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## English as a meaning-making resource in Russian-based professional communication

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### Abstract

The paper examines how English is used by Russian speakers to convey various meanings and how these meanings are linked to language ideologies circulating in contemporary Russia. Discourse analysis and ethnographic methods (interviews and surveys) are used to conduct several case studies, each focused on a certain communicative niche affected by globalization.

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*Keywords:* English; Russian; globalization; communication; language ideology; meaning

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### 1. Introduction

The global expansion of English and its appropriation in the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1985) have brought to life new language practices where English is integrated into local contexts to serve the immediate purposes of local speakers. In recent decade or so, this phenomenon attracted attention of anthropologists, linguists and culture experts from different countries. The meaning-making function of English in local contexts was studied in hip-hop and popular culture (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook, 2009; Chan, 2009; Johnson and Milany, 2010; Moody, 2006; Park, 2010; Pennycook, 2010; Sarkar and Winer, 2006; Terkourafi, 2010), linguistic landscape and advertizing (Adetunji, 2015; Backhaus, 2007; Bhatia and Ritchie, 2013; Bolton, 2012; Buckinham, 2015; Dimova, 2012; Martin, 2008; Martinez, 2015), computer-mediated communication (Antroutsopoulos, 2010; Seargeant and Tagg, 2011), and other

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communities of practice (Bolton, 2013; Blommaert, 2007; Heller, 2010; Hickey, 2010; Higgins, 2009, Johnstone, 2010; Maynard, 2007).

In Russia this topic is fairly new. Though Englishization of the Russian language is seen as one of the leading sociolinguistic trends, researchers tend to focus on the contact-induced lexical innovations, such as borrowings, lexical and semantic loans, and hybrid words (Krongauz, 2009; Valgina, 2003; Kazkenova, 2013; Kuzmina and Abrosimova, 2013). Research on meaning-making aspects of English in Russian-based communication is as yet limited. The role of English in advertizing, public signage and linguistic landscapes was touched upon by Ustinova and Bhatia (2005), Proshina and Ustinova (2012), Kirilina (2011) and Eddy (2007). Indexical potential of English in identity construction was studied in sports subcultures (Kuznetzova, 2013; Gritsenko, 2012), song lyrics (Aleshinskaya and Gritsenko, 2014, 2016; Gritsenko and Aleshinskaya, 2015), recruitment discourse (Alikina, 2014), and everyday life (Gritsenko, 2013, 2014). The creative aspect of Russian-English language play was examined by A. Rivlina, who outlined the formal patterns and described the functions of bilingual creativity in book titles, magazine and newspaper headlines, TV show titles, brands, shop and restraint names (Rivlina, 2011, 2015).

This paper intends to contribute and add further to the discussion of the role of English in Russian-based communication. My aim is to find out what Russians think about the English language and how they use it to communicate different meanings. I will address professional communication, which so far has not been studied from this perspective, and focus on “the language ideological load both guiding the process and being one of its results” (Blommaert, 2003, p. 610). I will also argue that English can serve as a meaning-making resource even if its fragments do not actually appear in the utterance.

## 2. Methodology and study material

The study is guided by the concept of language as a translocal mobile resource (Blommaert, 2003, 2010) and the research on language ideology which helps to link the assumptions people have about a language to their social experience and political interests (Irving, 1989; Silverstein, 1979, Woolard and Shieffelin, 1994).

I will bring together sociolinguistic and ethnographic approaches to show how English is used by Russian speakers to convey various meanings and how these meanings are linked to language ideologies circulating in contemporary Russia. To this end, I will use the findings of several case studies, each focused on a certain communicative “niche” (Blommaert, 2003) affected by globalization.

The study material includes texts of electronic media; over 200 job ads and 150 resumes from the recruitment portals *rabota.ru*, *headhunters.ru*, and *superjob.ru*; two interviews with personnel of local recruitment agencies on the role of English in Russian labour market; a survey of 240 employees from Russian offices of international companies specializing in audit and IT, and a survey of 300 Russian university students (aged 18-21) who study English as a foreign language.

The interview and survey findings will clarify what motivates the use of English in Russian-based communication and what it actually means for different parties. The ‘glocal’ nature of appropriations of English and combinations of diverse methodological and conceptual tools will allow examining familiar types of phenomena from a new perspective.

## 3. Analysis

Research findings suggest that in the Russian communicative space, English performs semantic and semiotic functions. In the first case, English and Anglicisms are used to fill lexical gaps or to name new phenomena, for instance, academic concepts or Internet activities:

- элективы [electivy] from “electives” – дисциплины по выбору; кредиты [kredity] from “credits” – зачетные единицы;
- лайкать [laikat’] from “to like”, ретвитнуть (retvitnut’), from “to retweet”, погуглить (poguglit’) from “to google”.

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