

The Importance of Preserving Languages “Documenting Endangered Languages in the World”

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Abstract:

The current study aims to find out how important language is for humans to communicate with others, culturally and socially across the boundaries of time and place. And monitoring the reasons for the strength and continuity of some languages over others. Then studying the reality of languages threatened with extinction in the short and medium term, and analyzing the reasons behind the threat of some languages with extinction, whether for environmental, social, cultural or historical reasons. Then arrive at the negative effects of losing some languages forever.

A set of research methods were relied upon: the historical method - the descriptive survey method - and the descriptive analysis.

The study reached a set of results, the most important of which are: The importance of language to human life in all activities - There is linguistic diversity in most regions of the world - There are many strong and widespread languages and their extinction is difficult because they are widely used - There are many languages that are threatened with extinction soon for various cultural, social, environmental and historical reasons- There are negative effects resulting from the extinction of some languages on the level of academic studies, the level of activities that the population experiences, and on communication between new generations.

Keywords: (Indigenous (mother) languages - strong languages - weak languages - extinction - UNESCO - linguistics - cultural transformation).

Introduction:

Language expresses everything that can be included in the circle of linguistic activity. Whether it is audio symbols, written symbols, or signs; That is, language expresses

the general entity, which contains the features of human linguistic activity in its spoken or written cultural form, whether contemporary or inherited. **(Shahin, 2020)**

Language is considered the basic tool in the lives of the peoples of the world. It is used to communicate, document and support relationships between people. Language is also a means of understanding, transferring and exchanging ideas, and people expressing their feelings. Learning languages contributes to building a person's personality and increasing his ability to absorb his culture, customs and traditions. Common languages contribute to communication between peoples in all parts of the world. **(Gordon, Raymond G. 2005)**

Despite the importance of language in the lives of people, there is a strong and violent threat facing the majority of languages spread in the world, especially those spoken by a small number of people, as many foreign studies indicate, such as: (Gibbs 2002; Abley 2003 & Nettle and Romaine 2000 & Crystal 2000). About 75% of the world's languages, which number about (6,900) languages spread throughout the world, may be threatened with extinction. There are only (600) languages, and these are the most widely used languages among humans, thus ensuring their continuity away from the danger of extinction. **(Fishman, Joshua A. ed. 2001)**

Based on this, the current study focuses on knowing the importance of language in the lives of peoples in various life activities, the importance of linguistic diversity for communication between peoples, and the real reasons (social and cultural) behind the exposure of some languages in societies. world to extinction, then we monitor the languages threatened with extinction in the world in the near term. Then we point to the powerful languages that are used by the majority of the world's population and ensure their continuity. Then we present the effects resulting from the extinction of

some languages around the world, and finally we study appropriate methods to preserve languages from extinction.

Study Problem:

The problem with the current study is that more than 75% of the languages in the world are at risk of rapid extinction, due to cultural or social reasons related to the peoples who speak them. The danger is increasing rapidly. Perhaps every two weeks at least one language becomes extinct forever, because the people who speak it are very few, and with the death of these people, those languages are lost forever. The dominance of some of the major languages spread globally, such as Arabic, English, and French, may weaken the chances of survival of these endangered languages. Hence, the problem of the current study crystallizes in the following main question:

How can languages spoken by a few groups of people be preserved from the risk of extinction?

Study questions:

Through the main question of the study, we can derive a set of the following sub-questions:

- What is the importance of languages as a means of understanding between the peoples of the world that affects all their life activities?
- What are the original languages that the majority of the world's people use to communicate with each other?
- What are the reasons for the strength of indigenous languages in maintaining their position and continuity in communication between peoples?

- What are the most prominent languages that are rapidly endangered among the world's population?
- What are the reasons and factors (social and cultural) behind the exposure of some languages in the world to the risk of extinction?
- What are the consequences of the extinction of some languages around the world?
- What is UNESCO's position on endangered languages around the world?
- How can we contribute to preserving some endangered languages around the world?

Importance of studying:

The importance of the current study is that it highlights the importance of the linguistic context in the lives of the peoples of the world, as a means of communication, expression, understanding, interconnection, building a common history, and achieving civilizational achievements. The study also focuses on the comparison between indigenous languages that are widely used among peoples, their strength factors, and between weak, marginalized and endangered languages and the reasons for this.

The study also highlights the negative effects resulting from the extinction of some languages at all levels and life activities. The study also monitors UNESCO's attempts and efforts to save some endangered languages. Finally, the study presents a set of proposals and recommendations that may contribute to saving hundreds of endangered languages around the world.

Study Goals:

The current study seeks to achieve a set of the following goals:

- Recognizing the importance of languages, whether indigenous or modern, in communication between the peoples of the world in various life activities.
- Determining the extent of people's need for language to achieve social, cultural and civilizational communication across the borders of space and time.
- Finding the reasons for the strength of indigenous languages, which ensures their spread and long survival in the lives of peoples.
- Monitoring the most famous languages threatened with extinction in the short and medium term.
- Arriving at an analysis of the (social-cultural) reasons behind the extinction of some of the world's languages.
- Identify the most important negative effects that result from the extinction of some languages in some countries.
- Monitoring UNESCO's positions in its attempts to save some of the world's languages that are threatened with extinction.
- Providing solutions, proposals and recommendations that may contribute to saving some languages that are on the brink of identity and on their way to extinction.

methodology:

The study is based on a set of research methods as follows:

- Historical approach:

It is used to monitor and track the development of some indigenous languages and sub-languages, their impact on the lives of people around the world, and the degree of their strength and use among people.

- The descriptive survey method:

in collecting data and information about the subject of the study, analyzing the literature and drawing study results from it.

- Descriptive analysis method:

in analyzing some data from tables and statistics about the subject of the study to produce results that serve the subject of the study.

Study literature:

1. Language concept:

There are many definitions of language put forward by researchers in the field of language, and all definitions focus on the phonetic nature of language, its social function, and the diversity of linguistic structure from one society to another. We find "Carroll" defining language as: (any language is a structural system) of customary spoken sounds, and of sequences of sounds that are used or that can be used in dealing between individuals when A group of people, and classifies the things, events, and processes that It takes place in the human environment). Sapir's definition: (Language is a purely human, non-instinctive way of communicating thoughts, emotions, and desires through symbols produced voluntarily). (Lyons, John ,1995)

2. Native (mother) languages:

Indigenous languages or mother tongues are those languages to which people are exposed at birth. In many countries, the term mother tongue refers to the languages of individuals' ethnic groups, an alternative to their primary language. In periods of time, this pronunciation is used for the language that individuals learned at zero at birth. Those children who live in bilingual environments may have multiple languages. Individuals' first language is considered an essential part of their personal, social and cultural identity. The first language leads to learning and acquiring successful social patterns of acting and speaking. It also contributes to the distinction between linguistic competence and representation. Some believe that there is no difference between the original language and the acquired language.”(Terri Hirst,2010)

3. The importance of languages in the lives of peoples:

Language is the means by which people communicate. By learning a language, communication is achieved abroad. Emails, chats, tags, and symbols are ways to communicate with others. It can be said that without language, interaction between people would not take place. Symbols are part of our daily life and also essential to language. Language is a very broad term and perhaps not completely understood, even though it is essential in our daily lives..(Kotamraju, Prasanna.(2020).

Man has a social nature, and his tendency to join with his fellows for lower or higher purposes is one of his essential characteristics. To understand and be understood by his fellows, people were forced to produce a language without which they could not communicate with each other. Language is the source of culture, and the source of its existence, created by the principles of codification and oral communication, the basis of which are the media and the products highlighted by Enlightenment thought. This

is why we find that any science is not devoid of the characteristic of culture. Since all sciences have their source of existence through language, it is imperative for the individual to absorb the linguistic expression specific to each science to enrich knowledge. (Shay,Shelly,2018).

4. Endangered languages in the world:

Before we discuss the endangered languages in the world, we focus on the reality of the current distribution of languages in the world .only about 5% of the world's languages have at least 1 million native speakers. These 347 languages account for 94% of the world's population (and this figure is increasing). In contrast, the remaining 95% of languages are spoken by only 6% of the world's people. Nearly 81% of the world's population speaks only 76 languages. Each of these has 11 million speakers or more. Only eight languages in the world are spoken by more than 100 million people; It is spoken by about 42% of the population. These include Mandarin Chinese (873,014,288 speakers), Spanish (322,299,162 speakers), English (309,352,270 speakers), and Hindi (180,764,695 speakers). Portuguese (177,457,180), Bengali (171,070,202), Russian (145,031,551), and Arabic (136,411,737) .(Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. ed. 2005).Chart No. (1) shows the linguistic distribution in the world.

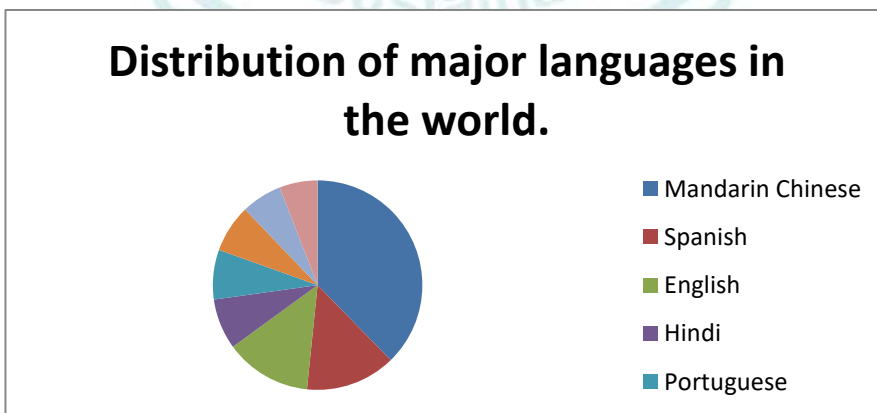


Table 1. Count/percentage of languages/speakers by world distributions (from data collected in Human Ethnology)

Area	Number of languages	Percentage of languages	Number of speakers	Percentage of speakers
Africa	2091	30.0	675.887.156	11.8
Americas	1001	14.5	47.559.383	0.8
Asia	2268	32.7	3.489.897.149	61.0
Europe	238	3.4	1.504.393.185	26.3
Pacific	1311	19.0	6.124.345	0.1
Total	6912	100.0	5.723.861.210	100.0

As for endangered languages, UNESCO indicates that The language groups that are mastered by 35% of the new generations are in clear danger. Many numbers in different regions around the world, for example the countries of Canada and Australia, and this was supported by language researchers in those regions. They concluded that in Canada, only three languages survived the extinction of more than 50 languages. (Cree, Atikamik, and Inuktitut) may be viable in the long term. The Australian continent is the continent most exposed to language extinction, as 90% of indigenous languages are on the verge of extinction (McConville, Theberger ,2001).

In the Asian continent, its population speaks only about 55 languages; Some of these languages are spoken by only 500 people, and these languages include about 26,000 out of the 30,000 speakers of indigenous languages prevalent today. What is striking is that indigenous languages are no longer widely used in daily life activities.

The survival or extinction of a language depends on the amount of pressure exerted on it. A large language can be at risk if external pressures on it are great (for example, the Quechua language of South America, which has millions of speakers), while a small language can be Safe, as long as the community is functional and the environment is stable. (e.g. Icelandic, with less than 300,000). Small languages can disappear much faster than large languages, and in current circumstances the size of

the language may be a decisive factor in determining the survival and continuity of the language. 61% of all languages are in danger of extinction. It represents the continent of Africa (32%), Asia (54%), and Europe (31%), but it is much worse in North and South America (78% and 79%), Australia and the Pacific (95%).(**Grenoble, Lenore A.,2006**).

Jobs in which language is used may This explains its ability to last for long periods. Less than 5% of the world's languages are considered the official language of many countries, and are spoken by most of their residents. Some of the dominant languages are the language of official governments, correspondence, culture and education, and English is considered the first and official language for more than % of the countries of the world. The French language has official or co-official status in 29 countries. The extinction of any language in the world represents the extinction of the traditions and culture of entire groups, because half of the extinct languages were not written. Languages end with the death of the people who created them. Among the examples of endangered languages, there are only three people who speak the “Magati-Ki” language on the northern border of the country, and one person who speaks the “Amur Dag” language, which was declared dead after he died, and three others who speak the “Yawuru” language in the west. A single person speaks the “Siletz de Ne” language, which was used by the indigenous people residing on the Siletz Reserve in the US state of Oregon. %).(**Grenoble, Lenore A.,2006**).

Studies have shown that there are 5 regions where languages are disappearing rapidly: Northern Australia, 153 languages, Central and South America, 113 languages, in Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, and Bolivia. In the North Pacific there are 54 languages, including British Columbia in Canada. In Eastern Siberia, China and Japan, there are 23 languages. In the southwestern United States, there are indigenous groups who speak as many languages as 383 languages, the number of which is

constantly decreasing. According to recent statistics, some languages may become extinct within days. For example, the **Taucher** language of the indigenous people of Peru is only spoken by one person. Likewise, the **Kaijahana** language, which is the language of one of the Amazon tribes in Brazil, will also become extinct with the departure of the only two people who spoke it. The **Limerig** language was widespread on the island of Vanuatu in the southern part of the Pacific Ocean, the **Tanema** language in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean, and the **Angerib** language and the **Albantoid** language in Nigeria, Each of them is spoken by 4 elderly people. The **Lekki** language is spoken by 5 people on one of the islands of Indonesia. The **Onguta** language is spoken by 6 people from a tribe living in a small village on the western bank of the **Wetu** River in Ethiopia. The **Domi** language is spoken by 8 people in one of the remote mountainous areas of the **Khotang** region in Nepal. .(**Al-Fadil,2023**)

There is also the **Shehri** or **Jabali** language, spoken by about 150 people. It is considered an official language in the **Dhofar** Region, but it is not written and has not entered the media or education. The **Batahari** language is spoken by residents of a small coastal area in eastern **Dhofar**, and the number of speakers does not exceed 100. **Batahari** is no longer spoken by younger people, and it is one of the languages threatened with extinction, because speakers of this language change over time to speakers of the languages surrounding them, such as **Mahri** and **Jabaliya**. As for the **Harsusi** language, which is a language very close to **Mahri**, it is used in Jeddah Al-**Harasis** in the **Dhofar** Province in central Oman, and the number of its speakers may not exceed approximately 2000. We must mention here that Mahri influenced these declining languages, and new generations of these tribes began to speak Mahri. Sometimes people of this language appear in Mahri language statistics. As for the

Habiut language, the number of speakers does not reach 1,000 people, and they are spread along the Yemeni-Omani border.(**Al-Fadil,2023**)

5. The reasons and historical and social factors that threaten some languages with extinction in the world:

There are a group of various reasons and factors responsible for the extinction of some languages in the world, which we can mention as follows:(**Maffi, Luisa ed., 2001**)

- Environmental risk: a fundamental factor that has a major impact Concerning the formation and continuity of further language groups. This demonstrates the difference that people experience in providing their food supplies over time, and this is strongly linked to weather and climate conditions, diversification of productive activities and sources of income, the ability to store many types of food, movement, and patterns of social exchange. In areas where rainfall increases throughout the year. Thus, the residents of these areas can be self-sufficient. These conditions lead to the emergence and development of distinct languages and are maintained in small, self-sufficient communities. As environmental risks increase, this leads to individuals seeking to develop their social relationships to provide their food. Languages spread within interconnected social relationships. Its members cooperate to confront all environmental risks.

- A decrease in the number of users of the language: This is due to the increasing age of its speakers, or the death of some of them, and the lack of use of that language by children of the new generation.

- The dominance of some languages: the presence of some other dominant languages, government policies, and job opportunities.

- Genocide of some minorities: where language ends with the extermination of those groups, because their language is essentially oral, not written.
- Urban transition: This means a group changing its way of life and leaving some of the original areas for new areas. All of this affects the survival and continuity of the language.
- Lack of vital factors: The lack of these factors can help it survive.
- Absence of the alphabet: One of the most important reasons for the weakness of languages is because many ancient languages are oral languages. This may be due to the lack of literary works or the lack of people who can write and read.
- External migration: Here the mother tongue is abandoned when moving to another place where the government imposes the use of a particular language in order to obtain social or economic advantages or to avoid discrimination. In some cases, parents believe that learning the approved language for their children gives them more opportunities. , so they stop using and teaching their mother tongue for this reason.

6. Powerful Continuous Languages Spoken by the Majority of the World's Population:

Although there are thousands of languages in the world, there are 10 languages that are the most widely spread and used among the entire population of the world. They are the powerful languages that guarantee their continuity for long periods of time. They can be arranged according to their rates of use among the population as follows:

(Abu Dhabi - Sky News Arabia, 2017)

-English language:

It is the most widely used language around the world and is known as the language of the age and the language of technology. It is used and spoken by more than one and a half billion speakers, as a native language or as a secondary language. The percentage of English speakers around the world is approximately 25% of the world's population, and thus the English language stands as one of the strongest languages in the world.

- **Chinese Language:** It is spoken by 18.50% of the world's population, and China's population exceeds approximately one billion people. The Chinese language is known as Mandarin, and China has the largest population in the world.

- **Indian language:** It ranked third with a speaking rate of 11.61% of the world's population. It is the official language of India as well as in the Fiji Islands. It is also spoken by the population of Nepal, and a significant percentage in South Africa and other regions of the world.

- **Arabic:** It occupies fourth place among the most widespread languages, and it is spoken by people in about 67 countries in the world, including all Arab countries. The number of its speakers is estimated at about 6.6% of the world's population, and it became an officially approved language in the United Nations in 1974.

- **Spanish:** The Spanish language ranks fifth because there are 25 countries that consider it the official language. The proportion of its speakers reaches 6.35 percent, or about 402 million people. In addition to Spain, the Spanish language is widespread in Latin and Central America and is the second language in the United States after English.

-the Russian language:It is the most widespread Slavic language, and one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. The percentage of its speakers is 3.97 percent, and they are distributed in many countries of the former Soviet republics, including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and others.

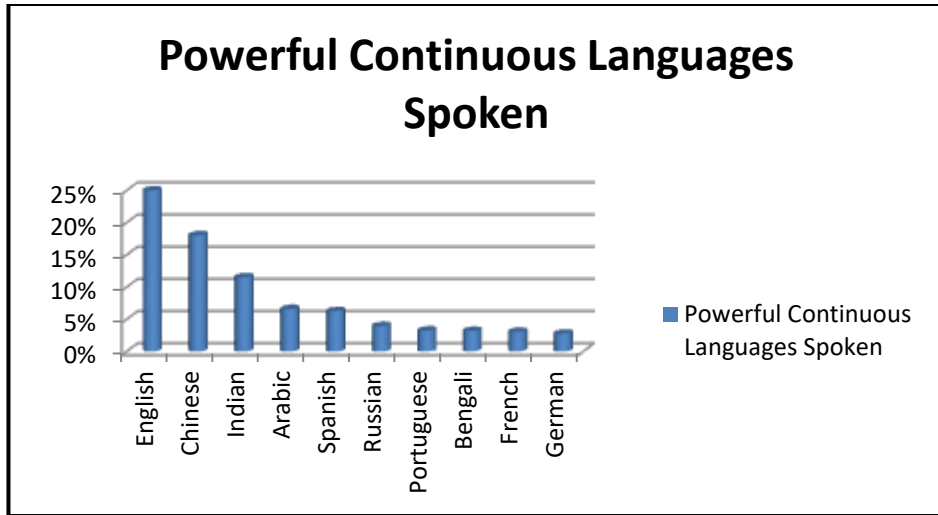
-Portuguese:The percentage of those who speak Portuguese is 3.27 percent of the world's population, distributed among Portugal, Macau, Angola, Venezuela, and Mozambique, but the most famous and largest country that speaks Portuguese is Brazil.

-Bengali language:It is ranked eighth and is spoken by 3.18 percent of the world's population, including about 122 million people, the total population of Bangladesh. It is also the language of the state of West Bengal in India, and is considered one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

- French language:It is the official language in 33 countries in the world, and the proportion of its speakers reaches 3.06 percent of the world's population. As for its speakers, in addition to French, they are distributed among Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Monaco, and some African countries.

-German language: The proportion of its speakers reaches 2.78 percent of the world's population. It belongs to the West Germanic languages. It is considered one of the most common mother tongues in the European Union, and it is one of the most famous countries that speak it, along with Germany, Austria, and parts of Switzerland and Belgium.

Figure No. (2) shows the distribution of the strongest, most widespread and widely used languages in the world.



7. Reasons for the strength and dominance of the English language over the world's languages and its continuity among the world's population:

The most important reasons that made the English language occupy the throne of languages in the world can be concluded as follows:

- **It is spoken by the majority of the world's population:** More than a quarter of the world's population speaks it, because it is an understanding that is spoken by about 1 to 1.6 billion people, in addition to the 400 million speakers of English as their mother tongue.
- **The language of international business and trade:** where the financial centers are located in the United Kingdom and the United States.
- **The majority of programs, news, and films are presented in English:** Hollywood is considered the source of global entertainment, so it is natural that English is the primary language in filmmaking.

- **An easy language to learn:** The English language is not a difficult language to master, as the vocabulary is simple to understand and is shared with many other languages.

- **A language related to other languages:** The cultures that helped shape modern English are the Romans, the Vikings, and the French. For this reason, it is a hybrid language made up of Latin, German and Romanian elements.

- **Flexible language:** English enables things to be expressed in more than one way. There are different ways to explain the same thing due to the great diversity of vocabulary.

- **Its dialects are different around the world:** the emergence of distinct dialects among countries where English is the mother tongue. The English language differs in its pronunciation and dialect in the United Kingdom, Australia, and America, as well as in spelling and speaking, as it is influenced by the cultures and historical events that have shaped its development.

- **A language that does not involve discrimination:** you can use it in any way, and from this standpoint, some countries such as Singapore have embraced this concept at heart, inventing a completely new type of English called "Singlish," which has absorbed other aspects of other languages such as Chinese and Malay.

8. The effects of the extinction of some languages around the world:

The extinction and loss of the language leads to negative repercussions and effects on multiple levels, including: **(Al-Fadil,2023)**.

-The impact of language extinction on the academic aspect:

Language loss directly affects linguistics and the analysis of applied human linguistic abilities. The lack of available languages affects the diversity available for study, because the lost languages represent stores of information that were transmitted orally for hundreds of years. The abandonment of traditional languages and cultures, or the extinction of the language, leads to the complete loss of this type of precise knowledge.

-The impact of language extinction on heritage and culture:

Man expresses the aspects of his social, cultural and spiritual life and preserves them from disappearing through language and its various media, either in writing or orally. But when that language becomes extinct, much of the data in the new language must be reshaped and restructured. We see many societies in which a linguistic shift has occurred, suffering a great loss in most of their cultures, traditions, and heritage, despite preserving their social identity.

9. How do we preserve endangered languages to continue?

There are many factors that have been sought and confirmed by UNESCO, an affiliate of the United Nations, in order to preserve some endangered languages, including: **(Grenoble, Lenore A.,2006).**

- **Using digital media and social networking sites:** Social media plays a vital role in preserving many languages for communication between people of the same language to keep them alive. Digital transformation contributes to preserving the use of language by spreading it in virtual reality.

- **In the field of education:** Teaching in the original language means that this language will remain with generations, and every individual will be keen to learn it. Because it is the language of science and knowledge. This can be represented in the

language of the Zionist entity, which was able to revive its language by making it the language of science and knowledge.

-Promoting publishing and printing processes: They represent documentation processes that have multiple means of preserving languages, and publishing contributes greatly to preserving them. Writing novels, stories, and even scientific matters in the original language helps to preserve, continue, and perpetuate them.

- Making dictionaries for each language: dates, traditions, and translation of oral stories are recorded in those dictionaries.

-Technical support: Modern technology can preserve and revive languages before they become extinct. For example, a version of Windows 8 has become available in the Cherokee language, and there is an application for the Cherokee language that allows its users to send messages using the 85 letters of the language. A large number of websites devoted to one or several languages of a particular region unite their speakers and provide multimedia teaching tools.

Summary of results:

-Through the previous presentation of the study, we reached several results, the most important of which can be mentioned as follows:

-Language is a structure of customary spoken sounds, of sequences of sounds that are used or that can be used in interpersonal interactions by a group of people, and that classifies the things, events, and processes that occur in the human environment.

Indigenous languages or mother languages are those languages that people are exposed to at birth. The term mother tongue refers to the language of an individual's ethnic group rather than the individual's first language.

-Language is the means by which people communicate. By learning a language, communication is achieved in all aspects. Signs and symbols are few examples of the way we communicate with others. Symbols are part of our daily life and also another part of language. Language is a very broad and not completely understood word that is essential in everyday life.

-Nearly 80% of the world's population speaks a total of only 75 languages. Each of these has 10 million or more speakers. Only eight languages in the world have more than 100 million speakers; they are spoken by about 40% of the population.

-only about 50 languages are spoken today; Of these only 18 have at least 500 speakers. These 18 languages represent approximately 25,000 of the 30,000 indigenous language speakers spoken today.

60% of all languages are already at risk. The situation is slightly better in Africa (33%), Asia (53%), and Europe (30%), but much worse in North and South America (78% and 77%) and Australia and the Pacific (93%).

English is the de facto or official language of more than 70 countries; The French language has official or co-official status in 29 countries. The extinction of any language in the world.

-The reasons and historical and social factors that threaten some languages with extinction in the world is Environmental risk, A decrease in the number of users of the language, The dominance of some languages, Genocide of some minorities , Urban transition, Lack of vital factors, Absence of the alphabet, External migration.

The effects of the extinction of some languages around the world is : Language loss directly affects linguistics and the analysis of applied human linguistic abilities. The lack of available languages affects the diversity available for study, because the lost

languages represent stores of information that were transmitted orally for hundreds of years.

many societies in which a linguistic shift has occurred, suffering a great loss in most of their cultures, traditions, and heritage, despite preserving their social identity.

Recommendations:

1. The need for the interest and cooperation of all countries whose populations contain endangered languages to spread them among new generations.
2. UNESCO provides special financial support for the development of dictionaries for all endangered languages.
3. Activating endangered languages on social media sites and computer programs.
4. Teaching endangered languages at various levels of education.
5. The importance of classifying languages that belong to the same origins, or have common relationships in linguistic composition, letters, or words, or are spread in the same environments.
6. Using modern analysis techniques in comparative linguistic studies of languages at risk of extinction.

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