

Language Interference between Ukrainian and English in Canada

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Abstract. The present paper dwells upon the problem of the language interference between Ukrainian and English in Canada. It gives a concise outline of the major reasons of such a tremendous impact of the two languages on each other. A brief overview on the history of establishment of Ukrainian in the English-speaking country is given. The typical lexical, grammatical and phonetic relevant features of mixed Ukrainian-English (Ukish) are in the focus of the study.

Keywords: *language of diaspora, loanword, Ukish, language interference, Canadian Ukrainian, ethnic language.*

Introduction. The linguistic schools and studios of the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI centuries pay more and more attention to the diversity of the regional variants and accents of the English language as *lingua franca*. Due to the process of democratization and globalization of modern world the problem of territorial varieties of English seems to have acquired a significant scientific status and become the mainstream of the profound linguistic study. And a successful solution of this problem can prove the fact that a language is the most powerful means of interaction between human beings and a leading factor in the process of communication. Among a huge number of regional varieties of the English language in the world Canadian English is of a special interest since it exists and functions within the territory with the second national language and numerous ethnic languages. So, we have approached the problem of interaction of English and Ukrainian in Canada in order to track down the major mechanisms of their influence on each other.

A brief review of publications on the subject. The subject-matter of the present research has been under a thorough investigation of the scholars since the mid 50s of the past century. The early works are namely devoted to the description of the process of establishment of Ukrainian in Canada (A.Royik [7], M.Marunchak [5], I.Gerus-Tarnavetska [1], R.Pendakur [6]). Among the later works the attention of the authors was mainly focused on the process of socialization of the English lexemes in the Ukrainian language (O.Martynowych [4], P.Sekirin [8], J.Lehr [3]). Sufficient typological research findings by D.Struck [9] and K.Hudyma [2] have greatly contributed to the generalization of the database on Ukrainian in Canada and systematized all the earlier obtained scientific results.

The goal of the present study is to generalize the bulk of the researches on the problem of language interference between Ukrainian and English in Canada; to track down some unregistered features and give a linguistic interpretation of them. Regarding the dynamic nature of co-existence of Ukrainian and English in Canada it is worth doing a thorough linguistic analysis to reflect the current changes and show the stages of their socialization.

Materials and methods. The illustrative material of the present study has been purposefully accumulated by us in different situations of communication of Canadian Ukrainians, the representatives of different waves of immigration as well as the native speakers of Canadian English in the provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan in Canada. To collect, systematize, study and give the linguistic interpretation of the obtained results we applied the random selection method, the method of comparative typological analy-

sis and the method of linguistic description.

In a long run of the history Canada is known to be the second country in the world according to the number of Ukrainians living within its territory. The process of immigration of Ukrainians to the Canadian territories began in late XIX century and since then the Ukrainian language has gone through several periods of socialization from the mother tongue of the ethnic group of Ukrainians to the ethnic language spoken by a numerous diaspora of several generations. Originally it was brought to the country by peasants from Western Ukraine, the majority of whom were ill-educated or uneducated at all. Thus, Ukrainian can by right be regarded as one of the oldest heritage languages in Canada [2, p. 181]. The following waves of immigrants were contributing to the language introducing numerous lexical as well as phonetic peculiarities. And after a considerable continuance it has developed into a specific regional variety of the Standard Ukrainian Language – Canadian Ukrainian.

As the time passes Canadian Ukrainian inevitably changes and by now it has started losing its originality and moreover its popularity. There is also a measure of diversity within it. Once being widely spoken in Ukrainian homes, schools, parishes and communities due to the speakers born in Ukraine, it is now on the way out. At present the language witnesses a notable decrease in number of native speakers what sufficiently narrows the spheres of its spread.

Some half a century ago the situation was quite opposite. In some provinces, in Ontario and Saskatchewan in particular, Ukrainian was an inseparable part of social life: the majority of newcomers from Ukraine joined the industry of car production (GM, Crysler), actively participated in building Ukrainian churches and halls, organized the Ukrainian languages schools, cultural clubs, concert halls and seniors' homes. Moreover, speaking Ukrainian was like a law in the majority of Ukrainian homes despite the fact that children attended English schools or parents were employed with English-speaking companies or families lived among non-Ukrainian neighbours. There existed a strong tendency of transmission of the Ukrainian heritage from generation to generation, and the most significant constituent of that heritage was the language.

Most of the Ukrainian diaspora history is connected with the idea of language retention not just to symbolize the national identity, but to make it a dynamic organism living in the community. The reasons for such efforts have been presented by P.Yuzyk [10], who claimed that the advantages of the retention of mother tongue are as follows: "1) It provides for cross-fertilization and mutual enrich-

ment of the cultural strains in the development of a common Canadian culture and national personality; 2) It stimulates cultural growth and affords a wider, more direct “grass-roots” participation of Canadians in cultural and artistic events; 3) It helps to exploit the unique linguistic potential talent in the multi-ethnic population for Canada’s greater and more effective role in international affairs, for closer cultural, commercial, and touristic relations with other countries, and for better access to foreign scholarship and the improvement of Canada’s scholastic knowledge and wealth; and 4) It contributes to the development among Canadians of less parochial, more tolerant and informed attitude toward international affairs, and countries and cultures of the origin of their fellow citizens” [10, p. 82-83].

The end of the XX century brought its new tendencies of rapid development of IT-technologies, overwhelming computerization of all fields of human activities, total democratization of the society and creation of the global village. All of them have immensely impacted the status of Canadian Ukrainian and caused its gradual decline. Despite multifarious efforts to preserve Ukrainian in Canada, such as Ukrainian language schools, bilingual schools, political and youth organizations, introduction of Ukrainian as a foreign language at school, University language studies, children camps, fiestas, cultural events, the language is likely to shortly become extinct.

Nevertheless, there is a hope that it will keep alive, though in some modified form: a mixed variant of Ukrainian and English, which appeared, in fact, during the first wave of immigration. Among the early immigrants a number of English lexical units were assimilated to the grammatical and phonetic rules of Ukrainian and thus, like hybrids, entered the vocabulary of the Ukrainians in Canada. They once firmly established in use and have survived up today. All the subsequent waves of immigration and new realities of the human progress have plentifully enlarged it and the process is going on. Regarding such a mixture of two languages D. Stuk coined a term “Ukish” (a blending of Ukrainian and English), that manifests the use of some special language among the native speakers of Ukrainian in Canada. The researcher even singles out “classical” Ukish in opposition to what has been brought by the later waves of immigration, especially those, who arrived in Canada after WWII – people with more profound education and knowledge of the native language [9].

Some typical examples of Ukish are widely-used by Ukrainians either in professional spheres or in everyday life regardless of a speaker’s proficiency in English, his social status or situation of communication. To the list of such English lexical units pronounced and used in accordance with the morphological and phonetic laws of Ukrainian we can refer some *nouns*: *teacher* – тичерка, *pipe* – пайпа, *box* – бокса, *lawyer* – лосер, *garbage can* – гарбич кена, *hall* – галя, *holiday* – голидей, *boat* – бовт, *cash* – кеш, *nurse* – ньорса, *fridge* – фрідж, *carpentry* – капендерка, *Christmas* – крисмус, *cookies* – кукіси, *backyard* – бек ярда; *verbs*: *to miss* – змістувати, *to drive* – драйвувати, *to clean* – клинувати, *to fix* – фіксувати, *to farm* – фармарувати, *to can* – кенувати; *to study* – студіювати; *adjectives*: *broke* – брок, *square* – сквировий, *fine* – файний, *all right* – орайт, *lazy* – лизі, *crazy* – кризі.

On the phonetic level there is an obvious assimilation and close sound imitation to the original language. For instance, the voiced sound /r/ is quite frequent in the majority of positions in the Ukish words, while it occurs only in certain lexemes in Ukrainian. And at the same time the English pharyngeal /h/ loses its articulatory value and tends to be replaced by the Ukrainian voiceless /r/ in words like *галя* (*hall*) and *голидей* (*holiday*). Such a tendency can be approached as a proof of a two-way influence of the involved languages on each other.

Alongside separate words making up the vocabulary of Ukish, there is an abundant corpus of word combinations entering the language and functioning in it as independent lexical units. To understand and interpret the linguistic nature of such units is often possible only through the detailed analysis of their origin and the way of their being translated into the foster language. In a number of cases the adopted word combinations are the result of word-for-word translation of the phrase of the original language. Quite often such translations may sound absurd, funny or contradictory to the norms of the literary language. For example:

to give a ride – дати райда (підвезти когось), *to miss a bus* – змістувати баса (запізнитись на автобус), *to ride a bike* – кататись на ровері (їздити на велосипеді), *to take a course* – брати курс (вивчати щось), *to take bus #1* – брати автобус №1 (їхати автобусом №1), *to make/take a picture* – робити знімку (фотографувати), *to fill out an application* – вповнювати аплікацію (заповнювати анкету), *to pay attention to* – зважати (звертати увагу), *at 6 in the morning* – о шостій рано (о шостій ранку), *don't worry* – не журись (не хвилюйся), *to be sorry* – бути сорі (жалкувати), *to drop smb. off* – скинути когось (висадити когось), *to pick smb. up* – підібрати когось (забирати когось), *to have an appointment* – мати апоінтмент (мати призначення), *to have a birthday* – мати уродини (мати день народження).

Some of the lexical constructions of Ukish may lose their popularity or so-called “relevance” due to linguistic as well as extra-linguistic factors. The leading factor in this process is determined by a strong tendency of modern immigrants to try and use the literary forms of the Ukrainian language or just to speak English, the proficiency in which is comparatively high among the Ukrainian speakers.

Touching upon the problem of Ukrainian-English language interference in Canada one more aspect should be under discussion. It is the question of some speaking formulas generally accepted by the Ukrainian speakers, but having completely English syntactic structures. They have strongly become acclimatized in speech, but sound rather out-of-tune for a correct speaker of Ukrainian. Very often such constructions completely repeat the constructions of the original language and are just a word-for-word translation of them. Let’s view some of them to track down the main patterns of their formation. For example, the Ukrainian sentence *Чи ти міг би мені допомогти?* sounds as *Чи ти годен мені допомогти?* of the English *Can you help me?* since it is focused on the semantic meaning of the modal verb *can* demonstrating the physical ability of the addressee. The sentence *Меніприємно зустрітисяз Вами* sounds as *Я маюприємність зустрітисяз Вами* repeating the syntactic structure of the English sentence *I*

have a pleasure to meet you. Or in the sentence **Я беру пілси о 6** which in original sounds like *I take pills at 6*. The same situation can be observed in the sentences with the verb *to have*: *Have you a family? Ти маєш фамілію? I don't have a car. Я не маю кари. He has a birthday. Він має уродини. Has she a boyfriend? Має вона бойфренда?* Such a tendency replaces the standard Ukrainian formula with the verb **бути** in one of its forms – **є**: **У тебе є родина? У мене немає машини. У нього день народження.** In some cases the translation of the English verb *to have* can replace other Ukrainian verbs. The sentence *She has a baby* is translated as **Вона народила дитину** while a Ukish speaker can say it as **Вона має бейбі**. In some sentences there is a notable omission of the verb *to be* in the Ukish variants. So, the sentence *My elder daughter is a nurse, but younger is a teacher* may be translated as **Моя старша донька нюрсою, а молодша тичеркою**. Or the sentence *I am sorry* may sound as **Я сорі** or *He is all right* as **Він все орайт**.

According to L.Kozachevska and O.Sydorenko the speakers of Ukish have a diverse attitude towards the status of their language. While some of them consider such a language to be crippled, others accept the deviations and even believe that it is necessary to codify them in a special dictionary. Among the immigrants of the 2nd and 3rd waves there is an opinion that the language they use at home drastically differs from the one they hear in Ukraine. And, actually, two reasons can throw the light upon the situation. First of all, the south-eastern dialect of Ukrainian is the most frequent for the diaspora and even may be referred to as a background of their variant of the literary language. The situation is conditioned by the massive immigration of people from the western Ukrainian territories. And after all, the borrowings on all levels of the language enter the standard and are quite noticeable for bilingual speakers [12, p. 146].

The processes of enlarging the vocabulary of Ukish go side by side with the processes of enlarging the vocabulary of Canadian English with the borrowings of the Ukrainian language. By today a certain number of Ukrainian lexemes have established themselves in speech of Canadians and seem to be on the way to complete socialization and codification in the dictionaries. Those lexemes are entering the vocabulary of English in Canada partially assimilating to its syntactic and pronunciation norms. Among such loanwords we can observe the word **тато** spelt as *tato*. In many communicative situations it is used to replace the English *Daddy*, what can cause a certain misunderstanding among the native speakers of English since the word *tato* is pronounced in a way close to the English *tartar*. A similar situation can be detected with the Ukrainian lexeme **баба** standing for *grandmother* and repeating the sound form of the English *barber*. In our personal observation we came to the conclusion that the word *baba* is quite often used even in the families where none of the members is of the Ukrainian origin.

One of the reasons to explain Ukrainian borrowings in speech of Canadians is the absence of some one-word notions in the English language and their presence in Ukrainian. Let's regard the Ukrainian words **кум** and **кума** standing for the English multi-component lexical units *godfather of one's child* and *father of one's godchild* or

godmother of one's child and *mother of one's godchild*. In order to avoid so "wordy" constructions the speakers are inclined to find some easier, more laconic forms like *kum* and *kuma*. It can be explained by the universal tendency of speakers to economize the language resources and articulatory efforts. The same linguistic interpretation can explain the introduction of the Ukrainian words **сват** (*svat*) and **сваха** (*svakha*) for the replacement of the English constructions *son-in-law's father* or *daughter-in-law's father* and *son-in-law's mother* or *daughter-in-law's mother*. To the bulk of the loans some lexemes denoting the dishes of the Ukrainian cuisine can be referred: *borsch*, *kasha*, *holubtsi*, *varenyky*, *paska*, *perogy*, *kovbasa*. Some elements of the Ukrainian national culture are reflected in borrowings too: *hopak*, *cossak*, *hetman*, *bandura*, *panakhya*.

Another aspect of the language interference between Ukrainian and English in Canada is the field of transliteration and translation of proper names. It mainly concerns the first and the last names of people as well as some geographical names. First settlers from Ukraine were dissatisfied with their Slavic names in a way and tried to make them sound more like Anglo-Saxon ones [11]. So, **Ярема** became **Jeremy**, **Хома** – *Thomas*, **Іван** – *John*, **Степан** – *Stephen*, **Петро** – *Peter*, **Данило** – *Daniel*, **Михайло** – *Michael*. Some were not replaced by the English equivalent, but the closest sounding variant for them was found: *William* for **Василь** or *Terry* for **Тарас**. The children of the first wave immigrants were born in Canada and the parents gave them the English names, but tried to find or even create the corresponding Ukrainian variants. In our study we happened to come across some quite specific names. For example, we heard the name **Деруся** or **Дируся** for *Darol*, **Каролька** for *Carol*, **Іванка** for *Joana*, **Христя** for *Christine*, **Рузя** for *Rose*, **Славка** for *Sylvia*, **Володимир** for *Walter*.

In the system of the Ukrainian surnames used in Ukish there is a strong tendency to show no difference between the feminine and masculine forms, while gender-indicating endings are a relevant feature in Slavic languages. Thus, the masculine forms of the last names are preserved for both of the spouses. For example, пані **Сімаговський** (*Mrs.Simachowsky*), пані **Самохін** (*Mrs.Samochin*), пані **Возний** (*Mrs.Wozny*), пані **Скобліковський** (*Mrs.Skoblikowsky*) пані **Ласковський** (*Mrs.Laskowsky*).

Conclusions. The processes of the language interference between Ukrainian and English in Canada can be explained by a number of linguistic as well as non-linguistic factors. A co-existence of two languages within one community of speakers inevitably results into the immediate mutual impact between those languages. As the reality witnesses Canadian Ukrainian once being a mother tongue for a huge community of speakers is losing its popularity and is almost on the way out. It has undergone a series of sufficient modifications having assimilated to the lexical, grammatical and phonetic peculiarities of English and consequently lost its authenticity. It is neither a mother tongue of the Ukrainian community of Canada any longer nor the language of Ukrainian homes or schools, it is just the language useful for the group identification and thus, according to D.Struk, might not even be transmitted to the next generation [9].

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Языковая интерференция между украинским и английским в Канаде

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Аннотация. Данная работа касается проблемы языковой интерференции между украинским и английским языками в Канаде. В ней также кратко рассматриваются основные причины столь существенного влияния двух языков друг на друга. Здесь представлен сжатый обзор истории развития украинского языка в англоязычной стране. В статье особое внимание уделяется изучению базовых лексически, грамматически и фонетически релевантных черт смешанного украинско-английского языка (Юкиш).

Ключевые слова: язык диаспоры, заимствование, Юкиш, языковая интерференция, канадский украинский, этнический язык.