



Topic: Protection and preservation of
originary languages and dialects in a
globalized world.

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What is expected of delegates for this agenda:

It is of great importance for delegates to join efforts to promote and protect linguistic diversity and multilingualism, as well as to recognize the vital role of local languages in the advancement of science.

For this to be achieved, every delegation needs to understand the importance and the full range of powers of the UNESCO as it will help guide their discussion towards solutions to be implemented to the problematic at hand, following the principle of R2P.

An Introduction to the UNESCO:

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was founded in the United Nations Conference of 1945 with the purpose to create an organization that would represent a culture of peace and that would establish the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”. Its Constitution was signed on November 16, 1945 and came into force after the ratification of 20 countries on November 4, 1946.

Nowadays, UNESCO has 195 Member States and 11 associate members, all working towards the Organizations purpose: "to contribute to peace and security by promoting

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collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations" (UNESCO Constitution, 1945, Article 1¹)

UNESCO is composed of three bodies: the Secretariat, the General Conference and the Executive Board.

In this committee, delegates will simulate the General Conference of the UNESCO.

The General Conference, meets every two years, and is attended by all 206 members (Member States and Associate Members) to determine the policies and the main lines of work of the Organization, as well as to set programmes and the budget. Each country has one vote regardless of size or contribution to the budget.

Today, the agenda of UNESCO, works alongside the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established at the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly², through six programs: education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, communication and information, and sustainable development goals for ocean.

General description of the Problem:

Language shapes the way that people connect and interact with each other, forming a sense of cultural identity that reflects the richness of the diverse histories, cultures and knowledge of all humankind, "it is through language that culture is shared and transmitted, a unique world view is expressed and identity is moulded and recreated" (Caoagas, 2008, p.1).

There are about 6,000 known languages worldwide, out of which around 5,000 of them are spoken by millions of indigenous people. Nevertheless, all around the world linguistic diversity is under threat. It is estimated that 600 languages have disappeared in the last

¹ This article of UNESCO's Constitution is the legal support upon this committee is based on, because it includes the maintenance and perpetuation of language diversity as a basic principle: "Based on this principle, 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" (Noriko Aikawa, 2001: 13).

² To know more about the SDGs visit: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

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century and on average, one language disappears every two weeks. If current trends continue to be allowed around 90 percent of the world's languages will more than likely disappear by the end of this century.³

In addition, languages that have thousands of speakers have encountered the problem that fewer and fewer children are learning their indigenous languages, resulting in a decrease in its number of speakers, “at least 50% of the world's more than six thousand languages are losing speakers” (UNESCO, 2003, p.2) because more and more indigenous languages are being used only by elders.

Language endangerment is the result of many factors or forces both external such as economic, cultural, political or educational subjugation as well as internal, such as the discriminatory practices perpetrated by society toward these communities or the very negative attitude that many of these communities have towards their own language (in many cases this internal forces have its roots on the external ones), that cause a halt in the intergenerational transmission of linguistic traditions. Many indigenous peoples have abandoned their language because they associate it with having a disadvantaged social position within their countries; they have come to believe that in order to overcome discrimination, to secure an income and to enhance social (national and global) mobility they must abandon their cultures.

The reason why it is of vital importance that this problem is discussed and solutions are sought is because every time a language becomes extinct⁴ or dies⁵ it results in an irrecoverable loss of knowledge; call it cultural, historical, scientific or ecological. Even so, “speakers of these languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard 1992, Hale 1998)” (UNESCO, 2003, p.2). Every single language is an expression of the humane experience of the world and every

³ See UNECO Portal on Endangered Languages at <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php>. Also see Harrison, David, “Indigenous Languages Dying.” Director, Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania on Al Jazeera at <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/5A3D288A-CB05-46D0-87A6-56C71D7C0973.htm>

⁴ A language becomes extinct when there it is no longer being used and it doesn't have any speakers, for example: Nyawaygi

⁵ A language is considered dead when it is no longer being spoken by its native people, but is still used in certain contexts, for example: Latin

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time a language dies or becomes extinct, we lose more and more evidence for knowing our past, understanding our present and maybe answering questions in the future.

Antecedents:

“The spread of English [...] has served to undermine the rights of other languages and to marginalize the opportunities that should exist for widespread multilingual education” (Burns, 2013).

From the beginning of human history (determined by the invention of writing) and part of its prehistory (the first languages) have always had one objective: to communicate (Yule, 2014). Its complexity and other characteristics determine its superior level over animal communication (Yule, 2014). And represent the long path each language had to walk to exist in this very moment. Therefore they are a treasure of Human History and Culture (Ting-Toomey, 1999). As UNESCO’s definition of Language: “Language is one manifestation of cultural diversity” (Simmons, 2018) with the importance that “Every language reflect a unique world-view with its own value systems, philosophy and particular cultural features” (Simmons, 2018) each “Tongue” is as valuable as others.

(Tawakal Shah, 2014)

The iceberg metaphor for culture

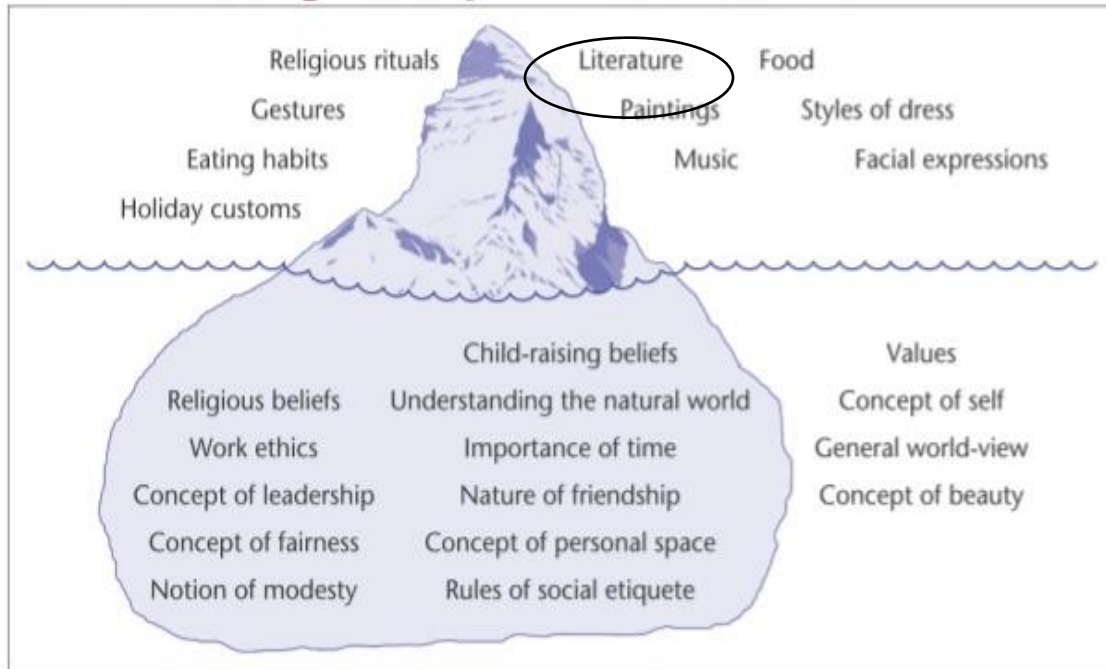


Figure 2.5 The iceberg metaphor for culture

Source: <http://www.indoindians.com/lifestyle/culture.htm>

Back in the day when tribes, then soldiers (and nowadays armies) conquered each other, they tried to impose their own culture over the society that has lost the battles. The winners needed to show they were strong and vibrant: hence they tried to destroy the evidence of a culture before them and make the conquered forget their roots: one of those roots was language (Marimón Llorca, s.f.). This supremacy or superiority process lasted unaddressed until the end of the WWII with the creation of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But still that was not enough yet to save “Linguistic World Heritage”. Nevertheless it was the first step towards its “achievement”.

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The creation of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (in 1945 and 1993) demonstrates that governments all around the Globe are aware of these situations and have “committed” to the World Heritage.

Despite the presence of these Organizations, languages are disappearing due to their “suppression, official policies of cultural eradication, and the passage of time” (Coles, 2018). Nowadays Globalization has not been useful for this issue... yet. When there is literally a world of opportunities and knowledge that could help with the preservation of languages, humanity is so self-centered that aspects like culture are no longer important.

With indigenous speakers forced to go abroad for better opportunities and obliged to “hide” their identity “El problema es que entramos indios y salimos blancos” (Alarcón in Villaroel, 2014) are causing the extinction of languages (Mtholoyoke, s.f.)

The Website Mtholoyoke establishes that the historic reasons of the vanishing of languages are (Mtholoyoke, s.f.):

- “Anything or anyone that directly threatens the physical safety of a community threatens the survival of the language they speak.”
- “Catastrophic natural disasters can decimate or wipe out small communities in isolated areas”
- “Foreign diseases have annihilated entire indigenous communities”
- “Desertification and deforestation, as well as economic exploitation for resources has forced unplanned and unpredictable migration to take place”

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- “In [...] suburban settings, communities struggle to maintain their cultural and linguistic traditions”
- “Conflicts at an international scale and long-term ethnic or religious enmities”
- “The domestic policies of a large number of [...] countries actively promote the abandonment of tribal languages”
- “minority languages are repressed”
- “Population pressures, globalization and the spread of industrialization are the most accredited culprits of ‘language murder’”
- “Global economic patterns often force small, unindustrialized communities to assimilate to a different culture”
- “Pressure to speak in the dominant language”
- “The increasing feelings, particularly amongst children, of shame and inferiority about the native language”

“The spread of English, much of which had occurred through its prominence in global language education, has served to undermine the rights of other languages and to marginalize the opportunities that should exist for widespread multilingual education.”

(Burns, 2013)

Even though Indigenous Peoples have been taken into consideration for the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (UNDESA Division for Inclusive Social Development of Indigenous Peoples, s.f.) and the next year was declared as the International Year of Indigenous Language, there is a long way to achieve the objectives. Nonetheless the international agreements and conferences, the means to achieve the goals they have set

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regarding indigenous languages are not clear. These organizations and institutions have settled different aims but the means to meet and address them have not been described: it is said that nations and governments need to preserve their heritage and they have agreed... but the question “how are they going to do it?” has not yet been answered.

Legal Instruments:

UNESCO means of actions include three legal instruments in the form of:

Declarations whose aim is promoting, in exceptional circumstances, general principles acknowledged by the Members of the General Assembly, are a rarely-used and extremely formal and solemn tool that are not subject to ratification, acceptance or accession by States. They only require a simple majority vote.

Recommendations to Member States are instruments that the General Conference formulates “principles and norms for the international regulation of any particular question and invites Member States to take whatever legislative or other steps may be required in conformity with the constitutional practice of each State and the nature of the question under consideration to apply the principles and norms aforesaid within their respective territories” (Article 1 (b))⁶. They are not subject to ratification, acceptance or accession by States and in the General Conference formulates. They only require a simple majority vote.

International Conventions define rules with which the States undertake to comply. They are subject to ratification, acceptance or accession by States. They will require a two-third majority to be adopted.

Agenda:

- *To allocate the funding and resources that are necessary to protect, preserve and further develop indigenous languages*

⁶ Rules of Procedure concerning recommendations to Member States and international conventions covered by the terms of Article IV, paragraph 4, of the Constitution of UNESCO

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- *Promote the use and learning of indigenous languages in public administration and academic institutions*
- *Encourage the participation of indigenous people in the political and legal fields by translating laws and key political texts into their language*
- *Guarantee the right to mother-tongue education for indigenous people*
- *Facilitate and promote the learning of indigenous languages outside the communities of these languages, not only for indigenous people, but also for people who may not have any ties to it but are interested in learning the language*
- *Generate language-immersion programs*
- *The UNESCO responsibility to prevent this problem from escalating*

Delegations:

- Australia (Commonwealth of Australia)
- Brazil (Federative Republic of Brazil)
- Canada
- China (People's Republic of China):
- Colombia (Republic of Colombia):
- France (French Republic):
- India (Republic of India):
- Indonesia (Republic of Indonesia):
- Mexico (United Mexican States):
- Nepal (Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal):
- Papua New Guinea (Independent State of Papua New Guinea):
- Peru (Republic of Peru):
- Russia (Russia Federation):
- Sudan:
- United Kingdom (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland):
- United States (of America):

R2P:

Culture, history, human heritage and identity... what else is needed to provoke citizens to understand the importance of native languages?

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The responsibility to protect leaves in the hands of everyone that has the possibility to act, the decision of helping and providing aid to what is needed.

During the debate, delegates have to consider the options to achieve the settled goals. It is in their hands (as global citizens) to promote, create, and design all means to provide aid to the people that cannot stand on their own.

Notwithstanding race, nationality, culture or ideology each one of us (as an international committee) has a background, each one as important and valuable as the other. Hence the responsibility to protect should not just address each delegation's interests: instead the WORLD HERITAGE needs to be protected and preserved.

“No se puede vivir en el solo presente. La vida sería devorada si no se hubieran tomado precauciones para superarlo rápidamente y totalmente.” (Buber) This establishes the idea that the present cannot be lived while forgetting the past. The past gives the tools to overcome the present, if not, repercussions could take place. If it is considered that indigenous languages are a window to the past and this past is put aside: humanity's ability to conquer the present will disappear.

“A language will perish if all who speak it are dead” (Mtholoyoke, s.f.)

Additional Research Links:

1. UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001894/189453s.pdf>
<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=es&page=atlasmap>
2. Language Vitality and Endangerment
file:///C:/Users/itzel/Downloads/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf

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<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/focus-areas/post-2015-agenda/the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-indigenous/mdgs.html>

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