



IDIOMATIC ERRORS IN THE SPEECH OF NON-LINGUISTIC STUDENTS AND THEIR RELATION TO FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the typical errors made by students of non-linguistic higher education institutions in using English idiomatic units. The role of first language (L1) interference in the emergence of such errors is examined, a five-type classification of idiomatic errors is proposed, and methodological measures for preventing each type are outlined.

The appropriate use of idiomatic units is an indicator of advanced proficiency in a foreign language. However, idiom-related errors occur persistently in the speech of non-linguistic students, and a considerable proportion of them can be explained by the influence of the mother tongue, that is, by interference. T. Odlin defines language transfer as the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired [1]. S. Irujo's experimental study demonstrated that reliance on L1 equivalents leads to both positive and negative transfer in idiom acquisition: idioms with full equivalents are acquired most easily, whereas partially matching idioms produce the greatest number of errors [2]. T. Cooper, in turn, established that language learners most frequently resort to guessing from context and literal interpretation when determining the meaning of an unfamiliar idiom [3].

On the basis of an analysis of the methodological literature and of typical cases observed in teaching practice, idiomatic errors in the speech of non-linguistic students may be divided into the following five types:

1. Calque errors (negative transfer). The student translates an Uzbek idiom into English word for word: to express the meaning of "barmoq orasidan qaramoq", forms such as **to look through fingers* (correct: *to turn a blind eye*) are produced. Such combinations do not exist in English and cause misunderstanding in communication.

2. False equivalence errors. With partially matching idioms, the student assumes a complete correspondence: under the influence of the Uzbek idiom "bir o'q bilan ikki quyonna urmoq", the form **to kill two rabbits with one bullet* (correct: *to kill two birds with one stone*) emerges. S. Irujo identifies precisely this group of partial equivalents as the most error-prone [2].

3. Literal interpretation errors (receptive errors). The student understands an English idiom in its direct meaning: *cut corners* is perceived as physically cutting corners, *bite*

the *bullet* as biting an actual bullet, as a result of which the meaning of the text is misinterpreted [3].

4. Formal distortion errors. The fixed structure of the idiom is altered: **make the ball rolling* (correct: *get the ball rolling*), **in red* (correct: *in the red*). Such errors indicate that idioms have not been acquired as holistic, invariable units [4].

5. Pragmatic and stylistic errors. The idiom is grammatically correct but situationally inappropriate: the use of a highly colloquial idiom in a formal presentation is a case in point. Errors of this type show that, alongside the meaning of an idiom, the conditions of its use must also become an object of instruction [5].

Empirical verification.

To test the proposed classification, a preliminary analysis was carried out on the basis of a translation exercise performed by 28 students of the Tashkent State University of Economics (TSUE), divided into two groups. In the task, students translated sentences containing idiomatic units between Uzbek and English. Each instance of misuse, mistranslation or incorrect formation of an English idiom in their work was identified and assigned to one of the five error types. Altogether 28 idiomatic errors were registered; since a single student could produce several errors while others produced none, the number of errors does not correspond to individual students. Their distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of idiomatic errors by type (TSUE, 2 groups, 28 students)

Error type	Number	Share, %
1. Calque errors	8	28.6
2. False equivalence	6	21.4
3. Literal interpretation	5	17.9
4. Formal distortion	3	10.7
5. Pragmatic / stylistic	6	21.4
Total	28	100

As the data show, calque errors caused by direct word-for-word transfer from the mother tongue proved to be the most frequent type (28.6%), which confirms the leading role of L1 interference in idiom use. False equivalence and pragmatic-stylistic errors followed, with an equal share (21.4% each); the former likewise stems from interference — from over-reliance on partially matching Uzbek idioms — while the latter reflects insufficient attention to the conditions of idiom use. Literal interpretation errors accounted for 17.9%, and formal distortion errors were the least frequent (10.7%). Taken together, the calque and false-equivalence types — both directly related to interference — make up half of all registered errors (50%), which empirically supports the central assumption of this study.

The analysis shows that the majority of idiomatic errors are systematic rather than accidental in nature, being connected with the influence of L1 phraseology and with the practice of teaching idioms in isolation from context. Proceeding from this, the following preventive methodological measures are proposed: presenting idioms exclusively within context; analysing English and Uzbek equivalent idioms through special comparison exercises, with particular attention to partial equivalents; planning recycling exercises that consolidate

the fixed form of the idiom in memory; and making the stylistic colouring and situational appropriateness of idioms an explicit object of instruction.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that idiomatic errors among non-linguistic students are predominantly systematic in nature and are largely conditioned by first language interference, as confirmed by the prevalence of calque and false-equivalence errors. The proposed five-type classification enables the teacher to accurately diagnose the cause of each error and to select targeted preventive exercises, while the consistent presentation of idioms within context and the comparative analysis of English and Uzbek equivalents help to reduce the influence of interference and to develop students' idiomatic competence.

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