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ДОБРЕДОЉОВТЕ WËLLKOMM स्वागत छ  
VÄLKOMMEN FÄILTE VÍTEJTE HERZLICH ΚΑΛΩΣ ΗΡΘΑΤΕ  
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**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE VARIETIES OF  
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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*Abstract: The article considers the basic issues of a comparatively new linguistic subject - contact variantology of the English language, related to the language varieties of intercultural communication, which is nowadays the English language and the term of World Englishes. The problems of categorization of variants, norms, and comprehension between the speakers of different varieties, are considered. The author favours the idea of "intercultural literacy", which allows to monitor and implement intercultural communication in different variants of English.*

*Key words: World Englishes, acrolect, mesolect, basilect, intercultural communication, nativisation, society*

When defining English varieties as special language formations with specific features which distinguish one variant from another, it is important to remember that these varieties are of a sociolinguistic nature and reflect the characteristics of the language of a society, not of individuals. English varieties represent a continuum (in B. Kachru's terminology, a "bilingual continuum" [6, p.66]). 2), consisting of such phases as acrolect - mesolect - basilect, characterizing the level of language use, not by a separate individual, but by society (acrolect - formal level of communication, mesolect - informal level of educated users and basilect - level peculiar to uneducated users). However, a variant is a continuum that is functional and not static. Within one variant, educated users can alternately use different lexical levels depending on the purposes and situation of communication.

Linguists describe English language varieties on the basis of the acrolectonic and mesolectonic zones of the bilingual scale of users belonging to a particular society. Varieties are distinguished from each other by innovations and deviations which are typical for a given society and indicate the nativization and acculturation of English in that society. Deviations characterise the differences of local varieties not only from the British and American standard, which underlies the norm of so-called "International English", but also variants within the same circle. For example, typical deviations of Indian English include plural forms of nouns considered uncountable in British and American English: equipments, furnitures, etc.; use of verbal forms with "would" to express real future tense: I would be going to London this month, or universal tag question: She is beautiful, isn't it? At the same time, many deviations are characteristic of different regional variants and thus can serve as an indicator of future trends in English, which requires further special research.

Furthermore, the question of norm, standard and learning model is one of the most debated issues. Despite the fact that one of the fundamental theses of the World Englishes theory is the statement about equality of all English varieties, whereas the equality concerns social status, but not the norm. According to B. Kachru scheme [7, p.40] there are three types of variants with respect to norm: norm-providing variants of the Inner circle, norm-developing variants of the Outer circle and norm-dependent variants of the Expanding circle. The main problem concerns the norm of the Outer-circle varieties:

their users reject the exonorms of British and American English variants and tend to codify the endonorms of their own variant [2, p.244] through dictionaries, textbooks, mass media, fiction in English created by local authors. The variants of the Expanding circle, on the other hand, still rely on the norms of the British (prototypical) and the American as the variant (as D. Crystal has accurately pointed out, the American dollar is followed by the English language (see note 3) [5, p.7-8], or more precisely its American variant). The problem of finding new norms, politically and economically free from the dominance of the British and American standard, led to the emergence of the confrontation between the concepts of English as an International Language (EIL) and World Englishes (WE).

According to Jennifer Jenkins [2; p.244] the term "International English" was used to mean the model which is the standard English language not based on the British standard RP (Received Pronunciation) and not on the American standard General American (GA), but on identifying a common core that links all the real varieties of English. As a result of attempts to create such a common core, the Jenkins model resembled a reduced model of an artificial language such as Basic English, which does not really function and therefore has no right to be called a living variant.

As defined by P. Strevens [11, p.88], the standard of International English is "a particular dialect of English, the only non-localised dialect with global distribution without significant variation, universally accepted as an appropriate educational goal in the teaching of English, which can be implemented in speech with an unlimited range of accents" (see note 4). In the mid-1980s there was a debate between R. Quirk [10] and B. Kachru [7] about the English standard. Quirk believed the standard should be one that encompassed all variants of English, while Kachru argued for the need to recognise the linguistic reality of multiple norms based on the actual usage of the educated speech community.

Talking about the standard of English used in international, intercultural communication, Strevens and Quirk had in mind an ideal model of language, whereas Kachru is talking about real (tangible) variants of speech. This is why "International English" cannot be viewed as a variant (as opposed to Standard British, which is based on the central, London dialect). "International English" is an ideal, devoid of ethno-cultural features, an educational model that teachers and students of different countries, who teach and learn English, strive to achieve. However, in reality, like any ideal, this model is not achievable in absolute terms - no individual can overstep his or her own culture and mother tongue. In reality, each teacher in the classroom, as well as the learner, remains a native speaker of his or her own variant of English at one or another of its lectal stages. In characterising an individual's lectal stage, we speak of his or her interlanguage (advanced level, or *acrolect*; intermediate level with strong traces of native language interference, or *mesolect*; and elementary proficiency, or *basilect*). In combination, the deviations and innovations that make up the typical linguistic features of educated members of society are the parameters for distinguishing one or another ethno-cultural speech variant of the English language.

Because the Kachru's theoretical paradigm is founded on the description of speech varieties, it is based on the descriptive rather than prescriptive principle, for which it is called "liberation linguistics" [6], which takes into account such factors as "intelligibility, appropriateness, and effectiveness of communication" rather than the "rightness or wrongness" of expression. In Russia the concept of studying the linguistic aspects of intercultural communication with the participation mainly of English, which has become a secondary means of cultural self-expression of peoples [1, p.155], for more than a quarter of a century by the scientific school of interlinguocontactology headed by V.V.

Kabakchi [2; 4; 5]. Investigating the processes of English language acculturation, its adaptation to the expression of Russian and other cultures, the researchers of this school, thus, characterize the corresponding variants of English in lexical and phonographic aspects, emphasizing that today English can be "both a means of communication and a means of disconnection" [2, p.245].

In discussing the future of English, some linguists foresee the fate of Latin, whose divergent processes led to the disintegration of the language first into dialect-variants, and then into independent languages, differing from variants by a lack of mutual comprehension. Indeed, if local features of variants begin to dominate over general linguistic norms, a similar outcome can be expected, leading ultimately to the decline of English and the emergence of the American language, Indo-English, etc. The theory of intercultural communication serves precisely as a meaningful link to the theory of contact variantology, which helps find the key to the solution of emerging problems. Working both in the field of contact variantology and in the field of the theory of intercultural communication, the Japanese linguist and cultural scientist N.Honna founded the principle of "diversity management", which consists not in standardisation, but in the cultivation of intercultural literacy [2, p. 246). Intercultural literacy implies familiarity with the culture of the opponent, reflection on one's own culture in contrast to other cultures and awareness of the diversity of any ethno-culture (in terms of gender, social, age, etc. differences).

To the aspects of intercultural literacy indicated by Sandra McKay [10] one should add the linguistic aspects of intercultural understanding described by Larry Smith: the ability to recognize the form of a word / statement (intelligibility); to understand the meaning of a word / statement (comprehensibility); to interpret the meaning of a word / statement, to realize the intention of a speaker (interpretability) [2, p. 249]. In other words, using semiotic terms, it can be argued that for the success of intercultural communication one should pay attention to the form, semantics and pragmatics of communicants' English varieties and prepare students to communicate in different varieties of English, not only in British or American English. Let us consider the importance of each of these aspects with specific examples.

The ability to recognise the form and structure of an utterance produced in different varieties of English is related to problems of differences between the variants at the phonographic level. Particular attention should be paid to those varieties whose Latinization differs from the traditional system of sound-letter correlation (Arabic English, Thai English, Vietnamese English, etc.). Such variants, for example, include Chinese English, where the culturally loaded words that constitute the innovative features of this variant have non-traditional letter combinations (qi), non-traditional letter readings (xi [shi], qi [chi] or [ji]).

Differences in syllabic-rhythmic and intonational patterns of utterance can be a problem for the successful perception and understanding of the structure of words and utterances in Eastern English [8]. Pronunciation of English words by speakers of Oriental languages is often characterized by a stress on each syllable or its shift, sound substitution, insertion of epenthetic vowels, reduction of final consonants, which leads to a change of rhythm of the entire statement and formation of homophonic words: boast - boat.

The knowledge of the main phonetic deviations, typical for the Eastern variants of the English language helps to understand the Russian names in the text, created by the Chinese authors in English. For example, China Daily [2006-06-29] published an article covering the progress of a joint Russian-Chinese project. The article included the following statement: "A few border trade zones, such as the Sino-Russian Suifenhe-Bogelaniqinei Trade Complex in the province...". Only the knowledge of the peculiarities of Chinese

pronunciation of English words (irrelevance of the consonant voicing-soundness feature, r-l substitution, insertion of vowels in consonant clusters) makes it possible to decode the name Bogelaniqinei > Pogranichny.

At the level of grammatical meanings, grammatical deviations common to nativised varieties of English can prevent successful comprehension. For example, the use of the present tense instead of the past tense in Chinese English: ...we really have a good time [1, 71]; the use of the form of Continues tense for emotionally neutral expression of an ongoing action in East African variants of English: Some of us could believe that women are having a lot of things to do. [2. P. 250] or the use of the auxiliary verb "would" to express the real future: We would soon be given a rise. The word combinations in local variants of English may also be unusual: "to play tai-ji" in Chinese English; "inauguration of aseminar" in Indian; "Open the air conditioner" in Filipino.

A particular difficulty in understanding of nativised versions of English are the lexical meanings of words: culturally oriented realias (Chinese: "dazibao"- wall poster with large hieroglyphs, "qigong"- system of breathing gymnastics"; Japanese: "jizen kyogi"- prior informal discussion of a problem in business; "sangaku"- theatrical genre"; korean "taeguk"- flag of the Republic of Korea; "tolharubang- stone statue of an old man").

The pragmatic aspect of successful communication involves understanding the specifics of discourse in a particular variant of English, the use of speech strategies, etiquette formulas, etc. Familiarity with them comes through studying the cultures behind these varieties. For example, an uninformed person may be surprised by an African greeting: "You have put on weight!" or a Chinese greeting: "Have you had lunch?". On the other hand, a desire to preserve the addressee's face and the principle of politeness compels an Indian communicator to use rather clichéd phrases like "What's your good name please?". Some scientific articles written by native speakers of Eastern-English seem to be too vague to the Europeans, because they are structured not according to the logical principle "from the general to the specific", i.e. from the thesis to the details that support it, but on the contrary: the author presents different approaches to a problem and the reader has to draw conclusions himself, so that such works may seem incomplete to the European reader [9].

Research into the linguistic aspects of successful cross-cultural communication is inextricably linked to the issue of recognising language varieties as sociolinguistic phenomena. If we continue to see deviations from the British and American norm only as mistakes made by this or that individual, without considering them as a typical, systemic usual phenomenon capable of changing the norm over time, the neglect of deviations representing actually linguistic features of an English variant will persist, and with it, the negative attitude towards this variant will persist. The study of varieties in all their semiotic and cultural aspects and their receptive teaching will prepare communicators to meet "dissimilarity", promote linguistic tolerance and reduce the degree of dissociation that is possible when using different variants of the same language. Today, awareness of this need is taking place in many countries not only in the Outer Circle but also in the Expanding Circle.

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