

SECȚIA 11

PERSPECTIVE MULTIDIMENSIONALE ASUPRA EDUCAȚIEI MULTILINGVE: PROVOCĂRI, OPORTUNITĂȚI ȘI INOVAȚII

GLOBALIZATION AND CHANGING TRENDS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

GLOBALIZAREA ȘI TENDINȚE ÎN EDUCAȚIA LINGVISTICĂ

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Rezumat. Ultimele trei decenii au fost marcate de multiple transformări în predarea - învățarea limbilor, mare parte dintre acestea fiind generate de globalizare, inițial percepută drept tendință și fenomen din domeniul economiei. Trebuie să subliniem că în pofida numeroaselor controverse și contradicții, globalizarea a declanșat procese transformatoare cu impact considerabil asupra tuturor aspectelor ce țin de predarea - învățarea limbilor. Tendințele transformatoare ale globalizării, deși deopotrivă blamate și elogiare, au schimbat pentru totdeauna percepțiile despre educația lingvistică, scoțând în evidență necesitatea de a considera și include noi și noi dimensiuni pentru a echipa indivizii cu abilitățile necesare, care să pe permită să comunice eficient în diferite contexte socioculturale, educaționale sau profesionale. Articolul descrie principalele schimbări în predarea - învățarea limbilor ca rezultat al globalizării, fiind evidențiate dimensiuni precum multiculturalismul, multilingvismul și rolul transformator al tehnologiilor. În plus, sunt evidențiate efectele mobilității oamenilor facilitate de globalizare, precum și Abordarea comunicativă în predare limbilor și variațiile ulterioare ale acesteia.

Cuvinte-cheie: abordare complexă, globalizare, multilingvism, multiculturalism, tehnologie, rol transformator.

It is undeniable that the modern world is undergoing rapid, multifarious changes in the context of political and economical developments, where permeable geographical boundaries allow people, goods, services and ideas to move easily across borders. Under the circumstances, educational institutions worldwide started developing strategies aiming at internationalizing their programmes. All these changes have a considerable impact on language teaching and learning across the globe and inevitably, on the approaches in use in the field, requiring different practices in order to achieve the more and more complex educational goals. The increasing number of dimensions to be incorporated into language education raised teachers and researchers' awareness of the complexity of the process and its ever more problematic character. Hence, professionals in the field have been struggling to figure out new approaches that would suit the new language education landscape that has been prompted by globalization, in an effort to avoid ethnocentrism. The present article attempts to elucidate several controversial aspects dealing with language education and practices in the context of multilingualism and multiculturalism, heavily marked by globalization.

Prior to delving deeper into the subject, the concept of “globalization” will be addressed to clarify its importance and influence in language education. Globalization, as a concept, is not a new one. It has been around for centuries, however, the beginning of its astounding influence is linked to the 1990s, when it was initially discussed from economic perspectives, but soon was extended to cultural perspectives [5].

R. Robertson argues that in order to grasp its influence in every area, it is essential to understand it from these two perspectives: cultural and economic. He contends that globalization is both a process and a theory: “Globalization is the process by which people and communities come to experience common economic, social and cultural environments.” As a theory, globalization is described as the compression of the world-intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole [R.Robertson, as cited in 6, p.3].

A more comprehensive view is launched by Anthony Giddens, 1991, who states that “by intensifying the interconnectedness among different people, things and ideas, globalization homogenizes the world, but at the same time the world becomes heterogenized as people are more aware of differences owing to the increasing exposure to them across the globe.

Summing up the view of various authors concerned with the topic of globalization and how it impacts daily life, it is worth emphasizing that as a phenomenon, it has both advantages and drawbacks as it *affects the balance of social, economic and cultural power between nations, communities and individuals and it can both enhance or restrict human rights and freedom* [as cited in 6, p.14]

Despite being a catchphrase for several decades already, globalization still produces mixed feelings for a number of reasons. It is blamed for being the main cause of widening the gap between the rich and the poor, becoming increasingly a pure form of imperialism [Smith 1997, as cited in 6, p.7] and praised for creating multiple opportunities for facilitated trade around the world.

Extremely complex, globalization should be understood in all its dimensions and influences as there is no walk of life that has not been affected by it. However, for the sake of the present paper we will focus on the aspects that refer to language education in a world that has never been so intricate.

Inevitably, the effects of globalization are considerable in terms of cultures as the intensified mobility of people has led to intensified interactions and cultural exchanges that gradually have become blurred for the most part. The fact that most of the world population has become an avid consumer of the same products (music, movies, fashion, foods, etc.) has produced this effect of blurring the boundaries between different cultures. Researchers in the field contend that the phenomenon is always two sided and consists of both homogenization and heterogenization trends which quite often triggers hybridization of cultures.

Claire Kramsch notes that under the new conditions, foreign language educators are the ones who face the most controversial dilemmas: “they have been compelled to rethink what their role is and how they are to conceive of “culture” in an era marked by various contradictions: increased diversity but also growing homogeneity, increased multilingualism but also growing monolingual mentalities, increased breakdown of national and linguistic boundaries but also increased control and assessment practices” [4, p.16].

Culture and language are inseparable and they undergo the same transformative effects in the context of global trends and overflow territorial boundaries. Hence, the controversy and contradictions generated by the phenomenon. De Swaan, 2001, argues that this intensive interaction and overlapping of cultures and languages, with English being hypercentral in the

general language network and used extensively in all areas, has produced a devastating effect on peripheral languages that are disappearing at a steady pace. For centuries, he states, *it was multilingualism that kept humanity, separated by so many languages, together* [3]. Besides, the advent of globalization has entirely shattered the traditional view of culture (one language = one culture) [4, p.19], with monoculturalism and monolingualism being labeled as a historical construction of nation-states that was to establish not only their territorial integrity and their political autonomy, but also to support their colonial practices abroad [Makoni & Pennycook, 2007, as cited in 4, p.19-20].

Globalization with all the array of changes it produced, particularly due to communication technologies, has also generated a sort of “culture wars” where those in favor of globalization trends argue against those who try to defend national heritage and traditions. The hybridization of cultures and languages raised a number of questions about people’s national identity /identities versus citizenship which made researchers refer to the changes associated with globalization as “postnationalism” [1, p.20]

Barney, 2004, describes the globalization discourse as “dramatically increased international migration and a concomitant proliferation of multi-ethnic societies and diasporic communities; the rise of media technology which facilitate the global distribution and consumption of mass cultural products, as well as inexpensive, timely, interpersonal communication across vast distances; and the diminishing ability of states to protect and nurture domestic, indigenous cultural industries in the context of global, liberalized market conditions”[1, p.24].

When referring to globalization we inevitably mean the *slackening of geographical constraints* and the intensification of different types of interactions which are possible through language. Thanks to technology, distances do not represent an obstacle to interactions nowadays whereas language is: a shared linguistic code is mandatory for interactions involving participants from different parts of the world. For the most part, the *majority of participants in global exchanges use a linguistic code they have learned, rather than the language they have natively acquired* [2, p.3]. Block and Cameron note that these new demands changed essentially the conditions in which languages are learnt and taught.

On the one hand, globalization with its homogenization effects seems to have produced a variety of positive changes worldwide, promoting the idea of competition in all fields and improved quality standards. On the other hand, it poses threats to national identity and stimulates nationalism as a way of resisting Americanization [2, p.38].

For language educators and sociolinguists particularly, globalization and its effects have come along with a series of dilemmas, as well. The generally embraced language policy that promotes learning English alongside mother tongue(s) has produced unexpected effects in different parts of the world like endangered native languages, especially in those linguistic communities where clear regulations were missing. Hence, the necessity to preserve and revitalize national languages and cultures under more and more pressure from the omnipresent English. Under these circumstances, UNESCO stepped in to raise awareness of the urgent need to preserve national languages and cultures, emphasizing the importance of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the development and survival of mankind. Specific measures have been taken to safeguard local languages, among which the Declaration on the Use of Vernacular Languages in Education in 1953, and language policies have been developed and implemented. In many parts of the world, though fully acknowledged, the benefits of using mother tongue in education for as long as possible, have gradually been ousted by “trendy reforms”, induced by

globalization for the sake of avoiding underestimation and marginalization of underrepresented languages.

It is essential to note that English has a pivotal role in promoting a new conceptualization of language education and most governments have adopted policies that highlight its status as a *lingua franca that is required to meet the demands of the post - modern world*. At the same time, bilingualism, multilingualism and multiculturalism in many countries are being righteously encouraged and promoted extensively as a survival practice for their secular linguistic and cultural heritage and identity.

Another dilemma deals with how to teach English in this new, versatile reality. The rapid replacement of methods with approaches has produced numerous inconsistencies, revealing that they were totally inappropriate for specific communities or countries. The Communicative Language Teaching approach, for instance, has turned out to be ineffective for those who learn English for academic purposes [6, p.15].

The tight interconnectedness created by globalization led to major challenges related to the dimensions that language education should contain. Therefore, the reconceptualisation of language teaching curricula became a key priority. Some decision-making authorities contend that a comprehensive, effective language learning programme / curriculum should focus primarily on the functional use of the target language, whereas some others promote the idea that language education programmes should encompass various aspects related to intercultural communication, multiculturalism and cultural diversity. The multitude of opposing, controversial views have impacted the field in many ways and as of today there is still no unanimously accepted conceptualization of foreign language education, with researchers and practitioners wavering between new and old ideologies.

Despite the various re-conceptualizations of language education, it has been emphasized that there is considerable mismatch between what language programmes offer and what is really needed in the new landscape globalization has created. First of all, as Cl. Kramsch remarks, it is because the triad: communication, language, and culture has changed meaning. More and more so, we can see how globalization led to the instrumentalization of language, with English being omnipresent, which inevitably and steadily has generated a consumerist, touristic mindset that goes hand in hand with greater competitiveness, and, ultimately, greater and more invisible power and control [4, p.22].

Besides, the shift from monolingualism towards bilingualism, and more recently, to multilingualism in the language classroom has produced a completely new tapestry of language education philosophy. However, as specialized literature in the field reveals, it appears that globalization as a key factor of the change is largely avoided and ignored. In fact, as Cl. Kramsch states, multilingualism has always been an inherent part of humanity and human interactions, as people have always been using several languages or dialects to communicate.

All around the world, there is a general trend of adopting and implementing high resounding, promising reforms and approaches that supposedly will produce the best outcomes and yield manifold benefits to the society as a whole. In reality, as it can often be seen, most of these imposed or borrowed practices fail to suit local communities with their centuries long traditions, customs and practices and produce confusion and more harm than benefits. At times, especially in Asian states, there is a counter- movement on the rise in defense of local linguistic communities and cultures, which have been under threat of becoming extinct. It should also be noted that having a critical approach to some of the new developments does not equal denying the role and importance of pursuing change and innovation. What we are trying to highlight is

the need for a reasonable, balanced attitude to what concepts are introduced in language education in local communities and how these are affecting language education, be it positively or negatively. Overall, globalization and its effects are perceived differently: it is both a fashionable term and a highly contested one [2, p. 3]

An aspect worthwhile highlighting deals with the fact that globalization facilitated mobility of people, which consequently led to a notable increase in interactions amongst people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Educational institutions, in particular, have been facing a whole range of challenges to accommodate for the needs of a significantly diverse student population. Consequently, another trend was identified: an increased demand for higher education and for educational quality [4]. With the shift of emphasis from monolingualism and monoculturalism in many educational settings to multilingualism and multiculturalism, we have seen a trend of curricula adaptation and upgrading. The aim is to promote proficiency in multiple languages, with a focus on incorporating bilingual and multilingual programs, with students learning and using other languages, besides mother tongue.

Apart from this, technology has started playing a pivotal, transformative role in language education making language learning more attractive, accessible and interactive. This opened a wide range of new possibilities for learners to explore languages in more authentic and immersive ways, thus transcending the confines of traditional classrooms. This is on the one hand. Whereas, on the other hand, we should note, in line with Cl. Kramsch's view, that communication technologies are downplaying the importance of culture in language education by giving more importance to semiotic codes and modalities and interactional strategies than to cultural content [4, p.18].

Furthermore, the worldwide, almost unanimous recognition of the importance of communicative competence produced an avalanche of various changes in the field which marked a paradigm shift, where grammar accuracy does not represent the main priority of language classes. Learners are encouraged to develop their abilities to communicate in different languages in real-life situations and in a variety of settings, applying practical skills such as listening, speaking and showing cultural awareness. Inevitably, under these circumstances, globalization has also spurred the demand for language educators with diverse linguistic and cultural competencies, which generated another trend - language teacher training programs. The main objective of these programs is to equip language educators with the skills and knowledge they need to facilitate effective navigation of multicultural classrooms.

Amongst the multiple reforms and innovations in language education practices that have been prompted by globalization, the ones listed below have been in use for a while and seem to have gained momentum:

- Communicative Approach: Language classes increasingly emphasize real-life communication skills over rote memorization of grammar rules. Students engage in interactive activities such as role-plays, discussions, and simulations to develop their speaking and listening abilities.

- Technology Integration: With the advancement of technology, language classes have incorporated digital tools and resources to enhance learning. This includes the use of language learning apps, online platforms, multimedia materials, and virtual reality simulations to provide immersive language experiences.

- Content-Based Instruction: Language learning is integrated into other academic subjects, allowing students to learn language skills while studying topics of interest such as

history, science, or literature. This approach provides meaningful context for language acquisition and encourages interdisciplinary learning.

- Task-Based Learning: Students work on authentic tasks and projects that require them to use the target language in practical situations. This approach focuses on developing language skills through problem-solving and collaboration, reflecting real-world language use.

- Cultural Competence: Globalization has emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in language education. Classes often include cultural components, such as studying literature, films, and traditions from the target culture, to help students understand the cultural context of the language they are learning.

- Online and Blended Learning: The rise of online education platforms has facilitated access to language courses for learners around the world. Language classes are offered in various formats, including fully online, blended (combining online and in-person instruction), and self-paced courses, providing flexibility and convenience for students.

- Language Exchange Programs: Globalization has facilitated international exchange programs, allowing students to immerse themselves in the language and culture of the target country. These programs provide invaluable opportunities for language practice and cultural exchange, fostering linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence.

These practices reflect efforts to adapt language education to the demands of an increasingly interconnected world, equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a globalized society.

To sum up, we would like to highlight that despite the controversies and ambiguities in perception, globalization has brought about transformative changes in language education, emphasizing multilingualism, technology integration, communicative competence, and cultural awareness. These trends reflect the evolving needs of a globalized world, where effective communication across languages and cultures is paramount.

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