

THE KICHWA LANGUAGE INFLUENCE IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF OTAVALEÑOS LEARNERS AT UNIDAD EDUCATIVA SAN LUIS

LA INFLUENCIA DE LA LENGUA KICHWA EN LA ADQUISICIÓN DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO DE ESTUDIANTES OTAVALEÑOS DE LA UNIDAD EDUCATIVA SAN LUIS

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Resumen

Este estudio se centra en examinar la influencia de la lengua kichwa en la adquisición del inglés como lengua extranjera por parte de estudiantes otavaleños de la Unidad Educativa San Luis. Se reconoce que la influencia lingüística, en este caso del kichwa, juega un papel crucial en el proceso de aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. Los resultados de la investigación sugieren que esta influencia puede manifestarse tanto a nivel lingüístico como cultural. El análisis se basa en la idea de que la cultura y el contexto influyen en la forma en que los individuos adquieren una nueva lengua. Los estudiantes se ven afectados por sus propias experiencias culturales y lingüísticas, que pueden influir en su pronunciación, estructuras gramaticales y elección de palabras en inglés. La investigación también aborda la importancia de considerar las diferencias culturales y



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lingüísticas al enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera, lo que implica adaptar los métodos de enseñanza para abordar estas influencias. En resumen, este estudio arroja luz sobre cómo la lengua y la cultura kichwa pueden jugar un papel en la adquisición del inglés como lengua extranjera en el contexto de los estudiantes otavaleños de la Unidad Educativa San Luis, destacando la importancia de comprender y abordar estas influencias en el proceso educativo.

Palabras clave: Idioma Kichwa; Adquisición del Idioma Inglés; Influencia de las lenguas extranjeras; Estudiantes Otavaleños; Factores culturales y lingüísticos.

Abstract

This study focuses on examining the influence of the Kichwa language in the acquisition of English as a foreign language by Otavaleño students at Unidad Educativa San Luis. It recognizes that linguistic influence, in this case, from Kichwa, plays a crucial role in the process of learning a second language. The research findings suggest that this influence can manifest both at a linguistic and cultural level. The analysis is based on the idea that culture and context influence how individuals acquire a new language. Students are affected by their own cultural and linguistic experiences, which can influence their pronunciation, grammatical structures, and word choices in English. The research also addresses the importance of considering cultural and linguistic differences when teaching English as a foreign language, which involves adapting teaching methods to address these influences. In summary, this study sheds light on how the Kichwa language and culture can play a role in the acquisition of English as a foreign language in the context of Otavaleño students at Unidad Educativa San Luis, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing these influences in the educational process.

Keywords: Kichwa Language; English Language Acquisition; Foreign Language Influence; Otavaleño Students; Cultural and Linguistic Factors.

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Introduction

One of the particularities that are intended to highlight in the academic field of language studies is the magnificence of culture in the learning of any language as a second L2 or foreign language FL. While it is true that the exceptions are as numerous as the individuals who learn or speak a language natively, it is also true that there are a number of characteristics common to each speaker. Therefore, it is unimaginable to place a speaker outside of a cultural environment (Ishihara y Cohen, 2010).

Culture not only determines what use is to be made of the language based on the context in which it is used but also sets a series of structures and formulas that are only conceived within that specific culture (Leiva, 2017). A good example of what can be discussed would be vocabulary and lexical richness. Regarding this, for example, it is not surprising if Finnish speakers have hundreds of words to qualify the tone of the color



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white, or in Galician language many ways to refer to the rain. Probably here, two cases in which the environment has an impact on culture are mentioned since it is also about two elements that cannot be separated.

This explains in a very graphic way why Finnish speakers can feel limited in other languages when they want to describe a shade of white, since within his cultural feeling the definition of this shade of white would be more perfect if they had available the same means that their mother tongue provides them. Words from other languages are often adopted precisely because they manage to convey more than those of the language itself. In Spanish, for example, we would have the Ecuadorian word to refer to a feeling that we could not describe with such precision if we did not adopt a term from another language, since “nostalgia” exists, but it does not imply the same nuances at all.

Details like these signify the profound influence of culture on language, enriching it in a positive manner. However, this influence can turn negative when students transfer linguistic structures or thoughts from their mother tongue to a foreign language (FL/L2) with distinct connotations. Therefore, the teaching of pragmatics and culture in the English classroom as a foreign language or second language (FL/L2) is imperative.

As noted by Domínguez Vázquez (2001), 'We must bear in mind that individuals transfer not only the forms and meanings of their own language and culture, but also the contextual nuances associated with these forms and meanings to the foreign language and culture. This phenomenon occurs actively when attempting to communicate in the new language and adapt to the novel culture, as well as passively when striving to comprehend the language and culture as practiced by native speakers.'

This quote perfectly condenses what can be discussed about the danger of directly transferring structures from one language to another. The correct interpretation of certain errors will depend directly on the cultural empathy of each interlocutor, as well as their ability to reconsider that perhaps the understanding has not been correct due to some type of cultural interference.

Problem statement

The most dangerous thing would be for English learners as foreign language to apply the forms and meanings of their language and culture to English speakers when interpreting messages being Kichwa, their mother tongue. This could make them believe, in the most extreme of cases, that an entire society rejects them beyond their comprehension.

Therefore, the emphasis on the significance of pragmatics will lead to analyze aspects such as misunderstandings or possible conflicts in the classroom, non-verbal communication, and the role of intercultural mediator that teachers must exercise; all this from a perspective that seeks to reflect on what culture is and what its limits are.

Likewise, it seems important to analyze an approach that fundamentally revolves around comprehension and oral expression. This importance given to orality can be explained by the fact that when thinking of English as a foreign language EFL, the first idea is of a complex language that demands practical use to its learners in



an unnatural integration into daily life which is not possibly similar to their life as they are fully developed in their mother tongues in this case Kichwa language.

Justification

Lovón (2018), diligently examines linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of contemporary Spanish and Kichwa. His taxonomy on grammatical interference has been an important reference in linguistic research work. The nuances are multiple when it comes to learning a language interference, the particularities that must be taken into account are countless and those of the students themselves are added.

It is often said that every person is a unique world, and this individual world becomes even more complex when we consider the challenge of apprehending an entirely different world, such as that involved in learning a second language (L2). In this regard, students' receptivity is influenced by a range of factors, including their emotional state – whether they are feeling happy, depressed, or somewhere in between – and the environmental conditions in which they are learning. For instance, a calm and relaxed environment can differ significantly from a noisy one, impacting the learning experience.

As Domínguez Vázquez (2001) aptly observes:

"Cultural differences play a pivotal role in elucidating various linguistic phenomena. The process of interference in foreign language acquisition is not solely attributed to disparities in culture between linguistic communities or the typological distinctions among languages. It also stems from the individual characteristics of each learner, their unique situations and contexts, as well as psychological and physical aspects. Factors such as excitement, fear, fatigue, among others, can be considered as potential sources of interference."

On the other hand, in accordance with the idea defended by Robles (2016), it is important to introduce from the outset the teaching of culture in the EFL class, since every individual has stereotyped ideas of the speakers of other languages. languages, which will not necessarily have a positive influence on the learning of these languages, but rather the opposite.

The study of the stereotype is relevant because the representations that learners have of the language, they are learning predate the learning of the language itself. However, there are aspects, as in the case of gestures, which creates a code equal to that of their mother tongue and calculates the codes of their own culture. Due to this fact and this cultural apriorism, trying to teach civilization once the students can function in the language, they learn nothing more than maintain a separation between language and culture that, in reality, do not form more than one entity. Throughout the process, learners will tend, through the filter of the stereotype, to project or confirm what they previously knew about the culture they are learning.

According to Robles (2016), a previous *-ideological base-* should not be allowed to influence the learning of an L2. This, moreover, would be within the reach of any individual, regardless of whether or not they dedicated themselves to learning the language in question. When a speaker decides, for whatever reason, to launch himself fully into the study of a new language, the most desirable thing would be for him to do it in the hands of a teacher capable of opening the doors to the entire reality of the world in which it is introduced. In other words, it is impossible to understand a code like the linguistic one in an adequate way if the vast



world that surrounds it is unknown, language and culture are two parts of a whole that is incomprehensible if they are not learned from a blank slate devoid of any type of stereotype or preconceived idea.

It is expected that the final outcome of this research work will benefit learners, teachers and the school as a community. The results obtained may guide other teachers in similar multilingual contexts to reduce the native language interference and use that condition in their favor.

Theoretical framework

Regarding this issue, Escobar (2000) defines this linguistic phenomenon as "...those linguistic features found in language B, the receiving language, which do not correspond to features of either language A or language B (as used by monolinguals), but are found in speech of bilingual speakers" (p. 20).

This definition is based on the fact that as long as there are two linguistic communities in contact, there will be some type of linguistic interference, as long as there is a bilingual linguistic community, since the bilingual individual is the focus of linguistic contact. Consequently, (refers to A. M. Escobar), according to Saussure, linguistic interference would be a phenomenon of speech and not of language. Likewise, the author points out that "the social context, and not the structure of the languages in contact, ultimately determines the direction and degree of interference... Social factors are relevant in language contact and its role in the history of languages" (ibid: 28). There are different types of language contact situations that lead to different types of interference between one language and another: the borrowing process itself and that of structural or substratum interference. In the loan process, the incorporation is given in the mother tongue by its own speakers; this is the case, for example, of native Spanish speakers who use terms of Kichwa origin. In substratum interference, embedding occurs in the second language of bilingual speakers due to their limited knowledge of the target language; this is the case of grammatical interference in the Spanish of Kichwa speakers in Ecuador.

Due to the fact that linguistic interference is not detached from the social phenomenon, it is that it motivates to initiate an investigation directed to the study not only linguistic, but also social (sociolinguistic interferences) that is also related to the development of students in general.

In addition, Vásquez (2001) provides a historical analysis of the origin of the term 'interference.' She explains that this concept has its roots in wave physics, where it refers to the interaction of two wave movements, leading to either reinforcement or cancellation. However, the term 'interference' extends beyond the realm of physics, influencing various fields such as electronics, telecommunications, psychology, pedagogy, cultural anthropology, and sociolinguistics, which is the focus of this study. In the field of linguistics, the term 'interference' can be traced back to the early 20th century, with notable contributions from scholars like Sandfeld and Jakobson, as noted by Vásquez (2001). Vásquez further elucidates, based on a comprehensive review of existing literature, that 'interference' can be likened to linguistic change, borrowing, or calquing, as we will refer to these approaches. For instance, García Yebra defines 'interferences' as unnecessary or incorrect calques that deviate from the norms and conventions of a language, leading to the emergence of Anglicisms, Gallicisms, Italianisms, Latinisms, and more.



According to Czochralski (1971), as cited by Vásquez (2001), the concepts of 'borrowing' and 'calquing' are conscious and deliberate processes that involve direct reflection. However, the transfer of elements from one's native language to a foreign language occurs automatically, that is, unconsciously and naturally.

Interference occupies an important place in the language learning-acquisition process because it is very often cited as a source of error that affects the linguistic production of learners. Many scholars agree that the more similar the languages are, the more interference there will be, whereas there will be less interference otherwise (León, 2010). This shows that the distance between languages and cultures plays an important role in the language acquisition and communicative competence of the foreign language user. For this reason, it is worth mentioning concepts like interlinguistic and intercultural distance.

According to Jingsheng (2008), language is only one of the multiple codes used in daily life contacts and forms part of the culture as a whole system of signs. Differences in cultural orientation, values, concepts, social norms, and ways of being, to a greater or lesser degree between different linguistic and cultural communities, lead to other differences in the process of encoding and decoding, in linguistic and extra-linguistic acts, in pragmatic rules, and so on.

In other words, language is a component of culture and the way a language is spoken and understood depends on the culture with which it is associated and on the set of ideas and concepts linked to the speaker's vision of the world. So, it is worth asking why many learners think that by mastering the grammar rules of a language and memorizing a series of words they will be able to speak and communicate effectively in their target language. It is clear that this is not the case, because a language is more than grammar and vocabulary, it is inserted in a defined social and cultural context. In fact, it cannot be thought of as a language without its culture.

Recently, the relationship between language and culture has gained importance in language teaching, especially considering that today's learners are part of a globalized and multicultural world and what is expected of them is to be intercultural mediators. So, in their process of socialization in a foreign language, many factors intervene. Apart from the skills that they must develop to acquire significant learning, learners must become aware that the language they study maintains an interdependent relationship with the culture in which it is spoken.

The notion of culture that is addressed in this case study is seen as a set of behavior patterns, a guide so that foreign language learners can function in a culture or society that is foreign and from which they will be forced to decipher meanings, interpret intentions or discover implicit messages. Therefore, language and culture are two inseparable realities because language expresses the culture, and culture is acquired through language. This correlation causes linguistic and cultural patterns to differ from one language-culture to another.

Kichwa is one of the most spoken languages in Ecuador after the official language Spanish. Throughout history, Kichwa speakers have been numerous. In the 16th century, the Spanish chose it to carry out their evangelizing and colonizing purposes because they realized that it was a general language: there were few Kichwa speakers on the coast and important communities in the Andes. Despite the imposition of Spanish, and the subsequent refusal to teach people to speak this language, the language continued to be spoken. It is one of the living Andean languages like Aymara and Jaqaru. However, some of the speakers have stopped



using it. The objective of this research is to analyze the Kichwa linguistic interference in the acquisition of English as a foreign language in Ecuador at Unidad Educativa San Luis from in Otavalo Community.

Materials and Methods

Among the different models of qualitative research, this work opts for the case study since, in this model, "the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, an event, an activity, a process, or a or more individuals and the cases are delimited by time and activity" (Figueras & Puig, 2019, p. 11).

Case study methodology is a research approach used to investigate a specific phenomenon, context, or individual case in-depth. It involves analyzing and understanding a particular case to gain insights, generate hypotheses, or provide detailed descriptions. This research approach is very useful to analyze practical problems or certain situations, finding at the end of the case study the record of this, where information is exposed in a descriptive way regarding what was evidenced and discovered.

The case study research is descriptive and explanatory because it performs a synchronous analysis of grammatical interference in the Kichwa of bilingual speakers from the Unidad Educativa San Luis and gives an explanation of the process based on the theoretical foundations of linguistics and sociolinguistics. It is descriptive because it carries out a systematic observation of grammatical interferences in Kichwa speakers, indicating the most important cases that will have a qualitative assessment. It also presents the characteristics of the grammatical interference phenomena that occur in Kichwa learners, in order to carry out the corresponding analysis. It is explanatory because it shows the causes of these linguistic forms. Likewise, it presents the origin of the most important grammatical interference phenomena.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, p. 289) state that "a case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than presenting them with abstract theories or principles". In the same way, these authors maintain that one of the advantages of case studies is that they allow us to capture a depth of data that would go unnoticed in more general types of research and make them understandable to a non-specialist public.

The case-study source of data was chosen based on the condition of being native Kichwa speakers who are learning English as a foreign language at Unidad Educativa San Luis from the Otavalo community. Unidad Educativa San Luis is a Diocesan Educational Center with the mission of training critical, enterprising, proactive women and men with Christian values and family identity, capable of solving their own problems and those of the social and natural environment in accordance with the demands of the contemporary world and pedagogical currents. Present, promoting their human and Christian vocation in society. English language is one of the major subjects included in the school curriculum. Few English native speakers have been teachers at this school.

This mode of investigation conforms to the general objectives of this research and given the characteristics of the context and time in which the facts are analyzed and following the classification of case studies proposed by Stake (1995, cited by Montaner 2018), this study is classified as an intrinsic case study since it



is a case with its own specificities and with a value in itself. The case is not chosen because it is representative of other cases, but because it is of interest and serves to better understand it.

The sample was made up of three learners in first year of bachillerato, as well as the three English teachers from the school who have taught them english before in previous years.

Results and Discussion

The data sources included a semi-structured interview, observation files, documents, and students' performance in the EFL classroom. The instruments were applied during a period of six weeks without any interruption or event that could change the final results.

With this type of interview, it sought to generate a rich and articulated interaction through questions formulated in an open manner and directed towards the research topic, but which allow some flexibility to adapt the sequence of the interview according to its development. This type of tool allows not only to analyze what is said but also how it is said, contributing valuable information to the investigation.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepared a set of questions (or interview guide) as the basis for them. Unlike structured interviews, however, the interviewer could deviate from the guide and continue with other questions on topics relevant to the investigation that came up during the interview. As a result, different questions can be asked to each interviewee. (Mackey & Gass, 2012).

The interview guide (see Annex # 1) was designed in such a way that each of the questions was focused and related to one of the objectives of the investigation as shown in Annex # 2, and that together they were allowed to give answers to the questions and general objectives of the investigation.

Regarding the development of the process of this research model, the three phases proposed by Martínez Bonafé (1988) were followed:

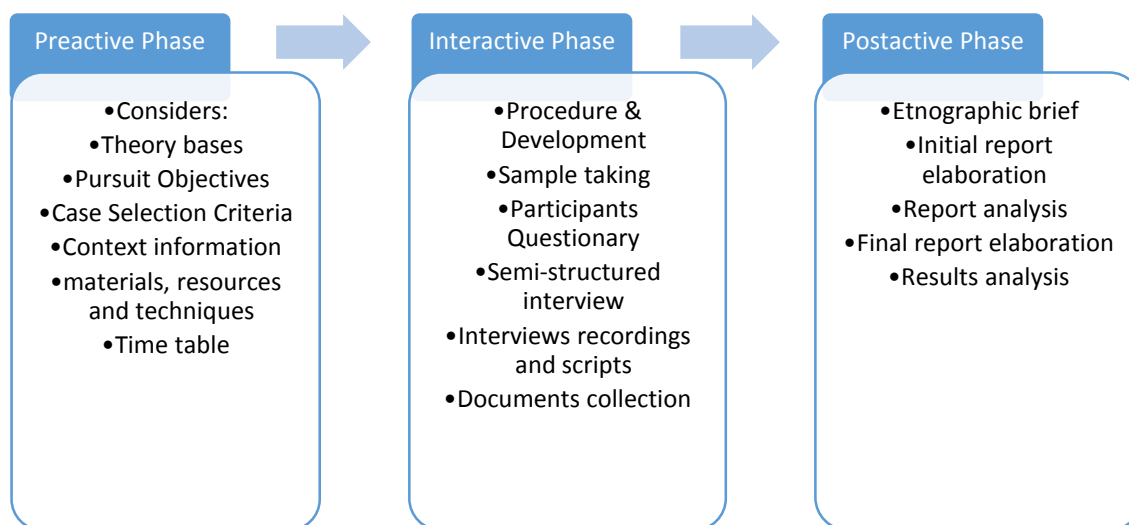


Figure 1. Structure and organization of a case study
Adapted from Martinez Bonafé (1988).

Data Analysis

Data collected was organized into four categories of language aspect. Those categories aimed to point out the contrast among Kichwa, Spanish and English use in social and educational contexts.

Vocabulary

As in other languages, it is common to observe that some words are exclusive to certain linguistic environments. In the case of Kichwa speakers, the Andean Cosmvision is an important factor that determines the way of thinking, interacting, and communicating in Kichwa communities. It is the case of the word *-angel-* that according to the precepts of the Andean worldview angels do not exist, therefore, understanding these concepts from other languages and cultural contexts is difficult. This sociolinguistic phenomenon is more evident in adults who are learning English than in young people and children, since due to the effects of globalization and cultural domination, the vocabulary of English has not only become Spanish, but has also become words of frequent use in Kichwa communities.

Grammar

In Kichwa, among its grammatical features, the source of the information or evidentiality, several nominal cases, an inclusive and an exclusive *-we-*, the benefit or attitude of the speaker regarding an action, and optionally the topic are distinguished. Transitive verbs agree on the subject and the object. They express nominal predications juxtaposing the subject and the attribute. Unlike Spanish and English, Kichwa works without articles or conjunctions and without distinguishing grammatical genders.

In the Kichwa language, in a detailed way and as if a person were drawing, speakers express through the use of suffixes. For example, when they want to express something to the interlocutor, it is done in a sincere and direct way. For this purpose, suffixes such as *-ri*, *-lla*, *-yku* are used, forms that are suffixed to the verbal roots, or to any nominal root, so that the interlocutors can understand what is being manifested.

Phonetics

The syllables of the Kichwa languages are made up of at least one vowel as the nucleus. As a general rule, they accept a consonant in attack and coda position (beginning and end of syllable, respectively); however, more recent loanwords can accept up to two consonants in attack, especially with liquid consonants. Intonation and stress have minor roles.

Three vowel phonemes are distinguished: an open vowel /a/ and the closed rounded /u/ not rounded /i/. Furthermore, Central Kichwas distinguish two vowel quantities: short and long vowels /a:/, /i:/, /u:/. The precise pronunciation of these vowel phonemes varies with their phonetic environment. The neighborhood of a uvular consonant produces more centralized allophones like [ɑ], [ɛ], [ɛ], [o], [ɔ] and that of the palatal semiconsonant /j/ also causes an advancement of /a/ to [æ].

Pragmatics

On the other hand, Spanish speakers group together in one word a whole set of thoughts. Thus, the Kichwa speaker reasons differently from the Spanish one. In addition, the basic level of learning the Kichwa language



is simple, but it gradually becomes more complicated as it does not resemble the Spanish language at all. It is for this reason that the learners who intend to learn the Kichwa language with the translation method do not succeed.

To expose a brief contextualization about the vital role of pragmatics in the teaching of foreign languages, it must be pointed out the responsibility of the figure of teachers in the multicultural classroom. The fact that notorious language use misunderstandings can occur in learning and living with a foreign language and culture should be enough to assume the relevant role of pragmatics in daily life. In fact, as Escobar (2000) rightly indicates, poorly acquired pragmatic habits are much more difficult to correct than merely linguistic ones, and their interference in interaction is more harmful.

The degree of fixation on the cultural assumptions that govern interaction is extremely high so that pragmatic habits are much more difficult to correct than purely grammatical ones.

As a summary the following table shows the 4 aspects of Kichwa speakers.

Table 1. Linguistic Interference between Kichwa speakers' learners of English as a foreign language.

Interference	Aspect
Lexical	Absence of Kichwa words in English such as anaco, faja, bayeta, poncho and vice versa, words such as manager, crush, toe, spoiler, bromance.
Sintactical	Mostly use of present and future tenses in the Kichwa, the past being almost non-existent. English compound tenses do not exist in the Kichwa language.
Phonetics	Three vowel phonemes are distinguished: an open vowel /a/ and the closed rounded /u/ not rounded /i/. Furthermore, Central Quechuas distinguish two vowel quantities: short and long vowels /a:/, /i:/, /u:/.
Pragmatics	Highly limited use of English inside the Kichwa communities. Many speakers have learned English due to their business tradition and the necessity to sale their products. English learning has been given in non-formal educational contexts.

Elaboration: The researcher.

Conclusions

Kichwa influences the learning of the English language due to several factors; the first conclusion to be mentioned is the advantage that Kichwa speakers have when learning English, since they already are bilingual Kichwa-Spanish, this situation favors their acquisition of English which becomes in their third language to be learned. The highly globalized world in which we live today requires us to take on challenges that involve interacting more fully with others. That is why learning languages has become so popular in recent years, as the labor and academic markets increasingly tend towards internalization. What many people don't know is that the advantages of learning new languages go far beyond the professional field: this is learning that brings multiple personal benefits.



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Second, the linguistic interference could be considered minimal since both languages are deeply different. The amount of false and real cognates is inexistent. Also, it should be noted that theoretical aptitudes and nuances about the concept of *-culture-* may vary depending on the generational scale. However, it should not be forgotten that, despite the weight of culture and the importance of a good integration of Kichwa speakers in Spanish-speaking schools, the great particularity of groups of this profile is that they are made up of learners who speak Kichwa as their first language L1, so the Cultural interference and misunderstandings will be the order of the day, and avoiding and preventing the latter will be the ultimate task of teachers, as well as their great challenge when teaching English as a foreign language.

Finally, some social factors that affect the linguistic attitudes of the students are observed. Age has a positive influence on English because as the learners get older, they become more aware of Kichwa, and this complements the school grade factor. Since, students are more aware of the importance of their native language. Likewise, the family and friendship factors are vital for the preservation of Kichwa, because learners only interact in their mother tongue with their family and friends or acquaintances.

As the passive mental operation of processing thoughts and knowledge in the native language, and in turn, in the production of the foreign language, when translating phrases, expressions and even complete constructions in the Kichwa language. Definitely Kichwa as well as any other native language obstructs the easy learning of a foreign language in this case English.

As a recommendation from this case study; it should be considered that teachers need to be trained with cultural relevance in a way that allows them to carry out their work efficiently, communicate with students and the population, who respect their ways of life, their customs, their beliefs to guide the teaching-learning process, abandoning the one-dimensionality in which they were formed.

No language is maintained, neither developed, if it is not used in daily life. One of the important mechanisms for the strengthening and development of a language is writing, which also helps to fix terms in speech. Therefore, the balance between oral and written practices should be controlled.

Although, traditional education makes invisible the languages, customs, knowledge, worldviews, and philosophies of the original peoples. It represents them as something from the past, but despite centuries of exclusion, they are still very present. Teachers have to consolidate the value and appreciation of native culture and languages.

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