

**MODERN SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE SPANISH  
LANGUAGE: NEW CHALLENGES**

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**Abstract.** The coexistence of different cultures, identities and ethnic sensitivity has formed the configuration of the contemporary Spanish-speaking society that is facing two essential problems: that of migrations and that of identities. In the modern sociocultural context, the Spanish language is determined by the balance between the two opposite extremes: globalization and the diversity of cultural identities.

The objective of this publication is to analyze the current social context, emphasizing the fact that Spanish, trying to preserve its own global cultural identity, is forced to compete with English, on the one hand, and with regional languages and minorities identities, on the other. At the same time, the development of migration and globalization processes is associated with the intensification of intercultural communications unfolding in a pluralistic society. The versatility of the phenomenon of intercultural communication in the Spanish-speaking space in the context of globalization explains the need for its study, taking into account the current sociolinguistic situation.

The main goal of the paper is within the following theoretical framework: the first relative to the construct of the superdiversity of S. Vertovec (2007), and the second, the concept of interculturality of C. Walsh (2009) and the third, the plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in global societies.

The most recent research in the field of sociolinguistics proposes theoretical approaches oriented towards the analysis of so-called "super-biodiversity". This concept reflects the complexity of the current plurilingual and pluricultural scenario in which speakers use hybrid communication resources, which confirms that language is one of the most flexible and expansive tools in the cultural production of identity.

But, at the same time, nowadays it becomes more evident the desire to seek and protect their own national, ethnic, cultural or linguistic identity in minority societies. In the opinion of M. Marusehko, the identity problem has become so acute that it already has a global character. It is surprising that in

the context of globalization the regional languages are experiencing a parallel spread throughout the last thirty years.

The analysis of the sociolinguistic situation in Spain, which being a multinational country, presents a very diverse panorama shows that the search for its own identity very often provokes social conflicts.

Migratory studies have emphasized the theme of identities and ethnicity until now understood as the isolated realities of cultural interactions between different diversities (immigrant populations and native residents) that until up to now have not been sufficiently studied. The research materials published in the journal "LANGUAGE AND MIGRATION" reflect the new social reality in which the global communities of many countries live.

At the same time migration is connected with the effective teaching of the Spanish language to new residents of Hispanic countries. The hardest didactic difficulty that Spanish teachers will have to deal with is, precisely, the diversity of its geographical, dialectal and discursive modalities that must be known and taught properly. But the problem is no longer burning because, from the normative point of view, the Spanish language offers a plurality of national and supranational standards with a polycentric perspective that, at least in its fundamental aspects, must be assumed by teachers and professionals of ELE to exercise your work competently.

Regarding the teaching for immigrants, recently, the problem of the specific and adequate training of Spanish teachers for immigrants in different educational contexts has been discussed: from students in university education, to Primary Education, Secondary Education and linguistic support classrooms, etc., because the professionals that work with this type of students are still missing skills they need to meet the needs and demands of this educational practice.

**Keywords:** Pan-Hispanic plurilingualism, Pan-Hispanic pluriculturalism, superdiversity, Pan-Hispanic identity construction, Spanish language and migration, teaching for immigrants

### **Introduction**

In the recent decade, Spain and Latin America have become the home of many immigrant communities from all over the world. The coexistence of different cultures, identities and ethnic sensitivity has formed the configuration of the contemporary Spanish-speaking society that is facing two essential problems: that of migrations and that of identities.

In the modern sociocultural context, the Spanish language is determined by the balance between the two opposite extremes: globalization and the diversity of cultural identities.

### **Purpose of the study**

The objective of this publication is to analyze the current social context, emphasizing the fact that Spanish, trying to preserve its own global cultural identity, is forced to compete with English, on the one hand, and with regional languages and minorities identities, on the other. At the same time, the development of migration and globalization processes is associated with the intensification of intercultural communications unfolding in a pluralistic society. The versatility of the phenomenon of intercultural communication in the Spanish-speaking space in the context of globalization explains the need for its study, taking into account the current sociolinguistic situation.

### **Methodology**

The main goal of the paper is within the following theoretical framework: the first relative to the construct of the superdiversity of S. Vertovec (2007), and the second, the concept of interculturality of C. Walsh (2009) and the third, the plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in global societies.

In order to carry out this research, statistical methods (borrowed mostly from the cited publications), methods of direct observation *in situ*, and descriptive methods (based on current media materials) have been used.

### **Results / Findings**

The process of human mobility on a large-scale and the last years of economic recession have helped to draw a new reality of contemporary Spanish-speaking society, a new social, economic and cultural landscape.

The most recent research in the field of sociolinguistics, in addition to discovering new observation scenarios and demonstrating the main causes of the increase in situations of linguistic and identity contact, propose theoretical approaches oriented towards the analysis of so-called "super-biodiversity". This concept reflects the complexity of the current plurilingual and pluricultural scenario in which speakers use hybrid communication resources, which confirms that language is one of the most flexible and expansive tools in the cultural production of identity (Raevskaya, M.M., 2017).

But, at the same time, nowadays it becomes more evident the desire to seek and protect their own national, ethnic, cultural or linguistic identity in minority societies. In the opinion of M. Marusehko, one of the most competent sociolinguists today, the identity problem has become so acute that it already has a global character (Marusehko, M.A., 2015, p. 10-11). It is surprising that in the context of globalization the regional languages are experiencing a parallel spread throughout the last thirty years. They expand, first, due to the support of their governments. Other factors that encouraged this process to be successful include economic pragmatism, social practices, political influence and historical tradition.

The analysis of the sociolinguistic situation in Spain, which being a multinational country, presents a very diverse panorama shows that the search for its own identity very often provokes social conflicts.

One of the most vivid examples is the case of Catalonia. It is no secret that the Generalitat de Catalunya is accused of carrying out a linguistic policy that promotes uniformity in the Catalan language and the marginalization or exclusion of Castilian (Grinina, E.A., 2008), which leads to social instability and contributes to the fact that certain political forces put the issue of the status of minority languages into play from the point of view of their interests, paying attention to cases of undermining the right to use the mother tongue for some inhabitants of the country.

If it were not for the games or political ambitions, the solution would seem obvious: in Catalonia the use of any language should not be imposed, restricted, marginalized, excluded or penalized. On the contrary, we must affirm the individual freedom of linguistic use and recognize that the citizen has the right to use the language that suits him. And that, because bilingualism is not a problem to solve, but a wealth to preserve. And it must not be forgotten that Spanish will never cease to be the language of international communication.

Another case, let's say the opposite one, that awakens a huge interest is the case of Aranese (Grinina, E.A., 2016), which is a variety of Gascon, which in turn is a variety of Occitan extended by the south of France. This minority language does enjoy official recognition. In 1990 the Parliament of Catalonia promulgated the Llei de règim special of the Val d'Aran, according to which Aranese declared itself the language of Aran and co-official with Castilian and Catalan. Thanks to the protection of the Law, the native population of Occitan has obtained a chance to study and master their mother tongue because Aranese is taught in all the nursery and primary schools. The results are spectacular: 90% of the population understand Aranese, 64.9% speak it, 59.3% know how to read and 25% can write, according to the sociolinguistic data provided by the official survey of the population of 1996 (Fernández-Cuadrench J., 2003, p. 233). This example shows that if there is a political will of public institutions to promote the use of language, Aranese can become the catalyst for collective identity. What a contrast it makes with the situation in Occitania! 7300 inhabitants of Val d'Aran have the right to learn and officially use their language, while the government of the French Republic denies it to three million Occitan speakers in the south of France.

On the other hand, globalization tends to reduce the number of world languages as a means of communication across cultures, and in order to survive, it must be a global community language, have a common standard,

be ever-present in technologies, diplomacy and international forums. One of the most obvious linguistic changes generated by globalization is the demand for English that has become the truly dominant language in Europe and remains the preferred second language for most Europeans in 2025. English is the global lingua franca in business, academia, politics, media, technology and culture. Its unprecedented expansion puts into question the competitiveness of many other languages. However, some of them were able to survive in conditions of the globalized world and even carry out the linguistic normalization.

Language standardization is a constant and extremely important problem for the Spanish-speaking countries because the Standard Spanish must be "an eclectic modality suitable for certain communicative purposes [...] in which all speakers feel somehow represented and comfortable [...]" and enjoy *universal* acceptance as an effective Pan-Hispanic variant (Bravo García E., 2008, p. 23).

Over the past 20 years, the problem has received very solid and conscious institutional support within the framework of the Pan-Hispanic language policy: the Royal Spanish Academy, in collaboration with the Association of Academies, published such emblematic works as the Pan-Hispanic Dictionary of Doubts (*Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*, 2005), the new version of the previously published Orthography (*Ortografía del español actual*, 2010), the Dictionary of Americanisms (*Diccionario de americanismos*, 2010), the New Grammar of the Spanish Language (*Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, 2009-2011), the 23d edition of the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (*DRAE*, 2014), The style book of the Spanish language according to the pan-Hispanic norm (*El Libro de estilo de la lengua española según la norma panhispánica*, 2018).

The process of Pan-Hispanic identity construction in the field of the Spanish language is the key issue in the International Congress of the Spanish Language. The VIII International Congress of the Spanish Language (CILE) took place in Córdoba (Argentina) from 27 to 30 March 2019 and was held under the slogan "America and the future of Spanish. Culture and education, technology and entrepreneurship" (Raevskaya, M.M., 2018). The sessions were structured around five thematic axes: "Spanish, as a universal language", "Language and Interculturality", "Challenges of Spanish in 21st Century Education", "The Spanish and the digital society", "The competitiveness of Spanish as a language for innovation and entrepreneurship".

As we see, another direction was added to the traditional Pan-Hispanic linguistic themes and intercultural practices - the didactics of the Spanish

language, which requires a detailed rethinking in the new social Spanish-speaking context (Raevskaya, M.M., 2019).

Intercultural communication is a daily plurilingual and pluricultural practice constructed in the framework of global multi-ethnic Hispanic societies. It is to be understood as the cultural interaction of and between immigrant populations and native residents who live in global cities.

### **Discussion**

Migratory studies have emphasized the theme of identities and ethnicity until now understood as the isolated realities of cultural interactions between different diversities (immigrant populations and native residents) that until up to now have not been sufficiently studied. The research materials published in the journal "LANGUAGE AND MIGRATION" reflect the new social reality in which the global communities of many countries live (Pérez Cantor Y., 2018). Its space is dedicated to the analysis of the linguistic and communicative reality of migration, attending to the study of all the social and linguistic elements that concur in the process of sociolinguistic integration, including the processes of acquisition of second language.

The phenomenon of migration has made revising some tendencies of the linguistic policy. The key point of the linguistic policy in a modern-day Spain, for example, has predominantly *been* up to now related to multilingualism (Grinina, E.A., 2012). Spain signed the European Charter of Minority or Regional Languages in 1992 and ratified it in 2001, being obliged to comply with the commitments assumed and to protect languages recognized as official in the Statutes of Autonomy, that is, Catalan, Galician, Basque or Euskera, and also some others spoken in several communities, for example, Aranese, Asturian, Leonese or Aragonese, which is also confirmed by the corresponding Statutes of Autonomy. However, at the time of signing this Charter, the dialects of the official languages and, consequently, the languages of the immigrants were excluded. These changes are a reality we can no longer ignore. It implies that special attention is paid to the languages of migration when applying the language policy.

At the same time migration is connected with the effective teaching of the Spanish language to new residents of Hispanic countries (Níkeleva, D. G., 2017). The hardest didactic difficulty that Spanish teachers will have to deal with is, precisely, the diversity of its geographical, dialectal and discursive modalities that must be known and taught properly. But the problem is no longer burning because, from the normative point of view, the Spanish language offers a plurality of national and supranational standards with a polycentric perspective that, at least in its fundamental aspects, must be

assumed by teachers and professionals of ELE to exercise your work competently.

In the last decade, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has provided a common basis for the development of language programs throughout Europe based on the principle of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism when the individual does not keep the learned languages and cultures in mental compartments strictly separate, but develops a communicative competence to which all knowledge and linguistic experiences contribute and in which languages are related to each other and interact.

Regarding the teaching for immigrants, recently, the problem of the specific and adequate training of Spanish teachers for immigrants in different educational contexts has been discussed: from students in university education, to Primary Education, Secondary Education and linguistic support classrooms, etc., because the professionals that work with this type of students are still missing skills they need to meet the needs and demands of this educational practice.

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