



## Interference in Teaching English to Bilinguals

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### Abstract

This article addresses the issue of language interference in the English instruction of bilinguals whose native languages are Russian and Tatar. The causes of this phenomenon are examined from a variety of perspectives. The article highlights the positive and negative aspects of the interference, as well as the effects of these factors on bilinguals' English language acquisition. This article offers a qualitative analysis. In the practical portion of the study, the phonetic errors of Kazan school students who study English due to their native Russian and Tatar languages are analyzed. Bilingual students who initially study a foreign language were chosen for this purpose. After proposing the tasks, phonetic errors were corrected and analyzed from the perspective of the influence of the native language at the time they were made. The article examines various types of phonetic interference using empirical examples from English classes.

**Keywords:** Language Interference; Teaching English; Phonetics Mistakes; Bilingual.

### 1. Introduction

Due to the growing importance of the English language today, it can be concluded that learning this language can be extremely beneficial. Multiple studies have demonstrated that learning a new language improves memory, problem-solving and critical thinking, concentration, multitasking, and listening abilities. Learning English has a profound effect on one's life. So that language-related aspects of life, such as relationships and development, employment opportunities, and personal growth, can change and improve. Unfortunately, some individuals are unwilling to learn languages other than their own. In principle, however, learning English will result in employment, increased self-confidence, and complete mastery of the English language. To this end, 55% of the internet's content is written in English. In general, English is a global language that nearly everyone speaks. Considering the current state of the world and the importance of communication, it is prudent to include this language in personal plans. In the following section, we will learn more features of the English language (Kroll & Bialystok, 2013).

English is a global language that is used to communicate with native English speakers as well as those who speak other languages. In actuality, when we cannot communicate with someone due to a language barrier, we use English, the common language. Therefore, English should be learned for wider communication. English holds an official status as a second language in 60 countries and a special status as a foreign language in 20 others. Additionally, English is the native language of five countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada (Jasim, 2021).

It is impossible to deny that different cultures and languages interact in the contemporary world, which has inescapable consequences. In the process of mastering a language, the norms of one language are superimposed on the norms of another language, resulting in linguistic interference. This phenomenon is frequently accompanied by negative effects, namely errors at various language levels (Weinreich, 1953). Interference in linguistics and foreign language instruction can be examined from various perspectives. The fact that such a contact of languages makes possible their unification is seen as positive. This enables connections between various cultures and enriches the vocabulary through the assimilation of loanwords into the receiving language (Nation, 2001). However, the majority of researchers note that

interference makes language learning more difficult and less effective. Differences in the linguistic pictures of the world of different linguocultural communities are one of the greatest obstacles to communication and the study and teaching of a language as a non-native one, as the interference of the native language affects all levels (Zamaletdinov et al., 2016).

## 2. Literature Review

Errors made by students due to interference are difficult to prevent if they are not taken into consideration. At the beginning of the learning process, certain tasks must be introduced to prevent interference and counteract its influence (Bagana & Khapilin, 2010). The reason for this phenomenon is that bilinguals already possess the grammatical, lexical, and phonetic foundations of their native languages when they begin learning a second language. When attempting to recreate the existing systems of foreign languages in the system of a new foreign language by imposing the norms of the source language on the norms of the language being studied, complications arise (Benediktov & Benediktov, 1968). This phenomenon has an explanation in psycholinguistics.

A learner attempts to simplify the process of learning a foreign language by imitating their native language's norms, which results in numerous errors at all linguistic levels (Yusupova, 2020). In addition to its psychological roots, the phenomenon of interference can also be examined from a linguistic perspective. Despite the fact that some languages may share structural similarities, they are nonetheless distinct. As patterns in different languages are not always the same, this is the reason why transferring patterns from a native language results in errors (Ellis, 1997).

This type of error complicates both the teaching process and its outcome, as native speakers will have difficulty understanding their interlocutor's written and spoken language (Korobeynikova & Ashrapova, 2018). Teachers must pay close attention to the phenomenon of interference in the classroom. To eliminate the accent, it is, therefore, necessary to examine the phenomenon of phonetic interference, which is the assimilation to the phonetic norms of the native language during the formalization of oral speech in a foreign language. To accomplish this, specialized exercises and strategies for overcoming interference should be implemented (Tulusina & Akhmetgaleeva, 2017).

## 3. Methodology

This article is a qualitative study of frequently occurring interference errors. Its purpose is to identify the causes of the phonetic errors made by Russian and Tatar students when pronouncing English sounds. Sixteen Kazan Gymnasium elementary school students served as a practical base. In order to assess the level of influence of the native language on the process of teaching English, we selected primary school pupils whose native languages are Russian and Tatar.

In order to collect data, the students were instructed to read aloud a few excerpts from English texts. A voice recorder was used to capture the results, which were then reviewed for errors. Collecting and analyzing the data, noting errors, and explaining and evaluating them were the tasks of the research.

## 4. Results

The essence of phonetic interference is the transference of phonetic norms from one language to another. Misplaced stress is one example of such a mistake. This occurs because a similar word in the native language may sound differently in a foreign language (Wells, 2000). For instance, the stressed syllable in the Russian word «индустрия» is the third syllable, which differs from the English word «industry.» In an attempt to transfer the norms of the Russian language, students make an error in intonation, which is perceived as an accent in spoken language.

A violation of articulatory skills can account for interfering errors. When producing sounds, each language is characterized by a certain position of all parts of the speech apparatus; therefore, when students attempt to recreate sounds by analogy with the sounds of their native language, they become distorted, which is also the cause of the accent (Wells, 2000). This type of error includes the pronunciation of palatalized sounds where they are not required and vice versa, as well as specific English sounds.

Palatalization is the process of softening consonants by elevating the middle portion of the tongue to the upper palate or by shifting the articulation to the palate. Thus, both Russian and Tatar have both hard and soft consonants and both moderate and strong palatalization. This phenomenon is uncommon in the English language, however, because the majority of English consonants are harsh. In this case, palatalization can occur when a front vowel follows a consonant,

as in the word “review” [revju:]. The palatalization of English sounds does not result in a change in the meaning of the word; however, it does result in students having an accent.

Considering errors in the pronunciation of specific English sounds [ə] and [ð], it is evident that learners attempt to find an equivalent in their native languages. Bilingual Russian speakers are characterized by replacing the following phonemes with incorrectly similar sounds: c, [ϕ]; [ɜ], [ɐ]. Tatar contains sounds similar to specific English sounds, so Tatar students make fewer phonetic mistakes in this instance.

Tatar has its own set of distinctive sounds, which are reflected in the English phonetics: - ə - [æ], ə - [ə:], ж - [dj], н - [ɲ], and h - [h]. Therefore, students whose native language is Tatar make fewer phonetic mistakes relating to phoneme pronunciation. However, both Tatar and Russian students frequently replace long vowel sounds with short ones, which can result in not only phonetic mistakes but also difficulties in the semantic differentiation of certain words. For instance, replacing the short sound [i] with the long sound [i:] results in a completely different word: “ship” instead of “sheep.”

The Tatar language is characterized by synharmony, which requires that every sound in a word be either soft or loud. There is no such rule in the English language, creating a problem for Tatar-speaking students who use this pattern when speaking English and distort the pronunciation. This category of error includes students’ mispronunciation of the word “embarrassment” [im’b’ar’as’m’en] by softening vowels and consonants. In addition to phonetic errors in pronouncing phonemes, both groups of bilinguals frequently commit intonational errors in syntax. This includes improper sentence pauses, tempo, and intonation. English has two types of intonation: rising and falling. The choice of intonation depends on the sentence’s meaning and purpose. Rising intonation is used when we say goodbye, ask open questions or make a request to someone. Falling intonation is used in orders, exclamations, affirmative sentences and special questions.

Additionally, phonetic interference is subdivided into various levels. Their oral speech contains instances of substitution, resegmentation, overdifferentiation, and underdifferentiation, according to an analysis of their mistakes. This is related to learners’ inability to distinguish foreign sounds while listening correctly. This is the category of phonetic mistakes that refers to difficulties with the pronunciation of specific English sounds. When there are no such sounds in the native language, such errors have been described earlier in this paper. Therefore, a learner cannot accurately pronounce them in a foreign language while attempting to replace them with similar but distinct sounds.

Overdifferentiation is the incorrect pronunciation of consonant phonemes, including mistakes in the loudness and timbre of sounds. The palatalization of previously described sounds is a prime example of this error. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in the speech of Tatar students, whose native language requires consonants and vowels to be in harmony with each other in accordance with the hardness and softness principle. An additional example of overdifferentiation in the speech of English learners is the devoicing of final consonants by analogy with Russian and Tatar: end – [ent], code – [keut], dog – [dok].

Within the framework of substitution, students impose the phonetic norms of their native language on the norms of the English language. In this instance, the aspiration of consonant sounds presents obstacles. This phenomenon is absent from the Russian and Tatar languages, whereas it is a characteristic feature of English phonetics. Under the influence of interference, learners do not add aspiration to the English phonemes [p], [k], and [t], which are formed by airflow during exhalation after articulation of these phonemes. Beginner-level students make frequent errors of this type, forgetting the standard phonetic features of English: cat, take, and purpose.

Resegmentation occurs at the syntagmatic level in speech. In the analysis of learners’ errors, examples of plus- and minus-segmentation and vowel contraction were documented. In the first instance, the interfering influence of the language causes English language learners to add extra sounds to certain words. This is especially evident when an English word ends with the letter combination –er, which has no sound and cannot be pronounced. In the Russian and Tatar languages, it is not typical to place an unpronounceable sound at the end of a word. Consequently, errors occur in the form of epenthesis or the addition of an extra sound. In addition to this example, plus-segmentation can be observed in the following words: father - [fəðer], corner - [kɔrner], going - [gəʊɪŋ].

In contrast, minus-segmentation is a phenomenon in which certain sounds disappear when pronouncing words. This occurrence is known as apocope. This category includes the following errors made by students: The continent of Europe - [jʊrɒp]. In this case, the influence of the native language is particularly apparent, as in Russian and Tatar, a consonant follows the first vowel, whereas in English, it is followed by two vowels. Vowel contraction includes examples

of errors that occur when learners attempt to replace difficult-to-perceive diphthongs with a single vowel instead of multiple vowels or a combination of vowels and consonants. The analysis has revealed the following examples of this type of error: queue – [ku:], Europe – [jurɒp], pedestrian– [pɪdestren]. As a type of phonetic interference, prosodic interference can also be distinguished; as a result, incorrect word stress placement can occur. Due to similar spelling and pronunciation in the Russian-English and Tatar-English language pairs, borrowings and words-internationalism present a greater number of difficulties of this type. This category of errors includes the following instances: internet - [ɪntən'et], crocodile - [krɒkəd'ɪl], telephone - [telɪf'on].

## 5. Discussion

The research demonstrates that oral speech of learners with Russian and Tatar native languages contains a large number of phonetic errors due to the following factors: the imposition of phonetic patterns of the native language on the norms of a foreign language, the lack of identical phonemes of a foreign language in the native language, and an attempt to simplify the process of memorizing phonetic material by assimilation to the native language.

If attention is not paid to this phenomenon during the learning process, the situation will deteriorate over time, and students will use grammatical errors carelessly in their speech. To avoid such a scenario, it is necessary to implement specialized exercises, such as tasks based on a differentiated approach and incorporating multimedia technologies, among others (Rakhimova & Mukhamadiarova, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

The study revealed that the influence of the native language is indeed reflected in the process of foreign language acquisition. The conducted analysis enables us to conclude that the interference of the native language actually causes phonetic errors in English instruction. It is necessary to pay attention to this phenomenon during the learning process in order to teach students correct pronunciation and further assist them in avoiding such speech errors.

The impact of one's native language cannot be overstated. Transferring norms from one language to another results in numerous errors across all language levels. Learners develop an accent and make errors that make their speech difficult to understand due to phonetic interference. This enables us to conclude that, in order to combat all types of language interference, a special set of exercises must be developed and implemented in the process of teaching foreign languages.

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## Author Contributions

The authors contributed equally to the writing of the article.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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