

The Impacts of Technology on The Human Rights of Linguistic Minorities

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Abstract:

As we know nowadays technology is an indispensable part of our daily life and we see that it can change everything on a small or large scale. There is a considerable point about technology which could have both destructive and constructive effects on things, especially it is important to be aware of its quality concerning more critical things like sensitive groups.

One of the sensitive groups in our world who need special care is the linguistic minority. Linguistic minorities in different societies may face several issues. There are many common obstacles that almost all linguistic minorities, in every society, may face. Many linguistic minorities are deprived of the enjoyment of fundamental rights including limitations in the use of minority language in education, media, place names and public signs, public administration, and judicial fields. The actual and potential effects of technology on the linguistic minorities' human rights is a crucial issue. In this article, we analyze the matter of how technology usage could have an impact on the different rights of linguistic minorities.

Keywords: Human rights, linguistic minorities, Minority language, Technology

I. Introduction

Technology advancements have had far-reaching impacts on humans, affecting groupings of people in different ways. One of the groups influenced by technical improvements is linguistic minorities.

Linguistic minorities may face a variety of challenges in various societies and many of them are denied to exercise their fundamental rights. In this essay, we look at how technology can affect the human rights of language minorities which is a major source of concern.

II. The effect of technology on the linguistic minorities' rights

Innovations in technology could have an impact on linguistic minorities' enjoyment of fundamental rights in a variety of areas, including the use of minority languages in education, the media, place names and public signs, public administration, and judicial fields.

1. Education

One of the challenges that many linguistic people face in various societies is the lack of instruction in their native tongue. International and regional institutions protect minorities' educational rights and linguistic minorities should be able to learn in their native tongue. For instance, according to article 14 of the Framework Convention for the Protection

Of National Minorities, 'the Parties must endeavor to ensure,' education in a minority language 'in areas inhabited...traditionally or in substantial numbers,' 'where there is sufficient demand, "as far as possible,' 'within the framework of their education systems,' and 'enough opportunities.' [1].

In some education systems, all or most school courses are taught in a regional or minority language, and educational officials provide instruction in regional or minority languages; for example, bilingual schools in Slovenia deliver education in Slovenian and Hungarian [2].

But, in several countries, we've observed that students are still unable to receive an education in their minority language. Also, we may experience a drop in the number of minority languages because there is a lack of education in the mother tongue for child minorities in schools [3].

In many countries, minorities are often unable to study in their mother language and must be educated in the majority language and many of them may perform poorly in school and receive lower grades compared to native speakers, which may also have a detrimental impact on their economic condition in the future [4].

The advent of technology could result in positive effects on the education of linguistic minorities.

Firstly, it should be acknowledged that in many countries. Advances in technological facilities enable students to be educated in minority languages via a virtual network, even outside of the classroom [5]. Thus, in the countries in which there is no formal education in the minority language and students are not able to study in their native tongue, they can use different technological devices to educate in their mother tongue, even outside of school. For instance, instructional tools such as digital material that incorporates text, sound, and diagrams components might be used [6].

Also, one of the most significant advantages of technological improvement is that students, even in different geographical areas, can actively collaborate and share information with one another [7]. Students from linguistic minorities can communicate with one another, as well as with teachers who can teach in the minority language, to help each other achieve their educational goals.

As a result, we may assert that technology improvements could improve the education of linguistic minorities who are unable to learn in their original language or who do not have access to high-quality facilities in their community.

2. Media

There are no broad regulations with respect to this issue but there are some international and regional documents. Besides the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which articulates some general rules about freedom of expression, article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (U.N. Declaration on Minorities) is accessible in the international domain.

At the regional and more specific level, the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (the Framework Convention), Article 9 is the operative provision, under which States undertake to ensure that persons belonging to minorities are not discriminated against in their access to the media. Moreover, they are required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities are granted the possibility to create and use their media and the freedom to create and use print and broadcast media outlets without hindrance.

However, there is an obligation for states to ensure the application of their commitment, there are some limitations in this article counting: States may provide that such use be undertaken within the legal framework of their broadcasting laws, and States ensure this opportunity “as far as possible” which means based on their available resources. “In addition to the positive obligation to ensure the possibility of access, it has been advanced by some independent experts that any access should not discriminate among languages and thus not restrict the enjoyment of minority rights.” [8]

In addition, The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages contains thorough articles regarding this issue. There are some options in Article 11 for the enhancement of regional or minority languages in the public service, especially in the broadcasting sector. Provisions such as the creation of radio stations and TV channels, production, and distribution of audiovisual works; the provision of financial assistance; the training of journalists, and the encouragement of the creation of newspapers or magazines.

It is worth mentioning that most of the documents which have stipulations about minority languages have the same wording as Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Few other documents also set out some regulations about the media rights of minorities including linguistic minorities. Namely, Article 151 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community, Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in addition to Guidelines on the Use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media which is one of the OSCE HCNM guidelines concerning specific aspects of minority rights [9].

It is evident from the foregoing that “the protection accorded to minority languages (specifically) in the broadcasting sphere by existing international human rights instruments is neither entirely comprehensive nor entirely coherent.” [10]

The regulation within the sphere of minority language not only is not limited to theoretical documentation but is also expressed in some cases hearing before different tribunals. As an occurrence of private media, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in paragraph 17(vi) of Recommendation 1589 (2003) on Freedom of Expression in the Media in Europe has urged the Member States “to abolish restrictions on the establishment and functioning of private media broadcasting in minority languages” [11].

It is obvious that obligations regarding the access of minorities to media entirely are imposed on states but by the exposure of the technology in all aspects of our lives, particularly the widespread web utilization, the form of these undertakings has been changed. One of the indispensable parts of the enjoyment of minorities from their media language rights is providing education about technology.

Technology and its aspects have advanced so rapidly that it is now possible to procure systems for preserving languages relatively cheaply. But the implementation of them requires individuals who are competent in dealing with the necessary hardware, software, and key components of these electronic innovations [12]. We need some people who have required proficiency in the field of new media as well as technology due to the strengthening of linguistic minorities to use media innovations. The state funding for minorities to devise the technology is also significant for their capacity to contemplate the desirable plans in the media.

New forms of technology are closely dependent on the internet and that creates platforms for expression including online TVs. States must in the first place ensure equitable and non-discriminatory access to the Internet and in the second-place access to these new platforms, if they impose the restrictions on minorities, this will inevitably impact the online presence of their language. In fact, "The development of online spaces for what has been in many cases primarily oral languages can herald a whole new era of revitalization and revival and can bring them to new and modern domains." [13] Likewise, the presence of minority languages in more brand new technological forms helps them to be viewed as part of the contemporary world.

Using internet-based or technological platforms as widespread media supposedly could be an educational instrument. Even though these efforts are only complementary to official educational systems, not their replacement, it helps the transmission of the language by gathering the knowledge of the old generation of one language. Intergenerational communication and transmission depend on individuals dedicated to both transmitting and learning the heritage tongue [12]. The best way to revitalize a language is through intergenerational transmission, and any attempts to promote language use in an atmosphere where intergenerational transmission is either impractical or impossible are doomed to failure [14]. When the last remaining persons competent in the relevant language are old, and intergenerational transmission of the language has failed so far, the media would be the last fortunate resort.

As was mentioned earlier, the availability of media technology is decisive in its effectiveness for minority groups. Otherwise, it would give rise to more discrimination and problems.

This matter is largely on the states to make uniform procedures. This paper suggests that the most remarkable impact of technology on the human rights of minority languages is on the transformation of state obligations. It is wrongly perceived that minorities could use some options like the Internet and they do not need states for their promotion anymore. However, states still are the main providers of technological equipment. In this respect, concerns that linguistic differentiation will put many people at a disadvantage in emerging digital public spheres led the European Union, for example, to fund a project to set up digital debating platforms for four minority language groups [15].

The sensitive issue about using the technological advances in media is that without taking the linguistic minorities' concerns into consideration it could initiate uneven processes including ethnicization of language [15]. Undoubtedly, for the major media, the size of the audience is an integral factor and to access media such as internet media support of states is

necessary [16] but it does not mean that traditional forms of media like radio or TV are out of benefit. "Where internet platforms are used to wholly substitute traditional media or services, a community will be left disadvantaged as problems of access will surely arise" [17]

All in all, the destructive or constructive impact of technology on strengthening or weakening the human rights of linguistic minorities arises from its implementation in each society, in addition to states' policies that are adopted and the situation of minority groups in the society.

3. Place names and Public signs

The other problem that many linguistic minorities may face is the use of minority languages in names, place names, and public signs. The use of minority languages in public signs has a positive impact on linguistic minorities' inclusion in society and also minorities feel more engaged and close to their community when they can read public signs in their mother tongue [18]. According to Article 11(3) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, one of the important rights that linguistic minorities should have is that in areas traditionally inhabited by a considerable number of minorities, the Parties shall endeavor to display traditional local names, street names, and other topographical indications intended for the public in the minority language [19].

Technological development could indirectly affect the use of minority languages in public signs. Recent progress in digital technology, such as the introduction of social media, has had a profound impact on people's lives and is likely to increase the desire for change [20].

As previously stated, states shall endeavor to display traditional local names, street names, and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is sufficient demand for such indications. Social media is drastically altering how people connect and collaborate, having an impact on all parts of our lives, for instance, diverse social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, serve a variety of purposes in terms of sharing information, connecting people, and expressing views [21]. Because of technological advancements, including social media, linguistic minorities can interact more easily with one another and communicate their demands to responsible authorities more simply to persuade authorities to display local names, street names, and other topographical signals in their minority language alongside the majority language.

4. Public administration and judicial fields

International law has some conventions or declarations which discuss the rules that apply to public administration rights of linguistic minorities, namely, Article 14 (3) of ICCPR. Likewise, but in more specific terms regional documents set out more undertakings for states in this area.

In many texts, there is a division between state authorities and regional and local authorities like the Language Charter which provides in Article 10 local or regional authorities, as well as public services provided by the administrative authorities or other persons acting on their behalf. Furthermore, these authorities are committed to fulfilling their obligations through translation or interpretation, recruitment and training of the officials and public service employees, and compliance as far as possible with requests from public service employees

knowing a regional or minority language to be appointed into the area in which that language is used. Generally speaking, these matters deal with the question of how linguistic diversity can be overseen in the public sphere [22].

Similarly, Oslo Recommendations contain what is necessary to implement 'administrative language rights' for states. States "shall adopt appropriate recruitment and/or training policies and programs" to ensure that qualified civil servants are available to receive and handle petitions and to interact with persons speaking such languages in daily business [23].

Another document in this issue is the 2000 Flensburg Recommendations which emphasize some general areas, "governments should recognize the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of policies in favor of regional or minority languages as necessary tasks making a crucially important contribution to the good governance of modern societies". Such good governance extends to more than the traditional elements of administration [23]

All of the above-mentioned rules are vital for minorities to use their language in their relations with public authorities as it allows them, in the opinion of the OSCE experts, "to become actively involved in the civil life of the country to create a pluralistic and open society, where members of minority groups feel integrated without having to sacrifice their identity" [24].

While there is some regulation about the administration rights of linguistic minorities and it is clear that to some extent the international community needs to preserve these rights, these rights "suffer from the ambiguity and 'flexibility' of the legal texts and, at least as of yet, the lack of a precise definition and scope, and the required 'strength' in light of the various qualifications, and restriction-clauses contained in all international treaties and documents." Some of the restrictions are Significant Numbers, Possibility, Necessity, Desire, and The National Legislation Clause.

It is clear from the documents and literature in this field that the progress of technology has an eminent impact on the enjoyment of the linguistic minorities of their human rights in administrative parts. Either administrative procedures or translation is integral for an efficient administrative system that contains linguistic minorities as dynamic actors.

Following the latter, advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, wearable technology, and real-time data analysis improved its utility in several ways. For instance, some translation applications which work offline or in real-time are practical for administrative work. About the former either some changings are probable. Digital technology provides relatively simple possibilities to include local voices and viewpoints in the production of electronic discourse in minority languages for educational purposes [15]. Hence these productions could be used for preparing human resources who could devise the diverse languages in their work that brings about functional procedures.

In considering the administrative rights of minorities, "translanguaging" is a fatal criterion and this article suggests that as within the previously mentioned matter in media rights, the most substantial influence of technology in this arena is the transformation of states' undertakings. Translanguaging is concerned with the erasure of language hierarchies and boundaries, language varieties are all conceived of as equal, and hybrid language is used as

the norm [14]. The environment in which the technology is integrated in order to make reliable, facilitated, and rich conditions for everybody who speaks in their favorite language is not just admired but required.

Linguistic minorities often confront significant difficulties in accessing, interpreting, and responding to disaster warnings. It can occasionally undermine appropriate dissemination and response to emergency information. Although it is a state obligation to inform them of forthcoming disasters and dangers, not always is possible for it at the proper time due to the lack of resources. "Technological advancement provides opportunities to explore computational means of engendering culturally and linguistically appropriate communication during emergency events." [25]

Documentation, communication, and awareness in minority languages hold strong positions in public matters. To organize them regarding the linguistic minorities' needs, the internet is a convenient tool. To this end, The Committee of Experts of The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has recommended elsewhere that until such documents are available in printed form, the internet represents a cost-effective interim solution for providing documents of state, local, and regional authorities, as well as public services in minority languages [26]. Needless to say, during this time the contemplation of the internet is more far-reaching in many fields and there is no more only an interim pleasant form, on the contrary, it is perceived as a permanent instrument in many cases.

Participation in civil life is a right for everyone regardless of their language. However, this right is not as obtainable for minority groups as for the majority. Despite these barriers, linguistic technologies have the potential to improve minorities' status in the public sphere to have more engagement. As such, language technologies may contribute to social justice, democracy, and economic growth in general, while at the same time empowering linguistic minorities and facilitating the enforcement of individual rights (information rights, political rights, social and cultural rights, freedom of enterprise, etc.) of their members, in particular [27].

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