

The effects of language interference in learning English and Spanish in the USA

Научный руководитель – Гречухина Мария Андреевна

Блеквина С.А.¹, Капашкина Я.В.²

1 - Московский государственный университет имени М.В.Ломоносова, Факультет глобальных процессов, Образовательная программа «Глобальные политические процессы и дипломатия», Москва, Россия, *E-mail: sofhl@mail.ru*; 2 - Московский государственный университет имени М.В.Ломоносова, Факультет глобальных процессов, Москва, Россия, *E-mail: yanasoldatova@yandex.ru*

The United States is a country with many cultures, and this also affects language. The way English and Spanish interact is a key topic for researchers studying society and language. Spanish is the second most common language spoken in the U.S., so it naturally has a strong influence on English and vice versa. This influence leads to a common effect called language interference[1][5].

This process, where the structures of one language influence the production or understanding of another, creates a unique bilingual environment where speakers frequently navigate between two distinct linguistic systems [3].

Within the U.S. education system, the influence of one language on another is often discussed in connection with "Spanglish" or code-switching. This practice, where speakers mix English and Spanish, is often looked down upon in formal school environments. However, it plays a vital role in helping Latino communities maintain their cultural and family heritage.[2][6].

Students learning either English as a Second Language (ESL) or Spanish as a Heritage Language often experience what linguists term "negative transfer," where phonetic, grammatical, or lexical patterns from the mother tongue impede the acquisition of target language norms [3][4].

When examining the psychology of language, the English worldview is often characterized by its direct analytical nature, heavy dependence on rigid sentence structure, and emphasis on exact word meaning. In contrast, Spanish—rooted in a distinct cultural setting—employs a more adaptable sentence formation and a grammatical system marked by gendered nouns. This fundamental divergence means that when learners strive to integrate these two frameworks, they inevitably face internal psychological conflict. In classrooms across the USA, this interference manifests not merely as an error, but as an active construction of a hybrid identity that reflects the student's bicultural experience [7].

The effect of this interference is particularly visible in the development of "interlanguage," a transitional linguistic system that evolves as the learner acquires the target language [3]. For example, interference in syntax—such as the omission of subjects in English (common in Spanish) or the hyper-correction of verb tenses—highlights the ongoing negotiation between the two languages. These phenomena suggest that learning is not a linear transition from one language to another but a multidimensional process of intercultural negotiation [1][5].

Furthermore, the privileged sociopolitical position of English as the nation's primary language introduces a significant power dimension to the challenge of linguistic interference. Speakers frequently encounter societal pressure to suppress Spanish-influenced speech patterns in English to conform to standardized academic or professional norms. This pressure can undermine the linguistic legitimacy of bilingual students, compelling them to constantly negotiate between the "proper" language expected by institutional authorities and the authentic linguistic expression of their bicultural identity.[6].

In conclusion, language interference in the U.S. is not simply a grammatical hurdle but a reflection of the profound interaction between two global cultures. By acknowledging interference

as a structural reality rather than a deficit, educators and researchers can better understand the cognitive and identity-forming processes of bilingual learners. This intersection of language and culture remains a vital area of study for understanding the future of communicative practices in an increasingly interconnected American society [2][7].

Источники и литература

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