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Grammatical Interference in the Speech of Azerbaijan Students

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Annotation: *learning foreign languages is a growing need of hour in this age of globalization. In the multilingual Azerbaijani society English is becoming a second language, as a teacher our aim is to help the students to overcome the problems which the students encounter while mastering the language. When learning a second language the students rely on the structure of their native language for producing utterances in English, and this can be helpful or detrimental. Their use of the mother tongue may have a positive or negative impact on their learning of the foreign language. The influence of students' native language, on how easy or difficult is the acquisition of the foreign language, all lies in the process through which the students go through while learning. The aim of the article is to disclose the essence of the notion of "interference", to describe its types and analyse interference in the speech of the Azerbaijani students in the sphere of grammar.*

1. Introduction

Interference may be viewed as the penetration of the elements of one language into another one at various levels, including phonetics, grammar and semantics. Phonetic interference includes foreign accent, stress, rhyme, intonation and speech sounds of one language which influences the said in the other language. Grammatical interference is the intrusion of the rules of one language into another in the sphere of word order, use of pronouns and determinants, tense and mood. Interference at the lexical level provides borrowings from one language and making them more natural in pronunciation.

The most investigated level of interference is lexical interference. The events in the country, spread of the English language, increasing need for this language gave birth to various types of interference, including the grammatical interference.

Grammatical interference occupies an important place in bilingual speech, particularly in the speech of the Azerbaijani students who learn English. The linguists have been paying attention to grammatical interference since the 30s of XX century. Weinreich notes in his "Languages in Contact", "Findings and Problems" that "the problem of grammatical interference is at present among the most discussed issues of general linguistics" (Weinreich, 1968).

According to Weinreich, grammatical interference emerges when the grammatical units in the source language are applied approximately in the same form to the target language, it leads to the violation of the norms of the target language or when the rules compulsory from the point of view of the grammar of the target language do not work because of the contradictions existing

in the rules of these languages (Weinreich, 1973). Weinreich calls the source language the source of interference, and the target language - the object of interference.

As the minimal language unit, which expresses the thought of the man, is the utterance, then when we analyze the speech of a bilingual, firstly, it is necessary to single out the simple utterance as an integral unit of the speech of the bilingual, secondly, it is necessary to single out two main organizing centers of the utterance: the combination of parts of the nuclear of the utterance, which expresses the predicate, the combination of parts of the nuclear with the subordinate complementary parts of the utterance, which expresses the objective, attributive, adverbial and other meanings and relations (Khashimov, 1987).

2. Method of investigation

The research work is carried out by using the descriptive, comparative methods by subjecting to analysis the specific language materials, implementing grammatical models of English and Azerbaijani.

3. Scope of investigation

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

Various linguists have concentrated their attention on those mistakes which demonstrate the influence of the native language on the second language acquisition. Some would consider them inhibitory; while others point out that they are facilitative. The present study sheds light on another sphere of interference mistakes which are found in the speech of the Azerbaijani students at the grammatical level. The plain tasks were given to the students, for example, to translate a text from Azerbaijani into English or vice versa, changing the verb into the past simple, choosing the appropriate articles or tense forms and etc. Then, we compare the students' sentences with the correct ones in the target language, and find the mistakes. Then we come to finding the sources of mistakes.

4. Study of grammatical interference in the speech of Azerbaijani students

The reason of the grammatical interference lies in the identity of grammatical forms existing in two languages, in our case between Azerbaijani and English. 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.

The Azerbaijani and the English languages differ in the word order of simple sentences. The word order is flexible in Azerbaijani, because it is a synthetic language, but the fixed one inherent to English is connected with its analytical nature, therefore typological differences in the structure of Azerbaijani and English sentences create grounds for grammatical interference. While studying the word order of the English sentence, one must pay a special attention to grammatical interference, because syntax creates conditions for the realization of the meaning of the word.

In the English speech of the Azerbaijani students there are violations of the norms of the English language connected with the differences in the structure of the Azerbaijani sentences compare: the fixed word order of the English sentence (subject-predicate-object and flexible word order of Azerbaijani which is subject- object- predict). In the works dedicated to typology of the Azerbaijani and the English languages it is noted that the main members of sentences in the English language can be omitted in the incomplete sentences, though it is not much characteristic for the English language (Gurevich, 2004).

As to the predicate in the English sentences, a part of it is often omitted in the speech of the Azerbaijani students. As opposed to the Azerbaijani language where the predicate can be omitted, it is not characteristic for the English language. However, in the English speech of the students one can note omission of the parts of the predicate, as, for example, in the sentences with the verbs in the Passive Voice in which parts of the predicate expressed by the verb *to be* is often omitted. *The telegram (was)¹ sent at five o'clock yesterday. Such books (are) sold in special shops. The picture (was) spoilt by fire. Such questions (are) often raised by students. This book (was) written many years ago.*

In the sentences with tenses of Continuous group a part of predicate expressed with the verb *to be* is also often omitted, for example, in the sentences like: *I (am) waiting for my friend. We thought that you (were) working on your project. They (are) making a lot of new experiments in their laboratory now. Everybody (is) still laughing at his jokes.*

In the sentences with the Present and Past Perfect Tenses the students often omit a part of the predicate expressed by the verb *to have*, for example, in the sentences like: *He (has) never seen his father. My dream (has) come true. I am sure you (have) translated the article. I (have) chosen the faculty of International Relations of Azerbaijan University of Languages. His lectures (have) always (been) interesting.*

One of the distinct demonstrations of grammatical interference by the Azerbaijani students is the omission of the auxiliary verbs in the interrogative and negative sentences in the English language. The typological differences in the formation of such sentences in the Azerbaijani and the English languages are the potential field of grammatical interference, as there are no auxiliary verbs in the Azerbaijani language.

For example, in the sentence like: *How many letters you wrote yesterday?* the auxiliary verb of the past tense *did* is omitted. The correct question should be like this: *How many letters did you write yesterday?*

The auxiliary verb is often omitted by the students in the negative sentences like this: *I (did) not come yesterday. Yesterday I (did) not know what to think.* Or, for example, the question such as: *What your brother did yesterday?* In this case the grammatical interference takes place because of the influence of the structure of the native language of the student, on the one hand,

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

on the other hand, the deviation from the norm of the English language in this sentence also arises because of the grammatical interference, as the students cannot tell the auxiliary verb of the past tense *did* from the notional verb of the past indefinite *did* (of the verb *to do*).

In the interrogative and negative sentences with the Present Indefinite Tense the students often omit the auxiliary verb of the present tense *do* (*does*), for example, in the sentences: *Where (does) she live? What (do) you usually do in the evening? What (do) you think about the new building?*

In interrogative and negative sentences with the Future Indefinite Tense the students often omit the auxiliary verb of the future tense *shall* (*will*), for example: *When (will) you come? When (will) you finish your course paper? He (will) travel to the Crimea by train.*

A widespread deviation from the norm of the English language in the speech of students is the omission or the incorrect use of the forms of the English link verb *to be* in the sentences “*Our cars the best in the world*” instead of “*Our cars are the best in the world*”, “*Our pupils very diligent*” instead of “*Our pupils are very diligent*”, “*It very big and beautiful*” instead of “*It is very big and beautiful*”, “*You is late*” instead of “*You are late*”, “*My favourite subjects was*” instead of “*My favourite subjects were*”.

This difference in the use of the link verb in the Azerbaijani and English languages leads to grammatical interference in the speech of students.

Sometimes the subject of the sentence is usually omitted under the influence of the Azerbaijani language as in the sentence *At the party (we) met people whom we had never seen before*. Here in the subordinate clause the students omit the subject *we*. *He got a bad mark at the English exam because (he) made a lot of mistakes in the translation. He said (he) had taken the necessary books in the library*. In both subordinate clause of the two sentences the students omit the subject *he*.

Despite considerable grammatical differences in the structures of the Azerbaijani and English languages, the composition of the parts of speech is identical. The differences in grammatical categories and the ways of their expression in Azerbaijani create great potentials for the grammatical interference in the Azerbaijani and English languages.

The verbs which have their own categories in each language and subject to definite rules underwent grammatical interference mostly (Alimov, 2005).

One of the grammatical categories of the English verb is the category of person expressed by the morpheme *-es* in the Present Tense and zero morphemes in other persons (Arakin, 1979). While using verbs in the third person singular in 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 endings denoting the category of person in the Azerbaijani and English languages.

In the system of the English verbs there is the grammatical category of tense expressed unlike in the Azerbaijani 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 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 irregular verbs, form the Past Indefinite Tense of these verbs by adding the suffix *-ed* of the Past Tense of regular verbs. For example, the students say *maked* instead of *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*), *rebuilted* 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*).

It should be noted that the long-standing examples refer to intra-lingual grammatical interference and a number of such deviations in the English speech of students are indicators of irregular and communicatively irrelevant grammatical interference in higher stages of uncommunicative Azerbaijani and English bilingualism.

It should be noted that students have certain difficulties in the application of the rules in the use of indefinite forms of verbs, such as the Infinitive in the English language, the reason being the birth of grammatical interference.

The Infinitive is an indefinite form of the verb and particle *to* being its preceding formal sign. In some cases the Infinitive is used without the particle *to*, for example, after the verbs of physical perception (*to see, to hear, to know*), the verbs of inducement (*to let, to make, to have* etc.), modal verbs (*can, may, must*), in some phraseological combinations (*I'd better, I'd rather*) . However, usually the students often omit the particle *to* even if it is needed in such sentences as "*I wanted (to) learn English*", "*I want (to) travel a lot*".

Sometimes the participles undergo interference. For example, the forms of the Participle II are used instead of the Participle I: "*I want to find a work connecting with English*" instead of "*I want to find a work connected with English*".

The differences in grammatical categories of the nouns in the Azerbaijani and English languages also create potentials for grammatical interference.

For example, the grammatical category of number coincides in both languages, but in the English language it is restricted in nature.

Interference is observed while expressing, first of all, the category of number of nouns. In both languages there are nouns, the majority of which have forms of singular and plural both.

The potential grammatical interference touches upon the nouns having only singular and only plural, but realized in speech differently. Special terms are used for nouns singular only in singular and for plurals only in plural. The influence of the potentials of grammatical interference is diminished when bilinguals fully assimilate peculiarities of the grammatical system of the word change having the category of number in English.

The nouns *money* and *news* are used only in singular, but the nouns *goods* and *clothes* - only in plural.

When the students use such nouns with pronouns, they make deviations from the norms of the English language because of differences in the forms of Azerbaijani and English nouns under the influence of the native language where these nouns have quite opposite quantitative characteristics. For example, while answering the question “*What’s the latest news?*”, the students answer “*They are about the oil situation in the USA*”, where one must use the pronoun *it* instead of *they*, as the noun *news* has only singular form. The students also use the verb *to be* in plural (*are*): *What are the latest news?* under the influence of the Azerbaijani language “*Son xəbərlər necədir?*”, where “*xəbərlər*” is used in plural.

In the Azerbaijani language the noun “*paltar*” is used in singular while in the English language the noun “*clothes*” is only in plural. Because of the inconsistency in the usage of the number of nouns in the Azerbaijani and English languages the students under the influence of the native language make such deviations from the norm like “*His clothes is dirty*” using the verb *to be* in singular (*is*) instead of the plural (*are*).

We can come across grammatical interference in the formation of plurals of nouns. In the English language plural of nouns is formed by adding the ending *-s* to the form of singular (*place-places, box-boxes*). But some nouns (*man-men, woman-women, foot-feet* etc.) form the plural by changing the root vowel and otherwise.

There may appear such deviations from the norm of the English language as *mans* instead of *men*, *foots* instead of *feet* in written and oral English speech of students. Such examples refer to intra-lingual interference as they are the result of intra-lingual analogy.

5. Conclusion

Summing up the above-mentioned issues we would like to add that a diversity of the phenomenon of interference in the English speech of students at the grammatical level is due to, first of all, the difference of the Azerbaijani and English languages in grammatical structure. Lack of the grammatical category of article, differences in the grammatical category of number, gender, case of the noun, tense and aspect of the verb create potentials for the grammatical interference, but the differences in the manners of expression of these grammatical categories are due to grammatical interference in the English speech of the Azerbaijani students.

Typical deviations from the norms of the English language at the grammatical level of the English speech of students, are in close relation to the level of fluency in the English language of students. The higher is the level of fluency in the English language, the rarer and more

intensive are such deviations from the norms of the English grammar in the speech of the Azerbaijani students.

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