PART II

MLE AS AN ECONOMIC EQUALISER IN INDIA AND NEPAL: MOTHER TONGUE BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FIGHTS POVERTY THROUGH CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY SUPPORT[1]

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1. Poverty as Capability Deprivation

Eminent welfare economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen conceptualizes poverty as 'capability deprivation' and 'unfreedom' (1985; Dreze & Sen 2002). Capability, in his view (Dreze & Sen 2002), "refers to the ultimate combinations of functionings from which a person can choose" (35) and freedom is "the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead" (35–36). Thus, curtailment of capabilities and lack of real social opportunity, rather than the conventional indicators such as low income or impoverishment of life conditions, are relevant for understanding the nature and causes of poverty. Sen explores the cyclic nature of the relationship between social discrimination, lack of opportunities, lack of freedom, capability deprivation and poverty, stressing that "the crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom" (Dreze & Sen 2002, p. 6).

The emphasis on 'capability' has been seen as a powerful interdisciplinary approach to deal with the questions of poverty and the well-being of marginalized communities (Robeyns 2006). Robeyns (2006) suggests that, in dealing with the problems of such communities, it is necessary to identify both capability inputs, and obstacles to the realization of capabilities. Formal education, which plays a crucial enabling role in Sen's view of economic development, can be seen as a major capability input. Illiteracy is 'unfreedom' and a major obstacle that imposes severe limitations to economic opportunities. Besides directly enhancing economic opportunities through easier access to jobs and income, school education adds to social and cultural freedom and empowers individuals for adequate

[1] This paper draws heavily on some of our earlier papers, especially Mohanty 2008, Skutnabb-Kangas 2010, Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010, Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty 2009, Nurmela, Awasthi & Skutnabb-Kangas 2010.

participation in the exercise of political rights. Inequality of opportunity is related to distributional aspects of freedom – inequalities in respect of freedom, participation and development. This is particularly crucial for many societies in South Asia, such as India and Nepal, where social divisions, based on such distinctions as caste, class, culture, language, and religion, are pervasive. Dreze and Sen (2002) speak of the substantial problem of 'voicelessness' of the disadvantaged groups in India, particularly the scheduled tribes,[2] arising out of the large-scale oracy/"illiteracy"[3] and

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[2] The indigenous or the aboriginal communities in India are officially called 'tribes' (*ādivāsi*) and are listed as 'scheduled tribes' which are identified on the basis of 'distinct culture and language', 'geographical isolation', 'primitive traits', 'economic backwardness', and 'limited contact with the outgroups' and also, sometimes, on political considerations. Anthropological Survey of India, in its *People of India* ... project (Singh 2002), has identified 635 tribal communities of which 573 are so far officially notified as Scheduled Tribes. In this paper the term 'tribe' (rather than 'Indigenous peoples') is used in its formal/official sense.

[3] "Everybody should be defined either positively, in terms of what they are and know: 'literate' versus 'orate', or BOTH should be defined negatively, in terms of what they are NOT and do NOT know: 'inorate' versus 'illiterate'. It is unfair to define one group positively in terms of what they are/know ('literate') but define the other group negatively, in terms of what they are NOT/do NOT know ('illiterate'). This hierarchises people. More accurate definitions might be:

> *ORACY*: High levels of spoken language proficiency; to be a competent speaker or storyteller. An *orate* is an individual who communicates through listening and speaking but not reading and writing; orates often have superb memory strategies in comparison with persons considered literate because orates [illegible] their entire "[illegible]ary" in their heads. *Orature* is oral literature (Skutnabb-Kanga[illegible] McCarty 2[illegible]). The paradigms in literacy research also makes this clear:
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> Literacy can be defined as the ability to read and write. Yet this definition masks two different paradigms informing literacy research and practice. *Autonomous* views characterise literacy as abstract, neutral, and independent from the social context and language users (Ong, 1982). *Ideological* views characterize literacy as socially and historically situated, fluid, multiple, and power-linked. Educationally, an *autonomous* view emphasizes discrete language skills, often taught through direct instruction and scripted phonics programs. An *ideological* view binds reading and writing to oracy, emphasizing the development of different literacies (and multiliteracies) for different purposes through meaningful social interaction and critical examination of authentic texts (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty 2008: 3–4).

One might ask why we need to define these concepts

> The concepts we use are almost never neutral. In contested arenas such as bilingual education, words and concepts frame and construct the phenomena under discussion, making some persons and groups visible, others invisible; some the unmarked norm, others marked and negative. Choice of language can minoritise or distort some individuals, groups, phenomena, and relations while majoritising and glorifying others. Concepts also can be defined in ways that either hide or expose, and rationalize or question power relations (Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty 2008: 3).

It is clear that the concept 'literate' participates in making ITMs and their cultures 'invisible', 'marked' and 'negative'; it 'minoritises' them, and hides and rationalizes power relations instead of exposing and questioning them" (Nurmela et al. 2010: xx).

lack of education, both of which impede economic development. But the concept of capability deprivation is equally important in all parts of the world; most education of Indigenous, tribal and minority (both national and immigrant/refugee minorities) children (hereafter ITM children) accomplishes, namely violation of their education rights.

Formal education[4] is seen as the most crucial input necessary for development out of poverty. Lack of (formal) education for the disadvantaged in India, according to Dreze and Sen (2002), is not due to parental indifference to the opportunities and possibilities that this education opens up. Neither is it due to the purported large-scale participation of children in the labor force (a claim which they show to be unsubstantiated). They attribute large-scale non-attendance and school dropout[5] to lack of interest (of parents as well as children) in the kind of schooling offered to them (which they view as inconsequential). It is also due to a host of 'discouragement effects' because of alienating curricula, inactive classrooms, indifferent teachers, and social discrimination in the classroom (ibid: 158). Dreze and Sen (2002) do not specify the roots of the discouragement effects. But linguistic and cultural discrimination and disadvantages, arising out of prevalent inequalities due to such discriminatory treatments are central to the vicious circle of illiteracy, educational failure, lack of freedom, capability deprivation and poverty.

This article focuses on the relationship between the languages of ITMs, mainly tribal peoples and their poverty, generally, and in particular in India and to some extent Nepal. It shows how multiple layers of discrimination – in Indian constitution and governance, through low instrumental vitality of tribal languages, exclusion and non-accommodation of ITM mother tongues in education, and inequalities in the relationship between power and languages – severely restrict their freedom of choice and access

[4] Many people see only formal education as education, and call people without it "uneducated". Still, every society educates its people; in societies with no formal schools the whole society mostly participates; every adult and many older children are teachers who transmit the knowledge that children need to become mature, responsible adults of their society, with appropriate skills and values. In informal education the teacher/student ratio is much lower than in formal education; there is often instant feedback instead of delayed gratification which can be demotivating; children are often allowed to try out their knowledge and skills; they are praised when they show that they have learned new things; they can feel that their knowledge is useful for the community. Of course there are limitations too, but in general there is no reason to hierarchies formal and informal education the way it is done today by those with access to formal education.

[5] The term 'push-out' (Mohanty 2000, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) is more appropriate as it captures the essence of the phenomenon; children are pushed out by inappropriate organisation of schools, here mainly because of the wrong medium of education.

to resources. This in turn leads to "illiteracy" or low levels of literacy, educational failure and capability deprivation. While formal education is the enabling factor for economic development, language is the enabling factor for access to quality education, and often to any school education.

2. The Wrong Medium of Education Implies a Violation of the Right to Education

Summarising the Introduction, then, "poverty is no longer to be viewed simply in terms of generating economic growth; expansion of human capabilities can be viewed as a more basic objective of development" (Misra & Mohanty 2000a: 263). Since the loci of poverty, and of intervention, are in Sen's view, economic, social and psychological, and measures have to be taken in each of these areas, the central question in reducing poverty can be formulated as follows: "What is the most critical (and cost-effective) input to change the conditions of poverty, or rather, to expand human capabilities?" (Misra & Mohanty 2000a: 265). There is "a general consensus among the economists, psychologists and other social scientists that education is perhaps the most crucial input" (ibid.). Thus *if* poverty is understood as "both a set of contextual conditions as well as certain processes which together give rise to typical performance of the poor and the disadvantaged" in school, and *if* of "all different aspects of such performance, cognitive and intellectual functions have been held in high priority as these happen to be closely associated with upward socio-economic mobility of the poor" (Misra & Mohanty 2000b: 135–136), *then* we have to look for the type of division of labour between both/all languages in education that guarantees the best possible development of these "cognitive and intellectual functions" which enhance children's "human capabilities" (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010: 68–69).

Much of today's Indigenous and minority education not only violates the right to education and prevents the maintenance and development of the world's languages but may also participate in crimes against humanity and even linguistic genocide, as these are defined in various United Nations and international law documents. The main *educational* reason for all this, including the world's "illiteracy", is the choice of the wrong medium of education. Dominant-language-only education is "widely attested as the least effective educationally for minority language students" (May & Hill, 2003: 14). It is organized against solid research evidence about how best to reach high levels of bilingualism or multilingualism and

how to enable the ITM children to achieve academically in school. In many countries, such as in Nepal and India, a large proportion of ITM children joining school are pushed out during the early years of primary education. Submersion education through the medium of dominant languages is subtractive; it happens *at the cost* of ITM children learning the mother tongues, rather than additively, learning a dominant language *and* other languages *in addition to* the mother tongue(s).

Submersion education of ITM children today is not enhancing but rather curtailing the necessary cognitive and intellectual functions (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 1984, 2000, Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty 2009, Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010). Thus it deprives children of the choices and freedom that are associated with the necessary capabilities. Today's ITM education represents capability deprivation,[6] including identity deprivation. And imagining that those organising submersion education do not know it is naïve. Blaming parents or blaming teachers and demanding more high-stakes testing (as in connection with the USA's No Child Left Behind) solves no problems, as long as the economic, social and political problems of unequal distribution of power and resources are not tackled. Former director of research in the International Monetary Fund, Raghuram G. Rajan, having stated that the percentage of USA youth now finishing secondary education is lower today than in 1970, includes in his latest book *Fault Line* (2010), in his suggestions for more and better education, also better food for poor children. As Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) show in their book on why more inequality is bad for everyone, including the rich, USA and Britain belong to the absolutely most inequal ones of the rich countries – and their educational achievement is consistently among the lowest ones (see, e.g. their Figures 2.6, p. 23, and 8.1, page 106). Knowing that low levels of teacher training in countries like India and Nepal is often blamed for children's low achievement, it is sobering to relativise it. Of course, high quality teacher training is "a good thing" for children's educational results, but, as Stephen Krashen states for the USA,

> The heavy focus on measuring teacher quality can give the false impression that teacher quality is everything. Study after study, however, has shown that poverty is a stronger factor than teacher quality in predicting achievement.

[6] Capability deprivation dovetails neatly with Phillipson's (2010: 214) interpretation, following Harvey, of continental Europeans who replace their national language by English in their research publication or teaching as not experiencing 'domain loss', the conventional liberal term, but rather linguistic capital dispossession.

> The best teachers in the world will have limited impact when children are undernourished, have high levels of lead in their bodies, live in noisy and dangerous environments, get too little sleep, and have no access to reading material (Krashen 2010).

There is no reason to believe that educational authorities would be in any way "nicer" than other policy makers. In that sense, it is the parents who should make demands, and choose the type of education that promotes their children's interests. But in terms of "choosing" the kind of education that, based on research results, would be the best for ITM children, namely mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MLE), most parents have no choice! For a choice to exist,

- alternatives need to exist. MLE does not exist today for most ITM children – they HAVE to accept dominant-language-medium submersion education.
- parents need to have solid, research-based knowledge about the long-term consequences of their choices. Most parents in the world do not have this.[7]
- parents need to know that all languages are fit for education, and that either/or is a false ideology. Children can learn BOTH their own language AND one or several dominant languages well if the education is organised to make this possible.

The *United Nation's 2004 Human Development Report* (http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/) linked cultural liberty to language rights and human development. It argued that there is

> no more powerful means of 'encouraging' individuals to assimilate to a dominant culture than having the economic, social and political returns stacked against their mother tongue. Such assimilation is not freely chosen if the choice is between one's mother tongue and one's future.

In fact, the term "choice" itself "is a misnomer. The whole logic of choice is predicated on the fact that human beings are rational seekers of self-interest and base their decisions on rational calculation and free will" (Kabel 2010). People are supposed to weigh different alternative strategies and choose the one that maximises their benefits and profit. One type of 'proof' of the absence of a link between language and identity presented

[7] In both India and Nepal we are involved in "grassroots" information distribution about the need of and benefits from MLE – see Mohanty, Panda & Skutnabb-Kangas 2009, Skutnabb-Kangas 2009.

by myth-makers who criticize what they call essentialism builds on rational-choice theory: If the link between identity and language were strong, the benefits of maintaining a mother tongue would weigh more than the benefits of shifting to a dominant language. The 'exponentially increasing phenomenon of language shift' can only be explained by 'the absence of a link between identity and particular languages', Stephen May writes (2005: 328–329). Ahmed Kabel calls rational-choice theory

> sacred liberal dogma. The fact of the matter is that parents 'make choices' with regard to lang[illegible]s under enormous structural constraints. Some of these constraints m[illegible] flagrantly palpable to simply ignore: violence, dispossession, threat to life … while others may be beyond the conscious awareness of the actors themselves. Also, given the overwhelming amount indoctrination and propaganda as well the systemic violence that they are subjected to, parents can hardly be said to be meaningfully 'choosing' (Kabel 2010).

The structural constraints limiting parents' agency[8] may include education that promotes linguistic genocide. The United Nations *International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (E793, 1948) has five definitions of genocide. At least two of them, possibly three, are relevant for ITM education:

> Article II(e): 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'; and
> Article II(b): 'causing serious bodily *or mental* harm to members of the group'; (emphasis added).

Can most Indigenous and minority education in the world be claimed to participate in committing linguistic and cultural genocide, according to the genocide definitions in the UN Genocide Convention? Can it be seen as a crime against humanity? Robert Dunbar (human rights lawyer) and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas have asked this question in several publications. An Expert paper written for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Magga et al. 2005), looked at violations of the (human) right to education. The Expert paper contains sociological and legal argumentation which shows that to educate Indigenous/tribal and minority (ITM) children through a dominant language in a submersion or even early-exit transitional programme violates the human right to education. This right is encoded in many international human rights documents, also

[8] See Ahearn 2010: 28–33 for a reflective discussion on agency and structural constraints.

in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Art. 29). The Convention has been ratified by ALL other UN member states except two: Somalia and the USA…

Subtractive dominant-language medium education for ITM children

- prevents access to education, because of the linguistic, pedagogical and psychological barriers it creates. Thus it violates the right to education;
- often curtails the development of the children's capabilities, and perpetuates thus poverty (see economics Nobel laureate Amartya Sen);
- is organized *against solid research evidence* about how best to reach high levels of bilingualism or multilingualism and how to enable these children to achieve academically in school.

In the second Expert paper, Dunbar & Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) again considered the possibility that such subtractive educational policies, implemented in the full knowledge of their devastating effects on those who suffer them, may constitute international crimes, including genocide, within the meaning of the United Nations' 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (the "Genocide Convention") and other international documents. That States persist in such subtractive policies, given such knowledge, can, it is concluded, *from an educational and sociological point of view* be described as a form of linguistic and cultural genocide.

Dominant-language medium education for ITM children can cause serious physical and mental harm. Subtractive dominant-language medium education for ITM children can have harmful consequences socially, psychologically, economically, and politically;

- very serious mental harm: social dislocation, psychological, cognitive, linguistic and educational harm, and, partially through this, also economic, social and political marginalization;
- often also serious physical harm, e.g. in residential schools, and as a long-term result of marginalisation – e.g. alcoholism, suicides, incest, violence, illnesses, short life-span.

The paper contains legal argumentation which shows that forcibly (i.e. when alternatives do not exist) educating ITM children in a dominant language in submersion and even early-exit transitional programmes is *at least sociologically and educationally genocide.* We need some more court cases to ascertain the precise interpretations of some concepts in the Genocide Convention's definitions. In any case this education might be

legally labeled a crime against humanity. The conclusion in the second Expert paper is:

> The various forms of subtractive education to which indigenous children have been and continue to be subject results in very serious and often permanent harmful mental and physical consequences. It is now at odds with and in clear violation of a range of human rights standards, and in our view amount to ongoing violations of fundamental rights. It is at odds with contemporary standards of minority protection. In our view, the concept of "crime against humanity" is less restrictive [than genocide], and can also be applied to these forms of education. In our view, the destructive consequences of subtractive education, not only for indigenous languages and cultures but also in terms of the lives of indigenous people/s, are now clear. The concept of "crimes against humanity" provides a good basis for an evolution that will ultimately lead to the stigmatisation through law of subtractive educational practices and policies.

In a new book (2010; downloadable on the internet), Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar consider the extent to which the various forms of submersion education practiced both earlier and today by States could be considered to give rise to *international criminal responsibility*, exploring the application of the legal concepts of genocide, and of crimes against humanity. The term 'crime against humanity', first used in the modern context in respect of the massacres of Ottoman Turkey's Armenians of 1915, was translated into international legal principle in 1945, Although long associated with armed conflict, it is now accepted that they can also be perpetrated in times of peace, and can now be seen as part of customary international law. Although the concept is "sweeping", it has a number of common features. First, they are "particularly odious offences in that they constitute a serious attack on human dignity or a grave humiliation or degradation of one or more persons". Second, they are not isolated or sporadic events, but "are part of a widespread or systematic practice of atrocities that either form part of government policy or are tolerated, condoned, or acquiesced in by a government". Third, such crimes can be perpetrated in time of war or in peace. Fourth, they are committed against civilians or, under customary international law, enemy combatants in armed conflicts (Cassese, 2008, 98–101). The most complete description of what constitute "crimes against humanity" is now set out in the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* of 17 July, 1998 (the "ICC Statute") (http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/statute/romefra.htm). In the Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010) book (which the very short description above is based on), they note the existence of a range of barriers to the application of either concept to forms of submersion education, in the absence of

concrete court cases that could clarify some of the concepts. But they also note, particularly in relation to the concept of crimes against humanity, that the law is not particularly clear and is constantly evolving, which may make the application of at least some concepts of international *criminal* law to submersion education possible as the law develops.

3. Consequences of Subtractive Dominant Language Medium Education: Identity Strategies

In many countries around the world children from ITM groups are forced to go to schools, which do not use their mother tongues (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000 for a discussion of the global scenario). In addition to violating the right to education, as described in section 2, such forced submersion education in a dominant language has a subtractive effect on their mother tongues while the development of proficiency in the language of schooling can be slow and may remain limited. Due to the inadequate development of L1 and L2 and limited bilingual proficiency, children fail to benefit from the usual cognitive and metacognitive advantages associated with bi-/multilingualism (see Mohanty 1994 on these). Problems of non-comprehension in the classrooms cumulate to school failure and large scale 'push-out'.

Forced imposition of dominant languages also has adverse impact of cultural pride and identity. In effect, it prevents access to education, because of the linguistic, pedagogical, cognitive (CALP-related[9]) and psychological barriers that it creates. Education, which imposes a dominant language on ITM children, is clearly associated with loss of mother tongues and it amounts to forcible assimilation of minorities to the dominant language and culture. Thus it often curtails the development of the children's capabilities, and perpetuates thus poverty.

An analysis of the use of languages in Indian education (Mohanty 2006) – as media of instruction (MOI) and as school subjects – shows that minority languages are weakened and endangered by their exclusion and non-accommodation in school education and literacy programs. The exclusion takes place despite a clear constitutional provision that the state and the local authorities shall endeavour to "provide adequate

[9] See Jim Cummins' home page at http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/ for the two important concepts BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency).

facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at primary stage of education to children belonging to minority groups" (Article 350A, *Constitution of India*). Exclusion of mother tongues in formal education follows from the perception of powerlessness and low vitality ascribed to minor, minority, and tribal languages compared to the dominant majority languages such as English. In fact, English happens to be the most preferred MOI in India and has a significant presence in school curricula all over the country. The role of English in triggering a power game and a hierarchical pecking order of languages has been discussed elsewhere (see Mohanty 2004, 2006). Preference for English medium education has relegated Hindi and other major regional and constitutional languages to lesser positions in education (Kurien 2004), considerably weakening them in all spheres of the Indian society. These major regional languages, in turn, tend to push the tribal, minor, and minority languages out of favour. They are imposed on ITM speakers particularly in domains of education and official use. The prominent role of English in education can be viewed as a key factor in such outcomes in respect of the minor and dominated languages.

The *Sixth All India Educational Survey* of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) shows that out of 41 languages used in schools (both as MOI and as subjects) only 13 are tribal languages[10] (Gupta 1999, in Statement 11.2 in Gupta 1999). Except for one (Nicobaree), these tribal languages are from North Eastern States, which have a much higher concentration of tribal population compared to the rest of India. It should also be noted that the literacy figures for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups are also much higher in the NE States, and these states record a better rate of economic development than the other states. Further, out of the 13 tribal languages in schools, only three to four are used regularly as MOI (Jhingran 2005); the rest are languages taught as school subjects or used as MOI in some special programs, but not on a regular basis. Thus, less than 1% of the tribal children get an opportunity for education through the medium of their mother tongues. This neglect of tribal MTs is quite striking since a very large number of classrooms throughout the country have sizable proportions of tribal children. In twenty states for which DISE (District Information System for Education – a database of the Ministry of Human Resource Development,

[10] The Anthropological Survey of India (ASI), in its *People of India* project (*POI*) (Singh 2002), listed 623 tribal communities out of which about 573 are notified or scheduled for official recognition. The tribal groups speak 218 languages out of which 159 are exclusive to them; 54 languages are used by the tribals for inter-group communication (Singh 2002).

Government of India) is available, there are 103,609 Primary Schools (grades I to V) with more than 50%, 76,458 schools with more than 75% and 58,343 schools with more than 90% ST children (Jhingran 2005). All of these are taught in a submersion program, through the medium of majority languages. The DISE does not even have any information on the first language of the ST or other children whose home language is different from the school language.

As we have pointed out, exclusion of mother tongues from early education has serious consequences for tribal children in India. This is reflected in poor educational performance of the tribal groups – the low literacy and high "push out" rates – and consequently, in capability deprivation and poverty (see Mohanty, 200[illegible] *Language and Poverty* for some selected indicators of poor educational development of the scheduled tribes in India). From the beginning of schooling, tribal children take at least two to three years to learn (something of) the language of the teaching and the textbooks (Mohanty 2000). This effectively means that their learning of school content and concepts become quite slow from the very beginning of schooling. A study (Jhingran, 2005) in four states – Assam, Gujarat, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh – showed some striking problems of non-comprehension for the tribal and other children schooled in second language submersion programs. It revealed that children had little or no comprehension of the teacher's language, even after about six months in Grade I. The Grade I children showed no recognition of alphabets, except when the characters were arranged in sequence (showing rote memorization). Since children had no understanding of the language of teaching (L2), there was very little conversation or oral work in the classroom; teachers emphasized passive participation, such as copying alphabets and numbers from blackboard or textbooks. Interestingly, the study found the situation to be a little better when there was a tribal teacher who knew the mother tongue (L1) of the children and could 'unofficially' lapse into L1 in certain circumstances, particularly when the children had problems with L2. The academic achievement of these children in submersion schooling in a dominant language (L2) was found to be lagging behind even in Grade V:

> [They] read with a lot of effort, mostly word by word .... Their oral skills in the second language are poor and they are definitely more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue. Such children cannot frame sentences correctly and have a very limited vocabulary. While they can partially comprehend text (of grade 2/3 level), they were unable to formulate answers to

> simple questions in the standard language. In most schools, the tribal language-speaking children could not score a single mark in the reading comprehension test (Jhingran 2005:50).

Other studies also show similar findings in respect of the tribal children in India in submersion education (Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy & Ramesh 2009). For example, a national assessment of learning achievement of students at the end of Class V, conducted by NCERT in 2004 with a country-wide sample of 88,271 children (Singh, Jain, Gautam, & Kumar 2004), showed that the ST students scored significantly lower than the other students in tests of learning achievement in Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Language, Reading Comprehension, and Grammar and Usage. With very low levels of classroom achievement, it is not surprising that over 50% of the tribal children entering Grade I are pushed out by Grade V and over 80% by Grade X. This means that only 20 out of 100 tribal children joining school survive, to appear at high school examinations, which only about 8 pass. Thus, the system of submersion education in a dominant language leads to 92% being pushed out earlier or failing high school leaving exams. In higher and technical education, the representation of the STs is dismally low, despite programs, which reserve places for students belonging to the Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. The proportions of STs in higher and technical education during the years 2000 to 2002 varied from 2.97 to 4.64 per cent, far below their 8.2% share of the population (Mohanty 2008b). These figures have not shown any appreciable increase in recent years. Educational failure and the consequent lack of access to higher education limit the upward socio-economic mobility of tribal groups in India.

There is a linguistic double divide, between English and regional majority/dominant languages (vernaculars), and between the vernaculars and ITM languages (Mohanty 2010). This hierarchical power structure of languages leads to deprivation and impoverishment of languages, threats of language shift, and endangerment and identity crises for the ITM language speakers. This is certainly true of all South Asian countries, which are typically characterized by multilingual social realities and monolingual state practices (see also Benson & Kosonen 2010, and articles in Tsui & Tollefson 2007). Linguistic minorities and speakers of dominated and indigenous languages in these societies seem to be adopting various strategies of negotiation and assertion of their identities. Collective identity strategies have led, in some cases, to language movements, and to the assertive maintenance and revitalization of languages (such as Bodo

and Santali). In most cases, passive acceptance of the status quo by the speakers of indigenous languages in India has also resulted in the acceptance of the dominance of majorised languages, and a dissociation between instrumental and integrative[11] functions of language (Mohanty 2004). Such dissociation is evident from their endorsement of the major languages for both the children's education and for use in economically significant domains (instrumental functions), and of the use of the groups' own native languages for in-group identity and culture (integrative/expressive functions). Such divergent identity strategies can be seen as leading to instances of "linguistic identity without language" and "language without identity". An example of the former is the case of monolingual Konds who use the Oriya language only but call themselves Kui

[11] Two kinds of interest in LHRs can be distinguished, according to Ruth Rubio-Marín (Professor of Constitutional Law in Seville, Spain). One is "the expressive interest in language as a marker of identity", the other an "instrumental interest in language as a means of communication" (Rubio-Marín 2003: 56); these correspond fairly closely to what we (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, e.g. 1994) have called "necessary" and "enrichment-oriented" rights. The *expressive* (or non-instrumental) language claims

> aim at ensuring a person's capacity to enjoy a secure linguistic environment in her/his mother tongue and a linguistic group's fair chance of cultural self-reproduction (Rubio-Marín 2003: 56).

It is only these rights that Rubio-Marín calls "language rights in a strict sense" (2003: 56), i.e. these could be seen as linguistic *human* rights (LHRs). The formulation above beautifully integrates the individual rights of ITMs with their collective rights. It is mainly these expressive rights, or lack of them, that are exemplified in the quotes.

Educational language rights, on the other hand, seem superficially to be more about instrumental rights. These *instrumental* language claims

> aim at ensuring that language is not an obstacle to the effective enjoyment of rights with a linguistic dimension, to the meaningful participation in public institutions and democratic process, and to the enjoyment of social and economic opportunities that require linguistic skills (ibid.).

But the educational goals presented in Section 4.1, as well as the educational linguistic rights discussed in Chapter 2, show clearly that good ITM education has both expressive and instrumental goals. Unfortunately these insights are adversely affected when some instrumentalists claim that those interested in the expressive aspects exclude the more instrumental communication-oriented aspects (for instance unequal class- or gender-based access to formal language or to international languages). The debates in 2003 numbers of the Journal of Language, Identity and Education are an example of this old division based on outmoded ideas being reinvented again. The same debates have been fought already in the 1960s and 1970s, both over integration of minorities (are they more interested in their languages, or in jobs) and over indigenous claims (are they more interested in identity, language and traditions, or in autonomy/land rights). Most groups are mostly interested in both types of rights, expressive and instrumental, and often one is a prerequisite for the other, with both being alternately causal AND dependent variables. Many of us work with both aspects, and see them as complementary, not mutually exclusive.

people, i.e. they have Kui linguistic identity[12]). An example of the latter is those many upper-class English-educated Bhojpuri speakers who do not identify with Bhojpuri.[13] Use of indigenous and vernacular languages is often associated with shame and denial of proficiency in these languages.

A third strategy of the ITM groups is one of individual level assimilation into the dominant language (and culture) and 'invisibilisation' of their indigenous languages, accepting language shift and dominance by the major languages. Many ITM communities have succumbed to the pressure from the dominant languages. They accept the progressive loss of their mother tongues as a *fait accompli*. As a result, intergenerational transmission of many ITM languages is no longer evident. This has led to loss of many ITM languages in India. UNESCO's *Atlas of World's Languages in Danger* lists 197 languages for India in the endangered language category, the highest number in the world. Over 80% of these are tribal languages. These are some indications of how the hierarchical linguistic structure and the double divide in Indian society are variously negotiated through complex social-psychological processes, affecting the future of languages (Mohanty 1991, 2004).

However, assertive maintenance and revitalisation strategies have led to recognition of some languages (such as the Constitutional recognition of Bodo and Santhali as 'Official Languages') and significant development of these languages. The Bodo language, for example, has shown a phenomenal development in recent years, with its use in all levels of formal education, from primary to doctoral level programs, and large-scale use in media and other socio-economic domains. Since the granting of autonomous status to the Bodo community and constitutional recognition of Bodo language, there has been a growing number of newspapers, magazines, printed texts and literary productions, television stations, films and various other commercial applications in Bodo.

In contrast, passive acceptance and 'invisibilisation'/ assimilation strategies have led to progressive marginalisation, impoverishment and loss of most of the ITM languages in India. Studies of multilingual socialisation in

[12] Kui is the indigenous language of the Kond tribe in Kandhamal District of Orissa. In parts of the district, there has been a shift of Kui in favour of Oriya, the state dominant language. The Oriya monolingual Konds in these parts of Kandhamal still identify with Kui language calling themselves 'Kui people'.

[13] Upper class Bhojpuri speakers often assume a superordinate identity as Hindi speakers. Srivastava (1989) also noted that migrant Bhojpuri workers in Maharashtra show a language shift towards Hindi.

India (Bujorborua 2006; Mohanty et al. 1999) show that children in India develop an early awareness of the double divide and the social norms of preference among the languages in the hierarchy. For example, in discussing the stages of multilingual socialisation, Mohanty et al. (1999) show that 7- to 9-year-old children in India have a clear awareness of the higher social status of English vis-à-vis their own mother tongues, and that schools do contribute to the development of such early awareness. Bujorborua's (2006) study of multilingual socialisation of Assamese children shows that children develop an early preference for using English, over Assamese. She also shows that parental language socialisation strategies target transmission of the socio-linguistic hierarchy of languages and the preference for English over Assamese, Hindi and other languages. These studies show how the relationship between language and power and the hierarchy of preferences for languages are socially constructed and legitimated through the processes of language socialisation.

Analysis of the acculturation strategies and negotiation of identities in situations of contact between Bodo and Assamese in Kokrajhar, Assam, and between Kui and Oriya in Orissa (Mohanty and Saikia 2007, Mohanty, 2007) shows why some marginalised linguistic groups resort to assertive maintenance, while others show passive acceptance (and assimilate). Analysis of attitudes towards maintenance of one's own group's language and culture, intergroup relations, subjective ethnolinguistic vitality and social identity of the linguistic groups in contact shows that stable bilingualism in language contact is associated with social integration. In situations of contact between two linguistic groups, one of which is highly dominant and the other marginalised, perception of own-group vitality by the dominated group may be so low that they view their own powerlessness as legitimate and do not "experience" any discrimination. However, when the dominated group experiences discrimination it tends to show separation and rejection strategies of acculturation; this leads to tension in intergroup relationship. Field studies of collective action by Bodo and Kui speakers in India show that dissociation of integrative and instrumental dimensions in language maintenance attitudes are associated with a passive identity strategy. The Kui speakers view their language as vital for maintenance of their cultural and linguistic identity. At the same time, they do not perceive any value in their language for their socio-economic mobility. Analysis of the history of the Bodo language movement, on the other hand, shows that, prior to the emergence of organised social movement against the dominance of Assamese language over Bodo, individual identity strategies led to perception of intergroup

boundaries to be permeable and tendency to assimilate into the dominant group. However, as the language movement got organised with emergence of committed leadership, intergroup boundaries came to be perceived as impermeable and collective identity strategies resulted in increasing rejection of the tendency to assimilate. Thus, permeability of intergroup boundary is not an objective condition; with increasing salience of social identity, boundaries are perceived as impermeable. Further, when a community views its own ethnolinguistic vitality as very low it tends to assimilate leading to language shift. And when the perceived ethnolinguistic vitality is high (as with the Bodo), the community tends to assert its ethnolinguistic distinctiveness engaging in language maintenance strategies. In contrast, some groups such as the Konds may have a level of intermediate range of perceived vitality viewing their language as socially significant for their identity but not having any instrumental value. In such cases, the community and its language remain marginalised and the language tends to be pushed to limited domains of home and in-group communication. Thus, the findings support a double threshold hypothesis of ethnolinguistic vitality, which predicts language shift below the lower threshold, marginalised maintenance below the higher threshold and collective action beyond the higher threshold. With increasing salience of group identity and favorable conditions for collective action (e.g. leadership), collective identity strategies (e.g. social movement participation) are preferred over individual strategies (such as assimilation). These studies of the social psychological aspects of languages in contact show that dominance of some languages and discrimination against others lead to social tension, impoverishment and loss of languages. Thus, imposition of dominant languages in education and other socio-economic domains has adverse impact on ITM languages and leads to poverty and loss of linguistic diversity.

4. MLE as Economic Equalizer (India & Nepal, Ethiopia, Saami, Finns in Sweden)

Every two to three weeks, the last speaker of a language is dying in some corner of the world, according to UNESCO. Loss of linguistic diversity and linguistic genocide are grim realities to which most of us seem to have closed our eyes, ears and minds. Submersion education may lead to the extinction of Indigenous/tribal/local languages, thus contributing to the disappearance of the world's linguistic diversity. It is important for the

future of the planet to maintain all the languages in the world: much of the most sophisticated knowledge about how to live sustainably, in balance with the ecosystem, is encoded in them, and disappears if the languages (are made to) disappear. Is this loss of language inevitable, as commonly believed? Or, are there alternatives? Is it unavoidable that the less powerful ITM language speakers continue to be deprived of any opportunity to develop their capability through severally imposed systems of subtractive education in a dominant language, which perpetuates the existing inequalities, pushes them into a vicious circle of poverty and accelerate the loss of linguistic and cultural diversity?

In India, children from among the speakers of 159 ITM languages constituting over 8% of the population are led to large-scale educational failure. This is because 99% of such children do not understand the dominant language of the schools, the teachers and the textbooks when they enter school depriving the tribal children of opportunity for development out of poverty. National assessment of children's classroom achievement (Singh, Jain, Gautam and Kumar 2004) at the end of the primary level education (Grade V) shows that the tribal children as a group are the lowest performers. Several studies (Jhingran, 2005; Mohanty, 2000, 2009) show that it takes at least two to three years for the average tribal child to understand the language of the teacher and the classroom; most of such children face the problem of non-comprehension during the primary school years and are rendered incapable with very limited academic success and very low rate of entry (only 2 to 4%) into enabling levels of higher and technical education, despite a policy of reservation of 8% of the intake for the tribal groups. In Nepal a large proportion of ITM children enrolled in school are 'pushed out' during early years of primary education, a majority in Grades 1 and 2 (Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009). A number of studies in India (see Mohanty, 2010; Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy and Ramesh, 2009) show that, compared to other disadvantaged groups who do not face the problem of mismatch between home language and school language, tribal children facing a language barrier in schools due to education in a dominant language have poorer school attendance, lower classroom achievement, and higher 'push out' rates and school failure. Clearly, the language disadvantage of tribal children in forced submersion schools is a major factor in large-scale school failure and high exclusion rates, contributing to their capability deprivation and poverty (see Mohanty 2008b, and 2010 for elaborate discussion).

In contrast, new experimental programs of mother based multilingual education (MLE), using the MT as the language of early literacy and school

learning makes a difference for the ITM children in India and Nepal as in many other parts of the world. School participation through the home language gives a sense of cultural identity and belongingness, which acts as a strong motivating force, keeping the children actively engaged in their schools. An example: Panchu, a Kui speaking Kond tribal child, in Class 2 of an experimental MLE school (*MLE Plus* Program) in Sapeli, Kandhamal District of Orissa, India, is dragged by a hyena on his way to school in September 2009. He fights bravely and is rescued by other school-going children, badly bruised.[14] He gets back home after nearly two week's hospitalization. Still recovering from the injury, he defies all predictions, and comes back to school. He is in Class 4 now (September 2011) and finds his school experience quite interesting and attractive. Panchu's story is striking because most tribal children in submersion classrooms do show a very high inclination to remain absent from school with any slight excuse and maximum "drop out" happens during the first two years of schooling. The language disadvantage of tribal children in dominant language schools has major "discouragement effects", which, as Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (2002) point out, tends to keep them out of school.

This realisation led to efforts in India and Nepal to try out various models of mother tongue-based education for Indigenous and tribal children (Mohanty 1989, 2006). The early attempts were transitional programs of bilingual education aiming at a smooth transition from the tribal MT to the dominant language of schooling. These early programs lacked any theoretical framework and were dropped without much success.

Only recently, some states have started structured programs of mother tongue-based MLE for tribal MT children. Mother tongue-based MLE started in Andhra Pradesh in the year 2004 in eight tribal MTs for children in 240 schools and in Orissa in 2006 in ten tribal MTs in 195 schools (see Mohanty at al. 2009: 278–291 and Nag and Manoharan 2009, for details of these programs[15]). These programs use MT as the only language of teaching and early literacy instruction for the first three years in primary level schooling. The state majority language (L2), Telugu in Andhra Pradesh and Oriya in Orissa, is introduced as a language subject for the development of oral communicative skills in the second year

[14] Panchu's story appears in *Swara* (Issue 2, 2010), the newsletter (edited by Minati Panda) of the National Multilingual Education Resource Consortium (www.nmrc-jnu.org).

[15] The MLE programs in both the states are now being upscaled to a larger number of schools and to other tribal MTs, and new states such as Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are planning MLE programs.

and for reading and writing skills in the third year of schooling. The state language (Telugu/Oriya) is used as a language of teaching along with the MT from the fourth year. The program envisages the MLE children joining "regular" school programs in the majority language of the states (Telugu/Oriya) from the sixth year of schooling.

In these programs, the tribal languages are written in the script[16] of the dominant state language with some modifications wherever necessary. The teachers in the MLE programs are from the tribal language community and speak the target tribal language. The programs follow the common school curricula of the states but attempt to integrate the indigenous knowledge system of the tribal language community in developing the textbooks and other curricular materials.

A special intervention program in Orissa, called *MLE Plus* (MLE+) (Panda and Mohanty 2009) is implemented in eight of the government MLE schools in two tribal languages – Kui and Saora. This program has a special focus on cultural pedagogy and emphasizes culture- and community-based approaches to children's collaborative classroom learning and development of cultural identity.

Several evaluations of the MLE and MLE+ programs have shown positive effects on children's classroom achievement, school attendance and participation, parental satisfaction and community involvement (Mohanty et al. 2009: 278–291; Panda and Mohanty 2009). Evidently, the experimental MLE programs in India provide better quality education for the tribal children compared to the traditional programs of submersion education in the state majority language, which is not their MT.

In Nepal,[17] the 2001 census recorded 92 languages, while the *Ethnologue*, 16th edition, claims 124 living languages and Yonjan-Tamang (2006) claims over 143 languages. 19 languages are estimated as being on the verge of extinction (Yadava and Grove 2008). Most languages have fairly few speakers; fewer than 20 have more than 100,000. The literacy rate in the 2001 census was 54%: 65% for males, 42% for females. With 2005–2007 data, the literacy rate for adults (15 years and older) was 56.5% (70.3 for

[16] Tribal languages in India do not have any exclusive script system and are usually written in the script of either the dominant regional language or another major language. But in recent years some tribal languages, such as Santali, have developed their own writing system.

[17] The Nepali section is largely based on Nurmela, Awasthi & Skutnabb-Kangas 2010, and, to some extent also on Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty 2009. Thanks to Iina Nurmela and Lava Deo Awasthi!

males, 43.6 for females; for youth between 15 and 24 it was 79.3% (85.3 for males, 73.0 for females) (*Global Education Digest 2009*, Table 15, p. 192). Nepali is the main language of teaching. About 50.1% of Nepal's school-age population speaks a language other than Nepali as a mother tongue. Teaching Indigenous, tribal and minority (ITM) children through the medium of a language that they do not understand obviously contributes to the low literacy rates. One of the major causes of children's "dropout", class repetition and failure is attributed to the use of Nepali (or English), instead of children's mother tongues in early grades of school education. According to a study carried out by EDSC (1997: 95) on the National Achievement Level of Grade 3 Students "the parents of the top 10 schools' students were from the Nepali mother tongue group whereas the parents of the bottom 10 schools' students came from non-Nepali speaking group". This shows the disadvantage the non-Nepali speaking children are facing in schools of Nepal (ibid.). As the statistics show, sooner or later ITM children get frustrated and stop coming to school, i.e. the structure of the education with a non-comprehensible MOI pushes them out.

The National Language Policy Recommendation Commission in Nepal pointed to this problem as early as 1994 (Yadava and Grove 2008: 24). The children enrolled at primary level tend to "drop out" from the schools. In some cases, the students leave the school and enrol again. For these students it takes nine to twelve years to complete the primary education. This is an indication of a great educational loss. "The majority of the school dropouts are found in grade (1–2)", Yadava and Grove state (p. 24).

Lava Deo Awasthi stated (2004: 286) in his PhD study *Exploring Monolingual School Practices in Multilingual Nepal*:

> The existing medium of instruction (MOI) practices do not allow NNS [= non-Nepali-speaking] children to receive education through their mother tongues [...]. Teaching in schools operates in Nepali despite the fact that a majority of school children in non-Nepali speaking areas speak other language(s) than Nepali. [...] My evidence suggests that the Nepali-only practice in classrooms has devastating effects on NNS children's school performance and on their self-esteems.

But listing push-out, repetition and failure rates in early grades do not describe the extent of harm that has been done to Indigenous children: the lack of appreciation of the Indigenous culture and language by the dominant society has led to feelings of inferiority, humiliation and self-hate when speaking one's native language (Hough, Thapa Magar & Yonjan-Tamang 2009: 147). The situation is thus similar to India's ITM children. Similar harm was described in detail in Mauritius, at an International

Hearing on the Harm done in Schools by the Suppression of the Mother Tongue, 20–24 October 2009 (See the *Report, Findings and Recommendations*, at http://www.lalitmauritius.org, 27 Oct 2009, Documents).

The existence of immense diversity of languages and cultures in Nepal proves that multilingualism thrived in the past, prior to the spread of the monolingual ideologies, promoted by the Nepali state under the influence of the British Empire in India. The systematic destruction of local languages through glorification of one dominant language can be attributed to the work of the Macaulay Minutes of 1835 in India at the regional level. In Nepal, this led to the Wood Commission Report of 1956. The Macaulay Minutes of the British India and the Wood Commission of Nepal had the same mission to accomplish: the spread of English in India and the spread of Nepali in Nepal (see Phillipson, 1992, 2010; Prasad, 2001; Awasthi, 2004). Just as English proved to be a means of anglicising India and creating linguistic power hierarchies, so did Nepali for the spread of mainstream language and culture across Nepal. The power of Nepali contributed significantly to invisibilising the language resources of the Indigenous/tribal peoples and minority groups (ITMs), and made them inconvertible to other resources, including political power (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, Chapter 6, Globalisation, Power and Control). The insurgency that Nepal faced for more than a decade in the past can also be interpreted claiming that the linguistic power hierarchies resulting from the monolingual orientations might have contributed to the loss of cultural cohesion and have increased social and economic cleavages, leading to majority/minority splits, social tensions and class conflicts in the country (see Raj, 2004).

Nepal's new governments since 2006 seem to have shown awareness of the need and interest in improving the mother-tongue-based MLE. Government's changed policy intentions on MLE were already very visible in 2006 but the implementation arrangements were not given due consideration in the *Interim Constitution* (2007). However, the political changes that took place in the country reiterated the need for providing mother tongue medium (MTM) education for children in the early grades of their primary education. Both the *Interim Constitution* 2007 (http://www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/Interim.Constitution.Bilingual.UNDP.pdf) and the *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF, 2007) ensure the *right of every child to have their education through the medium of their mother tongue during the first grades of their school years.*

The attitudinal changes can also be seen in relation to Nepal's international commitments. In addition to many of the more general UN human

rights instruments, Nepal's government has ratified or voted for two major UN instruments regarding the rights of Indigenous peoples. International Labour Organization (*ILO*) *Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* (see http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169) was ratified by Nepal in September 2007, and it entered into force one year later. The Convention, as a treaty, creates binding legal obligations for those States that ratify it. Thus far, only 22 states have done so, and Nepal is the first state in Asia to have done this. Nepal also voted in favour of the adoption of the United Nations' General Assembly *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) of 13 September 2007 (http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/8251378.html). As a General Assembly declaration, UNDRIP does not, strictly speaking, create binding legal obligations, but the moral obligations are still major.

Both give ITM children a right to mother tongue medium education, especially when interpreted together with other instruments, and comments to these.

A recent small-scale Multilingual Education Programme (2006–2009) in Nepal is similar to the Orissa programme in India. The programme was to achieve five interconnected objectives:

1. Creating a conducive policy environment for MLE;
2. Developing an institutional structure that will facilitate a bottom-up implementation of sustainable MLE and coordinate MLE activities;
3. Strengthening the capacity at central, district and community levels to implement MLE;
4. Creating and establishing models of learning environments that facilitate the non-Nepali speaking students' learning and prepare them to continue their education after the primary level;
5. Establishing models of creating support networks of schools implementing MLE.

The MLE programme included a small-scale intervention to build models of MLE in primary schools. Seven schools in six districts (out of 75 districts and 32,000 schools in the whole country) began work with MLE in 2007, using eight ITM languages as media of instruction (MOIs) in the first three grades. The approach was bottom-up and Indigenous knowledge of elders was used as a basis for textbooks which were developed in cooperation with elders, children, parents and teachers (see Hough, Thapa Magar & Yonjan-Tamang 2009, Yonjan-Tamang, Hough & Nurmela, 2009). In an effort to suggest a model for nation-wide implementation, the pilot experience was cascaded by the pilot school communities themselves into

two more schools in each district in 2009. The number of schools currently implementing MTM based education is very small. However, it has opened ways for the expansion and consolidation of MLE interventions, building on the lessons learnt and gains made so far. Similar results to India are already visible, with children who like coming to school, parents who can cooperate with teachers, lower push-out rates, etc. There are many challenges, though; advocacy, attitudes, teacher training, complex decentralisation and coordination processes, financial hurdles, methodology in linguistically diverse villages, etc. (see Acharya 2009, Bajracharya et al. 2009, Nurmela, Awasthi & Skutnabb-Kangas 2010, Taylor 2010).

Lava Deo Awasthi, the father of the Nepali MLE programme (who has himself been through many of the hurdles, not being a native Nepali speaker, "dropping out" of school in grade 6 and rejoining after a 3-year break, etc, was in September 2010 appointed Director General of the Nepali Department of Education (DoE). On his first day in the new position, he asked the directors of the various agencies under DoE to urgently make concrete plans on how to achieve the goal of every Nepalese child having their primary education through the medium of their mother tongues before 2015.

5. Concluding Remarks

In face of today's widespread mutual contact of bi/multilingual individuals and communities, languages could to be maintained. Languages can complement each other, with a smooth functional allocation into different domains of use – there is no need for any either/or thinking. We are ourselves examples of this. Ajit Mohanty uses his mother tongue, Oriya, in his home, English in his work place, Hindi in the market place and for viewing television programs, Bengali for communication with his domestic help (and for others who speak the language), Sanskrit for his religious activities, and some Kui with the tribal informants for his research with the (Kond) tribal community. Languages complement each other in his life as they do in those of other Indians, without any mutual conflict. This, as well as fluidity of perceived boundaries between languages, is also associated with the multiplicity of linguistic identities which forms a part of early multilingual socialization (Mohanty, Panda & Mishra 1999) in India. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas uses one of her two mother tongues, Swedish, at home in addition to English, with her British husband who understands both. She uses her other mother tongue, Finnish, with all Finnish-speakers,

including her daughters and grandson (unless there are people present who don't understand Finnish). She uses English as her main working language (but writes daily in four languages), Danish with Danish neighbours and other Danish speakers, Norwegian in Norway, often with Saami in Norway for whom it is a second language, German with people in Germany who do not understand English (e.g. most Kurds). Sometimes she uses four "languages" in the same sentence at home, meaning the fluidity of boundaries (also between identities) is similar to Ajit's. Of course we are also aware of Ellen Bialystoks' research which shows that using several (or even two) languages daily may postpone Alzheimer's with 5–6 years, a consolation at our age. But high levels of multilingualism are mainly necessary for all the other reasons that we have detailed in this article.

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