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Celebrating the 60th Birthday of Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

Edited by Robert Phillipson



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PREFACE

This volume brings together cutting-edge scholarship in language, education and society from all parts of the world. It celebrates the 60th birthday of Tove Skutnabb-Kangas on July 6, 2000. The book is inspired by her work in the fields of minority education, multilingualism, linguistic human rights, and language and power. The contributors, all of whom are people whose work has influenced and has been influenced by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, were encouraged to distil into relatively few words something of the essence of their professional experience. They were also invited to sketch out a vision of how the challenge of our multilingual diversity might be handled in a better world.

The fields named in the title of the volume serve to permit a thematic grouping of the papers into five parts of roughly equal size, starting with *Language* and *Rights*, and moving via *Equity* and *Power* to *Education*. Each part includes a range of chapters on these cross-cutting themes. The volume provides a provocative challenge to our ways of thinking about language, about how language rights are formulated and implemented, how speakers of all languages can be treated more equitably, and how multilingualism can be promoted in the wider society and more specifically in education. The rich mix of chapters serves to underline that the issues are comparable worldwide, that many apparently disparate topics can cross-fertilise each other, and that our understanding of the issues can benefit from coverage that is global, reflective, and committed.

There is considerable variety among the types of paper: retrospective and philosophical; comparative, local, and universal; activist and professionally iconoclastic; literary and visionary. The contributors come from many scientific specialisations, including anthropology, communication, economics, education, law, linguistics, literature, political science, psychology, and sociology. Collectively they exemplify how sociolinguistics has developed dynamic, multidisciplinary approaches to complex real-world problems. Such methods and insights are essential for language policy and language pedagogy in the contemporary world.

The book reflects the complexity and diversity of topics that are central to bilingual education, English as a Second Language, applied linguistics, and

sociolinguistics. Many of the themes are brought together in the concluding 'integrated comment', which analyses the chapters in terms of the role of the critical intellectual, issues of scientific approach, monolingualism in a global age, seeing language dominance afresh, economic gospels, hopeful ways forward, and a broader vision of how some of our language policy Utopias can be brought to life.

The strong coverage of the Nordic countries reflects Tove Skutnabb-Kangas's origins and primary professional base (Finland, Sweden, Denmark) and presents material that is not easily available in English. Many other regions are strongly represented: North America, India, South Africa, Australia, and many parts of Europe. There are papers on indigenous languages, sign languages, Esperanto, and Kurdish, all of which can be considered 'threatened' languages but which, for their speakers, are neither marginal nor 'minority' languages. In this way the book reflects a concern with the equality of all human languages, and a wish to promote a more democratic world linguistic order.

The book would have been even richer if it had included contributions by the following, also people who have influenced Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, who had hoped to write for the book: Alma Flor Ada, Mehmet Emm Bozarslan, Sertac Bucak, Pirkko Carpenter, Rosario Diaz-Greenberg, Philomena Essed, Hartmut Haberland, Rainer Enrique Hamel, Eduardo Hernández-Chávez, Lachmann Khubchandani, Georgji Khruslov, Alexei Leontiev, Joe Lo Bianco, Chris Mullard, Mart Rannut, Olaug Rekdal, Maret Sáráa, Miranda Vuolasranta, Kaarlo Voionmaa, Ruth Wodak.

Although the book represents a tangible personal tribute to Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, it is more than a collection of academic papers. Inscribed on a wall in St. Paul's Cathedral in London are these words about Sir Christopher Wren, the architect of this and countless other memorable buildings, 'si monumentum requiris, circumspice' if you seek my monument, look around you. For Tove Skutnabb-Kangas this publication will only be memorable if it leads to greater respect for language rights globally and locally, not least in education, better implementation of policies informed by scholarship, and a more equitable and ethically accountable language ecology.

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The first part of the paper by Ngugi * wa Thiong'o is from *Penpoints, gunpoints, and dreams. Towards a critical theory of the arts and the state in Africa* (Clarendon Press, 1998). It is reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press, © Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1998.

This book would never have come about without substantial support from many colleagues in the Department of Languages and Culture, University of Roskilde, Denmark, to all of whom I am very grateful.

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Many thanks too to the reviewers who recommended publication, and whose names now appear on the back of the book.

Tove's own influence on my own work and my life cannot be merely "acknowledged". I would not be what I am personally and professionally without her, I would not be without her. I lovingly hope our scholarly and private lives can continue to grow and age together, in peace and health. Let me join with all the contributors in wishing you

Happy birthday!
Grattis på födelsedagen!
Hauskaa syntymäpäivää!

ROBERT PHILLIPSON
TRANSCULTURA, TRØNNINGE MOSE, DENMARK,
JANUARY 2000.

Tove

Francisca Sanchez

Truthseeker her life is an
Openhearted odyssey through the outrage of oppression
Voiceful visionary she is no variable star
Evening star instead navigating into twilight's

Storm always constant and vigilant she writes our own
Kalevala with the kaleidoscopic orthography of her life
Unabridged unapologetic unshakable
Treasured testimony tenacious against tyranny
Nourishes our struggle
Anchors our tapestry of advocacy
Border to border and
Braids new understanding with our breath

Knowledge and passion entangled
And afire leave a tessellated trail brilliant as a
Necklace of sapphires and rubies
Gifts to us of unflagging light and power
Ardent keepsakes of her strength
She burns with a sentinel's bright flame against the shadows

PART I LANGUAGE: ITS DIVERSITY, ITS STUDY, AND OUR UNDERSTANDINGS OF IT

The fewer speakers a language has, the more necessary it is for the children to become high-level multilinguals, in order to be able to obtain the basic necessities needed for survival. The mother tongue is needed for psychological, cognitive, and spiritual survival cultural rights. All the other languages, including an official language of the state in which the children live, are needed for social, economic, political, and civil rights. A child must be able to speak to parents, family, and relatives, to know who she is, to acquire skills in thinking, analyzing, and evaluating. The mother tongue(s) is (are) vital for this. Further education, job prospects, and the ability to participate in the wider society require other languages. Thus high levels of multilingualism must be one of the goals of proper education.

Everybody, not just privileged elites or poor minorities, needs to be fluent and literate in at least two languages, preferably more. Everybody, not just minorities, needs to become aware of and acknowledge the importance of their ethnic and linguistic roots, in order to be able to develop, analyze, criticize, and reflect. Language rights for all are part of human rights. Language rights are prerequisite to many other human rights. Linguistic human rights in education are a prerequisite for the maintenance of the diversity in the world that we are all responsible for. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999b, 58.

Such a Treasure of Knowledge for Human Survival

Kerttu Vuolab

Mother Tongue A Treasure of Knowledge

All children have a mother tongue. We human beings started to learn our mother tongue before we were born. The mother tongue is a chain that binds us to our own history. Each one of us is a ring in the chain of generations, a ring in our own mother tongue. If any ring grows weak, the whole chain will be weak. Every generation has to make sure that their ring is strong enough to add the next ring onto the chain. Our personal duty is to transfer the mother tongue to the next generation. By passing on our language, the mother tongue, to the next generation, we ourselves guarantee that life itself will continue into the future.

We would all like to live forever. By having children we make sure that our own life continues in them. I have no children, or else all the children in the world are mine. My life does not continue in my own children, but I write books. My life continues in my books, which is a very selfish reason for being an author. If I wished to be a mother to a daughter or a son, that would be as selfish a way to continue my own life in the future.

A language, a mother tongue, is the most valuable inheritance of human beings. Without it every generation would be forced to experience and discover how to protect itself against frost, storm, wind, snow, rain, sunshine and all the other life-threatening things in the world. Our imagination would not produce such an endless capacity for creating new ideas if we human beings had no language, no mother tongue. Without it a human being would not be able to explain or teach any idea or technique to the next generation. Without a human language no technical wonders would exist.

My mother tongue is the Sámi language. I call my mother tongue the Sámi language, because the words Lapp and Lappish do not respect our language on an equal level with other languages. My mother tongue Sámi is neither a poor nor a primitive language! No language in the world is poor or primitive. Every language

is rich in some way or other. Sámi is a rich language: for instance it describes nature and the weather accurately and beautifully. It has almost 200 words for 'snow'. Every word explains the condition of snow: Is one able to ski on it? What temperature is it? Can it take the weight of walking on it? Is it going to change in the immediate future and in what way? All words in every language are prescriptions for human survival.

A Language Prescription for Survival

If any language in the world dies, with it disappears great human wisdom, the experience of life over thousands of years. With a language disappears a treasure of knowledge that could save human life from the danger of destruction. The conditions for life are becoming progressively worse. Life on planet Earth cannot afford to lose any human language. Because knowledge for human survival is needed more than ever in the history of the Earth and life on it

Human beings all over the world have passed survival knowledge on to the next generation by telling stories, singing songs (yoiking in our case¹), reading poems, playing with words, chatting and telling jokes to each other. Every mother talks to her child with love and she hopes that life will continue in her child. All mother tongues are the unwritten history of human life. This history respects love, peace and life. You don't have to read much to realize what written history respects: money, war and killing, death.

Numbers have made people blind to understanding the value of things, especially in administration and government. Nothing seems to have a value before it has been measured or had a price put on it so as to gauge its meaning and importance. A language seems to have enough value when more than five hundred million people speak it. Big numbers have made the politicians and bureaucrats blind, they see the value of a language in terms of numbers. That is probably the reason why they do not respect minority languages. Small languages don't count for them. That is why most minority languages are in danger of being killed. The governments that respect only the major languages in their countries call to mind a herring: everyone is swimming in the same direction and nobody asks: 'Where are we going? What is threatening us?'

When I hear of 'minority languages', 'lesser known languages', or 'small languages' I am reminded of a fox cub. She is on her own, without a pack to

protect her life. The fox cub must watch out and listen, be fully aware of any danger that could threaten her life. To stay alive the fox cub must be ready at all times to hide, run away, and take note of the other living creatures in the forest. A fox cub is a very alert living creature, eyes that see, ears that hear, with a sensibility for noticing what happens all around. With the wisdom of a fox cub the governments in the

1 On yoiks and yoiking, see Gaski, this volume.

world could stop the destruction of nature. People should appreciate that there is real value in being alive, and their duty is to make sure that life continues.

Literature the Daughter of the Mother Tongue

Very often people think that we Sámi had no literature before books were written and published in Sámi. In fact we have a very rich oral literary tradition. Although I did not have books when I was a child, I had my stories, poems, jokes, fairy tales, myths, yoiks, legends. They were my books, and not only books, but also theatre. My libraries were my family, my home, and nature around the area of my home.

When I was a child, story-telling was not a separate ceremony like the evening stories on TV these days. When I was a child, stories for me were duty, hobby and fun, explainer, company and comforter. My family, especially my grandfather and my mother, told us stories from morning to evening, while they were doing their everyday work.

My literary events took place in our cowshed as we were milking cows. Or on the hill as we were walking to pick cloudberry. Or they happened in the middle of slaughtering. I remember one day my grandfather came home with a reindeer that was no longer alive but had yet to be skinned and have its horns removed. My grandfather was obliged to go back up the hill, because the reindeer had been penned into an enclosure. While my mother was skinning the reindeer she told us children the following story:

A long time ago some animals in a forest decided to have a competition. There was a mouse, a wolf, a bear and a frog. The mouse, the wolf and the bear, each of them had a crossbow. But the frog had nothing, only her tongue. The first one to kill a reindeer wins. That was the competition. The mouse was the first to shoot at a reindeer. It took its bow and arrow and shot. But the mouse lives too near the ground, so the arrow didn't fly higher than the hooves of a reindeer. The arrow of the mouse did not kill the reindeer.

My mother was skinning the reindeer's legs and showed us that between the hooves there is a gland. The mouse's arrow.