

Address by the Honorary President of Linguapax Unescocat

It has been an honour to participate in some of the Linguapax Asia conferences, the contributions from which make up this publication. I am delighted to have been invited by the coordinators of Linguapax Asia to write the introduction to the publication. In Tokyo, I had the opportunity to express how impressed I was by the high quality of the papers presented on lesser studied aspects, reflecting on the protection of linguistic diversity, which is the main objective of the international Linguapax movement. Along with more usual topics such as the relationship between languages and education and awareness about global problems, there are new contributions on language ownership, interaction between religions, languages and ethnicity, the manipulation of languages by propaganda and the language context of human trafficking. The research presented is highly original and advances the boundaries of sociolinguistics. The research is not limited to providing new answers to conventional questions, but dares to formulate new questions. Linguapax Asia conferences have always provided a breath of fresh air.

I would also like to praise the selection of speakers and participants. There are researchers who are highly regarded internationally such as Professor Tasaku Tsunoda from the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics, and Fernand de Varennes from Murdoch University in Australia, who is one of the highest international authorities on the study of conflicts with linguistic components. I also praise the choice of experts who, for many years, have been promoting the mobilisation of foreign language teachers in favour of international understanding and peace, such as Kip Cates from Tottori University in Japan, and the professionals who have lived in different language contexts and, for this reason, have enriching experiences because each one has learnt to be from different linguistic communities. I see that Linguapax Japan is made up of people who are integrated, to a great extent, in Japanese culture although they are from linguistic communities on other continents. They can speak with authority about the joys and difficulties of multilingualism. We cannot forget the participation of media experts such as Arudou Debito from the Hokkaido Information University. In this publication, readers will also find texts from around twenty experts offering their ideas from different, complementary perspectives.

Asia is arousing growing interest not only due to the emergence of great economic powers, but also the cultural evolutions affecting it. Among these, linguistic phenomena are very important. Chinese authorities think that the mismanagement of its linguistic diversity can affect its economic development negatively. Three years ago, in an experts meeting held in Beijing, the Chinese linguists expressed to us, the group of experts invited by the Chinese government, their concern on language policy. The Indian experience which recognises its territorial languages officially invites us to assess the results achieved realistically. Laws do not sufficiently guarantee the life of all languages on the Indian subcontinent and the management of linguistic diversity needs to be improved. In all countries, the economic cost of protecting minority languages is studied, and experts insist on also measuring the economic and cultural costs of uniformising language policies. In Asia, there is great interest in learning English, and this has taken over from other colonial languages. It seems clear that English is imposing itself as the common language for technical and economic globalisation. However, many sensible people believe that the thousand-year-old cultures of Asia cannot be expressed well

enough in English and that the subtle invasion of the mythological and spiritual heritage associated to English should be fought against. Every language carries particular epistemologies and value systems, and Asian cultures are certainly not inferior to Western sciences and wisdom. For these reasons, maximum attention should be paid to ideas provided on all these issues by both the Asian researchers through their academic research, and the contributions made by writers and opinion leaders on language issues. Japan is a country characterised by notable linguistic self-esteem, and we should observe how it evolves from monolingualism to a model of complexity made necessary by globalisation processes and Japan's notable international responsibilities. Japanese society will have to relativise its monolingualism and advance towards a positive view of linguistic pluralism that is compatible with its self-esteem and with social integration. The solutions found by Japan will serve as an example to all Asian countries affected by the same issues. Japan's pioneering character in many areas needs to be a reality in this field too.

The presence of Linguapax in Japan would not have occurred without the initiative and enthusiasm of Frances Fister-Stoga from the University of Tokyo. She deserves thanks from all of Linguapax's international network for her perfect understanding of the spirit of our movement and her dynamism that have made it possible to hold the symposia documented in this publication. Frances has spread her enthusiasm to other experts in the academic and cultural world. I have a special memory of some of her friends who, on my successive visits to Japan, welcomed and guided me through Japanese labyrinths that were unknown to me. I would like to mention Jelisava Sethna (Biba) and William Gater. Thanks to their friendliness and patience, I have become a great admirer of Japanese life and a modest amateur expert on Japanese cultural heritage, especially the Buddhist tradition. I think that Linguapax Japan should grow with greater participation from public and private Japanese cultural institutions. In this sense, I fully share the opinion of the aforementioned Professor Tsunoda, president of Linguapax Asia. From an international point of view, Linguapax is optimistic about the growing responsibility being taken on by other Asian countries in our network, as well as the interest shown by international institutions such as the United Nations University and, of course, UNESCO where the first Linguapax experiences began. Until now, Prof. Fister-Stoga has miraculously managed to hold the Linguapax Asia conferences with little or no financial resources. This has been thanks to the militancy and generosity of the organisers and participants. However, in the future, as we wish to grow, we will have to have sufficient financial support. Both in Japan and other Asian countries, we will have to find public institutions, foundations and companies that wish to sponsor our activities. Our network can offer initiatives for the future to linguistic communities and their leaders, as well as to government authorities who would like to improve their language policies. We wish to be more than passive observers of the evolution of linguistic communities. We wish to promote changes that help all communities live with dignity, and initiatives that facilitate fair and peaceful coexistence between languages, seeking harmony that has to include the major international languages, the majority languages of all States, and the minority and minoritised languages.

The symposia organised by Linguapax Japan are not the only Linguapax experiences on the Asian continent. I am delighted to remember the magnificent experts meeting sponsored by the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, with technical collaboration from the

Central Institute for Indian Language and UNESCO Etxea, that was held in Mysore in 2000. The collaboration between Cambodia, the European Union and Linguapax should also be mentioned. Half a million school books were published that helped Khmer people return to educational and linguistic normality following the tragic dictatorship period. If we also look at the Australian continent and the Pacific, we should remember the Linguapax conferences held in Australia and the participation of Linguapax at many meetings of the International Federation of Language Teacher Associations. Denis Cunningham has been chairman and secretary general of this federation and is the person in Australia who has promoted the Linguapax ideals the most in his continent. More recently, the responsibilities carried out by Joseph Poth in Polynesia and by our coordinator Lluís Bernabé in New Caledonia should be mentioned. I think that all the linguistic communities in Asia and the Pacific deserve an ambitious campaign to protect linguistic diversity because this is a very important part of humanity's heritage, the majority of governments are keen to do so, and the experts in both continents are among the best in the world. This is confirmed by the fact that Linguapax Prizes have been awarded to experts such as Fernand de Varennes from the University of Murdoch, Australia, in 2004, Maya Khemlani David from Malaysia in 2007, and Katerina Te Keikoko Mataira from New Zealand in 2009.

I hope this publication encourages new members to join Linguapax Asia and that we can increase our number of initiatives. The Linguapax network is made up of five types of members. Firstly, there are experts from linguistic communities who promote changes based on the aspirations of the communities themselves. Secondly, there are scientists and academics who study languages, language contact and the evolution of communities, as well as the technologies applied to linguistic phenomena. Thirdly, there are professionals from language education, communication and translation who suggest advanced methods for multilingual education and promoting interlinguistic understanding. Fourthly, government decision-makers and specialists making decisions about languages in the education world and linguistic coexistence, in media and public administration, and who have to take special care to protect the most vulnerable languages. Fifthly, there are international civil servants who are concerned about linguistic harmony, justice and peace. All members of Linguapax participate freely, on a disinterested, voluntary basis, to contribute to the active protection of humanity's language heritage. The doors of Linguapax are open. Those who currently coordinate Linguapax Japan and the other members of the movement in all continents understand this.

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