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Dvorzhetska M. P.
Kyiv National Linguistic University

STUDIES OF THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH IN THE WORLD

As is known English has become the most global of languages, the lingua franca of business, science, education, politics [1, 112].

So how many people in the world speak English? The most widespread languages are Chinese, English, Spanish, Hindi, and others. Mandarin Chinese is spoken by most people in the world (700 million), English comes next with 400 million speakers.

Bill Bryson, a British linguist, examining the spread of English, underlines in his informative publication “Mother Tongue” that English, as an official language, is used in countries with a population of about 1.6 billion, roughly a third of the world total [2, 176–177].

Without any doubt, English is recognized as an important language of the world, and it is not hard to find impressive statistics to prove it. Two thirds of all scientific papers are published in English. More than seventy percent of the world’s mail is written and addressed in English, says Lincoln Barnett in the book “The Treasure of our Tongue” [3, 12–15]. English unites the world. We agree with one of the popular Canadian maxims: “The knowledge of English is the easily convertible currency that opens doors for communication in different socio-cultural spheres of international contacts” [4, 65–68].

As researchers in the field of English philology, and teachers of language education we are interested in the English language characteristic features that promote the easily obtainable language acquisition.

What are the linguistic reasons for the spread of English?

English language dictionaries, scientific linguistic publications on the comparative studies of languages underline such linguistic priorities of the English language: the richness of the vocabulary, the wealth of available synonyms, many words of Greek and Latin origin, economical application of grammatical rules, that is the grammar simplicity, openness for changes [5, 12–15].

By contrast to English, some languages burden themselves with remarkable complexity: for instance, the Finnish language has fifteen case forms. Imagine 15 ways of spelling dog, house, cat and so on. English has abandoned case forms, except for possessives. In English the verb ride has just 5 forms (ride, rides, rode, riding, ridden; the same verb in German has 16 forms). One of the undoubted virtues of English is that it is a fluid and democratic language in which meanings shift and change in response to the pressures of the common usage [6, 26–36].

John Wells, professor of Phonetics in the University of London, in the Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (1995) registers the accepted modern phonetic variants of words due to the openness of English Received Pronunciation Standard to phonetic changes under the influence of regional dialects and social, modernized accents of English. Even the British Queen has shifted subtly towards an accent that is more typically spoken in the wider community, and it is more valid and effective in the English language as an international mode of communication. The Longman Pronunciation Dictionary provides clear models of widely-accepted, contemporary English pronunciation as well as valuable information about alternative pronunciations [7, A Quick Guide to the Dictionary].

What are the main areas of the spread of English in the world? Braj Kachru divides the use of English into three concentric circles. The Inner Circle is the traditional base of English and includes countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States, and loosely, the (historically mainly white) former colonies: Australia, New Zealand, some islands of the Caribbean, and the anglophone population of Canada. English is the native language or mother tongue of most people in these countries [8, 11–34].

In the Outer Circle are those countries where English has official or historical importance (“special significance”). This means most of the Commonwealth (the former British Empire), including populous countries such as India and Nigeria, and others under the American sphere of influence, such as the Philippines. Here English may serve as a useful lingua franca between ethnic and language groups. Higher education, the legislature and judiciary, national commerce and so on may all be carried out predominantly in English.

The Expanding Circle refers to those countries where English has no official role, but nonetheless is important for certain functions, notably international business. This use of English as a lingua franca by now includes most of the rest of the world not categorized above. Research on English as a Lingua Franca in the sense of “English in the Expanding Circle” is comparatively recent [9, 44–64].

English has become a world language because of its establishment as a mother tongue outside England, in all the continents of the world. English is one of the 6 official and working languages of the United Nations Organization.

It is worth noting that the spread of English is promoted by the educational policies giving preference to teaching English as a foreign language at schools and universities. For instance, English as a foreign language most often studied in the European Union (by 89% of schoolchildren), followed by French (32%), German (18%) and Spanish (8%). In the EU, a large fraction of the population in non-English speaking countries claimed to be able to converse in English: in the Netherlands (87%), Sweden (85%), Denmark (83%), Luxembourg (66%), Finland (60%), Slovenia (56%), Austria (53%), Belgium (52%), and Germany (51%) Norway and Iceland also have a large majority of competent English-speakers. In addition, among the younger generations in the aforementioned countries, competence in English approaches 100%. In Ukraine, the number of secondary schools and higher educational institutions where the studies of English are provided on different levels of professional proficiency is growing every academic year.

Although the vast majority of people are learning English to be able to use it as a lingua franca, the spread of English is not devoid of sociocultural and linguistic challenges that require studies in national and international perspectives for reasonable cross-cultural solution.

There are two competing pressures currently influencing the development of English: one acts to maintain international intelligibility, promoting a uniform World Standard English; the other acts to preserve national identity, promoting a diverse set of Regional Standard Englishes [10, 113–114]. But the drive for mutual intelligibility in English as a mode of cross-cultural communication is very strong. National identity of English demands linguistic distinctiveness for promoting understanding in international cooperation. Internationalism implies intelligibility and demands an agreed standard of English in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and conventions of use.

The establishment of the linguistic core features (Lingua Franca Core) especially for phonological intelligibility in English communication is one of the important research projects for promoting cross-cultural communication in the Global civilization.

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Зеленская Е. С.

Институт философии Национальной Академии наук Беларуси

ЯЗЫК И ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ В УСЛОВИЯХ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ

Столкновение культур как основная характеристика глобализационных процессов актуализирует проблему построения собственной идентичности. В связи с этим остро стоит вопрос о самоопределении человека. Этот факт обуславливает особое внимание к исследованиям языка как основания идентификации человека. Таким образом, проблемой исследования становится изучение взаимосвязи идентичности и языка в условиях современной культурной динамики (глобализации).

Анализ этой взаимосвязи является актуальным и отвечающим объективным потребностям общества. Процессы идентификации и формирования идентичности являются основополагающей характеристикой бытия человека, принципиально значимым свойством индивидов и групп, изменяя и определяя взаимодействие между людьми и культурами, формируя и регулируя первичные поведенческие стереотипы. Основной детерминантой индивидуальной идентичности является язык. Соответственно, определение гармоничных способов адаптации субъекта к современным культурным процессам возможно лишь посредством анализа трансформаций языка.

Данное исследование непосредственно связано с важнейшими научными задачами. В частности: научное обоснование инновационного развития, основывающегося на общественном согласии, многовекторном сотрудничестве с соседними государствами и полноценном культурном и политическом диалоге с мировым сообществом подразумевает анализ идентичности языка как основания формирования идентичности.

Цель статьи – анализ взаимосвязи языка и идентичности в современной культурной ситуации.

Реализация указанной цели предполагает решение следующих задач:

- рассмотрение некоторых аспектов современной культурной ситуации;
- исследование особенностей процессов идентификации в современной культуре;