

## **Exploring the challenges and motivational factors in english language learning: insights from rural Zumba, Ecuador**

*Explorando los retos y factores motivacionales en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés: perspectivas desde Zumba Rural, Ecuador*

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### **Abstract**

Zumba is a border region in Ecuador, considered a remote area and classified as urban- rural, with a predominantly rural population. This study aims to explore the challenges faced by high school rural students in learning a second language (English) in Zumba and to identify the motivational factors influencing the learning process, taking into account this region's socio-cultural and demographic characteristics. Teaching English in rural areas has unique characteristics, as it requires consideration of a range of specific factors involving students, which can be critical to their learning process. It was a qualitative study in which, from a constructivist perspective, interviews will be conducted with students from rural areas, their parents, and teachers to understand their perspectives on education in Zumba.

Keywords: Rural student; Teaching in rural zone; Challenges in learning English; Rural schools; Motivation in learning in rural area.

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## Resumen

Zumba es una zona fronteriza del Ecuador, considerada una zona de difícil acceso y denominada como urbano-rural, predominando la población rural. Este estudio tiene la finalidad de conocer las dificultades que los estudiantes de colegio del sector rural de Zumba enfrentan en el proceso de aprendizaje de un segundo idioma (inglés) e identificar los factores motivacionales que influyen en el proceso de aprendizaje, teniendo en cuenta las características socio-cultural y demográficas de este lugar. La enseñanza de inglés en zonas rurales tiene características especiales, ya que se deben considerar una serie de factores especiales que pueden ser determinantes en el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Fue un estudio de método cualitativo en el cual desde el constructivismo se aplicarán entrevistas a estudiantes de las zonas rurales a sus padres y profesores con el fin de conocer sus perspectivas sobre la educación en Zumba.

Palabras Clave: Estudiantes rurales; Enseñanza en zonas rurales; Retos en el aprendizaje de inglés; Escuelas rurales; Motivación en el aprendizaje en áreas rurales.

## Introduction

Interest in learning and teaching English has increased over the past years; Shikalepo (2020), said that the quality of education has become the primary goal that many countries worldwide have focused on. Newman et al. (2023), expressed that the Ecuadorian English curriculum is a key subject to teach that would help the future development of the socioeconomic sustainability of the country. Ecuadorian leaders have a high assumption that without proficiency in the English language, the country would not be prepared for economic, political, and social development (Newman et al., 2023). Shikalepo (2020), mentioned that learning quality can be affected by the lack of interest from parents or legal guardians, which can compromise the outcomes of these students. Also, Dunstan et al. (2021), have pointed out that when learning a foreign language in rural areas, it is necessary to clarify that these students have unique characteristics due to the external environment in which they develop. Dunstan et al. (2021), stated that there is a broad framework for classifying rurality, and studies on rural education are based on these descriptions. As a result, certain specific aspects inherent to education in these areas are not considered (Dunstan et al., 2021). Hamidah Abdul et al. (2017), considered motivation a key factor in learning a new language. An initiative, a student with extra enthusiasm, can enhance the learning process and, as a result, lead to more effective teaching (Hamidah Abdul et al., 2017). Despite the existence of numerous studies by researchers covering topics related to learning a new language, insufficient literature has been found focusing on the learning deficiencies faced by students from rural areas. Misguided definitions of what is considered rural education hinder effective analysis and understanding of the challenges faced by students in these areas; these implications may include flawed policies and decisions that fail to adequately assist or fund the needs of people living in rural areas (Dunstan et al., 2021). This study aimed to identify the difficulties in learning English among high school students from rural areas, as well as analysis of the motivation for learning a foreign language among these students who have characteristics different from those in urban areas. This research took place in Zumba, a border area of Ecuador; and used a qualitative method, applying semi-structured interviews with high school students, parents, and teachers. To achieve this, the study is guided by the following questions: What are the primary challenges faced by high school

students in Zumba in acquiring a foreign language? What factors influence students' motivation to learn English in Zumba? By addressing these questions, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of language learning in rural Ecuador and inform more effective teaching practices.

Three theories of second language acquisition were selected to conduct this research. Considering the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the region, these theories align with the research objectives. The input hypothesis is a theory developed by Krashen; it explains that if the student is exposed to an understandable input up from his current level, the student can acquire the second language, represented by  $(i+1)$  (Luo, 2024). Krashen (1989), considered that in acquiring a second language, the student needs to learn listening and vocabulary first; then, productive skills (writing and speaking) should be developed. He explained that several tests have demonstrated more comprehensible input - more language acquisition of a second language. The acquisition of a second language is measurable by various tests; these tests have shown better results when the students absorb more comprehensible input in the second language outside of school. In rural environments, the student is not always exposed to a second language, the environment where the student grows up. A prevalent problem in learning in rural settings is the lack of certified teachers (Shikalepo, 2020). Pathan et al. (2018), pointed out that the theory of Sociocultural Development developed by Vygotsky emphasizes the role played by social, cultural, and historical factors in the student's development. This theory states that students will improve their second language knowledge with the support of advanced classmates, parents, or teachers who can assist them. He develops the idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to how skilled peers can assist their classmates and how collaborative learning improves the ability of those other less qualified students.

Also, Dörnyei (2009), expressed that learning a second language should not be seen as another subject in school; several motivational researchers have adopted paradigms that link motivation factors with individual paradigms from the students and the opportunity to learn a second language. The L2 Motivational Self-System is a new reform from the other theories about motivation, conserving their nature.

## Rural Education

Pin-Zambrano (2024), pointed out that rural education consists of the educational process based on the needs of communities located in rural areas, which face unique challenges such as geographical location, cultural diversity, and economic development. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt curricula and educational programs to effectively meet the needs of students (Pin-Zambrano, 2024). The organization of rural education is a challenge for the entire educational system, even more so for those who live in rural zones; as Olalla Chávez and Mosquera (2024), mentioned, the academic context in Ecuador shows concerning symptoms in learning English, and it could

affect both students and teachers. Roby-Ortega and Esteves-Fajardo (2024), pointed out that the difficulties faced in rural areas are different from those of urban areas; some of these challenges are characterized by a lack of access and resources. One of the most common issues affecting rural education and the quality of education in these areas is the availability and qualifications of teachers (Moreno Quinto et al., 2024).

### **Teaching in Rural Areas**

Knowing and identifying teacher capabilities in the field of rural English teaching in Ecuador can provide a guiding tool to support language use practices (De Angelis, 2024). However, Atme Mamani (2024), highlighted that teachers in rural areas also faced significant challenges in improving their skills and updating their methodologies. The same author explained that their work is typically located in hard-to-access regions and frequently lacks the technological tools needed to access essential services. Additionally, the absence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the communities where they operate further hinders their ability to develop professionally (Atme Mamani, 2024). Padilla Eras (2024), described through their study that some teachers have abandoned their current employment in rural areas due to the rural working conditions. In the rural context of Ecuador, multigrade teachers are described, which poses a challenge for educators as they must be prepared to teach all subjects while adapting to a new sociocultural system; they need to be trained in all subjects, presenting an even more significant challenge for teaching a new language, as many of these teachers were not trained or prepared to teach a second language (Tillaguango-Pintado & Argudo-Serrano, 2024).

### **Teacher – Students – Parents in Rural Education**

Feliciano Semidei et al. (2024), highlight the importance of connecting students and teachers in rural areas, emphasizing that teachers should be interested in learning from the communities and getting to know their students. Dunstan et al. (2021), expressed that educational practices that promote equity, inclusion, and diversity are characterized by understanding the factors that affect students' teaching and learning. These authors explained that inadequate guidance for students resulting from the poor quality of education harms their future development. Additionally, in rural areas, many parents often lack the time or linguistic skills necessary to assist in this regard, highlighting that students in rural settings possess unique characteristics that affect their assessment and success in learning achievement (Dunstan et al., 2021).

However, in Ecuador, since 2021, efforts have been made to implement equity in the use of information technology in education, but challenges persist that require continuous attention (Calle-Cordova et al., 2024). Almache Granda et al. (2024), explained that the technology gap can be challenging due to the lack of exposure to digital tools and online resources. Educators can seek practical solutions, such as using printed materials, organizing cultural exchanges, and leveraging local opportunities to contextualize language learning.

## Students' Motivation in Rural Areas

Studies have highlighted how sociocultural aspects and socioeconomic conditions in rural environments influence student performance (Moreno Quinto et al., 2024). Morales Morales and Obaco Soto (2024), confirmed that these adverse conditions faced by students in rural areas directly impact their motivation and academic performance, contributing to low academic achievement and demotivation. Coinciding with Franchisca et al. (2024), highlighting the role developed by external factors, learning environment, teachers, and parents affect the motivation in the learning process, it is important to take into account the need in the learning process of the students' motivational factor in the correct achievement of the content. Motivated students have a better attitude toward learning a new language, which helps develop English skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading), allowing these students to achieve better results and proficiency in the language (Soto et al., 2019). In addition to the student's learning ability, motivation is one of the factors that helps drive learning outcomes. One of the most relevant aspects of motivation is achieving a specific preexisting behavior in students, and this behavior is related to their future (Triviño Lino & Zambrano de la Torre, 2024).

## Methodology

### Study Design

This study followed a qualitative approach, aiming to explore the challenges and motivational factors influencing English learning among students in rural Zumba (Cabrera- Tenecela, 2023). A thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and categorize the data into meaningful themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

### Participants

For the students' interview, participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: 1) High school students; 2) students aged 15-18 years; 3) students who wish to participate freely and voluntarily in the research; 4) students whose parents or guardians have signed the informed consent form.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria were: 1) Students living in the Zumba-Urban area;

2) students who decide to withdraw from the research, parents, legal guardians, and teachers who decide not to join after completing the interview were considered.

## Instruments

For this research, two semi-structured question guides were created for the interviews—one for students and the other for parents and teachers, with a total of 17 items. The question guide was piloted with five high school students, two teachers at the same level of education, three EFL teachers pursuing a master's degree in teaching English as a second language, and the supervising professor of this article. Among the feedback received, it was suggested to reword two questions for better understanding by the students. After these changes, the question guide was piloted again, in order to have an understandable questionnaire for the participants. Additionally, the interviews were conducted with two legal guardians of the students, who could also understand and respond to the interview fluently.

## Procedure

**Phase 1:** the informed consent form was sent to several students' parents (See Appendix 1), explaining that this is a research study on English teaching in Zumba. This permission could be revoked at any time, and the participants' data will remain confidential, with only the research results being published. Five English teachers and eight parents were invited to participate in these interviews. However, only two English teachers and four parents or legal guardians agreed to participate. In the case of the students, only six submitted their parents' informed consent forms on time and participated in the interviews. The sampling was conducted using the snowball technique, in which the participants suggested other participants who met the requirements for the research.

**Phase 2:** the interviews were conducted (see Appendix 2) after the students' academic schedules and on weekends. The schedules were arranged according to the participants' availability to conduct the interviews. For all the participants, the interviews were in-person at times convenient for the participants. The interviews took place individually and in appropriate locations, ensuring a suitable environment for their development, and they were conducted in Spanish, the participants' mother tongue (Filep, 2009). These interviews lasted up to 16 minutes per participant.

**Phase 3:** the software Taguette was used to facilitate the coding process, guaranteeing a methodical and rigorous examination of the qualitative data (Rampin et al., 2021). In total, 20 unique tags were applied across the dataset, allowing for a structured interpretation of participants' perspectives.

## Results

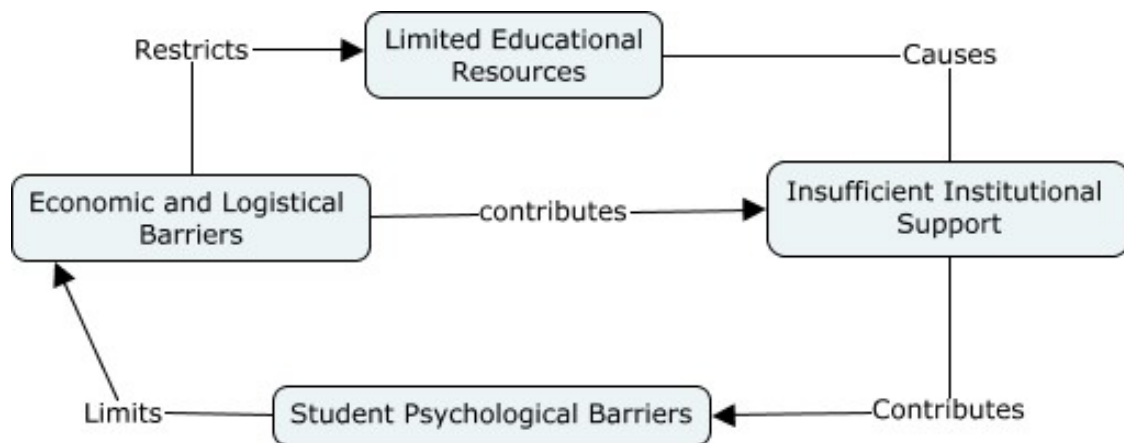
The results from the interviews conducted with 12 participants show the challenges and motivational factors influencing high school students' English learning experiences in Zumba. To achieve this objective, the data was categorized into two main themes, each aligned with a specific

research objective. The first category, primary challenges in learning English, aimed to identify the systemic barriers that hinder students' ability to develop English proficiency. The second category, factors influencing students' motivation, sought to understand the elements that either encourage or discourage students from engaging in English learning. This section examines the perceived importance of English for future opportunities, the relevance in rural contexts, the role of teachers, digital tools, extracurricular activities, and parental support. Together, these two categories provide a perspective on the difficulties students face and the factors that shape their learning attitudes, offering insights for future educational improvements.

### Primary Challenges in Learning English for High School Students in Zumba

In Figure 1, the interconnected challenges faced by students in Zumba when learning English are illustrated. Economic and logistical barriers restrict access to educational resources, leading to a lack of qualified teachers, limited instructional materials, and insufficient opportunities for English exposure.

Figure 1. Interconnected Barriers to English Learning in Rural Zumba



Source: own elaboration.

**Limited Access to Qualified English Teachers.** According to the participants' responses, one of the most pressing issues affecting English learning in Zumba is the lack of specialized teachers in rural schools. Many students entered high school with a weak foundation in English because, during their early years, their teachers were multisubject instructors rather than English specialists.

A graduate student explained: "When I arrived at high school, it was complicated because we did not have English teachers; previously, they were multilevel teachers who did not have adequate training in the subject of English" (Student 1, 18 years old, translated from Spanish). Similarly, Teacher 2 (translated from Spanish) acknowledged: "It can be difficult for rural communities to recruit and retain qualified English teachers, which puts students at risk of receiving instruction from less experienced or qualified teachers".



**Insufficient Exposure to English and Limited Resources.** Based on the participants' responses, another major challenge is the minimal opportunities for students to engage in English learning beyond the classroom

One student pointed out: "No, the truth is, just with what we learn in class, we do not know how to practice at home" (Student 2, translated from Spanish). Teacher 2 reinforced this idea: "Students find it very difficult to interact with the language outside of the classroom because there are fewer teaching resources available, such as books, audio-visual aids, or even internet access" (Teacher 2, translated from Spanish).

**Transportation and Economic Barriers.** Based on the participants' experiences, economic hardship significantly impacts students' ability to attend school consistently and focus on their studies. In rural areas, students often travel long distances to school, sometimes walking for up to 40 minutes due to financial constraints.

A parent explained:

Sometimes my son walks 40 minutes back from the city to save money because I sometimes do not have enough to give him even for the bus, and sometimes he collaborates by walking back, arriving either wet or in the hot sun, and he even gets sick. (Parent 2, translated from Spanish)

**Reduced Hours of English Instruction.** The participants expressed that another barrier is the limited number of hours dedicated to English within the school curriculum. Students and teachers agree that the time allocated to English lessons is insufficient for students to develop speaking and comprehension skills.

A teacher highlighted: "The actual curricula have reduced the daily English hours. There are only three hours of reduced time for practicing special speaking skills in English" (Teacher 2, translated from Spanish). A student echoed this sentiment: "In schools, there are English teachers, and there are very few hours of English per week; we only have three. It would be good to take an additional course" (Student 4, translated from Spanish).

**Low Confidence and Fear of Participation.** Many students reported feeling intimidated in English class, particularly when asked to speak or interact.

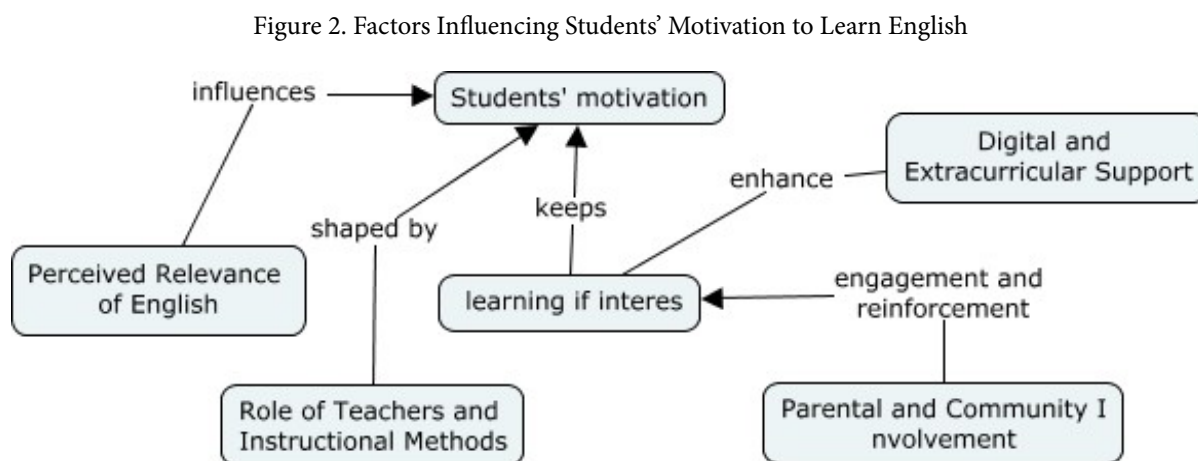
One student confessed: "I felt afraid that my classmates would laugh at me" (Student 4, translated from Spanish). Another added: "The teacher asked to pose questions in English, and since I did not feel prepared in English, I did not ask questions and to do the homework, I helped myself with a translator at home" (Student 2, translated from Spanish).

Even teachers acknowledged that students from rural areas struggle with acclimatization when they enter high school, often feeling overwhelmed by the sudden increase in English usage: "Many of these students come to the institution from rural areas with low language skills, and they struggle to adapt to a new environment" (Teacher 1, translated from Spanish).



## Factors Influencing Students' Motivation to Learn English in Zumba

Figure 2 illustrates the key elements that shape students' motivation to learn English in rural Zumba. The perceived relevance of English directly influences students' motivation, determining their level of engagement with the language.



Source: own elaboration.

**Perceived Importance of English for Future Opportunities.** Taking into account the participants' perspectives, one of the strongest motivating factors for students in Zumba is their belief that English can provide better job and study opportunities. Many students recognize that English is an internationally spoken language and view it as a gateway to higher education, international travel, or employment abroad.

For instance, Student 4 stated: "I want to get a profession and learn English so I can go to the United States" (Student 4, translated from Spanish). Another student reinforced this idea: "English is almost always used for everything, and it is easier to find a job" (Student 5, translated from Spanish).

Teachers also emphasize this point to encourage engagement. Teacher 1 explained that English is the universal language, the language of technology, education, and business. "In the globalized world we live in, learning English is essential for personal and professional advancement" (Teacher 1, translated from Spanish).

**Lack of Perceived Relevance in Rural Contexts.** According to the participants' perceptions, some students see English as important for their future, while others struggle to relate it to their immediate reality.

Teacher 1 expressed that in the rural sector, sometimes, English is considered not very useful because it is not associated with the daily activities that take place, such as agricultural work or household chores. Similarly, students who do not have short-term goals involving English (such

as traveling or studying abroad) tend to prioritize other subjects over English, viewing it as an unnecessary challenge rather than a skill worth mastering.

**Influence of Teachers on Student Engagement.** The participants acknowledge that teachers have a significant influence on shaping students' motivation.

Unfortunately, several students reported that some teachers lack patience or do not engagingly explain concepts. One student described their experience: "The teacher is not that good and doesn't explain well" (Student 6, translated from Spanish). Student 1 added: "Sometimes teachers do not motivate me much for learning. When I started high school, I felt bad when I did not understand and the teachers did not have the patience to clarify my doubts" (Student 1, translated from Spanish).

Teacher 2 emphasized the importance of engagement: "The secret to successful language learning is to create a lively, interactive atmosphere that motivates students to practice and try out the language in authentic situations" (translated from Spanish).

**Low Student Confidence and Fear of Making Mistakes.** Some students expressed fear of speaking English in class, particularly those coming from rural schools where they had little prior exposure to the language. They often feel embarrassed when compared to urban students, leading to a reluctance to participate.

One student admitted: "I felt afraid that my classmates would laugh at me" (Student 4, translated from Spanish). Another student shared a similar sentiment: "The teacher asked to pose questions in English, and since I did not feel prepared in English, I did not ask questions" (Student 2, translated from Spanish).

Teachers also acknowledged this issue, stating that students struggle to adapt when they enter high school and require additional support to build confidence. "Many of these students come to the institution from rural areas with low language skills and struggle to adapt to a new environment" (Teacher1, translated from Spanish).

**The Role of Digital Tools and Extracurricular Activities.** Based on the participants' experiences, technology has the potential to increase motivation by making English learning more accessible and engaging. Several students mentioned using YouTube, Duolingo, or other apps to practice English outside the class.

One student shared, "I use Duolingo to learn words" (Student 3, translated from Spanish). Another mentioned, "Sometimes, I watch videos or review what was explained" (Student 4, translated from Spanish).

However, not all students take advantage of these tools. Some lack consistency and do not feel motivated to practice independently. A student admitted: "No, I don't give it the necessary importance" (Student 6, translated from Spanish).

Teachers also noted that digital resources are underutilized despite being available: “Almost 100% of households have the internet, but it depends on the student’s interests and the parents’ supervision” (Teacher 1, translated from Spanish).

In addition to digital tools, extracurricular activities like English clubs or conversation groups could enhance motivation. However, as Teacher 2 (translated from Spanish) pointed out, these opportunities are limited in rural areas: “Public schools participate in extracurricular language activities, such as English clubs or conversation sessions. Nevertheless, it is not enough to expose students to the English language” (Teacher 2, translated from Spanish).

**Parental Support and Community Involvement.** According to the participants’ responses, parents play a fundamental role in sustaining students’ motivation, yet many struggle to provide academic support due to their own limited English proficiency.

Teacher 1: “Parents find it difficult to assist their children because they are not familiar with the language, but I recommend that at least they supervise the students’ engagement in these extracurricular practices” (Teacher 1, translated from Spanish).

Another teacher suggested that community initiatives could help reinforce the importance of English learning: “Engage the community and parents by organizing events that emphasize the importance of learning English. Parents can be encouraged to support their children’s learning at home, even if they aren’t fluent in English themselves” (Teacher 2, translated from Spanish).

The result of the survey showed that the primary challenges in learning English in Zumba stem from systemic issues, qualified teachers, exposure to English, economic constraints, insufficient instructional time, and student confidence. However, the factors influencing students’ motivation to learn English in Zumba are complex and interconnected. While many students recognized the importance of English for their future during the interview, motivation barriers, perceived relevance, teaching methods, low confidence, and limited resources were the most common responses.

## Discussion

This research indicates that students face several difficulties in learning a new language. Among them is the challenging access to specialized English teachers at the primary education level in rural schools. In answer to the first research question, which aimed to identify the primary challenges faced by rural high school students in Zumba in acquiring a foreign language, it was found that students face several difficulties in learning a new language, among them is the challenging access to specialized English teachers at the primary education level in rural schools. Rural schools have multilevel teachers, and students do not receive adequate training in English, as was expressed by parent and student during the interview, which aligns with findings in previous research that documented how the lack of adequately trained teachers can contribute to low

performance in EFL classroom (Moreno Quinto et al., 2024). This deficiency may be related to the research context, as it was conducted in a rural area where primary schools do not provide adequate preparation for students regarding English language instruction due to the size of the class and the remote location. That rural students did not have an English teacher specialized. Multilevel teachers in rural areas are responsible for the education of children of various ages or educational levels, which represents a challenge because many of these teachers are not well qualified, coinciding with the study made by Atme Mamani (2024), who highlighted the necessity of increasing the training for them. This leads to students arriving at high school fearful of participating in classes, as they feel disadvantaged compared to their peers from urban areas who have not faced these learning deficiencies in primary education. Students from rural areas who have to mix with other children who are not at the same class level can feel distrust and fear in English classes. Teachers need to recognize these difficulties and address them by getting to know the students and assisting them according to their learning needs while providing support for those who feel insecure in class. Coinciding with Tillaguango-Pintado and Argudo-Serrano (2024), who mentioned that teachers should ignore one-size-fits-all, this challenge has also been highlighted by Dunstan et al. (2021), who found that teachers should promote empathy and equality to achieve better results. Matching with these studies, establishing a methodology that reflects empathy and promotes the participation of these rural students would be a good plan to follow to eradicate the existing deficiencies, as it would help them feel more comfortable in their learning and achieve better grades.

The participants of the interview mentioned that the teachers sometimes encourage them to practice with apps or digital mediums, and many students do not feel motivated to practice the language outside of class hours, sharing the same point of view of Hamidah Abdul et al. (2017), teachers have an important impact in supporting the students' learning process it is why the importance of the students feel motivated by their teachers. Despite concerns about the restriction of internet access among the rural population, in this research the interviewed students had internet access and technological tools in their homes, which contrasts with previous research conducted by Almache Granda et al. (2024) and Roby-Ortega & Esteves-Fajardo (2024), they highlighted the lack of internet access as one of the difficulties in rural education. This may be due to the small sample of students who were able to be interviewed because of time constraints, as not all the students selected for the study provided informed consent from their parents to participate in the interview. Nevertheless, it was suggested that the internet quality could be improved at high schools with some English laboratories to help the students be more immersed in English environments. This coincides with the result found by Hamidah Abdul et al. (2017), where the teacher could not use an ICT method in class due to the technological restrictions in the schools. Economic barriers, such as lack of affordable transportation, were also determined to be a challenge, as walking long distances contributes to exhaustion. This has also been found by Moreno Quinto et al. (2024) and Soto (2024). In addition, adding more hours of instruction was also suggested to improve learning.

Regarding the second research question, which aimed to identify the factors that influence students' motivation to learn English in Zumba, it became evident that some students recognize the importance of English for their future, such as traveling or obtaining job opportunities. This aligns with the findings of the research conducted by Triviño Lino and Zambrano de la Torre

(2024), which highlighted the significance of motivational factors in achieving students' future goals since a motivated student will achieve better academic results, and this can help them obtain better opportunities, whether in the workforce or as a student. Nonetheless, the lack of motivation among high school students to learn English was evident, as highlighted by the behavior of some students who recognize the necessity of learning English but do not attempt to improve their skills or practice what has been taught in class. Because many come from rural areas, English is often not considered vital for their agricultural activities. This lack of support was also reflected in the comments of parents who admitted that they find it difficult to assist their children with English homework, as they do not possess sufficient knowledge of the subject to support them, even though these parents encourage their children to study a foreign language, it was similarly founded in the study conducted by (Hamidah Abdul et al., 2017), in which the parents support the idea of the importance in learn a new language. Children will always see their parents as role models, or they like to feel praised and motivated by them; if students live in an environment where their parents do not encourage or instill the learning of the language, maybe they will not feel motivated to learn. In this sense, even though parents may not feel well-prepared in English, they should encourage their children's desire and enthusiasm for learning English. Franchisca et al. (2024), share a similar view, underscoring the importance of external factors in students' motivation toward learning. Coinciding with this research, Roby-Ortega (2024), suggested that it is necessary to develop a plan for the training of parents and students to help improve their skills using teaching materials and interactive approaches. The rural environment may have caused this deficiency, as the interviewed parents had low academic preparation, and it especially made it very difficult for them to assist their children with their homework. It would be a good action to consider with rural students in Zumba, as it would help parents feel prepared to support their children, even teaching them that unless the students read in front of them or practice in front of them, it is a way to stimulate the students and at the same time provide support in their preparation.

As a limitation of this study, it can be stated that many rural students in this area could not be reached due to time constraints, as well as teachers and parents who refused to participate. Therefore, a more thorough analysis of the deficiencies in English learning in this area is recommended for future studies.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it can be said that high school students from rural areas in Zumba face various challenges that can affect their English learning process. These challenges include the lack of qualified personnel at the primary education level, which leads to students developing a fear of participating in classes and asking questions upon reaching high school. The limited exposure of these students to environments where they can develop their English skills is another deficiency, in addition to the economic factors faced by both students and their families, which can sometimes become an inconvenience regarding transportation to schools in the cities. It is important to mention that even the teacher encourages their students to learn a foreign language, the lack

of motivation was evident in the responses of the participants. Furthermore, the environment in which these students grow can be a factor in their lack of motivation, as even though some students understand the importance of learning a new language for their future, they do not give it the necessary importance and interest. Although it was evident that the majority of the students interviewed in this research had internet access in their homes and the technological tools for practice in extracurricular hours, even though they didn't use those resources to improve their English skills. Future research should conduct a deeper analysis of the difficulties in English learning among rural Zumba students, with a focus on the methodologies developed by teachers in the classroom.

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