



GERMAN AS A TERTIARY LANGUAGEⁱ

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Abstract:

The people learning a foreign language think they can have a command of the language by learning just its grammar. However having merely grammar knowledge is not enough to have a full command of a foreign language. On learning a language the goal is to have an effective communication with the receiver. Therefore a language should be discussed with a communicative approach in the classes. This approach refers to the necessity of scrutinising the language within a pragmatic way as well. In this study the issue is tried to be discussed within the example of the students learning German after English. The people deciding to learn German after they learn English generally plan to benefit from the similarities between both languages. The teachers' laying emphasis on the positive transfers in the classes absolutely motivates the students in a favorable way. However it is seen that the similarities between English and German do not always provide convenience to the students. Because of this, in this study it is explained by some examples that the similarities between these two languages cause negative transfers. The determinations, important for the ideal foreign language course, provide great benefits in descending the source of student errors and correcting these errors.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, positive transfer, negative transfer, English, German

Özet: Yabancı dil öğrenen kişiler genellikle sadece gramer bilgilerini öğrenerek bu dile hakim olabileceklerini düşünmektedirler. Halbuki sadece gramer bilgisine sahip olmak iyi bir yabancı dil hakimiyeti için yeterli değildir. Bir dil öğrenilirken amaç alıcıyla etkili bir iletişim kurabilmektir. Bu yüzden ilgili yabancı dil, derslerde iletişimsel bir yaklaşımla ele alınmalıdır. Bu yaklaşım dilin aynı zamanda pragmatik açıdan da irdelenmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Bu çalışmada İngilizceden sonra Almanca öğrenen öğrenciler örneğinde konu ele alınmaya çalışılmıştır. İngilizceden sonra Almanca öğrenmeye karar veren kişiler genellikle iki dil arasındaki benzerliklerden

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faydalanmayı düşünürler. Derslerde öğretmenlerin pozitif transferler üzerinde durması elbette öğrencileri olumlu yönde motive eden bir yaklaşımdır. Ancak İngilizce ve Almanca arasındaki benzerliklerin öğrencilere her zaman kolaylık sağlamadığı görülmektedir. Bu yüzden çalışmada iki dil arasındaki benzerliklerin negatif transferlere de neden olduğu bazı örneklerle izah edilmiştir. İdeal bir yabancı dil dersi için önemli olan bu tespitler, öğrenci hatalarının kaynağına inmede ve bu hataları düzeltmede büyük bir yarar sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yabancı dil öğretimi, pozitif transfer, negatif transfer, İngilizce, Almanca

1. Introduction

The necessity of learning at least one foreign language is a fact accepted by everybody in today's world. Towards the end of the twentieth century, with the globalization process, the dizzying development of information and communication media has made English an international communicative language (*lingua franca*). Thanks to this, English is taken as a first foreign language at schools in most of the countries. As a result of this, it is seen that German is taught as a second foreign language (tertiary language) after English (Neuner, Hufeisen, Kursiša, etc. 2009).

In this study, German lessons taught after English is studied with different perspectives. In other words, the topic is discussed with regards to the students whose first foreign language (L2) is English (L2) and the second foreign language (L3) is German. Students' use of their knowledge about English language while learning German sometimes affects them positively sometimes negatively. Therefore, the subject of transfer is discussed as a both positive and negative transfer. In this context, how English affects the students learning German is demonstrated in detail. Thus, the facilities and difficulties the students, having learnt English as the first foreign language, have while they are learning German as a "tertiary language" might be understood better.

2. Purpose and the Research Question

This study is written by using qualitative research technique and it discusses the students whose first foreign language (L2) is English and second foreign language (L3) is German. The research examines which facilities and difficulties the students have while they are learning German. In this context, how the students who -after their mother tongues (L1)- learn English (L2) as a first foreign language and German (L3) as a second one are influenced by English is justified in detail. In this study, the answers to all these questions are searched and the determinations about how German which is a "tertiary language" can be taught to the students more efficiently are pointed out. Hence, German and English are compared in terms of some language elements. As a

result of this comparison, the similarities and differences between the two languages are emphasized.

3. Material and Methods

In this study, first of all, the topic is explained with descriptive method within the light of the primary and secondary sources written about German taught as a foreign language. Thus, the theory of the subject is determined. No specific student level is chosen in the study. The topics studied in the research, address different language levels. The samples from scientific sources on teaching German more efficiently were examined with simple random sampling method and the findings obtained from this study were discussed as qualitative research. In this study, English and German languages were examined from a comparative perspective and some similar useful results were obtained for the course activities by revealing their similarities and differences.

4. Language Acquisition and Learning

In many scientific books and articles, acquisition and learning are considered as the terms different from one another. Acquisition is carried out mostly in an “*incidental*” process, while learning in an “*intentional*” one. (Apeltauer, 2001, p.14). Acquisition generally comes into question at an early age in the acquisition of the first language (mother tongue). The child gains his first language by making contact with his natural environment. Thus, the child acquires the language in a non-conscious process. On the other hand, the person is more conscious in the learning process. Intensive efforts are made to learn and implement the rules of the language and the student learns the language in accordance with the purpose during this process. This is also true for foreign language teaching. Foreign language teaching is generally carried out by external oriented courses (Edmondson & House, 1993, p. 11-12). Even though the students are sometimes self-oriented during the classes (for example, while doing exercises), it is undeniable fact that the course activities are usually carried out in external orientation.

4.1. First Language - Second Language - Foreign Language - Tertiary Language

Every child growing under normal conditions starts to speak the language used in his/her environment in a few years. In other words, the child acquires the language without much difficulty. If the child cannot not find any chance to talk to anyone, then the process of natural acquisition gets damaged and the child the child cannot improve his language skills (Curtiss, 1977). What is more, the language that a person improves firstly is called a “first language”. In the scientific literature, the term “first language” is used instead of “mother tongue” in general. This concept indicates other language or languages that are likely to be learned in the future as well (Ahrenholz, 2008).

The term “second language” stands for the language learned immediately after the first language. The term second language is usually confused with the term foreign language. However, although foreign language is learned after the first language, it is not possible for the person to use the foreign language he/she learns, outside the class. For example, the child learning a foreign language has no opportunity to use it among his/her friends, while they are playing together outside. Second language is the language, the people use actively apart from their first language. For example, German is the second language of the Turk learning German in Germany, because that person has a chance to use it on the street. (Apeltauer, 2001).

As mentioned partially above a foreign language is learned with the help of the teacher at school. The person has no possibility to use the foreign language he/she learns in his/her daily life after the classes. In another words the person does not have an opportunity to find “real” communication environments where he/she can practice what he/she has learned. The students who want to use foreign language in real communication environments are generally obliged to go abroad by affording high costs and troubles to fill the deficiency (Wicke, 1999, p. 5).

The term “tertiary language”, the essential topic of the study, is used to describe the other foreign language (L3) learned after the foreign language (L2) learned beyond the first language (L1). While the person is learning a foreign language as a tertiary language he/she benefits from the knowledge he/she has gained from the languages he/she has learned before. That is to say, the student transfers information from the foreign language (in some cases from the first language itself) he/she has learned before.

5. Pragmatics in Foreign Language Teaching

In foreign language teaching, generally the teacher tells the lesson within his/her mother tongue (L1) and just gives the examples in that foreign language. This raises the perception among the students that the foreign language learned is an artificial language. If the teachers explain the sentences in the foreign language only in the mother tongue, that means they ignore the fact it is a means of communication and due to this it transforms the language into an object on which operations are made. However, language is a multidimensional means of communication. In addition, the principle of “learn now, use later” is not important for teaching a language; on the contrary “learn as you use, use as you learn” is quite important. (Butzkamm, 2000, p. 6). Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the communicative and thus pragmatic aspect of the language. Whence, it is necessary to take the learned language as a means of communication in daily life instead of as a material on which merely the operations are made. When considered from this point of view, it is seen that it is required to examine the language not only grammatically but also pragmatically. Pragmatics is a sub-branch of linguistics and it admits each linguistic expression as an action. Hence, it centers upon the point that the language should be examined just within a context (Ehrhardt & Heringer, 2011; Liedtke, 2016). Let's try to explain this detection with an example:

“Anna: Komm, lass uns heute Abend ins Kino gehen.”

[Anna: Come on; let's go to the cinema tonight.]

“Karl: Ich muss für eine Prüfung lernen.”

[Karl: I have to study for an exam.] (Finkbeiner, 2015, p. 7)

Considering the German example above, it is clear that some explanations should be made for the students. First of all, it is necessary to analyze the words semantically. (Löbner, 2015). For example, the verb *“lernen”* in this example does not mean *“to learn”* but *“to study”*. However, considering Karl's statement pragmatically it is seen that he does not use this sentence to express just he has to study but to mostly reject Anna's request. That is to say, Karl implies with this statement that he does not want to go to the cinema with Anna (Finkbeiner, 2015, p. 7). As can be seen from this example, it is necessary to discuss the purpose of the person's speech in order to approach his/her expressions pragmatically. Thus, it is essential to focus on what the person means rather than what he/she says (Krallmann & Ziemann, 2001.)

6. Communicative Capacity in Foreign Language Teaching

Providing the students with the ability to communicate effectively with the recipient is one of the most significant goals in foreign language teaching. Getting to the root of the word *“communication”* it is seen that it comes from the Latin word *“communicare”* and it means *“to cooperate jointly”* (Beck, 2017, p. 15). It is understood from this fact that there is a mutual interaction in communication. Communication with which intercomprehension is essential is the indispensable verbal / nonverbal action of our daily lives (Burkart, 2002). Performing these verbal / non-verbal actions, it is needed to answer the following questions that demonstrate the function of communication:

- When is communication established?
- Where is communication established?
- Who is communication established with?
- What are the personal characteristics of the participants of communication?
- What is the topic of the communication?
- What is the target of the communication?
- How is communication established (verbal/ nonverbal)?
- Which channel is used in communication? (Heringer, 2004, p. 23-26)

The answers of all of these questions are fairly significant for an effective communication. For example, in German we should address the person with whom we are not intimate as *“sie”* rather than *“du”*. On the other hand, there is not such classification in English. Due to this, the person whose first foreign language is English continues his/her habit in English within German too and he/she addresses everyone by using the pronoun *“du”* (you). However, in German, addressing someone who we are not very close with as *“du”* is an attitude that hurts the recipient. Because of this, communicating in German the people should get permission to address each other as *“du”*. (Lüger, 1997). Learning such details as this is very important in communication.

When the teacher gives authentic examples from daily life, he/she should tell the lesson with a suitable course language. To give an example, in German lesson the teacher should talk to the students in German, so that the students get an opportunity to hear that foreign language thanks to the course language. Thus, the students have a chance to see both the similarities and differences between German and English. Now let's look through some language patterns that teachers use during class:

English	German
Open your books at page...	<i>Öffnet eure Bücher auf Seite...</i>
Turn to page...	<i>Schlagt Seite ... auf.</i>
Read the text on page...	<i>Lies den Text auf Seite...</i>
Look at the picture on page...	<i>Schau das Bild auf Seite ... an.</i>
Please fetch ... for me.	<i>Bitte hol mir...</i>
Would you collect the worksheets?	<i>Würdest du bitte die Arbeitsblätter einsammeln?</i>
Do this exercise for homework.	<i>Diese Übung ist Hausaufgabe.</i>
Write the answer/sentence in your exercise book/on the board.	<i>Schreibt die Antworten in eure Hefte/an die Tafel</i>
That's right. That's wrong	<i>Das ist richtig. Das ist falsch.</i>
Good. Very good. That's good.	<i>Gut! Sehr gut! Das ist gut.</i>
That's not good. Try again.	<i>Das ist (noch) nicht gut. Versuch es noch einmal.</i>
That's better.	<i>Das ist besser.</i>
Well done.	<i>Gut gemacht.</i>
Be quiet.	<i>Seid ruhig.</i>
Sit down, please.	<i>Setzt euch bitte.</i>
Ask your friend/neighbour.	<i>Frag deinen Freund/Nachbarn.</i>
Make a list.	<i>Mach eine Liste.</i>
Put in the words.	<i>Setze die Wörter ein.</i>
Can you see the board?	<i>Kannst du die Tafel sehen.</i>

When the teacher speaks in the related foreign language, the students should try to speak in that language as well. It is a very important opportunity that provides a possibility for the students to communicate in the foreign language. Now, here are the student's probable sentences:

English	German
Good morning Mr/Mrs...	<i>Guten Morgen [Herr/Frau]...</i>
Hello	<i>Hall</i>
Good-bye	<i>Auf Wiedersehen</i>
Thanks. Thank you (very much).	<i>Danke. Vielen Dank.</i>
I'm sorry.	<i>Tut mir leid</i>
I'm sorry I'm late.	<i>Tut mir leid, dass ich mich verspätet habe.</i>
I'm sorry I haven't got my homework.	<i>Tut mir leid. Ich habe meine Hausaufgaben nicht.</i>
I'm not feeling well.	<i>Ich fühle mich nicht gut.</i>

Can I open the window?	<i>Kann ich das Fenster aufmachen.</i>
What's this in English/German?	<i>Was heißt dies auf englisch/deutsch?</i>
Can I say: ...?	<i>Kann ich sagen: ...?</i>
What does ... mean?	<i>Was bedeutet ...?</i>
Can I ask a question, please?	<i>Kann ich bitte eine Frage stellen?</i>
I can't do this exercise.	<i>Diese Übung kann ich nicht.</i>
How do you do this exercise?	<i>Wie macht man/geht diese Übung.</i>
Can you help me, please?	<i>Können Sie/Kannst du mir helfen?</i>
This question is difficult.	<i>Diese Frage ist schwierig.</i>
I can't find the answer.	<i>Ich kann diese Antwort nicht finden.</i>
Is this right?	<i>Ist das richtig?</i>
Can we/Can't we read this?	<i>Können wir dies (nicht) lesen?</i>
Let's act out the story.	<i>Wir möchten die Geschichte spielen.</i>
Can we sing a song?	<i>Können wir ein Lied singen?</i>
Let's do our homework together.	<i>Laß uns die Hausaufgaben zusammen machen.</i>
When is our lesson tomorrow?	<i>Wann haben wir morgen Unterricht?</i>
How many exercises must we do?	<i>Wie viele Übungen müssen wir machen?</i>
(Reisener, 1989, p.117-118)	

Taking lexical bundles used by both the teachers and the students into account is that the similarities between both languages provide convenience to the students. However, it should be added that the differences between the two languages may cause students to make some negative transfers. When considered from this point of view, the teacher should have knowledge about the positive and negative transfers the students might make.

7. Transfer in Foreign Language Teaching

Taking the student profile who learns English as a first foreign language after his/her first language (mother tongue) and then German as a second foreign language into consideration, it is obviously seen that since the students have learnt English before, they have an opportunity to transfer the notions they have gained from that language to German. As the students have gained "language awareness", thanks to the first foreign language they have learnt, they improve it more while they are learning the second foreign language. (Neuner, Hufeisen, Kursiša, etc. 2009, p.6). The students learning German as a second foreign language has a more mature age than the age when he/she learnt the first language in the past (Hufeisen, 2003, p. 7). All of them are substantial advantages for the students learning German as a second foreign language. Natheless, it should also be added that the first foreign language (English) sometimes has disadvantages besides these advantages. Now, let's go on to discuss the topic more in detail by expressing the positive sides firstly and then the negative ones.

7.1. Positive Transfer

The fact that some words in German and English resemble one another with regards to both form and meaning provides convenience to the students learning German following English. Indeed, the teachers' starting the lesson with the similarities will contribute to the teaching processes. The following examples on words illustrate this situation quite obviously:

Objects

English: house, vase, paper, glass, book, flag, krawatte.

German: *Haus, Vas,e Papier, Glas, Buch, Flagge, Krawatte.*

Organs

English: arm, hand, nose, shoulder, mouth, chin, foot.

German: *Arm, Hand, Nase, Schulter, Mund, Kinn, Fuß.*

Months

English: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, etc.

German: *Januar, Februar, März, April, Mai, Juni Juli August etc.*

Similarities in some sentence formations provide facility in learning for the students as well. The examples below demonstrate these similarities:

English: She goes to him. He is 25 years old. It is very cold.

German: *“Sie geht zu ihm. Er ist 25 Jahre alt. Es ist sehr kalt.”*

It is possible to benefit from the morphological similarities between these two languages.

English: big - bigger - the biggest

German: *groß - größer - am größten*

English: homeless

German: *heimatlos*

What is more, it is necessary to add that the similarities between both of the languages should be treated by the teacher carefully. The teacher should prevent the students from making mistakes in such topics as words, sentence formations and pronunciations by taking attention into the subtle differences between these two languages. For example, there are some words pronounced quite similarly but written differently in both languages. It is fairly clear that it is the responsibility of the teacher to prevent these kinds of mistakes. In short, the similarities cause difficulties in learning

in some cases whereas they provide convenience for learning. The topic, the similarities causing students to make mistakes, is discussed within the “negative transfer” chapter.

7.2. Negative Transfer (Interference)

In the scientific literature, “negative transfer” is also called as “interference”. The following example about communication presents clearly that the language learnt before might influence the language newly learnt negatively.

After waiting for his order of steak for a long time at a restaurant in America, A German tourist says to the waiter: “*Waiter, can I become my steak?*”. The American waiter laughs a lot when he hears this sentence. Probably, the German tourist confuses the verb “*bekommen*” in German with the verb “*become*” in English. However the verb “*bekommen*” in German means “*to get*”, while the verb “*become*” means “*to come into existence*” in English. The mistake made in transferring the word in a language to the other one just because of its formal similarity is called interference (Hufeisen & Neuner 2003). The Table: “False Friends” below points out some formal similarities between English and German.

English Word	German Translation	False Friend	Correct English Translation
also	auch	also	so
arm	Arm	arm	poor
art	Kunst	Art	way, sort, kind
bald	Glatze, kahl	bald	soon
brave	mutig	brav	well-behaved good
concurrence	Einverständnis	Konkurrenz	competition
curious	neugierig	kurios	strange

Table 1: The Table: “False Friends”

(Source: https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/words/false_friends.htm)

Interference is not only seen on the basis of a word (false friends), but also on other linguistic elements. Hellinger (1977) describes the subject of “interference” under two main titles: “Interlingual Interference” and “Intralingual Interference”.

7.2.1. Interlingual Interference (Interference between two languages)

A. Substitution: A form that exists in a language is transferred to the other language even though it does not exist in that language. The phoneme /s/ in German is used instead of the phoneme /θ/ in English. Example: He thinks about her.

B. Over-differentiation: In German, going to a place is expressed with the verbs “fahren” or “gehen” according to the sort of the action. In English, the verb “drive” is used if the person drives the car by himself/ herself. “Mit dem Bus fahren” in German corresponds to “to go by bus” in English. Due to this, “*to drive by bus” is a false expression in English.

C. Under-differentiation: Most of the German students learning English as a foreign language misuse the verb “swim” in English to mean “schwimmen” in German. However, in order to describe an object that does not sink into water, the verb “float” is used rather than “swim” in English.

D. Over-indulgence/under-representation: Even though there are alternative structures in the foreign languages, the students generally tend to prefer the well-known structures. For example; in English the students use the “relative pronoun” in the sentence “The man who/m I saw” and consciously avoid using the sentence structure “The man I saw”.

7.2.2. Intralingual Interference (Interference in a language)

A. Over-generalization: For example, if a regular plural rule is applied to an irregular noun too. Example: “book-books” * “sheep-sheeps”.

B. Hypercorrection: A person expressing himself/herself in a foreign language does not use the expressions in that foreign language like the native speaker, but rather spells one-by-one. Example: the person pronounces the word as /w d n/ rather than /w dn/.

All these detections indicate that a teacher who gives lessons to the students learning German after English should know the types of interference discussed above well. Otherwise, he/she will have difficulty in determining what the reasons of the students’ faults are. The teacher possessing all these data has an opportunity to show the students the reasons of their faults quite obviously and easily.

7.3. Excursus

Students’ making mistakes while they are learning a foreign language is very normal, but sometimes they lose their interest in the foreign language lesson, due to their teachers’ failing to apply the fault correction strategies correctly. It is seen as one of the prominent obstacles against the students’ being successful at the foreign language lesson. Therefore, the teacher should have proper and elaborative knowledge about how to determine what is false and to correct the fault at the foreign language lesson. For example; the teacher should be aware of that sometimes it is better not to interrupt the student while he/she is expressing himself/herself in a foreign language, despite his/her mistakes, so as not to disrupt the fluency in the speech. Because of that, the teacher should know how to classify the faults as the ones disrupting and not disrupting communication (Kleppin, 2002).

8. Conclusion

Deciding to learn a foreign language, the position of that language among the world languages affects us considerably in the choice of language. It is an indisputable fact that English has a great reputation all over the world thanks to its being a “lingua franca”. On the other hand, it is recommended to learn more than one language within the framework of the language policy of the European Union. In this regard, German is taught as a second foreign language in lots of countries. In other words, this policy helps German be taught as a tertiary language in most of the countries.

However, it is an indisputable fact that language teaching should be elaborated not only grammatically but also pragmatically and communicatively. Therefore, it should be emphasized that we should focus on what people imply, rather than what they say in language teaching.

It is believed that teaching German just after English usually has positive contributions to the learning process. The fact that both languages come from the German language family is effective in this thought. Nevertheless, by comparing the two languages profoundly, it is seen that the similarities do not always provide positive contributions. As it is obviously known that, the positive contributions of the similarities between English and German are called as positive transfers, while the negative impacts of them are called as negative transfers or interferences. For example; the students may generally confuse the verb “become” in English with the verb “bekommen” in German. Additionally, they may sometimes confuse the word “still” meaning “even now” in English with the word “still” meaning “silent” in German. Because of this, the teacher should find out the reason/ reasons of these kinds of faults and help the students correct it/them. In this regard, it is beneficial for the teacher to know the table “false friends”, the table of the similarities causing faults, well. So that the teacher can get to the bottom of the fault easily and give a required warning.

Negative transfer might emerge not only in the meaning or spelling of a word, but also in the pronunciation of it. Especially the students’ -learning German just after English- pronouncing the German words generally in English interrupts the fluency in communication. In this respect, it will be fairly advantageous to investigate the issue of “negative transfer” in miscellaneous ways.

About the Author

Erdoğan Yücel began his academic carrier as a Research Assistant at the Department of German Language Education at the Faculty of Education at Selçuk University in Turkey in 1998. He gained his Master's degree at the same university in 2000 and his PhD at Gazi University in 2006. Currently working at the Department of Foreign Languages at the Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education at Necmettin Erbakan University as an Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erdoğan Yücel researches in the field of teaching German and he gives lectures at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level. He is married and has two children.

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