

Universality and Particularity: The Politics of Language in the U.S. - Humiliation for Language Minority Speakers

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Abstract

While many nation-state spend millions and millions of dollars toward mega salaries to remunerate individuals (athletes, companies, CEOs, and politicians), most of these Nation-state, case of the U.S. , argue that they cannot develop a language policy that accommodate major minority language such as Spanish in the U.S. to the status of Official language. It goes without saying that these major minority languages are in situation of cultural diglossia, i.e., in position of low status, language of less prestige, and these language speakers are dominated and humiliated by being requested to speak the language of higher status or prestigious status to have access to social and political privileges. In many multilingual multicultural countries across the world, case of Africa, National constitutions, document that is supposed to establish individual citizenship is not even translated in languages not identified as official languages. How can the citizens of these countries defend their rights and learn the laws of their nation-sate? It is my argument that in the age of “global communication” (McPhail, 2010), this attitude, fostered by speakers of languages of higher status or prestigious status such as English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, fails to honor the Human right declaration. This attitude is humiliating and hegemonic and should be transformed by adopting a referendum procedure toward major language status to meet the universality and particularity norms of the cultural globalization and democratic participation for all.

I Use the case of the U.S. because, as “the world’s most powerful state, which also has the most stable and longstanding democratic institutions and unparalleled advantages in every sphere, including the economy and security concerns” (Chomsky 1999: 6), the U.S. should be the role model when it comes to human right and social policies related to human identities’ defense (Parekh, 2008).

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