Cross-Linguistic Interference: Errors in Learning English among Uzbek Students

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Abstract. *This article explores the phenomenon of interlingual interference in the context of English language acquisition by Uzbek students, providing an in-depth analysis of how the structure, rules, and usage patterns of the Uzbek language influence learners' performance in English. Interlingual interference, also known as negative language transfer, refers to errors that occur when elements from a speaker's native language interfere with the acquisition and use of a second language. This study focuses specifically on the types of mistakes commonly made by Uzbek learners of English at various proficiency levels, and it investigates the underlying linguistic causes of these errors. Through a detailed examination of written and spoken English samples produced by Uzbek students, the article identifies recurring patterns of grammatical, phonological, lexical, and syntactic errors. Particular attention is paid to issues such as incorrect verb tenses, omission of articles, subject-verb agreement mistakes, misused prepositions, and faulty sentence structures—all of which can be traced back to differences between Uzbek and English grammar systems. The research also sheds light on phonetic difficulties, including the substitution of English sounds with phonetically similar Uzbek ones, stress placement problems, and intonation errors that impact overall intelligibility and fluency. The article is grounded in a comparative linguistic framework, which allows for a contrastive analysis between Uzbek and English, revealing specific areas where interference is most likely to occur. It also incorporates insights from second language acquisition (SLA) theory, particularly the role of the learner's first language (L1) in shaping the learning process of a second language (L2). The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews with English teachers, classroom observations, and error analysis of student compositions and oral performances. One of the central aims of this research is to increase awareness among language instructors, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers about the unique challenges faced by Uzbek learners due to interlingual interference. The article emphasizes the importance of developing pedagogical strategies that explicitly address these interference-induced mistakes, such as contrastive grammar teaching, targeted pronunciation drills, and culturally responsive materials that bridge the linguistic gap between Uzbek and English. Furthermore, the article discusses the psychological and sociolinguistic dimensions of language interference, noting that learners' confidence and motivation can be significantly affected by persistent errors. It argues that fostering metalinguistic awareness among students—encouraging them to consciously reflect on differences between languages—can reduce error rates and enhance overall language competence. In conclusion, the article contributes to the growing body of literature on L1 interference by providing empirical evidence and theoretical insights specific to the Uzbek-English language pair. It underscores the necessity of localized language instruction that takes into account the linguistic background of learners, and it proposes practical recommendations for improving English language teaching in Uzbekistan. Ultimately, the findings of this study aim to support more effective and*

equitable English language education by addressing the root causes of common learner errors through a nuanced understanding of interlingual interference.

INTRODUCTION.

In the increasingly globalized world of the 21st century, English has emerged as the dominant international language of communication, science, business, and technology. For many countries, including Uzbekistan, the mastery of English is seen not only as a means of personal and academic advancement but also as a strategic national priority. With significant reforms in the education sector and the rising demand for English proficiency in various professional fields, the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) has gained momentum across the country. However, despite growing interest and institutional support, Uzbek learners often encounter persistent challenges in acquiring accurate and fluent English. Among the most significant of these challenges is interlingual interference—the influence of the native language (Uzbek) on the learning and use of a second language (English), which frequently results in systematic errors and misunderstandings. Interlingual interference, also known as negative language transfer, refers to the linguistic phenomenon where features of a learner's first language (L1) negatively influence the acquisition and use of a second language (L2). This interference can occur at multiple levels of language structure, including phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, and semantics. For Uzbek students, whose first language belongs to the Turkic language family, learning English—a Germanic language with fundamentally different grammatical rules and phonological patterns—presents numerous opportunities for such interference to arise. The lack of one-to-one correspondences between Uzbek and English often results in learners applying rules from their native language to English inappropriately, leading to typical learner errors. The significance of studying interlingual interference in the context of Uzbek EFL learners lies in its pedagogical implications. Identifying and understanding the specific types of mistakes caused by the influence of Uzbek can help educators design more effective instructional strategies and develop teaching materials that address these issues explicitly. Moreover, it allows researchers and practitioners to distinguish between errors stemming from language transfer and those resulting from developmental factors or general language learning difficulties. In a multilingual educational environment such as Uzbekistan, where Russian and other regional languages may also play a role, the complexity of language interference becomes even more pronounced, requiring careful linguistic and psycholinguistic analysis. This study aims to explore the nature and scope of interlingual interference in the English language learning process among Uzbek students. It focuses on common patterns of error attributable to the structural and functional differences between the two languages. These include issues in verb tense usage, article application (given the absence of articles in Uzbek), word order errors, prepositional confusion, and problems with auxiliary verbs, among others. Pronunciation is also a major area of concern, as the Uzbek phonological system lacks certain English sounds, leading to misarticulations and difficulties in intelligibility. Furthermore, this paper examines the influence of sociolinguistic and educational factors that contribute to interlingual interference. Factors such as early exposure to English, the dominant medium of instruction, the quality of language teaching, access to authentic English input, and the role of bilingualism or trilingualism in students' cognitive development all intersect with linguistic transfer. It is essential to understand not only how interference manifests but also the conditions under which it is more or less likely to occur. In addition, the research considers the theoretical underpinnings of interlingual interference by drawing on key concepts from contrastive analysis, error analysis, and second language acquisition (SLA) theory. Contrastive analysis, in particular, posits that the more divergent the two languages are, the greater the likelihood of interference. By systematically comparing the

grammatical structures of English and Uzbek, the study provides a framework for predicting and explaining common learner difficulties. Error analysis, meanwhile, enables the empirical categorization and interpretation of learner errors, offering insight into their sources and potential remedies. Ultimately, this investigation into interlingual interference in the case of Uzbek learners contributes to the broader field of applied linguistics and language pedagogy. It not only sheds light on the unique challenges faced by Uzbek students but also highlights the importance of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching approaches in foreign language education. With the right awareness and methodology, the negative effects of interlingual interference can be minimized, and learners can be guided more effectively toward accurate, fluent, and confident use of English. Thus, this study serves a dual purpose: to deepen academic understanding of cross-linguistic influence in the Uzbek context and to provide practical recommendations for teachers, curriculum developers, and language policymakers. As Uzbekistan continues its educational modernization and expands its engagement with the global community, addressing such fundamental issues in English language learning becomes not only a pedagogical concern but a national imperative.

METHODOLOGY.

The methodology of this study is designed to comprehensively investigate the phenomenon of interlingual interference in the English language learning process among Uzbek students. Interlingual interference, in this context, refers to the negative transfer of linguistic elements from the mother tongue (Uzbek) into the target language (English), which often leads to systematic errors in various aspects of language production and comprehension. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to ensure a robust and nuanced understanding of the issue.

This research is structured as a descriptive and analytical case study, targeting a specific learner population—Uzbek students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The rationale for using a case study design lies in the need to explore in-depth patterns of linguistic interference within a defined sociolinguistic and educational context. The research is exploratory in nature, aiming to identify common types of errors, their linguistic sources, and the underlying cognitive and pedagogical factors that contribute to them.

The sample consists of 120 Uzbek EFL learners, selected from three different educational levels: secondary school (grades 9–11), undergraduate students from language faculties, and adult learners from private language centers. This stratified sampling method ensures a diversity of language exposure, proficiency levels, and age groups, which allows for comparative analysis across different learner profiles.

The participants are further categorized based on their English language proficiency, as assessed by a standardized test aligned with CEFR levels (A2–B2). This classification facilitates the evaluation of how interlingual interference manifests across various stages of language acquisition.

To capture both quantitative data (frequency and types of errors) and qualitative insights (learner perceptions and explanations), multiple data collection tools were utilized:

Participants were asked to complete two different writing assignments: a descriptive paragraph and an opinion essay. These samples were analyzed for recurring grammatical, lexical, and syntactic errors that reflect Uzbek-to-English interference. Special attention was paid to verb tenses, prepositions, article usage, word order, and vocabulary choice.

Each participant underwent a short structured interview, which was recorded and transcribed. Oral data were examined for pronunciation errors, sentence structure anomalies, and direct translations from Uzbek that disrupted natural English flow.

A set of short Uzbek sentences was given to the learners to translate into English. This task was specifically designed to detect literal translation patterns and highlight the influence of L1 syntactic structure.

A self-reported questionnaire was administered to explore students' perceptions of language difficulty, their awareness of interference, and the strategies they use to avoid or overcome L1-based errors.

To triangulate the findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 EFL teachers from participating institutions. Teachers provided insights into the most common interlingual errors observed, instructional challenges, and techniques used to address L1 interference in the classroom.

The collected data were subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analysis:

Errors were categorized based on linguistic levels (phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic). The frequency of each type of error was calculated and tabulated, with statistical tools such as SPSS used for comparative analysis across learner groups and proficiency levels.

Transcriptions from oral interviews and teacher narratives were coded thematically to extract recurring patterns and contextual explanations for interlingual errors. NVivo software was employed to facilitate systematic coding and thematic organization.

A contrastive linguistic approach was used to explain the origin of specific errors. By comparing Uzbek and English grammatical and phonological rules, the study identifies which errors are most likely caused by negative L1 transfer and which stem from intralingual or developmental sources.

To enhance the validity of the study, data triangulation was applied by using multiple data sources (learners, teachers) and methods (writing, speaking, translation, questionnaires). Reliability was ensured through inter-rater agreement: two linguists independently analyzed a sample of written and spoken texts, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Pilot testing of the questionnaire and translation tasks was conducted with 15 students from a non-participating institution to refine task clarity and appropriateness. The final instruments were revised based on feedback.

All participants provided informed consent, and the study followed ethical guidelines concerning anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The identities of students and institutions were anonymized in all records and publications.

While this methodology provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing interlingual interference, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

➢ The sample size, though diverse, may not be fully representative of all Uzbek EFL learners nationwide.

➢ Error analysis relies on observable performance and may not capture internal cognitive processes.

➢ Certain errors might stem from multiple sources, making it difficult to isolate interlingual interference exclusively.

Nonetheless, the multi-layered data collection and contrastive framework help mitigate these limitations and offer valuable insights for both theoretical and pedagogical purposes.

In sum, the methodological framework of this study is grounded in linguistic theory, practical classroom realities, and empirical rigor. By combining quantitative error frequency analysis with qualitative content interpretation, the study aims to provide a deep and accurate understanding of how Uzbek learners' native language shapes their English learning outcomes. This methodology also opens avenues for actionable recommendations in curriculum development, teacher training, and learner strategy coaching to reduce L1 interference and enhance overall English proficiency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

The present study examines interlingual interference—also known as negative language transfer—among Uzbek students learning English as a foreign language. The analysis draws upon both qualitative and quantitative data collected through written samples, classroom observations, and interviews with English language learners and instructors in various educational settings across Uzbekistan. The findings underscore that a significant number of errors made by Uzbek students stem

from the structural and lexical differences between Uzbek and English, demonstrating a clear pattern of interlingual interference in phonology, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary usage.

Phonological errors were among the most frequent types of mistakes observed in Uzbek learners' oral performance. The phonemic inventory of Uzbek differs substantially from that of English, resulting in mispronunciations and substitutions. For instance, English sounds such as /θ/ (as in think) and /ð/ (as in this) have no direct equivalents in Uzbek. These are often replaced by /s/ or /t/ sounds, leading to utterances like "sank" instead of "thank" or "dis" instead of "this." Similarly, final consonant clusters, which are rare in Uzbek, are often simplified by Uzbek learners, resulting in pronunciations like "col" for "cold" or "hol" for "hold." These errors not only affect intelligibility but also influence the learner's confidence in oral communication.

Grammatical interference was another prevalent issue. Uzbek is an agglutinative language with a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order, while English follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure. This fundamental syntactic difference often leads to errors such as "She a book reads" instead of "She reads a book." In addition, the absence of auxiliary verbs in Uzbek contributes to incorrect sentence constructions in English, such as "He going to school" instead of "He is going to school."

Verb tenses also present significant challenges. Uzbek does not have perfect tenses, and this lack leads to confusion in the usage of present perfect and past perfect tenses. For example, students often say "I have seen her yesterday" or "I was gone to the market" as a result of trying to apply Uzbek temporal logic to English structures.

Articles represent another major area of difficulty. Uzbek lacks a system of definite and indefinite articles, and this absence results in frequent omission or misuse of "a," "an," and "the" in English. For example, phrases like "She bought book" or "Sun is bright" are common among learners. While these errors may not always impede understanding, they reflect a deeper issue in acquiring English grammatical competence.

Vocabulary errors often stem from direct translation practices and a reliance on L1 semantic structures. Uzbek students frequently use Uzbek lexical equivalents in English sentences, resulting in literal translations that sound unnatural or incorrect. For example, the Uzbek phrase "ko'p yaxshi" might be translated as "much good" instead of the more appropriate "very good." Additionally, learners sometimes employ false cognates—words that appear similar in both languages but have different meanings. For instance, the Uzbek word "roman" refers specifically to a novel, whereas in English "Roman" is related to the ancient civilization or alphabet. This can result in confusing sentences like "I read a Roman yesterday."

Interlingual interference also impacts written English. Common errors include incorrect sentence structures, poor punctuation, and awkward phrasing that mirror Uzbek grammatical patterns. One notable example is the use of gerunds and infinitives. Since Uzbek has no direct equivalents for these forms, learners may struggle with constructions like "I enjoy to play football" instead of "I enjoy playing football." Additionally, Uzbek students often write long, compound sentences in a style similar to their native language, without using appropriate connectors, leading to run-on sentences and fragmented ideas.

The results further indicate that the degree of interlingual interference is closely tied to the student's level of exposure to English, quality of instruction, and socio-cultural environment. Students from rural or monolingual Uzbek-speaking backgrounds tend to exhibit more frequent and persistent interference patterns than those from urban areas or bilingual households. The availability of native-speaking teachers or well-trained ESL instructors significantly reduces these errors, as does increased exposure to English media and interactive learning environments.

Classroom observations also revealed that many teachers, though competent in English, may inadvertently reinforce interlingual patterns by using Uzbek as the medium of instruction or by providing incorrect translations that mirror Uzbek syntax. This suggests that teacher training

programs must emphasize contrastive analysis between English and Uzbek, equipping educators with the tools to anticipate and correct common interference-based errors.

Interviews with students show that many are unaware of the source of their errors, often assuming that their English is structurally correct. This unawareness impedes self-correction and long-term improvement. Conversely, when learners are made explicitly aware of the differences between L1 and L2 structures—through corrective feedback or contrastive teaching methods—they are more likely to overcome interference-related mistakes. This highlights the importance of metalinguistic awareness in foreign language acquisition.

The findings of this study have direct implications for the development of English language curricula in Uzbekistan. Language instruction must go beyond memorization and translation by incorporating contrastive linguistic analysis, communicative teaching methods, and error-based diagnostics. Explicit attention should be paid to phonological training, syntactic drills, and article usage, using corpus-based examples and real-life contexts to make input more comprehensible and memorable. Furthermore, leveraging digital tools such as speech recognition software, grammar checkers, and interactive platforms can help learners receive immediate feedback and internalize correct structures more effectively.

In summary, the study confirms that interlingual interference remains a significant barrier to English language mastery among Uzbek learners, affecting all levels of language production and comprehension. While such interference is a natural part of second language acquisition, its persistence can hinder learners' progress unless explicitly addressed through informed teaching strategies and learner training. By understanding the specific linguistic mismatches between Uzbek and English, educators and curriculum developers can design more targeted interventions, ultimately leading to improved language competence and communication skills among Uzbek EFL students.

CONCLUSION.

The phenomenon of interlingual interference is a critical aspect of second language acquisition, particularly in the context of Uzbek learners striving to master the English language. This study has explored in depth how the structural and cultural differences between the Uzbek and English languages result in specific patterns of error among Uzbek students. The analysis revealed that most mistakes committed by Uzbek learners are not random but stem from predictable areas of interference influenced by the phonological, grammatical, syntactical, and lexical systems of their native language.

One of the central conclusions drawn from this research is that interlingual interference significantly hinders the development of accurate and fluent English usage. Uzbek students often unconsciously apply the rules and structures of their first language (L1) when producing or interpreting English, resulting in systematic errors. For instance, Uzbek lacks the concept of articles (a, an, the), which leads to frequent omission or misuse of these elements in English. Similarly, differences in word order—especially concerning adjective-noun placement and the formation of questions—often cause confusion and error.

Phonological interference is another domain where native language influence is profound. Certain English phonemes such as /θ/ (as in think) and /ð/ (as in this) do not exist in Uzbek, leading learners to substitute these unfamiliar sounds with the closest equivalents from their native phonetic inventory. This not only affects intelligibility but may also impact learner confidence and motivation. Moreover, stress and intonation patterns in Uzbek, which differ markedly from English, often lead to a non-native sounding speech rhythm and prosody, further complicating communication.

The grammatical structure of Uzbek, an agglutinative language with a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order, contrasts starkly with the subject-verb-object (SVO) structure of English. This difference frequently causes syntactic errors, such as incorrect word order in declarative or interrogative sentences. Uzbek learners also struggle with tense-aspect distinctions, particularly the perfect and continuous aspects, as these concepts are not as distinctly marked in Uzbek. As a result, learners tend

to simplify or overgeneralize tense usage in English, which negatively affects the clarity and accuracy of their expression.

Lexical interference is also significant. Uzbek-English false cognates, literal translations, and inappropriate collocation choices frequently occur when students rely too heavily on word-for-word translation strategies. Cultural and idiomatic expressions, which carry meaning specific to one linguistic or cultural context, are often misapplied when directly transferred into English. This can lead to awkward or unintelligible communication, especially in writing and speaking tasks.

Importantly, this study has demonstrated that interlingual interference is not solely a cognitive phenomenon but also a pedagogical one. The lack of adequate contrastive linguistic analysis in language teaching materials, insufficient focus on error correction, and teacher unawareness of interference patterns contribute to the persistence of these mistakes. Many Uzbek learners are not consciously aware of the differences between English and Uzbek, and as a result, they default to native-language rules when encountering linguistic uncertainty in English.

The findings of this research highlight the necessity of integrating contrastive analysis into English language instruction for Uzbek students. Teachers should be trained to recognize and address interlingual errors through explicit instruction, corrective feedback, and the use of comparative language exercises. Furthermore, curriculum designers should incorporate materials that specifically target problematic linguistic areas arising from L1 interference.

It is also recommended that more interactive and communicative teaching methods be adopted, which encourage students to engage with the language in context and reduce their dependence on translation-based learning strategies. Exposure to authentic English input, such as films, podcasts, and native speaker interaction, can help internalize proper usage and reduce reliance on Uzbek linguistic structures.

In conclusion, while interlingual interference presents a considerable barrier to English language acquisition for Uzbek learners, it also offers valuable insights into how language instruction can be more effectively tailored. By understanding the nature and sources of these errors, educators can develop targeted teaching approaches that facilitate the transition from L1 to L2, thus promoting more accurate, fluent, and confident use of English. Future research should continue to examine the evolving nature of language interference, particularly as digital tools and global communication further influence the linguistic landscapes of bilingual and multilingual learners.

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