INTERCULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: Languages are an important part of our lives. They do not only help us communicate with one another, but they also contribute to our self-improvement, they help the development of the economy and of the business environment. We live now in an era of globalisation; while at global level there are certain languages that tend to dominate the scene, in Europe, the linguistic diversity is not eliminated, but celebrated. Without the constant effort of the European Union institutions to fight for the promotion of language learning, language teaching and preservation of languages, or without the continuous will of European citizens to learn the languages of their neighbouring states, at any time in their lives, there would not be understanding or a true "unity in diversity". In order to make people proficient in a language that can help the economy and/or the development of a business, people on the labour market have to be trained in schools or universities, or other institutions, by offering language courses. Therefore, universities and governments have a great responsibility to work on promoting languages, language learning and teaching. This article focuses largely on the recommendations made by the European Union in what multilingualism is concerned, on the European Higher Education Area, and particularly on the actions taken in higher education institutions in order to implement the abovementioned recommendations as to language teaching and learning.

Keywords: language, language policy, language learning, European Union, higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language means diversity, cultural heritage and cooperation. It is an important part of our identities and represents the most direct manifestation of a culture. Due to language, one may establish relations with other people and may transmit the cultural heritage of his/her people. They also represent bridges between peoples and cultures, and are considered "the medium through which place in politics. communication takes commerce, defence, academia, the media, technology, the internet, and most aspects of life"; therefore they are definitely "central to our increasingly international world, to globalisation and to the accelerating process of European unification" (Phillipson 2003: 5).

We live now in the era of globalisation, but, while at global level there are certain languages that tend to dominate the scene, in Europe, the linguistic diversity is not eliminated, but celebrated. However, English tends to dominate the scene as a *lingua franca* in various domains of human life. A separate sub-chapter of this discourse will analyse this very problem.

The strategy for multilingualism of the European Union stresses the fact that speaking other languages and understanding other cultures strengthen the connections between different parts of Europe, as well as the fact that languages represent the path that has to be followed for social integration and intercultural dialogue.

2. THE SUPREMACY OF ENGLISH

One cannot start discussing multilingualism in Europe without speaking first of the current *lingua franca*. Today, English is the *lingua franca*. It is, certainly, the synonym of globalization all around the world. It has become such a powerful language and such an important tool for communication that today we are surrounded by it everywhere.

"A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country" (Crystal 2003: 3), when it has a special role within the communities, and this status can be achieved in two ways: either by adopting the language as the official language of the country (and this way the language is used at all levels, from the government to the education institutions) or by foreign language teaching.

In the case of English, it is well known the fact that, at the beginning of the 19th century Britain was one of the most important countries in the industrial and trading sector, but by the end of the same century its leading role was taken by the U.S.A., which, in just one century, developed without precedent and became the most productive economy in the world at that time. It was indeed Britain which began the spreading of English through its colonies and political imperialism, but it was the U.S.A. that strengthened the position of this language as a global language.

As a consequence, a notion well-known in the field of sociolinguistics has to be brought into discussion: the linguistic imperialism [Phillipson (1992) Pennycook (1994, 1998), Crystal (2003), Graddol (1997), Brutt-Griffler (2002), Maurais and Morris (2003), Hamel (2005), Ricento (2006), Hagège (1992, 2006)]. Phillipson offered the first definition regarding the linguistic imperialism of English: "the dominance of English is asserted and the establishment maintained bv and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (Phillipson 1992: 47), and by structural he referred to the material properties such as institutions and financial allocations, while by cultural he meant immaterial or ideological properties such as attitudes and pedagogic principles.

In some countries, governments have adopted laws in order to limit the invasion of English terms in the local language. We may take France as a good example. The Toubon Law of 1994 relative to the use of the French language is well known. Having three main objectives (the enrichment of the French language, the obligation for the citizens to use it, and the protection of the language as the official language of the country), *la Loi Toubon* was envisaged to protect the French language from the English invasion¹. Examples can be made: the French use the word *ordinateur* for *computer*, *souris* for *mouse* and so on.

Therefore, we may analyse the spreading of English from four points of view: economic, scientific and technological, media-related and educational.

The economic aspect of the wide-spread of English as a global language is strongly related to the Second World War and the power and influence exercised by the US in the European recovery. I believe we are all familiar with the Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Plan, promoted by the US Government at the end of the Second World War. The main purpose of the Americans was to make the US a European power (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999: 22). "The first grand objective [of the US], of course, is to keep America as a European power, not just for today, but for the indefinite future" the US Ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, stated in 1997, and was cited in "Guardian Weekly" on 12 January 1997 (cited in Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999: 22). Therefore, it seems that English is "a language which has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time" (Crystal 2003: 120).

Another aspect that explains the widespread of English is the scientific and technological development of the US in the 20th century, which was the result of the US strengthening position on the European and global market and of the massive emigration of the European intellectuals to America.

We may speak here of two terms: *brain drain* and *brain gain*. During and after the Second World War, the Nazi politics of exterminating Jews caused the emigration of many intellectuals and scientists to the US. One of the most notable examples is that of the

¹ See full text at http://www.langue-francaise.org/ Loi_toubon.php, 07/04/2011.

famous physicist Albert Einstein who, due to political reasons relative to the Nazi politics, immigrated to the US in 1933 and obtained the American citizenship in 1940². Other famous physicists moving to the US in the war period include Hans Bethe, James Franck, Victor Weisskopf, Werner Heisenberg and Enrico Fermi. They all left their home countries and moved to the United States as a result of the Nazis taking over Germany or as the Italian policy to move closer to the Nazi doctrine with which they did not agree.

Further on, another thing explaining the wide-spread of English as a global language has media-related and cultural aspects. Ever since the mass emigration of European intellectual and artists, a new cultural world formed in the United States. Great artists such as the composer, pianist and conductor Igor Stravinsky moved to the US.

Afterwards, in the 1960s appeared a new cultural trend, that of *pop art*. Basically, initiated in the UK, the trend expanded and developed in the USA, having Andy Warhol as the main figure. The term is the abbreviation of "popular art" and defines the post-war work centred on consumerism and materialism.

Mention should be made that the US supremacy in the media-related and cultural field was sought since the European Recovery Plan (i.e. Marshall Plan). The Foreign Assistance Act of 1948 contained, according to the French linguist Claude Hagège, an explicit exigency: "les pays qui profitaient de l'aide américaine pour se relever des destructions de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale n'étaient pas assistés gratuitement, mais devaient. parmi beaucoup d'autres compensations, accorder aux productions de Hollywood 30% de leurs écrans" (Hagège 2006: 29).

However, probably one of the most important reasons for the wide-spread of English around the world is the educational one. The teaching of English has become one of the most important activities in schools, high schools and universities all around the globe. International academic conferences are organised in English, most speeches are delivered in the same language. If one takes a look at the ranking of the best universities in the world, there will be no surprise to see that the universities in top twenty are predominantly American.

Another important mention on this topic is that English has also become the *lingua franca* publications. of international scientific According to Hamel, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were three languages that dominated the sciences: German for medicine, biology and chemistry, French for law and political sciences, and English for political economy and geology. The fact that English has become the language of science and of international scientific publications may also be the result of the Citation Index; even its founder, Eugene Gardner, stated that the most influential solution for the promotion of his citation indexes was the publishing of as many pages as possible in English, emphasizing that "English is simply the language that scientists as a whole now best understand" (cited in Ammon 2006: 8). As such, in 2007, more than 75% of the articles in the social sciences and humanities and 90% in the natural sciences were written in English (Hamel 2007: 53).

3. MULTILINGUALISM IN THE EU

The first official document regarding languages in the EU was the Regulation No. 1 regarding the language regime of the Economic Community. European On 6 October 1958, the Council of the European Economic Community, based on Article 217 of the Treaty, adopted the first Regulation the language regime of the regarding Economic $Community^{3}$. European The regulation settled the official languages and the working languages of the community institutions. According to Art. 1 of the Regulation, the official and working languages were German, French, Italian and Dutch. Furthermore, Article 2 of the Regulation regarding the language regime of the European Economic Community mentioned that all texts

² See details at http://www.einstein-website.de /z_biography/princeton-e.html, 10/04/2011.

³ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/ro/dossier/dossier_11.htm, 18/10/2010.

addressed to the institutions by a sender from a member state, as well as the answers given by the institutions, had to be drafted in one of these official and working languages. Article 4 of the Regulation stipulated that the regulations and other texts of general applicability were also supposed to be drafted in the four official languages, and so did the Official Journal of the Community (as Article 5 stipulated).

Several other documents were issued by the EU institutions along the years⁴.

Mention should be made that several programmes have been initiated in order to promote foreign languages, together with the of students. professors mobility and administrative staff, such as: Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig or other European projects elaborated under the auspices of the EU Directorates.

4. THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to make people proficient in a language that can help the economy and/or the development of a business, people on the labour market have to be trained in schools or universities, or other institutions, by offering language courses. This way, schools and universities can also implement the European Union's recommendation regarding the need for citizens to be able to speak at least two languages other than their mother tongue. This recommendation was first stated during the meeting of the Council with the Ministers for Education of 4 June 1984⁵. Afterwards, it continued to be reassumed in almost every E.U. document on multilingualism than followed⁶.

More recently, languages policies have become very important for universities, as most of them accepted to adhere to the Bologna process, which is the result of the Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999, by the Ministers of Education from twenty-nine European countries, in order to establish a European Higher Education Area. The main goals of this declaration were to adopt "a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, as well as "a system essentially based on two main cycles" (bachelor and master); to establish a system of credits: to promote mobility for students and teachers; to promote the "European cooperation in quality assurance", as well as the "European dimension in higher education"⁷.

⁴ *First Regulation regarding the language regime of the* European Atomic Energy Community (1958), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), the Council decision regarding the Multiannual programme to promote the linguistic diversity of the communities in the information society (1996), the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Languages (2001), the Report from the Education Council to the European Council "The concrete future objectives of education and training systems" (2002), Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Commission staff working paper – Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity' (2003), Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 - 2006 (2003), the White Paper on Education and Training. Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society (2005), the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the European Indicator of Language Competence (2005), A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism (2005).

⁵ The Council recommended member states to adopt all measures necessary in order to ensure the teaching to pupils of at least two languages other than the mother tongue before they finish the compulsory schooling. See full text in the *Council Resolution of 16 December 1997 on the early teaching of European Union languages*, at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/1998/ c 001/c 00119980103en00020003.pdf, 22/01/2011.

⁶ See the Presidency Conclusions of the Barcelona European Council, 15-16 March 2002, at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/71025.pdf, 22/01/2011.

⁷ The Bologna Declaration, 1999, http://www.magnacharta.org/pdf/BOLOGNA DECLARATION.pdf,

^{20.01.2011.} This European higher education dimension established in Bologna was afterwards completed by several other Communiqués: Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Leuven and EUA Prague Declaration (2009). All these documents focused on the necessity of having lifelong learning programmes, on the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area, on the adoption of a system of degree structures based on two main cycles, and the recognition of degrees, on doctoral studies, on the promotion of young researchers and their mobility, on the need to facilitate the mobility of students and staff and to make quality higher education accessible to all, on the social dimension and the employability of graduates, and, last but not least, on the need to preserve

5. MULTILINGUALISM IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

There are many discussions on the definitions given to language policy, but there is not a standard one. Harold F. Schiffman, for instance, argues that language policy is "a set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural norms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language" (Schiffman 1996: 5). Robert L. Cooper notes that "language policy is the body of decisions made by interested authorities concerning the desirable form and use of languages by a speech group" (Cooper 1989: 160). The UNESCO document on "Everyday Multilingualism" states that "language policy is focused on plurilingualism, intercultural competences, deepening mutual understanding, and supporting transparency and coherence in language learning"⁸.

European education ministers and universities are well aware of the fact that languages are extremely important and that language policies are needed, not only at governmental level, but at the level of the universities as well, as the universities are the ones that train and perfect the future employees for the labour market.

Nonetheless, the struggle of universities and their commitment to promote linguistic diversity and language learning can only lead to success, both for the institutions and for their students, not to mention the economy.

But do the European universities actually have a language policy? Or do they just admit that it is necessary to have one, but in fact they do not have a clear policy? Is it that they just advocate for multilingualism and intercultural education in higher education, but when it comes to their own institution nothing is made in this respect?

As an answer to these questions, the European Language Council launched a survey; the questionnaire was addressed to the universities of the European area, in order to find out if they implemented the recommendations of the European institutions, and if so, in which way. This survey was made in 2002 and 2003 and gathered information on the situation at that time regarding language policies in higher education⁹.

Therefore, as the results of the survey show, surprisingly, at that time, there were only three universities in the member states (150 questionnaires sent, but only 21 that responded to the survey) that actually had a language policy in the form of a single document (the case of Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania) or as a documentation integrated in several documents cases of Aristotle University (the of Thessaloniki, Greece, as well as the University Freiburg. Switzerland). of Other eight universities responded that they were at that time working on the development of a language policy, while ten of them did not have anything similar to a language policy.

Still, the language policy document of Babe -Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, remains, as the European Union documents show it¹⁰, one of the most comprehensive and appropriate documents on this issue. The document, adopted in 2001, under the title For a European Language *Policy*, explicitly situates the policy within the European context of 1+2 (mother tongue plus two other foreign languages), underlining the skills required (communication skills. intercultural communication skills etc.) in order to form European citizens, presenting the infrastructure used. The foreign language

cultural and linguistic diversity for a "unity in diversity".

⁸ UNESCO document, *Everyday Multilingualism*, Proceedings of the International Conference at the University of Applied Sciences, 13-15 June 2008, Eisenstadt, Burgenland, www.unesco.at/news/ conference_report.pdf, 29/01/2011.

⁹ Angela Chambers, University of Limerick, Ireland, *Language policy in higher education in Europe: a pilot survey*, www.userpage.fu-berlin.de, 12/01/2011.

¹⁰ See the ENLU's (European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning among All Undergraduates) document *Benchmarks for a Higher Education Language Policy*, at www.userpage.fuberlin.de/~**enlu**/downloads/TF1_report_final.rtf, 29/01/2011. See also Angela Chambers, *op.cit*.

course culminates in the examination of the students' linguistic knowledge, in accordance with the *Common European Framework for Languages*, and in the issuance of language certificates.

It is difficult to find other clearly stated language policies in the universities across Europe, as the great majority probably does not have a single document, but several other documents, which may be "very unspecific"¹¹.

6. INTERCULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION AT BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

Babeş-Bolyai is promoted as a multilingual and multicultural institution of higher education. This is supported by the fact that our university is situated in a multicultural and multilingual area, where Romanians, Hungarians and Germans live. The university tried to respect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population in the area.

Therefore, the multicultural character of our university is supported by the fact that its students, teaching and administrative staff are Romanian, Hungarian, German and Roma. Moreover, the university has set up "lines of study" with different languages of instruction. As such, "15 of our 21 faculties provide both a Romanian and a Hungarian curriculum, and 9 of them provide both a Romanian and a German curriculum. There are also two faculties (the Faculty of Reformed Theology and the Faculty of Roman-Catholic Theology) which provide courses in Hungarian only"¹².

According to the official data, published on the university's website, the university offered, for the academic year 2010-2011, a large number of specialisation at bachelor and master's level, in Romanian, Hungarian, German, English, French, Italian and Spanish languages¹³. Usually, the Hungarian and German specializations are attended by students who have Hungarian or German as mother-tongue or who are fluent in these languages. While for the programmes in the other above-mentioned languages, courses are attended by non-native speakers; therefore, the courses taught in one of these languages are usually considered CLIL classes. Professors teaching CLIL classes are either native speakers of the respective languages or nonnative speakers and in this case they have to make proof of their fluency in the language.

Moreover, the University encourages students to familiarise with the culture of country whose language they are learning, by participating in language courses organised by the cultural centres functioning within it¹⁴. This way, students can are better endowed with intercultural and plurilingual competences.

BBU is strongly committed to implement the EU recommendation regarding the learning of at least two languages other than the mother tongue; that is why, in most faculties, they are obliged to choose at least one foreign language as part of their study programme. Many of them also choose a second foreign language as an optional subject.

In 2006, five years after the adoption of the first document on languages and cultural diversity in our university, the BBU Senate adopted the "Hotărâre privind reactualizarea politicii lingvistice a Universității Babeş-Bolyai" [translated "Resolution for updating BBU's language policy, Oltean 2009: 93], which strengthened the position adopted by our university in what regards languages and cultural diversity.

Therefore, the Senate adopted the document which provided that two foreign languages had to be studied for at least three

¹¹ See *Higher Education Language Policy in Europe: A Snapshot of Action and Trends*, www.userpage.fuberlin.de, 25/01/2011.

¹² For more details, please visit the official website of the university, available at www.ubbcluj.ro.

¹³ According to the official data published on the university's website, for the academic year 2010-2011, at bachelor level there were 104 specialisations in

Romanian, 55 in Hungarian, 13 in German, 8 in English and 1 in French. At master's level, the university offered 179 courses in Romanian, 36 in Hungarian, 7 in German, 34 in English, 11 in French, 3 in Italian and 3 in Spanish. Data are available at http://www.ubbcluj.ro/en/programe_academice.

¹⁴ Italian Cultural Centre, Austrian Cultural Centre, French Cultural Centre, Polish Cultural Centre, American Cultural Centre, German Cultural Centre, Korean Cultural Centre, the Institute for Turcology or the Confucius Institute.

semesters; that the first modern language studied had to be one of the six languages that are studied in the Romanian schools (i.e. English, French, German, Italian, Spanish or Russian) and the level of knowledge had to be the equivalent of B2 of the CEFR (at least 20 points out of 30, obtained at the language proficiency certificates issued by one of the two language centres); the second modern language was any other foreign language, including the non-European languages, while proficiency in this language had to be of at least 15 points (the equivalent of B1 according to the CEFR).

Babes-Bolvai University, through its International Cooperation, Centre for coordinates and supports the different forms of international cooperation. It develops, promotes and implements, under the close supervision of its Director and of the Vicerector in charge of international relations, the internationalisation strategy of BBU by coordinating and managing the students', teachers' and researchers' exchanges through (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci. LLPs Grundtvig, Comenius, Tempus etc.).

7. CONCLUSIONS

Language policy and language planning in higher education represent a much debated topic in the last decade. The resolutions, conclusions and communications issued by the EU institutions are mere recommendations made to guideline the member states in drafting a language policy for their own citizens, relying therefore on the *principle of subsidiarity*¹⁵. The national economy can also be better supported if graduates are prepared for the job market with better language skills. Let us remember the words of Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of the old Federal Republic of Germany, who once said: "If I'm selling to you, I speak your language. If I'm buying, dann muessen Sie Deutsch sprechen [then you must speak German]."

Therefore, universities have to take, along with the states, the responsibility of implementing the resolutions, conclusions and communications issued by the EU institutions in what language learning and teaching are concerned in order to create citizens that are able to work in the knowledge-based society.

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¹⁵ "The subsidiarity principle pursues two opposing aims. On the one hand, it allows the Community to act if a problem cannot be adequately settled by the Member States acting on their own. On the other, it seeks to uphold the authority of the Member States in those areas that cannot be dealt with more effectively by Community action. The purpose of including this principle in the European Treaties is to bring decisionmaking within the Community as close to the citizen as possible". For more details see the European Parliament fact sheets detailing the "principle of subsidiarity" at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/1_2_2_en.htm , 04/04/2011.

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