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## 1. Introduction: the state of the world's languages

The paper is structured as follows. First I sum up a few basics about the state of the world's languages. Then I discuss one argument for why everybody should be multilingual. I have chosen one of the less well known arguments, the relationship between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity. Next I claim that most indigenous and minority education participates in committing linguistic genocide according to UN definitions of genocide, and examine to what extent human rights instruments can be used to prevent this, and to support the maintenance of linguistic diversity. I tie things together in a short discussion of self-determination, "ethnic conflict" and linguistic human rights, using Subcommandante Marcos. Finally, I say a few words about one aspect of ecology, namely the prerequisites for ruining the planet beyond repair, which I hope my audience can apply to linguistic and cultural ecologies.

First some basics. The exact numbers of languages or speakers of languages **are** not known (lack of resources for their study) and **cannot** be known (the border between languages and other varieties, e.g. dialects, is political not linguistic). The most useful source on number of languages, The **Ethnologue**, edited by Barbara Grimes, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, a missionary organisation - see <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/> lists almost 6.800 languages in 228 countries. But it only mentions 114 Sign languages. Still, there are deaf people in all societies, and while hearing people have developed spoken, oral languages, the Deaf have developed Sign languages, full-fledged, complex, abstract languages (see Branson & Miller 1998, 2000, for brilliant analyses of the treatment of Sign languages and Jokinen 2000 for the (lack of) LHRs of Sign language users). Those who speak about 'languages' but in fact mean oral languages only, participate through invisibilising sign languages in killing half the linguistic diversity on earth.

Most of the world's languages are spoken by relatively few people: the median number of speakers is probably around 5-6,000 (Posey 1997). Over 95% of the world's spoken languages have fewer than 1 million native users; some 5,000 have less than 100,000 speakers and more than 3000 languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers. A quarter of the world's spoken languages and most of the Sign languages have fewer than 1,000 users, and at least some 500 languages had in 1999 under 100 speakers (The **Ethnologue**). Some 83-84% of the world's languages are endemic: they exist in one country only (Harmon 1995).

**Table 1. Basic information about languages**

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are 6-7,000 spoken languages (see <b>The Ethnologue</b>, <a href="http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/">http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/</a>), and maybe equally many Sign languages.</li><li>• The median number of speakers of a language is probably around 5-6,000</li><li>• Over 95% of the world's spoken languages have fewer than 1 million native users</li><li>• Some 5,000 spoken languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers</li></ul> |
|---|

- Over 3,000 spoken languages have fewer than 10,000 users
- Some 1,500 spoken languages and most of the Sign languages have fewer than 1,000 users
- Some 500 languages had in 1999 fewer than 100 speakers
- 83-84% of the world's spoken languages are endemic: they exist in one country only

Linguists are today working with the description of the world's linguistic diversity in the same way as biologists describe and list the world's biodiversity. There are **Red books for threatened languages**, in the same way as for threatened animals and plants and other species (Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2. Red lists for threatened animals and plants**

The web-sites for the Red Lists of Threatened Plants and Threatened Animals are  
 <<http://www.rbge.org.uk/data/wcmc/plants.by.taxon.html>>;  
 <[http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/plants/plant\\_redlist.html](http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/plants/plant_redlist.html)>;  
 <<http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/animals/>>.  
 These lists are monitored by World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK; phone 44-1223-277 314; fax 44-1223-277 136; email <[info@wcmc.org.uk](mailto:info@wcmc.org.uk)>; more general web-site <<http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/data/index.html>>

**Table 3. Red books for threatened languages**

For languages, see  
**Europe:** <[http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe\\_index.html](http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_index.html)>  
**Northeast Asia:** <[http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/nasia\\_index.html](http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/nasia_index.html)>  
**Asia and the Pacific:** <<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/redbook/asiapacific/asia-index.html>>  
**Africa:** <<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/redbook/africa-index.html>>  
**Databanks for Endangered Finno-Ugric Languages:**  
 <<http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/deful.html>>  
<http://www.suri.ee>>  
**Russia:** <<http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/>>

A language is threatened if it has few users and a weak political status, and, especially, if children are no longer learning it, i.e. when the language is no longer transmitted to the next generation. There are detailed definitions of the degree of threat or endangerment.

Habitat destruction, for instance through logging, spread of agriculture, use of pesticides, and the poor economic and political situation of the people who live in the world's most diverse ecoregions, have been identified as some of the main causes for the disappearance of biodiversity. What most people do not know is that disappearance of languages may also be a very important cause.

While new trees can be planted and habitats restored, it is much more difficult to restore languages once they have been murdered. Languages are today disappearing at a faster pace than ever before in human history. What happens is linguistic genocide on a massive scale, with formal education and media as the main concrete culprits but with the world's political, economic and military structures as the more basic causal factors. Big languages turn into **killer languages**, monsters that gobble up others, when they are learned **at the cost** of the smaller ones. Instead, they should *and could* be learned **in addition** to the various mother tongues.

Even the most 'optimistic realistic' linguists now estimate that half of today's oral languages may have disappeared or at least not be learned by children in a 100 years' time, whereas the 'pessimistic but realistic' researchers estimate that we may only have some 10% of today's oral

languages (or even 5%, some 300 languages) left as vital, non-threatened languages in the year 2100. 90% may be 'dead' or 'on the death row', 'moribund' (negative terms that many, including myself, object to). Languages can of course also be 'reborn' or 'reclaimed' - there is a handful of examples of this. Kauria in Australia is one (see Amery 2000). Those who speak it now say that it was not dead - even if the last speaker died in the late 1920s - it was only sleeping. But so far it has happened seldom, and fairly few new languages arise.

Hearing that languages are disappearing, many people might say: so what? It might be better for world peace if we all speak a few big languages and understand each other - only romantic linguists want to preserve the small ones. Here I present only one of the many counterarguments against linguistic genocide and for support for the maintenance of linguistic diversity (hereafter LD): the relationship between linguistic diversity and biodiversity.

## 2. The relationship between linguistic diversity and biodiversity

Maintenance of diversities, in the plural, is one end of a continuum where ecocide and linguistic genocide are at the other end. We start with **biodiversity**. Monocropping, pesticides, deforestation, genetic engineering and the wrong use of fertilisers and irrigation have led to an unprecedented decrease of all kinds of biodiversity, including agrobiodiversity. People consume at least 7,000 species of plants, but 'only 150 species are commercially important and about 103 species account for 90 percent of the world's food crops. Just three crops - rice, wheat and maize - account for about 60 percent of the calories and 56 percent of the protein people derive from plants' (Thrupp 1999: 318). The remaining crop diversity (already low) is eroding at 1-2% and livestock breeds at 5% per annum (Christie & Moonie 1999: 321). 'Almost all farmers' knowledge of plants and research systems [something that has been built up during the 12,000 years of agriculture, Thrupp 1999: 318] could become extinct within one or two generations' (Christie/Moonie 1999: Table 7.5). Likewise, 'almost all local knowledge of medicinal plants and systems as well as the plants themselves could disappear within one generation' (ibid.). 'Rainforests are coming down at a rate of 0.9 percent per annum and the pace is picking up. Much of the earth's remaining diversity could be gone within one or two generations' (ibid.).

Still, **linguistic diversity** is disappearing relatively much faster than biodiversity. Table 4 presents a very simple comparison based on numbers and extinction rates (see my 2000 for details). According to

- ◆ **Optimistic realistic estimates**, 2% of biological species but 50% of languages may be dead (or moribund) in 100 years' time.
- ◆ **Pessimistic realistic estimates**, 20% of biological species but 90% of languages may be dead (or moribund) in 100 years' time.

**Table 4. Estimates for 'dead' or 'moribund' species and languages**

Percentage estimated to be dead or moribund around the year 2100	<b>ESTIMATES</b>	<b>Biological species</b>	<b>Languages</b>
	'Optimistic realistic'	2%	50%
	'Pessimistic realistic'	20%	90%

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. One of the organisations investigating this relationship is Terralingua<sup>1</sup>. 'Terralingua is a non-profit international organisation devoted to preserving the world's linguistic diversity and to investigating links between biological and cultural diversity.' Conservationist David Harmon is the General Secretary of Terralingua. He has investigated correlations between biological and linguistic diversity. Harmon has compared endemism of languages and higher vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians), with the top 25 countries for each type (1995: 14) (Table 5). I have **BOLDED AND CAPITALISED** those countries which are on **both** lists. 16 of the 25 countries are on both lists, a coincidence of 64%. According to

Harmon (1995: 6) 'it is very unlikely that this would only be accidental.' Harmon gets the same results with flowering plants and languages, butterflies and languages, etc. - a high correlation between countries with biological and linguistic megadiversity (see also Harmon, forthcoming).

**Table 5. Endemism in languages and higher vertebrates: a comparison of the top 25 countries**

Endemic languages	Number	Endemic higher vertebrates	Number
1. PAPUA NEW GUINEA	847	1. AUSTRALIA	1.346
2. INDONESIA	655	2. MEXICO	761
3. Nigeria	376	3. BRAZIL	725
4. INDIA	309	4. INDONESIA	673
5. AUSTRALIA	261	5. Madagascar	537
6. MEXICO	230	6. PHILIPPINES	437
7. CAMEROON	201	7. INDIA	373
8. BRAZIL	185	8. PERU	332
9. ZAIRE	158	9. COLOMBIA	330
10. PHILIPPINES	153	10. Ecuador	294
11. USA	143	11. USA	284
12. Vanuatu	105	12. CHINA	256
13. TANZANIA	101	13. PAPUA NEW GUINEA	203
14. Sudan	97	14. Venezuela	186
15. Malaysia	92	15. Argentina	168
16. ETHIOPIA	90	16. Cuba	152
17. CHINA	77	17. South Africa	146
18. PERU	75	18. ZAIRE	134
19. Chad	74	19. Sri Lanka	126
20. Russia	71	20. New Zealand	120
21. SOLOMON ISLANDS	69	21. TANZANIA	113
22. Nepal	68	22. Japan	112
23. COLOMBIA	55	23. CAMEROON	105
24. Côte d'Ivoire	51	24. SOLOMON ISLANDS	101
25. Canada	47	25. ETHIOPIA	88
		26. Somalia	88

New and exciting research shows mounting evidence for the hypothesis that it might not **only** be a correlational relationship. It may also be causal: the two types of diversities seem to mutually enforce and support each other (see Maffi 2000). UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program), one of the organisers of the world summit on biodiversity in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, published in December 1999 a megavolume called **Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity. A Complementary Contribution to the Global Biodiversity Assessment** (Posey, ed., 1999) summarising much of this evidence. The strong correlation need not indicate a **direct** causal relationship, in the sense that neither type of diversity should probably be seen directly as an **independent** variable in relation to the other. But linguistic and cultural diversity may be decisive mediating variables in sustaining biodiversity itself, and vice versa, as long as humans are on the earth. Of course there was no relationship in pre-human times, but as soon as humans came into existence, they started to influence the rest of nature. Today it is safe to say that there is no 'wild' nature left - all landscapes have been and are influenced by human action, even those where untrained observers might not

notice it immediately. All landscapes are cultural landscapes. Likewise, local nature and people's detailed knowledge about it and use of it have influenced the cultures, languages and cosmo-visions of the people who have been dependent on it for their sustenance. This relationship between all kinds of diversities is of course what most indigenous peoples have always known, and they describe their knowledge in several articles in the Posey volume..

The article on linguistic diversity in it is written by Terralingua's President, Luisa Maffi, and myself (Maffi, Skutnabb-Kangas & Andrianarivo 1999; see also articles in Maffi (ed.) 2001). We suggest that if the long-lasting coevolution which people have had with their environments from time immemorial is abruptly disrupted, without nature (and people) getting enough time to adjust and adapt (see Mühlhäusler, 1996), we can expect a catastrophe. The adjustment needed takes hundreds of years, not only decades (see Mühlhäusler, 1996). Just to take one example: nuances in the knowledge about medicinal plants and their use disappear when indigenous youth in Mexico become bilingual without teaching in and through the medium of their own languages - the knowledge is not transferred to Spanish which does not have the vocabulary for these nuances (see Luisa Maffi's doctoral dissertation, 1994).

Those of us who discuss these links between biodiversity and linguistic diversity get attacked by some linguists and others who accuse us of Social Darwinism. I will use a representative sample of these attacks<sup>2</sup>. It claims that

"relying on biomorphic metaphors implies that dominant languages are fitter than others and that "primitive" languages, unable to adapt to the modern world, deserve their fate".

Much of the accusations have to do with lack of interdisciplinary knowledge - most linguists do not know enough about present-day biology to be able to see what the biological metaphors and the claims of a causal relationship stand for. Let's deconstruct the attacking claim a bit, with arguments from David Harmon, also from email communication (17 January 2001). On this lack of knowledge, Harmon says:

"This [is] the usual misunderstanding of evolution by people in non-biology disciplines who tend to parrot the "received vie" of biological phobia and cannot or will not distinguish Social Darwinism (which of course has long since been discredited [...] from neo-Darwinism as it is now understood by evolutionary biologists."

Harmon then goes on to explain this present understanding about "fitness":

"Evolutionary "fitness" has nothing whatsoever to do with putting anything (including species and languages) into a hierarchy, and equally nothing to do with teleology - which is always the unspoken assumption underlying comments like [this. The comment] implies that evolution (in this misguided vie) "can", "should" or "could" produce some kind of prearranged or wished for result. The current consensus biological understanding is that evolution does not, cannot, aim to produce anything - and I would add, in my view that goes for cultural (and, as I would call it, biocultural) evolution too. For example, as soon as one says, or claims that others say, that cultural evolution "should" or "ought" to produce this or that outcome (such as the "triumph" of dominant languages, the implied labelling of others as "primitive"), at that very moment it ceases to be evolution: it becomes globalization or some other form of social planning. Evolution is undirected, and must always remain so if it is to go by the name of "evolution".

Darwin's use of the word "fitness" is unfortunate simply because we cannot shake its mid-Victorian provenience. A biological organism is "fit" simply if it fits into its ecological community and functions therein. If conditions change radically, and it no longer fits into the community, it will probably go extinct (note that there is no hint of "should" or predestination).

Before the weaving together, Harmon has the following to say about "primitive":

"You would have to look long and hard to find a biologist of repute who claims that any one species is more "primitive" than others, other than in the obvious morphological sense of cellular complexity, and that therefore one species is worth more than another - which is what [the attacker] wishes to project on biology when [s/he] (invalidly) mixes the political, value-laden language of "dominant" and "primitive" languages into [his/her] argument. The argument is really a kind of backdoor anthropocentrism, whether realized or not."

And then comes the final sum-up:

Now the crux of the question as [the attacker] applies it in his quote above, is: what does it mean to say that "primitive" languages are "unable to adapt to the modern world"? We know that it DOES NOT mean that they couldn't adapt linguistically; it is the consensus among linguists, is it not, that any language has the internal resources to cope with extralinguistic change and innovation, of whatever scope, IF there were no (extrinsic, non-linguistic) socio-political pressures on it. That condition is perfect "fitness" in the strict Darwinian sense. [The attacker], like so many others, is not distinguishing between this un-teleological, evolutionary condition and the radically different, non-evolutionary, volitional processes of socio-political change that are the real causes rendering languages "unable to adapt to the modern world". A giveaway: note the tag phrase "deserve their fate": from fitness we have segued to a declaration of (1) morality, as in just desserts, and (2) fate, as in predestination. An impermissible leap, if the two distinct senses are left undistinguished.

To summarize my own views on the relationship, I use Colin Baker's (2001) summary of Chapter 2, from Baker's review of my latest book:

"Ecological diversity is essential for long-term planetary survival. All living organisms, plants, animals, bacteria and humans survive and prosper through a network of complex and delicate relationships. Damaging one of the elements in the ecosystem will result in unforeseen consequences for the whole of the system. Evolution has been aided by genetic diversity, with species genetically adapting in order to survive in different environments. Diversity contains the potential for adaptation. Uniformity can endanger a species by providing inflexibility and unadaptability. Linguistic diversity and biological diversity are ... inseparable. The range of cross fertilisation becomes less as languages and cultures die and the testimony of human intellectual achievement is lessened.

In the language of ecology, the strongest ecosystems are those that are the most diverse. That is, diversity is directly related to stability; variety is important for long-term survival. Our success on this planet has been due to an ability to adapt to different kinds of environment over thousands of years (atmospheric as well as cultural). Such ability is born out of diversity. Thus language and cultural diversity maximises chances of human success and adaptability" (from Colin Baker's review of Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, Baker 2001: 281).

If we during the next 100 years murder 50-90% of the linguistic (and thereby mostly also the cultural) diversity which is our treasury of historically developed knowledge, and includes knowledge about how to maintain and use sustainably some of the most vulnerable and most biologically diverse environments in the world, we are also seriously undermining our chances of life on earth.

Killing linguistic diversity is then, just as the killing of biodiversity, dangerous reductionism. Monocultures are vulnerable, in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, as we see in increasingly more dramatic ways, when animals, bacteria and crops which are more and more resistant (to antibiotics, to Roundups, etc), are starting to spread - and we have just seen the tip of the iceberg. With genetic manipulations the problems are mounting rapidly. In terms of the new ways of coping that we are going to need, the potential for the new lateral thinking that might save us from ourselves

in time, lies in having as many and as diverse languages and cultures as possible. We do not know which ones have the right medicine. For maintaining all of them, multilingualism is necessary. Multilingualism should of course, then be one of the most important goals in education.

### 3. Most indigenous and minority education participates in committing linguistic genocide

It is clear from the statistics of number of languages and number of speakers that indigenous peoples and minorities are the main depository of the LD of the world. Therefore, it is decisive what happens to their languages. Many of them have traditionally been multilingual, and they have maintained their own languages. Today, as formal education reaches more and more people, schools can kill in one generation languages which, in situations without western type of formal schooling, were maintained for hundreds or even thousands of years or more.

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 and Prah 1995 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).

## 4. The human rights system does not prevent linguistic genocide

Mother tongue medium education should be a basic linguistic human right (LHR). 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 one examples of how language in education gets a different treatment from everything else, from 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).

The same type of formulation as in Art. 4.3 abound even in the latest HRs instruments. Minority languages and sometimes even their speakers MIGHT "**as far as possible**", and **within the framework of [the State's] education systems**, get some vaguely defined rights, '**appropriate measures**', or '**adequate opportunities**', "**if there is sufficient demand**" and "**substantial numbers**"

or '**pupils who so wish in a number considered sufficient**' or '**if the number of users of a regional or minority language justifies it**'. All these examples come from the Council of Europe **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** and the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**, both in force since 1999. The Articles covering medium of education are so heavily qualified that the minority is completely at the mercy of the state. It is clear that the opt-outs and alternatives in the Convention and 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.

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.

There are some recent positive developments but no results are in sight yet, and there is little reason to be optimistic. There is a proper condemnation of subtractive submersion education in **The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities**. These Recommendations, published in 1996 by OSCE's (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, represent authoritative guidelines for minority education for the 55 member states (which include Canada and the United States). They are 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). I would like all of you to go home and find out to what extent your country lives up to the Hague Recommendations in your minority education.

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).

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.

But even if some improvements might be on their way, it has to be mentioned 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.

## 5. Self-determination, "ethnic conflict", and linguistic human rights

Educational LHRs, especially the right to learn one's mother tongue fully and properly, orally - when this is physiologically possible - and in writing, seem to among the most important rights that minorities and indigenous peoples want. minorities are up against almost impossible odds when they try to get access to basic human rights that most dominant language speakers take for granted. Mother tongue medium education is part of the minorities' important demand to have **the collective right to exist and reproduce themselves as a distinct collectivity** respected and formally legalised. One can see the importance of the twin demands of self-determination and mother tongue medium education in conflict prevention work in central and eastern Europe, as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has done (e.g. 1997: 153). It is equally clear in Africa and Asia, where, for instance, 'insurgents in Ethiopia have over the years, placed the use of native languages at the centre of their demands for autonomy and self-determination.' (Prah 1995: 7). Or in Latin America, where education through the medium of the indigenous mother tongues was, together with local self-determination, one of the important demands in the two week Zapatista march from Chiapas to Mexico City in March 2001 (reported by Jens Lohmann in *Information* 13 March 2001).

If a state does not grant basic linguistic human rights (LHRs), including educational language rights, to minorities and indigenous peoples, this lack of rights is what often leads to and/or can be used to mobilisation of sentiments which can then be labelled "ethnic conflicts", especially in situations where linguistic and ethnic borders or boundaries coincide with economic boundaries or other boundaries where linguistically and ethnically defined groups differ in terms of relative political power. If legitimate demands for some kind of self-determination are not met, be it demands about cultural autonomy or about more regional economic or political autonomy, this may often lead to demands for secession. Thus granting education- and language-based rights to minorities can and should often be part of conflict prevention. The whole problematic is beautifully addresses by Subcommandante Marcos in an interview where he, addressing the fear of fragmentation that many states seem to have, also draws the connections between collective rights, peace or "ethnic" conflict, and globalisation:

Our aim is to get the Mexican Congress to recognise the identity of indigenous people as 'collective subjects' by right. Mexico's constitution doesn't recognise Indians. We want the government to accept that Mexico has a variety of peoples; that our indigenous peoples have their own political, social and economic forms of organisation, and that they have a strong connection to the land, to their communities, their roots and their history.

We are not asking for an autonomy that will exclude others. We are not calling for independence. We don't want to proclaim the birth of the Maya nation, or fragment the country into lots of small indigenous countries. We are just asking for the recognition of the rights of an important part of Mexican society which has its own forms of organisation that it wants to be legally recognised.

Our aim is peace. A peace based on a dialogue which is not a sham. A dialogue that will lay the groundwork for rebuilding Chiapas and make it possible for the EZNL to enter ordinary political life. Peace can only be had by recognising the autonomy of indigenous peoples. This

recognition is an important precondition for the EZNL to end its clandestine existence, give up armed struggle, participate openly in regular politics and also fight the dangers of globalisation (from Ramonet 2001: 1).

Marcos also emphasized the demand for MTM education as one of the important motivating forces for the march in February 2001 from Chiapas to Mexico City. One could draw a close parallel with the United States where the constitution does not recognise indigenous peoples or minorities as proper collective subjects either, and where minority rights and even indigenous rights are denied in the name of national unity. While the indigenous peoples in the USA are well aware of this, many of the minorities still have a long way to go before they start in earnest using international law to demand basic human rights, including educational LHRs, both individually and as collectives. Even today the denial of collective rights has to do with the (mostly unfounded) fear of the disintegration of the state. An imagined unity of the state through forcibly trying to homogenise the citizens linguistically, culturally and even ethnically is one of the strong motives behind HRs violations where the elites controlling the state are the perpetrators. We can see the same trend all over the world, in Australia's "one literacy", a "singular, measurable, narrowly defined, English-only literacy" (Lo Bianco 2001), in the "homogenising effect of imposed Hispanization" (Bolivia) or "a deliberate attempt to 'whiten' and 'Chilenise' Andean populations ... under Pinochet" (Arnold & Yapita 2001), or in the European examples of "such abject failures of nerve...such failures to attempt to defend the rights of linguistic minorities ... such sociolinguistic sophistry" that Peter Trudgill (2000:58) quotes from Bulgaria (Videnov), Greece (Angelopoulos), Hungary (Deme) and Britain (Stein and Quirk), just to take a few examples. Unless collective rights are considerably strengthened very soon (but without weakening individual rights), the world's linguistic diversity will be lost.

To make the issues more complex, today states are not the only perpetrators of human rights violations, and sometimes they themselves need protection. Firstly, the worldwide globalisation has made it necessary to discuss to what extent individuals (and even some states) also need **protection from unfettered markets**, as part of their HRs proper and how this could be done. As noted above, we now need to concentrate more on cultural, social and economic rights. Market-capitalism-run-wild oppresses a large majority of the world's population in ways where even willing states have difficulty in protecting their citizens. It does not make things easier that many (maybe most?) states are **not** willing - there is an unholy alliance between national and transnational political elites and transnational market forces. Often there are more representatives of various transnational companies (agriculture, food, medicine, biotechnology, etc) than state representatives sitting around the table when important international and regional agreements about the environment, consumer protection, TRIPs, etc. are being negotiated.

Secondly, one might even envisage that **states** themselves, especially non-western states, but also smaller western states, especially those in eastern and central Europe, might need protection from the market forces. Otherwise states cannot take back their decision power over economic issues, which they have handed over to transnational companies and finance conglomerates. This is more necessary than ever, also for the implementation of human rights but more generally for the planet to have a future (see my 2000a for argumentation on this point; see also Baumann 1998 and Tomaševski 1997b).

It is difficult, though, to envisage the forms that this protection would take. If the transnational techno-military complex together with other market forces were to be made firm duty-holders (they are beneficiaries already, with the WTO agreements and covert Davos agreements), we would run into the same problems as with the state being perpetrator and protector at the same time. Still, some new system is urgently needed. No present international organisations (e.g. the UN) can be envisaged to be strong enough to function as neutral arbitrators and to guarantee these rights - all of them are in the joint pocket of states and market forces.

## . 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.

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. What are you going to do about this? Secondly, if some of you may feel provoked, even furious, please don't shoot the messenger. Reflect rather on the message.

#### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> For connections between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity, see Terralingua's web-site <<http://www.terralingua.org>>.

<sup>2</sup> I do not want to disclose the identity of the accuser since this comes from a private email exchange, and I respect this person's general views a lot.