

Linguistic genocide

Les 40 ans de la FNSF [1966 - 2006]

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Content

- **biodiversity - linguistic and cultural diversity**
- **linguistic and cultural genocide**
- **situation of deaf children today in the light of educational and linguistic human rights**
 - **right to education**
 - **right to have education in mother tongue**
- **critical look at the human rights instruments**

- **the rights of parents - the rights of children**
- **impact of nationalism and linguistic imperialism**
- **responsibilities of national associations of the Deaf**

What we know about the Deaf child?

- 1. Education of deaf children
 - 2. Language and language acquisition
 - 3. Psychological studies
 - 4. Studies on listening and speech skills
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- **Studies on human rights of the Deaf child?**

human rights

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graph TD; A[human rights] --> B[educational rights]; A --> C[linguistic human rights]; C --> D[educational language rights]
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educational rights

linguistic human rights

educational language rights

Realisation of linguistic human rights

- Right to education
- freedom of thought and expression
- to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect and exploitations
- right to be not subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Deaf children victims of systematic linguistic genocide

- monolingual reductionism
- linguistic imperialism

→ research on linguistic human rights

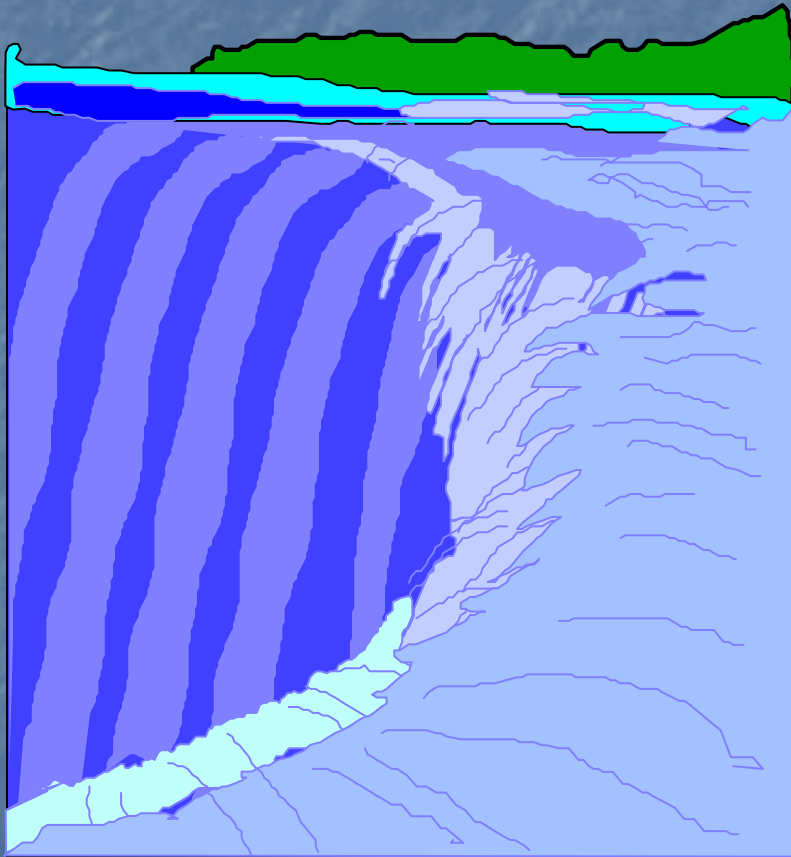
→ status of language in human rights instruments

→ by Dr. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

How to love a Child?

- Educational philosophy of Janusz Korczak:
 - CHILD'S RIGHT OF TODAY
 - CHILD EXISTS FOR HER/HIMSELF
 - EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES NOT ALLOWED TO SERVE OTHER GOALS BUT WELFARE OF THE CHILD
- "Who are you, what will you become?"

Biodiversity - linguistic and cultural diversity



- High biodiversity = high linguistic diversity
- 90% of languages in a danger of dying out in a century
- linguistic diversity disappearing faster than biological one

Linguistic diversity

- Indigenous peoples
 - 4 % of the world's population
 - control or manage 20 % of the surface of the earth
 - speak 60 % of the world's languages
- 80 % of the world's languages exist in one country alone, median language 5000 speakers
- sign languages a rich part of global linguistic diversity

Genocide?

- The international legal definition of the crime of genocide is found in Articles II and III of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.
- Article II describes two elements of the crime of genocide:
 - 1) the *mental element*, meaning the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such", and
 - 2) the *physical element* which includes five acts described in sections a, b, c, d and e. A crime must include *both elements* to be called "genocide."
 - http://www.preventgenocide.org/genocide/official_text.htm

- Article III described five punishable forms of the crime of genocide: genocide; conspiracy, incitement, attempt and complicity.

- **Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:**
 - (a) Killing members of the group;
 - (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
 - (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
 - (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
 - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

- **Article III: The following acts shall be punishable:**
 - (a) Genocide;
 - (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
 - (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
 - (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
 - (e) Complicity in genocide. "

- *The following are genocidal acts when committed as part of a policy to destroy a group's existence:*
- **Killing members of the group** includes direct killing and actions causing death.
- **Causing serious bodily or mental harm** includes inflicting trauma on members of the group through widespread torture, rape, sexual violence, forced or coerced use of drugs, and mutilation.
- **Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to destroy a group** includes the deliberate deprivation of resources needed for the group's physical survival, such as clean water, food, clothing, shelter or medical services. Deprivation of the means to sustain life can be imposed through confiscation of harvests, blockade of foodstuffs, detention in camps, forcible relocation or expulsion into deserts.

- **Prevention of births** includes involuntary sterilization, forced abortion, prohibition of marriage, and long-term separation of men and women intended to prevent procreation.

Forcible transfer of children may be imposed by direct force or by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or other methods of coercion. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as persons under the age of 18 years.

- **Genocidal acts need not kill or cause the death** of members of a group. Causing serious bodily or mental harm, prevention of births and transfer of children are acts of genocide when committed as part of a policy to destroy a group's existence.

- *Key Terms*

- **The crime of genocide has two elements: intent and action.**

- “Intentional” means purposeful. Intent can be proven directly from statements or orders. But more often, it must be inferred from a systematic pattern of coordinated acts.
- **Intent is different from motive.** Whatever may be the motive for the crime (land expropriation, national security, territorial integrity, etc.), if the perpetrators commit acts intended to destroy a group, even part of a group, it is genocide.
- **The phrase "in whole or in part" is important.** Perpetrators need not intend to destroy the entire group. Destruction of only part of a group (such as its educated members, or members living in one region) is also genocide. Most authorities require intent to destroy a substantial number of group members – mass murder. But an individual criminal may be guilty of genocide even if he kills only one person, so long as he knew he was participating in a larger plan to destroy the group.

- *The law protects four groups - national, ethnical, racial or religious groups.*
- A **national group** means a set of individuals whose identity is defined by a common country of nationality or national origin.
- An **ethnical group** is a set of individuals whose identity is defined by common cultural traditions, language or heritage.
- A **racial group** means a set of individuals whose identity is defined by physical characteristics.
- A **religious group** is a set of individuals whose identity is defined by common religious creeds, beliefs, doctrines, practices, or rituals.

Linguistic and cultural genocide

- "... prohibiting the use of language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or in the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group."
(International Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948)
- run by mass media and formal schooling along with market and other forces

Linguistic genocide

- **overt and direct prohibition** (laws, imprisonment, torture, killing)
- **covert and indirect prohibition** (ideological or structural means, e.g. educational systems)
- No bilingual teachers, minority language not on school time table
- language as non-resource, as 'handicap' -> prevents acquiring majority language

Linguistic genocide

- educational structure disabled -> disables children
- **same happens with Deaf children!**
- **deficiency-based models -> unequal maintenance and reproduction of unequal power relations**
- dominant group presented as beneficial for the dominated
- globalisation processes + 'free market' ideology behind linguistic genocide

- Education systems for Deaf children also for economical benefit of those in power?
 - Cochlear implants part of economical exploitation of Deaf children?
- Education authorities reflect myths of monolingual reductionism:
 - monolingualism is normal, unavoidable, sufficient, desirable etc.
 - fear of disintegration of present states leading to conflict and wars

- formal education systems run by people of the majorities + medical counselling and childcare
- the most intensive and long prevailing linguistic genocide in the history!!
- stronger measures of normalisation today through CI <-> supported by monolingual and monocultural and "free market" ideology? -> against Convention on the Rights of Child!!

Situation of Deaf Children

- Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- right of minorities to use their language in the community with other members of their group
- Article 5 of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education
- Article 4 on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

- Article 14 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

- right to maintain their collective identity through the medium of their mother tongue through education

- possibility of learning their mother tongue or learning in their mother tongue

- UN Standard Rules

- possibility to use sign interpreters
- sign should be used in families, education and in the communities
- mass media should serve sign users
- special schools where sign is used

Convention on the Rights of the Child

- most widely ratified human rights treaty in history
- first legally binding international instrument with full range human rights
 - civil and political rights
 - economic, social and cultural rights
- not ratified: Somalia and USA

The Deaf child's right to education?

- 21 % of children in developing countries do not attend school (UNICEF 1999)
- only 20 % of Deaf children in developing countries attend school (WFD, 1991)

80 % of the 70 million Deaf person in the world live in developing countries

The Deaf child's right to have education in her/his mother tongue?

- sign language is used appr. 40 schools of 100 in developing countries (though not clear how it is really used) (WFD 1991)
- very small fraction of Deaf children has access to bilingual education

Deaf education programmes

- most deaf schools in the world are like language deprivation, submersion or sink-or-swim programmes (oral programmes)
- some are like transitional programmes (TC programmes)
- few bilingual programmes can be viewed as language shelter or maintenance programmes

Deaf children encounter extra problems compared to other children of linguistic minorities

→ Sign languages are not seen as full fledged languages and mother tongues of Deaf children + Deaf children are seen still exclusively as disabled children → other terms than "Deaf"?

→ Sign language users?

Technological instruments as a powerful tool of linguistic genocide

- Role of cochlear implants?
- Neo-oralistic wave?

Critical look at the human rights instruments

- “Language in education systematically gets poorer treatment than other basic human characteristics like gender, race or religion etc.”
- “very few international or regional human rights instruments grant binding educational linguistic human rights”
- “present binding rights completely insufficient for protecting and maintaining linguistic diversity”

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1998)

Who are we?

- traditional/territorial/autochthonous/national vs.
- ethnic, religious, linguistic vs.
- immigrant, guest worker, refugee minorities...
- UN CCPR Article 27: **“In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of the group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language”**

Who are we?

- We as sign language users? -> linguistic minority?
- We as Deaf people? -> disabled group?
- Or both?

“ People who are deprived of linguistic human rights may thereby be prevented from enjoying other human rights, including fair political representation, a fair trial, access to education, access to information and freedom of speech, and maintenance of their cultural heritage” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas)

Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights

- Handed over to UNESCO in June 1996
- the first attempt at formulating a universal document about language rights
- unfortunately it does not relate to sign language users

The rights of parents - the rights of children

- All human beings are equal → rights of both are equal (philosophy)
- BUT in human rights instruments level:
 - parents choose a school (ICESCR),
 - "...best interests of the child will be their basic concern..." (CRC)
- **conventions of human rights more like social and practical agreements**

Nationalism and linguistic imperialism

- Nationalism:
 - creation and use of signed systems
 - national sign language vs. community/local sign language?
- Linguistic imperialism practised by deaf and hearing “experts”: changing or replacing local sign languages with sign languages from their countries
- monolingual stupidity and naivety

Responsibilities of National Deaf Associations

- Do the linguistic human rights of Deaf children have top priority?
- Are NADs for Deaf children, too?
- How much thought has there been of the situation of Deaf children?
- Are there organised activities for Deaf children and their parents?
- Are NADs for adult Deaf only?

- Can responsibility for Deaf children be given to others?
 - How about babies and infants living at homes with their parents?
 - Do we take care that all Deaf children have a chance to use her/his own language ready from birth?
- A global survey concerning the linguistic rights of the Deaf (Finnish Association of the Deaf)

- More actively fighting for linguistic human rights of Deaf children with other minority language groups, experts, activists, language-related institutions and organisations world wide
- no longer enough to demand the rights as Deaf persons only, but also as sign language users

*It is sign language using
children who keep our
language alive. It is them
who enrich the linguistic
and cultural diversity in
the world!*