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**DOI: 10.38173/RST.2024.28.2.1:9-16**

<b>Title:</b>	<i>LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND LINGUISTIC RIGHTS IN PRESERVING MINORITY LANGUAGES</i>
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**Section:** International Relations

**Issue:** 2(28)/2024

<b>Received:</b> 27 August 2024	<b>Revised:</b> -
<b>Accepted:</b> 11 November 2024	<b>Available Online:</b> 15 November 2024

Paper available online [HERE](#)

## LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND LINGUISTIC RIGHTS IN PRESERVING MINORITY LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT:

WIDESPREAD GLOBALIZATION HAS BROUGHT NOT ONLY ECONOMIC, POLITICAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL STRUCTURAL CHANGES. IDENTITY, AS A SOCIETAL ELEMENT, AND LANGUAGE, AS A SPECIFIC TOOL OF PRESERVATION, ARE THREATENED BY THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS LINGUA FRANCA, ACCELERATING THE MARGINALIZATION OF MINORITY LANGUAGES. LANGUAGE SHIFT IS A CONCEPT DEALING WITH THE LOSS OF NATIVE LANGUAGES IN FAVOUR OF DOMINANT ONES, WHILE LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AIMS TO RESTORE OR MAINTAIN THEIR USE. EDUCATION IS A MAIN TOOL IN REVITALIZATION EFFORTS, BUT IT IMPLIES THE ELABORATION AND INFORCEMENT OF LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES. DESPITE THE EFFORTS AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, LINGUISTICISM, OR DISCRIMINATION BASED ON LANGUAGE, STILL REMAINS A BARRIER IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PUBLIC LIFE. THIS ARTICLE FOCUSES ON THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AND THE CONNECTION WITH POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL FACTORS. IN PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY, LINGUISTIC RIGHTS ARE AT THE FOREFRONT, TOGETHER WITH COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS FROM INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES, AND INSTITUTIONS. THE ARTICLE ARGUES THAT LANGUAGE POLICIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN EDUCATION, IF APPLIED CORRECTLY, CAN BE USEFUL TOOLS IN COUNTERBALANCING THE DOMINANCE OF MAJORITY LANGUAGES AND RESTORE NON-DOMINANT NATIVE LANGUAGES IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD, WITH A TENDENCY TOWARDS HOMOGENIZATION.

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**KEY WORDS:** LANGUAGE SHIFT, LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION, IDENTITY, LINGUISTIC RIGHTS, EDUCATION POLICIES.

### INTRODUCTION

Language shift appears when the language of one community gradually loses importance or use and is replaced by another, more dominant one. The root causes of language shift are often political, economic and social, having as background historical assimilation policies. Language revitalization is a normal reaction to language shift, with the intention of restoring a threatened or vulnerable language or maintaining a stable one.

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Language revitalization has some defining characteristics: intergenerational transmission and addition of new speakers, introduction of new domains where the language can be used, involvement of the individuals and the community, state efforts, etc [1].

Both language shift and revitalization must be analyzed from the wider perspective of globalization. From the political or academic sphere to everyday life, the concept of globalization has gained popularity. However, establishing a definition that encompasses all the elements of globalization is not an easy thing to achieve. Of course, this phenomenon, like any other large-scale phenomenon, has led to divided opinions. The supporters of globalization enthusiastically praise its merits, being considered the solution to all economic, political, social or cultural problems. On the other hand, critics consider it a harmful factor, one of its negative aspects being the exacerbation of inequalities.

As we can see, globalization can no longer be perceived only from a territorial point of view. It goes much further, reaching an intensification of social, economic, cultural and political relations, as well as a global consciousness that determines common actions. Globalization consists of multiple processes through which people in a society become closer culturally, economically, politically, socially, informationally, strategically, epidemiologically and ecologically to people from distant geographical societies [2].

This implies the development of trade, multinational corporations, the free movement of people, capital, services, cultural exchanges, but also medical or environmental issues that spread much more easily. The new institutions that have emerged connect the states. International law and global governance help states protect their citizens, ensure well-being, respect human rights, and ensure security. Trade liberalization has established strong relations between economies. States consume imported goods, and the production process takes place in different countries, where labor force is cheaper.

International organizations and the integration process have led to the transfer of powers from national to regional or international level. Global governance is shaped by a global civil society characterized by numerous NGOs such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International, or consumer protection organizations, academic institutions, trade unions, peace activists, human rights, etc [3]. The free movement of people, goods and services is seen by some as an erosion of the nation state, which means that there is no longer a relationship between people, culture and the geographical territory. Moreover, the popularity gained by the Western world by turning the English language into an international language and the entertainment industry that influences and minimizes other cultures, have created concern among skeptics.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the most important consequence of globalization is English becoming lingua franca, and other languages losing dominance or even becoming threatened with extinction. Thus, the emergence of several movements for the support of local languages with focus on programs for the preservation of linguistic diversity.

Education plays a crucial role in language revitalization and maintenance. A strong legal framework for minority languages, proper curricula, planning and strategies, such as immersion programs, bilingual education or cultural projects can strengthen not only language usage, but have wider implications on identity preservation. In education, language revitalization can take different forms, from teaching a native language as a school subject, bilingual or multilingual education, or immersion programs. While studying a language as a school subject might be useful, it is impossible to get to the desired level of fluency without external sources. Bilingual education uses the minority language as a language of instruction, with several school subjects taught in that language, together with the development of vocabulary in new domains. The most desirable model are the immersion programs, where all

the teaching is done in the minority language. The language courses offered to adults can also be a tool to the promotion of language in practical contexts.

### **LINGUIICISM AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RELATION TO LANGUAGE**

For indigenous peoples, language rights are strongly related to other rights, such as self-determination, the right to traditional land and natural resources, or cultural heritage. Language loss goes beyond the disappearance of syntax or vocabulary, and it has more to do with the disappearance of cultural practices and identity. As a human rights issue, it has deep societal, economic and political consequences as a direct result of long historical traits of oppression and assimilation policies.

Rooted in racism, linguicism refers to discrimination based on language. In this case, individuals or groups are treated unfairly due to their language, dialect, accent or proficiency. Skutnab-Kangas defines the term linguicism as: “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language [4].” In this new social order, the cultures and languages that are to survive and expand, will do so because they are adapted to modern technologies, market economies and democracy [5].

This term can be applied to a native language, if that language is not one of the dominant ones, generally used by the masses, or to a dominant language in which a speaker is not proficient. Therefore, if a speaker is not fluent in the language of the majority, they can be discriminated upon. In the same way, if their mother tongue is a non-dominant one, they can face discrimination. Even dialects and accents can become a source of language discrimination. Usually, linguicism is favored in societies that privilege the official dominant language of a country, with little or no regard for minority or indigenous languages. In education, this manifests itself in the form of unfair treatment and unequal opportunities for students who are not fluent in the dominant language. In the work environment, hiring decision, remuneration or promotion are highly influenced by one's fluency, dialect or accent. Politically, restrictive language policies can severely limit the exercise of basic human rights, such as participation in political processes or access to services.

On a broader scale, linguicism can lead to inequality, exclusion, loss of cultural identity and decline of linguistic diversity. Usually, majority languages tend to survive, and this seems to be true when we look at English becoming a universal language and the list of other dominant world languages that gained prominence, replacing smaller local languages totally or partially. Addressing linguicism implies inclusive language policies and special education opportunities to keep these local languages afloat.

### **THEORETICAL INSIGHTS ON LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION**

According to Ethnologue, the main source of statistics regarding the world's living languages, language vitality is demonstrated by the extent that the language is used as a means of communication in various social contexts for specific purposes. The most significant indicator of a language's vitality is its daily use in the home, combined with its use outside the home, the generations who speak it and the number of domains in which the language is spoken. Language vitality is studied by exploring the domains of use, transmission across generations, motivation for use, governmental policies, and contexts [6].

Ethnologue uses the following scale to assess vitality:

- Institutional - The language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.

- Stable -The language is not being sustained by formal institutions, but it is still the norm in the home and community that all children learn and use the language.
- Endangered - It is no longer the norm that children learn and use this language.
- Extinct - The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language [6].

UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment report offers an insight on intergenerational language transmission, ranging from Safe (the language is spoken by all generations), Stable yet threatened (the language is spoken by all generations, yet multiculturalism or a dominant language has surpassed some communication contexts), Unsafe (the language may be restricted to some specific contexts), Definitely endangered (the language is no longer learned as a mother tongue and children do not typically respond using the language), Severely endangered (the language is spoken only by older generations), Critically endangered (older generations know the language, but do not use it anymore), Extinct (there is no one who can speak the language) [7].

Joshua Fishman proposed a reversing language shift theory, where intergenerational transmission plays a crucial role in language preservation. This creates a very complex network, involving the willingness of the individuals, the family ties, the whole community openness and the governmental agencies creating the proper framework. According to Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), the levels of language disruption between generations can vary from Level 1 (the strongest), where the language has a stable use at national level, in all domains (education, work environment, media, governmental communication), to Level 8 (only elderly generations can speak the language and there is no further transmission of the language) [8].

Introduced by Einar Haugen in 1972, the ecology of language theory approaches multilingual societies and the "interaction of any given language and its environment [9]." According to Haugen, languages cannot exist in isolation, but are deeply shaped and influenced by political, economic, social, and cultural factors. Therefore, language revitalization requires an analysis of the entire environment around a language, and how it is internally perceived by the speaker and used by the community.

The ethnolinguistic vitality theory proposed by sociolinguists Howard Giles, Richard Y. Bourhis and Donald M. Taylor examines the interconnection between language vitality and survival and the social context of the group. Accordingly, an ethnolinguistic community can survive if it meets the three variables of vitality:

- Status (economic, social, sociohistorical, linguistic)
- Demography (distribution and number of members)
- Institutional support (mass media, education, government services, industry, religion, culture) [10]

A language is considered vital if the members have the possibility to use their native language, have means of representation in the political field, education and work opportunities, media and cultural preservation tools. The ethnolinguistic vitality theory has its applicability in producing effective policies and strategies for the protection of minority languages, especially in bilingual and multilingual educational systems.

The linguistic human rights perspective, analyzed by Tove Skutnab-Kangas and Robert Phillipson emphasizes the role of states and international organizations in protecting linguistic diversity. According to international human rights law, individuals and groups have the right to speak, transmit and benefit from the use of their own language. As the authors point out, before 1815, language rights were not mentioned in any international treaty. On the

contrary, great empires tended to impose their dominant language on colonies and assimilate the native population. With the Congress of Vienna Final Act, the protection of national minorities was introduced, and gradually, several constitutions started to recognize linguistic rights. During the interwar period, the Paris Peace Treaties and international conventions also stipulated the protection of minorities and their linguistic rights [5].

Only after World War II, with the emergence of the United Nations, human and minority rights started to gain prominence, and their linguistic rights were in debate. The developed legal framework includes various instruments for the overall protection of human rights and specific minority rights, including language and education. With the following list being by no means exhaustive, it includes the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169), and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, as the most relevant for the studied context.

The European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted on November 4, 1950 and entered into force in 1953, was an innovation, representing the first regional human rights system. Although it does not provide information and does not deal strictly with minorities, some provisions are also relevant to them, like freedom of expression, and implicitly the freedom to use one's native language. The only article of the Convention that makes direct reference to minorities is Article 14, which provides as follows: "The exercise of the rights and freedoms recognized by this Convention shall be ensured without distinction of any kind, in particular as to sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, membership of a national minority, property, birth or any other situation. [11]"

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on December 16, 1966 by the UN General Council and entered into force on March 23, 1976, is another essential document that underpins the development of the regional human rights system. One of the reference principles in the evolution of minorities, self-determination, is supported by Article 1, which states that all peoples have the right to self-determination, more precisely, access to resources and the right to choose their political status, economic, social and cultural development. Regarding minorities, Article 27 clearly outlines the direction: "In States where ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to these minorities shall not be deprived of the right to have, in common with the other members of their group, their own cultural life, to profess and practice their own religion or to use their own language. [12]"

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted in New York on December 18, 1992, is based on Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and reiterates that: "States shall protect the existence and national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their territories and shall encourage the creation of conditions for the promotion of this identity." Also, "persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, to use their own language, privately or in public, freely and without obstacles or any other form of discrimination. [13]"

Indigenous peoples have always been a point of interest for the International Labour Organization, the specialized agency of the UN, which is responsible for the first international convention of its kind, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) of 1989. It deals with issues such as racial discrimination and exclusion and has the

fundamental objectives of ensuring equality and respect for indigenous culture, traditions, values and way of life [14]. Particular importance is given to education, with indigenous people having the right, where possible, to education in their mother tongue and the establishment of educational institutions.

The Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, signed on 5 November 1992 is the only document with direct reference to language. According to this Charter, states should engage in eliminating any restriction on regional or minority languages that could jeopardize their harmonious development, to ensure pre-school, pre-university and university education, totally or partially, to provide the possibility for speakers of native languages to address the authorities in their mother tongue, to encourage the written and audiovisual press, as well as any form of cultural manifestation in these languages. Also, Article 14 supports cross-border cooperation, in order to promote contacts between speakers of the same language, living in different states [15].

According to our analysis of the aforementioned documents, the general non-discrimination principle in the ECHR has paved the way for more specific provisions found in the ICCPR, UN Declaration, ILO Convention No. 169 and ECRML. Thus, universal human rights are insufficient to properly address minority issues that require specific patterns for each case. Language revitalization and maintenance are defined as a primary instrument in a native community empowerment. The particular focus on education in indigenous languages, as emphasized in the ILO Convention No. 169 and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, represents the first step of language revitalization, followed by other sociocultural aspects. Though the current legal framework offers a strong basis for the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, its efficiency tends to be reduced by improper implementation mechanisms or discrepancies between different countries and their specific minority issues and needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, former historical assimilation policies led to the development of processes such as language shift and revitalization. These processes cannot be seen independently from political contexts or economic and social dynamics. The gradual loss of languages and cultural heritage need comprehensive restoration. One drawback among many advantages of globalization is the exacerbation of inequalities, language included. The spread of English as lingua franca and the dominance of Western culture, such as Americanization, pose a threat to linguistic diversity. This perspective is analyzed by several sociolinguistic theories, explaining the impact of globalization on minority languages and the role of the international community in protecting vulnerable linguistic communities.

The first and most common method used in language revitalization is education. Immersion programs and bilingual education can be effective in achieving fluency and promoting the use of minority languages in a variety of old and new domains. Legislation, governmental policies, effective planning are necessary to ensure these educational strategies have the desired impact. The efforts in this respect are notable, but, at the same time, translating the provisions from theory to practice can be a difficult task, that needs resources, well-trained teachers, and infrastructure. However, language-based discrimination remains a strong barrier to language revitalization. Speakers of minority languages often do not have access to education in their native language for various reasons (lack of printed materials, insufficient teachers or trainers, underdeveloped curricula or deficient national legislation). In the workplace, hiring or promotion are still related to fluency in the dominant language of the state, while integration in the public life requires the same, proving that despite great

institutional efforts, there is a high chance for minority language speakers to abandon their native language in favor of more advantageous social or economic opportunities given by the dominant language.

It is a well-known fact that linguistic rights are essential for identity preservation in a highly homogenous world. The vulnerability of individual languages and the linguistic world heritage calls for revitalization. Addressing linguisticism through educational means is a step towards inclusion and multiculturalism. However, successful language revitalization requires common efforts: policies, legal frameworks, and institutional support at both national and international levels. But most of all, it requires the willingness of individuals and groups to ensure the survival of their distinctive identity.



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