Cross-cultural communication: Euro-English

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Abstract. The process of globalization in modern world has affected all spheres of our life – politics, economy and culture. To realize these processes people should have a common means of communication – a lingua franca. The English language has become this lingua franca due to many reasons, as about 1,5 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.

Introduction

Nowadays communication across the world has increased greatly in scale, scope and speed thanks to the development of transportation and communication media. The interaction and co-existence of people with different backgrounds, ethnics and beliefs have turned urban metropolitan areas into multinational and multicultural. The time of globalization shows that people of different cultural, ethnic and religious identities should have more to share than ever before. And one of the means of their cross-cultural communication in many parts of the world today is the English language. People today communicate beyond national borders by e-mailing, chatting, blogging besides speaking and writing. Global networking has produced new societies of hybrid and very often conflicting cultures, where people are to become pluricultural individuals.

Council of Europe: language policy

Europe is not an exception. 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 and planning of the Council of Europe is a grand experiment based on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism [1 : 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 a 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 [2 : 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 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 [3 : 206].

English as a lingua franca

The English language today has become not only an international language throughout the world, but it has also become a lingua franca. A lingua franca is usually associated with a variety of language that has a worldwide use as a means of communication in countries in which users have no other language in common.

There are several reasons why the English language has become a language for global communication: historical, political and economic, informational, cultural and linguistic. Historical reasons arise from the colonial past of Great Britain, which spread its influence and language all over the world (beginning with XV century). Political and economic reasons are connected with the might and influence of the USA and Great Britain. As D. Crystal states, the American dollar is followed by the English language [4 : 7-8]. In many of the world`s countries the English language is associated with prestigious well-paid job and status. Informational reasons are specified by the necessity to have one common language for Internet communication. Cultural reasons are connected with the development of tourism and acquaintance with other cultures through so called "contract literature", i.e. written in English by non-native speakers. Linguistic reasons arise from great flexibility of the English language and its ability to borrow foreign words easily.

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. This English is known today as Lingua Franca English. Although English is a global lingua franca in politics, business, science and education, the significance of its use is increasing in the global scale in Europe, Asia, Latin America and other parts of the world. In each of these regions the English language adopted and is adapting to local languages and cultures, becoming both socialized and internationalized.

In each territory "regional English" is becoming standardized and functions both as a means of identity and expression of social culture and as a global lingua franca. These regional standard Englishes may be classified into six groups – Native Speaker English, Euro-English, Asian English, Latin English, African English and Aral English. [5 : 126].

Euro-English

If we compare and analyze these regional varieties of English, we may see that 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. 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 1. Foreign language skills in the European Union

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

The table shows the total proportion of European citizens speaking each language in the European Union (as mother tongue or as a foreign language) [6].

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 [7: 76].

European leaders use English in 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 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) 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.

Economic globalization, development of transportation and communication systems have increasingly deterritorialized and hybridized world regions. The knowledge and competence of a common language (English) being demanded, schools, colleges and universities have incorporated English with their curriculum all over the globe. Graddol [8 : 120] predicts that in the foreseeable future English will be a basic skill, not a special talent any longer. If it is so, it no longer matters where you acquire this basic language skill in the English-speaking community.

Conclusion

It only matters how proficient you are. English proficiency will be judged not by being a native speaker, but by one's level of cross-cultural communicative competence as an individual [9 ; 67]. English as an international language (EIL) will comprise all regional standard Englishes, they'll become more intelligible being spoken and understood by educated speakers of English language varieties while communicating cross-culturally and cross-regionally. [10 : 204] When it happens and when language education becomes more profound, Euro-English as a means of communication will become the bearer of pan-European culture.

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