

Contact variantology: problems of national language variety terminology

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Abstract: The process of globalization in modern world has affected all spheres of our life – politics, economy and culture. To realize these processes people should have a common means of communication – a lingua franca. The English language has become this lingua franca, as about 1, 5 billion people speak English today. People of different cultural, ethnic and religious identities should have more to share than ever before. And one of the means of their cross-cultural communication in many parts of the world today is the English language. People today communicate beyond national borders by e-mailing, chatting, blogging besides speaking and writing. Global networking has produced new societies of hybrid and very often conflicting cultures, where people are to become pluricultural individuals. The article deals with the problems of national language variety definition in general and special lexicography. The definition of the term “national language” is given; its subcategories, such as “dialect”, “form”, “variety”, and “variant” are analyzed, and the ways of the national language formation and changes are described.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, lingua Franca, language variety, national language, social, professional, territorial dialect, variant

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays communication across the world has increased greatly in scale, scope and speed thanks to the development of transportation and communication media. The interaction and co-existence of people with different backgrounds, ethnics and beliefs have turned urban metropolitan areas into multinational and multicultural.

The English language today has become not only an international language throughout the world, but it has also become a lingua franca. A lingua franca is usually associated with a variety of language that has a worldwide use as a means of communication in countries in which users have no other language in common.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

There are several reasons why the English language has become a language for global communication: historical, political and economic, informational, cultural and linguistic. Historical reasons arise from the colonial past of Great Britain, which spread its influence and language all over the world (beginning with XV century). Political and economic reasons are connected with the might and influence of the USA and Great Britain. As D. Crystal states, the American dollar is followed by the English language [1]. In many of the world's countries the

English language is associated with prestigious well-paid job and status. Informational reasons are specified by the necessity to have one common language for Internet communication. Cultural reasons are connected with the development of tourism and acquaintance with other cultures through so called “contract literature”, i.e. written in English by non-native speakers. Linguistic reasons arise from great flexibility of the English language and its ability to borrow foreign words easily.

We can see today that English in the role of a lingua franca has practically developed and is also in the process of developing into a distinctive variety that can be differentiated from all other known varieties of English. This English is known today as Lingua Franca English. Although English is a global lingua franca in politics, business, science and education, the significance of its use is increasing in the global scale in Europe, Asia, Latin America and other parts of the world. In each of these regions the English language adopted and is adapting to local languages and cultures, becoming both socialized and internationalized.

In each territory “regional English” is becoming standardized and functions both as a means of identity and expression of social culture and as a global lingua franca [2].

It is common knowledge, that the status of some languages gives a possibility to existing of some national language varieties. Due to many geopolitical reasons national languages of nations which were dominant on the territory of other countries became state languages in them. Close co-existence of the dominating foreign language and the native language (languages) naturally brought to the formation of a new kind of language. The English language is a good example of it. Nowadays the English language is represented by many varieties throughout the world, such as American, Australian, South African, Canadian, Indian and others.

There are many examples in history when states gaining independence didn't get rid of the dominating foreign language. V.A. Grechko comments on this situation as follows: "Becoming free of English colonial supremacy, Indian Government took a decision not to abolish the use of English in the country and use it as one of the literary languages (together with Hindi and Urdu). They understood perfectly well that it would cause much damage to national (cultural, economic, scientific and social) interests of the country. The second language in these countries became a means of communication and a means of expressing spiritual values, customs and traditions of the people that were historically closely connected together [3].

The appearance of language varieties is connected with many linguistic problems, which are considered differently by linguists. The problem of a language variety arises when the status of the English language in modern world is defined, when its territorial peculiarities and socio-political conditions of functioning are considered. It is common knowledge, that the English language occupies a special position among national languages in the world due to the number of people speaking it and due to the areal of its use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The term "World Englishes" is becoming more popular nowadays, as it comprises different variants of English both in Great Britain and also abroad. Besides, such terms as "The Family of Englishes" and "World Englishes" are used. Some linguists believe that the English language being used as a means of metacommunication loses its historical roots, because English language varieties have so much difference between themselves that the term "English Languages" can be appropriate.

According to B. Kachru and T. McArthur the term "World Englishes" testifies the fact that people of the World are very tolerant to the English Language. This term unites all existing and newly arising variants of English as equal members of some "club" - "The

Family of Englishes," the plural form of "Englishes" or "Languages" gives special emphasis to it. [4].

S.G. Ter-Minasova supposes that soon the plural form "Englishes" will be used instead of the singular form "English" [5].

We may also suppose that the term "Englishes" shows the dynamics of the English language varieties development, their functions and status. One of the most serious problems of dialectology, variontology and many other linguistic sciences is the problem of terminology.

The national language is a heterogeneous phenomenon, as its different varieties are termed differently in modern linguistics - "dialect", "form", "variant", "vatiety", etc. According to O.S. Akhmanova's dictionary, "...a language variety is any subdivision of a language: dialect, accent, idiolect, etc. [6].

The review of dictionaries and linguistic journals shows that the term "dialect" may denote different notions.

In the "Dictionary of the Russian Language" S.I. Ozhegov gives the following definition of this term: "Dialect is a local or social accent" [7]. We can see that the dictionary gives the definition of one subdivision of the language through another, as for the linguist the terms "accent" and "dialect" are different notions. In this dictionary the term "accent" is defined as "a local variety of territorial or regional dialect". "The Dictionary of the Russian Language" by S.I. Ozhegov is not a professional linguistic handbook, that is why not all linguistic subtleties are considered in it.

In the professionally oriented dictionary by L.L. Nelyubin the following definition of the term "dialect" is given: "Dialect – variety (variant) of a given language, which is used by a more or less limited number of people, who live on the same territory or are closely connected professionally and who are in a constant linguistic contact" [8]. According to the cited above definition, *dialect* is such a subdivision of the language which may appear at territorial or professional community of people. So we may distinguish *territorial dialects* and *professional dialects* which have certain differences.

Let's compare the given definitions:

"Professional dialect is a variety of social dialect, which unites people of similar professions or any kind of activity".

"Social dialect is a form of language, which is used by a more or less limited number of people of special community, who are in direct contact with each

other. There are many social dialects in every language”.

“Territorial dialect is: 1. Dialect spread within a definite area. 2. A form of a language used by a more or less number of people who live on the same territory and who are in direct contact with each other”.

According to the definitions cited from the dictionary we can see that the term “dialect” has different meanings and can be referred to different spheres of usage. First of all, dialect is a form of language use, which unites people according to some similar features.

In the professionally-oriented dictionary by O.S. Akhmanova the term “dialect” has the following definitions:

“Dialect – 1. Variety (variant) of a given language, used by a more or less number of people, who live in the same area and are closely connected with each other by their professional or social activity and who speak the same language. 2. A complex of similar accents, which have some relevant features. 3. The same as accent.

“Dialect professional – a variety of social dialect, which unites people of the same occupation”

“Dialect social – dialect of some social community or a group of people”

“Dialect territorial (local, regional) – dialect within a definite area”

From the definitions listed above we can notice that the term “dialect” is defined in the dictionary through the terms “accent”, “variety”, “variant”, thus forming an extensive list of synonyms, which makes it possible to interchange them in use.

Dialect is the key-notion of such linguistic discipline as dialectology. That’s why in classical dialectology the terms “dialect” and “accent” differ in aspect and gender. In the textbook “Russian Dialectology” the following definition is given: “...accent is the smallest variety of the language. The accents which have some features in common can represent only a part of the language which is called dialect. The term “dialect” may be used in both meanings.”[9]

We should pay attention to the fact that “varieties within one language are called dialects. Sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish between these notions. If we speak about two very close to each other language systems it is sometimes very difficult to say if we deal with two dialects of the same language or with two relative languages”. So the term “dialect” in this textbook is considered to be equivalent to the term “language”.

If we take into consideration social dialects, we should mention that “social dialects within some language, Russian in particular, differ greatly from territorial ones. While the latter differ between themselves by actual facts, social dialects are characterized by peculiarities of vocabulary, word - usage, phraseological units and mainly by special terminology”.

Review of general and special lexicography showed that in modern linguistics the term “dialect” is used to denote several notions connected with different language units (according to O.S. Akhmanova) and sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish between them. Being a member of a synonymic group the term “dialect” may be used in speech in the meaning “accent”, “variant” or “variety”. It is very important to distinguish between these terms and define their correlation with *national* and *literary* language.

As we can see these two terms can be used equally. G. Brook in his book “English Dialects” defines dialect as “any variety of a language, which is associated with a definite group of people using it. This group is much smaller than that using the national language” [10]. In accordance to this definition G. Brook considers American English and British English to be dialects of the English language. We think that such use of this term is too wide.

As to the correlation of the terms “language” – “dialect” – “variant” we should mention that the difference between *language* and *dialect/variant* can be defined as the difference between *general/specific*. The definition of *dialect/variant* is the specification of the notion “language”. This specification is achieved by adding extra-linguistic characteristics to the definition of *dialect/variant*. Such extra-linguistic characteristics may be specification of territorial use and language community. Besides, policy and state play a very important role in the definition of a language variety. This fact is well illustrated by the following saying: “Dialect is the same as language, but without any army”. When we speak about the variant we may speak about the existence of the “army”, which means that the term “variant” is much wider in meaning than the term “dialect”.

Besides, the difference between *dialect* and *variant* also depends on the distance from the former metropolis and a number of people speaking it. South African Republic can be mentioned as an example. It is very far from Great Britain, where the English language was brought from, where the living conditions, climate, flora and fauna influenced the development of the language greatly.

A.D. Shveitser understands dialect as “a territorial variety of the national language, which is limited by the sphere of oral speech and, thus being contrasted to a literary norm”. He defines the literary norm as “a territorial variety of one national language” / A variant of the national language means “an area-limited variant of the literary language” [11].

We consider that “ South African English, American English and British English cannot be treated as dialects, as the use of this term in this context makes wrong impression about the structure of the literary language and dialect language in Great Britain, South African Republic and in the USA” [12].

The term “New Englishes” is often used nowadays referring to English language variants. These “New Englishes” remind dialects used within the country, but taken world-wide. Millions of people use them unlike regional dialects, when the number of speakers is limited to thousands of people.

V.M. Shirokikh states, that “The language shows difference in national groups’ behaviour and their desire to distinguish themselves among others, that’s why different language variants appear. There are variants in all languages and sometimes the process of language learning becomes a more complicated task than it seemed at the very beginning. Linguists pay attention to the fact that the language preserves its similar characteristics only on a limited territory and at definite circumstances”. [13]

We should also agree with point of view of L.I. Apollonova, who states that “the formation of a language variant presupposes the change of social conditions of its functioning, changes in ecological background and language basis. Besides, being brought into new conditions, the language continues to change according to the tendencies of its development and under the influence of new extra - and intra -linguistic factors, adapting to new conditions of its functioning”[14].

CONCLUSION

Regional variants which function as *lingua franca* contribute greatly to the English Language in general. Nowadays we cannot speak about the English language as a language of one culture. It has become world-wide spread and has become a means of world culture reflection. It only matters how proficient you are. English proficiency will be judged not by being a native speaker, but by one’s level of cross-cultural communicative competence as an individual. English as an international language (EIL) will comprise all regional standard Englishes, they’ll become more intelligible being spoken and understood by educated speakers of English language varieties while communicating cross-culturally and cross-regionally.

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