

Immunization of Didactics of National Languages in Central Europe

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Abstract

This article proposes to analyze the basis of national educational policy in the context of postmodern culture. First, I would like to indicate the dependence of educational policy on the decisions of economists. My thesis is, that in the era of globalization the educational impact of national language should be protected. The aggressive dominance of English in the cultural space requires reform in teaching of national languages, especially in Slavic Europe. Therefore, I propose my own project of comparative research on education of national languages in Central Europe. The main thesis of the paper talks about the need for immunization of national educational discourses. One of the methodologies useful here, that can liberate the power of indigenous languages, is the poetically recognized theory of affordance (J.J. Gibson). Finally, I would like to invite you to create an international research consortium.

Key words: education, language, politics, immunization, experience.

1. Education and Politics

In European countries, the organization of teaching the national language is regulated by law. However, the form of this organization is not often discussed from the political perspective. We would like to believe that such a law (in Poland it is Core curriculum) is the result of collaboration of experts of pedagogy, methodology, literature, linguistic and cultural studies. So, in this curriculum we want to see an independent and deeply humanistic educational project as well as to encourage the development of children and youth.

Therefore, the analysis of methods of teaching the national language, analysis made from the political perspective can be considered to be too ad hoc and too remote from academic discourse or the paradigms of humanities. But I think that the view of the role of national languages separated from diagnosis of liquid modernity doesn't allow us to explicate the weakening nation-making function of school in the conditions of globalization. "Political correctness" of scientists studying the state of education cannot adequately represent and explicate manifestations and effects of universal economization of the education process. Moreover, in recent years in the European Union the defense of the status of national languages is not popular, because it can lead to negatively evaluated, nationalistic attitudes.

The European Parliament looks obviously reluctant to "normative isomorphism of the language, people and nation", which is realized most fully in Poland and ten neighboring Central European countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary). Thomas Kamussela emphasizes that the treatment of the national language in these countries, until recently, was identical to an uncritical idolatry. This attitude was associated with a romantic need to sacrifice. With the same attitude the Poles were entering the EU in 2004 (Kamussela 2012, p. 208). But the question is, whether such attitudes still prevail? It seems that the ten years of the Polish presence in the UE has changed very much in terms of attitudes towards national language and its ability to set standards for the community. Political correctness of authorities presently governing the Polish education, orders to organize teaching Polish by the declaration of the EU, but it does not encourage asking about the basis for such actions. Acceptance of the initial assumptions does not encourage discussing the question whether the Polish language lessons do teach the indigenous language and culture, or just passively watch the disappearance of linguistic competence of students. It seems that a Polish teacher must nowadays diligently measure in the matriculation growing inadequate use of their student's mother tongue.

This civic passivity is used by successive governments, treating Polish language education and its social capital as one more fully subordinate branch of production, culture and economy, which can be used in political marketing. Therefore, discussions running among educators relate only to the matters of secondary importance and they are limited by assumptions pre-defined by economists and politicians. These principles include principal for the EU educational policy recommendations for the percentage of students and graduates in the annals, or the mobility of young people and their multilingualism. The principle of subordination of educational policy decisions and forecasts of the World Bank was described by Eugenia Potulicka in last year's *Polonistyka* (Potulicka 2013). Her diagnosis clearly indicate, that Polish teachers are left only with internal educational problems, that relate to forms of examination, following scoring system reforms, a set of readings, the number of hours of the subject, the theory of language, literature, interpretation methods - but only those, that are easy to use in the test system of education.

Concentration of attention of the scientific community on modifications inside the systems does not allow talking about education as a long-term Polish teaching, such as daily education of five million Poles in specific cultural behaviors. Focusing only on the construction of the tests, we forget about styles of thinking, about the production of identity in the course of naturalization of the specific cultural behavior, allowing treating the native language as the assimilation of economic value. That is why there is no space for imagination and experience of the greatest writers and scientists on Polish lessons. This phenomenon is a consequence of the fixed belief in the economic dimension of all knowledge, including knowledge about literature. The Polish language teaching is done as an element of curriculum which puts literature, humanism and universal humanity in the process of global economic production. For almost ten years the education system in Poland (through its structure - now corrected) allowed to buy online the Polish language presentation of Matura exam.

Today, the only effective ways of motivating students to read is to show them, that the text may appear on an examination. So, we see that the students in the classroom, learning their mother tongue, accept the supreme position of neo-liberal economics. Polish learning model, as part of the mechanism for obtaining points in final exams, mass produces in pupils and students the attitude of consumers, and produces customers of specific institutions or profit-oriented corporations. This model of Polish lessons educates consumers and followers chosen by economist vision of life style and conduct.

Tadeusz Zgółka at the Congress of Polish Language in 2011 clearly emphasized that excessive rank of English, in Polish schools and universities still increasing in its importance at the expense of the national language, cannot be unnoticed, since it might lead to serious neglect of civilization (Zgółka 2011). Economists and politicians have known for a long time, that Polish language lessons (and the teaching of the national language in each country) strongly and massively intervenes in the social structure by extensive educational, linguistic, narrative influence. In contrast, humanists do not discuss enough its possible social impact. They left overall vision of the effectiveness of education of Polish Language to be formulated by ministerial institutions, which should mainly deal with the administration and supervision of the educational process. Therefore, the founding the responsibility in social interaction by the teaching of the national language, requires today the discussion about teaching language from new position, from not only a narrowly linguistic or literary point of view. So, we need international debate over the position of our national language, going down to a secondary role in education in schools.

Research on the role of the national language should reveal a variety of political and economic attempts to use this education for political, particularistic goals. As a result, such research will show in educational projects the various forms of bio politics, which Roberto Esposito warns against. The philosopher describes this problem as the form of liberal eugenics, which "intervenes in social practices, deregulating and normativising practices of communities." (Burzyk, Sawczyński 2013, p. 25).

2. Liberate the power of language - immunization of national education

Increasingly, we hear from sociologists and cultural theorists that contemporary globalization does not depend on the homogenization of cultures (Morley, 2011). This means that we don't need to prepare our young people towards the homogenization of cultures, languages, world and views. The case is also important for the specific educational topics here. Particularly, because the lessons of national language have a great impact on formatting a style of thinking of younger generations. At present, from the perspective of the existing core curriculum, Polish language is a subject deliberately constructed so that the educational process could avoid as much as possible the binding of the language and culture with a particular place, space, experience.

The core curriculum of teaching Polish language and Polish culture is treated as the way to develop competence of universal, common culture, where the competence of the expression in Polish is only important, when it is socially functional and it reproduces competence taught in English from the earliest classes (Podstawa programowa 2009).

The researchers of contemporary didactics for several years have warned against rising instrumental treatment of the Polish language in school teaching. Every day at school there is no personalization of education. The competence of Polish language is reduced to the level of functionality and simplified classification of cultural texts, but this competence does not target on interpretations which strengthen the student's individuality and their cultural roots in the region (Janus-Sitarz, 2009, Pieniążek 2013). In this way, the Polish lessons become the fields managed by Technoscience, or else Science-Technology-Society (STS).

Therefore, we clearly see the need for an independent and broader research on feedback between education and society, between management style of teaching Polish literature and social science technology (Binczyk 2012). What is needed here is an extensive reflection about values and axiology implemented under only such school teaching management. This is important especially in the scope of specifying the mentality and identity of the mass-produced in schools "small actors" of the global media and economic networks (Latour, 2010). The rank of the mother tongue for several years has been reduced to simple functions supporting the smooth functioning of the liberal state integrated into the structure of the Union. The EU wants its citizens to have basic skills in speaking, writing and reading of simple texts both in their own language, as well as in the current lingua franca, which is English.

It is true, as in the conclusions of the 2011 Congress of Polish Danuta Ulicka wrote (Ulicka 2011), "danger monolanguage (global Englishness) is not in the same degree of risk for the variety of knowledge", but the problem is revealed in Poland increasingly in educational development of mentality, still intensely colonized by western social technology. The indicated issue requires urgent research. Literature about contemporary didactics is plenty of comments about poorly educated individual students' competence, especially ways to call them, precisely describing their own place in the culture. A high school diploma of Polish language is obtained by more than 95% of baccalaureate candidates, because in order to earn it, they must to write simply test and (without a special involvement and knowledge) only a short text consist of 250 words.

Without emphasis on such qualities in learning Polish as identity, rootedness, the memory of their own biography and a biography of the family, the community of children and young people are regularly deprived of deep relationships with their own language and cultural space. Students are massively exploited for the production of a specific social product of flattened axiological scale. Today's high school graduates are the product of free market economy and state policy that promote massive investments in English but at the same time the native language is treated as a secondary space of simple social competence, whose main aim is to stimulate technological entrepreneurship. Education has become a field of manufacturing of a special type of personality, which in the absence of another model, is willing to choose such a school, which promotes neoliberal lifestyle and such practices in the cultural universe. In short, the Polish state, through its own education in its current form produces a mass of individuals which have difficulty communicating in their native language, but they see their big chance in the English language products and such media offers.

3. Immunization of cultures for deeper dialogue of differences

In this situation it is worth asking whether in the regulations of the ministry of education can be found any indication of the need to immunize, protect and strengthen of what is human in the highest degree, because it is possible to call most accurately only in the native language. Linguistic practices of native cultures are also lively and direct expression of their emotions, needs and relationships. But now these practices are moving into the denationalizing area of English, so national cultural practices are moving into specific cultural non-places (the term of M. Augé). Indicated above considerations of Polish studies education show that the moving of the cultural center outside the functionality and decision-making, in Poland has lasted for several years. So, I think this issue is worth examining in the context of a similar situation in neighboring Central European countries.

The planned study will concern the duration and safety of cultures such as Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian, and will examine the conditions of the power of organizing communities through national languages. Our languages are incomparably less expensive than English and our communities have smaller number of users.

But this approach will not have dimension narrowly national, nationalistic reaction to the phenomenon of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2006). It will be rather an indication of the natural reaction of the body of the community, defending its integrity and vitality from excessive deconstruction and violence by outside influences (Škrabec, 2013). At this point it is worth noting that the myths inscribed in most national anthems of the Slavs (indicating the special and Arcadian characteristics of our homelands, their special mission in the context of the European powers and the culture of consumption (Kiss 2009, p. 106)), today are probably not able to convince neither involve the young generation. It seems that there is an urgent need of new own myths, and more precisely - attractive cultural scenarios, as inspiring as made to order by western economies in Hollywood, which in the native languages will be able to reveal and activate that, what most stimulates attention and commitment present-day Polish or Slovene, and will also allow them to dialogue on the future of Europe.

At the same concept of the poor identity of the Central Europe, it's still unstable status (Zenderowski 2010, p. 56-60), we see as a presupposition of contemporary global cultural situation which Roberto Esposito describes in terms of a community built on axiological emptiness. Contemporary communities, if they want to avoid ideological determinations, must arise in response to the lack of meaning, a lack of sense a priori or as a result of technological regulations. Currently, the community turns out to be the boundary "between the general destruction of meaning and necessity that each separate event, every shred of existence carries in themselves their sense" (Esposito 2013, p. 52).

In the transition between excess mindless consumption, identity building for sale, participation in the shallow political and economic games and on the other side the need to comply and fulfill one's biography with value of individual experience I see a special role for the creative power of the national languages and the meaning of its intense teaching and practice. The community and its members, have no other common ground and agreement on their own projects of identity than their own language. This language performatively produced of common sense as local acts of meaning. If other communities will be strong enough to impose their productions of sense on the Polish language, our community separated from their own language by another language, and without the institutional immunization of the own language, will no longer exist, or at least will lose the power of self-organization. The question is: how to balance the immunization and autoimmune factors so that the body of the community could effectively communicate with each other and at the same time live safely and in symbiosis with other communities.

Raised questions clearly show that in the second decade of the twenty-first century a need for further modernization of the educational discourse has been emerging, especially in the context of the mechanisms of liquid modernity. However, this should not be an indication associated with nationalism, but rather with a motivation to comparative recognition and design improved model of education. Comparative education would be "a therapy for the illness of nationalist separatism" (Hejmej 2013, p. 275), and also the path of defining the boundaries of the functionality of trans cultural vision of the community. Going back to the roots and the creative power of indigenous languages for medium and small European communities may be highly necessary. Even if in order so that in the presented and promoted as an inevitable intercultural dialogue was still something to talk about. Because a further simplification of reality and mentality to the translational effectiveness of Basic English can lead to the disappearance of cultures and their final identification with the language of economics and products of global politics. (It is not difficult to note that for several years, under the influence of cultural change, the dominant political and economic trend, in Poland has been lost sensitivity to the need to fix Polish-centrist educational discourse. People massively head towards to a liquid identity, the basic patterns are global biographical narratives, where English is the primary for constructing of biographical projects and career.) Of course there is the other side of the problem, namely the question of autoimmunity: inbred population protection in the way that weakens society due the total isolation from the surrounding environment. This problem was discussed among others by Jacques Derrida after the attack on the World Trade Center, pointing to the preventive immunization, namely the building new enclaves and "small walls" against the effects of globalization. However, as Roberto Esposito says, this type of protection, i.e. strong autoimmunity, destroying the influence of the enemy can destroying itself (Campbell 2013, p. 36). The analysis of the Italian philosopher shows that the problem of excessive autoimmunity should set another important barrier to research projects initiated here.

(An important context for this issue may be, for example, cultural effects of recent policy decisions of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban).

4. Conclusions

Noting the alarming failing of the role of national languages in the functioning of communities in Poland, but maybe also in Central Europe, I believe that it worth building a special research consortium to undertake a comparative study of teaching of national languages in neighboring countries. The goal of such research would be to lay down the fundamental principles of poetics of immunization that is protection / release of the educational discourse in Slavic countries from the obligation (or rather economic pressure) of the RE-production of culture which is structured by global English.

Poetics of immunization, as a way of self-control shaping of experience by a community, shaping the narrative of identity with the help of their own language (and minority languages and dialects), could be used to build a real foundation for policultural, not mono language intercultural dialogue. Educational poetic of immunization would be help to call, create and animate in communities what is their own, with an emphasis on absolute difference and untranslatability of their historical, geopolitical and landscape experiences. Poetic of immunization would also protect the national culture against total loss of the ability to influence on the shape and ways of organizing social life in a situation of growing global consumer culture (Bylok 2013, p. 122-123). In this sense, the educational project would to use of the powers and competencies of geopoetics (Rybicka 2014), consciously and deliberately linking all discursive practices and identity with the environment and bio-geographical circumstances.

It is worth paying attention to James J. Gibsons affordances, that functionalized in the process of rooting of young people in the environment may be successfully conducive to effective and authentic life in a culture, language, geographical land and its natural specificity. It's a chance to practise the language in the rhythm of the narrative of individual identities, without closing to otherness, but without weakening the roots, which are difficult to maintain among aggressive influence of liquid reality. This would be education without temporary political product placement, without ideology trying to annex and infect millions of young minds with a corporately controlled influence.

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