ASPECTS OF LINGUISTS' PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN PROCESSES OF EMANCIPATION AND POLITICAL MANAGEMENT OF LANGUAGE (WESTERN EUROPE > ITALY > SARDINIA): GUIDELINES FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Abstract
        The signs indicating growing worldwide interest in ethics in research are now emerging strongly. In the field of social studies, the communities, associations and institutes of psychology, anthropology and ethnography are those that have taken the lead in proposing and formulating ethical codes, together with the community of linguists, mainly non European. Europe is behind the others not only in the drawing up of a detailed ethical code for linguistic research, but above all in the embodiment and assimilation, of some fundamental ethical principles by operators in the field of European minority and/or endangered languages. The researcher (as the representative of an institution, an agency and so on, that is to say, of cultural elites) is in any case objectively in a position of superiority, prestige and power. Metasociolinguistic practice (including discursive custom) possesses indexicality, as does any other social practice: it is to be desired that all connotations of cultural intraeuropean 'colonialism' imposed from above to local counterparts should be avoided. And this can be prevented only by adhering to a formal ethical code accepted by the communities and persons involved. Sardinia (Italy) represents the case study.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, language policy, Sardinia, ethics

Introduction:
        There are several signs indicating that the world of research is concentrating more and more on the ethical fundamentals of scientific research; increasing emphasis is being placed on the need for full awareness of researchers' social responsibilities (Dupuy 2004 and references). What are involved are the relations between research and society, research and politics, to arrive at the more concrete problems of the short- and long-term planning of research activities and allocation of funds, both public and private. When the effects of the global financial crisis spread throughout Italian society, with an important negative difference compared to other states and areas of the world, the issue of research and funding assumed vital importance for the proper functioning both of research and university education. The need to use to best effect the ever-decreasing resources available calls not only for the adoption of a common ethical code, but also a more articulated sector-by-sector ethical vision capable of avoiding any improper access to funds that may occur.

Main Text:
        For those who do not work primarily in this field, the signs indicating growing worldwide interest in ethics in research are now emerging unsystematically, but in any case strongly. In 2003, the multinational Springer Publishing began publishing the Journal of Academic Ethics. In March of 2013, a recent meeting of the research group of the Nordic Summer University was held in Iceland under the title "Towards a New Ethical Imagination. Political and Social Values in a Cosmopolitan World Society". In 2011, the scholars

belonging to this group stated in a document that: "We can observe that ethical problems increasingly have been a central problem in public debates in Nordic societies and in the international community." Browsing through the web, we can see that the most distressing issues of an ethical nature centre on the ethics of biomedicine, pharmacology, high-tech applications and, more recently, economy and finance (ethical banking) exploitation of resources, sustainable development and so on (http:// ec.europa.eu/bepa/european-group-ethics/welcome/index_en.htm).

In the field of social studies, the communities, associations and institutes of psychology, anthropology and ethnography are those that have taken the lead in proposing and formulating ethical codes, together with the community of linguists (mainly in America - Canada, United States, Mexico ? -, in Australia and New Zealand ?) who devote their efforts to the study of surviving indigenous/aboriginal populations in the so-called New World, reduced over the centuries of European colonization to the status of ethnic and linguistic minorities at risk of extinction or even of dying out at a rapid pace (Nettle, Romaine 2000; Rymer 2012).

The general principle on which both research activities and the formulation of ethical codes are based is the safeguarding and preservation of the world's linguistic and cultural diversity, as stated in the UNESCO documents in which just as important are equal treatment and reciprocal trust among those involved. Since we are often dealing with the world's most powerful countries, we must call attention to the impression that a certain aura of forward-looking political correctness and historical compensation surrounds the principles of undoubtedly just and proper ethical behaviour. Beyond the fundamental and undeniable correctness of the ethical structure, there would appear to be a connotation of 'image', so to speak, and rhetoric, on how to approach others, the civil society as a whole and in particular the scientific community.

As concerns Africa, and in a certain sense Europe, in the last decades we have seen strong ethical implications in studies on (post-)colonialism and linguistic neo-colonialism, rather controversial concepts (Phillipson 1997 and references; Vigouroux, Mufwene 2008) closely connected with the role of English and French, the languages of colonizers (of European origin), as the languages of higher education imposed in the colonies and continued in the decolonized states, as the languages of literature, as *linguae francae*, as the languages of the elite, and not lastly as international languages (with English in the forefront), in sum, as an acrolect compared to other often majority languages (fundamental references and key arguments: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcolonialism,http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_imperialism, http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impérialisme_linguistique, University of Cape Town 2006). In any case, the application of the concept of 'minority' in Africa is problematic and/or inappropriate (Kubik 1989/2003).

We could argue that in the European linguistic conformation we find a crossroads of all the issues to be found on the other continents, although with different statutes. Europe is first and foremost densely disseminated with historic ethnic and linguistic minorities and new minorities resulting from recent migratory flows. Leaving outside the scope of this work the new minorities, each historic European minority has its own history and a quite variable period of permanence both on the (sub)continent itself and within a political and administrative formation. As concerns the chronology of its documented existence in an area, the extreme limits are perhaps represented by the Basques and Romani populations. Between the two extremes we find the minorities resulting from historic migrations (microcolonizations) of fragments of European and non-European (Turkish) peoples or those resulting from the redefinition of political boundaries that have created minorities connected to majorities on the other side of the line of demarcation (cross-border continuity). We must not forget that there are territorial / permanent minorities (in the large majority of cases) and

minorities removed from their lands or migrant or dispersed. Thus in its strictest sense the concept of "autochthony", with its synonyms "indigenousness" or "aboriginality" ("characteristic of THE EARLIEST KNOWN DWELLERS IN ANY COUNTRY" [my emphasis] (*The Shorter OED*; "Caratteristica delle popolazioni STANZIATE DA EPOCA ASSAI REMOTA nel territorio in cui risiedono." *Dizionario Treccani*) is inapplicable to many historical European populations, but it is above all insidious, as the history of recent centuries demonstrates. To be equitable, we should speak of autochthony not as an absolute magnitude but as a scalar one. In multiethnic areas aggressive nationalism can also be generated by the widespread sentiment (politically and 'historiographically' upheld) of major autochthony conferring greater *jus soli* (e.g. the case of Transylvania), that is to say, by the answer to the question "who was here first, we or you?" (the answer is obviously "we"). And the theoretically equal rights deriving from common citizenship are not always respected in political and civil practices. If we agree that all peoples prior to the recent extra-European (im)migrations are autochthonous in Europe, is it correct to speak of diglossia in the multilingual minority areas (which are today almost certainly the majority, if not the totality), as the result of intra-European colonization, at least linguistically speaking?

What is a colony? Briefly stated, historians define it as: "Territoire occupé par une nation en dehors de ses propres frontiçres. Elle l'administre et le maintient dans un état de dépendance.[...] Mais la réalité d'une colonie n'est pas réductible à son éloignement géographique d'une métropole. C'est un ensemble de traits qui la définissent : histoire d'une conquête plus ou moins violente, diversité des implantations de populations européennes (quasi nulle pour l'Afrique), infériorité de statut politique et civil de ses habitants «indiçgènes» excluant la citoyenneté de plein droit qui rçgne en métropole, exploitation unilatérale des ressources de ces pays, stigmatisation culturelle ..." (Renard 2013).

In the case of Sardinia, an island at the centre of the western Mediterranean and not far from Africa, at the crossroads of extremely old migratory, commercial and thus political and cultural routes, historic moments definable as true colonisations are not lacking. However, starting from the 18th century, the incorporation of the island in the Kingdom of Sardinia (and Piedmont), followed in the second half of the 19th century by Italian unification, not as result of occupations or colonial wars but of common European vicissitudes (wars of succession, redefinition of frontiers of states through wars or diplomacy, annexations on the one hand and consequent loss of territories on the other, expansion or the formation of new and larger "national" states). In this historical context, leaving aside linguistic peculiarities, the history of Sardinia is that of one of the regions of Italy (and of Europe) involved, albeit in its specificity, in the "southern question". Subservience, underdevelopment and marginality, only partly remedied through special and relatively recent measures such as recognition as an autonomous region with a special statute following the Second World War (http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regione_a_statuto_speciale), inclusion in the area of responsibility of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno [Fund for the South] (1951 - 1992), and so on. Having as antagonists Italy and Italian, an anticolonial and self-pitying political and linguistic approach would thus be incoherent with the last three centuries of history, as well as extremist (Italy's official language is Italian, see e.g. Law no. 482/1999 "Regulations concerning the safeguarding of historic linguistic minorities", Article 1: "The official language of the Republic is Italian"; http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/99482l.htm).

If in Sardinia certain impulses towards emancipation advanced by vociferous minorities are tinged with anticolonial hues, this may be due to the fact that common beliefs of mainland Italians, even among highly cultivated people, are confused, contradictory and at times even sarcastic (Eco 2010: http://espresso.repubblica.it/dettaglio/el-me-aristotil/2134379) as concerns linguistic minorities, language and dialects. This is certainly a part of the centrifugal-centripetal dynamics of regional vindications against

national claims of necessity and the need for cohesion, which are not new, but which in the last decades have once again become quite manifest (Bruni 2007).

In any case, certain political positions are irritating, ingenuous and arrogant at one and the same time. With Decision 215/2013, the Italian Constitutional Court had to intervene (to re-establish the provisions of the constitution and that of Law 482/1999) on an article of a decree law (July-August 2012, no. 95) of the Monti government; in this law, which dealt with the revision of public expenditures, the so-called "spending review", the "geographic areas characterized by linguistic specificities" were limited to the areas "in which linguistic minorities of foreign mother tongues are present" (evidently languages spoken by a majority in other European states from which for historical and political reasons they were separated, but not Calabrian Greek or Griko); Friulan, Occitan and Sardinian, which are not (official) languages of other states, were considered in the technical notes of the law as "special dialects" (?).

Despite this, today's highly bureaucratic and top-down strategies for the protection, emancipation and standardization of Sardinian, and only secondly for the other local varieties (Catalan in Alghero, Tabarkan Genoese, Gallurese and Sassarian, which are linguistic minorities within or alongside an insular linguistic minority) propose nothing original or innovative compared to the rest of Europe. But Jacques Leclerc, a French-Canadian expert on the subject of "aménagement linguistique" and linguistic policies, suggests a different procedure: "[...] il faut être conscient des limites qu'il y a à importer des idées et des expériences, voire des «recettes» des autres, car toute politique linguistique est le produit d'une histoire et d'une culture, et ne se transpose pas facilement. Les échecs et les succçs dépendent également de facteurs extérieurs à la politique elle-même, alors que les priorités ne sont pas les mêmes d'un pays à l'autre. Néanmoins, on aurait tort d'ignorer ce qui se fait à l'extérieur de son propre pays." (http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/monde/historique_du_site.htm).

Instead, what the regional administrations want to impose in Sardinia with a certain bureaucratic pressure and political impatience, often resorting to the weapon of the allocation of funds, is a vision, which is to say an ideology, a policy and a regulatory and prescriptive (and thus evaluative) practice corresponding perfectly to the historical European model of national languages in use starting from the 18th century. Despite the situation of social and structural precariousness of the Sardinian language, which in the first place should have been raised to a more vital social and structural level, the objective chosen immediately was the creation of a single standard of writing inclined more steeply on the central dialects (and for this reason strongly criticized by speakers of the southern dialects as well as by a small number of specialists) to be diffused or imposed radially through the regional administration and the schools. With this top-down, centralizing vision of linguistic policies and plans to be implemented, priority is in all cases given to the issue of the allotment of funds, while nothing is done to encourage actions by forward-looking linguistic volunteers.

What has been ignored is the analysis produced by more than one linguist in the international field on the predominance in the last centuries of European history of the "discours métalinguistique de type normatif, porté, dans les sociétés dotées de langues standardisées et scolarisées, par toute une activité normative ambiante" that would also include a part of academic linguistics; which instead on the scientific and ethical planes should not assume regulatory positions (Eloy 2000 and references). On the propagandistic level, the difference between self-certified, which is to say declared, linguistic competence (as results from the sociolinguistic survey commissioned by the Sardinian regional administration and performed by Anna Oppo) and effective competence has not been clarified; this difference should have been investigated and measured by the specialists and on this basis the emancipatory actions should have been based. The critical positions existing in society and among researchers were not taken into account: the polyphony of

opinions was seen as harmful to the cause in that it delayed implementation. Above all, no credit was given to an objection derived from the teachings of Antonio Gramsci, a thinker of Sardinian origins. Although he is quoted enthusiastically in other circumstances, in this case his idea that "…the organized action [if conceived democratically] must respond consensually to the real cultural and linguistic conditions and needs of the entire mass of speakers" was ignored (Rosiello 1986; Gramsci 1975, 2345: "since the process of formation, diffusion and development of a single national language takes place through a whole complex of molecular processes, it is useful to have an understanding of the complete process in its entirety so as to be in a position to intervene actively in it with the best result. This action should not be considered as decisive in the belief that the objectives set will all be reached in detail, which is to say that a given unitary language will be arrived at: a unitary language will result if this is a necessity and the planned action accelerates the times of the already-existing process; what this language is to be cannot be foreseen and pre-established [...]".).

Such conditions and needs were not studied with the proper precision and respect before each institutional action was taken, since the choice made was authoritarian, political and bureaucratic exercised by a small and inevitably transitory elite. If we could agree theoretically with the position assumed in 2005 by the then European Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potoènik, according to whom "Policy is therefore expected to set norms and standards and interfere with science, and to channel scientific results into socially-relevant objectives", such political plans for action and their justness must in turn undergo social scrutiny. I dealt with a relatively recent episode in the island's linguistic policy in Lörinczi (2010 - 2013).

The support of specialists for the regional linguistic policy was sometimes searched for outside of Sardinia since, as stated above, among the island's specialists opinions were divergent. For the most part foreign to the island's historical and cultural context or psychologically and epistemologically indifferent to it, the outside specialists benefitted from official invitations by the regional authorities and lasted a few days. Thus they did not have the time to perform a survey of the opinions and attitudes of speakers or hold meetings on the same level with local university colleagues despite the fact that a sincere and open dialogue involving all interested parties is not only scientifically necessary, but is required by all ethical standards of scientific research. Specialists make up a network of competences and opinions that are diffused and interact not only face to face, but also at a distance, and for this reason they can justly be defined as a metapopulation with its own rules of epistemic and ethical equilibrium. But in this sense, Europe presents important regulatory gaps.

 Coming back to the subject announced in the title, the Old Continent is behind the others not only in the drawing up of a detailed ethical code for linguistic research, but above all, I believe, in the embodiment and assimilation, of some fundamental ethical principles by operators in the field. At the international symposium on threatened languages held in July 2013 at the Academy of Sciences in Munich, the issue of linguistic ethics was hardly touched upon (see the programme); the most pertinent mention was Thierberger and Musgrave (2007), who however are Australian scholars and who dealt with the new technologies in the collection of linguistic data and their unexpected ethical consequences. At the just-as-recent Cungressu (Réseau Francophone de Sociolinguistique, July 2013, held in Corsica some weeks after the unilateral declaration of the co-official status of Corsican with French) the issue of linguistic ethics was not expressly indicated, but the way of dealing with the relationship between linguistic variability and power dynamics brought to the fore sincerity and professional transparency (for both these recent congresses I was able to read only the summaries).

 As concerns the European institutions, it is not easy to draw up a list of the ethical codes adopted up to now. It is certain that some institutions of higher learning in the United

Kingdom, Germany, Norway and the Netherlands have adopted their own, although sometimes touching on the main point only (e.g. Germany) on which to base sociolinguistic investigations, in particular those concerning linguistic minorities, in some cases outside the EU or geographic Europe. This clearly took place within a general conceptual framework like the one adopted by the EU, which states: "Ethics is an integral part of research: it is only by getting the ethics right that research excellence can be achieved." (EU 2010, 5). Single researchers deal with the subject, both in Europe and elsewhere (for example, I have consulted Launey 2000, Tsunoda 2005, Rice 2006, Blanchet 2012, etc., besides Thierberger and Musgrave 2007 *cit*., but the literature is abundant, not lastly because ethical issues are often implicated or subordinated to other, more technical ones).

Conclusion:

        As is now evident if observed at the global level, it is not only the status as a minority in the strictest sense, that is, numerical inferiority or weakness, that generates - in agreement with international and sometimes national and regional regulations (a similar list of regulations, charters, laws etc. in Sardinia at http://www.provincia.cagliari.it/ProvinciaCa/it/leis_e_paperis1) - the obligation, necessity and opportuneness of focusing special attention on the communities investigated as such, that is, as minorities. The behaviour of researchers, if ethical, must especially take into account the possible conditions of inferiority, marginality, weakness or vulnerability of a social and cultural or economic and political nature, that is, the position of subservience - to use the known term derived from Gramsci (Green 2002) - of certain communities, groups or individuals. As concerns this possibly subservient position, which must be focused on preliminarily, the researcher (as the representative of an institution, an agency and so on, that is to say, of cultural elites) is in any case objectively in a position of superiority, prestige and power (even more so if he/she comes from one of the so-called prestigious universities) which he/she must not take advantage of. In sociolinguistic practice, and in social practice in general, the issues of disadvantage or vulnerability may, for example in the case of children (see recently Lauchlan et al. 2012 for Sardinia), add to those of age, gender, schooling and alphabetization, not to mention the sometimes difficult relations with a possibly complex-ridden family and, in some cases, complacent educational institutions. If, as often occurs, the scholar not only does not belong to the community, but resides and works in another region or even abroad, the differences in status and/or culture and/or language may jeopardize the development of relations on an equal basis and thus make cooperation difficult. With these issues are associated those of a metasociolinguistic nature: metasociolinguistic practice (including discursive custom) possesses indexicality, as does any other social practice. In my opinion, it is strongly to be desired that all connotations of cultural intraeuropean 'colonialism' imposed from above should be avoided. And this can be prevented only by adhering to a formal ethical code accepted by the communities and persons involved.

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