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The Language Situation in Modern Australia

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In the article the language situation in modern Australia is analyzed from the points of the components, functional distribution of socio-communicative functions between its systems and subsystems and also the factors that formed this situation and are influencing it at present. The English language (Australian English) is found to dominate in the exoglossic aspect while its codified variety (mAusE) is found to dominate in the endoglossic aspect of the language situation, the consequences of this domination for Aboriginal and migrant languages and Australian English itself are studied. The two aspects of the language situation in modern Australia: exoglossic and endoglossic – are found to be isomorphic.

Keywords: language situation, exoglossic, endoglossic, language policy, non-balanced, multiculturalism, bilingualism, macro-mediator, micro-mediator, language habitat, migration, multiethnic communities, LOTEs, Aboriginal languages, mAusE, AusE, exonormative, endonormative, supra-dialect koine, lingua franca, dialectisms, ethnolects, sociolects, polycentric, epicenter.

Introduction

There is no denying the fact that modern era is the age of global communication, interaction and mobility. It is also the age of global English – Globish.

The societies and communities are increasingly becoming multiethnic due to migration. But does this mean they are becoming multilingual and multicultural?

With the help of studying the language situation in Australia, which is traditionally viewed as a multilingual and multicultural society, we are trying to analyze the phenomenon of Australian multilinguicity and multiculturalism through studying the modes and types of interaction of migrant languages

and cultures with the English language in the language habitat of Australia.

Definitions

The definitions of a language situation given by different researches (A. D. Shveitser, L.B. Nikolsky, Ch. Ferguson, G.P. Neshimenko etc.) vary in the set of criteria employed by the linguists. The definition given by A. D. Shveitser combines most of these criteria and in our research we rely on this definition: “Language situation is a model of social and functional distribution and hierarchy of socio-communicative systems and subsystems which coexist and interact within a politico-administrative unit or cultural

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habitat in a certain period of time, and also social attitudes of members of these language groups (communities) towards these systems and subsystems.” (Shveitser, 1978: 85)

This definition, like most of the others, distinguishes two aspects of a language situation: the internal differentiation of one and the same language (“the system of subsystems”) and the interaction of different languages (“language systems”) operating in one society. Depending on the type of the society: monolingual or multilingual, the former or the latter aspect comes to prominence.

The language situation in a monolingual society can be defined as a system of functionally distributed forms of existence of one language (“the system of subsystems”), correlating with the continuum of language communication. According to L. B. Nickolsky’s classification of language situations, such language situations are called **endoglossic**. (Nickolsky, 1976: 80-88, cited from Shveitser)

The language situation in a multilingual society is a similar system, in which different languages are functionally distributed. Such language situations are classified by L.B. Nickolsky as **exoglossic**. (ibid)

The word “hierarchy” in A. D. Shveitser’s definition correlates with L. B. Nickolsky’s classification, in which he defines language situations with functionally equal systems as **balanced**, and those with functionally unequal systems as **non-balanced**.

In his theory of the language situations G.V. Stepanov distinguishes a “language state” and “language situation”. The “language state” ” is a paradigm of different varieties of the same language which form the functional system of this language: dialects, a codified language, national varieties. The elements of this paradigm can either interact or function independently. The language situation is defined

by G.V. Stepanov as interaction of different parts of a language paradigm i.e. a syntagmatic aspect of relationship of a language paradigm. (Stepanov, 1976:30-31)

In A.D. Shveitser’s definition, as well as in the definition of Ch. Ferguson and in some other definitions, the language situation is connected with a synchronous state, or a “certain period of time”, and is sometimes treated as a static and isolated phenomenon.

But this doesn’t mean that a language situation is something isolated. In the words of L. B. Nickolsky :” The interaction of functionally different languages changes in the course of time under the influence of the society and the language policy. This process can be segmented into a number of stages, each of which can be called ‘a language situation’“(Nickolsky, 1976:126).

So, the language situation is the result of some linguistic as well as extralinguistic factors and is “determined by such factors as: linguistic, historical, cultural, demographic, geographic, economic, social and political (mostly language policy) “(Guboglo, 1973:231)

Of all the factors mentioned above, we consider language policy to be the key factor, forming a language situation. M. Usseler defines language policy as “the measures of state and social institutions concerning the social status of a language as a means of communication, which include social evaluation of a language as a means of communication and also steps to form national languages”. (Usseler, 1987: 196)

Language policy in a multinational country is particularly complicated because it should consider such factors as a large number of languages and nationalities present and the types of relationships between them and also the role of different languages and their speakers in social life. We base our research on the detailed and thorough analysis of language policy in Australia by E.B. Grishaeva. (Grishaeva, 2005)

**The exoglossic aspect
of the language situation
in modern Australia**

Australia is a multiethnic state and defines itself as a nation of migrants and a multilingual and multicultural country.

The modern language situation in Australia is a result of historical development of Australia and it stems from the early period of colonization and formation of the Australian nation. The English language was transported to Australia at the end of 18th century when the first penal colony was established in port Jackson (modern Sydney).

Before the arrival of the British, Australia was a multinational and multilingual society which had around 250 different (and mutually incomprehensible) tribal languages, whose speakers could not understand each other. The language habitat of early Australia was not hierarchical; all its languages had equal status.

Therefore, it can be said that the language situation in early Australia was **exoglossic balanced**. All the languages had equal demographic and communicative capacity.

The lack of a lingua franca, a language of intertribal communication, resulted in the inability of the separated indigenous (tribal) languages to oppose the power of the invading English language, which not only destroyed the balance of the traditional language habitat, but also forced most of the Aboriginal languages out of this habitat. Nowadays there are only 120 Aboriginal languages left, which have limited social functions of local or household languages.

But there are not only Aboriginal languages and the English language in the language habitat of Australia. There are also numerous migrant languages there.

It should be noted, that Australia has always been a migrant country (migration has consistently been part of Australian history).

The first migrants were free settlers from Britain. Among the first non-English-speaking migrants were Germans, who formed the largest non-English speaking community in 19th century. The second largest group of migrants was Italians, who started to arrive to Australia at the end of 19th century. Asian migration was banned during the policy of “White Australia”, but after the abolition of this policy the country started to accept considerable numbers of Asian migrants as well. All in all, as a result of a constant influx of migrants from non-English speaking countries, the language ecology of Australia was enriched by some 200 migrant languages. They are known as LOTES-Languages other than English.

So far we can witness more than 300 hundred languages present in Australia. Besides the English language, 120 Aboriginal languages and 200 LOTES there are some early pidgins in the language habitat of modern Australia, which developed simultaneously with the Australian English: Norfolk (or Pitkern) and Cape Barren English. So, we can classify the language situation as **exoglossic**. But in contrast to the early Australian society, in modern Australia these numerous languages do not have the equal status. Having forced away the Aboriginal languages, English came to dominance in Australia.

The migrants arriving to Australia were strongly influenced by Australian surroundings and were supposed and expected to become part of the Australian society. The policy of assimilation demanded that migrants should accept the values of the host culture and study the English language as the most important part of acculturation. The knowledge of English was the necessary condition of integration of an individual into the Australian society.

The domination of English the modern Australian society is reflected in its official status – it dominates in government, political administration, official papers and education.

Besides that more than 90% of 22 mln population of Australia speak English either as their first or second language.

The domination of English is also reflected in its socio-communicative role of a language – macro-mediator: it is the language of intergroup, intercommunity and international communication, catering for all the groups of a multilingual society.

The languages of migrant communities (LOTEs), like Aboriginal languages, have the functional status of local (household or “island”) languages, or languages-micro-mediators. Such languages are functionally limited; their role can be compared to the role of dialects. The speakers of such languages are, as a rule, bilingual, speaking their native languages at home and switching to a codified form of the national language in other social situations. This type of bilingualism is known as subordinate bilingualism.

According to J. Fishman, the transition from compound bilingualism, i.e. the bilingualism, where contacting languages are functionally interdependent (the English language is based on one’s native language) towards coordinative bilingualism, where languages function independently and again to compound bilingualism, when English begins to dominate in all spheres (and it is the native language that is based on English) takes place within the process of assimilation of 2-3 generations of migrants.

Compound bilingualism is a complicated socio-communicative system in which some cells of the functional matrix are filled with English, the others with the native ethnic language. (J. Fishman, 1972:115-116, cited from Shveitser, 1983:43)

So, the general tendency of the English languages forcing out indigenous and ethnic languages and gaining the dominant role is the important aspect of the language situation in modern Australia.

The domination of English is reflected in both objective and subjective aspects of the language situation in modern Australia. While the objective aspects includes the parameters characterizing language systems and the relationships between these systems, the subjective one is connected with the social prestige of the coexisting systems and with social values of the speakers (“social attitudes of members of these language groups (communities) towards these systems and subsystems.”)

The tendency of forcing out of minority languages is accompanied by low language loyalty combined with the low status of native languages and high status of the English language in ethnic communities. To characterize this situation J. Fishman applies the term of Ch. Ferguson “diglossia”, which the author initially used to characterize endoglossic language situations, in which “there is a socially justified and culturally meaningful functional differentiation” of the codes, used in the society, i.e. there is an agreement that one variety has a “high” status, the other – “low” status. As a rule in such situations there is a functional division between these two varieties: “high” is used for “public”, “formal” situations and is often recognized as the official language of the state. This variety has more complex and conservative linguistic features, than “low” variety. The “low” variety is, in contrast, characterized by an “unofficial” status, household usage, changeable and “simplified” structure and is limited to oral communication. (Bell, 1980:175)

At the same time J. Fishman notes the opposite tendency – the prestige of native languages in migrant communities is growing as the spheres of its functional usage are being limited. J. Fishman calls this phenomenon “the prestige halo”. It should be noted that this increased prestige is not backed by the increased usage of these languages. So, it is a kind of inverse proportion between

the intensity of the use of the native language and the positive attitude towards it. This fact proves that there is no direct connection between the objective and the subjective aspects of the language situation. (Fishman, 1972, cited from Shveitser, 1983:46-47).

Despite the fact that Australia is a multiethnic society, the idea of introduction of the second official language was not supported by the population fearing that an attempt to proclaim one of the numerous LOTEs as the second official language could lead to the split of the society into ethnic and language groups. (Grishaeva, 2005)

The modern language policy in Australia is aimed at integration of migrants into the Australian society. Among the main principles of this policy are the following:

- supporting Aboriginal languages and LOTEs
- providing the services in LOTEs
- providing the opportunities for studying LOTEs

In accordance with these principles, local governments in Australia pay a great attention to the languages of the ethnic communities and provide the services and information in different languages. There exists the Buro of registration for interpreters and translators and an extensive infrastructure of telephone and court interpreting and translation services for non-English speaking population. The languages recommended for studying at schools include: standard Chinese, Indonesian, Arabic and Spanish. (ibid)

So, the language situation in modern Australia can be characterized as **exoglossic non-balanced**, because only one of more than 300 languages present, dominates – the English language. Of all Australian languages, English has the highest demographic and functional capacity and it is the language – macro-mediator with the highest social status. This domination of English

is leading to aboriginal and migrant languages dwindling away from the social spheres despite the support of the government.

The Endoglossic Aspect of the Language Situation in Modern Australia

Describing the exoglossic aspect of the language situation in modern Australia, we treated the English language as a homogeneous phenomenon. But the English language in Australia, catering for all the groups of its multiethnic society, is not at all homogenous. Therefore, the language situation in modern Australia is not limited to the exoglossic aspect, but it is characterized by the combination of **exoglossic** and **endoglossic** relationships between the language systems and subsystems forming this language situation.

The History of Australian English

The English language was transported to Australia at the end of 18th century when the first penal colony was established in port Jackson (modern Sydney).

In the period of colonization of Australia the formation of the national English language had already been completed. The Standard British English – the national variety of the English language functioned as an supradialect communication system in England and had a high social prestige while local dialects got low social status.

Being a transported language, at first, English in Australia was exonormative – it had an outside standard: the British English. The influence of a Standard British English and its codified norms was huge.

Australian English was called “corrupt English” and had a low status due to the features of south English and Irish dialects. These very

dialectal aberrations formed the core of the Australian variety of the English language.

The recognition of the equal status of the Australian English did not come quickly. The inferiority was sustained with the help of the system of education which was rather conservative and British norms-oriented.

The negative attitude lasted till S. Baker's publication of "The Australian language" and G. Mitchell's publication "The English in Australia" in 1944. Both linguists claimed that the codified variety of Australian English (or, in the terms of G. Leitner – the mainstream Australian English (mAusE) had the right to differ from the British norm and needed description and judgment from the inside, not the outside. And yet as far as the 1970s Australian English was still exonormative.

But the transition to the Australian norms was imminent. As soon as the first edition of the Macquarie dictionary (part of the Macquarie project) was issued in 1981, it became an authority not only in lexical and grammar usage of words, but also in pronunciation. So, by the end of the 1980s mAusE became the official language of the Australian society.

Modern Australian English is endonormative, i.e. it has its own standard and norms, and it is an epicenter of the English language in Asia-Pacific region. (Leitner, 2004)

The Internal Structure of Australian English

Codified Australian English (mAusE) is the official national language and as such it has dialects of its own. On the whole, Australian English does not have the same degree of dialect variety as British English. Moreover, Australia was traditionally considered as lacking dialects and regional varieties. This was accounted for by the fact that in Australia people lived in the conditions which demanded or, at least,

encouraged assimilation. Despite the fact that early settlers were the speakers of English and Irish dialects, the language situation in colonial Australia did not encourage the preservation of these dialect differences. On the contrary, accepting various migrant waves, the country was in need of an overdialect koine to help the communication on the continent. The codified variety of Australian English became such overdialect koine.

There have traditionally been distinguished three social accents in Australian English: Broad, General and Cultivated. They were distinguished by S. Baker in 1945 and A.G. Mitchell and A. Delbridge in 1965. Nowadays, B. M. Horvarth adds two more accents: Ethnic Broad and Accented. Her statistic analysis shows that according to the articulation of vowels there is a core – Cultivated, General and Broad and a periphery – Ethnic Broad and Accented. The speakers of periphery accents are Greeks or Italians: two thirds of Greeks speak with Accented (sociolect 1) and two thirds of Italians with Ethnic Broad (sociolect 2) (Leitner, 2004:230-231).

Grammar and stylistics are quite unified throughout the country. As for the lexis, a survey in regional usage in the lexicon of Australian English, carried out by P. Bryant, found clearly defined usage regions (or dialect zones) in Australia, namely:

1. South-west (southern part of Western Australia)
2. South-Centre (Southern Australia and Eastern Victoria)
3. South-East (Victoria, Tasmania, Riverina, south New Wales, part of Southern Australia)
4. North-East (Queensland and New South Wales)

According to her findings, dialectisms are limited to several onomaseological domains, such as: food, household utensils, countryside, birds

and plants while there are much less dialectisms in topography, business and weather. (Leitner, 2004: 254-255)

So, mAusE plays the role of the national language, has some dialectal differences and it is a codified variety of Australian English.

Varieties of Australian English

According to G. Leitner, besides mAusE, there are other varieties of Australian English which include: Aboriginal English, English as a lingua franca and ethnical varieties of Australian English. They form the paradigm of Australian English (AusE).

Aboriginal English is also called a dialect or ethnolect of AusE. Before the arrival of the British, Australia was a multinational and multilingual society with more than 250 different languages, which were mutually incomprehensible to their speakers. Besides that, there was no language of intertribal communication, a lingua franca. Nowadays Aboriginal English is the main means of communication of Australian Aborigines (indigenous population), and according to many specialists, today it is the means of expressing Aboriginal identity. (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 70).

English as a lingua franca is used for communication in mixed ethnical communities. Although Australia is a multilingual society, Australians are mainly monolingual or at best bilingual, speaking their native language and English.

Ethnic variants of English are called sociolects, e.g. Italian English or Greek English. They have the features of phonetics, lexis and even grammar structures of migrant languages and have quite a low social status. They are usually the variants of English spoken by the first generations of migrants.

Therefore, AusE, being a primary national variety of the polycentric English language,

is itself polycentric in the language habitat of Australia.

As for the functional distribution of the elements of the endoglossic paradigm, we can say that mAusE as the language of the mainstream society, the language of government, political administration, official papers and education, dominates over the other varieties of AusE, which are limited to local and household usage. It has high social prestige and has a more developed structure.

Thus, the endoglossic aspect of the language situation in modern Australia is isomorphic to its exoglossic aspect. They are both **polycomponent non-balanced**. The combination of socio-functional distribution and the hierarchy of socio-communicative subsystems in the endoglossic aspect form the Australian national variety of the English language.

Similarly to Australian language dominating in exoglossic situation, mAusE dominates in the endoglossic one.

mAuSe has the same relations with the “substandard” subsystem which normally exist between the standard language and dialects within the national language. mAusE is also multifunctional, performing all the social functions typical of the national language (it is the official language, the language of culture, science and mass media) while its “substandard” variants, its social and regional dialects are, as a rule, monofunctional. They are used in a limited range of social situations, household interaction and some professional spheres.

Conclusion

Our research shows that the language situation in modern Australia is a complex interaction of the systems and subsystems of its exoglossic and endoglossic aspects, which are isomorphic to each other, both being polycomponent non-balanced. English in Australia has the same dominating

role it has all over the world. Australian English dominates over more than 300 languages in the language habitat of modern Australia, its codified variant – mAusE – being recognized as the official language of the country (and the only one).

Due to its role as the official language and high social prestige, the English language is willingly accepted as a means of international communication (lingua franca) in multiethnic communities thus blurring the language and cultural distinctions and leading to levelling of cultures and their unification, the vehicle for this

levelling being the English language – Australian English.

Being the primary national variety of the polycentric English language, Australian English is polycentric in the language habitat of modern Australia. This pluricentricity seems to be a compensation for forcing Aboriginal and migrant languages out of the language habitat of Australia. It seems to provide the means for expressing of ethnic identity for indigenous people and migrants through ethnolects and sociolects of Australian English.

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Языковая ситуация в современной Австралии

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В статье анализируется языковая ситуация в современной Австралии с точки зрения компонентов, функционального распределения социально-коммуникативных функций между различными системами и подсистемами, а также факторов, сформировавших данную языковую ситуацию и оказывающих влияние на ее формирование в настоящее время. Выявляется доминирование английского языка (AusE) в экзогlossном аспекте и его кодифицированного варианта (mAusE) в эндогlossном аспекте языковой ситуации в современной Австралии и анализируются последствия этого доминирования для аборигенных и иммигрантских языков и самого австралийского английского языка. Выявляется изоморфизм между экзогlossным и эндогlossным аспектами данной языковой ситуации.

Ключевые слова: языковая ситуация, экзогlossный, эндогlossный, языковая политика, несбалансированная, мультикультурализм, билингвизм, макропосредник, микропосредник, языковой ареал, иммиграция, полиэтничные сообщества, языки иммигрантов, аборигенные языки, ДАА, АА, экзонормативный, эндонормативный, наддиалектное койне, лингва франка, диалектизмы, этнолекты, социолекты, плюрицентричный, эпицентр.
