

Full Length Research Paper

THE CONTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGES TO CULTURE

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Accepted May 6 2011

This article discusses three separate topics of interest. Firstly, it gives a general historic and modern discussion of some important views in languages and culture. The distinctive relationship between them is explained and discussed; a particular attention is being paid to the contribution of globalization in the development of languages and culture.

Secondly, it deals with the position of English language in the world today. The increased awareness and the reasons for teaching it are discussed.

The third part of this article is to supply the readers with some useful recommendations for teaching additional languages to develop the cultural aspect of a population with special reference to the 'Aures' region of Algeria.

Keywords: History; language; English; globalization; teaching, Aures, Algeria.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of teaching languages to culture is not a new one. In the historic period, the teaching of foreign languages was confined to the classical teaching of Latin and Greek. Around 500 BC, Greek literature was considered as the apogee and the origin of knowledge in the Western world. Famous theologists such as Plato and Aristotle advanced different new theories and reasoning about the creation of the universe.

Plato's view is very interesting in terms of mobility and change. He established a school of philosophy called "Academia" and with his pupil Aristotle advocated that in physical terms the mobility of every form is inevitable. In linguistic terms the implications are similar in the

sense that every human being is progressing and therefore progress comes along with them. Language is learnt automatically element by element; without memorizing rules.

During the renaissance, educators such as the French Montaigne Michel Eyquem (1533-1592) introduced a new literary essay on the knowledge of humanity in general. He asserted that "Each man bears the complete stamp of the human condition". The natural order means each one of us learns by himself at his own pace, with no dictation.

In "Prodromus Pansophia", Johann Amos Cornemius" (1592-1670) views on language acquisition were similar to Montaigne's. His teaching approach advised a gradual exposure of the pupils to the world because he thought that learning results from the inner desire of the human and not of what it is imposed

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on them. He advised what we call today: The “contextual approach” (teaching by images) in Prevot. J., (1981).

In the late 18th century, authors such as Wilhelm von Humboldt (1762-1835) considered the importance of the addition of teaching culture into languages.

In his theory of “human education” (1793), he mentioned that ‘...self-education can only be continued ...in the wider context of development of the world’ (p.33).

In 1789, he stressed that ‘the education of the individual requires his incorporation into society and involves his links with society at large’ (p.155). Humboldt’s educational ideas are entirely in connection with the new trends of globalization of today’s change. In reality educational progress can only be possible if social considerations are considered locally, nationally and internationally.

Similarly, Jean Jacques Rousseau’s (1772-1778) philosophy of education in the “Emile” was not a major point of controversy in the education per se, but it was interesting in terms of language and its relationship to society in the sense that someone who is properly educated cannot return to primitive life and ignore his relationship with society.

In Africa alone there are about 1500 out of 6000 universal spoken languages.

The question to ask here is which language do people across the world choose to communicate with this diversity of languages?

The model of English preferred and established as a prestigious international language has evolved since the second war as a result of the industrialized revolution which created new scientific and technological language terms linked to the new inventions. According to the writer, this position of the English language as the most preferred in the world could have been better in terms of progress if another language other than

English had had the opportunity to develop like it and expand itself across the World! Of course this “so-called language’ has to be as much richer and easier in terms of its vocabulary, phonetics and written transcript as the English Language. The writer thinks that other nations did not have the chance to progress and expand their languages as international languages as a result of their difficult geographical positions. Therefore; this inhibited their languages to be established across the world like the English Language did.

From personal perspective, the author’ views about the success of a language depends on many factors not found in old and contemporary literature. From a scientific point of view, our ancestors’ human nature may have played a determinant factor in the essence of each language. The writer means by that if people of a given language have, for instance, been more relaxed, nervous or stressed in their way of life, their temperaments affect the whole composition of their languages (the structures, forms and lexis). This could explain why a given language’s lexical dictionary is more developed and rich than another! The genetic disposition to acquire more than one language could also play a major factor.

The nature of work activity and stability of a country could also be considered as a main vector in the success of its language. I mean, if our ancestors had an interesting varied, business activity; they would have invented more appropriate business terminology adopted to sell their products. But external factors like wars, colonization, dictators and religions were additional vectors influencing the success, stagnation or destruction of local languages. Certain types of daily media which are considered as a window to develop some languages throughout the

world, such as the daily exposure to some well known Television channels are to blame and may lead to a kind of isolation in some neglected areas and can be a determinant factor in decreasing the contact in oral communication between people around the globe.

Authors such as Sir Ernest Gowers (1987) see the demand of the English language originating from residential reasons. With over 300 million people speaking English, most of them live in the United States of America and England (222 million and 56 million respectively). There are other significant numbers elsewhere, mainly Canada (17 million), Australia (14 million). In addition, English is the official second language in many countries where it is used as a means of education. Among these countries we name former British colonies such as India (700 million) Pakistan (85 million).

Paradoxically, to this big demand of English, the facilities and conditions for learning it are still very poor, especially in the African continent.

If we take the example of Algeria, the country has been colonized many times. The French one lasted for more than a century (1830-1962). After such a long period, the contribution of Algerian languages (estimated to be 18 with the predominant ones are: Arabic, Chaoui, Kabyle, Tachelhit and Tamazight's, Acalan, 1986) to culture had decreased significantly due to the French policy of assimilation of our languages. This resulted in the disintegration of Algerian culture and favoured the spreading of the monolingual learning of French. Today, most people in Algeria are still limited to the learning of only one foreign language, namely French.

CONCLUSION

With the expansion of hydrocarbons and the geographical position of some underdeveloped countries like Algeria, Emirates Arab's... English language will continue to be a considerable tool of linking cultures, ideas and customs worldwide. The Daily Telegraph (2008,p1) advocated that "The increased mobility and mass migration across borders, culture is becoming more homogenized and, some might consider, less meaningful as it gets easier to feel free at home in many countries".

On one hand, if we don't make an effort to preserve our national languages in Algeria, Africa and the world, by the next decade many languages and dialects will disappear taking with them hundreds of culture. On the other hand, if we want to become civilized citizens in a multicultural world, we must have contact with other cultures through the learning of languages. Because languages often bring change. This change can be social, economical and cultural.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional languages are a vital source to enrich the school curricular and the local culture. In order to bring the Algerian Universities, especially, the University Center of Khenchela closer to its community (schools and parents), to remove the existing linguistic and cultural barriers and to build a special multilingual and multicultural Algerian society, the introduction of at least two 'Additional Languages' (A.L) is advised for children aged 5-15 years old in the school curricula like English and Berber. Berber dialect, in our geographical context "Chaouia" is part of our identity and our cultural heritage. As part of a nation we must encourage its use in

schools. For the Algerian Berber to prosper, one must make sure that young people in this region of 'Auras' have the opportunity to learn it. Schools are the only vector for language change. Over centuries different colonizers have directly or indirectly oppressed and assimilated our local languages and culture." Berber" language should be valued as any other spoken and written languages at home and in the world.

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