18th PCSF 2018
Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

TRANSFER AND INTERFERENCE PHENOMENA IN THE SITUATION OF SUBORDINATE TRILINGUALISM

O.A. Sotskova (a), N.S. Spiridonova (b)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, (SPbPU), Polytechnicheskaya 29, Saint Petersburg, 195251 Russia, o_sotskova@mail.ru
(b) Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, (SPbPU), Polytechnicheskaya 29, Saint Petersburg, 195251 Russia, nataliasan@mail.ru

Abstract

The paper considers problems of interference and positive transfer when learning a second foreign language. The main focus is on the problem of the influence of native and first foreign languages on the second one. Language codes exist in the consciousness of a learner in the subordinate trilingualism relations when the first (native – Russian) language plays a dominant part in relation to the other two, with that the first foreign language (English) influences the second one (French), since they have a large quantity of similar structures. NL and FL 1 serve as a basis for transfer which can be both, positive and negative (interference). When teaching FL 2, a professor should take into account the way of transfer when using cognitive strategies in order to increase their effectiveness. A great part is played by the level of FL 1 system's formedness in the consciousness of a learner, because knowledge and skills, already acquired during learning, are transferred to the new language. At the phonetical level, interference is most frequent, which is connected with a lower articulating intensity of the Russian and English languages compared to French. In grammar and semantics, positive transfer is possible as well as negative one.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: French, interference, second foreign language, transfer.

1. Introduction

Within the last decades, researchers are particularly interested in methodological problems of teaching a second foreign language (FL 2) in secondary and higher education; this problem is covered in works of such authors as N.V. Baryshnikov, I.L. Bim, N.D. Galskova, I. I. Kitrosskaya, A.V. Schepilova. Great attention is paid to intensification and optimization of the process of learning FL 2 and when teaching foreign languages, communicative and multicultural competency start to prevail, the goal of which is a proper use of FL in a communicative situation (Almazova, Khalyapina & Popova, 2017). FL 2 overlays the already formed language systems in the consciousness of a learner, which allows using the same cognitive strategies, transferring skills and abilities, acquired during learning the first foreign language (FL 1). Observation, making assumptions, determination of the form and function of a language event are the basis of the cognitive orientation principle of the learning process (Baryshnikov, 2003). Cognitive strategies, used for that – comparison, generalization, systematization, mnemonics, etc. are applied according to a problem to solve.

2. Problem Statement

When learning FL 2, students actively use their linguistic and cognitive experience, first of all knowledge and skills of the native language (NL) and FL 1. Since NL is already mastered by the students, it is a primary source of transfer (Millrood & Maksimova, 2017). FL 2 and NL are in a state of co-activation of languages (Rankin, Grosso, & Reiterev, 2016). Transfer of knowledge, skills, and abilities from one language to another is one of the most frequent strategies when learning foreign languages. Transfer is a complex psycholinguistic phenomenon which, in the case of collision of two and more languages in one's consciousness, allows applying already known skills and abilities in a new situation (Vetrova, 2011). The cognitive basis of transfer is universality of the person's verbal ability. Transfer can not only be unconscious (happening spontaneously) but also conscious (when explaining and comparing language events of different languages) (Menezes, 2013, p. 405). On the other hand, FL 2 acquisition happens in the conditions of forming the subordinate trilingualism, i.e. one language (native) is learned in natural conditions and two foreign languages – in simulated conditions. NL is determinant in the situation of foreign language acquisition. FL 1 and FL 2 are studied in conditions that are not similar to the conditions of native language acquisition, which leads to transfer of paradigms of the first FL to the second one in all areas of speech and at all levels of the linguistic system of the new language (Bim, 2001).

When learning FL 2, a comparative approach is used, since there are universal theoretical positions and common patterns of teaching the French language on the basis of English. Learning is built on a conscious-cognitive basis (Cyr, 1998).

3. Research Questions

During the process of forming one or another kind of speech activity, typical difficulties emerge, caused by positive transfer of language learning skills as well as by interference with a negative effect (Dubois, Kamber, & Skupien Dekens, 2014). Transfer is one of the most used cognitive strategies when studying FL 2. In such a case, the key part is played by the development of the FL 1 system in the consciousness of a learner. The higher its level, the more often a teacher applies their analytical abilities

and uses transfer at the level of educational skills and grammatical generalizations. It is also true for interference. The transfer is the result of interaction skills (Gural & Sorokina, 2012). There are three types of transfer: spontaneous intuitive transfer, controlled transfer (present when, having a tentative basis and comparison of similar events, spontaneous transfer does not occur), and controlled transfer with partial tentative basis (if transfer is done after creating a partial tentative basis of a speech act among learners).

The affinity of language events often causes interference, in the case of which consentient aspects of an event hide their differences in the learner's consciousness and cause deviations from language norms of FL 2. Such types of interference as orthographical, phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactical are the most frequent. Besides, wrong skills acquired while learning FL 1, are transferred to the second language. When studying FL 2, one should pay attention not to avoiding interference but to reinforcing positive transfer at various levels of the studied language.

In the area of forming phonetical skills, significant interference should be noted while positive transfer is almost impossible.

Phonetical interference, occurring in an intonation pattern, articulation, stress accentuation, is based on fundamental differences in phonetical systems of the Russian, English, and French languages (Shepilova, 2005). The main reasons of difficulties among learners are connected with

1) different degree of the involvement of main articulatory means of a person (tongue, lower jaw, lips) and, therefore, specific qualities of the articulation tension distribution;

2) presence / absence of a phonemic attribute and different degree of its specialization in different languages;

3) articulation intensity and movements variation.

Low mobility of speech apparatus and, in consequence of this, low articulation intensity is typical for those who study the French language after Russian and English. Such a characteristic is a consequence of articulation skills formed when learning NL and FL 1 not distinguished for great variation of articulation movements.

The main interfering language in articulation of phonemes is the Russian language. Underestimation and overestimation of phonemic attributes of the French language are reasons for many difficulties of learners. For example, difficulties in teaching pronunciation of open [ɛ] and closed [e] in the French language happen due to undervaluation of the tongue lift attribute in the French language.

A great difficulty is learning how to pronounce French nasals because of the absence of modality as a listening principle in the Russian language. Overvaluation of palatalization, which happens due to NL, leads to mistakes in pronouncing of consonants.

Reduction of vowels, a characteristic feature of phonetical systems of the Russian and English languages, causes the habit to reduce French unstressed vowels.

Phonetical interference occurs, e.g. in tense pronouncing sound [u], as well as pronouncing sound [y] with preceding semivowel [j] as in the English language. In its basis, it has a mixture of phonemic attributes and leads to formation of allophones in pronunciation of a speaker. By the presence of such specific allophones, it can be determined which of the two foreign languages is a recipient and which is a donator. Such an allophone, for example, is pronouncing French [t] with English aspiration.

The influence of the English language on teaching French pronunciation is mostly connected with a different character of the articulation tension distribution (Robert, 2008, p. 18).

In the French language, sounds made with the front part of speech apparatus prevail, because in its factual structure, a great part is played by labialization of vowels and consonants.

In the English language, back vowels prevail. In the Russian speech, mid vowels are more often and consonants tend to be front.

Interference in the French language as FL 2 when vowels are pronounced deeper than they should is explained by the formed pronouncing skills when learning the English language.

The influence of NL occurs greatly when learning tempo, rhythm, and methodology of speech. This type of interference with the native language is notable for its stability.

Learners have difficulty dividing a phrase into rhythm groups, putting stress on every word, while in the French language the stress is put on the last syllable of the last word of a rhythm group. Phonetical means which create the impression of stress also differ: in the French language, the key role is played by the pitch of tone and in Russian – by the length of a stressed vowel. As a result, a learner does not make correct rises and falls of spoken pitch in complex sentences and cannot achieve fluidity of speech, which is promoted by linking in the French language.

In the field of stress, the negative influence of the English language can be noted in words – phonetical equivalents: possible – possible; second – second; moment – moment; difference – différence; development – développement.

To overcome the influence of NL and FL 1, one should use imitation, multiple trainings, and repetition; authentic sources are preferable.

Interference of FL 1 is reflected in forming the orthographical skill, it is typically the words, spelling of which is similar in the English and French languages (Robert, 2016, p. 111). Typical mistakes are: omission of –e at the end of words, putting y instead of i (économie - economy), omission of u in the words ending with –geur, –teur (voyager - voyageur).

In grammar, both positive and negative transfer (interference) are possible. The direction of transfer primarily depends on the level of forming a grammatical structure. The French language is classified as analytical (just as English): it has complex grammatical structures; grammatical categories and relations manifest themselves beyond a word and the word itself does not change and only expresses an abstract notion (table, parler) and becomes actual in speech with the help of linking to other words in a sentence. Grammatical interference occurs as an uncharacteristic word order for the give language. Here, a transfer of skills of composing certain kind of sentences from FL 1 to FL 2 (from English to French).

At the level of morphemes, deviations from norm, found in speech, are caused by category features deviances of parts of speech and often occur under the influence of the corresponding categories of the interfering language.

The Russian language can cause mistakes related to assigning gender qualities of NL to the French noun. An example of morphological interference is also using incorrect prepositions after a verb similarly to Russian: instead of the correct influencer qn – to influence somebody - influencer sur qn, instead of aider qn à faire qch – aider à qn.

Many cases of incorrect use of prepositions and articles, especially at the beginning of education, are explained by such interference. In comparison with the English language, the system of French articles is more developed and is completely absent in Russian. Thus, great difficulties are found in using correctly prepositions à, sur, dans in the expressions: "dans la rue" "à la gare". Here, the influence of both the English and the Russian languages has its effect: «на улице, на вокзале» - in Russian: "in the street, at the station" - in English.

Speaking of positive and negative transfer in syntax, one should divide different stages of speech act formation on the basis of inner speech (Koltsova & Kartashkova, 2018) and, in this connection, different levels of forming a grammatical structure.

At the stage of programming an utterance, there is a complex process of forming predicative categories in which NL and FL 1 are involved. Visions of features and categories of FL 2, not formed at the early stage of learning, identifying facts of the native and foreign languages lead to interference with the native language. Thus, at the concept level of an utterance, interference has the grammar of NL in its basis. The phenomenon of positive transfer basing on the English language can be used by a teacher in the case of absence one or another grammatical category in the Russian language, e.g. when explaining tense form plus – que – parfait.

At the level of realization of a speech act, transfer can occur from both the Russian and English languages.

For example, when constructing a conditional sentence the Russian language has an interfering influence. The sequence of tenses rule in this type of complex sentences is difficult to grasp due to using a future tense in the Russian conditional clause: «если у меня будет время» is incorrectly translated as "si j'aurai le temps".

The adjective preposition relative to a main noun in NL and FL 1 is also a cause to significant difficulties and mistakes among learners.

The sequence of tenses notion and the match of main rules is the source of positive transfer from the English language. Thus, a teacher's knowledge of analogies and differences in grammatical structures of interacting languages is the basis for his or her actions on preventing possible interference or forming a setting for positive transfer (Vetrova, 2011, p.76).

To overcome grammatical interference, great attention should be payed to comparing language systems, pointing out grammatical features of the given language for a learner. At more advanced stages of education, the so-called "linguistic intuition" emerges, when structures of FL 2 has already formed a certain system in the learner's consciousness.

In lexis and semantics, there are several kinds of positive transfer and interference. The reason for semantical interference lies in the fact that phenomena known to a speaker are reflected in the new language in a different way compared to the already learned languages. In this connection, interference manifests itself in assigning equivalent's characteristics from the already known language to a word of the new one.

A French word is often directly connected with a Russian or English equivalent in the speaker's consciousness and used with a deviance of its semantic slot, translated "literally": "je visiterai mes amis"; "je me suis lié avec le Directeur".

Since a lexical item of NL is directly connected with a notion, a FL 2 teacher more often deals with semantical interference from NL, although the influence of FL 1 should not be excluded.

Some lexical items of the studied languages have similar phonological and orthographical features, which makes positive transfer as well as interference possible. To reduce the influence of NL and FL 1, one should draw attention of learners to specific cases of using lexemes, form word-forming models among learners, introduce vocabulary according to different attributes, focus on synonymous expressions, and create semantic fields (Benayoun, 2008).

In the area of positive transfer in teaching such kind of vocabulary, the English language prevails. (Kochurova, 2011). A share of positive transfer connected with visual comprehension and recognition of French words is insignificant. However, this "similarity" of lexemes is also a source of negative influence occurring in extension of narrowing of the lexical item's meaning in the donator-language: lecture (reading) and lecture (oral presentation, the meaning absent in the French language); large (wide) and English adjective large (big), or "intélligent – intelligent – интеллигентный"

Interference with the English language is significant at the initial stage. The lack of lexical means in the French language leads to the transfer of words to FL 2 from English with the corresponding phonetical adaptation.

In word-formation, the matrix is the English language. In this area, the interference phenomenon should be mentioned, occurring in adding English affixes to lexemes of the studied language as well as in copying word combinations models of the already known language, for example: "il est froid", "il est chaud" instead of "il fait froid", "il fait chaud".

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this paper is to consider language phenomena of transfer and interference when teaching FL 2, determining primary trends in using transfer and interference, which will allow reducing their negative effect and increasing the effectiveness of cognitive strategies.

5. Research Methods

The comparative approach was used during writing of this paper.

6. Findings

Thus, language interference and transfer are phenomena that mean adaptation of norms of one language to norms of another while studying it. It is connected with psycholinguistic properties of mastering a foreign language and the basis is having a unified system of linguistic concepts in the learner's consciousness, in which several "language codes" combine. The most influential is NL, then FL 1, this creates the basis for interference and transfer.

7. Conclusion

Reduction in language interference and rational use of transfer when teaching FL 2 is a complicated and complex problem which should be successfully solved during the whole course of study as well as in the process of learners' self-study. Analyzing equivalents and differences in systems of the interacting

languages by a teacher allows forecasting possible directions of transfer, determining its conscious or unconscious nature, and relying on these comparisons when explaining new phenomena of the second studied language.

References

Almazova, N., Khalyapina, L., & Popova, N. (2017). International youth workshops as a way of preventing social conflicts in globally developing world. *3rd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts, SGEM2016, Book 2, Vol. 1,* (pp. 253-260). doi: 10.5593/SGEMSOCIAL2016/HB21/S01.033

Baryshnikov, N. V. (2003). *Metodika obucheniya vtoromu inostrannomu yazyku v shkole [Methods of teaching a second foreign language in school].* Moscow: Prosveschenie. [in Rus.].

Benayoun, J.- M. (2008). Systèmes opératoires en anglais et français : organisation hiérachique et valeurs syntactico-sémantiques [Operating systems in English and French: hierarchical organization and syntactico-semantic values]. *Études de Linguistique Appliquée [Applied Linguistics Studies], 149,* 57-64. [in French]. Retrieved from: https://www.cairn.info/revue-ela-2008-1-page-57.htm

Bim, I. L. (2001). *Koncepciya obucheniya nemeckomu yazyku kak vtoromu inostrannomu (na baze anglijskogo) [The concept of teaching a second foreign language (German on the basis of English)].* Obninsk: Titul. [in Rus.].

Cyr, P. (1998*). Les stratégies d'apprentissage [Learning strategies].* Paris: Clé international. [in French].

Dubois, M., Kamber, A., & Skupien Dekens, C. (2014). Tenir compte des langues premières dans l'enseignement / apprentissage des langues vivantes [Consideration first languages in the teaching / learning of modern languages]. *Mélanges Crapel, 35,* 5-11. [in French]. Retrieved from: http://www.atilf.fr/spip.php?article3997

Gural, S. K., & Sorokina, Y. I. (2012). Interferentnye yazykovye yavleniya i polozhitel'nyj perenos (anglijskij, francuzskij i ital'yanskij yazyki) [Interferential linguistic phenomena and positive transference (English, French and Italian)]. *Vestink of National Research Tomsk State University, 354,* 7-11. [in Rus.]. Retrieved from: https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=17385258

Kochurova, Y. N. (2011). Internacional'naya leksika v sinhronii i diahronii (francuzskij plast) [International vocabulary in synchrony and diachrony (French stratum)]. *Vestink of National Research Tomsk State University, 342,* 15-19. [in Rus.]. Retrieved from: https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=15640226

Koltsova, E. A., & Kartashkova F. I. (2018). Funkcional'nye osobennosti vnutrennej rechi v lingvopragmaticheskom i psihologicheskom aspektah [Functions of inner speech: linguistic, pragmatic and psychological aspects]. *Vestink of Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, 4,* 55-73. [in Rus.]. doi: 10.15293/2226-3365.1804.04

Menezes, V. (2013). Second language acquisition : reconciling theories. *Open Journal of Applied Sciences*, *3*, 404-412. doi: 10.4236/ojapps.2013.37050

Millrood, R. P., & Maksimova I. R. (2017). Uchebnyj bilingvizm: vchera, segodnya, zavtra [Learner bilingualism: yesterday, today and tomorrow]. *YAzyk i Kul'tura [Language and Culture], 37,* 185-204. [in Rus.]. doi: 10.17223/19996195/37/13

Rankin, J., Grosso, S., & Reiterev, S. (2016). Effect of L1 co-activation on the processing of L2 mopho-syntax in German-speaking learners of English. In D. Stringer (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 13th Generative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition Conference*. (pp. 196–207). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. Retrieved from: http://www.lingref.com/cpp/gasla/13/paper3287.pdf

Robert, J.- M. (2008). L'anglais comme langue proche du français? [English as a language close to French?] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée [Applied Linguistics Studies], 149,* 9-20. [in French]. Retrieved from: https://www.cairn.info/revue-ela-2008-1-page-9.htm

Robert, J.- M. (2016). L'anglais, langue de transfert pour la compréhension écrite du français écrit par des étudiants allemands [English as a language of transfer for written comprehension of French by German students]. *Synergies Pays Germanophones [Synergies German-speaking Countries], 9,* 107-116. [in French]. Retrieved from: http://gerflint.fr/Base/Paysgermanophones9/robert.pdf

Shepilova, A. V. (2005). *Teoriya i metodika obucheniya francuzskomu yazyku kak vtoromu inostrannomu [Theory and methods of teaching French as a second foreign language]*. Moscow: Vlados. [in Rus.].

Vetrova, N. V. (2011). Primenenie polozhitel'nogo perenosa iz anglijskogo yazyka pri izuchenii francuzskogo kak vtorogo inostrannogo [Applying Positive Transfer from English While Studing French as a Second Foreign Language]. *Vestnik of Ivanovo State Power Engineering University, 3,* 73-77. [in Rus.]. Retrieved from: http://vestnik.ispu.ru/sites/vestnik.ispu.ru/files/publications/73-77_0.pdf