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## Foreign Languages in Russian Education and Science

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### Abstract

Sociolinguistic status of foreign languages in Russian education and science is analyzed herein; prerequisites for foreign languages learning in Russia are substantiated; the formula for determining the prestige of a certain language and qualification indicators of a language social vertical position are determined; trends of the English language usage as the second language and the only foreign language are pointed out; a discursive frame of the English language is expressed from the date of signing of the Treaty of Versailles. The English language functioning in the Russian education system as an implicatum is proved by the presence of a posteriori formations, that were unknown for, at least, in recurrent meanings or unpopular in the speech community.

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### 1. Introduction

There are about 7,000 languages in the world, a precise number is difficult to determine due to absence of opportunity and often necessity for determining the distinct boundaries of the languages, language forms and types (discursive, stylistic and genre). Some language forms exist in a kind of dia- and isolects, which are components of complex functional paradigms and language situations, and are only used in certain communicative situations or do not have a written tradition at all. Despite the variety of living languages, the Russian Federation educational institutions of secondary and higher level offer a miniscule proportion of foreign languages for learning from this linguistic diversity: mainly English, more seldom German, and in even more rare cases French. For instance, in universities of Tomsk city (the West Siberia) the German language is studied 10 times less than English, and French

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– 15 times less (according to data as of 2011 (Vorobyova & Kobenko, 2013). The exceptions are practices of foreign language teaching in specialized departments of major universities, like Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Moscow State Linguistic University, the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, etc. Other languages (for example, Spanish) automatically fall under a naive (unscientific) definition of “exotic” and are studied beyond the school or university curricula as a hobby or by attending the paid language courses. In the language situation of contemporary Russia the status of English as the second common language can be observed – a phenomenon defined in linguistics as exoglossia (Kobenko & Sharapova, 2015). It is necessary to mention that for diagnosing a metalect – an imported idiom as a language situation component – presence of direct language speakers is not required. A communicative power of a foreign metalect is defined in conditions of information society by the so-called virtual language contacts: mass media activity, prestige, attractiveness of economic and political structure of the speech community, etc.

## 2. Foreign languages learning in Russia

Currently there is still a prejudice existing that learning English, German or French languages in Russia is related solely to their spreading, prestige and requirement to develop. According to Ethnologue data, publishing the sociolinguistic statistics of modern living languages, in 2014 five most communicatively powerful global languages included (number of speakers, expressed in millions, accordingly) – the first language is Chinese (1,197), second – Spanish (414), third – English (335), then – Hindi (260) and Arabic (237) (Ethnologue, 2014). It can be seen that status of favored three foreign languages (English, German and French), studied in the Russian system of education, does not fully coincide with the world statistic data: English – takes the third place in the world, German – in the twelfth, French – in the fourteenth after Korean, Lahnda (western Punjabi), Javanese, Japanese, Russian, Bengali, and Portuguese. This disclosure can be added with the fact that communicative power of idioms, determined by amount of speakers, is often understood under “language spread”. While spreading of language is the difference between its corpus and status. The corpus means a complex of all intralinguistic levels of language. For example, the German literary language includes the following levels: morphosyntactic, phonetic and graphic, lexical-semantic and linguistic-pragmatic. Above the mentioned levels there is an area of external linguistics, which includes the language policy and planning, orthology (the context of speculations on steady speech deviants), culture of language, its written tradition, etc. Extralinguistic levels constitute the language status that is better observed beyond the ethnic territory of language existence. For example, before events of 2014 in Ukraine, the Russian language had a regional language status. In the state of New York election documents were to be translated into Russian that defines its official language status. Thus, the most convenient angle of difference explication between corpus and status suggests corpus identifying with ethnic territory of language functioning, and status – with its popularity beyond this territory. The area of language crossing beyond the ethnic boundaries will constitute the spread. Indeed the status of a language is formed by its spreading beyond the boundaries of the speech community. If a language is learnt abroad, it is considered prestigious. According to beliefs of many contemporaries in the Russian Federation and beyond, languages spread owing to their prestige. How is prestige comprehended? As any other notion and value of fundamental linguistics, prestige should have a quantitative expression, caused by a dialectical nature of linguistic phenomena. We can determine the prestige, using the following formula:  $P = R / C$ , and  $R = (S - C)$ , where  $P$  – prestige,  $R$  – spreading,  $S$  – status, and  $C$  – corpus of language. To find the difference between status and corpus, we use the communicative power of an English idiom within boundaries of ethnic territory or national boundaries ( $C$ ) and beyond ( $S$ ). Accordingly, if this language is used worldwide for different purposes by 2,000,000 speakers, and within English-speaking countries – by only 335,000, then  $R$  is equal to 1,665,000. Then we find  $P$  as the quotient of  $R$  and  $C$ . We get 4.97 ( $\approx 5$ ). This is how many times the English language exceeds the corpus indicator globally. Particularly, it means that in a group of six persons, five will study English due to its status solely. Thus, prestige is the value, which expresses the degree of a certain language influence in the world. With a zero coefficient, the language is considered as non-prestigious, i.e. technically it does not cross the boundaries of its ethnic functioning area. Inside such ethnos the non-prestigious (autochthonous) language and prestigious (e.g., English) have different functions. According to B. Heine, the stated languages are stratified within a specific language situation as local (endoglossic, languages of horizontal media), only providing intraethnic communication, and socially vertical languages (exoglossic, foreign), literally mediating the upward movement, i.e.

languages of social status, education, career, and well-being (Heine, 1992). Considering the value R, it can be stated that spreading of some (prestigious) languages provides the non-spreading of the other (local, autochthonous and non-prestigious) languages of horizontal level. Therefore, *we do not learn foreign languages due to their prestige value, but foreign languages have an effect on us, according to their prestige, and do not leave us any other choice besides learning them (cf. Internet language – English)*. Due to this circumstance any selection of prestigious foreign languages is not free by default: we do not choose, but we are chosen. A similar situation we can see with the so-called ‘native’ language, which is not selected by a child, but is learnt from the mother speaking with them, or any other people closest to the child. Non-optional choice of a prestigious foreign language is aggravated by wish of some parents ‘for their child to study English since kindergarten’ or ‘take a child to a special language school to learn German as the language of ancestors who came from the Soviet Republic of the Volga Germans’. In this case we can observe indoctrination (imposing ideas and doctrines on a person, leading to non-critical acceptance), which is nothing but child abuse in terms of worldview factor. Parent overprotection here can serve bad and develop a negative attitude towards a foreign or any other language learning in general, including the native language, which we practically do not study in the same way as foreign.

### 3. Status discrepancy between the state and foreign language in the Russian education

Mainly negative response – especially among experts in foreign languages learning – was caused by the statement of Ms. Irina Yarovaya, a State Duma deputy, made on 30 January 2015. The statement says that a) “the Russian educational system is tailored to study foreign languages; b) only 866 hours are assigned for the Russian language learning, and 939 hours – for a foreign language; c) current federal standard lays on a personal success of graduates which is foreign to the Russian matrix, and not for teaching moral values”. Despite the expressly negative response, it should be admitted that statements of I. Yarovaya are relevant in the item b), supported by a convincing actual information. After the period of ‘perestroika’ the country only moved along the western vector of development, often to the disadvantage of its own interests. Mass learning of English, which is comprehended as ‘foreign’ in the first place (Vorobyova & Kobenko, 2013), resulted in its complete monopoly in the Russian Federation, and also in deterioration of the Russian language knowledge, which has the state language status. It is important to mention that in conditions of globalization, passing under unconditional domination of everything American, the ‘switches’ of language policy are set towards language democracy as the linguistic-political principle, providing for pluralism in norm-setting for the main component of language situation (the Russian language); variation of the means, leading to weakening of normative prescriptions, and finally to “tolerant” perception of illiteracy (as variation); to heterogeneity of its resources by excessive borrowings and, above all, to invasive type of borrowing due to permissibility of language policy. Indeed, when it can be said in a different way, then norms become something non-mandatory, leading to establishment of a foreign language in the status of prestigious at first, then as the only foreign language in the educational system.

Prevalence of certain foreign languages in their communicative power and prestige (i.e. functional nonequilibrium) in a specific language situation always tells about interest of the speech community in their language spreading beyond certain administrative and territory formation. In view of this, it is not surprising that English has practically established a language monopoly in Russia in the first decades of the 21st century. This fact is proved by numerous theses in philological and pedagogical sciences, based on English language material; its establishment as practically the only foreign language in higher education, and in ‘post-perestroika’ society of Russia – as the second language, actually. However, the main achievement of English in comparison to Spanish, which, according to Ethnologue data as of 2014, surpasses the English language by number of speakers worldwide (cf.: Spanish – 414 mln., English – 335 mln. (Ethnologue, 2014)), lies in that *English can be studied for free in the Russian education, but learning Spanish is done on a paid basis*. Considering this, no surprise, that a) Russian system of education is tailored to study a foreign language: career of a contemporary (young) researcher in Russia is impossible without English, science achievements are equivalent to career success, and b) level of success is measured by ability for combinatory analysis (selection from the available, but not invention of the new). Thus, justification of I. Yarovaya’s statements, showing the uneven status and functional ratio of foreign (English) and state (Russian) languages in the Russian school education system, can be seen (Yarovaya, 2015).

#### 4. Spreading of the English language in Russia

Status of the English language in contemporary Russia can be mistakenly understood as a foreign language status. A full-featured foreign origin of English could be stated in periods of ‘stagnation and perestroika’. Today it is a metalect actively used by people of Russia for their needs with a high degree of aposteriorization (changed as a result of adaptation by native population – a kind of hybridization), the norms that ceased to be namely English long time ago, i.e. be approved by law in the USA or Great Britain solely. This form of the English language we suggest designating as the “*implicatum*” (in comparison to pidgin as a type of interlanguage with ultimate reduced grammatical system) – collection of foreign language means and their autochthonous derivatives, fixed in a certain discursive framework in a specific language situation. The *implicata* are posterior (secondary) forms of English existence, derived from morphemic material of a donor language in the medium of recipient language functioning. For example, there are known aposterior units of the English-language origin from the German language, which are completely unpopular and unknown neither in the USA, nor in Great Britain, nor in the areas of English *implicata* spread: *Longseller*, *Flipchart*, and *Handy*. *Implicate* creation inside the speech community is enhanced by practices beyond the ethnic boundaries. Thus, the fact that a spoken German language can only be heard in the FRG, as Germans communicate beyond their boundaries (except for Switzerland and Austria) only in English that makes learning the German language in Russia pointless. In general, interest in the German language and culture spreading should be expressed by the native speakers themselves. Here, in our opinion, the assignment for the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be language preservation beyond Germany, keeping its status or raising it by increasing the language prestige and attractiveness, hence, creation of work places in Russia. Instead we encounter the anti-Russian rhetoric, introduction of economic sanctions and accusations of Russian aggression towards Ukraine, what can very soon shelve the status of the German language in the Russian education system for good.

It is worth mentioning that English has never been the language of education in all meanings of the word. A discursive framework of the English language since the Treaty of Versailles (1919), after which it was first spoken of as international, had always been limited to areas of management, banking, finance, and exchange broking. Neither approval of the Philadelphian citation index as a uniform (quantitative!) criterion of a researcher activity effectiveness evaluation, nor tremendous number of Nobel Prize winners among Anglo-Saxons and living in the English-speaking countries, nor unification of educational standards under the authority of the Bologna process, nor development of contemporary term systems with excessive English-American borrowings in all fields of knowledge, nor mandatory translation of key words and abstracts of articles and research results into English made it the scientific language in Russia or in the world.

What do we understand as the language of science? According to S. Klein, language of science is a relative notion. First of all, science always exists in the native language (Klein, 2007). Researcher gives an example of international conference, arranged and held in the FRG, where the only present Germans had to speak the only working language – English – and, overcoming incredible difficulties in explaining and comprehending the contents, explain each other the principle of pilot plant arrangement (Klein, 2007). In such a way, the international status of a conference does not make English the language of a scientific event in particular, or of science in general. It is impossible to imagine that M.V. Lomonosov observed the movement of celestial bodies, thinking and putting thoughts in German – the language of scientific elite of the time. In a nutshell, scientific language per definitionem always coincides with the language of researchers, in which they can do their research conveniently and appropriately. Consequently, the status of scientific language completely depends on peculiarities of national mentality and identical to that nation’s language, which conducts more intensive researches in the area. The right to be regarded as the language of science of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries unquestionably belongs to the German language. Discoveries and inventions of H. Ford, H. Hertz, O. von Lilienthal, K. Zuse and many others, have firmly reserved the German language for discursive framework of the disciplines for long, determined the development of professional term systems and thesauruses in the long term, and made the knowledge in a German-language morphological form the province of all mankind.

So, scientific language cannot be prescribed. The English language with its contemporary discursive frame serves more as a tool of ideology (of the ruling elite), that is totally opposite to the destination of scientific language. Science cannot exist within the ideological bonds; otherwise we have the right not to regard it science per se as the modern trends in the Russian science reveal. This conclusion is confirmed by the words of V. Ramachandran that ‘science is possible at strict compliance with two conditions: economic and ideological freedom’ (Ramachandran, 2003). *Eo ipso*, cognition of socially vertical contemporary English language status strongly contradicts its

establishment as the scientific language in the higher educational system of Russia. Thus, English is neither a foreign language in Russia, nor the scientific language. Its function is identical to the language of a social vertical, with which access to certain economic benefits is associated. Diagnostics of a social vertical language, according to L. Götze, typologically assumes function of distinction by language indicator (*ius linguæ*), known as “phenomenon of high snobility” (Götze, 2000). The English-speaking elite marks the limits from “lower class” by means of the language that even more aggravates the contradictory nature of the latter: despite the global language status, it is not available for everyone what is actively promoted by the ruling class.

Education – in Humboldt’s interpretation – is understood without doubt as the platform for development, humanities component and the valuable tool of which serves the knowledge of at least one foreign language. Requirement to learn any (choice option!) foreign language is dictated by constantly changing reality with its diversified and multifunctional contents. Acquisition of worldview – especially the scientific one – assumes a free choice of development milestones, consequently, this component of education should be mediated with account for personal preferences. Notwithstanding that quantity of taught languages (education languages) is always limited, even choice between English and German or French would not violate the principles of scientific worldview formation.

In higher institutions of Russia where German is practically driven out by western educational standards from the curriculum, the ruling elite use the untenable explanation of, allegedly, an utterly low number of people willing to study German in higher educational institutions. According to census data as of 2010, the German language takes the fourth place in Russia by number of speakers (before Chechen language – the fifth place) (Rosstat, 2010), being a purely foreign component of the language situation that does not support the statement about dramatic fall of its popularity in the Russian society. The ruling elite have to admit that this language is complex for an average student (the fact that in its turn does not justify re-training of students), or the fact of a foreign language elimination as the means for development and leaving the second common language in education (that actually means withdrawal of a foreign language from the educational system itself) as identifier of education (using the principle “higher education = knowledge of English = access to economic benefits, social and career growth = identification of a wealthy and successful citizen”).

## **5. Conclusion**

As it can be seen, the language of contemporary Russian education and scientific language (scientific nation) are not identical values. Their current content and leveller – the English language – serves more as a marker of social well-being rather than scientific inquiry tool. The described functional features of the English language in contemporary Russia and education result invariably from its status of a macro-mediator language, having a totally different function – unite and eliminate language barriers.

What are the results of the English single-language status in the educational system? It is deemed that a researcher who is scrupulously conducting a research project hardly needs to be translated into any language. The trend to publish papers in scientometrical databases is nothing but order of the ruling elite and is quite typical for national research and federal universities. There is no need in knowledge internationalization in contemporary Russian science; as in any other society it is more a prerogative of a small group of eminent scholars. Partially this requirement is related to a lower quality of researches, regularly observed during educational system reforming, i.e. actually putting it into a Procrustean bed of international standards. Transition to a uniform international language of scientific inquiries does not guarantee that there will be papers published on a certain theme in English that one more time proves the conclusion made by S. Klein. As an example, a scope of papers on exoglossic language situations before 2009, available in the Russian, German, French and Portuguese languages, can be given. However, it is permissible to stipulate that publications in English could be done before its establishing as a common second language. In fact, knowledge popularization does not prohibit the results publication in any of currently existing 7000 world languages, until the publishing itself does not become a policy tool of certain elite layers of society and state institutions.

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