

English Language: The Last Bastion of Globalization

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Abstract—The article analyzes the causes and consequences of linguistic globalization. If extra-linguistic factors were decisive for English to become a global language, linguistic factors were decisive for its preservation and development. The globalization of the English language has become possible by some of its immanent properties and is not exclusively a consequence of civilizational superiority. Therefore, the loss of global civilizational superiority will not necessarily cause the English language to lose its global status. While the coincidence of a number of extra-linguistic factors was important for English to become global, linguistic factors are crucial to maintain this status. The main risks of language globalization are critically analyzed. Despite the growing trend of deglobalization, English remains the last bastion of globalization.

Index Terms—language globalization, linguistic globalistics, English as global language

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary dialogue of cultures is more and more actively mastering the scenario of deglobalization. A comprehensive crisis of the idea of globalization leads to a gradual loss of the common space of existence of local communities, and of the formal and informal institutions of their interaction. The process of proliferation of these institutions at the beginning of the 21st century ceases to bring the desired result. The usual strategies of the effective incorporation of local communities into the system of global interaction are less and less able to ensure the unity of international functioning in the areas of economy, security, ecology, culture, science and technology, communication, etc. However, there is one institution that has successfully countered the universal trend towards deglobalization - the global English language. In this article, which was the result of many years of research, we will try to understand why English remains the last bastion of globalization.

To date, no universal understanding of the global language phenomenon has been developed. At the same time, an analysis of the quarter-century experience of linguistic globalistics (Blommaert, 2009; Crystal, 1997; Tochon, 2009 etc.) allows us to identify the main properties of English that determine its status as a global language.

II. REVIEW

The starting point for the development of this linguistic globalistics is rightly considered to be the first edition of “English as a Global Language” by the prominent linguist D. Crystal (Crystal, 1997). The scholar proceeds from two linguistic principles: on the one hand, he believes in the fundamental value of multilingualism as a unique global resource; on the other hand, he believes in the fundamental value of a common language, which gives us new opportunities for intercultural interaction. In this collision between fundamental tendencies of linguistic development - toward austerity (unification) and enrichment (embellishment) - the global significance of language is formed. The fundamental idea of linguistic global studies is D. Crystal’s thesis that language receives the status of a global one when its exceptional role is evident and recognized in every country of the world.

But there are many such languages: at least all the official languages of the UN (English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese) fall under this definition. Why did exactly English become the global language at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries?

According to Stig Hjarvard, the international influence of a language is due to a combination of three factors:

- 1) in a number of countries, it is used as native or first;
- 2) in a number of countries, it is accepted as an official language;
- 3) in a number of countries, it is taught as a foreign language in schools (Hjarvard, 2003).

These factors certainly ensure that a language gains and maintains international language status, but not yet a global language. According to D. Crystal, a fundamentally important factor for a language to acquire the status of a global

language is the power factor (political and military supremacy of its speakers). As we have noted, this suggests that a language domination based on her speaker's domination (Dolgenko & Kosyreva, 2020). At the beginning of the 21st century the dominance of English speakers in the main spheres of modern civilization (economy, politics, information technology, science and education, mass consumption and entertainment, sports and tourism, military affairs, etc.) is not perceived as unambiguous. The English language now meets the hallmarks of globality to a far greater extent than any other world language. As an instrument of intercultural communication, it embraces the world far more than Latin or French once did. The English language today has become not just a language of international communication, not just an international language, but precisely a global one (Dolgenko & Kosyreva, 2020).

The concept of a global language network allows us to take a new look at the process of linguistic globalization as the main subject of the dialogue of cultures at the beginning of the 21st century. This concept was developed by an international group of scientists (Shahar Ronen, Bruno Gonçalves, Kevin Hu, Alessandro Vespignani, Steven Pinker, Cesar Hidalgo) representing the National Academy of Sciences of the USA. Their research work "Links That Speak: The Global Language Network and Its Association with Global Fame" (Ronen et al., 2014) proposed a criterion for determining the global influence of a language based on its position in the global network connecting speakers of different languages. The breadth and intensity of a language's links in global communication, adjusted for the number of native speakers, is an indicator of language influence.

Researchers have mapped the Global Language Network based on the analysis of aggregate data from three sources:

- 1) translations of books included in UNESCO's database of book translations (Index Translationum);
- 2) posts on Twitter;
- 3) Wikipedia articles.

This allowed researchers to take into account the linguistic preferences of global communicators with different levels of linguistic training.

The first level is the authors of millions of translations of books included in the UNESCO Index Translationum, with a high artistic and linguistic potential (writers and professional translators). Language preferences at this level are shaped by the need for exposure to information recorded in books in different languages, including the achievements of the art of the word. Therefore, preference is given to languages on the basis of which rich literary traditions have been formed. The level of demand for translation into one language or another is shaped by a combination of consumer and aesthetic factors. In doing so, by processing 2.2 million translations into more than a thousand languages of books published between 1979 and 2011 in 150 countries, researchers have established not only the demand for languages as sources, but also as intermediaries for translation.

The second level is Wikipedia editors: they have general and specific knowledge of a field, are native speakers or have knowledge of the target languages but are generally not professional translators. The choice of editing language forms the global language influence map here. The Wikipedia dataset was compiled considering all language versions of the "free encyclopedia" that had been in operation since the end of 2011: that is 382 million articles in 238 languages.

The third level is Twitter communicators: this is the largest category (about one billion global Internet communicators) with a wide range of linguistic backgrounds, for whom the choice of language of communication is usually based on communication convenience (one tweet is limited to 280 characters and, until 2017 to 140 characters). The global network here is shaped by the languages that most often act as a tool for intercultural communication in this social network. At this level of global communication, it is evident that it is no longer only about the speakers of the language, but about those who use the language - the "users" of the language. The Twitter dataset collected by American researchers includes more than one billion tweets from more than 17 million users in 73 languages from December 2011 to February 2012 (about 10% of Twitter's total users at the time).

As a result, three maps were modelled to compare the direct and indirect communication paths between speakers of different languages. By summing up the data, scientists have been able to produce a single map of the global language network. The position of a language in the global language network affects the perception of information created by native speakers, as well as the exchange of information between speakers of different languages. The position of a language also affects the flow of information that is not produced in that language, but transmitted through it. Thus, the authors of the article "Links That Speak: The Global Language Network and Its Association with Global Fame" argue that the quantity and quality of information available to speakers of a language, the speed of information acquisition and the ability to disseminate information internationally depend on the position of the language in the global language network (Ronen et al., 2014).

The sum of the three maps of the global language network makes it possible to present a hierarchical structure of the influence of languages in global communication. The apex or central node of communication is English. It is surrounded by second-order nodes: German, French, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese. It is these five languages that are globally significant (sub-global) at the beginning of the 21st century and have the potential to compete with the global language. But can they? Should we expect linguistic deglobalization?

III. DISCUSSION

As we know, the prehistory of the globalization of the English language is rightly associated with the fact that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the British Empire spread its economic, political, and cultural influence over

almost the entire world, from Japan to Hawaii from east to west, and from Newfoundland to Australia from north to south. The legacy of British imperialism is that about 100 countries in today's world use English as either their national or an official language. However, English itself became global due to American economic and political, and then cultural (meaning primarily consumer culture) supremacy in the second half of the twentieth century. In the fields of popular music, cinema, television, business, finance, sports, information technology, US dominance during this period is not questioned, although it is constantly challenged. By the beginning of the 21st century it is the American influence in the world that catalyzes the globalization of English. It is becoming the common language of intercultural interaction in traditional areas of cultural dominance. In the new spheres of communication, it has initially taken a leading position and has ensured minimal competition from other globally significant languages (Dolgenko & Kosyreva, 2020).

Today, more than two billion people in the world speak English. It is the most widely spoken of the five official UN languages. English is spoken by about 85% of international organizations, French - less than 50%. Furthermore, more than one-third of the international organizations use only English as their official language, and this figure rises to almost 90% among Asian international organizations.

The main reason why the English language has gained global status is that 6 billion people use English as the main tool of Internet communication. The emergence of new communication tools should be seen as a fundamental change that has affected the nature of communication in the early 21st century. Today, anyone with a smartphone is virtually included in global communication. The Internet is attractive because its management of network resources is decentralized - on its server or website, everyone is free to present any information, in any order, as long as it is technically compatible with the system, browsers and technical protocols supported. Of course, it must not contradict current IT legislation. However, the enforcement of legislation is always reactive, which means that participants in Internet communication are in principle only bound by technical limitations on their freedom of expression in the global information space.

The possibility to have almost instant access to all sources of information at the same time and still make individual choices is perhaps the main advantage of Internet technology. Millions of people use the Internet every day for various purposes. The Internet has proven to be a constant source of news and information, not least because it can be connected to and disconnected from at will, and because it is virtually impossible to disconnect it completely. Of particular importance in global communication is the fact that the Internet provides not only an infinite amount of information, but also the ability to communicate in real time using communicators, messengers and social networks. This has led to a qualitative change in communication: the elimination of the distance factor and levelling the time factor, the creation of communities, the simulation of a virtual identity, the possibility of complete anonymity. This communicative freedom is an important condition for intensifying the exchange of meanings and the words expressing these meanings. The tendency for brightness of expression, for embellishment of speech, for language play prevails over the fundamental tendency for economy of linguistic means. This is very favourable ground for the utmost expansion of the influence of the English language.

As we commented in the article "Language globalization and language globalistics", it is important to bear in mind that the fact that English is widely used is not so important to linguistic globalization as the fact that English is fluently spoken. In this regard, it is very significant that the most common in terms of the number of speakers and fluent in the world is Chinese (more than a billion speakers). However, when sending an article to a scientific journal, the editor will ask the scientist to give an annotation and keywords not in Chinese, but in English. Otherwise, the results of the scientific work will be excluded from international scientific life. English language is regularly used (as non-native) by about two billion more people, according to the British Council. In addition, global Internet communication, of which English has historically been the main tool, is inexorably expanding the composition of the "users" of the global language (Dolgenko & Kosyreva, 2020).

However, it would be a mistake to think that the globalization of English is solely a consequence of civilizational domination. The victory of the English language in a kind of race for global linguistic dominance provided not extralinguistic, but actual linguistic features of the English language. They are established by Marina S. Kosyreva:

1. The most important factor determining the stability of the global status of the English language is lexical wealth. If you sum up the Oxford dictionary of modern English and scientific and technical terminology, the common thesaurus of the English language will be at least a million words. The vocabulary of English is approximately twice as large as that of French, German or Spanish. It allows you to solve any communicative tasks – from the most primitive to the most difficult.

2. At different levels of the language system of the English language flexibility manifests a very important quality for the communication function. This quality distinguishes phonetics, spelling, semantics, syntax, morphology, derivation, and styling. Flexibility allows you to use English in accordance with specific communicative tasks. In other words, adjust language to communication, not communication to language.

3. An important advantage in intercultural communication should be considered such a quality of the English language as a high degree of harmonization of the grammatical system. The categories of gender, number, and case are independent of the articles and affixes, as in Spanish, German or French. This simplifies real and virtual communication.

4. English does not require a mastery of subtle tonal variations of pronunciation and is rightly considered relatively simple in terms of spelling. Of course, for strict compliance with the norms of ortho and spelling, a great job is needed

to seriously train the speaker. However, for the communicative success of the “user” of the English language fluency in the norms of the language standard is not decisive. It is much more important to ensure contextual unambiguity, which allows the precise identification of the meaning of polysemous words and homonyms.

5. The most important factor in the globalization of the English language should be considered the fundamental absence of purism and, conversely, a kind of linguistic hospitality. As you know, up to 70% of the vocabulary of modern English is genetically borrowed. About 30% of Gallicism, about 30% of Latinism, and about 25% of Germanism in the borrowed vocabulary of English facilitate understanding of French, Italian, and German. In addition, over 10% of the vocabulary of modern English is internationalism, which is to some extent understood by all inhabitants of the Earth. All this ensures the primary use of English as a tool of global communication (Kosyreva, 2017).

The above-mentioned linguistic factors of the English language attractiveness are important for English to realize its global status. In this respect, English as a global language today is an impregnable bastion.

The advantages of a global language are obvious, especially in Internet communication. Nevertheless, the general cultural trend towards deglobalization cannot but affect the main instrument of intercultural interaction, so recently there has been a growing and quite legitimate concern that linguistic globalization of one of the natural languages could have very negative consequences both linguistically and extra-linguistically.

First of all, the increased influence and use of a global language may lead to the weakening and eventual disappearance of some lesser-spoken languages (in the longer term, the disappearance of all other languages). UNESCO publicly estimates that of the 13,000 or so living languages that existed on our planet at the beginning of the 20th century, just over 6,000 will be left at the beginning of the 21st century, of which up to 80 per cent may disappear by the end of this century (Pimienta et al., 2009). The globalization of English is considered to be a major factor in this trend. The linguistic map of the world is indeed fading.

Secondly, the natural dynamics of the development of a global language may be associated with an unfair advantage over other languages in countries where globalized English is not the state or official language. These processes are particularly evident at the lexical level, provoking widespread purist tendencies. One can only hope that each particular language will be able to develop its own version of the concrete result of counteracting the fundamental linguistic tendencies towards linguistic austerity and language enrichment.

Thirdly, further strengthening the position of the global language in intercultural communication is fraught with an increase in linguistic arrogance and the so-called linguistic swagger (Dolgenko & Kosyreva, 2020), which discourages the learning of other languages. This effect can already be seen in the British and Americans (why learn other languages when you can communicate wonderfully in English?). This also seems to be related to the gradual decrease in the number of schoolchildren and students learning a foreign language other than English. It is to be hoped that the impact of a global language will be comparable to that of at least the sub-global languages (Spanish, German, Portuguese, Russian, French) as well as the languages in the world's top ten (Hindi, Bengali, Arabic and Chinese).

It should be borne in mind that today the very idea of civilizational superiority or linguistic dominance causes a negative reaction from local communities. In some countries there is growing public discontent over the cultural dominance of English. This trend, paradoxically, is particularly noticeable in the USA with its whole civilization dominance. If the US loses its dominant position in key areas of global communication, the linguistic loyalties of other countries may decrease significantly until a new dominant force replaces it. However, the very essence of the process of deglobalization is that there will not be one dominant force – there will be several.

IV. CONCLUSION

Extra-linguistic factors played a decisive role in making English a global language; linguistic factors contributed to reinforcing this status. However, its future as such is by no means assured. After the conquests of Alexander the Great, the entire Hellenistic world communicated in Greek. Even in the Byzantine Empire nobody thought that such a situation would change but it did. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Latin remained the language of education, science, and culture until the 18th century. It seemed unchanged but it also changed. The language of the Mongol conquerors, who joined the East and West, could have become the common language of the Eurasian continent but did not. After the Napoleonic Wars, the French language became the main instrument of international communication. But that passed too. Among the languages of international communication, there have historically been aspirants to globalization, but their claims have never extended beyond the territories of multi-ethnic state formations (Roman, Byzantine, Mongolian, French empires). And yet at present the stability of the global status of the English language is not in doubt, despite the ever-growing trend towards de-globalization of the world.

The results of our long-term research allow us to assert that the stability of the status of the English language as a global language is ensured by a factor that is both linguistic and extralinguistic - the communicative factor of the Internet. It is precisely that about 6 billion inhabitants of the Earth cannot do without knowledge of the Latin alphabet (for entering a login and password) and can do with a relatively small set of English words, which is sufficient for communication in global networks (for more complex communication, a virtual translator can be used), provides elementary communicative capabilities of modern Internet users.

They are not “speakers”, but “users” of English as a global language. And this is the unique characteristic of the global language. That is why more common languages (in terms of the number of “speakers”, not “users”) are on the

periphery of global communication: Chinese, Hindi, Arabic. At the same time, Internet communication, which has made space an optional factor, contributes to the constant expansion of English as a “user” language, reinforcing its status as a global language.

The future of the English language as a global is related to the dynamics of counteracting the tendency toward unification (universalization of intercultural means of communication) and the tendency toward diversity (preservation of national linguistic identity). How serious the threat of linguistic is in the context of a stable linguistic globalization and how much it can stimulate the support and protection of the world’s languages, the future will show.

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