



## ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ LINGUISTICS

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### Language Contacts and South African Idioms' Nativization

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the specifics of phraseological units in the process of nativization which is understood as the need for local languages and cultures adaptation. The purpose of the research work is identifying peculiar features of the phraseological units nativization process due to the influence of language and cultural contact interaction. The research work is conducted on the basis of idioms comparative analysis of the British English language and such a language variant as the English language variant functioning on the territory as South Africa. Based on a combination of induction and deduction methods, methods of phraseological identification and component analysis, the unique properties of South African English idioms are revealed. The process of South African English idioms nativization is influenced by interference processes due to the influence of local languages and cultures. The research work results in revealing unique features of South African English idioms in comparison to British English idioms as: highly productive inclusions of lexemes from South Africa autochthonous languages the most productive of them are Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans; the tendency to simplify the grammatical structure of phraseological units which is manifested mainly in the articles' omission.

**Keywords:** language and culture, idioms, British English, South African English, inclusions, simplification

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### Языковые контакты и нативизация фраzeологических единиц в ЮАР

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**Аннотация.** Рассмотрена специфика фразеологических единиц в процессе нативизации, под которой понимается процесс адаптации к нормам местных языков и культур. Целью исследования является выявление специфики нативизации фразеологических единиц вследствие контактного взаимодействия. Исследование проведено на основе сравнительно-сопоставительного анализа фразеологического фонда британского английского языка и территориального варианта английского языка в ЮАР. Путем сочетания методов индукции и дедукции, фразеологической идентификации и компонентного анализа выявлены уникальные свойства фразеологического фонда английского языка, функционирующего на территории ЮАР, подверженного влиянию интерференционных процессов со стороны местных лингвокультур: высокопродуктивные

вкрапления лексем автохтонных языков ЮАР, наиболее продуктивными из которых являются языки зулу, хоса и африкаанс; тенденция к симплификации грамматической структуры фразеологизмов, что проявляется, в большей степени, в опущении артиклей.

**Ключевые слова:** лингвокультурология, фразеологический фонд, британский английский язык, территориальный вариант, английский язык в ЮАР, вкрапления, симплификация

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## Introduction

English, being the language of international communication, has many variations today. The variety of English variants has been analysed in works by B. Kachru [The Handbook..., 2006] and D. Crysral [2008]. European language function in Africa have become the necessary part to African people, as J. Baghana stresses [2018].

J. Baghana J., T.G. Voloshina, Ya. Glebova, M. Radovich M. have come to the conclusion that globalization is the reason of local languages' and cultures' extinction [Baghana et al., 2020; 2021b]. T.G. Voloshina pays attention to such English variant as Nigerian English and stresses the need to study the local languages and cultures while analysing Nigerian English phonetics, grammar and lexis [Baghana, Voloshina, 2019]. The authors pay attention to the functioning of French as the main language in Africa as well, they stress “the impact of interference on the functioning of French in Ivory Coast” as it is the reason of many new French variant” [Baghana et al., 2021a]. The should be special measures from the local Government to support the local languages and cultures diversity [Baghana et al., 2023].

In our research work the attention is pays to the analysis of such English variant functioning in Africa as South African English. H. Gough stressed that “in the South African context English has been both a highly influential language, and a language influenced, in different ways and to different degrees, by processes of adaptation within the country's various communities” [Gough, 1996].

The research problem lies in the need to make the analysis of South African English being the part of variants functioning on the territory of African and to trace the trends in most and least productive language process making the flesh of global English.

The purpose of the research work is to reveal language and cultural peculiarities of South African English idioms and to trace the most typical transformation processes while nativization process on the example of idioms.

## Methods

The research work is based on a combination of a group of methods. The main methodology includes the analysis of linguistic units, the comparative historical method, the method of structural opposition, the method of component analysis and the method of logical and semantic modeling.

## Results and discussion

Idioms of South African English have been adapted to the norms of many local languages and cultures. One must stress, peoples of South Africa are extremely emotional, therefore, they use many exclamations in the speech. Many of the exclamations have become the part of idioms, for example:

1. *Ag man!* [Dictionary..., 2023]

This emotional exclamation has been borrowed into South African English form Afrikaans and has the meaning of “Oh God”. Often it is used in the beginning of the sentence to express irritation or pity, for example:

*Ag man! What's the hell is going on?* [Taranov, 2023, p. 23]



This type of interjection is a part of such idiom as “*Ag man and his geld are soon parted*” meaning “some people can deal with money, while others can’t”. The analysed idiom corresponds to the British English “A fool and his money are soon parted”. While analysing the idiom adaptation process in South African English, one must stress that lexical and syntactic elements do not correspond to the British English variant: firstly, we notice the omission of “a fool” from British English in the beginning of the idiom and its change to the emotional exclamation “Ag man!”, and, secondly, there is lexical change from the English word “money” to the word “geld” borrowed from the local language Afrikaans.

2. *Aikona* or *Haikona* [South African..., 2023]

This type of exclamation is used to describe a very emotional situational. This word is used synonymously to English “never”, for example:

*Haikona?! How could that be?* [Collis, 2007]

This emotional speech marker has become form the local language Zulu which is used to describe the shocking stage of a person or when communicating emotionally with friends to support them. This exclamation is used in the idioms “Haikona say Haikona” which corresponds to British English idiom “Never say never”.

3. *Jislaaik* [South African..., 2021, p. 109]

This exclamation is used to express the surprise, for example:

*Jislaaik! You again!* [South African ..., 2021, p. 110]

This exclamation is used in the idioms:

“*Jislaaik my word*” [Motinyane-Masoko, Mawadza, 2017, p. 34] – expresses surprise, annoyance or dismay:

*Jislaaik my word! I did not expect you here!* [The online dictionary ..., 2023]

“*Jislaaik, my*” [Dictionary..., 2023] – shows surprise, wonder, pleasure:

*Jislaaik, my! I glad to come you* [Motinyane-Masoko, Mawadza, 2017]

Idioms of South African English adapt to the norms of local languages and cultures. The process of idioms’ nativization is connected with the replacement of British English lexemes and their changing for local analogues, which is named as local word inclusions.

Examples:

1. *Babbelas* [Motinyane-Masoko, Mawadza, 2017, p. 56]

The word “babbelas” means in South African English “hang over”. The lexeme “babbelas” came from the Zulu language. In British English “hang over” is the idiom and is used directly to describe uncomfortable feeling with fatigue and nausea after an excessive amount of alcohol, and indirectly or metaphorically to describe the unresolved problems from the past. South African English has the idiom “*Babbelas money*” which describes financial problems for business, such as bankruptcy, for example:

*Bed luck! It’s because babbelas money* [The online dictionary..., 2023]

2. *Biltong* [Dictionary..., 2023]

The word “biltong” is the element of local cuisine and means “beef dried meat” or “ostrich dried meat”. In South Africa many ethnic dishes are cooked from this meat type which is very tasty: it is spicy and is eaten nowadays at rugby matches. The idiom of British English “to put meat on bones” is transformed in South African English to “*put biltong on bones*” and means “to put on weight”, for example:

*He’s so skinny. He must put biltong on his bones* [Taranov, 2023, p. 45]

3. *Boet* [South African..., 2021]

The lexeme “boet” means “brother”, for example:

*Hey boet, see you at the poker game next time* [The online dictionary..., 2023]

The word “boet” is used addressing to a male friend. It is stressed that in South Africa close friends are considered to be a part of the family, therefore, close friends are like family members. The lexeme “boet” is often used in idioms of South African English, for example:

“*Boet of blade*” [Smith, 2017]

This idiom corresponds to the British English idiom “brother of the blade” and is used metaphorically describing a soldier:

*Now war! Boets of blade are waiting* [Taranov, 2023]

“*brews boets*” [Dictionary..., 2023]

This idiom presents the adaptation of the British English idiom “brews brothers” which is used to denote “beer-drinking students” in British culture and “time-spending with male friends” in South African English. The difference in culture influences the language as well and we trace the extension of idiom meaning in different cultures. It’s typical for British students to drink beer after lectures, while in South Africa there are not so many students in comparison with South Africa, and if young males spend time together in the evening they use to drink national drinks (not beer), and if dating with females, drinking is not very popular.

“*string boet*” [Motinyane-Masoko, Mawadza, 2017, p. 67]

This idiom of South African English corresponds to British English idiom “brother of the string”, which means a fiddler. The idiom in South African English has been transformed due the nativization process: firstly, we see the changing of English “brother” to the local analogue “boet”, and, secondly, we notice the difference in meaning – exactly the extension-meaning process as it is used to denote any kind of a musician:

*We need string boets for the party!* [Dictionary..., 2023]

4. *Boerewors* [South African..., 2021]

This is a special spicy sausage which is considered to be a traditional afrikaaner dish – “a typical farmer sausage”. This dish is more than 200 years and is still popular and is eaten as a hot dog with mustard and tomato sauce. This word from the local language Afrikaans is a part of the idiom “not a boerewors” which is the analogue to the idiom of British English “not a sausage” denoting something that is not important, something very tiny.

Example:

*We can do it next tomorrow! That not a boerewors* [The online dictionary..., 2023]

5. *Braai* [Taranov, 2023, p. 67]

The noun “braai” is used to describe a traditional barbecue in South African English. Usually people grid lamb chops and boerewors over flames. They cook melktert for dessert and enjoy time together. The noun “braai” has replaces the word “picnic” in idioms:

“*be no braai*” – is used to describe a person or a deal easy to deal with:

*That’s not braai. We do it right now* [The online dictionary..., 2023]

“*a few boerewors short for braai*” [Dictionary..., 2023] – this idiom corresponds to the British English idiom “a few sandwiches short of a picnic” and is used to describe a stupid person:

*Selling bananas is like a few boerewors short for braai* [The online dictionary..., 2023]

This example presents the situation when a person tries to sell bananas in the place where there are many species of bananas, so, it is not a good thing as it will not be beneficial.

6. *Laaitie* [South African..., 2021]

This word is used to describe a young woman in her teens or early twenties, often this noun is a part of idioms:

“a laaitie of few words” – is the analogue to the British English idiom “a woman of few words” [Collis, 2007, p. 106] and is used to describe a woman who speaks little. The idiom of South African English has been nativized lexically (changing from British English “woman” to Zulu “laaitie”) and grammatically (in South African English we can see the omission of the indefinite article “a” due to the absence of articles in local languages):

*She is a laaitie of few words! We know nothing from her* [Smith, 2017]

“*a laaitie for all seasons*” [The online dictionary..., 2023] – is used as the analogue to the British English idiom “a woman for all seasons” [Collis, 2007, p. 109]. This idiom describes a woman who is talented in many spheres:



*Melanie is a laatie for all seasons* [South African..., 2023]

“*marked laatie*” – corresponds to British “*marked woman*” [Collis, 2007, p.78].

In British culture this idiom is used meaning a woman who is targeted for harm, who is bullied due to many reasons: physically, psychologically, mentally, at work, in the family. In South African the meaning of the idiom has been narrowed to a woman who is mistreated offensively by her husband, for example:

*She is miserable as she is a marked laatie* [The online dictionary ..., 2023].

### Conclusions

Such English variant as South African English has been made in the result of British English influence and the adaptation to local languages the most productive of them are Afrikaans, Zulu and Xhosa. Idioms of British English, functioning on the territory of South Africa, have been nativatised to the norms of local cultures and languages which resulted in the specific structure of South African English idioms. The idioms of South African English have been nativatised which resulted in frequent inclusions of local lexemes and grammar simplification processes.

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