

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE OF UZBEK ON ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING

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Abstract: The influence of a writer's native language on academic writing in English remains a significant area of investigation in applied linguistics. This study explores how linguistic and rhetorical features of Uzbek shape English academic writing produced by Uzbek university students. Using a corpus of academic essays written by undergraduate students, the research analyzes grammatical structures, lexical choices, and discourse organization that reflect systematic transfer from Uzbek. The findings reveal that Uzbek academic traditions and language-specific features influence sentence complexity, cohesion strategies, argument development, and authorial stance in English texts. These influences are shown to be consistent and patterned rather than accidental. The study argues that such cross-linguistic influence should be understood as a natural cognitive process and a resource for pedagogical development. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of contrastive awareness and academic literacy instruction in improving English academic writing in Uzbek educational contexts.

Key Words: cross-linguistic influence, Uzbek learners, English academic writing, contrastive rhetoric, discourse organization, grammatical transfer, lexical transfer, academic literacy, second language writing, intercultural academic communication, applied linguistics

Introduction

In the modern academic environment, English has established itself as the dominant language of research, publication, and higher education. Students across the world are expected to demonstrate their academic competence through written English,

regardless of their linguistic background. As a result, academic writing has become a crucial skill for learners in non-English-speaking contexts, including Uzbekistan. However, writing academically in English involves more than grammatical correctness; it requires mastery of rhetorical conventions, discourse structures, and culturally embedded norms of argumentation. One of the most influential factors shaping academic writing in English is the writer's native language. Linguistic structures, patterns of thought, and academic traditions acquired through the native language often continue to influence writing in English. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as cross-linguistic influence, has been extensively discussed in studies of contrastive rhetoric and academic discourse. Rather than being a simple source of errors, cross-linguistic influence reflects the interaction between previously acquired linguistic knowledge and new academic writing demands. Uzbek provides a particularly relevant context for examining cross-linguistic influence in English academic writing. As a Turkic language, Uzbek is characterized by agglutinative morphology, flexible word order, and extensive use of suffixes to express grammatical relations. In contrast, English relies on relatively fixed sentence structures, limited inflection, and explicit syntactic marking. These structural differences alone create conditions for noticeable transfer effects in writing. The main objective of this research is to identify patterns of cross-linguistic influence at grammatical, lexical, and discourse levels in academic essays written by Uzbek learners and to discuss their pedagogical implications.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design that integrates qualitative textual analysis with quantitative observation of recurring linguistic patterns. This approach allows for detailed examination of individual examples while also identifying broader tendencies across a corpus of student writing. The participants were forty undergraduate students enrolled in English Philology and Translation Studies programs at a higher education institution in Uzbekistan. All participants were native speakers of Uzbek and had studied English formally for no less than eight years. Their proficiency

level ranged from upper-intermediate to advanced, as determined by institutional placement tests aligned with international assessment standards. The data consisted of academic essays written as part of regular coursework in linguistics, applied linguistics, and education-related subjects. Each essay ranged between 1,500 and 2,000 words and required students to construct analytical or argumentative texts. The essays were written under classroom conditions to ensure authenticity and to minimize external assistance.

The analysis was conducted in three stages:

1. Grammatical analysis, focusing on sentence structure, word order, tense usage, and subject realization
2. Lexical analysis, examining word choice, collocations, and literal translation patterns
3. Discourse analysis, focusing on paragraph organization, cohesion devices, argument structure, and authorial stance

Identified features were compared with corresponding patterns in Uzbek linguistic and academic traditions to determine whether they reflected cross-linguistic influence.

Results and Discussion

Grammatical Influence: One of the most prominent areas of cross-linguistic influence was sentence construction. Many essays contained long, complex sentences that combined multiple ideas into a single structure. This tendency reflects Uzbek syntactic preferences, where extended sentences with several subordinate clauses are stylistically acceptable. For example, one student wrote:

When students study a foreign language, which has become very important in modern society, they should also learn culture, because without cultural knowledge communication cannot be successful.

Although grammatically acceptable, this sentence mirrors Uzbek sentence-building patterns and appears overloaded by English academic standards. In English academic writing, such ideas are often divided into shorter, more focused sentences. Another recurring feature involved subject realization. In several instances, sentences lacked an explicit subject, reflecting Uzbek discourse conventions where subject reference is often inferred from context:

Is necessary to pay attention to academic writing skills at universities.

This structure directly reflects Uzbek patterns but conflicts with English requirements for explicit subject use. Tense usage also demonstrated transfer effects. Students frequently used present tense to describe previous research findings:

Many researchers say that writing is difficult for students.

In English academic writing, past tense is generally preferred when referring to completed studies.

Lexical Influence: Lexical transfer was evident in both word choice and collocation. Students often selected words based on direct translation from Uzbek, resulting in expressions that were semantically understandable but stylistically inappropriate in English academic contexts. For instance:

This issue has a big meaning for modern education.

This phrase reflects Uzbek lexical patterns, whereas English academic writing would typically use great importance or significant relevance. Collocational transfer was also common:

to make influence on students

to give big attention to the problem

These expressions demonstrate systematic lexical influence rather than isolated vocabulary errors.

Discourse and Rhetorical Influence: At the discourse level, cross-linguistic influence was particularly strong. Many essays began with broad, generalized statements and delayed the presentation of the main argument. For example, an

introduction might discuss the importance of education in society for several paragraphs before clearly stating the research focus. This structure reflects Uzbek academic writing traditions, where indirectness and extensive contextualization are valued. However, English academic writing typically expects a clear thesis statement early in the text.

Paragraph development also showed transfer effects. Topic sentences were sometimes implicit or placed at the end of paragraphs. Additionally, cohesion was often achieved through repetition of key terms rather than through explicit discourse markers such as however, therefore, or in contrast.

Authorial stance presented another area of influence. Students often avoided explicit evaluative language and personal positioning, reflecting Uzbek academic norms that emphasize impersonality. As a result, arguments sometimes lacked clear critical engagement with sources.

Conclusion

This study investigated the cross-linguistic influence of Uzbek on English academic writing produced by Uzbek university students. The analysis revealed that Uzbek linguistic structures and rhetorical conventions significantly influence sentence construction, lexical choices, and discourse organization in English academic texts. Recognizing cross-linguistic influence as a natural cognitive process allows educators to move beyond error-focused approaches to academic writing instruction. Instead, teaching practices should emphasize contrastive awareness, explicit instruction in English academic genres, and the development of academic literacy skills. Future research may expand the corpus size, explore disciplinary differences, or adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how cross-linguistic influence evolves as writing proficiency increases. Such research would contribute to more effective academic writing pedagogy in multilingual educational contexts.

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