

MULTILINGUALISM

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Definition of Multilingualism

Multilingual

(as an adjective) refers to a speech community which makes use of two or more languages

(as an adjective or noun) refers to the individual speakers who have the ability to use two or more languages (it contrasts with **monolingual**)



Multilingualism

Multilingualism (or **plurilingualism**) - may subsume bilingualism, but it is often contrasted with it.

The multilingual abilities are of several levels of proficiency, and raise different kinds of political, educational and social problems, depending on the numbers, social standing and national feeling of the groups concerned.

(Crystal, 2008 – Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics 6th Edition)



Multilingual Acquisition

Multilingual acquisition and multilingualism are **complex phenomena**.

They implicate all the factors and processes associated with second language acquisition and bilingualism.

(Cenoz and Genesee, 1998)



Variables that can impact the extent to which one of the languages involved (the L2 or the L1) will influence the acquisition of the L3:

the age at which L3 learning begins

the context of acquisition

individual characteristics

language distances among three (or more) languages

(Gass and Selinker, 2008)



SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH
MULTILINGUAL
EDUCATION



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CHAPTER 3

MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE: ISSUES, APPROACHES, OPPORTUNITIES

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*LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS | LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY
BIODIVERSITY | INDIGENOUS ISSUES
MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION*



Corporate Globalization, Diversities and Multilingual Education

'Globalization is an attempt to extend corporate monopoly control over the whole globe. Over every national economy. Over every local economy. Over every life' (Parenti, 2008).



Central issues are:

1. How multilingual education (MLE) can support the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity (LCD)?
2. What MLE can do to counter some of the threats to diversities, and to what extent some of the current approaches by researchers are doing this?

Globalization

What is it doing to diversities, human and biological?

Global challenge – globalization will lead to

a) homogenization or b) diversification?

Homogenization

Diversification



Linguistic, cultural and biological homogenization, biocultural homogenization - dangerous for the planet.

(Shiva, 1997, 2005)

Colin Baker (2001) writes:

In the language of ecology:

strongest ecosystems are those that are the most
diverse

diversity is directly related to **stability**

variety is important for long-term **survival**



Success on this planet has been due to an ability to adapt to different kinds of environment over thousands of years (atmospheric as well as cultural). Such ability is born out of diversity.

Thus language and cultural diversity maximizes chances of human success and adaptability.



Today, biocultural diversity is killed faster than ever before.

New species, new languages, new cultures (even if some do evolve) cannot keep up with the pace of current destruction.

What needs exploration is:

How MLE can address the issues, approaches and opportunities that are connected to contemporary global challenges? Is Glocalization possible, and what might it mean in education?



ISSUES

Present situation for languages and the bleak future

To what extent, whether and how MLE can support the maintenance of LCD and biodiversity?

Of the world's almost **7000** mainly spoken languages at least some **4500**, over half, are tribal/indigenous.

In 2100, there may be only **300-600** oral languages left as unthreatened languages, transmitted by the parent generation to children.



The most vulnerable languages:

With few speakers/numerically weak

Lack of a written language



If 90-95% of the world's languages disappear before 2100:

most Indigenous languages will go

almost all languages to disappear would be Indigenous

most of today's Indigenous/tribal languages would disappear (with the exception of very few that are strong numerically)



If we continue as at present, most of the world's Indigenous languages will be gone by 2100.

Serious implication for diversities:

Most of the world's linguistic diversity resides in the small languages of Indigenous peoples (IPs).

Most of the world's megabiodiversity is in areas under the management or guardianship of IPs.



One reason for maintaining all the world's languages:

Linguistic (and cultural) diversity and biodiversity are correlationally and causally related.

Knowledge about how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in the small languages of Indigenous and local peoples.

Killing them, kills the prerequisites for maintaining biodiversity.



Present situation in Indigenous and minority education: Genocide and crime against humanity. Alternatives

The goals that any **good education** must have for Indigenous/tribal and minority (IM) children are:

high levels of multilingualism

a fair chance of achieving academically at school

strong, positive multilingual and multicultural identity and positive attitudes toward self and others

a fair chance of awareness and competence building as prerequisites for working for a more equitable world

Non-MLE mainly dominant-language medium education for IM children

- 'prevents access to education, because of the linguistic, pedagogical and psychological barriers it creates

- may lead to the extinction of Indigenous languages, thus contributing to the disappearance of the world's linguistic diversity

- often curtails the development of the children's capabilities, perpetuates poverty, and causes serious mental harm

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



Subtractive education through the medium of a dominant language can have harmful consequences socially, psychologically, economically and politically.

Can cause both serious physical harm and very serious mental harm:

social dislocation	psychological
cognitive	linguistic
educational	

... also economic, social and political marginalization

(Dunbar & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008)

Subtractive education may thus participate in **linguistic and cultural genocide**

(according to two of the five definitions of genocide II(e) and II(b) in the United Nations 1948 International Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948))



What about MLE? Can all forms of MLE (which by definition use more than one language as the teaching language) be endorsed and expected to deliver good results?

NO



When children have been taught in their own languages for only a few years, an early transition to the international language of wider communication (ILWC) across Africa is accompanied by:

poor literacy in L1 and L2

poor numeracy/mathematics

high failure and drop-out rates

high costs/wastage of

expenditure

(Heugh, 2009)



Weak models of MLE (early-exit and late-exit transitional programs) are...

more humane for IM children than nonmodels

but they do not reach the educational goals of good MLE programmes either



Only strong MLE models (for both IM and dominant group children) reach the educational goals:

language maintenance (language shelter) programs for minorities (MINs)

two-way programs and the European Union Schools model for MINs and majorities

immersion programs for majorities

Indigenous revitalising immersion programs (for IM children who no longer speak the (grand)parents language).



All strong models (for both IM and linguistic majority children) –

mainly use a minority language as the main teaching language during the first years.

The longer it is used, the better the results in terms of high levels of bi- or multilingualism and school achievement.



It is very clear that **MLE is an opportunity**, because good MLE, adapted to local conditions,
can really lead to the educational goals.



Subtractive policies - are forms of linguistic genocide
(devastating effects)

Various forms of subtractive education - result in very serious and often permanent harmful mental and physical consequences.

Subtractive education

in clear violation of a range of human rights standards

an ongoing violation of fundamental rights

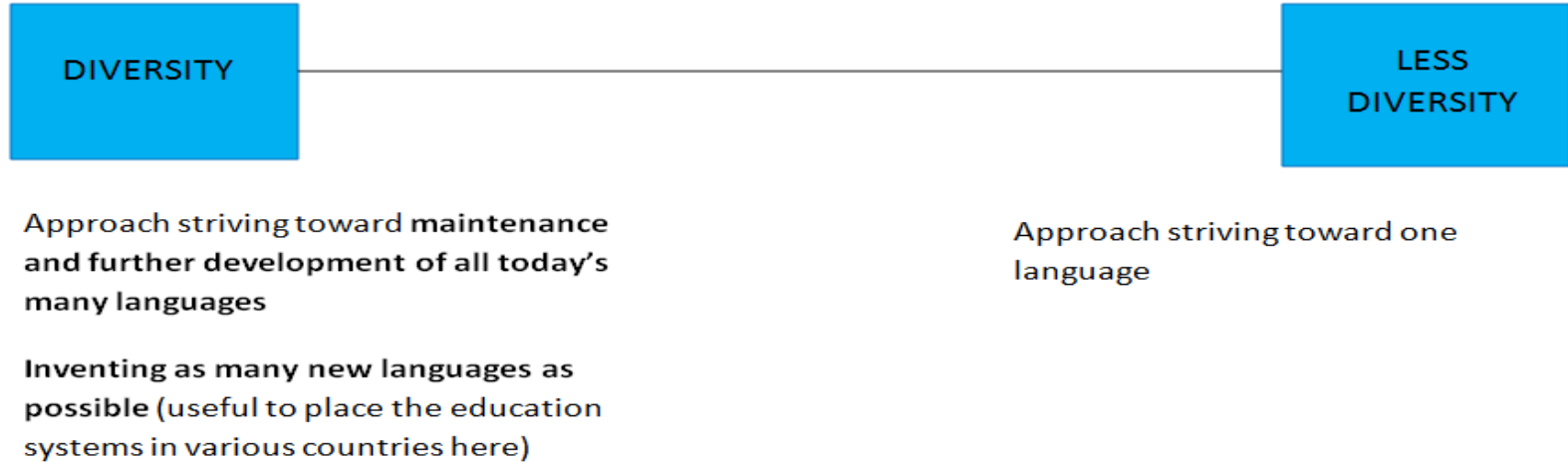
at odds with contemporary standards of minority protection



APPROACHES

Linguistic and cultural diversity support continuum

Parents, Educators, Researchers, Politicians - approaches for LCD



1. Post-(post-)modern 'non-nominalising' myth -makers:

'Languages/mother tongues do not exist, or they are outsider creations'.

2. Neo-liberal and neo-conservative 'non-essentialising' and rational choice theory myth -makers:

'There is little relationship between language, ethnicity and culture'.

'Mother tongues are not important'.

'Minorities do not want to maintain their languages'.



COUNTERARGUMENTS

Massive evidence shows that many, maybe most, IPs and MINs do NOT agree with the myth-makers **they do want to maintain their languages.**

IPs and MINs see their language as a '**cultural core value.**'



3. Archivists and other do-gooders:

Documenting languages but not really supporting their maintenance through active political struggle.

- people from The Summer Institute of Linguistics and related institutions with Christian missionary goals

- busy documenting dying languages (devoid of economic and political analyses)

Dead - revival; dying - reversal; neglected – revitalization

(Paulston, 1994)



Is most of the work (research and practical) done on 'dead' and/or 'dying' languages?

Is this also true for international organisations such as UNESCO or UNICEF, etc.?

Do funds follow the same principles?

More funds for work with 'dead' and/or 'dying' languages?



More Approaches

approaches that lead to education that objectively
results in less LCD

Subtractive education – use of dominant language

Early-exit transitional and Late-exit transitional programs
- **result in less LCD**



OPPORTUNITIES

Governments need to acknowledge that they are committing crimes against humanity with subtractive education

What can be done now?

What might be possible positive approaches?

What are the opportunities?



1. Governments need to know that what they are doing now in the education of most Indigenous and minority children is a crime against humanity. **This might make them more willing to opt for MLE.**

2. We ourselves need to know what our own roles are as researchers/educators, and decide what to do about it. Are we **supporting LHRs in education and MLE** or are we **participating in crimes against humanity?**



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