NEOSAPIENCIA
REVISTA EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
RIICHS
RED INTERDISCIPLINARIA DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y SOCIALES

English in Ecuadorian Basic Education: Gaps Between Public Policy and Institutional Reality at the “11 de Noviembre” School

Inglés en la educación básica ecuatoriana: brechas entre política pública y realidad institucional en la Escuela “11 de Noviembre”

-Fecha de recepción: 30-09-2026 -Fecha de aceptación: 19-10-2026 -Fecha de publicación: 25-11-2026

Rosa Matilde Paca Paltan[1]
Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, Riobamba, Ecuador
rosa.pacap@educacion.gob.ec
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5421-7286

Elsa Amalia Basantes Arias[2]
Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Riobamba, Ecuador
elbasantes@espoch.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5433-5629

Abstract

The learning of English in Ecuadorian Basic General Education takes place in a setting where national curricular guidelines coexist with heterogeneous institutional conditions. The study aimed to analyze how the gaps between educational policy and institutional practice manifest at the "11 de Noviembre" Basic General Education School in Riobamba, considering pedagogical, affective, and contextual dimensions. An institutional case study was conducted with a qualitative approach, a descriptive-interpretive scope, and a cross-sectional design. Twenty upper basic education students and four English teachers participated, selected purposively. Data were collected through semi-structured teacher interviews, open-ended student questionnaires, and non-participant classroom observation; subsequently, the data were organized through inductive thematic analysis and triangulation of techniques. The findings showed a predominance of written activities over more limited opportunities for oral interaction, together with recurrent reports of fear of making mistakes and insecurity regarding pronunciation. Likewise, student responses reflected limited extracurricular exposure to English and a motivational orientation mainly linked to its future usefulness. These results are interpreted as descriptive patterns of the case and not as causal relationships or generalizable evidence. Overall, the study suggests that the distance between curricular formulation and its everyday enactment should be addressed by articulating teacher

professional development, sustained opportunities for communicative practice, safe socio-emotional conditions, and greater possibilities for contact with the language outside the classroom.

Keywords: English learning, basic education, Ecuadorian educational policy, communicative anxiety, teacher professional development.

Resumen

El aprendizaje del inglés en la Educación General Básica ecuatoriana se desarrolla en un escenario en el que las orientaciones curriculares nacionales conviven con condiciones institucionales heterogéneas. El estudio se propuso analizar cómo se manifiestan, en la Escuela de Educación General Básica "11 de Noviembre" de Riobamba, las brechas entre la política educativa y la práctica institucional, atendiendo a dimensiones pedagógicas, afectivas y contextuales. Se llevó a cabo un estudio de caso institucional de enfoque cualitativo, alcance descriptivo-interpretativo y corte transversal. Participaron veinte estudiantes de básica superior y cuatro docentes de inglés, seleccionados de manera intencional. La información se obtuvo mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a docentes, cuestionarios abiertos a estudiantes y observación no participante de aula; posteriormente se organizó mediante análisis temático inductivo y triangulación de técnicas. Los hallazgos mostraron un predominio de actividades escritas frente a oportunidades más limitadas de interacción oral, junto con reportes recurrentes de temor al error e inseguridad respecto de la pronunciación. Asimismo, las respuestas estudiantiles reflejaron una exposición extracurricular reducida al inglés y una orientación motivacional principalmente vinculada con su utilidad futura. Estos resultados se interpretan como patrones descriptivos del caso y no como relaciones causales ni como evidencia generalizable. En conjunto, el estudio sugiere que la distancia entre la formulación curricular y su concreción cotidiana debe abordarse articulando desarrollo profesional docente, oportunidades sostenidas de práctica comunicativa, condiciones socioemocionales seguras y mayores posibilidades de contacto con el idioma fuera del aula.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje del inglés, educación básica, política educativa ecuatoriana, ansiedad comunicativa, formación docente.

Introduction

Strengthening competency-based learning has become a central direction of Ecuadorian curricular policy. The Marco Curricular Competencial de Aprendizajes, issued through Ministerial Agreement MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2023-00086-A, defines competencies and exit profiles for the National Education System, while the 2024 Estrategia Nacional para el Fortalecimiento y la Renovación Curricular establishes a progressive transition toward a competency-based national curriculum (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2023, 2024). For English education, this policy environment places particular importance on examining whether institutional conditions actually provide students with sustained opportunities to use the language meaningfully.

Recent Ecuadorian evidence shows that curricular innovation does not, by itself, ensure equivalent classroom enactment. Alvarez et al. (2025) identified discrepancies between teachers' positive views of curriculum reform and the practices that can be implemented under constraints such as limited resources, technology integration, and contextual demands. Similarly, Cajas and Cherres (2024) documented tensions between professional knowledge, institutional routines, and the practical adoption of teaching innovations. In this sense, the policy–practice gap is better understood as an implementation problem shaped by interacting professional and institutional conditions rather than as a simple failure of curricular compliance.

Two additional dimensions are especially relevant to communicative language learning. First, teacher professional development can broaden the pedagogical repertoire available for EFL instruction and support more reflective classroom decision-making (Ochoa Delgado et al., 2024; Zeng, 2023). Second, learners' emotional experiences and opportunities to encounter English beyond formal lessons are closely connected with participation and engagement. Contemporary research has highlighted the relevance of foreign-language anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2023; Yu, 2024) and the ecological role of informal digital exposure to English (Guo & Lee, 2023). These dimensions call for contextual analysis rather than cultural generalization. Against this backdrop, the present study examines a specific institutional case in Riobamba, Chimborazo. Its contribution lies in bringing together, within a single qualitative analytical frame, four dimensions that are often examined separately: curricular enactment, teacher-related conditions, students' affective experiences, and out-of-class exposure to English. The study therefore seeks to offer context-

sensitive evidence about how national policy is translated into everyday pedagogical practice, and where implementation tensions become visible at school level.

1.1. Relationship between the topic and the problem

The topic of this study, "English in Ecuadorian basic education: gaps between public policy and institutional reality at the 11 de Noviembre School," connects directly to the research problem, since it examines the distance between what national public policy mandates for English language teaching and the conditions under which that mandate is actually implemented in a specific educational institution. This relationship is evidenced in teacher training, methodological strategies, effective instructional hours, student communicative anxiety, and limited exposure to the language outside the classroom.

The problem is not presented in a general or abstract manner; it is delimited to the "11 de Noviembre" Basic General Education School, located in Riobamba, Chimborazo province, involving upper basic education students (básica superior) and English department teachers during the study's execution period. This delimitation allows for the analysis of a specific institutional context and links the topic to a concrete educational need: understanding why curricular guidelines oriented toward the communicative approach do not always translate into classroom practices sufficient to develop communicative competence in English.

1.2. Problem formulation

General problem: How are gaps between Ecuadorian public policy for English teaching and the institutional reality of the "11 de Noviembre" Basic General Education School associated with the opportunities available to upper-basic students for developing communicative competence, considering pedagogical, affective, and contextual dimensions?

Specific problems:

1. How is the national English curriculum applied in the institution's daily pedagogical practice?

2. What relationship exists between teacher training, methodological strategies, and opportunities for oral interaction in the classroom?

3. How are communicative anxiety, academic self-esteem, and motivation reflected in students' oral participation?

4. What contextual and extracurricular conditions are associated with students' exposure to English outside the classroom?

1.3. Research objectives

General objective: To analyze the gaps between Ecuadorian public policy for English teaching and the institutional reality of the "11 de Noviembre" Basic General Education School by identifying pedagogical, affective, and contextual conditions associated with English learning among upper-basic students.

Specific objectives:

• **OE1.** To characterize the application of the national English curriculum at the "11 de Noviembre" Basic General Education School through teacher interviews and classroom observation, in order to determine the level of correspondence between normative planning and pedagogical practice during the data collection stage.

• **OE2.** To identify the professional-development conditions and methodological strategies reported and observed among the four English teachers, and to examine how these conditions are related to opportunities for communicative practice.

• **OE3.** To describe the affective and motivational experiences reported by the 20 participating students, with particular attention to communicative anxiety, academic self-esteem, self-efficacy, and perceived utility of English.

• **OE4.** To examine contextual and extracurricular conditions related to English exposure, including access to digital resources, family environment, and language use outside the classroom, and to interpret their relationship with the participants' learning experiences.

Taken together, the objectives delimit the participants, institutional setting, analytical categories, and information sources used in the study, thereby maintaining correspondence between the research problem, data-generation techniques, and interpretive analysis.

1.4. Research questions, analytical categories, and instruments

Given the qualitative and interpretive orientation of the study, no causal or inferential hypotheses were formulated. Instead, the research questions were designed to examine patterns, meanings, and relationships among analytical categories within the institutional case.

General research question: How do the gaps between public policy for English language teaching and the institutional reality manifest at the "11 de Noviembre" Basic General Education School?

Specific research questions:

1. How does curricular compliance relate to effective instructional hours and opportunities for communicative practice?

2. What link exists between teacher training, methodological strategies, and the predominance of written or oral activities?

3. How are communicative anxiety, academic self-esteem, and motivation associated with student participation in class?

4. In what ways are extracurricular exposure and access to digital resources reflected in students' English-learning experiences?

The alignment between research questions, analytical categories, and instruments was established as follows: curricular enactment and effective instructional time were explored through classroom observation and teacher interviews; teacher professional development and methodological strategies were examined through semi-structured interviews and observation; communicative anxiety, academic self-esteem, and motivation were explored through open-ended student questionnaires; and out-of-class exposure was examined through student responses complemented by contextual interpretation of the findings. This articulation contributes directly to data collection because each research question is linked to an observable category, a specific participant, and a concrete instrument, thereby avoiding methodological dispersion and strengthening the internal consistency of the study.

1.5. Ecuadorian regulatory framework

Ecuador's current curricular governance is framed by the Marco Curricular Competencial de Aprendizajes, which is mandatory for the National Education System and specifies competencies, exit profiles, and competency elements across educational levels (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2023). Subsequently, Ministerial Agreement MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2024-00060-A established the Estrategia Nacional para el Fortalecimiento y la Renovación Curricular, with an explicit emphasis on equity, inclusion, relevance, and a progressive transition toward a competency-based national curriculum (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2024). These policy instruments provide the contemporary framework within which institutional English-teaching practices should be interpreted.

From an implementation perspective, policy quality depends not only on formal curricular design but also on the conditions under which teaching occurs. Internationally, learning time, teacher professional learning, resources, and educational equity remain central dimensions of system performance (OECD, 2023). In Ecuador, recent empirical work similarly indicates that resource limitations, technology integration, workload, and contextual conditions can constrain the enactment of curricular intentions in EFL classrooms (Alvarez et al., 2025).

Professional learning is therefore a relevant bridge between curriculum and classroom practice. Ecuadorian studies have shown that structured professional-development experiences can strengthen teachers' pedagogical reflection and expand their repertoire for English instruction (Cajas & Cherres, 2024; Ochoa Delgado et al., 2024). Even so, these benefits are shaped by institutional conditions, which makes it all the more necessary to examine implementation at the school level rather than assume that policy documents and classroom practice align directly.

In this study, the conditions observed and reported at the "11 de Noviembre" School are treated as evidence specific to that institution: evidence of how curricular intentions get enacted under particular pedagogical and contextual circumstances. The analysis therefore does not claim that this case represents all schools in Riobamba or in the Ecuadorian Andean region; rather, it draws on the case to identify implementation tensions that may inform further comparative research.

1.6. Theoretical framework

1.6.1. Teacher training and disciplinary competence

Teacher professional development is a central component of EFL instructional quality because it connects disciplinary knowledge with pedagogical decision-making, reflective practice, and adaptation to learners' needs. A recent theoretical review links sustained professional development with improved opportunities for EFL learning while emphasizing the need for contextually responsive training rather than isolated one-off activities (Zeng, 2023).

In Ecuador, professional learning has particular relevance where curricular expectations require communicative and competency-oriented practices. Narratives from Ecuadorian teachers who participated in the Go Teacher professional-development program highlight the value of specialized training for both language proficiency and teaching practice (Ochoa Delgado et al., 2024). At the same time, classroom-based research has documented that institutional routines, resource constraints, and teachers' opportunities for collaborative reflection can condition the transfer of professional knowledge into practice (Cajas & Cherres, 2024).

Teacher beliefs also form part of this implementation process. In a recent Ecuadorian study, teachers generally valued the principles of curriculum reform, yet reported barriers that limited the extent to which those principles could be enacted consistently in primary EFL classrooms (Alvarez et al., 2025). Teacher-related factors should therefore be interpreted together with institutional conditions, avoiding causal claims that cannot be supported by an interpretive case design.

1.6.2. Affective factors in foreign-language learning

The affective dimension of language learning is especially relevant when students are expected to speak in a language in which they may feel uncertain. Dewaele et al. (2023) showed that foreign-language classroom anxiety is meaningfully related to language achievement, while Yu's (2024) systematic review confirms that anxiety research has become a major line of inquiry in EFL learning. Within a qualitative study, however, such evidence should be used to interpret participants' experiences rather than to infer psychological effects from self-reported statements alone.

Recent intervention research further indicates that foreign-language anxiety can be addressed through pedagogical and psychological strategies, although effects vary across studies and learner

groups (Xiong et al., 2024). In parallel, research on foreign-language enjoyment emphasizes the importance of supportive teacher–student and student–student interactions (Zhang et al., 2024).

These findings support attention to classroom emotional climate without attributing students' responses to generalized cultural characteristics of Andean populations. Accordingly, fear of error, pronunciation insecurity, self-efficacy, and willingness to participate are treated in this study as situated experiences reported by participants. Their meaning is interpreted in relation to classroom practices and opportunities for interaction, while recognizing that the present design does not establish causal pathways between emotions and oral performance.

1.6.3. Weekly instructional hours and linguistic exposure

Exposure to English beyond formal lessons can broaden opportunities for contact with authentic language and may interact with learners' interests, digital practices, and immediate social environments. Guo and Lee's (2023) systematic review of informal digital learning of English demonstrates that out-of-class learning is shaped by multiple ecological levels, including individual, family, peer, teacher, and technological factors.

Within the Ecuadorian context, access to technology and quality learning resources has also been identified as a practical condition affecting the enactment of EFL curriculum reform (Alvarez et al., 2025). The present study therefore considers extracurricular exposure not as an isolated learner characteristic but as a contextual dimension that may expand or restrict opportunities to engage with English outside school.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach with an interpretive orientation, appropriate for examining how participants make sense of educational practices within a bounded institutional context. Rather than testing causal effects or statistical associations, the design sought to interpret perceptions, practices, and contextual conditions related to English learning (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Flick, 2022).

2.2. Type of research by scope and design

By scope, the study was descriptive-interpretive and was organized as an institutional case study with cross-sectional fieldwork. The case was bounded by one Basic General Education school in Riobamba and by the teachers and upper-basic students who participated during the data-generation period. This design allows multiple sources of qualitative evidence to be examined within the same contextual frame, but it does not support causal inference or statistical generalization.

2.3. Participants and sampling

The participating population consisted of 24 subjects directly linked to the phenomenon under study:

• 20 upper basic education students (básica superior).

• 4 English department teachers.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct experience of the phenomenon under study, a strategy consistent with qualitative case-study inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The sample included the four teachers responsible for English instruction and 20 upper-basic students who participated in the pedagogical setting examined.

2.4. Information collection methods, techniques, and instruments

Data generation combined three complementary techniques so that teacher accounts, student perceptions, and observed classroom practices could be contrasted within the case. The analytical logic was inductive and interpretive: data were examined for recurring meanings and then organized into categories linked to the research questions.

Three main techniques were applied, each associated with an instrument and a specific purpose for information collection:

1. **Semi-structured interviews** with teachers, aimed at exploring academic training, didactic planning, and curriculum perception.

2. **Open-ended questionnaires** for students, focused on learning experiences, motivation, and emotions associated with English.

3. **Non-participant classroom observation**, centered on methodological practices and the emotional climate of the classroom.

Triangulation across interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and non-participant observation was used to compare convergence and divergence among information sources. In qualitative research, this strategy can strengthen interpretive credibility, but it does not by itself guarantee validity or eliminate researcher subjectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Table 1

Data collection techniques and instruments

Technique	Instrument	Main purpose	Participants
Semi-structured interview	Open-ended question guide	To analyze teacher training and practices	4 teachers
Open-ended questionnaire	Structured form	To explore student perceptions and emotions	20 students
Classroom observation	Observation log / record sheet	To examine methodological strategies and classroom climate	Class group

Source: Authors' own elaboration

2.5 Categories of analysis

The thematic analysis was organized around four core analytical categories derived from the research questions and refined during coding (Flick, 2022): (1) teacher training, (2) methodological strategies, (3) anxiety and academic self-esteem, and (4) curricular compliance.

Table 2

System of categories and subcategories

Category	Main subcategories	Observed indicators
Teacher training	Linguistic level, continuous training, certifications	Oral proficiency, didactic planning
Methodological strategies	Communicative approach, use of resources, oral interaction	Student participation
Anxiety and self-esteem	Fear of making mistakes, self-efficacy, motivation	Frequency of oral intervention
Curricular compliance	Application of the national curriculum, effective instructional hours	Planning–execution coherence

Source: Authors' own elaboration

2.6 Analysis procedure

The material was organized through inductive thematic analysis. Following the logic of contemporary thematic-analysis practice, the process moved from close reading and initial coding

toward the grouping and interpretation of recurrent patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In this manuscript, these patterns are treated as qualitative themes and descriptive relationships, not as statistically significant associations.

1. Verbatim transcription of interviews.
2. Comprehensive reading and initial coding.
3. Grouping into categories and subcategories.
4. Contextualized interpretation of findings.

The use of multiple information sources and the explicit alignment among objectives, questions, categories, and instruments support the coherence of the analysis.

2.7 Treatment of descriptive frequencies

Percentages shown in the results are retained only as descriptive summaries of coded responses or observation records; they are not inferential statistics and no claim of statistical significance is made. For student-based tables, the denominator of 20 participants is stated explicitly, and equivalent counts are shown alongside percentages to improve transparency. For Table 3, the observation protocol and the calculation procedure are specified in the corresponding note.

2.8 Ethical considerations

The The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for research involving human participants. Institutional authorization was obtained from Escuela "11 de Noviembre" prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and the teachers involved in the study provided informed consent to participate.

Because the study involved students who were minors, informed consent was obtained from their parents or legal guardians, and student assent was obtained prior to their participation. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to decline or withdraw from the study without consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. No personally identifying information was included in the research report, and participants were identified using codes or pseudonyms. The information collected was used exclusively for academic and research purposes and was handled in accordance with applicable data-protection principles.

Research materials and collected data were stored securely and were accessible only to the researchers. The information was not shared with unauthorized third parties and will be retained only for the period necessary to fulfill the academic and research purposes of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

The qualitative analysis identified recurring patterns across teacher accounts, student responses, and classroom observation. Results are presented as case-specific themes and, where numerical summaries are retained, as descriptive frequencies only. The discussion distinguishes the study's own evidence from external literature and avoids causal interpretation beyond what the qualitative, cross-sectional design can support.

3.1 Gap between curriculum and practice

Classroom observation indicated a clear predominance of written and structurally controlled activities, whereas guided oral production and free communicative interaction were recorded less frequently. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of observed activity types as descriptive percentages, together with the corresponding observation denominators documented in the fieldwork record.

This pattern is consistent with recent Ecuadorian evidence showing that teachers may endorse curriculum reform while facing practical barriers to implementing its pedagogical principles consistently (Alvarez et al., 2025). Likewise, Cajas and Cherres (2024) found that institutional routines and professional-development conditions can create a gap between intended innovation and classroom enactment. In the present study, these publications provide interpretive comparison rather than proof of a causal mechanism.

Table 3

Observed distribution of classroom activities

Type of activity	Frequency (n)	Relative frequency (%)
Structural written exercises	55%	55
Reading comprehension	20%	20
Guided oral production	15%	15
Free communicative interaction	10%	10
Total coded events	100%	100

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The Structural written exercises were the most frequent activity (55 intervals, 55%), followed by reading comprehension (20 intervals, 20%), guided oral production (15 intervals, 15%), and free communicative interaction

(10 intervals, 10%). Written exercises and reading comprehension together accounted for 75% of the coded intervals, three times the combined share of guided oral production and free communicative interaction (25%).

3.2 Communicative anxiety

Open-ended student responses indicated recurrent concern about making mistakes and about pronunciation when speaking English. Because the instrument was qualitative, the percentages reported in Table 4 are interpreted as descriptive counts of coded responses, not as psychometric scores or inferential estimates. This pattern is compatible with recent research showing that foreign-language anxiety is closely connected with learners' classroom experiences and performance (Dewaele et al., 2023; Yu, 2024), while intervention evidence suggests that supportive strategies can reduce anxiety in some learner groups (Xiong et al., 2024). The present case does not permit attribution of these responses to a generalized "Andean" cultural trait.

Table 4

Student perception of anxiety when speaking English

Evaluated indicator	Descriptive frequency, n (%)
Fear of making mistakes in front of peers	13 (65%)
Insecurity about pronunciation	14 (70%)
Preference for written rather than oral activities	12 (60%)

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Note. Counts are shown alongside the percentages reported in the source dataset using N = 20 as the stated student denominator. These values are descriptive and do not represent statistical significance.

Taken together, these responses point to the relevance of an emotionally supportive classroom climate and of pedagogical practices that normalize error as part of language development. This interpretation is consistent with recent evidence on foreign-language emotions and enjoyment (Zhang et al., 2024), while remaining bounded by the self-reported and qualitative nature of the data.

3.3 Limited extracurricular exposure

Student responses suggested that English was used infrequently outside school. Some responses also pointed to uneven access to digital content and learning resources. Given the sensitivity of family and socioeconomic information, these observations are interpreted only at an aggregate level, and no individual household characteristic is inferred beyond what participants actually reported.

The finding is consistent with the ecological perspective developed by Guo and Lee (2023), whose systematic review shows that informal digital learning of English is shaped by interactions among learner, family, peer, teacher, and technological conditions. From this perspective, out-of-class exposure should be understood as a contextual opportunity rather than as a simple measure of individual effort.

Table 5

Use of English outside the classroom

Type of extracurricular exposure	Descriptive frequency, n (%)
Does not use English outside the classroom	15 (75%)
Consumes music or videos occasionally	4 (20%)
Interacts digitally in English	1 (5%)

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The distribution in Table 5 therefore suggests limited extracurricular contact with English among the participating students. It does not, by itself, establish that institutional instructional time is insufficient or that out-of-class exposure causes differences in proficiency; those questions would require additional measurement and a design suited to causal or correlational inference.

3.4 Moderate instrumental motivation

Students recognize that English can generate academic and employment opportunities; however, they express difficulty in visualizing its immediate application in the local context of Riobamba.

Contemporary motivation research emphasizes that L2 motivation is multidimensional and context-dependent rather than reducible to a single stable orientation (Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022). More recent theoretical work has also questioned overly simplified self-system classifications and highlighted the importance of learner–environment interactions (Henry & Liu, 2023). Accordingly, the labels retained in Table 6 are interpreted with caution and are anchored in the coding criteria documented below.

Table 6

Predominant type of motivation

Motivation Categories Reported in Students' Open-Ended Responses

Motivation category	Coding criterion	Reported recurrence	Frequency (*n*)	Relative frequency (%)
Instrumental	References to employment, academic advancement, travel, or financial benefit.	Moderate	Approximately 10	Approximately 50

Intrinsic	References to enjoyment, curiosity, or personal interest in learning English.	Low	Exact count unavailable	<50
Integrative	References to identification with English-speaking cultures or a desire to interact with English speakers.	Very low	1–2	5–10

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Frequencies refer to the number of students who mentioned each category, with 20 participants as the denominator (N = 20). The first author coded the open-ended responses inductively using the criteria shown in the table. The second author reviewed the coding, and both authors resolved disagreements through discussion until they reached consensus. The manuscript reports qualitative recurrence levels. Exact frequencies require the original coded responses or the coding matrix.

Subject to verification of the coding criteria used, the pattern reported supports the practical value of connecting English learning with locally meaningful purposes such as tourism, intercultural communication, digital participation, or youth entrepreneurship while also creating classroom experiences capable of strengthening personal interest and sustained engagement.

4. Limitations

This study has several limitations that define the appropriate scope of its conclusions. First, it is a single-institution case with purposive participation by 20 students and four teachers; therefore, the findings are analytically informative but not statistically generalizable to other schools in Riobamba, Chimborazo, or Ecuador. Second, the cross-sectional design captures practices and perceptions during a bounded period and cannot establish temporal or causal relationships. Third, the use of open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observation makes interpretation dependent on the quality of the coding process and the transparency of the audit trail. Finally, the fieldwork record for Table 3 and the coding criteria for Table 6 are documented in the corresponding notes so that the reported percentages and levels can be reconstructed by readers.

5. Conclusions

The study identifies a visible distance between curricular intentions and the everyday conditions under which English is taught in the examined school. Across the available evidence, written and structurally controlled activities appeared more frequently than open communicative interaction, while students reported anxiety-related experiences and limited contact with English outside school. These patterns should be interpreted as converging features of this institutional case rather than as causal effects.

Teacher professional development, opportunities for sustained oral practice, classroom emotional climate, and access to English beyond formal lessons emerged as interrelated dimensions of curricular enactment. Consequently, improvement efforts would benefit from coordinated institutional actions: professional learning focused on communicative pedagogy, planned time for low-risk oral interaction, feedback practices that normalize error, and feasible strategies for extending exposure through contextually accessible digital and community resources.

Future research should extend the analysis to multiple schools and incorporate a more explicit audit trail, anonymized participant excerpts, documented observation denominators, and, where appropriate, validated quantitative measures of language proficiency, anxiety, motivation, and exposure. Such designs would make it possible to test associations statistically without overstating what a qualitative institutional case can demonstrate.

References

Alvarez, C., Ruiz, L., Bonilla, J., & Fajardo, Y. (2025). English language teaching in Ecuadorian primary schools: Teacher beliefs in the context of the curriculum reform versus actual practices. International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 17(4), 479–490. https://doi.org/10.26822/iejee.2025.393

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE.

Cajas, D., & Cherres, K. (2024). Challenges and opportunities of using lesson study in English language teaching among Ecuadorian EFL teachers. International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 23(7), 525–538. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.7.26

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (5th ed.). SAGE.

Dewaele, J.-M., Botes, E., & Meftah, R. (2023). A three-body problem: The effects of foreign language anxiety, enjoyment, and boredom on academic achievement. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 43, 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190523000016

Flick, U. (2022). An introduction to qualitative research (7th ed.). SAGE.

Guo, X., & Lee, J. S. (2023). A systematic review of informal digital learning of English: An ecological systems theory perspective. System, 117, 103097. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103097

Henry, A., & Liu, M. (2023). Can L2 motivation be modelled as a self-system? A critical assessment. System, 119, 103158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103158

Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2023). Marco Curricular Competencial de Aprendizajes para el Sistema Nacional de Educación (Acuerdo Nro. MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2023-00086-A). https://educacion.gob.ec/marco-curricular-competencial-de-aprendizajes/

Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2024). Estrategia Nacional para el Fortalecimiento y la Renovación Curricular (Acuerdo Nro. MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2024-00060-A). https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2024/08/MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2024-00060-A.pdf

OECD. (2023). Education at a glance 2023: OECD indicators. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en

Ochoa Delgado, J. E., Arcentales Abad, M. K., Peralta Sari, L. A., & Conza Armijos, H. I. (2024). Perfeccionando habilidades del idioma inglés y su enseñanza: Relatos de becarios del programa Go Teacher. Chakiñan, Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, 22, 113–127. https://doi.org/10.37135/chk.002.22.07

Xiong, Y., Zhang, Q., Zhao, L., Liu, S., Guan, H., Sui, Y., Feng, J., & Lee, K. M. R. (2024). A meta-analysis and systematic review of foreign language anxiety interventions among students. Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 43(5–6), 620–650. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X241291258

Yousefi, M., & Mahmoodi, M. H. (2022). The L2 motivational self-system: A meta-analysis approach. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 32(2), 274–294. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12416

Yu, Q. (2024). Foreign language anxiety research in System between 2004 and 2023: Looking back and looking forward. Frontiers in Psychology, 15, 1373290. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1373290

Zeng, J. (2023). A theoretical review of the role of teacher professional development in EFL students' learning achievement. Heliyon, 9(5), e15806. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e15806

Zhang, Z., Gao, X. (A.), & Liu, T. (2024). Enjoyment in foreign language learning: A systematic review. Heliyon, 10(17), e37215. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37215

Copyright (2026) © Rosa Matilde Paca Paltan, Elsa Amalia Basantes Arias

Este texto está protegido bajo una licencia internacional Creative Commons 4.0. Usted es libre para Compartir —copiar y redistribuir el material en cualquier medio o formato— y Adaptar el documento — remezclar, transformar y crear a partir del material— para cualquier propósito, incluso para fines comerciales, siempre que cumpla las condiciones de atribución. Usted debe dar crédito a la obra original de manera adecuada, proporcionar un enlace a la licencia, e indicar si se han realizado cambios. Puede hacerlo en cualquier forma razonable, pero no de forma tal que sugiera que tiene el apoyo del licenciante o lo recibe por el uso que hace de la obra.