



VITALITY DIAGNOSTIC OF THE LANGUAGE AWAPIT IN THE AWA CENTER “EL BABOSO”

**DIAGNÓSTICO DE LA VITALIDAD DE LA LENGUA AWAPIT EN EL CENTRO
AWÁ “EL BABOSO”**

Recibido: 05/09/2023- Aceptado: 06/06/2024

José Miguel Obando Arroyo

Docente en la Universidad Técnica del Norte
Ibarra - Ecuador

Magíster en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza Bilingüe Español Ingles
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador

jmobando@utn.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8338-1237>



Nancy Cecilia Pozo Follarán

Docente en el Instituto Superior Tecnológico “Ibarra”
Ibarra - Ecuador

Magíster en Educación
Universidad Tecnologica América

npozo@itsi.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0659-4395>

Franklin Fernando Narváez Vega

Docente en la Universidad Técnica del Norte
Ibarra - Ecuador

Magíster en Educacion y Desarrollo Social
Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial

ffnarvaez@utn.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6247-7463>

Obando, J., Pozo, N., & Narváez, V. (Julio – diciembre de 2024). Diagnóstico de la vitalidad de la lengua Awapit en el centro Awa “El Baboso”. *Sathiri* (19)2, 31-47. <https://doi.org/10.32645/13906925.1278>



Abstract

Apart from Spanish, Kichwa and Shuar there are 12 indigenous languages spoken in Ecuador. This study had the objective to determine the degree of vitality of Awapit in the center "El Baboso" settled in the province of Carchi. Open conversations with members of the center, a socio linguistic questionnaire to the Awapit speakers of the center and a semi structured interview to the director of the local school were used as tools for data collection. To establish the diagnostic, there were used the six factors identified and stated in the Language Vitality and Endangerement document published by UNESCO. The data revealed that a reduced number of members of the center speak Awapit. Migration to Spanish speaking communities in search of education, better living conditions and healthcare are among the causes for the loss of the language. In addition, the use of Awapit is restricted to interactions that take place among the family members of the language speakers, whereas Spanish is spoken in social and sport events. In the meetings organized by the so called Confederación de Centros Awa del Ecuador Spanish and Awapit are spoken by the participants. Currently, the children who attend the local school are taking Awapit lessons. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this action in the process of revitalizing the language. It was concluded that in the Awa Center el Baboso Awapit is in critical endangerement, its use is restricted to a limited number of domains and the response to new forms of communication and media is minimal. It is important to continue taking actions in favor of revitalizing the language, otherwise, it could extinct and with it the culture of the Awa. To this end, four actions are included as recommendations that, if implemented in the center, will contribute to the revitalization process of the Awapit language in the Awa el Baboso Center.

Key words: Awapit, linguistic vitality, diagnostic, endangered

Resumen

Además del catellano, kichwa y shuar son 12 los idiomas indígenas hablados en Ecuador. El Awapit, el idioma de la Nacionalidad Awá, es uno de ellos. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar el grado de vitalidad de la lengua Awapit en el centro Awá El Baboso asentado en la provincia del Carchi. Para la recolección de información se llevaron a cabo conversaciones abiertas con miembros del centro, se utilizó un cuestionario sociolingüístico y se administró una entrevista semiestructurada al docente a cargo de la escuela local. Para establecer el diagnóstico de la lengua Awapit en el centro objeto de este estudio se utilizaron los seis factores identificados y descritos en el documento Vitalidad Lingüística y Peligro publicado por la UNESCO. Los datos recogidos revelaron que solo un grupo reducido de personas hablan Awapit en el Centro Awá El Baboso. La migración a comunidades hispánicas en búsqueda de educación, mejores condiciones de vida o salud se encuentran entre las causas para la pérdida del idioma. Además, el uso de Awapit se limita a interacciones que mayormente se llevan a cabo entre los pocos hablantes de este idioma y los miembros de sus familias. En reuniones sociales y deportivas prevalece el castellano, mientras en que en reuniones de la Confederación de Centros Awá del Ecuador, el castellano y Awapit son los idiomas usados por los participantes. Se vienen tomando acciones en favor de la enseñanza del idioma a los niños de la escuela local. Sin embargo, los resultados podrán ser evaluados en los años venideros. Se concluye que en el Centro Awá del Baboso la lengua Awapit se encuentra en peligro crítico, su uso se restringe a un limitado número de dominios y la respuesta a nuevas formas de comunicación es mínima. Es importante seguir tomando acciones en favor del revitalizar la lengua Awapit en este centro de otra manera al corto plazo la lengua podría extinguirse y con ella la cultura Awá. Para el efecto, se incluye como recomendaciones cuatro acciones que de ser implementadas en el centro coadyubarán en el proceso de revitalización de la lengua Awapit en el Centro Awá el Baboso.

Palabras clave: Awapit, vitalidad lingüística, diagnóstico, peligro

Introduction

Bokova states that as information technologies have brought more of the world's knowledge to more of the world's people at unprecedented speed, humanity's linguistic diversity has been shrinking (UNESCO, 2010). This decrease is the result of the need, in some cases, of the members of indigenous nationalities to shift to larger languages in their communicational interactions as if done in their native tongue, the possibilities of social, economic and educational transactions also shrink.

In Ecuador the linguistic diversity and the vitality of indigenous languages has also been subject of analysis and study. Awapit, the native language of the Awa Tikal, in Ecuador is a typical example of the above cited behaviour as even when it is still being used by a good number of members of people who self identify as part of this ethnic group, its speakers face a number of nocive situations for its maintainance; these go beyond the linguistic and sociolinguistic frames as they have to do with unsafety and poverty (Haboud, 2018).

Published data accounts that by 2001 there were 17461 speakers of Awapit worldwide from which, according to this source, 3286 corresponded to Ecuadorian (Clevens, 2012)

Then by 2012 this cipher decreased to around 15130 speakers of Awapit worldwide (Lewis Paul et al, 2016). The same authors claim that there were 3130 speakers in Ecuador by 2012. As can be noted, there was a decrease in the number of speakers of Awapit worldwide which also moved the ciphers for Ecuador.

The data published in the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* includes Awapit states that in general, Awapit is considered as one of the endangered indigenous languages in Ecuador (UNESCO, 2010). However, empirical data has not been updated recently. In spite of this, oral accounts product of recent visits to some Awa centers in Ecuador coincide that there are centers like San Marcos in the province of Carchi where a good number of inhabitants speak Awapit. On the contrary, there are centers like El Baboso, in the same province, where only a few members speak Awapit in familiar settings and community meetings. This information motivated the researchers to do this study with the aim of determining the current situation and degree of vitality of this indigenous language in the Ecuadorian Awa Center of El Baboso.

34

The community. El Baboso, a community of the parish Tobar Donoso, is one of the 15 Awa centers of Carchi and one of the 22 recognized Awa centres settled in Ecuador (Proyecto CARE Ecuador, 2016). Its proximity to Lita, a rural parish of Ibarra the capital of the province of Imbabura, makes people think it belongs to the above mentioned city. According to the interview conducted to director of the local school on the basis of the last internal census, currently, there are 75 families and a number of 285 people living in El Baboso. This data constitutes the reference to diagnose the vitality of the language Awapit in this community.

It takes around thirty minutes to get to the center from Lita, whereas there is not a road that directly connects the center to Tulcán, the city the center belongs politically. The unpaved way that reaches and crosses "La Bocana", the union of Mira and Lita rivers, as well as "El Baboso" river is the motorable road used by the inhabitants to get to the community. Nowadays, people mainly use pick ups or motorcycles to go to and from Lita, it is common to see people walking with their baskets with fruit on their backs, though.

As for basic services, the center has access to electricity but not to safe drinking water nor sewerage. Liquefied gas is the most used fuel, people still use firewood, though. The centre has four small grocery stores where people buy goods and children buy sweets. The government has installed a health centre with three physicians working permanently. 55 children attend the local school where five teachers work from seven to one on weekdays. The center also has a community center where usually the formal meetings take place. There is a volleyball court just next to it that constitutes the place where young people and most members of the community join in informal conversations as young people practice sports like ecuavolley and soccer.

Objective. Diagnose the degree of vitality of the indigenous language Awapit in the Awa center "El Baboso" of el Carchi.

Method

This descriptive study was conducted during eleven visits made to the Awa centre "El Baboso" between November 2022 and September 2023 in which the following activities were done:

- Open conversations with the inhabitants to initially get an informal approach to the Awa center El Baboso. The initial conversations were held with the director of the local school, and members of the community, including two children, of the last two grades, who attended the local school during the school period April, July 2023 and who are Awapit speakers. The conversations helped to identify the perceptions of the community towards the teaching and learning of the language in formal settings as well as the intergenerational shift.
- A sociolinguistic questionnaire oriented to collect data that allows identifying the knowledge the subjects have of Awapit, their perceptions towards it, its use, attitudes and linguistic and social expectations. This tool was an adaptation of the sociolinguistic questionnaire firstly used by Haboud in her study "Vulnerabilidad lingüística en Ecuador: la lengua Awapit" (Linguistic Vulnerability in Ecuador: Language Awapit). The questionnaire includes a section to collect data about the community, general data of the participants in the study, knowledge and use of the languages (L1 and L2) in several socio-communicative contexts. Linguistic generational shift, linguistic variation (2018). This tool was administered to ten inhabitants of the center who, from data obtained during the open conversations, are the Awapit speakers in the center.

Once the sociolinguistic questionnaire was administered, there was conducted a semi-structured interview with the director of the local school to find out his perception about the actions taken by the government, Federación de Centros Awa del Ecuador oriented to revitalize the language.

When collecting data, each action was visually and audio registered. The conversations and interview and sociolinguistic questionnaire were conducted in Spanish and the data later interpreted by the authors into English. The quantitative data was based on a sociolinguistic questionnaire administered to the subjects participant of the study. It was important to take into account the qualitative data collected during the conversations with the inhabitants, leader and director of the local school to better understand the situation of the language Awapit in the center.

Once the data was collected, the attempt to diagnose the degree of vitality of Awapit lead to researchers to discuss the factors that may be considered to conduct in the study. As in the case of Indrayani in her study about the vitality of Sundanese (Indrayani, 2011), an indigenous language of Indonesia, the authors decided to use the six factors below, published by UNESCO in the Language Vitality and Endangerment that need to be considered if what is pursued is determining the vitality of a Language (2003): (1) Intergenerational Language Transmittion; (2) Absolute Number of Speakers; (3) Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population; (4) Trends in Existing Language Domains; (5) Response to New Domains and Media; and (6) Materials for Language Education and Literacy.

Tables one to five below show the descriptors included in the document adopted by the International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages for the above cited factors considered to determine the vitality of a language (2003).

Table 1
Intergenerational Language Transmittion

Degree of Vitality	Grade	Speaker Population
Safe	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up
Unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
Definitely endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
Severely endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
Critically endangered	1	The language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.
Extinct	0	There are no speakers

Taken from Language Vitality and Endangerment (UNESCO, 2003)

In regards to the absolute number of speakers, Aikawa states that it is very difficult to analyze absolute numbers, but the smaller the speaking community of a language, the more probable that language becomes vulnerable (Aikawa, 2003).

Table 2
Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population
Safe	5	All speak the language
Unsafe	4	Nearly all speak the language
Definitely endangered	3	A majority speak the language
Severely endangered	2	A minority speak the language.
Critically endangered	1	Very few speak the language
Extinct	0	None speak the language

Taken from Language Vitality and Endangerment (UNESCO, 2003).

Table 3
Shifts in the domain of language use

Degree of Endanglement	Grade	Domains and Functions
Universal use	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.
Multilingual parity	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
Dwindling domains	3	The language is used in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
Limited domains	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.
highly limited domains	1	The language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions.
Extinct	0	The language is not used in any domain for any function.

Taken from Language Vitality and Endangerement (UNESCO, 2003).

Table 4
New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Language

Degree of Endanglement	Grade	New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Language
Dynamic	5	The language is used in all new domains.
robust/active	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
Receptive	3	The language is used in many new domains.
Coping	2	The language is used in some new domains. Minimal
Minimal	1	The language is used only in a few new domains.
Inactive	0	The language is not used in any new domains.

Taken from Language Vitality and Endangerement (UNESCO, 2003)

Table 5
Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Grade	Availability of Written Materials
5	There is an established orthography and a literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
1	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.
0	No orthography is available to the community

Taken from Language Vitality and Endangerement (UNESCO, 2003).

Findings

It is quite probable that members of the Ecuadorian Awa Nationality who live in centers near Spanish speaking communities have been pressed to shift their native language towards the use of Spanish for daily quotidian interactions as for commercial and educational transactions in the last two decades (Haboud, 2018).

This study pretended to diagnose the current situation of Awapit in the Awa center of El Baboso by collecting live data through informal conversations with the members of the community, leader, teachers and students of the local school as well as conducting sociolinguistic interviews to all the identified Awa speakers of the town to later come to a diagnostic of the vitality of the language Awapit.

Open conversations. Once the so called Dirección de Educación Bilingüe Zona 1, accepted that the researchers conduct a research in the Awa Center of El Baboso, a first approach to the community was made. The first encounters took place in the school of the center and initially started with the director of the school, teachers, a group of students of the 9th, and 10th grade and a few parents who usually were in the area of the school.

The conversations constitute the oral accounts in this study. The topics were mostly about the first people who arrived in the area, how the center has changed throughout the years, how Awapit is being taught and identifying the people who speak Awapit in the community.

The data collected revealed that the settlement started around eighty years ago when a group of eight people came from north Carchi crossing the rainforest. This group of people, who used Awapit to communicate among themselves, were hired by a landowner of the region as laborers. It was also known that these first inhabitants of the center were compelled by the landowners to learn and communicate in Spanish.

In spite of this, the proximity to Lita, as above mentioned the nearest Spanish speaking town to El Baboso, made this people go to that place in search of goods or medicine. Once the group began to grow, the interactions with the people of El Baboso and Lita increased. However, their children did not attend to school in Lita but to a small school created for the children of the laborers of the landowner in his lands (Huanga, Perceptions of the Inhabitants of El Baboso towards Awapit in their center, 2023). As the teacher of the school taught in Spanish, the children who attended this school began to learn Spanish formally. This consequently derived in the birth of a small bilingual group of children in which even though at first Awapit was still prevailing over Spanish, it was clear that the tendency for the future was in favor of the latter language. Thus for educational or even social reasons the children began to use Spanish with a higher frequency rate than Awapit, leaving their mother tongue to be used at home.

As for the start of the teaching of Awapit in the center, in 1985, the bilingual Quichua – Spanish teaching within the official educative system started (Krainer, 1996). However, in El Baboso, in 1979, the public local school opened with the name of “Centro Educativo Intercultural Bilingüe Humberto Valenzuela Vera”. Since then, the children of the center had the opportunity to study in a school of the government. From then on, there have been some attempts to introduce Awapit as part of the curriculum of the schools based in the Awa centers of Ecuador. According to the director of the local school, the teaching of Awapit began in 1990 (Guanga, 2023). Since that year, according to the

interviewée, the children have been studying Awapit. It is also clear that this process has not been steady as there have been different policies and changes from the government. During the school year 2022 - 2023, the children who attended the school took 4 lessons of Awapit a week. However, during the visits of the researchers to the school, it was not possible to confirm that version.

The informal conversations with the students of the school gave to know that children were learning basic vocabulary in Awapit. However, it was evident that they are not able of communicating in that language among themselves or with parents, siblings and friends. In february 2023, a new bilingual teacher was transferred to the school with the aim of providing assistance in the teaching of Awapit during the school year 2023 – 2024.

As for the members of the community, were mainly parents who went to the school to pick up their children or that were asked to go due to talk about academic situations of their children. The intention of the researchers was to get first hand information about to know about the people who speak Awapit in the center. All the people coincided in the names of the ten inhabitants who know and speak Awapit in the center. The next paragraph synthesizes the main findings about them.

From the ten Awapit speakers in El Baboso, three of them are women. The ages of this group are in the ranges of 13 and 76 years. Two of them are students, seven are laborers and one of them is a teacher. Even though, they live in El Baboso, none of them is originally from the center. They were born in different Awa centers, including those on the Colombian side. This fact particularly caught the attention of the researchers as could be thought that none of them learned Awapit in el Baboso. However, as the conversations continued, it was known that three participants were raised in the center and learned Awapit from their parents. One of them studied Awapit with the to become a teacher and the remaining ones came from centers where Spanish and Awapit are used interchangeably like Ojala, Ispi, Chical. The two youngest speakers moved from Ojala, a center where Awapit is spoken by most of its inhabitants, to El Baboso to study as their parents considered they were to have a better education there.

Sociolinguistic questionnaire to inhabitants of the community who speak Awapit.

Once the data via informal conversations was collected then the sociolinguistic questionnaire was administered to the ten members of the community who currently live in El Baboso that speak Awapit.

Table 6
Mother tongue of interviewées

Awapit	Spanish
9	1

Data above reveals that Awapit is the mother tongue of most interviewées. At first sight, it may be presupposed that the interviewées use Awapit most of the time in their daily interactions.

Table 7
Level of comfort of the interviewees with the language

Awapit	Spanish
9	1

The data above coincides, in frequency, with the data of the previous table as most of the interviewees agree that the language they feel more comfortable with is Awapit. This suggests that the interviewees may want to use Awapit in most of their daily interactions due probably to some factors like the domain of the language they have, the language they use at home to communicate with their parents, children and siblings as well as in the community meetings.

Table 8
Mother tongue and comfort of participants with the languages

	Awapit	Spanish
Mother tongue	9	1
Language participants feel more comfortable with	9	1

As mentioned previously, the data of the table above shows that both categories coincide in the frequencies which, initially, suggests that there is a strong relationship between the interviewees mother tongue and the language they feel more comfortable with.

Table 9
Language spoken at home

Awapit	Spanish	Both
6	3	1

Most interviewees responded that Awapit is the language they speak at home. Some of them said that they use Spanish, whereas one participant uses both, Awapit and Spanish. Considering that these are the ten Awapit users members of this community or that, at least, have a certain knowledge of the language it was expected that most of them use their mother tongue as a means of communication or that some of them use both languages. However, there is a significant number of interviewees that responded that use Spanish as the mean of communication at home.

Table 10
Spoken language of the interviewees with parents

Awapit	Spanish	Both
7	2	1

Most interviewees responded that they speak or spoke Awapit with their parents as the parents of some of them have already passed away. A few interviewees speak Spanish or both languages which interestingly, coincides with factors like the age as they are the youngest participants in this study and that even when they currently live in El Baboso, they are originally from community centers like Ojala where Awapit is spoken used among its inhabitants. This may suggest

that parents want their children to preferably speak Spanish probably because to their criteria, that language gives their children better possibilities in Education and success in life.

Table 11
Spoken language of the interviewées with siblings

Awapit	Spanish	Both
7	0	3

Even though the number of interviewées who speak Awapit with their siblings is the same as the number that speak Awapit with their parents, the number of interviewées who only speak Spanish decreased to null, on the contrary, the number of participants who speak both languages increased significantly. Coincidentally, the two oldest participants are part of the group who speak both languages with their siblings, probably they attended to schools where they were Spanish was the language used by the teachers and classmates which somehow required them to code switch from Awapit to Spanish and viceversa in their interactions.

Table 12
Spoken languages in formal meetings and in federation reunions

Awapit	Spanish	Both
0	1	9

According to the answers given by the participants Awapit and Spanish, both, are mostly spoken in formal meetings of the community as well as in those of the so called "Federación de Centros Awa del Ecuador". Only a participant mentioned that Spanish is the only language spoken in these meetings. In general terms, the attendants to formal meetings within the community and among communities code switch from Awapit to Spanish and viceversa according to the communication needs that arise during the discussions.

Table 13
Spoken languages in Social and Sport Contexts

Awapit	Spanish	Both
0	1	9

As in the previous section the answers given by the participants to this questions coincide that both languages, Awapit and Spanish, are majoritarily used in social and sport situations in the community.

Table 14
Language used to write

Awapit	Spanish	Both
0	1	9

As far as the language used by the interviewées to write, most of them agree that they use both languages to write. However, it is clear that Spanish is majoritarily used in the school and formal

correspondence among the members of the community. During the visits to the community, it was seen that the children who attend the school of the centre are beginning to learn to write in Awapit.

Table 15
Language spoken by grandparents

Awapit	Spanish	Both
10	0	0

All the answers given by the interviewées mention that their grandparents spoke Awapit as the mean of communication in the community. That is to say that the shift from Awapit to Spanish was given with the participants who probably due to proximity to Lita, the nearest town to the community and the place where they could buy goods and trade their products or study began to learn Spanish.

Table 16
Most spoken language by the parents of the interviewées

Awapit	Spanish	Both
9	0	1

The answers to this questions confirm the idea that the last generation of inhabitants of El Baboso were the ones who began to use Spanish to communicate in their daily life.

Table 17
Languages mostly spoken by the inhabitants of the center

Awapit	Spanish	Both
0	10	0

As for the most spoken language in the community, all the interviewées agreed that Spanish is definitely the language most in the daily interactions.

Table 18
Language spoken by youngsters

Awapit	Spanish	Both
0	10	0

In the same way, all the participants coincide that the Spanish language spoken by youngsters. In addition to what has been said above, all the participants agreed that the Rio Verde Bajo is the Awa center where Awapit is better spoken.

Table 18
Language used in social networks and on telephone calls

Awapit	Spanish	Both
0	10	0

Data revealed that all the participants used Spanish both, when they use social networks to communicate or when they talk on the phone.

As far as the materials available, during the visits to the school it was noticed that in the school there are not many resources for language education, except for fable books in Awapit and some books published by the Ministry of Education.

Discussion

Regarding the factor intergenerational Language Transmission, Awapit in the Awa center El Baboso matches degree number one: "Critically endangered". The data collected for this study revealed that only ten inhabitants, from which only two are young, speak Awapit in home contexts. Its use is restricted to home interactions or some occasional conversations among speakers. As for formal education, the language is being taught to children. However, the teaching of Awapit in the center is limited to giving students lists of basic vocabulary and some practice on pronunciation. Therefore, at present, children are not able of using the language to communicate among themselves or with other members of the community. Spanish is mostly used in social meetings and sport activities. In meetings, organized by the so called Federación de Centros Awa del Ecuador, Spanish and Awapit both are used. It can be concluded therefore that the language is used by very few speakers, mostly of great-grandparental generation.

For factors two and three, absolute number of speakers and proportion of speakers within the total population respectively, the situation of Awapit in El Baboso is critical. Firstly, the data available about the number of people who speak Awapit in Ecuador varies from source. For example, in 2008, CODENPE¹ published that the number of users of this language was of 3750 (CODENPE, 2023) whereas the so called Archivo de Lenguas y Culturas del Ecuador presents data that in 2010, according to INEC², there were 3131 users of Awapit (Archivo de Lenguas y Culturas del Ecuador, 2023). On the other hand, according to the online Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger there are 5513 speakers of Awapit in Ecuador and categorize it as endangered and unsafe (UNESCO, 2023). Secondly, the data collected in the center evidenced that there is a small speech community in the Awa Center El Baboso which makes the language very vulnerable. Migration, the search of access to work, to healthcare and education are factors that contribute to the native indigenous inhabitants perception that the more dominant language ensures quality of life (Báez, 2018). In the case of Awapit in Ecuador, those factors are to be necessarily considered for the loss of the language in certain Awa centers as in El Baboso. In the Awa centers of Ecuador most of their inhabitants are bilingual Awapit – Spanish though (Haboud, La Vulnerabilidad Lingüística en el Ecuador: La Lengua Awapit, 2018) whereas, in El Baboso from the 75 families and 258 inhabitants only a ten speak the language. This represents the three point eight per cent of the total population of the center. Interestingly, the findings also evidenced that none of the Awapit speakers was born in the center but migrated from other Awa centers of Ecuador and even from Colombia in search of better opportunities for them and for their families.

Regarding factor four, shifts in domains of language use, as described above, Awapit is only used at home and in some special occasions by a few inhabitants of the center. Some people remember some words about the language, whereas children who attend the local school are learning it. However, currently the degree of endangerment for Awapit in the Awa Center El Baboso matches number one, highly limited domains as the language is used for very few functions.

¹ Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador (Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador)
² Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute for Statistics and Census)

For the response to new domains and media factor there are two considerations that need to be done initially. Firstly, there is no access to good internet connection in the Center El Baboso. Even though, many inhabitants have a cell phone and have a plan that includes internet, the signal is not good enough. Secondly, not many families have internet service in their homes. In fact, the local school does not have internet access. However, in spite of the previously noted considerations young people, specially, make use of social networks to communicate among them as well as for entertainment and to get informed of regional, national and international news. It is clear that news posted in social networks are done in Spanish. As for the language used to communicate among young and adults when they talk on the phone or when they chat, Spanish is mostly used.

Therefore, the degree of endangerment of Awapit, in the Awa Center el Baboso, for the factor response to new domains and media factor is number one: minimal, the language is used for very few domains. Probably, short whatsapp or messenger messages among teenagers in Awapit or phone calls among adults in Awapit but nothing apart from that.

As for the materials in Awapit found in the center, except for some fable books found in the laboratory of the school and some books published by the government, there were no other materials.

In sum, the dominant language in the Awa Center El Baboso is Spanish. This language is used by almost the totality of the inhabitants in most daily exchanges thus at home, at work, at school, in informal situations like sport games, social meetings or formal reunions. It can not be said that there is a process of bilingualism in the Awa Center of El Baboso, except for the reduced number of people who speak Awapit and that use it at home with parents and siblings and that code switch from Awapit into Spanish and vice versa in social, sport and formal meetings. Given this situation, in the case of these small group of speakers, at present, it would be considered a subtractive bilingualism in which the dominant language displaces a native language. (Haboud, La Vulnerabilidad Linguistica en el Ecuador: La Lengua Awapit, 2018). Therefore, Awapit is being restricted just to home exchanges.

Regarding the children who attend the local school and who have been studying Awapit as part of their elementary education. The methodology used by the teachers is not communicative. What students learn is vocabulary related to food, animals, colors, parts of the body among other basic topics. In fact, there is no a language teacher with specialization in the teaching of Awapit in the school. Recently, as mentioned previously, a bilingual teacher was sent to the school, their second language is not Awapit, though. Therefore, if the teaching of Awapit in the school continues in this way, it would be very difficult to revitalize the language in the center as the students will probably learn some vocabulary which will allow them to passively and partly understand conversations held in Awapit.

In sum, with the current dominance of Spanish over Awapit in the center, the absence of language teachers with an specialization in Awapit, besides the current actions to revitalize the language are being implemented big efforts need to be done immediately if revitalizing the language is the objective in the Awa Center of El Baboso.

Conclusions

- ◆ Initially, the prohibition of landowners to their laborers to use their language and later migration and the mobility of the inhabitants of the center to Spanish speaking communities strengthened the belief that the use of Spanish firstly ensured them to have a job and that eventually may contribute to have a better quality of life.
- ◆ The findings evidenced that just ten inhabitants of the Awa Center el Baboso speak Awapit which collocates this language in critical danger. Its use is restricted to a limited number of domains like formal meetings, interactions among the few speakers of the community and its response to new communication forms is negative.
- ◆ The dominant language in the Awa center of El Baboso is Spanish. The very few number of speakers of Awapit, in this case, may be consider bilingual. However, their bilingualism is clearly subtractive.
- ◆ The implementation of the governmental policies in favor of teaching Awapit to the children who attend bilingual schools, at least in the specific case of El Baboso, has not had a positive repercussion in the center as the children are not capable of fluently communicating in their mother tongue yet.

Recomendations

- ◆ It is clear that given the proximity of the center to Spanish speaking communities and the need to satisfy basic needs makes them travel on daily basis being Spanish the language dominant in the interactions taken place in this trips. However, it is recommended that leaders and all the members of the community come to agreement about the advantage of beginning to use the language in social and informal events in their center and not only in formal meeting organized by the Confederación de Centros Awa del Ecuador.
- ◆ The perceptions about Awapit of the members of the center evidenced that they want to take actions in favor of revitalizing their language and promoting its use in social and informal contexts. As suggestions, the researchers include below a list of internal actions proposed by Reyhner in his study about revitalizing indigenous languages that may be put into practice by the members of the center to support the revitalization of the language:
 1. Implementing the Language Apprentice (Hinton, 1994) Model by teaming Awapit fluent speakers of the center with youngsters who want to learn the language in a one on one teaching strategy.
 2. Language Nests, fluent older adults provide pre – school child – care where children are immersed in their indigenous language (Fishman, 1991) .
 3. Develop places in the center where the language is encouraged, protected and used exclusively (Reyhner, 1998).
 4. Offer literacy in minority language. Promote voluntary programs in the schools and other community institutions to improve the prestige and use of the language Giving recognition to special local efforts through awards (Reyhner, 1998).

5. As far as the teaching of Awapit, it is indispensable that teachers continuously take part in professional training courses in which new and innovative language teaching methodologies are learned and later implemented with the students of the local school of the center.
6. There are 22 legal Awa Centers in Ecuador, even when oral accounts suggest there are twenty four. The universe of study of the language Awapit is big to be covered in only one study and generalizations can not constitute reliable information for researchers. Therefore, it is necessary that further research is done that allows to have a clearer and wider vision of Awapit in Ecuador.

References

Aikawa, N. (2003). "UNESCO's Programme on Languages" In *Conference Handbooks on Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim*. Paris: UNESCO.

Archivo de Lenguas y Culturas del Ecuador. (11 de Septiembre de 2023). *Archivo de Lenguas y Culturas del Ecuador*. Obtenido de <https://flacso.edu.ec/lenguas-culturas/sobre-el-archivo/sobre-lenguas/>

Báez, G. P. (April de 2018). Why languages become endangered, and how we can keep them alive. (M. Anderson, Entrevistador)

Clevels, M. (2012). Language Endangerment in South America: The Clock is Ticking. *De Gruyter Mouton*.

CODENPE. (11 de Septiembre de 2023). *Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas del Ecuador*. Obtenido de <http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/htm.htm>: <http://www.codenpe.gov.ec/htm.htm>

Fishman, J. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon: UK Multilingual Matters.

Haboud, M. (2018). *La Vulnerabilidad Lingüística en el Ecuador: La Lengua Awapit*. Quito: PUCE.

Haboud, M. (2019). Educación Intercultural Bilingüe en el Ecuador . *ELAD - SIDLA*, 5,6.

Hinton, L. (1994). *Flutes of fire: Essays on California Indian languages*. Berkeley: Heyday Books.

Guanga, A. (04 de Septiembre de 2023). Perceptions of the Inhabitants of El Baboso towards Awapit in their center. (Obando, J. Interviewer)

Indrayani, L. (2011). Language Vitality: A Case on Sundanese Language as a Surviving Indigenous Language. *International Seminar "Language Maintenance and Shift"*.

Krainer, A. (1996). *Educación Bilingüe Intercultural en el Ecuador*. Quito: Abya - Yala.

Lewis Paul et al. (2016). Ethnologue: Languages of the World. *SIL International*.

Proyecto CARE Ecuador. (2016). *Línea Base Proyecto CARE Ecuador*. Quito: Ciespal.

Reyhner, J. (1998). *Some Basics of Indigenous Language Revitalization*. Obtenido de Revitalizing Indigenous Languages: https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/RIL_Intro.html

UNESCO. (2003). *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2010). *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNESCO. (11 de Septiembre de 2023). *World Atlas of Languages*. Obtenido de <https://en.wal.unesco.org/countries/ecuador/languages/awa-cuáiquer>