



LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE AND METHODS OF ITS OVERCOMING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

This scientific article focuses on the theoretical grounding in language interference by means of studying the relation between bilingualism and interference. Consecutively, the article considers the variety of language interference with its typical influence on French language learning by students. Special attention is paid to contrastive analysis and error analysis - the basic ways for overcoming interference mistakes. A body of preliminary measures is presented, as well as corrective strategies for dealing with interference in studying foreign languages with the aim of improving the quality of language knowledge and its transformation into language competence.

Key words: language interference, bilingualism, interference mistakes, system, norm, contrastive analysis, error analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Language interference is one of the current problems in foreign language teaching. Its consideration on an international scale is an actual response to the applied results of the structural methods also known as audio-visual, audio-oral and structural-global. With the above methods the learning of a foreign language becomes a process realized through imitation and mechanical reaction to the language stimuli. Structural methods exclude theoretical explanation, deliberate approaches in foreign language education and above all - any comparison with the native language.

Thus, the educational materials developed in accordance with these methods suppose that the teaching of a foreign language should be done in one and the same way with students from different nationalities regardless of any difficulties deriving from the native language or other factors. Only when it becomes evident that the results from the application of such methods are not the expected ones since the way of explanation and language acquisition is a long and cumbersome process (learners have to apprehend for themselves the educational

content according to their language and cultural knowledge), can a step be undertaken towards a discussion of the language interference and its influence on foreign language teaching.

DISCUSSION

In the modern didactics of foreign language teaching interference is considered to be a particular methodological principle. It predetermines some of the approaches and means of education. The theoretical grounding for interference is explained through the theory of contacts and the theory of bilingualism. Bilingualism means having command of more than one language: native and foreign. The two differ in the degree of command.

Communication between the two language systems is the reason for the interference which is the object of psycholinguistics and linguistics research.

From the point of view of psycholinguistics, it is a negative transfer of language habits and skills from the mother tongue or from a foreign language to another foreign language.

From a linguistic point of view, interference is an interaction or a change in linguistic structures and structural elements. It appears to be a deviation from linguistic norms in the spoken and written language.

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Bilingualism differs in character. In correlative bilingualism both language systems exist together in the individual's mind and are independent of one another. When the individual has good command of the two languages there is no interference. In the case of subordinate bilingualism, the second language is not mastered to the degree the first language is. Here, mother tongue dominates and influences the second language leading to interference. (1)

According to the matter involved there are two types of interference - **interlanguage** and **intralanguage**, and two type according to form - **implicit** and **explicit**.

In teaching French as a second language to students studying Preschool and Primary school Pedagogics and Primary school Pedagogics with a Foreign Language, the most common mistakes occur in interlanguage interference. In this case mistakes appear because of the negative transfer of habits from the native language (sometimes from the first foreign language that is supposed to be in very good command) to the second language, in this instance French. Typical examples for interlanguage interference are statements like: Je suis 20 ans instead of J'ai 20 ans; Je se lave, Tu se laves instead of Je me lave, Tu te laves; Il aura beau temps instead of Il fera beau temps.

Intralanguage interference occurs when learners make mistakes under the influence of the already acquired language knowledge and established habits in the foreign language: J'ai allé à la Faculté instead of Je suis allé à la Faculté; Elle a tombé dans la rue instead of Elle est tombée dans la rue; These mistakes result from Passé composé of the verbs conjugated with the verb "avoir". French language students very often pronounce "la plain" instead of "la plaine", "la semain" instead of "la semaine". It is because after they have learnt nasal vowels in words like: "plein", "main" and in this pattern words in which there are no nasal sounds are pronounced with nasal sounds, as well.

Interference is explicit in cases when learners make mistakes in oral and written foreign language expression transferring language habits from the native to the foreign language and thus they ignore the norms of foreign speech. With implicit interference learners do

not make mistakes because they avoid using grammatical and lexical difficulty constructing phrases without it. In this way there are no mistakes but the speech becomes simpler and poorer and it **loses** its expressive and idiomatic aspect.

The object of implicit interference are lexical notions and grammatical forms which do not have an equivalent in the native language. For example, les pronoms adverbiaux "en" and "y" fall under the influence of the implicit interference. The answer of the question: "Tu vas à la bibliothèque?" "instead of: "Non, j'en reviens" very often is: "Non, je reviens". "Veux-tu du café?" the answer is: "Non, merci, je ne veux pas" instead of: " Non, merci, je n'en veux pas"; or "Allez-vous au théâtre?", «Oui, je vais souvent» instead of «Oui, j'y vais souvent».

Intralanguage and implicit interference are more uncommon in comparison to interlanguage one.

There is interference on different language levels: phonetic, lexical and grammatical. The extent of its presence is due to the degree of language distinctions, in other words - to their typological proximity or distinction.(2) For instance, language interference on the phonetic, lexical or grammatical level occurs more often in teaching French to Bulgarians than on the level of writing because the writing symbols are completely different. Whereas with learners studying French as a second foreign language, interference on the writing level occurs under the influence of the first foreign language, in this case English. That is why learners write in French "development" instead of "développement"; "exercise" instead of "exercice"; "lesson" instead of "leçon"; "environment" instead of "environnement"; "envelope" instead of "enveloppe" etc.

Phonetic interference affects the improper pronunciation of phonetic sounds in the second language caused by the existence of different phonetic structures from the point of view of the mother tongue or the first foreign language. Thus, for instance "âge" will be pronounced "ash", "élève" - "elef", "rouge"- "rush", "fleur" - "fljor". There are cases of phonetic interference in non-observance of the rules for intonation of the French phrase, merging and accent.

Typical examples of lexical interference are: the wrong use of words, narrowing or

expansion of the word meaning, formation of non-existing lexical items using foreign suffixes. It is often said: “les cadres du film nous montrent “ instead of “Les plans du film nous montrent». «Je voudrais tourner votre attention sur ce problème” instead of». «Je voudrais attirer votre attention sur ce problème” ; «Il n’a pas trouvé d’endroit dans le compartiment » instead of «Il n’a pas trouvé de place dans le compartiment»; «athéiste” instead of «athée”; “protest” instead of “protestaton”; “footballist” instead of “footballeur”.

Grammatical interference concerns changes in the structure and the structural elements in the foreign language. It is caused by semantic and formal resemblances and distinctions between the native and the foreign language system: “Il remercie à sa mère” instead of “Il remercie sa mère”; “Ils aident à leurs parents” instead of “Ils aident leurs parents”; “Je n’ai pas de l’argent” ” instead of “Je n’ai pas d’argent”.

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND ERROR ANALYSIS

These are the main approaches for the studying and overcoming of interference. The scientific juxtaposition languages is one of the most rational approaches for improvement in foreign language teaching.

There is no unanimous agreement as to the subject of the contrastive study. In some theoretical conceptions the subject of

description are contrastive phenomena; in others - the set of distinctions between the grammars of the two languages.

More scientifically sound is the statement that similarities, as well as differences between languages should be considered because only the reciprocal complement of the two provides an opportunity for complete language characterization.

The juxtaposition of language systems occurs on the levels of system, norm and usage.(3)

Distinctions on system level:

* absence of a category in one language which is present in the other language. For instance, the Subjunctive mood in French and its absence in Bulgarian language;

* different distinctions in one and the same category: Gender is available in both languages but masculine, feminine and neuter exist in Bulgarian whereas the French language has only masculine and feminine gender;

* no correspondence in the number of meanings of lexical items. For example, “pièce” in French means: ”a piece”, “a part of a machine”, “a room”, ”a coin”, ”a stage play”, ”a document”. ”Connection” can mean in French: “liaison”, ”lien”, ”relation”, ”cravate”, ”trousseau”, ”attaches”.

* lack of correspondence in the meanings of grammar items (**Table 1**)

Table 1. Comparison between Aspect in Bulgarian and Temporal form in English

Aspect in Bulgarian	Temporal form in French
Present	Présent
Imperfect: perfect, imperfect	Imparfait
Futurum: perfect, imperfect	Futur: catégorique / hypothétique

Juxtaposition on a system level considers both the peculiarities of languages (Aspect in Bulgarian, Sequence of tenses in French) and the language universals (absolute tense, vowels, consonants and others).

Differences on Norm level:

Languages differ not only in terms of existing categories, but with respect to the distinctive combination of language items. For instance, “se lever” is a reflexive verb in French while “get up” is not in Bulgarian: after ”if” in Bulgarian , Future Tense is used while after “si” Futur is not used in French.

Differences may occur in a phrase formation. For example: “Veer backpedal”-Se retourner comme une crêpe;” “As clear as day light”, /As the nose on your face /- “Simple comme bonjour”.

Juxtaposition on usage level:

The purpose is to choose the most appropriate form from those available which the language bearer will use. That is to say, usage mistakes in the usage create a “foreign accent” and reveal the foreign speaker. For example: ”Il est dans son cabinet” is used instead of ”Il est dans son bureau”; “ Je suis allé vivre dans un hôtel”

instead of “Je suis allé loger dans un hôtel” ; “un homme ordinaire” instead of “un homme simple”.

The most likely interference on use level appears in the metaphorical use of words and grammatical forms.

Contrastive analyses put forward the theoretical aspects of interference, and error analysis – its practical aspects.

Juxtaposition states the similarities and differences between languages pointing to opportunities for a potential interference while the error analysis determines the real deviations from the Norm or usage in the spoken and written speech of a bilingual speaker in a particular context.

Scientific studies of interference include a combination of a theoretical aspect/contrastive analyses/ and a practical aspect (error analysis).

TYPES OF INTERFERENCE MISTAKES

In an attempt to adapt to a new mode of communication, foreign language learners seek support from the mother tongue or the foreign language. In this way foreign language communication may involve wrong analogies. They result in intralanguage mistakes when the initial base has been the foreign language and interlanguage interference mistakes when the base occurs to be the native language.

Interference mistakes affect all language levels: phonetic, morpho-syntactic, lexical-semantic.

Phonetic interference mistakes

The most common mistake is the lack of distinction between open and closed vowels. For instance: “porte” and “sirop” are pronounced with one and the same Bulgarian “o”, without any differences between “o” open and closed, and “été”, “mère” with the same Bulgarian “e” without any distinction between [e] and [ε].

Learners make some phonetic interference mistakes in the pronunciation of long and short vowels: “lit-lire” ; “mais-mère”; “haut-haute”, in the pronunciation of nasal vowels, etc.

Lexical interference mistakes: “Il ne faut pas rester les mains croisées” instead of “Il ne faut pas rester les bras croisés”. “C’est un repas délicat” instead of “C’est un repas maigre”.

Grammatical interference mistakes. Gender of the nouns in French is considered according to the Gender of the nouns in Bulgarian. That is why, learners say: “une groupe” instead of “un groupe” ; “un fenêtre” instead of “une fenêtre” ; “un dent “ instead “une dent “, etc. Special attention should be paid to reflexive verbs which are not reflexive in Bulgarian . For example: “se dépêcher”, “se lever”, “se hâter”.

Grammatical interference mistakes may be also found in:

* the use of Direct and Indirect question: “Je ne sais pas est-ce que je dois partir demain” instead of “ Je ne sais pas si je dois partir demain”.

* article partitif and changing the partitive and indefinite article with the preposition “de”: “Je ne mange pas de la viande” instead of “Je ne mange pas de viande”; “Il a des bons amis” instead of “Il a de bons amis”.

* the sequence of tenses: “Il a dit qu’il a fini l’exercice” instead of “Il a dit qu’il avait fini l’exercice”.

There are Absolute and Relative Grammatical mistakes.

An Absolute mistake is an item which does not belong to the language being learnt: “Il a vite faisé le devoir” instead of “Il a vite fait le devoir”. A Relative mistake is form which is available but not appropriate for the particular text. (4)

Overcoming mistakes is carried out in two directions. They are providing against interference mistakes and corrective strategies in case mistakes are already a fact.

Preventive measures require:

* teachers to be in very good command of not only the foreign language but also of their mother tongue. Thus, they will be aware of the mother tongue interference and will take adequate measures;

* when compiling course books or educational materials to consider the native language system peculiarities and to bear in mind the common mistakes in the particular foreign language learning;

* the preparation of files of typical mistakes which the foreign language teachers should review before teaching or practicing the language material with his/her students;

* the creation of the a card file of mistakes according to the teaching stage and the type of speech activity: spoken or written.

* the use of an appropriate progress evaluation strategy in teaching so that exercises are

conducted in such a way as to avoid interference.

Corrective measures involve:

- * establishing a system with exercises for overcoming phonetic, lexical and grammatical interference mistakes;
- * exercises with verbs which change their meaning in accordance with the preposition they are used with;
- * exercises where nouns change their meaning according to Number and Gender;
- * exercises with nouns having only singular form in the foreign language to which correspond plural nouns in the mother tongue and vice versa;
- * exercises for translation

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be said that the issue of language interference is directly related to the place attributed to the mother tongue in the foreign language teaching system. Contemporary practice of foreign language teaching proves that with methods ignoring the mother tongue good results can not be expected.

The mother tongue has established the learners' language world and has acquainted students with the problems of language phenomena and therefore it is the mother tongue which will enable them to acquire a

new language world. That is why teachers should know the systems of both languages very well. They should be able to use the of learners' knowledge of their mother tongue and approach language teaching through a juxtaposition of language items not on a teaching level but on the level of approach for making and applying exercises.

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