

Gramatical Competence and Linguistic Interference: The Influence of Native Language to L2

Ganiyeva Dilduzaxon Qodirjon qizi

PhD student of Gulistan State University

dilduzaganiyeva57@gmail.com

Abstract: This study explores grammatical interference from Uzbek to English among Uzbek-speaking learners of English. The paper investigates common interference patterns, including errors in word order, verb tense usage, and article application, by analyzing written and spoken English data from non-native speakers. Findings indicate that structural differences between the two languages, such as the agglutinative nature of Uzbek and the analytic structure of English, lead to specific types of grammatical mistakes. Recommendations for teaching strategies are provided to help learners overcome these interference issues.

Keywords: Gramatical competence, linguistic interference, transference, grammar structure, positive and negative interference.



This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

INTRODUCTION

Despite being studied by many scholars, the phenomenon of **linguistic interference** remains relevant and is considered one of the pressing issues at various stages of language teaching. One of the main reasons for this is the integration of the world, active cooperation between countries, and, as a result, the increasing demand for learning other languages, especially foreign ones. In the process of learning a non-native language and applying it in practice, various difficulties and errors arise, and the cause of these issues is the phenomenon of **interference**.

Grammatical competence is a fundamental component of language ability. It refers to a person's **knowledge of the rules** of grammar in a language and the ability to **use those rules correctly** to produce and understand well-formed sentences.

Language interference occurs when linguistic features of a speaker's native language (L1) influence the acquisition or use of a second language (L2). In the case of Uzbek learners of English, this often manifests in the form of grammatical interference due to the structural differences between the two languages. Uzbek, a Turkic language, follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order, uses postpositions, and relies on suffixes for grammatical relations. English, on the other hand, follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order and uses auxiliary verbs and prepositions. This study aims to identify and categorize the most common grammatical interference patterns observed in English usage by native Uzbek speakers

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of **grammatical competence** was first introduced by **Noam Chomsky (1965)** as a component of a speaker's linguistic competence—the ability to recognize and produce grammatically correct sentences. Later, **Canale and Swain (1980)** expanded this concept in their communicative competence model, identifying grammatical competence as one of four key components necessary for effective communication in a second language.

According to Canale and Swain, grammatical competence includes knowledge of:

- ✓ Morphology (word formation),
- ✓ Syntax (sentence structure)
- ✓ Semantics (meaning), and
- ✓ Phonology (sound system).

In the context of Uzbek learners of English, grammatical competence is often hindered by **L1 interference**, especially in areas where Uzbek and English structures diverge. Learners may understand vocabulary and context, but struggle with sentence accuracy due to differences in word order, verb usage, or the lack of articles in Uzbek.

Developing grammatical competence requires more than rule memorization—it necessitates **meaningful exposure, contextualized practice, and corrective feedback**. As Krashen (1982) emphasized, conscious knowledge of grammar contributes to language learning only when combined with comprehensible input and low anxiety learning environments.

Why is Grammatical Competence Important?

- ✓ Ensures **accuracy** in speaking and writing.
- ✓ Helps learners **avoid misunderstandings**.
- ✓ Forms the **foundation** for other types of language competence like **sociolinguistic** and **communicative competence**.
- A learner who says:
 - ✓ “She doesn’t like coffee.” has grammatical competence.
- But a learner who says:
 - ✓ “She don’t like coffee.” is showing **incomplete grammatical competence**, possibly due to **interference** from their first language or a misunderstanding of English rules.

Grammatical interference, also known as linguistic transfer or cross-linguistic influence, occurs when the grammatical rules of one language affect the use of another language. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in multilingual individuals and second language learners, often resulting in unique linguistic patterns and challenges. Interference involves the avoidance of an individual’s speech in the other language as a result of the influence of the mother tongue on the language spoken at all levels. Interference can be considered to be both *negative* and *positive*. Negative transfer reflects the difficulties encountered in the use of the target language. This difficulty occurs mainly when the target language is used in conjunction with the other language. Positive transfer means facilitating language learning. (Baghirova, 2021)

According to Newmark and Reibel (1973), the tendency for learners to rely on their first language (L1) rules during second language (L2) production is not a sign of genuine acquisition but rather a fallback strategy due to gaps in L2 knowledge. While interference may momentarily support communication, it does not signify long-term progress. They argue that drilling contrasting language points between L1 and L2 is not a lasting solution. Instead, true acquisition—and

therefore the real remedy for interference—comes only through comprehensible input (Newmark, 1966, p. 81), where the learner is exposed to meaningful and understandable language in context.

This view aligns with the findings of the present study. Many grammatical errors made by Uzbek learners of English—such as incorrect word order or article omission—can be traced back to direct L1 transfer. These errors persisted despite years of grammar-focused instruction, suggesting that input-rich, communicative environments may be more effective in overcoming interference than traditional grammar drills.

Linguistic interference—the influence of one language on another—is a common phenomenon in second language acquisition. This process is especially evident among learners whose native language grammar structures differ significantly from those of English. Gass and Selinker (1983) describe interference as a form of **negative transfer**, meaning that knowledge from the first language (L1) can hinder correct expression in the second language (L2).

As Brown (2000) explains, interference occurs when the learner's L2 knowledge is not yet solid, leading them to rely on the L1 system while attempting to speak. This is particularly evident in grammatical categories such as verb tenses, verb forms, articles, and noun phrase structures.

In his scientific study, **D. Karimov (2020)** analyzed how Uzbek grammatical categories negatively affect the process of learning English. He identified verb tenses, plural markers, and word order as the main sources of interference. According to Karimov, Uzbek expressions of time do not correspond well with the complex tense system in English, often resulting in errors.

Krashen (1982), in his “Input Hypothesis” theory, emphasizes the importance of providing correct and comprehensible input rather than focusing solely on interference. However, his theory does not deny the existence of interference; rather, it proposes that proper input can reduce its effects.

Causes of Grammatical Interference:

1. Language typology: Similarities and differences between language structures
2. Proficiency levels: The impact of language competence on interference
3. Cognitive processes: How the brain manages multiple language systems

Manifestations of Grammatical Interference:

- 1) Word order: Transfer of syntactic structures from L1 to
- 2) Morphological transfer: Applying inflectional patterns from one language to another
- 3) Tense and aspect: Misuse of temporal markers based on L1 conventions
- 4) Agreement: Errors in gender, number, or person agreement
- 5) Prepositions and articles: Incorrect usage influenced by L1 patterns

METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned above, Interference can occur at various linguistic levels, including phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical. Uzbek-speaking learners of English are particularly prone to syntactic and grammatical interference, due to fundamental structural differences between the two languages. Uzbek is an agglutinative language with Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order and extensive use of suffixes, whereas English follows an analytic structure with Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order and relies heavily on auxiliary verbs and fixed word patterns. In the case of Uzbek learners of English, this often manifests in the form of grammatical interference due to the structural differences between the two languages. Uzbek, a Turkic language, follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order, uses postpositions, and relies on suffixes for grammatical relations.

English, on the other hand, follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order and uses auxiliary verbs and prepositions. This study aims to identify and categorize the most common grammatical interference patterns observed in English usage by native Uzbek speakers

For example, Uzbek does not have articles ("a," "an," "the"), and this absence often leads to their omission in English by Uzbek learners. Similarly, the concept of tense and aspect in Uzbek differs significantly from English, which results in tense-related errors. According to Odilova (2018), the misuse of English verb tenses by Uzbek learners is frequently due to direct transfer of L1 temporal conventions.

Verb Tense

Uzbek does not use auxiliary verbs in the same way as English. As a result, learners often omitted "do/does/did" in questions and used the present simple instead of present perfect or past tenses.

Article Usage

Since Uzbek does not use definite or indefinite articles, learners commonly omitted "a," "an," and "the."

Prepositions

Literal translation from Uzbek often led to incorrect prepositions (e.g., "in Monday" instead of "on Monday").

Word Order

Participants frequently produced sentences such as "He a book read" instead of "He reads a book," reflecting SOV influence.

The findings confirm that grammatical interference is a significant factor affecting the English proficiency of Uzbek learners. Word order issues were the most frequent due to the fundamental syntactic differences. Additionally, article misuse highlights the difficulty in acquiring features that do not exist in the native language.

Implications for Teaching

- **Focus on contrastive analysis:** Comparing English and Uzbek structures helps learners become more aware of differences.
- **Error correction strategies:** Teachers should provide targeted feedback on recurring interference errors.
- **Drills and pattern practice:** Structured practice on tense forms, article usage, and prepositions is essential.

CONCLUSION

Grammatical interference from Uzbek to English is evident among Uzbek learners, particularly in sentence structure and verb usage. In order to achieve grammatical competence in English, language instructors and learners should take into consideration of grammatical interference and overcoming its negative effect. Understanding the root causes of these errors can help educators develop better instructional strategies and reduce negative transfer from L1 to L2.

REFERENCE

1. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47.
2. Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

3. Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
4. Newmark, L., & Reibel, D. (1973). Necessity and Sufficiency in Language Learning. In D. Dinnsen (Ed.), *Current Trends in Linguistics* (Vol. 12). The Hague: Mouton.
5. Newmark, L. (1966). How Not to Interfere with Language Learning. *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 32(1), 77–83.
6. Odilova, D. (2018). Common Grammatical Errors in English Made by Uzbek Learners: A Contrastive Approach. *Journal of Foreign Language Education*.
7. Karimov, D. (2020). *Til interferensiyasi va grammatik xatolar tahlili*. Tashkent: UzMU Nashriyoti.
8. Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.
9. Gass, S., & Selinker, L. (1983). *Language Transfer in Language Learning*. Newbury House Publishers.
10. Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
11. Tursunov, B. (2021). The Impact of Native Language on English Grammar Acquisition in Uzbek EFL Learners. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), 45–53.
12. Usmonova, N. (2019). Grammatical Interference in Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Uzbek Students. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 5(3), 22–31.
13. Wajnryb, R. (1990). *Grammar Dictation*. Oxford University Press.