



27-28 AUGUST 2008  
TOKYO, JAPAN

*"In the galaxy of languages,  
every word is a star." ...UNESCO*

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# **Globalization & Languages: Building on Our Rich Heritage**



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The "Globalization" series is directed by Hans d'Orville  
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Front cover photo: The Hudhud Chants of the Ifugao, Philippines © Renato S. Rastrollo/NCCA-ICH/UNESCO

The Hudhud Chants, proclaimed UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001,  
are again learned by children of the Ifugao community (Philippines) in special Hudhud schools.

For more information on the Hudhud Chants of the Ifugao, please go to  
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# FOREWORD

The designation by the United Nations General Assembly of 2008 as International Year of Languages, for which UNESCO was lead agency, demonstrated the increasing recognition of the importance of languages in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, in building inclusive knowledge societies and maintaining a culturally diverse world. Or, as the slogan for the International Year put it: 'Languages Matter!'

Through language people build, understand and express their emotions, intentions and values; confirm social relations; and transmit cultural and social expressions and practices. Thus, language is a determining factor of cultural identity for diverse groups and individuals. It is an inherent part of who we are.

UNESCO's Member States have repeatedly made the important connection between linguistic diversity and cultural diversity and the role they play in promoting sustainable development. This is evident in the legal instruments underpinning UNESCO's strategy to safeguard cultural diversity. Principal among these are the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its action plan, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Globalization processes are having a palpable impact on the use, knowledge and preservation of languages. On the one hand, globalization has the potential to revitalize languages and foster their use in society by:

- connecting institutions around the world that are working with endangered language communities` to promote the revitalization, maintenance, and perpetuation of their languages;
- providing access to information and communication resources that can be utilised to assist communities in preserving their linguistic diversity;
- connecting endangered language communities from various regions of the world so as to raise awareness, increase advocacy efforts, and share best practises.

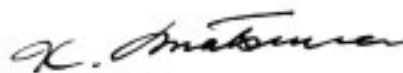
But globalization also harbours the risk of greater uniformity, which endangers languages, particularly when emphasis is placed on acquiring the main international languages at the expense of regional and local languages, especially in education systems, the media and public life in general. Given current trends, experts estimate that within a few generations, more than 50 percent of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken in the world today may disappear. The consequences of this would be tragic.



The International Conference "Globalization and Languages: Building on our Rich Heritage", jointly organized by UNESCO and the United Nations University from 27 to 28 August 2008 provided an opportunity to join forces with eminent experts from politics, academia, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society to discuss the ways and means to protect languages, promote multilingualism and preserve linguistic diversity in light of the challenges and opportunities associated with the processes of globalization.

Attention was given to the essential role that languages play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Education for All (EFA) goals and in building truly inclusive knowledge societies. In an excellent example of international cooperation and intercultural dialogue, conference participants devised key policy recommendations on some of the strategies and approaches needed to protect endangered languages and to foster their use in society.

It gives me great pleasure to present the results of the in-depth discussions and debates by renowned experts on issues related to the complex and changing relations between globalization processes and the language mosaic of the world. I encourage you to take particular note of the key policy recommendations that they have devised urging governments, UN bodies, international and regional bodies, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society to focus more attention on the need to develop holistic, national language policies and approaches that empower communities to use their languages by expanding access to education, communication and information tools, economic opportunities, and political decision-making processes and in so doing further promote their sustainable development.



Koïchiro Matsuura  
Director-General of UNESCO

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Konrad Osterwalder, Rector, United Nations University (UNU), Tokyo, Japan



### **Shintaro ITO**

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA),  
Tokyo, Japan

Mr. Ito began his political career in 1981 as the Political Secretary to the Minister of State for Defense. He also was a professor for a number of years at Tamagawa University and at Tohoku Fukushi University in Japan. Mr Ito was elected Member of the House of Representatives (4th District, Miyagi Prefecture) in 2001. He was re-elected twice. In 2005, he served as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and then went on to become the Deputy Secretary-General for the Liberal Democratic Party in 2006. He is currently the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), a post which he has held since 2008. He holds a Master of Laws (LL.M) in Political Science from the Graduate School of Law at Keio University, and a Master of Arts Degree from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University.

# STATEMENT BY SHINTARO ITO, STATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MOFA), TOKYO, JAPAN

It is a great pleasure for me to attend the opening of UNU/UNESCO International Conference on globalization. I recognize that this gathering has an important agenda, that is, how globalization could bring about benefits to all people on earth. It is a great honor for Japan to provide a forum for the Conference that marks its 6th year.

This year's theme: "Globalization and Languages," is really a timely one. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages. I am personally very interested in the issue because I am a Japanese law-maker, and at the same time, also engaged in academic study and university teaching in fields related to communication, information technology and civilization.

A language reflects the culture and tradition of its people. More importantly, it embodies its people's ways of thinking, as well as their way of feeling and their sense of value. We often find ourselves trying to adopt the foreign way of thinking and acting. In other words, I think that languages have the power to determine one's way of thinking.

Therefore, the loss of a language has significant meaning. When one is deprived of his or her own language, one has to give up his or her own way of thinking. If people are forced to use the same language, there will be uniformity in thinking. If that is to happen, I am afraid that the evolution of our civilization would come to a halt. It is my belief that civilization can only advance where there is coexistence of different cultures. The variety of cultures gives birth to our new wisdom and serves as a foundation for innovative human thinking. Multilingualism is one of the essential elements for the further evolution of our common society.

Advanced information technology has accelerated globalization, and the world has become smaller. The increased opportunities for access to information via internet are widely welcomed, as it is expected to benefit the developing countries as well as developed countries.

However, globalization is also posing a threat to multilingualism. As more and more people rely on major languages that are used on the internet today, minority languages are on the verge of disappearing. Indeed, there is a study which warns that more than 50% of the 7,000 languages spoken in the world may vanish within decades. Here, I would like to add my voice to that of Mr Matsuura's, who calls upon us to take urgent action.

Throughout our history, diversity has created the wisdom of the world which we live in. Diversity also leads to hope for a brighter future. Therefore, it is not sufficient to preserve disappearing languages in a museum as if they were historical art pieces, but rather, we must utilize them as active and vibrant tools.

To this end, we need to act with a fresh mind. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time to share all of my ideas with you today. I wish I could join the discussions in the following sessions. However, as that is not possible, it is my sincere wish that the participants of this Conference produce enlightening suggestions on how to safeguard languages.

Finally, I would like to pay my utmost respect to UNU and UNSECO for the vigorous efforts, and would like to reaffirm that Japan continues to be your true partner.



### **Hirokazu MATSUNO**

Senior Vice-Minister,  
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT),  
Tokyo, Japan

Mr Matsuno was elected Member of the House of Representatives, Chiba Prefecture, 3rd district, in June 2000. He was then re-elected in November 2003 and then again in September 2005. In September 2005, he became the Director of the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Division of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He then became the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Labour and Welfare in September 2006. Since August 2008, he has held the post of Senior Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan. He graduated from the Faculty of Law at Waseda University in 1986 and the Matsushita Institute of Government and Management in 1989.

# STATEMENT BY HIROKAZU MATSUNO, SENIOR VICE-MINISTER, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MEXT), TOKYO, JAPAN

In recent years, globalization has progressed in all fields of politics, economy, and society. For example, in the economic sector, business activities that cross borders and freely access markets around the world are significantly affecting the global economy. Mutual exchange of culture and values beyond borders has heightened interest in countries with different languages, societies, cultures, and religions. This has opened the door to gaining even more new knowledge and experience.

At the same time, it is necessary to possess advanced language capabilities and to be trained in communications technology such as IT in order to benefit from globalization. At this point, perhaps only a part of the worldwide population has these abilities.

The dismal truth is that around the world there are 770 million people age 15 and up who are illiterate. The disparity between those who can adapt to globalization and those who can't will likely widen even more.

As part of the Education for All initiative to promote literacy, MEXT contributes to a trust fund that enables UNESCO to address this issue. MEXT has also stipulated in the Basic Promotional Plan for Education in July this year that the "Plan for 300,000 Exchange Students" will be formulated.

Our country is welcoming many international students from developing countries, especially from Asia. After completing their studies in Japan, these students return to their countries and have flourishing careers in various workplaces such as universities, government ministries, and private companies. Japan's target is to increase the number of exchange students to 300,000 by the year 2020. We hope by that these students will become active in their home countries, and will contribute to their development by cultivating personnel that succeed in a globalized society. While cultivating human resources is an activity that requires time, MEXT aspires to contribute to the cultivation of human resources abroad through activities like these.

Finally, I hope that this conference will result in much fruitful discussion. I wish to conclude my greeting by extending my appreciation to UNU, UNESCO, and everyone involved for their hard work in arranging this conference.





### **Koïchiro MATSUURA**

Director-General,  
United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
(UNESCO), Paris, France

Koïchiro Matsuura began his diplomatic career with a posting to Ghana in 1961 covering ten West African countries, leading to a lifelong passion for the cultures and people of Africa. He worked in development cooperation throughout his career and in political affairs, with a focus on North America. In the 1970s, he served as Counselor at the Embassy of Japan in Washington, DC, and later as Consul General in Hong Kong. As Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1992-1994, he was Japan's Sherpa for the G-7 Summit. In 1999, while serving as Japan's Ambassador to France and chairing UNESCO's flagship World Heritage Committee, Mr Matsuura was elected by Member States to his first term as Director-General of UNESCO. After a first term marked by programme and reform accomplishments, as well as the addition of new countries, including the United States, to membership in UNESCO, he was re-elected to a second term in October 2005. Mr Matsuura has authored books in Japanese, English and French on UNESCO, international relations, the intersection between diplomacy and development cooperation, Japan-US relations, Japan-France relations, and a history of the G-7 Summit.

# STATEMENT BY KOÏCHIRO MATSUURA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL UNITED NATIONS, EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO), PARIS, FRANCE

It is both an honour and a pleasure to inaugurate the annual UNU-UNESCO International Conference on Globalization, whose theme this year, "Globalization and Languages: Building on our Rich Heritage", is particularly pertinent in 2008, the International Year of Languages.

We are very honoured today by the presence of the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Shintaro Ito, and Senior Vice-Minister for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Hirozako Matsuno, through whom I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan for the support which has made this event possible.

Allow me to acknowledge with great pleasure the presence of Professor Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yai, Chairman of the UNESCO Executive Board, and Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Benin to UNESCO, who is also an internationally renowned specialist in linguistic issues.

I should also like to extend a warm welcome to Mrs Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, President of Iceland from 1980 to 1996 and a valued UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador since 1998. In this role, she works tirelessly on behalf of the Organization to bring countries together in all domains, including linguistic diversity, multilingualism and literacy.

We are equally honoured by the presence of Adama Samassékou, Executive Secretary of the African Academy of Languages and President of the Maaya Network for linguistic diversity. Mr Samassékou, your devotion to the study and promotion of languages, your participation in the World Summit on the Information Society; and your passionate advocacy for Human Rights Education show you are a true friend of UNESCO. It is a pleasure to share this platform with you.

I am also very pleased to welcome Professor Stephen May, Chair of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and a prolific writer on language and human rights.

Finally, but not least, allow me to pay tribute to Rector Professor Konrad Osterwalder. Let me express my satisfaction that you have agreed to continue these annual conferences, now in their sixth year, which have become something of a tradition. They underline the close collaboration between UNESCO and UNU on cutting-edge issues and help to deepen our understanding of different aspects and dimensions of globalization processes. I should also like to express my personal appreciation both for your clear vision for the future of the UNU, and for your determination to further strengthen the bonds with UNESCO, which you set out to the 179th session of the UNESCO Executive Board in April this year. You may be assured that I share that determination.

The designation by the United Nations of 2008 as International Year of Languages, for which UNESCO is lead agency, is testimony to the increasing recognition that languages are vital to the economic, social and cultural life of all societies.

Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, the promotion of education for all and the development of knowledge societies 'without discrimination of race, sex, language or religion' have been central to UNESCO's work since its creation in the aftermath of the Second World War. Its constitution is premised on the principle of the equality of languages and cultures and the need for the Organization to advance 'the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through .... the free flow of ideas by word and image.' (Article 1.2(a)).

In the first decades of the Organization's existence, its work preserve "the independence, integrity and fruitful diversity of the cultures" was based on a notion of culture restricted to the fine arts, literature and certain performing arts.

A series of international exchanges from the 1970's onwards led to a definition of culture that reflects a far more inclusive approach. This is expressed in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in 2001, which considers culture to be "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, [...] encompassing in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

This recognition of the diversity within and between societies is the basis for UNESCO's work to preserve and foster cultural diversity - or pluralism - and its corollary, intercultural dialogue, one of the most pressing issues of contemporary society.

Linguistic diversity is an essential part of a culturally diverse world because it is through language that people build, understand and express their emotions, intentions, values and concept of the world. Languages shape the cultural identity of diverse groups and individuals. They are an inherent part of who we are. In this, languages are not only important tools for communication between individuals, groups and nations: they are our link to the past - and to the future; the medium through which cultural memory is transmitted from generation to generation; and an important reference point in today's fast changing world. That is why UNESCO considers linguistic diversity to be an essential part of a culturally diverse world.

Over the years, UNESCO's Member States have repeatedly made the connection between languages and culture in the legal instruments underpinning UNESCO's strategy to safeguard cultural diversity. Principal among these are the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its action plan, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

It is clear that globalization processes are having a palpable impact on the use, knowledge and preservation of languages. On the one hand – through the driver of information and communication technologies – globalization has the potential to facilitate the promotion of other cultures and thereby promote intercultural dialogue – and ultimately peace. On the other hand, it harbours the risk of moving towards uniformity, which puts many languages in peril and damages linguistic diversity.

Given the critical role of languages in transmitting knowledge and information to all segments of society, there can be no doubt about their strategic importance in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals, and expanding access to the benefits of globalization. For example, as factors of social integration, languages play a strategic role in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger at the heart of MDG 1. As a support for literacy, learning and life skills, they are essential to achieving MDG 2, namely, universal primary education, and efficiently preventing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, which is the aim of MDG 6 but which can only be effective if health programmes are delivered in languages understood by the learners. Moreover, in their capacity as systems embodying local and indigenous knowledge about resource management, languages are strategic to ensuring the environmental sustainability foreseen by MDG 7. But this can only be achieved if the interactions are based on vernacular languages.

In view of their strategic importance more must be done to promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity in public life and to bridge the "language divide". Experts tell us that within a few generations, more than 50 per cent of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken in the world today may disappear. This would constitute an enormous loss for humankind and our global cultural heritage and diversity. When a language disappears, a culture disappears and the world is impoverished by it.

Yet, only a few hundred languages are used in schools and most are used only sporadically. And less than a hundred are represented in the digital world. This means that thousands of languages – though mastered by those populations for whom they are the daily means of expression – are absent from education systems, the media, publishing and the public domain in general.

This limits the exchange of knowledge and information. By developing policies to advance multilingualism, including in cyberspace, we can work towards reducing this "language divide".

UNESCO is well placed to do so. Since 1993, its Endangered Languages Programme has worked to promote and protect linguistic diversity throughout the world. It focuses on the implementation and promotion of operational activities and projects, such as building local and national capacities for language safeguarding and documentation, and identifying and disseminating good practices.

In 2007, to increase awareness among governments, UN organizations, educational institutions and civil society about the importance of promoting and protecting all languages, especially indigenous, minority and endangered languages, we launched a public awareness campaign on the theme "Languages Matter!" It was designed to galvanize support for the celebration of the International Year of Languages.

Furthermore, in view of the increasing importance of languages, an intersectoral platform was created, involving all five of UNESCO's programme sectors: education, the natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information. Activities focus largely on multilingual education and endangered languages, but other issues such as intercultural dialogue, book publishing policies and capacities, including translations and wide dissemination. Multilingualism in cyberspace, indigenous knowledge and social transformations are also being addressed.

Given the multidisciplinary and cross-cutting nature of languages, it is only fitting that this international conference comprises specialists from a variety of fields and with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Your presence is testimony to your commitment to safeguarding the diversity of the languages of the world and to promoting their harmonious coexistence in a multilingual context.

Overcoming differences for the sake of linguistic diversity is an urgent mission not only for UNESCO, but for the whole of the international community.

We must act urgently. The costs of losing linguistic diversity are high and may jeopardize international cooperation to promote sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, and the achievement of the MDGs and EFA goals.

It is therefore crucial to develop language policies that enable each linguistic community to use its first language, or mother tongue, as widely and as often as possible, including in educational, administrative and legal contexts, while also mastering a national or regional language and an international language to enable intercommunity and international communication. In addition, we must encourage speakers of dominant languages to master other languages, albeit of national or international nature in order to expand the scope for dialogue and communication. Only if multilingualism is fully accepted as an invaluable asset can all languages find their place in our globalized world.

Conferences such as this are strategic to achieving these goals. The two-day programme focuses on key issues such as multilingualism, translation, literacy, endangered languages and standard-setting instruments. As such, it facilitates joint analysis of distinct but interrelated fields of study. By building thematic bridges, it will help to ensure that the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism in educational, administrative and legal systems, cultural expressions, the media, cyberspace and trade, are recognized at the national, regional and international levels. Such fora will undoubtedly assist governments, civil society organizations, educational institutions and professional associations to understand that "languages matter" – and encourage them to take appropriate action.



**Konrad OSTERWALDER**

Rector,  
United Nations University (UNU);  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General,  
Tokyo, Japan

Mr Osterwalder was appointed as the fifth Rector of UNU on 1 September 2007. He holds a Ph.D. in Theoretical Physics from ETH Zurich. He was the Rector of ETH Zurich from 1995 to 2007 and Professor in Mathematical Physics from 1977 to 2007. Before that he was on the faculty of Harvard University for seven years. He is a member of the Swiss Academy of Technical Sciences and he holds an honorary degree from the Technical University in Helsinki.

Mr Osterwalder also served as Vice-President of the Conference of Rectors of Swiss Universities, as Chair of the University Council of Darmstadt University and as President of the Conference of European Schools of Advanced Engineering Education and Research.

# STATEMENT BY KONRAD OSTERWALDER, RECTOR, UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (UNU); UNITED NATIONS UNDER SECRETARY–GENERAL

Kokuren Daigaku e youkoso. Benvenuti, Bienvenue, bienvenidos, 'ahlan wa sahalan, Shalom habah, huan ying, dabro pazhalovat', Willkommen, and Gruetzi mitenand in my native language, which is of course just to say welcome one and all to the United Nations University and to the 2008 UNU/UNESCO International Conference on Globalization and Languages – Building on our Rich Heritage.

I address you today in English, even if many languages could be spoken in this room, more I think than at any other conference we may have had here. I wish we could have provided translators for all of them, but we would have needed another hall of this size just to accommodate them. The conference participants alone speak more than forty languages. English is the only language shared by all of us, with French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Indonesian being shared by some. Thirty-four other languages are spoken by only one person. Despite this impressive diversity, it is very interesting to note that neither Chinese nor Arabic appear on the list, so even at such a gathering as this, we apparently do not cover all six official languages of the United Nations.

This is my first UNU/UNESCO International Conference at which I have the pleasure of welcoming you as host so let me exercise my prerogative to share a few thoughts with you.

Needless to say, I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this UNESCO/UNU International Conference on Globalization and Languages. My warmest thanks to all who have helped to make this meeting possible: the organizers, the speakers and the sponsors.

## LANGUAGE AND GLOBALIZATION

The urge to communicate – to reach out, to connect, to instruct, to share – is primal and ancient. Our facility to communicate is probably the greatest single contributing factor to the success, such as it is, of our species. Obviously there are many ways to communicate, but language is so important, so advantageous, that even the fossil record shows that its acquisition changed the shape of our brains with astonishing rapidity<sup>1</sup>.

Since we first became human we have sought to leave a mark, to pass on what we know. Some scholars believe that the earliest cave paintings may be instruction manuals, painted to teach the tribe and to plan for the hunt<sup>2</sup>.

It may have been the evolution of the hyoid bone that gave us language, or the enlargement of the hypoglossal canal, or a mutation to the "forkhead box P2" gene<sup>3</sup> – or it may well be that we

will never know whence language comes from. What we do know, without a doubt, every single one of us, is that language is at the very core of our humanity.

In an interview with the magazine L'Express<sup>4</sup>, the linguist Claude Hagège highlighted a few years ago this link between language and humanity, and here I wish to quote his words, which are full of wisdom – as well as humor, another very human characteristic:

The human genius creates instruments that have their own existence. But our brain evolved rather little in the last hundred thousand years. We are closer to the crocodiles than the intellectuals believe. We still obey our limbic brain, which produces the wars, the confrontations, the conflicts of territories, etc. The aptitude for language is what distinguishes us from the monkeys. And our languages are what make us most human. It is a good reason to defend them, no?

I quote this not just because of its relevance to the topic of the conference but because to me this quote encapsulates some of the core issues that we are charged to examine here at UNU – and at UNESCO, also – issues of education, conflict, and peace.

Globalization, too, is an ancient urge to reach out. Since we first stood upright we have longed to walk further, to explore, to go beyond the horizon ... and, very soon thereafter, to trade.

In *The Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith noted "the human propensity to truck and barter, to exchange one thing for another." It is this propensity that drove the ancient thalassocracies (maritime supremacy) of Minoa and Phoenicia, and that drives the global multinationals of today. But from there to here it has not always been, needless to say, smooth sailing.

## LINGUA FRANCA

Silk is an example of a commodity that was shipped from China to ancient Rome, passing through the hands of traders from diverse linguistic backgrounds as it made its way from China to India, to Arabia, to Ethiopia, to Greece and finally to Italy. The benefits of a lingua franca here are obvious, and it could not have taken long for one to arise. Chekhov's observation that not having knowledge of foreign languages is much like not having a passport must have been very apt indeed to these ancient mariners.

Aristotle and Plato incidentally made a similar journey, or at least their words did when they were absorbed by the Arab world and then rediscovered in the Middle Ages by European philosophers who found them in their Arabic versions. The philosophers then translated these texts into Latin, including the summaries and comments which had been added by Arab philosophers of the Golden Age, including Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina's). These Arab philosophers thereby influenced the ideas then taking shape which led ultimately to the Enlightenment. This might be why and how we still have Aristotle and Plato today, and how they have come to be studied by students



all around the world including those in the so-called Confucian countries. Confucius of course, has made his own journey but that is enough travelling for one day.

Today we have English, that wonderfully mongrel language, that serves much of the world in the capacity of lingua franca.

I'm a physicist, and until WW II the lingua franca of my field was German, the language of Planck, Einstein, Heisenberg and many others. Now it is English, almost exclusively. Rupert Lee, in his book [The Eureka! Moment:] 100 Key Scientific Discoveries of the 20th Century writes:

Of the thirty-five discoveries dated between 1900 and 1932, fifteen were published in German, nineteen in English, and one in French. The sixty-five discoveries dated from 1933 onwards were all published in English apart from five, which were published in German.

This puts scientists who do not speak English more or less fluently at a disadvantage. We have seen how scientists benefit from being able to discuss their ideas with each other, and in these discussions non-English-speaking scientists clearly find themselves 'out of the loop'.

His words point to a serious and growing concern in academia today, that non-English-speaking researchers may be excluded, their research unread, their thoughts unknown, their insights unshared, the ranking of their institutions perhaps disadvantaged because of a language barrier. But the problem is not limited to scientists. In our everyday life, English plays an ever growing role. The communication sector is dominated by English, but that is not the only example. This is why in many countries teaching English starts at a very early age in preschool or in the first years of elementary school. Whether this occurs at the expense of the local language is open for debate.

It is one of the cornerstones of a sustainable global humanity that as many people as possible are given the opportunity to learn the common language, to understand it and to formulate ones own thoughts in it.

But then we have to ask the question: how many Aristotles and Platos might we be losing today?

The drive for a common language, mastered by as many people as possible therefore creates another important responsibility.

Humans speak with many voices, in different languages and the language is an important aspect of culture, of a way of thinking. Just remember the different greetings I offered to you a few moments ago. Although they all intend to say the same thing, they don't all have exactly the same meaning. Whereas "Welcome" and "Benvenuto" similarly express the wish that the person has arrived well, the Hebrew "Shalom habah" means peace to the one who comes and the Swiss "Gruetsi" is a contortion of the German "GruessGott", which means I greet you in the name of good.

Thus, language is an expression of the way we think, but even more importantly, our language determines to a high degree not only how we think, but also what we are thinking about. A concept requires a notion and a notion calls for a word. Hence, the diversity of languages is part of the richness of human experience, of human thinking and feeling.

The threads of history and human experience, spun of language, now run through the sharp machinery of modernization and globalization. These threads connect us to our past and lead us from the labyrinth of the present.

Humans speak with many voices, but in our universal quest for a better life, humanity speaks as one. Language does not merely inform our sense of history and progress; it is the core of our understanding, the very means by which we know.

Yet, globalization does create the need for as many people as possible to master the lingua franca. But at the same time the linguistic heritage has to be appreciated and fostered. It has to be allowed to flourish, to grow and to develop in its own way. This heritage is one of the essentials of our cultural diversity and a cornerstone for sustainable development. Globalization must be about sustainability, about strength in diversity, not its obliteration. It must allow every human being to find his or her identity in his or her own language and in his or her own cultural environment. We should build on our rich heritage.

We gather here today to explore what linguistic diversity means to human culture, to human development, and indeed to the sustainability of our future world, thus making a contribution to the International Year of Languages.

#### Notes

1. Diamond, Jared (1992, 2006). *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal*.
2. Petroski, Henry (2006), *Success Through Failure: The Paradox of Design*.
3. It is possible an ancient mutation of this gene gave rise to the proclivity for language. There are contemporary cases where mutation of or damage to this gene results in aphasia.
4. L'Express, 02 January 2000, "Une langue disparaît tous les quinze jours".

**LANGUAGES  
AND GLOBALIZATION:  
WHAT IS AT STAKE?**

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Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Former President, Republic of Iceland,  
and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages, Reykjavik, Iceland  
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Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, United Nations Educational,  
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THE POLITICS OF LINGUISTIC AFFINITY



**Vigdís FINNBOGADÓTTIR**

Former President,  
Republic of Iceland,  
and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages, Reykjavík, Iceland

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir was born in Reykjavík, Iceland and educated in France, Denmark and Iceland. She is known for her teaching and cultural leadership. She directed the City Theatre of Reykjavík until she was elected President of the Republic of Iceland. She was the first woman in the world to be elected head of state by universal suffrage. She is a dedicated spokesperson for the fight against desertification and for reforestation, for which she received the CERES Medal from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 1997. She is a strong advocate for every field of cultural endeavor and was the first chair of COMEST, UNESCO's Commission for Ethics in Science and Technology, from 1998 to 2002. Since 1997, she has been a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages.

# EDUCATION FOR ALL IN THE LANGUAGE OF THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE

In spite of gloomy predictions, I do not believe that cultural diversity will be one of the casualties of globalization. Indeed, the cultivation of cultural diversity is one of today's greatest opportunities, because we cannot conceive a stronger and a better world in the future without stronger and better individuals. However, strong individuals cannot and do not grow out of a vacuum. They grow out of a cultural background and in order to become strong, especially in this globalized world of ours, they need to know from where they are coming; or in other words who they are. It is the only way for them to be able to react as autonomous individuals to the pressures of today's world, pressures that regrettably weigh more heavily on some portions of humanity than on others.

I am thinking of the millions of people who leave their homeland in hope of a better life, either because they have no choice or because the alternative is stagnation and poverty or sometimes even oppression and starvation.

This is an immensely difficult and stressful experience: you have to learn a new language, which is not an easy task for anyone; you are without the support network of family and friends; you are confronted with different values, customs, and ways of interacting with people: which means that you are experiencing cultural diversity, but a diversity which only goes in one direction. You must live with the culture of the other – of those who are at home –, while they are reluctant to acknowledge yours.

This leads to a particular predicament which hundreds of millions of young people in today's world are subjected to: they are brought up in a society in which the culture of their parents has little or even no recognized value. This can and has led to two equally bad results. The first is anger towards a society that they perceive as rejecting them with a supposed return to the culture of their parents, which is in fact often a vastly deformed and extreme vision of that culture. The second is a cutting away of one's roots: suppression and in some cases denial of who one is, in order to become who society expects one to be. Both results are unlikely to foster autonomous individuals contributing as such to a harmonious, peaceful and culturally rich society.

I personally believe that it is rather simple to avoid these two extreme results – and please don't misunderstand me, I am not saying that the immigrant experience in the world today is exclusively that of either one or the other. Indeed, I believe that there are many examples where second generation immigrants have been able to integrate fruitfully the culture of their parents with that of the society in which they grow up to become fully participating adults. The culture of today and tomorrow is very much that of the creative fusion of elements of diverse cultural origin. However, too often the immigrant experience is that of cultural impoverishment and that can be counteracted by simple measures taken in schools in countries with significant numbers of immigrants.

Allow me to take as an example my own country, Iceland. Formerly one of the poorest countries of Europe, and only recently one of its richest, also quite isolated as an island in the North Atlantic, we have had little historical experience of immigration and until a little over ten years ago the number of foreigners choosing to live in Iceland was very small, most of them coming for sentimental reasons, having met an Icelandic man or woman and choosing to spend their life with him. Now this situation has changed radically and we have a significant number of foreigners living in Iceland, who are becoming Icelandic citizens in increasing numbers and are changing our culturally homogeneous society into one of considerable cultural diversity.

One of the many challenges this brings to us has to do with teaching all of these people to speak Icelandic, one of the oldest languages on the planet since it hasn't changed in its grammar and basic vocabulary for almost a thousand years. It is also a difficult language, with strange rules and a great number of synonyms which make the language mysterious and poetic, but at the same time dauntingly difficult to master. This is particularly true of their children who are coming into the pre-schools and elementary schools with no or only fragmentary knowledge of our language. Our specialists have found out that a good way to stimulate the learning of Icelandic is to allow the children to study at the same time the language their parents speak at home. Instead of implicitly refusing to acknowledge this language, it is better to consider the child's experience of linguistic diversity as an asset, as a basis to work on: as a wonderful opportunity, working not only to the benefit of the immigrant child, but also that of the whole class.

There are many reasons for this: the experience of being brought up with two or several languages, that of bi- or multilingualism is inherently one in which the ability to use language develops, and as a consequence the ability to learn, to interact with others, to shape and to transform one's own experience. However bi- or multilingualism is not as effective if only some of the languages of the user are cultivated, while the other is neglected, becoming only a rather poor one only used for limited communication. By allowing the immigrant children to study formally the language of their parents, their other abilities are being enhanced, among them their ability to master the language of the society in which they live. In this way they can achieve more for themselves and their families, and also contribute more to the society.

For the mono-lingual children, those who are not daughters or sons of immigrants, this can also be a first and important experience of linguistic diversity, opening up to them the interest for acquiring a new language. For all, this will foster their awareness of cultural diversity, and give them an inkling of the great cultural wealth of humanity. The immigrant children receive a strong message that their culture is not something to hide – or implicitly to be ashamed of. On the contrary, it is a heritage to be proud of, giving them a stronger sense of who they are: a sense of self or identity that can only strengthen the individual.

Regrettably, the experiments made in this direction have been cut short in some of the Nordic countries I mentioned. It is for budgetary reasons, which to my mind are very short-sighted, because even though it does cost money to have teaching staff capable of helping these children cultiva-

te their own linguistic and cultural heritage, I can assure you that the investment is a wise and profitable one.

As a nation, I hope we Icelanders will be wise enough to invest in making our new experience of cultural diversity a fruitful one for all: for the people who choose to live among us, to become part of us, but also for those of us who have their cultural roots in Iceland's past. Perhaps more than others, we should be able to understand that allowing the new Icelanders to cultivate the culture of their ancestors is the best way forward. After all, we owe our independence, and therefore the prosperity we enjoy today, to the strong sense of self, our pride for our heritage, that came from the cultivation of a culture and of a language that was not only of value to ourselves but also recognized by others.

One of the things that I hope will support this endeavour in Iceland and the rest of the world, are initiatives such as those being taken in my home city Reykjavík at the University of Iceland. The professors of languages there decided to name their research institute The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and are now actively working on creating a World Language Centre. This centre will pool the expertise of specialists of many languages from many countries. It will also cater to the needs of non-specialists, for example with the creation of "virtual museum of languages", where examples of every language can be heard and observed. It will be an exciting place, using information technology and new media to enable visitors – among them children – to enable visitors to experience the wonderful diversity of human languages.

More importantly, the creation of the World Language Centre gives a strong message to the world: a message of respect – which by the way is a term that can be translated into every language. Through respect for others, for their culture, for their language, one also learns respect for one self. And it is through self-respect that one becomes a stronger and more generous individual. Humanity needs many more of those.





**Olabiyi Babalola Joseph YAÏ**  
Chairman of UNESCO's Executive Board;  
Ambassador and Permanent Delegate  
of Benin to UNESCO, Paris, France

Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yaï was elected on Monday, 5 November 2007, as Chairman of UNESCO's Executive Board. At the time of his election he was Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Benin to UNESCO, a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO and former Chair of the Finance and Administrative Commission of the Executive Board.

During his mandate as Ambassador, he was a member of the World Heritage Committee, the Committee of the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (IFPC), the International Scientific Committee of the Slave Route Project, the Board of Trustees of the Africa World Heritage Fund (AWHFD), President of the Culture Commission of UNESCO G77 (Commission IV, Culture, of the 32nd Session of the General Conference, 2003), Vice-Chair of UNESCO's Executive Board (2001-2003) and a juror for the designation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage as well as for the Melina Mercouri and Simón Bolívar Prizes.

Before his appointment as Ambassador, he was a consultant for culture and language policy in Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Togo and Mozambique in the 1970s and 1980s. He taught as Professor at the Universities of Benin, Ibadan and Ife (Nigeria) and Florida (USA).

He holds a BA from the University of the Sorbonne (France) and a post-graduate diploma in linguistics from the University of Ibadan (Nigeria).

# LANGUAGES AND GLOBALIZATION: TIME FOR ACTION

In this, the International Year of Languages, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you first of all, as is our African tradition, in the language of our host country:

Konishua  
Kombawa

And now let me further this courtesy by welcoming you in my own mother tongue, before doing so in the official languages of UNESCO:

\_Kaaroo  
\_ Ku is\_ agbayé o.

The task of leading the International Year of Languages, conferred upon UNESCO by the United Nations Conference, is a very serious one in the eyes of the Executive Board. For us, it is not enough to be satisfied with isolated and symbolic gestures without a future. Our task, as we understand it, is to engage in a process of reflection which will produce suggestions for concrete action on the ground. Within this context, it is my great pleasure to announce that the subject of our thematic debate during October's 180th session will be: "The protection of indigenous languages threatened with extinction, and the contribution of languages to the promotion of EFA for the purposes of sustainable development". Our hope is that the work of this conference will make important contributions to this debate.

What are the key issues relating to languages in the context of globalization? These concerns are very well known and recognized, at least at UNESCO. I am not therefore going to distract and bore the specialists that you are by speaking to you of dead languages, of threatened or violated identities, of the violation of cultural diversity or of the irrevocable loss of knowledge that is nonetheless vital to our humanity.

I would prefer to dwell on what has received less recognition: the need for urgency in this action – hence the somewhat provocative title of my short presentation. Please allow me to point out a few myths and to state a few truths, for, as Jaimes Torres Bodet, one of this Organization's Director-Generals, once put it: "the other name for UNESCO is truth". On this subject, I do, however, have a small confession to make: some of my linguist friends, to whom I had proudly described our conference as an event, have pointed to what they call my "naïve enthusiasm". "Yet another UNESCO meeting!", they retort "You'll see, nothing will come out of it but pious wishes and more bumb to fill the reports written by your Organization's civil servants". I am afraid that UNESCO's track-record regarding languages over the last 15 years justifies their pessimism. The truth is that there is a gulf between what we promise and what we deliver. We are doing little, too little, for languages, in light of what we know about them and of the scientifically-motivated recommendations made by linguists. Once again therefore, the one challenge above all others is action.

Our conference will address an important thematic of our times: globalization and its relationship with an essential tool for communication, existential expression and the incarnation of cultures and of societies; namely language or languages. These represent the most creative and sophisticated gifts that Man possesses and may prove to be as precious as life itself.

We should therefore keep in mind that the protection and promotion of all languages guarantees the survival of diversity, and that the way in which we treat languages will serve as an indicator and a measure of the face that we wish to give to globalization.

My aim, in the little bit of time given to me, is:

- (a) to demolish a few of the deeply-rooted myths surrounding this question and, in doing so;
- (b) to reiterate some simple truths, by reaffirming the primary truth and the real importance of language's place in personal development and the importance of broaching the global objectives fixed by the international community, in this case the MDGs, and the EFA goals.

It is clear, in accordance with the principle of reality that, as the Canadian linguist Mackey has put it so pertinently and so bluntly: "Only before God and linguists are all languages equal". From UNESCO's point of view, however, it is just as clear that languages should also be equal before policy-makers, in the name of the cardinal principle of democracy, of the equal dignity of cultures, of human rights, of non-discrimination and of equal opportunity.

For this reason, UNESCO should proclaim loud and clear and the other members of the United Nations should join them in chorus to declare that a true linguistic policy is nothing other than society accommodating and adjusting to linguistic diversity.

If it is possible to avoid linguistic discrimination on a political level by according all languages the same chances of promotion and development, in reality it is impossible to obtain an equality of roles and functions and therefore an equality of prestige and status. However, is such equality necessary? In a plurilinguistic context, different languages assume different functions and play different roles. We must work towards a dynamic complementarity between these roles and functions. The vision of one uniform language is really just a fiction, a figment of the imagination. All language is heteroglossic in the sense that it is characterized by a complex stratification of genders, registers, styles, sociolects, dialects and by an interaction between these categories.

But intellectual honesty forces us to recognize, as a Nigerian linguist has noted, that the general attitude towards minority languages and even towards those spoken by tens of millions of speakers in the majority of ex- or neo-colonial countries can be resumed in the five following key phrases, going from the worst to the most harmless:

- (1) eliminate them;
- (2) assimilate them;
- (3) tolerate them;

- (4) neglect them;
- (5) safeguard them.

But let us come to the myths. The first is that linguistic multiplicity forms an obstacle to national unity within states.

Linguistic policies must therefore handle this question by starting from the premise of the European nation states that see a single language as the only guarantor of national unity. The existence of several languages slows down progress towards national unity. One language alone must therefore be retained, at a stretch two and, exceptionally, three. In other words, national unity requires official monolingualism and the use of several languages accentuates inter-ethnic conflicts. The only way to smother and avert such conflicts is to have one trans-ethnic and a-tribal language, usually the European language of colonization.

The real picture is that multilingualism is the norm, the normality. Monolingualism is really the exception, whereas the practice of multilingualism is widespread. In African countries, for example, an average of more than 30% of the population speaks at least three languages. Elsewhere, this multiplicity is even greater and becomes a real spectre. The number of recognized languages in Africa varies from 1,200 to 2,500. Such a statistical discrepancy makes no sense. It is evidence either of the ignorance surrounding this question or of a deliberate attempt to blur the data. The reality is a mixture of these factors. Languages and dialects are poorly defined in Africa. The research conducted by Kwesi Prah, a Ghanaian sociolinguist working in one of Cape Town's universities in South Africa, has established that there is a large degree of intercomprehension between several families of African languages which cross the continent from East to West. Detailed dialectal surveys carried out in Mali on the Dogon language have identified a standard way of speaking that has a 70% degree of intercomprehension with the region's eight other dialects. Yet the generally accepted view is that villagers from two neighbouring villages in this zone are unable to understand one another, as their language is so dialectally fragmented. On the global level, we are becoming aware that half of the world's languages are concentrated in only seven states.

If this version contained a grain of truth, civil wars would never have existed in human history. It is not languages in themselves that generate conflicts but rather the messages of hate dictated by struggles for domination that inflame people's hearts and lead to wars. The genocide committed in Rwanda, one of the rare countries with a tendency towards monolingualism, and the role played by the famous Radio Collines reminds us of this fact in the most horrid of ways. The collapse of the Somali state, another country with strong linguistic homogeneity, must convince us of the absurdity of this theory.

The second myth claims that the widespread use of the mother tongue risks leading to isolation in these days of globalization and constitutes an obstacle to the promotion of international languages. Research carried out by the UNESCO Institute for Education in more than forty multilingual countries on all continents, as well as this institute's recent survey in conjunction with the

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) covering 22 African countries, has demolished this myth. This research should reassure policy-makers of the validity of the multilingual option which favours maintaining the promotion of mother tongues rather than the classic model of supporting and supervising the introduction of the international languages that have the status of official languages, sometimes even of exclusive languages, in the majority of the countries studied. This research has shown us, above all, that prematurely interrupting the use of the mother tongue results in the interruption of the learner's cognitive and academic development.

I will only mention the myth of "under-developed languages" or languages "ill-adapted to scientific discourse" here because it remains pernicious and widespread. Scholars like Cheikh Anta Diop already sought to destroy it more than half a century ago, and states like Israel, Malaysia and Indonesia refute it in practice before our very eyes.

A last myth, the substance of which politicians are more sensitive to, is the cost of introducing mother tongues into the education system as a medium for teaching and of the promotion of unofficial languages in general, including in literacy training. This cost is reputed to be exorbitant, if not simply prohibitive.

Here at the present time, no serious research allows us to give credibility to these claims, which, as well as being a myth, amount to a useful spectre and a pretext for inaction. To be taken seriously, any notion of cost should first evaluate what the exclusion of the mother tongue and the hegemonic use of the colonial languages for nearly half a century after independence has cost us, for example in each African country.

We can calculate that this cost must be not only exorbitant but simply monstrous, especially in light of the expected and obtained results and of the poverty of the populations which have made these sacrifices. In addition, I would argue that UNESCO, under its mandate, must also consider an intangible, uncountable conception of the cost incurred by the non-use of mother tongues and draw it to the attention of Member States and decision-makers: alienation, damaged or negatively obliterated identities, brain-drains, the sometimes irrevocable loss of knowledge and skills and so forth.

The rapid examination of these myths allows us to conclude that unless we recommend that states adopt a courageous, resolute policy of multilingualism which reflects the world's linguistic diversity, promotes the introduction of mother tongues into formal education, and enables languages to assume different roles and functions within organizations or politico-cultural entities in a dynamic complementarity, as defined in agreement with their speakers, we risk:

1. never attaining the EFA goals in the countries of the South, veritable bottomless pits, even though the budgets allocated to education are and are becoming larger and larger;
2. increasing the North-South divide by preventing certain languages from coining technical vocabulary and from being used in scientific research;

3. worsening the social fractures in the countries of the South by favouring a "North" in the South, while nevertheless encouraging the brain-drain from the South to the North;
4. making us unwitting accomplices to linguicidal policies and cultural genocide;
5. promoting a hemiplegic and therefore inhumane form of globalization;
6. finally, failing in our cardinal mission of constructing peace in the minds of men.

I would like to present to you a very brief critical appraisal of UNESCO's action in the field of languages over the last 15 years. It will, to a certain extent, be a sort of self-evaluation, not to pull the rug out from under your feet but rather to show you that at UNESCO we are aware of our weaknesses and our shortcomings. On this subject, the praise must however precede the criticism. Since the historic 1951 conference on mother tongues, UNESCO has, in effect, done a wonderful job regarding languages. It has thus inspired, undertaken or supported work of great pertinence and quality involving the standardization and "technicalization" of languages; fundamental and applied research into language; the translation of works representing cultures and civilizations; the development of basic linguistic infrastructures and even the backing of national, regional and international institutions for the promotion of languages. This work has borne very satisfying results and, very early on, established our Organization's reputation as a key actor in the fields of language promotion, cultural emancipation and in trying to build dialogues among civilizations.

Yet, over the last few years, there appears to have been a change of direction. UNESCO has altered its priorities and its strategy, for reasons which will, one day and in the right place, need to be examined. Instead of the operational work to which it had devoted its efforts, which corresponded to the expectations of populations the world over and which paid established dividends, the Organization currently concentrates its attention, without any well-grounded research to back it up, on a dubious bilingualism. This strategy considers mother tongues to be stepping stones and yet puts its weight behind official international languages which thus become the telos or the main beneficiaries of its work. Such an approach, we must presume, can only be justified by a disregard for the prevalent multilingualism that it thus tarnishes and of which the complexity requires solutions which cannot be accommodated within a simplistic bilingual framework.

There is also reason to worry, in light of the Organization's movement away from the operational work of linguistic development, about the new directions which favour access to cyberspace and languages threatened with extinction. Without any doubt, all languages have a right to cyberspace. But what sense is there in discussing cyberspace in relation to a language which has no space on Earth among the community of languages with literate environments? And can we be taken seriously when we lament the fate of a language spoken by a thousand speakers but do not concern ourselves with either the survival or the empowerment of those people? Indeed, when, at the same time and without any soul-searching, we pay no heed to the survival of a language spoken, like Yoruba, by more than forty million souls and which, in the long run, is just as threatened with death because it is not taught and is still not equipped to be a medium for teaching at all stages of the education system? Such an attitude is the equivalent of snivelling over a dying individual, while refusing to apply the appropriate remedy to all the members of his village who suffer from the same illness.

In conclusion, UNESCO is going to have to reconsider its strategy and its priorities as regards language if it hopes to regain its prestige in this area.

I would like to end this short introduction to your debates with some suggestions, while continuing to insist on the need for urgent action:

1. to bring about, on a global level, an awareness of the role of languages and notably of mother tongues in education and economic and social development;
2. to underline, through its advocacy, the normality and the positive aspects of multilingualism and multiculturalism;
3. to bring knowledge in this field up to date, especially the World Language Report, and to publish research, good practices and selected case studies of discussions and of international and intercultural perspectives;
4. to create, on a UNESCO level, a special intersectoral platform for languages and to concentrate once again on operational activities and on supporting regional and subregional centres for the promotion of languages;
5. to suggest, as a follow-on from the International Year of Languages, the creation on a United Nations level, of an international observatory for languages, multilingualism and cultural diversity. Our conference should outline the objectives and the content of this observatory.

I will no doubt have the opportunity to speak further with you about all these points during your workshops and I wish you the best of luck in your work.



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# LANGUAGE RIGHTS: LINKING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

## ABSTRACT

We live in an increasingly globalized world, and one moreover that is dominated by English as the current lingua mundi (international language). At the same time, we are facing the rapid retrenchment and loss of many of the world's nearly 7000 spoken languages, with indigenous and other minority languages being most at risk.

In this context, what are the possibilities for preserving linguistic diversity into the next century? What role can the development and implementation of language rights play, at both national and supranational levels, in the promotion/protection of such diversity? What arguments need to be employed to guard against increasing linguistic homogenization, particularly via the international dominance of English?

This presentation will address these questions by focusing on the following three key areas: the rights attributable to minority language speakers at both the national and supranational level; issues of identity and social mobility in relation to language diversity; the advantages of bilingualism in an increasingly interconnected world.

## INTRODUCTION

The prominent British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, has defined globalization as:  
the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.  
(Giddens 1990: 64)

One of the key concerns in academic discussions of globalization is whether these globalizing processes will inevitably result in greater uniformity, or whether diversity – ethnicity cultural, linguistic, national – can still be maintained in an increasingly interconnected world. For many commentators, the forces of globalization have been viewed, however despairingly, as an inevitable threat to diversity – resulting in the increasing 'McDonaldization' of the world, to borrow a phrase from George Ritzer (1996).

Concerns over the effects of globalization on diversity are especially evident in the area of language rights and language education, particularly given the close links between globalization and English as an international language. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, as we watch the apparently inexorable march of English across the world, and related pressures for people to learn and speak English, often at the expense of the languages they already know, the prospects for maintaining linguistic diversity do not seem bright. The well-known predictions by linguists such as

Michael Krauss (1992), that up to 90% of the world's 7000 spoken languages are endangered and that over 50% will 'die' – that is, be no longer spoken – by the end of this century would seem to reinforce this pessimistic view about the impact of globalization on the world's languages.

While I think there are serious concerns about the state of the world's languages in this age of globalization, I also believe that all is not (yet) lost. In fact, I believe that globalization can actually be part of the solution as well as the problem. This is because in my work (e.g. May, 2003, 2005, 2008), I have consistently argued that it is actually nationalism, and the related organization of the nation-state that is the greatest threat to language diversity, based as it is on the notion of linguistic homogeneity in the public realm and, often, an allied public monolingualism. This idea of a single common 'national' language (sometimes, albeit more rarely, more than one language) is a product of the last few hundred years of nationalism. Previous forms of political organization did not require this degree of linguistic uniformity. For example, empires were quite happy for the most part to leave unmolested the plethora of cultures and languages subsumed within them – as long as taxes were paid, all was well. If previous forms of political organization were not dependent on linguistic homogeneity, it goes without saying that subsequent forms need not be either. The linguistically homogeneous nation-state model – though we still assume it to be – is neither inevitable nor inviolate.

This is where globalization has a key role to play – by linking the local and the global, by making the borders of nation-states (including their linguistic ones) more porous, by challenging nation-states to engage in the public domain on multiple linguistic fronts, globalization can actually bolster rather than undermine linguistic diversity, challenging nation-states to engage or re-think themselves in more linguistically plural and interconnected ways.

Of course, this won't be easy – particularly, given the already hegemonic role of English worldwide. But today, I want to suggest, very briefly, three key principles that might lend themselves to this task: the notion of promotion-oriented language rights; rethinking the relationship between language use and language value; and the merits of bilingualism. Let me look at each of these in turn.

## PROMOTION-ORIENTED LANGUAGE RIGHTS

The sociolinguist, Herbert Kloss (1977) introduced a distinction over 30 years ago that still seems highly relevant today – that is, the distinction between what he termed 'tolerance-oriented' and 'promotion-oriented' language rights.

For Kloss, tolerance-oriented rights ensure the right to preserve one's language in the private, non-governmental sphere of national life. These rights may be narrowly or broadly defined. They include the right of individuals to use their first language at home and in public, freedom of assembly and organization, the right to establish private cultural, economic and social institutions wherein the first language may be used, and the right to foster one's first language in private schools. The key principle of such rights is that the state does 'not interfere with efforts on the parts of the minority to make use of [their language] in the private domain' (Kloss, 1977: 2).

On a human rights level, the extension of tolerance-oriented language rights would appear to be something all linguistic groups should be afforded – that is, the right to use the language(s) one chooses in the private domain, without threat of censure or discrimination. Sadly, however, this is still not the case today in all contexts. One only has to think of the Kurds in Turkey, or Tibetans in China to realise this. (Recent historical examples include Franco's Spain and Kosovo under Milosovich). There is still much work to be done here in ensuring even these basic language rights.

If tolerance-oriented language rights are not always allowed in modern nation-states, then promotion-oriented rights present an even greater challenge. Promotion-oriented rights regulate the extent to which minority rights are recognized within the public domain, or civic realm of the nation-state. As such, Kloss argues that they involve 'public authorities [in] trying to promote a minority [language] by having it used in public institutions – legislative, administrative and educational, including the public schools' (1977: 2). Again, such rights may be narrowly or widely applied. At their narrowest, promotion-oriented rights might simply involve the publishing of public documents in minority languages. At their broadest, promotion-oriented rights could involve recognition of a minority language in all formal domains within the nation-state, thus allowing the minority language group 'to care for its internal affairs through its own public organs, which amounts to the [state] allowing self government for the minority groups' (1977: 24). The latter position would also necessarily require the provision of state-funded minority language education as of right.

Promotion-oriented language rights could be applied to two key people groups today. The first are national minority groups – a term drawn from the political theorist, Will Kymlicka's work – who have always been associated historically with a particular territory, but who have been subject to colonization, conquest, or confederation and, consequently, now have only minority status within a particular nation-state. These groups include, for example, the Welsh in Britain, Catalans and Basques in Spain, Bretons in France, Québécois in Canada, and some Latino groups (e.g. Puerto Ricans) in the USA, to name but a few. They also include indigenous peoples, who have increasingly been regarded in both international and national law as a separate category of peoples. Following Kymlicka, I have argued in my work that these groups can claim, as of right, at least some of the benefits that majority national languages currently enjoy – including publicly funded education in their languages.

However, I have also argued that a second possibility for the extension of such rights can apply to ethnic minorities, who have migrated from their country of origin to a new host nation-state, or in the case of refugees have been the subject of forced relocation. Here, a promotion-oriented language right cannot be argued as of right, but can still be advanced on the basis of the widely-accepted principle in international law of 'where numbers warrant'. That is, in order to avoid language discrimination, it is important that where there is a sufficient number of other language speakers, these speakers should be allowed to use that language as part of the exercise of their individual rights as citizens. Or to put it another way, they should have the opportunity to use their first language if they so choose. This approach allows for the maintenance of multiple cultural and linguistic identities in both the private and public domains, rather than the often forced choice between a local (ethnic) and

national linguistic identity that is the product of nationalism and nation-state organization – in order to be a citizen of X you must (only) speak language Y. Dispensing with this forced language choice more accurately reflects the communicative profiles of multilingual speakers and accords with globalization's recognition of both the local (ethnic, national) and the global.

## RETHINKING LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE VALUE

Still, this is not easy to achieve – particularly, when the notions of language value and use come into play. This is the idea that some languages – most prominently, English as the current lingua mundi or world language – are simply much more useful (and therefore, valuable) than other languages. As a result, so the argument goes, one should stop speaking the less valuable languages and learn English. Much language shift and loss – both historically and currently – can be explained by this 'language replacement' argument; the idea that people shift from speaking a minority (less valuable/useful) language to a majority (more valuable/useful) language on the basis of the social and economic benefits involved.

Central then to these language replacement arguments is the idea that the individual social mobility of minority language speakers will be enhanced as a result. Relatedly, those who promote minority languages – those, supposedly, less valuable and useful languages – are consistently criticized for consigning, or ghettoizing minority language communities within the confines of a language that does not have a wider use, thus actively constraining their social mobility. We see this for example in the arguments of the 'English Only' brigade in the US, who argue that continuing to speak Spanish is not only politically problematic but an inevitable recipe for social immobility (see, e.g., Barry, 2000; Huntingdon 2005). We can broadly summarize the logic of this argument as follows:

- Majority languages are lauded for their 'instrumental' value, while minority languages are accorded 'sentimental' value, but are broadly constructed as obstacles to social mobility and progress
- Learning a majority language will thus provide individuals with greater economic and social mobility
- Learning a minority language, while (possibly) important for reasons of cultural continuity, delimits an individual's mobility; in its strongest terms, this might amount to actual 'ghettoization'
- If minority language speakers are 'sensible' they will opt for mobility and modernity via the majority language
- Whatever decision is made, the choice between opting for a majority or minority language is constructed as oppositional, even mutually exclusive

These arguments appear to be highly persuasive. In response, however, I believe that the presumptions and assumptions that equate linguistic mobility solely with majority languages are themselves extremely problematic. For a start, this position separates the instrumental and identity aspects of language. On this view, minority languages may be important for identity but have no instrumental value, while majority languages are construed as primarily instrumental with little or no

identity value. We see this in the allied notions of majority languages as 'vehicles' of modernity, and minority languages as (merely) 'carriers' of identity. However, it is clear that all language(s) embody and accomplish both identity and instrumental functions for those who speak them. Where particular languages – especially majority/minority languages – differ is in the degree to which they can accomplish each of these functions, and this in turn is dependent on the social and political (not linguistic) constraints, in which they operate (May, 2003). Thus, in the case of minority languages, their instrumental value is often constrained by wider social and political processes that have resulted in the privileging of other language varieties in the public realm. Meanwhile, for majority languages, the identity characteristics of the language are clearly important for their speakers, but often become subsumed within and normalized by the instrumental functions that these languages fulfil. This is particularly apparent with respect to monolingual speakers of English, given the position of English as the current world language.

On this basis, we can argue that the limited instrumentality of particular minority languages at any given time need not always remain so. Indeed, if the minority position of a language is the specific product of wider historical and contemporary social and political relationships, changing these wider relationships positively with respect to a minority language should bring about both enhanced instrumentality for the language in question, and increased mobility for its speakers. We can see this occurring currently, for example, in Wales and Catalonia, with the emergence of these formerly subjugated languages into the public domain – particularly via, but by no means limited to education.

Likewise, when majority language speakers are made to realize that their own languages fulfil important identity functions for them, both as individuals and as a group, they may be slightly more reluctant to require minority language speakers to dispense with theirs. Or to put it another way, if majority languages do provide their speakers with particular and often significant individual and collective forms of linguistic identity, as they clearly do, it seems unjust to deny these same benefits, out of court, to minority language speakers.

## PROMOTING THE MERITS OF BILINGUALISM

And this brings me to the final point that I want to discuss with you today – if the distinction between majority/minority languages can be effectively critiqued, as I've suggested it can be, we can then begin to promote the importance of bilingualism/multilingualism in any combination of languages. This requires, however, one further step: dismantling the assumption that language usefulness equates directly with language reach – i.e. the more useful the language the greater its international reach. English is the key language to which this currently applies, but it can also apply to a range of other 'international' languages – French, German, Spanish, Chinese, for example. On this basis, learning one of these languages in addition to those we already know is clearly useful for one's wider engagement in the world – a cosmopolitan engagement with positive implications for trade and/or diplomacy. However, conversely, maintaining, or learning, a 'local' language has no such obvious benefits and smacks of ghettoization.

We see this distinction regularly made in arguments against the maintenance of, for example, Spanish in the USA, Maori in New Zealand, or Welsh in Wales, by proponents who instead laud the importance of international languages. Thus, Brian Barry, the noted US political theorist, can argue that Spanish in the US, or Welsh in Wales are of little use because of their 'localism' - he would prefer to see French taught instead. And yet, this beggars belief on a number of fronts: Spanish, after all, is a majority not a minority language in many other national contexts (think Central and Southern America), as well as an international language, so to argue that speaking Spanish in the US amounts to ghettoization is nonsense. And while French is clearly an international language, and Welsh is not, it goes without saying that Welsh in Wales, is far more useful to know than French. Indeed, Barry specifically bemoans the labour market advantages of those with an educational qualification in the Welsh language because local authorities increasingly require knowledge of Welsh as a condition of employment (see 2000: 105-106). This is rich indeed, given that these exact same arguments are made without apology by Barry, and other likeminded critics, on behalf of majority languages, particularly English. They simply can't have it both ways - deriding minority languages for their lack of utility, and then opposing their utility when it proves to be politically inconvenient. After all, as Jim Cummins's once famously asked: why is bilingualism good for the rich and not for the poor?

This reminds us that in any discussion of bilingualism/multilingualism, we must always take account of the wider social and political context in which it is situated, along with the positions and wider agendas of the commentators themselves. It also highlights the responsibility of those well versed in the research literature - which has for over 40 years now consistently demonstrated the cognitive, social and educational advantages of bilingualism, when that bilingualism is valued and recognized - to articulate clearly and consistently these benefits in the academic as well as wider public domains. As Mary McGroarty argues: 'it is the job of [those] interested in policies that include attention to bilingualism to keep the value of bilingualism in the public consciousness, to continue to demonstrate that bilingual approaches to education are not only feasible but, in fact, actually exist' (2006: 5; see also 2002). In order to achieve this, McGroarty continues: 'advocates for positive language and education policies must constantly articulate the value of bilingualism, and to be able to do so in varied terms that respond to a protean environment of public discussion' (2006: 5-6).

And this is the real challenge we face - to change the public and policy discussions which continue to assume public monolingualism as the norm, which continue to limit cosmopolitanism only to knowledge of so-called international languages, and which continue to relegate the local at the expense of the global when it comes to languages (and much else). If globalization can teach us anything, it is that to be a linguistic citizen of the world requires us to not limit our language choice but rather to extend it, so that we can operate fully and effectively in all contexts - the local, national and global.



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# BUILDING SHARED KNOWLEDGE WITH OUR LANGUAGES IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

Globalization is henceforth a well established reality in the life of nations and peoples of our planet. We increasingly learn about the danger it represents when it leads to an excessive unified life-style and culture, the dominance of one simplistic vehicular language, the Global English over all the other languages of the planet. The Global English, sometimes derisively called Globish, allows, indeed, a Korean and an Argentinean to ask directions when they intersect in a Parisian airport, but it does under no circumstances enable one to build a cultural identity neither at the level of an individual, nor at the level of a nation.

Nevertheless, we also know that globalization can be a tremendous asset if, together, we gather our efforts to preserve and cultivate linguistic and cultural diversity, considering all our languages and our cultures as a single treasure for humanity. From this treasure, this rich heritage, we can build and share knowledge and know-how which, in solidarity, we can exchange with all the peoples on the earth. This is the message that Africa, through our voice, transmitted to the world during the second phase of World Summit on Information Society held in Tunis in November 2005. We called for the creation of a world network for the promotion of linguistic diversity and shared knowledge in a globalizing world.

There is no use recalling that we are in the 21st century, the era of ICT, of information and a shared knowledge society, and yet an estimated 774 million illiterate adults in the world are likely to disappear with their knowledge and know-how because they are not able to access education opportunities and communication and information tools, which would enable them to not only develop and improve their knowledge, but also to create the conditions necessary for the transmission of their knowledge to future generations!

We are in the 21st century, at a time when the great potential of ICT enables young people to develop their genius and their creativity, and yet approximately 75 million of the world's children have not yet gotten this chance and, worse, in many countries of the world, and specifically in the vast majority of the African countries, school – a place for building knowledge by excellence – is still foreign to the environment. The curricula in schools in many African countries do not take into account the culture or the history of the community, of the country or of the continent!

How do we ensure that national languages become real training, information and communication tools for citizens at all levels, in order to ensure a wider participation of masses in the development process?

In other words, how could we empower languages for them to be used again in all spheres of public life, particularly in education?



How many young, and even not so young, people throughout the world and in Africa, continue to face language barriers that prevent them from developing their creative genius, from constructing new knowledge and sharing it, and from accessing universal knowledge?

You will understand that this will not be possible without all world languages in all continents being used in all spheres of public life, particularly in education.

That is why many countries in Africa have taken initiatives to introduce their national languages into the educational system, which is the only way to reverse the situation and to bring African languages back to their appropriate status for the benefit of more than 80% of the population.

ACALAN has therefore opted for functional, convivial multilingualism as a strategic, educational approach. This strategic approach subtended by an administrative decentralization and sub-regional and regional integration policy is based on the essential principle of the conviviality of languages. It includes the mother tongue, an African cross-border language and a European language for international communication. This approach reinforces the philosophical and ideological choice of linguistic diversity, at the same time it can implement our pan-Africanist vision. It is the key for pursuing an African perspective of managing multilingualism for the development of the continent.

Thus, bilingual education is the springboard which leads to a multilingual education – the basis of intercultural education, the guarantee for promoting linguistic diversity and the best means for building shared knowledge in a globalizing world!

You will therefore understand that the first challenge of education in Africa, for example, is the language of instruction. What is urgently needed at all levels of the continent, especially at the national and regional level, are strategies for implementing the Language Action Plan for Africa, the Decisions of the African Union and the vision and projects of ACALAN. These strategies must be designed and implemented with the support of all of Africa's development partners.

This is now technically possible, politically inescapable and historically an imperative!

This is why ACALAN stresses the need to rebuild African educational systems, which require the application of three main principles:

- 1) rebuilding the cultural identity of the learner, based on the use of the mother tongue as the foundation of the process of acquiring knowledge and on the concomitant use of the European language – the official language.
- 2) linking school to community life, from the point of view of both teaching content and teaching methods. What is needed is to, on the one hand, reform the curricula so as to encompass the development of the necessary know-how and life skills, and, on the other

hand, to replace inhibiting formal teaching methods with active ones which free the learners' initiative.

- 3) creating a process of partnership and cohesion around the school from which it will benefit; allowing for relations amongst the teachers, the learners and the administration to be democratic; and having the entire educational community, especially the learners' parents, involved in school life.

The introduction of African languages in the educational system of each country as a medium of instruction, with special attention being paid to the teaching of these languages to children, is undoubtedly one of the most important elements for the survival of African languages and the preservation of linguistic diversity in Africa.

Language, the pedestal of both individual and collective cultural identity – is also the privileged instrument of knowledge construction. Language is the receptacle and the vehicle par excellence of the cosmo-vision of human societies. Therefore, how do we preserve humanity from the drama of the predictable loss of knowledge housed in the languages of the world? How do we outline perspectives that permit us to ensure the maintenance and development of the world's intangible heritage – the treasure of humanity?

How do we help all of the citizens of the world, particularly in Africa, exercise their right to communicate in the language of their choice? How can we ensure, for example, that the use of the internet reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of diverse cultures and individuals? More specifically: How do we better exploit the information and communication technologies to empower, in their languages, the millions of illiterates across our African continent and other parts of the world, so that they can be creative and conscious actors of the information and shared knowledge society?

You will understand that we cannot build a shared knowledge society without our languages, without the choice to preserve and promote linguistic diversity, which means accepting to substitute the destructive logic of market competition with the logic of solidarity and complementarity. This logic is likely to restore the harmony of beings and species. We know that cultural and linguistic diversity is for human society what biodiversity is for nature: the ferment, the bedrock of what I have called, a few years ago, our "humanitude" or "humanness" (for you to have an idea), our permanent opening to the Other, our relationship as human beings to be human, which requires a permanent relationship of solidarity, without calculation, a spontaneous impulse host of the Other... this "humanitude" that links man to man, according to the beautiful expression of our Dear Elder Aimé Césaire! It is through this concept of humanitude that I translate what we call in Africa *maaya*, *neddaaku*, *boroterey*, *nite*, *ubuntu*... People of Mande (a West African area inherited from the Mali Empire) say to us: "I am a human being not because I think I am, but it's your eyes landed on me that make me a human being!"

This is why it is time to move from rhetoric on the defence of linguistic diversity to the implementation of concrete actions on the synergy between languages, including partnerships between languages in the world. Partnership requires above all the recognition of others and respect for their identity and the sincere desire on both sides to work together to build a common project, in a spirit of true and mutually beneficial solidarity.

The initiative of the African Academy of Languages, born in Tunis on November 2005 during the second phase of the WSIS during the AU ICT Week, MAAYA Network – the World Network for Linguistic Diversity was officially launched on 21 February 2006 on the occasion of the International Mother Tongue Day at UNESCO in Paris. Its goal is to enhance and promote linguistic diversity as a basis for the unity of human communication. It is therefore called MAAYA from the Mandingo language, a major cross-border vehicular language of West Africa. Now it brings together many international organizations like UNESCO, the Francophonie, the Latin Union, the International Telecommunication Union, Maison des Langues and NGOs such as the Language Observatory Project (LOP), Linguasphère, SIL, ICVolunteers, Funredes, the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) etc. The MAAYA network is particularly attentive to support and encourage all initiatives to promote, facilitate and ensure the development of linguistic diversity in the world, and obviously the backup and the revitalization of endangered languages and less widely spoken languages. In this context, the MAAYA network is honoured to be one of UNESCO's partners in monitoring the events on every continent in celebration of the year 2008, International Year of Languages, so that one can say anywhere: "Languages matter!". To this end, an International Advisory Committee, composed mainly of international organizations concerned with linguistic diversity, and chaired by the Interim Executive Secretary of ACALAN, the President of MAAYA Network, is being established. That is what MAAYA Network is devoted to worldwide. The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), on the other hand, is devoted to monitoring initiatives to promote linguistic diversity at the regional level, a perspective reinforced by the proclamation of 2008 – International Year of Languages.

The birth of the MAAYA network will greatly contribute to the rehabilitation of world's disadvantaged African languages. Our goal is to develop the network on all the continents, in order to strengthen cooperation between all national and regional organizations interested in promoting linguistic and cultural diversity within their sphere of activities. At present, MAAYA serves as a platform of exchange and sharing in the area of shared knowledge, where technology offers a great potential for languages, but is also a risk to them. To date, only a very small number of languages of the 6000 spoken in the world are available in cyberspace.

It also serves as the moderator of the sub-theme on linguistic diversity, which is action line C8 of the WSIS Plan of Action, and has initiated the "Dynamic Coalition for Linguistic Diversity," as part of the Internet Governance Forum.

Among the research projects and programmes of activities initiated and particularly supported by MAAYA network, we can quote:

- The observation programme of world's languages in cyberspace, undertaken, on the one hand, by Professor Yoshiki Mikami from Nagaoka University of Technology, here present, with LOP for Asian and African languages and Professor David Dalby, with Linguasphère, and secondly, by Daniel Pimienta from Funredes NGO, located in the Dominican Republic, for European languages spoken in the West. These observatories provide us with a fairer vision of the evolution of languages in cyberspace, which allows us to focus our efforts to preserve linguistic diversity in this space, and provides support for emerging languages and lesser equipped languages.

- The training of interpreters in lesser diffused languages by the Federation of the International Conference Volunteers (ICV). This NGO founded by Ms. Viola Krebs, who also ensures the Permanent Secretariat of the MAAYA network, is located in the following continents: Europe, Africa, South America, North America and Asia. It is very active in providing interpretation services during small and medium sized conferences, where the same service would be unaffordable at the market rate. Training volunteers is important if we are to increase opportunities for communication in a greater number of languages.

- The Project "Voices and Texts," which aims to save a portion of the intangible heritage of Africa, by recording and digitizing oral voluminous texts, and developing software for speech recognition, automatic writing, translation and speech to exploit these texts and share them with other linguistic communities. It is precisely this kind of project that illustrates very concretely what we mean by "building knowledge about our rich heritage and sharing the knowledge so built."

On the African continent, the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), which I have the honour to lead, has been organizing a series of conferences in five regions (West Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa the East and North Africa), with the support of UNESCO, the OIF, the Swiss Cooperation and ADEA, to sensitize policy and decision makers from each region on the role of cross-border vehicular languages that could contribute to African regional integration, and place lesser diffused languages in national language policies. This increasing awareness paves the way for more cooperation between states in promoting languages and linguistic diversity in many areas, such as bilingual education, administration, agricultural training, health campaigns, civic education, and communication.

There is no doubt that ACALAN is the only academy of languages in the world that has a continental jurisdiction. It has initiated research programmes and training for the entire African continent, including:

- a higher multilingual education programme integrating African languages not only as taught subjects, but also as vehicles for education at the tertiary level. This programme is entitled Pan-African Master and Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and African Languages (PAN-MAPAL). It is located on an experimental basis in three African University, Cameroon (University of Yaoundé I), South Africa (University of Cape-Town) and Ethiopia (University of Addis Ababa), before it is extended to all African Universities.

- a Terminology and Lexicography programme to develop appropriate terminologies, especially in science and technology in African languages. The development of terminology in African languages is an effort to empower these languages to make them suitable to use as working languages in all of Africa's development areas;
- an Atlas of African languages to make maps of Africa's languages at national, regional and continental levels, to get a more accurate vision of languages and their evolution. According to specialists, the number of African languages currently varies between 800 and 2000, depending heavily on whether one considers each one as a language or as a dialect of a language. The ACALAN Linguistic Atlas Project wants to help establish data and more reliable analysis, while providing Africa with the means of regular updates and observation on the dynamics of languages using computer data processing.
- a programme of promoting African languages in cyberspace and through information and communication technology. This project is not limited to the presence of African languages in cyberspace, but also focuses on the key issues of a localized domain name, the development of web 2, and the problems associated with the multilingualization of communicative appliances, as well as the localization of software.

For all our projects and programmes, both for the MAAYA network and for ACALAN, we hope to benefit from the support of our financial partners, whom we would like to thank for having understood the value and importance of our mission to safeguard Languages in Africa and around the world.

These are the thoughts that I wanted to share with you, hoping that this conference, like other activities of the International Year of Languages, can contribute to the emergence of a global shared knowledge society!



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He is a member of the executive committee, Africa Leadership Forum, and was advisor to the Independent Commission of Population and Quality of Life and the Independent Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development. He holds an MA and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Konstanz (Germany).

# THE POLITICS OF LINGUISTIC AFFINITY<sup>1</sup>

Language as a federating parameter of international cooperation is a relatively new phenomenon. Today, the multilateral arena comprises a number of international organizations, where Member States have organized themselves around the use and promotion of a particular language. The origins of this feature coincided, by and large, with the end and disappearance of colonialism: especially the colonial powers sought to maintain bonds and rally countries around the use of a particular language, while developing also their common commitment to other values, such as democratic principles and human rights, and sustainable development programmes. The Annex to this document provides an overview of existing international groupings organizations created around the parameter of linguistic affinity (which is work in progress).

Since the last decades of the 20th century, the number of international organizations linked to a particular language has grown. The entities concerned are devoted to promoting such language through inter-governmentally designed policies and programmes – but not only. The formation of such “blocs” has also highlighted the important role languages can play in addressing global challenges humanity will face. The designation by the United Nations of 2008 as International Year of Languages is testimony to the importance of multilingualism and an increasing recognition that languages are vital to the economic, social and cultural life of all societies.

Linguistically-founded organizations have gained weight over time, becoming both a discussion forum for countries and leading to agreements on more diverse and issues seemingly unrelated to language. Consensus around linguistic issues was clearly perceived to facilitate common action and cooperation in other fields as well. Often, the propagation of common values – such as agreed standards of human rights, political freedom and participatory democracy – or common dislikes provides a sort of glue that can hold an international body together and give it gravity. Even though the scope of an organization’s focus may expand, it nevertheless has retained some balancing linguistic concerns. The commitment to linguistic diversity has thus proved to be rather resilient and sustained.

This enrichment of the international scene coincided with a much stronger focus internationally on language issues, which were recognized as part of cultural diversity and a strategic factor in its own right. Languages shape the cultural identity of diverse groups and individuals. Languages are the medium through which cultural memory is transmitted inter-generationally, and serve as an important reference point in today’s world. This orientation ultimately culminated in the adoption of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Though languages are being treated in this Convention rather cursorily as a means, it nevertheless injected arguably a boost for its recognition globally by referring to oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage.

This trend is complemented by another recent trend whereby linguistic concerns of a more general nature are being introduced into the work of global or regional international organizations, not only of the UN system but also of other intergovernmental organizations, such as the European

Union or the African Union. As an aside, intergovernmental organizations are struggling in rendering proper interpretation and translation services for its working (normally two) and official languages (six in the UN and some 20 in the European Union).

To realize the human right of freedom of expression, it is important that people can express themselves in their mother tongue as widely and as often as possible and to master other national, regional or international languages. Language is also a catalyst for actions that can contribute to the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It further helps to promote access to knowledge. Without strong policies to foster linguistic diversity in all aspects of a nation's life – one of the four principles/pillars recognized by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) – in schools, administration, law and in the media, the world risks denying hundreds of thousands of people globally the basic right to engage in public life, debate and participatory democracy.

The above trend has been accompanied by another development, triggered by globalization and the concern about a movement towards linguistic uniformity, whereby multilateral organizations with a very broad security and development remit have increasingly emphasized the critical role of languages in its own right and as a vector of development and international cooperation. Organizations like the United Nations, UNESCO, the African Union, the Arab League and ALECSO, the European Union and the Council of Europe all have adopted landmark decisions pertaining to languages.

## Note

1. I am grateful to Ms. Clare Stark and Ms. Nicole Webley, Assistant Programme Planning Officers in the Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO, for their research contributions to this paper.



## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP)	<p>8 Member States Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor-Leste</p> <p>3 Associate Members <u>Equatorial Guinea</u>, <u>Mauritius</u>, <u>Senegal</u>.</p>	<p>1996</p> <p>with biannual Heads of State and Government meetings (most recent was held in July 2008 in Lisbon)</p> <p>"The Portuguese language: a common heritage and a global future"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To create initiatives aimed at consolidating and promoting the Portuguese Language and to encourage its member countries to ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.</li> <li>• To facilitate joint political and diplomatic actions by its Member States, in order to strengthen their presence within the international arena.</li> <li>• To improve bilateral and multilateral cooperation among Member States, especially in the following areas: health, education, agriculture, public administration, technology, science, defence, communications, justice, public security, culture, sports and media.</li> <li>• The Organisation's programmes also seek to assist with issues addressing MDGs linked with the following issues; providing education for all, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of gender equality, reduction of infant mortality rate, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and promoting sustainable development.</li> </ul>	<p>CPLP has the developed the following programmes devoted to languages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Portuguese Language Census</b> - a project designed to map the number, proficiency and challenges of Portuguese speakers in the world.</li> <li>2. <b>Digital School and University</b> - a project which will use the Internet to promote home-based education in member states, especially in areas far removed from learning centres.</li> <li>3. <b>Portuguese language observatory</b> - provides services in translation, information and statistics on the world population of Portuguese speaking countries, ethnological studies, and information on the use of the Portuguese language on the internet. It promotes teaching of the language, and links to libraries and literature sources.</li> <li>4. <b>The International Institute of Portuguese Language (I IPL)</b> - which is charged with advancing linguistic cooperation.</li> <li>5. <b>The Three spaces Language Initiative</b> - focuses on promoting linguistic diversity in the world. At the most recent meeting on 21 April 2008 in Lisbon, the organisation agreed to encourage linguistic diversity from early childhood in order to encourage citizens to become multilingual. It was also decided that each Member State should introduce multilingual approaches in schools and facilitate teacher training in the area.</li> <li>6. <b>Prizes</b> - the Prix Fernando Mendes, is awarded to a master's or doctoral thesis, which contributes to the promotion of Portuguese language in the world.</li> </ol>

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)	<p>55 Member States Albania, Andorra, Belgium, French Community of Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, New Brunswick, Quebec, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Gabon, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Laos, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Niger, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Cyprus, Ghana</p> <p>13 observers Austria, Croatia, Géorgie, Lithuania, Mozambique, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Serbia, Hungary</p>	1970	<p>The Organization seeks to strengthen and promote French as a communication tool and cultural vehicle. These efforts compliment the organization's commitment to multilingualism and its efforts to preserve and highlight cultural and linguistic diversity. The organization encourages solidarity and the pooling of resources among countries committed to the French language.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie, contributes to promoting peace, democracy and support for the rule of law and human rights by focusing on preventative measures. It provides members with access to its network of intergovernmental, institutional, academic and non-governmental organizations with the intention of building national capacities, resolving conflict and providing support for ending crises.</p> <p>To support education, training, higher education and research, the organization enables Member States to provide all children with access to a full primary school education. It further promotes teaching, training and research which leads to employment and promotes the French language in schools.</p> <p>The Organization contributes to sustainable development through cooperation in poverty reduction within Francophone states. It is also committed to integrating Francophone developing least developed countries into the global economy.</p>	<p>OIF supports countries in the design and implementation of curricula and educational tools. For example, in African education systems OIF supports teaching programmes that link the mother tongues of students and the French language. Some of the organizations and networks that are supported by OIF include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>International Council of Languages (Cifla)</b> provides information and advice on language policy issues.</li> <li>2. <b>The International Network of French in the world (Rifram)</b> brings together public institutions and associations of various Francophone states and governments involved in the promotion of French as well as academics and experts concerned with its use and teaching.</li> <li>3. <b>The International Network of French Language Management (Rifal)</b> promotes research efforts for the development of the French language.</li> <li>4. <b>The International Network of African Languages and Creole (Rilac)</b> seeks to promote the translation of texts and the training of interpreters/translators.</li> <li>5. <b>The International Network of French Literature</b> promotes French literature</li> </ol>

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
The Commonwealth (of Nations)	<p>53 Member States</p> <p>Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uganda, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zambia</p> <p>(Note: Commonwealth membership entails acceptance of Commonwealth practices and conventions, including the use of the English language as the medium of inter-Commonwealth relations and acceptance of the Commonwealth style of informality and consensus</p>	18 November 1965	<p>The Organization focuses on two main areas: peace and democracy; and pro-poor Growth and sustainable development.</p> <p><b>Peace and Democracy</b> - To prevent or resolve conflicts, strengthen democratic practices and the rule of law, and achieve greater respect for human rights. This work is carried out through four programmatic areas: Human Rights, Democracy, Consensus Building and Rule of Law Good Offices for Peace</p> <p><b>Pro-Poor Growth and Sustainable Development</b> - to develop the national capacity of members through its programmes in Public Sector Development, Economic Development, Environmentally Sustainable Development and Human Development</p>	<p>The Association for Commonwealth Literature ad Language Studies</p> <p>ACLALS was started in 1964 with a conference at the University of Leeds and was officially accredited to the Commonwealth in 2005. Through this accreditation, ACLALS is eligible to apply for continued funding from the Commonwealth Foundation, and to participate in civil society consultations and The People's Forum of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings</p> <p>The main objective of ACLALS is to promote and coordinate Commonwealth Literature Studies, organize seminars and workshops, arrange lectures by writers and scholars, publish a newsletter about activities in the field of Commonwealth Literature and hold one conference triennially. Membership in ACLALS is offered through its local branches in Commonwealth countries</p>

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
<p>The Organization of Ibero-American States for the Education, Science and Culture</p>	<p>24 Member States:</p> <p>Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Equatorial Guinea, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela</p>	<p>1949</p>	<p>The Organization contributes to the spread, and preservation of Spanish and Portuguese. It is also dedicated to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting bilingualism,</li> <li>2. Improving methods of teaching languages</li> <li>3. Strengthening mutual understanding, integration, solidarity and peace among the peoples of Latin Americans through education, science, technology and culture.</li> </ol> <p>Annually, an Ibero-American Summit is being held since 1991, bringing together Spanish-, Portuguese- and Catalan-speaking Heads of Government and State of Europe and the Americans</p>	<p>The Organization promotes reading in schools, the use of and maintenance of school libraries and the incorporation of information technology in school curriculum.</p> <p>It also encourages the training of students in their native language as well as in foreign languages, and facilitates the loaning of books in coordination with other public libraries to encourage multi-cultural education.</p> <p>To promote culture in development policies, the Organization encourages its Member States to include a cultural component in public administration and management and by encouraging the incorporation of culture components in school curricula.</p>

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
League of Arab States	22 Member States: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen	22 March 1945	<p>- Voluntary association of independent countries whose peoples are mainly Arabic speaking.</p> <p>- The Organizations' main goal is to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.</p> <p>Its stated purposes are to strengthen ties among the member states, coordinate their policies, and promote their common interests.</p> <p>- voluntary association of independent countries whose peoples are mainly Arabic speaking. Its stated purposes are to strengthen ties among the member states, coordinate their policies, and promote their common interests.</p>	
Arab League Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ALECSO)		25 July 1970	- The Arab League is involved in political, economic, cultural, and social programmes designed to promote the interests of member states.	

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
Academy of Persian Language and Literature	Representatives are mainly from four countries: Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan.	1935	<p>The academy is a government controlled international body presiding over the use of the Persian language in Iran and other Persian speaking countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on creating and approving official Persian equivalents for foreign, general or technical terms.</li> <li>• Created an official orthography of the Persian language, titled Dastur e Xatt e Fârsi (Persian Script Orthography).</li> </ul>	
Cooperation among Farsi-speaking countries	<p>Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan</p> <p>Countries have framed their trilateral cooperation as sub-category of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) – which has as other members Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan</p>		<p>Promotes research on Persian language and literature, other Iranian languages, Persian heritage, Iranology and Iranian culture.</p> <p>A new (sub) Organization may be in process of being formed to create new linkages among countries, sharing common bonds of culture and language. Thus far, meetings of Foreign Ministers were held – a summit was held in 2006 and the Foreign Ministers met last in March 2008 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan</p>	

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
TÜRKSOY Organisation	<p><b>Member States:</b></p> <p>Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan Turkey, Turkmenistan</p> <p><b>Observing members:</b></p> <p>Northern Cyprus, Altai (Republic of the Russian Federation – RF), Bashkiria (RF), Bashkortostan (RF), Khakassia (RF) Saxa Yakut, Tatarstan, Tuva and the Autonomous Region of the Gagauz Land in the Republic of Moldova</p>	July 12, 1993	<p>TÜRKSOY is an international organization which seeks to facilitate cooperation between Turkish-speaking countries in the fields of culture and arts, without interfering with the administration of members and their domestic and foreign policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Envisioning the new balances emerging in international relations, to support the cultural restructuring throughout the region and the world.</li> <li>• To establish friendly relations among the Turkish speaking peoples and nations, and to explore disclose, develop, and protect the common Turkish culture, language, history, art, and customs.</li> <li>• To create the necessary atmosphere for enabling the use of a common language and alphabet in the lands of the Turkic World.</li> <li>• To promote scientific explorations that support the common past of the Turkish culture and history.</li> <li>• To facilitate the transfer of the national history, mother tongue language, literature, culture, art, customs, and traditions to future generations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Programmatic themes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Organisation aims to develop cultural and artistic relations between Turkish speaking states. It encourages radio and television programmes, documentaries, videos, and films which promote the Turkish culture and art.</li> <li>• It supports the organization of performances and festivals involving plays, operas, ballets, music, and folk dances that promote the Turkish culture.</li> <li>• It supports the hosting of seminars on the goals of TÜRKSOY as well as the publication of literature which promote the Turkish culture.</li> <li>• It collaborates with other international organisations involved in cultural and educational activities.</li> </ul>

## Annex : International Organizations created around Linguistic Affinity

Groupings	Members	Establishment	Main Objectives	Main Programmes devoted to Languages
<p>Cooperation among German speaking countries within:</p> <p>a) the United Nations</p> <p>b) OECD</p>	<p>Concerned Member States:</p> <p>Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein (at UN)</p>		<p>a) within the United Nations, the German-speaking Member States agreed to establish a German Language Translation Section, funded by the Member States concerned, mainly to translate the resolution of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and other select documents, such as the annual report of the Secretary-General. Varying terminologies used by the different countries were harmonised and officialised under the umbrella of the United Nations;</p> <p>b) OECD has established a Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), with a steering committee, that is made up of high-ranking officials from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, who are in charge of conducting regional seminars in German related to educational development.</p> <p>The work of the OECD committee is primarily to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss school development problems in the three countries</li> <li>• Create major topics for the countries'</li> <li>• Select participating scholars and sample case studies</li> <li>• Analyse and disseminate the common and cross-border results from the seminars</li> </ul>	



MULTILINGUALISM,  
TRANSLATION,  
COMMUNICATION  
AND LITERACY

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Gregory Kamwendo, Associate Professor of Language Education and Head of the Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

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MY TWO ENDANGERED LANGUAGES – JAPANESE AND ALASKAN YUPIK



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# BUT HAVING SMALL HOUSES SPREADS HIV – PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN HEALTH SERVICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

## ABSTRACT

Good health is one of the prerequisites for sustainable development. It is therefore not surprising that three of the eight Millennium Development Goals actually focus on health matters. From the three Millennium Development Goals, it is easy to tell that it is only healthy people who can contribute significantly and meaningfully to sustainable development. Governments and other agencies, therefore, have an obligation to offer adequate and quality health services. These health services do not operate in a linguistic vacuum. Language and communication problems sometimes derail the delivery of quality health services. The use of exoglossic languages (such as English, French, and Portuguese) can sometimes be problematic given that these languages are known/used by a minute segment of many a country's population. On the other hand, the use of local languages has its own problems too. To this end, then, how can local and global languages be meaningfully used in the delivery of health services in Africa? The current paper highlights some of the linguistic dilemmas, contradictions and other challenges that African countries face as they deliver health services. The initial part of the title of this paper is meant to highlight the problems of communicating about one of Africa's critical health problems i.e. HIV/AIDS. The paper argues that for a long time, enormous language planning efforts in Africa have gone into the education domain, thereby neglecting other domains (e.g. the health domain). In view of the centrality of health to human life and sustainable development, it is important to give a new lease of life to language planning in the health domain in Africa.

## INTRODUCTION

Good health is indispensable to sustainable development. It is well known that poor health undermines sustainable development. The importance of good health for sustainable development is highlighted in a special way by the fact that three of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) actually address health issues. The three MDGs are: to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; and, to combat diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and malaria. A clear message coming from the MDGs is that there can be no sustainable development when people do not enjoy good health. For people to enjoy good health, they need to have access to health services such as medical tests, drugs, health education, and others. It is important to stress that health services are provided through some linguistic media. This being the case, there is a need to take a serious consideration of how the language factor impacts on the delivery of health services in multilingual sub-Saharan African countries. For a long time, enormous language planning efforts in Africa have been devoted to the education domain, thereby neglecting other domains (e.g. the health domain). In view

of the centrality of health to human life and sustainable development, it is worthwhile to give increased attention to language planning in the health domain in sub-Saharan Africa.

The current paper has been organized as follows. In section 2, I give an overview of the link between language and globalization, with special reference to the linguistically diverse sub-Saharan Africa. In the next section (section 3), I highlight the critical role of language in HIV/AIDS education and clinical settings.

## GLOBALIZATION AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Globalization is a widely used and misused concept. It is a concept that cannot be pinned down to one universally accepted definition and/or description. Globalization means and/or implies different things to different people. It is against this background that Held et al. (1999) have remarked that globalization is a concept that comes with multiple, contested definitions and meanings. I will, therefore, not attempt to provide many definitions of globalization. Only two definitions will suffice here. First, globalization can be defined as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens 1990: 64). On his part, Mazrui (2004: 1) defines globalization as a "process by which regions of the world become linked, at various levels of society, through an expanding network of exchange of peoples, goods, services, ideas, traditions etc across vast distances". This interconnectedness of the world cannot be realized to the full without the presence of connecting languages. There is a need, therefore, for languages that enable people of divergent linguistic backgrounds to link up. Today, English is the main language of globalization (see Mazrui 2004). But we need to be critical and ask: to what extent is English a global language? Does everyone have access to English? The answer to the second question is NO. The truth of the matter is that there are inequalities with regard to access to English across the world. Some people are native speakers of English, whilst others are non-native speakers of English, and there are also some people who do not speak or write English at all.

Sub-Saharan Africa is generally characterized by linguistic diversity. Another common feature is the compartmentalization of Africa on the basis of former colonizers' languages. To this end, we have the so-called English-speaking African countries (Anglophone countries), the Portuguese-speaking countries (Lusophone countries) and the French-speaking countries (Francophone countries). A critical examination of the so-called English-speaking countries, for example, reveals that in actual fact, such countries are not English-dominant countries. The same situation applies to the so-called Portuguese-speaking and/or French-speaking African countries. In all these countries, the official language is actually a minority language in so far as the numerical strength of its speakers is concerned. The vast majority of the people in sub-Saharan Africa can only communicate through local languages. As lamented elsewhere, the labels Anglophone, Lusophone and Francophone are misleading (Kamwendo & Mooko 2006). This being the case, through which languages, then, can sub-Saharan African countries best deliver their health services? This is one of the key questions that this paper addresses.

Globalization is associated with advances in information technologies, international mobility of labor, increased capital flows across national boundaries and so on. Advances in communications technologies have brought about the time-space compression of the globe. As a result, the advanced information technologies have exponentially increased the ease, economy and rapidity of communication. This, in turn, has given unprecedented access across the world to the global flow of ideas and cultural products (Sklair 1999). Global languages (e.g. English) are the media through which information is able to reach various corners of the world. The major lingua francas of the world (such as English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic and others) have made national boundaries more fluid and less rigid (Shohamy 2006). This has, in turn, increased the demand for proficiency in the languages of global communication as Shohamy (2006) observes that:

Local languages are no longer useful beyond the specific territory of the nation-states, while other languages are needed. Nations realize this situation and demand that their residents acquire a variety of additional languages that will be useful for such international and global functions and for economic and academic purposes (Shohamy 2006: 37).

The year 2006 was declared the Year of African Languages. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), on its website, invited contributors to respond to the following question: "As the continent marks the Year of African Languages in 2006 to help promote the use of the mother tongue, does it matter if Africa's indigenous languages are dying out?" A contributor from Kigali in Rwanda, observed that in addition to one's mother tongue, "I strongly advise the acquisition of an international language, whether it is English, French or Chinese. The ability to speak an international language provides opportunities for work and life choices". A Kenyan contributor argued that "as long as nationhood is strengthened, then the more global languages like English and French, will be sufficient. Incidentally, some of my countrymen are taking lessons in Cantonese, in order to take advantage of the Chinese economic emergence". A Tanzanian contributor cited "the need for the young Africans to keep pace with the rest of the world who speak either English, French or German". The general feeling throughout the BBC debate is that in this age of globalization, knowledge of languages of international communication is a key asset.

## LANGUAGE AND HEALTH SERVICES DELIVERY

In this section of the paper, I highlight the role of language in health service delivery. I adopt the World Health Organization's definition of health, cited by Evans (2002: 198), as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being". Health services, on the other hand, mean the provision of counseling, preventive and curative drugs as well as the provision of health related information. In this section, I focus on the role of language in HIV/AIDS education and language use in clinical settings.

## LANGUAGE AND HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

I begin by making reference to the initial part of the paper's title which reads: "But having small houses spreads HIV". It sounds very strange! Since when did small houses begin to spread HIV?

Though the quotation sounds strange, it is in fact a real message found on billboards in Botswana. The full text on the billboard read:

“People say small houses strengthen relationships. But having small houses spreads HIV. Having more than one relationship over the same period of time highly increases your risk of HIV infection”.

When you go for the ordinary and literal meaning, you miss the meaning of the text. Obviously, one does not expect small houses to spread HIV/AIDS. Such a thing has never happened and it will never happen. Since the literal meaning is unacceptable, one then has to search for the context-dependent meaning of the term 'small houses'. In the context of Botswana English, 'small house' is a man's extramarital affair (a concubine). The idea of 'small house' signifies a woman who is lower in status than the legitimate or senior wife. Though 'small' and 'house' are ordinary English words, the term 'small house' can be misinterpreted by anyone who is not familiar with the Botswana context where the term is widely used. In keeping with the principles of Pragmatics, word meaning is malleable. Words change their meaning(s) depending on the context in which they are used. The billboard I have referred to is an example of the use of language that can bring about unintended meaning despite the fact that the billboard is in English, the main international language. What is special here is that the English language here has been localized or domesticated, and made to carry local flavor. Whilst we may think that through the use of English we are communicating to the entire world, we may not be doing so given that the local English may not be understood by 'outsiders'. Even for the local audience (i.e. the Botswana audience), English is not the best medium for communicating with it. Setswana, the national language, is the best medium for disseminating HIV/AIDS messages in Botswana.

As mentioned elsewhere (e.g. Kamwendo & Mooko 2006) and earlier in this paper, despite the fact that sub-Saharan African countries are linguistically categorized as French-speaking or Portuguese-speaking or English-speaking, the majority of the people have no competence in these languages. As a result, the said languages are not the best media for HIV/AIDS education in Africa given that they exclude the majority of the people. Therefore, the use of indigenous languages in HIV/AIDS education makes sense. However, the use of indigenous languages in HIV/AIDS comes with a serious setback i.e. the lack of culturally appropriate and acceptable terminologies. For instance, in Uganda, it has been noted that local languages, such as Runyankole, lack the socially appropriate terms for human reproductive organs that health service providers could use in public talks and demonstrations on condom use. What exist in local languages are the crude and socially inappropriate names for reproductive organs (Seidel 1990). Furthermore, HIV/AIDS is closely linked to sexuality – a taboo subject in many African societies (see, for example, Kesby 2000, Mashiri et al. 2002, Mutembei et al. 2002, Lwanda 2003, Horne 2004, Mawadza 2004, Moto 2004, Uys et al. 2005, Batibo & Kopi 2008). HIV/AIDS is a topic that qualifies to be called face-threatening (see Brown & Levinson 1987 on the face-saving view of linguistic politeness). Therefore, HIV/AIDS education programmes have to seek ways of overcoming these cultural and linguistic hurdles. For every country, there is a need to closely examine the terminologies that are currently in use in HIV/AIDS education in order to

determine their effectiveness and social acceptability (e.g. see Moto 2004). This is no easy task in a multilingual and multicultural society.

It has already been noted that every society has its own culturally acceptable and/or unacceptable language use. In view of this situation, it is important that designers of information, education and communication (IEC) programmes on HIV/AIDS be sensitized on the importance of using culturally acceptable terminologies. For example, in Malawi, there have been concerns over the local language terminologies used in HIV/AIDS and reproductive health education. Some people had argued that the terminologies were socially inappropriate. To this end, a joint study between the Centre for Language Studies of the University of Malawi and the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation was conducted to identify culturally appropriate local language terminologies for use in reproductive health education. The study, funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), solicited terminologies from selected sections of the Malawi population and health service providers. Among the areas whose terminologies were elicited were: sex terminologies (i.e. terms that express the act of sexual intercourse), terminologies for sexual reproductive organs (i.e. terminologies for male and female organs), terminologies related to pregnancy, terminologies for labour experiences, terminologies for counselling and so forth (Al Mtenje, Director of Centre for Language Studies, personal communication).

With reference to the Southern Africa region, the critical role of local African languages in HIV/AIDS education has been strongly acknowledged by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). Based in South Africa, but covering Southern Africa, OSISA is a funding organization that has strong interests in language rights issues. OSISA mainstreams language issues into all its programmes, namely economic justice, education, human rights and democracy building, information and communication technologies, gender, media, and HIV/AIDS. What is particularly relevant to the current paper is OSISA's interest in the use of African languages in HIV/AIDS education in Southern Africa. OSISA appreciates that it is indigenous African languages that have the capacity to reach the widest possible targets of HIV/AIDS education. It is further recognized that it is important to translate HIV/AIDS materials from exoglossic languages (e.g. English, Portuguese) into local languages, thus promoting the widespread dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS. Obviously, questions have to be raised about the accuracy of the translations and their culture-specific sensitivity (see Valero-Garces 2001, 2002). Realizing that HIV/AIDS is face-threatening subject, OSISA advocates for the development and promotion of socially and culturally terminology and expressions in indigenous African languages. OSISA's support for the role of indigenous African languages in HIV/AIDS education is a powerful indication that indigenous African languages have a critical and important role to play in the delivery of health services such as health education.

Linguistic exclusion in HIV/AIDS education can be very critical when it comes to minorities such as the visually impaired, the hearing impaired, indigenous peoples, and refugees or displaced groups of people. The notion of linguistic exclusion refers to a situation whereby a segment of a population is left out of HIV/AIDS education, with language behind the main reason for the exclusion. This may happen due, for example, to the fact that the HIV/AIDS messages are packaged in a language that some of the target audiences for the messages do not understand. One case here is the



use of exoglossic languages or the use of national languages as media of HIV/AIDS education on the assumption that every one understands it. For example in countries that have adopted linguistic assimilation policies (e.g. Botswana and its use of Setswana as the national language; Tanzania and its use of Kiswahili as the national language), there is sometimes a tendency to ignore the fact that there are some linguistic minorities that may not understand the national language. There is need to reach the linguistic minorities through their own languages. This is precisely what the Kuru Family of Organizations (KFO), a non-governmental organization working among the San (Basarwa or the so-called Bushmen) in Botswana is doing. Through the KFO's Community Health Programme, there has been a production of culturally and contextually relevant IEC/behavioural change tools on Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Among the tools produced are health cue cards that allow for interactive sessions in sharing information about HIV/AIDS. Other IEC tools such as banners, shirts and fliers allow people with little or no literacy to pick up health messages (Kuru Family 2007).

Another category of minority language users that is often ignored by health service providers is sign language users. When people refer to minority languages, it is often oral languages that come to mind. The invisibility of sign languages creates the erroneous impression that sign languages are not genuine languages. It is important to stress that sign languages constitute legitimate kinds of human languages (Baker 1999, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). These are fully developed and authentic languages. Sign languages allow their users to communicate the same complete messages just as spoken languages do. It is also important to stress that sign language is not the same thing as gesturing. Whilst gesturing is unsystematic and used in an ad hoc manner, signing is an extensive, structurally complex and rule-bound system of communication. Deaf people form a numerical minority. But we can also extend the notion of minority-group status to dimensions of power and status in society. As Baker (1999: 123-124) has noted, "deaf people have much less power and prestige and lower recognition and leverage than majority groups in society". The majority group here refers to the hearing people. Most ethnolinguistic minorities tend to live in geographically marked areas. This is not the same with deaf people. Deaf people are not born in a deaf community. They are scattered across any country among hearing people. With reference to health services, we need to ask the following questions: do the health services in sub-Saharan Africa provide sign language interpretation? If there is no sign language interpretation, have we seriously considered the implications of the absence of the language service? It is important to bear in mind that all human beings have the right to enjoy various social services (e.g. health services) without being discriminated on linguistic grounds. What is needed for the deaf is special arrangements to have information on HIV/AIDS and other health hazards conveyed to them through sign language. One example that can be cited here is a comic book that is reaching out to the South African deaf community with messages on HIV/AIDS, sexual violence and sexual rights (IRIN 2008). As a politically, linguistically, socially and economically marginalized group, the deaf are usually not the targets of information and education on HIV/AIDS and sexuality.

The issue of illiteracy is also critical in health education. The use of reading materials (e.g. billboards, magazines, pamphlets, posters etc) turns out to be useless when dealing with illiterate people. As such, HIV/AIDS education through audiovisual materials works well (of course assuming

that the audio element is a language that the audience understands). Television and videos can also be used, and both carry the advantage that they provide sound and pictures. But televisions and videos are not owned by many people in sub-Saharan Africa. Televisions and videos are luxuries which the majority of the people cannot afford. Televisions and videos are mainly confined to urban areas. Rural areas, with their poverty and lack of electricity, rarely have access to televisions. In such situations, the radio becomes a very important tool for HIV/AIDS education. When it comes to the use of the radio as a health education tool, it is important to stress the importance of having broadcasting policies that are sensitive to linguistic diversity in society. Another health education tool is the use of performing artists such as drama groups and musicians.

As we conclude this sub-section, it is important to remind ourselves that combating HIV/AIDS is a top priority globally in line with the Millennium Development Goal number 6. In this era of the HIV/AIDS threat, IEC programmes have become indispensable for empowering people. It is only people who are well informed about HIV/AIDS who can take the necessary and correct preventive measures, and also put in place effective care of those who are HIV positive. HIV/AIDS related IEC programmes take various forms – billboards, banners, leaflets, books, posters, web pages, radio, television, videos, performing arts such as drama and music, and so forth. Artists are taking health messages directly to communities through community languages. This is being done in a number of sub-Saharan African countries. The notion of mother education, as propounded and promoted by UNESCO, is applicable to the health domain. If we are to succeed with health education, then we have to provide it in a language that our target population best understands, and that language is usually the mother tongue.

## LANGUAGE IN CLINICAL CONTEXTS

Let us now consider language use in clinical environments. Language is very critical during the performance of clinical activities (see, for example, Crawford 1999, Candlin & Candlin 2003, Saohatse 1998, 2000). The importance of language in clinical services can be noted in the following key observation: "While sophisticated techniques have been used for medical diagnosis and treatment, inter-personal communication is the primary tool by which the physician and patient exchange information" (Ong et al 1995: 903). Cameron and Williams (1997) echo the same position:

Although we may think that the primary tools of medicine are technological, the most fundamental tool, upon which all use of technology depends, is that of language. Language allows patients and care providers to make their intentions known, a crucial step in the process of identifying a problem, investigating how long it has existed, exploring what meaning this problem may have, and setting in action a treatment strategy. Thus if problems in linguistic encoding interfere with this process, there may be important consequences (Cameron & Williams 1997: 419).

Ideally, we need clinical encounters (between patients and clinicians) that are language concordant. These are clinical encounters under which the patient and the clinician speak the same language. But in this is not always the case in sub-Saharan African clinical contexts. Sometimes a

patient may meet an expatriate doctor who does not speak a local language, or the patient may meet a local doctor with whom she/he does not share a common language. This boils down to having a linguistic discordant clinical interaction. Under such situations, interpretation is required. Interpretation, when performed competently, is an aid to communication in a clinical setting. However, interpretation is not always provided by competent people, thus the quality of the language service may not be satisfactory. In some cases, unwilling and reluctant nurses and/or other hospital personnel provide interpretation (see Crawford 1999, Saohatse 1998, 2000), and sometimes patients may interpret for other patients, or relatives may also interpret for patients. The use of untrained interpreters sometimes comes with inaccuracies that may lead to improper decisions by clinicians. It is therefore important to have well trained interpreters.

To underline the prominent place of language in clinical encounters, I narrate two real life clinical events. One of the events takes place in Europe and the second one in a sub-Saharan African country. Both events stress the centrality of language in the delivery of health services. The first clinical event takes us to Germany. A fifty-six-year old Turkish woman was refused a heart transplant by clinics in Hanover. The reason behind the refusal was linguistic in nature. The patient did not speak German. As such, it was feared that the "patient might not understand the doctor's orders, might take the wrong medicine and might not be able to get help if there were complications" (Spolsky 2004:1). The decision was that whenever there was no bridging language between a patient and his/her doctor(s), no operation should be carried out. This decision amounts to having a language policy. It is an institution's language policy.

The second case to highlight the importance of language in clinical contexts comes from Botswana. A colleague from my department at the University of Botswana shared with me her experiences at Princess Marina Hospital in Gaborone in 1982. My colleague, whom I shall call Jennifer, happened to have shared a maternity ward with an Afrikaans-speaking woman from Bokspits. I shall call this Afrikaans-speaking patient, Mervis. Mervis spoke neither English (the official language of Botswana) nor Setswana (the country's national language). Mervis gave birth, but the newly-born baby had some complications that required that she should be kept under clinical observation before being handed over to her mother. Unfortunately none of the nurses on duty understood Afrikaans. The nurses were, therefore, unable to explain to Mervis why her baby could not be handed over to her. So Mervis was kept in the dark. She grew worried. She wanted to know what was happening. Once approached, Mervis could only say: "Bokspits", thinking that she was being asked about where she came from. As time went by without any success in communication, Mervis became so desperate that she started to cry. My colleague, Jennifer, became concerned and wanted to assist, but her knowledge of Afrikaans was very minimal. However, Jennifer, using here skeletal Afrikaans, tried to communicate with Mervis. Jennifer struggled to explain to her fellow patient that the baby was unwell, hence she had to be kept under observation. Even though Mervis was using what can be called broken Afrikaans, her colleague eventually understood what the problem was with the baby. Upon realizing that Jennifer could speak some broken Afrikaans, hospital personnel started to use her as a link between them and Mervis. Through her broken Afrikaans, Jennifer was able to serve as a linguistic bridge between Mervis and hospital personnel.

The above described situation is not uncommon in many clinical contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, due to the presence of expatriate health services personnel who speak a global language (and no local language), or even a non-expatriate who does not know a particular local language, some of the patients may not directly communicate with such personnel. So they have to resort to the use of interpreters (see Crawford 1999, Saohatse 1998, 2000 for the case of South Africa). Some expatriate health services personnel may even fail to communicate effectively through English (see Kamwendo [in press] for the case of Taiwanese medical personnel who were working in Malawi).

One area that needs more scrutiny in Africa is the linguistic dimension of the recruitment and licensing of medical personnel (see Kamwendo, in press). Outside Africa, it is the norm that before a medical practitioner can be allowed to practice, he/she must demonstrate fluency in the national or official language of the country. It is against this background, for example, that non-native speakers of English may be required to take English language proficiency tests in English dominant countries. The language proficiency tests certify whether one has sufficient command of a language that would allow him/her to perform clinical duties efficiently. But how many sub-Saharan African countries demand that expatriate medical personnel should demonstrate proficiency in a dominant local language before they are licensed to practice? In Malawi, for instance, the Medical Council expects an applicant for a medical practitioner's license to have adequate knowledge of the English language (Kamwendo, in press). This is an anomaly since English is a minority language in Malawi and the other so-called English-speaking countries (i.e. demographically, English is a minority language). It is through local languages that the majority of the patients are able to interact with hospital staff. The proposal here is that in addition to knowledge of the global language of medicine (English), expatriate medical personnel also need to have knowledge of the local i.e. language and culture of the local people.

In view of the linguistic barriers that exist in African clinical contexts, there is need to have language facilitation for special groups of patients, such as the visually challenged, the speech challenged, those with limited proficiency in English (or any other language) etc. Another issue worth considering is the provision of language courses for health service personnel. These courses should aim at cultivating fluency in a local relevant language that would enable health service workers to carry out clinical tasks without the use of interpreters. Even when an interpreter is used, the assumption should be that the health service worker has some knowledge of the local language that would allow him/her to follow how communication is being interpreted. Supported by such knowledge, service providers would critically follow interpretation, and probably be in a better position to press the interpreter for clarification.

## CONCLUSION

In this era of globalization, improved and increased means of travel have meant that no part of the world is unreachable. This is, no doubt, a positive development. The negative angle of this situation is that the increased human mobility around the world has come with an increase in the

pace at which human, animal and plant diseases spread. Infections or outbreaks can no longer be confined to certain geographical zones. To this end, we find that health hazards such as HIV/AIDS, bird flue, tuberculosis and others are no longer confined to particular areas of the world. These are no longer national health hazards. These and other health hazards have turned into global health hazards. The world is constantly communicating about the various hazards i.e. their spread and control. This communication about global health hazards takes place through global languages, and English is the main lingua franca of health communication. But not every community in the world speaks English or other languages of global communication. That is why governments and other health services providers in sub-Saharan African countries need to convert the health messages into local languages which the masses can understand.

It is no exaggeration to say that in Africa, language policy and planning in the education domain has taken the lion's share of scholars' efforts and attention. Scholars writing on African education have been preoccupied with questions such as: which language(s) shall serve as media of instruction in schools; and which language(s) shall be offered as subjects of study? The preoccupation with language issues in the education domain is not surprising given the high level of importance attached to education in development discourse. Education is often cited as one of the catalysts for development; and as we all know, no education system operates in a linguistic vacuum. So one cannot fail to appreciate why language policy and planning scholars have shown great interest in the education domain. But the reality is that education is not the only catalyst for development. When one looks at the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it can be deduced that good health is one of the catalysts for sustainable development. It is only healthy people that can contribute significantly and meaningfully to national development. In order to achieve the three health-related MDGs, it is important that governments and other health services-providing agencies provide adequate and quality health services. The provision of health services will always be made in some linguistic medium. As such, the language factor should be considered whenever we plan for the provision of healthy services. Since language permeates into all aspects of life, it is important that language scholars explore the role of language in the delivery of health services. We have to ask: Are certain languages acting as barriers or bridges to the effective delivery to health services? If health services delivery experiences some linguistic hurdles, what can, or what should be done in the form of language services?

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**Yoshiki MIKAMI**

Professor of Management and Information Systems Engineering  
and Coordinator of the Language Observatory Project,  
Nagaoka University of Technology, Nagaoka, Japan

Born in Tokyo in 1952, Yoshiki Mikami received a BEng (Mathematical Engineering) from the University of Tokyo and a PhD from the Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University. He joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI, current METI) in 1975 and has held senior positions such as Director for IT Standards and Director for Information Policy. After serving the ministry for 22 years, he moved to academia and has been a Professor at Nagaoka University of Technology since 1997. He teaches ICT policy, technology management, and the history of Japanese industrial development, among other subjects. His research interests include measurement and evaluation of multilingualism in cyberspace, language resource development, design of ICT policy review indicators, among others. He has initiated several publicly funded international projects, such as the Language Observatory Project, the Asian Language Resource Network Project and Country Domain Governance Project. He is a member of the executive committee of Maaya (World Network for Linguistic Diversity).

# MEASURING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY ON THE INTERNET

On behalf of Language Observatory Project and on behalf of the MAAYA network, a global multi-stakeholder network for linguistic diversity, I would like to share with you my experience of measuring linguistic diversity in cyberspace.

My paper will follow this format. First, I start with a brief description about the Language Observatory Project. Then secondly, survey snapshots will be presented. Thirdly, I will discuss how we should interpret the result.

Now, let me start with the first point, what is the Language Observatory? I coined the word using the analogy of an astronomical observatory. An astronomical observatory observes stars in the sky, and the Language Observatory observes languages in cyberspace. I learned that there are more than five thousand stars which can be viewed by the naked eye in the sky. Likewise, there are more than six thousand languages spoken around the globe, but only a few of them are enjoying the benefits of information technology. Search engines can handle only a limited number of languages. Even major computer platforms can, even now, only support a limited number of them.

This recognition motivated us to set up a virtual observatory to reveal a real picture of the situation. The Language Observatory consists of two major technical components. One is a crawler robot that collects web pages. The other is a language identifier that automatically identifies the language properties of the page.

When I say "language identification", I refer to not only languages, but also to the scripts and encodings of the page that are included. Currently, our observatory has a capability of identifying more than three hundred languages.

Our project was kicked off four years ago. On the International Mother Language Day in 2004, we organized the first workshop and invited an UNESCO official (Mr. Paul Hector) to witness the launching of the event. The event was reported by UNESCO's web news site.

UNESCO adopted so-called cyberspace recommendations just a few months before the launch of the Language Observatory Project. Measurement of linguistic diversity on cyberspace is one of the key issues addressed in the recommendations.

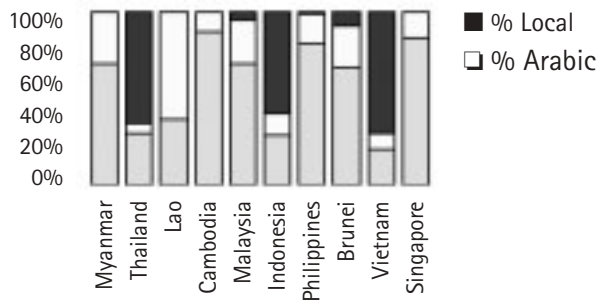
The funding given by the Japanese Science and Technology Agency (JST) helped us to equip a fleet of server computers. Various technical supports given by our international collaborators also helped us to implement the project successfully. UbiCrawler, a powerful crawler software developed by a team of people based out of Milano University in Italy, helped us a lot.



## Expert Collaboration Case of African Survey



This slide is a snapshot of experts who joined the African Web Language Survey Workshop organized in Bamako, the capital of the Republic of Mali, in 2006. This event was made possible by the strong initiative of Mr. Adama Samassekou. On this occasion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to him for his continuing support.



Then I move on to the second part, and give a brief report of the survey result. Because of the tremendously huge size of the cyberspace, it is impossible for us to survey an entire web space. It is estimated to be in the order of tens of billions of pages. So we decided to focus our efforts on only country domains in Asia and Africa. This slide shows the language compositions of web pages of 34 Asian countries. Note that China, Korea and Japan are not included because of their huge size. As you notice, local languages have a majority share only in a limited number of country domains, namely Turkey, Israel, Iran and a few Arabic speaking countries in the Middle East, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. The light-blue color represents the English portion, and not-surprisingly, it occupies the majority share, or even more than ninety percent of the pages in several country domains.

## Estimated number of pages Top 10 Asian languages



Language	Script	Speaker population	pages
Hebrew	Hebrew	4,612,000	11,957,314
Thai	Thai	21,000,000	7,752,785
Turkish	Latin	59,000,000	3,959,328
Vietnamese	Latin	66,897,000	2,006,469
Arabic	Arabic	280,000,000	1,671,122
Tatar	Latin	7,000,000	1,575,442
Farsi	Latin	33,000,000	1,293,880
Javanese	Latin	75,000,000	1,267,981
Indonesian	Latin	140,000,000	866,238
Malay	Latin	17,600,000	432,784

Note: Chinese, Korean & Japanese domains are excluded. As of October 2006

as of June 2006

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This slide lists the top ten Asian local languages. It includes their respective speaking population and the number of pages we found on the web. Hebrew comes out on top and is followed by Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese, Arabic, etc.

On the African continent, the situation seems far worse. More than sixty country domains in Africa are grouped into three language groups, the English speaking (Commonwealth), Francophonie and Arabic speaking countries. Not-surprisingly, English and French occupy the majority share in each of them. The presence of African local languages is almost negligible in all groups.

## Estimated number of pages Top 10 African languages



language	script	speaking region	pages
Malagasy	Latin	Madagascar	5,382
Swahili	Latin	Tanzania	5,170
Afrikaans	Latin	South Africa , Namibia	1,775
Krio	Latin	Gambia, Sierra Leone	1,575
Kinyarwanda	Latin	Rwanda	1,059
Shona	Latin	Zimbabwe, Mozambique	538
Somali	Latin	Somalia	396
Siswati	Latin	Swaziland	335
Oshiwambo	Latin	Namibia, Angola	264
Rundi	Latin	Burundi	252

Note: South Africa is excluded. As of October 2006

LANGUAGE OBSERVATORY

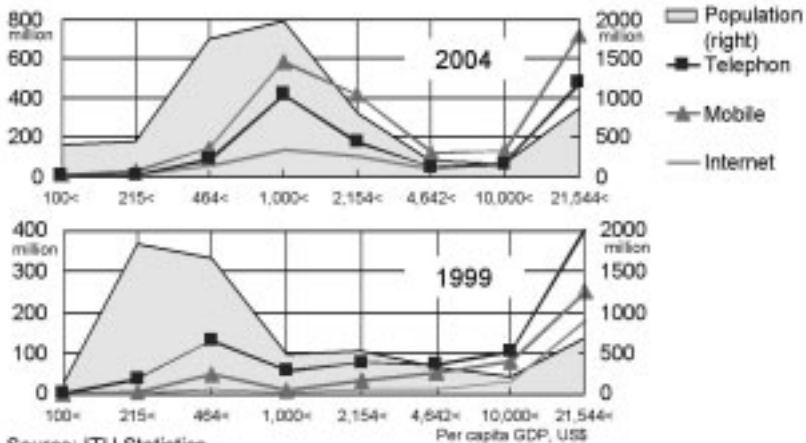
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The top ten African local languages are shown in this slide together with their speaking region and the number of pages we found on the web. Malagasy, an official language of Madagascar, comes out on top and is followed by Swahili, Afrikaans, Krio, Kinyarwanda, etc. Please note that the presence of those African local languages is far smaller than that of Asian languages. They are merely in the order of thousands, at best.

The previous slides told us of the existence of a serious gap between languages. We may call this "Digital Language Divide". In the following section, I would like to discuss how the results should be interpreted. First, let me present a few data in an economic context.

### 3. How to Interpret it?

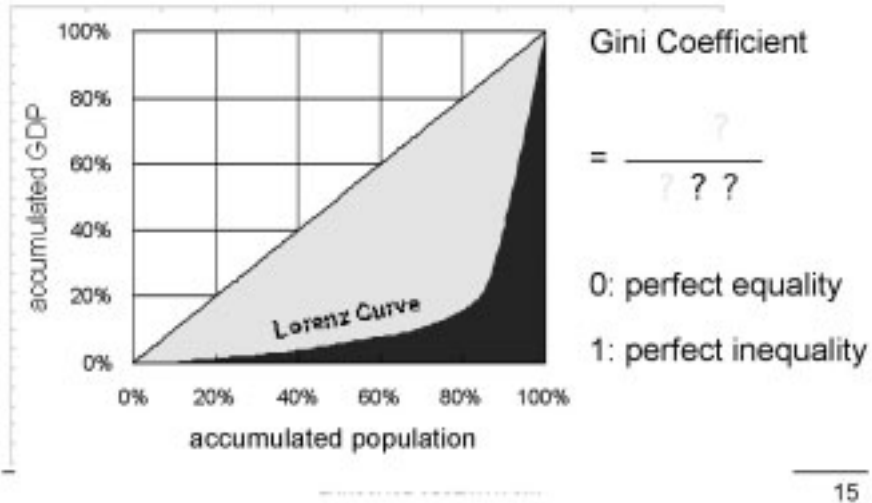
#### 3.1 Economic Context



Source: ITU Statistics

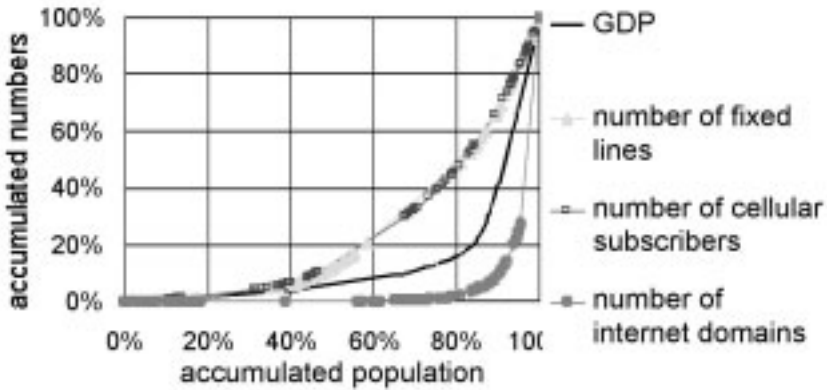
This slide shows the distribution of population and the level of communication access of countries with different income categories. The high income countries are on the right and the low income countries are on the left. The two graphs correspond to 1999 and 2004. Clearly telephony, mobile phone access in particular, has largely improved during these five years.

## Gini Coefficient: a measure of inequality of distribution



Economists always refer to the GINI coefficient when they talk about income inequality. If we plot accumulated population on the horizontal axis and accumulated income on the vertical axis, it results in a curve called "Lorenz Curve". The greater bending of the curve means the bigger inequality of income. I borrowed this concept to measure the gap in cyberspace.

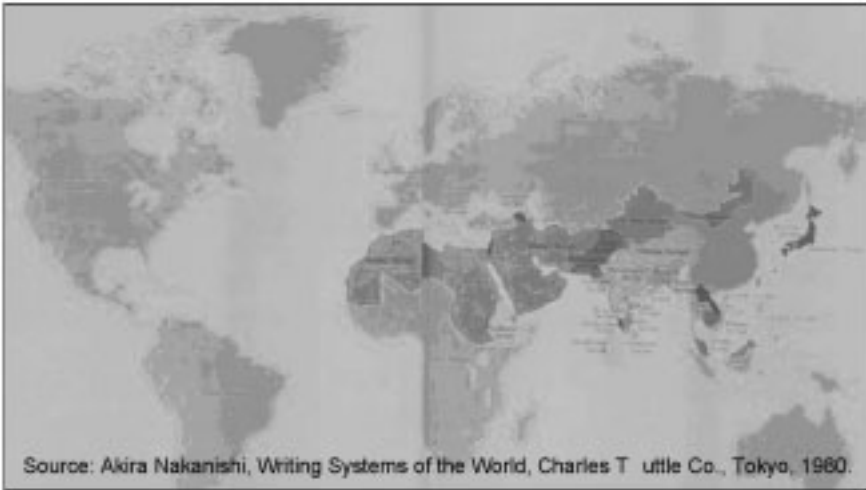
# Telephony has been improved, but Internet is ...



Gini-coefficient: Telephony 0.51 < GDP 0.73 < Internet 0.91

This chart shows the Lorenz curves of four indicators, GDP, the number of fixed line telephones, the number of mobile subscribers and the number of host computers connected to the Internet. GINI coefficient of telephony is 0.51. It is below that of GDP. Namely, inequality found in telephone access is now less than income inequality. But the inequality of host computers is still bigger than that of income. This analysis clearly addresses that telephony has been improved but internet access still has not.

## 3.2 Technical Context World Map of Scripts



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Secondly, I would like to introduce a factor from a technical point of view. This is a map of the world colored by scripts used to represent mother-tongue languages of the region. As you can see, most parts of the world are marked with two slightly different yellow colors, which correspond to the Latin and Cyrillic alphabet. The pink color means Arabic and is used in northern Africa and the Middle East. But the Asian continent looks like a patch work of many different color kilts, and this has created a special technical difficulty in the region.

## A Jesuit Friar's letter, 1608 Six hundred versus 24



Doctrina Christam  
in Tamil, 1578

"Before I end this letter I wish to bring before Your Paternity's mind the fact that for many years I very strongly desired to see in this Province some books printed in the language and alphabet of the land, as there are in Malabar with great benefit for that Christian community. And this could not be achieved for two reasons; the first because it looked impossible to cast so many moulds amounting to six hundred, whilst as our twenty -four in Europe ."

source: Priolkar, The Printing Press in India, Bombay, 1958

One old day record exemplifies this difficulty. A letter written by a Jesuit friar four hundred years ago says that the difficulty to cast more than six hundred moulds of type was an obstacle to print a book in a local language with local script at that time.



# Case of Tagalog: The script was finally lost



Handwritten text in Tagalog script, including the phrase "Laus Deo" at the bottom.



Philippines  
postal stamp  
issued in 1995

"Doctrina Christiana", bi-lingual version, printed in Tagalog by Tagalog script / in Tagalog by Latin script / in Spanish by Latin script. (1593)

Another case of printing in the early days is the "Doctrina Christiana" case, which was printed in Manila. It gives us an idea of what would happen in the worst case. The book shown in this slide was printed in three versions, Tagalog in Tagalog script, Tagalog in Latin script and Spanish in Latin script. During the first hundred years after the first printing, Tagalog script, as shown in the center of this slide, was completely lost. Now, only a few Philippine people recognize the motif designed in a postal stamp issued in 1995 as their ancestors' script.

# Asian Language Typewriter Collection



top to bottom

Tamil, Bengali,  
Sinhalese /

English, Hindi,  
Korean /

Myanmar,  
Thai

Let me show you my typewriter collection. This is not just a classic typewriter collection. It is a collection of typewriters localized in different languages. From top to bottom and from left to right, there are Tamil, Bengali, Sinhalese, English, Hindi, Korean, Myanmar and Thai typewriters. It is surprising for me to find that all typewriters have a similar shape and have almost the same number of keys, while the sets of letters of those languages are quite different in size. Why? Typewriters had been localized by largely omitting letters and by superimposing multiple strokes in a complicated fashion, all of which affected local users.

As explained in three cases, difficulties in language localization had been the key obstacle to the spread of new information technologies since the type printing age. I assume, therefore, that the central factor in localization efforts in the computer age has to do with character encoding issues.

# Encoding Chaos leads to delay of localization



Language	Standard encoding and its share	Examples of other encodings found <small>[footnote]</small>
Turkish	ISO 8859 (99.5%)	
Hebrew	ISO 8859 (87.7%)	
Vietnamese	UTF-8 (96.4%)	TCVN, VIQR, VPS
Thai	TIS 620 (97.3%)	
Mongolian	UTF-8 (95.5%)	Latin-Cyrillic
Sinhala	UTF-8 (44.5%)	Metta, Kaputa , etc.
Telugu	UTF-8 (16.6%)	Shree, TLH, etc.
Tamil	UTF-8 (14.9%)	Amudham , Kumudam , Shree, Vikatan , etc.
Burmese	UTF-8 (0.7%)	WinResearcher , etc.

note: Local proprietary encodings are shown in this table by names of font (families) as of June 2005

This assumption is confirmed by this table. The top five languages are those languages which have a substantial presence in cyberspace. They all have a well established encoding standard for their scripts encoding. On the contrary, the bottom four languages are suffering from encoding chaos, and are much less present on the web.

### 3.3 Socio-cultural Context Four Domains



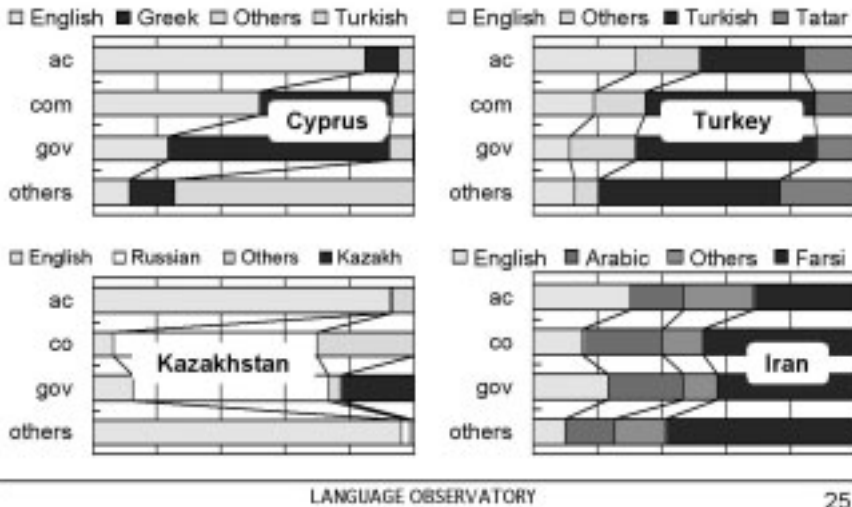
Personal domain	Public domain	Occupational domain	Educational domain
Conversation, mail, phone, blog, magazines, newspaper, novel, songs, etc.	Official documents, laws and regulations, traffic signs, contract, legal, etc.	Business letter, invoice, manual, contract, name card, packaging, etc.	Textbook, academic journal, dictionary, scientific communication, etc.

Based on EU's "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (2004)

Thirdly, I would like to introduce the socio-cultural context. People's language activities have various domains. Here I took a framework for analysis from a European Union document. The document defines four domains: personal, public or governmental, occupational or business, and educational domains.

In a monolingual society like Japan, four domains are filled with the same single language, but in multilingual societies different languages work in different domains. For example, a global language like English or French works in the educational and occupational domain, but very local languages, and even minority dialects, work in personal life. If we can analyze the language composition found in the secondary level domains of each country, the result would illustrate how each language has found its domain of specialization.

# Specialization of Language Secondary domain analysis



LANGUAGE OBSERVATORY

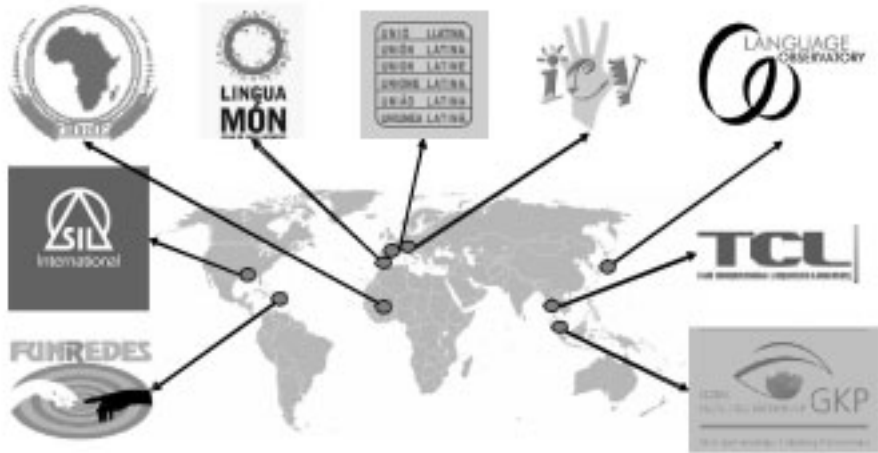
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A few sample survey results of four countries: Cyprus, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Iran are shown here. We can see a higher percentage of English being used in the educational domains of all four countries, and a higher percentage of official or local languages being used in most countries in the area of personal communications.

Now I would like to conclude my presentation. As presented in the second part of my presentation, the Digital Language Divide is observed in Asian and African country domains. Behind this divide, I assumed three factors, which correspond to the economic, technical and socio-cultural context respectively. From the economic context, I mentioned that there are fewer access opportunities in countries low income countries. From the technical context, I mentioned the special difficulty in localization. It is particularly serious for non-Latin users. From the socio-cultural context, I have drawn attention to the low presence of local languages in educational and occupational domains. It means that we really need to empower local languages.

Regarding the future of the Language Observatory, I have a forward-looking vision that is based on two proposals. One is to develop a language specific search engine on the basis of our technical infrastructure. The key elements for language specific search engines are language identification and the crawler robot. Another one is to develop a network of language observatories on a global scale. I hope that some of the audience agree with these proposals, and that we can join together to work together in the future.

# World Network for Linguistic Diversity



Lastly, let me introduce one more slide. This shows some of the members of the MAAYA network.



**Osahito MIYAOKA**

Professor of Linguistics,  
Osaka Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan

Osahito Miyaoka was born in Kobe, Japan, in 1936. His work has focused on (Central) Alaskan Yupik since 1967, specifically linguistic documentation, practical orthography, native teacher training and teaching materials. This research was undertaken while he held teaching positions in the Department of Linguistics at Kyoto University, Hokkaido University, and the University of Alaska, among others. He was the Project Director of Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim (1999-2004) under the Grant-in Aid for Scientific Research on Priority Areas [Tokutei-ryouiki-kenkyuu] sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan.

He is currently a Visiting Scientist at the Max Planck Institute, Leipzig, while working to finalize comprehensive grammar materials of Yupik in Alaska. He has published both in English and Japanese on various aspects of Yupik and on language endangerment. Recent publications include: Linguistic Diversity in Decline — A Functional View, in *The Vanishing Languages of the Pacific Rim*, Eds., Miyaoka, Sakiyama and Krauss (Oxford University Press, 2007).

## MY TWO ENDANGERED LANGUAGES — JAPANESE AND ALASKAN YUPIK

According to the oft-quoted scenario by Michael Krauss (1992) that only 5 to 10 percent of the 6,000 languages currently spoken in the world are "safe" languages, Japanese certainly belongs to this group. However, there are many of us who feel that even ours is "facing a critical fate". As a matter of fact, i) attempts to introduce English teaching to elementary schools and ii) such things as "special English zones" have already started. I am flatly opposed to these recent policies in this country. We must know that these actions may be Japan's first steps to becoming a monolingual English society. Are we really prepared for this?

I have been working on Yupik (an Eskimoan language) since 1967, which is spoken by close to 10,000 people in Southwest Alaska, making it the most fortunate language of the 19 Native Alaskan languages (20 languages until very recently). The decline of Yupik began with the introduction of bilingual education, which started in 1970. Contrary to the people's great expectations that the language would be revitalized through bilingual teaching at school, it turned out to instead accelerate the conversion to English. This has resulted in a steady decline in the use of Yupik, especially among people below 40 years of age.

We firmly believe in linguistic diversity. That is exactly why we are here. There may be different views, however, as to where the diversity comes from as well as why it is so important.

Many people would agree that a language enshrines a whole culture, and that it provides unique strategies for allowing people to adapt to their environment (natural, material, social, supernatural), which are closely linked to their own way of understanding - cognition and categorization - their environment. Language is uniquely weaved through cultural activity and behavior and through manufactured things, values, attitudes, meanings, images, accumulated knowledge and experience. With a whole culture and its details enshrined, each language may represent a people much better than perhaps any (non-linguistic) cultural world heritage site, hence, the urgency of documenting near-extinct languages.

In Japanese, the basic verbs for 'to divide' ("wakeru") and 'to understand' ("wakaru") have the same root. And the noun "wake" does not only mean 'dividing' but also 'reason'. One would surely be reminded of the very beginning of Genesis where God repeated this "dividing" and "naming" to create the world and of the "logos" in "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1), which means language and reason. Different environments, being differently categorized (and named), cannot but result in a diversity of lexicon/dictionary of languages.

A question arises here, however. If a language is simply a reflex of one non-linguistic culture, how can linguistic diversity be so great, or, structurally much greater than a cultural one? This may not be any wonder if the latter has more direct functionality or serves more specific purposes.



Language, by contrast, does not seem to be so directly bound to the environment. As a matter of fact, language may not be so superb a work (as an instrument), as the novel prize winner (novelist) Jun'ichiro Tanizaki once remarked. Not necessarily being a superb organ of thought and expression, a language is full of ambiguities, idiosyncracies and irregularities (residues). The fact that linguistic diversity is (much) greater than non-linguistic culture, to me, seems to suggest that language is not a mere instrument. Non-material culture is probably less diverse because of its direct functionality, or because it serves more specific purposes (One might think that language may not have developed as just a means of communication, but may more likely be a case of exaptation).

I would now like to turn to another aspect of language (or want to stress it here), which is that lexicon may be a reflex of a people's unique environment. Language has its own "grooves" (Sapir 1921) by which the lexicon is manipulated for thought and expression. This is the question of <grammar>, in which, it is interesting to note, morphology shows much greater diversity than syntax. Morphology deals with words which are mere "forms". As Edward Sapir wrote: 'the word is merely a form, a definitely molded entity that takes in as much or as little of the conceptual material of the whole thought as the genius of the language cares to allow' (1921: 32; italic mine).

In the space between Sapir's lines one may read the thoughts of Eneetto Croce, which I believe showed profound insight in saying: linguistics is 'nothing other than the Aesthetic' estetica as investigation of a fundamental capacity of human beings and 'aesthetic activity is...a matter of giving form, and nothing other than a matter of giving form' (1992 [1902]: 17, 20). Incidentally, I would understand that use of "forms" in human language, which leads to its diversity, comes from the cognitive and physiologic limits of the brain and the articulatory organ on which it relies.

A form is not necessarily (or so directly) bound with function, a marked contrast with syntax which is directly functional in terms of communication. It would be the lesser (or more indirect) functionality that yields diversity, as is the case with language itself vs. non-linguistic culture (above). No wonder, a word as a "form" can take in as much or as little of content, hence much freedom or variability of morphology (vs. language universals more favored by syntacticians).

Coupled together, lexicon and grammar characterizes a unique language, which ensures a vast variety of means of thought (or reasoning) and expression.

A linguistic "groove" may be illustrated with one feature permeating in Central Alaskan Yupik, a polysynthetic language. Note that each of the two below is a single word (not a phrase or a sentence) and both use the same transitive construction in which the first person is the subject ('he' is actually the object) - as the inflection -aqa at the end shows:

- a. irnia-q-aqa 'he is my child'
- b. ange-n-q-aqa 'he is bigger than me'

The diversity of languages in the world is currently shrinking at a rate which exceeds the extinction of species on earth, while the reduction of linguistic diversity generates much less concern and is rarely perceived as a serious problem. This comes from the instrumental view of language – the more useful, the better.

Amid great concerns that diminishing biodiversity may reduce the vitality of living things and cause a catastrophe in the ecosystem, we must consider that the extinction of languages, each which enshrines a unique culture and which supports the diversity of thought and cognition, will probably cut the vitality of humankind as an intellectual being. What if the pattern or grooves of thought and cognition inextricably intertwined with language was far from universal?

The Spanish priest Bartoleme de Las Casas, seeing up close the atrocities committed against the natives by the conquistadors, gave an inside denunciation on the view of human beings during those times ("Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies" in 1552). This is not a problem limited to an isolated incident five centuries ago but is still the case in various earth-shaking events in the world nowadays. If things we arrogantly call "rational" could be biased by a certain language, this may be nothing but Madness which could erase/eliminate the "irrational" in other peoples. It would be no less than "Sheer Madness" recently termed by Thomas L. Friedman, American author and columnist, to refer to the off-shore drilling for more climate-changing fossil fuels in Greenland. This is the very question that diminishing languages pose to us, as I perceive it.

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# EDUCATION AND LEARNING

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FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: MOTHER-TONGUE BASED BI/MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR ETHNIC CHILDREN IN THAILAND



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Paulin Djité is Associate Professor of sociolinguistics, translation and interpreting and French at the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of Western Sydney. He acts as an adviser for many international organizations on education, translation and interpreting and has published extensively in the area of sociolinguistics. His books include *The Language Difference* (in press), *The Sociolinguistics of Development in Africa* (Multilingual Matters, 2008), *From Language Policy to Language Planning* (NLLIA, 1994) and *Voir l'Amérique et mourir* (Académie Européenne du Livre, 1992). He holds a number of titles and honours, including the Médaille d'Or de la Jeunesse et des Sports (France), the Certificate of Olympic Merit (IOC) and the title of Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques (France). He is a member of the editorial boards of *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *Language Problems & Language Planning*, and *Afrique Compétences*.

# THE NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION, LEARNING AND LANGUAGE

## ABSTRACT

Language plays a central role in cognition and learning, and language-in-education policy determines who has access to education. Fifty years after the proclamation of independence in Africa, education is still sought through colonial languages (English, French or Portuguese), and these languages remain the key to acquiring, maintaining and enhancing a higher socio-economic and political standing. Whilst multilingualism is the most prominent feature of speech communities in Africa, the education of the African child is still locked into a monolingual policy of language substitution, a policy that imposes a language of instruction that the majority of learners do not know and that wrongly assumes that all learners possess the same backgrounds and experiences.

The time has come for a much needed paradigm shift, in order to put in place new, practical solutions to the wasteful and long-held practice of insisting on a language-in-education policy that has failed to deliver the desired results. Language-in-education policy needs to be better targeted, in order to create a truly learning society, a society in which education is much more responsive to the immediate realities of the learners, such as health issues, as well as to those of a globalising and changing world, such as education. Along these lines, this contribution looks at what can happen to the health of the illiterate citizens of a polity and discusses emerging opportunities for innovation in education and learning that can better integrate local languages as media of instruction, such as the recent developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

## INTRODUCTION

Language is more than a means of communication, because it is through language that we, as human beings, construct, learn and understand concepts and practices. Our identities take shape and are shaped by the language(s) we speak and encounter. The knowledge and science we acquire are conditioned by language(s). Language is therefore strategically important in building inclusive knowledge societies and in making progress in attaining sustainable endogenous development.

Hence, language, education and learning in Africa are far more than a desire or a means of preserving cultural and linguistic diversity. They are not an artefact of the school curriculum; but fundamental pedagogic and strategic approaches to imparting knowledge and know-how, in order to lift the continent out of its current socio-political doldrums and economic misery. Language, education and learning go to the heart of how we make education and technology transfer inclusive, how we help both learners and teachers, and people in general, interact more naturally and negotiate meanings in ways that improve the effectiveness of the learning process (Baker, 2001: 238), how we make the educational experience of young and old of greater relevance to their daily life, and how we facilitate greater participation of the people in their community at local and national levels.

In Africa, one should not be learning a language or learn through a language to ask for stamps at a post-office, when millions of people are in urgent need of health care and relief from hunger. Learning a language or learning through a language should enable the majority of the people to contribute to, and benefit from, economic growth. It should help them understand the practical use of fertiliser and increase the production of maize or rice, improve reproductive health, avoid the curse of preventable and deadly diseases, at the same time that it is helping their children pass geometry, mathematics or science tests (der Walt, 2006: 170).

In a position paper entitled *Education in a Multilingual World*, UNESCO (2003) defines Education for All as "a quality education for all ... including consideration of the many varied cultural and linguistic contexts that exist in contemporary societies." Although cognitive development in children can occur through languages other than the mother tongue, it notes that "research has shown that learners learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual education approaches." (See Preface of *Education in a Multilingual World*, UNESCO, 2003). A raft of African and international instruments, support the use of mother tongue education, including, for Africa, the OAU Language Plan for Action (1986), which lays emphasis on the use of African languages as media of instruction and as working languages at all levels of government, the Draft Charter for the Promotion of African Languages (1996), the Harare Declaration (1997), and the Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures (2000). The basic principles underlying these documents are the acceptance of multilingualism as a fact of life in Africa, and the need to empower the languages that the African people know best at all levels, as working languages, media of instruction and languages of the mass media. Furthermore, many scholars have argued that the exclusive use of a European language as medium of instruction in sub-Saharan Africa is, at least in part, responsible for the illiteracy, low school enrolments, high school repeat and drop-out rates, and social inequity on the continent (Bokamba, 1991; Bokamba, 1984; Hutchinson, 1983). There is no denying that the existing educational system is beset by a woeful lack of materials in quantity and quality, insufficient educational infrastructure, and high levels of illiteracy.

Yet, fifty years on, conferences on the use of African languages in education and learning still debate whether to use African languages as media of instruction, rather than how to use them (Bamgbose, 2004: 18) and various arguments and myths against the use of mother tongues in education are rehearsed by those who would have us believe that good education in Africa can only be imparted through a European language (Chaudenson, 1987 & 1989; Dumont, 1990). Can education through language substitution offer the best chance for all learners to gain the basic life-long functional literacy skills they need to bridge the knowledge gap and achieve a sustainable level of endogenous development? Does it make economic sense to hang on to the policies of the last fifty years? This contribution is an attempt to answer these questions but looking at what can happen to the health of the illiterate citizens of a polity, in the first instance, and goes on to discuss emerging opportunities for innovation in education and learning that can better integrate local languages as media of instruction, thanks to recent developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

## THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Six years into the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien (Thailand), the final communiqué of the Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All in Amman, Jordan, was claiming significant progress in basic education, an increase in primary school enrolment and a decline in the numbers of children out-of-school, a growing emphasis on the quality of education and a spirit of innovation for important educational advances in the years ahead<sup>ii</sup>.

Four years later, in Dakar (Senegal), the international community (160 governments) committed to six goals aimed at ensuring quality Education for All by 2015<sup>iii</sup>. Again, whilst pointing to some measure of success<sup>iv</sup>, it is noted that school enrolment is not enough, and much still remains to be done in the areas of early childhood education, gender parity and literacy<sup>v</sup>. The Education For All Development Index (EDI), calculated for 129 countries, shows that 25 of these countries - two-thirds of which are in sub-Saharan Africa - are far from achieving Education For All. In 17 of these countries, less than 63 percent of pupils reached the last grade of primary school. Even though more children are going to school than ever before, many more are dropping out before grade 5, or graduate without mastering basic cognitive skills. According to the EDI, 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa are far behind meeting these goals (UNESCO 2007)<sup>vi</sup>. UNESCO (2000) also estimates that 50 percent of school-aged children are not attending school in West and Central Africa, and one out of three children is not attending school in Eastern and Southern Africa. The overall rate of attrition is 25 percent, and the dropout rate is also 25 percent of the school age population.

The performances of all sub-Saharan educational systems are among the lowest in the world, with only 60 pupils out of 100 able to complete primary school, and only 30 competent in the basic learning skills. In Burkina Faso for example, children average 2.9 years of schooling (3.5 years for boys and 2.3 years for girls). In Kenya, where school enrolment is free since 2003, 22 percent of school age children or 1.7 million children are still not going to school. In Malawi, where the same policy of free enrolment has been implemented since 1994, school enrolments are still low; and of those children who attend school, only 10 percent can understand the school curriculum. Similarly, in Burundi, where school fees were abolished in 2005, Education For All is a real struggle. According to the second Southern [and Eastern] Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAC-MEQ II, see also Mothibeli, 2005), by grade 6, more than 55 percent of students in 14 Southern and Eastern African countries have not attained the minimal level of literacy required to remain in the school system. Overall, sub-Saharan Africa will be burdened with some 57 million children out of school. Adult literacy is also neglected and 72 out of 101 countries, for which projections were made, will not succeed in halving adult illiteracy rates by 2015 (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008). In other words, sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve the six Education for All goals.

These education results make no mention of the language of learning and/or literacy in sub-Saharan Africa, and how knowledge information is imparted and/or accessed.



Indeed, data in literacy, or lack thereof, in developing countries do not always take account of the sorts of linguistic adjustment learners need to make in pursuit of education; they simply assume that all learners share the same backgrounds and experiences. But competence in the language of education is a significant factor in learning and in capacity-building. Everyone is now agreed that language-in-education policies must be grounded in a concern for inclusion of all. If this is the case, then we must keep on asking whether education in European language(s) is the only way, or the best way, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1) in sub-Saharan Africa, and whether it is the only way, or the best way, to achieve universal primary education (MDG 2), or prevent against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other preventable diseases (MDG 6).

The dysfunction of the educational systems and the underachievement of school-aged children in Africa are widely documented, and they all suggest that educational achievement is in great part a function of the language-in-education policies and practices. According to Obanya (1980: 88) "It has always been felt by African educationists that the African child's major learning problem is linguistic. Instruction is given in a language that is not normally used in his [sic] immediate environment, a language, which neither the learner nor the teacher understands and uses well enough". The use of the European language limits both teachers and students in what they can say, as opposed to what they would like to say, thereby imposing an unnecessary obstacle between the students and the knowledge that they are supposed to acquire (Alidou and Brock-Utne, 2006). This lack of flexibility in the language of instruction forces teachers to use inappropriate and ineffective pedagogical practices, such as chorus teaching, repetition, rote-learning, code-switching and safe talk, which undermine the teachers' effort to teach and the pupils' effort to learn. Furthermore, teachers tend to do most of the talking, while the pupils remain silent or passive, during most of the classroom interactions. Probyn (2001 & 2005) suggests that pupils may feel alienated from the subject content, when it is not expressed in their mother tongue. In a study of the medium of instruction in different African countries, Rubagumya (1994: 1) also notes that the language of instruction "acts to varying degrees as a barrier to effective learning". Eisemon et al. (1989) report that, in the primary schools they surveyed in Kenya, science instruction was characterised by imprecise and incoherent discourse, due to the teachers' lack of mastery of the science content and competence in the English language, and many Standard 6 pupils found it difficult to follow instructions in English (Muthwii, 2002). Some teachers acknowledge the fact that when the medium of instruction is a European language, it constitutes a major stumbling block for pupils' understanding and academic success (NCCRD, 2000, and Probyn, 2001). In Burkina Faso, where most of the budget for primary schools is spent on the teaching of French (56 percent of the entire curriculum), Alain Sissao writes: "Only 25 of 100 pupils understand what they read in French in Burkina Faso primary schools; twenty are able to write a short essay describing a familiar situation, and not one has functional reading skills (i.e. reading a table of contents, reading instructions, etc.)"<sup>vii</sup> [Own translation]. Sissao goes on to suggest that "French, which is only spoken in the classroom, in the presence of the teacher, should be taught as a foreign language". In Nigeria, a performance survey of high school students showed that only 9.7 percent did well enough in English in the university entrance examination, whilst 64.3 percent failed (Bamgbose, 2004: 22). In the late 1990s, the Applied Linguistics Institute of the University of Cocody launched a pedagogical experiment in Côte d'Ivoire known as "Le Projet-Nord". The Projet-

Nord was an experiment in mother-tongue instruction; namely in Dyula, in the Odienné region, and Sénoufo, in the regions of Korhogo and Katiola. UNESCO deemed the experiment to be a resounding success, as it was shown that the pupils in the fourth year of this project had achieved a level of understanding in mathematics at least equal to that of Year 11 students in the traditional school system, where the only language of instruction is French. Nevertheless, for some unknown reason, the project was suddenly abandoned. In 2001/2002, the then Minister of Education decided to revive the experiment and launched the *Projet Ecole Intégrée* throughout the country, in a number of local languages, as languages of instruction; namely: Abidji, Adjoukrou, Agni, Attié, Baoulé, Bété, Dyula, Mawu, Sénoufo and Wè. The aims of the project are threefold: (1) teaching and learning in the mother tongue of the pupils, (2) teaching literacy to the parents of the pupils in their mother tongue, with a view to involving the parents into the learning activities of their children, and (3) introducing the pupils to agro-pastoral activities, together with children who have dropped out of the traditional school system. The children organise a school cooperative under the supervision of a teacher, who acts as a technical adviser. They then determine which activities to undertake, then sell the fruits of their labour and use the income to improve their school facilities. Beyond the pedagogical exercise, the project aims to put in place an educational system that engages both the pupils and their parents on a process of lifelong learning. This contrasts with a traditional and elitist educational system, where French is the sole language of instruction, and which leaves the illiterate parents behind, whilst creating challenges, linguistic and otherwise, for the learner (Ayewa, 2007).

When the language of instruction is familiar to students, communication does not just improve with teachers (Bergmann et al., 2002: 66) and makes it easier for teachers and learners to negotiate meaning in an effective way (Baker, 2001: 238), it also improves with parents, and between teachers and parents, hence facilitating greater participation from the parents and the school community (World Bank, 2005), and leads to better teaching and learning all around. Instruction in the mother tongue leads to inclusion of more local content in the curriculum, and makes the educational experience much more relevant to the learner. Parents lose their fear of the school, when they are able to discuss the learning process their child has embarked on with both the child and her teacher. The evidence showing that active learning takes place in programmes where instruction is done in languages that are known to the teachers and students, and that students who learn in their own language do better in school, is overwhelming (e.g. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Malawi, Niger, Tanzania and Zambia) (Alidou, 1997; Alidou & Mallam, 2003; Bamgbose, 2005b; Brock-Utne, 2000; Brock-Utne, Desai & Qorro, 2004; Chekaraou, 2004; Heugh, 2000; Ilboudo, 2003; Mwinsheikhe, 2002; Ouédraogo, 2002; Prophet and Dow, 1994), and many are those who now advocate an increased use of mother tongues as media of instruction, to promote cognitive development and improved second language learning (Heugh, 1995). Beyond examples of successful literacy experiments in the mother tongue (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, and Tanzania), all of which show that initial literacy in the mother tongue can enhance learning skills, including the learning of European languages at a later stage, mother-tongue instruction in primary and secondary schools has also been shown to be a viable alternative to instruction in a European language, because it can help build on what the learners and teachers already know. Despite all this evidence, "African languages, as media of instruction, are generally

limited to lower primary levels of schooling and an extension to upper primary classes is rare" Bamgbose (2004: 25).

Logistical and ideological difficulties in providing education in the mother tongue are often raised to argue against this solution. Hornberger (2002: 30) writes that, to "transform a standardising education into a diversifying one" presents an ideological paradox; a paradox clearly reflected in the educational systems of many African countries. Whilst not denying these difficulties, extending the reach of education in developing countries calls for a much bolder focus on the nexus between education, learning and language; and this focus requires looking to innovative ways of resolving both the logistical and ideological difficulties attached to education in the mother tongue. The argument here is about the necessity of language and culture as the necessary vehicles of basic and functional literacy, life-long knowledge and know-how and therefore of endogenous development. This is what this contribution attempts to suggest in Section 4, which discusses the role ICTs can play in the management of multilingualism in Africa.

Many, it seems, have yet to grasp the incalculable human costs of the education crisis in Africa, and its related consequences. The reality is there for those who want to see it, and no amount of theorising can gloss over it. Educational deprivation threatens to consign the continent to an increasingly marginal future, and the debate would be greatly enhanced if everyone partaking in it took the time to familiarize themselves with, and understand the dysfunctional nature of the education system in Africa. Education is empowerment; it is the key to a sustainable development founded on social justice. The formulation of an appropriate language-in-education policy is therefore critical to successful education and the survival and development of a polity. Needless to say, an ill-conceived language policy can have disastrous results as is today evidenced in most of sub-Saharan Africa. The overall economic impact of the education crisis is huge and, as Djité (2008a) writes, one should not lose sight of the synergy between education, literacy, learning and the other pillars of development that are: health, education the economy and governance. In the next section, this contribution takes a brief look at how the lack of education, literacy and learning in one's language can affect the health of the people concerned.

## THE NEXUS BETWEEN LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Literacy (and numeracy) skills are at the heart of education and educational opportunities; lack of these functional skills make speech communities unable to face development challenges and much more vulnerable to poverty, preventable diseases, exclusion and exploitation. Persisting high levels of child and adult illiteracy undermine much more than the chances of achieving education for all by 2015, they also undermine health.

Health literacy is defined as the capacity of individuals to obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions; that is to say, the ability to use printed and written information associated with a broad range of health-related tasks to accomplish one's goals at home, in the workplace, and in the community (Seldon et al., 2000;

Kurtner et al., 2006). It includes tasks such as a patient's ability to read and understand instructions on prescription drug bottles, appointment slips, medical education brochures, doctor's directions and consent forms. Another aspect of health literacy is oral communication; that is to say, the ability to orally comprehend what a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist says about what the health problem is, what to do about the problem, and why it is important to take immediate action.

Research in health literacy shows that, although the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2007/2008 puts the literacy rate in the United States at 99 percent<sup>viii</sup>, a five-year, US\$14 million study of U.S. adult literacy in twelve states across the country, commissioned by the U.S. government showed that 21 to 23 percent of adult Americans are functionally illiterate and, as a consequence, are not "able to locate information in text", can not "make low-level inferences using printed materials", and can not read well enough to hold a good job. This study estimates that up to 20 percent of American adults lack basic reading and writing skills - ranging from signing one's name to identifying basic information from a simple form - and an additional 2 percent are marginally literate (meaning they can not fill out an application or interpret instructions for an appliance) (Kirsch I. et al., 1993). A follow-up study showed that there was no statistically significant improvement in these figures (Kutner, Greenberg, and Baer, 2005)<sup>ix</sup>.

Proliteracy America (2003) argues that low literacy, poor health and early death are inexorably linked. In other words, those who lack basic literacy skills are much more likely than others to suffer from heart disease, diabetes, and prostate cancer. Illiterate or low-literate women are affected in terms of birth control, pregnancy, giving birth and raising children (Gazmararian, Parker & Baker, 1999). Rudd, Moeykens and Colton (2000) have found that "death rates for chronic diseases, communicable diseases and injuries are all conversely related to education for men and women". This is mainly due to low literacy adults not being able to read or understand medication labels or may read them incorrectly. As a result, they often lack information about where to go for help and when to seek help (Williams et al., 1995), make less informed decisions than others about their treatment options, and can not participate effectively in two way communication with health care providers (Pfizer, 2002).

Literacy levels also highly correlate with the adults' ability to look after the welfare of their own children (Grosse & Auffrey, 1989; Weiss, Hart, McGee & D'Estelle, 1992), and there is a direct link between the parents' education level and their children's performance in school (Hayes, 2002), and the children of low-literate parents tend to get poor health care and nutrition at home, and do poorly at school (Proliteracy America, 2003: 19-22). Low literacy impacts on parents' understanding of medical information and ability to follow therapy prescribed for their children (Moon et al., 1998) and, crucially, maternal illiteracy is strongly associated with specific health outcomes, such as malnutrition, low immunization rates, and high infant mortality (Arya & Devi, 1991; Foege & Henderson, 1986).

The American example is not an isolated case. A study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (25 June 2008) also shows that the health of many Australians is threatened by their inability to read and write. The study indicates that people's health-related decisions are strongly associated with their level of education and literacy skills.

In other words, health literacy skills are not what they should be, even in developed countries. But more importantly for the issue at hand, limited literacy is viewed as an inhibiting factor in, amongst other things, accessing health information, when individuals struggle or are unable to read educational materials, directives, forms, and informed-consent documents commonly used in the health field. If the foregoing is the current state of affairs in developed countries, where the majority are believed to interact in their own mother tongue, then one can only imagine the negative impact of the lack, not only of health literacy, but of literacy in general, in sub-Saharan Africa. This means that most people, adults, women and children, who have the basic human right to decent health care, when they are lucky enough to find a doctor, a nurse or a pharmacist, who are already in very short supply, can not understand many of the basic health instructions they receive, not only because they are illiterate, but because they are illiterate in a foreign language. Well-meaning patients in sub-Saharan Africa are simply not able to take medications as directed, not only because they do not understand the directions, dosage, or interactions with other prescriptions, but because they do not even understand the language(s) these are written in. The youth of sub-Saharan Africa are not able to read the warning signs on cigarette packs or other harmful products, not only because they can not read, but because they can not read the European language in which these warning signs are written. Even verbal information is often transmitted in a language that they do not understand, as most doctors and nurses use the official European language in their interactions with the patient population. Hence, they are unable to follow medical instructions correctly.

Health literacy is only one of the many challenges the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in this part of the world face in trying to improve their conditions of life. The fight for the MDGs begins with, among other things, good health. But the fight for good health and decent health care services begins with literacy and education; and literacy and education begin not only with language, but most importantly with the ability of the target population to understand and take an active part in the process of development. Literacy is important as a tool of personal empowerment and a means of social and human development; but it is a fallacy of grand proportion to think that the majority of the population in sub-Saharan Africa will attain the sorts of literacy levels being recorded in developed countries in languages that are foreign to their everyday interactions.

When they are made aware of the extent and significance of the tragedy evolving in sub-Saharan Africa over the last fifty years, - in part because of a misguided language-in-education policy based on a mythical superiority of European languages and the expediency of pragmatism<sup>x</sup>, - many simply despair. Others ask if there is anything that can be done to salvage the situation. The following section of this paper suggests that there are avenues and opportunities to rectify and improve the language-in-education policies that are currently prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa.

## LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

In *The Sociolinguistics of Development in Africa*, Djité (2008a) has discussed the contribution recent developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) can make to the management of multilingualism and how local languages can be used to make education a lever of deve-

lopment. In a follow-up paper (Djité 2008b), he argues that, just as Africans received Christianity and adopted it as their own, creating their own forms (enculturation), they can adapt the new ICTs and use them for their own purposes, especially in the areas of education, literacy and learning. The work of some ICT Experts promises to provide a pathway for accessing new knowledge articulated in the language(s) of the African child. These technologies, offering the technical tools to address many of the constraints that held back African languages, can help bridge the digital divide. Because they allow everyone to use their own language, the new technologies do not discriminate along linguistic lines, and can be taken advantage of by all.

One of these initiatives is the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) project, which already provides inexpensive laptop computers, also known as the green or XO machines, to some 600,000 children in Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Libya, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda<sup>xi</sup> and Uruguay, and the US and Canada, as a result of the Give One Get One charitable giving campaign that ran up until December 31, 2007. The technology behind the OLPC project has been hailed as an innovation that could revolutionise education for nearly two-billion children in the developing world, giving them access to knowledge and modern forms of education.

A number of similar initiatives have since been announced. In April 2007, Microsoft announced that it will make software available for US\$3 to poor countries that offer PCs to pupils and students (AFP, 20 April 2007) and, in May 2007, India, which has already developed a US\$47 PC, announced that it was working on building a US\$10 computer that will be connected via Internet to a central server, with access to Word or Excel. In May 2008, OLPC unveiled plans for a second generation, book-like design of the XO called XO-2 or XO-XO. OLPC estimates that the XO-2, which will become available in 2010, will cost around US\$75. This new computer, which will be slimmer and lighter than the original version, comes with dual-touch screens, one of which can be used as a keyboard to enable standard typewriter style of computing. Because the XO-2 uses a virtual keyboard, it is customizable to any language or alphabet. At the very least, these developments demonstrate that adapting technology to the needs of developing countries is feasible.

Significantly, at its June 2008 meeting in Paris, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), in its biggest transformation in decades, voted to open up the Internet naming convention, in order to allow more options. In other words, instead of being limited to .com, .org, .au, .uk or .fr as the last letters of their Web addresses, companies, organizations or individuals can register a domain based on their own name or any other string of letters at the end of their URL, as long as they can show a "business plan and technical capacity"<sup>xii</sup> The process of introducing the new system is set to start in the third quarter of 2009.

Even more significant, the new domain names can be written in other languages (e.g.; Asian and Arabic scripts). This means a complete overhaul of the way in which people navigate the Internet, and hundreds of new domain names could therefore be created by the end of the year, rising to thousands in the future. Although it is unlikely that individuals will be able to take advantage of the new naming conventions to create more personalized Web sites - some experts predict that it

may initially cost around US\$50,000 to register a new domain name – ICANN expects a broad range of applicants, including indigenous communities interested in protecting aspects of their languages and cultures. Indeed, associations or companies such as (see mentioned above) may very well be able to use this new opportunity.

Together with software localisation and terminology work carried out in a number of African languages over the last few years (e.g.; the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa – PRAESA –, the Centre for Advanced Studies in African Society – CASAS – and the various projects of the African Academy of Languages – ACALAN<sup>xiii</sup>), these technological innovations now make it possible to provide versions of this technology in languages specific to the receiving countries. They make ownership of this technology possible in African languages and further shatter the myth of “languages of technology and science”, whilst bolstering the case for linguistic plurality in information technology. Hence, one no longer has to assume that the most effective languages for learning in the developing world are European languages. Eliminating the linguistic hegemony of the rich over the poor through education, literacy and learning is the first step to reducing poverty; and it is time that African linguists, educators, governments and private enterprise gear up to improve on these initiatives, by ensuring that all school children not only have access to a computer, but that they can do so in their mother tongue(s). The immediate practical language needs and constraints that have shaped the language-in-education policies in Africa in the early fifties and sixties now need to be balanced against the future needs and opportunities of the continent.

## CONCLUSION

We can all remember the times when IMF and World Bank Experts were of the view that governments in developing countries were distorting market forces by giving access to grain banks and fertilisers to their farmers, an approach that led to the dumping of cheap products from developed countries. For five decades now, we have been witnessing a push for developing countries to depend entirely on European languages in their educational systems and given up their own languages. Many who champion such a solution are emboldened by the lack of desire in developing countries to put in place policies that will ensure Education For All, long-term independence and prosperity. But how can people face-up to their governments and hold them to account, when they have no idea whatsoever of the sorts of decisions that are being made on their behalf, in part or mainly because of the language in which these decisions are debated?

Science is not neutral, and we must ask ourselves the relevance of a school curriculum that is divorced from the reality and aims of the learners. Critics of mother tongue education often rehearse the same articles of faith about multilingualism in Africa and economic rationalism, while ignoring the statistics about the failure of the exclusive use of a European language as the medium of instruction. But all the evidence thus far suggests that the policy of education in European languages is not sustainable in the African context (Djité, 2008a; Bamgbose, 2004) and that “Everything is nothing in education without language”. It is hard to deny that there is a strong positive correlation between language of instruction and achievement at school, and that the choice of the medium

of instruction plays a crucial role in the learning process. Education, after all, is about deepening and enriching the school experience in terms of lifelong learning. Freire (1970) has already argued for the nexus between education and language, in what he called critical pedagogy<sup>xv</sup>. Language may not be everything in education<sup>xv</sup> for a host of different reasons, and the use of mother-tongue instruction in and by itself will not guarantee success, without real commitment to mother tongue education and widespread effective strategies for its dissemination (capacities that countries with struggling economies show few signs of developing). But the evidence is abundantly clear: (1) the experiments of the last fifty years, with sole reliance on European languages have failed to deliver the desired results; (2) in addition to education, illiteracy in the mother-tongue in the African context is a major stumbling block to others pillars of the development process, of which the crucial area of health.

It is interesting to note that, as UNESCO is bringing together experts to reflect on the theme of "Globalisation and Languages", the European theme seminars at the 15th Congress of Applied Linguistics of the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée (AILA) at the University Duisburg-Essen (Germany) on "Multilingualism: Challenges and Opportunities" comprise a presentation about a 5 million research project (project DYLAN) on the management of language diversity in Europe, sponsored by the European Union, which seeks to identify the conditions under which Europe's linguistic diversity can be an asset rather than a drawback. The goal of the project is to investigate how different modes of thought, argumentation and action, which are themselves linked to different languages, partake in the development and transmission of knowledge, and what role they play in the control of interactions, problem solving and decision making. Inspired by DYLAN, is another seminar entitled Multilingualism in EU Institutions, which asks whether multilingualism can be maintained in the EU institutions and focuses on the legitimacy and practicality of potential solutions to the problem. Also being discussed is *Multilingualism and minority languages: Achievements and challenges in education*, a theme which looks at European minority languages which are 'unique' languages in one state (e.g.; Irish, Welsh, Frisian) or spread over more than one state (e.g.; Basque, Catalan) and examines the challenges of teaching through a minority language in a changing world; and, finally, a symposium on *Language education reforms at the margins of Europe: Policies, practices, challenges* concerns itself with changing language-in-education policies for the provision of (multi-lingual) education in a selection of Central and Eastern European countries.

The issues of education, literacy and learning are not just limited to the African continent, and it is wrong to assume that any people, no matter how poor, will be prepared to – or ought to be prepared to – pay a social and cultural price, in order to be able to read and write (Coulmas, 2001). It is condescending to believe that African nations have to make do with what they have, and can not afford the luxury of foresight. When one cares for human beings, one has to show compassion and help them help themselves, not just for here and now, but through all the years of their lives (Leith, 2007); we can start doing this for sub-Saharan Africa, by restoring education and learning in the languages that are readily available to the majority of the people.



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## NOTES

I. See Article 2 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1 of the UNESCO Constitution, Article 5 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which came into force on 1 March 1998, Articles 2.1, 14.3(a), 14.3(f), 19.2, 19.3, 24.1, 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 17, 29, 30 and 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 3 and 4, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Articles 1, 2(b) and 5.1(c) of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Articles 28(1), (2), (3) and 30 of the ILO Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, Articles 14, 15 and 17 of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 21, 22 and 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 27 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 4 of the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Article 28 of the 1989 ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, Article 5 of the 1985 Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals who are not Nationals of the Country in which they live, Article 45 of the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, Article 29 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 5 of the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, Article 22 of the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, Article 9 of the 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, Articles 19 and 29 of the 1995 Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy and Article 6 of the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

II. See Education for all: Achieving the goal – The Amman Affirmation, June 1996 (16-19 June 1996). The same document acknowledged that issues pertaining to gender gap in education, early childhood care and out-of-school literacy and education programmes for adolescents and adults remained important challenges that required a renewed effort,

III. These goals are: (1) expand and improve early childhood care and education, (2) provide free and compulsory universal primary education by 2015, (3) equitable access to learning and life-skills programmes, (4) achieve a 50 percent improvement in adult literacy rates, (5) eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015 and (6) improve all aspects of the quality of education.

IV. Enrolments in primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 36 percent between 1999 and 2005, and governments in 14 countries abolished primary tuition fees, whilst public expenditure on education increased by 5 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and the number of out of school children dropped sharply since 2002.

V. The number of people lacking basic literacy skills has barely changed over the last two decades, whilst an estimated 72 million children of primary school age, or 10 percent of the world's children of that age, did not attend any school at all in 2005.

VI. See UNESCO (2007) EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008. UNESCO: Paris. The EFA Global Monitoring Report is an annual publication prepared by an independent team based at UNESCO, which monitors progress towards the six Education for All goals adopted in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. These goals are listed in Footnote 2, above.

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VIII. Kozol (1985: 37-39) explains that the census bureau reported literacy rates of 99 percent based on personal interviews of a relatively small portion of the population and on written responses to census bureau mailings. If the interviewees or written responders had completed fifth grade they were considered literate.

IX. The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) assessment defines literacy as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

X. Others call this "nationism", in the mythical belief that there is such a thing as a "neutral" language (see Fishman, J., 1968).

XI. On 2 January 2007, the government of Rwanda committed to provide one laptop per child to all primary school children within five years.

XII. The organization estimated last year that only 17 percent of the original 4 billion network addresses remained available. And it predicted that it would run out of new addresses within the next five years.

XIII. For example, the Terminology Project based at the Kiswahili Institute of Dar-Es-Salaam (Tanzania), the African Languages and Cyberspace Project based in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), and the Lexicography Project based in Gaborone (Botswana).

XIV. See Freire, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Continuum.

XV. Ibid.



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# MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN: ESCAPING THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF LANGUAGE DISADVANTAGE IN INDIA

## INTRODUCTION

Eminent welfare economist and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen conceptualizes poverty as 'capability deprivation' and 'unfreedom' (1982, 1985; Dreze and Sen 2002). Capability, according to Sen, refers to 'the ultimate combinations of functionings from which a person can choose' (Dreze and Sen 2002) and freedom to "the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead" (35-36). He relates social discrimination to lack of opportunities and freedom, capability deprivation and poverty. The 'capability' approach has been seen as a powerful interdisciplinary tool to deal with the questions of poverty and the well-being of marginalized communities (Robeyns 2006). Robeyns (2006) suggests that it is necessary to identify capability inputs and obstacles to the realization of capabilities. Education is a major capability input according to Sen who views illiteracy as a major obstacle to economic opportunities and as lack of freedom. School education directly enhances economic opportunities through easier access to jobs and income and, equally importantly, it adds to social and cultural freedom and empowers persons for adequate participation in the exercise of political rights. Inequality of opportunities is related to distributional aspects of freedom – inequalities in respect of freedom, participation and development. In the context of Indian society, where social divisions, based on such distinctions as caste, class, culture, language, and religion, are pervasive, this is particularly crucial. Dreze and Sen (2002) speak of the substantial problem of 'voicelessness' of the disadvantaged groups in India, particularly the scheduled tribes, arising out of the large-scale illiteracy and lack of education, both of which impede economic development. They attribute large scale non-attendance and school drop out<sup>ii</sup> to lack of interest (of parents as well as children) and to a host of 'discouragement effects' due to alienating curricula, inactive classrooms, indifferent teachers, and social discrimination in the classroom (158). Although Dreze and Sen (2002) do not analyze the roots of the discouragement effects, linguistic and cultural discrimination, arising out of prevalent inequalities, is central to the vicious circle of illiteracy and educational failure, lack of freedom, capability deprivation and poverty.

This paper seeks to analyze the relationship between the languages of the tribal people in India and their poverty and shows that multiple layers of discrimination – in Indian constitution and governance, low instrumental vitality of tribal languages, exclusion and non-accommodation of minority mother tongues in education, and inequalities in the relationship between power and languages – severely restrict their freedom of choice and access to resources, leading to illiteracy, educational failure and capability deprivation. While education is the enabling factor for economic development, language, it is argued, is the enabling factor for access to quality education. The paper shows how the mismatch between home and school languages and neglect of mother tongues forces the tribal children into subtractive language learning in a form of submersion education in the domi-

nant language and leads to poor educational achievement reinforcing inequality. It is argued that education in India must promote an additive form of multilingual development beginning with children's mother tongue as the medium of early education. Recent experiments with multilingual education (MLE) in India and their problems and prospects are briefly discussed.

## LANGUAGES IN INDIA: MULTILINGUALISM AND INEQUALITY

Over 10,000 mother tongues (MTs), which were named by the respondents in the 1991 Census Survey of India were rationalized and classified into 3372 MTs out of which 1576 were listed and the remaining 1796 were grouped under the 'other' MT category. The MTs are variously classified into 300-400 languages belonging to five language families. 22 of these languages are constitutionally recognized as official languages listed in the VIIIth schedule of the *Constitution of India* and, in addition, English is recognized as an associate official language. Large numbers of languages are used in various national domains - 104 languages for radio broadcasting as well as adult literacy programmes, 87 for print media and 67 in primary education. The figures are daunting and they do point to mega diversity; India ranks fourth in the world in terms of the number of languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). However, Indian multilingualism is unique in many ways not just because of the presence of a number of languages in different spheres of social life in India; the dynamics of the relationship between these languages and their users, the manner in which the languages are organized in the society and the way they are reflected in the daily lives of the common people all over the country make the ethos of language use in India quite distinct from the dominant monolingual societies. The psycho-social dimensions of the patterns of language and communication in India are characterized by several unique features (see Mohanty, 1991, 1994a, 2006 for elaboration) which are particularly relevant for understanding the distinctive nature of its multilingualism. With most people and communities using multiple languages in different domains of their daily lives, grass-root level of multilingualism is widespread and languages tend to be maintained in situations of mutual contact. This is possible because of the fluidity of perceived boundaries between languages, smooth and complementary functional allocation of languages into different domains of use, multiplicity of linguistic identities and early multilingual socialization (Mohanty, Panda, and Mishra 1999). With such characteristic features, multilingualism remains a positive force for the individuals and communities. Our studies (see Mohanty 1994a, 2003a for discussion and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995 for a review) have shown cognitive and social benefits associated with multilingualism and mother tongue maintenance. Review of cross-cultural studies on bilingualism/multilingualism (Mohanty and Perregaux 1997) shows that the Indian findings have contributed to the positive view of the psychological and social role of multilingualism.

Despite such positive features and the maintenance norms, many Indian languages are endangered and most of them happen to be tribal languages. For example, 1971 Census showed that Orissa was one of the most linguistically diverse provinces in India with 50 languages out of which 38 were tribal languages. Now, the Government of Orissa official documents put the number of tribal languages in the province at 22. Even when many languages coexist and are maintained in the multilingual mosaic, many more are also victims of discrimination, social and political neglect and

deprivation. There is a wide gap between the statuses of languages; while some are privileged with access to power and resources, others are marginalized and disadvantaged and, therefore, Indian multilingualism is characterized as a 'multilingualism of the unequals' (Mohanty 2004).

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Mohanty, 2004, 2006), linguistic discrimination and inequalities are formally rooted in the statutory and political processes of governance. With constitutional recognition of only twenty-two of the languages as official languages, most of the Indian languages are effectively kept out of the major domains of power. There are also specific official recognitions of languages for many other public purposes, such as for promotion of culture and literature, and for use in limited spheres of governance. The constitutional and governmental recognitions are reflections of the political power of the linguistic groups. In December 2003, Parliament of India passed the 100th Constitutional Amendment Bill to include four languages (Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santali) in the VIIIth Schedule of official languages, a recognition which came to these languages after prolonged movements and political lobbying. Maithili was earlier classified in the Census as a mother tongue within Hindi (which, in fact, has twenty mother tongues grouped under it with over one million speakers). When the Constitutional amendment of 2003 conferred official language status to two tribal languages – Bodo and Santali – it was for the first time since the adaptation of the Constitution that such recognition was accorded to any tribal language. This was possible due to the assertive language maintenance movements by the two tribal language communities. Other less powerful languages and mother tongues are often dubbed as 'dialects' and weak voices for recognition are suppressed in the dynamics of power and politics. Pervasive discrimination and neglect in all spheres of governance limit the scope of democratic participation and effectively deny equality of opportunity to the tribal and other linguistic minorities. The official system of formal education is yet another major basis of institutionalized inequality. As I will show later, only a few of the languages are used for school instruction and most of the tribal and minority languages are left out of the schools and literacy programmes.

## THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF LANGUAGE DISADVANTAGE

As languages, such as the tribal languages, are kept out of major domains of power and development such as official, legal and other formal use, education, trade and commerce, they become vulnerable to shift pressures from the dominant contact languages threatening their survival. In face of such threats, the speakers of these languages seem to adopt what I have characterized as 'anti-predatory strategies' (Mohanty 2004, 2006) to ensure survival by a passive withdrawal into domains of lesser power and visibility. In effect, language shift does not occur; but there is considerable domain shrinkage with languages barely maintained mostly in the domains of home and in-group communication and, in most cases, declining inter generational transmission of the mother tongues. The so called 'natural' bilingualism among the tribal and other linguistic minority speakers can be viewed as a form of maintenance strategy which also ensures smooth social functioning and inter-group relations, "but the cost of such survival and maintenance is identity crisis, deprivation of freedom and capability, educational failure (due to inadequate home language development and forced submersion in majority language schools), marginalization and poverty" (Mohanty 2006:266). Unfortunately,



most of the marginalized linguistic groups seem to be accepting the low status and exclusion of their languages as *fait accompli*. Their language is perceived as important for identity and integrative functions but, instrumental functions are dissociated from the native languages in favor of the dominant ones (Mohanty 2004); low vitality of their languages is perceived as legitimate by the victims of the processes of exclusion. As I have argued,

The tribal and minority language speakers are disadvantaged to begin with; they are usually poorer, mostly belonging to rural, backward and economically underdeveloped areas. Prolonged deprivation, exclusion from education, and from domains of official and economic power further weaken these languages which are not allowed to develop and the weakness of the languages are used to justify further neglect and exclusion in a vicious cycle of disadvantage. Thus, the so called poverty of languages, disabilities and disadvantages often associated with minor languages, are not inherent; they are socially constructed by the institutionalized discriminations in educational, political, economic, and other social spheres conspiring to strengthen the association between tribal languages and insufficiency. Sadly, the weaknesses and insufficiency of tribal languages are often cited as grounds for their exclusion from education (Mohanty, in press).

## LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION IN INDIA

Despite a clear constitutional provision that the state and the local authorities shall endeavor to "provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at primary stage of education to children belonging to minority groups" (Article 350A, Constitution of India), a large number of minority languages are weakened and endangered by their exclusion and non-accommodation in school education and literacy programmes (Mohanty, 2006). Mohanty (2006) shows that altogether only 41 languages are used in schools either as the language of teaching or the medium of instruction (MI) or as school subjects and this figure actually declined from 81 in 1970 to 67, 58, 44, and 41, respectively, in 1976, 1978, 1990 and 1998. The number of languages used as the MI has also declined. Between the years 1990 and 1998, the number of languages used as MI declined from 43 to 33 in primary grades (I to V), 31 to 25 in upper primary grades (VI & VII), 22 to 21 in secondary grades (VIII to X), and 20 to 18 in higher secondary grades (XI & XII). Thus, only the speakers of a limited set of languages are provided opportunities for education in their mother tongues. Even in adult literacy programmes, 104 languages are used for literacy instruction and limited success of adult literacy programmes and frequent relapse of the new literates into illiteracy have been attributed to non-use of mother tongues (Karlekar 2004; Mohanty 2005). "The mismatch between home and school languages and neglect of mother tongues, particularly for literacy and schooling, force the tribal (as well as other minority) children into a subtractive language learning experience, and their poor educational achievement limits their future opportunities" (Mohanty, in press). The negative consequences of such mismatch have been documented in several Indian studies (e.g., Jhingran 2005; Mohanty 1994a, 1994b, 2000, 2005) which show that the submersion programmes, in which minority and indigenous children are forced to learn in the medium of a dominant language, result in subtractive language learning, have negative consequences, and violate right to quality education:

"In subtractive language learning, a new (dominant/majority) language is learnt at the cost of the mother tongue which is displaced, leading to diglossic situation and later often replacement by the dominant language. Subtractive teaching subtracts from the child's linguistic repertoire, instead of adding to it. In this enforced language regime, the children undergo subtractive education. ... This also contributes to the disappearance of the world's linguistic diversity ..." (UNPFII 2005:3).

As pointed out by Toma\_evski (2004), the use of a dominant official language as the language of instruction in primary schools is a main feature of "collapsed models of schooling" which reinforce inequality. In India, the exclusion of mother tongues from formal education is closely linked to the perception of powerlessness and low vitality ascribed to minor, minority, and tribal languages compared to the dominant majority languages such as English. In fact, English has established itself as the most preferred MI and has a significant presence in school curricula all over the country. The role of English in triggering a power game and a hierarchical pecking order of languages has been discussed elsewhere (see Mohanty 2004, 2006). Preference for English medium education has relegated Hindi and other major regional and constitutional languages to lesser positions in education (Kurien 2004), considerably weakening them in all spheres of the Indian society. The relationship between language and power and the hierarchy of preferences for languages are socially constructed and legitimated through the processes of language socialization and social norms and a host of complex social psychological processes associated with construal of linguistic identities (Mohanty, in press). Studies of multilingual socialization in India (Mohanty, Panda, & Mishra 1999, Bujorborua, 2006) show that children in India develop an early awareness of the higher social status of English vis-à-vis their own mother tongues, and that schools do contribute to development of such awareness.

Education has been held as a powerful tool for language change. As such, exclusion of languages from formal education does contribute to their marginalization and shift. Apart from the loss of diversity due to what has been characterized as 'linguistic genocide in education' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), such exclusion has serious consequences leading to educational failure, capability deprivation and poverty. This is particularly evident in case of the tribal groups in India whose languages are disadvantaged due to layers of discrimination and exclusion in the system of formal education. I will now turn to a closer look at the tribal population in India to illustrate this point.<sup>iii</sup>

## **LANGUAGES, EDUCATION AND POVERTY IN THE TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA**

### **TRIBAL LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION**

With a population of 84.3 million, the Scheduled Tribes (ST), constitute 8.2% of the total population (1028.6 million) of India (The Census of India 2001. The Anthropological Survey of India (ASI), in its *People of India* project (POI) (Singh 2002), listed 623 tribal communities out of which about 573 are notified or scheduled. The tribal groups speak 218 languages out of which 159 are

exclusive to them; 54 languages are used by the tribals for inter-group communication (Singh 2002). Most of the tribal languages do not have a script<sup>iv</sup> and are written in the script of either the dominant regional language or another major language, but some tribal languages, such as Santali<sup>v</sup>, have developed their own writing system. Most of the tribal groups are bilingual or multilingual at the community levels. According to the POI, out of 623 tribal communities, 500 are bilingual ones. It must be noted that community level bilingualism/multilingualism reflects the communicative skills of the adults, whereas the children usually grow up with the native tribal language which is the home language and language of early communication.

The Sixth *All India Educational Survey* of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) shows that out of 41 languages used in schools (as MI and subjects) only 13 are tribal languages (see Statement 11.2 in Gupta 1999), all but one (Nicobaree) from the North Eastern States which have a much higher concentration of tribal population compared to the rest of India. The literacy figures for the ST groups are also much higher in the NE States. Incidentally, these states also record a better rate of economic development. Further, out of the 13 tribal languages in schools, only three to four are used regularly as MI (Jhingran 2005) whereas the others are taught as school subjects or used as MI in occasional special programmes. Thus, less than 1% of the tribal children have any real opportunity for education in the medium of their mother tongues. This is quite striking since a very large number of classrooms throughout the country have sizable proportion of tribal children. In twenty states for which DISE (District Information System for Education) – a database of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India – is available, there are 103,609 Primary Schools (grades I to V) with more than 50%, 76,458 schools with more than 75% and 58,343 schools with more than 90% ST children (Jhingran 2005) who are taught in a submersion programme of majority language education. The DISE does not even have any information on the first language of the ST or other children whose home language is different from the school language.

### SCHOOL LEARNING OF TRIBAL CHILDREN: THE PROBLEM OF EXCLUSION OF MTS

I had described the classroom learning of a Kond girl child in class II of a primary school in a remote village in Raikia Block of Kandhamala (Phulbani) district:

The child, who has left behind many other children of her age who never came to school, is present in the class with wide-eyed curiosity trying to figure out what is going on. Despite all the pious programmes, improved curricula, Operation Blackboard and many such efforts, she just does not learn to read and write. She is not alone; there are many other such children from Kond families who also do not learn. They are all in each other's comforting company; days pass by but they do not learn. Examinations they may or may not pass but they are certainly passing time. .... any common person can tell you that she does not learn because she does not understand the teacher, the texts, and the curricula all of which use a language she does not know; it is not the language of her family (Mohanty, 1999).

Jhingran (2005), in his study of the language disadvantage faced by children with a mismatch between their home language and their school language, also gives similar description of Class I tribal children whose classroom activities are confined only to copying from the blackboard without any oral communication at all since they do not understand Hindi which is the MI and the language of the teacher. Similar observations are quite common in classrooms in many other tribal areas. From the beginning of schooling, tribal children take at least two to three years to learn the language of instruction which the teachers and the texts use (Mohanty 2000). This effectively means that their learning of school content and concepts become quite slow from the beginning of schooling leading to a cumulative learning problem. Jhingran (2005) speaks of the 'double disadvantage' of children having new academic information and concepts being 'thrown' at them in an unfamiliar language. Jhingran's (2005) field work during 2004 in four states – Assam, Gujarat, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh – shows that the tribal children, schooled in second language submersion programmes for about six months in Grade I, showed no comprehension of the teacher's language and no recognition of alphabets, except when arranged in sequence (showing rote memorization). Classroom teaching-learning process emphasized passive participation, such as copying alphabets and numbers from blackboards or text books; there was very little conversation or oral work in children's L<sub>2</sub>, the MI. Interestingly, the situation was found to be a little better when there was a tribal teacher who knew the mother tongue (L<sub>1</sub>) of the children and could 'unofficially' lapse into L<sub>1</sub> in certain circumstances particularly when the children had problems with L<sub>2</sub>. In respect of academic performance of the tribal children in Grade V whose first language was different from the MI, Jhingran (2005) shows the following:

(They) read with a lot of effort, mostly word by word ..... Their oral skills in the second language are poor and they are definitely more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue. Such children cannot frame sentences correctly and have a very limited vocabulary. While they can partially comprehend text (of grade 2/3 level), were unable to formulate answer to simple questions in the standard language. In most schools, the tribal language speaking children could not score a single mark in the reading comprehension test (50).

Definitely, exclusion of mother tongues from early education has serious consequences for tribal children in India reflected in the low literacy and high 'push out' rates and generally, poor educational performance of the tribal groups which leads to their capability deprivation and poverty. I will briefly discuss some selected indicators of poor educational development of the STs in India which can be related to their economic development. In most cases, a comparison is made with the disadvantaged caste groups, the Scheduled Castes (SC), who constitute another disadvantaged group with poor economic development. It should also be pointed out that the SC are marked by a negative comparison in the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy, whereas the STs, generally, are out of the caste based hierarchy and, hence, less stigmatized on this ground in social comparison.

### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, LITERACY AND 'PUSH OUT' RATE AMONG THE STS

The crude literacy rate, i.e., the percentage of literates in the total population, as in 2001, is 38.41% for the STs, whereas the corresponding figures for the total population and the SCs are

54.51% and 45.20%, respectively. Effective literacy rate (percentage of literates among the population aged 7 years and above) is 47.10% for the STs compared to 54.69% and 68.81% for the SCs and the rest of the population, respectively. Thus, the STs show a literacy gap of 21.71% compared to 14.12% for the SCs. In fact, literacy rate for the STs is much lower if one takes out the figures for North Eastern states like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Manipur, with much higher rates of literacy. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER, i.e., percentage of children in the age group enrolled in schools) and push out rate between grade I and later grades are shown in Table 1. As the Table shows, more than 50% of the tribal children enrolled in grade I are pushed out before completing primary education, and over 80% before completing high school (i.e., grade X). It may be noted that the enrolment ratio is relatively high in the early grades due to special initiatives and government programmes for the STs in recent years. In higher grades, the GER for the STs remains lower than the corresponding figure for the SCs, as well as the national average.

TABLE 1. ENROLMENT AND PUSH OUT RATES (2002-2003)

GROUP	GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO			PUSH OUT RATE		
	CLASS I-V 6-11 YEARS	CLASS VI-VIII (11-14 YEARS)	CLASS I-VIII (6-14 YEARS)	CLASS I-V	CLASS I-VIII	CLASS I-X
SCHEDULED TRIBE	98.67	48.19	80.50	51.57	68.67	80.29
SCHEDULED CASTE	95.61	56.28	81.06	41.47	59.91	71.92
TOTAL POPULATION	95.39	60.99	82.51	34.90	52.80	62.60

[Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Secondary and Higher Education) (2004). Selected Educational Statistics, 2002-2003. New Delhi: Government of India]

## CLASSROOM ACHIEVEMENT OF ST CHILDREN

Poor classroom performance of the STs compared to other groups is a common finding in Indian studies. A study assessing classroom achievement of students at the end of Class V, conducted by the NCERT in 2004 with a national sample of 88,271 children (Singh, Jain, Gautam, & Kumar 2004), shows that the ST students scored significantly lower than other students (i.e., excluding the SCs and STs) in tests of learning achievement in Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Language, Reading Comprehension, and Grammar and Usage (see Table 2 for details). The ST students performed better than their scheduled caste counterparts (except in Mathematics), but their performance was significantly below the performance of other students.

Table 2. MEAN ACHIEVEMENT SCORES OF CLASS V STUDENTS

Subject Area	SC (n=18,146)	ST (n= 11,424)	Others (n=58,701)
Environmental Studies	48.53	49.52	50.99
Mathematics	44.97	44.12	47.45
Language	57.01	58.19	59.54
Grammar & Usage	60.78	61.37	63.00
Reading Comprehension	50.99	52.89	53.78

(Source: Singh et al., 2004)

The performance of the tribal students in high school examinations (i.e., after 10 years of schooling) has also been found to be lower than that of the Scheduled Castes and other groups. Table 3 shows the percentage of failure and of success with different levels of achievement<sup>vi</sup> or divisions in the state level high school examinations for the years 2003, 2004, and 2005 in the state of Orissa (India), the population of which includes over 22% STs. The high school examinations are common examinations conducted by the Board of Secondary Education of Orissa for all the students of government and other recognized majority language (Oriya) medium schools in Orissa, in which over 250,000 students are educated. Table 3 shows that the ST students have a higher failure rate compared to the SC and other students. Their level of achievement, in terms of the division is also quite low. Low achievement of the tribal students effectively reduces their chances of joining institutions of higher education, in which the representation of tribal students is strikingly low, as shown in the next section.

Table 3. Percentage of SC, ST and Other Students in Different Achievement Levels in High School Examinations in Orissa (India)

Year	2003			2004			2005		
	SC	ST	Others	SC	ST	Others	SC	ST	others
Number of Students	30290	26214	18305	33924	30604	19916	37415	3437	2102
1st Division (60+ %)	04.94 %	03.34 %	2.91 %	05.16 %	03.41 %	13.19 %	05.39 %	03.65 %	13.8 %
2nd Division (45-60%)	13.82 %	12.53 %	19.88 %	14.54 %	13.79 %	20.62 %	16.28 %	15.83 %	22.18 %
3rd Division (30-45%)	19.70 %	20.43 %	21.05 %	21.89 %	23.02 %	20.41 %	23.17 %	24.38 %	23.42 %
Fail (<30%)	61.54 %	63.69 %	46.15 %	58.40 %	59.77 %	43.77 %	55.15 %	56.13 %	40.54 %

(Source: Board of Secondary Education, Orissa)

## ST STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The proportion of enrolment of the ST students declines with the higher levels of education. Enrolment figures available for the year 2002-2003 show that out of 122.4 million children enrolled in primary grades (I to V), 9.67% (11.8 million) were STs and 17.70% (21.7 million) were SCs, proportionate to the size of their respective populations. However, the corresponding enrolment in classes IX to XII drops to 5.37% for the STs (1.78 million) and 13.25% (4.40 million) for the SCs out of the national total of 33.20 million. In higher and technical education, the representation of the STs is even lower, despite measures which reserve places for students belonging to the Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. Table 4 gives the figures for enrolment in higher and technical education in the years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. The proportions of STs in higher and technical education over the two year period have varied from 2.97 to 4.64 per cent, far below their 8.2% share of the population.

Table 4. Enrolment in Higher and Technical Education

Year	Higher Education			Technical Education		
	All Categories	SC	ST	All Categories	SC	ST
2000 - 2001	9.937 million	769,000 (9.69%)	236,000 (2.97%)	1.665 million	184,000 (11.05%)	68,000 (4.08%)
2001 - 2002	7.139 million	940,000 (13.16%)	306,000 (4.28%)	1.894 million	191,000 (10.08%)	88,000 (4.64%)

[Source: Planning commission (2004). Report of the Task Group on Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on Selected Agenda items of the National Common Minimum Programme. New Delhi: Government of India.]

Large scale educational failure and non-attainment, lower literacy and high 'push out' rates among the tribal people in India are related to a host of complex factors. But the critical role of the neglect of the tribal mother tongues in the areas of education and literacy instruction in leading to such conditions cannot be denied. The exclusion of tribal mother tongues from education limits the tribal children's chances of adequate classroom learning and success in academics and, consequently, limits their freedom and restricts their ability to influence the direction of their lives. A number of Indian studies show that tribal children (Saikia and Mohanty 2004, Sema 2008) as well as other groups of children (Nayak 2007) perform significantly better in MT medium classrooms compared to their matched counterparts in classrooms in which the language of teaching is another dominant language. The educational benefits of the use of mother tongue in regular classroom settings have been shown in studies all over the world.

### EDUCATION, CAPABILITY DEPRIVATION AND POVERTY IN THE TRIBAL POPULATION

School failure and non-attainment leading to lack of access to higher education limit the upward socio-economic mobility of tribal groups in India. As the Handbook of Poverty in India (Radhakrishna Et Ray 2005) observes, "Due to low educational and skill levels, majority of tribal workers are involved in low quality of employment such as agricultural and non-agricultural casual wage laborer" (23) and "proportion of regular workers is abysmally low at merely 4 per cent among the STs" (24). A report of the Planning Commission Task Group on Development of SCs and STs (Government of India 2004) shows that the percentage of marginal workers, who find work only for less than six months a year, is 31.1% for the STs, compared to 27.0% for the SCs and 19.8% for others, and most STs are engaged in work which does not require formal education or training based skills. Educational failure, at least partly due to the systematic exclusion of mother tongues, is clearly reflected in the capability deprivation, economic under-development, and general poverty of the tribals in India, which evidently is a complex multidimensional phenomenon and process.

Various economic indicators of poverty in India place the STs at the bottom in comparison even to other disadvantaged groups. An estimation of the Head Count Ratio of poverty (Planning Commission 2001) shows that the proportion of population below the poverty line is highest for the STs (44%) compared to the SCs (36%) and others (16%). The decline in the percentage of poor (below

the poverty line) between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 was 7% among the STs as against 12% among the SCs and 9% among other categories (Radhakrishna & Ray 2005). In terms of monthly per capita consumption figures, approximately 50% of the ST households in rural areas belong to the consumption class of less than 340 Indian Rupees. The corresponding figures for the SCs, other backward castes (OBC), and others are 40%, 30%, and 17%, respectively (Radhakrishna & Ray 2005). Health, nutrition, and other indices of Human Development reflect the same picture of deprivation for the tribals. The trends of poverty and deprivation among Scheduled Tribes in India are summed up in the following words:

Macro-level data substantiates the fact that tribals in the country constitute the poorest category not merely in economic terms but in all aspects of human development. They are deprived of access to quality education and health care; they are resource poor and their traditional sources of livelihood are dwindling; labor market discrimination and lower skills only afford them occupations with low productivity and limited scope for diversification. Therefore, the slow pace of development among the tribals in India, needs to be contextualized in the vicious cycle of deprivation and poverty. This not only impedes their engagement with mainstream development, it also keeps their entitlements and capabilities low. (Radhakrishna & Ray 2005:29)

The relationship between the language of the STs and their disadvantage is undeniable. When education, which is officially named as human resource development in the Government of India system, neglects the most powerful resource that a tribal child comes to school with, her mother tongue, it sets in motion a process of cumulative disadvantage that is clearly depriving and disabling rather than enabling; it fails to develop the human resource. The critical role of language is summed up in the following words:

(T)he non-accommodation and exclusion of language(s) in education contributes to these processes by limiting access to resources and denying equality of opportunity. Language(s) that people speak or do not speak can and do contribute directly to poverty in many other contexts of discrimination and the perpetuation of inequality by the deprivations of linguistic human rights, democratic participation, identity, self-efficacy, and pride. In the case of the tribals in India, linguistic discrimination forms a core of their capability deprivation through educational neglect and in many other complex ways, all of which contribute to their poverty in a vicious circle. Their languages are weakened by marginalization and exclusion from education, official use, and other instrumentally significant domains, and then castigated as inadequate forms of language to justify further exclusion. (Mohanty, in press)

## FROM MOTHER TONGUE TO MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

The system of school and higher education in India has not responded to the prospects and challenges of its multilingual ethos (Mohanty 2008). As pointed out earlier, maintenance of mother tongues, multilingualism and linguistic diversity are cognitive, educational and social resources for



the tribal people, their communities as well as the society at large. "The core of Indian multilingualism is in complementary relationship between languages and in the need to bridge the gap between the minor, minority, and tribal languages, and the languages of wider communication, including the regional and state level languages - Hindi and English. Multilingual education holds a central position in planning for a resourceful multilingualism that does not marginalize and deprive the minor, minority, and tribal language groups" (Mohanty 2006:277). Analysis of various programmes of school education in India shows that there are only nominal forms of multilingual education in the absence of systematic use of mother tongues and other languages as languages of classroom teaching. Sometimes bilingual transfer programmes claim to be programmes of bilingual/multilingual education whereas they are, in reality, soft assimilation programmes leading to subtractive language learning and language shift. Transitional programmes, both early-exit and late-exit varieties, in different parts of the world have been shown to have the same characteristics of soft assimilation (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1984). Unfortunately, the existing systems of public and private education in India do not support the weaker languages nor do they support high levels of multilingual proficiency. The recent National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (NCERT 2005) sets MT based multilingualism as a goal of school education in India but, in the absence of specific formulations on the multilingual education (MLE) methodology, it remains an unrealized framework for promotion of multilingualism through education and for preserving the multilingual character and diversity of the society. It is necessary to have a comprehensive languages-in-education policy in India for empowerment of tribal and minority languages and promotion of multilingualism for all (Mohanty 2004, 2006). MLE in India needs to be developed as a process of education that starts with development of MT proficiency for all children forming the basis for development of proficiency in all other languages with functional significance for specific groups including the tribal peoples. The theoretical foundation of such a process is well developed and supported and need no elaboration in this paper. In recent years some experimental programmes of MLE for tribal children have started with Government initiatives in some of the states with substantial tribal population and are planned in few others. The following section gives a brief description of these programmes.

## MLE INITIATIVES IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

After several aborted efforts to bring in mother tongue based education for tribal children in several states such as Orissa (Mohanty, 2006), some states have now started structured programmes of MLE for tribal children whose mother tongues are different from the state majority language used as language of classroom instruction. In Andhra Pradesh, multilingual education programme started in the year 2004 in eight tribal languages. The programme involves early literacy and instruction in the mother tongue before the second language is introduced. The children are introduced to reading and writing in a tribal language, which is their mother tongue. Classroom instruction for development of language and literacy skills, numbers and mathematical concepts, environmental studies, and all of the curricular areas are carried out in the mother tongue. Bilingual or multilingual teachers, knowing the language of the children are appointed as MLE teachers in the experimental schools in which only the mother tongue is used for classroom instruction during the first couple of years of schooling during which some conversational competence in the second language are also sought to

be developed. The writing system of the state majority language (Telugu) is used to write the tribal language and formal instruction in Telugu as the second language of the child begins from class three onwards. The first batch of MLE children in Andhra Pradesh programme is in class four. From grade three onwards, the classroom instructional time is shared between the mother tongue and the second language. The programme envisages introduction of the third and fourth languages such as the Hindi and English in later grades, while no policy decision has clearly been made in respect of continuation or discontinuation of the mother tongue beyond the primary grades.

From the year 2006, a similar programme is in place in Orissa, where 10 tribal languages have been selected for the experimental MLE project now running in 195 schools and the first batch of students is in class two. The Orissa MLE initiative is described in a recent paper (Singh & Mishra, 2008), in which the State Project Director of the Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority (OPEPA, which is the apex body for planning and implementation of the MLE programme) Mr. D.K. Singh and the State Coordinator, Tribal Education, OPEPA Mr. M.K. Mishra, provide some details of the programme. The schools selected for the MLE programme have nearly 100% children who speak a tribal language. Thus, the classrooms are quite homogeneous with all the tribal children and their teacher speaking a common language. For each of the 10 tribal languages, teachers and language resource persons were selected from among the tribal communities for development of teaching-learning and text materials following the common curricular framework for all the schools in Orissa. The culture of language community is sought to be integrated into the curricular materials through what is known as the village calendar and the theme web approach. The village calendar approach is used to select the content of the curricular materials. The calendar year is divided into seasonal village activities from which the content of the textual and teaching learning materials are selected. Basic skills in different curricular areas such as language, mathematics, and environmental studies are related to different activities and thematic content. For example, a particular theme is related to writing as a broad skill which is then related to specific skills such as writing a word list, and individual work book writings. The theme web is divided into two tracks or roads, one for accuracy and correctness and the other for meaning and communication. For example, corresponding to these tracks, the instructional materials for language such as alphabet charts and alphabet books are grouped under the accuracy and correctness track whereas the storybooks are grouped under the meaning and communication track. The instructional material developed through a series of workshops, were pilot tested in schools and through community feedback. Besides the material development, teacher training and attitudinal training of teachers were also undertaken through a series of specific programmes. The first batch of MLE students in Orissa have just completed their Class I and a new batch is in the process of joining Class I. Singh and Mishra (2008) report some initial success for the MLE programme in Orissa assessed in terms of increased student interest and attendance and community involvement. A special intervention programme called MLE+ is also implemented in eight of the Orissa MLE schools in two tribal languages – Saora and Kui. This programme uses cultural psychological approach for child and community focused intervention (see Mohanty & Panda 2008 and Panda & Mohanty, forthcoming, for details of the programme). Experimental MLE programmes are also planned in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and other states.

## MLE IN INDIA: SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The initial evaluation shows that the experimental MLE programmes in India are somewhat more successful than the traditional programmes of submersion education in the second language, although, more systematic evaluation seems to be required. Further, the nature and methodological groundings of these MLE programmes remain unclear. These programmes appear to be leaning towards early-exit rather than late-exit models whereas analysis of best international MLE practices clearly show that at least seven to eight years of instruction in MT as the medium of instruction is necessary for development of high levels of multilingual competence (Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson & Skutnab-Kangas, forthcoming). Apart from this major gap between theory and practice and absence of rigorous evaluation, these programmes have a major weakness lacking in clear policy and material support and government commitment, raising serious doubts on their continuation and expansion. The current experimental projects are very limited in their scope and coverage both in terms of number of tribal languages taken up for MLE and the number of schools in the programme. In Orissa, for example, 10 out of more than 22 tribal languages are covered and that too in 195 schools so far whereas there are over 11,000 schools with a majority of tribal children whose mother tongues are different from the language of teaching.

Thus, to what extent the MLE programmes in India can succeed in enabling and empowering the tribal people to escape the vicious cycle of language disadvantage in India remains to be seen. MLE has been convincingly shown to be beneficial for the linguistic minorities as well as majorities through out the world. "It now needs to be implemented as multilingual schools developed within the context of Indian multilingualism. The question for these schools is not whether to use the mother tongue OR the other tongue. It is not about whether to use Hindi OR English. Multilingual education in India is about the mother tongue AND the other tongues as it develops multilingualism for all in Indian society" (Mohanty 2006:278).

### NOTES

i. The indigenous or the aboriginal communities in India are officially called 'tribes' (*\_div\_si*) and are listed as 'scheduled tribes' which are identified on the basis of 'distinct culture and language', 'geographical isolation', 'primitive traits', 'economic backwardness', and 'limited contact with the out groups' and also, sometimes, on political considerations. Anthropological Survey of India, in its *People of India* project, has identified 635 tribal communities of which 573 are so far officially notified as Scheduled Tribes. In this paper the term 'tribe' (rather than 'indigenous peoples') is used in its formal/official sense.

ii. The term 'push out' (Mohanty 2000, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) is more appropriate as it captures the essence of the phenomenon. I will use this term in place of 'drop out' henceforth in this paper.

iii. The following section is based on my earlier paper (Mohanty, in press).

25 scripts are used for writing Indian languages. 11 major scripts are used to write the main scheduled languages and iv. 13 minor scripts are used for writing some minor and tribal languages. Besides, the Roman scrip has been adopted by some languages in recent years.

v. The Santals, have developed a script of their own – *Ol Chiki* – invented by the Guru Gomke (the 'Great Teacher') Pandit Raghunath Murmu. This script has become rallying point for the identity of Santal tribals. There are other tribal communities where sporadic and uncoordinated efforts are made to evolve language specific writing systems.

vi. In the High School Examinations, students scoring above 60% are graded as first division, 45% to 59% as second division, and 30% to 44% as third division. Those securing less than 30% are graded as failed.



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After studying political science, sociology and social psychology in Italy and the US and working as a university teacher and consultant, Gabriele Mazza began working at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in 1973. His previous positions include Secretary to the Conference of Ministers for Youth, Acting Director of the European Youth Centre, Secretary to the Conference of Ministers of Culture, Head of the Cultural Policy and Action Department and Head of the Higher Education and Research Department. He currently supervises the work of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education.

His achievements include launching, managing or supervising pan-European programmes and targeted assistance activities on education for democratic citizenship and human rights, history teaching, life-long learning, educational technologies, cultural rights, education of Roma children, European studies and social sciences in higher education, religion in intercultural education, cultural dynamics and regional development, national cultural policies, arts in education, culture and new technologies, language policies and education, and computational linguistics.

Today he is the Director of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education. He coordinates the educational mission of the Council of Europe in 47 countries. His work involves consultation, policy formation, and strengthening educational institutions. He is internationally known for his leadership in the reconstruction of the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he acted as co-chair of the first Conference of Ministers of Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was personally involved in brokering political agreements between Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks in such matters as cultural rights, university reform, primary/secondary legislation and curriculum reform, teacher training, as well as democratic citizenship and human rights education.

# THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

## INTRODUCTION

The right to education is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe, and other international instruments. This right can only be fully exercised if learners have the language competences expected by the school. Equal access to the full curriculum is highly dependent on language proficiency which determines whether learners can meet the expectations of the curriculum and proceed successfully through each successive stage of education.

All learners have an entitlement to quality education. Young people may be denied this entitlement or disadvantaged in their attempt to exercise it because of a lack of certain language competences. They may come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and come to school without the secure foundation that others enjoy, or they may be migrant children or indigenous minorities who are competent in one or more languages but have difficulty with the language of instruction in school. The more abstract and formal, structured 'academic' language of the school can be quite different from the vernacular language variety of many learners.

## TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The Directorate of Education and Languages (Language Policy Division) of the Council of Europe has therefore begun to develop a framework of reference for the main languages of schooling to support our member states in their efforts to raise achievement in language.

We are addressing two dimensions of the languages of schooling: Language as a subject which focuses on the specific teaching of language as a school subject and Language across the curriculum, which focuses on the language learning that takes place in all subjects. There is a tendency in many European countries to compartmentalise the curriculum, and to view language as a subject in isolation from other subjects as if it alone is responsible for developing all the necessary language skills. However, because learning a subject and developing language competence go hand in hand, we are emphasising the need to pay closer attention to the contribution of other school subjects to language education, defined as 'language across the curriculum'. Language education takes place in all subjects, although often in a more hidden way than in language as a subject.

The new Council of Europe reference framework will include a description of the language and other communicative competences (e.g. semiotic competences) expected of learners and the kinds of learning experiences they need in order to acquire these. These expectations are seen as learners' entitlement, their fundamental right for successful learning and social inclusion.

We are concerned with language across the curriculum not merely a tool to be mastered for communication purposes but equally as a transversal instrument for learning, personal development, creative expression, developing culture and values, for socialisation and identity building, for developing critical capacities and autonomous learning and thinking.

We are in effect developing an overarching framework for plurilingual and intercultural education that embodies a commitment to the key values of the Council of Europe and linked to the promotion of democratic citizenship, social inclusion, and respect for diversity – diversity of languages and cultures, of ethnic and social groups.

This new instrument will complement our existing Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which is concerned with foreign and second languages. This is a tool to promote plurilingualism and respect for the plurilingual repertoires of individuals. It includes language competence standards which are very widely used not only in Europe but on other continents, and the framework document has been translated into almost 40 languages, including Japanese, Chinese and Arabic.

Our work in education is concerned with developing common reference tools for language education which of course are not normative or binding in any way, unlike our European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This is a Convention, the only instrument in the world devoted exclusively to the protection of the linguistic heritage. Each of the 23 states which have ratified the Charter is monitored on how it implements the specific commitments it has undertaken in its instrument of ratification. My colleague, Sonia Parayre, will present the Charter in more detail in Workshop 4 dealing with standard-setting instruments.

## CONCLUSION

Allow me to conclude by summarising the scope of the new reference framework under development. One of our main tasks is to elaborate an inventory of learners' entitlements in terms of plurilingual and intercultural language education encompassing all the languages and language varieties present in the school. The aim is to match up these entitlements with specifications of learning objectives that will allow the subsequent construction of standards and profiles at different stages of schooling.

These entitlements relate to:

- the unique and dynamic language repertoire of each learner;
- the official language(s) as subject(s) and as means of instruction across the curriculum;
- languages of minorities, regional languages, languages of migrants that are part of the plurilingual repertoires of learners and/or part of the school curriculum – whether taught as subjects or used as languages of instruction ;
- foreign languages as taught subjects and/or as means of instruction for some other subjects.

We are developing a flexible descriptive instrument to be adapted to contexts of use. Language education must take account of the plurality and heterogeneity of learners and of learning contexts because:

- all societies are multilingual and multicultural, albeit in different ways;
- all schools are environments open to a plurality of languages and cultures;
- all languages are plural;
- all identities are plural;
- all types of education are plurilingual and intercultural to varying degrees;
- all types of plurilingual and intercultural education are actualised in a specific context: there is no one recipe or recommended methodology.

Plurilingual and intercultural education is a challenge, an obligation, as well as an opportunity for the future of our societies. It must be based on the language of schooling, which is a subject taught and the main vehicle for other types of disciplinary teaching, while also recognising learners' entitlement to develop their unique language repertoires and their intercultural competences. In this way the key goals of education relating to personal development and social integration of the learner can be enhanced.



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# CONTESTING THE DEFAULT: THE IMPACT OF LOCAL LANGUAGE CHOICE FOR LEARNING

Multilingualism is a gift, a resource. No one knows this better than Africans do. The uses of one's own mother tongue are characterized by deep understanding, richness of speech forms and metaphor, familiar concepts. Uses of other languages permit communication with others, broadened access to knowledge outside one's own cultural milieu, and participation in civic entities beyond one's own community. Multilingualism contributes to the reinforcement of one's own, local identity in order to permit healthy engagement with the rest of the world; in fact that is its primary advantage relative to globalization.

However in the developing world, stable multilingualism is only possible when the language that carries lesser political capital is intentionally, institutionally supported. Those languages (termed here 'local languages' in an attempt to avoid the political implications of terms such as minority, vernacular, and indigenous) must be promoted in national language policy and included in the education system. When this is not done the 'default' processes of language loss, and wholesale assimilation to the languages of globalization, quickly take hold.

The intentional, systematic use of the local language in contexts of education and learning has multiple points of impact on a society, particularly in contexts where the local language has suffered from relatively low prestige and little tradition of written use.

## IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT

The term 'development' has a variety of definitions, ranging from economic reform to enhanced human agency. Development that is described as "human-centered" development implies the enlargement of people's choices (UNDP 1990:10) or the expansion of human capabilities (Sen 1999). Describing development this way highlights the importance of a range of locally-held competencies - those which facilitate successful knowledge acquisition, understanding, clear communication, and the ability to evaluate new ideas and alternatives. These parameters of successful development in turn speak strongly to the importance of local language-mediated learning as an essential component of the development process. Indeed, as Robinson (1996:4) argues, "wherever people are put at the centre of the development process, issues of language will always be close to the surface".

This argument gains more significance in view of the fact that current efforts for sustainable development are not always finding success in the two-thirds world - and that learning contexts in the developing world are not yet adequate to sustain those development efforts. The 2008 World Development Report notes that low education levels, particularly in rural areas, continue to inhibit economic development (World Bank 2007:9). The more specifically education-focused development goals, those of Education for All (EFA), show even less encouraging trends. According to the 2008

mid-term review of EFA goals, both literacy and educational quality (the focus of two of the six EFA goals) are seriously lagging behind EFA targets. Not only so, but the goal of gender parity in education is also being missed (EFA GMR 2008: 8). Given these pessimistic assessments of the effectiveness of education, both formal and nonformal, it seems that more attention to the role of language choice in development and in the acquisition of knowledge would be highly appropriate. As Djité (2008: 180) states, "*sustainable development will not be achieved at the expense of the people of Africa, or at the expense of their languages*" (emphasis added).

## IMPACT ON LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

Intentional integration of a local language into learning contexts, and into the formal education system in particular, implies a significant degree of development of that language – which in turn has significant effects on the vitality of the language (Spolsky 2004: 189). Corpus planning activities that are key to the successful use of local language as a medium of instruction include development of a useable writing system, production of dictionaries and grammatical descriptions, language modernization (the expansion of the lexical inventory to include mathematical, scientific and other conceptual terms), the recording of local-language terminology that is in danger of being lost, and production of written materials in that language. Languages of greater prestige and wider use in the world typically have a development history that includes all of these activities, but thousands of local languages around the world do not. It is easily seen, then, that integrating local languages into the school environment involves processes that stabilize and give greater instrumental capacity and prestige to those languages.

As a researcher in northwest Cameroon, I was privileged to witness some of these language development activities in some of the Cameroonian languages of the area. One day I watched a group of 14 Bafut school teachers compiling animal names in the Bafut language (Trudell 2006a: 630):

A teacher is leading the [group] in an exercise of writing the names of animals – wild and domestic – in Bafut. [Literacy supervisor] John Ambe tells me that the purpose of this is that people normally learn the names in English, and they don't always remember them in Bafut: 'if you ask someone, maybe they can only name five [animals] in Bafut. So we are working together here to remember them and write them down correctly in Bafut language. We did [the same process for] plants yesterday.'

More than 40 wild animals are named during the session. At one point, there is some uncertainty about the precise spelling of the Bafut word for pangolin: Is it mbaranga'a or ambaranga'a? They say it over and over to each other and finally decide on the first spelling. Then they talk about what the animal looks like. . . It occurs to me that I am watching the standardization of the Bafut language in progress.

In another instance observed, Bafut grammar as taught in the upper primary grades aimed to enhance students' appreciation of the complexity and linguistic adequacy of their mother tongue (ibid. p. 631):

In one Grade 7 class, the PROPELCA teacher taught the 12 verb tenses in Bafut first by eliciting them from the students, then asking for the English names of those that correspond to English verb tenses. It became clear that Bafut has more verb tenses than English does. The teacher pointed this out at the end of the class: "Bafut does have grammar, just as English has. In fact, it has a more complex system of tenses."

Enhancement of the use of local language in learning contexts is important for both maintenance of the language itself and a strengthened sense of the value of that language among its speakers (Trudell 2006b:199).

## IMPACT ON ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Research – both quantitative and qualitative – is plentiful concerning the beneficial impact of using a child's first language on cognitive and academic outcomes in school. Admittedly, as Diarra (2003) states with regard to Angola, in-depth study is hardly necessary to see that poor results in L2-medium classrooms are often directly related to the lack of student fluency in the language of instruction. Nevertheless, studies that track educational outcomes of the use of a child's first language show astonishing consistency in their conclusions. One well known longitudinal study done in the United States by researchers Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier gives clear evidence that the longer a child is taught in his or her home language, the higher his or her achievement will be throughout school (Thomas and Collier 2002; 1997). Studies in the developing world, if not as statistically rigorous, are no less convincing. For example, evaluations of the Malian government's programme of *Pedagogie Convergente* (convergent pedagogy, a bilingual education model) indicate that children taught in their mother tongue achieve substantially better exam results in mathematics and French compared to their peers who are taught in French-medium classrooms; they are reported to be more enthusiastic, active learners as well (UNESCO 2008). This conclusion is repeated in many programme assessments across the continent (see for example Fafunwa et al 1989; Benson 2002; Williams 2006).

The principle behind such education programmes is simple: learning should start with the known and move to the unknown. Thus, teaching a child new content must be done in a language he or she knows well. Teaching new content in an unknown language can only end in frustration for student and teacher – as millions of learners across the developing world can testify. Giving a child the needed time to develop his or her cognitive ability in L1 allows that child to learn new content more easily, as well as enabling him or her to learn second and even third languages throughout his or her academic career.

## IMPACT ON NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

For speakers of the politically minoritized languages of the world, participation in the affairs of the nation depends on their ability to think critically, to process written information, and to speak the language(s) of power as well as their own languages. As a colleague from South Africa recently said, "despite their constitutional rights, speakers of African languages simply are not heard."<sup>1</sup>

This political invisibility is certainly language-linked, as Mozambican scholar Sozinho Matsinhe has observed:

The use of [international languages] allows only a vertical approach to political interaction; the minority who speak them control the majority who do not. Using local languages allows more horizontal interaction, and the level of debate changes altogether.<sup>2</sup>

This situation speaks to the need to develop minoritized languages in order to increase their speakers' access to processes of national citizenship, and it also speaks to the need to enhance people's access to fluency in the language of power. Integration of the local language into education systems as a medium of instruction, along with deliberate and programmed second language acquisition, is an effective way to ensure fluency in the second language as well as enhancing instrumental uses of the first language in social and political contexts.

Among speakers of some minority languages in Senegal, the desire for national citizenship and participation in national affairs is partly responsible for the popularity of literacy classes in local languages (Trudell and Klaas 2007: 9). In these language communities, both formal and nonformal mother-tongue medium learning is perceived to have positive effects on the social and political mainstreaming and legitimization of the community. This is seen to happen in three ways:

- the mitigation of the educational inequalities which members of such communities face in the formal education system, related to language of instruction – what Johnson and Stewart (2007:247) call “horizontal inequalities”;
- the fact that development of the local language, culminating in ‘codified’ status by the national government, gives it legitimacy and standing in the eyes of the nation;
- the belief that use of local languages in school will allow more children of these language communities to succeed academically and so participate in national society as equals. Local-language literacy programmes appear to be providing an avenue for attaining some measure of success in the national education system, as learning in the mother tongue is used as a bridge for transferring literacy and other skills into French.

Far from setting themselves up as providers of alternative education or bastions of cultural isolationism, promoters of local-language development and literacy are putting considerable effort into helping students from their communities to succeed in French-medium school and to integrate successfully into national life.

In conclusion, the fact that the forces of globalization have given rise to parallel processes of localization and decentralization serves as an important indicator of the strength and importance of the local – including local language and culture. Adejunmobi (2004:161) accurately captures the linguistic versatility and pragmatism of Africans in the face of these two forces of globalization and localization:

Citizens of poor countries who operate in markets impacted by global capital have reason to learn new languages, but also to retain distinct and localised identities. They have reason to become conversant with other cultures while avoiding complete assimilation into such cultures.

The intentional development and use of local languages in education and learning strengthens this adaptability of developing-world citizens, allowing them to survive and even thrive in their world today.

#### NOTES

1. Dr. Chimane Tlale, North West University, South Africa; 8 July 2008.
2. Prof. Sozinho Matsinhe, University of South Africa, Johannesburg; 9 July 2008.

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# MULTILINGUALITY, LANGUAGE AND 'A LANGUAGE': IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

I propose to problematize the issue of the distinction we need to make between 'language' and multilinguality. The concept of Language (with a capital L), a highly abstract mental construct, is useful only when we are talking of the Universal Grammar and the human innate Language Faculty and its interaction with other human cognitive faculties.

This subsumes the concept of native/mother languages of an individual as abstract systems. The concept of 'a language' should be used only when we, as linguists, make abstractions and write a grammar of a particular language, an idealised object, or when a community creates 'an object' for issues of identity, a community's 'social concomitant' of 'a language' in the linguist's sense (Le Page 1978). In all these three cases, we have no access to actual human behaviour of individuals and groups. Our only access to language is through multilinguality where the focus is on human beings for whom neither language nor community is a frozen constant; both languages and identities here are in the making, always, though of course constrained by Universal Grammar.

Multilinguality is indeed constitutive of being human where all individuals and groups move along a continuum that ranges from partially shared systems on the one hand to completely unshared systems in terms of 'a language' on the other. About 'Language' we can only speculate and work with our intuitions; about 'a language', we can elicit data and idealise it in a variety of ways or examine the ways in which communities create the object 'a language' with or without any scientific basis. But for multilinguality we can actually observe, howsoever incompletely, what people do in a social and psychological perspective in moments of instant pidginization.

Languages of people, of ordinary and not elite people, and more particularly of those on the margins in terms of poverty, caste, class or gender, would make sense only in this perspective. The immediate implication for education is to focus on a curricula and a syllabus that are predicated on multilinguality as a resource, strategy and a goal. The idea is not to have literacy or primary education in the languages of children but conceptualise and implement a total curriculum, syllabus, teaching materials and classroom transaction in terms of multilinguality.

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# FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: MOTHER-TONGUE BASED BI/MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR ETHNIC CHILDREN IN THAILAND<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In countries with linguistic diversity, people who speak socially less powerful languages tend to be bi- or multilingual, speaking their own ethnic/local language, possibly a more dominant regional language and the official or national language. On the other hand, people who speak the dominant language tend to add only those national and/or international languages that are as or more powerful than their own. Simply put, people in power tend not to learn the languages of the less powerful. This is the scenario commonly observed in the kingdom of Thailand, as well as in other developing countries in the world.

For Thailand, this has led to two kinds of school programmes. One is Thai-English bilingual education, initiated in 1996 and geared mostly for urban, middle-class children who speak Standard Thai as their mother tongue. The languages of the classroom are Thai and English, with initial emphasis on English language learning. The societal and educational aims of this programme are pluralism and enrichment with biliteracy and bilingualism as the expected language-learning outcomes. Twelve years after this programme was initiated, the expected learning outcomes need to be evaluated to see if children in this programme actually are achieving the programme's aims.

The second kind of education programme in Thailand is found in mainstream schools throughout the country. In this programme, Thai is the only language of instruction, regardless of whether the students are Thai or members of other ethnic groups.

### Questions to consider with respect to languages and education in Thailand

1. Since Thailand is a multilingual country with over 60 languages spoken within its borders, what can schools do to improve the quality of education for children who do not speak Thai as their first language?

Schools or educators need to recognize that bilingualism and multilingualism are prevalent in Thailand but the degree of bi/multilingualism is different in different parts of the country. Bilingual communities tend to be situated near the country's borders and are often surrounded by other language groups. Most members of the communities are motivated to learn the prestige languages in order to secure a better future. For example, people in the western region of Thailand, where many ethnic people are bi-or multilingual, might use their own ethnic/local language (e.g., Mon or Pwo Karen), a neighboring or regional language (e.g., Burmese), or Standard Thai in their conversations, depending on the topic being discussed and their relationship with the other speakers.

However, there are pockets in the north, northwest and west of Thailand which are remote, with poor media or communication systems, and where the people lack opportunity and motivation to learn Thai. In these areas, children speak only or mostly their ethnic language when they enter school. They are rarely exposed to Thai in their daily lives.

The emphasis in UNESCO's programme of "Education for All" is not only about increasing children's access to schools but, equally important, it is also about the quality of education that the schools provide. Schools should provide a good balance between meeting the learners' educational needs and serving the nation's social, cultural and political demands. When indigenous language minorities are perceived as a threat to national security, and language uniformity is perceived as necessary for national unity, education becomes a tool for social, linguistic and cultural assimilation. In diverse linguistic situations such as Thailand, monolingual education programmes are likely to hinder ethnic minority children's ability to get a good education and lead to the loss of linguistic and cultural diversity.

According to the research<sup>2</sup>, mother tongue<sup>3</sup> instruction is an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years. Schools can support multilingualism by employing the ethnic languages for instruction and including them as subjects in primary grades. In Thailand, however, no schools have yet developed a curriculum that would support maintenance bilingual education for ethnic minority children. Some attempts have been made to use mother tongue as medium of instruction but only the oral language is used and only for the first one or two years of school in order to help children enjoy being at school and understand what the Thai teacher is saying. Examples are 12 basic education mainstream schools in the south and several pilot schools in the north. The emphasis in these programmes is on moving the children into Thai as quickly as possible.

## **2. How can multilingual education be implemented without a clear practical policy and plans to guide the schools that want to implement such programmes?**

Thailand has no explicit multilingual education policy or clear statement from the Ministry of Education that supports bi/multilingual education. The only support for bi/multilingual education was a verbal statement from the ex-Minister, Mr. Jaturond Chaisaeng, which was publicized on the Ministry of Education website. Those of us involved in planning for bilingual education in two language communities- Pwo Karen and Mon- took this as a policy directive that would legitimize our pilot. Without a clearly stated policy, however, these pilot projects are vulnerable to those who want a "Thai-only" education system or a weak or pseudo-form of bilingual education (BE) or multilingual education (MLE).

With respect to selecting the schools for the BE pilot programme, the selection of the school for the Mon-Thai pilot project was based on the following points: First, almost 100% of the students in the school speak Mon as their mother tongue. Secondly, it is a mainstream school which represents the basic formal education system. Third, the school includes a 2 year pre-school and all primary grades. Fourth, school staff, recognizing the need for an innovative approach to overcome stu-

dents' poor performance and low achievement, asked for our<sup>4</sup> help in planning, preparing and initiating the programme. Finally, the education official who first informed us that the community, including school officials, wanted to implement a Mon-based BE/MLE programme, offered to coordinate between the school and the Office of Basic Education (OBEC).

The Pwo Karen (PK)-Thai BE project was initiated in Community Learning Centers (CLCs) rather than regular schools in the formal education system. CLCs are the official learning sites for children living in remote and/or difficult areas and are under the supervision of the non-formal education (NFE) system. The PK-Thai BE programme was originally intended as an expansion of a PK-Thai BE programme that had previously been initiated by the NFE department but then discontinued. Selection of CLCs for this project was based on several factors. One was that these CLCs are situated in PK villages and the children speak only Pwo Karen. In the selected sites, community members use only their language for communication within the community, an active way to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage. Another factor in the selection of these six village sites for the PK pilot project was that the area has been educationally deprived, with a high drop-out rate in primary level and only a few students entering secondary level because of poor levels of language and academic achievement. Evidence of this is a statement by the Chiangmai NFE director that less than 10% of PK children in the non-formal education system, in Chiangmai Province complete their 6 year primary education. Last but not least, the NFE director<sup>5</sup> of the district, together with NFE educators who had initiated the earlier project with UNESCO Bangkok, wanted to implement this programme in their CLCs so as to improve the teaching and learning for these ethnic children and indicated that they would support it.

Both the Mon-Thai and the Pwo Karen-Thai bilingual education pilot projects are attempts to implement mother-tongue based bilingual education programmes that are based on sound educational and language learning theories. The programme's purpose is to enhance the students' cognitive development and to enable them to achieve success in school while also supporting language communities' efforts to maintain their heritage languages and cultures. In addition, we hope that these pilot projects will demonstrate to Thai government officials that Thai nationals can implement a mother tongue (MT)-based education programme that leads to higher levels of academic achievement in communities that have formerly been at the bottom of the educational achievement charts.

### 3. What are the key factors which affect orthography development?

During the preparation phase of the programme, we encountered several difficulties relating to the choice of script in both languages. At the time we began, two Thai-based orthographies had already been developed for the Pwo Karen dialect spoken in the northern and northwestern regions. One was the orthography developed around 2003-4 for use in the original NFE programme that had been established in the nearby Omkoi district. The other Thai based orthography had been developed and used for almost 50 years by Christian Pwo Karen groups. We quickly recognized the need to foster discussion between the two groups to work out a standard Thai-based script that could be used in the northern areas of Thailand. Therefore, the process of dialogue through formal and informal

meetings began in 2007 and led to subsequent discussions. Two formal workshops on the Thai-based script were organized, the first to focus on developing a standard version of the Thai-based script. The goal of developing an acceptable, standardized Thai-based script was reached through the use of sound linguistic theories and through putting the orthography to practical use in communication. The second workshop was an attempt to make the orthography acceptable to Thai scholars who strongly opposed adaptation of the script for PK, arguing that it would cause written Thai to deteriorate. Writing PK words using Thai based script makes PK words look different from Thai; that is, they use different combination of letters and marks from Thai. We had to explain and show the Thai educators, NFE representatives, who encountered the complaints of how and why the formation of words in PK had to be written differently from Thai. This helped them understand that it was impossible to write PK words using Thai orthography, it had to be PK orthography though the script used is based on Thai. Finally, the Thai-based orthography was revised and there was an attempt to adjust and conform to the Thai system as much as possible.

Our main reason for using the Thai based script in the pilot project was that it would make it easier for children who had gained literacy in their mother tongue to transfer into Thai. The orthography should be a supportive tool that helps children to attain better learning achievements but it should also help safeguard MT speakers from political pressure related to national unity or integration.

Another problem was that some PK speakers in the north wanted to restore a traditional PK script (Burmese-based script) that had become extinct in these areas. They strongly felt that their cultural identity was tied up with the traditional script which they wanted to develop and revitalize. In spite of our initial attempts to explain the rationale for using the Thai-based script, this group had opposed the MLE project from the beginning because of the script choice issue. This group primarily wanted to use the orthography from another group of PK people who speak different from them and lived in the western region of the country. They believed that these two groups, the north and the northwestern dialects were mutually intelligible and therefore could use the same orthography. A series of awareness-raising and mobilization workshops and meetings were held to explain the rationale for using the Thai-based script in the northern region. It took about eight months but gradually this group was convinced that the disadvantaged children in their own communities would be helped by a MT-based BE programme. We agreed to assist them in developing the traditional script if they would form their own committee to work on this, which they did. The group is now actively involved in supporting their own programme and exceedingly proud of their writing system which they feel reflects their unique cultural identity. The two scripts; Thai-based and traditional, are both acceptable and both used for different purposes. The national or Thai based script is for ease of transfer into the national language while the traditional Karen (Burmese-based) script represents their own heritage and reflects the uniqueness of their identity.

4. What are the current educational findings that relate to these ethnic children regarding literacy in Thai, the national language? Is it reasonable to expect schools in Thailand to implement MT based bilingual education?

While preparing for this project, we conducted research on reading proficiency and learning achievement among Mon students in grade (G) 2 to 4 at the pilot school. This school is situated in Wanga village, Nong Loo sub-district of Sangklaburi district. Nearly 100% of the population speaks Mon as their first language and since the village is on the border with Burma, there is an unavoidable influx of Mon from Burma into the village. As a result of immigration and a high birth rate, the number of people has outgrown the available space. The population of the village is more than 10,000 with a high percentage of children. A large number of children enroll in the mainstream government school each year, and this year there are over 120 students of year 1 pre-school level. This community is exposed to Standard Thai because of the different types of media in the village. People use Mon in their interactions with friends and others in the village but they use Thai (broken or fluent depending on how long they have lived in the village) with Thai government officials.

Most adult Mon in the village can speak and understand their language but can not read and write it (or any language). Recognizing the danger to their language and culture, several Mon adults in the community organized a Mon Culture Committee and initiated the idea of teaching Mon in the school. Others, especially younger parents and most Thai teachers, did not see the importance of preserving their mother-tongue. Their children had problems in achieving government learning standards. They thought that using Mon would be a waste of time and their children should start learning Thai as soon as possible.

Consequently, this group resisted the BE programme and only wanted Thai in school. The school was in a difficult situation because of the conflict between these two groups. When the school brought in some Mon speakers to teach the Mon language and culture as recommended by some members of the school board, the school was criticized by many parents who were against using untrained teaching assistants (TAs) and against teaching Mon in general. The argument was that their children's learning of Thai needed to be improved because their future depends on Thai rather than Mon so the schools should spend more time on Thai.

With this background, we needed to demonstrate that students in the Thai-only programme were not performing satisfactorily in school even though Thai was the only language of instruction and Thai was taught as a subject from the first year of schooling. Our evidence was the result of G2-4 students' reading scores that were taken from the reading proficiency test<sup>6</sup> conducted by the mainstream schools as their baseline survey. These schools are located in the areas where there are students whose MT language is not Thai. The test was developed in one of our workshops sponsored by the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) prior to the implementation of the BE programme in order to evaluate the reading skill in Thai of the ethnic students in the Thai-only programme. The mean scores in percentage<sup>7</sup> of G2, G3 and G4 Mon students' reading proficiency in Thai at Wat Wang school are 53, 55, and 53 out of a possible 100 points. But when we looked at the scores of the comprehension part only, the number of students who received 2<sup>8</sup> or less was very high. The test results demonstrated that the majority of students (67% in G2 and 79% in G3 and in G4) did not understand what they were reading in Thai. This showed that comprehension part was low and this would definitely result in low learning achievements.

5. How could we get support from the community, especially big ones like Mon, when there is conflict among groups on various issues?

The challenge in the Mon community was to generate support for the programme among community members. Awareness-raising and mobilization were needed in the village. In cooperation with the school, we organized a meeting to introduce MT bi/multilingual education to all school teachers and administrators, some students in the higher grades, school board members, community leaders, district officials, administrators in other interested schools and regional supervisors. Participants at the meeting had many questions and doubts. Even the teachers had trouble understanding the rationale and purpose of MLE because they were Thai. We wanted them to experience what it was like to be in a classroom in which the teacher does not speak the students' language so we demonstrated that situation through a short skit, inviting them to participate by taking the role of young children in school whose MT is different from the language of instruction. We also held a workshop to develop simple reading material in the Mon language. Participants, who included preschool Thai teachers, Mon Teaching Assistants, supervisors and other interested persons, learned how to develop and create stories for small children in their language. These stories were put into Big Book and Small Book formats. When these books were made and displayed, community members could see the materials in their language. Interested individuals were allowed to visit and observe the literature development process. During this process, we tried to connect with the village head and his assistants. After a series of discussions with an influential village head assistant who is responsible for the community section leaders in the village, we took his advice by inviting all those section heads for dinner meeting. There are almost 80 section leaders in the village and each one is in charge of each community section. We presented to them what we had done at school and the expected benefits for the children in this village with respect to learning and culture. The project is now at least accepted and known throughout this big town-like village.

We also arranged a meeting with the school board in May of this year. We suggested that the school have an orientation meeting with parents whose children will be starting school, to share information about the new bilingual education (BE) programme, introduce the TAs and inform parents of the preparations for the programme. Parents were also informed of the projected benefits of the MT-based bilingual education and saw the display of materials developed in Mon. Parents seemed to be pleased about the idea of using Mon as language of instruction.

The geographical context for the PK project called for a different kind of programme. The six PK villages in Hod district of Chiangmai provinces are in remote areas and with too few students to have a full-fledged mainstream school. Each of the villages has a Community Learning Center (CLC) with only one teacher to teach all grade levels. The MT-based bilingual education pilot project for PK has been established in these six CLCs, as part of the non-formal education system.

Our first step was to hold several awareness-raising meetings and workshops with local stakeholders: school board members, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, school supervisors and others from the village. They worked in groups, discussing the educational, academic, and

socio-economic requirements for implementing the project in the six CLCs. Later, to raise awareness and mobilize others in the PK communities, we held open meetings in each of the six villages to learn from community members what they understood about the project and what they expected from it. Initially they indicated their desire for their children to be able to use Thai well, even if that meant that the children would have to abandon their own language. However, when they were asked if they would like their children to be bi-literate and bilingual, they replied that if they could choose, they would go for bilingualism and bi-literacy. The meetings, first with the leaders and then with parents and others, seem to have helped the community in general understand the purposes and potential benefits of the programme.

#### **6. How would instructional materials for MT-based bilingual education enable students to achieve the national curriculum standards?**

The plan for teaching the two languages--mother tongue/local language and Thai--in the pilot school and CLCs was first discussed with the teachers and other relevant persons. Although it is known that a good foundation for children's cognitive development requires ample time to develop their first language before moving into the second one, the language progression plan for the pilot project depended upon two factors. One is the amount of exposure the village children have to Thai and the other is the requirements of the Ministry of Education as outlined in the national curriculum standards. After analyzing the national curriculum standards for preschool and primary levels, it was decided to use only the mother tongue for instruction at preschool level. However, since the schools are required to begin reading and writing in Thai in Grade 1 of primary school, the children in the pilot schools would need to begin literacy in their mother tongue even earlier, that is, in their second year of preschool.

The plan is to introduce oral Thai in the 4th quarter of Year 1 of preschool and continue through Year 2 of pre-school and primary grades. MT literacy will begin in Year 2 of pre-school, to give the children 1 year to gain a foundational level in reading and writing in their mother tongue before they are introduced to Thai literacy in the second term of Grade 1. In pre-school and Grade 1, the mother tongue will be the primary language of instruction, but key Thai terms for academic subject will be introduced so the children become familiar with them. In primary Grades 2 and 3, concepts will be introduced in the mother tongue, taught in Thai, and summarized in the mother tongue. From Grade 4-6, the language of instruction will be Thai with some explanation of key concepts in the mother tongue. The mother tongue will be taught as a subject throughout the primary level.

Since at this time there is no flexibility in adjusting educational standards for children who do not speak Thai when they begin school, and since it will take longer for the ethnic students to achieve a level of fluency in Thai that will enable them to achieve grade level standards, the decision was made to start the programme already in pre-school. The MLE-specific curriculum standards for the pilot pre-schools are the same as the national standards. We realized that the learning outcomes must also coincide with national outcomes although we needed to make some adjustments to suit

the ethnic community contexts. Once they were satisfied with the MLE outcomes, the pilot project working group, which is composed of all relevant Thai teachers, supervisors, some local scholars and some TAs, developed indicators and activities for each outcome. The indicators will be used regularly to assess the degree to which the children are achieving the learning outcomes. The next step was to prepare lesson plans according to the theme of the week or according to the monthly cultural calendar.

The learning contexts for the Pwo Karen NFE students and the Mon mainstream formal education students are different. The NFE students learn at the CLC in the village 3 weeks a month, from Monday till Saturday, and are out of school the last week of the month. They normally have only one teacher per CLC so they study less hours because the teacher has to deal with other level students. They are normally grouped into 3 or at the most; 4 grades: for example, preschool plus some grade 1 makes one cohort, grade 1-3 form another cohort and grade 4-6 the third cohort. For the NFE preschool students, the teaching time is only 2 hours a day and the rest of the day, they just play outside or go back home after lunch. On the other hand, the Mon students study 5 days a week in school. They have a semester school break twice a year in October and in March/April. They are classified and set into preschool year 1 or 2 according to their age, 4 and 5 respectively. They have their own classroom with some educational visual aid and toys. They come to school from 9 am to 3.00 pm, spending three hours per day studying and the rest for their nap in the afternoon and lunch.

Lesson plans for the pilot programme call for child-centered activities, each lasting from 10-20 minutes. At first it seemed difficult for the teachers to plan these learner-centered activities because they were used to a more teacher-centered approach (although they claimed that the old approach was child-centered). Preparing the lesson plans has taken a lot of time and still requires a lot of adjustment. However, the teachers are learning and have already improved their lesson plan activities.

Lesson content for year 1 of pre-school is drawn from the local context and is based on the educational principle that children learn best when they use what they already know to learn new concepts. Traditional forms of measurement and traditional art forms have been incorporated into the curriculum. Many things such as herbal medicine, types of cultural art forms, musical instruments, songs, and cultural games, that have not been valued and are in danger of being lost, are being brought into the curriculum period Equally important, is that this "cultural or local curriculum" is also school-based and follows the national curriculum standards.

#### **7. Is pre-service and in-service teacher training necessary to the success of the programme?**

Teacher training was beneficial not only to the mother tongue teaching assistants (TAs) but also to the Thai teachers. It is best if both the Thai teachers and the TAs take part in the training workshop because the interaction helps them build a good relationship so they can benefit from and complement one another. At the training workshops, trainees learned how to use the teaching



methodology with different activities and different types of instructional materials. When it came to practice teaching in groups, they realized that this "new" way was not easy. The TAs kept forgetting the steps for the activities and the teachers kept slipping back to their old teacher-centered methods. In the Pwo Karen training workshop some of the teachers were hesitant to do the practice teaching exercises in front of others in the group, especially when some of their "students" were the TAs with whom they would be working. We found that teachers lacked experience in asking the kinds of questions that help children to build higher level thinking skills. They found it helpful to practice asking questions and analyzing them into categories; information question, open-ended question and imagination questions. The TAs had to study and follow the daily lesson plans that had been prepared, mainly by their Thai teachers. This was done before the TAs started teaching this academic year. It was agreed that this year the Thai teachers will be in the back of the class, supporting the TAs. Mainstream teachers and TAs paired up in each class but the teaching role will be the TAs. Thai teachers will observe in class and help document children's attitudes and participation in class. They plan to meet together every Friday.

After classes had been going for about one month, we went to visit the projects to observe classes and talk with TAs and the Thai teachers. The feedback was positive. For the NFE project, we were informed that more small children come to the CLC and in some villages almost 100% more children came to study. Furthermore, children participated well in class and they enjoyed the learning very much. In the past, these children never wanted to come to school, they just sat around outside. Now the children are eager to learn, they urge the TAs to start class and look forward to coming to the CLC. And equally important, parents are happy because their children tell them what they learn during the day.

Information from the Pwo Karen project (in the formal education system) is also positive, Thai teachers reported that the children interact much more than last year because they understand the language used in class. Children have more confidence and express themselves much better than last year. Children in both projects like the teaching materials but in different degrees, and find them very attractive and interesting.

## CONCLUSION

Both projects have just started and, of course, still have a long way to go. Even so, the implementation team hopes that reports from this project will help to encourage the Ministry of Education to promote and support mother tongue based bi/multilingual education in the areas that need them. Hopefully, the programme will also provide information about good practices that will be helpful to others who want to start and implement this kind of project. Fluency in two or more languages (their own and the dominant language) must be one of the goals of education in non-dominant language communities so that learners (children and adults) are able to obtain the basic necessities needed for survival. Supporting children's use of their mother tongue also supports their psychological, cognitive, and spiritual development. Access to the other languages, including an official language of the

country in which the children live, should be recognized as a social, economic, political, and civil right.

This programme will change over time and much is yet to be learned. What we have already found is that there will be plenty of challenges, including from the people most closely involved at every level, but that challenges can be met over time if we have patience, an eagerness to learn and understand, no single agenda, and flexibility.

#### NOTES

1. This programme has been made possible because of the long-term financial support from Pestalozzi Children's Foundation of Switzerland (PCF).
2. For example; Cummins (1989, 2000a), Glazer and Cummins (1985), Dutcher (1995), Thomas and Collier (1995, 1997), etc.
3. Mother tongue here means first or primary language.
4. Foundation for Applied Linguistics (FAL) is a Thai, non-profit and non-governmental organization established in 1989, with the purpose of enhancing the quality of life of the educationally disadvantaged in Thailand and neighboring countries, by promoting language learning and language development.
5. From an informal meeting with Mr. Worapoj, NFE director of Chiangmai and Dr. Suchin Petcharak, NFE academic section of northern region center, on May 29, 2008.
6. This test is designed to evaluate students' reading levels in accuracy, fluency, rate, and comprehension.
7. The scores of students' reading proficiency test are calculated and converted into an average figure of percentage for each grade level.
8. There are five levels of comprehension in the test; 1= not able to recall the story; 2= can only recall little, not continuously, not the key point/concept; 3= just barely grasp the main points, no details; 4= can get the main points well but not all details; 5= can get all the main points and other details in the story very well. In this test, we require level 2 at least for students to be able to understand the text, and to pass the test

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# REVERSING ATTITUDES AS A KEY TO LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND SAFEGUARDING IN AFRICA

## INTRODUCTION

Africa is not only the continent with the highest concentration of languages in the world, but also the area with the highest number of endangered languages (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998). According to Batibo (2005:155), at least 74.8 of the African languages are either moderately or severely endangered and 9.4% are extinct or nearly extinct, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Position of Language endangered in Africa (After Batibo, 2005:155)

	Category of Language	No. of language	% of Category
1	Relatively safe	336	15.8%
2	Moderately endangered	1,287	60.4%
3	Severely endangered	308	14.4%
4	Extinct or nearly extinct	201	9.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,132</b>	<b>100%</b>

In recent years, the degree of endangerment has been accentuated due to the increased prestige and dominance of the indigenous languages of wider communication, which have been accorded the status of national languages or used as lingua franca. This has resulted in the marginalization and low prestige of the minority languages. Consequently, many minority language speakers have developed negative attitudes towards their languages, resulting in limited intergenerational transmission. In fact, the problem has been compounded in those African countries which have embarked on the process of technicalization and modernization of their major indigenous languages. These have indirectly become agents of globalization, attracting Western-based lifestyles at the expense of the rich traditional knowledge and skills embodied in the minority languages. Hence, there is an accelerated rate of shift from the minority languages to the dominant languages in Africa. An important measure to take is therefore to reverse this trend by ensuring that the minority language speakers preserve and safeguard their languages.

## MEASURES OF LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AND PRESERVATION

According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006), there are a number of measures which have to be taken in order to revitalize an endangered language. These measures include an all inclusive language policy, a sub-autonomous federal policy, instituting viable literacy programmes for all languages, and the enhancement of positive attitudes towards the respective community languages. This paper argues that the enhancement of positive attitudes towards their community language is the most effective measure.

## THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

### Language Attitudes

Language attitudes have been defined as a feeling, reaction or emotional disposition towards an idea, concept or phenomenon (Bake, 1992:12). Where languages are concerned, attitudes to a language could be described as positive, negative or indifferent. Such attitudes become more pronounced when speakers become bilingual or multilingual. There is a tendency to develop different attitudes for each of the languages that they speak. These attitudes, whether positive or negative, will normally depend on the degree of symbolic or socio-economic value manifested by each language. The role of attitudes in language maintenance has been recognized by a number of scholars, including Adegbija (1998), Batibo (1992, 1997, 1998), Chebanne and Nthapelelang (2000) and Smieja (1999, 2003). This is because the speakers of a language hold the key to the continuation or abandonment of their language, the inter-transmission or dis-transmission of the language to their children and the expansion or reduction of the domains in which it is used. However, the speakers' attitudes depend heavily on the status and prestige of their language (Smieja, 2003:63). Such prestige results from their perception of its symbolic or utilitarian value. The social esteem in which a language is held is often a function of favourable government policies, historical legacy, use of language in education, extensive domains of use, a well-codified form of the language, substantial documentation or cultural prestige.

### Case studies in Eastern Botswana

The first investigation was carried out in two settlements,<sup>1</sup> namely Manxotae and Nata settlements. Manxotae is a small settlement about 20km off the Francistown road to Maun with about 500 inhabitants, most of whom are of Khoesan origin and speak Shukwe and Xaise, while the Nata settlement is much larger. It is situated where the road to Francistown branches off to Kasane and Maun. Being a commercial and administrative Centre of the Nata region, the Nata settlement has become relatively multi-ethnic. However, the study focused on the Khoesan speaking areas of the settlement.

In both settlements, the Khoesan people have cultivated a strong positive attitude towards Setswana, the national language and widely used lingua franca, to the detriment of their mother-tongue. Their preference for Setswana stems from its many charms, such as being the language of wider communication in the country, being the sole language used in lower education, being the language of oral government business and village administrative and being used in local meetings and social interaction. It is also the language heard on the radio, television and the one used by public figures, such as civil servants, politicians and traders.

When the Khoesan settlement inhabitants were asked to state which language (between their mother tongue, Setswana or English) they preferred to use at home, to communicate with in the settlement and for cultural activities, they responded as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Preferred language(s) for home and settlement communication among the Khoesan-speakers of Manxotae and Nata (Batibo, 2001).

Item	Khoesan %	Khoesan and Setswana %	Setswana %	Setswana and English %	English %
Preferred language used in the settlement for daily interaction	16.7	26.7	56.7	0.0	0.0
Language that parent would prefer children to speak at home	6.9	0.0	79.3	13.8	3.2
Preferred language(s) for cultural activities	9.7	25.8	64.5	0.0	0.0

The results of Table 3 are a clear indication that the Khoesan speakers of Manxotae and Nata and, indeed, those of the other Khoesan varieties in North-Eastern Botswana, would prefer Setswana as the language to be used in their daily lives. This would include family communication, settlement interaction and cultural activities. By implication, therefore, most parents would like to see a shift to Setswana. These results are largely similar to those obtained by Hasselbring (2000) in the case of Gantsi and Smieja (1996) in the case of the other minority languages of Botswana. The strong preference for Setswana, as seen above, stems from the Khoesan-speakers attitudes towards it. Setswana is preferred mainly because it opens the door to many opportunities. English, on the other hand, is seen as a remote elitist language which has little place in village life.

The study also looked into the cultural identity of the Khoesan-speakers of the two settlements. The aim was to determine whether these populations were still loyal to their cultural identity. Some of the responses are give in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Preferred names and cultural identity of the Khoesan-speakers of Manxotae and Nata (Batibo, 2001)

Item	Khoesan %	Khoesan and Setswana %	Setswana %	Setswana and English %	English %
Origin of informants' two (first and second) names	0.0	12.9	71.0	16.1	0.0
Preferred name(s) to be given to one's children	6.5	22.0	64.5	3.2	3.2
Preferred cultural identity	20.7	20.7	55.2	3.4	0.0



What was remarkable is that the Khoesan-speakers of Manxotae and Nata preferred Setswana names and culture to their own traditional names and culture. This was another demonstration of the negative attitude that they had developed towards their languages and culture, preferring instead that of Setswana. As a result, there was little intergenerational transmission of their languages to the younger generations, and in many cases it was nonexistent, as the children could only speak Setswana. The parents were proud to see them proficient in Setswana, as then they were ready to be integrated into the wider world of education and employment.

## REVERSING THE TRENDS TOWARDS LANGUAGE LOSS IN BOTSWANA

### Language Empowerment and shift reversing measures

One of the measures to be taken to stop or even reverse the trend towards language shift is to create positive language attitudes. This can only be done through language empowerment. Language empowerment refers to the institution of a set of measures to raise the social status of a language as well as to make it more viable in handling public domains. According to Bamgbose (2000:17), there are a number of measures that can be instituted to empower a language. These include a charter of linguistic human rights, appropriate legislation, language development, the adoption of second language norms, use of language in education, provision of incentives to users, and expansion of domains of use. In fact, these measures could be summarized by categorizing them in two types: the linguistic and the human based approaches. The linguistic set of measures would aim at empowering the language so as to be effectively used by the relevant community by instituting an appropriate orthography, functional literacy and extensive documentation. While the human set of measures would ensure that the speakers are empowered socio-economically so as to devise their own means of production and self-determination.

### A case study of attitude reversal: The Naro Language Project

The case of a language whose linguistic and human empowerment has brought about an attitude reversal and even the trend of language shift is Naro, a Khoesan language spoken in Ghanzi district. Naro is a Khoesan language, belonging to Central Khoesan. It is spoken by nearly 9,000 people at the border area between Western Botswana and Eastern Namibia. As most other Khoesan languages, the language was one of the critically endangered speeches, as the intergenerational transmission was rapidly diminishing in favour of Setswana, until the arrival in 1991 of a missionary couple with linguistic training, namely Mr Hessel and Mrs Cobby Visser.

The couple devoted their time to the Naro language by learning and describing it. They then worked out phonological and grammatical descriptions before instituting an orthography for the language. Then they started translating the Bible into Naro, as well as publishing other books, booklets and a newsletter in the language. The publications include story books, history accounts, narratives and lists of names. They prepared learning materials for those who wanted to read and write in the

language. They involved the whole Naro community, entrusting the elders with the direction and use of Naro literacy (Visser, 2000).

As a result, many community members, both youth and adults, enrolled in literacy classes. The literacy which was acquired became functional as it was used in their daily activities of painting, crafting, sculpturing, embroidering and weaving. They could count and settle their accounts in Naro. As a result, the Naro community was excited to see that their language could be used, just like Setswana and English. They saw their language not as a useless entity, but as an asset for socio-economic advancement and the promotion of cultural tourism. Hence, they developed positive attitudes toward Naro and enhanced their intergenerational transmission of their language. As a result of the Vissers intervention, Naro is now considered one of the most vibrant languages in Botswana (Batibo 2005:11). In fact, it has even attracted second language speakers, such as the Gwi and Gana. Thus, the once trend towards language shift has been reversed to language revitalization.

## CONCLUSION

Language shift and death are very closely linked to language attitudes. When the speakers are negative about their languages, they do not consider them to have any utilitarian value in terms of symbolic or socio-economic gains. But once they see such values, they fast become attached to them, as in the case of the Naro language. However, one major stumbling block in most African countries is the lack of recognition of these languages in the country's language policies. Most African language policies tend to favour the ex-colonial languages and the major indigenous languages. Without tangible national policy support, it becomes difficult to empower such languages for any public use. The work is often left to NGO's and individual efforts.

In Botswana, the many efforts made by NGO's and language experts are not always effective because of the lack of national policies which would allow these languages to be used in public domains such as primary education, local administration or customary courts. The action of ACALAN (Academy of Languages) to sensitize African Governments to review their language policies may put more pressure on our governments to re-think their language policies, many of which were put in place during the time of colonization (ACALAN, 2008).

## NOTES

1. The study was carried out in 1997, with a generous research grant from the UB-Tromso Collaborative Programme for Research and Capacity Building, based at the University of Botswana, Gaborone.
2. The Vissers have been operating under difficult conditions because of the lack of a supportive language policy from the government.
3. One other feature of Naro language empowerment is that the Vissers have managed to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems in Naro language development. Thus, their cultural descriptions have included environmental conservation methods, hunting skills, medical knowledge, cultural practices and traditional products and customs. Such an approach has brought the Naro people closer to their roots.

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# NAMING AND RENAMING IN THE PROCESS OF SAFEGUARDING ENDANGERED LANGUAGES, THE CASE OF JAKALTEK MAYA LANGUAGE (GUATEMALA)

## INTRODUCTION

The impact of the current process of globalization on the indigenous languages of Guatemala and Central America is becoming pervasive, and some global institutions such as UNESCO, the UN, etc., are alarmed at the pace of absorption and elimination of ways of life that erase cultures, languages and indigenous worldviews all around the world. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his speech during the celebration of the International Day of Indigenous People said that: "As 2008 is the International Year of Languages, this International Day is also an opportunity to recognize the silent crisis confronting many of the world's languages, the overwhelming majority of which are indigenous peoples' languages. The loss of these languages would not only weaken the world's cultural diversity, but also our collective knowledge as a human race."

This is the case of indigenous languages in Guatemala and Central America, an attack that started against their speakers since the Spanish Conquest of the early 16th century. Prior to the coming of the Spaniards and the imposition of Spanish as an official language of Latin America, another previous globalization process had occurred with the expansion of the Nahuatl/Aztec empire with a world economic and political system that extended throughout Central America, and thus imposing Nahuatl as a lingua franca of the empire (Carmack, Gosen and Gasco 2000). Nevertheless, the indigenous people of Guatemala adopted Nahuatl as a second language, but were not forced to abandon their own Mayan languages. It was then with the Spanish conquest that Nahuatl was imposed as the lingua franca and the cities, territories and people were renamed with Nahuatl names that have persisted until now. For example, the entire country of Guatemala was known in Maya as Chigag or Xeq'a' (Root of Fire) because of the many active volcanoes, but the Tlaxcaltec warriors who accompanied the Spaniards renamed the country as Quauthemallan, (Place of Abundant Trees), the region of western Guatemala Zac-uleu (White Earth) to Huehuetenango (Place of the Elders or the Ancient Ones). My hometown Xajla' (Place of Water and Limestone) changed to Jacaltenango (Place of Huts Surrounded by a Stone Fence).

My argument here focuses on recapturing the knowledge of the past and rewriting oppressed people's histories. If a colonial process of renaming places and erasing previous identities of people truncated a process of creating knowledge in their own languages, a process of renaming is necessary to maintain the languages and make them useful as instruments for self-determination. To rename places and people is to recognize previous histories and identities displaced by the forces of colonialism and domination. The renaming can occur in literature, geography, science and history. The imposed colonial terms of foreign, indigenous cultures, such as Nahuatl imposed on Mayas, can be

changed by renaming people, animals, plants and everything in the environment to make language alive. The safeguarding of Mayan languages can be done by using them to create knowledge and sustain or nourish indigenous worldviews. Young speakers do not see any productive use of indigenous languages so they try to get rid of them and learn English or Spanish, which are the world globalizing languages in Latin America. As Leanne Hinton has said: "A language that is not a language of government, nor a language of education, nor a language of commerce or of wider communication is a language whose very existence is threatened in the modern world" (Hinton 2000:3).

Responding to the efforts of the organizers of this international conference on safeguarding endangered languages, we must make sure that safeguarding indigenous languages is not only a concern of foreign institutions or governments, but of the speakers themselves. We must make sure that younger speakers of indigenous languages can see the creative power of their languages and present them with successful stories in the revitalization of native languages. They must understand that their languages are unique human creations and cultural treasures of humanity. At the present time and with the current discrimination and oppression in which they live, most illiterate peasants don't realize the importance, or the value of maintaining their indigenous languages. It is not enough to emphasize that communities encode in their languages a particular way of seeing the universe, or their particular worldviews, but to develop specific projects for safeguarding indigenous languages. To safeguard a language is to protect the knowledge encoded and expressed in it, such as indigenous people's respect and reverence for nature and the environment. Safeguarding a language is to successfully use the language in scientific research, literary creations and in education and commerce.

Ultimately, linguistic diversity and cultural autonomy is a human rights issue that we must take seriously to comply with the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, which has established that "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 to retain their own names for communities, places and persons".

## THE PROBLEM OF NAMING AND COLONIAL LANGUAGES

Prior to the Spanish conquest of Guatemala, indigenous languages enjoyed a high status and were praised as the gift of gods and of the ancestors. In the sacred Book of the Mayas, the Popol Vuh language was given by the first fathers and mothers created as an instrument to praise God and to give thanks for everything that was created. The Creators asked the first men created: "What is the nature of your existence? Do you know? Is not your speech and walk good?" And they answered with joy. "Truly we thank you doubly, triply that we were created, that we were given our mouths and our faces. We are able to speak and to listen...We thank you, therefore, that we were created" (Christenson 2007:199). According to the ancient Mayas, the word had a power for changes and miracles so the languages were considered a sacred gift of God. With these languages Mayans created the most sophisticated culture of the American continent, creating a hieroglyphic writing system that has not been totally or truly deciphered until now. Unfortunately, the languages of the indige-

nous people of the Americas were inferiorized and neglected since the Spanish conquest. Some Spaniards, particularly the missionaries like Bartolome de las Casas tried to defend and support indigenous cultures and diversity of beliefs, learning the language of the natives and writing grammar to show that the indigenous languages were comparable to the languages of the Old World. Unfortunately, the power of the conquistadores and the colonial system prevailed, and their will was imposed on the indigenous people and their languages. In this context of subjugation, some Spanish missionaries wrote to the King of Spain, Charles V declaring that: "Indians should not study because no benefit may be expected from their education, firstly, because they will not be able to preach for a long time in as much as this requires an authority over the people which they do not have; moreover, those who do study are worse than those who do not. In the second place, Indians are not stable persons to whom we should entrust the preaching of the Gospel. Finally, they do not have the ability to understand correctly and fully the Christian faith, nor is their language sufficient or copious enough as to be able to express our faith without great improprieties, which could lead easily to serious errors" (Hanke 1974:26).

Because of the misunderstanding of other people's cultures and languages, Bishop Diego de Landa collected the books (codices) of the Mayas and burned them at noon, close to the sacred well of Chichen Itza. According to Landa, "they contained nothing but superstitions and falsehoods of the devil; we burned them all, which they took most grievously, and which gave them great pain (Landa in Gates 1978:82). The destruction of the Maya writing system, and with it the destruction of the ancient Maya knowledge, was indeed remembered with great pain by the Mayans as stated in the Maya book Chilam Balam. "Should we not lament in our suffering, grieving for the loss of our maize and the destruction of our teachings concerning the universe of the earth and the universe of the heavens?" (In Montejo 2005:143). Later, bishop Diego de Landa wanted to document the Maya writing, but knowing his bad disposition toward indigenous knowledge and writing, the natives did not provide Landa with the information needed to write and read the Maya hieroglyphic writing system. Only Antonio Chi and Nachi Cocom, sons of the Maya lords subjugated by the Spaniards gave him some glimpses about the hieroglyphs and this is how Landa wrote his known 'Landa's Alphabet'. With this destruction, the knowledge of the ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing system died at noon when the books were burned close to the sacred well of Chichen Itza during the first half of the 16th century, as part of the Spanish conquest of the Maya land.

Since then, the naming and renaming of places, people and communities began affecting indigenous identities and the expression of their worldviews. Thus, the land of Xeq'a, Chiqaq, (Roots of Fire), which was the name given to Guatemala because of its active volcanoes, was renamed as Quauthemallan by the Tlaxcalteca warriors that accompanied Pedro de Alvarado in the conquest of Central America. Thus, Nahuatl became the lingua franca of the region and the names of people and places have remained until now. But perhaps the most damaging identity given to indigenous people of the Americas was the naming of them as "*Indios*", a denigrating term used to discriminate against indigenous people for centuries. It wasn't until recently (1990s) that the indigenous people of Guatemala renamed themselves Mayas, claiming their inheritance of the ancient Maya culture and civilization. The use of traditional names for plants, animals and places is important for the mainte-

nance of indigenous worldviews. Ancient knowledge is being lost because younger generations do not use the traditional names of plants and animals because most species of animals have become extinct in their communities and regions, so they are not in direct contact with nature anymore. It is unfortunate that indigenous knowledge is not included in the educational system in Guatemala. Maya children go to school and learn Spanish while rejecting little by little their indigenous languages until they graduate from school (primary and secondary education). Only a few recognize the importance of maintaining their indigenous languages and use them parallel to Spanish as bilingual speakers.

The rights and identities of indigenous people have been affected throughout the centuries because of the colonial act of naming and renaming people and places. As Seamus Dean as argued: "The naming or renaming of a place, the naming or renaming of a race, a region, a person, is, like all acts of primordial nomination, an act of possession" (Seamus 1990:18). A process of decolonization is necessary so that indigenous people and their languages are more dignified, and so that pejorative terms that are used to discriminate against indigenous people are discarded. The Guatemalan Constitution recognizes those rights, as well as the Accord on the Rights and Identity of Indigenous People of Guatemala. But it has been so difficult to get rid of the names of places and people given by the empire, since naming is an act of power (Hinton 1194). It is then important that indigenous people retake their own names and take control over their own identities in order to represent themselves in their own terms.

## LITERACY: A KEY FOR SAFEGUARDING ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

Literacy is fundamental to the process of self-determination and self-possession to reverse the cultural appropriation by the colonial forces that controlled indigenous populations. For the past five centuries, the indigenous languages of Guatemala have been neglected and abhorred as symbols of backwardness. To paraphrase Leanne Hinton, they have not been the languages of government, education, commerce, or of wider communication. For this very reason, some Mayan languages are in great danger of becoming extinct during the 21st century.

After the Spanish invasion of the Mayas, some young men were taken by missionaries to be educated in the new invading culture and they learned how to read and write in Spanish. Despite the dangers of the time, when indigenous people were persecuted and accused of being devil worshippers, some of these few Maya men who learned the colonial language tried to safeguard their languages and cultures. When they realized that their worldviews were under attack and in danger of being destroyed, they decided to write down their ancient traditions by using the Latin characters to write Maya texts. As a result of this effort to document the past, we have important ethnohistorical documents such as the *Popol Vuh*, the *Chilam Balam*, ...and the *Annals of the Kaqchikels*, among many other native texts. Literacy then, was important and these indigenous writers understood the impact of a foreign language on their lives, so they dedicated themselves to write down part of their history in worldwide recognized Maya texts, such as the *Popol Vuh*. For this reason, we recognize that literacy, which is the result of formal education, is a basic human rights issue. On the other hand, we know that a written language has more prestige than a non-written one, so it is important to write



and use indigenous language to produce and document indigenous knowledge. In other words, "having a written form of a language can elevate perceptions of its prestige. Alternatively, lack of written form is often interpreted by local communities as signalling that their language is not a "real" language and does not merit writing. If reading and writing are valued at regional or national levels, not having them in a local language can, unfortunately, lead to the idea that the language is inherently deficient' (Grenoble and Whaley 2006:116-117).

This is how Mayan languages have survived until now, considered as "dialects" (meaning deficient ways of communication) and not as real languages that merit writing. In the past, only anthropologists who compiled stories in Mayan languages wrote texts. It is only recently that linguists have compiled vocabularies and worked with indigenous people to write dictionaries. Now, Maya scholars and linguists are writing ethnographies when they collect Maya stories and are compiling short vocabularies, demonstrating that the Mayan languages are, indeed, languages that can be written down, and that they have grammar like other world languages. Despite these efforts, Mayan languages are still considered "dialects" by the Ladino population and not good enough to produce and express abstract ideas. This was the same argument used by early missionaries who argued against the teaching and learning of indigenous languages, so that Spanish still remains the national language.

In 2003, the Guatemalan Congress approved the Law for Indigenous Languages, recognizing the linguistic diversity of the nation and promoting their development as an integral part of the national unity of Guatemala. The Law was written and soon forgotten. This was due to the lack of funding and the political will to enforce the law in order to raise the standards of indigenous languages as national languages. There are some minor efforts being carried out to promote bilingual education (Maya and Spanish) in remote rural areas by small programmes called "escuelas mayas, (Maya schools)."

In terms of literacy, it is then fundamental that indigenous people learn how to write and read in their own languages. This practice is not easy, since even school teachers who supposedly read texts, find it hard to read and write in Mayan languages. There are several reasons why this practice has become difficult. First, the Mayan languages did not have a standardized alphabet, so each linguist or anthropologist wrote the language using different characters to represent linguistic sounds. It wasn't until 1985 that the Academy of Maya Languages of Guatemala standardized the alphabet to write Mayan languages. Secondly, Mayan languages have difficult sounds such as the guttural, palatal and glottal sounds that are difficult to write and pronounce. Without practice, the reading of Mayan languages becomes difficult and tedious. Thirdly, there is a lack of interest in reading among school teachers and students. For these reasons, very few people are really fluent in reading Maya languages. A good example of this lack of interest in reading Mayan languages is mentioned by Dr. Fernando Penalosa, who published a Maya novel in Q'anjobal Maya, written by the Maya writer Gaspar Pedro Gonzalez. "Only one copy of the book was sold and the buyer was a US linguist" (personal communication). This example illustrates the lack of interest in reading and writing in indigenous languages in Guatemala. School teachers and students are more familiar with Spanish so, even if there is a parallel text in Maya, they would prefer to read the Spanish version and not the Maya text.

## DOCUMENTING NATIVE KNOWLEDGE

I argue that safeguarding endangered languages in the case of Mayan languages must start with a process of recapturing the knowledge of the past and rewriting oppressed people's histories. The colonial process and post-modern process of globalizing and erasing indigenous identities has truncated indigenous people's dynamic process of creating knowledge in their own languages. A process of renaming (people, places, animals, plants, etc.) in their own languages is fundamental. It is also a useful for promoting the struggle for indigenous rights and self-determination. The safeguarding of Mayan languages must involve the dynamic use of these languages to create knowledge for the maintenance and promotion of indigenous worldviews. At the present time, younger speakers do not see any productive use of indigenous languages, so they try to get rid of them and learn English or Spanish, which are the languages of globalization in Latin America. We must make sure that the younger speakers of the language can see successful stories in language revitalization and that the creative power of their languages can be expressed in scientific research, literary creations and be more widely used in education and commerce. In other words, safeguarding languages is important if we are to protect the knowledge encoded in them, such as indigenous people's respect and reverence for nature and the environment. I propose a research project that focuses on native knowledge and epistemology in Maya linguistic communities, where languages are in even greater danger of extinction.

The project proposed must be carried out by native scholars and the elders who are specialists in different areas or domains of native knowledge. This process of research, documentation, analysis and interpretation of the ways indigenous people produce knowledge (ohtajb'al), and their ways to organize and explain their existence within their particular worldviews, should be a good way to safeguard Mayan languages in danger of extinction. The project should also focus on Maya ways of knowing, and the uses of indigenous methodologies and native classificatory systems. This philosophy of life or native science and knowledge is also implicit in the sacred Maya calendar. On this aspect, the Jakaltek calendar is a good example since it has the days dedicated to animals, plants, the ancestors, heroes and supernatural beings for the purpose of paying homage and respect to them throughout the year cycle, and signalling the relationships that exists between all beings of the universe.

The Jakaltek Maya calendar is important here as a source of knowledge about time, space, cyclical history, myths of creation, cosmology, religion and ecology, using indigenous Mayan languages. The project should be multidisciplinary, focusing on major native forms or fields of knowledge such as native philosophy, religion and spirituality, ethnoarchaeology (indigenous interpretation of monuments and sacred sites), epigraphy, ecology, ethnobotany, ethnolinguistics, ethnoscience, oral histories and traditions. We must remind ourselves that for indigenous people the various fields mentioned above are not compartmentalized. All these areas of knowledge form a unity in the production of knowledge, and the performance of rituals to form a complex whole, or what I call a living cosmology. As a result of the project, a series of texts on each of these segments of knowledge should be produced, using the indigenous languages in which knowledge is encoded. This will become an

important contribution to indigenous Maya knowledge at the closing of the oxlanh b'aktun, or the end of the fifth millennium in the Maya calendrical system, and the best way to safeguard indigenous languages with the participation of native speakers in the process.

This challenging project will be developed within and from the current Maya intellectual renaissance project (Montejo 2003). In fact, it will be the basis for the development of this systematic documentation and re-interpretation of native knowledge, methods and epistemology. The significance of this research project is wide-ranging. First, the researcher will provide concrete examples of the quality and philosophical depth of indigenous belief systems and world views stemming from within. This project will show the persistent struggle of indigenous people (in this case the Maya) to demonstrate to the scientific world that their knowledge is Maya-logical, or has acceptable truths.

It will also show that indigenous people are capable of producing and creating knowledge like many other cultures around the world. In this way, we will dispel the myth that considers modern Mayas as members of a decaying culture (Asturias 1977). Instead, we will show that Maya culture is still very creative and persistent and that it has survived by using its own knowledge system despite centuries of economic and educational neglect. This knowledge may not be evident to outsiders of the culture, but for indigenous people it is part of their daily life. The problem is that indigenous people are not yet allowed to create and produce (write) knowledge within the accepted "official" cultural and scientific canons. Indigenous people have been seen by researchers as informants and not as producers of knowledge. In most cases, indigenous people cannot spend time in academic or intellectual endeavors since they are concerned with their basic human rights and their survival.

A research study of this kind among the Mayas will be important for projects and programmes dealing with ecological or environmental studies, religion and philosophy (Montejo 2001). Native knowledge will also contribute to the fields of linguistics, ethnography, ethnohistory, epigraphy, Native American studies and the humanities in general. This project will generate the theoretical and methodological tools needed to express the complexity of indigenous knowledge systems.

The creation and interpretation of this knowledge will play an important role in the documentation and understanding of the cultural and intellectual diversity among indigenous people. It will develop and provide native methods in the field, in an effort to decolonize methodologies in the traditional practice of science and research. This is very important since Maya people, scholars, intellectuals, artists, and spiritual leaders are currently promoting the revitalization of Maya culture. It is appropriate to develop a project of this kind since the current globalization of the economy, and mass media communication will force indigenous cultures to assimilate or to adopt new ways for their survival.

## JAKALTEK MAYA LANGUAGE, A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

When I was a boy (4-5 years-old), I only spoke Jakaltek Maya language, which was the language in which my mother and father communicated to each other. It was the language that I heard

in the community when I learned to talk, so I started to use it as my mother tongue. My parents told me of an incident that took place when they travelled to a ladino community. As I was taken by my parents to this Mexican community across the border, they say that I started to play with the child of the family we were staying. We played, each one communicated to the other with his mother tongue. I talked to the boy in my Jakaltek Maya language, while he spoke to me in Spanish. Obviously, I did not understand what he said, nor did he understand what I said, but we enjoyed playing and communicating with the language that our parents spoke. This incident demonstrates how Mayan language was learned in the communities as a natural language used by all members of the community when I was growing up. But this same incident also motivated my father to communicate with me in Spanish, since he thought I should learn Spanish too. Thus, at this early age I learned the Mayan language from my mother and Spanish from my father. This is how I became bilingual at an early age and it was not hard for me to enter into primary school to achieve a formal education with the Maryknoll missionaries.

To me it was natural to speak two languages as a boy. I shifted from each language when needed. Although formal education was carried out in Spanish, I always returned to my mother and to my community to live and to speak Maya. I learned stories and legends from the Jakaltek Maya oral tradition. Everyone felt comfortable speaking the Maya language in the community since only a very few families spoke Spanish and we did not communicate with them. These Spanish speaking families were there in town because they worked as school teachers, as secretaries of the municipality, or as post office attendants. After a few of us finished primary school in town, we had to leave our community to go to a larger city in order to go to middle school, high school, or to get a higher education. At school, some of my companions were discriminated against and as a result they started to reject the Mayan language because they were embarrassed to be called "Indians". As a result of the continuous discrimination suffered in schools because we identified ourselves as indigenous people, some of my companions returned home and avoided speaking in Maya, even to their mothers who only spoke Maya. In my case, it was easy to adapt myself to the cities with ladino speakers since I spoke Spanish as well as Maya. My parents used the strategy of bilingual education to prepare me to confront this racist world that discriminates against indigenous people and their cultures. Those who did not speak Spanish well enough also started to think of their Mayan language as an obstacle to becoming a sophisticated person, so they began to dislike their own native language.

Another major problem that I faced during the early 1980s was the rejection of native school teachers who were assigned to teach in their own linguistic communities. During the early 1980s, there was a movement to reject Indians by society, and parents wanted their children to learn Spanish. In order to achieve this goal, they wanted ladino school teachers in their communities. They rejected native speakers, arguing that ladino school teachers were better because they were from the city and were monolingual in Spanish. In this way, some communities rejected indigenous school teachers and forced their children to stop speaking the Mayan languages. With the creation of the Academy of Mayan Languages (ALMG) in 1985, little by little the indigenous people started to value their native languages and now some communities show preference and appreciation for bilingual education, preferring teachers who are native of their own communities.

Like Jakaltek Maya, most indigenous languages in Guatemala remain unattended by governmental institutions. Not even the Academy of Maya Languages has a strong programme for promoting and safeguarding indigenous languages. Another major problem in promoting Mayan languages is the persistent racist view of indigenous people in Guatemala, which is reflected in the treatment of the languages. Government censuses and other institutional studies on the vitality of Mayan languages have tended to reduce the number of speakers, invisibilizing the indigenous people in an effort to present a more assimilated or ladinoized Guatemalan population.

With a country whose minority ladino population dominates and controls the national institutions, indigenous languages are in constant danger of extinction. A recent report funded by USAID presented six indigenous languages in danger of extinction: Xinca with 18 speakers, Garifuna with 203 speakers, Itza with 123 speakers, Mopan with 468 speakers, Tektiteko with 1200 speakers and Uspanteko with 1230 speakers. The Jakaltek-Maya language with 38,350 speakers is also in danger of extinction since the children and youth are not learning to speak and write in their Mayan language. Also, the research on the Mayan languages by foreign linguists is very limited and the dictionaries produced on these languages, such as Jakaltek Maya, are very incomplete. There is a need to compile greater dictionaries by Maya speakers in collaboration with linguists and anthropologists.

To safeguard the indigenous languages in Guatemala it is important to respond and implement what is stated in the Law on National (Indigenous) Languages, that "the State is obliged to facilitate the access to health services, education, justice and security...so that the population should be informed and attended in the language of each linguistic community". Unfortunately, the law exists only on paper. There is no appropriate budget for the implementation of the law, nor do government authorities have the political will to truly implement a national programme of bilingual education.

I have argued that in order to promote the uses of indigenous languages, there must be successful stories that can be followed or imitated by younger speakers. For this reason, I have started three small projects for the revitalization of Jakaltek Maya language and culture. First, the production of written literature in Mayan languages by poets and writers (including myself) has motivated younger speakers to write and produce literature in their own language. In this way, the Jakaltek speaking population recognizes that their language can be used as an instrument for the production of poetry and stories. This literature has been published by authors from the Jakaltek Maya language community, thus showing a constant creativity in Mayan languages. Examples include Victor Montejo's *Q'anil: Man of Lightning*, published in a tri-lingual edition by a prestigious University Press, as well as Humberto Akabal's poetry in Mayan language, and Gaspar Pedro Gonzalez's novels in Q'anjobal Maya language.

The second strategy for promoting Jakaltek Maya language is through the production of songs and their lyrics in Mayan language. There have been famous Jakaltek Maya singers who have produced CD's and whose songs have become well known in their communities. The success of some singers and composers has motivated or inspired others to produce songs in Mayan languages. The taped songs are sent to migrant communities in Mexico, Canada and the United States. In 1998, I

organized the first Festival for Maya singers and composers, inviting all the composers and groups to participate in this event. The response was overwhelming since almost a dozen Maya groups participated in the competition for the best song created in Jakaltek Maya language. This event took place in the major plaza in front of the Church in Jacaltenango, and thousands of people (young, adults, children, etc) congregated to listen and to enjoy the songs performed by the groups and their composers. Since then, Maya singers and composers have proliferated, entertaining their audience with songs that deal with many issues such as poverty, migration, love and politics, etc. In this festival of the Jakaltek song, monetary prizes and awards were given to the best composers and groups, so in this way they were stimulated to continue writing and composing songs in Jakaltek Maya language.

The third project that I initiated was the compilation of a Jakaltek Maya dictionary, since the existing one is incomplete. It was also written a long time ago by foreign linguists. I compiled thousands of words in Jakaltek Maya, but unfortunately, my luggage was stolen at a bus station when I arrived in Guatemala in 1998. Having lost this work, the project was truncated. This is however an important project that must be carried out soon since there are few older speakers left who could help in documenting the language with words that no one else uses or knows, but funding is needed for this project.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of globalization on the indigenous languages of Guatemala and Central America is alarming as we notice the pace of absorption and elimination of indigenous ways of life and world-views. Because of the continuous subjugation and discrimination of indigenous people as a continuation of the colonial process, the languages of indigenous people are in constant danger of extinction. Of course, Mayan languages have survived a process of globalization before with the Spanish conquest of the early 16th century. Since then, Spanish has become the national language. Nahuatl of Central Mexico became the lingua franca of indigenous people of Central America during the colonial period. People and places were renamed in Nahuatl. With the introduction of Spanish, the 22 Mayan languages were considered less important. This started the process of decline of the Mayan languages that still persists today.

The Maya people and civilization has already suffered a great loss. The language of the hieroglyphs (reading and writing) was lost, and the few who knew this ancient writing system such as Nachi Cocom and Antonio Chi did not pass on the torch of knowledge to future generations. With this failure, the loss of an ancient language of the glyphs was lost and with it, the great knowledge of a whole civilization was lost. Fortunately, Mayan culture and languages diversified and maintained Mayan culture throughout the centuries, but once again, these languages are in danger of extinction as a result of globalization and homogenization. And as mentioned above, colonialism and globalization is causing an alarming rate of language extinction. Language loss is not voluntary; it is the result of forced changes and the result of human rights violations of minorities and indigenous people. For this reason, addressing endangered languages should be "acknowledged as one of the highest priorities facing humanity, posing moral, practical and scientific issues of enormous proportions" (Campbell 2007:1).

It is then important to emphasize success stories like those mentioned above. The younger speakers must recognize that their indigenous language has a creative power in literature and in the production of knowledge. More success stories are needed and the native language should be continuously used in radio programmes, newspapers, songs, videos and teaching material for children and adults. In other words, the danger faced by indigenous languages as a result of globalization needs a prompt and effective response or action by governments, institutions and the communities of speakers.

On the other hand, the rejection of indigenous cultures and languages, as well as the environment of discrimination and neglect in which the majority of indigenous people have lived for centuries is the continuation of this exclusion that began with the Spanish conquest. The first priority then is to focus on the system that exploits indigenous people, just as theology of liberation placed blame on the states as sinners for not allowing the immense oppressed majority to achieve a dignified human life and existence.

Due to ignorance about indigenous cultures during the conquest of this continent, indigenous knowledge systems were dismissed as unimportant to the western world. Sometimes, indigenous beliefs systems were considered too simple and absurd, or were thought of as expressions of the lack of intellectual capacities of the natives. During the Spanish conquest, the written record of indigenous people were burned and destroyed by early missionaries. This was the case in Yucatan, when Bishop Diego de Landa (1560, 1983) burned the books of the Mayas calling its content: "teachings of the devil." In central Mexico, the same thing occurred, however, there was documentation of the Aztecs stories told by the elders to Bernardino de Sahagún (1950-82) and compiled in a series of volumes called the Florentine Codex. Unfortunately, in the Maya area there were no Sahagúns who interviewed the elders and documented their belief systems and knowledge from pre-Hispanic times. This was a great loss since Maya people had a writing system and a literary tradition. This knowledge was not considered important until recently, when epigraphers began to decipher Maya hieroglyphic writing as shown in the updated works by Michael Coe (1992), and Martha Macri (2002). The surviving codices are examples of how Mayas wrote about their histories, science, politics, literature and religion. Much of this knowledge has been forgotten, and much has remained unused, since everything has not disappeared. Native Maya knowledge is out there, fragmented in the oral tradition and waiting to be used again in this century of globalization.

For this reason, we must increase our interest in native knowledge, especially those focusing on medicinal plants and traditional forms of healing. For decades, the wisdom of indigenous people expressed in their oral traditions and their experiential knowledge of plants, animals and the natural environment was a source of "folk information" for the West, but never considered as scientific knowledge. Protecting endangered languages and safeguarding indigenous knowledge encoded in their languages is a human rights issue that must be respected and promoted in the future.

Unfortunately, and despite the changes in attitude towards the language, some children still prefer being monolingual in Spanish, while Mayan languages are still stigmatized as inferior lan-

guages spoken only by Indians. The problem in retaining indigenous languages is also due to the fact that adults are mostly illiterate and don't see the benefit for their children in retaining their native language. Even worse, with the current wave of globalization, people realize more and more that the language of education and business is the dominant foreign language, either Spanish or English. Despite the forces of assimilation, we must insist on the value of native languages, since a language is a key to our culture, with the power to connect us through time and to open the world of the past. For this reason, we must not allow indigenous languages to become extinct and we must continue with our efforts to promote their value, so that they maintain their vitality in the future.

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Between 2005 and 2007, he was a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, supported by the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme. His research project was to document and describe Toratán (Ratahan), an endangered language spoken by about 150 people in a handful of villages located in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The main goal was to create a digital corpus of annotated recordings, hosted at the Endangered Languages Archive. He is currently working on a dictionary of the language.

# A BALANCING ACT: COMMUNITY INTERESTS AND LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION

One of the central goals of language documentation (as laid out by Himmelmann (1998) and others) is the creation of corpora of language data – usually consisting of a core of digital video and audio recordings and associated annotations and metadata. For a variety of reasons (including security and convenience, but also as a requirement of funding agencies), these corpora are increasingly being housed in dedicated digital endangered language archives such as PARADISEC in Australia, ELAR in Britain, and DoBeS in the Netherlands.

However, it can be hard to explain the value of such digital archives to communities in the developing world, often without access to computers and high-speed internet. Rather, the practice of collecting material with the express purpose of sequestering it in first-world institutions can appear (at best) irrelevant, and (at worst) a throwback to colonial practices of cultural expropriation. Showing the value of documentation in general and archives in particular can be a challenge for fieldworkers and archivists, which require flexibility and a willingness to discover and adapt to community goals. This paper will discuss issues that arose during a documentation project in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, and will show some examples of material that came out of the project.

## LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new field of linguistics: language documentation, which is 'concerned with the methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings for compiling a representative and lasting multipurpose record of a natural language or one of its varieties' (Gippert, Himmelmann, & Mosel, 2006, p. v). Language documentation differs from language description (which aims to describe a language's system of structures and rules in the form of a grammar or dictionary) because of its focus on primary data—though of course documentation does not preclude description and is in fact an excellent corollary to it.<sup>1</sup>

Language documentation is most often associated with work on endangered languages, and it is fair to say that an increased interest in language endangerment (both among linguists and in the wider community) was the primary motivation behind its inception (and likewise the rationale behind the major funding schemes), but the principles behind it can be applied to any linguistic work involving use of primary data.

The most visible ways in which language documentation is changing the field are: a large and growing literature, the creation of specialised training courses for linguists and language workers, the funding of a significant number of documentation projects around the world, and the associated emergence of specialised digital archives for endangered language material. It is the latter two phenomena that I wish to discuss here.

## DOCUMENTATION PROJECTS

The emergence of language documentation has seen the creation of a new type of linguistic research activity: the dedicated language documentation project.<sup>2</sup> These have been aided by the availability of funds specifically for this purpose. Since the requirements of funding agencies are important in shaping the form of projects, it is worth listing the major ones here.

The current main sources of funding for academic language documentation projects are:

- The DOBES programme funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, begun in 2000 and still ongoing. It has funded 30 documentation teams and has also been prominent in the development of software tools and both practical and theoretical standards of documentation.
- The Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP), funded by Arcadia. Since 2003 ELDP has funded projects on approximately 130 languages, and generally allocates around £1 million in grants (out of a bequest of around £17 million) per year.
- Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL) funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in the USA. Initiated in 2002, it aims to award \$2 million annually.

There are other, smaller, sources of funds, and it appears that as documentation becomes more recognised as a field there will be more projects funded by the usual academic funding bodies such as the Australian Research Council or the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK.

## TYPICAL OUTCOMES OF DOCUMENTATION PROJECTS

Although the field is in its infancy and there is much debate about what a 'proper' documentation might look like, the description from the DoBeS website<sup>3</sup> is illustrative. The documentation, and therefore the archive, contain the following types of material: annotated audio and video recordings of diverse speech events with transcriptions; translations into one or more major languages; morphosyntactic analysis and other comments on content and linguistic phenomena; photographs and drawings partly bundled into groups of photos documenting processes; music recordings and videos of cultural activities and ceremonies; a description of the language's genetic affiliation, its socio-linguistic context, its phonetic and grammatical features, and the circumstances of research; recording and documentation of keyword-based descriptions to facilitate the organization; and accessibility of documents in the archive.

ELDP adds a grammar, dictionary and thesaurus to the list of desirable contents of a documentation. But clearly, the core of the documentation project is seen to be the corpus of annotated recordings.

To give an example of what this might look like, consider the documentation project of Toratán, a language spoken by about 150 people in three villages in North Sulawesi, Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> The main outcome of this project was about 50 hours of recordings (mostly video), comprising 70 indivi-

dual sessions. The bulk of the sessions are of a genre which, given the advanced age of the speakers, could aptly be called 'extended conversational reminiscence', though there are also more straightforward procedural narratives (how to make palm sugar, how to prepare particular foods, the proper way to conduct a wedding, etc), and personal stories. Some are of a single speaker, but the majority are of a pair or trio of speakers. In total, 20 speakers feature in the recordings, varying in age from 45 to 86.

The sessions were all transcribed and translated into Manado Malay (the local variety of Indonesian) and English. The annotations were prepared using the ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator) programme developed for DoBeS by the Max Planck Institute in Nijmegen. The ELAN file is an xml file containing information about the media files, segmentation in the form of timecode, and annotations which are linked via those timecodes to the media files. A subset of recordings were further analysed using Toolbox, resulting in a further set of interlinear tiers.

Figure 1 shows the ELAN programme open with a recorded session (a discussion about the sequence of a traditional courtship and wedding) and its annotations. There are tiers for transcription, translation into English and Manado Malay, and interlinear text showing word, morpheme, gloss and part-of-speech. Not shown here is the associated metadata about the date, type, and circumstances of recording, speaker identity, genre and so forth.

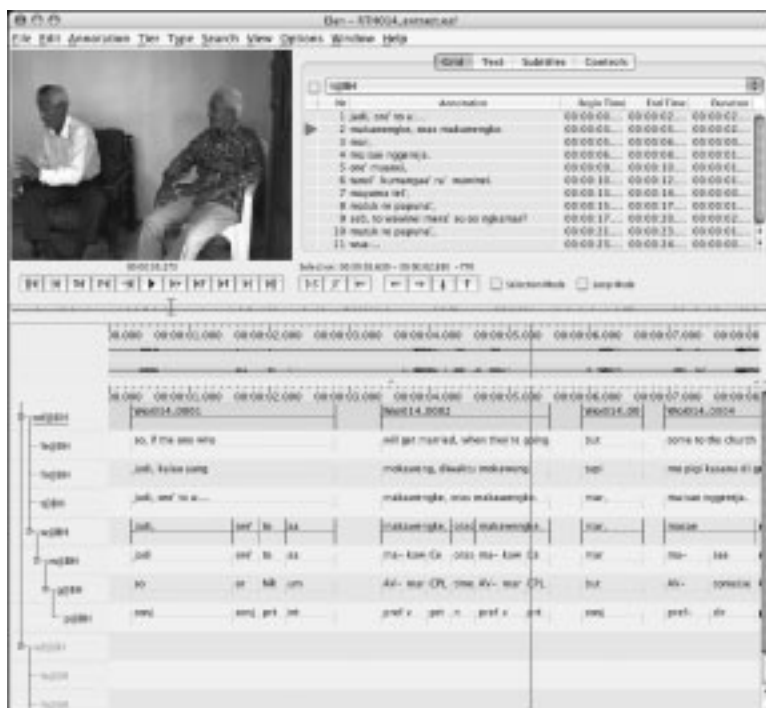


Figure 1: A video recording and associated annotations in ELAN

An annotated recording such as this lends itself to a variety of uses for the linguist, in that particular recordings (or indeed the whole corpus) may be searched for instances of particular words or morphemes, which may then be seen and heard in context. Depending on the level of annotation, there may also be information about gesture, utterance type, constituent order or whatever other sorts of information are found to be important.

The above is simply given as a representative example of the type of data constituting the core of a language documentation. There is of course variation across projects. Some have a particular focus, eg. ethnobotany or marine science. Some have made many more hours of recordings, but annotated only a small proportion. Some have audio rather than video recordings. Many use different tools for transcription and analysis. But they are all repositories of primary language data, with added information to make it searchable and understandable.

It is fair to say that the central goal of a documentation project as funded by any of these three bodies is to collect, annotate, and archive language data of this type. This leads fairly naturally to a widespread assumption among documenters that the 'purpose of their work is to "deposit data in the archive"' (Nathan & Fang, 2008). Thus, the researchers give the outcomes of their documentation project to the archive, provide information to be used in cataloguing and the documentation is in some sense considered to be 'finished'. The archive will look after the material from then on, in perpetuity, and allow access to it according to the requirements as set by the researcher and/or the community.

## ENDANGERED LANGUAGE ARCHIVES

Accompanying the emergence of language documentation has been the need for digital archiving of endangered language materials, and the creation of dedicated archives for this purpose. ELDP and DOBES explicitly require all material to be deposited in their own digital archives. DEL similarly requires digital archiving of data but does not specify the destination, merely advising grantees to conform to 'best practice' as recommended by E-MELD (Electronic Metastructure for Endangered Languages Data) and thus to deposit materials with an archive belonging to OLAC (the Open Language Archives Community).<sup>5</sup>

The mission statement of the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR), based at SOAS in London, is as follows:

We aim to:

- provide a safe long-term repository of language materials
- enable people to see what documentation has been created for a language
- encourage international co-operation between researchers
- encourage endangered language communities to participate and to build on the work done, in order to safeguard their languages
- provide advice and collaboration<sup>6</sup>

Access to the contents of the archive is generally via an online catalogue. To illustrate, the following screenshot shows the DoBeS archive, with metadata about a particular recording in the Saliba/Logea project headed by Anna Margetts at Monash University. Subject on access restrictions, a user may search the archive, and via the catalogue/browser download media and annotation files, or view/hear streaming media.



Figure 2: The DoBeS catalogue

## DOCUMENTATION, ARCHIVING AND COMMUNITY INTERESTS

The nature of the relationship between a fieldworker and the host community has been the subject of considerable debate within linguistics and other disciplines. It has grown from the simple notion that a researcher should 'give something back' to the community to the argument that a fieldworker should actively work for the community, or that the fieldwork should be considered an entirely collaborative project – fieldwork by a community (Grinevald, 2003). How this might best be achieved is a matter of considerable debate, and in any case the needs and desires of language com-

munities can differ in many ways. Sometimes they may be hard to gauge as the community itself is not necessarily clear or undivided about the potential uses of a linguist.

It has been my experience (and that of others, such as Musgrave and Thieberger (2007)), that while communities are generally not opposed to documentation work, it is unlikely to be a priority for most people.<sup>7</sup> Interest in the language is often low – this is usually one of the reasons the language is endangered, thus it is difficult to claim in any real sense that the fieldwork is being carried out by the community. And I can only agree with Musgrave and Thieberger when they state that ‘if such communities could access the money [ie. from ELDP etc], they would not in general choose to spend it on supporting language documentation’. If they were to spend money at all on language matters it would probably be on schoolbooks as part of a revitalisation programme: however two of the funding bodies (ELDP and DEL) explicitly state that they will not fund projects primarily concerned with revitalisation. (DOBES does not state this, but implies it by omission.)

Furthermore, the end result of a standard documentation project – the archived material – is likely to be inaccessible to communities in the developing world. In the Toratán case, although North Sulawesi has reasonably good communication infrastructure, computer ownership and access is very low, and the internet is virtually unknown outside of the provincial capital Manado (a grueling 4 hour trip from the Toratán villages). Broadband internet access is not widely available, and even where it is, its price is prohibitive and is likely to remain that way for some time. Thus, online access to material archived at ELAR, PARADISEC or DoBeS is not currently feasible. The material can be stored on a local computer, but low levels of computer literacy and the complexities of the documentation software make this a poor solution.

In addition, it has been pointed out that although the rhetoric of endangered language appeals to the irreplaceable cultural and environmental knowledge held within the language, ‘studies carried out by linguists tend to focus on structural and lexical analysis’ (Batibo, 2005, p. 40). Even when there is culturally important information contained within documentary material, the currently defined metadata schemes such as IMDI and OLAC emphasise the research interests of typological linguistics rather than aiming to be ‘multi-purpose’ in the sense of Himmelmann (2006, p. 2), ‘even though there is no evidence anecdotally or in the literature that typological findings are valued by or useful for language speakers’ (Nathan & Fang, 2008). Thus, even if the archived material were accessible, it is unlikely in that form to be of much use or interest to a community.

The above considerations are undeniably depressing, and lead to the question as to whether documentation can help speech communities at all. The good news is that there is a healthy and ongoing debate about these matters within the community of language documenters. The archivists have also shown themselves to be aware of these problems, and are attempting to ensure that materials are accessible to language communities and the nations in which they reside. PARADISEC, for example, has an agreement with cultural institutions in three countries (Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Papua New Guinea) ensuring that digital materials are made available in accessible forms (Nick Thieberger, pers.comm). DoBeS has a policy of setting up regional archives in order to improve access

for local researchers and language workers. Meanwhile, the archivist at ELAR has written and published extensively on the need for archives to be involved in 'mobilisation' of material (Nathan, 2006; Nathan & Csató, 2006), and (with others) has heavily criticised the emerging orthodoxy of documentation and the 'commodification' of endangered language research (Dobrin, Austin, & Nathan, 2007).

For the Toratán case, I simply decided to make most of the archival material available to the speakers in a readily accessible form. Since most of that material was video, and since speakers I worked with enjoyed watching the recorded conversations, I gave DVDs to speakers and family members. These needed to be subtitled in Manado Malay if the majority of community members were to understand, as only those over 60 are fluent speakers. Conveniently, the material I had prepared for documentation already had annotations in the form of transcriptions and translations that could be used to make these subtitles. Although not an especially straightforward process (involving various methods of text manipulation and the use of a DVD authoring programme), it was possible to produce these on my laptop in the field. The end result is DVDs which can be played on any consumer player. The subtitles default to Manado Malay, but can be changed via the DVD remote control. A screenshot showing how one of the procedural texts (how to make palm sugar) looks with the English subtitle appears in Figure 3.



Figure 3: DVD with subtitle

People enjoyed watching them, including children, who generally stopped whatever they were doing to gather round and watch. My main consultant, Bert Hosang (pictured at right in Figure 4), reported that this was the first time in many decades that a child had shown any interest in Toratán.





Figure 4: Watching themselves

## CONCLUSIONS

Language documentation is a field in its early stages, and is continually evolving. We should be aware of problems and imperfections but we should not allow them to distract us from the central issue: while debates about the proper methodology and ethics of documentation unfold, languages continue to fall silent. While it would certainly be preferable for all documentation projects to satisfy all potential users, it is nevertheless the case that even imperfect documentation is better than none, and also that the documentation projects taking place today are providing a far better record of endangered languages than anything carried out in the past. As the field matures, this should only improve.

## NOTES

1. It is also the case that most projects of language description necessarily involve the collection of large amounts of primary data. It is the contention of documentary linguists that this data should be archived or otherwise preserved for posterity and further use by the speech community or its descendants, by linguists (eg. so theoretical claims about the language can be checked against the data), or for other unforeseen uses.
2. Again, linguists (and others) have always been involved in collecting language data. What is new is the emphasis on data collection as a central activity.
3. <http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES/dobesprogramme/>
4. This was a two year ELDP-funded post-doctoral project (IPF0087) carried out by the author.

5. OLAC has 37 participating archives, relevant ones here include ASED (Aboriginal Studies Electronic Data Archive), AILLA (Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America), and PARADISEC (Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures).
6. <http://www.hrelp.org/archive/>
7. These observations are based on fieldwork in Indonesia and the South Pacific. I readily concede that they are not universally applicable.

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# IS IT GLOBALIZATION THAT ENDANGERS LANGUAGES?

Globalization, meaning the increasingly active and conscious interaction of human activities in different parts of the Earth, has a very long history – at least by the standards of the term's modern usage. The spread of a single species of hominids round the world, starting in east Africa 65,000 years ago and completed in the Americas 50 millennia later, is the founding achievement for all later globalization, but its extent totally exceeded the means for different communities to go on interacting. This had to await the advent of trade routes, from the 5th millennium BC in south-west Asia, 2nd millennium BC in Central Asia, and which jointly seem to have reached Egypt by 1070 BC, to judge from some silk found in the tomb of an Egyptian pharaoh.

After this, the first large-scale regional empires were founded, in the Middle East, China and latterly, India and Europe. This meant there were fewer, larger units to get to know about, but knowledge about life in widely distant parts of the globe spread more slowly than goods. Merchants, however, were also spreading knowledge of religions, initially Buddhism. And empires, local accumulations of power and wealth, gradually found that they could extend their reach too: notable early successes in this were the Arabs in the 7th century AD, the Mongols in the 12th, and the Russians in the 16th. Globalized epidemics became possible, firstly the Black Death, an unintended present to the west from the Mongol Empire.

The combinations of trade, religion and power began to be conveyed overseas from Europe in the 16th century too, and this is when globalization achieves a recognizably modern form. At last everyone in the world had a known address, so to speak, and a self-consciously global world-system was born. It was left to the empires of the 19th and 20th centuries to improve the technology of communications, so that it is now literally possible for any nation to speak unto nation, either with a direct visit, or more typically, without leaving home at all.

This then is globalization, where messages can now travel the world instantly and reliably enough to sustain real-time conversations. What is more, that power is increasingly diffused, so it is not just the summits of the power hierarchies who are in touch, but the vast majority of the world's people.

Since globalization is about human contact, it has naturally been accompanied by language effects throughout, from the original peopling of the world with an efflorescence of languages at the beginning of reconstructible history, to the immoderate spread of English in the 19th and 20th centuries. Indeed, the continental, and later global spread of certain languages is the clearest long-term evidence of what global contacts have been achieved.

But this brings us, at last, to the question I want to address in this talk. We all know that in this modern world, alongside the languages that have become global, there are others – the vast

majority – which have remained local in size and scope. There are close on 7,000 languages in the world, and half of them have fewer than 7,000 speakers each, less than a village. What is more, 80% of the world's languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers, the size of a small town. These smaller languages are increasingly thought of as endangered, since all over the world they are failing to be taken up by young people.

Now the question: Is it globalization, and the consequent spread of the global languages –above all at present, English – which is responsible for the endangerment of these other languages? I have dwelt at some length on the historical background of globalization, so that we can remember that this situation has been a long time in the making; and also to remember that there may be evidence about cause and effect which is not just from the last few decades when globalization has become extreme.

To get a fairer and less panicky answer to the question, we must first make the distinction between a *lingua franca* and a mother tongue. Not all languages have the same value to their speakers. When a language spreads as a *lingua franca*, this is a matter of convenience, making direct communication possible where before it was difficult because of a language barrier. The result is a larger community mediated by the *lingua franca*, with no corresponding loss of any other links. But when a language spreads as a mother tongue, this means that someone grows up with a language which is different from the mother tongue of one or both parents: some other mother tongue has lost a potential learner in the new generation. So whereas the spread of a *lingua franca* can only increase an effective 'global' community, the spread of a mother tongue may well decrease some local community. So only the latter contributes to language endangerment.

Confusion arises because a language like English has gained many speakers in both these ways. In North America and Australia, most immigrants and most of the indigenous population have adopted English as a mother tongue, whereas, as a *lingua franca*, it is also widely used in countries which have never had a close political association with Britain. In many countries, though, such as India, Malaysia, South Africa or Nigeria, its status is more mixed and ambiguous.

But consider a language like Esperanto, which only grows as a *lingua franca*: its spread is an asset to globalization, since it puts more people in touch with each other across the world, but it does not thereby replace any other linguistic competence. No-one, and no language, need be afraid of Esperanto. This is one asset of a spreading *lingua franca*. Another one, potentially, is that it brings with it few, if any, cultural presumptions: it exists purely as a means of communication, not a badge of membership of a tradition. There seems to be an increasing impatience, in the world of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, with holding up the native speaker as an ideal, or accepting that any part of British or American culture is part of the subject.

This cultural emptiness of a *lingua franca* is a matter of degree. There is a literature, including poetry, even in Esperanto. And people who learn any language in any way may derive from it some social benefits beyond the ability to communicate: indeed, those who know a *lingua franca*

which is not their mother tongue may often be recognized as an elite, having greater prospects and potentially greater power. This is in fact the rule, with second-language learners of English, French or Russian. But this does not supplant their mother-tongue culture. They do not thereby have less access to their traditions.

Nevertheless, the net effect of globalization may be adverse for minority languages, even if the spread of such lingua-francas does them no direct harm. Increasing and denser international contacts are likely to raise the general climate of aspiration and ambition within a territory. The results have often been a stimulus to imperialism in outsiders, nationalism in the local elite and urban masses, and centralizing economic development in both. All of these, by diminishing the role and independence of small traditional communities, usually damage minority languages. But this kind of damage is not by any means always brought about by the "usual suspects" among global languages, languages like English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, Persian or Chinese.

The Foundation for Endangered Languages' conference in 2006, held in Mysore, southern India, focused on multilingualism as it affects endangered languages, and the relations revealed were very varied (Elangaiyan et al. 2006). In Nicaragua, the Tuahka language yields to its ancient neighbour Miskitu, unaffected by the recent overlays of English and Spanish. In Pakistan, urbanized Torwalis abandon their language for Pashto and Urdu, not English. The small Turung community in Assam are finding that traditional pressures from Tai and Jinghpaw are morphing into new relations with Assamese and English; but the process is still too complex to have a predictable outcome. Matthias Brenzinger, in a wide-ranging discussion of the language dynamics of southern and eastern Africa (Brenzinger 2007), admits that there are languages now growing there at the expense of smaller languages, but these are Amharic, Swahili, Setswana, not English, and perhaps Kirundi and Kinyarwanda owe their present unchallenged status as national languages to previous spread.

Modern globalization can also bring about trends which are positive for minority languages. It can reveal the fact there are endangered languages all round the world, and so give their speakers a motive to contact one another, and build solidarity networks. It can spread ideas of how languages can reverse a downward trend, as Welsh, Maori and Hawaiian appear to have done recently in their different corners of the world, or breathe new life into the apparent husk of a dead language, as Hebrew did in the 20th century.

On the solidarity front, there has been since 1978 the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI), with its mission is to document, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages, reinforcing the processes of intergenerational language transfer, and specifically organizing regular summer schools to train teachers. On the other side of the world, there are now winter schools to promote knowledge of the Latgalian language (de Graaf et al. 2008), closely related to Latvian, which has been transplanted to central Siberia, but which is now put back in contact with its erstwhile linguistic neighbours in Latvia. This kind of parallel development is only possible in a globalized world.

The global trend of concern for endangered languages, wherever it may have started – if indeed it makes sense to look for a single source – has spread to influence governments and opinion-formers worldwide. We can instance activities, selected randomly in just four continents.

Here in Japan, there is now official concern for the Ainu, where until 1997, and the Act for "Encouragement of Ainu Culture and the Diffusion and Enlightenment of Knowledge on Ainu Tradition", there was only resignation, if not negative discrimination (though in fact, only on 6 June 2008 did Japan formally recognize the Ainu as an indigenous group).

In Australia, since 1992 and the "Mabo" judgement which recognized Native Title and ended the doctrine of "Terra Nullius" – namely that no indigenous population had rights to territory before the advent of European claimants, official attitudes to indigenous people have turned through 180 degrees, with an Aboriginal Reconciliation Commission in the 1990s and networks of "Australian Language Centres" set up in the 2000s. Although there was something of retrenchment under the Liberal administration, in 2008 the new Labor Government has issued a formal apology to them.

In Peru and other Andean countries, there is increasing acceptance that indigenous populations need special support. There is a national programme in Peru of *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*, and this is not just for the benefit of the majority indigenous language Quechua. There is also AIDESEP (*Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana*) which focuses on the education of speakers of Amazonian languages.

In Europe, the newly recognized duty to support minority languages has been cast into a treaty, which imposes specific obligations on national governments if they are prepared to accept it. This is the ECRML, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe, and so far ratified by 21 states. Effectively it mobilizes a supranational, quasi-global, organization in support of regional languages.

Finally, one can mention the efforts of that quintessentially global organization, the United Nations. Since 1993 UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Section has had an Endangered Languages Programme, and in 2003 adopted a Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage which recognizes the essential role of language in its expression and transmission. Other symbolic initiatives include the recognition since 2000 of 21 February as International Mother Tongue Day (the date originally commemorating the re-institution of Bangla as official in East Pakistan), and indeed 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

It is over-simple, then, and misleading, to cast Globalization as a direct cause of language endangerment. If one is concerned for this crisis, it is important to try to "remember the enemy": not global languages themselves, for they are only an effect of globalization, and not necessarily in direct competition with languages that are endangered. What has led to the endangerment of languages is the imperialism, nationalism, and centralizing economic development, which are more about the concentration of power, and hence the disempowerment – and sometimes dissolution – of minority language communities.

We have seen that, in current conditions, globalization, by unleashing new forms of human solidarity, gives some – modest – grounds for hope that these enemies of endangered languages can be resisted. Wade Davis has remarked that “Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind, a watershed of thought, an ecosystem of spiritual possibilities.” Globalization provides endless opportunities for cross-fertilization, but to get its benefits as much as possible must survive of the different variant growths. The best thing that we can do for endangered languages is to do our best listen to the stories told in them, respect the people who tell those stories, and see them passed on to the next generation. In one or other old-growth forest of the mind, we need to watch the trees grow.

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# SAFEGUARDING ENDANGERED LANGUAGES, VANUATU: A CASE-STUDY

## BACKGROUND

Vanuatu, a small island nation of around 80 islands located in the South West Pacific, is highly multilingual and multicultural. With over a hundred indigenous languages spoken among a population of over two hundred thousand, it is considered to have a high linguistic density per capita. While these indigenous languages have an important role at the local community level, Bislama, the English-based lexifier pidgin, functions as the lingua franca and national language of the country because of its unifying force. English, French and Bislama function as the three official languages while only English and French remain the principal languages of education in the country. All these different languages are protected under the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu.

## DECLINE

With time, these languages undergo changes as a result of contact with different facets of globalization such as social, cultural, religious, economic and political changes. During the process of these interactions, some of these languages increase their status to the detriment of others. According to statistics<sup>1</sup> based on languages known, out of the 106 known indigenous languages of Vanuatu, only 81 are still active, while 17 are considered moribund, and eight are already extinct. Moreover, only thirteen of these languages have over 5,000 speakers, while the rest are in their hundreds or less. Most of these local languages have a small speaking population, yet, they continue to be active for a long time. This is because speakers live in remote areas of the country and have little contact with the outside world. However, because of the small size and vulnerability of the country, this is changing. The country is being opened up to the processes of westernization with unstoppable forces that drive the desire for economic development. Today, researchers continue to identify undocumented languages that are on the verge of extinction.

## CAUSES

Languages in Vanuatu continue to be endangered because of various reasons at different points in time such as death, due to inter-tribal war, introduced diseases and epidemics; discriminating policies; deliberate lack of inter-generational transmission by parents; and language shift.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, diseases and epidemics that were caused by contact with foreigners and inter-tribal wars caused many deaths in Vanuatu and caused people to relocate. This resulted in reduced numbers of language speakers as they died or left their community. Today, languages die with the death of the last speakers as people shift to other languages.

Policy discrimination is another contributing factor of language death. This has directly or indirectly contributed to language shift to languages of powerful cultures at the expense of indigenous languages, which are thought to be marginalized. Formal literacy was first introduced by the missionaries in indigenous languages for the purpose of propagating the Christian teachings, but as a result of the colonization of Vanuatu by England and France, the colonial policy promoted both colonial languages: English and French, as the languages of education. Due to the multilingual situation of the country, the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu continued to promote these two languages by giving them constitutional status as the 'principal languages of education'. This type of policy has contributed to elevating the status of English and French while leaving the indigenous languages lagging behind in the way they are used in formal literacy and to convey information to the general public.

The paradigm shift from the traditional and natural way of learning to the formal and artificial way of learning through formal education also resulted in the shift to these two colonial languages for their powerful cultures and wider social and economic benefits. Some of the indigenous languages have ceased to exist as a result of the destruction or loss of the various traditional systems or eco-systems that provide the appropriate environment for the survival of language usage that reflect those systems. For example the introduction of Christianity is an example of a catalyst for this type of change in Vanuatu.

Lack of inter-generational transmission is another contributing factor to language decline whereby parents deliberately fail to transmit their language and traditional knowledge to the next generation, resulting in language shift.

In a multilingual country like Vanuatu, language shift is a common phenomenon and it occurs at three levels. First, natives shift from their indigenous languages to the two colonial languages - English and French - for their powerful cultures through formal education and formal employment.

Secondly, there is a shift from indigenous languages to Bislama, the national language. This is very common. It is a result of inter-island marriages, urbanization, and cash employment.

Finally, there is also a shift from one indigenous language to another. This is because the early missionaries elevated the status of some indigenous languages, which were used to translate the Bible, and as a lingua franca within certain linguistic communities.

## EFFORTS IN PLACE AND THEIR CONSTRAINTS

After independence in 1980, there was more awareness and political will to address this important issue, as indigenous languages and cultures were seen as national assets. There was a change from a discriminating policy to a more favorable one. In the form of legislative acts, the vernacular education policy and national language policy (draft) not only advocate for the protection of multilingualism, but also for the preservation, promotion and revitalization of indigenous languages

and traditional knowledge at home through inter-generational transmission, at the community level, and through the formal education system.

The Education Act of 2001<sup>2</sup> and the subsequent vernacular education policy is the government's first positive step through this policy directive to actively implement the provisions of the Constitution to promote the use of vernacular education in the formal education system, from early childhood to the primary level. It is also a way in which the government is officially rectifying the previous discriminating policy, which only promoted the colonial languages in the formal education system, to a more favorable one that promotes multilingualism. However, considering the multilingual state of Vanuatu, the progress of the implementation of this policy is hindered by lack of capacity building, lack of awareness and community support, lack of financial commitment from the government, and lack of literature material in the vernacular that are contextually relevant to the culture of Vanuatu to successfully implement the policy. The establishment of various institutions and statutory bodies reflect the Government's commitment to this mission.

The establishment of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and the national museum by the Vanuatu Government reflects its commitment to document, preserve and promote its traditional knowledge and indigenous languages through this mechanism. Today, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and National Museum, with the help of the government and other donor agencies, contribute immensely to this cause through community fieldworkers, traditional schools, and arts festivals through which different language communities showcase and promote different aspects of their culture. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre also functions as the clearing house or central bureau for documented literature and audio-visual materials on various cultural and linguistic aspects of Vanuatu. However, one of the constraints faced is the lack of linguists to work with the community fieldworkers to help them document their language and research.

The Vanuatu Cultural Centre also functions as the secretariat for the National Language Council, legally established in 2005, which is responsible for putting together the national language policy<sup>3</sup> draft. This policy (draft) advocates for the preservation and promotion of multilingualism. It also encourages multilingual and multicultural dialogue in advocating English and French for their role in the international community; Bislama, the national language, for its role in forging a national identity; the indigenous languages, for their role in reflecting one's local identity; immigrant languages, due to diplomatic reasons; and sign language for the deaf. This language policy strongly advocates for the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages at home through inter-generational transmission by the family, within the community, as well as through the formal education system.

The National Council of Chiefs, representing the traditional governing system, has a constitutional mandate to make recommendations for the preservation and promotion of Vanuatu languages and cultures. How they are addressing this issue is not directly with languages, but indirectly through the preservation of the traditional systems through which language functions. They work to ensure the preservation of traditional systems, natural habitats and eco-systems as a means to

preserve languages. As they believe that language reflects these systems, practices and habitats, once these systems cease to exist, the language associated with these also cease to exist.

The Ombudsman has a constitutional mandate to ensure linguistic rights prevail and to present an annual report to the National Parliament on an annual basis. The National Tourism office also encourages the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages and cultures through the promotion of eco-tourism, cultural villages, and other tourist related events based on a cultural calendar. These are examples of how the local people are encouraged to incorporate the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge and language into modern economy.

The Environment Unit also encourages the preservation of bio-diversity and linguistic ecology associated with the different aspects of bio-diversity by working to preserve 20,000 ha of the Vathe conservation area. It is a way to promote the sustainability of eco-systems, and to preserve languages associated with natural eco-systems, and to incorporate them into the modern economy. Traditional ways of marine and terrestrial resource management are also encouraged by the environmental unit.

The national government has gone further to declare 2007 and 2008 as the 'Years of Traditional Economy' for a myriad of reasons. In a way, it is revisiting the provisions of the Constitution to preserve and promote our linguistic and cultural diversity. It is also a way in which the Government is officially acknowledging the work done by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre to help preserve and promote its indigenous languages and cultures. Equally important, is its acknowledgement of the sustainability of the traditional ways of living that have sustained the livelihood of the natives for many generations, which continue to sustain the lives of 80% of its rural population, and which continue to complement modern economy today. Through this declaration, the Ni-Vanuatu people are encouraged to continue with their traditional ways of living using traditional knowledge that promote social security, food security and good sustainable living. In addition, through these practices, language and culture associated with these practices continue to survive. A positive result from this is that people are able to pay in-kind for social services provided by the government at the provincial level. This system is working in Vanuatu today, where Government services such as school fees are being paid in kind - with farm animals, agricultural produce, and artefacts.

## CONCLUSION

Although the traditional systems, ways of life and languages of Vanuatu are adversely affected by the different facets of globalization, Vanuatu has realized this and has already begun putting some mechanisms in place to address this issue. Realizing that language change is inevitable as a response to social and cultural changes, it has set up mechanisms and favorable policies which promote multilingualism, ensuring harmonious co-existence of all diverse languages in the country, as they all have their roles at different levels within the society. However, to ensure a successful implementation of vernacular education policy, it is paramount that proper awareness programmes are developed at the community level because implementation of such policies will inevitably involve the

participation of the community. Furthermore, such a policy has proven counter-productive in a multilingual country because of lack of advice and financial commitment. To ensure its success, a lot of commitment is needed at the top level in terms of advice, financial support, guidance, continual assessment and revision. In addition, cooperation with the policy-makers, the implementers and the community level is also an important pre-requisite.

## NOTES

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# STANDARD-SETTING INSTRUMENTS

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Joe Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia  
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Breann Yoshiko Swann, Esq., Licensed Attorney and Practitioner of Indian Law and Labor and Employment Law; Tribal Policy, Law & Government LL.M. Programme, Arizona State University, Tempe, USA  
"CHANGING THE LANGUAGE OF INDUSTRY: SETTING STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN THE WORKPLACE"





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# EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES<sup>1</sup>

## SUMMARY

The Council of Europe, through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter the Charter) is contributing to promoting cultural and linguistic diversity. The Charter entered into force 10 years ago and is to-date a unique convention worldwide specifically devoted to the protection and promotion of the various regional and minority languages in Europe. As on other continents, globalization is also affecting Europe and it is therefore of utmost importance that States ratify the Charter. Ten years of supervision of the implementation of the Charter reveal that with only a few encouraging exceptions, linguistic diversity is regressing everywhere in Europe and some languages are disappearing, at least for the time being, from areas where they have been historically present and where until recent times they represented one of the distinctive features of those areas' identity. This paper will explore the reasons for this complex phenomenon and reflect on the results of the monitoring mechanism of the Charter. The Anniversary is a good opportunity to address the effectiveness of the Charter, its impact on national policies, legislation and practice. In other words on how its application has led to States taking concrete measures for the benefit of minority languages.

## WHY DOES EUROPE NEED A SPECIFIC TREATY ON REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES?

With only a few encouraging exceptions, linguistic diversity is regressing everywhere in Europe and some languages are disappearing, at least for the time being, from areas where they have been historically present and where they have until recent times represented one of the distinctive features of those areas' identity<sup>2</sup>. According to estimates, one language is dying every two weeks on average<sup>3</sup>. Although most of the losses are expected to occur in South America, North East Asia, and Siberia, there are some weakened languages in Europe too, and the aim of the Charter is to prevent such loss.

Some of the reasons why linguistic diversity is digressing in Europe are explained in the evaluation reports adopted by the Committee of Experts to the Charter over the past 10 years<sup>4</sup>. The reports underline several factors that seriously affect regional or minority languages, such as : the enormous pressure by the majority language media; a lack of understanding in the society about the value of linguistic diversity and of the bilingualism that can be acquired through being raised in a regional or minority language context; a pragmatic (but short-sighted) vision that tends to privilege at all costs the learning of international languages of more immediate practical use; last but not least, ignorance (at best) or intolerance on the part of large parts of the majority population vis-à-vis the regional or minority language(s) still spoken in their country<sup>5</sup>.

We will see, in the course of this presentation, how those factors, which fall within the scope of the normative provisions of the Charter, have been dealt with by the Committee of Experts. The Committee of Experts' experience shows that a language which remains absent from public life will become stunted and ultimately die out.

But before going more in depth into the Charter, allow me to mention other Council of Europe treaties which contribute to the protection of linguistic rights, thereby promoting linguistic and cultural diversity throughout Europe<sup>6</sup>.

Before the Charter entered into force, linguistic rights were mainly protected by the European Convention of Human Rights. In terms of linguistic rights, the ECHR sets down mainly negative rights<sup>7</sup>, in the sense that it obliges states to abstain from acting in certain ways, as opposed to positive rights<sup>8</sup>. These include, of course, the freedom of expression and the prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention, including on the grounds of language.

Limits of this 'negative rights' approach became apparent from a relatively early stage. In 1968, in the landmark case on the use of languages in education in Belgium, the European Court of Human Rights concluded that Protocol 1, Article 2 of the Convention, dealing with the right to education, did not guarantee a right to be educated in the language of one's parents by the public authorities or with their aid.

It was therefore felt necessary to have more specialised treaties: the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages<sup>9</sup>. The drafting process of those two treaties shows that a different attitude to the question of linguistic rights has been chosen: on the one hand a minority rights general instrument that covers linguistic rights, and on the other hand a cultural instrument devoted to languages, without focusing on the status of the speakers themselves. Although different in nature and in their objectives they have a common goal – to establish minority civil and political rights and minority linguistic rights as a standard for Europe. These two complementary instruments, which both entered into force in 1998, provide indeed for clear positive rights for linguistic minorities.

Let's turn now to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which is the core instrument of my presentation.

## WHAT KIND OF TREATY IS THE CHARTER?

### A. An "à la carte" menu

Regional and minority languages in Europe are diverse and heterogeneous: the numbers of speakers of these traditionally spoken languages range from a few hundred to several million, some are co-official, others are only spoken at home. All these languages nevertheless have one factor in

common: they are all to some extent in a vulnerable position, some of which are even threatened by extinction – a trend that can only be reversed if states take resolute action<sup>10</sup>.

From a treaty law perspective therefore, the Charter is a somewhat complex instrument. Considering the great variety of language situations in Europe, the drafters adopted a legal technique whereby States have positive obligations of two different sorts, each corresponding to a specific operative part of the Charter: Parts II and III respectively.

- On the one hand, Part II of the Charter lays down the aims and principles which are to be the States' long-term policy targets. It applies to all regional or minority languages spoken within the State, even if States do not recognise them.
- On the other hand, Part III of the Charter caters for the (demographically) stronger languages and provides a menu of specific undertakings, in the fields of education, justice, dealings with the administrative authorities, media, cultural activities, economic and social life and transfrontier co-operation. The States have the possibility to choose the languages which will be covered by this part of the Charter, as well as to tailor their undertakings to the specific situation of each language (provided that a minimum of 35 undertakings is selected). However, the broad element of choice does not mean that governments are free to act arbitrarily, since the Charter requires that they exercise their discretion "in accordance with the situation of each language". This is a problem posed by a number of instruments of ratification in countries where the State applies the same Part III provisions to languages which are in a different situation.

This unique Council of Europe treaty is designed to accommodate the variety of different language situations in Europe and therefore to guarantee optimal protection at the right level and address the needs of the speakers.

So far, 23<sup>11</sup> member States of the Council of Europe have ratified the Charter, a further 10 have signed it. As far as EU member States are concerned, only 15 have ratified and a further 4 have signed. There are regrettably 8 EU member States<sup>12</sup> that have neither signed nor ratified the Charter, for a variety of reasons. In that respect, it is worth recalling the words of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe who, among others, stressed that the "failure to ratify the Charter hitherto cannot at all be explained or justified by the fact that [the member States concerned] do not need it; quite the contrary."

## B. The effectiveness and the impact of the Charter

Given that the Charter does not secure any enforceable rights for language groups or their individual members, it makes no provision for any judicial authority to supervise implementation, as is the case with the European Court of Human Rights. The protection system set up by the Charter is based on a monitoring mechanism, whereby a Committee of independent experts supervises the implementation of the Charter in each State Party.

Monitoring takes place in three-yearly cycles and involves periodical reports by each State on its implementation of the individual Charter undertakings. In performing its functions, the Committee of Experts carries out a fact-finding visit on the spot. The result of this work is the adoption, by the Committee of Experts, of an evaluation report including a number of observations to the State authorities on how to improve the situation of each language covered. The evaluation report, together with the State's comments, is submitted to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which may decide to make the report public and to address a number of recommendations to the State concerned.

According to François Grin, "the discussion of effectiveness is rooted in the philosophy of the Charter, which can be said to be a "third-generation" instrument, whose focus is on results; and reaching results is, at heart, a question of *effectiveness*. Let us remember that the aim of the Charter is to protect and promote languages as elements of diversity; the first problem, therefore, is to reach this goal *effectively*. Effectiveness, however, is not something that happens automatically, even though it is very necessary"<sup>13</sup>.

This is precisely how the Committee of Experts interprets the Charter. Coming back to the factors that affect linguistic diversity<sup>14</sup>, they can obviously be remedied only over a longer period and by a substantial and sustained effort – in fact, to quote the terms of Article 7 of the Charter, by "resolute action". Therefore it becomes all the more vital that the Charter should not be perceived as being just about intervening on the formal contents of the legislative provisions. That is why the reports of the Committee of Experts underline that the Charter is above all about achieving results, and this usually calls for a much more proactive and structured approach.

Assessing the impact of any international convention is not an easy task as it is difficult to determine whether internal factors led to the adoption of that treaty or if the external effect of the treaty had an impact on the internal situation. However, the monitoring mechanism has shown that domestic legislations or policies to protect or promote regional or minority languages have been adopted, revised or implemented since the adoption of the Charter<sup>15</sup>.

As stated above, one of the most important features of the Charter is its monitoring mechanism, involving three-yearly monitoring cycles, with periodical state reports and the monitoring of the Charter's implementation carried out by an independent Committee of Experts. So far, the Committee of Experts has adopted 36 evaluation reports on the fulfilment of the States Parties' undertakings, including observations on how to improve the existing situation of languages covered by the Charter. The reports which have already been considered by the Committee of Ministers have been made public and are available online<sup>16</sup>.

The Charter has for instance given language status to some minority languages which were previously perceived as dialects, such as Kven in Norway, Low German in Germany, Cypriot Maronite Arabic in Cyprus, Limburgish in the Netherlands. In many states Romani was explicitly recognised as a "non-territorial" minority language. The ratification in favour of Yiddish had a positive effect, for

example, in the Netherlands and both the authorities and the speakers realised its cultural value and potential for promotion.

The Charter has also led to the adoption of several domestic acts needed to guarantee the linguistic rights of the speakers, for example:

- The German Land of Schleswig-Holstein adopted a law regarding the use of North Frisian in relations with administrative authorities.
- the Sámi Language Act has been adopted in Finland.
- Acts on the use of Sámi, Finnish and Meänkieli in courts and administration have been adopted in Sweden.
- In 2001, Austria amended its Broadcasting Act and included the provision of regional or minority language programmes in the public service mandate of the ORF.
- The Croatian authorities stated that the long process of adoption of the 2000 Act on the Use of the Languages and Scripts of National Minorities was speeded up by the application of the Charter.

The Charter has also led to the adoption of measures and domestic policies that have strengthened the linguistic rights of the speakers, for example:

- Following the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers in 2001 to "create conditions that will facilitate the use of North Sámi before judicial authorities", Norway set up the first bilingual court, where Sámi is now being used in 25% of the cases.

### C. What lessons can be drawn from the last decade?

On the one hand, one can recognise the value of the reporting since States parties become more aware of the situation of the regional or minority languages spoken on their territories and their obligations vis-à-vis the Charter when writing national reports. On the other hand speakers of regional or minority languages and other interested parties can get an insight into the country's position and policies with respect to regional or minority languages as the reports are made public<sup>17</sup>.

In addition, the regularity of reporting allows a permanent dialogue to be built up between states parties and the Committee as well as between states parties and the relevant speakers in that country. In other words, the Charter has not only fostered dialogue between the speakers and the State authorities, but has also led to an increased and improved institutionalised representation and consultation of speakers at local, regional and state level in order to make their voice heard<sup>18</sup>.

Despite this impressive track record, it should not be overlooked that a number of structural problems continue to hamper the Charter's effectiveness. The Committee of Experts often observes in its reports that the domestic legal framework is generally good and is improving, but that the practical implementation is lagging behind.

## PERSISTING PROBLEMS : IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARTER AT NATIONAL LEVEL

### A. Recurring reasons explaining the failure to implement the Charter

When reading the evaluation reports of the Committee of Experts, one realises that the majority of measures taken by governments so far are of a relatively formal nature. However, adopting a good law on minority language protection is not enough: the law must also be implemented in practice, and this requires a wide range of practical and substantive measures, which are very often lacking. This is the message that emerges clearly from the monitoring carried out by the Committee of Experts so far.

There are various recurring reasons for this:

- *Question of competence between state and regional or local level:* The Committee of Experts has addressed cases where the responsibility for the practical implementation of the Charter lies to a large extent within regional or local authorities (for instance in the UK, in Spain or in the Netherlands). In such cases, the Committee of Experts constantly recalls that the central authorities have nevertheless the overall and final responsibility for the implementation of the Charter.
- *Lack of resources:* The Committee of Experts has constantly emphasised that, for certain undertakings to be implemented, the states must ensure that any additional costs arising from the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages are covered. Otherwise there is a strong risk that the measures taken will be no more than a token gesture. In this context, however, it should also be emphasised that the cost implications are not always as dramatic as estimated, which leads me to my last point.
- *Lack of political will:* The Committee of Experts has observed that – in general – the treatment of regional or minority languages does not so much depend on the ruling party of a state but lies more deeply rooted in the historical development of the country. Therefore it is all the more imperative to take measures to raise the awareness of the majority population.

Despite the fact that the Committee of Experts stresses the need for minority language protection to be grounded in domestic legislation, it so far has always taken a very pragmatic approach to the monitoring of the implementation of the obligations chosen by the States and is orientated towards concrete results and inevitably, policy aspects. It therefore expects resolute action from states parties.

## B. Case-studies on the implementation of the Charter in the field of education and in the media

Turning now to the provisions of the Charter, allow me to underline how State parties implement the provisions of the Charter with regards to education and the media. For a language to be used in the private and public sphere, its presence in the media is as crucial as its use within families or at school.

In both fields, the practice of the Committee of Experts is also rich in lessons.

- In *education*, a structured and overarching approach, covering all the stages of the educational system is often lacking. First of all, the inadequate provision of language teaching, in particular the shortage of adequately trained teachers at all levels of education, remains one of the principal problems affecting most regional or minority languages. The situation is aggravated by the frequent lack of adequate supervision mechanisms. Very few States have set up a body in charge of monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved.
- In the *electronic media*, which are probably the most influential means of communication in today's societies, the presence of regional or minority languages is in many cases little more than symbolic. Misunderstandings persist regarding the encouragement and/or facilitation of the broadcasting of regional or minority language programmes in the private sector. Many State authorities consider private broadcasts as merely complementary to the public service provision and do not take positive measures to increase the (marginal) presence of regional or minority languages in private broadcasting. On the contrary, the Committee of Experts has always stressed that in order to safeguard regional or minority languages, private broadcast media play a crucial role in their own right, which goes beyond merely complementing the public service broadcasting.

These aspects touch upon another important issue that the Committee of Experts has repeatedly underlined in its reports, namely the importance of attaching a positive value to the knowledge of regional or minority languages. Clearly, both an adequate recognition of the language in the educational system and a meaningful presence in the electronic media are a major means of raising the social status of regional or minority languages and thus of conveying a positive image not only to the majority population, but also to the regional or minority language speakers themselves, whose self-esteem often needs to be bolstered. Raising the social status and conveying a positive image of regional or minority languages are in fact crucial elements for a successful protection and promotion<sup>19</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

We have good reason to celebrate the Charter this year, but we are still aware that regional or minority languages remain a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage and that many



challenges still lie ahead of us. Europe is not isolated. It is part of a globalized world, and the whole of humanity is affected by the loss of any language. The International Year of Languages should constitute a momentum for countries of all continents to ensure linguistic and cultural diversity by securing the linguistic rights of their citizens.

## NOTES

1. The author is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this paper and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of the Council of Europe or the Committee of Experts
2. See the 2005 and 2007 Secretary General's Reports to the Parliamentary Assembly on the application of the Charter, at [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/sgreports/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/sgreports/default_en.asp)
3. some 3,000 out of the estimated 6,000 languages around the world are likely to die before the end of the century.
4. An overview of the evaluation reports adopted by the Committee of Experts can be consulted at <http://www.coe.int/minlang/> In addition, see Jean-Marie Woehrling, *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages - A critical commentary*, Council of Europe Publication, 2006.
5. see 2005 report quoted in footnote 1.
6. The Europe I am referring to is the Council of Europe 47 member States.
7. For a thorough analysis of the evolution of international law regarding linguistic rights, see François Grin, *Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. See also a recent article by Robert Dunbar, „European Traditional Linguistic Diversity and Human Rights: a Critical Assessment of International Instruments”, in *Human Rights and Diversity: New Challenges for Plural Societies*, Ruiz Vиейtez, Eduardo J.; Dunbar, Robert (Ed.), University of Deusto, Bilbao, 2007.
8. Possibly the only exception to this is the positive linguistic right defined under Article 6 of the ECHR. This Article, dealing with the right to a fair trial, provides under its paragraph 3 that:  
"Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the following minimum rights:  
a) to be informed promptly, in a language which he understands and in detail, of the nature and cause of the accusation against him;  
e) to have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court. "
9. Considering the scope of this presentation, it will not be possible to analyse in depth the rich elements resulting from the monitoring process carried out by the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention on the protection of National Minorities in terms of linguistic rights. The Framework Convention addresses a wide range of issues relating to minority protection, such as linguistic rights, effective participation in public affairs, freedom of assembly, etc. An abundant literature exist in respect of this Convention, and relevant information can be found at : <http://www.coe.int/minorities>
10. Whereas some States, for example Switzerland or Finland, have a long tradition of protecting and promoting regional or minority languages in public life, others lack awareness of the need for a language policy and confine the use of these languages to the private sphere. In that respect, it is important to remember that there is no division between Western and Eastern European States, as there are countries in both such as Hungary which have also developed tools for protecting and promoting languages.
11. Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom (status as of 17/9/2008). The ratification of the Charter by Poland is expected before the end of this year.
12. Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal.
13. See F. Grin's presentation at the launching of the International Year of Languages, UNESCO, Paris, 21 February 2008.
14. See above last para p.1
15. See the Secretary General's report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2007 and for an overview of the impact of the Charter, see also the presentation of Vesna Crnic-Grotic at the Conference celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Charter and the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, available upon request.
16. See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/Default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/Default_en.asp)
17. See Vesna Crnic-Grotic, footnote 14 above.
18. *Ibidem*
19. See the Secretary General's report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2005, foot note 1.



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His recent books include: *Teaching Invisible Culture: Classroom Practice and Theory* (with C. Crozet, 2003) and *Language Policy in Australia*, (Council of Europe, 2004), as well as a special issue of the international journal *Language Policy* entitled "The Emergence of Chinese" (2007). At present, he has in preparation a book on English and identity in China, a book on intercultural perspectives in education, and a publication on the role languages play in conflict, tension, social disruption and war. He has more than 120 refereed publications.

# THE ROLE OF STANDARD-SETTING INSTRUMENTS IN NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY PLANNING

## INTRODUCTION

In his 23 July message for 2008 *International Day for the World's Indigenous People*, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, spoke of “*the silent crisis confronting many of the world's languages*”. He noted that action on behalf of indigenous languages aims to put an end to marginalization, poverty, expropriation of indigenous people's traditional lands and other grave human rights abuses.

This statement underscores the persisting and vital connection between the general human rights of indigenous peoples and the state of the world's languages, the symbolic and the practical, the ideational and the material, the ideological and the concrete.

While the endangerment of each endangered language is specific to its conditions of history, inherited attitudes, and possibilities some principles are portable across context and some experiences and legal-policy instruments are able to serve as standard bearers of enlightened policy and prospects for change. Three standard setting instruments are:

- (i) explicit recognition of additive bilingualism for all, and first language rights for minorities, in all public policy;
- (ii) entitlements to bi-literate and bi-lingual traditional and contemporary education; and
- (iii) conferring explicit recognition of language rights in health and legal administration.

In this paper I very briefly discuss three instruments of law, the 1990-2006 US Native American Languages Act in the United States, the 1997 Indigenous People's Rights Act of the Philippines and vernacular language and literacy in Sri Lanka. These aim to highlight the essential point in my argument that we must combine symbolic and pragmatic action in three kinds of work, ideological, socio-cultural and linguistic, to strengthen the prospects for survival of endangered languages.

First, however, some brief observations about the context in which we are challenged to support minority languages, globalization.

## GLOBALIZATION

Everywhere education systems, policies and institutions are being transformed by globalization. While education has always been relatively open to international influence because knowledge, language and culture relatively freely cross national borders, today knowledge based economies make

comparative modern education standards critical to national development critical in competitive global relations.

Hence, globalization is not itself new and is best understood instead as *'the widening, deepening and speeding up of world wide interconnectedness'* (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999, p. 2). Globalization combines political economic change with cultural change (Suarez-Orozco and Baolian Qin-Hilliard 2004). On the one hand it entails the formation of world-wide markets operating in real time with common financial systems with enhanced cross-border mobility of production.

Contemporary globalization is accompanied by, and mediated through, English, which in recent decades has come to assume dominant status in curricula, both as a subject and increasingly as a medium of instruction. Its status is especially strong in Asia, where, among the sampled curricula in a 2005 review, it was the first foreign language in the curricula of 100% of Asian countries (Cha and Ham, 2008).

Globalization in some ways facilitates minority language maintenance because of the weakening of exclusive national sovereignty. National states classically operate with integrative and incorporative ideologies which often equate equality with sameness. To the extent that globalization lowers the exclusive demands of sovereign states to cultural sameness for citizens, it enhances prospects for survival the negative assimilative effects of nationalist ideologies. As this conference demonstrates, globalization, and the diffusion of enlightened regard for minority rights, can subject national communication policies to international scrutiny and critique and can disseminate techniques, knowledge and awareness of positive action for making multilingualism intergenerationally vital.

## THE LIMITS OF PLANNING

Before proposing standard setting instruments, it is sobering to reflect on the wisdom of long-in-the-tooth language planners. In a suitably chastening observation about language planning the noted Philippine linguist and educator, Andrew Gonzalez, once famously remarked that *"...benign neglect is better than deliberate language planning..."*.

Gonzalez was reflecting on the gap between the lofty aspirations of policy and the disappointing outcomes in the context of national surveys documenting the communication patterns in the richly multilingual Philippines. The failures of deliberate language planning should make us reflect on the improbabilities of reversing language shift when powerful economic, political, and cultural forces work relentlessly to attach material rewards to monolingual literate competence in a tiny number of globally connected languages.

This is because language is an immensely supple and complex set of practices, a socially produced system of semiotics that interacts closely with all aspects of people's social and personal lives.

Identity, both personal and social, and economic and national interests, as well as collective and individual memory, are all constructed through language, or are realized and negotiated in acts of communication.

Just as Gonzalez urges planners to temper enthusiasm for overt planning, in the early 1970s another distinguished sociolinguist, Joshua Fishman, also offered a wise caution. Reflecting on the failure of exclusively school-centered language revival Fishman made the astute observation that schools can be "unreliable allies of language maintenance". In the absence of sustaining usage planning, changes to public ideologies, and to laws and material opportunities, school-centered language planning for multilingualism can provoke more rapid language shift since this can merely confound the domains of a weak and endangered language with those of a strong and replacing language.

Three disparate and positive instances of standards setting will now be discussed.

### THREE STANDARDS: SYMBOLIC AND PRAGMATIC COMBINED

#### *i) United States: Native American Languages Act*

In 1990 the US Congress approved possibly the most explicit and bilingualism-promoting language declaration in its history, the Native American Languages Act (NALA). Its preamble states: "*It is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans... to use, practice and develop Native American languages*" (Congr. Rcd 1990; P.L. 101-477; October 30, part of the Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Bill, PL101-477).

By contrast, in 2001 the US Congress terminated the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. The BEA had been conceived as an anti-poverty measure, mainly for disadvantaged Mexican American children initially, and was progressively litigated and extended to all immigrant arrivals in US schools. It delivered very extensive, but strictly transitional, first language bridging to English but for its size, and spread, it was subjected to acrimonious dispute over its 33 year life.

The contrast between these two legal enactments is instructive, but what it teaches us is the power of the rhetorical construction, the ideological framing, of laws for minority rights. When national states conceive languages as either unthreatening to what they perceive as national cohesion, or when the supported languages are weak and marginal, or when those languages can somehow be included in new visionary imaginings as belonging to the national state, they can gain legal and political concessions.

The apparent conflict between the minority-language affirming ethos of the NALA and relentless opposition to the BEA suggest that socio-political issues are inherent in language planning for minority languages. They also tell us that the first activity we must engage in strengthen minority and endangered languages is ideological work.

It was precisely this kind of work that led to the further development of NALA. The native language preservation bill that aims to support native tribes transmit their languages intact through the intimate domain of child rearing, and the formal socialisation of schooling, was signed into law by President Bush on December 15, 2006 (H.R.4766, Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act). This new law authorizes funding for language nests, language survival schools and language restoration programmes for the 175 remaining out of the 300 US native languages, now after a long history of repression, including outlawed ceremonies and government policies of relocation and assimilation. It is interesting to note that in 2000, President Bush honoured Navajo Code Talkers who served US interests by suppling unbreakable language codes during World War II and this patriotism connection is a critical rhetorical tool in the ideological work on behalf of native language support.

*ii) Philippines: Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997*

The Philippines offers a different example of a standards setting instrument with potentially considerable merit, the Indigenous People's Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371, Republic of the Philippines, 1997). This law requires corporations to actively seek and obtain the consent of villagers to development initiatives rather than merely having such bodies explain their intentions to locals, thereby elevating the role of local indigenous languages in relation to development issues.

This law is a good illustration of language planning within a sphere of jurisdiction, subject to political sovereignty, and exposes the deep consequences for languages and multilingualism of non-language focused policy action. The Act obligates the state to a range of cultural, educational, social and linguistic procedures and entitlements for indigenous populations, including an acceptance of the legal standing of documents in these languages, supplanting past practices in which minority languages were a source of discriminatory practices.

The Act in effect created a new legal category of "indigenous peoples". Large scale development projects such as hydroelectric dams, logging concessions, and large scale open cut mines, frequently displaced indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, usually resource-rich areas.

Contained within IPRA is provision of a formal Bill of Rights for indigenous peoples, including rights to ancestral domains, self-governance and empowerment, social justice and human rights, and cultural integrity.

As Castro (2002) writes: *"To safeguard the indigenous peoples from deception by unscrupulous elements, the new law required that all project proponents first secure free and prior informed consent (FPIC) from the indigenous peoples in case these projects will intrude into their traditional territories. The use of the indigenous languages for information-education campaigns, public hearings and meetings, as well as for contract signing purposes has been stressed in the IPRA"* (p. 69).

The procedural nature of the obligations imposed by the IPRA for obtaining FPIC may serve as a powerful motor stimulating the use of indigenous languages in precise and elaborated ways.

Castro's study of the effects of IPRA (2002) points out that in "several documented cases" indigenous languages have been the key to preventing indigenous peoples from being deceived as to the intentions of developers, corporations or government agencies concerning large scale projects.

The law has not proved to be anti-development, but subjects development agencies to processes of negotiation that have the effect of empowering local languages and the conventional communication practices of indigenous peoples. It is not clear what effect these moves will have in long term efforts to reinforce the intergenerational vitality of small languages, but the impact so far noted by observers is for positive washback onto the language

The case highlights the potentially powerful effects of policy legislating for language rights but not in abstract ways, specifically tied to concrete application, linking high-stakes economic development to deliberative processes in local languages.

### iii) Vernacular Literacy in Sri Lanka

Another kind of standard setting, first language rights, as enshrined in Sri Lanka's constitution and education laws offers a different set of insights into strengthening languages. While neither of the languages involved here, Sinhala and Tamil, is remotely endangered, vernacular literacy in these languages teaches something important: what role do local languages play in meeting Millennium Development Goals and the six Education for All goals?

Recent research conducted for the UK Department for International Development comparing Zambia and Malawi on the use of children's first languages in early education concluded 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" (Williams, 1998).

This point is amply proved in the case of Sri Lankans' two mother tongues. The UN Millennium Declaration (MD) aims to accelerate international cooperation for overcoming gender disparities in education, improving health provision in poor countries and stimulating general economic development and gainful employment.

Comparing Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in 2001, the most complete recent in-year comparison, underscores Sri Lanka's literacy accomplishments, which against the backdrop of immense social upheaval and ongoing civil conflict are remarkable. The percentages for male and female youth literacy, and the gender parity index (ratio of male to female youth literacy), are given below, adapted by the present author

[www.stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=210&t](http://www.stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=210&t)

Country	Male Literacy%	Female Literacy%	Gender Parity Index
<i>Bangladesh</i>	67.2	60.3	0.90
<i>India</i>	84.2	67.7	0.80
<i>Nepal</i>	80.6	60.1	0.75
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	95.1	96.1	1.01

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), between 1991 and 2001 the overall youth literacy rate in Bangladesh improved 44.7% to 63.6%; in India from 61.9% to 76.4% and in Nepal from 49.6% to 70.1%. For Pakistan only 1998 is listed, 55.3% and for Sri Lanka only 2001, 95.6.

Goal 2 of the MD Goals addresses a longstanding, continually postponed, objective for what in development circles is abbreviated as "UPE" (Universalization of Primary Education). UPE comprises subsidiary targets, number three being that by 2015 there will be universal completion of the full cycle of primary education by all learners, boys and girls equally. This target relies heavily on two literacy measures, a rate for youth (15-24 year olds) and an "adult" rate.

The youth rate measures the percentage of the population "who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on everyday life", a skill which the UN claims reflects the outcome of primary education over "the previous ten years" and serves as a "...proxy measure of social progress and economic achievement" ([www.mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=656](http://www.mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=656); UIS updated 27 July 2007; and MD Goals).

We can see that Sri Lanka has a proud literacy achievement gained entirely in the vernacular languages, and high absolute numbers of claimed literacy, very high male and even higher female achievements, and the gender parity index which reverses the general tendency of male dominance. These are all due to free public education delivered in the mother tongues, the home languages, of Sri Lanka's children.

## CONCLUSION

These standards instruments are based on three different kinds of activity that are all required to improve prospects of making more languages intergenerationally vital: ideological work, socio-cultural work and linguistic work.

Ideological work is directed at undoing past policy. Essentially the ideological work in language planning for language diversity is to contest inherited negative beliefs and attitudes from dominant or replacing languages, negatives related to the value and vitality of indigenous, vernacular or immigrant minority languages.

The socio-cultural work relates to producing local intra-family and intra-community use-functions for threatened languages, i.e. finding new spaces in community and family lives in which modes of identity, relationships and local discourses will not be intact in the target languages. If we can support communities to revitalise processes of intimacy in traditional languages, i.e. to support home transmission and use of local languages, the base for policy intervention and standards will be strengthened. This is a critical aspect of the work that needs doing to strengthen communities and strengthen their languages.



The linguistic, or rather socio-linguistic work, involves re-establishing intact discourses, i.e. naturalising communication in minority languages even if this means persisting against the discouraging effects of code-switching and limited initial expressive abilities.

#### NOTES

1. Andrew Gonzalez, cited on p. 47, A. B. Gonzalez and L. Bautista (1986), *Language Surveys in the Philippines, 1966-1984*, vol. 1, Manila : De La Salle University Press, and at p. 337 in Hau and Tinio (2003).

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# CHANGING THE LANGUAGE OF INDUSTRY: SETTING STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN THE WORKPLACE

In June 2000, the owners of a small restaurant located on the periphery of the Navajo Indian Reservation implemented a workplace policy prohibiting employees from speaking the Navajo language during work hours.<sup>1</sup> Four Navajo employees refused to acknowledge the discriminatory policy in writing and were discharged from their employment as a result. Acting on behalf of the discharged employees, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) filed a federal lawsuit against the owners of the restaurant, alleging that the “English-only” policy discriminated against Navajo employees on the basis of their national origin.<sup>2</sup> The lawsuit, which was the first in EEOC history to challenge a workplace language policy that targeted a Native American language, marked the official injection of Native American languages into the ongoing public discourse about language diversity in the American workplace.<sup>3</sup>

For a variety of reasons, Native American languages occupy a unique and interesting space in the discourse about workplace language diversity. First, unlike the “immigrant” languages that are often targeted by discriminatory workplace policies, Native American languages are indigenous to the land that is now the United States of America. For that reason, Native American languages have the same inherent rights to exist and flourish within the United States as the members of their respective linguistic communities. Furthermore, because the vast majority of Native American languages are likely to disappear within the next few decades—along with the distinct cosmologies, epistemologies, worldviews and understandings imbedded within them—there is a heightened urgency associated with their protection and promotion. Moreover, the United States government has a duty, created by its own stated policy, to preserve, protect, and promote the rights of Native Americans to use, practice and develop their ancestral languages.<sup>4</sup>

In light of all the foregoing, one would think that the status of Native American languages in the American workplace would be the subject of a robust discussion. Sadly, this is not the case. There has actually been very little focused discourse about the nexus between workplace language policies in the United States and the survival of Native American languages. This presentation aims to begin filling that void by: (1) exploring the reasons that workplace presence is essential to the survival of Native American languages; (2) explaining why a space must be carved out for Native American languages in the workplace; (3) providing examples of United States federal, state and tribal standard setting instruments that endeavor to protect and promote the use of Native American languages in the workplace; and (4) proposing an effective multi-layered system of international, national, state and tribal standard setting.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE PRESENCE TO LANGUAGE SURVIVAL

Somewhere in the shuffle to revive Native American languages in the educational, domestic and social spheres of society, the question of language presence in the workplace got lost. However, as explained in detail below, Native American languages cannot continually be allowed to remain in the margins of the work sphere of society because that position can have a profound impact on their prevalence, prestige, socio-economic utility and, ultimately, their continued viability.

### A. The Workplace Is Where People Live Out Their Lives

As Cristina Rodriguez notes, "most people's daily lives, as they are lived out in public, are lived out in the workplace."<sup>5</sup> This is especially true in the United States of America, where the average worker spends approximately 1,804 hours per year at work—more hours than workers in most other countries with "advanced economies" in the Americas, Asia and Europe.<sup>6</sup> Given the disproportionate amount of time that many American workers spend in the workplace, the languages of the workplace, by default, become the prevalent languages in the workers' daily lives. Marginalizing or suppressing Native American languages in the workplace precludes them from operating in that capacity, which effectively speeds the process of linguistic assimilation.<sup>7</sup>

### B. Communities Engage in Self-Definition in the Workplace

Professor Rodriguez also notes that "in [the work] dimension of the public sphere, individuals and communities engage in self definition."<sup>8</sup> Citing the work of Cynthia Estlund, Professor Rodriguez explains that American workplaces become major sites for the negotiation of social differences between communities as the level of interaction between those communities diminishes in spaces such as schools, churches and civic associations.<sup>9</sup> With respect to the negotiation of language differences, specifically, workplace language policies and practices shape workers' understandings of the status and worth of their languages as compared to other languages. Accordingly, if certain languages are marginalized or suppressed in the workplace, the speakers of those languages may lose pride in them. Several scholars believe that loss of pride in a language can lead a linguistic community to shift to another language that is perceived to be more prestigious, which can ultimately result in loss of the original language.<sup>10</sup> If one assumes this to be true,<sup>11</sup> it necessarily follows that a diminished workplace presence for Native American languages can lead to a loss of pride in those languages and a detrimental shift toward languages that are perceived as more prestigious.

### C. The Languages of the Workplace are Languages of Advantage and Opportunity

In addition to the foregoing, socio-economic factors also play a significant role in determining the future viability of a language. Scholars such as Salikoko S. Mufwene perceive language loss to be a direct consequence of the "external ecology" surrounding a language (i.e., the sociohistorical setting in which the language is spoken).<sup>12</sup> These scholars contend that socio-economic factors, rather

than a loss of pride and prestige, lead linguistic communities to abandon their primary languages.<sup>13</sup> According to this reasoning, the dominant languages of the economic market endanger other languages because they lure speakers away with promises of socio-economic advancement and opportunity that other languages cannot provide.<sup>14</sup> In the context of Native American languages, specifically, Professor Mufwene describes this phenomenon as follows:

[T]he current loss of Native American languages is undoubtedly a continuation of the same process that led earlier, or concurrently, to the death of European languages other than English, e.g. Dutch in New Netherland (New Jersey and New York) or French in Maine, and of African languages.... With English establishing itself as the language of the economic machinery and of the colonial and post-colonial administrative structure, everybody else that functioned or was involved within the evolving system (including the African slaves) had to learn it. Gradually the prevalence of English as a lingua franca and ultimately as a vernacular was at the expense of those who were integrated, willfully or not, in the system.... [W]e may argue that English has spread among Native Americans and endangered their ancestral languages not necessarily because of school systems which have dispensed knowledge in English but because of a socio-economic system in which it has been increasingly necessary to command English in order to function in the work place and interact with the larger population.<sup>15</sup>

Based on Professor Mufwene's logic, workplace policies and practices that marginalize or suppress Native American languages can lead workers to perceive their ancestral languages as lacking socio-economic utility. This can force workers to abandon ancestral languages out of "practicality," pursuant to "the principle of least effort."<sup>16</sup> It can also affect the likelihood that workers will successfully transmit their ancestral languages to younger generations because adults are more likely to transmit, and young people are more likely to acquire, languages that are perceived as economically "useful" or "marketable." If a language is believed to lack these traits, its rate of intergenerational transmission will almost certainly suffer as a result.

While this presentation focuses on the case of Native American languages in the United States, the dangers described in this section are equally present in a global context. As markets throughout the world become increasingly integrated, certain languages gain value and status because they provide broader access to the increasingly monolingual "global" workplace. As a result, other languages become devalued because they cannot provide the same level of access to the marketplace. The perception that these languages lack socio-economic utility can prevent intergenerational transmission and, thus, preclude their survival.

## NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES MUST BE SAFEGUARDED AND PROMOTED IN THE WORKPLACE

Given that workplace presence is essential to the survival of Native American languages,<sup>17</sup> it is imperative, for the reasons set forth below, that a space be carved out for Native American languages in the American workplace immediately and without reservation.

The first and most important reason that Native American languages should establish an immediate workplace presence is the critical status of the languages as a group. As stated above, the vast majority of Native American languages are in danger of imminent extinction. Specifically, 155 of the approximately 175 extant Native American languages are expected to die by the year 2060 if significant efforts are not made to protect and revitalize them.<sup>18</sup> In light of the points raised in Section I, above, establishment of a workplace presence is vital to language revitalization and survival and the reversal of these grim statistics.

Another reason that Native American languages should be proliferated in the workplace is the fact that it is the stated policy of the United States government to preserve, protect, and promote the rights of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages.<sup>19</sup> In light of this government policy, special efforts should be made to safeguard and actively promote the use of Native American languages in the workplace.

Native American language use should also be encouraged in the workplace because the transformative presence of Native American languages in the workplace will inure to the benefit of not only Native American communities, but also employers and society at large. Because Native American languages are built upon entirely different philosophical, cosmological and epistemological frameworks than the English language, they have the potential to expose employers to entirely new thought processes and notions of economic relations, which could, in turn, lead to alternative modes of operation and social relations in the workplace that advance indigenous thought and further promote indigenous languages.

In addition to the foregoing, there are no legitimate reasons that a space should not be carved out in the workplace for Native American languages. As alluded to above, there is no philosophical justification for restricting the use of Native American languages in the workplace. The main philosophical support for English-only workplace policies that restrict the use of immigrant languages is the notion that persons who voluntarily enter a community to avail themselves of the benefits of living and working in that community have a duty to conform to the dominant language and culture of that community. That logic simply does not apply to Native Americans in the United States. Native Americans have occupied the land that is now the United States since time immemorial, and their languages, like their communities, have an inherent right to exist and thrive in the United States. It defies reason that Native Americans should refrain from using their ancestral languages to appease a western culture that has been present in the United States for only a few hundred years. To the contrary, the dominant majority should endeavor to embrace Native American languages or, at the very least, to allow Native Americans to choose for themselves whether, and to what extent, they will conform to the language of the dominant majority.

Similarly, the commonly cited "obstacles" to maintaining a multilingual workplace do not present a legitimate challenge to the promotion of Native American languages in the workplace because they are nothing more than expressions of fear and hegemonic tendencies. For example, as noted by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, the notion that all employees must

speak only English to reduce the fears and suspicions of English-speaking co-workers is, in itself, an expression of unjustifiable prejudice that "has an adverse impact on other persons based on their national origin."<sup>20</sup> Likewise, while the belief that all employees in a workplace should be able to communicate in a mutually intelligible manner is valid, the idea that the mutually intelligible language must always be English is narrow-minded. Where possible and appropriate, English speaking employers should endeavor to acquire and use the language of their Native American labor base, rather than impose English upon their workers for purposes of the employers' own comfort and convenience. Finally, the notion that a multilingual workplace reduces efficiency and decreases profits is not only unsubstantiated, it also fails to provide sufficient justification for contributing to the imminent death of a language. Employers who reap the benefits of a diverse labor force have a moral obligation to bear the slight economic burden of multilingualism that a diverse labor force may create. To require Native American communities to endure language loss so that employers can maximize profits is patently unjust.

## SETTING STANDARDS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING AND PROMOTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES IN THE WORKPLACE

Having established that a space must be created for Native American languages in the workplace, the ensuing question is "[h]ow far should the law go in policing the ways in which...employers...construct the mainstream through their formal and informal policies governing the spaces and people under their control?"<sup>21</sup> I suggest that the law should empower Native American communities to preserve, protect and perpetuate their languages by prohibiting employers from marginalizing or suppressing Native American languages in the workplace and providing guidance and funding to Native American communities seeking to set their own standards for language preservation. As explained in detail below, these goals are partly addressed by existing standard setting instruments, but the United States federal government, the governments of the several States, Native American tribal governments and the international community must continue to develop standards to fully accomplish this end.

### A. National Standard Setting: United States Federal Law

#### (1) Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

The principal federal law governing workplace language rights in the United States is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII").<sup>22</sup> Title VII provides, in pertinent part, that:

#### (a) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer<sup>23</sup>

- (1) to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex or national origin; or

- (2) to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.<sup>24</sup>

The EEOC defines "national origin" discrimination to include the denial of equal employment opportunity because an individual has the physical, cultural or *linguistic* characteristics of a national origin group.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Title VII's prohibition against national origin discrimination forms the basis for most federal administrative charges and lawsuits that challenge policies restricting language use in the workplace. The EEOC lawsuit described at the beginning of this presentation is an example of a language rights lawsuit brought pursuant to Title VII.

Despite being the main legal protection for workplace language rights in the United States, Title VII, as interpreted and enforced by the EEOC, is an inadequate legal protection. As Professor Rodriguez explains, Title VII does not protect employees' expressive interests, does not provide redress for unequal working conditions created by language restrictions, and only marginally protects employees from hostile work environments.<sup>26</sup> Title VII protects language rights only incidentally, in conjunction with the broader category of national origin discrimination. The concept of workplace language rights, however, is a complex one that should be given independent consideration. Accordingly, a statute like Title VII cannot stand alone as a sufficient legal protection for Native American languages.

(2) The Native American Languages Act and the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006

In 1990, the United States Congress passed the Native American Languages Act based on its recognition and acknowledgement that: (1) "federal policy ... has often resulted in acts of suppression and extermination of Native American languages and cultures;" (2) these "acts of suppression and extermination are in conflict with the United States policy of self-determination for Native Americans"; and (3) the traditional languages of Native Americans are an integral part of their cultures and identities and form the basic medium for the transmission, and thus survival, of Native American cultures, literatures, histories, religions, political institutions, and values."<sup>27</sup>

The Act provides that it is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages, specifically in education, tribal affairs and public proceedings.<sup>28</sup> It sets forth the government's intention to support the use of indigenous languages in education and recognizes the right of native governments to make their languages "official" and order instruction in their native languages. It also encourages the inclusion of native language instruction, where appropriate, at all levels of education and states that students proficient in Native languages shall be given comparable academic credit to students proficient in other languages.<sup>29</sup> At the time of its passage, the Act also required the President to direct the heads of federal departments and agencies to evaluate the laws they were administering, along



with their policies and procedures, to determine amendments and changes necessary to bring those laws, policies, and procedures into compliance with the Act.<sup>30</sup>

While the 1990 Act was a strong gesture of support for Native American languages, it appropriated no funds, created no positive rights, and had no practical effect.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, in 1992, Congress amended the Act to establish a grant programme to provide funds for, among other things, establishing community language projects to facilitate the transfer of language skills from older to younger Native Americans; training Native Americans as language teachers, interpreters and translators; and participating in television or radio programmes broadcast in Native languages.<sup>32</sup> However, even as amended, the Act has been criticized as an inadequate and disproportionate response to the linguistic crisis of "drawing back from the brink of extinction over 150 languages." The same commentators have also suggested that the Act does not "demonstrate a serious and sustained commitment on the part of Congress to attempt to undo the damage to the languages caused by past government policies."<sup>33</sup>

In December 2006, presumably in an effort to allay these criticisms and fill the gaps left by the Native American Languages Act, Congress enacted the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006.<sup>34</sup> This Act authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services, as part of the Native American languages grant programme, to make three-year grants for educational Native American language nests, survival schools, and restoration programmes.<sup>35</sup> While the Act does provide added funding for Native American language programmes, it focuses specifically on educational programmes and does not address the condition of Native American languages in the workplace.

Neither Title VII, the Native American Languages Act nor the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 are sufficient, standing alone, to provide a basic model for a national or international standard-setting instrument aimed at protecting indigenous languages in the workplace. However, a combination of the three, along with supplemental provisions specifically addressing the promotion of Native language use in the workplace could potentially serve as a good starting point.

## B. State Standard Setting: Individual State Laws

A few individual States with particularized interests have enacted laws protecting the use of non-English languages in the workplace. Of these laws, only the provision established by the State of Hawai'i specifically pertains to an indigenous language. The other laws contain broad prohibitions against the restriction of non-English languages, including Native American languages, in the workplace.

### (1) California Government Code § 12951 and the Illinois Human Rights Act

In 2001, the State of California enacted California Government Code § 12951 in order to "statutorily implement the constitutional protections provided by Section 8 of Article I of the California

Constitution, that no person may be disqualified from entering or pursuing a business, profession, vocation, or employment because of national or ethnic origin, among other factors." Section 12951, entitled "Workplace language policies," makes it an unlawful employment practice for an employer to adopt or enforce a policy that limits or prohibits the use of any language in any workplace, unless: (1) "the language restriction is justified by a an overriding legitimate business purpose such that the language restriction is necessary to the safe and efficient operation of the business;" (2) "the language restriction effectively fulfills the business purpose it is supposed to serve;" and (3) "there is no alternative practice to the language restriction that would accomplish the business purpose equally well with a lesser discriminatory impact."

Like California Government Code § 12951, Section 2-102 of the Illinois Human Rights Act makes it unlawful for an employer to impose a restriction that has the effect of prohibiting employees from speaking their native tongues in communications that are unrelated to their job duties.<sup>36</sup>

It is not entirely clear whether the California or Illinois workplace language laws have had any positive impact on the perpetuation of Native American languages. Conventional wisdom suggests that they have not. These laws are effectively copies of Title VII and they create no affirmative duty to support, fund, embrace or promote Native American languages in the workplace.

## (2) Hawai'i State Constitution

In 1978, the Hawai'i State Legislature amended the State Constitution to declare the Hawaiian language the co-official language of the State, along with English.<sup>37</sup> In the years that followed, immersion programmes based on the M ori model began in the islands, and, at present, approximately 7,500 students are learning Hawaiian, either as a medium of instruction or a second language, in universities, colleges, high schools, immersion schools, preschools, and community programmes.<sup>38</sup> To date, Hawaiian is the most widely studied indigenous language in the United States, and it is the only indigenous language that is used officially by a state government.<sup>39</sup>

Historical accounts of the time period suggest that a renaissance of Hawaiian culture and a renewed respect for the Hawaiian language prompted the declaration of Hawaiian as co-official language of the State, not vice versa.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, one cannot confidently assert that the co-official language designation of the Hawaiian language is responsible for its present day proliferation. However, assigning the language such a status does provide some measure of legal support for Native Hawaiians working to preserve and protect their language.

## C. Tribal Standard Setting: Tribal Laws

Rather than rely on federal or state laws, a number of Native American Tribes have enacted tribal laws to protect and promote their native languages. Tribal laws governing native languages take several different forms, including, but not limited to, laws that prohibit restriction of native languages in the work sphere, laws that impose an affirmative duty on tribal governments or tribal com-

munities to protect native languages, laws that make native language proficiency a required job qualification and laws that make native language proficiency a preferred job qualification.

### (1) Civil Rights Code of the Mille Lacs Band

Title I, Section 13 of the Mille Lacs Band Annotated Statutes affirmatively requires the legislative branch of the Band's government, to "in all its actions seek to preserve and protect the official language of the Band as Ojibwe..." While the language of the statute is broad, it could reasonably be interpreted to impose a duty on the Band's legislature to enact laws that both protect Ojibwe from restrictive workplace policies and affirmatively promote the use of Ojibwe in the workplace.

### (2) Constitution of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians protect their native language, Anishinaabemowin, through a two constitutional provisions. The first is an affirmative provision that, similar to Title I, Section 13 the Civil Rights Code of the Mille Lacs Band, "directs the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches of the government to...[p]romote the preservation and revitalization of Anishinaabemowin."<sup>41</sup> The second is a prohibitory provision, which states that "[n]o law shall be passed that precludes the use of Anishinaabemowin in the conduct of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians' official business, or in the daily affairs of the Tribe and its members."<sup>42</sup> Although it is similar in form to Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act, California Government Code § 12951 and Section 2-102 of the Illinois Human Rights Act, Article IV, Section C of the Band's Constitution provides stronger protection for Anishinaabemowin because it contains no exception for business necessities or official job duties. The affirmative and prohibitory provisions, in combination, create an exemplary legal framework for language preservation and protection.

### (3) Navajo Nation Code

#### 1. Diné Customary Law

Title I, § 204(C) of the Navajo Nation Code states that "[i]t is the right and freedom of the people that the sacred Diné language (nihiineéí) be taught and preserved."<sup>43</sup> Title I, § 205(D) further provides that "[t]he Diné have the sacred obligation and duty to respect, preserve and protect all that was provided for we were designated as the steward for these relatives through our use of the sacred gifts of language and thinking."<sup>44</sup> Like Title I, § 13 of the Mille Lacs Band Annotated Statutes, §§ 204(C) and 205(D) of the Navajo Nation Code create an affirmative duty to protect and promote the use of the Navajo (a/k/a, Diné) language. Pursuant to this affirmative duty, the Navajo people have promulgated multiple rules that affirmatively promote the use of their native language in the workplace.

## 2. Language Proficiency as a Qualification for Judicial Appointment

Title 7, § 354(A)(5) of the Navajo Nation Code states that applicants seeking judicial positions in the district courts of the Navajo Nation must be able to speak the Navajo language in order to be considered for judicial appointment.<sup>45</sup> Requiring native language proficiency as a prerequisite for a prestigious job position, such as district court judge, increases the perceived utility of the language and provides economic and social incentives for language acquisition. As explained in Section II, *infra*, improving the perceived marketability of the native language may increase intergenerational transmission, as parents seek to equip their children for academic and economic success.

## 3. Language Proficiency as a Preferred Trait in Employment

Similarly, Title 10, § 108(B) of the Navajo Nation Code makes knowledge and familiarity with the Navajo language a preferred qualification for educational and support personnel in schools and school districts.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Title 15, § 603(J) of the Navajo Nation Code categorizes the ability to speak and/or understand the Navajo language as a qualification to be considered by all employers doing business in or near the Navajo Nation when giving preference in employment to Navajos.<sup>47</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Not surprisingly, the tribal laws governing native language use in the workplace create more affirmative duties to protect and promote Native American languages than state and federal laws, and they are more specifically tailored to the needs and sensibilities of the linguistic communities. Accordingly, I propose that the most effective standard-setting instruments for the protection of Native American languages in the workplace are those created by the linguistic communities themselves. The linguistic communities possess a unique localized knowledge and, for that reason, are the only entities fully equipped to set standards for the protection and perpetuation of their languages. This does not mean, however, that state, federal and international governing bodies should remain silent. To the contrary, all levels of government share an obligation to help preserve Native American and other indigenous languages for the benefit of indigenous peoples and all mankind. I believe that the most effective and culturally sensitive way for states, national governments and international governing bodies to achieve this end is to focus their standard setting instruments on empowering and enabling indigenous peoples to develop their own standards and programmes for preserving and perpetuating their languages. External standard setting documents should prohibit governments, employers and other entities from restricting the use of indigenous languages in any sphere of society, and should provide direct guidance and financial support to indigenous communities seeking to preserve their native languages. They should not take a paternalistic approach, but rather, should protect the rights of indigenous communities to exercise their self-determination with respect to the future of their languages and their cultures.

## NOTES

1. EEOC v. Kidman, et al, d/b/a RD's Drive In/Exxon, CIV 02 1911 PHX LOA (D.Az. 2002).
2. *Id.*
3. Press Release, United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, EEOC Sues Arizona Diner for National Origin Bias Against Navajos and Other Native Americans (September 30, 2002), at <http://www.eeoc.gov/press/9-30-02-c.html>.
4. 25 U.S.C. § 2903.
5. Cristina M. Rodriguez, Language Diversity in the Workplace, 100 Nw. U.L. Rev. 1689, 1703 (2006).
6. U.S. Department of Labor, Chartbook of International Labor Comparisons: The Americas, Asia, Europe, Chart 2.9 (January 2006), at [http://www.dol.gov/asp/media/reports/chartbook/2008-01/chart2\\_9.htm](http://www.dol.gov/asp/media/reports/chartbook/2008-01/chart2_9.htm).
7. Rodriguez, *supra* note 5, at 1724.
8. *Id.* at 1703.
9. *Id.* at 1704.
  10. See, e.g., DANIEL NETTLE & SUZANNE ROMAINE, VANISHING VOICES: THE EXTINCTION OF THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES (2000).
  11. Scholars have not reached a consensus on this issue. Some scholars, such as Salikoko S. Mufwene, dispute the contention that loss of pride and prestige cause language loss. See, e.g., Salikoko S. Mufwene, Language Endangerment: What Have Pride and Prestige Got to Do With It? in WHEN LANGUAGES COLLIDE: PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE CONFLICT, LANGUAGE COMPETITION, AND LANGUAGE COEXISTENCE (2003).
  12. *Id.* at 3 n.2.
  13. *Id.*
  14. *Id.* at 5.
  15. *Id.* at 10, 13.
  16. *Id.* at 14.
  17. Some may argue that the workplace occupies a diminished role in the life Native Americans because of high unemployment rates and traditional practices. However, the role of the workplace as an institution in Native American communities is currently expanding as a result of large urban Indian populations and the expansion of tribal governments and commercial operations. Accordingly, to the extent that the workplace has not historically played a major role in Native American communities, it is growing increasingly influential as an institution and will likely continue to do so.
  18. Statement by Michael E. Krauss, Director Emeritus, Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, July 20, 2000, at Hearing on S.2688, the Native American Languages Act Amendments Act of 2000 3.
  19. 25 U.S.C. § 2903.
  20. Gutierrez v. Municipal Court, 838 F.2d 1031, 1043 (9th Cir. 1988).
  21. Rodriguez, *supra* note 5, at 1717.
  22. SANDRA DEL VALLE, LANGUAGE RIGHTS AND THE LAW IN THE UNITED STATES 118.
  23. For purposes of Title VII, the term "employer" includes private employers, and state and local governments employers, but it does not include Indian Tribes, the federal government of the United States, the District of Columbia or any corporations wholly owned by the United States federal government or an agency of the District of Columbia.
  24. 42 U.S.C. §2000e-2(a).
  25. United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Compliance Manual on "National Origin Discrimination," at <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/national-origin.html#II>.
  26. Rodriguez, *supra* note 5, at 1738-44.
  27. Waganakising Odawa Tribal Code, Article I, Section B, clause 1 at <http://www.Itbbodawa-nsn.gov/TribalCode/TRIBAL%20CODE%2007012008.pdf>.
  28. *Id.* at Article IV, Section C, at <http://www.Itbbodawa-nsn.gov/TribalCode/TRIBAL%20CODE%2007012008.pdf>.
  29. 1 N.N.C. § 204.C.
  30. 1 N.N.C. § 204.D.
  31. 7 N.N.C. § 354.A.5.
  32. 25 U.S.C. § 2901.
  33. For purposes of the Act, "Native American" is defined as Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Native American Pacific Islander.
  34. 25 U.S.C. § 2903.
  35. *Id.*
  36. *Id.*
  37. 25 U.S.C. § 2905.
  38. The bar in 25 U.S.C. § 2904 against restricting native language use in public proceedings and the confirmation in 2903(5) and (6) of native governments' rights to mandate use of native languages seem to assert positive rights, but

their enforceability is highly questionable. See James Fife, *The Legal Framework for Indigenous Language Rights in the United States*, 41 *Willamette L. Rev.* 325, 359-63 (2005).

39. 42 U.S.C. § 2991b-3.

40. Fife, *supra* note 20, at 357.

41. Public Law 109-394, 109th Cong. (2006).

42. *Id.*

43. 775 ILCS 5/2\_102 (A-5).

44. Hawai'i State Constitution, Article XV, Section 4.

45. Did You Know?, Hale Kuamo'o - Hawaiian Language Center, at <http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/olelo/uaikeanei.php>.

46. About the Hawaiian Language, Hale Kuamo'o - Hawaiian Language Center, at <http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/olelo/index.php>.

47. The Hawaiian Language `Olelo Hawai'i - A Brief History By John Fischer, at [http://gohawaii.about.com/cs/language/a/olelo\\_hawaii.htm](http://gohawaii.about.com/cs/language/a/olelo_hawaii.htm).

48. 10 N.N.C. § 108.B.

49.15 N.N.C. § 603.J.

**WORKSHOP:  
MULTILINGUALISM,  
TRANSLATION,  
COMMUNICATION  
AND LITERACY**

255-257

REPORT

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# WORKSHOP REPORT ON MULTILINGUALISM, TRANSLATION, COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY

## KEY REMARKS

The participants in this workshop commented on the areas where language is used, but are not that apparent in language policies. These areas include health services, new technologies, media, translation and interpretation. These areas may be considered, to some extent, technical and marginal in respect to what is sometimes thought to be at the heart of language policy, i.e. endangered languages, literacy and education.

The apparently less important aspects are, however, central to our daily lives and essential to every human being's existence. Using the Internet, going to the hospital, combating diseases, or discussing common business matters are indeed daily practices whose success is also linked to proper language strategies and policies. Managing all of those areas well is vital to promoting sustainable development.

It was stressed that languages are not a specialized matter reserved for language planners and linguists. As reflected in UNESCO's slogan for the International Year of Languages "Languages matter!". This means that they are relevant for all human and development issues, and particularly for the achievement of the MDGs<sup>1</sup>.

Another point underlined during the workshop was that language policies should be holistic and should focus on the ways and means of promoting multilingualism. Some of the points raised included the following:

- Publishing textbooks is a condition for promoting literacy and multilingualism;
- Promoting the use of regional vehicular languages is as strategically important and essential as safeguarding endangered languages;
- Internet access or technical interpretation is paramount to promoting multilingualism;
- Promoting multilingualism at the primary school level, and providing the financing to do so is a crucial component of an effective language policy;
- All linguistic analyses should employ a holistic approach.

Given the importance of investments required in order to develop and implement effective language policies, the group noted that a mapping of possible financing sources and mechanisms should be an ultimate priority.

Given the multiplicity of fields and levels concerned, effective language policies should be multi-stakeholder-based. Different ministers (from education to culture, from trade to professional training), different civil society groups (from languages associations to readers' clubs) and a variety of professionals in public and private bodies (teachers, literacy experts and planners, publishers, lawyers, interpreters, technical and scientific translators) are or must be on board in this process.

It was also stressed that a multilingual society is not necessarily a society in which everybody speaks all useful languages, but a place where communication is effective beyond language barriers because a variety of means and resources, including human and technical interpretation and translation resources, are available.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Every language policy should follow a holistic approach, and should take into account all possible aspects of social interaction, including technical and practical ones. Language policies should aim to impact on all areas where social interaction takes place (school, administration, parliament, justice, market, enterprises, financing bodies hospitals, media, cyberspace and software engineering, sports and entertainment, charity, cultural institutions, publishing, television cinema, advertisement etc).
- UNESCO, regional governmental bodies (like ACALAN<sup>2</sup>, Maaya<sup>3</sup>, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission) and national governments are invited to organize or further develop democratic forums, consultation initiatives and frameworks that facilitate transversal participation of public opinion, research actors, public institutions, private partners, civil society, market actors and professionals.
- Special initiatives should be taken to assist associations for interpreters and translators at the national level (by governments), regional level (by institutions like ACALAN, Maaya, the Council of Europe, the European Commission) or globally (UNESCO).
- Language policy monitoring tools (observatories, reports and statistics) should be created or further supported at national, regional and global levels. Such tools should also focus on the linguistic aspects of pertinent existing UNESCO and UN standard-setting instruments<sup>4</sup>.
- The safeguarding of language should be accompanied by modernization, namely through terminology development.
- As a priority for international institutions and UNESCO, possible sources of financing should be mapped and publicized.
- Language learning and teaching, at whatever level, both in public and private schools, should also be encouraged as a resource and a means to better understand the world through communication and engagement.

## NOTES

1. African Academy of Languages
2. World Network for Linguistic Diversity
3. Main standard setting tools: UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and its Action Plan (2001)
4. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)  
Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003)  
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)  
UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966),  
UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992)  
UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

# WORKSHOP: EDUCATION AND LEARNING

261-263

REPORT

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# WORKSHOP REPORT ON EDUCATION AND LEARNING

The following report attempts to briefly summarise a number of key points raised during the intense and fruitful discussions during this workshop. These points are dependent upon the necessary commitment at all political levels, acknowledging the fundamental human right to education, and as a key part of efforts towards achieving the EFA goals and the MDGs.

## LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY AND PRINCIPLES

- Education, language and learning are inextricably linked. As language plays a central role in cognition and learning, the promotion of mother tongue education is necessary for personal development and access to quality education. Quality mother tongue education, in particular in basic education, is crucial for social inclusion and effective bilingual and multilingual education. Mother tongue language education provides an essential foundation for further language education and facilitates the life-long development of the learner's linguistic repertoire.
- Effective mother-tongue based multilingual education needs to be promoted within a strategy of 'multilinguality' based on a coherent integrated approach to national and regional policies with a view to accommodating local, national and international languages in the curriculum. Access to education in the mother tongue, which is a basic right of all learners, should form part of an additive rather than subtractive approach (mother tongue AND other languages) by ensuring children's entitlement to the other languages readily available, including the right to acquire the necessary competences in an official language of the country.
- The languages and cultures of all students should be valued regardless of their status in the curriculum, thus promoting a positive self-identity, deepening cultural awareness and understanding, raising the individual's awareness of his/her own plurilingual repertoire and developing respect for the repertoires of others.
- Language education policy needs to be properly targeted in order to create a real and inclusive learning society that is responsive both to the immediate realities of learners and the demands of globalization and rapid change.
- Language education policy is a key part of social policy and needs to be developed within an intersectoral approach to policy making.
- Policy development requires strategic planning with advocacy programmes, including awareness raising and consultation with key stakeholders; the particular concerns of parents regarding multilingual education should be addressed in this process.

- Ongoing research is necessary to a) clarify and develop the concept of multilingual education in specific contexts and produce empirical evidence, and b) develop multilingual pedagogy.

## SOME PEDAGOGIC CONSIDERATIONS

- The languages represented in the classroom are a resource to be exploited. Classroom (linguistic) diversity should be used to promote awareness of languages, their diversity and convergences, as a mode of thinking – developing cognitive skills and abilities, and critical thinking. This will support the development of intercultural awareness and sensitivity, at the individual and societal levels, also contributing to empathic understanding and, ultimately, towards peace.
- Teachers are facilitators and learners. Beginning in primary school, an active pedagogy – rather than "teacher knows everything" approach to education is necessary so that children are empowered; learners can thus be supported in gradually assuming an appropriate degree of responsibility for their learning as a basis for further life-long learning.
- A successful teacher does not need to know all the languages in the classroom – it is much more important that he/she understands how to use them.
- The teacher should have the necessary competence in the language(s) of instruction and should develop awareness of the specific language competences required by the school curriculum. The elaboration of benchmarks – descriptions of the specific language competences required for successful learning in all subjects across the curriculum at different levels – is desirable for curriculum planning at different levels; teacher education should aim to make all subject teachers aware of their role as language teachers. A holistic approach to the overall language curriculum would support the implementation of a coherent approach to the development of the learner's plurilingual repertoire.
- ICTs and software localisation present educators with new ways of thinking about multilingual education and language teaching pedagogy. Investment is required in multidisciplinary research and developing teaching methods with a view to examining how ICTs can be most effectively used. Both hardware and software should be carefully designed, through dynamic interaction between educators, administrators, and computer engineers.
- ICTs based on interactive pedagogical principles can offer learners new and effective ways of developing autonomous learning strategies and help to promote an inclusive knowledge society.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UNESCO should promote an approach based on 'multilinguality' – quality mother tongue based multilingual education for all, accompanied by the necessary educational research, as part of its efforts towards the EFA and the relevant MDGs through the organization in different regions of awareness-raising events;
2. In cooperation with other international and intergovernmental organizations, UNESCO should:
  - a. help all Member States to elaborate appropriate language in education policies that ensure successful education and social inclusion
  - b. encourage research in support of the implementation of these policies
  - c. identify sources of funding for the effective implementation of these policies.



**WORKSHOP:  
SAFEGUARDING  
ENDANGERED LANGUAGES**

267-268

REPORT

Moderator: Herman Batibo, Professor of African Linguistics, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

Rapporteur: Clare Stark, Assistant Programme Specialist, Office of the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris, France

LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Victor Montejo, Professor, Department of Native American Studies, University of California, Davis, California, USA

Anthony Jukes, Research Associate, Endangered Languages, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, UK

Nicholas Ostler, Chairman, Foundation for Endangered Languages, Bath, UK

Hannah Vari-Bogiri, Lecturer, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji

# WORKSHOP REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

## INTRODUCTION

The processes associated with globalization are having a variety of accelerated impacts on the use, knowledge and preservation of languages. Globalization puts many languages in danger directly and indirectly as importance is put on acquiring the main international languages and technologies. International languages have the potential to displace regional and local languages, especially in education and the workplace. Through centralization in the interests of unity and identity, certain indigenous languages have been empowered at the expense of others. It also heightens the threat of cultural appropriations as more and more of the world has access to indigenous cultures.

Globalization also has the potential to revitalize languages and foster their use in society by 1) connecting institutions working to protect endangered languages; 2) providing the information and communication tools needed to document languages, traditional knowledge and cultural practices for the use and benefit of communities and the wider public; 3) providing independent sources of external advocacy for language communities; and 4) providing opportunities through international solidarity to breathe new life into endangered languages.

In assessing the degree of risk, it is a significant problem that there is so little reliable concrete information on prospects of language survival.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) In line with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, nation-states have the responsibility to design national language policies that promote the use of endangered and minority languages in all appropriate spheres of public life (health, education, culture, tourism, judicial and legal systems).
- 2) Language documentation efforts should be accelerated and focus especially on documenting endangered languages, with full attention to indigenous knowledge. Communities, businesses, NGOs and governments should ideally be actively involved in documentation projects and revitalization efforts. Projects may include the promotion of literacy.
- 3) Development efforts should focus on strengthening traditional knowledge systems and developing cultural industries in order to generate income and promote sustainable development and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. They should also extend access to ICTs and training opportunities within communities so that these tools can be employed to further promote cultural industries for economic self-sufficiency.

- 4) In order to promote positive attitudes to safeguarding languages, a holistic approach must be developed that empowers communities to use their languages, with linguistic, socio-political and economic dimensions so that parents are encouraged to transmit their language to their children and so that young people are motivated to learn and use this languages.
- 5) Local civil society organizations and NGOs should urge governments to advance national language policies that not only include minority languages, but also recognize the value of linguistic diversity. At the same time, such international and regional bodies as UNESCO, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Council of Europe and the African Union should also strengthen their efforts at the international level to sensitize and encourage governments to focus more attention on the development of national language policies. Increased prominence for indigenous language communities must be protected against improper uses and abuse.
- 6) Given that static language populations are not the only indicator relevant to the future vitality of a language, it would be desirable to have more reliable data on the trends of language survival. To this end, UNESCO should consult on measures to provide longitudinal statistics on language populations.

# WORKSHOP: STANDARD-SETTING INSTRUMENTS

273-275

REPORT

Moderator: Janet Blake, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University Shahid Beheshti, Tehran, Iran

Rapporteur: Russ Russell-Rivoallan, Programme Specialist, Office of the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris, France

LEAD DISCUSSANTS:

Sonia Parayre, Co-Secretary of the Committee of Experts to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France

Joe Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Breann Yoshiko Swann, Esq., Licensed Attorney and Practitioner of Indian Law and Labor and Employment Law; Tribal Policy, Law & Government LL.M. Program, Arizona State University, Tempe, USA

# WORKSHOP REPORT ON STANDARD-SETTING INSTRUMENTS

## UNESCO'S ROLE

UNESCO, as the lead Agency for the International Year of Languages, has a responsibility to stimulate international action of a concrete nature with respect to the international safeguarding of linguistic diversity and in guaranteeing language rights. UNESCO's mandate, especially the fields of human rights and culture, enables it to take a co-ordinating role in this domain.

UNESCO should urge Member States to fulfil their existing obligations under international treaties to protect and promote minority linguistic rights and linguistic diversity.

## THE ROLE OF VARIOUS ACTORS WITH RESPECT TO SAFEGUARDING LANGUAGES

In view of the cross-cutting nature of safeguarding languages, UNESCO should foster its cooperation in this specific domain with other agencies of the UN.

It is the responsibility of the State to develop an effective language policy at the national level (based on agreed criteria) with special concentration on endangered languages. States also have a responsibility to enable citizens and communities that have shown a commitment to develop their language and culture. This community empowerment could also take the form of public and private partnerships.

Linguistic communities have a concomitant responsibility to seek such assistance.

All States should adopt language policies that favour multilingualism and plurilingualism.

States and communities should target children and youth, ensuring that opportunities exist for the encouragement and promotion of inter-generational transmission of language.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Language learning at the sub-national, national and extra-national levels enhances cultural awareness, societal participation, social cohesion, intercultural competence and mutual understanding and respect. This enriches the whole of society.

Recognition of cultural and linguistic rights has the potential to enhance political stability and contribute to sustainable development.

States should aim to develop language policies through negotiated discursive approaches to policy formulation, thus localising decision-making as much as possible.

The retention of minority or regional languages generally does not endanger or threaten the acquisition of the national language (if different), or the acquisition of an international language.

The trans-boundary nature of languages needs to be taken into account.

Awareness raising of the value of languages and linguistic diversity should be promoted and should include the identification of certain domains where language can be reinforced: health, workplace, media, education, business.

There should be some consideration of language as a Human Right, rather than simply as a cultural issue.

## PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

To this end, UNESCO should adopt a political declaration that encourages the ratification by Member States of existing normative instruments that contribute to the safeguarding of languages.

The provision of an institutional umbrella mechanism that would encourage actions regionally or sub-regionally is needed.

An institutional mechanism (e.g. an Observatory) should be established as an over-arching international framework model, in partnership with regional mechanisms to act as:

- A clearing house
- A laboratory of ideas, for example through the establishment of a glossary of terms with the purpose of control so as to appropriately clarify and define concepts;
- A human and institutional capacity-builder in Member States;
- A monitoring/reporting body;
- Provision of a forum for indigenous peoples to enable the bringing to the fore of their claims.

The question of funding such a mechanism will need to be considered. This could be through voluntary extrabudgetary contributions of Member States and/or contributions from regional inter-governmental institutions.

National inventories could be undertaken to establish certain information with a view to future benchmarking, such as:

- what languages do exist?;
- what is their status?;
- what is the number/age of speakers?;



- what legislation exists to protect/promote languages?;
- how is the language used – solely private, public, mix of public and private?;
- ICH?;
- documentation and access?.

An International Directory of Linguistic Policies, similar to the World Heritage List, could be established with a view to recognising good policy practices.

The purpose of such a Directory would be to:

- Allow for the sharing of information on relevant issues;
- Provide a cadre for similar legislation;
- Become a Best Practice Register (States named);
- Provide international publicity and awareness raising of the issues.

The National Inventories could feed into the international directory.

Very clear criteria for inclusion must be established – not foreign languages, but migrant languages. Criteria for vulnerability (IUCN) must also be understood.

Shintaro Ito,  
State Secretary for Foreign  
Affairs, Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs, Japan (MoFA),  
Tokyo, Japan

**Multilingualism is one  
of the essential elements  
for the further evolution  
of our common society.**



Hirokazu Matsuno,  
Senior Vice-Minister,  
Ministry of Education, Culture,  
Sports, Science and Technology  
(MEXT), Tokyo, Japan

**Mutual exchange of culture  
and values beyond borders  
has heightened interest  
in countries with different  
languages, societies,  
cultures, and religions,  
which has opened the door  
to gaining even more new  
knowledge and experience.**





Koïchiro Matsuura,  
Director-General,  
United Nations Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),  
Paris, France

Languages are not only important tools for communication between individuals, groups and nations: they are our link to the past – and to the future; the medium through which cultural memory is transmitted from generation to generation; and an important reference point in today's fast changing world.

Konrad Osterwalder,  
Rector,  
United Nations  
University (UNU);  
United Nations  
Under-  
Secretary-General,  
Tokyo, Japan

The diversity  
of languages is part  
of the richness  
of human  
experience.





Vigdís Finnbogadóttir,  
Former President, Republic  
of Iceland, and UNESCO  
Goodwill Ambassador  
for Languages, Reykjavík,  
Iceland

The cultivation of cultural  
diversity is one of today's  
greatest opportunities,  
because we cannot  
conceive a stronger and  
a better world in the  
future without stronger  
and better individuals.

Olabiya Babalola Joseph Yaï,  
Chairman of UNESCO's  
Executive Board;  
Ambassador and Permanent  
Delegate of Benin to UNESCO,  
Paris, France

UNESCO should proclaim  
loud and clear and the  
other members of the  
United Nations should join  
them in chorus to declare  
that a true linguistic  
policy is nothing other  
than society  
accommodating and  
adjusting to linguistic  
diversity.



Stephen May,  
Professor and Chair  
of Language and Literacy  
Education, University  
of Waikato, Hamilton,  
New Zealand

It is actually nationalism,  
and the related  
organization of the  
nation-state that is the  
greatest threat to  
language diversity, based  
as it is on the notion  
of linguistic homogeneity  
in the public realm and,  
often, an allied public  
monolingualism.



Adama Samassékou,  
Executive Secretary  
ad int. of the African Academy  
of Languages (ACALAN)  
and President of Maaya Network,  
Koulouba, Mali

Globalization can be a  
tremendous asset if, together,  
we gather our efforts to  
preserve and cultivate  
linguistic and cultural  
diversity, considering all our  
languages and our cultures  
as a single treasure  
for humanity.

Hans d'Orville,  
Assistant Director-General  
for Strategic Planning,  
United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
(UNESCO),  
Paris, France

Without strong policies  
to foster linguistic diversity in  
all aspects of a nation's life –  
one of the four  
principles/pillars  
recognized by the World  
Summit on the Information  
Society (WSIS) – in schools,  
administration, law and in the  
media, the world risks denying  
hundreds of thousands of  
people globally the basic right  
to engage in public life,  
debate and participatory  
democracy.



Gregory Kamwendo,  
Associate Professor  
of Language Education  
and Head of the Department  
of Languages and Social  
Sciences Education, Gaborone,  
University of Botswana

Linguistic exclusion in  
HIV/AIDS education can be  
very critical when it comes  
to minorities such as the  
visually impaired, the  
hearingimpaired,  
indigenous peoples,  
and refugees or displaced  
groups of people.



Yoshiaki Mikami,  
Professor of Management  
and Information Systems Engineering  
and Coordinator of the Language  
Observatory Project,  
Nagaoka University of Technology,  
Nagaoka, Japan

There are more than six thousand languages spoken around the globe, but only a few of them are enjoying the benefits of information technology.

Barbara Trudell,  
Africa Area Academic  
Director,  
SIL International,  
Nairobi, Kenya

Research – both quantitative and qualitative – is plentiful concerning the beneficial impact of using a child's first language on cognitive and academic outcomes in school.





Hannah Vari-Bogiri,  
Lecturer, School of Languages  
and Media, University  
of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji

Out of the 106 known  
indigenous languages  
of Vanuatu, only 81 are still  
active, while 17 are conside-  
red moribund, and eight  
are already extinct.

(from left to right)  
Konrad Osterwalder,  
Rector,  
United Nations University  
(UNU), Tokyo, Japan;  
United Nations  
Under-Secretary-General

Hans d'Orville,  
Assistant Director-General  
for Strategic Planning,  
United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organization (UNESCO), Paris,  
France







Speakers and panelists from the 2007 UNU/UNESCO International Conference on "Globalization and Languages: Building on our Rich Heritage."

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

# DAY 1

## WEDNESDAY, 27 AUGUST 2008

### MASTER OF CEREMONY

Obijiofor Aginam, Academic Programme Officer, Director of Studies on Policy and Institutional Frameworks, UNU

09:30-10:15

### OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION

- Shintaro Ito, State Secretary for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan (MoFA)
- Hirokazu Matsuno, Senior Vice-Minister, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan (MEXT)
- Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Konrad Osterwalder, Rector, United Nations University (UNU)

10:30-12:30

### KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS ON LANGUAGES AND GLOBALIZATION: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Co-Chairs: Konrad Osterwalder, Rector, UNU and Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO

*Keynote speakers will present an overview of the importance of safeguarding languages in view of their critical role in attaining the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals, and in promoting cultural diversity and the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples. A brief Q&A period will follow the presentations.*

#### Keynote speakers:

- Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Former President, Republic of Iceland, and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages  
"Education for All in the Language of their Cultural Heritage"
- Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yaï, Chairman of UNESCO's Executive Board; Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Benin to UNESCO  
"Languages and Globalization: Time for Action"
- Stephen May, Professor and Chair of Language and Literacy Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand  
"Language Rights: Linking the Local and the Global"
- Adama Samassékou, Executive Secretary (a.i.) of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), and President of Maaya Network  
"Building shared knowledge with our languages in a globalizing world"

13:45-18:30

## PANEL SESSIONS

*Three panel sessions will be held on some of the strategic areas that are important in providing support to the safeguarding and promotion of linguistic diversity, especially indigenous, minority and endangered languages.*

*Structure of panel sessions: Moderators will introduce the topic of discussion and the panel members. Panelists will then give 10 minute presentations on their work as it relates to the topic of discussion, focusing on some of the key issues from their perspective. This will then be followed by a question and answer session.*

13:45-14:45

### **PANEL SESSION 1: Multilingualism, translation, communication and literacy**

**Moderator:** Marcel Diki-Kidiri, Senior Researcher,  
National Centre for Linguistic Research, CNRS, France

**Panelists:**

- Gregory Kamwendo, Associate Professor of Language Education and Head of the Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Botswana  
"But Having Small Houses Spreads HIV – Problems of Language and Communication in Health Services in Sub-Saharan Africa"
- Yoshiki Mikami, Professor of Management and Information Systems Engineering and Coordinator of the Language Observatory Project, Nagaoka University of Technology  
"Measuring Linguistic Diversity on the Internet"
- Osahito Miyaoka, Professor of Linguistics, Osaka Gakuin University  
"My Two Endangered Languages – Japanese and Alaskan Yupik"

15:00-16:45

**PANEL SESSION 2: Education and Learning**

**Moderator:** Ana Luiza Machado, Deputy Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

**Panelists:**

- Paulin Goupognon Djité, Associate Professor of Sociolinguistics, Translation and Interpreting, School of Humanities and Languages, University of Western Sydney  
"The Nexus between Education, Learning and Language"
- Ajit Mohanty, Professor of Psychology and Chairperson, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India  
"Multilingual Education for Indigenous Children: Escaping the Vicious Cycle of Language Disadvantage in India"
- Gabriele Mazza, Director for School, Out-of-School, Higher Education and Languages, Council of Europe  
"The Right to Education and Language Proficiency"
- Barbara Trudell, Africa Area Academic Director, SIL International, Kenya  
"Contesting the Default: The Impact of Local Language Choice for Learning"
- Rama Kant Agnihotri, Professor of Linguistics, University of Delhi  
"Multilinguality, Language and 'a language': Implications for Education"

17:00 – 18:30

**PANEL SESSION 3: Safeguarding endangered languages**

**Moderator and panelist:** Herman Batibo, Professor of African Linguistics, University of Botswana  
"Reversing Attitudes as a Key to Language Preservation and Safeguarding in Africa"

**Panelists:**

- Victor Montejo, Professor, Department of Native American Studies, University of California, Davis  
"Naming and Renaming in the Process of Safeguarding Endangered Languages: The Case of Jakalteq Maya Language in Guatemala"
- Anthony Jukes, Research Associate, Endangered Languages Academic Programme, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK  
"A Balancing Act: Community Interests and Language Documentation"
- Nicholas Ostler, Chairman, Foundation for Endangered Languages, UK  
"Is it Globalization that Endangers Languages?"
- Hannah Vari-Bogiri, Lecturer, School of Languages and Media, University of the South Pacific  
"Safeguarding Endangered Languages: Vanuatu – A case-study"

## DAY 2

## THURSDAY, 28 AUGUST 2008

*Panel session on standard-setting instruments, workshops, and opening/closing plenary sessions*

9:30–10:45

### PANEL SESSION 4: Standard-setting instruments

**Moderator:** Janet Blake, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University Shahid Beheshti, Tehran, Iran

**Panelists:**

- Sonia Parayre, Co-Secretary of the Committee of Experts to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Council of Europe  
"European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages"
- Jo Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education, University of Melbourne, Australia  
"The Role of Standard-Setting Instruments in National Language Policy Planning"
- Breann Yoshiko Swann, Esq., Licensed Attorney and Practitioner of Indian Law and Labor and Employment Law; Tribal Policy, Law & Government LL.M. Programme, Arizona State University  
"Changing the Language of Industry: Setting Standards for the Protection of Indigenous Languages in the Workplace"

11:00–11:20

### Plenary Session

*Opening remarks and clarification of the structure of the workshops and the main objectives and aim*

**Co-Chairs:** Govindan Parayil, Vice Rector, UNU and Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO

11:30–13:00

## Parallel Workshops

*Structure: The aim of the workshops is to give participants the opportunity to examine in more depth, the key issues that were raised during the panel sessions, and to develop policy recommendations on the strategies and approaches needed to protect endangered languages and foster their use in societies. Moderators will facilitate the discussions, and the rapporteurs will be responsible for drafting the recommendations of the group for discussion and adoption during the plenary session held later in the afternoon.*

### **WORKSHOP 1: Multilingualism, translation, communication and literacy**

**Moderator:** Marcel Diki-Kidiri, Senior Researcher, National Centre for Linguistic Research, CNRS, France

**Rapporteur:** Mauro Rosi, Programme Specialist Creative Industries for Development Section, UNESCO

#### **Lead discussants:**

- Gregory Kamwendo, Associate Professor of Language Education and Head of the Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Botswana
- Yoshiki Mikami, Professor of Management and Information Systems Engineering, and Coordinator of the Language Observatory Project, Nagaoka University of Technology
- Osahito Miyaoka, Professor of Linguistics, Osaka Gakuin University

### **WORKSHOP 2: Education and learning**

**Moderator:** Gabriele Mazza, Director for School, Out-of-School, Higher Education and Languages, Council of Europe

**Rapporteur:** Nicholas Turner, Research Assistant, Peace and Governance Programme, UNU

#### **Lead discussants:**

- Paulin Goupognon Djité, Sociolinguist, University of Western Sydney
- Ajit Mohanty, Professor of Psychology and Chairperson, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University
- Wanna Tienmee, Director, Foundation for Applied Linguistics in Thailand

### WORKSHOP 3: Safeguarding endangered languages

**Moderator:** Herman Batibo, Professor of African Linguistics, University of Botswana

**Rapporteur:** Clare Stark, Assistant Programme Specialist, Office of the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO

**Lead discussants:**

- Victor Montejo, Professor, Department of Native American Studies, University of California, Davis
- Anthony Jukes, Research Associate, Endangered Languages, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK
- Nicholas Ostler, Chairman, Foundation for Endangered Languages, UK Hannah Vari-Bogiri, Lecturer, University of the South Pacific

### WORKSHOP 4: Standard-setting instruments

**Moderator:** Janet Blake, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University Shahid Beheshti, Tehran

**Rapporteur:** Russ Russell-Rivoallan, Programme Specialist, Office of the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO

**Lead discussants:**

- Sonia Parayre, Co-Secretary of the Committee of Experts to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Council of Europe
- Jo Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education, University of Melbourne, Australia
- Breann Yoshiko Swann, Esq., Licensed Attorney and Practitioner of Indian Law and Labor and Employment Law; Tribal Policy, Law & Government LL.M. Programme, Arizona State University

14:00–15:30

#### Parallel Workshops

16:00–17:30

#### Concluding Session

**Co-Chairs:** Govindan Parayil, Vice Rector, UNU and Hans d'Orville, Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning, UNESCO

Reports of the workshops

Discussion of conclusions, and adoption of recommendations



The costs of losing linguistic diversity are high and may jeopardize international cooperation to promote sustainable development, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals. Thus, UNESCO is working to increase awareness among Member States governments, UN organizations, educational institutions and civil society about the importance of promoting and protecting all languages, especially indigenous, minority and endangered languages, and the need to develop language policies that enable each linguistic community to use its first language, or mother tongue, as widely and as often as possible, including in educational, administrative and legal contexts.

**Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO**

Language is an important aspect of culture. It is an expression of the way we think, but even more importantly, our language determines to a high degree not only how we think, but also what we are thinking about. A concept requires a notion and a notion calls for a word. Hence, the diversity of languages is part of the richness of human experience. The threads of history and human experience, spun of language, now run through the sharp machinery of modernization and globalization. These threads connect us to our past and lead us from the labyrinth of the present. Humans speak with many voices, but in our universal quest for a better life, humanity speaks as one. Language does not merely inform our sense of history and progress; it is the core of our understanding, the very means by which we know.

**Konrad Osterwalder, Rector of UNU**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

For further information about  
UNESCO's activities related to  
globalization, please see:  
[www.unesco.org/bsp/globalization](http://www.unesco.org/bsp/globalization)



GLOBALIZATION  
& LANGUAGES  
BUILDING ON OUR RICH HERITAGE

グローバル化と言語  
豊かな遺産を守るために