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## LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE: OVERVIEWING THE FUNDAMENTALS

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### **Annotation:**

In the presented article below based on the works of the scientists in the field of linguistics in general and language contact in particular we intend to discuss and overview the phenomenon of language interference also known as linguistic interference, cross linguistic interference or transfer. While making literature review on foreign, Russian and Kazakhstani linguists' outcomes some basic notions have been revealed and determined such as the definition, the essence, and the classifications. Language interference is often treated as the collaboration of two or sometimes more language systems that outcomes in the insight of norms of one language into another within the process of language contacts on the whole. In most cases language interference emerges in the second language acquisition process. Scholars view such a phenomenon from different perspectives. It tends to occur as a negative process mostly. Although in some cases language interference can be regarded as a positive influence. Along with these opposite viewpoints there is a neutral opinion on it.

**Keywords:** interference, language interference, linguistic transfer, bilingual, linguistics, language contact.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of language interference is supposed to be a transfer of linguistic specificity from one language to another by a bilingual. It may occur across both languages in the acquisition



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of a simultaneous bilingual, from a mature speaker's first language to a second one while being acquired.

Looking at the development of studies on contact-induced language change proves that

researchers use notions such as 'interference' (Weinreich, 1953), 'cross-linguistic influence' (Jarvis,

2002), 'transfer' (Heine and Kuteva, 2005), "language interference" (Karlinsky, 2011), but still the

same issue is being talked about – how the two language systems influence each other.

Turning to the occurrence of this term itself the concept "interference" is likely to be

originally introduced into use in precise science. The term "interference" is derived from lat. "inter"

– "between" and "ferens (ferentis)" – "carrying", "transferring" and means "the variation of wave

amplitude that occurs from the superposition of two or more waves" [1]. Later the term was adopted

in other areas of science including linguistics and the relatively recent course of SLA (Second

Language Acquisition).

It should be also emphasized that long before the appearance of the term "interference" in

language studies that currently plays a key role in the theory of language contacts and the idea of

bilingualism, the concern of the language interaction was formulated by the founder of the Kazan

linguistic school Jan Nieciślaw Ignacy Baudouin de Courtenay. He explained the influence of

languages on each other by convergent rearrangement of languages in the course of communicative



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contacts stating that "the effect of mixing languages is manifested in two ways: on the one hand, it introduces into a given language from a foreign language its characteristic elements (vocabulary, syntactic turns, forms, pronunciation); on the other hand, it is responsible for weakening the degree and strength of distinctiveness inherent in individual parts of a given language" [2, 54].

### MAIN PART

In the 1920s-1930s. the founders of the Prague linguistic school Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoy and Roman Osipovich Jakobson started a great research and challenged with the issues of Baudouin de Courtenay. Due to their contributions, the term "interference" became popular and widely discussed about. Later a lot of scholars took an interest in interaction and influence of languages, including L. V. Shcherba, E. D. Polivanov, A. Martine and U. Weinreich. From that point ahead linguistic schools and scholars started to make a research on this newborn notion to define it from different prospectives. Due to the fundamental works of U. Weinreich in the study of language contacts the term "linguistic interference" became firmly established in linguistics. Moreover, U. Weinreich is commonly regarded as the pioneer of language-contact studies also and was the first to note that those who learn second languages see linguistic forms from their first and second languages as equal. In his book "Languages in contact" (1953) he wrote about interference as a phenomenon that



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was likely to be reflected at different levels of language: phonetic, grammatical, lexical. U.

Weinreich defined interference as cases of deviation from the norms of language that occur in

bilingual speech as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of

language contact [3, 22].

The phenomenon of language interference started to be viewed mostly as a negative process

because the great number of scholars including V. Yu. Rosenzweig and M. Yu. Rosenzweig, V. A.

Vinogradov, L. V. Shcherba, A. E. Karlinsky, M. M. Mikhailov, V. N. Yartseva, speaking about the

nature of interference, emphasized its negative character, presenting interference as a "violation" in

bilingual speech [2, 54]. A. E. Karlinsky writes about interference as a special case of "speech

mutations", which consists in the unconscious transfer of skills from the native language to a

foreign one [4, 181]. Though L. V. Shcherba does not use this term in his article "On the issue of

bilingualism" he accepted "mutual distortion of both languages, in practice, when learning a foreign

language, distortion of this particular foreign language under the influence of the native one" [5]. N.

B. Mechkovskaya characterizes interference as "errors in speech in a foreign language caused by

the influence of the native language system" [6]. Transfer is defined by Odlin as 'the influence

resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language



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that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired' [7]. V. Yu. Rosenzweig believed that

"interference is a violation of the rules of correlation of contacting languages by a bilingual, which

is manifested in his speech in a deviation from the norm" [8]. According to V. A. Vinogradov,

interference is a direct consequence and main phenomenon of language contacts. He defined as

deviations from the norms of the contacting languages and appearing in bilingual speech as a result

of interaction with one or more languages. The greater the difference between interacting systems

the greater the potential area of interference [9].

On the contrary, some scholars note the positive influence of interference speaking about it

from the point of view of transferring knowledge of a general typological property through the

interaction of contacting languages possessing no negative impact on a non-native language. Heine

and Kuteva speak favorably about contact-induced change as transfer 'of linguistic material from

one language to another' that is based on the morphosyntactic equivalence between the model and

the replica languages whereas notions of 'model language' and 'replica language' are relative, i.e., a

given language can be associated with both roles [7, 604].

However, the two opposite sights of interference cannot limit it due to having a neutral view

presented by some linguists' research, in which interference is understood as a two-way process. In

W. Mackey's opinion interference implements the use of one language's properties in written or



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spoken speech to another one. E. Haugen believes that interference is a linguistic interweaving in

which any linguistic unit at once can be an element of two systems. L. I. Barannikova focused on

the diverse nature of interference, emphasizing that "the problem of interference is not purely

linguistic, because interference is not only one of the facts of language, but a phenomenon that has

deep psychological and, ultimately, socio-historical roots" [2, 56].

G. M. Vishnevskaya believes interference to be a process and result of "interaction of

language systems in bilingual speech, of which one system is the dominant one, generating the

effect of influence with a secondary, acquired language system", but emphasizes that at present

times there is no unified interpretation of this term and the main concepts of the theory of

interference are unidentified due to the lack of a unified methodology for studying the phenomenon

above [11].

The Kazakh explanatory dictionary of linguistic terms defines interference as an influence of

languages on each other in the conditions of bilingualism (multilingualism) [12].

Taking into

consideration the language policy in Kazakhstan trilingualism is likely to be spoken about and

applied into the language worldview in the country.

The American dictionary by Merriam-Webster defines neither language interference nor

language transfer, though offers the definition of the term "interference" from the precise science's perspective mostly such as "the mutual effect on meeting of two wave trains (as of light or sound)



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that constitutes alternating areas of increased and decreased amplitude (such as light and dark lines

or louder and softer sound)” [13].

The Russian Large Encyclopedic Dictionary online offers more than one hundred definitions

of the term “interference”, but only twenty of them are connected with linguistics.

The most

relevant goes to the “language contacts” direction that implies the following:

“language interference

is the phenomenon of interference in assessing it from the point of view of the levels of the

language system to which it belongs. From this point of view, there can be lexical, morphological,

syntactic, word-formation, accentological, phonetic, intonation, word-order interferences and

special cases of them" [14].

Current Kazakhstani linguistics represents the research of interference within the School of

language contacts and its founder - former Soviet and present domestic linguist Avraam Efremovich

Karlinsky whose works have contributed to the development of Kazakhstani contactology. He is the

developer of the method of dialing analysis aimed to model the speech of a bilingual by predicting

and experimentally checking the speech interference [16, 55]. Also he states in his work “... quality

and quantity of interference depend on the relationship between the contacting languages’ systems”.

The followers of the School of language contacts including N. S. Pak, D. D. Shaibakava, Z. Zh.

Aukhadieva, A. I. Rabinovich, L. N. Kovylna, V. T. Kirshner, S. Gazieva have investigated the



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processes of speech interference, integration and convergent development of languages [20, 108].

According to N. S. Pak, "Interference is cases of deviation from the norm in bilingual speech of

Language2 under the influence of Language1 on the phonological, grammatical, and lexical levels

of the language as a result of language contact" [17, 127].

Having studied diverse findings in this linguistic area we consider the most complete

definition of the phenomenon of interference is given by Linguistic encyclopedic dictionary edited

by V. N. Yartseva that says "Interference (from lat. inter — between each other, mutually and ferio

— touch, strike) — the interaction of language systems in a bilingual environment, emerging either

through the language contact or when an individual learns a foreign language; expressed in

deviations from the norms and system of a second language being influenced by a native one" [15].

The given definition is adopted from U. Weinreich's book "Languages in contact".

Summing all the definitions of the phenomenon of language interference we can admit that it

is often discussed as a source of errors meaning the negative transfer, although if the relevant

features of both languages are the same, it results in an appropriate language production suggesting

the positive transfer. The greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative

effects of interference are likely to be found.

Interference is believed to emerge both at the level of speech and at the level of language. So



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like many other linguistic phenomena, it can be divided into types or levels. The classification

presented by U. Weinreich in his book “Languages in contact” (1953) can be named as a pioneer of

division of the concept where he resumes long debates upon the problem of the language

interference. The American linguist distinguishes 3 types of interference that are phonetic,

grammatical, and lexical. All mentioned above types imply various facts of differentiation between

two language systems.

A. E. Karlinsky presents the typology of interference in his book "Fundamentals of the theory

of interaction of languages" (1990), where the scientist considers it only in the speech of bilingual

speakers. He distinguishes 4 groups of interference types:

- interference determined by the nature of deviations from the norm in speech in the object

language.

- interference determined by the nature of relations between elements of contacting languages.

- interferences that reflect the specifics of bilingual speech activity in the target language.

- interferences defined in terms of their impact on the act of communication [4].

V. V. Alimov in his manual “Theory of translation” (2015) states that in professionally

oriented intercultural communication and professionally oriented translation, interference can be

manifested at seven levels: sound, spelling, grammatical, lexical, semantic, stylistic, and intralanguage. Depending on the level of the language system at which the native and foreign languages



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are mixed, the corresponding types of interlanguage interference can be distinguished [18].

The following levels are the main differential levels of interference accepted by most modern

linguists: phonological; morphological; syntactic; lexical; semantic. Each of them is characterized

with the changes in the language system at the given level from changing of a sound at the

phonological level to intervention of the components of one language system into another at the

semantical level. Some scholars add another type that is called stylistic interference. It occurs in the

case when a little-known word is to be used by its already well-known synonym [19, 636]. When

replacing each other the style can be changed with the meaning being the same.

Phonetic interference is most common in speech, which is a reproduction of the sound unit of

the primary language in a foreign sound environment of the secondary language.

Also, phonetic

interference creates the possibility a foreign accent to appear. This is confirmed by A. E. Karlinsky

's conclusions, who believes that foreign language proficiency does not occur autonomously, but in

interaction with the native language, which subsequently affects the speech of a multilanguage

person either positively or negatively [17, 130].

Lexical interference occurs with the use of foreign-language words and phrases in speech of

Language2. "This pattern is primarily due to the fact that the vocabulary and phraseology of any

language are an open system, less strictly organized in comparison with the units and rules of the



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phonetic and grammatical levels" A.E. Karlinsky states [16].

### CONCLUSION

Summarizing the article we would better admit that the phenomenon of language interference has been widely researched since the middle of the 20th century by many linguists starting from Baudouin de Courtenay, U. Weinreich, A. E. Karlinsky., V. A. Vinogradov, L. V. Shcherba, V. V. Alimov and others. All of them have differently defined the term “language interference” depending on the methods of investigation and interpretation. As for us we would like to put a stop on the definition given by V. A. Vinogradov suggesting “...deviations from the norm of one or each of the contacting languages and manifested in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their acquaintance with more than one language” [9]. In other words, language interference is a deviation from the literary norms in a bilingual speech under the influence of another language within the language contact.

In the presented article we are aimed to search for the relevant information and make the literature review on the issue of interference in linguistics and challenged with the definitions of different scholars, nature of language interference, classifications and approaches to research this linguistic phenomenon which is currently regarded as one of the main concerns of applied linguistics and the modern theory of language contacts.



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