

Minority Language Television in Europe: commonalities and differences between Regional Minority Languages and Immigrant Minority Languages

Telebista eta hizkuntza gutxituak Europan:
antzekotasunak eta desberdintasunak Hizkuntza
Gutxitu Erregionalen eta Immigrazioaren Hizkuntza
Gutxituen

Television y lenguas minorizadas en Europa:
similitudes y diferencias entre las Lenguas
Minoritarias Regionales y las Lenguas Minoritarias de
la Inmigración

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Abstract

When reviewing the literature on minority languages and media in Europe, we observe that while some refer to the so called Regional Minority Languages others focus, especially in the last years, on Immigrant Minority Languages. There is no doubt that they deal with different realities. However in this article we try to find out what the commonalities are between such different realities, related to the use of television. We first illustrate the television landscape in both type of languages across Europe, then remark some commonalities as such of the impact that multiculturalism and media constructed geolinguistic regions might have on them. We finally draw some conclusion for future research.

Keywords: minority languages, television, migrants, multiculturalism.

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Laburpena

Hizkuntza gutxituak eta hedabideak Europan gaitzat hartuta argitaratu diren lanei begirata, egile batzuk Hizkuntza Gutxitu Erregionalei (*Regional Minority Languages* edo RML) buruz ari diren bitartean, beste batzuk -bereziki azken urteotan- Immigrazioaren Hizkuntza Gutxituak (*Immigrant Minority Languages* edo IML) ari direla atzeman daiteke. Ez dago zalantzarik errealitate desberdinez ari direla. Alabaina telebistaren erabilerari dagokionez, errealitate horien arteko antzekotasunak bilatzen saiatuko gara artikulu honetan. Horretarako, bi hizkuntza mota horiek Europan duten egoera azalduko dugu lehenik; geroago puntu komunak arakatuko ditugu, hala nola kultur aniztasunak edota komunikabideen bidez eraikitako eremu geolinguistikoei hizkuntza horietako komunikazioa nola ukitzen duten aztertuz; eta, azkenik, etorkizunerako aztergaiak izan daitezkeen hainbat ondorio zirriborratuko ditugu.

Gako-hitzak: hizkuntza gutxituak, telebista, etorkinak, kultur aniztasuna.

Resumen

Una mirada a la bibliografía sobre medios de comunicación y lenguas minorizadas en Europa pone de manifiesto que mientras algunos autores se centran en las llamadas Lenguas Minoritarias Regionales (RML) otros, particularmente en los últimos años, ponen el énfasis en las Lenguas Minoritarias de la Inmigración (IML). No hay duda de que se trata de realidades bien diferentes. Sin embargo, en este artículo, trataremos de analizar los puntos en común que podrían aparecer entre ambas en lo relativo al uso de la televisión. Con ese fin haremos inicialmente un repaso del panorama europeo de la televisión tanto en RML como en IML; posteriormente mostraremos algunos aspectos que pueden afectar tanto a unas como a otras, como son el multiculturalismo o las regiones geolingüísticas construidas sobre la base de los medios de comunicación; finalmente, esbozaremos algunas conclusiones que pueden servir como base para futuras investigaciones.

Palabras clave: lenguas minoritarias, televisión, emigración, multiculturalismo.

0. Introduction³

In the recent past to speak of minority languages in Europe meant referring almost exclusively to the languages of communities historically established in the continent (the so-called regional or autochthonous languages). Today, however, it seems increasingly difficult not to pay some attention to those other languages that, without any official recognition or without even being considered “European languages” (Extra and Yagmur, 2004), are coming to form part of our everyday landscape, especially in the big cities: the languages of immigration.

These languages, those of the millions of immigrants who have established, or are establishing themselves in Europe, can be considered as “minority languages” to the extent that, in the host country, they are languages of minorities and are excluded from important social functions (such as education, government, etc.). In its turn, the existence of these minorities is viewed increasingly less as a stage prior to the immigrants’ integration into the host society, and seen increasingly as a growing reality that will foreseeably continue, or even increase, in the future. A large part of the debates on multiculturalism and transculturalism derive from this assumption (Robins, 2006). As another factor contributing to that perception of increasingly multicultural societies, together with the increase in migratory flows and communication and transport facilities, we find the presence of a significant provision of mass media in those languages within our contexts, thanks both to Internet and to satellite and other technologies.

It must be pointed out that we are speaking here of “minority languages” in the sense accurately described by Mike Cormack and Niamh Hourigan in their book *Minority Language Media* (Cormack and Hourigan, 2007). In this work, referring essentially to the so-called “regional minority or autochthonous languages” of Europe, Cormack defines those languages politically and economically dominated by larger linguistic communities as minority languages. This domination occurs as a result of the tendency of the dominant nationalism in a given state to exclude such languages from national construction. It is therefore this exclusion from the national idea that makes them into minority languages and not so much the number of their speakers. The idea of linguistic minorities as those created as a consequence of their exclusion by nationalisms had previously remarked by M. Heller in her book *Linguistic Minorities and Modernity: A Sociolinguistic Ethnography* (Heller, 1997). In a parallel way, from the perspective of multiculturalism and transculturalism studies, it is this same exclusion precisely that is found by Kevin Robins (Robins, 2006) behind the discourses that consider the cultural diversity deriving from immigration to be a threat: this diversity clashes, according to Robins, with the project of national construction that has been dominant in Europe up to the present, that is: one nation = one identity = one culture. We can therefore deduce that it is precisely the same exclusion from a nation’s imaginary and cultural reality that underlies the minoritization of both autochthonous linguistic communities and immigrant linguistic groups. From this point of view, to speak of the languages of immigration as minority languages seems to make complete sense.

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We are aware that it is a complex question to introduce such different realities into the same category, and that it has consequences which are not only academic but also political. For example, should Migrinter, in its international conference on “ethnic minority media” held in 2010 in Poitiers, widen its focus of interest to include the media in languages of historical linguistic minorities in Europe, such as the Breton or Occitan minorities? Should the languages of immigration be included in the insufficient but significant initiatives that have emerged at the European level in favor of the regional minority languages, such as EBLUL (European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages) or the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages? With respect to its complexity, let us recall that the panorama of the regional minority languages in Europe is already convoluted in itself, ranging from those languages with a high level of official recognition (e.g. Basque in part of the Basque Country) to those others that are marginalized in their territory (e.g. Basque itself under French administration); and from those with only a few thousand speakers (e.g. Ladin) to those others with millions of people who use it habitually and in significant areas of their lives, even in the international field (e.g. Catalan). On the other hand, the diversity of the languages of immigration is no less complex, from those that have millions of speakers in Europe and the world to those that have a few thousand; from those that are official in various states to those that are not official in any.

Having said that, let us make it clear that it is not our intention to start with a clean slate and propose that, from now onwards, we should mix the debate on regional minority languages and minority languages of immigration. There are differences between the former and the latter that recommend caution on this question. To list some, let us say that while many of the regional minority languages are in danger of extinction, that is not the case with a large part of the languages of immigration. In the case of the former, besides, we are dealing with languages that are linked to a single territory (except for Romani and Yiddish), outside which they have no possibility of survival. Besides, in many of the cases of this group, defense of the language appears linked to the claim of a community to govern itself by its own rules, to a greater or lesser extent (from a certain degree of autonomy to independence); that is, a certain demand of a national character which responds, like a mirror, to the construction of a single nation within a state in which they are a minority or, as Letamendia says, a periphery (Letamendia, 2000).

In spite of these notable differences, there are an increasing number of works that raise the need of bearing in mind the general context of the minority languages when it comes to analyzing or working for each one of them. Thus, for example, from the perspective of diaspora studies, Cheesman (Cheesman, 2001) speaks of a “common cause” between what he calls the “old” and “new” minority languages of Europe, the former being regional or autochthonous languages and the latter those of immigration and diasporas. To work in favor of some, according to this author, means to work for a Europe that is more open to cultural diversity, and thus more inclined to also accept other languages. The latest contributions of Guus Extra, Durk Gorter and others (Extra and Gorter, 2008) seem to follow the same direction.

From the other perspective, that of studies on regional minority languages, Nia-

mh Hourigan (Cormack and Hourigan, 2007) speaks of the necessity for comparative studies between the languages of immigration and regional minority languages. Cormack goes even further and speaks of the discourses on multiculturalism, which normally proceed from the observation of migratory phenomena linked to globalization, as one of the factors that has helped the development of the mass media in regional minority languages in recent decades (Cormack, 2008).

Our own work on television of minority languages, both the case of regional languages (Arana, Azpillaga, and Narbaiza, 2007) and concerning the languages of immigration (Amezaga, 2007), leads us to consider the contrast between the two realities as a form of approaching the study of the importance held by the mass media in the process of development of both types of language. In this article we propose to raise some questions that arise from a comparison of the two cases. These are: the now evident fact, due amongst other reasons to the visibility of the mass media, that social reality in Europe is much more multilingual than the discourses on the nation made it possible to see; the consideration that both the speakers of regional minority languages and those of languages of immigration move simultaneously in two (or more) different spheres or universes, and that this entails different opportunities and behavior in the use of media; and the role of television and electronic media in general as a nexus of union between speakers who are dispersed within a hegemonic linguistic community (to which they in their turn belong). At the same time, questions arise from this analysis concerning the limits of the comparison between the two realities. Finally, bearing all of the above in mind, it seems essential to us to reflect on the construction of communication spaces through the electronic media, especially television, and how such spaces can affect the dynamics of minority languages, within the context of globalization and technological transformation that we are experiencing. These are the issues we will be dealing with in this article.

A combination of empirical and theoretical methods will be useful for our purposes. Through the first approach we will describe the provision of television in minority languages -both RML and IML- across the European Union. This will provide us with a clear image of the dimensions of the phenomenon we are dealing with, and a first basis for the comparison between the two realities. Our own previous work, as well as other sources, will help us at this stage. From the theoretical perspective, we will reinterpret some concepts proposed in for the analysis of the RML in some cases, and for the IML in others, in order to test their usefulness for the study of both realities. By doing so we should be allowed to construct, through inductive ways, some hypothesis which will guide us in future research.

1. Broadcasting in Minority Languages in the European Union (EU)

1.1 Regional Minority Languages (RML)

We speak of RML in Europe in the case of those languages of minorities historically established in a territory that have not reached the status of an official state language.

This definition emphasizes the relationship between language and territory, although the tradition includes two exceptions: Romani and Yiddish, two languages with a significant historical presence but dispersed throughout the continent. By emphasizing this historical relationship between language and territory, we believe that we are maintaining the most essential feature of this set and avoiding the dangers of a definition of RML as European languages facing other non-European ones, along the lines discussed by Cheesman.

In this field of the RML of Europe, it was estimated that there were some 90 minority linguistic communities in the European Union of 25 member states up until 2007 (Euromosaic, 2004). To these must be added the minorities of the countries that entered the EU that year, Bulgaria and Romania. This figure includes groups that, while they share the same language, are divided by state or geographic frontiers, with the total number of languages involved numbering around 60. According to Mercator Education (Mercator Education, 2010) the group of persons in the EU who speak a minority language, according to the definition of this term in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, is some 55 million (this total figure is based on a composite of census data and estimates).

Access to television in these languages involves a highly varied casuistry, given the heterogeneity of the minority linguistic communities. Some of them are articulated around languages that are minority languages in one territory but official in another, that is in the so-called “kin-states” (such is the case of many communities originating from displaced populations, a phenomenon that is more common in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe). Others, however, are languages that are present on a single territory and without a state that considers them official. The former are found in many cases in frontier territories or territories close to their kin-states, which has on occasion facilitated access to mass media in their own language. During recent decades, however, the development of satellite television (and more recently television on Internet) has placed a varied television provision in these languages within the reach of these populations. On the contrary, in other cases we find minorities that have provided themselves with their own television broadcasts, on occasion arising from, or specifically directed to their own community. There is a very wide range amongst the latter, extending from those with several channels that broadcast 24 hours a day in that language to those which are only present for some minutes a week. Finally, we find others that have not reached this medium.

In Table 1 we can see the different RML classified according to their access to television. It can be observed from the table that 10 linguistic minorities, which represent a third of the speakers of RML, have a considerable television provision in their language (more than 1,000 hours a year). Another 8 minorities (with approximately 3% of the speakers) have access to provision that is appreciably lower, in some cases only a few minutes a week. Another 58 minorities have access, at least by satellite⁴, to television broadcasts in their language but proceeding

⁴ We refer here exclusively to access to Free To Air (FTA) satellite signals. Access through payment systems (satellite, cable or ADSL) would have to be added to these.

from kin-states; this represents somewhat less than a third of the population of 55 million mentioned above. Finally, there are 24 communities that do not have available television in their own languages, which, in terms of the population affected, represent the remaining third. It is worth underlining the fact that all the minorities that have a kin-state have access to one or more broadcasts in their language.⁵

Table 1: Television in Regional Minority Languages in Europe

<p>Regional minority linguistic communities with their own broadcasts</p>
<p><i>More than 1,000 hours of broadcasts annually</i></p>
<p>Catalan (Spain and France), Galician (Spain), Basque (Spain and France), Welsh (United Kingdom), Frisian (Netherlands), Luxembourgish (Luxembourg), Swedish (Finland), Irish (Ireland), Scottish Gaelic (United Kingdom), Italian (Slovenia)</p>
<p><i>Less than 1,000 hours of broadcasts annually</i></p>
<p>Friulian (Italy), Finnish (Sweden), Breton (France), Corsican (France), Ladin (Italy), Sorbian (Germany), Saami (Sweden), Saami (Finland)</p>
<p>Regional minority linguistic communities without their own broadcasts but with access to television by satellite in their language</p>
<p>German (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), Turkish (Bulgaria Greece and Romania), Russian (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria), Romanian (Hungary), Ukrainian (Latvia, Poland and Romania), Bulgarian (Greece), Portuguese (Spain), Polish (Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania), Serbian (Hungary and Romania), Greek (Italy), Dutch (France), Hungarian (Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), Czech (Austria), Macedonian (Bulgaria and Greece), Slovak (Austria, Czech Republic and Hungary), Catalan (Italy), Luxembourgish (France), Albanian (Greece and Italy), Slovenian (Austria, Italy and Hungary), Croatian (Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Slovenia), Armenian (Bulgaria), Belorussian (Latvia and Poland), Danish (Germany), Irish (United Kingdom), Lithuanian (Poland)</p>
<p>Regional minority linguistic communities without access to television broadcasts in their language</p>
<p>Occitan (France), Low Saxon (Netherlands), Sardinian (Italy), Walachian (Greece), Romani (Slovakia), Kashubian (Poland), Romani (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Slovenia), Corsican (Italy), Asturian (Spain), Franco-provencal (France and Italy), Occitan (Italy and Spain), Ruthenian/Lemkish (Poland), Faroe (Denmark), Tatar (Romania and Bulgaria), Mirandese (Portugal), Saterlandic (Germany), Cornish (United Kingdom)</p>

⁵ The possibility of access by terrestrial signal or satellite to television broadcasts of kin-states does not necessarily mean their use, as this, according to the Euromosaic III report, “depends on a series of factors such as identity, the ‘standardness’ of the language spoken by the minority, and the political relations between countries”.

1.2 Immigrant Minority Languages (IML)

If we do not have precise data available on the number of speakers in the case of the RML of the European Union, the lack of information is even greater in the case of the languages of immigration. For reasons of various types analysed by other authors (Extra and Yagmur, 2004) statistics on the languages of immigrants are not available in a large part of the member states. Some partial works mention millions of speakers of Arabic and Turkish, for example, in countries like France and Germany (Grimes, 1992). But even in these cases the data is based on estimations and very diverse sources, not on census counts. We can however approach the dimensions of the phenomenon if we bear in mind that the number of “immigrants” – defined as persons born in a country different from the one where they currently reside – in the whole of the European Union is 40 million (United Nations, 2006). Obviously, the country of birth is not a precise indicator of the language(s) employed, but it helps to pose the question of the presence of languages that are different from the official languages within the member states.

With respect to television broadcasts in languages of the immigration in the EU, we find ourselves facing a rich panorama. An analysis that we made using a methodology already employed in 2004 (Amezaga, 2007), which enables us to count the presence of satellite television signals⁶ that can be received in the member states of the EU, shows that while the official languages in the Union tend to concentrate their broadcasts in those states where they enjoy such status (through payment bouquets operated in national markets), the languages of immigration tend to broadcast on Free To Air (FTA) signals that go beyond state frontiers, reaching a large part of the European geography, and can be received without any subscription. Thus, out of the group of 2,972 FTA signals that could be received in the EU in October 2008, almost half (1,379) were in languages without any official recognition in the EU countries, and involved more than thirty different languages.

Some of these languages without official recognition, and not even considered in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, have a significant number of broadcasts. Thus for example, as can be observed in Table 2, Arabic is the language with the most FTA broadcasts accessible from the EU, with 800 signals, even ahead of English, with 535 FTA signals. If we count the total of both FTA and encrypted signals, the two interchange their positions, but Arabic continues to have an important presence (994 in Arabic against 2,009 in English). Turkish also has a considerable presence, in both FTA and encrypted signals.⁷

⁶ It must be noted that we counted television signals broadcast on satellite, not channels. It is important to take this into account, since many channels are broadcast in more than one single satellite.

⁷ The presence of a number of broadcasts in Arabic in Europe is the result of both the existence of broadcasts directed to the speakers of this language in the continent and the range of broadcasts mainly directed at the countries of the North of Africa but that reach, openly, a large part of South and Central Europe.

Table 2: Satellite Television Signals in the European Union

Language	Encrypt	FTA	Total	Language	Encrypt	FTA	Total
English	1.474	535	2.009	Latvian	12	1	13
Arabic	164	800	964	Azerbaijan	1	11	12
German	326	275	601	Estonian	10	1	11
French	396	144	540	Macedonian	-	10	10
Italian	240	226	466	Luxemburgesish	-	9	9
Turkish	195	237	432	Tamil	6	2	8
Spanish	252	131	383	Pashto	3	5	8
Romanian	255	67	322	Korean	1	5	6
Hungarian	260	12	272	Japanese	4	2	6
Polish	222	27	249	Sinhala	-	6	6
Russian	153	87	240	Bengali	2	4	6
Portuguese	136	41	177	Philippine	5	-	5
Swedish	139	6	145	Malayalam	2	3	5
Bulgarian	77	42	119	Armenian	1	4	5
Czech	100	11	111	Georgian	2	3	5
Norwegian	103	3	106	Galician	1	3	4
Dutch	77	13	90	Punjabi	3	-	3
S e r b o - Croatian	69	20	89	Hebrew	3	-	3
Danish	79	1	80	Gujarati	3	-	3
Greek	50	19	69	Breton	3	-	3
Ukrainian	18	44	62	Maltese	3	-	3
Finnish	56	1	57	Thai	-	2	2
Albanian	47	8	55	Icelandic	2		2
Hindi	39	12	51	Belarussian	-	2	2
Farsi	1	44	45	Welsh	-	2	2
Slovak	33	10	43	Basque	-	2	2
Chinese	12	13	25	Kazakh	-	2	2
Kurdish	1	22	23	Vietnamese	-	1	1
Croatian	17	5	22	Uzbek	-	1	1
Urdu	14	5	19	Somali	-	1	1
Slovenian	11	7	18	Nepali	-	1	1
Lithuanian	14	1	15	Amharic	-	1	1
Catalan	7	8	15	Frisian	-	1	1
Bosnian	8	5	13	Gaelic	-	1	1

We cannot estimate what percentage of the immigrant population can have access to broadcasts in their language, since as mentioned we do not have statistics available on speakers in the EU. On the other hand, we do know that the only Sub-Saharan language present in Europe, via satellite television, is Amharic, and that the majority of immigrants from Central and Southern Africa therefore do not have access – at least by satellite – to television broadcasts in their language. We also know that in other economically rich regions with a high level of immigration, such as the United States or Australia, more than 90% of the people whose domestic language is different from English have access to broadcasts in their language through this medium (Amezaga, 2007). Nor can we estimate the real access to these broadcasts by the immigrant population that is technically able to do so, but numerous studies on the uses of television and other media amongst this population suggest that this is a regular and very widespread use (*ibid.*). By way of example, the Indian channel ZEE TV has 150,000 subscriptions in Europe and over one million regular spectators in the continent (Chalaby, 2005). Finally, market tendencies also seem to confirm the importance of this use: according to our own data, the number of satellite television signals that can be received in the EU has grown by 72% over the last four years in the case of the languages of immigration, against a figure of 33% for the official languages or those protected by the European Charter. And, obviously, to all of this we must add the presence of television broadcasts by cable and, increasingly, by Internet.

2. Minority Language Speakers and Multiculturalism

The policies developed in the European nation-states have meant the establishment of dominant official languages in their territories. The need to combine the fact of belonging to a minority linguistic group with life in a linguistically different society results, in many cases, in situations of bilingualism or multilingualism. In the case of linguistic minorities with television broadcasts in their language, we frequently find persons who can choose to use television in one language or another. If, besides, we take account of the fact that language is a basic factor for constructing the public space (Cormack, 1998), we can then say that bilingual or multilingual persons belonging to linguistic minorities move in a simultaneous manner, to the extent that they can accede to mass media in different public spaces. In some cases, we can even speak of persons who share their identity as members of a minority linguistic and cultural community with their identity as members of a majority political community structured around the nation-state. This latter situation is found in those states where nationalisation policies have enabled both identities to be compatible and not necessarily set against each other; something which is not always the case.

In the case of immigrant populations, we frequently find ourselves facing a similar situation. When immigrants establish themselves in a host country whose official language is different from their own, one of the first tasks to be undertaken is precisely to learn the language (Beacco, 2008). This requirement derives not only from the need to speak the language so as to have access to the labour market or for social integration, but even from the direct pressure of states, pressure that not even the policies of multiculturalism have managed to prevent (Kymlicka, 2001).⁸

⁸ In this era when there is so much talk of multiculturalism, we can even speak of a growing pressure

This reality is translated into the fact, well documented in both audience studies on television in RML and the bibliography on television uses amongst immigrants, that these bilingual populations consume television in both their own language and the dominant language, on condition, obviously enough, that they have access to both.

This raises a fundamental question for understanding the role that television can play in maintaining and developing minority languages, that is: what are the motives for speakers of minority languages opting to consume television in their language or in the dominant language?

Obviously, one of the reasons for opting for one language or the other is found in the inequalities that might exist between the two, relating as much to their status (presence in the media provision, prestige, context, etc.) as to their corpus (linguistic competence). In some cases, however, the Strict Preference Condition is observed, that is, a situation of equality of conditions between the languages where the speakers of the minority language tend to use this more than the majority language. This condition, presented by Grin and Vaillancourt (Grin & Vaillancourt, 1999) as the most important condition for any policy of linguistic revitalization, is found by Moring in the television uses of Swedish speakers in Finland, for example (Moring, 2007).

One of the reasons that might appear in the cases where this condition is fulfilled is, without doubt, the question of identity. That is, linguistic behavior as something linked to the feeling of belonging to a community and to the process of collective identity construction. Not altogether satisfied with this idea, and based on study of the Turkish and Kurdish communities in Great Britain, Aksoy (Aksoy, 2006) reaches the conclusion that, at least in the case of immigrants, the choice between media of the host country or media of their country of origin takes place more in terms of complementarity than of identity. Immigrants are persons above all else, not identities. And due to their multilingual and multicultural character, they have more options when choosing one media or another, and they use them in an essentially pragmatic way. They thus seek on each television channel what the others do not offer, rather than opting for one channel or another on the basis of a sentiment of belonging to this or that community.

Leaving aside the question of identity⁹, we believe that the proposal to view immigrants as persons equipped with greater linguistic and cultural resources, who turn to one medium or another according to their different interests, is something that can be taken up by scholars of RML. Especially in those cases where the speakers of such a language are also speakers of the majority language, this analysis of Aksoy's reminds us time and again of something that, however obvious, is perhaps

within the EU for the immigrants to learn the official language, as is shown in the report of Extramiana and Avermaet (Extramiana 2008). Nowadays, 23 of the 27 member states of the EU, through different formulas, require immigrants to know the official language in order to obtain nationality and recognition of other rights (*ibid* and our own research).

⁹ This is a quite complex issue that we cannot address here. In fact, the importance of identity practices varies from one social context to another. For example, it is not the same experience to belong to a stigmatized social group and to belong to a positively-stereotyped one. Our own research on Basque diaspora's use of television broadcast in Latin America shows us that in a context where belonging to that group is socially well-stereotyped (as Basques, generally speaking, are in Latin America), watching the Basque channel is clearly linked to the construction of such an identity which could be helpful to negotiate the position of the immigrants within the host society (Amezaga 2006).

not always taken into account: their simultaneous presence in two different communication spaces. Thus, it sometimes seems to be forgotten that Welsh speakers, for example, are also English speakers; or that one cannot speak of a Basque speaking community and a Spanish speaking community in mutually exclusive terms, given that the members of the former are also included in the latter. And that they move between both spaces in a way that is similar to how immigrants move in host countries. In this respect, we consider that the approaches to the duality of the immigrant condition are in part applicable to the speakers of RML.

3. Television as a Geolinguistic Region

In our opinion, one of the most interesting contributions made by the studies on transnational communication is the concept, proposed in 1996 by Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham (Sinclair et al., 1996), of geolinguistic regions. By geolinguistic region these authors understand those communication spaces that are discontinuous within the territory but united by the use of one language, thanks to the support of media like satellite television. Initially applied to this medium, but nowadays useful for understanding the formation of networked communication spaces, geolinguistic regions begin to be formed when the mass media are able to supersede the barrier of contiguous geographical space. Thus, in the same way that the television that operated in the framework of nation-states contributed to the formation of national communication spaces, cross-border broadcasts are contributing to the creation of transnational spaces, defined by the language used by agents (broadcasters and viewers) situated in very different areas of the planet. We find one example in the case of the Latinos in the U.S.A.: analyzing the development of Spanish-language television in the United States, Sinclair even speaks of how this medium, directed to a Spanish-speaking public and treating it as a “whole”, has to a large degree contributed to the construction of the Latino community as a diasporic one. But in this case one is dealing with a “diaspora in reverse”, since unlike the original meaning of this term (people of the same origin dispersed over the territory), we are facing people with different national origins (Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Salvadorans, Mexicans, etc.) who are increasingly coming to share the same sense of forming a Latino community (Sinclair, 2005).

Considered from the viewpoint of the RML, what is interesting about the notion of geolinguistic regions is the idea of a minority linguistic space dispersed within a majority linguistic space, but united by television. It is true that one of the most notable differences between RML and those of immigration is precisely that the former are concentrated in limited physical territories, while the latter extend over the whole continent or even the planet. But it is no less true that in a context of interior migratory movements and of growing urbanization, many of the speakers of the RML tend to move towards the cities, abandoning the rural space in which their language enjoys greater (although limited) hegemony and submerging themselves in the environment of the dominant majority language. Thus, for example, 45% of the speakers of Gaelic live in areas removed from the traditional Gaelic regions of the Scottish Highlands and Islands (Cormack, 2005). This phenomenon of dispersion of the speakers of the minority language amongst the speakers of the majority language

is even more pronounced in cases where a recovery of the former is taking place, as a result of policies of language normalization.

The Basque case offers us a clear example of the dispersion of the speakers of the minority language within a dominant linguistic space. According to the latest official data, the number of speakers of the Basque language in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country has grown by more than 70% over the last 25 years, rising from 22% to 38% of the population aged over 5 years (Eustat, 2009). Similarly, the number of people capable not of speaking but of understanding the language (who therefore form part, theoretically at least, of the target of televisions in Basque) has risen from 12% to 17% in the same period, 1981-2006. This notable recovery is due, in great measure, to the efforts made in the field of education, in addition to the contribution of teaching adults (Arana et al., 2007). Nonetheless, one of the challenges posed by this growth is precisely the fact that many of the new Basque-speakers (that is, those people who, while having a different mother tongue, are able to speak in Basque and who make up 45% of the total number of speakers) live in Spanish-speaking contexts (or French-speaking, in the case of the Northern Basque Country). This is due not only to their greater presence in urban areas, where the presence of Basque had been declining in the previous century, but also in many cases to their origin, in families or immediate social contexts that are monolingual Spanish-speaking. Hence, as a result of the introduction of Basque into families and contexts where it has not been present for generations, or where it has never been present at all (as in the case of the immigrant population proceeding from Spain and France, over a third of the total population of the Basque Country today), 44% of Basque-speakers live in linguistically mixed homes (Amezaga & Arana, 2009).

However, this important growth in the number of people capable of speaking or understanding Basque is not translated into a similar increase in the use of the language, which is also increasing but at a much slower rhythm. It is precisely this gap that leads many people concerned with linguistic normalization to wonder how the mass media might promote its use, given that over the long term a knowledge of the language, however basic, seems more or less assured through the educational system.

The importance that television might have in integrating these dispersed speakers in the Basque-speaking linguistic community, or even in articulating that same linguistic community, is still far from being empirically confirmed. However, the hypothesis that this medium can help in the integration of dispersed speakers – both in questions concerning the status of the language (identity, prestige, etc.) and those others relating to the corpus (development of language competence) – does not seem farfetched. This possibility seems even greater in an age when the tendency towards individual television consumption is growing.¹⁰

In the case of the languages of immigration, Gillespie (Gillespie, 1995) has studied how television is used by immigrant families for linguistic transmission. We found a similar use when analyzing the Maghreb community in the Basque Country (Amezaga, 2001).

¹⁰ According to studies by the Office of Audiovisual Communication Studies [Gabinete de Estudios de la Comunicación Audiovisual (GECA)], in the Spanish state the spectator is alone for 44% of the time when the television is switched on, while the spectator is in the company of another person for 36% of the time; television is watched by three or more persons for only 20% of the time (Segura, 2009).

In any case, from our point of view, the concept of geolinguistic regions, if applied to the reality of the RMLs, seems extremely interesting when focusing on the role of television in communities that are becoming increasingly immersed in contexts of urbanization, of atomization of everyday life and, in some cases, of incorporation of new speakers proceeding not from family transmission but from that of school.

4. Some Questions to Observe in the Future

As we have observed, the growing interest in the communication, culture and identity practices of immigrants in rich countries, along with other factors, is questioning the models centered on the national imaginary that reduce the experience of people space based upon a single identity, culture and language. Thus, multiculturalism and multilingualism are beginning to be accepted as descriptive of a reality that affects not only immigrants but also societies as a whole. To the extent that the discourse of linguistic and cultural homogeneity as a natural state has been the great enemy of the linguistic minorities in the continent, the overcoming of this discourse opens up new perspectives for those minorities. Put differently, the visibility of the multilingual reality of immigrants is making the reality of the RML more visible. The currents of opinion that view multilingualism as an advantage in the face of monolingualism thus act in favor of minority languages, by casting aside the idea, historically rooted in the nation-state's discourse of monolingualism, that they are obstacles to both personal development and social integration.

Nonetheless, that very break-up of the national imaginary might place in question the models on which some of the policies promoting RML have largely been based, as well as the work of many of the analysts who have used them. We should not forget that, in numerous cases, the way in which linguistic minorities have reacted, and have managed to survive, before the pressure of homogenization derived from the nation-state has been, precisely, by acting as a mirror in face of the latter (Letamendia, 2000), and claiming for themselves the same exclusivity within the territory that the state language was trying to bring under its dominion. The very concept of "communication space" applied to the minority languages, proposed in the 1980s (Gifreu, 1989 and 1996), is based on that national ideology. It sets out from the supposition that the minority language should become the majority language in its territory, and that diglossia should work in favor of what was until then the minority language. To this end, it poses the need of constructing, through actions in the field of language and especially in that of the mass media and cultural industries, a space where the language to be promoted should be, at the very least, preferential. That is only possible, or at least has only been possible up until now, to the extent that a minimum of political, economic and social structures are available that act on the territory, regulating and influencing the communication practices developed within it. And that is because unlike many of the IML – those that have a territory and a communication space where they are hegemonic, such as the country of origin, for example – a large part of the RML have as their sole habitat the territory where they have been established for centuries, and where they have been minoritized. This, without doubt, is a fundamental difference not only between the IML and the RML, but also between minority languages that have a space of hegemony and those that do

not, whether they are considered RML or IML. By this we are not trying to say that the important issue is to preserve the languages in themselves, at least in a specific territory, while forgetting what is really important: the linguistic communities. What we want to emphasize is that in the context in which we live today, the fact of having or not having one's own physically close or distant communication space – where the language in question is hegemonic – can be of great importance for the reproduction of communities that speak a language and/or identify with it.

How then should the discourses on multiculturalism be linked or transculturalism with the demand for the minority language to have its own communication space? One possible path would be to consider that, in the information age, communication spaces are increasingly supported by the media. And that it would be possible to think of fundamentally media-based communication spaces where the minority languages were hegemonic; always on the supposition that the participants in that space should also interact in other communication spaces, in the same way that the immigrant constantly moves between different spaces. This leads us to a question that we cannot elucidate here, which is the relationship between language, territory and power. Indeed, it would be hazardous on our part to suggest that the future of the linguistic minorities might depend more than anything else on the creation of a space of media communication, and abandon the idea that a minimum of control is needed over the mechanisms and structures that help to create or destroy that media space. That is, a minimum of possibilities for the development of cultural politics. This implies a certain political structuring, which will depend on other questions such as political identity or the attitude to diversity of the nation-state itself.

The paradigm according to which immigrants must choose between their identity -or cultural-linguistic practice- and that of the host country does not seem appropriate for describing reality; both should be understood in terms of complementarity and opportunity. Similarly it could also be proposed that the same complementarity works in favor of the RML. That is, if instead of considering participation in the minority communication space as incompatible with participation in other spaces, it were considered in terms of opportunity, this space could perhaps be opened up to those who until now have observed it from outside. Given that those already participating in it – the speakers of the minority language – already in fact live in that duality.

Finally, in relation to those linguistic communities that share a language with other communities or with kin-states, we must ask how the construction of transnational communication spaces is affecting their relation with those other communities or states. Analyzing the media directed at immigrants and diasporas, Jean Chalaby (Chalaby, 2009) describes three phases in their evolution: a first phase of *local migrant media*, where there is a prevalence of the media of immigrant communities themselves; a second phase, that of the *transnational migrant media*, where we find media broadcast (initially by satellite) from the countries of origin towards immigrant groups; and a third phase, that of the *trans-local migrant media*, where transnational diffusion gives rise to transnational audiences, and in which immigrants receive and consume the same broadcasts that are produced for the countries of origin, received at a distance thanks to the new technologies. Following this parallel, and still lacking comparative studies in this field, we must ask whether in communities that have linguistic relatives in other territories or even in kin-states, and that

have historically had their own media available, there will be a greater approach to the media proceeding from the kin-states; or even towards a greater interaction with other communities that speak the same language, thanks to the construction of transnational communication spaces. Following the same logic, we should ask, in the case of groups whose languages are RML in some cases and IML in others (such as the Russians in the Baltic republics, where historically established Russian communities coincide with different waves of immigrants), to what point those communication spaces can render the distinction between IML and RML redundant for a large part of the languages today protected by the European Charter for Regional and Minority languages.

In any case, there is little doubt that the deep and rapid transformations that are taking place in the field of culture and communication make it urgent to reflect on the way that globalization can affect minority languages, both IML and RML.

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