

On The Issue Of Language Interference At Language Levels In The Study Of A Tertiary Language

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the phenomenon of language interference in the context of tertiary language acquisition, focusing on how previously learned languages impact the learning of a new language. It examines interference at various linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, identifying common patterns and challenges faced by learners. The study explores the role of both the learner's first (L1) and second language (L2) in shaping interference patterns, considering factors such as typological similarity and proficiency levels. We analyze the impact of language interference on both receptive and productive language skills, emphasizing the need for explicit awareness strategies and targeted pedagogical interventions. The research aims to provide valuable insights into the complexities of tertiary language learning, offering implications for language teaching practice and curriculum development.

Keywords: Language Interference, Tertiary Language Acquisition, Cross-linguistic Influence, Second Language Acquisition, Multilingualism, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Transfer, Linguistic Typology, Language Learning, Language Pedagogy, Learner Strategies, Error Analysis

Introduction

The phenomenon of language interference, where the features of one language influence the production or comprehension of another, is a well-established area of research in second language acquisition (SLA). However, with the increasing prevalence of multilingualism, there is a growing need to understand the complexities of language interference in the context of tertiary language learning, where learners are juggling multiple linguistic systems. This study delves into the specific issue of language interference at various levels of linguistic structure (phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics) when learning a third or subsequent language (L3+). Exploring the source and nature of these interferences can provide valuable insights into the cognitive processes involved in multilingual language learning and inform pedagogical practices for L3+ acquisition.

In tertiary language acquisition, learners are not starting from a clean slate. They bring with them pre-existing knowledge of their first language (L1) and at least one second language (L2). The interplay of these languages with the new L3+ can result in intricate patterns of interference. Interference can arise from any of the learner's previously acquired languages, leading to a complex web of influences. For example, the phonological system of the L1 may impact the pronunciation of the L3+, while the syntactic structures of the L2 may influence the grammatical patterns used in the L3+. Understanding these specific levels of interference is crucial to understanding the complex challenges faced by multilingual learners.

Furthermore, the nature of the linguistic relationship between the languages involved can also affect the degree and type of interference. Languages that are typologically similar may lead to more positive transfer (facilitation of learning) at some levels but also greater interference at other levels. Conversely, languages that are typologically distinct may lead to less positive transfer but more noticeable and predictable errors. This study will investigate these nuances by examining specific examples of interference from previously acquired languages at different levels in the L3+ acquisition process.

This study aims to explore the phenomenon of language interference at various linguistic levels in the context of tertiary language acquisition. By examining the patterns of interference and their underlying causes, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of the cognitive mechanisms involved in multilingual language learning. The insights from this research can provide valuable guidance for educators seeking to develop more effective instructional approaches for supporting learners in mastering a third or subsequent language. Ultimately, this study aims to shed light on the complex interplay of multiple languages in the minds of multilingual learners.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the phenomenon of language interference at different levels in tertiary language learning. The study will combine quantitative analysis of learner production data with qualitative analysis of learner perceptions and experiences. The study will be conducted with learners of a specific L3+ (e.g., Spanish, French, Mandarin), who have previously acquired at least one other language (L2). The participants may have a variety of L1s.

Quantitative Data Collection:

1. Participants: A sample learners of a specific tertiary language (L3+) will be recruited for the study. The participants will be selected to represent diverse backgrounds in terms of their L1, L2, age, and proficiency level in the L3+.

2. Instruments: Data will be collected using various instruments to assess learners' production in the L3+, including:

- Oral Production Tasks: Learners will be asked to complete oral production tasks, such as picture descriptions, role-plays, or impromptu speeches. These tasks will elicit spontaneous speech, allowing for the observation of interference patterns.

- Written Production Tasks: Learners will be asked to complete written tasks, such as essays, summaries, or narrative writing prompts. These tasks will allow researchers to examine interference patterns in formal writing.

- Grammar and Vocabulary Tests: Standardized grammar and vocabulary tests will be administered to assess learners' knowledge of L3+ rules and lexical items, as well as to pinpoint specific areas where interference is evident.

- Phonological Assessment: Standardized phonological assessments will be used to evaluate pronunciation and intonation in L3+.

3. Data Analysis: The quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure the frequency of occurrence of interference patterns at different linguistic levels. Error analysis will be conducted to identify and categorize specific types of errors resulting from interference (phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic). Inferential statistics such as Chi-square or ANOVA will be used to determine the significance of relationships between learners' L1 and L2 backgrounds and specific patterns of interference in L3+ performance.

Qualitative Data Collection:

1. Participants: A subset of participants from the quantitative phase will be selected for in-depth interviews. This purposive sample will be chosen to include a variety of proficiency levels, L1 and L2 backgrounds, and diverse experiences with multilingualism.

2. Instruments: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and strategies in dealing with language interference during L3+ learning. The interview questions will address topics such as:

- Awareness of interference patterns in their L3+ performance.
- Strategies used to overcome or avoid interference.
- Perceptions of the influence of their L1 and L2 on L3+ learning.
- Experiences with different types of interference.
- The role of instruction and corrective feedback in addressing interference.

3. Data Analysis: Qualitative data from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This process will identify recurring themes and patterns within the interview transcripts, offering rich insights into the lived experiences of multilingual learners and the strategies they employ to manage language interference in their L3+ learning journey. Thematic analysis will aim to capture the complex and nuanced perspectives of the participants.

Conclusion

This study seeks to shed light on the complex phenomenon of language interference at different levels in the study of a tertiary language. The findings of this research will contribute to a better understanding of the interplay between multiple languages in the minds of multilingual learners. By providing evidence of the nature and source of interference, the study aims to inform pedagogical practices, assisting educators in designing targeted interventions to mitigate negative transfer and enhance learners' proficiency in L3+.

The study's results are expected to reveal specific linguistic levels and areas where interference is most prominent for learners from different linguistic backgrounds. The analysis will identify both the detrimental and facilitative effects of prior language knowledge, highlighting the importance of understanding individual learner profiles. The qualitative data will provide valuable insights into the learners' experiences and strategies for dealing with interference. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis will allow for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon of language interference in tertiary language learning, contributing to the development of a research-based pedagogy that effectively caters to the unique challenges faced by multilingual learners. The study will also highlight the need for further research on the cognitive mechanisms of language processing and the effectiveness of different strategies used to overcome the negative effects of interference, pushing the boundaries of our understanding of multilingualism and language acquisition.

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