

213. When languages disappear, are bilingual education or human rights a cure? Two scenarios.

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1. Introduction

There are probably between 6.500 and 10.000 **spoken (oral)** languages in the world, and possibly an equal number of **sign languages**. The most comprehensive listing of the world's (mostly oral) languages (on-line searchable) is in the 14th edition of **Ethnologue**, edited by Barbara F. Grimes of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (<<http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/>>). This lists more than 6,700 languages spoken in 228 countries. Europe is linguistically poor; it accounts for only 3% of the world's oral languages and of these around 225, 94 are 'endangered', according to Krauss (1992: 5). 81% of the world's oral languages, are in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Nine countries in the world have more than 200 and another thirteen more than 100 languages each. (Krauss 1992: 6). These top 22 countries, just over 10 percent of the world's countries, probably account for some 75 percent (over 5.000) of the world's oral languages. The top 10 oral languages in the world, in terms of number of mother tongue speakers (Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, English, Bengali, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, German and Wu Chinese) represent only 0.10 - 0.15% of the world's oral languages, but account for close to 50% of the world's oral population. The next 10 are Javanese, Korean, French, Vietnamese, Telugu, Yue Chinese, Marathi, Tamil, Turkish and Urdu). There are around 60 languages with more than 10 million speakers, together accounting for far over 4 billion people. Fewer than 300 languages are spoken by communities of 1 million speakers and above. Over half of the world's (oral) and most of the sign languages are spoken by communities of less than 10,000 speakers, and half of these, by 1,000 speakers or less. Around 10% of the world's languages are spoken by less than 100 speakers each. The median number of speakers of oral languages is probably some 5-6,000 people. Somewhat over 80 % of the languages are endemic, they exist in one country only and are therefore obviously extremely vulnerable if they are small in numbers.

Languages are today being killed¹ at a much faster pace than ever before in human history. As a consequence, linguistic diversity is disappearing. Krauss (1992: 5-7) divides the (oral) languages into three groups, the **moribund**, the **endangered** and the **safe** languages, on the basis of three criteria: intergenerational transfer from parents to children, numbers, and official status. The basic criterion is whether or not children

are learning the language (and this is partly why educational language rights are so important, see below). '**Moribund** languages' are thus languages which are no longer being learned by children; '**endangered**' are languages 'which, though now still being learned by children, will - if the present conditions continue - cease to be learned by children during the coming century'; and '**safe** languages' are languages which are neither moribund nor endangered (Krauss 1992: 5-7). The more detailed UNESCO Red Books for Endangered Languages² operate with the same criteria and stress the importance of the first two (children's learning, numbers) are the most important ones.

Linguists agree that many languages face extinction as spoken (or signed) languages, if present trends continue. Krauss estimates the number of oral languages that are assured of still being around in 2100 as only around 600, less than 10 percent of present-day oral languages. Not only are most of the languages with less than 10,000 speakers, over half of today's languages, going to disappear, but also most of those which have between 10,000 and 1 million speakers.

Some of the direct main agents for this linguistic (and cultural) genocide are **formal education** and the **mass media**, and behind them macro-level economic, military and political agents. Even if schools alone cannot save languages, as many sociolinguists, like Joshua Fishman (e.g. 1998: 414-415) have pointed out, schools can kill them more or less on their own.

There is an expanding body of scholarship addressing issues of linguistic inequality. The concept *linguicism* was created by analogy with racism and sexism to refer to 'ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988: 13). Most education systems worldwide reflect linguicism (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a). Often state education systems not only violate the linguistic human rights (LHRs) of minorities but they contribute to linguistic genocide.

2. From linguistic genocide to linguistic human rights

2.1. A continuum

The transmission of languages from the parent generation to children is **the** most vital factor for the maintenance of languages. When more and more children get access to formal education, much of the more formal language learning that earlier happened in the community takes place in schools. If an alien language is used in schools, i.e. if children do not have the right to learn and use their language in schools as the main medium of education, the language is not going to survive because children educated through the medium of an alien language are not likely to pass their own language on to their children and grandchildren. In this case the educational system has, through forced assimilation, participated in linguistic genocide.

What is linguistic genocide? I see it as an end point on a continuum where the other end point is full enjoyment of all (LHRs). Languages which are official languages obviously enjoy a lot of rights (see de Varennes, 1996, for an overview) and in most cases one might suggest that native speakers of these languages enjoy all LHRs. This includes state support for the intergenerational transmission of their languages in the state school system, through using these languages as the main media of education.

Juan Cobarrubias (1983) has developed a taxonomy of policies, which a state can adopt towards a (minority) language, with the following stages: "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". A directly LHRs-related similar taxonomy or continuum of LHRs might start at (a) linguistic genocide, and continue through (b) discrimination on the basis of language, (c) non-discrimination prescription and (d) conditional acceptance of some LHRs, to (e) full unconditional LHRs.

2.2. Linguistic genocide - first scenario

The first educational scenario to be sketched is the one we have today for most indigenous peoples, linguistic minorities, and those majority populations, often in ex-colonial countries, where one of the old colonial languages still is the main medium of education. This is a scenario which fits UN definitions of linguistic genocide. It does not support intergenerational transfer of languages: it leads to disappearance of linguistic diversity.

Linguistic genocide, a possibly provocative and emotionally charged expression, has to be scientifically described and also legally defined. From a *research* point of view, using Cobarrubias' taxonomy, linguistic genocide involves actively "killing a language" (without killing its speakers, as in physical genocide) or, through passivity, "letting a language die". "Unsupported coexistence" mostly also leads to minority languages dying (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999a, 2000a, for discussions about the difference between 'language death' and 'language murder' / linguistic genocide). From an *international law* point of view, we can use definitions of genocide and linguistic genocide from the **UN Genocide Convention**. Two types of UN definitions are relevant. The *first* type is those two definitions, which still *are* part of the 1948 UN **International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** (E 793, 1948):

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)

First language attrition and loss have been described fairly extensively in research literature and fiction. Sandra Kouritzin (1999) describes many cases in Canada where immigrant minority children have lost a language within one generation so that they as adults, for instance, are no longer able to speak to their parents. Lily Wong Fillmore has described the consequences for families in the U.S.A. (1992). Peter Mühlhäusler discusses results of linguistic imperialism in the Pacific (1996). Pirjo Janulf (1998) shows in her 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 happens to millions of speakers of threatened languages all over the world. For oral minority students education through the medium of a dominant majority language often leads to the students using the dominant language with their own children later on. Over a generation or two the children are linguistically and often also culturally assimilated, forcibly transferred to a dominant group. Since there are no alternatives in formal education (i.e. schools or classes which teach mainly through the medium of the threatened indigenous or minority languages), the transfer happens by force. For it to be voluntary, alternatives should exist, and parents would need to have enough reliable information about the long-term consequences of the various choices. None of these conditions are usually fulfilled for indigenous or minority parents and children, i.e. the situations where children lose their first language through forced assimilation, can often be characterised as genocide according to Article II(e), '*forcibly transferring children of the group to another group*'.

Since most Deaf children are born to hearing parents, parents and children do not have the same mother tongue by origin, and many of the Deaf children will in their turn have hearing children. Deaf children of hearing parents are in many countries still taught through oral methods, i.e. taught lip-reading and speaking in a dominant majority language, to the exclusion of a sign language. They are not learning their "own" language, a sign language, which is for all Deaf children the only type of language through which they can express themselves fully, i.e. it is their mother tongue by competence. Thus Deaf children, taught predominantly through the medium of a dominant oral majority language, are undergoing linguistic genocide: an attempt is made to *forcibly transfer* them from their 'own' language group to dominant majority language group. This subtractive attempt is doomed to fail, though, since it is impossible for Deaf children to hear.

There is also a wealth of research and statistics about the '*mental harm*' that forced assimilation causes in education and otherwise. This also entails threats to democracy and equality. A few examples follow, from Africa, Australia and North America, and from Deaf education - there are hundreds of other examples in Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a.

Edward Williams did two large-scale empirical studies, testing almost 1,500 students, in Zambia and Malawi in grades 1-7 and interviewing and observing many (1998). In Zambia, children were (supposed to be) taught through the medium of English, from grade 1, and to study a local language as a subject. This is known as submersion education (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996c, 2000a, for definitions of various models). In Malawi, they were taught through local languages, in most cases their mother tongues, during the first 4 years, while studying English as a subject. From grade 5 onwards, children in Malawi also study through the medium of English. Even when the Zambian children had had all their schooling in English, their test results in the English language were no better than those of the Malawi children who had only studied English as a subject. In fact the children in Malawi were doing slightly better than the children in Zambia.

In both countries there were huge differences in the results in English between urban and rural children, meaning English language results are socially not enhancing democracy. Likewise, there were big gender differences, meaning English language results do not support gender equality. Many of the Zambian pupils could not even be tested in the local language because they could not read it. On the other hand, when the Malawi children were tested in the local language, there were almost no differences between urban and rural pupils, or between the genders. Large numbers of Zambian pupils are claimed to 'have very weak or zero reading competence in two languages' (ibid., 62). The 'Malawian success in teaching reading in the local language', on the other hand, is 'achieved despite the almost complete absence of books and classes with an average of around 100 pupils, many of which are taught in the open' (ibid., 62). We often hear that there is no money for teaching in the many languages, in Africa or Asia. Echoing Indian evidence (e.g., Pattanayak 1988), Williams concludes that '[the] moral of the Malawian achievement would appear to be that if resources are scarce, there is a greater likelihood of success in attempting to teach pupils a known local language, rather than an unknown one' (ibid., 62). Since 74- 89% of the children in grades 3-6 are judged as not adequately comprehending a text in English that is judged to be at their level (ibid., 63), 'it is likely that they cannot understand their content subject course books' (ibid., 63), and therefore it is 'difficult to see how the majority of pupils in Zambia and Malawi could learn other subjects successfully through reading in English' (ibid., 63).

Teaching through an African language thus produces more democracy and equality, whereas using a foreign language as the measure of status and as a medium of education harms the children and also society as a whole. Williams concludes that '[f]or the majority of children in both countries the test results, and classroom observations, suggest there is a clear risk that the policy of using English as a vehicular language may contribute to **stunting, rather than promoting, academic and cognitive growth**' (ibid., 63-64; emphasis added). This fits the UN genocide Article II(b) definition of '*causing serious ... mental harm to members of the group*'.

The study confirms a pattern in many postcolonial contexts. World Bank policy employs a rhetoric of endorsing local languages, but funding exclusively strengthens European languages (Mazrui, 1997; Brock-Utne, 1999).

A similar conclusion is reached in Australia by Anne Lowell and Brian Devlin in an article (1999) describing the 'Miscommunication between Aboriginal Students and their Non-Aboriginal Teachers in a Bilingual School'. It is clearly demonstrated that 'even by late primary school, children often did not comprehend classroom instructions in English' (p. 137). Communication breakdowns occurred frequently between children and their non-Aboriginal teachers' (p. 138), with the result that 'the extent of miscommunication **severely inhibited the children's education** when English was the language of instruction and interaction' (p. 137; emphasis added). In the conclusions and recommendations the authors say that 'the use of a language of instruction in which the children do not have sufficient competence is the **greatest barrier to successful classroom learning** for Aboriginal Children' (p. 156; emphasis added). This is also '*causing serious ... mental harm to members of the group*'.

John Baugh from Stanford University, in an article called "Educational Malpractice and the Miseducation of Language Minority Students" (2000) draws a parallel between how physicians may maltreat patients and how minority students (including students who do not have mainstream US English as their first language, for instance Ebonics/Black English), are often treated in education. The harm caused to them by this **maltreatment and miseducation** also fits the UN definition of '*causing serious ... mental harm to members of the group*'.

When Deaf students are taught orally only and sign languages have no place in the curriculum, this also often causes *mental harm*, including **serious prevention or delay of cognitive growth potential** (e.g. Branson & Miller, 1998; Jokinen 2000).

All these are examples of **genocide according to Article II(b)**. In all the cases above it is also a question of the school 'prohibiting the use of the language of the group', as in the *second* type of UN definition. This is the specific definition of *linguistic* genocide, which was included in the final Draft of the Convention. In preparatory work for the UN Genocide Convention, linguistic and cultural genocide were discussed alongside physical genocide, and were seen as serious crimes against humanity (see Capotorti, 1979). When the Convention was accepted in the UN General Assembly, Article 3 covering linguistic and cultural genocide was voted down by 16 states (see Capotorti, 1979), and it is thus *not included* in the final Convention of 1948. But even when the states members of the UN in 1948 voted down the Article on linguistic and cultural genocide, there was wide agreement about how to define the phenomena. Thus what remains is a *definition of linguistic genocide*. which most states then in the UN were prepared to accept:

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*".

'Prohibition' can be direct or indirect. If there are no minority teachers in the pre-school/school and if the minority language is not used as the main medium of education, the use of the language is indirectly prohibited in daily intercourse and in schools, i.e. it is a question of linguistic genocide. Most minority education in the world is thus tantamount to 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, 1994; Jordan, 1988; Fettes, 1998). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000a) gives hundreds of examples of this prohibition and the harm it causes. *Subtractive* formal education which teaches children something of a dominant language *at the cost* of their first language (i.e. mother tongue by origin, as for oral minority children and for Deaf children with Deaf parents, or mother tongue by competence, as for Deaf children of hearing parents), is genocidal. All subtractive models of 'bilingual' education can be and often is genocidal. This includes not only submersion and segregation models but also most transitional models, especially early-exit transition³.

Instead, learning new languages should happen additively, *in addition to* their own languages. This is where Hugo Baetens Beardsmore has spent much of his professional life: in theorising about various aspects of how additive language learning, with high levels of multilingualism as a goal and a result, can be achieved in varying contexts, all over the world. He has been a pioneer in the area for decades, not only describing, understanding, field-working, measuring, theorising, but also implementing and advocating, solidly, reflectively, patiently, passionately but diplomatically, elegantly (see the bibliography for some of Baetens Beardsmore's work). Thanks, Hugo, for brilliant scholarship and true friendship!

Additive bilingual education models (see Note 3 for these) include at least language maintenance models, immersion, two-way models, and the European Union Schools model which Baetens Beardsmore has been central in developing.

2.3. Can present linguistic human rights counteract linguistic genocide - prerequisites for the second scenario

For the maintenance and development of languages (and thereby linguistic diversity on earth), educational language rights, including the right to mother tongue medium education, are absolutely vital. Binding LHRs, education rights in particular, may be one of the necessary (but not sufficient) ways of counteracting linguistic genocide and linguisticism. Our second scenario is one where all education is based on full educational

(and other) LHRs for everybody. Do we today have a proper basis in international law for these rights to be implemented?

There is a growing scholarly literature on LHRs, with a convergence between the concerns of lawyers (e.g. de Varennes, 1996), sociolinguists (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; Hamel, ed., 1997), media researchers (Hamelink, ed., 1998), economists (Grin & Vaillancourt, 2000), political scientists (McRae, 1997; MacMillan 1998), educational sociologists (May 1999, in press), anthropologists (Maffi et al., 1999) and others; Kontra et al. (eds, 1999) is an example of multidisciplinary efforts. The entire field is explored in depth, and related to overall language policy and to language ecology in Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a and Phillipson (ed.) 2000. Minorities have some support for other aspects of using their languages in areas such as public administration, courts, the media, etc. (Frowein, Hofmann & Oeter's edited books about minority rights in European States 1993 and 1994 give excellent overviews of Europe). But so far, the picture about necessary legal educational prerequisites for the second scenario is pretty dim.

In many of the post-1945 human rights documents, language has, along with race, sex, and religion, been seen as one of the basic characteristics on the basis of which individuals are not to be discriminated against in their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (e.g. in the United Nations Charter, Art. 13). But when we move from the non-duty-inducing phrases in the preambles of the human rights instruments to the binding clauses, especially to the educational clauses, there is a change (see Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994 for an overview). The clauses or articles about other characteristics create obligations: the states are firm dutyholders and are obliged to ('shall') act in order to ensure the specified rights (i.e. positive rather than negative rights). They contain demanding formulations where modifications, opt-out clauses and sliding-scale alternatives are rare. In binding educational clauses, however, language often disappears completely (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998), as, for instance, in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948) where the paragraph on education (26) does not refer to language at all or in the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966) where the educational Article (13) omits reference to language or linguistic groups (which have been mentioned in its general Article 2.2):

... 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...

The European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950 is equally silent on not only language rights in education but even more general minority rights. Several new Declarations and Conventions aimed at protecting minorities and/or minority languages, passed in the 1990s, omit language in the education clauses.

If language-related rights **are** included and specified, the Article dealing with these rights, in contrast to the demanding formulations and the few opt-outs and alternatives in the articles dealing with other characteristics, is typically so weak and unsatisfactory that it is virtually meaningless, as many researchers show (see, e.g., Guillorel/Koubi (red.), 1999; Kontra et al. (eds.), 1999; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994, 1995, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996 a, b, 1999b; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994, 1997, 1998; Thornberry, 1997; de Varennes, 1996). We can, for example, compare the unconditional formulation in Article 1 with the education Article 4.3 in the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities** (1992, not in force yet because of too few ratifications, see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000b) emphases added, '*obligating*' in italics, '**opt-outs**' in bold):

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.

One can ask what constitutes 'appropriate measures', or 'adequate opportunities', and who is to decide what is 'possible'? We see the same phenomenon in the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (1992, in force since March 1998). 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' (emphasis added). Just as in the UN Declaration above, the opt-outs and alternatives 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. Likewise, in the Council of Europe **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** (1994, in force since February 1998; see Thornberry, 1997, for a thorough critique) the Article covering medium of education is so heavily qualified that the minority is completely at the mercy of the state (emphases added):

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.

The rights of indigenous peoples might improve somewhat with the *UN, Working Group on Indigenous Populations: Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*⁴. A still more recent attempt to promote language rights, a **draft Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights**, handed over to UNESCO in Barcelona in June 1996), also suffers from similar shortcomings, even if it for several beneficiaries (*language communities* and, to some extent, *language groups*) represents great progress in relation to the other instruments described. Still, indirectly its education section forces all others except those defined as members of language communities (which roughly correspond to national territorially based minorities) to assimilate. The Declaration is under revision at UNESCO⁵. In conclusion, most educational clauses do not oblige states to more than non-discrimination on the basis of language.

3. Work to counteract minorisation and promote the survival of linguistic diversity, in international law and in education

There are few if any universal promotion-oriented rights in the binding clauses on language rights in education in international law. There are some small recent improvements in 'soft law', though, specifically in a **General Comment** of 6 April 1994 from the UN Human Rights Committee (UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.5, 1994) on Article 27 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which still grants the best binding protection to languages), and in the **Hague Recommendations Regarding Minority Education Rights**, from the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with 55 member states) High Commissioner on National Minorities⁶. The rights are also seen as applying to immigrant minorities when the two documents are read together. In the Hague Recommendations 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, including bilingual teachers in the dominant language as a second language (Articles 11-13). Teacher training is made a duty on the state (Art. 14). Finally, the Explanatory Note states that "submersion-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). If the Hague Recommendations were to be implemented, linguistic genocide in education could be stopped and children would have some of the most vital LHRs. **The 1997 Harare Declaration** from an OAU (Organisation for African Unity) Conference of Ministers on Language Policies in Africa and **The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures**, 17 Jan. 2000⁷; are examples of similar positive developments. Several edited books, in press or already out (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, ed., 1995, and May, ed., 1999) about successful programmes show how education leading towards high levels of multilingualism can be organised.

Several international organisations work for the promotion of linguistic diversity. Some are collecting the basic data needed. **Ethnologue**, mentioned above, is one. The **World languages report**, a UNESCO project whose aim is to describe the linguistic diversity of the world, to study the evolution and current state of the languages, and explain the problems which affect them in the different regions of the world wants to draw attention to the need for proper management of the world's linguistic heritage⁸. Another UNESCO-supported project is the **International Clearing House for Endangered Languages**, in Tokyo. It works with UNESCO on the Red Books on Endangered Languages, functions as a data bank of materials on endangered languages, and publishes a newsletter⁹. The **European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages**, EBLUL, is an example of proactive work to counter the minorisation of languages in European Union countries¹⁰. **Terralingua** is an international organisation devoted to preserving the world's linguistic diversity and to investigating links between biological and cultural diversity. Terralingua's web-site¹¹ has lists of and links to organisations working with both endangered languages, including various types of 'salvage operations', and with language rights.

. Language scholars who have discussed the ecology of languages, starting with Einar Haugen (e.g. 1972) have been aware of the threat and many are trying to counteract it, through analysis and action (see, e.g. Brenzinger (ed.), 1992 Fill, 1993, 1998; Fishman, 1991, ed. 2000; Grenoble & Whaley, 1996, eds. 1998; Hinton, 1994; Huss, 1999; Mühlhäusler, 1996). In the struggle against linguistic imperialism and domination, speakers of threatened languages are using many strategies. In Europe and neo-Europes (settler countries populated from Europe to the virtual extinction of earlier populations), most of those numerically non-dominant groups who have succeeded in gaining legal protection for their languages nationally have initially been politically and/or economically 'powerful' groups: Swedish-speakers in Finland, Afrikaans- and English-speakers in South Africa, Russian-speakers in the Baltic states. Subsequently, a few small national minorities and indigenous peoples have also gained some linguistic protection (Canada, Finland, New Zealand); a backlash also occurs (Australia, California). Sign languages are

mentioned in the constitutions of 8 states, Uganda and Finland being the first ones. Romany is starting to get some protection in a few countries. Kurdish, forbidden in Turkey, is extensively used in diaspora, and Kurdish satellite television has, despite serious threats, succeeded in broadcasting Kurdish-medium programmes to Kurdistan from Europe (Hassanpour, 1999, 2000).

Revitalisation and even the reclaiming of earlier minorised languages are also taking place. An encouraging example is given in Amery (2000). He describes work on reclaiming Kurna, an Australian Aboriginal language where the last speaker died some 60 years ago. The reclamation is mainly based on missionary documents from around 1850. The Māori, Hawaiians and Sámi use 'language nests', in which pre-schoolers are taught in the indigenous languages by linguistically and culturally proficient elders. Their pre-school teachers and parents also often develop more proficiency in the ancestral language too. In immersion programmes for these indigenous children, they are taught through the medium of indigenous languages which they initially do not know. The training of teachers and journalists in, for and through the medium of several small indigenous languages is expanding: for instance in Arctic areas, indigenous peoples are also establishing their own universities. Master-Apprentice-programmes in California (see Hinton, 1994) pair off proficient indigenous elders with younger people for 6-12 months, for instance 20 hours a week, for language revitalisation purposes, where the only requirement is that they use an indigenous language. These are just a few examples.

Despite such work, strategies to counteract the linguistic dominance and hierarchisation that may ultimately lead to the disappearance of the majority of today's languages are urgently needed. Today's efforts are completely insufficient. Without basic major changes of the kind Baetens Beardsmore and others have been advocating for decades, the linguistic scenario continues. But as we know, lack of LHRs is not only an information problem. The political will of states to grant LHRs is the main problem. 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. She 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 - and LHRs are a part of cultural rights. The message from sociologists like Zygmunt Bauman, human rights lawyers like Katarina Tomaševski and many others is that unless there is a redistribution of resources for implementing human rights, progress will be limited. It is probably not even of any use to spread knowledge of human rights as a basis for self-directed human development, unless the resources for implementation follow, and that can only happen through a radical redistribution of the world's material resources. But the implications of lack of

educational LHRs and the resulting linguistic genocide reach much further than education or linguistic diversity.

4. Implications for language ecology

A comparison of the world's linguistic and biological megadiversity countries shows a very high overlap (Harmon, 1995, forthcoming); both languages and biological species become thicker on the ground the closer to the equator one moves, and arctic areas have fewer species and languages.

Making a very simple calculation for the year 2100, estimating the rate of extinction with today's situation as the starting point, yields the following results (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a, for details): according to a 'pessimistic realistic' estimate, **20%** of all today's biological animal species will be extinct in 100 years' time, while according to an 'optimistic realistic' estimate the figure would be **2%**. The corresponding figures for plants are between 13 and 17%. In contrast, 'in the last five hundred years about half the known languages of the world have disappeared', according to Hans-Jürgen Sasse (1992: 7), and 90% of today's languages would be extinct in 100 years' time, according to Krauss, and over half even according to the most optimistic estimates. Thus the threat to biodiversity is relatively mild, as compared to the threat to languages.

But the relationship between linguistic and cultural diversity on the one hand and biodiversity on the other is possibly not only correlational. There seems to be mounting evidence that it might be causal (see Darrell Posey's book (1999), edited for the United Nations Environmental Program, for some of the evidence, especially Maffi et al. (1999); see also Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a). The strong correlation need not indicate a **direct** causal relationship, in the sense that neither type of diversity can probably be seen **directly** as an **independent** variable in relation to the other. But linguistic and cultural diversity seem to be decisive **mediating** variables in sustaining biodiversity itself, and vice versa, for as long as humans inhabit the earth. Today it is safe to say that there is no 'wild' nature left - all landscapes are cultural landscapes; they have been and are influenced by human action, even those where untrained observers might not notice this immediately. Ethnobiologists, human-ecologists and others have proposed 'theories of "human-environment coevolution"', including the assumption that 'cultural diversity might enhance biodiversity or vice versa' (Maffi, 1996). In this perspective, the first conference investigating this relationship between humans and their environment, 'Endangered Languages, Endangered Knowledge, Endangered Environments' (see Maffi, (ed.) 2000) stressed 'the need to address the foreseeable consequences of massive disruption of such long-standing interactions [i.e. the human-environment coevolution] (Maffi, 1996). The processes of language loss also 'affect the maintenance of traditional environmental knowledge - from loss of

biosystematic lexicon to loss of traditional stories' (ibid.). Thus loss of languages on a massive scale may also entail loss of some of the basic prerequisites for maintaining life on the planet. Both bilingual education and human rights are a small but necessary prerequisite for a cure - but much more is needed.

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Notes:

¹ Using 'killed' rather than 'dying' or 'disappearing' highlights the fact that it is neither 'natural' (in the same sense as for biological organisms) nor agentless for languages to disappear. And if there are agents responsible for and/or contributing to the killing, the scope for action may also be broader than if one thinks one is fighting against a 'natural development'. Processes leading to linguistic assimilation and therefore often languages disappearing include linguistic genocide. Besides, all the verbs, kill, disappear, die, are

equally metaphorical.

² The Red Books for Europe and Northeast Asia can be found at <<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/>>; Asia, Africa and the Pacific at <<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>> and Russia at <<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/>>.

³ For these models, see Baker & Prys Jones 1998, articles in Skutnabb-Kangas, ed., 1995 and Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, chapter 8.

⁴ <<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu4/subres/9445.htm>>.

⁵ News and/or details about some human rights instruments can be checked at the following web-sites: **The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** <<http://www.coe.fr./eng/legaltxt/148e.htm>>; **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** <<http://www.coe.fr./eng/legaltxt/157e.htm>>; Draft **Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights** <<http://www.linguistic-declaration.org>>. Many documents on language and law can also be downloaded from Mercator Linguistic Law and Legislation's web-site <<http://www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator/index-gb.htm>>.

⁶ <<http://www.osce.org/>>.

⁷ <<http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/AllOdds/declaration.html>>

⁸ UNESCO ETXEA, Alameda de urquijo, 60 ppal.dcha, E-48011 Bilbao, Basque Country (Spain); email <unescoev@eurosor.org>; web-site <<http://www.unescoeh.org>>.

⁹ Department of Asian and Pacific Linguistics, Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies, Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo, Hongo 7-3-1, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113, Japan; e-mail: web-site: <<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp>>.

¹⁰ EBLUL Head Office: 10, Sráid Haiste Íocht, IRL-Baile Átha Cliath 2, Ireland; email <ebdul@indigo.ie>; EBLUL Information Centre: Sint-Jooststraat 49/Rue St.Josse 49, B-1210 Brussel/Bruxelles, Belgium/Belgique, email <pub00341@innet.be>.

¹¹ <<http://cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/terralin/home.html>>.