

# Globalization and linguistic democracy

Bogdan POPOVENIUC, *Lecturer Ph.D.*  
*Department of Philosophy, Social and Political Science,*  
*Faculty of History and Geography*  
*“Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania*  
*bpopoveniuc@yahoo.com*

*Every language is the wisdom of the world in one of its forms*  
(Constantin Noica)

## Abstract

*The globalization brings a series of unprecedented phenomena. It closed systems, which were open before: like cultures, economies, languages and so on. In particular, the language as a natural, dynamic, unbalanced, open meta-system can preserve its internal coherence only if the working process is not violent and constant disturbed by direct interactions and mutual influences. The synergy of a language, that is the action of self-adjustment and self-organizing mechanisms which ensures its internal coherence, is efficient as long as its dynamic balance is not destroyed by the social, economical, cultural adverse factors. The globalization process opened “the world market of languages”. The future evolution of global linguistic ecosystem must be judged within the context of pluriculturalism.*

**Keywords:** *globalization, linguistic contact, philosophy, pluriculturalism, languages extinction.*

The Modernism carried away, from the moment of its dawn, the seed of its own destruction. All its key ideas had done nothing else but to prepare the world, for those who knew to see, for the end of an order or any other orderness. This fact could be seen clearly in the meaning of the twentieth century on all levels. The 20th century represented the century of endings. Like a chain reaction induced by the Nietzsche's announcement “God is dead”, last century proclaimed: death and occultation of the being (Heidegger), death of the man (Foucault), end of the

---

• **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** This paper was made within The Knowledge Based Society Project supported by the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number POSDRU ID 56815.

consciously subject (Lacan), end of the logos (Derrida), end of the history (Fukuyama), end of the geography (Virilio), end of the soul life (Noica), the degradation of symbols (Eliade). In one word what brought the end of the modernism was the end of local identities.

It is easily to notice that we are assisting to a globalization process, which is developing to an economical background. Its internal springs are not proceeding from the superior needs like knowledge and communication, but from those, which are elementary, like: biological or functional needs. That is we still are far from that population of Earth, so wonderfully described by the science fiction novels, which reached to their consciousness of planetary identity, though the contemporary civilization is exposing itself to perils, which are bigger every day. And this is one of the globalization's paradoxes: the satisfaction of the physiological need, the food and comfort needs (the eternal *bread and circus*), which are the basis of globalization process, puts in danger the other elementary need, the security one. In these terms we can't expect, for the moment, from this process to still have that rational part well enough developed, so that it protect the natural, social, cultural environment.

At the same time, the globalization process brings along a series of new unprecedented phenomena, which required a change of the instruments and the ways of defining various domains in order to be analyzed. Actually, the globalization entails a closing of the systems, which, usually was considered open. Paradoxically, the globalization of economy, culture and communication determines simultaneous its universalism, but at the same time it is closing at the world level. If a culture (or an economy) was analyzed until now as an open system under the influence of other cultures, now it appears a new object, the globalized culture, which is a closed system, limited to the Earth.

Particularly, the language is considered a natural, dynamic, unbalanced, open meta-system that like every system can preserve its internal coherence only if the working process is not violent and constant disturbed by direct interactions and mutual influences.

The synergy of a language, that is the action of self-adjustment and self-organizing mechanisms which ensures its internal coherence,<sup>1</sup> is efficient as long as its dynamic balance is not destroyed by the social, economical, cultural adverse

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Piotrowski, "Sinergetica și ocrotirea limbii române în Republica Moldova" (The theory of synergy and the Romanian language protection in Moldavian Republic), *Revista de lingvistică și știință literară (Linguistic and Literary Science Review)*, 1997, no. 3, pp. 92-94.

factors (like it happens in the case of so-called minor cultures<sup>2</sup> or in the globalization's circumstances, for the most of them).

Therefore, in what is concerning the study of languages contact, the globalization brings a high level of contact between them, so that the problem of surviving for some of them it becomes too real. I've revealed somewhere else<sup>3</sup> the similarities existing between the economical and political systems as products of the human being. For this reason, we could suppose that the processes of political and cultural globalization will follow the same route and this is lead by the economics mechanisms. In these terms the language, the communication instrument, has all chances to suffer the same phenomenon of development. Until now the system of market economy had proved to be the most efficient one and the democratic political system, the most fair (but both of them could be doubted in the globalization millennium). At the same time the globalization process opened "the world market of languages". Like any free market some of the participants have more advantages than others, though all of them respect the same rules. If we consider a departure moment of a free market those who are better situation (in regard with the financial power, position and resources), more efficiency and open to market's needs has the advantage. In the languages case it's all about the area, which it is covered, and the number of speakers, the communication efficiency and the types of relations established between the speakers within the alloglotical societies. In the contact between cultures, the globalization is not bringing a new phenomenon but only an exponential amplification of it. "The process of contact is presenting, therefore, under different aspects: economical- of contact in economy

---

<sup>2</sup> We use this term in a different meaning from its original one. We consider that nowadays the minor culture assigns that culture peculiar to a country, which lies in secondary economical echelon (or worth, in tertiary one – although the official idiom avoid this kind of phrases like "the third world's country") and those cultural products have no chance to has international spreading like the similar products which proceed from the strong economical developed or whit a big political authority. Illustratively is the chatting between the members of Program Committee, which worked on the organizing the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics) – Budapesta, 2003. The chairwoman of the Committee, Claire Gardent, suggested to organized a workshop whit title *Linguistic resources and instruments for east-European languages*. For stimulate the interest of the participants, from other places than the implied one, too, the syntagm *less-studied languages* hardly could be avoided by successive modification of the title finally they used the phrase *low desity languages*. See Dan Cristea, Dan Tufiş, "Resurse lingvistice româneşti şi tehnologii informatice aplicate limbii române" (Romanian Linguistic Resources and Informatics technologies applied on the Romanian Language), in *Identitatea limbii şi literaturii române în perspectiva globalizării (The Identity of the Romanian Language and Literature in the future of globalization)*, Trinitas, Iaşi, 2002, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> Bogdan Popoveniuc, "Market Economy and Democracy", in *Analele Universităţii "Ştefan cel Mare"* (Annals of "Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava), Suceava, 2003.

sphere, socio-political – of contact between populations, cultural – of contact between cultures, linguistic – of contact between languages, each of these main aspects is conditioning reciprocally: economical-socio-political-cultural-linguistic.”<sup>4</sup>

By the social-linguistic point of view, “in the battle for surviving” between two languages, it will win the one which is requesting the less waste of physical and physiological energy, therefore the most pragmatic one. We must not neglect the role played by existing relations between the economical and political structures of the two countries or communities. Though it is not obligatory the linguistic victory of the part which is economical and political superior, the advantage, which has the language of this community in the battle of supremacy, is overwhelming.

In the contact between languages literature, there are quoted as important factors, which influence the sizes, direction and nature of the contact between languages<sup>5</sup>: 1) the socio-political state of the two communities 2) their economical differences 3) the tolerance or the national, ethnical, religious discriminations 4) the socio-cultural cohesion or dispersion of the communities which are in contact 5) the number report 6) the degree of the territorial concentration of each of them (in relation with their mixture or the given linguistic enclaves when the position of the minority languages is weakening 7) the length and the continuity of the contact between communities 8) the intensity of the relations of a minority community with the ethno-linguistic “trunk “ from which it was separated 9) the existence of some socio-political activities and cultural-instructive in the mother language 10) the economical socio –political, cultural, artistic, technical, scientifically superiority of a community compared to the others. 11) The psychical particularities of the communities 12) the domination of the monolingualism in a country or controversially, of the plurilingualism,, the ethno- linguistic mixture is needing a contact language (like we have the ex-URSS example, where the Russian language has become the second mother language for the populations of its territory)

U. Weinreich calls the ensemble of these factors “the social cultural environment of the linguistic contact”. And he considers that without analysis of this, the researches about the linguistic contact could not exist.<sup>6</sup> None of these

---

<sup>4</sup> T. Il’jasenko, “Note privind contactul lingvistic” (Notes about linguistic contact), in *Limba și literatura moldovenească (The Moldavian language and literature)*, Chișinău, 1964, no. 3, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> After Ioan Lobiuc, *Contactele dintre limbi (The contacts between languages)*, “Al. I. Cuza” University Press, Iași, I, 1998, pp. 171-172.

<sup>6</sup> Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems*. New York, 1953, p. 4.

factors can influence the result of the process of linguistic contact, which will depend on their synergy because they are in a relation of mutual interdependence. Though, the existence of a major lack of poise concerning the relations existing between the social cultural situations of the involved parties will determine a reorganization of the other factors synoptic, modifying in that way the forces reports on ensemble and in the end to the domination of one of the languages which are in contact.

In the specialized literature there are different opinions over the languages contact phenomenon. They are oscillating between giving an excessive importance to it and its complete rejection. I consider that never the contact between languages can exist simply as a mutual pressure exercised by the qualities of the pure linguistic factors of those two languages. The contact between languages never has been pure and simple. Always in contact were not two languages but two social, political, economical, cultural organizations. “A complete picture of the interference in the linguistic contact situation it is not possible to give without considering the extra linguistic factors.”<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, I consider that the difference between two languages was never made by the bilingualism – although only through it – like suggests those analysts how want to explain the evolutionary process of the languages pure linguistic view.

The bilingualism, as “a product of the languages in contact”, “has played along the centuries and millenniums – and it is continuing to play an extraordinary role in the existence of human language in general and the life of the concrete languages. We can declare, without any exaggeration, that all the world languages no matter where and when they have been spoken, are entire or partial product of the bilingualism.”<sup>8</sup> And this is an unquestionable reality. How else can be achieved the contact between languages in the absence of their bilinguistical carriers? The communication between alloglotic persons would be impossible. But this doesn't mean that it is the one that plays the determinant role within the framework of the linguistic contact independently by the extra linguistic factors. The bilingualism at its turn is determined by the socio-economical conditions. The historical-cultural realities are the reason of the bilingualism (to the social level). The bilingualism, along the entire human history, represented a necessity (arrived from the need of intercultural communication, at the same way that the language appeared from the

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Iorgu Iordan, *Bilingvismul în domeniul romantic* (The bilingualism in the romantic domain), SCL, 1973, no. 2, p. 129.

need of interindividual communication) and not like a purpose in itself.

So I consider that, generally, “the languages disappear because of the *social* pressures and not the linguistic pressures of the languages which take their places. It is a decline process which consists in the restraining, more accentuated of the utilization sphere of this language, in a series of phenomena which had produced inside the system of language which is in extinction, caused by the restraining of its use, like an organ that progressively atrophying according as it ceases to normally discharge its vital functions.”<sup>9</sup> These phenomena are: “the loss of the living methods” (the superficial assimilation of words, the decline of the methods of making new words), “monostylism” (the limitation to only one linguistic register – the one of the language spoken in the family) “the vague characters of significations”, the loss of consciousness of linguistic identity”.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the languages are not disappearing because of the linguistic contact which could bring changes in their structure, even if it is fulfilled the fundamental condition of the active bilingual contact. This only allows the passing from a linguistic code to another, passing which can be followed by the progressive abandonment of the first code (and it is not obligatory that the official substitution of a language, the interdiction of using it in favor of other language to have the expected effect though that thing happens in some cases close to us).<sup>11</sup> Between the linguistic contact with his characteristic manifestations in social plan – active bilingualism and the disappearance of languages can't be established a direct determination.

In the context of globalization, as I was saying, the phenomenon of contact between languages, is not suffering structural changes only is growing a lot in intensity “Historical linguistic and cultural identities of human communities of the Earth are not affected directly by the globalization phenomenon which among other things, has the motivation to eradicate poverty, but indirectly, by its collateral consequences.”<sup>12</sup>

One of the important consequences of the globalization process is the spectrum of disappearance of the nation-state. If we follow the history of the state organization we could easily observe that if the tribe was “a group of nations or

---

<sup>9</sup> Marius Sala, *Limbi în contact* (Languages in Contact), Encyclopedical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 314.

<sup>10</sup> see Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, “À propos de la mort des langues”, in *XVI Congresso Internazionale di studi Romanzi*, (Firenze, 3-8 Aprile 1956), *Atti.*, II, Florența, 1960, pp. 381-388

<sup>11</sup> see Marius Sala, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-314

<sup>12</sup> Ion Ghinoiu, “Globalizarea și eternitatea arhetipurilor” (The globalization and the eternity of the archetypes), in *Identitatea limbii și literaturii române în perspectiva globalizării* (*The Identity of the Romanian Language and Literature in the future of globalization*), Trinitas, Iași, 2002, p. 299

related families which had the *same language* and traditions, lived in the same territory and, submitted to the authority of a chosen chief”; the people is a “historical form of superior human community and previous to the nation, which members live in the same territory, speak the *same language* and have the same cultural tradition” and the nation is “a stabile community of people, historical formed as a state, which appeared on the basis of the *unity of language*, territory, economical life, physical structure which is manifesting in the specific particularities of national culture and in the consciousness of origin and commune faith”.

This means that the global state can't represent only the natural continuity to the organization of world population in the conditions of the cultural, economical, technological development. And if for the achievement of this thing it is necessary not only an end of planetary history (an economical and political organization) but also an end of geography, it is necessary the existence of a common language too. And this it will be achieved by declaring a language as a world language (the English is a sure candidate), building a universal language (like Esperanto or Frenglish) or, simply, by the interaction it will get a unique language. The question is if the end of the nation-state will mean the end of the linguistic diversity, too.

In his work *English language and the Internet* David Crystal, asserts that three quarters of the world population is natural bilingual and for this reason it is perfect possible the maintenance of a standard language as being a *lingua franca* and to maintain in the same time the local languages: the standard language guarantees the intelligibility and the local one express the identity.

Therefore the bilingualism is not the vital problem of the languages contact (in the word of globalization). In a discussion on the David Crystal's book, Steven Pinker asserts that the negative effect of trilingualism to children it is a urban legend because for them it is no problem to learn words from many languages. The vocabulary of each of them is growing slower than the case they would speak only one, but the vocabulary in all the languages would be bigger without any psychological problems.

I consider that in this interpretation we loose the ensemble view which I the unexpected reflex of the multiple identity that ignore the other ended to ignore it self.<sup>13</sup> If we” define the culture as *what* a society makes and thinks. The language is *how* it thinks.”<sup>14</sup> In which language will think the society of globalization? “Every language has a fundamental plan, a particular cut. This type, or plan, or

---

<sup>13</sup> Leon Wieseltier, *Împotriva identității* (Against the Identity), Polirom, Iași, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Sapir, *Language. Introduction to the study of speech*, New York, 1921, p. 171.

structural genius of the language it is much more important, more piercing than any other characteristic of it.”<sup>15</sup> Than which would be the identities of those, actually, trilingual children (and especially the *Internet children*) in accordance with what ethos they will understand the world? Because thinking in a language means to see and understand the world within a peculiar framework.

Therefore, I consider that, the problem of linguistic diversity must be judged in the context of the pluriculturality. The globalization force the humankind of the three millennium to “recognize of what is foreign in a proper sense, gaining insight into its spirit, but in the same time, keeping of what is own. These are the things that all nations will must learn indifferent how long it takes to do.” (Huizinga). There are two possibilities. In the first case, the future structure (or superstructure) that will succeed the nation-state, in historical order – of course in the case of the clash of civilizations corroborated with the technological development will haven’t catastrophic consequences – will need only the common language in order to define it self. And that will happen because all inhabitants of the earth will become the citizens of the world, shearing the same culture, social, economical and political organization and, of course, the same territory, the Earth. In the second case, the most likely, we attend to a really open, on the market challenge of the different cultures languages (as well as of the different varieties within the same language). I consider that the languages of the people which well shaped culture has a little chance to disappear, unless the nation identity consciousness vanish itself, which means the disappearing of its national ethos. At the same time, the offensive of globalization put the fate of various dialects, varieties and “minor” languages in a fatal danger, because it is grounded in economical (and political) mechanisms.

### **Bibliography:**

1. \*\*\* *Identitatea limbii și literaturii române în perspectiva globalizării (The Identity of the Romanian Language and Literature in the future of globalization)*, Trinitas, Iași, 2002.
2. Cristea, D., & Tufiș, D., “Resurse lingvistice românești și tehnologii informatice aplicate limbii române” (Romanian Linguistic Resources and Informatics technologies applied on the Romanian Language), in *Identitatea limbii și literaturii române în perspectiva globalizării (The Identity of the Romanian Language and Literature in the future of globalization)*, Trinitas,

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120

Iași, 2002.

3. Jordan, I., *Bilingvismul în domeniul romantic* (The bilingualism in the romantic domain), SCL, no. 2, 1973.
4. Lobiuc, I., *Contactele dintre limbi* (*The contacts between languages*), "Al. I. Cuza" University Press, Iași, vol. I, 1998.
5. Piotrowski, R., "Sinergetica și ocrotirea limbii române în Republica Moldova" (The theory of synergy and the Romanian language protection in Moldavian Republic), *Revista de lingvistică și știință literară*, no. 3, 1997.
6. Popoveniuc, Bogdan, "Market Economy and Democracy", in *Analele Universității "Ștefan cel Mare"* (Annals of "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava), Suceava, 2003.
7. Sala, M., *Limbi în contact* (Languages in Contact), Encyclopedical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997.
8. Sapir, E., *Language. Introduction to the study of speech*, New York, 1921.
9. Schlieben-Lange, B., "À propos de la mort des langues", in *XVI Congresso Internazionale di studi Romanzi*, (Firenze, 3-8 Aprile 1956). Atti., II, Florența, 1960.
10. Weinreich, U., *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems*, New York, 1953.
11. Wieseltier, L., *Împotriva identității* (Against the Identity), Polirom, Iași, 1997.