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Learning English for specific purposes among members of the Shuar Musap Community

Aprendizaje de inglés para fines específicos entre los miembros de la Comunidad Shuar Musap

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ABSTRACT

Ecuadorian Amazonian communities play a leading role in calling foreigners to experience their beautiful landscapes and the uniqueness of their traditions; therefore, it is important for their inhabitants to be able to communicate with the English-speaking tourists who visit them. Through a mixed methods approach using questionnaires and interviews, the present study aimed to determine perceptions of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning within the framework of Andragogy principles among the Musap Shuar community. The findings of the study show favorable perceptions and high motivations regarding English language learning among adults in the community, making them ideal candidates for ESP learning within the framework of Andragogy. Implications for future research and implementation in other communities engaged in community-based tourism are included.

Descriptors: Learning; communities; english. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Las comunidades amazónicas ecuatorianas juegan un papel protagónico al llamar a los extranjeros a experimentar sus hermosos paisajes y la singularidad de sus tradiciones; por ello, es importante que sus habitantes puedan comunicarse con los turistas de habla inglesa que los visitan. A través de un enfoque de métodos mixtos utilizando cuestionarios y entrevistas, el presente estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar las percepciones sobre el aprendizaje de inglés con Fines Específicos (ESP) en el marco de los principios de la Andragogía entre la comunidad Musap Shuar. Los hallazgos del estudio muestran percepciones favorables y altas motivaciones con respecto al aprendizaje del idioma inglés entre los adultos de la comunidad, lo que los convierte en candidatos ideales para el aprendizaje de ESP en el marco de la Andragogía. Se incluyen implicaciones para futuras investigaciones e implementación en otras comunidades dedicadas al turismo comunitario.

Descriptores: Aprendizaje; comunidad; inglés. (Tesauro UNESCO).

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INTRODUCTION

"Tourism uses nature as part of its products" (Buckley, 2011, p. 398). Community tourism has become an alternative to generate income complementary to daily economic activities and defend and revalue local cultural and natural resources. In this context, the Ecuadorian Amazon, together with its communities, plays a leading role in calling foreigners to know the beauty of its landscapes as well as the uniqueness of its traditions. Musap is a Shuar community located 42 kilometers from the city of Macas, on the Macuma-Taisha road in the province of Morona Santiago. It is made up of seventy families, who, in 1972 founded the community working especially in the agriculture field, therefore, in 1990, ten families came together in an experiential and community tourism project to generate extra resources, take care of nature and live their lives among national and foreign tourists. The result was to create social benefits, maintain their traditional culture, and increase intercultural communication (Tsundoda & Mendlinger, 2009).

As part of the project activities that the community maintains from its creation as cultural values, the tourist attractions are shown to visitors (mostly national and English speakers) by the families in charge of the tourism, through a welcome ceremony, a tour to the waterfalls, and a cultural dance; therefore, it is of utmost importance that its inhabitants can communicate in English in a basic way.

The traditional methods such as the grammar-translation or direct method for teaching English in schools may not be well suited for this particular community, given its characteristics, especially the fact that the learners are older and according to (Harner, 1978) and (Trujillo, 2021) who point out that the Shuar are fierce warriors, free and strong people who could not be conquered by the Spaniards, and who since colonial times have faced many battles, making them a people distrustful of strangers and difficult to win their trust. They are also very tight with traditional values with an uncommon sight of the universe demonstrated on their culture, beliefs, food, and, language.

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A very important element to keep in mind is that from their perspective they are the owners of the land and outsiders need to ask for permission. They don't believe that outsiders have the right to occupy their land, however, given the fact that we are talking about economics and trying to be prosperous, the community now is more open, even though, as they become more open, they may not respond to a classic approach developed for a teacher-centered classroom with typical textbooks and unilateral instruction where the teacher seems to be the owner of the knowledge and the students, passive receivers (Umida et al. 2019).

They are divided into construction, guidance, agriculture, livestock, handicrafts, among others; the older members try to motivate the younger ones to study and become professionals but without forgetting their customs, native language (Shuar chicham), and community, for this reason, is imperative to find alternative methods of teaching a group of people with these attributes, which is where andragogy seems to be a much better fit. Research, based on the principles of the andragogy proposed by (Knowles, 1973), supports that training adults is different than teaching children: they are self-directed, the experience is used as background knowledge, they need problem center instruction with relevant current roles and their motivation is intrinsic. Adults gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values when they feel engaged in systematic and sustained selfeducation activities (Merriam & Ralph, 2007). In andragogy, learning has to be authentic, based on their experiences like problem-solving activities, projects, etc., in other words, it has to be presented in context with real-life situations. In the andragogical approach, some studies showed that learners are prepared for learning as long as they feel the need for it (Jendrych & Wisnewska, 2010), and have the motivation to do it. In this context, learning becomes a choice.

In the field of language learning, English for specific purposes (ESP) has been described as an approach where choice, authenticity, and need come into play to achieve specific language skills using real situations based on the necessities of the

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learners. Other studies on teaching English, have shown that there is a methodology for

teaching ESP, which is commonly used for learners with particular language needs. In

this case, English for occupational purposes (EOP), a branch of ESP, is used by adults in

service-learning because they know the subject more than the teacher, in this case,

"adults require a different methodology than teaching youths" (Jendrych & Wisnewska,

2010, p. 2). Therefore, English for occupational purposes requires an andragogical

approach.

While numerous studies have focused on analyzing these approaches and how they affect

learning in different fields, there is a lack of available investigation in Ecuador that focuses

on ESP through an andragogy framework, especially concerned with rural areas.

Considering the absence of information on this topic, the present research aims to explore

the perceptions of learning English for Specific Purposes to adults of the Musap Shuar

community, based on the principles of andragogy.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the principles of Andragogy are

appropriate to teach English for touristic purposes in the Shuar community where the roles

of the members are clearly defined and organized.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To analyze what are the perceptions, the adults of the community have about learning

English for specific purposes based on the principles of andragogy, the following research

questions will address in the present study:

1. What are the perceptions of the Shuar community regarding English language

learning?

2. Could the principles of Andragogy be appropriate to teach basic English for

touristic purposes?

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Andragogy

This study is founded on the andragogical model of Malcom Knowles, who asserts that adult learners are autonomous and participate actively in the learning process, compared to young learners, therefore, is "education of equals" (Kapur, 2015, p. 52). It is based on six assumptions: adults need to know why they need to learn, having a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions and lives, learn when they sense they are ready, bring their experiences into the learning process and, feel motivated to extend their knowledge in order to cope with real-life situations (Knowles et al. 2005). These principles are significant in the investigation of teaching English to adults of the Shuar community because they emphasize on the role of the facilitator and the unique characteristics of an adult as a learner.

Constructivism

The andragogical model shows its links to constructivism based on the notion that learners construct and interpret new information based on their existing knowledge (Borg, 2017), which is the result of a meaning-making search, and skills; then, learners are active participants of the learning process, constructing individual interpretations from their experiences (Applefield et al. 2000). According to (Aljohani, 2017), there are nine important principles of constructivist learning to take into consideration in the teaching and learning process, as shown in Figure 1.

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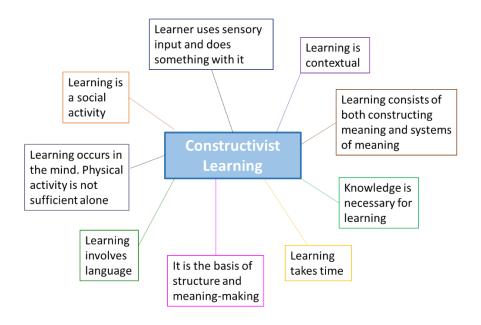


Figure 1. Principles of Constructivism.

Source: Adapted from Aljohani (2017, p. 102).

English for Specific Purposes

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach developed after World War II, which has been growing over the years helping students learn specific language according to their needs, whether in the academic (EAP) or occupational (EOP) field; whilst for Hutchinson and Waters cited in Zahid (2013, p. 139), ESP is an "approach rather than a product", denoting that ESP can include any kind of methodology, language or teaching material. According to Peter Strevens, mentioned in the study conducted by (Ibrahim, 2019), ESP distinguishes between four absolute and two variable characteristics as adapted from (John's & Dudley-Evans, 1991) chart and presented in Table 1.

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Table 1. Characteristics of ESP.

Absolute Characteristics	Variable Characteristics	Claim
Design to meet specific needs of the learner	Restricted as to the language skills to be learned	Being focused on the learner's need
Related in content to particular disciplines, occupations, and activities	No taught according to any pre-ordained methodology	Is relevant to the learner
Centered on the language appropriate to those activities		Is successful in imparting learning
In contrast with General English		Is more cost-effective than General English

Source: Adapted from Johns & Dudley-Evans (1991, p. 298).

Motivation

They assert that intrinsic motivation is the inherent satisfaction of doing something instead of thinking about its consequence. Then, in adult education's teaching and learning process, the learners must have clarity of their goals, needs, and values that allows them to be motivated and achieve the knowledge. Meanwhile, there are two kinds of motivation: integrative and instrumental. The first one refers to learning a language to communicate with tourists from other countries, and instrumental motivation is the one that allows achieving a goal. Table 2 shows a summary of theories and notions of andragogy, constructivism, motivation, and ESP, and its links to Andragogy.

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Table 2. Comparison of Theories.

FEATURES	ANDRAGOGY	CONSTRUCTIVISM	MOTIVATION	ESP
Authors	Malcolm Knowles	Jean Piaget Lev Vygotsky Dewey	Deci and Ryan	
Beliefs	Adults learn differently than children	Meaning-Making	Engaging learning. The individual is able on personal goals and values.	Is an approach to teaching a language based on the needs of the learners
Context	The need to know	Learning is contextual	Intrinsic motivation is contextual	Contextual
Role of language	Learner's experiences	Generate knowledge from the interaction between experience and ideas		To achieve a specific objective
Learner's concept	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent
Materials	Authenticity	Authentic	Authenticity	Authentic
Class focus	Student- centered	Student-centered		Student-centered
Class activities	Problem center	Real-life, purpose based on a task	Feeling effective	Language and vocabulary learning

STATE OF THE ART

The term andragogy was introduced in 1833 by Alexander Kapp, a German grammar school teacher, when he described Plato's educational theory, later in the 1960s a Yugoslavian adult educator described andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles et al. 2005, p. 61), but it was until 1970 that Malcom Knowles made it

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popular with his book, "The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy", where he explained the andragogy with a set of assumptions about adult learners (Loeng, 2018).

While some questions whether andragogy is a real theory or not (Macgrath, 2009), other authors coincide that adults learn differently from children and therefore, need different strategies and methodologies to learn effectively and achieve their goals. Other researchers assert that ESP is a constructivist model which can be used in adult learning because it is centered on the language and it can be applied in different areas whether academic or occupational.

In a study about teaching English in an indigenous community of Florencia (Ortegon-Betancourt, 2015), the researcher found that using ESP was feasible for students to learn the English language, as long as the tutors helped them with the speaking skill, motivated the students and guided them along the process all while promoting their independence. As adults are self-sufficient and independent, their motivation to learn is not limited to a reward, but rather is intrinsic in the sense that drives them to attain knowledge based on their experiences and self-determination, then, motivation encourages them to go through the learning process (Anjomshoa & Firooz, 2015). In such a way, teaching adults should be based on real situations, using specific material and tools to relate their daily lives with the knowledge acquired.

According to (Sarmento et al. 2018), the role of the teachers and students in ESP classes are complementary because teachers have the methodological skills to teach English, but students have the motivation to learn and the knowledge of their field. In this sense, both, teachers and students have to work together to allow learners to construct the knowledge being active participants and not only passive receivers of information (Applefield et al. 2000).

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A study conducted in India on the constructivist approach for teaching English showed

that it helped increase basic communication skills to communicate in English,

consequently making constructivism an indispensable tool to teach English and make

"students learn effectively and teachers teach efficiently" (Sharma & Gupta, 2016, p. 791).

When the constructivist approach, through its model of problem-solving in an experiential

environment is redefined and adapted for more complex students, it is known as

constructivism for adults; meaning, when combined with other forms of adult education, it

allows optimal learning where the student becomes an active participant in the generation

of knowledge. In essence, students learn by doing (Mayombe, 2020).

These prior findings show that language teaching approaches with constructivist

perspectives have tended to yield desirable results in the past, particularly among adult

learners, therefore, this approach will be very helpful in this investigation to reach the goal

of teaching English to adults of the Shuar community.

METHODS

Study Design

Since the research aimed to determine the perceptions the adults of Musap, Shuar

community have about learning ESP within the framework of andragogy, a mixed-

methods approach was used over four weeks process to gather the qualitative information

supported by quantitative data, as shown in Figure 2.

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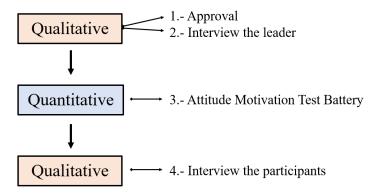
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Figure 2. Study design.



Participants

A research participant refers to a living individual who, voluntarily takes part in an investigation after giving a consent form to be the subject of the study and from whom the researcher obtains the data and, private information (Research Integrity: Natural and Physical Sciences, n.d.).

Therefore, this study will be conducted in Musap, Shuar community, which is made up of seventy families, who, ten of them in 1990 came together in an experiential and community tourism project. The total sample of my universe was made up of 29 adult Shuar native speakers, 18 of them were men and 11 women, ranging from 20 years or older, who were the participants of my research. The leader of the community is a 55 years old man who came up with the idea of creating the tourism project in 1990, and has served as the leader of the community ever since. Today, his role is to ensure the safety and well-being of the community and to promote better ways of life, based on touristic activities.

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Data Collection

To answer the research questions effectively, it is essential to use the correct instruments to capture quality evidence, hence, all steps for gathering data should be cautiously selected to ensure reliable and valid data (Ewen, n.d.).

First of all, approval from the leader of the community was needed, so the study can be accepted among the members, and the information they provided was real, it was also necessary to coordinate the logistic part for the survey and interviews. After he was being explained about the research, a 45 minutes interview was conducted in Spanish. The open questions used in the interview were about his predisposition on leading the members of the community to learn English if they could have the opportunity, the motivation to do it and, the importance for them to learn this language.

Afterward, the participants were made aware of the purpose of the study and were guaranteed confidentiality regarding their responses. They were asked to complete a survey with 40 questions divided into six parts: part one covered biodata, part two addressed reasons for learning English: part three proved any anxiety about learning a foreign language; part four explored attitudes towards learning English; part five explored the participants' motivation for learning a foreign language, and part six featured two open questions to diagnose their awareness about the benefit of learning English for their community. Parts two, three, four, and five of the survey were modeled after (Gardner, 2004) Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which was originally designed to investigate the motivation towards L2 in French students.

The AMTB test is a "research instrument which has been developed to assess the major affective components shown to be involved in second language learning" (Nino, 2017, p. 368). The adaptations were mainly focused on removing questions related to young learners and cultural attitudes, as they do not apply to the context of this study. After several revisions to reflect the unique circumstances of the Musap, Shuar community, 28 questions remained and featured a Likert scale (the adapted test was piloted with five

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participants of other Shuar communities) and, it was conducted in Spanish for a better understanding of the participants, for whom it took 20 minutes to finish.

The answers given by the participants in the AMTB were supported by interviewed them and the leader in order to have qualitative information about the perceptions of how their community would be benefited if they learn English.

RESULTS

The study is mainly focused on qualitative analysis supported with quantitative data, which helped to determine the perceptions the adults of Musap, Shuar community have about learning ESP. The information was processed in the SPSS software, which is frequently used to provide relevant interpretation of the data (Kpolovie, 2017). As shown in Table 3, more than three quarters of the participants can speak with English-speaking tourists, while slightly less than a quarter affirm they do not.

Table 3. Possibility of speaking with English-speaking tourists.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	22	75.9	75.9	75.9
	no	7	24.1	24.1	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 displays that nearby eighty percent of the participants are totally agreed with learning vocabulary related to tourism, while only 6.9% felt neutral and 3.4% agreed.

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Table 4. Interest in learning vocabulary related to tourism.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	2	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Agree	1	3.4	3.4	10.3
	Totally Agree	26	89.7	89.7	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Based on the calculation on the SPSS program (Table 5), more than half of the participants stated that they were very strongly motivated (65.5%), to learn English and communicate with English-speaking tourists; meanwhile, 6.9% were strongly motivated and 24.1% showed a neutral motivation.

Table 5. Motivation about learning English and communicate with English speaking tourists.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Weak	1	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Neutral	7	24.1	24.1	27.6
	Strong	2	6.9	6.9	34.5
	Very Strong	19	65.5	65.5	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

In table 6.69% of the participants stated that their attitude towards learning English is very favorable, 13.8% agreed between being favorable and neutral and, 3.4% felt unfavorable.

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Table 6. Attitude towards learning English.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Unfavorable	1	3.4	3.4	3.4
Neutral	4	13.8	13.8	17.2
Favorable	4	13.8	13.8	31.0
Very Favorable	20	69.0	69.0	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Perceptions among the leader and the participants

To support the quantitative data, an interview with 10 questions was applied with the leader of the community, who stated that "learning English could be a great opportunity to present our attractions and communicate with English-speaking tourists who visit us." He also mentioned that it will be important not only to learn vocabulary related to tourism, instead he is interested in learning general English to communicate with English-speaking tourists outside the community and invite them to experience their lifestyle.

The leader, as the person responsible for the well-being of the community, encourages the members to learn and become more prepared persons (Table 7) and increase their businesses. He feels that most of the members are motivated to learn English (Table 8), unfortunately, they don't have the opportunity to do it.

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Table 7.It will make me a most prepared and educated person.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	2	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Agree	4	13.8	13.8	20.7
	Totally Agree	23	79.3	79.3	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Motivation towards learning English .

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Few	2	6.9	6.9	6.9
	Neutral	5	17.2	17.2	24.1
	Much	20	69.0	69.0	93.1
	Very Much	2	6.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the participants, they answered two open questions included in the survey about how their experience with English-speaking tourists will help them to learn this language and, how their community will benefit if they learn English. Answering the first question, 93% of the participants agreed that their experience talking to tourists will help them to learn English, 2 participants left it blank, meanwhile, for the second question, 8 participants stated that knowing another language will be important for the community, 14 answered that they will teach others, 4 of them said that learning basic English will be enough, 2 members mentioned that they will like to become tourist guide and translate. One participant didn't answer the question.

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DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATIONS

Motivation and Attitude towards learning English

The results show that the participants seem to be highly motivated to learn English with more than 80% showing a favorable attitude towards English. This is not surprising considering that they mentioned that they want to learn English because they believe it would make them more prepared and educated persons to talk with tourists; they also believe that it would increase their economic prosperity, which is part of the leader's vision of English benefitting the community. Hence, they see the value of learning English because of the perceived link to prosperity as they reach financial success earning a better job (Abdalla-Abdalgane, 2020).

This perception is very consistent with the principle of instrumental motivation by Gardner and motivation with andragogy, which points out that if adults feel the learning is useful and satisfies their concerns, they will be much more motivated (Knowles, 1989). A different perception tends to occur in a traditional classroom environment, where students according to (Gardner, 2007) are motivated by their grades or not failing the course, as shown in a study conducted in Romania, where 60% of the teachers agreed that students' motivation to learn is due to their grades (Stan, 2012).

ESP and Andragogy

More than 90% of the participants show interest in learning vocabulary specifically related to tourism, which makes them suitable candidates for learning English through an ESP approach. Among the key features of ESP is that it is a specialized field in teaching to adults' specific content with authentic material, centered on the language requirements from the learners' needs in their context; in this case, the members of the community, by presenting their attractions to the tourists, they are showing their experiences, and if they are able to communicate in English about them, the third assumption of andragogy is immersed.

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Most respondents believe that taking such a course for learning ESP will help them to be

more prepared and educated in the future. This can be interpreted as taking responsibility

for their decisions and lives, even more so now that, due to the pandemic, tourism levels

have dropped and the community has been severely affected. While this is a real-life

situation that they have to face, being proactive in learning English and communicating

with tourists' links with the principles of andragogy of coping and the necessity to learn

when they are ready to do it.

When the members of the community were asked about the usefulness for the community

through the AMTB test, the scores were neutral. However, in the qualitative interviews,

they actually did reveal that they felt it would be beneficial, which means that it links to

one of the first assumptions of andragogy that says that adults need to know why they

need to learn to be able to be successful. This discrepancy seems to show a higher

comfort level with one on one interviews than questionnaires.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the results of the study and interpreting them based on the principles of

andragogy and ESP, it can be confirmed that adults from Musap Shuar community have

particular characteristics that make them less than ideal candidates for traditional classes.

Their perceptions regarding English language learning were favorable and they show an

interest in learning vocabulary related to tourism, which makes them good candidates for

ESP. They are highly motivated, with a positive attitude towards learning English and an

awareness that learning a new language based on their experience with real-life situations

will benefit their community. Therefore, the principles of andragogy may be appropriate to

teach basic English for touristic purposes among the participants of this community.

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LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Any plan to implement an ESP program, whether in a traditional educational setting such as a school or a remote community like the Musap Shuar Community, must first include a needs assessment, which is at the core of ESP principles since it considers teaching methods, materials and strategies to achieve its goal. It is necessary to implement this phase to develop, examine, and evaluate an ESP program in order to narrow the gap between the lacks, wants, necessities and environmental situation of the learners (Nimasari, 2018; Otilia, 2015).

Based on the studies mentioned above, this particular study was the first phase of a longer project that aims to explore the feasibility of implementing ESP instruction in the Musap Shuar Community. One of the major limitations was the distance, the time to conduct the study (two months), and the unique characteristics of the community, the closeness among them, and their traditional values. Hence, the researcher had to make multiple visits to the community to gain acceptance and interview the leader to obtain permission to proceed. To conduct this first part of the study it was necessary for the researcher to build trust, and for that, she spent a lot of time with the community, had multiple conversations, and even contribute with necessary items.

Given the characteristics of the community, it was necessary to meet with the members, explain the particulars of ESP, gain their trust, and understand their perspectives about learning English. Given the favorable responses, a second phase is recommended, including the creation of the syllabus and the implementation of an ESP program under the principles of andragogy. Therefore, it is important to note that in Phase 2, the researcher should also include pre-phase relationship building initiatives to execute the program.

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