



Typical mistakes in English speech of Azerbaijani students in condition of bilingualism

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ABSTRACT

One cannot study a foreign language without coordinating it with native language. It is necessary to arrange the process in a more effective way, so that the native language might not impede, but help to learn a foreign language. It requires examining key problems experienced by some learners in the process of studying, as well as determining the ways to overcome them. Many scientists and investigators pay a considerable attention to the problems of bilingualism, particularly, to the interfering impact of native language in learning a foreign language. Interference in linguistics is a consequence of influence of one language on the other. This is an interaction of language systems, deviations from the norm and system of non-native language takes place as a result of impact of native language. We support the idea of V.A. Vinogradov in understanding interference to be an interaction of language systems in the context of multilingualism where an uncontrolled transfer of certain structures or elements of one language to the other takes place. Such phenomenon may appear both in the oral and written speeches (Vinogradov 1990). The main objective of our paper is to study the phenomenon of “interference” of native language in teaching English and discover the common mistakes. First of all, it requires identifying the reasons, why such mistakes take place. Languages are in close coordination when people or nations get in touch with each other. It took many historic periods for nations and their languages to be in cooperation so that the system of teaching non-native language might be established. However, regardless of such historic periods, the native language speaker had coped with the phenomenon of interference every time he tried to understand and learn the language of other nation – the leading function of native language as to its different nature formed obstacles in learning a foreign language.

1. Introduction

Language – whether it is English, French, Hindi, or one of the world’s other numerous languages – is a taken-for-granted aspect of people’s lives. Language is learned without conscious awareness. Children are capable of using their language competently before the age of formal schooling. Even during their school years, they learn the rules and words of the language and do not attend to how the language influences the way they think and perceive the world. It is usually only when people speak their language to those who don’t understand it or when they struggle to become competent in another language that they recognize language’s central role in the ability to function, to accomplish tasks, and, most important, to interact with others. It is only when the use of language no longer connects people to others or when individuals are denied the use of their language that they recognize its importance. In a discussion, of the importance of language, or learning different languages, Charles F. Hockett noted that learning different languages allow people to understand messages about many different topics from literally thousands of people. Learning different languages allow us to talk with others, to understand or disagree with them, to make plans, to remember the past, to imagine future events, and to describe and evaluate objects and experiences that exist in some other location. Hockett also pointed out that language is taught to individuals by others and thus is transmitted from generation to generation in much the same way as culture (Charles F. Hockett 1982). The one, who learns a foreign language hardly, escapes the impact of the phenomenon of linguistic interference. Such phenomenon arises as a result of influence of one language on the other. As a rule, native language has an

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influence on a foreign language, but on an advanced level the situation may change. Interference may appear both in oral and written speeches, as well as in all the linguistic levels. According to U. Weinreich, “grammatical interference occurs when the rules of arrangement, harmony, selection and modification of grammatical units involved in the system of one language are applied to similar chains of elements of the other language”. The investigator offers to distinguish three types of interference in terms of grammatical relations:

- Reproduction of the relations of the other language, which expressively delivers a meaning far from that of the meaning implied by a speaker;
- Reproduction of the relations of the other language where relation model existing in the language is interrupted, as a result of which, the utterance may either lose its sense, as a whole, or its meaning becomes apparent from the context;
- Unnecessary application of certain type of relations to a language which does not require any obligatory relations in this sphere (Weinreich 1953).

We accept such types of interference and would like to add that one of the main reasons for grammatical interference is connected with the learners who apply the rules of arrangement of grammatical units in a sentence, harmony of parts of speech, as well as selection or compulsory modification of grammatical units inherent in native language which may seem to be similar, in their opinion, with the elements and structures of the English language. Such substitution of grammatical constructions also results with the violation of the norms of the studied language.

2. Method of Investigation

In the condition of Azerbaijani - English bilingualism, in English speech of the students, implementation of process of interference is based upon the study of typological distinction between Azerbaijani and the English languages including the diversions from the norms of oral and written speeches of Azerbaijani students. 344 papers and 200 minutes' records of oral English speech of students on various free topics and certain grammatical features, over 2,000 linguistic usages were studied.

The research of the oral and written English speech of students shows that all the known types of interference such as intralingual and interlingual, explicit and implicit interference, direct and indirect interference occur in the students' English speech. These types can be noted in different levels of the students' English speech– phonetic, lexical-semantic and grammatical levels.

In this article grammatical level of interference will be reviewed.

3. Scope of Investigation

It is a long time, approximately two centuries, that English has been taught in Azerbaijan as a foreign language. There were times, when Azerbaijan was occupied by the Russian empire, the English language was taught as a third language. The main attention was paid to the teaching of Russian, even Russian was called the second mother tongue for us. As a result of it, the English language and its teaching were kept in the background. But nowadays, we have gained our independence from the Russian empire and the English language has become the main foreign language that we teach in our schools.

The Scope of investigation covers the phenomenon of interference and the mistakes by the Azerbaijani students in learning English as a second language.

4. Some grammatical properties of the languages: Russian, Azerbaijan, English

Languages have different morphological structure and accordingly they are divided into various group, as synthetic languages, agglutinative languages, analytical languages, etc.

In synthetic languages grammatical relations between words (a) in the phrase and (b) in the sentence are expressed mostly by means of inflections, as in modern Russian. Examples:

- (a) окно дома, ехать верхом, писать ручкой etc.
- (b) Он едет на работу автобусом. Она читала эту книгу с большим интересом.

In agglutinative languages grammatical relations between words (a) in the phrase and (b) in the sentence are expressed by means of word changing inflections mostly having only one grammatical meaning, as in Modern Turkic languages, including Azerbaijani. Examples:

- (a) otağın qarısı, almanın dadı, məktəbə getmək etc.
- (b) Mən işə abtobusla gedirəm. Onlar şəhərdə yaşayırlar.

In analytical languages, including contemporary English, grammatical relations between words (a) in the phrase and (b) in the sentence are expressed mostly by means of form-words or word order. Examples:

- (a) the leaves **of** the tree, to write **in** pencil, to go **to** school etc.
- (b) There was **not a man in the** street. **Tom** knows **Brown** – **Brown** knows **Tom**.

It should be mentioned that the structure of a language is never purely synthetic, agglutinative or analytical; in a synthetic language one can come across elements of analytical languages.

For example, in Russian we can say:

- (a) буду читать, самая красивая
- (b) Мать любит дочь. Дочь любит мать.

In these phrases and sentences relations between words in contemporary Russian are expressed analytically by means of structural words (буду, самая) and by word order. Because in the sentence Мать любит дочь and Дочь любит мать syntactical relations between the words are denoted only by

means of the position of the words *мать* and *дочь* in the sentence; in the first sentence *мать* is the subject of the sentence as it stands before the verb-predicate, the word *дочь* is the object because it stands after the verb-predicate. In the second sentence vice versa. This is characteristic feature of the analytical languages.

Accordingly, though English is considered to be an analytical language, still it has got some elements of synthetic languages, such as word changing inflections and inner flexion, which are used to express grammatical relations between words in the phrase and in the sentence. Example:

- the plural endings – **s (es)**, – **en**, such as: **tables, foxes, oxen**;
- the third person singular ending – **s (es)**, such as: (she) reads, (he) goes;
- the suffixes – **er**, –**est** to form comparative and superlative degrees of monosyllabic (a) adjectives and (b) adverbs, such as:
 - (a) shorter, shortest; longer, longest; slower, slowest etc;
 - (b) faster, fastest; quicker, quickest; slower, slowest etc.
- the gender forming suffix – **ess**: poetess, lioness, hostess etc.
- the inner flexion as in **man-men, speak-spoke, louse-lice** etc.

The same linguistic phenomena can be met in contemporary Azerbaijani. Being an agglutinative language one may come across in Azerbaijani some features of analytical languages. A striking example for it can be the use of postpositions to denote grammatical relations between words such as *Əhməd üçün* and the formation of comparative and superlative degrees of the adjectives and adverbs as in *daha/nisbətən uzun, ən/lap uzun; daha/nisbətən sürətlə, ən/lap sürətlə* etc.

The grammatical structure of a language is not something that remains fixed and rigid for ever; it is constantly developing and changing. In the history of their development there have been many changes in the morphological structure of the above mentioned languages, specially the English languages. Because, the English language is going to become a synthetic one.

English grammarian Barber Charles also testifies to this fact in his book “Linguistic Change in Present-Day English” published in 1964. He writes: “In recent years ... the ‘s genitive has come into common use with nouns which are replaceable in the singular by it” (Barber 1964).

Further on he adds:

“It will be seen that this tendency for ‘s to replace of is a movement from the analytic to the synthetic” (Barber 1964:133).

All the above mentioned facts show that contemporary English has taken an extreme tend towards synthetic character.

5. Grammatical Interference and Its Influence on Learners Native Language

Interference is the interaction of language systems in terms of bilingualism, which develops either during language contacts or during individual appropriation of a non-native language; it is expressed in deviations from the norm and the second language system under the influence of native language. Interference appears as a foreign accent in the speech of a person who speaks in two languages; it can be stable and transitional, the interference is able to cover the levels of the language, but is especially noticeable in phonetics (accent in the narrow sense of the word). The main source of interference is discrepancies in the systems of interacting languages: different phonemic composition, different rules for the positional realization of phonemes, their compatibility, different intonation, different composition of grammatical categories and various ways of their expression. There is nothing wrong with interference if it is a transient phase of language learning.

A.L. Pumpyanskiy, a researcher of scientific and technical translation, thinks that there appears sound (phonetic), orthographic, grammatical (morphological, syntactic and punctuation), lexical, semantic, stylistic and intralingua interference in profession-oriented intercultural communication (Pumpyanskiy 1997).

The reason of the grammatical interference lies in the identity of grammatical forms existing in two languages, in our case between Azerbaijani and English languages. Typological differences in the Azerbaijani and the English languages are potential fields of grammatical interference. The real potential field of the grammatical interference in the speech of the Azerbaijani students covers just a part of grammatical interferences.

Grammatical Interference occurs when the elements of first language included in using a second language which shows itself in grammatical structure of the second language, word order, use of articles, pronouns, tense and mood etc.

In the English language the grammatical category of number is additionally supported by the grammatical category of definiteness and indefiniteness presented in the form of articles (Koshevaya 2008).

6. Discussion

6.1. Common Mistakes Using of Nouns and Articles

While using the English nouns, which differ from the Azerbaijani nouns in number, the articles undergo interference. For example, in the English language the indefinite article [a, (an)] is not used with the noun in plural. With such nouns the definite or zero articles are used. Depending on the absence of grammatical category of definiteness/indefiniteness in the Azerbaijani language, another grammatical interference takes place in the English speech of students. The students who forget that some nouns in the English language (goods-mallar, clothes- paltar, people- adamlar, police - polis, stairs-pilləkən and etc.) have only plural forms, they use the indefinite article with these nouns: “The company got a new goods” (Şirkət yeni mallar alıb.), “A police has come there in a minute” (Polis oraya bir dəqiqədən sonra gəlib çıxdı.).

The right use of articles in the examples like “the company”, “a minute” tells of a higher level of proficiency in the English language, because the sign of interference here is a simple interference, it is the minimal linguistic unit of the bilingual speech. It influences on the deviation from the norms of the English language on the same level of speech, while realizing the particular elements of the system of the language.

The study of interference of articles plays a great role in the study of grammatical interference in the speech of students, as the understanding of articles

in the English language usually presents great difficulties for students. The students often omit the Indefinite and Definite articles, which are indicated in bold type in word combinations and sentences. For example as: **the** most interesting, **the** greatest exporter, in **the** whole world, **the** people of Azerbaijan, to be **a** team leader, to write **a** thank you letter, **the** best, to take **the** first place, **the** countries of the third world, manager is **a** very important person, to be **a** very efficient specialist, **the** last reason, to learn **a** foreign language, to find **a** good job, he got **a** bad mark, my son is still **a** pupil, English is **an** international language, English is **a** very beautiful language, We need **an** umbrella stand, Could we have **the** invoice on Monday? Can we get **a** five percent discount? Such abundance of grammatical interference in the speech of Azerbaijani students is due to the fact that the articles do not exist in the Azerbaijani language.

Thus, at various levels of proficiency in the English language the Azerbaijani students differently realize the potentials of interference: typological differences, because of the lack of grammatical category of definiteness / indefiniteness realized by articles, cause the regular interference at the initial stages of bilingualism.

6.2. Common Mistakes Using of Personal and Possessive Pronouns

The students and pupils often experience difficulties with the use of personal and possessive pronouns. For example, the English expression “*I like*” corresponds to the Azerbaijani word combination “*xoşuma gəlir*”. Because of differences in grammatical constructions of both languages, we find interference in the speech of students when they use this expression. They say “*Me like*” and “*Me likes*” substituting the personal pronoun in the nominative case *I* for the personal pronoun in indirect case *me* which corresponds to the Azerbaijani construction of the expression.

6.3. Common Mistakes Using of the Verb To Let

The verb *to let* and the corresponding personal pronoun in the indirect case are used to express an inducement, for example, “*Let him go home*” (*Qoy o evə getsin.*). Under the influence of Azerbaijani where in this sentence the personal pronoun in the nominative case is used, the students often use the corresponding personal pronoun in the nominative case in the English language “*Let he go home*”.

The issue of grammatical category of case in the English language remains debatable; however, the generally accepted view is that the case system of the English noun is presented by two cases: common and possessive (Arakin, Vigodskaya, Iljina 2000).

As the English language refers to analytical type of languages, but Azerbaijani to synthetical type of languages, then mainly prepositions in the English language perform the function of a link between the words and/or used for the expression of object, adverbial and other relations which in Azerbaijani can be additionally or independently expressed by means of case forms of nouns and pronouns.

In English unlike Azerbaijani, nouns, as well as the pronouns in all the cases have no special endings. That’s why, various relations in English are expressed by prepositions and word order in the sentence. Typological differences in the expression of various case relations create potentials for grammatical interference.

6.4. Common Mistakes Using of Tenses

One of the grammatical categories of the English verb is the category of the person expressed by the morpheme –es in the Present Tense and zero morphemes in the other persons (Arakin 1979). While using verbs in the third person singular in the Present Indefinite Tense, the students often omit this ending: ‘Azerbaijan play a great role’ instead of ‘Azerbaijan plays a great role’ ‘It give us’ instead of ‘It gives us’, ‘The teacher believe that’ instead of, ‘The teacher believes that’, ‘He inspect the work of his subordinates’, instead of ‘He inspects the work of his subordinates’, ‘He coordinate all the personnel of an organization’ instead of ‘He coordinates all the personnel of an organization’, ‘He enjoy the fruits of the success’ instead of ‘He enjoys the fruits of the success’. This phenomenon of the grammatical interference is stipulated by the differences in the use of the endings denoting the category of the person in the Azeri and English languages.

In the system of the English verbs there is the grammatical category of the tense expressed unlike the Azeri language by three forms of tenses- present, past and future. In the English language for the formation of the Past Indefinite Tense used to express the action taking place in the past period of time the second form of the verb is used: the suffix -ed of the Past Tense joins the stem of the regular verbs, but the irregular verbs have a special form of the Past Tense which is to be learned. The students, who forgot about these forms of the irregular verbs, form the Past Indefinite Tense of these verbs by adding the suffix –ed of the Past Tense of the regular verbs. For example, the students say maked instead of using made (the Past Tense of the verb to make - *etmək*), taked or tooked instead of using took (the Past Tense of the verb to take - *götürmək*), leaved instead of left (the Past Tense of the verb to leave - *tərk etmək*), meted (the Past Tense of the verb to meet – *rast gəlmək*) instead of met, catched instead of caught (the Past Tense of the verb to catch - *tutmaq*), felt instead of fell (the Past Tense of the verb to fall – *düşmək, yıxılmaq*), rebuildled instead of rebuilt (the Past Tense of the verb to rebuild – *yenidən tikmək, bərpa etmək*), spented instead of spent (the Past Tense of the verb to spend – *sərf etmək*).

The expression of tenses by word order in the English language creates considerable difficulties for the Azerbaijani students. Thus, in the sentence “Who will be able to meet tomorrow the delegation at the station?” The students do not use the direct object after the verb, but after the adverbial modifier of time which is set at the end or at the beginning of the sentence. The right version is the following: “Who will be able to meet the delegation at the station tomorrow?” (*Kim sabah nümayəndə heyətini vağzalda qarşılayacaq? or Kim sabah nümayəndə heyətini vağzalda qarşılaya biləcək?*). Or, for example, the adverbs of the Indefinite Tense always, often, seldom, never, usually that are usually placed before the notional verbs or the verb to be. However, students often place these adverbs at any place in English sentences under the influence of the Azerbaijani language in which such adverbs have no fixed place in the sentence: “What usually do you do in the evening?” instead of “What do you usually do in the evening?”, “His lectures always have been interesting” instead of “His lectures have always been interesting”, “He said that his parents had always lived in the country”.

6.5. Common Mistakes Using of Expression there is/there are

The expression of spatial meaning of place by word order in the English language causes some difficulties for the Azerbaijani students. This happens while using the English expression there is/there are to denote the location of the subject or subjects.

The students often omit the expression there is/there are in the affirmative sentence. For example, the students translate the sentence “Bizim mənzilimizdə 3 otaq var” as “In our flat 3 rooms” instead of “There are 3 rooms in our flat”. Such a word order in English corresponds to the one in Azerbaijani.

While formulating the interrogative sentence with the expression there is/there are, the students often omit them even identifying them in the affirmative

sentence. For example, most of the students ask questions like this: “How many windows in the room?” “There are three windows in the room”, omitting the expression there is/there are, and only in rare cases students ask question in the right way: “How many windows are there in the room?”

In some cases while formulating the English sentence the students do not omit the expression there is/there are using them not at the beginning but in other places of the sentence, which also breaks the structure of the sentence. For example, the students break the structure of the English sentence in such examples: “Hər kompaniyada işçi iyerarxiyası var” by using the expression there is/there are in the place of the sentence where it must not be used: “A hierarchy of employees **there is** in every company”. In such sentences the expression **there is/there are** must stand at the beginning of the sentence: “**There is** a hierarchy of employees in every company”.

The students often forget about this expression substituting it with to be and to have in the sentences like “Three windows are in the room” (Otaqda 3 pəncərə var.), “Our flat has two rooms” (Mənzilimizdə iki otaq var).

6.6. Common Mistakes Using of Prepositions

The preposition **of** in English is used to form the genitive case of nouns while expressing the object, subject, attributive relations. However, under the influence of Azerbaijani, in which the endings are used to form the cases, the students always omit the preposition **of** in their speech. For example, one can come across such cases of deviation from the norm of English: “This form business organization is the most important in Azerbaijan” instead of “This form **of** business organization is the most important in Azerbaijan”, “I live in the town Ganja” instead of “I live in the town **of** Ganja”, “the success an organization” instead of “the success **of** an organization”, “expansion our company” instead of “expansion **of** our company”, “the advantages this type of organization” instead of “the advantages **of** this type of organization”.

The use of preposition **of** instead of by to denote the authorship of art work is also one of the typical mistakes encountered in the speech of students: “They read the books written **of** English writers” instead of “They read the books written **by** English writers”.

The students have some difficulties in using the preposition **to** in combination with nouns or pronouns for the expression of object meanings given in Azerbaijani with dative case without preposition. That’s why, the students omit this preposition in the sentences like “I showed my summer photos (to)^{*} my friends”, “When asked I always give my books (to) my friends”, “When I have problems my parents always give some good advice (to) me”.

The preposition by and with used relatively to express a character or acting forces and the subject, which correspond to the instrumental case of Azerbaijani, without preposition always are interfered in the English speech of students. In their statements the students omit these prepositions, for example, in the sentences like “St. Paul Cathedral was designed (by) sir Christopher Wren”, “The idea of heating a house (with) fire is useful”.

The expression of various spatial meanings (direction, place, time, manner, cause and effect of action) are always given in the English language with prepositions. For example, the students have difficulties while expressing the meanings of direction or place, for instance, go home (evə getmək) and to be at home (evdə olmaq), as in Azerbaijani the expression evdə olmaq is used without preposition, but in English it is used with the preposition at which points to the location in such expressions.

The students in their English speech often omit this preposition under the influence of Azerbaijani, for example, they often say and write to be home. Such deviations from the norm of the English language appear while using the expressions məktəbdə olmaq, that is, məktəbin binasında olmaq - to be at school, işdə olmaq - to be at work.

The expression of tense by way of prepositions present some difficulties for the Azerbaijani students. So, for example, preposition on, (on Monday, on Friday etc.) is used to denote the event occurred in some day of a week or the date in the English language. However, the students substitute this preposition on for in that corresponds to the azeri expression Şənbə günü, Cümə günü.

To denote the event occurred on some date in the English language the preposition on is also used: on the tenth of December, on the ninth of May (dekabrın onu, mayın doqquzu). In the Azerbaijani language such constructions are used without preposition that leads to the grammatical interference in the English speech of students as they always omit the preposition on or use the other ones, for example, in or at.

Thus, the wrong use of prepositions is due to the peculiarity of the subjective perception of their meanings by the people, speaking different languages. The result of such perception is the use of preposition on the analogy of the native language, as well as the transfer of such a use to similar cases of the foreign language.

6.7. Common Mistakes Using of Adjectives and Adverbs

Some differences in the grammatical categories of Azerbaijani and English adjectives and adverbs, for example, in the formation of the degrees of comparison, are also the potential field for the grammatical interference. In the formation of the degrees of comparison of the English adjectives and adverbs by the Azerbaijani students one can note the examples of the grammatical interference; in such cases where the students form the comparative and superlative degrees of the special group of adjectives and adverbs according to the common rules. For example, the students say *gooder* instead of *better* (comparative degree from the adjective *good*), and *badder* instead of *worse* (comparative degree from the adjective *bad*). In the other cases the students form the degrees of comparison of adjectives mixing up the rules, for example, they say *the most great* instead of *the greatest* (superlative degree from *great*). Such examples refer to intra-lingual interference as they are the result of intra-lingual analogy.

7. How to overcome the interference

The reason for the interference, as we have already mentioned above, the English and Azerbaijani languages differ from each other genealogically, typologically and areal. But the solution of the problem of interference requires serious and extensive research on various levels of language,

* The words in brackets are omitted in the speech of Azerbaijani students

psychological and methodological aspects. Our focus is on the linguistic aspect itself, i.e. comparative analysis of two unrelated different system languages, such as English and Azerbaijani languages, in order to identify their common and distinctive features, which is the basis for determining the possibility of interference and finding the ways to overcome it. At first, it is very important to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching foreign languages, therefore, it is necessary to prevent and overcome language interference from both the native and the second foreign languages at all levels. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve several problems, for example: to analyze the modern base of psychological-pedagogical, methodological and linguistic literature, to observe the process of teaching foreign languages in schools and universities, to conduct a comparative analysis of different system languages and establish a typology of difficulties caused by double interference, then create a rational system of learning a foreign language. Undoubtedly, an important stage here is the linguistic analysis of different-system languages in order to identify their common and distinctive features, which is a prerequisite for determining the possibility of interference and finding the ways to overcome it. The data obtained from such an analysis can be used for selection of a language material and methods and techniques for studying it in accordance with its methodological difficulty.

8. Conclusion

Typical deviations from English norms on a grammatical level are closely dependent on learners' command of English. The higher the command of English is, the more rarely and extensively the deviations from the norms of English grammar can be seen.

As it can be seen, interference on different levels is characterized by various intensities.

Grammatical interference can be regularly noted and is communicatively important in certain cases. The variety of interference phenomena in the English speech of students on a grammar level is mainly distinctive to the difference between Azerbaijani and English in terms of the grammatical system which constitutes a framework of language. In addition, it should be noted that some mistakes can be explained by the lack of attention, and "developmental disease" which is hard to challenge.

We think that it is too difficult to get rid of interference of native language by way of studying differences between native language and the studied language. It is necessary to master the basics of the studied language and as soon as it is possible to learn the studied language in the original, namely, one must study language in use, in other words, the languages must be separated at the very beginning as much as possible, so that when speaking English one can think not in Azerbaijani but in the language which he/she learns. However, one should realize and remember that the learner of a foreign language cannot avoid the influence of native language, and must try to consciously minimize the wrong effect of the native language or vice versa.

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