



**International
Journal of Society, Culture & Language
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: www.ijscl.net
ISSN 2323-2210 (online)

Speech Interference Generated by Proverbs and Phraseological Units of the Russian and Chinese Languages

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ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received May 2021
Received in Revised form July 2021
Accepted August 2021
Available online August 2021

KEYWORDS:

Learning
Transposition
Paronym
Translation
Synonym

Abstract

To express their thoughts in Russian, students should have language resources in their active vocabulary, the consolidation of which in memory is advisable based on the skills of their native language. The most important role in teaching students a non-native language is played by transfer, which is one of the central categories of psychology. Russian and Chinese mentalities have different, sometimes opposite features, which make it difficult for Chinese students to learn Russian. The phenomenon of transfer occurs and exists during language contact regardless of the will and desire of bilinguals. As a result of the transfer phenomenon, interference and its cause are that certain areas in the linguistic picture of the world are preserved, to which the proverb and phraseology belong. The authors believe that proverbs should be attributed to the category of fixed expressions of the language and studied from the standpoint of general, particular, and comparative phraseology.

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1. Introduction

The exchange of information, first of all, takes place with the help of language without the existence of which it would be impossible to achieve mutual understanding. Communication can be direct or indirect (through translation). During translation, thoughts and ideas are transmitted from one language and expressed in another one. Direct communication is possible only if the communicants speak the same language. If the communicants belong to the same culture, the chances of achieving understanding are quite high. Cultural differences and differences in mentalities, however, can become obstacles to successful communication. As an example, the fact that communicants who speak a foreign language may not understand contexts and subtext may be mentioned. It is especially difficult to understand proverbs and phraseological units. The native language affects the consciousness of a person and has a direct influence on the process of learning the foreign language. It should be mentioned that a person cannot control the negative effects of such an influence, in particular, unconscious, spontaneous transfer of language habit. Such interference can be seen on different linguistic levels, including the lexical level.

The issue of interference has long been the object of attention of linguists studying the problems of bilingualism and translation. It occupies an equally important place in linguodidactics. The phenomenon of interference always manifests itself in the process of learning a second language. Sometimes it can have a positive effect (in particular, when contacting languages are studied). A more frequent effect is a negative one when learners make speech mistakes, violate language norms, and have a noticeable accent. There is a huge number of reasons for the interference occurrence and factors affecting this phenomenon, among which the main ones can be distinguished (Fu & Wang, 2020):

- knowledge of the native language, the level of speech development and language acquisition;
- knowledge of a foreign language, the level of speech development and language acquisition;

- the period of studying the language, the temporal difference between the study of the native and foreign languages. Moreover, the smaller this difference is, the more noticeable the interference is.

At the same time, interference is interpreted as “a violation by a bilingual of the rules of correlation of contacting languages, which manifests itself in their speech in a deviation from the norm”, and is often understood as a negative transfer due to the inhibitory effect of skills, in which “already established skills make it difficult to form new ones or reduce their effectiveness” (Fu & Wang, 2020, pp. 539-540). Interference in each language has its own specifics (Fu & Wang, 2020). The authors agree with the division of interlingual interference into weak and strong. Weak interference is a type of interference that can be worked out in a short amount of time and does not require great effort from students. Strong interference, on the contrary, is hard to overcome and requires a lot of practice and different types of activities. For example, the Russian phraseologism *Когда рак на горе свистнет* (when pigs fly) corresponds to the Chinese *When the sun rises from the west* (which corresponds to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz *When the tail of the donkey touches the ground*). Some conventional comparisons can serve as an example of contrasting intercultural lacunae: in Russian culture, there is *работает как вол* (works like an ox), in Chinese – *works like a horse*, a native Russian speaker will say *тонкий как спичка* (thin as a match) about a slim person, in Chinese culture such a person is often compared with a reed, a splinter. In each picture of the world, there may be etalon lacunae that are logically difficult to explain, for example, in the Russian language there is a representation of height: *Высокий как жердь* (high as a pole), *Как верста коломенская* (like a verst of Kolomna) (Inurrieta et al., 2020; Le Poder, 2020).

In the linguistic consciousness of the Slavs, the word *голова* (head) is not only an expression of the semantics of the “upper part of the body” but also is a verbal symbol of the center of the mind, intelligence: *Голова – главный* (*Head is the main person*). In Russian: *первый заместитель* (first deputy), in Chinese: *first hand*, in Kazakh: *right hand*. Problems in the

assimilation of phraseological units and proverbs are represented by images reflecting the characteristic features of the animal and plant world: *медвежий угол* (bearish angle) – *middle of nowhere*, *как от козла молока* (like milk from a goat) – *of little use*, *убить двух зайцев* (to kill two hares) – *to kill two birds with one stone*, *медведь на ухо наступил* (bear stepped on the ear) – *to have a tin ear*, etc., in which the expressive function expresses a state of consciousness with a modal-evaluative, the sociologized attitude of a person (Katsyuba et al., 2020). Acquiring the figurative means of the language to a certain extent is a problem for foreign students; most often, they are interpreted incorrectly since the rules of another language and another culture are fulfilled in proverbs and phraseological units, and when reading, there is indirect communication between representatives of various linguistic and ethnocultural communities. In this case, the language barrier is not the only obstacle to mutual understanding (Chrissou, 2020; Dong & Buckingham, 2020).

Interference is divided into interlinguistic and intralinguistic. In the case of intralingual interference, the language units and the rules for applying them are replaced within one (in this case, the one being studied) language. To these objective reasons that prevent an adequate understanding of phraseological units and proverbs, it is necessary to add a lack of understanding of the image underlying them. A linguistic error also includes a functional violation of speech segments, entailing a distorted idea of the object of cognition (language). Proverbs are complex formations that represent the phenomena of language, stable, reproducible combinations in appropriate communicative situations expressing a generalized judgment and identifying all the signs of a phraseological unit. Speech errors that occur in foreigners are most often associated with aspects of the language, i.e., phonetic, grammatical, lexical, and errors related to aspects of speech. At the lexical level, errors are associated with violations of the compatibility of words in the composition of proverbs and phraseological units, an incorrect understanding of the images underlying them. For example, one cannot say *beef milk* instead of *cow's milk*.

The purpose of this study was to investigate national and cultural specifics of the Russian language and characterize the main difficulties the Chinese students meet while learning Russian on the example of proverbs and phraseological units that cannot be adequately translated to Chinese.

2. Theoretical Framework

Interference is an inconsistent language form obtained as a result of the transference phenomenon. Since the concept of interference has a practically recognized negative meaning, to denote a positive transfer result, a positive transfer or, less often, facilitation is often mentioned. There are two types of skill transfer: 1) interference (a negative transfer that is hindering the mastery of a new activity); 2) facilitation (a positive transfer that contributes to the successful mastery of a new activity). Interference refers to cases of deviation from the norm of the second language that occurs in the written and oral speech of a bilingual in this language under the influence of forms, models, and rules of their compatibility in the primary language. It also considers facilitation, namely, the coincidence of models in two languages, as a result of which there is no violation of the norms of the second language. Such a psycholinguistic interpretation of the transfer phenomenon is appealing. Language differences are a linguistic entity, and learning difficulties are a psychological category.

The term ‘facilitation’ is not widespread enough; the terms ‘positive transfer’ and ‘transposition’ are used along with it. In this paper, the authors use the term “transposition”. This phenomenon is the basis for an integrative approach in teaching Russian and native languages. Transposition is a positive influence of the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired by students in their native language on the process of acquiring a non-native language. It should be noted that the transfer studies mainly consider the features of interference (Vereshchagin, 1983; Zhluktenko, 1993). The role of transposition in teaching Russian to students of national schools, which is one of the most relevant in modern methodology, is among the least studied. Among the special works, the research of Suprun (1975), Pashkovskaya (2006), and others can be mentioned. The ideas about the

use of transposition in the national audience were expressed by Bystrova (2003) in works devoted to general and particular problems of the theory of linguodidactics. Nevertheless, many issues of transposition are not sufficiently covered.

Transposition is a more complex and diverse phenomenon, the features of which depend on such factors as the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities in the native language, the presence of identical or similar elements between the native and Russian languages (Zhluktenko, 1993), the methods of using transposition in each specific case, and the nature of motivation when performing educational actions by students (Suprun, 1975). The effectiveness of the use of transposition is associated with the implementation of all these factors. In fact, if students do not have a solid knowledge of their native language, the skills and abilities to operate with the facts of their native language have not been sufficiently formed, it is impossible to talk about the possibility of a positive transfer (Bystrova, 2003). Apparently, the fact that in the practice of teaching Russian in national schools and universities, the transposition is used only sporadically is explained by the fact that the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities of students in their native language is very low. It is known that common features can be characteristic of all languages, as well as for a separate family or group of languages (Pashkovskaya, 2006). The universality of various properties of languages can be manifested at the level of formal means of expressing grammatical categories (for example, paradigms of grammatical forms and methods of word formation) or can cover the semantics of words and phrases.

3. Methodology

Acquiring a second language entails considerable changes in the structure of a linguistic person caused by the need for the coexistence of two or more language systems. From the point of view of psychology, transfer means the transposition of skills and abilities from one language to another. The obvious lack of methodological recommendations on the use of transposition in the practice of language teaching is felt especially acutely at present when national schools and universities

are searching for optimal methods and forms of teaching both the native language and Russian.

Language teaching has a general educational value when it teaches how to analyze thoughts through the analysis of means of expression, and this is achieved only by studying languages simultaneously and always looking for the corresponding elements. Then language learning becomes a powerful factor in the shaping of the mind. A person who purposefully and systematically learns a non-native language studies the linguistic means, including vocabulary, grammar, etc. They begin to conceive the fact of the rejection of the linguistic form from the conceptual content. The language form ceases to be transparent; it becomes opaque to the content. A person learning a second language is involved in the process of comparing the forms of the same content (concepts, judgments, etc.) by means of different languages. The comparison of the language systems of the native and the studied, in particular, foreign languages, determines a new consciously controlled bilingual existence of the individual. This state of bilingualism correlates with the development of dialectical thinking.

Foreign language learning cannot be successful if only mechanical assimilation of lexical units is implemented. Linguistic, speech, text, cultural, socio-cultural, communicative competencies are extremely important, and only their harmonious applying and equal connection in the curriculum can facilitate the process. In this context, the phenomena of the Russian language, which differ from the phenomena in the Chinese language or are absent in it, require special attention. Previous researches (Abdukadirova et al., 2020; Chrissou, 2020; Dong & Buckingham, 2020; Fu & Wang, 2020; Gisle, 2020; Katsyuba et al., 2020; Le Poder, 2020) have proven the importance of studying the issue of language interference. It is crucial to overcome cross-lingual interference, including that one that appears in the context of the study of culture-specific items.

The authors monitored students' oral and written language to find mistakes in the use of proverbs and phraseological units. Based on their own observations, the authors analyzed

the mistakes made by Chinese students during the studying of the Russian language, including students' mistakes made in written works and during practical classes. The classification of the mistakes was made on the basis of existing classifications (Bystrova, 2003; Vereshchagin, 1983; Xu et al., 2020; Zhluktenko, 1993)

4. Results and Discussion

The work on the prevention of errors based on the mixing of words that are similar in meaning or form should be based on the

principle of differentiation of similar phenomena of the language (Table 1). The ability to differentiate, compare, and segment linguistic and speech phenomena is a necessary condition for cultural speaking. This ability to differentiate words that are similar in form or meaning is important for overcoming speech errors, the reason for which lies in the imperfection of the mechanism of speech production (the mechanism of lexical choice and grammatical binding) and, as a result, in the confusion of similar lexical units in speech.

Table 1

Types of Errors in Foreigners' Speech

No.	Examples of lexical errors	Causes of a lexical error
1	Кассирша наконец-то сказала “ага” (“согласилась помочь”) The cashier finally said “aha” (“agreed to help”)	The absence of a word in the lexicon
2	Друзья любили вечерами “разглядывали фильм” Friends loved watching a movie in the evenings	Mixing of synonyms – a verbal-nominal combination and a word, violation of style.
3	У него “организационный (организаторский) талант” He has organizational talent	Mixing of paronyms
4	Это у нас в обычае “не можно” (противоречит обычаю) It is “not allowed” in our custom (contrary to custom)	Mixing of antonyms
5	Собака жила в своем “доме” The dog lived in its “house”	Replacement with an associatively close word
6	Лягушка превратилась в “красивую красавицу” The frog has turned into a “beautiful beauty”	An extra word, repetition of the cognate words
7	Я люблю молоко “говядины” (вместо «коровье молоко») I love beef milk (instead of cow's milk)	Violation of lexical compatibility
8	Они работают “спустя руки” They work “with their hands down”	The destruction of phraseologism
9	Они “разговаривали” об этом They “talked” about it	Mixing of specific forms of the verb

There are different approaches of Russian methodologists to the classification of lexical errors. There are three types of errors depending on the type of dominant interference: interlinguistic interference, which includes pleonasm – the use of intruder words for a Russian phrase, the calque translation of fixed expressions, including those with the meaning of time; interlinguistic and intralinguistic interference at the same time – paronyms, synonyms, and intralinguistic interference: synonyms, paronyms, the use of which is associated with lexical compatibility, stylistic and expressive coloring. There is a classification of lexical errors caused by cross-language interference: pleonasm – the use of extra words in the sentence: *мы танцевали танец* (we danced a dance) (tautology and

pleonasm are not quite the same: tautology – a word with the same meaning, and pleonasm – is the verbal redundancy); calque translation of the fixed expressions, including the rearrangement of the components: interlinguistic and intralinguistic interference at the same time: paronyms: *очень экономический счетчик* (very economic counter) – instead of *экономный счетчик* (economic counter), *встать учителем* (to stand up as a teacher) – *стать учителем* (to become a teacher); synonyms; intralinguistic interference: synonyms, paronyms, the use of which is associated with a lexical collocation, stylistic, and expressive coloring.

Knowledge of the types of lexical errors and the ability –to classify them helps the teacher to build systematic work on their prevention, as well as to carry out diagnostics when

teaching and enriching students' vocabulary. At the phonetic level, the Chinese make mistakes when pronouncing the sounds *m*, *p*, *ж*, for example, *лабодать* instead of *работать* to (work), *лано* instead of *рано* (early), *шолдый* instead of *желтый* (yellow), etc. At the lexical level, errors are caused by the phenomenon of interlinguistic interference, i.e. the use of extra words (pleonasm): *рисовать рисунок* (to draw a drawing), or errors caused by a violation of the compatibility of words: *говяжье молоко* (beef milk), *шуметь невозможно* (it is not possible to make noise;); paronyms: *очень экономический счетчик* (very economic counter) – *экономный счетчик* (economical counter), *встать учителем* (to stand up as a teacher) – *стать учителем* (to become a teacher); synonyms; intralinguistic interference: synonyms, paronyms, the use of which is associated with lexical compatibility, stylistic and expressive colouring: *овощи жарить* (fry vegetables) instead of *овощи тушить* (stew vegetables). Speech errors among foreigners are mainly related to aspects of the language: phonetic, grammatical, lexical errors, as well as errors related to aspects of speech.

Lexical errors were associated with the violation of word compatibility rules: *говяжье молоко* (beef milk) instead of *коровье молоко* (cow's milk), *чтобы хорошо учиться, надо учиться, много учиться* (to study well, you have to study, study a lot), *коричневые волосы* instead of *каштановые волосы* (brown hair), *в этом рассказе рассказывается* (this story tells), *мой брат молодой чем я* (my brother is young than me). Furthermore, mistakes correlated with a violation of compatibility and in the composition of proverbs and phraseological units were often made in the speech of Chinese students, which is associated with a wrong understanding of the image underlying them: *она красива как змея* (she is as beautiful as a snake); *девушки прекрасны как журавли* (girls are as beautiful as cranes) (Lončar & Valero, 2020). Based on these classifications and the analysis of typical mistakes of Chinese students, it was established that in most cases, interlinguistic interference occurs during calquing, when the lexical components of the original are translated by replacing them with lexical correspondences of the native language.

Calquing has become understood somewhat more broadly, including as a literal translation of fixed expressions and even sentences. Thus, in the Russian language, the phraseologism *правая рука* (right hand) is used to denote the main performing person, but when translating into Chinese, a calque translation is used *first hand*, which creates equivalent values of fixed expressions. Most often, there are errors generated by the permutation of components: interlinguistic and intralinguistic interference at the same time (Gisle, 2020).

Interference as a process and the result of the process is a violation by a native bilingual or multilingual speaker of the rules of correlation of contacting languages, manifested in their speech in a deviation from the norm. Observation of different types and subtypes of interference shows that the process of mastering new linguistic material, when understanding and guessing about the meaning of unexplored elements of the second non-native language (L2), the student can arbitrarily use any of the previously learned languages as support: native language (NL) or Russian (L1). Interference as a complex multidimensional phenomenon is a process and the result of a process in the contact of languages. The contact of languages is studied based on comparative linguistics. It is known that new material is better remembered if –the connections between semantics and structural features of the Russian and native languages are established. It is noted that students with a poorly developed speech in their native language often experience great difficulties in learning Russian. This statement is also confirmed by the example of students when a low level of speech competence does not allow them to freely operate language means in their native language (Winn & Restrepo, 2020).

This lack of language material also affects speech activity in Russian. With a highly developed speech ability, students learn the Russian language without much effort through their native language. Apparently, when mastering the laws of speech, some rules apply to all languages, especially if these languages are genealogically in certain relationships. Awareness and assimilation of a non-native language occur through knowledge of the structures and facts of the native language when they are compared, which makes it

possible to find the shortest path for an unambiguous understanding of the linguistic units of the contacting languages. This concept of acquiring a non-native language is based on the position of the widespread point of view about the universal character of thinking (Xu et al., 2020). The language base of a person in the process of developing and acquiring their native language directly interacts with the development of the thinking apparatus. The acquisition of another language, if it occurs with a formed language code in the native language, can be considered as a process of interaction for two language codes.

The authors consider the native language not as a system that needs to be overcome but as a basis for acquiring a non-native Russian language. According to this statement, it is advisable to draw up both programs and textbooks that will orient students to those features of their native language that are easily transferred into Russian or associated with it and often borrowed from Russian. The acquisition of new language experience is most effectively carried out based on existing knowledge and skills. The idea of a conscious and comparative approach based on an interlinguistic linguotypological study of language units is prospective for teaching Russian and Kazakh languages to school and university students. Conscious and intentional acquisition of a foreign language is clearly based on a certain level of development of the native language, and, conversely, the acquisition of a foreign language repeats the path of acquiring the higher forms of the native language (Abdukadirova et al., 2020).

Thus, interlinguistic and intralinguistic interference are the main causes of lexical errors. Most often, the result of interlinguistic interference is manifested when using (translating) fixed expressions with a meaning of time. When using synonyms and paronyms, both factors are applicable. Intralinguistic interference prevails when choosing a word in a spontaneous oral speech at a fast pace, which contributes to the erroneous use of paronyms. Knowledge of typical mistakes helps to prevent and correct them in a timely manner during the learning process, and the analysis of specific examples clarifies the semantics and lexical compatibility, which the dictionary cannot always give. A comparison of the

structural and semantic components of nominocentric proverbs shows that more similarities are observed in the composition of units with the concept of "man and his world". Semantically coinciding metaphors, proverbs, and phraseological units denote connotative meanings in a typical situation, create an image, give a national and cultural flavor (Walter, 2020). Teaching foreign students to compare the figurative meanings of Russian and Chinese proverbs helps to see their structural and semantic specifics, thematic diversity for the correct choice of the situation of their application in speech. Through the use of proverbs, the speaker's thought is expressed not only more accurately but also more informatively, figuratively, and emotionally.

Thus, the basis of the universal language and a single fundamental theory of language cannot be developed outside of the typological, comparative, and contrastive study of related and unrelated languages. Typological linguistics involves the comparative study of languages, as well as their individual levels and units. Therefore, it is quite natural that the phraseological systems of related and unrelated languages are also subjected to comparative and typological analysis. Comparative and typological studies of individual subsystems of related and unrelated languages contribute to a deeper and broader disclosure of not only linguistic universals, quasi-universals (linguistic phenomena often found in the languages of the world), but also unique ones as such in the phraseology of various languages. At the present stage, the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language (Russian as a Second Language) solves complex problems, and some ideas are being revised. For example, the development of all types of speech activity in their interrelation is put forward at the present stage as one of the main areas in teaching.

Deep knowledge of the language studied is a mandatory requirement for a foreign language teacher. What is also important and should be paid attention to is their knowledge of the student's native language, its structure and lexis. Knowing the similarities and differences of the two languages as well as of the two cultures may prevent ambiguous situations and improve the level of assimilation of the material by the students.

5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the authors would like to note that the process of acquiring a foreign language is considered by many scientists as a special human activity when the development of knowledge of the studied language is based on knowledge of the native language. Paremic units, including proverbs and phraseological units with the concept of “man and his world” compared in Russian and Chinese, thematically do not differ very much from others. They also offer insight into nature, characteristic features of flora and fauna of countries, religion and folk beliefs, and many others. The practical orientation of teaching the Russian language has expanded with the ideas of the need from the initial stage of teaching foreign students to form various competencies, such as linguistic, speech, text, cultural, socio-cultural, and important components of communicative competence, including knowledge, skills to learn and communicate in the field of professional communication and communication in the conditions of everyday behavior in public life, related to everyday life and leisure, etc.

For this reason, the practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language began to include not only professionally necessary language elements in terms of content but also forms of speech etiquette, speech intentions, as well as units reflecting the national and cultural specifics of the language. The communicative competence provides fluency of foreign students in the Russian language, which will be incomplete without the development of paremiological units since oral and written speech is not complete without allegories, the use of words in a figurative sense. The use of proverbs and phraseological units in speech makes speech natural, bright, and rich, helps a comprehensive understanding of the literary text, and promotes the establishment of emotional contact between the interlocutors. However, this important part of the work on the development of images of the Russian speech in foreign philology students remains an understudied aspect of research in the field of methodology of Russian as a second language.

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