GLOBALIZATION AND THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC COMPETENCIES

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Abstract: Globalization is a subject worldwide debated by economists, economists, sociologists, political scientists, politicians and linguists. Globalization has enriched the scientific and cultural world, and many people brought benefits and economic but some analysts foresee most advantages in terms of economic integration. In the economic context of the 21st century when the trade has surpassed the boundaries of states and more contacts between people increases the likelihood of greater global solidarity, English has become one of the most used ways of communication between business and then also between other individuals. The possibility that English become the only language spoken in all the countries of the planet is more intense under discussion, but most linguists and researchers in the field are against this possibility. At the lexical level there is an unprecedented development in terminologies, causes being particularly extra linguistic nature: the emergence of new areas of existing development, the change and evolution in general of all compartments of social life.

Keywords: globalization, communication, cultural diversity, foreign languages, linguistic competencies

We are part of a society in which the means of communication have achieved a level of unexpected development. *Globalization* is the term used by some to describe the growing global interdependence between people, and between states. The process was accelerated considerably in the last decade, largely by the huge advances in technology. Nowadays, we are able to make international phone calls to speak to our friends who are studying abroad, we can read articles online or make friends from other continents through social networks (and some of us may even find our soul mate), or even share the results of our research studies. We are clearly influenced by globalization more than we are aware of. But how many of us have tried to analyze and to really understand the phenomenon in order to have a better control over its consequences?

1. Globalization and the modern era

Globalization is believed to be a recent phenomenon, typical of the contemporary era (at least at the level of awareness). It is not "a single concept that can be defined and encompassed within a set time frame, nor is it a process that can be defined clearly with a beginning and an end" (Al-Rodhan, Stoudmann 2006:3). The term appears as late as the 1960s, its promoters being Marshall McLuhan, Professor at the University of Toronto, and Zbigniew Brzezinski from the University of Columbia.

Its acquired meanings and definitions in the specialty literature are numerous and cover a wide area. Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990: 64) has described globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way

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that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. This involves a change in the way we understand geography and experience localness. As well as offering opportunity it brings with considerable risks linked, for example, to technological change. Robert Gilpin, a researcher in the field of political economy, speaks of "the integration of the world-economy", while Jan Aart Sholte, Professor of politics and international studies and director of the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation (CSGR) at the University of Warwick, refers to the "de-territorialization – or the growth of supraterritorial relations between people"/ globalization is 'a transformation of social geography marked by the growth of supraterritorial spaces' - although he simultaneously recognizes that 'territoriality and supraterritoriality coexist in complex interrelations.' (Shaw, online source[1])

Globalization, thus, has powerful economic, political, cultural and social dimensions. "Here we want to focus on four themes that appear with some regularity in the literature:

- de-localization and supraterritoriality;
- the speed and power of technological innovation and the associated growth of risk;
- the rise of multinational corporations; and
- the extent to which the moves towards the creation of (global) free markets to leads to instability and division" (Smith, M. K. and Doyle M. 2002[2])

John Tomlinson notices a double determination between culture and globalization, considering that "globalization is the center of modern culture, and the cultural practices are at the center of globalization" (2002:9). It pertains therefore to a relationship of reciprocity. The real meaning of globalization can be highlighted only in the cultural context of the contemporary era, but, in its turn, the manner in which the individual and the community perceive culture is influenced by globalization through the new methods and instruments it promotes. Values are redefined and principles are reassessed according to the new parameters imposed by the technological evolution and by the simplification of communication methods. First and foremost, effective speed and profit are required. Only after securing the above could we talk about evaluation at the moral and aesthetic levels, an analysis that brings us the closest to the conservative cultural approach.

The book *Global Transformations. Politics, Economics and Culture,* starts from the assumption that "one of the most direct forms of perceived and experienced is cultural globalization" (Held, McGrew, Golblat, Perraton 2004:372). The natural reaction is to challenge this idea, giving as a counterargument the primacy of the economic dimension of globalization. But if we refer to culture in its broadest sense as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or the way of life)"(online source[3], then the initial statement proves to be founded. Because before the occurrence of a specific type of economy there was the thinking that generated it, before a spectacular scientific development there was the researcher and the specialized education that the former had received, and all of them clearly belong to the cultural segment of a society.

[1] http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/hafa3/scholte.htm
[2] http://infed.org/mobi/globalization-theory-and-experience/
[3] Online source: merriam-webster.com (accessed 25.11.2013)

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2. Cultural globalization and linguistic globalization

Cultural globalization becomes more and more evident in the linguistic plane. We are in a continuous process of learning foreign languages; whether we do it out of passion or out of desire for professional achievements. Nowadays, kindergarten preschoolers start taking English lessons at the age of 4, than they will study French, German or Spanish in the first grade. As it was only then that they were receiving the first directions for elucidating the alphabet and they did not know how to write, the teacher prompts to draw the words they are learning. It is important to get used to the new language as soon as possible.

The origins of globalization at the linguistic level are to be found in various fields. Man is a social being, who can find oneself only within a community and who feels the need to communicate with peers. Moreover, the development of an economy of global dimensions has raised the issue of cooperation among economic agents from various regions, which implies the need for a means of communication accessible to all the participants. Conducting the analysis in the historical past, it is also worth mentioning the politico-administrative factor. That is the colonial regime, which imposed the use of the metropolis language by the colonies - if not as one clear objective, at least as a consequence of the presence of the administrative apparatus, which comprised clerks trained in the metropolis.

The roots and manifestations of linguistic globalization are older than one may think. In the beginning, one could notice the primacy of Latin, long considered to be *lingua franca*, and quickly associated with the communication tool in sciences and consequently turned into the basis of specific terminologies. In the fields of Zoology and Botany, the system of scientific names of Latin origin is imposed in order to facilitate communication between researchers coming from different linguistic areas. The same thing happens in the legal field: terms such as *de facto, de jure, casus belli,* etc. have remained in use in the specialty literature and in the current legal practice.

There follows the era of the French language domination. In the African space, this is nothing else but a direct result of the colonial regime. But in the European area, the Francophone spirit has emerged as a result of the fascination of various societies with the French culture in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. By learning the French language, the elite of the states aspiring to cultural accomplishment had access to the cultural works and innovations of French origin. But, beyond the desire for going beyond limitations and evolving socially, politically and artistically, it has to be admitted that the adoption of French as a language of communication in societies such as the Russian or even the Romanian ones also involves a component of mere imitation.

The emergence of a new power over the ocean meant the renunciation to the supremacy that Baudelaire's language had before. Especially after World War II, the imposition of the English language became an increasingly prominent process. The case of Romania is highly suggestive; even though it is a francophone country by tradition, statistics indicate that the number of pupils studying English in the pre-university system of education has not only increased, but it has surpassed the number of the students learning the French language.

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3. Linguistic and cultural diversity

Linguistic diversity is as much under threat just as its ecological counterpart. It has decreased globally by 20% in the years from 1970-2005 (Harmon and Loh, 2010). Many scholars (Crystal 2000, Krauss 1992) predict imminent death of half of the languages spoken in today's world. Crystal's work on Language Death (2000) along with works by Nettle and Romaine (2002) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) show that standardisation policies adopted by the state or the corporate sector are instrumental in motivating speakers to shift voluntarily to more powerful and prestigious language(s) and this is playing a major role in destruction of linguistic diversity.

Linguistic and cultural diversity belongs to the world history. It needs no further illustration than the Babel Tower in the Judeo-Christian culture. In 2001, the UNESCO Member States adopted the Universal Declaration on cultural diversity, from which we quote article 6 (online source[4])

> *– Towards access for all to cultural diversity.*
> *While ensuring the free circulation of ideas and works, care should be exercised so that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity.*

Therefore, we are talking about a new association on the world stage between culture and democracy conducive to the promotion of intercultural expression in multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is actually cultural diversity approached politically and economically and its protection is an obsession in the context of globalization. This convenient and handy scapegoat seems to be turning culture into a commodity. The information is turned into a resource that is an object of economic exchange reflected first and foremost in the virtual space in which English is the "lingua franca". The influence of the Anglophone world in form and content seems to be a cultural domination/ homogenization whose catalyst is the Internet. The inter-penetrating of the cultures by means of this network is both a risk and a benefit: reduction to a single transnational community but also the destruction of the psychological, intellectual, and cultural enclaves. The English which is simplified, operational, imposed (provisionally) as an international language and technique is a defiance of the "Esperanto" project, demonstrating that economic motivation is clearly superior to the cultural one when it comes to languages.

Currently, different linguistic communities access the Internet and integrate languages less spoken than English into their activities, which allows them to go beyond geographic and cultural boundaries, to eliminate almost totally communication costs and to provide unprecedented information dispersion. Are we to talk about homogenization, uniformity through globalization and delocalization of societies? Our opinion is that such a framework of

[4] http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accesed 25.11.2013)

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unhampered communication is actually a tool that could help to preserve multiculturalism which is beneficial for the global cultural development. It is true that 69% of the web pages are in English but this only reflects a larger share of web access in Anglophone areas. It represents just an imbalance stemming from the North American origin of the Internet; we are yet in the infancy stages of the Internet, and the pages containing non-North American content are still growing (we are in the process of acquiring the know-how).

The Internet is definitely a symbol of globalization, although globalization is still a fluid concept (hence its use as a "booger"), acquiring either positive or negative implications depending on its users. In a narrow conception, globalization effaces specific differences, bringing us all together into a common are lacking any personality. We consume in the same way and we produce in the same way. Do we really? We forget that what defines our identity is not much related to economics and that the language is not just a lot of words but it is associated with a way of thinking, with an anthropological/ethnological heritage, with a way of feeling.

Six thousand languages equate six thousand ways of feeling. How easily can the consumption of Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola or Jacobs change our way of feeling? How easy is it to love in a different language than that of the first maternal caresses? Pathetic as they may seem, such questions contain an emotional argument for multilingualism. The term sustainability associated with a strong economic motivation is offensive from an emotional point of view because it starts from the premise that economy controls the identity of individuals. Why hesitate to admit that poor, underprivileged, economically underdeveloped areas are the ones in which the linguistic wealth is preserved and even thrives.

Why do we condescendingly consider that these are the areas in which one needs to act to save languages? Uniformization occurs much faster in rich areas in which language retention activities are very weak, even it is here that globalization actually attacks diversity.

Talking about certain languages using descriptors such as endangered, helpless or on the verge of extinction only amplifies the problem diminishing its self-esteem and making it obsolescent, uncomfortable – an embarrassment for its speakers. It makes them feel in inferiority/minority, projecting them in a poor state of mind, amplifying a negligible or otherwise easy problem to solve. The disappearance of languages is not a contemporary phenomenon but part of a natural cycle of life that should not be rushed/ emphasized by depreciative statements.

Under the circumstances (*globalization*, *endangered languages*, *Anglophonization)*, which are the steps to be taken to maintain a diversified linguistic system which involves the preservation of a similar cultural setting? The last fifty years have witnessed laws, movements, treaties aiming towards the sustainability with too little practical results as languages still continue to die out.

We all agree that we should be allowed to use our mother tongue in all circumstances. But what do we do when native speakers refuse to do this because it is yet another sign of their belonging to a neglected or maybe even despised minority. How can we convince the Romani speakers to keep and to cultivate their language when we virtually spit when hearing them speak it.

How can you keep the Maghreb dialects among the inhabitants of the French suburbs when employing them triggers unflattering epithets for their users. Preservation of linguistic

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identity can involve not only intellectual but also physical racks. These examples are not singular, discrimination hurting more than any virus created in the laboratory.

Economic considerations are not negligible either since preserving a language in a forced or privileged way may incur huge costs (manuals, books, documents, press releases) which are regarded as superfluous expenses in a world that is avid for money/wealth. What do we do first: nourish a Ugandan child or give him a primer in his native language? I obsessively recall the image in photograph winning hundreds of awards, representing a hunger-deformed Somali child under the greedy eyes of an eagle; the awards came at the cost of the life of the child grabbed by the predator bird while the photographer was protecting equipment of thousands of dollars. We are talking about endangered languages while hundreds of thousands of people die under our eyes of proud owners of gadgets and devices? There is no doubt that the disappearance of some languages impoverishes us in a way that is hard to quantify. But given the current economic context, it seems to me that this is a risible issue whose resolution pertains much more to the individual and his choices (and here pro-multilingualism education is needed) rather than to laws and treaties.

Education is the key word in the issue of preserving a diverse linguistic landscape and especially tolerating other languages or even embracing them. Looking into the space that surrounds me I consider that teaching basic concepts of German/Hungarian in the areas where there is a minority speaking these languages would be far more beneficial in schools than teaching musical notions. It would smoothen interethnic relations in multicultural areas. Reaching to minorities would reduce the depreciative trends and the "us and them" type of approach. This may be a solution for all areas with interethnic conflicts as knowing the other prevents us from seeing them as an enemy; moreover, dialogue is actually an area where the participants have equal importance, be they minority or majority.

Therefore, racism, discrimination and intolerance are factors that contribute more than globalization to the death of some languages and territories unsuitable for dialogue and identity preservation. The atrophy of some languages is directly proportional with their lack of economic, cultural or social prestige caused by inappropriate attitudes.

4. English language and linguistic globalization

> *Developing linguistic competencies has become increasingly important by virtue of the process of globalization, with its increased migration flows and its emphasis on cross-cultural communication across and within geographical boundaries. Learning languages is important for individual success, and linguistic competence levels are important for societies' competitiveness and cohesion* (online source[5])

Not only has the English language imposed itself as a communication tool in all international media, but it is also present through the phenomenon of Anglicization (a typical example of linguistic creolization). English permeates linguistic environments with which it

[5] Online source: http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/12thoecdjapanseminarglobalisationandlinguisticcompetenciesrespondingtodiversityinlanguageenvironments.htm (accessed 25.11.2013)

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previously had no connection, without having to replace the native languages, but becoming part of them. The result is an amalgam between the two languages in which there are no proper rules, but only the speakers' preferences and the aesthetic value that the new formulations can acquire. The Indian society is a good example in point, the Hindu language being subjected to the process of Anglicization.

There were reactions of rejection towards these trends of generalization of the English language. Not surprisingly, the most vehement language protectionism measures have come from francophone states. In France, there was even a proposal to ban the expansion of the use of English words, but which was not adopted in the end.

Nevertheless, specialists notice the making of a"global English", which ensures communication in all fields of activity and which can be used regardless of geographical areas. Another form of manifestation of linguistic globalization is generated by social media and all the means of communication that this concept covers. The way of communicating in social networks is a simplified one, often ignoring the grammar rules and resembling more and more a coded language. We consider that the best example in point is the very term "like", well-known in the social networking called Facebook or Twitter.

Linguistic globalization appears to be making the first victims, represented by the languages with increasingly fewer native speakers and whose extinction is now speeded up. With reference to this aspect, the surprise comes from Google, which launched the Endangered Languages Project (online source[6]) , which aims to establish databases of over 3000 languages and dialects on the verge of extinction.

The phenomenon of linguistic globalization is still in its early stages. Specialists remain skeptical with respect to a total linguistic uniformization, a phenomenon which is not otherwise desirable. "With every culture that dies, a unique flower disappears forever. There are treasures of wisdom and poetry in the smallest idioms, as well as in the perspective on the world of the smallest tribe doomed to disappear." (Neagu Djuvara 2008/ online source[7])

5. Developments in Romanian society

In the last decade and a half, the Romanian society has been in a permanent development and, the language in which this society is expressed has evolved inevitably.. It has been reported as some positive and negative phenomena which characterize current Romanian language. On the one hand, in the case of competence, the Romanian language shows a dynamism and creativity unprecedented in its history, both in terms of area coverage and the speed of progress.

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[6] Online source : http://www.wall-street.ro/articol/New-Media/133498/google-incearca-sa-conserve-mai-mult-de-3-000-de-limbi.html (accessed 25.11.2013)

[7] Cu fiecare cultură care moare, o floare unică se vestejeşte pentru a nu mai renaşte, o mireasmă incomparabilă se risipeşte pentru totdeauna. Există comori de înţelepciune şi poezie în cele mai mici idiomuri, ca şi în concepţia despre lume a celui mai mic trib destinat dispariţiei. Toate sunt pierdute - pierdute pentru totdeauna şi pentru toţi. În viaţa popoarelor, ca şi în toată Creaţiunea, ceea ce izbeşte cel mai mult şi scandalizează într-adevăr spiritul este risipa Naturii. Cei care astăzi sunt privilegiaţi şi aparţin culturilor majore pot încă să se legene în iluzia perenităţii lor. Dar până când? Ce rămâne din Egiptul antic, din Mesopotamia, din Creta, din Mexic şi Peru? Şi cum am putea avea asigurarea că rasa noastră trufaşă, care de veacuri îşi întinde dominaţia asupra neamurilor şi lucrurilor toate, nu va cădea şi ea, odată, în toropeală şi apatie?" (Neagu DJUVARA) http://www.humanitas.ro/humanitas/civiliza%C5%A3ii-%C5%9Fi-tipare-istorice-2 (accessed 25.11.2013)

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In almost two decades and a half, Romanian language has got a new face. There have been deep changes at all levels of language. Thus, in the area of training capacity normally equate words Romanian language to generate, for new words, borrowed from other languages (in particular in English), but also for abbreviations of complex lexical families with older processes existing in the language (for example, the noun *lobby* borrowed from English into Romanian generated forms: *lobbyist*, *lobby-ism*, *lobby-istic*). Over the last 23 years, the media have had an overwhelming role in enriching the Romanian language. Journalistic text is astounding ability to create new words and we cannot notice some ephemeral, others becoming stable such: *lideriadă*, *mitingită, tzunamizare*.

The English language appeared in countless words and phrases newly formed by calquing (or loan translation) *a da undă verde* from *to give green light*, *oportunitate* from *opportunity*/ *opportunité*, *gulere albe* from *white collars*, *a aplica* from *to apply*, etc.

At the lexical level, a unprecedented evolution is due to the following causes: the emergence of new areas of existence, developments in language testing to adjust to changes in technology and the evolution of science and in general of all aspects of social life. Creation of new terms by calquing translation is joined by the massive import of vocabulary. Terminology, vocabulary attached to the most diverse fields, contain a significant percentage of borrowings; from the entertainment industry to the political life, all fields are strongly marked by the European integration, all faces of social life currently use a speech affected in a significant proportion by the neology process.

It is important to recall the appearance of the Romanian language registers and styles: new functional styles (recreating the ground of journalistic style, using a new political discourse, the formation of new types of discourse, with the development of new domains such as of public relations or communication.

From the Revolution onwards, the Romanian language has obviously been marked by the effects of what is called linguistic globalization and Anglicization. Terms such as *fun*, *trendy*, *ok*, *fashion*, *freaky*, *job*, *fresh* have become common in the language of youth and not just theirs.

Conclusion

It can be noticed a dramatic shift of emphasis from book culture, which has become an elitist one of the few, to the audio-visual culture - of the many. The result is a continuous atrophy of stimuli to read, written knowledge transmitted by culture.

Even though Europe has a veritable treasure of languages (there are more than 200 European languages, not counting the languages spoken by people from other continents), this important resource should be recognized, used and maintained. Languages and cultures are alive and developing continually. People influence each other by the way they speak and write. Only English is not often enough.

"Bilinguals have the great advantage of being able to communicate with a larger number of people. They can live in two cultures, communicate better with other cultures and are able to overcome cultural barriers and build cultural bridges" (online source[8])

[8] Online source: http://edl.ecml.at/Home/Thecelebrationoflinguisticdiversity/tabid/2972/language/ro-RO/Default.aspx (accessed 25.11.2013)

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New media such as the Internet provides new opportunities for language development. Languages are in contact with each other and thus exert mutual influences in various ways, notably through loans. Due to globalization and international structures of large enterprises, foreign language skills are increasingly and should be essential for citizens to work effectively in their own country.

We think that globalization is "a phenomenon that can be explored, debated and even understood by anyone who is interested in doing so" (Leech, 2013 online source[9]), remaining challenging and sometimes difficult to analyzed[10].

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[9] Online source: http://www.thinkir.co.uk/globalisation-cafe/ (accessed 25.11.2013)

[10] "Perhaps the most obvious challenge the occurs right at the beginning of any discussion of 'globalization' is that the concept is apparently so broad and our interaction with 'it' is so ubiquitous. Thus it is particularly difficult for any of us to define what 'it' is!" ibidem

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