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English and its language policy in different countries

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Abstract. In the modern world, English has become widespread only in the “inner circle” countries (Great Britain, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) where English is the native language of the population. English is also actively used in outer circle countries. Countries in this circle include India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Kenya, South Africa, etc. In the “Outer Circle” countries, English is not the native language of a significant part of the population, but it plays an important role in government actions and daily communication. There are also “expanding circle” countries (Russia, China, Japan, Korea, Egypt, Germany, France, etc.) where English is not the native language of the majority of the population and is not used in public administration. In these countries, English is used in some fields of activity such as education, business, science, culture and tourism.

Keywords. English language, language policy, international communication, methodology, education

I Introduction

The spread of a language in different countries of the world depends on the language policy of the state – the official attitude of the government to the language or languages of the country, as well as to foreign languages established in policy documents and practical measures. This attitude towards language is manifested in domestic life, education, culture, economy, interstate relations, and language reforms.

Language policy has a particular impact on teaching English in different countries. This situation is explained by the fact that language as the essential cultural symbol of the people and the state, always plays an important role in the education of young people (Milrud (2012)). Consider, for example, the impact of language policy on the language culture of English language teaching in countries as diverse as Nigeria and Cuba. Since 1940, English has been Nigeria’s second official language (after local languages), and its constitution requires that legislative work in the country’s parliament be conducted in English. From primary school to higher education, including postgraduate studies, English is not only a subject but also a teaching tool. Even church services in Nigeria are almost always conducted in English, and the Bible is also in English.

Unlike Nigeria, Cuba has a discreet and even “cold” attitude towards English, which is explained by the contradictory relations of the Cuba state with the United States. In 1959-1970, the country cut off all ties with the United States, including cultural dialogue. Unlike

many countries in the world, American pop music was not played in Cuba at that time, American movies were not shown, and it was forbidden to listen to American radio stations. A more tolerant attitude towards the study of English for professional purposes emerged in 1970-1985. Despite good relations with the SSR at that time, English took the first place in 70% of Cuban schools, leaving only 30% for the Russian language. Since 1985, despite constant resistance to everything, English has been studied both as a means of international communication and as a language of scientific knowledge. Today, the spread of English in Cuba is still limited by official language policies. There are no native Cuban English teachers. Spanish is frequently used in English lessons. Learning English in Cuba is not related to participation in international business, but pursues general educational goals.

It is necessary to compare the language policy in Cuba with the language policy in India. Here the strengthening of the position of the English language proceeded more smoothly, despite the colonial past. India belongs to the “outer circle” countries, where English is not the main language, but the second official state language, and is used for daily communication, business correspondence, education, office work, political activities, including in the field of culture and show-business. “Indian English” is the generic name for the variety of English used by educated Indians as an additional language for intra- and intra-ethnic communication. This language, called Hinglish (a combination of English and Hindi), has absorbed many features of Indian culture throughout its almost 300-year existence. The government’s language policy is that official documents make it a requirement that Indian school children and students be taught practical knowledge of English in school and university. The most popular form of language in universities is “library English”, that is, the English used for students to read academic and professional literature. Since education at universities is mostly conducted in English, the necessity of improving students’ skills in listening to course content in English is also emphasized. In India, the traditional reading and interpretation of literary texts was and still is for teaching English. Indian students are also required to write essays on various topics of daily life and ideological content.

Language policy in India does not prevent English from penetrating Indian culture. Culturally marked words and speech patterns are also seen in Indian English (Kaushik S. (2011)). For example, “wife-burning” is a typical Indian idiom in English, its modern usage means mistreatment of a woman in the family and its semantic roots belong to ancient Indian traditions. English sentences are structured according to Indian politeness rules. Thus, the sentence “I hate your face” becomes a typical Indian sentence, in which the expression according to the rules of politeness is carried out in the third person in the form of a vague assumption: “My friend may not like your face.” Many Indian words, like names of clothing (sari), foodstuffs (curry), etc. India has penetrated the English language and speech of neighboring countries.

The history of Soviet Russia is interesting for examining the role of the English language in society and the influence of state policy in its place. In Soviet period, the study of foreign languages has always been considered as an important issue of not only educational but also state and even political importance. Language was regarded as “a weapon in the struggle for life” in reference to ideological and military opponents. One of the popular sayings in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century was: “Learning foreign languages enriches the native language, makes it more lively, flexible and expressive” (Kaushik (2011)). Such statements revealed the ideological content of foreign language education aimed at developing the native language in school-age children, patriotic education, as well as perseverance, logical thinking and diligence. The practical purposes of foreign language acquisition were discussed by the Methodists, but

there were no conditions that would actually solve this problem. The grammar-translation method was first used in foreign language teaching in the 1920s. In the 30s of the 20th century, the method of conscious comparison was approved in line with the decisions of the party and government regarding primary and secondary schools. During this period, the first programs for teaching foreign languages for secondary and higher schools, fixed textbooks and accompanying teaching aids were created. In 1932, the first scientific methodological works appeared in connection with another decision of the Soviet government on the need to teach a foreign language (German) in schools. The magazine “Foreign languages at school” was published. Thus, the methodological culture of the Soviet period began to form.

II Methodology

The ideas of teaching foreign languages were based on Marxist-Leninist dogmas about “understanding of objective reality” and “conscious assimilation of knowledge”. Socially determined, psychological, subconscious, intuitive, genetic explanatory processes of language acquisition, alien to bourgeois and Soviet methodology, were excluded from scientific discussions. The scientific origins of the method can be traced back to the Russian thinkers K.D. Ushinsky, N.G. Chernyshevsky, I.M. Sechenov had materialist views on the determination of individual mental phenomena by social conditions. From the works of these scientists, statements were selected according to the Stalinist conception of the influence of the social environment on the formation of personality.

Linguistic justification of the comparative method was reflected in L.V.Sherba’s works. L.V. Sherba emphasized that the basis of this method is the understanding of movement, and the basis of nurture is the development of individual in the collective. The skeptical attitude towards “bourgeois pedagogical theories” in Russia was manifested in 1936, when the People’s Commissariat of Education issued a decree banning experimentation in schools as a “harmful bourgeois practice”. Russian schools returned to language testing only in the 1990s, when the practice of using tests in the educational process was largely forgotten and a persistent negative attitude towards them was formed. The methodological culture in Russia still rejects the use of language tests to monitor knowledge in number of cases. The main ideological task before the Methodists of the pre-World War II period was to establish their own “Soviet” foreign language teaching methodologies in opposition to “foreign and liar” bourgeois teachings. Any manifestation of interest in Western pedagogical theories was considered a “movement towards the West”. In the post-war period, that is, during the Cold War, attitudes and interest in “bourgeois culture” among individual members of Soviet society remained negative. The atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion made contact with English speakers and other cultures difficult, and the language itself continued to be learned from textbooks focusing on lexical-grammatical structures and from ideologically charged or specially selected texts. Schoolchildren and students often focused on literary texts by British and American authors that corresponded to Soviet ideological guidelines, but were little known and in little demand in their author’s homeland.

The ideas of the comparative method characterized the Russian methodological culture until the 70s of the 20th century. In 1961, when the government decree “On improving the teaching of foreign languages” was issued, there was a revival in the methodology of teaching Soviet foreign languages. The purpose of school education was practical knowledge of a foreign language. To achieve this goal, a conscious practical method was developed and practical, educational, educational and developmental goals were developed for teaching foreign languages. Another “educational reform” took place in the 1980s. The theories of developmental, intensive learning, active learning, cooperative pedagogy and other innovative

ideas began to be developed. Their development was hindered by the fact that the Soviet foreign language teaching methodology developed in a relatively closed space and had little interaction with foreign pedagogical training. This led some researchers to claim that until the “reconstruction” (until the 90s of the 20th century), the teaching of foreign languages was organized by analogy with the teaching of Latin, as if modern languages, including English, were “dead” (Ter. – Minasova S. (2005) The language of most teachers and students could not be authentic apart from the natural language environment. It was during this period that the communicative-oriented teaching method was actively spread in the Russian version of foreign languages. Communicative-oriented teaching ideas were integrated in Russia under the significant influence of methodology.

The influence of the Soviet period is still evident in the constant “fear of the wrong version” in Russian methodology, but this condition is regularly observed among native speakers in Great Britain and the United States, representatives of a large number of dialects and variants. In the professional consciousness of the older generation and some Russian teachers, the academic norm clearly prevails in “living English”, complete grammatical structures are superior to elliptical language, and deviations from grammatical rules among native speakers cause confusion and even anger.

During the reconstruction period, from the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century, due to the collapse of the USSR, the rejection of the “enemy image” in ideological works and changes in language policy, Russia entered the “expanding” circle. Interest in research has increased rapidly among broad segments of the population. In the 1990s, short-term intensive English courses became popular in Russia, especially among potential immigrants, businessmen and tourists. Ideas of intensive training characterized Russian methodology for a relatively long time.

The idea of teaching students not one, but two or more foreign languages is becoming increasingly popular. Foreign language teaching had a great impact on Russia’s accession to the Bologna Agreement and its integration into the European pedagogical space. Concepts such as the “academic mobility” of students have been to pedagogical use. In the newly opened pedagogical field, Russian Methodists are expanding “social constructivism”, “education”, (Мильруд (2007)) “educating students abroad” and “improvement of professional skill practice of teachers”.

Methodological knowledge is influenced by new teaching-methodological complexes that bring foreign methodological experience into Russian classrooms and combine it with national methodological traditions. Foreign ideas regarding foreign language teaching encounter resistance in many cases in Russia. In some cases, voices are heard for identity and the demand for Russian and English textbooks to have their “own face” in the methodology of teaching foreign languages in Russia. The influence of the language and ideological policy of the state on the methodological knowledge of foreign language teaching can be seen not only in Russia but also in China. Since the 1970s, communication-oriented teaching began to permeate China’s English language teaching culture. This did not happen immediately, and it took more than a decade before the “communication diary” in teaching English at various levels of national education was officially announced. In China, only the 90th province has formulated real requirements for teaching and modifying the state language “for communication” and developing all speech activities such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Before this, reading texts with artistic-philosophical content dominated the lessons. According to Chinese teachers, much attention should also be paid to the grammar of the language, which represents an independent aesthetic and pedagogical value. Chinese methodists expressed the thoughts

of developing their “own Chinese version” of communicative English teaching without copying “Western traditions” (Liu J.(2007). Since the education system in China is under the control of the central government, English teaching in Chinese schools is kept at a level sufficient for this country. Therefore, Chinese classes consist of children with large numbers of children (forty or more in a class). National traditions promote student-centered education, and therefore teacher management in classrooms is dominated by collective, preliminary work (teacher-centered).

It is necessary to look over language policy and some characteristic features of teaching English in contemporary Japan. In Japan, there are high requirements for mastering the English language and the main educational program is supported by the Ministry of Education. All textbooks must also approved by the Ministry. English exams which are approved by Ministry holding to test standard grammatical knowledge and without grammatical knowledge it is impossible to be accepted into higher education institutions. At the same time, for working in companies that requires practical knowledge of the English language, it is essential to successfully pass a non-grammatical software test and a communicative-oriented exam. The Ministry of Education recommends these: graduates of Japanese schools must learn to use English in practice, must show interest in learning the language and culture, must demonstrate the motivation in learning of the language, must be receptive and productive at the required level and must be mastered in all types of speech(listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Among the teaching methods recommended by the Ministry of Education of Japan include understanding sentences in the form of questions, orders, requests and suggestions, responding to the expressions that you heard and understanding the general meaning of the text. Communication oriented tasks have been declared superior to grammar and vocabulary exercises. In Japanese schools, the main content of lessons remains grammar, and lessons are usually taught in Japanese rather than English. In the center of the lesson is the teacher who takes the usual dominant position in the class, controls the teaching process and evaluates the results. Choral reading of words, structures and texts followed by the teacher is widely used. Words are learned in a list. A lot of attention and time is devoted to the translation of sentences and texts. Particular attention is paid to the grammatical transformation of sentences. In a 50-minute lesson, on average, only 5 minutes are devoted to communicative activity. In most cases, communicative tasks are performed in the form of pre-learned dialogues. In the linguistic laboratory equipped with modern multimedia equipment, the traditions of the audiolingual teaching method of English are still strong, with repetition of the material.

An interesting practice in Japanese schools is the collaboration of two teachers in the classroom: a native teacher and a foreign native teacher. Such classes are usually more communicative oriented. It should be emphasized that after the experience of co-teaching the language with a native speaker, the Japanese teacher returns to his usual practice in his classroom – non-communicative and teacher-centered exercises. One reason is the duty to ensure that students enter a university where standard grammar knowledge is required to successfully complete the test. Communication-oriented tasks are perceived as “fun” by Japanese students, as opposed to learning grammar, i.e. “real language learning” (Sakui K.(2004)). Grammar exercises are taken seriously by Japanese students and are considered “real teaching”.

Conclusion

Thus, language policy, together with other factors, has a significant influence on the methodical culture of English language teaching in different countries.

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