

54. Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2000). The Author Responds [to Reader's Comments on TSK's 'Linguistic Human Rights - Are You Naive, or What?']. **TESOL Journal** 9:2, Summer 2000, 4-5.

Short comments to Kevin Cross' (KC) points. First, situations with 2 languages only-re unusual in Scandinavia too. One of my own studies in Sweden (1987) was done in a school which taught 57 mother tongues as subjects, and had mother tongue medium education for several groups. In a study of all municipalities with more than 100 immigrant minority students in Denmark (meaning most municipalities in the country) Birgitte Rahbek Pedersen and I (1983) could ascertain that it would have been possible to organise at least early-exit transitional programmes for over 70 percent of the children. Not doing it for them, under the pretext that it cannot be done for everybody, is one of the ways of participating in the forced assimilation. NOT having qualified bilingual teachers and materials, e.g. in the USA, is a result of not having planned for them - many minority groups have been in western countries for decades, some for centuries.

I am sorry that KC finds the tone of my contribution offensive - it is not meant to be. Provocative, yes, of necessity, because the issues are important, and what happens is upsetting. Please read the Introduction to my **Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?** (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000) where I argue for the use of the strong terms, despite the emotional impact (and where also concepts like McDonaldisation are defined). On the 818 pages of the book I try to be more nuanced than what one can be in a short article. Formal education of indigenous peoples and minorities has been and continues to be a killing agent in relation to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the planet. If we want to maintain this diversity (which is also a necessary prerequisite for the maintenance of biodiversity and thus life on our planet; the first book-length treatises of this are just out or in press), action has to come NOW - therefore the urgency.

Of course I am not accusing individual, hard-working teachers - I am talking about linguistic structures, ideologies and practices in the article, not about evil or good intentions of individuals. On the other hand, individual teachers CAN influence linguisticism and many do, positively. It is also clear that critical intellectuals do not get jobs; being critical of the present linguistic educational systems and writing what I write has certainly not helped 'furthering S-K's academic career' as KC implies - quite the opposite.

In the book **Multilingualism for All** (TSK, ed., Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1995) all the articles, written by people with extensive experience from classrooms, talking to teachers, etc., discuss the practical solutions that KC wants; this includes several North American writers (Jim Cummins, David Dolson, Ofelia García, Kathryn Lindholm). What we do is to look at concrete solutions and compare what successful programmes do in many parts of the world, in order to arrive at principles that many of them share, despite their local differences. We know more or less enough about what should be done, but it is not being done. I am interested in why. I sense that KC and I share an interest in how to bring about the changes needed, despite discursive differences. That could be a good starting point for dialogue.

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

<<http://babel.ruc.dk/~tovesku/>>