

Social and Cultural Aspects of the Contents of First School Books in Lapland: Exploring Contrasts with Australian Reading Materials.

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Introduction

This paper examines literacy practises in minority education. The theme is an appropriate preface to 1993, Year of Indigenous People, when global research will focus on the position of the, so called, fourth world, populations. Those peoples comprising of the fourth world are struggling to maintain their heritage in form of human rights. The general public has recently been reminded of the political battles in for example Croatia, Lithuania and Kurdistan. The Australian Aborigines share the human rights agenda with the rest of the world's indigenous populations, among which is the indigenous group of Sami of Lapland. The Sami are in a linguistic and political minority in the three Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway and Finland. A small percentage of Sami also live in the CIS.

Central to the theme of the current paper is the examination of early pedagogic literature as documents of enculturation and socialization in the context of Australian and Samish societies. The analyses are based on a cross-cultural comparison of early school texts in use in Samish vernacular classes in Finnish Lapland and in classrooms of Australia (Baker & Freebody, 1989).

Children's textbooks make compelling research material for investigators interested in society's portrayal of notion of childhood. School literature is unique from other types of literature in its aim to systematically reinforce forms of cognitive and behavioral competence to its readership (Luke, 1988). Curriculum developers design school readers for the specific purpose to guide pupils into acceptable social participation such as, appropriate communication skills, attitudinal evaluation and behaviour in groups within their immediate environment (Department of Education, Queensland, 1987; Samish Board of Education, 1990). The reader is expected to readily identify with the environment of the text, the text characters and their activities due to the close assimilation between the world of the text and the world outside the classroom. Text contain guised messages which are mediated to the reading audience. These may consist of political and social values which are expected to be readily adopted by the pupils. The normal development of the child's self-concept is thus secured by

providing of 'real-life' examples from the mainstream society in guise of the text protagonist's activities in the mundane world.

There are however, examples which demonstrate that children's text-books function different from or contrary to their designed purpose. Educational materials in Australia have been shown to give additional insight into the illustrated structure of society by providing an adult view of child culture, and in particular, how adults prefer to inform children about the world which they inhabit (Baker & Freebody, 1989). This world is often distant from the real world of the child. The world of the text-book contains, animals who can speak; adults who are unable to show emotions; adults who never speak to each other; and adults who engage in seemingly desultory activities (Baker & Freebody, 1989). In brief, the Australian school texts were shown to be heavily gender and generation biased. The world portrayed in these school texts is based on fantasy which children are expected to understand and to differentiate from when required to

adjust to the real world outside the classroom. Thus children are anticipated to learn to 'commute' intellectually between the two worlds of school-text fantasy and playground reality.

The above account by Baker and Freebody (1989) suggests how important is the representation of a realistic notion of childhood to the Australian society. Perhaps Australians have a less acute need to mediate to their children the reality of the surrounding political and social environment than has a population with concentrated needs for basic everyday survival within a dominant culture?

The fantastic content of school literature seems unique to 'western' societies. For example, Indonesian school texts do not portray animals as participants in human conversation, but include these only as provisions of food or as agricultural necessities (Nicholson, 1985). Furthermore, the stories of these texts revolve around everyday, work related events without the involvement of fantastic fairy-tale components. The messages mediated through Indonesian school-texts thus contrast against Australian text contents in aspects of reality formation. The contrasts suggest that Indonesian children are introduced to a more veracious version of childhood than are Australian children. Skutnabb-Kangas (1990) emphasizes the importance of spreading awareness about the potential power of education which is merely detectable by critical evaluation of educational practises especially in majority societies. In a time of, so called, linguistic and cultural genocide, these issues are crucial to minority populations.

Education, Power and Enculturation

Foremost on the agenda of fourth world populations has been the battle to regain their cultural heritage in form of land and socio-political rights. However, closely related to cultural integrity is linguistic identity and

thus the main priority of indigenous people is to maintain their vernacular code. In the past decade several language maintenance programmes have been introduced into majority society curricula around the world (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). While language immersion programmes are a major achievement for minority group members, it does not warrant complacency but should alert curriculum developers to critically evaluate the function and the contents of such educational curricula. This is especially of current interest in light of the spreading threat to the survival of minority languages of the world. Sachs (1992) estimates that more than 94% of the world's 5000 languages will die within the next fifty years. Sachs' statement makes plausible the idea that along with these dying 4700 languages will perish 94% of the world's cultures. The question arising from such grim statistics is: How is it possible? What causes the death of a language and its culture?

One of the more subtle contributors is literacy practise. Being literate, in any society provides both social and political access to affluence (Lankshear & Lawler, 1989). For ethnic minority group individuals, literacy learning often means the forsaking of one's mother tongue and cultural customs as the price for gaining knowledge in the majority society (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988). The various minority language maintenance programmes have attempted to combat this problem by introducing the school curriculum in the ethnic vernacular. However, despite years of strenuous efforts, the linguistic competence of minority group speakers remains low or indeed non-functional in the mainstream community (Aikio, 1991). One of the leading causes is claimed by Aikio (1988) to be the limited opportunity to utilize the vernacular outside the classroom context. For example, the Samish language has no official rights, and hence the Samish people cannot use this vernacular as a code of communication in their everyday dealings with government agencies (eg. at the post office).

Such socialization processes promoting linguistic change are directly monitored by the majority culture (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). Aikio (1991) emphasizes this having serious outcomes on primary education within native

families who often find it easier to transfer the majority language to the next generation rather than insisting on maintaining the use of the indigenous minority code. Another factor contributing to the decay of indigenous language use is what Aikio (1991) calls 'the taboo' - or an attitude which reinforces a form of shame over the minority language use. Many older Samish speakers refuse to speak Samish to children, due to their indoctrinated belief that knowledge of two languages will weaken their children's competence of the majority tongue. It is in this manner that Skutnabb-Kangas (1990; see also Fairclough, 1991 and Luke, 1988) claims that education serves to control populations. The reinforcement of power is practised through "the instruments (ie. language) and the ideological messages (ie. cultural content)" (p.6) within the school curricula.

Culture is emphasized in teaching through classroom discourse about socio-

political structures and values, and by information (either explicit or implicit) of the language hierarchy in the world. Skutnabb-Kangas (1990) refers here to the choice of foreign language instruction in school. The range of foreign language courses is limited to a few 'prestige' languages, while other (invariably the minority) languages are totally ignored in this highly organized, pedagogical practise.

On the more textual level, a contradictory content of the messages in the school texts and the beliefs of the home may contribute to internal conflict in the child's development of the self-concept. There are extensive reports on the learning difficulties experienced by minority group pupils which relate to the culture-adaptive problems which members of minority groups face when subjected to culturally, linguistically or socially diverging teaching materials (Christie, 1989; Cummins, 1985; Harris, 1990; Lauren, 1987 to mention a few). The main difficulties encountered in such situations has not so much been the cognitive aptitude, but rather the lack of background knowledge, or schemata, about the topic of the text which has resulted in poor concentration and learning difficulties. In other words, children's social and cultural background may predetermine achievement in literacy skills.

The World of the Text

It was argued by Baker and Freebody (1989) that semantic properties of the text reveal emotional and psychological aspects of child culture. In addition to depicting the emotional world, the texts also indicate the social structure of the artificial society within the stories' illustrations. This paper will briefly outline two functional aspects of texts which promote desired social norms and values namely, human behaviour, including emotional expressions, generational hierarchies and gender issues; and social structure evident from the culture specific activities which are carried out by the various text protagonists.

A close investigation of the characters who inhabit the worlds of the texts, reveals the kinds of humanistic qualities that are valued in society. The characters inhabiting Australian (AR) and Samish (SR) readers' story contents are listed in Table 1 below.

(insert Table 1 about here)

The most obvious feature from the above table is that the world in children's first readers is inhabited by the immediate family and domesticated animals. However, the SR corpus has an overall higher frequency of humans compared to animals than does the AR corpus. A comparison of the frequencies of all human terms in the SR and the AR corpora reveals that in the Samish texts every twenty-second word refers to a human, whereas this measure is less frequent in the Australian texts showing a frequency of one per forty-three words. This can be explained by

the 'human qualities' allocated to animals in the AR corpus, such as verbal skills and sense of dress. While the equivalent 'animal talents' are also

noted in the SR corpus, there is an overall lower frequency of animal terms.

Many of the words in the SR corpus are kinship terms which extend from the immediate family, such as aunts and uncles. This finding is a reflection of the extended family network in the Samish community where contact between aunts, uncles and grandparents occurs on a more or less daily basis. Another signifier of the close interaction between families in Samish culture is the high frequency of grandparents. The words grandfather and grandmother are among the five most frequently occurring words referring to living things in the SR corpus, whereas the AR corpus only lists grandmother in this category. The occurrence of grandparents is a meaningful illustration of the immediate kinship structure in Samish society. The Samis commonly provide for the elder members of the family, who customarily stay living with one of their offspring's family for their final years of life. So important is this notion to Samish culture, that two of the thirteen text books in the SR corpus are named " grandfather and the children" (.ddj. ja m.n.t).

Both the SR and the AR corpora consist of three generations, adults; grandparents, and children. The terms mother and father and indeed also grandparents occur at higher frequencies than do boys and girls in school texts from both cultures. The high occurrence of the word children in the AR corpus highlights the generational gap (Baker and Freebody, 1989). The word child is expressed from an adult perspective since children seldom refer to each other by this term, but instead seem to use words such as girl/s and boy/s and proper nouns. The frequencies of the latter terms in both the SR and the AR corpora are lower than of the word child.

Thus the texts in both the SR and the AR corpora are about parents, family members and animals which are familiar to the childhood environment in both cultures. Note here the high frequency of various terms of reindeer in the SR corpus. As reindeer farming is one of the major means of income in the Samish community, the children's texts give an accurate illustration of this occupational environment. The culture specific content of the Samish texts will be further elaborated on below.

It was stated by Baker and Freebody (1989) that identity formation is fostered through the allocation of emotional descriptions within the text. Hence, affective representations demonstrate to children variations of personality traits. As was stated above, the Australian readers entirely lack referral to adults' emotional attributes. Emotion overall is insufficiently demarcated in the AR corpus, with animals being the main characters representing the emotional world. Table 2 displays some examples of positive and negative emotional verbs and adjectives from the AR and the SR corpora.

(insert Table 2 about here)

Positive emotions consist of approximately 80 % of all emotional words in both corpora as compared to the 15 % of negative emotions. The most salient of these are the contrasts in frequency of the word love which has a low occurrence in both corpora but more discernibly has only one instance in the SR corpus. This clause expresses the love for a family pet, which corresponds to the same effect in the AR corpus regarding animals as the target of emotional expressions. The second directional emotional verb refers to liking which has a ratio of 3:1 in favour of the Australian readers. That is, half of the emotions in the AR corpus are displayed as liking someone or something. The SR corpus uses not only more variations of the word like (liikot, berostan) but also makes use of stronger emotional terms, such as dare (duostat) and the negative terms grief (morras), boring (ahkit), and fed up (dolkat). The corresponding terms in the AR corpus are the more general sad, bad and afraid. These words provide projections about the social environment of the two cultures. The relatively stronger negative emotional terms in the SR corpus portray the cultural reality which Samish children experience from participation in the reindeer herding

(the slaughtering season of reindeer) and from close contact with the elder members of the family. There are many words relating to death and dying in the SR corpus other than those denoting emotions (eg. godda/kill, jame/die, surges/terrible) which can be seen as a natural reflection of a close Samish kinship network. Children may encounter the loss of the elder family members (ie. grandparents) at an early age. While this reality is totally absent in the AR corpus, those negative emotional terms which are present are directed towards humans by animals, and when used by human characters the object is material rather than human (Baker & Freebody, 1989).

Further aspects supporting identity formation are gender portrayals. A ratio of 6 to 4 male to female terms in the SR corpus corresponds to the same ratio found in the AR corpus as well as smaller text samples from other parts of the world (eg. America, Carroll, Davies & Richman, 1971; Canada, Luke, 1988; Indonesia, Nicholson, 1985; Singapore, Gupta & Yin, 1990). The gender division is additionally emphasized by the allocation of activities on the basis of gender as illustrated in Table 3. below.

(insert Table 3 about here)

Table 3. displays some verbs in relation to girl/s and boy/s as sentence subjects or objects. Indicated are those verbs which occur solely in connection with one gender group, that is, activities that are uniquely carried out by one gender group.

The universal gender bias is once more confirmed, in that girl/s are initiators of less activities than are boy/s in both the SR and the AR corpora. This contrast is clearest in the AR corpus where girl/s never

occur as exclusive subjects of verb phrases. However, the Samish girls perform some assertive actions, for example competing and killing. The latter is a verification of the realistically illustrated village life in the SR corpus where the girls kill the fish which has been caught.

The noteworthy universal similarities in the gender bias cross-culturally can be illustrated by the following example from the SR corpus: while boys let do, girls must; while boys jump, girls compete; while boys let do, girls fancy; boys look, and girls burst out laughing, and finally; boys open and girls chase. The unavoidable impression suggested by the above short example is that of any school yard, anywhere in the 'western' world.

The alternative activity is that of the receivers, or the objects of the clause. Again, there are gender related parallels between the two corpora. In the SR texts boys are: spanked, wanted, released and carried while girls are merely looked at or pointed to. The corresponding illustration in the AR corpus is bleak, boys are: jumped with, come to, played with and talked to, whereas girls are simply held on to and kissed. In other words, boys are given not only more attention but also more demanding attention than girls in both text corpora. Thus, these brief examples illustrate the early beginning of stereotyping of sex-roles in both the Samish and the Australian cultures.

The gender bias is carried over to the adults activities in the texts of both cultures. Table 4. presents examples of verbs in clauses associated with adults in both the SR and the AR corpora.

(insert Table 4 about here)

There are similarities in the activities carried out by parents in both the Samish and Australian texts with the one exemption being the word shout (bargut) which occurs in the SR corpus. The high frequency of the word grandparents in the SR corpus motivated the second section in Table 4. Here a gender difference is noted in that grandfather is depicted as somewhat more reserved, by mainly engaging in 'adult' type activities (reading, being busy) whereas grandmother engages in more verbal activities such as singing, asking and promising.

The activities allocated to the teacher in both cultures are similar in nature. Both cultures reinforce the authoritarian teacher role by the choice of verbs connected with the intellectual activities. The generational hierarchy is thus maintained through associating teacher/adult with words such as asking, telling, showing and helping. Note that in neither culture does the teacher participate in leisurely activities such as playing, or singing. These are rather delegated to the home environment, where parents (and grandparents) are responsible for such performances.

While human participation is the indicator of identity forming and

development of the self-concept of the child it also portrays aspects of social structure in gender and generational relations as illustrated in the above examples. In summary, both the Samish and Australian cultures show evidence of gender and generational divisions, through the frequencies and illustrative positions of the text characters. The protagonists are further allocated tasks according to stereotypical sex role divisions which exemplify the desired normative behaviour to the reading audience.

Culture-specific contents of text

The Samish sample consisted of text books designed for the vernacular language maintenance programmes. As stated in the above section, the perspective of curricula for minority group education is expected to differ in terms of emphasis given to revive racial integrity and a dying language. The Samish text books were found to be consistent with cultural terminology promoting the originality of the Samish culture and its customs, many of which face the threat of extinction. This section displays some examples of the cultural emphasis within the SR corpus, which functions to encourage the practising of Samish customs and language. Table 5. illustrates the occurrence of culture-specific terminology within the SR corpus which also promotes enculturation processes into the Samish social environment.

(insert Table 5 about here)

The activity most frequently described in the SR corpus is the annual picking season of cloudberries. Berry-picking is one of the main activities during the berry season in early autumn and the manufacturing of cloudberries makes a profitable form of income. The activity is reflected in the reoccurring vocabulary relating to cloudberries (see terms for food).

There are many terms relating to reindeer herding life. The realistic quality of the texts are again evident in the verb denoting the slaughtering of reindeer (erohus). The use of this term acts as a reinforcer of the other descriptive verbs relating to death and dying as discussed earlier in this paper. Another form of living, apart from reindeer herding is fishing, which is indicated in the SR corpus by the relatively frequent use of terms relating to this occupation (eg. cikta/patch fishnet).

The traditional l.vu or goahti (tepee) is no longer the residence of Samish people. Rather its inclusion in the recent text books is for orientational and historical education purposes. The l.vu is nevertheless an identity marker for the Samis and is still occasionally in use during the summer months in the forest during reindeer herding.

The inclusion of the fantasy-life component which is salient in the

Australian reading corpus, is not altogether absent in the Samish school texts. Samis have a rich mythological history, which has previously been ridiculed and divested of its significance by the majority societies of the Scandinavian majority states. Through the recent cultural revival campaigns however, more mythological characters and traditionally orally reported sagas emerge in publications. These are also reflected in the newer

editions of teaching materials. One such example listed in Table 5. is noaidi or shaman believed to be a chosen person with supernatural powers in Samish mythology.

In summary, the few presented examples for culture-specific words in the SR corpus provide support for the texts functioning as guidelines in a cultural and traditional direction towards increased Samish integrity. The reality based illustrations of Samish village life is evident from the selected use of cultural vocabulary and activities carried out by the story characters.

Conclusion

The results indicate that school texts across diverging cultures display similar enculturation processes which are manifested through semantic and cultural vocabulary contents. The seemingly simple story structures in children's first school readers in both the Samish and Australian societies revealed embedded guidelines as to the manner in which children are directed socially and culturally. The school books in both societies were found to contain gender and generational distinctions which categorize the concept of childhood into an insular parameter. The texts were seen to provide mainstream images for children's formation of their identity and self-concept which carry stereo typic biases. Adjectival and noun frequencies provided evidence of the emotional world depicted within the story contexts. A five to one positive to negative emotion ratio was found in both samples combined, indicating that the negative feelings are under represented in both cultures. However, the Samish corpus consisted of stronger emotional words which were seen as an indicator of the Samish children experiencing the concepts such as grief and bereavement at an earlier age than do Australian children.

The main contrasts in the SR and AR corpora consisted of fictional quality and cultural content. While the Australian texts contain a larger amount of fictional characters and fairy-tale components, the Samish readers convey a picture of society which is more reality based as indicated by the activities carried out by the text characters. The Samish text books imply a serious attitude toward childhood and child culture. In the Samish readers children were illustrated as contributing to the normal function in everyday activities, whereas the Australian texts had a high fantasy component.

The implications of the current results highlight the acute need for neutral teaching materials. In Skutnabb-Kangas' view, "education and literacy (or lack of them) are two of the most decisive factors in determining the life chances of today's children" (1990, p.3). To the extent that all children should have access to literacy learning, they should also have available to them materials free of distorted ideals of child culture itself, as well as cultural and socio-political dispositions and attitudes.

The children attending the schools in Lapland face dual aspects of enculturation as documented in this report. The initial aspect is that of enculturation of children into the adult society portrayed by gender and generational bias. The second threat of enculturation is that of the Sami as a minority group being assimilated into the Finnish majority society. The dilemma in Lapland is multidimensional, as was stated by Aikio (1991). It does not seem to suffice to provide culturally salient Samish school readers, but the linguistic skills and cultural values learned from the texts must be given a chance to be put into practise in the wider community. As suggested by Baker and Freebody (1989) this objective may be achieved by utilizing a critical approach to the study of literacy in the classroom. The teachers' role would thus consist of encouraging children to adopt an inquisitive mind about the illustrations and social norms promoted by the school text. The two societies of Australia and Lapland can in this way contribute to the global maintenance of veridical child culture.

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Table 1. 20 most frequently occurring words in the SR and the AR corpora referring to living creatures.

Samish			Australian		
Rank	word	F/10000	word	F/10000	
1.	eadni (mother)	80	mother	42	
2.	.hcci (father)	73	children	34	
3.	.ddj. (grandfather)	55	father	32	
4.	(various reindeer terms)	47	pig/s	29	
5.	.hkku (grandmother)	25	cat/s	27	
6.	siess., muott., goaski (aunt)		dog/s		27
7.	g.nda, b.rdni (boy)	20	man/s	22	
8.	beana (dog)	19	bear/s	20	
9.	oabb. (sister)	18	dad/s	19	
10.	loddi (bird)	16	grandmother	19	
11.	guolli (fish)	14	fish	18	
12.	eanu, ceahci, eahki (uncle)		boy/s		17
13.	bussa (cat)	13	daddy/s	15	
14.	g.ranas (crow)	11	horse/s	15	
15.	viellja	10	friend/s	15	
16.	gumpe (wolf)	10	rabbit/s	15	
17.	nieida (girl)	8	bird/s	15	

18.	gussa (cow)	8	boys	12
19.	s.vza (lamb)	7	mum/s	11
20.	heasta (horse)	7	kitten/s	11

Table 2. Frequencies of words relating to positive and negative emotions in the SR and the AR corpora.

	Positive	F/10000	Negative	F/10000
Samish				
	buore (good)	39.0	cierrut (cry)	8.1
	suohtas (funny)		i liiko (don't like)	1.6
	liikot (like)	9.8	morras (grief)	2.6
	duostas (dare)	2.6	ballat (fear)	2.6
	h.vski (fun)	1.3	ahkit (boring)	1.9
	berostit (like)		dolkat (fed up)	
1.9				
	bohkosit (burst laughing)		.9	v.illahit (long for)
.6				
			surges (pitiful)	.6
total		64.7		14.9
Australian				
	like	71.0	sad	11.6
	good	26.4	bad	8.9
	fun	20.0	cry	2.3
	laugh	15.2	afraid	.8
	happy	8.7	scared	.2
	love	2.9	missing	.2
total		144.0		24.2

Table 3. Verbs in relation to boy/s and girl/s as sentence subjects or objects

	Samish		Australian	
	boy/s	girl/s	boy/s	girl/s
Subject:				
	dahto (want)	fertet (must: aux.v)	answer	-
	njuike (jump)	miela (fancy)	hurt	
	dadja (say)	gilvu (compete)	shout	
	daga (let do)	bohkosit (burst out laughing)	think	
	leahko (open)	bivdimis (chase)	work	

Object:

dahto (want	oaidnit (look at)	come to	hold on to
risset (spank)	cujuhii (point to)	jump with kiss	
beassat (release)		like	
guoddit (carry)		play with	
	talk to		

Table 4. Verbs associated with adults in the Samish and Australian corpora

Samish	Australian
Parents:	
galget (sort out)	say
mannat (go)	have
oaidnit (see)	come
bargut (shout)	look
leigga (play)	
Grandparents:	
grandfather	grandmother
haviid (hurt)	l.vlut (sing)
vastidii (answer)	jearrat (ask)
fidnet (be busy)	lohpidii (promise)
logai (read)	v.ldit (take)
Teacher:	
d.dja (say)	say
mannat (go)	help
jearrat (ask)	write
lohkat (read)	read
boahta (come)	count
s.rggut (draw)	weigh
muitalit (tell)	show

Table 5. Examples of culture specific terms from the Samish text corpus

	F/10 000
Activities:	
l.ddo (pick cloudberries)	2.93
erohus (separation of reindeer for slaughter)	.97
cikta (patch fishnet)	.65
Reindeer herding:	
eallu (reindeer farming life)	7.1

jeagil (lichen, reindeer feed)	2.6
muzet (dark brown reindeer)	1.6
guttii (reindeer which is producing young)	1.3

Architecture:

goahti (home, Samish 'tepee')	8.1
l.vu ('tent')	7.5
loaidu (floor of goahti)	2.6
loavdda (roofing of goahti)	1.9

Food:

luome (cloudberry)	5.2
goikebiergu (dried reindeer meat)	1.3
gumposat (bloodpudding)	.7

Other terms:

st.lo (Samish goblin)	14.3
vuovdit (Sami of the forest)	4.5
njaveseani (women of mythological stories)	2.3
rivgu (not a Samish woman)	1.9
noaidi (shaman)	.6

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s.rggut (draw)	weigh
muitalit (tell)	show

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