

THE COGNITIVE ASPECT OF THE LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE

Abstract. In the following article language interference is being investigated from the point of the conceptual integration theory, which proposes two conceptual domains on the basis of similarities to integrate forming a blend. As well, the contact of languages provokes the conflict and then the interpenetration of two linguistic systems in the mind of a user. Two conceptual domains are presented by the contacting languages, which on the basis of the linguistic interference form a blend – a mixed language structure. Various definitions of the language interference have been observed in the article; nevertheless, all the linguists consider that the interaction of the linguistic systems in a speaker's mind leads to the formation of the third integrated system based on the components of both contactors. This assumption has been used to elaborate and present the figure underlying the process of the language interference based on the conceptual integration. To illustrate the theory, the examples on the morphological, lexical and syntactic levels of the mixed language Spanglish have been examined. The given language is the mixture of the English and the Spanish languages, which are interfering in all hierarchical levels. The emphasis in the analysis has been made on the conceptual blending of the two language systems on the levels of Spanglish hierarchy.

Key words: language interference; conceptual blending; conceptual integration; blend; mixed structure; mixed language; Spanglish.

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КОГНИТИВНЫЙ АСПЕКТ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ИНТЕРФЕРЕНЦИИ

Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена исследованию языковой интерференции с точки зрения теории концептуальной интеграции, которая предполагает интеграцию двух концептуальных областей на основании схожих черт с образованием так называемого смешения (бленда). Аналогично этому, контакт языков приводит к конфликту, а затем и взаимопроникновению двух языковых систем в сознании пользователя. Две концептуальные области представлены контактирующими языками, которые на основе лингвистической интерференции образуют бленд – смешанную языковую структуру. В статье были

рассмотрены различные определения языковой интерференции. Тем не менее, во всех освещённых дефинициях, данных лингвистами, указывается, что взаимодействие языковых систем в сознании говорящего приводит к формированию третьей интегрированной системы, основанной на составляющих обеих сторон контакта. Это предположение было использовано для разработки и представления схемы, лежащей в основе процесса языковой интерференции, основанной на концептуальной интеграции. Для иллюстрации теории были рассмотрены примеры на морфологическом, лексическом и синтаксическом уровнях смешанного языка «спанглиш». Данный язык представляет собой смесь английского и испанского языков, интерферирующих на всех иерархических уровнях. Основное внимание в анализе уделено концептуальному смешению двух языковых систем на уровнях иерархии «спанглиша».

Ключевые слова: языковая интерференция; концептуальное смешение; концептуальная интеграция; бленд; смешанная структура; смешанный язык; спанглиш.

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The study of a new language is always connected with the process of language interference, when the native language influences the target one. At a certain moment, when the level of the studied language approaches the level of the native one, the target language starts influencing the mother tongue. In this case, mutual *language interference* is clearly observed, which is, undoubtedly, closely connected with the cognitive processes inside human mind, as language studying is not simply learning its structures, vocabulary and rules, but perceiving the surrounding reality and forming the subsequent concepts through the realm of a new language.

Each language has its own peculiarities, specific vocabulary, non-equivalent lexicon and set phrases, which cannot be literary transferred into other languages. Otherwise, the cultural and cognitive components characteristic of a given nation are lost, and the hidden meaning of the translated phrases is missing. That is why proverbs, set expressions, and phrasal verbs are translated into expressions that are equivalent in meaning but different in composition.

These assertions could be challenged by noting that, for example, multi-dialect languages like English and Spanish, which vary not only from country to country but also from region to region, also have different forms of expressing similar meanings. However, it should be remembered that this very difference demonstrates the influence of human perception and conceptual world picture on the form and content of the language characteristic of a given region.

The individual's perception and classification of the surrounding reality are constructed through the use of the linguistic system, which includes all levels of the language hierarchy. First,

we see, then associate and organize into groups, which is impossible without language use. Even strict grammatical rules, as Langacker R., assumes, are a reflection of the mental structures of a particular nation or even an individual (Langacker 1987: 73). It is not surprising that the emergence of interference provokes interpenetration and even mutual assimilation of the linguistic conceptual systems.

To start with, it is necessary to examine in more detail the definition of the concept of “language interference”. Genuinely the term “interference” was used in physics, chemistry and biology for identifying mutual interaction of waves or species, respectively. Concerning language, the term was firstly applied by the members of the Prague linguistic school (Vachek 2003: 83). According to the Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary, interference is an interaction of the linguistic systems in the conditions of bilingualism, which occurs either during languages’ contact or while individual mastering of a foreign language (Лингвистический энциклопедический словарь 1990: 197). However, this definition does not fully take into consideration the cognitive aspect.

If we consider the definition of the process given by Baudouin de Courtenay I., interference is not just borrowing by a language of single linguistic units of another language, but general mutual convergence of two languages (Верещагин 1968: 56-60). Indeed, two linguistic systems, the knowledge and mental perceptions they convey, interpenetrate each other during a linguistic contact. In this case, the same interfering meaning is no longer expressed within a single linguistic system, but within two or more. Thus, a conflict arises in the individual’s consciousness between linguistic systems, influencing each other, resulting in the formation of a new, unified system consisting of elements, meanings, understandings, and knowledge contained in both languages.

This assumption can also be supported by a set of definitions given by other linguists. For instance, the Russian linguist Scherba L. states that interference is a mutual adaptation of the speaker’s language and of the listener’s language, which results in changes of the norms of both contacting languages (Щерба 1958: 42-46). American linguist Haugen E. defines interference as a linguistic interaction, when any linguistic unit can become a part of two systems simultaneously. However, later the scientist doubted whether a bilingual possesses two complete language systems, as exactly the process of interference objects this fact. An individual uses the system of the first language to fill the gaps in the second and vice versa. The process of interference allows it to fill in the gaps in both systems: the languages complement each other, allowing for the mutual substitution of missing words, concepts, and ideas in both languages (Haugen 1956: 185).

The most developed explanation of interference was given by the American linguist Weinreich U. in his monograph “Languages in Contact” (1976). Here interference is explained as a deviation from the norms of a language by a bilingual as the result of knowing two or more languages or of a language contact (Вайнрайх 1979: 36). In the process of a contact the influence on the whole system of a language takes place: it reconstructs to adapt to the received element and to integrate it into its structure. So, languages’ contact is not simply a linguistic contact, but a cognitive process that at its highest and most developed point results in the construction of a new conceptual and, subsequently, linguistic world picture – hybrid and mixed languages.

According to the Russian sociolinguist Fomichenko L., interference is a language phenomenon based on the close interconnection of interfering elements, which are seen in the form of cognition. The interfering influence of cognitive processes, exteriorized via mentality, knowledge structures, linguistic elements, and language abilities, orients towards understanding that language studying and world cognition are simultaneous and inseparable processes (Фомиченко 1998: 112). Uzbek linguist Dzhusupov M. also emphasizes that speech interference is the result of contact in the individual's consciousness between the language systems of the native and studied languages (Джусупов 2017: 355). Moreover, as the president of the American Pragmatists Association Kecskes I. states, interference is not only mutual adaptation, but it is based on *conceptual blending*, when the concepts within two languages through linguistic channels converge in the bilingual mind, forming a mixed system (Kecskes, Albertazzi 2007: 157).

Conceptual blending itself, also known as conceptual integration, is considered a fundamental cognitive process based on an individual's ability to absorb information, draw conclusions, evaluate, and infer. As a result of conceptual blending, two independent mental spaces, responsible for information input and linked by a common space, are transferred to a new mental space (a hybrid or a blend) based on elements inherent to both. The hybrid generates a new derivative structure that distinguishes it from the input information (Ashurova, Galieva 2018: 61).

This cognitive operation also serves as the basis for the process of linguistic interference. Having "a common underlying conceptual base (CUCB)", blending results in forming conceptual and linguistic information that is neither the same as in the native language, nor as in the target one (Kecskes, Albertazzi 2007: 160). Basing on this conception, we have attempted to create a schematic representation of the conceptual integration (Fig. 1), where L1 is a native language, L2 is a target language, and the blend results in the mixed structure, which, depending on the level of bilingualism and interference, can result in simple mistakes, mutual adaptation or creation of a new mixed language.

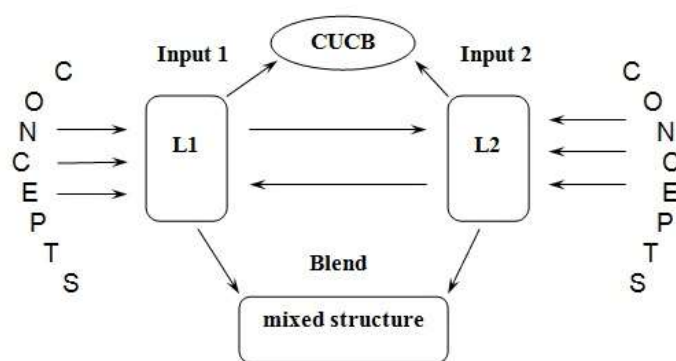


Figure 1. The process of the language interference based on the conceptual integration

Thus, in the common underlying conceptual base of bilinguals two different world visions are blended, resulting in a conceptual domain that is not equal to the content of the conceptual domain in either language (Kecskes, Albertazzi 2007: 161). We should also take into consideration a socio-cultural blending aspect of the language interference. As the language encompasses the conceptual world picture of a nation that speaks it, their mentality and national peculiarities are presented in its

structures and forms. So, the language interference cannot be separated from a cultural component, as understanding a language is learning its nation. Here it should be noted that changes in individual's perception, as the result of studying a new language, are to some extent culturally-colored as the way of world cognition presented via language is also acquired and, colliding with the native vision, results in interference on all the levels of the language hierarchy. Therefore, many scientists put forward the hypothesis about the independent status of the mixed languages, which represent the most deeply developed manifestation of the language interference.

Let us analyze several examples of the mixed structures in morphology, lexis and syntax of a mixed language, based on the interaction of the English and the Spanish languages, namely, Spanglish. Spanglish is a generalized nomination of an overall group of the mixed languages and dialects of the Mexican-American border area, which has presently spread far beyond the initial borderline over the United States and the Latin America, touching simultaneously other world parts, where the given languages come into contact. Spanglish combines traits of English and Spanish in their various combinations depending on the proximity to the border, the individual peculiarities of speakers, the purpose of the contact, etc. and is based on the idea of self-identification and self-representation of the bilingual society in a monolingual world.

Spanglish is characterized by the developed interference of English and Spanish on approximately equal level on all levels of the language hierarchy, not counting the phonetical level, where Spanish influence is stronger. Let us examine the mixed Spanglish structures from the position of the conceptual integration.

On the morphological level of Spanglish, frequent modified words might be observed, which are formed by adding Spanish affixes and inflections to English-taken root morphemes. For instance, this can be seen in such verbs as “colapsar” (from Eng. “to collapse”) or “enjoyer” (Eng. “to enjoy”), or a noun “el asorteamiento” (Eng. “assortment”). In the given examples we can trace the interpenetration of two grammatical systems, namely English and Spanish, where the meaning is taken from the English domain and the grammatical form – from the Spanish one. The formed blend is based, firstly, on the similar properties of the subsequent parts of speech, which is proved by belonging to the same part of speech as in English. Thus, both “colapsar” and “enjoyer” are verbs as their English bases. Secondly, the blend considers the grammatical characteristics of the Spanish domain, which gives verbs, being formed with the help of Spanish verb inflections -ar/-er, the same conjugation and tense characteristics as of Spanish verbs and the noun – the same gender as its Spanish equivalent. That is, similar in sense Spanish noun “el surtido” is of male gender, which gives Spanglish equivalent preference for the male gender, too, which is observed through the male ending -o and the male article “el”.

In lexis such mixture might be noticed even easier as Spanglish lexical system is characterized by the intense code-switching of all types. Let us analyze the following sentence taken from “The Don Quixote of La Mancha” by Stavans I. “*Uno es y slim y rico y single y educado e idealista while el otro es bajo y gordo y pobre y casado y casi iletrado y materialístico, o maybe un mejor término es practical*” (Stavans 2018: V). Here the blending of two lexical systems is visible. Of major interest is that the code-switching concerns not simply the blocks of the

sentence, but the languages are interwoven accurately through all their structure making the forms' blend complex, but smooth. Another proof for the blending to be integrated is that not the particular parts of speech are expressed in one of the languages connected, but the mixture concerns all members without certain preferences.

From the syntactic point, an interesting example might be the usage of a complement in the mixed sentences. For instance, when the complement is presented by the English language, it is put after a verb, as English grammar demands. If it is used in Spanish – then it stands before a verb, as Spanish grammar proposes. Conceptual integration here is expressed not only on the lexical level presented by the code-switching discussed before, but by the underlying grammatical concepts, which oblige English-expressed complement to follow English rules and expressed in Spanish – to follow Spanish rules. It can be seen in the following examples: “Yo *lo* knew”, “I demand that you *le* diga”, “El niño hit *him*” (Stavans 2018: 54-85), where the complements in Spanish “*lo*”, “*le*” are given *before* the verbs “knew”, “diga”, to which they belong, and the complement in English “*him*” – *after* the verb “hit”.

Thus, on the sample of Spanglish we might observe, how two language hierarchies are conceptually integrated into one blend, based on the interwoven properties of two linguistic domains.

To conclude, interference is a linguistic and cognitive process occurring in an individual's consciousness, influencing their perception of reality and reflected in speech. The native and target languages mutually interpenetrate, adapt, and incorporate elements of each other into their linguistic systems. This can result in both simple, periodic errors and – at the most advanced stage of interference – the formation of new hybrid and mixed languages. In this process, the two linguistic systems complement each other, as a bilingual inclined to interference does not possess two complete linguistic systems and uses both languages simultaneously to fill in the gaps. This creates a kind of a mixed structure (blend), which is neither the first nor the second language, but represents a new linguistic entity.

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