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**THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION RELATING TO THE MAINTENANCE OF
ETHNIC IDENTITY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS
IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES***

Introduction

I note, after a long period of attentive interest and after having read the series of reports issued by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI/CD(81)1, CERI/CD(82)5 and CERI/ECALP/84.02), that progress is slow in elucidating the concepts embodied in the above title. They may be understood in various ways - the notion of culture being a good example. Does a universally accepted definition of the word exist? In the report CERI/ECALP/84.02, we find that culture is "...an instrumental reality, an apparatus allowing the satisfaction of fundamental needs, i.e., organic survival, adjustment to the environment and continuity in the biological sense" (after B. Malinowsky). It is a starting point, as this other somewhat similar definition, taken from Linton, shows: "Culture is the configuration of acquired behaviour and of the results of human activity whose elements are transmitted and shared by the members of a particular group" (Verdoodt, 1977, p.10). The difficulties arise when one tries to apply one of the definitions to real situations. At what point do acquired behaviour and the results of human activity in a given society differ enough to enable two or more cultures to be distinguished? The dividing lines are as vague as those between language and dialect (Verdoodt, 1977, p.9).

Listening to earlier contributions convinces me that authors too often assume that two cultures imply two languages. Nobody appears to imagine that this is not necessarily so. There can be two very different languages used in a single region to express one and the same culture - this is notably the case of Finnish and Swedish in Finland, and it is very likely the case of English and French in Canada. This would explain why no major problem arises for English-speaking children in the French-speaking school system. Conversely, a single language - French, say - can be found in several different cultures. Who would dare argue that the use of French is everywhere tied to a single culture? This is why I say that there is no necessary link between the multicultural and the multilingual, even though they often go together. We have the examples, in Canada, of the Inuits (Eskimos) vis-à-vis the English- and French-speaking inhabitants and, in Finland, the Samis (Laplanders) vis-à-vis the Finnish and Swedish language groups. An Arabic or Turkish speaking group of migrants may even found a culture in their host country which is significantly different from the culture of their homeland, even though they continue to use their own language.

* Original: English

Having made these points, I shall go on to the broader theoretical issue with which this paper is concerned, namely, the factors involved in the preservation of identity.

Linguistic Theories

This would normally be the place to mention the research done on contact between languages, but this would not help us very much. Most linguists tend to consider the contact between two languages as nothing more than a reflection of the interaction between two clearly distinct groups, rather than as a structure internalized by one and the same group. Modern linguists thus generally enquire which lexical, grammatical or phonetic structures of language A have interacted with those of language B (Mikes, 1965). I perceive a new trend, however. Some linguists now believe that a bilingual person may possess a single system containing two or more registers (Van Overbeke, 1976). They therefore study a bilingual person's grammar as they would that of a unilingual subject. In the light of this, linguistics - differential or contrasting linguistics, in particular - may possibly take a turn towards closer respect of social reality.

Psychological and Neurological Theories

Most of these theories, when they deal with bilingualism, concern the pace of the bilingual subject's intellectual development and the ease with which the person expresses himself in two or more languages. The rate of mental development, however, and the degree of ease in expression are usually measured in artificial situations. Certain studies show a positive relationship between bilingualism and the rate of development (Cummins, 1985, p.8). Other, usually earlier, research discovers a negative relation (International Conference on Bilingualism and Education, 1928). Yet other investigations fail to find any connection. These contradictory findings are doubtless due to the tendency of many psychologists to neglect the social class or background of their subjects and, particularly, the circumstances in which they use language A rather than language B, while, contrarily, quite a number of psychologists put forward the idea of interlingual equilibrium - a bilingual subject who has a good command of both his languages is known as a balanced bilingual or as equilingual. This concept of individual equilingualism does not seem to me a very useful one, for the following reason: bilingualism, which usually results from social norms, can survive in stable fashion in most individuals only if each language serves a separate function. Any society which aimed at producing bilingual persons capable of expressing themselves on any matter just as well in language A as in language B would soon cease turning them out. In reality, no society requires two languages for expressing the same set of functions. This does not stop certain persons from wanting to become or remain equilingual - interpreters, for example. Nor does it stop linguistic groups demanding and obtaining equal treatment for their languages on a regional (Europe) or national (Yugoslavia) scale, or even economic and political equality. But the fact remains that the people of the region or country express themselves better and more fluently in their own language A than in languages B or C.

Sociological Theories

To say the least, sociology has not shown much interest in the use of language in a given context. The work of Fishman and a few others is an exception. Sociologists generally work from large-scale quick samplings, and their studies are often studded with self-evaluated data (language surveys) or statistical analyses of very broad categories (English-speakers, German-speakers, etc.). Methodological problems to do with the frequent differences between self-evaluation and social reality tend to be overlooked (Khubchandani, 1974).

Recently, however, the sociology of language has taken on new stature and has uncovered a certain number of fundamental theoretical concepts. We shall consider at least five of these.

- **Sociolinguistic Situations.** These "situations," or life areas, are sociological constructs derived from a careful study and analysis of clearly favourable circumstances. All role relationships (or recognised systems of mutual rights and obligations existing among members of the same sociocultural group) need a suitable location and socially determined time in order to function. "Lovers generally need the right place and the right moment" (Fishman, 1971, p.61). When the three factors (role, place and time) coincide in the desired way for the type of culture concerned, this gives a "favourable situation." Thus, when it is seen that language A establishes contact between teachers and pupils in classrooms and corridors, etc., for as long as the contact involves educational techniques and specialities, it may be surmised that all of these situations belong to a single field, namely, schooling. When, moreover, the observers claim that language A is suitable for every imaginable situation in the field of schooling but is unsuitable for situations belonging to a different field - for example, family or neighbourhood - a clear link is established between language A and a particular life field. One fact seems beyond dispute: in any society, languages or dialects can exist side by side, but they are used for certain fields rather than others. This can be remarked even in Iceland, where English (as, formerly, Danish) is regularly used in certain situations.

- **Diglossia.** This term designates the possession of two or more complementary, non-conflicting languages (or dialects, or a language and a dialect) used for communicating within a single group. Diglossia exists when some functions are usually carried out in language A and others in one or more other languages. It is thus a sociological notion, as distinct from bilingualism, which is a personal aptitude. When the aptitude of bilingualism is widespread in a given society, it may or may not coexist alongside diglossia.

Diglossia without widespread bilingualism can be found, for example, in rural or recently urbanised African societies. It is a structure typical of populations where the opposite ends of the social scale cohabit and operate in separate language frames. In such cases, the bilingual (e.g., French-Kirundi) are found only in a certain élite, not in the mass of the population. This may cause or maintain social tensions.

More or less widespread individual bilingualism may exist without diglossia when, in a given social context, there is no clear answer to such questions as: When should a certain language be used? With whom? To talk about what? The case arises particularly among children in an occupied country or the children of immigrants. These children become bilingual at an early age and introduce into the home the language learned outside. Often, the habitual or mother tongue is buried and supplanted. We may note here that most psychological studies of bilingualism and school performance have been carried out in a context of bilingualism without diglossia. The latter is typified by subtractive bilingualism, even when the mother tongue (used by a social minority) is taught as a means of transition towards the target language. As a result, the handicaps brought to light by this research are often extended to all bilingualism, whereas they occur genuinely only when diglossia is absent.

Diglossia and general bilingualism exist side by side in societies where easy access may be had to the various social roles and the corresponding languages. Each generation begins by learning its habitual or mother tongue. Then, through education, it rapidly acquires one or more other languages. This occurs, for instance, in Switzerland and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where the population is trilingual (Luxembourgian, French, German), each language corresponding to precise spheres of experience. It is perhaps worth noting that both Luxembourg and Switzerland are unarguably happy and prosperous countries.

- **Linguistic Community.** Such a community exists, in our view, where the members have at least one language in common. This kind of community is not to be understood as a group of people speaking one and the same language; it is rather a community formed out of a certain "density" of communication and the possibility of mutual comprehension, even though more than one language may be involved (Gumperz, 1962). Countries where general bilingualism exists (e.g., Luxembourg) thus usually form linguistic communities, by contrast with nations characterised by diglossia without social bilingualism (e.g., Burundi). In the case of the latter, the masses are mostly unilingual, while a select few jealously conserve their knowledge of a language (French, for example) different from the popular tongue.

- **Sociolinguistic Surveys.** These are few in number. They are generally commissioned in the wake of an educational decision in order to see whether it can somehow be implemented. I have come across hardly any surveys preceding the choice of languages to be taught or used in education. These choices would benefit, however, from respecting the contexts to which they are applied. I readily admit that the post-school usefulness of a language is, in most cases, a difficult thing to measure. I have made the attempt for my own country (Verdoodt, 1981, 1982, 1983). Usually, the most one can do is to establish an "ordinal" usefulness which makes it possible to list a group's needs and preferences in a certain order. Sometimes the basic criterion is more than just usefulness (an asset for business, the diplomatic service, scientific and technical contacts, etc.), and is also cultural.

- **Ethnic Group.** After the methodological questions raised above, it is fair to ask just what the concept of ethnic group means in

present-day anthropology. At least three definitions may be quoted. The ethnic group usually represents more than the village. In most cases, it corresponds with the tribe. Even in Europe, ethnic distribution today reflects the divisions of the continent's early history. The most efficient method for determining ethnic boundaries is small-scale ethnological cartography. At the present time, several continental ethnological atlases are being prepared, the furthest advanced being the atlas of Europe. Cartography does not, however, dispense the ethnologist from thoroughly investigating the situations of which the map is but the spatial representation (de Rohan-Csermak, 1980, p.675). Another definition, which is more common in political science than in ethnology, identifies the ethnic group with the linguistic community. When not only bilinguals but also those who, by force of circumstances, have given up their language while remaining true to their origins are included in this community, we are led to a third definition, that of M. Weber (1971, p.416) quoted in document CERI/ECALP/84.02 (in French original, p.4): "We call 'ethnic' those human groups, when they do not represent 'kin' groups, that nurture a subjective belief in a common origin founded on similarities of customs or outward behaviour patterns, or both, or on memories of colonisation or migration, in such a way that this belief becomes important for ease of communication, whether or not a community of blood ties exists objectively." In view of the ambiguity of the concept of ethnic groups, I shall not be using it in the rest of my contribution.

Cultural Theories

I have already referred to these in my introduction. For them to become operative, they require an accurate inventory of a culture's most characteristic indicators and of the place of language within that culture (Smolicz, 1983).

We should at this point mention the studies made of apparently unilingual national situations (England, France) in which notable differences exist between the linguistic usage of the various classes (cf Bernstein, Bourdieu, 1970, Snyders). These differences (commonly termed "deficits" by certain authorities) between speakers of what is generally considered to be a common language may, in fact, correspond to distinct cultures (middle class and working class culture).

Economic Theories

There are no such theories concerning bilingual education. Opponents of this kind of education therefore have a clear field in front of them. A Swedish economist, however, devised a cost/benefit analysis of bilingual education (Thorburn, 1971) which I tried to adapt to French in the Americas (Verdoodt, 1976). Thornburn posits two inputs (teacher costs and pupil costs), two outputs (familiarity with a minority local language and with a more widely employed language), and seven consequences: administration of education; business and diplomacy; scientific, technical and cultural contacts; national unity; social equality; cultural development; living standards of those concerned.

This would be the right place to situate research findings on the potential for more or better paid jobs open to the bilinguals or multilinguals in any given country, but so far we have not come across any with the requisite sweep.

Political Theories

These are legion (for example, Kloss, 1962), and I myself published a work on the safeguard of human rights in multilingual States (Verdoodt, 1973). I adapted my conceptual and theoretical structure from that used during the seminar on multinational societies organised in Ljubljana in 1965 by the United Nations advisory services in the field of human rights (Mackey and Verdoodt). These are the elements which I borrowed:

A. Measures taken to safeguard human rights and the basic freedoms without discrimination.

B. Measures taken to safeguard specific rights essential for preserving separate identity:

1. The right of groups to use their language in everyday life, in courts of law, in public and in certain assemblies. I consider this right as pertaining to "sociable" objectives (Meisel and Lemieux). The German Swiss find it adequate for their regional speech.

2. The right of linguistic groups to set up or obtain independent learning establishments and to safeguard the development of their own traditions and distinctive characteristics. I consider this right as pertaining to educational objectives. It satisfies the Frisians in the Netherlands and Germany.

3. Equal economic and political treatment for the linguistic groups within a single country. I consider that this equality is obtained through the pursuit of utilitarian objectives by the linguistic groups. This seems to be the case with Yugoslavia.

4. Freedom of association irrespective of national frontiers. Linguistic groups exercise this freedom by pursuing external objectives, not usually political in nature. This is the case with Slovenians in Italy with respect to Slovenia.

5. The right to secede. It is associated with the determined pursuit of external political objectives. We find it in the case of certain political parties in Canada, and also in Switzerland, where the Jura canton split off from the canton of Berne.

I am indebted to the Quebec political economist, V. Lemieux (publication pending), for the classification of these five objectives. Lemieux also established a relation between these objectives and the structural level at which their pursuit generally creates difficulties, identifying four structural levels for this purpose. The first of these levels is that of communication, which is a simple question of transmitting messages from one point to another. Next comes co-ordination, more concerned with orders and directives, followed by representation, involving the respective numbers of

representatives of the linguistic groups on the umbrella directorial bodies, their relative influence and representativeness. Finally, we arrive at the "plenary" level, association, where groups unite more or less completely in one or two national organisations. Lemieux then situates the levels at which particular problems occur. They can be shown as follows:

Objectives Pursued	Relations resulting from these objectives	Levels at which problems occur
1. "SOCIALABLE" (everyday life)	Few	COMMUNICATION (ASSOCIATION)
2. EDUCATIONAL	Few	COMMUNICATION CO-ORDINATION ASSOCIATION
3. ECONOMIC/POLITICAL ("utilitarian")	Many	COMMUNICATION
4. EXTERNAL, NON-POLITICAL	Many	-
5. EXTERNAL, POLITICAL	Many	COMMUNICATION CO-ORDINATION REPRESENTATION ASSOCIATION

In short, those who pursue "sociable" objectives do not ordinarily encounter difficulties except in communication, whereas those who pursue external political objectives are inevitably embroiled in conflict at the highest and most important level, that of association itself. I am therefore inclined to conclude with Lemieux that:

(a) It is important that linguistic groups establish the type of relational structures among themselves that match the objectives pursued. For example, a fairly loose type of co-ordination could be imagined where educational objectives (if these are markedly different) are being pursued, whereas a tighter form of co-ordination could be envisaged in the case of economic/political objectives (if they are closely related).

(b) When one of the groups modifies its objectives, the relational modes must be altered accordingly. If, for example, the external, non-political objectives take on more importance than the common utilitarian objectives, the mode of association must be loosened, while leaving the possibility open of retightening it if the common utilitarian objectives once again come to the fore.

(c) The most important thing to remember is that, when a problem arises at a low structural level, the solution must generally be sought at a higher structural level. According to Lemieux, these levels extend from communication at the bottom to association, where the solution frequently lies, at the top. It is thus a mistake to try to remedy every problem at the level of the language of communication, since, in many cases, the trouble is one of co-ordination, representation, or association itself.

As for the best way to protect the rights of linguistic groups, my personal research leads me to prefer favourable national

custom to national or regional law, and the latter to international law.

Favourable national custom, as it exists in Switzerland, for example - at least as far as the traditional languages of the country are concerned - is a sure sign that the majority (e.g., the German-speaking majority in Switzerland) is swayed by its convictions rather than by externally imposed legal obligations. As I can see it, these convictions, particularly when held by the majority group, are a vital - though often inadequate - ingredient in the respect of linguistic rights. In this connection, here is a short excerpt from the speech delivered on 15th July 1937 by the Swiss Chairman, Mr. Calonder, at the solemn closing session of the Joint (German-Polish) Commission for Upper Silesia:

"I shall sum up the above-mentioned practical experiments by stating my deeply-held conviction that nothing, not even the most precisely defined contractual stipulations, can take the place of the determining and essential moral factor, that is to say, goodwill and collaboration in a spirit of reconciliation, when it comes to protecting minorities" (Kaeckenbeek, 1942, p.851).

This spirit is the fruit of education, in the broadest sense of both training in schools and spiritual communities and ongoing training using all the modern techniques of communication. In the matter of national as against international law, my position is no different from that of most jurists, who consider that the protection of human rights by international instruments must always come second to protection at the national level; the internal possibilities of redress must be exhausted before any appeal is made to supranational organisations.

This is not to say that international pressure and treaties serve no purpose. The fact remains that the problems posed by aggrieved linguistic groups have always formed a threat to world peace, as testified by two European examples: that of Cyprus - the source of war between Greece and Turkey - and that of the Aaland Islands - which, at an earlier date, brought Sweden and Finland to the verge of armed conflict. The League of Nations took little time to find a satisfactory solution for the Aaland Islands (Verdoodt, 1973, pp.97-101), but the same cannot be said for the United Nations which has maintained a peace-keeping and police force of thousands of men on Cyprus for decades without any solution being in sight.

Educational Considerations

It may come as a surprise that these constitute the conclusion rather than the central framework of this paper. The justification for this procedure is that education has unlimited potential, which flows from all that has been said above. It may even be said that "cultural claims ... do not necessarily include the involvement of the school. And in a number of cases, especially with regional features, it would not be very difficult to show that the pressures on the school are stronger where the regional ... language [is] already dead or nearly so" (CERI/ECALP/84.02, p.19, para. 60). This is to say that

education, and more especially language learning, are inconceivable outside of or in opposition to the linguistic community in which they operate. If we assume that certain linguistic communities are bi- or multilingual (and, preferably, diglossic), it will be these communities that determine either spontaneously or by law in which fields their two or more languages are employed, in education particularly. Educationists may well wish to change the pattern of language use. If so, they should prelude their effort with an information campaign to win over public opinion because, otherwise, they will have no guarantee that their teaching will succeed.

The quantity of work dealing with education leads me to divide the field into five subtopics:

- **The Local Community.** In a bi- or multilingual country, the educational programme does not necessarily have to be decided in the capital city. Its main outlines may be democratically determined at the government level, but its execution is impossible to imagine without the mobilisation of each local community. It is not simply a matter of involving the parents - they have a strong tendency to back teaching of the dominant language. Other active members of the local community, living alone or still unmarried, must also be involved. Lastly, in communities where diglossia exists without general bilingualism, it will be extraordinarily difficult to get representatives of the opposite extremes of the local social hierarchy to meet regularly in a hall or around a table but, I believe, success in education is worth this effort.

- **Preliminary Empirical Research.** When such research is contemplated, linguists and psychologists are often the only persons approached. They naturally have this role to play, but sociologists should also be consulted, as their help is vital in defining the local linguistic and social landscape, particularly the place held by dialects. Will they be included or, at least, admitted in education? A large number of choices depend on the answer to this question, notably teacher training with respect to the dialects, and local teaching materials. These problems recur in connection with evaluation. I am reasonable certain that refusal to take account of linguistic variety and/or local variants is the cause of significantly slower learning and of many dropouts (Labov, 1978).

- **Teachers.** Teachers are obviously the cornerstone of any educational programme in a bilingual situation. They are entitled to special training, one of whose aims is to teach linguistic tolerance and to avoid establishing incommunicability. Language separation is always difficult to achieve in primary education and even, because of the small number of pupils involved, at secondary level. Everything is to be gained, therefore, by training teachers who are living examples of bilingualism (or, in some cases, of biculturalism).

- **The Curriculum.** Many authors today call for a form of education in which pupils have some lessons in one language and others in another language, not including lessons specifically devoted to the languages themselves. Some schools in Yugoslavia - notably the one in Lendava/Lendva in Slovenia - go even further, since

they regularly skip from one language (Slovenian) to another (Hungarian) in the course of the same lesson. Of course, a wide range of intermediate solutions can be imagined (Gaarder). Some curricula provide for separate classes for school beginners who are weak in the second language. Most experts feel, however, that it is contrary to the principles of understanding, tolerance and friendliness in a bilingual (or, it may be, bicultural) society to organize completely separate schools from kindergarten through to university.

Too few syllabuses, to my way of thinking, include classes on the attitudes (local, regional, national) that the languages under study, the people who speak them, and bilingualism (or bi- and multiculturalism in general) provoke. They too rarely include specific and well-documented courses on the individual advantages of bilingualism (advancement in trade, industry and administration) and the collective advantages (open-mindedness, culture, preservation of identity).

- **Evaluation.** It is important to carry out regular, accurate assessments of the progress made towards stated objectives. Linguistic and psychological tests are usually applied to this effect. But, as the issue involves more than the individual, these are not enough. Our conclusion, then, is: it is important regularly to take stock with the local community or, if it is too big, with delegates who represent it.

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