FUNCTIONING OF THE LANGUAGE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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The objectivity of formation and functioning of the language of international communication is proven. A historical aspect of this phenomenon is considered, a survey of similar languages functioning in the past being presented. The predictability and prospects of English becoming a language of international communication is emphasized.

Key words: political and economic ties, language of international communication, interstate contacts, global processes

Recent decades have seen unprecedented acceleration of globalization processes including the international relations realm. Economic and political ties between states are getting closer; scientific-business and personal contacts between the citizens of different countries are fostered. The above-mentioned trends set the development of new methodological approaches and guidelines for the formation of language policy as priority tasks. Such policy is aimed at increasing the efficiency, fostering and facilitation of communication between the representatives of different linguistic environments. It primarily refers to defining the position and formation of the global international language. Currently the approximate number of languages is estimated between 2500 and 5000 and the number is climbing steadily. Moreover, it is impossible to give the precise figure since often differences between the dialects may be barely noticeable and rather conventional [1, 609].

The question of benefits and threats of the formation and functioning of the language of international communication – Lingua Franca is in the focus of linguistic debates of the recent decades. The proponents of establishing such a language point out the objective nature of its formation. They emphasize the advantages and the necessity of Lingua Franca.

They refer to the dynamism and strengthening of political, economic and cultural relations between the states as well as the increased interpersonal contacts across the borders in recent decades as the most convincing arguments. The establishment of the language of international communication will optimize the development of such relations.

Their opponents have little enthusiasm for establishing Lingua Franca, they explain their position by forebodings that the language of international communication can oust other languages from communication, posing a threat to national self-identification of representatives of different ethnoses and national cultures. Since it is English that is spreading fastest and is currently proposed as the means to ease international communication, the opponents consider facilitation of its functioning as ‘Americanization’, the display of “language genocide” or even “linguistic imperialism”.

Some states have adopted the legislative acts aimed at protecting and developing national languages (Portugal, Brazil, Italy, France etc.). Hence, these countries consider their national languages as the highest spiritual value. Moreover, some European states, by adopting such measures in response to the spread of English emphasize the priority of their languages and in a way undermine common European values and interests.

A popular German journalist Von Wild, regards such measures as “manifestation of Europhobia”. He wrote in this connection: “Suddenly, after many years of economic integration the Danish, the Germans, the French, the British remembered their “identity” and, like Laokoon started fighting against the ‘insatiable python’ Brussels, which allegedly was threatening to swallow them”. Von Wild accuses the supporters of national idea of betraying the principles of European solidarity, of attempting to undermine the idea of the formation of European consciousness and European identity [7, 37].

However it is quite clear that modern global society, numerous international organizations can’t function properly without the language of international communication – Lingua Franca. So in order to settle the dispute between the opponents and proponents of the language of international communication new scientific approaches and methodological frameworks should be developed concerning the essence of the role of lingua franca. The basic concepts underlying its functioning should be researched.

We hold the view that in order to assess the importance of establishing the international language, we should take a broad-based look at the history of mankind. Back to the ancient times there already existed such languages, which facilitated communication between many peoples.

Over the entire course of recorded history, languages have gone in and out of fashion as a preferred tool of international communication. Analysis of their functioning in the past will help to outline the ways establishing English as the language of international communication and cast its consequences for mankind.

It is noteworthy that mankind realized the necessity of using the language of international communication at very early stages of its history. A number of attempts have been recorded to create such a language artificially. Back to the 17-20 cc. about 1000 such languages were created. The first project of an artificial language was Volapuk. It was the first artificial language to be used for practical communication. The constructed language was created in
1879–1880 by Johann Martin Schleyer, a Roman Catholic priest in Germany. However, the language did not gain the foothold in daily communication. When in 1887 L.L. Zamenhof introduced his language – Esperanto, designed not to replace but rather to complement native languages, the use of Volapük went for naught. L.L. Zamenhof’s language aimed to be the world’s second language. His solution was to create a neutral language that all could speak equally without losing any of their heritage. Unfortunately, not everyone liked this spirit of internationalism. Nationalists were suspicious that Esperanto would weaken the national language and Esperantists were often suspected of being spies during the Second World War. Hitler went as far as to make the language illegal during the Nazi era (Zamenhof was Jewish) and persecuted Esperantists. These were serious blows to the language, but it survived and today is as strong as ever. We can still observe evidences of Esperanto being viable – out of the 6,800 languages known in the world, Esperanto ranks in the top 100, having the 33rd largest Wikipedia site, ahead of Danish with 188,000 articles. Google added Esperanto to its list of languages available to translate [8,2]. Yet we can hardly say that the survival of Esperanto can make the position of the language strong enough to claim the status of lingua franca. Following Esperanto several more projects of artificial international languages were introduced – the most notable of which - Occidental, introduced in 1922, became the second largest international auxiliary language in numbers of adherents, the language interlingua, introduced in 1951. However none of these languages gained grounds as international languages.

We can state that the idea of spreading artificial languages failed. After the second world war the need arose to define national, not artificial languages which would perform the function of the languages of international communication.

At the dawn of human civilization in Ancient Middle East Egyptian was the most eminent language used by many nations, by the end of the Middle Ages it was extinct. Later, in the Hellenistic period, Greek was spoken all the way from Athens to the banks of the Amu Darya in Central Asia. However it was Latin, that reigned supreme over European territory south of the Danube and west of the Rhine, not to mention North Africa and became the most widespread language of international communication. It was to play a significant role in creating the multi-faceted European culture and forming European civilization.

Historically, the past international languages achieved their status through the military and economic expansion of the nations which spoke them and this, naturally, turned these languages into the languages of international communication. D.Cristal a leading British linguist and author wrote: the language becomes powerful if a country becomes powerful. [2, 28]. The language of a powerful country spreads together with the spread of its economic and political impact.

Latin was one of the Italian languages (the language of the Latini, the tribes living in Latium, an area of ancient Italy now known as Lazio. They spoke an early version of what became the classical Latin language. When Rome, part of the Latini (or more simply, the Latins) first came into contact with her neighbors (beginning with the VIII century B.C.), Latin wasn’t the lingua franca of Italy, let alone the known world. Latin gradually began to spread throughout the Italian peninsula and then throughout the Mediterranean region, ousting other vernacular languages. It referred to the period of 4-3 cc B.C. The Latinisation of Italy was mostly completed in I century B.C. Expanding their military, political, and economic influence, the Romans gradually spread Latin in Northern Africa, Spain, Galia, the Pirenean part of Germany, Rhaetia, Pannonia and Dacia [1, 253]. Latinisation of the linguistic space of the territories, incorporated into the Roman Empire lead to ousting or even disappearance of many languages used by the tribes and peoples living on these territories.

There is no doubt that the spread of Latin over such vast territories, had primarily economic grounding. In order to enter commercial relationship in the ancient Market the buyer and the seller had at least to understand each other’s language. Latin served this purpose. It was in the course of market relationship evolution that the ancient language of international communication was developed. Since all modern national languages were evolving in the process of market relationship development, when economic ties between certain areas were strengthening and exchange of goods between the tribes was intensified. The knowledge of Latin gave the possibility for those who knew it to speak the language in various parts of Roman empire, thus opening up new social prospects, increasing their competitiveness within the Roman society. For the tribal elite of those tribes that were subdued by Roman power, definitely the knowledge of Latin was prestigious.

However, it is undeniable that the spread of Latin throughout the vast territories of Roman Empire had somewhat aggressive character. Roman conquest of Gallia, Iberia, South Africa, Britain, Pyrenean Germany, Noricum, Pannonia, Dacia resulted in the spread of Latin on these territories. The Latin language absorbed or influenced the native tongues of the area. During that period several regional languages disappeared. At the same time it is worth mentioning that as Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire, the language became a pervasive influence, becoming the universal language of science, literature and culture. Latin preserved this status even after the collapse of the empire in the V century A.D.

So till XII-XIII centuries Latin was considered the language of European literature and poetry. Till XV-XVI centuries it was not only the written language of Catholic church, science, medicine, law, but it was also used by the Catholic clergy, scholars, lawyers, doctors, officials to communicate with one another. Since XVI century Latin has been the language universally used for catholic services. The use of Latin in the liturgy is a most efficacious way of avoiding heresy; translations of the liturgical texts, which are being constantly updated, increase the risk of error in the transmission of divine teaching. That is why the Church has held to Latin for such a long time as a protective rampart for the integrity of her dogmas. This is because an unchangeable dogmas require an unchangeable language.

In the 19 century Latin was still used in the universities of Europe. Latin has remained an academic subject into the 21st century. However most of the Latin courses currently offered in secondary schools and universities are geared toward translating historical texts into modern languages.
We would like to emphasize that until 18-19 century Latin was used as the language of diplomacy, what is easily explained, since it is quite obvious that for the development of international relations and establishing new diplomatic contacts a common language is necessary and Latin performed its role. The role of Latin in consolidating religious unity of the Catholic Church in Western Europe was equally significant. As the Catholic Church was dominating in the majority of European countries, Latin proved an admirable means for the spreading of Christianity and had proved to be a bond of unity for the Christian peoples of Europe. This need for establishing such a language arose from the necessity to provide favourable conditions for communication of the clergymen of different countries. Latin served this purpose best of all. Latin still retains this role of the language of catholic liturgies and is the official language of Vatican (along with Italian).

Thus for over two thousand years Latin played the role of the language of international communication. Latin ceased to be a mother tongue about 1000 years ago but continued to be used in European society until the XVIII th century. Latin has been an international language for longer than both English and French together. As the compilers of the Anthology of medieval literature wrote: “Latin was not a dead language, and Latin literature was not dead literature. Latin was not only used for writing, it was also used for communication. It was a spoken language that united ... educated people of that time ... Even theological treatises ... were the school of dialectics “[ 3, 5 ]. A Russian scholar I.M. I.M. Borovskiy emphasized the meaning of Latin as the language of international communication: “Latin fully met the requirements of the language of international communication in scientific sphere.” [ 4, 72 ].

Thus, Latin played a distinguished role in the development of European civilization. Owing to Latin, the culture of ancient Rome and Greek culture became the asset of the whole mankind. It laid the foundation for the Renaissance. It was Latin that made a major contribution to the development of science and education in Europe.

At the same time it should be particularly emphasized that all European languages were under the permanent influence of Latin as the source of lexical enrichment and contribution to the scientific and technical terminology. Latin served as the foundation for the formation and development of nearly all Western European languages, the ones that belong to the group of Romance languages. Romance languages developed from Latin under the influence of local dialects and a branch of the Italic languages within the Indo-European language family after the 5 century A.D. i.e. after the collapse of Roman empire. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, political and economic ties with the regional provinces were weakened. The provinces gained independence and were becoming states. It lead to the situation that they no longer needed Latin as the language of international communication. The regional differentiation of Latin took place, which was modified by local languages and dialects. Latin, through interaction with local dialects gave birth to a number of Romance languages. The process of Romance languages formation was completed in the IX century

Thus, Romance languages were formed as a result of Latin functioning as the language of international communication on the European territories, which formerly were territorial units of Roman empire. Though formed on the basis of local languages, the Romance languages widely relied on the words, models of word building and stylistic patterns of Latin. So it is not an exaggeration to say that Romance languages originated from Latin.

Now there exist 12 Romance language, the European territories, which formerly were provinces of Roman empire among them: Spanish, Galician, Portuguese, Catalan, Provence, French, Galician Italian, Sardinian, Romansh, Rumanian, Moldavian, (also a group of dialects belongs here) The total number of people who speak Romance languages is 690 million. More than 60 countries use roman languages as national or official ones. oci6. For example French is used in 30 countries, Spanish in 20, Portuguese in 7, Italian - 37, 1, 431].

As the result of Latin being in use as the language of international communication, all the Romance languages (apart from Moldavian, which switched to switched to the Romanian version of the Latin alphabet only in 1989) introduced Latin alphabet, borrowing the Roman graphics of the letters for writing. It should be mentioned that Latin alphabet is used for writing by most of European countries (even the ones that do not belong to Romance language group).

At the same time we would like to mention that Cyrillic alphabets, used in Ukraine and some other countries have also been affected by Latin alphabet. Written Latin was formed under the influence of Greek, and Greek, in turn, laid the foundation for Cyrillic alphabet.

Consequently, Latin as the language of international communication played a significant role in the formation of many European languages, affected European linguistic environment. Moreover, some Romance languages (German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian) displayed some trends towards developing into the languages of international communication.

It is worth mentioning that throughout history the languages, represented by the countries pursuing colonial policy - English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, partly German and French had the biggest prospects of becoming international languages.

France was the biggest and most influential state of continental Europe in the middle ages. So it is not surprising that it was French that claimed the status of language of international communication. Beginning with the 17 century French was used as the language of international communication (along with Latin). For example it was a recognized language of diplomatic correspondence. In Russia and many other countries the knowledge of French testified to an elevated education level and showed one’s aristocratic descent. French was widely used in the work of international forums, during diplomatic negotiations and the Olympic games. Currently it is one of the official and working UNO languages.

However, gradually French lost its dominant position in the linguistic space of continental Europe. It became particularly obvious after the first world war, when the peace of Versailles was signed in 1919 in two languages: French and English. Thus the historical tradition of signing international pacts in French only was changed.
The reduction of the significance of French as the international language was particularly noticeable as the result of the Second World War. In 1940–1944 During the time of German occupation French was less widely used. In 1944 English came to France (brought by the liberation armies of Great Britain and the United States of America).

Since that time the gradual invasion of Europe by the English language has begun and its citizens opt to learn and use English. Moreover, it concerns not only European countries - all Latin America refuses from predominant learning of French in its universities, introducing English into their curriculums. One of the reasons of increasing popularity of English is the USA becoming a superpower, the strengthening of its political, economic and cultural influence all over the globe.

A number of international organizations were formed after the Second World War. The purpose of these organizations was to enhance and facilitate the reconstruction of the world and “further control over the world processes” [ 5, 8. As D.Crystal mentioned -85% of international organizations use English as the working language, whereas only 49% use French[ 2, 28 ]. These figures provide convincing evidence to English being in wider demand in resolving international issues than French.

English is gradually acquiring the status of international language. As the Economist Magazine wrote, “English has gained the status of global lingua franca and inseparable part of global revolutionary processes. [ 6, 39 ].

It has already been mentioned that the spread of some Romance languages was connected with the invasion of some areas by the European colonial powers. That is why some European languages also possess some features of the languages of international communication. It primarily refers to Spanish, which is the state language of Spain and 19 countries of Central and Latin America. The language is also spread in the Philippines, in the former colonies and zones of Spanish protectorate in Africa and also in the south of the USA. The number of Spanish speaking people is 300 million. Spanish is one of the six official and working languages of UNO [ 1,203].

The Portuguese also possesses some features of the language of international communication, spread in Portugal (10 million speakers), Brazil (130 million speakers). It is also used in Angola, Mozambique, the Republics of Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe as well as in some Asian countries (Аомен - a special Administrative Region of People’s Republic of China and some regions of India). Altogether about 150 million people speak Portuguese [1, 385 ].

Some European languages (Dutch, German) also have some features of the languages of international communication. To some extent it concerns Russian, which is spread in nearly all independent states formed after the disintegration of the USSR. During the Soviet times the Soviet republics were affected by a widespread russification, Russian playing a dominant role across the linguistic space of the Soviet Union.

At the same time it should be pointed out that the spread of European languages was occasionally accompanied by ousting the languages of other peoples and was rather aggressive by nature. This fact is used as the consideration in the debates concerning the role of an international language and its introduction into all spheres of life. Саме цей факт активно використовують противники мови міжнародного спілкування, виступаючи із критикою з приводу її запровадження.

Thus, we are currently observing the objective and natural need for realizing the theoretical nature and practical implications of English as lingua franca. The debates are held among politicians and linguists on the issue of what exactly language can perform the function of a lingua franca, however most of them are inclined to admit that currently the establishment of English as a worldwide lingua franca is irreversible.

List of references

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Розкривається об’єктивна доцільність формування та функціонування мови міжнародного спілкування. Висвітлюється історичний аспект цієї проблеми; подано огляд функціонування аналогічних мов у минулому людства. Підкреслюється перспективність набуття англійською мовою статусу мови інтернаціонального спілкування.

Ключові слова: політичні та економічні зв’язки, мова міжнародного спілкування, міждержавні контакти, глобальні процеси.

ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНИЕ ЯЗЫКА МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ОБЩЕНИЯ:
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Раскрывается объективная целесообразность формирования и функционирования языка международного общения. Освещается исторический аспект этой проблемы: представлен обзор функционирования аналогичных языков в прошлом человечества. Подчеркивается перспективность приобретения английским языком статуса языка международного общения.

Ключевые слова: политические и экономические связи, язык международного общения, межгосударственные контакты, глобальные процессы.