Juan Luis Vives and Richard Mulcaster: A humanist view of language

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ABSTRACT

Humanist writers were multifaceted and their writings eclectic, delving into a wide range of fields of enquiry. Many issues were raised and addressed, pursued or abandoned, often unsystematically. This heterogeneity has frequently led to the neglect of specific facets of authors who have gained renown in other fields. This I believe to be the case for Richard Mulcaster and Juan Luis Vives, whose contribution to language theory has been eclipsed by their relatively modern views on education. Their views on language merit more attention, if not for their originality as such, at least for the testimony they provide of a period in transition. The work of these authors show how views on language evolved throughout the period and convey a sense of its dynamic character. Profoundly conservative attitudes coexist with progressive ones and, though rooted in the past, they strain towards a new vision of the nature and functioning of language in human society.

J.L. Vives' facet as linguist has been overshadowed by his prolific and extensive work on philosophy, education, psychology and letter-writing, as Eugenio Coseriu points out in his essay, "Acerca de la teoría del lenguaje de J.L. Vives" in *Tradición y novedad el la ciencia del lenguaje* (1977). There, he offers a brief survey of the linguistic questions dealt with and maintains that Vives was one of the most interesting and original writers in all Europe. This claim is supported by the enumeration in almost schematic form of the most salient points in his theory of language, special attention being paid to his semantic theory. A second essay in the same volume analyses his theory

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of translation. In general, Coseriu's appraisal is unconditionally positive although he does call attention to the fact that Vives is torn between the older beliefs to which he is faithful and the new concept of language which branches out into new territory.

The tension generated between the resistance of the old to yield to the new is the subject of Richard Waswo's (1987) analysis of Vives' semantic theory. He questions the originality to which Coseriu pays tribute and demonstrates that Vives owed much to his predecessor and intellectual rival, Lorenzo Valla. Waswo sketches out the crux facing not only Vives, but all Renaissance thinkers. Although opposed to Valla's new classification of the sciences in principle, Vives found himself inevitably led along the same path as his rival but was unwilling to bring the argument to its ultimate conclusion. Waswo maintains that Vives was caught in the no man's land between a hankering after the old classic beliefs and attempting to incorporate new ideas.

Richard Mulcaster was caught in the same dilemma and has suffered somewhat the same fate at the hands of historians, being allocated a niche as spelling reformer or pedagogue (O'Neill, 1996). The theory of language which underlies and explains his modest spelling reforms was first explored by R.F. Jones in his landmark essay, "Richard Mulcaster's views of the English language" (1926). This was the first time that serious attention had been paid to his theory of language [1]. More recent works on Renaissance language (Donawerth (1983, 1983a) and Blank (1996)) have included reference to Mulcaster as one of the forgers of language theory in the sixteenth century and to a degree have readjusted the imbalance.

One of the reasons for the relative neglect of Vives' ideas on language by English scholars lies in the fact that little of his vast corpus of work is available in English. Until Foster Watson's translation of *Linguae Latinae Exercitatio* (1539) as *Tudor School-boy Life. The Dialogues of Juan-Luis Vives* (1908) and *De Tradendis Disciplinis,* (1531) as *The Transmission of Knowledge,* in 1913, only one of his pieces had been translated into English [2]. Watson was also responsible for drawing attention to Mulcaster's theories of education. In an article in the *Educational Times* in 1893, he points out the continuing relevance of the Renaissance schoolmaster's ideas. *Positions* had been edited by Herbert Quick in 1888 and in 1925, E.T. Campagnac provided an edition of *The First Part of the Elementarie.*

Before proceeding to an analysis of their ideas on language, a brief survey of their educational theories is called for, as both language and education are intimately linked. The similarity between Mulcaster's educational theories and those of Vives was pointed out in a brief footnote in Watson's introduction to *The Transmission of Knowledge.* Parallels are not difficult to find and suppositions that Mulcaster was influenced by his predecessor by Watson (1913), Simon (1966) and Cressy (1975) are not without foundation.

Vives had spent six years (1522-28) in England, where he not only frequented the Court in the capacity of tutor to the future Queen Mary, but was also a member of Sir Thomas More's circle. It was in 1523, when he was at Oxford, that a minor work covering some of the material in *De Tradendis* was written and was probably known there (Simon, 1966). Mulcaster refers approvingly to "Vives the learned Spaniard" (Quick: 1888, 259) [3] when discussing the dangers of embarking on third-level education at too tender an age.

Vives was a figure of some importance in Renaissance England and was well known among both pedagogues and philosophers. Roger Ascham refers to him in *Toxophilus*. Ben Jonson transcribed large parts of his writings in his commonplace book *Timber or Discoveries* (1640). Bacon elaborates on his diagnosis of the corruptions of learning and makes explicit reference to his progressive view of mankind's development. On the practical level, Vives' dialogues were widely used in Tudor grammar schools, appearing on the curriculum in Eton in 1561, followed by Shrewsbury (1562-68), Rivington (1564) , Hertford (1614) and Westminster (1621).

Vives' theories of education are echoed by Mulcaster both on the theoretical and practical levels. The basic aim of education, to form an ethically and civically responsible individual, capable of applying his knowledge to practical pursuits, is a shared one. Both conceive of education as a co-operative enterprise where parents participate and collaborate with the schoolmaster. Establishing criteria for the admission of students and the organisation of the timetable figure prominently in both works as does the emphasis on physical exercise to strengthen the body and strict attention to the grading of the material studied. In *Positions* (1581), Mulcaster deals with each of these topics under the headings used by Vives: what was to be taught, to whom, in what order and for how long.

Mulcaster's vision of education coincides more with Vives' and Montaigne's than with that of either Sir Thomas Elyot or his own contemporary, Roger Ascham. Mulcaster with his characteristic "irreverence" questions some of the underlying principles of *The Book Named the Governor,* especially that concerning private tutelage. This can be explained by the fact that, fifty years after Elyot, the make-up of society had been changed by both the Reformation and the emergence of a demanding middle-class culture which caused the number of endowed schools to mushroom and made the teaching of classes rather than private tutelage, the norm. Demands for education were much greater than those envisaged by Elyot.

Given that Vives and Mulcaster, like the majority of their contemporaries, held speech to be the external manifestation of man's superiority over animals, language plays a central role in their educational theories. Speech was virtually synonymous with reason. As Vives points out, the Greeks used the same word to signify both language and reason. He also stated that "the

powers of almost all knowing and understanding is located in words" (qtd. in Waswo 1987: 126). Mulcaster, likewise, maintains that words show the workings of man's reason over time (Donawerth, 1983a). The nature, development and status of language is therefore inextricably linked to their concept of education. It is to these observations on language that I wish to turn.

The most pertinent aspects of the theory of language as proposed by Vives and Mulcaster will be compared and contrasted under the following headings: the questioning and critical perspective held on the ancients, the status and use of the vernacular, the attitude to grammar and its role in the acquisition of language, the inherent individuality of each language and the concept of language as a social institution. These themes, addressed in greater or lesser detail by the authors in question, summarise the principal issues under debate in the Renaissance. The surface similarity, however, often masks very different motivations, and these differences can be accounted for, in the main, by the fifty-year gap separating the two writers and the constant readjustments of theory to fit the mould of circumstance.

1. QUESTIONING OF THE ANCIENTS

Both Vives and Mulcaster show a healthy critical attitude towards the ancients and, what is more, use the past as a starting point to move towards a promising future. Vives was one of the first to reject the belief that the present was less noble than the past, that men were dwarfs riding on the shoulders of giants and that their age was that of iron, not gold. He, in fact, reverses the situation and deposits his full confidence in the ability of man to affect the direction of change, stating that if men were to strive sufficiently earnestly they could build on the ancient's knowledge. He warns that men should not, "merely acquiesce" and "receive everything on trust from others" (Watson, 1913: 209-10), but test the validity of past knowledge through experience. Much as he admired Aristotle, he was highly critical of his method of enquiry (Watson, 1913) and saw in this uninhibited questioning the path towards the advancement of knowledge and the emergence of mankind from the shadows of a faded glory, "We shall not repeat the ancients, but in fact we shall teach something entirely new" (qtd. in Murphy, 1983: 94).

The same spirit of optimism about man's powers and the necessity to "honour good writers but without superstition" (Quick, 1888: 13) saturates Mulcaster's view and practice of language. He, too, selectively chooses principles, not precepts from past authors for application to modern problems. He is sceptical of blind adoration and uncritical copying, saying that the oldest is not necessarily the best (Campagnac, 1925) and is constantly guided by the awareness of circumstance, "circumstance bindes, and wilbe obeyed"

(Quick,1888: 18). For both writers, language and human society are historically determined, a product of the specific conditions prevailing at any one point in time.

Once they had given up or at least substantially loosened the grip of authority, the only alternative was to fall back on experience. "Precise observing and comparing" (Quick, 1888: 9) constitute the groundwork on which theories are built. In this sense, as in their questioning of hitherto sacrosanct ancient wisdom, they are forerunners of Francis Bacon, whose manifesto, posted on the doors of the seventeenth century, takes up these two points [4]. Mulcaster goes to great pains to point out repeatedly that both his spelling and education reforms are firmly grounded in experience and observation, two concepts which were to become the backbone of scientific materialism in the age of reason.

Experience is both the basis of theory and the yardstick by which it is measured. There is no suspension of judgement merely on the grounds of rigid authority. The past is to be used selectively and put up for examination in the light of the increasing knowledge of the present (Vives) and the specific conditions prevailing (Mulcaster). The first hairline fissures in blind reverence for the past can thus be detected in these two humanists. Both of them, however, worked this out within the prevailing framework. They substantiate the theory that the Renaissance itself was a movement which underwent an evolution, (and not necessarily chronological, as can be seen from the examples of Elyot and Vives, near contemporaries but widely divergent in many of their approaches). They also provide evidence that scientific materialism did not represent a revolution but rather an evolution of Renaissance humanism. The great paradox of the humanist movement is illustrated here; that interest in the ancient past led to a liberation from it.

2. USE OF THE VERNACULAR

The status of the vernacular in the educational projects of the two men is elevated but for quite different reasons. In part, this is historically determined. Symptomatic of the time span that separated their work is the fact that although both were classical scholars, Vives wrote in Latin, while Mulcaster offers a spirited defence of his choice to write in English. An additional factor which must be taken into consideration is that Vives epitomises international humanism and his remarks on the vernacular are not coloured by nationalist concerns as are Mulcaster's.

Vives' concern for the mother-tongue was conditioned by its potential, and decidedly ancillary role in speeding up the process of learning Latin. He advocated its use especially in the early stages, and states that the teacher should know not only his own language but also its etymology and historical

development. The mother-tongue was valued, therefore, not on the grounds of its intrinsic merit but for its role in the acquisition of the Latin language and hence, the knowledge contained therein.

The double translation method was the centrepiece of Vives' teaching practice. This was later popularised by Roger Ascham in England but had a long tradition behind it which can be traced back via Pliny the younger to Cicero (Breva-Claramonte, 1993). This method implies a dominion of *both* the vernacular **and** the target text. W. Nelson puts forward the theory that grammar masters in the sixteenth century, "conceived it an essential part of their duty to train their students in the correct and comely use of the vernacular" (1952: 119); "The road to good English passes through classical territory" (128). Vives confirms this supposition; his concerns were basically bilingual, recommending that the vernacular be used outside school hours in order to avoid code-switching. However primitive in its inception, what Vives was proposing was a concept of language learning which foreshadowed the seventeenth-century methods protagonised by Charles Brinsley and Joseph Webbe, methods which aspired to teach Latin and English simultaneously (Salmon, 1979).

Changes in the perception of the status of the vernacular bring to the fore one of the great paradoxes of the era. Vives represents early humanism, when the effort to revive the classical languages was at its highest. An unforeseen off-shoot of this was, however, the growing realisation of the power of the vernaculars, of which Vives was by no means unaware, although he never contemplates dethroning Latin as the language of culture and the elite. At odds with this belief, however, was the conviction, expressed over and over, that content supersedes form, that the concern of language should be what he calls "solid things". These, and not the language in which they are expressed, should be the prime concern of the teacher; "We ought to welcome a good sentence expressed in French or Spanish, whilst we should not countenance corrupt Latin" (Watson, 1913: 296). Mulcaster expresses the same scepticism about the spurious dignity offered by the use of Latin, "manie sklender things ar oftimes uttered in the Latin tung, ... which if theie were Englished, and the mask puld of... would seme verie miserable" (Campagnac, 1925: 275). This admission opens the doors to the vernaculars.

Mulcaster represents the later stage of humanism and has the confidence to bring his hypothesis to its ultimate conclusion "And why not I praie you, as well in English, as either in Latin or anie tung else?" (Campagnac, 1925: 270). In contrast to Vives, he deplores the fact that knowledge can be held hostage by any one language. While Vives champions Latin because of its functionality, Mulcaster calls a different set of criteria into play: Latin, for all its merits, is not the *naturall* language of the English as it was for the Romans (Quick, 1888: 242). "I honor the Latin, but I worship the English" (Campagnac, 1925: 269) is his slogan and

he draws a neat distinction between the semantic load of the verbs *honour* and *worship*. The latter carries emotional connotations associated with faith and devotion as opposed to a rational belief and objectively arrived at judgement implied in *honour*. This distinction is confirmed by Mulcaster's usage of the two terms throughout the *Elementarie* and puts him in a position where he is straining between the intellectual appreciation of Latin and the emotive love of his mother-tongue, a tension which spurred him to reform English spelling.

Both writers are forced to reject the thesis that any one language is intrinsically and inherently superior to another on the basis of the diachronic perspective they bring to linguistic development. For Vives, Latin has become a treasure house of knowledge by virtue of the cultural values which have accrued around it over time. Du Bellay (1549) makes the same point, stating that Latin's superiority came from the fact that it had been used more than other languages. That is the basis of its superiority. Mulcaster, likewise, attributes Latin's status to historical accident as it "had so great a forestart, before other tungs" (Campagnac, 1925: 270). Differences in languages are the result of contingency of time and place and this holds out hope that the vernaculars can rise from their knees. Symptomatic of his sense of the historical past and its influence on language is the direct comparison he makes between English and Latin in order to answer the charge that English is too 'uncouth'; "And so was it in Latin, and so is it in ech language" (Campagnac, 1925: 270). The Latin example vouches for the future capabilities of English.

3. THE ATTITUDE TO GRAMMAR

Neither Vives nor Mulcaster were innovative in their attitude to grammar. They were working within the reactionary tradition of the humanist movement who rejected scholasticism —at least in their propagandistic treatment of the theme [5]. Vives represents the general opinion that grammar was not the end, but the means by which classical texts could be opened up to students, "I wish this knowledge of grammatical science to be learned without being wearisomely troublesome, for while it is injurious to neglect rules, so it also injures to cling to, and be dependent on them too much". (Watson, 1913: 98). Mulcaster seconds this with the observation that, "grammar of it self is but the bare rule, and a verie naked thing" (Campagnac, 1925: 56). Linguistic usage was primary; grammar secondary. The subsidiary role of grammar can be deduced from Vives' double translation method, where he stresses contextualisation rather than grammar in order to reach understanding. Rules "will have no effect of themselves unless they are joined with experience and practice"

(qtd. in Ijsewijn & Fritsen, 1991: 27). The important point is that both writers, by incorporating the unquantifiable variables of diachronic development and its social nature into the language equation, and by giving primacy to usage, realise that it cannot be boxed in by a set of rules. Rules can never account for the totality of language because of the variety of usage and the liability of language to change. Language, they imply, contains both a rational element and one that that lies beyond the scope of reason. This was a lesson which English linguists were reluctant to accept and the fretful struggle with language continued on into the 19th century.

In Vives' point of view, the development of human society consisted in induction, "from a number of separate experiments the mind gathered a universal law" (qtd in Simon, 1966: 118). Grammar was the product of a similar evolution, determined by usage and descriptive in nature. In *Pseudo-dialectica* (1520) he condemns the scholastic approach to grammar as practised at the University of Paris on the grounds of the "meagre and penurious prescript of grammar rules which all too often ignore both observation and experience" (qtd. in Ijsewijn & Fritsen, 1991: 27). Both writers perceived a direct link between language and experience, in the sense that grammar rules are to be derived from the usage observed in language. "We do not speak Latin in a certain way because Latin grammar commands it, rather the contrary: grammar commands it because that is how the Latins speak" (qtd in Waswo, 1987: 121). This is the principle that Mulcaster transfers to his spelling reforms. It is on the basis of the observation of usage and how it has evolved that he devises parameters for the regulation and normalisation of English spelling.

As regards a grammar for the vernacular, Vives dismisses this idea on the grounds that, "in a language which is in continual use there is no necessity to frame systematic rules" (Watson, 1913: 79). In any case, a grammar, accounting for only a part of the language is of limited use. This view was in fact shared by English linguists: it was not until 1640 that a fully-fledged grammar of the English language was published, although Bullokar did issue a pamphlet at his own expense in the 1580's [6]. Mulcaster deals with grammar only in passing, ascribing to it two functions: it is a tool for learning a foreign language; it "seketh to help us to the knowledge of foren languages" (Campagnac, 1925: 55) and the means by which the English language can be elevated in status. It is clear then that for Vives there was only one conceivable grammar possible —that of the classical or dead languages. Mulcaster, on the other hand, while at times using the term in its generic sense, implies that a grammar of the vernacular is not only possible but urgently needed. In the stipulations he set down for the monolingual English dictionary, usage is included. Furthermore, the fact that he contemplated and appears to have started a follow-up work on reading, indicates that much more on grammar may have been projected.

On the question of grammar there is therefore consensus insofar as it was conceived as a tool in its descriptive capacity but liable to abuse. This held for both the classical languages and vernaculars but the latter, due to timing, was not contemplated by Vives. There was not opposition to grammar as such but a reorienting of its use and a heightened awareness of the territory that lay outside grammar *per se*.

4. LINGUISTIC INDIVIDUALITY

Inherent in the recognition that grammar constitutes only a part of language is the recognition, albeit hazy and ill-defined, of the creative and unpredictable element in language [7]. In this way, the reaction to grammar was metamorphosed into something positive which in turn, led to the discovery of a new and invigorating element in language. It resulted from what Waswo describes as, "regarding language not as the cosmetic vehicle of a single cosmic order, but as creating new, perhaps even plural and competing orders of experience" (1987: 132). The questioning of authority and the recognition of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign both paved the way for the acceptance of each language as a particular and collectively idiosyncratic expression of reality. This in turn propagates an attitude which steers clear of making blanket statements on the superiority or inferiority of any one language over another, an attitude which both share. That Vives recognises that each language is animated by a spirit which escapes precise definition is revealed in his theory of translation. Texts of a scientific or informative nature admit a fairly close translation, but for those of a literary nature, translation is well-nigh impossible, imbued as they are with idiomatic expressions, turns of phrase and idiosyncrasies. Synonymy between languages is also impossible unless a loan word is used.

Mulcaster has the same sense of the individuality of languages. For this reason, he maintains that each language must be evaluated in terms of its fulfilment of its communicative function, that is, in terms of how it answers the needs of the linguistic community at whose service it is, rather than appealing to an external standard of perfection, "An English profit must not be measured by a Latinists pleasure" (Campagnac, 1925: 275). Furthermore, he asserts poetically that each language is informed by a "secret misterie, or rather quickning spirit" (Campagnac, 1925: 177). It is in these moving words that he conveys that part of language outside rule and reason, in short, that part of language which intrigues and perplexes.

While Vives clings to Latin in principle, the evidence that experience presented to him vouched for the legitimacy of the vernaculars. On the other hand, Mulcaster's defence of the vernacular and its unique character was fuelled in part by extralinguistic concerns, namely, the fervent nationalism

of the post-Reformation climate. By asserting the unique characteristics of English, he was not only opportunistically appropriating arguments drawn from the heart of the religious and/or economic fields but also speaking as one who had direct experience with translation.

5. UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

For Vives there was no question but that if there was to be a universal language, Latin was the prime candidate: "If it were lost, there would result a great confusion of all kinds of knowledge and a great separation, an estrangement" (qtd in Simon, 1966: 106). What he is evoking here is Babel revisited. His vision is not however as clear as it may seem. While stating that the diversity of languages was a result of sin, he goes on to profess that no one language is better than another intrinsically, "we have this or that language, by the gift of art" (Watson, 1913: 90). Vives was entangled in the web in which many of his generation and to a lesser extent the succeeding ones found themselves caught. If the theocentric view is valid, how then can the question of language be determined by aesthetic or functional concerns, which are those that Vives applies in his passages on the vernacular? If the theory of Babel is accepted, how can the vernaculars be cleansed of the blemish of sin? This conundrum exemplifies what Waswo calls the "typically pendular motion of Vives's thought" (1987: 130).

Mulcaster is not apparently shackled by the hegemony of Latin, describing submission to it in terms of freedom and slavery "is it not indede a mervellous bondage, to become servants to one tung?; I wold English were fre" (Campagnac, 1925: 269). Vives, as a Catholic in pre-Reformation times, naturally saw in Latin a manifestation of a universal language which would foster unity and universal peace among peoples [8]. In Mulcaster's time this unity had been violently splintered, Latin had become a symbol of Rome, and an obstacle, rather than an aid to the advancement of knowledge. The amount of time spent in the acquisition of Latin is seen as a waste.

Utopian ideals of universal peace and harmony aside, unlike Mulcaster, Vives was also an exclusivist, believing that certain knowledge should remain hidden from the masses, "It is also useful that there be some language sacred for the learned, to which be consigned those hidden things which are unsuitable to be handled by everybody and thus become polluted" (Watson, 1913: 93) [9]. He believes that Latin should be preserved as a "shrine of erudition" and as a medium of international culture, This view is not shared by Mulcaster who, in the closing chapters of the *Elementarie,* stresses that advancing English does not necessarily imply downgrading Latin. He possesses a breadth of vision which accommodates both languages.

Mulcaster's references to a universal language are extremely vague, making it difficult to specify which language —if any— he regards as universal. He mentions it in *Positions* but not in the *Elementarie*. From the scant evidence available, three tentative conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, that Mulcaster conceives of this language as located in the past, expressing the desire that "in time all learning may be brought into one toungue so that schooling for toungues, may proue nedeles... as once they were not needed" (Quick, 1888: 240). However, while at one point he gives us to understand that Latin was the first tongue, later he specifically states that this was not so, "For the tungs that we studie, were not the first getters, tho by leerned travell the prove the good keepers" (Campagnac, 1925: 269). Secondly, his desire for one language stems from practical purposes: to speed up the acquisition of knowledge. It is therefore validated on purely pragmatic grounds. There is a third possibility hinted at in the *Elementarie*, one which links him more closely with Bacon than with his humanist counterparts. This is his comments on and passion for mathematics. Defending the serious study of mathematics, he makes the point, albeit in passing, that they come nearer the first principles of knowledge than language does. It would be too speculative and far-fetched to align him with the seventeenth century innovators of a universal language based on mathematical principles, but the similarity between this concept of mathematics and those which informed the natural languages devised in the period is at the very least interesting.

While both writers see in a universal language a means for advancing education, the different degrees of conviction are determined by the time of writing. Vives' age was intrigued by questions concerning the origin, nature and fate of the original language. By the end of the century, however, the issue had faded into the background before being revived once again by the Antiquarians. Mulcaster considers questions of the origins of writing if not irrelevant, at least not of utility for his specific purpose and he cannot, due to the intervening events, vouch confidently for Latin. Moreover, in practice, the stress he gives to circumstance and popular custom places national and cultural individuality in the foreground.

4. THE SOCIAL NATURE OF LANGUAGE

If ancient precept is not admitted as a valid criterion to assess vernaculars; if classical authority is undermined by circumstance and if the linguistic sign is admitted as arbitrary as it was increasingly in the Renaissance, then a new vantage point had to be established which would account for the dignity, diversity and changing nature of the

vernaculars. Such a perspective was found in society. An appreciation of the extent to which language was being placed in its social matrix can be gained by an examination of the imagery of the period, especially in England. There is a shift from the use of organic imagery to a series of tropes which are architectural, political or artificial in nature. Although the tendency is by no means global, in Mulcaster's text, the emphasis is on political and urban imagery rather than the natural type favoured on the continent. Furthermore, the discussion on language in Mulcaster's text and in those of his fellow English humanists draws on contemporary issues such as the debasement of the coinage, the woes of the import-export trade and the nature of the monarchy. All these indices point to a new conception of language, moving from the organic to the manufactured or institutional.

Vives expresses the social nature of language by other means. *De Tradendis* opens with a passage which establishes that man is a social animal and that human knowledge is a social product, transmitted through a social medium. This concept of human development and with it, that of language, takes into account the psychological and environmental conditions that exert a powerful influence on man and his social behaviour. In this view of language, the emphasis lies on the speaker and not on the language as an abstract entity. "Speech is the instrument of human society. Hence, the particular language used, this or that, will primarily depend on its effectiveness as a means of communication and secondly on its resources for eloquence and brilliancy" (Watson, 1913: 39, 90). The idea of a speech community opened up the doors for the serious study of the vernacular, because, although Vives does not admit this possibility explicitly, communicative effectiveness became the main parameter for evaluation of any language. Hence, each language can only be evaluated on its own terms, and in relation to its speech community.

Once society is inserted into the equation, the role of man becomes primordial. Both writers place the onus and responsibility for the destiny of the language on the speaker; Mulcaster calls for his fellow country men to use English. This same plea comes from Speroni and Castiglione in Italy and Du Bellay in France. Man was not only the heir to linguistic forms and meanings but also their creator. His duty was two-fold: to extract from the best of the past, the paving stones for a road to the future. This was the fundamental principle at work in Vives' and Mulcaster's view of language, one which involved both creativity and continuity, imitation and innovation. It was the basis on which Mulcaster's spelling reforms were founded, allowing change within continuity so that the heritage of the past would not be cast adrift and the changing needs of society not be ignored.

6. CONCLUSION

Neither Mulcaster nor Vives' texts are completely consistent. There are muddy areas, lack of consistency, loose ends and outright contradictions, but confusions and tensions are the real medium and agency of cultural change. Both texts bear testimony to the slow birth of a new concept of language. Vives and Mulcaster have been hailed as innovators but this must be interpreted in the sense of reworking old veins of thought and extracting from them nuggets which are then realigned and reconfigured in the light of prevailing circumstances.

It would be foolhardy to interpret the similarities between Vives and Mulcaster as indicative of influence of one upon the other. Questions of influence are decidedly difficult to determine because the generally parallel lines their thinking followed could merely reflect much that was in the common domain of northern humanism. Their views on language are at once closely related and, at the same time, conditioned by the chronological position they occupy. The most that can be hoped for is to illustrate how the Renaissance concept of language evolved, shifting between various opinions coexisting harmoniously and even contradictorily for long periods. Adoption and adaptation were the slogans of the period, and these two concepts are evident in Vives' and Mulcaster's work.

NOTES

[1] The expression *views* of the English language as used by Jones is perhaps more adequate than *theory* of language as no systematised, consciously elaborated body of thought on language existed, at least in England in the sixteenth century.

[2] Only one of Vives works had previously been translated into English: *An Introduction to Wisdom,* by Richard Morison in the 1540's.

[3] All citations from *Positions* are from Herbert Quick's 1888 edition. Citations from *The Elementarie* are from E.T.Campagnac's 1925 edition.

[4] See Foster Watson (1913) for an extended comparison between Vives and Bacon (Introduction to *The Transmission of Knowledge:* cii-cxi).

[5] Keith Percival in this article «The grammatical tradition and the rise of the vernaculars» (1975) makes the point that, far from marking a clean break with the past, the humanist grammatical tradition was a continuation of the medieval and much indebted to it.

[6] William Bullokar printed *Bref Grammar for English* in 1586. It was, as its title indicates, a mere sketch.

[7] This was called the «genius» of the language in the 18th century. In his article. "The 'genius' of language in sixteenth-century linguistics". Stankiewicz argues for the presence consciousness in the sixteenth century that each language is "endowed with linguistic properties which make up its distinctive character, or 'genius'" (p.180). The analysis of Vives and Mulcaster testifies to this fact.

[8] This was one of the practical benefits Vives attributed to Latin and was one of the prime motivations for the quest for universal language in the seventeenth century. See Salmon, 1979.

[9] This stance was by no means unusual and persisted throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One case in point was the medical profession who protested energetically against a popularisation of their trade secrets. See "It hurtheth memory...", by R.W. McConchie (1988). Thomas Elyot was an exception as he published *A castle of health* (1541) in English.

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