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LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

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EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE PLANNING

An explicit language policy presupposes language planning which is sensitive to a range of pressures, social, political, economic and ideological, pressures which are generated internally within a state and externally, namely from foreign sources. There are essentially three inter-related types of language planning: **corpus planning** (to do with language form and structure), **status planning** (to do with the uses to which a language is put in various domains, and the prestige attached to the relevant languages) and **acquisition planning** (the arrangements made, generally by a Ministry of Education, for the learning of languages). Key issues are then choice of official state languages, the status of "national" languages, which languages are to be used as the medium of instruction and which, if any, foreign languages are to be obligatory. In this paper we concentrate on some aspects of status planning and acquisition planning, especially educational language planning.

The languages to be planned for and learned relate to an **ethnic** dimension, the maintenance of cultural traditions and authenticity, the continuity of languages from one generation to the next, the use of **local** "community" languages (in different states referred to as "heritage" languages or "autochthonous" languages). The child in school also needs to be equipped for **societal** language functions, to use the languages of the local media and state media, to be prepared for adult working life and **state**-regulated functions (for example, dealings with local authorities on matters of employment, taxation). Finally, educational language planning involves equipping the citizen for a range of **supra-statal or trans-national** functions, learning foreign languages for purposes of contact with the outside world, these languages being connected with significant geopolitical interests or representing a cultural tradition which is of value for personal enrichment.

Educational language planning may require that the student learns three or even more languages. In an integrated Europe it is imperative that many children become high level multilinguals. Many minority children are already multilingual, despite educational language policies which have often not been conducive to it. What is needed now is a policy which makes **both minority and majority** children high level multilinguals. First I will discuss one of the most important factors which have prevented the adoption of educational policies leading towards multilingualism, namely the ideology of monolingual naivety/stupidity. Then I will present some educational models which seem to succeed in helping children to become high level multilinguals.

MONOLINGUAL STUPIDITY, the ideology of the "homogenous" nation-state: is monolingualism normal, desirable and necessary - or plain stupid?

The mythical homogenous nation-state (a state with one nation and one language which does not exist anywhere in the world) is connected with the ideology of monolingual naivety/stupidity. Monolingual stupidity is characterized

by three myths. These claim or imply that monolingualism at both the **individual** level and the **societal** level is **normal, desirable and unavoidable**. I will present these myths and criticize ("dissect") them.

Myth 1: **MONOLINGUALISM IS NORMAL**

The myth

According to the myth, the homogenous nation-state is an ideal formation, (one of) the most highly developed way(s) of social organisation of peoples' lives. Since the homogenous nation-state only has one nation, it is also ideally monolingual because there is only one ethnic group. This means that only one official language is accepted at a **societal** level. The myth also believes that most states and people are monolingual.

At an **individual** level it means that a monolingual individual is seen as the norm (this has been especially prevalent in testing). Of course she may learn foreign languages at school or when she visits other countries, but not in the family or the neighbourhood.

Critique

In fact monolingualism is **abnormal**, if we by "normal" mean the way most countries and people are. There are some 7,000 languages in the world, but only around 200 states (both "language" and "state" are difficult to define and the exact numbers are unclear). There are extremely few countries in the world without national minorities, and every **state** in the world has speakers of more than one language. Here is one possible scenario: Even if there were an extreme **fragmentation** into many more states, e.g. if the number of present states were to double, and if an **accelerated linguistic genocide** were to occur (if, for instance, 10 additional languages were to die every year), we would need to wait until at least the year 2600 before it could be "normal" for states to be **factually monolingual** (i.e. to be "real" nation-states, with one ethnic group and one language only in each state).

Despite the wealth of languages, more than half of the world's states are **officially monolingual**. English is (one of) the official language(s) in almost 60 of these states. The number of languages used as media in primary education is probably much less than 500. Speakers of more than 6,500 languages thus have to become minimally bilingual, at least to some degree, in order to have any formal education, to read (anything else than the Bible and maybe a few primary text books), to receive any public services, to participate in the political life in their country, etc. Even if some of the remaining official or semi-official languages have many speakers (like Chinese, English, Arabic, Russian, Hindi, Spanish, Japanese, etc), there are still more multilingual than monolingual **individuals** in the world.

Thus claiming that monolingualism is normal is absurd, both at state level and at individual level.

Myth 2: **MONOLINGUALISM IS DESIRABLE**

The myth

It is believed that monolingualism is efficient and economical and connected with and leading to rich and powerful **societies**. **Individuals** who are monolingual, can use more time than multilinguals for learning the one language really thoroughly and for learning other things, and therefore they are believed to become better in their own language and to achieve better in school. Besides, it is still also believed (by the proponents of monolingualism) that bi- or multilingualism is harmful to a child: it confuses, takes time, prevents the child from learning any language properly.

Critique

At a **societal** level monolingualism is inefficient and uneconomic. It represents dangerous reductionism. There is no **causal** connection between multilingualism and poverty (even if there in many cases may be a correlational one). A monolingual state oppresses the linguistic human rights of the minorities and can often commit linguistic genocide.

It prevents political participation of many of its citizens and an integration of the society. It often ruins trust and cooperation between different ethnic groups, it often breeds arrogance, ethnocentrism, racism, ethnicism and linguisticism in the majority group and it may breed bitterness, hatred and colonised consciousness in minority groups. It increases waste of talent, knowledge and experience, and prevents "free movement of goods, services, people and capital" (the goals of the European Union/Community).

A monolingual **individual** experiences many drawbacks, compared to a high level bi- or multilingual (i.e. someone who knows two or more languages well). A **high level bilingual** does **BETTER than** a (comparable) **monolingual** on the following types of test:

- several types of subtest of general intelligence
- cognitive flexibility
- divergent thinking
- creativity
- sensitivity to feedback cues
- sensitivity to and interpretation of non-verbal messages
- metalinguistic awareness
- learning of further languages (faster and often better)

(for evidence, see e.g. Cummins 1984, Skutnabb-Kangas 1984).

3. Myth 3: **MONOLINGUALISM IS UNAVOIDABLE**

The myth

According to the myth, bilingualism is at an **individual** level seen as a (negative) temporary phase on the way from monolingualism in one language to monolingualism in another language. According to this view, the first generation Latvian in Siberia (or Canberra) knows her mother tongue, and learns a little Russian (or English). Her children know Latvian as children, but the language of the new environment, Russian (English), becomes her main language as an adult. The third generation Latvian in Siberia/Canberra maybe knows some words of the grandparents' language, but is fairly monolingual for all practical purposes, and in the fourth generation nothing is left of the Latvian language. This is seen as an unavoidable (and positive) development.

At a **societal** level, it is believed that modernisation and development necessarily lead to the disappearance of "lesser used languages" - having several languages is seen as uneconomical, traditional and as preventing development. Linguistic assimilation of groups is mostly seen as voluntary, good for the individual and necessary for the group if they want to participate in the economic and political life of the new environment/country. Maintaining the old language is a nice romantic dream. You must choose.

Critique

In fact many minorities have kept or tried to keep their old language while learning the new one. Latvians in Siberia and Canberra have certainly tried. There is **no need for either-or solutions** (*either* you "cling to" your old language, and it means you don't learn the new one, *or* you learn the new and it inevitably means losing the old). **Both-and is better for the individual and for the society**. Both are enriched by bilingualism, intellectually, culturally, economically, politically. It is perfectly possible to become a high-level bilingual or multilingual if the educational language policy is geared towards it, as is shown in the last section of this paper.

Synthesis: monolingualism is an illness

At an **individual** level monolingualism is a result of a wrong educational policy and of linguisticism. The patients, i.e. those individuals who suffer from monolingual stupidity, are in need of care, just like AIDS patients.

At a **societal** level monolingualism is a social construction which is unmodern, underdeveloped and primitive. It might have been seen as a necessary concomitant to the development of the first phases of a Western-type nation-state (and even that is doubtful), but now it is definitely outmoded and dangerous. It prevents political and economic global development, justice, equity, cooperation and democracy. Like cholera or leprosy, monolingualism is an illness which should be eradicated as soon as possible. It is dangerous for peace in the world.

The positive aspect about this illness is, however, that it is curable.

Are the Baltic languages majority languages? Is Russian in the Baltics a minority language?

Before we look at different educational models, most of which differentiate between models for majority language speakers and models for minority language speakers, we have to ask ourselves what the status of the Baltic languages (here: Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian) and the Russian language are. Majorities and minorities are mostly defined in terms of numbers, but also in terms of their relative power. In my view, during several years to come, the Russian language in the Baltics must during a transitional period be treated as a majority language for all educational purposes (including, organizing immersion programmes, see later), whereas the Baltic languages must for educational purposes be treated as minority languages, in need of protection. **Russian is thus a majorized minority language** (a minority language in terms of numbers, but with the power of a majority language), whereas **the Baltic languages are minorized majority languages** (majority languages, in need of the protection usually necessary for threatened minority languages). This should be borne in mind when reflecting on the applicability of the models described below.

HOW TO MAKE RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS MULTILINGUAL

"TRADITIONAL PROGRAMMES"

If monolingualism is negative for the patients/victims and for the society as a whole, how can educational language planning help in getting rid of it? How should education be organised, so as to make **everybody** bilingual or multilingual at a high level? I will mention a few recent experiments which have succeeded in this, and draw conclusions on the basis of them about principles which seem important to follow if high level multilingualism is the educational goal. Before going on to the experiments, I will sketch a common development often preceding the experiments (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, 1984, 1988, 1990, and articles in Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins (eds) 1988 for details).

The educational starting point in a monolingually oriented country is usually **monolingual instruction through the majority language to both majorities** (who stay monolingual) **and minorities** (who at a group level do not become high level bilinguals).

In the next phase where big societal changes have occurred, **majorities** are still taught **through the medium of their own languages**, with teaching of foreign languages as subjects (and they stay fairly monolingual), but **(some) minorities** have succeeded in getting **maintenance or language shelter programmes**, where they are taught through the medium of their own languages, at least during the first six years, often longer, with good teaching of the majority language as a second language, given by bilingual teachers (and they become high level bilinguals).

IMMERSION PROGRAMMES

But if we are interested in how **majority** children become bilingual, we have to go further. The only educational programmes where this has been achieved on a broad basis, are the Canadian immersion programmes (see Lambert & Tucker 1972, Swain & Lapkin 1982, Genesee 1985; see also Rannut 1992 for an Estonian-language presentation of them). An **immersion programme** is a programme where majority language children with a high status mother tongue voluntarily choose to be instructed in a minority language, in classes with majority children only, and with a bilingual teacher who understands what the children say in their mother tongue, but speaks L2 only. There are more than 400,000 children in Canada who have gone through immersion programmes or are in them now - they are the

best studied language learning programmes on a large scale in the world.

Results from early immersion programmes, the most common model, show that the children's **mother tongue competence** initially is not on a par with English-speaking children in English-medium programmes, but as soon as they start getting instruction in English (from 3rd grade), they catch up, and are at the latest in grade 5 at the national norm level in English or higher. Their **school achievement** is often higher than the mean in Canada. The **competence in French** comes up to a native or near-native level in listening and reading comprehension. In productive French skills, speaking and especially writing, the children make more mistakes, are not as fluent as native speakers and generally lag behind. Despite this, their productive French is at a much higher level than anything reached by good foreign language teaching. They are especially good in situations where they can themselves choose the topic and the level of formality of the discourse. **The attitudes** towards French language and culture and towards francophones in Canada are positive, but maybe not quite as positive as many people might hope or expect.

The majority of immersion programmes are still in French, but there are programmes in other languages too, especially in Ukrainian and Spanish but also some in Hebrew, German, Chinese and Arabic. Some trilingual programmes also exist (see Genesee 1986 and Taylor 1992). Immersion programmes have spread from Canada to the United States and, increasingly, also to other countries (Australia, Catalunya, the Basque country, Finland, Holland, Hungary, Germany, and some countries (e.g. Switzerland, Estonia) are investigating the possibilities of starting up.

Some of the gaps in immersion programmes have to do with children having little (informal or formal) contact with other children (or indeed adults) speaking the target language as their native language. Immersion programmes have mostly been located in English-speaking schools, without any French-speakers. Some of the difficulties in producing fully "correct" French may also be due to the fact that French has not been taught as a subject, it has only functioned as the medium of education. Both these factors, in addition to a belief in the importance of cross-lingual and cross-cultural contacts for attitude formation, have influenced the development of the European school model and partly also the two-way programmes in the United States. I will only present the European schools (based on Hugo Baetens Beardsmore, see bibliography), without discussing other experimental models (two-way programmes, alternate-days programmes, early reading, kohanga reo - see bibliography), but conclude on general principles drawn on the basis of several of them.

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

In the European Schools an attempt is made to combine good sides from maintenance programmes for minorities and immersion programmes for majorities, and to avoid the few weaknesses which these models may have.

The first European School, K-12 (Kindergarten through grade 12), was founded in Brussels in 1958 for children of European Community officials. There are presently 9 European Schools in 6 countries and the tenth will start in the autumn of 1993. There are 12-13,000 pupils. Everybody who works for the European Community can have their children in these schools: cleaners, ministers, janitors, secretaries, interpreters. If there is space, local children can attend: one of the schools has many children of former miners, another one has immigrant steel-workers' children. European Community officials' children have no fees whereas local children pay a nominal fee.

The goal is to "guarantee the development of the child's first language and cultural identity" and to "promote a European identity through instruction for all pupils in at least 2 languages, compulsory learning of a 3rd as a subject matter, and options regarding a 4th language" (Baetens Beardsmore 1993, 8), to "eliminate prejudice and nationalistic antagonisms", and "use multilingualism as a tool for both scholastic achievement and harmonious ethnolinguistic relations" (ibid.)

All or most official languages of the European Community (EC) function as the principal medium of education initially in their own subsections in every school. Normally a child attends a subsection for her own mother tongue, i.e. Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese or Spanish. There are some children from other language groups, and these attend the subsection the language of which they know best. Most Arabic-speakers are for instance in the French language subsection.

The **medium of education** is initially the child's mother tongue (= the language of the subsection), and **all** cognitively and linguistically demanding decontextualised subjects continue to be taught through the medium of the mother tongue (first language, L1) at least up to grade 8.

All lessons/periods last for 30 minutes in grades 1-2 and 45 minutes from grade 3 upwards. The **mother tongue** is taught as a subject 16 periods per week (hereafter 16p) in the first two grades, 9p in grades 3-5, 5p in grades 6-7 and 4p in grades 8-12. The **second language** (L2) also starts as a subject in grade 1 and has 5p in grades 1-7, 4p in grade 8 and 3p in grades 9-12. The pupils can choose between English, French or German as their L2 (meaning the children in these three subsections only have a choice between two languages whereas all the other children have three choices). All the teachers are native speakers of the languages which they teach, but the absolute majority of teachers are bi- or multilingual - this also applies to the other staff in the schools: the adults must be good models of multilingualism. Every child thus has adults in the school who speak their language.

From grade 3 a couple of **subjects are taught in mixed groups** and they may be taught **through the medium of L2**. The subjects chosen are always cognitively and linguistically less demanding and context-embedded, e.g. 1p physical education and 3p "European Hours" with excursions, planning of parties etc. "European Hours" could, for instance, be taught through French to 5 Italian, 3 Danish, 6 Greek, 7 German and 5 Portuguese children, and through German to 6 English, 5 French, 4 Spanish, 2 Greek and 3 German children. The medium of education is mostly an L2 for all the children, but there may also be some children present for whom the language is an L1.

From grade 6 the amount taught through L2 increases, so that e.g. music (2p), arts (2p), physical education (3p) and complementary activities (2p - handicrafts, computers, photography, electronics, typing, painting, etc) are taught in mixed groups. But **until grade 8 all subjects taught in mixed groups through the medium of L2 are cognitively and linguistically less demanding and context-embedded**.

In grade 8 a **3rd language** (L3) starts as a subject, with 4p. (in grades 9-12 3p), and the pupils can choose between every subsection's language: all are offered. If, for instance, a Greek and a Danish child have become friends, having been taught physical education together through French since grade 3, they can choose to study each other's languages from grade 8.

In **grade 8 L2 becomes the medium of instruction also in one or two cognitively demanding decontextualised subjects** (e.g. history, 3p), **often in mixed groups but without mother tongue speakers** of the medium of instruction. The teachers use multilingual dictionaries or word lists and ensure understanding in several ways. The subject matter has often been discussed earlier through the medium of the respective mother tongues of the pupils so the concepts are familiar.

In **grades 9-10**, physical education, history and geography are taught through L2, the other compulsory subjects (there are not many) through L1. Of the elective courses, only Latin and classical Greek are taught through L1, everything else through L2. The 4th language (L4) starts as an elective subject in grade 9, with 4p (in grades 11-12 3p).

In **grades 11-12**, only L1 and L2 are compulsory while L3 and L4 are optional. Philosophy and mathematics are taught through L1, all other compulsory subjects through L2 (or L3). Of the elective subjects, Latin, classical Greek, physics, chemistry, biology and advanced courses (including one in L1 as a subject) are taught through L1, everything else through L2 (or L3 or even L4). In grades 9-12, those elective courses which are not prescribed as courses to be taught through the medium of L1, are taught in mixed groups, and the language of instruction can thus be a pupil's L2 or L3 or L4, or, as it may sometimes be, L1.

The **results** seem to show that the children learn at least **two languages at a native level, both receptively and productively, both orally and in writing**. They are supposed to be able to take content matter tests in both L1 and L2 at a native level, and many take some subjects through L2 in the European Baccalaureate. Some even do it in their L3. Many of the children reach high levels in L3, and some even in L4. The results in the final exams are above medium, with, for instance, 95,5% of the 1,002 candidates passing the European Baccalaureate in 1992 (see Baetens Beardsmore 1993, table 8).

When immersion pupils reach a near-native level in L2-reception, European School pupils seem to reach a native level in L2-reception AND production, in addition to, for many, high levels in a 3rd and sometimes also a 4th language. Research on attitudes also shows preliminary positive results.

NECESSARY PRINCIPLES

Finally a synthesis. It is, of course, possible to make many different kinds of cautionary generalisations. It seems to me, though, that the principles which have to a large extent been followed in most of those experiments which have reached the best results (i.e. high levels of bi- or multilingualism, a fair chance of success in relation to school achievement, and positive intercultural attitudes), could be formulated as 8 recommendations:

1. Support (= use as the main medium of education, at least during the first 8 years) the language which is least likely to develop up to a high formal level. This is for all minority children their own mother tongue.

Majority children can be taught through the medium of a minority language. (Here the European Schools are an exception, because they teach also majority children initially through the medium of their mother tongues (e.g. Italian for Italian-speaking children in Italy).

2. In most experiments, the children are initially grouped together with children with the same L1. Mixed groups are not positive initially, and certainly not in cognitively demanding decontextualised subjects. (Exception: two-way programmes (50% minority, 50% majority children, all taught through the medium of the minority language initially, later through both), but this may be a relevant factor in accounting for the Spanish-speaking children's sometimes relatively less impressive gains in both languages, compared to English-speaking children in the same programmes. The mere presence of majority language children in the same classroom may be to overwhelming for minority children, despite the minority language being the medium of education).

3. ALL children are to become high level bilinguals, not only minority children. This seems to be especially important in contexts where majority and minority children are mixed.

4. All children have to be equalized vis-a-vis their knowledge of the language of instruction and the status of their mother tongues. Nice phrases about the worth of everybody's mother tongue, the value of interculturalism, etc, do not help, unless they are followed up in how the schools are organised. Equality has to show in the demands made on the children's and the teachers' competencies in the different languages involved, so that everybody has the same demands (both minority and majority children and teachers must be or become bi- or multilingual). Equality has to show in the place the languages are accorded on the schedules and in further education, in testing and evaluation, in characters given for the languages, in the physical environment (signs, forms, letters, the school's languages of administration, the languages of meetings, assemblies, etc), in the status and salaries of the teachers, in their working conditions, career patterns, etc.

It is possible to equalize the children vis-a-vis their knowledge of the language of instruction in several different ways:

A All children know the language of instruction (maintenance programmes, European Schools initially)

B No children know the language of instruction or everybody is in the process of learning it (immersion programmes, European Schools in certain subjects in a later phase)

C All children alternate between "knowing" and "not knowing" the language of instruction (two-way programmes in a later phase; alternate-days-programmes (50% minority and 50% majority children, the medium of education alternates daily)

5. All teachers have to be bi- or multilingual. Thus they can be good models for the children, and support them (through comparing and contrasting and being metalinguistically aware) in language learning. Every child in a school has to be able to talk to an adult with the same native language.

This demand is often experienced as extremely threatening by majority group teachers, many of whom are not

bilingual. Of course all minority group teachers are not high level bilinguals either. But it is often **less** important that the teacher's competence in a majority language is at top level, for instance in relation to pronunciation, because all children have ample opportunities to hear and read native models of a majority language outside the school, whereas many of them do NOT have the same opportunities to hear/read native minority language models. High levels of competence in a minority language is thus more important for a teacher than high levels of competence in a majority language.

6. Foreign languages should be taught through the medium of the children's mother tongue and/or by teachers who know the children's mother tongue. No teaching in foreign languages as subjects should be given through the medium of **other** foreign languages (for instance, Turkish children in Germany should not be taught English through the medium of German, but in Turkish).

7. All children must study both L1 and L2 as compulsory subjects through 1-12. Both languages have to be studied in ways which reflect what they are for the children: mother tongues, or second or foreign languages. Many minority children are forced to study a majority language, their L2, as if it was their L1.

8. Both languages have to be used as media of education in some phase of the children's education, but the progression seems to be different for minority and majority children.

For MAJORITY CHILDREN the **mother tongue** must function as the medium of education at least in some cognitively demanding, decontextualized subjects, at least in grades 8-12, possibly even earlier.

MAJORITY CHILDREN can be taught **through the medium of L2** at least in some (or even all or almost all) cognitively **less** demanding context-embedded subjects from the very beginning, and L2 can also be the medium of education, at least partially, in cognitively demanding decontextualized subjects, at least in grades 8-12.

For MINORITY CHILDREN the **mother tongue** must function as the medium of education in all subjects initially. At least some subjects must be taught through L1 all the way, up to grade 12, but these subjects may vary. It seems that the following development functions well:

- transfer from the known to the unknown

- transfer from teaching in a language to teaching through the medium of that language

- transfer from teaching through the medium of L2 in cognitively less demanding, context-embedded subjects, to teaching through the medium of L2 in cognitively demanding decontextualized subjects. The progression in the European Schools for minority children seems close to ideal:

The progression IN RELATION TO THE MOTHER TONGUE is as follows:

1. **All subjects** are taught **through the medium of the mother tongue** during the first 2 years.

2. **All important cognitively demanding decontextualized subjects** are taught **through the medium of the mother tongue** during the first 7 years.

3. There is **less** teaching **through the medium of the mother tongue** in grades 8-10, and again **more** teaching **through the medium of the mother tongue** in grades 11-12, especially in the most demanding subjects, in order to ensure that the students have understood them thoroughly.

4. **The mother tongue** is taught as a **subject throughout the schooling**, from 1-12

The progression IN RELATION TO THE SECOND LANGUAGE is as follows:

1. **The second language** is taught as a **subject throughout the schooling**, from 1-12

2. **The second language** becomes **medium of education** already in grade 3, but only in **cognitively less demanding context-embedded subjects**. The teaching can be given in mixed groups, but ideally together with other children for whom the language is also an L2.

3. Teaching in **cognitively demanding decontextualized subjects** only starts **through the medium of L2** when the children have been taught that language **as a subject for 7 years** (grades 1-7) and have been taught **through the medium of that language in cognitively less demanding context-embedded subjects for 5 years** (grades 3-7). Children should not be taught demanding decontextualized subjects through L2 with other children for whom the language of instruction is their L1, before grade 8. In European Schools this is mostly not done even in grades 9-12 in compulsory subjects, only in elective courses.

It is equally important for both Russian speakers (and other minority language speakers in the Baltics) and speakers of the Baltic languages to become high level multilinguals. It is a perfectly feasible goal.

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