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SUMMARY
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**Language rights and language planning in the case
of some pluricentric languages**

A sociolinguistic approach

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Summary

The present thesis proposes an analysis of the relationships between language rights, language policy, use of minority languages and exercise of power, as well as of the problems of language planning based on an assessment of the situation of the Sami languages (Sami: *sámi*) in Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Russian Federation, as well as on the examination of the situation of the Kurdish language (Kurdish: *zimanê kurdî*) in the Middle Eastern countries (Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria).

The situation of these two languages has been chosen as the subject of this research because their social and cultural environment is very different. However, both languages are spoken in several countries, but neither of them have a country where the official use of the language in question (as the dominant language of the state concerned) could be provided naturally. This not only affects the domains of language use and their prospects for the future, but raises special problems related to minority language planning, if speakers want those languages to be used not only in private life, where the legislation of the respective countries permits this.

Although language rights are now considered part of universal human rights, however, in many countries, the implementation of language rights in everyday life is hampered by larger or smaller obstacles. This thesis aims to examine the possibilities of using minority languages depending on the social structure: it is an analysis of social, cultural, political and sociological conditions which influence the practical application of minority language rights in the territories mentioned above. Furthermore, the objective of this study is to examine how these states respect and implement the international law on human rights, and if the internal law of the states recognizes or not the existence of linguistic and ethnic minorities, and the extent to which it provides an opportunity for the use of minority languages in the different domains of language use.

Practice shows that national laws have a higher priority than international human rights documents, thus states adopt them, or rather reject them – the acceptance rate, of course, largely depends on the specific local social systems and cultural traditions. The international documents on human rights and protection of minorities, which aim the progress

made in strengthening the rights of minorities, and the international organizations impose the respect for human rights and democratic principles.

Today, in all three Scandinavian countries, as far as possible, adequate conditions are ensured for the preservation of culture, traditions and Sami identity. The example of Finland shows that the state (at least at the legislative level) tries to comply with the international documents, while the Middle Eastern countries included in this study ignore the conventions, and the linguistic rights of the Kurds are not provided sufficiently either by the national legislation so that, in these countries, there are serious problems in this area.

In the research of minority language rights it is extremely important to analyze the external factors of language use and language policy issues. One of the main problems of language policy is ensuring the exercise of linguistic rights, it is therefore essential to study the international conventions and understand the political context of the states on whose territory the linguistic minorities in question live.

The purpose of the comparative study is to highlight similarities and differences between the different language policies, and to analyze the manner in which the minority and educational policy measures of the states concerned are found to be discriminatory against minority language rights. The problems highlighted are addressed primarily from the perspective of minority education because schools are always the most important instrument of the state in its efforts to assimilate minority children.

The structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between language policy and education policy. Before presenting the educational programs favouring additive and transitional bilingualism, we formulate the objectives of a good education, which should be considered when educating indigenous minorities. Also, in this chapter we present the educational programs used in Turkey and Finland.

Chapter 3 presents those special provisions of the Finnish law which refer to the Sami language and education in that language, then it addresses the future of education and Sami identity.

As regards Norway, the thesis points out that the Sami language use is not that widespread in the state institutions, as it would be expected on the basis of legislation. This situation was created due to the following reasons: lack of proficiency in Sami, lack of knowledge and understanding of texts and lack of promotion of linguistic equality. The

international community has criticized Norway because of its policies of assimilation and discrimination against indigenous people. Studies show that the Sami speakers are discriminated against in various contexts, many children and young people are exposed to harassment because of their Sami identity, and a number of racist acts have gone unpunished to this day.

The situation in Sweden is similar: Sami speakers often feel that school does not contribute to strengthening the identities of their children, and Sami parents believe that local authorities do not take their right to education in their mother tongue seriously, and even oppose it openly.

The same chapter presents the general laws that protect the rights of indigenous peoples and also guarantee the rights of Sami minorities in Kola Peninsula. In the Russian Federation, the implementation of the Sami minority rights is much more difficult than in the Scandinavian countries. The new legislation in the Russian Federation has not proved to be so effective as to protect the endangered Sami languages. The Russian law cannot solve all the problems of national minorities, particularly where small communities of Sami speakers live scattered in vast areas.

This part of the thesis treats the Kurdish problem in Turkey as an international problem: it describes the process by which Turkey, gradually moving away from modern nationalism, gains the EU candidate status, respectively tells about the most critical issues of the Kurdish minority education. Since the formal education system in Turkey was based on Kemal Atatürk's ideology, Kurdish children in Northwest Kurdistan were separated from their families through intensive programs and were given forcibly education in Turkish. Although the opportunities offered by public schools in Turkey are extremely limited, according to studies, every Kurdish individual would like to receive education in his/her mother tongue. This chapter stresses that the submersion model that uses only the dominant language is the least effective form of education for Kurdish children.

The following subchapters identify the aspects by which the Iraqi legislation and practices in this state are not in accordance with the international standards as regards ensuring minority rights. These subchapters also show that by strengthening the Persian ethnic nationalism the Iranian government violates the democratic norms on non-Persian groups. Also, this chapter reveals that the Syrian government should take measures to combat discrimination against minority groups.

In chapter 4, we compare the minority policies practised by the countries mentioned above through a linguicism continuum. Assimilation trends are similar, however, Finland has applied much more covert methods in its policy of assimilation. In this regard, Finland and Turkey represent the two most extreme points on the scale. Education in Turkey is the scene of continuing conflicts between the state and non-governmental institutions. The state owns and manages the education system which is interpreted primarily as an instrument for nation- and state-building. In this way, universities play an important role in the democratization of social and political life and in gaining the independence of the university from the power of the state in the near future. An important step would be the liberation of education and rethinking the role of the university which should enjoy full political independence to play a constructive role in the democratization of the society.

It is essential to allow and even encourage the establishment of educational institutions. Currently there are possibilities for a peaceful conflict resolution between the state and the university, but the basic education is still a powerful political institution.

Chapter 5 classifies the types of language planning and the following subchapters present in details the activities related to acquisition planning for Skolt Sami, Inari Sami and Northern Sami. This is followed by subchapters discussing about the constitutional recognition of the existence of mother tongues other than Turkish, about expanding the domains of language use in the case of the Kurdish language, and about the development of education in the Kurdish language: those (higher education) institutions and private education centres are presented which have newly offered education in Kurdish language to those interested.

The same chapter presents the corpus planning activities: it describes the possibilities for achieving standardization for the Sami language, it highlights the advantages of the new Kurdish alphabet (so-called *yekgirtú*) and presents the innovations for the Kurdish vocabulary.

The thesis emphasizes that the Sami languages are also used in those areas of life where they have not been used before. Due to language revitalization projects the role of Sami languages has been revised and the function of these languages has been expanded. The Sami language education and the linguistic innovations increase the prestige of the Sami languages among the speakers. We emphasize the need for change in the attitudes of native speakers on issues related to education and media. In this respect prestige planning can be decisive.

Conclusions

There are significant differences among the Scandinavian and the Middle Eastern states in terms of their attitudes to minority language rights. In the Scandinavian countries, although in the past the assimilation was sought by the minority policy, in recent decades more steps have been taken to preserve the language and to encourage the use of Sami languages.

From the perspective of ensuring and implementation of language rights, based on the results of this thesis we can affirm that the processes occurring in *Sápmi* can be interpreted as actions of revitalizing the language. The essential factors affecting language revitalization are the following:

1. recognising the importance of the use of mother tongue in the family;
2. rethinking parental language selection strategies that may have a role in preserving identity;
3. changing attitudes that are reflected in the results of this research: preschool and school-age children usually have a positive attitude regarding the use of the Sami language.

It seems that there is no correlation between the mastery of language and the attitude towards the language which is the most important expression of national/ethnic identity. For example, there are Sami speakers but also individuals who do not speak the language, but who emphasize the importance of language. In the Skolt Sami and Inari Sami settlements the language is accepted as a value in the parents' generation, but is not always treated as a value in the grandparents' generation. Maintaining the language plays a stronger role in the transmission of traditional knowledge.

These significant changes in the attitudes on minority language rights were possible because democracy in the Scandinavian countries has a longer tradition than in the Middle Eastern countries, and the Scandinavian states have adopted the international documents on language rights. This process was favoured by the fact that in the Scandinavian countries the ensuring of minority rights has not been associated with the idea of an eventual dismantling of the states, as in the case of Turkey.

Given the fact that in the states of the Middle East there is no democratic tradition, the Kurds must fight in all four states for their own minority and linguistic rights. Traditionally, the Islamic religious identity was considered more important than the ethnic or linguistic identity. Failure to respect the linguistic rights of national minorities in Turkey is the direct consequence of the modernization philosophy of the country which founds the state on the

Turkish ethnicity and its language. The failure of the Kurds' repeated attempts to obtain their linguistic rights stipulated in various international documents and conventions reinforces those radical movements which advocate for the creation of an independent Kurdish state. However, this would mean for the states concerned the loss of territorial integrity, and the idea of this danger is circulated as an argument against ensuring minority and linguistic rights claimed by the Kurdish population.

Following the preparations for the EU membership Turkey began to treat the Kurdish problem differently, given the fact that the implementation of the country's democratization is impossible without EU support. Thus, the nation-state oriented Kemalism (Turkish: *Kemalizm, Atatürkçülük, Atatürkçü düşünce*) came into conflict with the democratic version of Kemalism oriented to globalization. However, the democratization process is not realized directly through political will, but rather indirectly by external pressure.

The decline of the nation-state has an impact on the Kurdish movement and on the attitude of the Turkish state towards the Kurdish issue. The Turkish state, regardless of its political and cultural system, must respect and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms, and must not lose sight of the UNESCO policy according to which every culture is valuable and should be protected (Vizi, 2002).

Although human rights are codified in international and regional treaties, these were not respected by Turkey. Therefore, the most pressing task is the implementation of universal standards of current international treaties by the states in the Middle East, and rethinking the relationship between states and minorities. The international documents will be successful if these states decide to support the survival and development of minorities. However, these documents play a role in rethinking the general principles about minorities.

To solve the Kurdish problem, it is important to recognize that the problem is of ethnic nature. It is necessary to clearly and publicly recognize the fact that Kurds make up a group that has its own cultural identity. After all these, the main objective should be to ensure the cultural autonomy within the existing states. The recognition of diversity must be reflected in laws and regulations. The international community has developed around the world different mechanisms that can be used to solve the Turkish–Kurdish issue as well.

The Turkish government can perform rapid changes in the field of language use. Regarding cultural reforms the following measures prove to be effective: education in Kurdish language, tolerance for cultural activities, freedom of publication, keeping the original Kurdish place names, right to a Kurdish name (Barkey-Fuller 1998). Turkey must

know that the EU has strict procedures that must be met. The EU reminds the government in Ankara that progress is necessary in relation to the Kurdish issue to maintain the country's stability, democracy and unity.

In the last decade, Turkey has begun to consider the reality of multilingualism of this linguistically heterogeneous state: nowadays, there are some possibilities to learn the Kurdish language – not as a mother tongue because the constitution still forbids it, but as a foreign language within some colleges and universities. According to the directors of various educational institutions the speakers are interested in language courses and university courses. Graduates of these courses may have an important role in the future because if the mother tongue education were accessible among Kurds, they could work as trainers. The activists of Kurdish cultural movements encourage the use of local dialects to maintain the linguistic and cultural diversity.

The conclusions and lessons resulting from this thesis can also be of practical value in rethinking the forms of education and mother tongue education in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

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