

209. Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2002). Linguicide, ecocide and linguistic human rights - education as a villain or a partial solution? In Τρέσσου, Ευαγγελία / Μητακίδου, Σούλα (επιμ). Η ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΜΑΘΗΜΑΤΙΚΩΝ. Εκπαίδευση γλωσσικών μειονοτήτων. [Tressou, Evangelia / Mitakidou, Soula (eds). *Education of Language Minorities: the teaching of language and mathematics*. ISBN 960-374-191-4]. Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 606-630. (210 is the same paper in Greek; 209b is the same paper with some additions partially in Swedish).

ABSTRACT

Languages are today being murdered faster than ever before in human history. Optimistic realistic prognoses claim that only half of today's oral languages will exist around 2100; pessimistic but realistic accounts say that 90% of the world's oral languages may be dead or moribund (no longer learned by children) in a hundred years' time. The media and the educational systems are the most important direct agents in language murder today; indirectly the culprits are the global economic and political systems.

After a short overview of the situation of the world's languages, I will discuss three types of argument for why the world's linguistic diversity should be maintained. The first is the relationship between linguistic diversity (LD) and biodiversity, and threats to them both. LD is disappearing relatively much faster than biodiversity. Linguistic and cultural diversity on the one hand and biodiversity on the other hand are correlated - where one type is high, the other one is too, and vice versa. New research suggests mounting evidence for the hypothesis that the relationship might also be causal: the two types of diversities seem to mutually enforce and support each other. If the long-lasting co-evolution which people have had with their environments since time immemorial is abruptly disrupted, without nature (and people) getting enough time to adjust and adapt, we are also seriously undermining our chances of life on earth because we are murdering the linguistic (and thereby mostly also the cultural) diversity which is our treasury for historically developed knowledge, including knowledge about some of the most vulnerable and most biologically diverse environments in the world (see Terralingua's web-site <http://www.terralingua.org>).

The second type of argument claims that the future belongs to multilinguals even economically. High level multilinguals do better at a group level than monolinguals on tests measuring certain aspects of creativity, cognitive flexibility and divergent thinking, and they have access to knowledges and ideas in several languages. In an information society multilingual linguistic and cultural capital leads to creativity and innovation, and these precede investments. When half the world has high competence in English, the laws of supply and demand predict that the price goes down: English will be a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for good jobs - like literacy yesterday and computer skills today. More varied linguistic competencies are needed . and these are what Europe is killing or not promoting via schools. Monolingual English speakers will be great losers, fit for pathological museums.

The third type of argument claims that oppression of the linguistic human rights (LHRs) of indigenous peoples and minorities leads to conflicts which can then be labelled ethnic. Granting LHRs prevents conflict. Present provisions in human rights law will then be assessed: to what extent do they contain LHRs, especially in education, rights which are necessary to counteract the threat towards the maintenance of LD. The result is that is that the most vital LHRs are not protected and much of the education of minorities and indigenous peoples conforms to the UN definitions on genocide by 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'. Learning new languages should be additive rather than subtractive: it should add to people's linguistic repertoires; new languages, including lingua francas, should not be learned at the cost of the diverse mother tongues but in addition to them. 'Killer languages' (and English as the foremost among them), when learned subtractively rather than additively, pose serious threats towards the LD of the world.

For more detail, see Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (1999). **Linguistic genocide in education - or worldwide diversity and human rights?** Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates). My web-site <<http://babel.ruc.dk/~tovesku/>> has an outline and a list of contents.

5. The human rights system does not prevent linguistic genocide

The education of indigenous peoples and minorities in large parts of the world is today being organised in direct contradiction of our best scientific knowledge of how it should be organised, and so is the education of both minorities and numerically large but politically dominated groups in most African and many Asian countries (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000 for details in the claims; see Brock-Utne 1999 for Africa). Most of this education participates in committing linguistic and cultural genocide, according to Articles II (e) and (b) of the 1948 UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide:

Article II(e), *'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'*; and
Article II(b), *'causing serious bodily **or mental** harm to members of the group'*; emphasis added).

Likewise, most minority education is guilty of linguistic genocide according to the 1948 special definition (not part of the present Convention)

Article III(1) *'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'*.

Pirjo Janulf (1998) shows in a longitudinal study that of those Finnish immigrant minority members in Sweden who had had Swedish-medium education, not one spoke any Finnish to their own children. Even if they themselves might not have forgotten their Finnish completely, their children were certainly forcibly transferred to the majority group, at least linguistically. This is what happens to millions of speakers of threatened languages all over the world. There are no schools or classes teaching through the medium of the threatened indigenous or minority languages. The transfer to the majority language speaking group is not voluntary: alternatives do not exist, and parents do not have enough reliable information about the long-term consequences of the various choices. 'Prohibition' can be direct or indirect. If there are no minority teachers in the pre-schools/schools and if the minority languages are not used as the main media of education, the use of these languages is indirectly prohibited in daily intercourse/in schools, i.e. it is a question of linguistic genocide.

Assimilationist submersion education where minorities are taught through the medium of dominant languages, causes mental harm and leads to the students using the dominant language with their own children later on, i.e. over a generation or two the children are linguistically and often in other ways too forcibly transferred to a dominant group. My latest book **Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?** (2000) provides hundreds of examples of the prohibition, the harm it causes, and the forcible transfer (see also, e.g. Baugh 2000, Cummins 1996, 2000, Kouritzin 1999, Lowell & Devlin 1999, Williams 1998, Wong Fillmore 1991). Formal education which is **subtractive**, i.e. which teaches children something of a dominant language **at the cost** of their first language, is genocidal. By comparison, learning new languages, including the dominant languages which most children obviously see is in their best interest to learn, should happen additively, **in addition to** their own languages. Educational LHRs which guarantee additive language learning are also what is needed for preventing linguistic genocide and for linguistic diversity to be maintained on earth. And the knowledge about how to organise education that respects LHRs certainly exists (see, e.g., Huss 1999, Huss et al., forthcoming, May (ed.) 1999, Skutnabb-Kangas (ed.) 1995, just to mention a few).

If the **Hague Recommendations** about educational LHRs were to be implemented, linguistic genocide in education could be stopped (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

But international and European binding Covenants, Conventions and Charters give very little support to linguistic human rights in education (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1994). Language gets in them a much poorer treatment than other central human characteristics. Often language

disappears completely in binding educational paragraphs, for instance, in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948) where the paragraph on education (26) does not refer to language at all. Similarly, the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (adopted in 1966 and in force since 1976), having mentioned language on a par with race, colour, sex, religion, etc. in its general Article (2.2), does explicitly refer to 'racial, ethnic or religious groups' in its educational Article (13.1). However, here it omits reference to language or linguistic groups:

... education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all **racial, ethnic or religious groups** ... (emphasis added)

When language IS in educational paragraphs of human rights instruments, the Articles dealing with education, especially the right to mother tongue medium education, are more vague and/or contain many more opt-outs and modifications than any other Articles (see, e.g., Kontra et al., eds, 1999; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994, 1995, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996a, b, 1999a, b, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994, 1997, 1998). I will show you just two examples of how language in education gets a different treatment from everything else. One is international, the other one European.

In the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities** from 1992 (adopted by the General Assembly in December 1992), most of the Articles use the obligating formulation 'shall' and have few let-out modifications or alternatives - except where linguistic rights in education are concerned. Compare the unconditional formulation in Article 1 about identity, with the education Article 4.3:

1.1. States *shall protect* the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and *shall encourage* conditions for the *promotion* of that identity.

1.2. States *shall* adopt **appropriate** legislative *and other* measures *to achieve those ends*.

4.3. States **should** take **appropriate** measures so that, **wherever possible**, persons belonging to minorities have **adequate** opportunities to learn their mother tongue **or** to have instruction in their mother tongue. (emphases added, '*obligating*' in italics, '**opt-outs**' in bold).

Clearly the formulation in Art. 4.3 raises many questions. What constitutes 'appropriate measures', or 'adequate opportunities', and who is to decide what is 'possible'?

The Council of Europe **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** is from 1994 and Norway has ratified it. We again find that the Article covering medium of education is so heavily qualified that the minority is completely at the mercy of the state:

In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in **substantial** numbers, **if there is sufficient demand**, the parties shall **endeavour** to ensure, **as far as possible** and **within the framework of their education systems**, that persons belonging to those minorities have **adequate** opportunities for being taught in the minority language **or** for receiving instruction in this language (emphases added).

The Framework Convention has been criticised by both politicians and even international lawyers who are normally very careful in their comments, like Patrick Thornberry, Professor of Law at Keele University. His final general assessment of the provisions, after a careful comment on details, is:

Despite the presumed good intentions, the provision represents a low point in drafting a minority right; there is just enough substance in the formulation to prevent it becoming completely vacuous (Thornberry 1997: 356-357).

We can see a similar pattern of vague formulations, modifications and alternatives in the **European Charter**. A state can choose which paragraphs or subparagraphs it wishes to apply (a minimum of 35 is required). Again, the formulations in the education Article, 8, include a range of modifications, including 'as far as possible', 'relevant', 'appropriate', 'where necessary', 'pupils who so wish in a number considered sufficient', 'if the number of users of a regional or minority language justifies it', as well as a number of alternatives, as in 'to allow, encourage **or** provide teaching in **or** of the regional or minority language at all the appropriate stages of education' (emphases added). Of course there are real problems in writing binding formulations which are sensitive to local conditions. Still, it is clear that the opt-outs and alternatives in the Charter permit a reluctant state to meet the requirements in a minimalist way, which it can legitimate by claiming that a provision was not 'possible' or 'appropriate', or that numbers were not 'sufficient' or did not 'justify' a provision, or that it 'allowed' the minority to organise teaching of their language as a subject, at their own cost.

The conclusion is that we are still to see the right to education through the medium of the mother tongue become a human right. Still, the human rights system should protect people in the globalisation process rather than giving market forces free range. Human rights, especially economic and social rights, are, according to human rights lawyer Katarina Tomaševski (1996: 104), to act as **correctives to the free market**. The first international human rights treaty abolished slavery. Prohibiting slavery implied that **people** were not supposed to be treated as market commodities. ILO (The International Labour Organisation) has added that **labour** should not be treated as a commodity. But price-tags are to be removed from other areas too. Tomaševski claims (ibid., 104) that

The purpose of international human rights law is ... to overrule the law of supply and demand and remove price-tags from people and from necessities for their survival.

These necessities for survival include not only basic food and housing (which would come under economic and social rights), but also basics for the sustenance of a dignified life, including basic civil, political **and cultural** rights. It should, therefore, be in accordance with the spirit of human rights to grant people full linguistic human rights.

6. Alternatives that respect linguistic human rights in education and support multilingualism and linguistic diversity

Worldwide, there are some positive recent developments, though¹. I shall only mention the one which is most directly and concretely related to the education of minorities, **The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note** (1996), which have already been introduced. They represent an authoritative interpretation and concretisation of the minimum in present HRs standards (see also van der Stoep 1997, Rothenberger 1997). Even if the term used is "national minority", the guidelines also apply to other groups, for instance immigrated minorities, and one does NOT need to be a citizen in order to be protected by the guidelines (both these observations follow from the UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment on Article 27).

In the section 'The spirit of international instruments', bilingualism is seen as a right and responsibility for persons belonging to national minorities (Art. 1), and states are reminded not to interpret their obligations in a restrictive manner (Art. 3). In the section on 'Minority education at primary and secondary levels', mother tongue medium education is recommended at all levels, also in secondary education. This includes bilingual teachers in the dominant language as a second language (Articles 11-13). Teacher training is made a duty on the state (Art. 14) (see Table 10).

Table 10. Articles 11-14 and the Note on submersion education from The Hague

Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note

11) The first years of education are of pivotal importance in a child's development.

Educational research suggests that the medium of teaching at pre-school and kindergarten levels should ideally be the child's language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.

12) Research also indicates that in primary school the curriculum should ideally be taught in the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Towards the end of this period, a few practical or non-theoretical subjects should be taught through the medium of the State language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option.

13) In secondary school a substantial part of the curriculum should be taught through the medium of the minority language. The minority language should be taught as a subject on a regular basis. The State language should also be taught as a subject on a regular basis preferably by bilingual teachers who have a good understanding of the children's cultural and linguistic background. Throughout this period, the number of subjects taught in the State language, should gradually be increased. Research findings suggest that the more gradual the increase, the better for the child.

14) The maintenance of the primary and secondary levels of minority education depends a great deal on the availability of teachers trained in all disciplines in the mother tongue. Therefore, ensuing from the obligation to provide adequate opportunities for minority language education, States should provide adequate facilities for the appropriate training of teachers and should facilitate access to such training.

Finally, the Explanatory Note states that

[S]ubmersion-type approaches whereby the curriculum is taught exclusively through the medium of the State language and minority children are entirely integrated into classes with children of the majority are not in line with international standards (p. 5).

Finally, the Explanatory Note states that '[S]ubmersion-type approaches whereby the curriculum is taught exclusively through the medium of the State language and minority children are entirely integrated into classes with children of the majority are not in line with international standards' (p. 5). Remember that most of the education offered to indigenous and minority children in Europe and North America is submersion.

The last issue to be mentioned here is that having full legally guaranteed LHRs is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for languages to be maintained. Teresa McCarty and Lucille Watahomigie (1999) discuss the language education of the 'nearly two million American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians [who] reside in the USA, representing over 500 tribes and 175 distinct languages' (p. 79). The article starts with a denouncement of subtractive education. One of the important conclusions is that 'language rights have not guaranteed language maintenance, which ultimately depends on the home language choices of Native speakers' (91). What this means is that bottom-up initiatives are urgent. There must be incentives for people to transmit their own languages to the next generation, and these incentives need to be both affective and instrumental.

7. Linguistic and cultural ecologies

Finally, a few words about linguistic and cultural ecologies. The impact of the recent positive developments in counteracting linguistic genocide in education and the killing of linguistic diversity

is yet to be seen. We might learn from the history of killing biodiversity. Jared Diamond examines in the chapter 'The Golden Age That Never Was' in his 1992 book the evidence for people and cultures before us having completely ruined the prerequisites for their own life. They have destroyed their habitats and/or exterminated large numbers of species. This has happened in many places and it makes the 'supposed past Golden Age of environmentalism look increasingly mythical' (Diamond, 1992: 335). If we want to learn from it, and not make it happen on a **global** basis (this is our obvious risk today), we better heed his advice. Diamond claims (ibid., 335-336) the following (Table 11).

Table 11. When do people ruin their environment beyond repair, according to Jared Diamond?

'... small long-established, egalitarian societies tend to evolve conservationist practices, because they've had plenty of time to get to know their local environment and to perceive their own self-interest. Instead, damage is likely to occur when people suddenly colonize an unfamiliar environment (like the first Maoris and Eastern Islanders); or when people advance along a new frontier (like the first Indians to reach America), so that they can just move beyond the frontier when they've damaged the region behind; or when people acquire a new technology whose destructive power they haven't had time to appreciate (like modern New Guineans, now devastating pigeon populations with shotguns). Damage is also likely in centralized states that concentrate wealth in the hands of rulers who are out of touch with their environment'.

Summary of Diamond's factors:

1. Colonize an unfamiliar environment;
2. Advance along a new frontier;
3. Acquire a new technology whose destructive power people haven't had time to appreciate;
4. Centralized states that concentrate wealth in the hands of rulers who are out of touch with their environment'

As we can see, we have the perfect global prerequisites for ruining our planet beyond repair.

- Long-established small societies are breaking up, and, with urbanization and migration, people encounter new environments; factor 1.
- New technologies are more destructive than ever and results of biochemical and other experiments (like genetically modified crops) are taken into use before we know anything about the long-term effects on nature or people; factor 3.
- We have growing gaps and alienated elites; factor 4.
- And we do not have the new planets to move to when we have damaged this one; factor 2...

In terms of ruining our **linguistic and cultural** ecologies beyond repair, we know already that similar processes are at work. There are many similar analyses of destructive paradigms. Some researchers have also started the discussion trying to identify the languages-related devastating processes which are similar to the list of factors that Diamond has identified. I will here give one of them - this is my latest reworking of factors in two paradigms originally suggested by the Japanese scholar Yukio Tsuda (1994) In analyzing English language imperialism in Japan, he identifies two paradigms which he calls the Diffusion of English paradigm and the Ecology of Language paradigm. In his analysis of the spread of English Tsuda presents several other **factors related to this diffusion** (Maher & Yashiro's 1995 description about Japan seems to identify similar concomitants to the spread of English in Japan; so do Masaki Oda's writings; see also Honna, 1995). In Tsuda's alternative, the 'ecology of language' paradigm, he includes minimally bilingualism but hopefully multilingualism for all. Robert Phillipson and I have worked further on Tsuda's original suggestions (see our discussion in Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). Table 12 presents both paradigms in my latest version (2000), where I have added several new dimensions to Tsuda (see also his 1998). Obviously the list is very much of a 'goodies' and 'baddies' type. Still, too often there seems to be a correlation between ideologies and practices which follow each approach. - Again, it is important to remember that learning of English can be included in **both** paradigms. In several other disciplines, similar

frameworks for the necessary choices have been presented and I discuss some of them in the last chapter of my book (2000).

Table 12. Diffusion of English and Ecology of languages paradigms

The diffusion of English paradigm	Ecology of languages paradigm
1. monolingualism and linguistic genocide	1. multilingualism, and linguistic diversity
2. promotion of subtractive learning of dominant languages	2. promotion of additive foreign/second language learning
3. linguistic, cultural and media imperialism	3. equality in communication
4. Americanisation and homogenisation of world culture	4. maintenance and exchange of cultures
5. ideological globalisation and internationalisation	5. ideological localisation and exchange
6. capitalism, hierarchisation	6. economic democratisation
7. rationalisation based on science and technology	7. human rights perspective, holistic integrative values
8. modernisation and economic efficiency; quantitative growth	8. sustainability through promotion of diversity; qualitative growth
9. transnationalisation	9. protection of local production and national sovereignties
10. growing polarisation and gaps between haves and never-to-haves	10. redistribution of the world's material resources

Summing up, then, learning new languages should be additive rather than subtractive. It should add to people's linguistic repertoires; new languages, including *lingua francas*, should not be learned at the cost of the diverse mother tongues but in addition to them. In this sense, the 'killer languages' (Anne Pakir's term), and English as the foremost among them, are serious threats towards the linguistic diversity of the world (see Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1997, 1999). Linguistic human rights are more needed than ever. So far, human rights instruments and discussions about both them and about educational language rights have not even started addressing these big questions in a coherent way where all types of ecology would be discussed within an integrated political and economic framework. When speakers of small languages learn other, necessary, languages in addition to their native languages, they become multilingual, and the maintenance of LD, necessary for the planet, is supported. When dominant languages, like English, are learned subtractively, at the cost of the mother tongues, they become killer languages.

I would not like to be more dramatic than necessary - but I would still like to remind ourselves: when our great grandchild asks: 'why did you not stop this craziness? You could have done it!', the one answer we cannot give is: I DID NOT KNOW. Secondly, if some of you may feel provoked, even furious, please don't shoot the messenger. Reflect rather on the message. Thirdly, I asked in the title of this paper whether the school system is a villain, or a partial solution. It is up to you.

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Notes:

¹ *Examples of positive recent human rights instruments, draft instruments, recommendations, declarations or comments*

1. UN, Human Rights Committee: *General Comment on UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27 (4 April 1996, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.5)*.
2. UN, Working Group on Indigenous Populations: *Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu4/subres/9445.htm>.
3. CIEMEN (Mercator Programme, Linguistic Rights and Law); The International Pen Club (Committee for Translation and Linguistic Rights): *The draft Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (handed over to UNESCO in June 1997)*; <<http://www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator/index-gb.htm>>.
4. The Third World Network, Malaysia; The Cultural Environment Movement, USA; and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, AMARC: *People's Communication Charter (including an International Hearing on Language Rights, in May 1999, in the Hague*; <http://www.waag.org/pcc>.
5. OSCE, High Commissioner on National Minorities: *The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note*; <http://www.osce.org/>.
6. *The 1997 Harare Declaration from an OAU (Organisation for African Unity) Conference of Ministers on Language Policies in Africa*.
7. *The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures, 17 Jan. 2000* ; <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/AllOdds/declaration.html>.