

57. Reflections on scholarship and linguistic rights. A rejoinder to Jan Blommaert.

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Journal of Sociolinguistics 5:1, 2001, 143-155.

'The attachment that many peoples have to their language is clear from the fact that it often becomes a symbol of their very existence (see, e.g. Fishman's collection In Praise of the Beloved Language). This is what makes this field interdisciplinary and vital for human rights but difficult to limit to traditional empirical research. There are elements of identity, access issues, and questions of ownership' (Michael Clyne, personal communication).

1. A LANGUAGE RIGHTS PARADIGM?

It is important that the promotion of language rights should be informed by the insights of language experts of all kinds. Jan Blommaert (JB) is also right to surmise that we agree with many of his statements about the nature of linguistic variation and processes of linguistic hierarchisation. However he has chosen to attack what he refers to as a language rights paradigm, and his remarks clearly necessitate a response. This will focus on strengthening the foundations underpinning a field that is of increasing interest not only to (socio)linguists but to lawyers, educationalists, economists, anthropologists, policy-makers, and many others. Given the existential agony of speakers of indigenous and minority languages in many parts of the world, academic skirmishing would be not only unhelpful but also unethical.

JB cloaks himself in the mantle of the guardian of scholarly quality. He also repeatedly stresses how much agreement there is between his goals as a sociolinguist and our own work in linguistic human rights, linguistic imperialism, and language policy. It is therefore baffling that the text that he chose to represent the fast-moving field of linguistic human rights is a brief pre-print of an entry we wrote for a reference work in the early 1990's, which was ultimately published in the Handbook of Linguistics and Communication Science (ed. Goebel et al., 1996). The entry is not on language rights but on 'Linguicide and linguicism', and intra-language discrimination (which JB accuses us of not covering) was not covered because other articles in the Handbook deal with it. Our article explored why languages are being killed off, and demonstrated and exemplified the way hierarchisation by means of language, the exercise of linguicism, in analogous ways to racism and sexism, can be approached in a principled way. In all there are seven pages of text, the final page and a half of which are devoted to 'Resistance to linguicide and linguicism'.

This last part enumerates a number of documents in international law, universal and regional, which seek to promote greater enjoyment of language rights. The ultra-brief coverage of these summarized how far states have been prepared to go in acknowledging and legislating on minority language protection and promotion. We also stressed the limitations of both the documents and the good will of states, and noted that the 'nation-state' is currently under pressure from globalization, transnational regionalization, and grassroots movements with democratic, root-seeking, or ecological agendas. The state, with its constitutive myths of cultural and linguistic uniformity, has probably outlived itself, we claimed. We noted that for some researchers the state is no longer permanent but negotiable. This suggests that we were then well aware of states as ideological constructs, as social pacts, relations under internal and external challenge that serve some interests better than others.

On the basis of these 7 pages of text, which are his main source for our work on linguistic human rights, JB wields a sociolinguistic/ethnographic hatchet to characterise work in what he calls 'the linguistic rights paradigm' as follows:

'problem of quality'; 'shoddy work'; 'not supported and sustained by outstanding and self-critical research'; 'fraught with highly problematic propositions and assumptions'; 'incapable of dealing with more refined questions'; 'misguided use of biological metaphors and parallelisms'; 'vulnerable to all sorts of empirical critique'; 'cursory mentioning ... but it remains undeveloped'; 'highly objectionable'; 'a political program is not a substitute for analysis'; 'sacrifice the sort of quality control that comes with being a professional and committed scholar'; 'of no benefit at all to those whose cause we support'.

Of course none of this is ad hominem, how could one! We merely happen to be the hapless, named authors. It would however contribute rather more to scholarly dialogue if a critique was based on what the authors in fact say, rather than gross misrepresentation, a point we return to. One might also expect a paradigm to boast founding texts that cover more than 7 pages. There are in fact several recent book-length presentations of language rights that we have no connection with (e.g. Kibbee 1998, 22 contributors; Guillourel & Koubi 1999, 18 contributors). In Canada the implementation of language rights has spawned a strong research tradition, not least among lawyers (see, e.g., the bilingual bulletin of the Centre Canadien des Droits Linguistiques of the University of Ottawa, and de Varennes 1996). A number of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language in 1997 (127), edited by Rainer Enrique Hamel, is entitled 'Linguistic human rights from a sociolinguistic perspective' (9 articles, 3 book reviews, virtually all of which had appeared earlier in Spanish in Mexico). A special issue of the journal Language sciences (20/1, 1998), was also devoted to language rights: it has 10 contributors, including ourselves and scholars from Hong Kong, India and Malaysia. It is quite clear that to suggest we have some kind of paradigmatic monopoly of work in this area is pure fantasy. JB has not done the homework that any valid analysis of work in language rights presupposes. His text makes no reference to any author on linguistic rights topics other than ourselves, meaning the selected 7 pages.

JB seems to be aware that more has been written since the early 1990s, concurrently with the increasing salience of language issues and ethnicity in many post-communist and post-colonial trouble spots. He refers to but does not indicate familiarity with our 1994 edited volume Linguistic human rights: overcoming linguistic discrimination, which has twenty contributors, and is in total 478 pages, and Skutnabb-Kangas's recent (2000) book Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?, for which he provides an incomplete reference (quite apart from spelling Skutnabb-Kangas in three different ways in his manuscript, and Phillipson in two). The complete list of contents of this 818-page work has been on TSK's homepage since early 1999. A recent book, not mentioned by JB, is Language: a right and a resource. Approaching linguistic human rights, 1999, edited by Miklós Kontra (MK), Robert Phillipson (RP), Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (TSK) & Tibor Várady. Too recent for JB's discussion paper is Rights to language: equity, power, and education, edited by RP, 2000, which has over 50 contributors. A feature of both these recent books is that the contributors include anthropologists, economists, lawyers, political scientists, sociologists, discourse analysts, and researchers into the media and sign languages. If there is a paradigm in the making, it is an eminently multi-disciplinary one. Salvation will never come from sociolinguistics alone. But sociolinguists can hopefully forge a powerful synthesis of the insights from all these disciplines, while remaining abreast of cutting-edge developments in the sociology of language and micro-sociolinguistics.

2. REDRESSING THE BALANCE AFTER FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Our attempt to redress the balance begins with short replies to some of the claims that JB falsely attributes to us. It is important thereafter to focus on how language rights work can be strengthened so as to contribute to a more equitable language order locally and globally. As critical scholars we see ourselves as engaging in analysis, which of course is a *sine qua non* and which must meet stringent standards of theory-informed quality control, and as participating in ongoing struggles against injustice in which language plays a decisive role. Of course 'research and implementation potential for sociolinguists, applied linguists and languages planners' (JB) is part of this, but for us the ones who need linguistic human rights most are the main agents and co-actors. A claim like 'the field has moved far beyond "linguistic rights" claims now' (JB) might become a reality when everybody does enjoy the necessary linguistic human rights. But we are not even approaching that situation yet.

A. We are NOT believers in any kind of 'nation-state' ideology or even in the existence of states in which there is one 'nation' and one 'language' only, and we certainly do NOT equate linguistic communities and languages (see below). We DO believe that, in the political realities of the contemporary world, it is states that are duty-holders, that negotiate the content of human rights conventions, that sometimes ratify them, and can sometimes be held accountable or made responsive to demands for linguistic rights. Hence the importance of trying to influence states.

B. We do NOT '[equate] "language" with "language names"'. In much of our earlier work we HAVE analysed, individually and jointly, how 'languages' have been defined (as opposed to 'dialects', 'vernaculars', 'patois', etc) as well as the invisibilization and stigmatization strategies embedded in labelling. For a recent summing-up, see TSK 2000: 6-30; 140-155.

C. We do NOT claim that all languages should be 'developed' through 'introduction of status varieties in these languages' or 'creating a written standard'. Many languages ARE being successfully used in schools orally only (for instance in many African classrooms where the official language of instruction is an ex-colonial language), or children are writing down their own 'dialects' or 'languages', with no awareness of a written standard or status variety where it exists, and it often does not. In most Rudolf Steiner schools and many other progressive schools (often for children from the lowest socio-economic strata) children in elementary schools write their own books, often reflecting their own spoken varieties, rather than using commercially available texts.

D. We have never referred to 'authentic' or 'pure' **languages** as JB claims - even in the quote that he has chosen, we refer to 'authentic ideas and products (instead of mass-products)'.

E. We have NOT claimed that 'declaring languages equal' would 'make their speakers equal in real societies'. Of course not. Nor is the following our suggestion: 'calling for more legislation, for covenants and explicit policies, suggesting that these policies would in practice have a deep effect on the life conditions of the masses' (JB). So far as we are aware, few sociolinguists devote more effort in what they write to the analysis of power relations and the meshing of language with economic and political factors. We agree with Williams (1992) that much sociolinguistics is inadequately grounded in social theory, resulting in studies which are strong on documentation but weak in explanatory power. There are equally serious shortcomings in the traffic in the other direction: too few political scientists or sociologists are working intensively with language issues. There are also, fortunately, scholars working with language in multidisciplinary ways, e.g. Branson & Miller 2000, Hassanpour 2000, May, in press, and there is, for instance, a substantial literature on

the economics of language, see for instance Grin 1996, 1999, Grin & Vaillancourt 2000, on the financing of language policy and on allocative and distributive justice.

F. We do NOT claim that '[a]ll languages should be institutionally equal, with equal money, broadcasting hours in the media, books and grammars'. That would be naive and fatuous. The Draft Universal Declaration of Language Rights, handed to UNESCO in Barcelona in 1996, was rejected by most states in its initial form precisely because it contained similar naive demands, a point we made in writing prior to the launching of the Draft Declaration.

MK: 'There can be practical limits on resources allocated to all languages. The question to me is: how does one set the limits? How does one, for instance, prevent a State from granting equal rights AND funds to a minority that constitutes 0.1% of the population? In Rumania the State cannot afford to set up a university for each of the 19 or so national minorities, so on what basis should they set up a Hungarian university but not an Armenian one? Szilágyi Sándor's bill addresses just that thorny issue. J B's problem is elsewhere. He says the development and introduction of status varieties brings with it the creation of exclusive and elite-hegemonic varieties. Yes, it is likely to, but this is not unavoidable in principle. (Norway has two standards and a law forbids teachers to attempt to change a kid's dialect in school).'

Our summary of 'Language rights in postcolonial Africa' (RP & TSK 1994), almost entirely based on the work of African scholars, attempts to survey how far changed language policies, recommended by scholars from all parts of the continent, can contribute to the solution of Africa's grave social, economic and political problems (see, for instance, Prah 1995a, b, with recommendations completely opposite to JB; see also RP, TSK & Africa 1985, published by the Organisation for African Unity). The Asmara Declaration was not written by ivory tower linguists but by creative writers, by Africans working in African languages, by independent thinkers who are invariably up against a hypocritical state that is wedded to European languages. We suspect that the use of the word 'equality' in the Declaration ('2. The vitality and equality of African languages must be recognized as a basis for the future empowerment of African peoples') indicates in this context that the drafters of the document were expressing a wish that African languages be perceived and treated as being the equal of the ex-colonial European languages. This has been OAU policy for decades (Mateene 1985a, b), articulated in many policy documents and most recently in the Harare Declaration (1997), but it has so far remained largely a dead letter, pious rhetoric that undemocratic, unaccountable regimes can bask in.

This is why the validation of African languages in post-apartheid South Africa is not only of continental but global significance (Alexander 2000, Desai 2000, Heugh 2000). Language policy makers in South Africa have succeeded in having language rights enshrined constitutionally, and there are many bodies concerned with implementation, the complex process of 'reducing English to equality', a phrase used earlier by Neville Alexander in relation to Afrikaans. Alexander chaired the LANGTAG consultation exercise that produced a visionary policy document (LANGTAG 1996) that builds on validating all the languages of South Africa, and links language needs and strategies to the economy, education, cultural change and democratisation. Language rights interlock with power hierarchies, attitudes to language, and a range of duty-holders. Linguists have much to offer in corpus planning and elaboration, where one element has to do with strategies for unifying some of the major languages (that were artificially divided by missionaries) while respecting multiple linguistic identities.

3. ADDITIVE (BOTH/AND/AND) RATHER THAN ALTERNATIVE (EITHER/OR) LANGUAGE POLICIES

In the following section we discuss what we see as two main issues in JB's article. JB seems to regard many problems as involving a pair of alternatives that one has to choose between. Rather than an either/or dichotomy, a more inclusive both/and/and approach is possible, which we exemplify in relation to each of the themes.

3.1. Intra-language and Inter-language Diversity

We do NOT 'reduce diversity and hence inequality ... to inter-language diversity and inequality', or consider only inequalities 'between languages'. In our lengthy historical analysis of 'Linguistic human rights, past and present' (TSK & RP 1994; see the updating in TSK 2000, chapter 7) we make it clear that we are fully aware that discrimination takes place as much within as between languages:

It is obvious that linguicism may also be a useful concept in analysing the role of language in schooling in relation to 'monolingual' majorities. Similar processes of structurally favouring middle-class language and the 'standard' code, and marginalising dialectal and sociolectal varieties, are at work in most national education systems, and still generate heated controversy, as seen in the recent debate on a 'national' curriculum, with focus on the 'national' language, in Britain and elsewhere.' (TSK & RP 1994: 104)

The book also addresses some of the inadequacies of western definitions of language and approaches to multilingualism, in particular in Lachman Khubchandani's article (1994) on plural and fluid linguistic identities in India.² A regular theme in our work is the co-articulation of classism, sexism, racism and linguicism, the resulting inequalities, and the parallels between various types of inequality. We also increasingly refer to EnglishES (see McArthur 1998 and the journal *World Englishes*).

However, a paramount consideration when situating linguistic human rights in international law, is, at least initially, to use the type of terminology that this field uses. Otherwise one may be addressing a few hundred researchers from (socio)linguistics only and have no impact on the rest of the world. To take one example, 'sociolects' and 'varieties' are unknown concepts in international law, and cannot lead to protection, unlike 'languages'. Likewise, 'linguistically diverse students' (a term often used about linguistic minority students in the USA) have no rights, whereas 'minorities' do. We discuss the difficulties and challenges of merging different scholarly traditions in real multidisciplinary work on linguistic human rights, and the need for reciprocal concept clarification in different discourses, in the Introduction to Kontra et al. (eds.) 1999. The cause of language rights crucially involves working with lawyers in an open dialogue that can build conceptual bridges.

MK: 'The interactions of inter-language discrimination and intra-language discrimination may be very diverse, and hence concentration on the former only does not tell the whole story. But then nor does JB tell the whole story either. Nobody can do this today because these interactions have barely been researched. Simply put, the task is to complement the inter-language discrimination studies with intra-language studies.'

I find JB's argument about the relative disenfranchisement of minority group members forced to speak a dominant language and majority group members who lack access to status varieties of their own language, overstated. We don't have enough empirical research to know if disenfranchisement within a language can be, or is necessarily, as bad as between languages. Here is one situation to show otherwise. Hungarian is a minority language in

Slovakia. If a H patient can use H to a H doctor, assuming that the doctor speaks the status variety of H but the patient does not, is the patient 'thoroughly disenfranchised'? What does 'thoroughly' mean here? Is the patient linguistically as unequal in the Hungarian medical interview as s/he would be in an L2 (Slovak) interview? The Slovak State Language Law expects them to use Slovak only. Is the patient just as thoroughly disenfranchised in a Hungarian interview as in a Slovak one? Well, a host of other factors also play a role, e.g. national solidarity can wipe out the potential intra-Hungarian discrimination ('We are both oppressed, it matters but little that you speak ugly Hungarian/fancy Hungarian'). If the doctor is Slovak rather than Hungarian, and the patient speaks a low prestige variety of Slovak as an L2, the patient may be doubly discriminated: first, because s/he speaks an L2 (not as well as s/he could speak Hungarian), second, because the L2 is a low prestige variety. Intuitively I just don't think that the two handicaps are just as 'thoroughly disenfranchising' in all cases.

Of course the aim 'to make available the power varieties of languages' (JB) is commendable but not enough. The issue is HOW they are made available. Subtractively or additively? Making the power varieties available in education and not specifying the additive relation is also propagating less than we know is good. JB does not say that the power variety must be **added** to the vernacular rather than replacing it. If it is, and inter-language discrimination is done away with, then we have the best of worlds.

'Inequality among language groups would be reduced, but inequality within languages would be increased' says JB. This is the major issue, the interaction of the two, but can one predict the lesser evil? I think the outcome of the interaction is probably highly country-specific, or region-specific, or culture-specific, and at this state of our knowledge we should be very cautious. Hence **non**-discussion of intra-language issues is **not** welcome but assuming that intra-language discrimination is just as thoroughly disenfranchising is an overgeneralization.'

3.2. 'Ethnic harmony' and 'social harmony' - postpone language-in-education decisions until Education for All is in place?

We advocate additive (both/and/and...) language policies. One of the several instances where JB uses the opposite, common either/or ideology is in his otherwise interesting discussion about the colonial paradigm. Here, for nation-building reasons, the ex-colonial languages were further entrenched in post-colonial states and were labelled un-ethnic or neutral. As JB rightly remarks, 'multilingualism was equated with multi-ethnicity, and ... opposed to national unity'. The ideology 'stressed ethnicity as the basic divisive force in society, not social and socio-economic difference'. JB acknowledges that we have also identified problems caused by this ideology, which leads to disastrous results.

But what JB then claims is that 'a program of ethnolinguistic pluralism is based on exactly the same ideology as the one it claims to combat ... because here as well, ethnic harmony prevails over social harmony'. The same either/or ideology makes JB suggest that 'modalities of education' - here exemplified with the medium of education - and 'linguistic issues' should 'be put on hold', until socio-economic and political problems which prevent children from getting access to formal education have been solved! Yes - let's stop worrying about racism and sexism until questions of class have been solved in the West! Poor Paulo Freire had obviously not heard JB's wisdom because he thought that literacy was to be attained **at the same time** as (and might even support!) the political struggle of campesinas in Latin America... What we claim is that it is perfectly possible to match up ethnolinguistic and socio-economic concerns - there is no necessary contradiction. Likewise, children need two or more languages in education, learned additively. It is not a question

of either the mother tongue or a dominant language but both, and more; no language needs to be sacrificed in additive learning.

Stephen May (1999) perceptively analyses the pluralist dilemma, where a uniform 'national' language and culture have been imposed on 'nation-states', in the name of social cohesion (civism) and where any public recognition of the rights of ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities to maintain their distinctiveness has been seen as a threat. He argues that in liberal pluralism, the individual, universal 'citizenship' rights have been seen as opposed to collective and particularistic 'ethnic' rights, with an active hostility towards minority rights as a result. These have been limited under the false guise of the universality and neutrality of individual rights. In fact, individual citizenship rights have come to represent the particular 'interests and values of the dominant ethnic group as if these values were held by all' (p. 45). They are 'in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture ... a particularism masquerading as the universal' (ibid.). What is missing in this liberal conception of individual rights is what Fishman calls 'cultural democracy' 'the recognition of an individual's right to retain their ethnic, cultural and language affiliations should these differ from the "mainstream"' (p. 46; see also Fishman & Fishman Schweid 2000). With Kymlicka, May concludes that 'the specific recognition of minority rights leads neither to favouritism nor ghettoisation (both of which are commonly levelled criticisms)', and 'nothing in this position precludes cultural change and cultural adaptation - minority group identity need not be essentialised' (p. 46). We agree.

A key site for the implementation of linguistic human rights is education. Choice of the medium of education is the most crucial variable for maintaining the world's linguistic diversity when all children attend school. This was discussed in the 'Concluding remarks' to the volume Minority education - from shame to struggle (1988) by TSK and Jim Cummins, in similar ways to May on the pluralist dilemma. This dilemma consists, in Jayasuriya's formulation, of how to reconcile 'the rightful concerns of cultural diversity and identity with the socially legitimate desires and claims to achieve equality' (quoted in ibid., 393), or 'the competing pressures of the expressive and instrumental dimensions of ethnicity - the latter being concerned with the more material aspects of living, especially the need for economic, social and political power' (ibid.). The conclusion then too was that **both** were important and legitimate. TSK & JC saw a focus on learning the mother tongues of minorities as something that could be done with at least three completely different purposes: it can be emphasised 'to the *exclusion of the learning of both the second language and other skills*' (394). It can also be emphasised 'as a part of ethnicity, to the *exclusion of societal questions of economic and political power*, as is done in most of the multiculturalism discourse. This is a *therapeutic* approach, which builds on *deficiency theories*, and is used as a form of *pacification*' (ibid., 394). This second route is what JB accuses us (RP and TSK) of following. It is the same approach which is seen in today's attempts to ethnicize questions of economic and political power - to use culture and ethnicity as generalised causal factors when minorities face problems. Some postmodernist approaches, even if they do not emphasise minority mother tongues, can also be criticised for excluding questions of power, while presenting the choices that western elites have as more universal than they are. The third approach JC and TSK identified was to emphasise the mother tongue 'partly in its own right, as a *self-evident human right*, and partly in order to be able to give a *better instrument* for coping with both the learning of the second language and the learning of other skills, and to include *analysis, understanding, evaluation and action in relation to societal questions of economic and political power*. An emphasis on minority mother tongues can thus be for *exclusion*, for *pacification* or for *empowerment*' (ibid., 394).

MK: 'JB seems to be saying that there should be a hierarchical order: first of all, formal education should be provided, and once it is in place, then the medium issue can also be

teased out. The problem is that education always occurs through the medium of some language, and it is not immaterial whether the medium is an L1 or not. Where there is no education at all, the medium of education is not an issue. Mother tongue medium education demands assume the existence of formal education, and where this does not exist (as in many of the cases JB presents), there are no tails that can wag the dog. 'Putting the linguistic issue on hold for some time' opens the door for an African scenario where, for instance, secondary education in whatever language, is demanded, with emphasis on the increase of students. But starting to worry about the medium later may be too late. The Roma example from Hungary in Kontra et al. (1999: 13-14), shows that discrimination based on language of instruction gives rise to lifelong unemployment for many Hungarian Roma/Gypsies. Education for Gypsies with a non-Hungarian L1 is provided in Hungarian, hence they drop out, hence they are unemployed. One cannot 'worry later' about the medium, because non-L1 education can mean no formal education. This is just one specific example, not to be overgeneralized, but neither to be left out of consideration. If building up a formal education system must start from scratch for indigenous or minority children, or for children from dominated ethnolinguistic groups, it should start in L1.

If the mother tongues were used as media of education, 'ethnicity would be appeased, but linguistic and social inequalities would be sharpened', according to JB. All over the world? JB may be right about Tanzania, but certainly wrong about Hungarians in Slovakia and hundreds of other minorities. More work is needed to understand details in exceptions, but this does not invalidate principles with strong explanatory power in a large number of cases.'

JB presents claims about what the implementation of linguistic rights in Africa would result in, without offering any empirical evidence (see, for instance, Prah 1995a, b, for evidence and recommendations completely opposed to JB's claims). His Tanzanian description, though interesting in itself, makes gloomy reading, but is irrelevant to principles of language rights and also to the logic of JB's argument. Swahili is not an oppressed minority language which has suddenly achieved linguistic rights. It is in fact in many ways a majority language, understood and spoken by a majority of the population, and is probably diminishing linguistic diversity in Tanzania in dramatic ways. Still, being a language related to many Tanzanian languages and mutually intelligible with several, its situation and role is in no way comparable to that of English.

JB claims, without providing evidence, that ethnolinguistic minority elites would benefit enormously from linguistic rights whereas ordinary people would probably experience little difference, 'linguistic and social inequalities would be sharpened'. But if we look at empirical evidence, we see a different story.

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 of them (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 TSK 1996 and 2000, chapter 8, for definitions of this and other 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 not enhancing social aspects of democracy. Likewise, there were big gender differences, meaning English language results do not contribute to 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 of 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 between 74 and 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 facilitates more democracy and equality, whereas according a foreign language a high status and using it 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 definition of '*causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group*' (see TSK 2000, chapter 5). 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).

John Baugh from Stanford University, in an article called 'Educational Malpractice and the Miseducation of Language Minority Students' (2000, see also 1999) draws a parallel between how physicians may maltreat patients and how minority students are often treated in education, including students who do not have mainstream US English as their first language, for instance Ebonics/Black English. The harm caused to them by this **maltreatment and miseducation** also fits the UN definition of '*causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group*'.

These cases fit the UN definition of genocide. In all of them, students experience violation of their linguistic human rights. When students are granted the basic right to mother tongue medium education, positive results follow.³ These rights have been clearly formulated in the Hague Recommendations. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities published in October

1996 educational guidelines called The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note. These guidelines were worked out by a small group of experts on human rights and education (including TSK). They represent an authoritative interpretation of the **minimum** in present human rights standards; they are also valid for immigrant minorities. 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, 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). According to this interpretation by some of the best human rights lawyers in the world, '[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' (Explanatory Notes). Most of the education offered to indigenous and minority children in Europe and North America is submersion. So is much of the education through the medium of an ex-colonial language offered to African children.

If deep ethnography or sociolinguistics has much to offer, JB's discussion paper does not clarify how this might come about. On the contrary his laudable focus on socio-economic existential problems, and the failure of education systems to serve the mass of Africans well, seems to trap him into recommending a continuation of the linguistic and social status quo. The ones served well by this are the elites and their global backers in the corporate and financial worlds. One prerequisite for positive changes is self-awareness among researchers about research ethics and our own ethnocentricity (see Menk 2000) and paradigmatic limitations (e.g. Mühlhäusler 1996). Miklós Kontra highlights comparable ethical challenges to sociolinguists (e.g. 2000, Szabolcs and Kontra 2000), with added demands on their linguistic and cultural competence when working outside their own countries (Kontra 2000; see also Östman 2000). We need approaches which combine (intra- and inter-language rights, disciplines, research and activism, etc) and act in complementary, not competing, ways.

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¹ The three authors have co-edited a book on language rights together. We therefore thought it appropriate that Kontra should participate in the rejoinder, even if he is not named by Blommaert. Because of time constraints, most of Kontra's comments have been inserted separately; a few have been integrated into the rest of the text. All three of us thank Michael Clyne for reflective, insightful comments.

² There is a wealth of research on language/class, language/ethnicity, AAVE/Ebonics, dialects as language barriers, etc, by such writers as Bernstein, Labov, Lippi-Green, Wolfram, De Mauro, Vignuzzi, Ammon, etc.).

³ . TSK 2000 presents some of the positive results.