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LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND SOCIETY: UNITY vs DIVERSITY

It is commonly accepted that language and culture are closely intertwined. Every time you communicate with a person who speaks another language you are also interacting with the culture that speaks through this particular language. You cannot understand one's culture without accessing its language directly.

Everything is intertwined in this world. By learning another language we investigate not only the essentials of it (its grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, its laws and rules etc) but at the same time with the help of it, like it or not, we study the essentials of another culture (its customs and traditions etc).

Language is an integral part of culture. Language and culture have constantly been interacting, influencing and enriching each other. This issue is a live one discussed not only by linguists but also by anthropologists, cultural anthropologist and philosophers. For instance, F. Rossi-Landi, an Italian philosopher, whose works focused on philosophy and linguistics said that children learn their language and culture from the society they were born in.

Culture is always marked by language. It is the language that marks the cultural identity of the nation. Culture is made up of common values, events, identities, feelings, beliefs and attitudes shared by one ethnic group or groups that may comprise the whole nation. By studying the language we usually study culture, but is it possible to state that by studying culture we can study the only one language? This issue is quite disputable. Here we face with such concepts as inter-cultural interactions and multiculturalism within a single society.

In a society where it is possible to find various ethnic groups living very close to each other, be they large or small, we face with inter-cultural interactions. They may speak one and the same language or its dialects, share the same or similar cultural values.

The diversity in a language may be caused by dialects of different kinds such as geographical, social based on occupation, gender and age, functional etc. The diversity in culture may be caused not only by various geo position or historic events of the past but also by various languages spoken by people in different parts of the country. Anyway, there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures, the focus lies on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships.

At the same time we should not confuse concepts of inter-cultural and multicultural societies. Multicultural refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups. People live very close to one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other. These cultural groups usually use their own specific language. If in a society there are several specific cultural groups, does it mean that each of them use only their specific languages and these languages could be quite different? Or they have to speak the so called state language to be understood and unite their efforts to be integrated into the society?

Thus, we come to the situation when in a country we find so called multilingualistic communities or ethnic groups that communicate in more than one language.

One can find many examples of multicultural and multilingualistic co-existence in European community. The governments refer with a great deal of respect to the right of their citizens to use their mother tongue. They proudly speak of their cultural and language diversity thus calling other countries for implementing such experience wherever possible.

It is quite possible to see in a decade in some European countries the fact of implementing Turkish or Farsi as the second state languages. It could be as usual to hear these languages spoken at the Parliament sessions in France, Austria or Germany as nowadays we see mosques on the streets of Paris, Vienne or Berlin. The immigrants have brought their language with their culture to their new homeland and they do not ask but demand to use it freely everywhere from the streetmarket to the parliament, from kindergarten to university. The European Union respecting this natural right will definitely approve it. This complex relationship may be the point of non-return when it is quite possible to lose one's own hereditary uniqueness.

The might of the nation always lies in the culture-language diversity holding on to their ancestral culture and respecting each other. Our unity is our diversity.

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