

Summary, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (more in my books and articles), [www.Tove-Skutnabb-Kangas.org](http://www.Tove-Skutnabb-Kangas.org)

In my panel speech, in addition to my handout, I mentioned seven points, addressing some of the questions we were given:

1. Some people are afraid that bilingualism might be harmful for the children. Quite the opposite. In addition to what Pia Lane presented, high-level bilinguals as a group do better than corresponding monolinguals in tests that measure cognitive flexibility, divergent thinking, certain aspects of verbal intelligence, creativity, ability to focus, and often learning additional languages faster and better. All these are characteristics that are central in tomorrow's world. Bilinguals become demented (e.g. getting Alzheimers) 3-4 years later than monolinguals. According to Ajit Mohanty's studies, metalinguistic awareness (knowing how languages function) may be the most important causal factor behind the benefits.
2. There is often a "double divide" (Ajit Mohanty's concept). ITMs (Indigenous and Tribal peoples, Minorities - autochthonous, national, immigrant minorities (including refugees, the Deaf - and Minoritised people; see my handout) mostly have to learn at least three languages: their own minority language (MIN), a national/state language (MAJ), and an "international" language, often English (E). There is often a hierarchical order, E at the top, MAJ next and MIN at the bottom. They mostly have different functions – the three I's: Instrumental (E and MAJ), Integrative (MAJ at state level, MIN at community level), and Identity-related (mostly MIN). This needs to be planned into education.
3. Many ITM parents are being fooled by fallacies, false ideologies (e.g. maximum exposure or early start of the state language leads to good results). They are made to believe that they have to choose between the mother tongue and the state language; either/or, instead of both/and/and. In order to have a real choice when deciding about language/s at home and the medium of education, parents should have enough evidence-based research knowledge of the long-term consequences of their choices. This should be given already at maternity clinics, to both parents.
4. In relation to Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) in education for ITMs, Europe and the whole world are today going backward. Think of the Roma, the Kurds, (especially in Turkey), minorities in Ukraine Russia, Latvia, Uyghurs in China, Dalits and Adivasi in India, and many others. On the other hand, there are positive examples too, with good practice, e.g the Saami in Norway and Finland. There are some good laws and declarations (e.g. the Hague Recommendations that I participated in writing decades ago), but far too little implementation and action. It seems we have not learned anything – we repeat the same mistakes in education (for instance of migrant and refugee minorities) that many states are now apologizing for in their Truth and Reconciliation Committees.
5. We DO know how to educate both ITMs and majorities (all should have a chance to become minimally bilingual) and "smart". For this, they need different models. My handout presents some of them. The main prerequisites that good models share are that the goals are positive for the groups concerned, and the teachers are bilingual. Otherwise it is difficult for them to properly compare the languages and thus support the development of the children's metalinguistic awareness. All models have to be contextualized – there is no model that is fit for all circumstances.
6. Many human rights lawyers may lag a bit behind in relation to minority education: they have to be multidisciplinary, rather than monodisciplinary and formalistic. The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, articles 2b and 2e, about causing serious physical or mental harm, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (meaning forcible assimilation instead of integration), and the intent required by Article 2, must also consider interpretations from other disciplines – see my point 7 .

7. When ITM education fails (which it often does), are the political and educational decision makers evil people who intentionally harm the children? A fairly recent discussion in law and other disciplines has started to separate “evil motive discrimination” from “results discrimination”. Decision makers have for minimally 70 years been offered research-based advice on how best to educate ITMs, and also what NOT to do. If they still choose educational models that lead to “poor” results/outcomes, this can be seen as intentional. It is then the structure of the educational institutions, e.g. schools with submersion models that are made responsible for the results. This education can discriminate, harm the children, and lead to forced assimilation. This education is capability deprivation (a concept from the economics Nobel laureate Amartya Sen) which leads to poverty. Teachers can be very nice and caring – and still they can participate in linguistic and cultural genocide; the educational structure does the discrimination and harm and forcible assimilation for them. In the end, when all ITMs attend school (and many don’t), this education can – and does -lead to the disappearance of many ITM languages. It seems to me that it is not very clever to first kill ITM languages, and then try to laboriously revitalise them. Especially the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that is encoded in Indigenous/tribal languages and languages of local people who have lived for centuries in the same places, a knowledge of how to live sustainably and how to adapt to planetary changes, is absolutely vital as tool in the climate crisis. These people and their languages have many of the keys we need. The TEK (which is much more sophisticated and detailed than western scientific knowledge) disappears when the languages are killed.