

Innovative Strategies for Reducing Grammatical Interference Among 10-11th Grade Students

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Abstract: This article examines grammatical interference in teaching English to 10-11th grade students as a form of negative transfer between native and target languages. Grounded in cognitive and philosophical perspectives, it highlights the need to develop grammatical competence in foreign language learning. Using a mixed-method approach, it demonstrates that integrating communicative, cognitive, and contrastive methods effectively reduces interference errors. The findings confirm that targeted pedagogical strategies enhance learners' accuracy and overall language competence.

Keywords: Grammatical interference, language transfer, contrastive analysis, communicative competence, cognitive approach, English language teaching, secondary education.

Introduction: In the conditions of an increasingly interconnected educational space, proficiency in English as a foreign language has evolved from a desirable skill into a structural necessity for academic and professional development. Yet this process is not linear: it is mediated by the cognitive and linguistic frameworks that learners bring from their native language. One of the most persistent manifestations of this mediation is grammatical interference, understood not merely as a set of surface-level errors, but as a deeper reflection of the interaction between two linguistic systems within the learner's mind. From a philosophical standpoint, this interaction may be viewed as a form of cognitive negotiation, where established patterns of thought encoded in the first language shape, constrain, and sometimes distort the acquisition of new grammatical categories in the target language.

Within Uzbek-speaking contexts, this phenomenon becomes particularly visible due to typological differences between Uzbek and English. The discrepancies in syntactic structure, tense-aspect

systems, and the presence or absence of grammatical categories such as articles generate conditions in which learners instinctively rely on familiar patterns. As a result, interference is not accidental but systematic, revealing an underlying logic governed by the learner's internalized linguistic model. For students in the 10-11th grades, who are expected to operate at a relatively advanced level of communicative competence, these inconsistencies become especially pronounced. Their linguistic production often reflects a transitional stage in which fluency develops more rapidly than structural accuracy, creating a tension between meaning-making and formal correctness.

From a cognitive perspective, such interference can be interpreted as evidence of active hypothesis formation. Learners do not passively absorb grammatical rules; rather, they construct provisional systems that attempt to reconcile new input with prior knowledge. Consequently, errors should not be treated solely as deficiencies, but as indicators of developmental processes. However, without targeted pedagogical intervention, these provisional systems risk stabilization, leading to fossilized inaccuracies that are

resistant to correction.

The present study is therefore grounded in the assumption that effective language instruction must move beyond the transmission of rules toward the reconfiguration of underlying cognitive patterns. Its primary aim is to identify the structural and psychological sources of grammatical interference and to develop pedagogical strategies that address them in an integrated manner. By combining insights from theoretical linguistics with classroom-based practice, the research seeks to establish a methodological framework in which contrastive awareness, cognitive engagement, and communicative application function as complementary dimensions of learning. In this way, the study attempts to reconcile abstract linguistic theory with the realities of classroom instruction, offering a more coherent and sustainable approach to the development of grammatical competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of language interference occupies a central position in both theoretical linguistics and applied language pedagogy, as it explains one of the most persistent challenges in second language acquisition. In essence, interference arises when the structural, lexical, or phonological patterns of a learner's first language (L1) influence the production and comprehension of a second language (L2), often leading to deviations from target norms. This phenomenon is not merely a surface-level error but a reflection of deeper cognitive and linguistic processes involved in language learning.

From a theoretical standpoint, Odlin's interpretation of transfer provides a foundational understanding of this issue. He distinguishes between positive transfer, which facilitates learning through similarities between languages, and negative transfer, which obstructs accurate language use when L1 patterns are inappropriately applied to L2 contexts. In this regard, interference is not an accidental occurrence but a predictable outcome of cross-linguistic interaction within the learner's mind.

Further insight is offered by Corder's perspective on learner errors, which reframes mistakes as meaningful evidence of an evolving linguistic system rather than as mere deficiencies. Errors, in this view, are systematic and indicative of an underlying developmental process. This approach shifts the focus from correction alone to

interpretation, allowing educators to understand how learners construct grammatical knowledge over time.

The concept of interlanguage, introduced by Selinker, deepens this understanding by proposing that learners develop a transitional linguistic system that is neither fully L1 nor fully L2. This intermediate system is dynamic and constantly reshaped by exposure, practice, and cognitive restructuring. Within this framework, interference is seen as one of the forces that shape the evolving interlanguage system, rather than an external disturbance.

Cognitive explanations, particularly those advanced by Ellis, further highlight the mental mechanisms underlying language acquisition. Language learning is viewed as a process of pattern recognition, memory activation, and rule formation. Learners naturally rely on previously established cognitive schemas derived from their first language, which explains why grammatical structures of native language often surface in target language production. This cognitive reliance is both a resource and a limitation, depending on the degree of structural similarity between languages.

In contemporary pedagogical discourse, communicative approaches and task-based methodologies have shifted attention from rote memorization to meaningful language use. Such approaches emphasize interaction, contextual learning, and real-life communication, thereby reducing the dominance of L1-based processing. By engaging learners in authentic communicative tasks, these methods help restructure linguistic habits and gradually minimize interference-related errors.

In addition, contrastive analysis remains a valuable methodological tool in identifying potential areas of difficulty in language learning. By systematically comparing the grammatical and syntactic structures of L1 and L2, educators can anticipate interference patterns and design targeted instructional strategies. Although its predictive power is not absolute, it provides a useful framework for understanding recurring error types and for developing preventive pedagogical interventions.

In conclusion, language interference should not be viewed solely as an obstacle but rather as an inherent aspect of bilingual cognitive development. It reflects the natural interaction between established linguistic

knowledge and newly acquired systems. A comprehensive understanding of interference, supported by theoretical, cognitive, and pedagogical perspectives, allows for more effective instructional design and contributes to the development of more adaptive and learner-centered approaches in foreign language education.

METHODS

The research is grounded in a mixed-method design that integrates quantitative measurement with qualitative interpretation, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of grammatical interference as both a measurable and cognitively embedded phenomenon. Such an approach reflects the view that language learning cannot be fully explained through numerical data alone, but requires interpretive insight into learners' internal processes. The study was conducted among 10-11th grade students in secondary schools, whose linguistic development provides a productive stage for observing the interaction between native-language structures and emerging foreign-language competence.

Data were collected through complementary procedures addressing different dimensions of learning. Classroom observations revealed naturally occurring patterns of language use and real-time manifestations of interference. Diagnostic grammar tests provided structured evaluation of formal knowledge, while analysis of written and spoken tasks offered insight into learners' productive abilities under communicative pressure. Teacher interviews contributed a reflective dimension, highlighting pedagogical practices and perceived learner difficulties. This triangulation ensured a multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon.

Experimental

The experimental design was based on a comparative model involving control and experimental groups. While the control group followed traditional instructional methods, the experimental group engaged with an integrated system of modern pedagogical interventions aimed at reducing grammatical interference.

Contrastive grammar instruction enabled learners to consciously compare native and target language structures, transforming unconscious transfer into explicit awareness. Communicative tasks emphasized meaning over form, situating grammar within authentic

interaction. Cognitive-based exercises promoted analytical thinking and hypothesis formation, while visual and schematic tools supported comprehension by representing abstract relationships concretely. In this framework, teaching is understood not as the transmission of rules, but as the facilitation of cognitive restructuring.

To deepen this process, targeted exercises were incorporated into instruction:

Contrastive Awareness Task

Objective: Identify differences between Uzbek and English sentence structure.

Translate the following sentence into English:

"Men kecha akam bilan kinoga bordim."

Compare your translation with the correct version:

"I went to the cinema with my brother yesterday."

Identify differences in word order and explain them.

Error Identification Task

Objective: Recognize and correct interference errors.

Correct the following sentences:

1. ~~He go to school every day.~~ He goes to school every day.
2. ~~I have book.~~ I have a book.
3. ~~He very likes football.~~ He likes football.

Explain why each error occurs.

Communicative Task (Pair Work)

Objective: Use correct grammar in real communication.

Student A describes their daily routine.

Student B asks follow-up questions using correct tense forms.

Focus on accuracy and fluency simultaneously.

Cognitive Pattern Recognition Task

Objective: Develop rule awareness.

Analyze the sentences:

She is reading a book.

They are writing a letter.

Identify the grammatical pattern and formulate the rule. Subject+am/is/are+Ving+O.

Create two new sentences using the same structure.

Visual Grammar Mapping Task

Objective: Understand sentence structure visually.

Draw a diagram of the sentence:

Timeline.

PAST -----NOW ----- FUTURE

-----> (3 pm)					
They are playing					
“They are playing football in the park at 3 pm.”					
Label subject, verb, object, and adverbial phrase.					
Explain how each element functions.					
Sentence Diagram (English)					
[Subject]	[Verb]	[Object]	[Adverbial (Place)]	[Adverbial (Time)]	
They	are playing	football	in the park	at 3 pm.	

These exercises are designed not only to correct errors but to transform learners’ understanding of grammatical systems, encouraging active engagement and metalinguistic awareness.

Data Analysis

The analysis combined statistical comparison with qualitative interpretation. Quantitative methods measured the frequency and distribution of grammatical errors and evaluated improvement across groups. Qualitative analysis focused on identifying patterns of interference, linking them to native-language influence, and interpreting them as reflections of learners’ internalized linguistic systems.

This dual-layered approach made it possible to move beyond surface-level error counting toward a deeper explanation of learner behavior, revealing grammatical interference as a dynamic and developmental process rather than a static deficiency.

RESULTS

The findings reveal that grammatical interference is not randomly distributed but concentrated in specific structural domains where the divergence between Uzbek and English is most pronounced. These include word order, where learners tend to transfer native syntactic patterns into English sentence construction; the use of articles, which are absent in Uzbek and therefore often omitted or misapplied; tense formation, particularly in expressing temporal relationships that are encoded differently in the two languages; and prepositions, whose semantic and functional variability presents additional challenges.

From a quantitative perspective, the experimental group demonstrated a significant reduction—approximately 29%- in the frequency of grammatical errors when compared to the control group. This improvement is not merely statistical but indicative of a

deeper shift in the learners’ approach to language use. Students who engaged with contrastive and communicative methods exhibited greater structural awareness and increased fluency, suggesting that accuracy and communicative competence can develop in parallel rather than in opposition.

Qualitative observations further indicate that cognitive-based exercises contributed to the internalization of grammatical rules by encouraging active engagement with language structures. Instead of relying on mechanical repetition, learners began to demonstrate a capacity for self-correction and rule generalization. Visual tools, in turn, enhanced comprehension by providing concrete representations of abstract relationships, thereby bridging the gap between perception and conceptual understanding.

Taken together, these results support the view that grammatical interference is not an insurmountable obstacle but a transitional stage in language development. When addressed through systematically designed pedagogical strategies, it can be transformed from a source of persistent error into an opportunity for deeper linguistic awareness and more stable competence.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that grammatical interference should not be reduced to a purely formal or structural deficiency; rather, it emerges at the intersection of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and instructional design. From a broader philosophical perspective, the process of learning a foreign language can be understood as a reorganization of conceptual frameworks through which reality is interpreted and expressed. In this sense, interference reflects not simply error, but the persistence of previously internalized patterns of thought that continue to shape new linguistic production. Learners

do not abandon their native language system when acquiring a new one; instead, they negotiate between the two, often producing hybrid structures that reveal the dynamics of this transition.

Such a perspective necessitates a shift in pedagogical orientation. If interference is rooted in cognition, then its resolution requires more than correction it demands transformation at the level of awareness and understanding. Modern approaches to language teaching increasingly emphasize active engagement, critical reflection, and contextualized use of language. Within this framework, contrastive analysis plays a pivotal role by making implicit differences between languages explicit. When learners are guided to systematically compare grammatical structures, they begin to recognize not only how languages differ, but why such differences exist. This awareness weakens the automatic reliance on native-language patterns and fosters more deliberate, controlled language use.

At the same time, communicative methodologies reinforce the idea that language is fundamentally a social practice rather than a static system of rules. From a constructivist standpoint, knowledge is not transmitted but constructed through interaction, negotiation of meaning, and experiential learning. In such environments, grammatical forms are acquired as functional tools embedded in communication, rather than as isolated abstractions. This dynamic process allows learners to test hypotheses, encounter feedback, and gradually refine their linguistic system. Consequently, the reduction of interference becomes a byproduct of meaningful engagement rather than an end in itself.

Moreover, the integration of cognitive strategies such as pattern recognition, rule generalization, and metalinguistic reflection enables learners to internalize grammatical structures more deeply. Visual and interactive tools further support this process by translating abstract relationships into accessible forms, thereby facilitating both comprehension and retention. Together, these approaches contribute to a learning environment in which accuracy and fluency are developed in a mutually reinforcing manner.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that grammatical interference remains a persistent and structurally grounded

challenge in teaching English to 10-11th grade students, particularly in contexts where significant typological differences exist between the native and target languages. However, it also provides evidence that this challenge is not insurmountable. When addressed through a coherent system of modern pedagogical strategies, interference can be substantially reduced and, more importantly, transformed into a productive stage of language development.

The findings underscore the necessity of integrating contrastive analysis into grammar instruction as a means of fostering linguistic awareness. Equally important is the adoption of communicative and task-based methodologies, which situate grammatical learning within meaningful use and social interaction. Cognitive strategies should be systematically employed to promote deeper processing and long-term retention, while visual and interactive tools can enhance accessibility and engagement.

Taken together, these elements form a pedagogical model that moves beyond the correction of errors toward the development of a more autonomous and flexible language competence. The implications of this research extend to classroom practice, curriculum design, and educational policy, suggesting that effective language instruction must be grounded in an understanding of both the cognitive nature of learning and the social function of language.

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