The interference process at the morphological and syntactical levels

Yusif Ashraf oglu Suleymanov
Technical University, Azerbaijan

Abstract

The interference process at the morphological and syntactical levels between Azerbaijan and English languages has been given in this article. And the examples with their errors about morphological and syntactical interference in contacting languages have also been explained and analyzed here. The common problems highlighted in the analyses of the students’ samples consist of omission of phrases (NP-noun phrase and VP- verb phrase) in the sentence formation. The errors do not differ from those that previous studies have identified. The causes of the errors are frequently named as the same sources of the interference of the first language and intralingual. The students learn the rules of morphology and syntax, although it does not guarantee that learners will grammatically apply the rules into their writing. These all largely depend on teachers’ activity.

Keywords: the interference process, morphological, syntax, errors, identify
It is well known that in a large number of settings including Azerbaijan teaching English is associated with teaching grammar. This is because it is the core element of language teaching and it must be definitely attained by second language learners. However, the notion of grammar itself is complicated and abstract to conceptualize. Once, it was regarded as ‘the science of language’ in its broadest understanding. In contrast, it can also, in its narrowest sense, be defined as the combination of words to form phrases and sentences. Although linguists find this definition ‘oversimplified’ they maintain that “it is a good starting point (and an easy way to explain the term to young learners)”.[1] Ferris D.R. When the latter definition is adopted, then the notions of morphology and syntaxes emerge as two components of grammar. In this case, morphology can be understood as the study of structure and formation of words, while syntaxes as the study of rules to combine words into phrases and phrases into sentences. Syntaxes and morphology are more important in second language acquisition because students’ performances are monitored and evaluated, especially at lower levels, and based on their morphological and syntactic knowledge. To evaluate this knowledge, teachers generally tend to look up their pieces of writing. However, it is known that students make many errors while forming sentences due to violation of the rules of syntaxes and morphology. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to identify and analyze the morphological and syntactic errors in a small portion drawn out from Azerbaijan students’ writing samples. Secondly, the potential causes of the errors will be explored with brief explanations. “Morphological errors may be considered as those which result from the misapplication of the morphological rules in the formation of words. Some linguists maintain that morphological errors indicate the learner’s miscomprehension of the meaning and function of morphemes and morphological rules.”[4] Ur P.M. These types of errors may include such errors as omission of plural nouns, lack of subject-verb agreement, the adjective-noun agreement, verb tense or form, article or other errors. On the other hand, syntactic errors are those which disobey the phrase structure rules and, in this way, violate the formation of grammatically correct sentences.[2] Fowler H.W. These errors can be exemplified as word order, ungrammatical sentence constructions resulting from faulty use of verbs, prepositions, articles, relative clauses in sentences. These types of errors have attracted the attention of great number of researchers. Their research, more or less, found similar types of morphological and syntactic errors stemming from such sources as mother tongue (Azerbaijan language) interference and inconsistency of the rules in the target language.

A detailed overview of previous studies related to the topic is presented in the following section. During the interference process there will be many errors which comprise four main classifications of errors: morphological, lexical, syntactic and mechanical errors. According to the results, the number and types of errors showed differences based on students’ proficiency level in English. For instance, lexical errors outnumbered the other types of errors in first-year students’ essays, while syntactic errors were the most common in second and third-year students’ essays.[3] Kirgoz Y.N. This research conclude that the most common errors were syntactic once caused by the faulty verb phrase structures including auxiliaries, faulty word order and tense confusion in the conditional causes. Everybody must know and describe the main source of these errors concerning to the first language interference. If we collected many samples of essays from beginner learners most of which are not English and analyzed the obtained data to study the potential errors sources, then the students’ errors would fall into
two main categories: for example, interlingual errors incluse grammatical (pluralization, verb tense), prepositional interferences (addition, omission, misusing) while intralingual errors include the article (addition, omission, misuse), spelling and redundancy. According to some linguists intralingual errors have nothing to do with mother language and result from the target language itself that students are trying to learn.[5]Hopkinson. For instance, the verbs” do and make” are confusing for many Azerbaijan learners as well as for other L2 (second language) learners. On contrary, interlingual errors are attributed to L1 (first language) interference, and are caused by learners’ lack of knowledge of the TL (target language) and their reliance on L1 (first language). Kirkgoz concludes that the possible sources of the errors she has identified in adult learners’ essays occurred due to L1 (first language) interference and intralingual, TL (target language) interference. In another context the syntactical errors of Azerbaijan students are recapitulated by investigating of previous studies and identify several error categories as a result of theirs reviews. There are verbal errors, relative clauses, adverbial clauses, sentence structure, article, prepositions and conjunctions. For each error type, teacher provided examples to illustrate how they actually occurred in authentic sentences and what causes these errors. It is has been pointed out that L1 (first language) interference and target language interference are sources of errors, in accordance with the results of other researches. [9] Suleymanov Y.A. The interference which has been marked as syntactic ones in the analysis, are those which consist of word sequence translated directly into Azerbaijan. The length of such sequences differs – from expressions containing several words or whole sentences. These formulations sound unnatural in Azerbaijan and compared with the original text their syntactic structure is the same as a result of such literal translation, the meaning is shifted. To illustrate what a syntactic interference can cause, a sentence has been given to show one of the cases in which a direct translation of the structure causes a serious shift in the meaning and thus the sentence has been misunderstood.[6] Baker, Mona, Malmker and Kristen. It has been noticed that previous studies didn’t take the way of identification and classification of syntactic and morphological errors. However just the marking and describing of the probable causes of errors do not draw a picture that can help teachers and learners to see the nature of errors and further minimize occurrences of these errors in language using no matter of spoken or written.

With this research will attempt to analyze any essental morphological and syntactic characteristics of writing of examples collected from a group of Azerbaijan students. [10] Suleymanov Y.A. There are two types of writing samples. One consists of single – sentence answers given by first – year students in the high school as part of an exercise under the topic “computer games”. The other sample comes from a university student who is required to write at least 100 words about his expectations from exchange program. This is a prerequisite for those who want to participate in the exchange program. The sample1 is presented below together with analyses of morphological and syntactical structures of students’ answers. For example: 1: First – year students’ answers: The topic: “Computer Games” – 1. Do you like computer games? Why? Why not? S(student).1: - Yes, I do. Because of fun. (Yes, I do because they are fun.- amended version) – The first part of the answer is syntactically correct. Student 1 shows that he/she admits “yes – no” questions and accordingly provides an answer using the pattern “do”. If it had been – Yes, I like – it would have been syntactically wrong since the verb “like” is transitive and requires an object following it. However, the
second sentence does not obey the phrase structure rule that \((S(sentence)) \rightarrow NP\) (noun phrase, verb phrase- VP) sentence is made up of a noun phrase (NP), a verb phrase (VP). But it consists of a PP (propositional phrase) and a NP (noun phrase), which does not comply with the existing rules. Although the answer might be semantically accepted in daily speech, it is erroneous for written language due to the lack of such phrases as NP(noun phrase) (they) and VP(verb phrase) (are) in the word order. This type of error generally stems from L1(first language) interference.

2. S (student) 2: I like computer games. – This is in accordance with phrase structure rules, thus, syntactically correct. \(S\) (sentence) \(\rightarrow\) NP(noun phrase) VP(verb phrase).

3. S(student)3: MC( main clause) – I like do computer games; SC(subordinate clause) – [because sometimes useful and exciting computer games.] – In contrast to the sentences above, this is a complex sentence including one main and one subordinate clause. However, the two clauses are syntactically faulty. The MC (main clause) includes an additional verb “do”. In English it is impossible to use two main verbs together in the same sentence (except do for emphasis). This error probably occurred due to the misapplication of L2 (second language) rules drawn from present tense. As “do” exists in interrogative and negative forms, it doesn’t have affirmative forms. In SC (subordinate clause), there are two syntactic problems is the first one is mis-word formation and the second one is a missing verb “be”. Besides, the NP (noun phrase), “computer games”, in SC (subordinate clause) can be replaced with the subject pronoun “they”. The amended sentence looks like as following: “I like computer games because computer (they) – (are) sometimes useful and exciting.”[7]Kato A.

4. S (student) 4: MC(main clause)[Yes, I like computer games]SC(subordinate clause)[ because a good way to spend a nice time and fun.] – This is again a complex sentence with one MC (main clause) and one SC (subordinate clause). MC (main clause) is correct but SC (subordinate clause) is faulty since the sentence lacks NP (noun phrase) (they) and aux. (are). This type of error occurs as a result of negative transfer of L1 (first language) syntactic meaning to L2 (second language) sentence formation. In the SC (subordinate clause) at the formation of the sentence the student fails to assign a verb (the right verb for collocation), which breaks the syntactic correctness of the sentence since it is conceived as “spend fun “, if the verb “have” does not stand before the word “fun”. The correct form should be as following: “Yes, I like computer games because [they are] a good way to spend a nice time and [have] fun.”

5. S(student)5: MC(main clause) [Yes, I like to computer games]. S C (subordinate clause) [because computer games is very fun and exciting.] – In this example, Student 5 forms a complex sentence, however, separates two clauses with a comma. In the MC(main clause), we observe the infinitive with the particle “to”. The reason might be overgeneralization of the previously learned rules such as “like + infinitive”. However, even in this case, infinitive clause needs a non-finite verb e.g. I like to play computer games. In S C(subordinate clause), a very common error type is seen due to a subject – verb agreement which signals a morphological error. Computer games should be followed by “are”. Such errors occur generally due to the lack of attention and self-monitoring during the writing.
process. For this sentence, there may be two possible amended versions: (1) – Yes, I like computer games because they are fun and exciting, (2) – Yes, I like to play computer games and they are fun and exciting. [8] Fromkin V., Rodman R. However, after considering the original question, the former answer sounds more appropriate. The second question in the exercise gives us the information about types of computer games that students like. In comparison with the answers to the first questions, the syntactic errors have decreased in number in the following writing examples. For example:

S (student).1: “I like adventure games” is syntactically in accordance with S (sentence) -> NP (noun phrase) VP (verb phrase). S (student).2: The answer “I love racing games” is the same as the above one as regards to syntax ( S (sentence) -> NP (noun phrase) VP (verb phrase), VP (verb phrase) -> NN (noun noun); however, the faulty word formation “lowe” results in spelling error. This is a general error particularly among beginner and low intermediate students. The reason lies in that there is difference in the letters of the alphabet of both languages. The Azerbaijan language does not include the letter “w”, so students tend to use “w” instead of “v” assuming that “w” is equated to the letter “v”.

To conclude, there are many problems in the analyses of the students’ examples consisted of omission phrases, particularly NP (noun phrase) and VPs (verb phrases) in sentence formation. Although a number of syntactical and morphological errors have been detected in the samples of the students, they succeeded in forming morphologically correct words and syntactically grammatical phrases and sentences. The implications of the study for the language teacher are multifaceted. Having been identified, these errors can be eradicated or at least minimized through the activity of teachers. To correct forms of words, phrases and sentences are more likely to be absorbed by students through peripheral learning. All these largely depend on teachers’ creativity to take the right action to minimize the errors.
References


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