

CAMEROON VARIANT OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SOME SPECIFIC FEATURES

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Abstract. This article is devoted to the solution of several issues. The first one is the consideration of cultural linguistics as a modern science studying features of culture which are reflected in any language of any country. The second task is a research of the phonetic and lexical level of English and French variants in Cameroon. The article presents some cases of cultural influence on language development formation. As the subject of the research, we have chosen the English and French variants used in the territory of the Republic of Cameroon. The reason for the choice is explained by historical and cultural features of this country that had a serious impact on the formation and development of local languages, and the languages brought from some European states. The article shows some particularities of the variation of the English and French languages used on the territory of the Republic of Cameroon and their comparison with the English language of the United Kingdom and French language of France. The article provides some information on the history of the Republic of Cameroon as a state, information on the emergence of the languages, their development throughout history and a current condition of the languages' variants in the state. The article also gives some facts on the phonetic and lexical level of the English and French variants.

Keywords: cultural linguistics, Cameroonian variant of English and French, the Republic of Cameroon, language levels, phonetic level, lexical level.

INTRODUCTION

Scientific knowledge is a complex system. As well as any system, it is always in a condition of continuous development. During the evolution of the system, some changes have occurred under the influence of many various factors. These factors can be either internal or external. Due to the continuous development, the system has created in itself all the conditions for the emergence of various innovations. However, certain parts of the system's elements have lost their functions, become outdated, that leads to their gradual disappearance. The procedures happening in the system promote this process as it is known that the system of science is a self-regulating system which is capable of independent development. External factors influencing the system are called extralinguistic conditions or situations. This definition is used for those situations which make an impact on the system from the outside. As examples of such factors, we can present such events as resettlements of the people, military or expansionist campaigns, activity of the persons exerting an impact on the country or on the world community and many others.

As a result, it is necessary to note that in the system of scientific knowledge some paradigms appear and develop, others - disappear or lose their value. This natural process of new data accumulation leads to the development of a theoretical basis. Thereby, there is a change and emergence of new scientific trends and paradigms. One of the newest branches of scientific knowledge is the cultural linguistics branch of scientific researches. Now it is situated at a formation stage, however, the theoretical and terminology database is in the constant development.

The cultural linguistics as a science has cross-disciplinary character due to the fact that it has appeared in the synergy of some humanitarian disciplines. Studying of interdisciplinary sciences gives the chance of rethinking of the scientific facts in a new way. As a kind of a scientific research, cultural linguistics is one of the modern trends. Despite the comparative novelty, it holds a firm place in the scientific world and it is considered as one of the directions of language studying with a high priority for new researches.

First studies in this domain were conducted in the second half of the 20th century. The development of the theoretical basis of the new direction went along with the huge volume of data on the culture and language of various countries in the world. The analysis of the obtained information led to the understanding that language contains not only semantic information but also the total knowledge, cultural values, moral standards and historical facts of one or another people. Thereby, there is a way of studying the culture of given people by the analysis of its language features.

For the analysis of the received linguistic material which contained information of culturological character, the science required the base of theoretical knowledge and also accurate information of an object and a subject of the research in the discipline. By this means, the interrelation language-culture in a certain country became an object of a research. As result, the subject of cultural linguistics is the culture from the linguistic point of view.

Essentially new factor in this science was the fact that not only data of this or that language, but also a ratio of the language and the language thought processes of the humans belonging to a certain society are exposed to the analysis. It should be noted that rules of communication establishment, accepted in this society, are also important factors. Concepts of culturological values of a society are considered by means of speech standards.

METHODS

This article is based on systematic approach to the interdisciplinary analysis. Due to the cross-disciplinary approach, we take into consideration the anthropocentric factor, linguistic and non-linguistic information, intercultural analysis, especially dealing with the problem of culture and language correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the second half of the 20th century in science, a new approach has appeared which, in the time following, was called anthropological one, focused on the human himself. In that way, the cultural linguistics was also affected by a new trend in science. As a result, the science started to consider the culturological facts of a language by a research of person's cogitative activity as society units.

Nowadays many authors from different countries are engaged in studying cultural linguistics. Among modern researchers, we should mention articles of such authors as T.V. Evsyukova, E. Yu. Boutenko [7], Z.K. Sabitova [13] and also monograph by V.M. Shaklein [16]. Among works of the European authors,

P.A. Ishida [17].

It is believed that the first who started talking about this scientific discipline in Russia was V.V. Vorobiov. In 1990, in his monograph "Cultural linguistics. The theory and methods" he worked out the term "cultural linguistics". In this work the author described a new linguistic discipline and formulated its definition as: "*Cultural linguistics is the complex scientific discipline of the synthesizing type studying interrelation and interaction of culture and language in its functioning and reflecting this process as complete structure of units of their language and extra language cultural contents unity by means of system methods and with orientation to modern priorities and cultural establishments (the system of norms and universal values)*" [20: pp. 36-37]. Thereby, this definition is considered to be one of the classical definitions as it fully and accurately emphasizes the most important aspects of all linguoculturological researches. The scientific field considers features of this or that language system in complex interaction with culturological data correlated to moral ethical standards of society.

Besides, "The New Dictionary of Methodical Terms" has offered its own definition. It is said that the complex nature of the new scientific discipline, emphasizes its close interrelation with other sciences. It is also mentioned that one of the main problems of cultural linguistics is multilevel interrelations between such concepts as "language" and "culture" [4: p. 127].

The main part of all cultural linguistics definitions, as a new discipline, is the emphasized correlation between the language and the culture. However, in one of the V.A. Maslova's scientific research, the language is regarded as the embodiment of culture. "*All culture manifestations of certain people can be found in language*" [10: p. 5]. Carrying out the detailed analysis of correlation between language and culture, V.A. Maslova offered her definition of this science and considers it as "*the humanitarian discipline studying material and intellectual culture embodied in living national language and in language processes*" and also "*the integrative field of knowledge incorporating results of researches in cultural science and linguistics, ethnolinguistics and cultural anthropology*" (Maslova, 2001: p. 37).

Nowadays, people do not exist separately from each other. They are in continuous interaction with each other that makes the impact on their languages. Such interaction is a difficult, multilevel process because it is carried out at the numerous levels at once: economic, social, linguistic. Though, we should mention that mutual exchange happens not only at the material but also at the mental level.

Analyzing European and American linguistics, we can underline that cultural linguistics can be interrelated with ethnolinguistics as they study the similar issues. It is believed that the first issue in the history of foreign linguistics about language, culture and people interrelation was considered in the works of the German linguist Johann Gottfried Herder [8]. The next but not less important stage of ethnolinguistics development is the treatise of E. Sapir [14] and B. Whorf [21]. The American researchers studied the languages of the American Indians. In the course of their researches, they came to an important result: all languages have different formation structure.

Studying collected material, scientists formulated the theory that the structure of language systems differed because language speakers live in different communities and have a different culture which led to differences in the way of thinking. "*Culture is how this society does and thinks. Language is how this society think*" [14: p. 193]. Thanks to the work of the American scientists it became possible to compare people behavior. Based on this, it became possible to remove the stereotypic norms of this community. Such norms are a basis for the creation of linguistic world-image of this society. Thus, there is an opportunity to compare it to reality.

Today linguoculturological researches study features of any given language. Languages of the African countries are of a great interest to a research. It is connected with historical features of the continent as various

European states in different times influenced on the culture and language of this region. This fact without any doubt impacted on linguoculturological features of the local population's languages.

Nowadays there are 62 states on the territory of modern Africa. Most of them are independent countries (54 states). Still, the others 8 - are territories controlled by the different state. Due to the historical situation on this continent, some African countries were colonies of the European states until the 20th century. These countries pursued an active policy on a way of life, customs and the culture of the local population. During the era of colonial conquests, territories of the modern states were the property of other countries. That is why they could be bought, sold or presented in order to change the owner. Thereby, Africa was a large zone for constant political oppositions and military conflicts. Along with such conflicts, there were also cultural disagreements and misunderstanding. The European powers wanted the inhabitants of controlled areas to study foreign languages. This historic fact influenced the current situation. Nowadays, according to various researches, in Africa, there are from 1250 to 3000 languages. Such inaccuracy in the calculation is connected with the fact that some languages disappear while others have been found relatively recently and have not yet been registered.

The mentioned language variety is of considerable interest for philological and linguoculturological researches. This article will be devoted to observation of language features of the phonetic and lexical level of the variant of English and French languages used in the Republic of Cameroon. It is extremely interesting to study the language situation in the country because there are some specific features there. *"The language situation in Cameroon is unique. On the one hand, the English language collaborates with the African local languages, on the other hand, the French language also corresponds with them. But there is no one language which can be used as a connecting link for all the country ethnic groups"* [6: p. 13].

The choice of the Republic of Cameroon is connected with the fact that it is one of the most perspective regions for linguoculturological researches. Due to historical features of this area, languages, as well as culture, of the local population were under the continuous influence of various European states which had their own language features and cultures.

The researchers who study the Cameroon variant of English and French agree on a general view of this language. Scientists assume that they are a kind of simplified variants of the English and French languages used in the United Kingdom and France. Some modern researchers stress that: *"The tendency of such an attitude to the Cameroon variant English as a lower kind of language is widely spread in the scientific linguistic research papers. It is understood to be directly influenced by British English. So, that is why these scientists' point of view is: to change Cameroon system of orthography to the British English one"* [5: p. 22]. However, it has features of some other European languages in its basis. Owed to this fact, we can note some common features of Cameroon variant of English and other European languages both on the lexical and phonetic language level.

The Pidgin in the Republic of Cameroon is, to some extent, a lingua franca for the local population. Researchers consider that its emergence is connected with the linguoculturological fact [3]. Despite rather a small territory of 475 km and the population of 20 million people, the population of this territory is divided between significant amounts of various ethnic groups. They have either their own languages or use one of the official languages of Cameroon. Numerous researches on studying of local population's languages have already been conducted, but official sources say there are certain difficulties with providing exact data on the total amount of languages on the territory of the state [9]. Thereby, researchers provided different data in process of studying a country's language variety. According to the population census of 1995, in the Republic of Cameroon, there were about 140-150 ethnic groups using different languages and dialects which total quantity was about 200. Language groups were closer to the big regional centers that are the reasons why the republican government made some calculations. So, the results of sociolinguistic researches, which were measured by the local organizations at different times, were localized from 1983 to 2000 from 123 to 244 languages. One of the last polls in 2000 revealed 286 languages. But it was possible to map only 267. Researches revealed that some parts of the listed languages are presented mostly as the changed dialects of local languages which, nevertheless, were considered as independent languages. Recent scientific works [19] showed that nowadays the number of separate languages in Cameroon is 283. 277 of them are living languages and 6 are extinct. 273 out of living languages are native and 4 - foreign. Besides, 12 - are established, 101 - are developing, 88 - have a firm position, 56 - are decaying and 20 - are on the verge of disappearance [2: p. 27]. Many researchers note that the republic represents so-called "Africa in miniature": on relatively small territory of the country, it is possible to note a considerable variety of the used languages. Besides above-mentioned, scientists note comparative semi-illiteracy of the local population as the number of literate people is about 70%. Thereby, researchers consider the following facts as the possible causes of Cameroonian variant of English emergence:

- ethnic variety of local population;
- the necessity of creation of common language, lingua franca;
- comparative semi-illiteracy of the population [12].

The Republic of Cameroon is situated in Central Africa. The people of pygmies populated the territory of modern Cameroon in the Neolithic era. Later, about 2000 years ago a migration of Bantu tribes took place, which populated East, South and Central Africa. In 1472 the first Portuguese sailors landed on the territory of modern Cameroon. They called those places "Rio dos Camaroes". Since 1884 this area was under control of the German

government (Kamerun), but according to the peace treaty after the World War I, since 1919 these lands were divided and attached to English and French colonies. As a result, the territory of modern Cameroon was divided on western (British Cameroon) and eastern (French Cameroon). More than 40 years this territory was under control of two contending colonial giants that left an imprint on cultural and language development. In 1960 and 1961 eastern and western Cameroon gained independence.

The modern researcher, Professor Loreto Todd noted that Cameroonian variant of English, a kamtok, is used on this area approximately since the end of the 19th century [1: p. 3; 18]. This fact is confirmed by the earliest historical works on the formation of a kamtok [11]. Researchers noted that this language originally was used by workers on plantations in the city of Limbe (till 1982 – Victoria). Nevertheless, researchers mention that despite the fact that the pidgin was initially used in this city; the kamtok was mainly dived after the time it was brought to the city of Kumba. Till 1990 and nowadays this center is one of the five largest cities of the state. At the moment Kumba is a big regional and trade center. Thanks to the fact that the city is located in one of the main ways of trade it quickly became the main regional center of trade. So, from 1950 to 1990 this city was the only large commercial point on the territory of the country where English was actively used. Trade development influenced city development. Gradually it became a trade center not only of this area but also of all Africa that led to the expansion of the city territory. As a result, the city gradually became multinational. The need for free communication for representatives of different language groups caused considerable growth of popularity of a new lingua franca both among young, and adult generation [15].

Due to the growth of influence in the region, Kumba became attractive not only for the local population. After a while, Nigeria began to trade with the young Republic of Cameroon and the use of Pidgin English only increased. Besides that, Douala, one of the main economic centers and the trade ports of Cameroon, is relatively close to Kumba. So, the Pidgin English reached also the ocean, from there, the merchants arriving at this port from all parts of the country promoted to the distribution of a kamtok to other parts including francophone regions. Up to the middle of the XX century, this language was considered as "the spoiled English", nowadays the kamtok grows in popularity as a lingua franca. At the moment it is used during church services and also in mass media, on radio and television.

Expansion of a Pidgin among the francophone population led to the appearance of local variants of a lingua franca on the basis of French (Vacunta, 2014). However, as researchers of the Cameroonian variant of English mark, the most universal variant is the Kumba language. In some francophone sources, this variant is named "L'anglais de Kumba" (English Kumba). In so doing, English Kumba became a basis for a modern variant of English in the Republic of Cameroon.

In the works devoted to a research of the Cameroon variant of English, it is mentioned that the kamtok is the simplified variant of the British English. These languages have certain distinctions, despite their proximity. Thus, observing the phonetic level of a Cameroon variant of English, it is necessary to mention that there are some features that this language has inherited not only from officially accepted English, but also from the second official language of the state, French.

Observing phonetic features of British English and Cameroon variant of English it should be stressed that there are certain similarities and distinctions. They have 24 + a consonant [x] (Table 1) and 20 consonants (Table 2) respectively. Despite such similarities as the sounds [m], [p], [b], [f] in British English and in the Cameroon variant of English, we should emphasize that there are no such sounds as [v], [z] and [ʒ]. It is also important to note that in British English there is no sound [ɲ] which is nasal guttural consonant of Cameroon variant of English and which can be found in French. Other consonants underwent minor changes in pronunciation, however, exist as in British English as in the Cameroon variant of English.

Table 1. Consonant sounds of official English

		Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal		m		n			ŋ	
Plosive/affricate	fortis	P		t	tʃ		K	
	lenis	b		d	dʒ		g	
Fricative	fortis	f	θ	s	ʃ		X	H
	lenis	v	ð	z	ʒ			
Approximant				l	r	j	W	

Table 2. Consonant sounds of the Cameroon variant of English

	Labial	Coronal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b	t d	tʃ dʒ	k g	
Fricative	f	S	ʃ		H
Nasal	m	N	ɲ	ŋ	
Lateral		L			
Approximant	w		j		

Rhotic consonant		R			
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Also, considering the data tables we can note the lack of consonants [z] and [v] which exist both in English and in French which are official languages of the Republic of Cameroon. It is a result of linguoculturological interaction. The Cameroon variant of English, after interaction with two officially accepted languages, gained some features of both. However, we can observe also the influence of the local languages on a target language. For instance, the lack of several consonants, like [z] and [v], which are rarely used in a few languages of the local population.

Besides distinctions in pronunciations of the consonants used in the given English variants, vowels also underwent considerable changes. As a result of development of a kamtok only 7 vowel sounds are used in it: [i], [e], [u], [o], [a], [ɛ], [ɔ]. The English used in the United Kingdom contains only 20 vowels: 8 out of them are diphthongs and 12 out of them are monophthongs which completely are absent in the Cameroon variant of English. As a result, the number of vowels dramatically reduced.

As we have already mentioned in this article earlier, the researchers consider Pidgin as the simplified English variant. During the analysis of the phonetic level, we revealed certain features. The Cameroon variant of English originally was used only as the language of communication. Its written system has just started to be developed. That is why the influence of language phonetic level on the lexical one is very substantial. Considering the particularities of the language phonetic level, it is necessary to emphasize that significant differences in the words' spelling are inevitable.

In the course of the lexical units analysis used in the Cameroon variant of English, we allocated certain groups of words. The first group consists of the numerous words which have been borrowed from British English, but their written form was simplified towards phonetic sounding of a word. For example, haus (house), wait (white), kam (to come). These words represent full analogs of the British English transcription of the lexical units. But, besides these words, in the Cameroon variant of English, there are also words sounding of which cannot be completely reflected because of the specific phonetic features. Long vowels [i:], [ɔ :] can be an example of such inaccuracies in the British English words "bean", "talk", "small" which are absent at the phonetic level in Cameroon variant of English. But, these words are present in Cameroonian Pidgin. The transcription of original British English words corresponds to these words in the Cameroon variant of English: [bi:n] = bin, [tɔ :k] = tok, [smɔ :l] = smol. Besides these words forms which mostly coincides with the British English transcription, we can add to the group the following words: empty = emti, uncle = onkul, ring = rin. Also, except impossibility to transfer the longitude of English sounds, in Cameroon variant of English words it is possible to observe some features of the British English diphthongs. For example, such words of Cameroon variant of English as drai = dry, dai = die, daun = down. Despite the lack of diphthongs, we can observe their replacements with certain letters which allowed to keep a word into the language.

The following group of the words in the Cameroon variant of English which have drawn our attention is a group of words borrowed from French. The modern Republic of Cameroon was under the administration of Great Britain and France from 1916 to 1961. So, the local languages were under the considerable influence of these foreign languages. Besides, the fact that Cameroon was divided between Great Britain and France plays an important role. It is necessary to emphasize that the government of France of that time adhered to certain and quite tough language policy on the territory of their colonies. Introduction of French as the only official language was the purpose of such a policy. Having considered the influence of English on lexical level earlier, we can also consider the influence of French on it. Particularities of the influence of French on the Cameroon variant of English can be observed on some loan words.

CONCLUSION

In general, the situation with the French language can be correlated to the situation with the one with the English language. A part of French words is used in the Cameroon variant of English in the form of their transcription, for example, equipe (team) = ekip, gateau (cake) = gato, réseau internet (internet) = rezo. These words are used in the Cameroon variant of English after the full loan of phonetic sounding and transcription of a word. Due to the fact that in French there are nasal vowels which are absent in the Cameroon variant of English a part of words underwent little changes in spelling. For instance: accident = [aksida] = aksidang, camion = [kamjɔ] = kamyong, santiman = [sa tima]

= santiman. The listed words almost completely coincide with the French sounding, however with some changes.

Thereby, on the basis of the stated information, we can come to the following conclusion. In the Cameroon variant of English, there are certain, modified words which have been borrowed both from English and French. The spelling of these words is directly connected with features of the phonetic level of the Cameroon variant of English. However, a dictionary of the kamtok consists not only of borrowed words from English and French. There are also words of the local population, for example, mbele = policeman, ndinga = guitar, ndolo = love and also German words, for example, the word shwine = pig, swine. Thereby, historical aspect has a great influence on the formation and development of the modern Cameroon variant of English. The territory of the modern republic was under the control of three various European states, that is why the languages of these countries impacted on the future literary English language of Cameroon. The higher influence of the European state, the more words remained in language. So, Germany lost the influence on Cameroon in 1919, as a result, the number of German words in the Cameroon variant of English is rather small. In this manner, we can observe linguoculturological influence on the considered language. So, the Cameroon variant of English can be considered as an example of the interaction of various languages, and it represents

considerable interest for further linguoculturological study.

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