



**O‘ZBEKISTON UNIVERSITETI
TALABALARINING NEMIS VA INGLIZ
TILLARINI O‘RGANISHIDA LINGVISTIK
INTERFERENSIYA**

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**LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE IN LEARNING
GERMAN AND ENGLISH BY UZBEK
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКАЯ ИНТЕРФЕРЕНЦИЯ
ПРИ ИЗУЧЕНИИ НЕМЕЦКОГО И
АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКОВ СТУДЕНТАМИ
УЗБЕКСКИХ ВУЗОВ**

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va nemis tillarini o‘rganayotgan o‘zbek oliy o‘quv yurtlari talabalari o‘rtasidagi tillararo interferensiyani o‘rganadi. Bir semestr davomida 52 nafar birinchi kurs talabalari (har bir guruhda 26 nafardan) kuzatildi. Interferensiyaning to‘rtta asosiy turi paydo bo‘ldi: fonologik (o‘zbek tilidagi tovushlarni almashtirish), orfografik (imlo va tovushlarning bir-biriga mos kelishini kutish), morfosintaktik (artikl, so‘z tartibi, gender bilan bog‘liq qiyinchiliklar) va kognitiv (so‘zma-so‘z tarjima). Har ikki guruhda ham o‘zbek va hind-yevropa tillari o‘rtasidagi strukturaviy qarama-qarshiliklarni aks ettiruvchi o‘xshash qonuniyatlar kuzatildi. Natijalar talaffuz, grammatika va L2 fikrlashni yaxshilash uchun maqsadli ta‘limga urg‘u beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: o‘zbek til o‘rganuvchilari; lingvistik interferensiya; ingliz tili chet tili sifatida; Nemis tili chet tili sifatida; fonologik interferensiya; orfografik interferensiya; morfosintaktik interferensiya; kognitiv interferensiya.

Аннотация: В данном исследовании исследуется кросс-лингвистическая интерференция среди студентов узбекских вузов, изучающих английский и немецкий языки. В течение одного семестра наблюдалось 52 студента первого курса (по 26 в каждой группе). Возникли четыре основных типа интерференции: фонологическая (замена узбекских звуков), орфографическая (ожидание совпадения орфографии и звука), морфосинтаксическая (трудность со статьями, порядком слов, гендером) и когнитивная (словесный перевод). Обе группы демонстрировали схожие закономерности, отражающие структурные контрасты между узбекским и индоевропейским языками. Результаты подчеркивают целенаправленное обучение для улучшения произношения, грамматики и L2 мышления.



Ключевые слова: узбекские обучающиеся; языковая интерференция; Английский как иностранный язык; Немецкий как иностранный язык; фонологическая интерференция; орфографическая интерференция; морфосинтаксическая интерференция; когнитивная интерференция.

Abstract: *This study explores cross-linguistic interference among Uzbek university students learning English and German. Fifty-two first-year students (26 per group) were observed over one semester. Four main interference types emerged: phonological (substituting Uzbek sounds), orthographic (expecting one-to-one spelling–sound match), morphosyntactic (difficulty with articles, word order, gender), and cognitive (word-for-word translation). Both groups showed similar patterns, reflecting structural contrasts between Uzbek and Indo-European languages. The findings stress targeted instruction to improve pronunciation, grammar, and L2 thinking.*

Keywords: *Uzbek learners; linguistic interference; English as a foreign language; German as a foreign language; phonological interference; orthographic interference; morphosyntactic interference; cognitive interference.*

INTRODUCTION

When acquiring a new language, learners often carry over patterns from their mother tongue, a process widely described as **linguistic interference** or **negative transfer** (Corder, 1967; Ellis, 1994). Such transfer can cause errors in pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning, as the learner relies on existing linguistic habits when producing or interpreting L2 structures. Odlin (1989) defines transfer as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language previously acquired” (p. 27).

In Uzbekistan, where Uzbek is the primary L1, these contrasts with Indo-European languages are pronounced. Uzbek is an **agglutinative Turkic language** characterised by subject–object–verb (SOV) word order, the absence of grammatical gender and articles, and a relatively phonemic orthography (Khikmatillaeva, n.d.). By contrast, English and German employ subject–verb–object (SVO) or verb-second word orders, obligatorily mark definiteness with articles, and, in German, encode grammatical gender and case on nouns and determiners.

Research has shown that these typological differences lead to predictable difficulties. Uzbek learners often replace absent English phonemes such as /θ/ and /ð/ with familiar sounds (Jabborov, 2025), assume transparent spelling–sound relationships in English and German (Nuritdinova, 2021), and struggle with article use and rigid word order (Danikulova, 2025; Abdurakhmanov, 2023). In German, gender and case further complicate acquisition (Shermukhammadov & Khasanova, 2024). Learners also rely heavily on **literal translation strategies**, producing unnatural expressions (Azimovna, 2025).

Although interference has been extensively studied for English or German individually, few studies have systematically compared Uzbek students’ difficulties



across both languages. This study addresses that gap by analysing **parallel interference phenomena** in English and German, with the aim of informing more effective pedagogical strategies for multilingual higher education in Uzbekistan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A qualitative observational study was conducted over one semester (four months) to analyse interference errors among Uzbek students learning English and German. The focus was on phonological, orthographic, morphosyntactic, and cognitive interference.

Participants: Fifty-two first-year undergraduates at Karshi International Innovation University (all native Uzbek speakers, aged 18–19) took part. They were divided into two groups: English (n=26) and German (n=26). Both groups were beginners (CEFR A1), ensuring comparable backgrounds.

Data Collection: Instructors systematically logged recurrent errors during regular classwork (pronunciation drills, grammar exercises, writing tasks, presentations). Observations were supplemented with occasional teacher interviews; no additional tests were administered.

Error Categorisation: Errors were classified into four categories: phonological, orthographic, morphosyntactic, and cognitive. Examples were documented and reviewed independently by two researchers for reliability.

Data Analysis: Errors were analysed qualitatively using a contrastive approach, identifying recurring patterns and comparing English and German groups. Frequency counts were noted where relevant, though emphasis remained descriptive. Findings were interpreted in relation to existing research on L1 interference.

RESULTS

Overview: The observation revealed that **Uzbek L1 interference significantly impacted students' performance** in both English and German, and importantly, many of the challenges were analogous across the two groups. The findings are organized into the four interference domains, with illustrative examples from the classroom data. Table 1 (not included here) would summarize the key error types observed in each category for English and German learners. Overall, both groups displayed *similar interference patterns* caused by the structural contrasts between Uzbek and the target language, though some issues were more pronounced in one language than the other (for instance, grammatical gender errors were unique to the German learners).

Table 1. Phonological interference

Issue	English observed	German observed	Likely L1 cause	Prevalence	Suggested remedy



	errors (examples)	errors (examples)	(Uzbek)		
Phoneme substitution	/θ, ð/ → /s,t/ or /z,d/ (<i>think</i> → <i>sink/tink</i> ; <i>this</i> → <i>zis/dis</i>); /w/ → /v/ (<i>west</i> → <i>vest</i>); /ŋ/ → /n*/ (<i>sing</i> → <i>sin</i>)	/ç/ (<i>ich</i>) → /ʃ/ or /x/; /x/ (<i>Bach</i>) variably realised; <i>ü/ö</i> approximated as /u,o/ (<i>Müller</i> → <i>Muller</i> ; <i>schön</i> → <i>shon</i>)	Missing phonemes in Uzbek inventory	High	Articulatory drills, minimal pairs, visual mouth/tongue cues; spaced, short daily practice
Cluster simplification	Final clusters reduced: <i>asked</i> /ɑ:skt/ → /ask/ or /ast/	Epenthesis in clusters: <i>Schmerzen</i> /ʃmertsən/ → /sə.../	Lower tolerance for complex clusters	Medium	Slow, metronome pacing; build-up drills (C→CV→CVC); dictation + feedback
Stress & intonation	Mis-stress (<i>GUI-tar</i>); flat yes/no intonation	Inaccurate stress placement; carry-over of flat/Uzbek-like contours	Final-syllable stress tendency; limited prosodic categories	Low–Medium	Stress-marked word lists; shadowing; chunked reading with marked nuclei

Table 2. Orthographic interference

Issue	English – observed errors (examples)	German – observed errors (examples)	Likely L1 cause (Uzbek)	Prevalence	Suggested remedy
One-to-one sound–letter expectation	Pronouncing silent letters: <i>knight</i> → /knight/; irregular mappings: <i>laugh</i> → “laf”, <i>night</i> → “nite”	Misreading W as /w/ (<i>Wasser</i> → /wasər/); writing sh for sch (<i>Schule</i> → “Shule”); pronouncing silent h (<i>Jahr</i>)	Uzbek’s largely phonemic orthography; “pronounce every letter” habit	High (Eng), Medium (Ger)	Explicit phonics/rule packs (Eng vowel teams; Ger ei/ie, sch); contrastive dictations; error banks
Capitalisation & conventions	—	Noun capitalisation omitted (<i>das</i>)	Transfer of Uzbek/English capitalisation	Medium	Visual editing checklists; colour-coding



		<i>buch</i>)	norms		nouns in drafts
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Table 3. Morphosyntactic interference

Issue	English – observed errors (examples)	German – observed errors (examples)	Likely L1 cause (Uzbek)	Prevalence	Suggested remedy
Articles	Omission/overuse: <i>∅ sun is shining; I bought ∅ new book; the life is short</i>	Wrong/omitted articles: defaulting to die (<i>die Buch; die Vater</i>); telegraphic <i>Mutter ist Lehrer</i>	No article system in Uzbek; definiteness via context/case	High	Contrastive mini-lessons; formulaic frames; cloze with feedback; noun–article flashcards
Gender & case	—	Confusion with der/die/das and case endings	No grammatical gender/case marking on articles in Uzbek	High (German only)	Gender tagging (colour/shape codes); spaced retrieval; sentence-building with cases
Word order	SOV transfer: <i>I to the store went; My friend English speaks</i>	V2 violations: <i>Ich im Garten arbeite</i> ; misordered time adverbials; sub-clause verb-final issues	Uzbek SOV and flexible order	High	Word-order templates (SVO/V2); unscramble tasks; speaking drills with time/place/manner slots
Auxiliaries & tense/aspect	Dropped do : <i>She not understand</i> ; over/underuse of progressive	Perfekt aux mix (haben/sein); avoidance or misuse of Präteritum/Perfekt	Missing direct equivalents in Uzbek	Medium	Patterned drills; timelines; contrastive charts with cues (“motion = sein” etc.)

Table 4. Cognitive interference (translation/thinking patterns)

Issue	Cross-language examples	Likely L1 cause (Uzbek)	Prevalence	Suggested remedy
Literal translation idiom	<i>with empty hands</i> → “empty-handed”; Brüder	Direct mapping of L1 idioms/lexemes	High	Teach L2 chunks/idioms; parallel corpora



	used for mixed “siblings” (need Geschwister)			snippets; “replace-with-chunk” feedback
Word-for-word sentence building	<i>I university to study go; Du magst Fußball spielen? (for Spielst du gern Fußball?)</i>	Planning in Uzbek → linear translation	High	Picture-based speaking (no L1 planning); time-boxed responses; translation-free prompts
False friends & collocation	<i>systematic prepared; This grammar is interesting me</i>	L1/Russian calque & collocation transfer	Medium	Collocation notebooks; concordance lines; reformulation tasks
Pragmatics/culture	<i>please begin your eating; proverb calques</i>	L1 politeness formulas mapped into L2	Low–Medium	Role-plays; pragmatics awareness mini-lessons; feedback on register

DISCUSSION

Cross-linguistic influence—predictable loci of error. Across both target languages, the highest-yield predictors of error map cleanly onto Uzbek–L2 contrasts: (i) novel segments (Eng /θ ð w ŋ/; Ger /ç x/ and front-rounded vowels /y ø/) → systematic substitutions and epenthesis; (ii) orthography expectations → one-to-one sound–letter assumptions; (iii) articles/definiteness and rigid word order (SVO/V2) absent in Uzbek SOV → omissions and misordering; (iv) translation-driven planning → calques and non-targetlike collocations. These align with contrastive analysis predictions and prior reports of Uzbek learners’ difficulties with articles, word forms, and pronunciation [6][4].

Language-specific divergences. Shared interference dominated, but two divergences mattered pedagogically:

- **German-only:** gender/case on determiners and adjective endings (der/die/das; -en/-em...) produced persistent agreement errors—an L1-absent category.
- **English-only:** do-support and progressive aspect prompted auxiliary omission (*She not understand*) and over-generalised *be + V-ing*.

Cognitive vs linguistic interference. A sizeable portion of morphosyntactic error rode on **cognitive transfer** (planning in Uzbek, then linear translation). Learners who reduced word-for-word planning made fewer order/article errors, echoing research that discourages reliance on translation [21][22]. Rule knowledge



alone did not prevent spontaneous L1-driven omissions, underscoring the need to cultivate **L2-in-L2 thinking routines**.

Implications for instruction (prioritised).

1. **Pronunciation (weeks 1–6):** articulatory coaching + minimal pairs for /θ–s, ð–z, w–v/; for German, targeted /ç/ vs /x/ and *ü/ö* vowel shaping; slow-temporal practice for clusters.
2. **Articles & gender (weeks 1–12):** English—high-frequency frames (*go to the...*, *have a...*, generic plurals). German—gender tagging (colour/shape codes), spaced retrieval of noun–article pairs, sentence-building with case slots.
3. **Word order templates:** English SVO and German V2/subordinate verb-final taught as **fillable templates** (Time–Verb–Subject–Rest for V2 drills); daily unscramble and rapid reformulation tasks.
4. **Orthography bridges:** short “rule packs” (Eng vowel teams; Ger *ei/ie*, *sch*, silent letters) with contrastive dictations to re-set one-to-one assumptions.
5. **De-translation routines:** picture-based speaking, 30–60-second monologues from prompts, chunk teaching for idioms/collocations (*empty-handed*; *Spielst du gern...?*).

Developmental trajectory. Errors decreased over the semester, especially where practice was **high-frequency and feedback-rich** (articles in fixed frames; German V2 in main clauses). Gender/case and English auxiliary support showed the slowest gains—consistent with category novelty and low salience.

Limitations and generalisability. One-site, one-semester observation without controlled pre/post testing limits causal claims; multilingual backgrounds (e.g., Russian) may modulate transfer. Nonetheless, patterns mirror reports for Uzbek learners and for other article-less L1s [6], supporting cautious generalisation.

Actionable takeaway. Treat Uzbek-L2 interference as **systematic and teachable**: front-load articulatory work; make articles/word order **templatic**; externalise gender/case with visual tagging; and deliberately **wean learners off translation** through chunking and L2-only planning.

CONCLUSION

Focusing explicitly on **Uzbek-specific linguistic interference** makes learning **German and English** easier, faster, and more productive for pupils—and it must be a central teaching priority. Our observations show that most persistent errors are **systematic outcomes of L1→L2 transfer**, not random mistakes. Because these patterns are predictable, they are **teachable and preventable**.

What teachers should prioritise (with pay-offs):



1. **Phonological interference** (Eng /θ ð w ŋ/; Ger /ç x/; ü/ö): *Action*: articulatory coaching, minimal pairs, slow cluster build-ups. *Pay-off*: rapid intelligibility gains and fewer fossilised mispronunciations.
2. **Orthographic interference** (one-to-one spelling–sound expectation): *Action*: short “rule packs” (Eng vowel teams; Ger **ei/ie, sch**, silent letters), contrastive dictations. *Pay-off*: cleaner decoding/encoding and reduced guessing errors.
3. **Morphosyntactic interference** (articles, word order; German gender/case): *Action*: template-based SVO/V2 drills; high-frequency article frames; colour-coded gender/case tagging. *Pay-off*: fewer omissions/misorderings; earlier grammatical accuracy.
4. **Cognitive interference** (L1 planning, calques): *Action*: translation-free tasks, chunking of idioms/collocations, picture-based speaking. *Pay-off*: more fluent, natural L2 output.

Programme-level steps: run an entry **diagnostic** on these four areas; **front-load** contrastive mini-lessons in weeks 1–4; embed **spaced retrieval** (articles/gender) and daily **word-order templates**; align **assessment rubrics** to reward progress on interference targets; provide **teacher CPD** specific to Uzbek→German/English contrasts.

Bottom line: treating interference as the **core design problem**—not a side effect—gives teachers a clear roadmap and gives Uzbek pupils the quickest path from translation-dependent output to confident, accurate communication in **German and English**.

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