Terminology in the Era of Globalisation

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The importance of terminology in the era of globalisation stems from the fact that nowadays the rapid growth of scientific and technological knowledge is practically impossible without paying attention to the state of terminology. Special lexical units comprise more than 90 percent of the new words in modern languages. The growth of scientific and technical vocabularies is much faster than that of the everyday speech vocabulary, so at present the number of terms in some sciences (for example chemistry or biology) exceeds the number of common words. We can compare the following figures: the full, unabridged version of the Webster's dictionary contains about 700,000 English words; the largest Russian 17-volume dictionary treats some 120,000 words (though already there are dictionaries containing ca. 200,000 words); at the same time Russian construction terminology numbers more than 150,000 words, modern biological terminology exceeds a million names for varieties of living beings, in chemistry we know more than 1,5 million substances. In industry already at the beginning of the 1980s more than 20 million types of various products were manufactured, each of them having its own special name.

Special vocabulary not only already comprises the major part of any advanced national language but also is the most dynamic strata of language. The so-called "information explosion" – that is extremely rapid growth of flows of scientific and technological information – caused the terminological explosion – that is enormous growth of the number of new terms. For example at the beginning of the 19th century according to our calculations there existed about 10 thousand building terms; at the beginning of the 20th century their number grew to 30-35 thousand while at the present time it may come up to 250 thousand. It happens because every 25 years the number of sciences and scientific disciplines grows twice, and every new science needs its own terminology. If we consider the fact that accord-

ing to the Encyclopaedia Britannica in the 20th century as much as 2,500 new sciences and scientific disciplines came into being, then the problem of terminology in the 21st century takes it proper shape. We should also pay attention to the role terminologies of various branches of science are playing in shaping our knowledge of the surrounding world and ourselves, though this is usually underestimated and neglected by the governments (Grinev, 1999).

One of the main problems, that immediately arises in connection with globalisation, and could be clearly observed, is that we have to find out some effective linguistic means of international communication. From linguistic point of view there are three possible solutions to the problem of communicating in new conditions, namely:

- establishing universally accepted artificial language as a means of communication;
- successfully solving the problem of machine translation; or
- choosing one of the existing languages as a universally international or drastically limiting the number of international languages.

The history of attempts at inventing *artificial languages* is quite impressive, listing various projects of creating "ideal" languages, though none of them became widespread. Suffice it to say that the most widely used artificial international language – Esperanto, regardless of the fact of its centenary existence, did not really succeed in justifying great expectations of becoming the universally known and prevailing in use international language. It may be accounted for by the essential drawbacks of its creation – debatable lexical innovations, lack of preliminary estimation of the possible phonetic and grammatical problems for the people with various language background, etc. But then, even some more efficient artificial languages, such as Occidental – that was proposed by some quite competent and skilful linguists, and has many merits, namely, it is easy to understand, even without extensive linguistic knowledge and skills, easy to learn, thanks to less artificial constructions to memorise – could not become sufficiently popular.

But this option is, perhaps, out of the scope of terminology science, though some principles of constructing new words are basically the same, whereas the next two are directly connected with terminological problems.

The next solution is *machine translation*. The main obstacle on the way to effective machine translation lies in the fact that in the dictionaries we

find multitude of equivalents of the source term. As was mentioned in some publications (Grinev, 1999), when the dictionary gives only one equivalent for the source term, the task of translator is rather easy, though he still has to make sure that the suggested equivalent has the same meanings as the source term. Situation becomes difficult if there are two variants of translation of the source term. It becomes even more complicated with the growth of number of probable variants of translation.

Often such lists of equivalents include synonyms, variants and quite different terms side-by-side, thus utterly embarrassing the user of the dictionary. Even when translating into the native language and perfectly well knowing the difference between the proposed variants, translator does not necessarily know which of the synonyms is standardized and, therefore, preferable. In cases of translating from the native language translator has to solve a very difficult problem of discriminating between the absolute equivalents, variants, partial and conditional equivalents or quite different terms which are often given in a dictionary in a random order. In many cases the occasionally used terms are carefully but without critical assessment registered by the author of terminological dictionary and presented as variants of translation, what I am usually referring to as "embarras de richesses". It makes translator's work really trying. In the case of machine translation it gets even more complicated, because then the choice of equivalent is quite formal – usually the first one is supplied.

Systematic comparison of the national terminologies in the process of creating a dictionary makes it easier and with more reliable results. It gives the opportunity to get the clear picture of the existing synonymic and quasi-synonymic relations between terms within national terminologies, to choose the most preferable terms out of the group of synonyms and to establish reliable equivalents to be used in translating the corresponding group of synonyms and to ensure reversibility. But most important, it presents the opportunity to minimize the number of equivalents of the source term, in many cases leaving only one equivalent. Unfortunately, this problem is far from being solved and the present tendencies in dictionary making give reason to be sceptic.

The last solution is the choice of one of the existing languages. Globalisation of the industry, economics, culture, even the everyday life results in forming of new conditions of the existence and interaction of the national languages. One of them is domination of some languages, chosen as means of

international communication. In our history there were times of domination of one of the prestigious languages: in Middle Ages Latin was a universal language of literacy, the same role was played in the East by Arabic; in the 18th and the 19th centuries French was the language of educated persons all over Europe. Now, since the second half of the 20th century English is gradually becoming dominating language all over the world. Simultaneously we can view lessening of the number of the actively used languages. According to the UN calculations during the current century approximately 2,500 of the presently functioning 3,000 languages will disappear from active usage. You may disagree with me but some languages have small chances to survive. In many cases the feverish attempts to revive and sustain the practically hardly existent national languages are in reality flogging dead horses.

In reality, however, only those languages are doomed to disappear, that already have quite limited usage (such as one-village languages). In many cases disappearance would only mean a change of status – from language to dialect, as, in all appearances, it recently happened with Moldavian that was proclaimed a dialect of Romanian. At the same time we may observe quite the opposite process – some dialects, as for example Catalonian and Galician in Spain, Provencal in France gained the status of official languages.

There may be two causes for disappearance of national languages – the most natural one being the narrowing of the sphere of application of a national language transforming it into a local dialect and the next one is the influence of a closely related language with the historically determined traditionally wide spectre of functioning (such as the case of the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian languages which at the end of the 1980s were being almost completely ousted by the Russian language).

It follows that the surviving languages will widen their functional domain and a number of speakers will increase outside the countries of their origin (it might be mentioned as a curious fact that at the present time both the British and the Russians constitute national minorities among the native speakers of the respective languages). With the commencement of international application of some of the existing languages we come across the problem of their effective usage. And here the question of the national language policy arises.

At present we can observe that some of the political decisions concerning language in the emerging new states have only momentary political reasons with complete ignorance of the natural tendencies of language develop-

ment and cannot therefore be taken seriously. Therefore working out sound impartial recommendations based on the analysis of natural processes of evolution and, in particular, international interaction of languages becomes a necessity. Such recommendation first of all should be concerned with terminology because, firstly, this part of the word-stock may be most easily regulated (special lexis is quite probably the only part of language that might be consciously manipulated and controlled), and, secondly, because controlling special vocabulary may enhance greatly the progress of science and technology.

When we speak of the minor languages – and, according to the opinion of prof. Pusztay, expressed at the October International Conference "Terminology of National Languages and Globalization" (Vilnius, 2006), even languages with 10 mln. native speakers should be considered as such, at least two factors, in our opinion, should be considered.

Firstly, the number of people speaking state languages of minor states, such as the Baltic ones, might be substantially increased by the people of other nationalities acquiring those languages.

Secondly, one of the most effective means of preventing disappearance of related minor languages is their **convergent development**, increasing chances for their survival. It is interesting that purely political decisions of the 20s of the previous century proclaiming national languages what was then dialects of the same language made it difficult, but could not prevent the possibility of communication between the peoples of the Central Asia countries. But what the unfavourable conditions, natural disasters or disastrous political decisions can not do, could be done by the people themselves – the thoughtless uncoordinated borrowing from different languages – Arabic, Russian, English, German, Persian leads to increase of differences of former dialects, and, consequently, mutual understanding.

The convergent policy implies that the already existing principles of borrowing:

- transliteration is preferable to transcription, because nowadays the majority of borrowings is carried out in written form;
- when borrowing pay attention to the form rather than meaning, because meaning is changing (with development or change of the corresponding concept) much easier than the form;
- to ensure the easiest assimilation of borrowings it is allowable to simplify their forms, evading consonant clustering and vowel hiatuses that

might cause problems in pronouncing; adapting the endings so that they would conform with the accepted grammatical paradigms;

- with new terms the already existing international forms are to be preferred;
- in many cases widely known Old Greek and Latin morphemes could be used in forming new national terms (Grinev, 1987);

two new principles of co-ordinated language policy should be added, namely:

- there should be the same source languages for borrowing into related languages;
- the forms of the borrowings, if not identical, should be as close as possible and in case of different national suffixes, there should be strict correspondence of new words with those suffixes.

The national languages problems of the newly independent states were most thoroughly discussed at the beginning of the 1990s at the number of conferences in Ukraine (Chernovtsy 1990, 1991; Kiev 1992), where the possibilities of convergent development of related languages and effective methods and principles of ensuring coordination in related languages development were analysed and everybody was quite enthusiastic. Unfortunately later they were not implemented in Ukraine which led to the present situation where in some cases several national terminologies, based on various principles but different from forms in other Slavonic languages are suggested to the consternation of specialists.

The perspectives of terminological research and practical activities for the commencing century might be quite promising under the beneficial circumstances leading to the elaboration and application of the set of rules for controlling the development of special languages. Under the adverse conditions the end of the century will witness the endless discussions of the minor problems of terminology science while the opportunity to control the evolution of the mainly used languages will be irretrievably lost. Unfortunately the general experience of the human behaviour allows counting rather on the pessimistic variant of the forecast.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the topical linguistic problems of globalisation is overcoming language barriers. There are three possible solutions – accepting an artificial language as means of international communication, machine translation

or endowing one of the existing languages with supreme international functions. Another topical problem is preserving small national languages which may be effectively achieved by convergent development of related languages. In any case the present situation requires well-considered state language policy.

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TERMINOLOGIJA GLOBALIZACIJOS EROJE

Straipsnyje gvildenami tautinių kalbų terminologijos klausimai dabartinėmis globalizacijos sąlygomis. Nagrinėjami trys požiūriai į kalbos barjerų šalinimo problemos sprendimą – optimalios dirbtinės tarptautinės kalbos sukūrimas, mašininis vertimas ir vienos iš dažniausiai vartojamų kalbų pasirinkimas tarptautine.

Analizuojamos vadinamųjų mažųjų tautinių kalbų išsaugojimo problemos. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas giminingų kalbų terminijos konvergencinės plėtros koordinavimo politikos galimybėms.

ТЕРМИНОЛОГИЯ В ЭРЕ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ

В статье обсуждаются вопросы терминологии национальных языков в современных условиях глобализации. Рассматриваются три подхода к решению проблемы устранения языковых барьеров – разработка оптимального искусственного международного языка, машинный перевод и выбор одного из наиболее употребляемых языков межнационального общения.

Анализируются проблемы сохранения так называемых «малых» национальных языков. Особое внимание уделяется возможностям координированной политики конвергентного развития терминологии родственных языков.

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