

1. COMMUNICATION AND DISCOURSE

1.1. The language – a means of identity- and social re-cognition

The entire existence of mankind has been characterized by a constant strive to achieve objectives related to language education. Language as a manifestation of dialogue is a feature unique to mankind as it conveys information on the cognitive, affective, intellectual and aesthetic attributes of the interlocutor. The quality of one's speech and writing confirms – at least at a perceptual level - that: "The man is not the only animal that thinks, but it is the only one who thinks he's not an animal" (Lestienne 5).

For Horatius, the poet, the word inscribed on a sheet of paper can stand in the way of oblivion, and writing becomes a pledge of the survival of glory. "Exegi monumentum aere perennius" (I have completed a monument more durable than brass) (qtd. in Cornea 11).

Plato, however, in ancient Greece, seems to reject writing as the main antidote to oblivion, as a valuable support to an unreliable memory constantly tempted by other yearnings. The proof is the myth of Theuth in *Phaedrus* and the answer of the king of Egypt Thamus given to Theuth, the inventor of writing, god and patron of scribes:

[...] For this will provide forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it, through neglect of memory, seeing that, through trust in writing, they recollect from outside with alien markings, not reminding themselves from inside, by themselves. You have therefore found a drug not for memory, but for reminding (Plato, *Phaedrus* 274 e-275a, 85).

Ernst Robert Curtius concludes that, in essence, the Greek philosopher "underestimates writing and literature" (Curtius 349), but the reason behind it remains unknown. The source of this misjudgment may arise from a metaphysical reservation in what concerns writing or can be interpreted as a refusal of easily-earned eternal glory.

More recently, Marshall McLuhan argues that the *Gutenberg Galaxy* begins with Greek civilization, more precisely with the introduction of phonetic orthography by the Greeks, which makes a clear distinction between consonants and vowels, thereby providing an accurate visual image of a sound sequence. It is also the reason why, for a long time, the Greeks have preserved their archaic oral tradition described as 'aurality' - which means that "texts are produced by means of writing, but published via speech in public reading" (Cornea 15). Over several centuries, Greece was not only a space dominated by orality but also a space of epic, lyrical and dramatic creations, in a word: poetry. Its reliance on the alphabet invented in early antiquity allowed the development of its philosophical and scientific culture, which