



Aristotelio College Model United Nations

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organization  
(UNESCO)  
Safeguarding Endangered Languages and Dialects  
Study Guide**

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## 1. Introduction to the Topic

At the moment, thousands of the world's languages are on the verge of extinction. A language may be in potential endangerment when its speakers begin to cease to use it or use it in an increasingly reduced number of its original communicative domains, and pass on this practice from one generation to another. In result, there are no (new) speakers to carry on the language—neither children nor adults. Three main criteria are provided as guidelines so as to identify endangered languages: the number of current speakers, the age of current speakers, and whether younger generations are acquiring fluency in these said languages. UNESCO, taking a step further, has expanded on these groups and employed six further points (nine in total) of assessment of language vitality, which are the following:

1. Intergenerational Language Transmission
2. Absolute Number of Speakers
3. Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population
4. Shifts in Domains of Language Use
5. Response to New Domains and Media
6. Materials for Language Education and Literacy
7. Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies Including Official Status and Use
8. Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language
9. Amount and Quality of Documentation <sup>1</sup>

Some languages fall silent due to tragedies (natural disasters and/or genocide, for example), while others because of language planning, migration education policy, and persecution <sup>2</sup>. Other language endangerment causes may be the result of not only external forces such as military, economic, religious, cultural, or educational, but also internal forces may be included, such as a community's/country's negative attitude towards its own language <sup>3</sup>. These internal pressures tend to have their respective source in external ones, and at the same time halt the intergenerational transmission of both linguistic and cultural traditions. Many indigenous people, having always had their culture associated with disadvantaged social position, have recently come to the realization that their languages are no use retaining any longer <sup>4</sup>. They have decided to abandon their languages and cultures in hopes of overcoming their (in) direct discrimination, to secure a sustainable livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate to the global marketplace.

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<sup>1</sup> Unesco.org. (2017). Language Vitality and Endangerment (International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages). [online] Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language\\_vitality\\_and\\_endangerment\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf) [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>2</sup> Austin, P. and Sallabank, J. (2011). *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>3</sup> Unesco.org. (2017). FAQ on endangered languages | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/faq-on-endangered-languages> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>4</sup> Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Since the rate of language and dialect extinction has increased rapidly following the rise of mass communication, one of globalization's side effects, it is crucial now more than ever to protect multilingualism and multiculturalism.

## **2. Definition of Key Terms <sup>5</sup>**

### **2.1 Dialect**

Any variety of a language that is spoken, which may fend off and eventually become a separate language. Given example is the French and Spanish language which evolved from Dialects of Latin. Based on linguists, the point where a dialect becomes a language is when speakers of two different language varieties can understand one another and their tongues are characterized as mutually intelligible.

### **2.2 Native Language**

The language that a person learns to speak in early childhood. The same term can be used to define an ancestral language or heritage language, which is referred to a language spoken by the ancestors of a specific civilization.

### **2.3 Endangered Language**

A language at risk of extinction, because of a small number of speakers, declining numbers of speakers or speakers who shift to speak a completely different language.

### **2.4 Language Prestige**

The level of reputation a language holds in relation to other languages or dialects. Often a language is considered as prestigious when it owns a significant value and is spoken by those in power.

### **2.5 Language Shift**

Is a procedure occurred when a language's value is diminished by its speakers, who usually turn (or else shift) to a national or global language of more prestige. This often appears when the local indigenous language is considered of a lower status, with the result to cease its diffusion to the children.

### **2.6 Language Death or Extinction (or Linguicide)**

A language that has lost its last native speaker and no longer passes to the children. This phenomenon can affect a language's linguistic competence, which includes both its idioms and dialects, resulting in the existence of no fluent speakers of the language variety. However, a language which has lost its proficiency in speaking by the individuals may not lead to its death, but to its attrition.

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<sup>5</sup> Miller, A. (2017). *The Linguists. Endangered Languages / PBS*. [online] Pbs.org. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/thelinguists/Endangered-Languages/Key-Terms.html> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

## 2.7 Language Revitalization

Actions and policies that aim at the promotion, reinforcement and proliferation of the use of a language in danger. The term **language revival (or reclamation)** can also be used to describe the attempt to bring back an already extinct language.

## 2.8 Linguistics

The scientific study of language and an academic discipline taught at universities.

## 3. History and background of the topic

### 3.1 History of the Language endangerment

Ever since the colonial and industrial periods, a multitude of languages have been extinguished. The phenomenon occurs more often in Asia, South America and Africa due to economic development consequences, where endangered languages are notably concentrated <sup>6</sup>.

In a colloquium held at the 1991 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, the linguistics profession was mainly focused on the scale of language endangerment due to an issue appeared in the journal *Language*. It has been decided that a proper solution would come from recording the remaining speakers and then create linguistic archives for future reference. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities followed in 1995 and the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights came in 1996. Also in 1996, the first UNESCO atlas of the world's languages in danger was published, encompassing around 600 languages. The 2010 edition of UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages would grow to include 2500 and be officially launched in interactive form, freely available online <sup>7</sup>.

In 2000, the “Ethnologue” was launched by SIL International, providing a vast database on world linguistic statistics and tradition. In 2003 the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted and emphasized on the need for immediate action. This commitment was confirmed by the subsequent Action Plan mandated by the Declaration to promote the linguistic diversity as part of the world's cultural diversity. During the same year, the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages published its report, establishing a framework for determining language endangerment. Furthermore, it was in 2003 that the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted. On December 18 of 2006 the recommendation of the European Parliament on key competences for lifelong learning, as part of its commitment for multilingualism was adopted. The General Assembly of the UN proclaimed 2008 to be the International Year of Languages and named UNESCO as the lead agency <sup>8</sup>. In 2009 UNESCO and ICANN launched a partnership to promote linguistic diversity in Internet domains and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 the resolution of the Council of Europe's Congress of

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<sup>6</sup> Austin, P. and Sallabank, J. (2011). *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>7</sup> Unesco.org. (2010). *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in danger*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>8</sup> Un.org. (2008). *International Year of Languages - 2008 - Preservation of Languages*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyl/multilingualism.shtml> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

Local and Regional Authorities of entitled “Minority languages – an asset for regional development” was adopted<sup>9</sup>

### **3.2 Actions that have already been taken**

#### **The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity**

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity notes that “*All persons have [therefore] the right to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and all persons have the right to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms*”, in support of human expression and linguistic creation.

Another standout is Article 6, which calls for “*media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity*”.

Finally, Article 10 acknowledges the urgency to “*reinforce international cooperation and solidarity aimed at enabling all countries, especially developing countries and countries in transition, to establish cultural industries that are viable and competitive at national and international level*, while the rest of the Declaration encourages the promotion of linguistic diversity in cyberspace, linguistic diversity at all levels of education and the learning of several languages from the youngest age<sup>10</sup>.

#### **International Expert Meeting of UNESCO Program on Safeguarding Endangered Languages**

After it was reminded that UNESCO’s Constitution includes the maintenance and perpetuation of language diversity as a basic principle; “*to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction of race, sex, language, religion, by the Charter of the United Nations*” (UNESCO Constitution Article 1)<sup>11</sup>, it was pointed out that there’s a need for language documentation, protection and educational integration, support of linguistic diversity and Eco-diversity, as well as monitoring of language attitudes and policies (such as, but not limited to the effects of globalization) by all states<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Europarl.europa.eu. (2013). REPORT on endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union - A7-0239/2013. [online] Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2013-0239+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. (2002). Paris: UNESCO

<sup>11</sup> Unesco.org. (2017). Language Vitality and Endangerment (International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages). [online] Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language\\_vitality\\_and\\_endangerment\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf) [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>12</sup> Ich.unesco.org. (2003). Recommendations for Action Plans (International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages). [online] Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00117-EN.pdf> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

## **The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage reached a resolution that aims, among other things;

- (a) To safeguard the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) To ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
- (c) To raise awareness for the importance of the intangible cultural heritage at local, national and international levels and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;
- (d) To provide for international cooperation and assistance (Article 1) <sup>13</sup>

It further grants authority to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage to compile a Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, with the aim of “better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance, and to encourage dialogue which respects cultural diversity” (Article 16) <sup>14</sup>.

## **4. Legal Framework**

Despite the fact of the recent history of UNESCO’s involvement in endangered languages, the idea of a legal framework to surround the issue quickly started to spread and created the need of immediate measures that needed to be taken to safeguard the most vulnerable languages and dialects. In the early 1980s UNESCO began to make statements on the importance of languages in the maintenance of cultural diversity of the world and several international normative texts and declarations have testified to a growing awareness of the importance of language issues at a global level.

### **4.1 The language issue in the UN context**

Among many others, some of the first and most important steps and actions taken to point out and tackle the issue of language endangerment were;

- The *Declaration of Vienna of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993)* <sup>15</sup>, which affirms the right for “persons belonging to minorities to use their own language”;
- The *Call of the General Assembly of the United Nations* <sup>16</sup> to give more attention to multilingualism (December 1992);

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<sup>13</sup> Ich.unesco.org. (2003). Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - intangible heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO. [online] Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>14</sup> Unesco.org. (2003). Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/santiago/culture/intangible-heritage/convention-intangible-cultural-heritage/> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017]

<sup>15</sup> Ohchr.org. (2017). *OHCHR | Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

- The **Resolution 56/262**<sup>17</sup> (**Part II**) of the General Assembly of the United Nations with main goal to maintain and guard all languages and;
- The **Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations**<sup>18</sup> at its fifty-eighth session (2003), in order to take measures that will protect, promote and preserve all languages.

#### 4.2 UNESCO's activities on endangered languages

Based on UNESCO's Constitution foremost principle (Article 1), "*UNESCO has developed programs aimed at promoting languages as instruments of education and culture, and as significant means through which to participate in national life*".

- The establishment of **the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity**<sup>19</sup> (Points 5, 6 and 10) acknowledges the relationship between biodiversity, cultural diversity and linguistic diversity so as to encourage, incorporate and sustain linguistic diversity at all levels of education, and to foster the learning of several languages from the youngest age.
- The **Language Vitality and Endangerment**<sup>20</sup> document which clarifies the significance of supporting the endangered languages by highlighting the role of the Speech Community, the role of External Specialists, the assessment of language endangerment and the urgency for Documentation.
- The **Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights**<sup>21</sup> with the goal to establish the principles for a just and equitable linguistic peace without imbalances throughout the world, by ensuring the respect and full development of all languages as a key factor in the maintenance of harmonious social relations.

### 5. Discussion of the Topic

Today roughly 5,000 to 6,000 languages are spoken in the world, but it is estimated that in a century from now, the number will almost certainly fall to the low thousands or even the hundreds, leading to one of the biggest cultural disasters in the history. Among many causes of language endangerment cultural, political and economic marginalization accounts for some of

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<sup>16</sup> Ohchr.org. (1992). Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. [online] Available at:

[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/Booklet\\_Minorities\\_English.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/Booklet_Minorities_English.pdf) [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

<sup>17</sup> Team, O. (2002). *ODS HOME PAGE*. [online] Documents-dds-ny.un.org. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/497/60/PDF/N0149760.pdf?OpenElement> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

<sup>18</sup> Unesco.org. (2005). Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations at its fifty-eighth session. [online] Available at:

[http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis\\_tunis\\_prep\\_multilingualism\\_rieks\\_smeets\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis_tunis_prep_multilingualism_rieks_smeets_en.pdf) [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

<sup>19</sup> Unesdoc.unesco.org. (2002). Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity . [online] Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127162e.pdf> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

<sup>20</sup> Unesco.org. (2003). Language Vitality and Endangerment . [online] Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language\\_vitality\\_and\\_endangerment\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf) [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

<sup>21</sup> Pencatala.cat. (1996). UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF LINGUISTIC RIGHTS. [online] Available at: [http://www.pencatala.cat/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/dlr\\_angles.pdf](http://www.pencatala.cat/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/dlr_angles.pdf) [Accessed 17 Nov. 2017].

the greatest world's endangered languages. In addition, the cultural impacts and the general effects on communities are the key factors that will concern us and be the central field of our committee's issues discussed.

## **5.1 Cultural Marginalization**

It is a fact that much of the cultural, spiritual, and intellectual life of a person is experienced through language, which actually forms the social identity of the individuals. Its implementation ranges from prayers, myths, ceremonies, poetry, oratory, and technical vocabulary, to everyday greetings, conversational styles, humor, ways of speaking to children, and unique terms of expression through habits, behavior, and emotions. In other words, language is one of the most fundamental domains which creates and disseminate cultural customs and traditions. However, plenty of minorities who speak languages without an important power amongst societies face the struggles of “surviving” the pressure of cultural dominance of others when literature and higher education is only accessible in the majority languages.

### **5.1.1 Cultural Imperialism**

The phenomenon of cultural marginalization keeps appearing while cultural imperialism is favoring the dominance of the most powerful civilizations, thus the most prestigious languages which are being part of them. The impact of culture imperialism is often seen when individuals abandon their language, either by themselves or by ceasing its diffusion to their children, in order to adapt a more prestigious one. This fact can also be seen in minorities speaking an endangered language which is associated with a negative social stigma like poverty and illiteracy, forcing them to adopt the dominant language so as to achieve a higher social status, cultural progress and sustainability. A great example of a dominant language that has been forced to be assimilated is the Hindi language in India. Since its adoption by the Indian government as their official language it has taken over many other topical languages and dialects.

### **5.1.2 Technology-related Effects**

Globalization is the main cause for the rapid development and sovereignty of technology, which sometimes is the reason why people fend off from their customs and traditions. Schools that have adapted technology as a basic learning tool through the use of broadcast media and the Internet may lead to the expansion of the scope and power of the dominant language at the expense of endangered languages. For these reasons, language documentation is considered as a successful way to maintain and safeguard its existence or even assist to the revival of an already extinct language. Effective documentation includes extensive videotape, audiotape, extend grammar and vocabulary analysis and written records of actual language use, both formal and informal. The sufficiency of this practice is often evaluated from the degree of support each community appears to have for their language variety and the official attitude of the civilians toward a language.

## **5.2 Effects on Communities**

In the times of cultural transformation and constant interaction that affect our traditional ways of understanding cultural identities and belonging, cultural categorizations can lead easily to minoritization and discrimination. At the same time there are parts of the world, societies or communities that are in danger of becoming either cultural fortresses, or cultural ghettos facing alienation, exclusion and marginalization. Cultural rights violations include the prohibition of the use of regional languages and prohibition of production or importation of publications or intellectual property rights of indigenous people, among others. However, the effects of this policy of cultural exclusion are numerous.

### **5.2.1 Cultural effects**

It is a fact that language loss often means deterioration of cultural traditions, which are tied to that language. Such examples are songs, myths and poetry which are not easily transferred to another language. Part of the community's intangible heritage is lost, resulting in their sense of identity, thus producing a weakened social cohesion, as their values and traditions are replaced with new ones that are a product of globalization.

### **5.2.2 Economic effects**

In the economic sector, the cultural marginalization denies a section of the society equal access to education, productive resources for the realization of their productive human potential and opportunities for their full capacity utilization. These minorities are excluded from the work market or experience discrimination when it comes to wages and health insurance. They live in poverty and they have limited social mobility. As a result, these groups are mostly illiterate or not equally well educated; they live on the margins of the society, as they struggle to cover their basic needs. In general, fundamental human rights are extremely violated and the well-being of the communities cannot be achieved.

### **5.2.3 Political and social effects**

In the political sector, such exclusion appears when people don't have equal access to the formal power structure and participation in the decision making processes. In many cases, even the participation to the voting procedures is impossible. Thus, they become dependent and politically and socially ignorant. The community cannot be developed socially and mostly politically when some parts of it are excluded or when it's cultural identity is lost. In other words, losing a language has severe political consequences, as some countries confer different political statuses or privileges on minority ethnic groups, often defining ethnicity in terms of language. As a result, the problem of social exclusion is more than present.

## **6. Block Positions**

The disappearance of endangered languages and dialects is an issue that concerns many Member States all around the world.

### **6.1 North America**

Native American languages are the languages of the native peoples of the Western Hemisphere and their descendants. A number of the Native American languages that were spoken in the late 15th century have become extinct. However, steps have been taken for their preservation<sup>22</sup>. The government of the United States of America has declared as a policy the right and freedom of Native Americans to use practice and develop Native American languages and to preserve them via language immersion programs in the Native American language acts of 1990<sup>23</sup> and 1992 and the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act<sup>24</sup>.

## 6.2 Russian Federation

In Russia there is a serious number of endangered languages and dialects as well. More specifically there are 148 of them in Siberia. The Russian President has supported the work of the NGOs<sup>25</sup> and UNESCO concerning the preservation of Siberian culture and languages.

## 6.3 African continent

Furthermore, Africa is the most linguistically diverse continent in the world. People speak approximately 2,000 different languages. New languages, such as Kenya's "sheng", a mixture of English, Swahili and mother-tongues, are emerging. But, more than 300 languages have less than 10,000 speakers, a fact that renders them, according to the United Nation's list, as endangered. Moreover, 37 of them are in danger of completely being extinct. New generations don't learn African languages and parents don't take the chance to teach their own children the benefits of these indigenous languages. Some of the countries that face the extinction of languages and dialects are Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and, last but not least, South Africa. However, promotion of local language education may also be employed to fragment political opposition. Examples include the policies of former Cameroonian president P. Biya<sup>26</sup>, Tanzania's J. Nyerere<sup>27</sup> and Ghana's K. Nkrumah<sup>28</sup>, who used the protection of endangered languages as a means to strengthen national separatism.

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<sup>22</sup> Linguisticsociety.org. (2011). *Resolution for U.S. Government Action to Support the Preservation and Revitalization of Native American Languages* | Linguistic Society of America. [online] Available at: <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/resolution-us-government-action-support-preservation-and-revitalization-native-american> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>23</sup> Www2.nau.edu. (1990). *Native American Language Act*. [online] Available at: <http://www2.nau.edu/jar/SIL/NALAct.pdf> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>24</sup> Congress.gov. (2006). *Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act*. [online] Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/109/plaws/publ394/PLAW-109publ394.pdf> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>25</sup> Foundation, R. (2016). *Putin calls to support NGOs working to preserve culture and language of the Russia's peoples*. [online] Russkiymir.ru. Available at: <https://www.russkiymir.ru/en/news/216026/> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>26</sup> ResearchGate. (1997). *The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon*. [online] Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28641754\\_The\\_Anglophone\\_Problem\\_in\\_Cameroon](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28641754_The_Anglophone_Problem_in_Cameroon) [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>27</sup> Ström, E. (2009). *The Situation of Ndengeleko: A Coastal Tanzanian Language*. [online] Lingref.com. Available at: <http://www.lingref.com/cpp/acal/38/paper2150.pdf> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>28</sup> Small, A. (2017). *An unintended legacy: Kwame Nkrumah and the domestication of national self-determination in Africa*. [online] Scielo. Available at: [http://www.scielo.org/za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1996-20962017000100005](http://www.scielo.org/za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1996-20962017000100005) [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

## 6.4 China

For a country which is so associated with its national language, known as Mandarin, China is extremely rich in linguistic diversity. Unfortunately, the country's rapid development as well as the efforts of the government to mandate the use of Mandarin in schools and official settings has led to the disappearance of many other languages and dialects.<sup>29</sup>

## 6.5 European continent and European Union

Europe has to face the issue of the distinction of minority and regional languages and dialects as well. The European Union is formed of 28 Member States but has 24 official languages, since some Member States share the same official language. There are languages that are endangered due to the extremely low number of native speakers, while some dialects, although they are spoken by a number of people, are not officially recognized. It is estimated that between 7 million and 10 million people are native speakers of Catalan in Spain, France and Italy. In the same time, Malta's total population of 420,000 is all bilingual English-Maltese. On the other hand, Irish, the first state language in Ireland, has no official status in Northern Ireland, where it is being characterized as a regional language. It has been classified by UNESCO as "definitely endangered".

Currently all European countries except from France, Andorra and Turkey have signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>30</sup>, whose provisions cover the issue of the use of the minority language, while Greece, Iceland and Luxembourg have signed it, but have not ratified it. Also, in 1992, the European Union adopted the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML)<sup>31</sup>, which entered into force in 1998. Although it is legally binding for 24 countries, some member states such as France, Iceland, Italy, FYROM, Moldova and Russian Federation have chosen to sign it without ratifying the convention.

## 7. Questions To be Addressed

It is vital to take into serious consideration that **all the Questions to be addressed should be discussed** during the committee sessions in the Moderated and Unmoderated caucuses so as to express your country's specific policy about the issue under discussion and then form your draft resolutions. Thus, based on your personal research you will have, except from the statements in your position paper, to answer and keep notes for the following questions;

- Which are the best ways to implement the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, regarding the learning of a variety of languages from a young age?

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<sup>29</sup> Schiavenza, M. (2013). *On Saving China's Dying Languages*. [online] The Atlantic. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/06/on-saving-chinas-dying-languages/276971/> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>30</sup> FCNM, N., glance, A., Factsheet, F. and Europe, C. (2016). *FCNM Factsheet*. [online] National Minorities (FCNM). Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/fcnm-factsheet> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

<sup>31</sup> list, F. and Europe, C. (2017). *Full list*. [online] Treaty Office. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/148> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2017].

- In which way the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights about a harmonious development of all languages will help to detect phenomena of cultural imperialism and eliminate cultural marginalization?
- How does each community affect the way a language is used for the domains of social, political and economic life?
- Which may be the impacts of language extinction in both a national and international level?
- Is the already existing progress enough to adequately address the issue? If not, which are the measures that need to be taken to avoid the attrition of a language or a dialect?
- How can we ensure that the technological evolution in the age of globalization will not be a menace for the vulnerable languages?
- Which are the dangers of Internet's application that conduce to the language endangerment and how can we reverse the issue via the social media?
- How can we stabilize the coexistence of the most prestigious languages with those which are less dominant?
- How can we preserve and protect minority languages, in order to promote cultural diversity?
- Should States be required to cultivate local languages even if that may be detrimental to their integrity and sovereignty?

## **8. Conclusion**

All things considered, it is clear that even if the matter of language endangerment is not a wide spread and well-known phenomenon, it is however of outmost significance and a very challenging issue in need to be solved. Possible consequences could be cultural loss with disastrous impacts for the history of entire civilizations, which can also conduce to an economic, political and cultural crisis, especially for the minorities, or even to an irreversible loss of their social identity. Before continuing with any of your personal research always bear in mind how a language may affect the personalities of individuals. A hypothetical fend off from the ethical principles and the virtues derived from a language could lead to the disappearance of linguistic diversity and aggravate the effort for cultural maintenance and its dissemination to the future generations. Many organizations, like UNESCO, have taken serious steps to stabilize the need for evolution without departing from our past as humans who created astonishing civilizations by the development of languages and dialects. Nevertheless, there are still many goals that need to be reached and in order to achieve them all nations should be united to this common goal.

We cannot wait to see you in the committee and listen to all of your ideas, discuss and debate. We hope for the best collaboration ever and we already know that it is going to be an unforgettable experience for all of us! Last but not least, do not hesitate to contact us and ask for anything concerning our topic and the procedure.

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- Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights: [http://www.pencatala.cat/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/dlr\\_angles.pdf](http://www.pencatala.cat/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/dlr_angles.pdf)
- Language Vitality and Endangerment (Amount and Quality of Documentation): [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language\\_vitality\\_and\\_endangerment\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf)
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## 10. Further Resources

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