

# Interinfluence between foreign and mother tongue as for verbal production of future teachers

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Our investigation is within several areas: the area of learning a foreign language, the area of acquiring and learning the mother tongue from the standpoint of the culture of speech, the area of methodical-pedagogical approach of the problem of a foreign and the mother tongue and finally, the area of basic psychological principles and laws of learning in general. In short, we can say that the basis of this paper is psycholinguistic with pedagogical and pragmatical aims and tasks.

Professor Renzo Titone, the well-esteemed Italian psycholinguist and true founder of psycholinguistics as a science in his country, in his latest books on the methodics of teaching a foreign language and on the nature and aims of a foreign language today, stands for the so-called, «humanistic scientific didactical method of learning a language.» He tends to elaborate the methods and approaches, to create one didactical programme which would unify the logical-natural sequences of grammatical elements which should be learnt with the functional nature of the language and with the psychological nature of acquiring new knowledge and of learning in general, and especially learning a language. He himself calls this model of learning a foreign language «glottodidactics» and considers linguistical learning as an integral expression of behaviour, cognition and personality. Thus, he sets three levels in the hierarchy of psycholinguistic operations of learning a language (a foreign one and the mother tongue); 1. tactical level; 2. strategical level and 3. ego-dynamical level. The tactical level refers to arranging significant elements of language into sequences as a result of programmed behaviour in the given situation. That means that perceptive – operative actions belong to this level.

The strategical level represents the plan of cognitive processes which should be used in the given situation. In fact, it is the conscious part of the subject of speech, that is, the conscious thinking part of speaking behaviour.

For the third level – ego-dynamical, Professor Titone says «that it is as much intimate as public,» either conscious or subconscious. This third plan in essence controls the previous two, tactical and strategical...

For these reasons the European Committee of Ministers has recommended that a greater number of foreign language lessons should be introduced into schools because of the unification of the countries into one unique economic and cultural unity,... because learning a foreign language is not a luxury any more. It is a necessity if a country wants to take part in world happenings...

People are not especially ethnocentric any more. It is the demand of the modern times: the necessity of a greater mixing among people, of expanding trade and industry, knowing other cultures, of the greater flow of scientific information etc. We consider it unnecessary to speak and emphasize too generally the significance of such investigation (both the mother and the foreign language) for teachers, because language is still the main educational means for learning, for forming personality, for developing thought, for transferring knowledge and experience,

for proper socialization and communication. It remains later in life, especially for successful communication at work and in the struggle for survival. Using the following hypothesis we have started our investigation: there is correlation between verbal production of future teachers of foreign language in the mother tongue as measured by the observed variables.

The tasks of this investigation, inspired by the work of Prof. Dr Tatiana Slama Cazacu, were not only the establishment of language development in foreign and mother tongues, elaboration of the frequency vocabularies as a picture of language development and establishing language knowledge and abilities of the students, but also the contribution of learning a foreign language in developing the mother tongue and vice versa. The pragmatical aim of this investigation has been to use the obtained results for creating new and improving the existing methodical actions, with the goal of quicker and better development and learning of both languages. Thus the aim is to advance language teaching by creating useful recommendations for working on the development of the general language culture of future teachers...

The examinees were students of the Teacher Faculty (N=27) and not teachers already teaching at schools because it is hard to include them in the investigation because of individual teacher's resistance to being examined and, in their minds, to be scrutinized. Such resistance is not a characteristic of those preparing to be teachers. The investigation was done in Belgrade for practical and theoretical reasons. We chose an urban environment in which the influence of negative environmental factors is reduced to the lowest level of local speech, bilingual environment, teacher proficiency, etc. The investigation examination took place in 1991.

The sample of language speech which was used in the investigation was composed of writing a composition on the same topic in both languages and testing language development (competence) in both languages, but the topic was freely chosen. The time given for the written tasks was limited to two school lessons under conditions which the students are used to. The tests of language competence which we used in a number of investigations of the mother tongue were standardized for the school population and composed by Prof. Dr Smiljka Vasić. As a measure of linguistic development, frequency lists for each examinee were used and frequency vocabulary was made on the basis of the written tests for English and Serbian as a measure of the level of vocabulary development.

The data were computer-analyzed. Beside general statistic measures such as the mean value on the tests, the standard deviation, we did the correlational analyses hi-square test and others.

Two examinations were done: preliminary and final. We did this because we wanted to check the applied tests and methods for establishing facts. These examinations showed similar results and the check was necessary and useful.

Among the individual conclusions, we shall mention only those that are, in our mind, useful for foreign language teachers.

1. There is interinfluence between verbal production of the mother tongue and verbal production in foreign language. We can conclude that the students' written tasks, according to both the quantity and repetition of new words, are considerably better in compositions in Serbian language than in English language. They are richer and have a more varied vocabulary in Serbian language. It is a little surprising for our teaching because if a foreign language is learnt for 8 or 10 years, then the results should be better. However, the students progress in Serbian language – this can be seen. Here we can think over the nature of teaching foreign language.

2. Between verbal production in a foreign language and the mother tongue, the relationship is more obvious at this level of knowing the foreign language – on behalf of the mother tongue.

More verbal production in the mother tongue leads to greater production in a foreign language. In the observed group the mother tongue always leads. The answers on the test in the mother tongue show a high level of language development of both languages although the topics are the same.

The most obvious difference is in the range of free compositions, (N=747) new words in English language and (N=1566) in Serbian language. The range of running repeated words in English language is 4092 and in Serbian language it is 5568. The students realized twice as many new words in Serbian language as in English. If a frequency vocabulary of the written compositions is taken as a measure of verbal production, then it is individually, and on the whole, always greater in the mother tongue than the frequency vocabulary obtained on the basis of the written tests in English language and for the same topic.

3. Qualitative analysis also contributes to the results in the mother tongue. The nature of defining as well as the level of abstract vocabulary as a measure of language development and verbal production are higher in the mother tongue than in the English language.

4. The nature of vocabulary in the mother tongue has features of better mastered abstract words. The students' vocabulary in English language has features of concrete vocabulary. This could be seen according to the index of repetition which is significantly higher in the English written tests than in the Serbian written tests.

5. Definitions of the same notions in both languages do not overlap either according to the content or range or development of language structure.

6. In the mentioned conclusions it is important to see the main fact: all our data show that there is interinfluence between the two languages. The level of correlation and significance is not the same at all measured parameters (0.05 or 0.01). It is probable that by mastering and better knowledge of English, its influence will be greater on developing the mother tongue, so the nature of the influence will be more obvious. These assumptions come from our investigation and from the majority of studies which deal with the relationship of the mother and the foreign language. They speak about strengthening the influence of a foreign language on the mother language to such an extent so that sometimes negative influence may emerge, as well as bringing foreign structures into the mother tongue: which has been found in this material, although less. This happens with students with insufficiently developed structure of the mother tongue, so interference between the two languages is negative for the mother tongue.

Certain psychologists and some linguists point to the fact that good knowledge of a foreign language advances further development of the personality, especially if both languages have usable value for the given personality and if there is no psychological resistance according to one of the two languages in the personality itself.

Beside the general conclusions, we have given special and individual conclusions at the end of each chapter; general conclusions derived from them. We shall mention only the most important:

1. by comparing the titles of free written compositions it has been confirmed that even in titles in both languages we can guess their basic grammatical structures. This can be seen from the lists of frequency words obtained from the titles.

2. In the titles in the English language, verbs as grammatical categories and verb following elements dominate. This relationship has been noticed in the contact of the two languages, which shows that even in small language samples such as the title, we can see basic structural features of the language, that is the frequent use of certain kinds of words.

3. There are differences between the use of words with frequency one (creativity or variety of vocabulary is usually measured by it) in both languages. In the English language there are fewer such words (EL=491 than in the Serbian language SL=1175), which is in accordance with our results – greater freedom of use of new words in the mother tongue than in the foreign language is shown.

When considering school practice, it is emphasized that each teacher should have in mind that the mother tongue and a foreign language mutually influence each other and that they help the development of personality.

Cooperation between teachers of the mother tongue and foreign language teachers is essential and the lack of space here does not permit us to name them all. Thus they would consider the existence of interinfluence between the mother tongue and a foreign language. The work under these circumstances will improve development of the pupils' speech, freedom of expression, greater quantity of successful verbalization and communication, forming the pupils' verbal personality, his/her perceptive and cognitive abilities, and better realization of the relationships which in time become more complex in the world current unity.

It is useful, of course, to have in mind some already known and some different new levels of learning a foreign language of which Professor Titone speaks, such as:

1. tactical,
2. strategical and
3. ego-dynamical levels, as well as the motivation of pupils for learning (a) the language which emerges from habitual value from what is being learnt.