WORLD ENGLISHES: REFLECTION ON TEXT COMPLEXITY PROSPECTIVE STUDIES

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Abstract: The following study aims at highlighting new directions of text complexity studies, giving way to more advanced and varied research in the area. It has become the tradition in Russian linguistics as well as foreign one to assess predominantly the complexity of educational texts, thus allowing the learners to boost text comprehension and better material recognition [1], [2], [3], [4]. Text complexity studies can be directed at other types of texts (fiction or newspaper articles) in order to raise the level of awareness and desire to read in general. Bearing in mind that newspaper articles in English can be written by native and non-native speakers, and both types of newspapers can be used in educational purposes, there is urgent need, as we perceive it, to distinguish the features of authentic and Russian English newspaper texts. The research question of upcoming studies can be accomplished as follows: Are English-language newspapers written by Russian speakers of English as ELF comparable with the texts of authentic publications? The results of this study will be interesting in terms of studying the Russian version of the English language as one of the World Englishes in order to demonstrate whether the differences between the English variants are significant. For this purpose, two tools of computational linguistic analysis can be applied: Coh-Metrix, a computational tool that produces indices of the linguistic and discourse representations

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(developed by Arthur C. Graesser and Danielle McNamara), and L2 Syntactical Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) developed by Xiaofei Lu at Pennsylvania State University (a computational tool which produces syntactic complexity indices of written English language texts).

Keywords: text complexity, assessment, World Englishes, L2, computational analysis

1 Introduction

According to D. Crystal, the number of people who speak English in the world is more than 1 billion 100 million people, and only one quarter of them recognize it as their native language [5]. Due to the fact that at the moment the number of people who speak English at one level or another is three times higher than the number of "native speakers", the globalization process involves not only the spread of English and, above all, English-speaking culture throughout the world, but also changes in the English language influenced by other cultures.

Many people around the world use English as a lingua franca (ELF), i.e. a tool for communication between people. According to the "Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary" by V.V. Vinogradov, lingua franca (*from Italian: Lingua franca - Frankish language*) is a functional type of language, which is an instrument of interethnic communication in certain areas of social contacts. Initially, the term "lingua franca" meant a specific language, more precisely, a form of language that appeared in the Middle Ages in the Mediterranean region in the Levant and represents a mixture of Italian and French vocabulary. The lingua franca of that time predominantly served as a linguistic means of trade between Arabs and Europeans, which in the Levant were called Franks, after whom the language got its name [6].

It should be noted that at different historical stages and in different territories the role of lingua franca was performed by different international languages. Thus, the ancient Greek was the international language of antiquity [7]. Then, for a long time, the dominant language of the Mediterranean and western Europe was Latin, which was used in all spheres of human activity. At the time of the Arab Caliphate in the vast territory - from India in the east to

Portugal in the west - the Arabic language performed a similar function. Later, beginning with the Enlightenment (18th century), French became the dominant language in Europe. In the 19th century, thanks to the outstanding activities of German scientists, German language acquired great importance. But none of the above-mentioned languages had such a wide distribution and influence throughout the world as English has nowadays.

The concept of ELF itself does not imply a single standard of English. ELF researchers do not even consider the possibility of the existence of a single monolithic form of language either at the present moment or sometime in the future. And although participants of intercultural communication should possess common phonetic and lexical-grammatical structures of the English language for productive communication with all users, ELF researchers allow the use of local variations of the English language in various communicative situations [8].

Despite the lack of consensus among the linguists on the status of ELF, this phenomenon is gradually gaining recognition from social linguists, but the validity of using ELF in language teaching is still controversial, since until now its features have not been formalized anywhere [8].

As a result of such linguistic processes, new variants of the English language appeared, called World Englishes, or New Englishes. The term World Englishes means new national variants of English in countries where English is not the first language. The term was first mentioned by American linguist B. Kachru in "Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle" in 1985. According to Kachru, English was "nativized" in India, Singapore, Nigeria and other countries. Along with this term, such terms as "nativised English", "indigenized Engish", "institutionalized English", and also "New Englishes" [9] are equally used. At present, all these terms are widely used in their works by British linguists E. Erling and T. MacArthur [10], [11].

2   Methods

Newspapers in English can be divided into those that are produced in Russia and abroad. Foreign newspapers in English are divided into newspapers

written for native speakers and for those who learn English as a second language (ESL learners). Newspapers published in the United States or Great Britain are in one way or another the standard for non-native speakers, since the texts of such newspapers have lexical and grammatical characteristics inherent in authentic texts. The research question of upcoming studies can be accomplished as follows: Are English-language newspapers written by Russian speakers of English as ELF (Russian newspapers: The Moscow News, The Moscow Times, The St.Petersburg Times) comparable with the texts of authentic publications such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times (American newspapers) or Financial Times, Times, Telegraph, the Guardian (British newspapers)? The results of this study will be interesting in terms of studying the Russian version of the English language as one of the World Englishes in order to demonstrate whether the differences between the English variants are significant.

Coh-Metrix is a computational tool that produces indices of the linguistic and discourse representations of a text. Developed by Arthur C. Graesser and Danielle McNamara, Coh-Metrix calculates the coherence of texts on many different measures.

Coh-Metrix can be used in many different ways to investigate the cohesion of the explicit text and the coherence of the mental representation of the text. "The definition of cohesion consists of characteristics of the explicit text that play some role in helping the reader mentally connect ideas in the text" [12]. The definition of coherence is the subject of much debate. Theoretically, the coherence of a text is defined by the interaction between linguistic representations and knowledge representations. While coherence can be defined as characteristics of the text (i.e., aspects of cohesion) that are likely to contribute to the coherence of the mental representation, Coh-Metrix measurements provide indices of these cohesion characteristics.

L2 Syntactical Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) developed by Xiaofei Lu at the Pennsylvania State University, is a computational tool which produces syntactic complexity indices of written English language texts. Along with Coh-Metrix, the L2SCA is one of

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the most extensively used computational tools to compute indices of second language writing development. The L2SCA has been used in numerous studies in the field of second language writing development to compute indices of syntactic complexity (syntactic structures, length of production units, amounts of coordination, amounts of subordination, overall sentence complexity, phrasal sophistication) [13], [14], [15].

3   Results and discussion

One of the pioneers in the study of new variants of the English language is B. Kachru, who, in the book "Indexing of English" (1983), initiated the tradition of describing varieties of English in areas where it is not native [16].

New Englishes have certain formal properties (lexical, phonological, grammatical) that distinguish them from British or American English standards. Most of the adaptations in the new versions of the English language are related to vocabulary in the form of new words, word formations, phrases and idiomatic expressions. In the process of new language structures creation, users of English believe they are adapting the language for meeting new communication needs" [17].

Such a variety of changes in local language versions led to the fact that the mistakes made were considered the norm, and the native speakers of the language lost the ability to control changes in the language.

The New Englishes distinguish the following characteristics [18]:

1. New Englishes develop through the education system (perhaps even as a means of learning at a certain level), and not as the first language of the region;

2. New Englishes develop in regions where the majority of the population do not speak English as their mother tongue;

3. New Englishes are used to perform a variety of functions (for example, writing letters, government messages, literature, like lingua franca in the country and in formal contexts);

However, the term New Englishes does not include dialect forms of the language of the British Isles (Scottish, Celtic variants), does not refer to the language of immigrants in English-speaking countries, as well as pidgin on the basis of English [19,24].

The term New Englishes itself is controversial. For example, some linguists, criticizing this term, argue that the choice of such a category as New Englishes itself is meaningless, because each generation makes its own changes to all variants of the English language, which leads to the impossibility of defining one or another variant as new [20,25].

New Englishes are often characterized by the fact that the countries in which these options are represented were not colonies of the British Empire, but use English as a necessary international language. This category includes such countries as Russia, Japan, China, Indonesia, Thailand, etc. [16,26,27].

According to B. Kachru, English in Russia is one of the new language variants, which is used mainly for narrow purposes, such as business, tourism, Internet communication, and also professional communication, requiring functional language proficiency [17].

However, many other researchers insist that Russian English cannot be defined as a full-fledged version for two main reasons. The first reason is that the English language in Russia is not used in intra-ethnic communication and does not have the linguistic environment for its development as a new option. The second reason is that in teaching English the peculiarities of both British and American variants of English are taken into account in Russia and, therefore, the resulting characteristics of Russian English as a result of mixing two options are perceived as errors and not as features of a separate version.

4   Summary

The peculiarities of the Russian version of the English language are presented in the works of such Russian researchers as A. A. Ionin, A. A. Rivlin [21], however, the most complete classification of such changes is presented in the work by Z. Proshina "English as a Lingua Franca in Russia" (2008). Prof. Proshina identifies the most typical changes in the English language in Russia at all language levels [22].

At the phonetic level:

1. changes in intonation patterns (raising the tone in special and alternative questions);

2. lack of aspiration;

3. stunning voiced consonants at the end of words;

4. no difference in pronouncing long and short vowels.

At the morphological level:

1. using Past Simple time instead of Present Perfect;

2. Absence or incorrect use of articles.

At the syntactic level:

1. preference patterns with the preposition *of* ("the form of the 19th century" instead of the "the 19th century form");

2. wrong word order in phrases ("the problem "generation gap " instead of "the generation gap problem");

3. the absence of a verb-link, especially in present tense (at the moment the main subject I'm responsible for <is> American Culture), due to the absence of a verb-link in the present tense in Russian;

4. changing the order of words in sentences depending on the distribution of semantic load ("This book I have read already");

5. reordering words in gerund constructions ("birth giving" instead of "giving birth").

At the lexical semantic level:

1. expressions created by tracing expressions of the Russian language: home task ("home assignment"), to enter the university ("to be admitted to the university"), foreign passport ("a passport issued to Russian going abroad"), Candidate of Philology (academic degree in literature or linguistics, approximately the corresponding PhD in the foreign education system);

2. misuse of prepositions

3. changes in the meaning of concepts in the English language with the intervention of Russian realities in the English language ("unpaid work" or "social service").

As well as pragmatic deviations, which are the most persistent, since they are connected with the culture of the native language:

1. the masculine nature of the language, which is not entirely politically correct for English (using the word "man" instead of "human being" in a neutral context);

2. excessive verbalization (obtained by rearranging sentences from one language to another);

3. the degree to which orders and requests are categorical, expressed

by an imperative (the Russian expression of the imperative sounds too categorical: "I think I can not do that" instead of "I don't think I can do that").

5 Conclusions

As a rule, the above-mentioned changes are considered to be errors with respect to international standards of the English language [23]. Such deviations from the norms of the standard made by Russian-speaking users of English are still not fixed, so they cannot be considered innovations of the Russian version of the English language just as they cannot be considered acceptable for this regional version as a result of the nationalization of the English language due to the needs of contextual, formal or logical correspondence. Words borrowed from English to describe a new cultural phenomenon, on the contrary, can be considered innovative. At the same time, the deviations described above are only a trend in the use of educated Russian-speaking people, something like a "linguistic price" for integrating the English language into new cultural realities [13].

However, despite the not quite definite status of Russian English, one cannot deny the fact that the above-mentioned features of the use of English by Russian-speaking people are essential and deserve further study on the basis of the new linguistic material.

6 Acknowledgements

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