

Language, Education and (violations of) Human Rights

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Abstract 1

The education of Indigenous and minority children in most countries today violates the right to education (Magga et al., 2005). It can sociologically and educationally be termed genocide, according to the UN Genocide Convention; legally, it can be seen as a crime against humanity (Dunbar & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008). The maintenance of diversity is counteracted by the increasing dominance of English (Phillipson 2008) and other killer languages. These are often learned subtractively, at the cost of the mother tongues (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000), instead of additively, in addition to mother tongues. Schools participate, through assimilationist genocidal education, in processes of linguistic capital dispossession (Harvey 2005, Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, forthcoming), and reproduction of poverty (Sen 1985, Misra & Mohanty 2000, Mohanty 2000, Mohanty & Minati 2007).

Abstract 2

- **The most important Linguistic Human Right (LHR) in education for Indigenous peoples and minorities, if they want to reproduce themselves as peoples/minorities, is an unconditional right to mainly mother tongue medium education in non-fee state schools. This education (of course including teaching of a dominant language as a subject, by bilingual teachers) should continue minimally 8 years, preferably longer (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, forthcoming a, b, Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, forthcoming; Heugh, forthcoming, Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, forthcoming). Today, binding educational LHRs are more or less non-existent. According to pessimistic but realistic estimates, 90-95% of today's spoken languages may be very seriously endangered or extinct by the year 2100 (Krauss, Maffi & Yamamoto 2004).**

Abstract 3

If this scenario is not counteracted strongly and immediately, the estimate could also be that most languages to go would be Indigenous, and most of the world's Indigenous languages would no longer be learned by children in 2100 or be completely extinct. Since much of the knowledge about how to maintain the world's biodiversity is encoded in the small Indigenous and local languages, with the disappearance of the languages this knowledge (which is often more accurate and sophisticated than “western” “scientific” knowledge, see ICSU 2002) will also disappear; this means destroying the prerequisites for human life on earth.

Is this what we want?

Languages are today being
killed faster than ever
before in human history

3-600 languages left in 2100? Or 40-50?

- The most 'optimistic realistic' linguists estimate that half of today's oral languages may have disappeared or at least not be learned by children around the year 2100 (e.g. Wurm, ed., 2001).
- The 'pessimistic but realistic' researchers estimate that we may only have some 10% of today's oral languages left as vital, non-threatened languages around 2100, or even 5% (Krauss 1992, 1995).
- or even 40-50 languages, the fully digitalised ones (Rannut 2004).

The most important **PEDAGOGICAL** reason for both languages disappearing and for "illiteracy" is **the wrong medium of teaching.**

Indigenous and minority children and children from dominated groups are taught in dominant languages, **SUBTRACTIVELY**. They have few Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs).

Subtractive versus additive

Subtractive versus additive

- **SUBTRACTIVE** teaching through the medium of a **dominant** language replaces Indigenous or minority (IM) children's mother tongues. It subtracts from their linguistic repertoire.

Subtractive versus additive

- **SUBTRACTIVE** teaching through the medium of a **dominant** language replaces Indigenous or minority (IM) children's mother tongues. It subtracts from their linguistic repertoire.
- **ADDITIVE** teaching through the medium of the **IM mother tongues**, with good teaching of the dominant language as a second language, adds to IM children's linguistic repertoire and makes them **HIGH LEVEL BILINGUAL OR MULTILINGUAL**. They can learn their own language and other languages well.

Why do languages
disappear?

Two paradigms

In studying causes for the disappearance of languages we find two explanatory paradigms:
language death and
language murder.

When languages, "the vast libraries of human intangible heritage", disappear,
is it

(natural) death or is it murder?

■ DEATH

- Languages just disappear naturally...
- Languages commit suicide; speakers are leaving them voluntarily for instrumental reasons and for their own good.

■ MURDER

- Arson: the libraries are set on fire!
- Educational systems, mass media, etc participate in committing linguistic and cultural genocide according to the UN Genocide Convention definitions, Art. 2b & 2e

("NATURAL") DEATH or MURDER?

Two paradigms

- *Languages do NOT just disappear “naturally”, like flowers being born, blossoming, and withering.*
- *Languages do NOT “commit suicide”. In most cases, speakers do NOT leave them voluntarily, for instrumental reasons, and for their own good.*
- ★ *Languages are being “murdered”. Most disappearing languages are victims of linguistic genocide.*
- ★ *Educational systems and mass media are important direct agents in linguistic and cultural genocide. Behind them are the world’s social, economic, technological and political systems.*

The difference between seeing the disappearance of languages as **death** or as **murder**?

■ **DEATH**

- If languages just disappear naturally, there is no agent. The only ones to blame are the speakers themselves. It is THEIR individual and collective responsibility ... and they have profited by language shift.

■ **MURDER**

- If languages have been murdered/ killed, we can analyse the structural and ideological agents responsible: the world's economic, technological and political systems. Even when language shift has happened with speakers' "consent", ideological factors behind this "consent" can be analysed.

Language murder at work: English is today the world's most important **killer language 1**

- When "big" languages are learned **subtractively** (at the cost of the mother tongues) rather than **additively** (in addition to mother tongues), they can **become KILLER LANGUAGES** (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000 for details)
- Killer languages pose serious threats towards the linguistic diversity of the world.

What is a killer language 2

”Being” a **killer language** is **NOT** a characteristic of a language. It is a question of how a language functions in relation to other languages.

ANY language can **become** a **killer language** in relation to some other language.

What is a killer language 3

Besides, "languages" do not kill each other. It is the power relations between the **speakers** of the languages that are the decisive factors behind the unequal relations between the languages which then cause people from dominated groups to learn other languages subtractively, **at the cost of their own.**

English is today the world's
most important **killer**
language...

.... but most dominant languages function
as killer languages vis-à-vis smaller or less
powerful languages. There is a **nested**
hierarchy of languages, and glottophagy
("language cannibalism").

Sign languages and killer languages

- ALL oral languages can, through enforced oralism, function as killer languages, in relation to Sign languages
- Official/national oral languages may be especially important killer languages vis-a-vis Sign languages
- The **American Sign Language** may pose serious threats towards all other Sign languages, if it is learned subtractively. It may be **the worst killer language** among Sign languages

ONE REASON WHY LINGUISTIC
HUMAN RIGHTS IN EDUCATION
AND MAINTENANCE OF ALL THE
WORLD'S LANGUAGES *are necessary*

Counteract linguistic
genocide and crimes
against humanity in
education!

Genocide?

Is the term not
too strong?

UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948).

Two of the five definitions of genocide

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Two of the five definitions of genocide

- Article II(e): '**forcibly *transferring children of the group to another group***';
and

UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948).

Two of the five definitions 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).

EUROPE, Pirjo Janulf, 1998

Janulf (longitudinal study): 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.
Assimilationist education is genocidal.

AFRICA, Edward Williams, 1995

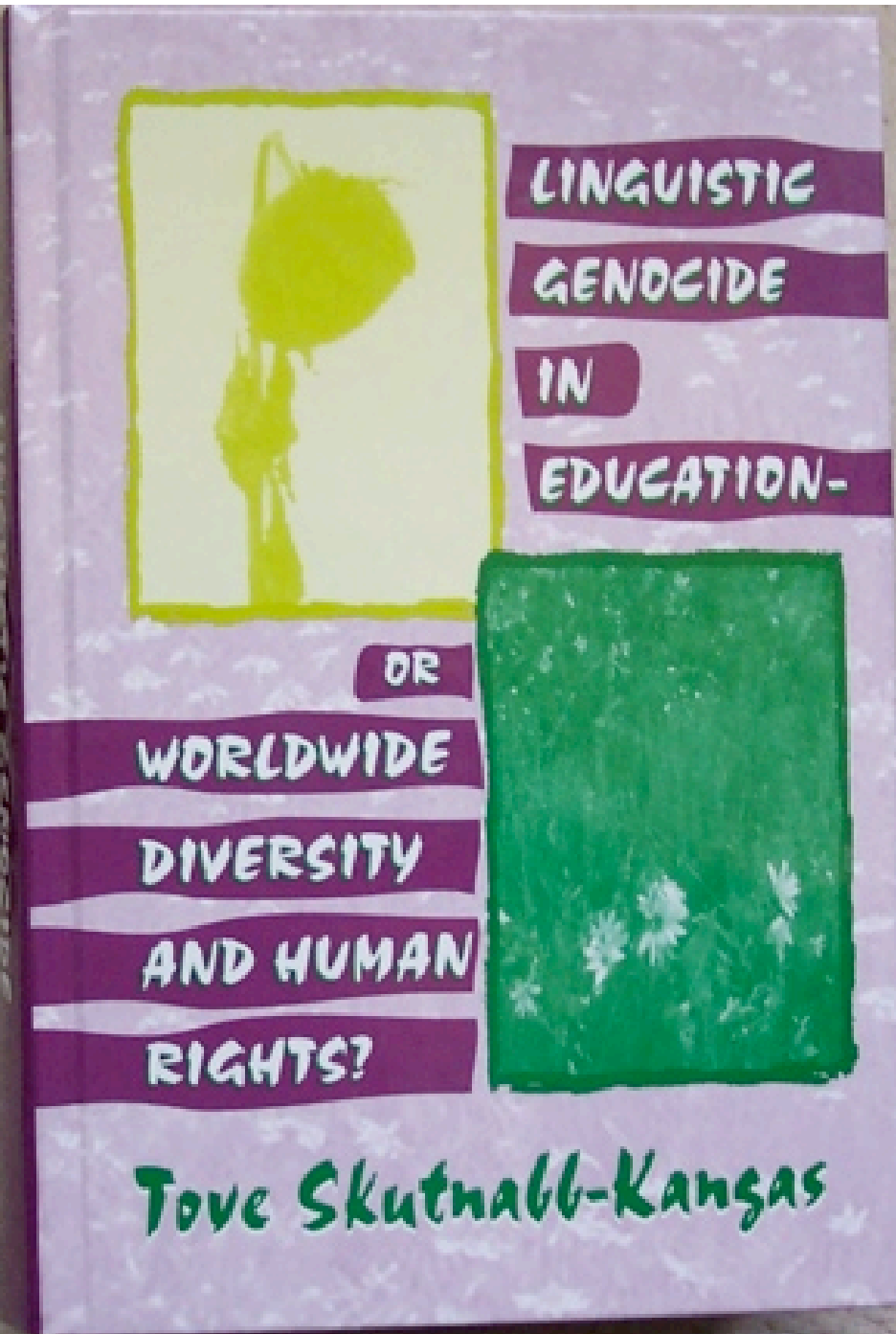
Zambia and Malawi, 1,500 students, grades 1-7

Zambian pupils had all education in English) ‘Large numbers of them have very weak or zero reading competence in two languages’.

The Malawi children were taught in local languages during the first 4 years, with English as a subject). They had slightly better test results in the English language than the Zambian students. In addition they read and wrote their own languages. Conclusion: ‘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’. This fits the UN genocide definition of “causing mental harm”.

CANADA, Katherine Zozula & Simon Ford, 1985

- Report 'Keewatin Perspective on Bilingual Education'
- tells about Canadian Inuit 'students (taught in English) who are neither fluent nor literate in either language' and
- presents statistics showing that the students 'end up at only Grade 4 level of achievement after 9 years of schooling'.
- **Causing mental harm?**



Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove
(2000). **Linguistic
genocide in
education - or
worldwide
diversity and
human rights?**

Mahwah, NJ &
London, UK:

Lawrence Erlbaum
Associates,
818 pages.

(my home page
[www.akira.ruc.dk/
~tovesk/](http://www.akira.ruc.dk/~tovesk/) has a list of
contents).

Most Indigenous and minority education in the world participates in committing linguistic and cultural genocide, according to the genocide definitions in the UN Genocide Convention (see, e.g. Magga et al. 2005, Expert paper written for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, on violations of the (human) right to education).

Magga, Ole Henrik, Nicolaisen, Ida,
Trask, Mililani, Dunbar, Robert and
Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2005).

**Indigenous Children's Education and
Indigenous Languages. Expert paper
written for the United Nations
Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues. New York: United Nations.**

The Expert paper contains sociological and legal argumentation where we show that to educate Indigenous and minority (IM) children through a dominant language in a submersion or even early-exit transitional programme **violates the human right to education**. This right is in many international human rights documents, also in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (Art. 29). The Convention has been ratified by ALL other UN member states except two: Somalia and the USA...

Subtractive dominant-language medium education for IM children

- prevents access to education, because of the linguistic, pedagogical and psychological barriers it creates. Thus it violates the right to education.

Subtractive dominant-language medium education for IM children

often curtails the development of the children's capabilities, perpetuates poverty (see economics Nobel laureate Amartya Sen).

Subtractive dominant-language medium education for IM children

is organized **against solid research evidence** about how best to reach high levels of bilingualism or multilingualism and how to enable these children to achieve academically in school.

Our new Expert paper (2008)

Robert Dunbar & Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

Forms of Education of Indigenous Children as Crimes Against Humanity?

[In the UN system: Expert paper for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, presented by Lars-Anders Baer, in collaboration with Robert Dunbar, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas & Ole-Henrik Magga]. New York: United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. 2008.

Genocide?

- In Dunbar & Skutnabb-Kangas 2008, we again considered **the possibility that such subtractive educational policies**, implemented in the full knowledge of their devastating effects on those who suffer them, **constitute international crimes, including genocide**, within the meaning of the United Nations' 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (the “Genocide Convention”). That States persist in such policies, given such knowledge, can, we conclude, from an educational and sociological point of view be described as a form of **linguistic and/or cultural genocide**.

Dominant-language medium education for IM children

can cause serious physical
and mental harm.

Subtractive dominant-language medium education for IM children can have harmful consequences

socially, psychologically, economically, politically:

- very serious **mental** harm: social dislocation, psychological, cognitive, linguistic and educational harm, and, partially through this, also economic, social and political marginalization
- often also serious **physical** harm, e.g. in residential schools, and as a long-term result of marginalization - e.g. alcoholism, suicides, violence.

Our 2008 paper contains legal argumentation which shows that forcibly (i.e. when alternatives do not exist) educating IM children in a dominant language in submersion and even early-exit transitional programmes is at least sociologically and educationally **genocide** (we need some more court cases to ascertain the precise interpretations of some concepts in the Genocide Convention's definitions). In any case this education can be legally labelled **a crime against humanity.**

Conclusion in Dunbar & Skutnabb-Kangas 2008 Expert paper for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

- The various forms of subtractive education to which indigenous children have been and continue to be subject results in very serious and often permanent harmful mental and physical consequences.
- It is now at odds with and in clear violation of a range of human rights standards, and in our view amount to ongoing violations of fundamental rights. It is at odds with contemporary standards of minority protection.

Crime against humanity?

- In our view, the concept of “crime against humanity” is less restrictive [than genocide], and can also be applied to these forms of education.
- In our view, the destructive consequences of subtractive education, not only for indigenous languages and cultures but also in terms of the lives of indigenous people/s, are now clear.
- The concept of “crimes against humanity” provides a good basis for an evolution that will ultimately lead to the stigmatisation through law of subtractive educational practices and policies.

Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs)

Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) in education are ONE necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite in the struggle to prevent linguistic genocide and crimes against humanity.

LHRs in education necessary for group maintenance and for linguistic diversity

- **When all children attend school, LHRs in education are necessary for any group to reproduce itself as a group.**
- **LHRs are necessary for maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity (and, as a mediating factor, biodiversity) on earth.**
- **The most central LHR in education is the right to mother-tongue-medium education in state schools.**

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- **promoting conflict prevention; and**

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- **promoting positive state policies towards minority languages**
- **promoting the maintenance of the world's linguistic diversity;**
- **promoting conflict prevention; and**
- **promoting self-determination.**

Language rights

+

Human rights

=

**LINGUISTIC HUMAN
RIGHTS**

What are LHRs (Linguistic Human Rights)?

- **(some) Language Rights (LRs) + Human Rights (HRs) = LHRs**
- **Some LRs are so necessary for a dignified life that they must be seen as inalienable: no state, individual or group is allowed to violate them; they are Linguistic Human Rights**

LANGUAGE in human rights instruments

- LANGUAGE is one of the most important ones of those human characteristics on the basis of which people are not allowed to be discriminated against. Others are gender, "race" and religion.
- Still LANGUAGE often disappears in the educational paragraphs of binding HRs instruments.

Language disappears in binding educational paragraphs in human rights instruments 1

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- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** the paragraph on education (26) does not refer to language at all.

**Language disappears
in binding educational paragraphs
in human rights instruments 2**

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The **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966) mentions language on a par with race, colour, sex, religion, etc. in its general Article (2.2).

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Its education Article (13.1) explicitly refers to ‘racial, ethnic or religious groups’ but **omits here reference to language or linguistic groups:**

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Its education Article (13.1) explicitly refers to ‘racial, ethnic or religious groups’ but **omits here 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)

Binding educational clauses of human rights instruments have more opt-outs, modifications, alternatives, claw-backs, etc. than other Articles

UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 1992

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■ 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. (emphases added, ‘*obligating*’ and positive measures in blue *italics*, ‘**opt-outs**’ in red **bold**).

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- 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.

**Council of Europe's
Framework Convention for the
Protection of National Minorities
and
The European Charter for
Regional or Minority Languages,
both in force since 1998.**

The latest news about them are at [http://
conventions.coe.int/treaty/EN/cadreprincipal.htm](http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/EN/cadreprincipal.htm)
and their treaty numbers are 148 and 158.

Council of Europe's **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**

- In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in **substantial numbers**, **if there is sufficient demand**, the parties shall **endeavour** to ensure, **as far as possible** and **within the framework of their education systems**, that persons belonging to those minorities have **adequate** opportunities for being taught in the minority language **or** for receiving instruction in this language (emphases added).

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:

- **‘as far as possible’**
- **‘within the framework of [the State's] education systems’,**
- **‘appropriate measures’**
- **‘adequate opportunities’**
- **‘if there is sufficient demand’**
- **‘substantial numbers’**
- **‘pupils who so wish in a number considered sufficient’**

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Part III, Education Art. 8

The opt-outs and alternatives in 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.

Educational linguistic human rights, especially the right to mother tongue medium education, are among the most important rights for any minority.

Without them, a minority whose children attend school, usually has to accept subtractive teaching through the medium of a dominant/majority language.

**It cannot reproduce itself as a minority.
It cannot integrate but is forced to assimilate.**

Assimilation is subtractive

Integration is additive

ASSIMILATION or INTEGRATION? 2

- **Assimilation** is **enforced subtractive** ‘learning’ of another (dominant) culture by a (dominated) group. Assimilation means being forcibly transferred to another group.
- **Integration** is characterized by **voluntary** mutual **additive** ‘learning’ of other cultures. Integration means a choice of inclusive group membership(s).

HRs' lawyer Katarina Tomaševski,
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to Education (1996: 104) :

- “The purpose of international human rights law is
 - to act as correctives to the free market
 - to overrule the law of supply and demand and remove price-tags from people and from necessities for their survival”.

Linguistic (and cultural) rights in education
are, as human rights, necessities for
survival. Price-tags should be removed!

No “right to be educated in one’s own language” in international law?

- *“Until recently, most legal observers were probably of the view that there existed no “right to be educated in one’s own language” in international law” (de Varennes, 2007).*

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(1966, in force since 1976), Article 27 still grants the best

BINDING protection for linguistic rights:

“In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.”

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- only conferring some protection from discrimination (= “negative rights”) but not a positive right to maintain or even use one’s language.
- not imposing any obligations on states.

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- recognizing the existence of a 'right', and
- imposing positive obligations on States.

What does this imply for immigrant and refugee minorities? 1

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- **States have to see all national, immigrant and refugee minorities who fulfill objective minority definitions and choose to classify themselves as minorities, as minorities protected by Article 27. This includes Sign language users.**

What does this imply for immigrant and refugee minorities? 2

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- The minorities must have **positive language rights**, not only the negative right of protection against discrimination.

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What does this imply for immigrant and refugee minorities? 3

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- **States have to recognize the existence of a 'right'**

What does this imply for immigrant and refugee minorities? 3

- States have to recognize the existence of a 'right'
- States have **positive obligations** towards the minorities, including the Sign language users.

**The Hague Recommendations Regarding the
Education Rights of National Minorities from OSCE's
High Commissioner on National Minorities ([http://
www.osce.org/hcnm/](http://www.osce.org/hcnm/))**



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For minorities, 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 (Art. 11-13).

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‘[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’ (The Explanatory Note, p. 5).

Recent HRs instruments

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 61/295 on 13 September 2007

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Adopted by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/106 on 13 December 2006

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Art. 13 & 14

Article 13

1. Indigenous peoples have the **right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations** their histories, **languages**, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
2. States **shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected** and also to **ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood** in political, legal and administrative proceedings, **where necessary through the provision of interpretation** or by other appropriate means.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Art. 13 & 14

Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the **right to establish** and control their educational systems and institutions **providing education in their own languages**, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of **education of the State** without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, **including those living outside their communities**, to have access, **when possible**, to **an education** in their own culture and **provided in their own language**.

What can governments do in order not to participate in crimes against humanity?

Both Indigenous and minority education could be organised so as to promote high levels of multilingualism. Examples: Indigenous education in **Nepal (Hough et al, forthcoming a, b) and **Orissa, India** (Mohanty & Panda, 2007, Mishra et al., forthcoming), the **Saami country in Norway and Finland** (Aikio-Puoskari, forthcoming), **minority education in Ethiopia** (Heugh, forthcoming, Heugh et al. 2007, Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, eds, forthcoming). **Deaf education will be mentioned** (Skutnabb-Kangas, in press, Skutnabb-Kangas & Aikio-Puoskari, 2003).**

Some positive examples ... but more hypocrisy

- Some promising developments are taking place in many parts of the world, including India, Nepal, Peru, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Norway, Finland, etc.
- Still, in today's situation there is **a lot of nice talk and far too little action. Most countries are hypocritical.**

Any positive exceptions? Orissa, India

- In July 2007, a project started in Orissa, India. In 200 schools, Indigenous (“tribal”) children from 10 language groups are being taught through their mother tongues in the first grades. The coordinator is dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra. 16 more languages will be added in 2008.
- The research project FROM MOTHER TONGUE TO OTHER TONGUE: FACILITATING TRANSITION IN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION OF TRIBAL CHILDREN IN INDIA, directed by professors Ajit K. Mohanty and Minati Panda (Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi), follows some of the children.
- There are similar projects on a smaller scale in a couple of other states (e.g. Andhra Pradesh). There are plans to start them in several other states.

Any positive exceptions? Nepal

The project Multilingual Education Programme for all non-Nepali Speaking Students of Primary Schools of Nepal (Ministry of Education, Nepal, Dr. **Lava Deo Awasthi, and Chief Technical Advisor, Professor **David Hough** - from Japan), are running 6 pilot projects where **Indigenous and minority children will be taught mainly in their mother tongues in primary school. Materials & curriculum are bottom-up, largely planned by villagers. The plan is to extend this to ALL non-Nepali mother tongue children in Nepal. Nepal has over 100 languages.****

Any positive exceptions? The Saami

In Sápmi (the Saami country) in the core Saami administrative areas in Norway and Finland, **Indigenous Saami children have the right to have their first 9 years of education through the medium of Saami** (there are 10 Saami languages). They learn Norwegian/Finnish as a second language, and English and other languages as foreign languages. There are some Saami-medium upper secondary schools, and a Saami-medium university college. The results are excellent linguistically, academically, in terms of identities. See Aikio-Puoskari (forthcoming), Skutnabb-Kangas & Aikio-Puoskari (2003) and references to **Aikio-Puoskari** in

www.samiskhs.no/eng/ToveSkutnabbKangas.htm

Any positive exceptions? Ethiopia

Ethiopia has an innovative and progressive national education policy which is based on 8 years of mother-tongue medium (MTM) education. Regions have the authority to make their own decentralized implementation plans. Some regions transfer to English medium already after 4 or 6 years. A study across all the regions was commissioned by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (Heugh, Kathleen, Benson, Carol, Berhanu, Bogale & Mekonnen, Alemu Gebre Yohannes (22 January 2007). **Final Report. Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia, Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, September to December 2006**). There is an efficient collection of system-wide assessment data. These show very clear patterns of learner achievement at Grade/Year 8, 10 and 12. The Grade 8 data show that **those learners who have 8 years of MTM education plus English as a subject perform better across the curriculum (including in English) than those with 6 years or 4 years of mother tongue medium.**

The Deaf

World Federation of the Deaf

<http://wfdeaf.org/default.aspx>

“... even in industrialised countries, the majority of current Deaf education programmes do not respect the linguistic human rights of Deaf children. Indeed, most Deaf education programmes fall into the language deprivation category described in theoretical models of education of linguistic minorities. “Language deprivation” for Deaf people means ignoring the use of sign language as a basic communication means, as a language of instruction and as a school subject. Following this, the linguistic human rights of Deaf children are grossly violated in educational programmes all over the world.”

Any positive exceptions?

The World Federation of the Deaf has several examples of **education of the Deaf through the medium of Sign languages**, with positive results. Research follow-up is still scarce.

Making Sign languages **official languages** or granting them other constitutional rights is in progress in many countries.

Teacher training has started properly in several countries (see, e.g., <http://www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/okl/koulutusala/vkluoko/> . This is a **5-year MA-level teacher training programme taught completely through the medium of Sign language**. It started in 1998 and trains every year 8-10 teachers who have to be bilingual in Finnish Sign language and written Finnish when they start. They are competent to **teach the whole 9-year curriculum through Sign language**.

IMAGINING MULTILINGUAL SCHOOLS

*Languages in Education
and Glocalization*




Edited by Ofelia García, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas
and María E. Torres-Guzmán

Articles from all over the world on how multilingual education has been and can be organised (2006).

See
Text
www.multilingual-matters.com/multi/display.asp?isb=1853598941

Ex Minister of Education in Kurdistan
Abdul-Aziz Taib, interview 15 March 2006



“Every child in the world
has the right to education
through the medium of
their mother tongue”

Too little, and too late

When states, including the ones who voted AGAINST the UN DRIP (Australia, Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand, USA), refuse to grant Indigenous peoples and (both “national” and immigrated) minorities an unconditional right to the most decisive LHR in education, the right to be educated in one’s own language in a non-fee state school, they are seriously harming both the children concerned and themselves - and our planet.

Results of lack of LHRs in education for Indigenous and minority children

- *Lack of LHRs, especially in education, is co-responsible for*
 - - illiteracy, lack of school achievement, educational waste, poor life chances;
 - - disappearance of groups/nations/peoples (through forced assimilation);
 - - killing of the world's languages and linguistic diversity, **and TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) as prerequisites for the maintenance of biodiversity.**

Subtractive dominant-language medium education for IM children

- may lead to the extinction of Indigenous languages:
- thus contributing to the disappearance of the world's linguistic diversity.
- A partial result of this can be the disappearance of the knowledge about biodiversity and its maintenance, and, through this, diminishing prerequisites for human life on earth.

AN IMPORTANT REASON FOR MAINTAINING ALL THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES

- Linguistic diversity and biodiversity are correlationally and causally related.
- Knowledge about how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in small languages.
- Through killing them we kill the prerequisites for maintaining biodiversity.
- (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 2002, 2004, in press, for details)

The role of indigenous peoples

- Most of the world's megabiodiversity is in areas under the management or guardianship of indigenous peoples.
- Most of the world's linguistic diversity resides in the small languages of indigenous peoples. Much of the detailed knowledge of how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in the languages of indigenous peoples.
- **If we continue as now, most of the world's Indigenous languages will be gone by 2100.**

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Strongest ecosystems are most diverse (Baker 2001)

- 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 (2001: 281) review of Skutnabb-Kangas 2000)

Biocultural diversity

(= biodiversity + linguistic diversity +
cultural diversity)

is essential for long-term
planetary survival

because it **enhances creativity and
adaptability and thus stability.**

**Today we are killing biocultural
diversity faster than ever before.**

Vandana Shiva 2008

“Ecological multiples are insurance. In any crisis, uniformity is the worst way to respond; diversity is resilience”.

Shiva, Vandana (2008). Making Waves. Interview with Vandana Shiva. Environmentalist extraordinaire. By Rowenna Davis. *New Internationalist*, April 2008, p. 29.

Rationality?

We are among the rarest of the rare not because of our numbers, but because of the unlikeliness of our being here at all, the pace of our evolution, our powerful grip on the whole planet, and the precariousness of our future. We are evolutionary whiz kids who are better able to transform the world than to understand it.

Other animals cannot evolve fast enough to cope with us. It is possible that we may also become extinct, and if we do, we will not be the only species that sabotaged itself, merely the only one that could have prevented it. Diane Ackerman (1997: xviii-xix)

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