MULTILINGUALISM AND EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

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Abstract – This essay attempts to show the importance of linguistic issues in education for democracy and the close relationship between democracy and multilingualism. Increasingly nation-states are having to adapt to linguistic diversity within their borders and to recognize that democracy requires the participation of all citizens, including those belonging to linguistic minorities. Democracy also requires that all linguistic groups share a sense of community. The author argues the need for educational policies that address these challenges.

Résumé – PLURILINGUISME ET ÉDUCATION À LA DÉMOCRATIE – Cet essai tente de montrer l'importance des questions linguistiques dans l'éducation à la démocratie et le rapport étroit entre la démocratie et le plurilinguisme. De plus en plus, les états-nations doivent s'adapter à la diversité linguistique au sein de leurs frontières et admettre que la démocratie exige la participation de tous les citoyens, y compris ceux appartenant aux minorités linguistiques. La démocratie exige également que tous les groupes linguistiques partagent un sens de la communauté. L'auteur maintient la nécessité de politiques éducatives abordant ces défis.

Zusammenfassung – ZUM VERHÄLTNIS VON DEMOKRATIE UND VIELSPRACHIGKEIT – Das Artikel versucht die Bedeutung sprachlicher Gesichtspunkte für Demokratiebildung und die enge Beziehung zwischen Demokratie und Vielsprachigkeit aufzuzeigen. Staaten müssen sich zunehmend innerhalb ihrer Grenzen auf sprachliche Vielfalt einstellen und anerkennen, dass Demokratie die Teilhabe aller Bürger voraussetzt, auch derer, die sprachlichen Minderheiten angehören. Demokratie beinhaltet auch, dass alle sprachlichen Gruppen eine soziale Zusammengehörigkeit empfinden. Der Autor argumentiert für die Notwendigkeit von Bildungsstrategien, die diesen Herausforderungen begegnen.

Resumen – MULTILINGUALISMO Y EDUCACIÓN PARA LA DEMOCRACIA – La autora trata de mostrar con este ensayo la importancia que revisten los aspectos lingüísticos en la educación para la democracia y la estrecha relación que existe entre la democracia y el multilingualismo. Un creciente número de Estados-nación se ven en la necesidad de adaptarse a la diversidad lingüística existente dentro de sus límites y a reconocer que la democracia requiere la participación de todos los ciudadanos, con inclusión de los que pertenecen a minorías lingüísticas. La democracia también requiere que todos los grupos lingüísticos compartan la sensación de pertenecer a una misma comunidad. La autora sostiene que se necesitan políticas educativas que respondan a este desafío.

Резюме – ПОЛИЛИНГВАЛЬНОСТЬ И ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ ДЛЯ ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА – В данной статье предпринимается попытка показать значимость лингвистических вопросов в образовании для демократ-

ического общества и тесное взаимоотношение между демократией и полилингвальностью. Все больше и больше государствам-нациям приходится адаптироваться к лингвистическому разнообразию внутри своих границ и признавать, что демократия требует участия всех граждан, включая и тех, кто принадлежит к лингвистическим меньшинствам. Демократия также требует, чтобы все лингвистические группы разделяли чувство общности. Автор данной статьи утверждает, что необходима такая образовательная политика, которая была бы направлена на эти вызовы.

The link between language and society

Throughout human history language and society have always been deeply interconnected. Without a language as the basis for communication, no society can function. Particular challenges arise in multicultural and multilingual societies in which a balance between diversity and unity must be found (Banks 2002). This is especially true in a world in which democracy has become the accepted norm. This article will address the relationship between democracy and multilingualism, and the role played by education in promoting a linguistically democratic society.

In what language does a society operate? Is it the language of all the citizens? If not, what is done by the state to involve all the linguistic groups within its borders in the democratic process? How is the marginalization of linguistic minorities groups to be avoided (using the word "minority" in the broader socio-economic sense of a disadvantaged group)? These are issues that are relevant to democracies in both the northern and the southern hemisphere, although the challenges vary greatly from one country and region to another. In most Western European countries, many of which are officially monolingual, there are immigrants and refugees from all over the world who have to be integrated into the democratic society. Often they are expected to adopt the dominant language, while their own minority language is given a low status, if any. In the case of democratic African countries there is usually a wide variety of linguistic groups living within the same borders. Usually a former colonial language is used as the official language and given a higher status than the indigenous African languages, despite the fact that the latter are spoken by the majority. Thus, the situation of the minorities in the democracies in the Northern hemisphere can be compared to that of majority populations in the democracies of the Southern hemisphere (Brock-Utne 1998). The issue of multilingualism must therefore be taken into consideration by all democratic countries.

The rights of minorities in a democracy

Before addressing the relationship between democracy and multilingualism, it may be useful to attempt a working definition of democracy. According

to Michel Saward, democracy has the basic characteristic "that all people are equal in some important respect." and "it follows from this that all should be treated equally in certain specific political respects" (Saward 1994, p. 8). In what respect are the people of a democracy equal? According to Torres, this "implies a process of participation" (Torres 1998, p. 11). A simple definition of democracy is a society ruled by and for the people (Cummins 2000b; Saward 1994). The process of participation involves election of political representatives and the right all citizens to vote as equals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, language, religion etc. Ideally this results in a government whose policies correspond to the wishes of the majority. However, at the same time the safety, rights and needs of the minority or marginalized groups also need to be attended to. Hence, the need for some minimal rights emerges, such as the right to freedom of speech and expression, equal treatment under the law, adequate health care and adequate education, to name but a few (Saward 1994). According to this view, these rights and freedoms must be guaranteed to each citizen regardless of the will of the majority and must be protected by a judicial system in such a way that they become constitutionalized. This is concurrent with Torres' view (1998) that individual rights should be ranked above collective rights. Failure to do so could cause severe injustice to many of the citizens in a democratic society.

Democracy involves citizens' participation in public affairs and thus implies that people have the power to take part in decisions regarding their own lives in the context of a wider society (Torres 1998). In addition, equal rights must be guaranteed for all. Unfortunately, equality within a democratic nation-state does not always imply that the languages spoken are accorded equal status. According to Honing (2001), one of democracy's strictest tests is the challenge that we experience when we have to work, live and share not just with people with whom we have a great deal in common, but also with those with whom we happen to have a connection simply because we co-exist within a single nation-state. The practice of living peacefully together with people we perceive as "foreigners" puts our democracy to the test, and one of the greatest challenges may be linguistic in nature.

Multilingualism

The term multilingualism (defined as the use of two or more languages) can refer to individuals or to societies. In the case of individuals, multilingualism often arises from the need to communicate within a range of different contexts. A person may be exposed to one language within the family, another in school and another in the market place. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) defines a multilingual speaker in terms of a combination of linguistic identification (both by the individuals themselves and others), varying skill levels and the

capacity to function in at least two languages. She points out the benefits of a positive relationship towards the two languages and a high level of communicative skills in both. Often, we learn an additional language at school. For linguistic minorities or marginalized groups, it has been found to be important that their first language be recognized in the education sector, because this is the only way to achieve the desirable goal of additive multi-lingualism (Cummins 2000b; Desai 2000, Kymlicka 2001). Additive multilingualism is the process by which a new language is learned while the learner still maintains and develops the mother tongue (Cummins 2000b; Heugh 2000). It is now widely recognized that it is of the utmost importance to develop skills in both languages in order to enhance cognitive, linguistic and academic growth. The main factor that enables this goal to be reached is the *status* that the educational system accords the mother tongue or first language (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). The opposite of additive bilingualism is subtractive bilingualism. This implies that a new language is learned at the risk of displacing or replacing the mother tongue, and the mother tongue is not learned at a high level (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

The term multilingualism can also describe the situation within a nation-state. On a worldwide scale, monolingual people represent a minority. There are approximately 200 countries in the world, but roughly 6,500 different languages, although the number is contested (Grimes 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas 1988). Thus, multilingual countries are common, while monolingual countries are the exception. Within a country languages often enjoy widely varying degrees of status. Some are official, some are national, and some are not officially recognized at all. South Africa is a country with 11 official languages "to cater for South Africa's diverse peoples" (Republic of South Africa 2004). Switzerland has four national languages, but only three of them are counted as official (Swissworld 2004). A language classified as official is used in official administration, official communication and national institutions. However, there is no guarantee that multiple official languages within a country are automatically accorded equal status. In many African countries with several official languages, the former colonial language often enjoys a higher status than the African languages (Brock-Utne 2000).

Language is a powerful determinant of social identity. We tend to use it together with other determinants such as religion and ethnicity to categorize people. In this way, we construct social identities, which we use to ascribe certain characteristics, abilities and social status (Banks 2001, 2002). In addition, proficiency in more than one language facilitates "interpersonal, academic and social communication, expands intellectual horizons, and encourages appreciation and tolerance for different cultures" (Burbules and Torres 2000, p. 21) in an age of globalization and internationalization. In the light of this, democracy and multilingualism are not separate issues, but are interrelated. The following section presents a number of different aspects of this relationship.

Different aspects of the relationship between democracy and multilingualism

A number of aspects that are of particular importance and relevance will now be examined in terms of their individual and societal implications.

Individual rights

Certain rights and freedoms are necessary to secure a democratic society. These have economic implications for the nation-state and politicians must make compromises in many matters (Burbules and Torres 2000). The use of multiple languages in society in general and the education sector in particular can be difficult owing to the high costs involved, for example when interpreter services, teaching materials in multiple languages or linguistically qualified teaching staff are required. Thus politicians in a democracy have more than economic criteria to consider when deciding on policies relating to linguistic issues.

Treaties have been issued by both the UN (1948) and the Council of Europe (1992, 1995) concerning the individual rights of people in general and minorities in particular (Åkermark 2003). Although the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (1992) does not include the languages of migrants, the Charter still recognizes the importance of the relationship between linguistic rights, human rights and societal needs. All treaties recognize the responsibility of the nation-state to ensure the equality and integration of minorities. Language is often seen as a representative for the cultural values of a group and when this language is not recognized, the whole group may perceive its existence as being under threat.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, 2000) argues that it is the responsibility of the state to provide an educational system where multilingualism is treated as a necessity. Those individuals with a mother tongue that is not the/an official language need to become bilingual in order to communicate within the different spheres of family and society. However, it is not only linguistic minority groups who should become multilingual. This represents an asset for every democratic citizen and plays an important role in ensuring equality. All children in a country should be given the same opportunities to participate and become active citizens, regardless of whether or not their mother tongue differs from the official language(s). Education in a democratic society supportive of the linguistic rights of the individual can become a tool for citizenship education and sustainable democracy. The rights of citizens with regard to political representation are also taken into consideration when educating people in a way that enables them to understand the political message and the practicalities of the electoral process (Torres 1998).

From a micro perspective, the right to use the mother tongue increases children's capacity to learn in school (Banks 2001). Strong academic and conceptual skills in the mother tongue are crucial for achieving good skills in an additional language. The intellectual and academic resources of bilingual

students will also increase if the first language is maintained (Cummins 2000b). Furthermore, this also promotes equality for the relevant minority groups in the right to be define their own future (Cummins 2000a; Rassool 2000).

Are linguistic rights therefore a human right that must be addressed in a democracy (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Cummins 2000a)? Persons belonging to minorities and living in industrialized countries need to master the official language, i.e. the language of the majority population, in order to exercise fundamental democratic rights – such as free exercise of the franchise, freedom of speech, etc. According to the above-mentioned international treaties (UN 1948; Council of Europe 1992, 1995), all cultural identities are worthy of respect. Language is an essential part of cultural identity (Cummins 2000b). To empower marginalized groups, the democratic society should help them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function as democratic citizens (Banks 2001). Access to information and public debate has an obvious empowering potential, which will be discussed later (Rassool 2000; van Dijk 1993, 2000). I therefore argue that the linguistic rights of minorities and marginalized groups should be considered a human right, which the democratic society must not neglect. Even though this has economic implications, such as the cost of translations, extra financial resources for the educational sector and so on, the long-term economic, societal, judicial and political implications of neglecting linguistic rights will eventually far outweigh the additional expenses.

Highly competent and linguistically skilled citizens are a major asset to a country, both on a personal and a societal level. If individual rights are fulfilled, society as a whole will be the major beneficiary. Participatory citizens who identify with the country they live in are necessary to a viable democracy.

Identity in a multicultural society

To build a nation-state, it is first necessary to construct some sort of shared identity, and language is a powerful tool for doing this. National language policy is one way in which national identity is created. Through language people define themselves in relation to both the material and the social world (Rassool 2000). In this sense, the people with the dominant language as their mother tongue tend to be those most empowered to define the factors of a common national identity. In addition to language, shared values, symbols, historical heritage and other factors also create a sense of belonging and a shared "national culture", which is necessary to preserve a nation-state (Osler and Starkey 2000; Kymlicka 2001).

A country with a totally homogeneous culture and linguistic make-up is rather the exception than the rule in the contemporary world. But a population tends to contrast its own culture with "foreign" cultures without consideration of the different sub-cultures existing side by side within their own

country (Honing 2001). It is possible for citizens to share a national identity, and yet have different ethnic, religious, sexual or political identities. Identity is not a question of "either-or", but of "both-and". Multiple identities are a fact in the modern world (Parker et al. 2002).

Language, as we have seen, is a powerful form of social identity. It is used, together with other attributes like religion and ethnicity, to divide a population into social groups. However, many people argue that these are socially constructed identities rather than objective realities (Banks 2001, 2002). Different parts of an identity are made relevant in different situations. The things that we make relevant in social interaction contribute to the creation of an identity, i.e. both the way we perceive ourselves and the way we are perceived by others. But when an important part of one's identity, for instance the mother tongue, is not given any value by the wider society, cultural ambivalence can arise and bring about a feeling of a need to choose between two cultural identities and a sense of being ashamed of the non-valued part of one's identity (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Cummins 2000b). This can result in an inability to act as a citizen in society. According to Cummins (2000b) underachievement of students who have experienced long-term devaluation of their identities in the broader society is a well known phenomenon. In light of this we experience the importance of recognition of ones identity in order to be a citizen prepared for and capable of participation in a democratic society. All of us need to belong somewhere and Davies (2004) argues for acknowledgment of multiple identities and multiple loyalties in order to achieve this sense of belonging.

We shall next consider the educational system as an important tool in multicultural and multilingual nation-states when creating a national identity.

Education of democratic citizens

> How can individuals be citizens in any true sense if they have no comprehension of the official language as used by the law, by the news media, by the schools, by employers, or by the social services? (Heater 1999, p. 111)

Being a citizen is a role that needs to be learned. Every citizen must acquire knowledge of the social, legal and political system in which they live in order to be able to operate in society (Heater 1999). Obviously schools play an important part in this endeavour. Dewey (1997 [1916]) describes how the creation of the nation-state required a change in the administration and purpose of the educational sector. Schools came under governmental control and the primary aim of education was to create a citizen subservient to the superior interest of the state. Since education also has a socializing function, there exists a delicate balance between meeting both the societal and the national needs (Dewey 1997 [1916]). If education is to be a social process of educating democratic citizens, we first have to define what kind of society we want. Education is formed by the values that sustain the social reality (Freire 1985). Democratic values include both freedom of speech and the need for a political

opposition working as a balancing force. Freire (1985, p. 7) is using the concept of "conscientization" about the process in which human beings participate critically in a transforming act. In Freire's view the educational system should refuse to work as a tool for domination and mere transfer of knowledge, and instead be of a humanistic kind where the aim is liberation and a common creation of and joint quest for new knowledge (Freire 1985).

In this scenario it is difficult to neglect the importance of schools. The education sector effectively reaches a large portion of the population and in order to transmit democratic values the school must be a role model. Poulsen-Hansen (2002, p. 113) makes a valuable comment in this regard: "We cannot beat democracy into the pupils or students. The teaching style must mirror the subject or topic." Hence the interaction between different groups within the classroom is important since democracy is also concerned with how to handle conflicts and disagreements in a peaceful manner (Kymlicka 2001; Davies 2004). However, in many African countries the language of instruction in the classroom is a dominant language rather than the mother tongue of the pupils and teachers. Pupils struggle to understand and teachers struggle to master the language of instruction well (see e.g. Brock-Utne et al. 2003, 2004, 2006; Brock-Utne and Hopson 2005; Holmarsdottir 2005). In such a situation it is almost impossible to have a democratic classroom environment with dialogue and exchange of ideas in a non-authoritarian manner. Thus the teaching style can hardly mirror the topic.

Differences in culture, language and religion should, in a democratic society, be seen as necessary in the education of democratic citizens. We need the diversity – both in the classrooms and in society.

> As the liberal should know, no way of life, however rich it might be, can ever express the full range of human potentiality. Different ways of life therefore correct and balance each other and restrain each other's partialities. They should therefore be judged not only on the basis of what they are in themselves, but also in terms of their contribution to the overall richness of society." Parekh 1994, p. 203)

Cummins (2000a) stresses how important it is to value language as a right and a resource instead of focusing on it as a problem. Ruiz (1988), however, problematizes the language-as-right approach and sees a language-as-resource approach as more fruitful. The use of the student's mother tongue as a language of instruction upgrades the status of a language in society and contributes to the promotion of multilingualism (Ruiz 1988). In addition, it helps the development of self-respect and identity in each citizen (Brock-Utne 2000; Erickson 2001). To learn an additional language increases the cultural repertoire of a citizen and is, according to Erickson (2001), a necessity to attain success in the modern world. In addition, this will help people to live side by side in a multicultural society, and the balance between cultural, national, and global identifications may be equalized (Banks 2002). Through participation we are able to learn and evolve democratic skills

(Poulsen-Hansen 2002). Thus, it is important to empower *all* the citizens in a democratic society, also by promoting multilingualism in every way necessary, in order to enable them to participate and in that way educating them as democratic citizens. To return to Freire's (1985) way of thinking, education of democratic citizens encourages critical thinking and conscientization. The problem is that this is challenging to those in power, to the existing hierarchy and the dominant groups. Thus, it is important to be aware of the power structure and to act with the relations of power in mind. This will be addressed in the next section.

Power in a democratic and multilingual society

In a democracy, however we define it, power is not supposed to be concentrated within a small elite, and the population has a legitimate right to question those holding power. In this way power structures are more visible in a democracy than in any other form of government. On the other hand, Bourdieu (1991) introduces the concept of "symbolic power", which is of utmost importance in the discussion of the relationship between democracy and multilingualism. Symbolic power is a kind of concealed power by means of which the dominating group defines the world or "reality". This creates hierarchies disguised as natural by both the dominating and dominated groups. In a discussion of language, the symbolic power is present because one language or a group of languages are assessed as more legitimate and dominant than others. The language(s) of the state "becomes the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 45). A value system is established. It is important to remember that the symbolic power can only be effective when it is accepted and justified by the dominated groups as well.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) uses the theories of Galtung and Bourdieu to discuss different kinds of power. *Innate power* is the intellectual, physical and psychological resources we inherit from our parents, though they have to be negotiated as relevant in a social context. *Resource power* consists of the material and non-material resources available to you, e.g. economic capital and/or language. *Structural power* is a kind of power you possess by virtue of your position in the society. Resource power and structural power are convertible into each other, e.g. using money for education which can eventually bring a powerful position. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) divides the population into an "A-team" and a "B-team" where the A-team represents those who, in Bourdieu's conception, possess symbolic power. The "A-team" socially constructs their resources as the valid norm in society, which also implies deciding what language is to be valued as a linguistic resource. To climb the social ladder from the B-team towards the A-team requires a starting capital (language, culture, formal education) in order to be able to convert this into valuable capital. This starting capital has to be validated as capital to start with, and if the A-team does not do that, they can stay in

power and in a vicious circle continue to decide what kind of recourses are valuable. Monolinguals are a powerful *minority* in the contemporary world. They are often the A-team defining what kind of language is regarded as linguistic capital (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). In this situation, equality as a superior democratic value is often set aside.

The above-mentioned structure of power has implications in the educational sector and can create problems for immigrants, refugees and marginalized groups – often considered as part of the B-team. Davies (2004) emphasizes the necessity to learn about society power, the political system, rights and citizenship in order to challenge the system. The problem is that, since there is a strong relationship between education and the nation-state, education can never be "neutral" or objective. It reflects the power relations and structures in the wider society and is central to the hegemony since it often legitimizes the existing power structures (Torres 1998; Davies 2004). Schools tend towards equilibrium rather than challenging existing social patterns. Cummins (2000a, b) describes two different kinds of power used in an educational context. Coercive relations of power exist when someone dominant exercises power over someone who is subordinate, e.g. in a teacher-student relationship. In the opposite case we find collaborative relations of power where the educator is concerned with cooperation in order to empower the students to achieve more. The mindset of the teachers creates the basis of expectations, assumptions and goals set for culturally diverse students. Failure of multilingual students is often caused by coercive relations of power, but on the other hand, success of students is often a consequence of the interaction between the teacher and student, i.e. use of collaborative relations of power (Cummins 2000a, b). The educational system sends a message of a normative character, since what is accepted, respected and seen as normal is presented in the classroom community. Symbolic power is represented here as well as in the wider society and these power and status relations between dominant and dominated groups have a major influence on the students' progress and achievement (Cummins 2000b). Thus, the power relations in a democratic and multicultural society are visible in this context.

Since language is a political matter, a problem will arise if two (or more) languages are used in the school, because that will affirm the experiences and cultural starting point of the students and communities speaking those languages. This will challenge the existing symbolic power with the hierarchical system of social relations between different groups in the wider society (Cummins 2000b). The existence of languages of differing status results in linguistic hierarchies in democratic societies. The function of languages is related to the power of the social classes using them. Lindgren (2000) illustrates this by an example from Finland. In the 18th century only the lower classes spoke Finnish. The upper classes spoke Swedish. A change occurred at the end of the 18th century when the upper and middle classes started to use Finnish as well. Then Finnish changed to a national language, and neither Swedish nor Finnish were any longer connected to the class structure.

The reproduction of a dominant power relationship within the school and the larger society can take place if different cultures and languages represented in the classroom are not given respect and legitimacy. If the educational system is to educate democratic citizens it must be able to improve intergroup relations between the dominating and dominated groups (Banks 2002). In contemporary South Africa, the African languages isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga are accepted as official languages. Even though they have equal official status with English and Afrikaans, in practice knowledge of English constitutes a cultural capital which is used as a demarcation of social status (Alexander 2000). Research has found that some assess African languages as not properly equipped for use in high-status functions and that African languages are underestimated not only by those speaking European languages but also by African speakers themselves (Brock-Utne 2004; Nkabinde 1997). This resembles the characteristics of symbolic power where both the dominating and dominated groups are concurrent in their view of "reality" (Bourdieu 1991). These attitudes are not immutable to change. Desai (2000) promotes the idea that only through practice those attitudes can change. Thus, there is a need for the use of African languages in all domains of the society, and especially in education. According to Desai (2000) there is a need for mother tongue education in order to upgrade the status of all languages. The language in which education is given to African-language speakers is of very poor quality. How then to make changes in the power structure? A part of the remedy could be use of both a European language such as English *and* an African language as language of instruction in schools – for *all* citizens of South Africa, including those whose mother tongue are English or Afrikaans.

According to African language researchers the nine official African languages in South Africa are the ones created during the apartheid era in order to segregate people (Alexander 2000; Prah 2005; Makalela 2005). Each language was the main language of one of the Bantustans. Hence, previous power structures are still prevalent in the languages, making the choice of language of instruction a controversial one. A more progressive language policy would be to harmonize several of the African languages into two written forms, Nguni and Sotho (Alexander 2000; Prah 2005; Makalela 2005). In a democratic country with 11 official languages there is an obvious need for the citizens to be at least bilingual in order to have a viable democracy and try to avoid the reproduction of power structures. This implies that the people with one of the dominant languages as their mother tongue, i.e. English and Afrikaans, need to learn one of the African languages in the country. In addition, the majority of South Africans should also be given the right to write their school exams in an African language, not only in English or Afrikaans.

In a democracy with divergent interests, the ability to negotiate, to influence and have a voice is dependent on the instrument of language (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988). The right to influence collective decisions presupposes the

ability to understand what is going on and to participate in the public discourse in both oral and written language. I will now turn to this aspect of the relationship between democracy and multilingualism.

Deliberative democracy – access to public discourse

> Deliberation is a democratic way for a diverse group to grapple with shared problems and try to reach a shared decision about what to do. It is thus an authentic democratic activity and arguably the single most important activity in which democratic citizens must engage. (Parker et al. 2002, p. 169)

The main feature of deliberative democracy is the public discourse which is carried out in political speeches, news, books, academic discourse, etc. To be able to participate in this discourse, obviously a good command of language is of major importance. According to Kymlicka (2001) collective political deliberation requires mutual understanding and trust. In a democracy some of the underlying commonalities required include a mutual agreement that all citizens are equal, and a respectful attitude to diversity. Thus, both respect for different languages and competence in the official language(s) are necessary.

In Europe immigrants and other linguistic minorities can experience problems participating in the discourse if they are not properly trained in the official language. Speakers of official African languages in South Africa do not have equal opportunity to participate in their own language as do the speakers of English and Afrikaans, even though they greatly outnumber them. This illustrates that the one who "owns" the language of public discourse can also, to some extent, determine the content of the hegemonic message going out to the public (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Since power in a deliberative democracy consists in the access to the ongoing discourse, differences of power between groups are reflected in their differential access to public discourse (van Dijk 1993). Access to and control over the elite discourse often belongs to the "A-team" – the elite in a country (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

In a deliberative democracy the educational system becomes extremely important. In this system it is imperative to look at what kind of linguistic competence is encouraged. We have already highlighted the need for thorough mastery of the mother tongue as a prerequisite for acquisition of an additional language. This must be taken seriously in a deliberative democracy by the educational sector, otherwise power structures in the wider society will be perpetuated and education of another "B-team" will result (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). A deliberative democracy needs an active opposition as a prerequisite for functioning within democratic values. The educational sector has the capability to educate competent, active and participant citizens, hence educating towards deliberative democracy (Davies 2004).

Conclusion

Being monolingual restricts the individual to a limited societal context (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). In a democracy, which requires participation, this is not a favourable situation. Multilingualism broadens the repertoire for interaction and promotes mutual respect, tolerance and equality, which are key democratic values. A democratic country can provide citizens with different identities while still fostering an allegiance to a common nation-state. Here the educational system plays an important role. Citizens can be educated to regard multilingualism not seen as a problem but as resource. Recognition of linguistic diversity within the classroom can be used as a litmus test of democratic values. It is important to be aware of the power structures and be able to act upon power relations manifested in the classroom because they reflect the relations in the wider society. In short, education has a key role to play in shaping a democracy that involves the participation of all citizens, including those belonging to linguistic minorities.

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