English Language Variants Used by Non-Native Users and their Distinctive Features

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ABSTRACT

The study addresses the notion of a variant language as a non-native one. In terms of English as a language of global spread, such a variant appears as an exonormative idiom of the Expanding Circle, according to B. Kachru's theory of three concentric circles. The variant is based on its linguocultural justification and traces of native language transference, the manifestation degree of that depends on the type of the lectal level of the bilingual continuum (basilect, mesolect and acrolect). Typicality and systematicity of the linguistic deviations revealed in mesolect and acrolect speech of a society are the signs of a variant, distinguishing it from the interlanguage of an individual.

With the global development and spread of English, the question of which English variant we speak is very controversial. More and more scholars are ready to admit that people speak different variants of English as Chinese English, Indian English, Russian English, etc. Modern bilingualism, increasingly a mass phenomenon (Rivlina, 2013) and characteristic of almost all countries in the world, is the parallel functioning and interaction of a global language, which is English, and a local one. English influences local languages and local languages influence English, this phenomenon causes creation of a new variant. Addressing the problems of this interaction has become the task of a conceptual paradigm, World Englishes (Smith, L., Jenkins, J., Kirkpatrick, A., Melchers, G., Porshina, Z, Seargeant, P., Siemund, P., Kachru, B.) championed by the international association IAWE , whose members discuss these problems at annual conferences and in a range of international journals.

In the foreword to the proceedings of one of the first IAWE conferences, published under the editorship of Larry Smith (1981), the founder of this paradigm, Braj Kachru, and the famous British linguist Randolph Quirk emphasised the reality of different variants of English, both native and non-native, in the modern world. These are the variants spoken by Spaniards, Bangladeshis, Singaporeans, Malaysians, Thais, the peoples of India and the Philippines, Germans, etc.: the quantity of English variants is equal to the quantity of participants- native and non-native, Western and non-Western, including variants from the USA, Britain, New Zealand, Germany, India, Philippines, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Numerous cultural, lingustic, ideological and other differences could be found among the participants, but they all had this one thing in common: all of them used the English language to debate, discuss, and argue questions which

concern both native and nonnative users of English, as well as as global uses of English in various sociolinguistic contexts in different parts of the world (Smith, 1981). The global use of English occurs in different sociolinguistic and linguocultural contexts - this extremely important idea has been confirmed by numerous researchers from all over the world.

The basis of the paradigm was the recognition of the shift from recognition of only two variants of English - British and American - to acceptance of coexistence of several standard variants in written and oral forms in territories where they are in contact with other (local) languages and are separated from their prototypical variants. The founders of World English phenomenon emphasise that all variants are equal, that no variant has an advantage over other variants in terms of cultural dominance. Each variant reflects a different culture.

Nowadays, there are several pluricultural languages (Clyne, 1992)- among them German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Indian, Chinese, Russian, etc.- but their description is not yet as complete as that of the English Language, evidently because of the global spread of the latter.

The multiplicity of variants is reflected in a number of schematizations, and one of the most common is Kachru's theory of three concentric circles (Kachru, 1985), which shows that all variants of English can be divided into three groups:

1. Variants that are native to most country users and function in all sorts of functions - these are the variants of the Inner Circle.

2. Variants serving as second official languages in their states to which they were once transferred during the colonial era - these are the so-called Outer Circle.

3. Variants of the Widening Circle, functioning mainly in the field of intercultural communication.

Since all absolutely variants can function in intercultural communication, either native or non-native speakers of English need to be prepared for this communication, English as a lingua franca, or intermediary language in communication, is a common function of all variants, as represented in Luke Prodromou's model (Prodromou, 2018)

According to the Three Concentric Circles theory, variants differ in the status of their norm in each circle (Kachru, 1983). The Inner Circle variants are called norm-supporting by Kachru because they serve as educational models for those learning English Language. The Outer Circle variants are norm-developing – in other words, new norms are rapidly formed and gradually codified and become the language standard. The Expanding Circle variants are norm-dependent on the models presented by the Inner Circle variants. The peculiarity of the Widening Circle variants is that they are characterized by a much greater variety of norms, since they can be oriented to British, American, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, Irish, South African and other variants, depending on the needs of English users. It should be emphasized that all World Englishes, both native and non-native to their users, are referred to as variants.

Accordingly, norm-supporting variants have their own standards, or so called endonorms; norm-dependent variants are characterized by exonorms, i.e. orientation to the norms of other variants, and in norm-developing variants there is a formation of endonorms competing with exonorms. For example, in Indian, Filipino and a number of other Asian variants the plural use of nouns that in British and American variants are considered uncountable, and in Asian variants are perceived as discrete: equipments, furnitures.

The codification of more and more variants of English, at least in their oral form (so-called Standard Spoken English), has already affected many variants of the Inner and Outer Circles, as reflected in a new book by Cambridge Publishing, edited by Raymond Hickey, Standards of English (Hickey, 2012), describing the emergence of new norms in Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, African, Caribbean and other variants of English.

So, what can be considered as a variant of a language and what parameters have to be taken into

account to recognize a variant? There is an opinion that only a variant with its own norms and language standards can be considered as a language variant (Droschel, 2011). In this case, variants in the Expanding Circle are not variants, but what are they in this case?

From our perspective, there are several misconceptions about the Expanding Circle variants. First: many people identify variant with a learning model: for example, many EFL speakers think they speak British or American variant. Others think that in the Expanding Circle we should be talk about lingua franca, i.e. intermediate language, not variant. However, others associate the variant with the learner's interlanguage.

As for the first misconception, it is a wrong approach, because the model is the ideal to which we aims to when learning a language, but in reality the result of speech production does not always and most often does not coincide with the educational ideal (Seidhofer, 2011). What the learner receives at the input is not at all equal to what he produces at the output, and this manifests itself in accent, sometimes in grammar, especially in syntax, in vocabulary selection, in speech.

English as a lingua franca is just one of the functions of a language used in intercultural communication, in addition, the function is inherent to both non-native speakers and native speakers who have to adjust to their bilingual, non-cultural interlocutor. Today it can already be firmly stated that non-native speakers use English in various fields - including as a medium of instruction, as a creative medium (there is already fiction in English written by non-native authors), mass media and use in other spheres. That is why the second perception of the status of the Expanding Circle variants of English is limited and insufficient.

The third perception is due to the proximity of the notions of "variant" and "interlanguage", but despite their seeming similarity, they are fundamentally different from each other. Interlanguage, unlike variant, has no social nature (Davies, 1989). It is an individual, psycholinguistic phenomenon, demonstrating static frozen (at a certain moment) level of a learner's language proficiency.

Unlike interlingual (the concept of which was developed in the methodology of teaching English as a second / foreign language by the American linguist Larry Selinker (1974), variant is a social phenomenon, it is a multidimensional dynamic functional continuum used by bilinguals with different levels of language proficiency and in different functions. The multidimensionality of social variant lies in the fact that it represents a set of different lectal zones:

➢ acrolect- a standard sub-variant of a language which was used in formal situations by well-educated users;

➢ mesolect-a sub-variant of a language which is oriented to the standard of spoken language used by educated users in informal conversation or in situations where they lose complete control over their speech (because of fatigue, anxiety and other reasons can cause the imprint of the linguistic features of the native language);

Basilect - characteristic of poorly educated users with initial bilingualism; a sub-variant characterised by an extremely high degree of linguistic mixing/hybridisation, which is why it is called a hybrid term: Chinglish, Spanglish, Hinglish, etc.

All these three lects together represent a variant used by a particular linguistic-cultural society, so one cannot associate a variant with just one lexeme; such an association is only appropriate in the case of interlanguage.

Considering the variants of the Outer Circle, Platt, Weber and Ho identified four parameters necessary for variant recognition:

1. Usage in an educational system. (If we attach the Uzbek/ Kazakh/Russian variant of English to these parameters, we see an expansion of this function due to the new requirements for the universities in that regions to offer English-language courses due to the need to meet the

requirements of academic mobility and conformity with the principle of internationalisation of education).

2. Expansion of the usus of non-native language users.

3. Expansion of the functions of English. (new functions appear in advertising [40], in language games [8], [31], fictions written by non-natives, etc.).

We also observe localization and nativisation of English in many vaiants of the English language, where appears typical systemic deviations from the norm in speech of educated bilinguals (this is a manifestation of localization of English), while the English language we use is able to express our culture with its cultural concepts.

It is also important to analyse dictionaries to define the words 'variant'. The definition of variant in the dictionary edited by V.Y. Mikhalchenko (2006), assumes that "variant is a form of language existence, which is a modification of invariant, which can be determined by language system and structure or language norm. Variants of language appear as a result of differentiation of language under the influence of various extra-linguistic factors". Indeed, the existing variants of English are modifications of endonorm, but today we have the right to speak not of one standard, but several codified norms of English. The role of extralinguistic factors, and especially culture, is undoubted play very important role here.

Foreign linguists believe that we can speak of variants when there are differences between relatively homogeneous phenomena (Matthew, 2003). Variants of English are distinguished by their distinctive features, which include already fixed innovations and usual deviations from the prototypical variant (Proshina, 2007). Distinctive features of variants are distinguished by the study of typical features peculiar to the educated speech society - at the level of acrolect and mesolect. Examples of innovations can be realities and neologisms, in which language creativity of language users is manifested, for example: in Japanese English 'silver seat'- seats for elderly people in public transport; in Nigerian English 'go-slow'- traffic jam; in Korean English 'skinship'- strong friendship, etc. Innovations are not only characteristic of the lexical level, they can be found at any level. Deviations are just linguistic tendencies to deviate from the long-standing norm, which can also appear at different linguistic levels, including native speaker variants, as, for example, in British English there is an increase in the use of Progressive Tenses. In fact, deviations are halfway between a typical error and an innovation of the norm (Proshina, 2007).

An example of a striking lexical deviation was found on an Australian website about Chinese culture and the Chinese diaspora on the Continent (Goldman, 2012), where the word 'beautiful' comes across in a very unusual usage – 'the woman is not beautiful at all'. The meaning of the word 'beautiful' in this context is 'noble, strong in spirit'. And this is not an exceptional use of the word. We find its use in relation to a courageous teacher who saved her students by throwing herself under a bus, as a result of which she had both legs amputated; in relation to a driver who saved his passengers; a soldier who got burnt while rescuing people. This innovation is finding increasing usage in Chinese English, is gradually making its way into Australian English, but is not yet enshrined in dictionaries, except as reflected in the media.

The Central Asian and Russian variants of English still has few fixed innovations, as it has an exonorm rather than an endonorm. But we can observe typical deviations from the norm in the speech of educated speakers of that regions at different linguistic levels. For example, at the phonetic level: peculiar intonation, failure to distinguish long and short vowels, absence of aspiration, replacement of interdental consonant, stunned final consonants, etc. At the morphological level there is an under-use of the perfect and the article.

So, can we say that these are typical errors? Yes, up to a certain point in the speech of an individual we can consider them as errors, but in the speech of a society they become certain tendencies of usus, and, as we know, usus prevails over the norm. In our case, these features have been collected in the mesolect speech - knowledge of these deviations allows interlocutors from other cultures to better

understand our communicators, and our communicators to strive for an acrolect usage of language that is closer to the norm of its speakers.

In syntax deviations are revealed in the construction of attributive chains (the Russians prefer not prepositional definitions, but prepositional postpositional: 'the structure of the English Language < the English Language structure'; word order (in the determinative group: 'the problem "generation gap" < the generation gap problem', etc.

At the discursive level, Russian English is a masculine-oriented language which does not suffer from excessive political correctness. Sometimes, Russian English is characterised by excessive verbalisation: 'the process of globalisation'. Often the English speech seems too categorical to foreigners due to the excess of imperative structures: I think I cannot read that < I don't think I can read that.

All these features appear in the speech of linguistically educated users and allow us to identify them as bilinguals, successfully using English for their communicative purposes. A part of the distinctive signs peculiar to their speech, as well as to the speech of other users, is gradually consolidated in the oral and written forms of discourse in different spheres, turning into innovations; another part is rather considered as typical errors so far - these are usual deviations that sometimes appear also in the Inner and Outer Circles and indicate certain trends in changes of English as an International Language norms. This issue is very controversial and requires a special research.

Conclusion. Thus, the linguistic revolution of the variant paradigm consists in the following features: recognition of the pluricentricity of one language causing a diversity of linguoculturally equal variants, recognition of the dominant principle of functionality (the paradigm grew out of M. Halliday's functional linguistics), variability and inclusiveness (inclusion of more and more variants into the paradigm; inclusion of more and more fields of activity into the object of consideration, etc.) (Porshina, 2014).

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