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TEMA:

**“THE INFLUENCE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE ON THE
SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION”**

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Abstract

Second language acquisition does not proceed independently of prior linguistic knowledge: learners continuously draw on their first language when processing and producing a target language. Although cross-linguistic influence has been extensively theorized, empirical work integrating generative, cognitive, and socio-pragmatic perspectives on the Spanish–English pair remains scarce, particularly regarding spontaneous oral production. This study analyzed the influence of Spanish on English speaking performance among university learners. A dominantly quantitative mixed-methods design combined a single-group quasi-experimental pretest–posttest comparison with a transfer coding matrix and stimulated recall interviews. Fifteen Spanish-speaking undergraduates aged 19 to 24, at the A2–B1 range at an Ecuadorian university, completed an unprepared three-minute speaking task, double-rated with an analytic rubric comprising phonological and morphosyntactic subscales totaling thirty points, before and after eight weeks of contrastive instruction. Following Shapiro–Wilk testing, paired-samples t-tests were applied. Phonological scores increased from 7.20 to 8.80, morphosyntactic scores from 7.93 to 9.80, and total speaking scores from 15.13 to 18.60, a gain of 22.91 percent. All comparisons were statistically significant, with large within-participant effect sizes ranging from 1.18 to 1.50. Qualitative coding documented null-subject omission, structurally calqued predicates, and vowel epenthesis, together with instances of facilitative transfer; recall data indicated that part of the interference reflected real-time processing constraints rather than absent explicit knowledge.

Key words: cross-linguistic influence, first language transfer, second language acquisition, English oral production, Spanish–English bilingualism

Resumen

La adquisición de una segunda lengua no ocurre de manera independiente del conocimiento lingüístico previo: los aprendices recurren de forma continua a su lengua materna al procesar y producir la lengua meta. Aunque la influencia interlingüística cuenta con amplio desarrollo teórico, escasean los estudios empíricos que integren perspectivas generativas, cognitivas y sociopragmáticas en español-inglés, particularmente en la producción oral espontánea. Este estudio analizó la influencia del español en el desempeño oral en Inglés de estudiantes universitarios.

Mediante un diseño de métodos mixtos predominantemente cuantitativo, se combinó un esquema cuasiexperimental de grupo único (pretest-posttest) con una matriz de codificación de transferencias y entrevistas de recuerdo estimulado. Quince universitarios hispanohablantes (19-24 años, nivel A2-B1) de una institución ecuatoriana realizaron una tarea oral improvisada de tres minutos, evaluada por dos jueces mediante una rúbrica analítica fonológica y morfosintáctica (30 puntos totales), antes y después de ocho semanas de instrucción contrastiva.

Tras la prueba de Shapiro-Wilk, se aplicaron pruebas t para muestras relacionadas. Las puntuaciones fonológicas aumentaron de 7,20 a 8,80; las morfosintácticas, de 7,93 a 9,80; y el puntaje total creció un 22,91 % (de 15,13 a 18,60). Todas las comparaciones resultaron estadísticamente significativas con efectos intra sujeto elevados (1,18 a 1,50). Cualitativamente se evidenciaron omisiones de sujeto, predicados calcados e epéntesis vocálica, junto con transferencias facilitadoras; el recuerdo estimulado asoció la interferencia a restricciones de procesamiento en tiempo real.

Palabras clave: influencia interlingüística, transferencia de la primera lengua, adquisición de segundas lenguas, producción oral en inglés, bilingüismo español-inglés.

Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) doesn't start from scratch. Instead, learners bring their first language (L1) knowledge, structures, and cognitive patterns to a new linguistic system. This prior linguistic knowledge significantly influences second language (L2) learning through a phenomenon called language transfer, which has been more recently conceptualized as cross-linguistic influence (CLI) (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). CLI isn't just a simple transfer of grammatical habits; it's the interaction between two linguistic systems within a bilingual mind, shaping how learners perceive, process, and produce language.

Early language learning approaches primarily saw L1 transfer as a source of interference. Contrastive Analysis, for example, viewed differences between the native and target languages as the main cause of learners' errors, leading researchers to see the first language as an obstacle hindering second language acquisition. However, advances in SLA research have changed this perspective. Modern theories recognize that the native language isn't just a source of interference; it's also a crucial cognitive resource that helps learners process language, form hypotheses, and communicate when they encounter gaps in their L2 knowledge. As a result, language transfer is now understood as a dynamic and multifaceted process, not just a negative phenomenon.

This conceptual shift has led to various theoretical explanations for the mechanisms behind cross-linguistic influence. Within the generative framework, the first language is seen as the learner's initial linguistic state, providing the structural blueprint upon which second language knowledge is gradually built (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996). On the other hand, the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis suggests that successful L2 acquisition necessitates learners reorganizing semantic, syntactic, and morphological features that are differently encoded across languages. This implies that language transfer is a process of cognitive restructuring rather than simply replacing habits (Lardiere, 2009).

In contrast, cognitive and connectionist approaches explain transfer as a result of general learning mechanisms rather than innate grammatical principles. According to this perspective, language acquisition relies on memory, pattern recognition, frequency of exposure, and processing efficiency (Ellis, 2005). Since the neural pathways associated with the native language are highly automatized, learners naturally rely on familiar linguistic structures when processing the L2, especially when time is limited or cognitive load is increased (MacWhinney, 1997). Moreover, conceptual transfer extends

beyond grammar to encompass how individuals organize concepts like time, space, motion, and emotion through the lens of their first language (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

Socio-pragmatic perspectives broaden our understanding of cross-linguistic influence by highlighting the significance of social identity, cultural background, and communicative context. From this perspective, the transfer of discourse conventions, politeness strategies, or cultural conceptualizations is not necessarily due to linguistic deficiency but may reflect learners' efforts to maintain aspects of their identity while communicating in another language (Pavlenko, 2005).

Furthermore, learners' perceptions of the similarity between their native and target languages, known as psychotypology, can significantly impact the extent to which they consciously or unconsciously rely on their native language knowledge during second language production (Kellerman, 1983).

The interaction between Spanish and English offers a particularly valuable context for examining these theoretical perspectives. While both languages share a substantial amount of vocabulary due to their common historical roots, they differ significantly in their grammatical organization, phonological systems, and syntactic structures. For instance, Spanish allows the omission of subject pronouns because verbal morphology conveys the subject's identity, whereas English generally requires explicit subjects, leading Spanish-speaking learners to produce sentences like "Is late" instead of "It is late." Similarly, phonological differences often result in the insertion of an initial vowel before consonant clusters, producing pronunciations like "eschool" or "estudent." These recurring patterns should not be interpreted merely as linguistic errors but rather as evidence of the cognitive influence exerted by learners' native language during second language processing.

These transfer phenomena become particularly relevant in university settings. Unlike young children, university students possess advanced cognitive and analytical abilities that allow them to formulate sophisticated arguments, critically evaluate information, and communicate complex ideas in their native language. However, when using English, they often experience a disconnect between their cognitive abilities and their linguistic proficiency. Consequently, they frequently rely on internal translation and L1-based structures to express ideas that exceed their current English proficiency, increasing the likelihood of complex cross-linguistic transfer.

Understanding how these mechanisms operate in higher education is crucial for improving second language instruction. Traditional pedagogical approaches have often focused on correcting observable linguistic errors without addressing the underlying cognitive processes responsible for those errors. A deeper understanding of cross-linguistic influence can help educators distinguish between transfer that facilitates learning and transfer that hinders accurate language production, leading to more effective and pedagogically informed instructional practices.

Despite this extensive theoretical foundation, empirical research that integrates the generative, cognitive, and socio-pragmatic perspectives on cross-linguistic influence remains scarce, particularly with respect to the Spanish–English language pair. Most existing studies examine L1 transfer through isolated grammatical error analyses or broad theoretical discussions, without empirically investigating how these mechanisms converge in the spontaneous oral production of adult learners. Furthermore, research on cross-linguistic influence has traditionally concentrated on written production or controlled elicitation tasks, leaving a gap in the understanding of how L1 transfer manifests under the real-time processing demands of spoken language among Spanish-speaking university students learning English. This gap is particularly significant in higher education contexts, where learners possess advanced cognitive and academic skills in their native language yet may still experience pronounced L1 interference when attempting to express complex ideas orally in their L2. Addressing this gap is essential not only for advancing theoretical understanding of cross-linguistic influence but also for informing pedagogical practices that more effectively support the development of oral proficiency within this specific learner population.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of Spanish as a first language on English language acquisition among university students by examining language transfer from generative, cognitive, and socio-pragmatic perspectives. By integrating these complementary theoretical frameworks, this research seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cross-linguistic influence as a dynamic cognitive process that can simultaneously facilitate and constrain second language development. Ultimately, the findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights that support the design of more effective, empathetic, and linguistically informed teaching strategies, recognizing the native language not as an obstacle but as a valuable foundation for successful bilingual development.

The impact of L1 transfer is notably pronounced in the development of **speaking skills**, a highly cognitively demanding aspect of language acquisition. Speaking necessitates rapid information processing, simultaneous vocabulary retrieval, grammatical rule application, idea organization, and real-time intelligible pronunciation. Unlike writing, which permits planning and revision, oral

communication operates under immediate processing constraints, offering limited opportunities for language production monitoring (Levelt, 1989). Consequently, learners often depend on the linguistic structures and phonological patterns of their first language when communicating in a target language. This dependency frequently results in pronunciation challenges, syntactic transfer, inappropriate lexical choices, and pragmatic deviations, potentially diminishing communicative effectiveness (Ellis R. , 2015).

From a cognitive standpoint, L1 transfer is intricately linked to the limitations of working memory during spontaneous speech. (Kormos, 2006) posits that speaking encompasses several interconnected processes, including conceptualization, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring. When learners face cognitive overload due to restricted linguistic resources or communicative pressure, they instinctively activate the most automated linguistic system available—their native language. Therefore, transfer-related errors should not be solely interpreted as indicators of inadequate language proficiency but also as reflections of the cognitive strategies learners employ to sustain communication. This perspective shifts the focus from error correction to understanding the underlying cognitive mechanisms that influence oral language production.

Phonological transfer is one of the most apparent manifestations of L1 influence on speaking performance. Learners frequently apply the sound system, stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation of their native language when producing speech in a target language, leading to foreign-accented pronunciation and reduced intelligibility (Major, 2008). Similarly, morphosyntactic transfer impacts spoken fluency when learners unconsciously replicate sentence structures or word order from their L1. Lexical transfer may also occur through the use of cognates, false cognates, or direct translations, which can facilitate communication in certain contexts but cause misunderstandings in others. These forms of transfer illustrate that oral production is shaped not only by linguistic knowledge but also by the interaction between cognitive processing and prior language experience.

Despite the challenges associated with negative transfer, contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) research emphasizes that the first language should not be perceived solely as a source of interference. Instead, it serves as a valuable cognitive resource that supports language learning by facilitating conceptual understanding, vocabulary acquisition, and strategic communication (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Recognizing both the facilitative and inhibitory effects of L1 transfer enables educators to adopt more balanced pedagogical approaches that help learners identify transferable linguistic knowledge while addressing areas where interference is likely to occur. Such approaches

encourage language awareness, reduce learners' anxiety during oral communication, and promote the gradual development of automaticity in speaking.

As a result, comprehending the role of L1 transfer in second language acquisition is essential for elucidating the challenges learners face in developing **speaking skills**. Investigating how native language influence affects pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of oral language development and provides valuable insights for designing effective instructional strategies. By acknowledging the cognitive and linguistic dimensions of L1 transfer, educators can create learning environments that enhance communicative competence while enabling learners to use their first language as a bridge rather than as an obstacle to successful second language communication.

Theoretical Framework

Native Language Interference and Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a multifaceted process influenced by linguistic, cognitive, social, and environmental factors. One of the most significant factors in the learning of a second language (L2) is the influence of the learner's first language (L1). The knowledge that learners already possess in their native language can impact their perception, processing, and production of the target language. This phenomenon has traditionally been discussed in terms of language transfer, L1 interference, and cross-linguistic influence. (Odlin, 2003) elucidates that cross-linguistic influence pertains to the ways in which knowledge of one language affects the learning and utilization of another language. Consequently, the acquisition of an L2 does not transpire independently of prior linguistic knowledge; rather, learners continuously draw upon existing linguistic resources while developing their L2 system.

Historically, early language learning frameworks, particularly Contrastive Analysis, viewed native language transfer through a deficit-oriented lens. In these traditional models, structural disparities between the L1 and L2 were considered the primary source of systematic learner errors. This perspective framed the native language as an obstacle or source of interference that hindered L2 mastery. However, advancements in cognitive linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have transformed this paradigm. Modern frameworks recognize that the native language functions not merely as a source of interference but as a critical cognitive resource. It enables learners to construct hypotheses, process unfamiliar input, and navigate communicative gaps when L2 linguistic resources

are limited. Consequently, language transfer is now understood as a dynamic, multifaceted cognitive process that can simultaneously facilitate and constrain L2 development.

Table 1:

Native Language Interference and Second Language Acquisition

Theoretical Dimension	Contrastive Analysis Era (Legacy View)	Modern SLA / CLI Framework (Contemporary View)
Primary Concept	Direct L1 Interference / Habit Interference	Cross-Linguistic Influence (CLI)
Role of the L1	Structural obstacle and source of errors	Essential cognitive resource and foundation
Cognitive Nature	Passive transmission of behavioral habits	Dynamic interaction between linguistic systems
Pedagogical Goal	Eradication of surface-level errors	Development of language awareness and automaticity

Cross-Linguistic Influence in Language Learning.

The concept of cross-linguistic influence offers a comprehensive perspective for comprehending the role of the L1 in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008) characterize cross-linguistic influence as a multifaceted phenomenon that can impact both language production and comprehension. Their approach demonstrates that L1 influence is not confined to grammatical errors but can also encompass lexical, semantic, conceptual, and pragmatic aspects of language use. Consequently, learners may utilize their knowledge of the native language as a cognitive resource when interpreting or producing L2 forms.

Research on English as an L2 elucidates how disparities between learners' native languages and English can influence acquisition. Their findings revealed that learners' L1 backgrounds influenced their interpretation and utilization of English articles. Spanish-speaking learners, whose L1 includes articles, transferred aspects of the semantic system of Spanish into English, whereas learners whose L1 lacked articles exhibited distinct patterns of interpretation. These findings suggest that learners do not merely memorize isolated L2 forms; instead, they interpret novel linguistic information through preexisting linguistic and conceptual representations.

L1 influence can also interact with the learner's developing interlanguage system. (Jarvis S. , 2000) contends that identifying transfer necessitates systematic evidence rather than assuming that every L2 error originates in the learner's first language. Similarities between learners who share the same L1, differences between learners with distinct L1 backgrounds, and similarities between L1 and interlanguage performance can provide evidence of cross-linguistic influence. This perspective is particularly pertinent because L2 errors may have multiple causes, including developmental processes, limited exposure, insufficient knowledge, and processing difficulties. Consequently, the identification of native language interference necessitates meticulous analysis of learners' linguistic production.

Effects of Native Language Interference on L2 Acquisition.

Native language interference can significantly impact the development of communicative competence in the target language. At the phonological level, learners may transfer sounds, stress patterns, rhythm, or intonation from their first language (L1) into the second language (L2). At the grammatical level, differences in word order, verb conjugation, articles, prepositions, and sentence formation may lead learners to produce structures that reflect their native language. At the lexical level, learners may translate words and expressions directly from the L1, resulting in inappropriate collocations or false cognates. These forms of interference can affect the accuracy and, in some cases, the comprehensibility of L2 communication.

However, L1 influence is not necessarily permanent or equally strong throughout the learning process. (Ellis N. C., 2005) argues that second language development emerges through dynamic interactions among language use, perception, learning, and the linguistic environment. From this perspective, learners gradually develop new associations and representations as they receive and process L2 input. Increased exposure, meaningful interaction, feedback, and attention to linguistic form can therefore contribute to the development of L2 patterns that differ from those established in the L1.

Furthermore, the influence of the L1 may persist even among relatively proficient bilinguals. (Odlin, 2003)notes that cross-linguistic influence can extend beyond basic linguistic structures and may involve conceptual aspects of language. This suggests that learners may continue to rely on patterns associated with their native language when interpreting or expressing meanings in the L2. Consequently, understanding L1 interference requires consideration not only of observable grammatical or pronunciation errors but also of the cognitive processes underlying language production and comprehension.

Implications for Second Language Teaching.

The influence of the native language holds significant implications for second language instruction. Educators who acknowledge the linguistic disparities between students' first language (L1) and the target language can anticipate potential areas of difficulty and design activities that explicitly address them. For instance, if learners tend to transfer L1 pronunciation patterns into English, teachers can provide focused pronunciation practice, perceptual activities, and opportunities for meaningful oral interaction. Similarly, when grammatical differences lead to recurrent errors, teachers can contrast the relevant L1 and L2 structures and provide contextualized practice.

Nevertheless, instruction should not exclusively perceive the L1 as an obstacle. A contemporary perspective on second language acquisition recognizes learners as multilingual individuals whose existing linguistic knowledge can serve as an important resource for additional language learning. (Ortega, 2013) emphasizes the significance of understanding second language acquisition within a broader multilingual perspective rather than viewing learners solely in terms of deficiencies in relation to native-speaker norms. Consequently, teachers can strategically utilize students' L1 knowledge to promote metalinguistic awareness, identify similarities and differences between languages, and assist learners in comprehending why specific L2 forms may deviate from familiar L1 patterns.

Consequently, native language interference constitutes an important dimension of second language acquisition because learners' previous linguistic knowledge inevitably interacts with the development of their second language system. While negative transfer may contribute to errors in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and meaning, L1 influence can also facilitate learning when similarities between languages are advantageous. Therefore, the influence of the native language should be understood as a dynamic process of cross-linguistic interaction rather than merely as a source of linguistic errors. Examining this relationship can provide valuable insights into learners' difficulties and assist teachers in developing more effective instructional practices that acknowledge both the challenges and the resources associated with learners' linguistic backgrounds.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach with a quantitative dominant component and an embedded qualitative component (QUAN → qual). The quantitative strand followed a quasi-experimental, single-group pretest–posttest design, in which the same participants were assessed before and after a period of contrastive instruction targeting native language transfer in oral production. The qualitative strand consisted of a transfer coding matrix applied to the recorded speech samples and stimulated recall interviews conducted with a subset of focal participants.

The choice of a mixed design responds directly to the analytical requirements established in the approved sections. The Introduction frames cross-linguistic influence as a phenomenon that must be examined simultaneously from generative, cognitive, and socio-pragmatic perspectives. A purely quantitative measurement of change would document whether oral performance improved, but it would not provide evidence about the structural origin of the transferred forms or about the processing conditions under which learners resort to first language patterns. The qualitative component supplies that evidence, while the quantitative component establishes whether the observed differences are systematic rather than incidental.

A single-group design was selected because the participants constituted an intact class, which precluded random assignment to a control condition. This limitation is acknowledged in the interpretation of the findings and constrains the causal claims that can legitimately be derived from the results.

Participants and Sampling

Fifteen university students ($N = 15$) enrolled in an undergraduate English course at an Ecuadorian higher education institution participated in the study. Participants were selected through non-probabilistic purposive sampling, and the intact group was retained in its entirety in order to preserve the ecological conditions of the classroom.

All participants shared Spanish as their first language, had received formal English instruction as part of their undergraduate curriculum, and were placed at the A2–B1 range of the Common European Framework of Reference on the basis of the institutional placement procedure. Ages ranged from 19 to 24 years. Inclusion required regular attendance throughout the instructional period and the completion of both assessment sessions; participants who missed either session was to be excluded from the analysis, although no attrition occurred.

The homogeneity of the linguistic background is methodologically consequential rather than incidental. When all participants share the same first language, systematic deviations that recur across the group can be examined against the structural properties of that language, which is one of the evidential conditions that (Jarvis S. , 2000) identifies as necessary for attributing an observed pattern to cross-linguistic influence rather than to developmental processes or limited exposure. The A2–B1 range is also relevant: at these proficiency levels learners possess sufficient lexical and grammatical resources to sustain spontaneous speech, yet their oral production is not yet automatized, which is the condition under which reliance on the first language becomes most visible (Kormos, 2006).

Data Collection Instrument

Oral performance was assessed through a semi-structured speaking task evaluated with an analytic rubric designed for this study. The task required each participant to speak for approximately three minutes on a familiar topic presented at the moment of administration, followed by two follow-up questions posed by the examiner. The absence of preparation time was deliberate: planning opportunities reduce the processing pressure under which transfer is most likely to surface, and the research gap identified in the Introduction concerns precisely spontaneous, unplanned production (Levelt, 1989).

The rubric comprises six criteria distributed across two subscales. Each criterion is scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates that transfer-conditioned features consistently disrupt the intended message and 5 indicates that such features are largely absent or do not affect comprehension. The subscales yield a maximum of 15 points each and a maximum overall speaking score of 30 points.

Table 2

Structure and Scoring of the Speaking Assessment Rubric

Subscale	Criterion	Range	Maximum
Phonological	Segmental accuracy in L1-conditioned contrasts	1–5	5
Phonological	Syllable structure and consonant cluster production	1–5	5
Phonological	Word stress, rhythm, and intonation	1–5	5
Morphosyntactic	Explicit subject expression	1–5	5
Morphosyntactic	Word order and modifier placement	1–5	5
Morphosyntactic	Predicate construction and structural equivalence	1–5	5
Total			30

The phonological subscale addresses the features most frequently associated with first language influence on pronunciation: the discrimination of English contrasts that are not phonemic in Spanish, the avoidance of vowel epenthesis before initial consonant clusters, the production of final clusters, and the reproduction of English stress and rhythmic patterns. These dimensions correspond to the forms of phonological transfer described by Major (2008) and referenced in the approved Theoretical Framework.

The morphosyntactic subscale addresses the structural transfer phenomena documented in the manuscript: the omission of overt subjects, which reflects the null-subject property of Spanish; the placement of modifiers relative to the noun; and the construction of predicates through direct structural correspondence with Spanish, as in age expressions formed with a possession verb.

Each recording was rated independently by two experienced raters. Inter-rater agreement was calculated before the analysis, and discrepancies exceeding one scale point on any criterion were resolved through discussion until a consensus score was reached.

In addition to the rubric, a transfer coding matrix was applied to the transcribed samples. Each deviation attributable to Spanish was recorded and classified by linguistic level (phonological, morphosyntactic, or lexical) and by direction (negative or positive transfer). Positive transfer was coded when a Spanish-based resource produced a target-appropriate English form, which allowed the analysis to capture the facilitative dimension of cross-linguistic influence emphasized in the Theoretical Framework.

Intervention

Between the two assessment sessions, participants received eight weeks of contrastive instruction, delivered in two sixty-minute sessions per week for a total of sixteen sessions. The instructional content was derived from the transfer patterns identified in the pretest coding matrix, so that the intervention responded to the documented difficulties of this specific group rather than to a predetermined syllabus.

Sessions were organized around three recurring components. The first component addressed perception and articulation of the segments and syllable structures in which Spanish phonology conditions English production. The second component addressed suprasegmental features, with attention to lexical stress placement, sentence-level prominence, and rhythmic patterning. The third component consisted of consciousness-raising activities in which learners compared Spanish and English structures explicitly, examined why a given transferred form is licensed in Spanish but not in English, and reformulated their own recorded utterances. Every session concluded with a communicative production task performed without preparation, in order to promote the transfer of explicit knowledge to conditions of real-time processing.

The instructional design deliberately avoided framing the first language as an obstacle. Consistent with the position established in the Theoretical Framework, activities also identified structural and lexical correspondences that support English production, so that learners were encouraged to recognize their existing linguistic knowledge as a resource (Ortega, 2013).

Procedure

The study was conducted in nine chronological stages.

1. Participants were identified within the intact group and informed consent was obtained.
2. Institutional placement data were reviewed to confirm the A2–B1 proficiency range.
3. The pretest speaking task was administered individually and audio-recorded.
4. Recordings were transcribed and scored independently by two raters using the analytic rubric.
5. The transfer coding matrix was applied to the transcripts, and recurrent patterns of first language influence were identified across the group.
6. The eight-week contrastive intervention was implemented on the basis of those patterns.
7. Stimulated recall interviews were conducted with four focal participants, who listened to selected segments of their own recordings and commented on what they had been attempting to express.
8. The posttest speaking task was administered under the same conditions as the pretest, using an equivalent but non-identical prompt in order to limit content familiarity effects.
9. Pretest and posttest scores were compared through descriptive and inferential analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed for each subscale and for the overall score at both assessment points, including the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum. Mean differences and percentage improvement were calculated for the phonological subscale, the morphosyntactic subscale, and the total score.

Because the same participants were assessed on two occasions, the observations were treated as paired. The normality of the score distributions and of the difference scores was examined with the Shapiro–Wilk test, which is appropriate for small samples. The decision rule established prior to the analysis was the following: if the assumption of normality was reasonably satisfied, the paired-samples t-test would be applied; if it was not, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test would be applied instead. The significance level was set at $\alpha = .05$ for all tests.

Effect sizes were computed as Cohen's d for paired samples (d_z), and 95 % confidence intervals were reported for each mean difference. All analyses were conducted at the level of the individual participant,

and every aggregate statistic reported in this article was calculated directly from the individual score matrix presented in Table 3.

The qualitative data were analyzed through the transfer coding matrix and the stimulated recall transcripts. Coded deviations were examined in relation to the theoretical perspectives established in the approved framework, and the recall data were used to distinguish deviations arising from gaps in explicit knowledge from those arising from processing constraints during real-time speech.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and based on written informed consent. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, of the recording of their oral production, and of their right to withdraw at any point without academic consequence. All recordings and transcripts were anonymized through numerical identifiers, and no individual scores were disclosed to third parties or used for course grading. Institutional authorization was obtained prior to data collection.

Analysis of Key Findings

1. Context and Participants

The study was conducted in an undergraduate English course at an Ecuadorian university, in a classroom setting in which English functions as a foreign rather than a second language. Exposure to English outside the institution is therefore limited and largely mediated by written and audiovisual input, while opportunities for spontaneous oral interaction are infrequent. This condition is directly relevant to the research problem: when oral production is rarely practiced under real-time conditions, the articulatory and syntactic routines of the first language remain the most automatized system available to the learner (MacWhinney, 1997).

The group comprised fifteen students between 19 and 24 years of age, all of them native speakers of Spanish, placed within the A2–B1 range of the Common European Framework of Reference. Their academic profile is consistent with the population described in the Introduction: learners whose conceptual and analytical capacities in Spanish substantially exceed the linguistic resources available to them in English.

This asymmetry makes the group particularly appropriate for the study of native language interference in speaking. Participants regularly attempt to express propositional content that surpasses their English

resources, and under that pressure they draw on Spanish structures and phonological routines to sustain communication. Because the entire group shares the same first language, deviations that recur across participants can be examined against the structural properties of Spanish, satisfying one of the evidential conditions required for attributing a pattern to cross-linguistic influence rather than to general developmental processes (Jarvis S. , 2000).

2. Data Collection Instruments

Oral performance was measured through the analytic rubric described in the Methodology, which produces three scores for each participant at each assessment point: a phonological subscale score (maximum 15), a morphosyntactic subscale score (maximum 15), and an overall speaking score (maximum 30). The two subscales were retained as separate measures rather than collapsed into a single index, because the theoretical framework treats phonological and morphosyntactic transfer as distinct manifestations of first language influence, and there is no basis for assuming that they respond equivalently to instruction.

The instrument was designed to be sensitive to change associated with native language interference. Each criterion is defined in terms of the presence and communicative consequence of transfer-conditioned features rather than in terms of general fluency or communicative effectiveness, so that a change in score reflects a change in the extent to which Spanish patterns surface in English speech. Reading, writing, grammar knowledge in the abstract, and vocabulary breadth were deliberately excluded as assessment dimensions, since none of them falls within the empirical delimitation of the study.

The transfer coding matrix complemented the rubric by recording the absolute frequency and the classification of each transfer-conditioned deviation, which permitted the qualitative characterization of the patterns underlying the numerical scores.

3. Procedure

The pretest was administered individually during the first week of the academic period. Each participant performed the three-minute speaking task without preparation time, and the recordings were transcribed and scored by two independent raters. The transfer coding matrix was then applied to the fifteen transcripts, and the recurrent patterns identified in this analysis defined the content of the instructional phase.

The eight-week contrastive intervention followed, addressing the phonological and morphosyntactic patterns documented at the pretest. Stimulated recall interviews with four focal participants were conducted during the intervention period, providing access to the processing conditions under which the transferred forms had been produced.

The posttest was administered in the eleventh week under conditions identical to those of the pretest, with an equivalent prompt of comparable topical familiarity. Scoring followed the same double-rating procedure. The paired scores were then submitted to descriptive analysis, distributional testing, and inferential comparison.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in three stages. Descriptive statistics were computed for the six score variables in order to characterize performance at each assessment point and to establish the magnitude and direction of change. The Shapiro–Wilk test was then applied to determine whether the parametric assumption underlying the paired-samples t-test was tenable. Finally, the paired comparison was conducted for each subscale and for the total score, accompanied by confidence intervals and effect size estimates.

The qualitative material was analyzed in parallel. Coded deviations were grouped by linguistic level and interpreted through the theoretical perspectives established in the approved framework, and the stimulated recall transcripts were examined in order to determine whether particular deviations reflected an absence of explicit knowledge or a failure to deploy that knowledge under real-time processing demands.

5. Results

The individual scores obtained by the fifteen participants are presented in Table 3. All subsequent statistics were computed from this matrix.

Table 3

Individual Speaking Scores at Pretest and Posttest (N = 15)

Participant	Phonological Pretest	Phonological Posttest	Morphosyntactic Pretest	Morphosyntactic Posttest	Total Pretest	Total Posttest
1	6	9	7	9	13	18

Participant	Phonological Pretest	Phonological Posttest	Morphosyntactic Pretest	Morphosyntactic Posttest	Total Pretest	Total Posttest
2	8	10	9	12	17	22
3	7	8	6	7	13	15
4	5	9	6	9	11	18
5	9	9	10	11	19	20
6	7	6	8	7	15	13
7	6	8	7	9	13	17
8	8	11	9	13	17	24
9	10	11	11	12	21	23
10	6	8	7	9	13	17
11	7	7	8	9	15	16
12	9	10	9	11	18	21
13	5	8	6	9	11	17
14	8	10	8	11	16	21
15	7	8	8	9	15	17

Note. Phonological and morphosyntactic subscales range from 3 to 15; total scores range from 6 to 30.

Phonological Results

At the pretest, phonological performance was concentrated in the lower half of the subscale, with scores ranging from 5 to 10. At the posttest the mean increased to 8, with a range of 6 to 11. Dispersion remained essentially stable, indicating that the group did not become more heterogeneous after instruction. Twelve participants improved, two showed no change, and one recorded a decrease of one point.

Morphosyntactic Results

Morphosyntactic performance was marginally higher than phonological performance at the pretest (range 6–11) and increased to a mean of 9; (range 7–13) at the posttest. Fourteen participants improved and one recorded a decrease of one point. The slight increase in standard deviation indicates that participants responded to the instructional phase with somewhat greater variability on this dimension than on the phonological one.

Overall Results

The total speaking score rose from a pretest mean of 15.13 to a posttest mean of 18.60. Descriptive statistics for all six variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Speaking Performance at Pretest and Posttest

Measure	Assessment	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Phonological	Pretest	15	7.20	1.47	5	10
Phonological	Posttest	15	8.80	1.42	6	11
Morphosyntactic	Pretest	15	7.93	1.49	6	11
Morphosyntactic	Posttest	15	9.80	1.78	7	13
Total speaking	Pretest	15	15.13	2.90	11	21
Total speaking	Posttest	15	18.60	3.11	13	24

Qualitative Results

The transfer coding matrix identified recurrent patterns across the group at the pretest, four of which are illustrated below through the focal participants. The absolute frequencies reported correspond to the total number of transfer-conditioned deviations recorded in each three-minute sample.

Participant 1 produced *I have twenty years*, a predicate constructed through direct structural correspondence with the Spanish age expression, within a sample containing ten transfer-conditioned deviations. Participant 3 produced *Is raining today*, omitting the expletive subject in accordance with the null-subject property of Spanish, within a sample containing thirteen deviations. Both cases are consistent with the generative account established in the framework, in which the first language supplies the structural configuration on which second language production is initially built (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996).

Participant 4 produced *I go to the eschool*, inserting a prothetic vowel before the initial consonant cluster in accordance with Spanish phonotactic constraints, within a sample containing six deviations, of which four were phonological. This case is classified at the phonological level, not the syntactic one; the classification matters because the two levels respond to different instructional treatments and are scored on different subscales.

Participant 5 produced the target-appropriate sequence *The system is complex*, drawing on the lexical and structural correspondence with *sistema complejo*, within a sample containing eight deviations. This

case illustrates positive transfer and supports the position, established in the approved framework, that the first language operates simultaneously as a source of interference and as a cognitive resource.

The number of coded deviations was only moderately related to rubric performance, since the criteria weight the communicative consequence of each feature rather than its frequency. Participant 4, for instance, recorded comparatively few deviations, but the epenthetic pattern affected a large proportion of the lexical items produced and consequently reduced intelligibility.

The stimulated recall data indicated that several participants were able to state the relevant English rule when the recording was paused, yet had not applied it during production. This pattern suggests that at least part of the observed interference reflects processing constraints during real-time speech rather than an absence of explicit knowledge, which is consistent with the account of speech production advanced by (Kormos, 2006).

6. Characterization of the Participants

The fifteen participants formed a linguistically homogeneous group. All were native speakers of Spanish, aged between 19 and 24 years, enrolled in the same undergraduate course, and placed within the A2–B1 proficiency range. None reported sustained residence in an English-speaking country or regular use of English outside the academic setting.

This homogeneity is directly relevant to the object of the study. Because the entire group shares the same first language, the recurrence of a given deviation across participants can be examined against the specific structural properties of Spanish rather than attributed to individual variation. The null-subject property, the phonotactic constraint on initial consonant clusters, and the vowel inventory of Spanish are shared by all fifteen participants, and the pretest coding matrix showed that the deviations associated with these properties were distributed across the group rather than concentrated in a few individuals.

The proficiency range is equally consequential. At A2–B1 learners command sufficient resources to sustain extended speech, yet their production is not automatized, so the conditions under which first language routines are activated occur frequently within a three-minute sample. A group at a substantially higher proficiency level would have produced fewer observable instances, and a group at a lower level would have produced samples too limited to score reliably.

7. Performance in the Pretest and Posttest

Both subscales showed higher mean scores at the posttest than at the pretest. The comparison is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Comparison of Speaking Performance Between Pretest and Posttest

Measure	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Difference	% Improvement
Phonological	7.20	8.80	1.60	22.22
Morphosyntactic	7.93	9.80	1.87	23.53
Total speaking	15.13	18.60	3.47	22.91

The two subscales improved by comparable proportions, but the pattern of individual change differed. On the morphosyntactic subscale, fourteen of the fifteen participants improved, and the gains were distributed relatively evenly across the group. On the phonological subscale, twelve participants improved, two remained unchanged, and one declined, indicating a less uniform response to instruction.

Interpreted in relation to native language interference, the morphosyntactic gains suggest an increased capacity to construct English predicates and to express subjects overtly in contexts where Spanish licenses their omission. The phonological gains suggest greater accuracy in the production of segments and syllable structures conditioned by the Spanish sound system, including the reduction of vowel epenthesis before initial clusters.

The less uniform phonological pattern is consistent with the theoretical position established in the framework. Phonological routines are among the most highly automatized components of the first language system (MacWhinney, 1997), and their modification requires a restructuring of articulatory habits that operates on a different timescale from the acquisition of a structural rule. The finding should not be read as evidence that phonological interference is unresponsive to instruction, but as an indication that the two dimensions do not change at the same rate, and that improvement on one cannot be assumed to imply equivalent improvement on the other.

8. Verification of the Assumption of Normality

The Shapiro–Wilk test was applied to the six score distributions and to the three sets of difference scores prior to the selection of the inferential procedure. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6*Shapiro–Wilk Test of Normality (N = 15)*

Variable	Shapiro–Wilk Statistic	p	Interpretation
Phonological pretest	.952	.560	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Phonological posttest	.943	.421	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Morphosyntactic pretest	.936	.333	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Morphosyntactic posttest	.898	.089	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Total pretest	.954	.595	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Total posttest	.960	.686	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Phonological difference	.960	.692	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Morphosyntactic difference	.919	.187	Insufficient evidence to reject normality
Total difference	.953	.570	Insufficient evidence to reject normality

All p values exceeded the .05 threshold, so the null hypothesis of normality was not rejected in any case. This outcome does not establish that the distributions are normal; with a sample of fifteen the test has limited power to detect moderate departures, and the correct interpretation is that the data provide insufficient evidence against the assumption. On this basis the parametric procedure was considered admissible, and the paired-samples t-test was applied. It should be noted that the morphosyntactic posttest distribution yielded the value closest to the threshold ($p = .089$), which warrants a degree of caution in the interpretation of that particular comparison.

9. Inferential Comparison Between the Pretest and Posttest

Because each participant contributed one observation at each assessment point, the comparisons were conducted as paired analyses. The results of the paired-samples t-tests are presented in Table 7.

Table 7*Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Pretest–Posttest Comparisons (N = 15)*

Measure	Test	t	df	p	Mean Difference	95 % CI	d _z
Phonological	Paired t-test	4.583	14	< .001	1.60	[0.85, 2.35]	1.18
Morphosyntactic	Paired t-test	5.802	14	< .001	1.87	[1.18, 2.56]	1.50
Total speaking	Paired t-test	5.363	14	< .001	3.47	[2.08, 4.85]	1.38

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences between the pretest and the posttest on both subscales and on the total score at $\alpha = .05$. The confidence intervals for all three comparisons excluded zero, and the lower bounds indicate that even the most conservative estimate of change corresponds to an increase of approximately one scale point on each subscale.

The effect sizes were large in all three comparisons, with the morphosyntactic subscale ($d_z = 1.50$) exceeding the phonological subscale ($d_z = 1.18$). This difference should be interpreted with restraint. Within-participant effect sizes are computed on the standard deviation of the difference scores and are consequently sensitive to the consistency of individual change, so the higher morphosyntactic value reflects the greater uniformity of the gains on that dimension as much as their magnitude.

These findings indicate that oral performance on features associated with Spanish influence differed systematically between the two assessment points, and that the difference is unlikely to be attributable to sampling variation alone. They do not, however, establish that the instructional intervention caused the change. In the absence of a control group, maturation, increased familiarity with the assessment format, and general exposure to English during the eight-week period remain plausible alternative explanations. The results are therefore consistent with the proposition that instruction addressing cross-linguistic influence can modify the surface manifestations of transfer in speaking, but they do not by themselves demonstrate it.

Taken together with the qualitative material, the findings support the position established in the approved theoretical framework. The persistence of transfer-conditioned features at the posttest, particularly on the phonological subscale, indicates that first language influence is not eliminated through short-term instruction. The stimulated recall data further suggest that a portion of the observed interference arises at the level of processing rather than knowledge, which is consistent with the view that the first language operates as an automatized system that learners activate under communicative pressure, and not merely as a set of incorrect habits to be replaced (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

Statistical Tables

The tables required for the presentation of the empirical results are integrated within the Analysis of Key Findings at the points where they are discussed, in accordance with APA reporting conventions:

- **Table 2.** Structure and scoring of the speaking assessment rubric (Methodology, Data Collection Instrument).
- **Table 3.** Individual speaking scores at pretest and posttest (Results).

- **Table 4.** Descriptive statistics for speaking performance at pretest and posttest (Results).
- **Table 5.** Comparison of speaking performance between pretest and posttest (Performance in the Pretest and Posttest).
- **Table 6.** Shapiro–Wilk test of normality (Verification of the Assumption of Normality).
- **Table 7.** Paired-samples t-test results (Inferential Comparison Between the Pretest and Posttest).

Table numbering begins at 2 because Table 1 appears in the approved Theoretical Framework.

Discussion and Synthesis

The present study investigated the influence of Spanish as a first language (L1) on English oral production among university-level learners, with specific attention to phonological and morphosyntactic manifestations of cross-linguistic influence. The analysis was grounded in generative, cognitive, and contemporary cross-linguistic frameworks, which conceptualize L1 influence not merely as a source of error but as a dynamic interaction between established linguistic representations and the developing second-language (L2) system. This perspective aligns with contemporary research indicating that cross-linguistic influence extends beyond grammatical interference to encompass production, comprehension, lexical processing, and conceptual representation (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Consistent with this view, the theoretical framework posits that L2 acquisition does not occur independently of a learner's existing linguistic knowledge.

Descriptive findings indicate a measurable improvement in speaking performance following an eight-week contrastive instructional period. The phonological mean increased from 7.20 ($SD = 1.47$) to 8.80 ($SD = 1.42$), while the morphosyntactic mean rose from 7.93 ($SD = 1.49$) to 9.80 ($SD = 1.78$). Consequently, the overall speaking score improved from 15.13 ($SD = 2.90$) to 18.60 ($SD = 3.11$), representing a 22.91% increase. Paired comparisons revealed statistically significant differences, with the total speaking score showing a mean gain of 3.47 points and a large within-participant effect size ($dz = 1.38$). The morphosyntactic comparison yielded the largest effect size ($dz = 1.50$), followed by the phonological comparison ($dz = 1.18$).

These results suggest that explicit attention to L1-conditioned features may be associated with observable changes in learners' oral performance. However, these findings require cautious interpretation due to the study's single-group pretest–posttest design, which lacks a control group. As noted in the original manuscript, observed gains cannot be attributed exclusively to the instructional intervention; alternative factors such as maturation, additional exposure to English, familiarity with the assessment procedure, or other classroom experiences may have contributed to the improvement.

Another important finding concerns the need to distinguish negative transfer from positive transfer. The study included positive transfer in its coding matrix rather than treating every influence of Spanish as

problematic. This approach is consistent with contemporary research on cross-linguistic influence, which emphasizes that similarities between languages can facilitate learning while differences may create processing or production difficulties (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

The example “*The system is complex*” illustrates this phenomenon. The lexical and structural correspondence between Spanish and English can facilitate appropriate L2 production when the learner recognizes a compatible relationship between the two languages. This supports a broader interpretation of the L1 as a linguistic and cognitive resource, rather than simply an obstacle.

At the same time, linguistic similarity does not guarantee positive transfer. Research on English articles, for example, demonstrates that even learners whose L1 possesses an article system may continue to experience difficulties with English articles. (Sun, 2016) found that the relationship between L1 and L2 article systems was more complex than a simple similarity-equals-easier-acquisition assumption. Therefore, pedagogical comparisons between Spanish and English should focus not merely on identifying similarities and differences but on examining how particular linguistic features are represented and used in context.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The present study examined the influence of Spanish as a first language on English oral production among university learners, focusing specifically on phonological and morphosyntactic manifestations of cross-linguistic influence. The theoretical and analytical framework demonstrates that L1 influence cannot be adequately understood as a simple collection of errors. Rather, it represents an interaction between previously established linguistic representations, developing L2 knowledge, and the cognitive demands associated with real-time speech production.

The analytical results showed improvement in both dimensions examined. Phonological performance increased by 22.22%, while morphosyntactic performance increased by 23.53%. Overall speaking performance increased by 22.91%. The paired analyses presented in the manuscript showed statistically significant pretest and posttest differences, accompanied by large within-participant effect sizes. These results indicate that the proposed contrastive instructional model is capable of detecting meaningful changes in L1-conditioned aspects of oral performance.

Despite these limitations, the theoretical synthesis provides an important pedagogical implication. L1 should not be treated exclusively as an obstacle to English acquisition. Spanish provides learners with linguistic knowledge, conceptual resources, and established processing routines that may produce either facilitative or inhibitory effects depending on the relationship between the two languages and the

communicative context. This position is consistent with the contemporary understanding of cross-linguistic influence (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008) and with multilingual approaches to SLA (Ortega, 2013).

Future research should first address the principal methodological limitation of the present study by implementing a larger, experimentally controlled sample. A randomized controlled or quasi-experimental design involving an intervention group and an appropriate comparison group would permit stronger conclusions concerning whether changes in L1-conditioned speaking features are attributable specifically to contrastive instruction. Such a design would also reduce the possibility that maturation or general exposure to English explains the observed improvement.

Additionally, it should incorporate objective acoustic and linguistic measurements in addition to analytic speaking rubrics. Acoustic measures of vowel quality, voice onset time, consonant-cluster production, stress, rhythm, and intonation could provide more precise evidence concerning phonological change. This would complement the qualitative coding approach and allow researchers to distinguish perceptible improvement from changes that may not be readily captured through holistic or analytic ratings. Recent work on Spanish–English phonological interaction demonstrates the usefulness of acoustic measures for identifying subtle forms of cross-linguistic influence.

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CARTA DE ACEPTACIÓN DE ARTÍCULO CIENTÍFICO

Por la presente se certifica que el artículo titulado "The Influence of Native Language Interference on the Second Language Acquisition"

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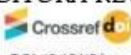
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