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Key challenges of teaching foreign languages in terms of their mutual impact

Ключові виклики викладання іноземних мов з урахуванням їх взаємовпливу

Summary. *The article deals with the study of linguistic interference in the process of learning German as second foreign language after English. The works of educationalists and researchers dedicated to this issue have been analyzed. Nowadays, German language is considered to be an important educational component in higher educational institutions of Ukraine, which is caused by the prospects of its use for economic, cultural, and scientific purposes. When learning two foreign languages, the knowledge of the first foreign language affects the process of mastering the second one. This impact is defined as linguistic interference, which can be both positive and negative. Specificity of simultaneous (sequential) learning of German and English is determined by their close genetic relationship. This can be clearly seen at morphological, lexico-semantic, syntactic language levels. On the other hand, there are a lot of differences between these Germanic languages in terms of vocabulary and grammar rules. In particular,*

at the lexico-semantic language level, there are some problems connected with the correct use of the so-called «false friends of the translator». In different languages, these words and phrases have a similar or the same morphological structure and are sometimes pronounced in a similar way, but differ in terms of their semantics. As for syntactic level, linguistic interference is most common at the initial stage of learning the second foreign language. This is determined, in particular, by the fact that less time is usually given for its acquisition compared to the duration of learning the first foreign language. The above-mentioned factors cause difficulties at achieving a certain level of foreign language proficiency. The article provides a description of the types of linguistic interference, pointing to the ways to overcome its negative impact. In our opinion, a teacher should combine paying attention to common features of German and English, on the one hand, and emphasizing their distinctive features, on the other hand.

Key words: genetic relationship of languages, linguistic interference, lexico-semantic level, syntactic level, simultaneous learning, sequential learning, “false friends of the translator”.

Анотація. Стаття присвячена дослідженню мовної інтерференції у процесі вивчення німецької мови як другої іноземної після англійської. Проаналізовано праці педагогів та дослідників, присвячені даній проблематиці. Сьогодні німецька мова вважається важливим освітнім компонентом у закладах вищої освіти України, що зумовлено перспективами її використання з економічною, культурною та науковою метою. При вивченні двох іноземних мов знання першої іноземної мови впливає на процес оволодіння другою. Цей вплив визначається як мовна інтерференція, що може бути як позитивною, так і негативною. Специфіка одночасного (послідовного) вивчення німецької та англійської мов детермінована їхньою тісною генетичною спорідненістю. Це добре простежується на морфологічному, лексико-семантичному, синтаксичному рівнях мови. З іншого боку, існує чимало лексичних і граматичних відмінностей між зазначеними германськими мовами. Зокрема, на лексико-семантичному рівні мови виникають певні проблеми, пов'язані з правильним використанням так званих «хлибних друзів перекладача». У різних мовах ці слова й словосполучення мають схожу або однакову морфологічну структуру та іноді подібно вимовляються, але є різними з точки зору семантики. Що стосується синтаксичного рівня, то мовна інтерференція найчастіше має місце на початковому етапі вивчення другої іноземної мови. Зокрема, це зумовлено тим, що на її засвоєння зазвичай відводиться менше часу порівняно з тривалістю вивчення першої іноземної мови. Задані вище фактори спричиняють труднощі при досягненні відповідного рівня володіння іноземною мовою. У статті подано характеристику типів мовної інтерференції, вказано на шляхи подолання негативного впливу цього лінгвістичного явища. На нашу думку, викладач повинен поєднувати акцентування на спільних рисах німецької та англійської мов, з одного боку, та виокремлення їхніх відмінних рис, з іншого.

Ключові слова: генетична спорідненість мов, мовна інтерференція, лексико-семантичний рівень, синтаксичний рівень, одночасне вивчення, послідовне вивчення, «хлибні друзі перекладача».

Introduction. Learning German language plays a significant role in modern higher education system, which is determined by a number of geographical and social factors. German is an official language in such highly developed European countries as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein. Germany is considered to be the world's largest exporting country. Therefore, there are a number of prospects of international economic cooperation facilitating a high level of German language competence. German is widely spoken on the territory of the European Union, ranking second in terms of prevalence in Europe. Besides, German is the second most widely used language of science, and Germany itself is the country that offers the largest number of educational and cultural programs compared to other European countries [1, p. 26]. This creates excellent prerequisites for students and teachers to increase the level of academic mobility, to improve skills and qualifications, as well as to get better career chances thanks to their German language proficiency.

Over the last decades, there has been a significant increase in the status of foreign languages in general thanks to the changes of socio-political orientation of our country resulted in new approaches and forms of international cooperation. It is declared in a number of official documents, projects, and guidelines, such as the «Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment» (CEFRL) put together by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project «Language Learning for European Citizenship». The CEFRL has it that better acquisition of European languages can contribute to communication and interaction between European countries having different native languages. It will facilitate to maintain European mobility, mutual understanding, cooperation, as well as to overcome prejudice and discrimination [9, p. 312].

The analysis of scientific papers shows that this issue has been studied in a number of scientific papers both in Ukraine and abroad. This concerns primarily the works of Ukrainian educationalists and methodologists, whose research is focused on establishing the peculiarities of learning second foreign language in institutions of higher education [8; 9], learning and teaching German as second foreign language [1; 3; 10], identifying key types of linguistic interference [2], disclosing the essence of linguistic interference processes in teaching German and English languages [4; 5; 6; 11].

Methodology. To provide a comprehensive study of the above-mentioned issues, the following methods of scientific research have been applied in the article. Using the descriptive method has contributed to determining the essence and basic features of linguistic interference, as

well as its types at morphological, lexico-semantic, syntactic language levels. The methods of analysis and synthesis have helped us at studying different viewpoints of researchers and educationalists regarding positive and negative impact of linguistic interference at simultaneous (sequential) learning of German and English. The inductive method has been applied in the process of revealing key factors of mutual impact of the given Germanic languages, generalizing the ways to overcome difficulties at achieving a certain level of foreign language proficiency caused by the studied language phenomenon.

Results and Discussion. According to the researchers, there are few textbooks for learning German which would take into account its sequential acquiring after English. Therefore, teachers face the need to develop the necessary educational material such as tasks, tests, and other exercises on their own. Quite often, the preparation of these tasks suggests that students are required to use their knowledge of English as their first foreign language [10].

On the other hand, there is an opinion in the methodology that expresses warning about the simultaneous learning of two foreign languages, pointing to the negative aspect of their interaction [12, p. 646]. Actually, in the process of acquiring a new language, a student uses his (her) knowledge and skills of the language that was learned before. The results of this sort of knowledge transfer can be both positive and negative, since it doesn't often match the specificity of the new language being learned. This phenomenon is called linguistic interference [9, p. 312].

As it can be seen, the main goal of learning German as second foreign language after English is to develop communication skills along with the willingness to participate in intercultural processes. In addition to this, German language proficiency contributes to developing a higher level of intercultural communication competence, which allows students to discover the cultural values of German-speaking countries [1, p. 29].

Thus, modern challenges in teaching foreign languages require find out key features and types of linguistic interference in the process of learning vocabulary and grammar structures of German as second foreign language after English. In our opinion, it can be approached through taking into consideration the degree of genetic relationship between the two studied Germanic languages. This will be useful at providing a more detailed description of linguistic interference, in particular, establishing effective ways to overcome its negative impact.

One of the main factors facilitating the process of learning German as second foreign language after English is that they both belong to the same branch of the Indo-European language family, namely the Germanic languages. Hence there is close genetic similarity, expressed at different

language levels. First of all, this can be seen at the lexico-semantic level concerning various parts of speech, especially at the initial stage of learning the language [1, p. 27] (*der Hut – a hat; der Pfeffer – pepper; bringen – to bring; trinken – to drink; neu – new; lange – long; welcher – which; in – in*).

There is also a significant level of similarity in word-building processes, particularly at making compound nouns and affixation (*der Teelöffel (der Tee + der Löffel) – a teaspoon (tea + a spoon); das Klassenzimmer (die Klasse + das Zimmer) – a classroom (a class + a room); die Freundschaft (der Freund + -schaft) – friendship (a friend + -ship)*).

Another sign of the relationship between German and English is the use of internationalisms (mainly of Greek or Latin origin) in both languages, accompanied by a greater or lesser degree of their morphological assimilation (*der Dialog – a dialogue; die Energie – energy; studieren – to study*).

As for syntactic level, a high degree of genetic relationship is featured by a number of similar grammar structures of both Germanic languages [5]. Below, there are just a few spectacular examples:

- similar rules of using definite and indefinite articles (*Das ist ein Wagen. Der Wagen ist schnell. – This is a car. The car goes fast.*);

- function of linking verbs (*Diese Bücher sind alt. – These books are old.*);

- verbs are divided into regular (*fragen (fragte, gefragt) – to ask (asked, asked)*) and irregular (*essen (ass, gegessen) – to eat (ate, eaten)*);

- using auxiliary verbs at creating past forms and the passive (*Ich habe das Frühstück gemacht. – I have made the breakfast.; Das Bild wurde von Peter gemalt. – The picture was painted by Peter.*);

- negative sentences have only one negation word (*Du hast nichts bemerkt. – You have not noticed anything.*);

- similarity in making comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs (*klein (kleiner, am kleinsten) – small (smaller, the smallest)*) including some common exceptions (*gut (besser, am besten) – good (better, the best)*).

On the other hand, both at the lexico-semantic and syntactic levels, there are a lot of differences between German and English. This leads to confusing and mistaking, making the process of acquiring a proper foreign language competence more difficult. In our opinion, there are two general problems students face at the initial stage of learning German vocabulary after English:

- a significant part of the vocabulary is completely different in both analyzed languages (*der Hund – a dog; die Wurst – sausage; kaufen – to buy; schön – beautiful; schlecht – badly; weil – because*);

- there are so-called «false friends of the translator». In different languages, these words and phrases have a similar or the same morphological structure and are sometimes pronounced in a similar way, but differ in terms of their semantics. At the initial stage of learning German as second foreign language after English, a typical example is the verb *bekommen*, which means *to receive* in English, being often confused with the English verb *to become*. Other good examples include: *die Mode* (*fashion* in English) – *a mode* (*der Modus* in German); *die Art* (*a way, sort, kind* in English) – *art* (*die Kunst* in German); *spenden* (*to donate* in English) – *to spend* (*ausgeben, verbringen* in German); *locken* (*to lure* in English) – *to lock* (*zuschließen* in German).

Regarding syntactic and morphological differences, we should also mention the conjugation of verbs and declension of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. In German, word forms are made by changing the article or adding grammatical endings. This is not a characteristic feature of English (*ich lerne, du lernst* – *I learn, you learn*; *Das ist dein Vater. Du hilfst deinem Vater.* – *It's your father. You help your father.*). There are also a number of confusing rules in terms of word order (*Wir gehen am Abend* (when?) *ins Kino* (where?). – *We go to the cinema* (where?) *in the evening* (when?)).

Confusing the above-mentioned rules resulted in making systematic mistakes, is a good proof of the negative impact of linguistic interference, namely the use of elements belonging to one language in a situation where a written or oral act of communication takes place in another language. Linguistic interference is mutual influence of language systems that occurs in the process of learning a foreign language or simultaneous (sequential) learning several foreign languages [11, p. 87]. In the first of the cases mentioned, mutual impact takes place between native and foreign languages, while in the second one – between foreign languages being learned. The latter can be explained by the wish to reduce the impact of the native language, which results in the use of skills acquired in the process of learning the first foreign language [4, p. 242]. The next reason for significant influence of the level of knowledge of English on the acquisition of German by Ukrainian students is the fact that Ukrainian belongs to a different language group, namely the Slavic languages. As a result, there is a much lower degree of its genetic relationship to both foreign languages described in the article.

Therefore, the following types of linguistic interference can be singled out [11, p. 87]:

- using words, word forms, phrases of the first foreign language in the second foreign language. This is often expressed by confusing lexical units that have similar morphological structure or pronunciation (*my Bruder* instead of *mein Bruder*);

- following syntactic and word-building models of the first foreign language at choosing relevant word forms and sentences in the second foreign language. A good example of confusing English and German in the process of their simultaneous (sequential) acquiring is making past tenses. For example, in the sentence *Die Frau spielte Tennis* there is a mistake in using the past form of the verb *spielen*, which is formed by means of adding the suffix *-te* (not *-ed*) in German;

- transferring the syntactic structure of the first foreign language system to the one of the second language. This concerns mainly the position of auxiliary verbs in a sentence. That is why, there are two mistakes in the syntactic construction *Am Wochenende wir sind gegangen ins Kino* (confusing the positions of both the auxiliary verb and the past participle).

The frequency of linguistic interference is determined by the following factors:

- native language proficiency level (which is inversely proportional to the interference impact);

- first foreign language proficiency level (the higher it is, the weaker the impact of linguistic interference is);

- time interval between the periods of learning two foreign languages (a longer interval reduces the influence of knowledge of the first foreign language on the process of learning the second foreign language and vice versa).

As for syntactic level, linguistic interference is most common at the initial stage of acquiring the second foreign language. This is determined, in particular, by the fact that less time is usually given for its acquisition compared to the duration of learning the first foreign language. This leads to higher lesson intensity, when students have to master a larger amount of information. More concise explanations, fewer exercises to consolidate the material being studied should also be taken into consideration [5].

A number of educationalists and researchers are of the opinion that an effective means of overcoming interference at the syntactic level is the use of a large number of exercises and revision of previously learned material. In this way, better consolidation is achieved. This contributes to transforming knowledge of the rules into a well-trained skill [4, p. 243].

On the basis of the foregoing, lexical and grammatical ways to overcome negative linguistic interference can be singled out. These ways are recommended to be taken into consideration at developing different types of teaching materials for students of higher educational institutions.

The lexical way includes:

- using international words, which in Germanic languages are mainly of Greek or Latin origin, emphasizing differences in their pronunciation and spelling in German and English, respectively;

- creating tables and lists of similar vocabulary in both foreign languages to enrich language proficiency and avoid mistakes caused by confusing;

- paying attention to the «false friends of the translator», explaining differences in their meanings.

In its turn, the grammatical way to overcome negative linguistic interference includes:

- a thorough analysis of grammatical systems of two foreign languages in order to identify similarities and differences in formation and use of corresponding grammatical categories;

- developing an appropriate complex of exercises based on the comparative analysis of grammar structures of both foreign languages to prevent confusing;

- encouraging students to independent study and identifying differences in word-building and grammar structures in German and English, providing verification and consolidation through involving them into group discussions [11, p. 88].

It should be mentioned that a lot of researchers point to the positive effect of the interaction of two foreign languages in the process of their simultaneous or sequential learning. Actually, the first foreign language proficiency contributes to the development of receptive and productive skills during the acquisition of the second foreign language [10]. An important role here is played by the degree of genetic relationship between both foreign languages, which is directly proportional to the optimization of the process of acquiring new vocabulary and syntactic structures through drawing linguistic parallels. At the same time, the teacher's ability to emphasize key distinctive features of both foreign languages and consolidate this information through relevant exercises helps to prevent and overcome the negative impact of linguistic interference.

However, it should be taken into account that students have possibly become familiar with some types of exercises based on their first foreign language proficiency. Thus, they are able to develop their own strategy for mastering vocabulary and grammar, using this strategy in the process of learning the second foreign language [1, p. 28]. The analysis of memory mechanisms shows that the efficiency of memorizing new educational material increases if it is associated with something that is already known. Therefore, it is recommended to refuse from out-of-context learning words and phrases. Instead, it is considered to be more efficient to use knowledge and skills acquired during learning the first foreign language, while the level of native language proficiency should be taken into consideration as well [7, p. 5].

Conclusions. Thus, it can be argued that a higher degree of optimizing the process of learning German as second foreign language after English can be achieved under the condition of taking into consideration both positive and negative influence of linguistic interference. The latter plays both positive and negative role in mastering new vocabulary and syntactic constructions of German language at referring to previously known English patterns. Last but not least, close genetic relationship of both foreign languages is considered to be a determining factor. In our opinion, combination of searching for analogy and opposition are efficient means to overcome the negative impact of interference in lexical and grammatical ways. Therefore, in order to achieve the expected level of foreign language proficiency, it is important to pay attention to common and distinctive features of both German and English at the morphological, lexico-semantic and syntactic levels. It is the teacher who has to distinguish them while presenting and training each part of the curriculum. The ability of students to apply empirically developed strategies of learning their first foreign language for mastering the second one is also a significant condition to be taken into consideration. Therefore, the level of English language proficiency is one of the determining factors for optimizing the learning process in this case. We see the prospects of the given research in the possibility of using its results at developing new learning activities to study German as second foreign language in higher educational institutions.

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Mother Tongue Interference on Students' Acquiring English Pronunciation

Інтерференція рідної мови при опануванні учнями англійської вимови

Анотація. У запропонованій статті розглядаються труднощі, з якими стикаються українські студенти при опануванні правильної англійської вимови.