

# LINGUISTICS

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## THE LANGUAGE OF WORLDWIDE COMMUNICATION AND LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

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**Abstract.** The aim of the paper is to examine the interrelations of English as the language of worldwide communication with other languages and cultures as well as the effect of linguistic and cultural globalization on ethnocultural identities. The paper demonstrates that in the conditions of globalization, ethnocultural identity is a component of a multiple identity, which includes the language of worldwide communication and the global culture as components of a global identity. In the conditions of the globalizing world, the English language, due to its “communicative potential” (A. de Swaan) transforms from one of the most widespread international languages into the global language of universal communication in all spheres of international activities and, first of all, in science and higher education. The article supports the opinion of a number of researchers in the field of the English language as a lingua franca about the need for recognizing English used as a means of overcoming intercultural and interlingual barriers as a new variety of the English language, which presents a special object of research, differing from the main national standards and new varieties of the English language. The English language as the language of worldwide communication is used in its major communicative function of interlingual and intercultural communication, and, in case of abiding by the principle of subsidiarity, does not lead to the elimination of ethnocultural identities, which are expressed through national and ethnic languages. As a result of the English language acquiring the global status, there takes place a stabilization of the world system of languages, which is expressed in weakening of competition between major world languages in international communication. English as the global lingua franca emerges as a new variety of the English language, free from national or ethnic cultural component, which does not mean, however, a lack of cultural component and, correspondingly, a new identity. Creation of a global society in conditions of globalization leads to the formation of a global culture and creation of a new global identity. To substantiate the thesis about a complementarity of interrelations of the English language as the means of world communication with other languages and cultures, the authors resort to the notion of “multiple identity”. In conditions of globalization, the global English language and the emerging global culture become part of the multiple identity of a multilingual and multicultural person of the information society. A possibility of and a need for multiple identities on the basis of mass individual multilingualism open the ways for preserving ethnocultural identities on the basis of functional spheres of use division between languages of different levels and hierarchies in the world system of languages.

**Key words:** English as a global lingua franca; language of worldwide communication; ethnocultural identity; multiple identity; linguistic and cultural diversity.

### **Introduction**

The evolution of the English language from a little-known language of a small ethnic group into one of the most widespread international languages occurred rapidly in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and involved the transformation of English into the language of worldwide communication. The English language's assumption of global language status is an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of languages and cultures, and has significant consequences not only for the theory and practice of language teaching, but also for the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage of the world. English, long before its transformation into a global means of overcoming language and cultural barriers, was considered by some academics and politicians as a domineering language, threatening the future of national languages and cultures. Thus the issue of its relations with other world languages and cultures came to be of great concern by the beginning of the third millennium, in a period of rapid globalization.

Is it true that the use of English as a global lingua franca in all spheres of international communication and the cultural globalization of the world may lead to its replacing other languages and cultures, especially the thousands of languages and cultures of small peoples in the world? Or is the language of worldwide communication becoming a part of the multiple identities of humankind in the era of globalization and the information society, without posing a threat to ethnocultural identity?

The approach to language as a tool, used for the purposes of communication, coordination of joint actions and understanding of the world, makes it possible to explain the difficulties of language policy without proper consideration of instrumental and functional properties of languages. However, some important issues connected with the development, conservation and use of languages and cultures in the context of globalization are not explained fully, despite the increasing level and scope of linguistic research. In this regard, the concept of A. de Swaan [1], a professor of sociology at the University of Amsterdam, on the global system of languages is of particular interest. According to de Swaan, more than six thousand languages in the world represent a system of languages, connected together by multilingual speakers. In the global system of languages some languages, according to the principle of multilingualism, have a wider function, i.e. being a means of communication between speakers of regional languages. Depending on the language's ability to act as a means of cross-language communication, de Swaan divides the global system of languages into four hierarchical groups: 1) peripheral languages, 2) central languages, 3) supercentral languages, and

4) hypercentral languages. Peripheral languages are generally not used for cross-language communication. This group includes the majority of so-called minor languages, which are under threat of disappearing, because speakers have to use other languages in the process of communication beyond their linguistic groups. Central languages, the number of which is about a hundred, are used as a means of communication by peripheral language speakers. Central languages are widely used within geographical areas, and are spoken by approximately 95 percent of all humankind. Supercentral languages are more geographically widespread than central languages and they are used as international languages for communication by central language speakers.

The group of supercentral languages includes 12 languages: English, Arabic, Spanish, Malay, Chinese, German, French, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Hindi and Japanese. Supercentral languages acquired the status of international ones as a result of their wide geographical spread and the fact that they are unusually major languages; the number of supercentral language speakers (with the exception of Swahili) exceeds 100 million. Hypercentral languages are those global languages which are used for communication between speakers of supercentral languages. The phenomenon of global language appeared at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as a result of the unprecedented growth of international contacts during the processes of integration and globalization. At present the only hypercentral language is English; the number of hypercentral language speakers, including both the first (L1), and the second (L2) languages, now approaches two billion.

The hierarchical distribution of languages in the global language system explains the difficulties of language policy in education, designed to support and develop multilingualism. According to A. de Swaan, "The study of languages is mostly passing in an upward direction... People usually prefer to learn a language which is at a higher level in the hierarchy" [Ibid: 5]. An ever-increasing concentration process, in which a central role is played by a small number of languages with the greatest communicative value, is directed by the "invisible hand of the market", i.e. the objective market mechanism described by Scottish economist Adam Smith in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in his book *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. Smith, opposing the protectionism of government regulation, used the metaphor of the "invisible hand" as an explanation of the tenet according to which every individual, striving for his or her own benefit, regardless of will or conscience, is directed towards the achievement of profits and benefits for all society through the "invisible hand of the market" [2].

De Swaan introduces the concept of Q-value of language as a measure of socially accepted notions of the "communicative potential" of the language, i.e. the communicative advantages of language acquisition as a result of investing time and money in its studying [1: 230-233]. The Q-value of a

language is defined not only on the basis of the language's predominance at the level of a geographical region or the whole world – based on the number of native speakers of the language – but also on the basis of language centrality, which is the indicator of the language's capability to connect people who speak different languages, estimated by the number of multilingual people who speak the language as their second one. Commenting on de Swaan's economic approach to languages, Ferguson (2006) writes: "Thus, languages can be regarded as long-term investment projects, and the volume of investments affects the functional potential of the language at the individual level; learning a second language can be likened to the creation of capital; acquisition of symbolic and intellectual capital in this case" [3: 122].

In the hierarchy of the global system of languages only the hypercentral language, English, has the highest Q-value because, though it yields to Chinese in terms of the number of native speakers, English takes precedence over not only Chinese, but also other languages in its centrality as a universal means of overcoming interlanguage and intercultural barriers. Studying English, therefore, provides the greatest benefit, and that is why it is not surprising that preference is always given to the English language when choosing a second or foreign language in educational systems around the world.

Supercentral languages have a high Q-value. Many of them are official and working languages of the major international organizations. Thus, the official languages of the UN are six supercentral languages: English, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, French and Russian. Swahili is one of the official languages of the African Union. Supercentral languages are widely included in the curricula of national educational systems in the studying of second and foreign languages. Higher education institutions offer courses in these languages, they are the languages used in broadcasting worldwide radio and TV shows, and a large number of educational materials are developed for their learning.

The Q-value of a central language is relatively small; it is sufficient for their use in national education systems, at least in the initial stages of studying, and even at the level of higher education in the European Union, South Africa and others. Peripheral languages have the lowest Q-value, in terms of communicative potential, and their use in the social life of a country is limited by the ethnocultural identity expression function of people who speak these languages. In order to preserve, support and develop these languages, the most major of them are given the status of national language, which makes it possible to include them in the curricula of school education.

Thus, the approach to language as an instrument for communication and understanding of the world, and also the consideration of language interconnection in the global hierarchical language system, in which the relative position of a language is based on its communicative potential that has an effect on its Q-value as "hypercollective goods", makes it possible to explain the phenomenon of English's transformation into the global means of com-

munication at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The global system is nothing new, but in the conditions of globalization, with an unprecedented growth in international communication, the necessity of a global means of overcoming interlingual and intercultural barriers led to a change in the relations between languages, which are at different hierarchical levels, and also to an acquisition by English of a global status. The transformation of the English language into a global one led to a stabilization of the world language system, putting an end to competition between major languages in the interlingual communication. However, English's intrusion into new functional areas not only at the international level, but also at the regional and national ones, is a cause of concern to politicians, researchers and the general public due to the potential danger of losing global linguistic and cultural heritage.

Some of the most important issues connected with the study of linguistic and cultural globalization are the issues about the impact of the language of worldwide communication and globalization on other languages, the beginnings of new varieties of English and their interrelations with English in its global status. The expansion of English throughout the world and, as a result, the beginnings of local varieties of English following indigenization after former colonies and dependent territories gained independence began long before the acceleration of globalization processes in the early 1990s, which, among other things, led to qualitative changes in English from an international language to the global language of worldwide communication. In the 1970-80s the cultural and linguistic isolation of English-speaking countries led to the recognition of the phenomena of World Englishes as varieties of English used in different sociolinguistic contexts around the world and necessitated the study of their linguistic characteristics, their sociocultural environment, as well as the literature written in these varieties. Traditionally, it is appropriate to classify these varieties of English by dividing them into three groups: 1. English as a native language (ENL), 2. English as a second language (ESL) used both in a given country and in international communication, and 3. English as a foreign language (EFL) used only for international communication.

The most famous pattern of the English language's expansion throughout the world and, accordingly, its varieties, is that of Kachru (1992), in which the expansion of English varieties is presented in the form of three concentric circles: the inner circle (UK, USA, Australia, etc.), the outer circle (India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Malaysia, etc.) and the expanding circle, in which English is widely used as a foreign language in international communication, though it plays no role in government or internal communication (China, European countries, etc.). Having described this model, Kachru noted a qualitatively new phenomenon, which distinguishes the use of English as an international language and the growing importance in its use in those countries, in which English is not recognized as an official or national language: "The expansion of the English language has reached such proportions

that at the present moment the efforts of the non-English-speaking world contribute largely to its use” [4]. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of people speaking English as their second language surpassed the number of native speakers of English, and as indigenization of English occurred in countries where English became more greatly used in politics, the economy, education and culture, a paradigm change in terms of language expansion and its adaptation to new sociocultural conditions became evident. According to Widdowson (1997), the expansion of English in the world is taking place, in contrast to past ages, in such a way that the English language is becoming the language of other people, and other people should have the same rights to English as its native speakers: “It is not the real language that is expanding, but a virtual language and its realization that is spreading. The expansion of the real language means its acceptance and compliance with its rules. The spreading of the virtual language means adaptation and autonomy. These two processes are completely different” [5: 140].

The independent development of the former British colonies after the collapse of the British Empire led to the acceptance of local varieties of English as national standards. Schneider (2007) explained the transformation process of the standard language of a mother country into new language standards by changes in the dynamics of national identity, requiring the adoption of a new outlook and value systems according to the perception of its status as an independent nation.

According to the dynamic model introduced by Schneider, the spread of English passes through five stages, during which the English language gradually becomes native (nativization), adopts local rules which are reflected in national dictionaries and literary works, and in the last stage, which Schneider calls the stage of differentiation, it acquires the status of a national standard [6].

Yet since English acquired the status of a worldwide language of global communication, the study of only native English (L1) and local varieties (world Englishes) became insufficient. According to an Austrian researcher of English as a means of global international communication, B. Seidelhofer, the conceptualization of English in a globalized world must include “the most widespread modern use of English as the lingua franca, which is globally its predominant reality involving the largest number of speakers in interactions mostly by non-native speakers”. Seidelhofer believes that the unavailability of some research to allow for “the acceptance of language, which is not someone’s native tongue, as a legitimate subject of research and descriptive characterization” is a “conceptual gap” that must be overcome, as indeed was the attitude towards “national varieties of English as a mistaken and wrong use” and “departure from the standard variant” [7: 237]. Seidelhofer explained the existence of a conceptual gap in the acceptance of English language reality as a global lingua franca in terms of a “resistance against the conceptual corrections, which are required by rapid

changes in a globalized world, as a result of which the concepts of ‘community’ and ‘linguistic diversity’ cannot be used in the same way as they were used long before the era of international mass movement, not to mention electronic communications” [Ibid: 238].

Seidelhofer introduced the concept of “communities of practice, characterized by interactions outside of primary social areas and speech communities,” which in turn leads to the creation of new varieties of English as a language which is the primary means of interlanguage communication (*lingua franca*), instead of the previous concept of community based on regular contacts of people who share a certain geographical area, in conditions of unprecedented global mobility and changes in communications which led to changes in the nature of communication. People who use English as their *lingua franca*, according to empirical research, form and develop it regardless of language standards. According to Seidelhofer, “English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) does not denote a depleted linguistic code, used on occasion as a temporary means, but rather it is “full of life, a powerful and versatile resource that enables communication across linguistic and geographical boundaries” [Ibid: 242].

The fact that Seidelhofer marks out English as a *lingua franca* as a separate variety on the basis of its formation in globalization which is not limited by any geographical and political boundaries of the global community that use English for global communication, is quite justified. Historically new varieties of English appeared in English-speaking countries that were put on the path of independent development, because the developing national culture and national identity were reflected in the language that became a part of the national mentality. National varieties of English can no longer be regarded as “improper use of the linguistic standard” and they are national varieties themselves, which are independent subjects for research. Likewise, the formation of world economic, political, scientific and cultural spaces during the process of globalization led to the creation of a single language area, the language of which differs from national varieties and cannot be equated to any of them. At the same time the point of view about the independent development of English as a *lingua franca*, the formation of which is determined now by non-native speakers, constituting the majority of people who use the language, is objectionable and does not match reality. Language rules and language usage are currently defined by native speakers, and not those who use the given language in its instrumental function, knowing it to a limited extent.

At the same time we should admit that as there is a strengthening of English in its status of the world language of global communication, the role of people who speak it as their second language will increase as a result of displacement of other languages by English from certain functional areas and a great increase in the degree of mastering English.

The recognition of 'English as the global lingua franca' as a new variety of English, free of a national cultural component does not mean, however, the lack of any cultural component and the formation of a new identity among people who use the global language to overcome interlingual and intercultural barriers. The creation of a global society in the context of globalization leads to the formation of a global culture and creation of a new global identity, which in turn enriches the multilingual and multicultural individual of today's information society and does not lead to the displacing of national cultures and ethnocultural identities.

The creation of a culture as part of a global language occurred due to several factors contributing to the formation of cultural phenomena in the global cultural space during globalization. Modern society is defined as an 'information society', the development of which happens through its transformation into a knowledge society [8-10]. The knowledge factor as the main source and resource of modern society's transformation into a knowledge society has a decisive influence on the course and nature of globalization processes. By its nature, knowledge is international and it leads to a smoothing of all ethnic and national differences in it. Knowledge is a beginning which unites all nations and peoples, and the knowledge society, forming in the process of globalization, cannot be anything other than global. It is logical to suppose that such a unifying beginning is a basis for the formation of a global unifying culture.

A decisive role in the formation of the knowledge society has been played by the information revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century which, based on digital technologies, led to modern knowledge being transformed into information. Mass flows of information, computer epistemology, virtual reality and the Internet connect all countries and peoples and enable the ongoing development of information culture as a global culture.

The language of worldwide intercourse in its basic communicative function of interlingual and intercultural communication is part of multiple identities and leaves undisturbed the area of representation of subject content in ethnic culture, which is expressed in the languages of ethnic groups and ethnic and cultural identities. The concept of "multiple identity" is not new, although it received greater recognition in the period of globalization. Benjamin Bailey, disapproving of the common aspects of uniformity of the linguistic, ethnic and racial categories of the U.S. population, noted the use of linguistic forms from a variety of two linguistic codes – Spanish and English by Dominican Americans – "for situational activation of various aspects of their multiple identities" [11]. The anthropologist Adam Cooper, in his description of an "existential struggle for the maintenance of their ethnocultural identity" also expressed his opinion towards the prevalence of the phenomenon of multiple identities in the context of globalization. In a paper devoted to anthropological approaches to ethnic cultures, published by Har-



vard University in 2000, he wrote: “We all have multiple identities, and even if I admit that I have a primary cultural identity, maybe I will not want to meet it” [12: 247]. Multiple identity, however, is not a new phenomenon appearing in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of growing economic, political and cultural exchanges in the world. Historically, the interaction of cultures as a result of conquest, revolutionary upheavals and regular trade relations led inevitably to acculturation processes and the creation of new multiple identities. The clearest example of multiple identities is the identities in Arabic-speaking societies of North Africa. At the present moment, the ethnocultural identity of the Arab population in North Africa is part of a complex multiple identity, which includes, on the basis of the Arabic language and culture, the national and pan-Arab identity [13].

Multiple identity is the result of identification of certain social categories, including gender, ethnic, age, cultural, professional, regional, and others. Different identities within multiple identities become apparent depending on the situation [14, 15]. This approach to identity was formed in the process of finding ways in the European Union to create a common European identity, which demonstrated the need for the simultaneous existence of a European identity, without which European integration would be significantly obstructed, and other identities, especially national and ethnocultural.

Globalization of language communication in the world, based on the English language, is accompanied by the phenomenon of glocalization, which is displayed both in the adaptation of national varieties of English in countries where English plays an important role in national communication, local linguistic and cultural standards, and the originality of use of English borrowings in local languages.

Linguistic globalization and linguistic glocalization, leading to the formation of multiple identities in the world, point to the groundlessness of statements about the displacement of local languages and cultures by English as the language of global communication. The viewpoint on the definiteness of choice “either / or”, in which non-native English speakers must make a choice between mastering the global language with a consequent loss of their languages and culture, or preserving their language and culture at the cost of linguistic and cultural isolation and rejection of English as a language of worldwide communication, is too simplistic. However, the violation of the principle of subsidiarity in use of languages, when a more widely used language is used in functions which are common for local languages and cultures, may indeed lead to a loss of linguistic and cultural diversity.

## **Conclusions**

1. The language of worldwide communication, which is essentially used for communicative functions as a means of international communica-

tion, will not threaten ethnocultural identities expressed in terms of national and ethnic languages. The influence of a language of worldwide communication on national and ethnic cultures in the process of cultural and identity globalization will also not weaken or supplant local cultures and subcultural identities, characterized by stability of national archetypes – the collective ethnic component and subconscious. The spread of English as a worldwide language in the conditions of globalization leads to the creation of multiple identities. The possibilities and necessities of multiple identities based on mass individual multilingualism in terms of which language and cultural aspects exist, which although they seem to be contradictory and mutually exclusive despite cultural homogenization during the period of globalization, make it possible to protect ethnocultural identities.

2. Ethnocultural identity in terms of multiple identities expresses itself through the use of a native (or official) language. The language of worldwide communication and global culture, as components of global identity, are part of multiple identities, providing for the entrance of ethnic groups to the uniform international, economic, political, educational and cultural space. Conflict between the language of worldwide communication and local languages and cultures occurs only when the principle of subsidiary is broken and the language of worldwide communication begins to be used in its unnatural function of intra-national and intra-ethnic communication.

3. In terms of this approach the language of worldwide communication, maintaining multilingualism, sorts out synergetic chaos occurring in the worldwide language system as an open, dynamic, self-organizing and self-developing structure, as a result of the influence of processes of globalization, leading to the activation of interlingual and intercultural contacts. This is not a language hierarchy of the global language system, in which the English language competed with the other international languages to become the means of worldwide communication, thus destabilizing multilingualism and threatening the existing linguistic and cultural variety considering increasing dominant languages and cultural influence and their invasion into functional spheres traditionally controlled by local languages and cultures. In the new language hierarchy, the English language obtained the status of a language of worldwide communication. The stability of individual multilingualism in the new conditions of an existing language of worldwide communication, is based on linguistic duality in dividing functional spheres of use between languages of different hierarchy levels. Besides, English as the language of global communication does not compete with the other languages' functioning as means of realizing national and ethnocultural identities.

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