THE NATURAL LANGUAGE SUSTAINABILITY IS DEPENDENT ON THE FEEDING/SEEDING POWER AS DETERMINED BY NL PRESENCE IN THE NATURAL LANGUAGE GLOBAL ARENA AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNICATION ORDERS

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ABSTRACT. No natural language can enjoy the status of a completely isolated language. This is due to their always being in some kind of contact condition with other natural languages. As they all occur in the Natural Language Global Arena, they may either win, lose in competition with other languages, or receive the equal status. The different 'statuses' of natural languages are owed to the feeding and seeding processes in which they participate. The said processes are framed by the communication orders in which the particular natural languages happen to function. In turn, the communication orders in which the languages are functioning, appear to be decisive in either strengthening or weakening the robustness of every natural language in their sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of the Natural Language Global Arena (hence NaLGA, see e.g. Puppel, 2007a; 2007b; 2012; 2013) has been introduced to ecolinguistics to accommodate the fact all the natural languages (hence NL) co-occur both in the inter-linguistic and trans-linguistic manner. The latter part of the statement follows from the simple fact that all languages appear in the universal communication space (hence UCS) and that they inevitably and inescapably go into local (or neighbouring) contact condition, since no NL can enjoy the status of a completely isolated language. As a result and depending on the degree of NL awareness on the part of the human communicators (hence HC)

involved in the various practices of contact, all the contacting NLs may either fall into the 'winner' (unmarked and partially inertial super-stratal/dominant/hegemonic) status, 'looser' (unmarked and partially inertial sub-stratal/non-dominant) status or 'equal' (marked and fully sought after and planned ad-stratal) status. Whether they become super-stratal, sub-stratal or ad-stratal very much depends on the degree of presence of the NLs in the NaLGA. In the remainder of the paper, a brief characterization of the presence of all the NLs in the NaLGA will be proposed with respect to two major processes which are at the foundation of the very being of every NL vis-à-vis other NLs. The two processes are: 'feeding' (i. e. how and to what degree a given NL feeds, or influences, another NL) and 'seeding' (i.e. how and to what degree a given NL is disseminated throughout the space of the NaLGA).

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The NaLGa, though being 'linguocratic' in the sense of providing an in-evitable and inescapable space for all the existing NLs, is at the same time not the kind of space in which all the existing languages appear equal in terms of their overall 'robustness'. Rather, it is the kind of space in which all the NLs represent a rich diversity of degrees of robustness, ranging from the weakest degree, which characterizes the least robust (weakest and therefore vulnerable to endangerment and loss) languages, to the strongest degree, which characterizes the most robust (strongest and therefore guaranteeing sustainability) languages. In this approach, the most robust NLs are the ones which dominate in the NaLGA, while the NLs characterized as the least robust languages may suffer from all kinds of inequality connected with having the status of non-dominant languages. In addition, all the NLs provide the necessary building material for the communication orders (hence CO) in which all the human communicators necessarily function in the sense that all the communicative traffic (i.e. communicative encounters, communicative acts and communicative practices), or, expression/performance basically, overwhelmingly and most importantly takes place in the modalities which are most fundamental for human communication, that is, the audio-vocal and visual-tactile modalities, respectively.

More precisely, the COs in which most of the HCs function are founded are the modalities to which all healthy humans have biologically-determined access by virtue of human anatomy. The modalities comprise the following:
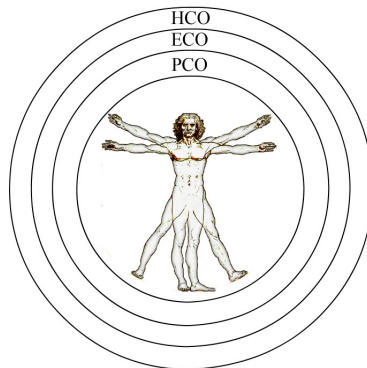
– the audio-vocal modality (AVo), which involves the so-called 'speech apparatus', comprises all the muscular-neurological structures which govern the production and reception of sounds, especially including the linguistic sounds. The CO based on the AVo modality constitutes the primary communication order (hence PCO), the oral-vocal communication order. The primacy of this CO is directly the function of its universal biologically-determined availability, expressed in the following statement: "all human communicators have access to the AVo modality in their communicative

practices, therefore no NL exists without the oral-vocal expression plane in the NaLGA",

– the visual-tactile modality (ViT) which comprises all the muscular-neurological structures involved in the 'eyes-hands' liaison responsible for the extension of the hands with various tools, in particular including the stylus used in the graphic (written) rendition of spoken linguistic utterances. The CO based on the ViT modality constitutes the extended communication order (hence ECO), the written/graphic communication order (see e.g. Tannen, 1982). The extended nature of this CO may be expressed in the following statement: "(a) since all human communicators have access to the ViT modality, a number of NLs exist in the NalGA as belonging to the ECO, that is, as utilizing the visual-tactile expression plane, and (b) although all human communicators have access to the ViT modality, not all are adept at using this modality in their communicative practices, therefore a number of NLs exist in the NaLGA without the utilization of the visual-tactile expression plane".

The fact that humans have turned out to be so adept and so successful at manufacturing tools has finally resulted in the development and production of sophisticated and globally available language carrying electronic devices in which both modalities have been merged to yield a new communication order, the hybrid communication order (hence HCO). In this order, expression/performance takes place by means of the two modalities combined together and additionally replicated in a constantly growing number and types of language carrying electronic devices. Needless to say, the latter make any NL present in the HCO a completely portable (though intangible) phenomenon. That is, they allow every HC operating within the confines of the HCO to carry any NL to every corner of the Earth.

The existing human communication orders may be illustrated in the following way (with Da Vinci's *Vitruvian man* serving as a perfect exemplification of the human bimodal, AVo+ViT, communicative design):
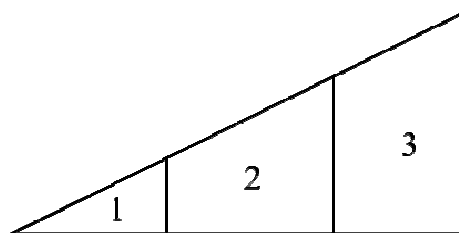

(Fig. 1)*The presence of NLs in the human communication orders where:PCO – primary communication order, ECO – extended communication order, HCO – hybrid communication order*

Thus, following what has been said above, a general picture may be drawn in which at least CO-wise (i.e. with respect to the immersion of the HCs in the PCO, ECO and HCO), all NLs may be characterized as being involved in overall communicative traffic in any of these orders, with the exception of those languages which have not yet managed to enter the ECO, as well as being involved in the feeding and seeding processes mentioned above. Furthermore, we may state that all the NLs may be present in the NaLGA in the following sequence of three dimensions:

1. presence of a NL in the PCO
2. presence of a NL in the ECO
3. presence of a NL in the HCO.

The fact that they are present in the NaLGA in three such distinctly different ways has an important bearing on a differentiation of their feeding and seeding powers, respectively. Thus, it is assumed that all those NLs which are present in the NaLGA solely through the PCO, which characterizes a large number of living languages which have not managed to develop written counterparts of their oral-vocal expression (i.e. exclusively spoken or unwritten languages), may have completely different feeding and seeding relations with other NLs as compared to those languages which have been successful in developing written/graphic expression potential and to those NLs which have entered the HCO. Therefore, it seems not too unrealistic to propose that the feeding/seeding power of any living NL increases accordingly as it enters the sequence of presence 1-2-3 (one may even dare say at this point that it increases exponentially in phase 3 of the sequence) with respect to the communication orders referred to above. This fact may be illustrated by means of the following diagram:

(Fig. 2) *Feeding/seeding power of NLs as correlated with the type of CO in which they are immersed*

Obviously, the NLs which are immersed in the HCO (as represented by phase 3 above) are those whose feeding and seeding powers appear to be the strongest due to the fact that their 'operational ranges' are the biggest. A typical

instance of a NL whose feeding/seeding power has reached an extremely magnified degree in the UCS is English. With respect to this particular language, the feeding process is accomplished through a massive supply of lexical forms, comprising such domains of language presence as the arts (literature, film, graphic design, etc.), the sciences, technology, economy, and general culture in a truly global dimension. In all those areas, the feeding power of English is presently unsurpassed. On the other hand, the seeding process is accomplished through an equally massive supply (dissemination) of English on a global scale, visible in the unprecedented internationalization (globalization) of that language. Thus, while estimating the number of English language communicators, one is also obliged to add to the total number of the native communicators a steadily growing number of secondary users of that language. It is obvious that English presently enjoys the status of a very robust NL with respect to its feeding/seeding power. A such, it is a highly sustainable NL. On the contrary, languages which are only oral-vocal languages (e.g. Bunan spoken in Taiwan by a population of approximately 41 thousand communicators, together with a host of other much smaller and unwritten NLs all over the world, see e.g. Lewis et al., 2015; Moseley, 2007), if combined with a small population of their users, are relatively less robust. Thus, their sustainability may be proportionately endangered (i.e. become endangered either severely, critically, or definitely).

3. SOME CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it seems appropriate to propose the following conclusions:
   a) no NL exists outside the NaLGA,
   b) no NL exists outside at least one of the COs postulated above, that is, above all outside the PCO,
   c) NL sustainability depends directly on its feeding/seeding power,
   d) the feeding/seeding power of a given NL depends on the CO in which it 'resides',
   e) the weakest feeding/seeding power characterizes those NLs which reside exclusively in the PCO,
   f) the strongest feeding/seeding power characterizes those NLs which reside in the HCO, which is the most complete and therefore most comprehensive of the communication orders mentioned above in that it comprises the preceding COs, i.e. the PCO and the ECO, respectively,
   g) subsequently, the most ideal and ecologically nontrivial manner for NL sustainability is for a given NL to be a 'resident' of the HCO.

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