L3 (English) Influencing on L1 and L2 (Kazakh) Production Among Kazakh - Russian Bilinguals: Pilot Study

Meruyert Ibrayeva
Nazarbayev University (Kazakhstan)

Abstract

This article investigates the rarely researched issue of how English grammar in multilingual settings interferes with mixed proficiency learners of Kazakh/Russian students. This paper will discuss the influence of English language instruction on the ability of university students to use Kazakh. It will consider this influence on both native and non-native Kazakh speakers. The study will discuss observation of such L1 and L2/L3 interferences. This paper highlights interference of multilingual students at Nazarbayev University. This is a pilot study utilizing semi interviews with students, classroom observation, and document analysis of students' written work. The findings highlight a new area for classrooms in which student's transition between multiple languages with differing grammatical systems. The research will be useful to develop the theory of teaching language acquisition in multilingual educational settings.

1. Introduction

Kazakhstan gained its independence in 1991. And there was a policy push for language revitalization to strengthen the national identity. Also with the dissolution of the Soviet Union economic trade of this country has expanded including countries such as Italy, Korea and China. Thus, Kazakh is becoming a trilingual society utilizing Kazakh at home, Russian in schools, and now in some universities English-medium of instruction. In this regard the amount of private language schools teaching English, such as Study Inn, Langberry, Study4you have become big trend in the country. Most adults, students and children try to attend English classes at these and other schools, because most jobs and study are explicitly connected with English nowadays. Secondary schools have several languages of instruction. These schools are multilingual and use a predominately high degree of English instruction. This stems from the Kazakhstan trilingual language policy implemented in 2007. These are Kazakh as a state language, Russian as a language of international communication and English – the language of successful integration into global economics [1]. The project called "Trinity of the languages" was changed and updated to focus in the engagement of international specialists into secondary schools to teach English [1]. Moreover, the engagement of international faculty from around the world is being growing nowadays in order to embed international academic standards.

Nazarbayev University is the newest university in Kazakhstan that is committed to working according to international academic standards. Students predominantly speak English not only in the classes but other extra-curriculum activities too, such as drama club, choir, intellectual show games and basketball/football teams with the language of instruction English. No less important fact is that all service in academic environment at NU is in English whether it is office registrar, graduate/admissions department, or library service, all office hours except Kazakh classes and any students meetings are held in English. Almost all the documents are required to be written in this language. As such, via email correspondence in English dominates over Kazakh language.

2. Literature review

There is a rapidly growing literature on language interference (Auer, 1998; Lin 1996; Martin-Jones, Romaine 1986), which indicates that this issue requires particular attention and approaches on the part of scholars around the world. However, this study was limited by the absence of investigations made in Kazakhstan except for a few studies. It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by language interference. According to a definition provided by Richard Skiba (1997), interference is "the transference of elements of one language to another at various levels including phonological, grammatical, lexical and orthographical" [2]. This definition highlights the language interference as the transference of language collocations, grammar structures, and word accent of one language to

another [2]. Most scholars use the term code switching. Whereas, code mixing refers to language interference, where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence (Pieter Muysken, Patrick McConvell and Margaret Florey, Alejandro Brice and Raquel Anderson). As Judy Woon Yee Ho cites in her paper concerning code mixing, it is the change of one language to another within the same utterance or in the same oral/written text. It is a common phenomenon in societies in which two or more languages are used [3]. In our case all three languages are equally engaged in education. Berthold et al (1997) contributes to the research on this issue and is more specific on phonological interference as items including foreign accent such as stress, rhyme, intonation and speech sounds from the first language influencing the second [2]. However, this article will discuss how the third language influencing the first for native Kazakh speakers. And how English also influences Kazakh, where Kazakh is the student's second language after Russian, Tartar, Korean and other language. We are not investigating the borrowing of words from one language to another but rather the misapplication of grammatical variations between Kazakh and English.

3. Population

There were two groups. One group consisted of sixteen students while the other contained ten students. Both of groups were attending upper-intermediate Kazakh during the spring semester 2015. These were first (fourteen students), second (five s-s) and the fourth (two s-s) year undergraduate students. The age of the students is between twenty and twenty-one. Most of them were SHSS students (twelve) and the equal number was engineering (seven) and SST (seven) students. All the cohort consisted of ten female and sixteen male. There were three students with different nationalities in two groups. These were ethnically Russian, Tartar and Korean, all the rest were Kazakh native students. All the cohort including Kazakh native and non-Kazakh native students finished Russian schools, where they learned Kazakh nearly three or four hours per week. These students are all trilingual. At NU students continue to take the domain of knowledge in English. During the interview few participants reported that they do not know most of words for communication, so the idea of mixing the language is the solution for them, especially academic lexis and terms in various fields.

4. Methodology

The study utilizes semi-structured interview, classroom observation, and document analysis of students' written assignments. The pilot interviews and classroom observation were conducted informally during the classes and office hours. The interview questions covered the study situation, language preference, language difficulties as well as extra activities and family background. Although the research and teacher were the same the data was assessed in conjunction with written students texts. Only the written work of those who made transference errors was analyzed. The purpose of the research was clearly explained prior to the interview. The duration of the interview was no more than five minutes with one student. And twenty-five minutes with a whole group. The amount of the key questions was ten plus additional questions if needed. The transference errors made during the interviews and classes were registered in a separate list. This is a pilot project and further investigation will occur in the following semester.

These methods are particularly useful in investigating transference errors because the evidence based on observations during the discussions and students' written work provides the opportunity to figure out transference errors, their frequency and causes.

5. Transference errors

The observations show that transference errors are made both by Kazakh native and non-Kazakh native speakers, but not all inclusive. During the interview participants stated a desire to speak Kazakh but there were several reasons precluding this such as strong accent and grammar is complicated to build big sentences. As one interviewee said: "I frequently mix the collocations such as I mean, exactly, like, sure, so etc. in Kazakh speech". One individual stated that they are unable to practice the vocabulary outside of classes because most friends prefer speaking Russian. This comment illustrates an increasing number of Russian speaking students.

In class and during office hours triangulated with interviews revealed that students spend only one, two hours in Kazakh during class. However during private time speak in Russian and other classroom

hours are in English. Only a small number of respondents (four students) indicated mixed languages. L3 influences L1 - for native Kazakh and L2 – for whom Kazakh is the second language.

Particular attention needs reflexive marker ozim/oneself. The following examples from the students' written work show this phenomenon. "*Ol ozinin kolyn zhudy / S/he washed her/his hands*" or "*I Piyotr onyn zhumysshylarymen zhaksy karym-katynasta boldy / Peter the First was in good relations with his employers*». In this context the usage of the reflexive markers ozim and onyn are considered transference error, because the ending *y* in the words *kolyn* and *zhumysshylarymen* demonstrates that this is his/her hands and employers. This error distinguishes with its frequency (eighteen students) during the observation.

Ten students mix negations in both languages using singular negation in Kazakh sentences while according to the grammar it needs double negation. The sentence "*Karttardy syilap, yeshkashan kart uileryne aparuga tyrysuga kerek / one should respect old people and never try to send them to the boarding house*" and "*men eshkaida bardym keshe / I went nowhere yesterday*" demonstrate that singular negation in English grammar is mixed with Kazakh.

In Kazakh a conditional verb is made by adding the conditional endings ca, ce to the stem of the verb. Few students mix up if-sentences in Kazakh with English. They use present simple adding personal endings with no conditional endings in Kazakh. It can be seen in the example: "*Yeger men bos bolamyn men ata-anama ketemin*", meaning *if I am free I will visit my parents.* Seven students with frequent interference were registered in this category.

Lexical errors are taking up the next category of transference errors. Students tend to mix the vocabulary in their oral speech. The examples "*Beatlesdyn*" *phandary / The fans of "Beatles*", *Astanada haby bar / There is a hub in Astana*, *Mentor suyakty / Like mentor, Screenshot suyakty / Like screenshot*" show that this category is characterized with frequent mixing.

Another instance of lexical interference is the direct translation of sentences. For example, "*Bir pikir osulay deidy / one opinion states that…*"instead of proper name plus pikirinshe.

Another example is "*Yen zhaksy adam bolu – baska adamga kyzmet isteu* (Indira Ghandi) */ The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others / Zhaksy adam bolu ushin baska adamdarga kyzmet zhasa* (Indira Ghandi)".

Students tend to mix sequence of tenses, though there is no sequence of tenses in Kazakh. The following example "*nege men "Beatles tandaimyn siz tusinesiz / you will understand why I choose Beatles*" instead of "*Beatlesty nege tandaganymdy tusinesiz*" shows that present simple instead of past simple in the main part with personal ending m to the verb tandau is used.

According to the frequency of transference errors word formation takes up the last position in the list of transference errors. One example of word formation is "*ruksatylgan opros boiynsha / according to the permitted survey*" produced instead of "ruksat berilgen/etylgen saualnama boiynsha*" was registered during the class observation. This example is specified with mixing three languages (opros in Russian).

6. Conclusion

This paper has argued that English language is influencing on Kazakh among Kazakh and Russian bilinguals. Language attitudes permeate our everyday lives: people often judge our social status, group membership, intelligence, and competence by the way we use language [4]. In this investigation, the aim was to assess the language interference of participants and show that phenomena on the basis of the evidence. The relevance of language interference is clearly supported by the previous and current findings. As previous research is claimed, the language interference could be regarded as an indication of laziness or poor linguistic proficiency or occurs in anxiety or excitement [4]. After the discussions with participants it was found out that they mix the language in purpose of reducing or saving the time. A possible explanation for this might be that they try to practice the target language in interaction but use English to speak quickly when in a hurry or simply not to loose much time for a long memorizing. This research has confirmed the findings of Jean-Marc Dewaele and Li Wei found that dominant language is a key factor for transference errors [4]. The next major finding was that the emergence of transference errors does not lead speakers to misunderstanding during interaction, because as it was mentioned in previous researches they live in an ethnically diverse environment, which is a reflection of the fact that they know the languages. In this case parental support and involvement are essential in learning the target language [4].

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the issues of language interference. A future study investigating language interference particularly between Kazakh and English languages would be very interesting.

References

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