



Research Article

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Attitudes and Motivation as Predictors of Perception of English Language Proficiency: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

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Abstract

English is the most widely spoken and written language in the world, so many students have different perceptions of English language proficiency, so there is a need to investigate the predictors of English language learning. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to determine the relationship between attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English learning under the SEM model as predictors of perception of English language proficiency in Peruvian university students. The sample consisted of 711 Peruvian students from a private university (442 females = 62.2% and 269 males = 37.8%). The questionnaire of attitudes towards learning English, motivation towards English, and socio-demographic questions were used, including the perception of English language proficiency. The proposed model obtained a satisfactory fit. Attitudes towards learning English explain 10% of the perception of English language proficiency, but with motivation towards English as the mediating variable. According to the established criteria, the goodness of fit of the model was confirmed ($\chi^2 = 383.78$; $df = 3$; $p = .000$; $RMSEA = 0.06$; $AGFI = 0.97$; $TLI = .97$; $CFI = .99$), which confirms the fact that all the values obtained are acceptable.

Keywords: Attitudes towards learning English, Motivation towards English, Perception, English language proficiency, English language

1. Introduction

Globalization has created an international society in which people from different parts of the world use English as a means of communication (Suwartono & Stapa, 2022). Especially when speakers of different languages meet, they use English to exchange messages, making it the most widely used

language among foreign speakers (Zuparova et al., 2020). English is spoken natively or as a second language by 1.5 billion people worldwide, followed by Mandarin Chinese with approximately 1.1 billion speakers, Hindi and Spanish in third and fourth place among the most spoken languages (Statista Research Department, 2023).

Likewise, in the educational field, learning English has become the language of choice for most countries because students consider English to be the key to optimal education (Mahu, 2012). Students take English courses for different reasons but mainly because they consider that it is necessary to have an adequate command of English to understand, speak, read, and write correctly as well as to achieve better professional development options (Acosta, 2020). English language is a self-improvement tool that helps students feel confident and exposed to a variety of cultural horizons (Mahmoodi & Narafshan, 2020). English as part of the curriculum, should have the same importance as other subjects within the curriculum at the higher education level so that students acquire a comprehensive preparation, achieving greater and better job opportunities (Sosa et al., 2018). In this sense, teachers have a great responsibility to develop activities that are relevant to the achievement of English proficiency (Acosta, 2019).

Knowledge of English, as the most widely used language in the academic world, is a fundamental skill for everyone in all fields (Gholami, 2017). For example, when publishing academic articles in different lines of research, researchers have to write their abstract or the entire article in English (Escalona & Reichelt, 2019). In addition, the ability to speak and write in English should be a requirement for researchers wishing to participate in an international conference (Gholami, 2017). "English is often perceived as a mandatory professional skill, a basic requirement, a necessity in the job market and, therefore, a commodity" (Ruzaite, 2017).

In the labor field, English is indispensable in the different professional fields as well as the development of its four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For example, in pharmaceutical professionals, English writing skills are essential for pharmaceutical case reports, drug application analysis, new service proposals, poster presentations at congresses, and writing academic papers, among others (Kovalenko & Afanasenko, 2021). It is worth mentioning that some work centers have established professional profiles of their employees who, in addition to having excellent professional qualifications in their field, also have a command of English (Leung, 2022). Similarly, if an employee is seeking a promotion or a change of position in his or her job, proficiency in English could be a factor in his or her promotion (Talaue & Kung Kim, 2020).

Therefore, learning English as a second or foreign language is an arduous journey that involves several factors in the learning process (Mohammed, 2018). However, the mastery of English for different purposes and in different professional areas enhances the profile of an individual in his or her professional life (Diachkova et al., 2021). Gardner (1985) states that motivation and attitudes are necessary variables in language learning. Learners with high language proficiency without sufficient motivation are less likely to achieve their goals (Choomthong & Chaichompoo, 2015). On the other hand, attitudes play an essential role in language learning; therefore, negative attitudes impede learning, while positive attitudes lead to language learning (Viet, 2017). In a study conducted with students of medical sciences, it was observed that attitudes towards learning English are positive, considering that English provides them with benefits in their present and future professional lives (Mahmoodi & Narafshan, 2020).

According to the literature review on the various predictors of English language proficiency, attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English seem to be the most consistent predictors of English language proficiency (Gómez y Sandoval, 2020). Moreover, there are few studies on student attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English as predictors of perception of English language proficiency. In this sense, this research aimed to determine the relationship between attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English under the SEM model as predictors of the perception of English language proficiency in Peruvian university students. This predictor model allowed explaining the dependent variable, based on the structural equation methodology (Escobedo et al., 2016). In the same way, the predictor model was the

theoretical proposal and the novel contribution of this study. It is intended that this study will be a high-level bibliographic reference for the following researchers interested in continuing studies on this subject.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Motivation and Attitudes towards learning English

From an educational and social point of view, Gardner (1985) states that motivation and attitudes are fundamental factors in achieving true learning. Essentially, learning occurs when motivation is present and when motivation is accompanied by attitudes. In the same way, the socio-educational model of the second language acquisition of Gardner and Lalonde (1985) affirm that the social context defines the attitudes of the learners. Therefore, the desire to acquire something is influenced by motivation, which is driven by a driving force or interest.

Furthermore, the learning and acquisition of a second language depends basically on the attitude and motivation of the students (Khan et al, 2023). It is vital to have a positive attitude and motivation to learn a language in order to obtain the expected linguistic result (Anokye, 2022). Motivation and attitude facilitate optimal second language learning. However, lack of interest in these factors leads to ineffective second language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

Saravia & Bernaus (2008) argue that in the process of learning English, the more students improve their level of language learning, the more positive their attitude towards learning English. On the other hand, those who have an insufficient level of English are the ones who show little positive learning attitudes, they are also the ones who lack cultural interest in languages. These findings reaffirm the hypothesis that motivation and attitudes show a positive correlation with language learning.

In the search for studies on motivation towards English and attitudes towards learning English, the following authors were found such as Harmanto et al. (2023) who conducted a Pearson correlation analysis with a sample of 350 Indonesian university students and whose results showed that there is a moderate and positive correlation between attitudes and motivation. However, the motivation of female students is higher than that of male students positive correlation. ($r=0.979$), in other words, women have better attitudes and motivation to learn English. Anokye (2022) conducted a Pearson correlation analysis with a sample of 100 secondary school students in Ghana and the results showed a moderate and statistically significant positive correlation between the motivations ($r = 0.45$) and attitudes ($r = 0.35$) of English language learners towards the English language with their performance in English. Özer (2020) performed a Pearson correlation analysis with a sample of 424 Turkish university students and the results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between attitude and motivation ($r=0.66$; $p<0.01$), and the correlation was average. Genc & Aydin (2017) carried out a Pearson correlation analysis with a sample of 462 Turkish university students and the results show that there is a correlation between positive attitudes and intrinsic motivation, instrumental motivation, and parental involvement in most of the students. In that study, it was observed that the participants were aware of the importance of learning English, they were intrinsically motivated to learn English as a foreign language, and they were motivated to succeed in the English language.

2.2 Motivation and English language proficiency

Motivation in second language learning is a multiform psychological construct that provides the initiative to learn a second language (Dörnyei, 2005). Tashlanovna et al. (2020) emphasize that motivation leads to the effectiveness of English learning, its influence is an important building block for learning a second language, and it is one of the factors that gives language learners success. Also, the more motivated students are, the more they will learn a second or foreign language.

Motivation in learning a second language is a fundamental factor in participating in foreign language courses; lack of motivation leads to burnout and, consequently, to abandonment of learning (Cocca & Cocca, 2019). In this sense, to the extent that there is motivation, students establish a schedule for studying a foreign language. Motivation can be supported by external variables such as educational policies, curricular changes, the environment of the educational institution, the teacher's methodology, friendships, family members, interest in foreign culture, as well as individual variables (personal tastes and interests) (Ramírez-Vega, 2021).

On the other hand, mastery of the English language is essential to obtain great achievements in the life of students, since it enhances their ability to process information and make decisions (Ahmad et al., 2021). In addition, proficiency in English improves academic performance (Yuksel et al., 2023) and subsequently transcends into a professional career (Azkiyah et al., 2023).

In the search for studies on motivation and English language proficiency, it was found that Cocca & Cocca (2019) researched 354 Mexican university students, the objective of their study was to investigate the relationship between affective variables, motivation, and English proficiency and to evaluate which attitudinal/motivational domains can best predict English proficiency. The results showed that English proficiency is highly correlated with the intensity of students' motivation, their attitude towards learning English, and their desire to learn English.

2.3 Attitude and English language proficiency

Previous research shows that attitudes have a major influence on the language learning process (DeBot & Verspoor, 2006; Dörnyei, 2005; Rod Ellis & Robbins, 1994; Gardner et al., 1985). The attitude of the students towards a second language is a key element because it produces motivation or demotivation in the student when learning a language (Bagheri & Andi, 2015).

Students with higher English proficiency have more positive attitudes toward English (Ghorbani & Khajavy, 2023a). In this regard, the ability to communicate in English is crucial to increase productivity at the international level, and linguistic competence is paramount to gain access to different knowledge and skills (Fleisher et al., 2015).

In the search for studies on attitudes and English language proficiency, it was found that Ghorbani & Khajavy (2023b) conducted a study on 359 Iranian university students whose purpose was to examine Iranian university students' attitudes toward the U.S. government and the English language in the Trump era. Among the results of this study was that participants with higher English language proficiency had higher positive attitudes towards learning English. Bagheri & Andi (2015) found that there is a relationship between medical students' attitudes towards learning English and their English language proficiency, their study found that there is a small positive correlation between medical students' attitudes towards learning English and their English proficiency.

Additionally, in the investigation of Chihara & Oller (1978) on attitudes and attained proficiency in English as a foreign language: a sociolinguistic study of Japanese adult speakers, it was found that there are weak correlations between the factors extracted from the attitude measures and attained proficiency in English as a foreign language. In some cases where positive correlations were expected, negative or insignificant correlations were observed.

2.4 Perception of English language proficiency

There is a notion of English proficiency that can refer to English second language learners' self-perception of their English proficiency; for example, in one study that assessed English proficiency, students were placed at a low intermediate level by an "objective" and standardized test; however, the students themselves indicated that they had a high perception of their own English proficiency as measured by a self-assessment exercise (Coetzee-Van Rooy & Verhoef, 2000). Meanwhile, Sahan & Şahan (2024) found in their study that perceptions change before, during, and after an English Medium Instruction (EMI) study as a function of learning experiences. Another study revealed that

the self-perception of English proficiency of South Korean citizens was that they were proficient in all English skills, which was consistent with other South African participants' perceptions of the English proficiency of the three South Korean participants (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2009).

Therefore, the perceptions of students who started learning English in primary school are known to be higher than those who started learning English in secondary school in terms of English proficiency (Yuntao, 2019). As this is the fact, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between students' attitudes, motivation, and perceptions of English language proficiency (Barrios, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Study

This research presents a quantitative methodology. The research responds to a cross-sectional predictive study whose main purpose was to explore the relationships between variables to predict or explain their behavior (Ato et al., 2013). Considering that, we wanted to determine the relationship between attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English using the SEM model as predictors of perception of English language proficiency among university students.

3.2 Participants

A total of 711 university students attending a private university in Peru participated in this study. The total number of females corresponded to 62.2% and males to 37.8%; their ages ranged between 16 and 25 (Mean = 20.43; SD = 2.39), of which 60.5% were between 16 and 20 years of age. All of them were studying in one of the 20 professional careers offered by the university. They were also studying basic, intermediate and advanced English at the university's language center. Basic English I students represented 26.6%, Basic English II students represented 27.7%, Intermediate English I students represented 22.9%, Intermediate English II students represented 20%, and Advanced English II students represented 2.8%. When asked about English language proficiency at the end of high school, only 2.3% were evaluated as excellent and 48.5% as not very good (Table 1). The sample selection was non-probabilistic. The sample size was calculated based on an infinite population, with a confidence level of 95%. It showed a 3.7% error and a variability of p and q of 50%, giving a minimum sample of 704, having evaluated 711 students.

Table 1. Description of the sample

Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
Sex	Females	442	62.2
	Males	269	37.8
Cycle	Basic I	189	26.6
	Basic II	197	27.7
	Intermediate I	163	22.9
	Intermediate II	142	20.0
	Advanced II	20	2.8
Perception of English language proficiency at high school graduation	Excellent	16	2,3
	Bad	141	19,8
	Very good	175	24,6
	Very Bad	34	4,8
	A little good	345	48,5

3.3 Instrument

Two instruments were used in this research. The first instrument was the Questionnaire of Attitude towards Learning English (Questionnaire of Attitude towards Learning English) constructed by Viet (2017) at Nong Lam University - Vietnam. It has 22 items. The data collection instrument applied was a Likert-type scale with non-dichotomous value judgments measuring the responses according to the following tabulation: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither Disagree, Neither Agree, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. Regarding the validity of the instrument, an exploratory factor analysis was carried out with a KMO value of .883. Three factors were identified using a varimax rotation with 50% of variance explained. The factors are emotional attitudes (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9), cognitive attitudes (items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18), and behavioral attitudes (items 19, 20, 21, and 22).

The original version of the questionnaire is written in English, so the back-translation method was applied to translate the 22 items into Spanish, the native language of the students in this research, so that when answering the questionnaire they could have a better understanding of the content of the items (Behr, 2016; Sousa y Rojjanasrirat, 2011; Brislin, 1970). The translation was done with the support of three English professors, two Spanish linguistics professors, and a psychology professor specialized in psychometrics.

The second instrument applied was the Motivation towards English Scale constructed by

Oñate (2015) in Chile. Items are expressed on a Likert Scale. To carry out the validation of the content of the items, we had the support of five professors from the Language Coordination of the University of the Frontier in Chile (team of experts). The reliability of the instrument in the original study sample had a Cronbach's alpha value = .70 in 113 students. The scale presents 10 items, questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were assigned the values: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). However, questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 were assigned different values because the items were written in negative form: strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5). The recent validation and reliability of this instrument was analyzed in a sample of Peruvian university students and it was observed that the validity of the internal structure presents two dimensions called "autonomous motivation to learn English" whose alpha and omega value was .835 and "demotivation to learn English" whose alpha and omega value was .77 for alpha and omega (Quenta-Condori et al., 2024).

There are several ways to investigate students' perceptions of their level of English proficiency, one of which is to ask for a personal assessment, considering a conscientious deduction by the students themselves (Coetzee-Van Rooy & Verhoef, 2000), the same one used in this study. In this sense, one question was asked to measure the perception of English proficiency: How do you perceive your own English proficiency? and the response options were very bad (1), bad (2), a little good (3), very good (4), and excellent (5). This question was developed under the guidance of an English professor, a Spanish professor and a psychology professor specializing in psychometrics.

3.4 Data collection procedure

For data collection, the Questionnaire of Attitude towards Learning English, the English Motivation towards English Scale, and sociodemographic questions such as age, sex, perception of English language proficiency, and level of studies (Basic English I, Basic II, Intermediate I, Intermediate II, Advanced I) that they were studying at the time of the survey were written in Google Form. All students were informed of the purpose of the research and were told that the information obtained during the study would be kept in the strictest confidence. The students agreed to participate freely and voluntarily under informed consent. It took them approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete the questionnaire. The link was sent to the students with the support of professors working at the two university campuses. The professors shared the link with their students via WhatsApp, for one month (February 2023).

Regarding the students' grades to assess English language proficiency, we requested the final

grades from the language center and then we were given access to the grades of the students who completed the Google form containing the instruments of this research.

3.5 Data analysis procedure

A descriptive analysis of the data in terms of means and standard deviations was applied to characterize motivation towards English, attitudes towards learning English, and perception of English language proficiency. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to observe the impact of attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English on the students' perception of English language proficiency. On the other hand, from the inferential point of view, Student's T-test was used to test the significance of the correlations, a Multiple Regression Model, and the Structural Equation Model with the following goodness of fit indices: Chi-square, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and Comparative Goodness of Fit Index (CFI). Analyses were performed using the SPSS 25 and AMOS 26 statistical packages.

4. Results

4.1 Characteristics of attitudes towards learning English

Regarding the characteristics of attitudes toward learning English (Table 2), it was found that the attitude with the highest average was item 10 *Being able to speak English is an advantage in the present time* (M=4.4), followed by item 12 *English is an important tool in scientific research* (M=4.37). However, the attitudes with the lowest measure were item 7 *You spend a lot of time learning English* (M=3.3), item 4 *You like to read books, documents, and journals in English* and item 8 *You will enroll in an extra English course even if it is not a compulsory subject in the school* (M=3.5).

Table 2. Characteristics of Attitudes towards learning English

Attitudes towards learning English	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. You like to learn English	4,1997	0,73316
2. You like someone else speaking with you in English	4,0338	0,75170
3. You like to speak English	4,0295	0,74340
4. You like to read books, documents, and journals in English	3,5907	0,83573
5. You like watching TV shows in English	3,7384	0,87157
6. In general, you realize that learning English is important and you love learning English	4,1589	0,74781
7. You spend a lot of time learning English	3,3418	0,77455
8. You will enroll in an extra English course even if it is not a compulsory subject in the school	3,5007	0,97414
9. Being able to communicate with foreigners in English is a fundamental purpose of learning English	4,1111	0,83769
10. Being able to speak English is an advantage in the present time.	4,4655	0,68269
11. You need English to be more successful in your studies	4,2278	0,81109
12. English is an important tool in scientific research	4,3727	0,73373
13. All students should learn English	4,2391	0,77583
14. Learning English is important to you because English is a very useful tool in modern society	4,3460	0,71492
15. When someone speaks English, you think they make a good impression	4,1674	0,75534
16. Learning English will help to develop your mind	4,2714	0,69668
17. Students should regularly use English in communication	4,0309	0,74429

Attitudes towards learning English	Mean	Standard Deviation
18. When someone speaks English you think they are good and qualified	3,8833	0,79728
19. The important purpose of learning English is to get high scores on English Tests	3,6245	0,89815
20. The important goal for learning English is to get a college degree	3,6076	0,94012
21. The important purpose of learning English is to have a good job	3,7848	0,86893
22. You learn English to make good academic progress	4,0970	0,71828

4.2 Characteristics of Motivation towards English

Regarding the characteristics of the Motivation towards English scale (Table 3), it was found that the motivation with the highest average was item 5 *Speaking and reading English is useful for my professional and personal development* (M=4.21) and the lowest was item 10 *If English was graded and had credits, I would study more* (M=2.45).

Table 3. Characteristics of Motivation towards English

Motivation towards English	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I like English and I put all my effort into speaking well and understanding what I read.	4,0450	0,69663
2. I like learning English because it allows me to interact with people from other parts of the world.	4,1083	0,74367
3. Whenever I see a foreigner, I try to talk to him or her in English.	3,4163	0,94255
4. I have a positive attitude towards English speakers and their culture.	3,9972	0,74870
5. Speaking and reading English is useful for my professional and personal development.	4,2194	0,69583
6. If I am proficient in English, I expect to have better job prospects.	4,1181	0,74122
7. I have always been bad at English.	3,0253	0,98977
8. Low grades in English demotivate my learning.	2,7046	0,99433
9. So far, I have learned English only because it is mandatory.	3,1575	1,07491
10. If English was graded and had credits, I would study more.	2,4515	0,97870

4.3 Characteristics of the perception of English language proficiency

Regarding the characteristics of English language proficiency, it was found that the mean was 17.5, with a standard deviation of 0.94, with a minimum grade of 16 and a maximum of 20, whose grades were obtained from the transcripts provided by the university. Regarding the rating of the perception of English language proficiency by each participant, it was identified that 56.3% rated themselves as “a little good” (Table 4).

Table 4. Level of perception of English language proficiency among university students

Level of perception	Frequency	Percentage
Bad	23	3,2
A little good	400	56,3
Very good	275	38,7
Excellent	13	1,8
Total	711	100,0

4.4 Explanatory model of perception of English language proficiency

Regarding the correlation analysis, significant correlations were observed between the variable English language proficiency and motivation towards English ($r=.16, p\leq 0.01$) as well as null correlation between English language proficiency and attitudes towards learning English ($r=.04, p\leq .25$), being its relationship with the perception of English proficiency positive and very low ($r=.08, p\leq .05$). The perception of English language proficiency, established positive and significant relationships with the independent variables (table 5).

Table 5: Correlation matrix of the factors associated with the perception of English language proficiency

Variables	1	2	3	4
1.Perception of English language proficiency	1,000			
2.Motivation towards English	0,329**	1,000		
3.Attitudes towards learning English	0,230**	0,556**	1,000	
4.English language proficiency (grades)	0,086*	0,160**	0,042	1,000

*.05 , **.01

To complement the above, a structural equation model was used, based on a covariance matrix (CB-SEM), which allows the simultaneous analysis of a set of dependency relationships, as shown in Figure 1, where it can be observed that attitudes towards learning English explain the perception of English language proficiency by 10%, but with motivation towards English as the mediating variable. According to the established criteria, the goodness of fit of the model was confirmed ($\chi^2 = 383.78; df = 3; p .000; RMSEA = 0.06; AGFI = 0.97; TLI = .97; CFI = .99$), which corroborates the fact that all the values obtained were acceptable. Figure 1 shows the explanatory model.

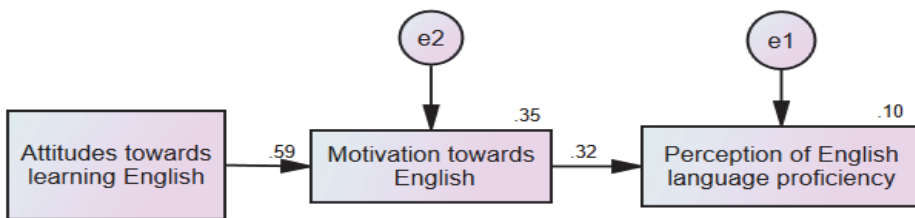


Figure 1. CB-SEM model explaining the perception of English language proficiency in university students

5. Discussion

Today, English is a communication resource in international business, science, and technology, which has led to a great demand for teaching and learning in educational and commercial institutions worldwide (Leung, 2022). Not knowing how to speak English as a native language leads to mixed feelings because some people tend to feel very excited about communicating in English but at the same time feel challenged in the learning process. However, once proficiency in English is achieved, the student enjoys the communicative ability in English that he/she has gained (Crystal, 2003).

English language proficiency is related to factors that contribute to the learning process. In this sense, the main objective of this study was to determine the relationship between attitudes towards learning English and motivation towards English under the SEM model as predictors of the

perception of English language proficiency in Peruvian university students. Given that, there is no previous work related to the factors that determine the perception of English language proficiency, which makes this study more interesting and relevant.

Some studies affirm the relationship between motivation and English proficiency (Tashlanovna et al., 2020; Cocca & Cocca, 2019; Dörnyei, 2005). Some authors agree that motivation is one of the factors that determines the effectiveness of second language learning. Motivation is an initial requirement and driving force for pursuing the long-term goals of language learning. (Alamer & Alrabai, 2022; Tashlanovna et al., 2020; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Gardner, 1985). Learners' motivation to learn a new language influences the success of language learning (Chihara & Oller, 1977). Although, according to Khodadad & Kaur (2016) not only motivation has a significant direct influence on English achievement but also attitudes toward the learning situation, integration ability, and self-efficacy.

As well as attitudes and English proficiency, there are studies that state their relationship (Ghorbani & Khajavy, 2023b; Bagheri & Andi, 2015; Chihara & Oller, 1978). Attitudes are factors involved in English learning, students who have positive attitudes are those who possess a greater desire to learn English (Kirkpatrick et al., 2024). Positive attitudes stimulate students' active participation in the process of language learning achievement (Feng & Hong, 2022). Students with positive attitudes perform better in learning a new language (Prastiwi, 2018). On the other hand, learners with negative attitudes allocate less time and energy during learning a language (Moghadam & Shamsi, 2021).

Some studies support the relationship between attitudes and motivation in English language learning (Khan et al, 2023; Anokye, 2022; Özer, 2020; Genc & Aydin, 2017; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; among others). It is important to mention that Gardner (1985) affirmed that motivation and attitudes are fundamental factors in achieving true second language learning,

Therefore, in the present study, it was found that the statistical model that best explains the perception of English proficiency is the attitudes towards learning English, as long as it is mediated by motivation towards English, being the adjustment indexes adequate; the same is not true if both variables act as predictors. There is no doubt that during the second language learning process, motivation plays an important role since it initiates, guides, and enables goal-oriented behavior, aspects corroborated by empirical studies (Alvarez y Rojas, 2021; Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2020). Regarding attitudes towards learning English, Galvis (2010) indicates that it is a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to something specific, such as a language, or some social fact, representing thoughts, feelings, and internal tendencies about behavior. It can also be seen that the predictive capacity of the independent variables is very low, only 10%, which implies that other aspects are considered in the explanation of language proficiency and that it is necessary to identify them in different studies. For example, according to Inada (2022), levels of enjoyment in class are closely related to English proficiency, and consequently, teachers are responsible for increasing levels of enjoyment rather than decreasing levels of anxiety. As stated by Yuntao (2019) The students' learning strategies have a major impact on their English proficiency. Based on Serquina & Batang (2018) age, gender, curriculum, average years of household schooling, nature of parental occupation, and motivation do not affect students' English proficiency, but aggregate household income has an enormous relationship with students' English proficiency. According to Oñate (2015) learning strategies, motivation, mother tongue proficiency, and prior knowledge are related to the level of English, but the variable with the greatest consistency in the level of language proficiency was motivation. Hence, it is possible to affirm as Uribe et al. (2008) point out that, probably, the external environment and their motivations make English not a priority element in their lives, in the sample studied.

In terms of practical implications, it is necessary to recognize that in university higher education there is an inequality in the perception of English proficiency, taking into account the origin (public or private school graduates) of the students. University students have different levels of perceived English proficiency, probably due to previous knowledge acquired in school. The

curriculum in Peruvian education considers the teaching of English only at the secondary level in public schools, in most schools they receive only about 100 minutes of learning once a week, while students in private schools receive English classes from kindergarten, elementary to high school and for more time during each week. Consequently, it is recommended to redistribute the hours of teaching and learning English as a foreign language and to introduce the English courses in primary education. In this way, the level of perception of English proficiency in the university education would reach an optimal level and the level of English proficiency of this country would have a better position in the ranking of countries with high level of English proficiency.

Having into account that teachers should provide help to all their students to improve their English learning strategies (Yuntao, 2019). Optimal teaching should be provided at the university level where English proficiency is achieved through oral communication with fluency and accuracy (Littlewood et al., 1996). Teachers should keep their students motivated by conveying enthusiasm to increase their interest (Cohen, 2010). English teachers and English professors should also employ useful accents, speed, clarity, and idiomatic expressions to avoid language barriers (Kuo, 2011). Also, achieving a higher level of English proficiency requires attention to a good and timely learning environment (Jannati & Marzban, 2015). The perception of English language proficiency may vary as its determining factors intervene.

In terms of limitations and future research, at the time the surveys were collected, some students decided not to consent to the survey. Perhaps the sample would have been larger and the results would have been different. Regarding future research, it is suggested to use the same data and conduct a comparative study to analyze and expand the current results, which were obtained from a private institution. The reality of public and private institutions in Peru is different, so the results of the variables analyzed in this research cannot be generalized. Likewise, the instruments used in this study on attitudes and motivation towards English are useful for further studies in other samples. The present study was conducted in a sample of Peruvian university students; therefore, it is recommended to apply the instruments with school, university, or graduate students in different national and international contexts. Researchers can adapt the questionnaire to the native language they consider relevant to their study with the appropriate translation method and can include sociodemographic information to enrich the results. It is also suggested that qualitative studies be conducted on the factors that determine English proficiency in addition to motivation and attitudes.

6. Conclusion

The research allowed the conclusion that the characteristics of English language proficiency in the studied sample presented the mean with a value of 17.5. It showed a standard deviation of 0.94. The rating of perception of English language proficiency identified that 56.3% was rated as "a little good", 38.7% was rated as "very good", 3.2% was rated as "bad", and 1.8% was rated as "excellent". The explanatory model of the perception of English language proficiency was established as a mediation model, which explained 10% of the dependent variable.

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