

A CONTRASTIVE APPROACH TO ENGLISH-GERMAN INTERFERENCE IN TEACHING GERMAN AS A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO KAZAKH-SPEAKING STUDENTS

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Abstract. The shift in the focus of attention of German language teachers to teaching German as a second foreign language in the universities of our country is due, as is known, to the language policy being pursued, on the one hand, and to the still unquenchable interest in the German language on the part of both students and teachers, on the other. The growing importance of effective methodologies in teaching German as a second foreign language has made research in this area particularly relevant today. This paper explores linguodidactic approaches to teaching German following English in classrooms where Kazakh is the language of instruction.

Drawing on practical teaching experience, the study outlines strategies to address language interference that learners commonly encounter across different types of speech activity. The article illustrates how prior knowledge of English, along with the influence of the native Kazakh language, can impact the acquisition of German as a second foreign language.

Specific instructional techniques are presented to demonstrate how language material can be introduced in a way that minimizes cross-linguistic interference. Emphasis is placed on recognizing and leveraging students' existing linguistic background, including their previous foreign language learning experience, to facilitate more effective learning of the new language.

Keywords: second foreign language teaching methodology, linguodidactics, language interference in learning, multilingual education.

Introduction

The practice of teaching German as a second foreign language (Aubakirova et al., 2024) following English demonstrates that students are capable of successfully mastering the language when one of the core didactic principles of foreign language education is applied - namely, the principle of conscious learning.

The article attempts to demonstrate the effectiveness of the contrastive approach in teaching a second foreign language (German), thanks to which students, relying on personal experience gained during the study of the first foreign language (English), achieve the desired results.

Theoretical issues of mastering a second foreign language were raised earlier in the scientific works of researchers, which N.D. Galskova writes about in more detail in her work (Galskova, 2024).

Knowledge of a second foreign language is becoming an imperative requirement today (Lockley, Yoshida, 2016). Demand creates supply, and accordingly, the focus of practicing teachers is shifting towards teaching a foreign language, in our case, German, as a second foreign language.

In the process of learning any foreign language - whether it is the first or the second - learners naturally, both consciously and subconsciously, draw comparisons between the target language and their native tongue, or with other languages they have previously acquired. This tendency makes the comparative approach a highly effective strategy in language instruction.

Several factors further reinforce the relevance of comparative study in the Kazakhstani educational context. These include the limited presence of authentic linguistic and cultural environments within local universities, the priorities outlined in national educational development frameworks, and the increasing significance of intercultural competence in today's globalized world.

Thus, in this article we will try to consider the potential and possibilities of using the contrastive approach in teaching German as a second foreign language after English.

Materials and research methods

If we talk about comparison in general as a method of studying any language, then it is used in various branches of linguistics (Averin, 2023).

Contrastive studies employ the comparative method, which involves the systematic analysis of one language in relation to another in order to identify and clarify the unique features of each. This methodological approach has long been associated with the field of applied linguistics, as early contrastive analyses were primarily driven by practical objectives, particularly in the context of foreign language teaching (Milokhova, 2019).

The relevance of contrastive analysis in language education is especially evident at the lexical level, where interference between languages poses significant challenges. In both linguodidactics and translation, addressing lexical interference remains a critical issue - thus reinforcing the need for ongoing comparative linguistic research (Puig-Mayenco et al., 2020).

In a review article on the theory of contrastive linguistics, the author Zh. M. Omasheva notes: "Contrastive linguistics as a science was formed in the middle of the 20th century in English-speaking countries. The beginning of contrastive research should be recognized as the publication of R. Lado's book "Linguistic across cultures" (Lado 1957) and the work of Sh. Bally (Bally 1955:11), which substantiated the need to teach German to a French-speaking audience" (Omasheva, 2011).

E.D. Suleimenova, in her manual *Kazakh and Russian Languages: Fundamentals of Contrastive Linguistics*, highlights that contrastive linguistics aims to identify both the similarities and differences between languages, with the goal of determining the most effective methods for teaching one or both of the compared languages (Suleimenova, 1996).

According to the author, any linguistic phenomena that meets the tasks of an applied nature can become the object of contrastive analysis.

Students are introduced to a variety of vocabulary on the topic of "Hobbys". After filling in the gaps with the necessary words, students must read this poem in chorus, or in groups of 3-4 people, "tapping" the verbs on the topic of "hobbies". This exercise helps to better memorize new vocabulary units and is also aimed at practicing their correct pronunciation.

Ergänzen Sie den Versen mit den richtigen Formen. Lesen Sie das Gedicht laut vor:
lernen – sammeln – malen – singen – backen – basteln – tanzen – spielen – fahren

Hobbys

Was ist Ihr Hobby? Sagen Sie es mir!

Na, gut. Wollen wir?

Ich sammle Münzen und suche Steine.

Ich bastle viel Schmuck und bilde Reime.

Ich backe gern Torten, Kuchen und Brot.

Ich spiele Computer und treibe Sport.

Ich lerne Sprachen und fahre Rad.

Ich liebe alles, was mir Spaß macht.

Ich mache Mode und drehe Filme.

Ich schreibe Märchen und singe gerne.

Ich jogge, tanze und schreibe Lieder.

Ich tauche, angle und male Bilder.

Wenn Sie mehr wissen wollen, worauf ich noch stehe, Schauen Sie mal schnell auf Facebook, da gibt es viel zu sehen (Erlenwein et al., 2021).

Considering the issue of the relationship between such sections of linguistics as comparative linguistics and contrastive linguistics from the point of view of the goals, objectives, methods and general principles of research: in contrast to comparative linguistics proper, the subject of contrastive linguistics is determined by the linguodidactic focus of such a comparison of languages, which will help to define

and describe such differences in languages that will help to better assimilate a foreign language, explain cases of discrepancy in grammatical and conceptual systems of languages (Ptitsyna, 2016)

In writing this article, we relied on the works on methodology, pedagogy, and contrastive linguistics of Russian and foreign scientists and other studies in the field of foreign language teaching methods (Tussupova, Temirbekova, 2016).

Results and Discussion

Linguistic analysis typically employs both intra-linguistic and inter-linguistic comparisons. In intra-linguistic comparison, the focus lies on analyzing categories within a single language, whereas inter-linguistic comparison involves the examination of categories across different languages.

Within the scope of interlingual comparison, three primary approaches are commonly applied: the comparative-historical method, typological analysis, and contrastive analysis. Contrastive linguistics, as a subfield, belongs to this latter category. Each of these methods serves distinct goals, operates on different types of linguistic material, and is applied within specific research boundaries.

The study design was dictated by the conditions of its implementation: the baseline level, control, and comparative conditions in the Kazakh language audience at the university where the experimental training was conducted. The number of groups is 2 study subgroups from different

educational programs to ensure the purity of the experiment: “Nuclear Physics” and “Kazakh Language and Literature”; the age of the students corresponded to the first year of university — on average, 17 years old.

The level of language proficiency at the initial stage was beginner in both groups: the control group and the experimental group. The selection of participants was carried out solely based on the students’ choice of German as a second foreign language. The teaching materials were prepared separately for the experimental group, based on a theoretical framework and practical data on the analysis of interference. Tests based on the content of the teaching material served as tools for diagnosing interference.

Numerous scholars, including B.A. Lapidus (1973), N.V. Bagramova (2005), and N.V. Baryshnikov, have investigated the challenges and particularities of teaching a second foreign language. Their research emphasizes the beneficial impact that learning an additional foreign language can have on individual development. They argue that exposure to multiple linguistic systems fosters a broader linguistic and cultural awareness.

When students begin learning a second foreign language after already having acquired a first one, the process of language transfer becomes an essential mechanism. This transfer is largely driven by comparison, systematization, and the learner’s ability to form associations between linguistic elements. At this stage, the teacher plays a critical role. Without proper guidance and metacognitive awareness, students may not fully understand the operations they are performing, which can result in systematic errors.

A strategic approach to introducing new linguistic phenomena may unfold through different types of transfer. Spontaneous or intuitive transfer occurs naturally when learners apply previously acquired knowledge without explicit instruction. This type of transfer assumes a level of comparability between linguistic structures and often relies on an internal reference system developed through earlier learning experiences.

However, in cases where spontaneous transfer does not occur - despite the presence of transferable structures in the first language - controlled transfer becomes necessary. In such instances, the teacher must deliberately direct the learner’s attention to the similarities and guide them in forming associations. A third variant, controlled transfer with a partial orientational base, involves learner reflection and prior awareness, allowing transfer to happen only after a partial cognitive framework for the speech act has been established.

Given that both English and German belong to the Indo-European language family, students often notice numerous structural and lexical similarities. This linguistic proximity facilitates positive transfer, especially in the domain of vocabulary, where shared roots and cognates enhance recognition and retention.

This linguistic similarity significantly facilitates the memorization and comprehension of both spoken and written German for students who have previously studied English.

For example, sport – der Sport, nation – die Nation, culture – die Kultur, conference – die Konferenz, etc.

At the same time, special attention should be paid to the development of pronunciation skills, because despite the visual similarity, the pronunciation of these words differs significantly from the rules of German phonetics.

If the rules of reading and pronunciation of the German alphabet are not consolidated at the initial stage, it is not easy for students to get rid of the influence of the English language, which accordingly leads to pronunciation errors. Thus, students often read the letter *v* as [w], although in German it is the letter [f] as [f], letter *i* as [ai], and not as [i], and letter *s* as [ʃ].

When acquiring grammatical structures, the existence of similar forms and patterns in both languages can greatly ease the learning process for German. Several parallels between English and German can be highlighted, such as:

The use of articles and their classification into definite and indefinite categories (e.g., *a table/ein Tisch; the star/der Stern*).

The necessity of the copular verb *to be* (*sein* in German) in linking subject and predicate (e.g., *This is a book. /Es ist ein Buch.*).

The presence of prefixes in certain German verbs, which often correspond to particles found in English phrasal verbs (for example, *to turn on/anmachen*).

The concept of modality and the specific usage of modal verbs such as *can – können, must – müssen, want – wollen, and should – sollen*.

Please note that in both languages, after modal verbs the semantic verbs are used without the particle *to/zu*: I cannot play piano. /Ich kann nicht Klavier spielen. You must not take the photos. / Du mußt nicht fotografieren (Tussupova, Temirbekova, 2016).

There are no difficulties in learning such similar forms in both languages: English to have + infinitive and German haben + zu + infinitive or English to be + infinitive and German sein + zu + infinitive.

Division of verbs into (Eng.) regular/irregular = (Germ.) strong /weak. (Germ.)

beginnen – begann – begonnen/ (Eng.) begin – began – begun; (Germ.) trinken – trank – getrunken / (Eng.) drink – drank – drunk; (Germ.) singen – sang – gesungen / (Eng.) sing – sang – sung.

The grammatical expression of degrees of comparison in adjectives, as illustrated by the German forms *lang – länger – am längsten* compared to the English *large – larger – the largest*, alongside other similar phenomena found in these and related languages.

Prefixes and suffixes in German are often recognizable from English: *un-* (unhappy-un-glücklich; -ness/-keit - (happiness - Glücklichkeit).

This way, there is no need to explain basic grammar concepts from scratch; you can go straight to comparing forms.

Despite the numerous similarities between the two foreign languages, important differences exist that teachers must highlight to students. Some learners, upon recognizing commonalities, tend to transfer language phenomena wholesale from one foreign language to the other, which often results in errors. For instance, when studying past tense forms in German, students frequently misuse the auxiliary verb *haben* instead of *sein* in the Perfect tense.

This confusion arises because English uses the auxiliary verb *to have* for the present perfect tense without differentiating between “static verbs” and “verbs of motion,” a distinction that is crucial in German grammar. In German, verbs indicating movement or a change of state require *sein* as the auxiliary verb in the past tense. Therefore, learners who first acquire English often struggle to grasp why certain verbs demand a different auxiliary in German.

This example illustrates both the potential for positive transfer from English to German and the challenges posed by interference. While positive transfer can accelerate the learning process, interference remains a significant issue. Consequently, teachers should carefully design their instructions to emphasize these differences and implement strategies to minimize transfer-related errors.

Experience teaching German as a second foreign language after English to Kazakh-speaking groups has revealed the most challenging aspects of learning German. For clarity, we focused on students’ acquisition of vocabulary – so-called “false friends” – while studying grammar, focusing on grammatical constructions and the resulting interference. We provide examples of the most common “false friends,” which, despite their obvious similarities in both languages, led to an inaccurate understanding of the original information.

Table 1. “False friends”

English	German (double-word)	Translation from English	Translation from Deutsch
eventually	eventuell	возможно	в конечном счете
actual	aktuell	фактический	актуальный
chef	Chef	повар	Шеф, начальник
Angina	Angina	стенокардия	Ангина, воспаление горла
gift	Gift	подарок	яд
film	Film	пленка	фильм
genial	genial	Гениальный, добродушный	блестящий
intelligence	Intelligenz	Ум, интеллект	Ум, интеллигентность
officer	Offizier	Чиновник, должностное лицо	офицер
professor	Professor	Преподаватель	Преподаватель только в университете
turkey	Turkei	Индейка	Турция

“False friends” are words in different languages that look or sound similar but have different meanings. In the case of English and German, such pairings are particularly insidious: their visual and phonetic similarities often mislead learners, leading them to make erroneous assumptions about meaning (Jensen et al., 2022).

Such words hinder the memorization process because they cause cross-interference: students begin to confuse meanings, contexts, and usage rules, especially at the initial stage of learning. This reduces confidence in using words and hinders the rapid development of language skills.

Therefore, when teaching, it’s important to purposefully introduce students to false friends, emphasizing the differences in meaning and illustrating them with contextual examples. This helps develop a conscious approach to memorizing vocabulary and avoid common mistakes.

Table 2. Some causes of interference

Kazakh	English /German
Presence of seven cases	Absence/ Lack of correspondence to some cases of the native language; the number of cases is 4.
Less variability in the order of words in sentences	Word order is more variable.
The word order “subject-object-verb” (SOV) is often used.	“Subject-verb-object” (SVO) is often used.
Absence of prepositions.	Using prepositions
There is a law of vowel harmony.	There is no such phenomenon.

Absence of articles in the Kazakh language.	Presence of articles.
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The specific differences between the Kazakh and German languages, as expected based on theoretical consideration through comparative analysis and identification of predictable errors in the speech of students in the process of teaching foreign languages, are caused by the fundamental difference between the Kazakh and German languages. The Kazakh language, being a Turkic language, is an agglutinative language with the manifestation of the rules of synharmonism (Jensen, Westergaard, 2023). In Kazakh, suffixes are used to express grammatical relations, while German is an Indo-European language, like English. German is an inflectional language where grammatical relations are expressed mainly by cases and changes in the form of the word itself.

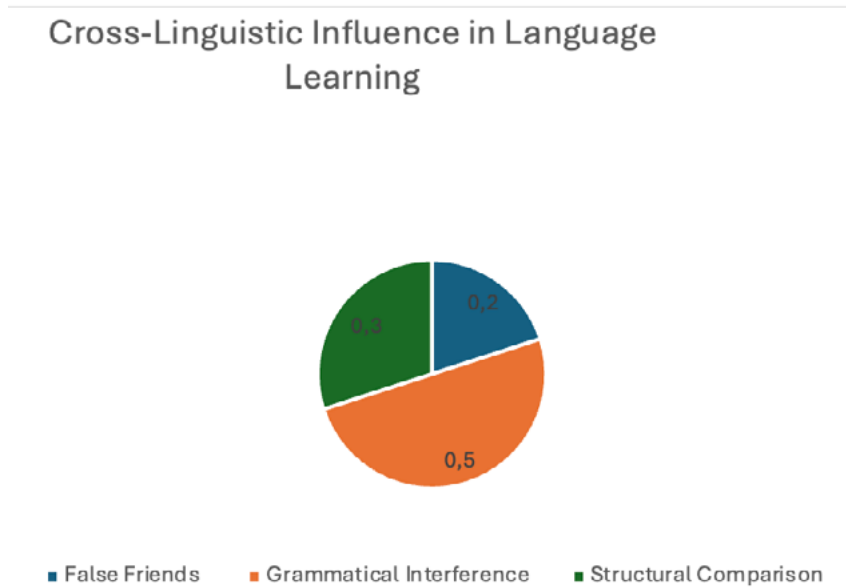


Figure 1. Cross-Linguistic Influence in Language Learning

The influence of the first foreign language on the acquisition of a second foreign language tends to diminish over time as learners gain proficiency and expand their linguistic repertoire in the second language (Brown, Miller, 2016). When acquiring new vocabulary, prior knowledge of English frequently serves as a helpful reference. For example, while studying the topic of “Verwandten” (relatives), students are often able to infer the meanings of familial terms due to recognizable phonetic and orthographic similarities, such as *Vater* (father), *Mutter* (mother), *Sohn* (son), and *Tochter* (daughter).

Moreover, differences in sociocultural knowledge become apparent through variations in communication styles, including gestures and forms of address, between representatives of the two cultures. For instance, the English pronoun *you* serves both as an informal and formal form of address, corresponding respectively to the Russian “ты” and polite “Вы.” In contrast, German differentiates between the formal *Sie* and the informal *du* when addressing individuals.

Cultural customs also manifest in greetings: handshakes are a common practice in Germany, used by both men and women upon meeting, introduction, and even when parting. Students often compare this with English-speaking cultures, where handshakes are less frequently used in casual greetings, highlighting the importance of understanding such sociocultural nuances.

It is also noteworthy that when learning a second foreign language, in our case German, students apply the strategies they have learned when learning English. Thus, prior knowledge of English supports the learning of German by providing students with experience in vocabulary

memorization, auditory comprehension, and grammatical communication. This foundation helps learners better understand effective language acquisition strategies, equips them with skills to work independently with the material, and reduces their fear of making mistakes.

For instance, when constructing dialogues, students are already familiar with instructional techniques such as the “top-down” approach, where a complete dialogue serves as a structural and intonation model for creating similar dialogues. They also know the “bottom-up” approach, which begins with learning individual dialogue elements (utterances) and gradually progresses toward independently conducting conversations based on educational and communicative contexts.

Experience working with 1-st year students when they begin learning a second foreign language shows that the use of various forms of exercises, including games, increases their motivation to learn German. In addition, they are familiar with many of them from the English language course.

Here are some of them:

One effective classroom activity is the game known as “Broken Telephone.” In this exercise, students form a chain and successively pass a word whispered by the teacher to the first student along the line, aiming to relay it without distortion or “breaking the chain.” The final student then announces aloud the word they received. A common variation involves the leader whispering a German word to the student at one end, who then passes it to their neighbor, continuing down the line.

Currently, the game is often played in two competing teams. The winning team is the one that successfully transmits the word to the last player more quickly and accurately. Through repeated exposure and practice, this activity helps students internalize new vocabulary and improves their pronunciation (Dreyer, Schmitt, 2021).

The students’ answers were coded in digital and letter format. The assessment criteria were universal for both groups. Procedure: classes were conducted according to the schedule approved by the university in the first semester in the first-year groups involved in the experiment.

During the data analysis, no initial data collection was carried out, which would have included an assessment of the level of knowledge, speech skills, and abilities, since the experiment involved students who were starting to learn German from scratch. After implementing the proposed model, the results were compared in the experimental and control subgroups of both groups.

The paper outlines diagnostic tasks, target categories of interference, and teaching methods using tables with grammatical, structural, and lexical data based on an analysis of language materials from three languages. To ensure the correct sequence, difficulties in the experimental group were addressed through the developed material, taking interference into account in each lesson.

The data were evaluated based on the results of the postexperimental test. The reliability assessment method was based on the same time interval for completing the tests, identical test items in both groups, and uniform assessment criteria, as well as the sessions being conducted by the same teacher.

Conclusion

In summary, this article has explored the concept of “contrastive linguistics” from a linguo-didactic perspective, aiming to uncover the potential and applicability of this approach within the methodology of teaching a second foreign language (Lockley, Yoshida, 2016).

These analytical methods serve not only as tools for linguistic comparison but also as effective means to motivate students by building on their prior knowledge (such as experience with English). By fostering internal associations through the identification of similarities and

differences between two foreign languages, this approach facilitates the comprehension and acquisition of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonetic features.

The novelty of the research: the study involves a contextspecific synthesis and proposes a pedagogical structure for a model of teaching German as a second foreign language after English to a Kazakhspeaking audience.

Contribution of the authors:

In writing this article, the authors' contributions are equally distributed and divided among themselves according to the following criteria:

Aubakirova Aiman Kairlovna - conceptualized the study, oversaw data integrity, collected and interpreted research findings, and performed the English translation.

Tussupova Gulden Kabdrashovna - developed the theoretical framework, prepared graphical representations of the data, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript.

Ustelimova Natalya Anatolievna - rafted the original manuscript, contributed to concept development, critically refined the text, and approved the final version for publication.

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Қазақ тілді студенттерді неміс тілін екінші шет тілі ретінде оқытуда ағылшын және неміс тілдерінің интерференциясына контрастивтік тәсіл

Андатпа. Неміс тілі мұғалімдерінің назарының біздің еліміздегі жоғары оқу орындарында неміс тілін екінші шет тілі ретінде оқытуға аударылуы, белгілі болғандай, бір жағынан жүргізіліп жатқан тіл саясатына, екінші жағынан, студенттердің де, оқытушылардың да неміс тіліне деген әлі де өшпес қызығушылығына байланысты. Сонымен, неміс тілін екінші шет тілі ретінде оқытудың теориясы мен дидактикасы саласындағы зерттеулердің өзектілігі бүгінгі күннің талабы болып табылады. Бұл мақалада қазақ тілінде оқытылатын топтарда ағылшын тілінен кейін неміс тілінің мысалында екінші шет тілін оқытудың лингводидактикалық аспектілері қарастырылады. Оқыту тәжірибесіне сүйене отырып, екінші шет тілі ретінде неміс тілін, бірінші шет тілі ретінде ағылшын тілін мысалға ала отырып, студенттерге сөйлеу әрекетінің барлық түрлерін үйрету кезінде туындайтын кедергілерді жеңу әдістері көрсетілген. Нақты мысалдар негізінде тілдік материалды ұсыну стратегиясы, туындайтын интерференция, оны еңсеру жолдары, сондай-ақ бірінші шет тілін оқып-үйрену барысында бұрын тәжірибе жинақтаған студенттердің әлеуетті мүмкіндіктерін ескеру және ана тілінің екінші шет тілін меңгеруге әсері көрсетілді.

Түйін сөздер: екінші шет тілін оқыту әдістемесі, лингводидактика, оқытудағы тілдің интерференциясы, көптілді білім беру.

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Контрастивный подход к интерференции английского и немецкого языков при обучении казахскоязычных студентов немецкому языку как второму иностранному

Аннотация. Смещение фокуса внимания преподавателей немецкого языка на обучение немецкому языку как второму иностранному в вузах нашей страны обусловлен,

как известно, проводимой языковой политикой, с одной стороны, и все еще неугасающим интересом к немецкому языку со стороны, как студентов, так и преподавателей, с другой. Таким образом, актуальность исследований в области теории и дидактики преподавания немецкого языка как второго иностранного, является императивной на сегодняшний день. В данной статье рассматриваются лингводидактические аспекты преподавания второго иностранного на примере немецкого после английского в группах с казахским языком обучения. На примере немецкого как второго и английского как первого с опорой на практику преподавания, продемонстрированы способы преодоления интерференции, возникающей при обучении студентов всем видам речевой деятельности. На конкретных примерах продемонстрированы стратегия подачи языкового материала, возникающая интерференция, пути ее преодоления, а также учет потенциальных возможностей самих студентов, имеющих предыдущий опыт изучения первого иностранного языка, и влияние родного языка на освоение второго иностранного языка.

Ключевые слова: методика преподавания второго иностранного языка, лингводидактика, языковая интерференция в обучении, полиязычное образование.

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