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INGLÉS**

**The Native Language Interference (language transfer) in Ecuadorian High  
School Learners of English.**

**TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

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2018

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## **DEDICATION**

To my hardworking, supportive parents and siblings for all their love and help.

Neyba

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

To my thesis advisor for all her pieces of advice and support throughout my thesis.

Neyba

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## **ABSTRACT**

“The native language interference (language transfer) in Ecuadorian high school learners of English” aims at identifying the influence of the native language on EFL Ecuadorian learners in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. To achieve this goal, 98 students who are attending the first year of baccalaureate in a public high-school and one English teacher were asked to participate in this study. The instruments for data collection were a checklist and 2 written test. In one of the test students had to write a paragraph and in the other students had to translate words and phrases. Then, the data was organized into charts to determine the most common mistakes. The results from this study indicate that grammar and vocabulary are the most affected language aspects by language transfer. In grammar the most affected aspects by this phenomenon are misuse of article, misuse of preposition, and subject-verb agreement. In vocabulary, “librería”, “actualmente” and “asistir”, “hacer una pregunta”, “dar un exámen” and “tomar helado” were the most affected words and phrases by LT. In pronunciation “school”, “sport/sports” and “study/studied” were the most affected words.

**KEYWORDS:** foreign language, grammar, language transfer, mistakes, mother tongue, pronunciation, vocabulary.

## RESUMEN

“La interferencia del idioma materno (transferencia lingüística) en estudiantes de inglés de los colegios ecuatorianos” tiene como objetivo identificar la influencia del idioma materno en los estudiantes ecuatorianos quienes aprenden Inglés como lengua extranjera en gramática, vocabulario y pronunciación. Para lograr este objetivo, 98 estudiantes que asisten al primer año de bachillerato en un colegio público y un maestro de inglés fueron invitados a participar en este estudio. Los instrumentos para la recolección de datos fueron una lista de control y 2 pruebas escritas. En una de las pruebas, los estudiantes escribieron un párrafo y en la otra los estudiantes tradujeron palabras y frases. Luego, los datos se organizaron en tablas para determinar los errores más comunes. Los resultados de este estudio indican que la gramática y el vocabulario son los aspectos del lenguaje más afectados por la transferencia lingüística. En gramática, los aspectos más afectados por este fenómeno son el mal uso del artículo, el uso indebido de la preposición y la concordancia entre el sujeto y el verbo. En vocabulario, "librería", "actualmente" y "asistir", "hacer una pregunta", "dar un exámen" y "tomar helado" fueron las palabras y frases más afectadas por la TL. En pronunciación "escuela", "deporte / deportes" y "estudiar / estudiar" fueron las palabras más afectadas.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** idioma extranjero, gramática, transferencia lingüística, errores, lengua materna, pronunciación, vocabulario.

## INTRODUCTION

The present thesis focuses on native language interference on the target language in high-school learners. The two languages in analysis are Spanish and English; being Spanish the first language/mother tongue and English the target language/foreign language. In this study, language aspects such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are analyzed in order to find the influence of the mother tongue.

Language interference or language transfer is the influence that one language has on the other one. The interference phenomenon can be seen in many aspects of a language including, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation among others. This interference can be positive and negative. The negative one induces learners to make mistakes and thus non-understandable written or spoken language is produced.

Vocabulary interference is understood as the borrowing of words from the first language to the target one, or to the adding, deleting or making up of words to make them sound as English words. Pronunciation interference is about learners using first phonological knowledge to produce spoken language on the target one, when Spanish learners of English produce words starting with consonant clusters “sp”, “sk”, “sl”, “st” among others, they tend to add the extra sound “e” to say words such as “school”, “speak”, etc. And grammar interference refers to target learners applying first grammar knowledge. Thus, many Spanish speakers may wrongly say “a woman beautiful” in lieu of “a beautiful woman”.

Regarding the present topic, several pieces of research have been done. One study is the one that Suliman (2014) conducted. The objective of this study was to look for the first language interference in someone’s spoken production. The main conclusion of this study was that students use as a base their first language knowledge to produce speech in English. Also, Khan (2016) carried out a research whose purpose was to delve into the appropriate use of L1 when acquiring L2 vocabulary. The researcher concluded that translation is a good method to teach vocabulary because students get the correct equivalents and a good understanding of the second language. Another study was carried out by Cabrera et al. (2014) whose objective was to analyze the interference of the Spanish language with the second language (English). The main conclusion was that the most difficult areas when writing in English are grammar structure and vocabulary.

The investigation of this study was made in the interest of identifying L1 interference on target language, the most frequent aspects affected by language transfer in high-school learners, and the way EFL teachers deal with this phenomenon. These will allow the researcher to come up with the most common techniques to overcome or defeat language transfer phenomenon.

In the same way, this study was done with academic purposes because nowadays a lot of teenagers are learning English but neither they nor the teachers take into account that

most of the mistakes they make are due to the first language interference. For people who share the first language, it may be easy to understand each other even though they make mistakes, but for the speakers of other languages it might be difficult because they do not share the same vocabulary, grammatical structures and other aspects of the language (Xoxha, 2015). Thus, it is important to know about language interference and overcome it to express thoughts clearly. Also, the present research was carried out with the purpose that teachers, students, researchers, institutions and people who are interested in this topic can take advantage of this by identifying the most common mistakes in writing, speaking and vocabulary use made by students and avoid them by reading the pieces of advice that the researcher provided in this investigation. In addition, this study was conducted to create a sense of responsibility on teachers who are unaware of language interference and to attempt to encourage those teachers who are aware of and talk about it in classes to do it continuously.

The researcher observed English classes and applied two instruments to the students and observed the teacher's and students' reactions. In the observation, the researcher listened to how students pronounced words starting with consonant clusters "sp", "sk", "st", etc. and jotted down how often the word was said, and how many times that word was pronounced correctly or incorrectly. Also, the researcher observed and wrote down the techniques the teacher used to deal with the language transfer phenomenon. The two instruments were applied to the sample as well. The students were asked to write a paragraph, to do this, students had to choose one of the four topics proposed. Also, the students translated 14 false friends and 5 phrases.

The present thesis is divided in the following parts:

In chapter I, the definitions of some important topics are described. These topics include what language, native language, foreign language is. Also, language transfer is defined as well as positive and negative transfer. Moreover, factors that cause language transfer are dealt as well as why learning a foreign language is difficult. Likewise, this chapter deals with the aspects affected by language interference: phonology, lexis and grammar. Finally, this chapter shows a summary of previous pieces of research related to the topic.

In chapter II, the methodology used to carry out the present investigation is explained. Moreover, information of the participants, place and the process of investigation is displayed.

In chapter III, the analysis and discussion of data is explained. To analyze the data quantitative and qualitative methods were used to get to the results. The data obtained is organized into tables from the most common mistakes due to language transfer phenomenon to the least. This tables address mistakes in grammar, pronunciation (consonant clusters) and vocabulary.

During the field investigation, one limitation that arose was that in the second week of observation, the Institutional sports week started, so students did not have normal classes. The researcher could not observe normally two of the lessons, but this was recovered at another time, in another class hour.

## CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Language learning is a complex process, it is not acquired or learned instantly by an individual. In order to master the native language, a human being has to go through a long period of time, in which he/she faces the stage of trial in which learners make mistakes in pronunciation, writing, sentence formation and so on. In the same way, target language learners make a lot of mistakes when learning a foreign language, but this is more complex because speakers already know/speak one. And it results that the knowledge of the native language hampers in some way a learning process; it may give as an outcome a delayed target language production or can either hamper a faster learning or acquisition since it interferes with the learning of L2 or foreign language.

### Language

Petuya (2015) defines language as a means of communication used by people to convey facts, and knowledge. Language is a complex system which is composed of a lexicon, grammar rules, phonology, numerals, body language, signs, facial expressions, and so on (Gertner, Fisher, & Eisengart, 2006). Humans combine all these aspects to transmit knowledge, establish conversations, and pass down information to new generations, in other words, people put together letters to form words, those words form phrases and sentences, these sentences are blended with body gestures, intonation, and rhythm and so on to express meaning (Nevid, 2011).

As a means of communication, language is used every day at any moment; people use it to express themselves, to convince people, to reach agreement, to establish and maintain relationships, in other words, it is used in daily activities. It is the most precious tool human beings can count on because people are the only ones who have this privilege; other species communicate with each other through movements, signs, songs and with any other means, but they do not have a communication system (Yule, 2016).

Around the world, there are about 7 099 languages. This number of languages can be reduced in a short amount of time. Some of these languages are spoken by few people and as speakers of some languages die the language dies with them. A reason for the disappearance of these languages is that people who belong to certain communities prefer to learn and speak languages that are spoken by a great deal of people (Simons & Charles, 2017). These languages include Spanish, English, Chinese, French, Chinese, Arabic, Armenian, Catalan, Dutch, Filipino, German, Greek, Hakka, Hebrew, Hindi, Irish, Japanese, Javanese, Latin, Livonian, Luganda, Malay, Mandarin, Muskum, Norwegian, Palula, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Sardinian, Serbian, Shona, Slovak, Slovene, Turkish, Ukrainian Vietnamese, and so on. Every language has its own phonological, grammatical, etc. system (Lyovin, Kessler & Leben, 2016).

### Native Language

Saville (2006) says that native language is known as first language or as mother tongue among other terms. This is the first language that a human being learns before the age of three years. It is being perfected over the years, because at the age of three learners just acquire basic things such as sound distinction, taking turns in conversations properly. And at the age of five or six learners use properly grammatical structures, rules and the other more complex language features are learned and acquired along the school years. In other words, native language is acquired and mastered in a natural way during the childhood. In addition, mother tongue is spoken and shared by people who live around the young individual, that is to say, it is shared by the individuals who belong to the same linguistic community/speech community.

In the same way, Benson and Kosonen (2013) mention that the mother tongue is the language that an individual masters at different levels including such elements as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical structures together with the gradual acquisition of pragmatic knowledge without any effort, in a natural way, just by being exposed to it in his/her linguistic community. Native language production happens in a natural way; speakers use it fluently without hesitating; there is not stops for the so called "thinking time" to find a suitable word or its synonym or to construct a sentence mentally first, in a difference with the L2 learning and production, especially at the beginning stages.

For example, a person who was born in Ecuador or has come to Ecuador during early childhood, without previous language background, his/her native language is Spanish, as well it is for Peruvians, Colombians, Chileans, Bolivians, Mexicans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Argentines, Cubans, Uruguayans, Spaniards and any other country in which Spanish is the official language. If this person later travels to another country of a different language when adult his/her native language will continue being Spanish because this is the first language he/she has been exposed to and learned.

As another example, it could be mentioned the case of individuals who were born in any English-speaking country in which English is the official/ main language. So their mother tongue is English. It basically refers to those people who were born in The United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and in any other country in which English is the official language.

### **Foreign Language**

Saville (2006) expresses that foreign language is also known as target language. This is the language spoken in other countries and is not the native language of an individual (Cohen, 2014). A foreign language is learned consciously for the following reasons, it is compulsory in schools, high schools and universities; it is used for travelling; cultural communication, own desire or any other reason (Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen & Lehtovaara, 2014). For instance, for Ecuadorian citizens, English is the foreign language

because it is not the official language, and is taught in secondary or high schools as any other subject. It can also be applied for the USA citizens who live in that country and learn Spanish in high schools.

Jespener (2013) mentions that one of the objectives to learn a foreign language is to be able to talk and communicate with people from other countries who speak a different language in order to transmit or receive knowledge, ideas and information. Nowadays the knowledge of a target language such as English is essential to keep in touch with people around the world in order to know what is happening outside.

Learning a target language means that the individual already knows a first language, and the knowledge of the first language interferes with the acquisition of the L2/foreign language; this phenomenon is known as Language Interference or Language Transfer.

### **Language Transfer**

Language interference or Language Transfer refers to the influence that L1 has on the target language. This term refers to the phenomenon that occurs when non-native speakers apply, or transfer their knowledge of the native language (the grammar rules, pronunciation features, vocabulary, etc.) into the target one (Pochhacker, 2015). This happens because when an individual is learning something new, he/she always relies on his/her previous knowledge, or establish relationships between previous and newly acquired language, and tries to find similarities in the new and previous knowledge and uses what is known to fill the gaps in the unknown area. This is inevitably when learning a foreign language; learners tend to use their native language knowledge (Benati & Angelovska, 2016).

It is impossible to learn a target language from the scratch, since, every human being masters the entire aspects (grammar, vocabulary, phonology, ect.) of the native language. Beginner learners tend to use the knowledge of their native language as the main resource when trying to speak in English. They frequently translate directly from their native into the target language (Cormier & Hagman, 2014).

#### **Classification of language transfer.**

##### **Positive transfer.**

Saville (2006) also outlined both sides of language transfer phenomenon. One side represents the so called Positive Transfer. It occurs when the interference of native language results in proper language production; this means, that the grammatical rules, lexicon or any other aspect of the mother tongue that was transferred to produce something in the target language are the same or similar. The positive transfer results beneficial for learners, because it simplifies the learning process. Positive transfer refers to the application of the existing rules in learner's native language and their direct transfer into the target one. When the coincidence between L1 and L2 is complete or very similar, it obviously makes the



language acquisition easier and benefits the whole learning process. It leads to correct production of the target language.

Positive transfer may be observed in the application of the grammar rules. Plural formation is a clear example. For instance, Spanish language speakers add “s” to form plurals. Coincidentally, in English it can be observed the same rule. For example, in Spanish for the singular noun “casa” an “-s” is just needed at the end of the word to form the plural noun “casas”; in the same way in English to form the plural noun of “house” just an “s” is needed “houses”. Another case is the noun “vaca” which plural form is “vacas” in Spanish, in English the plural noun for “cow” is “cows”. Another example, in Spanish the singular noun is “gato” and the plural is “gatos”; in English the singular noun is “cat” and the plural one is “cats” (Whitley, 2002).

Also, positive transfer is present at a lexical level (true cognates). Some English words are written and pronounced almost in the same way as in Spanish. Some examples are: in Spanish “interesante” in English “interesting”, “ángel” in Spanish and “angel” in English, in Spanish “banco” in English “bank”. Also, words such as “curious”, “culture”, “divide”, “excellent”, “family”, “hotel”, “objective”, “opinion”, “radio”, “repeat”, “vacation”, “vocabulary”, “rose”, “real”, “chocolate”, “essential” are true cognates because in Spanish these words are as follow, “curioso”, “cultura”, “dividir”, “excelente”, “familia”, “hotel”, “objetivo”, “opinion”, “radio”, “repetir”, “vacación”, “vocabulario”, “rosa”, “real”, “chocolate”, and “esencial” respectively. These pairs of words have the same meaning in both languages Spanish and English, as it can be noticed some of the words are spelled in the same way in both languages (Petuya, 2015).

### **Negative transfer.**

There can be observed another phenomenon of language transfer. It is the so called Negative Transfer. This phenomenon occurs when the aspects of a language, such as word meanings, grammar structures, pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, etc. are not similar or the same to the other one. That is, speakers’ native language aspects do not coincide with the speakers’ target language, but, the users apply their L1 knowledge to produce language in the TL, giving place to negative interference. If the mother tongue of the individual learning a foreign language is quite different to the target language, negative interference has a great impact on the spoken and written production. Negative transfer hinders a proper language production (Saville, 2006).

For example, negative transfer occurs when Spanish native speakers learning English add “s” or “es” to form the plural form without following specific rules, without taking into consideration irregular nouns and exceptions. For example, they say “fishes” instead of “fish”, “knifes” instead of “knives”, “scarfs” instead of “scarves”, “algas” instead of

“algae”, “halves” instead of “halves”, “analysis” instead of “analyses”, “womans” instead of “women”, “foots” in lieu of “feet”, “mouses” for “mice”, and so on (Appel & Mysken, 2006).

To wrap up, if the structures in both languages, English and Spanish do not coincide, it results in negative transfer of the knowledge and it results in an incorrect production of the target language, but if they match, correct production occurs.

### **Factors that Cause Interference**

When learning a foreign or second language, the native language knowledge is always present. Weinrich (1970) mentions that the following aspects cause interference:

The first factor that he mentions is learner bilingualism background. Being bilingual implies speaking two languages, one language is the mother tongue and the other is the target one, so mother tongue hinders the proper learning of TL. Learners have already memorized a substantial amount of words, grammar rules, phonological rules in their mother tongue, so it is logical that they are going to use that knowledge when learning any target language (Hoffmann, 2014).

The second factor is lack of faithfulness in target language; when the learner does not feel interested in the target language, he/she does not follow the appropriate structures of the target language and speaks and writes the way he/she wants. There is a great lack of responsibility and motivation to learn English from the beginning stages then, they think that English is easy and that is why they do not put too much effort to learn properly the target language. Learners, whose performance in English is not good, use their first language knowledge in the productive skills.

The third factor is limited lexicon, when a learner does not know a corresponding word in the target language he/she resorts to first language. Thus, they look for a word that sounds or is spelt in the same way in both target and native language, or they simply make up words, delete some letters of the Spanish words to use in their productive skills. It is important to know plenty of vocabulary of any area in order to have a native level, to speak smoothly and transmit understandable ideas, thoughts and information. Specific areas have specific vocabulary, for examples, doctors have their own set of words; engineers have their own set of words, and every profession has a specific group of vocabulary.

The fourth factor is need of synonym (a word which meaning is similar or alike to the other one. For example, **pretty** is a synonym of **beautiful** (Nursing, 2017).) Synonyms are important to avoid redundancy, the excessive use of a word in a single paragraph, essay or conversation. Synonyms show that the writer has a great deal of vocabulary in his/her memory thus he/she can express ideas smoothly and clearly, but this is a big problem for a low –level learner because in his/her attempt to use and look for words that have the same meaning they adopt words from their mother tongue.

The last factor is prestige and style. Speakers believe that the more sophisticated words they use, the better. They feel proud of establishing a conversation or delivering a piece of writing full of elegant, less frequently literary words. Unluckily, speakers and writers do not know the real meaning of a word, its denotative (literal meaning) or connotative (secondary meaning) meaning. For example, the phrase “white dove”. The denotative meaning of this phrase refers to a flying-white, small bird. It can be seen in sentences such as: “Look at that beautiful white dove eating fruits”. While its connotative meaning may refer to an innocent person. You can find it in sentences such as: “He is a white dove, he is so quiet and never speaks ill of people”

### **Why it is Difficult to Learn a Target Language**

Lennenberg (1967) mentions that when learning a target language at a proficient manner, age is an important factor. He says that it is better to learn another language when being a little baby, at an early stage because children’s brains are more elastic, then, the capacity to learn vocabulary and any aspect of a language without the interference of mother tongue reaches its highest peak. On the other hand, when a human being gets to the puberty stage, learning a language becomes harder because the brain becomes less elastic, making language learning harder. In this stage, native language has a great influence on the target language because the individual possesses a substantial amount of knowledge in all the language aspects of their mother tongue.

Nemati and Taghizade (2006) add that childhood is the best stage to learn a language mainly when being at home because parents feel anxious to hear their babies to say something, so when their kids produce language, they become excited and do not correct the child they rather encourage their little kid to do it again and again, producing on their infants so much confidence to speak. On the contrary, when being at school, the teachers always correct either pronunciation, grammar or any other aspect of the language. It is common to listen to teachers interrupting their pupils in their oral production or to see written production full of corrections. For the mentioned reasons, home is a real place to learn a language.

### **Aspects Affected by Language Interference**

#### **Phonological interference.**

Phonology refers to the study of segmental and supra-segmental aspects of speech. Segmental aspects are made of vowels and consonants and the supra-segmental aspects refer to stress, rhythm and intonation (Pennington, 2013). Then, phonological interference takes place when an individual learning a foreign language uses his/her phonological knowledge of L1 in aspects such as speech sounds, intonation, rhythm in the spoken production of the foreign language (Jones, 2006).

Spanish phonology is quite unlike compared to the English one in terms of vowels, and consonants. The Spanish language has 5 vowels and 5 diphthongs and the English language has eight diphthongs, 12 vowels, from which 7 are short and 5 long (Jones, 2006). In Spanish the length of the vowels does not change the meaning of a word, but in English it does. For example, when producing vowels sounds, Spanish speakers might say “beat” in lieu of “bit”. When producing consonants sounds, Spanish speakers might say “ban” instead of “van” (Yavas, 2016).

### **Consonant clusters.**

Pearce (2007) mentions that consonant clusters are composed of two or more consonants. Adding to this definition, Stork and Widdowson (2014) mention that consonant clusters can only be found at the beginning and at the end of words. Consonant clusters that occur at the beginning cannot occur at the end of words. At the beginning, words can take two or three consonants, including, “sp”, “st”, “sm”, “sl”, “sk”, “spl”, “sq”, “spr”, “str”. These consonant clusters can be seen in words such as *spe*ak, *st*art, *sm*ooth, *sl*ope, *sk*y, *sp*lice, *sque*eze, *sp*rinkle, *st*rength, and *scr*ub (Oxford University Press [OUP], 2017). Also, Stork and Widdowson say that when there are three consonants at the beginning of words, the first consonant is always “s” as a general rule of thumb, the next consonant can be “p”, “k”, or “t” and the last consonant can be “y”, “r”, “l”, or “w”. At the end, words can take two, three and four consonants such as “lf”, “rk”, “nd”, “lth”, “rsh”, “pth”, “sks”, “ghts”, “xths”. These consonant clusters are found in words such as *elf*, *bark*, *greensand*, *commonwealth*, *harsh*, *depth*, *multitasks*, *counterweights* and *sixths*. One of the biggest problems Spanish speakers face is the production of consonant clusters at the end and at the beginning of words. In order to produce English-like-pronunciation, Spanish speakers tend to shorten, substitute or adjust these sounds producing incorrect pronunciation (Gómez & Sánchez, 2016).

The most common of the already mentioned problems is the adjustment of consonant clusters at the beginning of words. For instance, in Spanish it was not found any word starting with “s”, but there are many starting with “es”, examples include: “estatura”, “español”, “escuela”, “estilo”, “estudiante”, “espacio”, “espina”, “esbelto”, “esfuerzo”, “esfero”, “estrella” and many more. Thus, when Spanish speakers produce words that start with consonant clusters such as “sp”, “sk”, “st” among others, they always add the extra sound “e”, this phenomenon is known as prothesis. So, when attempting to produce “school”, they say /esku:l/ in lieu of /sku:l/; /espi:k/ instead of /spi:k/; /eskaɪ/ for /skaɪ/ among other words (OUP, 2017).

Moreover, to pronounce consonant clusters at the end is another big deal because learners try to read every single letter that there is on the word, so to read sentences that include those words result very troublesome for learners. For instance, observe the following examples that represent those above mentioned difficulties: “What are your strengths and

weaknesses? ", "The robbers used masks to steal the money", "the teacher was so harsh with the students in order to get the class in order" (Stork & Widdowson, 2014).

This mispronunciation happens because Spanish speakers use the same strategy (letter-by-letter) as in Spanish to read English words. Thus, their production results in invented and non-sense words because they do not associate well graphemes and morphemes in English. This happens, because in Spanish to read words it is only necessary to know how every single letter of the alphabet is pronounced to produce proper pronunciation. This does not occur in English because knowing just the sounds of the letters is not enough, there are some words that are written almost in the same way but pronounced totally differently, the so called homographs. For instance: The verb "read" in present is pronounced like /ri:d/, and this same verb in past which is spelt in the same way is pronounced differently /red/. Another example, is the word "lead", as a verb it is pronounced as /li:d/, but as a noun it is pronounced /led/ (Zaretsky & Schwartz, 2016).

### **Lexical transfer.**

Lexical transfer refers to the transfer of knowledge on vocabulary from the native language to the foreign one (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Learners borrow words from their mother tongue and in order to make them sound as an English word they add, edit out letters or make up words. If they face true cognates, it results in positive transfers, thus, correct production, but, if they face false cognates/false friends (words that are similar in their spelling and pronunciation, but have different meanings and roots), their English production is wrong, then, negative transfer takes place (Saville, 2006).

This happens because English is so different from Spanish but at the same time these two languages share some common roots and origins because they both belong to the group of the Indo-European languages, this big group of languages is subdivided into sub-branches, in which, the English language is classified with Germanic languages, and Spanish is part of the Romance languages (Lyovin, Kessler & Leben, 2016); consequently, these common origins are reflected in what we know as true cognates (words that have the same definition and are written and read almost or exactly in the same manner in both languages). Both English and Spanish borrowed words from Classical Greek, Latin and French, so, as a result true cognates (Calvo, 2005)

That is why vocabulary is influenced by language interference. Learners get confused and use words that are written almost in the same manner (homograph) or pronounced almost in the same way (homophone) in both mother and target language to say or write something in another language (Postman & Keppel, 2014). For example, Spanish speakers use "embarrassed" for "embarazada" in lieu of "pregnant", "exit" instead of "success", "carpet" in lieu of "folder", "bookstore" for "library". In English "exit" means "way out" and not "éxito", "carpet" means "a surface used to cover floors" and not "carpeta" and "library"

means “a place in which you can ask for books to read” and not “librería”. And as a result they make awkward sentences like these ones: “My wife is embarrassed of our first baby”, “He reached exit because of his hard work and enthusiasm”, “My carpet is full of important papers” and “My teacher of history ask for a cheap book, please take me to the library”. The correct sentences are “My wife is pregnant of our first baby”, “He reached success because of his hard work and enthusiasm”, “My folder is full of important papers” and “My teacher of history ask for a cheap book, please take me to the bookstore” (Petuya, 2015).

Moreover, idiomatic expressions are also affected by this phenomenon because learners tend to make literal translations, they translate word by word. It results in incorrect literal word-by-word translation that can be observed in these examples: “The student gave the exam”, “She makes a shower every night”, “The students made some questions related to the English course”, “The clerk made him a discount”, “The doctor makes miracles” in attempt to say “The student took the exam”, “She takes a shower every night”, “The students asked some questions related to the English course”, “The clerk gave him a discount” and “The doctor works miracles” (Tzagari & Floros, 2013).

This phenomenon can be also observed in the use of collocations. Learners translate literally and do not take into account that collocations are set of words that always work together. To illustrate, learners incongruously say: “The quick train killed the careless boy”, “Lions shout in the middle of the Serengeti park”, “The jealous lover undertook suicide”, “The desperate girl blew up in tears”. The correct way to say the previous sentences are as follow: “The fast train killed the careless boy”, “Lions roar in the middle of the Serengeti Park”, “The jealous lover committed suicide” and “The desperate girl burst into tears” (Castells & Gallen, 2016).

#### **Grammatical interference.**

It refers to the influence of the native language on the foreign language in aspects such as subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, determiners and many more (Dekeyser, Tops, Devriendt & Geukens, 1999). Two or more languages may be alike in the parts of speech, but the rules to produce phrases, and sentences are different, distinct rules are followed, the unawareness of this induces learners to make mistakes related to grammatical interference (Wei, 2000).

Transferring grammar knowledge refers to learners applying L1 grammatical rules to organize information, ideas and thoughts into the target language. Learners translate word by word in attempt to produce spoken or written language without taking into account that a word has many grammatical categories, in other words, a word can be a noun, a verb, an adjective or any other part of the speech, the category that it takes depend on the grammatical function that it takes in the sentence (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2014).

#### **The most common mistakes in grammar.**

Fitikides (2002) mentions a long list of mistakes in grammar in such aspects as inadequate use of prepositions, incorrect use of infinitives and gerunds, use of wrong tenses, omission of preposition, misuse of will, may and can, misuse of simple past after “to”, misuse of simple past after the auxiliaries “had” and “have”, writing sentences in progressive with verbs that indicate state, confusion of gender, misuse of which to talk about people, use of double negatives, omission of prepositions, subject-verb agreement, omission of articles, omission of it as a subject and as an object, unnecessary prepositions, unnecessary articles, use of infinitives after modals such as can, could, may, might, let among others, incorrect repetition of subject, adjective in a wrong order, pluralization of uncountable nouns, wrong question formation, misuse of negation, no use of auxiliaries at the beginning of questions among others.

The first mistake that he mentions is inadequate use of prepositions; usually learners place a wrong preposition after verbs, adjectives, nouns, and words. For instance: for the verb “accuse” the correct preposition is “of” and not “for”. Then, correct sentence: “He accused her of sexual assault”. Incorrect sentence: “He accused her for sexual assault”. For the adjective “afraid” the correct preposition to use after it is “of” and not “from”. So, correct sentence would be: “She is afraid of getting married”. Incorrect sentence: “She is afraid from getting married”.

The second mistake mentioned is incorrect use of infinitives and gerunds, it is important to keep in mind that after some verbs, prepositions, adjectives and phrases, the gerund form should be used and not the infinitive form. As a case in point, after the preposition “without” the verb following it, should be in gerund –ing and not in the infinitive form. For instance, correct sentence: “Do not drive without using your seatbelt”. Incorrect sentence: “Do not drive without to use seatbelt”. After the verb “avoid”, use the gerund form and not the infinitive form. For example, correct use: “You should avoid drinking alcohol”. Incorrect use: “You should avoid to drink alcohol”.

The third error is the incorrect use of grammar tenses. In this category speakers and writers make some mistakes. One of the mistakes is the use of verbs in the past tense instead of the base form of the verb when there is an auxiliary “did, did not” in both negative sentences and questions. To illustrate, learners say: “Did you watched the movie?” Which is incorrect, you should say: “Did you watch the movie?” Another mistake is that learners use the third person “-s,-es” when they use the auxiliaries such as “does, doesn’t, can, must and so on”. For example, writers and speakers incorrectly say: “Does the teacher explains well?” “The teacher does not explains well”, “she cannot explains well”. The correct way for the mentioned sentences is as follows: “Does the teacher explain well?” “The teacher does not explain well” and “she cannot explain well”, respectively. Another mistake is the wrong

sequence of tenses. For example, learners incorrectly say: "Katy asked me what I am playing". The correct form of this sentence is: "Katy asked me what I was playing".

The fourth slip is the misuse of "will", "may", and "can" in lieu of "would", "might", "could", respectively in subordinated clauses. By way of illustration, users wrongly say "She said she will travel tomorrow", "Last week Mia told me that she may travel to London", "Adele thought she can cook perfectly". The correct form for the previous clauses are as follow "She said she would travel tomorrow", "Last week Mia told me that she might travel to London" and "Adele thought she could cook perfectly".

The fifth mistake is the misuse of the simple past after the preposition "to". It is worth mentioning that after "to" the verb goes in simple present. For instance, non-native English users mistakenly say "She wanted me to cooked dinner for her", "They tried to convinced me", "Mary liked to called late at night", "I helped him to moved the heavy box", "Taylor tried to closed the door softly". The correct form to say the previous sentences are "She wanted me to cook dinner for her", "They tried to convince me", "Mary liked to call late at night", "I helped him to move the heavy box", and "Taylor tried to close the door softly", respectively.

The sixth mistake reported is the misuse of simple past after the auxiliaries "have" and "had" in lieu of past participle. Examples include, "She has broke the window", "Bill has chose those ugly shoes to wear everyday", "Leah and Simone had drank six glasses of wine", "Rachel had spoke out about global warming". Users should say "She has broken the window", "Bill has chosen those ugly shoes to wear everyday", "Leah and Simone had drunk six glasses of wine" and "Rachel had spoken out about global warming".

Writing sentences in progressive with verbs that indicate state is another mistake foreign learners make. Like these "I am loving her", "She is understanding math now", "I am believing she will come back as soon as possible", "I am liking chocolate cake". I am belonging to an important firm". You should say "I love her", "She understands math now", "I believe she will come back as soon as possible", "I like chocolate cake and "I belong to an important firm".

Confusion of gender is another obstacle learners face when learning English. To illustrate, non-native English language users say "The window is closed, open her", "The book is closed, please open him", "She talks with his mom (when referring to her mom)", "He talks with her boss (when talking about his boss)", "They were looking for his keys (his instead of their)". Learners should say "The window is closed, open it", "The book is closed, please open it", "She talks with her mom", "He talks with his boss", and "They were looking for their keys". It is important to have in mind that non-living things take the pronoun "it" and that the possessive for he is his, for she is her; for they, their; for you, your; for I, my; and for we, our.



Misuse of which to talk about people is a challenge as well. As examples being, “That is the woman which teaches me music”, “He is the man which composes romantic poems”, “She is the girl which donates blood to the Red Cross”. Users better say “That is the woman who teaches me music”, “He is the man who composes romantic poems” and “She is the girl who donates blood to the Red Cross”. “Which” is exclusively used for things and animals, and “who” is only for people.

The use of double negatives is another mistake learners make. For instance, users say “They say they do not want nothing”, “Clerk says he is not scared of nobody”, “I am not going to go nowhere with you”, “Michael is always going out and having fun; he does not have nothing to do”. The correct sentences are “They say they do not want anything”, “Clerk says he is not scared of anybody”, “I am not going to go anywhere with you” and “Michael is always going out and having fun; he does not have anything to do”. When “not” is used, do not use *nobody*, *nowhere*, *nothing*; you better use *anybody*, *anywhere*, *anything*. Learners make this mistake because in Spanish we use double negatives, examples include: “No voy a *ningún* lado”, “No quiero *nada*, así que vete”, “No estoy enojada con *nadie*”, etc.

Omission of prepositions is on the list as well; learners tend to omit prepositions after words, verbs, and some phrases. For example, the verb “listen” is always followed by the preposition “to”, but learners usually say or write incorrect sentence like this one: “She was listening romantic music”. The correct sentence is: “She was listening to romantic music”. This mistake is made because in Spanish the mentioned phrase is as follow “Ella está escuchando música romántica”, in Spanish the verb “listen (escuchar)” is not followed by a preposition, but for a noun as it can be observed in the example.

Subject-verb agreement is another case where language transfer is present in beginner English language learners, when users talk about “he, she, and it”, they do not add “-s”, “-es” or “-ies” to the verb. Examples include: “My grandfather ask me to buy a bunch of flowers for his wife almost every day”, “Her mother travel around the world”, “Bill take with him some candies”, “The dog bark late at night” instead of “My grandfather asks me to buy a bunch of flowers for his wife almost every day”, “Her mother travels around the world”, “Bill takes with him some candies”, and “The dog barks late at night”. The same happens with negative sentences, users do not use “does not” when writing sentences with “he”, “she” and “it”. To illustrate, they say, “She do not like to eat chocolate”, “He do not change clothes every day”, “Elizabeth do not call her mom once in a blue moon”, “Lee do not eat too much in the early morning” in lieu of “She does not like to eat chocolate”, “He does not change clothes every day”, “Elizabeth does not call her mom once in a blue moon”, “Lee does not eat too much in the early morning”.

Omission of articles is another example when language transfer manifest itself. Learners do not write the articles “a”, “an”, or “the” before countable nouns. These includes, “Cassie is engineer”, “I feel so strong to drive car”, “My teacher is intelligent woman”, “Emma bought big house next to the central park”, “Her step-father is selling department”, “She plays guitar, but not flute”. Learners should say “Cassie is an engineer”, “I feel so strong to drive a car”, “My teacher is an intelligent woman”, “Emma bought a big house next to the central park”, “Her step-father is selling a department” and “She plays the guitar, but not the flute”.

An additional example of Language Transfer that results in inaccurate use of language is the omission of “it” as a subject and as an object. For instance, learners say “Is extremely cold outside”, “This is my house, has a swimming pool”, “I can see a big bull, is black and white”, “Look at that penguin, is amazing”, “Be careful with the thorn because hurts”, “Look at that cake, I made”, “That artwork is so expensive and delicate, please do not touch”. Learners should say “It is extremely cold outside”, “This is my house, it has a swimming pool”, “I can see a big bull, it is black and white”, “Look at that penguin, it is amazing”, “Be careful with the thorn because it hurts”, “Look at that cake, I made it”, and “That artwork is so expensive and delicate, please do not touch it”.

One more mistake is overuse of prepositions, learners use prepositions when they should not. They wrongly add prepositions after certain words, verbs or phrases. As it is in the following examples: “She asked to the doctor about the pills”, “The United States comprises 50 states”, “The thieves enter into the bank”, “Robots resemble to human beings”. Learners should say: “She asked the doctor about the pills”, “The United States is comprised of 50 states”, “The thieves enter the bank”, and “Robots resemble human beings”.

Another example of Language Transfer is overuse of articles; target language learners usually add the article “the” before names of people, countries or places, abstract nouns, name of languages. As a result they say: “The Ann went to the Paris”, “The Nicole is going to study abroad”, “They went to the England to visit their cousins and daughters”, “The love is an important human emotion”, “Josh masters the Chinese” instead of “Ann went to Paris”, “Nicole is going to study abroad”, “They went to England to visit their cousins and daughters”, “Love is an important human emotion”, and “Josh masters Chinese”.

The next frequent mistake is the use of infinitives after modals such as *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *let* among others. To illustrate, learners wrongly say: “I can to speak Spanish well”, “I could to do my homework yesterday”, “July might to bring what she promised”, “Arianna may to travel next Sunday”, “Her mother let her to go to the party” in lieu of “I can speak Spanish well”, “I could do my homework yesterday”, “July might bring what she

promised”, “Arianna may travel next Sunday”, and “Her mother let her go to the party” each to each.

Another example of language transfer that results in incorrect use of language is repetition of subject. For instance, learners improperly say “She broke the glass and she run away”, “In my free time I help my mom and I practice my favorite sport”, “Johanna, who is an impatient teacher, she threw the marker to my classmate”. Learners should say: “She broke the glass and run away”, “In my free time I help my mom and practice my favorite sport”, “Johanna, who is an impatient teacher, threw the marker to my classmate”. When there is short compound sentences avoid using repeatedly the subject in the same sentence.

To continue, it can be mentioned that beginner EFL learners place the adjective in a wrong order. Observe the following examples: “Adele is a singer famous”, “Carl and Grace have a girl very cute”, “Another thing important when talking about English grammar is that ...”, “My new colleague is a girl gorgeous”. Learners should say “Adele is a famous singer”, “Carl and Grace have a very cute girl”, “Another important thing when talking about English grammar is that ...”, “My new colleague is a gorgeous girl”. In English the adjectives are placed before the noun and in Spanish the adjectives are placed after the noun (Stockwell, Bowen & Martin, 1965).

Furthermore, very frequently and probably the strongest manifestation of language transfer phenomenon is pluralization of nouns and adjectives. Let us observe the transfer present in the incorrect use of uncountable nouns. “My mother gave me some nice advices”, “You can find fresh breads in that bakery”, “The rabbit is eating grasses”, “She has advanced knowledges on computing”. Learners better say “My mother gave me some nice advice”, “You can find fresh bread in that bakery”, “The rabbit is eating grass” and “She has an advanced knowledge on computing”. In Spanish nouns such as “advice”, “bread”, “grass”, “knowledge”, etc. are pluralized.

Question formation is also included in this list. Learners ask questions like “Have travelled they abroad once?”, “Has dyed she her long beautiful hair?”, “Had read they the horror movie?”, “Has used she the seatbelt to avoid fines and horrible accidents?” It is better to say “Had they read the horror movie?”, “Has she dyed her long beautiful hair?”, “Had they read he horror movie?”, “Has she used the seatbelt to avoid fines and horrible accidents?” This happens because in Spanish this type of questions are made in this word order: “¿Han viajado ellos al exterior alguna vez?” The verb in Spanish is used before the subject.

Negation is another frequent mistake beginners make. In Spanish to make negative sentence there is no need to use auxiliaries. Spanish speakers simply say “William no come vegetales”, but in English it is compulsory to use auxiliaries (Stockwell, Bowen & Martin,

1965). That is why it is common to see negative sentences such as “William not eats vegetables”, “Christopher not followed the rules so he is punished”, “She not drink alcohol in the next party”. Learners should say “William does not eat vegetables”, Christopher did not follow the rules so he is punished”, “She will not drink alcohol in the next party”.

No use of auxiliaries at the beginning of questions is another mistake in language transfer phenomenon. In Spanish, questions start with a verb and not with an auxiliary, for example: “¿Tienes mi celular?” So, Spanish speakers learning English make sentences like “You have my cellphone?” “Hannah hide the sweets from the children?” “Evangeline went to the discotheque without her mother’s permission?” It is correct to say “Do you have my cellphone?” “Does Hannah hide the sweets from the children?” “Did Evangeline go to the discotheque without her mother’s permission?”

### **How to Defeat Native Language Interference**

Sriprabha (2015) states that some actions and techniques can be taken in order to avoid or at least reduce the percentage of mother language interference. Among those actions he mentions that learners should speak English most of the time with their colleagues and classmates. If our classmates have a good English level they will correct us, and the proper form will store in the long-term memory. Another technique is watching TV in English, especially news and to put close attention on how words are pronounced in order to acquire the correct pronunciation. When watching English series we not only are exposed to correct pronunciation, but also proper grammar structures and a substantial amount of lexicon. Moreover, reading books is another very practical and efficient strategy to gain vocabulary, correct grammar structures, idiomatic expressions, etc. In addition, tongue twisters reading helps to pronounce words correctly. To begin, start first with simple tongue twisters that do not require too much effort, then read more complex tongue twisters, in this way the vocal tract will gradually get accustomed to pronounce the sounds correctly and learners will start reading smoothly and properly. In the same way, jot down words you tackled that cause you troubles in pronunciation, then ask an advanced learner to pronounce them and record him/her for later practice. Equally important is to record ourselves, listen to how we read and pronounced words. With this technique in specific, it is important to be self-critical in order to overcome native language interference. The last technique is to try to be as much as spontaneous as possible when speaking and avoid fillers such as “uhmm”.

Learning a foreign language (English) is a big need in today’s globalized world. Through another language, we can communicate with people around the world. However, as learners of a foreign language, people have their first language in which they express themselves better because they already know plenty of vocabulary, grammatical structures,

pronunciation, and so on; in other words, people master their first language, then, they face big challenges when learning a foreign language and one of those challenges is language interference in writing, speaking and vocabulary use. This phenomenon has called the attention of many investigators who have carried out many studies because it not only affects the South American languages but also the Asian languages. Some of the investigations are summarized in this study.

In China, Luo (2014) conducted a research whose purpose was to argue about the first language interference on target language pronunciation in college students, to analyze the causes and to come up with some solutions to overcome this phenomenon. He says that the difficulties that students face depend on the place they come from due to their dialects. For example, students whose origin is from Hunan Province face troubles to differentiate the /n/ from the /l/ sound. So, they pronounce “Knife” instead of “life”. Students who come from the Hubei province face the same problem, but in the other way round. They say “life” instead of “knife”. Students who come from Guangxi confuse the /g/ for the /k/ sound and the /b/ for the /p/ sound, so they say “gat” instead of “cat” and “bark” instead of “park” respectively. He suggests that in order to overcome this problem it is important to have knowledge on phonology and dialects, and to correct pronunciation mistakes. The author of this study concludes that a lot of Chinese college students confuse the /n/ with the /l/ sound and the /f/ with the /h/ sound and that the interference do not only happen at the pronunciation level but at other levels as well.

In addition, in Malaysia, Suliman (2014) conducted a research whose aim was to look for the first language interference in someone spoken production. In this study, 16 students from a rural area were chosen to participate. The results that he obtained are as follow: mother tongue interferes greatly on the target spoken production, for example, students may say “Go to my grandfather kebun lah”, “At my grandfather village also have a many apa many perkara baru lah”. He arrived to the conclusion that students use as a base their first language knowledge to produce speech in English, this is when language interference takes place, and that environmental factors have to deal a lot when mastering a language, thus, it does not matter how much exposure to English students have.

Another study was conducted in Los Angeles, by Brogan and Son (2015). In this study, the authors’ main objective was to analyze the frequency and type of negative interference. To reach this objective, 72 English-speaking students learning Spanish participated, they were divided into three groups aging 18 to 30 years old, in each group the same number of participants were included. They were given a task which was done twice; in each performance groups of 3 to 4 were formed. They were given real life situations to socialize in the group and then to talk about it without any written aid. Those dialogues were

recorded for later deep analysis. The result were as follow, in group 1, level 1, a 0% of errors were due to overextension of analysis (false friends), a 74,36% errors were because of transference of structure and a 25,64% of errors were due to interlingual errors. In group 2, level 2, a 7, 41% of errors made were due to overextension of analysis (false cognates), 70,37% belongs to transfer of structure, and 22,22% belongs to interlingual errors. In group 3, level 3, a 4,41% of errors were made in overextension of analysis (false cognates), 66,185 as a result of transfer of structure and 29,41% was due to interlingual errors. As a conclusion of this investigation they outlined that language interference does not necessarily decrease as the learner becomes more proficient, and that those mistakes are made due to language interference and types of error vary from level to level.

Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, Khan (2016) carried out a study whose purpose was to delve into the appropriate use of L1 when acquiring L2 vocabulary. He got to the results that in test one, the normal group (8.05) and the controlled group (8, 45) scored almost the same mean. In test two, the mean is quite different, in this case the normal group got a mean of 9, 4 and the controlled group got a mean of 12, 15. This result is due to that in the first test students took the test without previous teaching, but in the second test students from the controlled group received previous teaching of the vocabulary through translation. He concluded that translation is a good method to teach vocabulary because students get the correct equivalents and a good understanding of the target language.

In Loja- Ecuador, Cabrera et al. (2014) conducted a study whose objective was to analyze the interference of the Spanish language with the target one (English) in the writing skill in students of some high schools in the city of Loja. The results found in this study were as follows: the most difficult areas when writing in English are grammar structure and vocabulary due to the first language interference and that most of the mistakes that the students make are in aspects like misuse of verbs and prepositions, omission of object and personal pronouns, overuse of articles, inappropriate word order. The authors of this study concluded that Spanish Language (mother tongue) interferes at the moment of writing in English (target language). The authors further added that English grammar and vocabulary are the most affected aspects by the interference of L1 on L2, and that the process of thinking in Spanish and then writing in English really produces interference in L2.

In addition, in Algeria, Hanafi (2014) conducted a study whose purpose was to discover if there is a positive or negative transfer when writing in the target language. In this study 25 students participated and the result of this study shows that a number of errors depends on the first language of the learner, it means, that if the first language shares similarities in the vocabulary and grammar structure the probability of making mistakes is lower, and if the first language is different to the target one, the learners are probably to make more mistakes. The conclusions of this study are that in order to improve the teaching

methodology of a target language it is necessary for the students to be aware of the mistakes they make at the moment of writing in the target language also that it is important that someone else corrects these mistakes properly.

## CHAPTER II: METHOD

### **Setting and participants.**

The present study was carried in Loja city, in which 98 students who attended the first year of baccalaureate and one English teacher participated. The students who participated in this study were learning English as a foreign language in a public high-school and their ages were between 15-16 years old. The students' English level was varied, most of the students had a pre-intermediate level, some of them had intermediate level, few students had an elementary level and around 8-12 students had a beginner level. The participating groups were made up of male and females, from which 47 of the students were women and 51 were men.

### **Procedure.**

In order to carry out the present study, the researcher established the objectives to reach, then she looked for books and pieces of research related to the thesis topic in order to write the literature review and understand the topic better. Six studies were summarized and the most important topics related to the topic in question were described.

The researcher used two methods to analyze the data in this study, the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach. The qualitative method explores the problem, verbal or non-numerical data is collected through observations or interviews to be analyzed subjectively (Creswell, 2015). The quantitative method examines the problem, it generated data can be turned into numbers. Attitudes, opinions and other variables are measured (Brannen, 2016).

This study aims at finding out the most common mistakes in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation due to Language Transfer phenomenon. So, to achieve these objectives, the researcher visited one high-school to apply the different instruments and observe. The researcher observed the students and the teacher for a month in order to obtain data related to pronunciation and the reaction to mistakes due to language interference. During that month, students were asked to write a paragraph and to translate some false friends and phrases.

Then, in order to find out the mistakes students make in grammar due to language interference, the ninety eight students were asked to write a paragraph of about 80 to 90 words. For this, students chose one of the four topics proposed. Being the first topic a discussion about the pros and cons of using new technologies, in which students could talk, for example, mobile phones, internet, computers, etc. The second topic, referred to global warming. What is global warming? What problems does global warming cause? What can



you do to avoid global warming? The third topic, dealt with how can we make the world a better place? And the fourth topic, was about a paragraph describing what your ideal day would be or, if you've already had it, what it was like? These paragraphs were analyzed and the mistakes were classified into a table depending on the type of mistake. After that, the information was organized and tabulated to find the most common mistakes in grammar due to language interference.

Another aspect to analyze is vocabulary. Then, to analyze how much Spanish Language influences on English vocabulary, the ninety eight students were asked to translate 14 false friends and 5 phrases. The words and phrases were counted in order to find out the frequency with which the words and phrases were translated correctly, incorrectly or without answer. Then, this information was organized into two charts, in one chart the false friends were organized from the most common wrongly translated word to the least; and the phrases were organized in another chart from the most common wrongly translated least to the least one as well.

Also, students' spoken production was recorded on a worksheet in which the investigator jotted down the frequency with which students pronounced properly or incorrectly words starting with the consonant clusters "sk, sp, st, sl, and so on". This information was taken from students' class participation, reading passages and mainly from expositions. Then, the times words, which were pronounced correctly or incorrectly were counted and represented in a table.

Lastly, the English teacher reaction regarding mistakes, due to language transfer phenomenon, was carefully observed in order to find out the techniques or strategies the teacher used to minimize or reduce the interference of mother tongue on the foreign language. These techniques/strategies were written down on a sheet of paper for its corresponding analysis.

All this data was analyzed and the errors were classified into indicators in a table. Then the data was represented through statistical tables using Microsoft Excel in order to bring a clear view of the results.

The tools used are as follow: A checklist in which these options are displayed, in the horizontal rows: consonant clusters; in the vertical rows: correct pronunciation, wrong pronunciation, and examples. This checklist was used to find out the mistakes students made due to language interference at a phonological level when producing initial consonant clusters (st, sk, sn, sp, sc, sm).

Another instrument was a written test in which students wrote a paragraph of about 80 to 100 words. Students could choose one from the four topics. This activity was aimed at finding out the most common/frequent mistakes in writing (grammar).

The other tool was written test as well in which 15 Spanish words (false friends) and 5 phrases were displayed for students to write their equivalents in English, this, in order to discover the language interference at a lexical level.

Moreover, a sheet of paper was also used. This sheet of paper was used to jot down the techniques/strategies the teacher used in order to correct mistakes students made due to language transfer phenomenon.

### CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the researcher analyzes mistakes due to language transfer phenomenon in aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. In pronunciation, words starting with consonant clusters “sc”, “sp”, “st”, “sl”, and “sn” are analyzed, whether they are pronounced with an extra sound “e” at the beginning or not. In vocabulary, false friends and common phrases are analyzed if they are translated properly or not. In grammar, grammatical rules that are affected by L1 are examined.

Pronunciation.

**Table 1.** Words starting with consonant clusters

| <b>WORDS</b>     | <b>TIMES THE WORD WAS SAID</b> | <b>WRONG</b> | <b>RIGHT</b> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| School           | 154                            | 138          | 16           |
| sport/sports     | 10                             | 10           | 0            |
| study/studied    | 8                              | 8            | 0            |
| start/started    | 5                              | 5            | 0            |
| student/students | 3                              | 2            | 1            |
| Sleeping         | 3                              | 3            | 0            |
| Slide            | 3                              | 3            | 0            |
| Still            | 2                              | 0            | 2            |
| Stop             | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Stay             | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Stage            | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Scared           | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Speak            | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Spent            | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Speech           | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Spain            | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| Snake            | 1                              | 1            | 0            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>197</b>                     | <b>178</b>   | <b>19</b>    |

Source: Students of first year of baccalaureate

Author: Neyba Armijos

Table 1 shows words starting with consonant clusters such as “sk”, “sp”, “st”, “sl”, and “sn”. In the horizontal rows it can be observed the words students said in their speeches and on the vertical rows you can see how many times a word was said, either correctly or incorrectly. The most common words in the students spoken production are “school”, “sport/sports”, “study/studied”, “start/started”, “student/students” and “sleeping”. And the least common are “slide”, “still”, “stop”, “stay”, “stage”, “scared”, “speak”, “spent”, “speech”, “Spain” and “snake”.

The above chart shows “school” as the most pronounced word with a frequency of 154 times, from which 138 times this word was pronounced wrongly. In spite of the many times this word was pronounced, just a small number of times (16) was pronounced correctly. This word is followed by “sport/sports”, which was said 10 times, from which 10 times it was said improperly. The next word is “study/studied”, this word appeared in the students’ speeches 8 times, and from this 8 times, 8 times was pronounced incorrectly. The word that follows is “start/started”, which showed up 5 times in the students’ spoken production; from those 5 times, 5 times it was pronounced wrongly. The next word is “student/students”, it was said 3 times, from which 2 times it was produced wrongly. The next word on the list is “sleeping”, which appeared 3 times in the students’ speeches, and 3 times was produced improperly. To all this words, students added clearly the extra sound “e” when pronouncing the words starting with the consonant clusters “sp”, “st”, “sn”, and “sl”. This is because in Spanish there are many words starting with the “es” sound. So, students produce /esku:l/ in lieu of /sku:l/; /espi:k/ instead of /spi:k/, etc. (OUP, 2017)

Words such as “school”, “student”, “still” were pronounced properly by students whose English level is high, students whose speaking is considerably smoothly, with few fillers, without suddenly awkward stops and with few grammatical mistakes when speaking and as well in their pieces of writing.

False friends.

**Table 2.** False friends and their frequency

| <b>FALSE FRIENDS</b> | <b>WRONG</b> | <b>%</b>    | <b>RIGHT</b> | <b>%</b>    | <b>NO ANSWER</b> | <b>%</b>    |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| Librería             | 69           | 20%         | 16           | 3%          | 13               | 3%          |
| Actualmente          | 56           | 16%         | 16           | 3%          | 26               | 5%          |
| Asistir              | 40           | 12%         | 26           | 5%          | 32               | 7%          |
| Recolectar           | 39           | 11%         | 17           | 3%          | 42               | 9%          |
| Restar               | 28           | 8%          | 21           | 4%          | 49               | 10%         |
| Lectura              | 22           | 6%          | 34           | 7%          | 42               | 9%          |
| Grosería             | 20           | 6%          | 0            | 0%          | 78               | 16%         |
| Recordar             | 14           | 4%          | 66           | 13%         | 18               | 4%          |
| Ropa                 | 12           | 3%          | 67           | 13%         | 19               | 4%          |
| Firma                | 12           | 3%          | 76           | 15%         | 10               | 2%          |
| Éxito                | 11           | 3%          | 3            | 1%          | 52               | 11%         |
| Embarazada           | 10           | 3%          | 39           | 8%          | 49               | 10%         |
| Carpeta              | 10           | 3%          | 83           | 16%         | 5                | 1%          |
| Arena                | 4            | 1%          | 44           | 9%          | 50               | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>347</b>   | <b>100%</b> | <b>508</b>   | <b>100%</b> | <b>485</b>       | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Students of first year of baccalaureate  
 Author: Neyba Armijos

Table 2 deals with “false friends”. This table displays fourteen false friends with their corresponding percentage of wrong, right and no answer. From the fourteen false friends students were asked to translate from Spanish into English, the seventh false friends that were translated wrongly with a great frequency are “librería”, “actualmente”, “asistir”, “recolectar”, “restar”, “lectura” and “grocería”. “Lectura” and “grocería” shares the same percentage of wrong answers. The remaining false friends show a low frequency. These false friends are “recordar”, “ropa”, “firma”, “éxito”, “embarazada”, “carpetas”, and “arena”.

As it can be observed in table 2, the word that represented a great difficulty for students to translate properly is “librería”. This word shows a 20% of wrong answer, a 3% of correct answer and a 3% with no answer. This word was translated as “library” and not as “bookstore”. Library in Spanish means “biblioteca” which is a place in which someone can ask for books to read (Petuya, 2015).

The second word that represented more trouble to translate properly is “actualmente”. As you can see in table 2, a 16% of students translated it in a wrong way, a 3% of students translated correctly and a 3% of students did not answer. “Actualmente” was translated wrongly as “actually”. “Actually” in Spanish means “realmente”, the correct equivalent for “actualmente” in English is “nowadays” (Morató, 2015).

Continuing with this analysis, the third word that was translated with a high percentage of mistakes is “asistir”. The word “asistir” shows a 12% of wrong answers, a 5% of right answers and a 7% of no answers. This false friend was translated as “assist” and not as “attend” (Leoni, 2015). At this point, it is important to mention that the researcher provided with a sentence for this word “Yo asisto a clases todos los días” which may be translated as “I attend classes every day”. This sentence was provided because if this word is translated as “assist”, it is right in the sense of helping somebody else.

The false friend “recolectar” is another word that represents a big percentage of wrong translation. As you can see, a 11% corresponds to wrong answers, a 3% to right answers and a 9% to no answers. This word was translated mistakenly as “recollect” in lieu of “gather” or “collect”. Recollect means to remember, to recall and not “recolectar” (Vértice, 2008).

The fifth word that was translated wrongly with a high frequency by students is “restar”. This word represents an 8% of wrong answers, 4% of right answers and a 10% of no answers. In this case, “restar” was translated as “rest”. “Rest” means “to take a nap, to sleep” and not “restar”. The correct equivalent for “restar” is “subtract” (Petuya, 2015).

The sixth word is “lectura”. The table shows a 6% of wrong translation, a 7% of right translation and a 9% of no answers. This false friend was wrongly translated as “lecture” instead of reading, which is the correct word (Vértice, 2008). The word “lectura” shares the same percentage of wrong translation as “grosería”, but “grosería” shows a 0% of right answers and a 16% of no answers. The proper equivalent for “grosería” is “rudeness” and not “grocery” as students translated (Leoni, 2015).

**Table 3.** Phrases with their percentage of wrong, right and no answer

| PHRASES               | WRONG      | %           | RIGHT      | %           | NO ANSWER  | %           |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Hacer una pregunta    | 67         | 32%         | 11         | 7%          | 20         | 15%         |
| Dar un exámen         | 54         | 26%         | 17         | 11%         | 27         | 21%         |
| Tomar helado          | 44         | 21%         | 27         | 18%         | 27         | 21%         |
| Estoy de acuerdo      | 21         | 10%         | 26         | 17%         | 51         | 39%         |
| ¿Cuántos años tienes? | 21         | 10%         | 72         | 47%         | 5          | 4%          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>207</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>153</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>130</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Students of first year of baccalaureate

Author: Neyba Armijos

Table 3 is about five phrases, from these five phrases the three ones that showed more difficulty to be translated by students are: “Hacer una pregunta”, “dar un exámen” and “tomar helado”. And the two remaining presented a small percentage of errors, these phrases are: “estoy de acuerdo” and “¿Cuántos años tienes?”.

Let us look at the phrase that showed a 32% of wrong answers, a 7% of right answers and a 15% of no answers, which is “hacer una pregunta”. This phrase was translated wrongly as “do a question” or “make a question”. The correct way for this phrase is “ask a question”. As it can be observed there is a literal translation. Tsagari and Floros (2013) mentions that learners tend to make literal translation, they translate word by word, resulting in incorrect literal word-by-word translation. To this, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2014) add that learners translate word by word in attempt to produce written language without taking into account that a word has many grammatical categories, in other words, a word can be a noun, a verb, an adjective or any other part of the speech, the category that it takes depend on the grammatical function that it takes in the sentence.

The same happens with the second most common wrongly translated phrase, which is “dar un exámen”. This phrase represents a 26% of wrong translation, a 11% of wrong answers and a 21% of no answers. This phrase was translated mistakenly as “give a test” or “give an exam”. The correct way to this phrase is “sit a test”, or “take a test” (Fitikides, 2002). It is worth mentioning that the researcher warned students that this phrase refers to students taking or sitting a test and not a teacher giving a test to someone else.

The third most common wrongly translated phrase is “tomar helado” with a 21% of wrong answers, a 18% of right answers and a 21% of no answers. This phrase was translated as “eat an ice cream” or as “drink an ice cream”. The correct way to this phrase is “take an ice cream”. In this phrase, you can see a literal translation as well as the first phrase.

Grammar structure.

**Table 4.** Language transfer mistakes, frequency and examples

| <b>COMMON ERRORS</b>  | <b>EXAMPLES</b>  | <b>NUMBER OF MISTAKES</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|--|---------------------------|----------|
| Misuse of article   | The internet is important...<br>...for most of the my friends.                                     | 119                       | 31,15%   |
| Misuse of preposition   | Mothers should teach to their kids...<br>In the night...   | 45                        | 11,78%   |
| Subject-verb agreement  | ...because it help me...<br>The planet have...   | 41                        | 10,73%   |
| Omission of "it" as subject and object                        | The internet is important because help the family...<br>Technology is very good because help in... | 31                        | 8,12%    |
| Invented words  | ...I supered this moment<br>I will break my mets and study...                                      | 27                        | 7,07%    |
| Word order  | ...of the century XXI<br>The using excessive...  | 25                        | 6,54%    |
| Omission of preposition                                       | The using new technology...<br>..., listen music...  | 23                        | 6,02%    |
| Omission of subject   | In the internet found much things.<br>...technologies are good because give the things...          | 19                        | 4,97%    |
| Misuse of possessive adjectives, personal and object pronouns | My ideal day is when my parents close your problems.<br>I am good with they...                     | 15                        | 3,93%    |
| Uncountable and irregular noun pluralization                  | ...for the childrens.<br>...doing homeworks.   | 12                        | 3,14%    |
| Adjective pluralization                                       | The news technologies...<br>...kids are differents...  | 8                         | 2,09%    |
| Omission of article   | For example, IPhone is a really fantastic..<br>Global warming is a big problem in the world.       | 8                         | 2,09%    |
| Omission of auxiliary "do"                                    | I no like because...<br>Why you have to use new technologies?                                      | 4                         | 1,05%    |
| Literal translation   | There is like do a investigation.<br>You have 14 or 15 years old                                   | 4                         | 1,05%    |

|                 |                      |            |               |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------|---------------|
| Double negative | I can't do anything. | 1          | 0,26%         |
| <b>Total</b>    |                      | <b>382</b> | <b>100,00</b> |

Source: Students of first year of baccalaureate  
 Author: Neyba Armijos

As it can be seen in table 4, out of the 15 types of mistakes that were found in the instruments, the six most common ones are: misuse of articles (31%), followed by misuse of prepositions (12%), subject-verb agreement (12%), omission of "it" as subject and object (11%), invented words (7%) and word order (7%). Now, let us have a look at the less troublesome mistakes, omission of preposition (6%), omission of subject (5%), misuse of possessive adjectives, personal and object pronouns (4%), adjective pluralization (3%), omission of article (2%), omission of auxiliary "do", and literal translation (1%).

First, let us look at the most common mistake which is the misuse of definite and indefinite articles. In Spanish, indefinite articles such as "un", "una", "unas" and "unos" depend on the singularity or plurality, and on the masculinity or femininity of the noun. The definite article "the" in English has many forms in Spanish "el", "la", "los", "las" (Hernandez, 2016). If we look at the sentences students produced, you can find these ones: "The internet is important", in Spanish we always say "El internet es importante", that is why students use "the". Another example is "The technologies is a instrument", in this case in English, the use of the indefinite articles "a" and "an" depends on the beginning sound of the noun either vowel or consonant sound (Hernandez, 2016). So, the first mistake is due to the mismatch of grammar structures in both languages English and Spanish and the latter is because this grammar rule is not presented in Spanish.

The second most common mistake is the misuse of prepositions. To illustrate it, students wrote sentences like "Mothers should teach to their kids...". It is worth mentioning that in Spanish we say "Las madres deberían enseñar a sus niños.." Spanish speakers use "a" after the verb "enseñar", but it does not happen in English. Another example, is the phrase "in the night", this mistake is done because in Spanish we say "En la noche", but in English we should say "at night". The correct way to say the above sentences are as follow: "Mothers should teach their kids..." and "At night" Fitikides (2002) mentions that learners usually place a wrong preposition after verbs, adjectives, nouns, and words, this is because learners use mother language grammar rules as it can be observe in the mentioned examples.

Moving on, as the table 4 shows the third most common mistake is subject-verb agreement. Fitikides (2002) explains that Spanish speakers do not add "-s", "-es" or "-ies" to the verb when talking about "he, she, and it". In Spanish the last part of the verbs changes according to the subject. For example, "Yo ayudo", "Ella ayuda", "El ayuda", "Tu ayudas",



“Nosotros ayudamos”. That is why, students wrote sentences like “...because it help me...”, “The planet have...”. Learners should say “...because it helps me...” and “The planet has...”

Omission of “it” as subject and object is another mistake students make due to language interference. Look at this sentences: “The internet is important because help the family...”. If this sentence is translated into Spanish it would be “El interenet es importante porque ayuda a la familia...” As you can observe, in the Spanish version there is no need of subject, but in English it is necessary to use “it”. An additional example, “In my opinion, is the best invention...”. If this sentence is translate into Spanish it would be “En mi opinion, es el mejor invento” As you can notice, in the Spanish version, there is no need of subject because it is implicit. This is why, Spanish speakers learning English do not add a subject before the verb to be. As you can see learners have applied their mother tongue knowledge of rules to organize information, and ideas (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2014)

Continuing with the analysis of figure 4, the fifth most common mistake corresponds to invented words. To illustrate it, let us look at “I supered this moment”, “I will break my mets and study...” “Samsung J7 have more almacenamient”, Weinrich (1970) suggests that one of the causes of language interference is the limited lexicon. This, induces learners to look for a word that sounds or is spelt in the same way in the two languages, or they simply make up words, delete some letters of the Spanish words to use in their productive skills. In these sentences students have deleted a word from the Spanish word “almacenamient”, “mets” and “supered”.

The sixth most common mistake is word order. It is important to mention that in English the adjectives are placed before the noun and in Spanish the adjectives are placed after the noun (Stockwell, Bowen & Martin, 1965). Because of this mismatch of rules, students wrote sentences such as “...have also things interesting and beautiful” “The using excessive”. Besides, in this category students did not place properly words in sentences like “The world not can stay...” For a better understanding let us translate this phrase into Spanish “El mundo no puede permanecer...” It can be seen that the Spanish word order has been followed to produce that phrase in English. In this example, learners have applied literal translation to produce written texts (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS

First language influences foreign language at a great level in the students' productive skills, inducing language learners to make awkward mistakes in linguistic aspects such as: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Being grammar and vocabulary the most affected aspects by language transfer.

Regarding grammar, the most affected aspects by language transfer phenomenon corresponds to misuse of article, misuse of preposition, and subject-verb agreement. The article "the" is over used, and "a" and "an" are used without taking into account the beginning sound. Any preposition is used after verbs or any other word.

According to vocabulary, the most frequent interference with L1 is represented by the following words and phrases "librería", "actualmente" and "asistir". These words are mistranslated as "library", "actually" and "assist" respectively. It is important to mention that these mistakes not only affect vocabulary but also writing and speaking. Also, the phrases that are most affected by this phenomenon are "hacer una pregunta", "dar un exámen" and "tomar helado". Word-for-word translation is seen in these sentences "make a question", "give a test" and "drink ice cream" respectively.

Regarding pronunciation, it was detected the following words affected by L1 influence: "school", "sport/sports" and "study/studied" in the spoken production. Students who did not have a good English level pronounced these words with an extra "e" at the beginning. And students whose speaking was considerably smoothly produced these words properly without the extra sound "e".

The classroom teacher observed used individual and group feedback as a strategy to deal with language transfer phenomenon in writing, speaking and vocabulary use. For writing mistakes, the teacher corrected grammatical and lexical mistakes of some paragraphs on the board. To deal with mispronunciation, the teacher asked students to listen to songs and sing also he explained how words should be pronounced.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should look for ways or strategies to help language learners to be aware of the Language Transfer phenomenon and avoid making those mistakes from the beginning stages of target language learning. In this way, learners acquire a language in a neatly way.

It is advisable, for teachers to talk openly about language transfer phenomenon and set as many examples as possible. To tell students that there is not only positive transfer but also negative transfer, and thus literal translation does not work properly for all the structures.

It is advisable to send more individual written tasks and highlight on the students' papers which mistakes are done due to language transfer either in vocabulary, grammar or any other aspect of the language. The teacher can choose the most common mistakes and explain them on the board, so that everybody can take advantage of this.

It is recommendable to allow students more speaking time in order to give the teacher more chance to correct the pronunciation mistakes. And as teachers listen closely to our students' pronunciation and jot down the words students do not pronounce correctly for later feedback.

The researcher suggests some of the most common techniques to overcome the language transfer phenomenon in aspects such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. To defeat language transfer in grammar, a comparison and contrast of grammar rules in two languages, in this case Spanish and English is a good technique; here the teacher may explain that because of the mismatch of rules in two languages word-for-word translation is not a good idea to express something in a target language. To deal with "false friends", it could be a good idea to show students the two words with their corresponding pictures; pictures allow students to memorize easily the correct meaning of a word. This should be practiced over and over throughout the lessons. Finally, for a proper pronunciation of consonant clusters beginning with "s" the researcher suggests two strategies. The first strategy is listening to jolly phonic songs of the "s" sound, sing this song in order to practice the "s" sound and thus words starting with consonant clusters starting with "s". The second strategy is word repetition; teachers can make a list of words and asks students to repeat after her/him. To overcome mother language transference in all its aspects we should read and listen extensively, this means, to read and listen to things we like, in this way we get proper grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

To conclude, it is strongly advisable to suggest for further research that techniques and strategies to reduce language transfer phenomenon be applied in schools and high-

schools to find out how much they help and how effective they are in lessening this phenomenon.

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## **ANEXXES**



### Annex1. Checklist

Words that start with “s”

Date:

| <b>CONSONANT CLUSTERS</b> | <b>CORRECT PRONUNCIATION</b> | <b>WRONG PRONUNCIATION</b> | <b>EXAMPLE</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>ST</b>                 |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SK/SC</b>              |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SN</b>                 |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SP</b>                 |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SN</b>                 |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SM</b>                 |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SL</b>                 |                              |                            |                |
| <b>STR</b>                |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SQU</b>                |                              |                            |                |
| <b>SCR/SKR</b>            |                              |                            |                |

|            |  |  |  |
|------------|--|--|--|
| <b>SPR</b> |  |  |  |
| <b>SPL</b> |  |  |  |
| <b>STR</b> |  |  |  |
| <b>SKW</b> |  |  |  |

## Annex 2. Test

### FALSE FRIENDS

Translate into English the following words and phrases.

1) Actualmente:

2) Arena:

3) Asistir:

4) Carpeta:

5) Embarazada:

6) Éxito:

7) Firma:

8) Grosería:

9) Lectura:

10) Librería:

11) Recolectar:

12) Recordar:

13) Restar:

14) Ropa:

15) Estoy de acuerdo:

16) Tomar helado:

17) ¿Cuántos años tienes?:

18) Dar un examen:

19) Hacer una pregunta:



