Jelena Jovićević

EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGES IN CYBER CULTURE

Abstract

The paper deals with the ways in which the emergence of cyber culture and the Internet, as its key factor, has influenced the development of language. The paper investigates the effects the so-called electronic revolution has had on language in general, as well as on individual languages. The author aims to show that the English language, due to its global domination, managed to exert influence on Internet communication as well, thus becoming a challenge for other languages, including Serbian, which tend to borrow more and more English words and phrases. Finally, the paper will examine whether the way the language is used on the Internet differs from the way the language was used in the past to such an extent that the new trends could be called revolutionary.

Key words: Cyber Culture, Language, the Internet, the English Language, the Serbian Language

IN AN ERA OF CYBER CULTURE

According to Lev Manovich, "today we are in the middle of a new media revolution – the shift of all of our culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication" (2000, 43). If his words were further analyzed, it could be said that information technologies entered the pores of the humanity to that extent that they could be regarded as clichés and inseparable component parts of everyday life of people inhabiting the planet Earth. The extent to which the Internet, which can be rightfully regarded as the revolutionary breakthrough of the twentieth century, has changed the society's way of functioning can be illustrated by the fact that the Finnish Government has become the first country in the world to make broadband a legal right for every citizen.

jjovicevic@yahoo.com

What is more, it made all telecommunications companies obliged to provide the people with high-speed Internet access with the purpose of transforming the Internet from the mere source of entertainment into a part of everyday life. Furthermore, according to the available data, similar steps will soon be undertaken in Great Britain and France as well ("Finland Makes Broadband a Legal Right"). This newly emerged social and cultural movement that is closely related to the development of progressive information and communication technologies became widely recognized under the unique name of *cyber culture*. Having thus become "more phenomenon than fact" (Бригс и Берк 2006, 410), the Internet took the lead over other media that, according to the eminent American linguist Noam Chomsky, stand for the key elements of each capitalist society. As such, the Internet made significant contribution to numerous changes in various social spheres, integration of cultures and crossing the boundaries that separate people all over the world. Moreover, Chomsky also saw the Internet as being a kind of alternative and independent media that proved itself to be one of the key factors in political campaigns and subsequent political victories ("Language, Politics and Propaganda").

While investigating the purposes for which people use the Internet, American psychologist Patricia Wallace (1999) drew attention to the role of this phenomenon in the process of establishment and maintenance of contacts with friends and associates, search for good bargains, scientific research, exchange of information and experience, or even conspiracies. However, the thing that turned out to be of special interest to this psychologist was the use of the Internet for the purpose of communication between people and animals. (1999) Namely, in 1998, in the period of celebration of World Earth Day, millions of people from all over the world were given the opportunity to "chat" with gorilla named Koko ("An Internet Chat with Koko the Gorilla"). According to Wallace, after twenty-year-long period of learning American Sign Language, Koko came into possession of its own personal computer and email address through which it could present the audience with its attitudes to motherhood, pets, love or friendship (1999).

Nevertheless, despite utopian enthusiasm with which the Internet era was welcomed, this newly emerged cultural phenomenon aroused brisk discussions on the dimensions its impact on the society might reach. Namely, apart from the fact that they brought about unimagined opportunities for the development of the society, enhanced potentials, transformed economy and made its benefits available to people, information technologies and popular "surfing" the global network also became the embodiment of a threat for the humanity. In short, utopian visions of the mankind, woven in the social and cultural renaissance that the Internet era brought with itself, got fierce opponents inside the teams of scientists from various disciplines, that based their empirical research on the negative impacts of the Internet on the society and the people who live in it.

From her psychological perspective, Patricia Wallace recognized another side of the coin of this modern media. Namely, she regarded the Internet as "a place where we humans are acting and interacting rather strangely at times. Sometimes its effects seem to be quite positive, but sometimes, we do things online that we might never do in any other environment, and that we regret later (1999, 1). By mapping the borders of the "real world" (1999, 2) and cyber space, Wallace marked the Internet itself as the fertile ground for the so-called *role play*. When this gaming phenomenon is understood and played according to the rules of childhood role play, there is little problem since the game remains benign for the opponent. But what happens "when you jump to a role-play frame in which your online persona is markedly different from your real-life self and others do not? This is where role play begins to blend with the less benign forms of deception" (1999, 44). The same context raises other issues, such as the risk of creating parallel realities imbued with plenty of unrecognizable "avatars". The problem that occurs here is that the creators of these "avatars" identify with their creation sooner or later, thus risking the danger of running into the problem of distorted personality. In addition, Wallace emphasized another problem that the cyber era brought into the real world. She focused on the dangers stemming from the Internet-facilitated accessibility and distribution of pornographic materials and the fact that people feel freer to search for these materials on the Internet than they do in the so-called real world (1999).

List of negative effects that the researchers observed within the borders of the Internet's empire does not end here. American social psychologist Robert Kraut performed series of research at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. In cooperation with sociologists and scientists from other disciplines Kraut studied the ways the Internet was used in everyday life as well as its influence on the psycho-physical condition of people. Judging by his views, interpersonal communication is one of the main reasons why people use the Internet (Kraut and Kiesler 2003). Nevertheless, in his words, Internet use does not necessarily lead to positive effects, such as successfully established contacts and subsequent widening of social circles. The results of the research, which was based on the observation of behaviour of the families who were given free access to the Internet in exchange for the willingness to take part in the research, showed that the ones who had used the Internet heavily were more vulnerable to everyday stress than the ones who had not used it at all or who had used it lightly. What is more, greater use of the Internet was also associated with declines in participants' communication with family members, narrowing of social circles, increased sense of depression and loneliness and reduced awareness of community affairs (Kraut et al. 1998). Kraut concluded his research with the remark that the mechanisms on the basis of which the impact of the Internet could be judged were twofold. On the one hand, effects of Internet use

may depend on what people do when they find themselves online. On the other hand, the significant factor may be what they give up to spend time online (Kraut et al. 2001). These ideas can be exemplified by various online games played by Internet visitors. According to Kraut, with responsible use, popular online gaming turns into a healthy recreational activity that provides millions of people with hours of social entertainment. However, lack of control and failure to manage play behaviour can lead to feelings of dependency, problems in communication, learning or neglect of everyday social life. Therefore, the purposes of successful evasion of negative effects and problems stemming from this and similar forms of entertainment require pronounced self-control on the part of users of this contemporary media ("Project Massive").

LANGUAGE WITHIN THE BORDERS OF CYBER CULTURE

On the basis of everything that has been mentioned so far, one should not be surprised that language is also regarded as one of the fields on which the Internet has had crucial, if not devastating effect. Contrary to sociologists and psychologists whose attention is primarily directed towards the damage the Internet may inflict on people's social life, linguists and philologists are naturally focused on novelties as well as the problems that the Internet introduced in the field of language.

Centuries showed that the society, scientific discoveries and political events had left a deep mark in the development of languages. Therefore, it can be said that languages are difficult to study and explain to others for the reason that they stand for the inseparable part of everyday life of people, like an air we breathe without even noticing it (Бугарски 1996). Nevertheless, linguistic changes that occurred after the Internet had stepped on the social stage became more than noticeable due to the fact that they produced what eminent British linguist David Crystal termed Applied Internet Linguistics (Crystal 2005). Namely, new opportunities that electronic communication offered, reflected in emails, chat rooms or popular social networks, contributed to the creation of a special kind of language based on technical terminology, abbreviations, acronyms and entirely new punctuation marks. What is more, due to the increase in the number of Internet users, the phenomenon that used to be called "the Internet slang" grew into generally accepted lexis.

Focusing on the advantages and the perceived shortcomings of both traditional conversational speech and writing and Internet-based communication, Crystal noticed that the perfection of Internet-based communication lacked properties that traditional conversational speech was capable of producing. These properties are mainly reflected in a tone of voice which popular emoticons attempted, but failed to express and which successfully supplements the message that is to be transmitted in the process of communication. On the other hand, however, the Internet

created possibilities of multiple simultaneous interactions in popular chat rooms, introduced dynamic dimension in the form of animations and enabled linking of multiple texts, also known as hypertextuality that traditional footnotes characteristic of written communication only partly managed to achieve. In his defence of the Internet, Crystal also mentioned popular blogs, which he regarded as the replacement of traditional diaries. In his view, blogs marked the beginning of a new and creative stage in the evolution of the written language and a new motivation for child and adult literacy (2005). Apart from being fascinated by innovative features that the Internet introduced into linguistic forms, as well as by new linguistic identities that this network offered to its members, Crystal noticed another, multicultural advantage of this media. Namely, in his defiance of the all-encompassing domination of the English language on the Internet, Crystal pointed out that the Internet offered endangered languages "a fresh set of opportunities whose potential has hardly begun to be explored" and added that not only "better-off languages" should be given an opportunity to make full use of this media. For Crystal, all languages are equal, and "it is perfectly possible for a minority language culture to make its presence felt on the Internet" (2003, 142).

In Crystal's view, advantages that the Internet brought about were much more significant than the rather minor novelties, reflected in a few hundred new words and idioms that new type of communication introduced in the grammar and vocabulary of the English language (2005). Nevertheless, opposing views lay in wait to provide the expert community and the people in general with their own ideas. They saw Crystal's minor novelties as serious problems. Fierce opponents were reflected in the ones who struggled to prove that the Internet undermined the process of efficient communication by destroying traditional linguistic forms. Namely, while in the early phases of their development information technologies stood for the expertise of narrow circles of scientists, there is nowadays a growing realization that computer terminology is becoming generally accepted as everyday jargon filled with impenetrable metaphors, the so-called slang and acronyms (Mair 2006). Due to the explosion of electronic communication, language started being misused, which resulted in the creation of non-standard phrases that skillfully bypass grammar or spelling rules. Chomsky found the reason for this state of affairs in the use of the so-called textonyms as well as in the fact that the digital age made young people put reading skills and everyday obligations aside for the sake of checking emails or spending time in chat rooms. As a consequence, Chomsky added, young people are losing the ability to think seriously (Farndale 2010). And this is quite alarming, the author would add. If all these things are taken into consideration, it can be concluded that while in the past the printed media and television were regarded as parts of the group that had a negative impact on language, the Internet, as the modern-day media, proved itself to be much more destructive weapon.

Beside all the things that have been mentioned so far, the paradox that follows the impact that the Internet has made on the field of language should also be examined. Namely, it has already been pointed out that certain authors' observations, such as Crystal's, are based on the fact that the Internet can also be regarded as the fertile ground for the process of raising awareness and promotion of linguistic diversities (2003). However, it can also be said that the Internet itself contributes to growing domination of the English language in relation to other languages. Therefore, the author remarks, efficient surfing the global network requires knowledge of at least basic forms of the English language. The following segment will deal with the English language as the dominant factor and the specific leader of the progressive digital revolution.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS THE SPECIFIC LEADER IN CYBER CULTURE

It has already been implied that in the early phases of its development the Internet stood for a privilege that only technically advanced users could benefit from while using it for business purposes (Mair 2006). As the years went by, the media, which include information technologies, started developing rapidly. The beginning of the overall use of the Internet for everyday purposes created the need for a universal language that would be able to absorb all contemporary patterns of communication. The English language reached the level of absolute domination almost imperceptibly. Having its way cleared, the Internet stepped into the lives of people inhabiting different parts of the world who needed to be acquainted only with basic forms of the English language in order to be able to browse the Internet content efficiently. If all these things are taken into consideration, the most logical question that should be answered will be – why English?

Past times showed that political, economic and military strength of cities and states had a significant role in the process of spreading of languages to other territories. One of the best examples can be found in the case of Latin whose widespread use was not the result of a blessing, as some rulers might have thought. Reasons for this should be looked for in conquests, trade, religious missions or social aspirations (Ostler 2008a). Nowadays, the status of the English language is often compared to the status Latin used to have more than two thousand years ago and whose roots can still be traced in scientific terminology. Experts point out that the English language reached the dimension in which it could easily "dethrone" Latin and gain hegemony over it in the field of science (Moder and Martinovic-Zic 2004). Reasons for this situation lie in the fact that modern era paved the way for global economic development accompanied by advanced communication technologies and growth of multinational companies and international organizations that accepted English as

their official language. American and British technological, economic and media revolution, and consequent expansion of consumerist spirit, mass culture and cosmopolitan way of life also contributed to the process of turning of this language into global medium. As Chomsky pointed out, the United States of America displaced Great Britain at the top of the pyramid of power, which resulted in the fact that English started being regarded as a kind of international language. This situation was, in his view, just a reflection of the distribution of power ("Interview: Noam Chomsky"). Moreover, it is well-known that the English have rather narcissistic attitude towards their mother tongue, similar to the one the people from Italy used to have towards Latin (Knowles 1999). All this contributed to "English spread" (Brutt-Griffler 2002, 107). Therefore, it should not be surprising that more than eighty per cent of digital information on the Internet are recorded in English (Moder and Martinovic-Zic 2004).

Domination of the English language on the global network as well as in other modern media and fields of life brought about a lot of positive effects. Its contribution to the process of educational enrichment of population at the global level is immeasurable. Judging by some research, eighty nine per cent of children who live in the European Union learn English as a foreign language at school, whereas only thirty two percent of schoolchildren are interested in French. What is more, as a bridge of communication connecting people from various parts of the world and a link governing business and political relations, the English language rightfully gained the title of modern-day *lingua franca* ("The Challenges of Language Preservation").

Nevertheless, the authority of this language over other languages is often undermined by beliefs that the Internet could ruin its richness and turn it into unrecognizable set of linguistic patterns. Patricia Wallace claims that communication on the Internet can be playful or even intemperate, and that it abounds in "acronyms like *lol* (*laughing out loud*) and *rofl* (*rolling on the floor laughing*), and anything that *can* be abbreviated *will* be. This includes common words like *pls* (*please*), *cya* (*see you*), *u r* (*you are*) and *thx* (*thanks*)" (1999, 11). This list can also include English phrases such as *hello*, *goodbye*, *I want to see you* or *what a wonderful experience* that became rather old-fashioned which is why they were replaced by new expressions such as *hey*, *g'day*, *hola*, *howdy*, or *yo*, *c ya laters*, *ciao*, *au revoir*, or *hasta la vista*, *I wnt 2 c u* and *wht a wondaful xperience*. It is also important to mention the use of unavoidable emoticons, which are used with the purpose of showing emotions during the process of communication on the Internet. According to one source, in this situation, conventional skills such as the ability to write prose are largely irrelevant (Knowles 1999) to the advantage of turning to the process of acquisition of those linguistic forms that will be sufficient for relaxing chat with cyber friends. The reason for this can be found in the fact that people, especially young generations, change complete structure of

the sentence by eliminating subject, verb or a pronoun from it, only with the purpose of sending information as quickly as possible or keeping in track with modern trends. The logical conclusion would be that "these 'rules' or conventions of electronic communication, such as text messaging, email and 'chatting' on the Internet, are continually developing in response to users' techniques", which leads to "a situation that is ever changing around you and is also being changed by you" (Coultas 2003, 4). Because of this, what used to be known as traditional language turned into the so-called slang which some people find quite difficult to avoid or do not even want to avoid only because it makes life easier for them.

The problem that accompanies this newly emerged phenomenon is that such messages often have no meaning for the ones who failed to become acquainted with the latest "rules" of communication. Besides, it can be said that the more people "distort" language in this way, the harder it becomes for them to embrace the possibility of returning to the correct way of expressing thoughts. Therefore, one might rightfully ponder, the way one of the most eminent Serbian linguists did, if that was the language of Shakespeare, Chaucer in the fourteenth century, or, much earlier, of Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (Бугарски 1996). The answer would certainly be negative.

If all these things were taken into consideration, it could be said that the use of English phrases does not only stand for the reflection of global culture, but that it also reflects socio-cultural development and the level of education of people. Moreover, knowledge of English brings universal benefit since it removes borders and makes world heritage available to all. However, recent trends, marked by misuse of language, bring to the surface the problem that might happen in case the aforementioned trend becomes all-encompassing and destructive phenomenon that spreads to other languages.

THE SERBIAN LANGUAGE AND CYBER CULTURE

It has already been pointed out that modern-day information technologies brought significant advantages to mankind in general. However, French scientist Jacques Vallee used one of his works to warn the people of the dangers that the digital era might bring about. He was particularly interested in the so-called computer-aided translation, which, in his view, started being regarded as an object of fun among linguists, especially in the case of "a mention of a gentleman with the unlikely name of Leonardo *Yes* Vinci" (2003).

Situations of this kind often occur due to the fact that the interference of foreign, primarily English phrases in local languages is excessive and sometimes unnecessary and that it might lead to the problem of impoverishment of local languages. This can be exemplified by the cases from the developed and developing societies which are exposed to the in-

fluence of the so-called Anglo-Americanization and computerization and in which young generations are said to have been growing up shoulder to shoulder with the development of information technologies. This trend can also be observed in the Serbian language, despite the fact and the relevant data from 2009 according to which only ten thousand and five hundred Serbian citizens possess valid computer literacy certificate, which is alarmingly low if compared to the situation in the European Union (Вељковић 2009).

From its very beginning, the Serbian language has been imbued with foreign words that originate from Turkish, French, Greek, Latin or German language. These interlinguistic connections appear in the form of borrowings, transliterations, morphological transformations of foreign words and phrases, translations, adaptations or phonetic transcriptions. These penetrations of phonological, grammatical and lexical-semantic structures of one language into another language's system caused cultural mingling, facilitated communication among people in modern civilization and brought languages together (Бугарски 1991). It can be said, on the one hand, that the emergence of the Internet with the English language as its inseparable part contributed to the process of enrichment of the Serbian language. Namely, use of anglicisms in the Serbian language not only facilitated communication with foreigners, but it also introduced new words into Serbian, thus supplementing it with those words for which there were no Serbian equivalents, and opened new possibilities for the creation of new words. Therefore, it can be said that the cases in which anglicisms are used moderately stand for no threat for the Serbian language. What is more, majority of modern languages are imbued with words of this kind that have the same meaning and a slightly changed form. Such examples can be found in cases of words such as *radar/радар*, *laser/ласер*, *television/телевизија*, *telephone/телефон*, *radio/радио* or *clone/клон* (Бугарски 1991). Furthermore, the borrowed word *волонтер* can be regarded as the best indicator of the benefits that clever use of foreign words can result in, since Serbian translated form *добровољац* does not have the same meaning as the foreign word *волонтер*.

Nevertheless, there are views according to which "Serbian linguistics was not ready for the penetration of foreign words into our language. It had to protect and defend the Serbian language from the invasion of foreign languages. After all, that was its only task" (Медић 2000, 32). How can this assumption be supported? Namely, apart from the necessary and logical anglicisms, the Serbian language also abounds in its own grammatical forms and vocabulary that can and have to be regarded as useful and primary equivalents of foreign words. It can be said that the impoverishment of language results from the situations when the words *apply*, *survival* or *board* are adapted and used instead of words *конкурисати*, *преживљавање* or *одбор*. Perhaps the most extreme case happened with the verb *to google* or *гугловати* that managed to cement

its place in the Serbian and the English language as well, standing for a monosyllabic word for the use of the world-famous web search engine *Google*. It is interesting that Google's executives themselves were not thrilled about the whole situation despite the fact that this sequence of events contributed to further popularization of this search engine. They claimed that the bigger it got, the more it became part of everyday English language and less a brand in its own right (Duffy 2003).

The fact that people use foreign language terminology more often is sometimes justified by the rapid development of information technologies. Under such conditions, creation of local equivalents hardly manages to follow that process. Moreover, borrowings are in some cases known as words with small number of syllables, which is why they turn out to be easier to use than it is the case with local phrases. For example, practice has shown that the transcribed anglicism, *бестселер*, will be used more often than the Serbian phrase *најпродаванији производ* or *најпродаванија књига*. All-encompassing efforts of our society to join technologically advanced world in which the English language has sovereign power stand for one of the reasons for this state of affairs. In that situation, traditionally used words such as *контролни пункт, премија, срећан крај, погодак* or *аудиција* have been replaced, with or without adequate adaptation, with phrases such as *checkpoint, jackpot, happy end, bingo* or *casting*. However, various researches have shown that the creation of these "serboenglish" or "cosmoserbian" (Медић 2000, 32) subforms of the Serbian language resulted from chaotic and indiscriminate use of English phrases. Some of them, such as *агенда* or *мониторинг*, have been completely assimilated in the Serbian language so that people often tend to forget that they can use local equivalents in everyday speech and writing instead of these foreign phrases.

Additional problems are caused by some facts that are related to two officially recognized alphabets in the Serbian language – the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabet. Namely, people who use the Internet on a regular basis are often faced with the fact that some computer programs do not recognize the Cyrillic alphabet or letters such as *ш, ħ, ч, ж* or *ђ*, which is why they turn to the Latin alphabet and even replace the characters *š, ć, č, ž* and *đ* with characters *s, c, z* and *dj*. This trend has become widespread and has reached people of different social strata. In this way, it managed to undermine general facts about literacy, turning it into pseudo-literacy.

As has already been implied, it seems that this phenomenon has become more dominant among members of young population who seem not to have awareness of the significance of preservation of the richness and heritage of mother tongue. While older generations are sceptical about the use of English phrases, abbreviations or acronyms in everyday communication in Serbian because they often fail to understand their true meaning, young people see the use of anglicisms as a matter of prestige. In their view, it reveals the level of cultural and educational enlighten-

ment. For them, failure to follow the latest trends, which are popular among their peers, is unacceptable. Because of this, their everyday communication on the Internet is filled with the above-mentioned shortened forms, taken over from the English language. In this situation, their attempts to be concise and express as much information as possible in as fewer words as possible turn their communication into "distorted" set of semantic and grammatical forms over which all editors and publishers would put a question mark. For example, it can often be heard that their written communication is filled with phrases such as *сори*, *бај ð веј*, *btw*, *плиз* and *pls*, instead of Serbian equivalents *извини*, *узгред* or *молим те*. Additional problem is raised by the fact that students have become so accustomed to this way of communication that they often mix up letters in their schoolwork or use letters that do not exist in Serbian alphabets. For example, Latin letters *š*, *ć/č* and *ž* are frequently replaced with letters *sh*, *ch* and *zh*. It also happens that they mix up Cyrillic and Latin symbols or use *w* instead of Latin letter *v*. All this undermines the significance of Serbian alphabets. One of the reasons for this state of affairs can be found in the results of the research performed in 2010, according to which seventy six per cent of young people who are said to have grown up shoulder to shoulder with the development of digital technologies spend most of their free time on the popular social network known as Facebook. („Сваки други Србин користи Интернет"). Although this network can be used for educative purposes (namely, in one Belgrade high school a project has been conceived, within which profiles of famous Serbian poets are posted on Facebook with the purpose of motivating students to search for some educative content on this network), Facebook can be regarded as one of the key factors that exert negative influence on young people and a synonym of deviant forms of communication that occur in chat rooms in which the correct use of grammar forms has been put aside.

According to Bugarski, these situations in which words are used incorrectly are, in fact, excessive. Nevertheless, he wonders, what would everyday life and *image* of our *teenagers* be like without *jeans* and *badges*, *hamburgers* and *hot dogs* with *chips* and *cola* in a *snack-bar*, *disk jockeys* with their *hits* on *long plays* with *light show*, without *jukebox*, *walkman*, *walkie-talkie*, *computers* and *video recorders*, without *skateboard*, *surfing*, *free shops* and *shopping tours* while using *rent-a-car* and *air-lift*. Their lives would certainly not be *okay*, let alone *super* (1991). The author of this paper would add that their lives would certainly be the best, or *fancy*, if they called things by their right names.

TOWARDS LANGUAGE PRESERVATION

Some sources stress the possibilities of utilization of modern technologies and the Internet for the promotion of linguistic diversity (Crystal 2003). Among other things, the Internet can be used as a unique bank of

information about languages themselves. Big software companies are also worth mentioning in this respect, since they focus their activities on localization of their products into foreign languages with the purpose of making them understandable for as many users as possible. Besides, mankind is familiar with the attempts of founders of popular social networks to promote crossing of linguistic barriers by translating their web content into a great number of languages. For example, on the popular social network Facebook people can encounter an application called *Translations* that enables users to translate various content into several tens of languages (Shih 2009). What is more, according to the developer of this network, this application has become of use both to software developers in English-speaking countries who can translate their applications in several languages that Facebook supports and to developers in non-English speaking countries who can translate their applications into English. At the time Zuckerberg reflected on these data, Facebook itself was translated into more than seventy world languages (Ostrow 2008). Judging by the speed of development of information technologies, it can be concluded that this number has already been surpassed. However, it has already been pointed out ("The Challenges of Language Preservation") that the irony lies in the fact that the Internet itself contributes to the domination of the English language over "minority" languages, as Crystal would call them (2003). Can these languages, which, according to some estimates, exceed the number of six thousand, be protected and preserved under the unrestrained wave of urbanization? And how?

English has been called world language with reason (Brutt-Griffler 2002). Namely, in its historical conquests it managed to replace local languages on the British Isles, in Northern America and Australia. In this situation, this scientist wonders why and how local languages in Asia and Africa managed to survive despite globalization and how English came to be accepted only as a foreign language in these parts of the world. According to this author, mastery of English over local languages "does not occur, so long as the world language does not become the language of the internal (domestic) economy (market)" (2002, 122). And it has become widely known to what extent and in which way it took control at the global level. However, according to Christopher Moseley, his *Encyclopedia of the World's Endangered Languages* (2007) does not contain any unique manual or recipe on the basis of which languages can be preserved. The author of this paper would add that one such recipe does not exist. Nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that the attempts directed towards promotion and defence of mother tongues could provide stimulus and motivation for giving just positions to mother tongues. Activities organized by Unesco, performed with the purpose of defending local languages from the invasion of modern technologies are known all over the world. With this aim, International Mother Language Day is celebrated in February each year ("International Mother Language Day"). One of the

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attempts at language preservation was recorded in China where the media, publishers and website developers were forbidden to use foreign words and phrases because they sully the purity of the Chinese language and contribute to the creation of unfavourable social conditions. According to this source, standardized Chinese should be the norm. Therefore, abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided, as well as the so-called *Chinglish*, or mix of English and Chinese ("China Bans English Words in Media"). This kind of situation does not necessarily lead towards narcissism about mother tongue, of which Ostler spoke in one of his articles (2008b). Namely, this linguist claimed that the decisions of the nations that left foreign languages on the margins of social scale and marked them as optional in school system were a reflection of myopia and narcissism about their language, as well as of the inability to observe the significance of learning foreign languages for the process of acquisition of new knowledge on alternate worlds or viewpoints. Although it can be regarded as a little extreme, the situation in China has nothing to do with narcissism. It reflects persistence and struggle for the preservation of Chinese millennial culture and tradition.

This is certainly not the only way in which language can be preserved. Moseley (2007) quoted David Crystal and reflected on his attitudes according to which one of the factors that could contribute to the survival of languages was its presence in educational system. When the Serbian language is taken into consideration, representatives of the system of formal education should pay more attention to the examples of good and bad practice of the use of language. What is more, that is their primary task – to cherish local tradition in general and maintain academic interest for basic rules of language and culture.

CONCLUSION

Judging by numerous facts that are related to the development of information technologies, it can be concluded that Bugarski was right when he predicted that the twenty-first century would be the century of information (1991). The beginning of this era was marked by the development of the Internet. In its earliest phases, people did not know how to utilize a wide specter of opportunities that suddenly became available. As the years went by, the Internet went from the technological miracle to the indicator of literacy. Judging by the speed at which computer technologies develop and progress, it cannot be expected "that the kings of today's era will reign in tomorrow's era" (Shih 2009, 204), but that they will be overcome by new accomplishments performed by experts from the field of science and technology.

It should also be pointed out that language is the medium that can hardly be controlled, especially if all social segments that shape it are taken into consideration. In case the aforementioned trends continue, no

one will be able to assume to what extent the forthcoming technologies will influence the field of language in the years to come. Having in mind the fact that digital technologies primarily rely on the use of English, Ostler wondered whether this language would seem so attractive in 2050 when Brazil, Russia, China and India were predicted to comprise four of the six largest economies. This linguist was aware of the fact that some people would find it hard to believe that the world could ever abandon its common language of science. Nevertheless, he reminded the readers that Latin used to stand for the dominant language of science and that it still succumbed to the pressure of English. He did not claim that the English language would simply disappear, just as many Latin words remained in use to this day, but that it would change or split into families of languages. In short, "the world in the next few generations is likely to see greater multilingualism and less English-backed bilingualism" (2008a). Whether this means that local languages will manage to find their place under the sun remains to be seen.

At the end of this paper it can be concluded that the extent to which foreign languages in combination with digital technologies are capable of exerting influence on local languages depends solely upon users. According to Patricia Wallace, the Internet is not just the global village, but also "a huge collection of distinct neighbourhoods where people with common interests can share information, work together, tell stories, joke around, debate politics, help out each other, or play games. Geography may have little bearing on the way these neighbourhoods form, but purpose does, and it has a strong influence on our behaviour" (1999, 9). Therefore, people are the ones who mold the picture about themselves on the social stage. In the same way, the extent to which foreign words will be allowed to invade local languages depends on the users as well.

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Jelena Jovićević

EVOLUCIJA JEZIKA U SAJBER KULTURI

Apstrakt

Rad se bavi načinima na koje je pojava sajber kulture i Interneta, kao njenog ključnog faktora, uticala na razvoj jezika. Razmotriće se efekti koje je takozvana elektronska revolucija imala na jezik uopšte, ali i na pojedinačne jezike. Autor će nastojati da pokaže da je engleski jezik, usled svoje globalne dominacije, ostvario prevlast i u Internet komunikaciji, te da se kao takav istakao i kao svojevrstan izazov za ostale jezike, između ostalih i za srpski jezik, koji sve više preuizima reči i fraze iz ovog jezika. Takođe će se utvrditi se da li se način na koji se jezik koristi na Internetu do te mere razlikuje od načina na koji je jezik korišćen u prošlosti, da se novi trendovi mogu smatrati revolucionarnim.

Ključne reči: sajber kultura, jezik, Internet, engleski jezik, srpski jezik