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**Linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates and speaking anxiety  
in English learners**

*Interferencia lingüística, fosilización, falsos cognados y ansiedad al hablar en  
estudiantes de inglés*

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the interaction between linguistic and affective factors in second language acquisition, focusing on linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety. The research adopts a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. A total of 25 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2025 were selected from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Dialnet, and Google Scholar.

The findings reveal that these variables do not operate independently but form an interconnected system that significantly influences learners' performance and development in English as a second language (ESL). Linguistic interference was identified as a persistent source of error caused by the transfer of first language structures. Fossilization emerged as the stabilization of errors influenced by cognitive limitations and instructional conditions, especially feedback and practice opportunities. False cognates contributed to lexical inaccuracies through misleading cross-linguistic similarities, affecting comprehension and production. Speaking anxiety was identified as a key affective factor that interferes with cognitive processing and reduces learners' willingness to communicate.

The study highlights the reciprocal relationship between linguistic difficulties and speaking anxiety, showing how each factor reinforces the other and limits communicative development. Based on these findings, the research proposes an integrated pedagogical strategy that combines contrastive awareness, structured error correction, guided speaking activities, and supportive feedback to improve linguistic accuracy and learner confidence, promoting stronger communicative competence.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition, linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, speaking anxiety.

### RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la interacción entre factores lingüísticos y afectivos en la adquisición de una segunda lengua, con énfasis en la interferencia lingüística, la fosilización, los falsos cognados y la ansiedad al hablar. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo mediante una revisión sistemática de literatura guiada por el marco PRISMA 2020. Se seleccionaron 25 estudios revisados por pares publicados entre 2010 y 2025, obtenidos de bases de datos como Scopus, Web of Science, Dialnet y Google Scholar.

Los hallazgos revelan que estas variables no actúan de forma independiente, sino que forman un sistema interrelacionado que influye significativamente en el desempeño y desarrollo de los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL). La interferencia lingüística se identificó como una fuente persistente de error causada por la transferencia de estructuras de la lengua materna. La fosilización surgió como la estabilización de errores influenciada por limitaciones cognitivas y condiciones instruccionales, especialmente la retroalimentación y las oportunidades de práctica. Los falsos cognados contribuyeron a imprecisiones léxicas debido a similitudes engañosas entre lenguas, afectando la comprensión y la producción. La ansiedad al hablar fue identificada como un factor afectivo clave que interfiere en el procesamiento cognitivo y reduce la disposición a comunicarse.

El estudio destaca la relación recíproca entre las dificultades lingüísticas y la ansiedad al hablar, mostrando cómo cada factor refuerza al otro y limita el desarrollo comunicativo. A partir de estos hallazgos, se propone una estrategia pedagógica integrada que combina conciencia contrastiva, corrección estructurada de errores, actividades guiadas de expresión oral y retroalimentación de apoyo para mejorar la precisión lingüística y la confianza del estudiante.

**Palabras clave:** adquisición de segunda lengua, interferencia lingüística, fosilización, falsos cognados, ansiedad al hablar.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) constitutes a complex and multidimensional process shaped by the interplay of cognitive, linguistic, and affective variables. Among these, linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety emerge as pivotal factors influencing the development and outcomes of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. A nuanced understanding of the interaction among these elements provides critical insight into persistent learning challenges and informs the development of more effective pedagogical interventions.

Linguistic interference, commonly referred to as first language (L1) transfer, arises when learners transfer structures from their native language to the target language (L2), often resulting in systematic deviations in pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary. While cross-linguistic transfer may occasionally facilitate acquisition, negative transfer more frequently generates inaccuracies and misinterpretations (Khakimova, 2024). For example, learners may rely on entrenched syntactic patterns or phonological frameworks that are incongruent with English, thereby producing recurrent and, at times, deeply ingrained errors.

Closely associated with interference is the phenomenon of interlanguage fossilization, whereby non-target-like linguistic forms become stabilized and resistant to modification despite sustained exposure to the target language. Fossilization represents a significant impediment within SLA, as it signals a developmental plateau at which learners struggle to attain higher levels of linguistic proficiency (Chen & Zhao, 2013). This phenomenon is shaped by an interplay of internal variables such as age, motivation, and learning strategies and external conditions, including the quality of input and instructional practices.

Another salient source of difficulty in lexical development is the presence of false cognates—lexical items that exhibit formal similarity across languages yet diverge in meaning. These deceptive correspondences frequently give rise to semantic inaccuracies and miscommunication, particularly among learners whose first language shares etymological connections with English. Such patterns underscore the extent to which cross-linguistic influence permeates not only structural dimensions of language but also the semantic domain (Qosimova, 2025).



Beyond linguistic constraints, affective variables most notably speaking anxiety exert a substantial influence on learners' oral performance. ESL learners often experience heightened levels of anxiety when engaging in spoken interaction due to apprehension about negative evaluation, perceived linguistic inadequacies, and sociocultural differences. This anxiety may manifest in avoidance behaviors, limited participation, and a consequent reduction in communicative competence (Zhang & Khalid, 2024). The reciprocal relationship between anxiety and linguistic difficulty frequently engenders a self-reinforcing cycle that constrains both fluency and learner confidence.

Despite extensive research addressing these variables in isolation, there is still a lack of integrative studies examining their combined and interactive effects within a unified analytical framework. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of the multifactorial nature of SLA challenges and hinders the development of pedagogical approaches that address these issues holistically.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety interact and jointly influence the language development of ESL learners. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives with empirical evidence, this research seeks to advance a more comprehensive understanding of SLA and propose pedagogical strategies that enhance both linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Linguistic Interference**

Linguistic interference, also known as first language (L1) transfer, is one of the most significant phenomena in second language acquisition. It refers to the influence that a learner's native language exerts on the comprehension and production of the target language. According to Odlin (1989), language transfer arises from the similarities and differences between the target language and any previously acquired language, making it a key concept in understanding second language development.

In ESL contexts, this influence is frequently negative, as learners tend to rely on the phonological, syntactic, and lexical patterns of their first language when producing English. Ellis (1997) explains that such transfer often results in systematic errors, particularly in areas where the structures of the two languages differ significantly. These errors may affect



pronunciation, sentence structure, and vocabulary use, thereby limiting learners' accuracy and fluency.

From a theoretical perspective, linguistic interference is closely related to the concept of cross-linguistic influence, which suggests that learners construct knowledge of the new language based on their existing linguistic system. Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that this process is inevitable in second language learning, as learners naturally draw on prior knowledge to interpret new linguistic input. However, when structural differences between languages are substantial, this transfer can lead to persistent errors that hinder effective communication.

Therefore, linguistic interference constitutes a central variable in explaining why ESL learners experience recurring difficulties in mastering English. Understanding its role is essential for identifying common learner errors and for designing pedagogical strategies that minimize negative transfer and promote more effective language acquisition.

## 2.2 Fossilization

Interlanguage fossilization constitutes one of the most persistent constraints in second language development, especially among learners who do not attain full linguistic accuracy despite extended exposure to the target language. Rather than being understood as a temporary difficulty, fossilization refers to the stabilization of non-target-like forms that become resistant to change over time.

Recent research has questioned the traditional view of fossilization as an inevitable outcome of second language learning. Li and Ren (2023) argue that this phenomenon is strongly associated with insufficient input, limited opportunities for practice, and ineffective learning strategies, suggesting that it should be interpreted not as unavoidable, but as the result of specific learning conditions.

Empirical studies also show that fossilization is not restricted to beginning learners. Angoluan and Barretto (2024) found that even advanced learners continue to display recurring grammatical inaccuracies, which calls into question the effectiveness of conventional teaching practices in promoting full language development.

Instructional factors play a central role in this process. Al-Ahdal, A. (2024) found that fossilized errors in academic writing tend to persist when corrective feedback is inconsistent



or superficial, indicating that exposure alone is insufficient to ensure long-term improvement. Contextual variables further complicate the phenomenon. Iraqi et al. (2025) maintain that motivation, sociocultural environment, and the degree of engagement with the target language significantly influence whether learner errors become firmly entrenched or are gradually overcome.

Taken together, these findings suggest that fossilization should not be explained as an exclusively linguistic phenomenon. Instead, it emerges from the interaction of cognitive constraints, instructional practices, and learning conditions. Addressing it requires systematic feedback, sustained interaction, and heightened learner awareness of persistent errors.

### **2.3 False Cognates**

False cognates represent a relevant source of lexical difficulty in second language acquisition, especially when the learner's first language shares formal similarities with the target language. These items resemble each other in spelling or pronunciation across languages but differ in meaning, which may lead learners to assign incorrect interpretations or use them inaccurately in production. In this sense, false cognates are best understood as a manifestation of cross-linguistic influence at the lexical level (Ringbom, 2007).

Their importance lies not only in isolated vocabulary errors but in the cognitive strategy behind them. Learners frequently rely on formal similarity to infer meaning. This strategy often facilitates vocabulary learning. However, when that similarity is misleading, lexical transfer produces semantic confusion rather than support. Nation (2001) argues that vocabulary development depends heavily on connecting new lexical items to prior knowledge, but this process can generate incorrect associations when equivalence is assumed too quickly.

Research shows that the effects of false cognates are particularly visible in meaning interpretation and lexical ambiguity. Sampedro Mella (2024) found that false cognates in learner production can create ambiguity for native speakers, particularly when L1 meanings are transferred to formally similar L2 items. This suggests that the issue extends beyond incorrect word choice and directly affects intelligibility.

A more nuanced perspective emerges from recent work on Spanish English vocabulary overlap in academic discourse. Webb et al. (2025) found that cognates account for a substantial proportion of academic spoken vocabulary, whereas false cognates



represent less than 1 percent. This indicates that lexical similarity is generally beneficial, while reinforcing the need to distinguish genuine cognates from misleading ones. Even if relatively infrequent, false cognates remain pedagogically significant due to their potential to generate misunderstanding.

From a critical perspective, false cognates should not be treated as accidental vocabulary slips. They reflect a broader learning mechanism in which learners rely on prior linguistic knowledge to reduce processing demands. This strategy is often effective but becomes problematic when formal resemblance masks semantic divergence. For this reason, exposure alone is insufficient. Learners benefit from explicit attention to meaning contrasts, contrastive analysis, and activities that develop semantic awareness rather than simple form recognition (Nation, 2001; Ringbom, 2007).

Overall, false cognates constitute a meaningful variable in explaining lexical inaccuracy in ESL learning. Their relevance lies in demonstrating both the advantages and limitations of cross-linguistic similarity: prior linguistic knowledge can accelerate vocabulary growth, but it can also distort meaning when learners over-rely on formal resemblance (Nation, 2001; Ringbom, 2007).

#### **2.4 Speaking Anxiety**

Speaking anxiety is one of the most influential affective variables in second language acquisition, particularly in contexts where oral interaction is central to learning and performance. It refers to the tension, apprehension, and self-consciousness learners experience when required to speak in the target language. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conceptualized foreign language anxiety as a situation-specific form of anxiety associated with language learning, especially under conditions of communication pressure, fear of error, and anticipated negative evaluation.

Its relevance lies in the fact that it does not merely coexist with linguistic difficulty; it actively interferes with performance. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) argue that anxiety disrupts cognitive processing during language use by affecting input, processing, and output. This means that learners may know more than they are able to demonstrate in speaking tasks, as anxiety limits retrieval, organization, and fluent production of language.

A more critical interpretation is that speaking anxiety should not be reduced to a personal weakness or lack of confidence. Teimouri, Goetze, and Papi (2023) emphasize that



L2 anxiety is a multidimensional construct shaped by cognitive, curricular, and social conditions. From this perspective, anxiety is not simply located within the learner; it is also produced by the instructional and communicative context.

This is particularly evident in oral communication. Recent research shows that speaking anxiety is significantly predicted by communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, while perceived social support moderates these effects. It increases when learners lack linguistic control. It also intensifies when they anticipate judgment and do not perceive the environment as supportive.

The relationship between speaking anxiety and the linguistic variable of this study is theoretically significant. Linguistic interference, fossilized errors, and lexical confusion may increase anxiety by raising the likelihood of visible mistakes during oral production. At the same time, anxiety can aggravate these difficulties by reducing participation and limiting opportunities for practice. The relationship is therefore reciprocal.

Pedagogically, reducing speaking anxiety requires more than improving grammar or pronunciation. Learners benefit from supportive classroom environments, structured speaking practice, gradual exposure to oral tasks, and feedback that does not amplify fear of negative evaluation. Research on non-native speakers also indicates that sociocultural pressure and performance expectations can intensify anxiety (Zhang & Khalid, 2024).

Overall, speaking anxiety is a central variable in explaining why learners may fail to perform according to their actual level of linguistic knowledge. Its importance lies in its direct and measurable impact on participation, oral production, and long-term communicative development.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach, as it is based on the identification, analysis, and interpretation of scientific literature related to linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety in second language acquisition. Rather than measuring variables statistically, the study aims to understand how these factors are conceptualized in previous research and how they interact within ESL and EFL learning contexts.



This research is framed as a systematic literature review, following a structured, transparent, and replicable procedure for the selection, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant academic sources. The objective is not only to summarize previous studies but also to critically analyze the existing body of knowledge, identify convergences and divergences, and establish a theoretically grounded interpretation of the selected variables. The organization and reporting of the review were guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, which ensures transparency and rigor in systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021).

### 3.2 Method

The study follows a systematic review design. The selection and reporting process was structured according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, particularly in the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies. It is important to note that PRISMA was used as a framework for reporting and study selection rather than as an analytical method.

The analytical component of the study was qualitative and based on thematic analysis, which allows for the identification of recurring patterns and conceptual relationships across studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the review followed established principles of systematic review methodology, including the definition of clear eligibility criteria, transparent screening procedures, and structured synthesis of evidence (Higgins et al., 2024).

### 3.3 Phases of the Study

The systematic review was conducted in four main phases:

#### Phase 1: Identification

A structured search of scientific literature was conducted in the databases Scopus, Web of Science, Dialnet, and Google Scholar, selected for their broad coverage of peer-reviewed research in applied linguistics and second language acquisition.

The search was limited to publications from 2010 to 2025. The main keywords used were: linguistic interference, first language transfer, fossilization, false cognates, speaking anxiety, foreign language anxiety, ESL, EFL, and second language acquisition. These descriptors were combined using Boolean operators (AND, OR) to optimize search accuracy.

Inclusion criteria:

Peer-reviewed journal articles

Publications between 2010 and 2025



Studies in English or Spanish

Research related to the selected variables

ESL, EFL, or second language contexts

Exclusion criteria:

Duplicate records

Non-academic sources

Studies unrelated to the research objectives

Publications lacking methodological or theoretical relevance

This phase corresponds to the identification stage of PRISMA (Page et al., 2021).

### **Phase 2: Screening**

After removing duplicates, the remaining records were screened based on titles and abstracts.

Studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded at this stage.

This process ensured that only relevant studies progressed to the next stage, reducing selection bias and improving the quality of the final sample (Higgins et al., 2024).

### **Phase 3: Eligibility**

The selected studies were examined in full text to determine their eligibility. This phase involved evaluating each article in terms of relevance, methodological quality, and contribution to the research variables.

Studies that did not meet the required criteria were excluded, with reasons documented to ensure transparency, in accordance with PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021).

### **Phase 4: Inclusion**

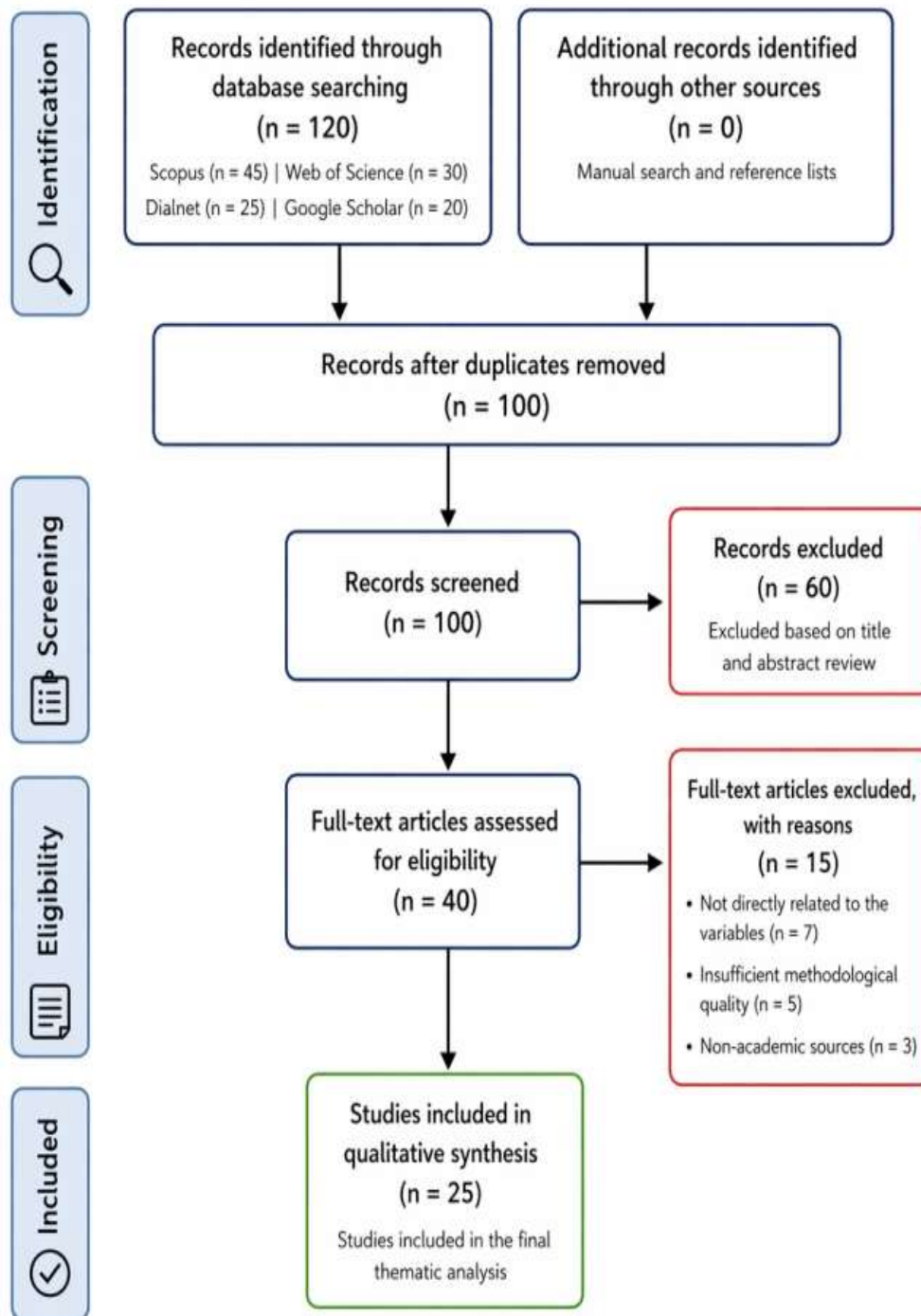
The final set of studies was included in the qualitative synthesis. Data from each article were organized into an analytical matrix, including information such as objectives, methodology, context, and key findings.

The analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, allowing the identification of patterns, similarities, and differences across studies. This approach provides a deeper interpretative understanding of how the selected variables interact within second language acquisition (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Figure 1**

*PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process*





**Note:** The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure transparency, rigor, and reproducibility. The numbers shown in the diagram represent the total records identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the qualitative synthesis, as well as the reasons for exclusion at each stage.



## 4. RESULTS

The present study was conducted through a qualitative systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021). A total of 25 scientific articles published between 2010 and 2025 were selected for analysis. These studies were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, Dialnet, and Google Scholar and examined in relation to four central variables: linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety.

The findings indicate that these variables function as an interconnected system influencing second language learning rather than as isolated factors. Previous research supports this integrative perspective, highlighting the interaction between cognitive, linguistic, and affective dimensions in SLA (Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

### **Linguistic Interference**

The analysis confirms that linguistic interference is a recurrent and structurally significant source of error. Learners tend to transfer phonological, syntactic, and lexical patterns from their first language into English, particularly at early and intermediate stages (Odlin, 1989; Ellis, 1997).

The findings also indicate that interference is more frequent when structural differences between languages are substantial. This supports the view that learners rely on L1 as a cognitive strategy to process new input, which may result in systematic errors if not addressed through instruction (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

### **Fossilization**

The results show that fossilization involves the stabilization of non-target-like forms that persist despite exposure to the target language (Selinker, 1972). The reviewed studies confirm that fossilized errors occur across proficiency levels and are not limited to beginner learners.

Evidence suggests that fossilization is influenced by both cognitive and instructional conditions. Limited corrective feedback and insufficient opportunities for meaningful practice contribute to the persistence of errors (Han, 2004; Ellis, 1997). These findings reinforce the idea that fossilization is not entirely inevitable but shaped by the learning environment.

### **False Cognates**



The findings indicate that false cognates contribute to lexical inaccuracies, particularly among learners whose first language shares similarities with English. Learners frequently rely on formal similarity to infer meaning, which may lead to semantic misinterpretations (Ringbom, 2007).

Although less frequent than true cognates, false cognates have a disproportionate impact on communication. They can generate misunderstandings and reduce intelligibility, especially in academic contexts where lexical precision is required (Nation, 2001). This confirms that cross-linguistic similarity operates both as a facilitative and misleading mechanism in vocabulary acquisition.

### **Speaking Anxiety**

The results demonstrate that speaking anxiety significantly affects learners' oral performance. It is strongly associated with fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and lack of confidence (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The analysis also shows that anxiety interferes with cognitive processing, limiting learners' ability to retrieve, organize, and produce language effectively during speaking tasks (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). In addition, recent research supports the view that speaking anxiety is a multidimensional construct influenced by cognitive, social, and instructional factors (Teimouri et al., 2023).

### **Cross-Variable Analysis**

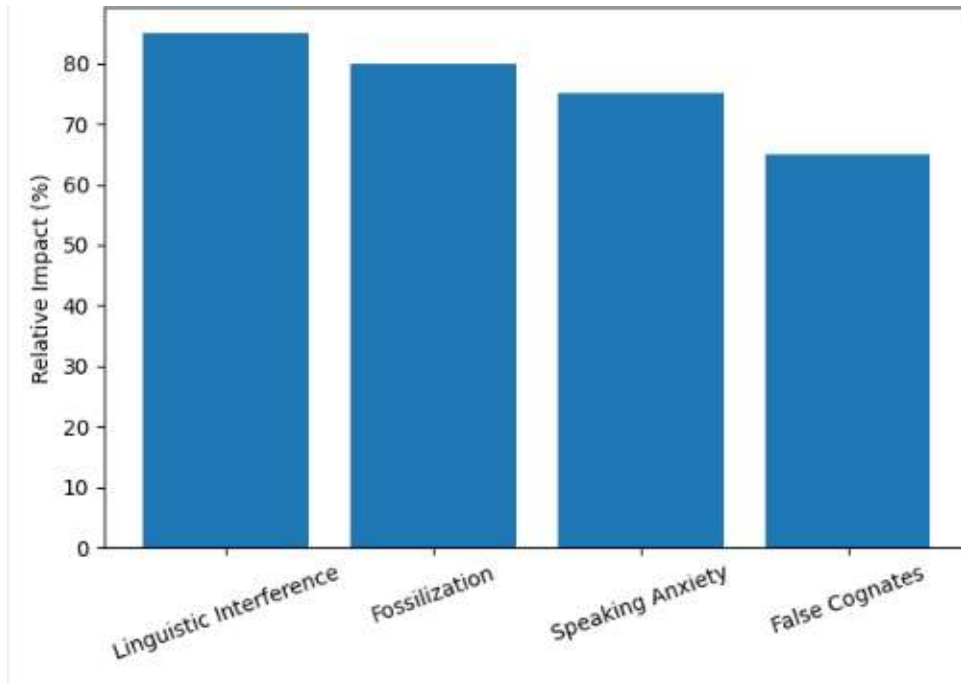
The analysis reveals that second language learning difficulties emerge from the interaction between linguistic and affective variables. Linguistic interference may contribute to fossilization, while false cognates increase lexical ambiguity. These difficulties, in turn, can intensify speaking anxiety by increasing the likelihood of errors during oral production.

At the same time, anxiety reduces participation and limits opportunities for practice, reinforcing linguistic difficulties. This reciprocal relationship highlights the dynamic nature of second language acquisition and supports integrative models of SLA that emphasize the interaction between cognitive and affective factors (Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

### **Figure 2.**

*Comparative Impact of Key Variables in ESL Learning*





*Note.* The figure represents a comparative interpretation of the impact of linguistic interference, fossilization, speaking anxiety, and false cognates based on the qualitative synthesis of the reviewed studies. The percentages indicate relative influence and do not correspond to statistical measurements.

**Table 1**

*Matrix of Technological Tools Used*

Technology Tool	Pedagogical Use / Innovation Activity	Application-Level / Context
QR codes	Implementation of self-guided motor circuits that include interactive challenges and access to explanatory videos of the motor technique.	Basic education (primary/secondary) and professional practice
Counting and Logging Applications	Real-time recording and analysis of physical performance to encourage self-awareness of motor progress.	Physical education sessions in basic education



Technology Tool	Pedagogical Use / Innovation Activity	Application-Level / Context
Projected interactive software and games	Projection of playful-motor activities that promote mass movement and collaborative participation.	School environments for practice and simulations in the BENV

*Nota.* Herramientas tecnológicas utilizadas con sus respectivas variables. Elaboration un.

### PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSAL

The findings of this study indicate that linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety are not isolated difficulties but interconnected factors that significantly affect second language development. Based on these results, this section proposes a practical and structured pedagogical strategy aimed at reducing linguistic errors while improving learners' confidence in oral communication.

This proposal is grounded in established research on cross-linguistic influence (Odlin, 1989), vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001), and foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), ensuring theoretical consistency with the variables analyzed in this study.

The strategy is designed to be applicable in regular ESL classrooms without requiring specialized resources and focuses on the integration of awareness, practice, feedback, and emotional support.

### Instructional Components

**Table 2**

*Instructional Components and Target Variables*

Component	Description	Target Variable(s)
Contrastive Awareness	Comparison between L1 and English structures to identify differences in form and meaning	Linguistic interference; False cognates



Error Recycling	Continuous identification and systematic correction of recurring learner errors	Fossilization
Guided Speaking	Structured speaking tasks with progressively increasing difficulty	Speaking anxiety
Supportive Feedback	Delayed and non-intrusive error correction strategies	Fossilization; Speaking anxiety

Note. Instructional components aligned with linguistic and affective variables in ESL learning. Own elaboration.

### Classroom Activities

Each component is operationalized through structured classroom activities that can be integrated into regular lessons.

**Table 3**

#### *Suggested Classroom Activities*

Activity Name	Procedure	Duration	Objective
Say it Right (contrastive error correction task)	Students compare incorrect vs. correct forms and produce examples	10–15 min	Reduce errors associated with linguistic interference and false cognates
Fix Your Mistake (guided error identification task)	Students identify and correct common errors collected by the teacher	10 min	Prevent fossilization
Think–Pair–Speak (structured interaction task)	Students think individually, discuss in pairs, and optionally present	10–15 min	Reduce speaking anxiety



Micro Speaking Tasks (controlled fluency practice)	Short individual or pair speaking activities	5–10 min	Increase fluency and confidence
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*Note.* Suggested classroom activities designed to address linguistic and affective variables in ESL learning. Own elaboration

### Feedback Strategy

One of the central findings of this study is that inadequate feedback contributes to fossilization and increases speaking anxiety. Therefore, the proposal emphasizes a balanced and pedagogically informed feedback approach.

**Table 4**

#### *Feedback Strategies*

Strategy	Description	Purpose
Delayed correction	Errors are addressed after the speaking activity	Maintain fluency
Recasting	The teacher reformulates incorrect sentences	Provide implicit correction
Peer correction	Students collaboratively identify and correct errors	Promote metalinguistic awareness
Error highlighting	Frequent errors are selected for class discussion	Prevent fossilization

*Note.* Feedback strategies used to reduce fossilization and speaking anxiety. Elaboración propia.

### Weekly Implementation Plan

To ensure consistency and continuity, the strategy can be implemented through a structured weekly cycle.

**Table 5**

#### *Weekly Instructional Plan*

Day	Focus Area	Main Activity
Monday	Interference & Cognates	Say it Right



Tuesday	Speaking Practice	Think–Pair–Speak
Wednesday	Fossilization	Fix Your Mistake
Thursday	Guided Speaking	Micro Speaking Tasks
Friday	Review and Integration	Mixed activities

**Note.** Weekly instructional sequence designed to address linguistic and affective variables in ESL learning. Own elaboration.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that second language acquisition cannot be adequately explained through isolated variables. Instead, the interaction among linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety reveals a complex system in which cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors mutually influence one another. This perspective is consistent with contemporary approaches to second language acquisition that emphasize the dynamic and non-linear nature of interlanguage development (Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

##### 4.1 Linguistic Interference as a Persistent Constraint

The results confirm that linguistic interference is a fundamental mechanism in second language learning. As proposed by Odlin (1989), transfer is an inevitable consequence of relying on previously acquired linguistic knowledge. However, the evidence suggests that, in ESL contexts, interference more frequently constrains learning than facilitates it, particularly when structural differences between languages are significant.

These findings challenge perspectives that present transfer as a neutral process. While positive transfer can occur, negative transfer tends to persist over time and remains resistant to correction when reinforced through repeated use. Therefore, interference should be understood not as a temporary stage but as an ongoing factor that continues to shape learner production across proficiency levels.

##### 4.2 Fossilization and the Role of Instruction

The analysis of fossilization supports the view that persistent non-target-like forms are not exclusively the result of internal cognitive limitations. Although early work defined fossilization as a natural endpoint in interlanguage development (Selinker, 1972), the findings of this study suggest that instructional conditions play a significant role.



Consistent with Han (2004), fossilization emerges as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the quality of feedback, the frequency of interaction, and the presence of corrective strategies. In many cases, persistent errors are associated with limited or inconsistent feedback rather than with an inherent inability to progress. This implies that fossilization should be interpreted, at least partially, as a consequence of pedagogical limitations.

#### **4.3 False Cognates and Lexical Processing**

The findings related to false cognates highlight the dual role of cross-linguistic similarity in vocabulary acquisition. As noted by Ringbom (2007), similarity between languages often facilitates learning by allowing learners to connect new forms to existing knowledge. However, the results also demonstrate that this same mechanism can lead to systematic semantic errors.

In line with Nation (2001), vocabulary learning depends heavily on prior knowledge; however, this dependence may result in inaccurate associations when learners rely excessively on formal similarity. False cognates therefore illustrate the limits of similarity-based strategies and suggest the need for instructional approaches that emphasize semantic precision rather than form recognition alone.

#### **4.4 Speaking Anxiety as a Central Variable**

The findings indicate that speaking anxiety plays a central role in shaping learner performance. While traditionally treated as a secondary affective factor, the evidence shows that anxiety directly interferes with language use. As defined by Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific construct, and its effects on cognitive processing have been demonstrated by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994).

This study extends these perspectives by showing that anxiety not only results from linguistic difficulties but also contributes to them. Learners experiencing anxiety are less likely to participate in speaking activities, which reduces opportunities for practice and increases the likelihood of persistent errors. This supports recent perspectives that conceptualize anxiety as a dynamic and context-dependent construct (Teimouri et al., 2023).

#### **4.5 Interdependence of Variables**

A central contribution of this study is the identification of the interdependence among the four variables. Linguistic interference contributes to error production; repeated



errors may become fossilized; lexical confusion caused by false cognates complicates communication; and these difficulties increase speaking anxiety. In turn, anxiety reduces participation, reinforcing this cycle.

This interaction supports dynamic models of second language acquisition in which multiple variables influence one another simultaneously. It also suggests that addressing individual variables in isolation is unlikely to produce significant improvement.

#### **4.6 Pedagogical Implications**

The findings highlight the need for an integrated approach to language teaching. Instruction should not focus exclusively on grammar or vocabulary; instead, it should address the interaction between linguistic and affective factors.

Effective strategies include the following:

Explicit comparison between L1 and L2 structures

Consistent and meaningful corrective feedback

Activities that promote lexical awareness

Classroom environments that reduce speaking anxiety

Without these elements, learners are likely to remain within limited interlanguage systems despite continued exposure to the target language.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The present study confirms that second language acquisition is a complex and multidimensional process shaped by the interaction of linguistic and affective variables. The analysis of the selected literature demonstrates that learners' difficulties cannot be attributed to a single cause, but rather to the combined influence of linguistic interference, fossilization, false cognates, and speaking anxiety.

First, linguistic interference emerges as a fundamental mechanism in language learning. The findings show that learners consistently rely on their first language as a cognitive resource to process the target language. However, this reliance often results in systematic errors when structural differences between languages are significant. Therefore, interference should not be understood solely as an initial stage, but as a persistent factor that continues to influence learner performance across proficiency levels.



Second, fossilization represents one of the most critical challenges in second language development. The results indicate that certain errors become stabilized and resistant to change, even after prolonged exposure to the target language. Importantly, the study supports the view that fossilization is not entirely inevitable, but is strongly influenced by instructional conditions, particularly the quality of feedback and opportunities for meaningful practice. This suggests that pedagogical decisions play a key role in either reinforcing or reducing persistent errors.

Third, false cognates highlight the dual role of cross-linguistic similarity in vocabulary acquisition. While similarity between languages can facilitate lexical learning, it can also lead to semantic confusion when learners assume incorrect equivalence between words. Although less frequent than other types of errors, false cognates have a significant impact on communication, especially in academic contexts where lexical precision is essential. This finding underscores the need for explicit lexical awareness in language instruction.

Fourth, speaking anxiety is identified as a central variable that directly affects learners' oral performance. The evidence shows that anxiety interferes with cognitive processing, limiting learners' ability to retrieve and organize linguistic knowledge during communication. Moreover, the study demonstrates a reciprocal relationship between anxiety and linguistic difficulties: errors increase anxiety, and anxiety, in turn, reduces participation and opportunities for improvement. This highlights the importance of addressing emotional factors alongside linguistic competence.

A key conclusion of this study is that these four variables do not operate independently. Instead, they form an interconnected system in which each factor reinforces the others. Linguistic interference contributes to error production; repeated errors may become fossilized; lexical confusion through false cognates complicates communication; and these difficulties increase speaking anxiety, which further limits language use. This dynamic interaction helps explain why many learners struggle to achieve communicative competence despite prolonged exposure to the language.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings emphasize that effective second language instruction requires an integrated approach. Focusing exclusively on grammar or vocabulary is insufficient. Instead, teaching practices must simultaneously address transfer awareness, error correction, lexical precision, and the emotional conditions of learning. The



proposed instructional strategy in this study demonstrates that targeted, structured, and low-anxiety practices can contribute to reducing errors and improving learner participation.

In conclusion, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of second language acquisition by highlighting the interaction between cognitive, linguistic, and affective dimensions. Its main implication is that improving language learning outcomes depends not only on what learners know, but also on how they process, use, and experience the language in real communicative contexts.

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