

LINGUISTIC ERRORS CAUSED BY CROSS-LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE IN BILINGUAL COMMUNICATION

Feruza Rakhmatova

University of Economics and Pedagogy

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Abstract

The phenomenon of cross-linguistic interference occupies a central place in modern linguistics, psycholinguistics, and second language acquisition studies. It occurs when elements of one language influence the production or comprehension of another language, leading to various linguistic errors. Such errors are especially common among bilingual and multilingual speakers who constantly switch between language systems. This article examines the nature of linguistic errors caused by interference, identifies their major types, and discusses their implications for language teaching and intercultural communication. The study demonstrates that interference affects all linguistic levels, including phonetics, lexicon, grammar, syntax, and pragmatics. Understanding interference-induced errors contributes to more effective language education and a deeper understanding of bilingual communication processes.

Keywords:

bilingualism, cross-linguistic interference, language errors, multilingualism, second language acquisition, linguistic transfer.

Introduction

Globalization, migration, and international communication have significantly increased the number of bilingual and multilingual speakers worldwide. As a result, researchers have shown growing interest in the mechanisms underlying language interaction within the bilingual mind. One of the most important manifestations of such interaction is cross-linguistic interference.

Interference refers to the influence of one another during language production or perception. This influence often leads to deviations from the norms of the target language and results in linguistic errors. While some scholars consider interference a negative transfer, others view it as a natural consequence of bilingual competence and language contact.

The objective of this article is to analyze the main types of linguistic errors caused by cross-linguistic interference and to evaluate their significance in bilingual communication.

Theoretical Background

The concept of interference was introduced into linguistic studies through research on bilingualism and language contact. Early studies by Uriel Weinreich emphasized that bilingual speakers frequently transfer linguistic structures from one language into another. Later researchers expanded this understanding by demonstrating that interference can occur at multiple linguistic levels.

Cross-linguistic influence is often divided into two categories: positive transfer and negative transfer. Positive transfer facilitates language acquisition when structures in two languages are similar. Negative transfer, on the other hand, leads to errors when speakers incorrectly apply rules from their native language to the target language.

Modern cognitive approaches suggest that interference results from the simultaneous activation of multiple language systems in the bilingual brain. During communication, lexical,

grammatical, and phonological elements from different languages compete for selection, increasing the likelihood of errors.

Types of linguistic Errors Caused by Interference

Phonetic Errors

Phonetic interference occurs when speakers transfer pronunciation patterns from their native language to a second language. Such errors often involve stress placement, vowel quality, consonant articulation, and intonation.

For example, Russian-speaking learners of English may experience difficulties distinguishing between long and short vowels because this distinction is less significant in Russian phonology. Similarly, Uzbek speakers may transfer native intonation pattern into Russian speech, producing non-standard prosodic structures.

Phonetic errors can affect intelligibility and may lead to misunderstandings in oral communication.

Lexical Errors

Lexical interference arises when speakers incorrectly use words due to similarities or differences between languages. One common source of lexical errors is the phenomenon of false cognates.

For instance, bilingual speakers may assume that words with similar forms have identical meanings across languages, resulting in semantic inaccuracies. Another manifestation is the direct translation of idiomatic expressions from one language into another, producing unnatural or incomprehensible utterances.

Grammatical Errors

Grammatical interference is one of the most frequently observed types of language transfer. It includes incorrect use of tense, aspect, gender, case, agreement, and word formation patterns.

For example, speakers whose native language lacks grammatical articles often omit articles in English. Russian learners of English may encounter difficulties with article usage because Russian does not possess an equivalent grammatical category.

Similarly, speakers may transfer native-language sentence structures into the target language, resulting in grammatical inaccuracies.

Syntactic Errors

Syntactic interference affects sentence structure and word order. Different languages organize information according to distinct syntactic principles, and bilingual speakers often transfer these principles from one language to another.

Examples include unusual word order, incorrect placement of modifiers, and inappropriate sentence patterns. Such errors may not always impede understanding, but they often reduce the naturalness and fluency of speech.

Pragmatic Errors

Pragmatic interference occurs when speakers transfer communication norms, politeness strategies, or discourse conventions from one culture to another.

For example, forms of address, expressions of gratitude, requests, and apologies may differ significantly across linguistic communities. A statement that is considered polite in one language may sound excessively direct or indirect in another.

Pragmatic errors are particularly important because they influence intercultural communication and may lead to social misunderstandings despite grammatically correct language use.

Factors influencing Interference

Several factors determine the frequency and intensity of interference-induced errors.

First, language proficiency plays a significant role. Beginner learners generally exhibit more interference because they rely heavily on their native language structures. However, advanced learners may also experience interference, especially in complex communicative situations.

Second, typological similarity between languages influences transfer. Similar languages often facilitate positive transfer but can also increase confusion due to subtle differences.

Third, language exposure affects interference. Regular interaction with native speakers and authentic language materials helps reduce error frequency.

Finally, sociolinguistic factors such as language dominance, frequency of language switching, and communicative context contribute to the emergence of interference.

Educational Implications

The study of interference has practical importance for language teaching. Teachers should recognize that many learner errors are not random but stem from systematic cross-linguistic influence.

Contrastive analysis between the native and target languages can help identify potential areas of difficulty. Furthermore, targeted instruction focusing on interference-prone structures may significantly improve language proficiency.

Modern language education should not regard interference solely as a deficiency. Instead, it should be viewed as evidence of active multilingual competence and cognitive interaction between languages.

Conclusion

Cross-linguistic interference remains one of the most significant sources of linguistic errors in bilingual and multilingual communication. It affects phonetic, lexical, grammatical, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects of language use. Although interference often leads to deviations from target-language norms, it also reflects the dynamic interaction of language systems within the bilingual mind.

A comprehensive understanding of interference-induced errors contributes to theoretical research in linguistics and provides valuable insights for language teaching. Future studies should focus on the cognitive mechanisms underlying interference and explore its manifestations in digital and professional communication environments.

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