



ECUADOR HABLA INGLÉS PROGRAM FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

JULY 2023



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Acronyms

DoS	U.S. Department of State
ECA	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
EHI	Ecuador Habla Inglés
EIL	Experiment in International Living (EHI Implementing Partner)
IP	Implementing Partner
MELI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation Unit
MoE	Ministry of Education of Ecuador
PAS	Public Affairs Section
PD	Public Diplomacy
TOC	Theory of Change
Vox pop	“Voice of the People” interview

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team at The District Communications Group (DCG) are grateful to the Monitoring, Evaluation and Innovation Unit at The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State for their support in carrying out this study. This evaluation was a collaborative effort, with guidance provided by the U.S. Embassy in Quito, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, EHI's implementing partner EIL, and Ecuador-based fieldwork partner Synergie Research.

The evaluators would also like to thank the teachers, students, administrators, counselors, and parents across Ecuador who allowed us into their schools and shared their experiences, insights, and opinions with us. This study would not have been possible without their participation and support.

Executive summary

In late 2019, U.S. Embassy Quito partnered with the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (MoE and implementing partner Experiment in International Living Ecuador (EIL to design and implement Ecuador Habla Ingles (EHI, an English program that seeks to amplify the reach of Public Diplomacy (PD English programming by aiming to improve the competency of English teachers with the ultimate goal of improving the English ability of students across Ecuador.

At the request of the Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Innovation Unit (MELI of The U.S. Department of State (DOS Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA, the District Communications Group (DCG, conducted a mixed-methods research study to explore the EHI program's outcomes on its teacher participants as well as to gain a better understanding of the needs and experiences of the students they teach. The study focused on the teachers', students', and other stakeholders' experiences with the EHI program and its effect on their lives.

The evaluation used a comprehensive mixed-method design crafted to best capture participant experiences with the EHI program and to examine contextual and systemic factors affecting program outcomes. We collected data from those directly involved in the program, from those on the waiting list but not yet enrolled in the program, and from other program stakeholders and community members, to gain insight on various aspects of the program implementation, outcomes, and operating context.

The evaluation included a literature review of peer-reviewed articles about teacher professional development programs and language pedagogy, and a desk review of program records. We conducted interviews with program implementors and stakeholders, four online surveys, 28 focus groups, 19 vox pops (on-camera, short personal interviews), 15 classroom observations, and nine in-depth interviews. Research participants included English teachers, students of participating teachers, parents of students, school administrators, counselors, and other staff and school community members. Data collection took place in multiple iterative waves from October 2022 to March 2023.

The evaluation intends to provide evidence to inform programmatic decision-making to the U.S. Embassy in Ecuador, who will be the primary user of the evaluation results. The evaluation will inform the design, implementation, and improvement of EHI going forward as well as offer a potential expansion of the program into additional countries by other DoS stakeholders. The study was carried out by DCG in a fully collaborative process with in-country data collection partner, Synergie Research, along with ECA's MELI team, the U.S. Embassy in Ecuador, and implementing partner EIL.

The study produced several main findings.

- This evaluation provides evidence that increased confidence precedes language proficiency, rather than necessarily following from it. EHI participants reported higher self-confidence in English-language skills and English teaching skills than non-participating peers. Participation in the program is also associated with a more positive outlook on the future.
- Moreover, modeling of pedagogical best practices through the EHI curricula and teacher trainers has a positive effect on how participating teachers manage their own classrooms and teach English to students. Teachers said they absorbed best practices about lesson planning, technology literacy, and instilling a growth mindset in students from the EHI program. Evidence from numerous sources demonstrates that EHI participant teachers increase their commitment to educating and their respect for their students – a profound mentality shift, especially given the contextual pressures and challenges they face. EHI participants unanimously supported the statement that “the program taught me new approaches to teaching English,” a finding validated by most students who responded to the evaluation surveys.
- As such, the program has several reported benefits and creates conditions that *could* lead to stronger English fluency among teachers. Teachers who participated in the program were more confident than their non-participating peers that their English levels had improved recently, but quantitative and qualitative research – including EIL’s records of teachers’ proficiency testing data – indicates that there is a long way to go to achieve significant measurable improvements in language skills for most participating teachers. Even teachers with a high level of proficiency said they need continued practice and growth in English conversation.
- The program aims to benefit students by providing stronger English instruction, but it is unlikely that community-level social or economic outcomes are occurring now. These outcomes may be particularly challenging to generate because of structural barriers that limit teachers’ experiences with EHI and limit overall learning outcomes for students in public schools. Poor school infrastructure, limited resources, recent reductions in English-language instruction hours, community violence and insecurity, and competing demands on teachers’ time all detract from potential higher-level gains made through EHI. The evaluation also provides evidence of the significant negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning, as well as on both students’ and teachers’ social support networks. This reinforces that PD programs such as EHI operate in complex scenarios and often require multiple points of engagement over years, not weeks or months, to materialize.

More could be done to support program participants in the hope of achieving longer-term English-language outcomes among students and communities. Teachers particularly note a desire to improve their English-listening abilities in a sustained and collaborative way. Administrator support, classroom resources, and more learning hours in English are also needed for teachers to create a pathway for their own teaching and language gains to spillover to their students. The evaluation generated several specific recommendations, including:

Recommendations for DoS stakeholders

- Foster the nascent EHI alumni teacher networks by facilitating structured in-person and online spaces for them to gather, practice English, and share resources. Share resources online, host in-person events, and cultivate the sense of community within the group and with teachers to the U.S. Embassy community.
- Continue to support positive outcomes and growth for EHI alumni through additional program formalization, incentives, awareness efforts, and subsidized testing.
- Leverage the energy of EHI alumni to amplify program ripple effects through mentorship programs and leveraging other U.S. government (USG) programs and alumni.
- Consider implementing cross-sectoral youth initiatives in conjunction with EHI, to allow for higher-level community outcomes that support mission PD goals.

Recommendations for program implementers

- Continue to be responsive to teacher requests for flexibility in EHI program offerings. Monitor changes in post-COVID school schedules and get teachers' input to determine optimal desired class schedules.
- Continue to hone the curricula and resources through more printed resources, adapting curriculum into Ecuadorian contexts, and making the program tools and teachings available on multiple platforms and formats.
- Support continued teacher alumni engagement through follow-on refresher courses and other learning resources, more avenues for alumni networking, and empowering alumni in leadership positions within the program.
- Strategically build awareness and interest in EHI among teacher and key non-teacher stakeholder groups through communications with teachers and school administrators, and workshops for parents.
- Promote the benefits of the program through alumni ambassadors and by raising awareness through social media and messaging platforms.

Recommendations for Ecuadorian education leaders

- Increase the hours of English-language instruction in public schools.

- Facilitate English-teachers' testing, accreditation, tenure, and promotions based on language acquisition.
- Work across sectors with programs geared towards child economic, physical, emotional, and mental well-being, and offer support for teachers and school community members.
- Support greater integration of students and their families in the school management model, which creates incentives and avenues for more community engagement and support of public schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the insights gained from the qualitative, quantitative, and observational data. They serve to provide evidence to inform programmatic decision-making to the U.S. Embassy Quito, the primary user of the Ecuador Habla Inglés (EHI) evaluation results. There are also recommendations for program implementers as well as other program stakeholders to support improved outcomes of the EHI program, as well as the expansion of the program into additional countries. The following recommendations are segmented by audience and purpose and ordered by importance.

Recommendations for PAS to strengthen program design

- **Foster the nascent EHI alumni teacher networks.** Provide facilitated, structured, in-person and online spaces for them to gather, practice English, and share resources. Share resources online, host in-person events, and cultivate a sense of community.
- **Continue to support positive outcomes and growth for EHI alumni.**
 - In addition to the existing certificate for completion of the English proficiency level, include additional official acknowledgment or amplification of participation in EHI by the Embassy. This is encouraging to teachers and signifies the value of the program to educators as well as to their school administrators.
 - Work with EIL and the MoE to develop incentives and awards for top-performing participating English teachers. This might include a package of resources for their classrooms, a recognition at the U.S. Embassy, or a monetary bonus.
 - Encourage applications from and consider giving preference to EHI alumni for other USG exchange programming.
 - Continue to support teachers by subsidizing the cost of all English-language-level exams. Ensure secured funding for this expense as it would be a considerable burden for many teachers to have to pay for these exams on their own. When possible, inform teachers in advance that these fees will be covered as the language tests costs may be a deterrent for some teachers.
- **Leverage the energy of EHI alumni** to amplify program ripple effects.

- Create a mentorship program between EHI graduates and non-participating English teachers to amplify and pass on their enthusiasm, confidence, learning, training, and other support. This could be piloted in one location and expanded, with support provided by post as needed, perhaps as a part of overall alumni engagement efforts. Create acknowledgement of the teacher mentors through a special status, incentive, or award from the embassy.
- A similar mentorship program among the top English students could be created as well if the teacher pilot proves effective.
- **Program and plan with the understanding that language learning outcomes are long-term efforts** and require investments of multiple years to achieve true proficiency; for teachers to be able to pass on their learning to students, they also need support, modeling, and resources in terms of pedagogy.

Recommendations for program implementers to maximize impact

- Continue to be responsive to **teacher requests for flexibility in EHI program offerings**. Monitor changes in post-COVID school schedules and get teachers' input to determine optimal desired class schedules.
- **Continue to hone the curricula and resources.**
 - Further adapt educational materials to be reflective of Ecuadorian cultural contexts, including more emphasis on music, dance, food, dress, art, and other cultural traditions, to make the educational materials more engaging to teachers and students alike.
 - Include native or fluent English speakers in the EHI program by leveraging other USG exchange program participants or alumni to provide additional remote courses with additional English-language listening opportunities, which participating teachers reported were lacking in classes.
 - Consider making available to teachers and their students existing online educational tools as a supplement to the online modules for teaching English.
- **Support continued teacher alumni engagement.**
 - Offer follow-on, refresher courses in English language, teaching techniques, and practice groups for motivated teachers. This could support teachers past their time in the main portion of the program and help them when they are renewing their B2 certifications with the MoE. Consider also allowing teachers at the B2 level or higher (without having participated in the EHI program) to participate in these courses to continue their education and practice in preparation for recertification.

- Provide formal and consistent platforms for alumni networking and English-language practice with peers. These could take place virtually or in-person, on a regional or national scale, depending on teacher preference.
- Nominate an EHI alumni leader to serve as a representative of teachers in discussions with MoE, EIL, and the embassy to reflect the concerns, barriers, and opportunities they face. This could be either a single teacher representative or a working group of leaders that program stakeholders can draw on for their insights and recommendations.
- **Strategically build awareness and interest in EHI** among teacher and key non-teacher stakeholder groups.
 - Highlight diverse English-speaking cultures in EHI materials to build interest among school administrators, parents of students, and wider school communities.
 - Create workshops for parents to raise awareness of the value of learning English. This will increase parents' capacity to support continued learning at home through workshops. This may also build parent awareness of the challenges that teachers face and improve teacher-parent relationships.
 - Promote the benefits of the program using participating teachers' own words. Some non-participating teachers shared that anxiety around making mistakes was a deterrent to participating. Using quotes from participating teachers about the supportive environment and teaching strategies used by EHI facilitators may dissuade some of these anxieties.
 - Consider building awareness of the program through informal, shareable WhatsApp posts to complement email and official outreach about the program.
 - Clarify the capacity of the program and clearly communicate opportunities for future engagement with potential participants and those on the waiting list.
 - Include school administrators in awareness outreach to show them the value of the program and build buy-in from educational superiors so that teachers feel empowered to undertake professional development.

Recommendations for education leaders to support shared goals

- **Increase the hours of English-language instruction** in public schools, as the evaluation provides evidence that reduced hours have a negative effect on students' English-language acquisition.
- **Provide more formal resources for participants**, such as printed booklets with tools and exercises, thereby directly extending the teachings of EHI into school classrooms. Ensure that these materials are engaging and interactive, with a continued focus on placing the educational content within the Ecuadorian context.

- **Support facilitation and transparency for English teachers’** testing, accreditation, tenure, and promotions based on language acquisition. Currently, teachers find these processes expensive and arduous, preventing their ability to gain certification, which lowers morale and motivation.
- Continue to work to holistically support students and teachers by ensuring they have safe, supportive, and thriving educational communities.
 - Develop a model and provide resources for after-school English clubs to provide direct support to the students. This has the side benefit of keeping them engaged at school and away from the instability in some of the most marginalized communities.
 - Invest in child safety measures on school grounds, to prevent violence and create safe, comfortable physical spaces to learn.
 - Work across sectors with programs geared toward child economic, physical, emotional, and mental well-being as well as support for teachers and school community members.
 - Support greater integration of students and their families in the school management model, creating incentives and avenues for more community engagement and support of public schools.

Program background

In late 2019, U.S. Embassy Quito partnered with the Ecuadorian MoE and IP EIL Ecuador to design and implement EHI, a flagship English program that expands and amplifies the reach of PD English programming dollars by aiming to improve the competency of English teachers, thereby improving the English ability of more students across Ecuador.

The EHI program improves English-language education by leveraging teachers EIL Ecuador has trained under previous PAS grants as force multipliers to reach a greater number of students. The partnership with the MoE also allows for “teacher participants” (distinct from the “teacher instructors” who lead the EHI English classes) to get professional credit for the courses. The partnership also gives the Embassy access to teacher data and resources so that the program is based on the curriculum that the teachers use in their classrooms.

Teachers are evaluated at the beginning of the program and put into appropriate courses according to their English ability. The expectation is that they will continue in the program until they have reached the B2 level, which might take as long as three years for those that began the program at the lowest level. At that point they may take an international certification exam to be officially certified at the B2 level. The intention of the program is that the B2 qualification

not only allows them to be more effective in the classroom, but also gives them greater job security and higher pay, as they become eligible for tenure track positions.

As of March 2023, six cycles of classes have been completed, reaching over 2,000 teachers in all 24 of Ecuador's provinces. The COVID-19 pandemic unexpectedly allowed the program to reach more teachers in more places than originally anticipated, as the program transitioned from an in-person to a virtual format just prior to launch. The EHI program has continued in a virtual format since then.

Evaluation background

The purpose of this evaluation is to explore the EHI program's outcomes on its teacher participants as well as to better understand the needs and experiences of the students they teach. The study focused on the teachers', students', and other stakeholders' experiences with the EHI program and its effect on their lives since participation.

The evaluation intends to provide evidence to inform programmatic decision-making to the U.S. Embassy Quito, which will be the primary user of the evaluation results. The evaluation will inform the design, implementation, and improvement of EHI and a potential expansion of the program into additional countries by other department stakeholders.

The evaluation aims to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. How has participation contributed to teachers' skill development?
 - a. How (if at all) has the EHI program affected teachers' English confidence, proficiency, and teaching practices?
 - b. What have been the results (if any) of the EHI program on the professionalization of public-school English-language teachers?
2. How (if at all) has teachers' participation in EHI contributed to improved student confidence and language skills in English?
3. What other emergent outcomes are there from the program, aside from language proficiency?
4. What other factors contribute to teachers' and students' learning outcomes?
5. What improvements can be made to the EHI program to support the achievement of its stated goal of improved language ability for teachers and their students?

Evaluation framework

As a framework to understand program effects, the evaluation used a context-adaptive approach, drawing on the Ecological System Model pioneered by Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner.¹ This systems model was adapted to take into consideration three components mentioned by Bronfenbrenner: process, person, and context, which were adjusted for this evaluation to focus specifically on the language learning setting. The emphasis for this study included measures of confidence, personal growth and other program effects, both intended and unintended.

This approach acknowledges that the systems the EHI program operates in are interrelated to the program, allowing analysis of the interaction of the environment and the relationship among these systems. As such, the evaluation will explore the views, experiences, and relationships of the key people within each system and between systems within which the program operates. For instance, the evaluation explored and analyzed how the program impacted a teacher participant's language learning but may also have had unexpected secondary effects within participants' families, schools, or communities. The evaluation also examined potential barriers that prohibited learning because of the intersection of the complex systems within which the program operates including, but not limited to: historic lack of training and confidence among public school English teachers; the ongoing global pandemic and resulting disruption of schooling; and the challenges introduced by the economic and social marginalization of the communities where the program operates and other related potential institutional inequalities. The evaluation attempted to understand the barriers and complexities that interact with program effects and draw insights on how the program teams might better understand these contexts to allow for stronger program impact and effectiveness.

Evaluation methodology

This evaluation explored program outcomes on EHI participant teachers and explored the needs and experiences of the students they teach.

Revisions to the original research design

This study differs considerably from the original evaluation design, which focused on measuring program impact through a longitudinal study of student language testing to determine effectiveness of the EHI program on teachers' language skill transfer. The original evaluation design centered on student outcomes — using an independent language testing partner to carry out language proficiency tests of the students of teacher participants — which would have

¹ Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological Models of Human Development. In International Encyclopedia of Education (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Elsevier.
https://impactofspecialneeds.weebly.com/uploads/3/4/1/9/3419723/ecological_models_of_human_development.pdf

served as the central data point in the evaluation to determine program effect. However, the evaluation's literature review found that it would be unrealistic to make conclusions about program effect by evaluating students over an interval of less than a year. Additionally, EIL's program records indicated that there have not yet been significant language gains by a majority of participating teachers, making it impractical to expect measurable secondary change in students over a shorter window of time.

Instead, to provide actionable insights and recommendations for stakeholders, the evaluation team worked closely with ECA's MELI Unit and the embassy in Ecuador to redesign the evaluation to take a more exploratory approach, including self-assessments by teacher participants of their confidence, personal growth, and any intended and unintended program effects. In the revised evaluation, the teachers' experience with the EHI program and its effect on their lives was the study's principal interest. As such, the input and testimony of the research participants served as the evaluation's substantive bounds. The evaluation investigated and reported on any topics that participants cite as consequential to their program experience.

The evaluation used a comprehensive mixed-method design crafted to best capture participant experiences with the EHI program and examine contextual and systemic factors affecting program outcomes. To speak to various aspects of the program and its operating context, data was collected from those directly involved in the program, those on the waiting list but not yet enrolled in the program (as a counter-factual), and many stakeholders and community members. Research participants included English teachers, students of participating teachers, parents of students, school administrators, counselors, and other staff, as well as other school community members.

Exploratory, inclusive, and iterative approaches

The EHI program is relatively new and had, at the time of the evaluation, only been carried out in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic's challenging educational environment. In addition, the program has taken place in communities where there is an especially high need for English-language improvement, which correlates with communities that are impacted by poverty and other forms of marginalization. As such, this evaluation required sensitivity to these complexities as well as an open and exploratory lens. The evaluation team was careful to not oversimplify findings, instead teasing out trends in outcomes and the variable cause-and-effect relationships behind them. With that guiding principle came an inherent open-endedness toward findings, with the lines of inquiry following the evidence wherever it leads.

The research used a phased and gradually deepening approach to getting the most detailed and insightful recommendations for program stakeholders possible. Each phase of research informed and built upon the last, with a focus of continual learning and adjustment as the evaluation progressed.

The study was carried out as a fully collaborative process with in-country data collection partner, Synergie Research, along with ECA's MELI team, and program stakeholders at the U.S. Embassy in Quito, with support from Implementing Partner, EIL. While DCG led in design, fieldwork oversight and analysis, the team worked closely with fieldwork partners to ensure that both the research process and findings were contextually appropriate as well as fair and ethical in execution. This evaluation centered the views and experiences of its research participants, to ensure that the evaluation process was an empowering and positive experience.

The inclusion of deep and exploratory qualitative elements and an exploratory research approach, as opposed to the original quantitative-focused longitudinal design, added depth to findings related to program outcomes and provided actionable recommendations. The ability to get multiple perspectives from various stakeholders and members of the community added value, as did the open and exploratory nature of the discussion guides, which drew on projective techniques² that offered unexpected and nuanced feedback in focus groups and in-depth interviews. While overarching findings were relatively consistent across both quantitative and qualitative findings, the diverse composition of research participants within and across different communities resulted in new details and supporting evidence emerging in each phase of fieldwork.

Data collection summary

In addition to a detailed literature review of peer-reviewed articles about teacher professional development programs and language pedagogy, as well as a desk review of program records, researchers conducted four online surveys, 28 focus groups, 19 vox pops³, 15 classroom observations, and nine in-depth interviews. The two waves of quantitative research took place in the middle of the Ecuadorian Coastal school year in October 2022 and at the end of the

² Projective techniques are creative tools used in qualitative research inquiry to uncover participant's deeper feelings, beliefs, and desires. The tools used by interviewers and moderators in this study included: use of imaginary scenarios and role play, metaphors, associations, and third-party projections.

³ A vox pop is a short video make up of clips taken from members of the public or key audiences or stakeholders. The name comes from Latin and translates to "voice of the people" and is commonly used in both news reporting and commercial market research. While for this study, the vox pops took place following focus groups, a vox pop interview traditionally refers to an on-the-street intercept interview. These clips are being used for internal briefings in this evaluation for program stakeholders to hear directly from their beneficiaries.

Coastal school year in February 2023. Qualitative research took place in three subsequent waves, by region, from October to November of 2022, with DCG evaluation team members travelling to Ecuador to support and observe data collection efforts in October 2022.

Figure 1: Detailed breakdown of quantitative research elements

Wave	Respondents	Number of Respondents	Dates of fieldwork	Response Rate
1	Participating and non-participating teachers	n=898 total respondents (851 participating teachers and 47 non-participating teachers)	September 16-October 16, 2022	52% among participating teachers 48% among non-participating teachers
2	Participating and non-participating teachers	n=1,245 total respondents (749 participating teachers and 496 non-participating teachers)	February 1-March 3, 2023	43% among participating teachers 39% among non-participating teachers
1	Students of participating teachers	n=6,782	September 29-October 14, 2022	NA ⁴
2	Students of participating teachers	n=5,358	February 1-March 3, 2023	NA

Figure 2: Detailed breakdown of qualitative research elements

Research element	Sample	Total participants	Region and Mode	Coast Region	Highlands Region	Total Sessions
Classroom observation	Participating and non-participating teachers and their students	15 teachers and their students	Coast and Face-to-face	Guayas: 3 (Guayaquil Midtown: 2, Tarqui Tengel: 1) Manabí: 3 (Portoviejo: 2, Manta: 1)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 2	15
EHI class observation	Participating teachers and one facilitator	~25	B1.2 Class Virtual			1
Student focus groups	Students of participating teachers	40	Coast and Highlands Face-to-face and virtual	Guayas: 3 (Guayaquil Midtown: 2, Tarqui Tengel: 1) Manabí: 3 (Portoviejo: 2, Manta: 1)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 2	8

⁴ As participating teachers were asked to forward the student link on to their own students, the number of students who received the link is unknown.

Research element	Sample	Total participants	Region and Mode	Coast Region	Highlands Region	Total Sessions
Teacher focus groups	Participating teachers	32	Coast and Highlands Face-to-face and virtual	Guayas: 3 (Guayaquil Midtown: 2, Tarqui Tengel: 1) Manabí: 3 (Portoviejo: 2, Manta: 1)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 2	8
Teacher focus groups	Non-participating teachers on EHI waitlist	16	Coast and Highlands Face-to-face and virtual	Guayas: 2 Manabí: 1	Provinces Highlands: 1	4
Community member focus groups	Community members, including parents	32	Coast and Highlands Face-to-face and virtual	Guayas: 2 (Guayaquil Midtown: 1, Tarqui Tengel: 1) Manabí: 1 (Portoviejo: 1)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 1	4
Mixed population focus groups	Mixed student-teacher groups	32	Coast	Guayas: 1 (Guayaquil Midtown: 1)		1
	Mixed participant and non-participant teachers		Face-to-face	Guayas: 1 (Tarqui Tengel: 1) Manabí: 1 (Portoviejo: 1)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 1	3
Vox pops	Program beneficiaries	12	Coast and Highlands Face-to-face	Guayas: 10 (teachers: 6 / students: 3 / school psychologist: 1) Manabí: 5 (Teachers: 3 / Students: 2)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 4 (Teachers: 2 / Students: 2)	19
School administrator in-depth interviews	School administrators: principals, vice principals, English-language department coordinators, other administrators	9	Coast and Highlands Face-to-face and virtual	Guayas: 3 (vice principal: 1 / principal: 2) Manabí: 4 (English coordinator: 2 / vice principal: 1 / other administrator: 1)	Ibarra, Imbabura: 2 (principal: 1 / other administrator: 1)	9

Quantitative fieldwork details

Researchers conducted four online surveys, two with both participating and non-participating teachers and two with students of participating teachers. The survey questionnaires were designed and distributed through the DoS Qualtrics survey platform and the survey was self-administered.

Surveys were split into two waves and were originally planned as a baseline and an endline meant to capture changes in key variables, such as perceived language skills and confidence in language skills, between the beginning and the end of the school year. However, due to changing start and end dates for schools, as well as delays in starting wave one due to needed permissions from the Ecuadorian government, the surveys were not a true endline and baseline; the first survey did not take place until the middle of the school year, and the time between the first and second survey was only four months and not the anticipated eight months. The first wave of surveys took place between October and November 2022 and the second wave took place between February and March 2023.

To reach as many respondents as possible, researchers utilized a multiple-part and staggered outreach strategy for each survey wave. Because student response rates were dependent on participating teacher outreach, every effort was made to boost teacher response rates. Teachers were contacted via the Qualtrics email system, through WhatsApp messages, and (for participating teachers) through the EIL Ecuador Canvas messaging portal. Teachers who did not initially respond to the request received three reminders to participate in the survey. An incentive to be entered into a raffle to win a large television was offered for teachers. Approximately two weeks after the teacher survey was launched, participating teachers were asked to distribute the student survey to their students via WhatsApp. An incentive to be entered into a raffle to win a tablet was offered for students of participating teachers.

Qualitative fieldwork details

Qualitative fieldwork took place between October 17 and November 17, 2022, in the cities of Guayaquil (Guayas province), Ibarra (Imbabura province), and Manta and Portoviejo (Manabí province). The qualitative portion of this evaluation included focus groups, individual interviews, vox pops, and classroom observation. Additionally, due to the nature of in-person fieldwork, researchers were able to observe and make notes on school settings including school locations, sizes, state of classrooms and available classroom resources, number of students, and other characteristics that may have an impact on teacher and student outcomes.

Focus groups

Researchers conducted a total of 28 focus groups: 24 in-person and four online. Focus groups were divided by key cohorts: eight participating teacher groups, four non-participating teacher groups, eight students of participating teachers, four mixed community groups (including school administrators and parents of students), three mixed participating and non-participating teacher groups, and one mixed teacher and student group.

Figure 3: Focus group participant breakdown

	Guayaquil	Ibarra	Manabí	Total
Participating Teachers	3	2	3	8
Non-participating Teachers	2	1	1	3
Students of Participating Teachers	3	2	3	8
Mixed: Participating and Non-participating Teachers	1	1	1	3
Mixed Community Groups	2	1	1	4
Mixed Teacher and Student Groups*	1			1
Total	12	7	9	28

*After piloting mixed teacher-student groups in Guayaquil, researchers determined that this type of group would best be replaced by mixed participating and non-participating teacher groups instead, as the presence of the teachers created a power imbalance and discouraged active and honest participation from the students within the groups.

In-depth interviews

Researchers also conducted nine in-depth, individual interviews with principals, vice principals, English-language department coordinators, and other school administrators. Three were conducted in Guayaquil, two in Ibarra, and four in Manabí. In-depth interviews were not originally part of the revised evaluation design. However, it was determined that including school administrators in focus groups may create unintentional power imbalances between administrators and other school staff or parents that would prevent other participants from speaking candidly in groups. The purpose of these interviews was to better understand the students' learning environment beyond their English class and what factors inside and outside the schools affected their learning process, as well as to gain an outside perspective on teacher outcomes based on participation in the EHI program.

Vox pops

Researchers conducted 19 vox pop interviews with participating teachers, non-participating teachers, and students of participating teachers. Nine were conducted with participating teachers, two with non-participating teachers, seven with students of participating teachers, and one with a school psychologist. These on-camera interviews allow research participants to speak to program funders and administrators directly, in their own words. These recordings will be used for internal presentation purposes for program stakeholders.

Figure 4: Vox pop and in-depth interview participants

	Guayaquil	Ibarra	Manabí	Total
Vox Pops				
Participating Teachers	4	2	3	9
Non-participating Teachers	2			2
Students of Participating Teachers	3	2	2	7
School Psychologist	1			1
In-depth Interviews				
Principals/Vice Principals	3	1	1	5
English-Language Department Coordinators			2	2
Other Administrators		1	1	2

Classroom observation

Researchers completed 15 classroom observations in eight English classes led by participating teachers and seven English classes led by non-participating teachers. Teachers were not told in advance which classes would be observed, only that there would be researchers visiting the school and that some classes may be observed. This enabled researchers to record a more natural and typical classroom experience than if the teachers were identified in advance. Observers used a standardized rubric for observation including sections on classroom climate (teacher-student dynamics, student engagement in instruction, etc.), English instruction and utilization (how much English vs. Spanish used in the classroom and in what format), English pedagogical tools (range of educational strategies utilized), and classroom materials and technology (infrastructure including seating, boards, computers, etc.). Each criterion was ranked on a scale from “consistently observed” to “not observed” or “not applicable.” Observation of classes led by both participating and non-participating teachers allowed researchers to compare the classroom strategies of both categories of teachers.

Additionally, a researcher observed one virtual EHI class (B1.2) in November 2022 to better understand the structure, content, and teaching presentation of the program. This observation of an EHI class provided context for the reports from participating teachers about their own experiences and the effect the program had on their confidence, skills, and teaching practices.

Limitations, biases, and adaptations

The evaluation was designed to provide valid and reliable data related to the evaluation questions. It accomplishes this, but some limitations and possible biases exist. These are described in the table below, as are as the mitigations the evaluation team implemented in response.

Figure 5. Potential biases and mitigation strategies

	Cause	Mitigation(s)
Design bias	While the original intention of the research design was to carry out a quantitative pre-post-test design, due to the necessity to obtain fieldwork permissions from the Ecuadorian government, the surveys were not a true baseline and endline. The first survey did not take place until the middle of the school year and the time between the first and second survey was only four months, not the anticipated eight months. It is possible that if a true longitudinal analysis was possible, the overall findings of this evaluation may have been different.	<p>The study triangulates across quantitative and qualitative data, across time, and from multiple sources including teachers, students, and others in the community.</p> <p>In addition, a lengthy discovery process including interviews with key stakeholders, an external literature review, and a thorough review of the existing proficiency testing data all served to inform evaluation design refinements.</p>
Response bias	The evaluation used largely self-reported data which may introduce some level of response bias. Instead of being able to independently validate teacher and student reports of language skills, the design relies in large part on research participants' own assessments of their skills, confidence, growth, and overall teaching and learning abilities, which may introduce response bias.	<p>This decision was intentionally made based on literature about the limitations of proficiency testing and the nature of the evaluation questions. Attempts to implement this approach would likely have been costly and unproductive in terms of understanding the program or informing future programs.</p> <p>The high level of triangulation within the study methodology also serves to mitigate response bias within the analysis.</p> <p>In addition, the evaluation team carried out independent classroom observation within participating and non-participating classes and of a virtual EHI class.</p>

	Cause	Mitigation(s)
Sponsorship bias	Participants were aware that the study was related to the DoS and the Ecuadorian MoE. The authorization letter of the evaluation team to enter the schools caused trepidation on the part of some qualitative research participants. Teachers and students shared that they were a bit intimidated by the fact that U.S. and Ecuadorian governments and program funders were the ultimate users of the data.	The evaluation team used informed consent processes and assured participants of the confidentiality of their participation in the research process. In addition, the research process allowed trust-building to lay a foundation of openness and honesty within the qualitative research sessions.
Desirability bias	Participants may have answered questions in a way that they thought would lead to being accepted or to provide what they perceived to be the “correct” answer. This may have been especially the case for current teachers and those on the waiting list, as they have a built-in incentive to respond to research questions in a way that puts them in the best light, or which provides justification for their inclusion in the program.	The research was carried out with a highly trained evaluation team that used interviewing and moderation strategies to create a safe and open space during focus groups, as well as interviews where participants felt at ease and comfortable sharing their views. They were reminded of the confidentiality of their responses and the independence of the evaluation team.
Selection bias	<p>Participants who chose to respond to the research requests may have had a more positive experience with the program, thus motivating their response.</p> <p>In addition, it is possible that those that have chosen to participate in the EHI program may be different from other Ecuadorian English teachers which limits the generalizability of the research results.</p>	<p>The surveys were carried out with multiple rounds of outreach through different platforms and included an incentive draw, which resulted in high overall response rates.</p> <p>Surveys were kept as short and simple as possible to minimize the burden on the respondent.</p> <p>The use of teachers on the waiting list – who are selected on a first-come, first-serve basis – allows for a greater chance of comparability between the two groups.</p>
Inclusion bias	<p>Students who participated in the focus groups were selected by the English teachers who may have felt compelled to select the highest-performing students. This was the only way the evaluation team could gain access to students, as the program team did not have access to student contact information.</p> <p>The only teachers included in the study were participants or those who were on the waitlist. This was done intentionally to maximize the similarity between groups for comparison purposes. However, this means the study did not include any non-waitlisted non-participants. As such, the evaluation cannot determine if non-participating teachers (those who did not voluntarily opt into the program or waitlist) are fundamentally different from those who</p>	During fieldwork, several adjustments were made to increase respondents’ comfort with sharing constructive feedback. Researchers re-structured student groups to not mix them with teachers, gave reminders that the evaluation was not high-stakes or an evaluation of the teachers, and included outside stakeholders and community members to validate the findings.

Cause		Mitigation(s)
	volunteered for the program in their abilities, level of motivation, etc.	
Cultural bias	As the research was designed by a team from outside of Ecuador that is unfamiliar with the social, political, and cultural context the program operates within, some level of cultural bias may have occurred.	The data collection was carried out by a local evaluation team that provided feedback on research approaches, reviewed all research instruments, and played a part in verifying all research findings.

In addition, while the original intention of the research design was to carry out a pre-post-test design, due to necessity to obtain permissions from the Ecuadorian government in advance of fieldwork that was unknown to the evaluation team in advance, the surveys were not able to be fielded at times that allowed them to be a true baseline and endline. As the first survey did not take place until the middle of the school year, the time between the first and second survey was only four months and not the anticipated eight months that was planned.

Additionally, the Ecuadorian school system is unique in that each region of the country has differing start and end dates for the school year due to their different climates and weather patterns, which have been further impacted by changing COVID-19 lockdown guidance. The evaluation team worked with a local team familiar with the educational context to determine fieldwork dates that best fit school timelines across the country; the fieldwork dates which did not align exactly with school start and end dates.

While the baseline survey among non-participating teachers from the EHI waiting list was relatively high at 47 percent, there were still low sample sizes among that group. Also, the universe of participating teachers changed between the two survey waves: the endline included new waitlisted teachers (who fell into the “non-participant” group) and new participating teachers that had been taken off the waitlist for the program after the closure of the first wave. As such, this limited the evaluation team’s ability to make statistically significant comparisons between the two waves. It did allow, however, for a merging of the two datasets to boost sample sizes and allow for statistically significant comparisons between the participating and non-participating groups. Participants were asked in the endline if they had completed the baseline and if so, only their first responses were included to avoid duplication of respondents.

As the evaluation did not have access to email addresses for all survey respondents, survey distribution took place through a combination of outreach through EIL platforms, WhatsApp messages from Synergie Research, and Qualtrics email reminders. While this method resulted in overall high response rates among both teachers and students, it meant that the survey responses could not be paired from baseline to endline. There was not an ability to match

individual survey responses to compare individual-level data over time. Instead, the analysis mainly used a combined dataset of both survey waves, which enabled us to compare participating and non-participating cohorts with greater sample sizes. In the end, this was likely not a serious issue as the time frames between survey waves would have made the chance of capturing change over time very unlikely.

Finally, the close partnership between the U.S.-based evaluation team and the Ecuadorian fieldwork partner allowed for adaptation and tailoring of research instruments, approaches, and techniques to ensure cultural-appropriate methods and an understanding of the power dynamics and potential biases inherent in the research process. An awareness of the potential research limitations and biases allowed the evaluation team to work to uncover potential bias at every stage, including in analysis, where the Ecuadorian fieldwork team also played a role in data analysis and drafting program recommendations.

Context

Research design and fieldwork took place throughout 2022 and the early months of 2023, during which time Ecuador was beset by rising gang violence linked to Mexican drug cartels, including shootings and car bombings. In addition, since the pandemic, the country has been experiencing a worsening socioeconomic crisis, which led to higher overall levels of crime, including within the educational communities and even within schools. During the same time there were widespread protests – especially from Indigenous and rural communities – related to government policies, climate change, and social policies. Center-right President Guillermo Lasso declared a state of emergency in two regions and labelled such violent incidents "a declaration of open war" against the government.

Additionally, lockdowns during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing social and economic issues in Ecuador, including children's schooling. During fieldwork, Ecuadorian schools were just beginning to open for in-person instruction after many months of lockdowns. Difficulties at home, such as increased poverty and isolation due to lockdowns and loss of income, had negative impacts on both teacher and student mental health. Poor internet connectivity during virtual classes stagnated student progress, leading teachers to backtrack lesson plans during in-person instruction to cover basic English knowledge even in more advanced classes. Moreover, in March 2022 (seven months before qualitative fieldwork began) the Ecuadorian MoE officially reduced the number of English instruction hours in public schools from five to three hours per week. This change further impacts the educational context for English-language learning outcomes in Ecuador.

These periods coincided with in-person qualitative fieldwork across the country. The areas where fieldwork took place saw multiple violent incidents and high levels of general insecurity and crime. Additional precautions were taken by the in-country evaluation team including travelling in groups, using private transportation, having systems to check in with field coordinators, and avoiding certain areas.

For additional details on the evaluation context and related research findings, please see Appendix III of this report.

Findings

Analysis of the quantitative, qualitative, and classroom observation data reveals that the EHI program has a positive effect on teacher self-confidence and pedagogy practices within their classrooms. In focus groups and in the survey, participating teachers reported improved self-confidence, supportive peer networks, and teaching strategies from the program. Additionally, participating teachers reported using more dynamic and engaging activities and a more collaborative approach with their students, incorporating a growth mindset and positive feedback. They also said they speak in English more during classes to model English-speaking for students. The survey showed that participating teachers had a more positive outlook on both the present and the future than teachers who had not yet participated in the program. Students of participating teachers also reported increased enjoyment of English classes.

The evaluation did not set out to independently measure changes in English proficiency of the teacher participants; however, the survey showed that three-quarters of participating teachers self-reported that they felt their English levels had improved. However, the evaluation also found that even graduates of the program clearly felt they had room for continued improvement. Some evidence shows that the program in its current form may not improve the levels of all participants as much as participating teachers self-reported in this study. EIL, while not directly involved in the certification tests, has records of participating teachers' testing results at the time they enter and at various times after joining the program and was able to provide some of that information to DCG.

More than 2,000 teachers have already participated in at least one module of the program with more teachers continuing to join. Teachers enter the program with a variety of levels of English, making it difficult to determine specific outcomes for all participants. However, in a sample of 84 teachers who completed at least three modules of the program that was provided by EIL, all but three of the teachers advanced from the initial module level that they took in the first session to a higher level of instruction. Within the 18 months, 32 of the 84 (38 percent) advanced to the B2.2 level of instruction. All 32 began the program at the B1.1 instruction level or higher, with most (28 of the 32) beginning at the B1.2 level of instruction. Of the 32 who advanced to the B2.2 instruction level, 28 took the official English-language International English proficiency Test (iTEP) exam and 15 passed. Of all of the teachers who began at the B1.1 level or higher (48), 31 percent passed the iTEP exam at the B2.2 level.

While this sample did not include all participating teachers, it demonstrates that there is evidence that some proportion of teachers that came in at a higher level and continued with the program succeeded in meeting their goal of achieving the B2.2 level certification, but many did not. Teachers that came in at a lower level have not had the time to complete all the

modules designed to get them to the B2.2 level, so it is not clear what their language outcomes may be. It is also clear that there were many external factors, outlined in this report, that may have affected language acquisition during this time. As a result, the data implies that EHI may facilitate and support improvement in English-language skills for many teachers, but not all teachers are able to achieve their English proficiency goals, especially within a short time frame. Instead, the literature and evaluation findings show that language acquisition is a relatively slow process and, even when measurable gains are made, is not likely to be sustained without ongoing practice and considerable support.

EQ1: How has participation contributed to teachers' own skill development?

Ecuadorian English teacher participation in the EHI program leads to self-reported increases in English-language level, confidence using English, and adaptations of pedagogical techniques, when compared with non-participating teachers. The survey among participating and non-participating teachers indicated participating teachers were twice as likely as non-participating teachers to report that over the past year, their abilities in English and teaching as well as their confidence in these abilities has increased “a lot.”⁵ Analysis of interviews and focus group findings give context about how and in what ways participation in the EHI program led to those self-reported outcomes.

⁵ n=727 participating teachers and 486 non-participating teachers who participated in the endline survey. For teachers who took both surveys, only their baseline responses were included.

Figure 6: Participating teachers show higher self-confidence and skills than non-participating teachers



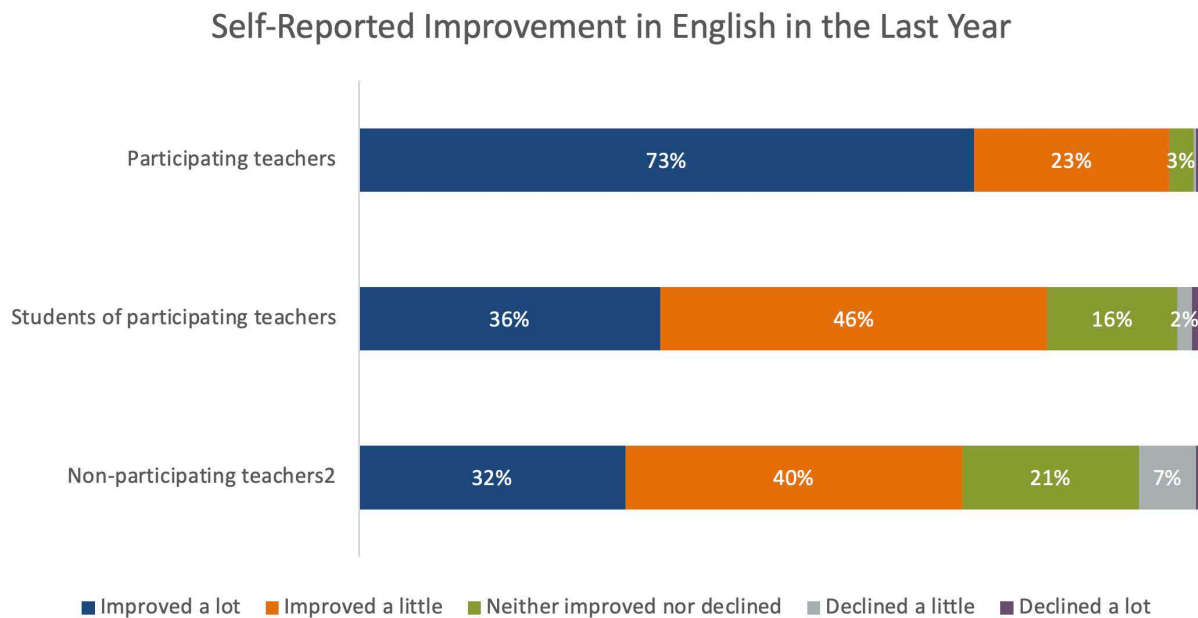
Base: n=727 participating teachers and n=486 non-participating teachers who participated in the endline survey.

Proficiency: Self-reported growth in teachers' English levels

Participating teachers nearly universally (98 percent) agreed that “the program was effective in increasing my English-language skills.” Likewise, 96 percent of participating teachers reported improvement of their English level in the last year, compared to 72 percent of non-participating teachers.⁶ Among students of participating teachers, 36 percent said their English improved “a lot” and an additional 46 percent said it improved “a little.” Only three percent reported declines. Only one and seven percent of participating and non-participating teachers, respectively, reported a decline. This overall positive trend may also be related to increased practice opportunities linked to a return to in-person instruction in schools.

⁶ However, proficiency testing data compiled by the IP and examined by the evaluation team in December 2021 does not yet confirm this finding. Based on several different available measures including The International English Proficiency Test (iTEP) and Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEVAL) test scores, EHI participants mostly showed only very modest measurable English proficiency gains. This may be attributable to the rigor and/or format of the tests or the limited time teachers participated in the program. It suggests that language acquisition requires sustained practice hours to make measurable proficiency gains.

Figure 7: Participating teachers self-reported much higher levels of improvement in English over the past year than non-participating teachers and students of participating teachers



Base: n=5,035 students who completed the endline survey and answered the question; n=727 participating teachers and n=286 non-participating teachers who participated in the endline survey.

A need for continued skill development

For some participating teachers, they were still lacking some important English-language proficiencies. In interactions with some participating teachers during fieldwork in Ecuador, the research team observed that some teachers had difficulties understanding basic questions in English such as, “How many years have you taught English?” or “Do you enjoy teaching English?” While some of these teachers had lower levels of language proficiency as evidenced by their current English testing levels, they sometimes reported greater confidence in their abilities than they were able to demonstrate in practice. However, in focus group discussions, both participating and non-participating teachers shared that listening tends to be the most difficult skill for them to master as they do not have many opportunities to listen to and interact with native speakers. Indeed, a quarter (24 percent) of participating teachers said that the program did not offer enough opportunities for listening in English; compare this two those who said the same thing about opportunities for reading, writing, and speaking (about 15 percent for each).

Teachers in focus groups said they saw decline in both student and their own levels of English that they attribute to the virtual learning environment during COVID-19 lockdowns. Both participating and non-participating teachers reported fundamental gaps in student learning,

which made moving through curricula difficult. They cited connectivity issues, poor access to resources, and other external factors like students' home lives, to explain poor retention.

"Most students returned with less knowledge [after COVID lockdowns]. They come with quite a few gaps in basic things. For example, they are in the 10th grade, and they do not remember the numbers beyond the number 10 or the days of the week, so it has been quite difficult." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"In two years of online classes the kids came with gaps that we really had to fill in or remember or go back. We all started teaching seventh grade classes remembering dates, the alphabet, greetings, because the kids didn't remember anything." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

The data did not show any changes in self-reported English-language or teaching skills between wave one and wave two for either the participating or non-participating teachers. This may possibly be due to the short time between the two survey waves.

Confidence: Development of teachers' self-confidence speaking English

This evaluation finds notably consistent outcomes of increased confidence in English skills and teaching skills across teachers that participate in the EHI program. In focus groups and interviews, an overwhelming majority of participating teachers shared that participating in EHI led to increased feelings of confidence in English-language skills and in confidence as a teacher. Survey analysis corroborates this qualitative finding. Seventy-two percent of participating teachers reported that over the past year their confidence in their English-language skills had improved "a lot," while 71 percent said their confidence in their abilities as a teacher increased "a lot."

"I labeled myself as a 'mute gringa.' I could understand people when they spoke English to me, but I couldn't respond in the same way. I would answer in Spanish. Now since I finished the EHI program, I can have a conversation with people from abroad." [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"Before in the teachers' meetings I felt more afraid. Some of them knew more English [than me] and now I am more skilled. EHI has helped me develop my abilities." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Non-participating teachers reported lower rates of confidence in their English-language skills. Only 35 percent of non-participating teachers reported both that their English-language skills had improved "a lot" and that their confidence in their abilities as a teacher increased "a lot,"

which is less than half the rate reported by participating teachers for the same statements. Moreover, fewer than half of non-participating teachers (45 percent) strongly agreed with statement “I am confident in my English abilities,” compared to 65 percent of participating teachers. Non-participating teachers in the focus groups also spoke about their lack of confidence and how this affected their teaching.

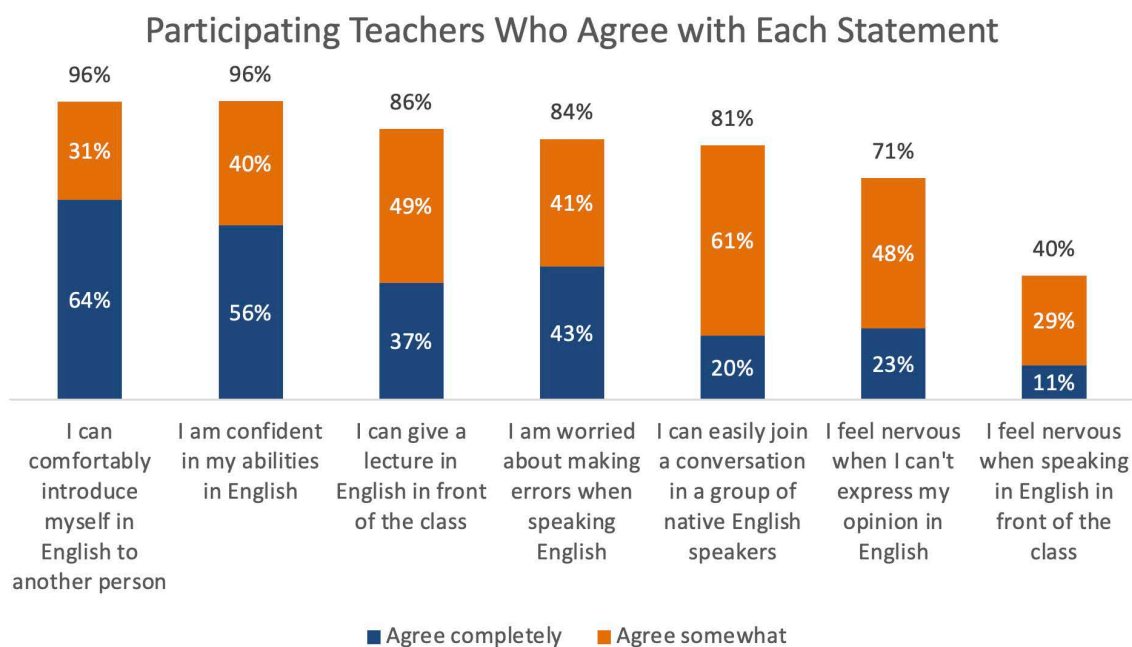
"[When I think of English, I feel] anxious and desperate. Desperate because I don't know if I am pronouncing it correctly to be able to teach well, and anxious because I want the students to have an excellent level of education." [Non-participating Teacher, Ibarra]

In the focus groups, teachers discussed their increased confidence around spoken English due to participation in the EHI program. Participating teachers shared that before going through the EHI program, they were nervous about speaking and listening in English. Although they felt largely comfortable with reading and writing, they often experienced anxiety when attempting to apply English skills to real-life English conversations with their English-speaking colleagues, in the classroom in front of their students, or with native speakers of English. They said their fears of making mistakes and feeling inferior to others was the primary motivator of their anxiety around speaking English. Non-participating teachers expressed similar anxieties.

However, after participating in the EHI program, participating teachers reported a notable increase in confidence around their English-language skills, particularly in speaking English. This was expressed in focus groups and high levels of confidence were also evident in the survey. Among participating teachers, the vast majority expressed confidence in their speaking abilities after the program. Ninety-six percent agreed with the statement, “I can comfortably introduce myself in English to another person,” 86 percent agreed with the statement, “I can give a lecture in English in front of a class,” and 81 percent agreed with the statement, “I can easily join a conversation in a group of native English speakers.”

Despite these gains, participating teachers still expressed some anxieties about speaking English: 84 percent said they worry about making errors when speaking English, and 40 percent still said they feel nervous when speaking English in front of a class. This suggests continued room for growth in terms of language proficiency and self-confidence, and/or that these teachers are potentially more aware of their English mistakes than they previously were.

Figure 8: Participating teachers feel more confident with English speaking, but still feel some anxiety around expressing themselves and making mistakes



Base: n=974 participating teachers who took either the baseline or endline questionnaire.

Participating teachers reported that their increased confidence came largely from the positive encouragement and reinforcement modeled by EHI facilitators. Teachers described how facilitators encouraged active participation and for teachers to attempt to use their English skills even if they made mistakes, promoting a growth mindset for the teachers. Instead of framing mistakes as something negative, EHI facilitators framed them as opportunities for learning. For many participating teachers, the positive mindset around making mistakes was not something they had previously encountered. They felt empowered to participate and view mistakes as ways to increase their skills. Now, many say they have less fear and shame around speaking English. These same participating teachers also reported that they share this positive mindset with their students and encourage them to try to speak in class.

“In the program they taught us that it was not necessary to have the same pronunciation as native English speakers, and that we can still converse. It doesn’t matter if we don’t have the right accent, the point is to practice. I am trying to apply this with my students. I tell them that no one here is an expert, that we are all learning, and if we speak and practice in class, they will lose their fear.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

“I also used the knowledge and the patience that [the facilitator] gave us during the course. She taught me that, ‘will is power,’ and she said, ‘I appreciate you; you don’t know how much I love to give these classes.’ That motivation that she appreciated us,

without knowing us and through a screen, that same love she conveyed to us, we can give it to the students.” [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Pedagogy: Improved teaching skills and classroom practices

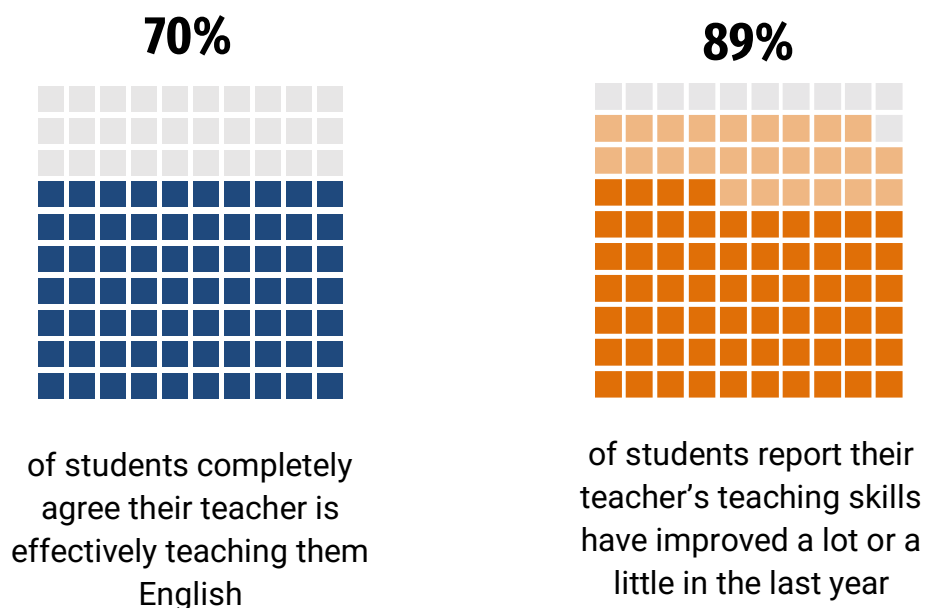
In addition to increased confidence in language, participating teachers reported applying lessons learned from EHI to their own teaching skills and classrooms. Ninety-eight percent of participating teachers who took the survey agreed with the statement, “the program taught me new approaches to teaching English” and 95 percent agreed with the statement, “the lessons of the program are applicable to my classroom.”⁷

Moreover, participation in EHI was associated with higher self-reported levels of teaching skill. The evaluation team created a teaching ability index by aggregating survey respondents’ agreement with statements about their teaching confidence and teaching ability.⁸ Analysis of this index indicated a statistical difference in self-reported teaching abilities between participating and non-participating teachers at the 95 percent confidence level (p-value < .001). While the index relies on self-reported data from the teachers, the survey among students of participating teachers provided some insights on how teaching skill and improvements are seen by others. Seven in 10 students who participated in the endline survey completely agreed with the statement, “my teacher is effective in teaching me English.” Nearly nine in 10 students noted improvement of their teacher participant’s abilities as an educator: 64 percent said their teacher’s teaching skills have improved “a lot” in the past year, while an additional 25 percent said they improved “a little.” As there was not a survey among students of non-participating students, it is not possible to compare how those students saw their teachers’ level of effectiveness and improvement in teaching English.

⁷ n=974 participating teachers who took either the baseline or endline questionnaire. For teachers who took both, only their baseline responses were included.

⁸ The index represents the mean response of each respondent to all statements, where 1 is “completely agree” and 4 is “completely disagree.” In the case of statement that were negative, the score was inverted, so a “1” always represented a positive assessment of confidence or ability. A lower mean score would indicate a higher level of confidence and ability. Analysis was conducted among those who answered the endline.

Figure 9: Most students of participating teachers agree their teacher's teaching skills are effective have improved in the last year



Base: [left] n=5,207 students who participated in the endline and answered the question; [right] n=5,045 students who participated in the endline and answered the question.

In focus groups, many teachers credited the modeling of teaching strategies provided by EHI facilitators for changing how they structure their lesson plans and interact with students. Teachers often reported applying lesson plans and tools they observed in their EHI courses in their own classrooms. In focus groups and interviews, some teachers described how, before participating in EHI, they did not prepare exact daily or year-long lesson plans, but this changed after their participation. When comparing participating teachers and non-participating teachers who took the survey, participating teachers were more likely to say they employ daily lesson plans; 83 percent of participant teachers completely agreed with the statement, “I come to class prepared with clear lesson plans,” compared to 75 percent of non-participating teachers.⁹

In EHI courses, participating teachers observed the structured lesson plans that facilitators created to build their skills each week, tactics they then went on to employ in their own lesson planning. Observation of one virtual EHI class supports these teacher reports. In the EHI class observed, the facilitator shared the lesson plan at the beginning of the class so that teachers could prepare for what they would learn that day. Each activity built on the previous one and

⁹ n=966 participating teachers and 360 non-participating teachers who took either the baseline or endline questionnaire. For teachers who took both, only their baseline responses were included.

allowed teachers to grow their understanding of a particular grammar topic and practice using it both in small groups and in front of the whole class.

"My classes are no longer the typical traditional ones. Before the program, I used to plan everything in one class, I mean vocabulary, listening, structure, grammar, speaking, and reading. But now, thanks to the EHI program, I have learned to plan my lessons with a process. I learned a class is based on a single strategy, and I apply it to my students. I use many activities to reach the students so that they understand me. I always focus on their actual life. I am very grateful to have this kind of methodology which I am learning with this program." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"I have learned new strategies that the facilitator used, and I applied them in class. For example, the vocabulary part, how to focus a reading by starting first with the vocabulary and trying to make sure that the children know the vocabulary, so that when it is time to read, it is a little easier for them. [Before participating in EHI] we went directly to the reading and the kids had to see if they understood each other or not. So that's what I learned. If they didn't pay attention, it's because they had no previous knowledge of the vocabulary." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

EHI facilitators also introduced teachers to a variety of online resources, such as Kahoot (an online platform that can be used for teaching English language through games) or Padlet (an online bulletin board where teachers can post questions for students to answer in forums). Teachers found these virtual resources helpful. During the pandemic, teachers and students were learning how to conduct online classes by participating in them themselves. Facilitators sharing resources and demonstrating how they could be implemented in the classroom enhanced the teachers' ability to effectively integrate the use of technology into their classrooms. Teacher participants and students themselves were adamant that these interactive and dynamic classroom strategies increase their students' interest and participation.

"There are many applications that sometimes you don't know, and you learn them in the program, and I am applying them now ... Applications such as Kahoot, and quizzes, which is something they use in [EHI] class a lot." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"The implementation of digital platforms in the educational environment [is important] also because technology helps a lot in learning." [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Administrative staff in schools where participating teachers teach also reported that they observed a change in teachers' attitudes and mindsets. Principals, vice principals, and school

psychologists largely validated the self-reported positive outcomes from participating in EHI; several shared that they have observed teachers who have participated in the program as being more connected with their students, more prepared to conduct their classes, and more committed professionally.

“What I do know is that [EHI] has been something very productive, not only for [participating teachers]’ knowledge of the subject, but in their professional career. What I have seen at least in this teacher (who has always been very good and very dedicated), before she never had that connection with the students and now, she has it since she is on this course. It seems that her mentality has changed. She is a little more open, more sensitive, much more empathetic.” [School Psychologist, Guayaquil]

“If we compare the teachers who are in the program with those who are not, I see them as having a stronger commitment to the students. [Teacher participant, name redacted] is the one I deal with the most. Her classes are very structured, and I assume that this is due to the preparation she has with the course. I see a difference in terms of methodology and commitment.” [School Principal, Guayaquil]

The difference in teaching strategies and professionalism between participating and non-participating teachers was also identified during classroom observations. Observers consistently noted that participating teachers across regions and schools appeared to have a stronger rapport and mutual respect with students when compared with their counterparts who have not participated in EHI. In seven out of eight participating teacher classrooms observed, observers rated, “Interactions between students and adults and among students demonstrate mutual respect” as “consistently observed,” while only two of seven non-participating teacher classrooms received this rating.

Observers also noted that participating teachers more often encouraged a growth mindset among their students, inviting them to learn from their mistakes in class. In one participating teacher classroom in Manabí, the observer reported that the teacher *“encourages students to participate (and to answer correctly) by handing out candy, and also encourages classmates to applaud them.”* Similar observations were documented in other participating teacher classrooms and observers gave seven out of eight participating teachers the rating “consistently observed” for, “The teacher is encouraging and non-judgmental when correcting students’ mistakes,” compared to only one non-participating teacher who received this score. Indeed, an observer of one non-participating teacher in Guayaquil noted that the teacher demonstrated open and blatant frustration with students when they did not demonstrate comprehension of the activity.

“Seeing that the students have not progressed with their activities, the teacher begins to shout, reminding them of the minutes they have left. Seemingly frustrated and resigned by the students’ lack of understanding and involvement, the teacher sighs, reflecting her resignation at the current reality of the students.” [Note from classroom observation of non-participating teacher in Guayaquil]

Moreover, although most classrooms have limited and/or outdated technology and resources available in the classroom, participating teachers more regularly conducted engaging activities that draw on topics recognizable from Ecuadorian culture or on subjects that more generally interested the students, such as movies.

“Sometimes [previous English teachers] talk about topics that we are not very interested in, [like] organ transplants. Last year they taught the same thing over and over again. So, that’s kind of boring. Today instead we talked about movie genres, and that’s something more contemporary, something that interests us more, and that we are surrounded by.” [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

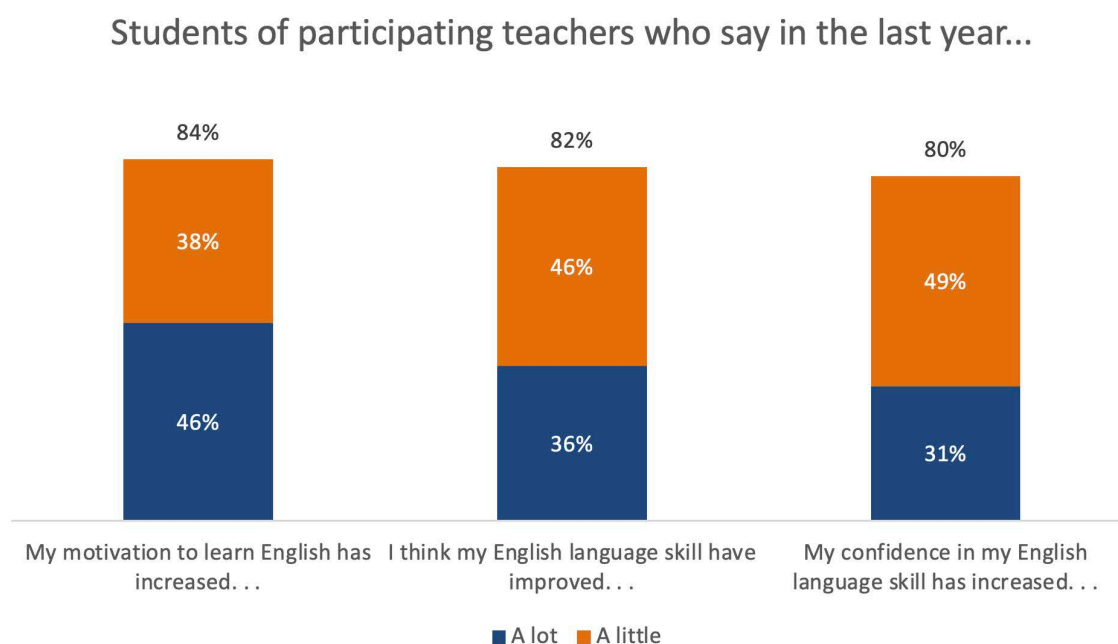
One aspect of English learning missing from both participating and non-participating teachers’ classes were opportunities for listening in English. Out of 15 classrooms observed, 14 received the rating “not observed” for the criteria, “The teacher provides opportunities to practice listening in English.” Many classrooms lack the resources to conduct these kinds of activities. In focus groups several teachers reported attempting to use their own phones to do listening exercises because the classrooms did not have speakers. Although some teachers (both participating and non-participating) reported trying to incorporate listening activities into their classes, snippets are not always well understood either due to environmental noise (number of students, noise from other classrooms and hallways) or because the students had not been adequately prepared with vocabulary to listen for in the audio clips. Listening in English was the skill that both participating and non-participating teachers most often reported as their weakest skill in focus groups, which may also contribute to why this skill is lacking in their own classrooms.

This represents a key finding that potentially limits the impact of the EHI program: participating and non-participating teachers across regions and schools face difficulties instructing their students due to scarce resources, overcrowded classrooms, and other external challenges that impact student outcomes. However, classroom observations and interviews with school administrators revealed a clear difference in pedagogical strategies, confidence, and classroom dynamics between participating and non-participating teachers.

EQ2: How (if at all) has teachers' participation in EHI contributed to improved student confidence and language skills in English?

Students of participating teachers indicated that they have greater confidence in their own English abilities over the past year and feel like they have shown improvement in English-language skills. They also report increased motivation to learn English (see Figure 10 below). It is not clear how much of this is due to the return to school after COVID-19 or other factors and how much is related to their teacher's participation in EHI.¹⁰ There are, however, indications that teacher EHI participation may impact students in other ways, including the creation of a more positive classroom environment.

Figure 10: Majorities of students of participating teachers say their English-language skills, confidence in English, and motivation to learn English have improved in the past year



Base: n=5,034 students who completed the endline survey and answered the question.

An empathetic and engaging learning environment after pandemic challenges

Students and their parents reported that fear, anxiety, and shame around learning English is a barrier to student skill growth. Both groups said that bullying and teasing when students make

¹⁰ A survey was not done with students of non-participating teachers, making it difficult to make conclusions about whether the increases in self-reported skill, confidence, and motivation are typical of all students or are unique to students of participating teachers.

mistakes in English speaking discourages them from answering questions and engaging in class.

“In the [English] courses, if you speak badly, they laugh at you, they make fun of you, so that makes you go backwards.” [Parent of Student, Guayaquil]

“If you don’t read well, you are embarrassed with your classmates because they laugh. Also, if you don’t know how to read, then the teacher corrects you. That can be helpful, but not everyone likes it. In general, I don’t like to be corrected, or to be told what to do and not to do. It’s good, yes, but I don’t like it.” [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

The growth mindset of EHI teacher participants is all the more stark considering the post-pandemic context. One English language department coordinator in Manabí argued that she believes that fear of making mistakes has become worse since remote classes started. She posited that doing classes virtually meant that students did not have to actively participate as much in class and that, coupled with the loss of educational progress, results in students coming back to school in-person with a lower knowledge base and nearly two years of no practice interacting with their peers in person. This makes them more nervous to participate for fear of making a mistake in class and being embarrassed by their classmates.

“Previously [before COVID-19 lockdowns], 80 percent of the time, we saw the active participation of the students. Now you have to say, ‘come on, you can do it, try to participate’ and the situation is a bit complicated, but it is precisely because of that period when they were using cameras and microphones, and I believe that this had an impact on them. Now the fear of making mistakes is much greater than before, so now we must inject a little motivation.” [English-Language Coordinator, Manabí]

Participating teachers of the EHI program shared frequently how they are applying positive reinforcement learned from EHI facilitators in their own classrooms to help overcome the anxiety students feel. They feel that this strategy improves student confidence and encourages them to engage more in their English classes. This was also evident in classroom observations in which observers in seven out of eight participating teacher classrooms noted that teachers encouraged active participation from students and were non-judgmental when correcting students’ mistakes.

“The moment that we as teachers feel more capable, it makes that fear of meeting the class go away. The confidence which we transmit to the students, now that we are more capable, the children feel it, and they also start to interact.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

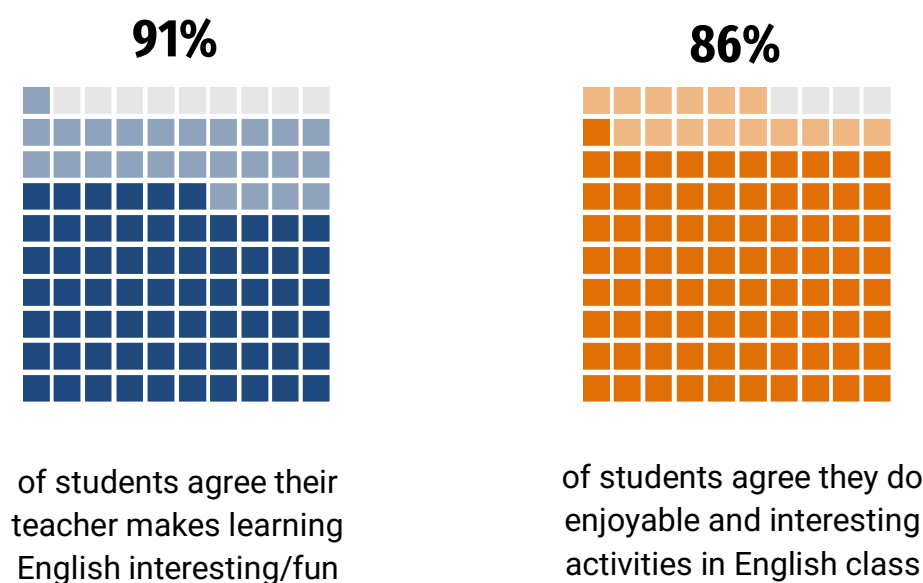
“An important part of this type of program is that they make you see the human side. They teach you the language, but they teach you to use what you know so that you can pass it on to someone else.” [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

“When students solve the exercise on the board, the teacher encourages them to participate and to not be shy, saying: ‘Don’t worry.’” [Note from classroom observation of participating teacher in Manabí]

“Students are encouraged to participate in class. They do not have good vocabulary or pronunciation, but this does not limit their participation.” [Note from classroom observation of participating teacher in Guayaquil]

Students in the focus groups tended to agree and several made comparisons between the teaching style of their current teacher and past teachers who have not participated in EHI. They stated that their current teachers are more empathetic, do not criticize them for making mistakes, use different teaching techniques than other teachers, and encourage them to actively participate in class. Ninety-one percent completely or somewhat agree with the statement, “My teacher makes learning English interesting/fun” and 86 percent say the same about the statement, “I do enjoyable and interesting activities in my English class.”

Figure 11: Vast majorities of students of participating teachers say that their teachers teach in an engaging manner



Base: n=5,207 students who completed the endline survey and answered the question.

In focus groups, students of participating teachers in all locations included in the evaluation noted that increased teacher support and positive reinforcement helps them and their classmates feel more engaged and makes the classroom a place where they are excited to learn. They noted teachers' contagious enthusiasm, creativity, patience, and positivity.

"With other teachers it's like they don't want to talk. They just want to explain the class and make us understand. It is not, for example, like the English teacher, you ask her, 'How was your day?' And she answers with a smile." [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"If I am not very clear on something she [my teacher] always says, 'If you have a doubt, tell me. I will help you.'" [Student of Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"In English, the teacher, from the moment she enters the class, spreads enthusiasm. Even the classmates that normally don't study do their work. That is the difference. They like to participate in English, and they ask the teacher questions." [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Moreover, students reported seeing differences in teaching style and methodology between previous teachers and current English teachers who have participated in EHI. They noted that participating teachers take the time to reinforce teachings through various methods including drawing, interactive activities, and repetition.

"In my last English class, I had a bad teacher, and he filled the whole blackboard with sentences and sentences and said that we would have a test on that on Thursday. But the teacher we have now is different. She asks us to repeat the verbs three times and we learn them with little drawings. She says it is better with little drawings in order to understand better." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"There have been good teaching methods, they know how to reach the student. Regarding the teacher I have, she has focused on all of us learning. It has not been like, 'I already taught and now you are on your own.' She likes to repeat things until she notices that we learned them and at a certain point even put them into practice. She likes to see the student's deficiencies so we can get to the goal." [Student of Participating Teacher, Manabí]

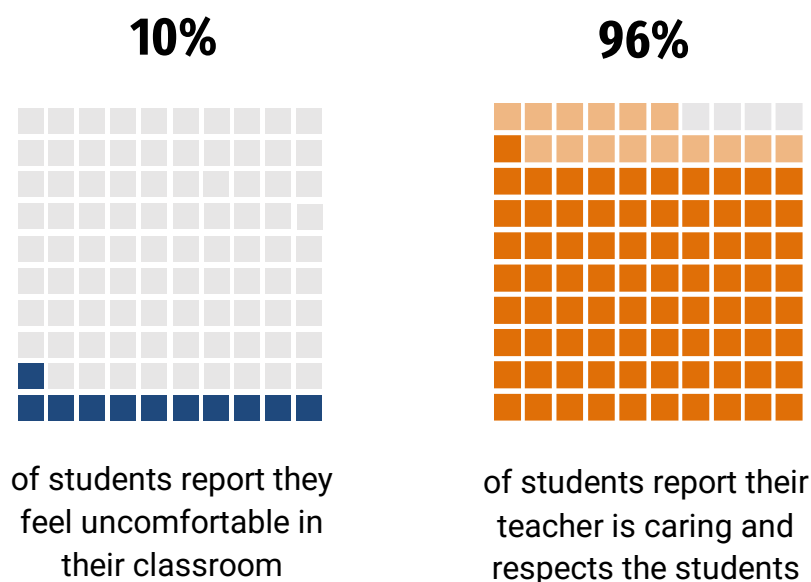
"Another change was in the teaching. Before, she [the English teacher] made us read the book and then answer the activities. Now she explains better. She makes us answer

the questions that come in the modules, she makes us express our answer, she helps us to create an opinion.” [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

“I had a teacher at the other school who was very pessimistic, she got very angry and I didn't feel like going to class. The teacher I'm with now is different, I love the way she explains, she is very patient in explaining, and she explains several times until we understand. The teacher tries to make us understand the module, she makes it fun and makes me want to take English classes if I like it. The teacher looks for methods to make the class fun.” [Student of Participating Teacher, Manabí]

Moreover, the endline survey showed that 81 percent of students of participating teachers completely agreed with the statement, “My English teacher is caring and respects the students” and an additional 15 percent somewhat agreed. Moreover, only 10 percent reported feeling uncomfortable in their English class.

Figure 12: Almost all students of participating teachers feel respected by their English teacher and feel comfortable in the classroom



Base: n=5,207 students who completed the endline survey and answered the question.

A need for continued skill development

Despite their positivity, students – much like the teachers themselves – still said they face challenges learning English. Sixty-one percent of students of participating teachers who participated in the endline survey agree somewhat or completely that it is difficult to learn

English in their classroom. In most focus groups, students specified that listening activities are the most difficult for them to understand, sometimes because the audio feels too fast or because the native English speaker accents are different from how they hear their teachers pronounce words.

“Listening [is the most difficult thing to learn in English] because it depends on the audio. Many times, you don’t understand everything. It goes fast, or there is a difference between American and British English. Sometimes I have to listen to British audios and the pronunciation is very different from the American one.” [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

“Listening is more difficult [than other activities]. Because there are words that look alike and I get confused, I think it’s one word and it’s another. The similarity of words, for example, like “sea” is sea and “see” is see, they are similar.” [Student of Participating Teacher, Manabí]

A long-term horizon for growth

The participating teachers in focus groups felt that it is was too early to identify all of the impacts on students based on teachers’ participation in the EHI program and that the process of building students’ English proficiency, knowledge, confidence, and engagement will take time.

“We are just starting, we are just applying these strategies, and we can’t see the impact or the change in the kids from one moment to the next.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

“This is long-term, not immediate, but it is a process that requires that all teachers are involved.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

EQ3: What other emergent outcomes are there from the program?

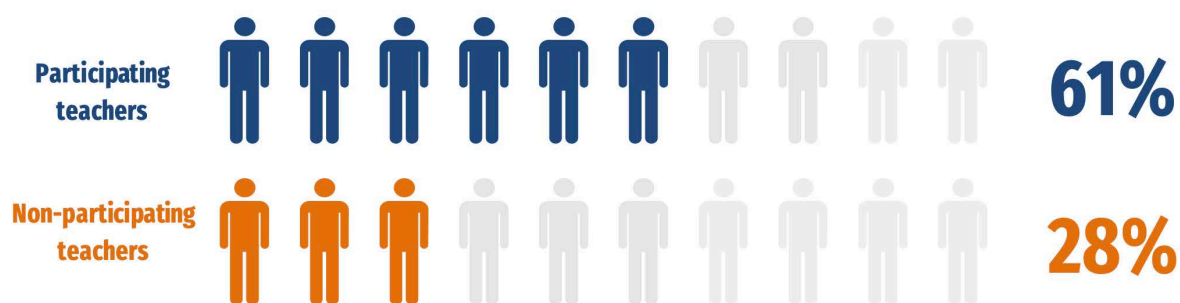
In addition to increased confidence in English language and teaching skills and observed improvements in participating teacher engagement of students, teachers reported creating and using new teacher networks. Participating in EHI introduced teachers to colleagues from other schools with whom they have independently created active peer networks to support one another, practice English, and share resources.

They also had a more positive outlook on the future after participating in the EHI program. Participation in the program is also associated with a more positive outlook on their future in Ecuador broadly.

New teacher networks and sharing of lesson ideas

Participating teachers shared that because of the EHI program they increased their connections with other English teachers and have been able to build a network with their colleagues to share ideas and provide and receive support. Twice as many participating teachers reported their connections to other English teachers have increased “a lot” over the past year, as did non-participating teachers (61 percent of participating teachers compared to 28 percent of non-participating teachers).

Figure 13: Participating teachers are more likely to report increased connections with other English teachers than non-participating teachers



Base: n=727 participating teachers and n=486 non-participating teachers who answered the question.

Teachers feel more empowered because of improved skillsets *and* the strong supportive networks they have built with their fellow participating teachers. Teachers took the initiative to set up group chats and video calls to keep in touch and EHI also sets up official messaging groups for each class at the start of each new module. Participants shared that these group chats were a great source, not only of teaching ideas and resources but also for encouragement and increased morale.

"I had never had contact with other English teachers, neither virtually nor in person, especially in the long term, so what caught my attention [with EHI] was that I said, 'Now I am going to be able to loosen up, learn more, interact,' and I was lucky enough to be accepted." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"We have a WhatsApp group where there are several English teachers and we are always sending a handbook, something that may be useful to someone else, material,

topics to discuss, and event planning, so there is still a link between teachers."
[Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"On Telegram we have made a group where we share everything in terms of planning, and many of them [the resources shared] are free. Now I feel supported by them [other participating teachers]." *[Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]*

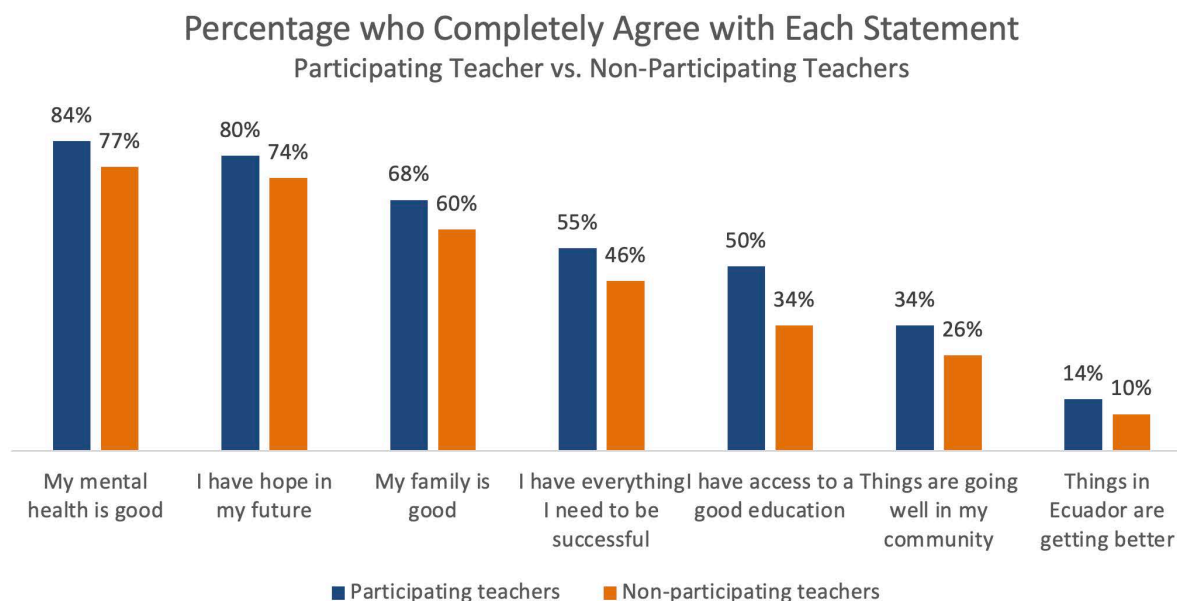
More positive outlook on the future and motivation to continue with English-language studies

Participation in the EHI program is associated with a more positive attitude about both the present and the future, according to survey results. Using the statements asked about a respondent's current state of mind and outlook on the future, the evaluation team created an index to determine overall current satisfaction and positive future outlook.¹¹ Statistical analysis of this score among participating and non-participating teachers indicates that there are differences between the two groups, with the mean favorability score of participating teachers statistically lower than that of non-participating teachers at the 95 percent confidence level (p -value < .001), indicating that participating teachers as a group have higher current satisfaction and positive outlook toward the future.

Looking at individual statements about their outlook, participation is consistently associated with higher levels of agreement with positive statements about their personal situation, as well as their family, community, and country-wide situation.

¹¹ The index represents the mean response of each respondent to all statements, where 1 is "completely agree" and 4 is "completely disagree." A lower mean score would indicate a higher level of current satisfaction and positive outlook. Analysis was conducted among those who answered the endline.

Figure 14: Participating teachers are more likely to report a positive outlook and optimism than non-participating teachers



Base: n=720 participating teachers and n=482 non-participating teachers who answered the endline survey.

These differences indicated that the program may be meeting higher-level goals such as increased optimism and hope for success and prosperity in the community. Moreover, the higher levels of satisfaction and more positive outlook are combined with a higher motivation to learn and teach English. Eighty-two percent of participating teachers say their motivation to teach English has increased “a lot” over the past year, compared to 62 percent of non-participating teachers. What is not clear is whether this higher positivity and motivation among participants is long-lasting.

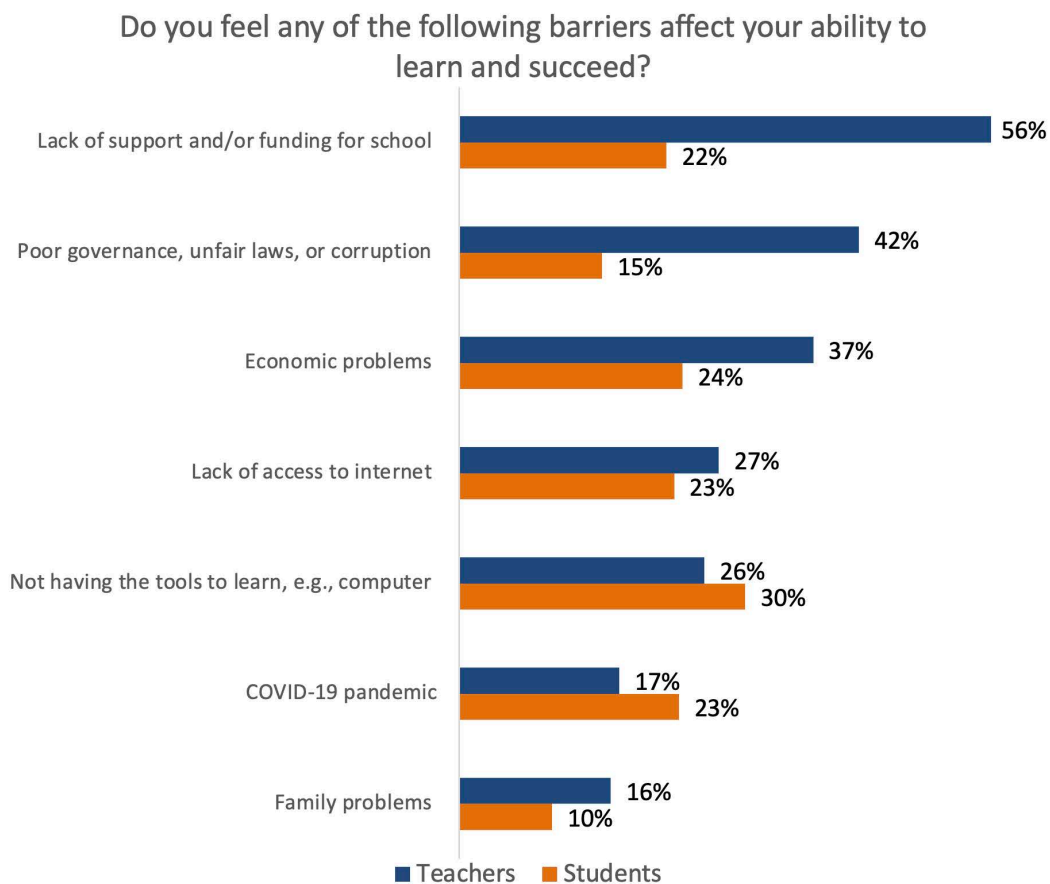
EQ4: What other factors contribute to teachers’ and students’ learning outcomes?

Both teachers’ and students’ learning and achievement are impacted by factors both internal and external to the school environment. This includes a lack of technological and economic resources, the ongoing global pandemic, home and community issues, and the social context of the country at large. Some of these factors affect English-language learning, while others affect the education environment as a whole and with it any learning, including but not limited to English-language instruction. All these factors may act as barriers to potential positive outcomes of the EHI program. This section highlights those factors that may come under the

control of key stakeholders of the EHI program. Additional factors that may require a more intensive, cross-cutting effort to address can be found in Appendix III.

When asked what barriers affect their ability to learn and succeed, teachers most often chose more systemic barriers, including lack of support or funding for schools (56 percent of all teachers who responded to the survey); poor governance, unfair laws, and corruption (37 percent); and economic problems (37 percent). Fewer named specific resources barriers, with slightly over a quarter of teachers naming lack of internet access (27 percent) and not having tools such as a computer to learn (26 percent). Students, in contrast, were about equally likely to mention both resource issues and systemic issues. About a quarter named each of the three systemic issues that were top barriers for teachers and about the same percentage mentioned lack of internet access. Three in 10 mentioned a lack of tools. Participants brought up these same issues in the qualitative elements as those that specifically affect English-language learning.

Figure 15: Teachers are more likely to report systemic barriers to learning and succeeding than students



Base: n=5,358 students and n=1,328 participating and non-participating teachers in wave 2.

School environment and infrastructure

The recent reduction in English instruction hours in public schools, demands on teachers' schedules and technical abilities, and challenges with access to resources and proper educational infrastructure all negatively impact teachers' teaching capacity and potential student learning outcomes and achievement.

Reduced instruction hours

Participants in focus groups and interviews perceived that there is a lack of institutional and governmental support for or prioritization of English-language learning in schools. They said that this is evidenced by the recent reduction in English-language class times nationwide from five hours to three hours a week; now, students will use this time to work on interdisciplinary projects.¹² Participants clarified that although official guidance states that students will take three class hours per week, in practice classes are only 40 minutes long and are further shortened by the administrative activities that need to be completed during class.

"What we need is more time. The more time we spend with the students learning English, the better, but they cut down our time and we cannot cover everything. So how can I jump from one level to the next, if the student has not yet mastered a certain level?" [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"In the last few years, there has been a reduction in the number of hours of English in the establishments. Right now, in the upper elementary school in my institution we only receive 3 hours of 40 minutes. In reality, with that we cannot make progress." [Non-participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Teachers, students, and even parents and other community members expressed disappointment with this change in curriculum. Teachers reported that this reduction in instruction hours severely limits educational progress, especially for language-learning that depends on repeated and frequent practice. Additionally, while stakeholders across cohorts mentioned interdisciplinary projects, they did not perceive these as being as valuable to students as additional hours of English.

"It would be good if they gave us back the five hours of English class. They took away two hours and put in a lot of subjects that are filler, and it is not fair. We were promoting five hours of English, and some kids came out speaking English. Now, on the other hand, those two hours less each week mean a lot regarding what they achieve." [Participating Teacher, Manta]

¹² ACUERDO Nro. MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2022-00010-A

"The time is not enough. Sometimes the activities are incomplete, and the teacher tells us to leave [them] for the next class but, if in that week there are no more classes for the next one, the thread is lost." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"English is one of the most spoken languages in the world. It is the main language, so if they are going to teach us, they have to do it with enough time because, in my opinion, 40 minutes is not enough for all the students to participate in a classroom or for the teacher to expand on certain information." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"I felt disappointed when they reduced the hours of English here in the school. I speak as a mother; it bothered me that they take away hours of English to put in other subjects." [Parent of Student, Manabí]

"I used to teach my students five hours of chemistry, but now I only have 2. And they changed those hours to give them PBL (Problem-Based Learning), art education, and more community projects, which I am not minimizing, they can be given, but not in the amount that mathematics should be given ... they are interdisciplinary projects that are done together or are project-based activities. Some teachers have to do something, although there was no training." [Parent of Student/Public School Teacher, Manabí]

Additional pressures on teachers' time

While the reduction in English class hours has reportedly not had an impact on teacher salaries, several teachers shared (and administrators confirmed) that English teachers had been obligated to take on the instruction of additional courses outside of their areas of expertise to make up for the loss of other instructional hours. They reported not receiving training on how to conduct these additional courses and did not feel prepared to provide proper instruction to students. In conversations with school administrators, they described how they adjusted English teachers' hours to fill instruction for other subjects, but none mentioned providing training or support for teachers to prepare for those subjects. Teachers also inferred that they felt their work as English teachers had been devalued in comparison with teachers of other subjects like math and science. Teachers say this also places an additional burden on them as they must find time to work on curricula for two or more subjects.

"We have to teach subjects that are not our strength. Being an English teacher, in order to complete my workload, they ask me to teach physical education." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"In private schools the English teacher only dedicated himself to English. Here [in a public institution] I have had to teach other subjects to complete my workload, for

example, citizenship, physical education, and philosophy." [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"When we are at school, we are 100% dedicated to the students, but it is at home where we prepare the class, where we have to grade, where we have to take or fill out grades and things like that, so it is a lot of work." [Non-Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"What we do is that the English teacher often has to complete his load, because their load is 30 hours, 25 teaching hours, and 5 community hours, so they suddenly have 15 hours, but they have 10 hours left over in their area, so then what we do is, we place them in another [subject] area." [School Principal, Guayaquil]

Lack of proper and sufficient resources

Public schools also lack the materials and infrastructure needed to properly support English learning. Participants across regions and schools reported that they lacked technology such as computers and reliable Wi-Fi that would enable them to access online resources to increase student engagement in classroom activities. Teachers and students alike believed that “dynamic” class plans (i.e., classes that incorporate a variety of activities such as interactive dialogues, videos and audios in English, small group activities, etc.) are the most effective for engaging students and improving learning outcomes. However, they argued, dynamic classrooms require technology. Participants reported that the lack of technology is particularly acute in English classrooms and regularly cited the lack of a computer lab for English classes when other subjects such as math and science had their own. Moreover, many participants reported that during the pandemic, people broke into schools and stole resources such as computers, cables, printers, and even flash drives.

"I would like to add to my English class a computer or projector, but sometimes we don't have those resources. As teachers, we have had to carry a laptop or carry small speakers and at the same time connect them via Bluetooth with the phone to be able to put something on them, but due to the number of students in the classroom, sometimes there is very little sound so that they can all reach the same exact understanding." [Non-participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"Some schools are located in dangerous areas, and thieves took advantage of the two years of the pandemic and robbed some institutions." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Lack of access to technology also reduces the learning materials students can access. Twenty-three percent of students of participating teachers reported that lack of internet access is a

barrier to their ability to learn and succeed; 27 percent of teachers reported the same.¹³ During the pandemic, the MoE created new English-teaching modules for teachers that are available online. At the same time, teachers reported that the Ministry stopped producing physical copies of these materials to reduce costs. Teachers would share those materials via WhatsApp or Canvas with their students to print out at home. However, teachers and students in focus groups reported that many students do not have access to a printer or told their teachers that their parents did not have the funds to go to an internet café to print the materials. Post-pandemic, not all schools have printers with sufficient paper and printing ink supplies.

"The parents complained, 'Why if we were already back in the classroom, does the English teacher send a digital document?' So, I said, 'because there are no texts,' and I don't send them to be printed, I select certain activities that we are going to work with so that they can visualize and transcribe them to their notebook. This can be done from a cellphone or from a computer. I don't send them to be printed." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"There are no texts. They have to be downloaded from the Ministry's [web]pages and they never download. Because they [the students] don't have the resources, because the copies are expensive, because there are no photocopiers in the surrounding area, and because the parents who could take them don't do it, they don't [have the materials]. We don't know if we should take the sheets ourselves, but we can't give copies away every day, so that creates a big problem. " [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"Many people in this community are low-income. It is very unfortunate that many times there are parents who do not have the money to buy school supplies for their children and sometimes the children do not have all the books provided by the government, and there are books that the students have to buy themselves." [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

As a result of the lack of access to technology and resources, students often cannot do their in-class worksheets or homework. Some teachers use their own money to print copies of materials, but students often must share worksheets. Teachers and students reported a desire for updated physical textbooks rather than online materials to resolve this issue.

"I carry my little speaker to do the listening. I walk around with my little speaker and my computer so that the children can at least listen to the listening because to top it all off we don't have an English book. We have to walk around with our own material so that

¹³ n=5,358 students of participating teachers and n=1,328 teachers (both participating and non-participating).

they [students] can make progress. Otherwise, I think we would be left behind. We have always been abandoned as English teachers." [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"Kids don't have printers, so they have to use the cybercafe to print and bring the materials. We must have a plan to have some extra printed sheets or to see how the class can be taught without the need of having the textbook so that the children don't feel bad, because sometimes they don't bring the material and they say that I didn't bring this because my dad didn't have enough money to buy and print the sheets. So, we try to find another strategy so that the children don't feel bad, and we can teach the class." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Students and teachers alike in focus groups appealed to the MoE, demonstrating a desire for a greater inversion of funds and investment in materials for public schools. There is a sense that public educational institutions lack the attention and resources necessary to fully equip teachers to teach and students to learn, especially when compared to private institutions in which tuition payments provide additional funding for these resources.

"We would wish that the government [would] give us English textbooks. We need more textbooks, to know what we are saying, to know what we are going to write." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"In Quito they have more, I think it is because it is the capital. When I came here, we all had to chip in, and it is supposed to be a public institution. My mom and I talked with the tutor, and asked, 'Why don't they tell the ministry that we need desks, paint, and repairs?' The budget for Ibarra is very little. They don't pay much attention to us." [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

On the other hand, teachers, and students alike shared that there would be value for language instruction to incorporate the use of technology available through mobile phones in classrooms themselves. They reported that cellphones allow students to access online Spanish-English dictionaries, applications and websites for learning and practice, and other online resources when appropriate. Some students shared that having access to online Spanish-English dictionaries is especially important as classrooms may lack physical texts to utilize for assignments. However, some participants reported that the use of cellphones was not permitted in schools. Many feel that this restriction should be relaxed, particularly for English classrooms. One vice principal from a school in Portoviejo, Manabí, shared that cellphones have been forbidden in the classrooms at her school because of the potential public relations issues

they could cause by students posting photos and videos of their teachers and administrators online.

"I was working with my cellphone, but it is forbidden to use it. The highest authority even blocked me. I had given the students a digital dictionary so they can work, but to avoid problems, I stopped doing it." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"I come up with an idea, with all the desire to do something different, but if there is no electrical outlet, there is no electricity, nothing to help me, how is it possible that after a virtual era they now tell us 'Nobody can use cellphones anymore, or anything like that,' so what do we do?" [Non-Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"For many reasons [cellphones are forbidden]. You don't know if they [the students] are paying attention in the class, if they are recording me and then I am part of a meme." [School Vice Principal, Manabí]

"The cellphone has advantages and disadvantages. When you realize 5 or 6 [students] are on WhatsApp or you run the risk of them taking a picture of you and making memes ... A colleague at school had his picture taken and they made memes of him, things like that. It has happened a few times, so you don't take any risks, so sometimes I choose to ask for the physical dictionary [rather than letting students use their phones to search for words in English]." [Non-participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Social issues and mental health

In addition to institutional-level challenges inside public schools, social challenges are present, such as changing societal dynamics due to COVID-19 lockdowns, poverty, and competing teacher perceptions of parents as both too involved and under-involved in their children's education. Participants and local evaluation team employees alike often referred to the deep societal shifts in Ecuador as resulting from COVID-19's status as a "social crisis," which has had negative impacts not only on health and economic sectors, but also on educational outcomes and mental health.

Challenges at home

Participants shared that during the COVID-19 lockdowns, many families experienced fractures. Some parents divorced or lost their jobs. Some families felt they simply could not live together and kicked kids out of the house. Some children took on work to support their families financially. These acute needs pull students' focus from coursework and produce negative learning outcomes.

"It can also be the environment at home that affects our emotions and how we are during the day. There will always be arguments among the family and that affects our emotions and when we come here [to school], we become angry, stressed, or down, and that also affects learning, because we are not 100% concentrated." [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"I have had to work to have money for my lunch. My mother had a place in the market, and when she was no longer there, it was time for me and my sister to go out to work. At that time, we had virtual classes during the lockdown. I had classes where I worked and sometimes, I could not make it because the classes were in the morning, so I would only get to do homework at night and then send it." [Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"There are needs and problems at home. Sometimes some young people come without food and worst of all, when they get home they find a dysfunctional family: no father, no mother. Because of the pandemic, they have lost family members. There are young people who even work, and they arrive at late hours. They can be robbed. We have students who have responsibilities when their responsibility should only be to study." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"There are many girls with depression and that is related to the family environment, which was caused during the pandemic. The fact of having been in lockdown had a significant effect on them. Also, their economic situation means that many of them prefer to work instead of studying. They need to eat. Many of them are even heads of households." [School Psychologist, Guayaquil]

Poverty and lack of access to educational resources

Even before the COVID-19 lockdowns, many students came from families of lower socio-economic background within these school communities and not all have access to other funds to purchase school supplies, to the internet needed for online resources, or to print materials for classes. Nearly 30 percent of students of participating teachers who responded to the survey said that not having the tools to learn was a barrier to their ability to learn and success. Teachers in more rural areas say that this challenge is often acute, and there is a lack of even the transportation for students to get to school. Students' lower socio-economic status resulted in greater gaps in English-language knowledge and skills when they were not able to access to the technology needed attend virtual school during the pandemic.

"Another disadvantage we have is that the students who are here are lower middle class. There are many who can't pay for internet. There were students whose parents would say, 'Well, I'll buy a dollar's worth of internet to watch the class,' but it was not

enough for other platforms, or to log in to work, or to [watch] other classes."
[Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"Here, poverty is a substantial influencing factor. I work in a rural area and when the rainy season begins, the majority of the students stop coming to school. The directors already know why, and they say, 'We need to support them because they're preparing the fields.'" *[Participating Teacher, Manabí]*

Student motivations for learning English

Similarly, students often described a desire to learn English to improve higher education and career opportunities in the future. They reported that having English-language skills would make them more attractive as potential employees as English is a "universal" language that is used "everywhere." This may have positive implications for student English-language learning outcomes as it provides them with increased motivation to study English.

"English opens many doors for work. If you want to work in a hotel, it is very important that you know English, because in hotels there are mostly foreign people." *[Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]*

"Studying English can open many borders for us in the work environment. For a person who speaks only one language, the salary is stable, but if you are bilingual, you can expand to other places to make investments in other countries or with foreign people. It gives us more possibilities." *[Student of Participating Teacher, Manabí]*

Motivated students shared that their ultimate goal is to learn English to be able to travel outside of Ecuador and gain employment elsewhere. They had doubts about the economic prospects in their home country and believed that their career opportunities would be greater if they went to another country, like the United States. Ultimately, an unintended consequence for some exceptional student beneficiaries may be to enable them to travel to the United States with the language skills they learn from teachers in the program. This aligns with a previous literature review conducted by DCG in 2021 that found that PD programs in underserved Latin American and Caribbean communities may spark new economic desires or provide abilities that participants do not feel they can realize or use in their home communities.

"My goal is to leave Ecuador and travel to the United States to look for a job there and improve my professional life." *[Student of Participating Teacher, Ibarra]*

"My dream is to be a soccer player and to go to another country, and in most countries the main language is English." *[Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]*

"Ecuador is not a country that nowadays gives opportunities. Even the most professional [people] sometimes cannot find a job, and if they find one, they do not find it with an ideal salary, so I am going to look for opportunities in other countries."
[Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"I heard that we had to learn English because in our country there were very few job opportunities and there were more job opportunities in the United States. To go there, you need English." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Complex opinions on parent, teacher, and institutional impacts on student outcomes

Teachers, parents, and community members held varying, and sometimes competing, understandings of the roles, responsibilities, and power of different actors in the educational environment and their ability to impact student learning outcomes. Teachers held competing beliefs that parents of students now are either too involved in their children's education or under-involved. Some teachers reported that parents often try to influence teacher instructional practices, such as asking them to limit their use of English in English classes so that all students understand. Many other teachers argued that parents of students often cannot or do not support their children's learning, either because they have other responsibilities or because they devalue formal education. Both circumstances, teachers argued, have adverse effects on student learning outcomes.

"My colleague used to speak only in English in elementary education and the parents complained. Since all the parents were against it, and since you have to listen to the authorities, you have to do what they say." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"Before, parents supported the teacher in his criteria and his decisions. Today the parent comes to threaten the teacher and support the student, whether or not he is right. So, that principle of respect has been lost over time." [School Administrator, Ibarra]

"They [parents] first say that they cannot help the students at home to learn English because they do not know English. The second one [question parents ask is] for what purpose is English going to be useful to their children in our country. The same parent already puts a blindfold on their children at an early age about learning the subject."
[Non-participating Teacher, Ibarra]

On the other hand, despite participating teachers reporting that many parents devalue English or simply do not spend much time supporting their children's education in English, in focus

groups and informal conversations with parents, parents often lauded the importance of English as a subject, arguing that it will allow their children to succeed professionally and, by extension, economically. While many participants in this evaluation shared that lack of parental support for student education is a barrier, they also often cited external difficulties (such as poverty or limitations on parents' time due to work responsibilities) as being limiting factors in parental support. This may indicate that while parents may recognize the importance of certain school subjects, more immediate concerns may detract from the time they could be active in their children's education.

"English is very important for everything. My daughter wants to learn because in the future she wants to be a professional and travel to other places to learn and come here to practice her profession." [Parent of Student, Manabí]

"Nowadays if you don't speak English, you are nobody." [Parent of Student, Manabí]

"Learning English opens many doors in business, in work. My daughter has the dream of becoming a neurologist doctor. English is very important because it opens doors, and my daughter wants to go far away to learn and do her profession." [Parent of Student, Manabí]

This apparent conflict of opinions between teachers and parents of students regarding the prioritization of English education demonstrates the complexity of the educational system and the likely frustration among all parties, given the hardships of the post-pandemic environment.

Teachers also perceived that this shift in power dynamics may be related to how the Ecuadorian government approaches student educational advancement. Their perception is that in recent years there has been increased pressure on teachers to ensure that students achieve a certain grade in their classes. The pressure is so great that some teachers reported feeling obligated to artificially boost student final grades to meet government goals for student achievement rates.

"When grades are determined, a student has 4 or 5 [out of 10, roughly equivalent to a C in the U.S. system] and does not turn in their homework. They do not complete their exams and final evaluation. They barely pass and the authorities ask, 'What did you do to improve that grade? Did you go see him at home? Did you talk to the parent?' because the student cannot fail the year." [Non-participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"A great percentage of students have many shortcomings, maybe because of economic means, maybe because they do not have the material, maybe because they do not care

or because they do not want to or because they are not interested. The government does not want to listen to that. The government wants to hear ‘Oh, look how good the programs we have implemented have been,’ and, ‘This has been the only government in which we have seen a low incidence of school dropouts. We are overcoming it.’ What kind of people are we going to release into society when they finish their education? I always ask myself that question.” [Non-Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Ultimately, teachers feel that artificially boosting student grades and allowing students without appropriate skill levels to advance in their education only harms students. In “the real world,” the students will not have the capabilities to complete tasks required of them. However, pressure from both parents and the Ecuadorian government to outwardly demonstrate student success places undue stress on teachers, as cultural customs dictate that people must follow the orders of their superiors. One parent of students in a focus group shared similar concerns that new pressures from parents has forced the MoE to, in turn, place pressure on teachers, which results in less-than-optimal student outcomes in schools.

“Unfortunately, now I am seeing, with the changes in the Ministry of Education, the laws have made our children and young people irresponsible. It forces one [the teacher] to pass a student to the next grade. So how is that student going to face life? If he/she goes with these gaps, the student complains, barely does his/her homework, the teacher cannot tell him/her anything, and cannot call his/her attention, because the parent says, ‘The teacher cannot yell at him/her, the teacher cannot tell him/her that.’ They go and complain to the districts and the teacher is fired, so, what has this encouraged? You make our young people irresponsible, not wanting to work and to get easy money, and compared to our times it is very different.” [Parent of Student, Guayaquil]

“We sometimes feel powerless because we want to actually help the students, but the system does not allow us. In the past, we would only offer extra credit. But now the mentality of the Ministry [of Education] is that that is not enough, that, ‘You have to find a way for the student to pass.’ Not for them to learn, but for them to pass. But what happens when they finish high school? What do they have in their heads? Nothing, because these students have had everything facilitated for them. But I do make them [the students] study and I do make them write so that they can learn and learn to face other difficulties in life.” [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

EQ5: What improvements can be made to the EHI program to support its goals?

The evaluation suggests that EHI program administrators can take actions to improve outcomes among existing participants and EHI alumni, as well as to make future program outreach more inclusive.

Maximize and more deeply engage existing participants

Foster English practice clubs

One of the positive outcomes participating teachers most often cited was that of the new relationships and supportive networks developed with fellow educators through their participation in the program. Many maintain their own WhatsApp or Telegram groups for continued communication, support networks, and resource-sharing. They demonstrated enthusiasm for the positive support and subsequent boost in confidence that they felt by creating and maintaining these networks with fellow teachers. They most often had these groups with teachers from their own EHI classes. However, several suggested that expanding conversation to include teachers from other classes, cities, and regions could enhance learning and perhaps lead to greater information and resource-sharing. Some also shared that formal opportunities to meet as a group, either virtually or online, to continue practicing their English skills could support teachers past their time in the main portion of the program and help them when they are renewing their B2 certifications with the MoE. Though teachers often shared that time and outside responsibilities are barriers to additional practice, they also argued that they would make time for additional practice if it were facilitated on their behalf.

“Beyond training, it would be great to organize study circles with my colleagues in the area. We have always wanted to do study circles focused on speaking English, but unfortunately it has not been possible due to lack of time.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

“When we are with our students, we don't really practice our English because we put ourselves at their level. It would be good to have a teachers' club and talk about different topics, not specifically about something, but to socialize, to talk, and that is the right time to continue practicing our English.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Provide printed resources

Participating teachers shared that the resources provided by facilitators during EHI courses were often well-planned and clearly organized. Some teachers suggested that a summary resource of learnings from EHI courses, such as a manual or a workbook about English teaching best practices, could be shared with participating teachers after they finish each course to help

sustain their progress. They argued that formal resources like these would allow them to more easily review and implement the strategies they learned from EHI in their own classrooms. Currently, many of EIL's resources are online-only and printed resources are not offered for teachers. This would further help bridge the gap in instructional resources since physical textbooks were removed from classrooms in favor of online resources during the pandemic (see the "Lack of proper and sufficient resources" section, above).

"Create a kind of pamphlet of Ecuador Habla Inglés, just as there are pamphlets from other institutions that teach English and distribute them to those of us who belong to EHI. It would help me to teach my class. It should be a manual of strategies for the class." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"[We need] resources, so that one can continue practicing. Say, 'This resource can be used to practice your listening, your reading,' something that one can use to practice [after finishing EHI]." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Create incentives for performance

Teachers pointed to a lack of incentives to improve because teachers do not receive "recognition" for their increased efforts or are close to retirement. For example, a participating teacher in Guayaquil reported that despite achieving higher levels of English through MoE exams, teachers rarely receive salary increases, which demotivates them from engaging in further professional development opportunities.

"We have colleagues who are about to retire and have two years to go, they don't want to [participate in programs like EHI], and they don't feel motivated because they're leaving." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"It is the precedent that we are not recognized. We are not recognized, and we are not valued." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Many English teachers view EHI as an opportunity not only to build their English-language skills but also to open the door for additional opportunities in their professional careers, such as acquiring the English B2 level certification or getting the opportunity to study abroad in an English-speaking country to practice their English skills. Some participating teachers expressed frustration that the EHI certificate itself is not formally recognized by the MoE as a certificate of English proficiency. Teachers find value in the course but felt discouraged that they still need to pass the nationally mandated English-proficiency exam to move ahead professionally, especially due to the financial burden of taking the English-language proficiency exams, which some said is prohibitively expensive (approximately \$200 every two years to renew). Although the U.S.

Embassy in Ecuador has paid for EHI B2.2 graduates to take one of the approved standardized proficiency exams, this benefit is not always guaranteed due to cost limitations.

“If you are an English teacher, [the EHI program] is for your vocation. Therefore, if I were staff of the embassy or of the EHI program, I would be constantly negotiating and looking for all the agreements with the Ministry.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

“The training through Ecuador Habla Inglés was so that I could dedicate myself to studying to get to another level, but for what purpose if the Ministry [of Education] isn’t recognizing that achievement?” [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

Incorporate other exchange opportunities

Many teachers (both participating and non-participating) were enthusiastic about opportunities to practice their English with native speakers in an English-speaking country. Some had previously participated in exchanges such as Go Teacher where they were able to go abroad to English-speaking countries for several months to immerse themselves in the language. They said immersive exchange programs reinforce classroom learnings and further strengthen language skills. Several teachers suggested that EIL could incorporate an award for top-performing participants, such as an exchange program or a trip to the United States for teachers to put their knowledge into practice. This would provide an additional incentive for learning and complement what teachers learned in EHI courses.

“I would like to have scholarships for the best graduates, a stay of a year or two, for improvement and further training in the United States.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

“[I would suggest] that the groups of teachers who are involved in the program have the opportunity to make a cultural trip. That the embassy helps facilitate us to get the visa, to buy the tickets or something like that, that we can have the experience of cultural exchanges.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil, Mixed Teacher/Student Group]

“I think that sometimes people learn by doing, by living our own experiences firsthand. When they finish school there should be scholarships for the best students, they should have the experience of going abroad.” [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Engage new potential teacher participants

Build buy-in among administrators

Teachers report that strict social hierarchies within schools sometimes prohibit teachers from taking on professional development opportunities. Despite administrators saying they express

support for teachers taking initiative to grow and improve, both participating and non-participating teachers shared that their superiors (often principals and vice principals of the schools) did not always support their participation in the program in practice or would not work with them to adapt their teaching schedules to allow them to participate. For some non-participating teachers, this has meant that they have been unable to participate in the program because they do not want to disobey orders from their administrators.

This is particularly true given the return to in-person teaching. One vice principal from a school in Guayaquil argued that it was out of school administrators' hands to provide permissions for teachers to participate in professional development programs. She said that during lockdown it was possible for teachers to participate in programs virtually outside of school hours, but now that schools have returned to in-person instruction, teachers simply do not have the flexibility to attend courses.

"Sometimes there is no openness in the schools when it comes to our being in the course. Because sometimes one asks permission from the authority, and they don't grant us such permission. They tell us, 'You have to organize yourself in the time you have,' but we start at 1 p.m., and they don't realize that during that time we have to eat, we have a family, so within the schedule itself we have to find time for ourselves because there is no support in the schools for teachers to develop our English skills." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"One of my colleagues told me that she had to withdraw from the [EHI] program because the principal at her school did not allow them to continue with the program. So, she preferred to leave because of the stress she was going through." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"The Ministry [of Education] has its law. It says that teachers can take two hours for training, outside the workday. [When] we were in the virtual mode [during lockdown], those who were in this English course were supported because it was virtual, but now that we are in the face-to-face mode we cannot tell them, 'Leave your students on their own' or 'Listen to your English class.' Now that we are in the classroom, we cannot authorize it." [School Vice Principal, Guayaquil]

Some participating teachers shared that they would log in to EHI classes from their educational institutions during breaks or even during instructional periods to be able to participate. Several teachers suggested that the EHI program should also be marketed explicitly to school administrators to demonstrate its benefits and build buy-in from teachers' superiors so that teachers feel empowered to undertake professional development. Supportive administrators

could then promote the program to teachers who would most benefit from it but who may not already know about it, as some participating teachers said they experienced.

"I think it [reaching more teachers to participate in EHI] would be accomplished through the districts. For example, if the district director receives the information, or sends the information to the directors of each of the educational institutions." [Non-participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"Work at the district level, so that the communication goes from the district chairperson to all the institutions, because not everyone heard about it." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

In interviews with school administrators many reported that prior to this evaluation, they had not heard of the EHI program at all. This was true even in the schools where there were several English teachers that were currently participating in the EHI program, indicating that overall awareness of the program is low among school administrators. As they were unaware of the program, they were similarly unaware of the potential benefits that the program could offer participating teachers.

Some school administrators who were aware of the program said they encourage teachers to participate in continuing education opportunities, which they said can improve outcomes for students – suggesting the potential of this audience to be a powerful messenger for EHI's core teacher participant audience. However, these supportive administrators reported that not all teachers take advantage of opportunities or implement what they learn.

"I try to motivate my teachers that 'If there is a course, do it.' If they ask me for permission for a course, do it, but sometimes (and I am talking in general not only about English) I share a course and they tell me 'Oh no, I don't have time,' 'I am busy,' 'I am too old for that.' I infer that this is possibly due to the fact that there is no desire for training, for continuous training, or for improving the teaching practice." [School Principal, Guayaquil]

"[To improve English for students at the school] the teaching staff must be well-trained because many times the person who is taking this course is aware of what they are learning, of what they can teach, of what they can convey, but many times they just take it [professional development courses] but they don't practice it. They don't teach it as they should teach it to the students." [School Principal, Guayaquil]

Raise awareness among teachers through non-email communication

One of the most important barriers to participation shared by non-participating teachers was a lack of awareness around program opportunities due to communication difficulties. Most non-participating teachers had heard of EHI but several shared that their administrators shared the opportunity too close to the application deadline. Teachers argued that if they had received the information earlier, they would have been able to get into the program.

Several also placed the onus of missing the opportunity on their own lack of attention to their emails, reporting that sometimes emails get lost in their inbox among their many other emails or go to their junk email inbox. Conversations with EIL reveal that coordinators are aware of this issue and include a disclaimer on their outreach for teachers to monitor their junk or spam email inboxes in case communications about the program are directed to those inboxes.

“I have had notifications [about the program] arriving to the district and to the educational institution where I work since the program started years ago but the problem is that the information reaches us the day before the registrations are over.”
[Non-Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

“One pays attention when the authorities tell you, ‘Please read,’ then it turns out that this email had already been sent or forwarded and 10 days that had already passed, so when one tries, the application date has already passed.” *[Non-Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]*

“I missed other occasions of Ecuador Habla Inglés because normally, they [school administrators] send us a lot of information to our email and sometimes they get lost.”
[Non-participating Teacher, Manabí]

Some teachers shared that they had ceased receiving communications from EIL or were unable to predict when they might receive important emails from EIL. This may be related to the issues mentioned previously with emails going to spam/junk folders or teachers not checking inboxes frequently enough.

“I signed up because I got the email that there was that opportunity. [EIL] contacted me to give the test and then they told me that they had given priority to those who had signed up first and [participants should wait] for the next opportunity. But I always check, and I have not received anything.” *[Non-Participating Teacher, Manabí]*

“I took the entry exam and after that, [EIL] didn’t answer me anymore. A classmate of mine also took the exam around the same time I did. She was checking her mail every

day and nothing. She stopped checking the mail for several days and then she got it, but she had not seen it [the email] and she had lost her place.” [Non-Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Allay teachers’ concerns about the program through messaging

EHI messaging can encourage new teachers to apply by directly addressing concerns: emphasize the supportive nature of small learning groups, how much time commitment is required, and exactly what the eligibility criteria are based on current regions and test levels.

Anxiety about practicing English in a group

A common anxiety shared by both participating and non-participating teachers is that they will be judged in a peer-to-peer setting for their English-language levels. Several non-participating teachers said that this was a contributing factor to why they have not yet participated in EHI. Many participating teachers reported that fear of judgment was their main source of anxiety when they began the EHI program, but because of the supportive environment that EHI facilitators foster, they quickly became comfortable and used mistakes as learning opportunities.

“When it came to speaking, I was self-conscious, I was afraid. But in EHI they give you that confidence. They allow you to be yourself. They are not judging you if it is right or wrong and now, I practice that with my children [students].” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Competing demands and feelings of being too busy

Others shared that they were interested in participating but were simply too busy with other personal or professional obligations. Many teachers, even those currently participating in EHI, emphasized the level of responsibility they hold at their schools and the various personal obligations they have, such as caring for children or elderly parents or otherwise supporting family members in the aftermath of COVID-19.

“I’m doing my master’s degree online. I have to read and very soon I have to submit my proposal for the final project and it’s a bit heavy for me. I know that my time management is not very good, so I said, ‘Work and study are enough.’ I didn’t want to put more pressure on myself.” [Non-Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Confusion about eligibility

For most non-participating teachers, confusion around entry requirements and/or being stuck on the waitlist are their only remaining barriers to participation. Some expressed confusion

about the entry criteria, particularly about the purpose of the competency assessment, or about how to participate and who is prioritized. Several shared that they were rejected because they had already achieved B2 status but hoped to be able to get continuing language training through EHI to maintain their skills. Moreover, in some areas the demand for participation may now be higher than the capacity of the program due to increasing awareness.

“I have registered two or three times, but I have never been selected. On one occasion I was told that there was no more space. On another occasion I was told that I already had the B2 and that this is only for those who do not have the B2, so I was not selected.” [Non-Participating teacher, Manabí]

“Since I reached B2 I didn’t have the opportunity to continue training. There should be an open program for other teachers. We don’t have the practice; there should be clubs where we can join courses to continue maintaining the level.” [School Administrator/English-Language Department Coordinator, Manabí]

Conclusion

The EHI program builds teachers’ confidence in their own language and teaching skills, provides them with examples for pedagogical improvement, makes their interactions with students in the classroom more constructive, gives them the opportunity to network and share resources with fellow English teachers in Ecuador, and likely instills in them a more positive outlook on the present and future. This evaluation demonstrates that participating teachers value the program as an opportunity for continued English-language improvement, among other things. Moreover, other teachers, school administrators, and students have observed positive changes in participating teachers’ day-to-day educational practices, particularly in how they actively encourage student participation in the classroom and how they encourage students to learn from their mistakes.

Yet data suggests that there are barriers that exist within the context of the educational systems in Ecuador that pose significant challenges for EHI to be able to achieve its goal to improve the competency of English teachers and students. It may still be too soon to determine whether teachers’ experiences with EHI have a student or community-level effect, such as improving students’ confidence in their English levels or improving their community’s economic or social well-being. What is certain is that contextual challenges impact teachers’ experiences with EHI and overall learning outcomes for students in public schools. Poor school infrastructure, limited resources, recent reductions in English-language instruction hours, violence and insecurity in surrounding communities, and limitations on teachers’ time all detract from potential gains made as a result of teacher participation in EHI.

While EHI cannot address all these contextual factors, there may be steps that program stakeholders can take to increase the likelihood that participating teachers are able to benefit from and implement what they have learned in their own classrooms more effectively. Providing additional educational resources for teachers to use in their classrooms, establishing more formal networking and mentorship opportunities for teachers, and offering ongoing professional development opportunities to teachers at higher English competency levels are just some of the ways that EHI can continue to optimize the EHI program to meet its goals.

Long-term learning and lessons for PD programs

As the EHI program moves to expand to other countries in Latin America, program stakeholders should continue to explore how shorter-term educational interventions like EHI take place within complex educational, political, economic, and cultural systems. This study serves to underscore the potential of engaging community leaders like teachers to achieve PD goals.

It also suggests the importance of bridging the gap between educational infrastructure and desired outcomes, like EHI's aims to improve students' English levels and subsequent job and educational prospects.

The context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the Ecuadorian educational system is a key factor in program outcomes, with this research highlighting how there are multiple levels of complicating factors that can serve to support and hinder program effects in several ways. This study's findings also emphasize that learning and language acquisition do not occur "within sanitized laboratories where theories are carefully tested, but rather under the realities of geopolitical and economic forces; governmental budgets and policies; institutional affordances and constraints; and the everyday actions of administrators, teachers, learners, and others" (Norris, 2016, p. 169)¹⁴. This context is an important part of the systems within which the program takes place and situate the resulting analysis and recommendations within these same contexts.

While the goal of the EHI program is to enhance the skillset of English-language educators in Ecuador, developing a realistic understanding of the complexities of the program context and articulating a framework to better understand the program's impact has value in and of itself. This program should continue to consider racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, infrastructure,

¹⁴ NORRIS, J. M. (2016). Language Program Evaluation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100, 169–189. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44135002>

connectivity, climate vulnerabilities, and other contexts in analyzing program impact, especially in finalizing a theoretical framework for the program in Ecuador and in Latin America more broadly.

Specifically, EHI program stakeholders should continue to tailor program interventions to each country's context as the program model is replicated across the region. As a part of that process, they should continue to incorporate strong exploratory and evaluative research into program design, planning and adaptive management, leveraging the existing collaborative relationships among key EHI stakeholders. In particular, the program may benefit from a longer-term longitudinal quantitative study to assess English-language skills and secondary program outcomes. As part of these efforts, educators, community members, and youth themselves should continue to be involved in evaluation and assessment activities. Involvement of teachers, students, and other stakeholders should occur as early as possible in the planning process so that strategies can be refined, refocused, or re-formulated based on their input and insights. Information from key stakeholders and potential partners will not only enrich the assessment process, but also benefit programs like EHI seeking to make results-oriented educational investments.

As a part of this study, a theoretical framework for the EHI program was developed within a collaborative process involving stakeholders such as the in-country evaluation team, the IP, MELI, the independent evaluation team, and stakeholders at post Quito. This draft theory of change (TOC) is based on an understanding that the program operates in an complex and complicated environment, and should be viewed as a living document that is revisited and revised based on learning that takes place during program implementation. Continuing to use participatory methods and input to revise the program's theoretical framework will be essential to building better understanding and implementation of the program, as well as to setting clear and realistic expectations for program effects. The TOC should guide the program teams and the evaluation teams as a blueprint for intended impact and should be a key tool for the replication of the EHI program in other country contexts.

Finally, the findings from this study emphasize the need for holistic interventions that include cross-sectoral cooperation to address barriers to complex social challenges. Cross-sectoral collaboration at the country-level for PD programming could link implementation of multiple programs with similar or related goals. For example, an education program such as EHI could be implemented in parallel with a youth capacity-building program, an international professional exchange program, and/or a security program to counter criminal activity. All together, these initiatives may be able to meaningfully contribute, for example, to Ecuador's Integrated Country Strategy goal to "promote mutual, inclusive, and sustainable economic prosperity." A

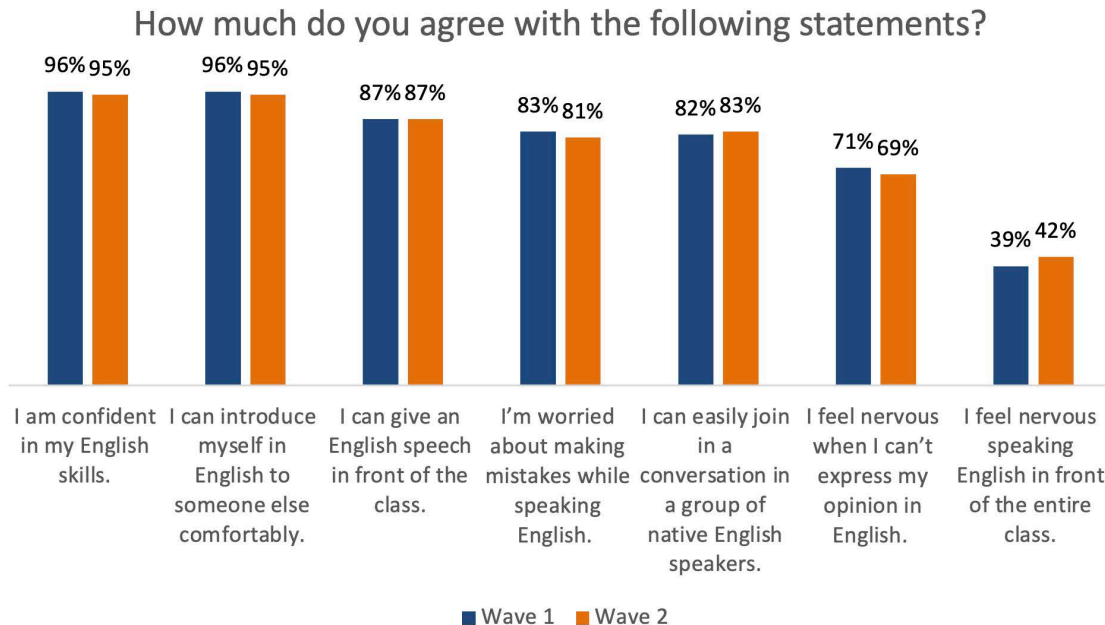
cross-sectoral approach such as this may allow higher-level outcomes to be achieved at the community level, as each type of intervention supports the others on a systems level. Engaging multiple stakeholders and programs to work together is likely the only way to craft solutions that are inclusive enough and possess the various perspectives and resources necessary to adequately address the interdependent and emergent challenges that a program like EHI faces. If the end goal of programs like EHI is to create more successful, motivated, and equitable communities through education, it will be necessary to combine this program intervention with others in a long-term strategy to achieve that impact.

The following theory of change (TOC) was developed in collaboration with stakeholders at the U.S. embassy in Quito and the EHI implementing partner, EIL. Note that bolded text boxes represent pathways that evidence from the evaluation supports.



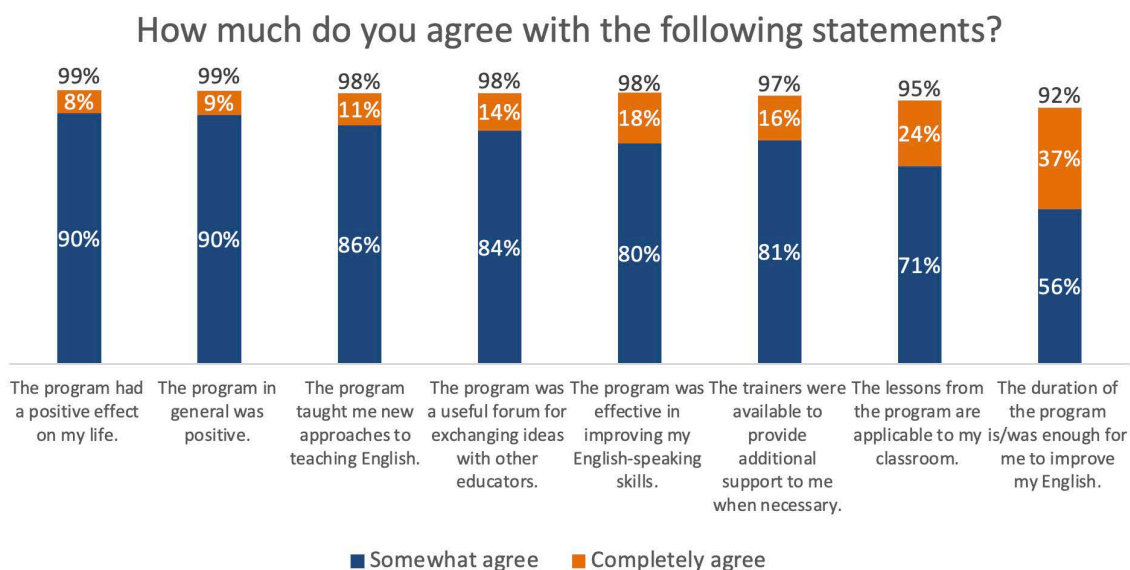
Appendix II: Additional quantitative data

Figure 16: Percentage of participating teachers who agree with each statement about English confidence and skill, by wave



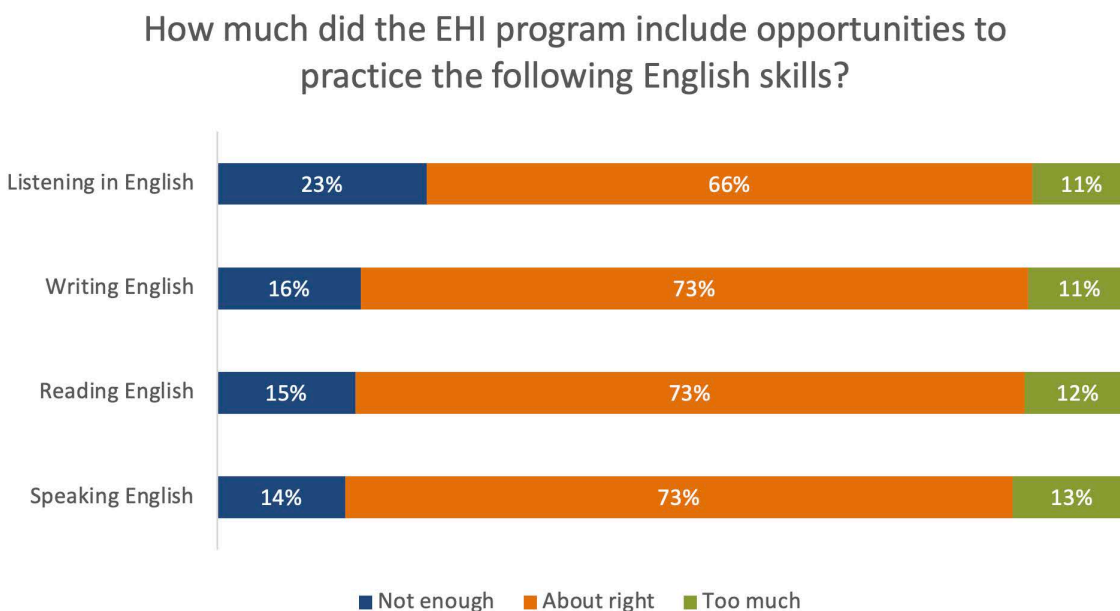
Base: n=851 participating teachers in wave 1 and n=749 participating teachers in wave 2.

Figure 17: Percentage of participating teachers who agree with each statement about the Habla Ingles Program



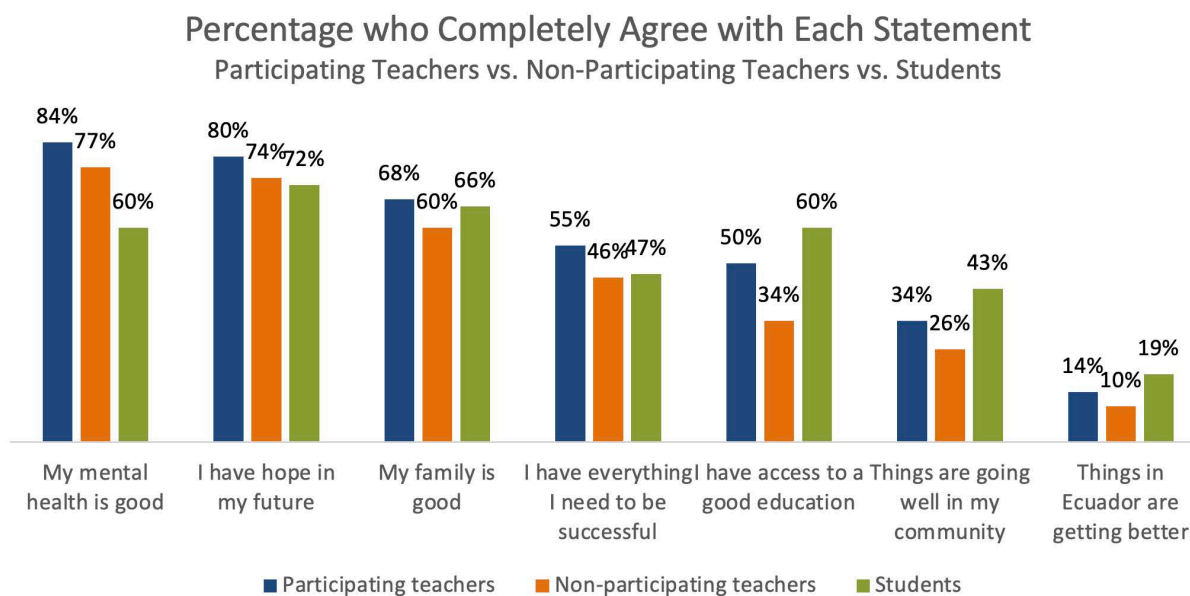
Base: n=957 participating teachers.

Figure 18: Participating teachers' perception of the opportunities to practice different English skills in the Habla Ingles program



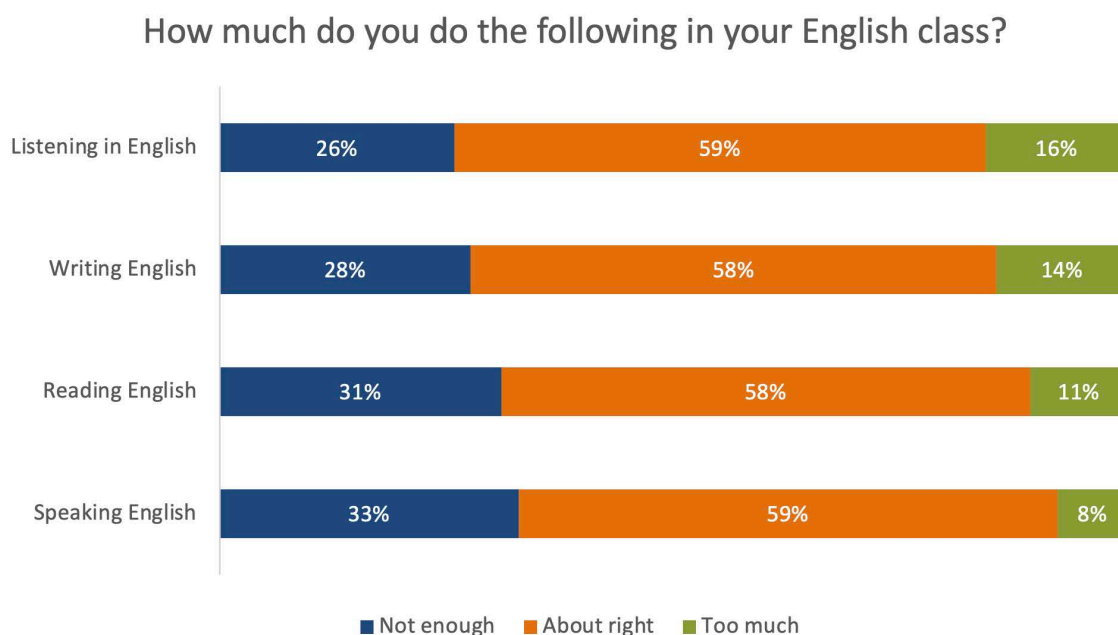
Base: n=957 participating teachers.

Figure 19: Differences in outlook and optimism between participating and non-participating teachers and students of participating teachers



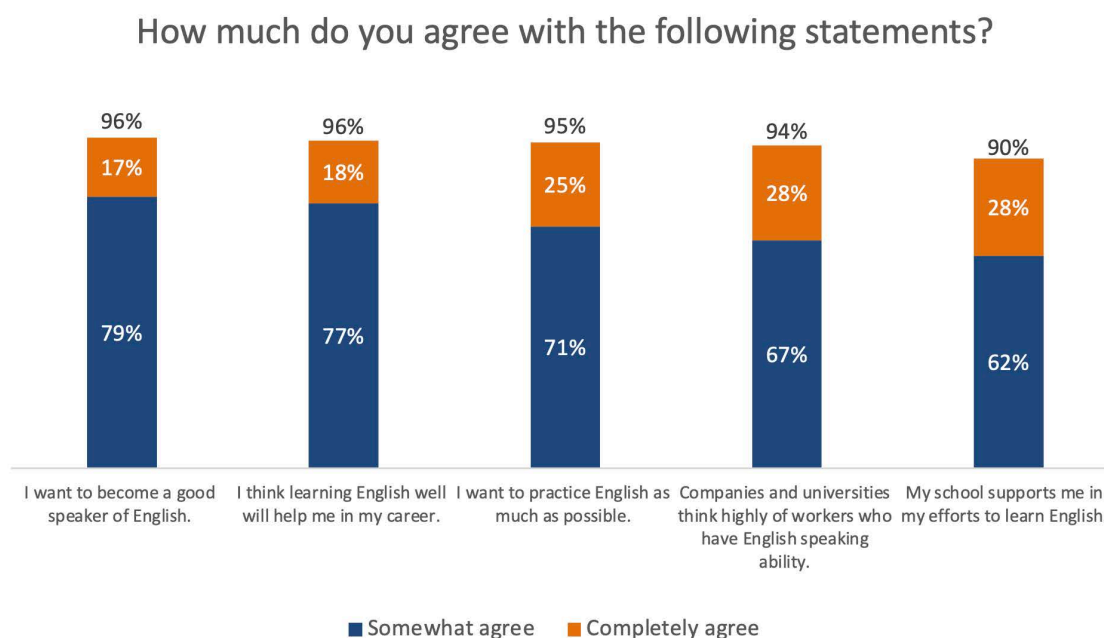
Base: n=720 participating teachers and n=482 non-participating teachers, and n=5,077 students of participating teachers who answered the endline survey.

Figure 20: Students' perception of the amount of different kinds of English instruction they get in their English class



Base: n=5,182 students of participating teachers in Wave 2.

Figure 21: Percentage of students of participating teachers who agree with each statement about their motivation to learn English



Base: n=5,358 students of participating teachers who answered the question in the endline.

Appendix III: Additional contextual considerations

While a wide range of complex, interwoven contextual factors were unearthed during data collection, researchers decided to highlight factors in the main body of this report that could come within the control of key stakeholders of the EHI program. Additional contextual factors largely beyond the control of these key stakeholders can be found here.

School environment and organization

As mentioned in section EQ5, the reduction in English instruction hours impacts how student learn at public schools. External factors further impact usable teaching time, such as untidy learning environments (scattered desks and chairs, trash left from previous classes) and administrative activities (taking class attendance). Some teachers also shared how security concerns in Ecuador further reduce proper class time due to administrative checks on students.

"The class is dirty, we start to clean the class, and a lot of time is spent on that, so there is much less time to learn. Besides there are only three or four classes of 40 minutes each, 20 minutes are used for cleaning, five to scold a student, and we have about 15 minutes left to study, and that is very little time." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"They [administrators] realized that a student had gone in to sell drugs. He had gone in dressed as a student, and later they realized that he was not a student. That's why we check the attendance list. So, if the class lasts 40 minutes, this process takes us 10 minutes. The class is over, and we are running out of time. It becomes difficult to finish the subject and be able to move forward. Before, when we had five hours, we asked for more hours, but then they reduced it to three hours." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

Overcrowded classrooms and varying support needs

Similarly, teachers expressed concerns that classrooms are overcrowded, often housing between 40-50 students per class with varying competency levels. Teachers say they are unable to meet the needs of all students during their limited time in class. In Ecuador, language learning is often divided by grade level, not language competency. Classrooms may hold students who have had previous instruction in English and have a higher skill level alongside students who are learning English for the first time. One student in a Guayaquil school shared that she had already learned English basics in her private school. When she came to the public school, she was placed in the same class as other students in her grade level who had not learned any English yet and so, she felt she learned nothing new that year. Even some parents recognized the pressure placed on teachers to perform when educating such large groups of

students and argued that it is nearly impossible for teachers to successfully educate their students with so many to attend to.

"In my institution we have 40 to 43 students per classroom. That is not beneficial for any teacher because it is exhausting. We physically wear ourselves out because we have to do more work. We have to evaluate and grade more students in each of our activities, so it is also physical wear for teachers." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"In a classroom where there are 48 or 49 students, even if the teacher kills himself teaching, the students are not going to learn because if I am explaining to one group, the other group is not going to learn because they are making noise. If they are in a classroom of 10, 20 people, they learn because the teacher will have the opportunity to teach each student." [Parent of Student, Manabí]

In addition to large class sizes, some teachers said they have students with disabilities in their classrooms and are not given the training or resources to support such students. These teachers shared that in addition to teaching they are trying to meet the support needs of students with disabilities, such as hard-of-hearing or deaf students or students with intellectual disabilities, without proper instruction or the needed resources to do so. This further complicates teachers' ability to effectively improve student outcomes in learning English as they are attempting to meet the needs of all their students equally.

"At the moment I found in my classroom three students with disabilities: two with Down syndrome and a child with ADHD. Even though I had planned adaptations for them, I had to take care of them first and I realized that the hour was already 20 minutes gone. At that moment, I felt so anxious." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"I had a case with a hearing-impaired girl. With this girl, I asked myself, 'How do I express myself to her?' because I don't know sign language, but she was able to tell me to talk to her by looking at her and that she will try to understand me." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

Environmental impacts on school infrastructure

Negative impacts of climate change are also exacerbating the existing poor school infrastructure in several locations and are impacting normal school proceedings. In one school visit in the northern part of Guayaquil, a landslide had destroyed basketball and tennis courts and was threatening to undermine the foundation of several nearby buildings. The area was deemed unfit to use, so the school had to merge facilities with another nearby school to provide sufficient classrooms for students. In some rural locations in Manabí, heavy rains had

washed-out roads on several occasions, blocking students from attending school. Continued interruptions to school operations due to negative effects of climate change may have adverse implications for student learning outcomes in the long term. Climate change impacts Ecuador at all levels, most demonstrably in this evaluation at the educational level. These findings may provide some support for the MoE to seek additional funding to address some of the most acute impacts of climate change on schooling.

“We face limitations because we are sharing space [with another school]. There are two entrances: one for the main school and one for us, ‘the guests.’ We have had landslides and those areas can be dangerous for the students. Imagine if the students went up to that area, how would they come down? So, this [sharing schools] is a preventative measure, but really the Ministry of Education has to resolve this.” [School Principal, Guayaquil]

Social factors

Complex opinions on parent, teacher, and institutional impacts on student outcomes

Some teachers perceived that there has been a shift in power dynamics to favor the demands of parents in relation to their children’s education. Teachers said they feel disempowered in their jobs because they are forced to adapt their teaching and grading strategies based on parent demands which do not always positively impact student learning outcomes. Some shared that parents would request that the teachers utilize less English in English classes and speak more Spanish to provide explanations to the students.

“In my case, they [students] complained because I teach my classes in English, so there were parents who came and complained because the students do not understand.” [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

“My colleague used to speak only in English in elementary education and the parents complained. Since all the parents were against it, and since you have to listen to the authorities, you have to do what they say.” [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

In focus groups, parents of students displayed their focus on ensuring their children do well in school, with several mentioning that a balance of instilling responsibility and being empathetic to students’ varying comprehension levels is necessary for them to do well in English classes. They highlighted the need to use English in the classrooms but also provide explanations to children in Spanish. One parent shared how they had approached a teacher regarding the difficulty level of their child’s English class and requested that the teacher update their educational practices.

“My 10-year-old son said, ‘Daddy the lady only speaks in English, and you can’t understand anything.’ I told him, ‘Have you asked her to explain?’ And he said, ‘She doesn’t even tell us what it means, she only speaks in English, and she expects us to understand her.’ I went to talk to the teacher, and I told her, ‘The children have not had English classes before. This is their first year, and don’t you think, with all due respect, that you should educate our children in a different way?’” [Parent of Student, Guayaquil]

Another parent in a different focus group criticized these kinds of requests from other parents, arguing that it takes away responsibility from the students and makes them believe that they can control the educational environment rather than giving teachers the command of their classrooms.

“My son, he is a good student but many times in school students do what they want, and teachers have no authority. I have taught my son since he was a child, and I have no problems with him and I hope not to have them, but there are parents who [abide by the idea that] ‘What their son says is the law,’ and the teacher is put below the student and that should not be.” [Parent of Student, Manabí]

On the other hand, teachers also argued that there are parents who are uninvolved in their child’s education and do not or are unable to help them with homework and support their children in school learning. Some teachers shared that parents had told them that they could not support their children with English classes because they do not know English themselves. Additionally, some teachers and students reported that not all parents view English-language learning as a valuable part of their child’s education or as a skill that will improve future earning potential or career success. Teachers said that this limits students’ potential progress with English-language learning since they do not have support at home.

"In the rural area, the children do not have the follow-up and support of their parents, because the parents cannot read or write, but many times they want their children to study. They [the parents] say, ‘I’m leaving them [the students] here with you and you see what needs to be done,’ so they leave them with us and there is no support." [Participating Teacher, Ibarra]

"Many parents leave everything up to their children. They say, ‘It is your obligation to study,’ and they don’t pay them too much attention. Sometimes too, when there’s an amount of money to be collected, maybe they can’t afford to pay, or sometimes, if they have it, they don’t want to pay." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"I talk to them [the parents] to try to get them involved in the learning process of their children, but there is also negativity from them, so I feel unmotivated, frustrated." [Non-Participating Teacher, Manabí]

Some teachers mentioned that they attempt to motivate their students to learn English by sharing examples of how English could be beneficial to their future careers, even in Ecuador. They provide examples such as working in the tourism industry, in hotels, or even on social media.

"There is no interest in learning the language. On one occasion a student told me, 'Why am I going to learn English if I am never going to leave the country?' and I told him that it is not necessary for him to leave the country, you can even apply it in your own country, for example, if you do not graduate, you have a profession as a driver and you pick up someone from another country, you can apply it." [Non-Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"I tell them [students] that they have to see the positive side. If you want to be a YouTuber because that is the fashion right now, how cool it would be to have your channel in Spanish and also in English? Another thing if you want to insult someone, it would be cool to learn and do it in English." [Participating Teacher, Manabí]

Security

The worsening security situation in Ecuador has impacts on teachers' capacity to educate their students and on student achievement outcomes. In recent years, gang activity and economic crisis, particularly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have increased rates of violence.¹⁵ Research participants and local evaluation teams shared experiences of robbery, extortion, physical assaults, kidnappings, and expansion of the drug trade among Ecuador's population. Several clarified that Ecuador used to be a gateway country in which drugs passed through on the way to other locations, but that drug use is expanding to the local Ecuadorian population.

Insecurity exacerbates educational challenges, particularly in Guayaquil and Manabí. Participants reported that some students, due to the already precarious economic situations of their families, become involved in gang activity and even drug trafficking for additional income. Two teachers from different schools described how students belonging to gangs had threatened them and teachers were fearful about going to work. School administrators, teachers, and students shared that some students would begin using drugs or alcoholic drinks

¹⁵ [Ecuador Declares Emergency in Three Provinces on Rising Crime \(usnews.com\)](https://www.usnews.com/story/news/latin-america/2020/07/23/ecuador-declares-emergency-in-three-provinces-on-rising-crime)
[What's Behind Ecuador's Rising Murder Rate? \(foreignpolicy.com\)](https://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/2020/07/23/what-s-behind-ecuadors-rising-murder-rate/)
[Ecuador's High Tide of Drug Violence | Crisis Group](https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america/caribbean/ecuador/ecuadors-high-tide-of-drug-violence)

and distribute them to their classmates at school. Some students expressed experiencing increased mental strain out of fear that something may happen to them or their family members or, unfortunately, due to already having experienced the death of family or friends.

"We have students who belong to gangs, and a colleague received a death threat. [The student said] 'I'm going to kill you. You don't know who you're messing with.' This was after she gave him a bad grade because he didn't submit an assignment." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"There are students who smoke here, they also bring drinks, and they can give a student a drink with some substance in it and they take it. For example, [at another school] they took a student out in an ambulance with an overdose. That's why they should do searches." [Student of Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"Some time ago a search was carried out [at the school] and drugs were found, some sharp tools were found. We teachers have to be constantly on guard near the bathroom because the kids escape or run away or go there to smoke. In other words, it is a full-adrenaline situation." [Non-Participating Teacher, Manabí]

"One of the inspectors detected a young man who was not from the institution. He had put on the uniform of a student, and as we were in sports, he was wandering around with other students and giving away drugs, that is to recruit. Fortunately, we detected him." [Non-Participating Teacher, Manabí]

In certain instances, teachers and students are fearful of robbery or physical violence and are hesitant to leave their homes. In an informal interview with two parents of students, the parents shared that they do not let their children go to and from school by themselves because robbery and assault are common on public transportation. They prefer to travel with them or, if they have a vehicle, drop them off at school themselves.

"One student told me, 'Miss, the man who was next to me [at the bus stop] put a knife to me and said, 'Give me your backpack,' and she came without her belongings, but they are kind of used to that situation." [Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

"There are some students who can't take an express bus, and they come by normal bus. They got robbed once on the express bus, so imagine the insecurity of a teenager coming home alone, without a parent by his side or even a friend to protect him." [Student of Participating Teacher, Guayaquil]

ABOUT THE MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND INNOVATION UNIT

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA) Monitoring Evaluation Learning and Innovation (MELI) Unit has been at the forefront of the Department of State's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts since its creation in 1999. Throughout its 20+ years, the MELI Unit has built a robust M&E system to ensure that ECA program staff, senior leadership, and implementing partners benefit from timely performance data that they can utilize for evidence-based decision-making.

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