Dominant Language and Identity

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Abstract

The main concern of this research is to illustrate the strong relation between language and identity, and to prove how they share a reciprocal kind of relation. Besides other influential factors, language seems almost to determine and establish the kind of identity to sovereign in monolingual communities. The researchers hypothesize that intervention and domination of the English language in a number of Arab countries, would negatively influence and threat the creation of the national identity of these countries. The aim of the present research is to alarm and urge all authoritative sides to take the responsibility to contain and reduce the influence of the dominant English. Some pedagogical significance

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lies behind this study, like suggestions for more efforts and awareness concerning methods of teaching. In addition, the need to keep the Arab national identity pure necessitates excluding the hegemony of English in everyday life in general, and that of the young generations' in particular.

Key Word: domination – language – identity – Arab countries – culture

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الـمستخلـص

ان محور اهتمام هذا البحث هو توضـيح العلاقة القوية بين اللغة والهوية، وإثبات كيف يشـتركان في علاقة ذات طبيعة تبادلية من حيث التأثير والتأثر ببعضــــهما البعض. إلى جانب العوامل المؤثرة الأخرى، يبدو أن اللغة تكاد تتفرد في انها هي من تحدد وتؤسس شكل الهوية السائدة في المجتمعات أحادية اللغة. ويفترض الباحثون أن تداخل وســــيطرة اللغة الإنجليزية في الحياة اليومية لعدد من الدول العربية من شأنه أن يؤثر سلبًا ويهدد تكوين الهوية الوطنية لهذه الدول. الهدف من هذا البحث هو تحذير وحث جميع الأطراف ذات الشـأن او التي لها السلطة على تحمل مسؤولية احتواء وتقليل تأثير هيمنة اللغة الإنجليزية في مجتمعنا العربي. تكمن بعض الأهمية التربوية وراء هذه الدراســــة، مثل اقتراحات لمزيد من الجهود والوعي فيما يتعلق بأســــاليب التدريس. بالإضــــافة إلى ذلك، فإن ضــــرورة الحفاظ على الهوية القومية العربية نقية تســـتلزم اسـتبعاد هيمنة اللغة الإنجليزية في الحياة اليومية بشكل عام، وهيمنتها في تفاصيل الحياة اليومية لدى الأجيال الشابة على وجه الخصوص.

INTRODUCTION

Language and identity are among the most important social aspects that determine the personality of the individual and the group, which contribute in directing human thinking. It is necessary to take care of them and pass them on to subsequent generations, and this duty is distributed to many influential parties, such as the family, the state, the school, specialists, and others. However, because of its significant role in shaping an individual's personality, the family as the basic part of any speech community bears a significant burden in this regard (Jacobs – Huey 1997; Morgan 1994). For the sake of

development and keeping up with the times, it is not advisable for the parents / caretakers to use any other language than their mother tongue when they talk with their children. This does not mean that children should not be taught other languages, but they can do so after they have fully mastered the mother tongue first, and in a controlled environment for scientific purposes.

LANGUAGE AND AUTHORITY

The state, due to its high authority, is often involved to legitimate an identity through different ways and efforts which help to withhold or withdraw the meant identity. Authorization may involve supporting a language in ways recognized by the state. Thus, the situation in Arab countries, which are supposed to be monolingual communities and for whom language is strongly associated with identity, this situation necessitates the legal struggle against any interfering language that may affect the purity of the national identity. One issue that is mainly controlled by the state is the kind of language to be used in formal situations, i.e., the state role over linguistic standardization. This can be fulfilled through various institutions and specific concerned authorities affiliated with the state that take care of cultural affairs in the country. Thus, it becomes clear that this heavy burden is a joint responsibility of language specialist scholars besides others from different fields of science or authority. Bucholtz & Hall (2004), emphasize the effect of language on developing identity and consider this process as a scholarly and political concept.

Language is not only shaping a great deal of our thought and the way we perceive the world (Theory of Linguistic Relativity), it is the address of existence and identity as well as the trustworthy repository in which the elements of nationality and the memory of the future are stored (Carroll, Levinson and Lee, 2012).

LANGUAGE Vs IDENTITY

Language is a component of identity, but "identity" is not a language, i.e., language is not the only component of identity, even though it is one of the most important, most fertile, deepest and most complex components. Language is central and essential to the production of identity. The relationship between language and identity is the relationship of the particular to the general. Because identity has many manifestations other than "language," as it is (identity) infinitesimally simple, that is nothing but the common denominator or the agreed-upon amount between a group of people, which distinguishes and unites them, and it is not only language that performs this task, so this brings us back to the other components of identity.

ESSENCE OF IDENTITY

Language is the mirror of any nation, and it is what links cultures from different civilizations to each other and immortalizes nations. Also it is the key to tomorrow that reduces the past and its legacy. Cultures interact, overlap, and cross-fertilize, as do languages. There is also a language that dominates the other(s) in some social circumstances. *Ibn khaldun,* the Arabic thinker, was the best to describe the relation between domination and submission: "*The defeated is always fond of imitating his emblem, his dress, his bee, and all his conditions and habits, and the reason for this is that the soul always believes in perfection in the one who overcomes it and is subjugated to it, either because of his view of perfection in what he acknowledged in his veneration of it, or because it is mistaken with it that its submission is not to be overpowered.*" Naturally, it is only for the perfection of the dominant part, that all its doctrines and its norms were imitated by the rest of the society, in the sense that the majority prevailed over, not with

fanaticism or strength, but with customs and doctrines, also fallacy. Such description highlights very well the process of erasing any crucial variations in identity. Furthermore, nationalism imposes that ethnic identities cannot coexist in harmony due to the expected subordination and oppression conducted by the dominant part.

LANGUAGE HEGEMONY

Controlling the outputs of science, scientific and technical research, idiomatic and established concepts share to build up the foundation of language hegemony, as is maintaining a state of linguistic, scientific, and intellectual dependency. In order to enforce the status of any native language, for instance Arabic, we need to unite efforts and insist on teaching in the mother tongue mainly with producing advanced scientific researches away from other language domination and/or submission weaknesses. Advanced nations and countries never let a foreign language to dominate their daily life affecting their native identity eventually. For example, the Japanese do not introduce their sciences in English and the French also do not learn their knowledge in English. While the Englishman does not have to learn French, the Arab who is usually raised on both Arabic and English, due to historical invasion or colonization, is required to be particularly efficient of English to obtain a good job or other social demands.

Ironically speaking, though most Arabs do not master their own standard Arabic, they endeavor to learn a foreign language, specifically English. Obviously, learning a foreign language for some social categories all around the Arab countries indicates a desired way of life, a new culture, a social prestigious choice. But, unfortunately it is done on the expense of their mother tongue's esteem (Bucholtz 2001). It is obvious that when a dominating language enters the life of another one, gradually it confounds the local language and replaces it. Interested scholars and thinkers alarm that the tyranny of English as a second language reinforces the increasing injustice of focusing on the English proficiency by a huge number of intellectuals. That's why so many individuals compete to learn English driven by some marketed ideologies which we call "sociolinguistic hypocrisy." This phenomenon is defined as an attempt to use a certain linguistic system or parts of it to conceal an original linguistic background and to confuse the listener, implying that the speaker is of a high social class (rich), and therefore, he was able to learn this language.

Many families, on the level of Arab countries, prefer to send their children to foreign schools where English is the language of teaching (and it is well known that foreign schools charge very high tuition fees). This is only because they believe that learning English is a sign of belonging to the upper class in the society. The actual tendency towards learning English results in emerging linguistic phenomena like code-switching and borrowing from English into Arabic. Such linguistic phenomena among the young is enhanced by the current technological development and internet, in addition to the suspected manipulation of the mass media and the global use of social communication devices or applications introduced primarily in English. Thus, there is an urgent need of learning and using English in everyday life, which proves the notion of the domination of English in Arab societies as active participants of the process of globalization. In this case, the domination of English has a positive effect on one hand, and a negative intervening effect on the other, since language is considered the title of existence and identity. As it is the faithful repository in which the elements of belonging and the memory of the future are stored, and it does not disappear except with the demise of the nation.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

According to linguistic anthropology, identity is defined as a social, cultural, and political construct. Anthropologists always stress the statement that practice, performance, contextuality, and ideology are inseparable in the process of identity creation. Ideology is the passage through which practice passes to the space of representation. Contextuality is the link between ideology and practice, while performance is the focusing of ideology through the introducing of practice. In different studies of language and identity, scholars often differentiate between cultural ideologies and social practices, i.e., cultural understandings highlight how members of different social backgrounds should or do speak and act in certain contexts. Such strategies are highly complex reflecting the accurate descriptions of cultural practice. This way, identity would be conceived as the source and the outcome of culture, it is a cultural entailment.

However, cultural identity will not be complete, nor will its civilizational specificity be highlighted, nor will it become a full identity capable of seeking universality to interact unless its reference is embodied in the membership of a community in which three elements are congruent: the homeland, the nation, and the state.

There is an intimate bond between language and culture, because it is not easy to imagine a language in the sense that does not produce a culture, whatever the language and whatever the culture. Just as it is not possible to imagine a culture that does not depend in a fundamental part on a linguistic vessel that contains it, interacts with it, and transmits it. So both, i.e., language and culture, may be seen as two circles overlapping each other. They are inseparable, they exchange a reciprocal influential roles to shape the entity of a whole community (Hall 2003; Ahearn 2001). Besides, the culture of a community contributes to the development and enrichment of their language by introducing a lot of new vocabulary to it.

Delving into cultural definitions or orientations can somehow be included within different overlapping sociolinguistic terms. The theory of linguistic relativity is based to emphasize an important point concerning language and culture. According to this theory, language is stated to determine our thought and the way we perceive the world around us. This central notion should be reflected in the way we act in different aspects of life. It means that language is responsible for establishing and then conceptualizing everything that we know or be in touch with from the beginning of humanity till now. The existence of language provides having readymade concepts and conducts fitting whatsoever kind of situation one may encounter. And because culture is acting, that in its turn represents part of thought, then we are facing two sides of one thing. Culture may be more general, as language is a very important element in building it and directing its course. However, culture has a serious role in influencing language as thought, and language and culture together do not emanate from within the human being, or are not individual. In other words, they are not individual specific, they are community specific since they are part of the movement of the medium in which they live. Hence, the necessary distinction between them and science. Culture is a theory of behavior rather than a theory of knowledge, and therefore, necessary differentiating between culture and science can be measured.

If the relationship between language and culture has become intertwined to the extent that language and culture have separated from science, there is also a fundamental difference between language and one of its main functions, namely, means of communication. Despite the importance, vitality, and necessity of this function, it is an

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abstract of limited value. Because it is verified among other living beings to the extent that you need and suffice, "communication" itself is necessary, but its intrinsic importance stems from its direct effect when it returns to thought and changes its methods. Communication is an important part of the human specific medium that builds and shapes values, feelings, and ideas, that gives them their taste and privacy, and dyes them with its distinct color, and this is what brings us back to the language. As it relates to the human mind and intellect more than it relates to his tongue and his relations with others. It reminds us of culture as the concept previously mentioned, not as quantities of information and knowledge that may be gathered and accumulated within the individual members or the society as a whole.

Identity is a word whose connotations revolve around the self, the truth, and the essence, and it is with these synonyms despite some differences that are based on different considerations that comes from the world of philosophy which is, in the terminology of the philosophers, "*the unseen*," *"the absolute truth*," or "*God."* Identity has many definitions for philosophers, mystics, psychologists, mathematics, and logic for instance. Most identity definitions may flow in the end into connotations that can be limited, in a nearly broad kind of frame, to truth, essence, self, unity or integration, belonging, equality and similarity. while in its initial form, it is viewed to be at the bottom of the ladder if such a ladder exists, and as the identity expands to include more individuals, it becomes more complex, interweaved, and structured because it turns to stress a deeper indication of its members, more expressive of their visions, and more attached to their collective interests and goals.

An individual's identity is noted to be drawn not only by her/his own self, shape and color, but also it can be largely determined by other influential factors like intellectual qualifications, age, education, personality and what comes to her/him through their membership as community citizens and what is produced by their relations with others under the rules of this community. Therefore, individual's identity must be, in some of its forms, part of the identity of their society, or bear at least some of the common features of this society.

Many sociolinguists and anthropologists agree that language is the oldest manifestation of identity, or to say, it is the essential factor that formulated the first identity of any group throughout human history. It is the one tongue that makes each speech community, a single "group", potential to share a recognized and independent identity. Hence, focus and interest in the study of language and identity increase side by side with the prior anthropological studies. Nevertheless, the historical or political events can cause negative effects on language and identity, especially, if such events are accompanied with social or political divisions that result in dispersion and immersion on the level of both language and identity. In both cases, the issue of language and the issue of identity arise, and often they are linked and similar to the point that they almost become one thing.

One last evidence to prove the close relation between language and identity is the fact that both of them are the essence of human characteristics. Language, in the sense established in the previous paragraph, is essentially assigned to be the means of communication used exclusively by man, which no other being has. Whatever description that applies to language is also applied to identity. Furthermore, what brings together a group of animals or a flock of birds, for example, is definitely not identity since they have no language to communicate. So language and identity can be recognized to form a composite, in the language of philosophy and logic. They are connected constituents within

which parts fall, their features are overlapping and cannot be separated from each other. Language contains and determines ways of thinking, cognitive process of conceptualization, feelings, people's wills and aspirations and the form of their relationships. Likely, identity is all these elements in its totality and complexity. Language and identity, then, are two sides of one thing. In other words, the human being in his essence is nothing but language and identity. Language is man's thought and tongue; at the same time, it is his affiliation, his social image or face, reality, and identity as well. The matter of the group, or the nation, is the affair of the individual.

Conclusions

Depending on the findings of this study, the researchers have arrived at some conclusions that are in support with the hypotheses under question. The initial conclusion endorses the common notion of language as the first expressive means through which a person expresses the thoughts that are on their mind. Hence, language is the official spokesperson for identity. Furthermore, language is concluded to be the basic resource for cultural production, and since identity has been confirmed to be the resource and the outcome of culture, therefore, language is definitely the basic resource for identity articulation as well.

Through language, a person can explain the differences and cultural distinctions of his nation and his people to those from other cultures, and also learn about other cultures in this world. Culture, On the other hand, is precisely undergoing identity and being relied on in the case of teaching languages to foreigners who want to learn a language. This demonstrates the extent of integration between culture, identity and language, as they are concomitant matters that cannot be separated despite any social, ideological, or political circumstances. Consequently, the particular importance of language (as a linguistic power), in building up and shaping the identity of individuals and of a whole nation eventually. Finally, such findings prove the hypotheses of this research completely, and also legalize fears and struggle against the expected threat of any intervening outsider language to be a dominant one in any country, specifically, in Arab countries.

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