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## GLOBALIZATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY WITHIN THE EU: A PROPOSAL FOR THE SOUTH TYROL

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**Summary.** Nowadays we are witnessing the final spread of globalization, a process leading on the one hand to cultural exchanges, but on the other hand to the cultural leveling. Thus, the necessity emerges to strengthen the sense of belonging of the people to a well defined territory together with its culture, based, first of all, on the local language. Within Italian borders, we can find a particular situation characterized by the necessity to preserve the local identity and to maintain the cultural heritage, in a place where a great importance is given to the cultural roots (as testified, for example, by the phenomenon of the 'Schützen'): the case of South Tyrol (an autonomous province in Northern Italy), which is part of Tyrol, a territory traditionally influenced by Germanic culture. By analyzing the linguistic situation in South Tyrol it became clear in which way Italy has faced the topic of linguistic minorities, by resorting to the principals of the nation-State. In South Tyrolean schools, German is taught as an official language, but South Tyrolean dialects, which belong to Austro-Bavarian languages, are mostly disregarded. One of the EU's future challenges should be the will to preserve the territorial identities respecting in the meanwhile local traditions, especially through the conservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage developed over the centuries. A valid solution in regard to this situation could be the teaching of the local dialects at the side of German language; such a proposal could fit for other European situations, where a common and/or national language together with the local dialects could be taught, according to the founding principal of the EU: united in diversity.

**Keywords:** dialects, South Tyrol, language policy, linguistic minorities, local culture, European Union.

### Introduction

In the present global context, thoroughly changed in the last few years, the loss of the sense of belonging to a community is evident and it is due to the social eradication created by the phenomenon known as *globalization*. At the same time the defense of the local identities and respective languages has developed up to suggest a new phenomenon of the social context: the *glocalization* (Bauman, 2005). This term is used to indicate a common necessity of the global world, developed nearby the globalization, characterized by the will of a determinate social group to defend their cultural and linguistic belonging, since the language is not a neutral tool but defines a social group (Duranti, 2011). The conservation of the language goes

beyond the simple linguistic element and reaches the awareness of the need of a solid unity between the person and the community. The present contribution refers to the linguistic situation in Alto Adige (called Südtirol in German language), an autonomous province in Northern Italy, along the borders with Austria, in the last century scene of many tensions among the German and Italian ethnic groups. This article aims at showing how it is possible to defend the local identities within a national State involved in the process of globalization, a situation by now ordinary to other countries all over the world. In particular, it deals with the linguistic relation between the local cultures and the Nation-State(s), and the theoretical implications of the effects of the linguistic planning adopted in these cases in which there is a substantial ethnical minority.

The object of investigation is the situation of the local identities in the context of the Globalization, with reference to the situation in Trentino-Alto Adige, a region situated in Northern Italy, along the border with Austria; this study can be considered to be an example for other similar situations. The hypothesis proposed is that the promotion of the study of the local dialects is important in order to preserve the diversity and the demo-ethno-anthropological heritage. In this context the multilingualism can sustain the relationship between the State and the local cultures, characterized by the opportunity to defend their identity in the society of globalization. The present contribution takes into account recent studies in language policy referring to the new trends. In particular, it focuses on the new perspectives deriving from the spread of Globalization, which has contributed significantly to the changing of mind about the traditional language policies, firmly based on the preeminent role played by the national languages. The proposal is preserving local languages within a plurilingual context, and the choice to focus on South Tyrol's situation is due to the fact that in the region there are two national languages (German and Italian) along with a regional language (Ladin) which are protected by the law, but the South Tyrolean dialects, which (together with Ladin dialects) can be considered the heritage languages, are not safeguarded. This proposal can be referred to other plurilingual context within the EU.

## **The language and the community**

In the society of globalization the borders among the States disappear and the concept of global village becomes a new social phenomenon. This condition requires more flexibility as for the transfer of goods and persons, but, above all, the spread of knowledge in order to create a mutual global bond that constitutes the basis for a universal sense of human belonging. The context, in which this global trend expands, appears to be difficult and tortuous in relation to the opportunity to achieve the shared objectives; in fact, the differences among the nations are evident not only from outside but also from inside. An example is the relations instituted among the local identities, a whole of social links aimed at the preservation of the demo-ethno-anthropological structure. The ability to institute solid social bonds is the basis of the society, and the *language* is the instrument more direct to establish a communication among people, who compose the community. This word takes up a particular meaning in relation to the necessity to make a common sense of belonging to which everybody can refer and in which everyone feels itself really represented. The term 'community' refers to a social group whose members take part

in a common objective, following the principals of solidarity and trust, fundamental characteristics for generating social capital (Gallino, 1978).

The relation between community and social capital is important to establish a connection between the *principal of belonging* and the *sense of belonging*. The former refers to the demo-ethno-anthropological indicators, which characterize a determinate social group; the latter refers to the will to participate in a common project, by putting the interests of the community before individual needs. The concept of 'identity' leads to the ideas of people and nation, the principals the institutional structure is based on and the defense of the demo-ethno-anthropological social structure depends on. The most appropriate instrument used by everybody to participate in the community activities is the language, which is one of the elements characterizing a social group, such as culture, religion, ethnic belonging, etc. The topic of the identity manifested itself above all at the beginning of the millennium, when the process of globalization started and changed the social relationship radically not just on a local scale, but also on a world scale. In particular, sociologists highlight in some cases a continuous loss of the point of reference, thus they have coined the term *liquid modernity* to indicate the decrease of the certainties considered indissoluble up to now. Also the national State appears to be no more able to control the sudden modification of the society and it has lost, as a consequence, the interest for the defense of the territory (Bauman, 2003). This condition has not generated the recrudescence of the old nationalism, but it has created a particular situation characterized by the decrease of the sense of belonging to a local community, evident also by a political point of view with the birth of those political movements finalized at the defense of the cultural roots. We can observe that the global situation proceeds to a deeper intensification of the contrast between the globalization and the glocalization. The first one is the result of the dissolving of borders for advantaging the global market of goods, followed by the transfer of a considerable mass of workers; on the contrary, the second focuses on the recognition of the local identities that claim the opportunity to defend their historical heritage. In this way, the contrast between two social institutes is clear which is very important for the human development, the *community* and the *society* (Tönnies, 2011). The reason of this dichotomy is evident in the evolution of the contemporary society and in the change of its cultural criteria. Their study is fundamental to understand that the concepts of identity and territorial unity, principals to which the same linguistic instrument refers, are important for the social life of a group.

The language gets, in this way, in the debate concerning the defense of the local identities, before in the European context and, then, in the global one, to settle the questions as regards to the need to safeguard the demo-ethno-anthropological social structure. Language and identity are synonymous of membership to a community that uses the linguistic instrument to determine the cultural space and to exclude those people who do not belong to their specific social group. The linguistic activity is originated by the will to take part in a community, whose members are tied by a solid sense of unity based on the harmony of the purposes. The opportunity to develop the linguistic activity is related to the language, typical of the ideal creation, which then develops up to include the traditional customs and the local identities, basic characteristics for creating a solid demo-ethno-anthropological social structure. The knowledge of a language favors the speaking among the members of a social group,

who adopt it as an official instrument of communication and who defend its uniqueness and importance inside the national State. One point should be underlined that not always the territorial borders mark a nation; on the contrary, we can often observe a particular situation: on the one hand, there is the Nation-Territory, which cannot leave apart the geographical frontiers, on the other hand, the Nation-Culture, which refers to the cultural belonging to a well defined identity. Sometimes they coincide, sometimes not, in fact one can find a condition characterized by the belonging to a nation by birth, whereas by culture to another, a situation evident above all near the borders, where the geopolitical alterations have influenced the local cultures (Meinecke, 1975). The development of the national State had a sudden acceleration after the French Revolution, whose most direct effect was the constitution of the national languages and the centralization of the cultural and the social life of the citizens. This condition has simplified everybody's life, but the centralization of the political power has reduced the local autonomies and has contributed to a territorial eradication, whose consequences are particularly evident in the contemporary society.

### **The social role of the language**

The language has not only a linguistic aspect limited to grammar or to vocabulary, but has also a social connotation, connected to the different roles depending on the necessities of the community, in order to become an instrument concerning the *status* of the people. In relation to the belonging to a determined ethnic group, culture, religion, or social class, the language assumes different characteristics and provides the instruments for communicating and establishing personal relationships. The language is the most suitable means to recognize the belonging of the people to a well defined community, so that they can participate in the cultural process, aimed at taking part in common activities. The language becomes the instrument *par excellence* of identification among the people, because they are members of a social group, characterized by a common history, tradition and culture, so that one can speak of ethno-linguistic discipline. This term refers to a specific scientific branch that, starting from the study of the language, determines the origin of the words and their syntactical expression, through the use of scientific criteria and schemes. The language has in fact a social value when we ascribe the relative characteristics to a determined cultural context, as Steward's classification, dated 1968, demonstrates:

- *Classical Languages*: formal and no longer spoken but preserved in literary and religious texts;
- *Vernacular Languages*: spoken varieties believed by their speakers to be independent;
- *Standard Languages*: languages with published grammars and dictionaries and a popular belief that there is a correct version;
- *Dialects*: usually spoken varieties taken to be a regional or social modification of a standard language or vernacular;
- *Pidgins*: hybrid varieties without native speakers;
- *Creoles*: former pidgins that have acquired native speakers;
- *Artificial Languages*: created languages like Esperanto.

Steward asserts that classical and standard languages are studied at school, while the other are relegated to particular conditions, cultural or professional; besides, the language favors comprehension of the common belonging of the people, its social role, rank or profession (Spolsky, 2011). Nowadays English can be reasonably considered as the only 'real' global language, to the disadvantage of other languages or dialects, whose criteria follow closely the more direct necessities of the communities, the basis for the development of a solid demo-ethno-anthropological social structure. This term refers to a well-defined place in which a determined culture develops, defined not only by the geographical borders but also by the social ones, an area in which the inhabitants communicate with the same language and have common features, such as the historical heritage. For these reasons not always the political borders of a region refer to the necessities of the local identities, on the contrary, the necessities of the communities do not reflect the parameters of the political authorities that have other aims. The link between the place and the language was, in the last years, studied by the sociologists with the objective to understand the origin of the local cultures, their evolution and the future perspectives in the global world (Johnstone, 2011).

The question intersects in the discussion between the national State and the global society; it has become clear in the last years, characterized by deep changes, evident also during the study of the local linguistic evolution. We moved from a strong centralism, in the first part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the search of a greater autonomy for the communities, determined also by the loss of importance of the State and a growing power of the international organizations. Though there was in the past a relevant interest in local languages, nowadays we witness an impoverishment of the global cultural outline, even if a recent increasing interest has focused on this delicate question. By the way, Jernudd and Nekvapil (2012) established eight degrees of use of the languages (a more used language corresponds to a higher level, while a less used language corresponds to a lower level):

- Endangered language used in educational sphere, in the work sphere, in the mass media, and on higher levels, even on state level.
- Endangered language used on lower levels (local media and government offices).
- Endangered language used in the local work sphere, in which interaction between speakers of the minority and majority languages occurs.
- Endangered language used as the language of instruction in schools, in looser or tighter dependency on instruction in the majority language.
- Endangered language used for instruction, but not in formal education.
- Endangered language used in family settings as a means of inter-generational handing down of tradition and is thus handed down in this way.
- Endangered language used by the older generation, which is already beyond the age of biological reproduction.
- Endangered language used (known, remembered) by several of its older speakers.

The reasons of the changes of the language are different and are caused either by the cultural and political alterations or simply by social phenomena, as the urbanization or the migration for job causes. An immediate consequence of the transfer of different ethnic groups is evident in the merge among several cultures, so that from their point

of contact new languages and identities can arise. The cultural alterations, increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had a double trend: in the beginning, a strong nationalism, on the contrary, in the end - the globalization that has become the most important process that has changed the society radically. Parallel to globalization a new phenomenon known by the term glocalization also developed, whose objective is the adaptation of the local identities to the global context, a problem evident in the autonomous province of Alto Adige.

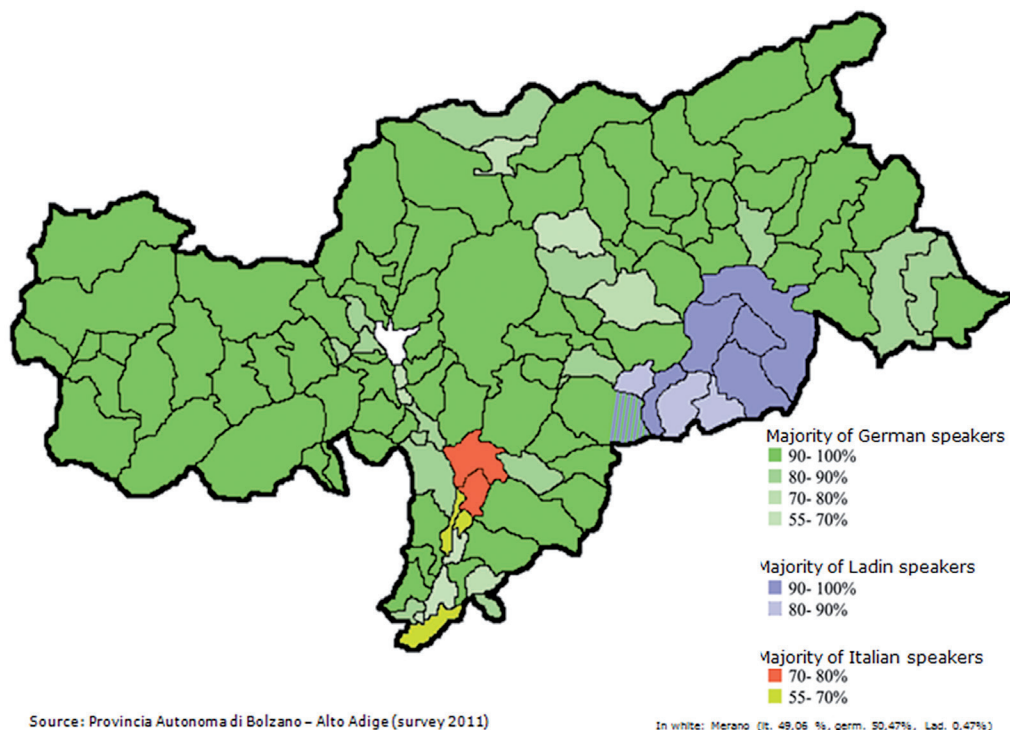
## **The case of the South Tyrol in Italy**

The South Tyrolean question originated after the First World War, when that territory was passed from Austria to Italy as a compensation for the military defeat; the assignment that afterwards generated many tensions. In fact, German inhabitants of Alto Adige call their territory South Tyrol with reference to the Austrian Tyrol. The situation of the South Tyrol is important for the implications as for language, local culture and *Schützen*, the defenders of the Tyrolean identity, born in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the local princes, who needed a local army for the defense of the Tyrol's borders, decided to found the first marksmen companies. The promulgation of the *Tiroler Landlibell* marked the official origin of the Schützen and their effective role, not only social but also juridical, because it ratified the institution of the obligatory conscription, and the practices of the recruitment were assigned to the courts. The Schützen were also later founded in Trentino with the name of *Welschtiroler*, in order to indicate the defenders of the local Tyrolean culture present in the area near Trento, at that time part of Austria. Their engagement is continued during the centuries against those people who were defined as enemies of Tyrol, including the Napoleonic Army, many disciples of the Enlightenment, many members of the nobility, and even some components of the royal family. The Schützen activity has continued during the centuries until now and has pursued the aim of the defense of the Tyrolean identity and the local culture. The *South Tyrolean Question* gets in the Italian political outline after the First World War and shows its particularity because the South Tyrol's culture is founded on an indissoluble bond among language, identity and Schützen, characterized by a strong dependence and correlation. In particular, the aim of the Schützen is the preservation of the Tyrolean culture, and for this objective they opposed also to the Fascism and the Nazism and many of them stood out for the courage, such as Michael Gamper. He has been renowned for the protest against the Fascism since 1923 and for criticizing above all the activity of the cartographer Ettore Tolomei, who converted South Tyrolean place names from German into Italian and eliminated the native toponyms. Also the Nazism was criticized for deserting the South Tyrol to Italy, in order to strengthen the alliance between German and Italy, justifying in this way the action of the Fascism (Marzari, 1974).

However, the most serious problems developed after the Second World War when, owing to the agreement De Gasperi-Gruber, there were many questions tied to the Italianization of the South Tyrol, especially in regard to the massive immigration of Italians, an operation that created heated arguments and the birth of an independence movement. The question continued for many years until 1972, when a new policy of

autonomy for Alto Adige opted for the acknowledgement of the preservation of the local identities. Although the *pacchetto atesino*, which is a series of rules for defending the culture of South Tyrol, is by now acknowledged and accepted, many tensions still remain between Germans and Italians, in relation to the use of the language in different ambits of daily life. In the case of Alto Adige the language studied is the official German and not the South Tyrolean dialects, also thanks to the mass media, such as journal and TV, that have spread the *Hochdeutsch* and not the different dialects spoken in this territory (Bruni, 1997). The question of the relation between the standard languages and the dialects can be referred to any country, but the study of the South Tyrol's case proves how often the national pattern is imposed on local basis without considering the real necessities of the communities. This case is typical of the Italian language policy, aimed at proposing the language policy at the local level traditionally adopted on the nation scale, already implemented at the national level. This condition is much more evident in Alto Adige because that territory is composed for the most part of the German ethnic group, so that the Italian government recognizes only the official German language and not South Tyrol's dialects that are part of the South German languages. The same forced Italianization during the Fascism did not take into account the etymological sense of the Tyrolean places and surnames; on the contrary, the Fascism Italianized the words and altered the original meanings of the words in order to adapt them to the Italian language.

The result was that many inhabitants of South Tyrol had a translation of their surnames and of the local toponyms, different from the original sense; a situation that generated, as a consequence, the resentment of the population. Besides, this linguistic operation, moreover, accepted by the international organisms, recognized only the official German language as a local language and not the South Tyrolean dialects that are different from various points of view. In a certain way the remedy to the Italian linguistic nationalism showed interest only for the *Dachsprache* (Dell'Aquila and Iannaccaro, 2011) that did not recognize the South Tyrolean dialects but proposed a national principal on the local basis. The risk is the standardization of the language and the culture not only at a national level, but also at a local one. This process carries out to a cultural standardization that restricts the autonomy of everybody and, as a consequence, makes dependence on the cultural model, taken as an example. The situation is clear in the language planning regarding Alto Adige, where the recognition of the German language does not mean the acceptance of the South Tyrolean dialects, but only the implementation of the model of national language at the regional level. This critique can also be addressed to Italian, an extremely nationalized language, imposed to the country without considering the requirements of the local communities. This observation is also supported by the next table, which shows the census in Alto Adige in 2011 that never mentions South Tyrolean dialects, but only German, Italian and Ladin.



**Fig 1<sup>2</sup>. Linguistic groups in Alto Adige (2011 survey)**

This situation generated cross-linguistic influences, originated from the point of contact of the dialects in the places near the borders: a fusion that afterwards generated positive interferences that enriched the local linguistic heritage (Zambelli, 2003/2004). Unfortunately, lack of real defense of the local identities risks ending into a cultural disagreement among the minorities, because they can feel a loss of respect to them and act, consequently, with potentially disastrous effects. In fact, the tensions developed from now on are the demonstration of the importance of the local identities and autonomies, too often repressed by the centralist State. By the way, the European Union defends all the diversities,<sup>3</sup> both linguistic and cultural (Urrutia and Lasagabaster, 2007), for favoring more cohesion among the peoples living within the European territory (Von Toggenburg, 2001). In particular, the European Treaty declares that: “[t]he European Community must contribute to the development of the cultures of the States members, in respecting their national and regional diversities, and at the same time defend the cultural heritage” (Bernier, 2001). The study of the South Tyrol’s case suggests an overall view how one nation-State, in this case Italy, has faced up the problem of the local identities in an area that

2 <http://www.provincia.bz.it/astat/it/censimento-popolazione/attualita.asp?aktuellesaction=4&aktuellesarticleid=425641> (accessed 23 July 2013).

3 Euromosaic Studies I, II and III (2004), [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/euromosaic/index\\_es](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/euromosaic/index_es) (accessed 23 July 2013).



in the past was the theater of secessionist tensions not yet soothed, in considering the activity of the institutions in relation to the cultural diversity.

### **Dialects as a resource: a proposal for South Tyrol**

The South Tyrol situation would require a different language policy, which considers the opportunity to study local dialects for maintaining the cultural diversity. This topic has become relevant above all in the last few years, when the necessity of preserving local identities has increased and focused the central point on the study of the local languages including those used at school. In particular, the case of South Tyrol is important for two features: the preservation of the local dialects and the multilingualism as a point of contact among various cultures. Here, three different ethnic groups, Italian, German and Ladin, live together and the cultures influence one another, so that the linguistic heritage is also the result of this positive influence. The local cultures are relevant for the conservation of the diversity, and the dialects are the means to obtain this aim, because they are the most important element characterizing the different communities. For these reasons the study of the dialects at school is basic for providing the students with the acquaintance with their culture, and, in this way, for defending the local languages as a fundamental part of the intangible cultural heritage.

I would propose to introduce the study of the dialects into the school curriculum, in relation both to the choices of the students and to the necessities of the communities. It consists basically in an educational approach that favors, besides the knowledge of the official languages, the study of local languages and cultures during the lessons. This aim can be achieved, on the one hand, through the comparative study of standard German and the local dialect, on the other hand, through the teaching of traditional histories and tales or by common songs, whose objective is favoring the awareness of the local cultural heritage. In addition, the results of this project can be advertised through the new media so that to create interactive links, in which the different schools can compare the results and propose new objectives together to the other educational institutes.

The curriculum requires four hours for Italian and German official languages and one hour for every dialect: the Italian ethnic group studies the influences among the languages across the border, while for German and Ladin ethnic groups study the local dialects. The teaching concerns a comparative study of grammar and lexicon since the primary school and the local literary work since the secondary school, so that the pupils can have a progressive knowledge of their heritage, through an education founded on a gradual learning. Teachers should have a deep knowledge of the local cultures and for this reason they should be well prepared in the local cultures, also through specific courses regarding: languages, customs, traditions, songs, and art. The objectives of this proposal are: acquisition of a dialect as a mother tongue, knowledge of the cultural heritage and study of the local folklore. This proposal is represented in the following table.

Table 2

### Proposal for the study of dialects in South Tyrolean schools

RECIPIENTS	Pupils from six to fourteen years (Primary and Secondary school)
RESOURCES	Teachers and external contributors (eventually)
OBJECTIVES	Becoming aware of the dialect dignity and of its values
TEACHING ACTION	<p><b>SCHOOL SUBJECTS INVOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• German (5h. weekly) – 1 hour devoted to study of comparative grammar and local dialects (German standard/German dialect of South Tyrol)</li> <li>• Italian (5h. weekly) – 1 hour devoted to dialect literature (stories, poems, rhymes, proverbs)</li> <li>• Ladin (1h. weekly) – 1 hour devoted to study of the dialects of the different Ladin communities</li> <li>• music (2h. weekly) – program time (during the school year) devoted to popular songs in dialect</li> </ul>
	<p><b>PUPILS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to analyze the texts proposed</li> <li>• to recognize the functions of a text and the purposes it is written for</li> <li>• to create a personal text by analogy</li> <li>• to organize a collection of texts arranged according to pre-established criteria</li> </ul>
PRODUCED DOCUMENTATION	Print, multimedia, final event
SCHOOLS LABS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• animation with popular songs and dances</li> <li>• presentation of projects for touristic tours</li> <li>• preservation of the local dishes</li> </ul>

The results of these observations demonstrate that the “[l]inguistic human rights can be regarded as having *both* dimensions: one primarily *individual*, another primarily *collective*. The first involves *continuity* from one generation to the next over time. It is therefore a linguistic human right to acquire the cultural heritage of the preceding generations, initially in primary socialization in the family and close community. The second involves *cooperation* between individuals, binding together a group, people, the population of a country, through sharing the languages and cultures of all” (Phillipson, R.; Rannut, M.; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994).

## Conclusion

The topic of this article is relevant in relation to the cultural implications in a point of view characterized by the study of the local dialects, for defending the diversity and the demo-ethno-anthropological heritage. In fact, recently, we have witnessed the loss of the identities in every ambit of the social life because of the cultural eradication that shows everybody’s spiritual poverty, in relation to the ability to create a good level of social capital. This situation has been determined by the decrease of the power of the State and by the development of globalization. The

State has not lost its bureaucratic apparatus, but it has changed in the fundament of its essence; this interpretation can have a plausible explanation in the light of its definition: "the State is a synthesis of a thesis, the family, and an antithesis, the community". The decrease of the importance of this principal has created a continuous loss of the sense of belonging and, therefore, a relevant diminution of the social capital, an indication extremely negative that shows the loss of future perspectives. Thus, every local dialect puts on the description of social glue, an element linked to the family and the community; in this way its defense is joined to the same State institution, not in the bureaucratic terms but in a more spiritual meaning. When the society is founded only on material relations of production it is doomed to failure in a short time, because it lacks the balanced spirit-matter, and it concentrates on that matter, leaving out the first to reach the materialistic society. The result is the lost of identity and the consequent widespread sense of bewilderment, which manifests itself in the decrease of the local diversities and that contributes, also at the linguistic level, at generating the global standardization. Therefore, the conservation of the language becomes a relevant element for the identification of a social group, both family and community, and requires the awareness of taking part of a common project, shared by all. Therefore, the language is not only a means of communication, but assumes the character of real social glue, an element fundamental for the preservation of the culture in a world in which the diversity decreases day by day.

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## **GLOBALIZACIJA IR KALBŲ POLITIKA EUROPOS SĄJUNGOJE: PASIŪLYMAS PIETŲ TIROLIO PROVINCIJAI**

**Santrauka.** Esame liudytojai plataus masto globalizacijos proceso, vykstančio pastaruosiu metu ir atveriančio duris įvairialypiems kultūriniais mainams; kita vertus, vedančio prie kultūrinės niveliacijos. Taigi atsiranda poreikis stiprinti žmonių priklausymo tam tikrai apibrėžtai teritorijai jausmą, priklausomybės tam tikrai kultūrai pojūtį arba teritorinę, kultūrinę ir kalbinę savimone. Kaip tik su tokia situacija susiduriame Italijoje: būtinumu išsaugoti vietinį identitetą ir kultūrinį paveldą provincijoje, kurioje kultūrinės šaknys yra labai svarbios (pvz., „Schützen“ yra puiki to iliustracija). Siame straipsnyje kalbame apie Pietų Tirolių (autonominę provinciją Šiaurės Italijoje), Tirolio dalį, tradiciškai veikiamą stiprios vokiečių kultūros. Analizuojant kalbinę situaciją Pietų Tirolyje paaiškėja, kaip Italija susiduria su kalbinių mažumų problema: laikantis tautos-valstybės principų, Pietų Tirolio mokyklose vokiečių kalba yra mokoma kaip valstybinė kalba, o Pietų Tirolio dialektai, priklausantys austrų-bavarų kalboms, ignoruojami. Vienu iš Europos Sąjungos iššūkių turėtų tapti siekis išsaugoti teritorinį tapatumą gerbiant vietines tradicijas ir skiriant ypatingą dėmesį per šimtmečius susiformavusio kultūrinio ir kalbinio paveldo išsaugojimui. Pagrįstas sprendimas šiuo atveju būtų vietinių dialektų mokymas kartu su vokiečių kalba; šiuo pasiūlymu gali pasinaudoti ir kitos Europos šalys, kur oficiali / valstybinė kalba turėtų būti dėstoma kartu su vietiniais dialektais – tai atitinka kartinį Europos Sąjungos principą: vienybę įvairovėje.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** dialektai, Pietų Tirolis, kalbų politika, kalbinės mažumos, vietinė kultūra, Europos Sąjunga.