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Subtractive Bilingualism in Bilingual Students in Ecuadorian Classrooms

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Resumen

El bilingüismo sustractivo se define como una forma de bilingüismo en la que el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma interfiere con el primer idioma. Se ha observado que se ha prestado poca atención a explicar y entender el bilingüismo sustractivo en estudiantes bilingües. Los objetivos de esta investigación descriptiva son analizar los factores reportados que influyen en el bilingüismo sustractivo y explorar su evolución a través del análisis de las experiencias de los participantes. Para esta investigación descriptiva se trabajó con cinco participantes a los cuales se les realizó entrevistas semi-estructuradas. Los resultados indican que la instrucción formal de los participantes en inglés y español, la exposición a los idiomas inglés y español en el hogar y la escuela, y las estrategias y métodos utilizados para mantener el bilingüismo fueron identificados como principales factores que influyeron en su bilingüismo sustractivo. Además, las experiencias de los participantes revelaron que la mayoría de ellos presentan bilingüismo sustractivo en su idioma nativo (inglés).

Palabras clave: bilingüismo, bilingüismo sustractivo, estudiantes bilingües



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Abstract

Subtractive bilingualism is defined as a form of bilingualism in which the learning of a second language interferes with the first language. It has been observed that little attention has been paid to explaining and understanding bilingual students' subtractive bilingualism. The objectives of this descriptive research are to analyze the reported factors that influence subtractive bilingualism and to explore its evolution through the compilation and analysis of participants' experiences. This descriptive research was conducted with five participants who were applied semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that participants' formal instruction in English and Spanish, the exposure to the English and Spanish languages at home and school, and the methods used to maintain their bilingualism were identified as the main factors that influenced participants' subtractive bilingualism. Moreover, participants' experiences revealed that most of them presented subtractive bilingualism in their native language (English).

Keywords: bilingualism, subtractive bilingualism, bilingual students



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Dedication

This thesis work is dedicated to "Mamita Flor" who out of everyone loved me the most. Although she does not remember who I am or where she is anymore, I will always love her like no one else.

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Introduction

Bilingualism and its effects on education have been an emerging topic in the field of language teaching and learning in recent years (Akinci, 2017). There is extensive literature about the growth of students' bilingualism; however, there appears to be less research on the evolution of subtractive bilingualism in this type of student.

According to Dorambari (2021), subtractive bilingualism is the perception that the acquisition of a second language (L2) would be detrimental to an individual's first language (L1). This can be caused by the increased cognitive load due to L2 acquisition which consequently decreases competence in users' L1. As explained by Schmid and Keijzer (2009), this phenomenon is experienced by minority groups, especially when they are not schooled in their L1. Furthermore, the frequent usage of students' L2 gradually replaces their L1 competence and culture.

This descriptive research aims to analyze and explore bilingual students' experiences in Ecuadorian classrooms by examining the reported factors that could have influenced the process of their subtractive bilingualism. For a better understanding of the object of this research, it is necessary to establish, at this point, that English is the bilingual participants' L1 and Spanish their L2.

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is a description of the topic and the research. Chapter two deepens the concepts and classification of bilingualism and types of bilingualism and includes relevant research on the topic. Chapter three explains the methodology, participants, and context of the study; it also describes how data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four presents the results and the discussion. Finally, chapter five includes the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER I

Description of the Research**Background**

Bilingual students in Ecuadorian classrooms who have lived abroad are highly motivated and or influenced by their heritage and roots which involve culture, traditions, and language. Therefore, when they live abroad, they try to keep up with their families' culture adopting a bilingual and bicultural lifestyle since they have extended family whom they can only communicate with in Spanish (Vargas & Camacho, 2015). However, it is prevalent that English will be more used because of the context in which they live. Hence, when moving back to Ecuador, the use of both languages, English and Spanish, can become an issue.

Nesteruk (2010) explained that the deterioration of a language could vary depending on its exposure and usage. The repercussions are negative for the student's English language in Ecuadorian classrooms because of the lack of necessary exposure to the language at school. In other words, the bilingual student can experience subtractive bilingualism due to the lack of exposure to and practice of the English language at school and the prevalence of the dominant Spanish language in Ecuador.

Ecuador has faced international migration for several decades and several reasons; some of the principal causes that trigger a citizen to emigrate could be economic, which is usually marked by a permanent life abroad or many years living out of the country until the migrant decides to come back (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2023; International Organization for Migration, 2010;). Other reasons could be academic and/or personal matters, which are just temporal and most cases for short periods (Perruchoud et al., 2019). When these people return to the country, they become what is known as returning migrants, which according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a term that refers to people returning to their country of citizenship after being international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) (International Organization for Migration, 2010).

Most returning migrants who come back to Ecuador from English-speaking countries might present English-Spanish bilingualism (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2023; International Organization for Migration, 2010). Because not all migrants face the same language acquisition conditions back in the host English-speaking countries, it is imperative to mention the variants of bilingualism that returning migrants may present (Salas et al., 2021). For instance, early bilinguals are children starting their language acquisition simultaneously, so the appropriate age for this stage is from birth until they turn five years old. Sequential or late bilinguals are people who acquire their second language after turning five until eight years old (Firat, 2018). Kim (2019) explained that early bilingual students need to start relating phonological features to their respective written symbols and late bilinguals need to correlate readings to build up their critical thinking.

Furthermore, more types of bilingualism are not directly related to age such as passive bilingualism which allows understanding of a second language, but the productive skills are limited. There is also additive bilingualism when a second language is acquired successfully, and subtractive bilingualism which is characterized by the detriment of the L1 while learning the L2 (Firat, 2018).

Researchers De Cat (2020) and Firat (2018) have conducted studies on migrant students that presented any variation in their bilingualism in educational settings in different social contexts; the results have had similar outcomes which rely upon academic performance which further results in the participant's additive or subtractive bilingualism. This is a disadvantage that bilingual students present in comparison to their monolingual classmates. Students who might not be as proficient in their second language as in their first language struggle for some years until they can use the language in content courses; this leads bilingual students to have poor academic performance (Menken, 2013). It takes years and scholarly programs for bilingual students to achieve academic proficiency in a second language (García & Wei, 2014). Furthermore, not all bilingual students have access to formal language education, and they must acquire the second language autonomously.

Different studies (Menken, 2013; Kremin et al., 2016) explained how students were introduced to several programs of English as a second language. The results agreed that students did not reach a good English proficiency level and that their academic performance in other subjects was poor. This occurs because these programs did not offer a basic introduction to literacy in students' second language, nor their native language. These studies concluded that there is not enough empirical research on the academic performance of bilingual students in different settings. Nonetheless, a good introductory English course and constant instruction on the L1 are essential for preserving students' bilingualism.

According to Rodríguez (2020), children from Hispanic migrant parents living in an English-speaking country usually live in a bilingual home setting. Unfortunately, they are more prompt to not be proficient in the Spanish language; likewise, the amount of input from Spanish is not enough compared to the amount of exposure the children have to the English language. The type of bilingualism that applies in these cases is passive bilingualism because they may not be able to produce Spanish orally or written. Even if somehow the parents manage to instruct Spanish literacy to their children, it is probable that the children still present some flaws to produce any skill in the Spanish language unless they are exposed to academic tuition (Velasco Zárate, 2021). As demonstrated in the works of De Cat (2020), Firat (2018), and Göncz (2015), bilingual participants needed more exposure to both languages in their context either in French, English, or Turkish. A similar case is presented in a study conducted by Chumak-Horbatsch (2008) in which bilingual students who have not been exposed to literacy in English as their first language, nor in Spanish as their second language, are prompted to interrupt the continuous updating of the language because they are not exposed to it.

Problem Statement

Mena Iturralde and Cruz Piñeiro (2018) explained when migrant families living in English-speaking countries decide to come back to their origin countries are denominated "returning migrants" (p. 272). Children from returning migrants who were born in English-speaking countries and come to Ecuador are classified as immigrants. Therefore, it is important to

mention the obstacles that immigrants and returning migrant students face regarding three aspects: their academic performance, language maintenance, and social adjustment (Velasco Zárate, 2021). To keep these three aspects in mind, students whether studying primary or secondary school must have access to special courses of adaptation, especially related to the Spanish language. Likewise, English maintenance should be integrated into EFL classrooms when immigrants from English-speaking countries are integrated into Ecuadorian academic settings. Participation and the use of resources in EFL classrooms to keep constant updating of the English language is key for immigrant students (Velasco Zárate, 2021). Some of the returning migrants who have maintained the English language explain that there should be enough input at home because there are tools that many returning migrants have access like the use of the internet, so they have exposure to the English language. The use of social media is a great help for returning students who want to maintain English conversations with friends they have made in their English-speaking country of residence before returning to Ecuador.

The case studies about the academic performance of bilingual migrant and monolingual students (De Cat, 2020; Fırat, 2018) were conducted in different countries that had similar language immersion courses with reinforcement classes and adapted extra lessons in the English language (participants' L2) directed to bilingual migrant students. Thus, the students still projected flaws in the second language production, even several years after acquiring the second language, and of course, approving scholar years in primary, secondary, high school, and even advanced university education levels (De Cat, 2020). The cause of the problem relies on the inadequacy of the educational programs that bilingual students attend because students need progressive instruction in the language, they need to learn to approve other regular classes. Therefore, all Ecuadorian returning migrants must have access in their educational institutes to language introduction extracurricular Spanish lessons to help them understand unknown vocabulary from regular academic subjects. For instance, these programs could encompass Spanish language courses if schools can provide them. It is

equally relevant for returning bilingual immigrant students who are acquiring Spanish as a second language to keep continuous instruction. Also, practicing English is imperative, so they do not become subtractive bilinguals (Kim, 2019; Montrul & Silva-Corvalán, 2019).

Peets et al. (2019) and Firat (2018) concluded that because of the lack of language instruction and exposure, bilingual students who struggle with content classes take as the main objective to understand and achieve academically at school; therefore, students do not focus on how the second language works. Likewise, Ecuadorian returning migrants tend to stop using the English language because the curriculum does not have any program for English-Spanish bilingual students and English teachers tend to exclude them because they are already proficient in English (Ministerio de Educación, 2019). The importance of having a working bilingual program for returning migrants related to their language instruction is a matter to be considered.

Rationale

Most Ecuadorian returning migrants are not exposed to English input at home, and the amount of English exposure in high schools is not enough because public educational institutions have not designed a bilingual learning program (Orellana, 2018). Since the National English Curriculum does not address bilingual literacy programs for returning migrant students, bilingual students are in urgent need of a new English working curriculum designed for bilingual returning migrant students. Therefore, caring about returning migrant bilingual students and the effectiveness of persevering with both languages will have positive outcomes in the country.

Consequently, this research aims to explore the relationship between the lack of English language training and the interruption of bilingualism of returning migrants from English-speaking countries, considering sociocultural factors and the educational curriculum of foreign languages in Ecuador.

Research Questions

- What are the experiences of bilingual students in Ecuadorian classrooms?

- What are the possible factors that contribute to bilingual students' subtractive bilingualism?
- What strategies could be used in an EFL classroom and outside of it to maintain English-Spanish students' bilingualism?

General Objective

- To analyze the experiences of bilingual students from English-speaking countries in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms.

Specific Objectives

- To explore the possible factors that contribute to bilingual students' subtractive bilingualism.
- To describe the strategies that could be used inside and outside EFL classrooms to maintain English-Spanish bilingualism in bilingual students.

CHAPTER II

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**Theoretical Framework****Bilingualism**

There is no easy way to describe the term bilingualism. Moradi (2014) claimed that “there is no single agreed-upon definition of individual bilingualism” (p. 147). Probably, there will not be one any time soon for the simple reason that the world and the people in it are constantly changing and evolving. The term bilingualism has many complexities surrounding it, and it is constantly evolving just like every concept that makes up human development. As mentioned by Liddicoat (1991), “bilingualism may be defined as having some ability to use two (or even more) languages” (p. 3). An important aspect to take into consideration when looking for a definition of bilingualism is proficiency; just how proficient must a person be in a certain language to be considered bilingual, and how that proficiency is measured (Liddicoat, 1991; Bartolomé, 2017). According to Moradi (2014), individuals are considered bilingual when they possess some degree of proficiency in at least two languages. It can be generally understood that the individual is equally proficient in both languages; however, quite often only one of the two languages is considered more valuable; therefore, it becomes the dominant language (Moradi, 2014). Furthermore, Bartolomé (2017) claimed that a limited number of bilinguals are equally proficient in both languages.

Nowadays, given the context we live in of constant evolution, globalization, and human mobilization, there is absolutely no doubt about the importance of bilingualism everywhere (Orellana, 2018). Bilingualism will continue to spread across different cultures and communities, and probably new definitions and dimensions will appear. As García and Wei (2014) mentioned, “most nations in the world today are multilingual” (p. 47). Similarly, Cummins (2009) stated that there are an estimated 5,000 languages spoken in the world’s 200 or so sovereign states. Thus, the majority of states encompass multiple languages within

their boundaries. About two-thirds of all children in the world grow up in a bilingual or multilingual environment. (p.163)

Montrul and Silva-Corvalán (2019) and Cummins (2009) pointed out that numerous variables such as age, sociocultural features, and the length of residence in the home or host country could affect language learning with different outcomes such as enhancement or loss of language. Bilingualism is such an important quality to develop; therefore, it should be pertinent to find a balance between the languages involved to take advantage of what bilingualism has to offer in the academic and professional aspects of life (Cummins, 2009).

Types of Bilingualism

When analyzing bilingualism, it is also important to describe its different types. In this sense, García and Wei (2014) pointed out that “Lambert proposed what became the two classic models of viewing bilingualism in schools during the 20th century, subtractive bilingualism, and additive bilingualism” (p.49). The authors explained subtractive bilingualism as the phenomenon that occurs when one of the two languages is considered a minority language and not as essential as the dominant language in the environment of the speaker and is, therefore, replaced by the majority language. On the other hand, additive bilingualism refers to the phenomenon in which both languages coexist and are considered of great importance altogether as a whole (Liddicoat, 1991). In Liddicoat’s words (1991), “additive bilingualism develops when both languages and the culture associated with them bring complementary positive elements to the child’s overall development” (p. 7).

Grouping types of bilingualism only in the two afore mentioned categories has become insufficient to appropriately assess how bilingualism manifests in different individuals (García & Wei, 2014). Even though these two types are regarded as classic approaches to viewing bilingualism, in this time and age the dimension of bilingualism is much more complex. García and Wei (2014) claimed that “these models of bilingualism have proven to be insufficient given the diversity of learners in classrooms today” (p.49). It is important to take into consideration that the different classifications of bilingualism and individual bilinguals are determined thanks

to the multi-dimensionality of bilingualism itself (Moradi, 2014). There are so many variables, internal and external mainly exposure and literacy in English and Spanish that play an important role in the development, maintenance, or interruption of bilingualism (Vuorenkoski et al., 2000).

Different manifestations of bilingualism also encompass the phases of life subjects undergo. In this matter, it is possible to distinguish two other types of bilingualism: (1) early bilingualism and (2) late bilingualism. Moradi (2014) explained that early bilinguals have been exposed to at least two languages during or before the “preadolescent phase of life” (p.148). On the other hand, late bilingualism exists when an individual has already acquired a first language to some degree and the other language is introduced to him or her after the age of eight (Moradi, 2014).

Furthermore, Moradi (2014) classified early bilingualism into two subtypes: (1) simultaneous early bilingualism and (2) successive early bilingualism. Simultaneous early bilingualism happens when a child is exposed to two languages at the same time (hence the term simultaneous) which produces bilingualism in the individual. The second subtype of early bilingualism is called successive early bilingualism. Here, the child has already acquired a first language and is later exposed to a second language. However, it differentiates from late bilingualism because exposure to a second language still occurs in the critical period of learning, early childhood (Moradi, 2014). A clear example of this subtype is that of immigrant children who move to a different country during their childhood. If the destination country uses a language different from their native one, they must learn the new language upon their arrival in their new home.

Furthermore, bilingualism has also been classified according to the socio-cultural environment of individuals. Two important types of bilingualism that adhere to this criterion are called “folk and elite bilinguals” (Moradi, 2014, p. 150). According to Moradi (2014), folk bilinguals are usually members of a community with their language considered not as predominant and essential in the society they live in. Folk bilingualism comes to be because

of practical contact with speakers of the target language (Liddicoat, 1991). On the other hand, elite bilinguals are proficient in the dominant language of the society they are part of. Liddicoat (1991) explained that elite bilingualism develops through formal instruction and is, therefore, highly valued. Essentially, elite bilinguals possess skills in another language that is considered highly valuable (academically or professionally) in their society; contrary to folk bilinguals whose own language is not as valued in terms of societal expectations (Moradi, 2014). The study of the different types of bilingualism according to age, social context, and other factors can help parents and teachers to ensure that their children take full advantage of their bilingualism.

Subtractive Bilingualism

As subtractive bilingualism is the focus of this research study, it is necessary to include the views of different authors in regard to this topic. In this sense, Liddicoat (1991) expressed that subtractive bilingualism comes to be when the two languages clash and instead of being a complement to each other, the more dominant language competes with the minority language.

As maintained by Nguyen (2022) subtractive bilingualism refers to the process of the L1 loss when gaining the L2 usually due to generational migration. Furthermore, Dorambari (2021) also described the process of the deterioration of L1 while acquiring the L2. In other terms, as Vega-Mendoza et al. (2015) stated when non-balanced bilinguals learn their L1 at home and the L2 at school, the L2 will become dominant. Therefore, the importance of keeping bilingual students exposed to both languages in the same instructional contexts helps learners avoid subtractive bilingualism (Montrul & Silva-Corvalán, 2019).

Nguyen (2022) and Dorambari (2021) agreed that when bilingual migrant students encounter subtractive bilingualism, their first language gets affected by vocabulary loss, syntax, and pronoun confusion. This is due to language immersion courses which are difficult for migrants who have to go through cultural and academic adaptations (Vega-Mendoza et al., 2015; Montrul & Silva-Corvalán, 2019). Therefore, any prior knowledge in their L1 when

they are acquiring the L2 at school will be difficult to maintain if the bilingual students are not exposed equally to both languages (Vega-Mendoza et al., 2015; Montrul & Silva-Corvalán, 2019; Nguyen, 2022; Dorambari, 2021).

Bilingual Education

It is important to discuss the existence and application of bilingual education because Ecuador is a country that has experienced high rates of migration and these rates have intensified in the last years. García and Wei (2014) mentioned that bilingual education refers to the type of education where “content and language learning are integrated” (p. 48). Cummins (2009) explained that the purpose of bilingual education varies greatly among different contexts and cultures. Some programs aim to enhance proficiency in both languages while others do not, focusing their attention and efforts on the dominant language (Cummins, 2009). Bilingual education is a concept quite present in the current world and with great benefits for students; however, there is some opposition to the idea. Cummins (2009) pointed out that “opposition to bilingual education for linguistic minority students derives primarily from ideological concerns related to immigration and national identity in societies that are increasingly diverse” (p. 169).

Although growing up in an environment that allows individuals to acquire two different cultures and languages has its fair share of benefits, bilingual students may face some limitations in comparison to their monolingual counterparts (Zyzik, 2019). An important disadvantage of bilingualism is found in the lack of English language vocabulary in bilingual students compared to their monolingual peers (Peets et al., 2019).

Despite the clear evidence of the beneficial and adverse effects that bilingualism has on different individuals, it is not an easy task to include those effects into singular categories given that bilingualism is such a wide spectrum. In this light, Peets et al. (2019) mentioned that “the language deficit and the control advantage interact to create a complex picture of cognition that is different for bilinguals and monolinguals, but not in a way that can be simply defined as better, worse, or indifferent” (p. 9).

Bilingualism Maintenance and Interruption

Maintaining or interrupting bilingual skills upon returning to the home country can have detrimental consequences for bilingual students in the long run. The maintenance of two languages and cultures that identify the individuals can be beneficial for their well-being. Vuorenkoski et al. (2000) mentioned that "maintenance of both the native language and the second language together with the two cultures experienced in childhood enhanced the child's mental well-being" (p. 265). On the other hand, the interruption of bilingualism and therefore loss of connection with a part of their culture and identity could result in grave consequences for the mental and emotional health of the individuals (Vuorenkoski et al, 2000). According to Cummins (2009), some maintenance programs have been created to help "language minority students" to enhance their abilities in the language that is considered weaker or a minority while living in a foreign country (p. 164). The interruption of bilingualism upon returning to the home countries may be caused by a wide variety of factors, given that it is a life-altering experience that rarely goes smoothly and with little to no consequences to deal with for years to come (Vuorenkoski et al., 2000). Vuorenkoski et al. (2000) remarked that "we should also bear in mind that depression, antisocial and neurotic behaviors, somatic symptoms, and school achievement represent only some of how children can react to migration" (p. 263).

A prominent factor in the maintenance or interruption of bilingualism is parental input (Subtractive Bilingualism). De Houwer (2007) signaled that the involvement of parents helps to maintain bilingualism in their children by encouraging them to use the minority language, at least at home, when living in a foreign country. However, it is important to keep in mind that not every household operates the same way or has the same experiences and resources. Potowski and Rothman (2011) also expressed the importance of familiar attitudes toward children's language development and their outcomes: maintenance, improvement, or interruption of their bilingual abilities.

Additionally, another important factor often mentioned is the role of educational institutions in bilingualism maintenance. Valdés (2011) believed that educational institutions

have the resources to help bilingual students not to lose track of the minority language. Those institutions just have to be (hopefully) up to the task and willing to contribute. She claimed that “the point of such support would be to send a clear message about the value of maintaining heritage languages” (p.142). Essentially, it can be concluded that input at home is the most relevant factor that determines the language outcome of young bilinguals. However, even the less relevant factors (social, cultural, and demographic) are still important to consider in future research (De Houwer, 2007; Potowski & Rothman, 2011).

Literature Review

To effectively understand the experiences of bilingual students in the Ecuadorian academic system, it is imperative to make a comprehensive analysis of research studies that closely examine subtractive bilingualism in terms of its effects on academic achievement and language use. Additionally, this section explores key factors that may contribute or hinder bilingualism within individuals' experiences.

Subtractive Bilingualism in Educational Systems

In Jimenez's (2020) and Collazo's (2021) qualitative empirical research studies, the researchers used observations to analyze subtractive bilingualism in a single participant respectively. Jimenez' participant studied in an English-only school in California, United States; her L1 was Spanish because at home that was the only language used. In other words, the participant was a bilingual student who did not have any formal instruction in the Spanish language because she learned it at home. As a way to collecting data, the author had conversational interviews in Spanish with the participant who answered in English most of the time. Jimenez concluded that her participant had subtractive bilingualism mainly because she was enrolled in a monolingual school. Furthermore, Jimenez (2020) reported that there was a strong relation between subtractive bilingualism and language choice when the participant of her research could not remember words in Spanish and repeatedly used English instead, or even more when she took long pauses to make short statements. The participant's difficulty to understand Spanish also forced the researcher to use English to assure language

comprehension. The author claimed that this situation could have been because there was a lack of social interaction and formal instruction in Spanish at the participant's school.

In the case of Collazo's (2021) study, the participant had the same characteristics as Jimenez's (2020) participant, except that the participant received formal instruction in Spanish at school. Collazo (2021) had Spanish conversations with her participant. After analyzing the conversations, the researcher reported noticing the lack of Spanish knowledge in the production skills of her participants, which interfered with her bilingualism. Collazo (2021) concluded that the participants did not develop subtractive bilingualism; however, the researcher highlighted the importance of having formal instruction in both languages, Spanish and English, for bilingual students. Nevertheless, it is a fact that there must be a constant and balanced exposure to English and Spanish at home and school not to lose language proficiency (Collazo, 2021).

Kim (2019) conducted a study in which the participants were bilingual migrant students in a district school in Texas. The main purpose of the study was to analyze the students' academic experiences based on their bilingualism. The participants' L1 was Spanish and their L2 was English. The researcher conducted interviews and surveys with the participants and analyzed the participants' experiences based on their perceptions of their academic performance and their Spanish language proficiency. Most participants agreed that they struggled when they produced the Spanish language. The students had acquired subtractive bilingualism because of the exposure they had to the English language in the immersion program they were part of where content subjects were difficult for Spanish speaking migrant students (Kim, 2019). Although this English language immersion program had helped bilingual migrant students learn English as fast as possible, the researcher suggested to implement courses that teach basic academic Spanish and English vocabulary as a starting point for bilingual students to function academically in both languages, avoiding this way subtractive bilingualism (Kim 2019).

Additionally, in Akinci's (2017) study, the participants were young bilingual students enrolled in a Turkish-French Bilingual school. The participants' L1 was Turkish and their L2 was French. The students were tested orally for their proficiency in both languages at the beginning of the research and two years after. After analyzing the proficiency tests results, the participants seemed to understand both languages because of two main reasons: the participants were exposed to formal French language instruction at school and output at home, demonstrating the strong relation between formal language instruction and informal exposure in bilingualism (Akinci's, 2017).

Jimenez (2020), Collazo (2021), Kim (2019), and Akinci (2017) presented findings that state that bilingual students need bilingual language programs to avoid subtractive bilingualism. Having bilingual language programs may prevent unconsciously choosing the language spoken at monolingual schools (Akinci,2017).

Maintaining Bilingualism of Bilingual Students in Schools

Camacho and Vargas (2017) conducted a study that focused on exploring the challenges bilingual returning migrant students from the United States experienced when they were incorporated in the Mexican educational system. Through the analysis of semi-structured interviews, the researchers described the distressing process of school transfers in Latin America when students came back from The United States. Camacho and Vargas (2017) concluded that one of the biggest challenges reported was finding a suitable school that could provide Spanish language adaptation programs for bilingual migrants, which in the public system was an issue. Furthermore, Camacho and Vargas (2017) explained the participants who have lived in the United States, had not received academic lessons in Spanish, and had no option but to enroll in public schools experienced poor communication with teachers and classmates since they could not understand English, and the participants were not able to fully understand Spanish. Therefore, the public schools were not able to maintain the migrants' bilingualism due to the poor English Language exposure these students had there (Camacho & Vargas, 2017).

Salas et al. (2021) conducted an exploratory research study in five Mexican institutions where bilingual returning migrant students attended. The main objective was to identify the educational flaws that participants experienced when they came back from the United States and enrolled in Mexico's academic system. The researchers, parting from semi-structured interviews, reported that teachers were aware that they needed proper training to help returning migrant students, who came from the United States, in terms of adaptation, socialization, and integration into the Spanish language in the classroom without losing their bilingual skills and/or identity. In the same way, bilingual returning migrant students noticed that they were experiencing lack of interaction in the English language. Salas et al. (2021) concluded that a stronger English language program and a Spanish language insertion course for returning migrants to ensure bilinguals' quality education in the Mexican academic system, should be created.

Sociocultural Factors in Subtractive Bilingualism and in Language Maintenance

Mojica (2017) conducted a study in Michoacan, Mexico to identify adolescents and children who were returning migrants from the United States to further analyze their insertion back in the Mexican academic system and community. The researcher held observations and interviews to analyze the participants' experiences. Mojica (2017) demonstrated the correlation of successful community and academic integration describing individual experiences of the participants. In addition, as presented in his research, the participants who were not proficient in Spanish did not function socially in their schools, which might have affected their community insertion and their academic failure since participants tended to drop out of school (Mojica 2017). Moreover, the participants did not have bilingual education in Michoacan, leaving them with no option but to attend school only using the Spanish language as the language of instruction (Mojica 2017).

Camacho and Vargas (2017) also found in their study the role teachers play in motivation in school attendance in bilingual returning migrants. The researchers, after analyzing the interviews applied to teachers and school principals, stated that teachers were

always aware of their bilingual migrant students from the United States; in addition, they noticed that students demonstrated by gestures and their grades that they could not understand the Spanish language at school. Another major factor that contributed to subtractive bilingualism was highlighted in this study, which is the accessibility to a public or a private institution in the Latin American academic system (Camacho and Vargas, 2017). Several participants of the study maintained their bilingualism when they were enrolled in private institutions that had better English courses and teachers (Camacho & Vargas, 2017). Consequently, participants who were enrolled in private institutions and had better English language teachers felt encouraged to attend.

Similarly, Chamorro et al. (2016) conducted controlled group observations among bilingual migrant Mexican residents living in the United States who were tested in their L1 (Spanish) and L2 (English) to evaluate their bilingualism. The researchers noticed that the first language (Spanish) was being subtracted due to the amount of exposure to L2 (English). Consequently, Chamorro et al. (2016) reported that subtractive bilingualism affects the L1 if the bilingual happens to be surrounded solely by the L2; in other words, subtractive bilingualism is usually a side effect of migration since the great exposition to the L2 language.

Camacho and Vargas (2017) and Salas et al. (2021) agreed on three main factors that bilingual migrants who came back from the United States (to Mexico), and whose first language was English endured during their process of academic adaptation in Latin America. First, family separation is highly demotivational for young students; the fact that they stop talking or meeting frequently with their family stops the interactions in their native language and the natural social environment. Second, cultural adaptation is worrying too; although globalization unites the world together, it is still not the same environment the students were used to in their academic settings. Third, the language barrier goes hand in hand with the academic disadvantage that migrants encounter when they have to acquire academic literacy and get tested in without any preparation in advance (Collazo, 2021; Jimenez, 2020; Kim, 2019). These three main factors get the students vulnerable to bullying, suffering, and miss

adaptations that cause English language rejection and therefore a total rejection of their previous culture. The interruption of their native language is what Chamorro et al. (2016) may categorize as a cognitively sensitive side effect of subtractive bilingualism caused by the environment surrounding the bilingual student.

The studies that have been analyzed focus on subtractive bilingualism of different types of students (returning migrants, migrants, natives, etc.). Research on this matter in Spanish-speaking countries are scarce, and in Ecuador the situation is not different. This indicates that there is an extensive and interesting investigation gap in the Ecuadorian context in which each year several bilingual students come from English-speaking countries and enroll in the Ecuadorian academic system.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

In this study, a qualitative approach is used, which involves the analysis of information to create concepts parting from valid anecdotes according to a specific phenomenon (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Therefore, this approach allows studying the phenomenon described in more detail by collecting data through semi-structured interviews where the participants shared their experiences and perspectives.

In addition, a descriptive research design was chosen for this study to gather data to further describe the experiences of bilingual students in Ecuadorian classrooms regarding their bilingualism. As stated by Siedlecki (2020), “the purpose of descriptive studies is to describe individual events, or conditions by studying them as they are in nature” p (8); therefore, this type of design was appropriate for the study conducted.

Context and Participants

The descriptive research took place in Cuenca, Ecuador where the official language is Spanish. There were five participants in the study. Four were university students (three female and one male) and one female high school senior year student. All of them were 18 years old or over when data was collected.

The participants were recruited using an online survey that was sent through social media platforms. In order to participate, individuals had to comply with the following characteristics: a) they must have experienced English-Spanish bilingualism at any age due to being born and/or living in any English-speaking country; and b) they had moved back to Ecuador to study primary or secondary school. Once the five participants were identified, they were invited to be part of semi-structured. The participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form.

In order to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, their real names are not mentioned in this descriptive research report; instead, pseudonyms are used.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information about the experiences of the participants in Ecuadorian classrooms in regards to their bilingualism. Semi-structured interviews are used to seek detailed and meaningful information about a key subject, problem, or event for the research (Kallio et al., 2016). A semi-structured interview gives the interviewer freedom to ask the questions according to the interviewer's order of consideration (Kallio et al., 2016).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants via the Zoom video platform. The interviews lasted an average of 20 minutes each. Four of the interviews were held in English and one of them was in Spanish because one participant did not feel comfortable speaking in English. The interviews were video, and audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed; in addition, the transcript of the interview conducted in Spanish was translated.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis which is a flexible method used to analyze data in detail. Furthermore, during the process of code selection and theme categorization the researcher can convey his/her own interpretation (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

After the coding process, four main themes emerged: Impact of Spanish formal instruction in Ecuadorian classrooms, exposure to English and Spanish languages in participant's households, perceptions of their bilingualism, and strategies and methods to maintain bilingualism.

CHAPTER IV

Results

For this descriptive research, five interviews with bilingual students, regarding their subtractive bilingualism in Ecuadorian classrooms, were conducted and later analyzed.

To better understand each participant, a description of their background is offered in this section. Individual characteristics of each participant such as age, place of birth, time spent in the United States, level of instruction reached, bilingual status, and current place of residence are included.

Participants' Backgrounds

Pedro

Pedro was born in the United States. He lived in New Jersey in a shared household with his parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousins. His English-Spanish language acquisition was simultaneous. He used Spanish at home to communicate with his family and had phone conversations with his family in Ecuador. He watched cartoons and spoke with his siblings in English. When he got to school, he already knew both languages, English and Spanish even though he never spoke Spanish at school. When Pedro was 11 years old, he and his family moved to Ecuador where he attended a public high school. There Pedro struggled with many subjects because he had never received any class in Spanish before at his school in the United States. In Ecuador, Pedro received only one period of EFL lessons per week which was established as the minimum in the National Curriculum back in 2005. He felt he forgot some vocabulary and expressions that he commonly said in English without any problem before coming to Ecuador. Later, he got transferred to a private high school where he had help with Spanish tuition and more periods of English per week (six pedagogical hours per week). To maintain and practice his English, Pedro and his siblings would only speak English at home. Also, Pedro watched movies, listened to music, and chatted with friends from the United States in English. Now he is still living in Ecuador, and he studies in a TEFL undergraduate program. He uses both languages without any problems.

Selena

Selena was born in New York, United States. At home, her parents would speak English and Spanish simultaneously. She studied elementary school there; the lessons were held in the English language. She was eight years old when she moved to Ecuador. She was enrolled in a private elementary bilingual institution which was suitable for her because some of her classmates were from English-speaking countries as well. Selena got transferred to a private regular secondary high school. She found the subjects more difficult than she used to in the previous school. She received 12 periods of EFL lessons per week, but her English lessons were solely focused on grammar. She maintained her bilingualism by practicing the language with native speakers, watching videos, and listening to music in English. She and her family did not speak English at home. Now she lives in the United States.

Mercedes

Mercedes was also born in New York. In her house in the United States, she was only allowed to speak in Spanish. Her mother tried to teach her how to write in Spanish with the help of books. She did not master the English language before going to school, but eventually, when she went to school, she did it with the help of her teachers who understood Spanish as well but did not teach it. She moved to Ecuador and got into a public institution that only provided a few English lessons per week. She struggled with regular academic subjects and her parents noticed that she was not as proficient in the English language as she was in the United States. Although her parents spoke English, they decided to maintain a monolingual (Spanish) household as Mercedes' younger sister did not maintain English at all when they arrived to Ecuador. Mercedes transferred to a private school in an attempt to maintain her English proficiency. This new school offered 12 periods of English lessons per week. After living for sixteen years in Cuenca, she considers that she forgot her English and now struggles with grammar and remembering some words. Now she lives in Cuenca and studies Tourism as a major at the university.

Ivana

Ivana was born in Ecuador, but she moved to the United States when she was still a toddler. She studied there until the sixth grade of elementary school. She described that at home her parents and sisters only spoke in Spanish, so they acquired the language through parental input. She did not know the grammar or spelling rules of Spanish when she came back to Ecuador; as a result, she struggled with regular subjects in the Ecuadorian curriculum. She also stated that she did not want to participate in English class because that did not feel comfortable around classmates or teachers. She mentioned that at some point in her adolescence, she forgot to spell some words or expressions in English. At university, Ivana studied English as a major. To practice her English skills, she practiced with acquaintances and family.

Dana

Dana was born in New Jersey. She lived in a household with her mother, father, and older sisters. She simultaneously learned English and Spanish. She studied in the United States until her first year of elementary school when she moved to Ecuador. She got into a private high school that provided ten English language classes per week. Dana remembers that her classmates bullied her when she spoke in English and ever since elementary school, she had not participated in any EFL class. Dana recalled a time when her parents noticed she did not answer nor understood most of the English language at home and she was called out and started to talk back in English at home even though she did not like to speak in English at school. She practices English with her sisters, but she does not consider herself bilingual because she does not feel confident to speak English in public.

Additional personal information about the participants is presented in Table 1, which will help to better understand the findings and the interpretation of the results.

Table 1

Participants' General Information

Participant	Age	Place of birth	Time spent in the United States	Level of instruction reached	Type of bilingualism	Current place of residence
Pedro	26	Nyack, New York State, the United States	12 years	University	Additive	Ecuador
Selena	23	New York State, the United States	8 years	University	Additive	The United States
Mercedes	22	New York State, the United States	8 years	University	Subtractive (Previous)	Ecuador
Ivana	22	Cuenca, Ecuador	11 years	University	Additive	Ecuador
Dana	18	New Brunswick, New Jersey, the United States	6 years	High school	Subtractive (Previous)	Ecuador

Factors that Contribute and Hinder Bilingualism

In this section, the themes that emerged from the analysis, including the voices of the participants, will be described.

Through the analysis of the interviews conducted with the participants, it was found that their perceptions towards their bilinguals varies among them. Their experiences have helped to identify the factors that could contribute and hinder bilingualism in four different areas: First, the impact of Spanish formal instruction in Ecuadorian classrooms when they enrolled in the Ecuadorian academic system. Second, the exposure to the English and

Spanish languages in their households in Ecuador. Third, their perception of bilingualism. Finally, the fourth area refers to the strategies and methods the participants used to maintain bilingualism.

Participants' academic information as well as their perceptions about their bilingualisms, and the strategies and methods used to maintain English are summarized in Table 2. This information will be elaborated further in the document.

Table 2

Participants' Academic Information

Participant	Formal Instruction (English)	Formal Instruction (Spanish)	Exposure to English in Ecuador (at home & school)	Exposure to Spanish in Ecuador (at home & school)	Perceptions of bilingualism	Strategies and methods used to maintain English
Pedro	Since pre-school	Since he was 7 years old	Home: speaking, video games, cartoons. School: Language-related instruction	Home: talking to parents. School: Academic subjects	Problems with specific vocabulary in English	English language formal instruction Motivation to help others to learn English.
Selena	Since pre-school	Since she was 8 years old	home: books, series, songs, shows, etc. School: Language and content-related instruction	Home: television and parents School: Academic subjects	Problems with spelling in English	English language formal instruction Avoid subtitles in movies or series. Set up technological devices in English

Mercedes	Since kindergarten	Since she was 8 years old	Home: Talking to parents School: Language-related instruction	Home: Speaking, books, music, etc. School: Academic subjects	Problems with English grammar	English language formal instruction
Ivana	Since pre-kindergarten	Since she was 11 years old	Home: Speaking, TV shows School: Language-related instruction	Home: Speaking with relatives and little sister School: Academic subjects	Problems with the spelling of specific words in English	English language formal instruction Language exposure at school and home. Set up technological devices in English
Dana	Since pre-kindergarten	Since she was 7 years old	Home: None most of her childhood, then an English language household School: Content-related instruction	Home: Speaking and praying School: Academic subjects	Problems with productive English skills.	English language formal instruction Talk to oneself in English. Practice at home and watch movies in English.

Impact of Spanish Formal Instruction in Ecuadorian Classrooms

When the participants were asked if they were introduced to any formal Spanish leveling courses provided by the academic institution. Three out five participants answered

negatively to the question; in addition, they mentioned the impact that not having these courses had on their bilingualism.

Pedro: Don't know really. I entered a very small high school, and there it was just basically everything, you know, since we knew how to listen, how to write, how to speak Spanish, we weren't introduced to anything, so it was just the right way into classes.

Mercedes: No, that was a big problem for me because I came here in fourth grade and my parents believed that it was better for me to attend a bilingual school in Ecuador which was private. So, this private school said "we can't make Mercedes pass to fifth grade if she doesn't know Spanish. So, she has to be in the previous level. So now she has to lose the year." My parents said that it could not happen, so I went to a public school allowed me to pass to fifth grade.

Ivana: No. I had a private tutor because like I said, there were a lot of Spanish words that I had forgotten because I mostly interacted in English back in the States with my sisters at home and with my classmates at school.

On the other hand, two participants answered positively to this question. They even mentioned the significance the language leveling programs had on their bilingualism. It is important to mention that Dana's interview was held in Spanish respecting her choice since she had encountered negative experiences with the English language in the past. Therefore, Dana's voice is included in Spanish as well as in English.

Selena: Fortunately, we were able to go there to a school called the CEDEI. We went there, and well it's now, I'm not sure if it's still a school, but right now it's an English academy, but it used to be a school and a pre-school and now it is a high school if I'm not wrong. But yeah, we went there, and actually they made a very big focus on learning English as a second language and also French, but first it was English. So, the same classes that we had in Spanish, we had them in English, so it was a really good way for me not to lose, basically not

lose my first language and also to be able to learn about it and to learn the material without having the language barrier.

Dana: Sí, vine a segundo de básica y creo que si estuve algún tiempo en refuerzo porque se me hacía difícil aprender las vocales en especial la “e” y la “i” que en inglés es todo lo contrario los sonidos y eso se me hacía difícil diferenciar, y al escribir igual, entonces creo que sí, si recibí clases de refuerzo por parte de los profesores de español.

Yes, I came to second grade and I think that I did spend some time in reinforcement because it was difficult for me to learn the vowels, especially the "e" and the "i" which in English are the opposite of the sounds and that was difficult for me to differentiate them, and when writing it was the same, then I think I indeed received reinforcement classes from the Spanish teachers.

It is necessary to highlight that there must be a protocol to introduce Spanish to migrant bilingual students, especially if they had not been exposed to academic literacy in this language back in the English-speaking country as it is suggested by Camacho and Vargas (2017) and Salas et al. (2021). Nonetheless, this does not happen in reality as in the case of Pedro and Mercedes who got enrolled in public institutions where they were not part of any language leveling course; instead, they had a heavy load of content subjects taught in Spanish; in other words, an immense charge of Spanish input.

In the case of Selena and Dana, who got enrolled in private institutions and were exposed to a bilingual program or Spanish reinforcement respectively, the results are different. They were able to understand and use the Spanish language with the support of teachers. Therefore, it could be inferred that there is a relation between the type of education that bilingual students receive in public and private institutions in the Ecuadorian academic system. Furthermore, the importance of a good English curriculum is remarked by Camacho and Vargas (2017) as it allows migrant bilingual students to feel more comfortable attending school

since they are not only understood by their teachers but also their classmates. This is notable in Selena's experience as she remembers her school with fondness and appreciation.

Exposure to English and Spanish Languages in Participants' Households

When participants were asked if they considered that the number of hours of EFL lessons per week at school were enough to maintain their English bilingualism, all of them answered negatively. In addition, they stated that they needed more exposure to the English language outside the English classrooms.

Selena: I would say that it would have been better to have more hours since English is a very complex language sometimes, so in order to be able to learn more about it you need to be exposed more to it, but I don't think it was a huge problem since I did actually try to learn more by my own side. I went an English academy, and I tried to incorporate that into my high school learning.

Mercedes: Not at all, I had my family, friends, movies, cassettes, and DVDs to practice my English, but I stopped practicing, and I felt I was missing practice.

It is clear that participants had maintained bilingualism through other sources of exposure thus, when they were asked if they kept using the English language at home once they moved to Ecuador, four of them mentioned that they had stopped speaking in English at some point of their life when living in the country, and rather they used Spanish at their household. Furthermore, they explained that only speaking in Spanish had a negative effect on their bilingual maintenance.

Selena: No, I would say by my high school years, or maybe by my middle school years is when I started to speak in Spanish. Like, I started to use Spanish in a better way, and I didn't

have the issue of speaking anymore, so we started to talk only in Spanish at home, which was also another influence to not keep my English side a hundred percent.

Mercedes: I have a little sister, but she doesn't have the English language. So, at home, we were just using Spanish until high school.

Ivana: Uhm, well, for the most part we talked with my sisters in English as much as we could, but again it's because of the exposure to the language. I think that it probably took a year for us to stop using English and start communicating with each other in Spanish because again in Ecuador, Spanish was the language that we were most exposed to, and it just became normal for us to start communicating in Spanish as well. So for example, now, I talk in English with my siblings; very rarely do I talk in English with my younger sister because my youngest sister doesn't remember English that much.

Dana: Sí, creo que los primeros meses o tal vez el primer año si hablaba en inglés. De ahí fui perdiendo poco a poco la costumbre, igual mis ñañas ya nos acostumbramos a hablamos solo en español. A veces seguimos hablando en inglés algunas cosas que nos queremos decir, cuando no queremos que mis papis no entiendan o algo así, entonces ahí utilizamos, pero no es algo cotidiano.

Yes. I think that the first few months or maybe the first year I spoke in English. From then on, I gradually lost the habit, just like my sisters, we got used to speaking to each other only in Spanish. Sometimes we continue to speak in English about some things that we want to say to each other, when we don't want my parents to understand or something like that, then we use it, but it's not an everyday thing.

Nevertheless, only one participant answered that he did not stop using the English language at home.

Pedro: Oh yes, of course. My siblings and I always spoke in English, and we would buy piles of movies from downtown, and we would watch movies, and we would only ask for the English

version, so we didn't like Spanish or Hispanic adapts. So, we would only watch everything in English, cartoons, series, movies; it was just English.

It is also relevant to mention that subtractive bilingualism commonly occurs if bilinguals are not surrounded by a dual language environment and there is poor exposure to their L1 while acquiring the L2 (Akinci, 2017; Chamorro et al., 2016). Thus, as in the cases of Selena and Mercedes, they needed more EFL lessons outside their schools to keep and practice their bilingualism; nonetheless they managed to be exposed to the English language in addition to their EFL lessons at school, which helped them with their bilingualism maintenance.

In the case of Pedro, he never stopped using English at home; therefore, he could maintain balance between both languages. In this sense, it could be argued that bilingual migrants that are exposed to both languages through formal exposure at school and constant informal exposure at home are less likely to experiment the consequences of subtractive bilingualism (Akinci, 2017),

Perceptions of Bilingualism

When participants were asked if they had perceived any alteration in their bilingualism, four of them answered that they had felt changes towards their bilingualism and they explained in detail the reason. Furthermore, one participant, Dana, explained the reason why she stopped producing English due to a negative experience.

Mercedes: Yeah, when I was in elementary school, in 6th and 7th grade, I noticed I was not speaking English at all for a month.

Pedro: Yes, certain words, expressions, idioms, many things I might have forgotten because of the lack of the use of knowledge of the English language before studying it.

Selena: Yes. That was something that really affected me, especially here after coming back, I saw that since I didn't have the same, let's say the same level as high school kids from here, it was something that I noticed over there that my teachers didn't teach me something new,

so I feel as if I was like stuck in the middle of middle school English level and not going into a high school level.

Ivana: I also started forgetting the pronunciation of certain words in English.

Dana: Creo que el primer año, cuando estaba en segundo de básica, si experimenté bullying de alguna forma porque la típica de “Ay la gringa” y/o cualquier cosa, pero no parecía gringa en su perspectiva de niños digámoslo así. Tenía el pelo café oscuro, los ojos oscuros, y uno siempre piensa que alguien que nació allá es de pelo rubio, de ojos azules, piel blanca, entonces muchos creo que no sé si no creían que era o creían que era una especie de que yo me estaba haciendo superior a ellos o algo así, no sé. Y creo que, en segundo de básica, hasta ahora no se sabe quién, me habían roto el libro de inglés como que me habían sacado todas las hojas del libro y así solo llegué al curso un día y vi mi libro roto todas las hojas. Me acuerdo que empecé a llorar y le dije a la profesora y le dije a mi mamá obviamente porque los libros de inglés normalmente son caros, pero creo que no hicieron nada al respecto.

I think that the first year, when I was in second grade, I did experience bullying in certain way because of the typical "Oh la gringa" and/or whatever, but I didn't look like a gringa from those children's perspective, let's put it that way. I had dark brown hair, dark eyes. And one always thinks that someone who was born there has blonde hair, blue eyes, white skin, so many of them, I think I don't know if they didn't believe me. If I was making myself superior to them or something like that. I don't know. And I think that, in second grade, until now no one knows who was. They had torn my English book as if they had taken all the pages out of the book and that's how I only got to the course one day and saw my book all torn up.

It is important to relate participants' perceptions of bilingualism in the cases of Pedro, Mercedes, Selena, and Ivana with what was found in Collazo's (2021) and Jimenez's (2020) results. The authors stated that poor bilingual formal instruction and the lack of genuine social interaction in bilingual students' L1 may lead them to experience unconscious language difficulties, such as not remembering the words in their L1, choosing the L2 as a first choice

for every conversation, and not understanding the L1. As mentioned by the participants of this study, they experienced small issues related to the minimal use of specific terminology which is explained by Chamorro et al. (2016) when referring to the pragmatic ability to convey vocabulary if a word is not remembered.

The case of Dana is complex since she was a victim of bullying when she came to study in Ecuadorian classrooms. The event she experienced triggered a trauma in her that made her keep her English language to herself or sometimes to be used with family at home. The social factors played a major role in the bilingualism of this participant; the cultural insertion into the academic setting was not welcoming and caused rejection to the English language, which resembles what was explained by Mojica (2017). It took Dana years to start speaking to her sisters in English at home, but still, she states that she does not like to talk in English. Even more, the interview was held in Spanish. This traumatic episode made her hide her bilingualism at school.

Strategies and Methods Used to Maintain Bilingualism

When participants were asked for advice on how to maintain bilingualism for people who could encounter the same migration situation they faced, all of the participants mentioned that a good strategy was to keep in constant exposure to the English language and to find opportunities to practice speaking it.

Pedro: Hmm either to go into an English academy or be in contact with other either native speakers or L2 speakers in general of the English language and keep practicing because, you know, the language can get rusty

Selena: Something that I have always done is to listen to e-books, watching TV shows in English, everything in English without subtitles, so it kind of forces you to understand what you are listening to without reading the titles below.

Mercedes: Ok so, Ecuador has one of the lowest ranges of English, so in high school, per week, I had a lot of English separated by skills. I think high school was a very important point to learn and improve.

Ivana: I suggest you keep talking in English with relatives that, you know, you have always spoken English with.

Dana: Yo hablo solita en inglés para tratar de practicar. O viendo series o películas como dije en inglés, haciendo cosas divertidas pero que involucren al idioma para que no lo pierdan.

I speak English by myself to try to practice. Or watching series or movies in English as I said, doing fun things but involving the language so they don't lose it.

It is important for bilingual students to continuously practice their language abilities in order to prevent any decline in proficiency (Chamorro et al., 2016). Therefore, participants have suggested certain guidelines to successfully maintain one's bilingualism. In addition, Mercedes and Pedro suggested to have formal instruction in English besides home exposure; as a matter of fact, authors like Chamorro et al. (2016), Salas et al. (2021), and Camacho and Vargas (2017) determined that it was necessary to maintain formal instruction in the migrants' L1 besides the Spanish leveling courses as key for bilingual students not to develop subtractive bilingualism.

It is worth mentioning, however, that these strategies may work differently for every bilingual. Nonetheless, keeping a bilingual formal instruction guarantees language proficiency and bilingualism maintenance through an adequate amount of language input and reinforcement (Chamorro et al., 2016).

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations**Conclusions**

The main purpose of this descriptive research was to analyze the experiences of bilingual students from English-speaking countries in Ecuadorian classrooms. Interviews were conducted with five bilingual students who were enrolled in Ecuadorian classrooms upon their arrival to the country. Three of the participants presented subtractive bilingualism after short time studying in Ecuadorian classrooms in different academic institutions; nonetheless this was temporarily until the participants got more exposure to the English language as young adults.

After conducting this study, and analyzing the data, it could be concluded that each participant faces a different reality depending on the institutions they were enrolled in when coming to Ecuador. Furthermore, for the participants of the study the Spanish language was a major struggle because they did not receive formal instruction in Spanish before incorporating to the Ecuadorian education system, which corroborates what is mentioned by Nguyen (2022) and Dorambari (2021) in regard to exposing bilingual students to a new L2. Besides, it was found that the bilingual participants struggled when receiving content subjects in Spanish because the vocabulary needed in those classes was not the same as the basic one they used with family at home. Therefore, they experienced academic despair caused by a lack of vocabulary in their L2 (Cummins, 2009; Peets et al., 2019). Consequently, it can be said that most bilingual students when incorporating to Ecuadorian classrooms felt the need to boost their Spanish proficiency in academic and daily conversations; therefore, they practiced in and outside the classrooms to successfully blend in with the locals. The pressure they felt to become proficient users of Spanish may explain why they learned the language in a short time.

Regarding the possible factors that contributed to the subtractive bilingualism of the participants, there are three factors that were determined after conducting the thematic

analysis. First, in regard to the impact of Spanish formal instruction in Ecuadorian classrooms, it could be concluded that the participants who were not exposed to language leveling courses rushed their L2 acquisition by academic pressure, which according to Nguyen (2022) and Dorambari (2021) has an effect in the subtractive bilingual of students. It is important to mention that, according to the participants, private institutions provide better English curricula and Spanish leveling courses than public institutions which directly influences this factor.

For the second factor, which is exposure to English and Spanish in bilingual students' households, it could be concluded that when they stop receiving exposure to their L1 at home are more prompt to subtractive bilingualism since the language is not in constant use and there is a need for informal or out of class exposure to their L1 (De Houwer, 2007).

The third factor was the participants' perceptions of their bilingualism. In this realm, it could be concluded that the bilingual students perceived they experienced subtractive bilingualism due to the lack of practice in their L1 in academic and social settings when arriving to Ecuador.

In relation to the strategies used inside and outside EFL classrooms to maintain English-Spanish students' bilingualism, the first strategy relates to finding an institution that could offer a good English curriculum thus they could practice their L1 no to decrease their language. In addition, another strategy used by the participants was to use their L1 as much as possible outside of the classroom, which according to Cummins (2009), Montrul (2019), and Silva-Corvalán (2019) is effective for the maintenance of bilingualism if it is continuous. Another conclusion that can be drawn is that when participants used English in their homes, their bilingualism was kept balanced. In other words, they were exposed to their L1 at home as much time as they were exposed to their L2 at school (Montrul & Silva-Corvalán, 2019). Another strategy bilingual students used to try to maintain their bilingualism was getting surrounded by the English language using electronic devices, whether watching movies, chatting, or listening to music in English. That is, the constant English language exposure to

technological tools like cell phones and the internet helped try to maintain their bilingualism as well.

Recommendations

English teachers must adapt the lessons according to the bilingual student needs because it is important to remember that they have the need to maintain bilingualism and not lose language proficiency. In Ecuadorian classrooms, English teachers in public institutions that have limited EFL periods per week can increase the level of difficulty of the tasks they give to bilingual students to help them practice their L1. On the other hand, English teachers in private institutions can assign bilingual students tutoring roles as a way of supporting their bilingual maintenance.

Furthermore, there should be an adaptation in the national curriculum to assure the successful incorporation of bilingual students in Ecuadorian classrooms, focusing on language leveling courses for them. Likewise, there should be campaigns in schools to create awareness among Ecuadorian residents to promote safe and friendly environments for bilingual students that might not be proficient in Spanish. These campaigns can support bilingual students while they are adapting to the academic system to prevent their subtractive bilingualism due to social rejection.

After reviewing and analyzing articles related to subtractive bilingualism, and conducting this study, it has been noticed that there is a lack of research on this topic in the Latin American context, especially in Ecuador. As a matter of fact, there were only a few studies that took place in this region, and not directly about bilingualism maintenance. Therefore, more research needs to be developed; in this way, research about bilingual learners in Ecuador must be conducted to create awareness and more importantly to avoid subtractive bilingualism in bilingual students.

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Annexes**Annex A: Interview Questions**

1. Where were you born?
2. How old are you?
3. When did you move to Ecuador?
4. How old were you since you started to learn English?
5. How old were you since you started to learn Spanish?
6. When you lived in the United States, did you receive English or Spanish classes at school?
7. When you lived in the United States, what were the methods used to learn Spanish at home?
8. When you lived in the United States, what were the methods used at home to learn English?
9. When you lived in the United States, what were the methods used to learn English at school?
10. When you came to Ecuador, did the academic institution provide any language leveling course to adapt to the Spanish language?
11. Did your teacher and classmates know you were bilingual?
12. How did your English teachers address the fact that you were bilingual?
13. When you started to study in Ecuador, did you encounter any academic difficulty?

14. How did your classmates address the fact that you were bilingual?
15. Did you perceive any alteration in your bilingualism during the time that you have been living in Ecuador?
16. Do you think that the academic periods per week of English as a second language were enough to maintain your bilingualism?
17. Did you keep using the English language at home, here in Ecuador?
18. Nowadays, do you consider yourself bilingual?
19. What helped you to maintain or lose your bilingualism in Ecuador, being this a monolingual country?
20. What advice would you give to English speaking and Spanish bilinguals to maintain the English language in Ecuador?

Annex B: Consent Form**Subtractive Bilingualism in Bilingual Students in Ecuadorian Classrooms**

I _____, agree to participate in the research project titled Subtractive Bilingualism in Bilingual Students in Ecuadorian Classrooms, conducted by Nicole Pamela Chacón Vera who has discussed the research project with me.

I have received, read and kept a copy of the information letter/plain language statement. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research and I have received satisfactory answers. I understand the general purposes, risks and methods of this research.

I consent to participate in the research project and the following has been explained to me:

- the research may not be of direct benefit to me
- my participation is completely voluntary
- my right to withdraw from the study at any time without any implications to me
- the risks including any possible inconvenience, discomfort or harm as a consequence of my participation in the research project
- the steps that have been taken to minimise any possible risks
- what I am expected and required to do
- whom I should contact for any complaints with the research or the conduct of the research
- I am able to request a copy of the research findings and reports
- security and confidentiality of my personal information.

In addition, I consent to:

- an online meeting on Zoom platform
- audio-visual recording of any part of or all research activities
- publication of results from this study on the condition that my identify will not be revealed.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____