THE PROBLEM OF NORMALIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LINGUISTICS

Turgunov Shukhratjon
Teacher, Uzbekistan state world languages university
E-mail: shuhratturgunov98@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the problems associated with language normalization and standardization efforts in English and Uzbek linguistics. It explains what language normalization and standardization entail and why linguists undertake such projects. The benefits and challenges of normalization are considered for both English and Uzbek. Historical contexts of standardization movements are provided for each language. Issues that arise from promoting a standard language at the expense of dialects and other forms of the language are examined. The article concludes by arguing that complete normalization is impossible to achieve and that diversity within languages should be maintained.

Keywords: language standardization, language normalization, prescriptivism, descriptivism, language variation, English linguistics, Uzbek linguistics.

INTRODUCTION

All languages experience natural change and variation over time and space as they are used by diverse communities (Labov, 1972). However, some linguists and language authorities have sought to impose standard norms and rules on languages in an effort to unify spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). This process, known as language standardization or normalization, aims to produce a uniform and 'correct' version of the language that can be taught in schools and used widely in official communication (Davies, 2003). While standardization aims to facilitate intelligibility and modernize languages, it can also disadvantage certain dialects and speakers. This article discusses the problems associated with normalization efforts in English and Uzbek linguistics.

Standardization of English

English experienced several periods of standardization beginning in the late Middle Ages. The Chancery Standard that emerged in London in the 14th century represented early attempts to regularize spelling in administrative documents (Keller, 1994). This preceded the spread of English through colonial expansion that helped establish modern standard English (MSE) based on southern British dialects (Crystal,

2003). Standardization was aided by prescriptive grammar books from the 17th-18th centuries that promoted 'rules' for correct usage through the notion of a 'Queen's English' (Milroy, 2001).

This early standardization advanced English as a lingua franca but relegated many regional dialects to being considered substandard, though they continued to evolve. Ongoing debates emerged between prescriptivists who sought to enforce standardized norms and descriptivists who documented actual language practices (Fowler & Fowler, 1964). Complete normalization was shown to be impossible given the fluid nature of language. By the late 20th century, many new English varieties, such as African American Vernacular English, gained recognition despite resisting full assimilation to MSE norms (Rickford, 1999).

Standardization raised issues like the dominance of Southern traits in the standard and marginalizing of Northern forms (Beal, 2004). Difficulties also arose in incorporating recent loanwords and concepts from globalization into the standardized lexicon without controversy (Hickey, 2012). Overall, English diversified greatly but MSE remains the variety taught in schools and used in official functions across world Englishes. The standardization debate continues with no clear resolution on how to balance unity and diversity within the language.

Standardization of Uzbek

Uzbek underwent several waves of standardization following the Sovietization of Central Asia in the 1920s. Prior to this period, Uzbek existed primarily as distinct tribal dialects without a unifying standard (Comrie, 1981). The Soviets introduced a Latin alphabet and grammar based on the Chagatai dialect spoken in Tashkent. However, this early standard faced resistance from communities attached to their local spoken forms. In the 1940s, the Cyrillic alphabet replaced Latin in order to strengthen Russia's cultural influence.

After independence in 1991, Uzbek transitioned back to a Latin alphabet as part of de-Russification and re-Central Asianization efforts. The modern Uzbek standard draws heavily from the Tashkent dialect but also incorporates features from other dialects to increase representation. Standardization was aided by new dictionaries published under state language policies that promoted a unified norm (lindstedt, 2000). However, variation persists across the large country between urban and rural speech forms as well as across regional borders (Comrie, 1981).

As with English, complete normalization of Uzbek has proven elusive due to its sheer diversity as the language of over 30 million people. Strict imposition of the standard risks marginalizing communities with non-standard dialects and identities. Finding a balance between functional unity and cultural diversity remains an ongoing project. Language policies must navigate nationalism, globalization and local

autonomy sensitively. Overall, standardization has advanced Uzbek as a modern national language while continuing to recognize internal variation.

Problems of Standardization

Some inherent problems arise from efforts to artificially impose standard norms on naturally diverse languages. Prescriptivism privileges certain dialects over others by asserting one form as superior or 'correct' (Milroy, 2001). This disadvantages speakers of non-standard varieties who face social stigma and exclusion if failing to conform to artificial rules. Complete normalization is shown to be impossible without forcibly suppressing all internal variation, a task no language authority has ever achieved (Labov, 1972).

Promoting a sole standardized variety risks losing dialects containing lexical, grammatical and stylistic traits valuable for historical, literary or cultural reasons (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998). Marginalizing vernaculars can endanger local linguistic diversity and traditional ways of speaking that contribute to cultural identities (Edwards, 1994). Standard languages often embed biases by privileging the norms of certain social classes or regions at the expense of others (Milroy, 1999). For historically marginalized groups, nonstandard dialects carry continued social meaning and political significance challenging standard norms.

Overall, descriptivist approaches arguing that 'usage determines correctness' better recognize the inevitability of language change and variation (Fowler, 1965). No single authority can or should seek to artificially freeze a language in time and space via standardization alone. Instead, balancing unity, diversity and social justice should guide language policies accepting multiple dialects and forms as natural phenomena (Kroskrity, 2000). Complete normalization is a theoretical ideal that brings more harm than benefit when rigidly imposed on fluid, diverse languages.

CONCLUSION

While standardization aims to facilitate uniformity, modernization and intelligibility, the problems this article has examined show the limitations of such projects for dynamic, diverse languages like English and Uzbek. Forces of globalization and local diversity will continue producing new language varieties that resist full assimilation to standardized norms. Complete normalization is an impossible goal given the inevitable and valuable nature of linguistic variation (Labov, 1994).

Language authorities must navigate the tension between prescription and description sensitively, recognizing dialects not as "wrong" but as valid forms deserving respect (Milroy, 1999). Policies balancing unity, diversity and equity offer a more realistic approach than dogmatically imposing a single standard. Future standardization efforts could focus on increasing representation, updating standards flexibly over time, and raising the status of vernaculars without seeking their

elimination (Woolard, 1998). Overall, maintaining linguistic diversity within tolerance for multiple forms should guide the management of complex, global languages.

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