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## LANGUAGE AND DEMANDS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

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### 0. INTRODUCTION

Language is related to self-determination and demands for self-determination at several levels and in a number of interconnected ways. As I am not a lawyer, my analysis of the role of language builds mostly on sociolinguistics, sociology, psychology, education and political science. I will look at some aspects of the relationship between language and the **denial** of (prerequisites for) self-determination (1).

Language has been **an important means of control and domination** and its importance is rapidly growing (Bourdieu 1977, Foucault 1980, Giroux 1992). Language has been seen as an **essential, homogenizing element in the nation-building of states** since the Age of Enlightenment (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990). There is also continuous controversy over the role of the **"standard" language ("proper" language) as opposed to other variants**. The enforcement of standard languages has likewise been a powerful method in controlling ordinary people (O'Barr 1982) and in homogenization (Illich 1981). Language has played an important role in **maintaining colonial structures** (Calvet 1974, 1987, Phillipson 1992, Mühlhäusler 1990) and reproducing neo-colonial structures (Bamgbose 1991, Ngũgi 1986). **Education through the medium of majority languages or colonial languages** has been the most powerful assimilating force for minority children, thus likewise having a homogenizing function (Cummins 1989a, Skutnabb-Kangas 1984, 1988a, 1990).

But language has also become an important means for counterhegemonies, and for seeking self-determination at several levels, psychologically, educationally, politically. Language is central for **seeing, interpreting, understanding and changing the world, and indeed in creating it**. The right to name one's own world, to define how one sees oneself and the rest of the world, is realized through language. **The validity of one's own endo-definition of one's own group** and its status (as opposed to having to accept an exo-definition, a definition of one's own group and its status from

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outsiders) **is negotiated through language**, even when arms and other material resources and structural power set the framework for these negotiations. Language is central to the **cultural and ethnic identity** of most groups (Fishman 1989, Skutnabb-Kangas 1987, 1990b, 1991a, 1994c).

Language is one of several important **mobilizing factors in struggles for national recognition**, whether for **indigenous peoples** (see Hamel 1994a, b, on Latin America, Magga 1994 on the Sámi in Norway and Kāretu 1994 on the Māori in New Zealand, Stairs 1988) or for **groups re-asserting themselves after the disintegration of communist regimes** (see Rannut 1994 on Estonia and Plichtová (ed). 1992). Control over the destiny of one's own language and maximizing its official use is also of paramount concern to **groups seeking self-determination or more cultural rights, before or, indeed, after decolonisation** (see Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1994 on Kurds, Tickoo 1994 on Kashmiri and Mateene 1980, 1985). Language is also central to the demands of most **immigrant groups**, regardless of whether these are aspiring to become new national minorities or not (see articles in Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (eds) 1988 and in Peura and Skutnabb-Kangas (eds) 1994).

In this paper I will briefly discuss a few of these aspects of language in relation to self-determination and demands for self-determination, under the following four headings:

1. Language as a means of exerting power and control.
2. Language and identity in relation to self-determination.
3. The compatibility of nation-state ideology from a language-related point of view (one state, one nation, one language) with demands for self-determination, including the question of linguistic genocide or linguistic human rights.
4. Language as a mobilizing factor in ethnic conflict: does granting of linguistic (and cultural) human rights lead to the disintegration of the nation state?

## 1. LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF EXERTING POWER AND CONTROL

The role of language in both **colonizing the consciousness of people/peoples to maintain oppressive societal structures** and in **decolonizing the mind to counteract these oppressive structures** cannot be overestimated. Despite the large number of armed conflicts in the world, there is an ongoing shift in the means used for exerting power and control, from the use of punitive means to more remunerative and ideological means, as Johan Galtung claims (Table 1). Language becomes increasingly more central to exerting power and control as we move from the use of physical, coercive force ("sticks") and psychological violence, shame, towards incentives ("carrots") and, especially, ideological persuasion.

TABLE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE

Dominated groups are decreasingly ruled by arms or by physical violence (either at all or alone), and increasingly with remunerative and ideological measures (Galtung 1980), with the help of carrots, benefits, rewards, bargaining and co-optation, and with the help of ideas, through persuasion. When the dominated stay dominated with their own (at least partial) consent, language becomes the (main) means of domination - and counterhegemonies.

Instead of or in addition to colonizing the land, water and natural resources of the dominated as under colonialism, and instead of directly colonizing the bodies of the dominated as under slavery, the modern version of domination is increasingly colonizing the minds, the consciousness of the dominated. Table 2 shows (with plusses and minusses) the intensity kind of the different kinds of colonization. As in the development outlined above (from the use of coercive force to the use of incentives and persuasion), we see outmoded forms of control (the more physical forms of colonization) being replaced by more subtle, non-physical means of control (psychological colonization).

TABLE 2 APPROXIMATELY HERE

When it is **consciousness industry** (meaning education, mass media, religions, and other means of mass distribution of ideas) that socially creates consent, the messages of the rulers to manufacture and negotiate this consent must be mediated through language. (Of course, visual and auditory non-verbal images are used in addition to the purely verbal ones, but this does not invalidate the argument). Therefore it is important for the rulers that the dominated understand the language of the rulers, otherwise the dominated cannot be ruled with their own consent, with the help of the rulers' ideas. This is also one of the reasons for why the rulers insist on the importance of dominated minorities learning the dominant majority languages. And this is also the light in which the spread of the English language worldwide should be seen. Star wars become redundant when everybody understands the English in advertisements glorifying coca cola, mcdonalds and other types of consumerism at the expense of local products and the environment, but the power holders may still feel the need to be able to **threaten** with physical force.

Of course there is nothing wrong with minorities learning the

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majority languages in the countries where they live, or with people all over the world learning English. But the messages about the importance of learning the dominant languages usually **glorify** the dominant languages (and their concomitant cultures, norms, ideologies, institutions), **stigmatize** the dominated languages (cultures, norms, ideologies, institutions), and **rationalize** the relationship between them (Table 3; partly based on ideas in Preiswerk 1980). This is in fact the content of the messages about their non-material resources given to minorities and others from the "B team" (see below) when they are being controlled through ideas.

TABLE 3 APPROXIMATELY HERE

In this way the learning of the majority or dominant language, with its culture, norms and ideologies), **at the expense of the minority's own language**, in a **SUBTRACTIVE** way, instead of **in addition to** it, in an **ADDITIVE** way (Lambert 1975), is presented as being in the best interest of the dominated. The result, e.g. "monolingualism" in the majority language, is presented as normal, desirable and inevitable, in accordance to the ideology of "monolingual stupidity/naivety", which is a concomitant of the nation-state ideology (2).

The education which many minorities receive, leads to monolingualism or a high degree of dominance in the majority language at the expense of the minority language (Churchill 1985, Cummins 1984, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1992, Cummins and Danesi 1990, Cummins and Swain 1986, Hakuta 1986, Padilla et al. 1991, Padilla and Benavides 1992, Ramirez et al. 1991, Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa 1976, Skutnabb-Kangas 1984, 1988, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1989a, Wong Fillmore 1991). If the minority languages are not learned, or are learned less well or orally only, the alternative messages of counterhegemonies, which could be presented through the medium of the minority's own languages, also get less chance of being both created and heard. Thus it is more difficult to start the necessary decolonization of the mind.

Next I will discuss the relationship of the colonization of the mind to power and control, and the role that language plays in maintaining an unequal division of power and resources in the world more generally. I will also show how various types of inequality and various "-isms" (classism, racism, sexism, imperialism) work together and coarticulate, and use, in part, similar strategies.

The Norwegian peace researcher, Johan Galtung (1980), talks of three types of power: **innate power, resource power and structural power**. **Innate power** we have inherited from our parents, e.g. intelligence, muscles and charisma. **Resources** can be **material** (capital, weapons, books, houses, cars) or **non-material** (language, cultures, experience, education, knowledge, time). **Structural** power one has by virtue of one's position. I shall return to innate power and Galtung later, but initially concentrate on the two other types.

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Both structural power and material resource power are, as we know, unequally distributed between different groups in the world. There may be said to be an "A team", which has more power and resources than its numbers justify, and a "B team" which has less power and fewer resources than its numbers would justify.

Some of the main oppositions and/or conflicts in the world as regards power and material resources (see Table 4) are expressed and reflected in "-isms" like colonialism, imperialism, racism, sexism, classism and ageism. These "-isms" regulate, legitimate, effectuate and reproduce the unequal division of structural power and material resources in the world between groups which are defined on the basis of the central factor(s) in each "-ism", i.e. "race" in biologically argued **racism**, ethnic group and its culture in **ethnicism**, language in **linguicism**, gender in **sexism**, age in **ageism**, social class in **classism**. I define sexism as "ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of gender." Likewise, I define ethnicism and linguicism as "ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of ethnicity/culture or language" (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988, 13).

TABLE 4 APPROXIMATELY HERE

The group which has **most power and material resources in the world** is the small élite which represents the "A team" in all respects: **"white" (2), middle class urban males with a high degree of formal education from majority groups in industrialized countries.** Simultaneously they are the group which is primarily responsible for the present state of the world: they could alter the causes of war, famine, environmental pollution and torture, just because they are the ones with most power. As a group they do not wish to.

Those who are **most deprived of power** are the groups which in all respects represent the "B team": **"black", "brown", "yellow" and "red" working class or rural women, orate or with no or little formal education from underdeveloped countries, often from minority groups.** "The poorest of the poor are women. It has been called the "feminisation of poverty". And this is why we need a "feminisation of power", to quote Margarita Papandreou in her welcome speech to participants at the conference "Building a Europe without frontiers: the role of women" (1992, 12).

Seen from a researcher's point of view, our own role is interesting, among other reasons because the groups which partly belong to the "B

team", partly to the "A team", play an important role in the maintenance of the current distribution of power and resources. Since the "A team" élite is very small in numbers, they need the consent of those who already in some way resemble them. Many of us support the élite in the "A team" and "their" ideology, even though we do not ourselves receive all of the power and resources which our numbers would require. The "A team" élite induces us to do so, through benefits and awards, and partly through ideological persuasion. Obviously we in the industrialized world would not be able to continue to exploit underdeveloped countries, unless the (male) élites of these countries collaborate with us. The more "characteristics" a group shares with the "A team" élite, the easier it might be to manufacture consent.

When we, through "development aid", for instance offer scholarships to people from Africa, one of the results (and/or causes/motives) is that some Africans who will be in powerful positions in their own countries later on, will, through their education, start resembling the power élite of the "A team" more and more. They will become people of high formal education, urban, middle or upper class - and in the first place they are often men, and from the majority groups in their own countries or from the most powerful minority groups in countries which do not have clear-cut majorities. Additionally it will be very difficult for them not to take over (something of) the Western world's view of the superiority of the West and of the causes of underdevelopment. They are exposed to massive ideological propaganda, while also being rewarded for believing in it - after which it is easier to get them to function as the **compradores** of the "A team" élite on their return. The same strategies are used e.g. vis-a-vis women in industrialised countries and immigrants.

If we wish for a world in which power and resources are distributed more equally, it is necessary to analyze the strategies which are used by the small élite to exclude others from power. We can see the various -isms (classism, racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, ageism, etc) as the ideologies, structures and practices which regulate the relationship between the "A team" and the "B team". In the conflict between women and men (conflict 5 in table 4) **sexism** is the most important principle. The conflict between different societal groups, as in conflict 4, is mainly a question of **classism**, conflict 1 a question of **colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism**.

**Racism** (Banton 1987, Cox 1970, Miles 1989, Rex 1986, Rex and Mason 1986, Solomos 1989) is an element in several of the conflicts, most brutally in conflicts 2 and 1, but to a high degree in the conflict between majorities and minorities too, conflict 6. Here, over and above brutal **biologically argued racism** (Miles 1989), it is often a question of more sophisticated forms of racism, **culturally/ethnically argued racism** and **linguistically argued racism**. In cultural racism, **ethnicism** (Mullard 1986, 1988), and linguistic racism, **linguicism** (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988, 13), people are divided into groups which get more or less access to power and

resources because of their ethnic (and cultural) or linguistic group, rather than their "race", as in traditional biologically argued racism.

It is also necessary to touch upon the question of where power comes from (for different but possibly complementary views see e.g. Foucault 1980, Feldman 1991). This is necessary in order to see the similarities in the power strategies used in the different "-isms" and to be able to identify what types of strategies powerless groups, among them minorities, can use so as to obtain their rightful share of the world's power and resources.

In an **idealistic-liberal** view, **innate power** (intelligence, muscles, charisma) is decisive for a person's fate. If one has "chosen" one's parents well, one has inherited from them intelligence, a capacity for hard work and other characteristics which lead to the acquisition of knowledge and money. Other people trust a person with innate power and elect her/him to various positions, and thus the person acquires structural power. We thus have the power-holders we have earned: they are simply more intelligent and hard-working than others. The American Dream represents this idealistic-liberal view: if you are intelligent and work hard (= have a lot of innate power) you can achieve anything: you can become a millionaire (= material resource power) and you can become the President of the United States (= structural power) - it is up to You.

Galtung's view is a **materialist** one. Innate power is a social construction, an illusion. It is not, in fact, innate. Intelligence is a result of cooperation of nature and nurture and possible to influence. A person's height and muscles are also influenced by the environment, e.g. by the food given to the pregnant mother and the infant. Only **structural power and resource power** are real, and they are convertible into each other. If one has material resources (e.g. money), one can buy immaterial resources (e.g. knowledge, a "good education", time), and with a good education one can get money (a high salary), i.e. one can convert one type of resource (money) to another type of resource (knowledge, time). A high structural position makes it possible to accumulate more resources, and resources give enough knowledge about societal power structures (and money for e.g. an election campaign) for a person to be able to get into positions of structural power.

In order to participate in the conversion process, a person needs a starting capital of either resources or structural power. Children acquire their starting capital - or lack of it - via their parents, reflecting the parents' position on the "A" and/or "B team"s. A child with "A team" parents with middle class jobs, time to spend with the child, a big house and many books, accumulates already in childhood many resources: care, enough food, linguistic book-oriented stimuli, help with home work, knowledge about how those sectors of society which are important from a power perspective, function, acquaintance with "important" people and travel. After school the parents and their friends are able to support the youth

via their connections and knowledge in finding the first job, which gives a fair salary (material resources) and new knowledge (non-material resources). These resources can later be converted into a better job, with a higher salary and a possibility to acquire more knowledge and connections which then can be converted, etc etc. Whereas a child with working class parents inherits the parents' lack of material resources and structural power, and can therefore not convert the non-material resources that she possesses, to other resources or to positions of structural power.

In order to analyze the strategies which keep the "A team" in power, I find it necessary to extend Galtung's position of seeing innate power as a social construction. I see also resources as social constructions. The "worth" a painting is seen to have, or the opinion of how a person has to speak in order to get a high status job (see e.g. Sato 1991, in press, and Crandall 1992 on court cases on language), has very little to do with "objective" criteria. To call a piece of paper "money" or "a check" and to be able to convert it into a house or a car, whereas other pieces of paper cannot be so converted, is likewise a social construction.

In my view, one of the most important "A team" strategies, used in all "-ism"s, is to socially construct their own resources, especially their non-material resources, so that they are seen as resources and are thus validated as convertible. This is done by glorifying the "A team" resources. At the same time, the "B team" resources, especially the non-material resources, the linguistic and cultural capital embodied in the languages and cultures of the dominated, are being invalidated through the stigmatization process. They are socially constructed by the dominant groups as invisible or treated as handicaps rather than resources, as something to get rid of rather than to cherish. They are socially constructed as non-resources, as opposed to the languages and cultures of the dominant groups, which are through glorification constructed as valuable resources, to be learned by others (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE

Since only those non-material resources which are seen as valid and valuable, can be converted to material resources and to positions of structural power, the stigmatization of minority languages and cultures as non-resources leaves minority children without a starting capital at the outset. The only resources that their parents could give them (their languages, cultures, norms and traditions), are invalidated, and the children are told by the educational system (where their non-material resources are invisible) to get rid of them because they prevent the children from acquiring majority resources. Under this false belief, many children abandon their languages, cultures, identities etc - but the



educational system with its submersion programmes for minorities does not give them full access to majority resources either. This prevents minorities from getting access to their fair share of material resources and structural power, at the same time as it prevents them from constructing counterhegemonies, both **structurally**, through lack of resources, and **ideologically**, through the colonisation of their minds so that many of them are led to believe that the unequal division of power and resources is due to deficiencies in the dominated group itself, its linguistic and cultural characteristics, norms, traditions.

## 2. LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN RELATION TO SELF-DETERMINATION

LANGUAGE is a tie. Our mother tongue(s) both form and are symbols of our identity. We have an **individual identity** where we recognize ourselves, despite both physical and psychological changes over years. Our name symbolizes this recognition - and change of name therefore also means a partially new identity. If the change is voluntary, as when somebody wants to create or assume a new identity, this may be liberating. If the change of name (or the non-acceptance by a state of the name which the parents want to give to a child, see Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1994, note 2 and Jernudd, 1994) is enforced, this symbolizes lack of power for self-definition (an endo-definition): the person has to accept an exo-definition because of lack of power. This is often true in relation to women (who have to accept the fathers' or the husbands' name). It has been and is still often true in relation to indigenous peoples, who have been forced to have the colonisers' names. It is still often true in relation to immigrants or people wanting to change their citizenship (e.g. Prof. Alma Flor Ada, who experienced a lot of pressure by the interviewer to change her "un-American" name when applying for USA citizenship; personal communication, Feb 1993).

We also have a **group identity**, a **social identity**, where the name used by ourselves about our group or our language may differ from how others name us. If others call us Lapps or Eskimo or mountain Turks or tribes, whereas we ourselves call ourselves Sápmi or Inuit or Kurds or nations/peoples, our identity has to be negotiated with significant or powerful others. This means, from a theoretical point of view, that our social identity is NOT a **characteristics** that we possess. Our identity is a **relationship** between the negotiating parties, enacted in and symbolized by this negotiation (Skutnabb-Kangas 1991b).

For most groups seeking self-determination today this negotiation situation is one of unequal power relationships between the negotiators. The result, whether they will, for instance, be called tribes or nations/peoples (or, indeed, states - a state is also a relation), encapsulates this relationship. Names used about individuals, groups and countries are therefore deeply symbolic, at several levels.

Our identities, our ties with ourselves and others, are **horizontal**, with **others sharing the same characteristics and relations**, for instance speaking the same idiom. Our identities are also **vertical**: with **ourselves earlier and in the future** and with **preceding and following generations**. These ties are maintained through language, information and negotiation.

Our identities are also **multiple**: we are at the same time members of a gender group, a generation, an ethnos, a demos (4), a professional group, a religious (or secular/secularized) group, a geographical area: local, regional, national, up to global, a political group etc. We can also be members of **two** or even more of some of them at the same time (e.g. **two** language groups or two ethnoses). Many of these multiple identities coexist harmoniously. Some of them we are not usually aware of. Some become focused, if we gain benefits or are being discriminated against because of them, and we may then become aware of potential conflicts between some aspects of our multiple identities. As a result, we may try to exaggerate them, or to get rid of some of the identities, by denying them or assimilation, e.g.), or we may try to change the negative value placed on them, by redefining them in a positive way (e.g. "Black is beautiful") and struggling to get this endo-definition accepted by others.

The analysis of one's own condition that precedes change, for instance preceding demands for self-determination, must be based on knowing where one comes from and goes to, i.e. the historical context of one's identity construction. If an individual or a group has been forced, by punitive, remunerative or ideological means, to internalize other more powerful groups' exo-definitions of who this individual or group is, (for instance that it is a tribe speaking a dialect, instead of a nation or a people speaking a language), a (new) language, embodying the group's own endo-definitions of who the group is, must be created or recreated. The **decolonization of the mind** of the group, seeing and defining the world in the multiple ways that correspond more with the interests of the group, is required. Naming one's world differently is often the first step preceding demands for self-determination.

"Making oneself conscious" of one's life-conditions and contradictions and taking action against the oppressive elements of reality, ("conscientization") in Paulo Freire's terms (Freire 1972), is a powerful tool for liberation, and language is central for this. Language is not, and cannot, by definition, be a neutral, "objective", disencumbered tool (5). It is always interpretative and subjective, regardless of whether those using it know or admit it or not. It is both a tool for domination and a tool for change and self-determination. Language is creating and willing the world.

3. THE COMPATIBILITY OF NATION-STATE IDEOLOGY FROM A LANGUAGE-RELATED POINT OF VIEW, (ONE STATE, ONE NATION, ONE LANGUAGE), WITH DEMANDS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION. LINGUISTIC  
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## GENOCIDE OR LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS?

### 3.1 THE NATION-STATE IDEOLOGY: ONE STATE, ONE NATION, ONE LANGUAGE)

The traditional stereotypical image of a nation-state sees the nation-state as a product of an evolutionary process starting with small tribal societies and developing through many phases towards "higher forms" of social organization of peoples lives where the nation-states represented the currently most developed form (e.g. Hobsbawm 1991). A nation-state was comprised of one "nation", and this imagined community (Anderson 1983) was, especially in the German nationalist tradition, ideally seen as united by one single language. Other nations within this Nation would then either be seen as disruptive, as an anomaly, or, if they are very small in numbers and insignificant in terms of power - as most indigenous nations/peoples have until very recently seen to be - they can be seen as colourful, non-threatening remnants from an earlier phase. In order not to be seen as disruptive, they have to accept that they "have no independent future" (Hobsbawm 1991, 35), that they are "small and backward" (ibid., 34) and have everything to gain by merging into greater nations" (ibid., 34), i.e. that they and their languages are "doomed to disappear" (ibid., 34), because of "the laws of progress" (ibid., 35), because they "could not be adapted to the modern age" (ibid., 35). All these are ethnicist and/or linguistic arguments, examples of the glorification, stigmatization and rationalization discussed earlier.

Since the "natural" development would be for every "nation" to have its own nation-state with its own language, the existence of **unassimilated** minority groups, of several "nations" within The Nation is seen as leading in a "natural" way to fragmentation: a complete or partial disintegration of the nation-state, with the formation of several new nation-states or some kind of a federal structure as a result. Since a nation-state is "indivisible" (e.g. in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982, Article 3 - see note 6), this usually is not allowed.

I will not enter the mammoth discussion about definitions of states, nations, nation-states or ethnic groups and the relationships between them (see e.g. Riggs 1985, but also Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1991, Hroch 1985, Smith 1983 and Tilly (ed.) 1975). But an interesting point for a discussion about language and self-determination is that all definitions of **STATE, NATION, or NATION-STATE** which I have checked and which mention anything about communication between the people belonging to the entity in question, talk about a (common, unifying, developed, official) LANGUAGE for the entity. None of them use DIALECT, VERNACULAR or PATOIS in their definitions, the implication being that people who speak the same dialect, vernacular or patois do not (or cannot) form a nation or a state or a nation-state.

**In order to form a nation or a state there has to be a language.**

Dialects (or vernaculars or patois - hereinafter "dialect" stands for all three) are not seen as developed enough to fulfil all the linguistic functions of a nation or a state. Having a language, as opposed to a dialect, thus becomes symbolic of a nation and a state, and even a people, in much the same way as a national flag, a national anthem, etc, are symbolic of the state. In the same way, small "national languages" were in a further evolutionary process beyond nations, towards a unified world, seen to "be increasingly confined to domestic use, and even there they will tend to be treated like an old piece of inherited family furniture, something that we treat with veneration even though it has not much practical use" (Karl Kautsky, quoted in Hobsbawm 1991, 36). Ideas of "a single world language, no doubt coexisting with national **languages reduced to** the domestic and sentimental role of **dialects**" (Hobsbawm 1991, 38, my emphasis) also confirmed the insufficiency of dialects as opposed to languages for the nation-building (and one-unified-world-building) process.

Every state thus "needs" a (highly developed) language which can function as its **official** language, regardless of whether this is formalized in its constitution or not. If it does not have one which is "developed" enough, it may borrow one from a "developed" nation-state, often the old colonial power. This is also often done if the state has several candidates, the implication being that a state only has **one** official language (or two or, at the most, three - see Pattanayak's criticism of this Western idea, 1986). The other languages, which by implication are not "developed" enough, may then be designated **national** languages, or they may be designated dialects and not play any official role, or they may be ignored or their existence denied altogether.

But if every state needs a language, is the opposite also true? Does every language need a state?

### **3.2 DOES EVERY LANGUAGE NEED ITS OWN STATE?**

There are, according to linguists' present appreciation, approximately 7,000 languages in the world (there is a huge literature on the topic, but the exact number is still unclear, see below), whereas the number of states is less than 250, depending on how a state is defined. If we were to believe in the myth of the nation-state as the most developed form of social organisation, and if the principle of self-determination were to be applied fully, so that every language group (every "nation") were to have their own nation-state, the present states would disintegrate into around 7,000 states. Since there are speakers of more than one language in every single one of the present less-than 250 states, and since the geographical areas for the 6,800 new nation-states would have to come from the present nation-states, that would mean the disintegration of every state in the present world. The belief in a nation state, coupled with an acceptance of a principle of self-determination (regardless of how it is defined), contains a serious

tension: acting according to **both** these beliefs and principles at the same time necessarily leads to the disintegration of all present nation states.

Very few nation-states can be expected to voluntarily accept this type of disintegration. There are many different ways of avoiding this disintegration. One which the international community is using at present is to **redefine and restrict the concept of self-determination** - and our symposium is an example of this approach (see also Eide 1990, 1991, Palley 1984). Another one is **reducing the number of potential nations**. This includes **preventing groups from acquiring or maintaining their own languages as one of the central prerequisites needed for nation-building**. "Old" minorities who already exist on the territory of the nation-state, can be "starved" into assimilation, at the same time as assimilationist educational and other policies attempt to prevent the creation of new "national" minorities from immigrated, settler or refugee minorities. Reducing the number of languages and thus potential nation-states is in fact being attempted in a variety of ways.

### **3.3 REDUCING THE NUMBER OF LANGUAGES AND THUS POTENTIAL NATION-STATES**

I will mention three ways of reducing the number of languages as prerequisites for nation-states and discuss some of them briefly. The three ways are:

1. Physical genocide
2. Linguistic genocide, including assimilating linguistic minorities by giving them (some) economic and political rights but not linguistic and cultural human rights, especially in education or, vice versa, by giving them (some) linguistic and cultural human rights but not economic and political rights.
3. Making languages invisible by labelling them dialects, vernaculars or patois

#### **3.3.1 Physical genocide**

The most dramatic way of reducing the number of (potential) nations is physical genocide. The prevention and punishment of **physical genocide** is regulated by a UN Convention, but physical genocide is nevertheless attempted in relation to some groups (see contributions in this volume for some examples).

#### **3.3.2 Linguistic genocide**

Another way of reducing the number of possible nation-states is to commit **linguistic genocide**, which would be actively) **killing a language without killing the speakers**, as in physical genocide, or, through passivity, **letting a language die** (see Juan Cobarrubias taxonomy (1983) where he discusses the following 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). Unsupported coexistence mostly also leads to minority languages dying.

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 a serious crime against humanity (see Capotorti 1979). When the Convention was accepted, Article 3, which covered linguistic and cultural genocide, was vetoed by some nation states (the "great powers"), and it is thus *not included* in the final Convention of 1948. What remains, however, is **a definition of linguistic genocide**, which most states then in the UN were prepared to accept. Linguistic genocide is defined (in Art. 3, 1) as

"Prohibiting 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".

The use of a minority language can be prohibited overtly and directly, through laws, imprisonment, torture, killings and threats, as in Turkey today vis-a-vis the Kurds (e.g. Human Rights in Kurdistan 1989, Helsinki Watch Update 1990, Besikci 1989, (Ali) Bucak 1989, Rumpf 1989). The use of a minority language can also be prohibited covertly, more indirectly, through ideological and structural means, as in the educational systems of most European and North American countries (see Cummins 1984, 1989a, Cummins and Danesi 1990, Cummins 1994, Hernández-Chaávez 1994, Skutnabb-Kangas 1984, 1990a, in press a, b, for details).

My claim is that 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 no bilingual teachers who are authorized to use the languages of the minority children as the media 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 and in the US, Canada and Australia. Immigrant minority education in these countries is thus guilty of linguistic genocide, as defined by the UN. So is the education that most indigenous first nations have had and that many of them still have (see e.g. Hamel 1994a, b, Harris 1990, Hernández-Chaávez 1994, Jordan 1988, Marainen 1988, Stairs 1988, Vorih and Rosier 1978).

A more covert way of making languages disappear at the same time as the state retains its legitimacy in the eyes of (most of) its citizens and the international community, seems thus to be for a state to observe (or to be seen as observing) several of the basic human rights for all its citizens, including minorities, but to deny minorities those human rights which are most central for reproducing

a minority group as a distinctive group, namely linguistic and cultural human rights. This has been the preferred strategy of most Western states. It can be seen in their opposition to any binding, promotion-oriented linguistic rights, especially in education, in international and European covenants (7).

It can also be seen in the fairly irrational and scientifically unsoundly based opposition to any type of maintenance education for minorities, especially migrant minorities, in Western states (see Cummins 1994 for an analysis of the USA). The lack of linguistic and cultural rights has been hoped to lead to the assimilation of minorities and thus to a reduction of possible nation-builders.

The opposite strategy, granting (some) linguistic and cultural human rights to minorities but denying them (many) economic and political rights, seems to have been used in many ex-communist or socialist countries, or, for instance, to some extent in South Africa and earlier in Namibia (see e.g. Rannut 1994, Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas and Africa 1985). This has been thought to lead to a voluntary "merging" of languages and cultures (a Soviet version of the melting pot, see Rannut 1994), with first the élites from the minority groups and later others, assimilating into the larger community in order to get access to more political power and material resources. Here also a reduction of possible nation-builders has been attempted.

The difference between the way that such countries as Turkey and for instance Sweden, the US or Canada commit linguistic genocide lies in that it is done more openly and brutally in Turkey (see Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1994) whereas it is more covert and sophisticated in Sweden, the US and Canada (Skutnabb-Kangas 1991a; see also Schierup 1992 and Ålund 1992 for critical accounts of Swedish multicultural policy). Covert linguicide (e.g. of the type that most Western states use in their educational systems) appears to be extremely effective, as compared with the overt version, as in Turkey. Within 2-4 generations, there are fewer speakers of most minority languages in these countries than in more openly linguicidal countries. Kurds still speak Kurdish and resist linguistic oppression, whereas many former Spanish-speakers in the USA have assimilated. 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.

### **3.3.3 Making languages invisible by labelling them dialects, vernaculars or patois**

A third way of reducing the number of possible nation-states by reducing the number of languages, is to hierarchize different groups which might want to form a nation and therefore eventually a nation-state, through **labelling** them so that **only some groups are seen as possessing the necessary prerequisite, a language**, whereas others are labelled as not possessing a language, but only a way of

communicating, an idiom, which is **not** a language. This idiom then has to be called something else, in order to differentiate it from a language. This labelling process is in fact one of the joint strategies used in many of the "-ism"s regulating power relationships in the world.

Labels are (or should be) a matter of negotiation. As long as dominant groups can maintain a monopoly of defining the Others, the decolonisation of the mind, needed for real economic, political, cultural and linguistic decolonisation, is difficult to achieve.

I will first look at the definitions of **language, dialect, vernacular** and **patois**, and show how these definitions, through their connotations, participate in *creating the opposition* between **the SELF, US** (speakers of a language; therefore worthy a nation-state of our own) and **the OTHER, THEM** (speakers of a dialect/vernacular/patois; therefore to be subsumed under a nation-state) and in hierarchizing them. We, Self, speak languages, They, the Other, speak only dialects, vernaculars or patois. Therefore, We have nations, the Other has tribes.

I will also give a few examples from **sexist and racist discourses** where males and "whites" are defined as the developed, positive, neutral norm and women and "blacks", as the undeveloped, negative, deficient deviant from the norm. I show that the same process is happening in defining a **language**, as opposed to how a dialect, a vernacular or a patois are defined.

Then I will look at whether it is in fact possible to differentiate between languages on the one hand and dialects/vernaculars/patois on the other hand in this hierarchical way on the basis of **linguistic** criteria. I show that there are no LINGUISTIC criteria for differentiating between a language and a dialect. In fact the **main criterion** for whether something is a dialect of another language or a separate language is the relative **political power of the speakers of that language/dialect**. A language is a dialect, a vernacular or a patois with an army, or a language is a dialect with state borders.

### 3.3.3.1. HOW IS THE OPPOSITION AND THE HIERARCHIZATION OF "US" (speakers of a language) VERSUS "THEM" (speakers of a dialect/vernacular/patois) CREATED: CONNOTATIONS OF LANGUAGE AS OPPOSED TO DIALECT/VERNACULAR/PATOIS.

In most "-ismic" discourses, for instance in a racist discourse, a negative image of the Other is created. At the same time, the discourses also construct Self as a positive counter-image of the Other, as mirroring the opposite of the negative Other (see e.g. Miles 1989). This positive Self is constructed as the self-evident norm, towards which the Other should strive. As long as the Other is different, the Other is seen as deficient, as an undeveloped or underdeveloped Self. If the Other wants to develop and get more power and material resources, it must annihilate itself, by either



disappearing or by acceding to being completely subsumed by Self, becoming like Self, assimilating into Self (8). This is also reflected in the language used to describe Other and Self.

We see this in sexism, where women were earlier and are still sometimes seen as undeveloped men (e.g. penis-envy, or using male behaviour as the norm, in, for instance, psychological tests and in clothing). The linguistic concomitant is seen in male forms in language being used as "gender-neutral" (as in Rights of Man, you guys) or as the unmarked form (heir/ heiress; doctor/ female doctor). "Man" and many other male forms are in dictionary definitions seen as both referring to males and also sometimes subsuming females, while the opposite is almost never the case. "Man" is said to mean sometimes a male, and sometimes both male and female, whereas "woman" only means female and never both female and male. Definitions of males are mostly presented as neutral and independent, and most of the connotations are positive, whereas the connotations of many words denoting females are negative and/or present females as dependent, as mostly existing only in relation to others, as somebody's daughters, sisters, wives, lovers, mothers. Thus a hierarchy between female/ male is created. The hierarchization also prevents especially males from accepting and cherishing the "female" side in males (because it is seen as negative) and from seeing the characteristics which males and females share, meaning unnecessary either/or polarities are created.

We see the same happening in racist discourse, where for instance the words chosen to describe people on the basis of their presumed skin colour are more ideological than "realistic". I have extremely seldom seen a "black" person, and my own skin colour is certainly not "white". The connotations of and synonyms for black are all negative ("lacking hue and brightness, soiled or stained with dirt, gloomy, pessimistic, dismal, deliberately harmful, inexcusable, boding ill, sullen or hostile, threatening, without any moral quality or goodness, evil, wicked, disgrace, grotesque, morbid, unpleasant, undesirable, substandard, potentially dangerous, illegal or underground, deliberately false or intentionally misleading", all these just picked out from one modern dictionary, Random House 1987, pp. 215-216). Most of the connotations of "white" are positive: "of the color of pure snow, decent, honourable, dependable, auspicious or fortunate, morally pure, innocent, without malice, harmless" (Random House, p. 2167). Thus, again, a hierarchy between "white" and "black" is created. If, instead of these ideological terms, more realistic labels were used (for instance "pig-pink" about us so-called whites), the connotations would be very different. Linguistic labels thus participate in creating the images of Self and the Other, positing the Self as the positive norm and the Other as a negative counterpart, hierarchizing Self and the Other, and polarizing the relationship towards either/or.

We see the same happening in the manner in which a **language** is defined, as opposed to how a **dialect**, a **vernacular** or a **patois** are defined in dictionaries. Languages are defined positively or

neutrally as the general, abstract, unspoken norm, whereas dialects, vernaculars and patois are defined partly negatively, with connotations of some kind of deficiency, commonness, lack of cultivation and civilisation, partly as undeveloped or underdeveloped forms of communication, something to be got rid of, to be subsumed under languages, in the same way as female forms or women are (supposed to be) subsumed under male forms or men.

Let us look at the definitions from one contemporary dictionary from 1987:

**"LANGUAGE** 1. a body of words and the systems for their use common to a people who are of the same community or nation, the same geographical area or the same cultural tradition ...3. the system of linguistic signs or symbols considered in the abstract (as opposed to **speech**). 4. any set or system of such symbols as used in a more or less uniform fashion by a number of people, who are thus enabled to communicate intelligibly with one another. ...13. a nation or people considered in terms of their speech...

LANGUAGE, DIALECT, JARGON, VERNACULAR refer to patterns of vocabulary, syntax, and usage characteristic of communities of various sizes and types. LANGUAGE is applied to the general pattern of a people or race: **the English language**. DIALECT is applied to certain forms or varieties of a language, often those that provincial communities or special groups retain (or develop) even after a standard has been established (**Scottish dialects**)... A VERNACULAR is the authentic natural pattern of speech, now usually on the informal level, used by persons indigenous to a certain community, large or small." (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged, 1987, New York: Random House, p. 1081)

**"DIALECT** 1. **Ling**[uistically] a variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by features of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, and by its use by a group of speakers who are set off from others geographically or socially. 2. a provincial, rural, or socially distinct variety of a language that differs from the standard language, esp. when considered as substandard ... 4. a language considered as one of a group that have a common ancestor: **Persian, Latin, and English are Indo-European dialects**... **Syn**[onyms] 2. idiom, patois." (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged, 1987, New York: Random House, pp. 546-547)

**"PATOIS** ... 1. a regional form of a language, esp. of French differing from the standard, literary form of the language. 2. A rural, provincial form of speech ... F[rench] lit. clumsy speech; akin to OF **patoier** to handle clumsily, deriv. of **pate** paw." (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged, 1987, New York: Random House, p. 1421).

**"VERNACULAR** ... 1. (of language) native or indigenous (opposed to

**literary** or **learned**). 2. expressed or written in the native language of a place, as literary works: **a vernacular poem**. 3. using such a language: **a vernacular speaker**...5. using plain, everyday, ordinary language... 9. the native speech or language of a place... 12. the plain variety of language in everyday use by ordinary people....15. any medium or mode of expression that reflects popular taste or indigenous styles... L[atin] **vernacul(us)** household, domestic, native (appar. adj.use of **vernaculus**, dim[inutive] of **verna** slave born in the master's household ...) (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged, 1987, New York: Random House, p. 2114)

Just as the underdeveloped Other has tribes, We the developed Self have nations. The Other has chiefs, Self has presidents or kings. The Other has primitive rituals, Self has civilized ceremonies. The Other has medicine men, Self has doctors. When the Other comes to our country, the Others' children become NEP- or LEP-children (No English Proficiency or Limited English Proficiency) or LOTEs (Languages Other Than English) or NESBs (Non-English Speaking Background) or "fremmedsprogede børn" (foreign-speaking children). They are defined with Self as the norm, negatively, in terms of what they are not, do not know or do not represent, whereas Self is taken as the self-evident norm. What the Others **are, know** and **represent**, is made invisible, negated, or reconstructed as a non-resource, a handicap, stigmatized as of less value. We, Self, speak languages, they, the Other, speak only dialects, vernaculars or patois.

Labels used reflect the power to define oneself, to use endo-definitions, or the lack of power to define oneself, having to accept exo-definitions, somebody else's definitions of oneself. In a situation where speakers of maybe only 5 percent of the world's languages live in states where their languages are official languages (Skutnabb-Kangas 1990a) and where they have the power to define themselves, to use their own endo-definitions of themselves, speakers of the majority of the world's languages have to accept an exo-definition. Demanding the right to define oneself and have this definition accepted and respected by others is one form of self-determination. Labels are a matter of negotiation. As long as dominant groups keep a monopoly of defining the Others, the decolonisation of the mind, needed for real economic, political, cultural and linguistic decolonisation, is difficult to achieve.

But is it not the case that all or most of those languages which are developed enough (i.e. which **are** languages and not dialects) already are official languages of states? Are not the others more primitive, less developed? Is it not correct to call them dialects, vernaculars or patois? Is not the boundary between a dialect and a language clear?

C.2. IS WHAT YOU SPEAK A LANGUAGE, OR IS IT ONLY A DIALECT/  
VERNACULAR/ PATOIS? TWO DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, OR DIALECTS OF THE SAME  
LANGUAGE?

Skutnabb-Kangas

Recently I asked an American teacher and his senior high school students who work extremely actively with multilingualism and multiculturalism how many languages they thought there were in the world. The teacher's guess was 300, the students' initial guesses varied between 200 and 500. After I had given them the "correct" figure, I asked how many states they thought there were. After their underestimation of the number of languages they obviously wanted to be on the safe side, and the teacher's first guess was 2,000. They had not been given enough knowledge to counteract the invisibilization of languages, represented by calling them dialects (which they also did: "all those dialects in Africa"). This also makes it difficult for them to counteract e.g. U.S. English arguments about multilingualism leading to disintegration and conflict.

There are, according to our present appreciation, approximately 7,000 languages in the world. The exact number is unclear mainly because the concept of language is unclear. We have no clear definitions about what forms of communication should be called "two different languages" and what are "varieties of the same language". These varieties can be **geographical varieties, DIALECTS, social varieties, SOCIOLECTS, gender-based varieties, SEXOLECTS or GENDERLECTS, age-based varieties, situational or stylistic varieties**). Varieties of communication can also be called VERNACULARS or PATOIS. For some varieties which are called vernaculars or patois, a corresponding higher variety is thought to exist, and this high variety is then called the LANGUAGE (for instance, peasants in Bretagne or Normandie in France can be said to speak a French patois whereas professors in Paris can be said to speak the French language). For some vernaculars there is no "high" variety. This mostly means that the language has not been reduced to writing (see Mühlhäusler 1991 on some of the negative consequences of doing this) or at least not standardized.

There are no **LINGUISTIC** criteria for differentiating between a language and a dialect, or vernacular or patois (for an elaboration of all the criteria, see Skutnabb-Kangas 1984, 59-64):

**Structural similarity or dissimilarity** can only tell apart very dissimilar languages. Thus it is easy to confirm that, for instance, Chinese and English or Kurdish and Turkish are clearly different languages because their linguistic structures are so dissimilar. But despite being structurally very close to each other, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian are called different languages. Serbian and Croatian are even closer to each other but they are now called two different languages. Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi are structurally and lexically very similar, Kannada and Marathi are structurally almost the same but lexically dissimilar. Structural similarity can thus be used in most cases to differentiate between two languages only in cases which are so clear that no linguists would be needed anyway to solve the problem. In other cases, linguistic criteria are not of much use.

**Mutual intelligibility** has also been used as a criterion: if you understand a "language" without being taught that "language", it is a dialect (or another variety) of your own "language", or your own "language" is a dialect of the one you can understand. If you do not understand it, it is a different language. But this criterion is far from being unambiguous (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1984 for details). Some factors which influence intelligibility will be enumerated below.

- Let us say that speaker A understands B, and speaker B understands C, who in her turn understands D. On the other hand, speaker A does not understand C, and speaker B does not understand D. Where is the boundary then between language and dialect? Or if A understands B but B does not understand A (non-reciprocal intelligibility), are A and B dialects of the same language for speaker A who understands both, but two different languages for speaker B who does not understand both?

- **How well** do the speakers need to understand each other? Is "**semi-communication**" enough (Haugen 1966, 102) or must the understanding be "**complete**", and is it ever complete even between speakers of the same language?

- Should the speakers who test the criteria be **monolingual**? It is, for instance, easy for me, knowing Swedish, English and German, to understand some Dutch, without having been taught Dutch. Would Dutch then be a separate language for a monolingual Swedish-speaker who does not understand Dutch, but a dialect of Swedish or German or English for me?

- Is **oral** understanding enough, or should we rather use understanding of **writing** as a criterion? Or the opposite: is understanding writing enough, or should one also understand the oral mode? A Finn who has studied Swedish at school, understands some written Danish, but does not understand spoken Danish at all. Is oral Danish then a separate language from Swedish, while written Danish is a dialect of Swedish?

- Should the criterion be used only with language **spoken by a native speaker, with normal speed**, or can a **second language speaker** who speaks slowly also be used? When several SWAPO-teachers were asked after a two-week workshop in Zambia whose English was easy and whose difficult to understand, I came out as the easiest one to understand, whereas some native speakers of English were almost incomprehensible to them (and English is my fifth language).

- **Age, amount of formal schooling, amount of exposure to the language or to other languages in general, learning styles, courage, motivation and fatigue**, obviously also affect intelligibility, in many situations much more than the same language/different languages question.

Mutual intelligibility as a criterion thus discriminates well only in situations with structurally unrelated languages, as was the case with the structural linguistic criterion too.

**The SOCIAL FUNCTIONS** of languages, measured by, for instance, the speakers' own views on what are different languages, are based partly on the two linguistic criteria mentioned above (structural

similarity, mutual intelligibility), but mainly on extra-linguistic criteria.

In fact the **main criterion** for whether something is a dialect of another language or a separate language is the relative **POLITICAL POWER of the speakers of that language/dialect**. A language is thus a dialect, a vernacular or a patois with an army, or a language is a dialect with state borders.

The group with enough political power can tell another group:

"What **we** speak is a language, but what **you** speak is only a dialect of our language. Our language is fully developed, modern, rich, logical. But your dialect is primitive, underdeveloped, traditional, with poor vocabulary, emotional, irrational, not fit for education or administration, literature, thinking, or civilization" (for examples, see Phillipson 1992 and Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1986b, 1989a, in press b).

This is what the Turks tell the Kurds: Kurdish is an underdeveloped dialect of Turkish. The Kurds were for a long time called mountain Turks by representatives of the Turkish state, and the language they spoke was labelled a distorted dialect of Turkish which had been developing in isolation in the mountains and therefore had some special features not found in proper uncontaminated Turkish (see e.g. Clason and Baksi 1979). Kurdish of course is completely unrelated to Turkish, just as English to Chinese. In the Turkish/Kurdish case, a WE is created but consequently hierarchized: we are the same, but **you are a deficient WE** and therefore not fit to determine your fate.

Many of the claims about different Englishes (Nigerian, Indian, Black) belong to the same type. Both the WEness and especially the hierarchization have only fairly recently started to be questioned (e.g. Kachru 1986).

In the examples above, the group in power claims that the "dialect" is **a dialect, vernacular or patois of their own language**.

The group in power can also tell that the subordinated group's language is **just a dialect, vernacular or patois where no proper corresponding (high) language has been developed at all** (i.e. it is not claimed to be a dialect of **their** language). This second type of claim is still being used in relation to thousands of the world's languages which are small in numbers.

The group with enough political power can also tell another group the exact opposite to subsuming the dominated group's mode of communication under their own language:

"What we speak is just in some ways similar to your language, but it is a language of its own. Both are two completely separate languages".

In this case, a possible or earlier WE is separated into two or more entities, and the existence of two separate entities (two nations with a language of their own) is then often used as a legitimation of secession and, often, hierarchization. This is what is happening with Serbocroat just now, in the early 1990s.

It should perhaps also be pointed out that **there are no "primitive" languages**. Every idiom in the world, spoken natively by a group of people, is logical, cognitively complex and systematic. All such idioms (languages) are capable of functioning as media of education, provided enough resources are used to develop the vocabulary in scientific fields. Even languages which have never been written can be used and have been successfully used as media of education. Every one of the world's 7,000 languages could also be developed for official use, provided enough resources are granted for this work.

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 ("partial support of specific language functions" or "adoption as an official language" in Cobarrubias' taxonomy above). The gulf between the good intentions expressed in preambles of international or regional documents and the **de facto** dearth of linguistic human rights can be understood as symptomatic of the tension between, on the one hand, a wish on the part of (nation) states to secure or give the impression of securing human rights to minorities, and on the other hand (nation) states denying linguistic and cultural human rights to minorities, because these are decisive for reproducing these minorities as minorities, which is seen as leading to the disintegration of the state.

It is therefore necessary to clarify how (speakers of) threatened languages can be supported **without this being perceived as undermining the position of the majority group** (Grin 1994) or the integrity of the state. At the same time it is necessary to dismantle the myth of a nation-state as the highest form of social organisation, and indeed renegotiate the concept of a state itself, and the need of states. The nation-state is currently under pressure from globalization, transnational regionalization and local decentralization, (democratic, root-seeking, environment-saving), and has probably outlived itself. States are no longer seen by many researchers as permanent constructions but negotiable relations. Linguicide as a strategy for preventing the disintegration of present day states has also become outmoded. Linguistic diversity at local levels is a necessary counterweight to the hegemony of a few "international" languages. The "world languages" should, just as roads and bridges, be seen as **tools** for communication of ideas and matter, but the creation of authentic ideas and products, instead of mass-products, is in most cases necessarily best done locally.

#### 4. LANGUAGE AS A MOBILIZING FACTOR IN ETHNIC CONFLICT: DOES GRANTING OF LINGUISTIC (and cultural) HUMAN RIGHTS LEAD TO

Skutnabb-Kangas

## THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE NATION STATE? LINGUISTIC GENOCIDE OR LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS?

"Interethnic cooperation and solidarity" between groups with different languages, "peaceful coexistence", is "at least as common and persistent as interethnic conflicts", according to Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1990, 39). But when conflict occurs, **language** is in many situations one of several factors **separating** the parties. In other conflicts, the parties **share a language** but differ on other counts. Bosnians shared a language with Serbs and Croats, but this did not prevent war. Thus there is no necessary **correlational relationship** between conflict and differences of language. But when difference of language coincides with conflict, does language play a **causal** role? In the first place, differences of language **cannot** in most contexts be said to "cause" war or even inter-ethnic conflict. "If and when ethnic hostility or rivalry occurs, there is generally a specific historical reason for it that relates to **political struggles over resources and power**" is Stavenhagen's assessment (1990, 39).

However, even if "the economic factor is seldom absent in ethnic conflict, it does **not** usually constitute any kind of triggering factor. Existential problems in a deeper sense are involved. The hatred that an ethnic group can develop against another group probably has less to do with competition **per se** and more with the risk of having to give up something of oneself, one's identity, in the struggle ... It is therefore more a question of survival in a cultural rather than a material sense ... The horror of ethnocide is a more basic impulse than the struggle to reap economic benefits at the expense of another group", Björn Hettne claims (1987, 66-67, my translation). "To sum up, the problem is not that ethnic groups are different, but rather **the problem arises when they are no longer allowed to be different**, i.e. when they subjectively experience a threat to their own identity, a risk of ethnocide. This is a fundamental cause behind the politicising of ethnic identity." (ibid., 67). I see **lack** of linguistic rights as one of the causal factors in certain conflicts. I also see linguistic affiliation as a rightful mobilizing factor in conflicts with multiple causes where power and resources are unevenly distributed along linguistic and ethnic lines.

Language is for most ethnic groups one of the most important cultural core values. A threat to an ethnic group's language is thus a threat to the cultural and linguistic survival of the group. Lack of linguistic rights often prevents a group from achieving educational, economic and political equality with other groups. Injustice caused by **failure to respect linguistic human rights** is thus in several ways one of the important factors which can contribute to inter-ethnic conflict - and often does.

This means that I see language-related issues as potential causes of conflict **only** in situations where groups lack linguistic rights **and/or** political/economic rights, **and** where the unequal distribution



of political and/or economic power follows linguistic and ethnic lines. Granting linguistic rights to minorities **reduces** conflict potential, rather than creating it.

Notes:

1. Part 1 of this article has been elaborated more in Skutnabb-Kangas 1988b, 1994a, b, in press a, b. Part 4 draws heavily on Phillipson, Rannut and Skutnabb-Kangas 1994.

2. For an elaboration and dissection of this ideology, see Skutnabb-Kangas, in press a, b, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, in press a).

3. On "white" and "pigpink", see below in 3.3.3.1. Many of the terms used in the table are ideological terms where the common denominator is that they, through glorification, stigmatization or rationalisation (e.g. setting "A team" as the norm towards which "B team" should strive) participate in legitimating (or delegitimizing) the unequal power relationship between "A team" and "B team".

4. The name which is used of an individual or a group (e.g. "a Kurd"/"Kurds") is often taken as an ethnic designation, an ethnonym - name used about an ethnic group (representative). As Yu.Bromley (1984) shows, the name **can** be an **ethnonym** (a Kurd = belongs to the Kurdish ethnos), but it can also be a **politonym** (= belongs to the Kurdish political entity, i.e. is a citizen of a Kurdish state, regardless of ethnicity), a **toponym** (= lives in or comes from the geographical area of Kurdistan, regardless of citizenship or ethnic group, i.e. a territorial designation). It could also be a **linguonym** (= speaks the Kurdish language).

It seems to me that the discussion about **ethnos or demos** as beneficiaries of self-determination, sometimes becomes confused, because **demos** for some people seems to denote a **toponymic** group (especially after the shift in the 1960s and 1970s from ethnicity or language as a basis for the right to statehood to territory as the main basis), for others a **politonymic** group, which in a way should render a discussion of the right to self-determination of a **demos** meaningless. For still others, they denote both **toponymic** and **politonymic** groups. The discussion of a definition of "peoples" could also benefit from keeping these concepts apart. It is often difficult because the same word (e.g. a Turk) can be used to designate all four.

Merging the meanings of all four into one concept and/or word can but need not also signify an extreme nation-state ideology, i.e. everybody is a Turk who lives in the territory called Turkey. This Turk is a Turkish citizen, s/he is (= **must** be) ethnically Turkish, and speaks (= must speak) Turkish only.

Internal self-determination can then concern rights to **linguonymic**, **ethnonymic** and even **toponymic** groups/peoples, whereas self-determination to **politonymic** peoples leads to external self-determination.

All the different "-nyms" can be endonyms or exonyms. A minimal human rights standard would require that Turkey accepts the Kurdish

endoethnonym (Kurds), rather than trying to impose their exoethnonym (Mountain Turks) on the Kurds (see also Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, this volume and Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1994).

5. As quantum physics tells us, nothing can in fact be a disencumbered tool. The observer effect - see e.g. Pagels 1982, Wolf 1991 - means not only that the phenomenon to be observed (e.g. "the world") changes **because** it is being observed, but also that we **create** it (make it happen or materialise) by observing it. And speaking about something is observing it, through language.

6. During the last two years, the Turkish government has attempted to persuade world opinion that the oppression of the Kurdish language has ended. Study of the Turkish constitution (1982) tells a different story - and the constitution is still valid. The language of Turkey is still Turkish. "The state of Turkey is in its state territory and state citizens an indivisible whole. Its language is Turkish." (Constitution, Article 3). Other formulations that prohibit the use of languages other than Turkish, are also still valid: "No language prohibited by law may be used for disclosure or publication of ideas and opinions. Written or printed materials, records, tapes, videotapes as well as other means of expression that are in violation of this prohibition will be confiscated..." (Constitution, Article 26/3). This is clearly aimed at Kurdish. Even if the law 2932 (stating what a language prohibited by law is) was repealed 12th April 1991, both the constitution and the anti-terrorist law passed 12th April 1991, still prohibit Kurdish (for details of the laws mentioned, see Phillipson, this symposium, Rumpf 1989 and Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1994; see also Saado 1989).

7. There have been numerous suggestions for including binding language-related rights in international human rights instruments (i.e. not only recommendations, like, for instance, CSCE-process documents - CSCE = Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe). Thus far, this has not succeeded. It seems that it is often the same states objecting to international or regional 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, did not grant the same rights to minorities in their own countries, and voted down proposed internationally binding rights (Capotorti 1979, 16-26). The same countries vetoed Article 3 on linguistic genocide (see above) after the Second World War. Greece, Turkey and the United States, for instance, have not signed the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (with Art. 27, the best formulation for linguistic rights so far). Germany, and the United Kingdom have not ratified its Optional Protocol. At the CSCE Copenhagen meeting on the Human Dimension (June 1990) Bulgaria, France, Greece, Rumania and Turkey "did not agree with some far-reaching formulations for the benefit of minorities" (Suppan and Heubergerová 1992, 68). When the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was accepted (June 1992), France, Turkey and United Kingdom abstained, Greece voted against (**Contact Bulletin** 9:2, 1992, 1).

8. Minorities resisting this forced assimilation are in fact seen as the major **cause** for ethnic conflict by some researchers, even by some whose analyses of ethnic conflict are in other ways subtle, e.g. Lars Dencik who acknowledges the power relationships in ethnic conflicts also by pointing out that "it is decisive to the analysis of a particular conflict who defines it - the actors involved or some external body" (1992, 143), then goes on to define conflict situations completely from external observers' point of view. When the actors see a conflict where an external observer does not, this is according to Dencik because the **actors** are not adequately informed (1992, 143). Likewise, when the actors perceive the conflict as a zero-sum game whereas the external body describes it as a non-zero-sum conflict, the **actors** may according to Dencik be "so blinded by their conflict attitudes that they do not perceive the cooperative aspect of the conflict situation" (ibid.). Thus in both cases the external observers' definition of the situation is implicitly taken as the objectively correct one, whereas the actors are seen inadequately informed or blinded. Dencik also sees it as important to study how the **minority** group changes to "continuously more instrumental conflict behaviour" (ibid.), whereas the **majority** group's conflict behaviours are not mentioned. Consequently, it is the **minority** group which, according to Dencik, has to change, to become de-ethnicized (i.e. assimilate), in order for the conflict to be solved; it is minority groups "persisting as distinguished ethnic groups" that becomes the problem (1992, 146).

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