

heteroglossia

Dossiers e Strumenti



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Heteroglossia - Dossier e Strumenti

Costruire la ricerca tra lavori in corso e opere di riferimento:

I dottorandi incontrano gli autori del *Précis du Plurilinguisme et du Pluriculturalisme*
(Zarate, Lévy, Kramsch)

Atti del seminario dottorale in Politica, Educazione, Formazione Linguistico-Culturali (P.E.F.Li.C.) 25-26 Marzo 2010

a cura di Danielle Lévy e Mathilde Anquetil

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Ludovica Briscese

Egemonia dell'inglese nelle politiche linguistiche vs problemi e paradossi nell'insegnamento di una lingua "universale"

It is precisely the status of English as a lingua franca that creates a myriad of opportunities for learning about language awareness and intercultural communication.

B. Seidlhofer

L'inglese è una lingua che non si ama. Si usa.

S.B. Flexner

Introduzione

Il presente articolo nasce in seguito ad un intervento della sottoscritta, effettuato durante il seminario internazionale, tenutosi il 25 marzo 2010, presso l'Università degli Studi di Macerata, dal titolo "*Précis du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme: nuovi riferimenti per la didattica delle lingue? De nouvelles références pour un questionnement en didactique des langues*". Gli incontri sono stati impostati sotto forma di dialogo e scambio di idee, con interventi e domande da parte delle dottorande PEFLiC, e risposte e spunti di riflessione da parte delle docenti dell'Università di Macerata e da esperte legate a tale dottorato per le tematiche trattate.

Le riflessioni scaturiscono dalla lettura di quello che oggi si può considerare, nel campo della didattica delle lingue e dell'interculturalità, un punto di riferimento riconosciuto, il *Précis du Plurilinguisme et du Pluriculturalisme*¹. Nello specifico questo

¹ Kramsch C., Lévy D., Zarate G. (éds.), *Précis du Plurilinguisme et du Pluriculturalisme*, Paris, Editions des Archives Contemporaines, 2008.

articolo si focalizza sui capitoli 7, “Institutions et Pouvoir”² e 8, “Histoire, Pratiques et Modèles”³ del sopra citato *Précis*. Il capitolo 7 è stato preso in considerazione per quanto riguarda il ruolo dello stato, delle istituzioni e del potere più in generale, nell’educazione linguistica; la mondializzazione dell’inglese e i paradossi linguistici che ne derivano, infine il ruolo assunto dall’inglese negli ultimi anni come lingua veicolare, soprattutto nei Paesi asiatici. Per quanto riguarda il capitolo 8, ci si è concentrati sul mito-desiderio-paura di ottenere una lingua universale vs la varietà delle lingue; il superamento della “maledizione di Babele” e il ruolo che la Storia gioca nell’apprendimento/insegnamento delle lingue straniere e dell’inglese in particolare.

Tali riflessioni vanno considerate come un *work in progress*, da inserire all’interno del discorso più ampio della tesi di dottorato della sottoscritta, dal titolo provvisorio “Dal monolinguisimo nazionale al mono- plurilinguisimo europeo: ruolo dell’inglese, New Englishes e formazione dei docenti di inglese come lingua ‘straniera’ in Italia”. I temi analizzati sono esplicitati brevemente nel corso dell’intervento.

Essendo la tesi di dottorato una ricerca in continua evoluzione, nell’arco di questi mesi sono stati apportati lievi cambiamenti rispetto alla versione fornita nel mese di marzo⁴, ma fondamentalmente le tematiche trattate e l’ordine dei contenuti sono rimasti invariati. I cambiamenti apportati saranno segnalati in nota.

L’intervento è stato esposto in inglese con citazioni in francese, lingua originale della prima pubblicazione del *Précis*. Di conseguenza, anche la trasposizione che segue è proposta in queste due lingue.

² Ivi, pp. 329-377.

³ Ivi, pp. 379-433.

⁴ Il presente articolo, infatti, è stato elaborato nel mese di agosto 2010.

The role of english today

1. Issues related to English teaching and learning in Italy

I would like to present the title of my research, “From monolingualism to mono-multilingualism in Europe: the role of English, New Englishes and training of teachers of English as a ‘foreign’ language in Italy”⁵.

I feel involved in the issues I am going to present as I am a Secondary School teacher of English as FL⁶ in Italy. Through my job and my PhD research I have had the opportunity to deal with problems related to language teaching and in particular to English language and culture. Specifically, I considered that:

- English is taking up the role of *lingua franca*, with consequent risks and perspectives on it and on the other languages⁷;
- English teachers’ training is, in Italy, often inadequate to represent such a complex sight in which New Englishes are emerging;
- Moreover, I am wondering how English can influence our identity as Europeans, more and more divided between longing for and fearing a mono – multilingualism.

⁵ The title has been modified in the latest months. In March it appeared as follows: “From monolingualism to mono-multilingualism in Europe: the role of English and its place in the linguistic and cultural repertoire in class”. Recently I have focused more on teachers’ training and on New Englishes within an intercultural curriculum in Secondary School.

⁶ i.e. EFL= English as a Foreign Language.

⁷ See also the article by Chini D., “Statut dominant de l’anglais: à propos de quelques effets sur les représentations et l’implication affective et cognitive des élèves dans les apprentissages langagiers”, in Castellotti V. (ed.), *Les Cahiers de l’Acedle*, 7:1, “Notions en questions en didactique des langues – Les plurilinguismes”, 2010, <<http://acedle.org/spip.php?rubrique194.PDF>>, pp. 125-140>.

2. *My PhD research*

My PhD research deals with the above-named issues. The topics are developed into 4 steps⁸:

1st step: a survey among Upper Secondary School students in the Province of Ancona, in order to check their linguistic and cultural identity and their awareness of the role of English and of its varieties today.

In February-March I handed out questionnaires to the students concerning such topics, and the average answers I got reinforce my assumption that teachers do not generally promote the reflection on the above mentioned issues.

2nd step: a search, among English teachers' training courses in Italy (some of which are suspended at present⁹), to detect if courses about New Englishes, or issues such as 'English and multilingualism', 'English and Identity', have been or were activated.

3rd step: a reflection on English inserted in a multilingual, multicultural frame: interbreeding, memory, identity and the reality of New Englishes.

4th step: the research-action: I will propose a didactic approach to training, tailored for future teachers of English language/s and culture/s.

⁸ Also in this case, the order of the chapters has slightly changed, but the final content remains unaltered.

⁹ I refer specifically to SSIS courses, tailored for initial training for Italian teachers of English as a foreign language, which allowed them to work in the Italian public school.

Notes from the précis

1. “*Institutions et Pouvoir*”¹⁰

Referring to chapter 7 of the *Précis*, “*Institutions et Pouvoir*”, I would like to consider some issues somehow linked to my research: first of all the assertion, made by Lo Bianco and Veronique in the “Introduction”, that the adjective “étranger”, that is, “FOREIGN” does not seem suitable anymore to define the multilingual context we are living in. This is an illuminating point of view to start my research on language teaching and learning from:

[...] l’expression même didactique des langues étrangères ne semble plus tenable pour décrire le contexte multilingue local¹¹.

The very expansion of English in a context of globalization promoted mainly by economy, is a distinctive trait of modern multilingualism and it is not the result, as it happened for the “francophonie”, of the linguistic policy of one particular country.

L’expansion et l’extension remarquables de l’anglais aux parties les plus peuplées du monde, dans un contexte de mondialisation rapide et profonde propulsée par l’économie, est l’un des traits distinctifs du plurilinguisme contemporain. Sur certains plans, on peut comparer le phénomène à la francophonie, bien que, contrairement à celle-ci, il ne soit pas le résultat de la politique linguistique d’un pays particulier¹².

¹⁰ Kramersch C., Lévy D., Zarate G. (éds.), *Précis du Plurilinguisme et du Pluriculturalisme*, cit., pp. 329-377.

¹¹ Ivi, p. 334. See the term ‘foreign’ put in brackets also in the title of the PhD research previously mentioned, to highlight this sense of proximity English shares with our culture today.

¹² Ivi, p. 336. See also Gorlach, *Even More Englishes. Studies 1996-1997*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998, and Crystal D., *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

English as an instrumental language, especially in eastern countries, has often risen to the level of main Educational Language, regardless the fact that the roots of these countries are linked or not to a colonial British past. These assertions make us suppose that English is being perceived more like an autonomous code, BUT, willingly or not, discarded from any memory, identity, specific place, or cultural roots.

Moreover, the mondialization, deterritorialization and grafting of English, especially in Asiatic countries, is at the core of a re-thinking of the emerging of the National identity of the countries involved, as we can read in the essay titled “Mondialisation et paradoxes linguistiques: le rôle de l’anglais”, by Amy B.M. Tsui¹³. This brings with it some paradoxes: English teaching in several Asiatic countries is felt as a “national mission” to enhance them in order to enter easily in contact with the rest of the world and to be competitive in the international market. That’s why governments invest in English teaching from Primary School, legitimating the rooting of this language among their population, without fearing that this could mine their identity. This is the case of Japan:

Le sentiment national japonais est valorisé par la déconstruction de l’anglais, c’est-à-dire en traitant l’anglais comme un outil technique, tout en réaffirmant la spécificité des valeurs et qualités japonaises¹⁴.

Sometimes, however, the opposite result is conveyed: in Cambodia, in Vietnam, in Nepal and in Pakistan, paradoxically, people tend to adopt English to resist the dominant local languages imposed by the state over the minority languages.

L’apprentissage de l’anglais est lié à l’avenir économique et aux missions nationales, sans sacrifier la spécificité, la continuité et la tradition culturelles [...]. Dans les pays émergents, l’anglais sert également de ressource pour résister à l’hégémonie linguistique et promouvoir la démocratisation¹⁵.

¹³ Ivi., p. 356.

¹⁴ Ivi., p. 355.

¹⁵ Ivi., p. 356.

I heard the personal experience of an Australian teacher of English, who taught her mother tongue in South Korea for three months to Primary school pupils in 2003. I will report an abstract from her considerations here below:

I was in South Korea for 3 months, in a town just outside of Seoul.
 The students were from primary school: 6-12 years old.
 The program included oral and written conversation and listening.
 They had a textbook to follow, but I added my own activities to make the learning more fun and interactive.
 Korean students are very polite and quite quick learners.
 They have high respect for their teachers, so that made the job easier.
 English is basically the second language for Koreans, most of the young people speak it and they learn it at school.
 I believe the nation itself has recognized the value of English in the world. Also Korea was heavily influenced by the US.

I found this teacher's words illuminating because she experienced the attitude of openness and curiosity of Koreans towards English. Moreover, it is clear from her considerations that the State itself has its heavy weight in language learning matters in Korea.

Issues concerning the spreading of English in the world and the importance the institutions are giving to this language, make me think over the need to pay a lot of attention on school programmes, as the class is probably one of the easiest channels to reach large portions of population and convey messages. How can this energy be employed in order to emphasize the value of multilingualism and multiculturalism at school, beyond the trend of teaching only the most 'prestigious' foreign languages?¹⁶ McPake asks herself how educators can help students capitalize their talents and their individual potentialities, in a world where homogeneity cannot work anymore.

¹⁶ See also Forlot G., "Place de l'anglais et paradoxes des apprentissages langagiers à l'école", in "Notions en questions en didactique des langues – Les plurilinguismes", in Castellotti V. (ed.), *Les Cahiers de l'Acadde*, 7:1, 2010, <<http://acedle.org/spip.php?rubrique194.PDF>>, pp. 97-124.

*Comment les décideurs soutiennent-ils le multilinguisme à l'école au-delà des langues étrangères prestigieuses?*¹⁷

And this is also my task for the time being.

2. “Histoire, pratiques et modèles”¹⁸

In chapter 8, “*Histoire, pratiques et modèles*”, in particular in the essay “*Diversité des langues ou langue universelle: Comenius et le surpasement de la malédiction de Babel*”, Suso Lòpez talks about an original linguistic unity under Latin in Europe, then mined by what was called ‘the curse of Babel’, during the Renaissance. The author maintains that multilingualism has always existed, but governments pretended the binomial ‘one language one nation’ to be real¹⁹. Suso affirms the only way to surpass the curse of Babel is to accept diversity, plurality, realizing, with Comenius, that a universal, perfect language does not exist:

Le surpasement de la malédiction de Babel, et donc l’acceptation de la diversité des langues, l’impossibilité d’une langue universelle, et la genèse progressive du concept de “grammaire générale” situent la réflexion linguistique de Comenius dans la modernité²⁰.

Could this discourse apply to English as well, since it is taking up the role of *lingua franca*, a sort of universal language that seems the most suitable one for international communication? Does it risk to emerge over the others, as ‘the curse of English’?

¹⁷ Kramsch C., Lévy D., Zarate G. (éds.), *Précis du Plurilinguisme et du Pluriculturalisme*, cit., p. 367.

¹⁸ Ivi., pp. 379-433.

¹⁹ See also the article by Maddalena de Carlo concerning the idea of one nation=one language=one identity, developed during the XVIII and XIX centuries with the birth of the National States, in “Plurilinguisme et interculturalité pour la construction de la citoyenneté Européenne”, in *éla*, «Approches Plurielles et Multimodales», 153, janvier-mars 2009, p. 69.

²⁰ Kramsch C., Lévy D., Zarate G. (éds.), *Précis du Plurilinguisme et du Pluriculturalisme*, cit., p. 394.

How can we rehabilitate this language, split between an impoverishment to mere tool, and its boasting presence as a strong, arrogant, conforming language?

Conclusion

My question

All these issues can be summarized into a question I would like to address in particular to professors Derivry²¹ and Kok-Escalle²². The question develops into two parts:

«The English language is insistently taking up the role of instrumental *lingua franca*, everybody's and nobody's language, and it is often associated with the field of international commerce, with consequent potentialities and risks for the cultures and languages it comes across, conveys and generates. Can a socio-historical perspective help us understand this evolution towards a new mono-multilingualism (local language-universal English)?

Moreover, how can the teacher of English FL take his/her place in such a context, in order to rehabilitate this subject, made of language *and* culture, replacing English into its position as a language with the others, and mediating among the requests of the world of work, the need to show the developing New Englishes and the school syllabus, not always flexible to embrace this type of approach?»²³.

²¹ Martine Derivry is Professor of 'Anglais et didactique des langues', Université de Paris VI.

²² Marie-Christine Kok-Escalle is Professor in the Department of Modern Languages Faculty of Humanities, University of Utrecht.

²³ Italian translation: "La lingua inglese sta assumendo in maniera sempre più incalzante il ruolo di lingua franca strumentale, lingua di tutti e di nessuno, ed è spesso associata al mondo del "commercio" internazionale, con le potenzialità e i rischi che ne conseguono per le lingue-culture che incontra, veicola, crea. Una prospettiva socio-storica ci può aiutare a capire questa evoluzione verso un nuovo mono - plurilinguismo (lingua locale-lingua inglese universale)?

Come può collocarsi il docente di inglese LS in un tale contesto, al fine di riabilitare una disciplina di lingua-cultura, ricollocando l'inglese nella sua posizione di lingua fra

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le altre, mediando fra le richieste del mondo del lavoro, la necessità di far conoscere i “nuovi inglesi” che si sviluppano, e i programmi scolastici non sempre flessibili ad assumere un tale approccio?”

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