

About Patterns of Confluence and Influence

Abstract

This introduction to Volume 9 of Inter Faculty takes up the theme of patterns of confluence and influence in the context of movements of history. From this perspective, it gives a commentary on each individual study as well as a short observation on the concept of 'mother' language.

Keywords: confluence, influence, patterns, history, mother language

In this volume of *Inter Faculty*, we are pleased to present Scholarly Articles, Research Forums, and Research Notes. The first two articles discuss the phenomena of migration in Slovenia and the complexity of Serbian and Croatian Languages in the context of recent movements of history in Yugoslavia (Žarko Lazarević and Vesna Požgaj Hadži respectively); the third article accounts for the syntactic and semantic characteristics of the nominal predicate in the Japanese Language (Hiroko Sawada). The three research forums report on: the first event to be held at the University of Tsukuba to mark International Mother Language Day, with keynote lectures by Andrej Bekeš and Mohammad Abdul Malek; the Linguapax Asia 2018 International Symposium 'Bilingualism Now'; and the symposium on 'Research Evaluation in the Humanities and Social Sciences'. The research note, co-authored by Esther Lovely and Asuka Ando, examines the situation of two bilingual and bicultural groups in Japan: Japanese returnees and hearing children of deaf parents.

As in previous issues of *Inter Faculty* there are a wide range of disciplines represented here, however, the body of research itself, whether from the point of view of phenomena or structure, shows that many common threads run through the different studies: history, economy, language, political oppression, culture.

Nonetheless, for this volume of *Inter Faculty*, we would like to highlight more especially the patterns of confluence and influence in the context of movements of history that become apparent in the research when taken as a whole. Indeed, throughout the course of time, patterns of confluence and influence can be seen in the political regime or governance, in the strength of the economy, in society, culture and values. In fact, in every aspect of human activity.

This brings us to the question of why research in the human sciences and research in the social sciences cannot be disassociated one from the other. In both domains, the subject of research is the product of human activity. Quite self-evident for a researcher in these fields, but we cannot stress enough the importance of this remark, because this is where the fundamental difference lies with research in the natural sciences, such as physics, chemistry, or biology.

To turn then, to the research presented here.

In his paper 'Migrations - Local Experiences in a Globalized World', Žarko Lazarević examines the phenomena of migration in Slovenia from the nineteenth century on, presenting three contexts of migration movements: the time up until World War I, the period between the two World Wars and the time after World War II. These three periods do not coincide exactly with the regime changes of the region under which, generally speaking, Slovenia went from being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to being part of a unified Yugoslavia, before becoming independent on the disintegration of the latter. Nevertheless, based on these contexts of migration, Lazarević gives a clear analysis from a socio-economic point of view of the variables that determine migration (emigration/immigration), i.e., overpopulation of rural areas, industrialization and urbanization. He concludes by noting that with accelerated economic growth, present-day Slovenia has become an immigration country, prevailingly for people from the former Yugoslav republics, and is now facing the situation of adapting to a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society.

The article by Vesna Požgaj Hadži, 'Language as a Symbol of a Fractured Country', describes the historical process of the separated, united, torn apart and reconciled Serbian and Croatian languages. Considerations of the history of the region are inevitable for this research. Požgaj Hadži distinguishes four periods characterized by socio-political movements to analyze the issues of the Serbo-Croatian language: the mid-nineteenth century which represents a time of integration of the two different languages; the twentieth century, under SFR Yugoslavia, when the languages were unified to form a common Serbo-Croatian language with Serbian and Croatian becoming a variation of the language; the 1990s, after the fall of SFR Yugoslavia, with the disintegration of the language; and present-day, with the promotion of successor standard languages which recognize the autonomy of the Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin languages.

The research of Žarko Lazarević and Vesna Požgaj Hadži are essentially related to movements of history, hence the need to distinguish context according to period in time. Yet the contexts do not coincide and are not homogeneous because the socio-economic factors and the institutions governing language are not of the same order. Nevertheless, with the work of these two authors a new avenue of research has opened up to explore the connection between economic movements and their impact on the status of national and regional languages.

With regards the article ‘Classification of Noun-Concluding Sentences from a Syntactic Analysis Perspective’ by Hiroko Sawada, this is a descriptive and theoretical work on a specific phenomenon in Japanese - noun-concluding sentences. As the author herself rightly remarks, this phenomenon can be observed in many languages. But the behavior of this phenomenon is different in each language and is therefore specific to each language. Sawada takes the importance that Japanese places on the concept of subject of cognition and object of cognition to propose three patterns of noun-concluding sentences. Thus language, the focus of analysis here, can be seen as a cognitive system which continuously enables expression of thought and which enables communication in cognitive, social, and interpersonal interaction. Sawada opens the way for further research on such sentence structures in the Japanese language.

In the research forums, here again the discussion is taken from the perspective of patterns of confluence and influence.

The research forum ‘My Mother Tongue Amidst the Languages I Speak’ was the first such event to be held at the University of Tsukuba to mark International Mother Language Day, an international observance day proclaimed and voted on by UNESCO on November 19, 1999. From a common understanding of this international observance day, faculty and international students of the University of Tsukuba held a series of events with lectures, videos and posters, to reflect on the diversity of languages and cultures in a multilingual context. The lectures by Andrej Bekeš and Mohammad Abdul Malek, each respectively, taking a region of Europe and the former Dominion of Pakistan as case studies, discussed how cycles of violence, language repression and assimilatory policies have had, and continue to have, far-reaching consequences, leading not least to severe political, educational and economic oppression of targeted peoples.

To briefly recall the origin of this observance day; on February 21, 1952 at the University of Dhaka in former East Pakistan, four Bengali-language speakers were killed in a demonstration protesting against Urdu being proclaimed the sole official language of Pakistan. Pakistan and India had gained their independence from Britain in August 1947 to form two independent dominions. At the time Pakistan comprised two separate regions: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. From among the more than seventy-four languages (Punjabi, Saraiki, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, Gujari, Kashmiri, etc.) spoken in the two regions, Urdu was chosen as the common, official language of all regions of Pakistan. However, the language spoken by the majority of the population in East Pakistan was Bengali, hence their demands for Bengali, their ‘mother’ language, to have official language status as well. It was in this context that the students of Dhaka University protested against the imposed use of Urdu leading to the tragic events of that day. East Pakistan finally broke away from West Pakistan to become the independent People’s Republic of Bangladesh in 1956, with Bengali as its official language. Forty-three years after the independence of Bangladesh, in November 1999, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed the institution of International Mother Language Day. The United Nations General Assembly welcomed the proclamation. This was the origin of International Mother Language Day.

However, as can be seen in the Declaration cited below, in essence, the statement by UNESCO is not a condemnation of political pressure brought to bear on linguistic minorities:

UNESCO believes in the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity for sustainable societies. It is within its mandate for peace that it works to preserve the differences in cultures and languages that foster tolerance and respect for others.

Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened as more and more languages disappear. Globally 40 per cent of the population does not have access to an education in a language they speak or understand. Nevertheless, progress is being made in mother tongue-based multilingual education with growing understanding of its importance,

particularly in early schooling, and more commitment to its development in public life.

Multilingual and multicultural societies exist through their languages which transmit and preserve traditional knowledge and cultures in a sustainable way.

(cf. <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday>)

In this text UNESCO calls for the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity, especially by strengthening education in the languages that people speak and understand.

But let us pause a while here to reflect on what mother language actually means in the context of International Mother Language Day. Is a mother language a minority language, a dialect, a regional, family language or the language of a native country, of childhood? Can a mother language also be an official language, a national language?

All these questions arise depending on how the word ‘maternal’ is interpreted. The word ‘maternal’, adjective corresponding to the noun ‘mother’, refers to the metaphorical value of origin (mother language), of fecundity (Alma Mater), the social value that evokes the role of the mother in society (mistress of the house, of the home), the psychological value (tenderness, protection, respect, contempt, ...) and so forth. Curiously, there is no ‘paternal’ concept of language. Mother language is a complex notion, defined by history, by social structure.

Nevertheless, whatever the value attributed to mother language, it is undeniable that a human being learns language by interacting with his social environment. For the newborn the relationship with his mother, the nurturer, is primordial in acquiring the cognitive schemas of language communication: recognition of the relationship between others and self, sharing of signs, memorization and representation. At this stage there is only one language, the mother language, and the characteristic of this language is that it is acquired through dialogical interaction <mother – child (newborn)>. Conceptualized thus, mother language then is the very foundation of such dialogue, and this dialogue, in turn, is the very foundation of human society.

Subsequently, however, the relation <mother – child> is defined by the family, the community, the society, the state. The language will then be constantly redefined as the family language, the local language, regional language or dialect, in accordance with the social norm, the standard language, normative, national, official, legal language. Then again, it is the norm that is imposed in collective, social life and so the mother language becomes linked to the norm and assimilated with the standard language, the official, national language. Or, on the other hand, the mother language can break away from the norm, from the authority in power and it is termed strange, becomes a target for contempt and discrimination.

The second research forum, ‘Bilingualism Now: The Imperative Issues in Bilingualism and Bilingual Education’, comes from Linguapax Asia, a branch of the Linguapax International organization with headquarters in Barcelona, Spain. For this symposium, the resolve of the organizers to highlight bilingualism rather than multilingualism arises from the understanding of multi- as against bilingualism in an Asian, especially East Asian, context. Multilingualism refers to a multilingual and multicultural community where, though several languages exist side by side, there is no communication between the different ethnic groups. In fact, in this type of multilingual community the people are monolingual. Bilingualism, on the other hand, is of people who speak more than one maternal language. Bilingualism also rejects the notion of exclusionary monolingualism or supremacy of one language over another, as, for example, the supremacy of a national language over a regional language or dialect, or a major language such as English, French, Russian, etc., over the official language of a former colony. This type of monolingualism would very well lack respect and dignity towards speakers of different languages. The premise of Linguapax Asia is that man in society is fundamentally bilingual, noting, however, that forms of bilingualism are diverse depending on the linguistic community or environment.

The symposium sought to address diversity of bilingualism by devoting an entire section to sign language. At the close of the symposium, the deliberations were summarized in a Declaration affirming the linguistic rights of people through bilingualism: ‘Linguapax is committed to building a gateway to the recognition of bilingualism and the life of all bilingual people’.

The Forum ‘Research Evaluation in Humanities and Social Sciences’ sought to highlight the fact that researchers in the human and social sciences suffer from a lack of standardized system of evaluation which would be able to validate their research activities. Yukio Morimoto brought together specialists from research institutes, public agencies, media and the private sector to discuss different forms of quantitative and qualitative evaluation of research for the human and social sciences. The key issue of the symposium was the question of whether or not it was possible to propose a system of evaluation proper to the Humanities and Social Sciences which would be able to account for the quality of the journals, the articles and the authors.

The research note ‘Invisible Bilingual and Bicultural Groups in Japan’, co-authored by Esther Lovely and Asuka Ando, developed from the discussions of the symposium on ‘Bilingualism Now’ presented above. The authors examine a hitherto little-known case of bilingualism in two minority bilingual and bicultural groups in Japan: Japanese returnees and hearing children of deaf adults (Coda). This study will enable further research into the issues of bilingualism.

To conclude, the present volume of *Inter Faculty* is a forum for reflection and discussion on the issues of patterns of confluence and influence over the course of time, and, as in the declaration by UNESCO cited above, together, with each individual research study presented here, calls for tolerance and respect towards all peoples.

As ever, *Inter Faculty* is an interactive journal which questions man, his society and the contemporary world, it is a journal which proposes new and original ideas, but above all it is a forum for exchange and as such we welcome comments and discussions from researchers of all domains.



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