

GLOBALISATION AND THE EFFECT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON IDENTITY



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A nation's language is a symbol of its identity, values and culture. In today's world of globalisation, English has become the dominant language of communication. How can non-English speaking countries maintain their own identity, culture and values in response to pressures of global economic structures, mass media and political institutions which threaten this identity? This paper discusses various viewpoints from different cultures that are facing this problem.

Key words: globalisation and identity, the English language, different views

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of globalisation is both complex and contradictory, and the role of English in this process is similarly complex. According to David Graddol, the macro trends of globalisation include: „...business process outsourcing (BPO), the rise of urban middle classes around the world, the development of new communications technology such as the internet, the global redistribution of poverty, the changing nature and control of news media, (and) the reform of education in universities and schools” (Graddol, 2006, 20). Graddol states that the shifting new world order is creating changes in social, economic, and political spheres and in languages as well. Postmodern Europe is part of this new process and is contributing to a globalised world by allowing the free movement of goods and people within its borders, which is resulting in new forms of multilingualism. In order to aid communication, an effort is being made to standardize approaches to the learning and teaching of languages. English is taking a major part in this changing global world. A study carried out by Graddol confirms that more and more people are learning English and this trend will reach about 2 billion in the next 10–15 years (Graddol, 2006, 14). He states that the increasing use of English as foreign language is accelerating globalisation and, concurrently, globalisation is accelerating the use of English (Graddol, 2006, 22).

It is obvious that in today's world of globalisation, English has become the dominant language of communication. In fact, it can be stated that it has become the 'lingua franca' of



the world. Economic, demographic and technological changes have encouraged the spread of English. This has put tremendous pressure on governments and individuals. On the one hand, in order to be competitive one has to obtain knowledge of English, yet on the other hand, there is a fear that native languages, customs and cultures in various English non-speaking countries are being threatened. There are many different reactions and points of view with regard to this process and this paper attempts to present a few of them.

2. EDUCATION

The domination of English can be seen in many spheres and its influence seems to be making the greatest impact in education. In order to be competitive in a globalised world market many countries are making changes to their education systems. A large number of countries are introducing English at the primary school level. This is confirmed by Graddol, „Across the world, from Chile to Mongolia, from China to Portugal, English is being introduced in primary schools, with greater compulsion, and at steadily lowering ages.” (Graddol, 2006, 88). Furthermore, there are a large number of governments that are going one step further and have plans to make their country bilingual. Colombia’s government have introduced a ‘Social Programme for Foreign Languages without Borders’ which is an initiative to make the country bilingual in 10 years. In 2004 in Mongolia, the Prime Minister stated that one of his government’s aims was to make the country bilingual in English. Other countries include Chile, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and China (Graddol, 2006, 89). Many Asian countries have used their colonial legacy to their advantage and have benefitted economically, especially India. However, changes in the education system in China, including the introduction of English at Grade 1, seems to have the greatest potential impact in Asia. According to Graddol, the result of this new policy includes the fact that China now produces over 20 million new users of English every year (Graddol, 2006, 95). Consequently, other countries in Asia including Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan are attempting to improve their English levels by restructuring their education programmes.

In addition to these changes to education at the primary level, there is a trend toward the globalisation of universities. Graddol states that one of the main reasons for the increased use of English in universities across the world is the fact that the world’s top universities are in English-speaking countries. In order to become an esteemed centre of academic excellence, universities need to attract teachers, researchers and students from around the world. Academic mobility is seen as a means to gain international experience, but also the opportunity to obtain employment with multinational companies. In Europe an attempt to standardise university education is being made through the ‘Bologna Process.’ Over 45 countries have agreed to implement the ‘Bologna Process,’ which is an agreement that aims to synthesise different university systems by establishing standard approaches to levels and length of courses. By unifying university systems, there is greater opportunity for movement of students within Europe, which is a major aim of this initiative.

3. CULTURE AND IDENTITY

The changes that are occurring in this process of globalisation and the spread of English can have a tremendous affect on a nation's identity and culture. According to H. D. Brown, „Culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others. It is the ‘glue’ that binds a group of people together... (it) is our continent, our collective identity (Brown, 2000, 176). Culture can also be defined as the ideas, customs, skills, arts and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time (Brown, 2000, 177). However, according to Condon, culture is more than the sum of its parts: „it is a system of integrated patterns, most of which remain below the threshold of consciousness, yet all of which govern human behaviour just as surely as the manipulated strings of a puppet control its motions” (Condon, 1973, 4). In addition, Condon states that culture provides a framework of cognitive and affective behaviour for each person, a template for personal and social existence. However, we have a tendency to perceive reality within the context of our own culture, a reality that has not necessarily been empirically defined, but that we have „created.” Brown states that it is obvious that culture, as an ingrained set of behaviours and modes of perception, becomes very important in the learning of a second language. In short, „A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.” Brown concludes that, „The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition,... is also the acquisition of a second culture” (Brown, 2000, 177). Consequently, it can be concluded that a person's world view, self-identity, and systems of thinking, acting, feeling, and communicating can be influenced by a contact with another language.

There are several factors, however, that should be noted with regard to the interaction between culture and language. Firstly, although learning a language implies learning a new culture, nevertheless, it is important to recall important factors in language acquisition, namely, attitudes and sociopolitical considerations. Gardner and Lambert have shown that a positive attitude toward a target language can lead to increased motivation and ultimately successful proficiency. In practice, there generally seems to be a mixture of positive and negative attitudes toward a target language, specifically English. Also, William Acton claims that a learner's perception of one's own culture in relation to the target language is a strong factor in language acquisition. These factors seem to play a powerful role with regard to views considering the influence of English in respective countries. Another issue that must be mentioned with regard to the relationship between culture and language is ‘linguistic imperialism.’ Robert Phillipson argues that the spread of English has led to the devaluing of native languages. Furthermore, the potential consequences of English teaching worldwide which contain Eurocentric ideologies in instruction, can lead to the legitimization of colonial or establishment power and resources, and of reconstituting „cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Phillipson, 1992, 47). However, according to Graddol, these arguments do not extensively explain the current enthusiasm for English which seems to be driven primarily by parental and governmental demand, rather than promotion by Anglophone countries.



4. DOMINANCE OF ENGLISH



There are many viewpoints from different countries that are coming to terms with the dominance of English. It should be noted that although there is an increasing use of English, nevertheless, its present state is not a simple process. Namely, due to colonisation, English is spoken in many countries alongside national languages. Kachru argues that there has been an emergence of „World Englishes” and that this has changed the status of English (Kachru 1985, 1992). For instance, in India acquiring English does not entail learning a new culture because one is learning Indian English. According to Kachru, the „Indianization” of English in India has resulted in English shedding any British cultural attributes. This process of „nativization” or „indigenization” (Richards, 1979) of English has expanded to an „outer circle” of countries that includes India, Singapore, the Phillipines, Nigeria, Ghana, and others. It is in these contexts that English is usually learned by children in school and is the medium for most of their primary, secondary, and tertiary education (Brown 2000, 193).

In his plenary at the IATEFL conference in Cardiff in 2005, Suresh Canagarajah argues that the development of English in this postmodern globalised world can be characterised by „hybridity and fluidity of relations.” He states that the identity of its users have modified English in different ways. The transnational flow of English has resulted from the outsourcing of work, transnational production relations, films, literature, and the internet. Yet, in each country, English is being conformed to local varieties. Consequently, Canagarajah claims that the identity of its users have modified English in different ways. He argues that English must be „deterritorialized” and he challenges native speakers to develop proficiency in a repertoire of Englishes which acknowledge local norms of relevance. This would imply a shift from a hierarchical approach which values native Englishes and targets native norms, to a levelled approach which recognizes global English as a plural system which has local experts in each variant. This enormous change would mean a shift from a focus on correctness based on the conventions of native English, to an emphasis on a negotiation of strategies and a recognition of the changing nature of language discourse. This would lead to a change in the circle of world englishes that would have English as the centre, and the outer circle equally shared by Carribean, Canadian, American, British, Australian, Asian and African Englishes. In short, he believes that a more inclusive global community can be constructed by recognizing the distinct identities of different Englishes, one that allows different voices to be heard.

During the same IATEFL conference, Amy B. M. Tsui, from the University of Hong Kong, acknowledges that non-native speakers of English are changing the global language. According to Tsui, the ratio of non-native speakers to native speakers is 3:1 in today’s globalized world. Nevertheless, although she acknowledges that language can make global interaction easier, it can also be a strong ideological tool that can construct reality. Tsui asks a very important question: Is the spread of English a cultural and linguistic imperialism, a powerful tool that facilitates the Disney-ization and McDonaldization of different cultures, that is, are we really changing English or is English changing us? In comparing the language policies of Asian countries, Tsui argues that what is common among them is the fact that many have gained political independence in the last 50 years. Most are still creating their own

national identities and their greatest challenge is to maintain this identity while introducing English into their national curriculum. Although each country is developing strategies to achieve proficiency in English, nevertheless, their governments have also been transparent about the place of English with regard to national identity. Tsui argues that China has made it clear that learning English is not „worshipping” English, but using it to participate with the rest of the world, which is a similar idea to the Japanese who believe in speaking only „meaningful English.” Other countries including Malaysia and South Korea stress the need to learn English in order to be economically competitive, and may, in fact, reinforce the spirit of nationalism. Tsui concludes by stating that, although English can be seen as a threat to national identity, it can reciprocally be viewed as a means through which non-native speaking countries can occupy a legitimate place in this global community. Furthermore, according to Tsui, the most important language will always be what we use in our everyday life and that, despite the importance of English in today’s world, loving our own language will always be right.



5. IMPACT OF ENGLISH IN CROATIA

In Croatia there are a variety of views concerning the impact of English on Croatian society. Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović in her article „Impact of Media on Incidental Learning of English Vocabulary” (Djigunović et al, 2006) states that although many consider the large influence of English in everyday Croatian society in a negative way, nevertheless, it can also be viewed positively. According to Djigunović, exposure to the English language through the media leads to an unconscious acquisition of vocabulary. This exposure creates a foundation for the formal learning of English. In addition, learners can see the language used in contexts other than the textbook, which creates a positive attitude toward the material. As a result, this can reduce the level of stress and fear of learning a foreign language. In the same paper there is a comparison with a similar study that was carried out in China where there is less exposure to English in the media as compared to Croatia. It was found that English words that were commonly found in the media were recognised and understood by the majority of people questioned (Djigunović, 2006, 451). Djigunović concludes that exposure to English provides a favourable climate in learning this language. The results in China lead to the same conclusion. Increased media exposure to English is regarded positively as it leads to an increase in motivation in learning the language, secondly, it’s an opportunity to practice the language, and finally, it facilitates in its acquisition.

Anja Nikolić-Hoyt presents an interesting view concerning the presence of the English language in the media. In her article „The Role of Popular and New Media in the Language of Global Teenagers” (Nikolić-Hoyt, 2006), she analyses the influence of modern media on teenagers. According to Nikolić-Hoyt, the internet is a forum which many young people are using more frequently and there is a distinct use of both the English and Croatian language. She states that in certain conversational interchanges on themes such as music or the internet, there is a tendency to ‘borrow’ or mix Croatian and English codes (Nikolić-Hoyt, 2006, 496). The author states that borrowing usually occurs as a result of lexical and/or referential voids



in the Croatian language. Furthermore, when analysing Croatian texts on the internet it was found that English words or phrases usually serve to open or re-direct discourse, or were used as „fillers.” Nikolić-Hoyt proposes that English plays a symbolic role and creates a group identity by which young people who live in urban centres can participate in popular cultural and sub-cultural trends in the new media, which have global dimensions and have led to the creation of a ‘global teenager.’ The author concludes by stating that although the globalisation process leans towards uniformity and homogeneity, it also creates new, hybrid forms of culture and language which represents a mixture of global influence and local tradition. The consequences of this can be seen in innovative language games and the production of pseudo-anglicisms, that is, new expressions which are different both in the form and definition of the English word(s) on which they were based. In the end, although teenagers in Croatian use a large amount of English words and phrases, they do not necessarily speak English, or a Croatian version of it. In short, the knowledge of English words does not mean knowledge of the English language (Nikolić-Hoyt, 2006, 501).

Mirjana Vilke and Marta Medved Krajnović acknowledge the overwhelming presence of English in Croatian society in their article „Do You Speak Crenglish?” (Vilke & Krajnović, 2006). They note the explicit influences of English, such as store signs, which are written in English rather than Croatian. In the media, specifically in newspapers and on Croatian television, a high content of English vocabulary is being used. Furthermore, the use of English seems very prevalent among young people, especially in their everyday conversations with each other. They state that this discourse consists of a mixture of both English and Croatian. Nevertheless, this usage is a distorted one in which neither a native English speaker, nor a Croatian native speaker would understand. There is also mention of the implicit infiltration of English in the cultural behaviour of Croatians, especially in the retail industry. Nevertheless, despite these influences, the actual level of English among pupils in Croatia is not up to standard, according to Vilke and Krajnović. In their study, ‘The English Language in Croatia’ (Vilke & Krajnović, 2006, 771), their research shows that the level of English at the end of elementary school is satisfactory in the areas of listening reading, and speaking, however, writing levels need to be improved. Among high school pupils, conversely, there is a distinct drop in the test results for listening and reading. Results in the area of speaking are better, however, writing skills are below expectations. High school pupils do not seem to advance to the levels expected of them based on the results of tested skills among elementary school pupils. In short, the results show that the communicative competence of young people is below the levels expected despite the exposure to English in everyday life. The authors acknowledge the importance of English in today’s globalised world and they recommend that action be taken to raise the level of English among young people. At the same time, they argue that there should be an effort to stop the entry of unnecessary and deformed elements of English into the Croatian language (Vilke & Krajnović, 2006, 776). These elements do not lead to an enrichment of Croatian, nor do they enhance a better knowledge of English.

Nives Opačić in her article: „The Media and Standard Croatian,” states that English is encroaching upon the Croatian language at an uncontrollably rate today (Opačić, 2006). The author argues that this is occurring regardless of the fact that there are adequate Croatian words

to use for various concepts. One reason for this infiltration is the influence of conversational language of the young in the media. According to Opačić, English is invading several areas of Croatian society including the language of teenagers and politicians, Croatian newspapers, Croatian TV, and computer language. Despite the increased use of English, however, there is a tendency to distort the English language itself. Many words are being wrongly translated into the Croatian language. For example, the English word 'Survivor' (the title of a popular TV reality show) has been translated to the Croatian word 'Opstanak,' which is actually the translation of the word 'survival' (Opačić, 2006, 523). Another tendency includes the practice of adding Croatian suffixes to many English verbs, for instance „sejvati” (engl. save); printati (engl. print) (Opačić, 2006, 528). Also, there is a trend to translate English words directly into Croatian, which in many cases are incorrect. Furthermore, English spelling and punctuation has influenced Croatian, especially in regard to capitalisation rules. Opačić ventures to state that the tendency to use English words can be the result of the feeling that Croatian words are not as 'worthy' as English words (Opačić, 2006, 528). In short, the Croatian media, in this time of globalisation, is having a negative influence on the Croatian language as a whole through its usage of English in one form or another. It is threatening the identity of the Croatian language and is leading to a loss of categories of words, such as adjectives. According to Opačić, this is due to the lack of concern among Croatian themselves, who submissively accept everything that is foreign.



6. THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH

To sum up, there are several factors that have to be considered with regard to the influence of English on a country's language, culture and society. In Croatia there are several views that must be taken into consideration. Firstly, the influence of English can be viewed positively with regard to certain aspects of language acquisition. This viewpoint is supported by Djigunović, who takes into consideration the affective factors such as fear and motivation in learning a second language. Access to English in Croatian society can lead individuals to accept the language more readily, and thus provide a positive environment for its acquisition. Nevertheless, we have seen an interesting trend that is occurring with regard to the influence of English in Croatia. Nikolić-Hoyt, Vilke & Krajnović, and Opačić all show the appearance of 'hybrid' forms of English that include a mixture of both the English and Croatian language. This tendency seems to reflect a global trend noted, for example, by Kachru and Canagarajah. Whether or not these 'hybrid' Croatian forms can be put in the same category of 'Indian' English is questionable, nevertheless the fact remains that they have emerged. The question is whether these new forms are destroying the English language, and at the same time, are they destroying native languages?

Graddol claims that English itself is a language that is constantly changing and has developed through extensive borrowing of other languages, including Latin, Greek and French. This process is an important aspect of any language which leads to innovation and creativity. Many countries have attempted to establish institutions which would protect native languages such as, France's 'Toubon Law.' However, many linguists are sceptical of



these types of initiatives and claim that, with the emergence of increased multilingualism in many countries resulting from immigration, these attempts might not be effective due to the fact that language switching is a natural process among bilinguals. In China and in many other Asian countries, the problem of trying to improve the level of English is compounded by other factors. For instance, the cognitive learning styles and the expected relationships between the teacher and student are very different in Chinese culture compared to English culture (Graddol, 2006, 117). Attempts have been made by the government to solve this problem by establishing practices and research which aim to introduce English in a way that would entail as little damage as possible to its own culture. In the end, it may be other factors that determine the sphere of influence of the English language in the world.

Many countries are realising that changing world influences require knowledge of several languages. Immigrants to English-speaking countries are finding the need to learn not only English, but also other languages, especially if they are working with other ethnic communities. Furthermore, many immigrant communities are promoting their own language by establishing their own schools and local programmes. In Britain, a survey by the UK Centre for information on Language Teaching showed the increasing trend toward bilingualism by the fact that over 60 languages are being taught in local ethnic communities (Graddol, 2006, 119). In the United States, the government has launched a 'National Security Initiative' to improve foreign language education in languages such as Arabic, Russian, Korean and Chinese. In addition, Spanish has become an important language in the United States due to the predominance of numerous Spanish-speaking communities. Multilingualism is an important trend occurring worldwide, but another factor that must be considered is the growing dominance of other languages in certain regions. Due to China's rising economic importance, Mandarin has become a popular language to acquire in many Asian countries, in Europe and the USA. Graddol states that, „An estimated 30 million people are already studying Mandarin worldwide and the Chinese government expects this to rise to around 100 million in the next few years” (Graddol, 2006, 63). In South America, Brazil has become one of the leading economic giants, and has introduced Spanish courses as an alternative to English. Other countries in South America have also shown an interest in the use of Spanish, thus confirming the growing influence of this language in the region (Graddol, 2006, 63).

The decline of English can be seen in other spheres as well. The language of the internet, although still predominantly in English has seen a decline in recent years. As software is being made to display different kinds of script there has been an increase in multilingualism. For example, studies have shown that there has been a marked increase in the use of Chinese and other languages on the web in the last five years (Graddol, 2006, 44). Many companies now offer a choice of language on their websites. Furthermore, local languages are used in chat rooms and in other contexts where everyone shares a first language. Other media forms such as international news channels have seen an increase in the use of languages other than English, including Arabic, Spanish, and French. Some independent journalists have become 'bloggers' and report on breaking stories in their native language. Although the entertainment industry is still dominated by U.S. audio-visual materials, nevertheless there has been a rise in interest in other materials from other countries. For example, Chinese viewers prefer South

Korean soap operas to U.S.A ones; in Europe Japanese Manga comics have become popular; 'Bollywood' from India has become increasingly influential; and Spanish 'telenovellas' are expanding world-wide (Graddol, 2006, 113). In short, even though English is the dominant language in the world today, there appears to be an underlying shift of change in this status.



7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, although the domination of English seems to threaten national culture and identity, nevertheless, many countries are aware of its place in their plans for their future. An important aspect of language acquisition is the attitude toward the target language. If the majority see English as a tool for economic advancement, they can, thus, use it accordingly. This seems to be the case in, for example, many Asian countries. Furthermore, although strong exposure to English can lead to a positive attitude toward the language, nevertheless, it does not necessarily lead to a better level of English as seen in many studies in Croatia. In many countries it might, in fact, lead to greater nationalism. In a globalised world borrowing and cultural influences are inevitable, but it is up to individuals to decide the extent of its impact on their own language and culture.

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GLOBALIZACIJA I UTJECAJ ENGLESKOGA JEZIKA NA IDENTITET

Sažetak

Službeni jezik nacije simbol je njezina identiteta, vrijednosti i kulture. U današnjem svijetu globalizacije engleski jezik postaje dominantnim jezikom komunikacije. Postavlja se pitanje mogu li države u kojima engleski nije službeni jezik održati svoj vlastiti identitet, kulturu i vrijednosti unatoč pritiscima globalnih ekonomskih struktura, masovnih medija i političkih institucija koje ugrožavaju taj identitet. U ovom radu iznijet će se različita kulturološka gledišta na taj problem.

Ključne riječi: globalizacija i identitet, engleski jezik, različiti pogledi