

The English of Englishes: a Threat or an Opportunity?

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Abstract. *This research is devoted to the study of the status of Euro-English - a variety of English spoken in European institutions and continental Europe. Its emergence and development occur under the conditions of multilingualism and is associated with the need to have a common language for all European citizens to ensure intercultural and inter-ethnic communication. The authors reflect on the similarities and differences between British English and European English in their status, processes, vocabulary and grammar.*

Keywords – *multilingualism, European English, British English, lexis, grammar*.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In common parlance, multilingualism is the use of many languages and the knowledge of these languages by one person. A multilingual person is perceived as communicating with the entire world and sharing the idea of free will, initiative, tolerance, new linguistic experience, and productive dialogue of cultures. In this respect, the multilingual reality is rich and wide compared to monolingual. This phenomenon provides transmission of unique and socially valuable knowledge and the experience of a variety of human relations with the language. Pushing the boundaries of one linguistic world and expanding its cultural space, multilingualism brings us closer to different linguistic worlds and cultures.

Multilingualism studies is a field of knowledge benefiting from sociolinguistics, educational linguistics, psycholinguistics and many others such as various fields of anthropology, communication, sociology, etc. In this work, we will explore three main aspects of multilingualism - speech, setting and language as such and reflect on the phenomenon of European English. We will investigate multilingualism from the point of view of stability and change, time and space and the related complexities.

Multilingual societies are prone to the necessity of choice, language contacts, and language maintenance and shifts more than any other societies. Public language choices by means of regulation, language engineering and other forms of language intervention, including language policy

and language planning [16] have become an everyday reality.

English is the first language, which has achieved a rapid and large-scale distribution around the world and led to the emergence of many of its native-like versions. The need for a more detailed study of the different Englishes marked the beginning of the development of contact variantology, known as the World English Paradigm [4]. The spectrum of varieties represented by the term World Englishes is so wide that McArthur asserts it is now “possible to be multilingual within the English world” [17, p. 4].

Despite the fact that the theory of the variability of the English language originated in the middle of the 20th century, most of the existing variants, their role, status and features have not yet been described and studied in detail. One of these variants is Euro-English.

Initially, English in multilingual continental Europe began to be used as a universal means of everyday communication between Europeans. Due to the active integration of European countries in the European Union, English has become the main language in which all official documentation is written and circulated. It is the language of administrative communication, education, business, trade, the language of the European Union member-states, as well as a compulsory foreign language in all European countries at all levels of education.

We will explore the status and functioning of European English or the English of Englishes and reflect on it from the multilingual perspective.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Multilingualism has been in the focus of linguistic research for several decennia, and still, there are different interpretations of this concept in many fields of the Humanities. In linguistics, it is a multi-level verbal system of languages, whose carrier is the active subject of speech and/or writing activities. In computer science, multilingualism is understood as the result of human-computer communication [9]. In cultural studies, multilingualism is interpreted against the background of the awareness of changes happening in the general socio-cultural situation, where all languages or language codes – verbal, artistic, scientific, and programming – culturally coexist [16, 27, 29].

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Research into multilingualism encompasses a thorough analysis of the language systems in contact, neighbouring communities, major and auxiliary functions of languages in society, as well as the everyday language practice of individuals who use more than one language. These aspects should not be studied separately, as they are pieces of a puzzle, which cannot be resolved any other way than by seeing them as part of a whole.

Some research works deal with creative adaptations in the languages in multiculturalism situations. Thus I. Buchstaller points out that by way of creatively adapting linguistic innovations, speakers can participate in global trends, yet do so in a highly localised and idiosyncratic manner. A micro-linguistic analysis of the emerging local practices allows researchers to situate localised linguistic processes into a wider picture of structural ‘becomings’ and makes one step forward towards the understanding of the development and/or maintenance of social spatiality. US English, for example, does not simply impose itself. Rather, it offers linguistic material that can enter the repertoire of the speakers in another locality as a resource to be filled with linguistic and social meaning [3].

E. Haugen notes that the analysis of language patterns from English demonstrates a whole variety of ways in which words and word combinations from the English language are coined and borrowed by different varieties of another language, for instance, the word combination *rush hour* has become *horas punta* in Peninsular Spanish and *horas pico* in American Spanish. An important observation is that the way lexis from English is adopted and consequently adapted to the norms of the target language depends considerably on the variety of English which has an impact on the target language, and on the way the English lexis has been adopted. There are numerous ways of adopting linguistic material – directly or indirectly through other language(s) [11].

A. Pennycook explored a growing tendency of emerging global Englishes. This tendency clearly demonstrates combined historical influence of the USA and Britain, and consequently, British and American Englishes and, at the same time, reveals the absorbing capacity of local patterns of speech. Local languages and language varieties successfully enrich themselves, mixing words from many different source languages. Furthermore, he notes that the most creative linguistic developments occur elsewhere. The source language (or languages) becomes irrelevant to the target language. This process bears a strong resemblance with global Englishes, since as A. Pennycook puts it, the creative expansion of English is now happening in Outer and Expanding Circle societies, and its Inner Circle historical roots have next to no influence on the process [22]. His observation is very much in line with the conclusions made by other linguists studying English as *a lingua franca*, who noted that native speakers of English are gradually marginalised by two factors – the constantly evolutionising English and the linguistic developments in numerous and expanding outer circles [22].

The language contact phenomenon described in a number of works as a pragmatic borrowing refers to the adaptation of a class of lexical items and phrases that are non-specialized, non-domain specific features. E. Peterson argues that some linguistic elements are prone to borrowing in language contact settings in general, but perhaps especially in foreign language contact settings [23]. According to him traditionally, the entrance of a foreign-sourced lexical item has been associated with bilingual speakers. Nevertheless, this is not a prerequisite for pragmatic borrowings as the motivation for such borrowings is pragmatic in nature. There is a certain shift in the term *pragmatic borrowing* from referring strictly to pragmatic elements to pointing to an element which enters a recipient language due to pragmatic and social motivations [23]. Moreover, a pragmatic borrowing seems to work in a complementary fashion with a heritage equivalent, creating what is perceived by native speakers as a variant that cohabitates with a pre-existing form; in other words, the pragmatic borrowing does not replace the stable, often standard, heritage form. Rather, the borrowed form carries indexicality such as urbanicity, for example. Another point is that pragmatic borrowings from English are incorporated into other languages in such a way that distinguishes them from both the English source as well as the pre-existing heritage equivalent. The forms acquire social, pragmatic, and even grammatical values that appear to be unique to their purpose in the language. A related point addresses foreign language contact and the role of a widespread *lingua franca* or foreign language such as English. E. Peterson argues that the notion of pragmatic borrowing and further investigation of this phenomenon would help answer questions that right now remain unanswered – such as what effect, if any, English has on the system of recipient languages [23].

Language contact is about the way in which even monolinguals sometimes find themselves enriching and adjusting their form of speech as a consequence of their interaction with bilingual individuals [14]. In the simplest definition, language contact is the use of more than one language at the same time and within a certain territory, though the speakers of two (or more) languages may not be in the same place for language contact to occur. The most striking example in the modern world is the pervasiveness of English outside the traditionally English-speaking nations. Millions of non-English speakers have come into contact with English through radio, television, Hollywood films, Internet, popular music and writings of all kinds [28].

The tension between mono- and multilingualism may be observed in Europe today, where massification within the development of European integration is being counterbalanced by national revivals, especially in Eastern and Central European countries which have regained their political autonomy in recent years, and regional resurgence in Western Europe, for instance, in Italy and Germany. However, the inevitable economic and political interdependence may promote multilingualism and cultural autonomy at the regional as well as the wider international level.

In Europe, the sociolinguistic situation is characterised by language diversity. There are many different linguistic communities in the European Union. Each community has its history, culture and native language. However, English is used for intra-European communication in a “plethora of contexts, as the native language of millions, the official language of numerous nations, and a lingua franca in a multitude of international dealings” [4, p. 2]. An increasingly growing number of English speakers in the world either feel they own the language because they have their national dialect or, on the contrary, reject Western cultural norms that are indispensable parts of the language. These citizens of English as an international language feel that changes need to be made: in how the language is viewed in general, in attitudes towards varieties of English [4, p. 1].

It is difficult to underestimate the importance of English for all spheres of European life, including the politics and economy of the European Union. English is the official working language of such international organisations as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, NATO, and the UN. Most of the entire written documentation is published in English. English has replaced the European languages that dominated for many centuries, for example, French, which used to be the main language of diplomacy. Every day English gains more popularity and is an independent choice of millions of citizens [27]. The inevitable consequence of inter-ethnic communication is the emergence of new linguistic forms and structures that adapt to the new multilingual conditions. The main difficulty in adaptation lies in an attempt to achieve consistency in terminology [21].

The language policy of the European Union is aimed at maintaining and preserving linguistic diversity. However, due to the high communicative value of the English language and its active use in the daily life of Europeans, European English has become the main language of communication between member states and acquired de facto the status of lingua franca for the countries of continental Europe [1].

Due to the fact that most of the existing variants of the English language have not yet been described and analysed in-depth, there is still no unanimous opinion in science about the status of the Euro-English language. Linguists are still arguing whether this variety can rightfully be considered a legitimate and independent language. Different attitudes towards Euro-English are also observed among citizens of the European Union.

D. Crystal holds that Euro-English cannot yet be considered an independent variant, similar to American, Indian or Singaporean English. However, there are all prerequisites for this. According to the researcher, it is only a matter of time [6]. D. Crystal argues that there are not only territorial variants of English, but also special variants of English spoken by major social and political entities. Euro-English is one of these varieties [6]. It is often referred to as a language for special purposes, a language of international communication, or one of the variants of English that are used only by Europeans for whom it is not native.

B. Carstensen was among the first to propose the term “Euro-English”. In 1986, he wrote an article in which he argued that Euro-English is significantly different from native English (cited from [15]).

M. Berns also noted that Euro-English differs greatly from British, American, Australian, Canadian and other native versions of English [2].

T. McArthur defines Euro-English as follows: “English is the language spoken by all European countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom and Ireland” [18, p. 2] He asserts that it is possible to be multilingual within world English [18, p. 3]. It is the language which is easy to speak to a minimum level but incredibly difficult to master to perfection [18].

The German English language researcher C. Gnutzman doubts the legitimacy of Euro-English: Gnutzmann et al. point out that “it is not clear, as yet, whether English in Europe will in the foreseeable future become a language in its own right, one that is ‘owned’ by its multilingual speakers, or whether the orientation towards native-speaker language norms will continue to persist” [10, p. 78].

M. Modiano has done extensive research into EuroEnglish. According to him, Euro-English could help provide its users with a sense of identity, among other benefits, which were logical and welcome at the same time. “In the act of recognising the validity of Euro-English,” Dr. Modiano wrote, “one liberates continental European [second language] users of English from the tyranny of standard language ideology” [19, p. 327].

III. RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIAL

In this study, we resort to several methods including definitional, conceptual and semantic analyses. The material of the study is the official documentation of the European Union, the European Security Strategy (December 12, 2003), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (December 12, 2015), Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union (February 2016), the European Antitrust Control and Standard setting, Flexicurity in Europe (2013), and numerous articles on multilingualism and multiculturalism. We have proposed a number of criteria according to which lexical units can be ascribed to European English. More than 400 lexical units – neologisms belonging to European English have been analysed, and their status described.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

There must be certain grounds for attributing a lexical unit to Euro-English. We have proposed several criteria, which can be used as a filter to determine the attribution of a lexical unit to European English. A lexical unit belongs to Euro-English if it:

- is thematically linked to political, diplomatic, cultural or social events of the EU;
- demonstrates a high frequency in the texts belonging to the European discourse, and refers to the realities of European life;

- demonstrates a change of meaning compared with its primary meaning in British English;
- is frequently used primarily or exclusively in the discourse of the European Union.

Lexical units that failed to meet the proposed criteria cannot be classified as belonging to Euro-English. For example, in the official documents of the EU in the economic sphere, one can often find the word combination ‘globalisation of the economy’. Yet, despite its high frequency in European discourse, it is typical exclusively of European discourse and is also often used in British English, as evidenced by the statistics and many examples from the British National Corpus, where there are more than 12,293 hits beyond European discourse.

At the first stage of our study of European English, we divided all selected lexical units into the following thematic domains:

- EU regulations and standards;
- words having the ‘euro’ prefix;
- words belonging to EU trade, diplomacy, politics, economics and culture;
- names of EU institutions;
- neologisms related to the exit of Britain from the EU;
- words that have changed their meaning in European English;
- neologisms used exclusively in the discourse of the European Union, not included in the vocabulary of British or American English.

Our research has shown that Euro-English is different from native variants of English and has a set of distinct characteristics.

Its emergence and development occur under the conditions of multilingualism and are associated with the need to have a common language for all citizens to ensure intercultural and inter-ethnic communication. For Europeans, English is only a common language, a tool of communication. They are not inclined to associate themselves with the English-speaking culture and, therefore, refuse to use cultural-specific terms. Consequently, Euro-English is characterised by neutrality.

Other languages and cultures naturally influence Euro-English. In European countries, it is common for English to go through the process of Europeanization. This means that in the European Union, English has begun to develop under the influence of local languages and cultures. For instance, a constant confusion of the two nouns – ‘opportunity’ and ‘possibility’ under the influence of French since *possibilité* in French can actually mean “opportunity”:

I had the opportunity to attend the conference (BrE)

I had **the possibility to attend** the conference (EuE), [20].

Another interesting example is the adjective ‘touristic’ used attributively instead of the classical ‘tourist’:

He ends up in a part of Paris far from the **touristic** center, a marginal stretch of block buildings and derelict streets [7].

There are other examples of a deviation from the norm or meaning shift in Euro-English:

“eventual” is now used in the meaning “possible”, “subsidiarity” has come to mean “the principle that legal decrees should be enacted as close to people as possible”; “Berlaymont” means “bureaucracy”, “conditionality” means “conditions”; and “semester” is “used to mean six months”; “to hop over” is used in the meaning “to refrain”, “to foresee” instead of “to predict” means “to plan for, include or provide for” since the French “prévoir” and German “vorsehen” both have a similar root to “foresee,” but are used differently in their respective languages than they are in English.

A very telling example is the verb “to incite”, which originally meant “to encourage someone to do something violent or illegal”, for instance:

He incited his fellow citizens to take their revenge

The party agreed not to incite its supporters to violence [5].

In Euro-English, the verb has acquired a new meaning – “to encourage someone to perform a desirable action or behaviour” [13].

In questions, Europeans tend to substitute ‘what’ by ‘how’, asking ‘How do you call it?’ instead of ‘What do you call it’:

I get more money than I would working in a... **how do you call it?** [26].

Reflecting upon grammar, one can observe the following tendencies:

- deviations from the norms of the formation of plural forms of substantive, for example, informations, advices, travels, competences;
- incorrect use of articles;
- frequent replacement of grammar constructions, for example, there were on we were (We were four at the party instead of There were four at the party);
- loss of the ending -s in third-person singular verbs, for example, he look good;
- spelling mistakes can often be noticed; for example, Europeans are used to writing judgment rather than judgement.

The phonetics of Euro-English is also distinguished by the desire for simplification. Many unusual for Europeans phonemes, such as [ð] and [ə], are replaced by simpler ones. Many words are often pronounced with an improper accent. There is also a tendency not to distinguish between long and short vowel sounds. More and more words acquire special pronunciation. For example, the word cooperation in British English is pronounced / kəʊ,ɒpə'reɪʃ (ə) n /, and in Euro-English / kə:pə'reɪʃən / [19].

There is an obvious process of nativisation when common expressions from other European languages penetrate Euro-English.

Euro-English contains a large number of terms that are unique to the European experience.

The most important feature of Euro-English is the tendency to deviate from the accepted language norms and patterns that native English speakers adhere to and tend to simplify. The reason for the violation of the language norm is the lack of a unified approach to learning and using English. A survey of 6,000 European Commission employees found that 95% wrote in English, but only 13% of those were native speakers [26].

Unclear documents waste time and resources, and poorly drafted texts may give rise to difficulties in the correct application of EU law and can generate bad publicity. In Britain, a 2009 report from a parliamentary committee found that jargonistic weasel-words allowed policymakers to compensate for unclear thoughts and disguise the impact of their proposals. It also found that “officialese” alienates people from organs of government and discourages them from gaining access to legitimate benefits and services [4, p. 272].

Consequently, simplification occurs because most of the official documentation is written in English, and then translated into other European languages.

In order to eliminate the possibility of distorting the meaning of European documentation, sentences are to be simple and understandable. It is also important not to overload the text with complex constructions so that the recipient does not lose the thread of narration and understands its intended sense. Therefore, there are numerous replacements of long phrases and constructions in the texts of official documents with simpler and shorter ones:

BrE a certain number of – EuE most
 BrE in order to - EuE to
 BrE with regard to – EuE about

One of the main lexical features of Euro-English is an extensive use of the prefix - *euro*. For example:

‘eurozone’

Europe, or at least the **eurozone**, had a second recession of its own [12].

‘eurodollar’

Another measure of improved conditions was the **Treasury** over **Eurodollar** spread, the difference between three-month dollar Libor and three-month U.S. Treasury bill yields.

‘Eurocurrency’

It regained a global presence due to the relaxation of exchange controls in 1958, the development of the **Eurocurrency** and Eurobond markets in the 1950s, and the deregulation of capital and securities markets in the 1980s [8].

Euro-English is characterised by changes in the meaning of words, mixing vocabulary and syntax of different languages. Words tend to be used in their new meaning and an atypical context, for instance:

‘Cabinet’ is

1) a cupboard used for storing things such as medicine or alcoholic drinks or for displaying decorative things in.

2) In politics, the **Cabinet** is a group of the most senior ministers in a government, who meet regularly to discuss policies [5].

In Euro-English, the noun has acquired a new meaning - a private office: “He has retired to his cabinet.”

Many neologisms appear in Euro-English, which reflect the realities of exclusively European life. For example, the noun ‘comitology’ is not included in the vocabulary of British and American English. In Euro-English it means “a committee procedure”. This term is understood and used only by employees of EU institutions:

In our view, one reason for the Commission to choose the **comitology** procedure is that the Commission has a stronger position than during the ordinary legislative procedure [25].

Brexit has triggered the development of a number of new words:

Grexit – Greece leaving the EU;
 Frexit – France leaving the EU;
 Brimain – Britain remaining an EU member;
 Briturn – the return of Britain to the EU;
 Branxiety – anxiety over the prospect of Britain leaving the EU.

New times may indeed call for new words, and even when saying things in new ways does not add to the pool of meaning, loose language has its uses.

The necessity to disguise and deviate from the truth as the main extralinguistic motives and, consequently, the frequency of the techniques for creating intentional ambiguity has led to the formation of new concepts, for example, *alternative facts*, *alternative knowledge*, *alternative explanations*, *counter knowledge* and *some others*. The conceptual basis of these neologisms is the availability of some interpretive alternatives or options, one of which is chosen by the recipient. All strategies and techniques of achieving ambiguity or vagueness create an opportunity for manipulating public opinion since they provide several reference points. In the era of the so-called *post-truth* and the abundance of information provided by the old and new media, the multiplicity of reference points for the formation of judgment creates a favourable environment for the emergence of new concepts, including that of *alternative truth* [24], which deviate from the traditional values and create alternative conceptual dichotomies in European discourse.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study allowed us to define the role, the modern view on the status and significance of English for the inhabitants of continental Europe, to develop our own definition of Euro-English and describe its characteristic features.

Euro-English, a lingua franca, spoken among the largely non-native residents of Europe, is a variety of the English language, used in all countries of continental Europe as a means of both official and everyday communication. It has retained many features of the British and American versions of English, being neither of them. Euro-English is formed

under the influence of various languages and cultures and acquired many of their grammatical, lexical and phonetic characteristics.

One of the main features of Euro-English is its neutrality and the obvious tendency for simplification, as well as susceptibility to the natural influence of local languages and cultures, resulting in a violation of the language norms at all language levels.

Euro-English provides an opportunity for communication as the language used by millions of residents of continental Europe. At the same time, Euro-English might share the fate of other varieties of world Englishes, i.e. the “new Englishes” of India, Singapore and West Africa, which are considered to be low prestige.

The on-going process of European disintegration could, in fact, profit from recognising Euro-English as a characteristic of the peoples of Europe. Euro-English could serve as a starting point for the European language constituency, and, consequently, a legitimate European policy in future, including language policy. Euro-English has become a fact of life, whether it is for better or for worse. Linguists and opponents to the idea of the very existence of Euro-English should explore this phenomenon in-depth, assessing both opportunities and threats coming with it. Though definitely, opportunities have already outweighed major doubts. It is clear, however, that all Europeans have an opportunity to claim English and in doing so, transform and adapt it to best suit their own needs. EuroEnglish does not pose any threats but rather enriches local languages and benefits communication.

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