

Language rights: a framework for ensuring social equity in planning and implementing national-education policies

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Abstract:

Background: An important issue in the discourse on language rights is the degree to which they influence the development and implementation of language policies or perpetuate inequalities in many language situations. Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2002a, 2002b) and May (2000), for example, have argued that language rights offer a reasonable framework for protecting minority languages. In contrast, Brutt-Griffler (2002a) argues that a focus on language rights is neither theoretically justified nor realistic as a means for protecting the interests of linguistic minorities. This article uses the antithetical views expressed by Brutt-Griffler, a critic of language rights, and by Skutnabb-Kangas, an advocate of those rights, as a point of departure in marshaling arguments to advocate human rights as both a mechanism for ensuring social equity, for expanding educational offerings particularly to school-age children, and, in turn, for fostering national development.

Focus of Discussion: Skutnabb-Kangas observes that the most important of linguistic human rights (LHRs) that is needed in the educational process to maintain the world's linguistic diversity is the unconditional mother-tongue medium (MTM). Brutt-Griffler holds a contrary perspective, arguing that an emphasis on language rights is not theoretically justified, and that they cannot protect the interest of linguistic minorities. This article uses those disparate views to frame arguments on social equity and educational policies.

Arguments: Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a) has been an ardent advocate for the education of linguistic minorities worldwide and proffers answers to a key question: "Can a human rights (HRs) approach to language planning and policy promote educational equity for diverse student populations?" (p. 180). She argues that indigenous and minority education is congruent with the U.N. definition of linguistic genocide and that the dominant language (e.g., English as a world language) often morphs into a killer language.

Brutt-Griffler holds an antithetical view, arguing that linguistic human rights not only have little impact on peoples' lives, but that they are inconsistent with the theoretical standpoint of language policy and planning (LPP). She notes that language rights are not effective vehicles for social change and that an emphasis on such rights limits LPP theory.

Conclusion: Both Skutnabb-Kangas and Brutt-Griffler note the limitations of LPP theory. Even so, Skutnabb-Kangas, on the one hand, supports adopting and implementing worldwide language rights and promoting a policy on such rights as a desideratum for accomplishing social equity at a national level. Brutt-Griffler, on the other, argues that because language rights offer an inadequate framework for applying LPP theory, they cannot provide an effective pathway to meaningful social change. This article avers that language rights can be a mechanism for enhancing social equity in language policies, and, in turn, national development, by emphasizing two justice-driven perspectives: procedural justice and distributive justice. Because of the limitations of LPP theory and the lack of empirical research on the interface between language rights and national-education policies for social change, this article concludes by suggesting future directions for that much-needed research agenda.

Keywords: language rights, social equity, procedural and distributive justice

語言權利：保證在計劃和實施國民教育政策下 社會公平的一個架構

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摘要

背景：語言權利話語中一個很重要的議題是，語言權利對制定和執行語言政策究竟有多大程度的影響，以及是否會加深在多語言場景中的不平等。例如，Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2002a, 2002b) 與 May (2000) 認為，語言權利給少數族裔語言提供了合理的保護性框架。相反，Brutt-Griffler (2002a) 卻認為，語言權利不僅從理論上能以立足，從實際上也不能保護少數族裔語言使用者的利益。立足於語言權利宣導者Skutnabb-Kangas的贊同立場和語言權利批評者Brutt-Griffler的反對立場，本文提出人權作為一種手段，一方面可以確保社會公正，為學齡兒童拓展教育機會，另一方面也可以促進國家發展。

爭論焦點：Skutnabb-Kangas 認為，母語媒介（MTM）無疑是最重要的語言人權（LHRs），因為它可以在教育過程中維持世界的語言多樣性。Brutt-Griffler 則持相對立的觀點，認為將重點集中於語言權利在理論上站不住腳，而且也不能保護語言少數族裔的利益。本文以這兩種對立的觀點出發來闡述社會公正與教育政策。

論據：Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a) 是對在世界範圍內保護語言少數族裔教育權利的熱情宣導者。她提出了一個關鍵問題：“人權途徑能否在語言制定和執行中保護少數族裔學生的教育公正權利？”（第180頁）。她認為土著和少數族裔教育的境況符合聯合國關於語言滅絕的定義，居於主導性地位的語言（如英語作為世界語言）往往會演變為語言殺手。

Brutt-Griffler 則持相反的觀點，她認為語言人權不僅對人們的生活沒有絲毫實際幫助，而且與語言政策和規劃的理論出發點相違背。她注意到語言權利不是社會變革的有效工具，而且強調語言權利會進一步加深語言政策與執行的局限性。

結論：Skutnabb-Kangas 與 Brutt-Griffler 都注意到了語言政策與執行理論的局限性。儘管如此，一方面，Skutnabb-Kangas 支持在世界範圍內採納和執行語言權利，且宣導以此權利為基礎在國家範圍內達到社會公正。另一方面，Brutt-Griffler 認為語言權利沒有為應用語言政策與執行提供充分的理論框架，也沒有為促進有意義的社會變革提供有效的途徑。本文認為，通過強調程式公正與分配公正這兩種基於公正的途徑，語言權利可以成為語言政策中增進社會公正和國家發展的機制。由於語言政策與執行理論的局限性，以及缺乏對語言權利與旨在社會變革的國家語言政策之間關係的經驗研究，本文最後提議將來的研究可以集中在這個課題。

關鍵字：語言權利，社會公平，程式公正與分配公正

Language planning is a near-essential element in nation-building; so essential, in fact, that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the nation and its languages.

—Millar (2005, p. 198)

This article uses two disparate perspectives on linguistic human rights (LHRs), those of Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2000, 2002a, 2002b) and of Brutt-Griffler (2002a), as a point of departure in arguing that those rights are a *sine qua non* for both social equity and social change—particularly at the national level. To the degree that social injustice, which bedevils linguistic minority groups, perpetuates the non-acceptance of linguistic diversity and is as well the outcome of that non-acceptance, national-education policies need be at once sensitive to the potential pitfalls in implementing programs that are bereft of clear indicators of linguistic rights as human rights, à la Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995); Skutnabb-Kangas (1996); Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1994); Skutnabb-Kangas, Kontra, and Phillipson (2006); and Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, and Kontra (2001).

This article has four parts. The first focuses on Skutnabb-Kangas and her colleagues' wide-ranging arguments on LHRs. The second, on Brutt-Griffler's contrarian perspectives on LHRs. Based on the preceding analysis, the third part makes a case for embedding linguistic diversity and for considering two normative perspectives on language policy for national development. Finally, in light of the limitations of language policy and planning (LPP) theory and of the nascence of empirical research on the interface between language rights and national-education policies, this article presents future directions for that research focus.

Skutnabb-Kangas's Perspectives

Advocating Diversity in Language Education

Many school-age children confront situations in which there are major differences between the language used at school and that used at home. In developing a policy on education and language, it is important to distinguish between one's right to get a formal education, which is necessary for social, economic and political participation and mobility, and one's right to an informal education through one's mother tongue. Both rights should be synchronous. It is essential for language minorities to participate fully in a broader society, as well as to retain connection with their home or community language (Wiley, 2002).

Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2000, 2002a) and Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins (1988) are ardent advocates for the education of linguistic minorities worldwide. Much of Skutnabb-Kangas's research is premised on answering an overarching question: "Can a human rights (HRs) approach to language planning and policy promote educational equity for diverse student populations?" (2002a, p. 180). She advocates instituting linguistic educational rights and eradicating monolingualism on grounds that the latter prevents citizens' political participation, ruins trust and cooperation between ethnic groups, breeds arrogance and linguisticism in majority groups, foments bitterness and colonized consciousness in minority groups, and decreases welfare (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, 2002a). She argues that, generally, indigenous and minority education is consistent with the U.N. definition of linguistic genocide, in that a dominant language often morphs into a killer language. To her, the most important of LHRs that is needed to maintain worldwide linguistic diversity is the unconditional right to education in one's mother-tongue medium (MTM), which she

views as contributing to reducing societal conflict. Absent that right, coupled with economic, social and political factors, world illiteracy becomes an imminent reality. Children learn language from their parents and communities. Such learning process occurs in societies where children do not commonly attend school. But when most of the children start attending school, if the minority and indigenous children are educated through the dominant language (often a nation's official language), it is unlikely that when they will become adults they will continue to communicate with their own children in their own (home) language. Therefore, to the degree that the home language is not transmitted, the children are forced to become language outsiders—that is, a part of an external linguistic group.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak (1994), and Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) argue that the schools, the media and the world's economic, military and political systems are the main agents of linguicide or cultural and linguistic genocide, whereby parents are forced not to let their children learn their mother tongue or to identify with it. Fishman (1992) observes that languages cannot be saved by schools, and that sometimes such institutions act as agents for killing language in one or two generations. While governments once suppressed languages, technology is today a major force against the existence of native tongues (Haney, 1995).

Other variants of linguistic genocide are deliberately and calculatedly state-enforced, as on the Tibetan plateau, where China represses Tibetan culture and clams down on freedom-touting protesters, demonizes the Dalai Lama, promotes Mandarin as the language of social and economic mobility, and fails to provide education in Tibetan language beyond primary school. Consequently,

China's hosting of the summer Olympic Games in 2008 raised the ire of freedom activists worldwide, particularly over that country's treatment of Tibetans. An even more extreme case is the subjugation of the Kurds to colonial rule in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, and of Turkey's proscription of the Kurdish language in an attempt to implement assimilationist and genocidal policies on the Kurds (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas & Bucak, 1994). Taiwan's primary schools educate children solely in Mandarin and English; therefore, such a language policy hamstrings pupils whose mother tongue is not Mandarin, fails to support minority languages and dialects, and undercuts the students' linguistic rights in the process. Even though a cadre of Taiwanese civic leaders advocates that various dialects be formally taught in schools, chances of enacting a formal policy on it still seem far-fetched.

Monolingual vs. Bilingual Instruction

Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a) argues that it is necessary for children to learn the home language as well as the dominant language. Most minority children are more likely to reach their educational potential if they have functional skills in both the dominant language and their own language. Additional language skills enrich people's lives, give people more choices, and offer them more freedom; however, these additional languages and the dominant language could be learned *pari passu*, neither of which exclusively. Additional languages need not be a substitute for one's mother tongue. Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a) believes that everyone who resides in a country where a mother tongue is not an official language has the right to become bilingual in both a mother tongue and in the official

language. English can be one option for an official language. The reason: It has an official status in more than 60 countries (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). An exclusive formal education, by which children learn a dominant language, may have two knock-on effects. The first is that it can lead to linguistic genocide by which, say, English (imposed over Welsh), Mandarin (imposed over Cantonese and other dialects), Hindi (imposed over English), and Urdu (imposed over English) become killer languages. The second is that it can engender ethnic complexes and strife, as have occurred in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the former Yugoslavia. On the social limitations of a dominant, non-native language, Childs (2004) writes in regard to the subordination of Welsh to English: “Throughout centuries of English rule, Englishmen persuaded themselves as well as some Welsh people that the Welsh language was inferior, perhaps fit for managing a sheepfold or a barnyard, but inelegant and incapable of expressing what is beautiful and noble” (p. 14). Thus, LHRs, which guarantee additional language learning, are a desideratum for preventing linguistic genocide and also for maintaining national linguistic diversity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002b).

Negative rights can help prevent linguistic discrimination; positive rights are required for education through minority languages. Worldwide, MTM education is one of the most compelling arguments used by indigenous and minority people to advocate bilingualism. But in the HR approach, educational equity for the diverse students does not seem particularly promising. Language-based discrimination in education, class and gender are palpable in societies where ethnic loyalties trump ethnic identities. MTM education is also LHRs, but few people experience it. Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a)

argues that even though the United Nations advocates human rights and democracy, governments spend more resources on the military than on education and health. In South Africa, a diversity-addled country, multiple language discourses have been shown to be a central element in the exercise of power and in the creation of climates of violence (Janks, 2000). Adopting a language-rights policy can help foster greater social justice.

Brutt-Griffler’s Perspectives

Brutt-Griffler (2002a) holds contrary views, arguing that a focus on language rights is not theoretically justified, and that it cannot protect the interest of linguistic minorities. She writes that linguistic human rights have little impact on peoples’ lives; at the same time, such rights are inadequate for applying LPP theory to national-language policies. She also writes that language rights cannot be effective for social change and that an emphasis on language rights perpetuates inadequate LPP theory. States often adopt language policies that may not favor ethnolinguistic minorities even though these states support language rights. For example, the rationale for official-English laws and prohibition of bilingual education in the United States is that it will improve educational quality, economic opportunity and equal rights for linguistic minorities.

Brutt-Griffler (2002a) uses the examples of Lesotho and of Sri Lanka, countries where a form of industrial education used there was based on MTM and where English teaching to the working class was prohibited. In contrast, colonial Africa, particularly the regions under British rule, experienced the diminution of traditional linguistic norms and a threat to MTM, a subject to which we now turn. In essence, the next two sections are guided by the question,

To what extent did colonial governments in sub-Saharan Africa (particularly in colonial Basutoland) and in Asia threaten linguistic diversity? What were the implications of that threat for postcolonial (or indigenous) administrations?

Two Normative Approaches

It has been argued that a language policy should serve the interests of all members of the group equally and uniformly. May (2000) notes that “advocates of linguistic human rights tend to assume the identity of linguistic minority groups as given, the collective aims of linguistic minority groups as uniform, and the notion of collective rights as unproblematic” (pp. 371-372).

Kontra et al. (1999) and Pennycook (1998) aver that language rights should be and are appropriately concerned with both the empowered and the marginalized. Thus, language policy should focus not only on language groups, minorities and ethnic affiliation but also on its impact on the disempowered socioeconomic groups within language groups (Brutt-Griffler, 2002a); the goal of a language policy is to ensure equity for all language groups.

Cast against these challenges, then, we conclude that LHRs are a *sine qua non* for social change—one that acknowledges the social injustice (e.g., linguistic genocide) that certain linguistic groups experience and the methods (e.g., protection and special status) that need to be considered in redressing societal wrongs, even in Asian societies that tend to accept inequities in the treatment of individuals (Thomas, 2008). As Janks (2000) observes in reference to the pitfalls of cultural diversity in South Africa, “language and social justice can be brought together to emphasize power as productive in time of distress, truth and reconciliation” (p. 184). To date, a HRs

approach to language policy has been effective in promoting educational equity for diverse populations (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002a). What is needed, then, is a policy that emphasizes justice as a primordial component of an engaged and informed citizenry whose interest is in developing equitable educational language policies, even when one language is fast becoming a world language. Brutt-Griffler (2002b) observes that English has been transformed from the mother tongue of a handful of nations to being a world language used by more speakers in non-mother-tongue settings, and facilitated, for the most part, by both teachers and learners. She argues that English as a second language has not replaced the local language, a conclusion pointedly rebutted by Erling (2002), who argues that English has encroached upon indigenous languages, which are under threat in Ireland, in Africa and in Asia. To the extent that social equity calls for justice—that is, the legitimacy and fairness in dealing with citizens and for publicly acknowledging the rights and duties of citizens in formulating language policies and in rejecting threats to their mother tongues—it is important that language rights be viewed as one of several “possible mechanisms that may increase the probability of perceptions of social equity” (Park, Ellis, Kim, Ruddell, & Agrusa, 2006, p. 90). Such a framework, in our view, requires two normative approaches toward ensuring knowledge and practice of social equity at the national level.

The first is awareness among citizens of the normative principle of procedural justice, which is dependent on the perceived fairness of systems or procedures (e.g., neutrality, the absence of prejudice, and the presence of ethics) for making decisions or proactive social-equity judgments related to national-education policies.

Similarly, the second is awareness of the normative principle of distributive justice—that is, the philosophy that underpins fairness and equity in the distribution or allocation of benefits and burdens or the calculation of a gain-to-loss ratio consistent with the social position of social groups in a nation or the fairness in the allocation of rewards in the absence of past wrong-doing. In other words, this knowledge is antithetical to rectificatory (or compensatory) justice, which addresses past wrongs. Rather, distributive justice seeks to respond proactively to structural inequalities that have the potential to lead to group marginalization and alienation and to intercultural, language-based conflict. It does so by identifying the level of sacrifice that should be expected of, say, one ethnic group in comparison with that of another for the sake of a united agenda on language use in formal education. Avoiding such deleterious outcomes underpins Skutnabb-Kangas's (1996) assertion that our failure as humans to grant educational rights to linguistic minorities leads to monolingualism that is absurd at state and individual levels, to inefficient and uneconomic consequences, and to the disintegration of nation-states.

Grin and Vaillancourt (2000) note that distributive justice manifests itself in, say, the financing of policy intervention by which payments are transferred directly from native speakers of the majority language to those of the minority language, but insisting that such funds not necessarily be geared toward financing policy measures. Parijs (2003) writes that unequal linguistic endowment can result in major interpersonal injustice, which can be corrected through a set of principles of distributive justice. Both procedural and distributive justice imply that citizens' favorable understanding of mechanisms (e.g., language rights) for promoting

social equity can enable social development to occur at a national level. We, therefore, argue in this article that national-education policies *qua* language policies be broadly sensitive to the push-pull forces that tug at the national conscience, undermining or enhancing an understanding of the procedures and outcomes attendant on the much-needed use of language as a pivot in the discourse on national unity, reconciliation, social mobilization, and national change.

Thus, this article concludes that both forms of justice be considered *pari passu*. That way, nations can much better accomplish and sustain national-development programs that are framed by linguistic diversity and educational rights. Both forms of justice have informed the more than 150-year-old debate over the medium of instruction in school education in monolingual Hong Kong, where, following the cessation of British rule there in 1997, high language (English) and a low language (Chinese) are being realigned to placate educators, students and parents waiting with bated breath for the definitive word on whether the government will adopt a relaxed policy that allows more English-medium schools or will formulate more stringent language requirements and further reduce the number of English-medium-instruction and increase Chinese-medium schools (Ho & Ho, 2004; Lin, 1999; So, 1989; Tsui, Shum, Wong, Tse, & Ki, 1999). A bone of contention, that is, from a distributive justice standpoint, that has been a regular feature in the discourse on instructional medium is that the extra resources funneled to Chinese-medium schools, not into English improvement, have led to an imbalance in the use of scarce resources (Tse, Shum, Ki, & Wong, 2001).

The landscape for the region's government's language policy for schools will eventually be

informed by three interacting factors: economic, political, and educational (Ho & Ho, 2004). The political factor, that is, government's language preference, is the most dominant on the heels of the official departure of British administration from the region. Such dominance, in itself, bespeaks both procedural and distributive justice, in that officials of the Special Administrative Region engage in extensive consulting and deliberating on language policy, which has engendered a phenomenal increase in Chinese-medium secondary schools and seems to be out of favor with English-medium schools.

In contrast, Singapore's language policy is emblematic of the erosion of both forms of justice, in that it does not adequately recognize the groundswell of disparate views on multilingualism, and its knock-on effects such as intra- and inter-language discrimination, the injustice faced by non-native speakers of English, and ethnic and class conflicts, all of which, as Wee (2005) put it, raise fundamental questions about the city-state's linguistic human rights. Thus, even though at the national level, Singapore's multilingual policy recognizes four official languages (English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil), its acknowledgement of the division of labor between English, which is associated with scientific and technological knowledge, and mother tongues, associated with traditional values (Wee) creates a hierarchization of language and its concomitant social challenges. But one may argue that such division in itself is less an antidote to social and class conflicts and more a perpetuation of that conflict and a challenge first to human rights and, then, to linguistic rights.

Similarly, Bangladesh offers an example of how such language rights as human rights that transcend social, religious, ethnic boundaries have been

truncated, necessitating, as it were, a constrained national dialogue on the merits of national-education policies that seemingly exclude minority languages and position the country on the brink of economic disarray and social chaos, and negating the very essence of procedural and distributive justice. The ensuing muted debates in that country are not rife with procedural and distributive justice, in that equity in access to schooling does not loom large in those debates. There is also hardly an acknowledgement that less dominant (or minority) languages need to be more seriously considered in the education policy of a nation with 48 ethnic minority groups, each with its own language. Even with such a large number of traditional languages, historically, debates still focus, *mutatis mutandis*, on Bengali and English, making minority children, particularly those from rural areas, almost personally responsible for learning at least three languages. It is, therefore, important that more extensive work be undertaken to inform the process for instituting national-language policies that will expand educational opportunities to multicultural societies; foster inter-ethnic relationships; create synchronous dialogues among multicultural groups; prepare them to respect LHRs as, and synchronize them with, social equity; and encourage them to participate more actively in an increasingly global marketplace.

Establishing a framework—that is, a culture that guides national discourse on such language policies will, if governed by the two forms of justice outlined in the preceding paragraphs, also require that the state undertake three actions premised on three principles Weinstock (2003) outlined: (a) use the least invasive means possible, for example, by eschewing legislating about language in areas that do not help the state attain its goal; (b) eschew actions that might

be misconstrued as according pre-eminence to native speakers of a majority language; and (c) be flexible in using a mix of languages, a mix that can change over time. Weinstock argues that because these principles are grounded in a national will to engage the least advantaged linguistic class, to avert benign neglect, and to privilege the language of the majority only for pragmatic reasons based on a functioning democracy and not because of any intrinsic value of the majority linguistic community, the state will undertake the role of a neutral linguistic arbiter. The overarching importance of justice-driven language policy requires that nations ascribe no less value to such a policy as an indicant of social equity than to other traditional facilitators of social and national development. As this article's epigraph states at the outset, that role is all the more crucial because equitable language planning (read: LHRs) for social change is meaningfully intertwined with national development planning.

Future Research on Language Rights

To date, there is no empirical research that assesses the interface between language rights and language policies, let alone that which also considers justice (in both procedural and distributive forms) in planning and implementing education policies. Much of the extant empirical research on language use treats it in a mix of variables, absent national-education policies. For example, Kouzmin (1988) investigated attitudinal responses to language maintenance in Russian communities in Australia; Namei (2008), language proficiency and preference; Schwartz (2008), sociolinguistic and non-linguistic factors that account for home or heritage language proficiency among second-generation immigrants; and Tse et al. (2001), issues perceived by administrators and school

teachers during Hong Kong's transition from English to Chinese as the medium of instruction. Other studies treat the concept as a discrete observation in a mere categorical context (e.g., (Abdul-Aziz, 2007; "School Building," n.d.; "Standing Committee," 1999; Tam, 2000), even as national discourses point to the need for an inclusive or eclectic approach to planning and implementing national-education policies. Other forms of research have looked at language strictly in qualitative and socio-historical contexts—that is, its use as a minority versus a dominant language.

A decade ago, *Linguistic Sciences* published eight articles that "represent the current thinking of prominent sociolinguists and language rights researchers" (Grundy, Benson, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, p. 1), and that discuss theoretical issues rather than "describe situated rights abuses" p. 1). One such article argued that language rights and language policy cannot be addressed realistically outside a general theory of society, but within broader sociopolitical contexts and the political economy of language planning (Rassool, 1998). Even so, the analyses in all eight articles were invariably bereft of empirical analyses. While that in itself is not a limitation of the selected research, it does point to a reality of that research focus.

In light of both the lack of empirical research in the context advanced in this essay, and the nascence of theory-guided research in language rights in general, future research, therefore, could use case studies and empirical research or a semiotic analysis to fill that void, paying utmost attention to prescient issues such as how language rights can better interface with national-education policies particularly in developing nations. Such a much-needed research agenda can provide an in-depth, integrated understanding of the interplay among language rights,

justice (e.g., social equity, procedural and distributive justice) and national-education policies.

Theoretical Overtones

There is an additional advantage of marshalling empirical evidence on language rights. Granted, Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a) is concerned primarily about the activist goal of social justice, while Brutt-Griffler (2002a) is focused on the gapping hole created by the inadequacy of a theoretical framework on the spread of English. Tollefson (2004) notes that the latter's claim about inadequate language policy theory is important, iterating Williams's (1992) assertion that LPP is still on the margins of social-scientific investigations. Fishman (1992) notes that it is necessary for the LPP researcher to develop a more sophisticated social theory that is grounded in advanced work of sociolinguistics. It behooves researchers also to ground their investigations in theoretical sociolinguistics contexts vis-à-vis language rights and national-educational policies. Tollefson (2004) bemoans the minuscule interest in LPP among sociolinguists whose work tend to imply that LPP theory has little to offer their field, again lending credence to our assertion of the near absence of empirical evidence in language rights, social equity and national development.

Both Skutnabb-Kangas (2002a) and Brutt-Griffler (2002a) acknowledge the limitations of LPP theory. Even so, Skutnabb-Kangas supports adopting and implementing worldwide language rights and promoting the necessary adaptation of language policy to social justice. Adapting such language policy is necessary. In contrast, Brutt-Griffler argues that because language rights offer an inadequate framework for developing and using LPP theory, the latter cannot be an effective pathway toward meaningful social change.

Therefore, this present article is a starting point in posing far-reaching questions on the theoretical link between, say, LPP theory and social issues, and on defining concepts (e.g., linguistic genocide, procedural justice and distributive justice) within that realm, positing propositions and hypotheses, measuring variables, determining planning outcomes or the effects of program implementation, confronting linguistic genocide through policy prescriptions, and challenging orthodoxies. Absent such theory-based research, the field of language rights as it interfaces with educational policies will be stunted, leaving even much more to be desired, and fomenting situations that do not augur well for language rights as social equity and for national policies on education as social change.

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