GRAMMATICAL INTERFERENCE AND TRANSFER IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE: STRUCTURAL OUTCOMES OF LANGUAGE CONTACT

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Abstract. This article presents a systematic analysis of the processes of grammatical transfer and interference emerging as a result of linguistic contact between Uzbek and other languages. Language contact, particularly with English and Russian, has triggered notable grammatical changes in contemporary Uzbek. The paper examines various types of interference occurring at phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and lexical-semantic levels, supported by real-life examples. Bilingualism, code-switching, and structural transfer of language units are identified as the main mechanisms of interference, while the social and psychological factors behind these processes are also explored. Based on the findings, the study evaluates the evolving grammatical borrowings and normative shifts in modern Uzbek speech from a scientific perspective.

Key words: grammatical interference, language transfer, bilingualism, code-switching, grammatical borrowing, lexical-semantic shift, language contact, loanwords, syntactic distortion.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of accelerated globalization and the expansion of transnational communication, contemporary languages are increasingly shaped by sustained and multifaceted contact. Digital technologies, international migration, global trade, education, and mass media have intensified cross-linguistic interaction, thereby broadening the scope and depth of interlingual influence. Within this global linguistic environment, English and Russian function as dominant languages of communication and exert a measurable impact on the structural development of the Uzbek language. These influences are observable across multiple linguistic levels, including phonetics, lexis, grammar, and stylistics, where contact-induced change has become a defining feature of modern Uzbek usage.

Among the most significant outcomes of language contact are the phenomena of grammatical transfer and grammatical interference. Grammatical transfer refers to the process through which foreign linguistic elements, initially introduced as lexical borrowings, undergo grammatical adaptation and structural integration into the recipient language. This process often involves the reconfiguration of morphological markers, syntactic patterns, and combinatory rules in accordance with the internal norms of the target language. Grammatical interference, by contrast, emerges from the interaction and overlap of distinct grammatical systems, frequently resulting in deviations from established norms, hybrid constructions, or structurally non-native patterns. Although analytically distinct, transfer and interference are closely interconnected processes that tend to evolve sequentially, with lexical borrowing serving as an entry point into deeper morphological and syntactic influence.

This article investigates the mechanisms, manifestations, and communicative consequences of grammatical transfer and interference in the Uzbek language. Particular attention is given to grammatical units and structural models influenced by English and Russian, as these languages represent the most intensive and socially salient sources of contact in contemporary Uzbek society. The study examines how contact-induced grammatical patterns are realized in diverse communicative domains, including formal written texts, mass media discourse, digital communication, and youth speech, where normative boundaries are especially susceptible to external influence.

The relevance of the present study lies in the fact that grammatical transfer and interference constitute some of the most dynamic processes in the ongoing development of the Uzbek language. These phenomena not only reflect natural mechanisms of linguistic change but also raise important questions concerning grammatical normativity, structural stability, and language policy in multilingual contexts. By providing a systematic and empirically grounded analysis, this article aims to clarify the conceptual distinction between transfer and interference, to identify their modes of manifestation in actual language use, and to assess their broader implications for the grammatical system and normative framework of the Uzbek language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of interference has been extensively studied in global linguistics and analyzed from various perspectives by numerous researchers. Uriel Weinreich was the first to introduce the concept of "interference" into scientific discourse, defining it as a deviation from linguistic norms in the speech of multilingual individuals. According to Weinreich, in language contact situations, elements of one language are transferred into another–not only at the lexical level but also structurally and grammatically. This process may occur consciously or unconsciously, influenced by social and psychological factors [7, p. 44].

Weinreich also emphasized that interference can affect all levels of language: phonetics, morphology, syntax, and semantics, each responding differently to language contact [7, p. 62].

American linguist Einar Haugen analyzed the sociological and communicative aspects of interference and introduced the concept of code-switching into linguistics. Haugen described code-switching as a process in which bilingual speakers incorporate elements from one language into their speech in another language. He considered this one of the key mechanisms of linguistic interference and viewed it as a dynamic process of language contact, leading to active change and adaptation within the language system [4, p. 44].

Sarah G. Thomason and Terrence Kaufman explained grammatical interference as the preservation of the source language's syntax in borrowed grammatical units. They argued that lexical borrowings often carry accompanying grammatical structures into the recipient language, and that the adaptation process frequently retains the syntactic and morphological forms of the source language [8, p. 37].

Don Winford analyzed grammatical interference as a process involving shifts and transfers within the language system. He viewed interference as a phenomenon that arises through borrowing or code-switching, encompassing not only lexical items but also direct transfers of grammatical structures and syntactic models. From this perspective, the grammatical patterns borrowed into Uzbek from English and Russian–such as word order, auxiliary verb constructions, and passive forms–can be interpreted through the mechanism of interference described by Winford [10, p. 29].

Bechert and Wildgen, instead of using the term "interference," proposed the concept of "Sprachmischung" (language mixing), interpreting language contact as a stage in the formation of a new language system. They argued that the process of interference stimulates internal structural changes in a language and enables us to view language as a dynamic and evolutionary process [1, p. 178].

Claudia Riehl highlighted the overly negative connotation of the term "interference" and suggested replacing it with the term "transfer." Nonetheless, in modern contact linguistics and contrastive studies, "interference" remains the dominant term [7, p. 22].

Heine and Kuteva studied language contact at both semantic and grammatical levels, noting that structures accompanying lexical borrowings introduce new conceptual and syntactic models into the language system. Their theory demonstrates that grammatical interference can arise not only through code-switching but also via the process of linguistic transfer [5, p. 88].

In Uzbek linguistics, interference is considered a relatively new concept. For instance, O.S. Akhmanova's Dictionary of Linguistic Terms does not include an entry or definition for

this term. However, S.M. Lokshina's Concise Dictionary of Foreign Words includes the term and provides a brief explanation. It is noted that the term derives from the Latin components inter and ferens, meaning “mutual influence.” Interference can be interpreted broadly or narrowly; in linguistics, its linguistic explanation is considered most relevant.

Azim Hojiyev’s Explanatory Dictionary of Linguistic Terms defines interference as follows: “Interference (Lat. inter – mutual + ferens – transfer) is the phenomenon of transferring features of the native language into the language being learned. This language is typically unrelated to the native language. For example, a speaker who thinks in Russian may express the sentence 'карандаш упал' as 'qalam yiqildi' in Uzbek.” This definition illustrates that interference is a complex phenomenon with not only linguistic but also psychological and social dimensions [11, p. 45].

M.T. Zokirov, on the other hand, explains it as the involuntary transfer of language skills and habits ingrained in the native language into a second language being learned. He also notes that linguistic interference may appear in non-linguistic phenomena as well, adding a socio-psychological dimension to its characterization.

Additionally, scholars such as E.M. Akhunzyanov, I.A. Zimnyaya, A.A. Leontyev, N.M. Kurmanbaev, and A.A. Zalevska have studied interference as a psychological phenomenon, describing it as the transfer of skills and habits associated with one activity into the framework of another activity.

The literature reviewed above demonstrates that grammatical interference in the Uzbek language is not only of theoretical importance but is also a highly relevant issue in terms of practical language acquisition and the development of linguistic norms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, contact-linguistic approach to examine grammatical transfer and interference in the Uzbek language under conditions of sustained multilingual interaction. The analysis is based on descriptive and contrastive methods, which enable the systematic identification and comparison of contact-induced grammatical phenomena in Uzbek and the source languages involved, primarily English and Russian.

Structural-syntactic analysis is employed to investigate the impact of borrowed grammatical patterns on Uzbek sentence structure, word order, and izafa constructions, while semantic-pragmatic analysis is used to interpret shifts in meaning, usage, and communicative function resulting from grammatical interference. These methods are applied to authentic language data drawn from media texts, public discourse, and contemporary written and spoken sources.

The methodological framework is grounded in contact linguistics, allowing grammatical transfer and interference to be examined as interrelated processes shaped by bilingualism, code-switching, and structural borrowing. The integration of these methods ensures analytical coherence, empirical validity, and theoretical consistency in the interpretation of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interference is a relatively new yet crucial concept in linguistics. It refers to a linguistic phenomenon that arises when two or more language systems come into contact. Uriel Weinreich defines interference as “deviations from linguistic norms in the speech of a bilingual individual” that is, it occurs when elements of one language are transferred into another (Weinreich, 1953, p. 44). Interference may manifest across various linguistic layers, including phonetics, morphology, syntax, lexis, and stylistics.

Borrowed words represent lexical units of foreign origin that have undergone phonetic, morphological, and semantic adaptation within the Uzbek language as a result of sustained

language contact. While lexical borrowing constitutes the most visible and socially accepted outcome of interlingual interaction, it frequently functions as an initial stage in a more complex process that extends beyond vocabulary and penetrates the grammatical system of the recipient language. In contact linguistics, borrowings are therefore not merely lexical phenomena but also act as carriers of structural influence, facilitating the transfer of non-native grammatical patterns into the target language.

Unlike borrowing, which primarily operates at the lexical level, grammatical interference manifests most clearly at morphological and syntactic levels, where foreign structural models interact with, and sometimes disrupt, established grammatical norms. Borrowed lexical items often enter Uzbek together with implicit syntactic and combinatorial patterns derived from the source language. As a result, these items function as "vehicles of interference," enabling the introduction of foreign grammatical constructions that contribute to gradual and sometimes covert systemic change within the Uzbek language.

A salient illustration of this interaction can be observed in the use of English-derived verbal forms in contemporary Uzbek discourse. The English verb submit, for instance, has been borrowed as a lexical unit; however, its appearance in constructions such as submit qilindi instead of the normative Uzbek form topshirildi exemplifies grammatical interference rather than simple borrowing. In this case, interference arises not from the lexical borrowing itself, but from the transfer of an English-based verbal pattern that conflicts with Uzbek grammatical conventions. Such examples demonstrate how lexical borrowing may trigger deeper structural consequences, thereby blurring the boundary between lexical transfer and grammatical interference.

To capture this interaction in analytical terms, the present study proposes the following functional model: $I=f(B+C+T)$ where I denotes grammatical interference as an observable linguistic outcome, B represents bilingualism as a sociolinguistic precondition, C refers to code-switching as a communicative mechanism, and T signifies transfer, encompassing both lexical and structural dimensions. This model conceptualizes interference not as an isolated error phenomenon, but as the cumulative result of multilingual competence, alternating language use, and structural borrowing.

Empirical evidence from Uzbek media discourse further supports this model. Consider the following sentence reported in Gazeta.uz: *Mitinglar to‘g‘risidagi qonun loyihasi tez kunlarda qaytadan jamoatchilik muhokamasiga qo‘yiladi.*

Here, bilingual exposure (B) to Russian and English through institutional communication and mass media has enabled the borrowing of the lexeme miting. At the level of code-switching (C), this foreign-origin unit is embedded within an otherwise Uzbek syntactic environment. Structural transfer (T) becomes evident through its grammatical integration: the word miting receives the Uzbek plural suffix -lar and participates in a possessive–genitive construction (to‘g‘risidagi). Although miting has largely achieved normative acceptance, its integration continues to reflect the structural imprint of the source language, illustrating how interference may persist even after lexical stabilization.

These observations indicate that interference operates across multiple layers of the linguistic system and cannot be reduced to isolated lexical anomalies. In multilingual settings, contact-induced influence affects phonetic realization, semantic interpretation, morphological structure, and syntactic organization simultaneously, necessitating a multidimensional analytical framework.

At the phonetic level, interference emerges when the phonological patterns of the source language influence pronunciation norms in Uzbek. This is particularly evident in borrowings mediated through Russian, where stress placement and vowel realization may diverge from standard Uzbek norms, resulting in non-standard pronunciations in informal or semi-formal speech.

Lexical-semantic interference involves systematic shifts in meaning that occur during the process of borrowing. In Uzbek, numerous borrowed lexemes exhibit semantic narrowing or reinterpretation, whereby their functional range becomes more restricted than in the source language. Such shifts often reflect cultural adaptation and contextual specialization, and they are especially prominent in journalistic language, translated texts, and everyday discourse.

Morphological interference becomes apparent when borrowed lexical items are integrated into the inflectional system of Uzbek, sometimes revealing traces of source-language structure. For example, Russian nouns such as shkaf (‘wardrobe’) are adapted into Uzbek forms like shkafda, where the original prepositional construction (v shkafe) is replaced by the Uzbek locative suffix -da. While this adaptation aligns with Uzbek morphology, it simultaneously demonstrates the structural accommodation of a foreign nominal concept within the Uzbek grammatical framework.

Syntactic interference represents one of the most consequential forms of contact-induced change in contemporary Uzbek. It involves the transfer of foreign word order and noun phrase structure, particularly from Russian and English, into Uzbek discourse. This influence is evident in official documents, translated materials, advertising language, and youth speech, where constructions increasingly replicate source-language syntax rather than adhering to native Uzbek patterns. A notable manifestation of this process is the weakening or restructuring of traditional izofa constructions under the pressure of English modifier–noun patterns and Russian extended noun phrases.

Within this context, grammatical interference functions as an integrative category that encompasses and systematizes the effects of phonetic, lexical-semantic, morphological, and syntactic interference. It arises when foreign grammatical categories and constructional schemas such as voice patterns, case relations, or modifier head ordering are transferred into Uzbek. In bilingual communicative environments, speakers may unconsciously project grammatical models from one language onto another, resulting in hybrid constructions that gradually become normalized through repeated use.

The cumulative impact of these processes underscores the central role of grammatical interference in shaping contemporary Uzbek language development. Identifying and analyzing such patterns is essential for understanding contact-induced language change, assessing shifts in grammatical normativity, and evaluating the long-term implications of multilingual interaction for the structural integrity of the Uzbek language. Consequently, grammatical interference emerges not merely as a peripheral deviation, but as a key mechanism through which language contact drives systemic linguistic evolution.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined grammatical interference and transfer in the Uzbek language as outcomes of sustained language contact, with particular emphasis on the structural consequences of interaction with English and Russian. The analysis demonstrates that grammatical interference is not an incidental or peripheral phenomenon, but a systematic and multifaceted process that affects multiple levels of the linguistic system, including phonetics, lexical semantics, morphology, syntax, and, ultimately, grammatical organization.

The findings confirm that lexical borrowing frequently serves as an entry point for deeper structural influence. Borrowed words function not only as vocabulary expansions but also as carriers of implicit grammatical patterns originating from the source language. Through repeated use in bilingual and multilingual communicative environments, these patterns may penetrate the grammatical framework of Uzbek, leading to the emergence of hybrid constructions and contact-induced structural shifts. In this respect, grammatical interference represents a cumulative outcome rather than a collection of isolated deviations.

By proposing the functional model *I=f(B +C+T)*, this study conceptualizes interference as the interaction of bilingualism, code-switching, and lexical or structural transfer. This model provides an explanatory framework for understanding how grammatical interference emerges, stabilizes, and, in some cases, becomes normalized in contemporary Uzbek usage. Empirical evidence from media discourse, public communication, and everyday language use supports the validity of this approach and illustrates the dynamic nature of contact-induced grammatical change.

The analysis further shows that grammatical interference exerts a particularly strong influence on syntactic organization, including word order, noun phrase structure, and izofa constructions. Under the pressure of English and Russian syntactic models, traditional Uzbek grammatical patterns may be reinterpreted or weakened, especially in institutional discourse, translation practices, advertising language, and youth speech. These shifts reflect broader sociolinguistic processes associated with globalization, digital communication, and the expanding role of multilingual competence in Uzbek society.

At the same time, the study emphasizes that grammatical interference should not be viewed exclusively as linguistic error or deficiency. While unchecked interference may pose challenges to grammatical normativity and stylistic consistency, it also constitutes a natural mechanism of language change and adaptation. From a contact-linguistic perspective, interference reveals how languages restructure themselves in response to external pressures and communicative needs.

In conclusion, grammatical interference and transfer emerge as central mechanisms shaping the ongoing evolution of the Uzbek language. Understanding these processes is essential not only for theoretical contact linguistics but also for applied domains such as language education, translation studies, lexicography, and language policy. Future research should further explore the long-term stabilization of contact-induced grammatical patterns and their implications for the codification and standardization of Uzbek in an increasingly multilingual environment.

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