
This book focuses on non-functional phonologies (NFP): that is, phonological disorders with no known physiological or neurological causes. It is a substantial book, well written and carefully researched, with an applied and pedagogical orientation that will make it invaluable for clinicians and students in speech pathology and child phonology. It is an ambitious and original work; its practical guidance for those assessing child phonology is based on a comprehensive and up-to-date descriptive and theoretical review of phonological systems and their realization in children’s speech. It consists of six chapters, each of which introduces general concepts of phonology as well as modern concepts of nonlinear phonology and includes practical material, most notably a set of original worksheets that are geared to assessment or other types of intervention. It also has three appendices: the first reviews commercial tests, the second provides examples of stress patterns in English lexical items, and the third presents conventions of the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Chapter 1 (Concepts and Definitions) provides a brief introduction to phonology, child phonology, and assessment. Chapter 2 (Phonotactics: Word- and Syllable-Level Patterns) offers a detailed conceptual and research review of segmental and suprasegmental phonotactic patterns, in a cross-linguistic view, followed by a look at phonotactic issues in child phonology and a discussion of assessment concerns involving phonotactics. The latter section includes assessment tools (forms or worksheets) for examining the child’s phonotactic repertoire and examples showing how these might be used, followed by a section giving guidelines for intervention. The chapter then introduces recent linguistic concepts of nonlinear, metrical, and autosegmental phonology, with a discussion of their application to assessment and intervention in NFP. In the author’s view:

Important concepts from nonlinear phonology allow us to provide more elegant, comprehensive descriptions of familiar child phonological patterns. . . . In general, nonlinear phonology encourages the clinician to consider all the levels within a phonology, assessing and treating each individually and in interaction with each other. (p. 47)

Chapter 3 (Phones and Features) begins with a discussion of the nature of phonological systems, phonetic universals, markedness, and the characteristics of child phonetic inventories. Here Velleman introduces the notion of “defaults,” such as the different vowels that occur across languages for epenthesis. The chapter presents a detailed description of children’s consonant inventories, with data from children to illustrate NFP patterns. The next section addresses the assessment of children’s phonetic repertoires, with several worksheets and ex-
amples of their use, as in the previous chapter. The chapter ends with a brief review of feature geometry and articulatory programming and their implications for intervention.

Chapter 4 (Contrast) addresses the topic of contrast: “[t]he most critical function of a phonological system is that of differentiating messages. . . . If the number of contrasts in a language is reduced, the effectiveness of that language will be compromised” (p. 86). Here the author discusses the collapsing of lexical distinctions that is a common result of children’s phonological simplifications, particularly of syllable structure. Contrast in suprasegmental and segmental aspects of phonology is reviewed for the languages of the world, including a discussion of underlying and surface representations, and then in child phonology, with examples of children’s neutralizations and the resulting high functional load of certain phonemes. This is followed by a discussion of implications for remediation in terms of contrastive sound classes and minimal lexical pairs, with worksheets and examples. The chapter ends with a view of nonlinear phonology as applied to contrast. In the author’s view:

The nonlinear theories of defaults, autosegmentalization, and underspecification highlight those aspects of a phonology that are, in a sense, the most automatic . . . [leading] to the identification of those aspects of the child’s phonology that are the most habitual and the most systematic. . . . [T]he speech-language pathologist’s role is to break down the child’s reliance on inappropriate defaults and to build on the contrastive elements. (p. 114)

Chapter 5 (Phonological Patterns) starts with a view of phonological rules in generative phonology and contrasts this with a view of phonological processes in natural phonology, followed by worksheets for identifying phonological processes. The topic of phonological avoidance and constraints is then addressed, with worksheets provided. The author notes that “[c]onstraint theory facilitates the expression of more basic phonological truths by considering those phonological possibilities that do not occur in the (child’s) phonology” (p. 131). Relationships among pattern types, “the changeability of constraint priority orders” (p. 137), and constraint repair strategies are considered next. The author argues that “constraints may have explanatory value broader than that of processes or even rules” (p. 131). This leads into a discussion of Optimality Theory and the concepts of markedness (ease-of-production) and faithfulness (ease-of-perception) constraints, with illustrations from second language learning and applications to child phonology in relation to consonant cluster simplification, deletion, and epenthesis. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of clinical applications.

Chapter 6 (Phonological Systems: A Longitudinal Case Study) reviews the case of a child with NFP by comparing her phonological system at age 2;3 and age 4;0 using the concepts and a range of the worksheets previously introduced. As Velleman shows:

Determining that which is not possible in the system as it is (i.e., the constraints) is far more useful than only identifying the strategies that the child is using to avoid violating those constraints (i.e., rules or processes). Once the constraints have been identified, goalsetting is relatively easy: Remove the constraint. (p. 188)
The chapter provides excellent illustrations and discussions of how phonological systems change over time, as well as proposing interventions for this child. As the author concludes:

I have two critical points to make. One concerns the title of the book, which I found to be unenlightening as to its content. The other is that, although the author intended the worksheets, as she states in the Preface (p. xi), to “form the backbone” of the book and although they are indeed a central feature of it, I suspect that some of those who are practically inclined (e.g., doing clinical work) may find it difficult to make it through the entire book. As the author realizes, it is possible to use much of the practical material without reading all of the other sections, but the level and amount of content may deter some readers, which would be a shame. Thus, there may be a need for a somewhat less ambitious book to stand beside this one, and if so, I would encourage Velleman to write it for a less linguistically interested or sophisticated audience. At the same time, I would encourage all those working, or aiming to work, in NFP to make the effort to study this book; it will be worth it.

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*Linguistic genocide in education – Or worldwide diversity and human rights?*

In the preface to this passionately argued text, the author makes the political aspects of the work quite clear. She states that she hopes readers will “become angry, desperate, frustrated, as well as reflective, optimistic and eager to join me and others in demanding, suggesting, creating, and implementing change” (p. xv). This statement sets the tone for the entire book: a mixture of self-professed utopian thinking (p. 600) and clear-sighted accounts of actually existing conditions. Recognizing that a simple call for justice is not enough in a world dominated by transnational capitalism and marked by institutionalized inequities in power, the author admits that a human rights approach to linguistic issues will only work if there is also a redistribution of the world’s resources. The book is thus a call to action on a variety of fronts.

The author has long been an involved and committed activist and researcher (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990, 1995), and her command of the literature is impressive. At over 700 pages, there is more than enough information about linguicism and linguistic genocide to make readers angry and frustrated. The discussion ranges all over the globe, and examples are drawn from a diverse group of language communities (e.g., the Ainu in Japan, speakers of Occitan in France, as
well as native peoples in the United States and Canada). Additional background information is contained in the various supplemental materials integrated into the main text (e.g., information boxes, elaborated definitions, reader tasks, and Internet citations). The quantity of these inserts is so great that the book can actually be used as a demographic and sociolinguistic reference text. For example, in an analysis of how threats and physical punishment are used to prevent the use of minority languages, the intimidation of Kurdish speakers in Turkey is given as an example (pp. 320, 327). Inserted into this discussion is a six-page overview of the situation in Turkey (pp. 321–326) that can stand on its own. Because of the book’s structure, it is important that readers choose a reading strategy. When an information box is six pages long, a reader has to make some important choices about what to read and what to return to later. Trying to read in a strictly linear manner might cause readers to get lost in the details and lose the flow of the argument.

The first section of the book, “Setting the Scene,” is made up of four chapters that present information about the status of endangered languages and linguistic minority communities around the world. Chapter 1 focuses on demographics, covering the number of languages and speakers of each language in various parts of the world. This serves as an introduction to which languages are safe, which are endangered, and which are moribund. In Chapters 2 through 4, the author makes explicit connections between notions of biodiversity and cultural and linguistic diversity. Just as biodiversity is seen as essential for a healthy ecosystem, “the preservation, promotion and development of linguistic and cultural diversity are vital for world peace” (p. 203). However, just as natural habitats are being destroyed by a globalizing economy, indigenous and minority languages are put at risk by the predatory growth of globalizing languages such as English. While some would argue that languages die when they are no longer productive or efficient (a market-based/liberal economic model of language use), the author points to other factors. She suggests that it is incorrect to talk about language choice as free (p. 68) because there is no guarantee of equal access to the linguistic (or economic) marketplace, and so linguistic choices are always complicated by issues of power. The glorification of dominant languages and the stigmatization of minority languages or language varieties (p. 196) means that linguistic choices are made in a politicized climate. In this way, rather than speaking of a language dying, it is more fitting to speak of a language being killed. This willful destruction of languages reduces cultural diversity and thus creates an unhealthy sociopolitical climate.

The second section of the book, “Linguistic Genocide, State Policies, and Globalisation,” elaborates on the relationship between state power and the extermination of languages. Central to this discussion is an examination of the role of language in nation building. The author argues that, as a nation-state is organized, it becomes associated with a dominant language, and that it attempts to subjugate all the other languages within its borders (see also Bourdieu, 1992). Because a community that retains its own language always has the potential to ask for self-determination, speakers of nondominant languages are often believed to be a threat to the nation-state’s integrity. The author believes that nation-states reduce the number of languages spoken within their borders by
physical genocide (killing the speakers of the language), linguistic genocide (killing the language), or making languages invisible (by labeling them as dialects, patois, etc.) (p. 312). Whereas the first method involves brute power, the second and third involve more covert uses of power. For example, the author suggests that languages can be killed by structural means (p. 352), as is the case in school systems that enforce monolingualism in the dominant language. Forced assimilation into the dominant linguistic community can also be achieved by stigmatizing nondominant varieties (e.g., attempts to shame Finnish speakers in Swedish schools) (p. 345). Because minority languages are seen as divisive rather than as valuable resources, the nation-state’s development is measured by its assimilation of formerly independent communities. The author sees a similar rationale at work in the actions of supranational bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO). Supporters of a globalized economy see nonassimilated languages and cultures as impediments to growth (p. 464). Because the WTO was created by and for transnational capital, locally institutionalized human rights regulations are dismissed as trade barriers. In this way, linguistic and cultural diversity become vulnerable to both national and supranational forces.

The third and final section of the book, “Struggle against Linguistic Genocide and for Linguistic Human Rights in Education,” consists of two chapters. Here the author moves beyond a description of current conditions to suggest effective strategies for action that are intended to counter hegemonic forces. In Chapter 7, she begins by tracing the history of various international agreements that have addressed the issue of human rights. In general, these agreements have not been able to protect endangered languages because they did not directly address language issues (e.g., the Copenhagen Declaration supported cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity without addressing language [p. 529]) or were not embraced by the most powerful countries in the world (various UN human rights instruments [p. 493]). The author then suggests that a Universal Covenant of Linguistic Human Rights is necessary. Work on such a document is underway, but it will take a long time to create a consensus about what it should cover and how it should be enforced. The author also discusses what is happening at the local level and provides information about grassroots organizations that are attempting to create a climate where linguistic human rights are respected. The reader is invited to join international associations and is urged to find local groups to work with.

In Chapter 8, the author reviews types of bilingual education (e.g., immersion, segregation, transitional programs) in a variety of contexts and assesses reports of their success. She introduces a utopian model and presents a number of principles meant to guide program development. These principles include a belief that all children should become high-level bilinguals (not only minority children), that the L1 and L2 should be mandatory subjects for all students in grades 1 to 12, and that all teachers should be bi- or multilingual. This utopian model would be a way of both supporting the linguistic human rights of a bi- or multilingual community and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity.

While it is hard to argue with a book that is on the side of worldwide diversity and linguistic human rights, it is in the utopian policy suggestions that there are some problems. The model for education appears to be based on the presence
of sizable immigrant communities and does not account for the existence of smaller groups of immigrants. Thus, while the goal of providing mother tongue instruction to all students is a laudable one, there does not seem to be a recognition of how certain smaller communities would be able to fulfill that requirement. For example, how can a school with limited resources provide a full mother language program for a linguistic minority community that is made up of only two or three families? Even with a utopian stance, issues of resources cannot be avoided.

The author also suggests that “a monolingual English-as-second-language teacher in Australia or the United States or Hong Kong is per definition incompetent. An English teacher must know both English and the student’s mother tongue” (p. 503). Again, this assumes that an ESL classroom is made up of students who all speak the same mother tongue, which is not always the case. The reality of ESL education is too complicated to make per definition claims about ESL teachers’ competencies.

Finally, another troubling aspect of the book’s utopian vision is the bias it displays against monolingual individuals. The author’s stance on this issue is clear. She writes, “If multilingualism is more positive than monolingualism for the . . . society as a whole, how can educational language planning help in getting rid of monolingualism? How should education be organised, so as to make everybody bilingual or multilingual at a high level?” (p. 569). With this statement, the author moves from suggesting that bilingual or multilingual education is necessary for the development of bi- or multilingual individuals to proposing that monolingualism be exterminated. Perhaps this is because she sees monolingualism as inherently hegemonic and views multilingualism as counterhegemonic (pp. 202, 268).

While there is nothing wrong with suggesting that people should learn additional languages, the author crosses the line by disparaging the cognitive capacities of monolinguals. In several key instances, monolingualism is associated with ignorance, and individuals are described as being in a state of “monolingual stupidity” (p. 644) or “suffering from monolingual stupidity” (p. 662). This is a dangerous and ironic reversal of old beliefs about the cognitive deficits and instability of bilinguals. While it might simply be that the author’s rhetoric got out of control, it is disturbing to read that majority children can be “helped” out of monolingual stupidity (p. 612) by policies that would mandate bilingualism. Are indigenous linguistic minority communities also monolinguistically stupid if they only speak one language?

In a book of this impressive size and scope, these criticisms are minor. The author presents a wide-ranging and complex argument with a great deal of supporting evidence. By placing the issue of linguistic human rights in a broader sociopolitical context, the author helps the reader make clear connections between the functioning of power and the health of languages and provides an opportunity to be critical of language policies that claim to be apolitical or simply concerned with viability. While for some readers this may have the feel of preaching to the converted, the clarity of the argument and the wealth of background details provides a depth that makes the book much more than a
political tract. As an exhaustive summary of previous research and a clearly articulated program for progress, it could become a touchstone in the linguistic human rights movement.

REFERENCES

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