

Caparide, April, 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> 2009

***The Role of Education in the Language of Schooling as a Promoting Factor of Social and Cultural Inclusion***

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**One nation-state, one common language**

Once upon a time, policy-makers believed that linguistic diversity jeopardized the unity and identity of each country. In other words, the historical process of building modern states included language rationalization. By language rationalization, I mean the standardization of the language/ dialect to which the status of official language was assigned and the promotion of monolingualism. Hence, the motto one nation-state - one and only one common language involved active and repressive policies to ensure that the educational environment would be monolingual and monocultural.

In fact, if all the citizens of a country share a common language, the administration and management of the *res publica* becomes easier. As Laitin (1999: 54-55) puts it:

*Legal uniformity is easier to assure when court decisions are delivered and recorded in a common language. Tax can be collected more efficiently and monitored more effectively if merchants keep their books in the same language. State regulations can more efficiently be disseminated if translations are not necessary for compliance to take place. And territorial boundaries are easier to patrol if the population at the boundary speaks the language of the political center, one that is distinct from the language of the population on the other side of the boundary. Given these considerations, it is not surprising that rulers of states have sought to transform their multilingual societies into nation-states through policies that can be called "language rationalization".*

A good example of language rationalization is France. As soon as 1539, François I issued the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts. This edict established Francien, a dialect spoken in Paris and surroundings, as the only official language of France, despite the fact that close dialects like Norman and languages like Occitan had more literary prestige and a

longer literary tradition. François I was mainly aiming at replacing Latin, which was until then the language of education and science, by a vernacular language, and the edict did not change the linguistic repertoires of the majority of the French people, who kept using their local languages or dialects in their daily life. In fact, despite the active and repressive policy of monolingual promotion designed by Napoléon I, in 1863 about one fifth of the French population did not speak French. The resistance opposed by the Bretons to the use of French as the sole language of schooling made the Inspector-general of Education issue the following declaration of war around 1920: "for the sake of the linguistic unity of France, Breton must be extinguished". Only under Mitterand's government was Breton given the status of a regional language and France considered officially a multilingual country.

As we all know, the motto one nation-state - one language is no longer officially adopted in the European Union. Several legal texts recognize the rights of historical minorities to preserve their language and culture. The most important ones are:

The *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages*, which entered into force in 1998. It aims at the protection and the promotion of the historical regional or minority languages of Europe, at the preservation and development of Europe's cultural tradition and heritage and recognizes the right to use a historical regional or minority language in private and public life.

In its Appendix II, the *Declaration on National Minorities*, issued in 1993, establishes that "States should create the conditions necessary for belonging to national minorities to develop their culture, while preserving their religion, traditions and customs. These persons must be able to use their language both in private and in public and should be able to use it, under certain conditions, in their relations with the public authorities."

Finally, the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, which entered into force in December 2000, contains several provisions concerning languages and language rights in articles 21, n.1, 22, and 41, n. 4. Article 21, n. 1, states that "Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership

of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited". Article 22 states that "The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity". And Article 41, n. 4, states that "Every person may write to the institutions of the Union in one of the languages of the Treaties and must have an answer in the same language".

In short, EU officially states its multilingual and multicultural nature. However, the legal texts I referred to above do not mention community or heritage languages of immigrant groups. Hence, the presence of such languages in public schools varies widely across EU countries. As Perera (1999: 18-19) remarks, in the UK, few public schools at primary level offer teaching in the heritage language of the children, whereas in Sweden children have the right to at least 2 hours instruction per week in their parental language.

### **Myths that go both ways**

In designing and evaluating language policies that both promote multilingualism and guarantee proficiency in the official language by children with historical minority languages or heritage languages as L1, one should be cautious to avoid myths that go both ways. I will mention a myth that was long used to justify the exclusive presence of the official language in the educational environment (Myth 1) and another myth that has been used to argue for the presence of L1 in schools on incorrect grounds (Myth 2).

Myth 1: Being bilingual or multilingual is not an advantage for academic success; on the contrary, it is a disadvantage: bilingual children are at risk of becoming semilinguals.

This is a very old myth. Samuel Johnson, in 1761, wrote the following:

*To use two languages familiarly and without contaminating one by the other is very difficult; and to use more than two is hardly to be hoped. The prizes which some have received for their multiplicity of languages may be sufficient to excite industry, but can hardly generate confidence.*

However, research results show that this is false.

Cummins (1981) showed that in U.S. schools where all instruction is given through the second language (i.e., English), non-native speakers with no schooling in their first language take seven to ten years to reach age- and grade-level norms; he also showed that immigrant students who have had two to three years of schooling in their first language in their home countries take at least five to seven years to reach age- and grade-level norms. Collier (1995) showed that non-native speakers schooled in a second language for part or all of the day do reasonably well in early years; however, when academic and cognitive demands of the curriculum increase, students with little or no academic development in their native language have a larger percentage of failure than native speakers. But students who have spent four to seven years in a quality bilingual program sustain academic achievement and outperform monolingually schooled students in the upper grades. Jessner (1999), a study based on selective data from trilingual adults (bilingual Italian/German learners of English) on their use of certain problem-solving behaviour in think-aloud protocols during the process of academic writing, showed the important role played by metalinguistic awareness in the performance of the tasks. On the basis of these results, Jessner argued for the reactivation of prior language knowledge in the language classroom and claimed that multilingual education should focus on the similarities between languages in order to increase metalinguistic awareness in both teachers and students.

In short, bi/multilingualism neither handicaps children's cognitive growth nor compromises proficiency in the languages at stake; on the contrary, bi/multilingualism has proven to present cognitive advantages and to be associated with an increasing metalinguistic awareness and with academic success in the upper grades.

Myth2: Our native language shapes our categorization of the world. This means that different languages determine different categories of thought and that each particular language is the sole way of expressing the culture of the community that acquires it as L1.

In the words of Benjamin Lee-Whorf, a self-made linguist who popularized the myth:

*We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face, on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds — and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significance as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way — an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language.*

(LTR: 213)

And:

*Every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.*

(LTR: 252)

As soon as Whorf's papers were published, linguists, psychologists and anthropologists showed the weaknesses of his claims: they showed that such claims were based on wrong analysis of Hopi sentences, circular arguments (people with different native languages think differently; people think differently because they have different native languages), imagined data (like the famous anecdote of seven words for the colour "white" in Eskimo) and fallacious conclusions.

In short, although no scientific arguments or research have ever shown the rightness of whorfian claims, the idea that each language determines the "psychology" and the culture of the community which acquires it as L1 and, inversely, that such a "psychology" and culture can only be correctly expressed through the language that determines them is still popular and keeps on being used to advocate schooling in the native languages of children from linguistic minorities. (I will get back to this topic in the concluding part of this talk)

## **The role of schooling in the official language**

Having done away with these two myths, let us address the central topic of this talk: what is the role of schooling in the official language in contemporary multilingual and multicultural societies? This is a serious question, as research shows us that it is harder for language-minority students to attain academic success. For instance, Cardenas, Robledo & Waggoner (1988) showed that they are 1.5 times more likely to drop out of school than native speakers. Moss & Puma (1995) also showed that non-native speakers receive lower grades, are judged by their teachers to have lower academic abilities, and score below their classmates on standardized tests of reading and math.

I will refer to three reasons that argue for considering proficiency in the official language an important educational goal.

### ***Literacy in the official language, socialization and citizenship***

Let us start by keeping in mind that language is the primary medium of socialization. Through language, we interact daily, express our thoughts, learn new concepts, draw conclusions, make public our states of mind, dream and insult.

Acquiring a language is a miracle of biological evolution and competition, given the appropriate input. But knowing how to use a language involves learning particular ways of using it in particular settings in a given community. In other words, even a monolingual proficient speaker acquired and developed several grammars of his native language and shifts from one to another one in the appropriate contexts.

In our contemporary societies, a substantial part of our knowledge and use of language consists of the complex processes involved in fluent reading and mature writing. For societies which commit themselves to evolve into knowledge societies, developing literacy in every child and adult has become an essential educational goal.

In this context, literacy in the official language of the country one lives in is an essential tool: it is a tool for learning and for long-life learning; it is a tool for information search

and retrieval; it is a tool for professional relationships and for professional success; it is a tool for citizenship, for it allows us to stand for our rights and to participate actively in local, regional and national institutions of government; and, last but not least, it is a tool that gives us access to a wide variety of cultural goods. Hence, to be proficient in the official language of the country one lives in is an effective factor of social inclusion: it gives one the means to interact outside his own language community, allows one to listen to, to read and to understand news, debates and articles in the media, provides one with a fundamental tool of citizenship and offers one career opportunities otherwise impossible to get.

### ***Literacy in the official language and scientific literacy***

In our contemporary societies, scientific and technological literacy is crucial to economic and cultural development.

Hurd (1998: 410) gives the following definition of scientific literacy: "scientific literacy is seen as a civic competency required for rational thinking about science in relation to personal, social, political, economic problems, and issues that one is likely to meet throughout life".

Drori (2004: 25) provides the following association between scientific literacy and economic development: "policy-makers world-wide regard economic growth as dependent on the scientific and technological capabilities of the labour force (...)".

OECD (2007: 106) too has addressed the issue of meeting the needs of the labour market in an increasing multilingual Europe and advises that

***Education systems, particularly in Europe, will need to deal more effectively with increasing socio-economic and cultural diversity in their student populations and find ways to ensure that children from immigrant backgrounds ultimately enter the labour market with strong foundation skills, as well as with the capacity and motivation to continue learning throughout life.***

And Lee (2005. 493) points out that "Students from all language backgrounds need to acquire the discourse of science as well as the discourse of their homes and communities, to understand the culture of science as well as their own cultures, and to behave competently across social contexts".

A recent study, Rodrigues & Oliveira (2008), shows interesting results in what concerns the relationship between proficiency in the official language (in this case, Portuguese) and scientific literacy. The subjects of the study were three groups of 9th grade students: group 1 gathered native speakers with high proficiency in Portuguese; group 2 gathered native speakers with low proficiency in Portuguese; and group 3 gathered non-native speakers who speak at home exclusively a foreign language or a foreign language and Portuguese. The subjects' scientific literacy was assessed using a set of written activities selected (translated and adapted) from the science units of the Pisa tests. The results of the study show that:

*to be proficient in the official school language influences pupils' assessment of scientific literacy, at least when we use written science activities to assess scientific literacy. The proficiency in the official school language is a relevant factor, even more than to be a native speaker or not. In fact, being a foreign pupil or a native speaker with a low proficiency in the official school language does not make a significant difference when assessing scientific literacy. Only the pupils with a high proficiency in the official school language perform better in scientific literacy.*

(Rodrigues & Oliveira 2008: 10)

### ***The economic benefits of proficiency in the official language***

Many parents believe that proficiency in the official language will give their children an advantage in the labour market in terms of both greater employability and higher earning power. Several studies support this belief. I will mention only one.

A research project developed in the Department of Economics of the University of Guelph, Canada, covering the immigrant population of Ontario was concluded in 2003. This study showed "that both quantitative and document literacy have a significant effect on the observed earnings gap between immigrants whose mother tongue is

English and those whose mother tongue is a heritage language. This effect is present even after controlling for education, work experience, years since migration, age at migration, industry and occupation. The effect is most pronounced for immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. The study also finds that the earnings effect of literacy tends to increase with the level of formal schooling."

### **What we should care about**

I have presented three reasons that argue for the importance of proficiency in the official language.

Let us now address a related issue. Many texts stress the importance of proficiency in the official language when it is acquired or learned as L2. However, they often ignore a lot of factors that should be considered if one wants that our educational systems promote effective proficiency. Allow me to remind you of some of them.

### ***Teacher training in Linguistics***

Teachers of the official language should have appropriate training in Linguistics. In particular, they should know the differences between acquisition of L1 and L2 and be aware of specific properties of the grammar of their students' native language.

Because such a training does not exist, properties of the native language of each student are often ignored by teachers. So, they program their classes as if their non-native students have no knowledge of a particular language. This kind of practice does not promote the transfer of the students' linguistic knowledge and skills from L1 to L2. It is also the case that differences between the native and the official language writing systems are not given proper attention.

The guidelines for the teaching of Portuguese as L2, issued by the Ministry of Education, aim at drawing teachers' attention to these linguistic aspects<sup>1</sup>:

***The time needed to acquire a grammar and develop enough communicative competence in L2 depends on many different factors. Some of the more***

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<sup>1</sup> The translation is mine.

*important ones are: personal characteristics (eg., age, motivation, personality, linguistic aptitude, learning habits) previous knowledge (L1 and other languages the speaker knows and encyclopaedic knowledge), learning opportunities (immersion; immersion and schooling; only schooling).*

(Leiria, I., M. J. Queiroga & N. V. Soares, 2005: 11).

Language universals and their interaction with genetic and typological properties of L1 and the official language are also considered crucial factors in this document.

*If two languages belong to the same family, they have more cognates and grammar aspects in common than if they are not. Between genetically close languages, besides more cognates (which behave like doors that allow us to enter in the L2 more easily), there is also more transferable knowledge to L2.*

(Leiria, I., M. J. Queiroga & N. V. Soares, 2005: 12).

The difference between writing systems is also mentioned:

*Portuguese has an alphabetic writing system, whereas Chinese has a logographic one. (...) According to several researchers, the fact that L1 has not an alphabetic writing system is a serious handicap for lexical processing because speakers pay more attention to the meaning of the graphic form than to the phonological aspects.*

(Leiria, I., M. J. Queiroga & N. V. Soares, 2005: 12).

In short, teaching the official language to non-native students requires "Serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the-art teaching" (Zemelman *et al.*, 2005: vi). Research signals the following best practices: daily writing practice for extended periods of time (Hall, 1993); predictability and consistency in instruction (Calkins, 1983); explicit instruction, scaffoldings, and modelling (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005); promoting reading-writing connections (Cumming, 2001; Grabe, 2001).

### ***Teachers' awareness of transferrable knowledge and skills***

I will mainly quote the research findings account presented by Gottardo & Grant (2008).

In what concerns phonological awareness: "Research has shown that phonological awareness in a child's L1 is related to reading an alphabetic language, in this case English, regardless of the nature of the first language. For example, phonological awareness skills in languages with very different scripts (writing systems), such as Spanish and Chinese, are related to English reading (e.g., 27; Lindsey, Manis, & Bailey, 2003; Gottardo, Yan, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2001). Although L1 and L2 phonological awareness are related, for young children who learn to read both languages simultaneously, English phonological awareness is more strongly related to English reading (Gu & Gottardo, 2004). However, for older children who learn to read two languages sequentially and read their first language before learning to read their second language, L1 and L2 phonological awareness are equally related to English, L2, reading. Therefore, for younger bilingual children, assessment of phonological awareness skills should take place in English, the language of reading instruction. For older children, the assessment of phonological awareness can take place in English or the L1. For bilingual children with relatively good L2 proficiency, L2 phonological awareness might be more strongly related to L2 reading. Problems sometimes exist in finding standardized tests of phonological awareness in the L1. In cases where standardized tests of phonological awareness do not exist in the L1, English phonological awareness will give a reasonably accurate picture of phonological awareness skills that would have an impact on learning to read any alphabetic language".

In what concerns word reading, "word reading skills are also related across the L1 and L2 for alphabetic languages. However, L1-L2 literacy skills are not related for Chinese-speakers reading Chinese and English (Gottardo, Geva, Faroga, & Ramirez, 2006). The results of this research suggest that if a child is learning to read in two alphabetic languages, even languages with alphabets that are visually very different (English and Hebrew; Hebrew and Russian), assessment of word reading in either language could be used to understand reading potential in the other language. However, if the children are bilingual and biliterate in Chinese and English, assessing reading potential in one language is not likely to inform whether the child will experience difficulties or be successful in the other language. Therefore, word level reading skills are related across languages with the exception of word reading in alphabetic versus nonalphabetic scripts".

In what concerns oracy, "When other linguistic skills are compared across languages, a different pattern emerges. Variables related to oral language proficiency in English and in Spanish were examined in detail in a group of Spanish-English bilinguals in first grade (Gottardo, 2002). The results suggested that grammatical knowledge is related but not completely overlapping across languages. Not surprisingly children performed better on L1 syntactic tasks and showed the highest level of performance on early developing L2 structures such as the use of regular plurals (e.g. cat/ cats) (Brown, 1973). Interestingly, only the use of regular plurals in English was related to the use of plurals in Spanish. However, the "rules" for forming these plurals are similar for both languages. This finding suggests that assessment of these skills in only one language will not provide an accurate picture of these skills across languages".

In what concerns vocabulary skills, these "also show weak relations across L1 and L2. When vocabulary scores on standardized tests were compared across languages, Spanish and English, the skills were not related (Uccelli & Paez, 2007). Bilingual children showed greater growth in English vocabulary scores than in Spanish vocabulary scores from kindergarten to first grade. In addition, the total number of words and the total number of different words that bilingual children used in oral language story-telling tasks were not related across languages. Young children do not automatically use L1 vocabulary knowledge to deduce the meanings of similar sounding words in their L2 (Gottardo et al, 2006; Gottardo, van Daal, Charbonneau, Meberg & Skaatun, 2007). Therefore, in order to accurately measure vocabulary knowledge, both L1 and L2 skills should be tested".

In what concerns knowledge of story structure, "In contrast to research on vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, research on story structure has shown that children's skills in knowing what a "good story" needs are related across languages (Uccelli & Paez, 2007). A "good story" was defined as including the main events of the story in the right order, linking parts of the plot together to give the story flow and providing reasons why events take place. Children's skills in producing a well-structured story were related across Spanish and English and showed growth in both languages over time (Uccelli & Paez, 2007). The results of research conducted on knowledge of higher-level narrative

skills shows that these skills are related across L1 and L2, and can be assessed in only one language".

And the authors conclude:

*The above findings show that the assessment of bilinguals is more complex than the assessment of monolingual speakers. All assessments must consider multiple language and literacy related skills. In addition, the assessment of bilinguals must consider factors such as definitions of bilingualism and degree of proficiency in each language.*

### ***Economic and cultural background of the student's family***

The economic and cultural background of the student's family is, as we well know, a crucial factor for effective proficiency in the official language, which means that special attention should be paid by the educational environment to students whose parents have low levels of literacy in their native language and scarce or no reading habits.

As Cummins (2006) remarks, the impact of poverty on school achievement has been largely ignored in educational reforms. Research shows that, for students from generational poverty, relationships are the key motivators for learning (Payne, 2006). It also shows that the quality of support, nurturing, and stimulation depend on the quality of children's day to day experiences at home and in school (Hertzman & Kohen, 2003).

Summarizing, research emphasizes strengthening and transforming school relationships with parents, local authorities and heritage communities to make them more collaborative. Regardless of income or level of education, parents can support children's education in many ways: by reading with them and talking about the text in their native language or in the official language of schooling, by encouraging an inquiry approach to learning, ... Through discussion with their children about events at home, parents can help students acquire important verbal skills that will help them to engage in instructional discourse and to become critical readers and consumers of information. Schools, local authorities and heritage communities need to develop partnerships with parents that allow them to identify and validate parental contributions to the shared task of educating students.

### *The social prestige of L1 in the immigration country*

The social prestige of L1 in the immigration country is undoubtedly an important factor in the child's day life at school and may determine two opposite attitudes towards the official language: some children refuse to learn it, while others understand that proficiency in that language is a crucial factor of social inclusion in school and more broadly in the immigration society. These work hard and end up bilinguals with an affective bond with the language of schooling. Chico Buarque, in the novel *Budapeste*, offers a beautiful description of these two opposite attitudes:

*Para algum imigrante, o sotaque pode ser uma desforra, um modo de maltratar a língua que o constrange. Da língua que não estima, ele mastigará as palavras bastantes ao seu ofício e ao dia-a-dia, sempre as mesmas palavras nem uma mais. E mesmo essas, haverá de esquecer no fim da vida, para voltar ao vocabulário da infância. Assim como se esquece o nome das pessoas próximas, quando a memória começa a perder água, como uma piscina se esvazia aos poucos, como se esquece o dia de ontem e se retêm as lembranças mais profundas. Mas para quem adotou uma nova língua, como a uma mãe que se seleccionasse, para quem procurou e amou todas as suas palavras, a persistência de um sotaque era um castigo injusto.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Concluding remarks**

One of the best cases that argue for the importance of proficiency in the official language of the country one lives in and that argue against Myth 2 (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) is the fact that some of the best contemporary writers are bilingual and choose to write in their language of schooling and not in their native language. And in

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<sup>2</sup> “For some immigrants, the foreign accent may be a revenge, a way of mistreating the language that constrains them. From the language they do not love, they will only mumble those words strictly needed for their job and their daily life, always the same words and not one more. And even those, they will forget them in their old days, to get back to the vocabulary of their infancy. Just as we forget the names of our close ones, when memory starts losing water, like a swimming-pool slowly emptying, as we forget yesterday and remember our deepest memories. But for those who adopted a new language, as if they chose a mother, for those who searched and loved every one of its words, the persistence of a foreign accent was an unfair punishment.”. Translation is mine.

choosing to do so, they still offer their readers a view of their own native cultures and of the way their characters deal with the conflict of cultures.

Here are some examples.

Kazuo Ishiguro, the author of *The Remains of the Days*. He was born in Nagasaki, went to the UK with his parents when he was six. He was schooled in English and writes only in English.

Amy Tan, the author of *The Joy Luck Club*. She is the daughter of Chinese immigrants in California. She was schooled in English in the U.S.A. and writes all her novels in English.

Amin Malouf, the author of many novels, amongst which, *Samarcande*. He was born in Lebanon, his native language is Arabic, his father was proficient in English and his mother in French. He was schooled in French, lives in France and writes in French.

Anita Desai, the author of *Fasting, Feasting*, for instance. She was born in India, her father's native language was Bengali, her mother's was German. Her native language was German. She was schooled in English, teaches in English in American universities and writes all her novels in English.

Salman Rushdie, the author of many remarkable novels and short stories. He was born in India, his father was Muslim, his native language was Urdu. He was schooled in English in India and in the UK. He teaches in English in American universities and writes all his short stories and novels in English.

Allow me to conclude this talk with some fragments of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*. His prose is a hymn to educational success in the proficiency of the schooling language by a non-native speaker.

*The Moor's Last Sigh* tells the story of the family Menezes da Gama Zogoiby, from Cochin. They were huge traders, specialized in spice export. The story begins when Cochin was still part of the British Empire. The da Gama family is catholic, claims that Vasco da Gama was their ancestor. According to the legend of the Zogoiby family, they are the offspring of the last king of Granada, Boabdil, who was Muslim, and of a Jewish slave who followed him in exile.

In the initial pages of the novel, Moraes Zogoiby, the story teller, says:

*Pepper is what brought Vasco da Gama's tall ships across the ocean, from Lisbon's Tower of Belém to the Malabar Coast: first to Calicut and later, for its lagoony harbour, to Cochin. English and French sailed in the wake of that first arrived Portuguese, so that in the period called Discovery-of-India — but how could we be discovered when we were not covered before? —we were 'not so much sub-continent as sub-condiment', as my distinguished mother had it. (...)*

I draw your attention to the perfect way in which the pair *discovered/covered* and the lexical invention *sub-condiment*, one term of the pair *sub-continent/sub-condiment*, introduce the reader into the atmosphere of the story. They also offer the reader the first glance of the personality of one of the main characters, Aurora Menezes da Gama Zogoiby, mother of the story-teller.

Some pages ahead, the reader is introduced to another character, an Anglican preacher called Oliver D'Aeth. D'Aeth suffers from an allergy to the shining light and the harsh sun of India. Because of this, his skin is always red and covered with infected bubbles that make him itch all the time. When he sees Aurora, who was then very young, he falls in love with her desperately, which makes him itch even more. Listen to the way their first meeting is presented to the reader:

*She eventually asked him his name. When he told her, she laughed and clapped her hands. 'O, too much,' she said. 'Reverend Allover Death'.*

Here, the phonic game with the character's name, homophonous of the English word *death*, is hyperbolized by the paronym *Allover* of his name Oliver. But these figures of speech are not mere language games, they have a meaning in the context of the novel. *Allover Death* means that Aurora sees him like a person dying in life, a death announced by his skin infection. It also means that the preacher identifies himself with the side of the Indian-British conflict condemned to be defeated. As he puts it in his own words:

*India was uncertainty. It was deception and illusion. Here at Fort Cochin the English had striven mightily to construct a mirage of Englishness, where English bungalows clustered around an English green, where there were Rotarians and golfers and teadances and cricket and a Masonic Lodge. But D'Aeth could not help seeing through the conjuring trick, (...). And when he looked out to sea the illusion of England vanished entirely; for the harbour could not be disguised, and no matter how Anglicized the land might be, it was contradicted by the water; as if England were being washed by an alien sea. Alien and encroaching; for Oliver D'Aeth knew enough to be sure that the frontier between the English enclaves and the surrounding foreignness had become permeable, was beginning to dissolve. India would reclaim it all. They, the British, would — as Aurora had prophesied — be driven into the Indian Ocean — which, by an Indian perversity, was known locally as the Arabian Sea.*

This fragment expresses, with powerful visual images, the foreigner's awareness of the increasingly severe political and cultural conflict, still hidden under the superficial icons of the British way of life. It also expresses the foreigner's awareness of the inevitable outcome of this conflict: the death of the Victorian dream of the British Raj, the jewel of the Crown.

Were he not schooled in English would Rushdie excell this much in his L2? How many of us, who were schooled in our L1, attained the high level of proficiency needed to write poetic prose in our L2? And getting back to Rushdie, does writing in English prevent him to preserve and offer his readers wonderful pictures of his own native and hybridised culture?

Two concluding remarks.

Let us not forget that the presence of non-native speakers in European schools is an extreme case of language diversity. The degrees of mutual understanding reached by students from historical regional or minority languages and by students from heritage

languages as they enter school vary a lot, as a function of the languages at stake, and of complex social and cultural variables. So does their success in attaining proficiency in the language of schooling.

But less extreme cases of language diversity are also at stake in monolingual children whose native language is the language of schooling. Children arriving at school with native dialects distinct from the standard language are also students at risk of academic failure and early drop out. They too need an educational environment where linguistic tolerance is promoted and cultural differences are considered a value and not a disadvantage. They too need well trained teachers, with a high level of linguistic knowledge and awareness.

Finally, let us not forget that History tells us that intense language contacts lead to changes in the languages at stake and that intense cultural contacts lead to new cultures issued of hybridising. I think that this will also be the case in our EU multilingual and multicultural societies. The language acquisition process of new generations of former immigrant communities will undoubtedly contribute to language change. And educational systems must be prepared to deal with these expected changes.

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