

LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE AS A CAUSE OF LANGUAGE ERRORS: TEACHING EXPERIENCE AT THE NON-LINGUISTIC FACULTY OF A UNIVERSITY

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Abstract:

This article examines interlanguage and intralanguage interference as key causes of language errors identified in English classes, focusing on both the oral and written speech of students from the Faculty of Chemistry. It provides examples of different interference-related errors, such as lexical, word-formation, grammatical, and stylistic mistakes, and highlights how the specific nature of the material studied by non-linguistic students contributes to these errors. The article concludes that interference is an inevitable result of underlying linguistic mechanisms but also posits that the native language can serve as a valuable resource for metalinguistic reflection. Methods for organizing classroom activities and exercises to prevent common language errors are also proposed.

Keywords: Interlanguage interference, foreign language, native language, language errors, metalinguistic reflection.

The demands of modern life and the development of society require professionals to possess, alongside in-depth knowledge of their specific fields, proficiency in at least one foreign language. Increasingly, English is favored as the global lingua franca, a tool for international communication. Many scholars agree that linguistic knowledge is indispensable for personal, social, and even national development [Putra, 2020], making the study of foreign languages an essential part of university curricula.

One of the most effective ways to master a foreign language is the communicative approach, which emphasizes immersion in the language and

minimizes the use of the native language in instruction. However, some researchers argue that successful language acquisition requires a combination of communicative and structural-functional methods tailored to the individual needs of students [Nikulicheva, 2014: 8]. Our experience teaching English at the Faculty of Chemistry at KARIIEI supports this view. Most students enter university with a basic level of foreign language competence and seek to deepen their knowledge by drawing analytical parallels between the structures of their native and foreign languages. This reflective approach helps in identifying and preventing common language errors.

Guided by practical considerations, we have collected and analyzed typical language mistakes made by students whose native language is Uzbek and who are learning English as a foreign language. As I.G. Ovchinnikova rightly points out, language interference is the primary factor causing language errors [Ovchinnikova, 2021]. Interference, or interlanguage transfer, has long been a subject of linguistic inquiry, studied by scholars such as L.S. Vygotsky, V.G. Kostomarov, L.V. Shcherba, and others. In simple terms, interference occurs when previously acquired linguistic knowledge in one language is applied to solve similar problems in another language. Interference manifests even at advanced levels of foreign language proficiency, though research suggests it decreases as proficiency increases [Abhishek, 2022].

While interference is often viewed negatively, it can also have a constructive role. The ability to compare languages, identify linguistic universals, and draw interlanguage parallels fosters linguistic competence [Samarskaya, 2017]. Thus, interference-induced errors can serve as valuable material for refining language instruction practices.

Types of Language Errors and Interference

1. **Lexical Errors:**

Interlanguage interference often leads to errors in word choice. For instance, students might use "opening" to mean "scientific discovery," transferring the Uzbek word's broader meaning to the English lexeme "discovery."

Similarly, students may use "end" instead of "expire" when discussing the expiration of a document like the Montreal Protocol. These errors arise from the transfer of meaning from the native language to the foreign language, where the concepts are similar but not identical.

2. **Intralinguage Interference:**

Errors also result from intralinguage interference, where confusion arises within the target language itself. For example, students may mix up similar-sounding or similarly spelled words, such as "search" and "research" or "pure" and "poor." This phenomenon is known as extraversive paronymy, where phonetic similarities cause errors in word usage [Kuznetsova, 2010: 61].

3. **Word-Formation Errors:**

Students often incorrectly form adjectives using the wrong prefixes, such as "*uneffective*" instead of "ineffective" or "*unlegal*" instead of "illegal." These errors are particularly common when dealing with complex scientific texts, as students may struggle with less frequent prefixes like "in-" in words such as "inconclusive" or "inexhaustible."

4. **Grammatical Errors:**

Grammatical interference occurs when the grammatical rules of the native language are applied to the foreign language. Common examples include using gendered pronouns for inanimate objects (e.g., referring to water as "she") or forming plurals for uncountable nouns in English. Additionally, errors in subject-verb agreement and preposition use often stem from interference [Weinreich, 1999].

5. Stylistic Errors:

Stylistic interference is most evident in students' written work, particularly in their attempts to write abstracts for scientific articles. Uzbek-speaking students tend to produce long, complex sentences with multiple subordinate clauses, which are characteristic of formal Uzbek writing but cumbersome in English. This often leads to the violation of English academic writing conventions, which favor shorter, more direct sentences.

Addressing Language Interference in teaching

To correct interference-related errors, instructors can employ a variety of exercises focused on word formation, lexical choice, and grammatical transformation. Analyzing language errors provides insight into the cognitive processes behind speech production and opens new avenues for psycholinguistic research. Encouraging students to reflect on their errors as part of metalinguistic analysis can foster a more conscious approach to language learning.

Viewing interference not merely as a negative phenomenon but as a potential learning resource enriches both the teaching process and students' linguistic development. It allows for structural and typological comparisons between languages, expanding the pedagogical toolkit available to educators and enhancing students' overall linguistic competence.

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