

## INVESTIGATING PRODUCTIVE AND NON-PRODUCTIVE WORD FORMATION PROCESSES IN MODERN ENGLISH: IMPLICATIONS FOR TESOL

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First language interference is a natural part of the second language learning process. As learners try to master English, they inevitably rely on their existing linguistic knowledge and apply it to the new language. While some aspects of this transfer can be positive, such as borrowing familiar vocabulary or grammatical structures, it often leads to errors that can hinder language acquisition. TESOL teachers must be aware of these challenges and find effective strategies to address them in the classroom. This article will examine the different aspects of first language interference in TESOL, focusing on pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural factors. It will also provide practical approaches for mitigating its effects.

### Pronunciation Issues Due to L1 Interference

Pronunciation is one of the most immediate areas where L1 interference becomes evident in language learners. Since each language has a unique set of sounds, learners often struggle when they encounter English sounds that do not exist in their native language. In such cases, they tend to approximate these unfamiliar sounds by substituting them with the closest equivalent from their first language. For example, Spanish speakers may replace the English “th” sound with “d” or “t” because this sound does not exist in Spanish, while French speakers may pronounce the “h” in words like “house” as silent due to their language’s tendency to drop initial “h” sounds.

Beyond individual sounds, L1 interference also affects intonation and stress patterns. Differences in pitch and rhythm between languages can lead to unnatural speech patterns in English. Chinese learners, for instance, may carry over tonal patterns from their native language, making their English sound flat or unusual. Similarly, speakers of Japanese, a language with a more even pitch distribution, may struggle with English stress patterns, where content words are emphasized to convey meaning.

To address these challenges, teachers can implement focused pronunciation practice, helping students distinguish and produce sounds that are absent in their L1. Minimal pair exercises, such as differentiating between “bit” and “beat,” can be particularly effective. Additionally, modeling correct intonation through recitation and repetition drills allows students to mimic the natural stress and rhythm of native English speakers. By developing accurate pronunciation and intonation, learners can improve their clarity and confidence in spoken English. However, overcoming ingrained pronunciation habits is a significant challenge, especially for adult learners or those who have been speaking English with L1 interference for a long time. Despite

these difficulties, consistent practice and targeted instruction can greatly enhance pronunciation skills over time. [2; 82] Syntax and Sentence Structure Errors

Syntax, or the arrangement of words in sentences, is another area where first language interference often leads to errors. Since different languages follow distinct syntactical rules, learners may mistakenly apply their native sentence structure to English, resulting in grammatical mistakes. One common issue is word order errors. Speakers of languages that follow a subject-object-verb (SOV) structure, such as Japanese, may struggle with the subject-verb-object (SVO) order in English. This can lead to sentences like “I to the store went” instead of the correct “I went to the store.”

Another frequent difficulty involves articles and prepositions. Languages like Russian, Chinese, and Japanese do not use articles such as “a,” “an,” and “the,” causing learners to omit them in English. Similarly, prepositions often do not have direct equivalents across languages, leading to mistakes in their use. Learners may misuse “in,” “on,” or “at” because their native language structures prepositional phrases differently.

To address these challenges, explicit grammar instruction can be highly effective. Teachers can highlight key differences between English and the learner’s first language, focusing on word order, article usage, and prepositions with clear explanations and examples. Additionally, sentence transformation exercises, where students rewrite sentences from their native syntax into English, provide valuable practice in constructing grammatically correct sentences. Practicing different sentence types, such as affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms, also helps reinforce correct structure.

Mastering English syntax leads to clearer communication and a more natural sentence flow in both spoken and written English. However, for learners whose native language has a significantly different syntactical structure, breaking habitual patterns can be a slow and challenging process. Despite these difficulties, consistent practice and targeted instruction can greatly improve their grasp of English sentence structure over time. [3; 100]

#### Vocabulary Transfer and False Cognates

Vocabulary transfer occurs when learners rely on words from their first language that resemble English words. While these similarities can be helpful when the meanings align, they can also cause confusion when false cognates—words that look similar but have different meanings—are involved. One of the most common challenges arises with false cognates. For instance, a Spanish speaker might use the English word “actual” to mean “current,” when in reality, it means “real” or “true.” Likewise, a French learner may mistakenly assume that “eventuellement” translates to “eventually,” when it actually means “possibly” or “in the event.”

Another issue is overgeneralization, where learners extend the meaning of a word based on their native language, leading to incorrect word choices. For example,

a Chinese speaker might say “borrow me your book” instead of “lend me your book” because their first language does not make a clear distinction between “borrow” and “lend.”

To address these challenges, teachers should provide focused vocabulary instruction that not only explains the meanings of English words but also highlights false cognates that could cause misunderstandings. Using contextual exercises, where students see words in sentences and learn how they function in different situations, can be particularly effective. Additionally, drawing attention to cross-linguistic comparisons can help learners recognize both the similarities and differences between English and their first language. Encouraging students to be cautious with words that resemble those in their native language but carry different meanings in English can reduce errors.

By developing a more precise understanding of English vocabulary, students can avoid confusion and improve both their written and spoken language skills. However, overcoming false cognates can be challenging, especially for learners who have been using incorrect words for a long time. Extra attention and practice may be necessary to fully correct these mistakes and build a more accurate vocabulary. [4; 75]

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