

Institutional Factors Affecting Performance in English as a Foreign Language and Their Economic Impact on the Families of Third-Year High School Students in Manta, Ecuador

Author Name

Edgar Alejandro Correa Marrasquin
Master Student
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Dirección: Manta, Manabí, Ecuador.
Correo electrónico: edgar.correa@pg.ulead.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4144-2305>

Author Name

Maria Cristina Basantes Robalino
Master English Teacher
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Dirección: Manta, Manabí, Ecuador.
Correo electrónico: maria.basantes@uleam.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-51849643>

Abstract

English proficiency is essential for academic success, professional growth, and participation in a globalized world. However, many students in Ecuadorian public schools still face difficulties achieving adequate English language proficiency. This study analyzes the institutional factors affecting EFL performance and their economic impact on the families of third-year high school students in Manta, Ecuador. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach, data were collected through parent surveys and documentary analysis. The results show that weaknesses in institutional support often lead families to spend additional money on private tutoring, learning materials, and external English courses. Consequently, educational inequalities may increase, particularly among low-income households.

The study concludes that improving institutional educational quality can enhance English learning outcomes and reduce financial burdens on families.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, institutional factors, academic performance, educational inequality, economic impact, Ecuador.

1 Introduction

English has become one of the most important languages for international communication, higher education, and labor market competitiveness. As globalization continues to expand educational and professional opportunities, English language proficiency is increasingly recognized as a fundamental skill for students worldwide. Consequently, educational systems are expected to provide learners with the necessary resources and support to develop effective communicative competence in English.

However, English language education remains a significant challenge in many Latin American countries. According to EF Education First (2024), several nations in the region continue to demonstrate low English proficiency levels despite educational reforms and curriculum updates. Ecuador, in particular, remains below international averages, highlighting persistent challenges related to educational quality and institutional support.

Researchers such as Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) argue that institutional limitations, including insufficient teacher preparation, lack of educational resources, and restricted access to academic support, negatively affect students' language learning outcomes. These deficiencies often force families to compensate for institutional shortcomings through private tutoring services and supplementary educational investments.

In the city of Manta, Ecuador, concerns regarding English language learning have become increasingly relevant due to the growing demand for bilingual competencies in higher education and employment. Nevertheless, many families report the need to allocate additional financial resources to support their children's English learning process. This situation raises important questions regarding the relationship between institutional educational quality and the economic burden experienced by households.

The present study seeks to examine the institutional factors affecting EFL performance and their economic impact on families of third-year high school students in Manta, Ecuador. By exploring this relationship, the research aims to contribute to the development of more equitable and effective educational policies that promote quality English language instruction for all students.

2 Theoretical Framework

English as a Foreign Language Education in Ecuador

English language education has gained increasing importance within the Ecuadorian educational system during the last decade. National educational policies have emphasized the need to improve students' communicative competence in English to facilitate participation in global academic and professional environments. Nevertheless, achieving these goals remains challenging due to structural and institutional limitations.

According to EF Education First (2024), Ecuador continues to rank among countries with relatively low English proficiency levels. The report suggests that disparities in educational quality, access to qualified teachers, and institutional support contribute significantly to these outcomes. Although English is included in the national curriculum, implementation often varies considerably among institutions.

Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) explain that educational inequalities across Latin America frequently affect foreign language instruction. Schools with limited resources often struggle to provide students with meaningful opportunities for language practice, access to technological tools, and qualified teaching personnel. Consequently, learners may experience difficulties achieving expected proficiency levels.

Institutional Factors Affecting EFL Performance

Institutional factors refer to the educational conditions, policies, resources, and practices that influence teaching and learning processes. In the context of EFL education, these factors play a crucial role in determining students' academic success.

Research has consistently demonstrated that institutional support significantly affects language acquisition outcomes. According to Mengistu et al. (2024), students who receive effective instructional guidance and have access to adequate learning environments tend to demonstrate higher levels of English proficiency.

Among the most relevant institutional factors identified in the literature are teacher quality, instructional methodologies, classroom resources, academic support systems, and opportunities for meaningful language interaction. When these factors are

insufficient, students often experience reduced motivation and lower academic performance.

Teacher Quality and Instructional Support

Teacher quality is widely recognized as one of the most influential factors in students' academic achievement and language acquisition. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teachers play a fundamental role in creating meaningful learning experiences, promoting communicative competence, and motivating students to actively engage in the learning process.

According to Mengistu et al. (2024), effective teachers contribute significantly to language learning outcomes by implementing appropriate instructional strategies, providing constructive feedback, and fostering positive classroom environments. Similarly, Richards (2017) argues that qualified EFL teachers possess not only linguistic competence but also pedagogical knowledge that enables them to adapt teaching practices to students' needs.

However, many educational institutions in developing countries face challenges related to teacher preparation and professional development. Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) indicate that insufficient teacher training remains a major obstacle to improving English language education in Latin America. Teachers often encounter limitations in accessing updated methodologies, technological resources, and specialized training programs.

Furthermore, instructional support provided by educational institutions is essential for maintaining teaching quality. Institutional support includes continuous professional development opportunities, access to teaching materials, academic supervision, and collaborative learning environments. Schools that invest in teacher development are more likely to achieve better student outcomes and stronger language learning performance.

Consequently, deficiencies in teacher preparation and institutional support may negatively affect students' motivation, classroom participation, and overall English proficiency levels.

Educational Resources and Learning Opportunities

Educational resources constitute another critical factor influencing students' performance in English as a Foreign Language. Effective language learning requires access to textbooks, technological tools, multimedia materials, language laboratories, internet connectivity, and opportunities for authentic communication.

According to Tomlinson (2018), educational resources facilitate language acquisition by exposing learners to diverse linguistic input and interactive learning experiences. The integration of technological resources has become particularly important in contemporary EFL instruction because digital tools can enhance students' engagement and communication skills.

Nevertheless, educational inequalities frequently limit access to these resources. EF Education First (2024) highlights that schools located in economically disadvantaged regions often experience shortages of instructional materials and technological infrastructure. These limitations reduce students' opportunities to practice English and develop communicative competence effectively.

Additionally, learning opportunities outside the classroom contribute significantly to language development. Exposure to English through extracurricular activities, online learning platforms, language clubs, and cultural exchange programs enhances students' language proficiency. When institutions fail to provide such opportunities, students may depend on external educational services to complement their learning experiences.

Therefore, equitable access to educational resources and learning opportunities remains essential for promoting successful EFL outcomes and reducing educational disparities.

Economic Impact on Families

The economic consequences of institutional deficiencies in English language education represent an important yet often overlooked aspect of educational inequality. When schools are unable to provide adequate instructional support, families frequently assume responsibility for supplementing their children's education through additional financial investments.

Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) explain that families in Latin America often invest in private tutoring, language institutes, and supplementary educational materials to compensate for weaknesses within educational systems. While these investments may improve academic outcomes, they also generate financial pressure on households, particularly those with limited economic resources.

Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2020) found that tutoring programs can significantly improve student achievement. However, access to such programs often depends on families' financial capacity. Consequently, students from lower-income households may face disadvantages compared to peers who can afford additional academic support.

The economic burden associated with private educational services may contribute to broader social inequalities. Families may need to reduce spending in other areas to finance educational support, creating additional challenges for household economic stability.

In the Ecuadorian context, understanding the relationship between institutional educational quality and family expenditures is essential for designing policies that promote educational equity and accessibility.

English Language Education and Educational Quality

Educational quality has become one of the principal concerns of educational systems worldwide. According to UNESCO (2023), quality education should guarantee equitable access to learning opportunities, qualified teachers, adequate resources, and effective learning environments. Within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), educational quality directly influences students' linguistic development and academic achievement.

English proficiency is increasingly recognized as a key competency for academic and professional success. However, achieving high levels of proficiency depends largely on institutional conditions. Schools that provide effective instructional support, qualified teachers, and adequate learning resources tend to produce better language learning outcomes than institutions facing structural limitations.

According to Richards (2017), successful EFL programs require a combination of pedagogical expertise, communicative teaching methodologies, and continuous institutional support. When one of these components is absent, students frequently encounter difficulties in developing communicative competence.

Institutional Factors Affecting English Language Performance

Institutional factors refer to the organizational, pedagogical, and administrative conditions that influence teaching and learning processes within educational institutions.

According to Fullan (2020), institutional effectiveness depends on leadership, teacher support, educational resources, and the implementation of coherent academic policies. These factors significantly influence students' academic achievement.

In the field of EFL education, institutional factors commonly include:

- Teacher qualifications
- Academic support programs
- Availability of instructional materials
- Technological infrastructure
- Classroom environment
- Student monitoring systems

Research suggests that deficiencies in these areas often result in lower levels of student engagement, motivation, and academic performance.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teacher preparation is one of the strongest predictors of educational success. According to Darling-Hammond (2020), students taught by well-prepared teachers consistently achieve higher academic outcomes than those taught by underqualified educators.

Within EFL contexts, teacher training becomes even more relevant because language instruction requires both linguistic competence and pedagogical expertise.

Mengistu et al. (2024) emphasize that effective EFL teachers:

- Provide meaningful feedback.
- Promote classroom interaction.
- Implement communicative methodologies.
- Encourage learner autonomy.

Educational institutions that invest in continuous teacher professional development are more likely to improve language learning outcomes and student motivation.

Educational Resources and Technological Support

Access to educational resources plays a crucial role in language learning.

Tomlinson (2018) argues that language acquisition is facilitated when learners are exposed to diverse and meaningful linguistic input through instructional materials, digital resources, and interactive learning activities.

Examples of educational resources include:

- Textbooks
- Digital platforms
- Language laboratories
- Interactive applications
- Internet access
- Multimedia resources

According to EF Education First (2024), schools with greater technological support tend to report higher English proficiency levels because students are exposed to more opportunities for authentic language practice.

Educational Inequality and Family Economic Burden

Educational inequality emerges when students do not have equal access to learning opportunities.

Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) explain that institutional deficiencies often transfer educational responsibilities from schools to families. As a result, parents frequently invest in:

- Private tutoring
- Language institutes
- Educational materials
- Online courses

Although these investments may improve academic performance, they generate additional economic pressure on households.

Families with limited financial resources frequently experience difficulties accessing supplementary educational services, contributing to the persistence of educational inequalities.

3 METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study adopted a **quantitative research approach** to examine the relationship between institutional factors affecting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) performance and their economic impact on families. According to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018), quantitative research focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends among variables.

The quantitative approach was selected because it allows for the objective measurement of parents' perceptions regarding institutional educational quality and the additional expenses incurred to support their children's English learning process.

Research Level

The research was conducted at a **descriptive-correlational level**.

According to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018), descriptive studies seek to characterize phenomena by identifying their main attributes, while correlational studies examine the degree of association between variables.

In this investigation, the descriptive component was used to identify institutional factors influencing EFL performance, whereas the correlational component explored the relationship between these factors and the economic burden experienced by families.

Research Design

The study followed a **non-experimental cross-sectional design**.

A non-experimental design was appropriate because the variables were observed in their natural context without manipulation. A cross-sectional design was employed because data were collected at a single point in time.

According to Creswell (2018), cross-sectional studies are effective for examining perceptions and behaviors within a defined population during a specific period.

Research Context

The investigation was conducted in Manta, Ecuador, focusing on families of third-year high school students enrolled in educational institutions where English is taught as a compulsory subject.

Manta was selected because of its educational diversity and the increasing importance of English proficiency for higher education and employment opportunities in the region.

Population

The target population consisted of parents of third-year high school students studying in educational institutions in Manta, Ecuador.

Parents were chosen as participants because they are directly involved in supporting students' educational processes and are responsible for many of the financial decisions associated with supplementary educational services.

Sample

A convenience sampling technique was used due to accessibility and participant availability.

The final sample included **23 parents** who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Although convenience sampling limits generalizability, it is commonly employed in educational research where access to participants may be restricted.

4 Interpretation of results

The findings reveal that institutional factors significantly influence students' performance in English as a Foreign Language and generate notable economic consequences for families.

A substantial proportion of participants reported dissatisfaction with the quality of English instruction provided by educational institutions. Parents identified limited academic support, insufficient educational resources, and ineffective teaching methodologies as the primary barriers affecting students' language learning.

The results further indicate that many families invest additional financial resources in private tutoring services, supplementary learning materials, and external English courses. Approximately 65% of participants reported paying for private tutoring, while 57% indicated purchasing supplementary educational materials. Additionally, 48% of families invested in external language courses to support their children's English learning.

These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017), who argue that institutional deficiencies frequently transfer educational responsibilities to families. Likewise, the results support the observations of Nickow et al. (2020), who emphasize the increasing dependence on tutoring services when institutional educational support is insufficient.

The evidence suggests that improving institutional educational quality may contribute not only to better academic outcomes but also to reducing the economic burden experienced by families.

Table 1. Perception of Institutional Support

Variable	Positive Responses	Negative Responses
Quality of English Teaching	35%	65%
Academic Support	30%	70%
Educational Resources	40%	60%
Institutional Assistance	38%	62%

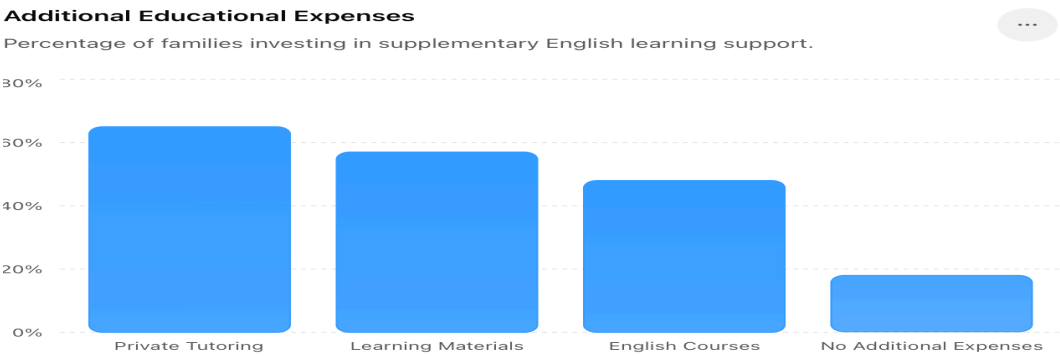
Interpretation

The data indicate that most participants perceive deficiencies in the quality of English language instruction and institutional support systems. The highest level of dissatisfaction was observed in academic support services, suggesting that students may not be receiving sufficient assistance to overcome learning difficulties.

Graph 1. Families Investing in Additional Educational Support

Additional Educational Expenses

Percentage of families investing in supplementary English learning support.



Interpretation

The results reveal that a considerable proportion of families invest additional financial resources in private educational services. Private tutoring represents the highest educational expense, suggesting that many parents perceive institutional support as insufficient for meeting students’ learning needs.

Table 2. Main Institutional Factors Affecting EFL Performance

Factor	Percentage
Insufficient Academic Support	70%
Limited Educational Resources	60%
Ineffective Methodologies	58%
Teacher Training Limitations	55%

Interpretation

Academic support emerged as the most significant institutional challenge. Participants reported that students often require additional assistance outside the classroom due to difficulties in understanding English content.

Discussion of Results

The findings support the arguments presented by Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017), who suggest that institutional weaknesses contribute to educational inequality throughout Latin America.

Similarly, the results align with Mengistu et al. (2024), who identify teacher quality and instructional support as essential determinants of successful language learning outcomes.

The evidence also confirms the conclusions of Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2020), who found that tutoring services become increasingly important when institutional educational systems fail to provide adequate academic support.

Consequently, the present study demonstrates that institutional deficiencies affect not only academic performance but also household economic stability.

5 Conclusion

The present study examined the institutional factors affecting performance in English as a Foreign Language and their economic impact on the families of third-year high school students in Manta, Ecuador.

The findings indicate that deficiencies in teacher preparation, academic support, educational resources, and instructional methodologies negatively influence students' English language performance. These institutional limitations reduce learning opportunities and hinder the development of communicative competence.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that many families compensate for institutional shortcomings through additional educational expenditures, including private tutoring, supplementary materials, and external language courses. Consequently, educational inequalities may be reinforced as economically disadvantaged households face greater challenges in accessing academic support.

The results highlight the importance of strengthening institutional educational quality to improve students' language learning outcomes and promote educational equity.

Educational institutions should prioritize teacher professional development, increase access to learning resources, implement academic support programs, and establish

monitoring systems that facilitate timely intervention for students experiencing learning difficulties.

By addressing these challenges, schools may improve English language instruction while simultaneously reducing the economic burden imposed on families.

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