

КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЯ

LANGUAGES IN THE FACE OF GLOBALIZATION

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ЯЗЫКИ ПЕРЕД ЛИЦОМ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ

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ABSTRACT

In the context of economic, political and cultural integration and globalization, languages tend to succumb to this process too, which can be proven by a constant flow of English borrowings. This is usually explained by the leading role of the USA and Britain in the economic and political fields and the cultural legacy of the English-speaking countries. The issue of an extensive use of the English borrowings in many different languages spurs a lot of debate in the society. Is it a fulfillment of the dream about one language that will unite us all or a threat for different national languages and cultures?

АННОТАЦИЯ

В контексте экономической, политической и культурной интеграции и глобализации языки также склонны поддаваться этому процессу, что подтверждается постоянным потоком английских заимствований. Обычно это объясняется ведущей ролью США и Великобритании в экономической и политической сферах и культурным наследием англоязычных стран. Проблема широкого использования английских заимствований во многих разных языках вызывает много споров в обществе. Что это? Осуществление мечты об одном языке, который объединит всех людей или угроза для существования для разных национальных языков и культур?

Keywords: English borrowings; globalization.

Ключевые слова: английские заимствования; глобализация.

Language as a gift that enabled a person to develop into a homo sapiens, since it is the ability to communicate and to verbally summarize the experience that made it possible. Language shapes people and simultaneously reflects the culture (culture in its broad sense: traditions, customs, worldview, national character). For instance, often the phrase “широта души” (basically, “the largeness of the sole”) is applied to describe Russian national character, which refers primarily to the patterns of behavior of the Russian people. It can communicate different qualities ranging from generosity to open-mindedness, however, this expression can be interpreted in another way, denoting a craving for extremes, for extreme manifestations of any quality, as Aleksey Tolstoy depicted in his poem “Коль любить, так без рассудку”¹. Victor Klemperer, a German journalist, claimed that there are no means against the truth of language, and this is also true, as the language is a witness, as it reflects the reality, the changes in the society, etc [8].

Nina Mechkovskaya distinguishes three so-called communication revolutions, i.e. three outstanding events that had a profound impact on the history of mankind, and one of them are the latest information technologies [6]. They have not only made the contact between people virtually instantaneous, but also have

resulted in the acceleration and further prominence of the changes in the language. The most tangible manifestation of this tendency is the penetration of borrowings, and English, as an international language, represents the biggest resource of borrowings for various national languages.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century Britain becomes the world’s leading industrial and trading nation (most of the innovations of the Industrial Revolution were of British origin). The linguistic consequences of this achievement, as we see now, were far-reaching. The new terminology of technological and scientific advance had an immediate impact on the language, adding thousands of words to the English vocabulary, making it a source of new terms for other languages. Actually, it is only with the end of the Second World War that the phenomenon of anglicisms takes its current magnitude. It can be explained by the fact of the hegemony of American economy and technology and the fashion of the so-called “American way of life”. The leading role of Britain and the USA (English is an official or working language in major international political gatherings, for example the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the European Free Trade Association, etc.) in the economic and political fields has left a mark on

¹ If to love, then without judgment,
If to threaten, then in earnest,
If to scold, then in temper,
If to chop, then from the shoulder!
If to argue, then with courage,

If to punish, then for a reason,
If to forgive, then with all your soul,
And if there’s a feast, then a lavish one!
[translated by Iouri Belov]

many languages. The growth of international markets, the travel of “outdoor media” around the world and the American slogan “it pays to advertise” has a linguistic effect on other languages the Italian language even coins up a word that characterizes the whole era “cocacolonizzare”, based on “coca cola” and “colonize” [3], [4].

Apart from the economic dominance of the UK and the USA, we cannot but emphasize the cultural legacy of the English-speaking countries. We cannot disagree with David Crystal’s opinion that it is quite unusual to find a blockbuster movie produced in a language other than English. There is a strong English-language presence in the film-making industry aimed at huge audiences (remember the big effect the films “Star Wars”, “Titanic” and “The Lord of the Rings” had) and, as it is known, the Oscar has always been English-speaking oriented and so is the Cannes Film Festival [3].

The longing for “prestige” words leads to such phenomenon as the emergence of pseudoanglicisms (apparent anglicisms). Pseudosnglisms are English-looking words that, however, do not exist in English. For example, an Italian footballer may call their trainer “mister”, but to an English-speaking person will not do so; in Russian we often use “face control” to denote restriction of entry, selective denial of service to visitors who do not meet certain criteria, however, we will not be able to find this expression in Merriam-Webster or Oxford English Dictionary.

Many nations strive to stop this “English invasion” in their national languages. For instance, there is a big concern in Italian society about “purity” of their language as there is an enormous number of borrowed words, especially from English. A rather considerable part of such borrowings occurred due to unreasonable using and copying of the English words. This is quite an issue of the day, which is confirmed by petition (#dilloinitaliano, basically “say it in Italian”) launched by Annamaria Testa². Roughly a couple of years ago, Annamaria Testa (an Italian communication expert), launched the petition on www.change.org with the aim of raising awareness around the ever-growing trend of using foreign words in the Italian language with no need, and the petition found support from over 70 000 people not only in Italy but also around the world.

However, borrowing is often viewed as a regular process in the development of any language, considering that any living language changes over time, with its vocabulary being the most flexible as it is sensitive to all the trends that emerge in the society. Already in 15th century Niccolo Machiavelli, a famous Italian philosopher, contemplated on the issue of the purity of a language and came to the following conclusion: “*you cannot find a language that speaks everything for itself without having been invaded by others*”, he explains that “*whenever new doctrines emerge in a City or new arts, new words must come, [...] but reduced in speaking with the moods, with the cases, with the endings and with the stress marks, they make the same consonance with the words of the language they are in, and so they become native*” [5].

While nowadays we are often skeptical about the intensity of English borrowings flow and question their necessity, we tend to neglect the history of the English language. Borrowings in English are known to account for about 70 percent of the vocabulary. David Crystal considers the “readiness” to borrow words to be one of the most specific features of the English language; he writes: “*English has always been a vacuum-cleaner of a language, sucking in words from any other language that its speakers come into contact with*” [2]. Less than a quarter of the words in English are of Germanic origin, while according to the estimates of some linguists, almost ¼ of the entire Latin vocabulary penetrated into the English language [7]. But at the same time, one cannot talk about the loss of its originality. The overwhelming majority of words have undergone phonetic and grammatical changes, and one cannot but take into account the leading role of word formation and rethinking of words in the development of the vocabulary of the English language.

Thus, maybe, the reason for our concern is not only the purity of the language, but the loss of our national language and culture? In the context of economic, political and cultural integration and globalization, languages tend to involuntarily succumb to this process too, as the globalization in itself leads to the strong need for one language, single for all, able to unite all people around and eradicate all the conflicts between cultures. The language that claims to perform these functions is the English language, as David Crystal writes “*A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country*” [1]. Many different factors contributed to this, as the leading role of the USA and Britain in the economic and political fields and the cultural legacy of the English-speaking countries.

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² Available from: <https://www.change.org/p/un-intervento-per-la-lingua-italiana-dilloinitaliano> (last accessed 05.05.2020)