

Language Regulation in a Global World

Guennady V. Svishchev, Alexander M. Amatov and Eugenia V. Tolstolutskaia
Belgorod State University, Pobeda Street 85, 308015 Belgorod, Russia

Abstract: Language regulation is a continuous process that comprises any changes to a natural language. The information revolution at the turn of the 20th century brought about the facts of English lexicon penetrating throughout quite a few of industries and other areas of public life. The study deals with some aspects of language regulation under the pressure of social, economic and political issues as parts of national language policies. As this study, mainly focuses on vocabulary, lexicographical, semantic and morphological analyses are used throughout the main part. It has been shown in the study that language regulatory processes have been an issue for some centuries now, although approaches are very different throughout nations. For one thing, the difference may be attributed to different statuses that languages have in the modern global world. Therefore, various political, economic and social factors provoke a wide range of measures in language regulation policies from mere scholarly interests or lamenting over ‘the beauty of the original language’ to the issues of a language’s adequate functioning and ultimately, survival.

Key words: Language regulation, globalization, linguistic purism, linguistic protectionism, adopted words

INTRODUCTION

The issues of language ‘purity’ and linguistic protectionism go back as far as national languages crystallized out of numerous dialects and other local varieties. Currently, the point remains mainly due to the fact that English words and even grammar elements penetrate other languages.

Back in the early 19th century some attempts to protect literary traditions in Russian were made. The aim was to prevent modern tendencies to infiltrate the stem of the language. Thus, A.S. Shishkov (1754-1841), a prominent Russian statesman, vice admiral and author, the Minister of public education and the head of Censorship Committee published his best known book ‘Rassuzhdeniye o starom I novom sloge rossiyskogo yazyka’ (‘Thoughts of old and new styles of the Russian language’). Some of his protectionist ideas and arguments against unneeded adoptions were met as a mere diehard attitude by most of his contemporaries. In modern textbooks A.S. Shishkov is treated as an author of some unsuccessful wordforms that he meant to make substitutes for adapted words like ‘mokrostupy’ (literary ‘wetsteppers’) for galoshes, ‘truporazyatie’ (literary ‘corpse-disassembling’) for anatomy, ‘zemlemeriye’ (literary ‘earthmeasuring’) for geometry, etc. (Aksyonova, 2015).

Now a days for instance, Russian sports announcements meant for general readers are often full of terms that do not belong to literary Russian and may thus

hamper adequate comprehension. Every now and then studys on boxing include ‘cruisers’ (heavy weights, resembling cruiser ships among smaller vessels), ‘prospects’ (prospective athletes), ‘challengers’ and ‘contenders’ (those who claim their priority and call the champion to contest quite obvious terms for English speakers but not for Russians readers), ‘punchers’ (V. Klichko is definitely not a puncher). Speaking of football terminology we should also mention some official English adoptions that were in use some time ago but are currently considered outdated like back, halfback, goalkeeper, corner, etc. Probably, forward is among those still in use. While looking quite adequate on sport fans’ websites, a formidable lot of unfamiliar terms used without any comments in official publications seems at least odd. Probably, the aim of their abundant use is to show the author’s professionalism and/or profound competence being considered by many as some sort of ‘professional stylishness’ (Krongauz, 2015).

Such abundant (and often slapdash) introduction of Foreign terms provokes negative reaction among both laymen and politicians. Thus in June 2014, an initiative to ban foreign words from public use was proposed by the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (Russia 24, 2014).

However, although English is most frequently accused of ‘invading’ other languages’ vocabulary, until approximately 19th century the situation had been quite the opposite. This study presents an overview of some issues connected with Foreign lexical items adopted by a language and linguistic protectionism exercised by some

activists in this respect. It is noteworthy that languages may well change their 'contributor/receiver' parts in the process. The attempts to regulate the use of the language in the light of its contamination by foreign-derived words in English and French will be considered further in this study.

PURISM AND LANGUAGE POLICIES

English is currently the source of a great amount of words adopted by other languages. However, it was only the 20th century that saw the unprecedented spread of English into nearly every field of modern society. For centuries before that English had been rather an 'importer' than 'exporter' of lexical items. This is easily illustrated by the fact that only some 25% of words in modern English derive from Germanic and not necessarily Anglo-Saxon origins these also include Norse, Dutch, German and other adoptions. By comparison, Latin and French each contribute over 28% of Modern English vocabulary (Finkenstaedt and Wolff, 1973).

For the overwhelming majority of foreign borrowings came to Middle English, the idea that words of Anglo-Saxon (or other Germanic) origin should have priority over the Foreign-derived ones (mainly Romanic, Latin and Greek) already existed in Early Modern English period. Thus, John Cheke, a notable English scholar, statesman and author, wrote in a letter to Thomas Hoby of 1561: 'I am of this opinion that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing of other tungen, wherein if we take not heed by tiim, ever borowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt' (Langer and Davies, 2005).

In the 19th century, a number of English linguists and authors, most notably William Barnes, attempted to 'purge' the English language of borrowings. The methods Barnes used included reanimating old or obscure English words, calquing Foreign-derived words with English morphemes and making new words with existing stems and affixes. Since, then the advocates of English purisms have developed Barnes's methods. Thus, a famous American science fiction author Poul Anderson wrote a short textbook on atomic theory called 'Uncleftish Beholding' (Anderson, 1989). The word 'uncleft' in the title refers to atom and all the words in the textbook have Germanic origin. One of the most recent books on the topic is David Cowley's *How we'd talk if the English had won in 1066* (Cowley, 2009) with a slightly different approach, namely reconstruction of Old English vocabulary and adapting them to modern English spelling and grammar.

The term *Anglish*, coined by Paul Jennings in 1968 is often used to denote any form of 'pure' constructed or reconstructed form of the language which includes only words of Germanic (preferably Anglo-Saxon) origin. Some websites present rather elaborate systems of lexical derivation and morphological procedure.

Although, such attempts to create a 'pure' English language (or tongue?) may and often do present interesting and challenging linguistic tasks, they seem to have always been of little interest to mainstream politicians in English-speaking countries. Also, these attempts sometimes are met with criticism in the media. The following two paragraphs may serve an example of that.

'Language peevers write for one another. They are not really writing for the larger public they do not expect to be heeded by the larger public and it would not be desirable if they were. Their identities are predicated on the belief that they are an elect, purists holding up the flickering candle of civilization amid the rabble. They write for one another to reinforce this status. If everyone wrote as they prescribe, their distinction would vanish.

Actually, there is a small additional audience of aspirants to the club: English majors, journalists, teacher's pets in whose minds a handful of shibboleths lodge, to be applied mechanically and unintelligently thereafter. But, the great unwashed public pays no attention and does not care, except to the extent that they have been schooled to feel vaguely uneasy about the way they speak and write' (McIntyre, 2014).

Probably, the only aspect of language regulation in modern English where political considerations have a big say is political correctness which however, falls beyond the scope of this study. As for the problems of linguistic purism and protectionism, very little (if any) steps have ever been taken in this direction from a political standpoint which sharply contrasts the situation with the language regulation in French-speaking countries.

The French language policy is of special interest here, since French being a major source of borrowings for nearly all European and some non-European languages, saw first attempts of linguistic protectionism at the peak of its popularity, namely in the late 17th early 18th centuries. It is obvious enough that a common language serves national unity. The problem was that French regions used to speak a variety of local dialects and even separate languages Breton, *langue d'oc*, etc. which often were unintelligible for the inhabitants of other districts of the country. It was considered a serious peril for the state and local teachers would often punish their student who spoke their local dialect (*patois*) instead of literary French. The outcome was seen in strict prescriptive measures as

for what words should be used in particular meanings and grammatical constructions which task was laid upon the French Academy.

The 20th century saw the process in full swing with several decrees issued on the matter followed by Loi #75-1349 on the use of the French language (the law concerning the use of the French language) passed on December 31, 1975. An updated edition was passed on August 4, 1994. A prior objective for the French language policy was the enriched and renewed language and the key points of the project received a strong media support (Gulinov, 2013).

The 20th century saw information revolution with English words penetrating all the fields of the French social life. The result was a set of official recommendations proposing French substitutes for English terms published by the French Academy. Thus, equivalents for various terms in the area of information technology and computer science: courriel (from courrier électronique) for E-mail, fouineur (from fouiner 'to stick one's nose everywhere, pry into other people's business') for hacker, etc. It should be noted that some of the recommended neologisms are still to appear in dictionaries. Thus, fouineur in modern dictionaris is restricted to shopaholic.

Since early 1970s, the French authorities started to legitimize terms for use instead of foreign (mostly English) words. Thus, the proposed term logiciel has replaced the corresponding English term software within a decade. The term informatique coined by Philippe Dreyfus in 1962 and incorporating information and automatique has no exact equivalent in English being similar in its meanings to computer science, information technology and data processing. It is noteworthy in this wide society was also invited to participate in the eradication of Anglicisms. Thus, organisation internationale of the Francophonie announced a contest for the best innovative translation of the English words buzz, chat, newsletter, talk tuning which firmly anchored in French. Similar attempts had been made in Quebec where French equivalents for English terms appeared, such as clavardage (from clavier 'keyboard' and 'chatter chat') for chat, 'information letter' for newsletter for talk show. Some technical terms also were coined by backward translation from English: baladodiffusion for podcast, numériser for scanner, etc.

The contest resulted in some new recommended terms which, in their opinion, best correspond to their English equivalents. Thus, words tchatche and éblabla were proposed to substitute chat. The former term explicitly resembles its English counterpart set up in French spelling while the latter contains for électronique

and blabla, French for 'chatter'. The jury found the two terms more appropriate than dialogue proposed by the Terminology Committee.

The word infolettre was considered more appropriate to substitute newsletter than the Canadian lettre d'information. The term talk which was also used outside IT was represented by the French debat. The terminology Committee also proposes the term emission-debat (from French emission 'broadcasting' and debat 'discussion, debate').

The word personnalisation was originally proposed to substitute tuning which had been adopted to denote primarily car tuning. However, personnalisation does not adequately renders the meaning of car tuning, therefore another variant was proposed and considered the most adequate of all: bolidage, derived from bolide (meaning 'race car') by affixation.

Two terms were proposed to substitute buzz meaning 'rumor, spreading information' bourdonnement and ramdam. The latter term was considered preferable since it derives from Ramadan, the month of Muslim fasting marked by noisy night time meals. Considering the demographic situation in France with increasing share of Muslim population this term has every chance of entering new French dictionaries.

Other examples of French substitutes for English words include world wide web (or toile mondiale) for World Wide Web, logiciel browser for web browser, site de la toile (sur la toile) for website, etc. It is noteworthy in this respect that the term ordinateur was proposed by Pierre Guiraud to substitute computer which sounded very much like two bad French words con and pute (Guiraud, 1959).

CONCLUSION

While language regulation in English is primarily restricted to areas of political correctness with linguistic protectionism being rather a marginal trend, French undergoes a notable surge of purism at all social levels. Apart from national sentiment this process is stipulated by more pragmatic reasons. The point is that in fact, modern French is receiving back an enormous amount of words it had generously donated to English in the previous centuries. Similar words underwent notable changes in meaning while existing in separate languages thus provoking numerous cases of misunderstanding and mistranslation. For instance, the English word library (meaning 'data file') was initially rendered into French as the similar in spelling librairie which however, means 'book shop' rather than 'library' (bibliothèque in French). Another example is agenda, a word that has identical

springing in both the languages but different meanings: 'list of things to be done' in English and 'notepad' in French. Thus, the following phrase may look rather strange to a French speaker: The review and approval of the proposed budget are on the agenda of the monthly meeting.

Therefore, the problems of language regulation in France and other French-speaking countries are primarily centered around the aspects of linguistic protectionism and present a notable part of their official language policy which is closely related with social and economic issues.

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