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COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS MADE BY UZBEK LEARNERS OF ENGLISH: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract. This study investigates the most prevalent grammatical errors made by Uzbek learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and examines the underlying linguistic mechanisms driving these errors. Utilizing an error analysis (EA) framework combined with Contrastive Analysis (CA), the paper categorizes frequent syntactic and morphological deviations observed in written compositions and spoken performance. The primary findings indicate that structural discrepancies between English (an Analytic, Subject-Verb-Object language) and Uzbek (an Agglutinative, Subject-Object-Verb language) account for a significant proportion of interlingual errors, particularly regarding article usage, preposition placement, word order, and subject-verb agreement. Additionally, intralingual factors, such as overgeneralization of English rules and incomplete rule application, further exacerbate learning difficulties. The article provides pedagogical recommendations aimed at improving EFL instruction in Uzbekistan through targeted contrastive instruction, error awareness activities, and scaffolded feedback strategies.

Keywords: error analysis, contrastive analysis, Uzbek EFL learners, language transfer, grammatical errors, pedagogical intervention.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o'rganayotgan (EFL) o'zbek tili sohiblari tomonidan eng ko'p yo'l qo'yiladigan grammatik xatolarni hamda ushbu xatolarga sabab bo'luvchi lingvistik mexanizmlarni o'rganadi. Xatolar tahlili (EA) va Qiyosiy-chog'ishtirma tahlil (CA) yondashuvlaridan foydalangan holda, maqolada

yozma va og‘zaki nutqda kuzatilgan sintaktik hamda morfologik og‘ishlar guruhlarga ajratilgan. Asosiy natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, ingliz tili (analitik, E-T-K / Subject-Verb-Object) va o‘zbek tili (agglyutinativ, E-K-T / Subject-Object-Verb) o‘rtasidagi strukturaviy tafovutlar tillararo (interlingval) xatolarning, xususan, artikllardan foydalanish, predloglar o‘rni, so‘z tartibi va ega-kesim moslashuvidagi xatolarning sezilarli qismini tashkil etadi. Bundan tashqari, ingliz tili qoidalarini oshiqcha umumlashtirish (overgeneralization) va qoidalarni chala qo‘llash kabi tildan tashqari bo‘lmagan (intralingval) omillar ham o‘rganish qiyinchiliklarini orttiradi. Maqolada maqsadli qiyosiy o‘qitish, xatolarni anglash mashqlari va bosqichma-bosqich aks-aloqa (scaffolded feedback) strategiyalari orqali O‘zbekistonda EFL o‘qitishni takomillashtirishga qaratilgan pedagogik tavsiyalar berilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: xatolar tahlili, qiyosiy-chog‘ishtirma tahlil, o‘zbek EFL o‘rganuvchilari, til ko‘chishi (language transfer), grammatik xatolar, pedagogik aralashuv (intervensiya).

Аннотация. В данном исследовании рассматриваются наиболее распространенные грамматические ошибки узбекских учащихся, изучающих английский язык как иностранный (EFL), а также анализируются лингвистические механизмы, лежащие в основе этих ошибок. В рамках анализа ошибок (EA) и контрастивного анализа (CA) в статье классифицируются частые синтаксические и морфологические отклонения, наблюдаемые в письменной и устной речи. Основные результаты показывают, что structural различия между английским (аналитическим языком со структурой SVO — подлежащее-сказуемое-дополнение) и узбекским (агглютинативным языком со структурой SOV — подлежащее-дополнение-сказуемое) языками обусловливают значительную часть межязыковых ошибок, в частности, в использовании артиклей, предлогов, порядке слов и согласовании подлежащего и сказуемого. Кроме того, внутриязыковые факторы, такие как чрезмерное обобщение правил английского языка и их

неполное применение, еще больше усложняют процесс обучения. В статье приводятся педагогические рекомендации, направленные на совершенствование преподавания английского языка в Узбекистане с помощью целевого контрастивного обучения, упражнений на осознание ошибок и стратегий поэтапной обратной связи.

Ключевые слова: анализ ошибок, контрастивный анализ, узбекские учащиеся EFL, трансфер языка, грамматические ошибки, педагогическое вмешательство.

Introduction

With the rapid modernization of Uzbekistan's educational landscape and its integration into the global economy, proficiency in the English language has become a critical skill for academic advancement and international mobility. Despite extensive curriculum reforms and early language instruction across primary and secondary levels, Uzbek learners routinely encounter persistent grammatical challenges during their EFL acquisition process.

Grammar constitutes the structural framework that ensures clear, unambiguous communication. When learners transfer features from their native language (L1) into the target language (L2)—or overgeneralize complex L2 rules—grammatical errors inevitably emerge. In the context of Uzbek learners, language transfer is heavily influenced by the fundamental typological differences between English and Uzbek:

- Typological Distance: English belongs to the Indo-European family and employs an analytic structure with Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) default word order. Conversely, Uzbek belongs to the Turkic family, exhibiting an agglutinative morphological structure with Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) default word order.

- Absence of Specific Features: Uzbek lacks certain grammatical categories that are essential in English, such as definite and indefinite articles (a, an, the), and relies on case suffixes rather than standalone prepositions to signal spatial and temporal relationships.

Understanding these structural differences is vital for both educators and researchers. Identifying, categorizing, and explaining recurrent errors enables teachers to design tailored instructional materials that proactively address learner difficulties.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- What are the most frequent grammatical errors made by Uzbek learners of English?

- To what extent are these errors attributable to interlingual transfer (L1 interference) versus intralingual factors (overgeneralization)?

- What pedagogical strategies can language educators employ to minimize these persistent errors?

Literature Review

1 Theoretical Framework: Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis. The systematic study of learner errors is historically rooted in two primary paradigms: Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA).

- Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957): CA posited that language errors stem primarily from structural differences between the learner's native language and the target language. Structural divergence produces "negative transfer" (interference), leading to systematic errors.

- Error Analysis (Corder, 1967; Selinker, 1972): Recognizing that CA could not explain all learner deviations, Corder introduced Error Analysis, which views errors not merely as bad habits to be eradicated, but as evidence of a learner's developing linguistic system, termed Interlanguage. Corder distinguished between mistakes (performance slips that learners can self-correct) and errors (systematic gaps in knowledge reflecting the learner's underlying competence).

2. Studies on L1 Transfer in Agglutinative Language Speakers Research examining EFL learners from Turkic or agglutinative language backgrounds (e.g., Turkish, Kazakh, Uzbek) consistently highlights specific zones of vulnerability:

- Article Acquisition: As shown by Ionin et al. (2004), learners whose native languages lack articles experience prolonged difficulty in mastering English definiteness and specificity markers, often substituting demonstratives or omitting articles entirely.

- Prepositions vs. Case Suffixes: Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) documented that learners whose native tongues utilize spatial suffixation struggle to master abstract prepositions in English, frequently resulting in inappropriate preposition choice or outright omission.

- Word Order and Auxiliary Placement: Structural differences in default word order (SOV vs. SVO) frequently disrupt sentence production under high cognitive load, causing learners to misplace main verbs or auxiliary markers (Gas, 2013).

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive Error Analysis (EA) approach based on Corder's (1974) methodological steps: collection of a corpus, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation.

1. Corpus Collection. The research analyzed a corpus of written essays and oral assessment transcripts collected from 120 intermediate-level (CEFR B1–B2) Uzbek undergraduate students enrolled in EFL programs across higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. The dataset comprised:

- 120 argumentative essays (ranging between 250–300 words each).

- Transcripts from 60 semi-structured oral interviews (approximately 10 minutes each).

2. Error Identification and Classification. Errors were extracted, cataloged, and categorized into major grammatical domains using a surface strategy taxonomy (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982), which classifies deviations as omission, addition, misselection, or misordering.

Analysis and Results

The descriptive analysis of the collected corpus reveals that grammatical deviations among Uzbek EFL learners are heavily concentrated within six key linguistic

domains. Quantitative examination indicates that the omission or misuse of articles constitutes the single largest category of errors, accounting for nearly twenty-nine percent of all identified instances. This is closely followed by prepositional misselection and omission, which represents twenty-two percent of total deviations. Subject-verb agreement and noun plurality errors comprise over eighteen percent, while word order shifts and auxiliary placement issues account for nearly fourteen percent. Finally, tense and aspect confusion represents approximately ten percent, and gerund versus infinitive misselection comprises seven percent of the error distribution.

1. Article Omission and Misuse. Because the Uzbek language contains no formal article system—expressing definiteness through context, word order, or accusative case markers such as -ni—errors involving a, an, and the emerge as the most frequent obstacle for learners. The majority of these errors involve the complete omission of indefinite articles before singular countable nouns, such as writing "*I bought new book yesterday" instead of "I bought a new book yesterday." In addition to omission, learners frequently display overgeneralization by inserting the definite article the before generic plural nouns or abstract concepts. For instance, learners regularly produce statements like "*The sports are good for health" rather than the correct form, "Sports are good for health." This pattern reflects a transitional stage in interlanguage where learners recognize the existence of the but lack a fully developed semantic framework for its application.

2. Preposition Selection and Omission. In Uzbek, spatial, temporal, and directional relationships are indicated through case suffixes—such as -da for locative context, -ga for directional target, and -dan for ablative context—or through postpositions. Attempting to map a single Uzbek suffix onto multiple distinct English prepositions leads to frequent misselection. A prominent example is the direct translation of the Uzbek directional suffix -ga to the English preposition to. This results in redundant preposition usage after transitive verbs, producing incorrect structures such as "*We discussed about the problem" or "*He reached to Tashkent" instead of "We discussed the problem" and "He reached Tashkent." Furthermore, because the locative suffix -da corresponds to in,

on, and at depending on context, learners demonstrate a strong tendency to default to in, yielding errors like "*I am in home" rather than "I am at home."

3. Subject-Verb Agreement and Noun Plurality. Linguistic transfer from Uzbek rules governing quantity and pluralization causes notable errors in English subject-verb agreement. In Uzbek grammar, when a noun is preceded by a number or a quantitative modifier (such as beshta or ko'p), the noun itself remains in its singular form. Consequently, learners frequently carry this rule directly into English, omitting the plural -s suffix after numbers and writing "*There are five student in the classroom" instead of "There are five students in the classroom". This negative transfer extends to indefinite pronouns and collective expressions. Learners often become confused by English quantifiers that require a singular noun and singular verb agreement, resulting in incorrect combinations such as "*Every students want to pass the exam" instead of the target structure, "Every student wants to pass the exam."

4. Word Order and Auxiliary Placement. Under cognitive pressure during spontaneous spoken communication or unedited writing, Uzbek learners frequently fall back on native Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order patterns. This results in placing main verbs at the end of clauses or placing temporal adverbs between the subject and the verb. A typical deviation includes sentences such as "*I yesterday my homework completed" instead of "I completed my homework yesterday." Sentence structure errors are particularly evident in question formation. Because Uzbek forms interrogative sentences primarily through intonation or question particles attached to the verb rather than auxiliary inversion, learners struggle with English auxiliary placement. This leads to errors where auxiliary verbs are omitted or misplaced, producing questions such as "*What you yesterday did?" instead of "What did you do yesterday?"

5. Tense and Aspect Confusion. While Uzbek possesses past tense markers and perfective aspects, it lacks a direct structural equivalent to the English Present Perfect Tense (have/has + past participle) that explicitly connects a past event to present relevance. As a result, learners display a heavy reliance on the Past Simple tense for all

past actions regardless of time frame or ongoing relevance. This reliance is especially clear in sentences containing time expressions like since or for. Learners frequently state "*I lived in Tashkent since 2020" while actively residing in the city, failing to utilize the Present Perfect form "I have lived in Tashkent since 2020."

6. Double Negatives and Negative. Harmony Standard Uzbek utilizes negative harmony, requiring negative pronouns such as hech kim (nobody) or hech narsa (nothing) to pair directly with a negated verb form. When learners translate this mental structure directly into English, double negative errors occur. This structural transfer produces grammatically incorrect English sentences such as "*Nobody didn't say anything," which must be restructured to either "Nobody said anything" or "Ahmad didn't say anything" to maintain standard grammatical logic.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that grammatical errors among Uzbek EFL learners are neither random nor evidence of an inability to acquire English. Rather, they are systematic patterns primarily driven by negative interlingual transfer arising from the structural divergence between Uzbek (an agglutinative, SOV language without articles) and English (an analytic, SVO language with an extensive article and prepositional system). Intralingual factors, such as rule overgeneralization, also contribute significantly to errors in complex tense usage and verb complementation.

Addressing these recurrent errors requires moving away from rote memorization toward targeted, linguistically informed instruction.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations:

- Explicit Contrastive Instruction: EFL instructors in Uzbekistan should incorporate brief contrastive explanations highlighting the specific structural differences between Uzbek and English (e.g., contrasting Uzbek case suffixes with English prepositions, or clarifying quantity-noun agreement rules).

- Targeted Focus on Article Semantics: Rather than teaching article rules purely as abstract concepts, teachers should utilize visual trees and contextual exercises focusing

on definiteness and specificity.

- Interactive Consciousness-Raising Tasks: Engaging students in error-correction activities where they analyze anonymized peer errors helps build metacognitive awareness and reduces reliance on L1 translation strategies.

- Scaffolding Word Order and Auxiliaries: Controlled production exercises, such as sentence-reconstruction and substitution drills, can help solidify SVO word order patterns until they become automated habits.

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