



# Interaction of Languages as the Main Factor of Linguistic Interference

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## Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of linguistic interference which can manifest itself at all language levels and in any part of the contacting systems which have structural differences. Researchers often subdivide this phenomenon in different types. It can be direct, inverse or bilateral. Depending on the type of speech activity one can distinguish impressive (receptive) or expressive (productive) interference. Depending on the form of manifestation interference can be explicit or implicit; intralingual (internal) or interlingual (external). The intensity of interference can vary and depends on subjective and objective factors. The study of this phenomenon cannot be limited to only one method and requires a complex approach.

**Keywords:** *interference, bilinguals, language interaction, phonetic, grammatical, lexical interference.*

## 1. Introduction

Interference as a complex phenomenon is of interest not only to specialists in the field of linguistics, but also to the researchers in related fields: sociolinguistics, psychology, pedagogy, cultural studies, etc. In linguistics interference is considered as a deviation from the norms of language. This is a special type of influence of one language on another, which is established in the oral and written speech of a multilingual individual.

The problem of interference is quite complex, it has not been completely studied and solved yet. It should be noted that all languages of different nations have one thing in common: they perform communicative and cognitive functions and reflect reality. In the process of reflection, concepts about the world are created. Words not only denominate objects and phenomena, but also express concepts. Though, logical and psychological laws on which thinking is based are the same for all people, each language possesses its own special organization of experience.

The problem of interrelation of language and mind has been of great interest to researchers. Various studies of the linguistic picture of the world are conducted among native speakers of different languages, associative dictionaries of languages are created. Due to these studies we obtain valuable information enhancing the research of the peculiarities of reality perception within a particular culture. According to M. V. Zavyalov, each language forms a certain image of the world, represented in the language by a semantic network of concepts specific to it. The detected difficulties that arise in intercultural communication and translation and the results of associative experiments prove this idea. In this connection the following problem of bilingualism arises: how two linguistic systems and two pictures of the world interact in one mind? [1].

## 2. Methods

This article is based on the systemic approach to the interdisciplinary analysis. Due to the cognitive cross-disciplinary approach we take into consideration the anthropocentric factor, linguistic and non-linguistic information, intercultural analysis, especially dealing with the problem of mentality and language correlation.

## 3. Results and discussion

There are no absolutely identical concepts in languages because concepts are based on different substantive relationships, fixed by different means. Reality is represented differently in various languages. This phenomenon, known as linguistic relativity, or linguistic complementarity, gives rise to so-called "linguistic thinking", special to the speakers of every language.

Interference is interpreted as "the interaction of language systems in bilingualism, occurring either in contacts of languages or while an individual is learning a foreign language. It is expressed in deviations from the norm and the system of the second language under the influence of the native language [2].

We should also note that there is a significant discrepancy in the use of the term "interference" in modern linguistics. Some researchers stick to U. Weinreich's understanding of interference as being any linguistic change caused by contact and subdivided into 'borrowing while preserving the language' and 'interference' as a result of the 'linguistic shift' but recognize both phenomena as 'subtypes' of interference [3]. Others oppose the interference as a structural and / or semantic change of forms of one language under the influence of another, direct borrowing (borrowing, transfer) of language elements (morphemes, words, etc.). Some even consider interference to be a concept describing only the process of the second language (L2) acquisition, while contact

changes in speech activities are designated by the term 'borrowing'. Despite the fact that the term 'interference' in recent years has somewhat narrowed the scope of its application, in the further presentation we prefer to use it in the original understanding by U. Weinreich, who sees it "as a convenient designation for any changes in the contact origin in the language system under the influence of speech activity of the individual" [3].

The concept of interference implies the reorganization of models, resulting from the introduction of foreign-language elements in those areas of the language, that are characterized by a higher structural organization, for example, the problems of the phoneme system, most of the morphology and syntax, some areas of the lexical systems [3].

Interference in one way or another characterizes the speech of all bilinguals, who incorrectly perceive and treat certain features of a foreign language as they usually treat structures of their mother-tongue (or primary language). The causes of interference phenomena can in most cases be detected using linguistic methods. Various forms of interference potential for a given contact situation can usually be predicted by comparing phonetic and grammatical systems of the languages in contact and determining their differences. Often, the reason of lexical borrowing can be explained by examining the points in which the vocabulary of the language shows its inconsistency with the needs of the cultural environment of the language contact. However, not all potential forms of interference actually take place in the reality [4, 5].

The exact picture of the impact of bilingualism on the individual's speech varies depending on a variety of factors, some of which are often extra-linguistic, since they are outside the structural differences of these languages or even beyond their linguistic inconsistencies. Full description of interference in the contact situation, reflecting spread, stability and disappearance of individual interference phenomena, is possible only when extra-linguistic factors are taken into account [6, 7].

The depth and intensity of interference can vary as it depends on subjective and objective factors. Subjective factors determine the individual linguistic abilities of a speaker, his/her linguistic competence. Objective factors include the degree of genetic similarity of the contacting languages, individual system-structural properties of the studied language, determining its specific features. The thing is that the closer the two languages, the more a bilingual speaker relies on his/her mother-tongue (primary language) in the speech in a foreign language. Therefore, kindred languages are usually easy to learn, but in this case interference occurs more often and is overcome with great difficulty. Thus, the greater the degree of similarity between languages, the higher is the probability of interference.

In addition to the comparative analysis, which makes it possible to identify the fields of interference probability, we should note the role of the analysis of typical errors, which shows the specific points of interference and helps reveal the nature of its manifestation. Both types of analysis should be applied because the errors that can be predicted by means of comparison of language systems do not always occur in reality.

Detection of interference should be based on the analysis of errors, because this is the way interference manifests itself. However, the study of interference should not be limited only to error detection.

A mistake in a foreign language is usually 'the result of a wrong choice of language means pertaining to a foreign language used for the expression of a properly programmed thought'. This can be caused by the following:

1) speakers may equate semantic, structural and functional phenomena the first (L1) and the second languages (L2) that are not the same, as well as different phenomena within a foreign language;

2) speakers may misunderstand the message or have incorrect associations (sometimes these mistakes can be of purely mechanical character) [8].

Errors in speech in L2 caused by the use of means pertaining to L1 are a manifestation of interference. The general premise of the problem is that a person, speaking a foreign language, always in one way or another, uses speech skills of his/her mother-tongue.

V. A. Vinogradov distinguishes two components in the mechanism of errors in the speech of L2: interference and analogy. Interference is as substitution of schemes and models of L2 by corresponding elements of L1 or changing the former by the latter; it can be caused both by the system and the norm of L1. Errors caused by false analogy, always relate to the standards and the system of norms [2].

Studies in recent years have clearly shown that only a part of errors in L2 can be explained by the influence of L1. Such errors are now qualified as interlingual, that is, errors of interlingual interference. At the same time, it has been found that there are many identical errors that happen not due to the nature of L1. Errors of this kind are called intralingual. They reflect the specifics of the process of learning a language and therefore they are often called 'development errors' [9, 4]. The existent classifications are usually the products of linguistic analysis of various language levels, types of speech, etc. L1 errors used to be treated as conditioned exclusively by the interference, and in the course of the analysis attention was focused on those elements of the form or the meaning of linguistic phenomena that could interact within the framework of the studied language. However, in recent decades in English-language publications, the emphasis has been put on the fact that the analysis of errors of this kind can and should be used to identify strategies of facilitating the process of language acquisition.

At the initial stage of L2 acquisition, one can observe a dynamic, constantly changing state of idiolects of L2. Some features that may vividly characterize the idiolect of one person at this stage of L2 acquisition may not manifest themselves intensively in the idiolect of another person. The main thing is that the number of errors caused by interference gradually decreases. By the end of training (if we refer to the artificial situation of bilingualism) skills tend to approach to the norm of L2 and can even lead to an equal command of the languages [10, 11].

When addressing interference issues, we should also take into account that interference can be observed in language and in speech. The structuralist theory of communication, which distinguishes between language and speech, accepts as a mandatory condition that 'a certain speech phenomenon belongs to a certain language'. Only on this basis is it possible to explain how we are able to perceive a statement that contains some elements from a foreign language. It is because a speaker or a listener (or both) usually identifies the matrix language of the statement and the elements that do not pertain to it stand out as 'borrowed' or transferred. This is one of the phenomena of linguistic interference.

It is obvious that the specificity of speech interference differs from that of the interference in language [3]. Since interference in the speech of a bilingual occurs as a result of the speaker's personal acquaintance with another language, the primary factors here are the perception of the elements of another language and the motives of borrowing. The intensity of interference in the speech of the same bilingual person may vary depending on the circumstances of the communication situation. The scope of interference, in particular, depends on an interlocutor. If the interlocutor is monolingual, the bilingual seeks to limit the number of loans that are already familiar to him, in order to be understandable to the interlocutor. But if the interlocutor is bilingual, the requirements to the purity of the language weaken, and the units of one language can be transferred to another without restrictions. When due to repeated occurrences in the speech of bilinguals such manifestations of interference become familiar and entrenched in use, we may call it "interference in the language".

Accordingly, the range of interference problems in the language includes phonetic, grammatical, semantic and stylistic integration of foreign elements into the language system”.

The past of each language is a dialectical unity of opposite development paths: development that enhances the differences between the language formations and development that brings languages closer together.

In every direction we sometimes observe two phases:

a) differentiation as a process of disintegration of a language into several independent languages-heirs;

b) divergence, i.e. when related or kindred languages start separating from each other; gradually divergence can lead to a split of one language into two individual languages.

In the convergence development it is similar:

a) convergence is the emergence of common properties of several languages (both kindred and unrelated) that occur due to long-term language contacts;

b) integration means merging languages into one language (as the final stage of their convergence and disappearance of differences). In this sense, the term "mixing" (or "crossing of languages") is also used [8, 11, 12].

The founders of the theory of language contacts realized that the phenomena defined as "borrowing" and "influence" cannot be simply reduced to the penetration of foreign elements from one language into another. These phenomena are a part of the process of convergence of languages, as powerful and comprehensive as the process of divergence.

The process of interference, which is directly related to the interaction of languages, generates features that can be divided into two categories: 'linguistic identification' and 'over-differentiation'. The former means a narrowing of the system and reduction in the number of differences, while the latter is characterized by the emergence of new linguistic entities. For example, among the phenomena of "linguistic identification" in the French language of Africa we note the absence of a double answer to the question ("oui" to a direct question and "si" to a question in a negative form). The contact of the French language, which has two forms of affirmative, with the Portuguese language, which has only one form of affirmative *sim*, explains the dominant position of *si* in the French language of Africa.

Also this process can be observed at the lexical level of the French language of Central Africa, where, for example, the distinction between the expressions *amener qu'un*- "lead someone" and *apporter qch* - "bring something" concerning opposition on the basis of person/inanimate object have disappeared, as a result of contact with certain Bantu languages, such as Kikongo. In Kikongo the relevant content is expressed in one word *nata*, which in French is expressed by such verbs as *mener* - "to take or lead smb", *emmener* - "to take away", *conduire* - "to drive", *porter* "to carry", *emporter* - "to carry away".

To express the idea "to move on the land", the standard French has at least several verbs *marcher* - "to walk" and *rouler* - "to go by a vehicle", specifying the method of action: on foot or using vehicle (car). In Laru only one verb *yenda* is used. Therefore, the contact of the French language with the language Laru deleted the opposition *marcher* - *rouler*. *Marcher* is used in all cases:

*Je marche à vélo* - "I'm riding a bike",

*Je marche en auto* - "I'm driving (by car)".

Thus, the two described phenomena are the consequence of the activation of some language units to the detriment of others.

Analyzing the speech of bilingual individuals, psychologists note, the formation of any language is not an isolated process and is based on the previous experience of the individual (in acquisition of a new language individuals necessarily use their past linguistic experience of L1). We still do not know much about the reasons why some people have better innate abilities to languages than others. It is not clear whether the ability to switch from one language to another and the degree of interference that occurs have to do with an innate ability or is the result of training. From the point of view of psychology, interference is closely related to

the problem of the interlocutor's incorrect perception of audio information and the absence of interference in a particular situation does not necessarily mean that a bilingual switch from one system (language) to another [13, 14, 9].

Linguistic interference can occur at three levels and depending on the level of the language it is customary to distinguish phonetic (phonological), grammatical and lexical interference.

According to U. Weinreich there are two main mechanisms involved in contact-type changes. The first mechanism is "borrowing" of linguistic elements of one language into another. The second mechanism is called "interlingual identification" of elements of two languages, when a speaker thinks that the elements are equal in both languages and transfer the elements of one linguistic system to an element of the other [3].

Interference on the phonetic and phonological levels happens if the phonemic inventories of the languages in contact differ. Phonetic interference in the context of African multilingualism is the objective extralinguistic factor that has a significant impact on the quantity and quality of phonetic variants, and, in particular, on the process of formation of the territorial variant of pronunciation. This is clearly seen in the case of the use of the French language whose sound system is as if "superposed" on the primary phonetic system of local languages.

Grammatical interference is one of the most difficult and controversial problems of the General linguistics. In the first half of the last century many prominent linguists doubted that any influence of one language on another was possible in the field of grammar. E. Sapir also claimed that he didn't see any significant morphological interaction. According to G. Schuchardt, only closely related morphemes can be influenced by a foreign language. But there are also opposing views, for example, "one morphological system can have an unlimited influence on another".

The problem of grammatical interference, manifested in the mechanism of speech activity, lies in the plane of interaction of genetically unrelated and typologically different languages. Basically, interference happens due to the absence and mismatch of grammatical categories in structurally different languages [15].

For example, the absence of a grammatical category of gender in African languages leads to violations in coordination with the nouns in local variants of the French language; the absence of a grammatical category of transition results in the difficulty in using transitional/non-transitional verbs. It is worth emphasizing that these errors are most frequently found in the speech of common people. The lower the level of education, the more limited the range of communicative competence is. Thus, the highest level of interference is recorded in the speech of the under-educated part of the population with low economic income who use the basilect form of the French language.

Almost all types of grammatical relations are subject to interference: word order, coordination, subordination and other relations between grammatical units, as well as modulation of prosodic characteristics. As for the French language in Africa, interference more often manifests itself in word order and agreement and rarely in prosodic modulations.

When a language gets into a foreign natural and socio-cultural setting it starts experiencing a shortage of means to express a new reality it lives in. In order to fill in the existing gaps the inner resources of the language can be used to create new lexical items; the existing items can be given new meanings (especially by means of word-coinages); words can be borrowed from a local language.

Lexical interference is understood in most cases as "all changes caused by interlingual connections in the composition of lexical inventory, as well as in the functions and use of lexical-semantic units, in their semantic structure".

Usually loan words are used to fill in the linguistic lacunae of a language in a foreign setting. The borrowed words are morphologically adapted to the language system. The form of a lexical unit may be transformed (for example, by adding suffixes

or prefixes of the adapting language). The meaning of a word may also be modified, restricted or extended. For example, the French word “oncle” (uncle), in Africa may also mean “any relative or friend of the same generation” and even “a boyfriend or a husband” (extension of the meaning).

#### 4. Conclusion

The study of interference is a rather broad theme of topical interest. Interference is subdivided into direct, inverse or bilateral. Depending on the type of speech activity one can distinguish impressive (receptive) or expressive (productive) interference. Depending on the form of manifestation interference can be explicit or implicit; intralingual (internal) or interlingual (external). The identified types of interference should be considered at all linguistic levels: phonetic, grammatical and lexical. Interference on the phonetic and phonological levels happens if the phonemic inventories of the languages in contact differ. Almost all types of grammatical relations are subject to interference: word order, coordination, subordination and other relations between grammatical units, as well as modulation of prosodic characteristics. All changes caused by interlingual connections in the composition of lexical inventory, as well as in the functions and use of lexical-semantic units, in their semantic structure are considered as manifestations of lexical interference. While studying interference process, it is necessary to apply an integrated approach. Along with the linguistic interfering factors (differences in the systems of the languages in contact) many of the extralinguistic factors, like the speaker's level of education, social status and prosperity, should be taken into account.

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