramirez, W.; Riera, F. 2025

Table 1 illustrates the pre- and post-surveys, where participants were able to express their perceptions about each criterion. Students were required to record a short film as a final project, producing language through short conversations, songs, and dialogue practice by employing skills acquired during the school year (mean = 4.43). Students were encouraged to promote motivated teamwork by interacting with their peers in the classroom, and identify main ideas during reading activities (mean = 4.12).

The reading results demonstrate that students are able to capture essential written information, in addition to completing quizzes and other online activities through technological tools (mean = 2.29). Written production was considerably lower than listening production in both the pre- and post-surveys. It was concluded that participants significantly improved their communicative listening skills by analyzing and reflecting on the most relevant information learned (mean = 4.46).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research focused on the positive impact of using technology in the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. The study took into account the participants' prior knowledge. Initially, the students were unable to structure sentences and phrases because they lacked vocabulary and were unmotivated to learn English. However, during the school year, the new methodology of using internet-accessible resources began to yield positive results by improving students' communication skills, allowing them to interact better with each other and with the teacher. The participants learned to grasp essential information from reading activities, especially developing their listening and speaking skills.

This progress was evident when reviewing assignments and the short film project in the target language; the students were divided into three groups and asked to create a video production in English with subtitles if necessary and a reflective theme of their choice. The first group would perform a choir singing their assigned role, the second group would act as main and supporting characters, and finally the last group would record, edit, and upload the short film to social media. The instruments were analyzed and validated by two experts in the field, and

allowed educators to see the students' improvement after integrating the use of technology into their English classes.

The students shared that they enjoyed the interactive online assignments more than the traditional assignments. Although language acquisition was slow, they enjoyed practicing English through short dialogues and conversations. The interactions demonstrated were meaningful. Furthermore, the students were involved in organizing an open house and announcing their invitation through social media. This student event included community members, other teachers, and parents, where they displayed models of houses and parts of the human body with their functions in English. The best projects were selected in advance, which were graded for research purposes. Ultimately, the participants improved their vocabulary, as well as their reflective capacity, by accepting EFL learning as a crucial part of their academic life, compared to the negative attitudes they had at the beginning of the school year.

LIMITATIONS

Before working with this type of study, future researchers should consider the challenges involved in the process. In the classroom, there may be distractions, especially if students use the internet to browse social media or other sites, which would affect the research objectives. Participants, being adolescents, tend to prioritize other interests over EFL learning. A lack of motivation toward acquiring the language undermines the primary purpose of using technology to learn English in all four skills.

Therefore, the teacher required extra assistance from the teaching staff to monitor the students' activities. Occasionally, power outages prevented internet access and required changing the lesson plan, adapting other plans for group activities during the lesson. Furthermore, economic factors limited the purchase of sufficient electronic devices for the classes because the district and the Ministry of Education do not provide televisions, and computers are scarce. Furthermore, in many cases, students did not complete their homework, citing the lack of internet access. Parents were not sufficiently supportive of motivating their children to fulfill their academic responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion to the study, the researchers suggest that educators interested in applying this research to their students consider that working with technology may be difficult to access, especially in rural areas, as the participants come from remote locations and require more assistance from the teacher. Research of this magnitude takes time and hard work. Furthermore, motivating students is essential as part of the teaching process, which is why educational and interactive materials with methodologies adapted to the needs of their environment are needed. Tutors must maintain an active focus on their students to learn English effectively.

Moreover, educators must manage the technology and its various devices, as well as have a backup plan in case of a power outage to direct different assignments during class. Additionally, there should always be a backup plan in case of connection problems or student absences. However, teachers are responsible for seeking parental permission for any activity and their consent regarding the final results of the research. Finally, using audiovisual tools will increase students' interest and motivation to learn English.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data presented above, it can be concluded that the implementation of educational technologies has a positive impact on English as a foreign language (EFL) learning in rural schools. Teachers were able to improve their teaching skills, especially by motivating students to study the target language through regular in-person meetings and online activities, which changed the participants' attitudes through dynamic interaction. Furthermore, despite the challenges encountered at school, such as lack of internet access and power outages, technological tools were used during most lessons.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the school year, students had low English proficiency, for that reason the most basic topics were repeated in several classes, integrating projects that they found difficult to complete. However, during the last quarter, significant improvement in students' communication skills was evident. The results provide a broader perspective on how English as a foreign language learning is managed in rural schools. It is hoped that this research

will inspire future studies to address some of the limitations present throughout the school year in this sample. It is possible for students in both urban and remote areas to have access to quality education, motivating them to learn English through modern methods that replace traditional ones.

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