

316. Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2016). Series editor's Foreword. In Bunce, Pauline, Phillipson, Robert, Tupas, Ruanni & Rapatahana, Vaughan (eds). *Why English? Confronting the Hydra*. Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters, xvii-xxii.

In this series, we welcome a second collection of articles on the theme of the *English Language as Hydra* (Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012), in which the worldwide trade in English-language teaching, testing and publishing is likened to the monstrous, multi-headed Hydra of Greek mythology. It should be noted from the outset that the editors and contributors do not seek to denigrate the English language per se. Far from it. Their targets are the agencies that peddle this language subtractively, at the direct expense of other languages and thereby serve to denigrate the core identities of the people who speak them. The chapters in this book consistently advocate a considered, and respectful, mother-tongue-based multilingual approach to language education – all language should be taught additively so that especially children's linguistic repertoire grows - and a wider recognition of a diversity of languages.

In the Foreword I have space to take up just a couple of themes reflected in many of the Hydra articles that follow (their summaries are in the Introduction). First a framework. Robert Phillipson and I have for decades analysed a trio of interconnected concepts - stigmatisation, glorification and rationalisation:

Maintenance of a linguistic hierarchy typically involves a pattern of *stigmatisation* of dominated languages (mere 'dialects', 'vernaculars', 'patois'), *glorification* of the dominant language (its superior clarity, richer vocabulary) and *rationalisation* of the relationship between the languages, always to the benefit of the dominant one (access to the superior culture and 'progress').

(Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013: 500)

The same trio of concepts has also been applied to the *speakers* of the hierarchised languages and their competence in the languages, especially the dominant ones. Many of the articles in this book show examples of all this.

One theme is '*helping*', which many articles expose. Marianne Gronemeyer (1992) analysed the concept in her article 'Helping' (1992) so profoundly that I have been unable to use the concept 'helping' for over 20 years. In order to 'help', the helper has to construct the 'helpee' (the victim in need of the helper's help) as helpless. Clarissa Jordão writes in this volume about teacher educators in Brazil who portrayed the teachers of English 'as unknowing subjects that needed our help to become "full" selves'. When becoming aware of this hierarchisation (through stigmatisation), the teacher educators (TEs, including Jordão herself) therefore needed to 'unlearn our privileges as TEs, positioned as the knowing selves in charge of *rescuing* teachers from ignorance and malpractice'. The TEs had to 'share the discomfort in the awareness of our positioning as *saviours* of the teachers, as responsible for 'rescuing' those that do not need rescuing ... Our genuine disposition to *help* teachers could be expressing a desire to colonise them, positioning ourselves as some sort of 'second-level Hydras'.

In fact, as Gronemeyer shows, the ‘helpers’ are the ones who benefit in several ways, not only through positioning themselves higher up in the power hierarchies and working to maintain that position, but also through preventing the ‘helpees’ from both seeing themselves *and becoming* strong agents in their own lives. Becoming strong agents might enable the helpees to start questioning the unequal power relationships which are reproducing them as powerless and in need of ‘help’. Similarly in Ruanni Tupas’s article (this volume):

In the school’s *Student Handbook*, for example, speaking in the vernacular is listed alongside other types of ‘misconduct’, namely: (1) littering, (2) using chain accessories for males, and (3) speaking bad words inside the campus (Geronimo 2013). In other words, echoing earlier discourses on the mother tongues or the Philippine ‘dialects’, this present-day aversion to speaking in the vernacular regards local languages as undesirable, inferior and filthy, and their speakers backward, disobedient and undesirable.

The ‘helping’ ideology rationalises the exploitative relationship between ‘helpers’ (British Council, western publishers, voluntary English language teachers, aid donors, etc.) and the ‘helpees’ so that what the former are doing always seems to be of ‘benefit’ to the latter. ‘Western do-gooders’, as Antje-Katrin Menk has called them...

The *rationalisation* notion posits that monolingualism (in English) is normal, desirable, sufficient, and inevitable, and that striving towards this or at least towards a good competence in English at the cost of other languages, *subtractively*, is ‘for the child’s own good’. The English Hydra - and other Hydras – are positioned as ‘helping’, through myths; among them the ‘economic benefit myth’. Kubota & Okuda’s (this volume) statement about Japan could probably be generalised to most of the countries discussed in this book:

the percentage of people in Japan who actually need English competence is small ... there is no empirical evidence that proves the link between English proficiency and income (Grin 2003) ... The belief that English competence is always linked to economic benefit is clearly a myth.

The ideologies about English and other Hydras also include glorifying dominant English-speaking mainstream monolingual societies, often stigmatising parents and children who want to become or stay bilingual/multilingual. Parents are questioned about this choice and blamed by organisations and even some researchers who claim that parents are doing a disservice to their children, and constraining their social mobility (see May 2014 for counterarguments). Sometimes the conflict between monolingual and multilingual upbringing can lead to the courtroom, as in the USA where a Spanish-speaking mother was threatened with the removal of her child unless she spoke only English to the child, including at home. The conflict between the monolingual and bilingual ideologies may also be within the family; parents disagreeing on children’s monolingual or bilingual upbringing. Christof Demont-Heinrich’s deeply moving and courageous article (this volume) describes consequences of this, including a divorce and a psychological breakdown, both also stigmatised by many mainstream ideologies. Writing about them in a scholarly article can also give rise to a hegemonic resistance to this kind of appeal to raw, individual human experience as "legitimate",

especially in the academic realm, where the "rational" is artificially separated from the "emotional", and the former valorised at the expense of the latter.

Moving back to states where English is not a native language of many, it is also claimed that competence in English 'helps' *everybody* economically. It is convenient for the corporate and other élites to support this claim and to also make employers believe that they need to demand English competence from ALL of their employees, when, in fact, in most of the work in most countries, a knowledge of the local and regional language/s is what is needed. The prestige that some competence in English and other Hydras gives is an imagery that should be questioned, and *is* being questioned throughout this book.

The second theme I want to touch upon here is *historicide and linguicide as prerequisites for each other*. Many of the languages that the English Hydra is now devouring have a very long history of use, some also for literacy, but this knowledge is often made invisible. It has to be re(dis)covered (Heugh 2009). Fighting what he calls 'historical amnesia', Tupas writes: '...our struggle for power is a struggle for memory. We can design our own future only if we take control of our own past'. Andrea Bear Nicholas, a Maliseet history scholar and Indigenous activist in Canada gives dozens of examples of 'official' history's omissions, distortions and outright misinformation about what the colonisers did (and continue to do) to Indigenous people/s. She calls this *historicide*, and connects it with *linguicide* - linguistic genocide. The search for an accurate history of the misdeeds of the colonisers, and of Indigenous resistance against them presupposes that the conveniently 'forgotten' facts can be recovered - and this is 'one of the most poignant reasons for maintaining Indigenous languages', she writes. Many Indigenous stories about the resistance often only exist in Indigenous languages. 'There can be no history of a people only in the language of the coloniser' (Bear Nicholas 2003). 'We are mentally colonised and alienated from our cultures if all we know is in English', Tariq Rahman from Pakistan stated in 2002. All four writers are not only presenting a plea for the voice of the subaltern to be heard in their own languages, but stating the very necessity of it for recovering the truths for a 'decolonisation of the mind' (Ngũgĩ 1987). Both English and non-English Hydras prevent this.

The two largest peoples in Europe without a state, the Kurds¹ and the Roma, are still invisibilised to the extent that the very existence of their languages has been/is denied:

Kyuchukov, a Muslim Rom linguist, established a program in Primary School Education and Romani Language at Veliko Turnovo University in 2004 to train teachers for Romani. The program was perfunctorily shut down in 2010 by the Sofia Education Ministry, which argued that 'all the applicants are Roma only', and they 'study a language which does not really exist' (Kyuchukov, 2013: xi).
(quoted by Bill Templer, this volume)

Aja Martinez relates the Arizona 2010 Bill banning from Arizona K-12 public education

¹ For Kurdish, see Fernandes 2012, and his many books. The only positive deed of ISIS, the so called Islamic State, is that Kurdish *peshmergas* fighting ISIS have made it impossible to deny the existence of the Kurds and their languages.

‘courses designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group’. This could prevent telling minorities about their own history, i.e. it is an attempt at historicide. But the law continues: ‘...with the exception of courses ... of the Holocaust or *any other instance of genocide*, or the historical oppression of a particular group of people based on ethnicity, race, or class’ (emphasis added). Robert Dunbar, a human rights lawyer, and I have shown that most of the various kinds of subtractive education that articles in this book outline, *can* be described as linguistic genocide (linguicide) from a sociological, psychological, educational and linguistic point of view (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010). This means that all history of Indigenous and minority education describes linguistic genocide - and could thus be taught in Arizona. Therefore, preventing further linguistic genocide in education could also prevent historicide. In addition, public education courses in most countries are of course ‘designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group’, namely the dominant group. Philippe Leymarie (2015: 8) writes about Africa:

The European education system, which builds an élite but acts as a ‘cultural defoliating agent’ (according to Burkina Faso historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo), exists alongside secondary, primary and Koranic schools for the urban and rural lower classes.

This growing, culturally and educationally defoliating system which builds on the glorification of the English Hydra and the stigmatisation of other languages and systems, is thoroughly exposed and analysed in this book; its irrationality laid bare. Resistance against it is described, and alternatives are suggested.

Why English? There is, indeed, huge irony in the fact that this collection is written *in English* and published in the United Kingdom. Such is the power of the global publishing industry and the pervasiveness of English-language hegemony that this critique needs to emanate from within its very realm.

May the knowledge in this book change attitudes, and actions.

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