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Factors Influencing Adult Learners' Motivation in EFL
Classes at CINDEA: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This phenomenological study investigated the factors influencing adult learners' motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes at a Centro Integrado de Educación de Adultos (CINDEA) in a rural region of Costa Rica. The research addressed an apparent reluctance toward learning English by exploring the experiences and perspectives of six adult EFL learners aged 38-57. The data collection included participant observation of learners' classes and the implementation of in-depth- phenomenological interviews. The analysis employed open, axial, and focused coding techniques to identify emergent themes. Three primary themes emerged: classroom and out-of-classroom challenges, the instrumental significance of English, and learners' expectations. In-class challenges included a lack of peer support, comprehension difficulties, limited autonomy, knowledge gaps, and emotional factors (anxiety, frustration, embarrassment). External challenges involved scarcity of resources (material and human), limited exposure to English, a lack of prior learning opportunities, age-related concerns, family responsibilities, and negative past experiences. Regarding learning English, four categories emerged: social inclusion, professional advancement, daily utility (e.g., understanding media, communicating with family), and intrinsic motivation (personal growth, self-improvement). Learners' expectations focused on family support, teacher empathy, engaging teaching methodologies, and judicious use of the first language (L1) for clarification. The study highlighted the significant influence of sociocultural context and individual circumstances on adult learners' motivation. It emphasized the importance of addressing internal and external factors to improve EFL instruction in rural settings.

Keywords: Adult EFL Learning, Motivation, Rural Education, In-class challenges, Sociocultural Context.

Resumen

Este estudio fenomenológico investigó los factores que influyen en la motivación de estudiantes adultos en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en un Centro Integrado de Educación de Adultos (CINDEA) en una región rural de Costa Rica. La investigación abordó una aparente renuencia hacia el aprendizaje del inglés mediante la exploración de las experiencias y perspectivas de seis estudiantes adultos de inglés como lengua extranjera con edades entre 38 y 57 años. La recopilación de datos incluyó la observación participante de las clases de los estudiantes y la realización de entrevistas fenomenológicas en profundidad. En el análisis se emplearon la codificación abierta, axial y focalizada para identificar los temas emergentes. Surgieron tres temas principales: las dificultades en el aula y fuera de ella, la importancia instrumental del inglés y las expectativas de los alumnos. Entre las dificultades en el aula se encontraban la falta de apoyo de los compañeros, las dificultades de comprensión, la autonomía limitada, las lagunas de conocimiento y los factores emocionales (ansiedad, frustración, vergüenza). Los retos externos se referían a la escasez de recursos (tanto materiales como humanos), la exposición limitada al inglés, la falta de oportunidades de aprendizaje previas, las preocupaciones relacionadas con la edad, las responsabilidades familiares y las experiencias negativas del pasado. En cuanto al aprendizaje del inglés, surgieron cuatro categorías: inclusión social, promoción profesional, utilidad diaria (por ejemplo, entender los medios de comunicación, comunicarse con la familia) y motivación intrínseca (crecimiento personal, superación personal). Las expectativas de los alumnos se centraban en el apoyo familiar, la empatía del profesor, las metodologías de enseñanza atractivas y el uso juicioso de la primera lengua (L1) para aclarar dudas. El estudio develó la importante influencia del contexto sociocultural y las circunstancias individuales en la motivación de los estudiantes adultos.

Subrayó la importancia de abordar los factores internos y externos para mejorar la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en entornos rurales.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje EFL de adultos, Motivación, Educación rural, Desafíos en clase, Contexto sociocultural.

I. Introduction

The teacher is nice, but we do not like English and we do not like English because we don't understand it, we are afraid of saying something wrong (Rosa, a student from a night school focused on adult learning in Pococí, Limón, Costa Rica)

In the epigraph above, a sixty-year-old student from Pococí expresses her frustration about her English lessons. Likewise, several adult learners have expressed reluctance to study English in this rural region where Rosa studies. Rosa is a housewife, and most of her classmates are too. Many students from this context also work in crop fields for around eight hours or more daily. Most have dinner at school sponsored by the government and commute long distances to get to school. These conditions are not uncommon for adult learning centers such as the one where Rosa is pursuing her education: a CINDEA. CINDEAs are educational centers created for adult learners who, for different reasons, could not complete their secondary school education in regular school. This type of school was created in 1993 through an agreement established in the Council of Superior Education 33-93, article number 111. The curriculum was designed using modules and divided into semesters. The usual schedule is in the evening (from 5:20 pm to 10:00 pm), but daytime schedules are offered depending on the students' needs and school infrastructure (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2018). Many CINDEAs were purposely created in remote areas where individuals had difficult access to formal education (Ministerio de Educación Pública de Costa Rica, n.d.) Still, CINDEAs are constantly challenged by dropouts. Based on statistics found in Informe de la Educación

Rosa's stance on the English language raises questions about the potential factors and circumstances that may cause her reluctance toward English. To begin to understand the

phenomenon, it is crucial to review previous research on different factors that might interfere with adult acquisition of a second language (L2) and their attitude toward learning. One often cited when referring to adult learning is age, which linguists frequently call the critical period hypothesis (CPH) (Birdsong, 1999). This hypothesis states that during childhood, learners are more likely to acquire a second language than in adulthood. The basis of this hypothesis lies in the perception that learners under the age of 13 approximately have more opportunities to learn in a native-like form. This conception originates from neurologists Penfield and Roberts' (1959) conclusions on a natural predisposition in a child's brain to learn a foreign language faster and more accurately than adults. However, other linguists such as Yoshida (2016) do not entirely agree with this hypothesis, considering a more sociolinguistic approach where having an intelligible, rather than a native-like pronunciation, should be the goal in EFL classes. Another factor related to adult learning is the various types of motivation learners have toward learning a foreign language. According to Knowles et al. (2005), the key to deeply understanding what motivates adult learners to learn is to know how they learn and the differences in their learning needs and goals compared to young learners. In short, Knowles et al. (2005) remarked that motivation in adult learning consists of understanding learners as human beings with needs and goals beyond the academic area or the curriculum.

In addition to internal factors that can be associated with adult learners' attitudes toward learning a foreign language, external factors play a significant role, too. As Clement (2016) concluded, external situations that simply cannot be removed in learners' lives hinder their focus and even their enthusiasm for studying. Some external factors discovered in Clement's (2016) study were work and family responsibilities. As mentioned earlier, adult learners like Rosa live and work in rural towns that are socio-economically limited. Likewise, adult students like Rosa

frequently work and study simultaneously. Moreover, in towns like the ones where Rosa lives, exposure to English is scarce because they mainly listen to English only in their classes. The quality of the class and the role of the facilitator are also two core elements that help or hinder the willingness learners may experience during English classes. On this matter, Brookfield (1986) stated: “Facilitators must assist adults to attain a state of self-actualization or to become fully functional persons” (p.123). Under this conception, learners should be aware of their learning process, which should be meaningful. In terms of class quality, Stanistreet (2019) suggested that in adult learning scenarios, it is necessary to provide a learner-centered approach in all aspects: assessment, teachers’ professional development, and the emancipation of individuals and communities in learning. Specifically, the approach used in adult learning must consider the differences among marginalized groups; it should guide facilitators on what to do or not to do to boost learners’ knowledge and motivation.

Moreover, it is relevant to discuss that, although other studies focused on EFL adult learning in rural areas have contributed significantly to understanding the conditions and challenges learners face, the contexts differ and what can be suggestable for one context, could not be applicable for another. This is a core characterization of qualitative research, the particularities of each participant’s scope. For instance, Morales and Cepeda (2021) conducted a study on personal barriers that affect communication in learners, which made them suggest the implementation of more contextualized material to work with learners in class. Their discussion centers on the implementation of material, rather than the flexibility of the proposed interventions across diverse rural contexts. Other studies related to EFL adult learning, such as Saiful and Triyono's (2018), compiled data based on teachers’ reflections that again, are of great importance, to a particular context and provide insightful opinions from instructors, yet not

learners. Therefore, this study attempts to explain a phenomenon with different characteristics from others in which distinct studies have been conducted. More significantly, it seeks to provide agency to learners by listening and observing the experiences, which will contribute to building a more structured schema of the research issue.

In short, factors that interfere with adult learning are already familiar concepts. However, there are still gaps in the contexts of free and public education, where there might be dropouts caused by demotivation toward learning a foreign language, in this case, English. Related to this issue, statistics about dropouts at CINDEA, specifically, were released by Programa de Educación, Nacional (2023), where there was an increase of 25% in dropouts between the years 2021-2023. Another statistic that is worth reflecting on is that most adult learners at CINDEA have an A2 level of proficiency in English, as also stated by Programa de Educación, Nacional (2023), based on the results obtained in the recent standardized tests applied in eleventh grade. Against this backdrop, this study aimed to explore why studying English might cause feelings of reluctance for six adult learners at a Costa Rican public school in a rural region. This study defines, reluctance as “an unwillingness to do something” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d, definition 1). In this sense, this study aimed to analyze adult learners' main constraints that lower their motivation to study English by posing the following questions: *What are the main challenges adult learners face in learning English? What are their expectations when trying to study English? What purposes do they see for English in their lives?*

The answers to these questions can contribute significantly to EFL practices in adult learning education contexts. Nevertheless, it is essential to underscore that this phenomenological study aimed to understand and explain a phenomenon rather than provide a solution to the difficulties encountered through the research process. Yet, the findings from this

study will be used to offer alternatives and set a precedent in inquiring into the methods and approaches used with adult learners at CINDEAs.

II. Theoretical Framework

The research problem this study addresses is the demotivation and reluctance that adult learners from an adult learning school in Costa Rica have developed toward studying English as a subject. The study aims to shed light on what triggers these adult learners' negative attitudes toward English, which can point to ways to diminish the high dropout rates, common in schools of this nature. This section discusses the theories I used to examine adult learners' accounts of the main factors influencing their motivation or demotivation towards learning English. The first subsection focuses on principles for teaching adult learners and general theories that characterize adult learning. The second subsection centers on theories of motivation towards learning in adults.

2.1 Age and Adults' Learning and Attitude toward Language Learning

Krashen (1981) contributed significantly to understanding the acquisition and learning of a second language. One of the central conclusions in his studies is that adult learners are more prompted to understand and use the acquired language system than the learned system. In the acquired system, Krashen finds that intake and fluency are the core features that can be learned faster. He describes that intake is what is perceived in obligatory scenes and where meaningful interactions occur. Krashen believes that some approaches, such as *Total Physical Response* and *Natural Method*, simulate an acquired language system more than a learned one. Contextualizing that conclusion to this study, more components of an acquired language system should be included in adult education besides those from a learned language system (grammar rules, formal vocabulary, among other aspects of language). For example, more authentic scenarios where learners need to use the language to perform a primary task. In this manner, Krashen

recommends including components of both scenarios (acquired and learned systems) to obtain more meaningful results (Krashen, 1981).

Another feature of adult learning that has been vastly discussed is related to the critical period in learning and how age is a determinant factor. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) was first introduced by the neurologist Wilder Penfield in 1950, and ever since, it has been tested in multiple investigations. This theory is based on the belief that human brains have better plasticity to acquire a second language before age nine (Birx, 2009). After that time, it becomes more complex for adult learners to acquire and learn a second language. Nikolov and Djigunović (2006) offered a review of studies conducted up until 2006 about the role of CPH in adult learners of a second and foreign language. In her review, she concludes that even though the CPH can genuinely affect how long a learner can take to master a second and foreign language, some factors relate to it: the length of the exposure to the target language is essential, but not necessarily a guarantee for the automatic acquisition of a language. Despite these differences, evidence shows that as learners' experience and knowledge in other areas expand with age, as well as their ability to learn a second language (L2) can also increase. Nikolov and Djigunović (2006) remarked that although CPH has undoubtedly had implications for adult learners, other factors such as the quality of exposure, the methodology used in FL classes, attitude toward learning, and even the academic background of facilitators have also proved to be critical components.

In a recent study, Xu (2023) found that children learn better, while adults learn faster. Then, the author concludes pronunciation and grammatical structure should not be essential in learning a second language when age is a negative factor. Also, input and return ratios have a better effect on young learners, meaning that the information heard or read remains longer in

young learners and their ability to exchange the information obtained from that input. That exchange of information is what the author calls return ratios. Finally, the author shares that it is more relevant to encourage understanding of the language than to promote memory of the language in adult learners. By following this approach, he considers there is more opportunity for them to develop proficiency (Xu, 2023).

2.2 Adult Learners: Learning Characteristics and Motivation

In discussions of the nature and complexities of adult learning, it is vital, first and foremost, to differentiate pedagogy from andragogy, where the first one is focused on how to teach and the second one on how to learn (Kapur, 2015). Second, to understand adult learning, it is inevitable to discuss the principles suggested by Knowles, often considered one of the significant contributors to andragogical literature (adult learning) in the United States (Knowles et al., 2005). In essence, Knowles proposed a series of principles that view adult learners from a more horizontal perspective where knowledge is interchangeable among facilitator and students and in both directions, rather than assuming that the teacher is the only owner or source of knowledge. Knowles' principles for adult learning are briefly described below, as they can help understand the experience of CINDEA students in my study.

First, Knowles explains that adult learners' experiences are a valuable aspect of learning. Knowles suggests that adult learners' experiences should be seen as a contribution to the class instead of ignoring it and seeing the teacher as the only source of knowledge. Second, the author refers to adult learners' motivation towards learning, which is usually life-centered. This is what Knowles called *readiness to learn*, or the attitude adult learners have regarding what they will learn: adults' learning must be helpful for and applicable to their current lives. Third, Knowles maintains that adult learners are self-directing, meaning they need to know the why and

the how of any learning they will embark on. Lastly, Knowles explains that the two key features of adult learners are contextual factors and intrinsic motivation. These allude to the importance of offering a more familiar learning environment where learners find meaning based on their realities and experiences (Knowles et al., 2005). In short, from Knowles' view, adult learners need to be quite aware of their learning, which implies their learning environments should reflect their most immediate personal and daily needs in real-life situations. Based on these principles, research has recommended establishing a logical connection between what is being learned and adult learners' activities outside the classroom.

Another scholarly contribution that can be used to understand adult learners' motivation (or lack thereof) is the *Self-Determination Theory*, pioneered by Ryan and Deci (2018). According to this theory, innate psychological needs are the basis for individuals' self-motivation and capacity to trace their goals. In an EFL class, some goals could include keeping a good Grade Point Average (GPA), using English at the workplace, having a promotion, and personal growth in learning a second language. Further, Ryan and Deci (2018) stated that adult learners face three primary psychological needs: need for competence, need for relatedness, and need for autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2018). The need for competence refers to the willingness to be knowledgeable enough to perform a task. The need for relatedness alludes to the necessity to be related or connect with a specific social group; for instance, an individual needs to speak a foreign language in a touristic place to communicate with others. The need for autonomy is the self-persuasion one has to fend for oneself. These three needs are closely related to Knowles' arguments on how adult learners need to understand the *why* and *how* of their learning. These interrelated needs are linked to learners wanting to understand profoundly and monitor their learning process.

Also, Eccles et al. (1983, cited in Henry et al., 2019) stated that achievement-related choices are motivated by a combination of people's expectations for success and subjective task value in particular domains. This refers to the value individuals give to specific tasks based on what they expect to achieve or obtain after finishing them. For instance, this occurs when adult learners are motivated to learn English because they want to pass an exam and finish high school, as it is a requirement to secure or even maintain a job. The opposite could occur when learners do not have that expectancy. Learners who do not have anything to expect or a reward do not find their learning valuable. This theory can also be linked to Knowles' et al. (2005) ideas on the interest of adult learners in tasks that apply to their immediate experiences.

Finally, the theory on *Identity and Investment in Language Education* by Norton (2000) can lead us to understand the emotional aspects that might cause reluctance towards learning in adults at a CINDEA. In this theory, Norton highlights the importance of recognizing identity in language as speakers' different perceptions about their role as speakers or users of the language. Norton (2000) remarked on the significant influence of cultural and sociological dimensions in building language identity. Norton (2000) postulated that speakers may have different identities for each language, which will depend on the political or power position of the language. For example, in Latin America, EFL learning is often focused on achieving a native-like accent because that pleases customers in many companies that invest in their countries. Therefore, based on the need to maintain a job position or have social acceptance, speakers invest in a type of learning that fits with the social and cultural demands of where they live. This theory can guide us in comprehending why EFL adult learners might not feel comfortable in English classes. This identity discussed by Norton may not be one of their immediate needs, and learners find EFL classes pointless based on their culture, realities, and personalities.

Moreover, these theories directly inform the study's findings and approaches by understanding the different particularities in adulthood that are essential not merely to understand but rather apply to the learning-teaching scenario. These particularities are often shaped by the learners' surroundings, their lives, and their perspectives about life, work, and family, among other areas that have a strong connection to their learning and motivation toward it. Analyzing the motivational aspects of learners considering psychological theories as the ones described earlier, can contribute significantly to a profound comprehension of the participants' interests and concerns. Concerning the CPH and adult motivation theories, it is crucial to study the popular beliefs on how is expected from adult learners to behave, the solid arguments related to the cognitive abilities to endeavor different activities such as learning a foreign language in contrast to what is perceived by the learners. The CPH theory, as discussed previously, has been debated over the years and might not always be affecting a specific population in terms of learning. Notwithstanding, it is one of the most validated scientific theories that could contribute to explaining the phenomenon of the present study.

III. Literature Review

In adult education, understanding the dynamics of motivation, effective teaching techniques, and the unique characteristics of rural learning environments is paramount. Each component plays a crucial role in shaping the learning experiences of adults pursuing education. The following paragraphs examine the complexities of adult learner motivation, innovative teaching strategies applied in different scenarios, and features of rural learning environments that impact educational outcomes. The findings documented in these studies can contribute to this investigation by making comparisons, creating hypotheses, and illuminating aspects that might be ignored in the Costa Rican context.

3.1 Motivation in Adult Learners in an EFL Class

Motivation is often an aspect that greatly facilitates the learning process when present in learners. Conversely, when it is not, it can become a constraint quite challenging to handle at any age. However, motivation as a constraint in adult learning could be even more complex to address. Thus, Ahl (2006) criticized the tendency to believe that all human beings have a natural predisposition to motivate themselves to learn regardless of the scenario in which these learners may be and their situations. The author argues this is not necessarily true since motivation does not entirely depend on individual efforts but on a significant part of the surroundings of one's life or experiences. In this critique, the author concludes that adult learners might also be seen as marginalized in the literature. There is a lack of studies on individuals studying at an age different from what is socially accepted/expected. For example, learners drop out of high school as teenagers and continue their education as adults. What is socially likely will often be that, as adults, they have already completed their education, causing learners to be judged by that system, which refers to them as unmotivated students. From this view, Ahl (2006) suggested considering motivation as a relational concept, not as something that is individually constructed.

Viswanadha (2019) suggested that in motivation research, motivation accountability lies mainly in the functionaries, referring to all the participants in the learning process (administrative employees, teachers, learners). However, he stated that some of the main factors affecting adult learners' motivation are environmental, learner, material, and volunteer-related. Environmental factors include ordinary sounds and daily conditions: comfortable places, noise, public movement, lighting, and ventilation. Learner-related factors would be cultural, psychological, and philosophical. Material-related factors include understandability, readability,

and concerns based on their learning needs. In the case of volunteer-related factors, the author refers to the facilitator.

In addition to the factors that affect motivation described above, Green and Kelso (2006) also concluded that there are personal motives for studying or not studying among learners. These motives can be beyond the classroom (finding a job, a sense of pride). Two other main factors associated with demotivation are teacher behaviors and the institution's structure. Although Green and Kelso's (2006) study is based on adult learners of university education, some of their motives are similar to other adult learners in different scenarios, including their willingness for self-improvement and search for better opportunities.

Motivation has its particularities in adult learning. Observation of learners' needs in the class and constant analysis of their learning process must be made to understand adult learners and how they could improve their motivation. In a study by Lukianova (2016) about motivation factors in adult learning, the author stated that one of the principal characteristics of motivated adult learners is that they set goals and concentrate on them until they succeed. The author emphasized the apparent search for achievement and self-realization learners have. Other related studies have been conducted in the context of Saudi Arabia. For example, Aljohani and Alajlan (2020) investigated why adult learners study, revealing that many reasons motivating learners are related to internal factors (religion and cognitive factors). Some others include the desire for social contact. It is salient to consider that this study was conducted during the pandemic during lockdown restrictions. Therefore, these findings show that the motives of adult learners can vary depending on the context and culture (Aljohani & Alajlan, 2020).

Regarding local studies, recent research in Costa Rica by Blanco Navarro and Esquivel Ibarra (2023), who focused on Adult Learners in a Master's program, shows some particularities

regarding emotions common in adult learners. For instance, some of the instructors interviewed mentioned that since adult learners are aware of their learning process, feelings such as anxiety, frustration, and embarrassment can lead to building gaps in language that somehow burden their linguistic performance. Another noteworthy finding is the unpredictability that, based on teachers' perceptions, learners have regarding their reactions when interrupted or corrected. Also, the researchers found reactions of frustration from teachers who expressed having tried several ways to motivate learners and their failures. Although this study was focused on adult learners from university education, emotional factors could also be found in other environments, such as adult learners in public or private schools. Another research study conducted by Ramírez and Hidalgo (2018) in Costa Rica has its basis on the level of satisfaction learners from night schools have as possible causes for dropping out of their studies. They found that learners seem to appreciate how teachers approach them highly. Related to this aspect, the researchers recommend not only asking teachers to employ motivational strategies but also involving teachers in participating in those activities to boost their motivation to teach and interact with learners. Other constraints that lower satisfaction in learners are related to infrastructure and the accurate fulfillment of the class objectives concerning the number of lessons learners are supposed to take. A particularity of infrastructure in this context is the lack of proper illumination. It is crucial to highlight that most learners in night schools are adults, and many might have visual problems, which is a barrier to their academic performance. As stated by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (2017), in the United States of America, it is usual for mid-forty-adults to start suffering from presbyopia, an age-related farsightedness, meaning difficulty in seeing objects from a close distance.

In a study conducted by Fallas Escobar et al. (2016), findings show some of the main interests or motives adult learners from different majors have regarding EFL learning. Their study discusses the monetary reasons why learners decide to learn English and how the different curricula have their focus on that. The authors examine how many of the EFL curricula in Costa Rica are filled with dominant discourses related to English as the only language to learn based on monetary needs. The study was conducted in Costa Rica with higher education students. The authors conclude by speculating that a similar situation might occur in other Latin American countries and how salient it is to reflect upon the extent to which English has been eagerly imposed based on economic interest. Thus, Fallas Escobar et al. (2016) study could lead us to think about adult learners' pressure to learn English quickly and effectively, which can result in negative attitudes such as frustration and demotivation toward classes.

3.2 Teaching Techniques and Strategies to Increase Motivation in EFL Adult Learners

One of the teachers' most significant challenges is finding appropriate techniques and strategies that are truly useful for learners. In the case of adult learners, it could become even more challenging due to the great variety of possibilities that can either help them improve their learning or decrease their interest in learning. One recent study suggests that an active learning approach can significantly contribute to adult learners' attitudes toward learning. Researchers such as Mohammed et al. (2023) discuss the effectiveness of implementing active learning strategies in an EFL-adult learning environment. In their study, the researchers conclude that active learning strategies have contributed to adult learning motivation and positive attitudes toward learning. The learning active strategies include different stages: engaging, exploring, elaborating, and evaluating. The authors propose a pre-quiz, journal work, and mapping in the engaging stage. They suggest brainstorming, non-linguistic representations, and discussion

forums in the exploration stage. Regarding the elaborate stage, some recommended activities include solving problems and debates. Finally, in the evaluation stage, the purpose is to have evidence of learning, so they suggested including self-evaluation and error correction activities. These components are key to developing an active learning approach that the authors claim is beneficial for helping learners develop soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking (Mohammed et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Hashim et al. (2018) suggested that techniques and strategies vary depending on learners' style. Therefore, they remark on facilitators' salient role in helping students discover how they learn to promote self-direction and autonomy in learning. Some of the strategies applied by the participants of their study are trying to listen to other people's conversations on how they use the rules of grammar, using the new words in a variety of ways, planning out in advance what one wants to say, asking the speakers to repeat, slowing down and asking for clarification if one does not understand (Hashim et al., 2018). These strategies could be adapted to different levels in different settings for students to test their learning styles and improve their performance.

Miller (2021) also argued about the need to teach adult learners the ability of learning to learn. She critiques how many students at a university level depend too much on librarians and teachers. She supports teaching strategies that reinforce self-improvement, autonomy, and independence in learning. She mentions how this dependency does not give adult learners the opportunity for professional growth. According to her, there are no precise strategies for all the learning scenarios, but in general, they should aim to cause self-sufficiency.

In a literature review conducted by Trivette et al. (2009) of studies about the characteristics and consequences of adult learning methods and strategies, the authors found that

there are common strategies that have been proven to work on adult learning not only to make them feel comfortable with their learning but also to provide with meaning to their learning experience. Most of the effective methods include three main sections. *Planning*, where topics are introduced; includes activities such as class lectures and warm-up exercises. Other activities that involve real-life knowledge demonstration and problem-solving are included in the *Application* category. The third category is *Understanding*, where learners are evaluated through exercises such as improvement reviews (notes about the aspects that can be enhanced). In general, adult learning methods that involve learners more actively using, processing, and evaluating their knowledge and skills as part of learning are effective strategies, as stated by Trivette et al. (2009). The most enriching aspect of this investigation for the present study is that the researchers do not refer to the strategies suggested as sole and absolute solutions to fulfill learners' needs but mainly as strategies that connect to learners' characteristics and interests. Appropriately adapting the earlier strategies could lead to a pilot plan to improve andragogical practices in EFL classes at CINDEAs. Adapting those strategies could benefit learners by increasing their motivation toward learning English.

3.3. EFL Adult Learning in Rural Areas: Factors that Affect Motivation

Mudra (2018) has examined the experiences of pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers during their teaching practicum in rural schools. The results of this study focused on teachers' experiences. Understanding these experiences is relevant for this study to highlight the role of the facilitator in offering more significant learning opportunities. Mudra (2018) found that pre-service EFL teachers face difficulties in rural school environments, including limited resources, large class sizes, and different student backgrounds. Additionally,

Mudra (2018) encountered cultural differences with other urban areas and language barriers that impact their teaching effectiveness and motivation to transmit to their learners.

According to Supriadi et al. (2021), there are some challenges (EFL) that teachers and students from rural areas must confront to be successful at teaching and learning. Some of these adversities include limited resources, which forces the teachers to get creative with the scarce resources found in schools in rural zones. Besides, teachers may have a large group of students since there are few teachers to serve all the students for which the rural educational institutions must provide service. However, teachers must apply different teaching strategies and use their limited materials. Creating solid relationships with students seems very important in cases like these to support each other.

In addition, Fayzulloyeva and Murzina (2022) stated that factors such as poverty, lack of students' and parents' support, lack of learning or teaching materials at schools, lack of motivation and proper guidance, lack of interest in learning English, poor learning environment, poor family background, and lower level of basic knowledge in English are some of the main challenges for EFL classes development. What is interesting about these findings is that they are quite recent. Given the technological advances and achievements regarding human rights and education, one could think situations like those mentioned above no longer represent a constraint. Therefore, since the study was conducted in a rural environment, it is crucial to consider the factors affecting learning found in their context.

Hill and Moore (2000) also wrote about adult education in rural areas. Some of the main discussion points in their book were on the obstacles learners face that profoundly differ from plausible difficulties encountered in rural areas. Among the ones mentioned, they stated that the major factors affecting rural communities were “globalism, diminished opportunities for work,

changing technologies, and the struggle to reconcile with regionalism” (Hill & Moore, 2000, p. 346). Although these conclusions arose from their study conducted in The United States, they believe this phenomenon occurs in different parts of the world. Thereby, the authors suggest that a thorough comprehension of the characteristics of particular rural areas and the hurdles learners encounter in those settings can lead to better teaching-learning approaches. These approaches would involve the necessary readjustments that adult learners are consistently obligated to execute for their sustenance under an environment of tolerance, empathy, and understanding of their learning process.

Another example in Latin America is the study conducted by Abaunza et al. (2019) in Colombia about demotivating factors in learning English in rural areas. In their study, they concluded the main factors that demotivate learners were teacher role and competence, learning environment, low intrinsic motivation, didactic material with inadequate content, poor instructional materials, excessive focus on grammar, and difficulty in learning English in general. This study demonstrated the robust variety of elements present in education and, more specifically, in EFL learning that are included in the school as well as outside the school. A further argument on the results obtained by Abaunza et al. (2019) is that some factors, such as poor instructional material, low intrinsic motivation, and difficulty in learning present in a rural context, might not entirely depend on the teacher or learners exclusively. These can also be correlated with external factors such as poverty, security problems, and health issues, among other motives that are not elaborated in Abaunza et al. (2019) but might be possible to find in rural areas in Latin America where not all resources could be available.

Moreover, a case study was conducted by Valdez (2021) in Texas with Latin participants. In her study, the researcher aimed to find actions toward supporting English language learners in

a rural, remote secondary setting. The study found that there needed to be more support and professional development, that there needed to be clearer expectations regarding English language proficiency standards, and that instructional decisions were dependent on practical training and communication. As exemplified in the research by Valdez (2021), clear expectations of learning are more than necessary for providing a meaningful learning experience to students, specifically for adult learners. An additional critical point from Valdez's (2021) findings is the encountered need to discuss lack of support and professional development.

IV. Methodology

4.1. Research Paradigm and Genre

The research paradigm of the present study is constructivist. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2018), the constructivist paradigm in qualitative research implies a researcher's view that the studied context is constructed by social interactions in which reality is subjective. Thus, this study's priority is understanding participants' perspectives and experiences. The present research is also framed as a phenomenological study because it aims to understand students' feelings and perspectives regarding studying English. In phenomenological research, the researcher collects data about the participants' feelings, perceptions, descriptions, and judgments (Patton, 2002, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Likewise, the study's objective is to comprehend the participants' main ideas, how they see their realities in learning English as a foreign language, and what their interests and fears are in learning English. As this is a phenomenological study, it follows a qualitative design where the aim is to explore a phenomenon in a natural setting. On top of that, the study centers its purpose on meaning (aiming to explain a phenomenon) more than just listing the information provided. The phenomenological study differs from other approaches such as case studies and action research mainly because its focus is not to find a problem but to fix it with an applicable solution. Its purpose is to understand and explain what is occurring and provide recommendations based on reflections and experiences observed and heard. This study does not attempt to build a theory that can be tested in a specific population as it occurs in a grounded theory approach. A phenomenological study's aim is not to emerge in a community and collect data as an insider to explain the culture and behavior of individuals, as it occurs in an ethnographic approach. A phenomenological approach seeks to deeply comprehend

the phenomenon that is occurring to certain individuals. In this case, the objective is to vastly comprehend the possible causes that can be affecting learners' motivation toward learning English.

4.2 Research Context and Participants

This study takes place in a rural environment, specifically at a night school created for adult learners. This type of educational center is called CINDEA, which in Spanish stands for “Centro Integrado de Educación de Adultos.” As stated in the introduction section, this type of school was created in 1993 through an agreement established in the Council of Superior Education 33-93, article number 111. At these CINDEAs, there have five English lessons per week, each one lasting 35 minutes. Groups of learners are categorized by the number of periods in which they study. For example, 9th graders would be called “3P” in the first semester of the year because they are in the third period of secondary education and “4P” when they are in the fourth period. In the educational center where this study was conducted, nine English teachers are distributed among seven communities administrated under the name of a single educational center. However, each community has a branch of the educational center where an academic coordinator is in charge (A. Martínez, personal communication, June 19, 2024). Although the educational center covers several communities and populations, this study centers on a single community where only one teacher (different from the researcher) works. The selection of the participants was strategically narrowed down to a specific age range. As elaborated earlier, the study is conducted in a rural area in which their context can naturally influence their responses. This particularity can differ from urban areas where there is a different population with different experiences only found in urban scenarios, especially related to education where in rural

contexts, the conditions and resources can be quite different in terms of accessibility and other conditions. The following table summarizes the participants profiles:

Table 1.

Participants' General Profiles

Participants' pseudonyms	Age	Grade
1	45	9 th (4P)
2	42	10 th (6P)
3	39	8 th (2P)
4	57	9 th (4P)
5	41	9 th (4P)
6	38	10 th (6P)

Note. Author's creation, 2023

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

This study used participant observations, interviews, and artifacts as means of data collection. The observations occurred on at least one occasion in approximately 35-70 minute classes. There was a participant observation because the researcher was immersed in the classroom, taking notes, noticing behaviors, and hearing comments. The type of interview that best fit the study's objectives was the phenomenological interview. As a phenomenological study, this work is intended to avoid fixing a problematic situation but to understand and explain the phenomenon. In this case, the interview prompted the students to answer questions about their motivation toward English and what might have caused that situation. This issue arose from

conversations with colleagues about a sense of discomfort and demotivation that learners seemed to show via comments in class. Questions were intended for learners to reflect upon the issue of demotivation. As Marshall & Rossman (2016) described, this interview had three stages: epoché, reduction, and structural synthesis. In this first stage, the researcher self-reflected on the adult learners' reluctance to learn English and how this affects learners from her (the researchers') experience or perspective. The idea of this stage is to separate the researchers' way of thinking from what is to be heard or seen by the study participants. The second stage is called reduction. In this stage, participants were interviewed to understand the phenomenon at hand. Questions were formulated in categories or. Lastly, in the structural synthesis step, the phenomenon's structure was described in detail. (See appendix A).

In addition, artifacts were collected to shed light on the study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), artifacts are valuable objects or items in a study because they can carry critical information that helps understand the phenomenon. Specifically, evaluation instruments such as exercises done in class by the participants were analyzed. These artifacts contributed to collecting information about learners' performance and evidence of contextualization or decontextualization of contents. Class material of this sort can be of great value because it contains evidence of learners' decisions or reasoning that led to understanding some of the main constraints related to the reluctance towards learning English. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest that artifacts can help the researcher compare other data obtained from different methods, such as in interviews. By following this approach, more solid corroborated results could be obtained.

All these data was analyzed through open, axial, and focused coding. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), these three data analysis procedures help us categorize

information and relate it to what has been read and researched and the new results obtained. In the case of open coding, data was read to identify emerging topics/concerns that repeatedly appear across participants' interviews. The types of coding utilized at this stage were emotion coding (participants express sentiments and emotions regarding their learning), process coding (participants shared their previous and current challenges while learning), and concept coding (participants mentioned abstract ideas, underlying meanings and themes related to their difficulties and expectations about learning English).

Subsequently, the resulting codes were compared for axial coding to create more prominent themes that help organize the codes. The theoretical framework of the study guided this stage of coding. After applying axial coding, a third step in the procedure was implemented: focused coding. This refers to utilizing the resulting coding scheme to finish coding all collected data. In this final step, research questions were answered directly. This step required the use of digital tools, as well as manual techniques such as note-taking.

4.4 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, being cautious of biased notetaking, interpretations, assumptions, and any other attitudes researchers could take when collecting data is of utmost relevance. Consequently, steps were taken to ensure the study's trustworthiness, employing triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Triangulation is a strategy that helps researchers to consolidate data through the application of different instruments. For instance, this study utilized open-ended interviews, observation, and artifact analysis. Member checking is another strategy that contributes to ensuring trustworthiness through the participants' verification of the accuracy of the researcher's field notes and preliminary analyses. This

verification provides transparency because the study participants make it. Then, if a biased annotation related to the matter does not necessarily represent the participant's views, it can be corrected after this verification. Finally, through peer debriefing, contribution from colleagues is expected. The observations and corrections other researchers can provide from their perspective as outsiders bestow a more neutral view of the results in general. By employing the previous trustworthiness is expected to be enhanced in this study.

4.5 Researcher's Role

To ensure transparency in the research, it is of great importance to acknowledge, as a researcher, my perspective and motivation in the development of the study. I have been a teacher in service for 7 years. It is also relevant to state that I come from a rural area with socioeconomically limited conditions. I have worked with adolescents, children, young adults, and even seniors. Most of my experience as an EFL teacher has been in adult learning contexts. In this environment, I have faced many challenges in EFL teaching. I have noticed how motivation, among many factors, is crucial to determining success academically. It is also worth saying that boosting motivation in vulnerable populations often represents a considerable difficulty. Therefore, my most significant interest is applying my professional and personal background to vastly understand learners' views and lives beyond a simple needs analysis. Thus, I can provide them with enhanced learning conditions within my means.

4.6 Ethical Considerations: Entry, Rapport, Confidentiality, & Reciprocity

As Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated, research ethics relies on the respect shown to study participants. In this sense, participants were notified, and the application instruments were explained to them. The entry consisted of speaking with the candidates of the study personally

about the purpose of the investigation, introducing myself as a researcher and teacher, and showing them how valuable their collaboration would be. Regarding rapport, the language utilized when approaching the participants was closely monitored to boost horizontal communication. The verification of general understanding of the procedure of the instruments (observation and interview) was done at any time the participants needed it. The participants' opinions, thoughts, and concerns were paramount during data collection. Technicalities or terminology that were too complex were avoided to ease tension among participants.

Regarding reciprocity, participants were offered to share refreshments during the interviews and school supplies such as pencils and notebooks for their classes as a token of gratitude. To ensure confidentiality, participants were told how the observation would be conducted and asked if they agreed or disagreed with anything from the procedure. Participants were informed about protecting their identities, meaning all data collected was anonymized. A consent was also provided for them to read and sign, indicating that they agreed to be part of the research study. Appendixes A, B, and C include the consent, observation, and interview forms.

V. Findings

This section addresses the three major themes that emerged from the interviews and observations. The first section elaborates on the classroom and out-of-the-classroom challenges affecting adult learners' motivation. The second section examines the instrumental significance adult learners see in learning English. Finally, in the last section, adult learners' learning needs in the English classroom are analyzed. These themes respond to the research questions guiding the present study: (a) *What are adult learners' main challenges in learning English?* (b) *What*

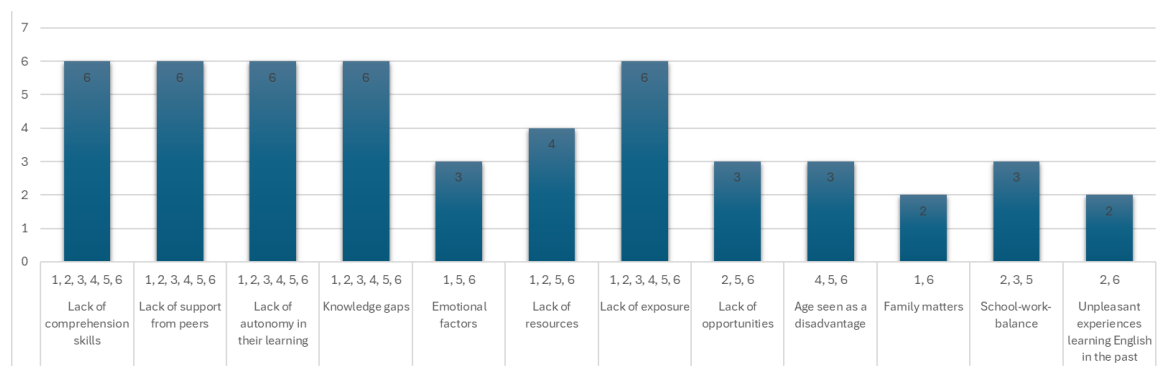
purpose do they see for English in their lives and (c) What are their expectations when studying English? Each of the themes serves as a direct answer to each of the research questions.

5.1. Challenges Affecting Learners' Motivation

This section addresses the in-the-classroom and out-of-the-classroom challenges facing adult learners who partook in the present study. For the context of this study, classroom challenges are understood as direct components of the classroom or school that are part of learners' realities, such as the class dynamics, methodology, teacher and students' attitudes toward learning, and attitudes between peers during the learning process. On the other hand, outside-of-the-classroom challenges refer to situations outside the classroom or in the participants' past that interfere with the participants' learning process. Figure 1 summarizes the challenges discussed in this section.

Figure 1.

Main Challenges when Learning English



Note. The previous figure represents participants' thoughts on the main challenges encountered when learning English.

5.1.1. In-the Classroom Challenges

The adult learners who participated in the study reported experiencing various challenges within the English classroom, including lack of support from peers, lack of comprehension skills, lack of autonomy in their learning, knowledge gaps, and emotional factors. Each of these challenges is discussed and illustrated next.

Lack of Support from Peers. Feeling endorsed by classmates might entail reinforcement in self-esteem, confidence, and motivation in learners. Conversely, learners could experience unconformities in the class that hinder their learning. Several students reported they do not count on the support of peers. For instance, Participant 1, a mother and housekeeper, recently changed her school schedule. She used to study during the daytime, but now she studies at night. She refers to difficulties she has faced in the classroom regarding her classmates:

Diay, digamos a veces me siento incómoda cuando no entiendo porque a veces es como le digo profe... deseo como tele transportarme con los compañeros del día para que me lleguen a ayudar cuando no puedo porque eso me ha ayudado mucho. [Sometimes I feel like I want to teleport myself to where my former classmates are for them to help me out when I cannot do things because that has helped me a lot.] (Interview)

The previous excerpt shows how Participant 1 appears to be affected by her current classmates, who are not as supportive as her former ones. She suggested that she would feel more comfortable and motivated if she had that help in class. However, based on her opinion, she is aware of her difficulties with learning English.

Another student, Participant 6, expressed a similar sentiment. Participant 6 is a factory worker, mother of four children, and single mother. During the individual interview, I asked her what her classmates think about her learning of English, to which she responded: *Depende, a veces se han burlado, a veces no. Es que ahora los compañeros que tengo no son como antes. Antes, mis compañeros sí me ayudaban bastante* [It depends, sometimes they have mocked me, sometimes they have not. The thing is that my classmates are not like the ones I had before. I used to have classmates who did help me a lot]. Participant 6 does not explicitly express she misses her former classmates, however, she highlights the difference she notices with her current classmates, alluding that she does not receive the same support she used to have in earlier years.

Lack of Comprehension Skills. Participants also stated that lacking comprehension skills poses a significant challenge for them. The following quote comes from Participant 5, a mother of 3 children, housekeeper, and factory worker. She stated:

Entrevistadora: Sí. ¿Qué es lo más difícil y lo más fácil o lo más fácil que encuentra el aprendizaje del inglés? Entrevistada: ¿Qué es lo más difícil? Todo. Entrevistadora: ¿Todo? Entrevistada: Todo. Como me cuesta tanto entender. Por ejemplo, puede ser escribirlo, pronunciarlo, leerlo. [Interviewer: What is the most difficult aspect and the easiest aspect of learning English? Interviewee: Everything. Interviewer: Everything? Interviewee: Everything. I find it too difficult to understand it, so for example it could be writing, pronouncing, reading it....] (Interview).

Participant 5 appears to be reasonably confident when mentioning that learning English is difficult for her. Still, she emphasizes that the reason that happens originates in her lack of understanding. She does not mention an easy aspect of her English learning process.

Another example where a lack of comprehension skills is underscored as affecting their learning is retrieved from Participant 6, a factory worker and a single mother of 4 children, a 38-year-old woman. She stated:

“Entrevistadora: Ah, ok. Entonces puede ser que eso sea porque es una aprendiz visual. ¿Y lo más difícil? Entrevistada: Entenderlo. Entrevistadora: ¿Entenderlo? ¿como cuando la profe habla, tal vez? Entrevistada: sí, entenderlo. Entrevistadora: O cuando lo lee.... ¿Más difícil? Entrevistada: Sí.” [Interviewer: Alright, so, perhaps you might be a visual learner... What about the most difficult aspect of learning English?
Interviewee: Understanding it. **Interviewer:** Understanding it? Like when the teacher speaks it, maybe? **Interviewee:** Yes, understanding it. **Interviewer:** or perhaps when you read... is it more difficult? **Interviewee:** Yes.]

Participant 6 answers the questions about the main difficulty in learning English. She acknowledges that she might be able to see words in English and how she remembers them when they are displayed. Nevertheless, she remarks that it is significantly challenging for her to understand when the teacher speaks or when she reads English.

Lack of Autonomy in their Learning. Another significant constraint identified by some participants was the lack of autonomy in their learning. The following quote represents Participant 5’s thoughts about it. Participant 5 is a single mother of 3 children, a housekeeper, and an agricultural factory worker. She states:

“Entrevistada: No, yo me siento bien. Porque digamos, el ambiente es, lo que es a la hora de hacer las prácticas y esas cosas. Es que uno como que se agüeva un poquito porque, digamos, no lo puedo hacer yo sola. Tengo que preguntar, tengo, o sea, uno está acostumbrado hacer todo solo. [Interviewee: Well, I feel good

because the class atmosphere is okay, the exercises and those things. What saddens me a little bit is that I cannot do things by my own. I have to ask... and I am used to doing things on my own]

The example above reflects Participant 5's lack of autonomy in learning, which seems to be a determining factor that affects her motivation and academic performance in class. Participant 5 clearly expresses how upsetting it is for her not to be able to solve the exercise in class without asking for help, mainly because she considers herself entirely independent in performing other tasks.

During classroom observations, I noticed that other participants faced a similar challenge. For example, Participant 2, a father of two children, a married man, and a financial provider of his family, also showed a lack of autonomy in learning. I wrote:

He continuously asks the teacher for clarification on vocabulary or the order of words.

The teacher repeatedly suggests that he follow the example and shows him how to do so.

After that, the teacher checks the exercise on the board to encourage students to self-correct their mistakes, if any. (observation)

During the observations, I noticed that Participant 2 relies more on the immediate teacher's assistance than the material provided by the teacher. He is constantly doubtful about continuing the exercise and asks his teacher several times, showing his lack of confidence and autonomy in learning. His excessive dependence on the instructor in the class could hinder his ability to analyze and reflect upon his learning and somehow restrict his creativity and critical thinking skills.

Knowledge Gaps. Knowledge gaps were a category that emerged from the theme of lack that participants stated to have. This category is a significant factor affecting participants'

motivation to learn English. During the class, observed Participant 1 was observed, a single mother of four children, current babysitter, housekeeper, and student. In the observation field notes, it was written, "The student is doubtful about vocabulary within sentences, and the teacher has to give her extra help by translating some of the words she does not understand"

(Observation). As reflected in the previous excerpt, Participant 1 seems to struggle with some exercises in class due to her limited vocabulary and knowledge of grammar structure. Since she is an eleventh-grade student, these knowledge gaps affect her performance in class significantly.

Another excerpt that illustrates knowledge gaps in participants is the observation made of Participant 2, a father and quality inspector in a pineapple company. The following information was noted in the fieldnotes: "The participant chooses five words from the reading, but he mentions he does not understand more than 5 words. The teacher tells him not to worry and focus on those five words he chose, only" (Observation). The earlier excerpt exemplifies vocabulary gaps observed in Participant 2 that keep him from successfully completing the exercises in class. Although the exercises appeared to correspond to his proficiency level, he still found solving them difficult .

Emotional Factors. Emotions play a significant role when learning a foreign language. In their responses during the interviews, participants disclosed some of the emotional factors that directly interfere with their learning of English. In the following excerpt, Participant 1 evokes emotions in connection to her English learning process:

"cuando me toca exponer porque me da mucha nervia. Los nervios me hacen que me proyecte a otro nivel, porque me agarran mucho nervios y me han ganado las ganas de llorar o me ha agarrado de hacer las manos así (hace gesto de tocarse las manos) y me pongo muy nerviosa y de los mismos miedos a pura fuerza pronuncio las palabras, pero

si, si puedo pronunciar, pero los miedos me matan.” [When I have to present in class I feel too nervous. Nerves made my mind go beyond. I feel too nervous and sometimes the feeling of crying has overwhelmed me. Other times I’ve kept the habit of moving my hands and I feel too nervous and scared. However, out of that fear I take strength to finally pronounce words. I know I can, but nerves kill me.] (Interview)

The excerpt above refers to the participants’ responses to the question, “What is the most difficult aspect and the easiest one about learning English?” As shown, Participant 1 emphasizes how she feels when presenting in English. She mentions that fear and nervousness are quite present in those moments, directly affecting her performance.

Moreover, Participant 5 also refers to decisions influenced by embarrassment or fear of showing herself vulnerable during the class. She states:

“Más que a veces los compañeros que usted ha visto, que a veces se echan a reír o algo así, entonces cuando dicen, ¿entendieron? Aunque yo no entienda, como, yo digo sí.

Entrevistadora: *Ah, eso es muy interesante. (En tono de broma).* **Entrevistada:** *(Sonríe avergonzada).*” [Interviewee: ... Mainly when sometimes classmates that you have seen, they laugh, so when you ask “did you understand” I say yes, even though, I actually do not understand. **Interviewer:** That sounds interesting. (Joking tone). Interviewer: (She smiled sheepishly)] (Interview)

In the example above, the participant mentions moments when she felt somewhat embarrassed for being the only one who appeared to lack understanding of a task in class. This was referred to when answering the question about what the participant thought about her classmates’ reaction toward her learning. Then she says she sometimes lies and understands when she does not, so

others do not laugh at her. Some students, as the previous examples show, are vulnerable to certain attitudes or comments made in the class, either from classmates or their teachers.

5.1.2. Out-of-the-classroom Challenges

The adult learners reported experiencing challenges outside of the classroom, such as a lack of educational resources, little exposure to English, lack of educational opportunities, age being seen as a disadvantage, family matters, lack of school-work balance, and unpleasant experiences learning English in the past. The succeeding paragraphs refer to the external factors from the classroom that participants manifest as their principal barriers when attempting to learn English.

Lack of Educational Resources. Lack of resources is another category that emerged from the theme lacks of participants in the study. Some learners describe how material and human resources are scarce outside the classroom, which affects their learning process and, consequently, their motivation to learn English. The subsequent excerpt was obtained from Participant 1:

“Entrevistada: Y entre todos nos ayudábamos. Y yo pienso que eso es muy bonito. En cambio, en el día no son así...Perdón, en la noche no son así. Entrevistadora: ¿Y cuál fue el motivo de usted para cambiarse? Entrevistada: Di profe por la situación económica.” [Interviewer: ...We helped each other. I think that is so nice. But now in day-time they are not light that...Sorry! I meant, in the night-time.. They are not like that. Interviewee: Why did you change your school schedule? Interviewee: For financial reasons, teacher.] (Interview)

Participant 1 refers to how much she regrets not counting on supportive classmates as she did before. She mentioned that she used to study during the daytime, but she had to do a shift because of her financial situation, which forced her to work as a babysitter. This represents decision-making situations in which individuals are influenced and even obligated by their socio-economic conditions.

Participant 5 also mentioned a lack of resources as her primary constraint in learning English. As stated:

“Entrevistadora: Bueno, por acá tenemos otra pregunta. ¿Además de la clase, tiene algún medio o apoyo para practicar inglés, además de la clase? Entrevistada: No. No. Entrevistadora: ¿Ninguna persona, ninguna plataforma o por internet? ¿Algún gringo que conozca usted por ahí? Entrevistada: No” [Interviewer: Besides the class, do you have any other means or resources to practice English? Interviewee: No, no. Interviewer: Not any digital platform, person or internet resource? Any native English speaker who you might know? Interviewee: No.] (Interview)

This participant’s answer reveals a significant lack of supplementary resources for practicing English beyond the classroom setting. Although the participant was asked about alternative means, such as digital platforms, internet resources, or interaction with native speakers, the participant indicated an absence of such opportunities. This scarcity of additional support mechanisms hinders the participant's ability to engage in autonomous practice and reinforces the dependency on the limited resources provided within the formal class environment.

Lack of Present Exposure to English. Lack of exposure is another core aspect that some participants believed to be a constraint in their learning journey. Indeed, exposure to the target language is essential to acquire proficiency when learning a language. Through exposure,

learners can increase their vocabulary repertoire and understand their use in context, for example. With limited exposure, learners have fewer opportunities to learn spontaneously and see the purpose of grammar structures, vocabulary, and differences in pronunciation intonation, among other language features. Unfortunately, in some participants' views, this exposure has not been sufficient, their engagement in learning. For example, Participant 2 talks about aspects he would change in his English learning process. He mentions:

“Entrevistadora: Ok. Bien. Si se pudiera cambiar un aspecto de su aprendizaje del inglés, ¿cuál sería o cuál sería y por qué? Entrevistado: Un aspecto....diay... ehhhh... mmmm... Sí. Lo que pasa es que mi forma de pensar con el inglés es llevar, como te digo, un paso a la vez porque es algo difícil. Es difícil de explicar. Como le cuesta a uno tanto entenderlo el inglés, para mí sería más práctico hacerlo o practicarlo que sé yo, 2 ó 3 veces la misma lección. Alargar un poco más la lección para yo entender. Eso cambiaría en mi entender.” [Interviewer: Alright, if you could change an aspect about your learning of English, what would it be and why? Interviewee: An Aspect? Well.. (appears thoughtful). Well, I think that what happens, from my way of thinking, English requires... how can I put this?.... To make a step at a time because it is difficult. It is hard to make myself clear about this. As it is that hard for me, it would be more practical to practice it in 2 or 3 more lessons... Making the lessons longer, so I can understand. That would change my understanding.] (Interview)

This excerpt highlights the need for more exposure to EFL learning. The participant expresses the difficulty of understanding English, attributing it to insufficient opportunities for practice. He suggests that extending the duration of lessons or repeating them multiple times would be more practical for comprehension. This indicates that the limited exposure to the language, both in

terms of practice frequency and depth, hinders the learning process, making it challenging to grasp and retain new concepts effectively.

Participant 6 also comments on how her lack of exposure to the target language affected her. She expressed:

“Entrevistadora: ¿Usted también sacó sexto en CINDEA? Entrevistada: No, digamos, no CINDEA, pero sí, también era un nocturno también, y no recibíamos inglés, solamente como las cuatro básicas y ha sido muy difícil también, y que le pongan eso, ¿cómo es que se llama? El hábito de estudiar, nunca tuve el hábito de estudiar y no lo tengo, yo creo que ya por lo vieja no lo voy a tener. [Interviewer: Did you finish primary school at CINDEA? Interviewee: No, not at CINDEA, but it was in a night school too and we did not have English classes. We only took basic subjects and it has been very difficult to get that... What is it called? The habit of studying, I never had that and I do not have it. Maybe because now I am old.] (Interview)

In this previous excerpt, the Participant emphasizes the difficulties she currently faces because she was not exposed to English at an early age, as children are now exposed to it. She suggests that getting to know the language and being exposed to it early on would have helped her feel more familiar with it, and she would not feel as frustrated as she does nowadays.

Lack of Educational Opportunities. Another constraint some participants identified is the need for educational opportunities, especially in English learning. Most participants refer to their lack of opportunities in the past and how that affected their early understanding of English. Lack of opportunities is a common factor in rural contexts where individuals prioritize their most immediate needs for survival over their educational needs. Some participants believe their lack of learning opportunities influences their understanding of English and attitudes toward

learning. Some even suggest that the lack of opportunities also shapes their current way of learning. Participant 2 states:

“Entrevistadora: Ah, ok, de acuerdo. Bien. Bueno, entonces el reto más que todo sería el tiempo, ¿verdad? Para el aprendizaje. Ok. ¿Y qué aspectos en sí con respecto al tiempo que usted menciona podrían estar interfiriendo? Digamos, precisamente en inglés. ¿Por qué cree usted que.. qué sé yo, requería más tiempo que ciencias, o estudios, o es lo mismo con las otras materias? Entrevistado: No, no, no, no es lo mismo, porque digamos, el aprender otro lenguaje implica otro reto diferente. Este, más en instancias como mi persona, que cuando yo, en la infancia mía, recibí lecciones en la escuela, no tuve esa oportunidad. No tuve esa oportunidad de escuchar el inglés o empezar a aprender. Hoy en día, sí, los niños, hoy en día, desde que nacen, ya le van inculcando el inglés y llegan a una etapa que se les hace más fácil.” [Participant 2. Interviewer: Ok. Alright. So, the main constraint would be time... right? in your learning process.... And what exactly about time represents a challenge for you in English? I mean.. Why do you think you need more time for English than for other subjects such as Science, Social Studies, among others? Interviewee: No, no, it is not the same. Learning another language implies a different challenge. Back in the say, I did not have the opportunity to listen to English, to learn English. Nowadays, children basically grow up with English, so they come to a point where it becomes easier for them to understand.] (Interview)

As the previous participant stated, a lack of opportunities to learn in the past can significantly influence their current comprehension of English and, therefore, their performance in the target language. He compares himself to contemporary times when learners count on different options to be exposed to and learn the target language.

The following passage is also related to the lack of opportunities in which Participant 5 explained that:

“Entrevistadora: Bien, entonces vamos a empezar con la primera pregunta, ¿cuáles podrían ser los principales retos en el aprendizaje del inglés para usted? Retos, dificultades, obstáculos. Entrevistada: Bueno, a mí me cuesta inglés, pienso yo que tal vez es porque uno no viene desde como los chiquitos ahora que van viendo inglés desde el kinder o materno, no sé, entonces ya a mí me cuesta mucho, no lo entiendo. Yo pienso que es por eso, digamos que tal vez es porque uno no viene desde principio y ya cuando estábamos en quinto y sexto es muy diferente ahora. [Participant 5. Interviewer: Good, so, let’s begin with the first question, what could be the main challenges in learning English for you? Challenges, difficulties or obstacles. Interviewee: Well, I think English is hard for me because I did not start learning it like children now who start learning English since kindergarten or before.. I don’t know... So I think it is so hard for me. I do not understand it. I think that is why. I mean, it is maybe because I could not learn it since the beginning (referring to childhood), so when we first started learning English in primary school (in a night school for adults) it was too different.]” (Interview)

Participant 5 mainly refers to a particular disadvantage she may have for not learning English at the beginning of childhood or youth. She even compares herself with students who are children now and do have that opportunity. She seems to regrettably say that her learning conditions would be different or less challenging now if she had had more alternatives. The lack of educational options mentioned could be driven by other circumstances often experienced in rural areas where individuals prioritize working over studying to sustain their families from an early age financially .

Age Seen as a Disadvantage. This belief was not significantly portrayed in all participants' responses. Only a few participants commented on how age affected their learning process. Participant 4, a mother of five children, housekeeper, and ninth grade, referred to age-problem situations that hindered their learning. She stated:

“Ah, en ese caso ya sí, yo soy una persona mayor de edad y ahí el obstáculo sería que ya se le olvida a uno las cosas, ya uno empieza a que se le olvida cómo pronunciarlo. Más que nada escribirlo, escribirlo a mí me está costando mucho, porque ya uno ya esta edad, ya se los olvida como le digo, entonces diría eso, el obstáculo para aprender que uno ya las manos también le duelen ya para escribir.” [Well, in that case, I am a senior now and the obstacle I find is that I tend to forget things easily. Now people like me, start forgetting how to pronounce words. And mainly writing... It is really hard for me to write because at my age, I forget things, so I would say the main obstacle to learn is that one. My hands sometimes hurt too when writing.] (Interview)

Participant 4 focuses on how her age and physical condition (due to her age) have affected their writing and speaking skills in the target language. She mentions that forgetting things and pain in her hands are consequences of her age, which she believes interferes with her learning.

Similarly, Participant 5, a mother of three children, factory worker, housekeeper, and night grader, sees age as a disadvantage from a different perspective:

“Entrevistadora: Ok, pero más allá de eso, ¿no? Ya no. ¿No lo cree necesario?

(aprender inglés) Entrevistada: Pues necesario sí, porque ahora es la base de todo.

Entrevistadora: No, pero ¿para usted? Entrevistada: Para mí, ya no. Yo creo que no.

Entrevistadora: Ah, ok. Bien. Bueno, ahí ya creo que me contestó un poco la pregunta de

qué beneficio se encuentra estudiar inglés. ¿Por qué no sería necesario para usted?

Entrevistada: *Diay porque, digo, yo pienso que ahorita por la edad también de uno, ya ahorita como que a uno casi no le dan trabajo en cualquier parte.*” **Interviewer:** Ok, but beyond that, don’t you think it is necessary to learn English? **Interviewee:** Well, it is necessary because it is the basis of everything. **Interviewer:** Ok.. Well, you already answered a little bit of the question related to the benefits you find in studying English. But, why do you think it would not be necessary for you? **Interviewee:** Well, because I think now at my age, it is hard to find a job in any place.] (Interview)

Participant 5 does not mention that age particularly affects her learning process, but she does refer to how there is no hurry or perhaps importance for her to learn English, expecting to get a better job because at her age, it is hard to be hired.

Family Matters. Family matters can often signify a barrier to education. These can directly affect their moods, motivation, and perception of learning, especially if they face different challenges. Consequences of motivational scarcity due to family matters could be a lack of concentration and engagement in the class. The upcoming excerpt reflects some family matters that Participant 1 faces and has impacted her learning process. Participant 1 is a single mother of 4 children, a babysitter, a housekeeper, and a cancer survivor. She states:

“Y ahí tengo un niño de ocho años y una niña que está en noveno. Entonces de día trabajo para salir adelante. El papá de mis hijos no ayuda en nada. Ya le he dicho muchas veces y le he puesto la pensión. Y no trabaja. Sólo tiene trabajos casuales. A él le da lo mismo si mis hijas comen. Si van al colegio o no. Yo les digo a mis hijos que agradezcan a Dios que yo siga aquí y que ustedes puedan sacar su bachiller y si pueden

sacar una profesión, pues bienvenido. Pero yo les daré todo lo que pueda a mis hijos. Aunque casi no me la agradezcan profe, porque a veces les digo... (llanto) Perdón, por lo que voy decir, pero es la realidad. Entrevistadora: Tranquila, no se preocupe.”

[**Interviewer:** So I have an 8-year-old-child and a 15-year-old-child. Then, I work in day-time to get ahead. My children 's dad does not provide anything. I have told him many times and I have legally requested the child support he must provide based on the law, but he does not work. He only has informal jobs. He does not mind if my children eat or not... if they go to school or not. I tell my children to be thankful that I am with them and if they can graduate from High School and continue a career, that would be great. I will give everything I can to my children, even though they are grateful enough, teacher, because sometimes I tell them... (crying), sorry for what I am about to say but it is my reality...**Interviewer:** It is okay. Don't you worry.] (Interview)

Participant 1 is a single mother who struggles with juggling different sorts. She refers to how her relationship with some of her children is not healthy. She describes how her children's attitudes make her feel unmotivated and disappointed, alluding to her sacrifices for them under circumstances where an absent father skips his financial and affective responsibilities towards his children. That lack of or scarce emotional support from her relatives could be significant for her concentration, motivation, and study discipline.

Participant 6, mother of 4 children, grandmother of a 2-year-old-baby, factory worker, and tenth grader, speaks on family issues that have affected her motivation towards learning:

“Entrevistadora: Ok, bien. Hay otro aspecto que usted mencionó que me llamó la atención. Usted dice, la reacción de mi familia es como indiferente. Les da igual. ¿Usted cree que, si fuese diferente, usted se sentiría más motivada para aprender? O, no, de

pronto no. **Entrevistada:** Sí, no sé. No sé, porque en el momento en que mi mamá me dijo a mí, me agarró muy tarde, sí me sentí muy decepcionada. Porque uno siempre, siempre espera de... bueno yo no tengo papá, sino que es mi mamá nada más. Entonces yo esperaba como otra reacción de ella. Pero bueno... ok. **Entrevistadora:** ¿Y sus hijas cómo se sienten que la mamá venga a escuela con ellas? **Entrevistada:** Bien. Me imagino. **Entrevistadora:**...porque es un ejemplo. (Entrevistada comienza a llorar). **Entrevistadora:** (trata de empatizar) ... Bueno, no es la primera que le pasa. Y ahorita me hace llorar a mí también. Porque con otra estudiante también, ahí terminamos llorando. **Entrevistada:** Pero bueno. Sí, yo a mis hijas siempre les he ayudado. O les he motivado que estudien siempre. Porque a mí no me lo dieron. Y para mí que ellas estudien y saquen la carrera es lo más importante. **Entrevistadora:** ¿Usted tiene una hija que ya tiene una carrera o están todavía menores? **Entrevistada:** Ella estaba en la universidad y no quiso seguir estudiando. Se la estuve pagando y no quiso. Me enjarané para pagársela y no quiso. La mandé a trabajar, no sirve para trabajar. Es la que tiene el bebé.” [Interviewer: There is another aspect you mentioned that caught my attention. You said your family’s reaction toward your learning process is indifferent, like they do not mind. Do you think that if that were different you would feel more motivated, or it would not change anything? Interviewee: Yes....Well, I don’t know.. When my mom told me that “it was a little late for me to study”, I did feel disappointed because... well... I do have a dad, so it’s only my mom who I have... So, I expected a different reaction from her... Anyways...! Interviewer: What about your children? What do they think about coming to school with their mom? Interviewee: Good, I suppose. Interviewer: sure... you are like a role model... Interviewee: (starts crying). Interviewer: It’s

okay.... it is not the first time this has happened (refers to the crying). I ended up crying with another student in a previous interview. **Interviewee:** Well, yes, I have always helped my children and I have motivated them to always study because I was never given that opportunity. So, my priority is that my children keep studying. **Interviewer:** Do you have a child who studies at the university or all your children are under age?

Interviewee: She used to study at the university, I was paying her tuition, but she did not want to continue studying. I got into debt to pay for her college education and she did not want to study. I sent her to work and she was not suitable for the job. It is the one who is a mother.] (Interview)

The excerpt above represents Participant 6's feelings about the conflicts that she faces in her family, which are related to education and learning. When Participant 6 is asked about her family's reaction towards her knowledge, she remarks on the value of family support and opportunities to learn that, unlike her case, her daughter is given. Still, sadly, she does not seem to appreciate it. Her body language and crying suggest that her disappointment and frustration in being a role model in learning do not appear to be enough. Likewise, this situation deeply affects her motivation toward learning.

School-Work Balance. Balance appears to be a significant factor affecting participants' motivation. As adult learners, it is natural to expect them to have several more responsibilities besides studying and learning. Participants of the present study are all parents, most of them single mothers, housekeepers, and financial providers, and three of them have underage children. Undoubtedly, they carry many responsibilities as parents, workers, and students. Some participants talked about their daily struggles to keep a healthy balance between work, which is often their priority for being financial providers at their homes, and school, which is also a

commitment for them because it represents an opportunity to improve their life quality in different manners. Particularly about school-work balance, Participant 2, father of adult children, Quality Inspector, a 42-year-old man, and ninth grader, comments:

“Entrevistadora: ¿cuáles podrían ser los principales retos que podría tener usted en el aprendizaje del inglés? Entrevistado: Los principales retos, bueno, diay, en veces la falta de tiempo, la falta de tiempo porque uno es un adulto, padre de familia y todo eso, entonces se genera mucho gasto de tiempo en otras situaciones. Entonces, se le hace complicado, complicado el estudio. Entrevistadora: Utilizar más tiempo de su familia para estudiar es algo, algo que implica tiempo, entiendo. ¿La jornada laboral suya de cuántas horas es? Entrevistado: La jornada mía, laboral es de 11 horas o más, entonces yo ingreso 6 y 30 de la mañana, y puedo llegar a salir hasta las 7.30 de la noche, algo así. Entrevistadora: Y eso es todos los días? Entrevistado: Todos los días.

Entrevistadora: De lunes a viernes? Entrevistado: de lunes a sábado.” [Interviewer:

What would be the main challenges you could have in your English learning process?

Interviewee: The main challenge, well, sometimes is the lack of time, the lack of time because I am an adult, a father and all that, so it takes a lot of time in different situations.

So, studying can become quite difficult. **Interviewer:** Using more time with family while studying can become hard to manage, I understand. How is your work schedule?

Interviewee: My work schedule consists of 11 hours per day or more. I start working at 6:30am and I can go out of work around 7:30pm, something like that. **Interviewer:**

Everyday? **Interviewee:** Everyday. **Interviewer:** From Monday to Friday? **Interviewee:** From Monday to Saturday.]

Participant 2 mentions time as a primary constraint to balance his time with his family and additional time to study outside the class. He considers that time is crucial to learning English, and due to his extensive work hours and family life, he finds it quite challenging to learn English. He suggests that it is hard to maintain a healthy balance between school and work. Hence, the participant mentioned that these obstacles are time-consuming and affect their learning progress. This situation might lead to feelings such as frustration or a sense of failure.

Participant 3, a married woman with underage children, cook, and eighth grader indicates issues related to school-work-balance:

“Entrevistadora: Ok, bien. Bueno, ¿qué otro obstáculo, qué otro reto podría mencionar usted? Además de esa parte que no se escribe igual a como se pronuncia. ¿Qué otra dificultad? Entrevistada: En mi caso personal, por el horario. Entrevistadora: Ah, ok. Entrevistada: Me pierdo las clases de inglés, después ya no encuentro la pizarra con las letras ahí es difícil.” [Participant 3. Interviewer: Ok, good. Well, what is another obstacle or challenge that you could mention? Besides the difference between spelling and pronunciation. What is another difficulty? Interviewee: In my case, the schedule. When I come to class, I have missed most of the class. Then I do not understand what is written on the board. That I find hard!]

Participant 3 comments that balancing work with school has become a core challenge for their English learning. She regrets how frequently she misses English class and cannot get to school on time.

Unpleasant Experiences Learning English in the Past. Unpleasant experiences in the past could have a significant impact on learners and remain longer than one might think. These experiences could even carry traumas and psychological side effects that hinder learners’

attitudes in future occasions. Under such circumstances, learners could experience indisposition and aversion towards certain classes, individuals, or environments. Thus, it is crucial to understand participants' thoughts on the issue and to address different alternatives that aid language teachers in coping with the situation. Concerning this issue, Participant 2 notes:

“Entrevistado: Uy, casi no recuerdo mucho, pero no fueron muy gratas porque en realidad, como dicen, topamos con mala suerte, topamos con profesores que tenían el acto de presencia y no fueron muy gratos en el intento de aprendizaje de inglés.

Entrevistadora: ¿Como que no los ponían a practicar, tal vez? Entrevistado: No, no nos daban el trabajo suficiente. Y algo que cuando se están empezando en el estudio de inglés, creo que es muy importante hacer explicación. No que te pongan con una hoja y te digan, haga eso. Y eso sucedía.” [Interviewee: Honestly, I don't remember that much,

but those were not quite pleasant actually, as people say, we ran into bad luck, we had teachers who barely showed up to class and they were not very welcoming in teaching English. Interviewer: Like they did not make you practice enough, perhaps?

Interviewee: No, they didn't give us enough practice and I think that when you begin studying English, it is very important to explain extensively, not just give you a worksheet and tell you to do a task. That is what happened.] (Interview)

Participant 2 describes his early experiences in learning English, which were not pleasant or motivating. He highlights that his first experiences were not entirely pleasant because he believes that English classes, precisely, must count with clear explanations and constant practice. He found himself in previous English courses filling in a worksheet with apparently no meaning for him. Other participants did not describe their first experiences of learning English as unpleasant but insignificant. They were asked if those experiences somehow affected their motivation, and

they both said they did. Participant 2 suggested that it was now different, but back in the day, English was irrelevant, and he did not feel motivated.

Participant 6 drew attention to her unpleasant experiences while learning English:

“Entrevistadora: Bien. ¿Cuáles y cómo fueron sus primeras experiencias en el aprendizaje del inglés? Entrevistada: Fue como una película de terror. Entrevistadora: ¿Sí? una película de terror? qué fuerte eso. Entrevistada: Sí, porque no me gustan y las veo para mí son frustrantes. Entrevistadora: Ok, pero esa primera experiencia, cuéntame cómo fue, digamos, por qué película de terror, ¿cómo se sintió usted? Entrevistada: Como cuando usted llega a un lugar nuevo, un lugar que usted no conoce a nadie ni nada, y usted no sabe ni si moverse o algo, si usted dice algo mal, se lo van a ver mal, si usted pronuncia algo mal, si se van a reír o no, es así, porque si usted no tiene conocimiento prácticamente de nada y que le lleguen a hablar y usted se queda... (gesto de sorpresa) [Participant 6 :Interviewer: Good, How were your first experiences of learning English like? Interviewee: Like a horror movie. Interviewee: Really? How hard that sounds. Interviewee: Yes, because I do not like them and for me, they are frustrating. (referring to English classes). Interviewer: Alright, tell me.. Why do you think they were like horror movies? How did you feel? Interviewee: It is like when you come to a new place, a place where you don't know anybody or anything and you don't know if you shall move or do anything, if you say something wrong, people would stare at you, if you pronounce something wrong, people would laugh at you... It is like that, because you don't have the knowledge about basically anything and the someone starts talking to you, you go like... (shocking expression)] (Interview)

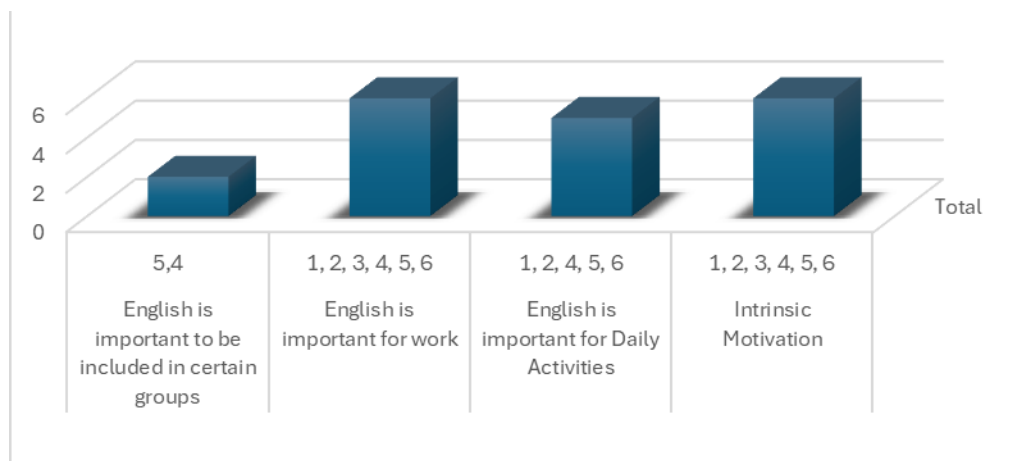
In this narration, Participant 6 showed how traumatic those first experiences with English were for her, so much so that it still has consequences on her attitude toward learning. She even compares her experiences with a “horror movie,” where she could not move or talk for fear of making mistakes and being judged by her teacher or classmates. She evokes frustration, anxiety, and confusion during those first English classes and attributes those experiences to her current attitude towards English; “that’s why it does not like me; it makes me feel frustrated (referring to the English class).

5.2. Purpose of Learning English

The following section examines the instrumental significance of learning English as expressed by the study participants. Their responses revealed four key categories within this theme: the perception that English is essential for inclusion in certain social groups, which emerged as the weakest category; the belief that English is crucial for professional opportunities, identified as the strongest category; the idea that English holds practical value for use in daily activities and a fourth one related to intrinsic motivation. The analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of how participants view the role of English in their personal and professional lives. Figure 2 illustrates the categories discussed in this section.

Figure 2

Participants’ Purposes of Learning English



Note. The previous figure represents participants' thoughts on the purposes they find in learning English.

5.2.1. English as Important to be Included in Certain Groups

Learning English to be included in certain groups refers to groups that are not explicitly job-related. Related to this necessity for English, Participant 4 recounted:

“Entrevistadora: ¿Qué beneficios encuentra en aprender inglés, además de los que me ya me mencionó? Entrevistada: Beneficios en sí. Y trabajos, especialmente la gente joven, ¿verdad? Entrevistadora: ¿Pero para usted en específico? Entrevistada: ¿Para mí? Entrevistadora: aparte de comunicarse y entender. ¿Qué otros beneficios? Entrevistada: Comunicarme con mis hijos cuando hablan inglés...Puede ser...Me gustaría eso. Sí, aprender qué es lo que dicen ellos o cualquiera.” [Participant 4:

Interviewee: What benefits do you find in learning English, besides the ones you previously mentioned? **Interviewee:** Benefits, yes. Job opportunities, especially for young people, right?. **Interviewer:** And what could be a benefit for you specifically? **Interviewee:** For me? **Interviewer:** Besides communicating and understanding... What

other benefits? **Interviewee:** Communicating with my children. Yes, that could be... Learning what they say or anyone else.] (Interview)

Participant 4 encounters a purpose of learning English that goes beyond finding a job or increasing her income. She mentions how she wishes to understand what her children speak. Accordingly, she sees learning English as a means to be part of a communication group where her children are.

In the same category, Participant 5, mother of 3 children, factory worker, and ninth grader, comments:

“Entrevistadora: Ahora, ¿usted considera importante aprender inglés? Entrevistada: Sí, claro. Entrevistadora: ¿Por qué? Entrevistada: Dìay, porque prácticamente ahora todo uno tiene que saber inglés, para todo. Pero ahí sí sería bonito, porque usted dice que a veces ve una película y a veces no la puede poner en español, tiene que ser en inglés, entonces uno se queda, (expresión de confusión) o sea, nada que ver, verla, porque no entiende.” [**Participant 5:** Interviewer: Now, do you consider it important to learn English? Interviewee: Yes, of course. Interviewer: Why? Interviewee: Well, because now we have to know English basically for everything. But it would be nice to learn English because sometimes you say you want to watch a movie and you sometimes cannot play it in Spanish, it has to be played in English, then you go like (confusion expression), I mean, there’s no point to watch it if you don’t understand.] (Interview)

In the context of adult learners, the importance of English is often underscored by their desire to engage with global cultural and professional environments. Participant 5 emphasizes the necessity of English by stating, “prácticamente ahora todo uno tiene que saber inglés, para todo.” This sentiment reflects the pervasive role of English in contemporary life, where understanding

the language is crucial for accessing media, such as films that may not be available in their native language. The learner's frustration with not comprehending films highlights how English serves as a gateway to cultural experiences and group inclusion, reinforcing the motivation to achieve proficiency in the language.

5.2.2. English as Important for Work

English is often seen as essential to improving one's professional profile and finding better job opportunities or remuneration. This belief is quite present in the context of the present study. Overall, all participants immediately recognized that it was relevant for work purposes. Interestingly, most of them also confirm that job opportunities in which English is required are only sometimes encountered in their context. Therefore, although they all find learning English beneficial, that possible advantage has yet to be seen in their current days. Participant 3 gives her opinion about the purpose of learning English in life:

“Entrevistadora: ¿Usted considera importante aprender inglés? Entrevistada: Sí, profe. Yo considero que sí. Entrevistadora: ¿Por qué? Entrevistada: Porque me gusta desenvolverme en el ámbito de cocina. Entonces, no sé, yo pienso que tal vez cuando un día ya mis hijos sean mayores, y yo esté mayor también y ya no tenga bebés, irme como para esos lados, Jacó, Puntarenas.” [Participant 3: Interviewer: Do you consider it important to learn English? Interviewee: Yes, I do. Interviewer: Why? Interviewee: Because I live to work in the cook field, then I think that when my kids grow up, I am older and I don't have babies, I can go to Jacó, Puntarenas.] (Interview)

Participant 3 talks about going to Jacó in Puntarenas province because it is a tourist place where she believes she could have a job opportunity if she knew English. Throughout the interview, she

constantly refers to how her motivation towards learning English has increased because now she wishes to keep working as a cook and communicate in English in her workplace.

Participant 6 expresses that learning English could improve her professional profile for a future job opportunity, too:

“Entrevistadora: Sí, las oportunidades. Ahorita, laboralmente, ¿usted cree que le serviría el inglés a aprender ahora o no tiene trabajo ahorita? Entrevistada: Yo tengo trabajo. Pero en lo laboral, sí sería súper importante. Entrevistadora: ¿Usted cree, por ejemplo, que en el puesto que usted tiene ahorita, el aprender inglés le ayudaría, qué sé yo, a que le pongan un mejor puesto? Entrevistada: No, ahorita en el trabajo que yo tengo, no. Pero sí buscaría en otro lado. Entrevistadora: Ah, ok. En otro lugar... Como para abrir su currículum. Entrevistada: Sí, sí, sí me serviría bastante, sí me ayudaría bastante. [Interviewer: Yes, job opportunities. Now, about that, do you think learning English now would be helpful for you now, or you don't have a job right now? Interviewee: I do have a job, pero still, it would be important. Interviewer: Do you think that you could get a promotion at your work right now if you knew English? Interviewee: No, not in my current job position, but I would look for better opportunities somewhere else. (If I knew English). Interviewer: Alright... somewhere else.. like improving your curriculum? Interviewee: Yes, that would help me a lot... a lot.]

(Interview)

As reflected in the previous excerpt, the participant considers that she could improve their job opportunities shortly. She believes that learning English is quite salient for work purposes.

Participant 6 affirms that she needs to see an opportunity for promotion via English in her current

job. However, she recognizes that she could grow professionally elsewhere if she learned English.

5.2.3. English as Important for Daily Activities

Learning English is also significant for communicating in daily activities, based on the participants' responses. A worth-mentioning aspect related to this outcome is that in the participants' context, English is not spoken in daily activities, which suggests they see their realities in an already globalized society in which English is included in their surroundings: trendy digital material, publicity in home products, TV and social media, occasional tourism scenarios and others. Thus, they comment on different random but realistic scenarios where they might need to understand English and communicate with it. In this regard, Participant 4 states:

“Entrevistada: ...aprender inglés ya sería para aprender algo y para, digamos, en una ocasión que tenga que leer alguna receta que tiene inglés o tal vez que salga del país o que tenga que encontrarme con alguna persona que quiera alguna dirección que pueda ayudarla. [Interviewee: Learning English is useful when, if the occasion happens, you have to read a recipe that is in English or maybe if you travel, or if you meet a person who needs a direction, so I can help him/her/them.] (Interview)

As reflected in the excerpt above, Participant 4 speaks on some of her daily needs in which she could see herself limited by her inability to understand English. As Participant 4 is also a housekeeper, understanding a recipe is one of her necessities and daily duties. Again, she mentions how that could represent an obstacle to her view of English outside the classroom; thus, she sees the value of learning English to do simple tasks that, in today's society, could be presented not only in her mother tongue.

Participant 1, mother of four children, cancer survivor, babysitter and eleventh grader also considers that English is relevant to help children in their assignments in her neighborhood:

“Entrevistada: Y también usted puede ayudarle a los niños de su mismo barrio, cuando no entienden un trabajo, pueden llegar a su casa y consultarles a usted.” [Participant 1:

Interviewee: You can also help children in your neighborhood when they don’t understand an assignment; they can go to your home and ask you about it.] (Interview). This participant mentioned that helping others in the neighborhood could be an immediate need in her context and that she would be glad to help if she knew English. It is also interesting to notice how participants perceive society or their realities where English is daily present. Therefore, they need to understand it and communicate with it.

4.2.4. Intrinsic Motivation

Some participants indicate intrinsic motivation by showing commitment to learning and awareness of their learning. As Ryan & Deci (2018) characterized, intrinsic motivation refers to a natural predisposition to perform a specific task. This willingness obeys the individuals’ psychological needs related to autonomy and competence. On this matter, Participant 1 alludes

“Entrevistada: Cómo es la reacción de sus compañeros (as) de clase con respecto a su aprendizaje del inglés? Entrevistada:me ha costado llevarme bien con el grupo y lloré bastante por eso. Y dije, es un reto, un escalón más. No por esto voy a dejar mis estudios botados. Tengo que seguir adelante. Si estoy aquí es porque tengo la capacidad. Nadie dijo que iba a ser fácil terminar, ha sido difícil porque ha sido difícil ahora que estoy trabajando y estudiando. A veces llego súper cansada, como le dije, a veces llego hasta sin comer. Que agradezco esa comida que nos dan porque a veces yo estoy vacía y eso le da a una como pilas para seguir adelante.” [Interviewer: How is your

classmates' reaction regarding your learning of English? **Interviewee:** It's been quite hard for me to get along with the group and I cried a lot because of that. And I said "this is a challenge, another step forward. If I am here it is because I am capable enough. Nobody said it would be easy. I won't drop out of school for this" Sometimes I come home exhausted, like I said before without having eaten. I am so thankful for the food they give me (at school). Sometimes I come to school on an empty stomach and that little food I am given helps me to feel a bit more energized to keep trying.] (Interview)

As shown previously, Participant 1 answered a question related to their opinion on their classmates' reaction toward their learning. She appears not to have a collaborative relationship with her peers. Nevertheless, she seems to have a positive inner dialogue. She exemplifies the phrases she tells herself, "This is a challenge more, a step forward, I am not going to drop school for this." Therefore, she motivates herself to continue studying despite not feeling entirely comfortable with her classmates.

Additionally, Participant 3, mother of 3 children, factory worker, woman in her forties, and ninth grader, expresses the following about the same question:

“Entrevistadora: *¿Y cuál cree usted que es la reacción, bueno, la reacción de sus compañeros y compañeras con respecto a su aprendizaje?* **Entrevistada:** *La percepción que ellos es que me hacen bullying. Ellos hacen bullying a nosotros (tono burlesco).*

Entrevistadora: *¿Usted cree? Sí. Sí. ¿Y eso cómo la hace sentir?* **Entrevistada:** *A mí me da igual. Porque yo misma me río de mí, digamos, cuando yo pronuncio algo que ni me sale, pero sale algo ahí parecido y ahí va a estar la intención, por lo menos. A mí no me desmotiva, porque yo sé que estoy aprendiendo. Tal vez un día lo haga bien. Ah, bueno. yo sé que yo estoy aprendiendo. Tal vez un día, o sea, la fe es un día dominarlo o por lo*

menos defenderme mejor. Sí. Pero ahorita, o sea, a mí no me afecta. No, porque yo sé que estoy aprendiendo y no sé.” [**Interviewer:** What do you think is your classmates’ reaction about your learning of English? **Interviewee:** My perception is that they engage in bullying (laughs). **Interviewer:** Do you think so? And how does that make you feel? **Interviewee:** Well, I don’t mind because I even laugh at myself when I pronounce something wrong because I can’t do it, so I try to pronounce it as good as I can. So at least I try. I don’t feel demotivated because I know I am learning. Perhaps, someday, I can do it right. I know I am just learning. I have the hope to someday master English or at least, manage to communicate. Then, my classmates’ reaction does not really matter to me. I know I am learning and I am not knowledgeable yet.]

Participant 3 considers that her classmates might laugh at her when she tries to pronounce English. Notwithstanding, she seems to express an intrinsic motivation towards learning, pointing out that regardless of their peers’ opinions or other circumstances, she is still learning. She is quite aware of her goal, which is graduating from high school (as she commented earlier in the interview). Then, she is pretty confident in her situation, and her attitude pushes her to accomplish her goals. Again, this type of motivation could significantly boost learners’ knowledge if their educational needs were fulfilled.

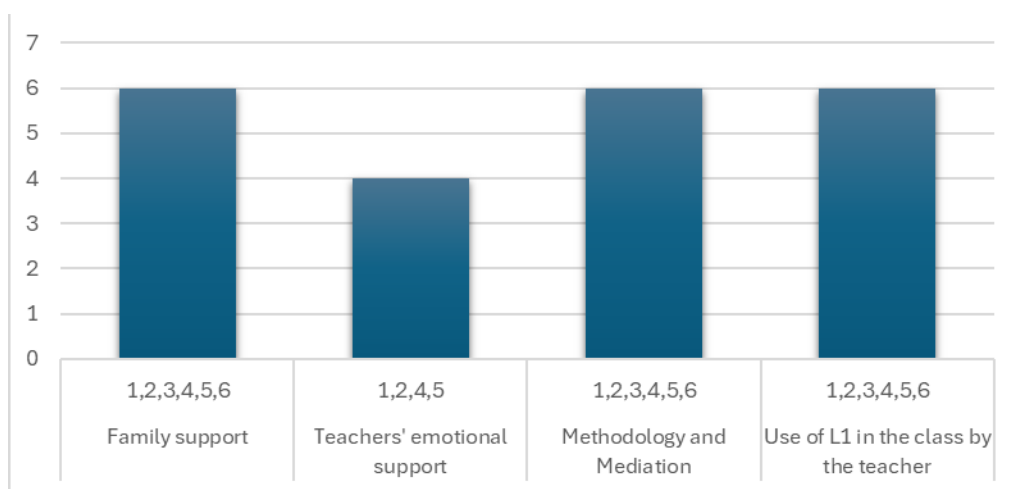
5.3. Expectations of Learners When Learning English

The following section explores learners’ expectations when learning English as observed and expressed by the study participants. This theme encompasses several key categories (See Figure 3): the role of family support in the learning process, the significance of teachers’ emotional support, the impact of teachers’ methodology and mediation, and the

teacher's use of L1 in the classroom. These categories provide insight into the various factors that shape learners' expectations and experiences in acquiring English language skills.

Figure 3

Participants' Expectations when Learning English



Note. The figure above reflects participants' opinions on their learning needs and expectations when learning English.

4.3.1. Family Support

Family support becomes a salient ally for learners, especially when they face challenges in their learning journey. Learners who count on their relatives' emotional and financial support reduce the distractions from their studies simply because they have someone to rely on. This support is often key to the learners' moods and psychological health, affecting their performance during class and, more importantly, their genuine learning.

Participant 1 comments about the support she receives from one of her daughters:

Entrevistada: *Y ella me dice, mami, yo me siento muy orgullosa porque usted lleva el colegio y porque hace cursos extraordinarios. Y entonces ella misma me anima, también*

me seca las lágrimas y me hace salir de ahí, de ese lugar (donde la mente lo lleva).

Entonces ya, yo vuelvo a retomarme otra vez y vuelvo a ser yo. [Participant 1:

Interviewee: So, she says (the participants' daughter), I feel very proud because you go to school and you take extra classes courses. So, she motivates me, she dries my tears and makes me release those negative thoughts in my mind. So, I come back to myself.]

(Interview).

The example above indicates how family support seems to be an aspect that is directly connected with the learners' motivation. In adult learning, specifically in the context of the present study, students expect their support from their partners, but mainly their children. In rural contexts, it is expected to find that many adult children still live with their parents or close to them. As a result, as parents, the participants somehow suggest in some of their responses how they expect to receive a sort of retribution for the sacrifices they made in the past for their children. Despite this is not always the case, some participants manifest satisfaction with the support they receive from their relatives and remark on the significance it has in their decision to continue studying and learning.

Another excerpt that exemplifies the significance of family support in learning English is the following presented by Participant 4, mother of adult learners, 56-year-old lady, housekeeper, and student:

“Entrevistadora: Ok, bien. Ok, usted me decía que la familia está contenta. ¿Cómo, cómo sabe usted que, que su familia le gustaría o está contenta de que usted aprenda inglés? ¿Usted podría mencionar algunos ejemplos? Entrevistada: Ya, ella, pero digamos, mi hija me motivó para que entrara a estudiar. Mis hijos también, ellos, ellos me motivan, me ayudan en lo que ellos pueden para que yo aprenda, hablar un poco de

inglés y que aprenda un poquito también de todo, de todo un poco en el colegio, de lo que se enseñan ahí.” [Interviewer: Alright, you mentioned that your family is happy. How do you know your family is happy because you study English? Could you mention some examples of that? Interviewee: Well, my daughter motivated me to start studying. My other children also motivate me, help me, so I can learn, speak a little English and learn a little bit from what is taught in school, in general.] (Interview)

As seen before, Participant 4 shows gratefulness and admits how her daughter motivated her to study and continue learning. The support she receives is fundamental in her motivation towards learning. The relation among close relatives could determine learners’ performance at school. The relation type could lead to encouragement or demotivation, especially if learners face challenges that are hard to handle for different reasons. Healthy feedback to learners, provided by individuals with an emotional bond, exemplified in Participant 4’s words, can bring positive attitudes toward learning. Feeling validated and encouraged by individuals who learners see often and share with them frequently can lead them to find reasonable strategies that help them cope with their difficulties in learning.

4.3.2. Teachers’ Emotional Support

Teacher’s emotional support can significantly aid learners who struggle with learning and lack motivation, even in adult learning. Adult learners are life-centered, as Knowles et al. (2005) suggested. This refers to the fact adult learners have different responsibilities that can emotionally drain them: family or children, job, debts, and social expectations, among other adult-material- circumstances. Therefore, Knowles et al. (2005) also recommended teachers approach adult learners from a horizontal approach in which their opinions and sentiments are

validated and considered in the classroom. This approach includes the need to support learners emotionally and not only academically.

Concerning emotional support, Participant 1 commented:

***Entrevistada:** ustedes no saben porque yo amo tanto los profes, porque ellos son mi timón, porque aquí es mi casa. **Entrevistadora:** Ay, Milagritos, me va a hacer llorar también. **Entrevistada:** Es la realidad, yo les decía a ellos que era mi casa y cuando yo me voy a graduar, yo sé que voy a llorar, porque ha sido mi casa. Ustedes han sido mis amigos, en las buenas y en las malas. He pasado cosas duras y siempre han estado ahí animándome para que no deje los estudios botados y yo se los agradezco con todo el corazón y lo que he logrado es porque yo los amo a ustedes. Me ha llegado aquí (señala su pecho) y también no tendrán muchas cosas para darles, pero todos ustedes me han dado en este corazón. [Interviewee: You don't know why I love my teachers so much because they have been my steering wheel, because school is my home. Interviewer: You are going to make me cry too. Interviewee: It's real...I have told my teacher school is my home and when I get graduated I know I will cry because school has been my home. You teachers have been my friends in good and bad times. I've been through a difficult time and you've been there always motivating me to continue studying and I highly appreciate that and what I have achieved is because I love you teacher so much. All that you have done for me has been kept here (she points out her heart). I might not have many things to give you, but all of you teachers have strengthened my heart.]*

(Interview)

Participant 1 explicitly expresses affection toward her teachers and school in the previous excerpt. The participant also explains how she often felt motivated in her most baffling moments

in life. The participant's experience demonstrates the value of emotional support in learners' lives in academic, personal, and psychological files. Emotional support, as exemplified, could be represented by encouraging words, gestures, understanding, or simply through listening. Teachers who go beyond the academic subject and try to understand learners' lives, expectations, and goals could encounter the origin of learning issues that can be handled promptly and accurately.

Participant 5 also expresses how her teachers' emotional support has been crucial in her determination to keep studying:

“Entrevistadora: Ok. Bien. ¿Cómo es la reacción de su docente en cuanto al aprendizaje del inglés? Entrevistada: Bueno, yo en ese sentido también siento apoyo por usted. Porque usted lo anima a uno ahí. Como ayer que usted nos estaba diciendo que nosotros veníamos a aprender que ninguno sabía. Entonces, pues uno se siente un poquito motivado. Que no vaya tal vez a entender yo...pero que... Y que por lo menos lo motivan a uno. Que uno tal vez no entiende porque no sabe. Pero que va a aprender en algún momento tal vez.” [Alright, what is your teachers' reaction about your learning of English? Interviewee: Well, in that sense, I also feel support from you. You motivated us. Like yesterday! You were saying that we came here to learn, that nobody knew English. So, we sort of feel a little motivated. That does not mean that we will understand, but at least I feel motivated. I know I don't understand because I don't know English... but perhaps, I will learn sometime.]

The participants' experience remarks on the positive impact of teachers' emotional support on their motivation to learn English. The excerpt above represents another example where teachers'

emotional support, as stated by some participants, can bring positive attitudes to learners despite their challenges. As reflected by Participant 5, she is deeply aware of her learning difficulties, but feeling motivated somehow makes her hopeful of learning. That hope is crucial for learners to continue doing their best to succeed. As discussed earlier, adult learners could face conflicts of different sorts, such as familial, work-related, and psychological, which may hinder them from continuing learning. Thus, these possible problematic situations could urge them the need to be heard, understood, and appreciated.

5.2.3. Teachers' Methodology and Mediation

Another expectation that study participants appear to have is related to the teachers' methodology and mediation. The approach used by the teacher in the class could easily arouse interest in learners or otherwise disconnect them entirely from learning. This delicate decision is often influenced by several factors: available resources, learners' proficiency, learners' styles, guidelines and norms to follow based on the school's philosophy, and more components. Teachers might not always include all or many components for distinct reasons. Then, learners' expectations about methodology in class are frequently complex to meet.

Participant 1 refers to the matter of teacher's methodology and mediation:

Bueno, qué aspecto me gustaría cambiar, me gustaría que el inglés fuera un poco más entretenido, porque bueno, le voy a poner un ejemplo, teníamos el otro año, el año pasado, por decirlo así, teníamos un profe, que creo que se llamaba Evelyn, y ella nos enseñaba el inglés cantando, y para nosotros era muy entretenido, porque aprendíamos demasiado rápido y ella se sorprendió, y yo le decía, profe, es que usted hace el inglés cantado con canciones y lo escribimos, a nosotros nos sorprende cómo usted hace para enseñarnos así, y en realidad hacemos las cosas súper bien, entonces yo pienso como

estudiante que a veces está bien ponernos a escribir, pero si tal vez le pondrían un poco de sazón o creatividad, el estudiante se interesaría más por eso, y por eso se motiva.

[Well, an aspect I would like to change about my English class is that classes were more entertaining. For example, last year we had a teacher, I think her name was Evelyn, she used to teach us English through singing and for us, that was quite fun because we learned faster and she even got surprised for that. I used to tell her “teacher, you teach us English singing, through songs, so we were surprised how she managed to teach us like that and actually we did all tasks successfully. So I think, as a student that it's okay to write, but perhaps with a little bit of creativity in class, a student could be more interested and motivated in learning.] (Interview)

The participant refers to the methodology in the class and its role as a motivating component toward learning. She elaborates on how more entertaining activities that go beyond simply writing could be beneficial in engaging learners with the class. Considering multiple learners' styles and reactions toward certain activities in class becomes a crucial task for teachers to maintain interest and motivation in learners toward learning. The previous excerpt demonstrates the learner's maturity in identifying what has been helpful for her and what can be improved to increase her motivation. This characteristic of adult learning could become a salient advantage in contributing more repertoire in learning methodology that allows learners to raise their motivation.

Moreover, Participant 2 also states on teachers' methodology and mediation:

“Entrevistadora: ¿cómo es, según su criterio, la reacción de su docente en cuanto a su aprendizaje del inglés? Entrevistado: Bueno, como lo mencioné anteriormente, mi

primera experiencia no fue muy buena. Tuve unos docentes que en realidad no mostraron ese carisma y ese amor que traen ellos por el inglés, que es lo contrario que noto en lo actual. Mi profesora, pues para mí, no solo para mí, sino para mis compañeros, aunque algunos renieguen, en realidad, todos están contentos y yo estoy contento porque siempre nos ha dado una buena línea de trabajo, nos ha tenido la paciencia de explicarnos adecuadamente y nos explica una, dos, tres veces, hasta que uno entienda, tal vez no el cien por ciento, pero sí entiende un buen porcentaje que le ayuda a uno.” [Interviewer:

How would you describe, in your opinion, your teacher's reaction to your English learning? **Interviewee:** Well, as I mentioned before, my first experience wasn't very good. I had some teachers who, actually didn't show that charisma and love they have for English, which is the opposite of what I notice now. My teacher, well, for me, and not just for me but for my classmates too, even though some might complain, actually, everyone is happy, and I am happy because she has always provided us with a good work structure. She has been patient in explaining things to us properly, and she explains once, twice, three times until we understand—not necessarily one hundred percent, but we understand a good enough percentage that helps us.] (Interview)

Learners' expectations regarding teachers' methodology and mediation can significantly impact their motivation toward learning, as illustrated by Participant 2's thoughts. Participant 2 comments on switching from unpleasant experiences to more satisfactory learning moments. He attributes his satisfaction in learning to the active role he appears to have in current days during the classroom. He suggests being glad about the work assigned during the class because he could practice more complex subjects for him to understand. The self-awareness of learning appears to be a core characteristic in adult learners who appreciate a methodology in class that allows them

to be true protagonists of their learning process rather than just expectant. Then, more active class participation is one of the main expectations in the methodology in class.

5.2.4. Use of L1 (First Language) in the Class by the Teacher

Using a first language in a foreign language could be a debate topic in language education. Experts such as Sampson (2012) suggested that the occasional use of L1 can positively influence learners' understanding of instructions and vocabulary that might appear ambiguous. On the other hand, Tanriseven and Kirkgöz (2021) concluded that excessive use of L1 limits exposure time to the target language and diminishes learning opportunities. Using L1 might reduce their frustration and foster their class participation.

The following was noticed during an observation of Participant 4 in the English class:

The participant does not feel comfortable when I speak English. However, I have explained to her several times that we cannot only use Spanish and that it is crucial to have some exposure to English, but we will use Spanish sometimes. She is a 56-year-old student whose personality is extroverted. She is known as a leader in her community. She used to work in the local government in her community. She is disciplined and committed. She is also straightforward and does not seem shy or embarrassed to ask something in class. (Observation)

As observed in Participant 4, discomfort arose when English was used extensively, despite the teacher's explanation of the importance of exposure to English. Her disconformity comes across as hindering her confidence when participating in class. Learners such as Participant 4, who are extroverted and participatory, could find limitations in interacting in an EFL class if they need help understanding instructions, exercises, or questions. Their reliance on L1 gives the

impression of their willingness to fully understand and give sense to what they are supposed to do. In appearance, using L1 more often in class positively impacts their confidence and reduces their possible confusion in understanding the target language.

Another example where the use of L1 by the teacher in class was evoked occurred during the interview conducted with Participant 5. She states:

“Entrevistadora: ¿Con quinto y sexto de primaria? ¿Sí? ¿Usted sacó primaria como adulta? Entrevistada: Sí. Ah, sí, sí. ¿Y en quinto y sexto vio inglés? Sí, pero no me costó como ahora. Entrevistadora: ¿Ahora le cuesta más? Entrevistada: De hecho, me había eximido. Entrevistadora: ¿Ajá? Entrevistada: Ajá. ¿Y qué cree usted, digamos, que ahora le está costando más? Entrevistada: Porque cuando estábamos en quinto y sexto no nos explicaban en inglés y español, digamos, usted también lo hace, pero cuando nosotros llegamos a, bueno, yo le digo primero del colegio, nosotros lo resentimos, porque el examen obviamente era de inglés como nos dijeron, entonces todo venía en inglés y nosotros no sabíamos ni a dónde iba la fecha, ni a dónde todo eso. Entrevistadora: ¿Digamos, en primaria les ponían el examen en español? ¿español e inglés? ¿Así Digamos, no solamente la explicación, sino lo que escribían? Entrevistada: Ajá.”

[**Interviewer:** With fifth and sixth grade? Yes? Did you complete elementary school as an adult? **Interviewee:** Yes. Ah, yes, yes. **Interviewer:** And in fifth and sixth grade, did you study English? **Interviewee:** Yes, but it wasn't as difficult as it is now. **Interviewer:** Is it harder for you now? **Interviewee:** In fact, I had been exempted. **Interviewer:** Really? **Interviewee:** Uh-huh. **Interviewer:** And what do you think, let's say, is making it more difficult for you now? **Interviewee:**

Because when we were in fifth and sixth grade, they didn't explain in both English and Spanish. I mean, you do that too, but when we got to—well, what I call the first year of high school—we struggled, because the exam, as they told us, was entirely in English. So, everything was in English, and we didn't even know where to put the date or where anything went. Interviewer: In elementary school, did they give you the exam in Spanish? In Spanish and English? Like, not just the explanation, but also what they wrote? **Interviewee:** Uh-huh.] (Interview)

The use of L1 by the teacher in class emerges as an essential need and expectation among learners to understand the target language better, as evidenced by Participant 5's reflection. More significantly, adult learners purport to be quite aware of their learning and recognize the reasons for their success or failures through it. This is the case of Participant 5, who clearly describes that her major conflict in understanding English is the transition from a class where the use of L1 was more present to a current class where the translation is not concurrent. This particularity has dramatically concerned the participant and caused her confusion, inadaptability, and demotivation toward learning. Namely, the limited use of L1 in the English class symbolizes a core issue in learners that connects to their motivation toward learning.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

The study's main purpose was to understand the factors that might be affecting adult learners' motivation toward learning English in a rural context. The following questions guided the study: a) *What are the main challenges adult learners face in learning English?* (b) *What purpose do they see for English in their lives?* and (c) *What are their expectations when trying to study English?* Recalling the context of this study, participants are situated in a rural area in Pococí, a canton from a Costa Rican province called Limón. The school where the study is carried out is located in a zone where agricultural activities and companies represent one of the prime employment sources for individuals. The study was conducted with adult learners whose age ranged from 38-56 years old.

As described in the previous chapter, the main challenges affecting adult learners' motivation towards learning consist of a lack of comprehension skills, peer support, self-autonomy of learning, exposure to the target language, and knowledge. Their lack of self-autonomy in the learning process is associated with their lack of exposure, knowledge gaps, and poor comprehension skills. As the learners mentioned, they cannot progress independently because of the scarcity explained earlier. More importantly, they seem aware of their situation but see limited possibilities to move forward. This scarce autonomy in their learning evokes a sense of failure that affects their motivation. The challenges mentioned above are connected to the sociocultural setting where they study, live, and work (Norton, 2000). For example, the lack of exposure to English is associated with their cultural settings and environments where the target language is not spoken or even needed, which might affect their investment in learning the language (Norton, 2000).

Concerning the second question, the primary purpose they mentioned in English for their life was work. This is an intriguing outcome mainly because participants see this purpose in future opportunities rather than their current job situations. A second significant purpose they discussed was their intrinsic motivation to learn English as a personal goal and to finish high school. A third purpose was that English was essential for daily activities such as reading recipes and communicating with others, among other spontaneous activities. Participants affirmed they do not have a current job position in which English is required but still picture themselves in a scenario where they might use English for work reasons. They live in an area where they are not vastly exposed to the target language; however, they see the purpose of learning English for occasional situations in which they could need to communicate.

Regarding the third question, adult learners expect support from partners, children, and relatives who live with them. That support is key in increasing their motivation despite the difficulties they claim to have regarding learning English. Under the context of this study, participants refer to their struggles in balancing family and school because both areas are time-consuming for them. Therefore, they might present feelings such as fatigue, stress, and even frustration in their attempt to deal with all their responsibilities. Aligned with these emotions, learners expect their family support through gratitude, consideration, and sometimes validation of their effort.

On the other hand, participants expect specific characteristics from the teachers, the class, and the school, such as extra time for classes, more elaborate explanations, and more engaging class activities. Besides, learners expect support from their teachers. This support can be shown by providing them with patience and understanding of their daily constraints related to their school-work-family balance that can often cause them to feel discouraged or stressed. These

sentiments, simultaneously, could lead them to perform poorly in the target language and interfere with their learning of the English process.

Another paramount aspect expected by the study participants in their English classes is the teacher's use of L1 in the class. All participants mentioned how the teacher's use of L1 can help them better understand instructions and critical vocabulary in some exercises. This need was also observed in the class. Learners affirm that understanding the class requires English use; however, they report needing help understanding instructions to begin doing the tasks and exercises during the class. Several participants expressed that they experience a sense of confusion, which hinders their progress in the exercises assigned. They consider that with the use of L1, they might feel more motivated to continue trying to complete their tasks. Then, they would know what they are doing and its purpose. Participants' expectations of the mediation can be related to a need for more life-centered activities that lead them to feel more engaged in the purpose of the task in their lives (Knowles et al., 2005). In addition, the use of L1 in the class, as claimed by the participants, can be associated with the learners' need to be in a more familiarized environment where they can ultimately be confident of their comprehension.

5.1. Contributions to the field

Motivation is one of the core components of learning. Motivation is a unique aspect in different educational contexts for distinct types of learners. On the other hand, adulthood is accompanied by multiple challenges that can affect motivation. The present study contributes to the field of language education in this regard. The study identified problematic situations learners face that might also occur in similar scenarios that have yet to be discussed in other studies. The study's findings raise the issue of educational and motivational factors that are often overlooked within a rural context in contemporary times.

Ahl (2006) criticized the tendency to believe that all human beings have a natural predisposition to motivate themselves to learn regardless of the scenario in which these learners may be and their situations. Her point about not making the individual the sole responsibility for their motivation towards learning resonated with the findings in the present study. Although some participants seem to count on intrinsic motivation despite their difficulties in learning, several external factors play a significant role in their motivation that do not depend on them, such as the lack of resources, lack of peer support, knowledge gaps, family issues, among others previously discussed.

Similar to the findings from Viswanadha (2019), who stated that environmental and material factors affect adult learners' education, the present study found that a lack of resources and educational opportunities affects the participants' motivation. Some of these factors appear appealing in rural contexts where different lacks emerge. In Viswanadha's (2019) study, environmental factors include comfortable places, noise, public movement, lighting, and ventilation. In the present study, participants did not comment on those environmental constraints. Still, they did affirm that a lack of dictionaries and technological tools directly affects their motivation towards learning because, as they admit, they do not have extra resources to practice English and reinforce their skills. As a result, some participants explained that they continued feeling disconnected during the class.

Regarding learner-centered factors, as found in Viswanadha's (2019) study, psychological challenges seem to be affecting this study's participants' performance in the target language, such as embarrassment when participating in class and feelings of stress and frustration due to their lack of understanding. Mohammed et al. (2023) believed in an active learning approach to enhance motivation in adult learners, where learners engage, explore, elaborate, and evaluate

through class development. These strategies encourage more meaningful participation among learners because tasks are designed purposefully. Consistent with this study, participants' expectations, especially regarding mediation and methodology, are closely related to the type of learning approach: learners expect more engaging activities in the class and more extended lessons to complete tasks. Therefore, Mohammed et al. (2023) suggested that the approach appears functional to the context. Nonetheless, applying this or other approaches would still need to be tested in the present study's context.

In terms of EFL learning in rural contexts and echoing prior research from Mudra (2018) and Supriadi et al. (2021), some of the main challenges encountered in education are related to limited resources, large classes, and a great variety of learners' backgrounds. Although Mudra's (2018) study does not state that these challenges directly affect learners' motivation, his findings indicate that those constraints affect students' learning processes and performance. In the present study, learners suggested that their lack of resources and support from peers, knowledge, and other circumstances impede their learning progress. Therefore, that sense of not moving forward is what can demotivate them. In essence, external factors, such as the ones previously exemplified, can directly or indirectly affect learners' motivation toward learning.

Ultimately, the results obtained through this study will be socialized with language teachers and administrative workers of the school where the research was conducted. The socialization will consist of an in-person- meeting at the end of the school year. Findings will be presented and discussed to understand better learners' thoughts, life challenges, and experiences that may affect their motivation to learn English. Ideally, the results can point to enhanced teaching approaches, more psychological support calls, and more inclusive and welcoming practices in school that allow learners to maintain their motivation regardless of the

circumstances that often cause them to experience reluctance and frustration, among other negative attitudes toward learning.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

As is often the case in phenomenological studies, a single study can cover fewer aspects than appear necessary to continue exploring the issue. The present study is not an exception. A limitation of this study was the number of participants, which, if extended, could be used to identify and discuss more enriching data. This represents a limitation, considering that it is not proportional to the number of learners in the chosen context.

Another limitation is that only one interview could be conducted with the participants. Still, the nature of the study suggests an extended version of the interviews is needed to collect more specific data that contributes to a better interpretation. Interviews were initially intended to have an extended version. Unfortunately, a second interview could not be applied due to time constraints. Resultantly, from the current findings, there are still gaps in the issue of motivation towards learning that can be explored more deeply in further investigations.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Research

The first suggestion is to conduct research that examines adult learners' linguistic performance in light of the factors that affect their motivation toward learning. Such research could also include analysis of their reactions after their performance in summative assessment, for instance. This follow-up and monitoring process can make the investigation data more robust and enriching in pursuing strategies that can increase motivation in adult learners.

A second suggestion is to include more participants in the study and compare their roles as mothers, fathers, women, or men in society. The objective is to investigate more cultural, generational, or social aspects portrayed in the factors affecting their motivation. Perhaps, by

making remarkable comparisons, more revealing data can bring new, more diverse, and specific conclusions that better shape our understanding of the issue.

Finally, a suggestion directed to policy-makers involved in adult education systems is to consider the limitations learners have both in the classroom and their accessibility to school. Even though there seems to be changes in improving EFL adult education programs at public schools recently, there is still an enormous necessity for adequate schedules and contextualized content that are more appealing to learners' realities. A great contribution would be to equip schools with suitable resources that can increase learners' motivation to address some of their multiple lacks at home. This support can include human resources that assist teachers in teaching learners how to operate technological devices, for example. One of the hugest paradoxes that occurs is that CINDEA learners are forced to take a standardized test that does not differ from the one that other high schoolers must take, despite the significant distinctions that exist among the school programs, accessibility, literacy, and infrastructure of educational centers.

5.4. Conclusion

Motivation in learners, and mostly in adult learners, is a topic that must always be present in educational work. This must be not only for EFL teachers but also for the school administration and society. Although some aspects indeed intervene in learners' motivation within the school, some influential factors come from eventualities and situations far from the classroom. Individuals' socioeconomic situation, daily responsibilities, physical and mental health conditions, and work, among other elements, are part of learners' personality, decision-making, and academic education. Therefore, the connection between the previous factors and their learning is undeniable. Thus, this relation must not be overlooked to encourage practices

that contribute to learners' welfare and optimize their abilities around the challenges they face regarding motivation toward learning.

In conclusion, all interest and support that can be given regarding motivation in EFL learners from the teaching field is of great importance to maintain hope and encouragement in learners. Specifically when it is about learners who, for multiple reasons, have lost valuable opportunities to improve their quality of life through education in their adolescence and childhood. Regarding learners' need to attempt to increase their motivation in EFL learning is and will always be of vital relevance for students not to concede to their studies and have a meaningful experience of learning. More importantly, understanding the factors affecting motivation in EFL learning is significant in rural areas, which could be negatively impacted in different places, including the educational field.

VII. References

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VII. Appendixes

Appendix A: Protocolo de Entrevista

Entrevista Profunda de Investigación Fenomenológica

Seudónimo del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Introducción (aproximadamente 2.5 minutos)

- Mi nombre es Silvia Valladares Castrillo, profesora de Inglés del Ministerio de Educación Pública.
- Mi investigación se trata de conocer las principales razones por las cuales estudiantes que oscilan los 40 años se podrían sentir desmotivados (as) para estudiar inglés.
- A manera de recordatorio, la participación en este estudio es voluntaria y la información brindada se mantendrá en anonimato.

Sección I: Enfoque en su historia de vida (20-30 minutos)

1. ¿Cuáles podrían ser los principales retos o en el aprendizaje del inglés? ¿Eso ha afectado en su motivación en cuanto a su aprendizaje?

1.

Seguimiento: ¿En su caso en específico, qué aspectos podrían estar interfiriendo en su aprendizaje del inglés?

0. ¿Cómo describiría su conocimiento del idioma inglés y su habilidad para entenderlo y hablarlo?

Seguimiento: Si usted pudiera cambiar un aspecto de su aprendizaje del inglés, ¿cuál sería o cuáles serían? ¿Por qué?

0. ¿Cuáles y cómo fueron sus primeras experiencias en el aprendizaje del inglés?

Seguimiento: ¿Además de la clase, tiene algún medio o apoyo para practicar inglés?

0. ¿Esta carencia o tenencia de apoyo o medio han influido en su motivación para aprender inglés?

Seguimiento: ¿Qué es lo que más difícil o fácil que encuentra del aprendizaje del inglés?

Sección II: Detalles de Experiencia (20-30 minutos)

1. ¿Considera importante aprender inglés? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?
2. ¿Qué beneficios encuentra en aprender inglés?

Sección III: Reflexiones de Significado (30-40 min)

2. ¿Cómo es la reacción de su docente en cuanto a su aprendizaje del inglés? ¿Eso ha afectado en su motivación en cuanto a su aprendizaje?
 1. ¿Cómo es la reacción de su familia o compañeros y compañeras en cuanto a su aprendizaje del inglés? ¿Eso ha afectado en su motivación en cuanto a su aprendizaje?
2. ¿Puede brindar algunos ejemplos? ¿Cómo se siente durante la clase de inglés?
 - ¿Le gusta participar en la clase de inglés? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?

Cierre de Entrevista (2.5 minutos)

- Agradezco profundamente su tiempo en contestar estas preguntas.
- Nuevamente, le aseguro que lo conversado en esta entrevista es absolutamente confidencial.
- Gracias otra vez y nos vemos en dos semanas.
- ¿Qué fecha y hora son más convenientes para usted?

Appendix B: Observación de Clase

Date: July 19, 2024

Location: Classroom

Type of Setting: Face-to-face class

The instructor: Anonymous

Class: Módulo 46/71 (Nos comunicamos en otras Lenguas) 4P/5P

Schedule: Friday 5:20-7:10 pm

Observation	Comments

Expanded Field Notes:

Appendix c: Formulario de Consentimiento

Título de la Investigación: Factores que Afectan la Motivación de las Personas Estudiantes Adultas en cuanto al Aprendizaje del Inglés en un colegio de Adultos en Pococí.

Investigadora Principal: Silvia Valladares Castrillo

Propósito del estudio y el motivo de su participación en este.

El propósito de este estudio es conocer las vivencias de ustedes como aprendices, sus motivaciones y principales retos en cuanto su estudio y aprendizaje inglés. Su participación es de gran valor, dado que la información recopilada contribuirá a tratar de dar a conocer las problemáticas actuales y brindar, dentro de lo posible, mejoras en su proceso de aprendizaje.

Usted ha sido invitado (a) a participar en este estudio porque es estudiante de un colegio del adultos en Pococí y considero que puede proveer información de gran relevancia para la investigación.

Participación en el estudio:

La participación es totalmente voluntaria.

Usted puede estar de acuerdo en ser parte del estudio y luego retractarse sin que haya algún tipo de consecuencia.

Si usted decide no participar, no hará ningún tipo de acción que le perjudique académica o personalmente.

Usted puede hacer todas las preguntas que desee o requiera acerca del estudio antes de que decida participar.

Contacto:

Si tiene preguntas, dudas, quejas, inquietudes o considera que la investigación le ha perjudicado de alguna manera, puede comunicarse con la investigadora:

silvia.valladares.castrillo@una.est.ac.cr y/o el Dr. Christian Fallas Escobar:

christian.fallas.escobar@una.cr

Esta investigación es respaldada por la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Si usted tiene consultas acerca de sus derechos como participante del estudio, preguntas, inquietudes o quejas, también puede comunicarse mediante la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico:

posgradompla@una.cr

Rol de la persona participante del estudio:

Si usted, de forma voluntaria, decide participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que participe de las actividades que se describen en el cuadro de abajo. La información que brinde será confidencial y usted puede desestimar su participación en el estudio cuando guste sin tener ningún tipo de repercusión que le perjudique de alguna forma en la clase de inglés que cursa o de alguna otra forma.

Actividades de la Investigadora	¿Cuándo?	¿Dónde?	Su participación como participante
Observaciones de clase: Tomar notas de su interacción en clase	Julio- Agosto 2024	Aula de sección	(a) Asistir a clases, participar en clase tal y como lo indica su profesor. (Lo que usted normalmente hace en clase).

Evaluaciones o prácticas de clase de participantes: Recolectar tareas, fichas de clase, entre otro tipo de material de clase.	Julio- Agosto	En el aula o por medio de whats app (lo que sea más conveniente)	Brindar material de clase como tareas, fichas de práctica o exámenes a la investigadora. Si usted gusta participar en esta investigación, usted otorga el permiso para que dichos documentos sean recolectados por la investigadora.
Entrevista Individual (1-2 hours) Entrevistar a participantes acerca de sus experiencias como aprendices del inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta entrevista podría tener una continuación de la entrevista en caso de que se necesite clarificar algún aspecto.	Agosto- Setiembre	Centro educativo o casa de habitación	Reunirse con la investigadora para conversar sobre sus experiencias como aprendiz del inglés como lengua extranjera.
Member-checking Session #1 (1-2 hours) Reunión con participantes para discutir principales hallazgos.	Setiembre- octubre	Centro educativo o casa de habitación	Reunirse con investigadora y otros participantes para discutir principales hallazgos.