

## Russian English: Myth or Reality?

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**Abstract:** What makes the Expanding Circle Englishes real rather than abstract varieties? This article highlights that it is culture that makes the specifics of an English variety whereas linguistic features might be shared by a number of other varieties. Russian English as a linguistic entity is based on the specifics of Russian culture and mentality revealed on all language levels, lexical and phonetic levels being the most noticeable. The negative attitude towards the concept of Russian English can be accounted for by a) the theoretical confusion of the *variety* with its only one *lectal subtype* (taking the basilect for the variety), while any variety is a complex and a continuum of several lects; b) scholars' understanding of a *dynamic and functional variety* characteristic of a speech community as an *interlanguage* of an individual with a fossilized level of language competence, and c) ignoring the fact that any variety expresses the cultural mentality in real life discourse. Change in the attitude in the speech community occurs with the gradual overcoming of these misunderstandings, which takes a fairly long time.

**Keywords:** Varieties, Expanding Circle, Russian English, linguistic features, cultural accommodation, linguaculture, attitude, lect.

### 1. Introduction

The global spread of English has naturally led to various conceptualizations of this complex phenomenon used in intra- and intercultural communication, which resulted in a number of schemes and models of English (Kachru, 1985; Kandiah, 1998; McArthur, 1998; Svartvik and Leech, 2006; Prodromou, 2008). Among the proposed models, Kachru's theory of three concentric circles has become most popular and widespread, though it has been criticized time and again (Bruthiaux, 2003; Canagarajah, 2007). According to this theory, Russia includes among the Expanding Circle countries, where English functions as a performance variety mostly in international communication and is learnt as a foreign language at school. This is still true although the linguistic situation, characterizing the range and depth of English in Russia, is irrevocably changing, with English acquiring new functions in the Russian setting, more and more intertwining with the Russian language, for example in mass media, advertising, business, and even politics. Among new functions are creative (for example, see Butenina, 2010), decorative, metalinguistic and ludic (Rivlina, 2005; 2011) ones. Even in education the use of English in Russia has widened, and modernization and internationalization (as leading principles of current education) are associated with shifting to English-language programs providing for academic mobility as a prerequisite of the Bologna process, a series of European agreements aimed to make the standards of higher educational systems of European countries

and quality of qualifications provided by their universities compatible.

While this spread of English is hardly ever questioned, the status of English in Russia is still an issue of hot debate. Two issues have become a subject of controversy: firstly, whether English that is used by Russians can be considered as a variety *per se* and, secondly, what is the name of this English in the system of other Englishes?

## 2. What Is English Variety?

When we discuss Englishes in Kachru's three circles framework, no one questions the name for Englishes used as native languages in the Inner Circle. They are usually expressed by an adjectival phrase: *Australian English*, *Canadian English*, etc. Normally, there are no hesitations in labeling varieties of the Outer Circle – they are also named by an adjective plus noun: *South African English*, *Indian English*. However, scholarly clashes break out because of the varieties of the Expanding Circle. For example, many linguists hesitate to name them by analogy with varieties of the Inner and Outer Circle, preferring to shyly name them *English in Russia*, or, as a rule, derogatorily, *Ruslish* / *Runglish* and the like.

This is due to the fact that English as used in the Expanding Circle is not believed to be a variety in its own right. To discuss this issue, let us take into consideration the existing definitions and criteria of language varieties. The *Concise Oxford Linguistics Dictionary* defines *variety* as “any form of a language seen as systematically distinct from others” (Mathews, 2003, p. 236). Distinctive linguistic features of Englishes, observed at all levels of the language, are the ground for such a differentiation. They make up a linguistic system and are determined by the transference of the first language of the speakers. English used by Russians fits this definition perfectly as it has its systemically distinctive features (see Proshina, 2008) as compared with other varieties. However, if we compare linguistic features of a number of non-native varieties, we can find out that, as a matter of fact, many of these features are not uniquely distinctive and are common to other varieties, thus revealing a general trend for dynamical development of the language as such. For example, preference for the Past Simple forms instead of the Present Perfect is revealed in American, Irish, and Russian Englishes, and on the contrary, “in resultative and extended-now contexts” (Davydova, 2011, p. 302) the Present Perfect is favored in New Zealand, Indian, Singapore, and German Englishes (*Sanctions have been imposed by the UN thirteen years ago.*); plural forms of traditionally uncountable nouns, mentally envisioned discretely, (*equipments, furnitures, advices*) are found in Russian, Indian (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 178; Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 129), Filipino (Bautista & Gonzalez, 2006, p. 135), East African (Schmied, 2006, p. 198), and West African (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 124) Englishes; irregular (non-standard) use of articles is traced in Indian (Gargesh, 2006, p. 104), Malay (Bautista & Gonzalez, 2006, p. 135), Filipino (Bautista & Gonzalez, 2006, p. 135), Singapore (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 136), East African (Schmied, 2006, p. 198), West African (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 124), and Russian Englishes. The similarity of distinctive features makes us believe that it is not the only relevant criterion for distinguishing varieties of English.

The *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* by H. Bussman (1996) adds a sociolinguistic component to the definition: “a particular coherent form of language in which

specific extralinguistic criteria can be used to define it as a variety” (p. 512). I do not think that this is an essential criterion in our case as all world Englishes, no matter which circle they are attributed to, are sociolinguistic phenomena and their functions in a speech community make up the extralinguistic specificity for an idiom to be determined as a variety. This definition should be specified: it is culture and mentality, or cognitive ways to verbalize things and events, which are extralinguistic but inseparable from language, that make a language variety particular.

Russian English meets the definition of a variety given in *A Dictionary of Sociolinguistics* (2004), as it is “a linguistic system used by a certain group of speakers or in certain social contexts.” (p. 324). As a matter of fact, all these definitions of variety are so broad that they include three types of variations studied in sociolinguistics: regional / territorial varieties, associated with certain ethnicities (ethnolects) and places (standard and non-standard dialects and local varieties, or topolects), sociolects representing speech differences in users’ classes and social groups (genderlects, youth slang, etc), and functional varieties depending upon situation or community of practice and characterized as functional styles or registers, formal and informal styles. World Englishes as varieties, though they can be characterized in all the three aspects of variation, are usually related to and described in the regional aspect. However, their difference from local dialects is in expressing different ethnic cultures, apart from some other features (see Widdowson, 1997).

Russian linguists have suggested another sociolinguistic classification of varieties into national and regional. National varieties are related to both literary form of the language and dialects used by a nation (Shveitser, 1976), which implies co-existence of a standard literary idiom together with non-standard dialects and diverse sociolects. Understood like that, national varieties are typical of monocentric languages and Inner Circle varieties of a pluricentric language. As soon as the process of endonorm codification is completed in the Outer Circle varieties, they may also be regarded as national varieties. A regional variety is a language functioning originally as a lingua franca in socio-cultural and geographical conditions that differ from the original setting the national variety was used in, and nativized because of the transference of the vernacular and adaptation to the new culture. A regional variety is based on the culture of the indigenous population and functions to express this culture. According to this definition, regional varieties can be found in the Outer and Expanding Circles. This definition of the regional variety is used in the World Englishes paradigm and is somewhat different from the sociolinguistic term, as described in the passage above (regional /territorial variety); it better reflects language contacts and accounts for the expanding diversity of a language that might be developing as pluricentric. For example, regional varieties of the Russian language are emerging now in Central Asian republics (Vakhtin et al., 2010; Sabitova, 2013) – they reflect indigenous cultures and have certain phonetic and lexical features specific only to these varieties of Russian. Sometimes regional varieties are termed local varieties, while a number of adjacent local varieties are combined into a regional variety. In this sense, Indian English is a regional variety as it covers Hindi, Kashmiri, Punjabi and many other Englishes. Probably, taking into account the multicultural population of Russia, we should also speak about Russian Englishes in the plural as a regional variety comprising many ethnic linguacultures, which was illustrated by the special issue of *World Englishes* journal whose cover was titled Russian Englishes (in the plural) (Proshina, 2005).

Regional and local varieties are new linguistic formations whose criteria were listed by Platt, Weber and Ho (1984, p.2-3) to include

1. use in the educational system;
2. development in an area where a 'native variety' of English is not a majority language;
3. use for a range of functions in a particular society;
4. localization and nativization.

Platt et al. (1984) spoke of the Outer Circle varieties only but nowadays all these criteria are also applicable to the Expanding Circle Englishes. Thus Russian English is used not only as a school subject but more and more frequently as a medium of education. It is definitely used in an environment where native speakers of English are few. A range of English functions is steadily increasing in Russia – it is used in mass media, in creative function, in business, politics, etc. – most often resulting in code mixing and switching. And there are no doubts about localization and nativization of English expressing Russian culture (Kabakchi 2009)

Susan Butler (1997, p. 106) proposed more linguistic aspects for a language form to be recognized as a variety:

a standard and recognizable pattern of pronunciation handed down from one generation to another;

1. particular words and phrases to express key features of culture;
2. association with the history of the language community;
3. a literature written without apology in that variety of English;
4. reference works showing that people in the language community look to themselves, not to an outside authority to decide what is right and wrong in terms of how they speak and write English.

The first criterion refers to the phonetic accent that is evident in many Russians speaking English. Since the accent is based on the accommodation of English sounds to the Russian phonetic system, the accent does not differ from one generation to another unless its speakers have lived for a long time in an English-speaking country and acquired intonation contours and sound clusters of native speakers. And even those speakers whose pronunciation emulates a model of native speakers most typically pronounce Russian culture-bound words, including proper names, the way Russians do, which makes it easy for English-speaking people to guess their origin. Key features of Russian culture are expressed in culture-loaded words many of which have to be borrowed into English. At the turn of the century, translingual Russian-English authors started to become known (Olga Grushin, Lara Vapnyar, Anya Ulinich, and others). And though they write as emigrants, away from Russia, their works are a symbiosis of Russian literary traditions with English. In Russia, creative works in English are also found in the lyrics of some song-writers. As for reference works of Russian English, several dictionaries on Russian culture-loaded words have been published (Burak et al., 2002; Kabakchi, 2002; Yuzefovich, 2003). English textbooks for schools are compiled by Russian authors (sometimes in collaboration with British or American text-writers). However, almost none of them is ready to say that they do not rely on the British or American model and that Russians do not need an arbiter in linguistic issues. Butler's (1997) fifth criterion, if taken in full, might be applicable only to the Outer Circle Englishes and even there we will not find unanimous agreement on the endonormativity of their varieties. Russians are still very sensitive to exonormative British or

American standards, especially in terms of grammar.

Some scholars (for example, Bruthiaux, 2003; Dröschel, 2011) argue that we can speak of a variety only when it has its own norms and standards. This proves to be a very conservative point of view on the nature of language variety. A more versatile correlation of norms and English varieties is found in Kachru's (1985) well-known classification of varieties into norm-providing/producing (Inner Circle), norm-developing (Outer Circle) and norm-dependent (Expanding Circle) Englishes. Probably, the only objection to this typology, well popularized by David Crystal (1995, p. 359), is that developing norms are observed in all three circles but they are, no doubt, most evident and most dynamic in the Outer Circle. It is just a matter of time for the Outer Circle usage to be recognized as endonormative, or having their own norms and standards distinctive from the norms of other varieties. As for Expanding Circle Englishes, they have exonorms and the specificity of their norms as compared with those of Inner Circle varieties is that they are much more variable – Russians, speaking English, can rely on British, American, Australian, and other norms, whichever they like most. In fact, this often leads to a mixture of norms (for instance, an American grammatical structure with British lexis) but since adaptability to a speech context nowadays is much more important than consistency (Modiano, 2002, p. 246), this is not relevant for communication, especially now that varieties tend to influence each other due to unprecedented mobility of people.

Given all these considerations, I would like to conclude that language *variety* is a complex term embracing at least three main types and many more intermediary and overlapping cases where norm is not the most relevant criterion. What is significant about substantiating varieties is their verbalization of specific culture and mindset and, therefore, transference of L1 certain features, which makes them a means to express cultural identity (a primary means in the Inner Circle, and secondary means in the Expanding Circle).

### 3. What Is Russian English?

As many other Englishes from the Expanding Circle, Russian English is not always accepted as a variety of English for the reasons mentioned above. If English used by Russians is not a variety, then what is it? Let us discuss the actual points of view.

As a rule, three alternatives are suggested (and what we say about Russian English is applicable to almost any other Englishes from the Expanding Circle):

- 1) many Russians believe that they do speak British or American English;
- 2) what we have in the Expanding Circle is a lingua franca, not a variety;
- 3) a performance variety is associated with interlanguage, or learner's English.

Regarding the first point of view, the variety in this case is definitely taken for a model used as an exonormative standard towards which learners and teachers are oriented. The concept of *model* "implies a linguistic ideal which a teacher and a learner keep in mind in imparting instruction or in learning a language" (Kachru, 1981). It is an ideal input at school but the output is real practice of use, which might be a far cry from the input. I cannot but agree with Barbara Seidlhofer (2011) that "...the English that is taught, it is usually not the English that is learnt, and... it is the English that is learnt that is put to use in international communication" (p. 194). The model of British or American English, especially when taught by Russian teachers, who

remain Russian in their culture and mindset however well (being Britishized or Americanized) they speak English, is produced as Russian English by Russian students. Does this mean bad English? By no means, mastery of the language does not depend on prescriptive rules of language models. A competent user of English is a person who can successfully implement a communicative task and be understood by other speakers of this language, no matter whether native or non-native (Prodromou, 2008; Ur, 2009).

The second mentioned association of an Expanding Circle English with a *lingua franca* restricts the nature of a variety to only one function, for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is a functional characteristic of any variety used for communicating between speakers with different mother tongues (Seidlhofer, 2011). Therefore, all varieties can function as a *lingua franca* in intercultural communication but each variety differs from other varieties in certain distinctive features. When in an intercultural setting, ELF speakers tend to use certain strategies to overcome challenges of miscommunication and non-intelligibility. These strategies might be common or sometimes different for users of various Englishes that are distinguishable not as *linguas franca*, i.e. functionally, but *linguaculturally*, i.e. due to their systemic dissimilarities resulting from the first language transfer and due to their cultural differences resulting in cognitive ways to verbalize their mindset.

In regard to the third alternative point of view, we can say that variety is not a learners' language. It is opposed to *interlanguage* as the social is opposed to the individual, as the dynamic and functional is opposed to the static and fossilized. Variety is a product of an entire speech community, while *interlanguage* is a certain level of a speaker's competence at a certain moment of restricted language development. The dependence and link between the terms is natural: as language is made by speech efforts of its users, in the same way language variety is represented as a sum of many *interlanguages* of individual speakers, but the terms are not of equal standing. Variety is a more generalized phenomenon and, therefore, more multi-dimensional. While a person's level of English might be represented by a certain static lect of a beginner (basilect), intermediate learner (mesolect) or an advanced / a proficient user (acrolect), a variety is an average or even a sum of all possible lects of a speech continuum. It is social and multidimensional as it embraces the entire cline of basilect, mesolect, and acrolect. Its description is done from the typical usage of many speakers, most of whom are well-educated. A variety consists of the three lects. They represent a continuum whose acro-, meso-, and basilectal zones are singled out according to the formality of the context of situation, degree of speakers' control over the language used in the situation, and the level of language competence. The acrolectal zone of the variety continuum is employed in formal settings; well-educated users of this lect are highly competent in English and have a full command over their speech. The mesolectal zone is characteristic of either informal contexts, or of formal situations when well-educated users, being tired, frustrated, too emotional or for whatever other reason, can sometimes lose full control over their speech and, therefore, make more deviations in their speech and move from the acrolectal zone to the mesolectal one, or mesolectal speech is found in educated users with a somewhat lower level of language competence. The basilectal zone of the variety continuum is typically represented by speech of not well-educated speakers with low language competence, characterized by heavy accent and transference of grammar, lexical, and discourse features of their first language. When we speak of a variety, we imply all



three lectal zones, though a description of a variety is usually made in the mesolectal zone. A variety is functional and dynamic because any competent user of English, when necessary, can easily slide from the upper (acrolectal) zone of the continuum to its lower part, switching from acrolect to mesolect and even basilect (if the situation requires that) and then back from basilect to mesolect or acrolect, but the notion of interlanguage does not imply any switch upward – a fossilized level of basilectal English is not appropriate for functioning in formal situations where the acrolectal level of an individual is supposed to be encountered.

Chinese scholars (Ge, 1980 cit. in Xu, 2010; Zhang, 1997) have proposed different terms for the lectal variation of social varieties: China English for the acrolect, a functionally formal lect of the cline; Chinese English for the less formal mesolect, and Chinglish for the hybrid basilect. By analogy, we might speak about Russia (or Russia's) English for the acrolect used by Russians (diplomats, TV presenters, scholars, etc.), Russian English for the mesolect, and Ruslish for the basilect. Each lect is characterized by certain specific language features by which a Russian who speaks English can be recognized and identified as a Russian, no matter whether they speak fluently and idiomatically or with a great number of deviations from the education model. For example, if we listen to an interview given by our Minister of Foreign Affairs, a very well-educated person, highly proficient in English, we can definitely relate his interview speech with the acrolectal zone but many linguistic, as well as cultural features will definitely tell us that he is Russian. When he is interviewed as a top government official, his language is identified as Russia (Russia's) English; when talking with someone during a break between sessions, his speech might become mesolectal, i.e. characterized as Russian English.

We can also use the term Russian English in a somewhat broader sense, implying not just the mesolect, but an entire continuum with all its three zones. This can be considered a metonymical usage, for mesolectal speech is characteristic of well-educated and less-educated people, is used in formal and informal settings and bears the greatest number of linguistic features typical of the variety at large.

#### 4. Attitudinal Aspect

We can suggest that non-recognition of the term *Russian English* is due to the attitudinal aspect first and foremost. To find out the attitude of Russians to the English they use and the dynamics of this attitude (if there is any), we conducted three surveys – in 2005, 2009, and 2013. The first and third surveys were conducted by myself, the second one by Irina Ustinova, Associate Professor from Southeast Missouri State University.

The first survey was conducted at several Far Eastern universities and involved about 300 students and instructors. A full description of this survey can be found in (Proshina, 2006). The survey had a number of questions, of which the most relevant for this presentation was 'Which variety of English do you speak?' Answering this question, only 5% of the faculty identified their English as Russian English, though 44% said they used a mixture of British and American English and there was some transference from Russian in the variety they speak. A similar picture was revealed by students. 6% of them recognized their Russian English and 59% were aware that their English was mixed but they didn't dare to name it Russian English, which they found stigmatized. Interestingly, the number of students and teachers who identified

their English as British or American was different – teachers (31%) proved to be more oriented towards British English as a prototypical variety whose norm they found more prestigious, while a practical younger generation of students were geared towards American English (20% vs. 7% who labeled their English as British) as a variety used more often in the Russian Far East.

The 2009 survey was conducted by Irina Ustinova (2011) in the European part of Russia and involved 140 participants (language instructors, students and professionals). This survey showed a small increase in the number of those who claimed that they communicated interculturally in Russian English (9% as compared with 5-6 % in 2005). 22 % admitted that their speech was a mixture of British, American, and Russian words and constructions. British English was claimed as a model by 59 % of the respondents (though they self-identified their speech rather than the model as British English) and American English was recognized as the variety used by 43 % of the Russian respondents.

The third survey was conducted in both European and Asian parts of Russia and included over 300 respondents. The majority of the participants (69 %), however, were from the Asian part of Russia. The respondents included professionals, students not majoring in English, students majoring in English, and English instructors. The majority of the respondents were young, in their 20s. Like the second survey, the third one was done online and included the same questions.

One of the questions in both 2009 and 2013 surveys was about the purpose of learning English. The dominant motifs were intercultural communication (22% in 2013 and 82 % in 2009) and finding a good job (20 % in 2013 and 60 % in 2009). Three other reasons were targeted at revealing a reverential attitude to native speakers' Englishes and cultures (the reasons for learning English, as were mentioned, were going to Anglophone countries - 14 % in 2013 and 50% in 2009; loving the Anglo-Saxon culture - 6 % in 2013 and 43 % in 2009; desiring to become as good as a native speaker – 9% in 2013 and 27 % in 2009). As we see from the statistics, the number of the respondents who shared this attitude decreased essentially in 2013, which means that the critical awareness of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005) has raised and this process is usually accompanied by heightened self-awareness.

This was proved by the responses to the question: 'Which variety of English do you consider yourself to be a speaker of?' Self-identification of the respondents reveals a considerable increase in percentage – 24 % in 2013 as compared with 9 % in 2009 and 5-6% in 2005 who named their variety Russian English. The progress in self-awareness of Russian English is evident. 29 % of the respondents admitted using mixed varieties, which highlights our thesis of increased variability in the norms of the Expanding Circle Englishes.

However, the model variety for teaching and learning is still not Russian English (3% of the respondents) but British (33%), American (18%) or rather a mixture of both (40%). This is quite justified by the exonormative nature of Russian English and proves that the dominant feature of standard variability is typical of the Expanding Circle Englishes. If we compare the responses to the abovementioned question ('Which variety of English do you consider yourself to be a speaker of?') and to the question 'Which variety of English is your goal to speak?', the percentage discrepancy shows that Russian users began to differentiate the notions of a variety as real practice of use and an ideal model of teaching and learning.



Though in the above discussion we have made a conclusion of raising critical awareness of native-speakerism, the attitude towards native speakers' English is complicated. The idea that 'English doesn't belong to the native speakers any more, but to anyone who uses it' still causes big disagreement in the Russian community. As compared with 2009, in 2013 the number of those who supported this statement slightly increased (36 % in 2009 and 38 % in 2013), while the number of those who were opposed to it remained the same (31%).

A great many respondents (47 % in 2013 and 50% in 2009) agreed that it is not the perfectly correct speech that is important in intercultural communication. The statement they agreed or strongly agreed with was 'Schools/colleges should teach English not as the native speakers speak it, but for efficient international communication'. Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement made up 37 % in 2013 and 30% in 2009. So the negative attitude towards loosening prescriptivism in education is noticeable. Linguistic perfectionism discourages the idea of legitimacy of deviations, which make up characteristic features of the varieties, and thus hinders recognizing Russian English as a variety. Probably, knowing other Englishes will promote the idea of English diversity and facilitate accepting our own "rights to be linguistic deviants" (Berns, 2005, p. 92).

So the inferences from the survey can be summed up as follows:

- The preferable models for teaching and learning in Russia are British and American Englishes. The reason for that is quite clear: Russian English as a variety of the Expanding Circle is exonormative, i.e. it has no norms of its own but is oriented towards the norms of the Inner Circle.
- As a variety of the Expanding Circle Russian English is characterized by increased variability of standard forms; therefore, a great number of Russians are not embarrassed to claim that they use mixed models of English.
- The progressive dynamics of the positive attitude of Russians to Russian English is evident: 24 % in 2013, 9% in 2009 and 5-6% in 2005 named the English they speak as Russian English.
- The assessment of Russian English will improve and is improving with the development of the conception that Russian English is a vehicle for conveying Russian culture.

## 5. Cultural Basis of the Variety

Today one of the major barriers for accepting Russian English lies in associating it with learners' English, i.e. with interlanguage, rather than understanding it as a complex social variety that serves as a secondary means of cultural identity. Any variety from the Expanding and Outer Circles has transference features of the native language that comes in contact with English. It is only natural for a variety as a social entity. But each speaker of a variety is able to develop their linguistic competence and move from one lect to another adapting their language to the functional needs and the context of communication. At the same time, every speaker of a variety is a carrier of a certain culture that underpins the variety, so their mindset will be verbalized by their own variety, not any other's.

This cultural specifics of varieties is best revealed in the so-called translingual literature (the term by Hansen, 2012), or world literatures in English (Thumboo, 2006), or contact literature

(the term by Kachru, 1983). Russian literature in English is represented by emigrant authors, both famous and less known. The great and well-known names are Vladimir Nabokov and Joseph Brodsky. Less known (so far) have been the names of Gary Shteyngart who published three novels in the USA, Lara Vapnyar with her two books of stories and a novel, Anya Ulinich with her novel *Petropolis* and Ellen Litman with her stories and a novel about Russian immigrants in the USA, Irina Reyn who wrote the novel *What Happened to Anna K.*, Olga Grushin with her two novels, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* and *The Line*, published in Great Britain under the title *The Concert Ticket* and some others. These are novels about Russia, Russian people, Russian culture. They reflect the Russian mindset and definitely represent different lects of Russian English.

When asked by a journalist whether her literature is Russian or American, Ulinich pointed to the complex symbiosis of its nature: “Context fills in the lack of literal understanding, while those who understand Russian can appreciate a memory of the language. **For a Russian speaker it’s an expressive moment, a way to enter the intimacy of that language while remaining in the exile of the Latin alphabet;** for an English speaker, it is perhaps a reminder that **underneath the seemingly understandable prose is a parallel one that is totally incomprehensible.**” (Stromberg, 2007: URL)

And Olga Grushin, who was the first Soviet student to receive a degree from an American university and who has a double citizenship until now, also emphasizes the Russianness of her English prose: “I did attempt **to imbue my English with a Russian feel**, since I wanted the novel to convey a very Russian sensibility overall. I often retained Russian cadences in my sentences (hopefully while staying within bounds of English grammar), made stylistic allusions to the Russian classics, and in general tried to portray through my language the way of thinking of the entire generation of Russian intelligentsia of the sixties—a somewhat exalted, earnest way of relating to the world, when lofty words like ‘soul,’ ‘beauty,’ and ‘truth’ were filled with everyday meaning.” (Greer, 2006, URL). Probably this is why this literature is so interesting to English-speaking readers of the world.

Indeed, since English has become a glocal language, which is used globally to express local cultures, it is a secondary means to express national identity, which is done through diverse world Englishes, including Russian English. As Larry Smith pointed out, “Although they [our students] will want to know a great deal about other people and other cultures, they should remember that they can only be themselves. English is a means to communicate to the rest of the world their identity, culture, politics, religion, and ‘way of life’” (Smith, 1983, p.9). This is true for all Russian communicators.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up briefly, Russian English is not a myth. It exists. It is a variety per se, belonging to the exonormative Expanding Circle. As such, it is characterized by following models of the norm-providing Inner Circle Englishes, and the specificity of its norms is their variability. Exonormative models are ideal input in teaching and learning, in the Russian educational context they are materialized as Russian English spoken by Russian teachers of English. The output of this learning process normally does not coincide with the input. Russian English is

manifested at different levels of the language structure.

Russian English is a general socio-linguistic entity characterized by certain linguistic features that are revealed to this or that degree in the speech output of Russians speaking English. As a social phenomenon a variety of English used by Russians is a multidimensional lectal continuum that can roughly be subdivided into three zones: acrolect, mesolect, and basilect. Unlike learner's interlanguage, the variety is dynamic and functional, which means that an educated user with a high level of language competence can switch from one zone to another depending on the functional load of English they use and the ability to maintain control over their speech. As a variety, English in Russia comprises all three zones - Russia's English (acrolect), Russian English (mesolect), and Ruslish (basilect) and cannot be associated only with its lowest basilectal zone, which is infrequently regarded as a deficient language.

Russia's / Russian English's major function is intercultural lingua franca, as it provides for the communication of people with different mother tongues and from different cultures. What makes Russian English specific, as compared with other varieties, is not only L1 transference but, first and foremost, the Russian culture and Russian mentality that are underpinning Russian English as a variety.

Russian English is not just a local variety used by ethnic Russians. Since Russia is multicultural and multilingual country, Russian English can be regarded in a broader sense as a regional variety that serves as a cover term for expressing in English diverse cultures of minority ethnicities living in Russia. The correlation of the two senses of the term *Russian English*, in the broad and narrow sense, has not been an object of linguacultural research yet and might be an interesting field for new discoveries and findings.

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