Chapter 60

Corporate Linguistic Rights through the Prism of Company Linguistic Identity Capital

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to draw the attention of the readers to the linguistic side of modern organizations. Taking into account modern companies that consist of workers and stakeholders representing different cultures and speaking various languages, the notion of linguistic liberties within a corporate setting requires deeper consideration. To study corporate linguistic rights and their implications, the concept of company linguistic identity capital has been created and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Since corporate human capital encompasses employees and stakeholders of different cultures, identities and communication styles, the place of work in the twenty-first century is not only dynamic but also challenging. To describe this complexity, the notion of super-diversity can be used since it takes into account the interplay of various variables and their dynamic mutual influence, such as the country of origin (including ethnicity, national language, religion, regional and local identity, cultural values and practises), migration channel (with notions such as, gendered flows, social networks, labor market niches), legal status, educational background and the access to employment (Ver-

tovec, 2007). The above-mentioned elements play an important role in creating and sustaining such a corporate atmosphere that gives all the workers and stakeholders not only the right to express their views but also the opportunity to possess equal access to corporate information. At the same time, these factors may lead to communication interference and information shortage. Thus, the growing role of diversified organizational human capital makes the discussion on human rights a crucial element of any corporate policy. The importance of profit organizations in the current debate on human rights is also connected with the globalization of international trade and investment which has reduced the economic power of governments and, simultaneously, increased the

role of transnational companies (Ewing, 2004). Moreover, modern economics is characterized by very intense human flows, with migration on the international level being the determinant not only of macro-agents of economic reality but also of the meso- and micro-ones. For example, immigration as such shapes the situation of host countries as far as their work capacity and competitiveness are concerned. At the more individual level, such factors as low economic growth and high unemployment may lead to the hostility to strangers (Lenhart & Münz, 1999). Consequently, the antipathy to newcomers is visible not only in the so-called individual determinants but also in the broader context characteristics, such as the economic development of the host country (Wallace, 1999). Thus, modern companies, being an active link between the state and the individual, should opt for such corporate policies that would enable every participant in the economic life to benefit from diversity and, in the long run, lead to the sustainable development of national economies.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As has already been stated, modern corporations play an important role in the international human rights system; they are the subject of human freedom but, at the same time, they have the obligation to respect individual liberties (Decaux, 2005). Taking the second aspect into account, human rights in the corporate setting are, among other things, connected with such areas of business as oil, mining, apparel, footwear, toys, pharmaceutics and technology. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the companies dealing in agriculture and farming, especially the ones producing coffee, tea, bananas and cocoa for global users (Ewing, 2004). Although basic human rights are advocated by all types of organizations, the importance of certain liberties depends on the type of activities related to the company profile. For example, the

corporations dealing in extractive sectors focus more on security rights, whereas most pharmaceutical corporations stress the importance of health issues (OHCHR Briefing Paper, 2004). As far as terminology is concerned, human rights within the corporate environment are often discussed under the term corporate social responsibility and are included in the codes of conduct. The codes of conduct "were created and emerged internationally, providing principles for business that promote benchmarking issues for human rights, workplace safety, transparency, environmental management, consumer protection and fighting corruption" (OECD, 2011, p. 14). It should be stressed that Corporate Social Responsibility is often linked with corporate image and identity. For example, Reputation Management is strongly correlated with human rights since violating CSR often leads to reputational and financial losses. Consequently, investors tend to buy stocks in the companies being CSR-oriented. Moreover, market positioning reflects the relation between the clientele's attitude to the brand and key CSR actions since customers are more likely to purchase the products and services of the companies being CRS-oriented. As far as the process of employee recruitment and retention is concerned, the corporations executing CSR policy are more apt to absorb a better workforce than the ones that do not include corporate responsibility in their mission statements. Taking lawsuit avoidance into account, proper CSR actions lower the risk of taking part in litigation (Driscoll, 2005). Thus, respecting corporate human rights not only improves the working conditions of those interested but also reduces the costs and simultaneously increases the profits of companies (Ewing, 2004). Apart from the above-mentioned corporate social responsibility, companies also respect corporate accountability. In some works, the division between corporate responsibility and corporate accountability is stressed, although in others these terms are used interchangeably. The main difference between these two notions is that corporate responsibility

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