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S.V. Yartseva

THE ANALYSIS OF THE PHONETIC INTERFERENCE ON THE SAMPLE OF “SPANGLISH”

Abstract: In the following article language interference as one of the forms of language contact is being investigated. The purpose of the study is to analyze the forms, in which language interference, precisely, its phonetical part can be expressed, and to draw conclusions on the basis of the analysis. The contact of nations inevitably leads to the contact of languages in different forms of interaction. These might include processes from simple mistakes while learning a new language to the emergence of a new language phenomena. The highest form of the language interference may lead to the creation of a so called mixed language that is based on the compilation of the constituting languages. The interference may be expressed on different levels of language hierarchy. In the present article these various types are listed with the phonetic interference being thoroughly explained and exemplified. The analysis of the phonetic level of one of the mixed languages called “Spanglish” is being provided to give examples for various manifestations of the phonetic interference. The given mixed language is the mixture of the English and the Spanish languages, which are interfering in all hierarchical levels. The characteristics of the phonetic interference in “Spanglish” has been described; the phonetic peculiarities have been analyzed and systematized. In the present study the method of linguistic description, comparative analysis, classification method, component analysis have been used.

Keywords: language interference; phonetic interference; language contact; contact linguistics; mixed language; Spanglish.

About the author: Yartseva Svetlana Vladimirovna, free applicant, lecturer in the Uzbek State World Languages University, “Linguistics and English Literature” department, ORCID 0000-0003-4054-0554.

Contact information: Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Chilonzor district, Tokhir str., 38; mobile: +998909020682; libertine13@list.ru

Ярцева С.В.

АНАЛИЗ ФОНЕТИЧЕСКОЙ ИНТЕРФЕРЕНЦИИ НА ПРИМЕРЕ «СПАНГЛИША»

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуется языковая интерференция как одна из форм языкового контакта. Цель исследования – проанализировать формы, в которых может выражаться языковая интерференция, а именно её фонетическая часть, и прийти к выводам на основе проведённого анализа. Контакт народов неизбежно приводит к контакту языков в

различных формах взаимодействия. Оно может представлять собой различные процессы: от простых ошибок при изучении нового языка до возникновения новых языковых явлений. Высшая форма языковой интерференции может привести к созданию так называемого смешанного языка, основанного на компиляции составляющих языков. Интерференция может выражаться на разных уровнях языковой иерархии. В настоящей статье перечислены различные типы, даны подробные объяснения и примеры выражения фонетической интерференции. Проведен анализ фонетического уровня одного из смешанных языков под названием «спанглиш» с целью приведения примеров различных проявлений фонетической интерференции. Данный смешанный язык представляет собой смесь английского и испанского языков, интерферирующих на всех уровнях иерархии языка. Описаны особенности фонетической интерференции в «спанглише»; фонетические особенности проанализированы и систематизированы. В исследовании использованы методы лингвистического описания, сравнительного анализа, метода классификации, компонентного анализа.

Ключевые слова: языковая интерференция; фонетическая интерференция; языковой контакт; контактная лингвистика; смешанный язык; «спанглиш».

Сведения об авторе: Ярцева Светлана Владимировна, свободный соискатель, преподаватель кафедры «Лингвистика и английская литература» Узбекского государственного университета мировых языков, ORCID 0000-0003-4054-0554.

Контактная информация: Узбекистан, г. Ташкент, Чилонзарский р-он, ул. Тохир, 38; тел.: +998909020682; libertine13@list.ru

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Introduction

Development of the modern linguistics has led to the emergence of various linguistic branches concerned with the connection of language and human factor. One of the recently developed trends within the anthropocentric or human-based linguistic paradigm is contact linguistics.

Contact linguistics studies languages interaction while being in contact, under the influence of the language users and the results of the contact having emerged. Among the crucial factors affecting these results might be the length of the contact, the social and the economic needs that

have appealed for the contact, the language abilities of the interlocutors, the need for self-expression and many other extralinguistic factors.

One of the main notions in the theory of language contacts is language interference. According to American linguist Weinreich, U., interference should be understood as deviations from the norms of the language in the process of bilingualism being a result of the knowledge of several languages by individuals, namely as a result of language contact [Weinreich 1979: 22]. Russian linguist Scherba, L. suggests that in purely linguistic terms interference should be identified as the adaptation of the language of one interlocutor to the language of another and, as a result, a change in the norms of the contacting languages (Щерба 1958: 42-46).

Thus, in the process of languages contact interference influences both contacting languages to this or that extent, which leads to various changes in the norms of the contacting languages on different levels of language hierarchy. Accordingly, linguistic interference might be subdivided into several types: phonetic, semantic, lexical, grammatical, orthographic, stylistic, sociocultural, etc. Different language scientists propose their own classification according to the spheres of language being concerned.

In this article, the phonetic type of language interference will be thoroughly investigated on the basis of one of the mixed languages that is “Spanglish”. To our point of view, mixed languages being based on the intensive and prolonged language interaction and having participants with highly developed bilingualism, and spreading far beyond the territory of the initial contact, are ones of the best representatives for the interference analysis.

Methods of Investigation

“Spanglish” that is a compilation of two constituent languages might be analyzed using descriptive, comparative, and contrastive methods of analysis. As well, some elements of a comparative typological analysis can be applied for the interfered levels of its language hierarchy. Precisely, the phonetic interference of “Spanglish” is being analyzed comparing and contrasting the features of English and Spanish with the changed phonetics of this mixed language.

Discussion and Results

Phonetic interference is a violation of the sound system of the target language under the influence of the native or, conversely, the influence of the second language on the sounds and pronunciation of the first. The speaker transfers the pronunciation skills acquired by him/her in the process of mastering the native language to the target language, violating the phonetic norm of the latter, which is the reason for the appearance of phonetic deviations. At the psychological level, this is expressed in the clash of the phonetic systems of the native and the non-native languages, their mixing, mutual adaptation and transformation into a kind of a third system.

Weinreich, U. identifies several aspects and types of phonetic interference. Among the influencing factors he proposes *paradigmatic* and *syntagmatic* ones. The syntagmatic factors refer to sounds connected in a certain sequence that is in a speech chain. Into the paradigmatic factors he includes the relationship between the sounds in the model, i.e. sounds that can appear at a given point in the speech chain (Weinreich 1979: 53-55).

Besides that, the linguist proposes classification of the influencing factors on purely *linguistic* and *extralinguistic* ones. To linguistic he refers *phonetic factors* including differences between the contacting languages in the contingent of phonemes, in the analysis of their components, and in the distributive models of the phonemes of these languages. Also here might be given *extraphonetic intralingual factors* meaning cases of interference, in which the speaker seeks to avoid homophony, leading to ambiguity. The linguistic factors can at times include the *residual effects of erroneous cases of interference* that have occurred previously and may emerge on the basis of language habit that has formed in the brain of the user. The *extralinguistic factors* are mainly linked to culture, concerning the desire of the speaker to be similar in speech to the native users of the given language in the general socio-cultural environment (Weinreich 1979: 56-59).

Concerning the types of the phonetic interference, formally it might be subdivided into the following:

- *Underdifferentiation* occurs, when the speaker does not distinguish between the individual phonemes of the second language, mixing them up. This type might be encountered, when the specified phonemes are similar or equally reproducible in the first language.
- *Overdifferentiation* occurs, when there are variations of phonemes in the first language that are absent in the second. This difference is imposed during the reproduction of the indicated phonemes in the second language, when, according to the language rules, this should not occur.
- *Reinterpretation of differences* might be noticed, when the speaker transfers significant features of the first language to the second language, where they are insignificant or redundant. More often this concerns doubled or unpronounceable consonants, as well as the length of vowels.
- *Substitution of sounds*: this type of phonetic interference occurs, when the phonemes of two languages are graphically displayed in the same way, but, in fact, there are differences in pronunciation (Weinreich 1979: 45-46).

Let us now analyze phonetic interference on the sample of “Spanglish”, identifying deviations from the norms of the English or the Spanish languages and trying to differentiate the types of phonetic interference occurring.

As it has been previously mentioned, the phonetic level of “Spanglish” is based on the mixture of Spanish and English phonetics. Interference can be identified to varying degrees depending on the territorial factor, social and psychological characteristics, as well as the degree of bilingualism of the speakers. Due to the widespread use of “Spanglish” among migrants, the transfer of the Spanish pronunciation to the English words is more common at the phonetic level, which concerns both words being changed at the morphological and lexical level, and those used without any changes. One of the reasons of the stronger Spanish influence on this level might be the smaller number of sounds in Spanish, almost complete absence of diphthongs and the clear articulation of consonants. However, in rare cases, there is also a transfer of American (due to territorial location) pronunciation to adapted and non-adapted Spanish words.

For Spanish speakers, as well as for those, who are fluent in Mexican Spanish, underdifferentiation of individual phonemes is characteristic. In particular, it is typical not to

distinguish between the phonemes /v/ and /b/. At the beginning of words, both phonemes will, for the most part, be pronounced as /b/, and in the middle or at the end of words – as a labial /v/. If one of these phonemes is located between vowels, then a slotted sound is produced, partially similar to English /w/ (Киселёва 2012: 166-172). For instance, the word “vote” (voting) retains in “Spanglish” the English spelling, but acquires a Spanish sounding /bote/, in this case here might be observed the replacement of the sound /v/ by /b/, the absence of diphthongization when /əu/ is pronounced as /o/, the clear pronunciation of the sound /t/ and the voicing of the silent in English final vowel /e/. Moreover, the Spanish word “bote” (boat) in “Spanglish” will be pronounced in the same way, which makes hearing distinction between these two almost impossible.

There is no distinction between the consonant sounds /s/ and /z/, which have one sound /s/ for the Spanish speakers, as well as for the “Spanglish” speakers. For instance, the word “zebra” is pronounced similarly to the Spanish equivalent “cebra” (despite the fact that both spellings in “Spanglish” are acceptable). That is, in this case, the sound /z/ is pronounced as /s/. In addition, the sound /r/ is clearly and sonorously articulated, and the final letter sounds like /a/ rather than like /ə/ in English.

Also, due to the absence of the /j/ phoneme in Spanish, “Spanglish” often lacks a phonetic distinction between /j/ and /tʃ/. For example, for a “Spanglish” speaker, there may be no sound difference between English words like “chin” and “shin” with both being pronounced with /tʃ/. In some cases, the phoneme /j/ can also be pronounced as /s/, but this variation is much less common [Klee, Carol y Andrew Lynch 2009].

A characteristic phonetic phenomenon for “Spanglish” is the indistinguishability of the long vowels, due to the absence of them in the Spanish language. Thus, /ɪ:/ and /i/; /e/, /æ/ and /ei/; /u:/ and /u/; /ʌ/ and /a:/; /o:/ and /o/ sound the same. For example, the word “door” can be pronounced either /dor/ or /door/, with the /r/ sound also being solid, not rhotic as in English. Another example is the word “parquear”, common in “Spanglish” derived from the English “to park”, which after the morphological change lost the long sound /ɑ:/, inherent in the vowel “a” in the original word, and acquired the sound /ʌ/.

Moreover, based on the previous example it is possible to note the omission of the vowel “u” in pronunciation if it comes after “q”, since in this case it is silent in Spanish. For example, the word “question” would be pronounced similarly to the Spanish “cuestión”, i.e. there is both the omission of “u” when /kwe/ is pronounced as /ke/, and the aforementioned indistinguishment of the sound /tʃ/ pronounced as /st/, as well as replacing the phoneme /ə/ with /o/.

Separate diphthongs in “Spanglish” are omitted, or are displayed in writing with two phonemes. To exemplify the first variant the word “bike” can be given, which is transformed into “baka” (in the presence of an abbreviated Spanish form “bici”), where the diphthong /aɪ/ becomes /a/. As well, in “Spanglish” there is a word “emiliar” formed from the English “to mail”, where the diphthong /eɪ/ is transformed into /i/. As an example of the second variation, we can cite “Spanglish” word “rayar” (in Spanish, the word has a different meaning) formed from the English “to write”, when the diphthong /aɪ/ is displayed by two letters “ay”. In addition, it is also worth

noting here the omission of the letter “w”, as it is uncharacteristic for Hispanics. Another example might be the word “taipista” (from the English “typist”), where the diphthong /ai/ is also displayed in the “Spanglish” variation with two letters “ai”.

Besides that, many vowels are pronounced as they appear in writing, or as it is typical for the Spanish language. For instance, “a” is almost always pronounced as /a/, “o” – as /o/, “u” – as /u/ (if it is not positioned after q or g), “i” – as /i/, etc. To exemplify, in the word “mapear”, derived from the English “to map”, both “a” sound like /a/, “e” sounds like /e/, while “p” softens. In the word “flirtear” (from Eng. “to flirt”) “a” and “e” sound similar to the previous example, and “i” has the /i/ sound. In the word “lectura”, derived from the English “lecture”, the pronunciation of “a” as /a/, and “u” as /u/ is also observed.

In some words derived from English and having the letter “u” in the original spelling, pronounced like /a/, it is possible also to observe some changes not only in the pronunciation, but also in writing. Perhaps this happens due to the fact that in Spanish the vowel “u” always has only the /u/ sound, and the discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation could cause certain difficulties for the Spanish speakers. As an example of such vowel substitution, the following words can be given: “lonche” (from Eng. “lunch”), “lonchera” (Eng. “lunch box”), “troque” (Eng. “truck”), “troquero” (“truck driver”), “fonazo” (“having fun”) (Nginios 2011: 118-122). In all the given examples the replacement of the vowel “u” with “o” and, accordingly, the sound /a/ with /o/ can be observed. Furthermore, in such example as “soportar” (from the English “to support”), the replacement of the sound /ə/ by /o/ is also noticeable, apparently due to the same letter “u” present in the original word.

Concerning the consonants, first of all, the absence of the letter “h” in Spanish should be noted, which might be seen only in the early borrowed words. In “Spanglish”, due to its English constituent, this letter is present both in English words that have not undergone spanization, and in the modified words and expressions. However, here “h” is not a glottal aspirated consonant, but is more distinct and firm. For example, derived from the English “to hang out”, the word “hangear”, characteristic of “Spanglish”, has a clearly articulated sound /h/.

Also in speech while pronouncing the phonemes /ð/ and /θ/, which are difficult for the Mexican Spanish speakers, these phonemes can be replaced by /d/ and /s/, respectively. Thus, “the” would be pronounced as /de/, “that” as /det/, “think” as /sink/. However, the /θ/ phoneme is not so difficult for Spanglish speakers in Spain, since this sound is characteristic of European Spanish.

In “Spanglish” there is no English nasal sound /ŋ/. Words that have this sound can be pronounced either with /n/ or a distinct hard /ng/. In this regard, words with the English ending “ing” are not very typical for the “Spanglish” speakers.

Separately should be noted a clear and firm pronunciation of such consonants as “r”, “t”, “d”. For example, the /r/ sound in “Spanglish” being similar to Spanish is voiced and clear, unlike the fricative English “r”. The consonant “l” can be interdental, dental, alveolar or palatal, depending on the subsequent sound and the position in a word (Киселёва 2012: 166-172). At the end or before the vowels /e/, /i/ it softens, and in combination with consonants or vowels /a/, /o/, /u/ it becomes

clear dental or interdental. In Spanish words used in “Spanglish” without changes, the double “l” in the case when the speaker is a native speaker of Spanish retains the sound /y/, or softened /l/ (depending on the territorial affiliation). However, “Spanglish” speakers, who have English as their first language, often pronounce “ll” like a normal /l/. For example, the words “lave” (lava) and “llave” (key) can be pronounced by these speakers identically (Klee Carol y Andrew Lynch 2009: 240-248).

Besides, similar to Spanish, in the words borrowed or modified from English, the letter “g”, followed by the phonemes /e/ and /i/, is pronounced as a softened, but distinct /h/. For example, this can be observed in the modified word “registrar” (Eng. “to register”).

In some cases, there might be observed the sound substitution that is the replacement of the labial sound /w/, which is difficult for Spanish speakers to pronounce and does not exist in Spanish, to /u/ if it is in the middle of a word or after a consonant, or to /gu/ if it is at the beginning of a word. As an example, we can mention such words and expressions used in “Spanglish”, derived from English, as “suéter” (from English “sweater”), or “güisqui” (English “whiskey”), “guáchate” (Eng. “watch out”) (Ramírez 1992: 186-188).

Also, as it has been noted earlier, the phoneme /j/ makes a certain difficulty in pronunciation for the Spanish speakers. To overcome the difficulty of voicing it and to avoid mistakes, in some “Spanglish” words in writing the English ending “tion” /ʃ(ə)n/ was replaced by the Spanish “ción” /si'on/, for example, in the word “aplicación” (from the English “application” with the similar meaning; in Spanish the word “aplicación” has a different meaning of “diligence”). The accent here also changes to the Spanish manner.

Based on the above specification, another characteristic change can be noted – the elimination of double consonants, since in Spanish there is only a double “l” if the words are not borrowed. As the example of this simplification such words as “fútbol” (English “football”), “bil” (“bill”), “atender” (“to attend” meaning “to assist”) can serve (Nginios 2011: 118-122).

The overdifferentiation of phonemes is also characteristic of this “mixed language” and is observed in two opposite phenomena: the voicing of initially silent phonemes, or the muting of originally pronounced ones. Indeed, in “Spanglish” some phonemes that are unpronounceable in English original words are pronounced. This, for example, concerns the final letters (for example, “e”), which are necessary for root phonetic variations of vowels in English. For example, the abovementioned word “vote” is read as /bote/, that is, not only does the final unpronounceable “e” becomes sonorous, but its influence on the root “o” disappears. Apparently, this is due to the simpler pronunciation of vowels, which is characteristic of the Spanish language, when all of them are voiced and have only one constant phoneme. Also, in some cases in unmodified English words, the doubled vowel “e” can be read as a double sound /e/, which is common in Spanish. Rarely the pronunciation of the double “o”, as two /o/ sounds might be observed, since this vowel is not doubled in Spanish and is typical only for the English words (Nginios 2011: 118-122).

An example of muting of phonemes can be the consonants “q” and “g”, when having in speech the sounds /e/ or /i/ after them. To preserve their original sound, they require the following

“u” in writing, which is not pronounced after them, being only a function letter, while in English there is no such rule. This phenomenon is clearly seen in such modified words as “parquear” (Eng. “to park”), “baquear” (“to back up”), “quechar” (“to catch”), “hanguear” (“to hang out”) (Fernández-Ulloa 2004: 86-90).

Thus, the above given analysis might lead to the following results of investigation: mixed languages, precisely “Spanglish”, are a good ground for the interference analysis, as it can be visible on all levels of the language hierarchy; phonetic interference in “Spanglish” may be subdivided into the following types:

- indistinguishability of individual sounds of the English language;
- substitution of some vowels by other ones;
- replacement of some consonant sounds with others;
- voicing the phonemes that do not require to be sounded;
- adding unpronounceable letters.

Conclusion

Contemporary linguistic situation leads to the emergence of the new linguistic branches, investigating interconnection of the linguistic and extralinguistic factors in the development of language. Contact linguistics as one of the modern trends studies various forms of language interaction and the results of language contacts. The mutual influence of languages cannot occur without such process as language interference that might be of different types according to the language levels, where it can be observed. In the standard view, interference is seen as a distracting factor in language learning as it prevents from correct usage of language forms causing mistakes. However, some social, cultural, economic and other external factors influencing the contact of languages and its users might result in the emergence of some new phenomenon. One of these results may be the appearance of a mixed language as the most developed form of interference on all levels of language hierarchy simultaneously. Here it is not already the distracting factor, but the means of progress.

“Spanglish” being taken as an example of a mixed language for the analysis of the phonetic interference is a good basis to show it in various forms. Phonetic interference here manifests itself in the influence of the Spanish phonetics on the English words and phrases, both modified and retaining their original spelling, and much less often – in the influence of the English phonetic norms on the Spanish pronunciation. Among the reasons presupposing this almost one-way influence might be given the simplicity of the Spanish phonetic rules compared to the English ones. Thus, among the types of phonetic interference in “Spanglish”, the most characteristic are: the indistinguishability of individual sounds of the English language; substitution of some vowels by others; replacement of some consonants with others; voicing phonemes that do not require pronunciation, as well as adding unpronounceable letters to some modified English words. These all lead to the development of the phonetic system not peculiar for either of the constituent languages.

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