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Euro-English
– a *New* Window on the World?

The creation of a supranational 'culture' on the multilingual European continent is a noteworthy undertaking for numerous reasons. Over the last decades we have witnessed an unparalleled, consistent endeavour to unite and integrate the European Community in pursuance of peace, stability and progress. Despite endless obstacles faced by the European Union that seem to undermine the achievement of a united continent, the very fact that the diverse European representatives are willing to sit at a common table is a manifestation of a 'felt need' to engage in this vast and ambitious project (cf. Walker 2005: 236 ff.). While multilingualism and multiculturalism constitute the very foundations of the Community philosophy, English has established itself as a lingua franca among non-native speakers (NNSs) in mainland Europe, as elsewhere in the world, giving rise to the concept of 'Euro-English'. The role that English is playing in the European Union is worthy of examination since its official functions within the EU will have considerable influence on the forms and functions of the English language on the whole European continent (Modiano 2006: 223). The European Union experience with its linguistic and cultural pluralism is a unique one, however, preserving the principle of language equality (enshrined in Council Regulation No. 1, Article 1) and protecting the smaller language communities of the Union from the ever stronger encroachment of English presents an unprecedented challenge.

English in the international context

Whether we like it or not, language and politics are virtually inseparable entities. The impact the latter might exert on a particular language phenomenon amounts to its authoritative classification as either an autonomous language or a dialect. The fact that it was not until the re-emergence of Norway as an independent state that a

distinct, autonomous standard Norwegian was developed (Chambers and Trudgill 1994: 12) can be put forward in support of that point, or, for instance, the more recent example of Serbo-Croatian disintegrating into three separate languages, namely Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian. From the linguistic point of view, the distinction between a language and a dialect is not relevant, hence it seems to be more appropriate to talk about *standard dialect* or *standard variety of a language* as opposed to its *non-standard varieties*.

Since political and economic factors affect languages to a great extent, in the same way, the status of English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF) is anything but pure coincidence. The unprecedented expansion of English as the language *du jour* arises from two factors.[1] The first reason for the expansion of English is the need for a medium of universal communication in the globalized world. A common language has become a necessity, and, had it not been for English, another language would have taken its current position as a global language. Secondly, the political hegemony of Anglophone nations solidified ELF's position. The language was simply at the right time and place to fill this communication need. The spread of English worldwide goes back to the eighteenth century when it was the dominant language of the British Empire, and has continued ever since, though by mid-twentieth century, and especially in the aftermath of the Second World War, the American version of English has been increasingly influential.

The dominant position of ELF has been established in virtually all areas of public life. English has become a medium of international politics and transactions, it plays a key role in world aviation, media, and education. English is one of the official languages and the recommended working language of the sea and has constituted a true *lingua franca* of international navigation and the maritime industry for almost a century (Pritchard 2006: 262). Last but not least, English has become the language of scientific publications, thus creating an opportunity for scholars to gain maximum impact and reach. Numerous fields in which English has *de facto* become a global language can be listed *ad infinitum.* Suffice it to say here that with the current state of affairs, we cannot afford to give up the idea of having a universal language as a communication tool. In the same vein, Euro-English as an emerging variety of European *lingua franca* seems to establish itself as an indispensable 'contact language' in the European Union both at the member-state and the pan-European level. Without any infringement to the principle of language equality, a lot of the Union's policies are being discussed during informal meetings or over lunches in the default framework of Euro-English.

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[1] The widespread use of English across geographical zones can be observed all over the world, with European continent taking a lead in that process, where the expansion accelerated especially in the aftermath of the fall of the Iron Curtain and further EU accession prospects for Central and Eastern Europe states. For a very interesting account of flood of anglicisms in Poland, see Griffin (1997).

Euro-English or Euro-Englishes?

In the light of the growing use of the term 'Euro-English' (E-E), it is vital to clear up possible misconceptions that might arise as a result of inconsistency of the linguistic contexts in which it appears. We can differentiate between E-E *sensu stricto*, i.e. the language used by politicians, jurists and other staff working for the EU institutions, including legislative texts, and E-E *sensu largo*, i.e. English as spoken by the non-native speakers (NNSs) on the European continent. The term in its broader sense is usually applied by linguists who tend to further differentiate between 'Euro-Englishes' depending on regional (predominantly national, though not exclusively) culture-specific influences. In this way English as spoken by those with German, French or Spanish as first languages might be considered a distinct variety of Euro-English at large and thus a potential subject of research. Irrespective of the aforementioned division, let us assume for the purpose of this analysis that whenever we use the term Euro-English, it should be understood as a general English variety as used in the mainland Europe, which, at the same time, presupposes immense diversity within its own boundaries, including specific legal Eurojargon.

Whereas the term 'Euro-English' was coined as a neutral concept for the purpose of research projects of the English continuum on the European continent (cf. McArthur 2003a: 158 ff.), it is often used to denote 'the bad English perpetrated in Brussels'(McArthur 2003b: 57). As if that was not enough, there is yet another term for the new variety on the mainland of Europe, namely 'Eurospeak', that is, 'the language of *Eurocrats,* which is the vernacular of EU politicians and civil servants' (Jenkins et al. 2001: 13).[2] Even if 'Eurospeak' does imply poor quality, still one should bear in mind the fact that it is the language which is meant to be easy to use and understand by an average EU citizen. This means that the language of the legal texts must be as simple and clear as possible so as not to result in ambiguity. Above all, language expressing the meaning of the law must be 'responsible language' (Seymour 2002: 13), with its major objective aimed at bringing the law closer to the citizen. Bearing in mind that the Community *acquis* (i.e. the entire Community law in force) must be translated into all official languages of the EU, legal language should also be translator-friendly, as it should remain just as accessible to the citizen after the process of translation. For this reason, using terminology specific to any of the legal systems of the Member States in order to designate Community concepts should be avoided (Šarčević 2001: 319, Wagner et al. 2002: 58, Stolze 2001: 307). It should be noted here that the *raison d'être* of the preference for Eurospeak to national terminology in translation does not lie in the language *per se*, but in the necessity to guarantee precise and unambiguous

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[2] For more hostile and ironic images and connotations attached to Eurospeak cf. *inter alia* McArthur 2003a: 158 ff.

legal discourse. Since translation of legal concepts imposed at the supranational level by nationally specific terms might be misleading, supranational terms with no immediate national meaning are usually preferable. In this respect, it is quite inappropriate to criticize the language of the EU's legislative acts because they do not look or sound "natural" (Wagner et al. 2002: 58).

This might raise, on the other hand, quite justifiable reservations on the part of the average European citizens, who possess little or no knowledge at all of the intricacies of the European legislation and its 'woolly' language. Members of the public tend to perceive the EU in terms of distant and unfamiliar institutions based in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. A lot is being said about the necessity to introduce more transparency into the *comitology* activities,[3] still, most of the EU citizens do not realize what the concept entails. Moreover, there are a number of legislative and legislation-related texts issued by the EU institutions, namely: *treaties*, *regulations*, *directives*, *decisions*, *conclusions*, etc. which might be problematic to differentiate between the respect to the institution that enacts them, the area of law stipulated by them, as well as their possible direct applicability. Interestingly, Eurojargon includes serious, significant terms, such as *subsidiarity* (in a nutshell, the principle of delegating power to the lower-level authorities, here Member States) as well as terms with negative connotations, such as *Berlaymont* (a synonym of 'red tape', Modiano 2006: 233). In addition, one can observe a tendency to use proper nouns to denote broader concepts, e.g. *Nice* to refer to the Treaty that was signed there. More commonly known Eurospeak lexical items embrace notions such as: *Member States*, *accession*, borderless *Euro zone* with its new currency *euro* or, growing in popularity since the onset of European constitutional deadlock,[4] *Eurosceptic.* Specialist nomenclature and new hybridized coinages incomprehensible to an average layperson trigger hostile attitudes towards 'Eurospeak hindering communication by (deliberately?) camouflaging the political and legal nature of the EU institutions' (Wagner et al. 2002: 45).

Euro-English with its stereotyped image shares the fate of other varieties of world Englishes also considered as low prestige, for example the "New Englishes" of India, West Africa and Singapore. Still, what we seem to be experiencing just now with different English varieties diverging still further from the 'classical' concept of what standard English entails is simply the price that must be paid for the status of English as a *lingua franca*. Thus the language is not any more in pos-

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[3] The term 'comitology' (or 'committee procedure') refers to the procedures under which the Commission executes its implementing powers with the assistance of comitology committees composed of policy experts from the Member States. For more detailed description, cf. e.g. <http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/comitology_en.htm> or <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/registre.cfm?CL=en>

[4] As a result of the "no" vote in France and the Netherlands in nationwide referendums of 29 May and 1 June 2005 respectively on the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, the future prospects of enacting a 'Constitution' for Europe are still unclear.

session of its native speakers. It became people's language serving an unparalleled function of a 'contact' or 'link' language. A very strong point supporting this view is expressed by Widdowson (1994: 385) who claims that "[h]ow English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgement. They are irrelevant. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. To grant such custody of the language is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status."

Although American English constitutes a very fertile source model for Euro-English, it is tempting to say that the English of mainland Europe is quite effectively forming a distinct variety, which, in fact, is in line with the findings concerning many 'Outer Circle' or 'Expanding Circle' Englishes (Kachru 1985) diverging substantially from the two dominant models.[5] The studies available to date of an emerging language variety on the mainland of Europe allow for quite a revolutionary prognosis with respect to its future. Until recently, with the climax of English as a truly 'global' means of communication, non-native speakers of English were forced to strive to target as closely as possible the promoted standard models of either British or American English if they wanted to avoid their speech being stigmatized as 'incorrect'. Incidentally, referring to non-standard grammatical forms as simply 'wrong' is a social rather than linguistic judgement, since most of such forms are typical of working-class speech and, as a consequence, tend to have low prestige (Hughes et al. 2005: 25).

European Englishes are slowly making their way onto a linguistic map of Europe through the process of nativization and fossilization. While the former entails usually newly coined commonplace expressions entering into discourse as useful communicative tools, the latter allows for non-standard, often ungrammatical forms to become accepted features of speech. Due to the fact that they are not recognised as legitimate varieties (since they have not undergone the process of institutionalization), Euro-Englishes were long neglected as a potential subject of research, which only began around 1990 (cf. Jenkins 2006: 164). Some scholars have already made endeavours to identify what makes the 'common core' of the ELF (the European varieties being a good research field because the speakers learn and use English mainly for *lingua franca* communication). Seidlhofer (2004: 220, as cited by Jenkins 2006: 170, see also Jenkins et al. 2001: 16) enumerates the following elements as potential core features of ELF lexicogrammar:

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[5] Cf. e.g. G. Nelson (2004: 299–308) for the analysis of the substantial autonomy of Hong Kong, India and Singapore varieties of English in the light of their lack of deviation towards either British English or American English. The results of the research undermine the claim made by some scholars (cf. e.g. Anchimbe 2006) as to all emerging varieties yearning to identify with the 'prestigious' American tongue.

• regularization of the third person present tense verb forms, e.g. 'he look very sad',

• omission of the definite and indefinite articles in front of nouns,

• use of 'who' and 'which' as interchangeable relative pronouns, e.g. a person which', ' a picture who',

• use of 'isn't it?' or 'no?' as a universal tag question, e.g. 'You're very busy, isn't it?',

• pluralisation of uncountable nouns, e.g. 'advices', 'informations',

• use of a verb stem instead of a gerund, e.g. 'I look forward to meet you tomorrow',

• use of that-clauses instead of infinitive constructions, e.g. 'I want that we discuss this problem',

• increased redundancy as a result of superfluous prepositions, e.g. 'I have to study about…' or enhanced explicitness, e.g. 'How long time?',

• heavy reliance on verbs of high semantic generality, such as: 'do', 'have', 'make', 'put', 'take'.

The features, as exemplified above, are used by NNSs in interaction with other NNSs without forfeiting intelligibility. On the other hand, what might be the cause of a communication breakdown is defined by Seidlhofer as *unilateral idiomaticity*, i.e. a situation when one interlocutor employs a native speaker idiomatic expressions such as idioms, phrasal verbs, metaphors, etc. that the interlocutor does not know (Jenkins et al. 2001: 16).

It should be once again emphasized here that, irrespective of the research into the so called 'common core' of Euro-English, it is all but a homogeneous entity. The counterargument suggesting that the term Euro-English is invalid on the ground of its homogeneity deficit is easy to refute for this simple reason that the two 'standard' models are themselves quite a fertile field for a diversity analysis, not to mention the fact that scholars tend to disagree on what 'standard' really means. Consequently, linguistic hierarchization devaluing language varieties on the sole ground of their divergence from the said 'global gold standards' (McArthur 2003b: 57) does not characterize the European language policy. On the contrary, new non-standard forms are seen as a valuable culture-specific enrichment as long as they do not pose a threat to intelligibility or infringe communication. Modiano (2003: 39) claims that under favourable circumstances, certain features of English used by Swedes may potentially become a part of the core of Euro-English. Bearing in mind that Sweden, alongside with Denmark, the Netherlands and (most recently) Finland, seem to be heading for bilingualism and biliteration in the near future,[6] this hypothesis might prove viable. The phrases such as: *a bill has been salted* and *she is blue eyed* indicting *overcharging* and *naivety* respectively, are

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[6] The point consistently argued by McArthur, who refers to this phenomenon as 'Scotlandization' of northern Europe, since, in his view, it resembles the linguistic reality as faced by Scots around 1700, cf. e.g. McArthur 2003a: 159, McArthur 2003b: 58 or Taavitsainen and Pahta 2003: 3.

examples of idiomatic use of language by Swedes (Modiano 2003: 39). These forms are in fact the result of language transfer, yet, if understood by other NNSs, who tend to pay more attention to the content rather than form of the language used by their NNSs interlocutors, they might be fossilized and later used as a general Euro-English rather than solely its regional variety.

It seems that, with Euro-English living more and more a life of its own, the two aforementioned dominant models are no longer capable of dictating what is (or is not) acceptable in the language. Whether we like it or not, "we are witnessing the emergence of an endonormative model of lingua franca English which will increasingly derive its norms of correctness and appropriateness from its own usage rather than that of the UK or the US, or any other 'native speaker' country" (Jenkins et al. 2001: 14). As a medium for supra-cultural communication, it can easily disentangle itself from single prescriptive model, thus functioning as a 'free-floating sign system open to all kinds of interferences from other languages according to the background and the linguistic competence of the writers all over the world' (Snell-Hornby 2000: 12 ff.). Arguably, this means that the reverse phenomenon of native speakers (NSs) adjusting their speech to the mainland variety will be gaining momentum. This should come as no surprise taking into account the fact that the speakers of Euro-English constitute the European majority, and hence cannot be expected to constantly make concessions to the speech variety represented by the NS minority (cf. Jenkins et al. 2001: 18).

The controversy surrounding ascertaining Euro-English alongside with other emerging varieties as self-contained entities and the major shift from monocentric to pluricentric perspective is not likely to be resolved in the near future, with the debate being further fuelled with the prospects of ELF evolving into *a single prescriptive model* (cf. *inter alia* the concern expressed by e.g. Prodromou 2007: 50). Quite against the odds, one should share Gramley's optimism in that "[t]he increasing fragmentation of the postmodern world is making room both for enough convergence to guarantee worldwide communication and for enough tolerance and diversity to allow local and worldwide groups to mark their identity and in-group solidarity with their own Englishes. No single variety need dominate this process. English can and should remain varied" (Gramley 2001: 244).

There is still one crucial point relevant to the discussion on linguistic map of Europe. Optimistic though one might be about the wide use and distribution of English (or Euro-English, which without question is the core language of the EU institutions), it still seems to be the language of the elite. Hence one of the main challenges of the emerging European polity is to avoid at all costs the 'language isolation' of its citizens as experienced by many impoverished people of India. The policy implemented by the EU concerning the requirement for *acquis communautaire* (the term representing yet another example of Eurospeak) to be translated into all official languages is criticized by some on the grounds of high cost (at present there are 27 Member States and 23 official languages, which, without

question, makes the EU the biggest market for translation services). Nonetheless, the said policy is in fact a guarantee of the right of all the EU citizens to have access to the law that directly concerns them. And for this right to be fully exercised and secured, the law should be available to all EU citizens in their native language. Similarly, quite remarkable proof of true implementation of the principle of language equality is the possibility for the citizens of the EU to address any EU institution in their mother tongue and receive a reply in that language. In contrast, as Šarčević (2001: 319 ff.) rightly points out, in order to achieve reliable translations of EU documents, which are often treated as equally valid legal instruments (originals), as well as respect the multilingual character of EU legislation, translators should consult and compare several authentic texts. What seems to be common practice at present, though, is the uneven balance in favour of English texts as the source texts for further translation.

Possible scenario for the future

I believe that there is enough potential in the European variety to resist the hegemony of the 'McLanguage' prevailing in the linguistic 'McWorld,'[7] which, arguably, does not constitute natural Euro-environment. It does not mean that we, the Europeans, should aspire to impose Euro-English at the global level. We should also abstain from undermining the outstanding achievements of North American technology and culture which undeniably enabled American English to thrive. Far from devaluing its prominent position, our objective to promote a self-contained language alternative that would mirror unique European identity should be justified. On the other hand, multilingualism has always been a characteristic feature of Europe, and, "it would be simplistic to believe that the EU could now suddenly make *tabula rasa* here and instigate one single language for the Union as a whole" (Salverda 2002: 8). On the contrary, the sound foundation of the 'ever closer union' amongst the peoples of Europe is their will to be "United in diversity" (cf. the Preamble of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe), of which diverse languages are just one example.

Incidentally, the ongoing process of European integration could, *de facto*, profit from recognizing Euro-English as a distinct characteristics of the Peoples of Europe. Thus English of mainland Europe, open to and embracing all the regional varieties, could become a good starting point for the true language constituency, and, consequently, a legitimate European polity in future, which, for the time being, is still striving to delineate its fuzzy identity.

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[7] The terms, as used by the author, do not imply rootless, detached from their cultural identity phenomena, as presented by Snell-Hornby (2000: 16 ff.).

At the end of the day we have come up to a standstill with our probabilistic deliberations as it is premature to say to what extent the envisaged scenario might reflect future reality. One cannot deny, though, that the new 'concept' of English still remains highly controversial. Since the novel medium is constantly in flux, and, allegedly, in its 'infancy' (Jenkins et al. 2001: 16), whether and to what extent its *status quo* can be codified is difficult to state. Not only do we put forward rather tentative hypotheses with regard to Euro-English, but we still have failed to answer exhaustively the question whether the term describes a self-sufficient entity. Nevertheless, if we commit ourselves to conceiving of 'Euro-English' as a new linguistic reality and thus assume it can be subject to codification, this in turn will imply legitimization of the language analysis in prescriptive rather than strictly descriptive terms. The next step from that could mean Euro-English making its way to the language classroom. This last stage, if such a scenario is plausible at all, would without question secure the novel variety's standing, thus enabling its participation on equal terms with other prominent 'Englishes' in the race for supremacy as the language of international communication and global discourse at large.

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