

## **Problems of Intercultural Interference in Foreign Language Teaching**

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**Abstract.** The problem of interlanguage interference has been well studied by linguists and specialists in the field of foreign language teaching. However, for the successful mastering of a foreign language, it is necessary to overcome not only linguistic, but also intercultural interference. Manifestations in the speech of the first mentioned interference are often obvious and easy to correct; the cases of violations of cultural norms is less manifested, and very often they are not given special attention. The article substantiates the necessity of studying

intercultural interference, reveals the concept, the phenomena of interference in foreign language professional intercultural communication, and also describes the model of students' learning a language profile for overcoming intercultural interferences and reveals the structural elements of the model of discussed criteria and indicators, levels of academic success overcoming intercultural interference.

**Keywords:** intercultural communication; interference; transposition; intercultural interference; intercultural differences; teaching foreign languages; the model of learning; foreign language; competence approach; intercultural competence; linguocultural code; socio-pragmatic inadequacy; pragmatic interference; the dialogue of cultures; discourse.

## INTRODUCTION

Expansion of international contacts, internationalization of all spheres of life due to the entry of the educational system of the Republic of Uzbekistan into the world educational and socio-cultural space required the application of an intercultural approach to the study of interference. For modern linguodidactics, the study of intercultural interference is also significant in connection with the intensification of professional activities of specialists of different profiles in close contact with foreign colleagues.

In this article, the intercultural interference is considered as a communicative hindrance due to the imposition of linguocultural codes of contacting languages, and is also associated with the increased interest of linguodidactics in the phenomenon of interference, which generates not only interlinguistic (phonetic, lexical, grammatical, syntactic), but also discursive, socio-cultural hindrances in intercultural communication. Hence, interference is interpreted in a broad sense as a conflict interaction of cognitive-speech mechanisms, which is manifested in the speech of foreign language learner in deviations from the linguistic, discursive, socio-cultural norms of one linguistic culture under the influence of another.

## MATERIALS

In the context of reforms in higher education, the lack of guidelines and standards almost become a norm. It can easily be found when we carefully examine the training materials and manuals offered today by the departments of foreign languages of numerous universities. Compilers of such textbooks usually forget about the main task of training specialists – obtaining necessary professional and socially oriented skills and communication skills in multinational environment. [4, p.1081]

From methodological point of view, interference is defined as involuntarily admitted actions of learners in foreign-language discourse of various inaccuracies with the position of the norms of the target language and culture due to the negative existence of linguistic impact, speech and

cultural experience. In our opinion, for the methodology of teaching foreign languages, it is important to study the mechanism of spontaneous transfer in the process of switching codes, to determine its regularities and related phenomena. This will reveal the possibilities of systematic transfer management in language and culture acquisition, because the transfer of skills is associated with its stability. In addition, it is necessary to develop in students a stable skill of carrying out speech activities.

In the process of intercultural communication, if communicants perform actions that are unexpected for the other communicant, or, on the contrary, do not perform the actions that the interlocutor expects from him/her, then this is called sociopragmatic inadequacy. [10, p. 3] The underlying cause of sociopragmatic inadequacy is the cultural and psychological characteristics of communicants, manifested in the socio-cultural features of communicative behavior. These features are understood as ethnically determined features of consciousness and mentality, which are actualized through the behavior of participants in the interaction. In view of this, we can talk about the ethno-specific or linguoculturological features of the participants of the communication. In cases, when such knowledge is not found, *cross-cultural/pragmatic interference* manifests itself.

E.V. Miloserdova interprets pragmatic interference as “the transfer of communication skills and behavior learned in the native language to a foreign language”. [9, p. 81] Cultural background is one of the main components of pragmatic competence. It is reflected in communicative behavior, where the following dominants are distinguished: an outline of the national character, dominant features of communication of specific people, verbal communicative intercourse, non-verbal communicative intercourse, national and social symbolism [12, pp. 30-31]. It is ignorance of the cultural background, which affects the success of intercultural communication, i.e., its result. On this point, M. Dzhusupov writes that “interference is not a mechanism of interaction of languages (cultures), but the result of this interaction [2, p. 147-148].

In different sources intercultural interference is correlated, as it has been noted, with psychological distance, in particular with “culture shock” [Schumann], “conflict of cultures” [14], “communicative trap” [13]. According to I.A. Sternin, this is “an easily perceived discrepancy in the norms and traditions of communication of peoples, manifested in the conditions of direct intercultural communication and expressed in misunderstanding, inadequate interpretation or rejection from the position of their own communicative culture...” [12, pp. 11-12].

It is proved that in the course of intercultural communication, incomplete understanding, ethnic stereotypes, prejudices, generalizations might often arise. In particular, the idea of referring particular people as uncultured (because of *coming too close for the interlocutor, talk a lot, touch*

*when talking, interfere in your affairs, ask too many personal questions, etc.*), incomprehensible in their behavior, when the motives of certain communicative actions are unclear (*for what to thank people, before leaving somebody's house as a guest, why not say 'thank you' to close friends*), and often contributes to the emergence of a sense of national superiority and arrogance towards people with a different, "incomprehensible" communicative culture. [12, p. 15] Thus, mutual understanding is influenced by the processes of attribution (stereotypes, prejudices, generalizations), ethnocentrism, anti-empathy, intolerant attitude to "other" cultures. Below we discuss other notions, which can be regarded as other causes of cross-cultural interference or sources.

Cross-cultural interference, as cultural, is revealed when the language syntagma itself is "immersed" "in the cultural paradigm" [17, p.71]. One of the interfering factors is the most complex process of coexistence in the human consciousness of two language systems and cultures. We should not forget the fact that language is one of the ways of fixing culture as a result of which everything that is presented implicitly (*ethnospecific value orientations, attitudes, and norms*) is reflected at the linguistic, discursive and behavioral levels.

## METHODS

Interference occurs in cross-cultural interaction as a result of misunderstanding, shock, psychological distance due to the ethno-specificity of language consciousness. Therefore, we consider it appropriate to use the more transparent term "*intercultural interference*" instead of the generally accepted "*pragmatic interference*". In a narrow sense, *cross-cultural interference* is understood as the process of conflict interaction between representatives of different linguocultures as a result of a mismatch of background knowledge about communicative and non-communicative behavior in the mind of a bilingual. And in a broad sense, by *intercultural interference*, we regard the result of the conflict interaction of different national consciousness in intercultural communication, where cultural patterns adopted in the native culture are transferred to a foreign language environment, which, of course, hinders goal-reaching and mutual understanding. To prove our claims, let us turn to the researches carried out by R. Lado.

According to R. Lado, culture consists of functional units that have form, meaning, and distribution. One of the functional units of culture is the act of behavior, which forms a scheme that has its own form, meaning and distribution, which are determined and modified by culture. Forms of cultural models (patterns) have a complex of meanings and distribution (temporal and spatial localization).

Form, meaning, and distribution do not exist separately from each other, they are mutually dependent. As R. Lado writes: “Forms are relevant when they are endowed with meaning; meaning presupposes form to be relevant to us; the distribution of meaningful forms is always characterized by the fact of existing model” [7, p. 52]. When a person finds himself/herself in a foreign language environment, there is often a transfer of patterns accepted in his/her native culture, as a result of which intercultural interference is manifested. However, cross-cultural interference can also occur at the language level. Scientists have proved that many conceptually equivalent words differ in the content of the cultural component. Let’s give a well-known example – the Russian word ‘*attestat*’ and the English ‘*certificate*’, which are conceptually considered equivalent. Both words mean a document of secondary education. However, they differ in their background knowledge. If the Russian word ‘*attestat*’ is a document which proves that somebody has finished secondary school and which is awarded to graduates in a solemn atmosphere, then the English ‘*certificate*’ is a document about passing one or more exams for a course of study at school. In view of this, there may be interference in the translation if they are taken as equivalent units. Well-known expression “thin soup” is translated into Uzbek as “*suyuqovqat*”, and into Russian – “*jidkiy sup*”. Thus, lexical compatibility does not coincide, i.e. many concepts are verbalized differently in English than in Russian and Uzbek cultures.

Based on the suggestions proposed by R. Lado, we conducted an intercultural measurement of some functional units of English, American and Uzbek linguistic cultures. Cross-cultural measurements were carried out as follows, taking into account the following:

- 1) already developed parameters and models (Hall [3], Prokhorov [11]Sternin[12], andKulikova [7];
- 2) certain macro-level, mega-level and micro-level which are discussed in sociolinguistics (Kochetkov [5]);
- 3) some principles (developed by Yusupov [18]). Here are just some examples that demonstrate the manifestations of cross-cultural interference.

1. Value orientations are different among Uzbeks and British/Americans. For example, the British and Americans especially value independence, equality, and law-abiding, which affects the patterns of communication (communication rules). In particular, they do not like when their **privacy** is violated, they protect their independence, for them society is a conglomerate of individuals, where everyone is responsible for himself/herself and where “I” is an individual, and for Uzbeks – collectivism, where a person dissolves in the collective and acts as a member of a certain collective. The main communicative rule in English and American cultures is “**Don't impose!**”, and for Uzbeks this rule is not appropriate and all this is reflected in the language and

behavior of the discussed people.

2. Given the nature of the Uzbeks takes on **small talk** as a stereotype of behavior of the British. For example, the British like to talk about the weather, but talking about family, about earnings are regarded as taboo, these are personal questions and if they are asked them, then the communicative rule “**privacy**” is understood to be violated. Uzbeks talk freely on these topics even with unfamiliar people, because they live in a collective, they seem to have no secrets from others.

3. In Uzbek culture, a man usually opens the door in public places. And in English – the door opened by a person, who goes first, regardless of their gender. In English culture, a man will not offer to help a woman, for example, carry a suitcase or give up a seat on the bus. This is due to the fact that in their society everyone is equal and what we perceive as politeness and respect for the female sex can be perceived as discrimination. In Russian and Uzbek cultures, it is usually a man, who opens the door, and it is also a privilege for men to carry heavy objects. Usually on holidays, women and men sit separately in Uzbek culture, and in English-speaking and Russian-speaking societies this is not observed. The meaning is similar, but the gender distribution is different in the discussed cultures.

4. Uzbeks, like the British, like to drink tea, but the form and distribution of traditions differ. The British usually drink tea with milk; the Uzbeks prefer to drink green/black tea without milk (form). No conversation among Uzbeks takes place without a tea party (meaning and distribution), which is allowed even at the official level of communication. In addition, in Uzbek culture, tea is poured into a **piyola** (bowl) and in a small amount, when a bowl of tea is served in the right hand, a small bow is made with one's head and body.

5. There is a presence of non-equivalent functional units (lacunae), such as **Mufti day**– a day when office employees can come to work in ordinary everyday clothes, and as if in gratitude for such an indulgence, they give a certain amount of money to a charity organization. In Uzbek culture – **khashar**, as a tradition based on the value of collectivism (together to build a house, clean ditches, plant trees). Other examples are holiday **Navruz** in Uzbek culture, the national dish – **Sumalak**, in English – **Boxing Day, turkey**.

6. The English feel more comfortable when they communicate with friends at a distance of 1.5 to 4 feet (foot=30.48 cm), and with unfamiliar people at a distance of 4-12 feet. Whereas the Uzbeks usually communicate at a closer distance and touching one another is allowed. Here we can find the existence of a mismatch of distribution (spatial localization), which leads to an erroneous understanding of the meaning of interlocutor's behavior.

7. For Americans, silence causes a negative reaction, whereas in Uzbek culture, if you talk

to someone, who is older than you, keeping silence is regarded normally and it's a tradition. If an old person is silent – it is associated with contemplation, reflection, and getting away from the hustle and bustle. However, among peers, silence is a sign of agreement or unwillingness to speak. Silence also means that the person does not know the answer or does not know how to say it in English. [18, p. 52] Thus, silence is a phenomenon of “polysemy”.

8. In communication, the British formally use the phrases **I'll call you**, **Drop in time**, and the Uzbeks perceive this as the truth. So, if the Uzbeks are told to “come in at any time”, they visit you, because it is the way they perceived your words. The British come to visit only if they are officially invited. The patterns are similar in form, but the meaning and distribution in these cultures are different.

9. The phrase **How do you do?**—a formal sign of greeting in English society, which suggests “**Echo feedback**”. However, with the similarity of the form in the Uzbek culture, **Ishlarqanday?** the meaning is more extended and therefore Uzbeks can tell their interlocutors in detail how they are doing.

10. In English and American cultures, the gender specificity is observed in the use of linguistic means to characterize men and women – for men there is used the adjective **forceful**, and for women **pushy**, **fighter** – for men and for women **spunky** or **feisty**, men **passes out** – *falling directly to the ground*, and a woman **faints** – *as giving way to weakness*. The Uzbeks do not have such differentiations.

11. In order to express *politeness* (meaning), the English use the modal verbs *could/would/should*, *you, please*. In the Uzbek language, politeness can be expressed by other means – suffixes, particles, for example – **Could you help me?** – *Mengayordambersiz-mi* (or *Mengayordambersiz-mi* – *Help me, please*). There is a match between the value and distribution, but the form does not match.

12. The affectionate treatment of the English **duckie** (darling) causes other associations among the Uzbeks, since the word *o'rdak* (duck) is usually used towards a person, who has grown fat for nothing. In Uzbek culture, women are affectionately called *axonim* (my lady), *jonim* (my soul), *jigarim* (my liver). Here we can only find similarity in distribution.

13. The gesture that means “everything is fine” in Uzbek culture – the fist being clenched and the thumb is up, and in American culture the thumb and index fingers are connected in a ring – OK. The meaning and distribution are similar, but the forms are different.

14. In these cultures, there are significant differences at the level of discourse. According to the parameters of E. Hall's definition of context, Uzbek culture can be classified as highly contextual, since there is a prevalence of judgments, pauses, omissions and non-directness in oral

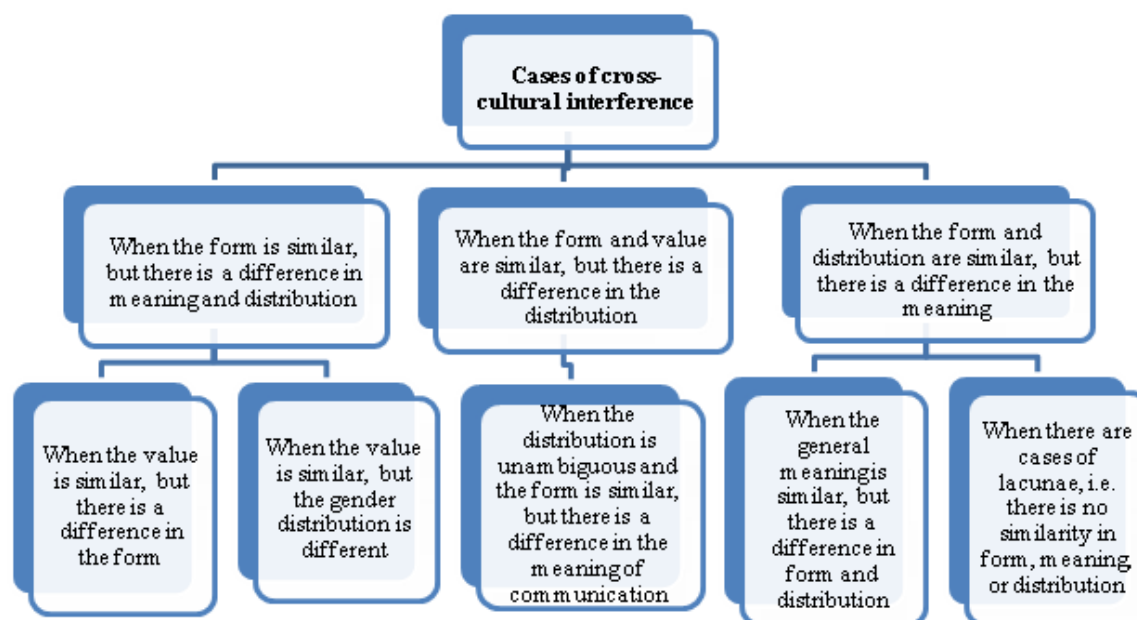
discourse. There are many implications in the speech of Uzbeks, for example, the word **xo'p** (okay) does not always mean that a person agrees or something will be done. There are also implications and deviations in written discourse. If we turn to the socio-political discourse, then there is a deductive organization of speech, and the English and Americans prefer inductive.

15. There is a discrepancy of intonation structures in the contacted linguistic cultures. For example, the English in the sentence **Would you like a salad?** they use Rise-Fall intonation pattern, whereas in the Uzbek language, this question is usually pronounced with a descending intonation, which demonstrates disrespect and rudeness in English culture. The phrase **Will you ever learn?** uttered in a descending tone sounds like a sarcastic statement in English – [16]. It should be noted that the Uzbek language has a peculiar word order, which dictates its own rules of intonation, different from English.

These examples demonstrate cases of cross-cultural interference that affect mutual understanding and, accordingly, affect the goal of communication. Summarizing the cases of cross-cultural interference described above, we can classify them as shown in the diagram.

## RESULTS

### Cases of cross-cultural interference among representatives of Uzbek culture when communicating with native English speakers



It should be noted, that R. Lado distinguishes only spatial and temporal localization. At the same time, situational conditionality and gender specificity are neglected. The above examples



give reason to refer them to distribution. Situational distribution is a situational conditioning of the use of certain patterns, which depends on the tone and usage, and the other is related to the gender specifics of communication and behavior.

From methodological point of view, the dynamics of approaches to the description and prevention of errors in the foreign language speech of students proposed by R.P. Milrud is informative [8]. The author classifies them according to the approaches to teaching foreign languages: 1) **errors of form** – behaviorism, 2) **errors of rule-mentalism**, 3) **errors of meaning** – cognitivism, 4) **errors of interaction** – communicative approach, 5) **errors of goal-setting**–discursive.

## DISCUSSION

The practice of intercultural communication has already proved that language mistakes of a native speaker are being treated with more tolerance than cultural ones, because they lead to misunderstandings, failures, and difficulties. Let's pay attention to the errors associated with cultural manifestations that occur in the last three types. In brief, we will highlight how the author demonstrates the nature of these errors and strategies for overcoming them:

**1.Errors of meaning.** Violation of the structure of meaning transmission, i.e. distortion of meaning both at the formal (*lexical-grammatical*) and content (*logics, coherence, etc.*) levels is attributed to errors of meaning. In order to prevent such errors, tasks of a reflexive nature are offered, in particular, working with synonymic rows, clarifying the meanings and collocations of lexical units, correcting the text (one's own and someone else's) on the basis of a **check-list**. Here content-semantic analysis is regarded as the main strategy for preventing cognitive errors.

**2.Interaction errors.** A well-formed statement in terms of language, but having shortcomings in the socio-cultural plan, leads to misunderstandings, and stagnation leads to a communicative failure. Language errors generally do not interfere the process of interaction, and the main one is considered to be an interaction error. It includes categorical, emotional, related to the norms of behavior in conversation. The basic strategy for preventing errors in speech should be interactive speech practice of communication participants, socio-cultural knowledge of the interlocutors.

**3.Errors of goal setting.** The criterion for the erroneous utterance is the inability to achieve the communicative goal set for the communication, i.e., the error of goal setting. The goal of communication requires a choice of the proper language means in accordance with the requirements of building a discourse – given socio-cultural context of interaction and belonging to a particular type of discourse, specifically logico-semantic forming of

statements (cohesion, coherence, and completeness), clear compositional design. It is the lack of formation of discursive competence that generates errors and ultimately hinders the achievement of a communicative goal. The prevention of errors contributes to careful work on what is included in the concept of discourse (types of discourse, communication strategies, etc.) [8, p. 15-16].

Our long-term personal experience of teaching English in the Russian and Uzbek classrooms of philological universities shows that all of these types of errors can occur in the speech of students of both classrooms. Students' mistakes are caused by the specifics of the foreign language culture and the process of intercultural communication itself, as well as the conditions in which the language of the specialty is taught. Therefore, as there has been already noted above, intercultural interference manifests itself at the linguistic, discursive and behavioral levels. The main reason for the manifestation of these errors is the linguistic and cultural specificity in the worldview of students, so it is necessary to pay due attention to the linguistic and cultural features of language, speech and behavior.

In general, cross-cultural interference occurs at the level of goal setting and mutual understanding. However, given the fact that there are universal elements at the linguistic, discursive, and behavioral levels, there is a general cross-cultural transposition (*facilitation, transference, positive transfer*). When transferring universal elements, some correction is still required in the field of linguoculturological and discursive knowledge, communicative and non-communicative behavior. Cross-cultural transposition is a controlled process, since it is a transfer in which the existing language, speech and behavioral experience in the minds of students stimulates already existing patterns in the introduction to a foreign language culture. L.S. Vygotsky once warned that "conscious and intentional assimilation of a foreign language is quite obviously based on a certain level of development of the native language." [15, p. 292] Thus, we come to the conclusion that the higher the level of knowledge of students in their native language and culture, the greater the potential they have for mastering the language and foreign culture.

Below we will focus on the laws that should be used to teach a foreign language as a specialty in the Russian-speaking and Uzbek-speaking audiences.

In the process of teaching foreign language as the major in the context of bilingualism/trilingualism there are two methodological patterns – 1) the emergence of intercultural interference– negative effect of linguistic experience acquired in their native culture and media culture, 2) the opportunities for positive transfer (transposition), the existing linguistic and cultural experience in the native culture of learners and the media culture.

Interference manifests itself at the linguistic, discursive, and behavioral levels and

negatively affects the outcome of cross-cultural behavior. Positive transfer occurs as well as negative transfer, at the linguistic, discursive, and behavioral levels: **a)** similar phenomena/elements and native bilingual/trilingual student experience is transferred to a foreign culture and, thus, the transfer promotes the assimilation of some cultural material; **b)** existing experience in media culture/, the intermediary language is transferred to a foreign culture, foreign language.

In our opinion, the frequency of negative impact of previous linguistic and cultural experience and cases of positive influence depend on the level of linguistic, cultural and speech development of the individual and the methodically thought-out organization of the educational process. Despite the multinational composition of academic groups in a linguistic university, it is possible to achieve a controlled process of teaching a foreign language culture, provided that the native language and culture are taken into account and appropriate progressive methods, means and methods of teaching are applied.

Taking into account the scientific and methodological provisions of D.D. Djalalov on the multi-stage procedure for establishing difficulties [1, p. 3-11], we will make an attempt to determine the main difficulties that students face when learning English as a specialty related to the intercultural aspect of learning.

From a methodological point of view, the following main difficulties in learning English are identified as:

**I. Intonation level** – tonality, since it is there that semantic distinguishing features are implemented, for example, by raising the tone of a request, an order can be obtained, the polite tonality of the Uzbek language can have the opposite effect in English.

**II. Lexical and lexical stylistic levels** – **1)polysemy** – *body, teach*, **2)compatibility** – **brown bread** (*qora non*), **strong tea** (*quyuq, achchiwchoy*), **he has golden fingers** (*uningqo'ligul*), **3)non – equivalent vocabulary** – **boxing day** (*the day after Christmas*), **sepyoydi** (the ceremony of putting the dowry for public viewing, held on the day after the wedding), **4)lexical units with cultural marking** – a) **denotative-marked units**, for example, a **friend** in English culture means a friend/acquaintance, but not a person who is in a close friendly relationship with you. In English culture, pals are there to have a good time together, but not to complain and ask for help. And in Uzbek culture, the concept of **do'st** (friend) is often associated with a close person, even with a brother, with whom you can share, who will help you, **b) connotative-marked lexical and lexical-stylistic units**—*black books, to smile like a Cheshire cat* (smile from ear to ear), *he looks like eggs* (ugly), *Big Ben*

(chimes in London), *to send someone to Coventry* (boycott against someone), *to be born within the Sound of Bow Bells* (born in London), *true blue* (persistent color – the blue color of the Scots in the rebellion of 1638). In order to understand these expressions, certain background knowledge is required.

**III. grammatical-semantic level** – socio-cultural conditionality of the use of certain constructions depending on the usage and tonality of speech. For example, the desirability and undesirability of actions are formulated in English culture in the form of descriptions, not prescriptions, for example, *No milk in my coffee, please* (if you want coffee without milk), *No smoking* (if you ban smoking). *You mustn't do it* (ban a child, but not an adult). In Uzbek culture, in most cases the preference is given to imperatives.

**IV. The level of discourse** – 1) the specificity of the structural and semantic organization of various types and forms of discourse, for example, designing official and personal letters, instructions and reports. In Uzbek culture, the deductive organization of discourse prevails, and in English, the inductive one is more used, English discourse is low-contextual, it traces organizing markers, clear argumentation, excludes various interpretations, and in Uzbek the discourse it is highly contextual, since implications are used in the form of deviations from the main idea and omissions, 2) the complexity of the process of recognizing implicit information due to ignorance of linguistic and cultural features.

**V. Behavioral level** – 1) the existence of lacunae, which are used only in one linguistic culture and having analogies in the other (the taboo of certain topics in English culture, 2) intercultural ambiguity – formally similar but bearing different meanings or distinguishing distribution in the contacted cultures (*a smile* – a formal sign of politeness), 3) polysemy – one form that carries many meanings (*silence*), 4) cross-cultural synonymy – the same meaning is encoded differently in English, Russian and Uzbek cultures (gesture “*he talks a lot*”, a symbol of good luck – in English culture – *a black cat*, and in Uzbek culture – *a swallow*).

## CONCLUSION

In order to overcome the above mentioned difficulties, it is necessary to use the following techniques: comparative-linguoculturological analysis, linguoculturological commentary, drawing up associative links, filling in clusters, problem tasks and extensive use of visual aids.

Thus, the prediction of intercultural interference in the context of dialogue of cultures should be directed on formation of skills of the bearer of the image of the world one linguistic and cultural community to understand (comprehend) the support of a linguistic image of the world, that means mastering by the bilingual person the amount of knowledge about the world. In the

context of a dialogue of cultures, a bilingual person should become an active participant in cross-cultural communication, owning, along with his/her native and non-native language as a means of everyday communication, which implies reaching the cognitive (thesaurus) level of the language personality. The use of the linguistic picture of the world and the thesaurus of a person as the method of knowledge organization suggests that to understand any phrase or text means to pass everything through one's own thesaurus in order to correlate with the knowledge s/he possesses and find relevant content to its place in the world.

In conclusion, we can emphasize that cross-cultural interference is an interference elements of one language system to another at the process of contacts between/among languages, and the result of this intervention can be negative, based on the above discussed examples, and positive, contributing to the adequate translation and understanding, and implementation of effective act of communication. The attention of methodologists is mainly focused on the phenomenon of negative interference, its prediction and prevention, since "negative language material" creates certain obstacles, slows down the learning process and the communication process, which leads to misunderstandings and communication failures.

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