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L1 Transfer in Language Learning: Contrastive Analysis between Bosnian and English Based on Error Analysis

Jezički transfer u učenju stranog jezika: Kontrastivna analiza bosanskog i engleskog bazirana na analizi grešaka

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ABSTRACT

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Previous research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has shown that some of the systematic errors of second language (L2) learners can be attributed to the influences of the native language (L1). In fact, many hypotheses in SLA have focused on the role of L1 transfer ranging the spectrum from No Transfer to Full Transfer. However, studies about the Bosnian language as L1 and the English language as L2 are not numerous at all. Therefore, the goal of this thesis was to fill this gap and to investigate L1 transfer by focusing on L1-L2 differences.

The instrument consisted of 60 essays written in English by high school students whose L1 is Bosnian. Essays were analyzed for common errors such as spelling errors, articles and word order. The results showed considerable influences of the native language. This revealed that there is a need for taking L1 Transfer into account when it comes to teaching and learning L2.

Key Words: error analysis, language transfer, intralingual errors, interlanguage

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. The Present Simple in Bosnian and English.....	18
2. The Past Simple in Bosnian and English.....	19
3. Examples of spelling errors.....	24
4. Indefinite aspect of adjective in Bosnian.....	27
5. Definite aspect of adjective in Bosnian.....	27
6. Error analysis on the use of articles.....	31
7. The most common position for adverbs in English	36

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Slavic language family tree.....	12
2. English vowels in vowel chart.....	14
3. Bosnian vowels in vowel chart.....	14
4. Type frequency of spelling errors.....	22
5. Error analysis on the use of articles shown by percentage.....	31

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1.Statement of Purpose.....	2
1.2.Overview of the Thesis.....	3
2. ROLE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE IN THE LEARNING OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE	
2.1.Definition of Transfer.....	4
2.1.1. Interlanguage.....	6
2.1.2. The concept of Initial State.....	7
2.2. Interlingual Interference.....	8
2.3. Culture Issue – Language, Culture, Society.....	10
3. FEATURES OF THE BOSNIAN LANGUAGE	
3.1.Language Family.....	12
3.2.Development of the Bosnian Language.....	13
3.3.Phonology.....	13
3.3.1. Vowels.....	14
3.3.2. Consonants.....	14
3.4.Orthography.....	15
3.4.1. Double Letters.....	15
3.4.2. Silent Letters	15

3.5. Grammar	
3.5.1. General Features of Bosnian Grammar	16
3.5.2. Synthetic vs. Analytic Language	18
4. ERROR ANALYSIS	
4.1. Method	20
4.1.1. Participants	21
4.1.2. Instruments	21
4.2. Spelling Errors	22
4.2.1. Results and Discussion	22
4.3. Articles	25
4.3.1. Definiteness/Indefiniteness in English	25
4.3.2. Definiteness/Indefiniteness in Bosnian	26
4.4. Means of Expressing Definiteness/Indefiniteness in Bosnian	27
4.4.1. Adjectival Inflection	27
4.4.2. Determiners as Marker of Definiteness/Indefiniteness	29
4.4.3. Context as Marker of Definiteness/Indefiniteness	30
4.4.4. Results and Discussion	31
4.5. Word Order	34
4.5.1. Discussion	36
4.6. Final Discussion	40
5. CONCLUSION	41
6. REFERENCES	43

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Statement of Purpose

Language learning, like any kind of human learning, involves committing errors. Moreover, errors are helpful for both teachers and students. Teachers may use it to measure a student's progress or lack of it and to choose a teaching strategy which is better. On the other hand, students learn from their errors.

There is a need to make a distinction between “errors” and “mistakes”. Errors are a result of the learner's lack of knowledge. Errors may occur repeatedly and they are not recognizable by students. Hence, according to James (1998:83) errors cannot be self-corrected. On the other hand, mistakes occur when students fail to utilize a known system correctly. They are made even by native speakers. They occur because of memory lapses, tiredness and various circumstances. Mistakes can be self-corrected with or without being pointed out to the speaker.

Many errors are due to the fact that students use structures from their native language. Some researches claim that possession of one's native language is facilitative. On the other hand, there are those who assume that knowledge of one's native language is a stumbling block.

The primary goal of this thesis is to test the hypothesis that there is more interlingual interference than intralingual interference. In order to test our hypothesis we will examine some of the factors that are considered important in second language acquisition guided by the following questions:

- a) What role does first language play in the acquisition of a second language?
- b) How does a typological distance between the first language (Bosnian) and the second language (English) affect the learning of English?

The aims of this study are to discover how negative transfer affects student's writing and to search for the causes of the negative transfer.

In this thesis, the distinction is made between “acquisition” and “learning”. Namely, the distinction may make sense in a number of contexts, for example, to distinguish between naturalistic L2 acquisition and L2 classroom learning. Participants in this study learn English only in classroom environment and the task which they were assigned to do were done in the classroom. That is why they are learning the English language and they are not acquiring it.

Stephen Krashen draws a big distinction between learnt and acquired language. According to Krashen (1982: 10-11), students who are taught in a formal way will “learn” the language but never fully acquire it. Acquisition consists of rules and principles that are not available to conscious attention. By contrast, learnt language can only be used as a “monitor” to what we say in L2. Krashen (1982) argues this is the only use of learnt language and further goes on to say that learnt language can never become acquired language.

The data for this study consists of 60 essays written by fourth grade students of a high school in Sarajevo. Their first language is Bosnian. They had been learning English for more than nine years prior to this research and they were supposed to reach an upper intermediate level at least. They were given a list of topics to choose from. The essays were written as a schoolwork assignment and ranged from one to one and a half pages in length. Once data were collected, the essays were converted into computer-readable files and scrutinized for errors deriving from Bosnian L1 influence.

1.2. Overview of the Thesis

The outline of the thesis is as follows. I start by explaining the purpose of the thesis. In Chapter 2 I present elements that play an important role in the learning of the second language. Those elements are interlingual interference (language transfer), intralingual interference and sociolinguistic situation. Chapter 3 describes characteristics of the Bosnian language. Chapter 4 presents results from the error analysis divided into three categories: (1) Spelling Errors, (2) Articles (3) and Word Order. Finally in Chapter 5, I review the results and explain the relevance of these findings.

CHAPTER 2

ROLE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE IN THE LEARNING OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE

Native language (L1) transfer has been a widely researched issue in the SLA. Many conclusions regarding the relationship between L1 and L2 drawn in the beginning stages of SLA research are still widely accepted. One such statement was that the L1 constitutes the initial point of L2 acquisition (e.g., Corder, 1967; Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972). The impact of the L1 on L2 learning appears to be strong and has, in fact, led some researchers to go so far as to claim that ‘the price we pay for successful L1 acquisition is the inability to acquire an L2’ (Eubank & Gregg, 1999: 92).

There are a number of elements that play an important role in influencing a learner’s interlanguage in second language acquisition (hereinafter: SLA). According to Richards (1973: 5), the three most influencing elements are:

- a) Interlingual interference (language transfer);
- b) intralingual interference;
- c) sociolinguistic situation.

Of course, these are not the only elements that put their mark on SLA. Other factors may be age, personality, motivation, etc. SLA is influenced by the age of the learner. Children seem to be in the best position to acquire a new language efficiently. Personality influences SLA in the way that introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral progress. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek out such opportunities. Motivation is also important because students who enjoy language learning will do better than those who do not. (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 36-45)

2.1. Definition of Transfer

In fact, it is difficult to give only one definition for transfer that includes all the different aspects. As well as the different views about the definition of transfer, there are also different terms for this phenomenon. Interlingual errors are also called *transfer* or *interference errors*.

There are two types of language transfer that may occur: positive transfer and negative transfer. According to the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics, positive transfer is “transfer which makes learning easier, and may occur when both the native language and the target language have the same form”. (Richards and Schmidt 2002: 294). The same dictionary states that “negative transfer also known as interference is the use of a native language pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language”. (Richards and Schmidt 2002: 294).

In his *Analysing and counteracting interference errors*, David Lott (1983: 256) defines interference as “errors in the learner’s use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue”.

Rod Ellis refers to interference as “the influence that the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2”. Moreover, according to Ellis, transfer is governed by learners’ perceptions about what is transferable and by their stage of development in L2 learning. (Ellis 1997: 51)

Larry Selinker (1972: 212) advocates that in learning a target language, learners construct their own interim rules with the use of their L1 knowledge, but only when they believe it will help them in the learning task or when they have become sufficiently proficient in the L2 for transfer to be possible.

Therefore, L2 students utilize their native language and that is positive transfer. But, their native language is different from the target language. Consequently, the negative transfer is the inevitable part of the process of learning second language. However, there are languages which are closer and have more similarities. Thus, such languages will be easier for learning. As Schachter (1996a: 161) claims:

“The adult’s knowledge of a prior language either facilitates or inhibits acquisition of the L2, depending on the underlying similarities or dissimilarities of the language in question. (...) The closer two languages are in terms of syntax, phonology, and lexicon, the more likely it is that higher levels of completeness can be reached.”

Therefore, if, for example, an English speaker was to acquire German he would need less time to do that than to acquire Japanese because there are more similarities between English and German in terms of syntax, phonology, and lexicon etc. than between English and Japanese.

However, it would be superficial to define L1 transfer in such a simple way. L1 transfer is rather complex and differences between two languages do not necessarily cause problems in SLA since similarities between the target and mother language are also a cause of difficulties in SLA.

2.1.1. Interlanguage

The term *interlanguage* was coined by Selinker in 1972. Interlanguage at the same time pays attention to characteristics of the target language but also to other languages a learner speaks, mainly their mother tongue. In this way one language and its entire system influences the system of the target language. A language learner applies features and rules of their mother tongue (or some other language they are familiar with) to the language they are learning. In this way they form sentences with their mother tongue patterns, which may often lead to a mistake. One of the most common mistakes that Bosnian learners of English make is the following:

L1: *Kako ona izgleda?*

L2: **How does she look like?*

Instead of: *What does she look like?*

Applying L1 rules to L2 usually ends up in deviant forms, which create interlanguage. Studying learners' interlanguage can help us determine the way they acquire a second language. Researchers have come up with a conclusion that inter-languages of learners of one language (regardless of their mother tongue) have many similarities in terms of L2 syntax. Corder (1981: 80) argues that the most important feature of interlanguages is the fact that they are simplified systems with a simple morphological system, poor copula use as well as a simple pronoun system. Furthermore, Richards gives a very important and obvious reason for accepting interlanguage – “like accepting a child's non-standard speech, acceptance of inter-language avoids

the necessity to halt the communication process for the sake of the learning process.” (Richards 1973: 89)

2.1.2. The Concept of Initial State

The concept of initial state is related to the starting point for L2 learners. According to Van Patten and Benati (2010), there are two basic positions on the initial state of SLA:

1. the learner transfers all properties of the first language at the outset
2. the learner begins with “universals of language” and does not transfer L1 properties at the outset (VanPatten and Benati, 2010:11).

Some researchers believe that from the very beginning, all the properties of the L1 are transferred into SLA (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996). If this were true, every language learner would expect a new language to be the same as a language he/she is already familiar with. This is commonly referred to as *full transfer*. In order to avoid full transfer, learner has to spot L2 properties that differ from L1 properties and to apply them correctly. Errors that learners make should reveal the influence from the L1. (VanPatten and Benati, 2010:11).

We will illustrate this with a simple example from Bosnian and English. Bosnian is what linguists call a null subject language. It means that Bosnian allows omission of subject pronouns in sentences and clauses that have tense. The reason for that is inflection. Inflectional endings give necessary information of person and number. Therefore there is no need for additional information in the form of pronouns. For instance, *Svirala je klavir* (She used to play the piano) is a perfectly fine sentence as is *Ona je svirala klavir* (ona = the overt subject pronoun “she”). English is a non-null-subject language, and thus **Used to play the piano* is not permitted because the subject of the sentence cannot be omitted. The subject can be any personal pronoun or a full noun phrase. Thus, the subject pronoun “she” is required as in *She used to play the piano*.

The initial state theory would claim that speakers of Bosnian begin acquisition by unconsciously assuming that English is a null subject language too. At the beginning, these learners would believe that **Is raining* or **Raining* are perfectly fine sentences in English.

Learners come up with a number of what Corder (1981: 73) calls hypotheses about their L2 which are after a certain period of exposure to L2 accepted or rejected. The learner expects to be corrected either by their teacher or by a native speaker of L2. Once they have stopped being corrected, they adopt their hypothesis and this is the moment when the inter-language stops developing and fossilization takes over (Corder 1981: 73). Such errors that are a consequence of using L1 features in L2 are known as interference errors. These errors can result from different sentence patterns, different logic of using prepositions, etc.

Linguists argue that a mother tongue can highly influence SLA. One of the most frequent ways is avoidance and overproduction of some L2 forms. A learner may tend to avoid structures that do not exist in his/her mother tongue in order to escape making unnecessary mistakes. At the same time, structures that are mutual to L2 and learner's mother tongue will be overproduced because the learner is confident of using the structure the right way.

2.2. Intralingual interference

In his book *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*, Rod Ellis (2006: 58) claims that "intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply." Such errors enable us to understand which learning methods the learner used and how fluent he was in L2 at the moment of determining errors. Richards (1973: 173) argues that the vast majority of errors made during SLA are the result of L1 interference. He divides intralingual errors into four categories:

- a) Overgeneralization errors occur when the learner forms an incorrect structure based on other forms in L2. For example, regular verbs in English get *-ed* suffix in Past Simple and Part Participle form and this applies to all regular verbs. However, there are irregular

verbs that have different endings in these two forms. Nevertheless, learners simplify the rule and generalize the same ending form for all types of verbs. e.g. **They buyed a new car.*

- b) Ignorance of rule restrictions means that learners try to use a rule in a context where it does not belong. This type of error is clearly visible in the use of prepositions. Learners try to make connection between similar verbs and to use same prepositions with them, but they often make a mistake, e.g. *He spoke to me.* and **He asked to me.*
- c) Incomplete application of rules involves failure to fully develop a structure. This can be seen in questions learners form. They either use a statement with a changed intonation (in spoken language) or they just place a question word before the statement, e.g. **Where he lives?*
- d) False concepts hypothesized (i.e. the learner fails to comprehend fully) arise when the learner does not fully comprehend a distinction in the target language. For example, if learners are taught a rule without its exceptions, then they will use that rule in all cases they presume it should be used. (Richards 1973: 173, as quoted in Ellis 2006: 59)¹

It is now clear that language learners have to face different obstacles in the course of language acquisition which are actually result of their familiarity with other languages, including their mother tongue. In certain cases, this can be positive and practical, but at the same time it can result in learners' making mistakes.

¹Richards, Jack C. (ed.). (1973). *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. London. Longman

2.3. Culture Issue – Language, Culture, Society

In the process of acquiring a new language, learners are faced with the issue of the culture of that particular language. When one decides to learn a new language, it is inevitable for this person to come across with the tradition, values and beliefs of the country or nation using that language. For example, learning the English language also means learning about native speakers of English, their countries, tradition, way of life, etc. All these elements are related to the issue of culture in the process of second language acquisition. It is also known as acculturation or adapting to a new culture. According to Redfield (Redfield, et al., 1936, P. 149 cited in Navas, et al., 2005)², acculturation comprises “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”. This means that acculturation arises once individuals of two or more different cultures come together and through time they adopt changes into their original culture. The acculturation model in SLA was first introduced by John Schuman. According to Schumann, one language learner will be successful in learning the language only to the extent that they acculturate into the group that speaks L2 as their native language or depending on their proximity to that group. In his paper on acculturation model, Schuman stresses two important types of acculturation. In the first type of acculturation, the language learner is fully integrated with the L2 group and has already acquired their life style, which enables him to acquire the L2. The second type is very similar to the first in terms of proximity to the L2 native speakers, but in this case, the language learner sees the L2 native speakers as a group whose life style and values he wants to adopt. By noting this, Schuman wanted to clarify that changing one’s life style and values is not relevant to the acquisition of the L2. The crucial issue is being close and open to the L2 group. (Schumann 1986:56)

At the same time, a new language means a new way of thinking, using different metaphors, phrases, idioms that are particularly related to that culture. In his book, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, H. Douglas Brown claims the

² Redfield, R., et. al. (1936). *Memorandum for the study of acculturation*. American Anthropologists, 38, 149-152

following: “As human beings learn to use a second language, they also develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting – a second identity. The new language ego, intertwined with the second language, can easily create within the learner a sense of fragility, defensiveness, and a raising of inhibitions” (Brown 2007: 72). This is the so called *language ego* which is created by acquiring a new language. If a person is familiar with several languages, then he/she possesses several language egos which enable that individual to think in many different ways and possibly to define things in a special way – by connecting all these ways of thinking they can understand the world from a unique perspective.

However, if a person refuses to accept the language ego and fails to adapt to a new culture, he/she will face a *culture shock*. This means that they do not feel pleasant while learning a second culture. They are uncomfortable because all of a sudden they have to change their perspective. Nevertheless, during the culture shock learners do acquire the new culture – in a more difficult way but still they get more experience, start perceiving themselves in a new way and above all they are aware of their own progress. When they become aware of this, the culture shock feeling passes and they slowly start understanding the new culture and they accept the new values.

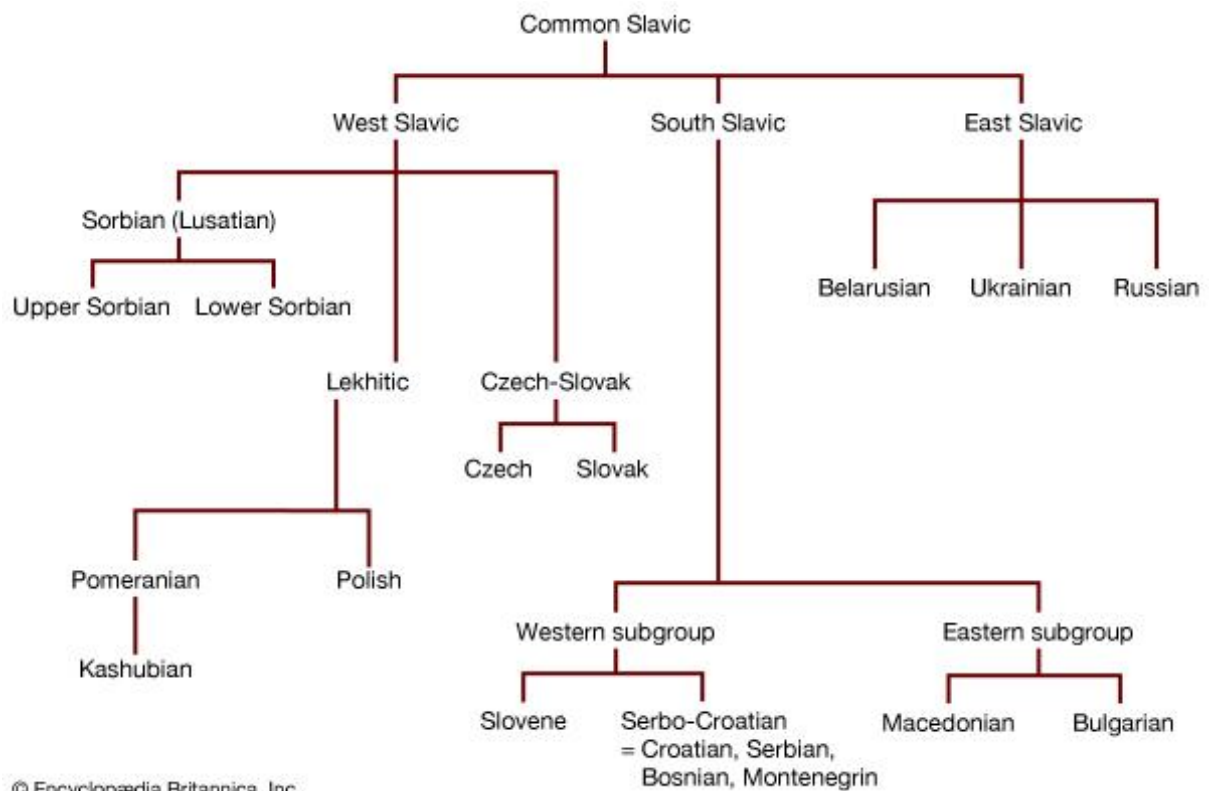
CHAPTER 3

FEATURES OF THE BOSNIAN LANGUAGE

3.1. Language Family

Bosnian belongs to the South Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family. It is very closely related to Croatian and Serbian languages.

Figure 1: Slavic language family tree



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Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Slavic-languages>

3.2. Development of the Bosnian Language

Bosnian belongs to the western subgroup of the South Slavic branch, together with Croatian, Serbian and Slovene languages. The Balkan region has had a long history of invasion and conflict. These upheavals enriched the language. The conversion to the Roman Church in the 9th century left its mark in the Bosnian language in the form of words borrowed from Latin and the adoption of the Latin alphabet. Subsequent invasions by the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires added richness to the language through the influx of Turkish and German loan words. The modern Bosnian language is highly influenced by the English language. English is the most widely used language in the world today. The high status of English in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be explained by several factors, including the small size of the country, the dependence on the international trade and the influence of British and American music, films and TV-programmes which are not dubbed, but subtitled.

3.3. Phonology

Bosnian is more transparent than English in terms of phonology. The reason for this lies in the fact that in Bosnian the majority of graphemes corresponds to a single phoneme and the majority of phonemes corresponds to a single grapheme, for example, /p/ is spelled <p> and <p> is pronounced [p]. However, one has to note that there are three phonemes (*dž*, *lj* and *nj*) in Bosnian that are transliterated using two graphemes. Taking these three exceptions into consideration, we cannot claim that in terms of phonology Bosnian has full transparency. On the other hand, we must add that the Bosnian language may be written using Cyrillic script. In this case, the transparency is absolute as each grapheme corresponds to one phoneme and vice versa.

3.3.1. Vowels

Vowels represent an area of great difficulty in learning English. The reason for that is that Bosnian has only five vowels, whereas English has 22 vowels and diphthongs. Moreover, there is no difference between short and long vowels in the Bosnian language. This is in contrast with English which has five long and seven short vowels. Furthermore, in Bosnian, vowels which appear next to each other do not form diphthongs as they do in English.

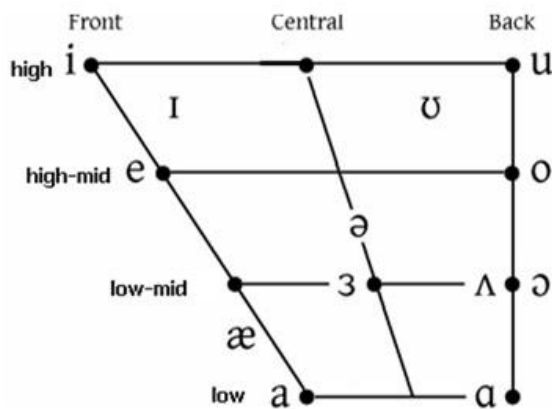


Figure 2: English vowels in vowel chart

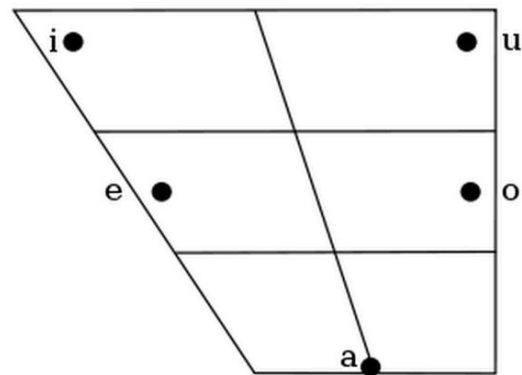


Figure 3: Bosnian vowels in vowel chart

Source: <http://www.languagebits.com/phonetics-english/vowels-in-the-english-language/>

3.3.2. Consonants

Many English consonants have equivalents or near equivalents in the Bosnian language. However, some consonants are articulated with difficulty. The following consonants may cause problems:

- /θ/ and /ð/ are the most difficult phonemes to be pronounced by the Bosnian speakers. They tend to be replaced by /s/ and /z/. Typical mistakes: *sin* for *thin*, etc.
- /ŋ/ is usually replaced by pronouncing /ŋg/ together.

- The difference between /w/ and /v/ is not clearly distinguished. It may cause confusion between words such as *west* and *vest*.
- The sounds /b/ and /p/ are not aspirated enough.
- The sounds /t/, /d/, /l/, /n/ are often made with the tongue touching the top teeth by Bosnian language learners.

3.4. Orthography

The Bosnian alphabet has thirty letters, five of which are vowels and twenty five are consonants. Also, two of the consonants are digraphs. Eight letters do not exist in the English alphabet. Those are: *č, ć, đ, dž, lj, nj, š,* and *ž*. On the other hand, four letters from the English alphabet do not exist in the Bosnian alphabet. Those are: *q, x, w,* and *y*.

The transparency between spelling and phonology varies within orthographies. The same letter can represent different phonemes when it is in different contexts, whereas the same phoneme can be represented by different letters. This is the case with the English language. On the other hand, each letter denotes only one phoneme, and each phoneme is represented by only one letter in the Bosnian language. At the same time, there are no silent letters in Bosnian. Put simply, English has deep while Bosnian has shallow orthography. (Frost: 1989: 169)

3.4.1 Double Letters

Bosnian orthography is not familiar with double letters. An exception is the superlative form with the adjectives that begin with the letter *j*, for instance *najjači, najjasniji, najjeftiniji* etc. Yet, those adjectives are not numerous at all.

3.4.2. Silent Letters

Silent letters do not exist in Bosnian because each letter denotes one phoneme. Thus, English silent letters make confusion because learners will tend to pronounce them in words like *knot, gnaw, comb, bomb, half, sword, psychiatrist,* etc.

3.5. Grammar

3.5.1. General features of Bosnian grammar

Grammatical systems of Bosnian and English are essentially different. Bosnian is a synthetic language. It means that grammatical forms are created through changes in the structure of the word due to the system of prefixes, suffixes and inflectional endings. This system helps to convey the meaning of tense, person, number and gender. Bosnian has quite complex systems of noun, adjective and even pronoun declension and verb conjugation. However, the question of word order in a Bosnian sentence is an issue that deserves special attention. At first sight, it seems that Bosnian has a free word order and that the formulation of a sentence depends only on the speaker's will. This statement can be challenged if we take context of a sentence in consideration. For example, a Bosnian language speaker may want to put emphasis on the subject, verb, object, or preposition of a particular sentence. Depending on the emphasis, the speaker will set a word order in terms of the significance of information elements.

In his book *Od rečenice do teksta* (1984), Josip Silić deals with the issue of word order in Serbo-Croat. According to Silić, one has to observe the relation between subject and predicate of a sentence when discussing word order. With this respect, the following elements are important:

- a) Active relation where the subject produces action. In this case, the subject will be used in front of the predicate, e.g. *Student piše.*
- b) Passive relation where the accent is on the action – passive verb form is used. e.g. *Pisano od studenta.*
- c) Subject and its quality – quality of a subject is stated after the subject itself, e.g. *Jabuke su crvene.*
- d) Type and class – type has broader sense than the class and therefore nouns indicating type are used before the ones indicating class, e.g. *Mačka je životinja.* (Silić 1984:65)

Special attention should be given to the position of enclitics in a sentence, which depends on the use of the subject and predicate in a given sentence, e.g.

1. Sunce **se** vidi kroz oblake.
2. Vidi **se** kroz oblake.

Accordingly, one can claim that in terms of grammar the word order in Bosnian is free. However, semantics and intention may significantly challenge this statement.

English, on the other hand, is an analytic language. It means that grammatical meaning is largely expressed through the use of additional words and by changes in word order. One of the main difficulties for Bosnians learning English lies in the fact that English relies to a great extent on the word order to indicate grammatical function, whereas Bosnian relies much more on morphological inflections.

1. Nouns have grammatical gender in Bosnian.
2. There are no articles in Bosnian.
3. There are no phrasal verbs.
4. Use of prepositions is far more limited than in English.

All above mentioned differences between the grammatical systems of the two languages inevitably lead to negative L1 transfer.

3.5.2. Synthetic vs. Analytic Language

Bosnian is a *synthetic language* while English is an *analytic language*. Synthetic languages are formed in the way that the majority of grammatical forms are created through changes in the structure of words. Synthetic languages have developed a system of prefixes, suffixes and inflectional endings which indicate declension, conjugation, person, number, gender and tense. On the other hand, analytic languages use additional words and word order to express grammatical meaning. It is illustrated below.

Table 1: The Present Simple in Bosnian and English

(Ja) jedem	I eat
(Ti) jedeš	You eat
On/ona/ono jede	He/She/ It eats
(Mi) jedemo	We eat
(Vi) jedete	You eat
(Oni) jedu	They eat

Personal pronouns in the Bosnian language are put into brackets because they are redundant. Inflectional suffixes (bolded) indicate the agent. Therefore, personal pronouns are unnecessary. An exception is the third person singular where the inflectional suffix is the same for three persons (He/She/It). Personal pronouns are recommended for the use in order to avoid any misunderstanding. However, the agent is usually obvious from the context.

Table 2: The Past Simple in Bosnian and English

(Ja) sam gledao (mas)	I watched	(Mi) smo gledali (mas)	We watched
(Ja) sam gledala (fem)	I watched	(Mi) smo gledale (fem)	We watched
(Ja) sam gledalo (neu)	I watched	(Vi) ste gledali (mas)	You watched
(Ti) si gledao (mas)	You watched	(Vi) ste gledale (fem)	You watched
(Ti) si gledala (fem)	You watched	(Oni) su gledali (mas)	They watched
(Ti) si gledalo (neu)	You watched	(One) su gledale (fem)	They watched
(On) je gledao (mas)	He watched		
(Ona) je gledala (fem)	She watched		
(Ono) je gledalo (neu)	It watched		

Personal pronouns in the Bosnian language are put into brackets because they are redundant but in that case the main verb comes into the first position. Inflectional suffixes and the auxiliary verb (bolded) indicate the agent.

CHAPTER 4

ERROR ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE ANALYSIS

As for Error Analysis, Corder claims (Corder, 1967, as cited in: Gass and Selinker 2001: 187)³, that errors are not only regarded as something to be eliminated, but rather can play an important role in L2 acquisition. In fact, Gass and Selinker argue that errors can be “red flags” and they may provide evidence of the state of the learner’s progress in second language learning.

4.1. Method

This paper aims to provide results of a quantitative and qualitative error analysis in high school students’ writing. Moreover, the role of the native language in the written production of 60 EFL learners was analyzed. The error analysis was carried out according to Corder’s suggestions (Corder, 1983, as cited in: Ellis 2006: 48)⁴:

1. Collection of a sample of learner language
2. Identification of errors
3. Description of errors
4. Explanation of errors

³ Corder, S.P. (1967). *The Significance of Learners' Errors*. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching,5, 161-170.

⁴ Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4.1.1. Participants

Participants are fourth grade students of a high school in Sarajevo. They started learning English when they were in the third grade of primary school, i.e. when they were eight years old. These students learn English as their first foreign language. In the period of ten years, the students took two classes of English weekly. Therefore, they were supposed to reach the upper intermediate level at least. The research is based on 60 papers of high school students that we took as relevant for error analysis. On the basis of the analysis we reached conclusions on errors in spelling, use of articles, and word order in English language.

4.1.2. Instruments

Participants were required to write a discursive essay in English on the assigned topic. They were split into groups and each group had only one assigned topic. Topics were as follows:

- Should Television Viewing be allowed without Control?
- Should Children be allowed to Own and Use Mobile Phones?
- Footballers Wages – Are They Getting Paid too Much
- Should High School Start at 13 and last for Six Years?
- Is Abortion a Question of Personal Freedom?

Essays were written in a classroom during a regular English class. Participants had 90 minutes to write the essay. They were not allowed to use dictionaries, textbooks or any other notes. Once data were collected, compositions were converted into computer-readable files and scrutinized for errors deriving from Bosnian L1 influence.

4.2. Spelling Errors

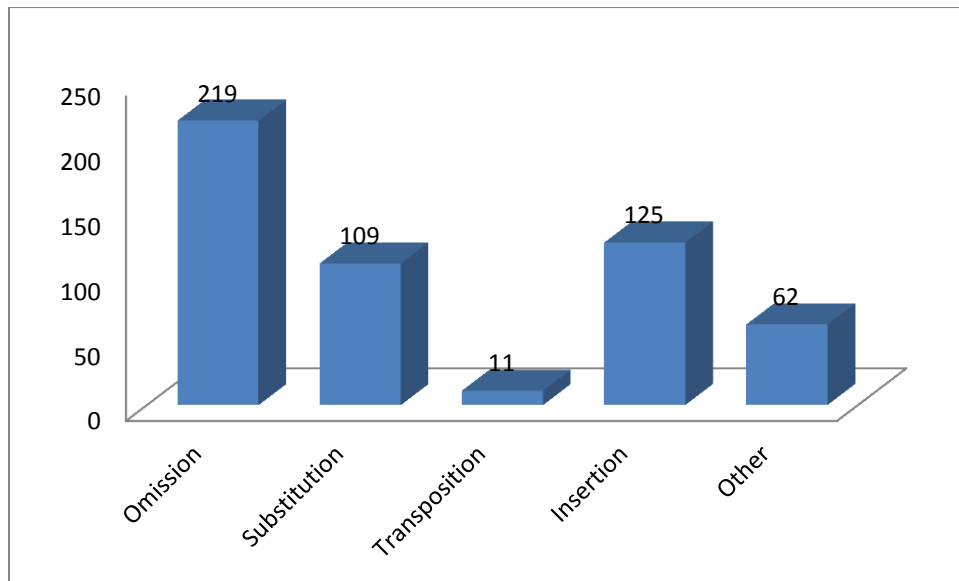
Spelling is the learner's ability to write a word correctly. Spelling errors in Bosnian learners are numerous. As mentioned earlier, the reason for this is the difference between shallow and deep orthography. The same letter can represent different phonemes when it is in different contexts, whereas the same phoneme can be represented by different letters. Moreover, the main cause of spelling errors is irregularities of the English spelling system. The fact that English spelling is inconsistent makes it more difficult and requires more effort to memorize. For instance, /i:/ can be spelled writing <ea> in *cream* or <ee> in *bee*. Similarly, the grapheme <gh> that corresponds to phonemes /f/ in *laugh* and /g/ in *ghost* depending on their initial or final positions in words. For this reason, the Bosnian learners find the English spelling system confusing.

4.2.1. Results and Discussion

Cook (1999) investigated the most common type of spelling errors. These errors were categorized into four major errors: omission (leaving letters out), substitution (replacing letters with incorrect ones), transposition (reversing the position of letters), insertion (including extra letters).

After identifying and categorizing the spelling errors of 60 students' writing composition, the students committed 219 omission spelling errors with a percentage of 43% of the total followed by 125 insertion spelling errors with a percentage of 24%. There are 109 substitution spelling errors with a percentage of 21% of the total and only 11 transposition spelling errors with a percentage of 5% of the total.

Figure 4. Type frequency of spelling errors



From the qualitative analysis, it is found that omission errors are due to the following problems: double letters, homophones and silent sounds. Double letters are not common in Bosnian and therefore, learners find them redundant or unnecessary. On the other hand, Bosnian students are aware of the existence of double letters and they tend to write double letters even when there is no need for it. Consequently, the main number of insertion errors is due to unnecessary double letters. For instance, the word *useful* is used 14 times in total. Eight times it is written with double *l* as *usefull.

The second cause of interference is homophones. Homophones are words that have the same sound but are spelled differently. For instance, the word *buy* written as <by>.

Silent sounds are a source of many spelling errors. In the Bosnian language one sound stands for one grapheme. Therefore, it is quite confusing for them to write a grapheme for something they have not heard. As a consequence, Bosnian students write *future* as *futur, *knee* as *nee or *subtle* as *sutle. Again awareness of the silent sounds may cause errors. It is not that the students only delete silent sounds but add them where they do not belong.

Substitution is not common at all. There were only 11 substitution errors out of total 526 spelling errors. They can be explained by students' carelessness because all graphemes are there but only in a wrong position.

Other errors are incorrect use of space and capital letters. A very good example of incorrect use of space is the word *cell phone*. It is used 19 times. Every single time it is written as one word (*cellphone*) by different students. It is an excellent example of interlingual interference because in Bosnian *cell phone* is written as one word (*mobitel*). According to the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language, this word is written using two lexemes.

Bosnian conventions in the use of upper and lower case differ slightly from English. Small letters are used initially in the names of the days and months, and in adjectives for nationalities and the names of languages. This can explain why a student wrote **latin* instead of *Latin*.

Table 3: Examples of spelling errors

Type of Error	Examples	Actual Word
Omission	Adiction	Addiction
	Bying	Buying
	Healt	Health
Insertion	Contente	Content
	Oppinion	Opinion
	Usefull	Useful
Substitution	Additude	Attitude
	Adventages	Advantages
	Emprove	Improve
Transposition	Thet	That
	Veiewers	Viewers
	Resaons	Reasons
	Can not	Cannot

Other	Cellphone	Cell phone
	latin	Latin

The spelling errors above show us that Bosnian native speakers with the upper intermediate level make errors that are based on their previous knowledge, e.g. they write *usefull** because they know that the lexeme *full* is spelled with double /l/; also particle *not* is always separated from the verb, but in *cannot* it is spelled as one word with the verb, and this confuses the students. This logic leads them to making spelling error. In this research we realized that spelling errors are not random but instead they are very consistent, as shown in the categories above – omission, insertion, substitution, and transposition. The vast majority of spelling errors can be categorized in one of these groups. This proves again that the reason behind making mistakes lies in logical reasoning which sometimes is not correct and ends in a spelling error.

4.3. Articles

Bosnian lacks an article system. L2 learners of English often have difficulty in mastering the proper use of indefinite and definite articles, especially when their L1 lacks articles. However, the category of definiteness and indefiniteness exists in every language. What is different is the way this category is expressed in certain languages, either by articles or some other elements such as word order, the aspect of adjectives and demonstrative determiners.

4.3.1. Definiteness/Indefiniteness in English

In English grammars, articles are found with other determiners. According to Oxford Learner’s Grammar determiners are the following: (2005: 165)

- a) articles – a/an, the
- b) possessives – my, your ...
- c) demonstratives – this/these, that/those

d) quantifiers – some, a lot, much, many, all, most, half, none, two...

The definite article (*the*) indicates that the referent is already shared between the speaker and hearer or they share knowledge of the same. When the situation of this is visible, demonstratives pronouns can be used instead of the definite article.

The indefinite article (*a/an*) signals that new information is mentioned for the first time. Indefinite determiners (*one, some, any*) can sometimes be used in such situations as well.

English also uses the personal determiners *my, his, her, its*, etc. in addition to the demonstratives *this* and *that*, in order to express definiteness.

4.3.2. Definiteness/Indefiniteness in Bosnian

In Bosnian, definiteness/indefiniteness is connected primarily with the two forms of adjectives – the so called definite (long) adjectives, and the so called indefinite (short) adjectives. The demonstratives *ovaj, onaj, taj* are also closely linked to definiteness, whereas indefiniteness can be expressed in Bosnian by the so called indefinite determiners such as *neki (some)*. Other South Slavic languages do not have an article system either but they do possess means of expressing definiteness and indefiniteness. Croatian linguist Ivo Pranjkovic in his article “Izražavanje neodređenosti/određenosti imenica u hrvatskom jeziku” (“Expressing the indefiniteness/definiteness of nouns in Croatian, 2000), mentions those means as follows:

1. choosing between the accusative case and the so called partitive genitive – example:

uzeti kruh (to take the bread) – DEF, as opposed to *uzeti kruha (to take some bread)* – INDEF;

2. the so called Slavic genitive – example: *Ne vidi stol. (He cannot see the table.)* – DEF, as opposed to *Ne vidi stola. (He cannot see a table.)*– INDEF;

3. Indefiniteness can be suggested by the plural of those nouns that normally do not have plural – example: *razni Bushovi i Clintoni* (*various Bushes and Clintons*);
4. Sometimes speakers of Croatian make use of the difference between the so called distributive singular and plural, where singular suggests some kind of definiteness, and plural some kind of indefiniteness – example: *ljudi u odijelu* (**men in a suit*) – DEF, as opposed to *ljudi u odijelima* (*men in suits*) – INDEF.

4.4. Means of Expressing Definiteness/Indefiniteness in Bosnian

Even though Bosnian does not have an article system, it has means to express definiteness and indefiniteness. Some of them are long and short adjectival inflection, demonstratives, possessives, context and word order.

4.4.1. Adjectival Inflection

Bosnian can express definiteness through differentiation between long and short form adjectives. The long forms are called definite, whereas the short forms are indefinite. However, only some adjectives have both forms.

Table 4: Indefinite aspect of adjective

INDEFINITE ASPECT OF ADJECTIVE						
Singular			Plural			
	mas.	neu.	fem.	mas.	neu.	fem.
N	čist-Ø	čisto	čista	čisti	čista	čiste
G	čista		čiste	čistih		
D	čistu		čistoj	čistim(a)		
A	čist-Ø	čisto	čistu	čiste	čista	čiste

I	čistim	čistom	čistim(a)
L	čistu	čistoj	čistim(a)

Table 5: Definite aspect of adjective

DEFINITE ASPECT OF ADJECTIVE					
Singular			Plural		
mas.	neu.	fem.	mas.	neu.	fem.
N	čisti	čisto	čista	čisti	čiste
G	čistog(a)		čiste	čista	čiste
D	čistom,(-e),(-u)		čistoj	čistim(a)	
A	čistog(a)		čistu	čiste	čista
I	čistom,(-e),(-u)		čistoj	čiste	čiste
L	čistom,(-e),(-u)		čistoj	čistim(a)	

Unfortunately, the correspondence between English articles and Bosnian adjective endings works only in few instances. Then, there are plenty of adjectives which have only short forms or only long forms. Moreover, most students are not aware of the difference between definite and indefinite aspect of adjective. Therefore, the aspect of adjectives can be seen as traces of both definiteness and indefiniteness more than the marker of the same.

4.4.2. Determiners as Marker of Definiteness/Indefiniteness

Speakers of Bosnian use *jedan* “one” as a marker of indefiniteness. In this case the indefinite determiner *one* behaves like an adjective. According to Zlatić (2008) elements that are traditionally known as determiners, such as universal quantifiers, possessives, demonstratives, and indefinite determiners *jedan* and *neki*, have the categorial status of an adjective. She advocates this point of view with the fact that Slavic determiners can occur both prenominally and postnominally.

1. Vidio sam *jednog* prijatelja.

2. Vidio sam prijatelja *jednog*.

1a. I saw a friend.

The literal translation would be “I saw one friend”.

This shows that Slavic determiners do not have the status of a functional category, since generally, functional categories (e.g. D(eterminer), AGR(reement), TNS(tense), C(omplementizer)) do not allow postposing.

Another word to express indefiniteness is the indefinite determiner *neki(m.) /neko(n.) /neka(f.)* “some”. In this case the indefinite determiner *neko* behaves like an adjective. It is used when the speaker does not know which one.

3. Neki dječak je razbio prozor.

3a. Some boy broke the window.

However, if they want to express definiteness, speakers of Bosnian use a demonstrative determiner *taj(m.) /to(n.) /ta(f.)* “that”.

4. Taj dječak je razbio prozor.

3a. That boy broke the window.

In her article "Izražavanje neodređenosti pomoću riječi *čovjek*", Snježana Kordić points out that indefiniteness can also be expressed by the use of the word *čovjek* (*man*). Example: *Čovjek ovdje ne može disati* (*One cannot breathe here*).

4.4.3. Context as Marker of Definiteness/Indefiniteness

In everyday communication speakers can resort to various linguistic and non-linguistic means to clarify their intentions, and hearers can require clarification. Context is an example of non-linguistic means to express definiteness/indefiniteness.

1. Bring me the yellow box, please.

1a. Donesi mi žutu kutiju, molim te.

The above nominal phrase in Bosnian is not marked for definiteness. Yet the context is marked for definiteness: the referent exists (there is a yellow box in front of them) and is unique (there is only one yellow box). The nominal phrase is therefore definite, even though the noun phrase is not formally marked as such. The speaker would have every reason to expect his reference to be unambiguous and successful.

2. Bring me a red box, please.

2a. Donesi mi crvenu kutiju molim te.

The noun phrase in (2) is marked as indefinite by the indefinite article *a*. In contrast to (2), the equivalent phrase in (2a) is not formally marked as an indefinite noun. Still, the context is marked for indefiniteness: there are several red and yellow boxes in front of them, and he therefore must assume that each red box is an equally good potential referent. If the speaker wanted a particular red box, then additional descriptive information would have been provided.

These examples illustrate that nominal referents can be interpreted as definite or indefinite, irrespective of whether they are formally marked as such.

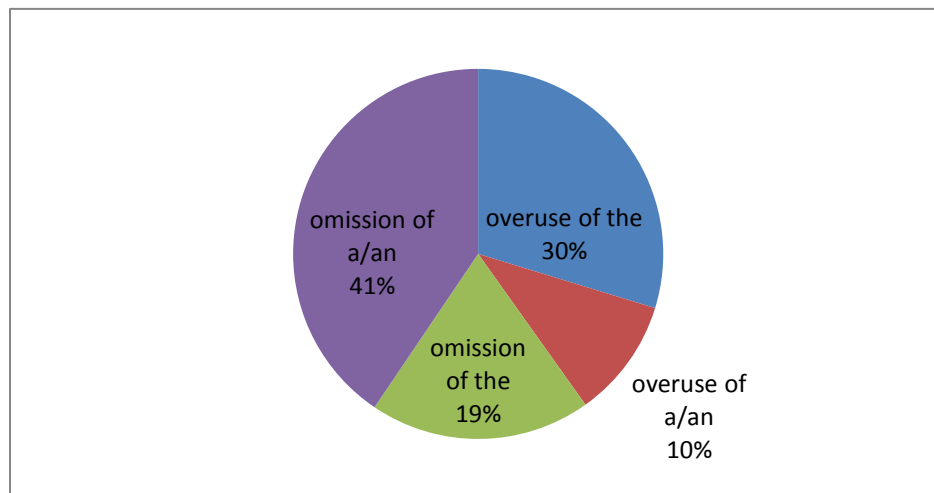
4.4.4. Results and Discussion

The quantitative analysis was carried out using error analysis, i.e. proper/wrong use or omission of the article. After identifying and categorizing the errors on the use of articles in 60 essays written by Bosnian L1 students, the total number of errors is 259. The students committed 6 errors by choosing the definite article in indefinite contexts, 71 errors by choosing the definite article in zero contexts with a percentage of 30 % of the total. There are 5 errors made by choosing the indefinite article in definite contexts and 22 errors made by choosing the indefinite article in zero contexts with a percentage of 10 % of the total. Furthermore, there are 50 errors made by choosing the zero article in definite context and 105 errors made by choosing the zero article in indefinite contexts, with a percentage of 60% of the total.

Table 6: Error analysis on the use of articles

<i>the</i> in indefinite contexts (overuse of <i>the</i>)	6 errors
<i>the</i> in zero contexts (overuse of <i>the</i>)	71 errors
<i>a/an</i> in definite contexts (overuse of <i>a/an</i>)	5 errors
<i>a/an</i> in zero contexts (overuse of <i>a/an</i>)	22 errors
zero article in definite contexts (omission of <i>the</i>)	50 errors
zero article in indefinite contexts (omission of <i>a/an</i>)	105 errors

Figure 5: Error analysis on the use of articles shown by percentage



The research results show the omission of articles as the main problem. However, the omission of articles in indefinite context is more prominent than in definite contexts. The results show that students are more willing to choose the definite article. It can be explained by the fact that the definite article is commonly acquired before the indefinite articles because “definite articles in English need not take number and the count/mass distinction into account” (Lardiere 2004: 335).

From the qualitative analyses of the instances of the article use, we can conclude that learners usually used correct forms in familiar context (i.e. with a familiar and frequently used noun, in set phrases). For example, the noun *world* was used more than twenty times. All examples were used properly, i.e. with the definite article (*in the world, all around the world*). Then phrases such as *go to school, go to university, go home* were used properly (i.e. with no article) except two examples made by a low proficiency student. Moreover, students used the phrase *on the other hand* 39 times. Every single time it was used properly (i.e. with the definite article). However, it is interesting to mention that no one used the phrase *on the one hand*.

There was a frequent omission of the use of the indefinite article in front of the nouns mentioned for the first time. Also, students often substitute the indefinite article with the definite.

In our analysis the omission of the indefinite article occurred in 41% of examples, while the definite article was overused in 30% of examples.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that the omission of the use of articles in adjective + noun constructions (**good way*, **national hero*, **unborn baby*, **ancient time*) maybe due to the learners' perception that the noun already had a defining element attached to it.

Students overwhelmingly choose “some” to mark definiteness. The determiner “some” was used 134 times. If we compare it to the determiner “any”, which is used only 15 times, we can come to the conclusion that the overuse of *some* is due to the L1 influence because, in some contexts, *some* can be used to express indefiniteness. Also, it shows that L2 learners' primary focus is not on the grammatical function of articles but on their meaning

There are also instances of the use of the indefinite determiner *one* instead of the indefinite article (9 times). This can be explained by the influence of students' L1, which lacks articles and where, in some contexts, the number *one* can be used to express indefiniteness.

As a conclusion, we can state that students have not mastered the use of articles yet. They do not understand the meaning of English articles, that is, that the articles may express countability, uniqueness and familiarity. The articles are a pure grammatical category for them and they concentrate on content words. Articles are seen as a stumbling stone for achieving good proficiency in English. Moreover, students find articles redundant because they do not understand why articles exist in English when they do not have it in their mother tongue. Yet, they understand each other very well. Then, when students try to memorize rules how to use the definite or indefinite article, they face a huge problem because there are too many rules and exceptions. Some of these are reasons why articles present a major problem.

4.5. Word Order

This chapter will deal with some general aspects of word order in both English and Bosnian. On the one hand, the English word order is relatively fixed. “The positions of subject, verb and object are relatively fixed”. (Quirk et al., 1985:51) The English language has only one means of indicating syntactic relations between the elements of the sentence. It is the word order due to the type of a language – English is an analytic language. On the other hand, Bosnian is a synthetic language and the word order is relatively free. It is relatively free because there are some rules that stipulate that enclitic forms cannot occupy the initial or the final position in the sentence.

Consider the following example:

1. A girl is reading a book.

In English, this is the only possible word order. One cannot say:

1. *A book is reading a girl.⁵
2. *Is reading a book a girl.

However, this is not the case with Bosnian. There are more than one way to say the same sentence.

1. Djevojčica čita knjigu. (SVO)
2. Djevojčica knjigu čita. (SOV)
3. Knjigu čita djevojčica. (OVS)
4. Knjigu djevojčica čita. (OSV)
5. Čita knjigu djevojčica. (VOS)
6. Čita djevojčica knjigu. (VSO)

⁵A *book the girl is reading* is a grammatically correct word order, albeit marked. The object of the predicate is fronted.

All these variants are acceptable and they are used when the speaker wants to emphasize some words. The initial position in the sentence conveys the meaning of the importance. If the speaker wants to emphasize a direct object they can do it by placing it in the first place. Then, if the speaker wants to emphasize the very action, again, they can do it by placing it in the first place. In this way, you can change shades of meaning of the same sentence. This is the reason why the word order in Bosnian has a stylistic value too.

According to Jahić, et al. (2000: 470), a sentence placed in a context, i.e. a sentence within a text, always starts with a topic or theme which is followed by a comment or rheme/focus. Considering that sentence elements do not have to have a specific relation to, they may switch places, so that the predicate can precede the subject, the object and adverbial preposition may precede the predicate, dependent clauses may precede the main clause, etc. For example:

1. Njega prate galebovi.
2. Crvenim linijama sam povezao kružiće.
3. Uskoro je gorjela čitava tekija.

However, if rheme precedes the theme, the *word* order is marked. The markedness of the word order indicates the speaker's intention to emphasize certain components of sentence structure, e.g.

4. Sjede ljudi.
5. Kroz kamen živi nosih dvije ruke. (Jahić et al. 2000:470)

The following examples, present a sentence in the English language in multiple word orders that change only because adverb *usually* can be used in different places in the sentence.

1. "My mother usually enjoys parties very much. (SAVOA)
2. Usually my mother enjoys parties very much. (ASVOA)
3. My mother enjoys parties very much, usually. (SVOAA)"

(Quirk et al. 1985:51)

The above sentences can have many Bosnian equivalents. Some of the possibilities are as follows:

1. Moja majka obično mnogo uživa u zabavama. (SAAVO)
2. Moja majka mnogo uživa u zabavama, obično. (SAVOA)
3. Moja majka u zabavama obično mnogo uživa. (SOAAV)
4. Obično moja majka mnogo uživa u zabavama. (ASAVO)
5. Obično u zabavama mnogo uživa moja majka. (AOAVS)
6. Obično mnogo uživa u zabavama moja majka. (AAVOS)
7. U zabavama obično mnogo uživa moja majka. (OAAVS)
8. U zabavama obično moja majka mnogo uživa. (OASAV)
9. U zabavama moja majka obično mnogo uživa. (OSAAV)
10. Mnogo uživa, obično, u zabavama moja majka. (AVAOS)
11. Mnogo uživa moja majka u zabavama obično. (AVSOA)

There is usually no possibility for confusion when shuffling words in Bosnian sentences since the subject, direct and indirect object are in different cases. There are seven cases in Bosnian and, together, they convey roles such as *agent*, *experience*, *instrument*, *possessor* etc.

4.5.1. Discussion

Even though there are significant differences between English and Bosnian considering word order, subject-verb-object (SVO) arrangement is the most common in both languages. The neutral word order in Bosnian is SVO. However, other word orders are possible since inflected endings mark the grammatical relations and roles in the sentence clearly. Yet only the order SVO is stylistically neutral. Therefore, the dominant word order pattern in Bosnian is the same as it is in English.

The results show that the students usually make written word order errors that are word-for-word translations of their native language. However, the students mostly prefer sentences with

SVO order. Verbs never occupy the initial or the final position even though it is possible in Bosnian (sentences 8 and 9).

However, there are a few examples of placing a direct object in the initial place. Again, the students feel free to change the word order due to habit, i.e. they do not implement the word order restrictions or they transmit word order rules from their mother tongue, Bosnian in this case.

1. **A lot of information** we receive from television, and because of that we know what is new in the world. FE4

Adjectives come in front of the noun phrase in both languages. There are no examples of adjectives put in the wrong place. The students apply the L1 rule to L2. The rule is the same in both languages. Therefore, positive transfer is inevitable.

When it comes to the position of adverbs, things get complicated. It seems that adverbs are a stumbling stone. There are three main positions for adverbs: front position (before the subject), middle position and end position (at the end of the clause). But for each type of adverb, one position is the most common.

Table 7: The most common positions for adverbs in English⁶

type of adverb	typical position	example
manner:	end	She dances very gracefully .
place:	end	Shall I drive you home ?
time:	end	I will be seeing you tomorrow .
degree:	middle	We are thoroughly enjoying the party.
frequency:	middle	Guy has often fished in that lake.

⁶ Geoffrey Leech et al., *An A-Z of English Grammar and Usage*, Longman, 2001, p. 22.

linking:	front	They arrived... So we left
comment or attitude:	front	Fortunately no one noticed.
adding or limiting:	middle	Cora can also play the piano.
viewpoint:	front	Officially ; Ivan was the boss
length of time:	middle	He hadn't long left school

Adverbs as modifiers almost always come before the word they modify (an exception is **enough**). Such adverbs are generally adverbs of degree (**very** broad, **too** soon, **just** after, **so** few etc.).

The students clearly show tendency to put adverbs in the initial position. There are numerous examples of adverbs in the initial place. One can conclude that the reason for this is not a will for emphasizing but applying features of their mother tongue.

2. Also, **on the road** something can attack them, or they can hurt themselves, so they need a mobile phone to call someone. TN15

3. Abortion **in many countrys** forbidden because for some people abortion is just like a crime. MA23

It has been found that students show a preference for placing subordinate clauses in the initial place. However, this preference cannot be observed as an error but a feature that is more common to the Bosnian language, their mother tongue. Examples are numerous, some of them are the following:

4. **Despite caring mobile phones on safe place**, many thieves can stole them. SA14

5. **And to allow it to forfill that purpose**, no restrictions should be set. TT17

It is interesting that students have a tendency to write very long, complex sentences with several clauses as it is often the case in Bosnian. This is the consequence of transferring Bosnian language rules into English sentences. Namely, in Bosnian it is possible to make long sentences

because of inflected endings clearly marking the grammatical relations and roles in the sentence. During this process they reverse the word order of S and V or do not insert *it*.

6. Although some people think that every women has a right to choose is she going to born her child, abortion can be very bad for community if every mother who from some reason doesn't want to born her child end pregnancy, natality (rate) would fall, and is a big problem today. KA25

There is no a table or statistical data for word order errors. It is very difficult to list and classify word order errors due to the fact that one language is relatively rigid and the other one is relatively free. Moreover, there are many exceptions. For instance, there are numerous examples of adverbs in the initial position. But they do not make sentences wrong and it cannot be classified as errors. The rules which govern the position of adverbs in sentences are complex and numerous because the meaning of the adverb needs to be taken into account and what information the speaker wishes to highlight. However, by revealing the word order errors and the potential cause why learners rely on their native language, further research is suggested because this area is not studied enough.

4.6. Final discussion

The aim of this analysis was to show the most common errors that high school students make in their papers in the English language. We focused on spelling, use of articles, and word order. The analysis showed specific errors in each of these categories. However, we realized one important thing that is common to each category of mistakes. Namely, students do not make random mistakes. They are very consistent and expected, one can even say habitual, especially when it comes to spelling errors. Once a student learns incorrect spelling and starts using it, it gets difficult to change this habit. When it comes to word order, we came to a conclusion that students are not familiar with the restrictions in the English language and in making sentences they often use the logic of their mother tongue, which is incorrect.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Errors and their sources are very significant in determining the process of acquisition of a second language. However, sometimes it is not easy to determine the source of an error. Also, it is impossible to predict all errors.

This study provides an insight into the learners' interlanguage at a certain point during their acquisition process emphasizing current problematic language features. Students' lack of knowledge and competence should not be seen as a failure to acquire the target language but rather as the development of a student's interlanguage.

One of the most important conclusions of this study is that the errors are not random and they are not specific to an individual student, which seemed to be the case at first. The errors are very consistent, as if they follow a pattern. The reason behind this is the incorrect logic derived from past knowledge and transmission of mother tongue rules in a foreign language. Therefore, the results confirm that the properties of L1 are transferred into L2. The first language plays a huge role in the process of learning a second language.

Then we saw how the typological distance between Bosnian and English affects the learning of English. The reason for numerous spelling errors is the difference between shallow and deep orthography. The Bosnian language lacks an article system and therefore the students demonstrated great difficulty in mastering the proper use of definite and indefinite articles. Also, the students often neglected the word order which should be followed in English and came up with constructions that are applicable in Bosnian.

This analysis could serve as an introduction to a more comprehensive research on this issue. Namely, in order to obtain even more accurate data, one could conduct an analysis of errors at the level of an entire high school generation (from grade one to grade four). This would show how students make progress in avoiding their habitual mistakes. At the same time, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics experts could work jointly with English language teachers who deal with the issue of language errors and show how students' background, extracurricular interests, and general way of life influence their making errors in English.

Teachers can benefit from the results of this study because they can have a better insight into the areas of language that cause problems for students and therefore place more emphasis on such language features. However, students' motivation can wane if their errors are constantly in the focus of teaching and therefore, teachers should be careful in correcting students' errors. In addition, teachers should focus more on the use of language rather than solely focusing on the usage in order to improve students' L2 competence. Teaching strategies and materials have to be modified in order to use the full potential of language learners since a student's learning strategy may not conform to the teaching strategy, which then causes difficulties in the learning process. Thus, error analysis is a powerful tool that teachers can use in order to verify and improve the effectiveness of his/her teaching methods and strategies.

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