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PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE RUSSIAN UNIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

The article identifies the factors characterizing the process of Russian higher education internationalization using contact English as the main tool of globalization. Internationalization of higher education is understood as the process of integration of global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education. Among the main factors of internationalization it is possible to indicate: use of the English language (EL) as the instrument of the process, student and teacher mobility, English medium instruction, curriculum reform, mutual recognition of diplomas, etc. It is claimed that the main problems of the Russian higher education internationalization are the prevailing introduction of English "from above", insufficient academic mobility, a small proportion of international English-language courses and programs and general lack of systemic English medium instruction, all resulting in a low level of proficiency in English. Specific trends of internationalization of the Russian education system are studied on the basis of experiments conducted at the Institute of Economics and Management of V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University. An analysis of the level of collective and individual EL proficiency, carried out in three social-age groups of teachers and students, shows a significant discrepancy between the factors of professional and everyday communication, depending on the communicative practice, age, and individual goals of the informants. The main conclusion is that the analysis confirms the thesis about the need to change teachers' generations for successful internationalization of the university community.

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Keywords: Globalization, academic mobility, English medium instruction, internationalization.



1. Introduction

This article discusses the impact produced on Russian national higher education by all-embracing processes of globalization, and as a preamble it is necessary to adopt a succinct view of globalization offered by Canadian researcher Knight (2015): *the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas . . . across borders*. It is important to stress that in the early 21st century there can hardly be a single country which has not been affected by globalization though the consequences may differ due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities. Knight (2015) positions globalization as a multifaceted process impacting internationalization of education.

1.1. Definition of internationalization.

There is no one-to-one correspondence between the contents of *globalization* and *internationalization*. Knight (2003) defined internationalization as the “process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of postsecondary education” (p. 2). She emphasized that the scope of internationalization could be limited to one educational institution, a certain sector comprising a number of educational institutions, or involve all national educational institutions.

The definition goes beyond specific contexts of teaching, research, and post-educational activities. It calls for changes in the institution's existing structure, operating modes, and ideology to be sufficiently qualified for joining and contributing to the global knowledge economy.

American researcher Hawawini (2016) claims that in order for an educational institution to be competitive in the global knowledge economy, its students and faculty have to go beyond traditional criteria of teaching, research, and service. According to him, “internationalization is an ongoing process of change whose objective is to integrate the institution and its key stakeholders (its students and faculty) into the emerging global knowledge economy” (Hawawini, 2016, p. 14).

In a study published by the European Parliament, the definition of internationalization was extended with the idea of enhancing the quality and social value of education. Thus, “internationalization is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society” (European Parliament, 2015, para. 10).

Internationalization of higher education is the process of transition from traditional higher education, when universities ensured the needs of the national economy and infrastructure, to its current state refurbished to meet the needs of the international economy and infrastructure. The process is basing on the fact that education has become a subject of export, and the university's competitiveness is often estimated by the number of foreign students it can attract and the number of international partnership programs it can organize (Hagers, 2009). This is confirmed by the studies of the European Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), presented at the seminar “Bologna 2020” (Vlaanderen, 2008).

1.2. Components of internationalization.

In a report prepared for the opening of the seminar, Director of the Association Wächter (2008) identified six groups of factors that characterize the international nature of European higher education.

Wächter (2008) considers the ever-increasing **mobility** of students and staff. The most important manifestation of the internationalization of education is the mobility of students traveling abroad to study at a foreign university and, to a lesser extent, the mobility of teachers and researchers. The form of student mobility is determined either by studying for one or two semesters without obtaining a diploma, or by longer studies with the aim of obtaining a diploma. Horizontal mobility can be realized through natural redistribution of students according to their interests between European countries that have equally developed higher education systems, and vertical mobility that is demonstrated by students from countries with less developed education systems moving to study in countries with more developed systems. An example of horizontal mobility is the Erasmus Mundus Program, and an example of vertical mobility is the transfer of students from developing countries to study at leading European universities.

Indeed, for the period of 2014-2020, “Erasmus +” has planned to cover 2 million students, 300,000 teachers and researchers and 25,000 doctoral students from European countries (horizontal mobility), as well as 135,000 students, teachers and scientists from other countries with which the EU has partnerships (vertical mobility) (EU, 2014).

Mobility of students, teachers and researchers as a factor in the internationalization of education presupposes **recognition at the state level** of diplomas, degrees, length of study, qualification criteria, courses, modules, etc. The mutual recognition envisaged by the Bologna process gives international status to education systems of different countries and encourages student mobility between them.

The presence of foreign students, teachers and researchers is impossible without **reforming the curriculum** to include the international component in their content and introduce new teaching methods and tools, which is the third group of internationalization factors. The mobility of curricula and teaching tools can also be implemented through **internationalization at home**, i.e. integrated courses and mutually recognized components of one curriculum distributed among cooperating universities (EACEA, 2015).

Another widespread area of transnational education is represented by various forms of the so-called **offshore higher education institutions** providing training in accordance with the programs of the head university by obtaining a third-level license in a given country. It is a special form of mobility, when students do not leave their country, but a foreign university offers them their program *in situ*.

All these forms of internationalization are carried out through **marketing and promotion abroad** of leading higher education institutions. Interaction of all factors is coordinated through a joint internationalization program – the agenda of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) which administers common accreditation criteria based on the European Register of Higher Education Institutions (Wächter, 2008).

1.3. The instrument of internationalization.

There is no doubt that the English language (EL) has become the main instrument of modern higher education which has entered the era of intensive internationalization. At many European universities EL is used for the development of a global network of higher education and international academic communication. It is actively winning the position of the dominant language of instruction – *English-*

medium instruction (Kim, Kim, & Kweon, 2018) and the universal contact tool for higher education (Parr, 2014) though this process is far from being complete.

In 2015 well-known Internet site *Studyportals* gathered information from 1,000 universities worldwide in order to offer students the information they need to make the right choice for their education future about most popular English-taught degrees. The Universities have been selected from the Webometrics University rankings (Studyportals, 2018). Below there is information on five European countries leading in the English-medium instruction:

1. The Netherlands (12 universities offering 1034 English-taught degrees including 104 Bachelors and 930 Master's programs).
2. Germany (58 universities offering 835 English-taught degrees, including 109 Bachelors and 726 Master's programs).
3. Sweden (12 universities offering 550 English-taught degrees, including 24 Bachelors and 526 Master's programs).
4. Denmark (7 universities offering 482 English-taught degrees, including 428 Bachelors and 54 Master's programs).
5. Spain (42 universities in the top 1,000 offering 404 English-taught degrees, including 115 Bachelors and 289 Master's programs).

The key role of EL is that it enhances mobility trends, enables students to compete in the global labor market, eliminates cultural and language differences and encourages university administrators to expand exchange programs, introduce double degrees and promote the participation of their scientists in foreign studies. In publications devoted to ways of reforming European higher education (Bedenlier, Kondakci, & Zawacki-Richter, 2018; De Wit, 2017; Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2016; Klemencic, 2018), the following prerequisites for the further introduction of EL in these areas are noted:

- internationalization of higher education and science through coordination of the international nature of production and consumption of scientific information;
- integration of content and language (Content and Language Integrated Learning - CLIL), teaching special subjects in EL during which students master the language while studying the content of special subjects;
- methodological support of such programs through the preparation of English-language teaching and research materials;
- individual and university-sponsored mobility of university students, researchers, and teachers;
- international graduate employment opportunities due to internationalization of economy and production;
- competition of universities in order to attract foreign students, for whom EL serves as an instrument of interethnic and intercultural communication.

2. Problem Statement

The Russian State Higher School is a complete system consisting of more than 650 state universities, which enroll about 9 million students, including over 220,000 foreign citizens from almost 200 countries of the world (Rosstat, 2018). According to the Webometrics Ranking of World's Universities, 585 Russian

higher education institutions are included in 12,000 of the most significant universities in the world – from position 122 (Lomonosov Moscow State University) and ending with position 11985 (Irkutsk State Pedagogical University / East-Siberian State Academy of Education) (Webometrics, 2018).

In the process of internationalization of Russian higher education, the same trends are observed at leading universities functioning in other regions of the world.

To begin with, it should be marked that the internationalization of Russian university education is carried out “from above” – through its goal-oriented integration into the international system of higher education, while the internationalization “from below” affects all members of the university community who speak EL, the basic tool in the process of international academic communication.

2.1. EL limitation in the Russian higher education

Two main functions that EL performs should be pointed out: 1 – it is used “from above” in various forms of state-oriented university educational activities and the international infrastructure of higher education which is an integral part of the international infrastructure of globalization; 2 – as a contact language “from below” it serves various types of mobility of students, teachers and researchers; promotes their secondary socialization in the international culture of the academic community.

In the field of Russian higher education EL is taught regularly as a foreign language due to the mandatory regulation of educational activities “from above”. Accordingly, it becomes relevant to study both the forms and channels of using EL beyond the limits of curricula and the language features of university communication in Russian universities which are part of the global system of higher education.

English medium instruction is carried out only in some universities, such as Moscow Lomonosov University, St. Petersburg Medical Academy, Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys, Russian Economic Plekhanov University, National Higher School of Economics, etc (RAKUS, 2011).

The most common field of internationalization is attracting foreign students to study in higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation. A significant role in this process is played by the intercollegiate organization RACUS, which offers foreign citizens training at prestigious Russian state universities in more than 300 medical, technical, economic and humanitarian areas of training. The name of the organization “RACUS” is an abbreviation of the names of its divisions: the Russian-Arabic / Asian / African / American Centers for University Services.

The activities of RACUS are not limited to advertising and information in the mass media of foreign countries. It uses such forms as preparation and implementation of joint educational projects of Russian and foreign higher educational institutions; establishment of educational institutions and filial branches of Russian educational institutions abroad, etc. (RAKUS, 2011).

In addition, internationalization through introduction of English medium instruction is facilitated by inviting foreign scientists for research and teaching, as well as organizing semester internships based on agreements on the exchange of senior students with partner universities abroad (Bykova, 2012).

2.2. Problems with EL communication and English medium instruction

The diversity of opinions and approaches to solving the problem of internationalization through introduction of English medium instruction into the university educational process shows that leading

figures of Russian higher education have not yet decided how to teach their students and teachers to effectively use this tool of internationalization.

Prospects for expanding English medium instruction are primarily in overcoming the lack of mobility of Russian students, teachers and researchers, which in its turn is directly related to the low level of English proficiency – the main tool for professional communication in the international academic environment (Enikeeva, 2011).

Summing up, we should emphasize that the introduction of EL as the tool of the process, which we call internationalization “from above” doesn't seem to be complete. There are many roads to be explored for the integration of Russian university education into international educational networks, participation in international projects and programs, the use of their potential to academic mobility.

3. Research Questions

How are the universal trends of internationalization specified in the Russian higher education system due to the current state of integration into international educational networks? Does internationalization "from below" represent specific lingua-social features of Russian academic EL discourse?

Being potential components of the international system, Russian national and local academic communities mainly comprise speakers of the same source language; consequently EL performs the function of their internationalization tool in situations of potential contact with speakers of other source languages.

Participants of Russian academic communication are involved in EL discourse not as random individuals, but as members of the academic community. Therefore, EL discourse involves mastering sufficient language skills for interaction a) in the official institutional environment and institutional speaker community setting institutional goals of communication; b) in a freer, informal communication, self-regulated communicative practice and non-institutional EL discourse.

Natural speech samples are produced in the process of purposeful communicative practice by members of this community, regardless of their individual level of English proficiency.

Specific forms of social practice are displayed in sociocultural contexts of Russian academic mobility where EL discourse production is determined by the fact of belonging to academic community, social roles, general and private goals of individual participants, their knowledge of social situation, norms of behavior and values of a given socio-cultural system. Disclosing the content of these factors we emphasize that they result from the following prerequisites for the use of EL by individual members of the university community, i.e., for internationalization “from below”: 1. Limited duration of time to stay in the university community for student majority of communication participants. 2. Individual goals of the participants of EL communication. 3. Communicative practice in EL, taking place in the process of both real and virtual institutional interaction of participants. 4. Collective EL discourse refracted through the preceding personal experience of individual participants.

We consider it necessary to put forward the proposition that internationalization “from above” is impossible without internationalization “from below”. The four factors listed above are equally obligatory for the use of EL by all members of the university community for their independent entry into this process, since it is precisely the subject-oriented EL that serves as a tool of inter-ethnic institutional communication.

4. Purpose of the Study

Since EL acts as one of the factors of collective identification for members of the university community, its speakers are potential Russian-English bilinguals. The purpose we will try to achieve is to prove that EL proficiency improves from one university generation of potential Russian-English bilinguals to another in the process of internationalization. In the university social environment such bilingualism is recognized as a special advantage that enhances the status of the individual and opens the way to those areas of professional activity that are inaccessible to monolinguals. Undoubtedly, Russian is the first language functionally prevailing in the university discourse, and members of this community preferably use it in majority of contexts in order to satisfy their information and communication needs.

By Russian-English bilingualism we mean bilingual proficiency and linguocultural knowledge that is realized in alternating active or passive language use depending on communicative spheres, linguocultural situations, as well as social and individual factors. There are different levels of EL proficiency, the choice of its active and passive use depending on sociolinguistic factors. The degree of EL proficiency is not indicated in this interpretation: it only implies that the practice of alternating languages presupposes an ability of implementing EL for communication purposes.

5. Research Methods

The data of the EL functioning in a Russian university community were studied on the material collected in a series of experiments in which about three hundred teachers, graduate and post-graduate students of V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University Institute of Economics and Management took part. Survey, selection and expert assessment of EL production in target groups was carried out with the help of fellow teachers of English at the foreign languages chair.

The study of internationalization required 1/ selection of informants representing the main social-age strata of the university community, 2/ assessment of the level of EL proficiency and 3/ identification and typological systematization of sociolinguistic and linguocultural characteristics that identify the university community in the time of internationalization of higher education. At the stage of collecting factual material and its primary systematization the survey of informants was conducted through interpersonal verbal communication in English, in the form of semi-structured interviews, consisting of both pre-prepared questions and spontaneous questions from interviewers. Informants were asked to independently assess their language competence in EL basing on the modified criteria of the European system of foreign language proficiency levels distributed in the blocks of listening, reading, speaking and writing. The list of self-assessment criteria for EL levels was compiled in accordance with a bank of descriptors the scales of which are based on a system of categories developed for describing the common European competences of foreign language proficiency (Council of Europe, 2013).

6. Findings

The first group of informants using EL in professional communication included 50 teachers in the age range of 28-50 years and 5-20 years of experience in teaching and research activities. The second group

consisted of 100 young teachers in the age range of 23 to 30 years and 1-4 years of experience in teaching and research activities. The third group consisted of 150 students in the age range of 21-24 years.

The process of introducing EL in the sphere of Russian university education is faced with the same problems that are characteristic of European universities. The traditional language ideology of many teachers and students is based on the norms and standards of native English speakers, although such norms are not observed in the context of international academic communication.

Comparison of average values of communicative competence in everyday and professional communication provides fairly objective results on the Likert scale.

Informants of the first group, in general, assessed their everyday competence as follows: Level A – 12%; Level B – 22%; Level C – 29%; Level D – 26%; Level E – 11%. A somewhat more positive ratio of marks is observed in professional competence: Level A – 19%; Level B – 26%; Level C – 27%; Level D – 19%; Level E – 9%.

For this group of informants, a significant discrepancy between the evaluation values on a five-point scale of the four factors of professional and everyday competence is very indicative: special vocabulary (3.16–3.96), dialogue speech (2.62–3.08), reading comprehension (3.08–3.48) and listening comprehension (2.60–2.90). These four factors develop in the process of accumulating experience of professional discussion, study of special literature, lectures and practical classes, which are necessary components of teaching and research activities.

Informants of the second group, in general, assessed their everyday competence as follows: Level A – 21%; Level B – 26%; Level C – 24%; Level D – 21%; Level E – 8%. More positive correlation of marks is observed in professional competence: Level A – 24%; Level B – 29%; Level C – 27%; Level D – 15%; Level E – 5%.

For this group of informants, the significant difference between the values of the three factors of professional and everyday competence is quite indicative: reading comprehension (3.41–4.11), special vocabulary (3.27–3.69) and, to a lesser extent, writing (2.89–3.15). These three factors characterize professional skills and abilities that need to be intensively developed by young scholars and teachers.

Informants of the third group, in general, assessed their everyday competence as follows: Level A – 22%; Level B – 27%; Level C – 25%; Level D – 18%; Level E – 8%. Insignificant differences in the ratio of ratings are observed in professional competence: Level A – 22%; Level B – 22%; Level C – 26%; Level D – 22%; Level E – 8%.

This group of informants is generally characterized by higher values of everyday competence assessment: reading (3.37-3.14) and dialogue speech (3.54-3.34), only the assessment of the professional vocabulary is slightly higher in everyday vocabulary (3.46–3.59). Their professional communication is limited to the scope of educational activities, which, obviously, serves as a certain preparatory stage.

Comparison of the self-assessment values of group 1 and 2 shows that in everyday communication teachers of the older age category are inferior to their younger colleagues in all types of communicative competence, with the exception of written speech, where their marks are slightly higher. An even more significant difference in favor of young teachers is observed in professional oral communication. These differences in the self-assessment values confirm the thesis put forward in the university community about the need to change teachers' generations for successful internationalization of higher education.

Comparison of the self-assessment values of group 2 and group 3 shows that within a few years after graduation, the activity of young teachers in everyday EL communication does not develop and becomes lower than that of students. In contrast, their competence in professional communication increases and exceeds the professional communicative competence of students in all types.

7. Conclusion

Internationalization of Russian higher education requires implementation of EL as the universal pragmatic tool for entering the global network of higher education. EL is used in the field of Russian higher education due to mandatory educational activities as an obligatory subject of the curriculum. However, it is insufficiently used as the tool of mobility of student and teacher community.

Internationalization “from above” creates a situation that is characterized by the presence of an ever-increasing number of participants of EL communication stimulated by institutional goals. Internationalization “from below” is individually carried out by all members of the university community in order to independently enter the sphere of international professional communication.

EL speakers are potential Russian-English bilinguals, and in university professional activities such bilingualism is recognized as a factor increasing the social status of an individual. Observations on the various groups that make up the university community show that EL proficiency level varies from one university generation to another in the process of internationalization. According to the results of the assessment of the EL proficiency level, it has been proved that in everyday and professional communication, informants of the older age category are inferior to their younger colleagues in all types of communicative competence except written speech and special terminology.

In general, the average self-assessment values of all types of everyday communicative competence are significantly lower than those of institutional communicative competence because accommodation to linguocultural norms of internationalization is carried out in accordance with the EL introduction "from above" and the need for informal EL use "from below" can hardly be met in academic areas of university communication.

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