ФГБПОУ Московское академическое художественное училище (МАХУ)
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“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.

Time for Equal Opportunities”

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

«Диалекты в литературе и публичном дискурсе: отстаивание аутентичности в глобализирующемся мире»

«Dialects in literature and public discourse: defending authenticity in a global world»

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Theses

- According to a legend, all modern languages can be viewed upon as dialects.
- In Russian, you can hear three territorial dialects.
- There are also states where social dialects have been developed.
- The lexical composition of social dialects reflects the interests of the group.
- Of all British social dialects Cockney is probably one of the most frequently used in literary works.
- The novelists also use dialect-colloquial elements.
- Literature reflects linguistic diversity while simultaneously playing a key role in the unification of the language.
- In Arab countries, the literary language has been the main one since the Koran was written… Arabic dialects were considered to be "low".
- To languages with a clear separation of functions between two dialects the term "diglossia" is applied.
- History is replete with examples of periods when people of different social classes used not only special dialects, but also completely different languages.
- Knowledge of foreign languages, as well as professional slang, unites people who may live on another continent, while dialects can work as borders within one country.
- The language may still disappear.
- Some States treat dialects as their greatest treasury.
- There are also countries that strive to maintain the purity of their language.
- Nevertheless, due to the Internet English is gaining popularity as the language of international communication.
- Dialects have become linguistic treasures of cultural unity and diversity that humanity must maintain, since different skills and characteristics allow the species to survive.

"The beauty of the universe consists not only of unity in variety, but also of variety in unity"

Umberto Eco (Italian novelist)

According to a legend, all modern languages can be viewed upon as dialects of the same predecessor – the Adamic language. As a result of the confusion of tongues and their further evolving, proto-languages appeared such as Proto-Slavic that gave birth to all Slav languages including Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian (Pic.1). Dialects today are a kind of national language, the use of which is characteristic of people living across a certain territory or connected by a social or professional community.

In Russian, you can hear three territorial dialects: Northern, Southern and Central (Pic.2). They have their own distinctive features. For instance, "okanie" is a phenomenon of the north, whereas "akanie" is typical for southerners who also pronounce "g" as "kh". The Central Russian dialect combining the attributes of the neighbouring ones was chosen for broadcasting throughout the country.

There are also states where social dialects such as jargon, professional language and slang have been developed. They have a unique vocabulary characterized by specific lexis, phraseology and semantics. Their bearers could be roughly categorized into certain groups according to age, profession, etc. The renowned author of the book "Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour" Kate Fox (2004) wrote about social dialects, "One cannot talk about English conversation codes without talking about classes. And one cannot talk at all without immediately revealing one's own social class." Therefore, to be identified as upper class a person has to possess the right accent. In B. Shaw's play "Pygmalion", Henry Higgins's profession is in great demand as not only does he teach people how to speak proper English, but he also gives them a chance to voice their belonging to the elite. Such indicators as pronunciation and vocabulary can distinguish the social status. Lower ranks drop the consonants (for instance, in the story mentioned above, Mr. Doolittle calls the professor "Enry Iggins"), while higher ones lose their vowels.

The lexical composition of social dialects reflects the interests of the group. In the Russian youth jargon of the 80-90s of the XIX century, for example, word formation based on borrowed roots was actively developing (“drinkach”, “drinkanut”). Children make up a verbal code in such a way that, on the one hand, their conversations could not be overheard by curious adults, and, on the other, so that it could serve as a “feather” to identify birds of their “flock”. Gangsters worldwide have also created a specific language so Vladimir Sharapov, the main character of the Vayners brothers’ novel “The Age of Mercy” (1975) had to copy the manner of both written and oral speech of a criminal to be accepted into their circle.

Of all British social dialects (Standardized, Scouse, Geordie, Estuarine English, Pitmatic, Makem and Brummie (Pic. 3)). Cockney is probably one of the most frequently used in literary works. Its speakers are supposed to be born within earshot of the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow in London church. In the middle of the XIX century, Cockney acquired the features of rhyming slang, invented in order to talk in full view of the police. It has become as attention-grabbing as traditional Cockney outfits embroidered with mother-of-pearl buttons. Endowing the characters with a special charm, be it an accent or a certain trait of appearance, the author seeks to distinguish them from the rest.

The novelists also use dialect-colloquial elements, that is, dialect characteristics accompanied by colloquial pronunciation and vocabulary. Many features of oral speech, such as compression of words (Gentm'n = gentleman), reduction of sounds in auxiliary words (gonna = going; o'er = over), can be found in the speech of different strata of society and in all regions. They do not carry much semantic load and are used at the request of the writer (Palivanych or kada = when). As for dialects, being stereotypical, they help readers determine class affiliation.

Literature reflects linguistic diversity while simultaneously playing a key role in the unification of the language. Italy, with more than two hundred different territorial dialects, can prove that like no other country. The fact that for the northerners it is next to impossible to understand the speech of those who

live in the south is brightly captured in the movie “Welcome to the South” (2010). The Italian language was mostly coined in the XIII-XIV centuries. Such Enlighteners as Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante wrote in the Tuscan dialect that formed the basis of the “Sweet new style” (“Dolce stil nuovo”). Gradially, it became the standard literary norm in Italy and modern Italian is the official language of six countries.

Meanwhile, in Arab countries, the literary language has been the main one since the Koran was written in the 7th century, which was taken as a model. There are more than ten dialects in the Arabic language, and all of them seek to simplify the artificially preserved literary Arabic, which being the language of the government, the media, literature and the Internet was not intended for every day communication. Learning the Koran by heart at school enables students to read books written about one thousand years ago in the old literary language, while in colloquial speech, films and songs peoples of different Arabian countries use their own dialect. Due to the fact that the language of the Revelation was adopted as the best example, other Arabic dialects were considered to be “low”. They were not studied and the Arabs did not even try to preserve them. The researcher of Arabic literature Al-Rafi wrote that the studying the developing of Arabic dialects is of great importance for the history of Arabic literature, but it reminds the search for fossils. What you can achieve is collect, organize and describe some of their remains.

To languages, like Arabian, with a clear separation of functions between two dialects the term “diglossia” is applied. In Kievan Rus (and later Moscow Rus) it was represented by the “high” Church Slavonic language and the “low” local dialect. People used Church Slavonic (that was not perceived as a foreign language) on solemn occasions, whereas Russian was not prestigious.

History is replete with examples of periods when people of different social classes used not only special dialects, but also completely different languages. This happened in England after 1066. At that time, the aristocrats speaking French were served “pork” for dinner, while the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons bred “pigs”. And in Russia in 1717, by order of Peter I, the first

book on etiquette was compiled and published, intended for young men and girls of noble origin, “The Honest Mirror of Youth”. In the second part of the 27th article, it says, “Young people should always speak to each other in foreign languages... so that they can be distinguished from other ignorant fools.” Consequently, in the XVIII century, the “high” language in the Russian Empire was French (which was used by the nobility), while ordinary people spoke Russian.

Knowledge of foreign languages, as well as professional slang, unites people who may live on another continent, while dialects can work as borders within one country. For example, in order to speak some particularly isolated dialects, the Chinese had to learn them almost like foreigners. To solve this problem in the 50s of the XX century, the official language of the Middle Kingdom was chosen, which in the West was called Mandarin, and in China itself Putonghua or Beijing dialect. In addition, the Baihua writing system was unified and simplified, so that speakers with different accents could perfectly understand each other’s writing. Most television programs and films use putonghua, accompanied by hieroglyphic subtitles, the same for all residents.

The Chinese themselves, despite studying Putonghua at school, continue to speak with a territorial accent. Unlike the Arab world, many literary works in Asia are written in dialects, and there are different types of operas, which reflect their culture and linguistic diversity: Qin Opera (Guanzhong dialect), Beijing Opera, etc., the authorities have also taken care of the preservation of dialects and even collect an audio archive.

Dialects, like languages in general, live as long as their speakers are alive. Unfortunately, natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions or earthquakes, lead to the extinction of tribes or their departure and the use of the dominant language in a new location. Even if people stay put, their language may still disappear as a result of cultural assimilation. Breton, in the north-west of France, is a classic example of a severely endangered language due to decades of suppression at the hands of the French educational system.

Some States, on the contrary, treat dialects as their greatest treasury, which encapsulates most of the history of communities, a significant part of their identity and gems of knowledge. They may be sources of some practical information, such as new methods of treatment, or intellectual, as when the links between dialects tell us about the movements and communication of early peoples. Some governments make the kind of effort that has already helped Welsh to recover from a dramatic decline to save their linguistic diversity.

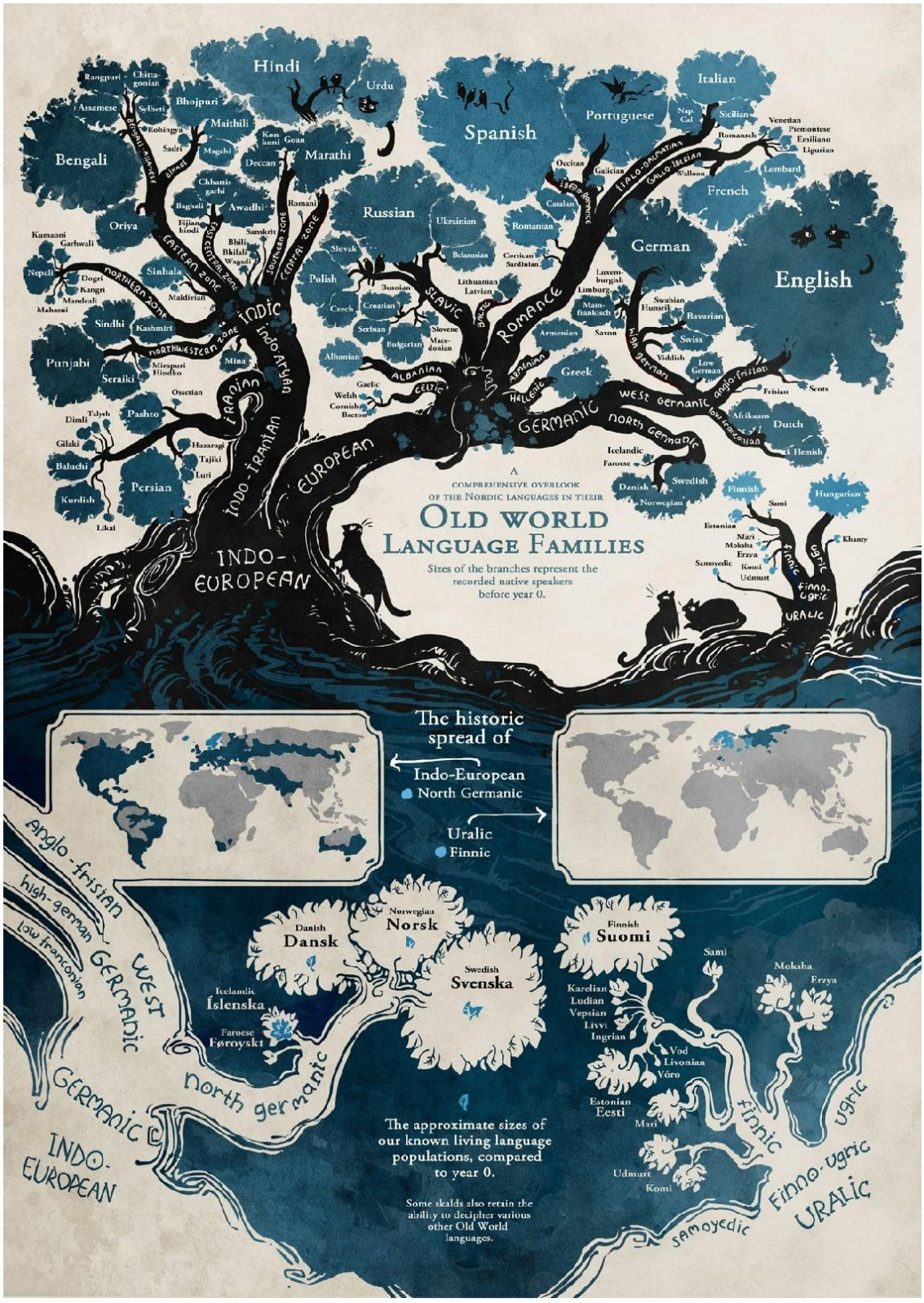
There are also countries that strive to maintain the purity of their language, though. In France, for example, in 1975, in order to "protect against the invasion of English and any other language and, consequently, foreign culture", the "Toubon Law" was adopted (Law 94-665, 1994).

Nevertheless, due to the Internet English is gaining popularity as the language of international communication, which contributes to the cultural exchange that is inevitable along the way.

Summing up, we would like to note two current trends in respect to dialects. On the one hand, we are witnessing the mutual influence of all world languages and their unification due to the processes of globalization and the simplest desire to be understood. On the other hand, dialects are still social markers that unite members of one circle and separate them from all the others. Evolving in this way, they have become linguistic treasures of cultural unity and diversity that humanity must maintain, since different skills and characteristics allow the species to survive.

Illustrations

Picture 1:

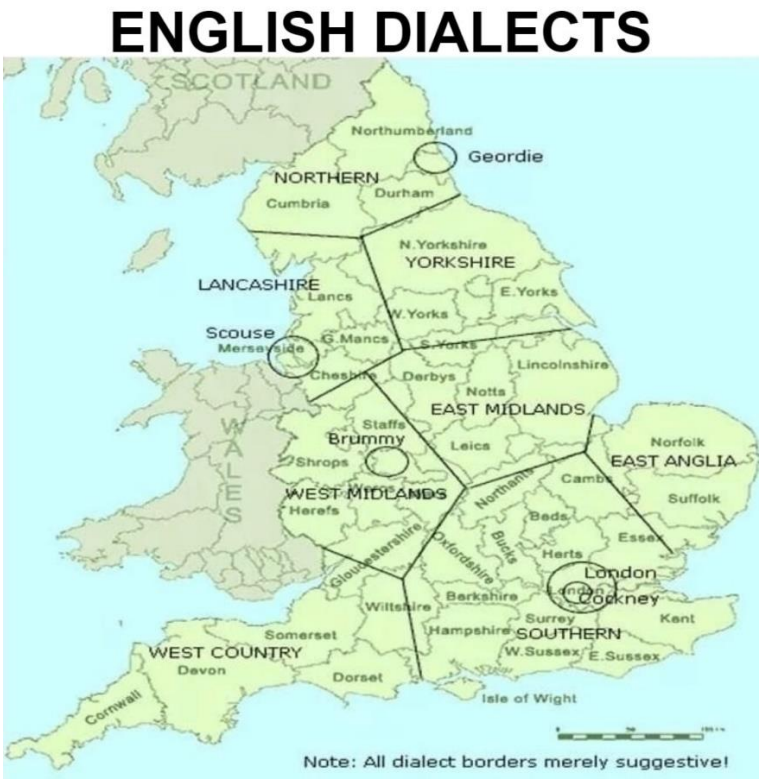


[Почти все языки мира на одном дереве - Росбалт (rosbalt.ru)](https://www.rosbalt.ru/) (the date of reference 27.11.2022)

Picture 2:

Made by Sofia Lobanova (the team's member)

Picture 3:



https://slideplayer.com/slide/3481540/ (the date of reference 27.11.2022)

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