



THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Baxtiyorova Farangizbonu Doniyor qizi

Urganch davlat universiteti Qiyosiy tilshunoslik

lingvistik tarjimashunoslik: ingliz tili yo 'nalishi

1-kurs magistranti

farangizbonubakhtiyarova@gmail.com

Annotation: This thesis explores the impact of the mother tongue on English language acquisition, focusing on linguistic transfer, language interference, and bilingual thinking processes. It examines how native language structures influence learners' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary development, and communicative competence in English. The study also outlines pedagogical strategies aimed at reducing negative transfer and promoting effective second language learning.

Keywords: mother tongue, English language acquisition, language transfer, language interference.

In the modern globalized world, English has become one of the most important means of international communication. It is widely used in science, education, technology, business, and intercultural interaction. As a result, the process of learning English as a second or foreign language has attracted increasing attention from linguists, educators, and psychologists. Among the many factors influencing second language acquisition, the role of the mother tongue remains one of the most significant and widely debated issues. Mother tongue, or native language, forms the foundation of an individual's linguistic competence. From early childhood, people develop their thinking patterns, communicative habits, and cognitive structures through their first language. When learning a foreign language, learners inevitably rely on their previously acquired linguistic knowledge. This interaction between the native language and the target language may either facilitate or hinder the learning process depending on the similarities and differences between the two languages.

The influence of the mother tongue on English language acquisition can be observed in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and communication strategies. In many cases, learners unconsciously transfer the rules and patterns of their native language into English. This phenomenon, known as language transfer or interference, plays a central role in second language learning. Positive transfer occurs when similarities between languages help learners understand and produce correct structures. Negative



transfer, however, appears when differences between languages lead to grammatical, lexical, or phonetic errors.

In multilingual educational environments, especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, understanding the impact of the mother tongue is essential for developing effective teaching methodologies. Teachers who recognize the linguistic background of learners are better able to predict learning difficulties and create strategies that support language development. Therefore, studying the relationship between native language influence and English acquisition has both theoretical and practical importance. This article aims to analyze the influence of the mother tongue on English language acquisition from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives. The study focuses on the role of language interference, bilingual thinking, pronunciation challenges, grammatical transfer, and communicative competence in English learning.

Language acquisition is a complex cognitive and social process shaped by multiple internal and external factors. One of the primary factors affecting foreign language learning is the learner's native language. Linguists have long argued that no learner begins studying a second language without the influence of the first language. The mother tongue acts as both a support system and a source of interference during the acquisition process. One of the most noticeable areas of native language influence is pronunciation. Every language possesses its own phonetic system, including specific sounds, stress patterns, and intonation structures. When learners encounter English sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue, pronunciation difficulties naturally emerge. For example, speakers of many Asian and Central Asian languages often struggle with English consonants such as /θ/ and /ð/ because these sounds are absent in their native phonological systems. Consequently, learners replace unfamiliar sounds with similar native language sounds, which may affect intelligibility and fluency. In addition to phonetic influence, grammar transfer plays a crucial role in English language acquisition. Learners tend to apply the grammatical rules of their mother tongue when constructing English sentences. This process may result in syntactic errors, incorrect word order, or misuse of tense structures. Languages differ significantly in sentence organization, verb conjugation, and article usage. Learners whose native languages lack articles often experience difficulties using "a," "an," and "the" correctly in English. Similarly, differences in tense systems may create confusion in expressing time and aspect relationships.

Vocabulary acquisition is also strongly connected to native language influence. Learners frequently rely on direct translation from their mother tongue when communicating in English. While this strategy may help at the beginner level, excessive dependence on translation can limit communicative



flexibility and lead to lexical inaccuracies. False cognates and semantic differences between languages may cause misunderstandings. For instance, certain words may appear similar in two languages but carry different meanings in actual usage. Despite these challenges, the mother tongue can positively contribute to language learning. Learners who possess strong literacy skills in their native language often demonstrate better analytical abilities when studying English grammar and vocabulary. Knowledge of linguistic structures in the first language helps learners compare language systems and develop metalinguistic awareness. Positive transfer occurs particularly when grammatical or lexical similarities exist between languages. Such similarities facilitate comprehension and accelerate language acquisition. Another important aspect is bilingual thinking. As learners develop proficiency in English, they gradually begin to think in the target language rather than translating mentally from the mother tongue. However, this transition requires extensive exposure, practice, and communicative interaction. In early stages of learning, students commonly formulate ideas in their native language before expressing them in English. Over time, increased language immersion helps reduce dependence on the mother tongue and strengthens spontaneous communication skills.

Educational psychology also emphasizes the emotional and cultural dimensions of mother tongue influence. Learners often feel more confident and secure when teachers acknowledge and respect their linguistic background. The complete exclusion of the native language from the classroom may create anxiety, especially among beginner learners. Therefore, many modern pedagogical approaches advocate balanced bilingual instruction where the mother tongue is used strategically to clarify difficult concepts and support comprehension. From a methodological perspective, English teachers should not treat mother tongue influence solely as a problem. Instead, they should identify areas where native language knowledge can be used constructively. Contrastive analysis, for example, allows teachers to compare the structures of the learner's first language and English in order to predict potential difficulties. This approach helps educators design targeted exercises focused on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary development.

Communicative language teaching methods also play a significant role in reducing negative language transfer. Interactive classroom activities such as discussions, role plays, presentations, and group tasks encourage learners to use English naturally rather than relying on translation. Exposure to authentic English materials, including films, podcasts, books, and online communication platforms, further strengthens language immersion and improves communicative competence. The sociolinguistic environment also affects the



degree of native language influence. Learners living in multilingual societies often demonstrate greater flexibility in language acquisition because they are accustomed to switching between linguistic systems. In contrast, students with limited exposure to English outside the classroom may rely more heavily on their native language structures. Therefore, creating communicative environments where English is actively practiced remains essential for successful acquisition.

Researchers in second language acquisition emphasize that language errors resulting from mother tongue influence should be viewed as a natural stage of development rather than evidence of failure. Errors reflect the learner's attempt to construct meaning using available linguistic resources. Constructive feedback, continuous practice, and supportive instruction gradually help learners overcome interference and develop higher levels of proficiency. Ultimately, the relationship between the mother tongue and English acquisition is not entirely negative or positive. It is a dynamic interaction shaped by linguistic similarities, educational strategies, learner motivation, cognitive development, and social context. Understanding this relationship enables educators to apply more effective teaching methods and support learners in achieving communicative competence.

Technological advancements have additionally transformed English language learning environments. Digital applications, pronunciation software, artificial intelligence tools, and multimedia resources provide learners with opportunities for individualized practice. Such technologies help students identify pronunciation errors, improve listening comprehension, and expand vocabulary independently. Consequently, modern educational technologies minimize some limitations caused by mother tongue interference.

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