InvestiGO
Revista Científica Multidisciplinaria
ISSN 2953-6367
http://revistainvestigo.com

Octubre 2026
Vol. 7 No. 21, PP. 64-79
https://doi.org/10.56519/cst2dj80

ESTRATEGIAS SOCIOAFECTIVAS PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS A ADULTOS MAYORES: ESTUDIO DIAGNÓSTICO DE MÉTODOS MIXTOS EN LA COMUNIDAD RURAL DE SIDCAY, ECUADOR

SOCIO-AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO OLDER ADULTS: A MIXED-METHODS DIAGNOSTIC STUDY IN THE RURAL COMMUNITY OF SIDCAY, ECUADOR

Verónica Margoth Parra Illescas[1], Martha Viveros Almeida[2]

{veronica.parra@upec.edu.ec[1], martha.viveros@upec.edu.ec[2]}

Fecha de recepción: 07/07/2026 / Fecha de aceptación: 21/08/2026 / Fecha de publicación: 14/10/2026

RESUMEN: Los adultos mayores rurales de América Latina permanecen ausentes de la oferta y la investigación en enseñanza del inglés. Este estudio diagnosticó las condiciones socioafectivas relacionadas con el aprendizaje del inglés en adultos mayores de Sidcay, comunidad rural de Cuenca, Ecuador. Se empleó un diseño mixto concurrente con predominio cuantitativo y un componente cualitativo breve y contextual. Veinticinco adultos de 60 años o más respondieron oralmente un cuestionario Likert de 24 ítems organizado a priori en cuatro dimensiones; cinco integrantes de una muestra cualitativa separada participaron en entrevistas semiestructuradas de 2 a 7 minutos. La consistencia interna por dimensión osciló entre 0,749 y 0,798. Las respuestas mostraron mayor acuerdo con motivación y valor percibido (M = 3,95; DE = 0,66), preferencias socio-relacionales (M = 3,81; DE = 0,74) y necesidades de inglés oral y funcional (M = 3,73; DE = 0,66), y menor acuerdo con barreras afectivas redactadas en sentido negativo (M = 2,86; DE = 0,79). Las 24 medias por ítem se situaron entre 2,64 y 4,08, y 16 ítems presentaron desviaciones estándar iguales o superiores a 1,00, lo que indica desacuerdo interno considerable. Las entrevistas aportaron cuatro categorías tópicas recurrentes sobre conexión y actividad, preparación emocional, apoyo docente y usos orales cotidianos, que complementan, pero no validan los patrones de la encuesta. Dado que los ítems positivos coinciden con tres dimensiones, los negativos solo con barreras y la administración fue oral, el sesgo de aquiescencia y la presencia de la entrevistadora no pueden separarse de las diferencias sustantivas. Los resultados son, por tanto, descriptivos y provisionales. El estudio aporta un instrumento documentado, un protocolo replicable de administración oral para adultos

[1]Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi Posgrado Ecuador, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9978-5517; +59399 970 2572.
2Profesor Ocasional en la Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi, Ecuador, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2441-6954; +593979289520.

mayores con alfabetización heterogénea y un primer perfil descriptivo de esta población, junto con un marco de ocho estrategias socioafectivas propuesto para evaluación futura.

Palabras clave: estrategias socioafectivas; adultos mayores; inglés como lengua extranjera; educación rural; aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida; Ecuador

ABSTRACT: Older adults in rural Latin America remain largely absent from English language teaching provision and research. This study diagnosed socio-affective conditions related to English learning among older adults in Sidcay, a rural community in Cuenca, Ecuador. A concurrent, quantitatively weighted mixed-methods design included a brief contextual qualitative component. Twenty-five adults aged 60 or over answered an orally administered 24-item Likert questionnaire organized a priori into four dimensions; five members of a separate qualitative sample completed semi-structured interviews lasting 2-7 minutes. Dimension-specific internal consistency ranged from 0.749 to 0.798. Responses showed greater agreement with motivation and perceived value (M = 3.95, SD = 0.66), social-relational preferences (M = 3.81, SD = 0.74), and oral, functional learning needs (M = 3.73, SD = 0.66), and less agreement with negatively worded affective barriers (M = 2.86, SD = 0.79). All 24 item means fell between 2.64 and 4.08, and 16 items showed standard deviations at or above 1.00, indicating substantial within-group disagreement. The interviews supplied four recurring topical categories concerning connection and activity, emotional readiness, teacher support, and everyday oral uses; these complement, but do not validate, the survey patterns. Because positive wording coincided with three dimensions, negative wording occurred only in the barrier dimension, and administration was oral, acquiescent responding and interviewer presence cannot be separated from substantive differences. The findings are therefore descriptive and provisional. The study contributes a documented instrument, a replicable oral-administration protocol for older learners with heterogeneous literacy, and a first descriptive profile of this population, together with an eight-component socio-affective teaching framework proposed for future evaluation.

Keywords: socio-affective strategies; older adults; English as a foreign language; rural education; lifelong learning; Ecuador

INTRODUCCIÓN

Population ageing is one of the defining demographic processes of the twenty-first century, and international policy has responded by framing lifelong learning as a right and as a determinant of wellbeing in later life. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (1); the World Health Organization defines active and healthy ageing as the optimization of opportunities for health, participation, and security throughout the life course (2,3); and the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, ratified by Ecuador, explicitly recognizes older persons' right to education adapted to their interests and needs (4). Ecuador's own normative framework points in the same direction: the Constitution establishes education as a lifelong right (5) and the Organic

Law on Older Adults mandates educational inclusion for persons aged 65 and over (6). These instruments frame English learning for rural older adults as a right pending fulfilment.

Against this normative backdrop, the empirical situation of English language learning in Ecuador is unfavourable. In the EF English Proficiency Index 2025, Ecuador ranked 83rd among 123 countries and territories, with one of the lowest scores in Latin America (7); the index uses a self-selected online sample and is indicative rather than representative. Formal English provision concentrates on children, adolescents, and university students, while older adults, particularly in rural areas, are practically absent from both provision and research. Yet a growing international literature shows that foreign language learning (FLL) in the third age is feasible and beneficial: it is associated with cognitive stimulation and possible protective effects against age-related decline (8-10), with gains in subjective wellbeing, self-confidence, and social integration (11,12), and with socio-affective factors emerging as central drivers of success (13,14).

Socio-affective strategies occupy a specific place in the language learning strategy literature. In Oxford's taxonomy (15), affective strategies (lowering anxiety, self-encouragement, monitoring emotions) and social strategies (asking questions, cooperating with peers, empathizing) form two of the six major strategy groups, while O'Malley and Chamot (16) group them as a single socio-affective category operating through interaction with others and control over affect. Two classic mechanisms explain why they matter. The affective filter hypothesis proposes that anxiety, low self-confidence, and low motivation raise a filter that blocks comprehensible input from becoming acquisition (17); socio-affective strategies operate precisely by lowering that filter. Sociocultural theory locates learning in socially mediated activity within the zone of proximal development (18), so cooperation, peer support, and guided interaction are not accessories but the very mechanism of development. In this study, socio-affective teaching strategies are defined as intentional instructional actions that integrate emotional support and structured social interaction to foster motivation, confidence, and participation.

For older learners these strategies are structural rather than peripheral. Andragogy suggests that adults learn best when instruction is based on their self-direction, draws on their accumulated experience, and is problem-solving and immediately relevant (19); critical pedagogy introduces a dialogic element in which learners co-construct knowledge (20); and foreign language geragogy proposes that age-related change be considered a design parameter rather than a deficit and that internalized ageist beliefs be counteracted (21). On the affective side, foreign language classroom anxiety, which includes communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety, is consistently related to avoidance of oral participation (22), while anxiety and enjoyment are partially independent, reducing anxiety and increasing enjoyment are different pedagogical tasks (23). Integrative and instrumental orientations (24) and learners' future self-images (25) keep older adults engaged in the long run, while for older adults, documented motives are mostly intrinsic and social, not occupational (11,12).

The empirical research on third-age FLL has been rapidly expanding. Foreign language training has been suggested as cognitive therapy against age-related decline due to the recruitment of neural networks that overlap with those that are most affected by ageing (8,26). Intervention studies provide some support: intensive courses were effective in enhancing attentional

switching in older participants (9); and reviews found that FLL can maintain or improve cognitive functions in healthy older adults, but reported small sample sizes and heterogeneous designs (10,27). Socio-affective outcomes are also well represented: wellbeing, enjoyment, and social contact (11,12); appreciation of oral practice and group belonging with no significant cognitive gains (14); and self-efficacy and group cohesion conditioning both language gains and wellbeing benefits (13). Senior learners also deploy compensatory strategies that instruction should legitimate and train (28). Regarding content, meaningful learning indicates anchoring new material in prior knowledge (29); a communicative orientation that prioritizes functional ability over formal accuracy (30) suggests that the realistic horizon is the Pre-A1 and A1 oral descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference (31).

This literature is geographically skewed: most studies come from European or North American urban contexts (27,32), and Latin American rural communities are almost entirely unrepresented; no study of this population in rural Ecuador was located. Sidcay, a rural community of Ricaurte parish in Cuenca canton, Azuay province, illustrates the gap: its older adults participate actively in community programmes and express interest in learning English, but no formal provision exists for them and no descriptive evidence is available on which a programme could be built. The general objective is therefore to produce a first descriptive account of the socio-affective conditions surrounding English language learning among older adults in Sidcay. Four specific objectives operationalize it: (a) to characterize reported motivation and perceived value; (b) to describe reported affective barriers and social-relational preferences; (c) to describe reported content and methodological preferences; and (d) to propose, for future evaluation, a framework of socio-affective teaching strategies informed by the observed response patterns. The study addresses four research questions: RQ1, what levels of motivation and perceived value do participants report?; RQ2, what affective barriers and social-relational preferences do they report?; RQ3, what content and methodological preferences do they express?; and RQ4, which socio-affective teaching strategies merit testing given the observed profile? Because the instrument was newly designed, unbalanced in wording, and orally administered to a small convenience sample, the study is framed as descriptive and provisional. Its contribution lies in documenting an instrument, a field protocol, and a first response profile, not in estimating population parameters or pedagogical effects.

MATERIALES Y MÉTODOS

The study used a concurrent, quantitatively weighted mixed-methods diagnostic design. Quantitative and qualitative material was collected during the same fieldwork period and analysed separately, but the brief qualitative component was used only to contextualize the survey patterns. It was not treated as an independent thematic study or as respondent-level validation. The scope was descriptive and the design non-experimental and cross-sectional: it characterized socio-affective conditions at one point in time as a basis for pedagogical design (33,34). No intervention was applied.

Fieldwork took place in Sidcay, a rural community of Ricaurte parish, Cuenca canton, Azuay province, Ecuador, whose older adult population participates regularly in community-centre and parish activities. The 2022 census confirms the sustained ageing of the national population and the weight of older adults in rural parishes (35). The survey sample comprised 25 adults selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria were age 60 or over, voluntary participation with signed informed consent, regular attendance at community programmes, and no self-reported condition impeding participation in an orally administered survey. The sample included 15 women (60.0%) and 10 men (40.0%), aged 62-78 years (M = 70.0, SD = 4.5). Educational attainment was heterogeneous: 9 participants (36.0%) reported none or incomplete primary education, 6 (24.0%) completed primary education, and 10 (40.0%) reported secondary education or higher. Five people were recruited purposively for the separate qualitative component. They were not linked respondent-by-respondent to the survey dataset and were assigned interview codes I01-I05, distinct from survey codes P01-P25.

Two instruments and one procedural record were used. First, a researcher-designed questionnaire contained 24 Likert-type items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) organized a priori into four six-item content dimensions: motivation and perceived value (MOT), affective barriers (BAR), social-relational preferences (SOC), and learning needs and preferences (NEC). Item content was derived from the socio-affective strategy literature (15,16), foreign language anxiety research (22), and third-age foreign-language studies (13,21). Three expert judges in English language teaching and research methodology reviewed clarity, relevance, and cultural adequacy. This process supported content validity only; it did not establish a four-factor structure. The sample was too small for exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis, so dimensionality remains untested. Internal consistency was estimated separately for each a priori dimension (36): alpha = 0.772 for MOT, 0.798 for BAR, 0.782 for SOC, and 0.749 for NEC. No total-scale alpha or total score was used, because the four domains are conceptually distinct. All MOT, SOC, and NEC items were positively worded, whereas all BAR items were negatively worded; the instrument included neither balanced keying nor a separate acquiescence indicator. Second, an eight-question semi-structured interview guide addressed language-learning history, emotions, motives, fears, relational preferences, useful content, expected teacher behaviour, and expectations. A field log additionally recorded administration conditions; it served as a procedural record and was not analysed as a data source.

Authorization was obtained from the community centre leadership and parish authorities, and the study was presented at a community meeting. Given participants' heterogeneous literacy, the questionnaire was administered orally and individually in Spanish: the researcher read each item, checked comprehension, and recorded the response; administration lasted approximately 20 minutes. This procedure reduced literacy demands but may have increased interviewer-presence and acquiescence effects. Interviews were conducted individually in Spanish in a quiet room of the community centre, audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and lasted approximately 2-7 minutes. All data were collected in July 2026.

Quantitative analysis comprised item- and dimension-level means, standard deviations, and percentage agreement (responses of 4 or 5), together with dimension-specific Cronbach alpha.

Because the small sample, shared administration session, and wording-direction confound make inter-dimension associations especially vulnerable to common-method and acquiescence effects, no correlation was used as substantive evidence and no hypothesis test was conducted. Analyses were run in Python with reproducible data-processing scripts. The five brief interviews were examined through semantic descriptive coding informed by thematic-analysis procedures (37) and supported by a coding matrix (38). The matrix served as an audit record for code-category-excerpt links; complete transcripts were reread, and discrepant accounts were retained rather than forced into consensus. The sole researcher conducted the interviews and coding; no independent second coding or member checking was undertaken. Outputs are therefore reported as recurring topical categories, not saturated themes. Integration used a joint display to examine complementarity between two unlinked samples; no respondent-level convergence was inferred.

All participants were informed about the study, its purpose, audio recording, anonymity, and the right to withdraw without any consequences, and they were asked to participate in the study voluntarily. The identities of the surveys were anonymized as P01-P25 and the identities of the interviews were anonymized as I01-I05. All data was kept on password protected devices that were only accessible to the researcher. The study was conducted following the ethical guidelines of Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi and the protection of older adults established in the national legislation (6).

RESULTADOS

The survey involved 25 participants: 15 women (60.0%) and 10 men (40.0%), aged 62 to 78 years (M = 70.0, SD = 4.5); 12 (48.0%) were aged 60-69 years and 13 (52.0%) were aged 70-79 years. Educational attainment was diverse, with secondary education or higher the most frequent category (n = 10, 40.0%), followed by none or incomplete primary education (n = 9, 36.0%) and completed primary education (n = 6, 24.0%). Table 1 summarizes the sociodemographic profile. No participant was aged 80 or over, so the findings describe the young-old and middle-old segments of the community rather than the oldest-old.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants (n = 25).

Variable	Category	f	%
Sex	Female	15	60.0
	Male	10	40.0
Age group	60-69	12	48.0
	70-79	13	52.0
	80 or over	0	0.0
Educational level	None / incomplete primary	9	36.0
	Complete primary	6	24.0
	Secondary or higher	10	40.0

Note. f = frequency. Source: field survey.

Internal consistency for the four a priori dimensions was alpha = 0.772 for motivation and perceived value, 0.798 for affective barriers, 0.782 for social-relational preferences, and 0.749 for learning needs and preferences. These coefficients are reported only as dimension-specific reliability estimates in this administration; they do not demonstrate factor structure. A total-scale coefficient was not calculated or interpreted, because the four domains are conceptually distinct.

Motivation and perceived value was the highest-rated dimension (M = 3.95, SD = 0.66), with 70.0% of item responses in the agreement categories. The highest-rated items were the desire to learn words and phrases (MOT1; M = 4.08, 76.0% agreement) and viewing English learning as an important personal achievement (MOT3; M = 4.08, 76.0%); the lowest was feeling good about learning new things at this age (MOT6; M = 3.60, 52.0%). Affective barriers showed a moderate mean (M = 2.86, SD = 0.79), and only 25.3% of barrier-item responses indicated agreement. Fear of making mistakes was the highest-rated barrier (BAR2; M = 3.08, 24.0% agreement), followed by frustration when not understanding (BAR5; M = 2.92, 32.0%); embarrassment about speaking before others was the lowest (BAR1; M = 2.64, 24.0%).

Social-relational preferences were endorsed at a comparable level (M = 3.81, SD = 0.74; 60.0% agreement). Feeling comfortable with same-age peers (SOC3; M = 3.88, 64.0%) and feeling valued when sharing life experiences (SOC5; M = 3.88, 64.0%) were the highest-rated items. Songs, games, and group dynamics were the lowest-rated item in this dimension, although still above the scale midpoint (SOC4; M = 3.68, 56.0%). Learning needs and preferences also showed a moderately high mean (M = 3.73, SD = 0.66; 59.3% agreement). Participants most strongly endorsed speaking and listening before writing (NEC4; M = 3.96, 72.0%) and interest in family and community topics (NEC3; M = 3.92, 68.0%). Community-based objects, images, and examples received the lowest endorsement (NEC6; M = 3.40, 36.0%). Table 2 details item- and dimension-level statistics and, as shown in Figure 1, motivation and perceived value ranked highest, followed by social-relational preferences and learning needs, whereas affective barriers ranked lowest.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by item and dimension (n = 25).

Dimension / item	M	SD	% agreement
Motivation and perceived value (MOT) - dimension	**3.95**	**0.66**	**70.0**
MOT1 I would like to learn words and phrases in English.	4.08	0.76	76.0
MOT2 Learning English would keep my mind active.	4.04	0.84	76.0
MOT3 Learning English would be an important personal achievement for me.	4.08	1.00	76.0
MOT4 I would like to use simple English phrases with my family or with visitors.	4.00	0.96	72.0
MOT5 I would gladly attend English classes in my community.	3.92	1.00	68.0
MOT6 Learning new things at my age makes me feel good.	3.60	1.15	52.0
Affective barriers (BAR) - dimension	**2.86**	**0.79**	**25.3**
BAR1 I feel embarrassed speaking English in front of other people.	2.64	1.11	24.0
BAR2 I am afraid of making mistakes when I try to say something in English.	3.08	1.12	24.0
BAR3 I get nervous when I think about learning a new language.	2.88	1.27	28.0
BAR4 I feel I am no longer of an age to learn English.	2.88	0.93	20.0
BAR5 I get frustrated easily when I do not understand something.	2.92	1.26	32.0

BAR6 I feel insecure when participating in front of a group.	2.76	1.01	24.0
Social-relational preferences (SOC) - dimension	**3.81**	**0.74**	**60.0**
SOC1 I prefer learning in a group rather than alone.	3.84	1.11	60.0
SOC2 I like helping my classmates and being helped by them.	3.76	0.88	56.0
SOC3 I feel more comfortable learning with people of my own age.	3.88	1.27	64.0
SOC4 Songs, games, and group activities encourage me to participate.	3.68	1.14	56.0
SOC5 Sharing my life experiences in class would make me feel valued.	3.88	0.88	64.0
SOC6 The teacher's kind and patient treatment is very important to me.	3.80	1.04	60.0
Learning needs and preferences (NEC) - dimension	**3.73**	**0.66**	**59.3**
NEC1 I am interested in learning English about greetings and daily life.	3.88	0.88	64.0
NEC2 I am interested in learning English about health topics.	3.60	1.00	56.0
NEC3 I am interested in learning English about family and community.	3.92	1.04	68.0
NEC4 I prefer speaking and listening rather than writing in English.	3.96	1.02	72.0
NEC5 I need classes to move slowly and with plenty of repetition.	3.64	1.08	60.0
NEC6 I would like classes to use objects, images, and examples from my community.	3.40	0.91	36.0

Note. Scale 1-5. % agreement = responses 4 or 5. Items were administered orally in Spanish and are translated here. MOT, SOC, and NEC items were positively worded; BAR items were negatively worded. Comparisons across dimensions may therefore reflect acquiescence and wording direction as well as substantive content. Source: field survey.

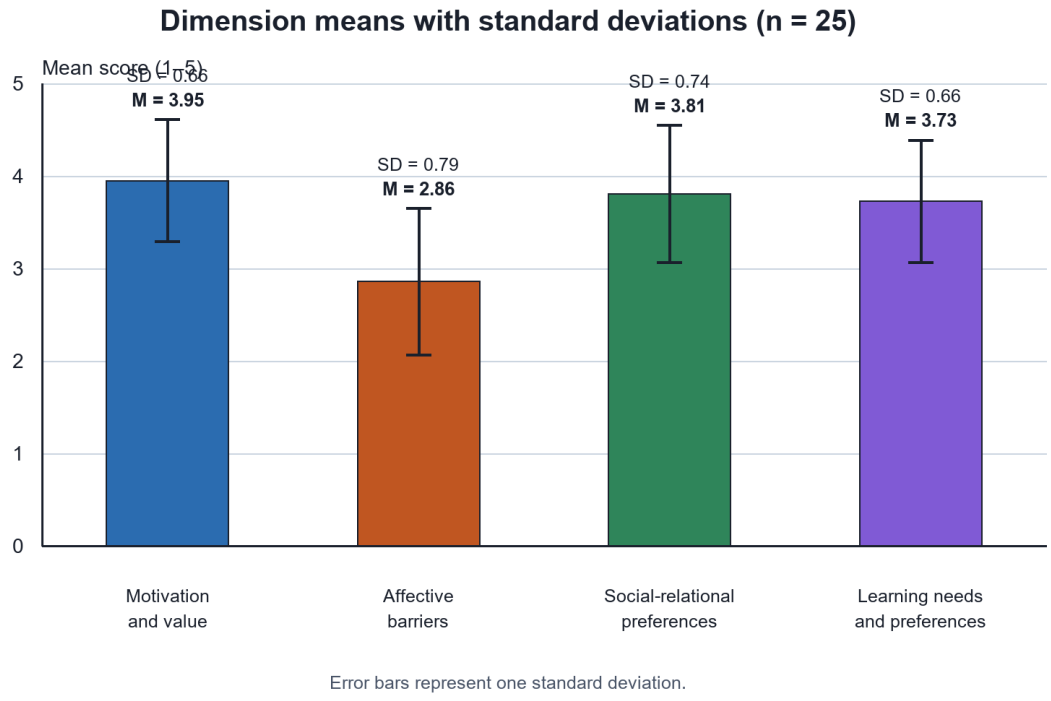


Figura 1. Medias por dimensión con desviaciones estándar (n = 25).

Dispersion was substantial at item level and qualifies every mean reported above. All 24 item means fell between 2.64 and 4.08, so no item approached the floor or the ceiling of the scale; 19 of the 24 means lay above the midpoint of 3.00, and the five below it were all barrier items. Item standard deviations ranged from 0.76 to 1.27, and 16 of the 24 items returned a standard deviation at or above 1.00, with eight at or above 1.10. On a five-point scale answered by 25 people, dispersion of this magnitude indicates that respondents did not answer uniformly within any dimension. Within-dimension spread of item means also differed markedly: social-relational preferences was the most homogeneous dimension (item means 3.68-3.88, spread 0.20), whereas learning needs and preferences was the most differentiated (3.40-3.96, spread 0.56). Agreement percentages followed the same pattern, ranging from 56.0% to 64.0% across the social-relational items but from 36.0% to 72.0% across the learning-needs items. The lowest agreement recorded for any item was 20.0% (BAR4, feeling too old to learn English) and the highest was 76.0%, shared by three motivation items. Group averages therefore conceal a distribution in which a substantial minority answered against the dimension trend on most items.

Across the instrument, all positively worded MOT, SOC, and NEC items had means above the scale midpoint, whereas the negatively worded BAR items had lower means overall. The wording confound is complete: all 18 MOT, SOC, and NEC items were positively keyed and all six BAR items negatively keyed, so no item permits the two influences to be separated. Pooled across items, the positively worded set averaged 3.83 and the negatively worded set 2.86, a difference of 0.97 scale points that coincides exactly with the wording split. Because responses were also elicited orally, this pattern is compatible with acquiescent responding and interviewer effects as well as with substantive differences, and their relative magnitude cannot be estimated from these data. Dimension rankings and positive-item endorsement are therefore provisional response patterns rather than clean estimates of construct differences. Accordingly, the descriptive contrasts in Table 2 are presented without hypothesis tests, factor-based scores, or respondent-level causal interpretation. No correction for acquiescence was estimated, because the instrument included neither content-balanced item pairs nor an independent response-style measure.

The five brief interviews yielded four recurring topical categories used to contextualize, rather than validate, survey responses. The first, English as connection, activity, and agency, grouped accounts of mental activity, recovering forgotten knowledge, family communication, and interaction with visitors. I02 described learning as a way to remain active through knowledge, while I05 emphasized speaking with children and understanding grandchildren (I02; I05).

The second category, varied emotional readiness, retained contrasting accounts. Some interviewees denied that fear was a barrier to learning, others mentioned nervousness, embarrassment, pronunciation, grammar, and potential ridicule. I01 shared concerns that individuals might be ridiculed for their pronunciation, while I03 shared that they were willing to attend with a desire to learn instead of fear (I01; I03). These accounts were not reconciled because it is impossible to determine which one is more dominant with a group of five.

The third category, safety through supportive and dynamic teaching, included the preferences for group participation, peers of similar age or ability, teacher kindness, encouragement, participatory activities, music, images, videos, and manageable groups. I03 showed how critical trust is by noting that a learner might not come back when a teacher instills fear or degrades the learner (I03).

The fourth category, functional oral English in family and community contexts, included greetings, health, family communication, visitors, everyday exchanges, and familiar community activities. I05 mentioned talking to children, understanding grandchildren and greeting others, and I03 proposed family, local businesses, gardens and community life as class topics. These categories are summarized in Table 3, but cannot be said to be prevalent or saturated.

Table 3. Recurring topical categories and illustrative quotations.

Topical category	Indicative content	Illustrative quotation (translated; code)
C1. English as connection, activity, and agency	Mental activity; recovering knowledge; family communication; visitors and foreign people	Keeping myself active through knowledge. (I02)
C2. Varied emotional readiness	Confidence and curiosity; nervousness; embarrassment; fear of mistakes or ridicule	Pronunciation is very difficult, and I fear people will make fun of me. (I01)
C3. Safety through supportive and dynamic teaching	Group learning; peer support; trusting teacher; participatory activities	If the teacher makes you afraid, you do not return. (I03)
C4. Functional oral English in family and community contexts	Greetings; health; family; visitors; familiar community activities	To speak with my children, understand my grandchildren, and greet people. (I05)

Note. Categories summarize a brief interview set and are not prevalence estimates; no claim of thematic saturation is made. Source: interviews.

Table 4 places the survey patterns beside related material from the separate interview sample to show complementarity. Interview accounts supplied concrete examples and contrasting cases within the same broad domains, but they cannot corroborate survey prevalence, because the samples were unlinked and unequal in size. The display is therefore an interpretive aid, not evidence of respondent-level convergence.

Table 4. Joint display of complementary quantitative and qualitative material.

Dimension	Quantitative finding	Related interview category	Complementary contribution
Motivation and perceived value	M = 3.95, SD = 0.66; 70.0% agreement	C1	Connection, activity, and agency supplied examples of possible motives.
Affective barriers	M = 2.86, SD = 0.79; 25.3% agreement	C2	Contrasting emotional accounts showed why a group mean may obscure individual concerns.

Social-relational preferences	M = 3.81, SD = 0.74; 60.0% agreement	C3	Descriptions of group participation and teacher trust contextualized social preferences.
Learning needs and preferences	M = 3.73, SD = 0.66; 59.3% agreement	C4	Examples involving greetings, family, health, and community illustrated possible content.

Note. The two samples were unlinked; the display shows complementarity, not respondent-level convergence.
Source: author's elaboration.

DISCUSIÓN

In the answers to RQ1, the answers were relatively high for learning English for words and phrases, personal achievement, mental activity, and social contact. These topics are similar to those found in the third-age language-learning research (11,12). All motivation items were, however, positively worded and elicited orally. The resemblance to previous studies thus helps to generate hypotheses rather than test the observed level.

As for RQ2, there was a mix of agreement with the negatively worded barrier items and accounts from the interviews of fear of mistakes, pronunciation difficulty, embarrassment, and possible ridicule. This item-level dispersion further supports this interpretation: 16 of 24 items have standard deviations of 1.00 or higher, and the group means mask true differences, so it would be a design mistake to assume that older learners are all alike in their emotional needs, regardless of the wording confound. Group learning, peer support and patient teacher were endorsed as positive, as was socially mediated learning and evidence of group belonging (13,14,18). However, both motivation and social preferences were positive, self-reported, and measured in a single assessment. Therefore, their exploratory association is not used as evidence; common-method variance and acquiescence are potential explanations. Emotional support is a reasonable precaution pedagogically, but needs to be tested in interventions.

For RQ3, oral English related to daily life, health, family and community was the most common response, along with paced and concrete support. This aligns with meaningful learning and compensatory-strategy principles (28,29) and proposes Pre-A1/A1 oral targets (31). The preference items were positively worded, so these priorities should be validated by cognitive interviewing, forced-choice or ranking tasks, and pilot observation prior to a curriculum being determined. The relatively weak endorsement of community-based objects and images (NEC6; M = 3.40) also supports the need to engage in negotiation with learners over materials rather than assuming local relevance.

There are only three contributions that can be made without going beyond the evidence. First, the study reports the development of a 24-item instrument, its dimension-level reliability, and the wording limitation and revisions needed for a population for which no instrument had been previously available in Ecuador, which should be corrected by others rather than repeated. Second, it outlines a feasible method of oral administration for older adults with diverse literacy, including the cost of interviewer presence, a practical limitation that written instruments cannot

address for this population. Third, it offers a preliminary descriptive profile of the older adults in the Ecuadorian Andes who live in rural areas, along with an explicit measurement agenda. All of these contributions do not rely on the disputed inference from the dimension means.

Table 5 provides a preliminary pedagogical framework for the diagnostic response patterns and interview examples and maps them to low-cost classroom options to answer RQ4. It is a discussion-based design proposal, not an empirical result; none of its strategies was implemented or evaluated in this study.

Table 5. Provisional socio-affective teaching framework for future evaluation in Sidcay.

Strategy	Socio-affective mechanism	Sample classroom action	Provisional basis
1. Trust circles at session start	Lowering the affective filter through belonging (17)	Five-minute opening round sharing news or feelings in Spanish, closing with one English greeting	Moderate barriers (BAR M = 2.86) and interview concerns about embarrassment and insecurity
2. Stable peer-support pairs	Social mediation within the zone of proximal development (18)	Fixed learning partners who rehearse dialogues before whole-group sharing	Preference for group learning and peer support (SOC M = 3.81)
3. Life-experience anchoring	Meaningful learning (29); geragogical use of experience (21)	Vocabulary built from participants' own stories, crops, trades, and family photos	Functional family and community content (NEC M = 3.73; C1 and C4)
4. Error-friendly norms with delayed, gentle correction	Reduction of fear of negative evaluation (22)	Public agreement that errors are learning steps; corrections modelled later, never person-targeted	Fear of mistakes and possible ridicule in interview accounts (C2)
5. Songs, games, and choral repetition	Enjoyment as an engine of engagement (23); memory support (28)	Short repetitive songs and movement games recycling target phrases	Interest in participatory activities and group dynamics (SOC4 M = 3.68; C3)
6. Slow-paced spiral recycling with multimodal support	Geragogical pacing and compensatory design (21)	Few items per session, large print, images and real objects, systematic recycling across sessions	Need for paced learning and multimodal support (NEC5 M = 3.64; NEC6 M = 3.40)
7. Visible progress and celebratory feedback	Self-efficacy and motivational self-image (24,25)	Personal achievement cards stamped each session; group celebration of milestones	Motivation and personal achievement (MOT M = 3.95; MOT3 M = 4.08)
8. Community showcases	Social recognition within active ageing (2)	Brief end-of-cycle demonstrations of greetings and phrases for family and neighbours	Family and visitor communication motives and community connection (MOT4 M = 4.00; C1 and C4)

Note. These unimplemented design options are the author's interpretation of provisional survey response patterns and brief interview examples; they require learner co-design and empirical evaluation.

There were six restrictions on interpretation. First, the wording of the items was confounded with dimension: all the MOT, SOC and NEC items were positive and all the BAR items were negative. Part or all of the cross-dimension pattern may be due to acquiescence and interviewer effects, which are likely to be stronger when the question is administered orally. Second, all survey domains shared source, format, setting and occasion, which means that substantive interpretation of inter-dimensional associations is hindered by common-method variance. Third, the four dimensions were specified a priori. Content relevance, not factor structure, is supported by three expert reviews, and n = 25 is not sufficient for factor analysis. Fourth, the convenience sample from one community allows for only tentative contextual transfer. Fifth, the qualitative part consisted of five unlinked interviews (2-7 minutes) that were coded by one researcher without member checking or independent coding, and the categories are examples and contrasts, not saturation, prevalence or validation. The researcher's role in instrument design, interviewing, and analysis could also have led to a focus on socio-affective issues; although the coding matrix and the keeping of discrepant accounts provide a limited audit trail, these are not sufficient to eliminate this influence. Sixth, the cross-sectional design does not allow for effects to be determined and the framework is untested. Balanced wording or an acquiescence measure, cognitive pre-testing, larger validation sample, longer linked interviews, independent qualitative audit or participant feedback, and pilot intervention should be used in future work.

CONCLUSIONES

The results of this diagnostic study provide a preliminary description of the responses to the survey and brief accounts of the interviews in one rural community in Ecuador. First, the respondents supported the learning of English for personal achievement, mental activity, family communication and practical interaction. These results suggest topics to be confirmed, as there was wide dispersion of items and positive wording may have led to an inflated level of agreement, and a lack of oral administration.

Second, endorsement of the affective barriers was not completely absent, as evidenced by some individual responses to nervousness, mistakes, embarrassment, and ridicule, and the distribution of responses to these items suggests that concerns were not evenly distributed. Group-based, supportive, and orally oriented instruction with a connection to daily life was also mentioned by interviewees. The examples support testing emotionally safe teaching practices, but the short, non-linked interviews do not provide any information on the extent of the preferences.

Third, the eight-strategy framework is not an assessed outcome, but a proposed framework for future implementation based on the context. Its value will be determined by balanced measure validation, co-design by learners and pilot testing of participation and oral production. The study does add to the concrete: a documented instrument with its limitations explicitly stated, an oral administration protocol for learners with heterogeneous literacy, and a first descriptive profile of a population not found in the regional literature. No claims are made for generalisation beyond Sidcay, and the differences between questionnaire responses, illustrative interview accounts and tested pedagogical effects should be maintained in any programmatic use of the findings.

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