

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN CHILDREN'S
SPEECH IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH**

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Abstract: This study presents a comparative analysis of grammatical errors in children's speech in Uzbek and English. A total of 100 children aged 6–10 years participated, including 50 native Uzbek speakers and 50 native English speakers. Speech samples were collected through structured and semi-structured tasks such as picture description, story retelling, and guided conversation. Errors were categorized into omission, substitution, overgeneralization, and word order errors. Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that while the overall error rates were similar across both language groups, the nature of errors differed significantly. Uzbek-speaking children predominantly made morphologically driven errors related to suffixes and tense marking, whereas English-speaking children exhibited syntactically driven errors, particularly in verb tense, auxiliary use, and word order. The study highlights the influence of language structure on error patterns and emphasizes the importance of language-specific educational strategies. The findings contribute to the cross-linguistic understanding of child language acquisition and provide practical implications for teachers and speech therapists.

Keywords: grammatical errors, child language acquisition, Uzbek language, English language, cross-linguistic comparison, morphological errors, syntactic errors, language development

Introduction

Children's language development is a complex process that involves acquiring the rules of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. During this process, grammatical errors naturally emerge as children experiment with language and test linguistic boundaries. Studying these errors provides insight into cognitive development, language acquisition mechanisms, and cross-linguistic influences. While extensive research exists on English-speaking children, comparatively fewer studies focus on Uzbek-speaking children, and even fewer explore cross-linguistic comparisons of error patterns [1,2].

Grammatical errors in children's speech are typically categorized into several types: omission errors (leaving out necessary words or morphemes), substitution errors (replacing one grammatical form with another), overgeneralization (applying a rule too broadly), and word order errors [3]. Understanding the frequency and nature of these errors across languages can reveal language-specific acquisition challenges and universal developmental patterns.

Uzbek, an agglutinative Turkic language, has a rich system of suffixes to indicate tense, person, number, and case, which may lead to complex morphological errors in children's speech. English, a Germanic language with relatively fixed word order and auxiliary verbs, presents different challenges, such as verb tense misuse, subject-verb agreement errors, and preposition mistakes [4].

The aim of this study is to compare grammatical errors in the speech of Uzbek- and English-speaking children, focusing on the types, frequency, and patterns of errors. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most common grammatical errors in Uzbek-speaking children’s speech?
2. What are the most common grammatical errors in English-speaking children’s speech?
3. How do error patterns differ between the two languages, and what cognitive or linguistic factors might explain these differences?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to cross-linguistic understanding of child language acquisition and provides insights for educational strategies and speech therapy in multilingual contexts.

Methods

This study employed a comparative cross-sectional design to investigate grammatical errors in children’s speech in Uzbek and English. The primary aim was to identify the types, frequency, and patterns of grammatical errors among children aged 6–10 years, a critical stage in linguistic development. A total of 100 participants were selected, with 50 native Uzbek-speaking children from primary schools in the Samarkand region of Uzbekistan and 50 native English-speaking children from primary schools in London, UK. All participants had no known speech, hearing, or cognitive impairments, ensuring that observed errors reflected natural language acquisition processes rather than external factors.

Data collection involved structured and semi-structured speech tasks designed to elicit spontaneous language production. Tasks included picture description exercises, story retelling from illustrated texts, and guided conversations with teachers or researchers. Each participant’s speech was recorded, transcribed, and anonymized, allowing for systematic coding of grammatical correctness.

Grammatical errors were categorized into four main types: omission, substitution, overgeneralization, and word order errors. Omission errors involved leaving out necessary grammatical elements, such as tense markers or auxiliary verbs. Substitution errors occurred when children replaced one grammatical form with an incorrect one. Overgeneralization errors reflected the application of a grammatical rule too broadly, while word order errors involved misplacement of words in the sentence. The following table illustrates examples of each error type in both Uzbek and English:

Error Type	Definition	Examples
Omission	Leaving out required grammatical elements	Uzbek: Men ket → should be Men ketaman; English: He go school → should be He goes to school
Substitution	Using incorrect grammatical forms	Uzbek: Kitoblarimni o‘qidim → Kitoblarimni o‘qiydim; English: She goed home → She went home

Error Type	Definition	Examples
Overgeneralization	Applying a grammatical rule too broadly	Uzbek: Men yedim → Men yedam; English: I thought → I thought
Word order errors	Misplacement of words in the sentence	Uzbek: Kitob stol ustida → Kitob stol ustida turadi; English: Book the on table → The book is on the table

Each speech sample was coded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and NVivo software to allow both quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative interpretation of error patterns. The frequency of each error type was calculated for both Uzbek and English-speaking children to identify cross-linguistic differences. Particular attention was given to language-specific challenges, such as the rich agglutinative morphology in Uzbek and the relatively fixed word order and auxiliary system in English.

To ensure reliability, two independent coders analyzed the transcripts, achieving a Cohen's Kappa coefficient of 0.88, indicating high inter-coder agreement. Any ambiguous cases were resolved through team discussion, guaranteeing consistent classification of errors.

By integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study provides a comprehensive overview of grammatical error patterns in children's speech across two typologically distinct languages. The methodology allows for meaningful cross-linguistic comparison, highlighting both universal developmental tendencies and language-specific acquisition challenges.

Results

The analysis of the speech samples revealed clear patterns and differences in grammatical errors between Uzbek- and English-speaking children. Across both groups, omission errors were the most frequent, followed by substitution, overgeneralization, and word order errors. However, the distribution and specific manifestations of these errors differed significantly between the two languages.

In the Uzbek-speaking group, omission errors frequently involved tense and person markers, which are critical in the agglutinative morphology of Uzbek. For example, children often omitted suffixes indicating past or future tense, resulting in incomplete verb forms. Substitution errors were commonly observed in cases of pluralization and possessive constructions, reflecting the complexity of noun and verb inflection. Overgeneralization errors occurred when children applied a regular morphological pattern to irregular cases, such as forming past tense verbs incorrectly. Word order errors were less frequent but appeared in sentences requiring postpositional markers or complex clause structures.

In contrast, English-speaking children showed a higher frequency of word order errors and verb tense misuses, reflecting the rigid syntactic rules of English. Omission errors were often related to auxiliary verbs (e.g., He going to school instead of He is going to school). Substitution errors included incorrect verb forms, such as *goed* for *went*. Overgeneralization was observed when children applied regular past tense rules to irregular verbs (e.g., *thoughted* instead of *thought*).

The following table summarizes the average frequency of errors per child for each category in both language groups:

Error Type	Uzbek-speaking Children (n=50)	English-speaking Children (n=50)	Observation
Omission	12.4 ± 3.1	9.2 ± 2.5	Omission more common in Uzbek due to complex suffixes
Substitution	8.5 ± 2.2	7.3 ± 1.9	Similar frequency, but types differ across languages
Overgeneralization	6.1 ± 1.8	5.7 ± 1.5	Slightly higher in Uzbek due to morphological complexity
Word order errors	3.4 ± 1.2	8.9 ± 2.3	Word order errors more frequent in English due to syntax rules
Total errors per child	30.4 ± 5.8	30.1 ± 4.9	Overall error rate is similar, distribution differs

The results indicate that while the overall error rate per child is comparable, the nature and type of errors are influenced by linguistic structure. Uzbek children's errors are largely morphologically driven, reflecting challenges in applying agglutinative suffixes. English children's errors are mainly syntactically driven, associated with auxiliary usage, verb tense, and word order.

Qualitative analysis further showed that contextual factors influenced error patterns. For example, in storytelling tasks, children were more likely to omit grammatical markers when speaking spontaneously, while guided conversation reduced the frequency of errors. Additionally, overgeneralization often occurred when children attempted to produce more complex sentences beyond their current linguistic competence, highlighting the interaction between cognitive development and language acquisition.

These findings provide valuable insights into cross-linguistic differences in child language development and emphasize the importance of considering language-specific structures when designing educational materials and language intervention programs.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant impact of language structure on grammatical error patterns in children's speech. While both Uzbek- and English-speaking children exhibited similar overall error rates, the types and distribution of errors were influenced by the linguistic characteristics of each language. Uzbek, with its agglutinative morphology, presents challenges in tense marking, suffix application, and possessive constructions, which explains the higher frequency of omission and overgeneralization errors in this group. Conversely, English's relatively fixed word order, auxiliary verbs, and irregular verb forms contribute to the prevalence

of word order errors, verb tense mistakes, and substitution errors among English-speaking children [1,2].

The study underscores that cross-linguistic comparisons are crucial for understanding universal versus language-specific patterns in child language acquisition. For example, omission and substitution errors appear in both languages, suggesting a universal developmental trend where children simplify or overapply grammatical rules during language learning. However, the specific manifestations of these errors are shaped by the structural and morphological features of the respective language [3].

From an educational perspective, these findings have important implications. Teachers and speech therapists should consider the linguistic characteristics of each language when designing instructional strategies. For Uzbek-speaking children, targeted practice on suffixes, tense marking, and word formation can help reduce morphological errors. For English-speaking children, emphasis on auxiliary usage, verb conjugation, and sentence structure may improve syntactic accuracy [4].

Moreover, the study highlights the role of task type in eliciting errors. Spontaneous speech tasks led to a higher frequency of grammatical mistakes, while guided or structured activities reduced error occurrence. This suggests that children's performance varies depending on contextual and cognitive demands, which should be considered in both research and pedagogical applications [5].

Overall, the results confirm that grammatical errors in children's speech are influenced by a combination of universal developmental tendencies, language-specific structures, and task context. A deeper understanding of these factors can support more effective language instruction and assessment in bilingual or multilingual settings.

Conclusion

This study provides a comparative analysis of grammatical errors in Uzbek- and English-speaking children aged 6–10 years. Key findings include:

1. Error types differ by language: Uzbek children predominantly produce morphologically driven errors (omission of suffixes, overgeneralization), while English children produce syntactically driven errors (word order mistakes, auxiliary misuse).
2. Overall error rates are similar, indicating that the frequency of grammatical mistakes is comparable across languages, but the nature of errors reflects language-specific challenges.
3. Task context affects error production: spontaneous speech elicits more errors than guided tasks, highlighting the interaction between cognitive load and linguistic competence.

These findings have practical implications for language education and intervention, emphasizing the need for language-specific instructional strategies and targeted grammatical exercises. The study also contributes to the field of cross-linguistic child language research, offering insights into how linguistic structure shapes grammatical development across typologically different languages.

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