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LANGUAGE PICTURE OF THE WORLD: THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE MONITOR PROJECT

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Abstract

Studies of modern global communication are traditionally aimed at discovering and systematizing different issues dealing with verbal and non-verbal interaction. The Global Language Monitor (GLM) which makes the focus of attention in the present paper is an efficient modern linguistic instrument intended for registering and rating the most popular verbal units that express important social, economic, political and cultural concepts in English. Since the beginning of the millennium is characterized by the rising impact of English upon globalization the authors set the purpose of analyzing the correlation between the top trending words in English and the way society perceives the relevant phenomena as part of its life in the time of globalization. Methods of linguocultural and sociolinguistic descriptions alongside elements of discourse analysis and linguosynergetics prove to be helpful to that end. The top words and phrases selected as the demonstrative material for illustrating English units evolution, contribute to the adequate interpretation of modern national English culture and mentality. The data obtained in the course of work might be used as a valid platform for language picturing of the world through the GLM. The transformations within the corpus of language units under consideration also reflect the changes in the life of the English speaking communities nowadays. The authors conclude that the interaction of both evident and implicit effects of globalization are objectively identified in the language picture of the world and should be taken into consideration in comprehending significant trends in the state of minds around the world.

1. Introduction

The title of the present paper requires the interpretation of globalization as a phenomenon embracing both information and communication components that are actually inconceivable out of a certain language environment, out of language means, since it is globalization that caused the emerging of two fundamental contradictory factors influencing development of language and the pursued language policy of today. On the one hand, people who are actually forming the best human segment of the modern global world do need mutual understanding, and at the same time people do require identity, national and cultural identity, on the other hand. While mutual understanding is of vital necessity for further development of mankind in all spheres of human activities identity crisis is a serious challenge for modern society with its highly developed technologies and archaic systems and subsystems meeting difficulties of modernization (Bachmann & Barth, 1998). Moreover, vital forces of tens and hundreds of languages are disappearing owing to expansion of world languages, and the English language makes no exception in the case. According to the official data, it is a well-known fact (and nobody ventures to deny it) that at present the English language evidently occupies the leading positions among other world languages in terms of the number of people using it either as a native language, or as a second language, or as a legal world communication instrument. The number of users is estimated at about 2 billion people (Payack, 2000).

2. Problem Statement

The epoch of globalization is characterized by a great number of technologically based and conceptually renewed projects aimed at monitoring and registering changes in the English vocabulary. One of them is known under the name of 'The Global Language Monitor'; it was born in Silicon Valley at the initiative of Paul J. J. Payack who is President and the Chief Analyst of the above project launched at the turn of the 21st century. His idea was to document language units used throughout the vast English-speaking world where people use English for any sort of oral or written communication. The most distinguishing feature of the GLM is the application of its Narrative Tracker technologies which are known as the World of Big Data for the global Internet and social media analysis. Narrative Tracker is based on global discourse, providing a real-time, valid picture about any topic, at any point in any time. Narrative Tracker analyzes the Internet, blogosphere, the top 300,000 online print and electronic global media, as well as new social media sources as they emerge. Today's speedy development of technologies in the service of humanitarian research and practices gives a valid scientific foundation for investigating the perspectives of harmonizing interpersonal and international interaction in the relevant areas of people's academic and practical interests (Carrier, 2017; Malyuga, Shvets, & Tikhomirov, 2016).

Another peculiar thing about the above project concerns its rules and regulations worked out by the J. J. Payack's team member in the area of vocabulary ranking, is based upon the actual word usage and in order to qualify the GLM word lists appropriately the registered words, phrases and names should meet at least three criteria:

- they must be found on the global scale;
- they should have a minimum of 25,000 citations;

▪ they should have the requisite 'depth' and 'breadth' of usage.

Depth is here defined as appearing in various forms of media; breadth implies that they must appear world-over, not being limited to a particular profession or social group or geography.

The goal is to find the most frequent word usage that will endure the test of time. The research topic explored in this paper is language and enunciation, and specific constructions, viewed in the perspectives of cognitive linguistics, semiotics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis studies. According to forecasts of some scholars majoring in the field of national languages contamination through the systems of global communication, the future of world social and linguistic experience depends upon the transformations and changes in national mentalities, national traditional values, national cultural trends and historical development tendencies a lot. There is one common fundamental component behind all these facts, and this component is a national language providing the wholeness of both human thinking and human activities on the global scale. Since today the world English is considered to be the undoubted leader in the sphere of world international communication it would be only appropriate to focus on the ways and means of top English units arrangement within rating lists elaborated by highly qualified specialists from the GLM team. Another problematic issue of the present research paper concerns the area of multicultural and sociolinguistic interactions interpreted in terms of the linguosynergetic approach.

3. Research Questions

The study presented in this paper sets the following research questions:

▪ What are the challenges of empirical language research under the impact of globalization ideology?

▪ What are the key conceptual trends of THE TWOY (the top words of the year) movement within the GLM schemata?

▪ Which sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic factors account for the up and down shifting of language units within the modern English verbal space at the start of the XXI century?

▪ Which aspects of linguosynergetic approach can contribute to the development development of innovative discursive methodology in the vocabulary studies at the beginning of the second millennium?

4. Purpose of the Study

The present paper is aimed at analyzing the sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic peculiarities of the world English language units through the eyes of the GLM as well as revealing the correlation between the top trending words in English and the way society perceives the relevant phenomena in its life. The authors' attention is focused on the subject represented by the English-throughout-the-world context and its evolution in the epoch of globalization.

5. Research Methods

In view of the above goal the use of linguocultural and sociolinguistic descriptions supported by the elements of discourse analysis and functional linguosynergetics have been applied to discover the key tends and trends in the English verbal space at the turn of the XXI century. As to the essential point of

GLM research methodology Paul J. J. Payack, the GLM President, and Chief Word Analyst, believes that it is "…to examine the totality of Global English with the tools now available to better understand the underlying trends that shape our words and, hence, our world. Our goal remains to detect the small changes in the language that often presage titanic shifts in the way humans communicate" (Payack, 2000, p. 79). So, the methodological platform of the present project is provided by the combination of theoretical speculations about modern verbal trajectory and authentic empirical data to provide the valid results. Considering the universal character of the synergic situation within the cluster of English verbal units at the start of the second millennium it may be assumed that the language evolution in this context is characterized by systemic spontaneous structuring emerging under the influence of both centrifugal and centripetal forces.

6.   Findings

Contemplating on the fate and fortunes of the English language, Payack (2000, 2018a, 2018b) shared his sensation of a thrill "to be a continuing witness to its evolution, watching and anticipating the countless new ways it will impact the lives of billions around the globe for decades (and even centuries) to come. In view of the predictions worded by Paul J. J. Payack in reference to the language impact upon the shaping of our world, the focus of our research is on the fragments of the GLM annual reports (GLM, 2000-2019). To describe the changes within the verbal space of this period represented by three top language units of the year, all language units were marked according to their linguistic status into three groups: words, word combinations or phrases, and proper names. The total number of language units covering annual top words for a fifteen-year period (2001-2015) is examined with the aim to track the trends, while the last group of modern verbal leaders comprising the most popular shifts for a four-year period (2016-2019) is commented in more detail.

At the turn of the XXI century the top names that more or less regularly entered the leading groups of most frequently used language units were *W. Dubya* (the abbreviated format for *George Bush, the Junior*), *Pope Francis,* political figures known for their activities like *Al Gore,* a politician and environmental activist who served as vice president (1993–2001) of the United States; Nobel Laureate *Al Gore* focused the world's attention on the global climate crisis. Then *Barack Obama* with a significant portion of human attention since 2008 comes as a permanent member of the top names' group with the only exception of *Steve Jobs* (1955-2011), whose name is associated with the success of Apple computers and the development of new revolutionary technology. In 2010 we started witnessing evident changes in Chinese leadership manifested in a rapid frequency rise of *Xi Jinping*, whose name is familiar to billions of people today.

As to the top name in the last four years' GLM annual reports it is *Donald Trump*, President of the USA. The fact has to be admitted that his popularity is growing due to both his intensive social and political activities and his speech manner characterized by frequent use of short verbal units rather than sophisticated words and phrases, repetitions, exaggerations, emotional colouring, which makes it better perceived by ordinary Americans. Since his presidential election campaign TV language analytics experts have repeatedly noted that the most peculiar way about Trump is the way he speaks to the public (Inzaurralde, 2017; Sclafani, 2017; Simms, 2018). It may well be one of the reasons that accounts for

registering verbal innovations and English derivatives related to his name (*Trumpism, Trumponomics, Trumpian*, etc). Another top name which stands a bit apart from the names of prominent figures of today is *Malala Yousafzai* who is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate; she is known for human rights advocacy, especially the education of women and children in her native Swat Valley in Khyber.

One more contribution to this rapidly changing cluster of top names is *Ebola* (registered as a top unit in 2014); Ebola virus disease or Ebola hemorrhagic fever is a human disease; the name comes from the Ebola River in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it was first found.

So, it follows from the schedule of verbal units usage for a certain period of time that words marked by the greatest number of repetitions are included by the GLM into the annual top lists of English words. Considering another top group from the annual reports including English phrases and word combinations it is possible to track the interaction of linguistic and extralinguistic factors and their impact upon the process of language evolution in the epoch of globalization at the turn of the centuries: "The Words of the Year chosen by the Global Language Monitor can be used to better understand the history of the 21st century, thus far" (Payack, 2000, p. 216). The annual lists of top word combinations and phrases mirrored through the GLM show the deep concern of the world about terrorism: *Arab Spring, Microaggression, Islamic Extremism, Hezbollah* (an international terrorist group primarily concerned with ongoing events in Lebanon and Israel), *Al Qaeda* (a terroristic group considered to be transnational); then come the consequences of migrant crisis as well as the threat of climate changes leading to global warming: *Migrant Crisis, Global Warming, Climate Chang*e. It is also through the annual top word lists that we are informed about the key issues of toxic politics and financial shocks common to both advanced and economically backward countries: *Fiscal Cliff, Financial Tsunami*.

Moreover, the new information technologies based on computer communicative platforms and processing data have contributed to the global renewal of the English vocabulary for the last two decades (*Dot.com, Twitter, Emoji*). It is noteworthy that not only outstanding persons' speeches are in the spotlight but also social, political events and election campaigns that are of vital importance for the global citizenship in various parts of the English speaking world: *Obama-mania, Make America Great Again, Brexit, #Me TOO, The Weinstein Effect* (a scandal provoking a global movement against sexual misconduct).

Actually at least two trends in the English vocabulary twenty-first century renewal should be mentioned: one of them concerns structural aspects of the newly registered words, while another is associated with the semantic transformations of the words already well known to the world Englishes. The language units *Selfiediction, Foodfie, Frenemy, LDR* (long distance relationship), *Brofie* are evidently demonstrating structural innovations. Meanwhile the recent innovations, like *The Moment* and *Weaponize* (registered in 2018), require some additional comments because of the remarkable shifts in their meanings on the one hand, and "…because of the disparity between English-language usage between the US and the rest of the world especially in the language of politics <...> Today *The Moment* represents a larger than life experience, the convergence of, perhaps, fame, fortune, and happenstance representing a time of excellence or conspicuousness" said President of the Global Language Monitor (Payack, 2018b, p. 17). Payack (2018b) continued: "As to the word *Weaponize* it is for the first time in the

GLM life-story when the two top words representing both British and American versions are considered to be leaders in this verbal maraphon" (p. 73).

Whatever trajectories are observed in language evolution we should bear in mind that these trends cannot come completely out of the blue (McCarthy, 2017). Even if they are not evident at the initial stage of their formation, some driving forces have inevitably given rise to them in this or that way. The synergetic theory explains it through the so called self-organization of the language system elements in the process of their interaction and mutual influence on each other and on the environment (Kharkovskaya, 2018; Ponomarenko, 2016). Functional linguosynergetics sees the language environment as a complex combination and interaction of those different systems which are inalienable from language (like the systems of mental and psychic ties, of cognition, of cultural concepts, of social and individual worldviews, of acceptable likes and dislikes of people, of means of historical and cultural experience preservation, of political regulatory devices etc.). All this medium makes up a holistic unity with language, as neither language can live without the medium, nor the medium can function without language. Thus, their permanent interaction is building up those trends that gradually give some shape to the globalizing linguistic consciousness.

The simplified formula of the described process looks like "2+2=5". It implies that both at the level of separate words or phrases and at the level of the language system the units acquiring new shades of meaning or newly born units are formed as a result of various semantic and structural combinations which can not be confined to a mere adding up of language elements. Therefore, the advance of certain components to the top positions (as well as the retreat of others to the background) is always a testimony of deep mental, cultural and social processes intercepting and overlapping with each other.

7. Conclusion

The data obtained offer a lot of opportunities for research speculations about theoretical issues assuming the adequate interpretation of changing language behaviour during this challenging period of time. In terms of the linguosynergetic approach to the study of the twenty-first century verbal innovations we can state that the so-called dynamic chaos of language elements within the frames of the above cluster is step-by-step replaced by the orderly pattern due to their clash in bifurcation zones on the one hand, and due to the impact of the so-called functional attractors. Moreover, in many cases this new verbal model is provided by not only non-linear linguistic factors but by exra-linguistic phenomena and events the combination of which results in the emergence of the critically new language entities. In the process of constant up and down shifting of systemic nuclear and peripheral elements within the verbal cluster under consideration they are interacting with each other and it is immediately reflected both in their mobility speed and in their structural and semantic transformations as well.

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