MYTHS AND REALITY ABOUT LINGUA FRANCA

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The article deals with the problem of the formation of a global language and the possibility of using English as a lingua franca as a universal language of interethnic communication.

Key words: lingua franca, English, linguistics, global language.

Globalization is "a complex multidimensional process characterized in the political, economic, cultural and informational universals when territoriality is erased as the organizing principle of cultural and social life" [2, p.13]. Lingua Franca (from the Italian lingua franca – Frankish language) can become a language that contributes to the development of globalization. It is a functional type of language used as a means of communication between speakers of different languages in limited areas of social contact [1]. While for some people it becomes a means of communication with a wider range of people, others express fears that one day the language of international communication will displace all other languages, depriving the world of cultural and linguistic diversity [3]. Is this the case? Let's consider the main dangers associated with the formation of a global language.

Will the appearance of this type of language accelerate the disappearance of less common ones? To answer this question, we must first define a general perspective. The processes of linguistic dominance and loss have been known throughout linguistic history and exist independently of the emergence of a global lingua franca [8].

No one knows how many languages have died since people learned to speak them, but there must be thousands of them. Linguists have estimated that linguistic diversity peaked in 8000 BC when up to 20,000 languages could exist (assuming that the world population is 5-10 million people, and the average community size is 500-1000). Today, probably less than half of that number remains [5]. In many of these cases, the death of a language was caused by the fact that an ethnic group assimilated into the dominant society and adopted its language. The situation persists today, although this issue is being discussed with increasing urgency due to the unprecedented rate of loss of indigenous languages [9]. At least 50% of the approximately 6,000 existing languages in the world will become extinct within the next century [4].

This is an intellectual and social tragedy. The language preserves the history of the people and reflects its identity. This is also a legacy for the rest of humanity. Once lost, it will never be returned.

It is worth noting that the number of permanent speakers of less common languages is sharply decreasing. The presence of a global lingua franca over time may deprive people of the need to learn other languages or reduce the opportunities for this. Thus, the language of global communication will accelerate the disappearance of languages spoken by a small number of people, or make all other languages unnecessary. There is also a possibility that the global language will cultivate speakers of an elite monolingual class that is dismissive of speakers of other languages. Those who can speak such a language fluently – and especially those for whom it is native – will succeed in many fields of activity without much effort, unlike people who do not possess the proper skills and knowledge of lingua franca. Scientists who do not speak English as a native language will need more time to study reports in English compared to their colleagues who speak their native language, and, as a result, they will have less time to do their creative work. Likely, top managers who do not speak English as a native language and work in English-speaking companies in parts of the world such as Europe or Africa may run at loss compared to their colleagues who speak their native language.

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Will the global language eliminate the motivation of adults to learn other languages? This problem already seems quite real. General observations show that clear signs of linguistic complacency are present in the typical British or American tourist who travels the world assuming that everyone speaks English. In addition, there is a genuine, widespread lack of motivation to learn other languages, partly due to a lack of money and opportunities, but also a lack of interest, and this may well contribute to the growing formation of English as a global language.

However, in economically difficult times, success in increasing exports and attracting foreign investment may depend on various factors, and, as is known, sensitivity to the language spoken by a country’s potential foreign partners has a special impact. Not only at the level of business and industry, but also at the mass tourism level, there are signs of growing respect for other cultures and a greater willingness to engage in language learning. Attitudes towards language are constantly changing, and more and more people are discovering that they are mastering a foreign language quickly enough.

Having analyzed the above-given statements, it should be noted that arguments about the need for national or cultural identity are often seen as the opposite of arguments about the need for mutual understanding. But this is misleading. It is quite possible to create a situation in which clarity and identity happily coexist. This situation is familiar with bilingualism, but bilingualism, in which one of the languages within the speaker is a global language providing access to the world community, and the other is a well–resource regional language providing access to the local community. These two functions can be seen as complementary, meeting different needs. And precisely because the functions are so different, the world of linguistic diversity can, in principle, continue to exist in a world united by a common language.

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