GLOBALIZATION IN RELATION TO NATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

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Abstract

As an international language used for global, political, cultural and financial exchange, the English language teaching in promoting globalization has been approached from diverse views. The paper intends to investigate the most used terms for globalization since Western countries or the United Nations are now considered the super power with a leading economic, cultural and military position in the global order and, of course, with many of the most apparently cultural expressions of globalization. As English has been the prevailing foreign language in the curricula of educational institutions, it is accepted as the dominating language in the world for globalization comes to be commonly known in political and educational communication.

Key words: *international language, English, globalization, national identity, educational communication, curricula.*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, the world experiences processes of both integration and disintegration. The expansion of world markets as a form of economic globalization can be understood as a process of integration composed of international flows of capital, goods, information and people. This process is both a form of economic integration and polarization of wealth that exacerbates tendencies toward greater global inequalities between rich and poor countries and regions. It also accentuates the need of a new system of governance. We are the witnesses of an accelerated set of changes – economic, cultural, technological and political – that create new possibilities and dangers both for democratic state and the notions of citizenship and national identity.

However, as Sheila L. Croucher pointed out, few terms are so difficult to explain as this already commonly used one: "globalization": "Few terms have been more widely and frequently used yet less clearly defined or understood than <<globalization>>. Every year since the mid-1980s the number of books and articles with the term globalization central to their titles has grown exponentially /…/. It is also increasingly common for the authors of these works to begin their analyses bemoaning the lack of conceptual clarity surrounding their subject matter and promising to rectify it. Some progress has been made, but many of the aspirations for greater conceptual and analytical clarity remain unfulfilled. The challenge is a tall one, reflecting the genuine complexity of the topic at hand. Globalization is a reality that is so large, so multifaceted, so ongoing, and so defiant of conventional categories and methods of analysis that it frustrates social scientific precision even on the part of the most dedicated of scholars. On the other hand, some blame must be attributed to sloppy scholarship and to the desire on the part of the media, politicians, and the general public for quick and easy explanations, or excuses, for complex pervasive and often unsettling economic, political, social, and cultural trends."[1]

Paper Content

There is a close relationship between the issues of identity and globalization. The concept of identity has undergone significant changes which many authors attribute to as the "crisis of identity". In contemporary socio-cultural conditions, an individual is forced, even if he wants it or not, to be in a constant search for identities. That implies the search for the meaning of the individual in relation

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[1] Sheila L. Croucher *Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World*, (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 9.

to the self and to the society. But such an identity can no more be fixed and this contradicts with the way identity was perceived before globalization became so widespread.

How might the process of globalization affect the process of identity formation? The main feature of modern global society is the interrelation between numerous communities. From socio-cultural perspective, globalization exercises a great effect on building the relationships between and among various locales. In our present world, where different distances are much shortened by transportation and communication technology, globalization is becoming interwoven with human's life and sometimes it is the leading factor contributing to the de-centering and dislocation of identities. Due to the spread of mass communication, an individual becomes more and more involved in the process of increasing mutuality of the world, being exposed to the widest variety of opinions and viewpoints, often contradictory and hardly reconcilable. This has a great impact on his identity. With the increase in number of such groups originating from various cultural backgrounds his / her identity becomes more vulnerable to the influence of the external forces and more difficult to affirm. That means, not only that relationship between people and happenings transform, but also that identities of people also undergo dramatic changes.

These changes have led some authors to consider that the notion of identity is not valid any more since identifying oneself with someone or something is not the feature that characterizes the postmodern individual. The mediation of experience by the means of communication has reached its peak, and its dangerous influence causes the substitution of the real world with the world images, signs and representations and the individual no more gets involved into reality. That's why I consider television signifying a powerful medium of globalization. News is often cited as the example of the collage; events are reported in a single short news program that may share nothing in common but the date of happening. This radical view that renders globalization leads to the dissolution of identity, the dissolution of the sense of one's self. By placing the emphasis on the mediating effect of the mass media we can say that their selective reproduction and representation of the events must be based on the cultural and national specificity of the concrete locales. Most new programs on local television put an emphasis on the representation of local events over the international ones. So, we may conclude that the effects of globalization sometimes are exaggerated while the local specificity is ignored or denied.

What globalization had definitely contributed to was the erosion of the "master identities" such as citizenship in the abstract meaning of membership in the territoriality defined and state-governed society. While the process of globalization undermines the traditional perception of locality as a bounded space, it seems to have a different kind of influence on another dimension of "locality" – that is, various rituals, ceremonies and collective memories that bind the people together.

So, we can conclude that the impact of globalization is contradictory. On the one hand, it works towards unification of the world, but on the other, this proves to have a dubious effect on diminishing the local specificity and the tendencies towards the local and cultural become more and more discernible. At present, national identity continues to be the object of governmental policy. It may be more important how it actually is since national identity is the inexorable subject of politics.

As John Edwards pointed out: "The essence of identity is similarity: things that are identical are the same, after all, and the word stems from the Latin *idem*. And this most basic sense is exactly what underpins the notion of identity as it applies to personality. It signifies the 'sameness' of an individual 'at all times or in all circumstances', as the dictionary tells us, the fact that a person is oneself and not someone else. It signifies continuity, in other words, that constitutes an unbroken thread running through the long and varied tapestry of one's life. It can even invoke an almost mystical sense of connectedness, particularly when one considers the very real changes that take place in that tapestry."[2]

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[2] John Edwards, *Language and Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 19.

As linguistic identity is largely a political matter, we may say that there is an urgent need to foreground the issue of politics of language. The link between language and identity has had a long and varied history nowhere more than in Europe. It was in Europe that language became a key element in the emergent nation-states. These new nation-states have come to share their names with the languages that were so vital for their political legitimacy. This process is still continuing in the sense that we are still living in an age of nationalism.

Identity is not a mere reflection of reality, a simple form of self-awareness, but rather a socially constructed phenomenon. Identity can change and even the most homogenous state contains varieties that may form the basis for present or future affiliation. If they have to gain any political recognition, they will have to fight against the principle of economy of scale and against the vested interests and historical advantages of established standards. Identity may carry the sense of "sameness", but it does not have to be mono-dimensional.

The other factor working against a monolingual state is the immediate result of mass immigration. Most major European cities now contain a mosaic of ethnic groups, speaking languages new to the area.

Technological advances have also had a profound effect on the language. Air travel, satellite TV, the Internet, telephone, video films and publishing facilitate a range and diversity of linguistic contacts. These media will not by themselves promote and maintain a multilingual society. Without a feeling of language identity and the will to keep a sense of group no amount of digital communication will prevent language shift. European powers (Britain, Germany, France, Austria, Belgium and Italy, for example) not only controlled the economies of their third-world colonies, but also exported the notion of linguistic identity as a basis for political legitimacy.

Identity involves not only "sameness", but by extension "otherness". In knowing who we are like we also know who we are not like and the sense of identity is dependent to some extent on an understanding of boundary where that with which we identify stops.

The invention of nation-state had already persuaded people to identify themselves with something in addition to the traditional social structures of family, clan and religion.

All the border changes seen in Europe over the last few decades, the reunification of Germany, the division of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, all point to the continuing partition of political units along ethno-cultural lines with languages as one of the most important factors in building and defining national identity. Anderson says that "in a world in which the nation-state is an overwhelming norm, all of this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistics commonly.", but the states can afford to be more accommodating and are more tolerant on minority languages. The language identity in Europe is diverse, complex and ever changing. Stephen Barbour adopts a broad approach and examines nationalist and internationalist discourse. He assumes that every nation should have its own nation state in which the national language should dominate since language and national identity are allied. Internationalist discourse demonstrates awareness not only of languages spoken by small groups, but also of English as a global lingua franca. Nevertheless, much internationalist discourse overstates the dominance of English in international exchanges.

In terms of language choice for world-wide relationship and communication, the foundation of globalization has led to growing international debate on the theme of English language in both academic and business fields.

How academics, politicians and journalists see the place of the English language in the image of the various nations? Many politicians and journalists adopt a generally nationalistic language because this reflects what the public wants to hear.

A global perspective recognizes the need of an international language. The response to this need on the part of many internationalists is to use English. A global perspective poses little real threat to national languages or minority languages. Globalism seems able to co-exist with linguistic

and cultural pluralism. The international language, be it English or the earlier international language French, tends to influence other languages, but not generally replace them in all spheres of life.

The consequences of espousing both internationalist and nationalist perspectives can impinge on many aspects of personal and professional life, for instance the professional activity in which many academics are engaged, namely language teaching.

There is a widespread perception of crisis in the teaching of languages other than English. Many students know they can encounter cultural variety in all major cities through the medium of English.

It can be said that English has gained a particular place among languages. Different languages have also been influenced by the challenge English imposes, inclining to a greater or lesser amount to establish English words, pronunciation, and word order in their language.

Language learning is thought to be a vital aspect of forming a European identity. The teaching and learning of English increased dramatically during the second half of the twentieth century in response to the growing use of English as an international language. This in turn was in large part related to the dominance of the USA politically and economically, a fact reflected in the role that English plays in international youth culture.

The popularity of English as a foreign language in European schools and universities means that young Europeans are now much better able to communicate with each other than their parents were. English does mean that young Europeans are able to speak to each other, which will surely give rise to a sense of being European. More relevant, however, is the question of whether English in Europe allows young people to express multiple identities. The growing body of research in Europe suggests that for young people English can symbolize the international youth culture. English is used now so extensively throughout the world that it can serve as an "open reservoir" for symbolic meanings.

English has become the prevailing foreign language in the curricula of educational institutions in foreign language learning. English is accepted now as the dominant language in the world as globalization comes to be commonly known in political and educational communication. Globalization and English language have been widely recognized as landmarks of most present societies. This indicates that cultural globalization is closely linked with the development of English as a global language. There is no doubt that many countries have been making attempts to support English education in order to engage actively in international activities.

One of the objectives of foreign language is to expand insight into the foreign nations since understanding different cultures will guide students toward globalization. The teaching of culture is not a secondary objective, rather equally important, and balances the linguistic syllabus of English teaching and learning typical English language instructional materials to convey cultural messages from a one-dimensional-base view toward a wide view. The students should be guided to take more reflective or ethnographic attitude toward the cultural values of other nations as a way of raising their knowledge of intercultural issues.

We want to prepare the students to communicate in the multicultural world of English. Globalization has not been implemented merely to unify language and increase use of English. National linguistic cultures may be under pressure and this is very much compatible with globalization theorists' characterization of the process. Governments must pay closer attention to languages as the language is the key factor in identifying national identity.

Because national identity of students is very important, they should be familiarized with their national history and identity. This is a better trend to acculturate learning, not simply providing a bulk of knowledge about foreign countries and people. Students may compare and contrast cultures of two or more nations while bearing in mind that the cultural manifestations are always constructed and, therefore, open to analysis and debate.

Cultural learning means not simply understanding of foreign culture but to tolerate cultural differences even when it is not fully understood or articulated. Such an approach fosters generally

open-minded, tolerant and sympathetic attitude towards other cultures. Students should understand that every culture must be respected and in the area of globalization, people should do their best to keep valuable cultural customs.

Cultural training does not necessitate teachers to act as information providers because details about different cultures are already available in a vast number of related publications, including textbooks. The role of the English language teacher, besides teaching students how to speak, understand, read and write English, is to provide opportunities for students to involve in meaningful communication with different people and cultures and to react critically on these interactions.

The recent developments have a tremendous impact on the very identity of individual languages and also that of the speakers of those languages. The question of identity is fast becoming a politically loaded issue, as Pandit (1975, p. 118) has noticed: "Loyalty to language is probably not as external to linguists as it may appear to be. An enormous amount of social and cultural information is encoded in a message; verbal interaction in a speech community is a cultural event; it reinforces sense of belonging and asserts one's existence in a community. In this sense, identity with language is not external, not a superposition – political or social – but an intrinsic linguistic trait. The speaker's attachment to his variety and his language is symptomatic of the cultural load his language carries for him."

Conclusion

In the emergent world order marked by instability and cultural intermixing at an unprecedented rate, we are constantly asked to negotiate our identities in response to pressures from all sides. In the case of our linguistic identities, the issue is further complicated by the fact that certain languages such as English have been found to be playing a hegemonic role, threatening the very survival of local and minority languages all over the world. Globalization has helped foster linguistic hybridity, but on the other hand contributed to the spread of certain language and the consequent disappearance of others. I believe that concepts as "master-language" and "native speaker-hood" are to be approached as political rather than linguistic issues.

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