



Building contact linguistic competence related to English as *the* nativized foreign language



Tvrtko Prčić*

Department of English, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Dr Zorana Đinđića 2, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with contact linguistic competence, a type of linguistic knowledge, for the first time identified and described here, which focuses on the standardized and consistent use of words and names from English as *the* nativized foreign language (ENFL) in a non-English language that regularly comes into contact with it. In the first part, the defining properties and major global implications of ENFL will be reviewed; in the second part, the concept of contact linguistic competence will be explained and then elaborated from three interrelated angles: (1) practical aspects, covering the reasons for introducing and building contact linguistic competence in special language users and, particularly, university students of English language and linguistics, (2) theoretical aspects, covering the foundations of contact linguistic competence and a proposed checklist of the elements to be mastered, and (3) pedagogical aspects, covering the methods for efficiently imparting and acquiring contact linguistic competence within the educational system and, specifically, EFL classes; and in the third part of the paper, prerequisites seen as indispensable for bringing this process to its full fruition will be touched on.

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1. Opening remarks

This paper aims to fill a gap in theoretical and applied linguistics, especially contact and contrastive linguistics, hitherto not seen to have been recognized as important or even as existing. It concerns the provision of learners of English, native speakers of non-English languages, and special language users in particular, with a mental resource box, to be called here 'contact linguistic competence', which is intended to help them to use elements, i.e. words and names, from English in their own native languages in a standardized and consistent manner. The problem is addressed against a backdrop of English as *the* nativized foreign language (or ENFL, for short) and the solutions proposed deal with practical, theoretical and pedagogical aspects of the matter. The central role in building contact linguistic competence is assigned to ELT; and the term 'building' denotes the process of creating and developing the theoretical framework, on the one hand, and of imparting and acquiring the knowledge, on the other.

The exposition is organized in the following way: in Section 2, the concept of English as *the* nativized foreign language is summarized and its defining properties and major global implications surveyed in their separate subsections. In Section 3, the concept of contact linguistic competence is introduced and its practical, theoretical and pedagogical aspects outlined in their separate subsections. And in Section 4, within closing remarks, the prerequisites to building contact linguistic competence, as it is conceived and presented here, are considered.

* Tel./fax: +38121459483.

E-mail address: tprcic@eunet.rs.

2. English as *the* nativized foreign language: an extended summary

It is a well-known fact that in the past few decades English has firmly and irreversibly established itself as the first language of international communication around the world and has become the global lingua franca (for definitions, properties and interpretations of English as a lingua franca and for various theoretical and practical implications of this phenomenon, including those pertaining to ELT, see Berns, 2009; Jenkins, 2006, 2007; Mauranen & Ranta, 2010; Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2011; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, & Pitzl, 2006). To highlight its worldwide spread, English is usually known by three roughly synonymous designations, each with a slightly different focus – world, international and global English (for corpus-based analyses of the niceties involved, see McArthur, 2004; Watterson, 2011; for a discussion of the names given to English in its worldwide role, see Erling, 2005; and for definitions, properties and linguistic and non-linguistic accounts of these Englishes, including aspects of language teaching, see Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 1997, 2006; Johnson, 1990; Llurda, 2004; McKay, 2003; Prčić, 2009; Rajagopalan, 2004; Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006; Sharifian, 2009).

However, it is perhaps less known that during this period of unprecedented planetary expansion, world/international/global English, in its role of a global lingua franca, has developed additional defining properties, which make it uniquely stand apart from all other, purely foreign languages. In the next two subsections, the new defining properties of English and their global implications will be discussed in some detail.

2.1. ENFL: the three defining properties

Purely foreign languages are traditionally and typically characterized by three properties (cf. Richards & Schmidt, 2002, the definitions of 'foreign language' and 'English as a second language'): (a) they are not the first language of a country, (b) they are not the official language of a country, and (c) they are taught as a subject in schools. The three new defining properties unique to English, which were originally identified and described a decade ago (cf. Prčić, 2003, 2004a), are the following: ready audio–visual availability, dual acquisition and supplementary language function.

Firstly, ready audio–visual availability captures the fact that English is not only globally used in all kinds of two-way spoken and written communication, but also is easily found in many areas of human activity in nearly all countries of the world, in one-way communication, mainly with the aid of constantly improving technology, above all the internet, television and radio.

Secondly, dual acquisition captures the fact that English first tends to be acquired non-institutionally, i.e. picked up spontaneously, by children being exposed to the language from their earliest age and growing up with it, in parallel with their native language, which in time leads to some acquaintance with English, enabling only vague comprehension of general meaning and just basic speaking and writing. This exposure to English is neither universal nor uniform, but highly variable – both quantitatively, with regard to when it begins and for how long it lasts in shorter and longer terms, and qualitatively, with regard to what has been acquired and to what extent. As a result, non-institutionally acquired knowledge is bound to vary widely from individual to individual and to depend strongly on the degree of realization of these two factors. Later on, English is re-taught and re-learned institutionally, within the educational system, like a proper foreign language, but with contents often quite different, and sometimes more elementary, from those already known. Non-institutional and institutional acquisition of English are concurrent and appear to be lifelong companions, the former acting as a kind of reinforcement of the latter.

And thirdly, supplementary language function captures the fact that English exerts or, more accurately, is allowed to exert, continuous influence on the international community as a whole and on individual language communities, which includes growing influence, of various manifestations, on native languages that come into contact with it. Affected in this way are equally non-English languages and their native speakers, both those who do not know English and those who are acquiring it non-institutionally and/or institutionally, but many of them use it with greater or less frequency in their own native languages. Here English functions as a supplementary language, because it supplements the communicative needs of a given language community by filling actual and supposed lexical and other gaps in the non-English language, thus helping to form a more or less integrated communicative resource, which is made up of the native language enriched with (selected) elements from English. In the resultant language mixing English can occur in one of three ways: most often, *within* the native language (at the levels of words through borrowing and of phrases and sentences through calquing, as well as other usage imports, notably in spelling); or, less often, *alongside* the native language (with translation provided, as in film subtitling, when the two languages are used simultaneously); or, least often, *above* the native language (without translation provided, as in job advertisements by foreign companies published in domestic newspapers only in English, when the native language is supplanted completely).

As could be inferred, these three properties, taken together, make English in part similar to a native language and different from a purely foreign language. At the same time, these properties have contributed to the emergence of a fourth sociolinguistic status of languages, viz. nativized foreign language, besides first, second and foreign, with English being (for now) the only member of this category. Hence the designation 'English as *the* nativized foreign language', where the definite article is stressed in order to mark the uniqueness of category membership and the adjective 'nativized' employed to emphasize that English has objectively and subjectively become part of many native languages and cultures around the world, to the diminution of some of its foreign language properties. And the many native languages and cultures around the world

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