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27 Countries, 23 Languages, and Communication Challenges in the European Union: A Comparison with ASEAN Economic Community

ABSTRACT: This study aims to determine the bilingualism that was predominant in Europe 150 year ago; how Europe, at a time when literacy was very low, could have so many people mastering two languages or more; nowadays, what makes most of the European citizens monolingual, while they enjoy wide education opportunities; how respective national languages emerged in Western Europe; the working languages in use at the EU (European Union) now, compared to ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations). In this study, the authors have adopted a historical approach. The data were gathered from various academic references and documentation, while the research itself uses qualitative data analysis. The results of this analysis show that most of the European do not speak anymore a regional language, but are also generally unable to master the national language of neighbouring countries, although they have learned it at school. It appears that many Europeans, especially if they live in large countries, are lazy to learn foreign languages because they consider it as useless in their professional and private everyday's life. Besides, in perspective of the ASEAN Economic Community launching, English language as a lingua franca may cover the needs of political and administration staff, but does not guarantee understanding and friendship between the peoples that constitute ASEAN. Therefore, it is recommended that in each ASEAN member country, languages and cultures from fellow ASEAN countries should be taught in selected schools. KEY WORDS: European Union; Regional and National Languages; Language Contact; Language Status; ASEAN Economic Community.

INTRODUCTION

Economists often compare the EU (European Union) and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), especially in view of the forthcoming creation of the AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). Policy makers in ASEAN countries are wondering

how to replicate the successes of the EU, but above all to avoid mistakes and failures in the EU, which can lead to a waste, such as the Brexit (Britain Exit). The specialists of cultures and languages also question themselves (cited in Blake, 2017).

We propose, in this article, a reflection

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on the status of languages, and in particular the working languages in the international institutions that are the EU on the one hand and ASEAN on the other. We will first give an overview of the current situation in Europe. Why are so many Europeans monolingual?

In Europe, only 150 years ago, bilingualism was very widespread. Many Europeans mastered a regional (vernacular) language and a vehicular language, or even several (Walter, 1994; Poche, 2000; and Boada, 2012). The situation is very different today: the vast majority of Europeans do not speak any regional language. They are generally monolingual, speaking only their national language, and sometimes they practice more or less well the national language of another European country (EC, 2006; and Rousseau et al., 2014).

This second language was learned at school, and often forgotten if the individual did not need to use it in his/her professional life. This situation is well known to foreign tourists in France, for example, who are surprised that many French people are not able to understand English (even if they have learned it for 7 years of schooling).

How did we pass in Europe from a period when multilingualism was widespread and the population uneducated; at the present time, when the majority of Europeans are both well-educated and monolingual? We shall briefly discuss the historical reasons for this. We will then deal with the emergence of national languages and linguistic unification in most Western European states. We will describe the very different status of languages within each organization, the EU versus ASEAN. Finally, we will propose some ideas for the promotion of ASEAN languages, a condition we believe is necessary for understanding between peoples and for the political and economic success of the ASEAN community.

METHOD

This study uses historical methods. The historical method aims to reconstruct the conditions of the Europeans, especially the French in the past systematically and objectively by collecting, assessing, verifying,

and synthesizing evidence to establish facts and reach conclusions that can be maintained (Kartodirdjo, 1992; and Sjamsuddin, 2007). With this method, the researchers selected answer with facts compiled in the form of an explanation paradigm.

Thus, the study by the historical method is a critical study of the circumstances, the development, as well as its past experience and consider carefully and cautiously to the validity of the historical sources as well as the interpretation of the sources of such information (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The data source of this research is in the form of books, records pertaining to the incident.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Unification and the Disappearance of Regional Languages.

Among the European countries, France is an exemplary case of authoritarian linguistic unification, wanted by the government. During the last two centuries, France has lost the majority of its regional languages. Virtually all the regional languages of the northern half of France have disappeared (except, of course, French, which has become a national language).

Moreover, the local regional languages that make up the whole Occitan and Franco-Provençal (southern half of France) are very threatened. Of the 7 regional languages still spoken in France (Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Flemish, Alsatian, and Occitan), four are in fact cross-border, as the vast majority of speakers reside in a neighboring country: Basque (southern France and northern Spain), Catalan (Spain), Flemish (Belgium), and Alsatian (German dialect). Corsica is an Italian dialect close to the Tuscan.

Even Breton (a language of the Celtic sub-family in Brittany) collapsed in two generations, now falling to less than 10% of the population (200,000 people, out of 2 million inhabitants), with of the majority of speakers over the age of 70. About 15,000 pupils take Breton lessons at school, but then very few practice it on a daily basis (Foy, 2002; and NCCA, 2005). We can say that Breton is currently in a situation of artificial survival: if the institutional support

ceases, the Breton language will exist only in written and audiovisual documents.

In Corsica, the Corsican language still seems solid, with about 50,000 regular speakers, one in four inhabitants, and 3 hours of teaching of Corsican language and culture compulsory in schools. Independent political parties in Corsica regard language as a symbol and an essential tool in their struggle for independence. See figure 1.

How do you explain that many regional languages in Europe, sometimes called "minority languages", have been replaced or even "erased" by a few national languages? We must first distinguish two types of regional languages: local regional languages and middle regional languages. Middle regional languages are considered as a whole which encompasses multiple regional local languages and/

or dialects, which sometimes cover only a small geographical area (Matsuura, 2009; Sellier, Sellier & Fur, 2011; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014). For example, Occitan, the average regional language of southern France, covers highly contrasted local regional languages. Occitan is an artificial synthesis, in which the speakers of different zones do not recognize each other.²

The same is true of Basque, highly contrasted in France and Spain, and even between the different areas of the Basque language area. This is the weak point of regional languages: local regional languages are too small to survive, while regional languages appear as compromises, artificial

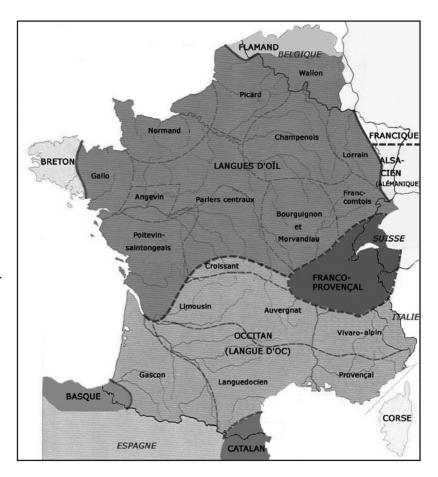


Figure 1:
Regional Languages in France
(Source: C. Alen-Garabato & M. Cellier, 2009)

syntheses, or unfairly favor one of the local languages *vis-a-vis* the others.

Some European national languages have been stabilized and standardized in the same way: German (*Dachsprache* or "tongue-roof"), Italian, Slovenian, Czech, and Finnish. English, and especially French, represent, as we have said, the triumph of a local language (that of the royal power) dominating or effacing all the neighboring local languages (Wardhaugh, 2006; and Sellier, Sellier & Fur, 2011). This is what we outline in the figure 2.

However, in Western Europe, a few regional languages (also called "minority" languages) are still very dynamic and do not appear to be threatened with extinction, such as Catalan in Northeastern Spain, Piedmontese and other regional languages in Italy, Flemish in Belgium, or Gaelic in Ireland (Poche, 2000; Becat *et al.*, 2002; and Irujo & Miglio eds., 2013). Even spoken

¹We do not deal here with French overseas territories, where some regional languages are very dynamic, such as Creole in the Antilles and Réunion, Tahitian in Polynesia.

²Occitan covers the dialects of Languedoc, Gascon, Provencal, Auvergne, and Limousin.

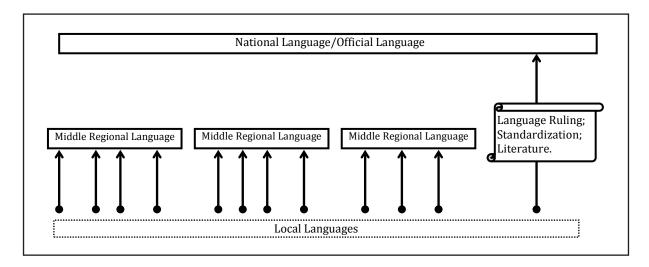


Figure 2: English-Language Local Area Incorporated in the Vernacular Medium, Unless the National Language in Some Western European Countries

on a daily basis by millions of speakers, these regional languages of Europe remain vernacular languages: they are spoken only in their region of origin, and have no chance of becoming a vehicular language in their country. Rather, they are exceptions to the global trend in Europe, which now represents only 3% of the world's 6,000 languages (Becat *et al.*, 2002; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

In France, the regional languages were consciously opposed by the government from the French Revolution of 1789 (we will explain why and how in the following section). More than a dozen regional languages have completely disappeared. It was only after the Second World War (1939-1945) that the government realized that this policy of eradicating regional languages did nothing for the French Republic and impoverished the cultural wealth of the country (Larkin, 1988; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014). But he was already too late.

In 1951, the Deixonne law allowed teachers to express themselves in the regional language, and offered one hour a week dedicated to the learning and practice of the regional language (Foy, 2002; and Sellier, Sellier & Fur, 2011). This law has been poorly applied, because in 1951, very few teachers mastered a regional language, and few children heard it in their families. Today, the teaching of regional languages is supported

by the Ministry of National Education, but involves very few young French people, and only in certain regions (Kuter, 2004).³

Moreover, it is a teaching for beginners, since none of these children has heard this regional language in his family! At the end of the secondary school, it is possible to go to the *baccalauréat* for an optional regional language test, level A2. The effort to maintain regional languages arrives too late in France, and appears largely artificial. Moreover, many parents of pupils prefer their children to learn a non-European language, such as Chinese, rather than a regional language (Solly & Esch eds., 2014).

The remaining regional languages in Western Europe are obviously not used in the work of the EU (European Union). However, in 1992, the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to protect these languages and encourage the population to use them (Walter, 1994; and Jones, 2013).

France has signed, but not ratified this Charter. If France ratified the Charter, it should: (1) Publish the official texts of local and regional authorities in two languages: national and regional languages; (2) Allow the use of this language in the administrative

³See also, for example, "History of the French Language". Available online at: https://slmc.uottawa.ca/?q=french_history [accessed in Bandung, Indonesia: December 27, 2016].

departments, including hospitals; (3) To offer a teaching of the regional language, from primary school to university; (4) Support the training of teachers, including journalists, in the regional language; (5) Encourage and support cultural activities in regional languages, such as festivals and shows; (6) Encourage and facilitate the dissemination of audiovisual documents in the regional language; (7) Promote and encourage translation, subtitling in the regional language; (8) Translate toponyms, such as names of villages, rivers, mountains, etc., into regional language if this toponym is different in French; and (9) prohibit any form of discrimination relating to the practice of a regional or minority language, for example the management of a company cannot prohibit the use of regional language (Barbour & Carmichael eds., 2000; and Rousseau et al., 2014).

In the case of France, ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages would oblige it to give status and encourage the practice of Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Dutch (standard Dutch and West Flemish), German (dialects of German, called "Alsatian" and German standard), and Occitan. These are the last regional languages still spoken today in France. The other problem, which we have already mentioned, is the legitimacy of these "medium regional languages", if they are a more or less artificial synthesis of various local regional languages, such as Basque, Breton, Occitan, very heterogeneous.

The French Senate rejected, in October 2015, the ratification of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, which does not therefore impose itself on the French Republic (Barbour & Carmichael eds., 2000).⁴ Indeed, the intellectual and political elites (rather Parisian) do not want the ratification of this Charter, considering that giving official status to the regional languages of France would weaken the French language and the unity of the Republic. It can be seen that the certainties and anxieties have not changed

much since the Revolution of 1789. Article II of the Constitution of the French Republic is very clear: "The language of the Republic is French" (Adamson, 2007; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

In reality, the regional languages which still exist in France are now so weakened that to be afraid is a little ridiculous (Poche, 2000; and Vanneuville & Gandreau, 2006). The example of Indonesia and its 600 regional languages shows that, in the presence of a national language (*Bahasa Indonesia*), regional languages are a cultural wealth and pose no danger to the unity of the nation (Sneddon, 2003). For France, it is certainly too late.

But, in the current resistance of the French elites to the rehabilitation of regional languages, we can see other reasons: (1) teaching and promoting regional languages in France would be expensive, with little benefit and very few people involved; (2) the vast majority of French people are totally indifferent to the fate of regional languages; (3) priority should be given to the promotion of French abroad, as an international language and as a language of culture; and (4) in some intellectuals, fear of future demands from immigrant communities, which might require, for example, that Arabic be supported and taught in the same way as other minority languages in France.

A Brief History of National Languages in Western Europe. The vast majority of the languages spoken today in Western Europe belong to the super-family of Indo-European languages (Walter, 1994; and Fortson, 2004). The main families of Indo-European languages are the following: (1) the Celtic family: Breton, Welsh or Welsh, and Gaelic in Ireland; (2) the Germanic family: German, English, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish; and (3) the Romanesque family: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian (Beekes, 1995; Fortson, 2004; and Rousseau et al., 2014).

In addition, a small number of languages spoken in Western Europe are not Indo-European: Basque (southern France and northern Spain), Hungarian (Hungary), and Finnish (Finland). Long after the end of the Roman empire, Latin remained the language of communication of European elites (Poche, 2000; and Adams, 2003). In Latin-speaking

⁴For comparison, see also "Language Policy in France". Available online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_policy_in_France [accessed in Bandung, Indonesia: January 15, 2017].

countries, Latin had evolved locally towards a large number of increasingly diverse local languages, and classical Latin was no longer understood by the common people. It was only when centralized kingdoms began to form a regional language (that of the King, generally) gradually replaced Latin.

In France, for example, it was only in 1539 that the King decided (the edict of Villers-Cotterets) that the legal texts would be drafted in French and not in Latin (Walter, 1994; and Barbour & Carmichael eds., 2000). At the same time, universities in Europe began to offer teachings in the local language, but without abandoning Latin.

The European nations were built in opposition and rivalry between themselves, by means of incessant wars on European soil and at sea, gradually fixing the borders of the states (Landes, 1998; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014). This construction of each state was carried out under the authority of the King, who progressively reduced the local power of the lords. The people were supposed to respect and admire their King, who symbolized the nation alone. Ideologically, the people had no role.

It was much later, as of the 19th century, that each state tried to convince citizens that they naturally belonged to a nation, and that they should be proud to be Italian, for example. The pride of belonging to a nation was transformed into an aggressive nationalism, which must be distinguished from patriotism. To be patriotic is to love your country, while remaining open to the populations of other countries. But nationalism was often accompanied by xenophobia against others (Walter, 1994; and Webster & Garcia, 2012). For example, being French is not being English, Italian, Spanish or German.

Every nation had to be convinced that other nations were hostile and inferior in civilization and, therefore, potential enemies (Webster & Garcia, 2012). Only this strong feeling of belonging to an exclusive nation could justify to the people the horror and sacrifices of wars, for example between France and Germany (1871, 1914-1918, 1939-1945) and their allies.

Pride and national identity are relatively recent social constructions (19th and 20th centuries), and among the symbols of the identity of each nation in Western Europe (flag, hymn, monuments, heroes, glorious history taught children, exclusive cultural characteristics) almost always figured as a single vehicular language, that of the intellectual and political elites of each state. In other words, a language symbolized a nation, and a nation was identified by a language (Anderson, 2012; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

This is why in Europe, more than anywhere else in the world, the formation of centralized nation-states has led to the disappearance of many regional languages, to the benefit of the official and national language of each state (Rousseau *et al.*, 2014; and Romaine, 2015). This official and national language, considered hierarchically superior to regional languages, made it possible to unify the nation and ensure effective administration.

However, it should not be forgotten that these national languages, such as French, English, and Spanish, were originally a regional language which was widely spread because it was the language of the King. For example, in France, French was spoken in a region, *Île-de-France* (Paris region), but the Kings of France gradually enlarged their territory and subjected all provinces to royal authority.⁵

One can, therefore, say that a national language is "a regional language that has been lucky" or more cynically "a language with an army": the hazards of history have spread it, to the point of supplanting most of the regional languages spoken in the provinces of the kingdom (Walter, 1994). "The languages of Europe are dialects [...] promoted by historical events to the status of languages", wrote C. Hagège (2014:494).

At a time in their history, European national languages have generally undergone a phase of standardization, desired by the central government to standardize the national language, so that citizens can understand each other perfectly, even

⁵See again, "History of the French Language". Available online at: https://slmc.uottawa.ca/?q=french_history [accessed in Bandung, Indonesia: December 27, 2016].

between distant provinces. In France, under the King Louis XIII was created the Académie Française (1635), responsible for fixing the orthography, the "good use" of the lexicon and the grammar, and to write a dictionary (Baddeley & Voeste eds., 2012).

Even today, the Académie Française is indefatigable in revising its dictionary and working on terminology (mainly to avoid borrowing words from English). German and Italian have also been the subject of standardization, which are rather syntheses between various dialects, while in France the royal power imposed French in a very authoritarian way, with a pre-established norm: good language French was that which was spoken in Paris, among the intellectual and political elite (Melissen ed., 2005).

Another important step in the constitution of a national language is obviously the emergence of a literature written, published, and transmitted as cultural heritage, while oral literature in the regional language was not written, or in late 19th century, and usually translated into the national language. This corpus of tales and legends reinforced love and pride for the nation's cultural heritage (Bronner, 1998; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

Literature in the national language was encouraged by the central government. The writers who pleased King Louis XIV received "pensions" (amount of money paid regularly). In return, the writers glorified the royal power. It was not until the 18th century, the Enlightenment, that writers dared to criticize political and religious powers (McLean, 2010).

France offers an example of this forced linguistic unification. In the 18th century, the majority of peasants spoke only their regional language and did not understand the King's language, French. But in the years following the French Revolution (1789), French was imposed with authority, and led to the decline of regional languages, criticized as vulgar idioms, backward, obstacles to progress and the Republic (Carmody, 2006; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

The government of the Revolution endeavored not only to impose French, but at the same time to eradicate the regional languages, as if they represented a danger to the unity of the Republic. School was the essential vector of this linguistic unification. From 1885, compulsory, free, and secular school (religious neutrality) imposed the French language on all children in France (Baker & Harrigan, 1980; and Carmody, 2006). Students who were heard to speak the regional language in the classroom or playing in the schoolyard were ridiculed and punished.

Despite these energetic measures, it was only a century ago, during World War I (1914-1918), that French young people from the most remote rural areas learned French, because they were mobilized and incorporated into Regiments whose soldiers came from various regions (Baker & Harrigan, 1980; and Walter, 1994). Consequently, the decline of the regional languages of France has accelerated, and most of them have now completely disappeared, there are only 7 left as we have seen.

In all European countries, and not only in France, dozens of regional languages have disappeared, or are threatened with extinction in the short term (within a generation); for example in Germany, the Swabian (Schwab), the Bavarian, and the Saxon. The trend towards the disappearance of regional languages accelerated greatly after World War II (1939-1945), with parents ceasing to teach them to children.

Monolingualism is, therefore, widespread in Europe, with the exception of countries with cross-border *diglossia*, such as Belgium (French and Flemish, a dialect of Dutch) and Switzerland (German, French, Italian, and Romansh). Note that in Switzerland Romansh is a regional language and, therefore, much more fragile than its three rivals, which are large European languages (Walter, 1994; and Boada, 2012).

As far as France is concerned, the rural exodus (young villagers seeking work in large cities), in the years 1950-1960, is probably the trigger for this decline of regional languages, and thus the abandonment of bilingualism (French + regional language) to adopt monolingualism (French only). This situation is well known to foreign tourists who visit France, astonished not to be able to

make themselves understood in English or in other European languages (Barker, 2008; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

A private company has estimated that the French have the lowest level in English among all citizens of the European Union! The teaching of foreign languages (those of other nation states, not regional languages) to young European pupils has not restored plurilingualism, but the situation is quite different in different countries (Piri, 2002). In the Scandinavian countries, the Baltic countries, the Central European countries or the Netherlands, the majority of young people have a good level of English, certainly because their national languages are scarcely spoken elsewhere (Walter, 1994; and Piri, 2002).

A Dutch or Estonian cannot hope to communicate in his mother tongue outside his borders, which is why he is strongly motivated to learn English. In other countries, where the number of speakers of the national language is much higher, the population seems much less motivated. The United Kingdom and France are certainly the most obvious examples of disinterest and sometimes laziness in learning foreign languages.

European National Languages and European Institutions. After the Second World War (1939-1945), Europeans finally understood that peace and prosperity required cooperation and not hostility between nation-states. Today, the European Union (508 million inhabitants), despite the crises it is going through, ensures a form of economic coordination between the 28 states that constitute it (Archick, 2017). A war between these European states is henceforth unimaginable, whereas the European history of the preceding centuries is only a long series of absurd and murderous confrontations.

But to cooperate one must understand one another, and the institutions of the European Union represent 28 states, totaling 23 official languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, and Swedish. This linguistic diversity is greater

than that of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), whose members have 8 national languages. In which language do EU (European Union) officials work?

The EU has not chosen a single language of communication. There is no lingua franca between the states located geographically in Europe, which could have been accepted by consensus as the language of the EU (Archick, 2017). Each official language of the countries composing the EU is thus recognized, whatever the number of its speakers. In the name of the principle of equity and neutrality between languages and cultures, none being superior to others; it seemed unacceptable for a linguistic community to impose its language on others.

The political project of the EU is a free association between states, the only method to guarantee lasting peace, facilitate economic exchanges, and promote development. In particular, the most numerous linguistic communities (German, French, Spanish, Italian, etc.) refuse in principle the linguistic imperialism of another language. This opposition of principle mainly targets English, the dominant language for international exchanges today. French, which was in the 18th century the language of European intellectual elites, no longer has the means to challenge the hegemony of English, but French intellectuals remain among the most suspicious and critical of the "international influence of the English language".6

The treaties governing the EU provide for speeches (in Parliament, the Commission) and legislative texts to be translated into the 23 official languages of the European Union. A simple calculation (23 * 22) shows that there are 506 combinations of two languages (source language + target language of a translation), e.g. Hungarian – Portuguese, Lithuanian – Slovenian, etc. It is not always possible to find translators/interpreters for all these combinations of languages. This obliges to choose a pivotal language, for example interpreter n ° 1 "Hungarian – German" and

^{6&}quot;How Globalization Challenges France". Available online at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/french_challenge_chapter.pdf [accessed in Bandung, Indonesia: December 27, 2016].

interpreter n ° 2 "German – Portuguese". In this case, the German language is the pivot language (Kishida & Kando, 2005).

These pivotal languages are generally those of numerous linguistic communities (English, French, Spanish, and German). This method mobilizes a large number of translators or interpreters, if it is an oral discourse. If, for example, a parliamentarian speaks Hungarian before his colleagues, it will be necessary to mobilize four interpreters to Portuguese only (pivot language, and the interpreters take turns every 15 minutes!). It is understandable that the European Parliament and the European Commission employ about 1,500 translators and interpreters, one third of the staff (not counting the elected officials). The budget for translation and interpretation is about 1% of the EU budget, equivalent to € 2.30 per European citizen and per year (Hall, 2012).

It is obviously impossible for an interpreter to be present at every meeting, every discussion. Of the 23 official languages of the EU, only three are used as working languages within the European Commission: English, German, and French (Hall, 2012; and Rousseau *et al.*, 2014).

Moreover, for the sake of fairness, the EU has adopted a single working language: the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, and the Central Bank. The Court of Justice of the EU deliberates in French, but its decisions must be drafted and communicated in the language of the litigants. For example, if a case involves an Italian institution or enterprise in a Polish language, the judgment will be published in Italian and Polish. At the European Court of Auditors, the working language is predominantly French, and sometimes English or German. Finally, the working language at the European Central Bank is English. As stated in an Article 21 of the European Commission, in general:

Any citizen of the Union may write to an [EU] institution or body in one of the languages [...] and receive a reply in the same language (cited in Marí & Strubell, 2015).

In spite of these important roles assigned to languages other than English, it must

be recognized that, on a daily basis, in the various committees, informal meetings, exchanges of information at the corner of a corridor, mostly English. For many calls for projects emanating from the European Commission, English is generally the only language. For example, to submit an application to an Erasmus + Capacity Building project, applications must be written entirely in English, which puts the countries of Southern Europe (Romance languages) at a disadvantage, where academics are not entirely Anglophone, be their Swedish, Danish or Dutch colleagues.

The Brexit (the United Kingdom leaving the European Union around 2020) will not call into question the status of English as a working language. English will remain the preferred language for small group meetings, informal exchanges between European officials and elected officials, and calls for projects (Blake, 2017). After the Brexit, the EU will thus be quite comparable to ASEAN in this respect: the working language will be that of one of the smallest members of the EU, Ireland, which only has 4.6 million of inhabitants.

France has a paradoxical policy: 200 years ago, it began consciously to suppress several of its regional languages, today it softly supports the 7 regional languages that still survive (Poche, 2000; and Piri, 2002). Yet, France encourages *plurilingualism* all over the world, especially when French competes with other languages. In this context, F. Grosjean (2015) states as follows:

France officially defends bi- and *plurilingualism* outside, especially in the countries of the French-speaking world. It could do so with such energy, and at all levels, within its borders with French, English and at least one other foreign or regional language, without jeopardizing national cohesion (Grosjean, 2015).

National Language and Regional Languages in ASEAN Countries. Most Indonesians are bilingual, using their regional and Indonesian languages on a daily basis (Sneddon, 2003; and Anderbek, 2015). A considerable number of Indonesians master three or four Nusantarian (Indonesian

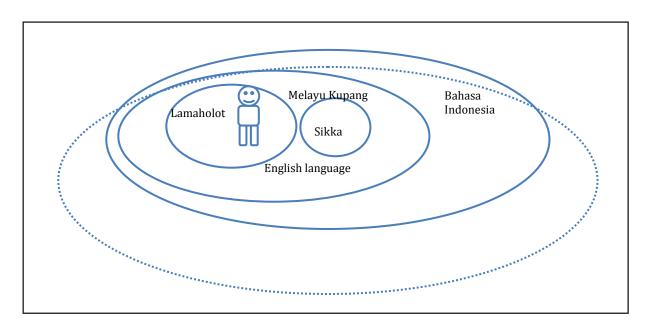


Figure 3:
Gravitational Language Organization, Example of a Lamaholot Speaker in East Flores NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur)

archipelago) languages, sometimes more. This *plurilingualism* can be described as a gravitational organization of languages (Steinhauer, 1994; Piri, 2002; and Benny & Abdullah, 2011).

Let us imagine, for example, a Flores East inhabitant who speaks Lamaholot, a nearby language (Sikka), Larantuka Malay (a regional lingua franca, spoken with interlocutors of *Nusa Tenggara Timur* whose regional language he does not know), and l (for contacts with people from another province of Indonesia). It is also possible that this person knows a non-Nusantarian language, for example English as lingua franca international. From the point of view of this speaker, these languages are organized around him in nested linguistic areas, as if he was the center of gravity, and capable of communicating with the persons situated beneath the successive orbits. Obviously, the more languages he has, the more people he can communicate with, as shown in the figure 3.

The gravitational organization of languages is widespread in Indonesia and elsewhere in the world (Sneddon, 2003; and Anderbek, 2015). It was also the case in Europe a few centuries ago: bilingualism was the most frequent case, many Europeans

mastered a regional (vernacular) language and a vehicular language. The situation is very different today, as discussed above, many regional languages have disappeared, replaced by a national language for each state.

The history of the Indonesian, which comes directly from the Malay (as the Malaysian) is well known, we will not deal here. Indonesia is as big as Western Europe, but it has been much wiser in its language policy. The emergence of Indonesian, a cement necessary for national unity, has not destroyed regional languages (Steinhauer, 1994; Masinambow & Haenen, 2002; and Sneddon, 2003).

However, local regional languages with fewer than 100,000 speakers and no written material (dictionaries, novels, children's books) are in danger of extinction in Indonesia as elsewhere in the world. However, this remarkable achievement (giving a national language to an archipelago of more than 13,000 islands) has not been repeated at the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) level, which adopted a non-Asian language as a working language.

A Comparison of the Working Languages of the EU and ASEAN. ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) has chosen a

European language, English, as the working language, according to the ASEAN Charter, Article 34 (cited in Kirkpatrick, 2010 and 2012). The relevance of this choice can be debated, but one thing is certain: English is not the language of any ASEAN nation, so no nation has imposed its language on other nations. The principle of neutrality and equality between cultures is respected, but by an inverse method to those of Europeans: the EU (European Union) recognizes the 23 official languages, while ASEAN does not use any of its 8 languages. The choice of the "everything" for the EU and the "nothingness" for ASEAN respect the equity between nations.

As Indonesia is the most populous country of ASEAN, logically the headquarters of ASEAN is in Jakarta. If ASEAN adopted other working languages, parallel to English, certainly Indonesian would be part of it (Sunendar, 2016). Seen from Europe, we can legitimately ask ourselves the question: why is not Indonesian, the language most widely spoken among the citizens of ASEAN, chosen as the working language of ASEAN? If it was not fair to give priority to Indonesian, why was not equal status given to each of the 8 national languages?

Let us compare the context of the start-up of the EU and ASEAN. Let us first note that in Western Europe, there existed many economic and cultural links before the creation of the EU. Mixed marriages between inhabitants of two European countries are not uncommon, especially after 1945. Many interpreters and translators of European languages were already trained and ready to work. On the other hand, during the colonial period there were few economic and cultural ties between the countries of South-East Asia, because they were artificially oriented towards the West (Anderson, 2002; Suwirta, 2003; and Suwirta & Ahmad eds., 2007).

Thus, the Dutch Indies in the early 20th century traded products mainly with Europe (especially the Netherlands) and the USA (United States of America), intra-Asian trade was insignificant for the ports of Batavia, Surabaya, ect. Even for the other colonized countries, all enclosed in a bilateral and

exclusive relationship with the colonizing country, for example Malaysia – United Kingdom; Philippines – USA; and Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos – France (Anderson, 2002; and Suwirta, 2003).

No interpreter and translator was already trained and ready to work when ASEAN was founded in 1967 for working languages, such as Thai-Indonesian, Vietnamese-Pilipino, etc. The languages of the colonizers (English, French, and Dutch) were spoken only by the Asian intellectual elites at the time of independence, between 1945 for Indonesia and 1957 for Malaysia (Steinhauer, 1994; Anderson, 2002; Masinambow & Haenen, 2002; and Sneddon, 2003).

During the creation of ASEAN, English had already asserted itself as the world's lingua franca for trade and science. The intellectual and political elites of Southeast Asia spoke mostly English (Benny & Abdullah, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2016; and Sunendar, 2016). The adoption of English as the working language of ASEAN was therefore simpler, more efficient, and more rapid. But 50 years after its founding, English remains in a situation of monopoly in the bodies of the ASEAN.

ASEAN has focused on strengthening economic ties between member countries. ASEAN citizens feel little concerned and now that the ASEAN Community has set new ambitious targets that can have a direct impact on the daily lives of citizens; it is beginning to run the same risk as the EU European: the decisions taken in Brussels are sometimes incomprehensible, unjustified, bureaucratic, and undemocratic. The EU is held responsible for all sorts of problems. sometimes criticized by politicians and the media, to the extent that in 2016 a large country, the United Kingdom, decided by a referendum to remove (Kirkpatrick, 2016; and Blake, 2017).

Citizens of South-East Asian countries would be more interested in ASEAN if, from time to time, they would hear in the media foreign personalities speaking in the language of another ASEAN country. For example, a Cambodian Minister is speaking in Indonesian language, an Indonesian expert was speaking in Thai language. But these

situations are unlikely. However, a small communication effort would make the ASEAN Community more sympathetic to citizens (Singh, Zhang & Besmel, 2012; Kulchan & Prachuabsupakij, 2014; and Sunendar, 2016).

If one consults the official website of the ASEAN at: http://asean.org, one finds that it is exclusively in English. It is, therefore, not understandable by most citizens of member countries. The ASEAN Community will soon face new challenges, for which, in our opinion, it cannot be satisfied with English monolingualism. It is even now that the opportunity for the Indonesian language to finally play a concrete role within the ASEAN is presented.

One of the objectives of the ASEAN Community is the free movement of skilled manpower, enabling freely to cross the common borders of ASEAN members in order to promote balanced economic development, combat poverty, and reducing socio-economic disparities (Benny, 2012; and Kirkpatrick, 2012 and 2016). This is an opportunity to encourage learning by expatriate workers from another ASEAN country, the national language of the host country, rather than English.

For a skilled worker who does not speak English, or has an insufficient level in English (A1 or A2), learning Indonesian does not require more effort than attaining a B1 level in English. It is the same for an Indonesian who would go to work in Cambodia. Family and professional integration in the host country will be facilitated. The "language passport" project, validating the foreign language levels of each participant, will be implemented on condition that it is possible to learn the languages of the other member countries.

Where can you learn Thai, Vietnamese or Pilipino today in Indonesia? Indonesian language and culture will be of interest to citizens of other member countries if the Indonesians themselves are interested in other ASEAN languages (Steinhauer, 1994; Bjork, 2005; and Benny, 2012). Paradoxically, young Indonesians prefer to learn the languages of North Asia: Japanese, Chinese, and, more recently, Korean (Sunendar, 2016).

But it is also because it is almost impossible to follow a teaching of Thai, Vietnamese, and Khmer.

In Europe, school systems favor "major" European languages: English, of course, but also French, German, and Spanish. The only way to encourage learning other languages is to pass reciprocal agreements or MoU (Memorandum of Understanding), from government to government. For example, a high school in Poland is committed to teaching Portuguese, while a high school in Portugal is committed to teaching Polish. To motivate the pupils' volunteers, trips and exchanges of pupils are organized.

The outstanding effort of the *Badan Bahasa* (Language Institution) in Jakarta, which through the PPSDK (*Pusat Pengembangan Strategi dan Diplomasi Kebahasaan* or Development Center for Language Diplomacy and Strategy) sends around fifty teachers of BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing* or Indonesian Language for Foreign) from around the world, and more particularly in the ASEAN countries, is worth noting here (Masinambow & Haenen, 2002; Sneddon, 2003; Bjork, 2005; and Sunendar, 2016). It is to be hoped that the other ASEAN countries will imitate this generous initiative.

At plenary assemblies and official ASEAN speeches, an interpretation can be organized via a pivotal language (probably English), so that a speech delivered in Indonesian, for example, can be listened to in Khmer, according to the schema: \rightarrow Khmer \rightarrow Indonesian \rightarrow English \rightarrow Thai \rightarrow Vietnamese \rightarrow etc.

Moreover, it would be useful and enjoyable if the most important texts and decisions of the ASEAN Community, which directly concern citizens, are translated and disseminated in the 8 languages of the member countries (or 9, to distinguish between Malaysian and Indonesian). Of course, these services have a cost of up to IDR 20,000 (twenty thousand Rupiah Indonesia) per year per capita, based on the cost of translation and interpretation for the EU (508 million inhabitants) and ASEAN (628 million).

Teachers, translators, and interpreters

will also have to be trained. This has a cost, but how much do misunderstandings cost? What would be the cost of misunderstanding and poor integration if workers move freely to another ASEAN country? How much will the ASEAN Community fail if all of a sudden citizens consider that ASEAN is the source of all their problems and pressure their governments to withdraw from this association? The mistakes of the EU, the self-centered and elitist tendencies of its bureaucracy, and finally the sad Brexit, are risks for ASEAN members.

CONCLUSION

France has deliberately and consciously eradicated most of its regional languages during the last two centuries, because the Republic feared that these languages would harm national unity. Fortunately, Indonesia did not make the same mistake; the national language, Indonesian, ensures the cohesion of the nation, and the 600 regional languages represent no danger to the unity of the country or NKRI (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*).

However, when international organizations broader than states were established, in Europe and later in South-East Asia, the choice of working languages was radically different. The EU (Europen Union) gives official status to its 23 languages. It means translating and interpreting a lot of information on a daily basis, but every country feels respected and treated fairly. Conversely, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) chose a European language, English, as the only working language. In doing so, it has chosen efficiency, but takes the risk that the citizens lose interest in an international organization, in which the elites discuss each other in English.

The establishment of the AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) could be an opportunity to launch an ambitious cultural cooperation between member countries, a true ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The promotion and learning of languages would be an asset for these exchanges. It is not only the pleasure to discover the cultures of neighboring countries in their richness and

diversity, but also to ensure understanding, sympathy, and solidarity among the citizens of the ASEAN member countries. For one day, it will not be the bureaucrats (who all speak English very well) who will decide the future of the ASEAN Community, but the citizens themselves.⁷

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