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## PROMOTION OF LINGUISTIC TOLERANCE AND DEVELOPMENT<sup>i</sup>

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This paper addresses four main questions:

1. **Have Western states (or, for that matter, any states) seriously supported linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights during this century?** My answer is that most of them have not. They have, on the contrary, tried to prevent the acceptance of legally binding international conventions and charters on linguistic rights. Many have developed educational systems which attempt linguistic and cultural genocide in relation to minorities and indigenous peoples. The paper will provide examples, and discuss the gap between realities and "posture" policy, including the myths that Western states have created of themselves as guardians of human rights in the world.
2. **Why have states not supported linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights?** My answer outlines the ideology of monolingual reductionism/stupidity/naivety, including the (false) belief that granting linguistic and cultural rights leads to the disintegration of a state. It also outlines the role of language in reproducing unequal power relationships.
3. **Should states support linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights for egoistic reasons, i.e. in the interest of their own elites, not only for human rights reasons?** Absence of economic and social rights, "the widespread unemployment and poverty" between the two "World" Wars is seen as having led to "the political upheavals and the emergence of totalitarian regimes" (Eide 1995, 29-30). Likewise, absence of linguistic and cultural rights can be regarded as an effective way of promoting "ethnic" conflict and violence. Granting linguistic and cultural human rights is a step towards avoiding "ethnic" conflict, disintegration of (some) states and anarchy, where the rights of even the elites are severely curtailed because of civil war-like conditions.
4. **Is "promotion of linguistic tolerance and development" the best way to support linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights?** It depends on how these concepts are defined

and whose definitions of them are validated. "Promotion of tolerance" seems, for instance, in a Council of Europe interpretation, to mean "counteracting the intolerance of majority populations in Europe and Europeanised countries towards some of their fellow citizens". The majority populations in western countries are to promote "linguistic tolerance" by tolerating linguistic and cultural diversity and "difference" and the existence of other groups and smaller languages. "Development" in "promoting linguistic development" can be understood in the same sense as in "the developed countries" and "the developing countries". This is the familiar evolutionary paradigm, where it is clear who constitutes the norm, and where it is only some who need to develop (to undergo structural adjustment programmes) because they are still deficient in relation to the norm. Does "promoting linguistic development" imply that we also have already developed languages which are the norm for the aspiring developing languages (or developing dialects or vernaculars), which are then promised more important roles in education and administration once their "linguistic development" has been "promoted" enough?

In my view it is high time to start a major reversal of the questions and start asking who should tolerate whom, and who or what is developed towards what goals. I will ask other types of questions, including the following:

For how long are we multilingual and multicultural individuals and groups going to tolerate the monolingual, monocultural reductionism that characterizes the ideologies of "nation states" and homogenising elites? For how long are we going to tolerate that the power-holders have appropriated a monopoly to define the world for us in ways which try to homogenise diversity? How long are we going to tolerate the linguistic and cultural genocide that dominant groups are committing, not only through economic and political structural policies but also, and increasingly, through the consciousness industry (education, mass media, religions)? How long are we going to tolerate that our languages are being stigmatized as backward and primitive, tribal and traditional, as vernaculars and patois and dialects (rather than languages), as not adapted to post-modern technological information societies? How long are we going to tolerate that the richness of all our non-material resources, our norms and traditions, family patterns and institutions, our ways of living, our languages and cultures, our cultural capital, are being invalidated by the power-holders, made invisible and stigmatised as handicaps and thus made non-convertible into other resources and into positions of political power, rather than made visible and celebrated, validated as valuable resources and convertible into other resources and into

positions of political power. How long are we going to to tolerate the widening gaps between the ever more grim realities, with linguistic and cultural genocide for us and monolingual stupidity for many majorities, and the posture politics, the nice phrases about toleration and celebration of diversity? For how long are the poor in the world (both in the North and, especially, in the South) going to tolerate the excessive exploitation which is called development, help and aid? How long are we going to tolerate the accelerating destruction of these precious non-material resources of our planet, our languages and cultures? And - the most important question - how long can the planet tolerate the destruction of diversity that is falsely called "development"?

Maybe what we rather need is to learn how to **stop** being tolerant and silent? Maybe oppressed groups rather need a UN Year of Intolerance or Zero Tolerance?

## 1. Introduction - what is tolerance? What is development?

In October 1993 at the Vienna Summit, the Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe reacted to "...the increase in acts of violence, notably against migrants and people of immigrant origin..." (from the Preamble to Appendix III), by adopting a Declaration and a Plan of Action on combating Racism, Xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Intolerance. It seems probable that the "promotion of tolerance", in the title given to my paper by the organisers of this conference, is the same tolerance which Council of Europe, UNESCO etc resolutions refer to. "Tolerance" here seems to mean "counteracting the intolerance of majority populations in Europe and Europeanised countries towards some of their fellow citizens". The majority populations in western countries are thus pleaded in the UN/UNESCO International Year of Tolerance to show tolerance towards diversity and difference.

Even if some of the resolutions and texts mention mutuality and the need for **everybody** to be tolerant, after reading the bulk of them, one is left with a strong impression that those who should be "tolerated" are those who are "different" in relation to an unspecified mainstream, namely minorities" (national, immigrant and refugee) and indigenous peoples. Those who are asked to do this tolerating are the majority populations, the so called "mainstream".

In parallel, in "promoting linguistic tolerance", speakers of dominant languages are then presumably asked to tolerate linguistic diversity, the existence of smaller languages and maybe also the ways the speakers of other languages (and other varieties) use the dominant languages, in ways which do not completely tally with how the speakers of these dominant languages (or rather the formally educated middle class sections) themselves use them. Again, it is the linguistically dominant groups who are asked to tolerate that the dominated languages and groups using them exist, and are different from the dominant ones.

What is "development" and "promoting development" or "promoting linguistic development" in the title? Is it the development reflected in the terms "the developed countries" and "the developing countries", where the evolutionary paradigm, with the West on top, is the set scene, where only **some** are presented as needing to develop or be developed because they are still "deficient" in relation to the norm, and where this norm is clear: it is the "modern", technological, post-industrial information society, overconsuming, ruining the environment, producing and trading in symbols; a norm which is environmentally impossible and unsustainable for planet in any

case - but this fact and the angst in the face of the solid threat we pose to our own future can then be comfortably deconstructed and "melt in the air" in the best post-modernist fashion. Is it the promotion of the kind of development which demands structural adjustment programmes to be pressed down on African and Eastern European countries by the World Bank and the IMF, programmes which do not work and make the poor still poorer?<sup>iii</sup> Does it imply from a language point of view, that we also have "developed languages" and "developing languages" (or developing dialects or vernaculars), and that we by "promoting linguistic development" can develop these developing languages so that they might be able to fulfil more important roles in education and administration? Is it the "already developed", standardized languages which are the norm for these aspiring languages - i.e. does a dialect need to have an army, state borders and the codified standards that usually accompany these, in order to be considered a developed language? Does development imply from language users' point of view, that "promotion of linguistic development" means spreading the linguistic homogenisation of the world that has been sold together with the subtractive spread of English (e.g. Phillipson 1992), at the cost of the development of other languages? Does it mean the spread of the prevailing monolingualism of the "real" English-speaking Brits or Americans or Australians or the monolingualism of the "real" monolingual French or Germans? Do we all have to become monolinguals (with a sprinkling of Japanese or other languages, good for trade, learned in school), in order to become linguistically developed? Do we all have to "suffer from monolingual stupidity" in order to be considered linguistically developed, instead of being "blessed with multilingual brains"<sup>iv</sup>? In my view it is high time to start properly reversing the questions and start asking who should tolerate whom or what, and who or what should be developed, towards which goals. I will take a few examples of the reversal. A research report, called "Culture of tolerance and silence" (1992) tells about peasant women in Giza, 20 km from Cairo in Egypt. Many of the women have been married off at the age of 9 or 10. They have many miscarriages and bear many children. They are afraid that the husband will take another wife unless they produce enough children. They labour in the fields and the house from early morning til late in the evening, and they tolerate these conditions in silence.<sup>v</sup> The report discusses how to support the women in **overcoming** the "culture of tolerance and silence" which is theirs. Maybe the women rather need to learn how to **stop** being tolerant and silent? Maybe these women, and other oppressed groups, rather need a UN Year of Intolerance or Zero Tolerance? Exactly the same conclusion is reached by Anees Jung

in her books about women in South Asia.

The Sámi are the indigenous peoples in northern Scandinavia and Russia, so called Lapps in colonial language. A Sámi friend, Liv Østmo, once talked about the culture of tolerance. She described the situation of the ignorance, ethnocentrism and often unintended racism that majority group representatives often display towards the Sámi. She said that she is tired of always having to be the tolerant teacher, patiently trying to develop some awareness in the majority representatives, always needing to smile and to try and explain to the clumsy intruder, stepping on her toes, that this person really is standing on the toes of the indigenous person, and if the majority representative tried to imagine herself in the same situation, she might understand that it hurts, and might consider moving a bit - instead of Liv pushing the intruder and screaming: "get off my toes, you bloody bastard!", as she **sometimes** feels like doing. Liv claims that she does not have as much tolerance left as she used to - her people have tolerated racism long enough for some to get accustomed to it, and she thinks they need to unlearn toleration, and to start treating the majority population as adults who should be responsible for their own learning rather than rely on indigenous peoples and minorities continuing to be their tolerant teachers, patiently waiting for a little development, decade after decade.

What has been promoted especially by some of the powerful Western states so far during this century has been their own linguistic and cultural lack of awareness, their intolerance of linguistic and cultural diversity, and a conscious underdevelopment and killing off of the world's linguistic and cultural resources and diversity. So far, those representing the bulk of this underdeveloped diversity have been much too patient and tolerant of the ignorance, of the attempts at linguistic and cultural genocide and its concomitant economic and political consequences. What we need during this UN Year of Tolerance is Zero Tolerance of the prevailing ideologies of monolingual reductionism, the illness that many powerful majority populations suffer from<sup>vi</sup>.

We also need to develop two kinds of support system. One support system is for these patients who suffer from monolingual reductionism to diversify, to get rid of their illness. Monolingual stupidity or monolingual naivety or monolingual reductionism is one of the most dangerous illnesses on our planet, dangerous for world peace<sup>vii</sup>. The only reconciliatory fact about this illness is that it is curable. Education can play a major role in the cure. The second support system needed is to protect and support those who are healthy, the multilinguals, so that we are not infected by the illness virus; so that we can

stay healthy and can see clearly that we are the healthy ones. Legally binding guarantees in international and national laws, protecting basic linguistic human rights, especially in education, are part of this support system. In what follows I will give a few examples to support my diagnosis.

## 2. Have Western states seriously supported linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights during this century?

My answer is that most of them have not. They have, on the contrary, tried to prevent the acceptance of legally binding international conventions and charters on linguistic rights. Many have developed educational systems which attempt linguistic and cultural genocide in relation to minorities and indigenous peoples. I shall provide a few examples, and discuss the gap between realities and "posture" policy, including the myths that Western states have created of themselves as guardians of human rights in the world.

My husband Robert Phillipson and I have studied a range of relevant international covenants and national constitutions in an attempt to gauge to what extent these legal measures provide support for dominated languages (1987, 1994). To do so, we devised a sociolinguistic instrument, a grid on which some of the important dimensions of language rights can be captured (Figure 1)<sup>viii</sup>.

Figure 1 approximately here

The first dimension represented in our grid on the vertical axis, is **degree of overtness**, on which one can mark the extent to which laws or covenants are explicit and detailed in relation to the rights of minority languages in education. The second dimension, represented on the horizontal axis, is **degree of promotion**, on which the extent to which a language is **prohibited, tolerated or actively promoted** can be plotted. We see both dimensions as continua. We are here concerned exclusively with the clauses on **language rights in education**, not the **general** clauses about language rights.

We plotted on to the grid a range of clauses on language rights in education from *national constitutions* and from *proposals for constitutional change*, and some **international and European conventions and decrees**, but only instruments which are legally binding on the governments. Mere recommendations have been excluded.

I will mention two conclusions. Firstly, many national

**constitutions** provide **more** protection to minority languages in education than the international covenants. Conversely, none of the **international covenants** overtly **prohibits** the use of any minority languages, as some national constitutions do.

Secondly, the **general clauses** of many covenants which relate to the exercise of all human rights do contain non-discrimination prescriptions on the basis of many characteristics (typically race, gender, and religion), AND language. But when we move to the **education clauses** of those covenants which are legally binding, in many cases language is **not even mentioned** under the **education clauses**.

The five UN conventions (A, B, C, D and E) thus have **general provisions** which can be seen as **overt non-discrimination prescription** (A, B, C) or even **overt permission**, mentioning language specifically (D, E). These rights are minimally negative rights, with a possibility of seeing some of them as leaning towards a vague acceptance of some positive rights<sup>ix</sup>. But the **education clauses** are no stronger than **half-covert assimilation-oriented toleration**. Minorities are allowed to use their languages in private, but not in state-financed schools. The same is also true of the other examples from regional covenants.

To sum up, despite many many nice phrases about linguistic rights in **non-binding** declarations and resolutions, there are hardly even negative linguistic rights and certainly no positive rights in international or European covenants which **are legally binding**, and where there is a complaint procedure. The policy on educational linguistic human rights seems to be a posture policy, without much content.

Since schools are one of the important sites where the colonization of the mind takes place and where language- and culture-based identities are negotiated and partly reproduced, **educational linguistic rights** are central both for the reproduction and for the contestation of present power relations. One of the **basic linguistic human rights** of persons belonging to minorities is - or **should** be - to achieve high levels of bi- or multilingualism through education. Becoming at least bilingual is in many cases necessary for minorities to exercise other fundamental human rights.

But it is clear that what is needed for minority languages to be maintained over several generations in countries where obligatory education is enforced is **overt promotion of these languages in education**. My claim is that when everybody goes to school, **everything** else, even permission to use the languages, will lead to the virtual extinction of these languages within 2 to 4 generations from when the obligatory education was enforced.



Very few Western states have been willing to grant minorities legally binding rights, especially linguistic human rights, and especially in education, at the highest international level. All attempts so far to get overt promotion-oriented educational linguistic human rights accepted in international law have failed, meaning linguistic genocide is not prohibited. This is understandable, because linguistic genocide is a logical expression of the belief in the myth of a monolingual nation state and no states want to grant rights which they believe would lead to their own disintegration.

It is often the same states objecting to instruments for protecting minority languages. The victorious states in the First World War who imposed clauses on language-related minority rights on the losers in the Peace Treaties, refused to grant the same rights to minorities in their own countries. Efforts by many non-Western countries to accord minorities more protection, including linguistic rights, have been blocked by the "great" powers. When other countries, for instance Latvia (1922), Lithuania (1925) and Poland (1932, 1933, 1934), proposed universal minority protection within the framework of the League of Nations, the Supreme Council rejected all the drafts. The same European and Europeanised countries voted down Article 3 on linguistic genocide after the Second World War. In the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, several proposals were made to include minority rights, even educational linguistic rights (e.g. the right to "establish and maintain, out of an equitable proportion of public funds for the purpose, their schools and cultural institutions", proposed by the UN Division of Human Rights), but these were likewise voted down, the attacks being led by the Europeanised Latin American countries and, especially, by the USA (Mrs. Roosevelt declaring that the concept of minority rights was not of universal significance).

Article 27 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) still grants the best **binding** linguistic rights in international law<sup>x</sup> (see also note 9), but for instance Greece and Turkey have not signed it. Of the almost 120 States which **have** ratified CCPR, the United States and Haiti are the only ones who have **failed** to ratify the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which contains **some** linguistic and educational rights. Germany and Britain have not ratified its Optional Protocol which gives access to the complaint procedure. At the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) Copenhagen meeting on the Human Dimension in June 1990, France, Greece and Turkey did not go along with some far-reaching formulations for the benefit of minorities. When the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was

accepted (22 June 1992 - see **Contact Bulletin** 9:2, 1992), France, Turkey and the United Kingdom abstained (together with Cyprus and Turkey - Turkey is the country which by the most brutal legal means in the world tries to kill a minority language, Kurdish - see Skutnabb-Kangas & Bucak 1994), Greece voted against. These examples of the United States, Britain, France, Greece and Turkey often preventing or trying to prevent the granting of linguistic human rights has not prevented Britain, France and the United States from presenting themselves as protectors of human rights and minorities, and criticizing other countries for **their** treatment of minorities.

When Western countries discuss language rights in their own countries and in other countries, despite good intentions and worthy goals, there is a strong element of **Western hypocrisy** which I can only sum up here. It consists of at least the following elements:

**Firstly**, they hinder or try to hinder the acceptance of international conventions and charters on linguistic human rights when other countries propose them, as was shown above. Very few Western states have been willing to press for minority protection at the highest international level. Efforts by many non-Western countries to accord minorities more protection, including linguistic rights, have been blocked by the "great" powers (see Capotorti 1979).

**Secondly**, they demand from other countries that these grant minorities rights, especially linguistic human rights, which Western countries do not grant to minorities in their own countries. This was clear after the First World War and is now again clear in relation to both "aid policies" (see also Phillipson, this volume) and the post-communist countries. In the Peace Treaties at the conclusion of the First World War, the victorious states, among them France, Great Britain and the USA, imposed on the states that emerged from the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires, minority protection clauses so that the cultures and languages of the groups in the new multilingual states should be respected. The same principles did not apply in their own states, though a token gesture was made in a League of Nations' Assembly recommendation in 1922:

"The Committee expresses the hope that the States which are not bound by any legal obligations to the League with respect to minorities will nevertheless observe in the treatment of their own racial, religious or linguistic minorities at least as high a standard of justice and toleration as is required by any of the Treaties and by the regular action of the Council" (from Protection of Linguistic, Racial or Religious Minorities by the

League of Nations, 2nd edition, Document C.8.M.5 I.B.1, Minorities, Geneva, 1931, quoted in Andrýsek 1989, 20).

The League of Nations had the task of seeking to resolve any conflicts that should appear - and notably failed to do so. The treaties provided for the right of complaint to the League of Nations (which had a Minorities Secretariat), and the International Court of Justice. This right of appeal proved to be of limited value: whereas 204 complaints were filed in 1930-31, only 4 were in 1938-39 (Boudoin & Masse 1973, 19). United Nations efforts to protect minorities have also had limited impact (Capotorti 1979, Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1994), though much is now under way so as to, hopefully, change this picture. On the other hand history does seem to be repeating itself. In the 1990s fact-finding human rights missions are sent to Baltic countries. Council of Europe membership is being withheld from countries emerging from Soviet dominance on the grounds that the citizenship laws and language laws of the new states are in conflict with international human rights standards (e.g. Druviete 1995, Rannut 1995, Van der Stoel 1995; see also Rose & Maley 1994). This is hypocritical in so far as a country like France does not grant any rights to its linguistic minorities. Likewise, Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe, as is Greece, which is also in the European Community, despite blatant human rights abuses and language laws which are manifestly oppressive. Such countries are members of the "Western club" because of "vital" Western interests, military (membership of NATO), political and economic. **Thirdly**, the Western countries use different standards when defining minority groups in their own countries and in other countries. This is especially clear in relation to what is demanded in order to be defined and accepted as a minority to be included in the recent European minority or minority language instruments on the one hand, and what is demanded from, e.g., the Baltic states vis-a-vis post-WW2 Russian-speaking non-citizen immigrants, people these states call "aliens". The concepts "national minority" and "migrant" seem to be defined according to different standards, depending on which country is being referred to, when linguistic rights are to be granted. **Migrants** are usually explicitly excluded from entitlement. This is also the case in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Both **territorial** and **non-territorial groups** can enjoy linguistic rights under the Charter, if they are seen as **national minorities** and not migrants. Some non-territorial groups which have been present in **Western** countries for centuries are, however, not defined as national minorities, and are thus overlooked. For instance, the Roma ("Gypsies") who have

been in Sweden and Finland since at least the sixteenth century, and Finns who have resided in Sweden for an equivalent period (i.e. Finns other than those resident in the Torne valley who have been an indigenous border minority since 1809) are not credited with the status of national minorities to whom the rights of the European Charter should apply.

When it comes to **the Baltic states**, by contrast, a tenth of the time appears to be regarded as adequate for the creation of a national minority. Are post-1945 Russian speakers in Latvia supposed to enjoy more linguistic rights than groups who have been in Western countries ten times longer?

And **fourthly**, the Western countries create, implicitly and to some extent also explicitly, a **myth** that linguistic and other human rights **are** respected in the **West** and that the West therefore has the right to function as some sort of a human rights police force in other parts of the world. But there have been few if any fact-finding missions to Western countries to find out whether linguistic or educational human rights are in fact respected there. Western countries are in fact guilty of linguistic genocide in relation to most immigrant and several indigenous (see e.g. Fettes, in press for Canada) minorities. Many Western countries prevent indigenous peoples and national minorities from using their languages in schools.

In relation to linguistic rights in education, I claim that most Western countries and many other countries have organised their educational systems so that they attempt to commit linguistic and cultural genocide vis-a-vis most indigenous peoples and minorities. At the same time they prevent majorities (with the exception of elites) from achieving high levels of multilingualism. Thus they reproduce, **firstly**, the dominance of the majorities over minorities and the unequal division of structural power and material resources between them, and, **secondly**, the monolingual reductionism (or monolingual stupidity or naivety) of the majorities themselves.

### 3. Linguistic genocide in education

The education of both majorities and minorities in most European and Europeanized countries (and also elsewhere) functions today **in conflict** with **most** scientifically sound principles about how an education leading to high levels of multilingualism **should** be organized. This can also clearly be seen in the articles in the book **Multilingualism for All** (Skutnabb-Kangas (Ed.) 1995) where we have tried to sum up some of the generalisations that we fairly confidently can make about the principles which successful educational experiments have followed. It is

perfectly possible to organise education, so that, **firstly**, minorities or speakers of hitherto dominated languages get **overt support** for their own languages and become high level multilinguals; **secondly**, so that speakers of dominant languages get an opportunity of escaping the monolingual stupidity or monolingual naivety that most dominant majorities in the world still suffer from and, **thirdly**, so that the educational system respects linguistic human rights.

None of this is done today.

I claim that education participates in attempting and committing **linguistic genocide** in relation to many **minorities** and indigenous peoples and violates their linguistic human rights and that education today deprives most linguistic **majorities**, with the exception of elites, of the possibility of gaining the benefits associated with really high levels of multilingualism. How can the maybe provocative-sounding concept, linguistic genocide, be defined? When the United Nations did preparatory work for what later became the International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E 793, 1948), **linguistic and cultural genocide** were discussed alongside physical genocide, and were seen as serious crimes against humanity (see Capotorti 1979). When the Convention was accepted, Article 3, which covered linguistic and cultural genocide was voted down by 16 states (some of the "great powers"), and it is thus **not** included in the final Convention of 1948. But what remains, however, is **a definition of linguistic genocide**, which most states which were members of the UN in 1948 were prepared to accept. The "group" that is mentioned in the definition is a minority group or an indigenous people. Linguistic genocide is defined (in Art. 3, 1) as

"Prohibition of the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group".

I claim that the use of a minority or indigenous language can be prohibited overtly and directly or covertly, more indirectly. Turkey prohibits the use of the Kurdish language brutally and directly, by law and by killing, torturing, imprisoning, threatening and fining heavily people who want to use Kurdish. The use of a language can also be prohibited not with the help of physical force, but structurally and ideologically, indirectly, in much more sophisticated ways. The use of a minority language is **in fact** prohibited "in daily intercourse or in schools" every time there are minority children in day care centres and schools, but they are not taught by minority teachers who are legally allowed to use the language of the

minority children as the main medium of teaching and child care most of the time. This is the situation for most immigrant and refugee minority children in all Western European countries, in the US, Canada and Australia. Immigrant minority education in these countries is thus guilty of linguistic genocide, according to the UN definition. It is also the situation for most indigenous peoples in the world (even if there are a few exceptions). At the same time, the minorities whose languages are being killed, are being made to believe that it is not only necessary but beneficial for them, and often that they leave their languages behind them voluntarily because they want to modernise or join the so called mainstream.

The difference between the way that such countries as Turkey on the one hand and, for instance, Sweden, the United States or Australia on the other hand, commit linguistic genocide is that the **covert** linguistic genocide (the type that most Western states use in their educational systems) is more efficient, as compared with the **overt** version (as in Turkey). Within 2-4 generations, there are fewer speakers of most minority languages in these European or Europeanised countries than in more openly linguistic countries. Kurds in the Turkish part of Kurdistan where the Kurdish language has been forbidden by law since 1924, still know Kurdish well and resist linguistic oppression, whereas many former Spanish-speakers in the USA, Italian- or German-speakers in Australia (Clyne 1991) and Finnish-speakers in Sweden have assimilated and no longer know the language, at least not well. It is often more difficult to struggle against covert violence, against the colonization of the mind, where short-term "benefits" may obscure longer-term losses. The Western educational system is more efficient in committing linguistic genocide than countries which imprison and torture people for the crime of speaking their own language.

As long as indigenous and minority children are not granted basic linguistic human rights in education, including the right to mother tongue medium education during at least the whole of the primary education (6-8 years), linguistic genocide continues.

#### 4. Why have states not supported linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights?

In trying to understand why states have not supported linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights, I shall outline the ideology of monolingual reductionism, including the (false) belief that granting linguistic and cultural rights leads to the disintegration of a state<sup>xi</sup>. I shall also mention several aspects

of the role of language in reproducing unequal power relationships.

The mythical homogenous nation-state (a state with one nation and one language which probably does not exist anywhere in the world) is connected with and supported by the ideology of monolingual reductionism. Monolingual reductionism is characterized by several myths. Here four are presented. These claim or imply that monolingualism at both the **individual** level and the **societal** level is **normal, desirable, sufficient and unavoidable**. I shall 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. Therefore, it should be the normal goal for people. 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 claims 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 6-7,000 spoken languages in the world (and probably several thousand sign languages), 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.

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 spoken languages and all signers (sign language users) 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 processes 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 that it is causally connected with and leads 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. Therefore they are believed to become better in their own language and to achieve better in school. Besides, it is still also falsely believed (by many of 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. It is inefficient and uneconomic to prevent people from understanding important messages, from getting their education in a language they know thoroughly, from understanding the discourse necessary for democratic governance to take place, and to prevent them from using a language they know well. There is no **causal** connection between multilingualism and poverty (even if there in many cases may be a correlational one)<sup>xii</sup>. A monolingual state oppresses the linguistic human rights of a multilingual population, especially the minorities and can often commit linguistic genocide. It prevents political participation of many of its citizens and an integration of the society. "If social integration is taken to be a psychological state characterized by positive self/ingroup identity along with positive other/outgroup identification, then bilingualism, both at the individual and at the social levels, seems to promote social integration." (Mohanty, 1994, 163). A monolingual state ideology



often ruins trust and cooperation between different ethnic groups, it often breeds arrogance, ethnocentrism, racism, ethnicism and linguicism 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). Thus claiming that monolingualism is desirable is false and short-sighted, both at state level and at individual level.

### 3. Myth 3: **MONOLINGUALISM IS SUFFICIENT**<sup>xiii</sup>

#### *The myth*

According to the myth, bilingualism is at an **individual** level unnecessary, because what is being said in other languages, is basically the same as what is being said in one's own language ("or in a stronger form, that it is in fact irrelevant or could **BETTER** be expressed in one's own language" (Fettes 1995) - e.g. Macaulay's famous quotes are a good example of this attitude<sup>xiv</sup>). "The whole post-Enlightenment thrust has been to construct secure linguistic walls around the majority of the population, while assuring them that they are missing out of nothing" (Fettes 1995).

At a **societal** level, it is believed that "if there is anything of any importance being said in other languages, it is being said or translated in the so-called world languages, primarily French and English. This is a kind of monolingual escape clause" (Fettes 1995). If something has not been translated into English, it does not exist: it cannot be good or important since it has not been translated.

## *Critique*

The discussion about to what extent thoughts are influenced by the language they are expressed in is one of the most persistent and vast discussions in psycholinguistics and I will not enter it here. But it is at least clear that even if it were **possible** to say everything important that has been said in cultures represented by other languages in English, it has not been done and will not be done. And the importance of what is said/written in other languages is only one (and often not an important) factor when it is being decided what should be translated from what language/s into others. Commercial and other interests are decisive, and translation is often one way or strongly biased, from big languages to smaller ones. Thus claiming that monolingualism is sufficient is a false, socially constructed myth, both at state level and at individual level.

### 4. Myth 4: **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 immigrant in Siberia, Canberra or Vancouver 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/Vancouver 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, Canberra and Vancouver have certainly tried. There is **no need for subtractive learning of the new languages, at the cost of the old ones, or 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-and, meaning additive learning of new languages, 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.

Thus claiming that monolingualism is unavoidable is also a false, socially constructed myth, both at state level and at individual level.

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. Its promotion is dangerous for peace in the world. It juxtaposes in a dangerous and wrong way the factual and legitimate interests of diversity in civil society against the interests of the unity of the state, and the security and continuity demands of ethnically and linguistically defined identities against the security and political integrity demands of the state. **Both** are legitimate, and possible to combine (cf Waever, Buzan, Kelstrup & Lemaitre 1993, 19-47).

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

### 5. The role of language in reproducing unequal power relations

In my view, the denial of linguistic human rights and the linguistic and cultural genocide and forced assimilation through

education are being used by states for three main reasons, one more economic, two more political. The **economic** reason has to do with homogenization and standardisation being seen as necessary prerequisites for consumerism and large single "free" markets, as stated above. The first **political** reason is to try to mediate the conflict between the two important principles in international law, the principle of self-determination on the one hand and the principle of the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of present states on the other hand. By denying linguistic human rights and by committing linguistic and cultural genocide the states seem to hope that there will eventually be no groups left to demand self-determination because the states will be homogenized as a result of the forced assimilation. Language plays here a multiple role from a collective point of view.

The second **political** reason has to do with the changing forms of power and control. The role of language in exerting power and control worldwide is rapidly growing.

Language is a key dimension, along with class and gender, and partially replacing "race", in the complex processes of hierarchising groups in society and maintaining and reproducing patterns of dominance. **Language** is used increasingly, instead of or in addition to other means of control, in maintaining, legitimating, and reproducing an unequal division of both structural power and material resources between two groups, the A-team, the elites of the world, and the B-team, the dominated, the ordinary people. The haves and the have-nots are partly constructed with the help of language so that the way we label individuals and groups and talk about them, attribute characteristics to them, legitimates this unequal division of power and resources. Partly the haves and have-nots are also constructed on the basis of what **languages** they know or do not know (their linguistic capital), and on the basis of their **ethnic origins and culture**. These new -isms, linguistically argued racism, **linguicism** and culturally and ethnically argued racism, **ethnicism**, are akin to and in the process of replacing the old biologically argued racisms. The fate of languages is thus of utmost importance.

But the importance of language is increasing even more, because of several **changes** in the role that language plays. I will mention three of them.

There is a **change from colonizing the land, water and natural resources** of the dominated (as in colonialism proper) **and from colonizing the body** of the dominated (as in slavery, or, in Australia, anthropologists desecrating Aboriginal graveyards, or, in the United States today, scientists in the Human Genome Diversity Project intending, despite protests from indigenous

groups, to take tissue samples from individuals from 700 endangered indigenous societies, "searching for unique DNA sequences that may offer clues to genetically-caused diseases and to potentially lucrative cures" (Colchester 1995), **towards colonizing their mind, their consciousness** (Table 1).

Table 1 approximately here

This is done through language, through the ideological messages of the coloniser, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o so aptly observes about the role of education through the medium of the English language:

"Berlin of 1884 [when Africa was divided between the European empires, our remark] was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom. But where the former was visibly brutal, the latter was visibly gentle ... The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation. (Ngũgĩ, 1987, 9).

The same colonisation play is replayed at the moment with the scramble for Eastern Europe where market economy, democracy, human rights and the English language are marketed as The Panacea (see Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, in press). Secondly, there is a **change from physically punitive means of control** (sticks, physical violence or threat of it) **towards psychologically punitive means** (shame), **remunerative means** (carrots, benefits, rewards, cooption), **and ideological means** of control (colonizing the mind, the consciousness, of the dominated, through the dominant group's ideas) (Table 2).

Table 2 approximately here

Ideas are mainly mediated through language. **In order to enable the colonization of the mind, minorities have to learn the dominant official languages and everybody has to learn English.** Star wars are a primitive and more expensive means of control, as compared to the **consciousness industry** (mass media, religion, schools).

There is a **change from biologically argued racism towards culturally/ethnically argued racism (ethnicism) and linguistically argued racism (linguicism)**. LINGUICISM refers to "ideologies, structures and practises which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of

power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language"<sup>xv</sup>. People are no longer divided into those with more and those with less access to material resources and structural power, on the basis of their skin colour ("race") but on the basis of their ethnicity and culture, and on the basis of their language (their mother tongue, and their competence (or lack of competence) in official and/or "international" languages). Through **glorification**, the non-material resources of the dominant groups, including the dominant languages and cultures are presented as better adapted to meet the needs of "modern", technologically developed, democratic post-industrial information societies. They tend to be projected as the languages of modernity, science and technology, success, national "unity", and other positive features. The non-material resources of the **dominated** groups, including their languages and cultures, are **stigmatized** as being traditional, backward, insular and inferior, they are marginalized, deprived of resources for their development and use. In this way they are made invisible or socially constructed as handicaps rather than resources. The relationship between the two types of languages is **rationalized** so as to legitimate and reproduce the unequal access to power and resources and present those with more access as "helping" the others (Table 3).

Table 3 approximately here

The clearest example of this in the contemporary world is English. It has been projected in the colonial and post-colonial world so effectively that English is seen as linked to favourable characteristics, whereas indigenous languages are stigmatized. There are strong similarities in the ways and means by which English was established as the dominant language in the British isles and in North America and the process of consolidating English as the dominant language in the "Third World", in former colonies. In practice the language policies have underdeveloped indigenous languages, and the linguistic underdevelopment parallels and supports the economic and political underdevelopment. Culturally the hierarchisation of languages represents a tragic rejection of authentic local values and their substitution by values that are convenient for global incorporation externally and for social stratification internally. The subtractive language policy in education where the learning of the dominant language has been presented as necessarily leading to the loss or the underdevelopment of the children's mother tongue, instead of being multiply additive, fits the few to succeed and the many to fail.

Firstly, indigenous peoples and minority groups are, both structurally and through colonising their consciousness into believing in the ideology of monolingual reductionism, prevented from developing their languages as one of the most important bases for being and for reproducing themselves as distinct groups and therefore wanting to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (from the common Article 1 of the UN Covenants on Human Rights). Secondly, peoples are denied self-determination because it is claimed that they do not possess one of the prerequisites for nationhood, a language, they only speak a dialect or a vernacular. Thirdly, groups are invisibilised with the help of the labels used about them. And fourthly, people are made to believe that both this and the unequal division of power and material resources in general is fair, through colonising their consciousness, their mind, through the A-team's ideas, mediated through language.

6. Should states support linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights for egoistic reasons, i.e. in the interest of their own elites, not only for human rights reasons?

Linguistic and cultural identity are at the core of the cultures of most ethnic groups (Smolicz 1979). Threats towards these identities can have a very strong potential to mobilize groups. Still, in **human rights** contexts, **cultural** concerns, including linguistic concerns, have continued to be neglected, as opposed to economic and social concerns, and, especially, civil and political concerns. But there are strong reasons why states should in fact **support** linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights, for **egoistic** reasons (in the interest of their own elites), not only for human rights reasons. Absence of **economic and social rights** between the two "World" Wars, "the widespread unemployment and poverty", is seen by Asbjørn Eide (1995a, 29-30) from the UN Human Rights Commission as having led to "the political upheavals and the emergence of totalitarian regimes". This realization led, according to Eide, to a genuine interest in **securing** economic and social rights, not only for their own sake but also for the preservation of individual freedom and democracy. Eide claims that economic and social concerns are "equally important in the **present** time, in light of escalating unemployment, increasing poverty and growing disparities in income, not only in the Third World but also in Central and Eastern Europe and in the West" (ibid.). Economic and social concerns have therefore, predictably, received a lot of international attention, most recently at the Copenhagen

Social Summit (March 1995).

On the other hand, Eide claims that **cultural rights** have, both in human rights theory and in practice, **lacked** importance and received **little** attention. Still, today "ethnic conflict" and "ethnic tension" are seen as the **most important possible reasons for unrest, conflict and violence** in the world. Just as **absence** of economic and social rights in the period **between** the world wars **promoted** the emergence of totalitarian regimes, **absence or denial of linguistic and cultural rights** can **today** be regarded as an effective way of promoting "ethnic" conflict and violence. This has been acknowledged by many researchers from several fields. E.g. Jurek Smolicz, Australia, formulates it as follows:

"... attempts to artificially suppress minority languages through policies of assimilation, devaluation, reduction to a state of illiteracy, expulsion or genocide are not only degrading of human dignity and morally unacceptable, but they are also an invitation to separatism and an incitement to fragmentation into mini-states." (Smolicz 1986, 96)

**Granting** linguistic and cultural human rights is a step towards **avoiding** "ethnic" conflict, avoiding disintegration of (some) states and avoiding anarchy, where the rights of even the elites will be severely curtailed because of the increasingly civil war-like conditions, especially in inner cities.

7. Is "promotion of linguistic tolerance and development" the best way to support linguistic and cultural diversity and linguistic rights?

### **7.1 Rights...**

We must deconstruct the myth about nation states, and about the relationship between granting or not granting rights, and "ethnic" conflict. The gulf between the good intentions expressed in preambles of international and local documents and the de facto dearth of LHRs in the West can be understood as symptomatic of the tension between on the one hand a wish on the part of the (nation) state to secure (or give the impression of securing) human rights to all, including minorities, and on the other hand the (nation) state believing that granting human rights, especially linguistic and cultural human rights, to minorities, is decisive for reproducing these minorities as minorities, this leading to the disintegration of the state. Since it is not very likely that any state would voluntarily work towards its own disintegration, it is imperative to



dismantle this false myth. According to Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1990), "interethnic cooperation and solidarity" between groups with different languages, "peaceful coexistence", is "at least as common and persistent as interethnic conflicts"<sup>xvi</sup>.

An alternative to linguistic genocide is the granting of linguistic human rights. Granting linguistic rights to minorities **reduces** conflict potential, instead of creating it. I see **lack** of linguistic rights as one of the causal factors in certain conflicts, and linguistic affiliation as a rightful mobilizing factor in conflicts with multiple causes where power and resources are unevenly distributed along linguistic and ethnic lines. I see language-related issues as potential causes of conflict **only** in situations where groups **lack** linguistic rights **and/or** political/economic rights, and when at the same time the unequal distribution of political and/or economic power follows linguistic and ethnic lines. Denial of linguistic human rights is an efficient way of promoting conflict. This conflict **can** then take ethnically and linguistically defined or articulated **forms**.

When the Cold War has ended and, with it, the "politics of East/West boundary drawing, an argument essentially about economic systems", Mary Kalantzis argues that "into the space have stepped arguments that are still about access to social resources, but arguments that are now expressed through a discourse of culture, identity and nation. This is the news, not only from Rwanda, Bosnia and Sri Lanka, but from the urban distress of the United States, France and Britain." (1995, 1). We could add Tibet and Kurdistan to the list too. In this new discourse of culture, identity and nation, negotiations about not only the tolerance of but indeed the preservation, promotion and development of linguistic and cultural diversity are vital for world peace.

If we can agree upon the necessity of linguistic human rights for all, instead of linguistic genocide, what are linguistic human rights, and who has them? Linguistic majorities, for instance English-speakers in the United States or Swedish-speakers in Sweden, normally take it for granted that their children can be **educated through the medium of their own language**. They also take it for granted that their mother tongue, the majority language, can be **used in all (or most) official situations**, by both children and adults. They see it as self-evident that the school supports the children in **learning the official language** (i.e. their mother tongue) as well as possible. Normally they also take it for granted that they **can identify with their mother tongue and have this identification accepted and respected by everybody, including the school and the census**. Many of the majority members are not aware of the fact that

these, for them self-evident rights are in fact denied to most linguistic minorities in the world, even when these rights should be seen as fundamental, inalienable linguistic human rights. Neither the indigenous people nor the Deaf nor other linguistic minorities, with fairly few exceptions, usually have these rights.

Since language plays an increasingly central role in the global reproduction of the unequal division of structural power and material resources, **access** to both one's own and other languages is a necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite for identity and analysis, for empowerment of the B team and for counterhegemonies. Granting everybody linguistic human rights is a necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite for this access. In a civilized state, there should be no need to debate the right to identify with, to maintain and to fully develop one's mother tongue(s) (the language(s) a person has learned first and/or identifies with)<sup>xviii</sup>. It is a self-evident, fundamental **individual** linguistic human right. There should be no need to debate the right for minorities and indigenous peoples to **exist** and to reproduce themselves as distinct groups, with their own languages and cultures. It is a self-evident, fundamental **collective** human right.

In my view, universal linguistic human rights should be guaranteed in relation to the **mother tongue**, in relation to an **official language** (and thus in relation to bilingualism), in relation to a possible **language shift**, and in relation to **drawing profit from education** as far as the medium of education is concerned.

In relation to the **mother tongue(s)** a universal convention of linguistic human rights in my view should guarantee that

1. everybody has the right to identify with their mother tongue(s) and have this identification accepted and respected by others,
2. everybody has the right to learn the mother tongue(s) fully, orally (when physiologically possible) and in writing. This presupposes that minorities are educated through the medium of their mother tongue(s), within the state-financed educational system),
3. everybody has the right to use the mother tongue in most official situations (including day-care, schools, courts, emergency situations of all kinds, health care, including hospitals, and many governmental and other offices).
4. any change of mother tongue is voluntary, not imposed. (If parents/guardians, choosing the medium of day-care and education for children, are not offered alternatives or do not know enough about the probable long-term consequences of their choices, the change of mother tongue which mostly is the result of majority-

medium education for minorities, cannot be designated voluntary)<sup>xviii</sup>.

In relation to an **official language** a universal convention of linguistic human rights should guarantee that everybody whose mother tongue is not an official language in the country where s/he is resident, has the right to become a high level bilingual (or trilingual, if s/he has 2 mother tongues) in the mother tongue(s) and (one of) the official language(s) (according to her own choice). This presupposes bilingual teachers. In my view, for instance a monolingual English-as-a-second-language teacher in Australia is per definition incompetent. A teacher **must** know both English and the student's mother tongue.

Likewise, here the parents **must** know enough about the research results when they make their choices - minority parents must e.g. know that good MT-medium teaching also leads to better proficiency in the dominant language, for instance English, AND in the mother tongue than English-medium teaching.

In relation to **drawing profit from education** a universal convention of linguistic human rights should guarantee that everybody can profit from formal education, regardless of what her mother tongue is. "Profit" should be defined in educational equal outcome terms, not just in terms of having the right to receive marks (as it has been interpreted in human rights courts so far). The rights that should be guaranteed at an individual level are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 approximately here

## 7.2 ... and duties

Rights normally also presuppose duties - if the rights of a beneficiary are to be guaranteed, there has to be a duty-holder who guarantees them. But who has ever heard international lawyers discuss human duties? It seems to me to be important to discuss linguistic tolerance and development in terms of who has what rights (the beneficiary of rights) and who has what duties (the duty-holder).

Simplified, both beneficiaries and duty-holders can be of at least four kinds: an individual, a group (people/minority/nationality etc), a state, and the humanity. Logically we get several possibilities, and I will only take up a few, important for the topic:

A. There is a situation where the individual is the beneficiary, has rights, and the State has obligations, is the duty-holder - this is how individual human rights have traditionally been understood. States seem to insist that there are no proper

**collective** linguistic rights, since all linguistic rights are formulated in individual terms: the beneficiaries are "persons belonging to such minorities", i.e. individuals, who have some negative rights, but are not even unequivocally allowed to enjoy these rights alone, on an individual basis, but only "in community with other members of their group"<sup>xix</sup>. If the State then grants majority individuals (and groups?) basic positive linguistic human rights (which most Western States do in practise), these rights should also be granted to minority individuals, otherwise all talk about equality is nice phrases.

B. There is a situation where only the State is the beneficiary and the individual and/or the group are the duty-holders. The State could demand loyalty, without giving anything (e.g. without supporting the linguistic and cultural self-ascription of minority groups). This seems to be the attitude of many States towards minorities: demanding loyalty but promising only vague protection. In the Vienna Declaration (see above), the formulation in the Preamble to Appendix II on National Minorities, is as follows:

In this Europe which we wish to build, we must respond to this challenge: assuring the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities within the rule of law, respecting the territorial integrity and the national sovereignty of States. **On these conditions**, (my emphasis) these minorities will make a valuable contribution to the life of our societies.

C. There is a mirror situation, where the individual has a right (for instance to use the mother tongue as the main medium of education) and the State the corresponding duty (to allow and finance mother-tongue medium schools). In exchange of the right the State as beneficiary also demands a duty from the individual. The right of the State might be to demand that everybody is proficient in the official language of the State, and this puts the corresponding duty - to learn the official language - on the minority individual. The mirroring should ideally include rights and duties which correspond to each other, rather than being only vaguely related. If the State as beneficiary demands that the minority individuals and groups respect the sovereignty, political ("national") unity and territorial integrity of the State, i.e. respect the State's right to exist and develop as a State, tolerate the State's (legitimate) jurisdiction over the individual and the group, and tolerate the majority group in the State, then the State must have the corresponding duty to respect and tolerate (and make the majority group/s in the State respect and tolerate) the

minority group's right to exist as a minority group, including positive rights to enable the group to maintain, develop and reproduce itself as a distinct group, and positive rights for every minority individual to maintain and develop their distinctive identity, language and culture in a legalised way, i.e. financed and governed by laws by the State in the same way as corresponding maintenance of the majority identity, language and culture are financed and legalised.

We could also think of a situation where the State remains properly neutral, i.e. assumes only negative duties and allocates the positive duties to the **group** which then grants positive rights to individuals. A minority individual would then have the positive right to mother tongue medium education, provided that the minority group in turn fulfills **its** positive duty, namely to deliver enough students wishing for an education in the minority language<sup>xx</sup>. The State would thus remain neutral, i.e. finance education in any language where the groups could deliver enough students.

So far it seems that most States have demanded the rights (i.e. demanded loyalty) but have not taken on the corresponding duties. States have thus prevented the true development of minority groups, and true mutual toleration, by not fulfilling their duties or by only fulfilling negative duties in relation to minorities (leaving their languages and cultures to die) and at the same time failing to specify the minority groups as a positive duty-holder. At the same time, the States have fulfilled positive duties towards majorities (supporting their languages and cultures).

D. There is a situation where "humanity" is the beneficiary, "has" rights, and the duty-holders are the individual, the group and the State - all have obligations. To maintain and develop (i.e. not only to "tolerate") linguistic and cultural diversity is the duty of everybody - not only indigenous or minority individuals and groups. Since everybody belongs to humanity, all of us are beneficiaries at the same time as we are duty-holders, individually and collectively.

Educational linguistic human rights seem to me to have a better chance of being granted if understood as belonging to types C and D, rather than A (whereas B seems to reflect totalitarian ultra-nationalistic states with denial of the existence of and forced assimilation for minorities).

Most commentators seem to analyse the lack of legally binding mother-tongue related educational linguistic rights mainly as an issue of the prohibitive cost (e.g. Gromacki 1992, de Varennes 1995). Says Ajit Mohanty:

"The real issue, therefore, is not whether, how or under what

forces does an individual or a group become bilingual; it is whether and at what cost does one become a monolingual..." (Mohanty 1994, 163; 158)

The nation-state is currently under pressure from globalization, transnational regionalization and local democratic, root-seeking, environment-saving decentralization, and has probably outlived itself. States are by many researchers no longer seen as permanent constructions but negotiable. If states demand rights but refuse to deliver the corresponding goods, refuse to do their duties to minorities, they in any case lose their legitimacy. Linguicide as a strategy for preventing the disintegration of present day states should become outmoded. Linguistic diversity at local levels is a necessary counterweight to the hegemony of a few "international" languages. "Preservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage of humankind" (one of Unesco's declared goals) presupposes preventing linguicide. This has been seen by some researchers and politicians as a nostalgic primordialist dream (creating employment for the world's linguists). The perpetuation of linguistic diversity can, however, be seen as a recognition that all individuals and groups have basic linguistic human rights, and as a necessity for the survival of the planet, in a similar way to biodiversity. Lack of rights is what leads to disintegration.

When global control to an increasing degree happens via language, instead of more brutal means (despite some of the signs of the opposite today), linguodiversity is a necessary prerequisite for democracy and informed participation. It is not only biodiversity which is a necessity for the planet. The questions I ask today, in the UN Year of Tolerance, are as follows: For how long are we multilingual and multicultural individuals and groups going to tolerate the monolingual, monocultural reductionism that characterizes the ideologies of "nation states" and their homogenising elites? For how long are we going to tolerate that the power-holders have appropriated a monopoly to define the world for us in ways which try to homogenise diversity? How long are we going to tolerate the linguistic and cultural genocide that dominant groups are committing, not only through economic and political structural policies but also, and increasingly, through the consciousness industry (education, mass media, religions)? How long are we going to tolerate that **our** languages are being **stigmatized** as backward and primitive, tribal and traditional, as vernaculars and patois and dialects (rather than languages), as not adapted to post-modern technological information societies? How long are we going to tolerate that the richness of all our non-material

resources, our norms and traditions, family patterns and institutions, our ways of living, our languages and cultures, our cultural capital, are being invalidated by the power-holders, made invisible and stigmatised as handicaps and thus made non-convertible into other resources and into positions of political power, rather than made visible and celebrated, validated as valuable resources and convertible into other resources and into positions of political power. How long are we minorities going to tolerate the widening gaps between on the **one** hand the reality of combining linguistic and cultural genocide for us, with monolingual stupidity for many majorities, and, on the other hand, the nice phrases about human rights, celebration of multiculturalism, tolerance and diversity, the posture politics? For how long are the poor in the world (both in the North and, especially, in the South) going to tolerate the excessive exploitation which is called development, help and aid? How long are we going to tolerate the accelerating destruction of these precious non-material resources of our planet, our languages and cultures? And - the most important question - how long can the planet tolerate the destruction of diversity that is falsely called "development"? Maybe what we rather need is to learn how to **stop** being tolerant and silent? Maybe oppressed groups rather need a UN Year of Intolerance or Zero Tolerance?

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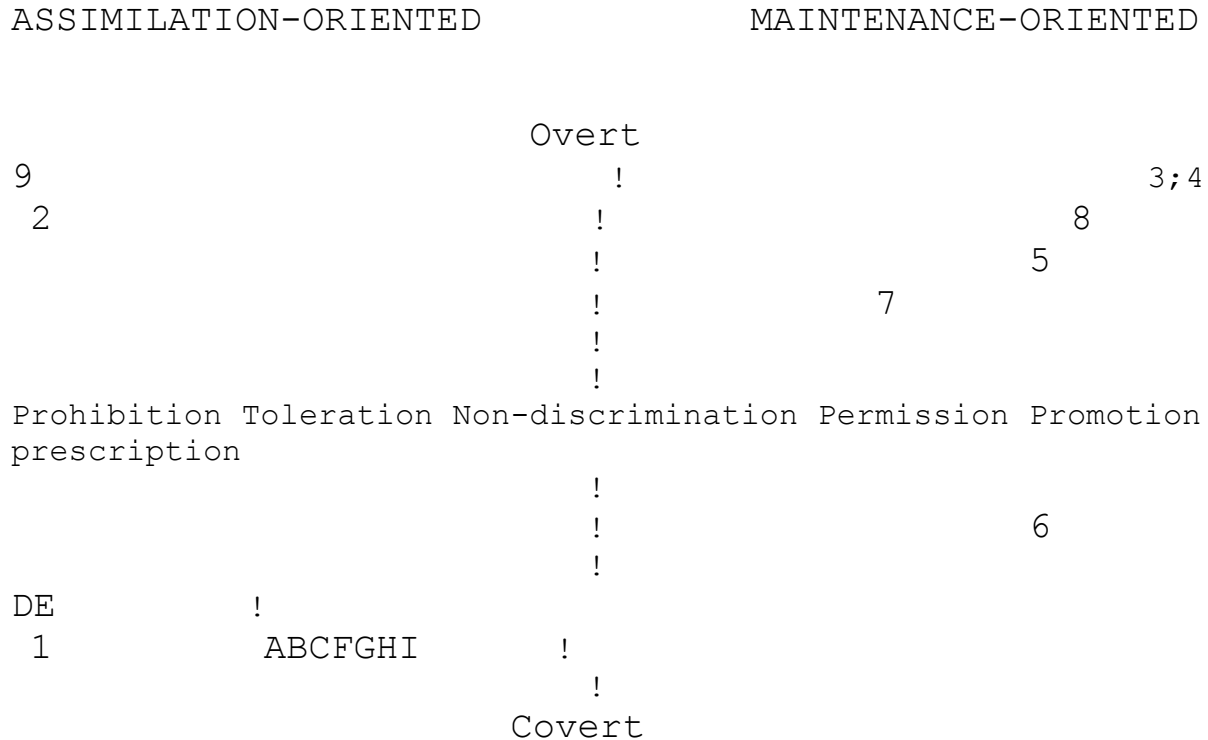
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Figure 1 Language rights in selected countries and covenants



Numbers refer to countries, letters to covenants

- 1.English Language Amendments to the USA Constitution, senator Huddleston
- 2.as above, senator Hayakawa
- 3.ex-Yugoslavia
- 4.Finland, Swedish-speakers
- 5.Finland, Sámi
- 6.India
- 7.The Freedom Charter of ANC and others, South Africa
- 8.the Basque Normalization Law
- 9.Kurds in Turkey

- A:The Charter of the United Nations, 1945;
- B:The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948;
- C:International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966;
- D:International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966;
- E:The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989;
- F:The Council of Europe Convention for The Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1950;
- G.The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981;

H.American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, 1948;  
I.American Convention on Human Rights "Pact of San Jose, Costa  
Rica", 1969.



Table 1 **What is colonised?**

**COLONIALISM**  
(Africa etc)

**SLAVERY**

**MINORITIES**  
(via **con-**  
**sciousness**  
**industry:**  
education,  
mass media,  
religion,  
etc)

**LAND & WATER & NATURAL RESOURCES**

+++

-

or  
indirectly

-

or  
indirectly

**BODY**

+

+++

+  
indirectly

**MIND, CON-  
SCIOUSNESS**

+

+

+++

Table 2 **Exerting power: means, processes and sanctions**

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i The conference where this paper was given was held in Ottawa. I started my oral presentation by greeting the First Nation whose lands we were on, and thanking them for granting the permission to hold the conference on their territory. I would like to repeat the thanks here. - This paper draws heavily on several earlier papers (see all references to Skutnabb-Kangas 1994, 1995 and in press in the bibliography). Many thanks to Mark Fettes for constructive comments on the oral version, and Mark, Robert Phillipson, Mart Rannut and Fernand de Varennes for interesting discussions on the topic.

ii "Minority" is a notoriously difficult concept. Partly, because there is, despite many attempts (see e.g. Capotorti 1979 and Andrysek 1989; see also Eide 1990, 1991, 1995b, Palley 1984) no legally accepted universal definition; partly because of the many connotations which place the concept differentially in several hierarchies. Many groups therefore do not wish to be called "minorities" but prefer other terms. Many indigenous peoples do not see themselves as minorities but as peoples - accepting to be a "minority" would connote accepting the legitimacy of the jurisdiction of the state which has colonised them, and might prevent certain preferred interpretations of self-determination. Some groups see a hierarchy where nations and nationalities are "above" minorities - here both nations and nationalities would have a certain right to political self-determination (including having their own state if they so wish) whereas minorities might only have the right to cultural autonomy - this has been the interpretation in several central and eastern European situations under communism. Some groups think that "minority" necessarily has negative connotations of "dominated", "poor", "less worthy", even "primitive" or "backward" - many North American immigrant groups have held this view. On the other hand, other immigrant groups, e.g. in northern Europe, have claimed that "minority" connotes a group which intends to and is allowed to settle permanently and is therefore a preferred label (as compared to "guest worker" or "immigrant") for a hyphenated group, e.g. Sweden Finns (Finns in Sweden), Greek-Australians (Australians of Greek origin). Likewise, these groups see that being accepted as a "national/ethnic" minority confers many more legal rights in international law to a group than the rights which immigrants or refugees have, and therefore becoming a minority has positive connotations. In this article I use "minority" in a general,

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positive sense, of groups which are "smaller in number than the rest of the population of a State, whose members have ethnical, religious or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population, and are guided, if only implicitly, by the will to safeguard their culture, traditions, religion or language. Any group coming within the terms of this definition shall be treated as an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority. To belong to a minority shall be a matter of individual choice" (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1994, note 2, for arguments for and details of this and other definitions).

iii In **Information** 8 May 1995, describing the economic situation in Hungary, people are quoted as saying that they now, "instead of the dictatorship of communism have the dictatorship of the World Bank" and that the living conditions are much worse now (Plöger 1995, 2). See Brock-Utne 1993, forthcoming, for some of the devastating figures and Sachs (Ed.) 1991 for criticism of the concept development.

iv Both these are modifications of slogans on T-shirts. Many Californian teachers give T-shirts to their high-level bilingual students, with "BLESSED WITH BILINGUAL BRAINS". I have a T-shirt (given by Portuguese-American friends) with the text "I DO NOT SUFFER FROM MONOLINGUAL STUPIDITY".

v Reported by Inge Schröder, in **Soldue** 18, March 1995, pp. 10-11, in an article called "Med Koranen som facitliste" (The Q'uran as the facit").

vi Mark Fettes pointed out that Zero Tolerance is not only a call to minorities/dominated groups to show less tolerance towards overt and covert linguisticism (and other types of racism and sexism and classism and other -isms), but also for majorities/dominant groups "to show less tolerance for those among their own group who practise such mistreatment" (from an e-mail letter from Mark Fettes, 10 May 1995). I fully agree.

vii See also articles in Schäffner & Wenden (Eds.) 1995.

viii Several of the national examples on the grid are historical. The recent Bills to change the USA Constitution (H.R. 123 by Bill Emerson, H.R. 345 by Owen Pickett, H.R. 739 by Toby Roth and H.R. 1005 by Peter King - see Powers 1995 for these) follow the same pattern as 1 and 2 on the grid. The recent South African temporary Constitution (see **South Africa's New Language Policy. The Facts**, 1994) would get an even higher rating than the Freedom Charter whereas present Serbian laws represent a serious worsening.

ix Recently (6 April 1994, Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.5) The UN Human Rights Committee adopted a General comment on Article 27 in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (D on the grid) which interprets it in a substantially more

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positive way than earlier. The Committee sees the Article as

- recognizing the existence of a "right";
- imposing positive obligations on the States;
- protecting all individuals on the State's territory or under its jurisdiction (i.e. also immigrants and refugees), irrespective of whether they belong to the minorities specified in the Article or not;
- stating that the existence of a minority does not depend on a decision by the State but requires to be established by objective criteria.

It remains to be seen to what extent this General comment will influence the State parties. If the Committee's interpretation ("soft law") becomes the general norm, then the whole assessment in this article needs to be revised.

x Article 27: "In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

xi This is a very preliminary categorisation and I would very much welcome comments.

xii See e.g. Fishman 1989 who refutes many of these myths about the causal connection, and Pattanayak (1988, 1991 (Ed.), 1991, 1992).

xiii This myth has been formulated on the basis of discussions with Mark Fettes, and I use many of his ideas in it.

xiv "Whoever knows that language (English, my remark) has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may be safely said that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together." (Trevelyan 1881, 290-291). See e.g. Khubchandani 1983, Phillipson 1992 and Said 1978 for criticisms.

xv Racism, ethnicism and linguisticism can all be defined in similar ways as: "ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and (both material and non-material) resources between groups which are defined on the basis of

- "race" (biologically argued racism)
- ethnicity and culture (culturally argued racism: ethnicism)
- language (linguistically argued racism: linguisticism)"

(Skutnabb-Kangas 1988, 13).

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xvi Stavenhagen's recent assessment of present educational policies is as follows: "In most countries where minorities exist, state policies are designed to assimilate or integrate minorities into the model of the national culture ... [The] way educational policies are carried out... tend[s] to destroy minority cultures, even when there is no wilful intention to do so ... Too often, policies of national integration, of national cultural development, actually imply a policy of ethnocide, that is, the wilful destruction of cultural groups." (Stavenhagen 1995, 75-76). This is how Stavenhagen formulates his alternative: "... However, if there is ethnocide, there might be a right to 'counter-ethnocide' through 'ethnodevelopment', that is, policies designed to protect, promote and further the culture of distinct non-dominant ethnic groups within the wider society, within the framework of the nation-State or the multinational State. Ethnodevelopment might be an aspect of the 'right to development' which the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed in 1986." (Stavenhagen 1995, 75-76).

Stavenhagen also sees self-determination as a necessary prerequisite for the positive development, but is not optimistic: "The cultural development of peoples, whether minorities or majorities, must be considered within the framework of the right of peoples to self-determination, which by accepted international standards is the fundamental human right, in the absence of which all other human rights cannot really be enjoyed...It is generally assumed that the populations of non-self-governing territories and the populations of established independent States hold a right to become or to maintain independence. For ethnic and cultural groups inside sovereign States, however, the issue of self-determination is a different one: To maintain and preserve their separate identity within the larger national society. While they are not generally considered to be the subjects of the right to self-determination in its external sense, there is an increasing support for the view that they have a right to a degree of internal self-determination, which is less territorial than cultural. It remains a subject of great controversy, however. This is mainly because governments fear that if minority peoples hold the right to self-determination in the sense of a right to full political independence, then existing States might break up through secession, irredentism or the political independence of such groups. State interests thus are still more powerful at the present time than the human rights of peoples. This is the background to the debate on cultural rights in the international community, and it shows that the basic issues have not yet been satisfactorily solved." (pp. 76-77).



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xvii "Mother tongue", also a difficult concept, is here defined as the language(s) one has learned first and/or identifies with. The "or" is there mainly for the benefit of two groups: those indigeneous or other individuals whose parents/grandparents have already been victims of linguistic genocide but who want to regain the original mother tongue, and the Deaf community for whom sign languages are the only possible mother tongues (possible in the sense that they are the only languages that they can learn fully and that give them a possibility of fully expressing themselves spontaneously. Of course they can also have a written language as an additional mother tongue, but writing is always a reduced type of communication as compared to speaking or signing). Since 90-95 percent of deaf individuals are born to hearing parents, a sign language may not be the first learned language for all deaf individuals. (The Deaf community should also, for instance, be considered a national linguistic minority in every country in the world. When European states have started ratifying the new **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (accepted 22 June 1992), not one of them has so far designated the Deaf Community as a national minority that the Charter should apply to). On mother tongue definitions, see e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 1984 (Chapter 2, "What is a mother tongue"), 1990 (Chapter 2, "Concept definitions"), Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989. There are also researchers who question the concept on the grounds that the (emotional) importance of the mother tongue has been overestimated (e.g. Coulmas, in press - but see Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, in press c, in the same volume) or that it has been misused in its primordial sense by political right extremists.

xviii Thus the fact that language shift does occur in all types of societies, has made some observers see it as something "natural", even when it leads to languages disappearing. I will try to clarify this by discussing the concept of linguicide, as compared to the more passive language death. Juan Cobarrubias (1983) has elaborated a taxonomy of policies which a state can adopt towards minority languages:

- (1) attempting to kill a language;
- (2) letting a language die;
- (3) unsupported coexistence;
- (4) partial support of specific language functions;
- (5) adoption as an official language.

The concept language death (Dressler 1988) does not necessarily imply a causal agent. Language death is by most of those who use the concept seen as occurring because of

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circumstances beyond the control of any agents. The "effects", for instance language death as a result of "modernization", are often regarded as inevitable concomitants of social change. Language death is seen as comparable to the evolution of natural organisms which develop, bloom and wither away, and therefore attempts to counteract it are seen as romantic or misplaced, trying to prevent a natural development.

When some liberal economists (e.g. Friedrich List, 1885: 174ff.) a century ago considered that nations had to be of a "sufficient size" to be viable, it followed that smaller nationalities and languages were doomed to disappear, as collective victims of "the law of progress". Their speakers were advised to reconcile themselves to "the loss of what could not be adapted to the modern age" (Hobsbawm 1991: 29-39). Several Western European liberal ideologists and Soviet language planners in the early part of this century held that nations (each with their own language) were but one phase in a development towards a unified world with a world language, coexisting with national languages which would be "reduced to the domestic and sentimental role of dialects" (ibid., 38).

This liberal ideology of development is still alive and well. When discussing "small ethnic groups and languages", we are warned not to "be idealistic and feel blind pity for everything which *in its natural course* is transformed, becomes outdated or even extinct", (Šatava 1992: 80; my emphasis). The concept of language death can be associated with this type of liberal ideology, whether in Eastern Europe, North America (the "English Only" movement), or in aid policies worldwide, these invariably supporting dominant languages. At the individual level, language death would within this paradigm be seen as a result of voluntary language shift by each speaker. The speakers of minority languages would simply be seen as viewing bigger languages as more useful and functional, and therefore shifting over, in their own best interest, when wanting to "modernize".

Linguicide (linguistic genocide), by contrast, implies that there is an agent involved in causing the death of languages. In the liberal ideology, described above, only an active agent with the conscious intention to kill languages (Cobarrubias' 1) would cause linguicide, whereas the next two (2 and 3) two would fall within the domain of language death. In my view, the agent for linguicide can be active ("attempting to kill a language") or passive ("letting a language die", or "unsupported coexistence", also often leading to the death of minority languages).

Seen from the perspective of a conflict paradigm, the causes of linguicism (and thus also language death and linguicide) have to be analyzed from both structural and

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ideological angles, covering the struggle for structural power and material resources, and the legitimation, effectuation and reproduction of the resulting unequal division of power and resources between groups, based on language. The agents of linguisticism can also be structural or ideological. Examples of structural agents would be the state, e.g. Turkey vis-a-vis Kurds; an institution, e.g. schools or day care centres; laws and regulations, e.g. those covering linguistic rights or the position of different languages on time-tables in schools; or budgets, e.g. for teacher training or materials in certain languages). Examples of ideological agents would be norms and values ascribed to different languages and their speakers.

There is thus nothing "natural" in language death. Languages cannot be treated in an anthropomorphic way, as organisms with a natural life-span. Language death has structural and ideological causes, which can be identified and analysed.

A great many of the world's languages have been eliminated in recent centuries as a (direct or indirect) result of European settlement and colonisation. The remaining ones have, through linguisticist processes, been hierarchized so that speakers of some languages and varieties have more power and material resources than their numbers would justify, simply because of being speakers of those languages and varieties.

But the hierarchization of groups and the control of access to structural power and material resources has changed form, as has been discussed above in the article. Therefore what is a result of linguisticism (in this case language shift), is, through a rationalisation of the relationships between (speakers of) different languages, made to seem both "natural" and "voluntary", something that the group does itself, in their own best interest, and often with "help" from the ones who in fact are killing the group's language and culture. In the "best" case, the group's behaviour can be explained as "internalised necessity" in Bourdieu's terms, where the members can see what they have to do anyway, and do it, regardless of what they think of it.

xix These formulations come from Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - see note 10.

xx This is the solution suggested e.g. by Alexei Leontiev (1994) for Russia.