THE LINGUISTIC INTEGRATION IN EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract:
Since its beginnings, the history of western thought has considered language and politics as a definition what it is to be human. This article will focus on the main problems of linguistic policies in Albania, the present problems and the future developments in the framework of integration into the EU.

Linguistic identity is largely a political matter. As a result, either its background or its language itself gives the main characteristic of a nation. Nowadays, discussion revolves round the issue of a unique, global language. English has the role of the main language spoken all around the world.

Key words:
Linguistic identity, communication, loyalty, nationalism, linguistic rule.

Introduction

The study of language and politics is aimed at understanding the role of linguistic communication in the working of social units, and how this system shapes language itself. Since its beginnings, the history of western thought has considered language and politics as a definition of what it is to be human. Aristotle's *Politics* describes man as being a political animal by nature. He shows that what actually separates the man from the beast is the articulation of a language signified by convention. The fact that the word "politics" derives from the Greek "*polis*", i.e. city, is highly significant. The city as an organized social unit depends on linguistic communication for its functioning, and urban life places functional demands on language, which are substantially different from those of a

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sparsely populated rural setting. Country folk rely on land for their living, city folk on one another. Politics is the art, and language the medium, whereby they position themselves to get what they need, and beyond that, what they want.

Language is the principal means through which we conduct our social lives[26]. When it is used in contexts of communication, it interacts with culture in multiple and complex ways. The words that people utter refer to common experiences. They express facts, ideas, or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. Words also reflect their author's attitudes and beliefs, their points of view, which are at the same time those of others. In both cases, language expresses cultural relativity.

As already mentioned above, language expresses culture, tradition, the custom of one nation but, more importantly, the language represents the identity, the origin of that nation, the idea of nationalism. The quest for identity is bound up with nationalism, cultural distinctiveness and language rights (including the rights of minorities)[27]. The use of a language as a maker of identity is what leads to the search for a national language, a regional language and the revival of languages associated with ethnic minorities within a larger multilingual community.

The challenges of linguistic integration

The European Union is a unique model of integration among European national states. It is reflected in various fields such as economy, culture, politics, law etc. The integration into the EU constitutes an advantage for Albanian society. The challenges of integration into the EU in the field of economy and politics are the same for all the countries. In every country of the European Union, the principles of economy are the same and provide the same outcomes. The same situation occurs in politics even during elections.

Does the integration in the EU effect any changes in language and culture?

Culture and language are two facts which cannot easily adapt themselves to new conditions. Every nation has its own language, its own

[26] C. Kramsch, 1998, *Language and culture*, Oxford University Press, p. 3.

[27] P. Sterkennburg, 2004, *Linguistics Today – Facing a Greater Challenge*, The Netherlands: John Benjamin Publishing, p. 69

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customs and culture, and these are facts that cannot be adapted with ease. While various countries reflect almost the same economic conditions, they preserve particular features of language and culture. Furthermore, each country is characterized by a variety of cultures, old customs and traditions which encapsulate the core of a nation and, of all these, language is the key to the identity of a nation. The nation is determined by its language. Language is what distinguishes nations from one another.

European countries are moving toward a society without borders. From the economic and political point of view, all European countries are nearly the same, but from the cultural and linguistic point of view the difference is evident. How are national and international languages going to interact in this new communication atmosphere? Will the old traditions and the national languages remain the same? What is going to happen with language contact? What kind of innovation will the integration into the EU bring about in Albania in the field of linguistics? Globalization is a main topic of discussion. English has acquired a new and heightened global status in world communication.

Elsewhere in Europe, English is learned as a foreign language in many countries, such as Germany and Finland and, of late, more increasingly in the former Soviet societies at the East[28]. The state of affairs mirrors its advancement everywhere else in the world.

The European Union has 27 Member States and 23 official languages. On entering the EU, each member state stipulates which language or languages will be declared official languages of the EU. So the Union uses the languages chosen by its citizens' own national governments; not a single language, but even a few languages, which may not be understood by other people in the Union. The languages of the EU, given the Union's policies of encouraging language learning and linguistic diversity, by way of a review of language skills in the Union today, are adapted to the rules of use of the EU's own official languages.

The EU views the use of its citizens' languages as one of the factors which make this institution more transparent, more legitimate and more efficient. At the level of culture and the enhancement of life standards, the EU works actively to promote wider knowledge and the use of all its

[28] R. Hartman, 1996, *English Language in Europe*, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, p.11.

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official languages throughout the Union. It has recognized the importance of its special language policy at the highest level.

One of the principle avis of well-being among the EU member states is the recognition of the diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs. This includes languages as well, due to linguistic diversity. The official languages of EU countries alone represent three language families: Indo-European, Finno-Ugric and Semitic. And, in comparison with other continents, these are relatively few. Linguistic diversity is an evident phenomenon, because of the increased frequency of global intercourse among people. They increasingly face situations where they have to speak languages other than their own, occasioned by student exchange programs, migration or business projects in Europe's ever more integrated market, tourism and globalization.

Article 22 of the European Union's charter of fundamental rights, adopted in 2000, requires the EU to respect linguistic diversity, and Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on language. Together with the respect for individuals, tolerance for other cultures and the right to linguistic diversity is what constitutes the core of EU values. This principle applies not only to the 23 official EU languages, but also to the many regional and minority languages spoken by segments of their population. It is this that makes the EU what it is – not a "melting pot" that reduces difference, but a place where diversity can be celebrated as an asset.

According to the Treaty of Lisbon, signed by the Heads of State or Government of all the EU Member States in December 2007, the EU shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

Albania and Kosovo are two countries which make use of the same language and they have many common cultural features. Which are the main problems of the linguistic policies in Albania? What are the present problems and what is likely to happen in the future? As we said before, linguistic identity is also a political matter. Therefore, what mainly characterizes a nation is its linguistic background or the language itself. A nation cannot really define its identity without its language.

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Albanian is spoken in the actual Republic of Albania, in Kosovo and other regions of ex-Yugoslavia, in northern Greece, as well as by numerous emigrants in Europe, the USA, etc[29].

What is the situation in Albania? What is going to happen with Albanian customs and the Albanian language? How is the Albanian language to be considered in relation to other languages? What is the function of the rule of language in Albania and Kosovo?

English is a powerful language in Albania, and, as a result, many people learn it because it is an international language and it is an advantage to use it. Albania is going to be part of the EU. The integration of the Republic of Albania will progress through some stages.

Over the past two or three decades, English has come to occupy a singular position among languages. Previously only one among several dominant European languages, it is today a *world language*, the language people use whenever they wish to communicate with others outside their own linguistic community. English has become *the lingua franca* of the global network. English is the "protocol" for oral and written communication across national frontiers.

Linguistic homogenization is not only a consequence of global imperial domination; the process of nation-building has also contributed to this. Quite frequently, the creation of nation states has involved the adoption of a single national language, whereupon education and cultural expression in other dialects and languages within the national frontiers have ceased. Not infrequently, the use of subordinate languages and dialects has been forbidden or has been subject to political sanctions. In a similar fashion, different dialects of the designated national language occupy different positions in a rank order, where one dialect is the prescribed norm. Thus, globalization and the predominance of English at the expense of other languages is nothing new. It is rather a question of a radicalization and acceleration of a centuries-old trend, in which local varieties of language die out, and more universal varieties survive.

Globalization refers to real changes that are important to human society. The process of globalization does not imply a homogenous process characterized by universality[30].

[29] Sh. Demiraj, 2000, *Gjuhësi ballkanike*, Tiranë: SHBLU, p. 61.

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The spread of English, the replacement of national languages with English in certain spheres in modern society, as well as the bilingualism of a more or less educated part of society can lead to similar consequences. The English spoken in different countries will differ under the inevitable influence of national languages and along with British and American English there will appear such varieties of English as Russian English or Chinese English. The process will not go as far as it went in the Middle Ages, since it will be smoothed by the Internet and other modern means of communication. But there cannot be any doubt that there will appear a unified and simplified variety of English, an International English. Sooner or later, "Global English" will probably be adopted by all nationalities in order to communicate with and to be understood by the rest of the world. Thus English can be the first victim of Globalization. And what may happen to national languages? Being exiled from different spheres of science and business, they will have to concentrate on cultural spheres. In the situation of forced or voluntary bilingualism, the less prestigious language eventually develops and flourishes in culture.

Today's world is often said to be characterized by globalization. The process of globalization is leading to even more changes in the world's language situation, but what exactly does globalization mean and what are its implications for language?

Globalization is a relatively new word. It only started to be used in the 1960's. The word "globalization" is seen and heard almost everywhere; in everyday conversation, in the media and in academic discourse. Furthermore, almost all areas of life have been touched by globalization in some way. Globalization refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-states (and by implication their societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe. Nowadays, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, communications, crime, culture, pollutants, drugs, fashions, and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries. Transnational networks, social movements and relationships are extensive

[30] J. Ervin, and Z. Smith, 2008, *Globalization*, USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, p.1.

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in virtually all areas of human activity, from the academic to the sexual. Moreover, the existence of global systems of trade, finance, and production binds together in very complicated ways the fate of households, communities and nations across the globe.

Global English is a feature of linguistic globalization and the local policies of global English can tell us a lot about globalization[31]. A brief look at pertinent areas of life shows examples of globalization. The political aspects of globalization include international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) and the multitude of international laws and agreements on the environment, human rights and trade. Cultural aspects of globalization include the flow of images, ideas, symbols and people around the world.

Globalization brings innovation in every society. What are the innovations which globalization will bring to Albania? What is going to happen with the old Albanian customs and the language of Albanian society? Are the Albanian people going to preserve their old traditions and customs in order to represent their nation? Or will globalization bring about innovation and, with it, the forgetting of the old culture? Is language going toward globalization, too?

The English language is supposed to be an obligatory foreign language in Albania. Starting with higher education; before going to university, pupils have to take an exam in English, besides those in Albanian Language and Literature and Mathematics. The English exam is an obligatory one for access to higher education. Furthermore, the students who get a master's degree at Tirana University have to pass the English exam at the University of Tirana. Recently, there was another decision of the Government of Albania that all the students who want to pursue a master program at Tirana University have to pass the TOEFL-test, or before they start a master program at any university in Albania.

With regard to the linguistic laws in Albania and the European Union, they should be considered within the framework of the linguistic laws of International Law and European Union Law. Respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is based on the provisions of article 6 of the EU constitution on the observance of the principles of freedom and

[31]S. Sonntag, 2003, *The Local Politics of Global English*, USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, p. 119.

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democracy, human rights and of States governed by the rule of law within the Union. In that sense, respect for diversity is essential in giving any minority access to the fundamental rights. Article 22 is also based on the provisions of article 151 EC on the community's action in the field of culture. Paragraphs 1 and 4 of article 151 EC provide that the Community, in the context of its actions, respects and ensures the promotion of the diversity of its different cultures. This guarantee applies to the respect and support for European cultural or regional minorities. At the frontier of the two articles of these treaties, article 22 of the Charter should guarantee the respect for all cultural, religious or linguistic minorities within the Union.

There are few Conventions on cultural, religious or linguistic diversity. The Council of Europe is, nevertheless, active in this area but the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages of 5 November 1992 was ratified only by Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. As for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, it was ratified only by eight of the fifteen member states of the Union (Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal).

Article 27 (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of the United Nations of 16 December 1966)**:** In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

According to this, (Communication COM: 2003, 449):

„*The peoples of Europe are building a single Union out of many diverse nations, communities, cultures and language groups; it is a Union built around the equal interchange of ideas and traditions and founded upon the mutual acceptance of peoples with different histories but a common future. Within a very short time, the European Union will undergo its most significant enlargement to date. The new Union will be home to 450 million Europeans from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It will be more important than ever that citizens have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with their neighbors. In short, the ability to understand and communicate in other languages is a basic skill for all European citizens. Language skills are unevenly spread*

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across countries and social groups. The range of foreign languages spoken by Europeans is narrow, being limited mainly to English, French, German, and Spanish. Learning one lingua franca alone is not enough. Every European citizen should have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. This is an ambitious goal, but the progress already made by several Member States shows that it is perfectly attainable."

The European Union commits a high level of resources to the promotion of the linguistic diversity which is part of its identity, and to encouraging language learning, which is indispensable to the proper functioning of its policies. Let's move on to Article twenty-second of the EU's charter of fundamental rights:

Article 22: Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity**.** The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

As mentioned above, in Article 22 of the European Union charter, the unique issue of respecting culture, language and religion is important and uniquely safeguarded in the European Union. The integration in the European Union includes the official language of every nationality.

In 2006, Albania signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. Theoretically, this is the first step towards membership in the EU. For the country, it was the corollary of 16 years of – sometimes rocky – transition to democracy. Under this agreement, Albania is obliged to improve its treatment of ethnic minorities – in order to bring it into line with EU-wide standards.

Prior to this, the country had already undertaken some important reforms. In 1993, a charter of rights passed by the Albanian legislature ensures for the 'individuals belonging to minorities full protection and equality before the law and it makes provision for education in their mother tongue.' In addition, the Albanian Constitution guarantees the rights of recognized national minorities, including the right to study and be taught in their mother tongue. Correspondingly, there is some provision of schools and classes for the Greek and Macedonian national minorities, where education in the minority language is available, to varying degrees. However, other minorities do not fare so well. There is a lack of education in and of minority languages for the Aromanian/Vlach and the Roma minorities.

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The Greek minority participates politically through a number of national parties. For example, the Human Rights Union Party theoretically represents all of Albania's minorities, yet in practice predominantly the Greek minority. In the 2001 elections it received 2.6 % of the vote and three members of parliament. At the last elections, in July 2005, it won two seats in parliament. Other minorities, in particular Roma and Egyptians, appear to be outside the system. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, in its third report on Albania in December 2004, expressed its concern over 'the lack of effective participation of persons belonging to some minority groups in the country's decision-making processes at the national as well as local levels.' It said that a lack of statistical information made it impossible to assess the extent of the problem, but highlighted the marginalization of the Roma and the Egyptians in particular, saying that numbers of Egyptians and Roma in state institutions seem particularly low, with those few persons that are employed in the public sector for the most part filling positions such as cleaning and maintenance.

From this point of view, one question arises: which are the problems of cultural integration in Albania? Is it necessary to change the old tradition, the national language and culture?

It is clear that the Albanians as a nation are not going to change their old tradition, customs and language. These issues are part of Albanian life and are going to remain the same as a sign of Albanian nationalism and history. Albania is going to be integrated into the European Union with the values of modernity, not with the values of seniority.

What are the challenges that Albanian, as an official language, and English, as an international language will have to face?

It is true that in Albania, most of the population considers English as an international language but this doesn't mean abandoning the national language, Albanian. There is another fact which is worth mentioning; there are so many borrowed words (Anglicism or other foreign words) which are used in the Albanian language instead of Albanian words. Albanian society is going to integrate itself in the European Union with its own linguistic identity, its tradition and customs. It cannot be denied that many people made a lot of effort to protect the Albanian language and even to defend it by a law. In 1974, the journalists at the radio and TV stations were forced to respect the norms of orthography and spelling set by the Congress of

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Orthography (which decided the standard of Albanian language as the official one) in 1972. Also, the journalists were forced to purge the Albanian language of unnecessary borrowings. At the end of the ’70s and the beginning of the ’80s began a campaign for the purism of the Albanian language. After the ’90s, the situation changed completely. The changes in society were reflected even in the language. Albanian society had lived through the informational isolation of communism for a long time. Under the new circumstances, the language of the media changed. The journalists in the radio and television tried to prove their professionalism by using borrowings and foreign words supposed to show “their ability and professional culture”. This phenomenon extended to every newspaper, Radio and TV station, spoken or written language use.

At the same time, another phenomenon emerged in Albania concerning the official Albanian language. The fact that the standardization of the Albanian language is based on one of the dialects of Albanian (the Tosk dialect) causes much conflict between scholars. Some of them describe this norm as being enforced by the communist system. The influence of the media plays an important role in Albanian society. TV broadcasts fill 70% of the people’s free time, and politics occupies an important part of the programs. Dialectal and foreign language structures are characteristic of the politicians’ speech, due to their incapacity of arguing their ideas and of offering alternative choices. As a result, the language becomes impracticable. As De Mauro emphasizes, “It is very difficult only to write and it is very easy to write. Just a little is needed to understand each other”[32]

The scholar Shefkije Islamaj admits to the fact that the information media have a negative impact in the digestion and use of the official language[33]. This phenomenon has largely influenced the Albanian media in the Republic of Albania, as well as out abroad.

Conclusion

The possibilities of improving the linguistic performance of the media can and must be found in the linguistic policies of the state. In the civilized world, every country follows its linguistic policies, which are even

[32] T. De Mauro, 2006, *Dukuri të shqipes bashkëkohore*, Tiranë: Excipere, p. 31.
[33] Sh. Islamaj, 2003, *Vëzhgime rreth shqipes standarde në mjetet e informimit në Kosovë*, Tiranë: Shqipja standarde dhe shoqëria shqiptare sot, pp. 311-325

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part of the cultural trend of that country. The Constitution and its laws clearly define the official language and the government abides to it. The decision of the Prime Minister in 1973 influenced the role of language in society. It took into account the fact that new laws and rules are to be issued by the government, whose duty is to defend the national language and regulate its appropriate use within society[34].

An important role must be played by the academic world. Albanian linguists and scholars have to bring their contribution to the area of linguistics. They have to set the trend of opinion in the institutional and national politics concerning the language. School and the educational system in general have to fulfill their mission in the linguistic education of the population. Particularly important to stress is the utter need of professionalism among journalists, who have to abide to the norms of the official language of their nation, even as part of the globalization process.

This will bring new possibilities for perfecting the normative system of use of the national language, which defines the linguistic identity of both individuals and nations in a world where the speed of change is measured in hours and minutes. This will keep the identity of the national language safe from winds of change blowing continuously in our fast developing world.

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[34] A. Saraçi, 2008, *La problematique langagiere des medias visuels albanais*, Medias en Europe Centrale et Orientale après 1989, Le monde Diplomatique, p. 272.

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Rezumat:

Integrarea lingvistică în Uniunea europeană

Studiul de faţă prezintă o sinteză a principaleor modele culturale ce au condus la actuala configurţie a identităţii culturale româneşti. Pornim de la premisa că identitatea culturală este un *construct*, un continuu proces evolutiv ce implică nu numai factori obiectivi, induşi din exterior, ci şi factori subiectivi, cu precădere elemente volitive. Această perspectivă de analiză, adoptată şi de istorici şi specialiştii în studii culturale, se bazează pe percepţia că situarea geografică şi evenimentele istorice care au influenţat societatea românească de-a lungul secolelor au creat o matrice definitorie pentru unele din caracteristicile prezente ale identităţii româneşti.

Cuvinte cheie:

Identitate culturală, românesc, parametri geografici, parametri istorici, modele culturale.

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