Euro-English: A New Variety?

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Abstract: The paper considers the problems, functions, and perspectives of using English as a lingua franca on the territory of the European Union, which originated due to the process of globalization in modern world.

The English language has become world lingua franca due to many reasons, as about 2 billion people speak English today. This article deals with the relationship of Lingua Franca English and Euro-English and the adequacy of lingua franca to represent the sociolinguistic situation in Europe, where English functions as a medium (lingua franca) of cross-cultural communication among Europeans.

Keywords: Euro-English, variety, lingua Franca, cross-cultural communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

The process of globalization in modern world has affected all spheres of our life – social, cultural, and political, as well as economy and education. To realize these processes people should have a common means of communication – a lingua franca. David Graddol 15 years ago noticed, that “no other region has been more affected by the rise of English than Europe” (Graddol, 2001: 47). Nowadays, the political and economic situation in Europe is a complicated one, due to thousands of immigrants, both legal and illegal, who stream to “wealthy” Europe is hope for better life, but who are mainly not English-language speakers. Interaction and co-existence of people with different backgrounds, ethnicities and beliefs have turned urban metropolitan areas into multinational and multicultural, so that people of different cultural, ethnic and religious identities should have more to share than ever before (Khokhlova, 2014:785). One of the means of their cross-cultural communication is the English language.

Significance

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. Euro-English is not an exception. The main idea of this article is to show a new approach to Euro-English as a new variety of English, which is in the process of its formations, as close co-existence of the domaining foreign language and the native languages naturally brings to the formation of a new kind of language.

Council of Europe’s language policy

The European Union was formed in 1993 as a result of European integration. It has become a motherland for its many peoples. Common cultural heritage of European people is the basis of their unity. In the light of cross-cultural communication, the language policy planning of the Council of Europe is a grand experiment based on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism (Yano, 2001:3). The Committee of Ministers of the Council sets down the following three basic principles as its aim of language policy:

- that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding;
- that it is only through better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination;
- that member states, when adopting or developing national policies in the field of modern language learning and teaching, may achieve greater convergence at the European level by means of appropriate arrangements for ongoing co-operation and co-ordination of policies.

The Council of Europe aims at improving the quality of communication among Europeans of different language and cultural backgrounds so that freer mobility and more direct contact are accelerated, which in turn will lead to better understanding and closer co-operation (Yano, 2006: XI-XII).

People living in Europe can achieve even greater unity if they identify themselves as Europeans rather than German or French. One thing is quite clear – existence of the European Union is sure to improve cross-cultural communication skills.

European integration began after World War II when in 1949 the Council of Europe was founded by ten member-countries. Today it has become very much influential and unites more than 40 member-countries representing over 800 million people. The Council of Europe consists of foreign ministers and member-countries who consider the situation in Europe at their meetings and make recommendations to
their countries on economic, social, cultural and educational unification in Europe. Following recommendations of the Council, many European countries adopt similar educational systems and similar language policy - “mother tongue + two foreign languages”. The languages which are suggested as “foreign” are English, French and German (Khokhlova, 2013:206).

English in Europe is gaining ground at the expense of all other European languages, so some people consider it to be a threat to minority languages and cultures. The British council operates language-learning services throughout Europe based on Standard British English and cultural contexts and values of Britain and the Commonwealth. Special attention is paid to the manner in which English is used in mainland Europe as a lingua franca among non-native speakers. As there are so many of them in Europe now, this fact makes it possible to term the English language spoken in Europe as “Euro-English”. Also English is playing a very important role in the European Union, as it is linked to the future of the Union.

The English language has rather a long history in Europe. It has been taught as a foreign language throughout mainland Europe since the 19-th century. Before World War II German and French were more commonly taught foreign languages in Europe? After the War Russian had been included in the curriculum as a required subject in formal education in all Eastern-European countries. When the Soviet Union ceased to be in early 1990s, interest to Russian decreased and English became the first and top-most foreign language in Eastern Europe.

The numbers of English learners surpassed all the foreign languages learners and by 2004, 90% of all secondary-school pupils were learning English.

Nowadays about 60 million people are native speakers of English only in the British Isles. The European Union, on the global scale, is a unique place, as it is here that a substantial community of Inner Circle first-language speakers lives and produce the major share of worldwide English language teaching materials. Also it is here that a massive population of non-native speakers receives compulsory foreign-language education in English, Standard British English to be used as a basis. However, it has been seriously challenged by American English in the past 20-30 years, as American variety of English is impacting the lives of millions of European through mass media, movies and music. As a result, Standard British English remains the most common platform for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Europe, but special attention is given to American English (pronunciation, lexis, and grammar) to acquire competence in cross-cultural communication. Today Europe tries to consolidate into what may one day be defined as a supranational state (Modiano, 1999:227), so it is evident that Euro-English for mainland Europe may join the ranks of World Englishes. M.Modiano called for the legitimatization of a mainland European variety of English under the rubric “Euro-English” (utt. no Jenkins; 2001:17).

Of course, there are other opinions on Euro-English. Robert Phillipson is one of the most ardent critics of Euro-English as a global and European lingua franca. We called this process of the English language spreading “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 2003). We believe there should be more concern for minor or lesser-used languages survival, as linguistic diversity is threatened by wide-scale Anglo-Americanization. R. Phillipson calls for minimizing US influence in Europe. However, linguistic americanization is growing in Europe, and Europeans in general are showing a growing interest in American as well as in British things. Phillipson even suggested a call for Esperanto as a solution to this “language problem” in the European Union, but had little support. Still, some followers demand to guarantee the rights of each member state to use its language in European Union countries, though official EU languages such as Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, and Lithuanian are spoken by less than 1 per cent of the European Union population.

**New Englishes criteria**

There are some criteria that allow having a language the New English legal status:

- The language should be used in education;
- The language should not be the majority language;
- The language should have a range of functions, and contain “localized” or “nativized” features;
- The language should be widely used within the members of the Outer Circle in addition to its use between them;
- Intellectual properties should be produced in this Englishes (Kachru: 2005).

Mainland Europeans are now in the process of creating Pan-European culture in English and through English. The problem is in the following: where the standards for the use of the European lingua franca are produced – in Britain or in the USA. In this case Europeans may remain on the periphery and have no rights and privileges in determining the forms and functions of their lingua franca, because the English language can be a form of empowerment for them. In the paradigm of the global spread of English mainland Europeans are defined as foreign language speakers, who should acquire near-native proficiency in Standard (=British) English. This gives little opportunity for mainland Europeans to participate in the development of Euro-English.
English Language Teaching practitioners across Europe notice that the standing of British English as a target for mainland Europe is becoming destabilized. Because of this status decline it may be the right time to accept the local variety of English for mainland Europe, legalize it, codify, and standardize.

II. EUROPEAN MODEL

To standardize and codify Euro-English for mainland Europe various projects are launched: The Vienna – Oxford English as Lingua Franca Corpus, International Corpus of Learner English, Corpus Cambridge Learners and others, which study how mainland non-native speakers are using English in their own right. (Mauranen, 2003:520)

B.Seidlhoper (Vienna) is investigating the successful use of English as a lingua franca without paying attention to the fact that the language, deviating from native-speaker speech is substandard. B.Seidlhoper marks that there are commonly used constructions, lexical items and sound patterns which are ungrammatical in Standard Language English, but generally unproblematic in ELT (English as a lingua franca) communication. The investigations of the data show that communicative success comes despite the fact “there is hardly a turn which is “correct” or idiomatic by ENL [English as a native language] standards”. (Seidlhoper, 2001:148)

Thus we may witness “the emergence of an endonormative model of lingua franca English” (Jenkins, 2001:15]. This model will certainly derive its norms of correctness and appropriate usage from its own experience than from any English-speaking country.

Euro-English seems to be the most advanced from the point of view of standardization: it is heard on a radio and TV, is used at business negotiations and conferences held in Europe and people who use Euro-English are mainly not native speakers. Euro-English sounds more “school English-like”, a little bit artificial and bookish, but at the same time being very clear and highly intelligible.

European ELT pedagogies and practices suggest that non-native speakers of English should no longer need to imitate and idealize Standard English. It sets the stage of paradigm shift which is required a mainland European second-language variety to come into being.

Europe today is a multinational “village”, which should have a common language for communication. For 16% of people living in Europe the English language is a native language, 31% use English for everyday communication. And the number of those for whom English is a second language exceeds those for whom it is a native language. The proportion of other European languages spoken in Europe is also great, but not so impressive as the use of English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Proportion of population of the EU speaking it as a mother tongue</th>
<th>Proportion of population of the EU speaking it NOT as a mother tongue</th>
<th>Total proportion speaking this language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deutsch</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Français</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italiano</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Español</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederlands</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elnika</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugues</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svenska</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dansk</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suomi</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the total proportion of European citizens speaking each language in the European Union (as mother tongue or as a foreign language) [19].

We should mention that the linguistic situation in Europe changes all the time. In 2004 ten more countries of Eastern Europe joined the European Union and the process continues. So the percentage of English speakers is growing very rapidly and the figures given in the table must have further increased by now. In Europe millions of people use English every day intensively and extensively, thus making it an important all-European lingua franca in politics, business, academic world and tourism. Successful communication in lingua franca and translation from it demands the fulfillment of three conditions: intelligibility, comprehensibility, interpretability. (Smith, 1992:76)

European leaders use English at their meetings, British English language schools train English language teachers and students to master the language better and improve their linguistic skills. Many young people of Eastern European countries leave their motherland and go to old famous European universities for

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better education and internationally-recognized diplomas. All these processes tend to establish European English as regional Standard English. Regional standard Englishes (Native-speaker English, Arab English, Euro-English, Latin English, Asian English, African English, etc.) may be considered logical steps to EIL (English as an International language), which makes the core of these Englishes, as it shares basic grammar, vocabulary and mutual intelligibility.

Today Midland Europeans mix features of American and British English in their speech. There is also a tendency to interject transferred features into their English usage. Moreover, many expressions, proverbs and idioms of European languages are accepted in Euro-English which enriches the language and they are relevant to the nativization process. Commenting on these changes Graddol suggests that “a new kind of Euro-English may be arising – a variety distinct from the major native-speaker varieties with its own institutionalized forms of usage” (Graddol, 2001:54).

Today, after 15 years of Graddol’s statement, we may witness that the process of Euro-English formation is actively going on, with new economic and political situation in Europe contributing to it greatly.

III. EUROPEAN UNITY LANGUAGE POLICY

Until recently there were eleven official languages in the European Union. In May, 2004 ten more countries joined the Union, raising the number of official languages to twenty. According to EU official statements, linguists’ equality should be achieved at all levels of the Union. But de facto English has become European lingua franca, French occupying second position, as the two main venicular languages of the EU. This “special status” for English and French is, of course, not in the line with the basic tenets of the European Union.

The popularity and importance of the English language for the work in the EU is supported by the citizens of Europe themselves, as they are becoming more and more proficient in the language. English is taught as a most common foreign language at school. Pupils and their parents well understand the necessity to acquire high levels of proficiency.

So it is reasonable, that English has surpassed French as the most viable working language of the EU and this process will continue. This process challenges the intentions of the Maastricht Treaty and the status of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 22) which proclaim linguistic diversity in the EU. Graddol sums up the EU attitude to English in the following way: “The Council of Europe’s framework has had a significant influence on language curriculum development in many European countries, but it is more than a mechanism for standardizing the teaching modern languages. It represents a wider ideological movement to improve citizens awareness of the multicultural nature of Europe, to encourage a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity, and to promote the learning of several language. In fact, the Council of Europe’s language policy is explicitly to foster large-scale multilingualism (or for plurilingualism as it prefers to call it) in Europe. European citizens should ideally learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue. The perceived benefits of such a programme include a better understanding between neighbouring nations, improved mobility of people in work, learning and leisure across language boundaries, and an enhanced sense of shared European identity” (Graddol, 2001:52).

Europe now is experiencing a very serious dilemma: on the one hand, there is a stated goal for linguistic multiplicity; on the other hand, increased English spread throughout Europe. Unless institutional support and official directives on English are provided, the use of English in Europe will be defined by private interests, government agencies, and educational authorities, as it happens now. English should be unified and integrated, because it is the very language in which Europeanization is taking place.

To create a unified Europe, a borderless Euro zone where goods, money, people and services can be easily exchanged without unnecessary bureaucratic interference was the primary goal of the EU. Much was done to realize it at the end of the 20th-beginning the 21st century. Unfortunately, the events of the last 5 years when immigrants, legal an illegal, flee to Europe in thousand complicated the situation in Europe greatly. Europeans and their governments do not want to have such “guests” on their territories. Some countries even began to build “walls” to stop immigrants and not let them cross the borders.

Yet English continues to spread. The process of monoculturalization, the growth of English as a most widely used language within the EU apparatus and European population are the features proving that Euro English is evolving into a culture-specific variety. One of the indications of it is the use of Eurospeak or Eurojargon within EU institutions. The first recognition of it is a lexical register used by Eurocrats: lexical items and word-combinations, such as Brussels (SU institutions); Maastricht (agreement signed there); Schengen land (countries that have free borders within EU); Euro land, Euro area, Euro zone (countries where the euro is used as the currency); internal market (European tree-trade zone); Berlaymont (“red tape”); “four freedoms” (free movement of goods, people, money, and services across European borders). These units are commonly used in the EU, but may not be understood by English users unfamiliar with European context. The term “member state” is also a European inversion.
Of course, the three main aspects of language use – grammar, pronunciation, and lexis – are to be studied systematically and eventually to codify a second-language variety of English for ELT in mainland Europe (Jenkins, 2001:14). Eurocrats and elected representatives working in the EU encourage clarity in written documents and easy-to-understand spoken language. They even published some booklets: “How to write clearly” and “Fight the Fog” with recommendation for English Language users.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the years to come, the spread of English in Europe will continue, and the role it plays as a lingua franca for successful cross-cultural communication and ideological and cultural implication of the English language usage will result in establishing a European second-language variety of English, a European lingua franca.

Limitations of the study

The study considers regional varieties of English, as the global spread of English has resulted in two opposing forces at work: diversification of the language into institutionalized local varieties for intra-national use and standardization of those varieties for international communication.

Direction for future research

Taking into account a great variety of Engishes spoken in the world, the question arises: what kind of English will be spoken on each continent in future? We consider that Euro-English may have significant linguistic influence over other countries in Europe.

There are some criteria to define what makes up an English variety:
- standard or recognized pattern of pronunciation;
- particular words and phrases which are used to express key features of the environment and are regarded as peculiar to the given variety;
- language community history;
- written literature in that variety of English;
- dictionaries and style guides.

Sources of funding of the study

The study was self-financed by the author.

V. REFERENCES

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