



The Evolution of Linguistic Rights Throughout History and the Major Milestones

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ARTICLE INFO A B S T R A C T

Keywords: Human Rights Milestones, Language Discrimination, linguistic diversity, Linguistic rights, Multilingualism

Received : 16 July
Revised : 24 August
Accepted: 30 September

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The evolution of linguistic rights represents a rich and consequential trajectory in the socio-political history of human societies. Mirroring broader shifts in political power, cultural paradigms, and technological advancements, linguistic rights have increasingly been recognized as a cornerstone of human rights and social justice. This paper embarks on a historical journey to trace the major milestones in the recognition, protection, and promotion of linguistic rights. Starting from the implicit recognition in ancient and medieval societies, it highlights the complex interplay of power, culture, and language. Concurrently, this period also sowed the seeds for a growing consciousness about the value of linguistic diversity. The paper critically examines the significant strides made in the 20th century, where international treaties and declarations explicitly acknowledged and championed linguistic rights. Here, the conversation around linguistic rights expanded to encompass dimensions of education, public administration, and more. In the 21st century, the digital age, the discourse on linguistic rights enters a new paradigm, shaped by the rise of technology and the internet. This period is marked by an increased awareness of digital linguistic divide and the potential of technology to both challenge and champion linguistic rights. Through a detailed exploration of these periods, the paper presents a holistic understanding of the development of linguistic rights. It underscores the enduring relationship between linguistic diversity, social justice, and national identity, and offers insights into the evolving global narrative on linguistic rights.

INTRODUCTION

In the vast tapestry of human rights and liberties, linguistic rights occupy a unique and pivotal space. At the heart of these rights is the fundamental premise that individuals and communities should be free to express, communicate, and preserve their identity through language without hindrance. Linguistic rights can be understood not merely as the right to speak or use a particular language but extend further to encapsulate the human and civil rights concerning the individual and collective ability to choose, promote, learn, and employ the language(s) of their choice across various public and private domains. Historically, the matter of language has always been at the intersection of power dynamics, cultural exchanges, and socio-political movements. As societies evolved, so did their understanding and assertion of linguistic rights. The evolution of these rights has been tightly interwoven with significant issues of identity formation, the nuances of colonization and its aftermath, the ebb and flow of globalization, and the intricate process of state-building and national identity creation. Furthermore, the discussion of linguistic rights brings to the fore questions of cultural preservation, diversity, and inclusivity. When a language dies, a unique worldview and a treasure trove of cultural knowledge vanish with it. Thus, linguistic rights are not just about communication; they are about preserving human heritage, ensuring diverse thought processes, and fostering mutual respect in an increasingly globalized world. By delving into the history and major milestones of linguistic rights, we aim to shed light on the complexities and nuances of this vital subject, underscoring its relevance in today's world and its undying importance in the shaping of our past.

LITERATUR RIVIEW

Linguistic rights, as an encompassing domain within the broader purview of human rights, have attracted scholarly attention, given their intricate connections with socio-cultural, political, and economic terrains. From historical perspectives, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) offers an in-depth exploration that ties linguistic rights closely with overarching human rights themes. Extending this discourse, May (2012) provides a lucid delineation of the interface between linguistic rights and minority rights, while meticulously weaving a narrative that spans from the civilizations of yore to the complexities of the modern era.

The shadow of the colonial epoch looms large in any discussion related to linguistic rights. Phillipson's seminal work, *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), serves as a linchpin that critically underscores the colonial legacy on languages, shedding light on linguistic hegemonies. Complementing this narrative, Makoni & Pennycook (2006) present an insightful probe into the aftermath of colonial policies on language, emphasizing the dual roles languages played - as vestiges of cultural identity and tools for dominion. Additionally, Spolsky (2009) analyses the linguistic policies and practices of colonial rulers and their lasting impacts on colonized communities.

The intertwining of linguistic rights with the modern geopolitical fabric presents a complex tapestry. Ricento (2005) brilliantly captures the nuances of

languages within these geopolitical arenas, echoing sentiments similar to those of Patten (2001), who emphasizes the dilemmas faced by states when accommodating linguistic diversity within policy frameworks. Concurrently, Blommaert (2010) and Heller (1999) dissect the myriad dimensions of globalization, both echoing the sentiment that linguistic rights are now more than ever tied to global mobility, migration, and economic shifts.

The dawn of the digital age, with its seismic shifts in communication paradigms, has ushered in novel debates around linguistic rights. Warschauer (2003) remains at the forefront of this discussion, highlighting the dual nature of technology as a preserver and a potential eroder of linguistic diversity. Cunliffe *et al.* (2013) offer insights into the challenges of ensuring linguistic diversity in digital ecosystems.

Drawing the threads together, it is evident that linguistic rights remain a dynamic and evolving field, informed by historical contexts, socio-political shifts, and technological advancements (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; May, 2012; Phillipson, 1992; Makoni & Pennycook, 2006; Spolsky, 2009; Ricento, 2006; Patten, 2001; Blommaert, 2010; Heller, 1999; Warschauer, 2003; Cunliffe *et al.*, 2013).

While there have been various studies focusing on individual moments in the evolution of linguistic rights, there appears to be a paucity of comprehensive research that provides a chronological tracing of the progression of these rights throughout history. The significance of linguistic rights, as a facet of human rights, has evolved in tandem with the socio-political shifts and developments around the world. However, few studies encapsulate a broad spectrum of milestones ranging from ancient civilizations, where language was intertwined with identity and power dynamics, to contemporary societies where linguistic rights play a role in global politics, education, and migration.

Many studies have often focused on a particular region, epoch, or linguistic community. But there is a need for holistic research that connects these disparate dots into a cohesive narrative. This would involve not only cataloguing key events and policy shifts, but also understanding the socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts that have driven changes in linguistic rights perspectives. For instance, while we have a wealth of research on the linguistic policies of individual nations or empires, we lack a panoramic view of how these policies influenced or were influenced by global movements or international diplomatic relations.

Furthermore, while major international charters and conventions on linguistic rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), have been well documented, the nuanced narratives and local struggles leading up to these milestones are often overlooked. An exploration into grassroots movements, indigenous language preservation struggles, and the role of civil society in amplifying the need for linguistic rights can provide a richer understanding of the topic.

Lastly, the role of technological advancements, such as the internet and digital communication tools, in shaping the discourse on linguistic rights in the

21st century is a budding area that needs further exploration. With languages dying at an unprecedented rate, understanding the role technology plays in both exacerbating and alleviating linguistic challenges is crucial.

In essence, while various pieces of the linguistic rights puzzle have been explored in isolation, there is a discernible gap in literature that provides a holistic, interconnected, and comprehensive narrative tracing the evolution of linguistic rights throughout history.

Research question

Linguistic rights, understood as the rights of communities to use their language as a mode of communication and education, have been a topic of contention and evolution for centuries. As societies grew and changed, so too did the understanding and appreciation of linguistic rights. While several studies have explored specific instances where linguistic rights have been championed or suppressed, there is a lack of comprehensive research tracing the overarching historical evolution of these rights.

a) How have linguistic rights evolved throughout history, and what have been the major milestones marking this evolution?

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the major milestones in the historical evolution of linguistic rights, drawing connections between past events and current practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically historical analysis, to trace the evolution of linguistic rights throughout history and identify the major milestones that have shaped this trajectory. The study used secondary data drawn from various sources including academic articles, legal documents, international treaties, and historical texts.

Data Collection

The data for this research was collected through a systematic review of the literature. This involved searching electronic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and PubMed for scholarly articles using relevant keywords such as 'linguistic rights', 'language policy', 'historical evolution of linguistic rights', and 'major milestones in linguistic rights'. Historical documents and international treaties were accessed through archives of international institutions like the United Nations.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed through thematic analysis. This involved coding the data for recurrent themes related to the evolution of linguistic rights. Sub-themes were also identified to offer detailed insights into the major milestones. The coded data was then analysed to draw out patterns and trends.

Validation

The findings of this study were validated through triangulation, ensuring that the identified milestones and evolutionary trends were corroborated by multiple sources. This helped to enhance the reliability and validity of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ancient and Medieval Times: Early Notions of Language Rights

Language, throughout ancient and medieval times, has been more than a tool of communication; it served as an emblem of cultural identity, socio-political power, and spiritual continuity. The ways in which societies engaged with languages often reflected broader historical and sociological trends, including the consolidation of empires, the spread of religions, and the migration of peoples.

During the vast expanse of the ancient world, empires like the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans often promoted their languages as a means of administrative control and cultural assimilation (see Ostler, 2005). The imposition of a dominant language was a common strategy to maintain control over newly acquired territories, yet this did not always mean the eradication or suppression of regional languages.

For instance, the Achaemenid Persians, despite their vast territories stretching from India to Egypt, adopted an approach of relative linguistic tolerance. Local languages in regions like Egypt or the Indus Valley persisted alongside the official imperial Aramaic (see Dandamayev, 1989). This multi-lingual approach can be seen as an early acknowledgment of the practicality and possibly the rights of linguistic diversity.

The medieval period, characterized by the rise of kingdoms, principalities, and religious movements, also had its share of linguistic fluctuations. As Christianity spread across Europe, Latin became not only a liturgical language but also an intellectual and scholarly *lingua franca*. However, the vernacular languages held their ground, often in parallel domains and at times intersecting with Latin, especially in literary creations (see Wright, 2006).

Furthermore, during the Islamic Golden Age, while Arabic was the primary medium of scholarly and religious discourse, non-Arab regions under Islamic rule, like Persia or parts of Central Asia, retained and even flourished in their native languages, further emphasizing the era's intricate linguistic tapestry (see Lapidus, 1988).

In short, the ancient and medieval periods were not devoid of linguistic consciousness. While power dynamics did influence the prominence of certain languages, there was an implicit understanding of the value and utility of linguistic diversity.

Renaissance and Enlightenment: Languages and Nationhood

The Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, spanning approximately from the 14th to the 18th centuries, catalysed profound transformations across the European continent, reshaping fields ranging from art and science to

philosophy and, critically, language. Originating in Italy, the Renaissance marked a vibrant “*rebirth*” of classical wisdom, reviving the allure of Greek and Latin manuscripts. Equally, if not more pivotal for the broader populace, it bestowed vernacular languages with an unprecedented esteem (see Burke, 2009).

Johannes Gutenberg’s groundbreaking invention of the printing press around 1440 significantly expedited this linguistic metamorphosis. The advent of this technology facilitated broader access to books, fostering the gradual standardization of vernaculars (see Eisenstein, 1983). The ensuing democratization of literacy and enlightenment underscored the versatility of vernacular languages - they transcended mere verbal interaction, embodying knowledge, cultural essence, and nascent nationalistic sentiments.

The Enlightenment era, with its robust emphasis on rationalism, scientific inquiry, and individual liberties, further enriched the discourse on language. Luminaries like John Locke posited that language was inextricably intertwined with cognition, shaping our understanding of humanity and its intrinsic nature (see Locke, 1690). This epoch, characterized by secularism and a predilection for rational discourse, impelled societies to reexamine the significance of language in facets ranging from governance and pedagogy to civic engagements.

Historical milestones, such as the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555, while primarily crafted as a religious covenant, implicitly sanctioned linguistic plurality. This treaty permitted sovereigns to determine the dominant faith (and indirectly, often the linguistic framework) within their dominions. This devolution of religious and linguistic choices hints at nascent inklings of linguistic rights, serving as a precursor to contemporary perspectives on the matter (see Mac Culloch, 2003).

Furthermore, the advent of notable literary figures, such as Dante Alighieri with his ‘*Divine Comedy*’ written in the Tuscan dialect, exemplified the burgeoning prominence of vernacular literature. Dante's choice to eschew Latin in favour of a regional dialect was revolutionary, elevating the status of vernaculars and setting a precedent for other European writers (see Barański, 2020).

By the denouement of these transformative eras, the archetype of the nation-state crystallized, wherein language became deeply entwined with constructs of national identity. As territorial demarcations oscillated, the languages reverberating within these borders evolved beyond mere communicative mediums, symbolizing unifying national ethos and identity (see Anderson, 1983).

The ancient and medieval periods offer fascinating glimpses into the early recognition of linguistic rights, even if they were not explicitly labelled as such. Here are some examples:

Akkadian Empire: Sumerian and Akkadian Languages: The Akkadian Empire (circa 2334-2154 BCE) is often cited as one of the first empires that

successfully amalgamated multiple linguistic groups. Although the Akkadians imposed their Semitic Akkadian language for administrative purposes, the earlier Sumerian language and culture continued to flourish, especially in religious and literary contexts.

Ancient Egypt: Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, and Demotic Scripts: While hieroglyphics were used for monumental inscriptions, hieratic and later demotic scripts, derived from hieroglyphics, were used for religious texts and everyday writing, respectively. This adaptation of script to suit various social contexts reflects an implicit acknowledgment of linguistic diversity and utility. Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, and Demotic scripts were used for different purposes and by different social classes. This stratification of scripts suggests a level of linguistic rights bound to class and function in society.

The Achaemenid Empire (Ancient Persia): Old Persian and Aramaic: Darius the Great adopted Aramaic as the administrative language for the vast Achaemenid Empire, despite Old Persian being the language of the rulers. This was an early recognition of the importance of utilizing a lingua franca familiar to a broader audience for effective governance.

Ancient Rome and Latin: Latin and Greek: Latin was the administrative language of Rome, but Greek was widely spoken and respected, especially in the eastern provinces. Many educated Romans were bilingual, reflecting the importance of linguistic inclusivity in governance, trade, and culture. Latin was the official language, but the vast territories of the empire had myriad native languages. The Romans often adopted a pragmatic approach, allowing regions to use their local languages for daily affairs. This can be seen as an implicit recognition of linguistic rights, especially in provinces like Egypt where Greek was heavily used in administrative contexts.

Ancient India: The subcontinent has a rich linguistic tapestry that dates back millennia. The classical language Sanskrit, used for religious and scholarly works, coexisted with regional languages like Prakrit. The Emperor Ashoka, in the 3rd century BCE, inscribed edicts in various languages, catering to different regions, which reflects an implicit acknowledgment of linguistic diversity (see Thapar, 2013).

The Islamic Caliphates: As Islam spread, Arabic became the language of religion and scholarship. However, local languages such as Persian, Berber, and others continued to flourish in respective regions. Many Persian poets, for instance, contributed vastly to literature in their own language despite the dominance of Arabic (see Bloom & Blair, 2009).

Medieval Spain (Al-Andalus): Arabic, Hebrew, and Romance Languages: During the Muslim rule in Spain, there was a vibrant coexistence of multiple languages. Arabic was the primary language of administration and scholarship, but Hebrew and various Romance languages were also spoken and written. This period produced scholars like Maimonides, who wrote in both Hebrew and Arabic.

The Ottoman Empire: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Others: The Ottomans, recognizing the linguistic diversity of their expansive empire, did

not attempt to suppress non-Turkish languages. Arabic and Persian were highly esteemed, especially in scholarly, legal, and religious contexts. This allowed for a multi-lingual bureaucracy and literary culture.

Medieval India: Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Regional Languages: While Sanskrit was a language of scholarship and religious texts, Prakrit and other regional languages (e.g., Tamil, Kannada, and Bengali) had their own vibrant literary and cultural traditions. Kings often patronized multiple languages, recognizing their cultural value and the importance of linguistic accessibility.

Medieval Europe: Latin was the dominant language of scholarship and the Church, but vernacular languages played a significant role in daily life. With the Magna Carta in 1215, for example, although written in Latin, it aimed to address and communicate rights and privileges of common people, indirectly suggesting the value of making crucial information accessible to the masses (see Holt, 1992).

Ancient China: Classical Chinese was used for official and literary purposes, while various spoken dialects existed across regions. This distinction between written and spoken forms allowed for a unified administration but still acknowledged regional linguistic diversity.

The Byzantine Empire: While Greek was the official language, other languages like Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac had their own communities and religious functions within the empire. This coexistence reveals an early understanding of communal linguistic rights.

In many of these examples, linguistic rights were more about practical governance, cultural preservation, or elite bilingualism rather than egalitarian principles. Still, they show early notions of linguistic pluralism and the importance of language in administration, culture, and identity.

19th Century: Nationalism and Linguistic Homogenization

The 19th century, with its waves of political revolutions and burgeoning national identities, marked a significant era in the evolution of linguistic rights and perceptions. This period witnessed the rise of nationalism- a sentiment rooted in the belief of shared culture, history, and importantly, language. The way societies approached language in this century deeply reflected the intertwining of linguistics with nationalistic fervour (see Breuilly, 1994).

As European empires began to consolidate, there was a palpable push towards linguistic homogenization within their borders. France offers a quintessential example. The French Revolution, while championing liberty and fraternity, also aimed to create a unified French identity. As a result, regional languages like Breton, Occitan, and Alsatian faced systematic marginalization in favour of standard French. This process was intensified under the Third Republic, with the education system playing a pivotal role in promoting French at the expense of regional languages (see Weber, 1976).

Similarly, in the newly unified German and Italian states, Standard German and Tuscan-based Italian were propagated as the national standards, often sidelining other dialects and regional languages. This linguistic

centralization was viewed as a means to foster national unity and diminish regional separatist tendencies (see Barbour & Carmichael, 2000).

In the broader global context, European colonial empires exported their languages to vast territories across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese, among others, were imposed as administrative and educational mediums, often erasing or subduing indigenous languages and altering the linguistic landscape of entire continents (see Phillipson, 1992).

However, the 19th century also witnessed resistance to such homogenizing efforts. In Ireland, for instance, the Gaelic Revival sought to resurrect and promote the Irish language, seeing it as a cornerstone of Irish identity and a symbol of resistance against English hegemony (see Smith, 1986). In essence, the 19th century was a period of linguistic flux, with forces of nationalism and empire shaping, promoting, and sometimes eradicating languages, all in the quest for unity, control, or resistance.

The 19th century marked a crucial period of significant political changes and the rise of nationalism in different parts of the world, which profoundly influenced the way languages were perceived and used. The 19th century was indeed a transformative period for many nations, and the drive towards linguistic homogenization was seen in various parts of the world. Here are more examples:

a) German Unification: The process of unification in Germany saw a strong push towards linguistic homogenization. The primary driving force was the nationalist sentiment that resonated with the phrase “ one people, one nation, one language ”. Standard German, based primarily on the dialect of Prussia, started to gain prominence as a result of this movement (see Sheehan, 1989).

b) Meiji Restoration in Japan: During the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), the Japanese government undertook a nation-building process that involved standardizing the Japanese language. The government established a unified educational system, disseminating standardized Japanese nationwide, which was crucial for fostering a cohesive national identity (see DeFrancis, 1984).

c) Italian Unification: Following Italy’s unification, the Tuscan dialect was chosen as the basis for Modern Standard Italian, largely due to its prestigious literary heritage. However, it was a language spoken natively by a minority. The process of linguistic homogenization was slow and accompanied by efforts to educate the Italian population in the national language (see Lepschy & Lepschy, 1977).

d) French Language Laws: France passed several laws throughout the 19th century promoting the use of the French language and limiting the use of regional languages. The Guizot Law (1833) and Ferry Laws (1881-1882) mandated French as the sole language of instruction in schools. These laws

aimed to create a cohesive national identity but were detrimental to regional languages (see Judge, 2007).

e) American English: In the United States, the 19th century was a time of large-scale immigration. Efforts to “*Americanize*” immigrants often involved English-language instruction. In the later part of the century, several states passed English-only instruction laws, promoting English at the expense of other languages (see Crawford, 2000).

f) Russian Empire’s Russification: Tsarist Russia embarked on a policy of Russification that aimed at integrating various ethnic and linguistic minorities into a cohesive Russian identity. This included promoting the Russian language in administration, education, and public life, often at the expense of other regional languages like the Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian languages and a number of dialects (see Kamusella, 2013; Thaden, 1981).

g) British Colonial Policies: The British Empire, with its extensive colonies, promoted English as a medium of instruction, governance, and administration. In India, for example, the introduction of English education in the 19th century by figures like Lord Macaulay aimed to create a class of English-speaking Indians who would assist in the colonial administrative apparatus (see Viswanathan, 1998).

h) The Ottoman Empire: As part of the Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire initiated policies to modernize the state. These reforms attempted to create a unified administrative language and suppress regional languages. However, it is noteworthy that the late Ottoman period also saw a flourishing of various linguistic and cultural expressions, leading to a complicated interplay between homogenization and multiculturalism (see Findley, 1989).

i) Spanish America: After gaining independence from Spain in the early 19th century, many new republics in Latin America aimed to forge national identities distinct from their colonial past. Spanish was promoted as the national language in many of these countries, sidelining indigenous languages and positioning them as ‘*backward*’ or ‘*pre-modern*’.

j) Hungary’s Magyarization: Much like the Russification policies in the Russian Empire, the Hungarian leadership in the Austro-Hungarian Empire sought to promote Hungarian (Magyar) over other languages such as Slovak, Romanian, and Croatian. This drive intensified during the latter half of the 19th century, leading to significant cultural and linguistic tensions (see Judson, 2007).

The emphasis on a singular, standardized language in many parts of the world during the 19th century reflects the power dynamics of the era, with national or imperial authorities often seeking to establish linguistic unity for political and administrative purposes.

While the 19th century did not witness the global, formalized linguistic rights movements that characterized the 20th century, it is crucial to understand this in its historical context. The 19th century did see a number of movements and trends that were, in many ways, precursors to the linguistic rights movements of the subsequent century. Here are some reasons and considerations for the apparent absence of a formalized linguistic rights movement during this period:

a) Conceptual Framework: The modern understanding of '*rights*' itself was still being developed and articulated in the 19th century. While there were human rights advancements, such as the abolition of slavery and demands for workers' rights, the specific notion of linguistic rights as an integral part of human rights was not yet widely recognized or advocated for.

b) Rise of Nationalism: The 19th century witnessed a surge in nationalism, leading to the unification of countries like Italy and Germany. Nationalism often prioritized a single national language to foster national unity. In this context, linguistic diversity could sometimes be viewed as a threat to national unity.

c) Colonialism: European powers expanded their empires, and the imposition of the colonizer's language was a common practice. While there was resistance to colonial rule in various forms, linguistic rights as a defined movement were often overshadowed by broader anti-colonial, independence movements.

d) Pockets of Resistance: While there might not have been a global or unified movement, there were certainly local and regional efforts to preserve and protect native languages. For example, in Ireland, there were movements to rejuvenate the Irish language in the face of English dominance.

e) Industrial Revolution and Urbanization: The rapid industrialization and urbanization of the 19th century meant that many people moved to cities in search of work. Urban centres often emphasized the dominant language, leading to further marginalization of minority languages.

f) Lack of Global Platforms: The 20th century saw the creation of numerous international organizations and platforms, such as the United Nations, where issues like linguistic rights could be addressed on a global scale. The 19th century lacked such widespread, international platforms for advocacy.

g) Shift in Priorities: The 19th century faced numerous political upheavals, revolutions, and wars. In many contexts, the immediate issues of political freedom, governance, and territorial integrity took precedence over linguistic rights.

In short, while the 19th century did not see a global, cohesive linguistic rights movement, it laid the groundwork for the more organized and recognized efforts of the 20th century. The socio-political developments, from the rise of nationalism to the impact of colonialism, all played a role in shaping the trajectory of linguistic rights.

20th Century: The Universal Declaration and Beyond

The aftermath of World War II brought an urgent global commitment to human rights, culminating in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This landmark document, though not exclusive in its focus on language, set the tone for the recognition of linguistic rights by underscoring that every individual was entitled to rights and freedoms “without distinction of any kind, such as...language” (see Article 2, UN General Assembly, 1948).

Following the Universal Declaration, the international community recognized the intricate link between linguistic rights and other human rights, leading to several pivotal treaties and declarations:

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) affirmed the rights of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion, and use their own language (see Article 27, UN General Assembly, 1966).

The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) further emphasized states’ obligations to protect the rights of linguistic minorities and encourage conditions for the promotion of their identity (see UN General Assembly, 1992).

Significantly, the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) in Barcelona emerged as one of the most comprehensive documents on the subject. It detailed linguistic rights in various sectors, from education to media and public administration, asserting that all languages are equal and deserve recognition and support (see World Conference on Linguistic Rights, 1996).

Real-world applications of these principles were evident across various contexts. For instance, Canada’s policy on bilingualism, rooted in the recognition of both English and French, found resonance with the principles outlined in these international declarations (see Edwards, 2004). In South Africa, post-apartheid linguistic policies were crafted to ensure that the 11 official languages were given equal status, a move that reflected the nation’s commitment to linguistic diversity and reconciliation (see Alexander, 2007).

As the 20th century drew to a close, it was clear that the global community had begun to recognize language not merely as a tool for communication but as an integral aspect of identity, cultural diversity, and human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, serves as a cornerstone for human rights principles worldwide. Its significance in the context of linguistic rights in the 20th century can be viewed from multiple angles:

a) Broad Recognition of Human Rights: The UDHR was the first document that aimed to provide a comprehensive framework for the rights and freedoms of all individuals irrespective of their distinctions, including language. Article 2 of the UDHR guarantees rights and freedoms:

without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

b) Foundation for Other Treaties: The principles outlined in the UDHR provided a foundational framework for the creation of subsequent international treaties and conventions. For instance, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) states in Article 27: In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

c) Context of Post-World War II: The UDHR emerged in the aftermath of World War II, a time when the global community was reckoning with the devastating effects of prejudice, discrimination, and genocide. The inclusion of language as a fundamental human right was crucial, as numerous linguistic communities had faced persecution during the war.

d) Emergence of Decolonization Movements: The 20th century saw a wave of decolonization movements where countries sought to reclaim their sovereignty from colonial powers. A critical aspect of these movements was the revival and promotion of native languages that had been suppressed during colonial rule. The UDHR and subsequent conventions provided a moral and legal backing to these efforts.

e) Increasing Globalization and Migration: The 20th century was also marked by increasing cross-border movements, leading to multicultural and multilingual societies. Recognizing linguistic rights became imperative to ensure that minority communities were not marginalized and were able to participate fully in societal functions.

f) Catalyst for Later Declarations: The UDHR's principles acted as a catalyst for the development of more specific linguistic rights declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) in Barcelona, which further elaborated the principles of linguistic rights in various domains of public life.

In short, the 20th century was a pivotal period for the recognition and establishment of linguistic rights on the global stage, and the UDHR provided a foundational framework that paved the way for more specialized conventions and declarations on the matter. The 'and Beyond' refers to the ripple effect and

the subsequent advancements in linguistic rights that the UDHR instigated throughout the century. So, the phrase ‘The Universal Declaration and Beyond’ encapsulates not just the importance of the UDHR as a starting point, but also the subsequent growth and development of linguistic rights in the 20th century and beyond.

21st Century: Digital Age and Linguistic Rights

The advent of the 21st century marked a paradigm shift in the landscape of linguistic rights, largely influenced by rapid technological advancements. The proliferation of the internet and digital technologies ushered in both challenges and opportunities for linguistic communities worldwide (see Warschauer, 2002).

Digital Exclusion and Linguistic Marginalization: The early years of the digital age saw the dominance of a few major languages on the internet, which inadvertently marginalized a plethora of indigenous and less-spoken languages. This digital linguistic divide reflected a newer form of linguistic discrimination, where speakers of non-dominant languages had limited access to online resources, tools, and platforms (see Cunliffe *et al.*, 2013).

Revival and Preservation through Technology: On the flip side, the very technology that posed challenges became an enabler of linguistic rights. Digital platforms facilitated documentation, preservation, and revitalization efforts for endangered languages. Websites, mobile applications, and online communities emerged as potent tools to teach, learn, and promote minority languages. For instance, the ‘Endangered Languages Project’, powered by Google, offered a collaborative space for linguists and communities to share research, resources, and multimedia content for several endangered languages.

Linguistic Rights in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technology: The rise of AI and machine learning has furthered the discourse on linguistic rights. These technologies predominantly support widely spoken languages, leaving a significant portion of the global linguistic landscape underrepresented. However, grassroots initiatives are pushing for AI that respects linguistic diversity, ensuring that minority languages are not left behind in the digital revolution (see Blommaert *et al.*, 2019).

Online Activism and Linguistic Rights: The digital age has also seen a surge in online activism promoting linguistic rights. Social media campaigns, online petitions, and virtual forums have provided platforms for marginalized linguistic communities to voice their concerns, share their stories, and rally for their rights on a global scale.

In short, the 21st century, with its digital ethos, has redefined the contours of linguistic rights. While challenges persist, the digital age has unlocked unprecedented avenues for the advocacy, preservation, and celebration of linguistic diversity.

Table 1. Historical Key Events and Milestones in Linguistic Human Rights

Time Period	Key Events & Milestones
Ancient and	- Greek and Roman expansions with efforts to protect local

Medieval Times	languages.
	- Medieval Europe sees Latin as the liturgical and scholarly language, while vernacular languages gain ground in daily life.
Renaissance and Enlightenment	- Recognition of languages as markers of cultural and national identity.
	- Emergence of linguistic nationalism in Europe.
19th Century	- Rise of nationalism and efforts toward linguistic homogenization in certain states.
	- Establishment of language-based nation-states.
20th Century	- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) upholds rights without distinction of language.
	- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and other treaties bolster linguistic rights.
	- Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) in Barcelona outlines principles of linguistic rights.
21st Century: Digital Age	- Digital linguistic divide emerges with dominant internet languages.
	- Technological tools aid in the preservation and promotion of endangered languages.
	- AI and machine learning offer new challenges and opportunities for linguistic diversity.

CONCLUSION

The journey of linguistic rights, as traced through the annals of history to the digital age, underscores the increasingly recognized imperative for their protection and promotion. The evolution of linguistic rights from the shadows of implicit support to the spotlight of explicit global discussions mirrors the shifting contours of global power dynamics, cultural exchanges, and technological breakthroughs (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995).

Linguistic rights emerged from the realm of unspoken or indirect provisions in ancient and medieval societies, as evidenced in the protective measures for local languages in the face of Greek and Roman expansions. They gained a more pronounced voice during the era of Renaissance and Enlightenment, as nations recognized languages as markers of cultural and national identity (see Fishman, 1999).

The 19th and 20th centuries bore witness to a dichotomy, as nationalism and linguistic homogenization coexisted with a burgeoning international consciousness about linguistic diversity and rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with subsequent treaties and declarations, played a significant role in endorsing linguistic rights as an integral part of human rights (see UN General Assembly, 1948; 1966; 1992).

The 21st century, propelled by the digital revolution, brought forth new challenges and opportunities for linguistic rights. Digital exclusion, linguistic marginalization, and the rise of Artificial Intelligence underlined the

importance of linguistic rights in a hyper-connected world. Concurrently, technology emerged as a powerful tool for the revival, preservation, and promotion of endangered and minority languages (see Warschauer, 2002).

The continued advocacy for linguistic rights is much more than a call for cultural preservation. It's a declaration of the profound human yearning for self-expression, identity, and a sense of belonging (see Pavlenko, 2002). It is a reminder of the intricate ties between languages and human rights, and a testament to the evolving understanding of these rights in an ever-changing world.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to express our deepest gratitude to team of the university library of University of Lodz, Poland. for facilitating access to rare historical documents, thereby contributing significantly to my understanding of the historical evolution of linguistic rights. Finally, I appreciate the digital services department in navigating the extensive online databases and e-journals that greatly enhanced our research.

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