

Analyzing the Factors of Grammar Mistakes Made by Uzbek Students and Ways to Improve Them

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Abstract: This paper discusses the most typical grammar errors in using English by intermediate and occasionally even low advanced English learners in Uzbekistan. With this article EFL instructors reconnect with their practice of teaching from the mistakes that the learners make in writing and speaking processes since it shows how to properly use some of the structures. For this research interviews and students' essays served to detect the errors. Then, it discusses the reasons behind them and offers ways to tackle the issue which helps learners to produce correct structures.

Key words: interlanguage, learner's language system, grammar as a product, grammar as a skill, grammar as process, grammar in context.

1. Background

Nowadays, it is becoming more and more crucial to learn English because it is one of the global languages that is employed for communication. Since English is taught as a foreign language in Uzbekistan, it might be challenging at times to learn a new language as the target language differs from the native language in many ways. When applying it, these variations may lead to mistakes made by students.

Students have difficulties when learning a new language since they have to obtain information and express their views by utilizing this language. According to Brown learners are involved in the process of "approximations to the system used by native speakers of the language" when learning a foreign language (2000). This implies a type of language formed by second- and foreign- language learners which independent from both the learner's native language and the target language being acquired in the process of learning a language. This separate linguistic system is called 'interlanguage' which was defined by Selinker (1972) as a transitional language system that is always developing and modifying as learners' second language expertise grows. However, number of students "are unsuccessful to achieve target language competence" (Ellis, 1994) when their interlanguage has rules that vary from those of the target language system. The goals of foreign language instruction are not affected or changed by this, but aid learners in acquiring the target language by making the interlanguage as similar to the target language as possible.

2. Methods

Participants:

The project involves 14 English learners currently studying at Samarkand state institute of foreign languages. The second -year undergraduate students whose field of study is Preschool and elementary education, were asked to participate in this piece of research. Since social disciplines are instructed in Russian, major subjects are conducted in English. As Uzbek is their native language, they know Russian as well which serves them for the translation of English words.

Data collection:

The data for this study were collected from the interviews and essays written by the students in their midterm 2022. The topics of the interviews were about themselves, a close friend, and a trip whereas, topics for Grammatical errors in sentences were analyzed based on the conventional grammatical rules.

3. Results and Discussion

For this research a number of students were interviewed. According to the interview, the interviewee showed an appropriate result. For confidentiality purpose, my participant will be renamed Shaxram. His answers were relevant, and some were provided with detailed explanation. Nevertheless, grammar mistakes are present in his speech. The frequent mistakes were noticed in using gerund like in the examples:

1. Used by learner: I go swim; suggested structure: I go swimming
2. Used by learner: I remember to go with my friends; suggested structure: I remember going with my friends
3. Used by learner: to be healthy is good; suggested structure: being healthy is good

The current issue, in pattern 1, may occur when the learner is sure about usage of this words as a noun transferring from Russian. The second sentence requires learner to be aware of specific knowledge about verb “to remember” which implies the future when it is used with “infinitive” and past with “gerund”. The third pattern may take place, when the student directly translates from Russian. As the verb “to be” is utilized in the form of infinitive in that language.

The next error is in using third person singular of Present Simple after a noun in plural form. It is employed by the learner once during the conversation.

Used by learner: online classes helps us; suggested form: online classes help us.

Such slips may be the evident of being lack of producing the mentioned grammar point and instruction.

Another study was carried out on students’ essays and one of them is explained in detail. The written task could reveal student’s decisive points to the given topic, whereas, there was sufficient grammar knowledge. There were mistakes in using passive voice:

Ex: it is time for them to grown up (essay)

(correct usage) it is time for them to be grown up.

Moreover, it is repeated in the following sentence as well.

Ex: *teenager should involve in part time job* (essay)

(correct usage) *Teenager should be involved in part time job.*

This could be the case when the student was in confused situation to hook the reader’s attention by giving emphasis to the subject of the sentence applying active voice in introductory part of the essay.

The next errors are gerunds in the sentence. It may be the influence of the first language acquisition to the second language which is translated from Uzbek as infinitive form.

Ex: They spend more of their precious time *to earn* money compared to the time spent to study (essay).

(Actual usage) they spend more of their precious time *earning* money, compared to the time spent studying.

There are also mistakes in applying punctuation after conjunctions in the beginning of the sentence: moreover, sometimes, so. The reason may hide behind insufficient material in the lesson plan because

the same mistake is repeated twice; however, the other conjunctions are utilized appropriately with comma. Ex: however, firstly, secondly.

Grammar point

Gerund is a noun ending “-ing” which has been formed from a verb.

Gerund exists neither in Uzbek nor in Russian. Therefore, it may cause difficulties to explain this grammar point to students when it doesn't have exact translation in both languages. From my point of view, it is a wrong way when it is taught in isolation because it has similar form with Participle 1 while teaching it as product. When it comes teaching as process, it may constrain students to producing the language when there are limited vocabulary and structure to proceduralize. As Thornbury (1999) noted that “learner's language system will rely on lexis rather than grammar when s/he gets used to depend on supporting context that in other situations s/he cannot share knowledge looking for aid” (p. 88). Teaching gerund as skill is mostly introduced in the activities like getting the main idea of the text, for example whether the paragraph is about hobby, interest or habits. However, there are verbs which require either infinitive or gerund depending on tense it implies. Ex: remember to fill it in or remember going to the cinema.

Learners may find learning gerund challenging since, it does not have exact form in grammar of Uzbek or Russian (Makhmudjonovna, 2022). Hence, it brings to misinterpretation of some words or even using other form of verbal (infinitive).

4. Conclusion

Like any other EFL students, Uzbek students face difficulties while learning English as a foreign language. Unquestionably, they make grammatical mistakes when communicate and express their opinions. It is common when learners use grammar incorrectly frequently, but it also inexcusable when they already know and does not wish to correct the mistakes. This paper identified and analyzed the grammatical mistakes that were committed by 14 Uzbek students in their speech and essays.

5. Implication

It would be better if learner notices the grammar feature in context while teaching it as product. The example may serve filling in the gap with appropriate verb either in infinitive or gerund in a context. As Thornbury (1999) pointed out that “structuring by the learner makes learner be actively engaged in an activity which requires deep consideration before he works out certain grammatical rules” (p.61).

For teaching grammar as process, teacher should create an activity which allows learners to express their opinions about their interests and beyond. For example, while teaching gerund in context of hobbies and habits, teacher can provide with extra option to choose “how it will be beneficial in future” or “how your hobby might have served if it had been 200 years ago”. According to Thornbury (1999) that through this kind of activities learners are motivated that make their own meanings open (p. 88).

Gerund could be taught as skill in an activity where the learner has to define and categorize whether it is in the past or in the present by involving the forms of it and the verb “remember”. While the student really notices the grammar, he is able to demonstrate it successfully (Thornbury, 1999, p.101).

It would be an appropriate option, if learner is not limited in time and topic to produce the grammatical feature. As it was researched by Crookes (1989) that “varied grammatical patterns are produced when planning time was given to learners”. By providing familiar topic to discuss, enables students to demonstrate excellent language performance (Thornbury, 1999).

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