

E-Society and Multi-Linguistic Factor: Communicational Linguistics Approach

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Abstract—The emerging E-Society is not only a new version of the society, which arises on the basis of new communication technologies. Obviously, it is neither the initial, nor the last social modification in history. At the current stage, any E-Society is not global, i.e. there is no uniform communication code. E-Society consists of fragmentary linguistic e-communities. Even the English language merely pretends to the global role, but it is virtually confined to the role of a linguistic mediator between the political, economic and scientific elites. New means of communication unavoidably change a society, but linguistic diversity inhibits nascence of the “global” society.

Keywords—*E-society; information society; multilingualism; communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

The contradiction of infeasibility to conceive of the objective social world without resorting to subjective description is addressed precisely by means of a language. A language serves the two crucial functions simultaneously – communicational (a language is a socialization tool) and cognitive (a language is a thinking tool). The communicational function of a language shapes and maintains all social systems and institutions, whereas the cognitive function allows us to depict and define them. In other words, the communicational function sets up all social structures as objects, which are accessible to visual study, whereas the cognitive function creates the subject itself. Interestingly, both functions are inextricably intertwined. As N. Luhmann wrote, “Language opens the door to regular structural conjugation of consciousness and communication systems” [1]. Thus, both objective social environment and its subjective descriptions are contoured by a language as a universal symbolic system. That is exactly why, no average individual does not detect any dissonance between their own objective social life and subjective perception of it – what suits cogitation, serves communication as well. Furthermore, reasoning itself emerges and evolves merely in the communication process. Therefore,

at least in social sciences, conceiving of the communication (interaction) process between the individuals, there is no methodological gap between the study “subject” and research subject. A language, as explained by K. Levi-Strauss, on its own represents a social phenomenon and even “when we speak and are not aware of syntactic and morphological laws of language. Apart from that, we do not possess conscious knowledge in phonemes” [2]. Despite the fact that conscious articulation of “linguistic laws” is carried out only in science, a language substantially performs its functions in the, which suspects nothing about existence of these laws. “Thus, one can state that in language studies impact by the observer on the visual object is negligibly small” [2]. The same thing goes for the laws of societal functioning, which emanates from and perpetuates itself in reliance on the language as an objective phenomenon.

As far as research study is concerned, truth stems from the dispute about the terms, albeit appeals to empirical facts. The founder of American pragmatism W. James once took note of the issue, whether a human moves around a squirrel, if it runs around the tree, where it is on, but also the squirrel simultaneously climbs up the tree in such a way, that a human loses sight of it: “The question, which side is right... hinges upon, which practical meaning you attach in the phrase “to move around a squirrel”... Draw this distinction line and after that there would be no ground for further dispute” [3]. Citing Quine, “everything that could be instantly confirmed by a contemplator, who speaks a language and has five sense organs” [4]. Consecutively, search for scientific truth is an intersubjective route towards objective reality, which can be run on diverse communicational codes. Under the informational-technological revolution (ITR) the multilingual phenomenon does not fade away. How far is it reasonable to acknowledge formation of the global informational society under these circumstances, equaling the society to a steady communication process?

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

Nevertheless, this research paper does not pretend on comprehensive identification of factors, resisting to emergence of the global E-Society. Rather, the aim of this study is to determine a necessary array of terms and methods, which foster effective and meaningful perception of the e-society.

III. KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

As Pedro Alves da Veiga remarks, "To a larger extent than buzzwords, the "digital divide" and "e-society" have come to represent a growing problem and an imminent tendency in our world" [5]. But at first, it is necessary to give consideration to the popular term "Information Society" and to discern its difference from the "E-Society". The term "Information Society" has been used since 1970-s, but its connotation got gradually transformed and, furthermore, depends on the scholarly approach (at least, there are more than 50 definitions). Technological interpretation of this term is pervasive ("an increase in information and communications technologies (ICTs) as a herald of nascent information society. It is suggested, often implicitly, that ICTs both define and create the information society"). Daniel Bell's theory of post-industrialism suggests an Economic-Occupational approach, "delineates an information society as one, whereby most jobs are informational". The definition, given by John Naisbitt, is close to this approach: "The information society is an economic reality and not simply a mental abstraction ...The slow spread/dissemination of information ends [...] new activities, operations and products gradually come to light" [6]. Such modern scholars as Manuel Castells and John Urry view the information society, first and foremost, as a network society: "Information networks have profound effects on the organization of time and space, as well as on other relations, allowing real-time communication on a planetary scale... The metaphor of mobilities along scapes (e.g. roads, rail, telecommunications systems which enable movements) may be considered to be central the information societies)". Yoneji Masuda reasons about a new type of society, where "the possession of information (and not material wealth) is the driving force behind its transformation and development [...] (and where) human intellectual creativity flourishes. As the Hungarian researcher László Z. Karvalics writes, "It is evident that the definitions are based on hidden preconceptions regarding which areas of life undergo significant changes: some are centered upon resources, others around products, or industries, or activities, or society and people. Some thinkers deem representation of global dimensions extremely to be important, while others do not. Some believe that political dimensions (control) are basic, whereas others do not even take note of it" [6]. However common objective criteria should exist for any definition. In the "information society" context they are, first and foremost, aligned with the new "manufacturing" technologies: "Information Society is a term for a society in which the creation, distribution, and manipulation of information has turned into the most influential economic and cultural activity. An Information Society may be compared with the primarily Industrial or Agrarian societies. The machine tools of the Information

Society are computers and telecommunications, rather than lathes or ploughs".

Therefore, the term "information society" in a modified way goes by the modernized Marxist definition of the economic and social framework, universal essence whereof is affected by universal economic laws: "The idea of a global Information Society can be viewed in relation to Marshall McLuhan's prediction that the communications media would transform the world into a "global village." Thus, by the "information society" we mean not a community as a specific existent structure, rather a new social-economic formation, which the entire humanity is gradually shifting to. But globality of the transition does not bring about synchrony of processes. The formation (as a common preset framework or evolution sample) by no means gives rise to the global society. In the real world various societies co-exist with each other.

According to the definition by Magoulas, G., Lepouras, G., Vassilakis, C, "E-society is a society that consists of one or more e-Communities involved in the areas from e-Government, e-Democracy, and e-Business to e-Learning and e-Health, that use information and communication technologies (ICT) in order to achieve a common interests and goals... The development of e-Society is relying and depending on the development of virtual reality (VR) technologies that insure interaction between participants of an e-Society in a more acceptable and tangible way. The development of (VR) and consequently the e-Society is based on improvement and balancing of participants' interaction methods, hardware necessary for such interaction, content presentation and effort required for development and maintenance" [7]. As a consequence, the E-Community definition is pivotal to characterization of E-society, which can be regarded as: 1.A virtual community established on the World Wide Web; 2. E-Communities are one sort of communication platform on the internet, and support or initiate business processes. They are used to build constant, self-dynamic communication and interaction processes; 3. The development of shared purpose, values, and experience resulting in the formation of trust between a group of people who may be geographically dispersed and communicate mainly via electronic means.

In summary, "we call the e-society a virtual set of individuals engaged in different types of relationships, exchanging information and knowledge, with technological access and use". That is, the e-society, anyhow, is a subset of the traditional society, which has always been existing by communications means.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The e-society phenomenon is studied in reliance on accumulation of scientific knowledge from all sciences. That is why, there is no wonder that theoretical background for scrutiny of this phenomenon is quite broad and has interdisciplinary nature. In our opinion, not only the analysis of economic and technological, political and social factors, but also a linguistic factor, lying at the heart of any societal mechanism, would come indispensable for successful comprehension of the global e-society phenomenon.

The role of the economic and technological exploration factor in social evolution was started by Marxism, which holds that economic determinants to a greater degree constitute not only social-political and cultural evolution of separate societies, but also interrelations between the nations. Unfortunately, this research area had been developing not only as a realist scientific theory (“academic Marxism”, “strong Marx”), but at the same time as a political ideology (“light Marx”) with sequential adjustment of scientific outcomes under the political requirements by means of the “Marxist dialectics”. In the sphere of the contemporary international relations studies the International political economy (IPE) carries on the tradition of academic Marxism, which regards economics as a principal perpetuum mobile of international relations. Yet, it is also evidently that “reduction to mere economic accounts cannot be adequate in any sense in no culture domain, including the sphere of economic processes” [8].

2) The role of political factor in the global international processes is revealed by the political realism. Noteworthy, neorealism takes account of not only natural (“given by nature”) political struggle between states (and societies) against each other, but also an outstanding role of non-governmental actors and economic determinants in this struggle. Time and again, obviously, both economic and political intercourse between individuals and groups with each other is feasible only within the society [9].

The linguo-political science analyzes practical political interaction between the specific communities, speaking different languages, as precisely communicational-linguistic communities, from the linguo-political perspective, appear to be the prime actors in any global processes. By far, this linguo-political approach is not new. One can come across its elements from the Bible Scriptures to the works by K. Marx. A linguistic community was regarded as an indispensable foundation for material production, as “production by an isolated individual outside the society... is non-sense, similar to development of a language without individuals living together and speaking with each other” [11]. From K. Marx’s viewpoint, any society is a “communication form” (Verkehrsform). Intriguingly, the linguistic community is an exclusively humane form of existence biological commonality (“humankind”) and transcends its boundaries: “As a matter of fact that Sancho speaks German, rather than French, owes to the circumstances, rather than humankind” [10]. Precisely due to its overt essence, naturally arisen linguistic commonality is preserved in economic development, changing its frames and shape, and standing in the historical arena either as a tribe, or as an ethnicity, or as a nation. Therefore, separate peoples have been created by a language, and precisely it fences the off each other. As K. Kautsky wrote: “Language is an ineradicable means of joint work and mutual aid, and, consecutively, all social relations and networks. Shared language is a powerful lynchpin in human society, whereas linguistic diversity is a formidable barrier dividing people” [12].

The “society” concept as a communications tool has been defined and elaborated within the sociological tradition. However, its grounds date back to Aristotle, who wrote that

“any state features a kind of communication... That communication aspires to the supreme good and to the greatest extent than other ones, which is the most important to anyone and encompasses other kinds of communication. This communication is called a state, alternatively, political communication” [12]. T. Parsons defined the social system as a “relational (attributed to relations) system of cooperation between the individuals and communities” [13]. A. Giddens (the structuration theory) presumed that the social system features “generative” (engendering) rules (and resources), rather than hard and fast frameworks” [14]. N. Luhmann elaborated the communications theory. In his opinion, the society consists of many systems, each performing its own function (economic, political, etc.), but all of them are intertwined with others due to the backbone system, which, basically, is a system of these systems, i.e. “a system of society”, which generates and reproduces communication. According to Luhmann, “communication is an integral part of the society, however the very communication cannot exist out of touch with the society... The self-reproduction thesis via communication postulates clear distinct lines between the system and its outer world. Reproduction of communication from communications takes place in the society. All other physical, chemical, neurophysiological and mental conditions pertain to the outer world” [1]. Thereby, in Luhmann’s opinion, in fact the society is purely a linguistic communication.

V. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

N. Luhmann wrote that “in the communication process the communication is always discussed about itself” [1]. This communication is called “self-description” of the society, i.e. it can be studied only via language. Therefore, in analysis of the contemporary international processes apart from the conventional research methods as the structural-functional and systemic analysis, comparative and comparative-historical method (and others), the three research methods are worth mentioning, especially significant to e-society study:

1. Method of Structural-communication analysis is based on the communicational function of the language, i.e. implies consideration of all social entities as communicational-linguistic communities.

2. Terminological analysis method rests on the cognitive function of the language and to the closest degree is connected with epistemology. As the English lawyer Edward Coke wrote in XVII century: “If you are not aware of the words, it will be impossible to conceive of the things; and if words disappeared, difference between things would incontestably fade away” [15]. The terminological analysis method combines:

a) linguo-positivist approach, which runs alongside with the early ideas by the linguistic positivist L. Wittgenstein and are designated to set up concordance of the term to the facts observed and get rid of empty and vague terms;

b) comparative-linguistic correlation between semantic meanings of similar words in various languages. Because every language “distorts” reality in its own way – that is why, there are the English, German or French schools in science,

divided not only by the state borders, but also languages. Exact sciences are devoid of this problem, because a common artificial scientific language was worked out in their making, which is universal among all linguistic communities (like mathematics). In social sciences, admittedly, there has always been strife to creation of the universal terminology.

c) Componential analysis: the linguistic method of determining exact semantic meaning of the word by its analysis and some accentuation (“elementary constituent of a word”, “minute unit of sense”), which can be used in all languages and for all languages and creates some kind of an equivalent of the universal language.

As a result, words and sentences have the right to scientific existence only when they point at the objects and facts of the real world. Any term (“word”) should be distinctly defined and detached from other terms. In spite of seeming simplicity and triviality, this method, as ancient as science itself, is an integral groundwork for any scientific research.

3. Method of social-political processes reconstruction on the basis of linguistic processes study, which have been well-conceptualized by linguistics, socio-linguistics and political linguistics. Indeed, when we are considering any social system as a constant communication process (structuration), we find out that the linguists have successfully been dealing with the matter for long. Certainly, their focus, first and foremost, has been concentrated on the linguistic changes, their causes and aftermath. But, apparently, any shift in the language (frequently, even phonologically) is a consequence of social changes in the linguistic community, which can be reconstructed politically and sociologically precisely due to well-scrutinized linguistic mutations and novelties. The language seems to be an autonomous and society-independent system. Therefore, all processes flowing in the language itself (and between languages) and being studied by linguistics and socio-linguistics might possibly reflect transformations running inside the society itself (i.e. in communication). A language (apart from other things) mirrors social processes; that is why, the very social process meticulously scrutinized by linguistics and socio-linguistics in its lingual terms can be reconstructed in social sciences as well. For, there cannot be a reflection without an object, which it mirrors.

VI. APPLICATION OF THE LINGUO-COMMUNICATIONAL APPROACH TO ANALYSIS OF E-SOCIETY

The term e-society is not usually translated into other languages and is used in its original English spelling. Thus, its closest tie to the English-speaking societies is plain to see. On the one hand, the e-society is social reality, which shapes human life, but on the other hand, it is a kind of a phantom, which cannot be seen or touched. If we associate the e-society with a computer or specific social media, we will find out only several visible frameworks and foundations, rather than the e-society itself.

In terms of the communicational approach the e-society as an objective (accessible to observation) fact exists solely and exclusively as a steady linguistic communication system between the individuals, which inevitably has lingual, rather than physical or spatial boundaries. This communication and

the system of stable relations between the individuals during the communication process are called the e-society. Thereby, when we reason about emergence and existence of the universal e-society, in fact, we observe the process of constant interaction and overlapping of a multitude of existent e-communities built up on various and multilingual communicational-linguistic communities.

Against the background of the cognitive approach the term “e-society” reflects in human consciousness (via language) their imagination of this tangible social phenomenon. Precisely this subjective, from their viewpoint, “vision” is being focused by the linguo-political idealists. However the vision of the e-society is not subjective. Firstly, it reflects objective social reality. As such, for instance, in those social entities, where e-society has not been crystallized out yet, there is no notion of it, like there is no separate word in their language, which would explain its meaning. Secondly, this vision has public nature and is objectively stipulated in language semantics, which is not engineered by us, rather we are taught it in the childhood. Consequently, the society records a shared vision of the e-society among its members via a common language in a natural way. Noteworthy, if scholars agree upon each other on adequate meaning of the term, usually, there is no sense in arguing over anything, as in course of a phenomenon’s description it gets completely described (i.e. research). Surely, mankind’s multilingualism should be taken into account – all of us see and feel the world in the same way, but analyze and depict it differently in according to semantics and logics of our languages evolved in various communicational communities, developing at unequal modes and stages of social and economic evolution. Certainly, more often than not the English-speaking term “e-society” does not have equivalents in other languages. But very frequently interlingual “correspondence” of the ancient and seemingly universal words is conditional as well. For instance, the Russian term “state” (etymologically deriving from the words “administration”, “a lord”, “supremacy”) does not fully equals to the English “State” (“status, affairs”), and, moreover, the Chinese 国家 (“a country, nation, state”), let alone the !Xóǀ language, whereby this word is likely to be simply absent (the exclamation mark “!” denotes a particular cluck, typical of the Bushmen language). The goal of the universal science is either to find one common scientific term through lexical correspondence or description (as it is done in the dictionary entries), which, to the fullest extent, comes up to real empirical fact, or separate these multilingual terms from others, clearly denoting their semantic meaning.

In compliance with the social-political processes reconstruction method proceeding from linguistic processes studies well-conceptualized by linguistics, admittedly, the history of the English language expansion over XX – XXI centuries has proved to be a reliable roadmap for any scholar, who researches globalization and e-society expansion.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Communication lies at the heart of any society. A language as a certain code lies at the heart of any communication. Intriguingly, language is not only a communication means, but to a large extent it identifies world outlook and culture of its

speech community [16]. Thus, obviously, all technical communication tools are set up on a language and for language. Grand breakthrough in technical communication means – alphabetization – in due time opened up a new social-economic evolution tier and exerted determinant influence on development of new social-economic formations. Technical and informational achievements of 20th century have shaped post-industrial information society. As the Canadian academician Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) noted in his work “The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects”, “Societies have always been shaped rather by the nature of the media via which people communicate than by the content of the communication. The alphabet, for instance, is a technology that is absorbed by the very young child in a completely unconscious manner, by osmosis. Words and the meaning of words predispose the child to think and act automatically in certain ways. The alphabet and print technology encouraged a fragmented processes - specialism and detachment. Electric technology fosters unification and involvement. It is impossible to understand social and cultural changes without knowledge in the workings of media” [17]. Finally, in 20th century owing to invention of computers, internet and digital technologies growth (which the e-society rests upon) the world has moved to the new stage of social development.

In the West the most popular viewpoint holds that the information society is a part and parcel of continuous improvement in democratic procedures, which is closely linked not only with e-democracy, but also e-governance. Furthermore, if to elaborate M.-K. Slaughter’s ideas on network governance in the globalizing world, thereupon the e-government can be perceived as an instrument in global governance or even global governance itself. Notably, global governance is unfolding gradually and “naturally” at the national and supranational tiers, uncontrollably, rather than under the UN aegis. What in practice is usually perceived as a tool oriented at achievement of larger “convenience” in social interactions (e.g., the English language as universal), gradually rearranges the modern social and political landscape. If nowadays we easily buy electronic tickets and are habitués of global webs, tomorrow world-wide electronic election on global issues is likely to come true... Still, at the current stage of multilingual civilization development, global e-governance appears to be rather an illusion. All social interaction (including the e-society) is based on living and various languages. While the automatic language has a binary code, the human language is much broader and more compound. As the great mathematician of 20th century Kurt F. Gödel wrote, multilateral code of the human language, overcoming any acutely preset “sequence” or algorithm, is beyond the capacity of any machine. However, it underlies all innovations. Thus, any information technologies have been imminently emerging due to multilingualism on our planet. And, notwithstanding such factors, facilitating global e-society as material culture and evolution of automatic interpretation technologies, nascence of the global e-society is inhibited by real

multilingualism, insufficient spread of the English language outside the Western world, intensifying multilingualism in the Internet, gaps in economic development and digital divide.

Undoubtedly, the informational-technological revolution is moving on in the modern world, i.e. gradual transition across all countries to the information society as a new social-economic level. But this transition does not automatically entail emergence of the global e-society. If arguing about this process, we are on its very start. Once again, (as in the Peter the Great epoch), in spite of the borrowed technologies, various lingual communities do not automatically converge and, moreover, homogenize. Although information technologies expansion correlates with overall increase in the English language study, it considerably outperforms the latter. As Karl Marx claimed, a mole scoops out at a leisure pace.

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