LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

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We are experiencing a digital revolution which is expected to change the way we live, work, interact, and speak. While technology is advancing for a handful of languages, most of those spoken today are in clear risk of digital extinction as pointed out by (Kornai, 2013). It is not only a globalized Internet that constitutes a threat. The new technologies are invading all aspects of our lives. We'll soon be talking to our machines like we talk to our neighbours. Must we change our language so that machines can understand us? In an era of omnipresent digital technologies, digital diglossia severely compromises the survival of thousands of languages. Bilingual speakers of a minority language and a global language, rather than miss the digital train, opt for the larger language that gives them access to more digital content, a wider audience, or more developed technologies. This affects the young particularly, and increases the linguistic gap between generations. On the other hand, technology has proven to be very effective for preservation and revitalization of endangered languages. In Linguapax Review issue, we look at the particular relation between technology and language diversity. In it, Juan Carlos Moreno Cabrera offers an interesting insight into how language diversity has driven the evolution of writing, the very basic language technology, while Daniel Pimienta sheds some light on the multilingualism of the Internet. The key issue, as raised by Tunde Adegbola, is whether "modern Information Communication technologies will promote or work against linguistic diversity". As he notes, this will "depend on the way they are employed". With them, Steven Bird, Subhashish Panigrahi, Roland Kuhn and Eddie Avila share with us their strategies for effective digital activism, "from the individual to the collective, from the areal to the global, from the native speaker to the language-agnostic technologist".

References

Kornai A (2013) Digital Language Death. PLoS ONE 8(10): e77056. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0077056

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