



## A content analysis of lexical borrowings in Imbabura Kichwa

### Análisis de contenido de préstamos léxicos en el Kichwa de Imbabura

### Análise de conteúdo de empréstimos lexicais no Kichwa de Imbabura

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#### Abstract

Kichwa speakers from Ecuador, specifically from Otavalo, have been in contact with the Spanish language for centuries. The interaction of the two languages within the same geographical space has caused the speakers of Kichwa, the subordinate language, to adopt words from Spanish to convey messages. This article aims at analyzing the function(s) of lexical borrowings and their possible implications for language revitalization and language loss processes in the Kichwa language from Imbabura province (IK). This research focuses on 1) the most common borrowed words that Kichwa speakers use, and 2) the possible reasons for using these borrowings. The research method used was the qualitative content analysis in which five eight-minute-long videos taken from a free video-sharing website were carefully examined. The borrowings were categorized by the syntactic functions and by their frequency of use. The results are aligned with previous research as content words outnumbered function words. The reasons for the use were analyzed taking into account social domains and mental processes.

**Keywords:** Kichwa; Spanish; lexical borrowing; language loss; language revitalization.

#### Resumen

Los hablantes de Kichwa de Ecuador, específicamente de Otavalo, han estado en contacto con el idioma español durante siglos. La interacción de las dos lenguas dentro de un mismo espacio geográfico ha provocado que los hablantes del Kichwa, el idioma subordinado, adopten palabras de la lengua española para transmitir mensajes. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la(s) función(es) de los préstamos léxicos y sus posibles implicaciones en los procesos de revitalización y pérdida del idioma Kichwa en la provincia de Imbabura (IK). Esta investigación se centra en 1) los préstamos lingüísticos más comunes que usan los hablantes de Kichwa y 2) las posibles razones para usar dichos préstamos. El método de investigación utilizado fue el análisis de contenido cualitativo a partir del cual se examinaron cuidadosamente cinco vídeos de ocho minutos de duración extraídos de un sitio web gratuito para compartir vídeos. Los préstamos lingüísticos se clasificaron por sus funciones sintácticas y por su frecuencia de uso. Los resultados están alineados con investigaciones anteriores, ya que las palabras de contenido superaron en número a las palabras funcionales. Se analizaron los posibles motivos para el uso de los préstamos lingüísticos teniendo en cuenta los dominios sociales y procesos mentales.

**Palabras clave:** kichwa; español; préstamos lingüísticos; pérdida del idioma; revitalización del idioma.

## Resumo

Os falantes de kichwa do Equador, especificamente de Otavalo, estão em contato com a língua espanhola há séculos. A interação das duas línguas no mesmo espaço geográfico fez com que os falantes de kichwa, a língua subordinada, adotassem palavras da língua espanhola para transmitir mensagens. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a(s) função(ões) dos empréstimos lexicais e suas possíveis implicações nos processos de revitalização e perda do idioma Kichwa em Imbabura (IK). Esta pesquisa se concentra em 1) os empréstimos linguísticos mais comuns usados pelos falantes de kichwa e 2) as possíveis razões para o uso de tais palavras. O método de pesquisa utilizado foi a análise qualitativa de conteúdo, qual foram examinados cuidadosamente cinco vídeos de oito minutos retirados de um site gratuito de compartilhamento de vídeos. Os empréstimos linguísticos foram classificados por suas funções sintáticas e frequência de uso. Os resultados estão de acordo com pesquisas anteriores, pois as palavras de conteúdo superaram as palavras funcionais. As razões para o uso de empréstimos linguísticos foram analisadas levando-se em conta os domínios sociais e processos mentais.

**Palavras-chave:** kichwa; espanhol; empréstimo; perda de idioma; revitalização de idioma.

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## 1. Introduction

Ecuador is a multicultural country where various languages and dialects are spoken. The vast majority of citizens use Spanish as the primary language of interaction, but in the 2008 constitution, Kichwa and Shuar were acknowledged as official languages for intercultural ties. (CRE, 2008). With more than 500 years of contact with the Spanish language, Kichwa from Imbabura (IK henceforth) has undergone different changes in its phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic structures. Torero (1974, as cited in Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004) classified IK in Quechua II B (QIIB) noting its distinct features that set it apart from other Quechuan groups such as Quechua I and Quechua IIA in Peru and Bolivia. The reason for these features is not yet clear, some state that it may be due to the Barbacoan languages' influence (Floyd, 2022) or other pre-Incan languages spoken in the area (Parker, 1972).

However, recent changes and expansion of Kichwa lexicon are heavily influenced by the constant contact with the Spanish language (Gómez-Rendón, 2007) which holds dominance in the country. Despite the presence of 14 other indigenous languages spoken in Ecuador, Spanish has emerged as the primary language in educational and social settings. Proficiency in Spanish has become crucial for comprehending information disseminated through social media, music, movies, technology, and even in healthcare contexts, such as understanding medical prescriptions. In this scenario, where one language is regarded as more 'useful', the necessity not only to understand but also to speak Spanish has prompted indigenous individuals to embark on learning the dominant language.

Languages change continuously across time in response to the needs and demands of their users (Cosieriu, 1986; Gonzales, 2019; LSA *Linguistic Society of America*, n.d.). These changes are necessary to refer to new objects, concepts, ideas, or technological inventions (Úbeda, 2022) that appear every day. One aspect of language change has to do with borrowing words from other languages. The inclusion of words from other languages into Kichwa may be considered part of cultural loss by socially dominant groups, but 'modernization' if those dominant groups added new lexical items to their language (Williams, 2019). Additionally, the continuous use of borrowings can influence the grammatical structure of the host language (Gómez-Rendón, 2007; Julca-Guerrero, 2009).

With this in mind, this article will analyze the function(s) of lexical borrowings in language revitalization and language loss processes in IK, devoting special attention to 1) the most common borrowed words Kichwa speakers use, and 2) the possible reasons to use them.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Language Loss

Although there is no exact number of languages that are threatened, the estimate is that more than 3,000 are jeopardized worldwide (Fishman, 1964; UNESCO, 2011). Language loss can be defined as the process where speakers decide not to use their mother tongue or stop speaking it to their children and instead adopt another language (Sallabank and Austin, 2011). Then, when there are no more speakers of a certain language, the language dies as well.

Unless the speakers of a language are wiped out by a natural disaster, a massacre, or a pandemic, languages usually extinguish gradually when “the functions of the language are taken over in one domain after another by another language” (Holmes, 2013, p. 59). In this sense, one could say that Kichwa is ‘gradually dying’ (Campbell and Muntzel, 1989) due to the gradual shift to Spanish as it is being used in many more contexts and domains such as education, friendship, religion, and even within the family. The latter being the place where Kichwa was used to orally pass knowledge from generation to generation (Atupaña *et al.*, 2017). This language shift increases the number of less proficient Kichwa speakers since most of the young population is able to understand yet not produce the language of their ancestors.

Kichwa spoken in Ecuador and other Quechuan varieties from Peru, Bolivia and Argentina are located somewhere within the ‘Vulnerable’, ‘Definitely endangered’ and ‘Severely endangered’ categories (UNESCO, 2010). The criteria used for this classification are: 1) intergenerational language transmission, 2) absolute number of speakers, 3) proportion of speakers within the total population, 4) shifts in domains of language use, 5) response to new domains and media, 6) materials for language education and literacy, 7) governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies (including official status and use), 8) community members’ attitudes toward their own language, and 9) type and quality of documentation. (UNESCO, 2011; Gomashie and Terborg, 2021).

Furthermore, Fishman (1964) states that languages can replace one another and speakers may prefer to use one language over their mother tongue depending on certain domains of language behaviour and the interlocutors involved in the interaction. Similarly, Holmes (2013) mentions that the use of a certain language over another depends greatly on the context and people’s communicative needs. With social issues such as social inequality, migration, racism, economic instability, among others, Kichwa speakers are forced to move to big cities where the predominant language is Spanish. This constant shift from one language to another may have a negative impact on future generations of speakers since they could become more proficient in one language than the other. As the constant use of Spanish may lead speakers to ‘think’ in Spanish, it could make them more vulnerable to forgetting vocabulary from their mother tongue. An option to fill this gap, functioning as a communicative strategy, would involve the use of words from any other language they know in order to effectively convey their message.

## **2.2. Lexical Borrowing**

When speakers lack vocabulary in one language, one option to convey the message would be to make use of lexical borrowings. Haspelmath (2009) considers lexical borrowing as a “lexical importation in a straightforward way” (p.35). Lexical borrowing can happen even if there is an exact equivalent in the native language (Julca-Guerrero, 2009), usually because borrowed words can give a degree of sophistication to the speaker or message (Daulton, 2012) and new words are perceived as more valuable than old ones by young speakers of a language (Castellano, 2008). The incorporation of borrowings into people’s first language sometimes can happen for lack of vocabulary or simply because there is not a word in their languages to express the desired meaning, so borrowing from a foreign language occurs (Holmes, 2013). Additionally, experts (Floyd, 2004; Gonzales, 2019; Holmes, 2013) affirm that these borrowings happen because languages are alive and they are in an ongoing process of adaptation. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among the youth, who demonstrate high receptivity to new vocabulary, whether from Spanish or English (Úbeda, 2022, p. 15).

It is important to mention that lexical borrowing is not the same as code-switching, where speakers can consciously use words or phrases from other languages they speak in order to convey meaning, express solidarity, establish social status, or highlight shared ethnicity with the addressee. This phenomenon is influenced by factors such as social context, domains, and situational dynamics (Holmes, 2013). On the other hand, according to Muysken (1990) borrowings are typically single words that exhibit syntactic, phonological, and morphological adaptation. They are frequently used by speakers, often replacing native words, and are recognized as distinct entities within the borrowing language. Additionally, they undergo semantic changes over time. Lexical borrowing is a long process in which a group of individuals start using certain words on a daily basis; whether or not they are successful in introducing the borrowings to the language depends on many factors. These include the level of acceptance of other speakers, the difficulty of understanding the concept of those borrowings and whether they merely experienced transient popularity or held lasting relevance (Gómez, 2009).

Lexical borrowing may be considered part of the transformation process of a language since people get used to the borrowings and, in most cases, gradually stop using the native version of words. For this reason, purists of the Kichwa language state that lexical borrowing should be avoided at all costs as their use endangers the language. However, there are other authors who shed light on the possible benefits of lexical borrowing in the language revitalization processes (Gómez-Rendón, 2008; Gonzales, 2019). Gonzales (2019) asserts that borrowings are confined to one of the five levels of the linguistic system, viz. lexical, semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological, suggesting they cannot pose a threat to the recipient language.

Word-borrowing is also part of the phenomenon of language interaction due to business, migration, movies, globalization, speakers’ attitudes toward the language and modern colonization (Daulton, 2012; López García-Molins, 2023, pp. 21-22). As stated above, Kichwa language suffered first-hand the effects of colonization and migratory movements within and outside the country (King and Haboud, 2011). This long, continuous and multimodal exposure and contact with other languages added new lexical items to Kichwa language and exposed adult and younger generations to objects and concepts that were not part of their daily lives. This, most likely unconscious integration of

vocabulary plus the limited spaces where Kichwa was spoken could have resulted in what Grosjean (1985) called ‘semilingualism’, which is an unbalanced bilingualism with speakers who are less proficient than monolinguals. Taking this into account, it could be said that the majority of Kichwa indigenous youth are, at best, ‘semilinguals’ since some of them are able to understand, yet not produce the language proficiently.

### **2.3. Internal migration and languages in contact**

There is no specific information about when exactly Kichwa people started to migrate for commercial purposes. The estimate is that they started during the Incaic regime (Meier, 1985); however, due to recent social, economic, and political changes in Ecuador, there has been a new wave of migration among the Kichwa people. Some have migrated to different parts of the world, while others have relocated to different cities within their own country in search of financial stability (Ordoñez, 2008)

Once migrants arrive in a new geographical space, they carry with them their language, beliefs, customs, and traditions. Gonzales (2019) states that language contact is the “peaceful or conflictive coexistence of two or more languages in a territory” (p. 87). Limo and Salcedo (2006, as cited in Gonzales, 2019) explain that linguistic contact arises from the movement of groups of people, whether for migratory, tourist reasons, global communication, or conquests.

Taking this into account, it is important to remember that communication and interaction play pivotal roles in enhancing productive skills and preserving a language. However, when there are fewer speakers of the language and the domains where the language can be used are reduced, the chances to keep the language alive are put at risk. In scenarios where families migrated to big cities within the same country to find job opportunities (Doughty, 1979), they were taken away from their linguistic community and were set in another environment, with a different language, culture, living style, and beliefs, often perceived as more modern or superior to their own. This new environment forces them to adapt in order to survive. People have to modify the dynamics within the household and these changes may influence the cultural practices and use of language (King and Haboud, 2011). This adaptation could lead people to start using the dominant language, or H1 (Holmes, 2013) at home, which will promote language shift and eventually monolingualism inside the household (Julca-Guerrero, 2009).

## **3. Methodology**

In this research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis was employed to examine videos and identify lexical borrowings utilized by Kichwa speakers from Otavalo, located in Imbabura province from Ecuador. The following section details the materials and procedures utilized to quantify and analyze the data.

### **3.1. Materials**

The material used for this study consists of five videos taken from a free video-sharing website — YouTube—, and they were not recorded nor edited by the researcher. Each video is at least 8 minutes long and cover topics related to 1) festivities and language, 2) traditional foods, and 3) traditional clothing.

In the first two videos, people participated in informal and semi-formal interviews where speakers had little or no time to think about grammar correctness. The next three videos were part of different documentary series to share cultural information about Kichwa Otavalo people. Consequently, the assumption is that the general topics were planned. The interviews involved a total of 17 speakers, consisting of 11 women and 6 men. They were distributed across the videos as follows: 5 women and 4 men in the first video, 2 women in the second video, 1 man and 2 women in the third video, 1 man and 1 woman in the fourth video and 1 woman in the fifth video. The speakers range from adolescents to adults and seniors; however, there is no exact information about their demographics.

### 3.2. Procedure

Videos were analyzed thoroughly and Spanish lexical items used by the speakers were categorized in an Excel document. Information was distributed in four columns. Starting from the left, the first one ('Total'), refers to the total number of times a borrowing was used by all speakers throughout the video. 'Word in Spanish' is the second column from the left, in which the Spanish written form of the word is shown. It is important to mention that although speakers changed the pronunciation and/or added Kichwa morphemes to the words, they were written following the RAE (Real Academia Española) 'Royal Spanish Academy' spelling rules. The third column is 'Part of Speech', in which words were categorized according to their syntactic functions. Finally, the last column ('Minute'), refers to the minute in which the word was uttered by the speakers. The list of videos used in this research can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*List of YouTube videos used in analyzing Spanish borrowings*

No.	Link	Videos for analysis
1	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/fwsht6h3">https://tinyurl.com/fwsht6h3</a>	Hablemos Kichwa
2	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3jzz3k32">https://tinyurl.com/3jzz3k32</a>	Programa cultural kichwa en "Otavalo"
3	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4w86ksec">https://tinyurl.com/4w86ksec</a>	Ep. 2: Modern Kichwa Clothing (Weaving Knowledge - The people Kichwa Otavalo)
4	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/7k24nne">https://tinyurl.com/7k24nne</a>	Ep. 1: The Evolution of Kichwa Clothing (Weaving Knowledge)
5	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/y29ctan6">https://tinyurl.com/y29ctan6</a>	"Chaki Tanta _ Cocinar en campo _ Cap 04"

*Note.* Table compiled by the researcher.

## 4. Results and discussion

In this section, we will take a more thorough look at some of the most common words and expressions that are borrowed from Spanish. Only borrowings that were used at least twice will be shown in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. However, borrowings that were used once were also part of the analysis and the full list can be found in the Appendix section.

As it can be seen in Table 2, the total number of words (No=46, refer to Appendix) found in the first video were grouped according to their syntactic functions: Conjunctions: 3 (7 %), verbs: 8 (17 %), adjectives: 8 (17 %), nouns: 20 (43 %), expressions 5 (11 %), adverbs 2 (4 %). In this

paper, we understand *expressions* as the frequent co-occurrence of two or a maximum of three words (collocations). Following Julca's (2009) definition of intra-sentential code switching, which is considered as a momentary switch of codes within a sentence or clause that does not change the main language of interaction or Matrix language, we consider 'de lunes a viernes, de ocho a seis de la tarde', as code-switching. This phrase has 9 words in Spanish, consequently, it was not displayed in the table nor was it part of the analysis.

**Table 2**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 1 ("Hablemos Kichwa")*

Total	Word in Spanish	Part of Speech	Minute
11	Y	CNJ	1:12, 2:04, 3:18, 3:43, 3:53, 4:35, 5:38, 6:53, 7:54, 8:09, 8:47
6	Pero	CNJ	6:13, 6:19, 6:34, 7:02, 7:35, 8:27
4	No sé	EXPRES	5:34, 5:51, 6:23, 6:34
2	Porque	CNJ	5:34, 7:05
3	Gustar	V	6:14, 6:16, 6:18
8	Parlar (archaic)	V	5:37, 5:48, 6:01, 6:07, 6:13, 6:20, 6:26, 6:33
2	Cierto	ADJ	5:22, 5:23
2	Familia	N	3:20, 4:53
2	Colegio	N	5:57, 6:03
2	Muy	ADV	6:46, 7:02
2	Complicado	ADJ	6:47, 7:02
2	Quedar	V	5:19, 7:06

*Note.* Table compiled by the researcher.

In Table 3, the percentages of borrowings (No=28) that appeared in video 2 are distributed as follows: 5 adjectives (18 %), 15 nouns (54 %), 6 verbs (21 %), and 2 conjunctions (7 %).

**Table 3**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 2 ("Programa cultural kichwa en "Otavalo")*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
3	Primero	ADJ	1:49, 2:00, 3:00
3	Último	ADJ	4:06, 4:21, 7:13
3	Cebada	N	0:40, 1:40, 2:14
5	Limpiar	V	2:09, 2:28, 2:29, 2:56, 4:51
3	O	CNJ	2:25, 3:43, 5:42
2	Coles (plural)	N	5:47, 5:50
2	Molino	N	2:22, 4:25
2	Igualar	V	3:59, 4:01

*Note.* Table compiled by the researcher.

In Table 4, the percentages of borrowings (No=27) that appeared in video 3 are distributed as follows: 3 conjunctions (11 %), 4 adjectives (14 %), 9 nouns (33 %), 4 verbs (14%), 3 adverbs (11 %), 3 expressions (11 %), and 1 interjection (3 %).

**Table 4**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 3 (“Ep. 2: Modern Kichwa Clothing (Weaving Knowledge - The people Kichwa Otavalo)”)*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
8	Y	CNJ	0:53, 1:52, 1:58, 3:34, 3:53, 5:23, 6:49, 7:39
2	Diferente	ADJ	2:27, 2:41
3	Camisa	N	2:44, 2:49, 4:48
2	Primero	ADJ	3:44, 4:39
3	Representar	V	2:10, 2:30, 3:37
3	Tapar	V	3:21, 3:25, 3:57
2	O	CNJ	3:23, 6:20

*Note.* Table compiled by the researcher.

In Table 5, the percentages of borrowings (No=10) that appeared in video 4, are distributed as follows: 3 adverbs (30 %), 5 nouns (50 %), 1 expression (10 %), and 1 conjunction (10%).

**Table 5**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 4 “Ep. 1: The Evolution of Kichwa Clothing (Weaving Knowledge)”*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
2	Siempre	ADV	2:14, 3:14
2	Cintura	N	2:13, 5:28

*Note.* Table compiled by the researcher.

In Table 6, the percentages of borrowings (No=12) that appeared in video 5 are distributed as follows: 5 verbs (42 %), 3 nouns (25 %), 2 conjunctions (17 %), 1 adverb (8 %) and 1 adjective (8 %).

**Table 6**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 5 (“Chaki Tanta \_ Cocinar en campo \_ Cap 04”)*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
3	Amasar	V	0:59, 1:43, 3:59
2	Pelota	N	4:39, 4:42
4	Zafar	V	5:30, 6:08, 6:46, 6:54
2	Tapar	V	7:00, 7:35
2	Tieso	ADJ	4:57, 5:01
2	Masa	N	1:51, 3:53

*Note.* Table compiled by the researcher.

As it can be seen from the results, the most common words vary from content words such as ‘pelota’ (ball), ‘camisa’ (shirt), ‘gustar’ (to like), to conjunctions like ‘y’ (and). This latter was used 19 times in total, making it the most frequently used loanword. However, on average, content words outnumbered function words, which goes in line with the results of previous research (Gómez-Rendón, 2008; Gonzales, 2019; Haugen, 1950; Julca-Guerrero, 2009). Interestingly, numerous borrowings also have translations in the Kichwa language, like ‘y - shinallata’. However, based on the results observed in the five videos, speakers tend to favor the loanwords.

#### 4.1. Time and sequence markers

In the same vein, when speakers needed to talk about numerical figures and time, for example, telling long numbers, days, minutes, or adverbs of frequency, they preferred to switch to Spanish and borrow words from that language. In the following examples, Kichwa morphemes or adaptations of Spanish words into IK phonological system will be shown in italics.

- (1) Video 1: '*uras*' for the Spanish word 'horas' (5:18), '*tiempo*' (7:21), '*dos mil dieciocho*' (8:55)
- (2) Video 2: '*tiempopita*' (6:32), '*diez minutowan*' (6:35)
- (3) Video 4: '*siempre*' (2:14, 3:14), '*tiempopika*' (5:43)

Additionally, Spanish is preferred to indicate order or sequence:

- (1) Video 2: '*primero*' (1:49, 2:00, 3:00), '*ultima*' (4:06, 4:21, 7:13)
- (2) Video 3: '*primero*' (3:44, 4:39)

The increase of use of sequence markers may be due to the fact that the speakers in videos 2 and 3 were in a more formal environment and they had to present information that had to be precise as it carried a lot of historical features, processes and changes.

#### 4.2. Adaptation

There are some changes in the morphosyntactic structure of borrowings. Holmes (2013) states that "Borrowed words are usually adapted to the speaker's first language. They are pronounced and used grammatically as if they were part of the speaker's first language" (p. 43). In very few cases words would keep their original pronunciation, most of the time they submit to the phonetic rules of the receiving language (Cole, 1982, as cited in Gómez-Rendón, 2007). As it can be seen below, some of the borrowed words used in the videos were adapted into either Kichwa grammatical structure or pronunciation.

##### 4.2.1. Grammar structure (use of morphemes)

IK as well as the other Quechuan varieties is an agglutinative language, where morphemes are added to the root word. The morphemes used in the videos were: pluralization '*-kuna*', accusative '*-ta*', locative '*-pi*', lative '*-man*', ablative '*-manta*', instrumental/commitative '*-wan*' and '*-ntin*', topic '*-ka*', affirmative focus '*-mi*', negative '*-chu*', causative '*-chi*', verbalizer '*-yana*', exclusive particle '*-lla*', diminutive/affective '*-ku*', first person plural '*-nchik*', and some verbal affixes such as the gerund '*-shpa*', and '*-kri*', additionally, '*-shka*' for past tense, and '*-sha*' and '*-shun*' for future. Some of the examples found are:

- (1) Video 1: *cuñadokunandin* (3:53), *vestmentakunata* (5:43), *escuelaman* (6:51), *saludasha* (7:07), *antepasadokunamanta* (4:37), *bailashpa* (5:12), *presentacionkuna* (5:13), *familiakunawan* (4:53), *gentewanka* (5:05), *hijallata* (6:10)

- (2) Video 2: *limpiashpa* (2:09), *limpiuku* (2:29), *limpiana* (2:28, 2:56), *limpiashkataka* (4:51), *granukunatallachu* (5:40), *quidashkakukuna* (4:16), *tantiaspha* (5:14)
- (3) Video 3: *simplekulla* (4:37), *representashpa* (2:30)
- (4) Video 4: *maquinawan* (3:59), *tiempopika* (5:43)
- (5) Video 5: (a) *masakrinchik* (1:43), *sopasiachichu* (4:20), *zafarichu* (5:30), *quidanlla* (5:51), *cruzachishpa* (6:27), *tapakrinchik* (7:00).

It can be observed that most of the speakers just added morphemes to the loanwords, with little or no change to the original words from Spanish. This characteristic would be described as “transference” by Gómez (1998, as cited in Gonzales, 2019), where the Spanish word does not experience substantial change in writing or pronunciation. Something interesting done by one of the speakers is ‘verbing’, i.e., the act of converting nouns into verbs. As seen in video 5, example 2, ‘sopa’ is a noun in Spanish meaning soup; however, its syntactic category was altered to that of a verb in the simple present negative form by the addition of suffixes, including the verbalizer ‘-yana’, the causative ‘-chi’, and ‘-chu’ for the negative. The meaning of *sopasiachichu* with the lexeme ‘ama’ in front of it would be ‘to keep the food from getting soggy’ (Video 5, minute 4:18-20). This complex process requires the speaker to have knowledge of the foreign word, quickly identify the part of speech, and then add the correct morphemes in the correct order to convey the intended message. Moreover, this cognitive operation is completed in a matter of seconds and is often executed unconsciously. This action of turning nouns into verbs is not a common characteristic of Spanish language, but seems to be a common feature in IK (Gómez-Rendón, 2008). Therefore, in this case, it can be said that Kichwa gave the Spanish borrowing an additional grammatical function, enriching it and easily adapting it into the Kichwa grammatical structure.

Not only additions of morphemes took place, but also the deletion of some Spanish phonemes. The same speaker omits the initial vowel /a/ in ‘amasar’ (to knead) and adds different morphemes at the end (Video 5, minute 1:43). In general terms, the omission of certain sounds seemed not to interfere with communication and there was no problem to convey the message as the following morphemes were placed correctly by the speakers.

Additionally, borrowings seem not to interfere with Kichwa syntactic structure as Spanish words were effortlessly included in Kichwa sentences. This flexibility or ease of Kichwa language to include borrowings in its lexicon and grammatical structure may be due to the non-configurationality of Kichwa language, where word order does not specify grammatical functions (subject/object), but discourse functions (topic/focus) (Taguchi & Saransig, 2024). This ‘flexible’ characteristic of Kichwa language allows speakers to adapt and include Spanish words to the Kichwa grammatical structure with great ease. Alternatively, another perspective on the adaptability of Spanish words and syntactic modifications in Kichwa suggests that these changes may stem from prolonged “contact-induced structural changes”. This phenomenon is attributed to the high level of bilingualism among speakers, which exposes them to Spanish-derived structural elements such as the SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) word order, subordinate constructions headed by Spanish conjunctions, SVO clauses, and also some Spanish inflectional affixes (Gómez-Rendón, 2008, p. 17). This exposure enables speakers to seamlessly navigate between Spanish and Kichwa grammatical structures.

### 4.2.2. Pronunciation

Regarding phonological adaptation, Gonzales (2019) states that in the borrowing process, words can experience phonological, morphological and syntactic changes. IK is a tri-vocalic dialect, that is, it only uses a, i, and u vowels; therefore, in most of the cases, adaptations were made to fit in IK phonological system. The common changes are the Spanish /o/ into /u/, and /e/ into /i/. Regarding suprasegmental features, most of the Kichwa words have the phonological stress on the second-to-last (penultimate) syllable. For that reason, a word like 'último', with stress on the third-to-last syllable, was adapted to Kichwa phonological system and was pronounced as /ulti'muta/. See more examples from the videos below.

- (1) Video 1: 'uras (5:17), quida'krinki (5:18), gus'tan (6:14), estudi'an (6:54), pir'dishun tiem'pota (7:20), inte'rupi (8:43), sin'tini (8:45),
- (2) Video 2: (h) 'uras (2:35), ulti'muta (4:06), quidashkaku'kuna (4:16), tan'tiashpa (5:14),
- (3) Video 3: carrukuna'tayman (3:06), sumbru'kuta (4:40),
- (4) Video 4: 'sumbru (6:06),
- (5) Video 5: (a)masa'krinchik (1:43), qui'danlla (5:51).

Although the pattern was to adapt the foreign phonemes to the Kichwa system, there are still some words such as 'tiempota' or 'pero' in which Kichwa speakers pronounce /o/ and /e/ without any change. Again, this seemed not to cause any breakdowns in communication. In this regard, one could state that the more familiar the speaker is with the second or foreign language, the easier it is for him to break the barriers or limitations of the first language. Additionally, because the three vowels are located at the edges of the vowel space to satisfy the principle of maximal distinctiveness, using Spanish vowels seems not to cause problems in communication as those words do not have minimal pairs<sup>1</sup>.

It is important to mention that this study did not take into account grammatical borrowings. For a deeper understanding of the influence of Spanish in Kichwa grammatical structure, koineization, and nominal structures refer to Gómez-Rendón, 2007.

## 4.3. Discussion

### 4.3.1. Domains

As Spanish is used in different settings such as churches, schools, offices, markets, and many others coupled with Kichwa speakers' migration to big cities, Kichwa people have more visual and aural contact with the Spanish language on a daily basis. They see and hear Spanish letters, words, sentences, etc. and interact with Spanish speakers almost everywhere they go. This constant exposure to another language makes them use, consciously or unconsciously, the words or phrases they saw and heard before. To illustrate: video 2: 'primero' (1:49, 3:00), 'ultimuta' (4:06, 4:21); Video 3:

<sup>1</sup> This process of phonological adaptation can be seen in more detail in Haugen (1950).

‘primero’ (3:44, 4:39), which are normally seen in textbooks or TV shows when following a process or recipes. Additionally, more and more Kichwa speakers are attending educational institutions, where the language of instruction is Spanish. This may be the reason why numerical figures, words to talk about time, adverbs of frequency and sequencers are commonly borrowed from Spanish.

Interestingly, when some words have been used for an extended period of time and are used very frequently, they reach a point of being considered ‘native words’ and are accepted as their own (Haugen, 1950) by Kichwa speakers. One clear example is ‘parlana’, which was used in the first video and many speakers think it is a Kichwa word (L. Almagor, personal communication, 2023), despite its origin in Late Latin ‘parabolare’, meaning ‘to speak (in parables)’ (Real Academia Española, n.d.). It likely represents one of the first borrowed words Kichwa speakers adopted. This process of making the loanword a native one responds to the lack of direct equivalents in the language (Gonzales, 2019). However, as it was stated before, many of the Spanish borrowings have their Kichwa equivalent. In the case of ‘parlana’, the verb ‘rimana’ is also used by speakers in the video to mean *to speak*. This poses the question of whether or not the Kichwa words will be considered synonyms of the ‘nativized’ loanwords, enriching the language or, on the other hand, they may have a negative impact on the language making native words eventually disappear, leading Kichwa to relexification.

#### *4.3.1.1. The Principle of Least Effort*

The concept is self-explanatory and refers to “the minimum amount of effort that is necessary to achieve the maximum result, so that nothing is wasted” (Vicentini, 2003, p. 38). This concept can be applied in any area of human action and Zipf (1949) argues that “people do in fact always act with a maximum economy of effort, and that therefore in the process of speaking listening they will automatically minimize the expenditure of effort” (p. 22). Taking this principle into account, we can say that one reason Kichwa speakers borrow words from Spanish is because it lets them convey their messages faster and there are fewer chances to make mistakes, optimizing ease of communication.

If we look back at the most commonly borrowed words from the first video, we can notice that all of them have either one or two syllables. In contrast, their Kichwa equivalents are longer, therefore more time is needed to articulate them and the longer the word, the more chances there are to make a mistake. This may be particularly true for semi-linguals who still struggle to use morphemes correctly. For example: ‘y’, which is a one-syllable conjunction, compared to its Kichwa equivalent ‘shi-na-lla-ta’, which has 4 syllables. This could be another possible reason why even elder Kichwa speakers borrowed words when speaking. This tendency, coupled with the prevalence of Spanish across various domains, the scarcity of written and audiovisual material in Kichwa, makes speakers become more familiar with Spanish vocabulary compared to Kichwa, which is used in restricted domains and the topics of conversation are not as broad as in Spanish.

#### *4.3.1.2. Mental processes*

Considering the psycholinguistic point of view, there are three main processes involved in language production: 1) conceptualization, 2) formulation and 3) articulation (Warren, 2013). Conceptualization refers to the abstract idea of what we want to communicate, i.e. lemma. Formulation is the lemma and lexeme connection, and articulation is the production of sounds. In this sense, if Kichwa speakers need to retrieve a word to communicate, the quickest and easiest option their brains have would be the use of Spanish words because, as stated above, those words

are used more frequently and are present in many different domains, such as educational, political, economic, etc. On the other hand, if Kichwa speakers wanted to use their native language, they will need more time for this lexical selection or retrieval. If the speaker is not proficient enough or does not use Kichwa frequently, he or she may make mistakes as the speaker in video 3 (3min 45s-53s) did when she intended to say *shinallata* - 'and' to add information; however, she used *shinapash* - 'but':

“akchakuta hapichishkani, shampachishpa, **shinapash** cintakuta churachishkani  
shinchi shinchi akchaku wiñachun”

“I tied her hair together, combing it, **but** I made her wear a ribbon to make her hair  
grow”

This *shinapash-shinallata* differentiation seems to be a little bit tricky for speakers as, in general, people prefer to use the Spanish conjunction 'y' than the Kichwa equivalent. This case may be a clear example of why people may prefer to use the borrowings even though there are equivalents in their native language. Other examples: 'no sé-*mana yachanichu*', 'camisa-*tallpalkushma*', 'zafar-*kacharina*', 'primero-*kallarinkapak*', and 'gustar-*allikachina*'.

Furthermore, previous research (Haugen, 1950; Gonzales, 2019) showed a consistent hierarchy in the distribution of parts of speech, typically observed as follows: 1) nouns, 2) verbs, 3) adjectives, 4) adverbs, 5) prepositions, and 6) interjections. The results of the present study indicate that the Spanish conjunction 'y' was the most used among the speakers, in order to merge words and sentences. However, in sum, the number of nouns and adjectives outnumbered conjunctions. With this in mind, the use of borrowings can be seen from two points of view. The first one considers that lexical borrowings favor communication since they give Kichwa speakers more options to convey their message. On the other hand, one can ponder if the excessive use of borrowings, especially subordinators, can influence the morphosyntax of the Kichwa language. Previous studies show that the result of “contact-induced changes in contemporary IQ [Imbabura Quichua] is the increasing replacement of embedded nominalized constructions with hierarchical, Spanish-modelled subordinated clauses” (Gómez-Rendón, 2007, p. 15). The use of Spanish borrowings in Kichwa may prompt syntactic alterations, potentially leading to the gradual omission of morphemes and subsequent restructuring of Kichwa's grammatical structure due to the influence of loanwords.

#### 4.3.1.3. Final remarks

This paper does not analyze the effects of borrowing words in Kichwa grammatical structure, but it is hypothesized that the frequent contact with Spanish language makes Kichwa speakers translate expressions calquing the grammatical structure too. Lexical borrowings may not be the reason for structural reorientation, but the excessive use of them can trigger its change (Gómez-Rendón, 2007; Haugen, 1950). The Kichwa grammatical structure (Subject-Object-Verb) changed when some borrowings or expressions were directly translated from Spanish. For instance, sentence (1) below, extracted from Video 1 (7:20), follows the typical SVO Spanish grammatical structure, instead of the canonical SOV word order in Kichwa. Therefore, careful planning and consideration are necessary in language revitalization initiatives and material development. Failing to comprehend contemporary shifts in the Kichwa language could result in the creation of pedagogical resources that unintentionally adopt Spanish grammatical structures and excessively incorporate loanwords.

- (1) *Ama pirdishun tiempota*  
Ama pirdi-shun tiempo-ta  
NEG waste-FUT time-ACC  
'Let's not waste time'

Finally, the degree of bilingualism among speakers significantly influences the extent of lexical borrowing in speech. As mentioned earlier, young speakers, who have more contact with the Spanish language, are becoming less proficient in Kichwa. Consequently, they may be more likely to use Spanish borrowings when they attempt to speak Kichwa. This may result in something that would be more similar to 'Media Lengua' (Gómez-Rendón, 2005), which is a mixed language with Spanish vocabulary and Kichwa grammar.

## 5. Conclusions

The variety of lexical borrowings found in the videos is consistent with Holmes' (2013) assertion that predominantly single and content words are borrowed. However, not all words were adapted into the Kichwa sound system, or there was not a complete phono-semantic matching with the adopting language, especially in vowel adaptation since some borrowings were still pronounced as 'e' and 'o', which are nonexistent in Kichwa. This may be the result of physiological factors due to the long contact and in some cases, the immersion of speakers in a Spanish-speaking environment. This raises the question of whether future generations of Kichwa speakers, unlike the first generation who had little or no contact with the Spanish language, would continue to use the Kichwa phonological system or rather use some kind of mix between Spanish and Kichwa. Bilingualism resulting from migration, language contact, and continuous exposure to Spanish through media may help explain why some speakers have developed a more sophisticated vocal tract, enabling them to produce five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) instead of three (a, i, u).

As stated before, many of the words have their versions in Kichwa, but with fewer families using Kichwa as their primary language at home, opportunities for practical application diminish, thereby, tasks such as word retrieval and sentence generation, i.e., lemma-lexeme connection, could be harder for speakers who have more contact with Spanish. Although there are supporters of lexical borrowing as the natural process any alive language goes through, it is crucial to consider that in the case of Kichwa and Spanish, there are two factors to take into account language prestige and identity. Regarding the first one, Kichwa is still stigmatized as a language that is not worth learning as it does not provide economic benefits, and it is still linked to poverty and illiteracy. Regarding identity, there is a question of authenticity when someone speaks Kichwa, a symbol of indigeneity and resistance, but uses more than half Spanish words. Additionally, it is unclear if borrowing words from Spanish hinders Kichwa revitalization or serves as a preservation tool. Further research is needed to understand its impact on language production.

In this regard, lexical borrowing should be considered carefully in the language revitalization process. If the purist view is considered in the process, then lexical borrowing would be like a virus that endangers its vitality. On the other hand, if Spanish borrowings reach a level of functionality, facilitate communication, and enrich the language, allowing its users to broaden their vocabulary, as

it was the case in the videos, then it would be an option to preserve the language. However, it is also important to mention that the excessive use of borrowings can trigger a grammatical similarity with the Spanish language. Although it probably will not change its agglutinating nature, it may provoke the loss of certain morphemes widening the differences among other Quechuan varieties.

The results of this study could shed light on the language revitalization process, as it allows a better understanding of the socio-linguistic reality of many Kichwa speakers from Otavalo, Ecuador. Also, the results are expected to contribute to the understanding of recent changes in the lexical system which could lead to the modernization of the existing linguistic resources or other Kichwa language-planning activities, such as corpus planning (Cooper, 1989, as cited in Hornberger y Coronel-Molina, 2004). Finally, with this work, we aim to assist educators, language planners, and policymakers in making informed decisions to preserve and promote indigenous vocabulary, safeguarding linguistic identity. Simultaneously, we strive to balance the integration of borrowed terms that feel natural to Kichwa speakers in order to enhance language proficiency and literacy skills among them.

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## Appendix

### Abbreviations used

IK	Imbabura Kichwa
LSA	Linguistic Society of America
No	Total number of words
ADJ	Adjective
N	Noun
V	Verb
ADV	Adverb
CNJ	Conjunction
EXPRES	Expression
1S	First Person Singular

**Table 2**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 1 (“Hablemos Kichwa”)*

Total	Word in Spanish	Part of Speech	Minute
11	Y	CNJ	1:12, 2:04, 3:18, 3:43, 3:53, 4:35, 5:38, 6:53, 7:54, 8:09, 8:47
6	Pero	CNJ	6:13, 6:19, 6:34, 7:02, 7:35, 8:27
4	No sé	EXPRES	5:34, 5:51, 6:23, 6:34
2	Porque	CNJ	5:34, 7:05
3	Gustar	V	6:14, 6:16, 6:18
8	Parlar (archaic)	V	5:37, 5:48, 6:01, 6:07, 6:13, 6:20, 6:26, 6:33
2	Cierto	ADJ	5:22, 5:23
2	Familia	N	3:20, 4:53
2	Colegio	N	5:57, 6:03
2	Muy	ADV	6:46, 7:02
2	Complicado	ADJ	6:47, 7:02
2	Quedar	V	5:19, 7:06
1	Como	ADV	6:48
1	Estudiar	V	6:54
1	Cada	ADJ	2:25
1	Es que	EXPRES	1:18
1	Vestimenta	N	5:43
1	Escuela	N	6:51
1	Saludar	V	7:07
1	Cuñado	N	3:53
1	Antepasado	N	4:37

Total	Word in Spanish	Part of Speech	Minute
1	Bailar	V	5:12
1	Presentación	N	5:13
1	Gente	N	5:05
1	Horas	N	5:18
1	Culpa	N	5:53
1	Caso	N	6:09
1	Hija	N	6:10
1	Mayoría	N	6:31
1	Yo	1S	6:36
1	Final	ADJ	6:36
1	Perder	V	7:20
1	Tiempo	N	7:21
1	Bueno	ADJ	7:48
1	Tecnología	N	7:59
1	Importante	ADJ	8:19
1	Mundo	N	8:43
1	Entero	ADJ	8:43
1	Sentir	V	8:45
1	Dos mil dieciocho	N	8:55
1	Primo	N	2:05
1	Mi	ADJ	2:04
1	Más que todo	EXPRES	5:59
1	Yo no sé	EXPRES	6:34
1	A la final	EXPRES	6:36
1	Fundador	N	7:42

**Table 3**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 2 (“Programa cultural kichwa en “Otavalo”)*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
3	Primero	ADJ	1:49, 2:00, 3:00,
3	Último	ADJ	4:06, 4:21, 7:13
3	Cebada	N	0:40, 1:40, 2:14
5	Limpiar	V	2:09, 2:28, 2:29: 2:56, 4:51
3	O	CNJ	2:25, 3:43, 5:42
2	Coles	N	5:47, 5:50
2	Molino	N	2:22, 4:25
2	Igualar	V	3:59, 4:01
1	Arroz (cebada)	N	0:40
1	Asegurar	V	1:42
1	Grano	N	5:40
1	Tiempo	N	6:32
1	Picar	V	7:06
1	Espiga	N	2:06
1	Horas	N	2:35
1	Cedazo	N	2:41
1	Tanto	ADJ	5:11
1	Tantear	V	5:14

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
1	Cosas	N	5:20
1	Igual	ADJ	6:09
1	Cebolla	N	6:22
1	Listo	ADJ	6:30
1	Pero	CNJ	3:00
1	Quedar	V	4:16
1	Sopa	N	4:30
1	Cilantro	N	7:07
1	Diez	N	6:35
1	Minuto	N	6:35

**Table 4**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 3 ("Ep. 2: Modern Kichwa Clothing (Weaving Knowledge - The people Kichwa Otavalo)")*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
8	Y	CNJ	0:53, 1:52, 1:58, 3:34, 3:53, 5:23, 6:49, 7:39
2	Diferente	ADJ	2:27, 2:41
3	Camisa	N	2:44, 2:49, 4:48
2	Primero	ADJ	3:44, 4:39
3	Representar	V	2:10, 2:30, 3:37
3	Tapar	V	3:21, 3:25, 3:57
2	O	CNJ	3:23, 6:20
1	Igual	ADJ	2:00
1	Entonces	ADV	2:15
1	Zigzag	N	2:16
1	Cuenta (como)	ADV	2:17
1	Carro	N	3:07
1	Tren	N	3:08
1	Molestar	V	3:09
1	Cinta	N	3:49
1	Por favor	EXPRES	1:38
1	Casi simple	EXPRES	4:37
1	Sombbrero	N	4:40
1	Pantalón	N	4:50
1	Porque	CNJ	4:53
1	Ropa	N	6:07
1	Propio	ADJ	6:06
1	Utilizar	V	6:33
1	Si [hay la] posibilidad	EXPRES	6:44
1	Diario	ADV	6:46
1	Hijita	N	1:40
1	Bueno	Interjection	4:27

**Table 5**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 4 “Ep. 1: The Evolution of Kichwa Clothing (Weaving Knowledge)”*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
2	Siempre	ADV	2:14, 3:14,
3	Cintura	N	2:13, 5:28
1	Cuenta	ADV	2:07
1	Tiempo	N	5:43
1	Solamente	ADV	5:47
1	Canal de YouTube	EXPRES	7:27
1	Pero	CNJ	3:08
1	Máquina	N	3:59
1	Sombrero	N	6:07
1	Gente	N	6:24

**Table 6**

*Spanish borrowings used at least twice in video 5 (“Chaki Tanta \_ Cocinar en campo \_ Cap 04”)*

Total	Word	Part of Speech	Minute
3	Amasar	V	0:59, 1:43, 3:59
2	Pelota	N	4:39, 4:42
4	Zafar	V	5:30, 6:08, 6:46, 6:54
2	Tapar	V	7:00, 7:35
2	Tieso	ADJ	4:57, 5:01
2	Masa	N	1:51, 3:53
1	Pero	CNJ	1:47
1	[ama] Sopa	N	4:20
1	Quedar	V	5:51
1	Como	ADV	1:34
1	Entrecruzando	V	6:27
1	Ni	CNJ	7:12

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Jefferson Isaac Saransig Almagor has participated in the selection of videos for the content analysis, data collection and analysis. Similarly, he participated in the writing and editing of this article.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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## **Author's academic background**

**Jefferson Saransig** earned a bachelor's degree in Education with a specialization in English teaching. He furthered his education by obtaining a master's degree from the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador. During the 2022-2023 period, he served as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) at the University of Notre Dame in the United States. His research interests encompass various aspects of linguistics, including bilingualism, second language acquisition, language revitalization, and language loss.