ENGLISH VS. FRENCH: HISTORICAL AND POETIC COMPARATIVE ARGUMENTS

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Abstract:The developing status of the English as the world-wide instrument of communication is irreversible. The debate on the English language priority to the status of lingua franca has been developed for more than one hundred years. The article makes an account of the inadequacy of arguments for the debate on the language as culture identifier against the language as an instrument of communication that were developed by a French symbolist poet Stephane Mallarméand Nicolae Iorga[1], a Romanian historian in early 20th century to support the linguistic national policies of the twenty first century.

***Keywords**: lingua franca; communication instrument; culture identifier, linguistic denativization,*

***Motto**: It is not difficult to find the truth. It is difficult to make it shine. Nicolae Iorga*

Language is not debatable and it is not an object of competition

The distinction between the concepts of *language as a communication instrument* and *culture identifier* aims to freeze out the arguments on language superiority and priority to the status of the world *lingua franca*. The pros and cons raised by Stephane Mallarmé and Nicolae Iorga stretch from linguistic arguments to political ones, but they ignore facts and make the debate go away from reality: the growing number of non-native English speakers using it to communicate across the world, extension of the science and technology domains promoting it, the official or special status that many least developed countries awarded it, etc. The short historical account on the two languages structure and their linguistic opposite policies opens way to modern-time evidence.

Concepts and operating principles

The arguments that our research brings forward on English as the language of global communication refers to the choice that the world has made for English as a linguistic instrument to carry out social and professional interaction. Accuracy is needed to the immediate access to the process of reasoning of our point of view on the operating concepts and principles of our paper.

The *language of communication* is defined as the language of progress and personal creative development, the language of knowledge and good practices dissemination to the

[1] Romanian professor of history, member of the Romanian Academy and a minister in the Romanian government (1871-1940)

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stakeholders. The language that facilitates communication is the essential key for learning, building relationship with others and enabling individuals to make sense of the world and of themselves. As communication expands throughout the world, people choose a language to meet their global communication needs. The globalization process draws the attention to the English phenomenon which has become, by facts, the *language franca*, the language that the world has chosen to communicate because it is"inextricable from the social relationships and identities of its users".(Graddol, 2006; 51-56)

The concept of *the language of culture identification* belongs to a set of culture identifiers which include also location, gender, race, history, nationality, religion, ethnicity, aesthetics, etc. that give the individual the sense of a shared citizenship and social values and beliefs. [Gans, Chaim, 2003]. The language as a culture identifier is learnt for the integration and identification with the respective speech community [Knapp, 2008:133] but the language of communication expresses a communicative and referential function, i.e. the culture associated to the natural language is not activated by its users. French is also used as a language of communication, but in the sense of the political context of the European Union.

Both English and French identify themselves with their original culture. The question is which one is entitled to the role of the world instrument of communication.

Why English?

English has become the corporate language, and meetings go smoothly when no native speakers are present […] because few native speakers belong to the community of practice which is developing among *lingua franca* users. (Graddol, 2006: 567-59)

The rapid economic and technological development results in a high rate process of urbanization which changes the old life-style patterns mainly in the metropolitan cities all over the world. English is now associated with the growing middle class population and the multilingual ethnic mix in the developed countries that strive against separateness. English is no longer a monolithic and hegemonic voice[2], a language belonging exclusively to its native speakers due to the process of *nativization*[3] which diversified it into many non-native varieties because of its functional flexibility. English has ceased to be a divisive social force in the sense of a shared citizenship, but a social cohesive force. The double ended process of *nativization* makes the language divert into varieties of English as a result of its contact with different languages (Kachru, 1985: 11-30) and turns the original language into a non-native linguistic variant, a *denativized* one which is adaptable to the global needs of communication.

Two languages, two histories

Both modern French and English languages started their modern emergence in the time of Renaissance when the classical learning was defined and fueled by the Protestant Reformation.

[2] Juliane House, Guardian Weekly, Thursday 19 April 2001

[3]Linguistic process by which a second language gains parent native speakers and becomes native to their children

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The printing press installed at the University of Sorbonne by the German Heylin von Stein[4] in 1450 and by William Caxton[5] who laid the first publishing house in England in the same time, contributed extensively to the rapid uniformity process of the two languages in the Medieval times through the development of the reading taste and literary writing, raising them to the status of vernacular in relation to the usage of Latin which was used until the 16th century for science and academic scholarship. (Palad, 2013:18)

The construction of roads, cannels and bridges enabled commercial trade development and national unity for both countries mainly due to the extension of trade and movement of armies and specialized working people that made the most geographically-distant and politically-resistant regions of the countries stick together through their languages that turned into *languages of culture identification*.

Following the *industrial revolution*[6] of the early eighteenth century, the move from a cottage industry towards an industrial society had a major impact on the language (Bragg, 2004: 238) by the new display of the vocabulary. The machine age powered the language as empathic as Tyndale's Bible[7] sets. The major steps of English as a global language followed the technological[8] and scientific revolution and continued with the modern-day fast revolutions in all the domains of human activity[9]. The scientists, innovators, managers have appealed to Greek and Latin as a linguistic source[10] to coin new words naming their industrial and technological novelties and make them easily understood and acknowledged by Europeans and by different other language speakers in the world.

The reconstruction of the Indo-European ancestor language opened largely a new space and time vision of the linguistic revolution. The progress of the etymological history reveals the language geological strata and the subject of comparative grammar opens vision on the mechanisms of the phonetic transformation leading to new language developments[11].

Although the first French speaking peoples were the Franks, a Germanic origin tribe, the Germanic vocabulary in modern French ranges from 500 words (1%) to 7500 words, 15% ,

[4] His French name was Jean de la Pierre, as he was born in a German place named Stein, and he established the first printing house of the university of Sorbonne

[5]1415 –1492) English merchant, diplomat, writer and the first who introduced printing in England in 1476 and the first retailer of his printed books (his London contemporaries in the same trade were all Flemish, German or French)

[6] The term *revolution* is used to outline the transition from the hand production methods to the manufacturing processes in the period from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840 that started in Great Britain. It marked a major development of the human life-standards which spread to the Western Europe and the United States within a few decades.

[7] the body of biblical translations made by William Tyndale, possibly after 1522, which is credited with being the first English translation to work directly from Hebrew and Greek texts. It was the first biblical mass product as a result of the advances in the art of printing. The work was inspired by Martin Luther's New Testament and published first in Cologne, after having been labeled as heretical in his country.

[8]It proceeded in the latter half of the 19th century until the World War I when electrification, mass production, production line were developed and vehicled by their linguistic correspondents.

[9] We make reference to the modern day fast developments that are carried out in all major new domains of human activity under the name of revolution: scientific, information, digital, green, nano and bio technology, etc

[10] We make reference to the Latin and Greek roots, stems, prefixes and suffixes that made possible the development of specialized terminology (note of the author)

[11] the 19th century witnessed a vast linguistic work devoted to the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European and its daughter proto-languages such as Proto-Germanic and Proto Romanic family using the historical linguistic techniques.

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according to various researchers. (Walter, H. 1998). *Les Chansons des Geste*[12] made the language literary and King Francis I made it official to his administration and court proceedings in 1539. The process of the language standardization started in the 17 century which became consistent with the linguistic policy of the French Academy in 1634. From that moment on the linguistic policy of the two nations split into two different directions: the academic body established by the Cardinal Richelieu[13] insisted on the preservation of the French language purity which goes on even today, contributing to the adaptation of the loan words. It was the time when French turned into the *language of culture identification*, although the Enlightenment made it the *lingua franca* of the European diplomacy, arts and literatures, when the Russian, German, Scandinavian courts used it as their official language. Nowadays, the purity of the language is manifested in the recent modifications of *software* into *logiciel*,*packet-boat* into *paquetbot*, and *computer* into *ordinateur*.

It is the linguistic *cultural component* that led to the communicative inequality of French against English when compared to the nativized latter capacity to communicate (Phillipson, 2003: 40). It is the *linguistic policy* that made the difference between the social roles that English and French play in the world: the communication capacity of English does not minimize the cultural impact of French distinguishness.

Stephane Mallarmé and Nicolae Iorga: a Case-study

Our project rejects the critical arguments and criteria used by Stephane Mallarmé and the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga in their evaluation of the social roles of the two languages. Their confusion between the concepts mentioned before brings out arguments against the Indo European and Germanic origins of the English language. Stephane Mallarmé advocates his theory that the Norman occupation stopped the English language evolution, as its speakers were forbidden to use it and made it decay by dropping its inflections. His structuralist treatment of English reveals Cratylus[14] language consideration as natural rather than conventional. His theories and linguistic themes are sampled by English grammar and lexical developments from a fragment of the Bible translated by Ulfilas[15] which displays a mature language by a *perfect orthography, regularity in phrases, making its speaking nation and the race authentic.* The "historical adventure" of the English language started with its contact with the Normans in 1066 that made it change completely and made it the mother-tongue of modern English, i.e. a twisted Norman French. He strongly denies the continuity of the English language use and evolution from the introduction of the Norman French on the conquered territory as the language of the new rulers. He states that this was the stage that made the language decay. The Norman French continued the process of making the language analytical, while English took the path of a degenerated language by acquiring a synthetic grammatical structure.

[12] Old French for "song of heroic deeds (from *gesta*: Latin: "deeds, accomplished actions
[13] the chief minister to King Louis XIII
[14] Ancient Athenian philosopher from the mid-late 5th century BCE
[15] *Ulphilas*, *Orphila* (ca. 311 – 383), bishop and Christian missionary

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His lexical subjective arguments ignore the different development of Latin source of *palacium* into *palais* > *palace,* and *castrum* into *château* >*castle*[16]. The stylish Latin lexical source is compared to the humble Anglo Saxon origin words, such as *home* and *heart*. When the *"Lois de permutation"* madeFrench musical and fit to poetry, English language acquired more roughness and rudeness.

He goes further into his personal linguistic research by trying to find French suffixes and prefixes in English grammar which he considers to have been deliberately changed into different grammatical categories to trace the language back to a false Germanic Anglo-Saxon origin.

Series of words like:

- beef - boeuf
- sheep - mouton
- swine -pork
- deer - venison
- fouls - poullet
- calf - veal

do not evidence the linguistic arguments of Stephane Mallarmé for the native English used in parallel with the Norman French on the British territory.

He does not understand why the English are proud of their language which is nothing else but pure bad French. The English should better follow its real French tradition and make the language what it really is. He gives samples of the words that are claimed to be English, but they proved to be nothing but mispronounced French words.

It is only the British vanity that makes the two languages sound differently… His authorized opinion in English linguistics is that English should preserve the French original pronunciation of the English words as recognition of the superiority of the French language. Here are some words that he provides as being samples of what he calls Norman English.

abot, abash, aunt, battler, carol, challenge, creak, cabbage, cheer, dab, dean, earnest, especial, frisk, gabble, garret, hoard, Jew, label, match, nice, pressure, paint, pall-mall, random, sorrel, etc.

The following word samples show the differences of the two languages development originating the same Latin roots.

Latin	**English**	**French**
brevis	abbreviate	abreger
negare	deny	negation
adjudicate	adjudicate	adjudger
quarere	conquer	acquerir
pretium	appreciate	apprecier
prehendit	apprehend	appredre

[16] http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=castle&searchmode=none

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Valuable arguments of the scientific research of *Grimm's Law* or the method of *historical comparative study of grammar* of Germanic languages initiated by *Frantz Bopp*[17] are to be used against theoretical linguistic adventures.

The historic terms made Nicolae lorga conclude that a French type of society on the British Isles developed up to the fourteenth century due to the absence of a British history and tradition. He considers Wace[18], Gautier Map[19], Jourdain Fantosme[20] contributions to the Norman language as long as English writers were proud to have been born on the continental France:

"Mes language as buens, car en France suis nez".

Further English author is quoted to apologize that he did not know French better, for he was just an English man:

Jeo sui Englois, si quier per tele voie

Estre excuse [21]*...*

The Romanian historian argumentation goes on: the English grammar books were published in French on the British territory that made its speakers aware of their low national identity profile making their literary work but only French imitations: Amis et Amiles[22], Ywain[23], etc. Even The Canterbury Tales of G. Chaucer are suspected to be of French origin (*chaucer, chaucier, chaussser)*. Nicolae Iorga claims "that his book is an imitation of the style, joke and craftsmanship of the French fabliaux, and it displays the irony of the neighboring literature which contains many noble things".

Conclusions

We consider Stephane Mallarmé's and Nicolae Iorga's work collections of linguistic prejudices persuasively advocated not to be taken into consideration. Is it vanity that makes the two languages different? The Romanian linguist Alexandru Duţu[24] considers the historian's commentaries excusable, but not the French linguist's as he makes his statements proofs. Pieces of works like this give us the measure of learned and charming dilettantes rather than that of scientists.

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[17] German linguist (1791 –1867) known for his extensive comparative work on Indo-European languages
[18] Robert Wace (1110 –1174) Norman poet who was born in Jersey and brought up in mainland Normandy
[19]Gautier Map (Walter Map - (1140-1208-1210) English writer known for his literary production of *De nugis curialium*, and the prose poem, Lancelot-Graal.
[20] Historian and Anglian-Norman chronicler that wrote between 1158 and 1174
[21] John Gower, English poet, 1330 –1408
[22] old French Romance
[23] Sir Ywain also called Owain, Yvain, Ewain or Uwain, a knight of the Round table in the Arthurian legend.
[24] Romanian historian, linguist and theologian (1928-1999)

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