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THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES IN THE PROCESS OF GLOBAL INTEGRATION

Стаття присвячена вивченню значення лінгвістичного різномайття в сучасних умовах. Значну увагу приділено впливу процесів глобалізації на існування і розвиток мов, особливо мов національних меншин. Зроблено висновок про можливі шляхи усунення негативних наслідків глобальної інтеграції для збереження мов.

Ключові слова: глобалізація, лінгвістичне різномайття, багатомовність, мови національних меншин, міжнародна комунікація.

Globalization is a complex phenomenon which engulfs various spheres of people's life. First of all, it embraces economy, politics, science and technology, education. Due to the historical origin of this process it is the English language which dominates on the international arena. Since the end of the XXth century it has become *lingua franca* for representatives of different cultures in their strive to cooperate and find mutual understanding.

At the same time it is necessary to emphasize that a great number of other languages, minority languages in particular, face the risk of being lost in the nearest future. And all this is happening due to the widespread popularity of the English language in particular. Representatives of almost all spheres of human activity, politicians, scientists and scholars, are trying to find the ways to preserve and develop linguistic diversity, to protect minority languages, endangered and even at the edge of extinction [May 2008]. Considering the aforementioned certain steps must be taken to carry out, protect and promote language rights.

Co-operation, whether it is interactional or transactional, is the most important function of the language. It is the interactional purpose that promotes global integration. Ogundare [Ogundare 2005, 60-63] describes language as a facilitator and an index of a people's capacity to conquer nature and civilize their environment. It is the language that helps values, ideas and achievements be passed from one generation to another. It is a mighty tool in conquering territories and lands. Being one of the most widely spoken languages in the world English has united all the nations in many respects. The best examples are the United Nations Organization, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The necessity and want to communicate, to connect and to share are primary and ancient. Unlike other living creatures, human beings are endowed with this ability to speak, which is apparently the only distinguishing factor to success. Although there are other ways to communicate, language is the most important and determining one among them. Scientific research in the study of the influence of language acquisition on the human brain shows that the shape of the brains is being changed tremendously [Osterwalder 2008].

Analysing the meaning of the two words, 'global' and 'integration', it should be emphasized that 'global integration' or 'globalization' has been invented to bring people of diverse cultures and languages together under one roof, regardless of whether it is political, economic or linguistic one. According to Lawal, globalization is a unity of three equally important concepts, such as trade liberalization, liberal democracy and international communication [Lawal 2006].

The prominent British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, has defined globalization as: "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" [Giddens 1990, 64]. And one cannot but agree with this definition, as there are a lot of examples supporting it to mention just a few. The increase or decrease of prices on any category of goods in the world stock-exchange results in relevant change of prices in any country of the world. Terroristic attacks in the USA greatly influence home policy of any other country. There is no such sphere which would stay away of the impact of global processes.

One of the issues about globalization is whether it serves unification or separation, and whether it is possible to preserve national identity, be it linguistic, cultural or ethnic. Mostly concerned have treated globalization and the processes connected with it as an obvious threat to diversity, which results in growing "McDonaldization" of the world [Ritzer, 1996].

Concerns over the effects of globalization on diversity are especially clear in the area of language rights and language education, especially due to close ties between globalization and English as one of international languages. As the world becomes more interconnected with increasing pressure for people to learn and speak English, often at the expense of their native languages, the prospects for maintaining linguistic diversity do not seem bright. The well-known predictions by linguists such as Michael Krauss [Krauss 1992], that up to 90% of the

world's 7000 spoken languages are endangered and that over 50% will 'die' – that is, be no longer spoken – by the end of this century, would seem to reinforce this pessimistic view about the impact of globalization on the world's languages [May 2008].

The threads of history and human experience run through the sharp machinery of modernisation and globalization. These threads connect people with their past and lead them to the future along the paths of the present.

It is evident that globalizing processes are having a tangible impact on the use, knowledge and preservation of languages. On the one hand, by means of information and communication technologies, globalization facilitates the promotion of other cultures and thereby promotes cultural dialogue and ultimately peace. On the other hand, it has the risk of moving towards uniformity, which puts many languages in danger and thus threatens linguistic diversity.

What are the key issues relating to languages in the context of globalization? It is very important to state that a true linguistic policy is nothing other than society accommodating and adjusting to linguistic diversity. If it is possible to avoid linguistic discrimination on a political level by according all languages the same chances of promotion and development, in reality it is impossible to obtain an equality of roles and functions and therefore an equality of prestige and status. However, is such equality necessary? In a multilingual context, different languages assume different functions and play different roles. It is essential to work towards a dynamic complementarity between these roles and functions. The vision of one uniform language is really just a fiction. All languages are characterised by a complex stratification of genders, registers, styles, dialects and by an interaction between these categories.

There are a number of myths relating to languages. One of them is that linguistic multiplicity forms an obstacle to national unity within states. The European Union is worth mentioning in this context. It is considered that national unity requires official monolingualism and the use of several languages accentuates inter-ethnic conflicts.

The real picture is that multilingualism is a norm, the normality. Monolingualism is the exception, whereas the practice of multilingualism is widespread. In African countries, for example, an average of more than 30 per cent of the population speaks at least three languages.

Actually globalization may be a solution as well as a problem. Over the last few centuries there has been an idea of a single national language. Previously existed social and political structures did not

require this degree of linguistic uniformity. Although, speaking about legal English, the need for lawyers from different European countries to understand each other appeared a long time ago, in the 5th century A.D.. Then it was called Anglo-Saxon or Old English. It is still partly alive.

This is where globalization has to play a key role by linking the local and the global, by making the borders of states more transparent, by challenging nations to get involved into the sphere of linguistic forms' multiplicity. Indeed globalization can foster rather than threaten linguistic diversity.

Given the critical role of languages in transmitting knowledge and information to all segments of society, there can be no doubt about their strategic importance in expanding access to the benefits of globalization. For example, as factors of social integration, languages play a strategic role in the eradication of extreme poverty. As a support for literacy, learning and life skills, they are essential to promote universal primary education, efficiently preventing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Moreover, languages are strategic to ensuring the environmental sustainability.

Linguistic diversity is an essential part of a culturally diverse world because it is through language that people build, understand and express their emotions, intentions, values and concept of the world. Language shapes the cultural identity of diverse groups and individuals. They are an inherent part of who we are. In this, languages are not only important tools for communication between individuals, groups and nations, they are the link between the past and the future, the medium through which cultural memory is transmitted from generation to generation, and an important reference point in today's fast changing world.

Over the years all the countries have repeatedly connected languages and culture in the legal instruments in order to safeguard cultural diversity. UNESCO is one of the world organizations, which aims at preserving cultural and ethnic diversity. Within the framework of this UN body a number of important documents have been passed: the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its action plan, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

In 2007, to increase awareness among governments, UN organisations, educational institutions and civil society about the importance of promoting

and protecting all languages, especially indigenous, minority and endangered, UNESCO launched a public campaign under the slogan "Languages Matter!". It was designed to increase support for the celebration of the international Year of Languages.

Furthermore, in view of the increasing importance of languages, an intersectoral platform was created, involving all five of UNESCO 's programme sectors: education, the natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information.

The United Nations General Assembly has been an international body committed to global integration through education. For instance, the year 2000 was proclaimed the international year for the Culture of Peace by the United Nations General Assembly. A culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on respect for life, promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and co-operation.

Taking into consideration all mentioned above it is evident that languages can be used, and are being used, as a genuine instrument for integration both national and global. Literature humanizes through language used in education. Globalization, however, has both positive and deleterious effects on indigenous languages. The role of languages is pivotal to human growth, national development, and global integration. The negative effects of linguistic globalization can, however, be reduced through effective corpus and status planning, particularly multilingual and multi-cultural education. Languages have to be well developed, codified, standardized, modernized and used for the implementation of multilingual education. This is the role of linguists and language educators.

It is therefore vitally important to develop language policies that enable each linguistic community to use its national language as widely and as often as possible, including all aspects of human life, namely in education, government and law, while also acquiring an international language to promote international communication. With multilingualism being accepted as an inevitable part of human interaction all languages will possess their decent place in the globalized world.

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Статья посвящена изучению значимости лингвистического разнообразия в современных условиях. Значительное внимание уделяется влиянию процессов глобализации на существование и развитие языков, особенно языков национальных меньшинств. Делается вывод о возможных способах устранения негативных последствий глобальной интеграции для сохранения языков.

Ключевые слова: глобализация, лингвистическое разнообразие, многоязычие, языки национальных меньшинств, международная коммуникация.

The article is devoted to the study of linguistic diversity importance and significance. Special attention is given to the impact of globalization processes on the existence and development of languages, especially minority languages. Possible ways to avoid negative consequences of global integration for the preservation of languages are outlined in conclusions.

Key words: globalization, linguistic diversity, multilingualism, minority languages, international communication.