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# Aspects and Dimensions of Bilingualism and Multilingualism in Europe

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## Abstract

This chapter aims to explore certain aspects and dimensions of bilingualism and multilingualism, with a focus on Europe. The issues analyzed are the following: languages coming into contact due to conquest or colonization, bilingualism and multilingualism as a reflection of political trends and contemporary lifestyles, official languages, and heritage languages. The field of language education is also treated, when it comes to the benefits of being bilingual and multilingual, which are also analyzed from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, with the claim that knowledge of several languages ensures survival and better living conditions. The conclusions are that bilingualism and multilingualism are a necessity and an inevitable phenomenon in today's Europe, especially due to migration and due to the need of adapting to and accepting other cultures. What is more, there is a universality of bilingualism and multilingualism throughout history.

**Keywords:** nationalism, culture, political science, migration, language education, language contact

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## 1. Introduction

Today's world has made knowing several languages almost a necessity. We need foreign languages to establish business communication, to travel, and for other personal reasons, whether we wish to learn a new language for entertainment or for studying in a foreign country or to better understand a different culture. A foreign language can be chosen deliberately, or it could be necessary for someone trying to adapt to a certain community. We distinguish between **multilingualism** and **plurilingualism** as follows: the first refers to "the simultaneous presence, availability or use of several languages in a given place, territory or nation," while the

latter refers to “the simultaneous knowledge of, and acquaintance with, several languages by a given person or a given community, and the use of, or competence in, more than one language in thinking, speaking, writing and/or reading.” ([1], p. 12).

Multilingualism relates to public life, as it refers to the use of multiple languages in a certain territory. Plurilingualism is related more to the personal side, although it can extend to a community.

We live in a culture where individuals often learn foreign languages as a hobby, yet this choice is not always a personal one. In some cases, even if individuals have become multilingual as a personal choice, the official language of a community can be a single one. The key to bilingualism and multilingualism is represented by language contact and interaction ([2], p. 26).

Multilingualism and bilingualism can imply accepting other cultures, getting to know them better, and adapting to them, their values, and their ways of life. Multilingualism and bilingualism mean, politically, the recognition of the way that different cultures live together and the historical basis of this symbiosis.

The issue of bilingual education dates back to first-century Rome, when there were discussions regarding which language should be taught to students: Greek or Latin ([3], pp. 109–110).

Certain countries are more closely associated with foreign language learning in the school curricula than others. According to Devlin [4], learning a foreign language is more specific to schools in Europe than to schools in America. A second foreign language is compulsory in over 20 countries in Europe, with Ireland and Scotland as exceptions, although, in Irish schools, two local languages are taught: English and Gaelic. English is the most popular choice of foreign language in European schools, followed by French, German, Spanish, and Russian, according to Devlin [4], while the United States “does not have a nationwide foreign-language mandate at any level of education.” The situation in the United States is likely influenced by the fact that English has become a globalized language of understanding for and with people of other nationalities. Due to this, it is not vital for Americans to learn a second language for the sake of their professional lives.

The teaching and learning of foreign languages can be seen as a political act even in schools and language classrooms. Certain languages are spoken on a global scale, which gives one more reason for individuals to prefer these languages over others:

“Although there are around 5,000–7,000 languages worldwide, a few languages predominate in the interconnected world described above. According to the Ethnologue, 40% of the world’s population speak the eight most common languages, namely Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, English, Bengali, Portuguese, Arabic, and Russian (Gordon 2005 in Cenoz 2009, p. 1). Around 6.1% of all people speak minority languages, such as Frisian, Basque, Welsh, Irish, and Catalan in Europe.” ([5], p. 12).

English, which is believed to have become a global language, is spoken officially in countries in Africa as well as Malaysia, Singapore, India, Philippines, etc. In such countries, we also encounter varieties of New Englishes, which differ in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation from standard British English (RP English). The varieties of New Englishes have gone through major interference from the first language of its speakers. These varieties are found in former British colonies.

It is clear that political entities such as the European Union can only encourage multilingualism. The search for a feeling of unity has always been associated with a common language. From this point of view, the European Union struggles to implement the slogan “unity through diversity” and the wish to artificially create a sense of community. The feeling of nationalism goes hand in hand with the respect for one single language: in Europe, from early modernism until the twentieth century, “a single national language” was regarded “as a guarantee of the unity and indeed the identity of a people, the language often being interpreted and praised as the purest expression of a nation’s soul.” The process of the standardization of a language is done through “normative prescriptions, appropriate actions for identity formation, sociocultural policies and educational policy, even measures for the unification of religious idiom by imposing specific translations of the Bible or prayer books.” We could regard all these practices as part of an ideology, which has in mind a “cultural conquest” performed by means of language policy. “The same holds, of course, for variations of ‘standard’ language, and dialects.” ([1], p. 11).

The use of a national language has been promoted through various policies, ranging from educational to sociocultural. By speaking of bilingualism and multilingualism, we automatically speak of a political pact: of two or more nations or cultures living at peace with each other, of collaboration. As Anderson [6] has taught us, a nation is, after all, an imagined community, created through common culture, values, and interests.

Before the European Union, we could establish an identity between country, culture, and language. Every country was associated with a unique language. Nowadays, the EU has declared its goal for the citizens of its member states to know several languages, which is in fact a rule: “The European Framework of Reference regulates and demands multilingual language competence in Europe. Each European citizen should understand at least two languages other than the mother tongue.” ([5], p. 9). We speak nowadays of language awareness in a world that is interconnected, an awareness which is clearly necessary since we need it to communicate and to show respect toward other cultures: “Critical literacy (Fairclough 1992) has become an important democratic value in a world that has developed into an interconnected network shared by many. This requires awareness that democratic structures only exist on the surface layer as social networks are dictated by the few who own them.” ([5], p. 11). Political changes have always been reflected in language policies: “Language policy has always been seen as the vehicle of nation building, and political changes usually bring language changes.” ([5], p. 12).

In some countries, there are two or more official languages, for example: Canada (English and French), Belgium (Dutch, French, and German), Switzerland (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), and Singapore (English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil). If we examine the history of those territories, we see that this attitude toward language has to do with their colonization. In Canada, French has been used since the French settlers emigrated to Canada in 1604 and English has been used in the provinces’ government ever since colonization by the British. Areas where two ethnicities live together usually have two languages, such as in Romanian cities like Oradea, where both Romanian and Hungarian are spoken, or in Mulhouse, where both German and French are spoken. Areas located close to a border also often use more than one language.

Language is always part of a certain cultural identity and of the symbols and practices associated with nationalism and patriotism. In some official bilingual areas, some persons can

refuse to answer in a language that they do not consider to be their own. This raises the issues of cultural and political tensions in areas where two cultures are supposed to coexist peacefully. By recognizing two or more official languages in a territory, we recognize the strong impact of past historical events, such as conquests. In its turn, the use of a certain language indicates the belonging of someone to a certain culture and cultural identity.

Using two different languages can raise the issue of belonging to two different cultures, which can have an impact on personal identity. The novels by Hanif Kureishi (1990–2017), for example, feature characters who are half-Indian and half-British and often explore these themes. The same identity issues often affect immigrants, who come from cultures and speak languages other than those of the country in which they now live.

On the other hand, promoting a certain culture requires promoting its language. We find ourselves drawn by exotic languages, such as Japanese, whose cultures we wish to discover. Through the inclusion of Spanish dramas in Romanian television programs, the respective language and culture are promoted.

Learning different languages is an aspect of politics, and it is done through various manifestations: through wars and physical, armed conflict, or imposed through culture.

## 2. Languages in contact

Historical events cause languages to come into contact, as the result of invasion, colonization, annexation, resettlement, etc., and also, as is the case nowadays, for establishing business partnerships. As a result, a new language needs to be learned by people who “may become refugees, either in a new place or in their homeland.” What is more, as a consequence of an invasion, “the indigenous population may have to learn the invader’s language in order to prosper.” (Wei 2013).

One such example is that of migrants in our contemporary world. This situation applies both to refugees and to other persons who leave their own country to find temporary work or to emigrate entirely. They have no other choice but to come into contact with another language and culture; they will need to adapt and learn the language of the country. They may join communities of their own people, if there are any in the respective country, but often, in order to find better conditions for life and work, they will need to adopt the language of the country they have moved to.

Whole populations may be forced to move due to natural disasters and find themselves faced with new languages. As a result of people’s resettlement, language contact occurs. An example of such a situation is the following: “Some of the Irish and Chinese resettlements in North America were the result of natural disasters.” (Wei 2013).

Religious issues can also cause people to move to other countries and deal with other languages. Religious oppression can cause people to leave the respective country and move to another country and then they will have to learn the language of the new country. “Russian speakers in Israel are a case in point.” [2].



The wish to learn a culture's language out of passion and personal empathy "with a particular ethnic, cultural, or social group" is not excluded. The main issue, however, remains the economic aspect that triggers migration in search for better living conditions. Accordingly, "Economic factors account for most of the linguistic diversity of the United States and an increasing proportion of the bilingualism and multilingualism in present-day Europe." [2].

Nowadays, the movement from one country to another has become possible due to many reasons. One such example is the politics related to migration, which has been allowed among countries in Europe. When poor countries join the European Union, this allows their citizens, Romanians, for example, to move to work and live in other European countries with better economic situations.

According to Hebden [7], "Multilingualism is vital for an inclusive EU." Hebden [7] believes that the current mobility provided by the EU offers great opportunities, such as the possibility "to move to another country for study or retirement." However, attention should be paid to the "new challenges of inclusion within a host community." ([7], p. 2).

The freedom to move across Europe allows citizens to feel equal with one another, as this sort of migration is so common that it has become almost a lifestyle in our contemporary world. Media advertising of classes focused on foreign languages and cultures, some even given free online, has advertised this lifestyle as something usual nowadays. In the past, moving to another country was a more isolated phenomenon and the person felt alone in the process; nowadays, the cultural shock is minimized through all the information made available worldwide and for free on the Internet. Even traveling has become something very usual as it has become simpler than it was in the past. We get lots of advertisements praising the reduced prices for flights and hotels. The plane has become, through low cost offers, a very common means of transportation. Working abroad has become something common, especially for citizens of poorer countries of the EU, such as Romania. The business of foreign language teaching seems to be supported by the EU, as "Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment" was in fact a strategy adopted by the European Commission in 2008. Regional and minority languages were included in the strategy. Afterwards, "In November 2008, the Council adopted for the first time a resolution on multilingualism. They recognised the need to widen the range of languages offered in the education system." [8].

In what way do these movements influence languages? Varieties of New English, such as Malaysian English, Philippine English, Indian English, and others, borrow ways of pronunciation, grammar structures, and words from the languages spoken natively in Malaysia, the Philippines, and India. Even English as lingua franca in European countries has led to borrowings; young people especially use English words and expressions mixed into discussions in their mother language. IT terms are often borrowed from English, but so are terms that already exist in the other languages. The reactions to this phenomenon have been varied: while some countries still accept this linguistic borrowing, other countries such as France have violently opposed this practice and have argued for the need to keep the purity of the country's language. Countries such as Hungary use their language only, avoiding borrowing at all costs; they go as far as translating proper names belonging to other nations into Hungarian.

### 3. Bilingualism and multilingualism: a reflection of political trends and contemporary lifestyles

The current discourse on bilingualism and multilingualism reflects the political issues of the time and the political situation in various countries. We speak of language policies, of requiring that certain languages be studied in schools. In Romanian schools, minority students have the chance to study the mother tongue of their ethnic group instead of Romanian literature and culture. Such a practice shows that they are accepted and not forcibly assimilated by the culture of the country they live in. However, they also need to speak Romanian as they need to communicate with people belonging to this culture.

Belgium is another example. It is a federal state, divided into three regions: the Flemish (where Dutch is used), the bilingual region (which is bilingual), and the Walloon region (where French and German are used). Yet, it manages to preserve a sense of unity that makes it a model for the European Union, according to <http://www.eutrio.be/structure-de-letat-federal-belge> [9].

Immigrants and refugees are often multilingual, due to their living in multiethnic home countries as well as having to learn the language of the country they moved to ([1], p. 12).

As a reflection of contemporary lifestyles, the use of several languages has led to the creation of a new domain of linguistics, **forensic linguistics**: “The study of bi- and multilingualism, together with that of social media, represents new frontiers in the field that has come to be known as ‘forensic linguistics.’” ([10], p. 671). This field investigates the way online criminals talk: “In a world connected by social media and globalization, the role of the study of multilingualism in forensic linguistics is increasing rapidly.” ([10], p. 671). The trend of multilingualism has affected all aspects of our lifestyle, on- and off-line.

Of course, there is the case of the European Union, discussed by Sokol [11]. He draws attention to “the political role of language,” as much more than a simple tool for communication. According to him, unity of religion and political unity, mean unity of language, as he offers an example from history: “Political and religious unification went hand in hand with linguistic unification, as occurred in the Albigensian Wars in France, the English conquest of Ireland and Wales or in the Reconquista in Spain.” ([11], p. 185). The English language strives to be a common language of understanding among different countries in the European Union. This was needed as “Modern society as well as democratic politics is based on communication among citizens,” and as “Everybody knows that Europe, and particularly Central and Eastern Europe, is divided by a wide variety of languages into linguistic groups, whose members are not able to communicate with each others.”

According to Mkhize and Hlongwa [12], “Historically, higher education in South Africa and Africa in general has relied on foreign languages; this has become a basis for social discrimination and inequality.” The authors claim that English is seen as the language of the elites, while indigenous languages are associated with an inferior status, which is a clear example of how a conqueror’s language can be imposed as the elite language on the conquered population.

In today's world, we try to show respect to several languages spoken in the same territory, to respect the language and culture of minority groups, and, at the same time, to bring them together, offering a sense of unity through a common language, a lingua franca. Brexit [13], when Great Britain voted to leave the European Union, affected the translation industry in Great Britain. This was because "The EU allows the free movement of people across the continent which necessitates a lot of public spending on language services," (<https://www.empowerlingua.com/brexit-will-affect-translation-industry/>) which will no longer be necessary if Great Britain establishes business relationships with America and China, where the English language is used. However, despite these claims, Brexit does not represent any danger: free movement in Europe will continue, and English will still be the lingua franca for a good number of years at least. There could be in fact an advantage to Brexit: more interpreters and translators will be needed, in case English will no longer be the lingua franca. Since once the majority uses English as a lingua franca, there is no need for many translators and interpreters. Once English is no longer a lingua franca, other languages will be needed, and more interpreters and translators, as once Romanian is your native language and you can use no lingua franca, an interpreter will be needed to help you understand someone who speaks Spanish. The interpreter will need to use Romanian; otherwise, he would have had to use English, the lingua franca, and not be forced to know Romanian.

While multilingualism allows for opportunities for the flourishing of the translation industry, there is also a search for a lingua franca. For certain countries, it is English. In the case of immigrants, the lingua franca becomes the language of the country they have migrated to, as they need to communicate with the inhabitants of the respective country. In any country, there can also be immigrants of other nations, and they may need to establish business communication with them as well.

### **3.1. Causes and cases of multilingualism: official languages and heritage languages**

In every country, there is one, but often more, official language(s), constituting the majority language, and there are also languages spoken by minorities, which can be official languages or not. The situation of immigration has raised the subject of heritage languages, defined by Valdés [14] as the immigrants' languages. The term refers to languages that are not English and is defined as follows: "In the United States the term 'heritage language' refers to a language learned at home that is different from the dominant language of the community." ([15], p. 452).

Of course, a heritage language can have different status depending on the way it is used and on the number of its speakers: for instance, Spanish is, in the United States, a second language as well as "the most widely studied foreign language in middle schools and high schools. [...] And because Spanish is spoken by Latino immigrants, it is also a heritage language." Other languages, such as Romanian, Polish, and Finnish, are, in the United States, "heritage languages whose distribution is highly restricted." ([16], p. 170).

Other heritage languages are Native American languages in the USA and Canada. McCarthy discusses the situation of these languages as follows: "Most Native American languages are



no longer acquired as a first language by children. They are nonetheless languages of identity and heritage, and in this sense can and should be considered mother tongues.” ([17], p. 201). These are endangered languages that need to be protected. The Native American Languages act was passed in Congress in the USA in 1990, and as a result, we find nowadays Native American immersion programs for learners.

The heritage speakers will also have to learn the standard, official language of the country they live in and they will be at least bilingual. The issue of heritage speakers has appeared due to the possibilities of mobility in today’s world.

### **3.2. Benefits of being bilingual and multilingual**

The theories showing the importance and benefits of being bilingual encourage learning at least one additional language. This practice supports the political need to set up the current “unity in diversity” and to legitimize the official bilingualism and multilingualism in countries where there are two or more official languages. At the same time, the practice is encouraged as there are professional opportunities for translators and interpreters in our contemporary world.

The benefits of being bilingual come from the need to adapt to and function in certain cities. For instance, Hong Kong is a bilingual city. Its inhabitants use both English and Cantonese. The Hong Kong Basic Law (Article 9) and the Official Languages Ordinance (Chapter 5) have established that English and Chinese are Hong Kong’s official languages.

Leaving the issue of cultural adaptation aside, there are political reasons for promoting bilingualism and even multilingualism through psychological theories. Linguistic studies have proved that we can take cognitive distance from an issue in a second language. Multilingualism is promoted for political purposes, in order to help people accept the concept of unity in diversity. Persons speaking two or more languages could be regarded as more diplomatic and more likely to be on good terms with other cultures, which is in the interest of the European Union. The European Union promotes the study of languages so that its citizens will find it natural to live on good terms with other cultures.

The benefits of being bilingual (enhancing cognitive abilities, task-switching, adjustment to “C” of 7-month-old children and “less cognitive decline” for seniors) are also constantly advertised through scientific research [18].

The cognitive benefits of better attention and task-switching among bilinguals can only encourage and motivate learners to learn a second language. What is more, we are told that in today’s world bilinguals outnumber monolinguals, this being another challenge we set up for ourselves, to be like the majority, and not to be left out. What is more, a definition of being bilingual is under debate, as “Language proficiency can vary from having some conversational fluency in one language, to being fully versed in reading, writing, and speaking two languages.” ([19], p. 292).

Nobody wishes to be an outsider in any social group. Scientific research constantly promotes the benefits of knowing several languages and people are beginning to expect that school or work will require that they learn a second, third, or even fourth language.

The issue of multilingualism is tied to modern democracies, and it is presented as such in the description of courses. For instance, part of the description of a Bachelor in Minorities and Multilingualism at the University of Groningen claims that the main challenge of democracies nowadays is to minimize the tensions caused by minorities, as they fight for “independence from encompassing majority states. At the same time migratory movements around the globe have created all kinds of new minorities like for instance Kurds in Germany or Turks in the Netherlands.” The main problem “is to find a stable balance between unity and diversity. How to deal with ethnic and cultural differences, that is the main question.” (<http://minorities.nl/courses/bachelor/> [20])

The topic of foreign language learning cannot be separated from its cultural and political component. Students of foreign languages cannot be without knowledge of political issues. Contemporary political situations cannot be ignored by university curricula.

At the same time, since language makes up a culture, and a feeling of nationality, in what way are we supposed to look at a second and third and even fourth language? Are they a threat or are they an act of reconciliation and understanding among cultures? How peaceful is today’s world? We know that there are areas of the world still engaged in conflict and we also talk of cyberwars. If you know a second language, do you distance yourself from your own emotional expression when you use it, and if so, does this have an effect of creating a distance from your own culture? In what way? Do you become more objective or do you lose your identification with it?

Immigration could be seen as something usual in today’s world. It has been shown that “Interestingly, attitudes towards immigration in Japan become more positive the more fluent a person is in English, suggesting that boosting English education may help to make the Japanese more accepting of immigration.” (<http://www.vdare.com/posts/the-english-language-as-a-trojan-horse-in-japan> [21]) Through a second language, politics could simply attempt to encourage people to adapt to the world they will have to live in from now on. Romanian newspaper authors have drawn attention to the fact that the use of English for communication among young Romanians has made them more open to accepting immigration, and they have taken a psychological distance from their own culture. It is known that young people from Romania wish to emigrate in search of a better future. Does the use of language lead to the wish to immigrate or does the wish to live abroad aid in learning English? This is still a matter of debate and personal perspective.

### **3.3. Individual vs. societal bilingualism**

Once an individual speaks two or more languages, we deal with individual bilingualism. In this case, we could have to do with a personal preference or decision. When a country or community uses two or more languages, the phenomenon is called societal bilingualism.

Romaine [15] wishes to establish the distinction between individual and societal bilingualism, but she believes that this distinction is difficult to make. Certain communities can be larger and others smaller. Sometimes, certain individuals are part of a small community, but they are also part of larger communities of speakers of a certain language. A community can be formed of two or more individuals, according to Romaine [15]. However, if we look at the

number of languages and countries, we find it is impossible. There is a “concentration of the world’s 6,900 languages into about 200 countries,” which “means that there are over 30 times as many languages as there are countries, or in other words, that bilingualism or multilingualism is present” ([15], p. 448).

Thus, contrary to the understanding we got in the introduction of this paper, European countries are not entirely monolingual. We do make this mental association, however. We do associate Spain with the Spanish language, France with the French language, and so on. Yet, these countries have minority ethno-linguistic communities that speak a language of their own in addition to the national language. Thus, for instance, Great Britain has the ‘Welsh,’ France has the ‘Bretons,’ and Spain has ‘Catalan’ as indigenous ethno-linguistic minorities. They also have more or less large populations of immigrants speaking other languages. The European Union expects every member country to take into consideration the language needs of minorities and immigrants. In their turn, immigrants and minorities have no choice but to learn standard languages used in the countries where they now reside, and used by those with whom they wish to interact.

Romaine raises the question of the existence of nation-states, which by definition recognize several languages. This is because within the nation-states there are several groups, and each and every one uses different languages. Not all languages are official languages, used in institutions and schools. Certain groups are more powerful and this leads to their language becoming the used one ([15], p. 449).

Due to the contemporary organization of the world, it is impossible not to speak of bilingualism and multilingualism. This naturally follows the structure of states and nation-states, as well as the connections among communities.

### 3.4. Evolutionary psychology: knowledge of several languages for survival

Multilingualism and bilingualism could be, in certain cases, ways of keeping culturally significant languages alive. For instance, the French try to preserve the Breton language by using it in haiku poetry contests and, of course, by speaking it in a restricted community. (NB: This is not a French government initiative but a resistance initiative of Bretons who want their language recognized by France aided by the multilingualism policy of the EU). The connection between language and culture is integral to the history of the respective country. By preserving languages through bilingualism and multilingualism, they try to preserve their civilization. Even if English is a *lingua franca*, it does not attempt to replace the languages spoken historically in the countries in Europe. Civilizations could be defined as a combination between a particular view of the world and history. According to Mozaffari [22], civilizations are formed by “an explicit *world vision*,” meaning “a set of cultural system, an ideology or a religion” and by “a *historical system*,” meaning “a coherent political, military and economic system.”

Since language is part of a country’s and people’s national identity, it is natural to regard it as part of history. Language is inseparable from history as it was used to create a nation’s cultural products and identity. World vision refers to the values of a culture—which are, in turn, established and legitimized through literature and recorded history, especially in legends of local heroes. The hero could be a character in either literary or historical works, and the model of the

hero varies according to the passage of time. When literary works and historical documents are studied in schools, they impose certain values on which to build a strong national identity. This national identity is used to keep unity among the members of the community. In this way, they will protect their country and the model of the hero will motivate them to succeed.

Bilingualism and multilingualism are promoted in order to encourage adaptation to today's world, together with preservation of national identity. Evolutionary psychology explains bilingualism and multilingualism as a survival tactic for certain communities and of smaller groupings of migrants that seek to adapt and be accepted. Within this approach, "knowledge and principles from evolutionary biology are put to use in research on the structure of the human mind" (<http://www.cep.ucsb.edu/primer.html> [23]).

Certain countries function due to the respect shown to a multilingual community. One issue regarding the study of bilingualism from an evolutionary perspective has been the fact that "Intuitively, learning two languages is harder than learning one, yet bilingualism is prevalent in the world." [24]. However, the conclusion is the following: bilingualism is a result of the interaction among multilingual communities. It "is seen as a secondary linguistic ability - a sort of by-product." ([24], p. 1).

The common element of bilingualism and multilingualism is the need for adaptation and communication with those with whom we live. This is confirmed by Sternberg and Christiansen [25], who refer to multilingualism as something normal in the world. In India, there are "twenty-two official languages, and only 18% of the population is a native Hindi speaker. Half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa is bilingual as well."

Crowd psychology may also play a role. Once an individual is part of a crowd, and the crowd behaves in a certain way, the individual believes that this is a universal type of behavior, to which he will have to adapt. The larger the crowd, the larger the feeling of its universal behavior, and the individual's loss of responsibility [26, 27].

Once bilingualism and multilingualism are the official rule, individuals have no choice but to adapt to the crowd that has adopted the rules. If they do not conform to the crowd, they will be left out. Romaine [15] supports this claim: "Bilingualism and multilingualism are normal, unremarkable necessities of everyday life for the majority of the world's population." This does not apply only to communication related to business necessities. Students need to learn foreign languages in order to pass their exams, graduate, and then be able to apply for a job to make their living.

Certain countries have been, historically, built by immigrants, such as the USA. They were "voluntary and involuntary immigrants" ([28], p. 467).

In this case, "The sociolinguistic profile of speakers of non-English languages in the USA is a direct reflection of the country's constantly ongoing history as a nation of immigrants. Such speakers are overwhelmingly either immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants." ([28], pp. 466–467).

This could be the reason why Anderson sustained his theory of a nation as an imagined community. Since language is not common, and several languages are officially accepted,



there was a need for something common to legitimize the holding together of the American community. Group cohesiveness is an evolutionary necessity; otherwise, there would not have been any security of the community during external attacks.

### 3.4.1. *Foreign languages*

#### 3.4.1.1. *Foreign language teaching*

EU has started a campaign advertising the benefits of foreign language learning with a political purpose: to keep its citizens united. Everyone wishing to learn a language can find the method that fits him or her best. If you open any Internet page, it is impossible not to find advertising regarding a wondrous method of language learning. Some promise extremely fast results; the characters used for advertising are persons that have been trying for years to learn a certain foreign language, but with no results. They needed it for their jobs and, due to the fast method, they managed to get the promotion they had been wanting for years. While skepticism regarding such methods is advisable, we cannot help but notice the campaign led by EU to unite citizens under a European identity. Raising the curiosity of its citizens toward different languages and cultures is part of the campaign. As many citizens would feel that they are losing their national identity due to constant traveling and migration, EU tells them that their language and culture will still matter and will be learned, respected and enjoyed by the other Europeans. Online correspondence courses such as EUROCOR include courses that will help their learners get a diploma to ease their access to the job they want. The courses include foreign language learning and ease the access for their learners to understand another world. In this way, every nation will feel proud that they are studied by other Europeans. It will also make them more aware of their touristic potential. Many European countries, such as France, Austria, Hungary, and others, rely on the tourist industry.

According to Hebden [7], studying a second foreign language has a political purpose: to make citizens feel included in EU. She states:

“increasing bilingual education in schools could enhance language exposure and therefore make inclusion easier, while also equipping learners with key assets for mobility without sacrificing on time spent teaching other subjects.”

As not everyone can learn a second or third language in his or her family, one solution is to learn it in school. The benefit of knowing foreign languages is, according to Frijhoff et al. [1], pp. 10–11, that it brings different people together, through bringing enrichment of the vocabulary and of the new perspectives brought on reality and through the empathy with other cultures and communities.

When historical circumstances and official rules bring two or more nations together, they have no choice but to live together and communicate through learning each other's language. In this way, the functioning of the respective state is ensured.

Frijhoff et al. ([1], pp. 10–11) underline the political role of language and the political aspect of imposing it in language teaching. At the same time, they draw attention to the fact that sometimes certain languages can be in political competition with one another. They are tools used to impose “another culture, a different ideology, a new world view.”



The language competition and conflict could be illustrated by cases of bilingual cities, such as the Romanian-Hungarian ones in Romania, where certain people traveling there who only speak Romanian report that sometimes Hungarian speakers who also know Romanian refuse to answer using the Romanian language.

Keeping these types of conflict under control is done through rules and through crowd psychology. Ensuring unity and respect helps keep possible armed conflicts at a distance. At the same time, multilingualism and bilingualism suggest a type of collaboration for several nations to survive together.

#### *3.4.1.2. Language and culture*

By studying foreign languages, people can minimize the culture shock they experience when moving to another place. Knowing the language of the foreign country can help them adapt more easily, especially since foreign language courses nowadays include a cultural component. Foreign language teaching methodologies debate on the inclusion of culture in foreign language curricula. According to Kramsch [29], the debate is still in progress.

The truth is that it was impossible for foreign language teaching to be separated from the culture of the respective language. However, some textbooks could have included more focus on the linguistic structures and less focus, if any at all, on the cultural background. Conversation guides, which only focus on traveling phrases or basic needs, do not include cultural aspects. Manuals for beginners in Romanian schools in the 1990s did not include cultural aspects, or they were restricted to fragments from French and English authors. They were using a different strategy: making learners adapt the language to their needs and relate it to everyday life. The awareness of cultural aspects was given later, when they would read about cultural and historical monuments such as Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower. In this way, the respective culture was felt as one's own, and then the cultural aspects were gradually introduced. Nowadays, the tendency is to introduce cultural aspects right away. The purpose is the same, to make the learner familiar with a different culture. As EU citizens, we are supposed to be already familiar with the respect and need for multilingualism. The benefit of knowing several foreign languages has reached the level of communities, not of individuals as in the past.

Foreign language teachers ask themselves the following question: "how can we develop in the learners an intercultural competence that would shortchange neither their own culture nor the target culture, but would make them into cultural mediators in a globalized world?" ([29], p. 57). This question is related to an issue that has preoccupied the members of EU ever since the beginning: will the possibility of movement make people feel less tied to their own culture and identity? EU promotes cultural values and tries to preserve the cultural and national identity of its countries in order to preserve the tourist industry, which in its turn generates income. The purpose is not only political but also economical, helping countries maintain their status and budget.

According to Hebden [7], the issue of the EU policy toward foreign language is the following: European citizens should be able to use two foreign languages. This was established in 2002 by the heads of states of the European Union, as knowing foreign languages can "make people more employable and build bridges between different cultures, leading to a more inclusive society."

Translation has prospered, creating a bridge between cultures. Foreign language learning methodologies have also come to include communication studies.

Perhaps in this way the differences between minority and majority languages would be minimized. This is one of the reasons why nowadays there is an active promotion of learning foreign languages, in schools, in universities, or within business companies and even as hobby courses.

### 3.4.2. *Multilingualism in cyberspace*

A UNESCO brochure of 2015 draws attention to issues of multilingualism in cyberspace, focusing on the fact that the Internet should be multilingual; otherwise, minorities will not have access to quality resources and communication. This would lead them not to be able to be included in current debates and online communities, “which are critical elements in support of sustainable development.” ([30], p. 2).

The Internet works similarly to the real world, dividing its users into communities. They either look for their communities or have to adapt, using the lingua franca, English.

The Internet, being multilingual, helps preserve rare languages: “interest in the role that a multilingual Internet can play in the preservation, revitalization and promotion of languages” ([30], p. 6).

The Internet itself has become part and parcel of our everyday lives. Communication via Internet has become a necessary and a compulsory skill in every working environment. We need to adapt to it just like it needs to adapt to the contemporary world.

### 3.4.3. *Yiddish as multilingualism*

An example of adaptation to multilingualism is that of the Jewish people. They have been multilingual throughout history, as their communities have spread throughout Europe. Yiddish itself is a language containing elements of several languages. It was called “a fusion language” by Weinreich [31], since it can bring into one single word three elements, from German, Hebrew, and Russian, as shown in the example of the word “*shlimezaln*ik (an unfortunate person)”: “*schlimma*-*zln*ik (German, Hebrew, and Russian) and the general European “doctor” gets a Hebrew plural: *doktoyr*im.” (<http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Language/Multilingualism> [32])

As a multilingual language, Yiddish has been a connection to both Jewish culture and European culture. Its speakers “could easily adapt to speaking German (Yiddish minus Hebrew and Slavic words) and Yiddish speakers revived modern Hebrew.” (<http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Language/Multilingualism> [32]).

The Jewish people have, historically, been largely ‘nomadic,’ both through choice and for the sake of escaping persecution. They can be regarded as an example of multilingualism, just like the Yiddish language. In other circumstances, problems may arise related to identity issues. The Jewish people have sought to minimize these potential issues by preserving their sense of culture and identity wherever they lived and traveled by preserving the Yiddish language, while other nationalities, which immigrated but did not maintain a single cultural language, faced identity issues.

Mok and Morris [33] draw attention to the persons who are not only bilingual, but also have to identify with two different cultures. Jewish people have tried to minimize these problems by choosing Yiddish as common language.

The contact between two different languages and cultures could lead to negative experiences, such as that of not knowing where home is. Literature has described such experiences; for instance, Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie in *Americanah* portrays a girl who wishes to return home to Nigeria after living for a while in the US, the country where she hoped her dreams would come true. Due to their many diasporas and persecutions, Jewish people have historically adapted to living in several cultures. They have needed to make their home in various different cultures. Ashkenazi Jews especially, through their use of Yiddish, prove that the phenomenon of knowing several languages and living in at least two cultures has existed since early history.

#### 3.4.4. *The universality of bilingualism and multilingualism through history*

Any history of multilingualism originates in the myth of Babel. The myth of Babel preserves the hope for a universal language that would help different nations understand each other ([1], p. 7).

We have noted the use of English as lingua franca today. However, there may be places where members of the older generations cannot speak and understand English. There is also a distinction between languages used at various levels in communities, from vernacular to regional and national, as they are “owned by specific social groups and cultural communities.” ([1], p. 7).

Wright [34] underlines the way different language groups come into contact and the inevitability of bilingual and multilingual education. What is more, he gives examples from history, showing that bilingual education dates back to the age before Christ, to the ancient Greece and Rome.

Schendl [35] believes that multilingualism has been commonplace in societies throughout history and that monolingualism is an impossibility, or “a marginal and unwanted phenomenon.” He also states that “There is strong evidence that this was even more true of earlier historical stages, including medieval Europe.”

This could happen as part of the consequences of historical conquests and conflict. There is a conflict between conquerors, expressing their conquest through imposing their language, and nationalists, who oppose themselves to this type of domination. Through language policy, a certain perspective, with values, social order, and cultural discourse, is imposed. In Europe, using a certain language can be seen as a sign of resistance, when minorities and oppressed groups use their native language. This act can be seen as a political way of freedom from domination of a certain language and culture ([1], p. 11).

The global spread of English has been accepted as normal. This is because it has become very useful to know English and people have understood the advantages. Even advertising can be done in English in certain non-Anglophone cultures; examples are Russia and China, where there are laws that “regulate the use of English in global advertising.” English is used creatively in the advertising industry, and sometimes in France, they put the French translation of the English words for explanation ([10], p. 594).

English has become part of the culture of countries that are not even Anglophone and that have not been under British rule.

## 4. Conclusions

This paper has dealt with several aspects and dimensions of bilingualism and multilingualism with a focus on Europe. It has examined political circumstances that lead to whole communities and even countries needing to use several languages besides the official ones. A country almost never uses only one language, as we may expect. Circumstances such as conquests and migrations lead to different communities living together. The use of English as a lingua franca will remain despite fears related to the event of Brexit. Multilingualism in Europe is, however, another reality. The social mobility leads to a need of multilingualism. Once we learn at least another language, we could sympathize with other people and cultures. At the same time, identity issues could arise, as national belonging goes hand in hand with using a certain language, a majority language. Switching within various countries and communities can lead to the experience of culture shock. Despite these issues, migration will continue, as will learning other languages, as it has become a matter of survival and better living conditions. The need for communication and cohesion of groups of various cultures has led to today's promotion of multilingualism. There is, obviously, a contradiction, since cohesion of a nation has been created throughout history not through multilingualism and through different cultures living together, but through a majority language and one single culture, with its products.

The teaching and studying of foreign language, a domain belonging to philology has, apparently, no relation to politics. Yet, perhaps not so surprisingly, we notice how much philology and politics are related, as politics create the rules for teaching and studying at all levels, including university.

The research regarding the bilingualism and multilingualism is encouraged by EU. It is a topic that is currently discussed and that will be analyzed in the future as well. As multilingualism is a contemporary issue, it will constantly raise problems and academic research will attempt to analyze them and provide solutions.

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