

*THE MISSING SDG: Endangered
Languages and Sustainable
Development*

**GJH GALDUA: Arriskuan dauden
Hizkuntzak eta Garapen
Jasangarria**

FEL XXIX 2025

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for Endangered Languages

The UNESCO Chair of World Language
Heritage The University of the Basque Country

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On the theme

**The Missing SDG:
Endangered Languages and
Sustainable Development**

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Foreword

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This volume contains the extended abstracts of papers presented at the 29th Annual Conference (FEL XXIX – Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country, Spain, 22-25 October 2025) of the Foundation for Endangered Languages. The papers are strictly for the exclusive use of conference participants and members of FEL.

In a departure from its past practice, especially in its first years of existence, when the proceedings of its annual conferences were published “in-house” as printed volumes with limited distribution, FEL, in recent years, especially as its annual conferences, together with its other activities, have enjoyed increasing success, has recognised the imperative to ensure a wider and better international distribution of its publications. This would contribute to a better knowledge of endangered languages as a topic and as a cause and to increased awareness of all aspects of the mission of FEL as well as the work of its partners and collaborators in the academic, community and advocacy fields.

FEL’s annual conferences, usually held on a different continent every year, involve a diversity of authors and presenters beyond the strict limits of the academic field. This wealth of knowledge and experience deserves to be more widely distributed. Consequently, since 2019, Brill publishers, one of the most respected international publishing houses and a world leader in the field of linguistics and social sciences, has undertaken to publish the proceedings of FEL annual conferences and related work, in a collection especially created for this purpose, the Brill-FEL Endangered Languages Series. Proceedings, or selected papers from the conference, will be published as the FEL Endangered Languages Yearbooks, or ELY. The recent merger of Brill with the equally internationally renowned publisher De Gruyter - now known as De Gruyter Brill - has slowed the Yearbooks publication in some measure, but the cycle has restarted on firmer grounds.

The process of paper selection begins as soon as possible after the conference. One or several members of the Organising Committee, mainly from the local team, will act as Volume Editor or Editors, working in close collaboration with the De Gruyter Brill-FEL Series Editors. They will perform the initial selection of papers, liaise with the relevant authors and under the supervision of the Series Editors, and in agreement with the authors, the papers will undergo a reviewing process for publication by the Series Editorial Board. The authors will be informed of any required changes and corrections in both substance and style, according to a format provided by the publisher. This process may take several months.

The Yearbook will be initially published as a volume in hard copy for sale internationally (by De Gruyter Brill), with a significant price rebate for FEL members. After a period of just over two years, the entire volume will be made available without charge on online open access. The conference book, consisting of watermarked extended abstracts, is designed to allow FEL members advance access to the conference papers, including – albeit in a slightly different format - those which will be published in the Yearbook, to continue support for research and scholarship on Endangered Languages and to promote the FEL mission.

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Nukhbah Taj Lengah	Craig Volker
Imanol Larrea-Mendizabal	Muhammad Zaman
Ibon Manterola	

FEL XXIX 2025 CONFERENCE

Program / Egitaraua

22nd of October (Wednesday) / Urriak 22 (asteazkena)	
8:30-9:00	Registration / Izen-ematea
9:00-9:30	Opening session / Hasiera Saioa Institutional representatives / Erakundeetako ordezkariak <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Igone Zabala, EHU Vice-Rector of Euskera and Linguistic Policy / EHUKo Euskara eta Hizkuntza Politikarako Errektoreordea • Estibaliz Saez de Camara, president of Red Española de Desarrollo Sostenible (REDS) / Red Española de Desarrollo Sostenible-ko (REDS) presidentea Chairs of the conference / Kongresuko Presidentzia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salem Mezhoud, Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) Honorary Secretary / Arriskuan Dauden Hizkuntzen Fundazioko ohorezko idazkaria • Ines Garcia-Azkoaga, EHU UNESCO Chair of World Language Heritage coordinator / EHUKo Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrako arduraduna
9:30-11:20	Session 1: Perspectives on SDG and Institutional Efforts to Promote Linguistic and Cultural Diversity / 1. saioa: GJHri Buruzko Ikuspegiak eta Hizkuntza-aniztasuna eta Kultura-aniztasuna Sustatzeko Erakundeen Ahaleginak <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juan Telleria. <i>Is Adding Another SDG the Solution? The Essentialist Foundations of the 2030 Agenda</i> (19) • Gulay Akin. <i>Sociolinguistic Vitality and Sustainable Development: Insights from the Homshetsma Language in Turkey</i> (64) • Aurelie Joubert. <i>Reconnecting with Language and Undoing Trauma: Breton and Occitan Acquisition as Healing Practices</i> (91) • Mikel Mendizabal & Miguel Angel Elkoroberezibar & Itziar Idiazabal & Ines Garcia-Azkoaga. <i>Looking for the Missing Link: Creation of Goal 18 to Promote Linguistic and Cultural Diversity / Galdutako Katebegiaren Bila: Hizkuntza eta Kultura-aniztasuna Sustatzeko 18. Helburuaren Sorrera</i> (85) • Parviz Fekrazad & Hamideh Poshtvan. <i>Gile Ghesseh: A Community-Driven Revitalization Effort in Gilan Province, Iran</i> (online) (79)
11:20-11:50	Coffee break / Kaferako atsedena
11:50-13:40	Session 2: Grassroot Activism, Global Language Revitalisation Efforts and Sustainable Development / 2. saioa: Herri Aktibismoa, Mundu Mailako Hizkuntza Biziberritzeko Ahaleginak eta Garapen Iraunkorra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fakhruddin Akhunzada. <i>The Role of Languages Revitalization in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: A Case Study from Northern Pakistan</i> (online) (6) • June Telletxea-Franco & Ainhoa Pardina-Arenaza & Albert Badosa Roldós & Oskar García de Bikuña. <i>HIGA: Youth Activism at the Intersection of Minority Language Revitalisation and Sustainable Development / HIGA: Hizkuntza Gutxituen Biziberritzea eta Garapen Jasangarria Uztartzen Dituen Gazte Aktibismoa</i> (14) • Alba Milà-Garcia & Anna Tudela Isanta. <i>Language Activism for Catalan: Analysis of Two Twitter/X Campaigns to Promote the Use of a Minority Language</i> (online) (30) • Marilena Karyolemou. <i>Returning to Kormakitis, Returning to Sanna?</i> (online) (49) • Ines Garcia-Azkoaga & Maria Montroy. <i>Minoritised Language as an Element of SDG Empowerment: An Experience with Săotomenese / Hizkuntza Gutxitua, GJHak Indartzeko Elementu gisa: Esperientzia bat Săotomens-arekin</i> (58)

13:40-14:10	Book presentation / Liburuaren aurkezpena <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joan Ferrarons. <i>El Dret a la Llengua. Per una Nova Declaraió dels Drets Lingüístics amb Perspectiva de Futur</i>
14:10-15:30	Lunch break / Bazkarirako atsedena
15:30-16:30	Invited talk: <i>Basque in the New Era of Diversity</i> / Hitzaldi gonbidatua: <i>Euskara Aniztasunaren Aro Berrian</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aitor Aldasoro. Vice-Minister for Language Policy of the Basque Government / Eusko Jaurlaritzako Hizkuntza Politikarako Sailburuordea Asier Aranbarri. Director of Social Transition and Agenda 2030 of the Basque Government / Eusko Jaurlaritzako Berrikuntza Sozialaren eta 2030 Agendaren zuzendaria
16:30-18:20	Session 3: <i>The Intersection of Cultural Expressions, Language Use and Sustainable Development</i> / 3. saioa: <i>Kultur Adierazpenen, Hizkuntzaren Erabileraren eta Garapen Iraunkorraren Elkargunea</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lluís Català-Oltra & Rodolfo Martínez-Gras. <i>Language Use in Sustainability Communication by Universities in the Spanish State on Facebook: A Descriptive Approach through Content Analysis</i> (online) (33) Bridget Moran-Nae. <i>Creating a Sustainable Revitalization Strategy for Livonian: What Can We Learn from Musical Performers?</i> (43) Danae Perez & Eeva Sippola & Jillian Melchor <i>Sustainable Language Documentation as a Key Enabler for Researchers and Policymakers: How to Ensure Diversity of Voices</i> (38) Mujahid Torwali & Jakelin Troy. <i>The Missing Goal: Indigenist Linguistics and the Sustainable Future of Torwali Language and Cultural Identity</i> (73)
19:00-20:30	Guided city tour / Hiriko bisita gidatua (See social program / Ikus egitarau soziala)

23rd of October (Thursday) / Urriak 26 (osteguna)	
9:00-10:00	<p>Plenary talk: <i>Vitality and Sustainability: The Case of Arctic Indigenous Languages</i> / Hitzaldi plenarioa: <i>Bizitasuna eta Jasangarritasuna: Artikoko Hizkuntza Indigenen Kasua</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lenore Grenoble. The University of Chicago / Chicagoko Unibertsitatea
10:00-11:50	<p>Session 4: <i>The Value of Sociolinguistic Capital for Environmental Sustainability</i> / 4. saioa: <i>Kapital Soziolinguistikoaren Balioa Ingurumenaren Iraunkortasunerako</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justyna Olko & Bartłomiej Chromik. <i>Local Sustainability through a Decolonial and Relational Lens. Multilingual Ecologies in the Sierra Norte Region in Mexico</i> (93) • Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar & Ibon Manterola & Belen Uranga. <i>Minority Language Revitalisation as a Vector of Sustainable Community Development: Preliminary Insights from the Basque Country</i> / <i>Hizkuntza Gutxituen Kiziberritza komunitatearen Garapen Iraunkorraren Bektore gisa: Lehen Hurbilpen bat Euskal Herriak</i> (51) • Gordon Cameron. <i>Prior Ideological Confusion: Not Relating Gaelic to Sustainable Development Goals in Scotland, and Strategies for Changing Course</i> (59) • Yamina El Kirat El Allame & Khadija Ouhmidi. <i>Linguistic Inclusion and Water Scarcity Awareness: The Role of the Amazigh Language in Advancing Sustainable Development in Morocco</i> (online) (75) • Gregory Haimovich. <i>Policy and Planning for Indigenous Languages in Public Health: Identifying Challenges Based on the Experience of a Community-Based Project in Mexico</i> (89)
11:50-12:20	Coffee break / Kaferako atsedena
12:20-13:50	<p>Session 5: <i>Multilingualism, Language Ideologies and Sustainable Development Policies</i> / 5. saioa: <i>Eleaniztasuna, Hizkuntza Ideologiak eta Garapen Jasangarriko Politikak</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gillphine Onkware & Jared Menecha. <i>Language, Identity, and Sustainability: Psychological and Developmental Imperatives in the Revitalization of EkeGusii</i> (online) (40) • Ioana Aminian Jazi. <i>The Role of Multilingualism in Language Shift and Revitalization: The Judeo-Spanish Case</i> (41) • Nathan Wendte. <i>Identifying Language and Community in Contexts of Reclamation</i> (online) (44) • Mary Jane Norris & Robin Adcock. <i>Measuring the Vitality of Indigenous Languages Using Canadian Census Data</i> (80)
13:50-15:15	Lunch break / Bazkarirako atsedena
15:15-16:15	<p>Round table: <i>Fostering Linguistic Capital and Sustainability in order to Reverse the Diversity Crisis and to Activate Societal Benefits in Europe</i> / Mahai-ingurua: <i>Hizkuntza-kapitala eta Iraunkortasuna Sustatzea, Aniztasunaren Krisia Iraultzeko eta European Gizarte-onurak Aktibatzeke</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justyna Olko, Gördan Camshron, Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones & Ibon Manterola (Fosterlang-Horizon project)
16:15-16:45	<p>FEL and Unesco Chair presentations / FELen eta MHOUKren aurkezpena</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salem Mezhoud, Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) Honorary Secretary / Arriskuan Dauden Hizkuntzen Fundazioko ohorezko idazkaria • Ines Garcia-Azkoaga, EHU UNESCO Chair of World Language Heritage coordinator / EHUKo Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrako arduraduna
16:45-18:15	<p>Session 6: <i>Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education as a Parth for Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development</i> / 6. saioa: <i>Kalitatezko Hezkuntza</i></p>

	<p><i>Inklusiboa eta Ekitatiboa, Gizarte-kohesiorako eta Garapen Iraunkorrerako Alderdi gisa.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amaia Munarriz-Ibarrola et al. <i>Setting a Research Agenda for Aphasia in Minority Languages</i> (81) • Uwuma Ugwu. <i>Language Hegemony and the Marginalization of Indigenous vVoices: Barriers to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Ekpeye Communities</i> (67) • Hayat Muhammad & Asmat Ullah. <i>Dameli Integrating Dameli Language Revitalization into the Global Sustainability Discourse: A Case for SDG 18</i> (online-on site to be confirmed) (47) • Asun Martinez & Veronica Azpillaga-Larrea. <i>Basque as an Additional Language Among Adult Immigrants in the Basque Country</i> (69)
20:00-23:00	Conference dinner

24th of October (Friday) / Urriak 24 (ostirala)	
9:00-10:00	<p>Plenary talk: <i>Living Languages... Seeds of Resilience and Sustainability</i> / Hitzaldi plenarioa: <i>Hizkuntza Biziak... Erresilientziaren eta Jasangarritasunaren Haziak</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marleen Haboud. Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador / Ekuadorreko Unibertsitate Katoliko Pontifikala
10:00-11:50	<p>Session 7: <i>Language Policies and Sustainable Multilingual Education</i> / 7. saioa: <i>Hizkuntza Politikak eta Hezkuntza Elebidun Jasangarria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvinder Negi. <i>Revitalizing Endangered Languages through NEP2020: a Pragmatic Framework for Sustainable Development in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh</i> (online) (23) • Eneritz Garro-Larrañaga & Ainara Imaz-Agirre & Roberto Arias-Hermoso & Amaia Lersundi. <i>Academic Language and Disciplinary Literacies: Key for Sustainable Multilingual Education in a Minority Language Context</i> (42) • Marcela Huilcán & Maria Mazzoli & Fiw-Fiwi Ñi Dungun. <i>Supporting Mapudungun Learners: Keys for Sustainable Language Revitalisation</i> (56) • Ines Garcia-Azkoaga & Leire Diaz de Gereñu & Itziar Idiazabal. <i>Sustainable Development from the Perspective of Education and Linguistic Diversity / Garapen Iraunkorra Hezkuntzaren eta Hizkuntza-aniztasunaren Ikuspegitik</i> (57)
11:50-12:20	Coffee break / Kaferako atsedena
12:20-13:50	<p>Session 8: <i>Fostering Cultural Preservation, Linguistic Rights and Social Justice for Sustainable Development</i> / 8. saioa: <i>Garapen Iraunkorrerako Kulturaren Kontserbazioa, Hizkuntza Eskubideak eta Gizarte Justizia Sustatzea</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shahid-ur-Rehman. <i>Revitalizing Gojri Language and Bakarwal Culture: A Community-Based Journey Toward Sustainable Development</i> (online-on site to be confirmed) (12) • Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar & Ibon Manterola & Ines Garcia-Azkoaga. <i>Articulating Linguistic Revitalization and Sustainability: A Study on the Basque Government's Policies</i> (60) • Yassine Boussagui & Yamina El Kirat El Allame. <i>Toward SDG 18: Revitalizing Amazigh for Equitable and Sustainable Development in Morocco</i> (61) • Esther Gabiola. <i>A Tea in the Tundra-Nipishapui Nete Mushuat</i>, by Joséphine Bacon, and <i>Ogella Line</i>, by Itxaro Borda: <i>A Comparative Example of how Literature in Endangered Languages Promotes Sustainable Development</i> (90)
13:50-15:15	Lunch break / Bazkarirako atsedena
15:15-16:15	<p>Round table: <i>Basque Grassroots Projects on Basque Language Revitalization and Sustainability</i> / Mahai-ingurua: <i>Euskararen Biziberritzea eta Iraunkortasunari Buruzko Euskal Proiektuak</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Izar Mendiguren, Xabier Harluxet, Gorka Julio & Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar
16:15-17:45	<p>Session 9: <i>Application of Technological and Traditional Knowledge in Language Revitalisation</i> / 9. saioa: <i>Ezagutza Teknologiko eta Tradizionalaren Aplikazioa Hizkuntzaren Biziberritzean</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arul Dayanand & Kavitha Nair & Uma Devi & Parthasarathy. <i>Indigenous Language Revitalisation through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) – A Case Study on Irula and SDG 4</i> (online) (36) • Bornini Lahiri. <i>Sustainable Development through Traditional Knowledge System</i> (55) • Karolin Obert & Philipp Striedl. <i>From Local Landscape Lexicons to Global Goals: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge to Successfully Implement SDG15</i> (71)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karmele Perez & Amelia Barquín & Ane Urizar. <i>Basque and Interculturality: The Challenge of Promoting a Minoritised Language in Multicultural Context / Euskara eta Kulturartekotasuna. Hizkuntza Gutxitu baten Erabilera Sustatzeko Erronka Testuinguru Kulturantz batean</i> (46)
17:45-18:00	Closing session / Itxiera saioa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salem Mezhoud, Foundation for Endangered Languages, Honorary Secretary / Foundation for Endangered Languages-eko ohorezko idazkaria Ines Garcia-Azkoaga, EHU UNESCO Chair of World Language Heritage coordinator / EHUKo Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrako arduraduna

25th of October (Saturday) / Urriak 25 (larunbata)

9:00-20:00	Cultural visit / Bisita kulturala (See social program / Ikus egitarau soziala) Albaola, maritime culture factory and Donostia / Albaola, itsas kultur faktoria eta Donostia
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Invited Talks: Brief Presentation of Invited Speakers and Abstracts

AITOR ALDASORO ITURBE



Vice-Minister for Language Policy
Basque Government

An electronic engineer by profession, he has accumulated experience working in various private sector companies. His political career includes serving as Mayor of Beasain City Council from 2015 to 2020, and as a Councillor and Head of Language Policy in the same municipality since 2003. He was a Member of the Basque Parliament from September 2020 to August 2021.

Between 2021 and 2023, he held the position of Adviser within the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability, and the Environment of the Basque Government. Subsequently, he served as Vice-Minister for the Environment and Sustainability from July 2023 to August 2024. Since September 2024, he has been serving as the Vice-Minister for Language Policy.

ASIER ARANBARRI URZELAI



Director of Social Innovation and
Agenda 2030
Presidency
Basque Government

A lawyer by profession, he served as Mayor of Azkoitia and spokesperson for the EAJ-PNV in the Gipuzkoa General Assemblies from 2003 to 2011, during a notably active period in his political career. Following this, he pursued advanced studies, completing a Master's degree in Political Integration and Economic Union in the European Union at the University of the Basque Country (EHU-UPV), and subsequently began a PhD in Law.

He currently holds the position of Director of Social Innovation and Agenda 2030 within the Presidency of the Basque Government, under the General Secretariat of Communication and Social Innovation. In addition, he serves as a Professor of International Relations at the University of Deusto, where he teaches the course *Government, Business and Diplomacy*.

Guest talk:

Basque in the new era of diversity

Abstract

For culture is not only the heritage of the past, but the living substrate of those of us who are. Languages do not only communicate, but they also hold rights, they transmit knowledge, they build community, and they allow each person to find their place in the world. In this communication, the presenters will use the language and cultural diversity advocated by the 18th Sustainable Development Goal as a starting point.

On the one hand, the importance of revitalizing a minority language like Basque will be emphasized. Such a process requires a great effort and the involvement of many stakeholders. As our society is increasingly diverse, we can find a wide variety of cultural and linguistic expressions around us, and faced this great change, it is essential to look to the future in terms of sustainability.

For this reason, in the recently accepted by the Basque Government "The Age. In the Plan for the Revitalization and Empowerment of the Basque Country" plan, a special effort has been made to align the objectives of the revitalization of the Basque Country with the sustainable development of the 2030 Agenda, which will be reported by Mr Aldasoro.

On the other hand, the "United Voices" initiative is also called upon to bring diverse voices and rhythms; it is much more than a project related to Goal 18, it aims to make the proposal an international contribution and a fundamental player in the transformation of society. Mr. Aranbarri will explain what this project consists of.

AITOR ALDASORO ITURBE



Hizkuntza Politikako Sailburuordea
Eusko Jaurlaritza

Lanbidez ingeniari elektronikoa, arlo pribatuko hainbat enpresatan egin du lan. Ibilbide politikoari dagokioez, hainbat ardura izan ditu, besteak beste, Beasaingo Udaleko alkatea 2015etik 2020ra eta herri bereko zinegotzia eta hizkuntza politikako arduraduna izan da 2003tik. Eusko Legebiltzarkide izan da 2020 irailetik 2021 abuztura bitartean. 2021-2023 bitartean, Eusko Jaurlaritzako Garapen Ekonomiko, Jasangarritasun eta Ingurumen Saileko aholkulari izan da. Ondoren, Ingurumen eta Jasangarritasuneko sailburuordea izan da 2023ko uztailetik 2024ko abuztura arte. 2024ko irailetik, Hizkuntza Politikako sailburuorde da.

ASIER ARANBARRI URZELAI



Berrikuntza Sozialeko eta 2030
Agendako zuzendaria
Lehendakaritza
Eusko Jaurlaritza

Lanbidez legelaria, Azkoitiko alkate eta Gipuzkoako Batzar Nagusietako EAJ-PNVren bozeramaile izan da 2003tik 2011ra, bere ibilbide politikoa bereziki aktiboa izan zen aldian. Horri jarraiki, goi-mailako ikasketekin jarraitu zuen eta Europar Batasunean Integrazio Politikoari eta Batasun Ekonomikoari buruzko Masterra burutu zuen Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatean (EHU), eta zuzenbideko doktoretzari ekin zion. Gaur egun, Berrikuntza Sozialeko eta 2030 Agendako zuzendaria da Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Lehendakaritzan, Komunikazio eta Berrikuntza Sozialeko Idazkaritza Nagusian. Gainera, eta

Nazioarteko Harremanetako irakaslea Deustuko *Unibertsitatean, Gobernua, Enpresa eta Diplomazia* irakasgaia ematen.

Hitzaldi gonbidatua:

Euskara aniztasunaren aro berrian

Laburpena

Kultura ez da iraganaren ondarea, baizik eta garenon substratu bizia. Hizkuntzek ez dute soilik komunikatzen, eskubideei eusten diete, ezagutza transmititzen dute, komunitatea eraikitzen dute eta pertsona bakoitzak munduan bere lekua aurkitzea ahalbidetzen dute. Aurkezpen honetan hizlariak Garapen Jasangarrirako 18. Helburuak aldarrikatzen duen hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna izango dute oinarritzko abiapuntu.

Alde batetik, euskara moduko hizkuntza gutxitu baten biziberritzearen garrantzia azpimarratuko da. Horrelako prozesu batek ahalegin handia eta eragile askoren parte hartzea eskatzen du. Gure gizartea gero eta anitzagoa izanik gure inguruan askotariko adierazpide kulturak eta linguistikoak aurki ditzakegu, eta aldaketa handi horren aurrean ezinbestekoa da etorkizunari begira jartzea iraunkortasun klabea.

Hori dela eta, Eusko Jaurlaritzak berriki onartutako “Aroa. Euskara Euskara indarberritzeko eta euskaldunok ahalduntzeko marko estrategikoa” deritzon planean euskararen biziberritzearen eta 2030 Agendaren garapen iraunkorraren helburuak lotzeko ahalegin berezia egin da eta horren berri emango du Aldasoro jaunak.

Bestalde, askotariko ahotsak eta erritmoak batzeko deia ere egin nahi da “Ahots Batuak” ekimenarekin; 18. helburuarekin lotuta dagoen proiektu bat baino askoz gehiago da, proposamena nazioarteko ekarpen bihurtu eta gizartea eraldatzeko funtsezko eragile izan nahi du. Proiektu hau zertan datzan azalduko du Aranbarri jaunak.

LENORE A. GRENOBLE



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Dr. Lenore A. Grenoble specializes in the study of language contact and shift in Indigenous settings, with particular attention to the Arctic. Her work is empirically driven, and her current interests focus on language usage in multilingual settings, with particular attention to Arctic Indigenous language communities. She is presently involved in several collaborative projects that investigate the linguistic, social and cognitive causes and outcomes of contact and shift, coupled with questions about the impact of urbanization and climate change, on Arctic Indigenous language vitality. Alongside these projects, she is involved in research into language revitalization and how to create long-term sustainable language practices. Her current field and documentation work is centered in the Russian Far North and Arctic, and in Greenland. Grenoble is a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship and a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). In 2018 she held the Fulbright Arctic Distinguished Chair, Norway. She has received grants from the NSF Program in Linguistics and the Program in Documenting Endangered Languages.

Plenary talk:

Vitality and Sustainability: The Case of Arctic Indigenous Languages

Abstract

Arctic Indigenous communities are currently experiencing unprecedented changes in their daily lives due to extensive demographic, social and environmental changes. In this talk I invoke ethnoscaples and mediascapes as useful theoretical frames to understand current changes coming from an influx of both short-term visitors and long-term immigrants to the Arctic, and the massive changes in the use of social media and online networks as entry paths for new cultural values and new linguistic patterns. Climate change cuts across the Arctic, amplifying other changes. Warming is proceeding faster in the Arctic than elsewhere in the world, with temperatures rising as much as three times greater. Given that these changes are occurring in the context of Indigenous communities who see culture, language and the natural world as inextricably connected and related, I posit a path forward that makes use of Indigenous knowledge systems couple with western science to offset these massive changes and create a sustainable future.

The UN has identified 17 strategic goals for sustainable development. These goals were advanced as a road map for how to improve the lives and well-being of everyone. To that end, Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) would seem to be central, but its actual realization is dependent upon attaining multiple other goals that have to do with long-term sustainable practices in society. These include fostering sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Goal 8), making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11), ensuring sustainable consumption and

production patterns (Goal 12), conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources (Goal 14), protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (Goal 15), promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (Goal 16), and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Goal 17). The essence of this set of goals lies in the force of Goal 13, taking urgent action to combat climate change, and this goal is essential to the sustainability of the Arctic.

A large number of these goals align closely with Indigenous values and priorities in the Arctic and, as I argue in this talk, working with them in a holistic manner that combines Indigenous practices and knowledge systems with Western science is key to establishing language and cultural vitality and sustainability. In the Arctic view, language and culture are an integral part of an overall ecology of sustainability—people cannot be separated from the environment they live in. Language is part of the land, land is part of language: Arctic Indigenous ontologies emphasize the relational nature of being, language and the environment, and this approach goes beyond languages as tools for communicating about the environment to a belief system that sees everything as interconnected. Coming from this ontological view that positions relations and connections as primary, building vitality and sustainability in one part of the system necessarily requires engaging with *all* parts. Language is a core element of Arctic Indigenous systems; language vitality is thus central to achieving sustainability of any kind.

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Lenore A. Grenoble Chicagoko Unibertsitateko Hizkuntzalaritza Saileko "John Matthews Manly Distinguished Service" da. Bere ikerketak hizkuntzen ukipena eta aldaketa, bizindarra eta iraunkortasuna, dokumentazioa eta biziberritzea ditu ardatz, arreta berezia jarrita Artikoko hizkuntza indigenen komunitateetan. Bere lehen landa-lana Ipar Ekialdeko Errusian, Siberian eta Groenlandian egin du. Grenoble gaur egun faktore linguistikoak, soziolinguistikoak eta psikolinguistikoak biltzen dituen ikerketan ari da, ukipenak eragindako aldaketa morfosintaktikoan eta aldaketan, eta horrekin batera, Artikoko komunitate indigenen klima-aldaketa, urbanizazioa, hizkuntza-bizitasuna eta ongizatea aztertzen ari da.

Hitzaaldi gonbidatua:

Bizindarra eta Jasangarritasuna: Artikoko hizkuntza indigenen kasua

Gaur egun, komunitate indigena artikoei aurrekaririk gabeko aldaketak bizi dituzte beren eguneroko bizitzan, demografia-, gizarte- eta ingurumen-aldaketa handiak direla eta. Hitzaaldi honetan, paisaia etnikoak eta paisaia mediatikoak marko teoriko erabilgarri gisa aipatzen ditut, Artikora datozen epe laburreko bisitarien zein epe luzeko etorkinen etorreratik datozen egungo aldaketak ulertzeko, eta sare sozialen eta online sareen erabileraren aldaketa handiak balio kultural berrien eta eredu linguistiko berrien sarrera gisa. Aldaketa klimatikoa Artikokoan zehar, beste aldaketa batzuk aplikatuz. Beroaldia bizkorrago doa Artikokoan munduko beste lekuetan baino, eta tenperaturak hiru aldiz handiagoak dira. Aldaketa horiek kultura, hizkuntza eta mundu naturala lotura eta harreman banaezin gisa ikusten dituzten komunitate indigenen testuinguruan gertatzen ari direnez, aurrera egiteko bide bat planteatzen dut, ezagutza-sistema indigenak mendebaldeko zientziarekin parekatzen dituen, aldaketa masibo horiek konpentsatzeko eta etorkizun iraunkor bat sortzeko.

Nazio Batuek 17 helburu estrategiko proposatu dituzte garapen jasangarriko. Helburu horiek guztien bizitza eta ongizatea hobetzeko ibilbide-orri gisa aurreratu ziren. Horretarako, 3. Helburua (Bizitza osasungarriak bermatzea eta adin guztietan pertsona guztien ongizatea sustatzea) funtsezkoa dela dirudi, baina helburu hori benetan gauzatzea epe luzeko praktika jasangarriekin zerikusia duten beste hainbat helburu lortzearen mende dago. Besteak beste, honakoak barnebiltzen dituzte: hazkunde ekonomiko iraunkorra, inklusiboa eta jasangarria bultzatzea (8. Helburua), hiriak eta giza kokalekuak inklusiboak, seguruak, erresilienteak eta jasangarriak izatea (11. Helburua), kontsumo eta ekoizpen eredu jasangarriak bermatzea (12. Helburua), ozeanoak, itsasoak eta itsas baliabideak kontserbatzea eta modu jasangarrian erabiltzea (14. Helburua) lurreko ekosistemen erabilera jasangarria babestea, berreskuratzea eta sustatzea (15. helburua), garapen jasangarriko gizarte baketsuak eta inklusiboak sustatzea (16. Helburua) eta garapen jasangarriko mundu-aliantza gauzatzeko eta dinamizatzeko bitartekoak indartzea (17. Helburua).

Helburu multzo horren funtsa 13. Helburuaren indarrean datza, klima aldaketari aurre egiteko premiazko neurriak hartzean, eta helburu hori funtsezkoa da Artikoren iraunkortasunerako. Helburu horietako askok bat egiten dute Artikoko indigenen balio eta lehentasunekin, eta, hitzaldi honetan argudiatzen dudana bezala, haiekin modu holistikoan lan egitea, indigenen praktikak eta ezagutza-sistemak Mendebaldeko zientziarekin bateratuz, funtsezkoa da hizkuntzaren eta kulturaren bizindarra eta iraunkortasuna finkatzeko.

Hizkuntza lurraren zati bat da, lurra hizkuntzaren zati bat da: Artikoko indigenen ontlogiek azpimarratzen dute izakiaren, hizkuntzaren eta ingurumenaren harreman-izaera, eta hurbilketa hori hizkuntzetatik haratago doa, inguruari buruz komunikatzeko tresna gisa, dena elkarri lotuta ikusten duen sinesmen-sistema baten aurrean. Ikuspegi ontologiko honetatik etorruta, zeinak harremanak eta loturak lehen mailakotzat hartzen dituen, bizitasuna eta iraunkortasuna sistemaren zati batean eraikitzeak nahitaez eskatzen du parte guztiekin inplikatzeko. Hizkuntza Artikoko sistema indigenen funtsezko elementua da; beraz, hizkuntzaren bizindarra funtsezkoa da edozein motatako iraunkortasuna lortzeko.

MARLEEN HABOUD BUMACHAR



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Dr. Marleen Haboud-Bumachar is a sociolinguist and anthropologist. Since 1976, she has worked with Indigenous languages, contact linguistics, and their effects in postcolonial contexts; as well as on bilingual education and literacy projects and research methodologies. In 2007, she founded the interdisciplinary research program *Oralidad Modernidad*. Based on collaborative methodologies grounded in strong ethical principles, she works on processes of active documentation, revitalization, and strengthening of Indigenous languages in Ecuador. From 2010 to 2017, she directed the National Georeferenced Sociolinguistic Survey of Ecuador's 12 Indigenous languages, involving 6,300 families, 777 communities, and teams of Indigenous co-researchers. This pioneering study has been key to assessing language vitality, guiding educational programs, reconnecting with local arts and oral traditions, and the proposal of appropriate public policies. Since 2017, she has worked with rural and peri-urban Andean communities on the recovery of ancestral ethnobotanical knowledge, health practices, and integral sustainability. More recently, as a member of the International Research Networks (IRNs)–WERA, she has resumed educational initiatives in multilingual Indigenous contexts. She has received community-based, institutional, national, and international recognitions, including the Georg Forster Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. She is the author of 85 publications in several languages.

Plenary talk:

Living languages ... Seeds of resilience and sustainability

Abstract

Language is not only a tool of communication, but a reservoir of memories, knowledge, and practices that sustain community life and a harmonious relationship with nature. In this sense, the vitality of any one language, particularly ancestral and Indigenous ones, is tightly linked to cultural, social, and environmental sustainability. Every spoken word is a seed that keeps alive strategies to nurture the environment, healing both spirit and body, while strengthening collective well-being. When a language is silenced, entire worlds of knowledge are extinguished, reducing the possibilities to build a sustainable future.

Drawing on action-research experiences developed in collaboration with community-based Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Highlands, I share situated processes of active documentation and revitalization in which narratives turn into a solid strategy to rediscover ancestral knowledge about the use

of medicinal plants and health, while reinforcing the speakers' languages, culture and identities. Each testimony demonstrates that revitalizing a language does not merely mean preserving the past; but sowing seeds of resilience, restoration, empowerment and sustainability for future generations.

This conference invites us to rethink the profound ways in which linguistic vitality and cultural, social, environmental, and ecological sustainability intertwine, creating a dialogue with current approaches to integral health (One Health). While these processes align with the global framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, they also underscore the central role of language in achieving sustainability, and the urgent need of it to be recognized as a goal in its own right.

MARLEEN HABOUD BUMACHAR



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Marleen Haboud-Bumachar soziolinguista eta antropologoa da. 1976tik, hizkuntza indigenekin, ukipenean dauden hizkuntzekin eta haiek testuinguru postkolonialetan duten eraginaren inguruan lan egin du; baita elebitasunaren inguruan, hezkuntza proiektuetan eta ikerkuntzarako metodologietan ere. 2007an, Oralidad Modernidad izeneko diziplinarteko ikerketa programa sortu zuen. Printzipio etiko sendoetan oinarritutako lankidetzatza-metodologietan oinarrituta, Ekuadorren hizkuntza indigenak dokumentatzeko, biziberritzeko eta indartzeko prozesu aktiboetan lan egiten du. 2010tik 2017ra, Ekuadorreko 12 Hizkuntza Indigenen Georreferentziatutako Inkesta Soziolinguistiko Nazionala zuzendu zuen, zeinak 6,300 familia, 777 komunitate eta ikerlari indigena barnebiltzen dituen. Ikerketa aitzindari hori giltzarria izan da hizkuntzaren bizitasuna baloratzeko, hezkuntza-programak bideratzeko, tokiko arteekin eta ahozko tradizioekin berriro konektatzeko eta politika publiko egokiak proposatzeko. 2017az geroztik Andeetako landaguneko eta hiriguneko komunitateekin lan egin du antzinako ezagutza etnobotanikoaren berreskurapenean, osasun praktikan eta jasangarritasun integrarean. Berrikiago, International Research Networks (IRNs)-WERAKo kide izanik, testuinguru indigena eta elebidunetako hezkuntza ekimenak berrartu ditu.

Aintzatespen komunitarioak, instituzionalak, nazionalak eta nazioartekoak jaso ditu, Alexander von Humboldt Fundazioaren Georg Forster Ikerketa Saria barne. 85 argitalpen egin ditu hainbat hizkuntzatan.

Hitzaldi plenarioa:

Hizkuntza biziak... Erresilientziaren eta iraunkortasunaren haziak

Laburpena

Hizkuntza ez da soilik komunikazio-tresna bat, baizik eta komunitatearen bizitzari eta naturarekiko harreman harmoniatsuari eusten dioten oroitzapenen, ezagutzen eta praktiken gordailu bat. Zentzu horretan, edozein hizkuntzaren bizitasuna, bereziki antzinakoena eta indigenena, oso lotuta dago iraunkortasun kultural eta sozialarekin, zein ingurumenarekin. Hitz egindako hitz bakoitza hazi bat da, ingurumena elikatzekeko estrategiak bizirik mantentzen dituen, espiritua zein gorputza sendatuz, eta aldi berean, ongizate kolektiboa indartuz. Hizkuntza bat isiltzen denean, ezagutzaren mundu osoak iraungitzen dira, etorkizun iraunkorra eraikitzekeko aukerak murriztuz.

Ekuadorko Goi Lurraldeetako komunitate indigenekin lankidetzan garatutako ekintza- eta ikerketa-esperientzietatik abiatuta, dokumentazio aktiboko eta biziberritzeko prozesuak partekatzen ditut, non narrazioak estrategia sendo bihurtzen diren sendabelarren erabilerari eta osasunari buruzko antzinako

ezagutzak berraurkitzeko, hiltunen hizkuntzak, kultura eta identitateak indartzearekin batera. Testigantza bakoitzak erakusten du hizkuntza bat biziberritzeak ez dakarrela iragana kontserbatzea soilik, baizik eta etorkizuneko belaunaldientzako erresilientzia, zaharberitze, ahalduzte eta iraunkortasun haziak ereitea.

Hitzaldi honek hizkuntza-bizitasuna eta iraunkortasun kulturala, soziala, ingurumenekoa eta ekologikoa elkarrekin lotzen diren modu sakonak birplanteatzera gonbidatzen gaitu, osasun integralaren egungo planteamenduekin elkarriketa bat sortuz (One Health). Prozesu horiek bat datoz Garapen Jasangarriaren Helburuen esparru globalarekin, baina, aldi berean, hizkuntzak iraunkortasuna lortzeko duen zeregin nagusia azpimarratzen dute, baita helburu gisa aitortua izateko premia larria ere.

Introduction to the Conference

The Missing SDG: Endangered Languages and Sustainable Development

University of the Basque Country (EHU), Vitoria-Gasteiz, 22 to 25 October 2025

Ines Garcia-Azkoaga, Salem Mezhoud, Jone Goirigolzarri Garaizar

Introduction

For its 2025 edition, FEL reached out to various organisations and experts in the Basque Country engaged in the study and promotion of the Basque language, proposing that they host the annual conference. The proposal was warmly welcomed by the UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage at the University of the Basque Country (EHU), which recognised it as a timely opportunity to deepen one of its core areas of work: linguistic and cultural diversity, and the advocacy for the inclusion of a specific 18th Sustainable Development Goal dedicated to these issues within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

FEL and the UNESCO Chair agreed upon a topic which is still underexplored in linguistic research, the role and place of language in sustainable international development. This will be considered through the lens of UN action and its impact at the national, local, and community levels. Thereupon the theme and title of the conference were formulated as ‘The Missing SDG: Endangered Languages and Sustainable Development’.

The organisers

The Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) is an international organisation established in 1995 with the mission to support, document, protect, and promote endangered languages worldwide. Through its conferences, grants, and publications, FEL provides a global platform for communities, researchers, and institutions to share knowledge and advocate for linguistic diversity as both a human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development.

The UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage (UPV/EHU), based at the University of the Basque Country in Vitoria-Gasteiz, works at the intersection of academic research, public policy, and community engagement. Its mission is to promote the recognition of linguistic diversity as an essential component of humanity’s cultural heritage and a fundamental factor in building inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies.

Why the Basque Country?

The Basque Country (Euskal Herria) extends across both sides of the western Pyrenees. It is historically composed of seven provinces, today organised into three distinct administrative entities: the Basque Autonomous Community (comprising Araba, Bizkaia, and Gipuzkoa) and the Chartered Community of Navarre within the Spanish state, and the Northern Basque Country (Iparralde) in France. Despite this political division, the Basque Country maintains a shared cultural and linguistic heritage rooted in the Basque language, Euskara, and a long-standing sense of collective identity. The 2025 FEL Conference will be held in the Basque Autonomous Community, in its capital city, Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Euskara is one of the oldest languages in Europe and the only non-Indo-European language in the region. With approximately 750,000 speakers, it enjoys official status and active promotion in the Basque Autonomous Community and parts of Navarre, and it is also spoken and revitalised in the French Basque Country. Despite remarkable progress—particularly within the Basque Autonomous Community—Euskara remains a vulnerable and minoritised language.

The Basque Autonomous Community and the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz offer an exceptionally appropriate setting for this conference. The region enjoys broad political and administrative autonomy, with its own government and parliament, and it has long demonstrated a deep commitment to sustainability and human development in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Civil society organisations have been especially active in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Basque Government has integrated them into its strategic policy and planning, explicitly recognising cultural and linguistic diversity as an essential dimension of sustainability.

Vitoria-Gasteiz, was named European Green Capital in 2012, and it stands out for its environmental achievements, which include the celebrated Green Belt of surrounding parks and sustainable urban design. Its well-preserved Medieval Quarter, vibrant cultural life, and commitment to ecological innovation make it an ideal venue for a conference centred on sustainable development.

The University of the Basque Country (EHU), the main public university in the region, is a leader in bilingual and multilingual higher education. Through its EHU agenda 2030 initiative, the university aligns its strategy with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and has added an additional “Goal 17+1,” dedicated to linguistic and cultural diversity—the very focus of this conference. The UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage, based at EHU, plays a central role in promoting sustainability and language

Why is the entire world shouting about sustainability while remaining silent on language?

This cry of bewilderment which, within some societies, may be equated to a cry of despair, defines the concern which many people around the world, especially those belonging to minorities and indigenous communities, harbour in the face of the gross inaction and blatant contradictions of world governments and international organisations, with respect to language and its – unacknowledged - role in sustainable development.

This concept of sustainable development stems from the work of the 1987 Brundtland Commission and evolved into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which articulates a universal plan for peace and prosperity through 17 interconnected goals. This highly commendable initiative has, however, one significant flaw: it largely ignores language, the medium through which all human knowledge, identity, and culture are transmitted. To ignore the language dimension of development in the SDGs is, from the outset, to run the risk of compromising the entire agenda. This is particularly true for minority, indigenous and other marginalised communities which, by losing their linguistic diversity, end up being excluded from all the processes which affect their daily life (economic, legal, educational, health) and long-term survival as coherent societies. This would be a blatant contradiction of the very objectives of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

The Basque Country has pioneered the concept of an 18th SDG in addition to the existing 17. Often referred to as 17+1, it purports to place linguistic and cultural diversity squarely at the heart of sustainable development and its material output through the practical vision of Agenda 2030.

The aim of the 29th FEL Annual Conference is to contribute to the development and promotion of the “missing SDG” with a view to filling the conspicuous void in the international processes, in particular the UN mechanisms designed to achieve sustainable development for all.

Aims and scope of the conference

This conference explores the conceptual and practical links between the maintenance and revitalisation of endangered, minority, and indigenous languages and the principles of sustainable development in diverse social, economic, ecological, and linguistic contexts. It seeks to identify policy implications and concrete strategies for integrating language revitalisation within broader sustainability frameworks.

The conference especially welcomes contributions addressing themes such as:

- The conceptualisation of the links between language maintenance and revitalisation and sustainable development.
- The role of language as a vehicle for achieving—or failing to achieve—sustainable development goals.
- The interaction between dominant, national, and endangered languages in advancing or hindering sustainability agendas.
- Community-based and institutional initiatives that successfully integrate linguistic revitalisation and sustainable development.
- Case studies demonstrating how linguistic revitalisation contributes to social, political, or economic progress.
- Policy, advocacy, and awareness-raising programmes connecting linguistic diversity and sustainable development.
- Obstacles and challenges to recognising and promoting the relationship between language and sustainability.
- Conceptual and practical proposals for the design of a future SDG 18, including essential linguistic and cultural dimensions.

The ultimate goal of this conference is to contribute to the conception of a new 18th Sustainable Development Goal dedicated to language and culture, and to reflect on its implications for the post-2030 global agenda.

Contributions

The call for contributions was met with rare enthusiasm, contradicting the seeming complexity of the theme of the conference, and was answered by 157 authors from 136 countries who, together, submitted 92 abstracts. These were reviewed by 44 scholars who gave generously of their time and expertise, and 39 papers were retained to be part of the programme of the conference.

They reflect the diversity of perspectives, disciplines, and experiences brought together under a shared commitment to safeguarding the world's linguistic heritage and recognising its essential role in sustainable development. Throughout the sessions, the papers presented at the conference offer a window into current community initiatives, policy innovation, and research from across the globe, highlighting how language revitalisation and sustainability are intertwined.

In a rare combination of talents from scholars, practitioners, community leaders and activists, this collection of works will, it is hoped, inspire, and contribute to, further reflection, dialogue, and collaboration among all those for whom linguistic diversity is a daily necessity and who will ensure that it remains a living and vital part of our collective future.

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We would like to thank all the institutions which have contributed to the funding of this conference: Vice-Chancellor for Basque Language and Language Planning of the University of the Basque Country (EHU), vice-chancellor's office for research of the University of the Basque Country (EHU), Basque Government Department of Culture and Language Policy, Basque Government Direction of Social Innovation and Agenda 2030, ELEBILAB research team of the University of the Basque Country (EHU).

We would also like to thank all the collaborators of the UNESCO Chair in World Linguistic Heritage at the University of the Basque Country (EHU), as well as all our colleagues who have helped to make this conference a success.

This conference would not have taken place without the dedication of all supporters of FEL and its mission all over the world, and above all, without the members of the Programme Committee who painstakingly reviewed each abstract and ensured that high scientific and ethical standards were respected throughout.

Kongresuaren aurkezpena

GJH Galdua. Arriskuan dauden Hizkuntzak eta Garapen Jasangarria

Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (EHU), Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2025eko urriaren 22tik
25era

Ines Garcia-Azkoaga, Salem Mezhoud, Jone Goirigolzarri-Garaizar

Sarrera

2025eko edizioaren kongresua antolatzeko proposamena egiteko, Foundation of Endangered Languages (FEL) erakundea harremanetan jarri zen ikerketa eta sustapenean diharduten Euskal Herriko hainbat erakunde eta aditurekin. Proposamenak harrera beroa izan zuen Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko (EHU) Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedran, aukera egokia ikusi baitzuten bere lan-ardatz nagusietako batean sakontzeko; alegia, hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna eta, 2030 Agendaren Garapen Jasangarrirako Helburuen (GJH) artean, gai horri zuzendutako 18. helburu berezia gehitzeko ekimena.

FELek eta UNESCO Katedrak hizkuntzalaritzan oraindik gutxi landua izan den gai batean arreta jartzea erabaki zuten: hizkuntzak nazioarteko garapen jasangarrian duen eginkizun eta tokia. Gaia NBERen jardunaren eta haren eragin nazional, lokal zen komunitarioaren ikuspegitik lantzea erabaki zen. Hortaz, kongresuaren gaia eta izenburua honela formulatu zen: “*GJH galdua. Arriskuan dauden hizkuntzak eta Garapen Jasangarria*”.

Antolatzaileak

Foundation of Endangered Languages (FEL) 1995ean sortutako nazioarteko erakundea da, arriskuan dauden mundu osoko hizkuntzak babestu, dokumentatu eta sustatzea helburu duena. Bere kongresu, diru-laguntza eta argitalpenen bidez, FELek plataforma globala eskaintzen die komunitateei, ikertzaileei eta erakundeei ezagutza partekatzeko eta aniztasun linguistikoa giza eskubide eta garapen jasangarriaren oinarri gisa defendatzeko.

Gasteizen kokatutako **Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko (EHU) Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrak** ikerketa akademikoaren, politika publikoen eta komunitatearen konpromisoaren arteko elkargunean egiten du lan. Bere eginkizuna da hizkuntza gutxituen biziberritzea eta hizkuntza aniztasunaren aitortza sustatzea, gizateriaren kultura-ondarearen funtsezko osagai eta gizarte inklusibo, bidezko eta jasangarrien eraikuntzan oinarri nagusi moduan.

Zergatik Euskal Herria?

Euskal Herria mendebaldeko Pirinioen bi aldetara hedatzen da, eta zazpi probintzia historikok osatzen dute. Gaur egun, hiru entitate administratibo nagusitan banatuta dago: Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoa (Araba, Bizkaia eta Gipuzkoa) eta Nafarroako Foru Erkidegoa, biak Espainiar estatuan, eta Euskal Hirigune Elkargoa (Ipar Euskal Herria, edo Iparralde), Frantziar Estatuan kokatua. Banaketa politikoak gorabehera, Euskal Herriak kultura- eta hizkuntza-ondare bateratua mantentzen du, euskararen eta nortasun kolektibo sendoa errotua. 2025eko FELen Kongresua Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan egingo da, Vitoria-Gasteiz hiriburuan.

Euskara Europako hizkuntzarik zaharrenetako bat da eta eskualdeko hizkuntza ez-indoeuropar bakarra. 750.000 hitzun inguru ditu, eta estatus ofiziala du Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan eta Nafarroako zenbait eremutan, non erakunde publikoetatik sustapen aktiboa jasotzen duen. Halaber, Ipar Euskal Herrian ere hitz egiten da eta biziberritze-prozesua martxan da. Aurrerapen ikusgarriak izan arren —batez ere Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan—, euskarak hizkuntza mehatxatu eta gutxitu izaten jarraitzen du.

Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoak eta Gasteiz hiriak kongresurako kokaleku ezin aproposagoa eskaintzen dute. Erkidegoak autonomia politiko eta administratibo zabala du, bere gobernu eta parlamentu propioarekin, eta aspalditik erakutsi du konpromiso sendoa jasangarritasunarekin zein giza garapenarekin, Nazio Batuen 2030 Agendarekin bat etorriz. Eusko Jaurlaritzak bere politika estrategikoetan eta plangintzan integratu ditu kultura- eta hizkuntza-aniztasuna jasangarritasunaren dimentsio funtsezkotzat aitortuz; eta gizarte zibilak ere oso aktibo jardun du Garapen Jasangarrirako Helburuak (GJHak) sustatzen.

Gasteiz Europako Hiri Berdea izendatu zuten 2012an, eta ingurumen-arloko lorpenengatik nabarmendu izan da; besteak beste, Hiriaren Inguruko Eratzun Berdeagatik zein hiriaren diseinu jasangarriagatik. Halaber, ongi kontserbatutako Erdi Aroko alde zaharrak, bizitza kultural aberatsak eta berrikuntza ekologikoarekiko konpromisoak garapen jasangarriari buruzko kongresu baterako leku ezin egokiagoa bilakatzen du.

Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (EHU) eskualdeko unibertsitate publiko nagusia da, aitzindaria goi-mailako hezkuntza elebidun eta eleaniztunean. Bere EHU Agenda 2030 ekimenaren bidez, unibertsitateak bere estrategia NBEn Garapen Jasangarrirako Helburuekin lerokatu du, eta hizkuntza- eta kultura-aniztasunari eskainitako “17+1 Helburua” izeneko gehigarria erantsi dio —kongresuaren ardatz nagusia dena, hain zuzen ere—. EHUn kokatutako Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrak ere paper garrantzitsua jokatzen du jasangarritasun eta hizkuntza aniztasunaren sustapenean.

Zergatik dago jasangarritasuna mundu guztiaren ahotan, baina mutu gaude hizkuntzen egoerarekin?

Etsipen oihutzat har daitekeen aldarri horrek mundu osoko herritar ugariaren kezka adierazten du, bereziki komunitate gutxitu eta indigenena, munduko gobernu eta nazioarteko erakundeek hizkuntzekiko eta haien garapen jasangarriarekiko aitortza eta ekintza ezaren eta ageriko kontraesanen aurrean.

Garapen jasangarria kontzeptuak, 1987ko Brundtland Batzordearen lanean lehen aldiz aipatua eta 2030erako Garapen Jasangarrirako Agendan garatua, bakea eta ongizatea lortzeko plan unibertsala du xede, elkarlotuta dauden 17 helbururen bitartez. Ekimen txalogarri horrek baina, hutsune handi bat du: hizkuntza —giza ezagutza, identitatea eta kultura transmititzeko tresna nagusia— ia erabat baztertzen du. Garapenaren dimentsio linguistikoa GJHetan kontuan ez hartzeak Agenda osoaren koherentzia eta eraginkortasuna arriskuan jar dezake. Bereziki komunitate gutxitu, herri indigena eta bestelako komunitate baztertuen kasuan, zeinak beren aniztasun linguistikoa galduz gero, bizitzaren arlo guztietatik (ekonomia, legedia, hezkuntza, osasuna) eta gizarte-kohesioaren epe luzeko prozesuetatik baztertuak geratzen baitira. Horrek 2030 Agendaren eta Garapen Jasangarrirako Helburu nagusien aurkako kontraesan larria ekarriko luke.

Euskal Herria aitzindaria izan da 17 helburuei gehitutako 18. GJHa proposatzerakoan: 17+1 ekimen moduan izendatu izan dena. Ekimen horren helburua hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna garapen jasangarriaren erdigunean jartzea da, 2030 Agendaren ikuspegi praktikoaren baitan.

Foundation of Endangered Languages-en 29. kongresuaren helburua da “GJH Galdua” delakoaren garapenean eta sustapenean ekarpena egitea, prozesu nazional eta nazioartekoetan —bereziki NBEn mekanismoetan— existitzen den hutsune nabarmena betetzeko asmoz.

Konferentziaren helburuak eta esparrua

Konferentzia honek lotura kontzeptual eta praktikoa bilatzen du hizkuntza mehatxatuen, gutxituen eta indigenen mantentze eta biziberritze-prozesuen eta garapen jasangarriaren printzipioen artean, testuinguru sozial, ekonomiko, ekologiko eta linguistikoa anizteta. Helburua da politika publikoetan eta estrategia zehatzetan hizkuntzaren biziberritzea jasangarritasunaren marko zabalagoetan txertatzeko bideak identifikatzea.

Konferentziak ongi-etorria egiten die bereziki hurrengo gaietan oinarritutako ekarpenei:

- Arriskuan dauden hizkuntzen, hizkuntza gutxituen eta indigenen eta garapen jasangarriaren arteko loturen kontzeptualizazioa.

- Hizkuntzaren eginkizun nagusia garapen jasangarriaren arrakastan edota porrotean (ekintza zehatzerako tresna gisa).
- Hizkuntza nagusi, estatuko eta mehatxatuen arteko elkarrekintza jasangarritasun-agendetan.
- Komunitateek eta erakundeek garatutako ekimen arrakastatsuak, hizkuntzaren biziberritzea eta garapen jasangarria uztartzen dituztenak.
- Kasu azterketak, hizkuntzaren biziberritzeak aurrerapen sozial, politiko edo ekonomikoari nola laguntzen dion erakusten dutenak.
- Politika, sentsibilizazio eta sustapen-programak, hizkuntza-aniztasuna eta garapen jasangarria lotzen dituztenak.
- Hizkuntzaren eta jasangarritasunaren arteko harremana aitortzeko eta sustatzeko oztopoak eta erronkak.
- Etorkizuneko 18. GJH baten diseinurako proposamen kontzeptual eta praktikoak, hizkuntza eta kultura dimentsioak barne hartzen dituztenak.

Kongresuaren azken helburua da hizkuntzari eta kulturari eskainitako 18. Garapen Jasangarriko Helburua kontzeptualizatzea, eta 2030 osteko agenda globalaren ikuspegitik, 18. helburuaren inplikazioak aztertzea.

Ekarpenak

Lanak aurkezteko deialdiak oihartzun bikaina izan zuen, kongresuaren gaiaren konplexutasuna gorabehera: 136 herrialdetako 157 egilek aurkeztu zituzten 92 laburpen, zeinak 44 adituk berrikusi zituzten. Horietatik 39 lan hautatu ziren kongresuko programaren parte izateko.

Aurkeztutako lanek ikuspegi, diziplina eta esperientziaren aniztasuna islatzen dute, eta guztiek partekatzen dute konpromiso komun bat: munduko hizkuntza-ondarearen babesa eta haren funtsezko rolaren aitortza garapen jasangarrian. Saioetan aurkeztuko diren lanek komunitate-ekimenak, politika-berrikuntzak eta ikerketa akademikoa jorratuko dituzte, hizkuntzaren biziberritzea eta jasangarritasuna elkarri estu lotuta daudela erakutsiz.

Ikertzaile, praktikari, komunitate-burua eta aktibisten arteko elkarlan berezi honen bidez hausnarketa, elkarriketa eta lankidetzak berriak piztea espero da, hizkuntza aniztasuna eguneroko beharizan gisa bizi eta gure etorkizun kolektiboaren parte zentrala eta dinamikoa izaten jarraitzean nahi duten guztientzat.

Eskertza

Kongresu hau antolatzeko laguntza ekonomikoa eman duten erakunde guztiei eskerrak eman nahi dizkiegu: Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko (EHU) Euskara eta Hizkuntza Plangintzarako Errektoreordetza, EHUko Ikerketa Errektoreordetza, Eusko Jaurlaritzako Kultura eta Hizkuntza Politika Saila, Eusko Jaurlaritzako Gizarte Berrikuntza eta 2030 Agendaren Zuzendaritza, eta Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko (EHU) ELEBILAB ikerketa-taldea.

Halaber, gure eskerrik zintzoenak Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrako laguntzaile guztiei eta kongresu hau arrakastatsua izan dadin lagundu duten lankide guztiei.

Kongresu hau ez zen posible izango FELen eta bere mundu osoko jarraitzaileen laguntzarik gabe, eta bereziki Programa Batzordeko kideen lan arduratsu eta zorrotzik gabe, zeinek laburpen bakoitza xehetasunez berrikusi baitzuten, une oro maila zientifiko eta etiko altua bermatuz.

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Is Adding Another SDG the Solution? The Problematic Relation between Endangered Languages and the 2030 Agenda

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Abstract

This article critically examines the metaphysical foundations of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, arguing that its essentialist and universalist assumptions undermine cultural and linguistic diversity. While the Agenda claims to promote pluralism, its underlying philosophical framework conceptualizes sustainable development as the realization of a universal human essence, privileging unity over diversity. The analysis shows that linguistic and cultural plurality are not treated as ends in themselves, but as instrumental means to achieving the SDGs. The article challenges this perspective by inverting the logic: sustainable development should serve the preservation and flourishing of linguistic and cultural diversity. In light of this critique, the proposal to introduce an 18th SDG focused on language is evaluated. The author argues that such an addition may reinforce the instrumentalization of languages rather than affirm their intrinsic value. Ultimately, the article concludes that addressing the erosion of linguistic and cultural diversity requires a fundamental rethinking of the metaphysical assumptions generally embedded in western thought – and specifically in global sustainable development frameworks – rather than a simple expansion of existing agendas.

Endangered Languages and the 2030 Agenda

Languages exist within cultural, social, political, economic and ideological contexts, where manifold factors directly influence their development and evolution. In this text, I focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) of the United Nations (UN) as an example of a powerful ideological element with a big influence in the promotion (or reduction) of linguistic and cultural diversity. More precisely, I analyse the philosophical assumptions that sustain the 2030 Agenda, and I explain that these assumptions generate a universalist perspective that limits, and even threatens, cultural and linguistic diversity.

The focus on the philosophical assumptions of the 2030 Agenda is relevant for two reasons. First, because of the highly influential nature of the 2030 Agenda. At the moment, it is the most important global development strategy and influences the policies and plans of national and local governments, international organizations, civil society, NGOs, academic institutions and national and international companies. For that reason, the philosophical assumptions of the 2030 Agenda are systematically reproduced by lot of different social, political and economic actors, which translate the perspective of the UN into actions with practical consequences. Second, because the 2030 Agenda explicitly affirms that it promotes cultural plurality and diversity. In this sense, it is important to expose that the tension between the explicit intentions and the implicit assumptions of the agenda could have an important effect on the promotion (or reduction) of cultural and linguistic diversity.

The objective of this article is to contribute to the debate about the necessity of an 18th SDG that would 'integrate entirely and comprehensively the language dimension and make full use of it to contribute to the success of the agenda' (Call for papers of the Conference). The literature about this issue shares an important characteristic: it analyses the relation between languages and the 2030 Agenda assuming that the former are the means and the latter is the end. That is to say, languages are considered in relation to their contribution to the achievement of the SDGs (see, for example, Mweri, 2020; Ulmer & Wydra, 2022; Rada, 2022; McEntee & Atalanes, 2023; Mcleod & Marshall, 2023). This is a dangerous logic, for the value of languages is thus linked (submitted) to their efficiency, rather than bestowing languages an intrinsic value. In my analysis, I invert the logic and I assume that the 2030 Agenda (the means) should enhance linguistic and plural diversity (the end). Alas, I find that the 2030 Agenda reproduces a universalist perspective that threatens (rather than promote) cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Essentialist Assumptions of the 2030 Agenda

To understand why the 2030 Agenda threatens linguistic and cultural diversity, it is necessary to examine its underlying metaphysical essentialist assumptions. These assumptions are grounded in three fundamental aspects (Rist, 1996; Telleria, 2021, 2022).

- *Essence*: an essentialist perspective presumes the existence of an essential nature of human beings — i.e., a set of inherent characteristics or attributes that define what it means to be human and distinguish humans from other living

beings or objects. This essence has been traditionally represented by attributes such as reason, freedom, human rights, health or dignity.

- *Universality*: since the human essence defines what is to be a human being, essentialist perspectives conclude that the human essence is the same for all human beings and, therefore, *one and universal*. That is to say, regardless of human diversity, it is assumed that there is a constitutive something that *all human beings* share. For the analysis in this article, it is important to stress that essentialist perspectives assume that cultural diversity is a contingent, particular, inessential and secondary layer that covers an essential, natural and necessary core that defines what human beings are (Geertz, 1973). Rather than assuming that diversity and culture are core elements of human life, essentialist perspectives assume that the contingent and particular cultural layer has to be removed in order to find the distinctive and universal human essence.
- *Development*: development (or sustainable development) is thus defined as the process that enables the full realization of *the* human essence. For example, if the essence is defined in terms of rights and dignity, development is understood as the social, political, and economic process of change that seeks to guarantee those rights and dignity for all individuals.

These metaphysical and anthropological assumptions are neither new nor unique to the 2030 Agenda. This essentialist and universalist logic has held a hegemonic presence in Western thought and culture – e.g., classical Greek philosophy, Christian theology and modern humanism (Reale & Antiseri, 2001; Copleston 2011). Development theories from the second half of the 20th century adopted this essentialist and universalist perspective and reproduced them for more than 70 years (Rist, 1996). In this sense, the 2030 Agenda is the last instalment of the UN's essentialist tradition.

These metaphysical assumptions are not explicitly explained by the 2030 Agenda. That is why a careful reading of the document is necessary to find elements and traces of the essentialist logic. The Preamble of the strategy shows that the 2030 Agenda defines the human essence in terms of health, rights and dignity. That is why the SDGs aim to end the causes of health issues – e.g., the agenda seeks to materialize a world ‘free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, (...) where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious’ (UN, 2015: paragraph 7) – and to promote political and social institutions that ensure ‘universal respect for human rights and human dignity’ (UN, 2015: paragraph 8). Thus, sustainable development is understood as the process of change that ensures the proper materialization of (the potential of) such an essence. For example:

We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can *fulfil their potential* in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment (UN, 2015: Preamble, emphasis added).

We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their *full human potential* (UN, 2015: paragraph 50, emphasis added)

That is why the UN defines in many occasions throughout the document that the SDGs as universal: since the human essence is one and universal, the strategy to materialize its full potential has to be also universal. Accordingly, the UN is confident that the global strategy will benefit everyone and *leave no one behind* (this is the motto of the 2030 Agenda).

What is the Place of Diversity in the 2030 Agenda?

The essentialist perspective is so embedded in the Western way to understand reality and human beings that it often appears as mere common sense. Most well intended people would subscribe the aims and the principles of the 2030 Agenda because, at face value, the UN strategy is inherently good for everyone. However, the essentialist and universalist assumptions of the document have important consequences.

Essentialist perspectives show a fundamental tendency to *privilege unity and universality over diversity and plurality*. As development (progress, betterment, well-being, etc.) is conceptualised as the materialization (expansion, development, flourishing, increase, etc.) of the universal and unitary human essence, essentialist approaches tend to conceptualise diversity and plurality in negative terms – i.e., as a *potential threat* to the full realization of the universal essence. In its more extreme forms, such a negative attitude towards diversity and plurality leads to xenophobia and to attempts to eliminate diversity. This is the case of, for example, the way racist supremacist groups understand migrations, ultraorthodox religious movements understand faith freedom and diversity or extreme right wing groups relate with the LGBT+ movement. In less extreme forms, the universalist perspective results in the silencing and hiding of diversity and plurality. The 2030 Agenda is a good example of the latter. As the 2030 Agenda is a strategy negotiated and agreed upon within the United Nations, the document carefully remains within the boundaries of what is generally considered politically correct. Within this politically correct framework, it would be inappropriate to explicitly oppose cultural and linguistic diversity. That is why, the privileging of the universal over the diverse manifests itself more through silences and omissions than through explicit statements.

As the call for papers for this conference affirms, the 2030 Agenda shows no genuine interest in preserving cultural or linguistic diversity. A thorough reading of the UN's strategy shows important characteristics in this sense. The word 'plural' and its derivations are not used in the whole document. 'Diversity' and its derivations are mostly used to speak about 'biodiversity' or about the diversification of economic sectors, not about cultural diversity. And not a single SDG focuses on promoting cultural or linguistic diversity. Only one target (among 169) mentions cultural diversity, however, it does in an instrumental way. The target focuses on promoting an education that provides the learners 'the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development': one of these skills is 'the appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development' (UN, 2015: Target 4.7). The end is sustainable development; culture and the appreciation for diversity are means for the end.

The only section of the strategy that explicitly focuses on diversity belongs to paragraph 36 – up to that paragraph, the Agenda and its results are described as 'universal' in fifteen occasions. The document explains:

We pledge to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility. We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development (UN, 2015: paragraph 36)

Three aspects deserve special attention in these lines. First, the UN uncritically assumes that there is not a potential tension between the promotion of diversity-interculturality and the promotion of a global ethics. If a global ethics is possible, it means that diversity has a limit: the limit imposed by the universal principles that form the ethics of global citizenship. The UN neglects this potential tension - and the complex relations between particular and universal concepts – due to its essentialist approach to political and social issues: the UN assumes that some universal principles naturally derive from the universal human essence. Not seeing this potential tension is the first step to impose, actively or passively, a set of particular principles and values as if they were self-evident, universal and essential (Ziai, 2016; Telleria, 2021, 2024). Second, the UN acknowledges natural and cultural diversity as if they were phenomena of the same kind. The UN does not seem to be aware of the inherent complexity of cultural diversity: for example, the way we understand nature, natural diversity and the relation between humans and nature are strongly conditioned by cultural factors. By assimilating natural and cultural diversity, the UN reproduces the positivist assumption that both natural and cultural diversity are issues that have to be properly managed in order to achieve sustainable development. Finally, but directly linked to the previous aspect, by saying that 'all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development,' the UN implicitly imposes its essentialist assumptions. Sustainable development is shown as the ultimate end, whereas diversity is a means that has to be properly managed for the achievement of the end. Sustainable development is presented as a self-evident and inherently good aim: any other thing is a means for this aim.

The essentialist assumptions of the UN bestow sustainable development a privileged position as the ultimate, natural, self-evident end because, as explained above, it is understood as the materialization of the universal human essence. The UN does not even consider that the very 2030 Agenda and the concept of sustainable development as such might be *cultural themselves*. Such a reflexive attitude would be a practical example of 'intercultural understanding, tolerance (and) mutual respect' (UN, 2015: paragraph 36) among the people of the world. However, the UN cannot adopt this reflexive attitude because it would erode the legitimacy of the 2030 Agenda: if the UN's position is just one among other, what is its legitimacy to promote a global strategy to transform the world? Does the 2030 Agenda really understand (respect, tolerate) other ways to understand human beings and their relation to nature? Or does the 2030 Agenda impose a specific set of cultural values and principles because it can do so? To avoid these problematic questions, the 2030 Agenda strategically hides and silences the complex debates about cultural and linguistic diversity.

Is adding another SDG the solution?

The reflection above provides important elements to enrich the debates about the right strategy to change the worrying global tendencies regarding cultural and linguistic diversity. More precisely, it makes a critical contribution about the relations between endangered languages and sustainable development. Is adding the 18th SDG the solution? On the basis of the analysis above, I think that that is not the case. I find two important reasons. First, both the 2030 Agenda and most of the literature reflecting about the relation between endangered languages and sustainable development conceptualize languages as a means to promote sustainable development. For example, the 18th SDG is generally presented in the following terms: 'Guarantee the presence and recognition of all languages and cultures *as an essential factor for* personal and social *development*'¹ (emphasis added). The analysis above shows that the tendency to instrumentalise languages in their relation to sustainable development is the consequence of the essentialist perspective: sustainable development is assumed to be the realization of the human essence; the rest is understood as a means. All the targets defined by the 2030 Agenda are means for sustainable development. Adding languages to this list of targets consolidates the idea that languages are means that have to be effective and efficient, not ends in themselves. The idea of putting (endangered) languages to compete with other means in a world structured through competitive markets dominated by powerful agents

¹ <https://www.ehu.eus/en/web/mho-unesco-katedra/garapen-iraunkorrerako-18-helburua> <28th of July, 2025>

is, I believe, a risky strategy. Second, the analysis above shows that the 2030 Agenda hides and silences cultural debates for strategic reasons. Averting the erosion of linguistic and cultural diversity is not a matter of simply adding one more goal to the list. Rather, it is a struggle against a fundamental logic deeply embedded in Western metaphysics. A global strategy that solidly reproduces such a deeply rooted and difficult to change set of metaphysical assumptions (and cannot challenge it without eroding its own legitimacy) might not be the best ally.

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Sociolinguistic Vitality and Sustainable Development: Insights from the Homshetsma Language in Turkey

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Abstract

This study offers an ethnographic examination of the vitality of Homshetsma—an endangered variety of Western Armenian spoken in Turkey’s Eastern Black Sea region—through the lens of sustainable development. Drawing on data from 160 participants across both speech (Hopa and Kemalpaşa) and heritage (Çamlıhemşin and Hemşin) communities, the research employs interviews, participant observation, and an adaptable vitality framework grounded in sociocultural and ecological realities. Findings reveal that the loss of traditional lifestyles—agriculture, seasonal work, and communal rituals—has led to diminished intergenerational transmission and weakened language use. The study argues that Homshetsma is not merely a means of communication but a repository of ecological knowledge, cultural memory, and sustainable practices. Language decline is intricately linked to broader transformations such as urban migration and cultural erosion, highlighting the interdependence of linguistic, cultural, and biological diversity. By aligning language vitality with Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., SDG 11, 13, 15), the study contends that sustaining minority languages must be integral to sustainability frameworks. Revitalizing Homshetsma depends not only on linguistic efforts but on supporting sustainable livelihoods. This paper calls for ecologically grounded policies that recognize endangered languages as vital to community resilience, environmental stewardship, and inclusive development.

Keywords: Homshetsma; biocultural sustainability; sustainable development; minority language revitalization; traditional ecological knowledge

1. Introduction

In traditional communities, language serves not only as communication but as a repository of ecological knowledge and a foundation of communal identity. Revitalizing minority or endangered languages thus requires more than linguistic preservation; it depends on sustaining local agriculture and tourism. Traditional farming, foraging, and seasonal rituals embed ecological knowledge in everyday speech, while culturally rooted tourism fosters meaningful contexts for language use and intergenerational transmission. As these practices endure, so do the linguistic forms and cultural expressions tied to them. Community-led tourism and organic farming, grounded in cultural and environmental values, can raise the status of minority languages by making them visible, respected, and economically viable (Romaine, 2019). In this way, sustainable livelihoods and language vitality reinforce one another.

The case of Homshetsma, an endangered Western Armenian variety spoken in Turkey’s Eastern Black Sea region, exemplifies the interdependence of language, ecology, and culture. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork (2021–2022), this study shows that Homshetsma is not only a means of communication but also a repository of traditional ecological knowledge—including sustainable agriculture, foraging, and transhumance—embedded in everyday language. Its decline mirrors structural shifts such as urban migration, socio-economic marginalization, and the erosion of communal, land-based lifeways, all of which simultaneously threaten the language and cultural resilience. Echoing Maffi’s (2005) concept of biocultural diversity, the findings highlight how linguistic loss often coincides with the erosion of cultural practices and biodiversity.

As Homshetsma weakens, access to intergenerational ecological knowledge declines—raising concerns for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). While these goals promote culturally inclusive and environmentally conscious development, they frequently overlook language as a conduit for ecological stewardship and resilience. By centering language in sustainability discourse, this research calls for a more holistic framework that treats linguistic diversity as an essential, though often neglected, dimension of sustainable development.

2. Context, Communities, and Methodology

2.1 Sociolinguistic and Ecological Context

The Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey is marked by steep mountainous landscapes, ecological richness, and significant linguistic and cultural diversity. Among its lesser-known languages is Homshetsma, an endangered variety of Western Armenian in the Indo-European family (Vaux, 2007). It is spoken by the Hemshin people, a historically mobile, highland-dwelling community with complex cultural and religious histories. While traditionally concentrated in the districts of Hopa and Kemalpaşa (Artvin province) and Çamlıhemşin and Hemşin (Rize province), Homshetsma speakers have become increasingly dispersed due to rural depopulation and labor migration.

The region's linguistic ecology reflects these ongoing demographic and economic shifts. In Hopa and Kemalpaşa, small groups of older speakers still use Homshetsma in daily life, making these areas viable speech communities. By contrast, in Çamlıhemşin and Hemşin, the language functions primarily as a symbolic marker of identity rather than a medium of communication, classifying them as heritage communities. This distinction is rooted in broader ecological and socioeconomic transformations, including the decline of traditional agriculture, the rise of tourism, and out-migration—all of which have diminished the contexts and practices essential for intergenerational language transmission.

Although recent studies have explored the cultural identity and social organization of the Hemshin people (e.g., Aslan, 2006; Büyükkürkciyan, 2011), systematic linguistic research on Homshetsma is still limited. To address this, Akın (2023) conducted an ethnographic study on the language's ethnolinguistic vitality. Building on this work, the present research frames Homshetsma within ecological knowledge and sustainable development. Some of the data analyzed here derive from Akın's fieldwork, providing an empirical basis to examine how language, environment, and livelihood intersect in the Hemshin context.

2.2 Aim and Research Questions

This study investigates the relationships between language vitality, ecological knowledge, and sustainable development within the Homshetsma-speaking communities of Turkey's Eastern Black Sea region. It aims to understand how language, livelihood, and local environments are interconnected and how these linkages can inform strategies to sustain both linguistic and ecological diversity. The study is guided by three research questions:

What sociocultural and environmental factors influence the vitality or decline of Homshetsma?

How does Homshetsma encode and reflect local ecological knowledge and land-based practices?

What insights do community perspectives on language, livelihood, and ecology offer for aligning Homshetsma maintenance with broader sustainable development goals?

2.3 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative ethnographic approach based on immersive fieldwork conducted in 2021–2022 across four communities: Hopa and Kemalpaşa (speech communities) and Çamlıhemşin and Hemşin (heritage communities). Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with 160 participants, participant observation, and detailed field notes focusing on language use, cultural practices, migration, identity, and perceptions of vitality. The researcher's insider positionality as a native of the region was crucial in building trust and accessing nuanced lived experiences.

Due to strong regional accents, automated transcription software was unsuitable; therefore, all interviews were manually transcribed over seven months. Thematic content analysis was then conducted through manual coding to identify key patterns related to language, livelihood, and ecology.

The study adopts a flexible, context-sensitive framework that prioritizes intergenerational transmission, everyday language use, cultural rituals, mobility, identity negotiation, and community perspectives. Central to this approach is valuing local voices and recognizing the intersection of language maintenance with sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship. This place-based, ecologically informed perspective provides a nuanced understanding of language vitality and informs holistic revitalization strategies aligned with sustainable development goals.

The following sections present the main themes that emerged from the fieldwork, organized into three interrelated domains: Language Vitality and the Loss of Traditional Practices, Ecological Knowledge, Sustainability, and the Language–Land Link, and Sustainable Livelihoods and the Revival of Language Practices.

3. Language Vitality and the Loss of Traditional Practices

This study reveals a profound link between the vitality of Homshetsma and the persistence of traditional lifeways in both speech and heritage communities. Participants emphasized that Homshetsma was historically embedded in seasonal rhythms, communal labor, and passed down through generations—especially within agricultural, pastoral, and ritual contexts. These lifeways provided natural settings for everyday language use in work, storytelling, and celebration. However, these practices are now rapidly declining, unraveling the social fabric that sustains language transmission.

In Hopa and Kemalpaşa, traditional practices such as transhumance, shepherding, farming, and village ceremonies play a key role in sustaining language vitality through intergenerational contact. Participants highlighted the decline of these practices—especially transhumance—as a major factor in linguistic and cultural erosion. As Participant 18 noted: “If transhumance disappears, so will the language. People will move elsewhere.”

Many participants expressed concern over the rapid erosion of these practices due to rural-to-urban migration, economic shifts, and the weakening of extended family structures. A 25-year-old participant reflected: “The disappearance of these cultural elements puts the language at even greater risk... Even the collapse of family ties directly contributes to it. Spending only one day in the village is not enough to maintain that connection; the need to use the language diminishes accordingly.”

By contrast, in heritage communities such as Çamlıhemşin, where Homshetsma is no longer actively spoken, concerns focus more on cultural continuity and identity. Participant 51 explained:

People’s lifestyles are changing, mostly due to economic conditions and the system we live in. As capitalism develops, that old feudal culture disappears, and capitalist relations become dominant... We used to have beautiful cultural values, but they’re vanishing. For instance, we have a tradition called Vartevor — nobody else has it, but it’s gone now.

This generational disconnect was echoed by Participant 5 from Hemşin: “As our cultural elements like *imece* (communal labor) or seasonal traditions fade away, so does our Hemşin identity. What we try to pass on to our grandchildren no longer makes sense to them—they haven’t lived it or experienced it themselves.”

There was broad agreement that reconnecting youth with traditional lifeways is essential for both linguistic and cultural survival. As Participant 43 urged: “Opportunities should be created for young people to return. If they come back, neither the language nor the culture and traditions will be lost.”

In sum, across both speech and heritage communities, the erosion of traditional lifeways undermines Homshetsma’s vitality. In speech communities, it disrupts everyday intergenerational use; in heritage communities, it weakens symbolic ties to identity. The language’s fate is thus deeply intertwined with the cultural, social, and economic transformations shaping the region.

4. Ecological Knowledge, Sustainability, and the Language–Land Link

This study reveals a profound connection between Homshetsma, ecological knowledge, and the sustainability of traditional rural lifeways in Turkey’s Eastern Black Sea region. Participants across both speech and heritage communities emphasized that Homshetsma is far more than a means of communication—it serves as a vessel of ecological understanding, spiritual values, and cultural rituals deeply embedded in land-based practices such as shepherding, tea cultivation, transhumance (*yaylacılık*), beekeeping, and communal festivals.

Transhumance emerged as a key cultural institution fostering community cohesion and active language use. As Participant 20 explained, “Transhumance, wedding ceremonies, etc., are definitely important... Young people join these events and speak the language... The elders put in more effort to speak the language.” According to participants, festivals like Vartevor and Hodoç—traditionally held in mountain pastures (*yayla*)—are perceived as integral to the transhumance cycle. They are seen as vital spaces for communal singing, storytelling, shared labor, and the transmission of ecological knowledge across generations. The gradual disappearance of these festivals and practices is closely linked to a weakening of both language use and communal identity.

This connection between language and ecological practice is vividly illustrated in Participant 41’s account:

A shepherd understands everything about their flock—from the sheep’s sickness, movements, and breathing to even the slightest change in behavior or grazing patterns. A shepherd is not just a herder but also the doctor of the flock. During honey collection, there’s a prayer performed in Homshetsma instead of using smoke. The bees remain calm during this moment. My grandfather was a beekeeper, and I know that he never used smoke while doing this.

Despite this deep-rooted cultural embedding, contemporary socio-economic changes challenge the continuity of these practices. Rural depopulation, tourism-driven openness, and youth migration have accelerated the decline of traditional lifeways, directly threatening the language's continued use and the community's collective identity. Participant 21 expressed a sense of resignation: "To be honest, we cannot do much to stop our cultural elements from disappearing. However, they must be transmitted to future generations... everyone is caught up in their survival now." Participant 37 further contextualized these shifts: "The economy here mostly depends on tourism now. What used to be a closed community has changed drastically into an open one. Thousands of people come, bringing in thousands of cultures. Whether you want it or not, you are affected."

Yet, amid these pressures, some cultural practices persist as acts of resistance and revitalization. Participant 2 shared an inspiring example: "I specifically learned to play the Hemshin pipe so that Hemshin music can live on. I taught it especially to children. Now I see them playing in wedding halls." These efforts highlight the ongoing commitment within the community to sustain language and culture through embodied practice.

Overall, the data demonstrates that Homshetsma is deeply intertwined with ecological belonging and collective memory. Rituals and embodied knowledge enact a relational ontology, connecting human and more-than-human worlds through language. This finding aligns with biocultural diversity frameworks (Maffi, 2005; Skutnabb-Kangas & Harmon, 2017), which emphasize the mutual reinforcement of linguistic, ecological, and cultural systems. Protecting Homshetsma thus requires safeguarding the values, worldviews, and ecological relationships that sustain both human and more-than-human communities in the Eastern Black Sea region.

5. Sustainable Livelihoods and the Revival of Language Practices

The vitality of Homshetsma is closely tied to the sustainability of traditional livelihoods. The language encodes ecological knowledge and cultural memory, while economically viable, land-based practices create essential contexts for its use and transmission. This section examines how community members explicitly link language maintenance with rural lifeways such as agriculture, pastoralism, and ecotourism.

Participants associated active language use with communal labor in natural settings—herding in the *yayla*, harvesting hazelnuts, or tending beehives—where elders and children informally transmitted linguistic forms. Homshetsma names tools, techniques, and practices, while also serving as the medium for narrating, joking, and warning, embedding the language in daily practical interaction. Participant 46 noted, "You couldn't herd animals in silence. You had to speak, sing, call—and that's how children learned, without even realizing."

However, the decline of traditional livelihoods—driven by migration, climate change, and market pressures—has disrupted the social spaces where Homshetsma once thrived. Without tangible links to sustainable futures, many younger community members see little reason to learn the language. NGO-led initiatives like festivals or gatherings were often viewed as insufficient for sustaining everyday language use. As Participant 23 remarked, "Language doesn't live in brochures or events. It lives in the soil, the sheep, the smoke from the hearth."

More promising are community-led efforts that embed language into culturally grounded, economically viable practices. In Hemşin, while no formal intergenerational farming program exists, elders and youth often work together during seasonal agricultural cycles, providing informal settings for sharing both practical skills and ecological-linguistic knowledge.

In Borçka, nature-based tourism is expanding, yet participants noted limited use of Homshetsma in related activities. Nonetheless, opportunities remain to integrate the language through storytelling, naming local plants or foods, and describing seasonal landscapes—anchoring it within meaningful ecological and economic domains.

These grassroots efforts reflect a shift from symbolic to livelihood-centered models of revitalization. Such approaches align with Grenoble and Whaley's (2021) call to situate minority languages within domains of dignified work and local pride. When tied to sustainable livelihoods, Homshetsma emerges as a living language that fosters intergenerational belonging and community resilience.

Rather than viewing endangerment as inevitable, these findings highlight how linguistic vitality is interwoven with the sustainability of local livelihoods and the broader relationship between language, culture, and economy—sustaining both words and ways of life in the Eastern Black Sea region.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Homshetsma's vitality is fundamentally linked to traditional land-based practices in Turkey's Eastern Black Sea region. The erosion of livelihoods such as shepherding, transhumance, farming, and foraging

undermines not only the language but also the rich ecological knowledge embedded within it. These intertwined losses threaten the community's cultural and environmental fabric.

Structural changes—including rural depopulation, youth migration, and economic shifts—exacerbate language decline, weakening both linguistic and ecological resilience. Sustainable revitalization requires moving beyond symbolic efforts toward restoring social and ecological conditions that enable the everyday use and transmission of language. Practical pathways could include community-driven programs pairing elders and youth for intergenerational learning of traditional skills alongside language, such as cooperative farming and shepherding. Local ecotourism can incorporate Homshetsma through storytelling, environmental interpretation, and cultural guiding, fostering economic viability directly linked to language and place. Supporting festivals and rituals with active youth participation strengthens transmission beyond symbolic representation.

At the policy level, integrating language planning with rural development, environmental conservation, and climate adaptation is crucial. This requires collaboration among local governments, NGOs, and language activists to support place-based education and livelihood-centered workshops that promote language use in meaningful contexts. Such an approach aligns with Romaine's (2019) argument that multilingualism should be embedded within sustainable development frameworks to advance global language justice, strengthen community resilience, and ensure minority languages are vital to cultural and ecological sustainability.

Recognizing minority languages as integral to biocultural diversity encourages holistic strategies sustaining linguistic, ecological, and cultural systems together. Ultimately, safeguarding Homshetsma means protecting a dynamic system of knowledge, memory, and practice essential for resilient and equitable futures amid ongoing environmental and social change.

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Reconnecting with Language and Undoing Trauma: Breton and Occitan Acquisition as Healing Practices

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Abstract

This paper examines the revitalisation of minority languages in Europe, with a particular focus on the French context, through the lens of historical trauma, public health, and psychological reparation. Traditional language planning, centred on corpus, acquisition, and status (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), often prioritised linguistic data collection and teaching materials over the lived experiences of speakers. Recent scholarship and grassroots movements, however, highlight the importance of community agency, ethical research, and the affective dimensions of language use (Olko & Sallabank, 2021). Building on insights from indigenous and postcolonial contexts, the paper considers how processes of assimilation, repression, and glottophobia (Blanchet, 2021) have caused linguistic alienation and intergenerational rupture in France, particularly among speakers of Breton and Occitan. Drawing on interview and media data, the study shows how reconnecting with ancestral languages can foster identity repair, self-confidence, and wellbeing, while also noting challenges faced by new speakers who encounter authenticity-based stigma. Situating revitalisation within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the paper argues that language reclamation should be understood as both cultural resistance and a public health strategy, capable of rebuilding community ties, reducing inequalities, and contributing to sustainable futures.

1. Introduction

The field of language revitalisation has grown and diversified its interests over the last few decades. Some early studies focused on collecting linguistic data, producing grammars and dictionaries, other encapsulated the importance of creating teaching materials, and advocating for protective policies (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). These approaches were guided by the principles of language planning, under three main branches: corpus planning, acquisition planning, and status planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997) and aimed at improving ethnolinguistic vitality and securing better prospects for endangered languages. However, they often overlooked the lived realities of existing speakers, many of whom were treated primarily as repositories of linguistic data rather than as agents of revitalisation.

Research of revitalisation and reclamation has increasingly centred its attention on speaker communities themselves. Rather than being seen only as sources of linguistic information, communities are now more frequently consulted in research design, recognised as co-creators of knowledge, and acknowledged as central actors in grassroots revitalisation movements (Olko & Sallabank, 2021). This shift has also been accompanied by growing attention to the ethical dimensions of linguistic research, including the need for informed consent, reciprocity, and long-term benefits for the communities involved (Rice, 2006; Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009).

Indigenous and postcolonial contexts, in particular, have highlighted the psychological and affective dimensions of language “loss”, or more appropriately language persecution and denial. In cases where speakers have been marginalised and denied language use and rights, a complex relationship shaped by emotions of shame but also pride, or nostalgia emerges (McIvor et al., 2009). Language has long been reconceptualised not only as a tool of communication but as a vital component of identity. An important element of this expression of identity is linked to the well-being of the speakers. In these contexts, historical trauma is associated with colonialism, assimilationist policies, and linguistic repression, showing how these processes have left deep scars in individuals and communities (Brave Heart, 2003; Olko, 2023).

The link between linguistic repression and generational trauma has therefore clear and legitimate links to postcolonial contexts. However, minoritised communities in Europe have suffered from a process of marginalisation which, for the most part, was accompanied with verbal and psychological abuse rather than direct physical repression. This article builds on these developments by exploring the concepts of public health, historical trauma, and psychological reparation in relation to minority languages in Europe, and specifically in France. While these frameworks have been most extensively developed in indigenous contexts (Bell et al., 2009; McKenzie, 2022), I argue that they also have some relevance, albeit to a different extent, for European minority languages, such as Occitan and Breton, which have undergone sustained processes of stigmatisation and marginalisation. The paper will discuss how reconnecting with endangered languages can contribute to transgenerational healing and empowerment, while also acknowledging the challenges posed by the aftermath of language planning efforts, that is, the risk faced by new speakers of being treated as ‘less authentic’ (Hornsby, 2015). Finally, the analysis will link these questions to the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), which underscore the need to reduce inequalities, promote wellbeing, and foster sustainable relations across communities.

2. Historical Perspectives on Language Revitalisation

2.1 Towards a critical sociolinguistics approach to language revitalisation

The research of the 20th century which often viewed endangered languages primarily as objects of study, to be recorded before they disappeared (Himmelman, 1998), lacked a humanised and critical approach towards the process of minoritisation and a critical stance towards the factors of endangerment. The emergence of language planning and policy frameworks (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Fishman, 1991) marked a shift towards more interventionist approaches but those were mostly top-down, from researches exerting their authority onto communities who received information and instructions. In France, for example, regional language policies only really started in the 1950s and were highly restricted to a few hours of teaching a week and cultural associations, but these were often contested or insufficient (Costa, 2013).

2.2 The Rise of Community-Centred Revitalisation

Since the early 2000s, grassroots movements have played a crucial role in reclaiming languages, demanding greater control over educational curricula, and shaping research agendas (Hornberger & King, 1996; Olko & Sallabank, 2021). Participatory and collaborative research methodologies have emerged, foregrounding the voices of indigenous and minority communities and recognising their agency in revitalisation. This shift has also aligned revitalisation more closely with issues of social justice, recognising language loss as a symptom of broader patterns of inequality, racism, and cultural domination (Hinton et al., 2018).

3 Language, Identity, and Historical Trauma

3.1 Historical Trauma in Indigenous Contexts

The concept of historical trauma originates in the study of Native American communities, where scholars described the cumulative, intergenerational impact of colonisation, forced assimilation, and cultural suppression (Brave Heart, 2003; Evans-Campbell, 2008). Historical trauma theory highlights how these collective experiences of violence and dispossession can lead to long-term psychological distress, substance abuse, and disruptions in cultural transmission (Kirmayer et al., 2014). In the realm of language, assimilationist policies such as residential schools, which explicitly punished indigenous children for speaking their languages, resulted in linguistic shame and alienation (McIvor et al., 2009). Language revitalisation in such contexts is thus not only about restoring communicative practices but about healing cultural wounds and reclaiming identity.

3.2 Applying Trauma Frameworks to European Contexts

While the European context differs from settler-colonial ones, minority languages such as Breton, Basque, Welsh, and Occitan have also faced systematic repression. In France, state policies of linguistic unification from the French Revolution onwards explicitly sought to eradicate regional languages, considering them obstacles to national cohesion (Harrison & Joubert 2018). Children were punished for speaking Breton or Occitan at school, creating a climate of shame and silence that discouraged intergenerational transmission (Costa, 2013; Blanchet, 2021).

Scholars such as Lafont (1971) and Sauzet (1996) have described these effects as linguistic alienation and the censorship of the desire to language, concepts that resonate with the psychological dimensions of historical trauma identified in indigenous contexts. Feelings of inferiority (auto-odi, or self-hatred) among speakers of Occitan or Breton mirror the internalised stigma documented among indigenous peoples (Olko, 2023). Of course, the impact of the trauma or the extent may differ considering the type of abuse and it is not the aim of the paper to diminish the suffering of indigenous populations but to shed light on a different and more psychological impact of demeaning smaller regional languages in France.

3.3 Revitalisation as healing

There is growing evidence that language revitalisation can have positive effects on psychological wellbeing. Studies in indigenous contexts show that learning and using ancestral languages can reduce rates of depression, suicide, and substance abuse, while enhancing resilience and cultural pride (McKenzie, 2022). Language reclamation is increasingly

recognised as a form of public health intervention (Bell et al., 2009). Language reclamation can be understood as a form of cultural resistance against centuries of domination. By speaking a French regional language, individuals symbolically contest the hegemonic ideology of linguistic homogeneity and assert alternative forms of belonging (Costa, 2013). For many learners, reconnecting with an ancestral language provides a means of repairing disrupted family narratives. Parents who were once discouraged from passing on the language may now see their children reclaim it in schools, fostering intergenerational dialogue and reconciliation (McIvor et al., 2009). Following Bell et al. (2009), revitalisation can be framed as a public health strategy.

In European contexts, reconnecting with minority languages may similarly contribute to identity reparation. Hornsby (2015) notes that new speakers of Breton often report enhanced self-confidence and community belonging. However, these processes can also generate tensions, as new speakers are sometimes stigmatised for their perceived lack of authenticity (O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2013).

4 Case Studies: Breton and Occitan

4.1 Historical Suppression of Breton and Occitan

Breton and Occitan are emblematic examples of linguistic repression in France. Both languages were widely spoken until the 19th century, but were systematically marginalised through the education system, administrative policies, and dominant discourses that framed them as “patois” rather than legitimate languages (Blanchet, 2021). Children in both areas were subject to the infamous “symbole” system, where they were humiliated for speaking their native language and not the national language at school (McDonald, 1989). Similarly, speakers were pressured to abandon their language as part of upward social mobility. The consequences included a profound rupture in intergenerational transmission, leading to steep declines in speaker numbers throughout the 20th century (Costa, 2013).

4.2 Revitalisation Efforts

Revitalisation initiatives for Breton and Occitan have included the creation of associative bilingual schools (e.g., the Diwan schools for the Breton language and the Calandreta for the Occitan language), cultural associations, media outlets, and regional policy measures (Hornsby, 2015; Costa, 2013). These efforts have produced a growing population of new speakers, often urban, educated individuals who learn the language through formal instruction rather than family transmission (O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2013). While these new speakers play a vital role in sustaining the language, they also face challenges, including accusations of inauthenticity from older speakers and persistent stigma from the wider French-speaking society (Costa, 2013). What has been consistent for Breton as well as Occitan speakers is a lack of legitimacy, as French speakers because a regional accented French but also as a regional language speaker due to the perceived French-flavoured type of Breton and Occitan that they speak.

4.3 Data presentation: Healing Through Language

Firstly, data from interviews with Occitan speakers clearly show the trends: older speakers express their sentiment of inferiority in comparison to someone who speaks French and new Occitan speakers claim their revived and celebrated reconnection with the ancestral language through linguistic practices and activism. Participants express their willingness to rediscover a language that was denied by their parents and relive their identity. In this data the reconnection to language as a boost for wellbeing goes through the recovery of a forbidden identity. New speakers also acknowledge their linguistic insecurity which makes them feel not entirely accomplished as speakers and thus although historical and collective trauma of being a regional language speakers seems overcome, it is replaced by a lack of confidence that can also damage a linguistic practice.

Secondly, an analysis of media discourse surrounding Breton speakers reveals the significant role that revitalisation plays in shaping wellbeing and identity. Coverage in regional outlets such as *Le Télégramme* and *Ouest-France* frequently highlights personal testimonies of learners and activists who describe Breton not simply as a linguistic skill but as a source of pride and belonging. These narratives often contrast sharply with earlier depictions of Breton as a “backward” or “dying” tongue (McDonald, 1989), showing a discursive shift towards associating the language with cultural renewal, resilience, and modernity. Interviews with young speakers presented in media reports underscore how language learning provides a sense of reconnection with family histories, while also fostering self-esteem and confidence in public settings. At the same time, coverage of cultural events such as the *Festival Interceltique de Lorient* portrays Breton as part of a vibrant and globally connected identity, countering earlier experiences of shame and silence.

4.4 Revitalisation, Sustainability, and the SDGs

The final section of the paper will focus on putting the results of the analysis within the frame of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which provide a useful outlook on the broader implications of language revitalisation. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are particularly relevant, as revitalisation contributes to mental health, identity repair, and social inclusion. Moreover, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) underscore the importance of inclusive governance and community participation, which align with the principles of grassroots language movements. Including a linguistic dimension in sustainability frameworks highlights the role of language in building resilient, cohesive communities. Far from being nostalgic or parochial, revitalisation can foster intercultural understanding, solidarity, and global sustainability but the data analysis also shows that we should be mindful of local pressure and general ideologies such as the ones that seem to penalise new speakers as inauthentic speakers.

5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that frameworks of historical trauma and healing through language, initially developed in indigenous contexts, offer valuable insights for understanding the situation of minority languages in France. The cases of Breton and Occitan demonstrate how linguistic repression has produced long-lasting psychological effects, including shame, alienation, and disrupted transmission. However, revitalisation initiatives also reveal the potential of language to serve as a tool for resistance, identity repair, and public health promotion.

Recognising the psychological dimensions of revitalisation allows us to move beyond purely linguistic or cultural perspectives, towards a more holistic understanding of language as a determinant of wellbeing and sustainability. Incorporating these insights into European contexts does not entail misappropriation but rather productive cross-fertilisation, enabling us to address the legacies of glottophobia and auto-odi.

Ultimately, revitalisation should be seen as part of a broader struggle for social justice and sustainable futures, in line with the SDGs. Rediscovering and reclaiming minority languages in Europe is not merely about preserving heritage but about fostering resilience, empowerment, and healing across generations.

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Laburpena

2017ko azaroan, Easo Politeknikoko Ingurumen Heziketa eta Kontrola goi mailako heziketa zikloan, nazioarteko politiketan hizkuntza eta kulturek zuten presentzia urria ikusirik, 2030 agendari 18. helburu bat gehitu zitzaion, hizkuntza eta kulturen aniztasunaren babesa plazaratzen zuena. Ekimen honek hizkuntza aniztasunak iraunkortasunean duen garrantziaz hausnartzeko balio izan zuen eskola barnean eta horretarako ezinbestekoa izan zen Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrakren (MHOUK) ezagutza eta eskarmentua. Elkarlan horren ondorioz 18. helburuaren proposamena euskal herrian zehar zabaltzen hasi zen, eta ekimenak denboran zehar oihartzun zabala lortu du bai Euskal Herrian eta baita nazioartean ere. 18. helburuaren abiapuntua azaltzeaz gain etorriko diren nazioarteko iraunkortasun eta garapen politiketan hizkuntzek dagokien pisua izatea aldarrikatzen dugu.

1. Sarrera

Munduan 7000 hizkuntza inguru daude eta haietako %43a desagertzeko arriskuan daude, nagusiki, hiztun gutxi dutelako eta, oro har, ez dutelako inolako aitortza eta babes ofizialik haien erabilera eremuan. Gutxiengoan dauden hizkuntza horiek, minoritarioak ez ezik, minorizatuak edo gutxituak ere izaten dira ez dutelako hizkuntza nagusiek duten indarra; ondorioz, hizkuntzak eurak baztertuak izateaz gain, haien hiztunek ere baztarkeria horren ondorioak jasaten dute, kasu askotan akulturazio prozesu baten eraginez.

Kasu batzuetan oso nabarmena eta gaitzesgarria da hiztunek jasaten duten kaltea. Adibide bat jartzearen, Nazio Batuen Erakunderako Gutxiengoaren Errelatore Bereziak bere txostenean (2019) jasotzen duen Bostwanako kasua ekarriko dugu. Bertan, 5 talde etnolinguistiko eta ofizialki aitortzen diren 28 hizkuntza daude. Jasotako informazioaren arabera, irati komunitarioek eragozpenak jasaten zituzten tokiko hizkuntza erabiltzeko eta ez zitzaaien lizentziarik ematen. Komunikabide pribatuak bakarrik ingelesa eta setswanera (biztanleen %77,3k hitz egiten duen hizkuntza) erabiltzen zuten. GIB/hiesari buruzko sentsibilizazio-kanpainak ere setswanaz eta ingelesez baino ez ziren egiten. Bestalde, gobernuak komunitate bakoitzean bertako hizkuntzan oinarritutako hezkuntza bultzatzearen aldeko borondatea adierazi arren, eskola pribatuetan ingelesez eta setswanaz besterik ez zen irakasten.

Txostenaren arabera, hango hezkuntzaren kalitatea hobetu den arren, lurraldearen urruneko eremuetan bizi diren biztanleek oraindik arazo handiak dituzte, kasu askotan hezkuntzara iristeko modu bakarra izaten delako haien komunitateetatik kanpo dauden barnetegietan ikastea, horrek dakartzan ondorio suntsitzaileekin.

Bostwanakoan baino egoera okerragoan daudenak ere badira. Kasu gehienetan, hizkuntza gutxituek haien garapenerako

eta biziberritzerako dituzten zailtasunak bere horretan dira. Horregatik, gutxiengoaren hizkuntzak sustatzeko eta babesteko deia egin zuen Nazio Batuen Erakundeak 2019a Hizkuntza Indigenen Nazioarteko Urtea izendatu zuenean. Jarraian etorri da Munduko Hizkuntza Indigenen Nazioarteko Hamarkada (2022-2032) ere, Ekintza Plan Globalerako (UNESCO, 2022) proposamenarekin.

Beste bide batetik, Nazio Batuen Erakundeak (NBE) 2015eko irailaren 25ean *gure mundua eraldatzea, 2030 agenda* onartu zuen (UN, 2015). Bertan garapen iraunkorra bilatzeko 17 helburu planteatu ziren; bat ere ez hizkuntzarekin lotuta, nahiz eta haren garrantzia behin eta berriz aldarrikatzen den

Badago, edonola ere, helburu bat hizkuntzarekin lotura estua duena eta berebiziko garrantzia duena: Garapen Jasangarrirako 4. helburua - Kalitatezko Hezkuntza. Lehen esan dugu hizkuntza gutxitua duten hiztun askok zailtasunak dituztela oraindik hezkuntza haien komunitateko hizkuntzan jasotzeko. Hizkuntza aniztasunaren presentzia eta ume eskolatu gabeen kopuru handiena (%72a), tamalez, bat datoz (Pinnock, 2009) eta ez dirudi konponbide erraza duenik.

Lan honetan, euskararen eskutik hurbilduko gara 2030 Agendara. Eskola baten sortu zen 2030 Agendari 18. helburua gehitzeko ideia, eta ideia hori edo esan beharko genuke katebegi galdu horren bilaketa nola sortu zen, eta orain arte egin duen bidearen berri emango dugu hurrengo ataletan. Helburua proposamenaren sorrera eta garapenari buruzko nondik norakoak partekatzea da, baina baita haren ekarpena eta beharra nabarmentzea ere.

2. Aurrekariak

2030 Agendaren garapen jasangarrirako 4. helburuak hezkuntzarekin du lotura eta ingurune-segurutetan garatzen den eta berdintasunean oinarrituriko kalitatezko hezkuntza inklusiboa bermatzea du jomuga. Euskal Herrian euskarak, minorizaturiko hizkuntzak, gaztelania eta frantsesaren aurrean borrokatu behar du bere egoera soziolinguistikoa hobetu eta berdintasunezko egoerara hurbiltzeko, eta hori kontuan izan gabe egun ingelesak duen indarra eta eragina. Egoera honek isla dauka hezkuntza sisteman. Prestigio txikia duen euskararen aurrean jarrera negatiboak agertzen dira hezkuntza sisteman eta jarrera horiei estrategia egokiek aurre egitea ezinbestekoa da. Aldi berean, hezkuntza sistemak euskal gizartearen azken urteetan gertatu diren aldaketak kudeatu behar ditu eta migrazio prozesuaren bidez iritsitako pertsonak, eta haiek dakartzaten kultura eta hizkuntzak aintzat hartu behar ditu. Ez da makala euskaratik abiatutako hizkuntza eta kulturen aniztasuna hezkuntzan txertatzeko dugun erronka.

Donostiako Easo Politeknikoan Lanbide Heziketako Ingurumen hezkuntza eta kontrola goi-mailako heziketa zikloa irakasten da; 2017ko udazkenean, *Nazioarteko Ingurumen Politikak* irakasgaian, Nazio Batuen Erakundeak (NBE) 2015ean onartu zuen 2030 Agenda eta bertan jasotako 17 GJHen lanketa txertatu zen irakasgai horretan.

Irakasle talde arduradunak bazuen esperientzia herri indigenekin egindako hizkuntza lankidetzaren alorrean, besteak beste, Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrak (MHOUK) eta GARABIDE Elkartek sustatutako proiektuen bidez (Larrañaga eta Barreña, 2021). Gainera, hurbiletik ezagutzen zituen hizkuntza aniztasunak garapenarekin eta iraunkortasunarekin zuen loturari buruzko hainbat ekarpen teoriko ere (Uranga, 2013; Idiazabal eta Pérez-Cauel, 2019). Esperientzia horretatik abiatuta, 2030 Agenda sakon aztertu zen eta bertan hizkuntzaren eta kulturaren presentzia hutsala zela egiaztatu zen. Gabezia hau NBEaren Giza Garapenari eta Naturaren kontserbazioari buruzko erreferentziatzko dokumentutan errepikatzen zela frogatu zen (UN, 1973, 1987, 1993, 2000, 2002, 2015). Dokumentu hauetan kulturek, eta batipat hizkuntzek, oso bazterreko protagonismoa daukate. Salbuespen gisara 1992ko Rio de Janeiroko Ingurumenari eta Garapenari buruzko Nazio Batuen Biltzarrak onartutako adierazpena eta bere 22 printzipioak aipa ditzakegu, bertan komunitate lokal eta indigenen nortasuna eta kulturak aitortu eta babesteko beharra adierazpenaren oinarritzko printzipioen artean txertatzen du:

“Populazio indigenek eta haien komunitateek, baita tokiko beste komunitate batzuek ere, funtsezko zeregina betetzen dute ingurumenaren antolamenduan eta garapenean, beren ezagutza eta praktika tradizionalak direla eta. Estatuek behar bezala aitortu eta babestu beharko lituzkete beren nortasuna, kultura eta interesak, eta posible egin beharko lukete garapen jasangarriaren lorpenetan benetan parte hartzea”. (UN, 1993).

Zoritxarrez, Rioko adierazpenaren ondorengoetan (UN, 2000, 2002, 2015), bai herri indigenen eta baita kulturaren presentziak protagonismoa galdu eta berriz ere zeharkako aipamenetara baztertu dira eta hizkuntzari buruzko apiamenik ez da ia batere bistaratu. Analisi honen aurrean Easo Politeknikoan, Euskadiko lanbide heziketak bultzatzen duen eraldaketa printzipioaren atzekapean (Eusko Jaurlaritzak, 2022), Agendaren lanketari modu disruptiboan heldu eta Garapen Iraunkorrerako Helburu (GIH) berri bat sortzea proposatu zitzaion ikasleei, alegia, hizkuntza aniztasuna eta kultura aniztasuna espezifikoki jasoko zituen helburua. Testuinguru horretan, beraz, 2017-2018 ikasturtean 2030 Agendari 18. helburua gehitzeko proposamena sortu zen Donostiako Easo Politeknikoan Lanbide Heziketako Ikastetxe Integratuan.

3. Metodologia

Goian aipatutako gabeziaz ohartuta, 18. helburua lantzeko proposamena eraman zen gelara. Proposamen horrek bi helburu pedagogiko zituen oinarrian, batetik, nazioarte mailako oinarrizko dokumentu bat aztertu eta ikasleekin espiritu kritiko eraikitzailea lantzea, eta bestetik, gizartearentzat eta gure ikasleentzat oso urrun zegoen erakunde batean (Nazio Batuen Erakundea) onartutako dokumentua eta erakundea bera ikasleen egunerokora hurbiltzea.

Helburuak erdiesteko hainbat jarduera bideratu zen ikasturteko txostenean zehazten den bezala (EASO, 2018); haien artean, hizkuntza, iraunkortasuna eta garapena lotzen zituzten herri indigenen testigantzak entzutea; GIH behatokia; kultura, hizkuntza eta natura astea; eztabaida-foroa; eta abar.



1. Irudia: Hizkuntza biziberritzeari buruzko mahai ingurua Easo Politeknikoan, 2018ko azaroa. (Iturria: EASO)

Laster, ekimena eskola osora zabaldu zen. Halaber, Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrako aholkularitza batzordean aurkeztu zen eta bi erakundeen arteko (EASO eta MHOUK) elkarlana sendotu zen 18. helburuaren inguruan aurrerapausu berriak emateko. Hastapenekoak izan ziren 18. helburua zenbait foro publiko eta akademikotan egindako aurkezpenak eta Easo Politeknikoa ikastetxean bertan 18. helburua jendaurrean aurkezteko antolatu zen ekitaldia.

Ikastetxeari dagokionez, ekimen horren inguruan proiektu pedagogiko osatu bat eraiki zen erronka bidezko metodologia kolaboratiboetan oinarrituta (TKNIKA, 2025). Ikasleei ekimena gizarteaz ezagutzera emateko egitarau bat prestatzea proposatu zitzaizen, besteak beste, 18. helburua irudikatzeko logotipoa diseinatu zen eta 18 helburuak barneratzen zituen 2030 Agendari buruzko erakusketa bat osatzeko marrazki lehiaketa antolatu zen. Irabazitako irudiarekin 18. helburua irudikatzen duen panela osatu zen. UN Etxeak 2030 Agenda sustatzeko sortu zituen beste 17 irudiekin batera, Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrak erakusketa ibiltaria zabaldu du Euskal Herrian zehar.



18. helburuaren dinamikak 2030 Agenda hurbildu du eskolako komunitate osora, haren lanketa ikastetxearen politikan, plan estrategikoetan eta curriculumeetan txertatu delarik. Lerro estrategikoen eta kudeaketa sistemaren ardatz egituratzaileak bihurtu dira GIHak, eta horren jatorrian 18. helburua txertatzeko egindako ahalegina dago. Aldi berean, 18. helburuak eskola mailan hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna bistaratu eta balioan jartzeko tresna eraginkorra izan da

eskolako azken jarduera-txostenean adierazten den bezala (EASO, 2025). Ekimena Euskadiko Lanbide Hezkuntzaren sarean zabaltzeko zenbait batzar eta ekintza burutu ziren eta honek euskal hezkuntza sistemako eskola desberdinak 18. helburura hurbiltzeko ere balio izan du (Lizaso et al. 2020).

Ekimenak ezin hobeto bete zituen bere bi helburu pedagogikoak. Hori ez ezik, harrezkero, 18. helburuaren aldarrikapenak bere ibilbidea ere garatu du. Aurrera begira, hizkuntza aniztasuna balioan jartzeko erreminta izaten jarraitzea espero da, Lanbide Heziketan eta, harekin lotuta, enpresa munduan urrun dagoen euskararen normalizazioan laguntzeko baliagarri izatea.

4. Ekimenaren garapena eta zabalkundea

EHUko Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedraren lidergopean, ekimenak bide aberatsa egin du, EHUUn hasi eta Gobernu Kanpoko Erakundeetan, euskalgintzaren eta Administrazioaren esparrutan zabaldu delarik (MHOUK, 2025). EHUK, adibidez, 18. helburuaren lanketa txertatu du bere 2030 Agendan, eta gauza bera egin dute beste hainbat ikastetxe; ekimena bereganatu duten beste hainbat adibide polit ere aurki ditzakegu, esate baterako, Zarautz, Andoain edo Ortuellako Udaletan, besteak beste. Euskal Herritik kanpo ere izan du oihartzuna aldarrikapenak; adierazgarria da Kataluniako Xarxa Vives d'Universitats erakundeak bere Agendan txertatu izana. Nabarmenezkoa da, batez ere, Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoko Gobernuak hartu duen konpromisoa, 18. helburua bere egin eta bere hizkuntza politikan eta 2030 Agendan integratu baitu. Hiru fase bereiz daitezke orain arte egindako bidean: a) EASO Politeknikoaren eskutik egindakoa; b) 2030 Agendako eragileen eskutik egindako bidea; c) Administrazio (Eusko Jaurlaritzako) 2030 Agendaren arduradunen eskutik egindako bidea.

a) EASO Politeknikoaren eskutik egindako bidea:

Fase honetan lehendabiziko urratsak eman ziren 18. helburuaren premia justifikatzeko eta 2030 Agendan sartzeko beharra argumentatzeko. 1. taulan ikus daitezke zerrendatuta fase honetan egin ziren ekimenak.

Data	Foroa
2017/XI/6	Euskal Herriko UN sarearen 3. batzarra - Zestoa
2017/IX/06	Hezkuntza - Garapen Jasangarrirako Helburuen (GIH) oinarria - Bilbo
2017/X/05	I Congreso Internacional de Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial: Preservación, estudio y transmisión (CIPCI)
2018/I/18	Easo Politeknikoko natura eta kulturaren I. astea - Donostia
2018/II/21	Euskararen Etxea, 17+1 erakusketaren irekiera
2018/III/18	Euskal Herriko UN sarearen 4. batzarra - Pasaia
2018/XI/13	Amerikako Hizkuntza aniztasuna Easo Politeknikoan - Bilbo

1. Taula: Ekimenaren hastapenak 18. helburua zabaltzeko.

b) 2030 Agendako eragileen eskutik egindako bidea:

Katedrak Garapen Jasanagarriaren eta hizkuntzen arteko gogoeta egitera gonbidatu eta euren ekarpena egin zuten munduko hainbat adituk; lan horiek liburu baten bildu ziren. Aldarrikapena, poliki-poliki, aipatutako ekimenen bidez, egindako erakusketen bidez eta bestelako jarduera akademikoaren bidez, Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko Agendako Zuzendaritzara iritsi zen. Hala, EHUko 2030 Agendan islatuta geratu da unibertsitateak jomugatzat hartutako beste helburu bat bezala. Horretaz gain, UN Etxearen eta Agendako beste eragile batzuen bultzadaz beste ekimen batzuk ere

bideratu ziren: argitalpen, hitzaldi, erakusketa, eta abar. Ez luzatzearren zerrenda gisa adieraziko ditugu nabarmenenak hurrengo taulatan (ikus 2., 3. eta 4. taulak).

Data	Foroa
2019	<i>Linguistic Diversity, Minority Languages and Sustainable Development / Diversidad lingüística, lenguas minorizadas Y desarrollo sostenible/ Diversité linguistique, langues minoritaires et développement durable.</i> Bilbao: EHU.
2021	Garapen Iraunkorreko Helburuei so hizkuntzen betaurrekoekin, <i>EKAIA</i> ale berezia, 277-296 or.

2. taula: 18. helburuarekin lotutako argitalpenak

Nabarmendu ditugun argitalpen horietaz aparte, oso foro ezberdinetan egindako dibulgazio-ekimena eten gabea izan da, besteak beste, hitzaldi eta ikastaroen bidez (ikus 3. taula).

Data	Foroa
2021	<i>“17+1”</i> : helburu bat gehiago 2030 Agendarako. Q-Epea, Bilbao.
2022	<i>La vinculación entre interculturalidad y ODS: 17+1</i> , RECI web-mintegia (Ciudades Interculturales).
2022	<i>Euskara eta 2030 Agenda. “Ekologikoa” ote da euskara erabiltzea?</i> . Bilbao.
2022	<i>Begirada bat unibertsitatetik. Hizkuntza-aniztasuna.</i> (Mondiacult 2022-era begira), Bilbaoarte.
2022	<i>Las lenguas indígenas y minorizadas y los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible.</i> II CIRLIM, Girona.
2023	<i>The Role of Indigenous and minoritized languages in the attainment of sustainable development goals.</i> ICLDC 8, Hawai.
2023	<i>Lenguas y ODS.</i> Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) Basque Country-Navarre, Zumaia.
2023	<i>Hizkuntza eta hezkuntza garapen jasagarrian.</i> UIK, Bilbao.
2023	<i>Garapen Iraunkorrerako 18. helburua, hezkuntza eta hizkuntza gutxituen internacionalizazioa.</i> EHuko Zientzia eta Teknologia Fakultatea.
2024	<i>The Basque language and sustainable multilingual development.</i> Basque Culture International Summer School. Donostia.
2024	<i>Garapen iraunkorra eta hizkuntza gutxituen biziberritzea uztartzeko saiakerak: begirada bat Euskal Herritik</i> , UIK. Bilbao.
2024	<i>Hizkuntzaz Blai.</i> Basque Environment and Ocean Week. Vitoria-Gasteiz.

3. taula: 18. helburua erdigunean izan duten hitzaldi eta ikastaroak

Honaino egindako bidea aberatsa izan arren, oro har, ez da izan oso emankorra gure gizartean. 2030 Agenda lantzen duten enpresa eta erakunde ugari identifikatu dira, asko, gainera, konpromiso sendoa dutenak tokiko hizkuntza gutxituaren sustapenarekin, baina paradajikoki, haien Agendaren lanketan ez da islatzenez aipatutako gaiari lotutako helbururik. Kontrako adibideak ere aurkitu ditugu, hizkuntzarekiko konpromisoa esplizitatzen dutenak, baina 2030

Agenda berez lantzen ez dutenak.

c) Eusko Jaurlaritzako 2030 Agendaren arduradunen eskutik egindako bidea:

Poliki-poliki, eta bide ezberdinetatik eraginda, bereziki BBK-ren prestakuntza-saioei eta UN Etxearen bitartekaritzari esker, hizkuntzaren eta kulturaren aniztasuaren gaineko gogoeta hainbat elkarte eta erakundetara iritsi da.

Administrazioa ere, kulturaren aniztasunak gure gizartean duen lekuaz jabetuta, eta kultura eta hizkuntza banaezina diren neurrian, aniztasun horrekiko gogoeta egin du, eta baita 18. Helburua, alegia, hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna, bere 2030 Agendan sartzeko urratsak eman ditu.

Izan ere, Eusko Jaurlaritzako Lehendakariitzako Agenda Zuzendaritzak Katedratik sustatutako gogoetaren eta aldarrikapenaren lekukoa hartu eta 2023an abian jarri zituen zenbait kontraste-saio euskalgintzako hainbat ordezkariarekin. 2025eko udaberrian egindako azken saioetan egin zen ariketaren bidez 18. helburuaren formulazioa euskal Administrazioaren 2030 Agendara iritsi da ekimen ezberdinen bidez (4. taula).

Data	Foroa
2025/06/02	“Ahots Batuak” ekimenaren aurkezpena, Donostian.
2025/06/27	Foro Debate DV: “La cultura y las lenguas como herramientas para fomentar la diversidad y huir de la polarización”.
2025/07/11	“Ahots Batuak” stand-a BBK Live-en.
2023-2026	“Hitzetatik ekintzetara”, Kutxa Fundazioa.
2025eko iraila	2030 Agendaren saria eta “Ahots Batuak”, Donostiako Zinemaldian.
2025/09/30	Mondiacult 2025, Bartzelona.
2025eko udazkenean	“Ahots Batuak” komunikazio kanpaina.
	Berrikuntza Sozialaren eta 2030 Agendaren Zuzendaritzaren asmoa Garabideren eskutik, BIZIBERRITZEN ARI DIREN HIZKUNTZEN MUNDUKO FEDERAZIOA bultzatzeko.
2025eko azaroa	Local 2030 Idazkaritzaren baitan eta 2030 Koaliziora lotuta 2030 EUSKADI HUBa sortuko da.
	EUSTATen eskutik, 18 GJHa adierazleen plataforma berrian kokatzeko egitasmoaren lanketa.

4. taula. Administrazioak 18. helburuaren inguruan sustatutako ekimenak

Goiko taulan ikusten den bezala, beraz, 18. helburua bide oparoa egiten ari da. Gauzak horrela, bada, batek daki etorkizuneko Agenda batean hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna aintzat hartzen duen helburuak leku “ofiziala” izango duen. Bukatzeko, ezin dugu utzi aipatu gabe, hain zuzen, Foundation for Endangered Languages-en eskutik antolatutako nazioarteko kongresua. Erakunde horrek ere 18. helburuan jarri du fokoa edizio honetan; aurrerapauso garrantzizkoa hizkuntzaren eta garapen jasangarriaren arteko loturaren gogoeta mundura zabaltzeko.

4. Ondorioa: Hizkuntzak axola du!

Ondo dakigu hizkuntza gutxiak bazterteak dituek ondorio kaltegarriak hezkuntzan, osasungintzan, nekazaritzan, ingurumenaren zaintzan, eta azken batean norbanako bakoitzaren osasun psikologiko eta sozialean (UNESCO Bangkok,

2010). Baina frogatua dago, baita ere, gutxituak dauden hizkuntza komunitateentzat zeinen baliagarriak diren bertako hizkuntza eta kultura mantentzeko edota biziberritzeko egiten diren ahaleginak.

Ezinbestekoa ageri da hiztun komunitateen gidaritzat eta ardurapean bideratu behar dela hizkuntza gutxituen biziberritzea, eta garrantzi berezia duela bertako hizkuntzan oinarritzen den irakaskuntza eleanitzak. EASO Politeknikoaren esperientziak erakusten digu hizkuntza gutxitu batetik abiatuta 2030 Agendari eta hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasunari buruzko gogoeta ezin hobe eta osotua egin daitekeela, hezkuntzan behar duen era eraldatzailean, gainera.

18. helburuak garapen jasagarrian herri eta komunitateen hizkuntza eta kultura propioak kontuan hartzeak, eta haien alde borrokatzeak dituen balio garrantzitsuak irudikatzen ditu, haatik helburu horren premia.

Balioan jartzen dugu helburuak orain arte izandako bilakaera, baina aurrera begira Garapenaren marko orokorrean ikusmira jarrita, 2030eko ondoren argitaratuko diren agenda eta giza garapenerako irizpide berriek kezkatzen gaituzte. 1492an abiatu zen gaurdaino nagusia den garapen eredu. Eredu hori natura objektu bihurtu eta haren extratibismoan eta kultur dominazioan oinarritzen da. Eredu hori gaingitu nahi badugu hizkuntza eta kultura baztertuei protagonismoa har dezaten utzi behar diegu, hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasunak garapen eredu ekologiko eta soziala eraikitzeko prozesuan ekarpen baliotsuak egiteko gaitasuna baitute (Posey 1999, Dussell, 2025).

Garapen iraunkorrerako bidea egin nahi bada, hizkuntzen aniztasunaren defentsa modu esplizituan jasotzea ezinbestekoa da. Rio 92ko adierazpenaren 22. printzipioaren adibidea kontutan izanda agenda berria sortzeko prozesuan ardura dutenei erronkari aurre egiteko anbizioa izateko eskatzen diegu. Hizkuntzak axola duelako.

Esker onak

Bidelagun guztiei eta bereziki EASO Politeknikoari eta EHUKo Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO Katedrari.

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Looking for the Missing Link: Creation of Goal 18 to Promote Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

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Summary

In November 2017, at Easo Politeknikoa, Environmental Education and Control higher degree training cycle, having verified the low presence of languages and cultures in international policies, added a goal 18 to the 2030 agenda, which highlighted the protection of linguistic and cultural diversity. This initiative served to reflect on the importance of linguistic diversity in sustainability within the school, and to this end the knowledge and experience of the UNESCO World Linguistic Heritage Chair (MHOUK) was essential. As a result of this collaboration, the proposal for objective 18 began to spread throughout the Basque Country and over time the initiative has gained wide resonance both in the Basque Country and internationally. In addition to setting out the starting point for Goal 18, we want to claim the importance of languages in future international sustainability and development policies.

1. Introduction

There are about 7000 languages in the world, 43% of which are in danger of extinction, mainly because they have few speakers and generally have no official recognition and protection in their area of use. These minority languages are not only minority, but they are also minimized or reduced, because they do not have the force of the principal languages; consequently, not only have they been excluded, but their speakers are also affected by this smallness, in many cases by an acculturation process. To address this situation, UNESCO has developed initiatives and declarations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), which include articles on the right to education in indigenous languages and the right to linguistic revitalization.

In some cases the harm suffered by speakers is very remarkable and reprehensible. As an example, we bring the Bostwana case that the Special Rapporteur for Minorities for the United Nations includes in his report (2019). It contains 5 ethnolinguistic groups and 28 officially recognized languages. According to the information received, community radio stations were hindered from using the local language and were not licensed. Only private media used English and Setswan (the language spoken by 77.3% of the population). HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns were also conducted only in Setswana and English. On the other hand, although the Government expressed its willingness to promote education in the native language in each community, private schools taught only English and Setswan. According to the report, although the quality of education there has improved, the population living in remote areas of the territory still has major problems, because in many cases the only way to access education is to study in boarding schools outside their communities, with the devastating consequences that this entails.

They're even worse off than in Bostwan. In most cases the difficulties of developing and reviving minority languages

persist. That is why the United Nations called for the promotion and protection of minority languages when 2019 was declared the International Year of the Indigenous Languages. The International Decade of the World's Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) also follows with its proposal for a Global Action Plan (UNESCO, 2022).

On the other hand, the United Nations (UN) adopted, on 25 September 2015, the *2030 agenda for the transformation of our world* (UN, 2015). It set itself 17 Goals for sustainable development, none related to language, although its importance is repeatedly proclaimed.

In any case, there is one goal that is closely related to language and that is of vital importance: Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education. We have said before that many speakers with minority languages still find it difficult to receive education in the language of their community. The presence of linguistic diversity and the largest number of uneducated children (72%) unfortunately coincide (Pinnock, 2009) and do not seem to have an easy solution.

In this work, we will approach the 2030 Agenda thanks to the Euskera. The idea of adding Goal 18 to the 2030 Agenda was born in a school, and we should say this idea, or how the search for this lost chain link arose, and we will report on the path it has taken so far in the following sections. The aim is to share the development of the proposal, but also to highlight its contribution and need.

2. Precedents

Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is linked to education and aims to ensure an inclusive and equal quality education in safe environments. In the Basque Country Euskera, a minority language, must fight against Spanish and French in order to improve its sociolinguistic situation and bring it closer to an equal situation, without taking into account the strength and influence of English at present. This situation is reflected in the education system. In the education system there are negative attitudes towards the Basque Country with little prestige and it is essential to fight these attitudes with appropriate strategies. At the same time, the education system must manage the changes that have taken place in Basque society in recent years and take into account the people who have arrived through the migration process and the culture and languages that they bring. Our challenge of integrating the diversity of languages and cultures into education is remarkable.

At Easo Politeknikoa, the Environmental Education and Control Cycle of Vocational Training is taught. In the autumn of 2017, the Agenda 2030 adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 and the elaboration of 17 SDGs were included in the programming of International Environmental Policies school subject.

The teaching team responsible had experience in the field of linguistic cooperation with indigenous peoples through projects promoted, inter alia, by the UNESCO World Linguistic Heritage Chair (MHOUK) and the GARABIDE Association (Larrañaga and Barreña, 2021). The team was also closely acquainted with various theoretical contributions on the relationship of linguistic diversity with development and sustainability (Uranga, 2013; Idiazabal and Pérez-Cauel, 2019). On the basis of this experience, the 2030 Agenda was thoroughly analysed, and the presence of language and culture was found to be insignificant. This deficiency was shown to be repeated in the UN's Reference Documents on Human Development and the Conservation of Nature (UN, 1973, 1987, 1993, 2000, 2002, 2015). In these documents cultures, and especially languages, play a very marginal role. Exceptionally, we can cite the declaration adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and its 22 principles, which include the fundamental principles of the declaration the recognition and protection of the identities and cultures of local and indigenous communities:

"Indigenous populations and their communities, as well as other local communities, play a key role in the management and development of the environment, given their traditional knowledge and practices. States should properly recognize and protect their identity, culture and interests, and make it possible to participate effectively in the achievement of sustainable development. " (UN, 1993).

Unfortunately, in the aftermath of the Rio Declaration (UN, 2000, 2002, 2015), both the presence of indigenous peoples and of culture have lost prominence and have once again been relegated to indirect references, and almost no mention about language has been displayed. In view of this analysis, at the Easo Politeknikoa, under the umbrella of the principle of transformation promoted by the Basque Vocational Training (Basque Government, 2022), students were proposed to address the development of the Agenda in a disruptive manner and to create a new Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs),

specifically covering linguistic and multicultural diversity. In this context, in the 2017-2018 school year, a proposal was made to incorporate Goal 18 into the 2030 Agenda at Easo Politeknikoa Integrated Vocational Training Centre in Donostia-San Sebastián.

3. Methodology

Realizing the deficiency mentioned above, a proposal was taken to the room to work on Goal 18. This proposal was based on two pedagogical objectives: on the one hand, to study an international basic document and contribute to develop a constructive critical spirit with students, and, on the other, to bring the document and the UN institution itself closer to the everyday life of students.

In order to achieve the objectives, a number of activities were carried out as detailed in the course report (EASO, 2018), including listening to testimonies from indigenous peoples linking language, sustainability and development; SDG observatory; cultural, linguistic and nature week; discussion forum; etc.



1. Figure 1: Round table on linguistic revitalization at Easo Politeknikoa, November 2018. (Source: EASO)

Soon the initiative spread throughout the school. It was also presented to the advisory committee of the UNESCO World Linguistic Heritage Chair and strengthened cooperation between the two institutions (EASO and MHOUK) to make further progress on Goal 18. The first steps were the presentations of Goal 18 at various public and academic forums, and the event organized for the public presentation of Goal 18 at Easo Politeknikoa.

As far as the school is concerned, a comprehensive pedagogical project was built around this initiative on the basis of challenging collaborative methodologies (TKNIKA, 2025). Students were proposed to prepare a programme to publicize the initiative in society, including the design of the logo representing Goal 18 and the organization of a drawing competition to form an exhibition on the 2030 Agenda that included the 18 goals. The winning image formed the panel representing Goal 18. Along with 17 other images created by UN Etxea to promote the 2030 Agenda, the UNESCO Chair of World Linguistic Heritage at the University of the Basque Country has opened a travelling exhibition throughout the Basque Country.



Figure 2: Goal 18 illustration panel (by Maia Etxebarria)



Figure 1. Goal 18 logo (author: Karina Senator)

The dynamics of Goal 18 have brought Agenda 2030 closer to the entire school community, incorporating its elaboration into the school's policies, strategic plans and curricula. The SDGs have become the backbone of the strategic lines and the management system, the origin of which is the effort made to incorporate Goal 18. At the same time, Goal 18 has been an effective tool for visualizing and valuing linguistic and cultural diversity at school level, as indicated in the last school activity report (EASO, 2025). A number of meetings and activities were held to disseminate the initiative within the Basque Vocational Training network, which has also brought the various schools in the Basque education system closer to Goal 18 (Lizaso et al. 2020).

The initiative fulfilled its two pedagogical objectives perfectly, and since then the proclamation of Goal 18 has developed its course. For the future, it is hoped to continue to be a tool for valuing linguistic diversity, to contribute to vocational training and, in connection with it, to the normalization of the Basque language in the business world.

4. Development and dissemination of the initiative

Under the leadership of the UNESCO Chair of World Linguistic Heritage of the EHU, the initiative has travelled a rich path, starting with the EHU and extending to NGOs, the fields of Basque culture and administration (MHOUK, 2025). The EHU, for example, has incorporated the elaboration of Goal 18 into its 2030 Agenda, and so have other schools; we can also find other pretty examples that have taken the initiative, such as the municipalities of Zarautz, Andoain or Ortuella. Outside the Basque Country the claim has also been echoed; it is significant that the Xarxa Vives d'Universitats de Catalunya has incorporated it into its Agenda. It highlights, above all, the commitment made by the Government of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, which has adopted Goal 18 and integrated it into its language policy and the 2030 Agenda. Three phases can be distinguished in the course taken so far: (a) by Easo Politeknikoa; (b) by the agents of the 2030 Agenda; (c) by those responsible for the 2030 Agenda of the Administration (Basque Government).

a) The path made by Easo Politeknikoa:

At this stage, the first steps were taken to justify the need for Goal 18 and to argue for inclusion in the 2030 Agenda. Table 1 lists the initiatives taken at this stage.

Date	Forum
2017/XI/ 6	Third meeting of the UN network in the Basque Country - Zestoa
2017/IX/06	Education, the basis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Bilbo

2017/X/05	First International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage: Monitoring, Analysis and Transmission (CIPCI)
2018/I/18	Nature and Culture Week at Easo Politeknikoa - Donostia
2018/II/21	Euskararen Etxea, opening exhibition 17+1
2018/III/18	Fourth meeting of the UN network in the Basque Country - Pasaia
2018/XI/13	American linguistic diversity. Easo Polytechnic - Bilbo

3. Table: Principles of the initiative for the deployment of Goal 18.

b) The path made by the agents of the 2030 Agenda:

The UNESCO Chair of World Linguistic Heritage invited experts from around the world to reflect on Sustainable Development and Languages; these works were collected in a book. The proclamation gradually reached the Agenda Directorate of the University of the Basque Country through the above-mentioned initiatives, exhibitions and other academic activities. It has thus been reflected in the 2030 Agenda of the EHU as another of the goals set by the university. In addition, other initiatives such as publications, lectures, exhibitions, etc., were promoted by UN Etxea and other Agenda actors. In order not to prolong, we will list the most prominent in the following tables (see tables 2, 3 and 4).

Date	Forum
2019	<i>Linguistic Diversity, Minority Languages and Sustainable Development</i> . Bilbao: EHU.
2021	Looking at the Sustainable Development Goals with language glasses <i>EKAIA</i> special edition, pp. 277-296.

Table 2: Publications related to Goal 18.

Apart from the publications we have highlighted, the outreach initiative carried out in very different forums has been uninterrupted, inter alia, through lectures and courses (see table 3).

Date	Forum
2021	<i>"17+1": one more goal for the 2030 Agenda</i> . Q-Epea, Bilbao.
2022	<i>The connection between interculturalism and ODS: 17+1, RECI Web Seminar (Intercultural Cities)</i> .
2022	<i>Euskera and Agenda 2030. Is it "ecological" to use Euskera?</i> . Bilbao.
2022	<i>A look from University. Linguistic diversity</i> (Mondiacult looking at 2022), Bilbaoarte.
2022	<i>Indigenous and minority languages and sustainable development goals. II</i> CIRLIM, Girona.
2023	<i>The Role of Indigenous and minoritized languages in the attainment of sustainable development goals</i> . ICLDC 8, Hawai.
2023	<i>Languages and SDGs</i> . Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) Basque

	Country-Navarre, Zumaia.
2023	<i>Language and education in sustainable development</i> . UIK, Bilbao.
2023	<i>Sustainable Development Goal 18: Education and internationalization of minority languages</i> . EHU Faculty of Science and Technology.
2024	<i>The Basque language and sustainable multilingual development</i> . Basque Culture International Summer School. Donostia.
2024	<i>Attempts to combine sustainable development with the revitalization of minority languages: a look from Euskal Herria</i> . UIK. Bilbao.
2024	<i>Language: Basque Environment and Ocean Week</i> . Vitoria-Gasteiz.

3. table. Lectures and courses focused on Goal 18.

Even though the process has been rich, in general it has not been very fruitful in our society. The 2030 Agenda has identified a number of companies and institutions, many of which are also firmly committed to the promotion of the local minority language, but paradoxically, in the drafting of their Agenda there are no goals related to the subject. We have also found examples to the contrary, which explain the commitment to language, but which do not deal with the 2030 Agenda itself.

c) The path taken by those responsible for the 2030 Agenda of the Basque Government:

Gradually, and influenced by various means, especially the training sessions of the BBK and the mediation of the UN Etxea, reflection on the diversity of language and culture has reached various associations and institutions.

The Administration, aware of the place of cultural diversity in our society, and insofar as culture and language are inseparable, has also reflected on this diversity and has taken steps to integrate Goal 18, linguistic and multicultural diversity, into its 2030 Agenda.

In fact, the Agenda Directorate of the Presidency of the Basque Government took the witness of the reflection and proclamation promoted from the Chair and launched a series of contrast sessions in 2023 with various representatives of Basque culture. The exercise, which took place in the last sessions of the spring of 2025, has made it possible to formulate Goal 18 through various initiatives in the 2030 Agenda of the Basque Administration (table 4).

Date	Forum
2025/06/02	Presentation of the "United Voices" ("Ahots Batuak") initiative. Donostian.
2025/06/27	Forum Debate DV: "The culture and languages as tools to promote diversity and escape polarization".
2025/07/11	"United Voices" stand at BBK Live.
2023-2026	"From words to deeds", Kutxa Fundazioa.
2025eko iraila	2030 Agenda prize and "United Voices", At the San Sebastian Film Festival.
2025/09/30	Mondiacult 2025, Barcelona.
2025eko udazkenean	"United Voices" Communication campaign.

	The intention of the Directorate of Social Innovation and Agenda 2030 to promote by Garabide the World Federation of Emerging Languages.
2025eko azaroa	Within the Local 2030 Secretariat and linked to the 2030 Coalition, the 2030 EUSKADI HUB will be created.
	Preparation of the plan to place the Goal 18 on the new indicator platform by EUSTAT.

4. table. Initiatives promoted by the Administration in relation to Goal 18

As can be seen from the table above, therefore, Goal 18 is on a prosperous path. So, who knows if in a future Agenda the goal of linguistic and multicultural diversity will have an "official" place. Finally, we cannot fail to mention the international congress organized by the Foundation for Endangered Languages. This organization has also focused on Goal 18, an important step forward in opening up to the world the reflection on the link between language and sustainable development.

4. Conclusion: language matters!

It is well known that the exclusion of minority languages has a negative impact on education, health, agriculture, environmental care, and ultimately on the psychological and social health of each individual (UNESCO Bangkok, 2010). But it has also been shown how useful efforts to preserve and/or revitalize the native language and culture are to minority linguistic communities.

It is essential that the revitalization of minority languages should be directed by the communities of speakers, and that multilingual teaching based on the native language should be of particular importance. The experience of Easo Politeknikoa shows us that from a minority language you can make a perfect and complete reflection on the 2030 Agenda and on linguistic and multicultural diversity, in a transformative way in education. Goal 18 represents the important values of taking into account the language and culture of peoples and communities in sustainable development, and fighting for them; that is the reason for the necessity of that Goal.

We value the development of the Goal so far, but looking ahead to the general framework of development, we are concerned about the new agenda and criteria for human development that will be published after 2030. It was in 1492 that the model of development that has hitherto prevailed began. This model is based on the object of nature and its extraterritorialism and cultural domination. If we want to overcome this model, we must let the marginalized languages and cultures take the lead, since linguistic and multicultural diversity has the capacity to make valuable contributions to the process of building an ecological and social development model (Posey 1999, Dussell, 2025).

In order to make progress towards sustainable development, it is essential to explicitly reflect the defence of the diversity of languages. Taking into account the example of principle 22 of the Rio 92 declaration, we urge those responsible for the process of creating the new agenda to be ambitious in meeting the challenge. Because language matters.

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***Gile Ghesseh*: A Community-driven revitalization effort in Gilan Province, Iran**

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Abstract

Gilaki, a member of the Caspian language group spoken in Gilan Province, Iran, has undergone a profound shift toward Persian over the past five decades. During this period, intergenerational transmission ceased as parents chose to raise their children as Persian speakers, hoping to avoid the stigma of speaking Persian with a Gilaki accent and to improve their children's educational and career opportunities. Amidst this decline, *Gile Ghesseh* emerged as the first grassroots, independent, and volunteer-led effort to revitalize initiative of its kind in Iran. Initially focused on documenting the Gilaki language through oral storytelling, the project intuitively expanded its scope in ways that align with best practices in language revitalization literature. It now organizes story-writing workshops for adults, holds language nests at schools, and publishes storybooks with audio recordings for children. Evaluation of the project reveals its success in promoting inclusiveness, accessibility, and sustainability. Looking ahead, the initiative aims to strengthen and expand its language nest program in primary schools to make heritage language interaction a regular part of children's education. *Gile Ghesseh* offers a practical and inspiring example for other marginalized languages in Gilan and beyond.

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Introduction

This article presents the first account of a grassroots effort to revitalize the Gilaki language, whose endangered status and linguistic situation are not well understood, both outside and within Iran. Gilan Province, nestled between the Caspian Sea and the Alborz Mountains, is Iran's fourth smallest by area but among its most linguistically diverse. Its humid plains, forested mountains, fertile foothills, and rugged slopes have shaped a rich blend of languages and communities. Among the eleven mother tongues spoken in the province, Gilaki is the second largest after Persian (Poshtvan, Anonby et al., 2022).

At first glance, Gilaki might seem like a healthy language considering its size, but the reality is otherwise. For about five decades, parents have stopped transmitting the language to their children. Today, Gilaki is spoken primarily by the older generation, placing the language at risk of going silent once this generation is no longer present.

Parviz, a retired employee of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, with a deep passion for folk poetry, music, and his mother tongue, witnessed the decline of Gilaki and took action. Without formal academic training in language revitalization, and relying solely on intuition and personal drive, he launched a Telegram channel called *Gile Ghesseh* to share audio recordings of folk stories narrated by speakers from various Gilaki communities. As the channel gained popularity among community members, *Gile Ghesseh* gradually evolved, expanding its scope and objectives to counter the ongoing language shift and support the survival of Gilaki, even if only within limited domains.

In the following sections, we first discuss Gilaki's status in relation to Persian and its endangerment, followed by a brief history of its documentation. We then outline this community-based project, the first of its kind in Iran, and conclude with a reflection on its effectiveness and a brief reflection. To maintain Parviz's narrative authority and in line with narrative methodology (McAlpine 2016), we adopt a third-person narrative style in this article.

Gilaki as an endangered language

In the absence of reliable, official demographic data, discrepancies persist at both international and national levels regarding the actual number of Gilaki speakers. This leads to unrealistic perceptions of the language's vitality. For instance, *Ethnologue* estimates 1.61 million speakers and classifies Gilaki as EGIDS level 4 ("educational"), suggesting vigorous use supported by institutions beyond the home (Eberhard et al., 2023). Nationally, scholarly publications also misrepresent the speaker population. In one case, Borjian and Borjian (2023, p. 10) estimate roughly 3 million speakers, while the latest census reports Gilan's total population as just over 2.5 million (Iran Statistics Centre, 2016), and not all residents speak Gilaki. Recent research places the number of speakers closer to 650,000 (Poshtvan and Anonby et al., 2022). Misjudgments like these reinforce institutional perspectives that exclude community voices and marginalize endangered languages (Leonard, 2023), creating a false sense of security that discourages mobilization and delays revitalization efforts.

The decline of Gilaki is closely tied to the expansion of Persian, which historically held a strong presence in urban centres in Gilan, serving commerce, administration, media, and modern schooling. Despite this, Gilaki remained dominant in daily life, local newspapers and elite circles, ensuring a balanced prestige between Persian and Gilaki. However, with population growth, rural development, and the spread of formal education the situation shifted in favour of Persian. Amid these, the state's double standards have worsened the situation. While Articles 15 and 19 of Iran's constitution formally acknowledge the status of regional languages, guarantee their use in education and protecting against language discrimination,¹ implementation has been inconsistent. Provincial broadcasting began in the 1990s, and in Gilan, Bārān TV and Radio Gilan were launched in 1998.² Yet national media often undermines the prestige of minority languages, including Gilaki, by portraying them as less sophisticated or using them for comic relief in television and cinema. This has reinforced the prestige imbalance and stigma, discouraging language transmission to younger generations (Huss, 2017, p. 104). Since the 1970s parents, especially in big cities and towns, stopped speaking Gilaki to their children to avoid the stigma associated with speaking Persian coloured by a Gilaki accent and to ensure their children's success in education and career. Although Gilaki continued to be used in classrooms in smaller towns and villages until the early 1990s, it began to decline, allowing Persian to establish itself as the dominant mother tongue.

¹ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1979/1989. The English version is available at: https://constituteproject.org/countries/Asia/Iran/Islamic_Rep_of; accessed on 5 September 2025.

² Both pieces of information are from the Persian Wikipedia pages on Bārān TV and Rādio Gilān. Radio Gilan initially was established in 1956, but due to various challenges, including weak transmission signals, it did not operate consistently. It was eventually stabilized and sustained in 1998.

Documentation of Gilaki

Documentation of Gilaki dates to the late 18th century, beginning with Gmelins (1774), and followed by Chodzko (1842) and some others, continuing through the 20th century with contributions from Geiger (1898-1901), Christensen (1930), Rastorgueva et al. (1979/2012), Stilo (2001, 2018), and many others. Gilaki has also appeared in language maps contextualizing Gilan within Iran, including Bruk and Apenchenko (1964, pp. 70–71), Behnstedt (1990), Izady (2006-2013). Among these maps Hourcade (2011) is based on actual data, and Bazin et al. (1982) focus on Gilaki in relation to its surroundings in Gilan. Government-led documentation of regional languages began in 1953 (Tabāri, 2020), and after several pauses, it has so far resulted in the publication of a volume on seven dialects of Eastern Gilaki (Amāni, 2020).³ The most recent endeavour began in 2018 within the context of the *Atlas of Languages of Iran* (ALI) (Anonby, Mortaza Taheri-Ardali et al. (eds.), 2015-present), and as part of Hamideh's doctoral research. This work produced two language distribution maps showing current mother tongues (Figure 1) and ancestral languages (Figure 2) in every populated place across the province.⁴

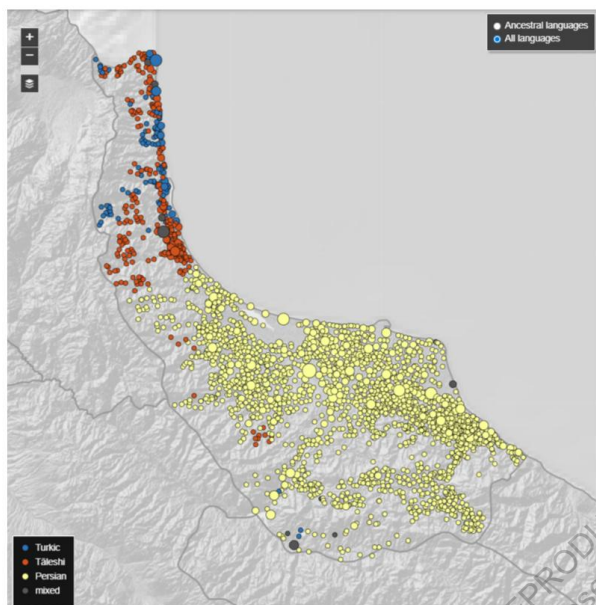


Figure 1: Map of all languages in Gilan Province, showing the main language spoken as a mother tongue in each community (Poshtvan, Anonby, et al., 2022) (<http://iranatlas.net/module/language-distribution.gilan>)

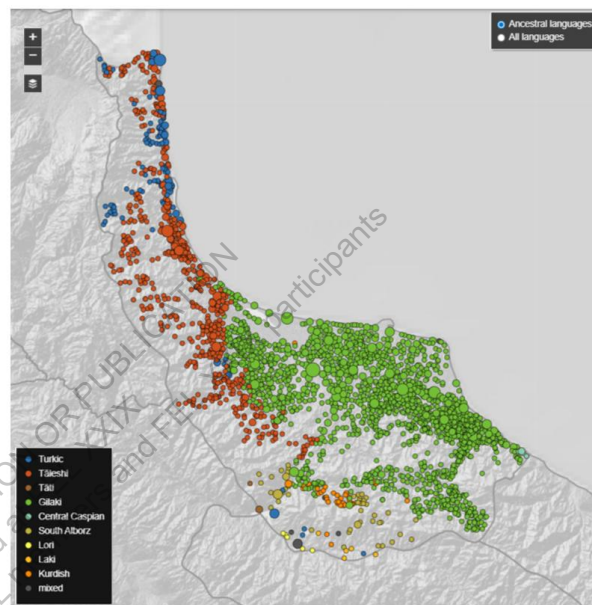


Figure 2: Map of heritage languages in Gilan Province (Poshtvan, Anonby, et al., 2022) (http://iranatlas.net/module/language-distribution.gilan_heritage)

When Hamideh began her research in Gilan, despite her Gilaki roots and due to her upbringing outside the province, she had little knowledge of the region's language situation. To better understand the community, she sought out knowledgeable individuals and eventually met Parviz, who was leading *Gile Ghesseh* language revitalization initiative. The following section introduces *Gile Ghesseh*, detailing its origins, activities, and role in revitalizing Gilaki. It also discusses the challenges faced, future directions, and offers a brief evaluation of its success and impact.

Gile Ghesseh as a community-based initiative

Rasht, the capital of Gilan, has long been a cultural center, shaped by its history as an international trade (Rabino, 1917, p. 475). It is home to one of Iran's earliest theatres, cultural associations, and the country's first public library (Bromberger, 2000). In this rich environment, the Gilan's House of Culture was founded in 2001 by Gilaki independent elites. Despite occasional resistance from authorities who view grassroots efforts as politically sensitive, the House has operated independently, promoting Gilaki culture. One of its long-standing activities is a Gilaki storytelling club. Parviz joined in 2006 but found its limited reach insufficient and sought ways to engage more people. In 2014, Telegram, a communication app, was introduced to Iranian users, offering an accessible platform for sharing and storing multimodal content. He took

³ A full account of the history of investigations into language distribution in Gilan can be provided in: Hamideh Poshtvan and Erik Anonby, "Mapping Language Distribution in Gilan Province, Iran," submitted to *Iranian Studies* (Special Issue: Mapping Iranian Languages).

⁴ In this project Hamideh has documented Gilaki in 35 locations, including both linguistic data and oral text recordings for each locality.

this opportunity to record and share Gilaki stories through a Telegram channel entitled *Gile Ghesse* ('Gilak story'), which he launched in November 2015.⁵ He initially invited 200 people to join and within two days, membership reached 3,000.⁶ The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Members sent messages of appreciation, and Parviz realized that this was something the community truly valued. He encouraged members to record themselves narrating traditional stories or to ask older relatives to do so. However, many potential contributors lacked the technical know-how to participate. To address this, Parviz launched a tutorial guide and an online workshop to train members in story writing and narration. Since then, the channel has offered weekly audio stories, and to date, 894 stories have been written, narrated, and shared by members. Some older contributors, though skilled in storytelling, were unfamiliar with digital tools and unable to record themselves. In 2016, Parviz negotiated with the Art Bureau of Gilan⁷ to use their studio space and equipment for recording. Between 2016 and 2019, he invited renowned Gilak writers and poets to the Bureau, recorded their stories, and released them on the *Gile Ghesse* channel. This was the only instance of governmental support for the project, and the only time a state institution contributed to a community-based initiative of this kind.

From the beginning, *Gile Ghesse* has aimed to revive the lived experiences of Gilaki speakers both in Iran and abroad through their own voices. While its primary goal is community engagement and cultural preservation, the platform also contributes to academic research by archiving all raw stories and making them accessible to scholars.

Gilaki course for adults

As a recent addition, Parviz now offers online and in-person Gilaki language courses. So far, three iterations of 13 sessions have been held. The course includes Gilaki language training but also serves as a space for developing writing skills and exploring the history of Gilaki literature. The attendees, although adults, are not mother tongue speakers of Gilaki. This makes it especially valuable that they have the chance to learn more about their ancestral language in a safe and welcoming environment where they feel respected and supported.

The teaching approach as Parviz explains, "is rooted in stories and songs. When language is carried through narrative and music, it becomes more memorable and meaningful. Instead of prescriptive rules, learners are invited to listen, retell, and create stories, and to play with language. For children, traditional songs help strengthen vocabulary and language structure."

Gile Ghesseh for children

Although children were not initially the intended audience, Parviz soon began adapting the project for them. With support from his wife, Fahimeh, an active volunteer in holistic child development, *Gile Ghesseh* began experimenting with language nests in primary schools whenever conditions allowed and schools were receptive. To prepare materials for these nests, Parviz started writing Gilaki stories for children and encouraged others in the community to contribute. These stories are now uploaded to the channel weekly and used in storytelling sessions alongside other language-based interactions in the language nests. To further expand access, Parviz began publishing the stories as printed book, each accompanied by an audio version. One series includes five volumes featuring a total of 50 stories written by various *Gile Ghesseh* members. So far, Parviz has authored six Gilaki story books for children, all funded independently.

The language nest initiative is especially important as it helps keep Gilaki alive among children who have never encountered the language at home, often because their parents were themselves raised as Persian speakers. Despite its promise and meaningful impact, the initiative remains modest in scale and faces several challenges. Some parents worry that learning Gilaki may "ruin" their children's Persian by adding a "Gilaki accent," while others question the value of such efforts altogether. Logistically, since the initiative is not part of the official school curriculum, organizing sessions requires negotiations with school boards, extra coordination, and strong commitment from both schools and families. More importantly, its sustainability is uncertain, as it currently relies on the voluntary efforts and personal funding of Fahimeh and Parviz. Long-term continuity will require sustained support to develop educational materials, recruit and train staff, and integrate the language nests into the broader educational system.

Reflecting on impacts

The *Gile Ghesseh* initiative exemplifies a community-based approach to language revitalization that prioritizes inclusiveness, accessibility, and sustainability. By encouraging contributors to record and submit stories using everyday

⁵ The inspiration of the channel came from the late Gilak poet Shivan Fumani (1946–1998), who used tape recorders to distribute his poetry, making it accessible even to illiterate audiences.

⁶ *Gile Ghesseh* can be found on Telegram at t.me/Gileghesseh and on Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/gileghesseh/>.

⁷ The Art Bureau, under Iran's Islamic Propagation Organization, officially promotes the values of the Islamic Revolution, though in places like Gilan it occasionally preserves local culture and supports regional artists, extending beyond the Bureau's original ideological mission.

devices such as smartphones and tablets, the project has lowered barriers to participation and enhanced community involvement. This in turn has facilitated the development of multimedia resources for future educational use.

Beyond technical accessibility, *Gile Ghesseh* has invested in preparatory measures, including recording guidelines to ensure quality and consistency. This demonstrates how mobile technologies can be purposefully exploited to support documentation and authentic content creation for endangered languages, especially in contexts where institutional support is limited or absent. Storytelling workshops have contributed not only to linguistic preservation and cultural continuity, but also to individual empowerment. Participants learn to craft their own narratives, both for submission to the channel and for independent publication.

Importantly, *Gile Ghesseh* has helped shift community attitudes toward Gilaki. Many members, especially women, who once felt embarrassed to speak Gilaki now participate confidently in storytelling and public performances. This change is significant, as parental attitudes influence language transmission (Evans, 1996). When parents perceive their heritage language as a source of pride rather than shame, they are more likely to share it with their children, even if not fully transmitting it as a mother tongue.

Finally, involving children, through storybooks and the language nest initiative, is a key component of *Gile Ghesseh*. Exposure to Gilaki in these settings helps develop comprehension skills and domain-specific vocabulary. Even partial linguistic competence of this kind creates meaningful connections to their heritage language, reinforcing cultural identity and emotional bonds with older generations (Grenoble, 2021, p. 12).

Concluding remarks

This paper has presented *Gile Ghesseh*, a grassroots initiative led by the first author to document and revitalize Gilaki, a once-dominant mother tongue in Gilan Province, Iran. In response to the widespread shift toward Persian as the main mother tongue across the region, *Gile Ghesseh* has mobilized the community through an intuitive model that records the lived experiences of older generation and transfers them to the younger generation, reconnecting them with their culture and linguistic heritage. It stands as the first successful initiative of its kind in Iran, maintaining and even expanding its activities over a decade without reliance on institutional support—financial or otherwise. This sustained success reflects both the insight behind the initiative and the depth of community engagement. While challenges remain, *Gile Ghesseh* offers a transferable model for other marginalized language communities in Gilan and beyond, demonstrating that revitalization is most effective when led from within.

Acknowledgments

I (Parviz) would like to extend my appreciation to my fellow writers and artists for their advice, technical support, and involvement in different stages and aspects of *Gile Ghesseh* and doing this voluntarily: MS. Mariā Ārmiyun and Parastoo Sām; and Mr. Ardeshir Lord, Shahrām Defā'i, Hossein Ebrāhimzadeh, Javād Asghari, Kiā Hedāyati, Behzād Yāhid, and Alimohammad Eqbāldār. I also thank the writers of the *Gile Ghesseh* workshop, audience, and the independent writers who entrusted their works to *Gile Ghesseh*. I offer my heartfelt thanks to my wife, Fahimeh Dehqāni, whose original idea led to the creation of language nests in schools.

I (Hamideh) am sincerely grateful to Professor Erik Anonby for his ongoing mentorship and support as both my supervisor and colleague. I would also like to thank Hakam Ghanim, my friend, classmate, and colleague, for his companionship and input in evaluating *Gile Ghesseh*.

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The Role of Languages Revitalization in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: A Case Study from Northern Pakistan

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Abstract

The United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), described as 'the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.' While these goals address challenges faced by people and the planet, they overlook the issues arising from the extinction of languages and global cultural diversity. However, the institutional practices of the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI), an organization working for indigenous languages in northern Pakistan, demonstrate connections between the SDGs and language and cultural diversity. Over the last two decades, FLI has empowered its target disadvantaged language communities and worked to decrease inequality between them and communities speaking powerful and influential languages. FLI assists language communities and government in their efforts to use mother tongues in education, which aims to provide a friendly environment for children of indigenous communities in their learning. Through reviving and promoting the oral arts of its target language communities, FLI helps rebuild peace in its target region. FLI contributed to protect its target language communities from the coronavirus epidemic by developing protective messages in their mother tongues. FLI's work also contributes to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. To achieve these goals, FLI carries out its interventions in collaboration with like-minded organizations. All these initiatives contribute to six SDGs, and the paper provides strong evidence of the link between language revitalization work and the SDGs. The paper recommends inclusion of SDG 18 dedicated to language and cultural diversity.

Keywords: SDGs, sustainable development, northern Pakistan, language revitalization, missing SDG 18, cultural heritage

Language Revitalization and Sustainable Development

Introduction

The United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), described as 'the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.' While these goals address challenges faced by the people and the environment. The 17 SDGs are: 1) No Poverty, 2) Zero Hunger, 3) Good Health and Well-being, 4) Quality Education, 5) Gender Equality, 6) Clean Water and Sanitation, 7) Affordable and Clean Energy, 8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, 9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, 10) Reduced Inequalities, 11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12) Responsible Consumption and Production, 13) Climate Action, 14) Life Below Water, 15) Life on Land, 16) Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and 17) Partnerships for the Goals.

When setting these goals, considerations regarding language extinction and global cultural diversity were not included. This may create difficulties in meeting the goals universally and could lead to certain communities being overlooked. The Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL2022-2032) states that language is directly related to eight SDGs (SDG 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 16, and 17) and indirectly related to seven SDGs (SDG 1, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15).

This article investigates the relationship between language revitalization efforts and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It presents the organisational practices of the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI), which engages in language revitalization in northern Pakistan, as a case study. The article also aims to identify which and how many of the 17 SDGs are addressed through FLI work.

For more than two decades, FLI has been working with language communities in northern Pakistan—a region home to over 30 indigenous languages—to preserve and promote their mother tongues. FLI's key initiatives include developing language resources, leading advocacy campaigns for institutional recognition, supporting communities in establishing mother tongue-based multilingual education, and assisting provincial governments in implementing language-in-education policies.

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed-method approach for data collection, including case studies and data from personal experience, organizational documents, literature review, and informal interviews with FLI staff and partners. Main sources are formal FLI documents—such as progress reports, evaluations, impact studies, project files, and meeting minutes—and firsthand experiences from field visits and participation in team activities.

FLI Language Revitalization Programs in Northern Pakistan

FLI employs a range of strategies to support language revitalization. Several of these approaches are aligned with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as detailed in the following sections.

Empowering Language Communities

In the recent past, government policies supported the use of official and some widely spoken languages, which limited the role of the country's majority languages and created inequalities between these powerful and indigenous languages. Policies that prioritized Urdu and English as official languages, have been identified as key factors that reduced the status of indigenous languages. People were required to learn these two languages to access educational opportunities and better employment (Coleman, 2010; Jan, 2016; Jhingran, 2019).

FLI works with target language communities to promote their mother tongues. FLI has conducted research about these languages and provided opportunities for community members to document their mother tongues, which contributed to efforts to develop orthographies and address writing challenges. As a result, communities have created literature and incorporated their languages into school curricula.

Awareness campaigns have contributed to a reduction in the use of secondary and dominant languages across various sectors, while simultaneously enhancing recognition and appreciation of native languages. Language activists have formed community-based organizations dedicated to language preservation and got understanding of their linguistic rights and the importance of maintaining their mother tongue.

FLI has facilitated connections among language communities for knowledge sharing and supported participation in national and international language-related events. By providing digital resources, FLI has empowered communities to utilize their native languages on digital devices and social media platforms.

Advocacy efforts at various levels have led some provincial governments to incorporate local languages into school curricula, with plans to expand the list further. These initiatives foster respect and recognition for local languages, promote social inclusion, and help reduce inequalities between disadvantaged indigenous language groups and speakers of dominant languages.

Education in Native Language Programme

FLI works to address learning challenges faced by children in indigenous communities due to instruction in unfamiliar languages. FLI's initiatives focus on advocating for mother tongue education, developing curricula in native languages, training teachers, and supporting communities in establishing multilingual education based on mother tongues.

Advocacy for the Inclusion of Mother Tongue in Education

The medium of instruction in the country is Urdu and English in schools. Urdu is the mother tongue for less than 10 percent of the population, while English remains from the period of British colonial rule. Most children do not have access to education in their native languages. Through advocacy efforts by FLI and its partners at the government level, two provincial governments—Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan—have passed legislation to include local languages in the school curriculum (Akhunzada, 2021). Additionally, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has implemented this legislation by developing school textbooks up to grade nine in four local languages and has begun using these books in classrooms. FLI has been supporting the KP Government's implementation of its language policies in the education system in coordination with relevant government departments.

Curriculum Development for Government Schools

FLI trained cohorts from Pashto, Hindko, Saraiki, and Khowar to review and edit school curricula. These trainees assess government-developed textbooks for use in schools. The initiative supports standardized orthography and grammar guidelines in local language textbooks, providing improved learning materials for children studying in their mother tongue. Annually, about one million books are printed in these four languages across the province.

Training Government Teachers

FLI is currently training teachers to teach in mother tongues. So far, FLI has trained 100 government teachers in Khowar and 50 in Saraiki. The program includes creating teacher training manuals in local languages and selecting master trainers from among the mother tongue speakers' teachers. The initiative aims to continue across KP province and expand to all included languages.

Supporting Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Schools (MTB-MLE)

FLI assisted six language communities—Gawri, Palula, Torwali, Indus Kohistan, Hindko, and Khowar—in setting up Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Schools (MTB-MLE), offering training in curriculum development, school

management, and teaching (Rehman & Sagar, 2015; Akunzada 2021). FLI also provided teaching materials and classroom equipment. These communities have run MTB-MLE schools for several years for preschool Year I and II.

Promoting Indigenous Oral Arts

Pakistan has tolerated two decades of violence, deeply affecting FLI's target ethnolinguistic communities. Proximity to Afghanistan exposed these groups to conflict spillover, fueling internal extremism and radicalization. Youth were especially impacted, as intolerance and animosity spread through prolonged, strategic efforts by various groups.

Home to 30 indigenous language communities, this mountainous region is renowned for its cultural and linguistic diversity (Liljegren, Akhunzada, 2017; Liljegren, 2018). These communities historically thrived in harmony, nurturing unique customs, languages, and artistic expression. However, extremist forces disrupted this balance—stigmatizing musicians, poets, and artists, and creating hostile environments that silenced cultural activities (Naidu-Silverman, 2015).

Though violence has declined, peace remains fragile. Deep-rooted radical beliefs continue to hinder recovery. Yet, indigenous arts offer a powerful path to healing and reconciliation. As Naidu-Silverman (2015) notes, art in post-conflict societies fosters empathy, dialogue, and emotional processing—essential for rebuilding trust and identity

FLI helps communities create resources and use art to process emotions, foster dialogue, and promote understanding. FLI supports organizing poetry events with broad participation, assists in setting up social media for artistic sharing, publishes poetry books, and enables recording and distributing community songs online. These efforts encourage healthy interactions, positive norms, and peacebuilding and helps in promoting Indigenous languages and cultures.

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

FLI's efforts to promote and preserve languages play a vital role in safeguarding the cultural heritage associated with each language group. In addition, FLI provides training for ethnographic research and publishes related materials. FLI's publications include works on the traditional use of plants, ethnographic research, and a picture dictionary featuring images of indigenous items.

Efforts to incorporate native languages into education help connect children with their ancestral heritage and ensure the transmission of cultural traditions to future generations.

FLI's initiatives to promote cultural expressions—such as poetry, music, and oral traditions—play a vital role in keeping them alive. By facilitating poetry events with broad community participation, we help reconnect youth with their cultural roots and ancestral wisdom. Additionally, recording indigenous songs and sharing them through social media platforms ensures their preservation and wider accessibility, safeguarding these rich traditions for future generations.

Overall, these interventions help to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage associated with the language and contribute the SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

Public Health Communication During the Covid-19 Pandemic

FLI and language communities applied their preservation and communication skills to support target communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. With help of language communities, FLI translated the WHO's COVID-19 protective messages into 12 languages, distributing them through social media and posting them in public spaces during the pandemic.

FLI continued its activities by launching a campaign to raise awareness about the disease among social media users. To do this, FLI produced short films in local languages using the WHO's protective message. The project included 15 languages and resulted in a video product aimed at target communities. These videos delivered Covid-19 awareness messages in 15 indigenous languages and were shared with the intended audience. The short films were designed both to inform communities about disease prevention and to support the use of mother tongues in new contexts. Community members and, in some areas, government officials, distributed the videos on their social media profiles. The language communities responded to these messages, and providing information in native languages contributed to improved understanding of pandemic precautions.

Collaborative Partnerships for Shared Objectives

FLI conducts its interventions in coordination with like-minded community-based organizations, national and international NGOs, universities, and government bodies. These partnerships contribute to the implementation of its interventions. Below is the list of organization FLI is collaborating.

- 22 language and cultural-focused Community Based Organizations (CBOs) from northern Pakistan.
- 07 Public Sector Universities located in Islamabad and FLI's designated region.
- 02 Education-focused departments within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Government.
- 03 Federal Level Government Organizations work for language promotion
- 02 National Level Non-Government Organizations.

FLI holds membership in UNESCO's Task Force for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Finding

FLI supports indigenous communities in northern Pakistan by promoting their mother tongues. This initiative contributes to reducing inequality between marginalized indigenous language groups and dominant language communities within the country. This initiative supports the country's progress toward the SDG 10 that aims to reduce inequality.

FLI initiatives that advocate for mother tongue education, assist in the development of school textbooks, provide teacher training, and support language communities in establishing mother-tongue-based multilingual education contribute significantly to quality education, aligning with SDGs 4.

FLI engages in activities aimed at revitalizing and promoting oral art, with a focus on indigenous poetry and music, to support peacebuilding efforts in its target region. This work aligns with SDG 16: "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions."

FLI interventions include training in ethnography, publications, poetry, and music promotions, as well as incorporating native languages into education, provide safeguarding for the intangible cultural heritage of language communities and contribute to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

The FLI awareness campaign provided protection against the Corona epidemic by translating WHO messages into Indigenous languages through audio-visual content and text, distributing them via print and social media. The initiative aimed to support the health and well-being of Indigenous communities and contributed to SDG 3: "Health and Well-being."

FLI conducts its initiatives in collaboration with government organisations (GOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international NGOs (INGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and universities. This approach supports the SDGs 17 "partnership to achieve the goals".

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that language revitalization initiatives support SDGs. This finding aligns with the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL2022–2032), which reports the connection between languages and SDGs. The organizational practices of FLI, an organization dedicated to language revitalization, have both directly and indirectly contributed six SDGs: Reduced Inequality (SDG 10), Quality Education (SDG 4), Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

The revitalization efforts of FLI also appear to support additional objectives, such as "Climate Action" (SDG 13) and which require further exploration.

With strong evidence of the significant role of language revitalization in achieving sustainable development goals, this study recommends the addition of a new goal dedicated to language and cultural diversity (SDG 18). The current goals do not explicitly mention language communities and their cultural heritage, which may impact the achievement of a more sustainable future for all.

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HIGA: Youth Activism at the Intersection of Minority Language Revitalisation and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have largely overlooked linguistic and cultural diversity as pillars of sustainability. This article examines HIGA (Gathering of Young Speakers of Minority Languages) as a youth-led model that embeds language revitalization within global sustainability frameworks. Since 2011, HIGA has fostered intercultural networks, digital activism, and empowerment among speakers of endangered languages. The 2025 edition in Vitoria-Gasteiz brought together 80 youth delegates representing over 55 minority languages, structured around three thematic pillars: language–environment relations, art and culture and technology. HIGA’s contributions align with several SDGs—quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable communities (SDG 11), climate action (SDG 13), peace and justice (SDG 16), and global partnerships (SDG 17)—while advancing a proposal for an SDG 18 dedicated to linguistic diversity. Central to its mission is recognising languages as vehicles of ecological knowledge, cultural identity, and social justice. By integrating participatory governance, environmental narratives, and digital innovation, HIGA demonstrates how youth activism can catalyse structural change and reposition minority languages as vital resources for equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies.

Introduction

Languages are among humanity’s greatest treasures, reflecting the cultural diversity of the planet. Beyond being tools of communication, they transmit worldviews, traditions, and collective knowledge, shaping individual and community identities (Flores et al. 2020; Garabide 2015). Yet, while a handful of dominant languages cover most of the world’s population, 46% of existing languages—most of them spoken by small communities—are currently endangered (Sadembouo and Ngoumamba 2015). Their loss would represent not only a cultural tragedy but also a severe threat to biodiversity and to the transmission of ecological and social knowledge systems (Maffi 2005). Safeguarding minoritized languages is therefore inseparable from safeguarding global cultural and environmental sustainability.

In this context, HIGA (Gathering of Young Speakers of Minority Languages) emerges as a pioneering initiative. Bringing together young people aged 18–30 from diverse linguistic communities, HIGA fosters collaboration, training, and activism for language revitalisation. By strengthening youth agency, it ensures that the safeguarding of cultural and linguistic diversity is not left to institutional policies alone but becomes embedded in intergenerational community practices (Amorrortu et al. 2020; Hernandez et al. 2020). HIGA thus exemplifies how grassroots action can contribute to sustaining linguistic diversity while also reinforcing broader social and cultural resilience.

This approach resonates strongly with global sustainability debates. In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission (Brundtland 1987) defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Yet, both the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have largely neglected linguistic and cultural diversity as essential pillars of global sustainability. As Romaine (2019) aptly argues, language constitutes a missing link in international sustainability discourses. Against this backdrop, HIGA stands out as an innovative model of youth-led activism that integrates language revitalisation within the broader framework of sustainable development.

At the same time, it highlights the insufficient presence of linguistic diversity in the 2030 Agenda and articulates a constructive institutional response: the proposal of a new SDG 18, dedicated to minority, Indigenous, and endangered languages.

Methodology

Context

Since its first edition in 2011, HIGA has become a robust empowerment platform for young speakers of minoritised languages, fostering intercultural activist networks and promoting the strategic use of digital tools (Pardina and Garaio 2023). Initially conceived as a European meeting, it has evolved into an international platform for training, project-building, and intercultural exchange. The inaugural edition in Vitoria-Gasteiz (July 2011), organised within the City Council's Youth and Language Plans, brought together speakers of minoritized European languages such as Breton, Corsican, Galician, Catalan, Valencian, Mallorcan, and Basque. After a seven-year hiatus, the 2018 edition consolidated HIGA as an ongoing initiative, drawing 75 young people representing 35 minority languages and expanding networks, projects, and institutional support. The 2020 edition, postponed to 2021 as "e-HIGA" due to the pandemic, experimented with a hybrid format, including a cooperation project competition alongside poetry, lectures, and music. In July 2023, HIGA returned with its most ambitious program yet, extending the length of the gathering, diversifying speakers and themes, reducing Eurocentric bias, and emphasising collaborative project development—blending dynamic group activities, lectures, workshops, project creation spaces, cultural visits, and digital media production to increase global visibility.

Building on this trajectory, HIGA 2025 convenes in Vitoria-Gasteiz, bringing together 80 youth representatives of more than 55 endangered languages from across the globe. Its overarching objectives are to advance revitalisation efforts, enhance youth political agency, and support the long-term sustainability of grassroots initiatives (Telletxea and Pardina 2025).

The information presented in this paper does not stem from a traditional research project, but from a global revitalisation initiative materialised through biennial gatherings. Specifically, the data refers to HIGA 2025, drawing on registration records as well as the shared experiences and reflections of activists and academics during the event. The authors themselves embody HIGA's dual nature: June Telletxea and Oskar García de Bikuña are rooted in activism, while Ainhoa Pardina and Albert Badosa combine academic research with activist engagement. All four are directly involved in the organisation of HIGA, ensuring an ongoing dialogue between grassroots practice and scholarly perspectives.

Programme of HIGA 2025

The five-day program integrated complementary activities designed to combine training, exchange, and creativity:

- a. Exchange spaces: The gathering prioritised group dynamics and community presentations to build trust, create a welcoming environment, and establish a shared baseline for collaboration.
- b. Lectures: Each day was structured around a central theme—languages and art and culture; languages and the environment; and languages and technology—introduced by experts and practitioners who fostered dialogue with participants.
- c. Workshops: Ninety-minute sessions translated concepts into practice, encouraging hands-on learning, peer exchange, and the co-design of solutions.
- d. Project creation space: Mixed groups designed small-scale, cross-community initiatives developed throughout the gathering and presented on the final day.
- e. Group activities and leisure: Cultural visits, social activities, and collective dynamics strengthened group identity and offered immersion in the local context.

These strands aligned with five thematic pillars: youth and language policy; the relationship between language and the environment; art and culture as tools for revitalisation; technology and digital activism; and strategic planning for linguistic sustainability. Together they underscored youth's capacity to drive structural change—shaping policy debates, increasing the visibility of minoritised languages in urban spaces, documenting ecological knowledge, and advancing technological innovation—supported by initiatives such as the *HIGA Plaza* digital platform (Telletxea and Pardina 2025).

In order to implement these objectives, the program was structured as follows:

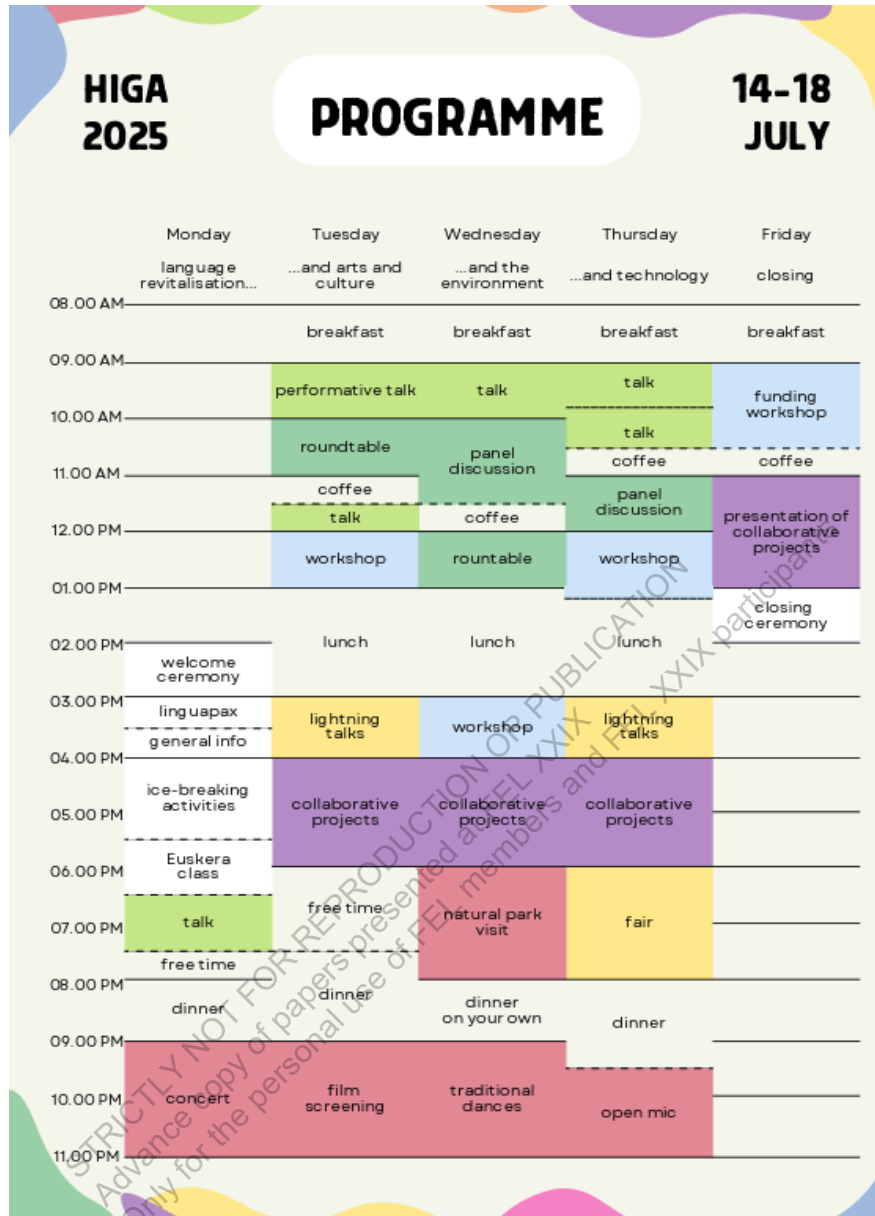


Figure 1: HIGA 2025: programme

Results

Connection Between Endangered Languages And Sustainable Development Established

HIGA demonstrates substantial alignment with the SDG framework and contributes meaningfully to the advancement of several goals: it strengthens access to multilingual education (SDG 4) (Idiazábal & Pérez-Cauarel 2019); combats linguistic discrimination (SDG 10) (García-Azkoaga & Idiazábal 2021); supports the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities (SDG 11); safeguards traditional ecological knowledge (SDG 13) (Gorenflo et al. 2012); advocates for equitable access to justice in Indigenous languages (SDG 16) (Marinotti 2017); and enables global cooperation through transnational networks (SDG 17). Through this multifaceted approach, HIGA frames language revitalisation as a transversal instrument for building more equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies.

Furthermore, the environmental strand of HIGA 2025 addresses how linguistic diversity can meaningfully contribute to other SDGs, particularly climate action and biodiversity preservation. As Gorenflo et al. (2012) emphasise, the loss of minoritised languages often entails the parallel loss of traditional ecological knowledge. In this context, HIGA recognises

language as a key vector in the transmission of environmental and cultural knowledge, promoting both the documentation of local ecological practices and the development of multilingual environmental narratives.

HIGA also offers a proactive response to the marginalisation of linguistic diversity in the 2030 Agenda by proposing the institutional recognition of a new goal: SDG 18. This proposed goal would aim to ensure the preservation, promotion, and revitalisation of minority, Indigenous, and endangered languages as integral components of sustainable development. Its operational targets include the systematic incorporation of linguistic diversity into formal and non-formal education systems; equitable access to public services in minoritised languages (Idiazábal & Pérez-Caurel 2019); legal protection of linguistic rights; enhanced media and digital presence for these languages; and the recognition of traditional knowledge systems in participatory environmental governance (Olko & Radding 2024).

The presentation will also outline the key strategic learnings anticipated from HIGA 2025: (i) the evaluation of digital tools—including artificial intelligence, social media, and open-source initiatives such as Wikimedia—in supporting revitalisation processes; (ii) the critical analysis of intersections between linguistic diversity and environmental sustainability; and (iii) the consolidation of HIGA Plaza as a global infrastructure for ongoing collaboration among youth activists. In doing so, HIGA articulates a vision for sustainable youth activism that positions minoritised languages at the heart of international development agendas.

Participants

Gender

As for gender, the distribution proved to be nearly balanced, with men and women represented in comparable proportions. Excluding the organizers, among the 89 young participants, 45 identified as women and 40 as men. In addition, 4 participants identified as non-binary, as shown in the following figure.

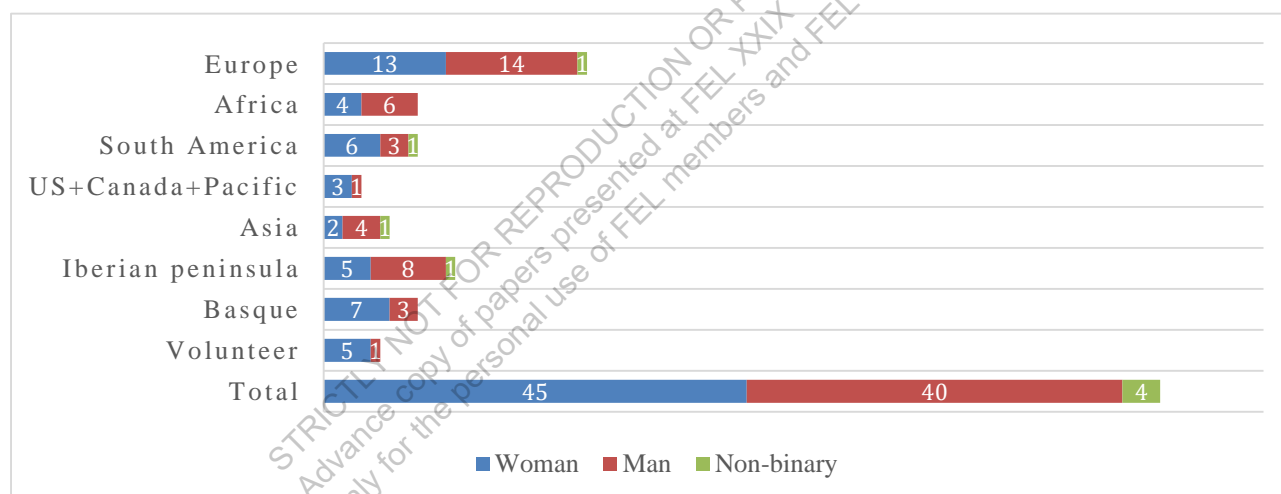


Figure 2: Gender

Origin

HIGA2025 brought together 69 language communities in total, including 25 from Europe, 11 from Africa, 10 from Asia, 16 from the Americas, 6 from the Iberian Peninsula, and 1 from other regions, as shown in the figure below.

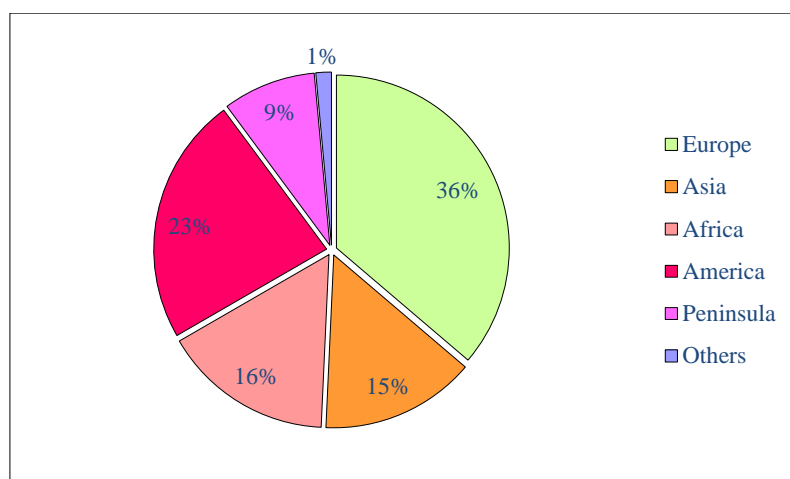


Figure 3: Languages at HIGA2025

Indicative of the breadth of representation is the following: Europe included communities such as Scottish Gaelic, Silesian, Lemko-Rusyn, Kashubian, Belarusian, Frisian (West Frisian), Irish, Cornish, Galician, Welsh, Sicilian, Lorraine Romance, Occitan, Sardinian, Crimean Tatar, Aromanian, Corsican, Karelian, Ladino, Franco-Provençal/Arpitan, Upper and Lower Sorbian, Yiddish, Burgenland Croatian, and Breton. Asia featured Ma, No, Kol, Santali, Eastern Minyag, Laz, Ojibwe, Lhoba/Tani, Saraiki, Buryat, Romani, and Kurdish. Africa included Riffian Amazigh, Kabyle Amazigh, Amazigh, Etche, Dagbani, Nubian, Ibibio, Vanuma, Lubwisi, Tyap, and Hassaniya Arabic. The Americas brought Wolastoqey, Spokane Salish, Hñöhñö, Náhuat, Quechua, Maayat'aan, Palenquero, Kichwa, Yucatec Maya, Garifuna, Uspanteco, Mapudungun, Mojeño Trinitario, Muysca, Kaqchikel Maya, and Mixtec/Tu'un Savi. From the Iberian Peninsula, Galician, Asturian, Catalan, Basque, Catalan Sign Language, and Spanish Sign Language were represented. Esperanto was also present. Collectively, these communities attest to the vitality and heterogeneity of minority and Indigenous languages across world regions.

Programme Content

Building on the program outlined above, the following section presents an overview of the main activities offered by HIGA.

Opening, closing, and reflection spaces

Drawing on the experience of previous editions, both the opening and closing ceremonies were designed to foster an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, allowing participants—many of whom had limited prior contact—to gradually integrate into the group. Dedicated moments for expressing emotions and sharing personal reflections proved highly effective in building group cohesion from the outset. Although the program was dense, free afternoons and optional activities were also incorporated to help participants manage their energy and strengthen relationships beyond the structured sessions.

Day 1: Language revitalisation through arts and culture

A lecture on oral improvisation in minoritized languages (with a focus on *bertsolaritza* and *glosa*) combined theory and demonstration, followed by a roundtable on “Recovering the Future: Languages, Culture, and the Power of Youth.” After a session introducing the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* (PEN Català), a creative workshop on songwriting in minoritized languages enabled group-based composition. Short talks by participants closed the day.

Day 2: Language revitalisation and the environment

A lecture on the impacts of mining on Europe’s Indigenous communities opened discussions, followed by a roundtable on language, migration, and community survival. Experiences from Mediterranean islands broadened the comparative lens. A workshop on community narratives and linguistic space mapping (Salma Halifa and Alexandra Philbin) translated environmental-linguistic linkages into practice.

Day 3: Language revitalisation and technology

Two lectures set the agenda: intelligent design for language learning (Stanisław Pstrokoński) and the digital divide and intersectionality in activism (Mashrur Imtiaz). A roundtable on “From Hashtags to Healing: Technology for the Common

Good in Endangered Indigenous Communities” connected to a workshop exploring LinguaLibre and Wikitongues and their benefits for minoritized languages. Further short talks showcased participant initiatives.

Project creation space

Participants co-designed collaborative projects. While this dynamic helped strengthen group interaction, its main objective was to stimulate the design of concrete revitalisation initiatives. Some will continue beyond the gathering; others functioned as scenario-building exercises. Expert guidance supported project design across thematic areas.

Some of the projects that were developed were expert-led projects: How to Teach Minority Languages [Maximilian Hassatzk]; Theatre Workshop: "Mother Tongues – Performing Language / Listening Differently" [Rebekka Bangerter]; Wikimedia Project [Mentxu Ramilo]; Promoting new modern and future-oriented (minority) language policies [Tomasz Wicherkiewicz]; We document and disseminate our languages [Pau Bofill]. Instead, some others were self-managed projects: Multilingual visual guide on climate change and minority languages; Poster campaign against linguistic and racial discrimination; Collaborative map of good linguistic and cultural practices; Proposals to improve the linguistic landscape; Multilingual short comic: languages and youth; Board game on linguistic diversity; Our Languages, Our Strength: Short Videos on Personal Experiences; Podcast: Diverse Voices on Gender and Languages; Writing a Multilingual Song with Traditional Rhythms and Contemporary Style; Sketch of Language Activism; Manifesto for Linguistic Diversity and Inclusion; Collective proposals for a new Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights.

Cultural activities

Cultural events complemented the daily sessions and contributed to group cohesion. Highlights included a concert by QueenKarter—HIGA’s participant—creating a lively atmosphere of song and dance; a film screening featuring participant-made documentaries and the Endangered Languages Project; a guided visit to Salburua Nature Park with an evening *dantza plaza*; and a memorable open-mic session on the fourth day. Although time constraints prevented full participation, the event revealed significant artistic talent and deepened both internal cohesion and public engagement.

Evaluation and future perspectives

Overall, the objectives set in advance were met: the gathering activated, critically trained, and networked young speakers of minoritized languages worldwide. Rather than an endpoint, it functioned as a milestone and a catalyst. Looking ahead, several areas for improvement emerged. Participants should be given greater responsibility and protagonism, using the event to share and learn from diverse sociolinguistic realities. Organisers should provide resources and support to transform HIGA from a periodic gathering into an ongoing process—for instance, by financing or facilitating funding for participant-led projects. Finally, future editions would benefit from more rest periods and a longer overall program.

Conclusion

The experience of HIGA 2025 demonstrates that language revitalisation cannot be separated from wider debates on sustainability, equity, and global justice. Far from being a secondary concern, linguistic diversity constitutes a vital dimension of sustainable development. By placing the agency of young speakers of endangered and minoritised languages at its core, HIGA illustrates how grassroots activism can generate global impact while affirming the transformative role of youth in shaping inclusive and resilient futures.

This connection becomes especially clear when framed through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the 2030 Agenda foregrounds priorities such as education, inclusion, and environmental protection, it fails to recognise the role of languages as vehicles of knowledge, identity, and participation. HIGA directly addresses this gap by demonstrating how revitalisation efforts advance multiple goals simultaneously: they expand access to multilingual education (SDG 4), reduce discrimination and inequality (SDG 10), strengthen sustainable communities (SDG 11), safeguard ecological knowledge crucial for climate action (SDG 13), ensure linguistic rights in access to justice (SDG 16), and foster transnational cooperation (SDG 17). In this way, language revitalisation emerges not as a parallel agenda but as a transversal instrument for achieving sustainability.

From this perspective, the proposal of an additional SDG 18 dedicated to the preservation and revitalisation of minority, Indigenous, and endangered languages acquires particular urgency. Such a goal would provide overdue institutional recognition of linguistic diversity as a pillar of sustainability, while also establishing operational targets ranging from education and legal protection to digital presence and the incorporation of traditional knowledge into environmental governance. In doing so, it would align global development agendas with the lived realities of communities for whom language is central to both identity and survival.

HIGA 2025 also shows how these principles can be put into practice. Its program—combining lectures, workshops, collaborative projects, and cultural events—mobilised young people not merely as participants but as leaders. The integration of artistic expression, environmental perspectives, and digital innovation confirmed the multidimensional nature of revitalisation and illustrated its potential to generate structural change across fields. The projects initiated during the gathering testify to the creativity and agency of youth in designing solutions that link local realities to global challenges.

In conclusion, HIGA 2025 affirms that safeguarding linguistic diversity is inseparable from building more equitable, sustainable societies. By articulating the need for SDG 18 and by modelling youth-led, community-based action, it positions languages not only as cultural heritage to be preserved but as strategic resources for constructing just, inclusive, and sustainable futures.

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HIGA: Hizkuntza gutxituen biziberritzea eta garapen jasangarria uztartzen dituen gazte aktibismoa

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Laburpena

2030 Agendak eta haren 17 Garapen Jasangarrirako Helburuek (GJH) neurri handi batean bazter utzi dute aniztasun linguistikoa eta kulturala iraunkortasunaren zutabe gisa. Artikulu honek HIGA (Hizkuntza Gutxituen Hiztun Gazteen Topaketa) aztertzen du, gazteen gidaritzapean sortutako eredu gisa, hizkuntzen biziberritzea nazioarteko iraunkortasun-esparruetan txertatzen duena. 2011z geroztik, HIGAk sustatu ditu kultura arteko sareak, aktibismo digitala eta hizkuntza ahulak hitz egiten dituzten gazteen ahalduntzea. 2025eko edizioak, Gasteizen ospatua, 80 gazte ordezkari bildu zituen, 55 hizkuntza gutxitu baino gehiago ordezkatzuz, hiru ardatz tematiko nagusitan antolatuta: hizkuntza-ingurumen harremanak, artea eta kultura, eta teknologia. HIGAk hainbat GJHekin bat egiten du—kalitatezko hezkuntza (GJH 4), desberdintasunen murrizketa (GJH 10), komunitate jasangarriak (GJH 11), klima-ekintza (GJH 13), bakea eta justizia (GJH 16), eta lankidetzak globalak (GJH 17)—eta, aldi berean, hizkuntza-aniztasunari eskainitako GJH 18 berri baten proposamena lantzen eta babesten du. Bere misioaren erdigunean dago hizkuntzak ezagutza ekologikoaren, identitate kulturalaren eta justizia sozialaren ibilgailu gisa aitortzea. Gobernantza parte-hartzailea, ingurumen-narratibak eta berrikuntza digitala uztartuz, HIGAk erakusten du gazteen aktibismoak nola eragin dezakeen aldaketa estrukturalan eta hizkuntza gutxituak gizarte bidezko, erresiliente eta jasangarrien baliabide nagusi gisa kokatu.

Sarrera

Hizkuntzak gizateriaren altxor handienetakoak dira, planetako aniztasun kulturala islatzen baitute. Komunikazio-tresna izateaz harago, mundu-ikuskera, tradizio eta ezagutza kolektiboak transmititzen dituzte, banakoen eta komunitateen identitateak eratzen dituztenak (Flores eta beste, 2020; Garabide, 2015). Hala ere, hizkuntza nagusi gutxi batzuek munduko populazio gehiena hartzen duten bitartean, gaur egun dauden hizkuntzen %46—gehienak komunitate txikiek hitz egiten dituztenak—desagertzeko arriskuan daude (Sadembouo eta Ngoumamba, 2015). Horien galera ez litzateke soilik hondamendi kulturala izango, biodibertsitatearentzako eta ezagutza ekologiko eta sozialaren transmisiorako mehatxu larria ere izango litzateke (Maffi, 2005). Hortaz, hizkuntza gutxituen babesa ezin da bereizi aniztasun kultural eta ingurumen iraunkortasun globalaren babesetik.

Testuinguru honetan sortzen da HIGA (Hizkuntza Gutxituen Hiztun Gazteen Topaketa), ekimen aitzindari gisa. 18–30 urte bitarteko hizkuntza komunitate aniztako gazteak elkartzuz, HIGAk lankidetzak, prestakuntza eta aktibismoa sustatzen ditu hizkuntzen biziberritzearen alde. Gazteen protagonismoa indartuz, hizkuntza- eta kultura-aniztasunaren babesa ez da soilik politika instituzionalen esku uzten, baizik eta belaunaldi arteko komunitate-praktiketan txertatzen da (Amorrortu eta beste, 2020; Hernandez eta beste, 2020). HIGA, hortaz, eredu paradigmatico bat da, oinarri sozialeko ekintzak nola lagundu dezakeen hizkuntza-aniztasunaren iraunkortasunean, aldi berean erresilientzia sozial eta kulturala indartuz.

Ikuspegi hori bat dator iraunkortasunari buruzko eztabaida globalekin. 1987an, Nazio Batuen Brundtland Batzordeak (Brundtland, 1987) garapen jasangarria honela definitu zuen: «orainaldiaren beharrak asetzera, etorkizuneko belaunaldiak berenak asetzeko gaitasuna arriskuan jarri gabe». Hala ere, 2030 Agendak eta bere 17 GJHei neurri handi batean bazter utzi dituzte aniztasun linguistikoa eta kulturala, iraunkortasun globalaren oinarritzako zutabe gisa. Romainek (2019) zuzen seinatu bezala, hizkuntza falta den katebegia da nazioarteko iraunkortasun diskurtsoetan. Testuinguru honetan, HIGA

berrikuntza gisa agertzen da, gazteek gidatutako aktibismo ereduak baita, hizkuntzen biziberritzea garapen jasangarriaren esparru zabalagoan integratzen duena. Era berean, HIGAk 18. GJH baten alde egiten du, hizkuntza gutxitu, indigena eta ahulenei eskainia.

Metodologia

Testuingurua

2011ko lehen ediziotik, HIGA hizkuntza gutxituetako gazteen ahalduzterako plataforma sendo bihurtu da, aktibista sare kulturartekoak sustatuz eta tresna digitalen erabilera estrategikoa bultzatuz (Pardina eta Garaio, 2023). Hasiera batean Europako topaketa gisa pentsatua, pixkanaka nazioarteko plataforma bihurtu da prestakuntzarako, proiektuak sortzeko eta kultura arteko trukeerako. Gasteizen egin zen lehen edizioa (2011ko uztaila), Udalaren Gazteria eta Hizkuntza Planetako ekimenen baitan, eta bertan parte hartu zuten Europako hizkuntza gutxituen hiztunek, hala nola bretoieraz, korsikeraz, galizieraz, katalanez eta euskaraz mintzo ziren gazteek.

Zazpi urteko etenaldiaren ondoren, 2018ko edizioak HIGA ekimen jarraitu gisa sendotu zuen: 35 hizkuntza gutxitu ordezkatzen zituzten 75 gazte bildu zituen, eta horrekin batera sareak, proiektuak eta instituzio babesak hedatu ziren. 2020ko edizioa, pandemiaren ondorioz 2021era atzeratua, “e-HIGA” izenarekin egin zen, eta formatu hibridoa esperimentatu zuen: lankidetzako proiektu lehiaketa bat, poesia, hitzaldiak eta musika uztartuz. 2023ko uztailan, HIGA inoiz baino programa anbiziotsuagoarekin itzuli zen: topaketaren iraupena luzatu zuen, hizlariak eta gaiak dibertsifikatu zituen, ikuspegi eurozentrismoa murriztu zuen eta proiektu kolaboratiboen garapenean jarri zuen arreta. Horretarako, jarduerak dinamikoak, hitzaldiak, tailerrak, proiektu-sorkuntzarako guneak, bisita kulturalak eta ekoizpen digitalak uztartu ziren, mundu mailako ikusgarritasuna handitzeko.

Ibilbide horri jarraituz, HIGA 2025 berriro ere Gasteizen ospatzen da, mundu osoan 55 hizkuntza gutxitu baino gehiagoren ordezkaririk diren 80 gazte bilduz. Bere helburu nagusiak dira biziberritze-ahaleginak sendotzea, gazteen gaitasun politikoa indartzea eta oinarri sozialeko ekimenen epe luzerako iraunkortasuna bermatzea (Telletxea eta Pardina, 2025).

Horrenbestez, lan honek aurkezten duen informazioa ez dator ikerketa akademiko tradizional batetik, baizik eta nazioarteko biziberritze ekimen batetik, bi urtean behin egiten diren topaketen bidez gauzatzen dena. Zehazki, datuak HIGA 2025ean oinarritzen dira, bai izen-emate erregistroetan, bai topaketen aktibista eta akademikoek partekatutako zituzten esperientzia eta gogoetetan. Gainera, egileen ibilbideak datoz, eta Ainhoa Pardinak eta Albert Badosak ikerketa akademikoak aktibismoarekin uztartzen dute. Lauak zuzenean inplikaturik daude HIGAREN antolaketan, eta horrek bermatzen du oinarri sozialeko praktika eta ikuspegi akademikoaren arteko etengabeko elkarriketa.

HIGA 2025eko Programa

Bost eguneko egitarauak osagarriak ziren hainbat jarduerak integratu zituen, prestakuntza, trukea eta sormena uztartzeko asmoz:

- Truke-guneak:** Talde-dinamika eta komunitateen aurkezpenak lehenetsi ziren, konfiantza eraikitze, giro atsegina sortzeko eta elkarlan oinarri komuna ezartzeko.
- Hitzaldiak:** Egun bakoitza gai nagusi baten inguruan antolatu zen—hizkuntzak eta artea eta kultura; hizkuntzak eta ingurunea; eta hizkuntzak eta teknologia—, eta adituek parte-hartzaileen arteko elkarriketa sustatu zuten.
- Tailerrak:** 90 minutuko saioek kontzeptuak praktikara eraman zituzten, ikaskuntza aktiboa, parte hartzaileen arteko trukea eta soluzioen diseinu kolektiboa bultzatuz.
- Proiektu-sorkuntzarako gunea:** Talde mistoek komunitateen arteko eskala txikiko ekimenak diseinatu zituzten, topaketa osoan zehar garatu eta azken egunean aurkeztuak.
- Talde-jarduerak eta aisialdia:** Bisita kulturalak, jarduerak sozialak eta dinamika kolektiboak talde-identitatea sendotu zuten eta tokiko testuinguruan murgiltzea ahalbidetu zuten.

Jarduerak horiek bost ardatz tematiko nagusirekin bat egin zuten: gazteria eta hizkuntza-politika; hizkuntza eta ingurumenaren arteko harremanak; artea eta kultura biziberritzearen tresna gisa; teknologia eta aktibismo digitala; eta hizkuntza iraunkortasunerako plangintza estrategikoa. Guztira, gazteek aldaketa estrukturala gidatzeko duten gaitasuna nabarmendu zen—politika-eztabaidak eraldatuz, hizkuntza gutxituen ikusgarritasuna espazio urbanoetan handituz, ezagutza ekologikoa dokumentatuz eta berrikuntza teknologikoa sustatuz—, HIGA Plaza plataforma digitalaren bidez lagunduta (Telletxea eta Pardina, 2025).

Helburu horiek gauzatzeko, programa honela egituratu zen:

HIGA 2025		EGITARAUA			UZTAILAK 14-18
	Astelehena hizkuntza biziberritzea ...	Asteartea ...eta artea eta kultura	Asteazkena ...eta ingurumena	Osteguna ...eta teknologia	Ostirala itxiera
08.00 AM		gosaria	gosaria	gosaria	gosaria
09.00 AM		hitzaia	hitzaia	hitzaia	finantziatzaia
10.00 AM		mahai- ingurua	mahai- ingurua	hitzaia	tailerra
11.00 AM		kafe	kafe	mahai- ingurua	kafe
12.00 PM		hitzaia	kafe	mahai- ingurua	lankidetzatzaia aurkezpena
01.00 PM		tailerra	mahai- ingurua	tailerra	amaiera- ekitaldia
02.00 PM	inaugurazio- ekitaldia	bazkaria	bazkaria	bazkaria	
03.00 PM	linguapax	Hitzaia laburra	tailerra	Hitzaia laburra	
04.00 PM	informazio orokorra				
05.00 PM	izotza hausteko ariketak	lankidetzatzaia	lankidetzatzaia	lankidetzatzaia	
06.00 PM	euskara klasea				
07.00 PM	hitzaia	aisialdia	natura parkera bisita	azoka	
08.00 PM	aisialdia	afaria	afaria libre	afaria	
09.00 PM					
10.00 PM	kontzertua	film- emanaldia	dantza plaza	mikrofona irekia	
11.00 PM					

1. irudia: HIGA 2025: programa

Emaizak

Hizkuntza ahulen eta garapen jasagarriaren arteko lotura

HIGAK erakusten du Garapen Jasagarriko Helburuen (GJH) markoarekin bateragarritasun handia duela eta hainbat helbururen aurrerapenean ekarpen esanguratsua egiten duela: hezkuntza eleanitzaerako sarbidea indartzen du (GJH 4) (Idiazabal eta Pérez-Caurel, 2019); diskriminazio linguistikoari aurre egiten dio (GJH 10) (García-Azkoaga eta Idiazabal, 2021); komunitate inklusibo eta jasagarriak sortzen laguntzen du (GJH 11); ezagutza ekologiko tradizionala babesten du (GJH 13) (Gorenflo eta beste, 2012); justizia eskuratzeko hizkuntza indigenen bidezko berdintasuna defendatzen du (GJH 16) (Marinotti, 2017); eta lankidetzatzaia globalak ahalbidetzen ditu nazioarteko sareen bidez (GJH 17). Alderdi anitzeko ikuspegi horren bitartez, HIGAK hizkuntza biziberritzea zeharkako tresna gisa kokatzen du, gizarte orekatuagoak, erresilienteagoak eta iraunkoragoak eraikitzeke.

Horrez gain, HIGA 2025eko ingurumen-ardatzak azpimarratzen du hizkuntza-aniztasunak nola egin diezaiokeen ekarpen esanguratsua beste GJHei, bereziki klima-ekintzari eta biodibertsitatearen babesari. Gorenflo eta bestek (2012) azpimarratu bezala, hizkuntza gutxituen galerak askotan ezagutza ekologiko tradizionalaren galera paraleloa dakar. Testuinguru horretan, HIGAk hizkuntza ezagutza ingurumen eta kultur ezagutza transmititzeko bektore gisa aitortzen du, eta aldi berean sustatzen du praktika ekologiko lokalak dokumentatzea eta ingurumen-narratiba eleanitzak garatzea.

HIGAk, gainera, erantzun proaktiboa eskaintzen dio hizkuntza-aniztasunaren bazterketari, eta 2030 Agendan 18. GJH helburu instituzionala izan dadin babesten du. Helburu horrek bermatu, sustatu eta biziberritu egingo lituzke hizkuntza gutxituak, indigenak eta ahulak, garapen jasangarriaren osagai integralen gisa. Haren helburu operatiboen artean lirake: hizkuntza-aniztasuna sistematikoki txertatzea hezkuntza formal eta ez-formalean; hizkuntza gutxituetan herriarrek zerbitzu publikoetara sarbide berdintsua izatea (Idiazabal eta Pérez-Caurel, 2019); hizkuntza-eskubideen babes juridikoa; hizkuntza horien presentzia handitzea hedabideetan eta eremu digitalean; eta ezagutza tradizionalaren aitortza ingurumenaren gobernantza parte-hartzailean (Olko eta Radding, 2024).

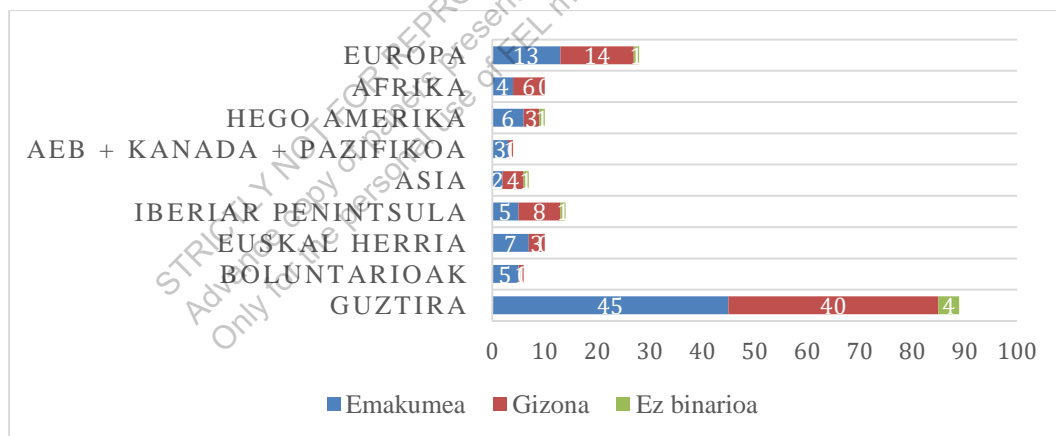
Aurkezpenak, halaber, HIGA 2025etik espero diren ikaskuntza estrategiko nagusiak azpimarratuko ditu: (i) hizkuntza biziberritzeko prozesuak laguntzeko tresna digitalen—hala nola adimen artifiziala, sare sozialak eta Wikimedia bezalako kode irekiko ekimenak—ebaluazioa; (ii) hizkuntza-aniztasunaren eta ingurumen iraunkortasunaren arteko elkarguneen analisi kritikoa; eta (iii) HIGA Plaza plataforma sendotzea, aktibista gazteen arteko etengabeko lankidetzarako azpiegitura global gisa.

Horren bidez, HIGAk gazte-aktibismo jasangarriko ikuspegi bat artikulatzen du, hizkuntza gutxituak nazioarteko garapen agendetan erdigunean kokatuz.

Parte-hartzaileak

Generoa

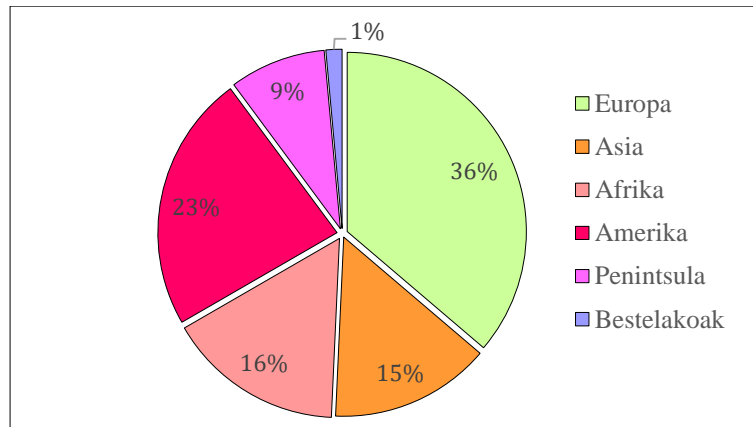
Generoari dagokionez, banaketa ia orekatua izan zen, gizonak eta emakumeak antzeko proportzioetan ordezkaturak egon baitziren. Antolatzaileak kontuan hartu gabe, 89 gazte parte-hartzaileen artean, 45ek emakume gisa identifikatu zuten euren burua eta 40k gizonez. Horrez gain, 4 parte-hartzailek ez-binario gisa identifikatu zuten euren burua, hurrengo irudian erakusten den bezala.



2. irudia: Generoa

Jatorria

HIGA 2025ek 69 hizkuntza-komunitate bildu zituen guztira: 25 Europatik, 11 Afrikatik, 10 Asiako herrialdeetatik, 16 Ameriketatik, 6 Iberiar penintsulatik eta 1 beste eskualde batzuetatik, hurrengo irudian ikus daitekeen bezala.



3. irudia: HIGA2025eko hizkuntzak

Ordezkaritzaren aniztasuna adierazten du hurrengo zerrendak:

- Europa: eskoziako gaelikoa, silesiera, Lemko-rusyn, kaxubiera, bielorrusiera, frisia (Mendebaldeko frisia), irlandera, kernowera, galiziera, galesa, siziliera, lorraineko erromantzea, okzitaniera, sardiniera, Krimeako tatartarra, aromaniera, korsikera, karelera, ladinera, frankoproventzala/arpitana, goi- eta behe-sorabiera, jiddisha, Burgenlandeko kroaziera eta bretoiera.
- Asia: Ma, No, Kol, santali, ekialdeko Minyag, laz, ojibwe, Lhoba/Tani, saraiki, buryat, ijito-hizkuntzak (romani) eta kurduera.
- Afrika: amazigh rifarra, amazigh kabila, amazighera, etche, dagbani, nubiera, ibibio, vanuma, lubwisi, tyap eta arabiera hassaniyya.
- Amerikak: wolastoqey, Spokane Salish, hñöhñö, náhuat, kitxua (Quechua), maayat'aan, palenquero, kichwa, Yukateko maia, garifuna, uspantekera, mapudungun, mojeño trinitario, muysca, kaqchikel maia eta mixtekoa/tu'un savi.
- Iberiar Penintsula: galiziera, asturiera, katalana, euskara, Kataluniako zeinu-hizkuntza eta Espainiako zeinu-hizkuntza.
- Besteak: esperantoa.

Guztira, komunitate horiek erakusten dute hizkuntza gutxituen eta indigenen bizitasuna eta heterogeneotasuna eskualde desberdinetan.

Programaren edukiak

Aurrez azaldu den programaren oinarrietan eraikita, atal honek HIGAk eskaini zituen jardura nagusien ikuspegi orokorra aurkezten du.

Irekiera, itxiera eta gogoeta guneak

Aurreko edizioetan eskuratutako esperientziatik abiatuta, bai hasiera-ekitaldia bai amaiera-ekitaldia inklusiboak eta harrera onekoak izan ziren, parte-hartzaileei—gehienek aurrez elkarrekiko harreman gutxi zuten—taldean pixkanaka integratzeko aukera emanez. Sentimenduak adierazteko eta esperientzia pertsonalak partekatzeke une espezifikoak oso eraginkorrak izan ziren talde-kohesioa hasieratik eraikitzeke. Programaren intentsitatea gorabehera, arratsalde libre batzuk eta jardura aukerakoak ere txertatu ziren, parte-hartzaileek euren energia kudeatu eta harremanak sendotu ahal izateke, saio egituratuetatik harago.

1. eguna: Hizkuntzen biziberritzea artearen eta kulturaren bidez

Hizkuntza gutxituetako ahozko inprobisazioari buruzko hitzaldi batek (bereziki bertsolaritzan eta glosan oinarritua) teoria eta erakustaldi praktikoa uztartu zituen. Ondoren, mahai-inguru bat egin zen: *“Etorkizuna Berreskuratzen: Hizkuntzak, Kultura eta Gazteriaren Indarra”*. Saio batean Hizkuntza Eskubideen Adierazpen Unibertsala aurkeztu zen (PEN Català), eta ondoren, hizkuntza gutxituetan abestiak sortzeko tailer sortzaile batek talde-lana sustatu zuen. Egunari amaiera emateko, parte-hartzaileen hitzaldi laburrak aurkeztu ziren.

2. eguna: Hizkuntzen biziberritzea eta ingurunea

Europako komunitate indigenetan meatzaritzak dituen eraginei buruzko hitzaldi batek eztabaida ireki zuen. Ondoren, hizkuntza, migrazioa eta komunitateen biziraupenari buruzko mahai-ingurua egin zen. Mediterraneoeko uharteetako esperientziek ikuspegi konparatiboa zabaldu zuten. Tailer batean, komunitate-narratibak eta hizkuntza-espazioen mapaketa landu ziren (Salma Halifa eta Alexandra Philbin), ingurumen- eta hizkuntza-loturak praktikan txertatuz.

3. eguna: Hizkuntzen biziberritzea eta teknologia

Bi hitzaldi nagusi aurkeztu ziren: hizkuntzen ikaskuntzarako diseinu adimentsua (Stanisław Pstrokoński) eta aktibismoan dagoen arrakala digitala eta interseksionalitatea (Mashrur Imtiaz). Ondoren, mahai-inguru bat egin zen: *“Hashtagetatik Sendatzera: Teknologia Herri Gutxituen Ongizaterako”*. Saio horrek lotura izan zuen tailer batekin, LinguaLibre eta Wikitongues tresnak eta hizkuntza gutxituentzako eskaintzen zituzten aukerak aztertuz. Gainera, parte-hartzaileen ekimenak aurkezteko hitzaldi laburrak izan ziren.

Proiektu-sorkuntzarako gunea

Parte-hartzaileek elkarlanean diseinatu zituzten proiektuak. Dinamika horrek talde arteko harremanak sendotzeaz gain, helburu nagusi bat izan zuen: biziberritze-ekimen zehatzak sortzea. Proiektu batzuek jarraipena izango dute topaketatik harago; beste batzuk, berriz, etorkizuneko eszenarioen diseinurako ariketa izan ziren. Adituen laguntzarekin, proiektuak arlo tematikoen arabera diseinatu ziren.

Sortutako proiektu batzuk adituen gidaritzapean gauzatu ziren:

- *Hizkuntza Gutxituak Nola Irakatsi* [Maximilian Hassatzk];
- Antzerki tailerra: *“Ama-hizkuntzak – Hizkuntza Eszenaratzea / Entzuteko Modu Berriak”* [Rebekka Bangerter];
- Wikimedia Proiektua [Mentxu Ramilo];
- Hizkuntza-politika modernoak eta etorkizunera begirakoak sustatzeko proposamenak [Tomasz Wicherkiewicz];
- *Gure Hizkuntzak Dokumentatu eta Zabaldu* [Pau Bofill].

Beste proiektu batzuk, aldiz, parte-hartzaileek eurek autogestionatu zituzten:

- Hizkuntza gutxituak eta klima-aldaketa uztartzen dituen gida bisual eleanitza;
- Diskriminazio linguistiko eta arrazialaren aurkako kartel-kanpaina;
- Praktika linguistiko eta kultural onen mapa kolaboratiboa;
- Paisaia linguistikoa hobetzeko proposamenak;
- Komiki labor eleanitza; hizkuntzak eta gazteria;
- Hizkuntza-aniztasunari buruzko mahaiko jokoa;
- *Gure Hizkuntzak, Gure Indarra*: esperientzia pertsonalen bideo laburrak;
- Podcasta: *Genero eta Hizkuntzei buruzko Ahots Anitzak*;
- Abesti eleanitza sortzea erritmo tradizionalekin eta estilo garaikidearekin;
- Hizkuntza-aktibismoaren eskema;
- Hizkuntza-aniztasunaren eta inklusioaren aldeko manifestua;
- Hizkuntza Eskubideen Adierazpen Unibertsala berritzeko proposamen kolektiboak.

Jarduera kulturalak

Eguneroko saioak osatu zituzten ekitaldi kulturalak, talde-kohesioa sendatuz. Azpimarratzekoa da QueenKarter partaideak eskainitako kontzertua, abestuz eta dantzatzuz giro bizia sortu zuena; parte-hartzaileek egindako dokumentalak eta *Endangered Languages Project* erakutsi zituen zinema-saioa; Salburua Natur Parkera egindako bisita gidatua,

arratsaldeko *dantza plaza* batekin; eta laugarren egunean egin zen mikro irekiko saio ahaztezina. Denborak muga jarri bazuen ere, ekitaldiek parte-hartzaileen talentu artistiko handia agerian utzi zuten, eta barne-kohesioa zein gizartearekiko harremanak sakondu zituzten.

Ebaluazioa eta etorkizuneko ikuspegiak

Oro har, aurrez ezarritako helburuak bete egin ziren: topaketak aktibatu, modu kritikoan trebatu eta saretu zituen mundu osoko hizkuntza gutxituetako gazte hiztunak. Mugarria eta katalizatzailerak izan zen. Hala ere, etorkizunari begira, hainbat hobekuntza-eremu identifikatu dira. Batez ere, antolatzaileek baliabide eta babes gehiago eskaini beharko lukete HIGA noizean behingo topaketa batetik prozesu jarraitu batera igaro dadin—esaterako, parte-hartzaileek gidatutako proiektuetarako finantzaketa edo baliabideen erraztasuna bultzatuz.

Ondorioak

HIGA 2025eko esperientziak erakusten du hizkuntzen biziberritzea ezin dela bereizi iraunkortasunari, ekitateari eta justizia globalari buruzko eztabaida zabalagoetatik. Bigarren mailako kezka gisa hartu beharrean, hizkuntza-aniztasuna garapen jasangarriaren dimentsio funtsezko gisa aurkezten da. Hizkuntza gutxitu eta ahulak hitz egiten dituzten gazteen protagonismoa erdigunean jarritz, HIGAk erakusten du oinarri sozialeko aktibismoak nola izan dezakeen inpaktu globala, gazteriaren eginkizun eraldatzailea nabarmenduz etorkizun inklusibo eta erresilienteak eraikitzeko bidean.

Lotura hori bereziki argia da Nazio Batuen Garapen Jasangarriarako Helburuen (GJH) esparruan kokatuta. 2030 Agendak hezkuntza, inklusioa eta ingurumenaren babesa lehenesten dituen arren, ez du hizkuntzen papera aitortzen ezagutza, identitatea eta parte-hartzea sustatzeko sektore gisa. HIGAk hutsune hori zuzenean betetzen du, erakutsiz hizkuntzen biziberritze-ahaleginek hainbat helburu aldi berean aurreratzen dituztela: hezkuntza eleanitzera sarbidea zabaltzea (GJH 4), diskriminazioa eta desberdintasunak murriztea (GJH 10), komunitate jasangarriak indartzea (GJH 11), klima-ekintzarako funtsezko ezagutza ekologikoa babestea (GJH 13), justiziara sarbidean hizkuntza-eskubideak bermatzea (GJH 16) eta lankidetzat transnazionala bultzatzea (GJH 17). Horrela, hizkuntzen biziberritzea ez da agendaren osagarri gisa aurkezten, baizik eta iraunkortasuna lortzeko tresna transbertsal gisa.

Ikuspegi horretatik, hizkuntza gutxitu, indigena eta ahulentzako 18. GJH izateak premia berezia hartzen du. Helburu horrek beharrezko aitortza instituzionala emango lioke hizkuntza-aniztasunari iraunkortasunaren zutabe gisa, eta aldi berean, helburu operatiboak ezarriko lituzke, besteak beste: hezkuntza eta babes juridikoa; eremu digitalean presentzia; eta ezagutza tradizionalaren txertaketa ingurumenaren gobernantza parte-hartzailean. Horren bidez, garapen globaleko agendak komunitate horien errealitateekin lerrokatuko lirateke, hizkuntza identitatearen eta biziraupenaren funtsezko elementu baita.

HIGA 2025ek, gainera, erakusten du printzipio horiek praktikan nola gauza daitezkeen. Bere programak—hitzaldiak, tailerrak, proiektu kolaboratiboak eta jarduerak kulturalak uztartuz—gazteak ez bakarrik parte-hartzaile gisa baizik eta lider gisa mobilizatu zituen. Adierazpen artistikoaren, ikuspegi ingurumenaren eta berrikuntza digitalaren integrazioak biziberritzearen izaera multidimentsionala berretsi zuen, eta haren potentziala agerian utzi zuen eremu desberdinetan aldaketa estrukturala eragiteko. Topaketan sortutako proiektuek gazteriaren sormen eta ekintza-gaitasuna frogatu zuten, tokiko errealitateak erronka globalekin lotuz.

Azken batean, HIGA 2025ek baieztatzen du hizkuntza-aniztasunaren babesa ezin dela bereizi gizarte bidezko eta jasangarrien eraikuntzatik. GJH 18aren beharra artikulatuz eta gazteen gidaritzapean komunitatean oinarritutako ekintza ereduak aurkeztuz, hizkuntzak ez dira soilik ondare kultural gisa ulertzen, baizik eta baliabide estrategiko gisa, etorkizun bidezko, inklusibo eta jasangarriak eraikitzeko.

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Language Activism for Minority Languages: Analysis of Twitter/X Campaigns to Promote the Use of Catalan

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Abstract

This study focuses on campaigns organised around the use of hashtags on social networks to promote the presence and use of Catalan, a minority language, in online contexts. These campaigns were designed by individual speakers or non-institutional collectives as a form of language activism that aims to contribute to the vitality of the Catalan language. Starting from three hashtag campaigns launched in 2022 –#Dispositiusencatalà ('devices in Catalan'), #Googleencatalà ('Google in Catalan') and #Netflixencatalà ('Netflix in Catalan')–, a digital ethnographic approach was employed to define the field under study, which included not only the hashtagged posts made on social media, but also other sources that emerged from the campaigns, such as mass media news. The qualitative analysis aims to establish how these campaigns were organised, how they were enacted, the awareness they raised and the results they achieved (if possible). Moreover, a complementary quantitative analysis of #Dispositiusencatalà (which generated over 14,000 posts and retweets) sheds some light about the specific way in which this particular digital affordance was employed by users. The results aim to offer an example of linguistic activism that can hopefully be replicated for other minority or endangered languages.

Introduction

Internet can provide a unique opportunity for the revitalization and maintenance of minority and endangered languages (Crystal 2000; Buszard-Welcher 2001; Welcher 2012; Cunliffe et al. 2013), and more particularly social media (Mayeux 2023), a context where the potential for language management by individuals needs to receive more attention (De Bres 2015; Pérez-Milans and Tollefson 2018). Nevertheless, in digital contexts the use of majority languages is still dominant, which can lead to linguistic homogenization (Belmar 2020) and become a challenge for languages and cultural diversity (Vincze & Moring 2018). Despite the fact that this situation can promote fundamental forms of inequality, which are often at the root of the very challenges for which the SDGs have been established, languages are not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, and represent “the missing link in the global debate on sustainability” (Romaine 2019: 41).

Context and framework

To combat this situation, and beyond the launch of institutional campaigns organised by the government, there have been many popular campaigns, organised by speakers, that aim to promote the use of minority languages in different contexts, particularly through the use of hashtags. Hashtags have different functions in social networks such as Twitter/X, since they generate searchable talk (Zappavigna 2015), allowing for the creation of communities and interpersonal relationships online. This particular digital affordance can be employed for ‘algorithmic activism’ (Maly 2018; Treré & Bonini 2022), since the visibility of certain posts on various social media platforms can be influenced by them. Previous studies show that hashtags have been widely used to organise social activism (see, for example: Chaudhry 2014; Fernández-Planells et al. 2014; Nacher 2021; Sinpeng 2021; Wang & Zhou 2021; Natalia et al. 2023; Shahin & Hou 2025). This includes activism promoting the use of minority languages as well (Ní Bhroin & McMonagle 2020; McMonagle & Ní Bhroin 2023).

This study focuses on the use of hashtags on social networks to promote the presence and use of Catalan online. Previous research focusing on the use of hashtags on social media in Catalan language reveals that they are used to pinpoint content that discusses the minority language or indicate content created in this language (Belmar 2019; Tudela-Isanta & Milà-Garcia 2022). An example of this is the hashtag #estiktokat, created by young social media creators on TikTok to index the presence of Catalan in this social network (Milà-Garcia & Tudela-Isanta 2022). However, the use of Catalan in relation to language activism campaigns has not yet been studied. In the context of this study, language activism is approached from a fluid, non-essentialist conceptualisation that encompasses “interventions in metapragmatic discourses and acts of linguistic citizenship” (Puchowski 2022: 179, drawing from De Korne 2021). Following Spolsky’s (2021, among others) definition of language self-management, in which

speakers simultaneously create, implement, receive and evaluate language policies, McNulty (2024) introduces the notion of collective language self-management, where the agent is now a group of speakers. This process, which is carried out by speakers that use social media platforms, maintains the link between self-management and individual language beliefs and ideologies, and it also reinforces the potential these actions have to bring about social transformations, expanding beyond micro-language planning actions (McNulty 2024). This notion aligns with the view that language planning and policy can be implemented by individuals, who become active agents for language maintenance and revitalisation, independently from macro-level policy or initiatives (Baldauf, 2006; Nic Giolla Mhichila, Lynnb and Rosati 2020).

Corpus and methodology

In 2022, three hashtags related to Catalan became particularly relevant on Twitter/X: #DispositiusEnCatalà, directed at users and asking them to change the language of their devices to Catalan; #GoogleEnCatalà, which was created to ask Google to offer Catalan in all its services, and #Netflixencatalà, through which users announced that they would cancel their subscription to the service due to the lack of audiovisual products offered in Catalan, particularly in those cases where a version of a particular movie or TV show had already been dubbed or subtitled in Catalan. By adopting a digital ethnographic approach, these three hashtags became the starting point for the field that emerged once we engaged reflexively with them and with the discourse generated around them (Varis & Hou 2019) beyond the affordances of the original source, in an effort to define the boundaries of a project that demanded methodological flexibility (Hine et al. 2009). Therefore, once the objective of the project was defined, the field was constructed (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz 2013), which involved “efforts to accommodate and interweave sets of relationships and engagements developed in one context with those arising in another” (Vered Amit 2001: 6), by viewing digital platforms as mediators that shape the performance of social acts instead of merely facilitating them (van Dijk 2013).

As a result, the study includes data as diverse as digital articles about the hashtags, interviews on media outlets, a change.org petition or a post on the meeting point for authors who write Viquipèdia's articles (Wikipedia in Catalan). By qualitatively analysing this content, we explored the mechanisms used in the organisation of these campaigns, the following they gained and the goals they achieved. Moreover, in order to delve deeper into the use of hashtags, all posts made on Twitter/X using #DispositiusEnCatalà were automatically extracted using Twitter's API. Results show the different strategies users employed to include hashtags in their posts with the aim of amplifying its reach and, hopefully, becoming viral in order to make a difference: while some users retweet the text of previous posts made by big and well-known entities and institutions, others prefer to insert the hashtag within a personalised post. By combining the analysis of the posts with newspaper articles and other media extracts, the development and impact of these campaigns can be described, and the results can serve as possible actions to undertake (or avoid) as well as examples to reveal the needs of minority language users.

Results

The first hashtag shared by Twitter users was #Netflixencatalà. The campaign was programmed to take effect on 23 June 2022. Interestingly, one of the main promoters of the hashtag, Carme Junyent – a linguist who specialised in endangered languages and linguistic anthropology – came up with the idea while she was being interviewed in a TV programme from the Catalan network. Since 2010 she became a prominent figure concerning matters related to the Catalan language, such as how to approach gender in the Catalan language or the decline in the number of speakers. On Saturday 11 June 2022, Carme Junyent was interviewed on the programme FAQS, where one of the topics under discussion was the minor presence of Catalan on Netflix (via dubbing or subtitles for shows and films) and how difficult it is to improve it. In an intervention, she expressed how she believed that, if the number of people cancelling their Netflix subscription until Catalan was included more notably really became substantial, the platform would need to address this demand. She followed by stating that, unfortunately, Catalan speakers are not aware of their strength or they simply do not have the will to fight for their language. Following the TV programme, on Sunday Junyent posted a poll on Twitter (her account had 20,000 followers), asking users whether they would cancel their Netflix subscription as a joint action until the platform added more content Catalan. Although she claimed that 10,000 votes were needed to reach a significant result and only 8,162 votes were cast, 52 % of users answered “Yes”. As a result, on Monday 13 June she posted a thread in which she explained why the result, from her point of view, warranted a subsequent action, and her proposal was for those who were willing to cancel their Netflix subscription on 23 June. It was not meant to be a campaign, but an attempt to make Catalan voices heard: “If they underestimate me, at least I will not be paying them to do so. If they underestimate my language, I can always say no” (translation from Catalan). On 19 June, Junyent also published an opinion piece on the digital newspaper Vilaweb, where she recounted everything that had happened those last days and sharing her attempt to make a difference.

As a result, on 23 June 2022 there were hundreds or even thousands of tweets (according to the newspapers who published articles about it) in which users stated that they had cancelled their Netflix subscription. The tweets were

written in Catalan and in English, included the hashtag #Netflixencatalà and usually tagged @Netflix or @NetflixES, or even Reed Hastings, co-founder and chairman of the media platform. The text of the posts, beyond the use of hashtags and mentions was varied: they simply stated that it was done, they explained the reason behind the cancellation, they offered information about Catalan or they stated the conditions that Netflix had to fulfill for them to subscribe again. In a lot of cases, the posts also included two kinds of images: on the one hand, screenshots of the form Netflix provided to cancel the subscription, where users had written, under the field “Other” for the reasons behind the cancellation, that the platform lacked content in Catalan; on the other, previously prepared images that other users had shared on Twitter. Unfortunately, since we are not able to access the information on Netflix accounts, the impact of this joint action is difficult to gauge, but officially there was no acknowledgement from the company. However, the movement generated on Twitter cannot be underestimated, even more so considering that it was organised in less than two weeks.

The second hashtag used by Catalan speakers on Twitter was #Dispositiusencatalà, through a campaign that was programmed for 5 July 2022 at 12 pm. This date was chosen precisely because it was the 10th anniversary of the release of the Catalan version of Twitter, specifically the one for the web application, which was achieved thanks to a hashtag campaign on Twitter (#Twitterencatalà) which was supported by 7,000 users, which included F.C. Barcelona, a fact that, according to organiser Albert Cuesta, tipped the scale towards success. The campaign #Dispositiusencatalà was organised by the account Apps en català (‘apps in Catalan’, @catalapps), an account managed by Catalan language activists that has also been involved in campaigns to add Catalan to Instagram, Twitch and Spotify. The aim was to raise awareness around the importance to configure Catalan as the language of all devices: “Platforms and companies can see the language configuration on their customers’ devices, and they translate apps and webs according to the demand they detect” (translation of a tweet by @catalapps written in Catalan and posted on 1 July 2022). Thanks to the academic access to Twitter’s API, which was freely accessible until 2023, we downloaded the 14,383 tweets that were posted from 5 to 9 July 2022. The quantitative analysis of the corpus reveals different trends. Concerning the language of the posts, all tweets containing text beyond the hashtag and user mentions were written in Catalan. This decision makes sense if we take into account that, this campaign was directed at Catalan speakers. Regarding the content of the tweets, only 758 (5.3 % of the total number of tweets) contained original text: the rest, 14,384 (were retweets of other publications). Among the most prolific creators of original posts, there are individual accounts and also accounts managed by organisations (such as @catalapps, the organiser of the campaign, and @Viquipedia, the account for the Catalan Wikipedia) or by active users in the Catalan Twittersphere (such as @xavidegr (Xavier Dengra)). On the other hand, there were 14,384 retweets of 628 original tweets, some of which were especially successful, with more than 500 retweets. Finally, the text of the tweets mostly urged Catalan speakers to change their devices’ language configuration to Catalan, and to help other people to change theirs as well. In some cases, tweets included even specific instructions to change the language of a specific device, such as an iPhone. Some tweets were accompanied by images that users designed specifically for this campaign. The repercussion of this campaign is also difficult to ascertain, although for a different reason than #Netflixencatalà, since in this case it is challenging to establish whether awareness concerning the need to configure devices in Catalan was reached.

The third hashtag, #Googleencatalà, was the most successful, since it was tweeted more than 40,000 times on 22 July 2022 alone. In this case, several organisations and Catalan activists joined efforts to organise a campaign whose goal was to ask Google to act more responsibly towards Catalan. At the time, while Catalan was a language option available on Gmail, Android and Google Docs, its availability and use differed greatly across Google applications. Among the claims, the organisers denounced the use of non-official Catalan toponyms on Google Maps and the fact that, when Google searches were made in Catalan, the first results given by the search engine were in Spanish. The great reach of the campaign that can be established from the number of tweets is also validated by the fact that general media, such as general Catalan newspapers (with a bigger audience than digital-only media), published articles about it. Moreover, Catalan politicians (active and former members of the Catalan Parliament, and former presidents of the Catalan government) also tweeted using the hashtag. Catalan media associated the politicians that supported the campaign with the Catalan independence movement.

Conclusions

This paper describes and analyses three hashtags campaigns that took place on Twitter in 2022. Although the organisation and the audience diverged among them, they all used a hashtag to reach a goal. The outcome of the campaigns can be difficult to ascertain, but the discourse generated around them cannot be restricted to Twitter, since in some cases these micro-level actions started a discussion at the institutions in charge of macro-level language policy, such as the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan government). Beyond defending and encouraging the use of Catalan and trying to boost its use in digital contexts, these campaigns play a greater role at a bigger scale by promoting digital inclusion, linguistic inequity and institutional responsiveness. These goals can be directly linked to SDG 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries (more specifically, 10.2: “By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status”) and SDG 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable

development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. By studying and describing how these campaigns focused on Catalan were organised, the repercussions they had, the goals they achieved (or failed to achieve) and the accompanying discourse that emerged around them, steps can be drawn and taken to replicate them or to design better strategies for other minority languages.

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Returning to Kormakitis, Returning to Sanna?

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Abstract

This paper focusses on Cypriot Arabic, a severely endangered Arabic vernacular spoken by the Maronite population of the village of Kormakitis as an example of how language revitalization actions implemented in-situ may prompt sustainable development and empower the local community despite adverse social, political and demographic conditions that relate to the massive displacement of the Kormakitis population after the 1974 Turkish invasion.

Taking as an example the organization of SannaKkam, a linguistic summer camp for children organized annually in Kormakitis, I will argue that language revitalization activities can bring children into closer contact with their land and natural space and: (a) foster an understanding of space as a cultural asset and as part of tangible and intangible heritage that must be sustainably preserved and promoted; (b) highlight the role of space to embody elements of identity; (c) strengthen awareness of land and property rights, both individual and collective, an issue of importance given the persisting political context of partition in Cyprus.

Kormakitis Maronites: the community and its language

Since the early 20th century, Cypriot Maronites have lived in four villages in the north of the island: Kormakitis, Asomatos, and Karpasha in the Kyrenia district, and Ayia Marina Skyllouras in the Nicosia district. Kormakitis is best known for its use of Sanna ('our language'), more widely known as Cypriot Arabic, a severely endangered variety. Although there is not currently any verifiable statistics as to the remaining number of speakers, working with the community for more than a decade allows to say that there would currently be no more than 500–700 speakers, with only one third being older native speakers and the rest using the language with varying fluency. Earlier estimates of 900–1,300 native speakers (Karyolemou 2010) point to a sharp decline within a decade, reflecting both the loss of elderly speakers and a breakdown in intergenerational transmission.

Cypriot Arabic was officially recognized as an indigenous minority language by the government of the Republic of Cyprus in 2008 and revitalization efforts have been undertaken since 2013 (Karyolemou, 2019, 2022; Karyolemou & Armotistis, 2020). However, no new speakers actively using the language have emerged to date (Karyolemou, forthcoming). A major obstacle to revitalization is the sociopolitical situation of the Maronite villages, and of Kormakitis in particular, the only place where Sanna has been regularly used throughout the last century, that are all located in the Turkish-occupied north since 1974. Two of them (Asomatos and Ayia Marina) have been converted into military bases and all of them are currently administered by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, that lack policies for minority recognition and protection (Dayioğlu, 2015) and tightly control activities that aim to support languages other than the official Turkish language. As a consequence, any effort by the Republic of Cyprus to sustain Sanna *in-situ* encounters significant challenges.

An enclave community with an enclave language

Sanna belongs to the group of *peripheral Arabic varieties*, a group of varieties that has been defined by Alexander Borg (1994: 42–43, 2004: xix, 2006; see also Roth, 2006/2007; Procházka, 2006/2007; Grigore, 2019) on the basis of their detachment from the core Arabic-speaking area and relocation to regions where they came in contact with and influenced by non-Semitic languages. Sanna was introduced to Cyprus between the 7th and 13th centuries by Maronite immigrants from Greater Syria, Lebanon, and the Holy Land. The exact state of their Arabic vernacular at the time remains unclear (see for some information Lentini, 2004, 2017), as it was exclusively oral until the 21st century. Its transfer as part of the repertoire of a migrant community is not unusual: medieval Cyprus, particularly under Frankish (1192–1489) and Venetian (1489–1571) rule, hosted numerous ethnic and religious groups, each bringing its language, faith, and cultural practices (Grivaud, 2000; Karyolemou, 2005; Nikolaou-Konnari, 2000). Often forming language enclaves (Schreier, 2009; Argenter, 2025), peripheral varieties are conservative retaining old- and pre-Arabic features and, at the same time, innovative having developed new trends under the influence of their contact languages (Newton, 1964; Roth, 1973/1974; Borg, 1985, 2004; Procházka, 2006/7).

In the socio-political context of Cyprus, the term *enclave (people)* / *εγκλωβισμένοι*, has also another meaning. It refers to Cypriot people who refused to leave their villages and homes in Northern Cyprus during the exchange of populations that followed the 1974 Turkish invasion and, thus, remained under the control of the Turkish army and later on under Turkish Cypriot administration. The Maronite villages of Kormakitis and Asomatos are among them.

The enclave population was subject to strict restrictions on movement, residence, property ownership, assembly, and cultural or religious activities, remaining largely confined to their villages. Contact with relatives in the south was not

possible, and communication was limited for years to short messages broadcast by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation. Chronic shortages of food, medicine, and basic goods made the population reliant on supplies provided by the Government of the Republic and distributed by the United Nations in collaboration with the Office of the Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs. Education was tightly monitored by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, teachers were intimidated, and schools were gradually closed. As no children were left to enrol in, Kormakitis primary school was closed in 2002.

Economic pressures also accelerated departure: before 1974 many Maronites worked in administration and government services in nearby towns, but under Turkish Cypriot rule and the shift to Turkish they could no longer retain these positions. Relocation, however, meant losing their homes and properties, that would have been deemed “abandoned” and redistributed to Turkish Cypriots from the south or settlers from Turkey, with no possibility of reclamation. As a consequence, Sanna became an enclave language of an enclave community. Deprived of its youth, Kormakitis turned into an aging community composed mainly of farmers and breeders¹. This population has become a symbol of resistance and perseverance and are often praised for their heroic decision to stay in their villages and become the guardians of the community, reclaiming at the same time their collective right to return to the land of their fore parents. Kormakitis became the object of ‘nostos’, the unfailing and everlasting desire to return to one’s home (Karyolemou, 2018).

Leaving Kormakitis had also negative consequences for *Sanna*, which was already in decline prior to 1974 due to the dominance of Greek (Newton, 1964; Roth, 1973/1974; Borg, 1985). High competence in Greek, gained through schooling, supported social and professional mobility (Rangkou, 1983), but prompted also processes of linguistic and cultural assimilation. Therefore, relocating from Kormakitis and living within Greek-speaking environments after 1974, accelerated the trend toward language shift (Karyolemou, 2019, 2022).

In this context, the enclaved population of Kormakitis are the last native speakers and the only ones capable of transmitting Sanna. Yet, their separation from the wider community makes intergenerational transmission a very difficult task, since sustained contact is essential for maintaining a vernacular minority language.

Language revitalization and sustainable development in the Kormakitis community

Since 2007, the establishment of *SannaKkamp* in Kormakitis—a linguistic summer camp enrolling 70–80 children and adolescents aged 4 to 16 each year—has created new opportunities for intergenerational interaction, the missing link in language transmission (Karyolemou et al., 2020), and among the younger generation of Maronites. The regular presence of young Maronites in the village not only fosters the use of Sanna within families and in the community but also enables the creation of peer networks that persist even after the children return in their homes in the South. Within these groups, the use of Sanna as a cryptic code in the presence of non-Maronite peers has been reported by several young Maronites. The organization of *SannaKkamp* has also raised positive metalinguistic awareness, especially among native speakers, who for the first time recognize their language as a legitimate object of teaching and learning (Bielenberg 2010). The active involvement of older native speakers (55+) and younger Maronite teachers (25–50 years), brings together people with strong linguistic competence and those with pedagogical training working toward the common goal of transmitting Sanna to the younger generation. This joint effort ensures the mutual transmission of language and teaching skills necessary to effectively teach the language and, at the same time, cultivates a shared sense of purpose and commitment.

The teaching programme of *SannaKkamp* comprises several outdoor activities such as hiking, walking, beach walking, treasure hunting etc. During these activities, the participants can interact with the environment, including protected species such as turtles and wild tulips, and reconnect with their land and natural landscape. In the process, they not only improve their knowledge of Sanna but, moreover, get to appreciate the natural and spatial resources of Kormakitis, develop awareness about sustainability, the risks of environmental disconnection and uncontrolled intervention, and the challenges involved in preserving the local fauna and flora.

During these outdoor activities children are able to study places of reference, local placenames and the topography of the wider Kormakitis area, which strongly relate to the history and past of the community. Such knowledge is supported with evidence from speakers’ interviews. For instance, one recurring narrative registered in the Archive concerns the name of Kormakitis, viewed as evidence of their Lebanese ancestry. According to this narrative, Maronites came from Kur, a small village situated on the mount Lebanon; *Kormakitis* is a variation of the second part of the sentence *Naxni jina, Kur ma jiti* (“We came, [the people of] Kur did not”), acting as a reminder of the separation between those Maronites who were willing to leave Lebanon for Cyprus and those who stayed back (Karyolemou, 2018). Whether such an etymology is

¹ The 1974 Turkish invasion left approximately 20 000 Greeks and Maronites trapped in their villages. Their number decreased by half a year after the Turkish invasion: concretely from 20,000 in 1974 to 10,000 in 1975, then 2,140 in 1979 (of whom 587 Maronites), 1,058 in 1985 (of whom 385 Maronites), 669 in 1995, and 345 in 2025. They are concentrated in two areas: the villages of Rizokarpasso and Ayia Triada in the Karpas Peninsula, and the Maronite villages of Kormakitis and Karpashia in the Kyrenia region. Data retrieved from the official site of the Cyprus Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs <https://www.presidentialcommissioner.gov.cy/>.

supported by historical evidence and is accurate or not, does not really matter. What matters is that a specific place becomes a landmark that serves to construct a coherent discourse about the community and its history. In this sense, the above narrative exemplifies how language, toponymy, and mythical beliefs combine to create social cohesion and sustain a sense of collective identity.

Spaces embody knowledge of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including cultural practices. In the Oral Tradition Archive, many narratives refer to places that are invested with a cultural or symbolic value. They illustrate how individual (churches, monasteries, various sites) or generic spaces (crossroads, hilltops, fields) become culturally meaningful in the minority culture. Many of these narratives concern religious places such as churches, shrines and related miracles, others concern common landscapes like caves, rocks or water streams. For instance, several narratives describe traditional beliefs in the therapeutic power of certain places and the rituals associated with them. One of them entitled “Little Antonis and the crossroad of healing”, narrates how a boy was cured of mumps through a ceremony that combines religious practices (reciting prayers, crossing the patient) with elements of folk magic (using animal bones). The choice of a crossroad, a site with a symbolic and mythological importance, but also fundamentally linked to Christianity by its form, highlights how natural landscapes acquire a cultural and symbolic significance within the minority culture.

Furthermore, and while this is not an explicit instructional goal, the fact that children get familiarized with the land and natural environment through both experiential activities and language instruction strengthens their ability to recognize the land and landscape as their own and are more willing and prepared to re-claim and defend their right to the land against potential contestation and encroachment. Given that property issues are among the most contentious aspects of the Cyprus problem (Erdem & Greer, 2018; Kyriacou, 2009), and that property ownership is closely tied to territorial sovereignty and consequently also to social well-being, such knowledge has important implications for human rights at an individual, communal and political level (Rakopoulos, 2022).

Finally, the return of young people to the village to participate in SannaKkamp –even for the limited time of one week– has been a strong incentive for parents to visit Kormakitis more often and for longer periods of time, thereby stimulating local life and creating greater demand for housing, recreational places, and services. As a result, most houses in the village have been renovated and restored by their owners and are now used for family holidays or during weekends. The return to the village has been encouraged by the Cyprus Government since the 2003 opening of the barricades separating the two parts of the island and the relaxation of movement restrictions by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. The Cyprus Government facilitates the repatriation to the North by granting repatriate status to people who reside in Kormakitis at least four days a week and subsidizing them. Until recently, repatriates were mostly retirees, but since 2020 a few families with young children have also chosen to return to the village permanently.

A bi-communal centre, the Kormakitis Centre for Cooperation, was built with the financial support of the European Union, on the premises of the old primary school. The Centre has several lecture rooms, dormitories, a ceremony hall, and outdoor facilities, thus providing a space for education, cultural exchange and inter-communal dialogue. It also hosts the new primary school re-opened in April 2024 with one teacher appointed by the Government of Cyprus. Although the language of instruction is Greek, the school dispenses Sanna courses to its pupils during afternoon classes and to parents and children on weekends. Several community-based activities are now also regularly organized. For instance, the Kormakitis Environmental Club *Tulipa Cypria* organizes several activities open to both the members of the community and to people from other communities, such as guided nature walks, bird-watching daytrips, and beach activities, which strengthen community bonds while promoting sustainable interaction with the natural environment and making the village wider known.

Conclusion

The case of Kormakitis illustrates how language revitalization and sustainable development can be mutually reinforcing processes. Initiatives such as SannaKkamp shows how language learning in situ can be embedded in environmental (outdoor activities) and cultural activities (narratives on space and landmark) which foster at the same time community resilience, social cohesion, and ecological stewardship.

Such integrated approaches not only support the survival of an endangered language but also contribute to the community's capacity for sustainable development. Revitalization initiatives encourage families to return to the village, stimulate local economic and social life, raise awareness of biodiversity and the need to protect natural resources and reinforce the younger generations' connection to its land and heritage, overall empowering the Maronite community as a whole.

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Hizkuntza gutxituak Garapen Iraunkorreko Helburuak Erdiesteko bitarteko gisa: esperientzia bat Sao Tome eta Principen

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Abstract

Lan honen helburua da hizkuntzek garapen iraunkorrerako duten garrantzia nabarmentzea. Sao Tomen eta Principen egindako esperientzia baten bidez, erakusten du hizkuntza gutxituen erabilerak eragin positiboa duela gizarteko hainbat alderditan. Sãotomensea (edo forroa) bikoizketa-tailer batean eta antzerki-tailer batean integratu zen hurrenez hurren. Tailerretan parte hartu zuten adineko hiztunak, tradizionalak baztertuak, sãotomense lehen hizkuntzatzat zutenak, eta hiztun gazteak lehen hizkuntza portugesa zutenak. Alde batetik, ikusi dugu tailer horiek belaunaldien arteko harremanak eta hizkuntzen arteko komunikazioa errazten dituztela, eta, bestetik, Garapen Iraunkorrerako 2030 Agendari zuzenean lotuta dauden onurak ekartzen dizkiotela gizarteari. Adibidez: osasuna eta ongizatea, hezkuntza, genero-berdintasuna, desberdintasunen murrizketa, helburuak lortzeko aliantzak, eta jakina, 2030 Agendan falta den helburu batena, baina funtsezkoa dena garapen iraunkorreko politikan, arriskuan dauden hizkuntzak gorde nahi baditugu: tokiko hizkuntza minorizatuaren eta hizkuntza- eta kultura-aniztasunaren aintzatespena.

Sarrera

Lan honen helburua hizkuntzen arteko harremana eta Nazio Batuen 2030 Agendan ezarritako Garapen Iraunkorreko Helburuak aztertzea da. Zehazkiago, São Tomen eta Principen egindako proiektu bat aurkeztuko dugu. Proiektu horretan parte hartu dute Euskal Herriko Unibertsitateko (EHU) Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen UNESCO katedrak eta Cooperación Bierzor Sur gobernu kanpoko erakunde espainiarrak. 2022an sinatutako hitzarmen baten bidez, proiektua Jaume I Unibertsitateko ikertzaile batek diseinatu eta garatu zuen, Katedraren laguntza eta jarraibideekin. Akordio horri esker, ekimen bat abiarazi zen, GKEak herrialde horretan egiten dituen jardueretan hizkuntzaren dimentsioa txertatzeko.

Batetik, bikoizketa tailer bat sortu eta diseinatu zen sãotomensez (edo forroz), hau da, komunitateko hizkuntza minorizatuaren batean. Bestalde, antzerki tailer bat egokitu zen GKEak jada planifikatua zuen jardueran forroa eta caboverdiera erabiltzeko; izan ere, ordura arte jarduera portugesean egiten zen. Berrikuntza, beraz, hizkuntza gutxituen erabileraren eskutik etorri zen.

Lan honetan erakutsiko dugu proposamena Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen Katedrak aldarrikatzen duen 18. Helburuarekin (helburu galdua) bat egin ez ezik, 2030 Agendan jasotzen diren beste helburu batzuekin ere badagoela lotuta.

Labur-labur azalduko dugu nola egituratzen diren bi tailerrak eta nola txertatzen diren forro eta caboverdiera jarduera kultural eta ludiko horietan, erakusteko sozializazioan ez ezik, adinekoen ongizatean ere laguntzen dutela, baita hizkuntza minorizatuaren balioan eta 2030 Agendako beste GJH batzuetan ere.

Marko teorikoa

Sao Tome eta Principeko Errepublika Demokratikoa 200.000 biztanle inguru dituen herrialde txiki bat da, Afrikako Gineako golkoan kokatuta dagoena. Hainbat uhartek osatzen dute; nagusiak Sao Tome uhartea eta Principe uhartea direlarik, hain zuzen, herrialdeari izena ematen diotenak (Munduko Bankua, nd). Portugalدار kolonia ohia da eta 1975ean lortu zuen independentzia (Clarence-Smith & Seibert, 2025). Horregatik, bere hizkuntza nagusia, eta ondorio guztietarako

bere hizkuntza ofizial bakarra, portugesa da, nahiz eta herrialdeak hainbat hizkuntza kreol dituen (angolar, caboverdiera, forro eta lung 'ie), Hedatuena forro (edo sãotomensiera) da, nazio mailako hizkuntza kreoleraz jotzen dena (Hagemeijer, 2009). Horrela, proiektu honetan batez ere hizkuntza horretan jartzen dugu arreta, baina baita caboverdieran ere, biak baitira esperientzia bideratu den komunitatean (Santo Amaro) gehien hitz egiten diren kreole hizkuntzak.

Ethnologuek emandako datuen arabera, forro arriskuan dagoen hizkuntza indigena da, zaharrek bakarrik hitz egiten dutena (Gonçalves & Hagemeijer, 2015; Ribeiro de Souza, 2015). Ez da eskoletan irakasten (Hagemeijer et al., 2018), eta ez du erakundeen laguntzarik. Hizkuntzaren transmisioa gero eta txikiagoa da, eta ez dago hizkuntzari lotutako identitate-sentipenik. Beraz, belaunaldi zaharrenen (kreoleari lotutako hizkuntza eta kultura mantentzen dutenak) eta gazteenen (portugesa hizkuntza bakartzat hartu dutenak) arteko aldea gero eta handiagoa da.

Caboverdiera kreoleari dagokionez, Cabo Verdeko langileekin iritsi zen Sao Tome eta Principera 1875 eta 1975 artean, eta bizirik iraun zuenez gaur egun kreolera nazionaltzat hartzen da bertan -ez da kanpoko hizkuntzat hartzen-; izatez ere, artxipelagoan gehien hitz egiten den hirugarren hizkuntza da (Alexandre & Gonçalves, 2018).

Caboverdieraz idazteko Alfabeto Bateratu bat dago (ALUPEC), bertako gobernuak 1998an dekretu bidez onartu zuena eta 2009an formalki Cabo Verde instituzionalizatu zena (Baptista & Bangura, 2010), nahiz eta Sao Tomen eta Principen ez den hizkuntza honi buruzko ekimenik bideratu. Forroaren kasuan ere alfabeto bat proposatu zen eta 2013an argitaratu zen hiztegi bat Portugesa-Forro/Forro-Portugesa (Antunes de Araújo & Hagemeijer, 2013), baina herritarrei ezagutzera eman ere egin ez zaiena.

Portugesa alfabetatze, administrazio eta komunikabideen hizkuntza gisa finkatzeak hizkuntza kreolen izen ona galtzea ekarri du, eta, ondorioz, baita belaunaldien arteko urruntzea ere; horrek, gainera, pobreziaarekin eta superstizioarekin zerikusia duten arrazoiengatik, adineko pertsona pobretuenek gizartean baztertuta geratzeko arrisku kezagarria eragin du (Almeida, 2022).

Garapenerako lankidetzaproiektuetan era askotako ekimenak aurki ditzakegu, eta horietako batzuk kulturaren zentratzen dira; esate baterako, Bierzo Sur Lankidetzaren izeneko gobernu kanpoko erakundea (GKE). Gobernu kanpoko erakunde honek Sao Tomen eta Principen lan egiten du, batez ere, desgaitasunen bat duten pertsonen eta baztertuta geratzeko arriskuan dauden adinekoen osasun eta gizarteratzearekin lotutako proiektuetan. Gizarte-ongizatean eragina izan nahi duen jarduerak da eta, horrenbestez, 3. GJHarekin (Osasuna eta ongizatea) lot dezakeguna.

Urangaren (2013) gisako lanek garapenerako lankidetzaproiektuetan hizkuntza-ikuspegia txertatzearen garrantzia azpimarratzen dute. Gure proiektua gertatzen den testuinguruan, ezin dugu alde batera utzi lotura kultural eta linguistiko hori, horregatik, erakutsi nahi dugu lankidetzaproiektua osatzen duten kultura-ekimenetan bertako hizkuntza txertatuz eta erabiliz, parte-hartzaileen hizkuntza-sentsibilizazioari laguntzen zaiola, baina aldi berean, eragin nabarmena izan dezakeela 2030 Agendako (Nazio Batuek, 2015) garapen jasagarriko beste helburu batzuetan ere. Izan ere, dimentsio linguistikoa kontuan hartuta, 10. GJHn ere (Desberdintasunak murriztea) eragina izan dezakegu. Esan beharrik ez dago proiektuaren espirituaren baitan sareak sortzeko bokazioa ere badagoela, zein 17. GJHarekin (Helburuak lortzeko aliantzak) bat datorrena.

Hizkuntzak balioesteko dugun interesak "17+1" kanpainara garamatza, EHuko Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen Unesco Katedrak bideratzen ari dena, ezaguna ere 18. GJH moduan (Hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna). Eskakizun hori 2030 Agendaren azterketatik dator, bertan ez baita hizkuntzekiko formulazio espliziturik egiten (Uranga, 2013; Garcia-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2021). Gabezia hori Romaine (2019) bezalako egileek ere nabarmendu dute, eta hizkuntzei eta garapen iraunkorrari buruzko txostenetan (Marinoti, 2017) salatu izan da. Era berean, Idiazabalek eta Perez-Caurelek (2019) koordinatutako argitalpen batek, non munduko espezialista askoren ekarpenak biltzen dituen, hizkuntza gutxituek komunitateen garapenean duten garrantzia ulertzen laguntzen digu.

Metodologia

Aipatu bezala, 2030 Agendako zenbait GJHekin erlazioa daitezkeen bi esperientzia aurkeztuko ditugu: a) Belaunaldien arteko tailer bat, ikus-entzunezko animazio bat forroa bikoizteari buruzkoa (xehetasun gehiagorako ikusi: Montroy, 2024; Montroy & Garcia-Azkoaga, 2024); b) Belaunaldien arteko eta hizkuntza anitzeko antzerki-tailer komunitario bat portugesez, forroz eta Caboverdieraz (Garcia-Azkoaga & Montroy, forthcoming). Proiektuak eragiten dituen GJH batzuk aipatu ditugu, baina ezin dugu ahaztu 5. GJH (Genero berdintasuna), hori baita jardueretan parte hartuko duten pertsonak hautatzeko kontuan hartu den baldintzetako bat, bai bikoizketa-jardueran, bai antzerkian. Bikoizketa-tailererako, sexuen arteko parekotasuna lortu zen, bai itzulpen-prozesuan parte hartu zuten adinekoen artean, bai ahots-aktoreen artean. Antzerkian, aldiz, hiru emakumek parte hartu zuten, eta ez gizonek, neurri batean emakumeak gizarte-bazterketaren aurrean ahulagoak direlako (Almeida, 2022), eta horregatik, ikusgarritasun handiagoa eman nahi genielako.

Bi tailerretan, komunitateko adineko pertsonak daude, forroa eta caboverdiera ezagutzen dituztenak. Parte hartzen duten gazteei dagokionez portugesez bakarrik mintzatzen dira, herrialdeko hizkuntza ofiziala eta koloniala.

Esperientzia hori osatzeko, behaketa ez-parte-hartzaileko teknikak aplikatu ziren, bai eta galdetegiak eta parte-hartzaileei egindako elkarriketak ere, tailerrari buruzko pertzepzioa, belaunaldien arteko elkarrekintza eta hizkuntza kreolaren presentzia ardatz hartuta.

Bikoizketa tailerra

Ikus-entzunezkoen aukeraketa kalitate eta egokitasun irizpideen arabera egin zen. Beste era batera esanda, kalitate handiko produktu bat bilatu genuen, Sao Tomeko testuinguru sozial eta kulturalan bideragarria izan zitekeena eta ez zena bereziki konplexua (ezpain-sinkronizazioaren beharrik gabe). Kasu honetan, TV3ko *Una mà de contes* saioko bideo bat erabili genuen ekoizleen oniritziarekin eta laguntzarekin.

Tailerreko parte hartzaileak izan ziren hiru neska eta hiru mutil, komunitateko bost adineko, gidoia forrora itzultzen lagundu zutenak, eta horiekin batera, adineko gizon bat eta emakume bat bikoizketako aktore lanak egiteko hurrekin batera. Bertako iratiak ere kolaboratu zuen, eta horri esker kalitatezko grabazioa egiteko gela bat erabili ahal izan zen. Horretaz gain, komunitatean eskura zeuden baliabide tekniko xumeak erabili ziren: sakelako telefono bat eta boluntarioetako baten ordenagailu eramangarri bat.

Antzerki tailerra

Ekimen honek belaunaldi ezberdinen arteko elkarlana sustatzera bideratuta zegoen. Hori dela, eta haur eta adineko emakumez osatutako talde baten antzezlanaren eszenaratzea zuen jomugan. Hautatutako obraren (Nunila Lópezen *Las estrellas rebotonas*) ahozko itzulpena egin zen forrora eta caboverdierara -adineko parte-hartzaileen ama-hizkuntzak-, aktore lanetan ari ziren emakumeak analfabetoak baitziren. Haurrek portugesez egiten zituzten beren rolak. Tailerraren irizpidea izan zen parte-hartzaile bakoitzak bere ama-hizkuntzan hitz egingo zuela, eta, horren ondorioz, hiru hizkuntzatan antzestutako obra bat sortu zen: forro eta caboverdiera, adineko emakumeek hitz egiten zutena, eta portugesa, haurren ama-hizkuntza.

Ikuspegi metodologikoa testuaren ulermen kontzeptualean zentratu zen, berezkitasuna eta garrantzi kulturala azpimarratuz. Adineko emakumeek lidergo sinbolikoa hartzen zuten emanaldian, eta haurrak – portugesez hitz eginen zutenak – hizkuntza kreolaren murgiltzen ziren giro ludiko eta solidarioan. Bikoizketa tailerrean bezala, parte hartzaileek irizpide zehatzak jarraitu zituzten. Adineko emakumeak lehenetsi ziren, kalteberatasun sozioekonomikoaren eta kreol hizkuntzen gaitasunaren arabera; haurrak, berriz, adinaren (6-12 urte) eta parte hartzeko borondatearen arabera aukeratu ziren. Bi asteko entseguen ondoren, antzezlana lauogeita hamar pertsona inguru erakarri zituen. Besteak beste, haurren familiak eta adineko emakume batzuk, komunitateko beste haur batzuk eta tailerrean parte hartu ez zuten adinekoak, baita Santo Amaro eta inguruko komunitateetako gazteak eta bizilagunak ere.

Emaitzak

Belaunaldien arteko integrazioa eta hizkuntzaren transmisioa sustatzeko sortu zen bikoizketa tailerrak hainbat alderdi positibo azaldu zituen. Jarduera motibatzailetzat eta iradokitzailetzat hartu zen, adinekoek belaunaldi gazteagoei buruz zuten ezagutza nabarmentzen zuena eta zaharren eta haurren arteko elkarrekin esanguratsua errazten zuena. Dinamikak forroarekiko hurbilketa ludikoa eskaintzen zien haurrei, eta horri esker hizkuntzaren oinarritzeko ulermena eta adierazpena hobetzeko gai baitziren. Gainera, onuragarria izan zen adineko parte-hartzaileentzat estimatuak, baliagarriak eta aktiboak sentitu zirelako, eta ekimenak beren ohiko errutina apurtzen lagundu zirelako, "zaharren eta haurren arteko poza eta adiskidetasuna" bezalako sentimenduak sustatuz parte hartzaileen esanetan (D., adineko parte-hartzailea, komunikazio pertsonala, 2023).

Tailerraren osteko galdetegiak agerian utzi zuen haurren jarreretan aldaketa mesedegarria izan zela forroarekiko zein bere hiztunekiko. Gehienek antzeko jarduerekin jarraitzeko eta kreol hizkuntzei buruz gehiago ikasteko interesa agertu zuten. Forroarekiko ikuspegi positiboagoa adierazi zuten, bai erabilera orokorrari dagokionez, bai eskolaren inguruko balizko presentziari dagokionez.

Antzerki-tailerrari dagokionez, eta belaunaldien arteko elkarrekintzari dagokionez, hasieran ez zegoen ia komunikaziorik haurren eta nagusien artean, lehenengoak beren roletan zentratzen baitziren. Hala ere, dinamika horrek bilakaera ona izan zuen, rolak ulertzea eta elkarri laguntzea sustatzen zuen metodologiari esker. Zaharrek ahotsaren modulazioa eta mugimendu eszenikoak bezalako alderdietan gidatu zituzten haurrak, eta haurrek jarraibideak eta aholkuak jarraituz

erantzun zieten beren errendimendua baieztatzeko. Emakume nagusiei ere laguntzen zieten oroimen kontuetan. Atsedendietan, nahiz eta gehienetan bananduta egon, noizbehinkako elkarrekintzak gertatzen ziren, batez ere famili loturen eta bitxikeria linguistikoen inguruan. Parte-hartzaile bakoitzak bere ama-hizkuntzan hitz egiten bazuen ere, entseguetan parte hartu aurretik edo ondoren emakumeen esaldiak portugesez errepikatzeak lagundu egin zien haurrei elkarriketen esanahi orokorra ulertzen, baita inprobisazioak eta akatsak identifikatzen ere, eta horrek agerian uzten du kreoletara modu eraginkorrean hurbildu zirela.

Azkenik, Gobernu Kanpoko Erakundeak kreolerak proiektuan integratzearen balorazioa positiboa egin zuen. Besteak beste, adinekoen gizarteratzea sustatzen duelako, estereotipoen eta aurreiritzien aurka borrokatzen duelako eta haien ongizate kognitibo eta emozionalari laguntzen dion ekimena delako. Bistakoa da, halere, ekimen horiek adinekoen autoestimua indartzeko ahalmena dutela, beren ezagutzak eta trebetasunak erakusteko aukera emanez. Hizkuntzen ikuspegitik ere ekimena positibotzat hartzen da kreolaren kontserbaziorako, komunitatearentzat duen garrantzia nabarmentzen baita proposatutako jardueren bidez.

Haurrei egindako inkestan, hamarretik batek antzerki-jarduera zaharrekin partekatzearen gozamina adierazi zuen, eta antzeko esperientziak errepikatzeko borondatea adierazi zuen. Batzuk etorkizuneko jolas-jardueretan kreolezko hizkuntzetan parte hartzeko uzkur baziren ere, gehienek eskoletan kreolerak irakastearen alde egin zuten.

Lagina mugatua izanik, eta emaitzak ezin badira orokortu ere, egindako lanak iradokitzen du Santo Amaron egindako belaunaldien arteko tailerrak, kreolaren erabilearekin, onuragarriak izan daitezkeela gazteen eta adinekoen arteko elkarrekintza sustatzeko, lankidetzak, kulturartekotasuna eta hizkuntza-transmisioa sustatzeko, bai eta bertako hizkuntza zein adinekoak ikusarazteko ere.

Konklusioa

Tailerrek belaunaldien arteko elkarrekintza sustatzen dute, eta horrek, hizkuntza arteko komunikazioa ahalbidetzez gain, beste onura batzuk ere ekartzen dizkio komunitetari, Garapen Iraunkorrerako 2030 Agendaren helburuekin lotura zuzena dutena, bai ofizialekin, bai EHUko Munduko Hizkuntza Ondarearen Katedrak sustatutako 18. helburuarekin (Garcia-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2021), zehazki, honako hauek:

- 3. GJH. Osasuna eta ongizatea: adinekoen ongizate emozionala eta autoestimua sustatzen du, kulturaren eta hizkuntzaren errealizazioaren bidez.
- 4. GJH. Kalitatezko hezkuntza: tailerrek ikaskuntza esanguratsua sustatzen dute testuinguru ez-formaletan, tokiko ezagutzak, sormena, eleaniztasuna eta trebetasun teknikoak integratzen dute (bikoizketa edo antzerkia, adibidez). Komunitatearen konpromisoa ere sustatzen dute.
- 5. GJH. Generoen arteko parekotasuna: Emakumeen eta gizonen parte-hartze parekidea sustatzen du.
- 10. GJH. Desberdintasunen murrizketa: hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunak ahaldunduz laguntzen du, tradizioz baztertuta egon diren adinekoen eskubide kulturalak eta ongizatea indartzen du.
- 17. GJH. Helburuak lortzeko aliantzak: Ipar eta Hego Globaleko erakundeen arteko lankidetzak, eta komunitate barruko eragileen arteko lankidetzak sustatzen du.
- 18. GJH. Hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasuna: arriskuan dauden hizkuntza indigenen eta haien hiztunen balioa indartzen du. Belaunaldi gaztearen jakin-mina pizten du hizkuntza indigenaren inguruan. Hurbilketa kulturala sustatzen du. Corpus digitalari ekarpena egiten dio eta hizkuntza gutxituan material berriak sortzera bultzatzen du.

Gauzak horrela, beraz, esan dezakegu garapenerako lankidetzak kultureko proiektu horietan hizkuntza-irizpidea txertatzeak eragin zuzena duela herritartasunean, osasunean eta ongizatean, eta, beraz, hezkuntza eraldatzaileari laguntzeko modu eraginkorra izan daitekeela.

Esperientzia horrek agerian uzten du hizkuntzak garapen iraunkorreko prozesuetan duen zeharkako eta ezinbesteko izazera, eta gizarte-ehuna indartzeko duen funtsezko eginkizuna. Horrenbestez, egokia dirudi 18. GJHaren eskaerarekin bat egitea, hizkuntza-aniztasuna eta hizkuntza-eskubideak ardatz izango dituen, gizarte bidezkoagoak, inklusiboagoak eta iraunkoragoak eraikitze funtsezko ardatz gisa. Argi dago 18. GJHak formulazio esplizitu bat merezi duela, ez bada laster amaituko den Agenda honetan, etorkizunean etor daitezkeenetan.

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Minoritised language as an element of SDG empowerment: an experience in São Tomé and Príncipe

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to highlight the importance of languages for sustainable development. Through an experience carried out in São Tomé and Príncipe, it shows how the use of minority languages in development cooperation activities has a positive impact on various aspects of society. Sãotomense was integrated into a dubbing workshop and a theatre workshop. The workshops involved older, traditionally marginalised speakers who maintained Sãotomense as their first language, and young speakers whose first language was Portuguese. On the one hand, we see that these workshops facilitate intergenerational relationships and interlinguistic communication; on the other hand, they bring to the community benefits that are directly linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For instance: health and well-being, education, gender equality, reduction of inequalities, partnerships to achieve the goals, and of course, an objective that is absent in the 2030 Agenda, but essential in sustainable development policies if we want to preserve endangered languages: the enhancement of the value of the minoritised language and of their own linguistic and cultural diversity.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between languages and the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. As a case study, we will examine a project carried out in São Tomé and Príncipe, in which the UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage at the University of the Basque Country (EHU) and the Spanish non-governmental organisation Cooperación Bierzo Sur have collaborated.

The project was designed and developed by a researcher from the Universitat Jaume I, with the support and guidance of the UNESCO Chair as part of a two-year research stay formalised through an agreement signed in 2022. This agreement enabled the launch of an initiative aimed at integrating a linguistic dimension into the activities undertaken by the NGO in the aforementioned country.

On the one hand, a dubbing workshop was created and designed in Forro, a minoritised language of the community in which the activity was conducted. On the other hand, a theatre workshop, already planned by the NGO, was adapted and the proposal incorporated the use of the minoritised languages of the community (Forro and Cape Verdean). It should be noted that before this project, the activities of the NGO were usually developed in Portuguese, so the novelty of the proposal consisted in the introduction of Forro and Cape Verdean. We will show in this paper how the proposal is not only aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 18 (the missing goal) claimed as such by the Chair, but also with other goals included in the 2030 Agenda.

We will briefly explain how the two workshops are structured and how Forro and Cape Verdean are incorporated in these cultural and recreational activities, to show that they not only contribute positively to socialisation, but also to the well-being of the elderly, as well as to the value of minoritised languages and even influence other SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

Theoretical frameworks

The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe is a small African country of just over 200,000 inhabitants located in the Gulf of Guinea. It is composed of several islands, the main ones being the island of São Tomé and the island of Príncipe, which give the country its name (World Bank, nd). It was a former Portuguese colony and gained its independence in 1975 (Clarence-Smith & Seibert, 2025). For this reason, its main language, and to all intents and purposes its exclusive official language, is Portuguese, although the country has several Creole languages (Angolar, Cape Verdean, Forro and Lung'ie) —the most widespread being Forro (or Sãotomenese), which is considered the main national Creole language (Hagemeijer, 2009). Thus, in this project we focus mainly on this language and also on Cape Verdean, since both are the most widely spoken Creole languages in the community of work (Santo Amaro).

According to data provided by Ethnologue, Forro is an endangered indigenous language that is only spoken by elders (Gonçalves & Hagemeijer, 2015; Ribeiro de Souza, 2015). It is not taught in schools (Hagemeijer et al., 2018), nor does it have institutional support. The transmission of the language is decreasing, and there is no sense of identity associated with the language, so the gap between the older generations (who still maintain the language and culture linked to this creole) and the younger ones (who have adopted Portuguese as their sole language) is widening.

As for Cape Verdean Creole, it arrived in Sao Tome and Principe with Cape Verdean labourers between 1875 and 1975 and remained active so that it is now considered a national Creole —it is not so much perceived as a foreign language— and, in fact, it is the third most widely spoken language in the archipelago (Alexandre & Gonçalves, 2018).

There is a Unified Alphabet for the Writing of Cape Verdean (ALUPEC), which the Cape Verdean government approved by decree in 1998 and which was formally institutionalised in Cape Verde in 2009 (Baptista & Bangura, 2010), although no action has been taken in Sao Tome and Principe on this language. The same has happened with the proposed alphabets for Forro Creole and the dictionary Portuguese-Forro/Forro-Portuguese, which was published in 2013 (Antunes de Araújo & Hagemeijer, 2013) and which has not even been made known to the population.

The consolidation of Portuguese as the language of literacy, administration and the media has led to the discrediting of Creole languages, and consequently also to an intergenerational distancing that adds to the already disturbing risk of social exclusion of the most impoverished elderly for reasons related to poverty and superstition (Almeida, 2022).

In development cooperation projects, we can find an enormous variety of initiatives, and some of them focus on culture, such is the case of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Cooperación Bierzo Sur. This NGO works primarily in projects related to health and social integration of people with disabilities and elderly people at risk of exclusion in Sao Tome and Principe. This is an activity that aims to have an impact on social welfare and, therefore, on SDG 3 (Health and Well-Being).

Works such as that of Uranga (2013) stress the importance of incorporating the linguistic perspective into development cooperation projects. In the context in which our experience takes place, we cannot ignore this cultural and linguistic link, so we want to show that, with the incorporation and use of the native language in the cultural initiatives that make up the cooperation project, in addition to contributing directly to the language awareness of participants, it is possible to have a significant impact on several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015). By including the linguistic dimension, we can also have an impact on SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities). It is needless to say that the very spirit of the project underlies a vocation to create networks, which is aligned with SDG 17 (Partnerships to Achieve the Goals).

Our interest in valorising languages leads us to the '17+1' campaign led by the Unesco Chair in World Language Heritage of the UPV/EHU. This demand, which has been translated into SDG 18 (Linguistic and Cultural Diversity), stems from an analysis of the 2030 Agenda in which the absence of an explicit formulation for languages is noted. (Uranga, 2013; García-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2021). This absence has also been highlighted by authors such as Romaine (2019), and denounced in reports (Marinoti, 1917) on languages and sustainable development. Likewise, a publication coordinated by Idiazabal and Perez-Cauel (2019?), to which many world specialists contribute, also helps us to understand the relevance of minority languages in the development of communities.

Methodology

As already mentioned, we will present two experiences that can be related to some SDGs of Agenda 2030: a) An intergenerational workshop on dubbing an audiovisual animation into Forro (for more details see: Montroy, 2024; Montroy & García-Azkoaga, 2024); b) A community intergenerational and multilingual theatre workshop in Portuguese, Forro and Cape Verdean (García-Azkoaga & Montroy, forthcoming). We have already mentioned some of the SDGs on which the Project has an impact, but we cannot forget SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which is one of the conditions taken

into account when selecting the people who participate in the activities, both in dubbing and theatre. For the dubbing workshop, gender parity was achieved among both the elderly participants involved in the translation process and those who served as voice actors. In contrast, the theatre activity involved three women and no men, partly because women are more vulnerable to social exclusion (Almeida, 2022). For this reason, we sought to give them greater visibility.

Both workshops involve older people from the community, who retain knowledge of Forro and Cape Verdean, and young people who have grown up speaking only Portuguese, the country's official and colonial language.

To complement this experience, non-participant observation techniques and the application of questionnaires and interviews with participants were applied, focusing on their perception of the workshop, intergenerational interaction and the presence of Creole languages.

The dubbing workshop

The selection of the audiovisual was based on criteria of quality and adaptability. In other words, we looked for a high-quality product that could be replicated in the social and cultural context of Santomeans and that was not particularly complex to dub (without lip-synchronization). In this case, we used a video from the TV3 programme *Una mà de contes*, with the approval and collaboration of the authors.

The workshop involved three girls and three boys, five elderly people from the community who contributed to the translation of the script into Forro, and one elderly man and one elderly woman who acted as dubbing actors together with the children. The local radio station also collaborated, providing one of its soundproof rooms for a better-quality recording. Apart from that, the recording was carried out with the minimum technical means available to adapt to the reality of the community: a mobile phone and a laptop belonging to one of the volunteers.

The theatre workshop

This initiative involved the staging of a theatrical play by an intergenerational group composed of children and elderly women. The selected play, *Las estrellas rebotonas* by Nunila López, was orally translated into Forro and Cape Verdean Creole—the mother tongues of the elderly participants—through a collaborative interpretation process, as these women were illiterate. The children performed their roles in Portuguese. The workshop was designed on the premise that each participant would perform in their mother tongue, resulting in a play delivered in three languages: Forro and Cape Verdean Creole, spoken by the elderly women, and Portuguese, the mother tongue of the children.

The methodological approach focused on conceptual understanding of the text, emphasising spontaneity and cultural relevance. The elderly women assumed symbolic leadership roles within the performance, while the children—monolingual Portuguese speakers—were introduced to the creole languages in a playful and supportive environment. As in the dubbing workshop, participant selection followed specific criteria. Elderly women were prioritised based on socioeconomic vulnerability and proficiency in creole languages, whereas the children were chosen according to age (between 6 and 12 years) and willingness to participate. After two weeks of daily rehearsals, the play was performed, attracting an audience of approximately ninety people. Attendees included the families of the children and some of the elderly women, other community children and elders who did not participate in the workshop, as well as young people and neighbours from Santo Amaro and neighbouring communities.

Results

The dubbing workshop, which was designed to promote intergenerational integration and language transmission, revealed a variety of positive aspects. It was perceived as a motivating and engaging activity, which highlighted the knowledge of older people to younger generations and facilitated meaningful interaction between elders and children. The dynamics provided a playful introduction to Forro for the children, who were able to improve their basic understanding and expression of the language. Furthermore, the participation contributed to the elders feeling valued, useful, active and encouraging a break from their usual routine, fostering feelings such as 'joy and friendship between elders and children' (D., elderly participant, personal communication, 2023).

The post-workshop questionnaire revealed a favourable change in the children's attitudes towards Forro and its speakers. Most expressed interest in continuing similar activities and in learning more about Creole languages. There was a more positive view of Forro for general use and also for its presence in the school environment.

With regard to the theatre workshop and concerning intergenerational interaction, at first, there was little communication between children and elders, as the former were focused on their own roles. However, this dynamic evolved favourably thanks to a methodology that promoted understanding of roles and mutual support. The elders guided the children in

aspects such as voice modulation and stage movements, and the children responded by following instructions and consulting to confirm their performance. They also supported the ladies in matters of memory. During breaks, although they generally remained separate, there were occasional episodes of interaction, mainly around family ties and linguistic curiosities.

Although each participant expressed themselves in their mother tongue, the strategy of repeating the ladies' phrases in Portuguese before or after their interventions during the rehearsals helped the children to grasp the general meaning of the dialogues, even identifying improvisations and mistakes, which evidences an effective approximation to the Creoles involved.

Finally, the integration of Creoles languages in the project was valued by the NGO as an initiative that fosters the socialisation of the elderly, combats stereotypes and prejudices, and contributes to their cognitive and emotional wellbeing. It was acknowledged that these initiatives have the potential to strengthen the self-esteem of the elderly by allowing them to showcase their knowledge and skills, especially in the preservation of Creole languages, whose relevance to the community is highlighted through the proposed activities.

In the children's survey, nine out of ten expressed enjoyment in sharing the theatre activity with the elders and expressed a willingness to repeat similar experiences. Although some were reluctant to participate in future recreational activities in Creole languages, the majority supported the teaching of Creoles in schools.

Although the sample is limited and does not allow broad generalisations, the results suggest that intergenerational workshops involving the Creoles conducted in Santo Amaro can be beneficial in fostering interaction between young and elderly people, promoting collaboration, interculturality and linguistic transmission, as well as the visibility of the autochthonous languages and the elderly.

Conclusion

The workshops foster intergenerational interaction, which not only allows for interlinguistic communication, but also brings other benefits for the community that are directly related to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both the official ones and Goal 18, promoted by the Chair of World Linguistic Heritage of the EHU (García-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2021), more specifically, the following:

- SDG 3. Health and well-being: By promoting the emotional well-being and self-esteem of the elderly through cultural and linguistic revaluation.
- SDG 4. Quality education: The workshops promote meaningful learning in non-formal contexts, integrating local knowledge, creativity, multilingualism and technical skills (such as dubbing or theatre). They also foster community engagement.
- SDG 5. Gender equality: Promotes equal participation of women and men.
- SDG 10. Reduced inequalities: Contributes to the empowerment of minority language speakers, strengthening the cultural rights and well-being of traditionally marginalised older people.
- SDG 17. Partnerships for the goals: Through cooperation between organisations from the Global North and South, and between actors within the community itself.
- SDG 18. Linguistic and cultural diversity: Enhances the value of endangered indigenous languages and their speakers. Raises the curiosity of the younger generation about the indigenous language. Promotes cultural rapprochement. Contributes to the digital corpus in the Sãotomense language and encourages the generation of new materials.

Furthermore, we can say that the integration of the linguistic criterion in these cultural cooperation projects for development has a direct impact on aspects such as citizenship, health and well-being, and can therefore be an effective way of contributing to transformative education.

This experience highlights the transversal nature of language in sustainable development processes, and its essential role in strengthening the social fabric. This being the case, it seems appropriate for us to join the demand for SDG 18, which focuses on linguistic diversity and linguistic rights, as an essential axis in the construction of fairer, more inclusive and sustainable societies. It is clear that SDG 18 deserves an explicit formulation – if not in this Agenda, which will soon come to an end, then in those that may come in the future.

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Language Use in Sustainability Communication by Universities in the Spanish State on Facebook: A Descriptive Approach through Content Analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of minority and state languages in Spanish universities' communication on Facebook, focusing specifically on sustainability-related content. A content analysis of 1,654 posts from 19 institutions compared language distribution and engagement metrics between sustainability and other topics. Results show that sustainability represents about 13% of university posts, with significant regional variation. Minority languages remain predominant in multilingual contexts (over 82%), and sustainability posts slightly increase their presence, though differences with other topics are not statistically significant. Engagement levels are generally low (21.6 likes per post), and Spanish consistently outperforms minority languages in likes, comments, and shares. However, the gap narrows in the case of sustainability, suggesting that this theme provides a relatively more favorable space for minority language visibility. Overall, the findings highlight both the resilience of minority languages and the persistent structural advantage of Spanish in digital academic communication.

Introduction and theoretical background

Sustainability has become a critical pillar in higher education institutions, not only as a subject of academic research but also as a core aspect of their social responsibility. Universities play a vital role in advancing sustainable development through interdisciplinary research, for example fostering innovation in climate action, or developing solutions for global environmental challenges (Lozano et al., 2013). Moreover, universities serve as microcosms of society, making them ideal platforms for implementing sustainable practices in energy use, waste management, and community engagement (Leal Filho et al., 2019). Integrating sustainability into curricula also prepares students to become environmentally responsible citizens and professionals. Beyond the campus, universities influence policy and raise public awareness, reinforcing their societal impact. Thus, sustainability in academia is not only a research priority but also an ethical commitment, aligning institutional missions with global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Therefore, it is not strange that one of the most common issues in universities' public communication is sustainability (as we will see, around 15% average in higher-education institutions-HEI of multilingual environments of Spain-MES).

In previous studies, we analyzed language use in digital communication within universities without addressing specific topics. In this study, and taking into consideration the perspective of Skutnabb-Kangas (2003; see also Holden & Airas, 2024), which links biodiversity with linguistic and cultural diversity, we focus specifically on sustainability-related posts, comparing the distribution of languages (in terms of average percentages) with the global patterns observed across all university communications, because we aim to quantify whether posts about sustainability have a different pattern of language use than the rest of the posts.

The starting hypothesis is that the theme of sustainability does not generate significant differences in the use of one language or another (especially in the confrontation first language of the State-minority language). However, in some universities, it is indeed possible that differences of some significance may arise. This may be due to the fact that such content —information, actions, and initiatives— is generally more closely tied to less anthropised, more naturalised territories, and therefore exhibits a clearer connection to local identity markers. These elements are often more easily associated with subnational or local identities, as well as with minoritised languages. Moreover, when this type of content is linked to rural environments, it tends to move away from urban normativity (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2019; Ginés-Sánchez et al., 2024), whose frame of reference is broader —typically national or global in scope.

In the previously cited study (Català-Oltra, Martínez-Gras & Penalva, 2023), universities in the Spanish State displayed an average of 77% of posts in the minority language, compared to 44.5% in Spanish and 5.2% in English. This indicates

a clear dominance of the minority language (Catalan, Galician, Basque, etc.) over Spanish in HEI-MES communication on Facebook—an inverse situation to that of other countries, where the State's main language tends to be overwhelmingly dominant. English, meanwhile, occupies a very marginal position, in contrast to the prevailing official discourse that promotes multilingual internationalisation—often a euphemism for Englishisation. At this work, we aim to assess whether this distribution changes when the focus shifts specifically to sustainability-related content.

Methods

The research is focused on a specific social network, Facebook, at HEI-MES and has quantified the use of languages in a population of 19 universities by means of a content analysis. We examined the most recent 100 posts from each university and compared their language use with that of the latest 15 posts specifically focused on sustainability. In addition to identifying the languages used, we recorded key engagement indicators, including likes, shares, and comments. These data will enable comparisons and, subsequently, the possibility of determining whether the differences between overall thematic content and sustainability-related content are statistically significant. A total of 1,654 posts, published between December 28, 2022, and August 13, 2025, were examined in the context of fieldwork conducted from May 14 to August 13, 2025. The analysis was carried out using the 'post' as the primary unit, but also employing 'university' as a unit of synthesis. Descriptive analyses were performed with SPSS 28.0.

Results

The results, in addition to univariate values, will be presented disaggregated by territory. We first set out those related to the behavior of the sustainability variable, before moving on to linguistic aspects.

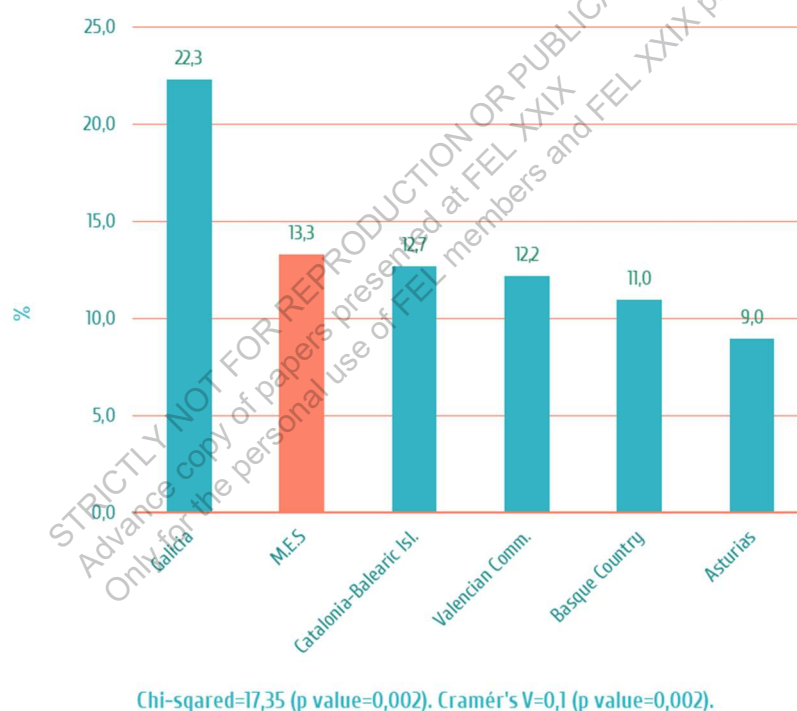


Figure 1: Sustainability-themed posts (average %)

In general, HEI-MES publish just over 13% of their posts on sustainability. Galician universities are clearly the most active in this area, with 22.3%, which explains why territorial differences are statistically significant, although with a low degree of association (Cramér's $V = 0.1$). Part of the Galician figures are supported by the University of Vigo, which exceeds 30%, as does the Catalan Universitat Rovira i Virgili. In contrast, some universities, such as the University of Girona and the University of the Balearic Islands, do not exceed 5%.

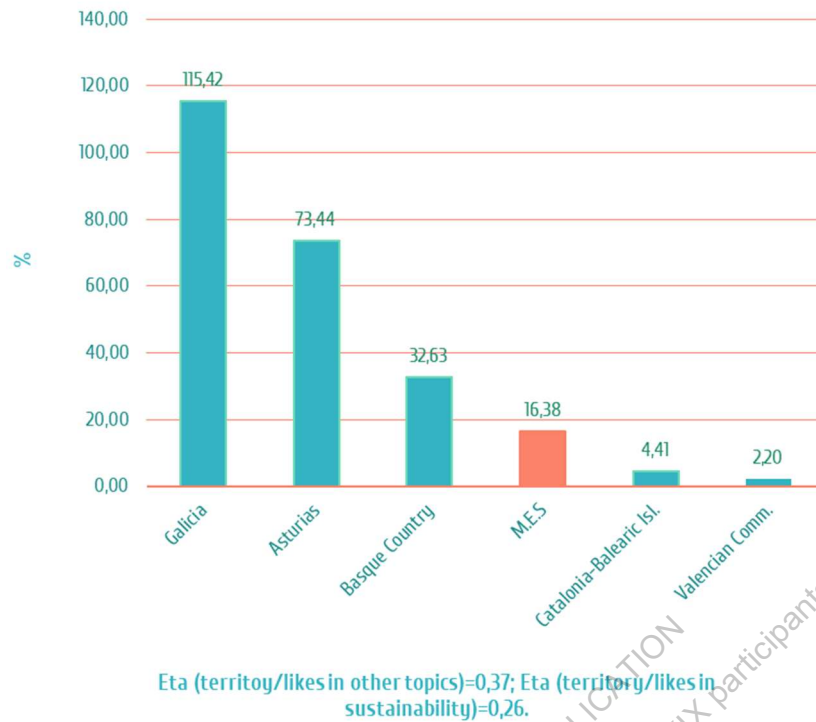


Figure 2: Proportion in which posts on other topics have more likes than sustainability posts

The vast majority of universities receive more likes on posts about issues other than sustainability (on average 16.4% more likes). Within this pattern, Galicia stands out once again: although it is the region that publishes the most about sustainability, it obtains considerably greater engagement (115% more) with posts on other issues than with those focused on environmental topics. Asturias also registers high values and, more generally, the entire Cantabrian-Atlantic basin, in contrast to the Mediterranean basin, where differences between likes on sustainability-related posts and other topics are minimal. Exceptions include the University of Girona (114%) and the University of Alicante (40%), which obtain more engagement from sustainability-related content than from other themes.

Before presenting the results regarding language, it should be noted that the sample/census is highly heterogeneous, with very limited linguistic variation, which has hindered the identification of clearer patterns. Thus, we find a monolingual Spanish model in the cases of the Universities of Oviedo and Miguel Hernández; a monolingual Catalan/Galician model in the Catalan, Balearic, and Galician universities; a distinctly bilingual model observable at the University of the Basque Country and the University of Alicante; and bilingual Valencian models with a bias toward Catalan in the cases of Jaume I and Valencia, and toward Spanish in the case of the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Variability arises mainly from this latter group, since the others display monolithic results that make it difficult to establish trends.

		Minority Language		
		Yes	No	Total
Sustainability Topic	Yes	186	34	220
		84,5%	15,5%	100,0%
	No	1177	257	1434
		82,1%	17,9%	100,0%
Total		1363	291	1654
		82,4%	17,6%	100,0%

Table 1: Use of the minority language depending on whether the topic concerns sustainability

Spanish universities located in multilingual contexts publish their content predominantly in the minority language (82.4%). When examining language use by thematic focus, it is observed that content related to sustainability is disseminated primarily in the minority language (84.5%), a slightly higher proportion than for other topics (82.1%). However, it should be noted that, from a statistical perspective, no significant differences are observed in the choice of

language used by universities to publish their content on Facebook, regardless of whether it is related to sustainability or not.

Let us now examine the details by territory:

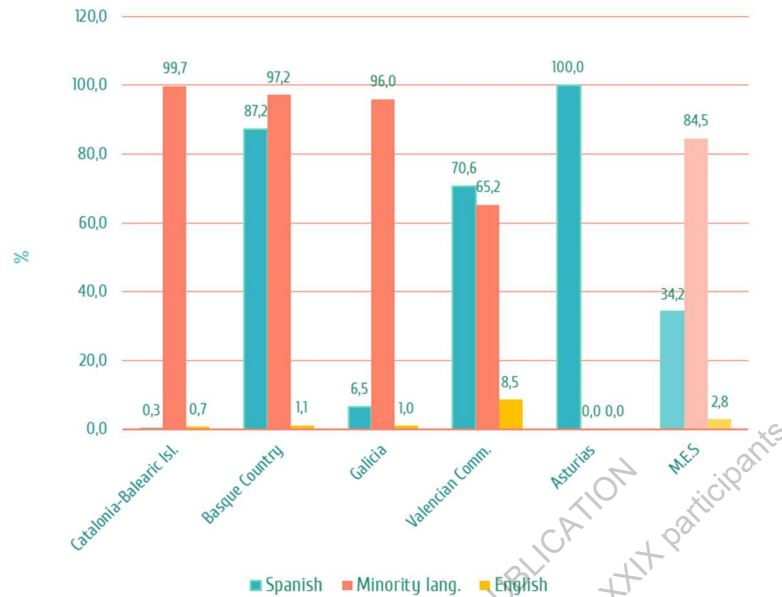


Figure 3: Percentage of use of each language in posts that are not about sustainability

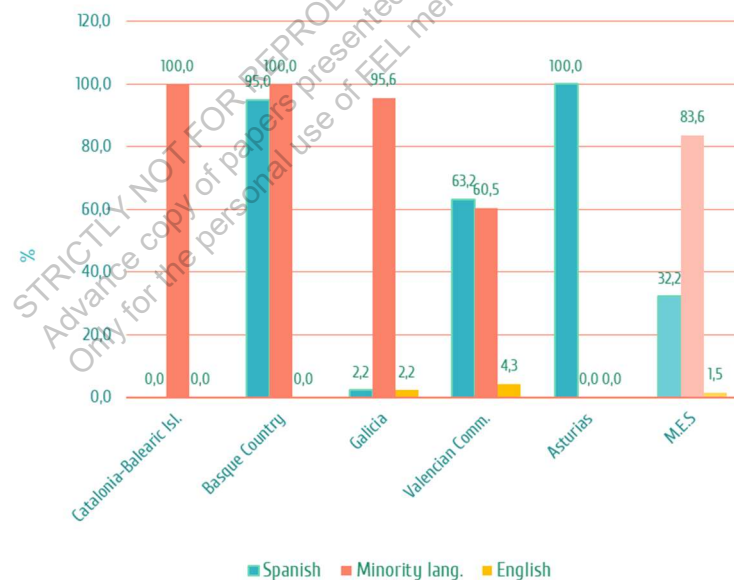


Figure 4: Percentage of use of each language in posts that are about sustainability

When comparing both graphs (figures 3 and 4), there are hardly any differences in the proportion of language use, whether the posts concern sustainability or other topics. University community managers follow clear linguistic guidelines in their communication, which are generally applied with considerable consistency. The diversity of situations is observed in the Valencian Community, as a result of the broader ambivalence regarding linguistic practices, which leaves each university free to adopt one criterion or another—or even to refrain from adopting any criterion at all.

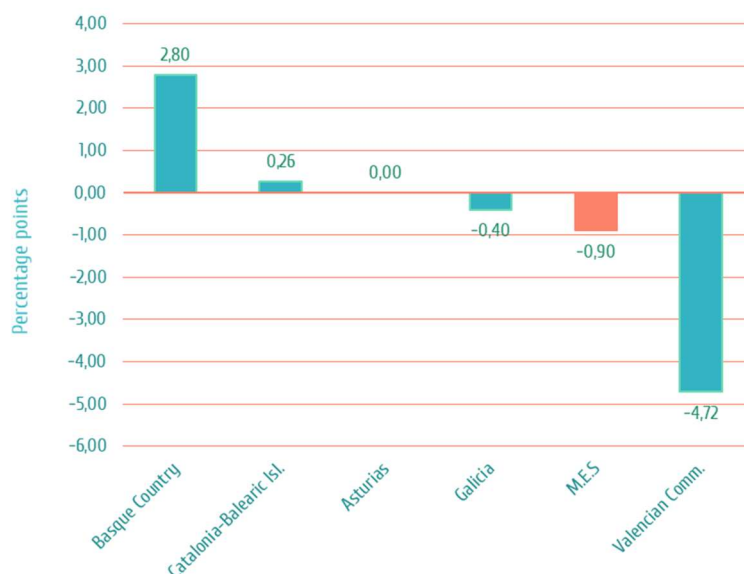


Figure 5: Use of minority language in posts about sustainability and other topics (difference in percentage points)

If we focus exclusively on posts written in the minority language (Catalan, Basque, Galician, etc.), we find that the differences between sustainability-related content and other topics are indeed minimal (MES = 0.9 percentage points in favor of other topics). However, it is important to highlight the case of the Basque Country (particularly based on the records from the University of the Basque Country), where the use of the minority language is nearly 3 percentage points higher in posts about sustainability than in those addressing other issues. At the opposite end, Catalan appears almost 5 percentage points less frequently in the Valencian Community when sustainability is the subject.

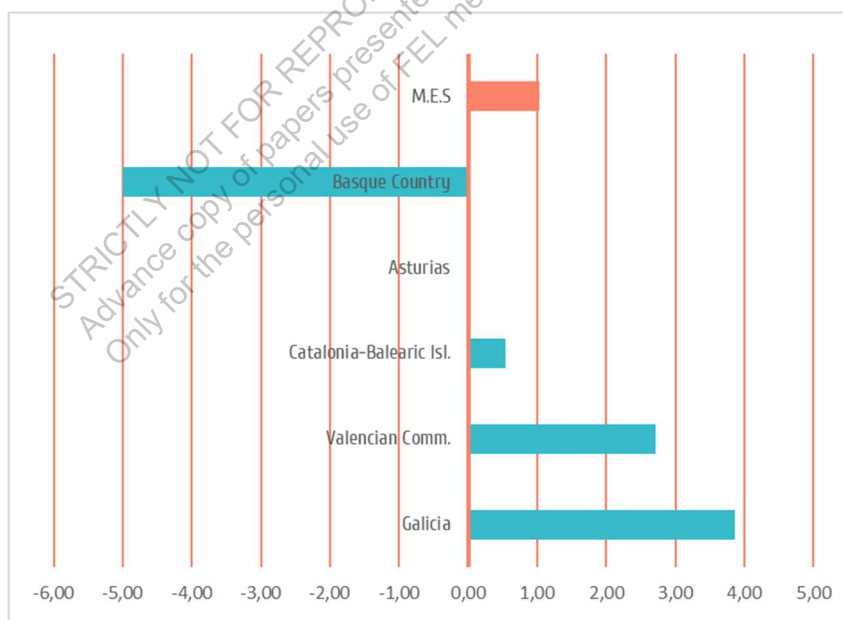


Figure 6: Percentage points of increase in the presence of the minority language over Spanish when talking about sustainability compared to when discussing other topics

Figure 6 provides the most accurate synthesis of what happens with minority languages when discussing sustainability in contrast to other topics. On the negative side of the spectrum, a greater use of the minority language compared to Spanish is observed in posts on other topics, whereas on the positive side of the spectrum, the minority language is used more than Spanish when addressing sustainability. It is, therefore, a distance of distances, bringing into play both language and subject matter. In this case, despite the fact that Basque is used more frequently in posts on sustainability (see Figure 5), when this double comparison involving Spanish is made, the Basque Country is the territory that

comparatively yields the most to Spanish when sustainability is addressed, while minority language usage improves when other topics are discussed. Conversely, although in the Valencian Community Catalan was used more in posts on other topics than in those on sustainability (see again Figure 5), here the situation is reversed: when writing about sustainability, the minority language gains more ground than when writing about other subjects (by nearly 3 percentage points). In this case, Galicia shares this positive balance for the minority language when writing about sustainability (close to 4 percentage points).

		Minority lang. Other lang. (Spanish + English)		Significance level (p-value)
Sustainability	Likes in posts	19,20	25,97	0,009
	Comments in posts	0,68	0,82	0,171
	Shared posts	2,26	2,88	0,955
Other issues	Likes in posts	19,82	30,88	<0,001
	Comments in posts	0,76	1,32	0,041
	Shared posts	2,53	5,64	<0,001

Table 2: Facebook engagement indicators by language used.
Comparison of means and Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples

Another aspect to consider is the level of interactions generated by content related to sustainability when published in a minority language versus in Spanish. To this end, the number of likes, comments, and shares was analyzed. Overall, the interactions generated by the universities under study show a relatively low average (21.6 likes per post across the dataset) compared to previous studies on engagement in institutional Facebook accounts of Higher Education institutions (Capriotti et al., 2023; Català et al., 2025). This may be partly due to the fact that the fieldwork was conducted at the end of the academic year (with less activity and lower involvement of the university community), as well as to a progressive decline in Facebook activity.

As also observed in earlier research (Català et al., 2025), engagement is higher in Spanish than in minority languages across all interaction types (likes, comments, and shares) and regardless of topic. However, this advantage of Spanish is more pronounced when other subjects are addressed, with statistically significant differences across all interaction types, in some cases very substantial (likes and shares). In the case of sustainability, significant differences in likes are also found in favor of Spanish, but these are less marked than in other topics (around 11 percentage points compared to about 7, with a significance level indicating a greater gap in Spanish).

Conclusions

This study has examined the intersection of language use and sustainability communication in Spanish universities' Facebook activity. The findings show that sustainability represents a significant, though not dominant, share of institutional communication, with notable territorial variation—particularly the prominence of Galician universities. Despite expectations that sustainability, as a theme closely tied to identity and local environments, might influence linguistic patterns, the results reveal only minor differences in language distribution compared with other topics. Minority languages remain the predominant medium in multilingual contexts, although regional disparities illustrate how institutional choices reflect broader sociolinguistic ambivalence.

The engagement analysis reveals an overall low level of interaction with university content, likely influenced by the timing of fieldwork and the general decline of Facebook as a platform. Spanish consistently generates higher engagement than minority languages, across both sustainability-related posts and other topics, but the gap is narrower in sustainability. This suggests that sustainability discourse offers a somewhat more favorable terrain for the visibility of minority languages, even if the advantage of Spanish persists.

Overall, the study highlights the resilience of minority languages in higher education communication, even within a digital ecosystem that structurally favors dominant languages. Sustainability emerges as a strategic theme that can modestly reduce linguistic inequalities in online engagement, though without overturning entrenched hierarchies. These results underscore the importance of considering not only thematic content but also the sociolinguistic dynamics underpinning institutional communication, opening avenues for further research on the interplay between language, identity, and global challenges in higher education.

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Creating a Sustainable Revitalization Strategy for Livonian: What Can We Learn from Musical Performers?

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Abstract

Previously spoken from the west coast of Latvia up into Estonia, the Finno-Ugric Livonian language is an endangered language of the Baltic region. Recognized as indigenous by the Latvian state, Livonian currently has approximately 30 speakers (Ernštreits, 2024). Whilst rarely used in intergenerational transmission, Livonian's main domain is currently that of culture, especially music, with multiple groups, both traditional and modern, using the language in their performances. These musicians have, however, been largely ignored in academic literature, yet I have made it the aim of my PhD to argue that they are engaging in vital bottom-up language policy (LP) and, as LP actors and community members, their voices are vital when designing sustainable language maintenance and revitalization strategies for the future. The data for this paper consists of thematically analyzed semi-structured interviews with Livonian traditional music groups concerning their language attitudes, the role they see for themselves in the revitalization, their opinion of how music and revitalization intersect, and the challenges they perceive in this process in the times to come. By analyzing these, we can draw conclusions on important factors and elements to consider when creating a sustainable revitalization strategy for the language which also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the UN.

Keywords: Livonian, language policy, sustainable revitalization, language revitalization, musicians

Introduction

Livonian is a Finno-Ugric language which is indigenous to Latvia. It is considered endangered by UNESCO and currently its number of fluent speakers sits at around 30 (UNESCO, n.d.; Ernštreits, 2024). The Livonian population, which until the first half of the 20th century resided in the northern part of Courland now known as the Livonian coast, had been bilingual since the First World War. However, the number of speakers dwindled from 1500 in the early 1900s to 50 by the start of the 21st century, due to two World Wars, Soviet occupation and a language shift towards Latvian (Ernštreits, 2024). Intergenerational transmission, other than in a few exceptional cases, was brought to a halt.

When the coast became a militarized zone under the Soviet occupation, the Livonians scattered inland to cities such as Riga and Ventspils. Two Livonian musical ensembles, *Līvlist* and *Kāndla*, were founded in 1972 to create a sphere in which Livonians could come together and the language could be used (Ernštreits, 2024). At present there are four ensembles in Latvia that perform almost exclusively in Livonian, namely: *Līvlist* from Riga, *Rāndalist* from Ventspils, *Kāndla* from Tārgale, and *Laula* from Kolka. As of now, culture, and music in particular, is one of the only spheres of use for Livonian since it is no longer used in daily communication.

Livonian is officially protected under Latvian language law, which states that “The State shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the Liv language as the language of the indigenous (autochthon) population.” (Likumi.lv, n.d.). However, state support is only one important factor when language revitalization is in play. As each language, like each ecosystem (Haugen, 2001), is unique, there is no “one size fits all” strategy when it comes to language revitalization. Hence, the inclusion of community members in the revitalization process (UNESCO, 2003) and understanding their context-specific needs is critical to ensure success, since a successful strategy can also have positive implications in working towards the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Livonian musicians have so far been overlooked as language policy actors. However, I set out to show, over the course of my PhD, that they are vital members of the revitalization process. Furthermore, as community members, their input should be considered when determining a sustainable revitalization strategy, that is to say, a strategy that is long-term and adaptable. Following this reasoning, when formulating a sustainable revitalization strategy for Livonian, what input from Livonian musical performers could be taken into account?

Background and Theoretical Framework

An Ethnographic Approach to Language Policy

This paper is anchored in the framework of the Ethnography of Language Planning and Policy, developed by Hornberger and Johnson (2007). ELPP originally mainly focused on multilingual education, however it is also fitting for my work conceptualizing Livonian musicians as LP actors, since it takes the limelight away from top-down policies and puts the empowerment of community members at its center. This framework affirms the intricate link between LP, social practices and local contexts, and requires extensive cooperation between community members and researchers. Whilst the connection between language revitalization and music is not unheard of in academic literature, there is little to no previous research on Livonian musicians, thus a potentially vital group of actors in the revitalization movement has up to now been ignored. This, in and of itself, is not sustainable for revitalization efforts long-term, as a part of the community is being disregarded, and in a context with limited speaking opportunities such as Livonian, music is indeed a crucial language

domain. Consequently, ELPP provides a fitting framework to study the specific needs of a language community and to advocate for its speakers when making decisions in a revitalization process.

Sustainable Development and Language Revitalization

The United Nations has developed seventeen ambitious Sustainable Development Goals aiming to work towards “peace and prosperity for people and the planet” and underlining how environmental, social and economic factors are interlinked (United Nations n.d.). These include goals such as providing quality education (SDG 4) or reduced inequalities (SDG 10), for instance. However, surprisingly, these Sustainable Development Goals do not mention language at all (Fettes, 2023), and they have indeed been criticized in the academic community for having fallen short in realizing the extent to which language diversity can have both a positive or negative effect on them (Study Group on Language and the United Nations, 2017). It is indeed curious that the UN has not conceptualized language as a key element in working towards these SDGs, especially when UNESCO has underlined the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism in attaining the goals, in particular SDG 4 on quality education, but also SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) (UNESCO, 2024). In the British Council’s report on Language and the SDGs, the focus on the role of language is placed first and foremost on SDG 4, but light is also shone on its importance in SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) (Harding-Esch & Coleman, 2021).

According to Fettes the aim of language policy should be to contribute towards “language solutions for a sustainable world” (Fettes, 2023), and if we follow my view of Livonian musicians as LP actors, then it seems fitting to look to them and their needs and observations - input which could lead us to find ways to carry Livonian sustainably into the future whilst also working towards the SDGs.

Methods

To provide an answer to the research question of this paper, I will draw on the data and results from my MA thesis on the role that Livonian musical ensembles see for themselves in the revitalization process, in which I explored the members’ language attitudes, their view of the intersection of revitalization and music, and the challenges that they see for the future (Moran-Nae, 2024). Over the course of April 2024, I carried out a total of 15 semi-structured interviews with members of all four Livonian ensembles in Latvia, namely Livlist, Rāndalist, Kāndla and Laula. My contact with them was facilitated by the Livonian Institute, to whom the ensemble members are familiar, and to negotiate my access during the fieldwork I also actively participated in the singing rehearsals of one of the groups. The interviews were based on a previously created theory-driven topic list (Dörmyei, 2007) and the topics broached over the course of the interviews were that of identity, ancestry, repertoire, awareness, community, connection, language use, language acquisition and language contact, intergenerational transmission, and state language policy and funding. The interviews were then subject to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this paper, the results from my thesis (Moran-Nae, 2024) are analyzed and discussed in reference to the United Nations’ SDGs (United Nations, n.d.).

Results and Discussion

Livonian musical performers have input that could relate to multiple of the UN’s SDGs. Indeed, an element that comes up repeatedly in the interviews is the importance of the younger generation, and by this, my respondents mean the emphasis that should be placed on giving children and youngsters the possibility to learn the language. Whilst a summer school named *Mierlinkizt* for Livonian children exists, the respondents call for an increase in spaces; and while they have been critical of the lack of state support for their musical activities, the state has recently invested more funds in the support of the language, such as financing language classes for youngsters and children alongside the usual summer school.

However, members of the ensembles lament the lack of teaching materials and educational resources. The respondents also stress the lack of adult minoritized language education, which has the consequence of limited intergenerational transmission, as even if they wanted to, parents find themselves unable to pass on their heritage language to their children. Both this and the limited language domains that the musicians highlight can have severe consequences on the mental health of minoritized language speakers that find themselves unable to use a language that is connected to their identity. Working on these factors would have positive consequences for the SDG 3 concerning good health and well-being, as far from being only physical, good health also relates to mental health. All of these factors listed concerning language learning and materials relate to the SDG 4 on quality education, as it promotes inclusive education and lifelong learning (United Nations n.d.; Harding-Esch & Coleman, 2021; UNESCO, 2024) - factors that under the current circumstances are lacking and need to be addressed. More specifically, considering how music seems to help in language acquisition, according to the respondents, this is something that could be taken into account for future strategies. Furthermore, to a certain extent, the need for educational resources can also be linked to SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, as nowadays these resources should be digitally accessible, to allow access to information and communications technology and to achieve digital equality. In this way, the highly scattered Livonian community in Latvia can obtain educational materials no matter their location.

Challenges aside, the musicians underline the success that they see themselves to be having in the promotion of Livonian, a fact that should be used to Livonian's advantage in its revitalization. According to the participants, their actions create awareness about Livonian and allow for a space in which they can feel members of a community, all the while expressing their identity. These elements echo SDG 4's aim to foster the appreciation of cultural diversity (United Nations, n.d.), but they also are in line with SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and its target of safeguarding cultural heritage. And in fact, musical engagement could show itself to be more sustainable than a top-down policy, as it can align revitalization with community wishes and identity. It is embedded within cultural life, making it a living, creative practice including both performer and audience participation. All of the aspects enumerated in this section are also tightly linked to SDG 10, namely reduced inequalities. Lack of inclusivity when it comes to issues of language can lead to marginalization, and equality needs to be achieved through educational opportunities, digital equality, cultural inclusion and representation.

Finally, SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) involves collaboration between different stakeholders, in this case national legislation and institutions and grassroots actors (i.e. musicians). Thus, moving forward it is vital to address these challenges and barriers expressed by members of Livonian ensembles if a sustainable revitalization strategy for Livonian is to be designed and, interestingly, the particular issues that they highlight coincide with multiple factors that would further the UN's SDGs. This would indeed, as Fettes puts it, find "language solutions for a sustainable world" (Fettes, 2023) and the language diversity supported by revitalization could achieve positive consequences for the SDGs (Study Group on Language and the United Nations, 2017).

Conclusion

This paper examined how, as important LP actors, the input of Livonian traditional musical performers could help in the design of a sustainable language revitalization strategy for the language. As outlined over the course of this paper, culture, and music in particular, can play an important role in promoting sustainable development. Anchoring itself in the framework of ELPP, this study sought to explore the needs of the community members themselves when it comes to how they see the future of Livonian. Having thematically analyzed the data of the respondents, results found that the input of these Livonian performers relates to multiple SDGs, such as quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), good health and well-being (SDG 3), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17). The respondents shine a light on the need for teaching materials and educational resources as well as adult minoritized language education. They also call for an increase in language domains for Livonian and more state support for their cultural revitalization, in particular as they view their actions to have positive consequences for identity building and language promotion (Moran-Nae, 2024), all of which need to be taken into account if Livonian is to be revitalized and then maintained sustainably for generations to come. Looking at the Livonian case, we can observe a fascinating example of community-led revitalization relying on the use of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). It is fair to admit that this case study is very specific and with a limited number of respondents, however, it can give a broad insight as to how collaborative artistic practices can be a sustainable, replicable model for the promotion and maintenance of minoritized and endangered languages. When exploring a sustainable revitalization strategy for the language, research should be carried out concerning the needs of other community members, not just the musicians - in particular, the growing number of youth engaging with the language, so as to better meet their needs concerning the upcoming years. Ultimately, this paper gives a first insight into a possibility for an approach that is not only sustainable and in line with the UN's SDGs, but also that is context specific and with the needs of the community in question in the foreground.

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Sustainable Language Documentation as a Key Enabler for Researchers and Policymakers: How to Ensure Diversity of Voices

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Abstract

This paper discusses the contribution linguistics can make to add language to the agenda of the UN and, ideally, to the list of Sustainable Development Goals. By focusing on individual and social communication practices that lie at the heart of cultural practices and the debates around them, linguistics has the potential to add substantial value to the discussions and propose practical solutions. Yet, also methods in linguistics must be sustainable, a challenge that has rarely been proposed in linguistics research. We therefore propose a procedure and analysis of sustainable language documentation that is participatory and includes not only the view of the researcher and policymaker, but also of speakers and participants themselves. Our field of focus is the Chabacano-speaking community of the Philippines that has a long history of social marginalization and also inconclusive documentary studies. Within the Chabacano community, there is a variety of voices promoting Chabacano, and such voices must be considered by researchers. This aim is the motivation behind our project of proposing a sustainable methodology in linguistics that sustainably documents this marginalized variety. We will show how a range of different voices can be brought to the forefront and what methodological considerations must be included in the discussions allowing a critical view especially of research and its representatives. Our ultimate goal is to add to designing a practical path to the inclusion of language as the eighteenth Sustainable Development Goal.

Introduction: Linguistics and sustainability

Language is so intrinsically entangled with human culture that it is commonly taken for granted in any discipline and project – also in the attainment of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (cf. Marinotti 2027). Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10, for example, refer to the importance of education, literacy, and the reduction of social and economic inequalities, yet they lack explicit mention of language. Also sustainability studies assign no specific role to language (cf. McEntee-Atalianis & Tonkin 2023). Yet, given its relevance in any human activity and in making information accessible, language must be brought to the forefront. The delineation of what a language is and who its speakers are, however, continues to challenge researchers and policymakers alike. In being capable of disentangling the connection between culture, social dynamics, and the establishment of power, linguistics can make a pioneering contribution to the discussion of sustainable approaches to language in that inequalities can be highlighted and reduced. Research on English as a Lingua Franca, for instance, has shown that competence in English substantially empowers speakers of marginalized languages, i.e. that language enables empowerment (Kramsch 2016). Sustainable approaches in linguistics thus promise to contribute to the empowerment of marginalized communities, helping eradicate poverty, and ensuring access to education and health. Sustainable approaches in linguistics, however, are yet to be developed.

Methodological approach: Sustainable language documentation

As a team of linguists experienced in research, fieldwork, and the industry, we claim that sustainable linguistics must start with sustainable methods in order to improve the database on which researchers and policymakers rely. Our point of departure is seeing language as a tool to not only talk *about* communities, but also *with* communities, and particularly to give a voice to community members. We define sustainability as the viability of a community or a practice or a form of intergenerational ethics, in which actions taken by present generations do not diminish the opportunities of future generations to enjoy similar levels of well-being and resources (cf. Brundtland 1987, Park 2007). Language is a crucial component in achieving a sustainable life and world because it is key to social empowerment, yet language and linguistics have largely been missing from the agenda of sustainability studies (e.g., Krieg & Toivanen 2021). In particular, and although the role of linguistic diversity for social inclusion and

education quality is well-known (e.g., McEntee-Atalianis & Tonkin 2023, UN 2015), the discipline of linguistics is still seeking ways to include sustainable approaches more broadly, especially on an international level. Our approach to add to this is to start by proposing sustainable methods that document language with a view into the future by creating a corpus that represents the full spectrum of linguistic and cultural forms of expression and in which participants not only contribute data to the corpus, but also actively participate in building it as well as in data analysis. The data collection will consider different methods to build a corpus that includes current and historical speech data in addition to written materials, such as letters, stories, or essays, and observations, and it will be based on both linguistic information as well as contextual and cultural data. Local collaborators are expected to actively contribute to data collection and preparation, as well as to their analysis.

Complex language ecologies: Chabacano's multilingual setting

Methods in linguistics must cover, among other factors, the inclusion of different agents and their voices in the documentation, analysis, and description of languages following principles of ethical integrity that see speakers as individuals and as communities, rather than focusing purely on linguistic structures. While this sounds straightforward, it is particularly challenging to achieve in multilingual and fragmented communities. In order to improve our understanding of social dynamics and develop sustainable methods, research should focus on communities that have a long history of multilingualism and social marginalization. Therefore, our case in point is Chabacano, a group of Spanish contact varieties spoken in the Philippines. The Philippines are a highly multilingual country with nationalist language policies that promote a Filipino identity based on Tagalog. With its colonial past and an overseas community of over 10 million, the colonial languages Spanish and English play a crucial role in administration and education, and also increasingly in everyday interactions. Also Spanish-based contact languages called Chabacano have been in use since Spanish was established by the colonizers, from which local varieties emerged. Speakers of Chabacano are multilingual and live in a complex setting, and several factors challenge the documentation of Chabacano and its speech communities, as they span geographic, socioeconomic, and political dimensions. Chabacano-speaking communities are geographically scattered, and some remain peripheral in this highly centralized state.

Within this linguistically diverse setting, language ideologies play a crucial role. Local language ideologies are influenced by national economic development agendas, which often emphasize English and Filipino as instruments for upward mobility, while Chabacano – as most other marginalized contact languages – is of low prestige and status, though each speech community has its own unique socio-ethnic and linguistic background that ultimately influences the vitality of the language. What often goes unnoticed in linguistic methodology is the fact that also researchers themselves bring their ideology into the field. For example, among creolists, it has been common to focus only on the most non-standard, i.e. basilectal, variety while discarding the documentation of more complex and unstructured linguistic practices (c.f. Migge 2020). This is why more recent attempts at documenting linguistic realities that emphasize sociolinguistic adequacy over structural, i.e. typological, adequacy in the documentation of multilingual practices have been proposed (Di Carlo et al. 2021). For example, it is known that Chabacano speakers are aware of generational differences and language shift as they observe the “deepest,” i.e. most basilectal, variety is spoken by the eldest, and they see the different varieties of Chabacano as culturally distinct. Also domains of use are shifting, mostly away from Chabacano toward English and Tagalog, yet little information is available and documentation remains fragmentary and incomplete (Lesho & Sippola 2013, 2014).

At the same time, there are numerous local organizations promoting Chabacano, including the Circulo Chabacano, Asociacion Chabacano del Ciudad de Cavite, Chabacano Siempre, and, most recently, the Circle of Chabacano Dreams. These groups and motivated individuals have worked to hold events promoting Chabacano, publish educational materials, teach Chabacano classes, and periodically hold a mass in Chabacano at the San Roque church with mass liturgy in Chabacano. These agents do not all promote a uniform concept nor hold homogenous views on the history and current status of Chabacano. Also official bodies show contradictory data regarding speaker numbers (Lesho & Sippola 2013), and researchers represent divergent positions as to how Chabacano is to be categorized in the first place. For example, researchers have proposed postcolonial approaches to contact varieties have argued that these varieties should not be considered in connection with their lexifier languages, in this case Spanish, because from the outside, this approach could foster their perception as an inferior variety. Yet, speakers themselves hold feelings of pride and connection with the colonial past from which their variety emerged. They identify, for example, rather with their Spanish heritage than with current societal trends in the Philippines. In other words, solutions proposed by outsiders and researchers may be disconnected from emic views and patterns of identity and not consider the full range of voices. This shows that this complex ecology of linguistic and ideological diversity and a large number of actors, it is important to consider the diversity of voices.

Conclusion: Proposal of a sustainable language documentation methodology

We claim that sustainable language documentation requires a multi-disciplinary approach, and we therefore consider a variety of sources and collect new data in a community-focused approach, in order to, first, show how

the debates around the vitality of Chabacano become biased, and, second, collect more accurate data on the speech community with a strong focus on including emic views and voices from within the community. Especially the local initiatives mentioned above promise to broaden and enrich the documentary corpus and are currently being processed, cleared for ethical reuse, transcribed, glossed, and translated into English and Filipino. Methodological approaches will include procedures of data collection that are common to a range of disciplines, especially anthropology, history, philosophy, and cultural studies. The richness of data will be complemented by collecting language data in their cultural and social contexts within their multilingual ecologies, and by considering metalinguistic commentary on language use and practices (cf., Di Carlo et al. 2021), as well as by combining community approaches with the work of linguists (e.g., Czaykowska-Higgins 2009). Long-term fieldwork starting in 2025 aims at collecting rich data that documents language use in multilingual everyday situations, such as the home and the neighborhood, and in symbolic, ceremonial uses, such as festivals and religious practices, highlighting the cultural heritage of the communities. The documentary corpus resulting from data collection aims at providing a more community-relevant view of Chabacano embedded in its multilingual ecology.

In so doing, we want to open a discussion of how linguistic data are collected sustainably and who should engage in the conversation in order to raise awareness of existing biases in research and policies. On the basis of the corpus, we will reassess and develop sustainable language documentation practices by comparing participants' views on language documentation, linguistic methodologies, and project goals. We propose that such a sustainable methodology of language documentation based on a collaborative framework and community-relevant language materials embedded in multilingual ecologies not only contributes to successfully improving the database for researchers and policymakers but also helps define the roles of linguists, researchers, on the one hand, and local and international activists, on the other, regarding ethical and representative challenges. Such participatory, democratic processes in knowledge production and practice-based research that consider different voices lay at the heart of sustainable approaches (Norström et al. 2020) and are expected to add to our understanding of facing and analyzing complex situations collaboratively encouraging the learning and understanding of different values and worldviews. It also facilitates the acceptance and commitment to diversity of voices by researchers, activists, and policymakers and promotes an environment that is sensitive to injustices and power relations (Caniglia et al. 2023). And finally, it will provide applicable insights to enhance the proposal for a workable UN program that empowers speakers of marginalized languages and fosters their access to education and health. We will be particularly keen to spot divergent views and seek ways of bringing actors together and facilitate this exchange beyond academic settings, taking results to policymaking and also the industry. The resulting insights will, in turn, support endeavors to add language as an eighteenth Sustainable Development Goal.

Key words: language documentation, language maintenance, community involvement, marginalized languages, language contact, language ideologies, multilingualism, Chabacano

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The Missing Sustainable Development Goal: Indigenist Linguistics and the Sustainable Future of Torwali Language and Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of Indigenous-led research in the documentation and preservation of endangered languages and its contribution to sustainable development, with a focus on the Torwali language of Swat, northern Pakistan. It is based on the authors' research into documentation and description of Torwali for the purposes of community development and cultural and linguistic sustainability. The study interrogated the intersection of Indigenous language and education policy, highlighting community-led initiatives in the Swat region and the limited but evolving governmental support for Indigenous language education. By linking language documentation, pedagogical practice, and sustainable development, the research provides a model for operationalising the proposed United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 18 (SDG 18) on Indigenous and endangered languages, demonstrating that culturally embedded linguistic research can yield academically rigorous, socially meaningful, and policy-relevant outcomes.

1. Introduction: grounded Indigenous linguistics and sustainable development goals

This paper examines the role of Indigenous-led research in the documentation and preservation of endangered languages and its contribution to sustainable development, with a focus on the Torwali language of Swat, northern Pakistan. Both authors are Indigenous linguists who conduct research together using Indigenist linguistic methodologies. The paper draws on the work of Mujahid Torwali, in collaboration with Troy, conducted for his PhD program in which he developed a methodology for producing a community friendly, culturally centred grammar to facilitate intergenerational transmission and educational application of language and culture. This methodology is grounded in community collaborative research integrating ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, and participatory collaboration with community members. By combining the author's insider knowledge as a native speaker of the language with insights from local stakeholders, the research addressed limitations of previous outsider-led studies that often lacked sociocultural contextualisation. The study further interrogated the intersection of Indigenous language and education policy, highlighting community-led initiatives in the Swat region and the limited but evolving governmental support for minority language education. By linking language documentation, pedagogical practice, and sustainable development, the research provides a model for operationalising the proposed United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 18 (SDG 18) on Indigenous and endangered languages, demonstrating that culturally embedded linguistic research can yield academically rigorous, socially meaningful, and policy-relevant outcomes.

2. What Would a Community Friendly Grammar of Torwali Look Like and Why it is Impotent in Local Education?

Mujahid Torwali's research was guided by the question: 'what would a community-friendly grammar of Torwali look like?' To create this grammar, he developed a methodology that engaged with Indigenist research methods, combining more traditional linguistic analysis with an ethnographic community led description of the language in its social context developed from interviews and observations in the community and personal insights as a native speaker and community member. The research adds to inclusive linguistic methodologies that support Indigenous communities to undertake their own research and provides practical tools that can help the Torwali people keep their language alive with a sustained identity. It also shows how Indigenous research methods can lead to more respectful and effective outcomes. Such research studies make a strong case for including Indigenous languages in the global development agenda of sustainability (Woods, 2023). Smith (2012) highlights that the recovery of Indigenous histories is closely linked to the reclamation of language and traditional knowledge. This process involves honouring the past while addressing the needs of the present. By showing how language, education, and sustainability are closely connected, this research supports the broader goal of making development more inclusive and culturally aware.

This project highlights the important role that Indigenous language preservation can play in achieving sustainable development and strongly contributes to the vision of a proposed United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 18, which would focus on protecting and promoting Indigenous and endangered languages globally. Because this research was conducted by a local Indigenous researcher, it inspires community members to take an active role in preserving and promoting their language and culture, allowing them to represent their community authentically to the world—something that external researchers often find challenging due to various barriers. It also encourages international researchers to work collaboratively with local experts, contributing their knowledge and support rather than conducting research

independently in communities they do not fully understand. Indigenous languages like Torwali are more than communication tools—they are carriers of cultural memory, traditional knowledge, and ecological wisdom. Preserving them is essential for maintaining the identity, resilience, and cohesion of their communities. In many cases, language loss directly threatens the survival of cultural practices, local knowledge systems, and social structures, making the protection of these languages a crucial part of sustainable development.

Torwali's study had two primary objectives. The first focused on developing a new and comprehensive description of the Torwali language, drawing on ethnographic research methods and active engagement with the local community. As a native speaker and member of the Torwali community, Mujahid Torwali combined personal knowledge with insights from other community members to create a description that is accurate, meaningful and acceptable to the community. This Indigenous approach contrasts with earlier linguistic studies on Torwali language, which were primarily conducted by non-local researchers and often lacked an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which the language is used. By integrating the perspectives of native speakers and situating the language within its cultural environment, the study aimed to produce a community-friendly grammar of Torwali. The grammar is designed as a practical tool for the community, especially for use in schools, supporting students and teachers in engaging with the language more effectively and encouraging its ongoing use and transmission. The description is structured to assist Torwali students in learning the language and in distinguishing its grammatical features from those of other languages. This grammar also serves as an important resource for future researchers who wish to study Torwali. The research also emphasises that a language description grounded in the everyday experiences of its speakers is not only linguistically informative but also socially and culturally empowering for the community. Figure 1 demonstrates the confusion created by teachers ignorant of Torwali language attempting to use inappropriate languages to explain English to Torwali students who have no knowledge of English or the language of instruction, in this case, Urdu.

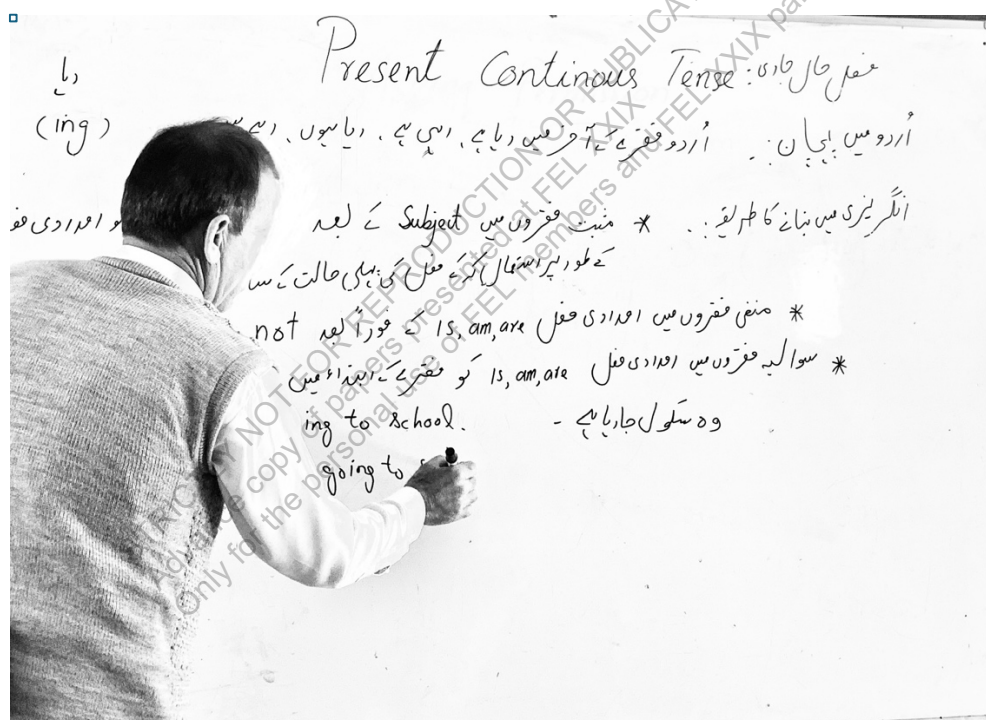


Figure 1: Non-Torwali speaking teacher attempting to explain English tenses to Torwali students using Urdu as the descriptor language (photo Mujahid Torwali 2019).

The second objective of the study was to explore the role of education and Indigenous languages in Pakistan with specific focus on the Torwali language. It considered how Torwali could be incorporated into formal education and the broader policy environment for Indigenous languages in Pakistan. This included evaluating the extent to which national and provincial education authorities, particularly the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Department of Education, recognises and supports the use of Indigenous languages in schools. The findings revealed that although awareness of the importance of Indigenous languages is gradually increasing, practical support from governmental bodies remains limited. Despite this, the research found that there are several community-led initiatives and efforts by local educators that are successfully creating culturally relevant and sustainable educational programs in Torwali. These initiatives demonstrate that, even in the absence of strong institutional support, communities can play a central role in preserving and revitalising their language through education. The study underscored the importance of combining formal linguistic research with

community engagement, showing that the survival and flourishing of Indigenous languages depends on both informed policy and active community participation.

By integrating these two objectives, the study provided a holistic understanding of Torwali, both as a linguistic system and as a living language embedded within its social and educational context. It contributes to the field of linguistics by offering a model for community-centred language documentation and revitalisation and offers practical guidance for educators, policymakers, and community members interested in promoting Indigenous language education. Ultimately, the research demonstrated that the preservation of languages like Torwali is not only a scholarly pursuit but also a vital component of cultural continuity and empowerment for the speaker communities. In figure 2, a comparison between distribution percentages of Indigenous languages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Pakistan overall demonstrates the dominance of a small number of Indigenous languages with high population numbers over the many Indigenous languages of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which are lumped into the ‘other languages’ slice of the pie chart for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa without regard to their individual status. They are completely absent in the pie chart for Pakistan more broadly which concentrates solely on the 6 major Indigenous languages and includes Urdu which is not an Indigenous language but rather the lingua franca and now national language of Pakistan.

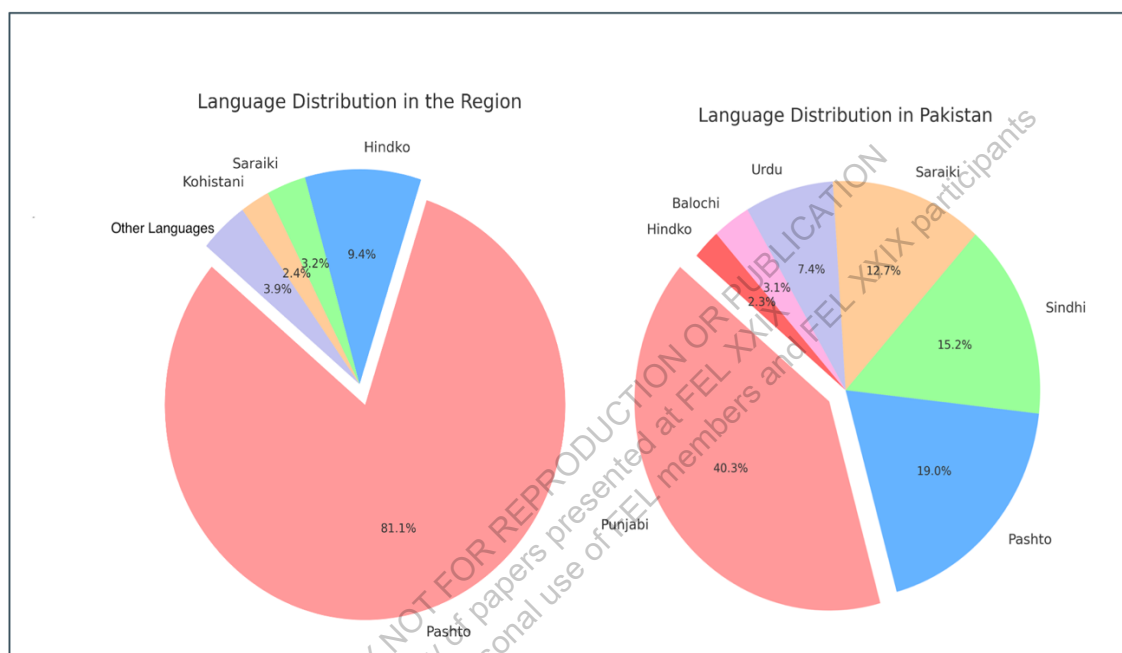


Figure 2: comparison of distribution Indigenous languages in the region of left: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and right: Pakistan more broadly.

By documenting Torwali in a way that is grounded in community knowledge and practice, this research provides a framework for supporting both language continuity and social empowerment. The project encourages participatory methods that place the community at the centre of knowledge creation. This approach ensures that the resulting materials are not only academically rigorous but also meaningful and useful for the people who speak the language. In the past, Torwali students, particularly those studying in non-Torwali areas, were often cautious about revealing their identity, as they faced bullying from neighbouring Pashtun students (Torwali & Troy, 2023). Studies like this can help encourage Torwali students to take pride in their language and culture and confidently embrace their heritage among others. Community ownership of linguistic resources strengthens a sense of pride and agency, encouraging younger generations to engage with their language and culture actively. In turn, this fosters intergenerational learning, promotes cultural resilience, and helps maintain the social fabric of the Torwali-speaking population and make them proud of their language and culture.

Beyond its cultural importance, the project demonstrates that Indigenous language preservation intersects directly with education, social equity, and sustainable community development. Languages carry unique ways of understanding the environment, social relations, and resource management, which can inform sustainable practices within local communities. By supporting Torwali in educational contexts and providing tools for learning and teaching the language, the project contributes to more inclusive, culturally relevant, and locally sustainable education. This ensures that development initiatives respect local knowledge and values, empowering communities rather than imposing external solutions.

Moreover, this research provides a model for integrating Indigenous perspectives into broader development agendas. It illustrates that the survival of Indigenous languages requires not only academic attention but also policy recognition, social support, and active community participation. When Indigenous voices are included in research and education, development strategies become more equitable, culturally sensitive, and sustainable. The project therefore makes a strong case for expanding global sustainability frameworks to explicitly include language and cultural preservation as central goals.

3. An Indigenist Approach to linguistic research

Mujahid Torwali's research project employed an Indigenist methodology to prioritise his community's Indigenous knowledge and authority throughout all stages of the research. This practise was developed and as advocated by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, a founder of decolonising, Indigenist research practises field (Smith, 2012). Unlike conventional linguistic research, which often positions the researcher as an external observer, this approach emphasizes participatory, collaborative, and culturally embedded practises, ensuring that outcomes reflect community priorities. Ethnographic observation allowed researchers to document language use in homes, schools, marketplaces, and community gatherings, capturing naturally occurring speech patterns, sociolinguistic norms, and contextualized interactions. Semi-structured interviews with community members across age groups and social strata provided insight into local perspectives on language, culture, and education. Iterative community workshops enabled preliminary analyses and grammatical descriptions to be presented for feedback, ensuring materials were socially and culturally acceptable. Structured language elicitation sessions targeted phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon to gather systematic linguistic data. Participatory analysis engaged community members in interpreting and refining findings, selecting examples for educational materials. Together, these practises ensured that the research was community-centred, socially empowering, and culturally sensitive, producing outputs that are meaningful, usable, and sustainable.

4. Innovations and Applications

A core output of the study Mujahid Torwali's study was the community-friendly grammar of Torwali language, designed for both academic and educational use. Unlike earlier studies, this grammar simplifies complex morphosyntactic structures, such as gender, number, case distinctions, and verb agreement systems, using clear charts, examples from daily life, and exercises suitable for schoolchildren. Sentences and illustrations are drawn from local stories, daily interactions, and oral traditions, making the material relatable and culturally grounded. Folk tales, proverbs, and songs are integrated to demonstrate grammar in context while preserving cultural heritage. Local teachers collaborated to design exercises and lesson plans aligned with the grammar, ensuring immediate classroom applicability. This grammar is not merely a scholarly description; it is a practical resource for sustaining the Torwali language, supporting learning and teaching, and empowering the community to take ownership of their linguistic heritage. Figure 3 provides an example of a multilingual lesson in a Torwali language engaged classroom of Torwali students. In comparison with Figure 2 where no Torwali was used in instructing Torwali students, the lesson in Figure 3 demonstrates the use of Torwali, Urdu and English to explain the reproductive system of plants. Mujahid Torwali was the teacher and in addition to using Torwali script he also explained the lesson in Torwali language. This might seem to be normal practice, however in Torwali schools the use of the Torwali language is no encouraged by the education system which severely disadvantages Torwali student (Torwali, 2020).

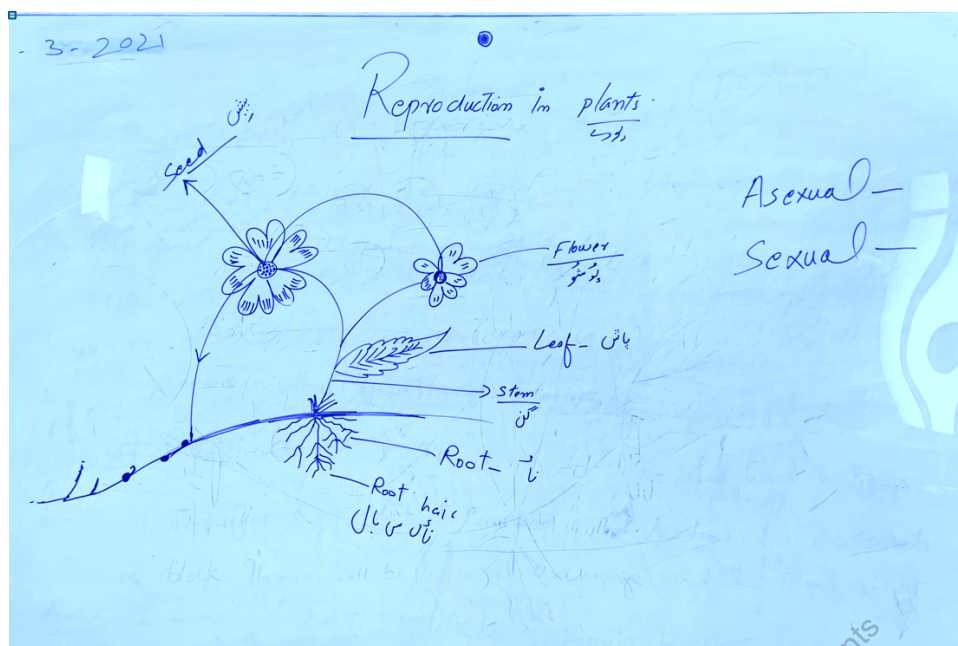


Figure 3: Plant reproduction lesson by Mujahid Torwali in Primary School Torwali, multilingual text using Torwali, Urdu and English (photo Mujahid Torwali 2021).

Although awareness of Indigenous languages is increasing in Pakistan, governmental support remains limited. Community-led initiatives are successfully promoting Torwali literacy: local educators develop lesson plans, storybooks, and teaching materials; elders and community organizations conduct storytelling sessions and workshops to foster intergenerational learning; and grassroots documentation projects create dictionaries, audio recordings, and educational resources for local use. These efforts underscore the crucial role of community engagement. Indigenous-led research strengthens community agency, instilling pride and motivation to maintain linguistic and cultural practices, which is essential for sustainability.

Several practical applications illustrate the impact of this research. In primary schools across the Torwali-speaking region, teachers have piloted lessons based on the grammar, including vocabulary acquisition, sentence formation, and storytelling, allowing children to use Torwali alongside Urdu and English. Early observations indicate improved engagement and comprehension, demonstrating tangible educational outcomes. Intergenerational workshops involving elders, parents, and children provide platforms for language transmission beyond formal schooling. Elders share local stories while children practice writing and speaking in Torwali, reinforcing both language skills and cultural continuity. Additionally, the grammar documents terminology for local flora, fauna, and farming practices, safeguarding ecological knowledge essential for sustainable land management and climate adaptation.

4. Broader Implications and Global Relevance: Linking Language Preservation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Language preservation intersects with sustainable development in multiple ways. Torwali encodes knowledge about ecology, agriculture, and social relations. Language loss threatens the survival of this knowledge and the resilience of the community. Torwali-based educational materials contribute directly to SDG 4 (Quality Education) by improving learning outcomes, supporting mother-tongue instruction, and fostering culturally relevant pedagogy. They advance SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by empowering marginalized communities and promoting social inclusion. Embedded ecological knowledge also informs sustainable land and water management practices, linking the project to SDG 13 (Climate Action). By demonstrating how local initiatives can inform global policy frameworks, this research illustrates the rationale for the proposed SDG 18 (Indigenous Languages and Culture). The study thus shows that language preservation extends beyond cultural heritage to encompass social equity, environmental stewardship, and education.

This research offers a replicable model for other Indigenous communities. Effective language preservation requires community-centred methodology, educational integration, and policy advocacy. Evidence from Indigenous-led projects informs governments and international organizations about the importance of minority languages. Linking local language preservation to SDGs demonstrates that Indigenous knowledge is integral to sustainable development worldwide. Indigenous-led research bridges linguistic scholarship and development policy, showing that language preservation can empower communities while contributing to culturally sensitive development strategies.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mujahid Torwali's project to create a community friendly grammar of Torwali language, useful also in the education and policy context in Swat, demonstrates how Indigenous-led research can produce academically rigorous, socially meaningful, and policy-relevant outcomes. It demonstrates that language preservation is inseparable from sustainable development, offering a practical model for other communities and a compelling case for integrating cultural and linguistic sustainability into global development frameworks. Indigenous-led linguistic research contributes directly to sustainable development, combining linguistic scholarship, education, and community empowerment. Creating community-friendly educational resources alongside other participatory educational initiatives provides a tangible model for intergenerational language transmission and cultural continuity. By integrating linguistic analysis with community engagement, this research highlights the interplay between language endangerment and sustainable development goals. Preserving Torwali through documentation safeguards traditional knowledge, promotes inclusive education, strengthens social cohesion, and informs sustainable local practices. Furthermore, the work supports the proposed SDG 18, emphasizing the global relevance of Indigenous and endangered language preservation.

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Local Sustainability Through a Decolonial and Relational Lens: Multilingual Ecologies in the Sierra Norte Region in Mexico.

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Abstract

In this paper we discuss the combined results of our quantitative and qualitative research carried out in the multilingual region of Ahuacatlan in the linguistically diverse area of the Sierra Norte de Puebla in Mexico. We show how these local ecologies characterized by relational and positive inter-ethnic attitudes enable forms of linguistic-cultural continuity, despite many centuries of colonial and neocolonial domination. Factors behind these patterns of sustainability include strong social networks cherishing inter-generational family relationships, a place-based socio-economic and socio-linguistic capital linked to informal local economy and the ongoing use of local environmental knowledge

Sociolinguistic situation in the Sierra Norte de Puebla

The history of linguistic diversity in the Sierra Norte de Puebla in Mexico, a home of Nahuas, Totonacs, Otomis and Tepehuas, shows how colonial, neocolonial and nation-state mechanisms have influenced depictions of diversity, including its distortion and invisibilization. The focus of this paper are multilingual ecologies in the region of Ahuacatlan inhabited by Nahuas and Totonacs. According to the last national census of 2020, in the entire municipality 77.51% of residents aged three and older speak an Indigenous language, either Nahuatl and Totonac, most of them living in the communities outside the municipal head town which is much more assimilated to Spanish. In specifically Nahuatl communities the numbers vary from 83.72% in Pochalcatl to 84.92% in San Francisco Ixquihiacan and 54.79% in San Jerónimo Coaltepec. Significantly, the percentage of speakers of Indigenous languages in the town of Ahuacatlan is 31.76%, mainly due to the influx of speakers from smaller Indigenous settlements in the higher, mountainous areas of the municipality. The economy of the latter is still mainly based on traditional agriculture, and to some extent, commerce. Overall, the residents of the broader municipality of Ahuacatlan and neighboring municipalities rely on many traditional forms of production and sustenance, including crafts and local market exchange. While much traditional knowledge and ritual celebrations survive today, the inhabitants also practice different forms of Christianity, mostly Catholicism and protestant denominations, with some presence of Jehova's Witnesses. The communities in Ahuacatlan live in close interaction with others that are Totonac-speaking. Consequently, interethnic marriages, socio-economic exchange and different forms of multilingualism, including Nahuatl, Totonac and Spanish, are present. Along with other Indigenous communities in Mexico, they also oppose environmental extractivism and social injustice (Pérez, 2019; Ruiz Muñoz & Espinosa Márquez, 2020; Post, E. 2022; Dexter-Sobkowiak, 2024; Olko, 2024; Olko & Radding, 2024). Interestingly, our work on language contact has shown that the variants of Totonac and Nahuatl spoken in this region preserve many complex structural features that have already disappeared in other regions. It is therefore quite possible that the retention of classifiers in Ahuacatlan may be related to Nahuatl-Totonac contact in the regional Sprachbund area, where Nahuatl, in fact, seems to constitute a relatively recent intrusion into the traditionally Totonac region. Proving this hypothesis requires further evidence, which our ongoing research in this multilingual region will hopefully provide.

The inhabitants of the smaller communities in this area report experiencing discrimination, marginalization, and even some forms of physical violence from the residents of the head town, who have assimilated toward a mestizo identity and enjoy a higher economic, social and political status (cf. Olko et al., 2023; Olko, Chromik & Maryniak, 2022). Children speaking Indigenous languages and coming from settlements in the mountains are still mocked and bullied in the schools located in the town of Ahuacatlan; however, attitudes and relations have improved in the last decade or so, especially after Indigenous people began to be directly represented in the municipal government, including the presidential office, after forming a long-term alliance of Nahuatl and Totonac towns. While children and teachers in the bilingual schools located in the outlying communities generally speak Nahuatl, there are no formal classes in the language or any related

instruction. Due to inter-ethnic marriages and commercial activities, there is still some degree of multilingualism, involving Nahuatl, Totonac and Spanish.

Scope of research, methods and findings

Our research has begun uncovering the complex history and the present situation of Indigenous communities in the area reflects both long-term resilience and continuity with marginalization, a sense of loss, historical trauma and re-traumatization triggered by contemporary challenges and many forms of violence, including environmental challenges and threats to local control over natural resources. While many patterns of community defense and ecological resilience have been developed over centuries, Nahua and Totonac communities in the region also face entirely new threats and must adapt their resistance strategies and forms of action.

In this paper we discuss the combined results of our quantitative survey carried in the region of Ahuacatlan in 2024-2025 as well as multi-layered qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews, participant observation and language portraits methodology. Crucial for our collaborative research have been the notions of participatory action research, togetherness and relationality that can be addressed on many complementary levels, such as community-involvement, the fostering and prioritizing of intergenerational knowledge production, community-driven products, collective authorship, and decolonial approach to sustainability and linguistic-cultural vitality. This approach is part of our self-reflective positionality developed in close collaboration with minoritized communities in Europe and the Americas.

Challenging simplistic Western views on sustainability, assimilation and prestige

Based on the current results of our team research, we will discuss the configurations of key factors influencing the vitality of local languages and grassroots multilingualism, the social and economic factors favoring the use of Nahuatl and Totonac, the relationships between speaking heritage languages and well-being, and the paths to enhancing the sustainability of Indigenous languages in local ecologies. Among the relational factors that have become salient in this process are, on the one hand, the ongoing disruptive impact of the nation state and, on the other hand, positive interethnic relations, inter-ethnic marriages and economic exchange, the continuity of socio-political organization over time, as well as grassroots patterns of multilingual socialization. Our research calls for redefining and decolonizing typical academic and Western approach to "sustainability", including the relationship between endangered languages and the multi-faceted well-being of local communities. One of our main hypotheses is that the vitality of Indigenous languages and local social networks are not only associated with higher levels of well-being and economic sustainability, but also with higher social and environmental resilience, reflected in successful and sustained struggles for environmental justice (Olko, Lubiewska et al., 2022; Lubiewska et al., 2025). During the presentation we will also briefly present joint share examples of collaborative research products oriented toward linguistic revitalization, the promotion of multilingualism in Indigenous languages, and the reinforcement of traditional knowledge transmission.

In terms of broader implications, our reconstruction and evidence reveal surprising patterns of linguistic continuity and resilience that escape typical conceptualizations based on dominant Western theories of language shift and acculturation strategies. These continuities challenge over-simplistic models of assimilation and adaptation to changing ecologies that presuppose language loss and shift to the dominant language. As seen in the Ahuacatlan region, the driving force behind resistance to assimilation and shift to Spanish have been many forms of informal economy still operating in such languages as Nahuatl and Totonac, with grassroots multilingualism being an important socio-economic asset. The vitality of both local economy and local languages is based on strong social networks operating both at intra-community and inter-ethnic levels of reciprocal relationships and exchange. It is this deeply relational socio-economic capital that defies the pressures of the nation state economy and its model of inter-human relationships. At the same time, as it underlies the emic sense of well-being, it keeps affirming the usefulness of local languages and many other aspects of Indigenous cultures in the region.

Therefore, our evidence supports the claim that the assumption that the language "with more prestige" and economic power is always preferred by members of Indigenous communities over their own language is very simplistic and it distorts the more complex reality (Mufwene, 2025). Perceptions of language utility and value are much more complex than envisioned by the assimilation model. This is conspicuous in our interviews with adult residents of the communities of Cualetepec and San Francisco Ixquihiacan, both of them subject to the municipality of Ahuacatlan. Our interlocutors consider the introduction of state schools (predominantly based on the Spanish language) in the last several decades as a huge achievement of local communities in their efforts to more successfully challenge the discrimination and exploitation suffered at the hands of more assimilated groups from the municipal head town. At the same time, members of these Indigenous communities favor the presence of Nahuatl-speaking teachers in their community schools. Many of them also transferred Nahuatl to their own children, and they continue to use it at home and in community-level social life, even though it coexists with Spanish to varying degrees.

Thus, the members of bilingual and multilingual communities “often contest the ideologies behind what is supposedly right or desired, for example because choosing the home language conveys group solidarity and the societal language conveys embracing modernity, and individual speakers may not wish to choose between the social identities these two poles index” (Backus, 2021). This view corresponds closely with the emerging understandings we have been able to develop of the complex reality of the Sierra Norte de Puebla region. Summing up, we wish to emphasize the need to question the simplistic claim that assimilation is the only strategy adopted in ingroup-outgroup relationships in Indigenous communities today. While in many places it indeed seems to be an entirely dominant trend, there also are local ecologies where more relational and nuanced inter-cultural attitudes enable forms of linguistic-cultural continuity, despite many centuries of colonial and neocolonial domination. Factors behind these patterns of continuity include strong social networks cherishing inter-generational family relationships, a place-based socio-economic capital linked to informal local economy and the ongoing use of local environmental knowledge.

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Minority Language Revitalisation as a vector of Sustainable Community Development: Preliminary Insights from the Basque Country

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Abstract

This paper presents preliminary findings from an ongoing ethnographically informed research project on the intersections between minority language revitalisation and community sustainable development through the case of Aiaraldeko Ekintzen Faktoria (AEF), a community-based cooperative in the Basque Country. We argue that conventional models of sustainable development overlook the role of language, despite its importance in shaping community identity, equitable and effective development, participation, and resilience. Drawing on content analysis, interviews, and participant observation, our study asks: (1) how do community actors conceptualise and relate community development and Basque language revitalisation? (2) how are the pillars of sustainable development interpreted and combined in practice? and (3) what role does the Basque language play in these strategies? Findings show that AEF does not treat Basque as a bounded object of preservation but as a structuring principle for building an ecosystem of resources that allow people to live fully through the language. Rather than foregrounding linguistic activism, Basque is integrated transversally into initiatives in communication, culture, agroecology, feminism, education, and cooperative economics. In this way, the language becomes a vehicle for addressing social inequalities and enabling alternative ways of life. Preliminary conclusions highlight the potential of minority languages to act as catalysts for inclusive and sustainable community futures.

The basics of our research project

This paper presents preliminary findings from an ongoing ethnographically informed research project exploring the intersections between minority language revitalisation and community sustainable development. Our central premise is that conventional conceptualisations of sustainable development—whether framed within the widely accepted three-pillar model (economic, social, environmental) or the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—lack an explicit linguistic dimension. We argue that this omission constitutes a conceptual and strategic shortcoming, particularly in multilingual contexts where language plays a critical role in shaping community identity, participation, and resilience. Our research is grounded in the hypothesis that minoritized languages, far from being merely cultural heritage, actively contribute to the sustainable development of communities (Fettes, 2019). To explore this idea, we examine several community-based initiatives across the Basque Country that, to varying degrees and either explicitly or implicitly, integrate the revitalisation of the Basque language (*euskara*) into broader community development goals. These include Aiaraldeko Ekintzen Faktoria (AEF), a holistic community project fostering transformation through diverse fields such as education, food sovereignty, feminism, or culture, which forms the focus of this presentation; Olatukoop, a cooperative network promoting social economy and decent work; Bizi!, a non-violent alter-globalisation movement for environmental urgency and social justice; Errigora, a grassroots initiative combining food sovereignty with Basque language promotion; and Euskoa, a local currency promoted by a non-profit association aimed at strengthening the local economy, popular farming, ecological transition, the Basque language, and reducing financial speculation. Situated in varied sociolinguistic contexts—from Basque-speaking areas to predominantly Spanish- or French-speaking regions—these initiatives allow us to compare diverse pathways of community development through language.

Our approach to sustainable development extends beyond the traditional ecological, social, and economic dimensions to include cultural and linguistic sustainability as a fourth pillar, recognising local languages and cultures as vehicles for equitable and effective development (Romaine, 2019). In parallel, we adopt a holistic, justice-oriented, and future-focused understanding of community development as a participatory and transformative process that empowers communities to build socially just, culturally sustainable, and ecologically resilient futures while challenging structural inequalities (Ife,

2013; Ledwith, 2011). Within this framework, minority language revitalisation is understood not simply as a linguistic goal but as a community-based process through which local actors decide how revitalisation activities contribute to broader social, cultural, and economic needs. This approach shifts attention from linguistic deficits to the role of language in knowledge transmission, cultural continuity, and social transformation, positioning revitalisation as both a driver and an outcome of sustainable community development (Lewis & Simons, 2015).

Our methodology is ethnographically informed and qualitative in nature. It combines documentary analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews with project managers and participants, and participant observation within selected initiatives. Our aim is to explore both the discourses and practices surrounding language use and development efforts in these community spaces. Key research questions guiding our inquiry include:

- How do community actors conceptualise and relate community development and Basque language revitalisation?
- In what ways do these initiatives interpret, operationalise, and combine the pillars of sustainable development?
- What specific roles does the Basque language play in their developmental strategies, and how is it integrated across the various axes of sustainability?

Aiaraldeko Ekintzen Faktoria: A holistic initiative for radical community transformation in and through the Basque language

In this paper, we focus on one of our case studies: Aiaraldeko Ekintzen Faktoria (AEF), the Aiaraldea Action Factory. Our analysis draws on content analysis of their website (www.aiaraldea.eus) and related transmedia materials, six semi-structured interviews with project managers and staff, informal conversations with participants in various AEF activities, and multiple instances of participant observation across different settings and events.

AEF is a non-profit social initiative cooperative that develops tools to respond to community needs and enable people to live in and through the Basque language at a local scale. It is based in Laudio, a town within Aiaraldea, a predominantly Spanish-speaking region of the Basque Autonomous Community composed of nine towns with approximately 45,000 inhabitants. While knowledge of Basque has grown significantly in recent decades, current figures show that around 30% of residents know the language (Eusko Jaurlaritza, 2023), but its daily use in informal settings remains as low as 4.5% (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2021).

Founded in 2010 as an association, AEF initially prioritised two objectives: advancing Basque revitalisation and fostering a community-based Basque-language media outlet. This early work led to the creation of the Aiaraldeko Euskalgintzaren Kontseilua (Council for Basque Language Advocacy of Aiaraldea), a platform that united previously fragmented local language activists and organisations to share reflections and coordinate strategies, as well as the launch of the region's most widely consumed media: the website aiaraldea.eus (around 2,500 daily users) and the biweekly print newspaper Aiaraldea Hemen (7,000 free copies distributed across the area).

After five years of activity, AEF undertook a year-long strategic reflection involving over 120 participants. The outcome was a shared recognition that language activism could not be limited to reporting in Basque on a predominantly Spanish-speaking reality. Instead, it was necessary to create new realities structured through Basque and embedded within broader processes of social transformation. Since then, AEF has grown into a multifaceted cooperative with 23 employees, more than 500 members, and an annual budget of around €1 million. Today, it operates as a hub for diverse initiatives, including a dynamic transmedia platform (radio, print, blogs, and web content, all in Basque), a comprehensive communication agency, cultural programming and artistic residencies, the distribution of local and ecological food products, a meeting forum for the feminist movement in the region, and transformative education and leisure activities for children and families.

To make this project possible, and thanks to the financial contributions of 250 members, AEF acquired a 750-square-meter pavilion in Laudio's industrial district, named Faktoria, to serve as its headquarters. Designed as both a shelter and epicentre for the project, Faktoria is conceived as an integral and multifaceted tool for community development. It houses a stage for cultural production, an audio-visual studio, offices, meeting rooms, a small theatre, children's play and growth spaces, a community food cooperative, dressing rooms, storage facilities, a kitchen, a canteen, a bar, and both indoor and outdoor community spaces.

AEF is guided by a set of core values. It is local, rooted in its immediate territory while positioning itself within the Basque Country and the wider world through small-scale action. It is community-based, promoting self-determined and flourishing societies by fostering collaboration and cooperative work, where individual identities and needs are understood as part of collective communities. It is transformative, committed to a new social model based on justice, equality, diversity, sustainability, and social economy. It is constructive, developing initiatives that not only challenge

existing “undesirable” realities but also build new, life-affirming ones. And it is free, safeguarding independence in its reflections and initiatives by avoiding economic and political dependencies and affirming self-determination.

Within this framework, Basque is not treated as a bounded object of preservation but as the structuring principle of an alternative model of community life. AEF seeks to grant the Basque language a transformative function that goes beyond the identity-driven focus of earlier revitalisation efforts and engages with the broader social, cultural, and economic realities that shape everyday life. As one founder explains:

We want our language to become the meeting point and connective thread of struggles and demands as marginalised as language activism itself; to become a tool and symbol for the struggles of the dispossessed, feminists, racialised people, farmers and ecologists, so that the voice that demands and builds a new world is a voice in Basque.

Basque is framed as the language of “the good life” (*el buen vivir*), capable of sustaining dignified, just, and harmonious futures that go beyond the capitalist model of society.

Practically, this means that all AEF activities are carried out through Basque, making it the transversal language across domains. Basque becomes both a means and a vehicle for transformation—an instrument for building an ecosystem of resources that allows the Basque-speaking community of Aiaraldea to live fully in their language, meeting material and social needs while ensuring cultural continuity. In this way, the language is brought from the margins to the centre, demonstrating that the community is capable of creating the resources necessary to live fully through Basque.

Preliminary conclusions

Our findings from the case of Aiaraldeko Ekintzen Faktoria (AEF) highlight how minority language revitalisation can be conceptualised as an integral component of community development rather than as a separate or isolated goal. Community actors at AEF explicitly reject the idea of revitalisation as a purely linguistic or identity-driven endeavour. Instead, they understand it as a transformative process that intersects with social justice, ecological sustainability, economic solidarity, and cultural production. This conceptualisation positions revitalisation as both a community priority and a shared strategy for building inclusive and resilient futures.

In operational terms, AEF demonstrates how the pillars of sustainable development can be combined and enacted through practice. By embedding Basque in communication, agroecology, education, feminism, cultural programming, and cooperative economy, AEF has succeeded in creating a multifaceted ecosystem of resources that addresses material, social, and cultural needs simultaneously. The establishment of Faktoria as a multifunctional hub illustrates this operationalisation in concrete form: a physical and symbolic space where ecological, social, economic, and cultural dimensions converge under a linguistically rooted framework. This highlights the potential of grassroots cooperatives to translate abstract principles of sustainability into tangible infrastructures of community life.

Finally, the role of Basque in AEF’s developmental strategy underscores its potential as a driver of social transformation. Rather than functioning merely as a marker of identity, Basque serves as the medium through which new realities are created and alternative models of living are sustained. Its transversal integration—“from below and from the left”—ensures that the language is present in all areas of community life while remaining deeply connected to broader struggles for justice and equality. By aligning Basque with causes as diverse as feminism, agroecology, and social economy, AEF not only strengthens the functional value of the language but also enhances its attractiveness. In this sense, Basque is redefined as a language of the good life (*el buen vivir*), capable of enabling communities to imagine and enact dignified and sustainable futures.

Taken together, these findings suggest that minority languages can play a catalytic role in community transformation when revitalisation efforts are conceived holistically and embedded in broader social, ecological, and economic practices. AEF’s experience demonstrates that revitalisation is not only compatible with sustainable development but can actively advance it by fostering inclusive participation, cultural continuity, and social innovation.

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Prior Ideological Confusion: Not Relating Gaelic Language to Sustainable Development Goals in Scotland, and Strategies for Changing Course

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Abstract

Theoretically, Gaelic in Scotland is one of the most planned and most politically supported minoritised languages in the world. Since the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, tens of millions of pounds have been invested in its future wellbeing and development, with purported aims of making the language more sustainable, of making the language a more vital part of Scottish civic and cultural life, of giving more people more opportunities to learn and use Gaelic in a greater variety of situations. The notion of sustainability is, unsurprisingly, tied closely to increasing speaker numbers. There is little strategic thinking, yet, which explicitly ties Gaelic language and culture – in fact, any of Scotland’s regional or minoritised languages and cultures – to the climate and environmental challenges faced locally and globally. The country’s National Performance Framework (NPF) draws on the UN’s sustainable development goals (SDGs) to set out a vision for collective wellbeing. Considering how language and culture fit (or not) into the NPFs National Outcomes affords a valuable chance to conceive and design more meaningful sociocultural interventions which could position language and culture as direct drivers in our pursuit of a more sustainable and societally-just future.

Introduction

As the world faces climate, cultural and linguistic emergencies, our decision-makers are wrestling with the problem of understanding and responding to these pressures. Some decision-makers, it appears, are unable or unwilling to truly tackle the problems, while others see an opportunity for ongoing resource and wealth extraction. Sustainable development can be seen as an essential response to tackling those challenges, at both a micro level and at the global, macro level. The integration of Scottish Gaelic language and culture, of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), into sustainable development thinking in the Scottish context still requires more holistic and considered strategising, to help society unpick and unwind centuries of land and resource mismanagement, inequitable land ownership structures and cultural and linguistic shaming.

In Scotland, sustainable development has attained a significant presence in the civic and political landscape over recent decades (Ross, 2018). What the term means to different constituencies, especially in the sense of rural-urban or periphery-centre power dynamics has, perhaps, moved from a reactive, short-termism to a more confident and empowered long-term responsibility for land and resources, albeit still facing challenges from external shocks (Rennie & Billing, 2015). This new resilience may be more visible in areas of Scotland which have seen a rise in community land ownership (Mackenzie, 2010; McMorran et al., 2018; Doyle, 2023). Concepts found in socioeconomic movements such as degrowth, including autonomy, open localism and self-organisation, can be read in the reaction to poorly-executed desk-based exercises, such as Scottish Natural Heritage’s Wild Land Map (2014), which was adopted at a policy level by government, but led to criticism of its *perception*-led aesthetic justification (Ritchie, undated). Another example may be the negative public reaction to the Scottish Government’s plan to introduce a Highly Protected Marine Area designation over 10% of its waters, on the country’s west coast which would encompass most of the communities with the greatest Gaelic speaker densities, and led to the plans being abandoned (BBC, 2023). Prior post-graduate work had related how cultural dynamics in the management of herring fisheries in that area had led to localised socio-economic benefits, with Gaelic-speaking fishermen using their language to exclude outside interests and steward a lucrative post-WWII resource until macro-level policy changes overpowered their capabilities (Camshron, 2011).

Methodology and Scope

The geographic scope of this paper broadly relates to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, specifically the three local authority areas (or Councils, out of 32 in Scotland) which are most commonly referred to as *A’ Ghàidhealtachd*, or the Highlands: Highland, Argyll & Bute, Na h-Eileanan Siar. *A’ Ghàidhealtachd* is a contested term (Murdoch, (1995), among others sees it as ‘carrying overtones which are loaded, erroneous and require revision’). Despite this, most Gaelic speakers would recognise the term as a spatio-cultural identifier. There is, of course, a national dimension as well, given that NGLPs operate at a national level. The methodology centres on analysis of existing policy documents related to Gaelic language and its position in Scotland in relation to the agencies and senior professionals tasked with its vitality, viability and future sustainability. This includes drawing on recently completed doctoral research, which included in-depth

interviews with leaders and decision-makers in fields including language development, socioeconomic development, education, business, media and governance.

Linkages to Gaelic and the environment in the national policy architecture

Scotland possesses an extensive suite of economic, environmental, linguistic and social policy and planning instruments. The UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs) help to guide Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) with a view towards helping the country contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Peace and Prosperity. Little strategic linkage, however, between minoritised languages in Scotland and sustainability has yet been designed, other than in a very minor 'organisational' sense – in other words, what certain language-specific bodies and public agencies will do to lower their organisational impacts on climate, and to meet net zero and climate change targets set by government. There is little meaningful vision (yet) relating language development or revitalisation to environmental sustainability which is, in part, related to the recent philosophical shift which positions minority languages (specifically Gaelic) as languages which belong to, are of, and are shared by everyone in the nation.

Gaelic in Scotland is one of the most planned and, theoretically, one of the most-supported RMLs in the world. We are currently halfway through the fourth National Language Plan for Gaelic (NGLPs) which, by its end point in 2028, will have covered 21 years. A close rereading of these NGLPs and other similar strategies and language plans created by local authorities and public agencies has been undertaken to identify instances of the use of sustainable development in relation to language. Policy analysis indicates that – perhaps unsurprisingly – mentions of sustainability for Gaelic language are generally linked to growth in speaker numbers. In other words, how can the language be brought a position sufficient that it can be 'sustainable'? Notionally, recent decades of work are having a positive effect – the number of reported speakers, as recorded in the 2022 Census for Scotland, grew from 57,375 in 2011, to 69,701, with those recorded as possessing any skill in Gaelic (speaking, reading, writing, understanding) grew from under 90,000 to over 130,000 in the same period.

The third NGLP 2018-2022 (2018) observes that: "Creating greater links between Gaelic and the economy can support those communities which have high levels of Gaelic usage to be more sustainable. There are two aspects to this – the economy created by investment in Gaelic and the wider economy to which Gaelic speakers contribute."

A Scottish Government working group also proposed: 'There should be increased activity in Key Sectors ... culture, heritage, tourism, sport, food & drink and the natural environment as the main drivers of social Gaelic use and economic outputs.' (Short Life Working Group, 2023).

Beyond these explicit references, and a limited number of more tentative examples, related to how economic growth can help sustain rural/marginal populations, there is little evidence that Gaelic (or any of Scotland's other RMLs) has been directly connected to broader environmental sustainability, and vice-versa.

Gaelic's organisational connection to environmental agencies

One of the very few significant works from a public agency which links (Gaelic) minority language and culture to sustainability or sustainable development was an environmental ecosystems services compiled on behalf of NatureScot, an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government, responsible for natural heritage and diversity (Maclean, 2021). The concept of ecosystems services has been critiqued as anthropocentric, not fully cognisant of power dynamics, and lacking the capacity to incorporate multiple value systems of different groups or to contribute, potentially, to intergenerational justice (Loos et al., 2022). Failure to adequately position language and culture in a more holistic relational position vis-à-vis environment can perpetuate the view that ecosystem services render natural resources more exploitable rather than mutually beneficial to human (and non-human) well-being.

SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) is a similar type of non-governmental organisation to NatureScot but it has no Gaelic component or remit, despite being the agency charged with environmental regulation, environmental protection and improvement, and flood risk management. Russell's (2022) work on biospheres in rural Scotland also identified the apparent organisational lack of comprehension that land management bodies can have a proactive role in marrying the language-culture nexus to resource management and agricultural practice. These obvious gaps in the policy sphere may be filled by a growing cadre of new voices, such as Smith (2021) who uses toponymic evidence to reconsider land use, land settlement and land management practices and cultures, and Dziadowiec (2025: 5) who explores the Gaelic concept of *dùthchas* which encompasses ideas of 'kinship, heritage and connection to place'. Similarly, Meighan (2024) identifies *dùthchas* as a 'conceptual tool that has guided Gaels to co-exist in harmony with, and in relation to their local environment over millennia, [which] can support the present-day (re)centring of place-based knowledges to foster more sustainable futures'.

The Gaelic socioeconomic market and place-based knowledge

For reasons of efficiency and economics, in the drive to make Gaelic a national and sustainable public good, ‘Gaelic jobs’ in Scotland are being created in urbanity as rapidly as in rural settings. Higher value ‘Gaelic jobs’ exist mostly in cities. This means that economic sectors can be seen to benefit from language policy more than place or community. Advocates for territory- or land-based language policies and supports face questions of essentialism when campaigning for autochthonous/Indigenous approaches to linguistic sustainability; they must deal with questions surrounding the supposed reification of communities of place rather than communities or networks of interest. In pursuit of sociolinguistic equity, Gaelic in Scotland faces an ongoing cultural flattening which arises from laudable attempts to make RMLs appeal to a general, national population. When RMLs become decoupled, or dislocated, from so-called traditional or bounded territories, the embedded, place-based cultural and environmental knowledge of managing green-economy and blue-economy assets becomes endangered in a society that is often driven by commercial imperatives rather than ‘the Commons’ (MacKinnon & Brennan, 2012; Chiblow & Meighan, 2021). Contemporary environmental policy generally fails to accommodate localised, specifically Gaelic-centred cultural knowledge (Ní Mhathúna, 2021).

McFadyen and Sandilands (2021: 160) relate their experience of place-based, linguistic activism as boiling down to: ‘if you know the stories, you love the place, and if you love the place you look after it.’ This finding positions humans in ‘an ethical and reciprocal relationship with the land, its past, people and their stories.’ This understanding is bound up in the idea of *dùthchas*, a linkage of belonging to a place, and safeguarding or stewarding its wellbeing for present and future. RMLs, however are so often linked to the idea of (cultural, traditional, demographic, territorial) loss that it can appear easier to identify the unsustainable instead of mechanisms for the future (Smout, 2009).

The nature-culture dichotomy commonly found in Western modernity intimates the separation of the natural and cultural, leading to the dominance of society/culture over nature (Byrne et al., 2013: 1). This dichotomy can be viewed as a ‘globe’ perspective, where humans act upon the world as if they exist outside of it (Ingold, 1993), or as a ‘sphere’, where humans act as an integral part of it, of existence, a common Indigenous ontology depicting more holistic and interconnected worldviews.

Hence, non-language organisations do not see (or cannot commit to pursuing) a role in language sustainability and language revitalisation – for multiple reasons, including philosophy, politics, funding, resourcing or blunt pragmatism. This means Gaelic as an RML suffers an ongoing ‘silo effect’ which decouples it from environment.

Researcher positionality

It has also become apparent (Cameron, 2023) that the collective leadership for Gaelic in Scotland is unable to identify what it is trying to achieve. When asked what the outcomes of language revitalisation ought to look like, leaders in key developmental fields were unable to provide a clear picture of the end goals, nor how exactly society is supposed to travel. Linguistic-environmental linkages were not readily apparent in the dataset which was gathered for the work.

This lack of prior ideological clarification (Fishman, 1991) has led to a situation in which participants in a Gaelic minority language social economy are unable to identify societal benefits for home and community, but can see that language policy helps a specific and limited cluster of economic sectors (Cameron, 2023).

As a researcher positioned in coastal Highland Scotland, in what according to the Scottish Government’s 8-fold urban rural classification is a ‘remote rural’ area, I live and work in a socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic environment which faces a number of existential threats, such as an aging demographic, population retention challenges, a lack of affordable housing for younger generations, land ownership inequalities, social isolation, linguistic and cultural loss, and so on. Despite this, as an activist in my community, working towards a more resilient and viable socioeconomic future, I fall back on the words of a man who was born and raised in the same community, but, like so many others, was forced to leave to ‘progress’. Farquhar Gillanders (1968: 148) wrote: “It is not enough for the Highlander to look back and bemoan his lot. He must assert himself and there must be outward signs of achievement and there must be a belief in progress throughout the community.”

Conclusion

How could a new SDG complement the existing grouping to engender a belief in progress throughout the community? How could a forward-looking 18th SDG in terms of RMLs (in Scotland and more generally) be conceived? We must perhaps extend Cooper’s (1981) conception of language planning from: ‘Who plans what for whom and how?’ to include an environmental or natural component, something which relates the importance of Gaelic, all variants of Scots (Lallans, Doric), Shetlandic, Orcadian and so on, to landscape management and biocultural asset management techniques for a more holistic approach to environmental and social justice with a renewed focus on rural (de)population and environmental stewardship. Recent doctoral research suggested that Gaelic language is still perceived in developmental terms as a somewhat ‘siloed’ issue and, therefore, in competition with other richly deserving causes or issues for funding and support. To overturn this perception, Gaelic (and other RMLs, TEK and so on) ought to be reimagined as direct

contributors to sustainable development such that language and culture are understood to be tandem drivers of change rather than peripheral interests which must be subsidised from the centre (Cameron, 2023).

More localised control of physical resources and assets, in terms of management and longer-term stewardship are laudable goals, and are certainly not new ideas. There needs to be some policy-generating space in Scotland, and elsewhere, which allow exploration of more holistic views of language and culture as sustainability drivers, not only in a sense of *economy supports language as language supports economy*, but fundamentally about how language and culture can guide, for example, rural and urban planning, less intensive agricultural practices, environmental risk management and the stewarding of green and blue resources. In this space, cross-cultural conversations may exist which overturn the colonialist ‘hoarding’ of language and culture as artefacts to create something more foundational and dynamic (Shulist, 2025).

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Linguistic Inclusion and Water Scarcity Awareness: The Role of the Amazigh Language in Advancing Sustainable Development in Morocco

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Abstract

The Moroccan State has implemented policies to address water scarcity, a pressing issue exacerbated by climate change and increasing demand. However, difficulties still exist, especially concerning developing people's awareness of water conservation techniques, especially in Amazigh communities. This study investigates how the use of the Amazigh language can promote public participation and awareness of Morocco's water shortage. Its main objectives are (i) to examine the extent to which the Amazigh language is incorporated into national water policies and public awareness campaigns; (ii) to evaluate how the use of Amazigh-language communication strategies can affect community participation in water conservation initiatives; and (iii) to investigate how linguistic inclusion may affect the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 6 and the proposed SDG 18. To achieve its objectives, the research addresses three research questions related to (i) the extent to which the Amazigh language is currently utilized in Morocco's water-related policies and public awareness initiatives. (ii) the effect of Amazigh-language communication on public understanding and participation in water conservation. And (iii) the effect of linguistic inclusion on the effectiveness of water scarcity mitigation strategies in Morocco. The study adopts a qualitative approach, making use of semi-structured interviews with local authorities, NGO representatives, and community members in the Tagart community, an Amazigh-speaking area in the region of Marrakech. It also offers a content and critical analysis of the official texts about the water issue. The study adopts the Sociolinguistics of Development theory (Djité, 2008), and the Linguistic Human Rights framework (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994). The findings reveal the need to integrate minority languages such as Amazigh into environmental communication strategies to improve the effectiveness of water conservation efforts and contribute to the broader goals of sustainable development. It also provides evidence for the role of integrating language revitalization as an additional dimension to the seventeen existing SDGs.

Keywords: Amazigh language, Water governance, Linguistic inclusion, SDGs, Environmental sustainability, Morocco.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, Morocco has experienced recurrent and severe droughts, along with prolonged periods of low precipitation that have critically affected its water resources and reduced the storage capacity of its dams. To address the issue, the Moroccan State has implemented policies to address water scarcity, a pressing issue exacerbated by climate change and increasing demand. These water governance policies include the Water Law 36-15 (2016), which "aimed at improving water use efficiency, providing universal access, reducing disparities between rural and urban areas, and ensuring water security" (the World Bank report, June, 2023, p. 5), the National Program for Potable Water Supply and Irrigation (Programme National pour l'Approvisionnement en Eau Potable et l'Irrigation; PNAEPI) 2020-2027, which focuses on building infrastructure and saving water, and the National Water Plan (2020–2050), which lays out plans for long-term water resource management,

In the meantime, the state has launched awareness-raising campaigns to sensitize citizens to the importance of adopting water preservation techniques to combat the catastrophic effects of climate change on the country's water security in particular and sustainable development as a whole. Given that Morocco is constitutionally a bilingual country recognizing Amazigh alongside Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as official languages, the current study argues that the Moroccan environmental communication strategies are required to abide by the constitutional provisions by incorporating both languages to guarantee the effectiveness of water scarcity mitigation initiatives and eventually contribute to the broader sustainable development goals. For this purpose, the study adopts the Sociolinguistics of Development theory (Djité, 2008), which examines the interplay between language and socioeconomic development, and the Linguistic Human Rights framework (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994), which highlights the importance of linguistic diversity in policy-making and implementation.

To understand the current situation of Amazigh, it is important to draw briefly on its major factors. The Amazigh language has been stigmatised and excluded from various domains of public life since independence in 1956 (Boukous, 2011, El Kirat, 2004). Despite its constitutional recognition in 2011, the Amazigh language is still marginalised in all public domains due to the state's procrastination policy in implementing its official character (El Kirat & Boussagui, 2019; Idhssaine, 2021, Boussagui & El Kirat 2025). The multilingual aspect of the Moroccan linguistic landscape, where various national, official, and international languages, particularly MSA, Darija, French, English and Spanish, are competing, is another factor that has exacerbated the situation of Amazigh given its low socioeconomic status (Boussagui, 2019, Boukous, 2011; Idhssaine, 2021). Therefore, the state's linguistic mismanagement tends to affect the effectiveness of its governance in the water sector since difficulties still exist, especially concerning developing people's awareness of water conservation techniques, especially in Amazigh communities.

Research Methodology

The current study investigates how the use of the Amazigh language can promote public participation and awareness of Morocco's water shortage. Its main objectives are (i) to examine the extent to which the Amazigh language is incorporated into national water policies and public awareness campaigns; (ii) to evaluate how the use of Amazigh-language communication strategies can affect community participation in water conservation initiatives; and (iii) to investigate how linguistic inclusion may affect the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and the proposed SDG 18 (Linguistic Diversity).

To achieve these objectives, the research addresses three research questions related to (i) the extent to which the Amazigh language is currently utilized in Morocco's water-related policies and public awareness initiatives. (ii) the effect of Amazigh-language communication on public understanding and participation in water conservation. And (iii) the effect of linguistic inclusion on the effectiveness of water scarcity mitigation strategies in Morocco. The study adopts a qualitative approach, making use of semi-structured interviews with 24 informants, including policymakers, local authorities, NGO representatives, and community members in the Tagart community, an Amazigh-speaking area in the region of Marrakech. The total duration of interviews is 7 hours, 41 minutes and 15 seconds. Interviews with policymakers had initially been planned, but they were not carried out due to the unavailability of the selected participants. The study also undertakes a content and critical analysis of the official texts and documents about the water issue, the National Water Plan 2020–2050, which lays out plans for long-term water resource management, and the National Program for the Supply of Drinking and Irrigation Water 2020–2027, which focuses on building infrastructure and saving water.

Findings and Discussion

This section is concerned with the presentation and discussion of findings, and it is structured into three subsections. The first one degree of use of the Amazigh language in Morocco's water-related policies and public awareness campaigns. The effect of Amazigh language communication strategies on public understanding and participation in water conservation initiatives is the focus of the second section, while the third section highlights the effect of linguistic inclusion on the effectiveness of water scarcity mitigation strategies in Morocco.

Amazigh's Incorporation into Morocco's Water-related Policies and Public Awareness Campaigns

The degree of use of the Amazigh language in the national water policies and public awareness initiatives is the focus of this section, which is organized into two sub-sections which examine (i) the place of Amazigh in the national-water-related policies and (ii) the extent of its utilization in the public awareness campaigns respectively.

Amazigh use in Morocco's water-related policies

The Water Law No. 36-15 was promulgated in 2016 via Dahir No. 1-16-113 (Bulletin Officiel, 6-10-2016). It

“aimed at improving water use efficiency, providing universal access, reducing disparities between rural and urban areas, and ensuring water security. It further emphasized decentralized, integrated, and participatory management and planning of water resources; strengthened consultation and coordination by establishing water basin councils and the adoption of the PNE by the Superior Council of Water and Climate; established the legal foundations to diversify sources of supply through the use of unconventional water resources; mandated the establishment of water information systems at national and river basin levels; and strengthened mechanisms for the protection and conservation of water resources (raw water abstraction and pollution fees and participatory groundwater management contracts).” (The World Bank report, June 2023, p. 5).

Both the French and Arabic versions of the Water Law No. 36-15 appeared in the Bulletin Officiel. However, the version of the law in Amazigh, although it is an official language spoken by a considerable percentage of the Moroccan population, particularly in the rural areas, which are mostly hit by the climate change, is not available.

The National Program for Water Supply and Irrigation (2020-2027 PNAEPI: *Programme National pour l'Approvisionnement en Eau Potable et l'Irrigation*). It

“aims to diversify the sources of supply, guarantee water security, and reduce climate change impacts by accelerating investments to strengthen water supply for drinking and irrigation uses.” (The World Bank report, June 2023, p. 6).

It is worthy of notice that the PNAEPI (2020-2027) is considered as the first phase of the National Water Plan (Plan National de l'Eau (PNE) 20-50 (www.equipement.gov.ma)). Both projects are presented in the previously cited site in French. The Amazigh and Arabic versions of the projects are not available in the Ministry of Equipment and Water.

Although the three laws related to water management in Morocco emphasise the state's initiatives to combat climate change and mitigate its negative effects on the Moroccan population's, the Amazigh communities included, water security, French, which enjoys no official status, tends to be the major means of communication in the national policies pertaining

to the governance of the water sector, followed by MSA which was incorporated in the Water Law No. 36-15 alongside French. However, the absence of Amazigh in such policies reflects the Moroccan state's indifference towards the language in spite of its official status and the state's failure to recognize the role of mother tongues in guaranteeing an effective environmental communication and, therefore, maintaining sustainable development.

Amazigh's incorporation into Morocco's public awareness campaigns

The Tagart community, like many other communities in Morocco and elsewhere, is hit by climate change. The community's water sources have been drastically influenced by the frequent droughts and decreased precipitation. A local authority member, D.A., a 73-y.o. male asserted that [Irrigation water is decreasing. Only 10% of the land or even less is irrigated [...]]. The shortage in the irrigation water has drastically influenced the community's social and economic status given that all agricultural domains have been influenced by drought. A local NGO member, K.R., a 46-y.o. male declared [drought has impacted everything]. In the same vein, F.L., an 80-year-old female, asserted [life is hard because drought has complicated it]. On the other hand, potable water is available given that it is supplied by the Ijddigen Association in collaboration with the National Office for Potable Water (ONEP). However, the increasing demand during the hot season affects its availability during this period, according to a 55-y.o. male local NGO member.

To face these challenges, the Association Izddigen has taken initiatives to sensitise the community to the importance of water conservation and it sometimes resorts to deterrent measures against the individuals who use potable water for irrigation purposes. As for the state, repair of irrigation channels by using cement, construction a water dam in the Zat valley and the provision the necessary logistics for the water associations are the major efforts that are beneficial to the Tagart community and the neighboring communities in Alhouz province. Moreover, the state has launched some awareness-raising campaigns mainly through the media, schools and mosques. The overwhelming majority of the informants reported that these campaigns are very limited, and their inclusion of the Amazigh language is insignificant compared to MSA and Darija. D.A. (73) local authority member declared [we hear about it in all media platforms, but the time allotted to it is limited]. He went on [currently, MSA is predominant]. In the same context, K.M., a 73-y.o. farmer, asserted that [some sermons in the local mosques highlight the issue of water scarcity. They are delivered in Classical Arabic, but only some points are translated into Amazigh]. At school, the initiatives are scarce and even when there is one, it uses only [MSA] according to I.O., an 18-y.o. female student. Concerning social media, the inclusion of Amazigh in the national water shortage awareness raising initiatives tends to be non-existent according to H.B., a 23-y.o. Master's student who undertakes her research on water security, as she claimed [I have never come across any content on water scarcity in Amazigh on social media]. Therefore, the limited incorporation of Amazigh in the state's environmental communication strategies is clear from the community members' testimonies.

The effect of Amazigh language communication strategies on public understanding and participation in water conservation initiatives

Effective communication with a community necessitates the use of a language that is spoken and understood within that community. As indicated in the previous section, the limited inclusion of the Amazigh language in the Moroccan water policy and awareness seems to cast doubts on the effectiveness of the state's communicative strategies with the Amazigh communities. The Tagart community, like many Amazigh communities, witnesses high illiteracy rates and low levels of education, and it is geographically, socially, administratively, and economically marginalized (Ouhmidi, 2025). Therefore, the state's linguistic choices in its environmental communication strategies tend to exclude a large proportion of the community members who are unable to understand the languages supported by the state. F.L., an 80-y.o. illiterate woman, affirmed "they do not speak Amazigh in the media [...]. They should speak our Amazigh because we do not speak Arabic. You understand the message in Amazigh, but not in Arabic ...]. However, Amazigh monolingualism does not seem to be the only factor that hinders communication. Limited command of the languages employed in the state's policies and awareness initiatives along with the community's awareness of the state's exclusion of its mother tongue, seem to limit the effectiveness of the state's efforts to mitigate water scarcity. H.B, a 23-y.o. a female student declared that [the information will be effective when it is delivered in Amazigh. [...]] It is inappropriate for an Amazigh community to receive information in Arabic and other languages. This view is shared by the majority of informants arguing that Amazigh the incorporation of Amazigh in the state's policy and awareness campaigns would be beneficial for the Amazigh communities.

The effect of linguistic inclusion on the effectiveness of water scarcity mitigation strategies in Morocco

The content of the interviews has indicated that the state's awareness-raising initiatives are limited and are ineffective due to their disregard for the country's linguistic and cultural diversity. D.A., a 73-y.o. member of the local community considers the incorporation of Amazigh along with the traditional means of information transmission in the rural areas' traditional markets and in various villages would assist in the state's efforts in promoting water security. A.R., a 23-y.o. male student who is in his last year in agro-industry engineering, explained that the incorporation of the community's traditional knowledge along with its language in the awareness initiatives would be more effective. He also suggested

that the involvement of the community's youth who have pursued their higher education and have obtained some training in raising the community members' awareness through programs that involve speeches, workshops and various activities that take into account the community's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. He emphasizes the importance of cooperation, hard work and consistency in realizing the country's water scarcity mitigation objectives and sustainable development goals.

Conclusion

For sustainable development goals to be achieved, language inclusion is a requirement. In Morocco, the impact of drought and low precipitation levels on the country's sustainable development cannot be overstated, particularly in rural areas, where high poverty rates are prevalent. Accordingly, the state has deployed efforts to mitigate water scarcity and guarantee sustainable development. However, the exclusion of the Amazigh language from the national water policies and awareness-raising campaigns, as reported in the Tagart community, seems to influence the effectiveness of the state's initiatives. The community advocates for the revitalization of the Amazigh language and its integration into policy and awareness-raising efforts to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). The present study also offers support and clear evidence for the need to include an additional SDG, SDG 18, "Linguistic Diversity", alongside the 17 existing goals. Language is not only a medium of communication but also the foundation of human interaction, learning, and participation. As UNESCO (2016, 2019) has emphasized, linguistic diversity is both a driver and enabler of sustainable development, without which the goals of quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), gender equality (SDG 5), and even climate action (SDG 13) cannot be fully realized.

This is particularly true for minority and endangered languages. As Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995, 2008) argue in their work on linguistic human rights, the exclusion of these languages from education, governance, and public life not only marginalizes their speakers but also leads to the erosion of collective knowledge essential for ecological sustainability and cultural continuity. Endangered languages often encode unique knowledge about biodiversity, ecosystems, and local adaptation strategies—resources that are lost when the language disappears (UNESCO, 2019; Maffi, 2005).

The recognition of linguistic diversity as an explicit development goal would therefore institutionalize the idea that protecting and promoting all languages, especially those under threat, is a prerequisite for genuine inclusivity, equity, and resilience in global development policies.

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Policy and Planning for Indigenous Languages in Public Health: Identifying and Dealing with Challenges Based on the Experience of a PAR Project in Mexico

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Abstract

My presentation concerns a little-studied aspect of language planning and revitalization – the usage planning of Indigenous languages in public health settings. It builds on the seven years' experience of a participatory action research (PAR) project in Sierra Norte de Puebla in Mexico. This project was launched with the objective of promoting and expanding the use of Nahuatl at public health services in Indigenous Nahuatl-speaking communities. Despite being the most widely spoken language in Mexico after Spanish, Nahuatl has been almost excluded from this vital domain of social life. I focus on the challenges we have faced while launching several important initiatives within the project. These challenges are divided into two main categories: one directly associated with language planning (primarily corpus planning) and another including social, political, and organizational issues of a broader nature. I also show how we have been responding to these challenges and which of them have had more influence on the project's advances.

Introduction

Since the emergence of language revitalization studies, their primary focus has been on the problem of intergenerational transmission, hence the prevalence of studies that discuss revitalization as part of formal or informal education. However, there is another crucial aspect of language revitalization that has received less scholarly attention – *(re)functionalization* of endangered languages, or expansion of their use in public domains, aimed to enhance their practical value and thus stimulate their transmission (Chebanne & Monaka, 2020; Briceño-Chel, 2021). One of the public domains of language use, whose significance in our lives cannot be underestimated, is health care. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) specifically mentions the Indigenous peoples' right to access health services (as well as the right to practice their own medical traditions) and the right to use and transmit Indigenous languages, but does not establish a connection between these two rights. Meanwhile, one of the obstacles to accessing health services in the context of Indigenous communities has been the problem of communication – the combination of linguistic and cultural barriers between health care providers and Indigenous patients not proficient in the country's dominant language (Trudgen, 2000; Briggs, 2019). Thus, the usage planning of Indigenous languages in public health can be beneficial both for their maintenance and for the health situation in Indigenous communities.

A number of projects have been launched to promote the use of Indigenous languages in public health settings with the above-mentioned benefits in mind (e.g., Vass et al., 2011; Arora et al., 2013; Pérez-Báez, 2016; Flood et al., 2019). However, in general, this field of activities still remains understudied, particularly with regard to identifying challenges and best practices for normalizing the usage of minoritized and Indigenous languages in public health care. Perhaps the most significant project in this area up to date has been the Wuqu Kawoq project in Guatemala, which develops programs for diabetes care in the K'iche' and Kaqchikel languages. The scope and objectives of the Wugu Kawoq project are based on the so-called *developmental approach* in language revitalization. This approach ties the success of a revitalization initiative to addressing social issues that contribute to the language decline, in this case, the poor quality of health services in Mayan communities (Henderson et al., 2014). The developmental approach thus articulates the importance of the interdisciplinary character of language revitalization, with a purpose not only to enhance the vitality of a language itself but also the sustainability of communities speaking it.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) on the use of Nahuatl in public health: an overview

Here, I would like to discuss the experience of a community-based project for introducing an Indigenous language into the work of public health services, relatively small-scale but carried out in line with the principles advocated by the Wuqu Kawoq project. The project under discussion was launched about seven years ago in the town of San Miguel Tenango in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, a region in Mexico. It grew up as participatory action research (PAR), uniting the efforts of Indigenous community members, medical workers, and mine as an external (academic) researcher. San Miguel Tenango is a town of about 2,000 residents, three-quarters of whom speak Nahuatl as their mother tongue, and is surrounded by other, smaller Nahuatl-speaking communities, all part of the municipality of Zacatlán, Puebla.

Being the most widely spoken Indigenous language in Mexico (with more than 1.5 million speakers), Nahuatl remains largely excluded from the area of governmental services, including public health. The personnel sent to work in health centers in Indigenous communities almost entirely consist of Spanish-speaking doctors, nurses, and health promoters, who do not receive any training in intercultural communication, let alone Indigenous languages. Historically, the authorities have not provided any kind of interpretation services for Indigenous patients, forcing them to solve the problem of language barriers themselves or lose the opportunity to receive care. As a result, Nahuatl speakers, and especially persons of advanced age, who often speak little or no Spanish and who are in greater need of health care, have to rely exclusively on the support of their bilingual relatives and frequently face discrimination instead of the attention they deserve (Haimovich & Márquez-Mora, 2021).

Our project began when, during my visit to Tenango, I met a Nahuatl language activist and a nurse, Herlinda Márquez Mora, and we agreed on research collaboration. I was interested in participating in community-based participatory research on language revitalization, while she was interested in promoting the language in health services, where the marginalization of Nahuatl was felt most in the community. So, according to our plan, the project should have focused on practical measures for introducing Nahuatl to the work of health services, primarily at community health centers. In sum, we delineated three main goals: 1) expanding the functionality and raising the prestige of Nahuatl through its usage in a public health context; 2) bridging the gap between the Nahuatl-speaking patients and the Spanish-speaking medical workers; 3) raising awareness of the most acute health issues in the community, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. During its existence, our project has included various activities and produced various materials that ensured the new role for Nahuatl in the work of at least two health centers, of Tenango and of Zoquitla, a neighboring community.

The project was interdisciplinary from the start, combining sociolinguistic and public health goals. Moreover, within a few months of the project's start, we realized that another aspect needed to be considered in our research – Indigenous health-related knowledge and its linguistic dimension. It was impossible to develop a new form of discourse in Nahuatl, which is health promotion from the biomedical perspective, without respecting the semantic and conceptual fabric of traditional Nahuatl lexicon on illness and the human body. Our early inquiries in local communities also revealed that this aspect of traditional knowledge was facing the same threat as the Nahuatl language. The project thus added the study and preservation of this knowledge to its goals.

Regarding the challenges that our project has had to face during these years and which, I believe, would be relevant for similar initiatives, I divide them into two categories, the one directly related to language planning activities and the second one to the wider social dimension, which does not only include language ideologies, but also systems of power relationships and policies in wider sense of this word. The organization and sustainability of the PAR as a diverse team of participants also present a challenge of this type.

1. Language planning challenges

1.1. Translation of biomedical discourse to an Indigenous language

In our first health educational materials, our task was to communicate information on type 2 diabetes in a) a concise manner, b) an intelligible manner, and c) in Nahuatl. Initially, the third aspect seemed to be the most difficult one, as Nahuatl, due to its exclusion from public health context, lacks analogues for biomedical terminology. At first, we produced the Spanish version by consulting local doctors and open-source materials from the WHO. However, upon translating the Spanish text into Nahuatl and testing it with a few speakers, it became clear that our attempt to replicate the style of health education from official sources – a style that is quite heavy and scientific – was not suitable for the target audience. So to avoid this style and unnecessary calques, we decided that it would be better to produce the Nahuatl text first, and this is what we did with subsequent materials – posters and audio recordings about dehydration, (un)healthy nutrition, Covid-19, and high blood pressure. Some new terminology had to be coined for this purpose (although in the case of diabetes, we preferred using the loanword), but the most important aspect was the preference of verbal constructions over nominal ones, which aligned the discourse with the regular Nahuatl speech. Afterwards, we tested the new materials with local Nahuatl speakers to ensure the intelligibility. If the speakers encountered difficulties with understanding, we changed specific constructions or lexical innovations and tested the text once again.

In sum, these are the principles we have been following in the production of biomedical texts in Nahuatl and making them intelligible for the local audience:

- 1) Using new terminology only where it is unavoidable and explaining it in the text;
- 2) Leaving attempts to imitate the official style and adapting the discourse to daily speech practices instead;
- 3) Avoiding the use of traditional lexicon on illness that could obscure the biomedical message, thus keeping two discourses (traditional and biomedical) apart.

1.2. Development and acceptance of specialized terminology

While in posters and audio recordings, we could clarify lexical and semantic innovations with context or images, there was also a case when we had to develop Nahuatl terminology for stand-alone usage, namely for signs at the clinic. This terminology consisted not only of medical concepts, but also of more casual ones (signs that say ‘toilet’, ‘cold storage’, ‘only authorized personnel allowed’, etc.). There are many situations when, in support of Indigenous languages, a lot of new specialized terminology is produced and relevant dictionaries are published; however, the speech community is either unaware of these innovations or does not understand them, as there is no proper channel to ensure their dissemination and acceptance. To avoid such a situation within our micro settings, we put up the following model. First, we invited several Nahuatl speakers of different ages and genders, who had better knowledge of the public health context, and organized a few workshops, during which they made their proposals for the Nahuatl analogues of the Spanish signs. After that, we conducted a poll among 64 bilingual community members, offering them to choose the most appropriate Nahuatl analogue in their opinion. At the last workshop, we ratified the Nahuatl versions based on the poll results and final discussion between project participants. This multi-stage process allowed us, first, to enhance the acceptance of the new terms by the community, and at the same time, to collect valuable data on word formation from a cognitive perspective.

2. Socio-political challenges

2.1. Coordination of activities with health authorities

However, the implementation of bilingual signs at the clinic revealed another issue, not related to language or even language ideologies. We prepared files for printing, but then we found out that in the meantime, the government of the state of Puebla, including health authorities (Secretaría de Salud), had changed, and as a result of that change, the logo on signs at health centers also changed, it became more detailed, and its use was restricted due to copyright. At that moment, we had an agreement with the personnel at the Tenango health center and with the regional public health jurisdiction for installing bilingual signs at the health center. However, in order to use official logos, we had to secure permission from the state department of health. At that point, the process stalled because no one could assist us in reaching the higher-level authorities and scheduling an appointment with relevant officials. We printed and installed several signs that did not require logos, but for the rest, we had to wait.

When Herlinda and I visited local health authorities in a nearby town, we were always warmly received, and after presenting our project and its advances, we heard many words of praise and encouragement from the officials, and they promised their wholehearted support for the project. But eventually it was almost all of it. We never counted on financial support from authorities – until today, all funding for the project has come from various grants and programs provided by Polish institutions. However, we had hoped to receive organizational support or be consulted on policy changes affecting Indigenous communities. We did establish trustworthy contacts with certain individuals at the department, but there has been no real collaboration between us and the health authorities. This fact is also remarkable, as the public health system in Mexico has recently proclaimed a policy of interculturality and a patient-oriented approach, and we essentially do what they are supposed to do according to this policy, and yet in practice, we have to operate in an isolated manner.

2.2. Coordination with local authorities

As regards local administration (municipal authorities and village councils), we have to deal with the same problem of discontinuity. If, for example, we work in collaboration with the Tenango council successfully for three years, we always risk that at the end of that period a new president and a new team get elected, and then we can lose their support in one moment, by the mere fact that we were in good relations with the government from the opposite party. This was nearly our situation three years ago, which was even more precarious, as Herlinda and some other Indigenous participants were part of the outgoing government. So we needed to make a serious diplomatic effort to ensure the acceptance of our project by the new government. However, we did not face major obstacles on their part afterward. In sum, the project has continued under four consecutive teams of town authorities.

2.3. Organization and continuity of the PAR framework

Every participatory action research is a long-term enterprise, which may not have a foreseeable end, as long as new ideas flow in and new opportunities open. A crucial aspect, however, is to maintain the structure based on the participation of the representatives of different stakeholders and preserve the participants’ interest in and commitment to the project. The project does not provide its members with full-time employment (I am full-time employed at the university, but not due to my involvement in this project); there is funding to compensate community members for performing specific tasks, but we cannot pay a salary to medical workers who are governmental employees. It is important to remember that participants can dedicate as much time to the project as they wish, without it preventing them from earning a living. In such a situation, a flexible project structure is essential, allowing it to remain open to new members without jeopardizing its progress if any of them need to leave. For that purpose, it is important to involve many people and expect from each one to contribute according to their will and availability, which can be a tiny bit, but even a tiny bit has value in this context.

Before concluding, I would like to illustrate the challenges mentioned above with a unique initiative developed within our project. This is Nahuatl classes for locally employed medical workers, and it is remarkable that the idea to teach such classes came first from the medical workers themselves, after they closely collaborated with us on the COVID-19 deterrence and vaccination campaigns. In 2021, Herlinda started teaching classes of the Tenango variant of the language, which has some unique features, and these classes took place more or less regularly once a week. After she started working at a hospital near Mexico City and could no longer teach, the classes paused for a while. However, I took on the task and was able to continue teaching the classes, though mostly in a remote mode. We developed a program oriented towards medical workers and their needs, which included an emphasis on spoken language rather than on historical grammar, more information on the body parts and illnesses, and more cultural information. Definitely, there have been aspects of Nahuatl that have made our students struggle, but the real difficulties were of technical and organizational character. In remote mode, there's always been a risk that the connection can fail. But even with a stable connection, the main obstacle was the availability of the personnel. Even if we agree on a specific day and time that suits most of them for a class, an emergency can still disrupt your plans. Apart from genuine health emergencies, I should note that the work of a public health employee in Mexico implies many administrative procedures, which sometimes take more time than attending to patients. The overload of personnel with administrative procedures has been the reason for cancelling many classes. This is the aspect where we could expect assistance from health authorities, who could have helped us allocate one hour per week for classes, thereby relieving personnel from secondary tasks. But unfortunately, it has not happened.

Conclusions

To sum up, the interdisciplinary participatory research on language revitalization provides you with an opportunity to contribute to several aspects that present interest for the community, not only those directly associated with the language. However, the number of challenges in the case of interdisciplinary PAR also increases. As you can see, the most significant challenges stem not from working on language itself, but from the socio-political environment. This is not because it opposes the very idea of language revitalization, but rather because it is structured in such a way that every novelty encounters numerous impediments on its path to becoming a reality. It is a pity that, among the vast literature on language planning and language revitalization, this aspect has received so little attention and discussion on how researchers and activists can cope with the challenges of this sort. I believe that only by meeting and overcoming those challenges ourselves, we can deepen our understanding of this aspect and develop strategies for dealing with it.

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Language, Identity, and Sustainability: Psychological and Developmental Imperatives in the Revitalization of EkeGusii

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Abstract

This paper argues for the institutionalization of a new Sustainable Development Goal SDG 18: Language, Culture, and Sustainable Development by examining the case of EkeGusii, a Bantu language of southwestern Kenya. Despite its millions of speakers, EkeGusii faces declining intergenerational transmission, urban stigma, and limited institutional support. Drawing on census data, school policy analysis, community media mapping, and original surveys, the study reveals how language loss undermines psychosocial well-being, identity, and equitable access to education and services. It reframes language revitalization as a developmental and psychological imperative, not merely a cultural concern. The authors propose ten actionable targets under SDG 18, including integrating heritage languages into education, health, media, and governance systems. Evidence from Kenya and comparable contexts shows that mother-tongue instruction, culturally responsive services, and youth engagement in creative domains can reverse language shift and enhance social cohesion. The EkeGusii case demonstrates both the urgency and feasibility of embedding linguistic diversity into global development frameworks. Recognizing language as infrastructure for resilience, inclusion, and dignity closes a critical gap in the 2030 Agenda and affirms the knowledge systems of marginalized communities.

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets 17 goals, but it does not name language or linguistic diversity as an explicit goal or target, despite frequent references to inclusion and leaving no one behind (United Nations, 2015; United Nations, 2024; McEntee-Atalianis, 2023). This omission weakens the link between development strategies and the knowledge systems communities use to interpret risk, govern resources, and care for well-being (British Council, 2021; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022). Languages encode ecological knowledge, social norms, and intergenerational ties that support resilience and participation in public life (UNESCO, 2020; British Council, 2021). Loss of language erodes identity and belonging, which are core determinants of psychosocial health and social integration in diverse settings (Hasnain et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2024). Revitalization of endangered and minoritized languages should be framed as a developmental and psychological imperative rather than as heritage preservation alone (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022; McEntee-Atalianis, 2023).

This paper advances a proposal for an eighteenth Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 18: Language, Culture, and Sustainable Development, and grounds the argument in the case of EkeGusii, a Bantu language of southwestern Kenya (KICD, 2017; Ethnologue, 2025; Texas State University, 2022). We combine census data, school policy analysis, community media mapping, and original household and youth surveys to examine vitality, transmission, domains of use, and attitudes among Abagusii speakers in Kisii and Nyamira counties (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019; Abiyo, 2024; Authors' field surveys, 2022–2023). We show how safeguarding EkeGusii advances existing SDGs while motivating a formal policy locus for linguistic diversity within the global framework (United Nations, 2024; British Council, 2021; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022).

Background

EkeGusii is spoken mainly in Kisii and Nyamira counties, with diaspora use in urban centers, and counts roughly 2.2 to 2.7 million speakers depending on source and year (KNBS, 2019; Ethnologue, 2025). Population size alone is not a sufficient measure of vitality, since stability depends on intergenerational transmission, domains of use, and status (UNESCO, 2010; Ethnologue, 2025). National language policy gives early-grade space to mother tongue or language of the catchment area, but implementation quality and materials vary and English and Kiswahili dominate practice, especially in towns (KICD, 2017; Mandillah, 2019; Abiyo, 2024). Regional evidence shows urban environments accelerate shift and reduce home-domain use for many minority languages in East Africa, driven by mobility, schooling, and work ecologies (Gibson & Bagamba, 2016; Ogechi & Hornsby, 2021). Our household surveys in 2022–2023 indicate declines in child fluency and home use among families in urban wards compared to rural wards, with parents reporting pressure to prioritize Kiswahili and English for school success (Authors' field surveys, 2022–2023; Abiyo, 2024). Youth

interviews highlight stigma toward local languages and the rise of Sheng as a cross-ethnic youth code in urban spaces, which further shifts peer-domain use away from heritage languages (Harvard International Review, 2020; Githiora, 2018; Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Structural, demographic, and cultural forces explain the decline trajectory. Colonial and postcolonial language policies elevated English and later Kiswahili as instruments of administration, education, and national integration, leaving minority languages with limited functional domains (Mandillah, 2019; Mwaniki, 2014; KICD, 2017). Urbanization, mixed-ethnicity households, and labor mobility reshape family language policy and reduce child-directed input in heritage languages (Norris & Ortega, 2025; Maseko, 2024; Zhao et al., 2022). Intermarriage often correlates with adoption of a lingua franca at home, which reduces transmission probabilities for minority languages across generations (Igboanusi & Wolf, 2009; Kilangi, 2024). Youth language markets in Nairobi and other towns valorize Sheng for identity and access to culture, while undervaluing local languages in prestige contexts, reinforcing attitude change (Harvard International Review, 2020; Cambridge University Press, 2021). These factors together predict further erosion of transmission and status unless policy and community action alter incentives and expand high-value domains of use (Gibson & Bagamba, 2016; British Council, 2021).

The psychosocial and developmental effects of language decline are significant. Meta-analytic and scoping reviews link heritage language maintenance and ethnic identity with better mental health, self-esteem, and social integration, although effects are moderated by family relationships and context (Hasnain et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2022). Recent reviews also associate heritage language proficiency with markers of emotional well-being in youth, particularly when family cohesion is present (Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2023; Hasnain et al., 2024). In Kenyan settings, school counselors and educators report motivational and identity challenges among learners when schooling languages diverge from home and community practices, consistent with evidence from language-of-instruction studies in low- and middle-income countries (Nakamura et al., 2023; Abiyo, 2024). The convergence of identity threat, stigma, and restricted voice in public institutions can reduce youth participation and weaken local social capital (British Council, 2021; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022). These psychosocial pathways justify treating revitalization as a mental health and youth development concern as well as a cultural policy issue (Hasnain et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2024).

EkeGusii revitalization efforts exist but remain fragmented. Several vernacular radio stations broadcast in EkeGusii and reach large audiences, especially Egesa FM and Kisii FM, which serve as cultural hubs and provide daily content in the language (Royal Media Services, n.d.; Radio.co.ke, n.d.; Kisii FM, n.d.). Local initiatives include a recent trilingual EkeGusii dictionary, Enchengeria, launched to standardize and promote use, which shows community energy for language resources (Kenya News Agency, 2023). Academic and civil society projects document EkeGusii linguistics and discourse, but integration into school practice is limited by teacher training and materials gaps (Cammenga, 2002; Nash, 2011; Abiyo, 2024). Comparable initiatives in East Africa show what is possible. Trials in Kenya and large-scale reforms improved early-grade reading when pedagogy, materials, and coaching were aligned, though they focused on English and Kiswahili rather than local languages (Piper, 2016; Piper, 2019; LASER-PULSE, 2020). Systematic reviews in low- and middle-income countries indicate mother-tongue instruction improves foundational literacy and later biliteracy when implemented with coherent policies and resources (Nakamura et al., 2023; Mandyata, 2024). These lessons apply to EkeGusii once curriculum, assessment, and teacher development include the language in early grades, with supported transitions to national and international languages (KICD, 2017; Mandillah, 2019).

Revitalizing EkeGusii advances several current SDGs. For SDG 3 on health and well-being, language maintenance aligns with better psychosocial outcomes through identity affirmation and family cohesion mechanisms (Hasnain et al., 2024; Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2023). For SDG 4 on quality education, evidence across Africa links mother-tongue-based instruction to stronger reading acquisition and equitable gains when scaled with fidelity (Nakamura et al., 2023; Mandyata, 2024). For SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, addressing linguistic marginalization targets structural barriers embedded in policy and service delivery (British Council, 2021; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022). For SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, supporting heritage languages in urban spaces strengthens social cohesion during rapid migration and demographic change (Harvard International Review, 2020; Cambridge University Press, 2021). For SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, multilingual inclusion raises trust and participation in governance and service access (British Council, 2021; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022).

We propose institutionalizing SDG 18, Language, Culture, and Sustainable Development, with ten targets that embed linguistic diversity into development systems. Target 1, integrate endangered and minoritized languages into early childhood, basic, and community education with teacher preparation and assessment aligned to learning in familiar languages (KICD, 2017; Nakamura et al., 2023). Target 2, embed heritage languages in public health messaging and psychosocial services to increase uptake and trust (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022; British Council, 2021). Target 3, fund community media, digital archives, and open repositories for language materials that are accessible and reusable (UNESCO, 2020; Kenya News Agency, 2023). Target 4, train teachers, counselors, and health workers in culturally responsive and linguistically inclusive practice (Nakamura et al., 2023; Mandyata, 2024). Target 5, incentivize youth participation through creative industries, radio, podcasts, and local tech hubs to shift attitudes and increase prestige domains (Royal Media Services, n.d.; Radio.co.ke, n.d.). Target 6, digitize lexicons, corpora, and orthography guides

with open licenses and quality control, linked to national repositories (Kenya News Agency, 2023; UNESCO, 2020). Target 7, add language indicators to national statistics and SDG monitoring so that inclusion is measured and resourced (United Nations, 2024; UNESCO, 2020). Target 8, establish sustainable funds and matching grants for community-led revitalization linked to national education and culture budgets (British Council, 2021; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022). Target 9, support multilingual governance and participatory processes at county level to increase voice and accountability, especially in linguistically diverse counties (British Council, 2021; United Nations, 2024). Target 10, align constitutional and statutory protections with linguistic rights and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to sustain policy attention beyond 2030 (UN General Assembly, 2020; UNESCO, 2022).

The EkeGusii case shows both urgency and feasibility. Large absolute speaker numbers obscure vulnerability in transmission, home use, and youth attitudes in urban settings (KNBS, 2019; Authors' field surveys, 2022–2023). Without interventions that expand high-status domains and address stigma, the trend will move from vulnerability toward endangerment, as comparative East African cases suggest (Gibson & Bagamba, 2016; Cambridge University Press, 2021). Community media, new lexical resources, and local scholarship provide a base to build on, but effective revitalization requires system-level policy and financing so that schools, health, and civic institutions normalize EkeGusii alongside Kiswahili and English (KICD, 2017; Abiyo, 2024; Kenya News Agency, 2023). The International Decade of Indigenous Languages offers a timely platform for aligning national and global action on language and development (UNESCO, 2022; UN General Assembly, 2020).

The 2030 Agenda depends on social legitimacy and voice as much as on growth or technology (United Nations, 2024; British Council, 2021). Recognizing language as development infrastructure closes a gap in the SDGs and directs investment to the cultural foundations of resilient societies (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022; McEntee-Atalianis, 2023). Revitalizing EkeGusii is a developmental and psychological necessity, not a peripheral cultural project, and it is consistent with an inclusive SDG pathway that values the knowledge and dignity of all communities (Hasnain et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2022).

Our Perspective

The Missing Pillar in the SDG Framework

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while comprehensive, overlooks language and linguistic diversity as explicit targets. This gap weakens the principle of "leaving no one behind" (United Nations, 2024). Language is not a secondary cultural element; it is the foundation through which communities interpret risk, manage resources, and sustain well-being. As Drucker (1999) pointed out, culture shapes strategy. Without integrating linguistic realities into development policies, interventions risk becoming disconnected and ineffective.

The authors' proposal for SDG 18 addresses this critical gap. By focusing on EkeGusii—a Bantu language spoken by over two million people, but at risk of losing intergenerational transmission—they highlight the paradox of numerical strength and functional vulnerability. Their call to action is both urgent and achievable.

Language and Identity: A Psychological Imperative

Language plays a pivotal role in identity formation, especially during adolescence. Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development highlights adolescence as a key period for identity consolidation. The stigmatization of EkeGusii, alongside the rise of Sheng as a prestige language in urban Kenya, disrupts this process, contributing to identity fragmentation and diminished self-esteem (Hasnain et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2024).

Jung's (1964) concept of the collective unconscious further emphasizes the symbolic importance of language. EkeGusii carries myths, archetypes, and ecological knowledge that unite the Abagusii community. Its decline leads to a loss of cultural coherence and psychological resilience.

Research shows that maintaining heritage languages improves mental health, particularly when family cohesion is strong (Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2023). In Kenyan schools, counselors report identity and motivational challenges when the language of instruction differs from home languages (Nakamura et al., 2023; Abiyo, 2024). These findings support treating language revitalization as a mental health and youth development priority.

Philosophical Foundations: Language as the House of Being

Heidegger (1959) famously said, "language is the house of Being." The decline of EkeGusii is more than a sociolinguistic issue, it is an existential crisis. Language shapes how communities perceive and act within the world. Its loss limits the capacity for authentic existence.

Charles Taylor (1994) argues that identity is formed within linguistic communities through dialogue. The marginalization of EkeGusii disrupts this process, weakening the moral and civic foundation of society. Thus, SDG 18 serves as a philosophical affirmation of the right to exist, to speak, and to belong.

Strategic Systems Thinking: From Fragmentation to Integration

The proposed targets under SDG 18 reflect advanced systems thinking. Drawing from Senge's (1990) *The Fifth Discipline*, the authors recognize that language revitalization requires integrated interventions across education, health, media, and governance. This systemic approach ensures that linguistic inclusion is not an isolated effort but a transformative process.

For example, integrating EkeGusii into early childhood education (Target 1), public health messaging (Target 2), and youth creative industries (Target 5) creates positive feedback loops that reinforce the language's prestige, transmission, and utility. Adding language indicators to national statistics (Target 7) and aligning constitutional protections (Target 10) institutionalizes linguistic rights and ensures policy coherence.

These strategies echo the success of Kenya's Tusome literacy program, which improved outcomes by aligning pedagogy, materials, and coaching though it focused on English and Kiswahili (Piper, 2016; LASER-PULSE, 2020). The same principles can apply to EkeGusii when supported by coherent policy and funding.

Equity and Epistemic Justice: Language as a Right

The exclusion of EkeGusii from formal spheres represents epistemic injustice a denial of the community's right to contribute to public knowledge. Nancy Fraser's (2008) theory of recognition and redistribution argues that justice requires both economic equity and cultural recognition. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) further asserts that cognitive justice necessitates validating diverse knowledge systems.

The authors' proposal operationalizes these ideas. By integrating EkeGusii into education, health, and governance, they affirm the dignity and knowledge systems of marginalized communities. This is not mere inclusion it is empowerment.

Conclusion: Toward a Linguistically Inclusive Development Agenda

We are convinced that this proposal for SDG 18 offers a visionary contribution to global development discourse. It reframes language as infrastructure, identity as resilience, and culture as strategy. Their interdisciplinary approach demonstrates that revitalizing EkeGusii is not a nostalgic pursuit; it is a developmental necessity.

The 2030 Agenda hinges on social legitimacy and voice as much as on growth or technology. Recognizing language as a form of development infrastructure fills a crucial gap in the SDGs and directs resources toward the cultural foundations of resilient societies. SDG 18 provides a pathway to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable futures where every community has the right to speak, to be heard, and to thrive.

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The Role of Multilingualism in Language Shift and Revitalization: The Judeo-Spanish Case

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Abstract

This article examines the role of multilingualism in processes of language shift and revitalization among Turkish Sephardim. Based on 60 sociolinguistic interviews conducted in Istanbul between 2012 and 2017, this study employs a multidimensional methodological and theoretical approach, as well as a cross-generational perspective combined with a semiotic analysis of narratives. The article examines how multilingual practices influence the internalization and reproduction of language ideologies while also offering a new understanding of the causes of language shift and potential pathways for revitalization. This study connects endangered languages and sustainable development by showing how multilingualism functions as both a condition of language shift and a resource for revitalization and reclaiming of heritage languages. In the case of Judeo-Spanish among Turkish Sephardim, multilingual repertoires sustain linguistic and cultural continuity even when intergenerational transmission of the heritage language falters. This article concludes that multilingual practices among Sephardim shape the way in which they negotiate linguistic and cultural continuity, distinctiveness, and belonging across generations beyond language shift.

1 Historical Context: Dynamics of multilingual practices among Sephardim

Jewish communities, both historically and in contemporary contexts, exemplify the centrality of multilingualism in shaping linguistic identity and cultural continuity. For nearly three millennia, Jews have practiced multilingualism across diverse regions and sociopolitical settings (Spolsky, 2010). Crucially, it is the diversity of Jewish languages—not the primacy of any single one—that has functioned as a defining marker of Jewish identity, as seen, for example, among Soviet Jews (Haarmann, 1998). The Turkish Sephardic community offers a particularly compelling case of this enduring multilingual tradition and illustrates how multilingual practices mediate processes of language shift.

The *Sephardim* (Hebr. *Sefaradim*, ‘The Jews of Spain’) are the descendants of the Iberian Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth century. After the expulsions from Castile and Aragon (1492), Portugal (1497), and Navarre (1498), between 50,000 and 90,000 Jews were displaced and resettled across North Africa, Portugal, Italy, Northern Europe, and Ottoman territories (Benbassa & Rodrigue, 2000: xxxvii). These groups brought with them the diverse Ibero-Romance vernaculars spoken in Iberia before expulsion (Quintana, 2023).

By the mid-sixteenth century, sustained interaction among diaspora-born generations gave rise to Castilian-based koine forms through processes of levelling, convergence, and innovation within Ottoman Sephardic communities (Minervini, 2006; Penny, 2012; Quintana, 2023). This “Sephardisation” process resulted, as Şaul & Hualde (2016: 10) put it, in “the disappearance of Romance multilingualism and the triumph of one language for the Jews of Iberian heritage in the Mediterranean.” Yet multilingualism evolved through new constellations of contact within the Ottoman Empire. Given the relative freedom that the Sephardim enjoyed to travel throughout the different regions of the Ottoman Empire and their international family networks contact with the local majority population as well as the different minorities around them led to the acquisition of further languages (Altabe, 2003): Hebrew was reserved for ritual, Judeo-Spanish structured family and community domains, Greek facilitated local interactions, and Turkish served as the language of public life, predominantly in men’s interactions with the Turkish-speaking majority. Multilingual proficiency was, however, distributed unevenly across several languages. For instance, by the end of the 19th century, Sephardim in Bulgaria could read Hebrew script without speaking it, spoke Turkish without writing it, and could neither speak nor write Bulgarian (Münch, 1994: 214).

Today, the Turkish Sephardim’s reflections on their multilingual practices often resonate with official discourses that portray Jews as emblematic of ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, and multilingualism—framing them as living symbols of Turkey’s Ottoman heritage of tolerance (Seni, 2015: 87). This perception is also echoed in personal narratives. Habib¹, for instance, describes his family’s multilingualism as almost innate: “My family was genetically predisposed to languages; they spoke many languages”. Similarly, when asked to name his favorite language, Salamon² struggles to single one out: “None of them, because I like many languages; I don’t like only one in particular”. Such accounts illustrate what Bornes-Varol (2013: 5) has described as a distinctive feature of Sephardic identity: rooted in inherent multilingualism, layered cultural affiliations, and the embrace of multiplicity.

¹ [1st-m-73-fluent-ind]

² [3rd-m-43-fluent-ind]

2 Methodological Approach

This study draws on 60 in-depth sociolinguistic interviews conducted in Istanbul between 2012 and 2017 as part of my PhD thesis (Aminian Jazi 2024). Participants were selected across three generations of Sephardim (62–92, 42–68, and 21–43 years old), including family clusters and independent cases, allowing for both intergenerational and individual perspectives.

Data collection combined participant observation, guided and expert interviews, and life-history and language-biography techniques, complemented by field notes, document analysis, and collaboration with community assistants (Langman, 2013). Interviews were carried out in the speakers' preferred languages, with fluid code-switching supported by the interviewer's multilingual repertoire (Romanian, French, Spanish, Portuguese) and, where needed, by a community assistant for Turkish. This adaptive practice fostered more natural, affectively resonant narratives (Pavlenko, 2007).

Analysis attends to both semantic and emotional dimensions of participants' narratives (Wieser, 1994), situating overt and covert attitudes within the embodied traces of trauma that shape memory, dispositions, and intergenerational orientations toward Judeo-Spanish (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017; Anthonissen, 2020; Busch, 2015, 2016; Rosenthal, 2024 [1995]). Interpretation draws on Grounded Theory Methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), while framing identity within Bucholtz & Hall's (2004) semiotic model of practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance, complemented by theories of social identity (Barth, 1998 [1969], 2000), Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Giles & Smith, 1979), and Ideology of Language framework (Kroskrity, 2004, 2010; Schieffelin, Woolard & Kroskrity, 1998; Gal & Irvine, 2019).

All excerpts from participants' narratives are anonymized and referenced through a systematic coding scheme (e.g., [3rd-m-43-fluent-ind]), which specifies an individual belonging to the third generation, male, proficiency in Judeo-Spanish and whether the speaker belonged to a family cluster (e.g., fam1) or was interviewed individually (-ind). While presented in English here, the original accounts were in Judeo-Spanish (Aminian Jazi, 2004, xvi). The translations were carefully rendered to retain the semantic and pragmatic subtleties of the source language.

3 Key results

The evolution of multilingualism and the trajectory of language shift among the Sephardim in Türkiye can be explained through two overarching categories of language ideologies that structured attitudes toward and practices in Judeo-Spanish, as well as the ways in which the shift away from it was organized (Aminian Jazi, 2024; Seloni & Sarfati, 2013): (1) ideologies arising from social attitudes and community developments, all of which contribute to a *rhetoric of language purism*, and (2) ideologies rooted in national language policies and their consequences which lead to the emergence of a *culture of fear rhetoric* (cf. Figure 1)

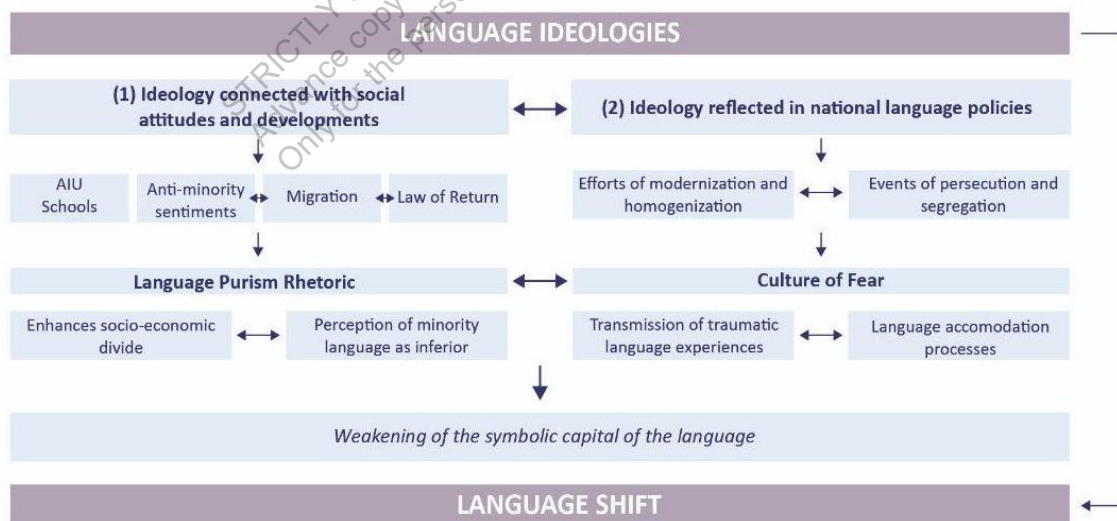


Figure 1. *Ideology types and their effects among Turkish Sephardim*
(Aminian Jazi, 2024, 224)

The first category—ideologies shaped by social attitudes and internal community dynamics—becomes particularly evident in the rise of French. From the mid-nineteenth century, French, introduced through the *Alliance Israélite*

Universelle (AIU) schools, emerged as a prestigious language of education and modernity, gradually rivalling Judeo-Spanish in intergenerational transmission (Benbassa & Rodrigue, 2000). French became associated with rational discourse, literature, and upward mobility, while Judeo-Spanish was increasingly stigmatized as old-fashioned mixed language of little value. As one consultant, Salomon, observed,

[...] French many times replaced [Judeo-]Spanish, because French was the language of the bourgeoisie and [Judeo-]Spanish a language --- old that --- they believed --- that was worthless. They said that richer families who had access to education and good schools were taught in French, and the French they learned was academic and they had a higher level in French. They said <Why are we going to speak [Judeo-]Spanish, it's the language of the poor, who couldn't study. Let's speak French, the language of the country, of a very, very civilised country.> Right?) [3rd-m-43-fluent-ind] (Aminian Jazi, 2024: 231)

Salamon links the adoption of French to its symbolic status within class hierarchies (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000). For some AIU-educated families, linguistic purism provided an ideological rationale for transmitting French at home: among my 60 interviewees, three first-generation and four second-generation participants reported French as their family language (Aminian Jazi, 2024: 231). These dynamics illustrate the first category of ideologies—those shaped by social attitudes and community developments.

The second category, however, stemmed from the assimilationist policies and measures after the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 which marked a more radical rupture in the multilingual practices of the Turkish Sephardim. Nationalist and homogenizing policies—such as the “*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!*” (“Citizen, Speak Turkish!”) campaign—elevated Turkish as the sole legitimate language of public life. Minority languages like Judeo-Spanish were increasingly stigmatized and suppressed, and public assaults on speakers generated fear, discouraging the intergenerational transmission of Judeo-Spanish even within the home (Bali, 1999; 2008). Against the backdrop of the two overlapping types of ideologies, language use was rarely a matter of free selection within a multilingual repertoire. Instead, it unfolded as a trauma-mediated negotiation of linguistic identity (Busch, 2015, 22016), with language representing as a central marker of national unity and ideological positioning (Aminian Jazi, 2024, 2025), as illustrated in the flow diagram in Figure 2 below.

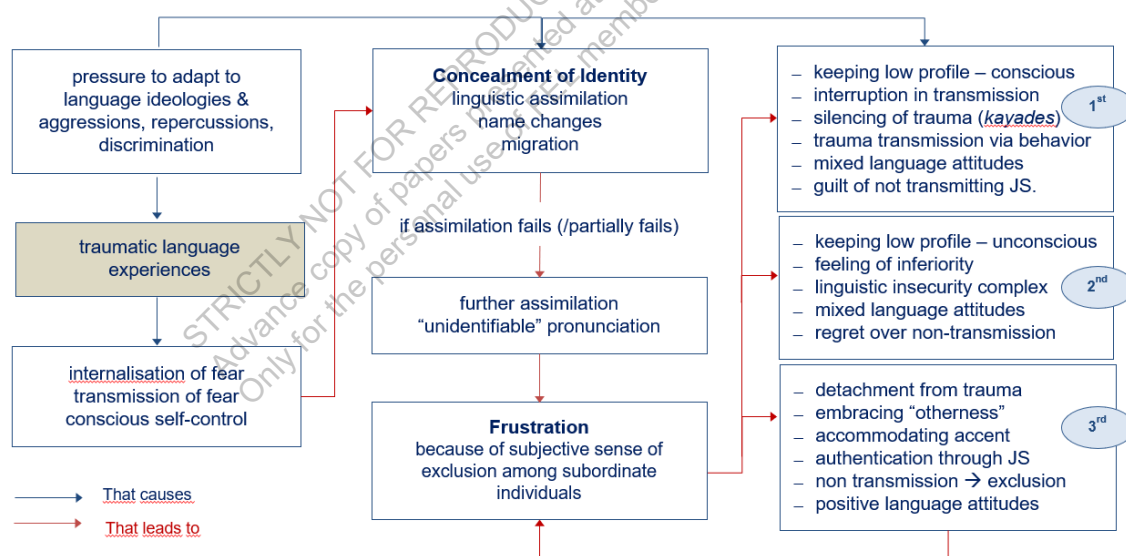


Figure 2. Flow diagram – pathways: ideologies, attitudes, practices –cross-generational perspective (Aminian Jazi, 2024: 323)

Linguistic strategies of unmarking ethnic difference—such as adequation through linguistic assimilation, name changes, and migration patterns (cf. Figure 1)—were articulated through various tactics of intersubjectivity (Aminian Jazi, 2024, 2025; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004: 369). These strategies frequently drew on discourses of linguistic purism, a pattern vividly reflected in participants' narratives. In doing so, they rendered the pervasive *rhetoric of fear* largely invisible, masking coercive pressures under the guise of modernity and progress.

For the first generation, abandoning Judeo-Spanish, adopting Turkish (including Turkish names), and silencing traumatic experiences of language suppression through *kayades* (also *kayadez*, f., a Judeo-Spanish term meaning “silence,” “stillness,” or “quiet”) were strategies aimed at ensuring personal safety. The second generation inherited these unspoken fears of repression based on language and negative attitudes toward Judeo-Spanish, which reinforced the disruption of intergenerational transmission and deepened linguistic insecurity (Preston, 2013), largely tied to their declining competence in the language. Since the 1990s, however, a new dynamic has emerged: younger generations—who no longer speak Judeo-Spanish fluently—have begun to engage with it in what Shandler (2004) terms a *postvernacular mode*. This is a distinct semiotic way of relating to the language that does not depend on fluency, but rather on symbolic engagement with the heritage language. Arising in response to a profound sense of linguistic and cultural loss, postvernacular practices reframe Judeo-Spanish not as a liability but as a central value of Sephardic identity and heritage, while also prompting critical reassessment of earlier narratives of linguistic purism (Aminian Jazi, 2025).

Although the abandonment of Judeo-Spanish was long justified in community narratives as a strategy of progress and integration, the turn to French within the multilingual repertoire also reflected assimilationist pressures that intensified after the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. French, as a prestigious yet non-threatening language, offered a safer vehicle of modernity at a time when nationalist policies rendered the transmission of Judeo-Spanish increasingly precarious and positioned Turkish as the language of domination and coercive assimilation. Since the 1990s, however, shifting attitudes toward the heritage language have brought to the surface previously covert layers of trauma, revealing how both overt narratives of modernization and the covert processes of internalization of vulnerability, antisemitic threat, and disrupted transmission shaped the retreat from Judeo-Spanish (Aminian Jazi, 2025).

Thus, despite assimilationist pressures and the shift away from Judeo-Spanish towards Turkish, Sephardic multilingualism persisted in new forms: historically shaped by Romance languages and varieties (Benor 2009), many Sephardim developed a fluid competence across French, Peninsular Spanish, and Italian, allowing for permeable linguistic boundaries among Romance languages that continue to inform identification processes and communication today across all generational cohorts covered in this study (Aminian Jazi, 2024; Altubev, 2003).

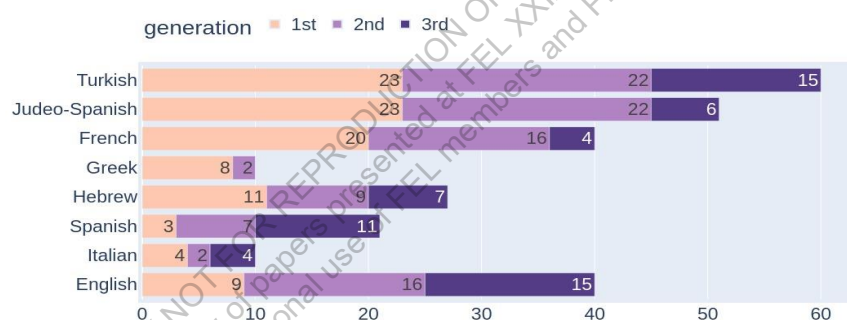


Figure 3: Sampling – number of languages spoken – by generation
(Aminian Jazi, 2024: 144)

Across generations, Turkish emerges as the only shared language among all consultants, while proficiency in Judeo-Spanish shows a sharp decline: it remained intact in the first and second generations but dropped to just one-third of the third generation (5 out of 15). French follows a similar downward trajectory, reported by 20 first-generation, 16 second-generation, and only 4 third-generation participants, underscoring both its historical prestige and its waning relevance. In contrast, English expanded steadily, from 9 participants in the first generation to nearly all in the third (15), reflecting global linguistic trends. Within the youngest generation, knowledge of other Romance languages (Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish) also appears, acquired primarily through formal education. This trend suggests both a general positive attitude to Romance languages and a compensatory means of accessing Judeo-Spanish in the absence of formal learning opportunities (Aminian Jazi, 2024).

For younger generations who neither speak Judeo-Spanish nor have any community-centred nor any formal opportunities to learn it, this multilingual literacy in other Romance languages offers access to their heritage language. Knowledge of Peninsular Spanish, Italian, and French is increasingly being mobilized to re-engage with the Sephardic past across different generational cohorts—whether in attempts to communicate with grandparents, to explore cultural roots, or to participate in symbolic revitalization efforts (Aminian Jazi, 2024).

4 Conclusions

These findings underline the dual role of multilingualism. Historically, multilingual repertoires structured the directions of language shift: French offered a safe vehicle of modernity, Turkish was adopted as the language of assimilation into the majority society while Judeo-Spanish was increasingly marginalized. Today, however, multilingualism provides resources for re-engagement. Literacy in Romance languages enables symbolic and postvernacular connections to Judeo-Spanish, allowing younger generations to sustain cultural memory and identity even without fluency.

At the same time, the results point to the deep imprint of language trauma and different ideology sets in shaping language practices. First-generation strategies of abandoning Judeo-Spanish, adopting Turkish names, or silencing traumatic experiences through *kayades* created a legacy of fear and linguistic insecurity that was transmitted to the second generation. Yet multilingual strategies and the continued use of Judeo-Spanish as a code language function as protective resource reinforcing group boundaries. These practices, while sometimes exclusionary of the younger generation, represent an inadvertent mode of intergenerational transmission that has left traces even among the third generation.

Viewed historically, the perception of Romance languages as fluid and interconnected—rooted in Medieval Spain and carried into the Ottoman diaspora—appears to have shaped Sephardic adaptability to shifting linguistic contexts. This perception facilitated koineization in the sixteenth century, enabled responses to Turkification in the twentieth, and today blurs the boundaries between Peninsular Spanish and Judeo-Spanish in third-generation identification processes. Multilingualism, then, is a constitutive element of Sephardic strategies for navigating identity, whether through assimilation, boundary maintenance, or revitalization.

The overarching conclusion is that it is not a single language that defines Sephardic identity, but rather the *habitus of navigating multilingual repertoires*. Across generations, Sephardim have drawn on multilingual resources to negotiate shifting socio-political, cultural, and ideological contexts. By foregrounding multilingualism as both a historical condition and a contemporary resource, this study reframes the role of multilingual repertoires in the dynamics of language shift and revitalization. Multilingualism, rather than being diminished, continues to evolve as the central medium through which Sephardim sustain continuity, negotiate distinctiveness, and engage with their heritage across generations. More broadly, this perspective contributes to scholarship on minority and heritage languages by highlighting how multilingual practices, shaped by language trauma, assimilationist ideologies, and shifting sociopolitical contexts, can simultaneously accelerate processes of shift and provide the very resources for cultural resilience and revitalization.

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Identifying Language and Community in Contexts of Reclamation

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Abstract

Sustainable development, as laid out in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, is inseparable from questions of language. In particular, linguistic human rights form crucial components of several development goals. Meeting these goals, however, will depend in large part on the ways in which policymakers conceptualize and reify specific language varieties and the communities that speak and identify with them. It can be an easy trap to assume an isomorphic relationship between language and community that renders each monolithic and essentialized. Such assumptions, if left unquestioned, risk reproducing many of the inequities that sustainable development tries to address. I present as a case study the situation of Louisiana Creole, where labelling practices defy easy categorization of either language or community. Although messy, this portrait does justice to the diversity of thought on the ground. Capturing the messier truths about language and its users via a more holistic analysis (such as that offered by language ecology) can serve as a safeguard against the unintended erasure of minoritized ethnolinguistic groups and their heritage languages, especially when these groups are more metalinguistic in nature.

The Place of Language in Sustainable Development

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whether or not by explicit design, include linguistic human rights as defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (2006). For example, access to education in one's mother tongue is seen as a linguistic human right, which clearly makes mother-tongue speakers of non-hegemonic languages a priority when it comes to developing educational materials. This activity is entailed by SDG 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education¹." Furthermore, as growing numbers of communities strive to reclaim and revitalize their heritage languages, this particular linguistic human right will only increase in relevance. This is true not only in the domain of education but also with respect to—among others—health (SDG 3), employment (SDG 8), and climate action (SDG 13). Skutnabb-Kangas identifies two classes of linguistic human rights: expressive and instrumental. Expressive rights are those pertaining to security in the use of one's native language and the chance to have that language preserved as a component of cultural reproduction by that language's speakers. Instrumental rights concern the ability to access services and participate in public institutions that have a linguistic dimension. When it comes to sustainable development, both of these deserve consideration.

The Role of Ideology

It is perhaps surprising that, despite its ubiquity, we generally struggle to define language in ways that fully capture its fluidity, malleability, and diversity. These difficulties are the direct result of dominant language ideologies that condition our thinking as a society and as individuals to view language varieties as named, discrete, and autonomous—regardless of evidence to the contrary. In a similar way, we tend to link these presumed discrete language varieties with relatively homogeneous communities of language users, creating essentialized portraits of ethnolinguistic identity (cf. Karimzad and Catedral 2018). These phenomena lay bare two of the largest challenges associated with elaborating an 18th cultural and linguistic Sustainable Development Goal: 1.) identifying language and 2.) identifying that language's community of users. Failure to adequately address these challenges may exacerbate rather than mitigate threats to global linguistic diversity.

Case Study: Louisiana Creoles

The centrality of these issues can be illustrated with an example from Louisiana in the Southern United States. Since its founding as a French colony at the turn of the 18th century, Louisiana has stood out for its ethnolinguistic heterogeneity (Picone 2015). One component of this diversity is the group known as Creoles. This label, whose use in the region dates back over two hundred years, has conspicuously shifted its semantic basis as both an ethnic and a linguistic label at several junctures over time without ever entirely abandoning its prior connotations (Wendte 2022). Louisiana Creoles are geographically concentrated in Southwest Louisiana, though populations also exist elsewhere in the state and among a diaspora stretching from Texas to California

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

and north to cities like Chicago. Who and what "count" as Creole have been a hot-button issue for almost as long as the term itself has been in circulation, though it became especially contentious in the immediate aftermath of the major socioeconomic and socio-racial changes brought about by the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). Nowadays "Creole" most frequently refers to non-White-racialized individuals whose ancestors were among the colonial inhabitants of Louisiana (Istre 2018). Other cultural traits are often appended to this definition including adherence to Roman Catholicism and a non-English-speaking background. But the finer details of that linguistic background have changed over time.

Linguistic Dimensions of Louisiana Creole Identity

The earliest indications of an "associated language" (Eastman and Reese 1981) for Louisiana Creoles pointed to formal French as the linguistic expectation for group members (Fortier 1884). More recently, and especially for the last generation of mother-tongue speakers (usually born in the first half of the 20th century), any local, French-lexified speech variety (whether linguistically described as French or Creole) could legitimately be labelled "Creole" (Wendte 2020). Over the past decade or so, and thanks to the growing momentum behind a reclamation movement for the Louisiana Creole language (where the preferred label tends to be *Kouri-Vini*²), a particular linguistic variety has come to be seen as the hallmark *par excellence* of Creole ethnolinguistic belonging (Wendte 2022). Tangible evidence of this groundswell includes the codification of a distinctive orthography (Landry et al. 2016), development of pedagogical resources (Guillory-Chatman et al. 2020), and creative projects involving poetry (Mayers and Mayeux 2022) and music (Barnes et al. 2019; Ledet 2023). Furthermore, there have been notable attempts by members of this movement to centralize energy around revitalization under the umbrella of a nonprofit organization³. The proportion of Louisiana Creole community members who are second-language learners of *Kouri-Vini* grows every year as mother-tongue speakers pass away without having passed on their language via intergenerational transmission.

Etic Definitions of Louisiana Creole

The Louisiana Creole language has been described in various works dating back to the late 19th century (Mercier 1881; Fortier 1884; Broussard 1942; Neumann 1981; Valdman 1996; Klingler 2003b; *inter alia*). Yet as a group, Louisiana Creoles are far from linguistically homogeneous; although today individuals are almost exclusively English-dominant, their families often have histories of multilingualism that include speakers of French, Creole, and even Spanish. Scholars have long noted the difficulty of strictly assigning language labels to the French-lexified varieties spoken in Louisiana, where the language linguists identify as Louisiana Creole may or may not go by that name for speakers themselves.

Emic Definitions of Louisiana Creole

This behavior is somewhat explained by what I call "ethnoglossic isomorphism" (*i.e.*, a tendency to call one's language by the same name one calls oneself or one's group), which has been robustly described elsewhere in the literature (Dajko 2012; Klingler 2003b; Spitzer 1986). I do not mean to suggest that Creoles themselves are unaware of the differences between and among the different language varieties spoken in their communities. However, as Dorice Tentchoff has noted, whether these differences are acknowledged is a highly context-dependent question (1975). In my own ethnographic fieldwork, I have uncovered a diverse set of labelling practices reflective of a heterogeneous basis for defining "Creole" from both an ethnic and a linguistic perspective. Over the course of approximately sixty semi-structured, sociolinguistic interviews conducted between 2015 and 2018, I asked self-designated, Creole-speaking Creoles to answer questions pertaining to who and what "Creole" refers to as a label for people and for language. Consider the four quotes below, each coming from a different participant⁴:

- (1) Joelle: "*Nimpòrt ki pe dèt in Kréyòl*" ("Anybody can be a Creole")
- (2) Pauline: "*Mé ze konné pa éyou i non trouvé se 'kréyòl'-la...monn dotòr isi cé plus françé ke kréyòl*" ("But I don't know where they got this 'Creole'...people around here are more French than Creole")
- (3) Belle: "Let's bring back Louisiana French—I refuse to call it Creole, okay?"

² For most intents and purposes, this label is synonymous with what linguists describe as Louisiana Creole.

³ <https://www.chinbo.org/en/home/>

⁴ Participant selection criteria for this study were: 1.) must identify as a Louisiana Creole and 2.) must claim proficiency in the Louisiana Creole language. All names are pseudonymous. Full results presented in Wendte (2020).

⁵ The orthography here reflects as closely as possible the recommendations of Landry et al. (2016) for writing *Kouri-Vini*, regardless of the speaker's specific language variety. See Wendte (2020: 126) for full discussion.

- (4) Camille: “*Na zen dé shòz çé dan françe, zen çé en kréyòl-la*” (“Some things are in French, some are in Creole”)

Some group members, like Joelle in Example 1, embrace a broad definition of “Creole” that encompasses nearly everyone who expresses an interest in affiliating with the community. For these folks, specific definitional criteria are less important than a willingness to throw one’s lot in with the group. Others, like Pauline in Example 2, are ambivalent about the label itself. For her, it is more accurate to call people “French” because that is the label that she grew up calling herself; “Creole” is seen as a more recent appellation that comes from outside of her group. For still others, an ambivalence about the label “Creole” is heightened to animosity. Belle in Example 3 is hostile towards the term because she sees it as a misnomer for her community and her heritage language, even though, like all of the participants, she was willing to be identified as Creole within the context of my study (the nuances of these apparently contradictory positions are explored more fully in Wendte 2020). In Example 4, Camille describes her own Creole language practices as displaying elements of mixture that include both Creole and French elements. Similar references to mixedness and hybridity with respect to background, culture, and language abound in these interviews. How do the lived realities of group members get translated into the kind of demographic data that are used to quantify things like speaker population numbers, which go on to inform policies pertaining to linguistic human rights that are currently (or may eventually) be targeted as components of sustainable development?

Metalinguistic Communities and Language Ecology

In Louisiana and the greater Gulf South region, ideologies concerning language labelling intersect with other labelling ideologies (over ethnicity, race, etc.). Ideological differences yield different labelling practices. Given a legacy of shifting reference, what—linguistically—is Louisiana Creole today? Who—ethnically—are the Louisiana Creoles today? And who should get the final word on those designations and their boundaries? Analogous questions bear relevance far beyond Louisiana. Attempts to decode language ideologies and their associated bases for differentiation (cf. Irvine and Gal 2000) are not well served by static notions of language and community that presume more rigid membership for and associations between these categories.

I believe this example points to two important considerations for SDG 18. First, with the ever-intensifying pressure on minoritized language communities to shift to more hegemonic language varieties, contexts of language reclamation are becoming more prevalent around the world (Leonard 2021; Harrison 2007). This will complicate and frustrate dominant assumptions about identifying discrete language varieties and locating their communities of users. Second, the communities of language users that are foundational to reclamation movements—*metalinguistic* communities (Avineri and Harasta 2021)—will need to be taken into account as the world seeks to deal equitably with contemporarily and historically minoritized ethnolinguistic communities, especially as concerns expressive linguistic human rights. Without careful attention to the highly subjective process by which languages are called into being and bounded via labels, SDG 18 risks exacerbating existing inequities in minoritized language communities whose character is of an increasingly *metalinguistic* nature. One potential safeguard against perpetuating harmful, hegemonic language ideologies is to try and establish a clearer picture of the language ecology (Haugen 1972) of a place via substantive ethnography before creating policy.

The notion of language ecology, pioneered notably by Einar Haugen, is a useful frame for understanding how a whole host of factors at various scales affect a language’s ongoing relationship with the community that uses it and/or identifies with it. Haugen proposes ten “ecological questions” to answer about a language to get a fuller understanding of its status. These inquiries bear on historical relationships, speaker demographics, domains of use, contact, variation, literacy, standardization, institutional support, speaker attitudes, and language vitality. Taken collectively, the answers to these questions reveal any language to be multifaceted and polysemous. While no doubt bedeviling to policymakers, undertaking an ecological analysis of language can serve as a powerful corrective to overly simplified schemas of language and community, which tend to present the relationship between the two as flat and uncomplicated.

Concluding Recommendations

Linguistic human rights, both expressive and instrumental, are inextricably linked to sustainable development; the creation of an eighteenth Sustainable Development Goal would clarify their importance to the endeavor overall. But to fully appreciate the subtle ways that language and culture undergird sustainable development efforts, policymakers must embrace a more holistic and complexified view of language that acknowledges the growing importance of reclamation movements among minoritized ethnolinguistic communities across the globe. Furthermore, they must recognize that such a view entails a major reconsideration of how one conceptualizes and bounds languages and communities as discrete objects. As the example of Louisiana Creole

shows, assuming a staunch isomorphism between a community and a language can mask or erase a diversity of opinions, beliefs, and lived experiences.

One way to avoid overgeneralization is by undertaking ecological studies of languages and language communities targeted or impacted by sustainable development policy. An example of this could be the Ethnologue database⁶, which sources answers to some of the ecological questions posed by Haugen from experts working within specific language communities. These efforts can be expanded upon and updated, however, to include more timely reports about changes within said communities. The collaboration necessary to produce good ethnographic fieldwork renders less likely the possibility that well-meaning policy reproduces inequities by failing to acknowledge the complex, multifaceted relationships that exist between any given language variety (or varieties) and its community (or communities) of users, whether historical or contemporary.

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Measuring the Vitality of Indigenous Languages Using Canadian Census Data

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Abstract

Canada is home to over 70 Indigenous languages. All of them are endangered to varying degrees. Recent years have seen a great increase in revitalization efforts across the country. The Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages (OCIL) was created by an Act of Parliament in 2019. Part of its mandate is to report on the vitality of the various languages. The Canadian Census is carried out every 5 years. The Census includes several language-related questions. The data that is produced can be analysed to produce several measures of language vitality. These are highlighted in a series of reports recently published jointly by OCIL and Statistics Canada.

Introduction

A basic principle of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is that activities should do no harm to Indigenous cultures and languages. Taking this a step further, given that many Indigenous languages are experiencing declining vitality, we can set another SDG (SDG 18) of strengthening Indigenous languages. This leads to developing objective and quantitative methods of measuring language vitality. These methodologies can then be used at national and community levels to support the language goals of Indigenous peoples and their programs of language maintenance and revitalization.

Language is an essential factor in the health and well-being of Indigenous communities (Harding et al, 2025). In a landmark study of Aboriginal language knowledge and youth suicide, Hallet et al. (2007) used 1996 Canadian Census data to derive Indigenous language speakers; they emphasized the predictive power of the language variable. Harding et al. suggested that language programs could "[harness] the healing effects of languages" by "delivering linguistically tailored health care". The literature also shows evidence of a positive relationship between speaking an Indigenous language and outcomes in education and well-being; see, for example, Findlay and Kohen (2013), who used data from Statistics Canada's post-censal Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

Census-based data is a valuable resource when measuring the vitality of Indigenous languages. Enhanced analysis of the data is a priority given the importance of language-use in community well-being.

Background

Data Source

The Canadian Census is an excellent benchmark for how language vitality data can be collected and interpreted. The Canadian government is officially bilingual in English and French. Consequently, the Census asks many questions related to the use of languages. The Census is conducted every five years by Statistics Canada, a federal agency. The most recent 2021 Census provides data for over 70 distinct Indigenous languages.

Census data can be analysed at various levels of geography, from national, down to individual communities (Census Subdivisions, or CSDs). A specific language's vitality can vary dramatically from one community to another, even when the communities have many similar characteristics. Anecdotally, we can observe that the remoteness of Indigenous communities has a positive correlation with language vitality. The index of remoteness recently developed by Statistics Canada (Hosseininasabnajar et al, 2023) provides a way to quantify this relationship.

There are many ways the basic data can be analysed to help develop an understanding of how a language's vitality is evolving. This understanding contributes to language assessments and helps inform strategies of revitalization and maintenance.

This paper uses data from the 2016 and 2021 censuses; however, useful data spans 35 years from 1986-2021. A set of reports on Indigenous language families were released in March 2025, using the 2021 Census data. These reports were a

collaborative publication between Statistics Canada and the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages (OCIL). OCIL's mandate is to "promote Indigenous languages and support the efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen their languages" (Indigenous Languages Act, 2019). The nine reports are organized by language family (Algonquian, Athabaskan, Inuktitut, Iroquoian, Salish, Siouan, Tsimshian, Wakashan, plus isolates). The broad language families can be narrowed to individual communities. As an example report, see Anderson & Norris (2025), which covers the Algonquian family.

Evaluative Frameworks and Measurements of Language Vitality

Evaluative frameworks are intended to help assess a language's level of vitality and inform strategies towards its maintenance or revitalization. These frameworks, or scales, generally invoke the concept of intergenerational transmission. The average age of a language's mother tongue population can be used as an indirect, but quantitative, measure of intergenerational transmission.

Lewis and Simons (2010) outlined several frameworks. Two commonly used frameworks are:

1. The UNESCO Framework of Language Vitality and Endangerment Factors (LVE) (UNESCO, 2003)
2. The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS)

Intergenerational transmission is an important consideration within both frameworks. Such frameworks are applicable within models of community-based language development and for measuring vitality within the Sustainable Use Model (Lewis & Simons, 2016). These frameworks are adaptable for use with Census-based language data because of the questions' scope and community-level component.

Developments in Census-based Language Research

In this paper, we discuss new measures of language vitality that expand on previous census-based language research. These new vitality indicators were introduced in the Language Family Reports published by Statistics Canada and OCIL (Anderson & Norris, 2025). The desired goal of these publications is ongoing accessible and transparent reporting on Indigenous language vitality. New measures and information published in these reports include:

- Reporting the extent of home use for mother tongue and second-language speakers by language family
- Data from the "Language of Work" variable for each family (relevant to EGIDS)
- Data for a new measure of "Silent Speakers", those who have an Indigenous mother tongue, but are no longer able to conduct a conversation in it.

The Quantitative Measurement of Indigenous Language Vitality and Revitalization

Canadian Census data can be developed to provide some key quantitative measurements of Indigenous language vitality. The Census asks four different questions on languages: (a) mother tongue, (b) knowledge (can speak well enough to conduct a conversation), (c) language used most often or regularly at home, and (d) language used most often or regularly at work. Other parameters collected by the Census include various population characteristics, such as those of age and area of residence. When combined with language questions, these additional parameters can provide relatively simple measures of vitality.

Mother Tongue and Acquisition

In the Census, mother tongue refers to the first language learned in childhood that is still understood. Mother tongue is a critical factor in assessing the vitality of a language and recognized by UNESCO in assessing levels of language vitality and endangerment (UNESCO, 2003). The factor of "intergenerational language transmission" was originally used for Canada in the third edition of the UNESCO Atlas (Moseley, 2010). This method used Census data on the size and average age of an Indigenous language's total mother tongue population (Norris, 2010).

Revitalization strategies must ultimately aim at restoring the intergenerational transmission of a language, which comes down to its use as a main language at home. The First Peoples' Cultural Council of British Columbia (FPCC, 2014) emphasized that reversing language shift requires young, sufficiently fluent second-language speakers who as parents can speak their Indigenous language at home.

Acquisition as a mother tongue or second language is not explicitly reported by the Census. Measures can be derived by comparing responses to the questions on mother tongue and knowledge. Mother tongue speakers are those who report an Indigenous language mother tongue and that they can conduct a conversation in it. Second language speakers are those who report they can speak an Indigenous language but do not report it as their mother tongue.

Detailed analysis shows that mother tongue speakers are mainly concentrated in reserve and rural areas and remote villages, whereas second language speakers are more concentrated in large urban areas (Norris and Adcock, 2023). This is consistent with the expectation that Indigenous languages in urban areas are more at risk than those in isolated

communities. Revitalization efforts face serious challenges in urban areas; however, tracking second-language acquisition over time can allow us to track shifts in these efforts.

Home Language Use

The Census question regarding home use of a language provides another variable by which to measure language vitality. Home language use is a key concept and indicator of a language's vitality. The extent to which a language is spoken at home, either "most often" (equivalent to a main language) or "regularly" (but not as the main language), can affect its maintenance and transmission. It can impact children's language outcomes since "The language... spoken most often in the home is more likely to become the mother tongue of the next generation" (Norris, 2007).

The distinction between most often and regular home use is especially meaningful for Indigenous languages in Canada, and endangered languages in general. It addresses those situations where a language is still being actively spoken despite not being the main language at home.

Distinctions Among Speakers in their Acquisition and Home Use

Language learning ideally occurs in the home during childhood when language learning is easiest. If not, it can lead to a breakdown in intergenerational transmission. Home use and acquisition are closely related. Observations from analyses of earlier Censuses (Anderson, 2018; Norris, 2006, 2018; Norris & Adcock, 2023) have consistently shown:

- i. Mother tongue speakers are more likely to use their languages most often rather than regularly at home
- ii. Second-language speakers are more likely to use their languages regularly rather than most often at home.

These distinctions are especially meaningful in situations where the main home use and mother tongue transmission of an Indigenous language is low. These situations are most common in three groups of Indigenous peoples: (a) youth (b) urban residents, and (c) those whose traditional languages have older mother tongue populations. Their speakers are more likely to have acquired their traditional language as a second language, and more likely to speak it as a regular/secondary language than as a main home language.

Intersection of Acquisition and Home Use as an Indicator of Vitality

This section further analyses data published in Statistics Canada's Indigenous Language Family Reports (e.g. Anderson and Norris, 2025). The figures presented here highlight the intersection of acquisition and home use as an effective vitality indicator.

Figures 1 to 3 use the example of individual Algonquian languages. UNESCO Levels of Endangerment (LoE), slightly modified by Norris and Adcock (2023), are also shown. Each figure illustrates an aspect of home use and acquisition for Algonquian languages, ordered by the average age of the mother tongue population of each language.

Figure 4 presents home use by method of acquisition for the Algonquian language family. However, unlike the first set of figures LoE is not included since it is generally not applicable at the level of language family.

Figure 1 We can see that for the younger mother tongue populations their respective languages have higher main home use and a lower LoE. As the average age of the mother tongue population increases (left to right) LoE increases and main home use drops. In contrast, regular home use overall increases with the mother tongue population average age. To highlight this contrast, we can look at speakers of Atikamekw (av. age 28) and Wolastoqewi (av. age 54). Atikamekw had 80% main home use, 10% regular home use, and an LoE of 2 (Unsafe). Wolastoqewi on the other hand had 26% main home use, 27% regular home use, and an LoE of 4 (Severely Endangered).

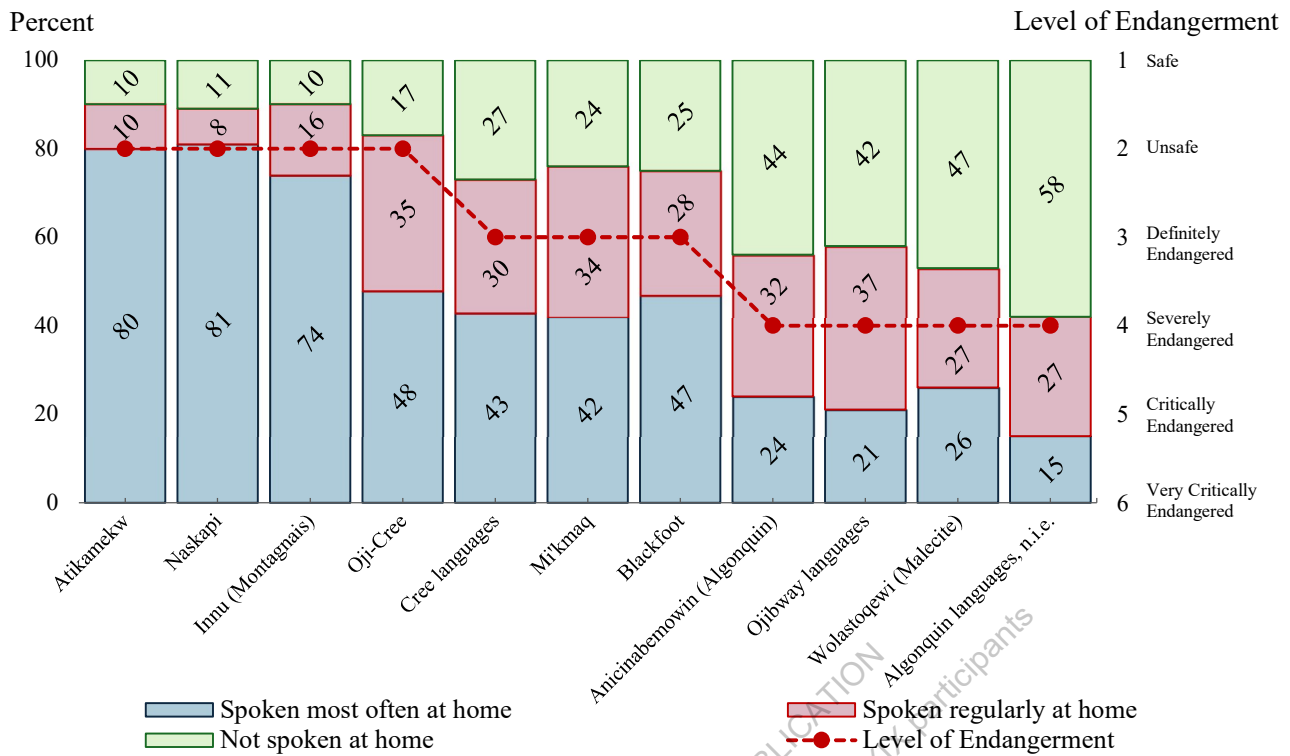


Figure 1: Home Language Use Among Speakers of an Algonquian Language, 2021 Census

Figure 2 This figure is similar to Fig. 1; however, home use is presented as a ratio of main to regular home use. It provides a focused look at the pattern of home use among those who are using their Algonquian language at home. The correlation between home use and LoE becomes even more evident here. As a language gets closer to an even split between main and regular use at home, we see the LoE begin to shift from Unsafe to Definitely and Severely Endangered. This highlights the usefulness of home use as a measure of vitality.

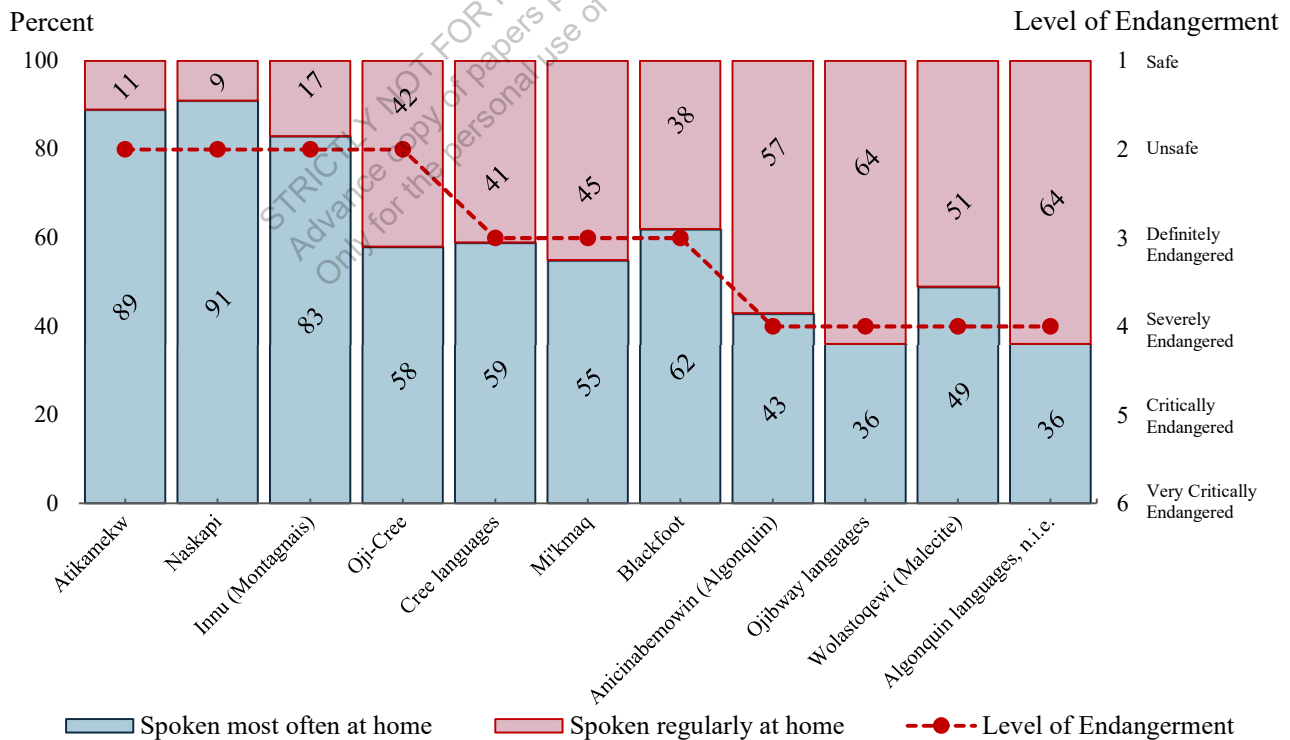


Figure 2: Proportion of Home Use Among Speakers using an Algonquian Language, 2021 Census

Figure 3 While most speakers of an Indigenous language in Canada acquired it as a mother tongue, second-language acquisition has been an increasingly important contributor to the growth of the speaker population. Fig. 3 shows the proportion of Algonquian language speakers with second-language acquisition. Again, we can see similar patterns as the previous two figures. First, as the average age of the mother tongue population increases the proportion of second-language acquisition among speakers increases. Second, as the proportion of second-language speakers increases the LoE increases. This shows that second-language acquisition is a valuable vitality indicator. When we consider home use and acquisition together, we see how both contribute to our understanding of a language's health and vitality.

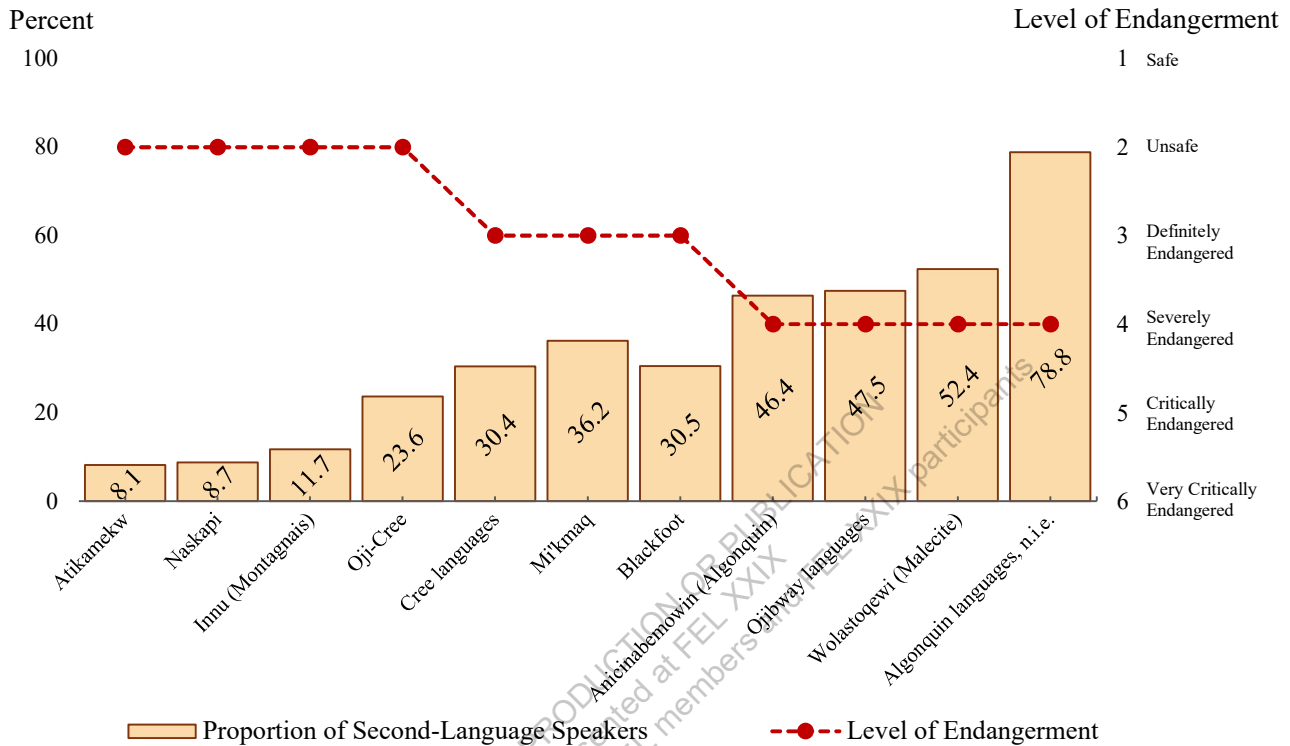


Figure 3: Proportion of Second Language Acquisition Among Speakers of an Algonquian Language, 2021 Census

Figure 4 We have shown how using these indicators in combination creates strong indicators of language vitality. Fig. 4 ties together method of acquisition and home use. This data is at the language family level (Algonquian). The majority of both Algonquian mother tongue and second-language speakers spoke their language at home, but to differing degrees. The vast majority (80%) of mother tongue speakers spoke at home (the other 20% not speaking it at home). A smaller majority (58%) of second-language speakers spoke their Algonquian language at home; nonetheless, this is still a positive sign for prospects of revitalization. Future reports at an individual language level would be valuable for localized research.

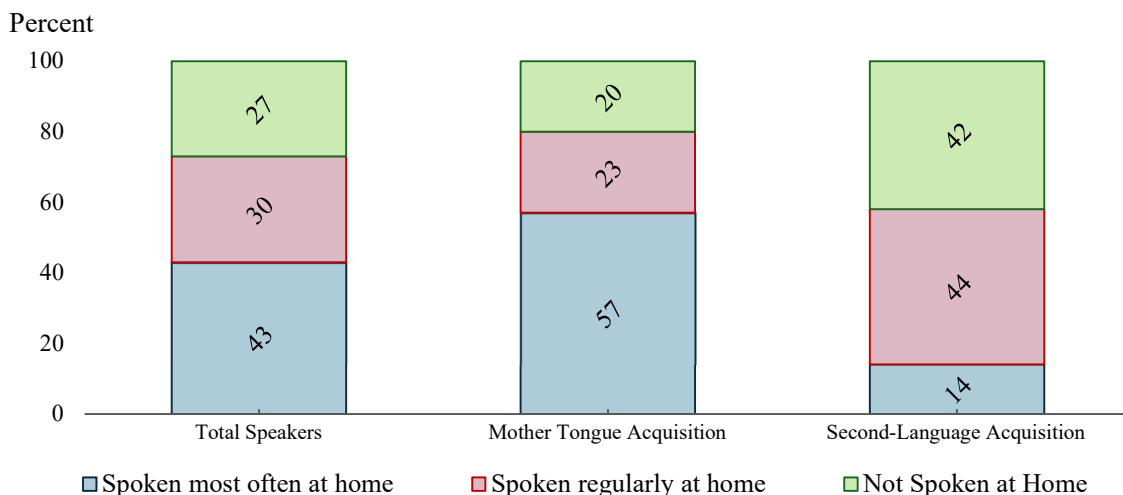


Figure 4: Home Use by Method of Acquisition, Algonquian Language Family, 2021 Census

Community-Based Language Development

Language-specific vitality data at the community level can be a useful resource for helping to inform Community Based Language Development. Community-specific data not only show where speakers of a given language reside, but also how a language can vary in its vitality from one community to another. While family-level and language-level data is important, community level data is necessary for optimal implementation of language programs. These programs might encourage maintenance in one community and revitalization in another.

Figure 5 Language vitality can vary significantly between communities. Fig. 5 highlights these variations by contrasting two communities in British Columbia. Skeetchestn and Kamloops 1 speak Secwepemctsin (Shuswap), part of the Salish language family. This data comes from the 2016 Census and includes the average age of the total Secwepemctsin identity population. We observe a contrast between the average age of the “speaker” and “mother tongue” populations between the two communities. This difference shows that Kamloops 1 has a younger population of second-language speakers. Language programs might encourage continued revitalization efforts in Kamloops 1 including increasing home use, while promoting more second-language learning in Skeetchestn. For comparison, we have also included Kuujjuaq, a community speaking Nunavimmiutitut (Inuktitut family) in northern Quebec, with high intergenerational transmission and main language use. The uniform low average ages for Kuujjuaq indicate a healthy language.

Average Age

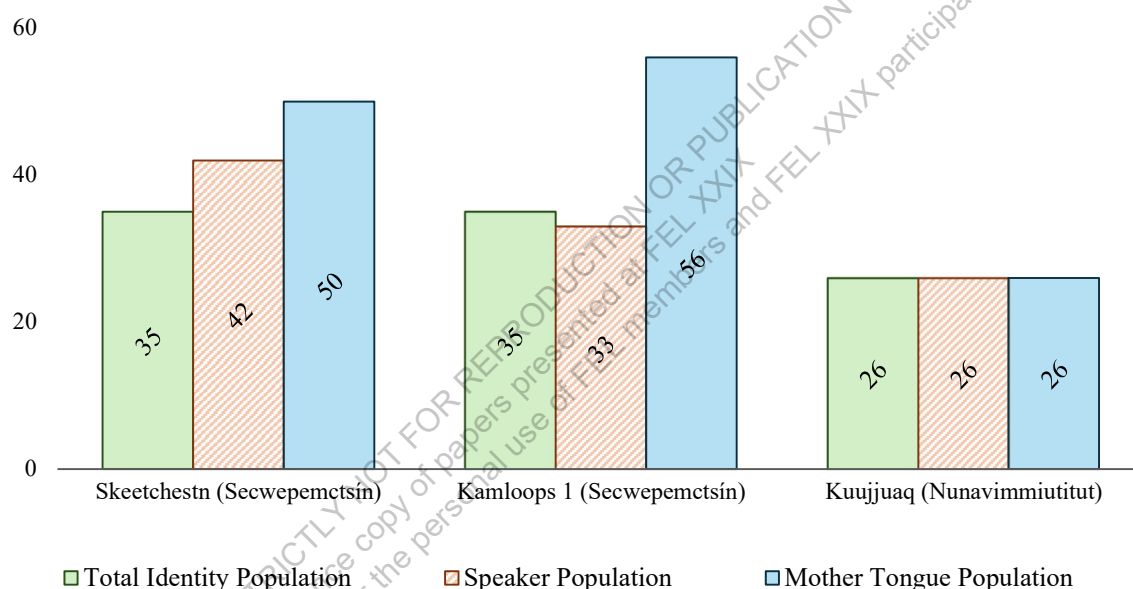


Figure 5: Community-Level Variations in Language Health, Secwepemctsin and Nunavimmiutitut, 2016 Census

Further Considerations

While not discussed in length in this paper, there are other avenues of Census-based research that can be explored further. Examination of Silent Speakers and language of work is required. As well, time-series analysis is possible because of the 5-year cycle of the Census.

Conclusion

Census-based data can be used to derive objective and quantitative methods of measuring language vitality. Using these methodologies at national, regional and community levels can help support the language goals of Indigenous peoples and their programs of language maintenance and revitalization.

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Setting a Research Agenda for Aphasia in Minority Languages

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Abstract

People from linguistic and cultural minority groups face significant barriers in healthcare communication, resulting in poorer outcomes and reduced safety. Aphasia research and clinical practice must prioritize minority languages to promote both the well-being of people with aphasia (PWA) and the preservation of linguistic diversity, as emphasized by SDGs 3 and 18. Despite growing multilingualism, aphasiology remains largely centered on dominant languages. This study presents recommendations from an expert panel within the Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists (WG2), based on survey responses from 73 clinicians and researchers. Thematic analysis revealed seven key areas for future research: basic definitions, norms, assessment tools, research priorities, speech-language pathologist training, treatment approaches, and societal impact. Respondents highlighted the need for culturally responsive care, language-specific tools, and training that reflects linguistic variation. The findings underscore the importance of addressing socio-economic and educational factors, cross-linguistic transfer in therapy, and the role of cultural identity in rehabilitation. This agenda aligns with the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) and calls for inclusive, equitable practices in aphasia care across diverse linguistic communities.

Introduction

Aphasia is an acquired language disorder resulting from neural damage, most commonly caused by stroke. Affecting approximately one-third of stroke survivors globally, aphasia leads to millions of new cases each year (Brady et al., 2016). People with aphasia (PWA) experience varying degrees of impairment across language modalities—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Common symptoms include difficulty producing grammatical sentences, challenges in understanding complex language, and anomia, or word-finding difficulties. In addition to core language deficits, many PWA also experience cognitive impairments involving attention, working memory, executive function, and processing speed, which further hinder communication and daily functioning (Ardila & Rubio-Bruno, 2018).

These impairments have profound psychosocial consequences, including reduced participation in life activities, social isolation, and strained relationships, all of which negatively impact psychological wellbeing and quality of life. With rising stroke incidence and increased life expectancy, the number of individuals affected by aphasia is expected to grow significantly in the coming years (Centeno, 2009).

Despite this growing prevalence, aphasia research and clinical practice remain disproportionately focused on monolingual, English-speaking populations (Beveridge & Bak, 2011; Egia-Zabala & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2024). This narrow focus overlooks the linguistic and cultural diversity of contemporary societies, where multilingualism and minority languages are increasingly common. Linguistic minority communities—including speakers of regional dialects, indigenous languages, and immigrant languages—face unique challenges in aphasia assessment and rehabilitation. These challenges stem from the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate tools, limited access to trained clinicians, and systemic barriers within healthcare systems (Centeno et al., 2020; Norvik et al., 2022; Scimeca et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024; Arslan & Peñaloza, 2025; Pourquié & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2025).

The Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists (CATs) issued a consensus statement outlining five key themes for future research: (1) evidence-based interventions for PWA, (2) effective support for communication partners, (3) cross-linguistic assessment and core outcome measures, (4) predictors of recovery, and (5) implementation science (Ali et al., 2021). While multilingual assessment and intervention were identified as priority areas within those key themes, the statement did not explicitly address the needs of PWA who speak minority languages. This omission is significant, given the wide variation in aphasia practices across linguistic and cultural contexts and the growing recognition of the need for inclusive approaches.

Language barriers in healthcare settings contribute to poorer outcomes for minority language speakers, including reduced patient safety and lifelong communication challenges (de Moissac & Bowen, 2019; Scimeca et al., 2022). Addressing these disparities requires a deliberate focus on linguistic and cultural diversity in aphasia research and clinical practice. This aligns with global policy frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (“Good health and well-being”) and SDG 18, which emphasizes the protection of linguistic and cultural diversity. In particular, indigenous language knowledge plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity and promoting wellbeing (Wooltorton et al., 2020).

Recent research (Arslan et al., 2023; Martínez-Ferreiro et al., 2023; Pourquoié et al., 2023; Munarriz-Ibarrola et al., 2025) has illuminated the complex realities faced by PWA who speak minority languages. These individuals often lack access to clinicians fluent in their language and to assessment tools that reflect their linguistic structures. This issue is especially pronounced in regions with high immigration, such as North America and Northern Europe, where clinical resources frequently fail to accommodate linguistic diversity (Centeno et al., 2020; Norvik et al., 2022). As a result, lesser-studied languages remain underrepresented in aphasia literature (Beveridge & Bak, 2011; Egia-Zabala & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2024), and PWA from these communities face inequities in diagnosis, treatment, and recovery.

The absence of validated tools for minority languages and the lack of clinical expertise in these contexts contribute to the marginalization of small linguistic communities. Without evidence-based guidelines tailored to their needs, disparities in care persist, and theoretical models of aphasia remain biased toward dominant languages.

This position paper presents the perspectives of an expert panel from CATs Working Group 2 (WG2), composed of researchers specializing in multilingualism and understudied languages. It proposes a targeted research agenda focused on the assessment and treatment of aphasia in minority languages. The agenda addresses critical gaps in clinical practice and research, aiming to promote linguistic equity, enhance diagnostic precision, and improve rehabilitation outcomes for PWA in diverse linguistic settings. This initiative aligns with the UN's Agenda 2030 and the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), reinforcing the need for inclusive, culturally responsive approaches to aphasia care.

Methods

This study was initiated following an internal survey distributed to 73 members of the Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists (Aphasia Assessment and Outcomes Working Group [WG2]) between June and mid-July 2024. The survey asked: “What topics and discussions would you like to see included in the upcoming WG2 agendas?” Of the 52 responses received, half ($n = 26$) highlighted cross-linguistic assessment, multilingualism in aphasia, or related concepts as key priorities.

A two-phase qualitative approach was used. In Phase 1, 34 WG2 experts—including the 26 who prioritized multilingual aphasia—were invited to complete an open-ended questionnaire focused on future research directions in aphasia and minority languages. Participants ($n=52$) responded to the following open-ended questions: 1) What should be on the future research agenda on aphasia in minority languages? and 2) What needs to be researched in the future?

In Phase 2, responses were transcribed verbatim into an Excel spreadsheet, with each row representing a distinct suggestion. Longer responses were split into multiple entries when they contained separate ideas. This yielded 141 individual suggestions. The dataset was thematically coded by three independent researchers (Matić Škorić, Pourquoié, and Arslan), each assigning labels to the responses without access to the others' classifications. Interrater reliability was evaluated using Fleiss' Kappa across a subset of 36 items (24.16% of the total dataset), yielding a coefficient of $\kappa = 0.815$ ($z = 18.1$, $p < .001$), indicating a high level of agreement. Any discrepancies in coding were resolved through consensus, resulting in the identification of seven overarching research themes.

Results

Responses were classified into seven main themes: Basic definitions, Assessment tools, Research practices, Treatment, Speech-Language Pathologists' Training (SLP Training), Societal Impact and Norms.

Basic definitions

The most frequently cited theme (30.5% of responses) emphasized the need to clarify foundational concepts related to minority languages and multilingualism. Experts highlighted the complexity of multilingual profiles, including distinctions between first- and second-generation immigrant speakers, varying language backgrounds, and differences in dominant language proficiency—all of which influence access to clinical services and treatment outcomes. Additionally, the sociolinguistic status of minority languages, shaped by language policies and their coexistence with dominant languages, was identified as a critical factor affecting assessment and therapy. The lack of awareness among clinicians and researchers regarding these sociolinguistic dynamics was seen as a major barrier to advancing culturally sensitive and scientifically grounded aphasia care.

Assessment tools

Research Theme 2 identified the urgent need to develop and improve aphasia assessment tools for minority languages, ranking this as the second most critical issue on the agenda (24.11% of responses). WG2 members emphasized that current tools are often inadequate, lacking cultural sensitivity and linguistic relevance for understudied language communities. A key priority is to establish best practices for adapting and validating existing protocols, designing aphasia-friendly language background questionnaires, and cataloguing tools across diverse linguistic contexts.

Existing assessments are frequently inconsistent and not comparable across languages, underscoring the need for culturally appropriate and psychometrically rigorous procedures. There is a pressing call to deepen understanding of pre-morbid language characteristics and to develop background questionnaires that reflect the linguistic realities of minority speakers. Many clinicians still rely on generic tools not tailored for aphasia or minority language settings.

The agenda advocates for standardized, open-source cognitive-linguistic resources that are adaptable across languages with complex morphology, syntax, tonal systems, or sign language structures. Collaboration with local communities, particularly in indigenous contexts, is essential to ensure cultural protocols are respected and misdiagnosis is avoided.

Challenges include determining when to adapt existing tests versus creating new ones, and overcoming economic and socio-political barriers to publishing tools for minority languages. Establishing neuro- and psycholinguistic profiles, along with standardized screening instruments, is seen as vital for improving diagnosis and treatment outcomes. Ultimately, the goal is to produce methodologically sound, linguistically inclusive, and culturally appropriate resources that enhance clinical care for people with aphasia (PWA) in minority language communities.

Research practices

Research Theme 3, identified as a relatively high priority (12.77% of responses), addressed gaps in research infrastructure and methodology. Experts noted the lack of clinical and academic dialogue in regions without strong traditions in speech-language pathology (SLP). WG2 members emphasized the need to explore how socioeconomic status, literacy, and education affect aphasia prevalence, recovery, and access to care in minority language communities. Cultural beliefs surrounding language, health, and disability were also noted as influential in shaping treatment-seeking behaviors.

A key research direction involves investigating how aphasia symptoms manifest across linguistic levels in speakers of minority languages. Theoretical recommendations call for moving beyond research designs centered on monolingual individuals from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) societies, advocating instead for broader, inclusive methodologies that reflect the complexities of multilingual environments.

Ethical concerns were raised regarding transnational collaboration in test adaptation and development. Members noted that many tools and findings related to minority languages are published in local journals, limiting their visibility and inclusion in broader scientific discourse. Linguistic bias and the use of standardized tests not validated for minoritized groups were identified as problematic.

Finally, the agenda calls for reflection on the role of minority languages in shaping aphasia research and clinical practice. It questions whether their inclusion is essential for developing robust theoretical models and delivering equitable healthcare services to people with aphasia (PWA) in diverse linguistic settings.

Treatment

Also representing 12.77% of responses, this theme focused on improving therapeutic approaches for multilingual individuals with aphasia. Experts called for systematic studies of current treatment practices, the influence of language attitudes on therapy goals, and the role of social support systems. Cross-linguistic transfer between languages during therapy (e.g., L1 to L2 or L3) and the factors influencing it, such as language distance, were identified as key areas for investigation. The development of language-specific intervention strategies, integration of technology-assisted rehabilitation, and support for family engagement were also highlighted. Importantly, the theme stressed the need to involve policymakers and stakeholders to ensure culturally adapted services for minority language speakers.

SLP Training

This theme (9.22% of responses) addressed the need to enhance training for speech-language pathologists working in multilingual and minority language contexts. Respondents emphasized the importance of increasing awareness of multilingualism, linguistic variation, and heritage languages among SLPs. Training should also focus on effective assessment strategies and the appropriate use of available tools and materials. Strengthening educational programs and professional development in these areas is seen as essential for improving care for PWA in diverse linguistic settings.

Societal impact

Research Theme 6 (6.37% of responses) highlights a critical gap in understanding the societal impact of aphasia among minority populations, particularly in cultural, linguistic, and socio-political contexts. WG2 members emphasized that cultural beliefs, language attitudes, and access to clinical services shape how aphasia is experienced and addressed. Effective care should extend beyond linguistic metrics to include sociocultural and identity-related factors. Family involvement and community-based approaches were identified as essential, especially in heritage language contexts like Turkish in Germany. Access to treatment in a minority language helps reduce social isolation. WG2 advocates for

expanding research and clinical practice to promote linguistic equity, including adapting tools for minority languages to ensure culturally sensitive and inclusive assessment and intervention.

Norms

Additionally, limited normative data in minority languages was identified as a major challenge. Variability in language exposure and lack of psycholinguistic resources complicate the development of standardized tools. Addressing English-language bias and promoting linguistic equity were seen as essential steps toward improving both research and clinical outcomes for speakers of minority languages, who are typically multilingual and often do not share a unified or standard language variety.

Discussion

This agenda-setting study outlines urgent priorities for advancing aphasia research and clinical care in minority language contexts. WG2 members emphasized the need for collaboration with local professionals and stakeholders, the collection of prevalence data, and the development of culturally appropriate assessment tools. These tools must reflect dialectal variation and sociocultural realities, and their effective use depends on clinicians receiving adequate training in multilingual and multicultural competence. Regular evaluation of clinical staff's needs and continued engagement with PWA and their families are essential to ensure responsive and inclusive care.

The identified themes reflect critical gaps in both research and practice, aligning with the goals of SDG 18, which promotes linguistic and cultural diversity, and SDG 3, which advocates for equitable health and well-being. Addressing these gaps will enable more accurate diagnosis, effective treatment, and culturally sensitive rehabilitation for speakers of minority languages. As research standards evolve—through clearer definitions, improved norms, and expanded training—clinical practices will follow, supporting the integration of linguistic equity into healthcare systems. Ultimately, this agenda calls for a shift toward inclusive, community-based aphasia care that reflects the linguistic diversity of our societies and ensures equitable access to services for all individuals.

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Afasia hizkuntza gutxituetan ikertzeko agenda

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Laburpena

Hizkuntza eta kultura gutxiagotuetako pertsonen oztopo nabarmenak izaten dituzte osasun-arretako komunikazioan, eta horrek emaitza okerragoak eta segurtasun txikiagoa eragiten ditu. Afasiaren ikerketak eta praktika klinikoak hizkuntza gutxituak lehenetsi behar ditu, afasia duten pertsonen ongizatea eta hizkuntza-aniztasunaren kontserbazioa sustatzeko, NBEren 3. eta 18. GJHetan nabarmendu bezala. Hizkuntza-aniztasuna gero eta handiagoa den arren, afasiologia nagusiki hizkuntza hegemonikoetan oinarritzen da. Ikerketa honek *Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists* (WG2) sareko adituen talde baten gomendioak aurkeztzen ditu, 73 klinikari eta ikertzailearen inkesta-erantzunetan oinarrituta. Gai nagusien analisi tematikoak etorkizuneko ikerketarako zazpi arlo identifikatu zituen: oinarritzko definizioak, arauak, ebaluazio-tresnak, ikerketa-ildoak, logopeda edo ortofonisten prestakuntza, tratamendurako hurbilketak eta gizarte-eragina. Parte-hartzaileek azpimarratu zuten kulturalki egokituak arretaren beharra, hizkuntza espezifikoaren tresnak eta hizkuntza-aniztasuna islatzen duen prestakuntza. Emaitzek berretsi zuten faktore sozioekonomiko eta hezitzaileen garrantzia, hizkuntza arteko transferentzia terapeutikoa eta identitate kulturalaren rola. Agenda honek UNESCOren Hizkuntza Indigenen Hamarkadarekin (2022–2032) bat egiten du, eta afasiaren arretan praktika inklusibo eta bidezkoak aldarrikatzen ditu hainbat hizkuntza-komunitatetan.

Sarrera

Afasia garuneko kalte baten ondorioz hartutako hizkuntza-nahasmendua da, eta gehienetan iktus baten ondorioz gertatzen da. Mundu mailan, iktusa izan duten pertsonen heren batek afasia garatzen du, eta horrek milioika kasu berri eragiten ditu urtero (Brady et al., 2016). Afasia duten pertsonen (ADP) hizkuntza-modalitate guztietan (mintzamina, entzumen, irakurketa eta idazketa) maila ezberdinak izaten dituzte. Sintoma ohikoen artean daude esaldi gramatikalak sortzeko zailtasunak, hizkuntza konplexua ulertzeko arazoak eta anomia, hau da, hitzak aurkitzeko zailtasunak. Hizkuntza-gaitasun nagusien galeraz gain, ADP askok arreta, laneko memoria, funtzio exekutiboak eta prozesamendu-abiadura bezalako gaitasun kognitiboetan ere kaltea izaten dute, eta horrek komunikazioa eta eguneroko funtzionamendua are gehiago zailtzen ditu (Ardila & Rubio-Bruno, 2018).

Kalte horiek ondorio psikosozial sakonak dituzte: bizitzako jardueretan parte hartzea murrizten dute, isolamendu soziala eta harremanetan tentsioak eragiten dituzte, eta horiek guztiek ongizate psikologikoan eta bizi-kalitatean eragin negatiboa dute. Iktusen intzidentzia handitzen eta bizi-itxaropena luzatzen ari diren heinean, aurreikusten da datozen urteetan afasiak eragindako pertsonen kopurua nabarmen haziko dela (Centeno, 2009).

Hala ere, prebalentzia gero eta handiagoa izan arren, afasiaren ikerketa eta praktika klinikoak gehienbat, ingelesez mintzatzen diren hiztun elebazarretan oinarritu dira (Beveridge & Bak, 2011; Egia-Zabala & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2024). Ikuspegi murriztu horrek bazter uzten du gizarte garaikideetako aniztasun linguistiko eta kulturala, non eleaniztasuna eta hizkuntza gutxiagotutako gero eta ohikoagoak diren. Hizkuntza gutxituak dituzten komunitateak—eskualdeko dialekto, hizkuntza indigena eta etorkinen hizkuntzetako hiztunak barne—erronka bereziak dituzte afasiaren ebaluazioan eta errehabilitazioan. Erronka horien oinarrian dago kulturalki eta linguistikoki egokiak ez diren tresnak izatea, profesional espezializatuenganako sarbide mugatua eta osasun-sistemak oztopo sistematikoak (Centeno et al., 2020; Norvik et al., 2022; Scimeca et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024; Arslan & Peñaloza, 2025; Pourquié & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2025).

Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists (CATs) sareak etorkizuneko ikerketarako bost gai nagusi identifikatu zituen adostutako adierazpen batean: (1) ADPrentzako ebidentzian oinarritutako interbentzioak, (2) komunikazio-laguntzako laguntza eraginkorra, (3) hizkuntza arteko ebaluazioa eta emaitzetarako oinarritzko neurriak, (4) berreskuratzearen iragarleak eta (5) implementazio-zientzia (Ali et al., 2021). Eredu horien artean, eleaniztunen ebaluazio eta interbentzioak lehentasun gisa identifikatu ziren, baina adierazpenak ez zituen berariaz landu hizkuntza gutxituetako ADPren beharrak. Hutsune hori esanguratsua da, kontuan hartuta afasiaren praktiketan hizkuntza- eta kultura-testuinguruaren arabera aldakortasun handia dagoela eta ikuspegi inklusiboen beharra gero eta gehiago aitortzen dela.

Osasun-arretako hizkuntza-oztopoek emaitza okerragoak dakartzkio hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunei, besteak beste, pazienteen segurtasun txikiagoa eta bizitza osorako komunikazio-arazoak (de Moissac & Bowen, 2019; Scimeca et al., 2022). Desberdintasun horiei aurre egiteko, beharrezkoa da aniztasun linguistiko eta kulturean arreta berezia jartzea afasiaren ikerketan eta praktika klinikoan. Ideia horrek bat egiten du Nazio Batuen Garapen Iraunkorreko Helburuekin (GIH), bereziki 3. helburuarekin (“Osasuna eta ongizatea”) eta hizkuntza- eta kultura-aniztasunaren babesa azpimarratzen

duen 18. arekin. Zehazki, hizkuntza indigenen ezagutzak funtsezko zeregina du identitate kulturala mantentzeko eta ongizatea sustatzeko (Woollorton et al., 2020).

Azkenaldiko ikerketek (Arslan et al., 2023; Martínez-Ferreiro et al., 2023; Pourquié et al., 2023; Munarriz-Ibarrola et al., 2025) agerian utzi dute hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunak diren ADPe errealitate konplexuak bizi dituztela: askotan ez dute beren hizkuntzan aritzen diren profesionalik, ezta beren egitura linguistikoak islatzen dituzten ebaluazio-tresnarik ere. Arazo hori bereziki nabarmena da immigrazio handiko eskualdeetan, hala nola Ipar Amerikan eta Ipar Europan, non baliabide klinikoek askotan ez duten hizkuntza-aniztasuna kontuan hartzen (Centeno et al., 2020; Norvik et al., 2022). Horren ondorioz, gutxi aztertutako hizkuntzek leku gutxi dute afasiaren literaturan (Beveridge & Bak, 2011; Egia-Zabala & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2024), eta komunitate horietako ADPe desberdintasunak jasaten dituzte diagnostikoan, tratamenduan eta berreskuratzean.

Hizkuntza gutxituetan baliozkotutako tresnen eta testuinguru horietan klinikari espezializatuen gabeziak komunitate linguistiko txikien bazterketa dakar. Haien beharretara egokitutako gida klinikorik gabe, arreta-desberdintasunak mantentzen dira, eta afasiaren eredu teorikoak hizkuntza nagusietara bideratuta egoten jarraitzen dute.

Lan honek eleaniztasunean eta gutxi aztertutako hizkuntzetan espezializatutako ikertzaileek osatutako aditu panelaren ikuspegia aurkeztzen du, hots, CATs sareko 2. lan-taldearena (WG2). Afasia hizkuntza gutxituetan ebaluatu eta tratatzeko ikerketa-agenda espezifiko bat proposatzen du. Agenda horrek praktika klinikoan eta ikerketan dauden hutsune kritikoak jorratzen ditu, helburu hauekin: berdintasun linguistikoa sustatzea, diagnostikoaren zehaztasuna hobetzea eta ADPrentzako errehabilitazio-eremak hobetzea askotariko testuinguru linguistikoetan. Ekimen honek bat egiten du NBERen 2030 Agendaren lehentasunekin eta UNESCOren Hizkuntza Indigenen Hamarkadarekin (2022–2032), afasiaren arretan ikuspegi inklusibo eta kulturalki egokiak bultzatzeko beharra azpimarratuz.

Metodologia

Ikerketa hau *Collaboration of Aphasia Trialists* nazioarteko sareko 73 kideri (*Aphasia Assessment and Outcomes Working Group* [WG2]) barne-inkesta baten ondoren abiatu zen. Inkesta hori 2024ko ekaina eta uztailaren erdialdearen artean banatu zen, eta honako galdera planteatu zuen: “Zein gai eta eztabaida gustatuko litzazuke etorkizuneko WG2 agendetan sartzea?” Jasotako 52 erantzunen artean, erdiak ($n = 26$) nabarmendu zituen hizkuntza arteko ebaluazioa, eleaniztasuna afasian edo antzeko kontzeptuak lehentasun gisa.

Bi faseko hurbilketa kualitatiboa baliatu zen. 1. fasean, WG2ko 34 aditu—horien artean eleaniztasuna lehentasun gisa aipatu zuten 26ak—gonbidatu ziren afasia eta hizkuntza gutxituen etorkizuneko ikerketa-ildoetan oinarritutako galdera irekiko galdetegi bat betetzera. Parte-hartzaileek ($n = 52$) honako galdera irekiei erantzun zieten: 1) Zein gai sartu beharko lirateke hizkuntza gutxituetako afasiaren etorkizuneko ikerketa-agendan? eta 2) Zer ikertu beharko litzateke etorkizunean?

2. fasean, erantzunak hitzez hitz transkribatu ziren Excel kalkulu-orri batean, errenkada bakoitzean proposamen desberdin bat zegoela. Erantzun luzeagoak hainbat sarreratan banatu ziren, ideia desberdinak zituztenean. Guztira, banakako 141 proposamen lortu ziren. Datu-multzoa hiru ikertzaile gaika kodetu zuten banaka (Matić Škorić, Pourquié eta Arslan); ikertzaile bakoitzak bere kabuz etiketak esleitu zituen, besteen sailkapenak ikusi gabe. Kodetzaileen fidagarritasuna Fleiss-en Kappa erabiliz ebaluatu zen, datu-multzoaren % 24,16ari (36 elementu) aplikatuta; emaitza honakoa izan zen: κ koefizientea = 0,815 ($z = 18,1$, $p < .001$), beraz, adostasun maila altua izan zen. Kodifikazioan egon ziren desadostasunak adostasunez ebatzi ziren, eta horrela zazpi ikerketa-gai nagusi identifikatu ziren.

Emaitzak

Erantzunak zazpi gai nagusitan sailkatu ziren: oinarritzko definizioak, ebaluazio-tresnak, ikerketa-praktikak, tratamendua, logopeda edo ortofonisten prestakuntza, gizarte-eragin eta normak.

Oinarritzko definizioak

Erantzunen % 30,5ak nabarmendu zuten hizkuntza gutxituei eta eleaniztasunari lotutako oinarritzko kontzeptuak argitzeko beharra. Adituek eleaniztasun-profilen konplexutasuna nabarmendu zuten, hala nola lehen eta bigarren belaunaldiko etorkin-hiztunen arteko bereizketa, askotariko hizkuntza-jatorriak eta hizkuntza nagusian duten gaitasun-maila ezberdinak—faktore horiek guztiek eragina dute zerbitzu klinikoetara sartzeko aukeretan eta tratamenduaren emaitzetan. Gainera, hizkuntza gutxituen egoera soziolinguistikoa, hizkuntza-politikek eta hizkuntza nagusiekin duten elkarbizitzak baldintzatuta, ebaluazioan eta terapiaren eragin handia duen faktore kritiko gisa identifikatu zen. Dinamika soziolinguistiko horiekiko profesional eta ikertzaileen ezagutza eta kontzientzia falta oztopo nagusi bat da kulturalki sentikorra den eta zientifikoki oinarrituta dagoen afasia-arreta garatzeko.

Ebaluazioa-tresnak

Bigarren gai nagusi gisa (% 24,11) honakoa nabarmendu zuten: kulturalki eta linguistikoki egokiak diren tresnak garatzeko beharra. Dauden tresnak askotan ez dira egokiak hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunen beharretarako, ez baitute sentikortasun kulturalik ezta zorroztasun psikometrikorik ere. Lehenetsun nagusiak hauek dira: protokoloak egokitzea eta balioztatzea, afasiadunentzako hizkuntza-jatorriaren inguruko galdetegi egokiak diseinatzea, eta askotariko komunitate linguistikoetako tresnak katalogatzea. Erantzun zutenek nabarmendu zuten afasiaren aurreko hizkuntza-gaitasuna ezagutzea eta baliabide estandarizatu, ireki eta egokiak garatzea, hain zuzen hizkuntza-morfologia konplexua duten, tonu-sistemak edo zeinu-hizkuntzak dituzten hizkuntzetarako egokiak direnak. Halaber, funtsezkotzat jo zen tresna etiko eta zehatzak garatzeko tokiko komunitateekiko lankidetzak, bereziki hizkuntza indigenen testuinguruetan. Gainera, gai honetan eztabaidatu zen ea egokiagoa den dauden testak egokitzea edo berriak sortzea, eta hizkuntza gutxituetarako tresnak argitaratzeko oztopo soziopolitiko eta ekonomikoak ere aipagai izan ziren.

Ikerketa-praktikak

Erantzunen % 12,77k ikerketa-azpiegitura eta metodologiaren gabeziak jorratu zituzten. Adituek nabarmendu zuten hizkuntza-patologiaren tradizioz ez duten eskualdeetan elkarriketa kliniko eta akademikoaren falta. Ikerketa-ildo gisa honako hauek proposatu ziren: egoera sozioekonomikoak, alfabetatze-mailak eta hezkuntzak afasiaren prebalentzian eta suspertzean duten eragina aztertzea, eta hizkuntza, osasuna eta ezgaitasunari buruzko sinesmen kulturek tratamendua bilatzeko jarreretan duten eragina ikertzea. Halaber, beharrezkotzat jo zen afasiaren sintomak hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunen hizkuntza-maila ezberdinetan nola agertzen diren aztertzea. Ikuspegi teorikotik, inkestatuek ikertzaileei eskatu zieten eredu elebarkar eta mendealdekoetatik (WEIRD populazioak deitzen direnak) haratago joateko eta errealitate eleaniztunak islatzen dituzten metodologia inklusiboak hartzeko. Kezka etikoak ere agertu ziren hizkuntza gutxituetan baliozkotu gabeko test estandarizatuen erabilerrari buruz eta tokiko aldizkarietan argitaratutako ikerketen ikusgarritasun mugatuari buruz.

Tratamendua

Erantzunen % 12,77k gai hau nabarmendu zuten, hots, afasia duten pertsona eleaniztunen tratamendu-aukerak hobetzeko beharra. Adituek honako hauen inguruan sistematikoki ikertzea eskatu zituzten: egungo tratamendu-praktikak,, hizkuntza-jarrerak terapiaren helburuetan duten eragina eta gizarteko laguntza sistemaren rola. Terapiaren hizkuntzen arteko transferentzia (adibidez, H1etik H2 edo H3ra) eta horretan eragina duten faktoreak, hala nola hizkuntzen arteko distantzia, ikerketarako gai nagusi gisa identifikatu ziren. Hizkuntza bakoitzerako esku-hartze estrategiak garatzea, teknologia bidezko errehabilitazioa integratzea eta familiaren inplikazioa sustatzea ere nabarmendu ziren. Gai honek, halaber, politika publikoak eta eragileak inplikatzearen garrantzia azpimarratu zuen, hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunei egokitutako zerbitzuak bermatzeko.

Logopeda eta ortofonisten prestakuntza

Gai honek (% 9,22) eleaniztasun-testuinguruetan eta hizkuntza gutxituak daudenetan lanean diharduten logopeda eta ortofonisten prestakuntza hobetzeko beharra jorratu zuen. Inkestatuek azpimarratu zuten logopeda eta ortofonisten artean eleaniztasunaren, hizkuntza aldakortasunaren eta ondare-hizkuntzen inguruko kontzientzia areagotzearen garrantzia. Prestakuntzak, halaber, ebaluazio-estrategia eraginkorretan eta eskuragarri dauden tresna eta materialen erabilera egokian jarri behar du arreta. Arlo horietan hezkuntza-programak eta etengabeko prestakuntza indartzea funtsezkotzat jo zen ADPentzat arreta hobetzeko hizkuntza-ingurune desberdinetan.

Gizarte-eragina

WG2ko kideek afasiak hizkuntza gutxituetako komunitateetan duen gizarte-eragina ulertzeko beharra azpimarratu zuten, sinesmen kulturalak, hizkuntza-jarrerak eta arretara sartzeko aukerak barne. Soziokulturalki egokiak diren ebaluazio eta tratamendua defendatu zituzten, familia eta komunitatearen laguntzaren rola nabarmenduz.

Normak

Azkenik, hizkuntza gutxituetan datu normatibo mugatuak izatea erronka nagusitzat identifikatu zen. Hizkuntza-esposizioaren aldakortasunak eta baliabide psikolinguistikoen faltak tresna estandarizatuen garapena zailtzen dute. Ingeleseko joera gainditzea eta berdintasun linguistikoa sustatzea funtsezko urratsak dira hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunen—gehienetan eleaniztunak eta askotan hizkuntza estandarizaturik partekatzen ez dutenak—ikerketa eta arreta klinikoaren emaitzak hobetzeko.

Eztabaida

Agenda hau ezartzeko ikerketak premiazko lehenetsunak identifikatu ditu hizkuntza gutxituak dituzten testuinguruetan afasiaren ikerketa eta arreta klinikoak gauzatzeko. WG2ko kideek tokiko profesionalekin eta eragileekin lankidetzan aritzearen, prebalentzia-datuak biltzearen eta kulturalki egokiak diren ebaluazio-tresnak garatzearen beharra azpimarratu

zuten. Tresna hauek aldaera dialektalak eta errealtate soziokulturalak islatu behar dituzte, eta haien erabilera eraginkorra bermatzeko, klinikariek eleaniztasun eta kultura-aniztasuneko gaitasunetan prestakuntza egokia jaso behar dute. Klinikako langileen beharrak aldian-aldian ebaluatzea eta ADPeekin zein haien familiekin etengabeko harremana mantentzea funtsezkoa da arreta sentikorra eta inklusiboa bermatzeko.

Identifikatutako gai nagusiek ikerketan eta praktikan dauden hutsune kritikoak islatzen dituzte, eta bat egiten dute 18. GJHarekin (hizkuntza eta kultur aniztasuna sustatzea) eta 3. GJHarekin (osasuna eta ongizatea bermatzea). Hutsune horiei aurre egiteak diagnostiko zehatzagoa, tratamendu eraginkorragoa eta kulturalki sentikorra den errehabilitazioa ahalbidetuko ditu hizkuntza gutxituetako hiztunen kasuan. Ikerketa-estandarrek aurrera egin ahala—definizio argiagoen, norma hobetuen eta prestakuntza zabalagoen bidez—praktika klinikoei jarraipena izango dute, berdintasun linguistikoa osasun-sistemetan txertatzea bultzatuz. Azken batean, agenda honek eskatzen du afasiaren zaintza inklusibo eta komunitariorantz lerratzea, gure gizartearen hizkuntza-aniztasuna islatuko duena eta pertsona guztiei zerbitzuetaarako bidezko sarbidea bermatuko diena.

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Language Hegemony and the Marginalization of Indigenous Voices: Barriers to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Ekpeye Communities

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Abstract

This paper examines the critical yet often overlooked role of linguistic inequality in hindering the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the Ekpeye communities of Rivers State, Nigeria. It argues that the hegemony of the English language, reinforced by national educational policy, systematically marginalizes the Ekpeye language and, by extension, the indigenous knowledge systems and participatory voices of the Ekpeye people. Through a mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative survey conducted across Ekpeye subgroups (e.g., age, gender, occupation, education), this study demonstrates how the hegemony of the English language and the consequent marginalization of the Ekpeye language actively creates barriers to achieving the SDGs in Ekpeye communities. Specifically, it explores its impact on quality education (SDG 4), hampering inclusive and equitable quality education for inhabitants of Ekpeye communities. The findings reveal that the exclusion of the Ekpeye language from the school system is not merely a cultural loss but a significant developmental impediment. The study concludes that achieving inclusive and sustainable development in indigenous contexts like the Ekpeye nation requires a deliberate decolonization of communication frameworks. It advocates the integration of indigenous languages into governance and education as a fundamental prerequisite for genuine progress toward the SDGs.

1. Introduction

The dominant use of English within Nigeria's educational system perpetuates the systemic marginalization of indigenous communities, such as the Ekpeye people of Rivers State in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This linguistic exclusion creates a significant barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which promises inclusive and equitable quality education for all. In Ekpeye communities, the postcolonial model of English-medium education remains the norm and it primarily targets the children and the youth. Many elders in Ekpeye rural communities who could not acquire formal education at a young age are largely living outside the mainstream information network, unaware of the broader news and knowledge that shape society. This approach effectively marginalizes adults and non-speakers of English, denying them access to crucial knowledge and undermining indigenous participation in national and global spheres of communication, education, governance, and culture.

In addition to this marginalization, the hegemony of the English language maintained through power structures like government, education, media etc, devalues and displaces local languages. The effects of this have been stigmatization and internalized inferiority complex with regard to the transmission of their language to the younger generation. Speakers of marginalized languages as it is often the case in Ekpeye, usually feel that their language is 'backward', 'primitive' and 'useless'. Elleh (2022), recounted his conversation with his teenage son who asked why he was not taught the Ekpeye language while growing up. Elleh responded to his son that the Ekpeye language would not be useful to him, being an American, and that there was no need learning a language that will not be beneficial (Elleh, 2022). This is the predominant view among Ekpeye parents as a direct consequence of a systematic relegation of their language to the background. Parents seeing no economic or social value in their heritage Ekpeye language, have become reluctant in passing it on to the younger generations. Of course this stems from the promotion of English as a 'civilized' and superior tool for social mobility while systematically denigrating indigenous Ekpeye. This creates a violation of the 'leave no one behind' pledge of the SDGs, making the investigation of language-based exclusion a matter of ethical and practical imperative for achieving SDGs.

2. The Ekpeye Language and People

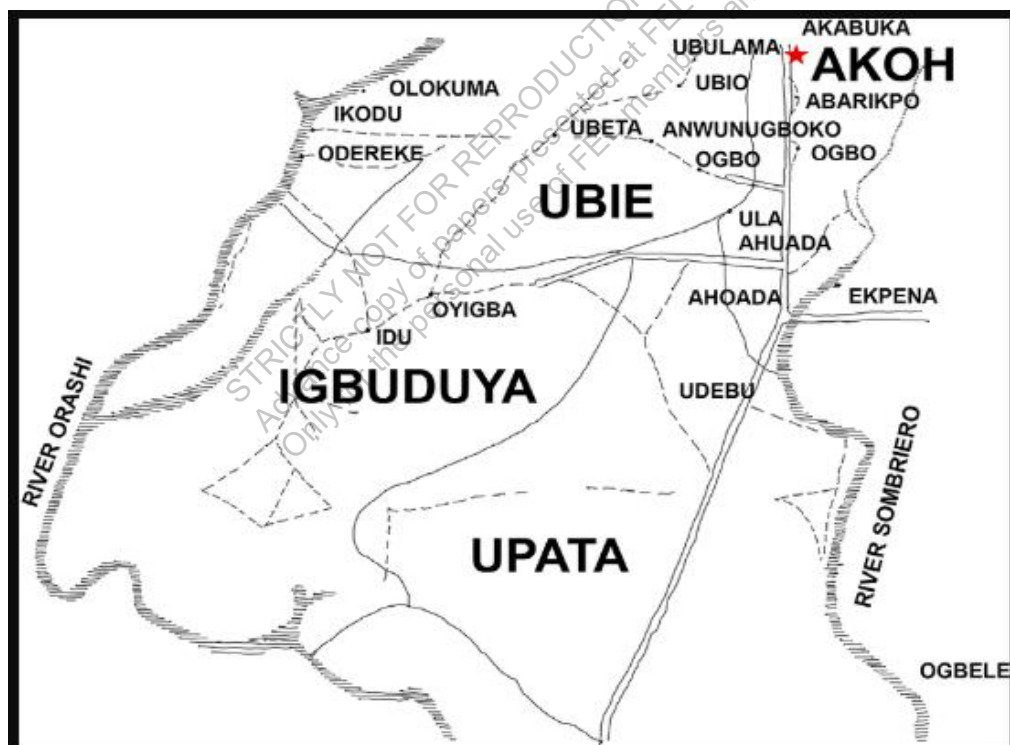
The Ekpeye people located in Ahoada-East and Ahoada-West Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria occupy a geographical land area that falls within Latitude 4.46 N, and 5.15 N, and Longitude 6.26 E and 6.45 E. They are a linguistically and culturally homogenous people. The Ekpeye language is classified as part of the Igboid language group within the larger Volta-Niger language family, also referred to as Benue-Congo (Williamson & Blench, 2000). Ekpeye is considered a distinct language within Igboid (Clark, 1969) with its own phonological and grammatical features.

The culture of traditional leadership is well-grounded in the Ekpeye political culture. The Ekpeye nation is ruled by a Traditional Head known as Eze Ekpeye L'ogbo. The Ekpeye kingdom is divided into administrative units or clans called Igbu. There were four major Igbu namely: Ubie, Akoh, Igbuduya and Upata. Igbu Akoh, Igbu Igbuduya and Igbu Upata have been further divided to yield Igbu Ehuda, Igbu Ugbobi and Igbu Olukwọ respectively, bringing them to seven Igbu presently. The different Igbu are made up of communities or villages (Ula) and each community is headed by an elected chief [known as Eze-New- Ula].

There is no official population figure for Ekpeye. However, the 2006 Nigeria Census projected for Rivers State in 2025 puts the population of Ahoada-East, predominantly inhabited by the indigenous people of Ekpeye at 277,105, and Ahoada-West at 415,725 with more than two-third of indigenous inhabitants as the Ekpeye people. Consequently, it is convenient to state that the Ekpeye people outnumber 400,000. Despite their rich heritage, they grapple with language hegemony-the dominance of English language-which marginalizes their indigenous voices and impedes progress toward the actualization of Sustainable Development Goals in their communities.

Figure 1. Map of Ekpeye territory drawn after the Colonial Intelligence Report on Ekpeye 1933, and showing the four major Igbu (Akoh, Ubie, Igbuduya and Upata)

(<http://doi.org/10.101/asr.2022.87>)



3. Research Objectives

- To investigate how the dominance of the English language in educational sphere perpetuate the marginalization of the Ekpeye language and its speakers.
- To analyze how this linguistic inequality acts as a critical barrier to the effective participation, inclusion, and sustainable development of Ekpeye communities, ultimately hindering the achievement of SDGs.
- To provide recommendations for integrating the Ekpeye language into development frameworks that foster local participation in global information mainstream.

4. Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on Robert Phillipson's (1992) theory of Linguistic Imperialism, which itself draws from Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. Gramsci characterized hegemony as the 'spontaneous consent' given by a subordinate group to the direction imposed by a dominant group, a state achieved by internalizing the dominant group's values through cultural institutions.

Phillipson's framework identifies how English, as a colonial language in Nigeria, has long been promoted as a 'civilized' and superior tool for social mobility. Its dominance in education, international business, and finance creates immense pressure for its adoption while systematically denigrating indigenous languages. Features of this imperialism include the prioritization of the dominant language and the construction of its ideological prestige. In Ekpeye communities, this has led to the internalized worldview of English's superiority, with catastrophic consequences: language endangerment, the devaluation of local knowledge in curricula, cultural dislocation, and a loss of cognitive justice. Phillipson's theory provides a relevant lens for countering hegemonic English education in this context.

4.1 Current Initiatives and Gaps

Efforts to counteract this trend, such as Igwe's (2020) Speak Ekpeye Fluently Language Initiative, which develops online resources to encourage language use among youth, are commendable. However, such initiatives primarily target a demographic that is both young and has internet access. A majority of native Ekpeye speakers reside in rural areas with limited internet connectivity and high illiteracy rates. Crucially, most community members are not literate in their own language, rendering online resources ineffective even when available. This underscores an urgent need to bring foundational literacy programs directly to the communities.

5. Methodology and Data Collection

A mixed-method approach was adopted, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The quantitative survey employed stratified and purposive sampling to ensure representation across Ekpeye subgroups (e.g., age, gender, occupation, education) and its four major administrative clans (Igbo).

Given their role as community custodians and opinion leaders, chiefs and women leaders were specifically selected. Among younger participants (aged 18 and above), only those with formal education were targeted to ensure the ability to comprehend and provide relevant information on the SDGs. Consequently, respondents were required to have at least a secondary education to reliably interpret the principles of the goals.

Despite financial constraints that limited the scale of this self-funded study, 400 questionnaires were distributed across the clans (100 each). A total of 287 were returned, yielding a 71.75% response rate. The return rates per clan were: Akoh (107), Upata (82), Ubie (57), and Igbuduya (41).

Complementing this, qualitative interviews were captured in the questionnaire to explore the community's specific challenges, needs, and priorities in greater depth.

6. Description of Statistics and Analysis

Statement: Out of a total of 287 responses retrieved, all 287 (100%) expressed support for the use of the Ekpeye language in schools. All respondents indicated ‘yes’ to the question of ‘whether they would prefer to have Ekpeye language included in formal education’.

The 100% support rate is a powerful statistic. It reveals an overwhelming demand from the community for the Ekpeye language to be used in schools. This strongly supports my thesis about English language hegemony and the desire from the community to counteract marginalization which directly links to SDG 4. "By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations."

The marginalization of the Ekpeye language is a primary barrier to quality education (SDG 4). Education in a foreign language leads to poor comprehension, and cultural alienation. Using Ekpeye in schools is a prerequisite for achieving inclusive and equitable quality education.

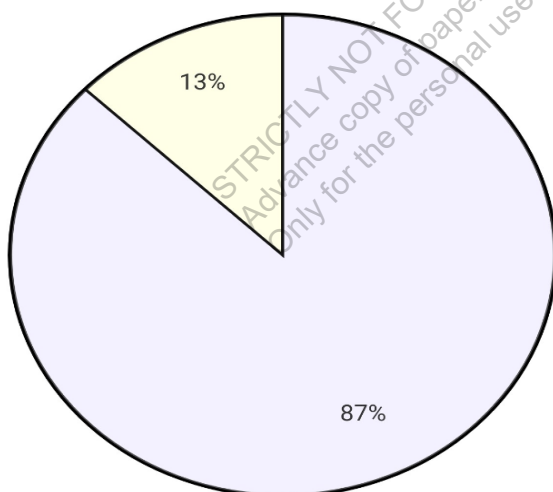
Language hegemony is a discriminatory practice. Promoting the mother tongue is an act of reducing inequality and promoting social, economic, and political inclusion. Mother-tongue-based education has a ripple effect on other SDGs:

- SDG 1 (No Poverty) & SDG 8 (Decent Work): Better education outcomes lead to better economic opportunities.
- SDG 3 (Good Health): Health information can be effectively communicated in the local language.
- SDG 11 (Sustainable Communities): Strengthening indigenous language and culture fosters resilient and sustainable communities.

On the issue of the level of awareness of the SDGs, the findings suggest a significant gap in awareness, constituting a fundamental barrier to achieving the SDGs. For example, out of a sample size of (n): 287, the sample proportion of participants claiming ignorance is $p = 250 / 287 \approx 0.871$. This can be expressed as 87.1%. The proportion of participants with knowledge of the SDGs is $1 - p = 37 / 287 \approx 0.129$ or 12.9%

The result revealed an overwhelming lack of awareness, with **250** participants, **(87.1%)** reported not being aware of the Sustainable Development Goals. Only **37** participants **(12.9%)** indicated they were familiar with them.

Figure 2. A pie chart showing the awareness of SDGs in Ekpeye Communities (n=287)



Ignorance of SDGs = 87%

Awareness of SDGs = 13%

The overwhelming lack of awareness suggests that information about global development frameworks like the SDGs is not effectively reaching the grassroots level. The fact that such a majority is unaware of a global agenda that is hinged on ‘leaving no one behind’ is a stark indicator of the marginalization of Ekpeye communities. True sustainability development requires local ownership and participation. When a community is unaware of the goals, it cannot consciously contribute to or shape them, thereby perpetuating non-inclusiveness.

The central theme emerging from the survey reveal a disconnect between global frameworks and local reality. The lack of awareness of the SDGs is a symptom of language hegemony. English being the language of education, government and information dissemination directly creates barrier to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

When asked about development priorities, an overwhelming theme emerged: the strong desire for quality education integrating the Ekpeye language into the formal education system and eradication of poverty.

The respondents correctly identify that marginalization begins with the denial of their linguistic and cultural identity in the sphere of education. This demand aligns directly with the targets of SDG 4.5 (inclusive education) and SDG 10.3 (reducing inequalities). Therefore, the path to achieving the SDGs in Ekpeye land is contingent upon reversing language hegemony.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on this analysis, the study advocates for inclusive, on-the-ground initiatives such as:

1. Creating literacy programs in the Ekpeye language for all community members.
2. Translating key SDG materials and government information into Ekpeye.
3. Establishing indigenous-language radio stations to broadcast and disseminate information widely. Undertaking these initiatives is essential to bridge existing gaps, ensure genuine inclusion, and empower the Ekpeye people to participate in their own development and the global SDG agenda.

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Integrating Dameli Language Revitalization into the Global Sustainability Discourse: A Case for SDG 18

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Abstract

Linguistic diversity is an essential yet often overlooked pillar of sustainable development. While the United Nations' 2030 Agenda outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address challenges ranging from poverty and inequality to climate action and education, it remains largely silent on language. As Suzanne Romaine (2019: 41) has pointed out, "language is the missing link in the global debate on sustainability." This paper responds to the call of the FEL 29th conference by presenting a case for a proposed SDG 18, focused explicitly on linguistic and cultural diversity. It does so through the lens of the Dameli language, a severely endangered Indo-Aryan language spoken in Chitral, northern Pakistan, and the grassroots organization Anjuman Taraqi Damyan (ATD), which has led pioneering efforts for its preservation and revitalization. The paper situates Dameli within the broader challenges of language endangerment, reviews ATD's community-driven initiatives, and links these experiences to the themes of education, inequality reduction, and peace-building already embedded within the SDGs. It further explores the obstacles faced by such initiatives, including political neglect, lack of resources, and structural exclusion of minority languages. By drawing from ethnographic fieldwork, participatory observation, and interviews, the paper highlights how community led revitalization efforts contribute directly to sustainable development. The conclusion argues that establishing an SDG 18 on linguistic and cultural diversity is not merely symbolic but essential to ensuring inclusive, resilient, and sustainable futures.

1. Introduction

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represented a landmark achievement in global cooperation, uniting governments, civil society, and international organizations around 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals aim to address pressing challenges such as poverty, education, gender inequality, environmental sustainability, and peace. Yet conspicuously absent from this agenda is an explicit focus on language. While the SDGs recognize culture in general terms, the silence on language undermines the effectiveness of the framework, as language is a critical enabler of education, participation, and cultural transmission.

This paper contributes to ongoing discussions about the integration of language into the sustainable development agenda. It does so by presenting the case of Dameli, an endangered language of northern Pakistan, and the work of Anjuman Taraqi Damyan (ATD), a grassroots community organization founded in 2010 to preserve the language and culture of the Damel valley by analyzing ATD's efforts and their alignment with development goals, this study demonstrates why the world urgently needs to establish SDG 18 on linguistic and cultural diversity.

2. The Importance of Linguistic Diversity for Sustainable Development

Linguistic diversity is a cornerstone of cultural heritage and human knowledge. Languages embody unique ways of understanding the world, encoding ecological wisdom, social norms, oral histories, and artistic expressions. When a language disappears, humanity loses an irreplaceable repository of knowledge.

From a development perspective, language is central to several SDGs:

- Education (SDG 4) is most effective when delivered in learners' mother tongues.
- Inequality (SDG 10) is perpetuated when minority language speakers are excluded from political, economic, or educational participation.
- Peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) depend on inclusive communication and recognition of linguistic rights.
- Climate action (SDG 13) and sustainable communities (SDG 11) are enriched by traditional ecological knowledge preserved in indigenous and minority languages.

As Romaine (2019) emphasizes, the failure to explicitly include language in the SDGs is a structural weakness that risks undermining their success. The Dameli case demonstrates these dynamics vividly.

3. Dameli Language and Its Context

3.1 Geographic and demographic profile

Dameli is spoken in the Damel Valley, located in Lower Chitral District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. With an estimated 6500 speakers, Dameli is classified as a severely endangered language. Its geographic isolation has preserved linguistic features distinct from neighboring languages, but modernization and migration now pose existential threats.

3.2 Linguistic and cultural ecology

Chitral is one of the world's most linguistically diverse regions, home to languages such as Khowar, Pushto, Kalasha, Wakhi, Palula, Gawar bati, Katveri, Yidgha, Gojri and Madaklshti. In this environment, Dameli speakers navigate multilingual realities, often shifting toward Urdu for education, Pashto for wider communication, and Khowar for regional interactions. The result is a gradual erosion of Dameli in public life.

3.3 Oral traditions and identity

Dameli has historically been an oral language, rich in poetry, folktales, songs, and proverbs. Oral traditions transmit community values and ecological knowledge, offering insights into agriculture, seasonal cycles, and moral conduct. These oral literatures are central to Dameli identity and resilience, but they are threatened as younger generations migrate to urban centers and adopt dominant languages.

4. Anjuman Taraqi Damyan (ATD)

4.1 Origins and mission

ATD was established in 2010 by Hayat Muhammad Dameli and Asmat Ullah Dameli, along with other community members concerned about the erosion of Dameli language and culture. Their mission was to document, preserve, and revitalize Dameli through volunteer-driven, community based initiatives. Importantly, ATD operates without government support, relying on contributions of time and money from local members.

4.2 Key achievements

The contributions of Anjuman Taraqi Dameli (ATD) to the preservation and promotion of the Dameli language are both pioneering and substantial. In collaboration with the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI), ATD developed the first standardized orthography for Dameli, a milestone that laid the foundation for literacy and further resource creation (FLI, 2012). Building on this achievement, ATD produced the first alphabet primer,

Dameli Alif Ba (Hayat Muhammad Dameli & Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2015), which continues to serve as a cornerstone of literacy education within the community.

Recognizing the importance of digital domains for language vitality, ATD, with technical collaboration from FLI, designed a Dameli keyboard for computers and later introduced an Android keyboard for mobile phones. These innovations have enabled speakers to use Dameli across digital platforms and social media, thereby expanding the language's presence in contemporary communication.

Resource development has also been a central focus. ATD, with the support of FLI, compiled and published the Dameli Urdu Wordlist containing 3,400 entries (Hayat Muhammad Dameli & Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2016), providing an essential tool for learners, teachers, and researchers. Complementing this effort, ten Dameli folktales with Urdu translations were recorded (Hayat Muhammad Dameli & Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2016), ensuring the preservation of oral traditions while making them accessible to wider audiences.

In addition, a range of books has been produced to strengthen literacy and cultural knowledge, including:

- Dameli Alif Ba Second edition (Hayat Muhammad Dameli & Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2016)
- Dameli Urdu Wordlist containing 3,400 entries (Hayat Muhammad Dameli & Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2016),
- Dameli Urdu English Conversation Book (Hayat Muhammad Dameli, 2020)
- Dameli Urdu English Proverb Book (Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2020)
- Dameli Folktales with Urdu Translation (Hayat Muhammad Dameli, 2022)
- Dameli Poetry book (Asmat Ullah Dameli, 2024)

Together, these achievements highlight ATD's holistic approach to language revitalization, combining orthography development, literacy resources, digital innovations, and the preservation of oral traditions. These efforts not only safeguard Dameli but also demonstrate the capacity of small communities to make enduring contributions to linguistic and cultural sustainability. Importantly, the Dameli case provides a valuable example of how grassroots initiatives can align with global calls for the recognition of linguistic diversity as a central dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4.3 Role in oral literature preservation

Anjuman Taraqi Dameli (ATD) has devoted special attention to the safeguarding and promotion of Dameli oral traditions, which form a central component of the community's intangible cultural heritage. Oral literature, including folktales, poetry, and storytelling practices, has historically served as a primary vehicle for transmitting knowledge, values, and cultural identity across generations. As Fishman (1991) emphasizes, intergenerational transmission through oral domains is a cornerstone of reversing language shift, and ATD's work directly contributes to this process.

One of the most notable efforts has been the audio recording of Dameli folktales, which not only ensures their preservation for future generations but also provides accessible resources for educational and cultural programs. Published collections of folktales with Urdu translations have further extended the reach of these traditions beyond the immediate community, making Dameli oral heritage visible in wider academic and cultural circles.

Cultural festivals, most prominently Jashan Daman, provide an important platform for presenting Dameli oral literature in live settings. These events feature poetry recitations and storytelling alongside music, dance, and traditional games, situating oral traditions within a vibrant framework of cultural expression. Such initiatives directly align with UNESCO's recognition of oral traditions and expressions as one of the key domains of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003). By preserving and celebrating oral heritage in this way, ATD strengthens linguistic identity and ensures that traditional knowledge remains dynamic and relevant.

4.4 Community engagement

In addition to preserving oral traditions, ATD has prioritized wider community engagement, both within Damel Valley and across urban diaspora centers. With significant numbers of Dameli speakers having migrated to cities such as Peshawar and Karachi, the organization has developed innovative approaches to maintain cultural

connections and strengthen collective identity. This approach reflects Grenoble and Whaley's (2006) view that successful language revitalization depends on grassroots initiatives that empower communities themselves.

ATD has built networks with Dameli diaspora communities through WhatsApp groups, cultural events, and social media initiatives. These platforms have proven particularly effective in reaching younger generations, who might otherwise become disconnected from their linguistic and cultural heritage. By providing accessible spaces for interaction, ATD enables youth to engage with their heritage while navigating life in multilingual, urban contexts. As Hinton, Huss, and Roche (2018) observe, such digital and cultural initiatives create "new domains of use" that are crucial for sustaining endangered languages.

Annual cultural programs in major cities such as Peshawar and Karachi further reinforce these connections. These gatherings bring together music, dance, and poetry while also reviving local Dameli games to encourage active participation among young people. Such initiatives resonate with UNESCO's emphasis on community participation as a cornerstone of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2017).

Through these sustained activities, ATD demonstrates that community engagement is not only about preservation but also about creating living spaces where cultural identity can be practiced, shared, and renewed. The Dameli case highlights how grassroots participation and cultural celebration are indispensable to sustaining endangered languages and the identities they embody.

5. ATD's Work in Relation to the SDGs

5.1 SDG 4: Quality education

ATD encourages parents to send their children to school, which directly supports SDG 4's emphasis on inclusive and equitable quality education. In addition, ATD organizes awareness sessions with parents, highlighting the importance of education for their children's future while also stressing the value of preserving their mother tongue. Through these initiatives, ATD not only promotes quality education but also strengthens cultural identity and linguistic heritage.

5.2 SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

By creating spaces for Dameli expression, ATD reduces social exclusion. It gives speakers of a marginalized language a stronger voice in society, addressing the inequalities that arise from linguistic discrimination.

5.3 SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Cultural recognition reduces conflict and fosters inclusion. ATD's festivals and gatherings provide peaceful platforms for identity expression, reducing the risk of alienation that can fuel unrest.

5.4 Beyond the SDGs: ecological knowledge

Dameli oral traditions also contain ecological knowledge about agriculture, climate, and natural resource management. Preserving the language therefore contributes indirectly to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

6. Challenges Facing ATD and Dameli

6.1 Lack of institutional support

Pakistan's language policies prioritize Urdu and provincial languages such as Pashto, leaving smaller languages like Dameli unrecognized in education, media, and governance. This lack of recognition hinders funding and legitimacy.

6.2 Resource constraints

ATD operates without external funding, limiting the scale of its projects. Volunteers contribute from their own pockets, but the lack of sustainable resources hampers long-term planning.

6.3 Outmigration and language shift

Many young Dameli leave the valley for education or work in cities. In urban contexts, the pressure to assimilate into Urdu or English-speaking environments accelerates the decline of Dameli use.

6.4 Political neglect

Governmental and institutional indifference perpetuates marginalization. Without legal protections or educational inclusion, Dameli remains vulnerable.

7. Toward an SDG 18 on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

The Dameli case underscores the urgency of establishing an SDG dedicated to language. Such a goal would:

- Raise awareness of linguistic diversity as a core development issue.
- Set measurable targets for the inclusion of minority languages in education and media.
- Ensure government accountability in promoting linguistic rights.
- Provide international funding frameworks for grassroots organizations like ATD.
- Recognize language as a human right and development necessity.

Examples of potential SDG 18 targets include:

- Integrating endangered and indigenous languages into primary education.
- Supporting language documentation and revitalization projects.
- Expanding representation of minority languages in media and public institutions.
- Establishing policies to protect linguistic rights at national and international levels.

8. Methodology

This paper is grounded in qualitative methods, including:

- Ethnographic fieldwork in the Damel Valley since 2004.
- Documentation of oral traditions, poetry, and narratives.
- Interviews with community members, educators, and linguists.
- Participatory observation in ATD events in Chitral, Peshawar, and Karachi.

The integration of academic and community perspectives ensures that the analysis reflects both lived experience and scholarly insight.

9. Implications for Global Policy and Practice

The Dameli experience has broader implications for global language policy. The UNESCO International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) highlights the urgency of safeguarding endangered languages, but such initiatives require stronger integration into national policies. Furthermore, the absence of language in the SDGs limits access to funding and recognition for community-led initiatives.

By institutionalizing linguistic diversity within development frameworks, governments and organizations can amplify the work of grassroots groups like ATD. This requires a paradigm shift from viewing language as a cultural luxury to recognizing it as a structural determinant of development success or failure.

10. Conclusion

Language revitalization is not a peripheral cultural project but a central pillar of sustainable development. The case of Dameli demonstrates that even small, resource poor communities can make significant contributions to education, equality, peace, and cultural resilience when empowered to preserve their languages. However, without structural support, these efforts remain fragile.

The time has come for the international community to establish SDG 18 on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity. This would provide recognition, resources, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that linguistic diversity is valued as an integral dimension of sustainability. For Dameli and countless other endangered languages, such a development would represent not only validation but a lifeline for survival.

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Basque as an Additional Language among Adult Immigrants in the Basque Country

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Abstract

The omission of the explicit protection of language diversity in the Agenda 2030 stems from a simplified view of global fluxes and the related multilingualism. It is clear, however, that language decisions need to be made explicit to achieve any additional intended goal. In last years, the Basque Autonomous Community is receiving an unprecedented number of immigrants, many of them from Latin-American countries. In this article we delve into the live stories of this feminized section of our society, who work as caregivers of elderly people in private houses or institutions. They surely navigate complex social and economic scenarios to reach to certain stability leaving the comfort zone of their countries behind. Adopting a qualitative research methodology based on face-to-face oral interviews, we have investigated their attitudes and beliefs regarding the minority language they are exposed to, as well as their own variety of Spanish. Far from being a threat for the revitalization process of the Basque language, the three women who shared their testimonies show a commitment to include Basque in their future lives or, at least, in their children's lives.

The omission of language in the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations published the Agenda 2030, which has had a great impact on our daily teaching and research endeavors. In the department of education where we work, efforts are being made to include some of the 17 goals in our syllabi and research proposals. However, if institutions, governments and agencies want to have any impact on issues regarding education or gender, for example, language decisions and planning must be carefully designed. This language-blindness of the Agenda 2030 was noticed by several stakeholders who were sensitive enough to language diversity. Thus, the University of the Basque Country EHU, the UNESCO Chair and Easo Politeknikoa joined their efforts to add the 18th goal (Garcia-Azkoaga and Idiazabal, 2021). This 18th goal is described as “linguistic and cultural diversity”. To the best of our knowledge, its implications for minoritized languages like Basque have not been explored.

This article aims to shed some light on the nature of this 18th newly added Sustainable Development Goal regarding its potential to keep multilingualism alive in the presence of growing numbers of speakers of the majority language. We adopt a view of language learning that does not necessarily involves language classes. In line with the research conducted by Theodórsdóttir and Eskildsen (2022) and Wagner (2015), we have enough evidence that supports that language learning can occur “in the wild”, which needs to be validated in any situation, particularly whit minoritized languages.

Basque as a minority language

Following Fasold (1984), a minority language is defined as a language or a distinct enough language variety, which might or might not exist in other parts of the world, of an ethnic group, indigenous or immigrant, whose speakers are obliged to perform in a different language, which is larger in number of speaker or enjoys more social prestige. There is no need to resort to tables with numbers from official sources to realize that the Basque language (*Euskara* in Basque) is a minority language. According to UNESCO, the current situation of the Basque can be described as “vulnerable”. The vitality of our language varies from place to place. If in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC from now on) the number of speakers continues to grow, the Northern region of Basque offers a much gloomier picture. According to the same sources, the situation of Basque in France is “severely endangered”. The lack of official protection or specific language policies from the French government is, in part, responsible for the loss of multilingualism in France. Fishman, in his 1991 book, already devoted a chapter to discuss how language planning and the revitalization efforts of the Basque community was a case of “reversing the language shift”. Baztarrika (2019) and Iurrebaso Biteri (2024) explain that the XX century was successful in language planning to reverse this language shift. However, the situation is not equal in the three areas where Basque is spoken. In this article, we will limit our research to the BAC, which has the highest number of “active” Basque speakers.

A quick portrait of immigration in the BAC

The number of immigrants from Latin American countries continues growing in the BAC. According to the Department of Welfare, Youth and Demographical Challenge of the Basque Government, in 2018 there were 90,800 immigrants from Latin American countries. Five years later, in 2023, the number grew to 138,300. Uranga *et al.* (2023) conducted a thorough review of the immigration's fluxes in the province of Gipuzkoa and reported that 45,988 people come from Latin American countries. According to the 2023 census, the overall percentage of immigrants with this origin in the province of Gipuzkoa was 6% of the total population. Following a qualitative methodology, Uranga *et al.* investigated different types of integration in our society, including sociolinguistic integration. They conclude that Basque can help in the integration process, but immigrants from Latin American countries do not see it as necessary (p. 50).

In the last years, there has been some turmoil in the field of elderly care among future and present workers. In its last official call for care givers, the provincial council of Gipuzkoa has required that applicants show that they have a B2 level of Basque (Council of Europe, 2001). Some of the trade unions do not agree on this requirement for hiring and according to Olabarria Oleaga (2025), in September 2025, the juries have considered this language requirement illegal. However, different institutions have opposing opinions. Two trade unions as well as *Euskalgintzaren Kontseilua* denounce that the banning of language requirements can be discriminatory. *Euskalgintzaren Kontseilua* is an organization made up of more than thirty associations which aim to influence language policies to speed up the process of normalizing Basque. In their webpage, they claim that this legal measure goes against the linguistic rights of the people who live in residences and want to be attended to in Basque. In other words, if the official call for hiring that included the requirement to know Basque could be potentially discriminatory for the Latino population that we just mentioned, the lack of knowledge of Basque can be discriminatory for the old people who want to communicate in that language.

Against this backdrop, we have conducted a small-scale qualitative study which wants to delve deeper into the relation that care givers have with respect to our minority language. Specifically, we want to answer the following two questions:

Research question 1: What is the attitude towards the Basque language of Latin American female care givers? As the two poles of a continuum, do they see the minority language as an obstacle or as an asset for their future selves?

Research question 2: What may be their main motivation to become a Basque-user?

The interview as our methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three women of Latin American origin that had been working with elderly people in the BAC. The researchers wrote the questionnaire in Appendix 1, following Uranga *et al.* (2024). The three women were acquainted with the two researchers, and their biographical features can be found in Table 1.

Pseudo name	Origin	Age of arrival	Current age	Network	Place of residence in BAC
Bety	Colombia	31	33	Father, husband and daughter	Ondarroa
Laura	Nicaragua	18	20	Sister, father	Bilbao
Lucy	Ecuador	16	39	Parents, siblings, husband and children	Donostia

Table 1: Participants biographical profile.

The participants were informed of the usual ethical standards. The researchers told them that their names or their personal information will never be displayed in future publications and that the recordings were for our research purposes only. In addition, they were told that we wanted to delve into the lives of caregivers regarding their perception of the languages used in their daily lives. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment in public spaces and recorded with a cell phone.

The face-to-face interview allowed us to ask questions that emerged during the conversations and to clarify issues that could be ambiguous on the spot due to language differences or cultural issues. It is important to remark that the interviewers were the two researchers who signed this article and that they used their Castilian variety in contact with Basque for the data collection. The three participants used their own variety of Spanish, which did not cause any breakdown in communication in any of the interviews conducted. Once the audios were transcribed, we proceeded to analyze the data

by looking for cues that clarify Latin American care givers' positioning regarding their attitudes and beliefs on the Basque language.

Results and discussion

We have organized the content of the interviews according to the informant, keeping in mind the two main research questions that lead this project and linking the information with the relevant literature, when available.

Bety, the nurse

Bety tells us that she came to the BAC two years ago because her husband was offered a job as a caregiver in an institution. He has a job position that Betty would like to acquire and her attitude towards de Basque language can be summarized as follows:

Solo hablamos castellano, pero me gustaría hablar euskera, ojalá pueda aprender, en Ondarroa se habla mucho euskera y me gustaría aprender.

We only speak Castilian, but I would like to speak Basque, I hope I can learn it; in Ondarroa Basque is often spoken and I would like to learn it.

There are two main aspects to her positive attitude: one is the idea that she has to study to have a degree that will allow her to work legally, like her husband. They both were nurses in Colombia, but their degrees are not valid in Spain. The other facet has to do with her daughter's future. Bety has a four-year-old child, which is already learning Basque in a public school. She thinks that it is important that she learns the minority language to have friends and have more opportunities. In addition, she believes that the school here is better than the one in her home country.

Bety's motivation to learn Basque is heavily rooted in her future self (Dörnyei and Chan, 2013), where she sees her daughter fully integrated into the new society through the means of Basque and, as a result, she is also integrated. However, in the interview she commented that she does not have many local friends and that sometimes they are stared at with a strange look "*y que son muy cerrados*". This comment can be linked to the perception Bety has that Basque-speaking communities are closely linked and difficult to access. In her imagination her daughter will not have that problem because she has learned the minority language at an early age and will build a social network from childhood.

Laura, the future student

Laura, like Bety, came two years ago to the BAC. Her older sister came six years before to take care of an old couple in the town of Ondarroa. Laura and her sister rented an apartment in Bilbao, the capital of the province. At the beginning, life was very hard, and she mentions that "*echaba de menos la comida, el clima y sobre todo, a mi familia y mis amigos*". She missed everything from Nicaragua, but she is happier now because she thinks that there are more opportunities to earn money that will make her family's life easier. She speaks with her family on her cell phone, and she feels connected now. She started studying rural engineering in Nicaragua, but she had to quit to earn money. Her dream is to go back to university one day and complete degree. Before she came to the BAC, she knew that Basque existed, but she had been told that it was very difficult to learn. She has a very positive attitude but with all the work that she has she does not see how she could make it to study the new language.

In sum, the motivation for Laura is related to the possibility of getting a university degree and she seems to see Basque as part of her future education.

Lucy, part of an extended family

Lucy, unlike Bety and Laura, has lived in the BAC longer than in Ecuador. Like Bety, she is proud that her three children have learned Basque in the public school. However, Lucy has only learned some expressions and words in all these years. The potential learning in the wild has not been successfully implemented. However, she told us that she has experienced that not knowing Basque has closed some job opportunities.

Her positioning regarding the Basque language is positive, but she does not have the time or energy to learn it. Lucy is happy enough if her children know the language. When asked about the residents that speak in Basque to her, she replies that she does not see the language requirement as necessary because "*te haces entender*" (you make yourself understood).

Conclusions

The three informants have enriched our knowledge of the process of immigration to the BAC. They pointed to different forms of motivation to approach the possibilities of formal or informal interactions in the Basque language. The three of them underscored the idea that adding Basque to their linguistic repertoire may improve their workability in the future. In other words, they seem to be cognizant that Basque can be an asset to a potential better job position. Besides being conscious of this instrumental motivation, the three women are also aware that they can meet people and integrate in a deeper manner through the minority language. Although this is particularly vividly expressed by Bety, the participant who

lives in small town where Basque is more used for social interaction. The other two women who live in larger towns do not see the need to learn Basque to meet people.

The third source of motivation has to do with grassroots culture. As one participant mentioned, this population does not have money to go to concerts or movies, but many of the cultural events that take place in the BAC are free and conducted in Basque. Basque can be the key to access a cultural world that is not the mainstream one.

Finally, the three of them aim at continuing studying and obtaining official degrees. Even though Bety was a nurse in her country, she must continue studying. They know that there is financial support for life-long education, and that Basque is crucial in completing their profile. They see themselves and their families in the BAC and they are no different than people born in our community in the sense that they want to have better jobs and lives. Summarizing, we have seen that Basque can be an asset in reaching those goals, and this idea may be a trigger to invest the time and effort to use and learn it.

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Appendix 1. QUESTIONNAIRE (Adapted from Uranga *et al.*, 2024)

Biographical data and immigration process

1. Place of origin: town, city, country
2. Year of arrival, how many years have you lived in Spain? In Gipuzkoa?
3. Any other place before Spain?
4. Reasons to immigrate
5. Describe your family network
6. Do you or anyone in your family speak other languages besides Spanish?
7. Did you know Basque existed before living in Gipuzkoa?

Job and social integration

1. How did you get your current job?
2. Which difficulties or opportunities did you experience to access this job?
3. How did you get information regarding the job market?
4. Do you have a contract? What type?

5. If you have children, are they in school? What type of school?

Spanish

1. Do you find speaking Spanish as an asset?
2. Have you observed differences between your type of Spanish and the one spoken in Gipuzkoa?
3. How do you live with those differences?
4. Do you try to adopt some features or lexical items from the local variety of Spanish?

Basque

1. Did you know there were two official languages in Gipuzkoa?
2. Who do you think speaks Basque more often, children or older people?
3. Have you tried to learn it formally or informally?
4. What is your opinion of the role of Basque in the job market?
5. And regarding your role as a caregiver?

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Revitalizing Endangered Languages through NEP2020: A Pragmatic Framework for Sustainable Development in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020¹ of India offers an opportunity to integrate language revitalization with sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly in Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh, India. Home to the Kannaure tribe and eight endangered languages, including Kinnauri, Kinnaur faces linguistic challenges due to globalization and limited institutional support (Negi, 2023). NEP-2020's emphasis on mother-tongue-based education up to Grade 5 aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education)², offering a pathway to enhance foundational literacy and cultural identity in marginalized communities. This article proposes a pragmatic framework for implementing NEP-2020 in Kinnaur to revitalize endangered languages while fostering sustainable development. Drawing on successful multilingual education (MLE) models from Odisha³, Gondi digital education in Madhya Pradesh (Boruah, 2020), and Nyishi textbook development in Arunachal Pradesh⁴, the framework integrates education reform, community engagement, and digital innovation. Empirical data from Kinnaur highlights challenges such as untrained teachers, lack of orthographies, and fragmented policy coordination. Proposed solutions include localized teacher training, bilingual teaching aids, and integration of Kinnauri oral traditions into curricula. By aligning language revitalization with socio-economic empowerment, this framework positions Kinnaur as a model for sustainable linguistic preservation within the SDG agenda, advocating for a potential 18th SDG focused on language and culture⁵.

Introduction

India's linguistic diversity, with over 19,500 mother tongues and 197 endangered languages as per UNESCO⁶, is a cultural treasure under threat. In Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh, the Kannaure tribe speaks eight languages, including Kinnauri, Sunam, and Chitkuli, all critically endangered due to declining speaker numbers and lack of institutional support (Negi & Jabeen, 2023). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a transformative framework to address this crisis by promoting mother-tongue-based education and multilingualism, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 for inclusive and equitable quality education. However, implementing NEP-2020 in Kinnaur requires a context-sensitive approach that accounts for the region's socio-cultural, linguistic, and geographical complexities. This article proposes a pragmatic framework for revitalizing Kinnaur's endangered languages through NEP-2020, integrating education, community engagement, and digital innovation. By drawing on successful MLE models from other Indian regions and empirical data from Kinnaur, the framework addresses challenges such as untrained teachers, lack of standardized orthographies, and societal preference for dominant languages like Hindi and English. The study argues that language revitalization is not only a cultural imperative but also a strategic tool for sustainable development, contributing to socio-economic empowerment, gender equity, and environmental sustainability. Ultimately, it advocates for policy convergence between NEP-2020 and the SDG agenda, proposing linguistic diversity as a cornerstone of sustainable development, potentially warranting an 18th SDG focused on language and culture.

Background: Linguistic Landscape of Kinnaur

Kinnaur, a tribal district in Himachal Pradesh, is home to approximately 84,000 people, predominantly the Kannaure tribe, who speak eight Tibeto-Burman languages: Kinnauri (45,000 speakers), Pahari Kinnauri (about 12,000 speakers), Sunam (about 395 speakers), Chitkuli (less than 1,000 speakers), Shumcho (about 2,000 speakers), Jangrami, Choyuli (less than 1200 speakers each), and Bhoti Kinnauri (about 2500 speakers) as per the Census of India 2011 records and a study conducted by Negi & Jabeen (2023). These languages face severe endangerment due to:

- **Globalization and Language Shift:** The dominance of Hindi and English in education, media, and employment marginalizes local languages, with younger generations increasingly adopting dominant languages.
- **Lack of Institutional Support:** Absence of standardized orthographies, teaching materials, and trained educators hinders formal education in Kinnauri languages.

¹ https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

² <https://globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/>

³ <https://scert.cg.gov.in/pdf/mle/MLE-Book-4/19-Multilingual%20Education%20in%20Orissa.pdf>

⁴ <https://scert.cg.gov.in/pdf/mle/MLE-Book-4/19-Multilingual%20Education%20in%20Orissa.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.ehu.eus/en/web/mho-unesco-katedra/garapen-iraunkorrerako-18.-helburua>

⁶ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192416>

- **Declining Intergenerational Transmission:** Social stigma and preference for English-medium education discourage families from passing down native languages.

Census data (2011) and field studies indicate a steady decline in speaker numbers, with Chitkuli and Shumcho at critical risk of extinction. NEP-2020 acknowledges this crisis, noting that even India's 22 Eighth Schedule languages face challenges, and emphasizes protecting unscripted and endangered languages (NEP, 2020). Kinnaur's linguistic diversity, deeply tied to its cultural heritage, necessitates urgent revitalization efforts to preserve identity and promote sustainable development.

NEP-2020: A Policy Framework for Language Revitalization

NEP-2020 provides a robust policy foundation for language revitalization, with key provisions relevant to Kinnaur:

- **Mother Tongue Education:** Recommends using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction up to at least Grade 5, strengthening cognitive development and cultural identity (NEP, 2020, para 4.11).
- **Three-Language Formula:** Encourages learning the mother tongue, another Indian language, and English to foster multilingual competence and inclusivity (NEP, 2020, para 4.13).
- **Digital and Cultural Integration:** Advocates leveraging technology, including AI and digital archives, to preserve and promote endangered languages (NEP, 2020, para 22.6).
- **Curriculum Restructuring:** Proposes integrating functional language aspects (grammar, vocabulary) and cultural knowledge into education, alongside creating institutes for translation and linguistic research (NEP, 2020, para 22.15).

These provisions align with global language revitalization strategies, such as Hinton's (2011) emphasis on community-driven education and intergenerational transmission, offering a blueprint for Kinnaur's linguistic preservation.

Lessons from Successful Models

The framework draws on three successful MLE models in India to inform Kinnaur's approach:

- **Odisha's Multilingual Education Program:** Odisha's MLE initiative, implemented in 21 tribal languages, integrates mother tongue instruction with bilingual materials, improving student retention and academic performance (SCERT, 2019). Community involvement in material development ensures cultural relevance, a model applicable to Kinnaur.
- **Gondi Digital Education in Madhya Pradesh:** Boruah (2020) highlights the use of digital platforms to teach Gondi, an endangered language, through apps and online resources. This approach engages youth and preserves oral traditions, offering a scalable model for Kinnaur's remote communities.
- **Nyishi Textbook Development in Arunachal Pradesh:** Community-led efforts to develop Nyishi textbooks have revitalized the language in schools, fostering linguistic pride and academic success (Deccan Herald, 2021). Kinnaur can emulate this participatory approach to create teaching materials.

These models demonstrate that mother-tongue-based education enhances engagement, reduces dropout rates, and strengthens cultural identity, providing practical insights for Kinnaur.

Empirical Challenges in Kinnaur

Field studies conducted in Kinnaur (2023) reveal several barriers to implementing NEP-2020:

- **Lack of Trained Teachers:** Few educators are proficient in Kinnauri languages, and existing training programs do not address local linguistic diversity.
- **Absence of Standardized Orthographies:** Most Kinnauri languages lack written scripts, complicating the development of textbooks and teaching aids.
- **Fragmented Policy Coordination:** Disjointed efforts between educational institutions, linguistic authorities, and tribal councils hinder unified implementation.
- **Societal Attitudes:** Parents prefer English-medium education for better job prospects, viewing local languages as less valuable.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Remote schools lack basic facilities, internet connectivity, and libraries, limiting access to digital and printed resources.

These challenges underscore the need for a tailored, community-driven approach to align NEP-2020 with Kinnaur's realities.

Proposed Framework for Kinnaur

The proposed framework integrates NEP-2020's provisions with Kinnaur's socio-linguistic context, structured around three pillars: Education Reform, Community Engagement, and Digital Innovation.

Education Reform: Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

- **Mother Tongue Instruction:** Implement Kinnauri, Sunam, Chitkuli, and other local languages as mediums of instruction up to Grade 5, as per NEP-2020. Develop localized curricula incorporating Kinnauri folklore, songs, and rituals to enhance cultural relevance and student engagement.

- **Teacher Training Programs:** Establish training modules for local educators, focusing on pedagogical skills and fluency in Kinnauri languages. Partner with institutions like Visva-Bharati's Centre for Endangered Languages to design proficiency-building curricula, drawing on Odisha's MLE model.
- **Bilingual Teaching Aids:** Create textbooks, storybooks, and dictionaries in collaboration with native speakers to standardize orthographies. NEP-2020's emphasis on vocabulary expansion and resource dissemination supports this initiative.

Community Engagement: Fostering Intergenerational Transmission

- **Family-Based Language Transmission:** Encourage families to use Kinnauri languages at home through community workshops promoting linguistic pride, inspired by Hinton's (2011) revitalization flow model.
- **Cultural Programs:** Organize Kinnauri folk song contests, storytelling festivals, and ritual performances, similar to Japan's Amami Folk Song Contest, to engage youth and reinforce cultural identity.
- **Tribal Council Collaboration:** Partner with Kinnaur's tribal councils to integrate language revitalization into community development plans, ensuring local ownership and sustainability.

Digital Innovation: Leveraging Technology

- **Digital Archives:** Develop online platforms with audio-visual resources, such as recordings of Kinnauri narratives and songs, to preserve oral traditions. NEP-2020's advocacy for AI and digital tools supports this approach.
- **Mobile Apps and Social Media:** Create apps and social media channels to teach Kinnauri vocabulary and phrases, inspired by Gondi's digital education model (Boruah, 2020). Gamified learning experiences can engage younger generations.
- **Digitization of Cultural Knowledge:** Translate and digitize Kinnauri oral literature, aligning with NEP-2020's National Translation Mission to bring tribal knowledge to broader audiences.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

Language revitalization in Kinnaur aligns with multiple SDGs:

- **SDG 4 (Quality Education):** Mother-tongue-based education improves literacy, retention, and cognitive development, ensuring inclusive education.
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Engaging women in cultural programs and teacher training promotes gender equity in education and community leadership.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** Linking language revitalization to cultural tourism and local crafts creates employment opportunities.
- **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities):** Preserving Kinnauri heritage strengthens community identity and resilience.
- **Proposed 18th SDG (Language and Culture):** Linguistic diversity, as a pillar of cultural heritage, warrants recognition as a distinct SDG to ensure sustainable development in multilingual regions.

By framing language revitalization as a development tool, the framework contributes to socio-economic empowerment and environmental sustainability, leveraging Kinnaur's cultural assets for tourism and local economies.

Implementation Strategies

- **Policy Coordination:** Establish a Kinnaur Language Revitalization Task Force, comprising educators, tribal leaders, and policymakers, to streamline NEP-2020 implementation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with NGOs and tech companies to fund teacher training, resource development, and digital platforms.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch community campaigns to highlight the cognitive and cultural benefits of mother-tongue education, countering the preference for English.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement metrics to track language use, student performance, and cultural engagement, ensuring accountability and scalability.

Expected Outcomes

- **Increased Speaker Numbers:** MTB-MLE and community programs will boost intergenerational transmission, increasing active speakers of Kinnauri languages.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Integrating oral traditions into education will strengthen cultural identity and pride, preserving Kinnaur's heritage.
- **Sustainable Development:** Language revitalization will support tourism, local economies, and gender equity, aligning with SDG targets.
- **Policy Scalability:** Kinnaur's model can inform language revitalization efforts in other tribal regions, contributing to India's linguistic diversity.

Challenges and Mitigation

- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Invest in school facilities and internet connectivity through government funding and private partnerships.
- **Teacher Shortages:** Scale up training programs and incentivize local youth to pursue teaching careers in Kinnauri languages.
- **Societal Attitudes:** Use success stories from Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh to demonstrate the value of mother-tongue education.
- **Orthography Development:** Engage linguists and native speakers to create standardized scripts, supported by NEP-2020's translation initiatives.

Conclusion

NEP-2020 offers a unique opportunity to revitalize Kinnaur's endangered languages by integrating mother-tongue-based education with sustainable development goals. The proposed framework, rooted in successful MLE models and empirical insights, addresses Kinnaur's challenges through education reform, community engagement, and digital innovation. By fostering collaboration between educators, communities, and policymakers, Kinnaur can serve as a model for linguistic preservation in India's tribal regions. The integration of language revitalization into the SDG agenda, potentially through a proposed 18th SDG, underscores the role of linguistic diversity in achieving equitable and inclusive development. With sustained commitment, Kinnaur's linguistic heritage can thrive, contributing to cultural resilience and sustainable progress.

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Academic language and disciplinary literacies: key for sustainable multilingual education in a minority language context

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Abstract

This study addresses the central role of Academic and Disciplinary Literacies (ADLs) in fostering sustainable multilingual education, particularly in minoritised language contexts. While general language skills are important, ADLs—such as the ability to argue, describe, and use subject-specific vocabulary—are essential for enabling students to construct and communicate disciplinary knowledge. Developing these literacies in a minoritised language is crucial for its normalisation, vitality, and long-term sustainability. We present findings from a large-scale project in the Basque Country that explored how explicit ADL instruction could enhance students' science argumentation skills in Basque (the language of schooling), Spanish, and English. The study involved 102 secondary students, using a quasi-experimental pre/post-test design. Results showed that students receiving targeted ADL instruction in Basque significantly improved their argumentation structures, accuracy, syntactic and lexical complexity, and use of subject-specific vocabulary. Importantly, these gains also transferred to Spanish and English, illustrating additive multilingualism and the value of leveraging one language to strengthen others. These findings highlight how schooling in a minoritised language can equip learners with resources for academic success, while promoting linguistic justice and equity. We argue that ADLs should be embedded in SDG 18 to support sustainable and equitable multilingual development worldwide.

Introduction

It is undeniable that current societies and contexts are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural, and, consequently, linguistic and cultural diversity are becoming key aspects in today's society. In this context, fostering individuals' language skills is essential for promoting human capital, equity and access to quality education (Lorenzo, 2023; Usanova et al., 2024). This is particularly critical in educational settings in which more than one language is involved, especially when one of those is a minoritised, endangered, or lesser-taught language (Pascual i Granell, 2024). In a context where learners' exposure to the minoritised language is limited, therefore, it is crucial for educational policies to implement approaches that foster their literacy skills in the minoritised language, irrespective of its status as a L1, L2 or Lx. As Cenoz and Gorter (2023) argue, additive multilingual approaches considering how language is used in school settings is crucial to support sustainable language development.

Said approaches, nevertheless, cannot focus on developing learners' general language skills alone, but also on their *academic and disciplinary literacies* (ADLs). In fact, in order to ensure sustainable multilingual development, it is not only crucial to promote language diversity and multilingual skills, but also to focus on learners' abilities to use language in key educational contexts. In this paper, we argue that SDG 18 needs to include ADLs as a key component to promote linguistic diversity and multilingual competence. This is a key aspect that, without explicit support in minority or endangered languages, may risk learners' language capital and, in turn, their opportunities to participate in educational, professional and cultural contexts. Developing mastery in disciplinary literacy in minoritised language speakers is essential for the language's normalisation, in fact, it enables its use in academic, professional and formal domains. This

does not only empower speakers and promote linguistic justice, but also expands the functional range of language, ensuring its vitality and long-term sustainability. Consequently, it is crucial for SDG 18 to embed ADLs as a key dimension. To illustrate this, findings from a large-scale project in the Basque Country will be used, with a particular focus on developing secondary education learners' ADLs in a minoritised language (Basque), in addition to the dominant language of society (Spanish) and a foreign language (English).

Academic and Disciplinary Literacies in a Minoritised Language: Key for Sustainable Language Development

ADLs are increasingly recognised as a key component of education, particularly in bi/multilingual education contexts (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2024). Unlike general language skills, ADLs involve the ability to construct, communicate and share knowledge within (school) academic disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Moje, 2015). In fact, the ways in which discipline experts communicate are deeply rooted in disciplinary conventions: how a historian argues differs from how a scientist does (Linares et al., 2012). ADLs, therefore, include skills related to producing and comprehending disciplinary texts (genres), using subject-specific vocabulary, or producing discourse functions (such as *arguing*, *describing* or *categorising*) in subject-specific ways (Dalton-Puffer, 2013). The latter are of particular importance for ADLs, as they are the linguistic analogues of (disciplinary) thought processes. These have been coined cognitive discourse functions (CDFs) (Dalton-Puffer, 2013), and are present in multiple processes in the classroom: tasks, educational curricula, classroom interaction... Among these, *arguing* is of particular interest for education in general, and in science education in particular. In fact, learning to argue is crucial to evaluate evidence and express their opinions critically. The successful use of argumentation has been linked to the development of critical thinking, metacognition and disciplinary enculturation.

In the context of minoritised and endangered languages, developing ADLs is both a pedagogical and sociolinguistic imperative. In fact, Lorenzo and Trujillo (2017) highlight that learners should be able to perform academic tasks in all their languages, not just dominant or majority languages. This is a key to ensuring learners' linguistic equity. Nevertheless, when the language of schooling is a minoritised language, these literacies present certain challenges. Despite their relevance, ADLs are not acquired automatically through mere exposure—even less so in minoritised or endangered languages, where students may have limited access to academic uses of the language outside school. In fact, students may have limited access to academic uses of the language outside school. This makes the role of schooling and explicit attention to ADLs in the minority language fundamental (Garro Larrañaga et al., 2024). In fact, schools represent not only the first space where students are exposed to academic genres, CDFs or subject-specific vocabulary in the target (minority) language, but often the only site where these practices are actively cultivated.

Methods

Study Design

This paper draws from a large-scale project conducted in the Basque Country in the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The project adopts a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test post-test comparison, including both an experimental group (in the academic year 2021-2022) and a control group (academic year 2020-2021). The main objective of the project was to understand how ADLs could be taught in a Basque-medium of instruction context, particularly focusing on fostering students' science argumentation skills.

During the project, an interdisciplinary group was created, which was composed of seven researchers, six secondary school education science teachers and two material designers. Six collaborative two-hour-long seminars were held between June 2021 and February 2022, which had a dual focus. First, the sessions aimed at training teachers and material developers in the theoretical constructs mentioned above, such as ADLs, the role of language in content construction or CDFs. Second, these seminars aimed to create an environment that fostered collaboration between researchers, teachers, and material designers. This led to the modification of the materials so as to include more explicit ADL teaching.

In order to test whether the modifications to the materials had a positive effect on students' outcomes, a total of four schools participated in the quasi-experimental design. All schools followed a Basque immersion Model D schooling, in which Basque is used as the main language of instruction for all content subjects. The Model D works as an important catalyst for the revitalisation and maintenance of Basque as a minoritised language (García-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2015; Cenoz & Gorter, 2023), and is crucial to develop learners' ADLs in said language (Imaz Agirre et al., 2024). In this Model, students learn all subjects through Basque, having around 26 hours a week of exposure, and Spanish and English are taught as language classes for 3 hours a week each. The four schools were part of an educational network that followed identical teaching approaches and materials.

Participants and Corpus

A total of 102 students from Year 8 participated in the study: 49 students were part of the control group, and 63 of the experimental group. With regards to students' home languages, 67.25 % reported having Spanish, 23.89 % having Basque, and 8.85 % having both.

As mentioned above, a pre-test/post-test procedure was used, and students were asked to produce three texts about renewable energy sources at each data collection point, one in Basque, one in Spanish and one in English. Students were asked to write an argumentative essay in the form of a letter, in which they had to argue in favour of using renewable energy sources at their school. Students responded to the same task before and after the instructional period in which they covered energy sources in the science classroom, which was around 3 months. Therefore, the total number of texts produced by the students was 678.

Data Analysis: CDFs, CAF and Subject-specific Vocabulary

For the analysis of students' texts, three separate analyses were run, following previous literature on ADLs, as well as writing assessment¹. The main aspects of each analysis are covered in the following lines.

- Science argumentation (CDF analysis). For this analysis, Toulmin's Argumentation Pattern (1958) was used, and the main elements needed to produce arguments were identified in students' texts: claims, data, warrants and rebuttals (see Garro Larrañaga et al. 2024; Lersundi et al., under review).
- CAF measures. Lexical and syntactic complexity, accuracy and fluency measures were analysed computationally using MultiAztertest (Bengoetxea et al., 2020), a corpus analysis tool that provides quantitative and objective measures for Basque, Spanish and English. Complexity refers to the diversity and sophistication of learners' syntactic and lexical structures, accuracy to producing error-free writing, and fluency to productivity measures (i.e. number of words or sentences). (see Arias-Hermoso & Imaz Agirre, 2024; Imaz Agirre et al., 2025).
- Subject-specific vocabulary (SSV). Students' productive vocabulary was assessed, with a focus on terms related to science. A total of 207 subject-specific terms were identified in the teaching materials using ANALHITZA (Otegi et al., 2017), and then, the terms were identified in students' texts in Basque. (see Arias-Hermoso et al., in press)

Results

Improvements in Basque

The statistical analyses showed that those students in the experimental group, i.e., those who received focused academic language instruction, improved in Basque in the three dimensions of ADLs analysed: argumentation skills, CAF measures and SSV. Therefore, students showed a better, more structured performance in academic Basque after explicit instruction.

With regard to CAF measures, it is important to mention that students in the control group (those who did not receive ADL-focused instruction), showed either no improvement or worse performance in the post-test than in the pre-test. Nevertheless, learners in the experimental group significantly improved with clear gains in lexical and syntactic complexity and accuracy (see Table 1). All in all, their texts displayed longer sentences, more subordinate clauses, and a richer use of modifiers per noun phrase. Accuracy showed a notable improvement, which is reflected in a reduced number of errors, per text, sentence and word.

Beyond CAF, a key strength of the intervention was science argumentation. Instruction following Toulmin's model in writing led students to include better-developed argumentation structures. While no difference was found in the control group, students' post-test scores in the experimental group featured more nuanced positions, clearer cause-and-effect logic, and more justifications linked to scientific evidence. This is easily seen in the presence of warrants, which increased notably after instruction, leading students to produce sentences such as *"To start, by using non-renewable energies we are harming the world. This is happening because the fossil fuels produce CO2 and sulfur, and those create acid rain and increase the greenhouse effect"*. The most substantial growth occurred in the inclusion of rebuttals (*Perhaps using renewable energy is more expensive, but we would be helping the world*), an element rarely found in baseline compositions but which became more frequent after instruction.

A final dimension of improvement was the use of more subject-specific words, which were more technical. Therefore, they improved both the size and technicality of their SSV use. Students' texts began to incorporate more technical terms such as *energia berriztagarriak* (renewable energies), *CO2 isuria* (CO2 emissions) or *transformazio energetikoa*

¹ The complete, more detailed description of the analyses and results can be found in the following papers: Arias-Hermoso and Imaz Agirre (2024), Arias-Hermoso et al. (in press), Imaz Agirre et al. (2025), Garro Larrañaga et al. (2024), Lersundi et al. (under review).

(energy transformation). Learners used more subject-specific and technical ways to refer to energy-related terms, such as using *hydraulic energy* instead of *water energy*. SSV was not simply used more frequently after the instruction, therefore using more types of words, but it was also used more times, therefore raising the technical density of students' texts. These lexical items were drawn from both classroom discourse and textbook materials, confirming the effectiveness of multimodal exposure and integrated instruction.

Table 1: Pre-post changes in argumentation skills and CAF measures in the three languages.

		Control			Experimental		
		Basque	Spanish	English	Basque	Spanish	English
Argumentation skills	Claim/baieztapenak	-	+	+	++	++	+
	Data/datuak				++		
	Warrant/bermeak	-			++		
	Rebuttalak				++	++	+
CAF	Lexical Complexity	-	-	-	+	+	
	Syntactic Complexity				+		
	Accuracy	-		-	++		++
	Fluency		-	-			

Legend: red (-) implies worse performance, blank spaces imply lack of change, and green spaces improvement (+). Two plus signs (++) imply large improvements, and single plus (+) small-medium size improvements.

Additive Multilingualism: Improvements in Spanish and English

Although the intervention was delivered in Basque, its effects were not isolated—students' writing in Spanish and English reflected instances of cross-linguistic transfer. This was particularly seen in the replication of certain argumentative structures and in some dimensions of CAF. Following Rinnert and Kobayashi's (2016) and Cummins' (1980) theories, students showed transfer or academic language skills acquired in Basque to the other two languages. For example, students increasingly replicated the Toulmin-based structure across their languages. Claims and rebuttals became more explicit and frequent after the intervention in Spanish and English. Nevertheless, students' language precision, or use of lexicogrammatical resources, was still limited in English as an FL, where they used lexically simpler ways of expressing cause and effect (*because it helps the planet*).

This transfer of skills was also visible in CAF measures, as students who received instruction also wrote longer sentences and more complex syntactic structures in Spanish and English. These languages were not the focus of the instruction, however, sentence length and subordination also increased. These patterns were also seen in accuracy, which showed moderate but noticeable improvements, particularly in Spanish, a language in which students were already highly proficient.

Ultimately, these findings illustrate additive multilingualism in action. The Basque-medium intervention did not merely boost performance in that language; it activated students' language resources across their full linguistic repertoire (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023). ADLs improved not through isolated language practice, but crosslinguistically. In addition, correlational analyses (Arias-Hermoso & Imaz Agirre, 2024) showed that the strongest connections across languages took place between Basque and Spanish, i.e., students' L1 and L2. This supports pedagogical approaches that leverage one language to strengthen others, rather than isolating them, particularly critical in multilingual contexts where balanced literacy across languages is an educational goal.

Conclusions

All in all, these findings illustrate how schooling in a minority language with targeted instruction towards developing ADLs is key to fostering secondary education students' acquisition of academic literacies. The intervention in Basque, the minoritised language, provided students with linguistic resources to express subject-specific meanings about a complex topic. This is a key contribution, as students' exposure to the language may be reduced in society, and therefore, requires explicit instruction for its revitalisation and maintenance (García-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2015). By equipping students to express disciplinary reasoning and construct knowledge through Basque, the intervention positions the language as a foundational aspect to achieve academic success, and, therefore, strengthen students' linguistic capital (Lorenzo, 2023).

Furthermore, such instruction supported equitable and sustainable multilingual development, as was suggested by the positive transfer effect across languages. Adopting and considering students' whole linguistic repertoire is key to foster multilingual competence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023). In fact, multilingual competence is not only a linguistic outcome—it is an academic and social imperative that facilitates functioning in increasingly diverse and intercultural societies (Usanova et al., 2024). When learners are taught to activate their full linguistic repertoire, they gain the ability to

transfer skills. This affirms the holistic nature of multilingualism, where languages support, rather than compete with, one another. Effective multilingual education, therefore, should build bridges between them, allowing students to develop a shared metalinguistic awareness across languages and disciplines.

Finally, the findings presented here reaffirm the central role of ADLs in fostering sustainable and equitable multilingual education, particularly in minoritised language contexts. When students are taught to *reason*, *argue*, and *describe* subject-specific knowledge through the medium of a minoritised language, they do not merely improve their linguistic proficiency—they develop the capacity to *think*, *learn*, and *participate* at school through that language. This is a transformative pedagogical stance that positions the minoritised language as the core of educational programmes. Such an approach is not only pedagogically sound, but vital for advancing SDG 18, which calls for the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity as a cornerstone of sustainable development.

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Hizkuntza akademikoa eta arloetako alfabetatzeak: hizkuntza gutxiagotu testuinguru bateko hezkuntza eleaniztun jasangarrirako gako

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Laburpena

Ikerketa honek arreta jarri nahi du hizkuntza akademikoa eta arloko alfabetatzeak (academic and disciplinary literacies, ADL hemendik aurrera) hezkuntza eleaniztun jasangarriaren sustapenean duen rolean, bereziki hizkuntza-gutxitu testuinguruetan. Hizkuntza-trebetasun orokorrak garrantzitsuak diren arren, ADLak —hala nola argudiatzeko, deskribatzeko eta gaiari buruzko hiztegi espezifikoak erabiltzeko gaitasuna— funtsezkoak dira ikasleek arloetako-ezagutzak eraiki eta komunikatzeko aukera izan dezaten. Alfabetatze horiek hizkuntza gutxitu batean garatzea funtsezkoa da hizkuntza horren normalizaziorako, bizindar eta epe-luzerako iraunkortasunerako. Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoko eskala handiko proiektu baten ondorioak aurkezten ditugu. Bertan aztertzen da nola ADLaren irakaskuntza esplizituak hobetu dezakeen ikasleen zientzia arloan argudiatzeko gaitasuna, euskaraz (eskolatze hizkuntza), gaztelaniaz eta ingelesez. Emaitez erakutsi zuten euskaraz ADL lanketa zuzena jaso zuten ikasleek nabarmen hobetu zituztela beren argumentu-egiturak, zehaztasuna, konplexutasun sintaktiko eta lexikoa, eta gaiarekiko espezifikoak zen hiztegiaren erabilera. Gainera, hobekuntza horiek gaztelaniara eta ingelesera ere transferitzen ziren, eta erakusten da eleaniztasun gehigarria eta hizkuntza baten lanketa nola dakarren beste batzuen indartzea. Aurkikuntza horiek agerian uzten dute hizkuntza gutxitu batean eskolatzeak ikasleak baliabidez hornitu ditzakeela arrakasta akademikorako, eta, aldi berean, hizkuntza-justizia eta ekitatea sustatzen dituela. ADLak GIH 18an txertatu behar direla defendatzen dugu, mundu osoan garapen eleaniztun jasangarria eta bidezkoa bultzatzeko.

Sarrera

Egungo gizarte- eta hezkuntza-testuinguruak gero eta eleaniztunagoak eta kulturartekoagoak dira; ondorioz, hizkuntza- eta kultura-aniztasuna funtsezko elementu bilakatu da gizarte garaikidean. Testuinguru eleaniztun eta kulturantz horretan, pertsonen hizkuntza-gaitasunak garatzea premiazkoa da, izan ere, kapital linguistikoa estu lotuta dago giza kapitalarekin, eta funtsezkoa da ekitate pertsonala, soziala eta profesionala lortzeko (Lorenzo, 2023; Usanova et al., 2024). Behar hori bereziki garrantzitsua da eskola-ingurune eleaniztunetan, non hizkuntza bat baino gehiago erabiltzen den, eta horietako bat, askotan, arriskuan dagoen hizkuntza edo hizkuntza gutxitua den (Pascual i Granell, 2024). Hizkuntza gutxituarekiko esposizioa txikia den testuinguruetan, beraz, behar-beharrezkoa da hezkuntza-politikak martxan jartzea ikasleek hizkuntza horretan alfabetatzeak gara ditzaten, izan H1, H2 edo Hx-n. Cenozek eta Gorterren arabera (2023), eleaniztasun gehigarria kontuan hartzen duten ikuspegiak gako dira hizkuntza-garapen jasangarria bermatzeko.

Hala ere, ikuspegi horien arretagunea ikasleen hizkuntza-gaitasun orokorren lanketa ez ezik, haien hizkuntza akademikoa eta arloko alfabetatzeak ere (*academic and disciplinary literacies*, ADLs, hemendik aurrera) garatu behar dira. Izan ere, hizkuntza garapen jasangarria bermatzeko hizkuntza-aniztasuna eta gaitasun eleaniztuna garatzeaz gain, ikasleek eskola-testuinguruan arrakasta izateko behar den hizkuntza ere garatu behar dute. Aurkezpen honetan, beraz, argudiatuko dugu 18. GJHrako ADLak osagai gakoak direla. Berebiziko aspektua da hau, eta hizkuntza gutxitu edota arriskuan dauden hizkuntzen kasuan, espezifikoak lantzen ez bada, ikasleen hizkuntza kapitala arriskuan egon liteke. Horren ondorioz, ikasleek hezkuntza-, lan-, eta kultura-testuingurutan parte hartzeko aukerak gal ditzakete. ADL-en garapena hizkuntza gutxiagotuan berebizikoa da hizkuntza-normalkuntzari begira, izan ere, hizkuntza hori testuinguru akademiko, profesional eta formaletan erabiltzea ahalbidetzen du. Horrek, hiztunak ahulduntzeaz eta hizkuntza-justizia

indartzeaz gain, hizkuntzaren erregistro funtzionala hedatzen du, bere bizitza eta epe luzerako jasangarritasuna bermatuz. Hortaz, ADLak 18. GJHaren parte izan behar dira. Ideia hau ilustratzeko, Euskal Herrian egindako ikerketa-proiektu handi baten emaitzak erabiliko ditugu, zeinetan ikerlerro nagusia ikasleen ADLak garatzea zen, bai hizkuntza gutxiagotuan (euskaraz), baita hizkuntza nagusian (gaztelera) eta atzerrikoan (ingelesez) ere.

Hizkuntza Akademikoa eta Arloko Alfabetatzeak Hizkuntza Gutxitu batean: Hizkuntza-Garapen Jasangarriko Gako

ADLak hezkuntzarako gakotzat hartu dituzte azkeneko ikerlanek, bereziki hezkuntza elebidun edota eleaniztuneko testuinguruetan (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2024). Hizkuntza gaitasun orokorrek ez bezala, ADLek arloetan ezagutzak eraiki, komunikatu eta partekatze gaitasuna barnebiltzen dituzte. Izan ere, arloetako adituen komunikatzeko moduak arloetako konbentzioetan sakon errotuta daude: historialari batek eta zientzialari batek ez dute berdin eztabaidatzen (Llinares et al., 2012). Hori kontuan hartuta, ADLek barne hartzen dituzte, besteak beste, ikasleen gaitasunak arloko testu-generoak ekoitzi eta ulertzeko, hiztegi teknikoak erabiltzeko, edota diskurtso funtzioak (hala nola *argudiatzea*, *deskribatzea* edota *kontatzea*) arloak eskatzen duen moduan ekoitzeko. Azken horiek bereziki garrantzitsuak dira ADLtarako, izan ere, gelan ematen diren prozesu kognitiboen erakusgarri linguistikoak baitira (Dalton-Puffer, 2013). Horiek *funtzio kognitibo diskurtsibo* (FKDak) deitu izan dira, eta ikaskuntza-prozesuan oso presente daude: atazetan, curriculumean, gelako elkarrekintzan, materialean... Horien artean, *argudiatzea* interes bereziko trebetasuna da hezkuntza-arrakastarako, baina bereziki zientzietako arloetarako. Izan ere, ikasleek argudioak ematen ikastea funtsezkoa da iritzi kritikoak adierazi eta ebidentziekin defendatzeko. Argudiaketa arrakastatsuek, beraz, pentsamendu kritikoa, metakognizioa eta arloko enkulturazioa garatzen dute.

Hizkuntza gutxiagotu eta arriskuan dauden hizkuntzen kasuan, ADLak garatzea premia pedagogiko eta soziolinguistikoa da aldi berean. Lorenzo eta Trujillok (2017) azpimarratzen dute ikasleek ataza akademikoak euren hizkuntza guztietan (etxeak, eskolakoak) egiteko gaitasuna garatu behar dutela, ez soilik hizkuntza nagusietan. Hori funtsezkoa da hizkuntza-ekitatea bermatzeko. Hala ere, eskolako hizkuntza gutxitua denean, ADLen garapenean zenbait erroka agertzen dira. Garrantzitsuak izan arren, ADLak ez dira automatikoki garatzen esposizio hutsaren bidez, eta are gutxiago hizkuntza gutxituetan, zeinetan ikasleen eskolaz kanpoko hizkuntza akademikorako esposizioa baxuagoa den. Hori dela eta, eskolaren ardura da hizkuntza gutxituan ADLak garatzeko estrategia esplizituak gauzatzea (Garro Larrañaga et al., 2024). Izan ere, ikasleek eskolan jaso ohi dute lehen aldiz (eta maiz, soilik eskolan) hizkuntza gutxituko ADLeekiko esposizioa, genero akademikoak, FKDa edota hiztegi teknikoak hizkuntza horretan ikas dezaten. Eskolak, beraz, funtsezko ardura du praktika akademiko horiek sustatzeko.

Metodoak

Ikerketaren Diseinua

Ikerlan hau Euskal Herrian 2020-2021. eta 2021-2022. egindako eslaka handiko proiektu batean oinarritzen da. Proiektuaren diseinua kuasi-esperimentala zen, pre-test eta post-test formatuko diseinua erabiliz. Horrenbestez, talde esperimental batek (2021-2022. ikasturtean) eta kontrol batek (2020-2021. ikasturtean) parte hartu zuten. Proiektuaren helburu nagusia ADLak euskaraz nola irakatsi daitezkeen ulertzea zen, bereziki ikasleen argumentazio zientifikorako gaitasuna sustatzeko.

Proiektuaren baitan, diziplinarteko talde bat sortu genuen: zazpi ikertzaile, DBHko sei zientzietako irakasle, eta bi materialgile. 2021eko ekaina eta 2022ko otsaila bitartean, bi orduko sei mintegi kolaboratibo egin genituen, bi helburu nagusirekin. Lehen helburua irakasle eta materialgileak alderdi teorikoetan prestatzea zen, hau da, ADLak, FKDa eta edukien ikaskuntzan hizkuntzaren rolararen alderdi teorikoak. Bigarren helburua eragileen arteko lankidetzaren sustatzea zen, ikasmaterialak aztertu eta egokitzeko, eta ADLak irakasteko esku-hartzeak elkarrekin diseinatzeko.

Materialen egokitzapenak ADLen garapenean eragin positiboa izan zuten ebaluatzeko, lau ikastetxek parte hartu zuten. Ikastetxe guztiek D eredu jarraitzen zuten, zeinetan euskara erabiltzen den irakaskuntza-hizkuntza nagusi moduan. D ereduak funtsezko papera jokatzeko du euskararen biziberritze eta normalkuntza prozesuan (García-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2015; Cenoz & Gorter, 2023), eta hizkuntza horretan ADLak ere garatzeko ezinbestekoa da (Imaz Agirre et al., 2024). Eredu honetan ikasleek euskararekiko 26 orduko esposizioa dute astean, eta gaztelera eta ingelesa astean hiru orduz irakasten dira. Parte hartu zuten ikastetxeak sare berekoak ziren, eta metodologiak eta ikas-materialak partekatzen zituzten.

Parte-hartzaileak eta Corpora

Guztira, DBH2ko 102 ikasleek parte hartu zuten ikerketan, 49 kontrol taldean, eta 63 talde esperimentalean. Ikasleen %67.25ek gaztelania zuen etxe hizkuntza moduan, % 23.89k euskara, eta % 8.85k biak. Esan moduan, pre-test/post-test diseinua erabili genuen, eta datu bilketa bakoitzean ikasleek hiru testu ekoitzi behar izan zituzten, bana hizkuntza bakoitzean (euskaraz, gaztelera, ingelesez). Ikasleek energia berriagarrien aldeko gutun bat idatzi behar

zuten, zeinetan beraien eskoletan energia berriztagarriak jartzearen alde egin behar zuten. Ikasleek, beraz, gelan gaia landu aurretik eta ostean bete zuten kontsigna berdina, 3 hilabeteko tartearen erdian. Guztira, 678 testu jaso genituen.

Datuen Analisia: FKDa, CAF and Arloko Hiztegia

Ikasleen testuak aztertzeko, hiru analisi egin genituen, ADLe eta idazketaren ebaluazioari buruzko aurreko ikerlanei jarraituz². Hiru analisi prozedurak jarraian deskribatzen dira:

- Argudiaketa zientifikoa (FKD analisia). Analisi honetarako, Toulminen Argudiaketa Eredua (1958) erabili genuen, eta argudioak ekoizteko ezinbesteko elementuak identifikatu genituen: baieztapenak, datuak, bermeak eta ezeztatzeak (ikus Garro Larrañaga et al. 2024; Lersundi et al., errebisioan).
- CAF neurriak (complexity, accuracy eta fluency). Konplexutasun lexiko eta sintaktikoa, zuzentasuna eta jarioa MultiAztertest (Bengoetxea et al., 2020) tresnarekin neurtu ziren konputazionalki. Konplexutasunak egitura lexiko eta sintaktikoen aniztasun eta sofistikazioari egiten dio erreferentzia, zuzentasunak akatsik ez egiteari, eta jarioak produktibitate-neurriei (adibidez, hitz edota esaldi kopurua). (ikus Arias-Hermoso & Imaz Agirre, 2024; Imaz Agirre et al., 2025).
- Arloko hiztegia (AH). Ikasleen zientziei buruzko hiztegi produktiboa neurtu zen. Guztira, 207 arloko hitz identifikatu ziren materialetan ANALHITZA erabiliz (Otegi et al., 2017), eta horiek ikasleen pre-post testuetan aztertu ziren (ikus Arias-Hermoso et al., prentsan)

Emaitzak

Hobekuntzak Euskaraz

Analisi estatistikoei erakutsi zuten talde esperimentaleko ikasleek (hau da, ADLe buruzko instrukzio espezifikoak jaso zutenek) euskaraz hiru dimentsioetan hobetu zutela: argudiaketa zientifikoa, CAFetan eta AHn. Hori horrela, ikasleek, orokorrean, emaitza hobea izan zituzten euskara akademikoan esku-hartzearen ostean.

CAF neurriei dagokionez, garrantzitsua da aipatzea kontrol taldeak (ADLetan zentratzen zen esku-hartzea jaso ez zuten ikasleek) ez zuela hobekuntzarik izan, edota, kasu batzuetan, okerreruntz egin zutela post-testean. Aitzitik, talde esperimentaleko ikasleen emaitzak nabarmen hobetu ziren, batez ere konplexutasun lexiko eta sintaktikoan, eta zuzentasunean (ikus 1. Taula). Oro har, ikasleen testuek esaldi luzeagoak zituzten, menpeko esaldien proportzio handiagoa, eta izen sintagmen modifikatzaileen ratioa altuagoa zen. Zuzentasunean hobekuntza esanguratsua egon zen, ikasleek akats gutxiago ekoitzi zituzten (testu, esaldi eta hitz mailan).

Esku-hartzearen gakoetako bat argudiaketa zientifikoa zen. Toulmin-en ereduan oinarritutako instrukzioak eragin positiboa izan zuen ikasleen testuetan, izan ere, argudio-egitura osatuagoak ekoitzi zituzten. Nahiz eta kontrol taldean alderik ez egon, talde esperimentaleko ikasleek argudiaketa-elementu guztiak gehiagotan ekoitzi zituzten post-testean pre-testean baino, iritzi argiago, kausa-ondorio erlazio logikoagoak eta datuetan oinarritutako justifikazio gehiago idatzi baitzituzten. Hau oso argia da garrantziaren kopuruan, zeina instrukzioaren ostean asko igo zen, *“To start, by using non-renewable energies we are harming the world. This is happening because the fossil fuels produce CO2 and sulfur, and those create acid rain and increase the greenhouse effect”* moduko esaldietan. Alderik nabarmenenak ezeztatzeetan eman ziren (*Perhaps using renewable energy is more expensive, but we would be helping the world*), izan ere, elementu honen presentzia oso baxua zen hasierako testuetan, baina gero eta ohikoagoa zen horien presentzia esku-hartze ostean.

Hobekuntza izan zuen azkeneko dimentsioa AH izan zen. Izan ere, ikasleek arloko hitz gehiago erabiltzeaz gain (haien hiztegiaren tamainaren neurria), post-testetako AH teknikoagoa-zientifikoagoa zen (hiztegiaren teknikatutasuna). Ikasleen testuetan ohikoagoak ziren termino zientifikoak post-testetan, hala nola “energia berriztagarri”, “CO isuri” edota “transformazio energetikoa”. Ez hori bakarrik, baina erabilitako hitzak gero eta teknikoagoak ziren, horren adibide da “energia hidrauliko” erabiltzea, “ur energia” erabiltzearen orde. Ikasleek gero eta AH mota gehiago erabili zituzten esku-hartzearen ostean, eta gehiagotan, horrenbestez, testuen dentsitate teknikoa altuagoa zen. Hitz zientifiko hauen jatorria materiala eta gelako elkarrekintza ziren, eta horrek esposizio multimodalaren garrantzia azpimarratzen du.

		Control			Experimental		
		Basque	Spanish	English	Basque	Spanish	English
Argumentation skills	Claim/baieztapenak	-	+	+	++	++	+
	Data/datuak				++		
	Warrant/bermeak	-			++		

² Analisi eta emaitzen deskribapen xehea honako argitalpen hauetan irakurri daiteke: Arias-Hermoso eta Imaz Agirre (2024), Arias-Hermoso et al. (in press), Imaz Agirre et al. (2025), Garro Larrañaga et al. (2024), Lersundi et al. (under review).

	Rebuttalak			++	++	+
CAF	Lexical Complexity	-	-	-	+	+
	Syntactic Complexity				+	
	Accuracy	-		-	++	++
	Fluency		-	-		

1. Taula: Pre-post aldeak argudiaketan eta CAF neurrietan, hiru hizkuntzetan. Legenda: emaitza okerragoak gorriz (-), alderik ez hutsik, hobekuntza berdez (+). Bi ikurrek (++) hobekuntza handiak erakusten dituzte, eta bakarrak (+) alde txiki-ertainak.

Eleaniztasun Gehigarria: Hobekuntzak Gazteleraz eta Ingelesezt

Esku-hartzearen hizkuntza euskara izan arren, eragin positiboa ez zegoen islatuta. Izan ere, ikasleen gaztelerazko eta ingelesezko testuetan ere alde positiboak nabarmendu ziren, hizkuntzen arteko transferentziaren seinale direnak. Cummins (1980) teoriekin bat etorritik, ikasleek euskaraz bereganatutako hizkuntza akademikorako gaitasunak beste bi hizkuntzetara transferitu zituzten. Toulminen ereduan ikus daiteke, adibidez, baieztapenak eta ezeztatzeak gazteleraz eta ingelesez ere ohikoagoak zirela esku-hartzearen ostean. Halere, ikasleek ingelesez erabilitako baliabide lexikogramatikak oraindik ere eskasagoak ziren, kausa-ondorioa adierazteko esapide sinpleagoak erabili baitzituzten (*because it helps the planet*).

Gaitasunen transferentzia CAF neurrietan ere ikusgarria izan zen, talde esperimentaleko ikasleen testuak konplexuagoak baitziren gazteleraz eta ingelesez ere. Hizkuntza hauek instrukzioaren arretagune ez baziren ere, ikasleek hobekuntza izan zuten hainbat alderditan gazteleraz eta ingelesez: esaldien luzera, menpeko perpausen ratioa, akats gutxiago... Azken hori bereziki nabarmena izan zen gazteleraz.

Oro har, emaitzek eleantiztasun gehigarria erakusten dute: euskarazko esku-hartzeak ez zuen soilik eragin positiboa izan euskarazko ADLetan, baizik eta ikasleen errepertorio linguistiko osoa aktibatu ere (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023). ADLak, berez, hizkuntzen artean transferigarriak direla esan daiteke, korrelazio-analisiak ere erakutsi moduan (Arias-Hermoso & Imaz Agirre, 2024). Korrelazio indartsuenak euskararen eta gaztelaniaren artean agertzen ziren (ikasleen H1 eta H2). Emaitzek, beraz, hizkuntza gutxituan oinarritutako esku-hartze pedagogikoak azpimarratzen dituzte, beste hizkuntzetan ere eragin positiboa izan dezaketelako, eta, horrela, ikasleek alfabetatze orekatua lor dezaten.

Ondorioak

Laburbilduz, ikerketako emaitzek erakusten dute ADLen lanketa euskaraz helburu duen irakaskuntza gako dela ikasleen hizkuntza akademikoa garatzeko. Euskaraz egindako esku-hartzeak ikasleei arloko ezagutzak eraikitze baliabide linguistikoak eman zizkien, gai konplexu bati buruz idazteko beharrezkoak direnak. Hau ekarpen garrantzitsua da, ikasleen esposizioa euskararekiko gizarte mugatua egon daitekeelako, eta, horrenbestez, irakaskuntza esplizitua beharrezkoa da biziberritze eta normalkuntza prozesuetarako (García-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2015). Ikasleekin arloko hizkuntza erabiltzeko eta hori ezagutzak euskaraz eraikitze trebetasunak lantzean, esku-hartzeak ADLak arrakasta akademikoa lortzeko funtsezko osagai gisa kokatzen du: kapital linguistikoa indartzeko gako (Lorenzo, 2023).

Horrez gain, instrukzioak beste hizkuntzetan ere eragina izan zuen, eleantiztasun ekitatibo eta jasangarria bultzatuz. Ikasleen hizkuntza-errepertorio osoa aintzat hartzea funtsezkoa da gaitasun eleantiztuna garatzeko (Cenoz & Gorter, 2023). Izan ere, eleantiztasuna ez da soilik emaitza linguistikoa: gizartearen eta eskolatzaren premia bat da, gizarte gero eta kulturartekoago eta eleantiztunagoetan beharrezkoa (Usanova et al., 2024). Ikasleek euren hizkuntza guztiak erabiltzeko gaitasuna dutenean, transferentzia positiboak gertatzen dira. Honek eleantiztasunaren ikuspegi holistikoa eta integratzailea azpimarratzen du: hizkuntzek elkarri eusten diote, ez dute elkar baztertzen. Horregatik, irakaskuntza eleantiztun eraginkorrek hizkuntzen arteko zubiak eraiki behar ditu, kontzientzia metalinguistikoa garatzeko asmoz.

Azkenik, lan honetan aurkeztutako emaitzek ADLen funtzio gako berretsi dute: hezkuntza eleantiztun bidezko, ekitatibo eta jasangarriko beharrezkoak dira, bereziki hizkuntza gutxitua duten testuinguruetan. Ikasleei hizkuntza gutxituan eztabaidatzen, arrazoitzen edota ezagutzak eraikitzen irakasten zaienean, ez dute soilik haien hizkuntza-gaitasuna hobetzen: hizkuntza horretan pentsatzeko, ikasteko eta eskolan parte hartzeko gaitasunak garatzen dituzte. Horrelako ikuspegi batek helburu pedagogikoak baditu ere, GJH 18rako funtsezko bihurtzen da: garapen jasangarria ardatz, aniztasun linguistiko eta kulturala babesteko eta sustatzeko aukera paregabea ematen du.

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Supporting Mapudungun Learners: Keys for Sustainable Language Revitalisation

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that sustainable development should include a focus on Indigenous language revitalisation. Communities need their languages to maintain their well-being and thrive: language revitalisation may impact education, health, and identity. For many communities, engaging in language revitalisation signifies taking a stance that reflects the commitment to the ancestral community. Institutions working within those contexts have to commit to fostering responsible research that puts the communities' needs and goals at the centre.

Our argument is illustrated with the example of the collaborative work carried out by Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun (an association for the revitalisation of Mapudungun) and a team of linguists from the University of Groningen (NL). In this project, we created a digital resource featuring a Mapudungun/Spanish dictionary, the *Mapudungun Nemülkawe*, with entries gathered by Fiw-Fiw, as well as entries from the research data of the Groningen team. This platform was implemented as an educational material in an A2.2 course of Mapudungun. This online tool represents the outcome of work between two parties that integrated goals while at the same time maintaining the specificities of each party. The product has become a community-oriented resource that integrates research-based findings and can now support future learners.

Introduction

Many Indigenous communities across the world were violently uprooted from their ancestral lands, severing deep spiritual and physical connections to place and resources. Colonisers imposed ruthless assimilation policies, stripping away Indigenous languages and cultures (Eira, 2010; Marimán et al., 2006). After enduring this violence, the oppression continued through different practices imposed by the Nation-States formed in the communities' territories (e.g. Lumby, 2024; Moya-Santiagos & Quiroga-Curín, 2022), often cutting across ancestral land with State-enforced boundaries, and disrupting community cohesion and natural development. These experiences have generated a trauma that has spread across generations, affecting Indigenous communities' well-being and putting many of their languages in a severely endangered situation. Currently, of the approximately 7,000 living languages in the world, about 43% are classified as endangered by UNESCO. Over 88 million people speak languages at risk of extinction due to the shift to languages of major communication, often colonial languages whose economic status on a global scale overwhelms the resources and efforts of minoritised and Indigenous communities around the world. UNESCO declared 2022–2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, noting that the pace of extinction is running faster, with an estimated loss of one language every twelve weeks (Campbell & Okura, 2018). These numbers are alarming and call for community, political and academic interventions. It is important to highlight that such endangered language narratives of loss and extinction can be misleading and harm Indigenous language community survival if they do not properly recognise colonial domination and continued postcolonial power imbalance as the actual agents behind language shift (Leonard 2023).

In this context, communities themselves have been working to bring back or strengthen their languages. Language revitalisation projects have been increasingly growing (Galla, 2009, 2016), including projects that embed the use of online tools to support these processes (Huilcán, 2025). These grassroots movements have been fundamental in the

revitalisation of Indigenous languages; however, communities cannot be left alone in this task, and yet this keeps being the case on many occasions.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address critical aspects that our world needs to tackle to ensure a healthy future for current and future generations. They include, among others, enhancing equality and quality of opportunities in education (SDG #4) and reducing all kinds of inequalities (SDG #10). Also, preserving the languages of Indigenous and minority communities is instrumental to achieving the important aims of good health and well-being for all (SDG #3). However, the links between healthy futures and language are generally overlooked. This lack of explicit mention of language within the SDGs reproduces systemic oppression based on colonialism, which affects underrepresented communities the most. The lack of institutional support is affecting the people speaking Indigenous and minoritised languages worldwide in a way that goes well beyond language shift.

Cognitive development and learning in the early years are most effective when instruction occurs in the mother tongue, as multiple research projects demonstrated (cf. one for all, the Ife Six-Year Primary Project, Nigeria, Fafunwa et al., 1989). In enhancing access to education and reducing inequalities, languages are therefore key. And here we are not referring to supporting the access and quality to education in the dominant languages, which is, of course, essential, but we are referring to the fair and realistic option of accessing the language of our ancestors. The languages that were denied to so many people across the world. Indigenous people worldwide have less access to health with respect to the dominant groups and poor results in critical health indicators (Heise et al, 2009; Dudgeon et al, 2021). Research shows that the maintenance and vitality of minoritised and endangered languages are protective factors in fostering health and wellbeing in at-risk communities (Harding et al., 2025), even in youth suicide prevention programs (Hallett et al, 2007). Indigenous languages embody worldviews and are perceived as a spiritual gift by many Indigenous peoples (Dorothy Thunder, pc). They are instrumental to achieve alternative sociopolitical set-ups, as for example one based on Indigenous food sovereignty (DeCaire, 2023). Losing an Indigenous language due to its extinction not only means losing words, but also losing entire unique knowledge systems. Communities need their languages to thrive and be able to maintain their well-being. If communities do not have the necessary tools in their languages, they are being denied equality across so many different areas. Learners are key in the future of their languages, and therefore supporting their learning processes ensures cultural continuity, protects communities' cultural set of knowledge and fosters their fair and healthy development.

In this paper, we present the collaborative work carried out by the association for the revitalisation of Mapudungun (the language of the Mapuche in South America), Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun, and a team of researchers from the University of Groningen¹, working on the morphology of highly synthetic languages, including Mapudungun². In this project, we create a resource for learning Mapudungun consisting of an online platform featuring a Mapudungun/Spanish dictionary, the *Mapudungun Nemülkawe* ('a dictionary of Mapudungun'), available at the website mapudungun.cl. The dictionary includes entries gathered by Fiw-Fiw as well as entries selected from the research data of the Groningen team, selected from the Mapudungun corpus AVENUE (Duan et al. 2020).³ Additionally, the association developed a set of educational activities, and the Groningen team developed a set of explanatory notes for specific word-internal schemas in Mapudungun. Always moving forward together in our work and reviewing the materials produced together, this online tool represents the outcome of collaborative work between a community-based organisation and a research-oriented institute.

¹ We provide a short description of who we are and our positionality in the next section.

² The Groningen team (composed by Marcela Huilcán, Maria Mazzoli as well as other colleagues and students) is working on the project "SHADES of grammar: The cognitive bases of morphological productivity in polysynthetic languages", financed through the VIDI talent scheme of the Dutch Research Council (NWO, Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek). The team is also working on the project "Mapudungun Nemülkawe: Collaborative work and a digital tool to help speakers regain fluency", also funded by the NWO.

³ AVENUE was a project of Carnegie Mellon University, the Chilean Ministry of Education, and the Institute of Indigenous Studies at the University of La Frontera (Chile). The corpus consists of around 142 hours of recordings compiled between 2001 and 2005 with their respective transcriptions with Mapuche speakers around topics of medical treatment, both in Western and Mapuche traditional medicine. The Groningen team worked mostly based on the transcriptions (and used the recording as support when needed) and analyzed around 200 complex words featuring instances of noun incorporation, verb serialization and applicative suffixes. From this list, 124 complex words were selected for the Mapudungun Nemülkawe.

The Mapuche community, Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun and the Groningen team

The Mapuche are an Indigenous community of what is known today as Argentina and Chile. The community has a total population of around 2.3 million people, with the largest population (around 2 million) living in the Chilean territory (Figure 1). The project presented in this paper was carried out in Chile; therefore, we will focus now on the Mapuche population living in that area.



Figure 1: Map showing the current territories of Chile and Argentina (Google Maps). The circled area shows the territory where most of the Mapuche population lives.

The last census implemented in Chile indicated that the Mapuche population (inhabitants identifying as such) was 1.745.147. This population lives mostly in the central-south area of Chile. The information available on ethnolinguistic vitality is extremely scarce. UNESCO indicates that Mapudungun is a language in the category of 'Definitely endangered'. Regarding speakers, the available information indicates that around 10% of the Mapuche population understands Mapudungun (roughly 157.000 people) and 9% can understand and speak with different degrees of fluency (approximately 136.000) (Chávez & Vergara, 2023)⁴. Most of the speakers -with different degrees of fluency- are adults older than 45 years old (35%) (Chávez & Vergara, 2023). It is relevant to note that this critical number shows the detrimental impact that assimilation policies of the Chilean state had on the Indigenous population and their cultures across the territory (Comisión Verdad Histórica y Nuevo Trato con los Pueblos Indígenas, 2008).

Mapudungun has different linguistic varieties depending on the geographical area where the language is spoken: Chedungun (near the mountains and the coast); Mapudungun (Malleco valley to the coast); Mapunchedungun (pre-cordillera, Coñaripe); Mapuzungun (Cautín); and Tse sumun / tse sungun (south of the Mapuche territory) (Loncón, 2017). In Chile, there is no policy indicating a national or official language. However, the *de facto* national language is Spanish. Since 2013, Mapudungun has been recognised as the official language in Galvarino and Padre las Casas, both districts located in the Araucanía Región. However, the active use of Mapudungun is unfortunately still in the symbolic domain since the dominant language at all levels of society is Spanish (Loncón, 2017). There is no language revitalisation policy that promotes the learning and use of Mapudungun at a national level, which leaves most of the revitalisation work to NGOs that work at the local community level.

Within these NGOs, Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun has been particularly active in the past decades. Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun is a language association dedicated to the teaching and the revitalisation of Mapudungun, based in the Bio Bio Region (south of Chile). The association has been providing Mapudungun courses since 2019. Their teachers are fluent speakers of Mapudungun who described themselves as new speakers. The team has additional support from other native speakers and Elders.

⁴ Authors Chávez and Vergara present the percentages. The estimated numbers correspond to the calculation made by one of the authors for her PhD thesis (Huilaén, 2025). Calculations are based on Chávez and Vergara's percentages and the population size.

As for the Groningen team, this is composed of Marcela Huilcán and Maria Mazzoli. Marcela is a researcher of Mapuche origin whose work is guided by the history of her community, her upbringing and other Indigenous communities across the world. As an Indigenous woman, she aims to conduct her research respectfully, trying to centre Indigenous voices and create pathways for research that challenges colonial legacies. Maria is a linguist born in Italy, and currently working and living between Germany and the Netherlands. Maria has worked with communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, North America and Europe, and she is now mainly working to contribute to *nêhiyawêwin* reclamation together with Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues and partners. As a white woman rooted in Western academic hubs, she has been working to identify and recognise her position, privileges, and biases with respect to colleagues, research participants and community members she has worked with.

Mapudungun Nemülkawe: A collaborative project

Since 2018, the work of Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun has aimed at fostering the learning and teaching of Mapudungun in children and adults and, crucially, at supporting young people who are searching for and (re)building their identity. One of the key activities is the creation of materials to support young adults in their learning of the Mapudungun language and Mapuche culture. The growing number of people interested in learning Mapudungun as a heritage language as well as a second language in recent decades (Mayo & Castillo, 2019) warrants the creation and preparation of reference materials that guide these processes (Catrileo, 1991).

According to the association members, however, lexicographic resources are missing that target adult intermediate second-language learners, a vital population for revitalisation purposes since most fluent speakers are elderly. This is true not only for Mapudungun but also for other Indigenous languages in the Americas and worldwide. In fact, the development of teaching strategies tailored to adults is an underexplored intersection of language revitalisation and applied linguistics (Daniels & Sterzuk 2022; McIvor 2015, 2020; Souter 2018) and a crucial area of investigation where academics can improve the state of the art and contribute to add up to existing resources.

Current materials for Mapudungun learners have multiple pitfalls. For instance, they do not include highly frequent words (because they are not based on corpus metrics), and do not include highly complex words, which are instead distinctive of fluent speech, especially of traditional speakers. New speakers of Mapudungun need resources that take into account the complexity of polysynthetic word formation: the combinations of word internal components in Mapudungun (for example, due to noun incorporation or verb serialisation) are so many that the number of possible words seems infinite, unlikely to fit in a manageable dictionary or to be learned by second language learners, without specific support.

In our project, the collaboration between the Groningen team and the Fiw-Fiw ñi Dungun members had the aim of using academically built resources and academic knowledge to support and enhance the reclamation effort for Mapudungun. There were mainly two outputs and a thorough evaluation, which we will present in the following sections.

The online platform mapudungun.cl

The first output of the collaboration was the development of an online tool. The online tool is a resource for learning Mapudungun, consisting of an online platform featuring:

- a Mapudungun/Spanish dictionary (the *Mapudungun Nemülkawe*),
- a set of educational activities to practice specific structures in Mapudungun, and
- a set of explanatory notes regarding those word schemas.

The dictionary includes entries gathered by Fiw-Fiw as well as entries from the research data from the Groningen team. Specifically, our project provided the association members with a list of 121 complex, polysynthetic words with their respective examples (Figure 2), together with information on the morphological productivity of word internal schemas (Figure 3).

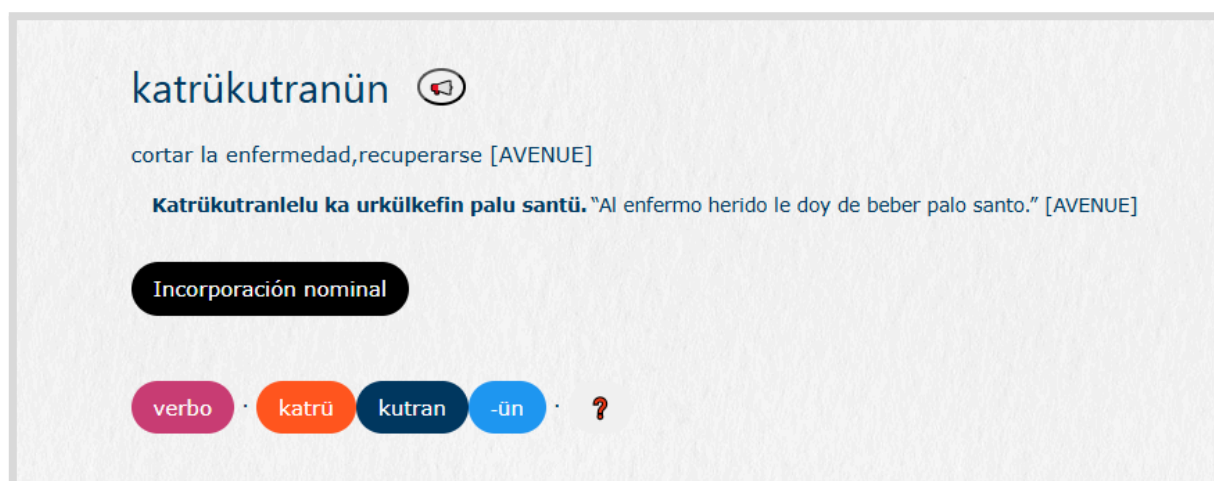


Figure 2: Screenshot of one entry in the dictionary selected and reviewed by the Groningen team. (<https://mapudungun.cl>)

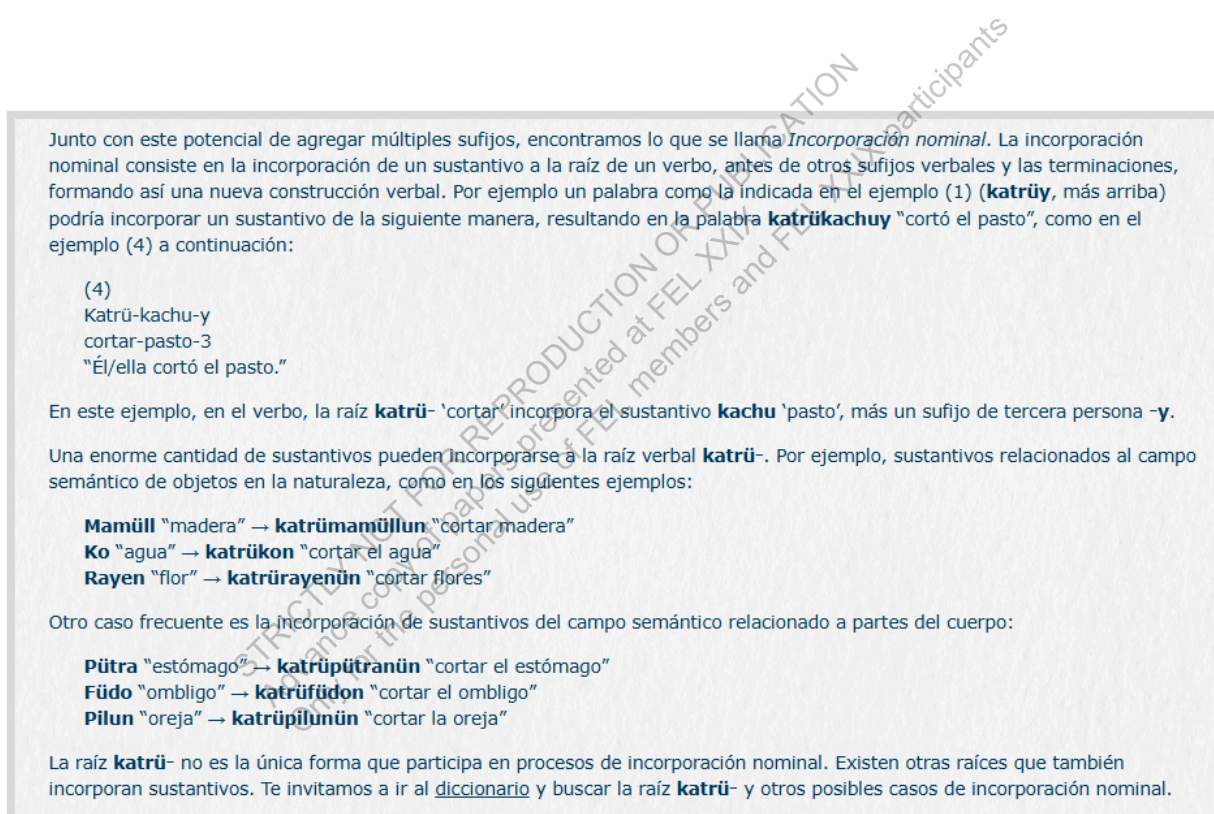


Figure 3: Screenshot of one section of the Explanatory Note for Noun Incorporation (<https://mapudungun.cl>)

All materials are available in mapudungun.cl. The platform and the material developed were tailored for advanced second language speakers and fed the creation of educational material for a newly designed language course at the level A2.2. Before this project, the association had designed and provided courses up to the A2.1 level. This project permitted a concrete advancement in the offer towards interested students, especially advanced learners.

The course

After the completion of the online dictionary, Fiw-Fiw organised an intermediate level course of Mapdungun to reach level A2.2, in which these resources were incorporated, and more educational material was created. The course followed

Fiw-Fiwi ñi Dungun's communicative approach, which consists of a pedagogical style based on oral communication and aimed at achieving functional and effective interactive ability in the language. The course was structured as follows:

- (1) *Kizuchillkatun*: independent study to be carried out by *chillkatufe* (students), facilitated by materials provided to them, i.e. text textbook developed within the project, plus all other resources mentioned above.
- (2) *Kellukimeltun*: content teaching guided by *kimeltuchefe* (teacher in Mapudungun). The team is composed of new speakers with a high level of proficiency and native speakers.
- (3) *Dugukantun*: practice of the language through oral communication using the content taught.

The A2.2 course was carried out during 6 weeks with two sessions per week. It was organised in a hybrid way with two sessions in person (at the beginning and the end of the course) and four online.

A key aspect of this collaboration is that we worked towards integrating our initially separate goals into one, while at the same time maintaining the specificities of each party's aim. On the institutional level, the aim was to study the morphological aspects of Mapudungun while finding ways to make this knowledge available to the community for their use. On the community side, Fiw-Fiwi ñi Dungun was looking for resources to move forward with the Mapudungun courses to be able to teach higher proficiency levels, since the most common is to offer levels A1 and A2+. The association was interested in continuing to support learners towards A2/B1. To be able to achieve this goal, the entire team agreed that more lexicographic resources oriented to adult intermediate second-language learners were needed.

Keys For Sustainable Language Revitalisation

Strengthening language through Language Revitalisation must be a goal in sustainable development. When we refer to LR, we do not refer to language only because for communities engaging in language LR signifies taking a stance that reflects the commitment to the ancestral community and a deeply rooted identification with it, as Hermes and Kawai'ae'a (2014) state "speaking through an Indigenous language is one of the deepest forms of identity reclamation and validation for people of Indigenous heritage" (p. 307). From the institution's side, it should also mean taking a stance that shows a commitment to underrepresented communities and a commitment to work towards fostering responsible research that contributes to the sustainability of the world.

In this project, we found fruitful ways to align our goals to favour the development of a single project. Our communication was fostered by a constant exchange of ideas in fortnight meetings, and daily communication via email and or WhatsApp for any needs or concerns that arose. For this smooth exchange, it greatly contributed to the fact that the association organised itself in smaller teams to cover the different areas of work.

A key element of the development of this project was to ensure as much as possible that the project would be sustainable in time, in other words, that the resources produced during the project would continue to exist and hopefully be implemented. One concrete element in achieving this was the fact that Fiw-Fiwi ñi Dungun decided to allocate funds in their internal budget for the hosting of the website, which speaks to the continuity of the plan after the impact exploration ends. Additionally, by developing educational resources that could be implemented in Fiw-Fiwi ñi Dungun's traditional teaching approach, we increased the chances of making these resources useful for future teachers and learners within the association.

Final remarks

Focusing on supporting learners with the creation of relevant educational resources, while at the same time working based on collaborative approaches, can directly contribute to enhancing the chances of language survival for Indigenous communities. Highlighting the relevance of language revitalisation processes for the sustainable development of the world should be clearly and loudly stated. Only by making this need visible we can concretely talk of a sustainable future for our world.

We hope this experience shows an example of a concrete action and collaboration that combined agendas in order to support the revitalisation of Mapudungun, a fundamental element in the sustainable development of these communities.

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Garapen Iraunkorra Hezkuntzaren eta Hizkuntza-aniztasunaren Ikuspegitik

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Abstract

Artikulu honek euskararen biziberritze prozesua eta hizkuntza gutxituetan oinarritutako hezkuntza eleaniztuna garapen jasangarriaren ikuspegitik aztertzen ditu. Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan garatutako murgiltze-eredutik abiatuta, erakusten du hizkuntza gutxitu bat hezkuntza-sistemaren ardatz bihurtzea posible eta onuragarria dela. Alde batetik, datu zehatzak lagun, nabarmenduko da azken hamarkadetan garatu den eredu horri esker, zeinak komunitatearen inplikazioa eta marko legal egokia baliatzen dituen, euskararen ezagutza handitu dela eta erabilerari eutsi zaiola. Horrek gizarte kohesionatuagoa eta bidezkoagoa sustatzen lagundu du. Bestetik, lanak erakusten du hezkuntza eleaniztun horrek ez diela kalterik eragiten etxeko hizkuntza ezberdina duten ikasleei, ezta aloktonoak izanda ere; aitzitik, gaitasun elebidunak garatzen laguntzen die, eta euren lehen hizkuntza ere baloratzen du. Egileek defendatzen dute hizkuntza-aniztasuna eta tokiko hizkuntzak kontuan hartzen dituen hezkuntza-sistema bat funtsezkoa dela garapen jasangarri eta inklusiboa lortzeko, eta horrelako prozesu bat ezinbestean dagoela lotuta 2030 Agendako hainbat helbururekin, bereziki 4, 10, 16 eta 18arekin. Esperientziaren argitara, beraz, euskara oinarri duen hezkuntza eleaniztuna eredugarria izan ez ezik, mundu mailako eronkeri aurre egiteko bide gisa ere aurkez daiteke, kontuan izanda ere testuinguru bakoitzak bere berezitasunen arabera erabakiak eskatzen dituela.

Sarrera

Euskararen biziberritzearen esperientzia Euskal Herriaren, eta batez ere, Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoaren (EAE) edo Euskadiren garapen jasangarriaren eragile nagusi bezala ikusi behar dela uste dugu, eta, zehazki, azken 50 urtetan garatu den hezkuntza elebi-eleaniztuna garapen horren ardatz eraginkor bezala irudikatzen dugu.

Lan honetan erakutsi nahi dugu hizkuntza gutxitua ardatz hartzen duen hezkuntzaren murgilketa ereduaren garapenean Euskal Herrian egin dugun esperientzia munduarentzat adibide eredugarri dela, besteak beste, jasangarriagoa delako hizkuntza aniztasunarekin, eta horrenbestez, ekarpen handiagoa egiten diolako jomugan dugun 2030 Agendako helburuei.

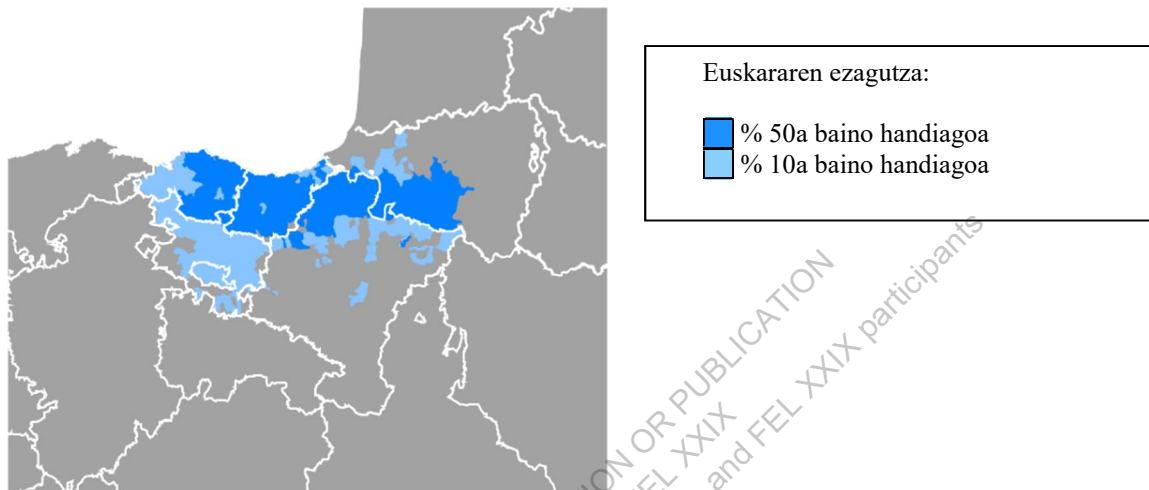
Garapen Iraunkorraren 2030 Agendaren esparruan, bada giza garapenerako bereziki sentikorra den helburu bat: hezkuntza (4 GJH – Kalitatezko hezkuntza). Izan ere, osasunarekin eta bizi-kalitatearekin batera, herrialde baten aurrerapena neurtzeko orduan kontuan hartzen den adierazleetakoa bat da, Giza Garapenaren Indizeari (GGI) dagokionez. EUSTATEk (2025) berriki argitaratutako datuen arabera, 0,948ko GGIa dago Euskadin, Nazio Batuen Garapenerako Programaren (NBGP) metodologiaren arabera.

Hizkuntza gutxituaren biziberritzea erabat lotuta dago Agendaren 4. helburuarekin, eta zeharka baldin bada ere beste guztiei ere eragiten die, bereziki hauei: 8 (Lan egokia eta garapen ekonomikoa), 10 (Ezberdintasunen murrizketa), 16 (Bakea, eta erakunde sendoak), 17 (Helburuak lortzeko aliantzak).

Euskara hizkuntza zaurgarri gisa kalifikatuta agertzen da *Arriskuan dauden Munduko Hizkuntzen Atlasean* (Unesco, 2010). Horretaz gain, horrela dio dokumentu horrek: “Ziur asko, euskara da hizkuntza isolatua, edo, berez, familia

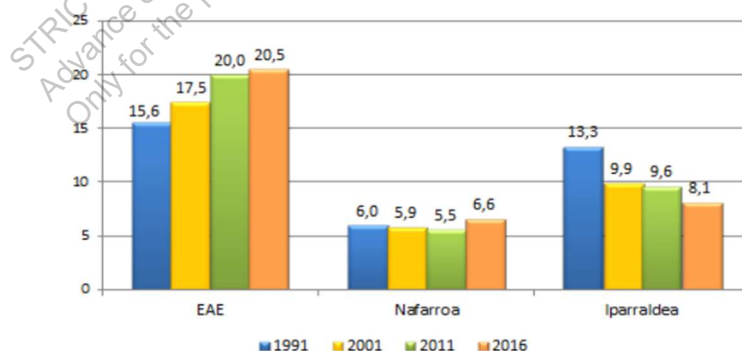
linguistiko bakarra osatzen duen hizkuntza, hobekien ikertua, eta baita eremu urriko hizkuntza ezagunenetako bat ere.” (2010:100).

Euskara izapide administratiboetan eta eskolatan erabiltzeko debekuak XVIII. mendean zabaldu ziren hizkuntza hegemonikoen inposizioarekin. Ondoren, Euskal Herriko hegoaldeko bi autonomietan (EAE eta Nafarroa) 1937tik aurrera haren erabilera debekatua eta gogor erreprimtua izan zen eta Ipar Euskal Herrian eskolan euskara erabiltzea erabat debekatua zen. Hala eta guztiz ere, testuinguru historiko eta politikoa gorabehera, 1968an hizkuntza estandarraren oinarriak ezarri ziren, Euskara Batua izenez ere ezagutzen dena, euskalkietan sortutako idazketa eta literatura bateratzeko. Bateratze hori, Hegoaldeko testuinguruaren kasuan, administrazioa, komunikabideetara eta eskolara hedatu zen, 1978ko Espainiako Konstituzioa eta 1979ko Autonomia Estatutua onartu ondoren. Gaur egun, euskarak 750.000 hiztun inguru ditu Pirinioen bi aldeetan banatuta, Frantzia eta Espainiaren arteko mugak bereizita (1 irudia).



1 irudia. Euskararen ezagutzaren mapa (Iturria: <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euskera>)

Hizkuntzaren egoera oso ezberdina da lurraldearen eta erkidegoen arabera, besteak beste, makro politikek mugaren alde batean eta bestean izan duten joera ezberdintasunak tarteko. Frantzian euskarak oraindik ez du ofizialtasun izaerarik, Espainiako autonomia erkidegoetan (EAE eta Nafarroako zonalde batean), aldiz, ko-ofiziala da gaztelaniarekin batera. Ondorioz, eskolen egoera eta hiztun euskaldunen proportzioa ere oso ezberdina da ondoko irudian (1 grafikoa) agertzen den bezala.



1 grafikoa. Euskara erdara beste edo gehiago erabiltzen dutenen bilakaera erkidegoaren arabera. Euskararen eremu osoa, 1991-2016 (%) (Iturria: Gobierno Vasco / Gobierno de Navarra / Office Public de la Langue Basque, *VI. Inkesta Soziolinguistikoa*, 2019: 24)

Marko teorikoa: garapen iraunkorra eta tokiko hizkuntza gutxituetan oinarritzen den hezkuntza eleaniztuna

Tokian tokiko hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasunaren babestea garapenaren ezinbesteko baldintzat aurkeztu zen UNESCOk 2010ean Bangkokoen egindako biltzarrean:

Konbentzimendu osoa dugu hizkuntza kontuan hartzea Milurtekoko Garapen Helburuak lortzeko ezinbesteko baldintza dela. [...] Izan ere, hizkuntza integrazioaren giltzarria da, gizakiaren jardueraren gunea, norberaren adierazpide eta identitatea. Jendeak hizkuntza propioari ematen dion lehentasunezko lekua aitortuz, hizkuntza propioa erabiliz, garapenean benetako parte-hartzea sustatu nahi da, interbentzioko emaitzak iraunkorrak izan daitezzen. (In Uranga, 2013:18)

Dakigun bezala, Nazio Batuen 2030 Agendan hizkuntzak eta kultura ez dira ageri garapen jasangarriaren helburu bezala. Aldiz, argi azaldu dute komunitate ezberdinetako aktibistek eta adituek norberaren hizkuntza kontuan hartzen ez duen garapen eta hezkuntza-sistemak ezin direla jasangarriak izan:

Garapen iraunkorra lortzeko, Afrikak atzerriko hizkuntzetan bilduta kanpotik inportatzen den ezagutzaren mendekotasun "neo-kolonialetik" askatu behar du, eta tokiko hizkuntzan/hizkuntzetan zein hizkuntza globaletan hezteko gai den eredu global bati jarraitu behar dio. (Wolff, 2019: 95)

Jarraitu beharreko bidea, beraz, amazigh-en oinarritutako hezkuntza eleaniztuna da, non gaitasun komunikatibo eleaniztunak indartzen diren. (EL Kirat El Allame & Boussagui, 2019: 213)

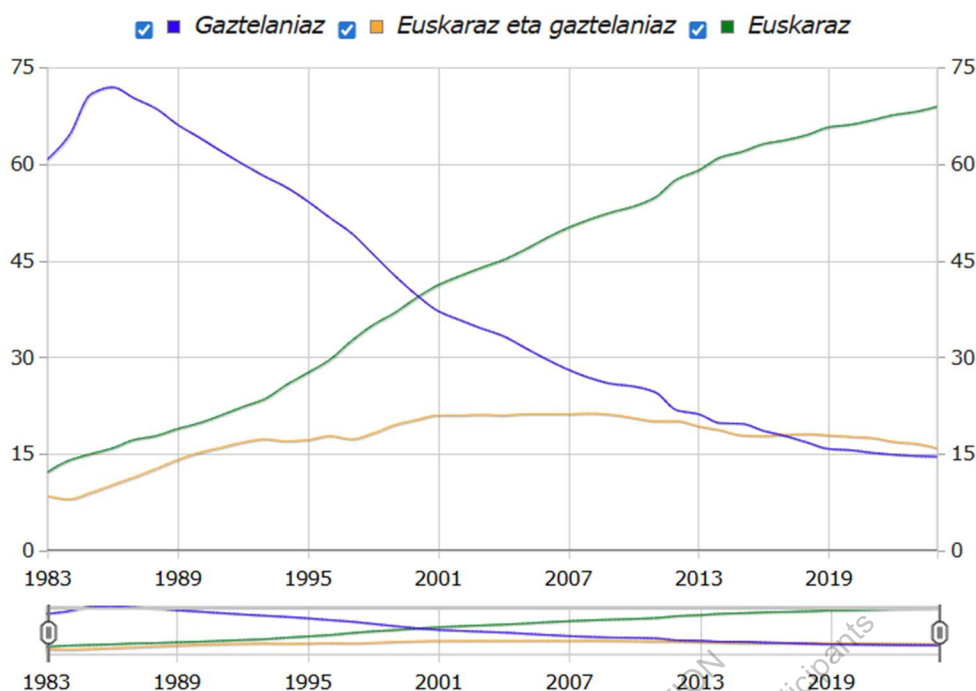
Egitura formaletan ordezkatu gabeko hizkuntzetan mintzo diren landaguneetako behartsuek –neskak eta emakumeak bereziki- bizi dituzte hizkuntza-politika eta –plangintzetako bidegabekeria handienak, hezkuntzaren alorrean batik bat. Hezkuntzak batez ere nazioarteko hizkuntzetan oinarriturik jarraitzen badu, tokian tokiko hizkuntzei bizkar emanez, ugaritu egingo dira desberdintasun horiek, eta ez murriztu. Hori horrela, nekeza edo are ezinezkoa egingo du garapen jasangarri eta berdinzalea lortzea. Zer egin dezakegu? Hizkuntzak garapenaren auziari bete-betean eragiten dion aldetik, erabakigarria da hizkuntza-aniztasuna areagotzea, bereziki, hizkuntza-politika eleaniztunak txertatuz hezkuntzaren arloan; ez gizarte-justiziaren bidetik Aurrera egiteko bakarrik, baizik eta hazkunde ekonomiko inklusiboa lortzeko ere bai. (Romaine, 2019: 50)

Eleaniztasuna ez da berria, baina gaur egun inoiz baino nabarmenagoa da, bereziki mende honetako migrazio mugimenduen eraginez. Europako eta mundu osoko tokiko hiztun komunitate gutxituentzat erronka berri bat ageri da bere hezkuntza sisteman zuzenean eragiten duena. Alde batetik, ezinbestekoa da bertako hizkuntza gutxitua sistemaren ardatz izatea, baina aldi berean bertako eta atzerriko hizkuntza hegemonikoak ere garatu behar dira, eta bestalde, migrazioak ekarritako beste hizkuntzek ere lekua izan behar dute eskolan.

Nola erantzun diezaioke eskolak horrelako erronka bati?

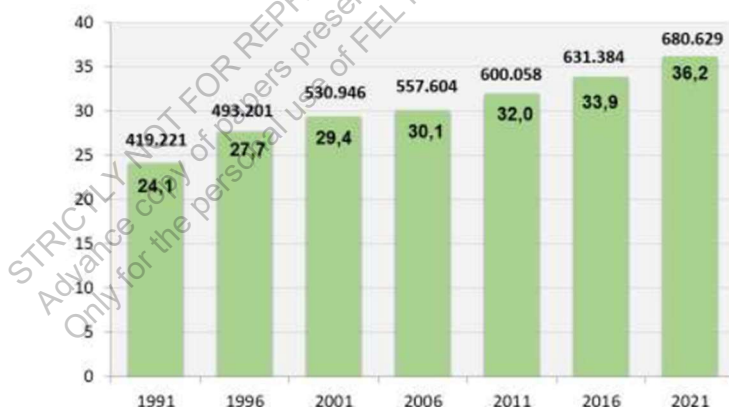
Euskararen biziberritzean eta euskarazko eskolaren garapenean funtsezko zutabea izan da gizartearen indarra. Euskal komunitate militante eta aktibo bati esker lortu zen proiektua behetik gora ehuntzea eta ezinbesteko aliantzak lortzea (17 GJH) berme instituzionala lortzeko eta aurrerapauso eraginkorrak emateko.

Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan, euskara biziberritzeko eta hezkuntza-eredu benetan elebiduna diseinatzeko, hamarkadatan aldarrikatutako eskakizuna izan da berezkoa duen hizkuntza gutxitua erabiltzea hezkuntzako hizkuntza gisa, hizkuntza hegemonikoarekin batera. Hau da, lortu nahi den helburua, eta hein handi batean lortutakoa, elebitasun gehigarria garatzea da, non hizkuntza hegemonikoez gain, ikasle guztiek hizkuntza gutxitua ere ikasiko duten. Horretarako, hezkuntza elebiduneko hautazko hiru eredu diseinatu eta arautu ziren (Eusko Jaurlaritza, 1983), euskararen presentzia eta murgiltze maila desberdinekin. Eredu horiek 40 urtez indarrean egon ondoren, familien % 80k baino gehiagok guztiz edo partzialki murgilketan oinarritzen diren hizkuntza-ereduak aukeratu dituzte (2 grafikoa). Urrats hori emateko orduan euskarak bere alde izan zuen orduko marko legal berria eta gizarte demokratikoa eraikitze gogo, bakea eta erakunde sendoak eraikitzea jomugan zituena (16 GJH).



2 grafikoa: Matrikulatutako ikasleak Unibertsitatetik kanpoko Araubide orokorreko Irakaskuntzetan, hizkuntza ereduaren arabera Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan (ehunekoa) (Iturria: Eustat, *Eskola-jardueraren estatistika*, 2025)

Hezkuntza-eredu horiei esker, eta bereziki instrukzio guztia euskaraz egiten duen murgilketa ereduari esker (D eredu), euskara-gaztelania elebidunen kopuruak gora egin du pixkanaka azken urteotan (Eusko Jaurlaritzak, 2023) (3 grafikoa). Euskararen biziberritzearen jarraipena egiteko Eusko Jaurlaritzak inkesta soziolinguistikoak egiten ditu aldiro, non jasotzen dituen horrelako datuak, esate baterako, 3 grafikoa ageri direnak.



3 grafikoa: Euskarazko hiztunen bilakaera. Euskadi, 1991-2021. (Iturria: *VII Inkesta Soziolinguistikoa*, 2021)

Datu horiek erakusten dute hiztun kopuruen aldaketa, alegia, euskara/gaztelania elebidunen proportzioaren gorakada (%24tik %36ra). Bilakaera hori gizarte osoak bultzatua izan da (18 GJH), legediak eta baliabide ekonomiko administratiboak lagunduta (16 GJH), baina eskolan ehundu da nagusiki, besteak beste, gurasoen inplikazioarekin, eta komeni da eskolan gertatu den aldaketa hori apur bat azaltzea.

Hasiera batean, aipatutako hizkuntza-ereduak gizarte elebidun batentzat pentsatuta zeuden, gaztelaniaz eta euskaraz bizi zen gizarte batentzat, eta jomugan zuen euskara babestea eta biziberritzea ikasle guztiak hiztun elebidun egiteko helburuarekin.

Bigarren grafikoa ikusi den bezala, euskarazko ereduaren, alegia, ia murgilketa osoaren aldeko hautua egin du gizarteak. Euskara, hizkuntza gutxitua eta eskolatzeko tradizioz gabea, irakaskuntza hizkuntza bihurtu da Haur Hezkuntzatik (HH) Unibertsitateraino, horrek suposatzen duen iraultzarekin: hizkuntza gutxitua prestakuntzarako

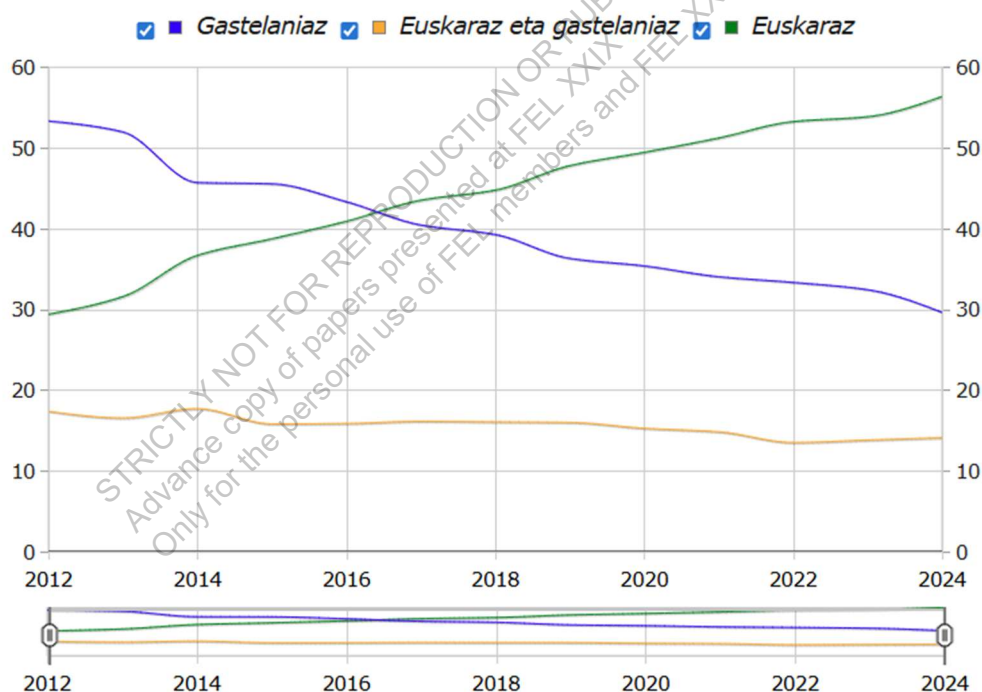
tresna egokia bihurtzea, zientzia hizkuntza gutxituan garatu ahal izatea, askotariko esparru profesionaletara hizkuntza gutxitua zabaltzea, eta abar, denak, 8 eta 10 GJHein lotura estua dutenak.

Aldi berean, uste dugu, eta ikerketa datuek horrela erakusten dute, ez dela edozein hizkuntzaren irakaskuntza prozesu soila izan, eskola osoaren eraldaketa ekarri baitu euskarazko murgilketa bidezko irakaskuntzak. Eraldaketa honen adibidetarako Haur Hezkuntzako mailan etxetik erdaldun diren haurrekin (dela gaztelania dela migrazio hizkuntza dutenak) euskarazko murgilketa bideratzen duten irakasleek oso argi dute nola jokatu euskaraz irakasteko, aldi berean, etxeko hizkuntza aintzat hartuaz, eleaniztasun hori kudeatzeko.

Eta beraz, saiatzen naiz familiako hizkuntzan ongietorria ematen. Hor sortzen da lotura bat, ezta? Hurbiltasun bat sortzen da, ezta? Ez da bakarrik etorri eta euskaraz ikasi behar dutela, ezta? Baina eman eta hartu harreman bat da, eta eman eta hartu horretan, haien hizkuntza ere presente dago eta baloratu egin behar da (A2; elkarriketa). (In Diaz de Gereñu, 2024: 265)

Gizartea asko aldatzen ari da azken urte hauetan eta, aipatu bezala, eskola ere aldaketa horren isla izan da. Orain 40 urte, euskara edo gaztelania soilik ziren haurren lehen hizkuntzak (H1) eskolan; egun, ordea, gero eta gehiago dira ez euskara ez gaztelania H1 duten ikasleak, hau da, ikasle aloktonoak.

Azken datuen arabera, 2003an % 3,2 zen jatorri atzerritarreko biztanleria; 2023an, ordea, kopuru hori % 12,4 zen. Aldaketa handia, azkarra eta oso bat-batekoa patxadaz egokitzeko, are gehiago hizkuntza gutxitua duen komunitate batentzat; izan ere, egoera berri honetan ez dira bi / hiru hizkuntza soilik ikastetxeak kudeatu behar dituenak. Joera eta tentazioa izan daiteke iritsi berrien umeak hizkuntza hegemonikoko ereduari matrikulatzea hori delako hizkuntza nagusia eta kalean, oro har, gehien entzuten den hizkuntza. Zorionez, Euskal Autonomia Elkargoan matrikulazio-datuek joera itxaropentsua erakusten dute euskararentzat (4 grafikoa), D ereduak baita hautatuena kasu honetan ere.



4 grafikoa: Unibertsitatetik kanpoko Araubide Orokorreko irakaskuntzetan matrikulatutako Espainiako nazionalitate gabeko ikasleak, hizkuntza-ereduaren arabera Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan (ehunekoa). (Iturria: Eustat, *Eskola-jardueraren estatistika*, 2025)

Oraindik ere badago jendea, nagusiki elebakarra, zalantzan jartzen duena hezkuntza elebidun-eleaniztunaren onurak dutenaren kontrara, egin diren ikerketek erakusten dute hezkuntza eleaniztunaren hautua ez dela kaltegarria familia-hizkuntza aloktonoa duten ikasleentzat ere (Manterola & Lardizabal, 2009; Diaz de Gereñu & Garcia-Azkoaga, 2016) euskaraz zein gaztelaniaz antzeko komunikazio-gaitasunak lortzen baitituzte. Nolanahi ere, bertakoentzat bezala, oinarritzko baldintza batzuk behar dira hizkuntza gutxituan murgilketa berma dadin (guraoen konpromisoa, murgiltze-prozesua ahalik eta lasterren hastea euskaraz, ...).

Ondorioak

Tokiko hizkuntza gutxituan oinarritutako hezkuntza eleaniztunaren eredu bat ez dago erronketatik salbu, baina hala eta guztiz ere, zenbait gauza garbi geratu dira gure esperientzia eta ikerketetan:

- Hizkuntza gutxitu bat erdigunean duen hezkuntza elebidun/eleaniztuna eraikitzeke, erakundeek babesa (16 GJH) ez ezik, ezinbestekoak dira komunitate baten borondatea eta inplikazioa beharrezkoak diren aliantzak eraikitzeke eta konpromisoak aurrera eramateko (17 GJH).
- Euskara, hizkuntza gutxitua izan arren, eskola eta unibertsitate hizkuntza izatera heldu da ezagutzaren garapenean galerarik eragin gabe (8 GJH), eta bertako eleaniztasunaren osagarri zentrala izanez. Bide horretatik, ekarpena egin dio hizkuntza gutxiaren beraren garapenari, arlo espezializatu eta profesionaletan beharrezkoak diren baliabide linguistikoak sortu dituelako (18 GJH), eta baita komunitatearen garapenari begira ere, aukera berriak sortu dituelako lan-munduan zein kulturaren munduan. Badago, beraz, lotura bat 8, 10 eta 18 helburuekin.
- Irakaskuntza elebi-eleaniztuna posiblea eta onuragarria da norbanakoarentzat eta gizarte inklusiboago batentzat, eta ezinbestekoa da bertako hizkuntza gutxitua indartu eta pertsona eleaniztunak sortzeko. Horrenbestez, ekarpena egiten dio 4 GJHari zein 10 GJHari, baina baita 16ari ere, hezkuntza funtsezkoa delako gizarte kohesionatuagoa eta baketsuagoa lortzeko.
- Hizkuntza gutxituak biziberritzeko ezinbestekoa da hizkuntza horiek bigarren hizkuntza moduan, eta murgilketak eskatzen dituen baldintzetan irakastea (ikus Dolz, Monferrer & Idiazabal, 2025). Bestelako ahaleginek ez dute ziurtatzen ez jatorrizko hiztunentzat ez haiekin batera osatzen duten komunitateko beste haurrentzat hizkuntza horien eskuratzeari; Hegoamerikako PEIB programek bertako hizkuntzen garapenean izan duten eragin eskasa lekuko (Flores Farfan, 2019).
- Ez ditu kaltetzen bigarren hizkuntza (H2) euskara ez dutenen eskubideak. Are gehiago, berdintasuna sustatzen du (10 GJH) eta gizarte kohesionatu eta baketsuaren oinarriak babesten ditu (16 GJH).
- Hizkuntza gutxitu bat erdigunean duen hezkuntza elebidun-eleaniztuna jasangarria da hizkuntzekiko, hizkuntza gutxitua zein hegemonikoa hartzen dituelako aintzat eta atzerriko hizkuntzaren ikasketa ere bermatzen duelako. Horretaz gain, ikasle aloktonoen hizkuntzak errespetatzeko eta aintzat hartzeko aukerak ere sortzen ditu, Bete betean lerrotzekin da, beraz, 18. helburuarekin, hain zuzen, hizkuntza eta kultura aniztasunarekiko errespetuarekin. Hau erronka handia da hizkuntzen egoera kontuan hartuta.

Gizarte guztietan gertatzen ari diren aldaketa demografiko azkarrek, esan bezala, eskola ere eraldatzen ari dira, eta horrek mundua eleaniztasun klabearen pentsatzera behartzen gaitu. UNESCOk emandako datuen arabera (2025), munduan 32 milioi gazte desplazatu daude, geroa sortutako hizkuntza-arrazoiengatik hezkuntza jasotzeko zailtasunak dituztenak. Testuinguru berri honetan, eskolan sortzen diren erronkak, beharrak eta jarrerak hobeto ezagutu behar ditugu, bai haur hezkuntzako etapetan (Diaz-de-Gereñu & Idiazabal, 2025), bai derrigorrezko hezkuntza orokorrean (Larraz & Diaz-de-Gereñu, 2024), zein helduen prestakuntzako zentroetan ere.

Horrela bakarrik identifikatu ahal izango ditugu benetan eraldatzailea izango den kalitatezko hezkuntza ezartzen lagunduko diguten jardunbide egokiak, bai hizkuntzari dagokionez, bai giza garapenari lotutako gainerako eremu guztietan jasangarriak izatea ahalbidetuko digutenak. Azken finean, Garcia-Azkoagak (2025: 8) dioen bezala: "2030 Agendaren eta hizkuntza- eta kultura-aniztasunaren arteko loturak ezartzea mundua eleaniztasunean pentsatzeko modu bat da, hizkuntzekin modu iraunkorrean konektatzeko eta garapenean laguntzeko aukera bat."

Hezkuntzan hizkuntza gutxitua aintzat hartzen duten komunitateak gertu dauden ezagutza irakatsietatik abiatzen dira, eta pixkanaka, ezagutza zabalagoekin elkarriketean eraikitzen dira, zientzia zorrotz ororen berezko ezagutza unibertsalen bilaketa kritikoa zailtzen jarri gabe (Dolz, Monferrer & Idiazabal, 2025). Horrela, gutxienez tokiko hizkuntza gutxitu bat kontuan hartzen duen eskola eleaniztuna garapen jasangarriaren bermea izango da, beti ere, eskolaz kanpoko eragilean eta erakundearen laguntzarekin eta etengabeko erronka dela ahaztu barik.

Esker onak

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Sustainable development from the perspective of education and linguistic diversity

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Abstract

This article analyses the process of revitalising the Basque language and multilingual education based on minority languages from a sustainable development perspective. Based on the immersion model developed in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, it demonstrates that making a minority language the cornerstone of the education system is both possible and beneficial. On the one hand, using data, it highlights that this model, with both community involvement and an appropriate legal framework, has increased the use and knowledge of the language and contributed to promoting a more cohesive and fair society. On the other hand, the work shows that this multilingual education does not harm students who have a different home language, even if they are non-native speakers of local dominant language; moreover, it helps them to develop bilingual skills and also values their first language. The authors argue that an education system that takes linguistic diversity and local languages into account is essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive development, and that such a process is necessarily linked to several of the 2030 Agenda goals, in particular 4, 10, 16 and 18. In light of experience, therefore, multilingual education based on Basque can be presented not only as a model, but also as a means of addressing global challenges.

Introduction

We believe that the revitalisation of the Basque language should be seen as the main driver of sustainable development in the Basque Country, and especially in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). Specifically, we see the multilingual education that has developed over the last 50 years as an effective axis of that development.

In this work, we want to demonstrate that our experience in developing the educational immersion model focused on the minority language in the Basque Country is an example for the world, among other things, because it is more sustainable with linguistic diversity and, therefore, contributes more to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda towards which we are moving.

Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is one goal that is particularly sensitive to human development: education (SDG 4 – Quality Education). In fact, along with health and quality of life, it is one of the indicators considered when measuring a country's progress in relation to the Human Development Index (HDI). According to data recently published by EUSTAT (2025), the Basque Country has an HDI of 0.948, according to the methodology of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The revitalisation of the minority language is closely linked to goal 4 of the Agenda and has a cross-cutting impact on all the others, especially 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 16 (Peace, strong institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

Basque is classified as a vulnerable language in the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (UNESCO, 2010). Furthermore, the aforementioned document states that “Basque is probably the most isolated language, or rather, the language that constitutes a single linguistic family, the best studied, as well as one of the best-known minority languages.” (2010: 100).

Prohibitions on the use of Basque in administrative procedures and schools spread in the 18th century with the imposition of hegemonic languages of the region (Spanish and French). Subsequently, its use was banned and harshly repressed from 1937 onwards. However, despite the historical and political context, in 1968 the foundations were laid for the standard language, also known as Euskara Batua, to unify the writing and literature created in the dialects. This unification spread to the administration, the media and schools after the approval of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the Basque Statute of Autonomy of 1979.

Currently, Basque has about 750,000 speakers spread across both sides of the Pyrenees, separating the borders between France and Spain (Figure 1).

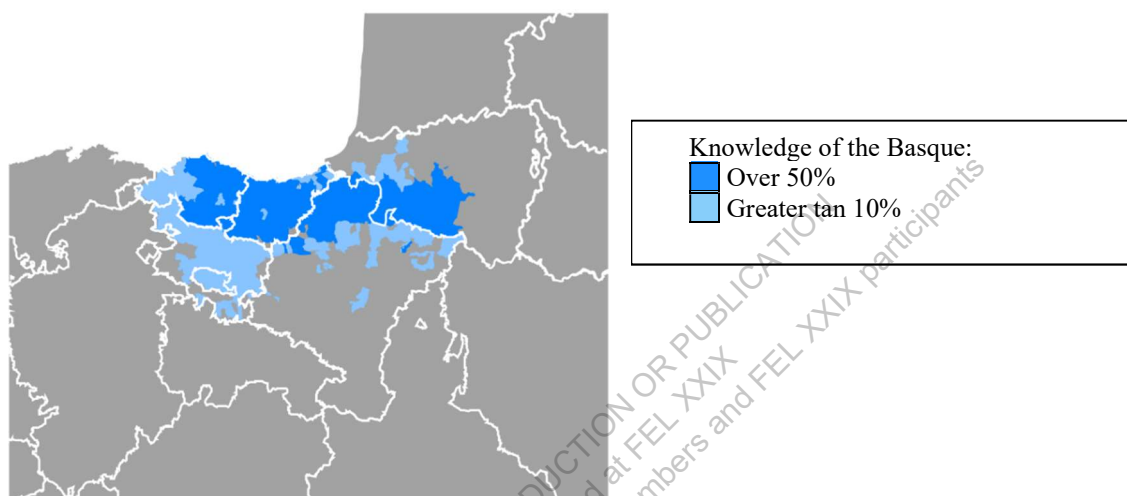


Figure 1. Euskera Knowledge Map. (Source: <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euskera>)

In any case, the situation of the language differs greatly depending on the territory and the autonomous communities. In France the Basque language is not yet official, whereas in the autonomous communities of Spain (in the BAC and in an area of Navarre) it is co-official with Spanish. Consequently, the type of schools (bilingual or monolingual) and the proportion of Basque speakers is also very different, as shown in the following figure (Figure 2).

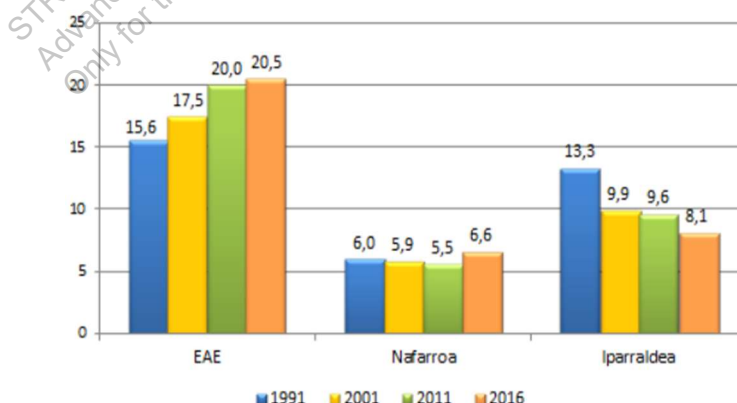


Figure 2. Evolution of those who use Basque as much or more than Spanish, by community in the entire Basque language area, 1991-2016 (%) (Source: Gobierno Vasco / Gobierno de Navarra / Office Public de la Langue Basque, VI. *Inkesta Soziolinguistikoa*, 2019: 24)

Theoretical framework: sustainable development and multilingual education based on local minority languages

The protection of local linguistic and multicultural diversity was presented as a prerequisite for development at the 2010 UNESCO Conference in Bangkok:

We are fully convinced that the consideration of language is a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. [...] For language is the cornerstone of integration, the centre of human activity, the expression and identity of oneself. Recognizing the priority place that people give to their own language, using their own language, is intended to encourage real participation in development, so that the results of the intervention are lasting. (in Uranga, 2013:18)

As we know, the 2030 United Nations Agenda does not include languages and culture as objectives of sustainable development. Instead, activists and experts from different communities have made it clear that development and education systems that do not consider one's language cannot be sustainable:

In order to achieve sustainable development, Africa must free herself from neo-colonial dependence on knowledge imported from elsewhere wrapped in foreign languages, but rather follow the successful global model of operating education through both local and global languages, giving indigenous languages their proper place in education and society. (Wolff, 2019: 95)

So the way forward is through Amazy-based multilingual education, where multilingual communication skills are strengthened. (EL Kirat El Allame & Boussagui, 2019: 213)

The poor in rural areas, especially girls and women, who speak languages not represented in formal structures, experience the greatest injustices in language policy and planning, especially in the field of education. If education continues to be based primarily on international languages, turning its back on local languages, these differences will increase and not decrease. This will make it difficult, or even impossible, to achieve sustainable and equal development. What can we do? As far as language is concerned, it is crucial to increase linguistic diversity, especially through the introduction of multilingual language policies in the field of education, not only to advance through social justice, but also to achieve inclusive economic growth. (Romaine, 2019: 50)

Multilingualism is not new, but it is now more evident than ever, especially as a result of the migratory movements of this century. For minority local speaking communities in Europe and around the world, there is a new challenge that directly affects their education system. On the one hand, it is essential that the minority native language be the centrepiece of the system, but at the same time hegemonic native and foreign languages must be developed, and, on the other hand, other languages brought about by migration must also have a place in school.

How can school respond to such a challenge?

The strength of society has been a fundamental pillar in the revitalization of the Basque language and in the development of the Basque school. Thanks to a militant and active Basque community, it was possible to weave the project from the bottom up, and to achieve the necessary alliances (SDG 17) to achieve institutional guarantees and effective progress.

Both in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) and in the whole of the Basque Country, in order to revitalise Basque and design a truly bilingual educational model, it has been demanded for decades the use of Basque as an educational language, along with the hegemonic languages. In other words, the aim pursued, and largely achieved, is to develop an additive bilingualism. That is, in addition to the hegemonic languages, all students learn Basque. To this end, in the BAC three optional models of bilingual education (Basque Government, 1983) were designed and regulated, with different levels of presence and immersion of the Basque language. After 40 years in force, more than 80% of families have opted for language models based entirely or partially on immersion in Basque (Euskera) (figure 3). This Immersion model had in its favour the purpose of building a new legal educational framework and a democratic society, with peace as its goal to build strong institutions (SDG 16).

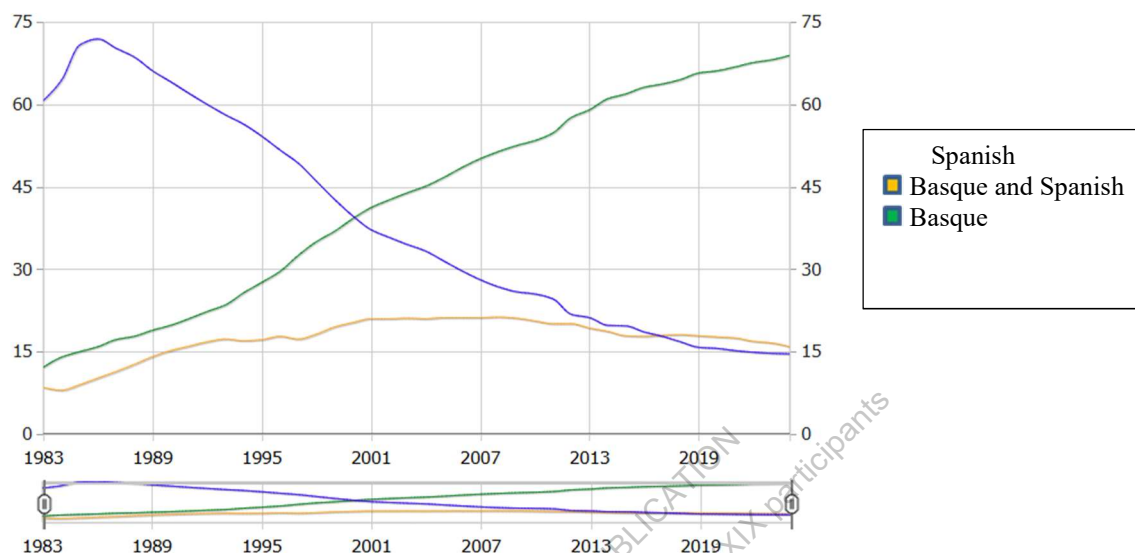


Figure 3. Students enrolled in non-university general education, according to the language model, in the Basque Autonomous Community (percentage) (Source: Eustat, *Eskola-jardueraren estatistika*, 2025)

Thanks to these educational models, and especially the total immersion model in Basque (model D), the number of bilingual Basque/Spanish speakers has gradually increased in recent years (Basque Government, 2023) (figure 4).

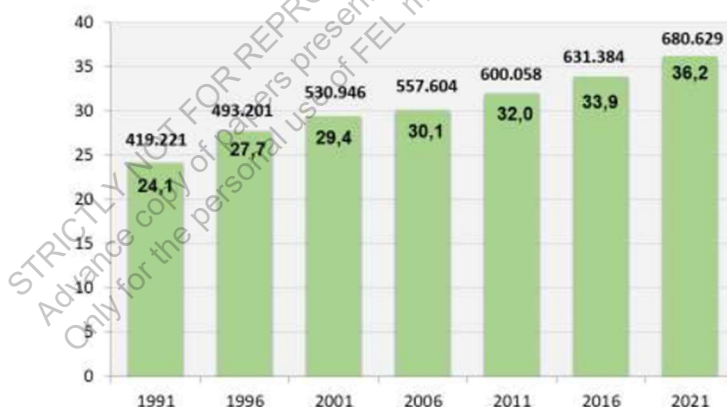


Figure 4. Evolution of Basque speakers. Euskadi, 1991-2021. (Source: *VII Inkesta Soziolinguistikoa*, 2021)

These data reflect the change in the number of speakers, that is, the increase in the proportion of bilingual Basque/Spanish speakers (from 24% to 36%). This development has been supported by the entire society (SDG 18), by a specific legislation and administrative economic resources (SDG 16). Nevertheless, the driving force has been the school with the involvement of parents. As a consequence, the school itself has been shaped radically.

The aforementioned linguistic models were designed for a bilingual society, and aimed to protect and revitalize the Basque language making all students bilingual speakers.

As we have seen in the figure 3, society has opted for the Basque language model, that is to say, almost total immersion. Basque, a minority language with no tradition of schooling, has become the language of instruction from pre-school education to university, with the consequent revolution that it entails: turning the minority language into a suitable tool for education, enabling science to be developed in a minority language, extending the minority language to the most diverse professional fields, all closely related to SDGs 8 and 10.

At the same time, we believe, and research data shows, that it has not been a simple process of teaching a language, as immersion teaching in Basque has transformed the entire school. An example of this transformation is the way in which teachers manage multilingualism; teachers responsible for immersion in Basque at the pre-school level are very clear about how to deal with non-Basque speaking children (both those who speak Spanish and those who have a migrant language) in order to teach in Basque, while at the same time considering the family language of these pupils, as can be seen in the following example:

And so, I try to welcome them in the language of the family. That's where a connection is formed, isn't it? It creates proximity, doesn't it? You don't have to come alone and learn English, do you? But give and take is a relationship, and in that give and take, their language is also present and must be valued (A2; interview) (In Díaz de Gereñu, 2024: 265)

Society has changed significantly in recent years and, as we have already mentioned, schools are also reflecting this change. In schools where the student's first language (L1) used to be Basque or Spanish, more and more students now have a different L1, i.e. they are allochthonous students who do not speak either of the local co-official languages at home.

According to the latest data, in 2003 the population of foreign origin was 3.2%, while in 2023 that number was 12.4%. This is a significant, rapid, and sudden change that is difficult to manage the normalisation process of the minority language. Note that in this new situation there are not only two or three languages that the school has to deal with. The tendency and temptation of the educational system has been to enrol the new comers' children in the dominant language model, that is in Spanish. Fortunately, the enrolment data in the BAC shows a hopeful trend for Basque (figure 5), as model D (in Basque) is chosen by the majority on the immigrant families (figure 5).

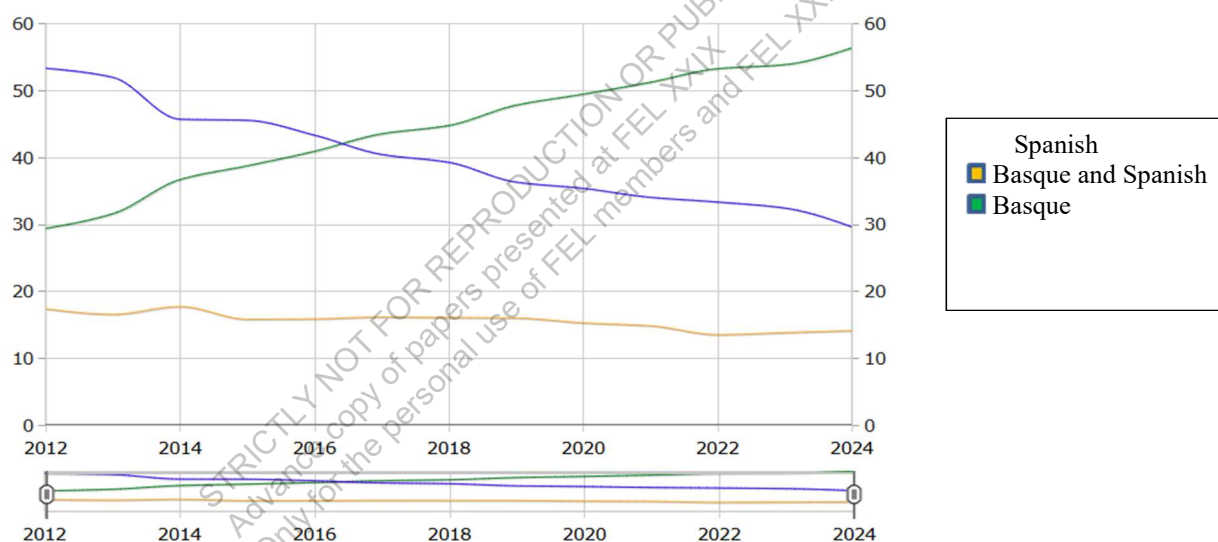


Figure 5: Non-Spanish students enrolled in non-university General Regime courses according to language model in the Basque Country (percentage). (Source: Eustat, *Eskola-jardueraren estatistika*, 2025)

Contrary to what many monolinguals keep pointing out, relevant studies show that the choice of multilingual education is not detrimental even for students with an allochthonous family language (Manterola & Lardizabal, 2009; Díaz de Gereñu & García-Azkoaga, 2016). These studies show that allochthonous students acquire similar communication skills in both Basque and Spanish. Of course, all type of students need some basic requirements to ensure an immersion in the minority language.

Conclusion

Such a model of multilingual education is not without challenges, but despite this, some things have become clear in our experiences and research:

- Building a bilingual, multilingual education system with a minority language at its core requires not only institutional support (SDG 16), but also the willingness and involvement of a community to build the necessary alliances and carry out the commitments (SDG 17).
- Despite being a minority language, Basque has become a language of instruction in schools and universities without compromising the development of knowledge (SDG 8), serving as a central complement to local multilingualism. In this sense, it has contributed to the development of the minority language itself, generating the necessary linguistic resources in specialised and professional fields (SDG 18), as well as to the development of the community, creating new opportunities in both the labour market and the cultural sphere. There is therefore a link with goals 8, 10 and 18.
- Bilingual and multilingual education is possible and beneficial for individuals and for a more inclusive society, and is essential for strengthening minority languages and creating multilingual individuals. It therefore contributes to both SDG 4 and SDG 10, but also to SDG 16, because quality education is fundamental to achieving a more cohesive and peaceful society.
- The revitalisation of minority languages requires to be taught as second languages and under the conditions required for immersion (see Dolz, Monferrer & Idiazabal, 2025). Many other so-called "bilingual models" do not allow the maintenance of the local language among natives or its learning among non-speakers who make up the same community. An example of these practices is the PEIB programs developed in Latin America. (Flores Farfan, 2019).
- It does not undermine the rights of people who do not have Basque as their second language (L2). What's more, it promotes equality (SDG 10) and supports the foundations of a cohesive and peaceful society (SDG 16).
- Bilingual multilingual education with a minority language at its core is sustainable with regard to language diversity, as it encompasses both the minority language and the dominant language and guarantees the learning of the foreign language. Furthermore, it creates a culture of respect and recognition of the languages of allochthonous students, thus aligning with Goal 18, which is respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. This is a major challenge given the situation of languages.

The rapid demographic changes taking place in all societies are also transforming schools, forcing us to think about the world in terms of multilingualism. According to UNESCO data (2025), there are 32 million displaced young people in the world who have difficulty accessing education for language-related reasons. In this new context, we need to better understand the challenges, needs and attitudes that arise in schools, both in early childhood education (Díaz-de-Gereñu & Idiazabal, 2025) and in compulsory general education (Larrazá & Díaz-de-Gereñu, 2024) and adult education centres.

Only then will we be able to identify best practices that will help us implement quality education that is truly transformative, both linguistically and in terms of enabling us to be sustainable in all other areas related to human development. In short, as García-Azkoaga (2025:8) says: "Establishing links between the 2030 Agenda and linguistic and cultural diversity is a way of thinking about the world in terms of multilingualism, an opportunity to connect sustainably with languages and contribute to development."

Communities that take minority languages into account in education start from knowledge imparted close to home and gradually build on this in dialogue with broader knowledge, without questioning the critical search for universal knowledge characteristic of all rigorous science (Dolz, Monferrer & Idiazabal, 2025). In this way, a multilingual school that considers at least one local minority language will guarantee sustainable development, always with the collaboration of extracurricular agents and institutions and without forgetting that it is an ongoing challenge.

Acknowledgements

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Revitalizing Gojri Language and Bakarwal Culture: A Community-Based Journey Toward Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The crisis of endangered languages represents one of the most urgent cultural challenges of the 21st century, with nearly half of the world's 7,000 languages at risk of extinction (UNESCO, 2010). In Pakistan, around 60 of 70 spoken languages are endangered, threatening not only linguistic diversity but also indigenous knowledge systems. This paper focuses on the Gojri language and the Gujjar Bakarwal pastoralist community, whose nomadic lifestyle and oral traditions face increasing pressures from modernization, displacement, and marginalization. Gojri, once a vibrant literary and cultural language across South Asia, now risks erosion along with the ecological wisdom and cultural identity it embodies. The study highlights community-driven efforts for revitalization, including media initiatives, social media activism, literary production, music, films, school-level programs, and mobile education models such as the Himalayan Literacy Network's nomadic schools. Women's handicrafts and cultural gatherings further link preservation with economic empowerment. These grassroots strategies demonstrate how language revitalization contributes to sustainable development by strengthening identity, resilience, and indigenous ecological knowledge. The paper concludes by calling for the recognition of SDG 18: Safeguarding Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, positioning linguistic and cultural rights as essential to inclusive and sustainable global development.

Introduction

The crisis of endangered languages has become one of the defining cultural challenges of the 21st century. According to UNESCO (2010), *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (3rd edition), notes that "nearly half of the world's approximately 7,000 languages are at risk of extinction by the end of this century" "Beyond the loss of communication systems, this trend represents an erosion of knowledge, cultural memory, and identity. Endangered languages carry local ecological knowledge, oral traditions, ethical frameworks, and indigenous pedagogies". (Maffi, 2005, 34:599–617).

Their disappearance threatens both cultural diversity and the global pursuit of sustainable development.

In Pakistan, more than 70 languages are spoken, yet around 60 of them are classified as endangered, creating a profound threat not only to linguistic diversity but also to the survival of indigenous cultural values that are closely tied to these languages. As languages decline, the traditions, knowledge systems, and cultural practices they carry are also pushed toward extinction. The Gojri language and the broader Gujjar cultural heritage, particularly the traditions of the nomadic Gujjar Bakarwals in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan belt are among those facing serious threats. For the Bakarwals, who sustain their livelihoods through pastoralism, Gojri functions as more than a means of communication; it is a living archive of oral history, ecological wisdom, and community identity. The erosion of Gojri, coupled with the marginalization of Gujjar Bakarwal culture, poses existential risks not only to the community itself but also to the preservation of unique indigenous knowledge systems essential for climate resilience and sustainable development.

Before moving to the discussion on measures taken for the revitalization of Gojri and the preservation of Gujjar Bakarwal culture, it is important to first provide a brief introduction to the Gojri language and the Bakarwal community

The Bakarwal Community and the Gojri Language

"Gojri is the mother tongue Gujjars, Gojri is considered one of the endangered languages in Pakistan. It belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of languages and is primarily spoken by the Gujjars in the Himalayan region, spanning northern parts of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. During the 7th to 15th centuries AD, Gojri was a common language in the Northwest belt of India, coinciding with the emergence of Sanskrit and Persian poetry and prose in the Indian subcontinent".(Shahid Rehman,2022)

"Grimes states: "Gojri, or Gujari, is the language of some 1.4 million or more Gujjars (or Gujjars, in Indian transliteration) living in the mountainous areas of northern Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, the disputed region of Kashmir, and northern India." (Losey 2002:1).

The Bakarwals follow a transhumant migration cycle, moving seasonally from high-altitude summer pastures in Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir to lowland plains in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during winter. This mobility sustains their

livestock, which contributes nearly 20% of Pakistan's mutton supply and provides wool, hides, and dairy" (Sharma, 2018).

"Despite their economic contributions, the Bakarwals remain politically and socially marginalized. Lacking land rights, they are vulnerable to displacement. Their migration routes are increasingly blocked by roads, hydropower projects, and security fencing, forcing many families into semi-sedentary livelihoods. Healthcare and formal schooling are virtually inaccessible during migration, further deepening cycles of poverty" (Hussain, 2019).

The Bakarwal are a marginalized ethnic group of nomadic pastoralists in Pakistan who face significant cultural threats. Primarily sheep and goat herders, they follow a unique migratory pattern dictated by the seasons. In summer, they travel to the high mountain regions of northern Pakistan and the picturesque Neelum Valley, where lush pastures provide abundant resources for their livestock. As winter approaches, they descend to lower, milder regions where they can find shelter and grazing grounds to sustain them through the colder months. Their lifestyle is deeply intertwined with the environment, guided by traditional knowledge passed down through generations that enables them to navigate seasonal shifts and sustain their herding economy.

Despite their resilience and adaptability, the Bakarwal face growing challenges, including limited access to education and healthcare, insecure land rights, and the disruption of their migratory routes due to modern infrastructure and development projects. Historically linked to the Gujjars of Central Asia, the Bakarwal are believed to have originated from Indian-administered Kashmir, migrating into Pakistan in three major waves. Their distinct social and cultural norms, values, and migratory lifestyle set them apart, making them a unique yet vulnerable community within Pakistan's diverse cultural mosaic.

Preservation of the Gojri language and the cultural traditions of the Gujjar-Bakarwal community

For the preservation of the Gojri language and the cultural traditions of the Gujjar-Bakarwal community, several steps have been initiated in Pakistan. These efforts, spanning media, literature, education, policy advocacy, and cultural empowerment, are primarily community-driven but are gradually gaining recognition at regional and national levels. Together, they demonstrate how grassroots activism can provide a foundation for language revitalization and cultural sustainability in marginalized contexts.

1. Print and Electronic Media

One of the earliest strategies for revitalizing Gojri has been the consistent use of print and electronic media. The publication of quarterly Gojri magazines has created an invaluable archive of literature, essays, poetry, and commentary. These magazines not only document linguistic richness but also foster a sense of identity and continuity among speakers. They provide a much-needed platform for writers, poets, and researchers to publish in Gojri, thereby elevating the language from oral domains into written and literary spaces.

On electronic platforms, Pakistan Television (PTV) has taken a pioneering step by introducing Gojri news bulletins. These broadcasts are symbolically significant: they place Gojri alongside national and regional languages, offering the community recognition in mainstream media. Similarly, Noor TV UK has introduced a dedicated program, Bethik, which is broadcast to diaspora audiences. Programs like these connect second- and third-generation Gujjars abroad with their linguistic and cultural heritage, countering the risk of complete linguistic shift within the diaspora.

Media interventions are critical because they normalize the use of Gojri in public spaces, countering the stigma attached to minority languages and validating their role in contemporary society.

2. Social Media Platforms

The advent of social media has transformed the dynamics of language preservation. Unlike traditional print or broadcast media, platforms such as Facebook allow for direct participation, creativity, and wide-reaching engagement. Several Gojri-language pages have become hubs of cultural exchange and identity reinforcement.

Notable among them are Gojri Mahari Zuban, Gojri Zuban-o-Adab, Geo Gojri, and Bazm-e-Gojrmay. These pages collectively reach tens of thousands of followers, featuring poetry recitals, cultural reflections, folk stories, and interactive discussions in Gojri. They serve both as archives and as interactive classrooms where young people learn idioms, proverbs, and folklore in an informal setting.

Social media also allows for transnational networking. Gojri speakers from Pakistan, India, and the global diaspora interact and exchange content, strengthening cross-border solidarity. This digital activism is particularly powerful in engaging youth, who are otherwise vulnerable to language shift toward dominant languages like Urdu and English.

3. Books and Literary Contributions

The publication of books in Gojri has expanded considerably in recent decades, reflecting both religious and secular domains.

- **Religious Literature:** Five translations of the Holy Qur'an have been completed in Gojri. In addition, a biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and several Hadith collections have been translated. Such religious texts are central in many communities, and their availability in Gojri provides spiritual access in the mother tongue while also elevating the language into sacred and scholarly domains.
- **Creative and Academic Literature:** Writers and poets have contributed significantly to Gojri prose, poetry, fiction, and collections of proverbs. Folktales and oral traditions have been transcribed, ensuring their transmission to future generations. Curriculum books in Gojri have been prepared for schools, including a health curriculum developed for the Himalayan Literacy Network (HLN) mobile schools. These materials are not only educational but also reinforce Gojri as a medium of learning and cultural reflection.
- **Research and Indigenous Knowledge:** Universities have started producing research on indigenous knowledge and oral traditions in Gojri, linking academic inquiry with community heritage. These works legitimize Gojri in intellectual spaces, challenging the notion that indigenous languages are unsuitable for higher learning.

The presence of books across multiple genres confirms Gojri's adaptability and richness, while offering practical resources for education, worship, and cultural life.

4. Films and Music

Visual and performing arts remain powerful tools for cultural survival. Two notable films, *Darshi* and *Iqra*, have been produced in Gojri. These films serve not only as entertainment but also as cultural documentation, portraying narratives, lifestyles, and values unique to Gujjar-Bakarwal communities.

Music has also played a critical role in strengthening Gojri identity. Artists such as Bashir Gujjar Hazara, Gul Nazar, Bano Rehmat, Sheikh Basit, and Sajid Aziz Qadri have produced popular songs in Gojri. Music travels beyond geographical boundaries and appeals especially to youth, ensuring that the language continues to resonate across generations. The popularity of Gojri songs in both rural and urban settings reflects the vitality and emotional attachment that speakers have with their mother tongue.

5. Conferences and Literary Gatherings

The organization of Gojri conferences and mushairas (poetic gatherings) has emerged as another vibrant strategy for revitalization. At the national level, such events create platforms where writers, poets, scholars, and activists converge to celebrate and promote the language. They provide opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, where young poets recite alongside senior literary figures, ensuring continuity of tradition.

Conferences also bring visibility to Gojri in academic and cultural spaces, encouraging policymakers, linguists, and educators to recognize the language's significance. These gatherings reaffirm the role of Gojri not only as a medium of folklore but also as a tool of intellectual and literary creativity.

6. School-Level Initiatives

In Northern Pakistan, particularly in Kalam, Swat, school-level programs have introduced Gojri into extracurricular activities. Competitions among schoolchildren, such as poetry recitation, debates, storytelling, and essay writing, are organized to cultivate pride in Gojri. Such initiatives highlight that the survival of endangered languages depends on youth engagement, and schools provide the most effective platform for structured transmission.

Embedding Gojri into education also counters the stigma that minority languages are "inferior" compared to national or international languages. By giving children recognition and awards for their competence in Gojri, these programs validate their cultural identity.

7. Curriculum and Policy Advocacy

Efforts to integrate Gojri into formal education have begun to yield results. The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has included Gojri as an optional subject at the primary level, providing institutional recognition for the language. This milestone reflects the success of long-term community advocacy.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Gujjar representatives have lobbied to include Gojri in the provincial curriculum, alongside other regional languages such as Pashto, Saraiki, Hindko, and Khawar. This inclusion would ensure that Gojri-speaking children are able to learn in their mother tongue, improving literacy and retention rates.

Beyond education, Gujjar delegates have met with the Statistics Department, NADRA, and census authorities to demand that Gojri be formally recognized. Its inclusion in census data and identity documents would validate its demographic presence and provide evidence for stronger policy support.

8. Community Awareness and Mobilization

Awareness campaigns have been central to building momentum for revitalization. Seminars, workshops, and media programs are frequently organized to highlight the value of Gojri. Such activities not only reach policymakers but also motivate community members themselves. The message is clear: preservation of Gojri depends on daily use at home and in community spaces. By making people aware of the risks of language loss, these initiatives foster grassroots commitment to revitalization.

Preserving Bakarwal Culture

Parallel to linguistic revitalization, significant efforts are underway to preserve Bakarwal culture, which faces equal threats from modernization and displacement.

- **Handicrafts and Women's Role:** Bakarwal women, traditionally skilled in embroidery, weaving, and craftwork, are being encouraged to continue these practices. Plans are underway to provide formal training, open local outlets in Pakistan, and eventually export handicrafts to international markets. This initiative links cultural preservation with economic empowerment, ensuring that culture is not romanticized but actively sustained through livelihoods.
- **Mobile Schools:** The Bakarwal Mobile Schools established by the Himalayan Literacy Network represent one of the most innovative community-based initiatives. These schools follow the nomadic routes of the Bakarwals, ensuring that children have access to education without being separated from their families and way of life. The curriculum integrates Gojri language instruction, indigenous knowledge, and practical skills, bridging the gap between modern education and traditional lifestyles. Mobile schools have had a profound impact, raising literacy rates and instilling pride in cultural identity among nomadic children.
- **Festivals and Cultural Gatherings:** Community events that feature traditional storytelling, music, and dance are also being encouraged. These gatherings help transmit cultural values to the younger generation while creating spaces of celebration and pride.

By integrating cultural preservation with education and economic opportunities, these initiatives provide a sustainable model of revitalization.

The revitalization of the Gojri language and the preservation of Bakarwal culture are not just acts of cultural continuity; they are part of a larger community-based journey toward sustainable development. For the Gujjar Bakarwal community, language and culture are tightly woven into the fabric of their livelihoods, identity, and ecological knowledge. Gojri carries centuries of oral traditions, songs, proverbs, and ecological practices that guide the community's sustainable use of pastures, water, and forest resources in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan belt. Losing this language would mean losing vital indigenous knowledge systems that have historically enabled pastoralist survival in fragile ecosystems.

The preservation efforts undertaken in Pakistan, whether through print and electronic media, social media campaigns, literary contributions, inclusion in school curricula, or the promotion of handicrafts among Bakarwal women, are therefore more than linguistic initiatives. They represent a grassroots model of sustainable development, where communities are not passive recipients of external aid but active agents of their own future. These initiatives also reinforce the broader global vision of development, demonstrating how cultural and linguistic diversity must be viewed as an asset in building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies.

Community-based schooling programs, like the MLE mobile schools for Bakarwals, show how education in the mother tongue can empower marginalized groups. These schools not only provide literacy and numeracy skills but also preserve cultural knowledge, embed indigenous ecological practices, and strengthen identity among nomadic children. Similarly, women's involvement in handicrafts, when connected to markets, creates livelihood opportunities that reduce poverty while keeping cultural expressions alive. Taken together, these steps illustrate that sustainable development is not merely about infrastructure and economics, it is about empowering communities to preserve their voices, values, and heritage.

Policy Priorities Toward SDG 18

While the international community has adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an important gap remains: none of these explicitly recognize language and cultural diversity as a development priority. Health, gender, inequality, and environmental sustainability are all addressed, but the absence of linguistic and cultural rights leaves indigenous and nomadic communities at risk of erasure.

To address this omission, scholars, activists, and indigenous communities have called for the adoption of SDG 18: Safeguarding Linguistic and Cultural Diversity. This proposed goal would ensure that language and culture are no longer invisible within global development frameworks. It would include the following core imperatives:

- **Mandating language-inclusive education policies:** Governments would be required to provide education in mother tongues, ensuring that children of minority and indigenous groups do not lose their cultural and linguistic heritage in the process of schooling.
- **Protecting nomadic and indigenous cultural rights:** Policies would safeguard the practices, mobility patterns, and cultural traditions of groups such as the Gujjar Bakarwals, treating them as knowledge holders and partners in sustainable development.
- **Funding documentation, digitalization, and community-based revitalization:** Adequate resources would be allocated for recording oral histories, publishing literature, and supporting digital platforms that make endangered languages visible and accessible.
- **Recognizing biocultural knowledge as part of sustainability metrics:** Development assessments would not only count economic growth but also include the preservation of indigenous languages and cultural systems as markers of resilience and sustainability.

The recognition of SDG 18 would be transformative for communities like the Gujjar Bakarwals. It would legitimize their struggles, validate their knowledge, and integrate their contributions into national and global development agendas.

Summary

This research, *Revitalizing Gojri Language and Bakarwal Culture: A Community-Based Initiative*, examines grassroots efforts in Pakistan to protect the endangered Gojri language and the cultural identity of the Gujjar Bakarwals. Key initiatives include media broadcasts, social media activism, literary and religious publications, cultural productions such as films, music, and poetry gatherings, as well as mobile schools and curriculum advocacy. Community empowerment is further strengthened through women's handicraft production, seminars, and policy engagement for official recognition of Gojri. These efforts demonstrate how language and culture preservation foster sustainable development by empowering marginalized groups, reducing inequalities, and safeguarding indigenous ecological knowledge. The study calls for the adoption of SDG 18: Safeguarding Linguistic and Cultural Diversity to ensure global recognition and support for such initiatives.

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Articulating Language Revitalization and Sustainability: a Study on the Basque Government's Policies

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Abstract

This study explores the intersection between language revitalization and sustainable development through an analysis of the Basque Government's policies. While these two fields have traditionally been addressed separately, recent initiatives in the Basque Autonomous Community have sought to integrate them. The research focuses on how Basque language revitalization and linguistic diversity are incorporated into the Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030, and how sustainability discourse is reflected in language policy documents. A content analysis of eight key policy documents reveals a growing alignment between language policy and the three pillars of sustainability—social, environmental, and economic. Notably, the Basque Government has proposed the addition of SDG 18, recognizing linguistic and cultural diversity as essential to sustainable development. The 2024–2034 strategic framework, Aroa, further consolidates this integration by linking Basque revitalization with broader social challenges such as equity, ecology, and resilience. Although the long-term impact of these policies remains uncertain, the study highlights the Basque Government's pioneering role in articulating language policy with global sustainability goals, and calls for future research to assess their effectiveness.

Introduction

Sustainable development and endangered language revitalization are two long-standing fields of study that have been widely studied, but separately. Over the past few decades, the fate of endangered languages has gained increasing political importance in many parts of the world. This has been accompanied by a notable rise in academic literature focused on studying efforts to halt or minimize the decline of vulnerable or endangered languages (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006), as well as a broad body of work on different methods and types of language revitalization (Pérez Báez et al., 2018). On the other hand, there is a growing number of studies aiming to analyze the benefits of integrating language policy concerns into global debates on sustainable development (Fettes, 2023). For example, Romaine (2019) argues that language is the missing link in the global sustainability debate.

Recently, efforts have been made to reflect on the links between language, culture, and sustainable development. Dessein et al. (2015) have positioned culture as the "fourth pillar" of sustainability and have analyzed how sustainable development can act as a vehicle for sustaining different cultural forms. Despite these and other proposals, incorporating linguistic diversity into sustainability debates remains an academic and policy challenge (Purvis and Robinson, 2018).

In the Basque Autonomous Community, institutional language policy in favor of the revitalization of Basque has been underway for over 40 years, with the design and implementation of various revitalization plans in areas such as public administration, education, and the media (Ortega & Manterola, 2022). Additionally, several social and institutional initiatives have tried to articulate sustainable development, Basque language revitalization, and the promotion of linguistic diversity. It is worth mentioning that in 2017, the EASO Polytechnic School of Donostia-San Sebastián and the UNESCO Chair of World Linguistic Heritage at the University of the Basque Country marked a milestone, by launching the initiative to add Goal 18 on cultural and linguistic diversity to the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development

Goals. Likewise, the importance of promoting minority languages and linguistic diversity has been underlined as essential elements for achieving Goal 4, Quality Education, of the 2030 Agenda (Garcia-Azkoaga, 2020; Garcia-Azkoaga & Idiazabal, 2021). Finally, the Basque Government's Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030 has incorporated linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as the promotion of the Basque language, among its objectives. On one hand, language policy in favor of Basque has been included in several goals and actions of the Agenda (Goirigolzarri et al., 2025). On the other hand, the Government has recently launched the initiative "Ahots Batuak" ("United Voices"), which proposes the addition of SDG 18—a groundbreaking goal that recognizes linguistic and cultural diversity as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. This initiative aims to fill a critical gap in the current 2030 Agenda by emphasizing the role of language and culture in social cohesion, inclusion, human development, and innovation. This goal refers to the recognition of cultures and languages as guarantors of societal development, complementing the 17 existing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This governmental initiative highlights linguistic and cultural diversity as a driver of social transformation, and the Basque Government intends to integrate it into the international agenda to generate both local and global impact.

In this context, this presentation deals with the links between Basque revitalization discourse and sustainable development discourse. More specifically, the endeavour is to explore, on the one hand, how linguistic revitalization and linguistic diversity have been incorporated into the *Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda*; and, on the other, to explore the extent to which the discourse of sustainability has been integrated into government language policy documentation on the revitalization of the Basque language.

Policy documents analysed

In order to achieve the aforementioned goal, this paper offers a content analysis of eight governmental policy documents. As far as sustainable development policy is concerned, the following documents are analysed:

- *Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030. Contribución Vasca a la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible* (Gobierno Vasco, s.f. (a))
- *Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Multinivel* (Gobierno Vasco, s.f. (b))
- The annual monitoring reports of the *Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030* (Gobierno Vasco, 2017; 2018a; 2019; 2020).
- *Agenda 2030 V. Contribución a Los ODS 16 y "18"*. (Gobierno Vasco, s.f. (c))

Regarding Basque revitalization policy, the analysis includes the following documents:

- *¿Y a partir de ahora qué? La sostenibilidad del desarrollo del euskera o "piedra que rueda no cria musgo"* (Consejo Asesor del Euskera, 2016).
- *Agenda Estratégica del euskera 2017-2020* (Gobierno Vasco, 2018b).
- *Agenda Estratégica del euskera 2021-2024* (Gobierno Vasco, 2021).
- *Marco estratégico para la revitalización del euskera y el empoderamiento de los hablantes del euskera* (Gobierno Vasco, 2024).

Findings

The documentary analysis shows that the *Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda* proposes to articulate several SDGs with the revitalization of Basque and the promotion of linguistic diversity. These are Goal 11 "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable," Goal 4 "Quality Education", Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", Goal 8 "Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all", Goal 10 "Reduce inequality within and among countries", and Goal 16 "Promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies". Most initiatives relating to the Basque language have focused on political measures aimed at increasing the number of speakers and promoting its social use, especially in informal and leisure settings. Although most references to languages are related to Basque, linguistic diversity and multilingualism also have a place in the Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030. In fact, promoting multilingualism among young people has been a key objective, leading to concrete policies at various levels and within different educational domains, including vocational training. Furthermore, linguistic diversity has been addressed from the perspective of coexistence and cultural diversity. For instance, improvements have been proposed for language immersion programs in the field of education for newly arrived students, as well as specific programs for all students, aimed at fostering education in linguistic, cultural, and religious coexistence. Within the framework of gender equality, the languages spoken by migrant populations have also been considered. It has been established that, in order

to eliminate violence against women and improve judicial support for victims, information about victim services will be provided in six different languages.

It is worth noting that the linguistic objectives and measures mentioned in the previous paragraph are aligned with the language policy implemented by the Basque Government prior to the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework. These measures also appear in various provincial and local plans aimed at revitalizing the Basque language. In this regard, it could be argued that such linguistic measures do not introduce a new framework or conceptualization of language policy and the revitalization of minority languages in light of sustainable development. Rather, they represent a reorganization of pre-existing language planning measures within the structure of the 17 SDGs.

However, probably the most notable contribution of the Basque Government is the inclusion of a specific goal in the *Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda*, the 18th Goal: "Recognition of cultures and languages as guarantors of the development of societies." This goal includes 14 targets that underline and reclaim, among others: recognition of the common intangible heritage of languages and cultures; linguistic and cultural rights; the importance of languages and cultures in individual and community well-being; the efficient management of linguistic and cultural diversity; and the inclusion of minority languages in the education system.

Regarding the documents on governmental language policy, the discourse on sustainability already appeared in 2016, in the *¿Y a partir de ahora qué?* document. This language policy document was the result of a participatory process led by the Advisory Council on the Basque Language, aimed at strengthening social and political consensus around the revitalization of Basque and serving as a guide for future language planning and policy measures. The 2016 document represents the first language policy document to explicitly reference the sustainable development of the Basque language. It referred to the social dimension or pillar of sustainability, as the revitalization of Basque is discussed in terms of social justice. It advocates for linguistic equality, in the sense of making it possible for Basque citizens to choose either Basque or Spanish in their daily interactions. The report draws on the conceptualization of sustainable development outlined in the 1987 Brundtland Report, which defines it as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Based on this definition, the report understands the sustainable development of Basque as a process that meets the linguistic needs of both current and future citizens, while creating the conditions for Basque to develop sustainably and remain a "living language."

Nowadays, the 2024-2034 strategic framework for Basque language revitalization, known as "Aroa" ("Era"), consolidates the articulation of the objectives of Basque revitalization and sustainable development: it advocates aligning Basque language revitalization with various social challenges, such as environmental responsibility, sustainability, gender equality, and social inclusion. Likewise, the "Aroa" framework advocates linking Basque language revitalization with equity and social justice, but also with ecology, sustainability, and resilience. Finally, it is worth highlighting that the "Aroa" framework explicitly mentions the 2030 Agenda and Goal 18: the presence and recognition of all languages and cultures is defended as a guarantee of personal and social development.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this presentation underscores the evolution and consolidation of the Basque Government's policies concerning the integration of Basque language revitalization, linguistic diversity, and sustainable development. What initially emerged a decade ago as an approach grounded primarily in the social dimension of sustainability has progressively expanded to encompass all three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental, and economic.

On the other hand, when exploring policies, projects, and initiatives that interconnect sustainability and the revitalization of minoritized languages, it would be highly valuable to move beyond the discursive realm and also examine the actual practices—that is, the ways in which these initiatives are carried out and their genuine alignment with both objectives. Through the analysis of such practices, it would be possible to better grasp and conceptualize the true implications of sustainable action that supports minoritized languages. In this regard, ethnographic research could offer significant insight and depth to this exploration. This line of inquiry should be explored in future research.

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Toward SDG 18: Revitalizing Amazigh for Equitable and Sustainable Development in Morocco

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Abstract

Morocco has pursued extensive social reforms to reduce poverty and territorial inequalities, notably through the National Initiative for Human Development (2005) and the Regime d'Assistance Médicale (2011). Despite some progress, regional disparities persist, revealing a critical missing link: language. This paper argues that the exclusion of Amazigh from development discourse undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of social policies. Drawing on Linguistic Human Rights Theory, the Sociolinguistics of Development, and Global Social Policy frameworks, the study explores the role of language in enabling equitable access to resources and fostering community participation. It examines (i) the place of Amazigh in Morocco's social and development frameworks, (ii) the consequences of excluding local languages from program implementation, and (iii) the potential of multilingualism and linguistic justice to enhance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research combines policy document analysis with interviews and focus groups across Amazigh-speaking regions. Findings highlight the centrality of language as both a tool of communication and a medium of empowerment. The paper ultimately calls for the recognition of linguistic diversity in global development agendas, including the adoption of a proposed SDG 18 on language preservation and promotion.

Keywords: endangered languages, multilingualism, social justice, Amazigh language, Sustainable development.

Introduction

For the past three decades, social reforms have proliferated in Morocco in an attempt to ensure that the impoverished and destitute benefit from the relative economic progress the country has achieved. The state adopted territorial social policies to end and dissolve ramping inequalities starting with the National Initiative for Human Development in 2005 and the ensuing enactment of 'le Regime d'Assistance Médicale' (RAMed) in 2011 aimed towards improving accessibility to medical services. However, although there have been some achievements, the development and social policies have not been able to reduce the regional and territorial disparities in the country (CESE, 2019, 2023). This paper argues that the missing link is language (Romaine, 2019). Without linguistic diversity and the promotion of multilingualism, marginalized groups are excluded from development opportunities and denied equal access to vital resources. The paper investigates the often-underappreciated place of Amazigh in the discourse on sustainable development in the country and underscores the pivotal role it can play in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of social policies and development programmes. The paper argues that the successful implementation of sustainable development programmes cannot be achieved unless it is done through local languages. The relationship between language and sustainable development is self-evident (UNDP, 2004). Policy development must be communicated to be implemented; it must be understood to be communicated; and for much of the world's population, understanding and communication begin with local languages (Trudell, 2009; Hanemann, 2015; Magni, 2017). Development programmes whose aim is to alleviate the situations of precarity and destitution that characterise minoritised communities in Morocco and many other parts of the world must adopt local languages, Amazigh in the case of Morocco, as their medium. Social policies and sustainable development programmes would only be paying lip service to development if local languages are not considered an integral part. Empowering people to take an active role in developing their regions and shaping their destiny begins with their language (Djité, 1993, 2008).

This paper contributes to the ongoing discussion on the necessity to add a new Sustainable Development Goal—SDG 18—focused on the protection, revitalization, and promotion of linguistic diversity and endangered languages. It argues that without local languages like Amazigh, global development agendas risk excluding the very populations they aim to serve. The study highlights that language is not only a medium of communication but also a vehicle of participation, identity, and equity—core values embedded across all existing SDGs. By

centering linguistic justice within development discourse, this research supports the call to recognize language as a fundamental dimension of sustainable and inclusive development.

The study draws on Linguistic Human Rights Theory (Skutnabb-Kangas), Sociolinguistics of Development (Djité, 2008). It also engages with critical development theory, emphasizing participation, inclusion, and equity through local languages. It seeks to (i) examine the role of the Amazigh language in the design and implementation of social and development policies in Morocco; (ii) investigate how language inclusion, or lack thereof, influences the effectiveness of sustainable development programs, and (iii) highlight the centrality of multilingualism and linguistic justice in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in marginalized regions.

The research addresses three research questions related to (i) how is the Amazigh language currently positioned in Morocco's development and social policy frameworks? (ii) what the consequences of excluding local languages from the implementation of sustainable development initiatives are, and (iii) how the inclusion of Amazigh can enhance the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and sustainability of these programs.

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach, focusing on selected Amazigh-speaking regions where development initiatives have been implemented. The study relies mainly on semi-structured interviews with policymakers, local government officials, NGO workers, and Amazigh-speaking community members.

The research also involves policy document analysis of national development strategies and language legislation. Interviews and focus groups are conducted in both Amazigh and Darija, depending on the participants' preferences. The official documents, program materials, and communication strategies used in development initiatives are collected and analyzed to triangulate the data to explore the gap between the policy discourse and real-life practices.

Role of language in sustainable development

The role language can play in advancing the sustainable development goals cannot be underestimated. As much as it can be a mechanism for marginalisation and exclusion, it can be a vehicle for 'equitable and participative access to socioeconomic and political spaces' (Djité, 2011) that are often reserved for the few. Language or rather local indigenous languages should therefore be at the centre of any attempts to alleviate the precariousness and hardship that people at the receiving end of sustainable development programmes experience. In fact, sustainable development policies that are often communicated and disseminated in dominant languages end up discriminating against the languages of the most marginalised and compromise the efficiency of those policies to improve the living standards of the people they intend to help. Sustainable development programmes or 'economics' for that matter 'must be multilingual and public policy in our linguistically diverse world must rest on explicit recognition of language as both a right and means of inclusive sustainable development' (Romaine, 2019 p. 42).

The link between language and development is well established by Robinson (1996), Djité (2008) and Trudell (2008). Robinson (1996) purports that "whenever people are put at the centre of the development process, issues of language will always be close to the surface" (p.4; quoted in Trudell, 2008). Djité (2008) goes further arguing that "no matter how one defines development, it cannot be achieved without reference to language as an important factor, and real development is not possible in Africa without the integration of local languages and the full participation of all her human capital" (p.6).

Moreover, the inclusion of local languages in sustainable development means the recognition of linguistic rights of the underprivileged which ultimately leads to a reduction of social exclusion and inequalities by ensuring that marginalized groups have access to resources and opportunities in their own languages. Promoting linguistic diversity through development programmes strengthens their sustainability, reminding us that development is not only the sum of statistical aggregates that measure national income and its growth but also social, cultural and linguistic. Without linguistic rights, sustainable development programmes risks producing and reproducing structures of power that privilege dominant groups and languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; 2009).

As a primary tool for sharing knowledge and raising awareness, language facilitates the dissemination of critical information about environmental conservation, social equity, and economic growth. Both Robinson (1996) and Djité (2008) contend that for sustainable development initiatives to succeed, they must be understood and accepted by the local populations, which requires information to be communicated in local and indigenous languages. In short, the inclusion of local languages in 'development efforts of any kind is key to their sustainability' (Trudell, 2008, p. 79).

Amazigh in Morocco: from marginalization to official recognition

Amazigh is an Afro-asiatic language (Ennaji, 2014; Mezhoud & EL Kirat EL Allame, 2010). It is present throughout North Africa – from the Oasis of Siwa in Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Mediterranean Sea to as far south as the Sahara Desert in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. It is, however, in Morocco and Algeria that the Amazigh speaking population remains most important. But estimating the exact figures presents a challenge as it is a highly contested political issue rather than a sociolinguistic one (El Kirat El Alame & Boussagui, 2019). The numbers of its speakers though are in steady decrease due to urbanization and the policies of cultural and linguistic assimilation instituted over the years through the Arabization policy (Ennaji, 2005; El Kirat, 2008). According to the 2024 census, 24.8% of the population in Morocco uses Amazigh daily, a figure that represents a slight decrease from the 2014 census and which has been met with strong opposition from Amazigh associations.

In Morocco, Amazigh is divided into three main regional varieties: Tashelhit spoken in the High Atlas, and Anti-Atlas Mountains and the plains of Souss, stretching from Agadir down to Ifni on the Western coast; Tarifit in the North and North-Easter part and the Rif area; as for Tamazight, it is widely used all along the major cities in the mountainous Middle Atlas area (including the cities of Khenifra, Azrou, El Hajeb, Ifran, etc.) and Eastern half of the High Atlas Mountains. This division – remnant of the colonial period – is questioned as it is geographically based and does not include some varieties which do not fall within any of these areas, in particular the Beni Iznassen variety spoken by the confederal tribe bearing the same name and the variety spoken in Figuig in the eastern part of the country on the border with Algeria.

After the independence, the language “suffered the fate of so many minority languages around the world, despised as the language of backward peasants and marginalized in modern society” (Marley, 2005, p. 1487). Amazigh was excluded from the identity component of the new independent state during the state building process and was banned from public domains and stigmatized for decades. It was not until the 2000s that the authorities’ attitudes towards Amazigh started to progressively move away from repression and neutrality to support and official recognition in 2011.

In 2001, The Amazigh Royal Institute for the Amazigh culture was created with the aim of protecting the Amazigh language and culture and working towards its maintenance and revitalization. This was followed by the introduction of Amazigh in primary school in September of 2003 as an instructed language and not a language of instruction. The changes in the status of Amazigh culminated in its recognition as the second official language alongside Modern Standard Arabic on July 1st, 2001.

Amazigh revitalization and sustainable development

One of the most overlooked aspects of the process of Amazigh revitalization is its potential economic value for its speakers. Since its recognition as a national language in 2001, little attention has been given to how language revitalization could have a positive impact on the daily lives of Amazigh speakers. As in many other African countries, the Moroccan state has divorced Amazigh language and culture from regional development strategies. Instead, the linguistic and cultural assets have often been treated as obstacles to development (Noah, 1999; 2003) contrary to research recommendations that show that genuine and sustainable development hinges on recognizing cultural and linguistic capital.

Sustainable regional development in Amazigh communities can only be achieved through active participation of the local residents. But effective engagement is only possible when communication is done in a language everyone understands. Mobilizing local communities towards sustainable goals cannot occur in an unfamiliar or imposed dominant language. Recent census (2024) shows that Amazigh speaking regions are still plagued by high rates of illiteracy, which automatically hinders any effective participation and engagement. Access to education, in particular literacy and lifelong learning programs in mother tongues, is therefore crucial. In fact, when sustainable developmental programmes are delivered and disseminated in local languages, they are conducive to raising awareness, strengthening community engagement, and empowering people to act towards a more sustainable lifestyle (Trudell, 2008).

In Morocco, however, rarely or ever has language factored in the design of human development programmes. For example, the 2006 report “The Possible Morocco” – a retrospective assessment of 50 years of human development in Morocco since its independence, and a vision of its prospects for the next twenty years – made no reference to the role language might play in reducing reported regional inequalities and disparities. The report argued that inherent structural inequalities in Morocco are largely attributed to a deficit in education and literacy, which alone explain the observable decline in global and regional rankings in terms of human development indices (p. 59). But the report falls short in linking these poor performances to the balkanisation of the education system and the exclusion of mother tongues in the Moroccan school.

Similarly, the New Development Model launched in 2019 aims for inclusive and sustainable growth by 2035 but with no attention to the language issue. The model sets out a national ambition to remedy the identified dysfunctions in the National Initiative for Development launched in 2005 and which have exacerbated inequalities in the country. The model sets several priorities that are hoped to transform the country by 2035, among which are inclusion, solidarity, and empowering women. How achievable they are without the inclusion of local languages – Amazigh in our case – remains to be seen.

The paper argues that Amazigh-based multilingual educational programmes are needed – programmes that develop communicative competence across languages while ensuring access to information and technology in Amazigh varieties. Such an approach would allow Amazigh communities not only to preserve and transmit traditional knowledge but also to address pressing socio-economic challenges (El Kirat & Boussagui, 2019).

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***A Tea in the Tundra-Nipishapui Nete Mushuat*, by Joséphine Bacon, and *Ogella Line*, by Itxaro Borda: A comparative example of how Literature in Endangered Languages promotes Sustainable Development**

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Abstract

Our presentation is intended to compare two poetry collections from both sides of the Atlantic written in endangered languages. Indeed, we want to study two books of poems by two artists who currently write in Innu and in Basque, based on their relationship to nature. First, because they are created in endangered languages, thus the value of the texts of those minority cultures which they display for the proclamation of original or excluded identities. Secondly, because they are both women writers, and finally, because the cry for nature prevailing in both is a clear call for a return to a deeper life, in one of them, and, in the other, the basis for seeking one's own voice, which can also be collectively interpreted. These reasons confirm literature in endangered languages as a precious artistic tool towards a sustainable understanding of the world. Because literature, poetry in this case, not only provides irrefutable proof that these languages are still alive, implying actual readership. But it also represents a valuable means of understanding the world through the prism of those languages, more so when the message encompasses respect for the Earth and the minorities.

Introduction: from Whaler Men to Writer Women

By the sixteenth century Basque whalers sailed beyond Newfoundland, up the river that the French named all through that same century as the Saint-Laurent, to acquire their precious treasure. During this adventure they collaborated with the Autochthone inhabitants of those lands, mostly the Innu and the Mikmak. To understand each other, they formed a pidgin called afterwards the Algonkin-Euskara. After five centuries, when the pidgin has long disappeared, each of these cultures must, for many reasons, and to a very different extent, face great difficulties in surviving challenged by the hegemonic languages and modes of thought which surround them.

The aim of our presentation is to compare two contemporary poetry collections written in Innu and in Basque by two poet women living in both sides of the Atlantic, which have both nature as the main common topic. Thus, this little comparative study is not presented as quantitative research, since its goal is to promote the value of literary texts written in minoritarian languages as being epistemological or, in other words, we should "consider literary texts themselves as knowledge" (Bradette, 2018: 17). Hence, concerning methodology, we propose an analysis of both texts as a thematic dialogue between the two collections of poems, focusing on the common points and particularities of each one. To do so, we will use the tools of theoretical contributions developed in recent years by researchers on Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism as the ones suggested by Anton (2017) and Herrero (2023) among other authors.

The first one of the books to analyse comes from Quebec, on the other side of the Atlantic. Here, though mostly surrounded by French speakers (and to a lesser extent by English ones), the multifaceted artist and poet Josephine Bacon produces her work in the Innu-Aimon language, inherited from her ancestors of the Côte-Nord region, and which belongs to the Cree linguistic family. In her collection of poems *A tea in the Tundra Nipishapui nete mushuat*, Bacon praises the greatness and beauty of nature, in a sweet and transparent voice, reminding us of our indispensable filiation with Mother Earth that we have so deeply forgotten in these critical times.

Back on this side of the Atlantic, in the poem book named *Ogella Line*, the Basque poet Itxaro Borda turns nature into an echo of human passions. First, it is the place where the poetic voice depicts her painful love of another woman, the natural space in which she lives her breakup and resulting solitude, the physical background of the poet's suffering. Furthermore, in a constant conversation between the wounded "me" and the absent "you", there appears a threatening and combative "us" too, which becomes a collective cry for the individuals marginalized by their language, and their sexual choices, among other reasons.

Linguistic and Literary Background

To contextualise the work of these two poets, we will begin with a brief overview of the recent history of literature in Indigenous languages in Canada. The First Nations, communities of ‘others’ who have inhabited the American continent for millennia and whose rights have long been silenced by the colonisers, have begun in recent decades to raise their voices to tell their story and defend what remains of their culture and identity. Paradoxically, in the geographical context of the province of Quebec, it is the French imposed on them during their childhood in boarding schools that will become the vehicle for their protest. For example, An Antante Kapeshe's autobiographical essay *Eukuan nin matshi-manitu innushkueu / Je suis une maudite Sauvagesse* (1976), which can be considered the first notable text published in this language, was originally written in Innu-aimun, but it is known thanks to the French translation by anthropologist and linguist José Mailhot. This was followed by the poet we are concerned with at present, Josephine Bacon, and her poetic work in French and Innu-Aimun, recounting the dispossession of their lands and culture through bilingual expressions.

Still from a linguistic point of view, despite the assertive tone of the Innu people's actual creations, nowadays their language is currently being neglected in favour of French among younger authors such as Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, who expresses herself through a variety of artistic mediums, including painting and slam poetry. In this group, which is losing and/or does not master the ancient language and speaks mainly French, we could include another creator, Naomi Fontaine, a French teacher, although terms and constructions from Innu deliberately appear throughout her work.

On this side of the Atlantic, although the situation of the Basque language is not as dramatic, it remains nonetheless quite critical, especially in the Northern side of the Muga (the Spanish-French border), the part of the Basque Country in French territory, where it does not have any official status, unlike in the Southern part, in Spain. As the history of Basque literature has been studied much more extensively than the one of the American First Nations, we can simply summarise the figure of the poet Itxaro Borda as a widely recognised author in the Basque context, who, being from Nafarroa Behera in Iparralde (North Basque Country), has won, among other awards, the Euskadi Prize in Literature for her novel *100% Basque* (2002) and who is currently a full member of Euskaltzaindia, the Academy of the Basque Language. Like Bacon does in Quebec, she publishes her texts in a minority language in a French-speaking context, but in her case, feminism and queer subjects are often showcased. She has always declared herself to be fundamentally marginal as a female, lesbian, queer writer creating in a language that is not recognised by the authorities and endangered.

Concerning the languages of the two poetry collections, both Josephine Bacon and Itxaro Borda write their verses in their mother tongues. And afterwards they add the French translation to the original text, both authors living in countries where, as we know, this language is hegemonic and where none of their mother tongues and literary languages are recognised as official ones in their countries. In this sense, the two editions I have used for this brief analysis which I now present are bilingual.

Thematic Exploration: Wandering and Questioning Self-Identity

With regard to the content, in both works an observer voice recites verses in the first person while wandering through a certain natural environment. This is a foreign environment at first, for neither of the poets belongs to the regions that they describe. In fact, Bacon depicts her 1995 trip to the tundra, near Schefferville, where she has been invited to the First Gathering of “Elders” of all the Innu Nation's Communities. Her discovery of the vast, bare landscape, Nature, which is personified as her conversational partner, fills her with wonder at her rediscovered freedom and gratitude, the emotional source of all poems¹:

Your clouds are boundless
(...)
I am indebted to you
For my freedom

Nothing to do with the much smaller landscape reflected by *Ogella Line*. Here, Borda restricts the area where the poetic voice strolls about to a small part of the Basque shore: the few miles between two beaches in Bizkaia, specifically the area between Laga, a sandy seaside, and a rocky beach called Ogella. As a matter of fact, it is the same space where the

¹ As we have used the original Innu-French and Basque-French volumes, we have translated by ourselves the quotes from French and Basque into English.

author herself wrote her poems in 2008 and where she presented them for the first time, namely in the same year, at a poetry festival called "Eako poesia egunak".

Gratitude versus Alienation

If we delve into the texts from a thematic perspective, in *A tea in the Tundra* we see the Innu poet's gratitude for the new landscape, which she considers a rediscovered home (p. 24):

Barefoot
I know I am home

In contrast, in *Ogella line*, the loneliness of the wandering heroine is heightened by the fact that she finds herself in the land of the one who left her ('The girl with the scent of patchouli' poem, p.15)

I had to learn
To walk among
The rocks without you
On these lands
That belong to you

Erosion versus Life

In Borda's work, the abandoned 'self' is identified with the landscape, which is constantly eroded by the sea wearing away the rocks: ('Stone, body' poem, p. 31).

(...)
In Ogella, words and speech are pulverised.
The vitality of stone crumbles
And so do I
(...)

Silence, cold, darkness and the erosion of the rocky landscape accompany the learning process of mourning. In *A Tea in the Tundra*, on the other hand, the Earth welcomes, soothes and nourishes, exorcising death:

You promise me a pure land
Where you exist
Missinak* gives me water
Papakassik* runs with me
Lichen nourishes me
Moss heals my tears
(...)
Lying down, I am not dying

Walking in search of Identity

The quest for the vanished love and the realisation of one's own loneliness is accompanied in *Ogella line* by self-questioning, particularly about the credibility of one's poetic voice, notably in the poem entitled 'Self-Portrait X' (p. 49), where this voice defines itself as a simple anonymous walker, without gender:

I am this individual exhausted
From walking for
Hours,
(...)
I speak with my shadow:
Am I more sincere
After walking for
Hours?

For Bacon, walking, along with other means of transport, is the foundation of her journey through the tundra (p. 40):

I walked
I carried
I paddled
To meet you
My knees worn out
I arrive at you

The Innu poet is nomadic in her roots, rediscovered in the landscape:

I am not the wanderer of the city
I am the nomad of the tundra

In contrast, the forced assimilation into a culture that is not her own, which she suffered in her youth, is described as a loss of contact with Nature, an imprisonment:

I am torn from your silence
You no longer tell stories
The colours of the air
I no longer recognise
My sisters, the winds

I am taught about God
I have lost the horizon
Facing me
The Wall

The memory of her arrival at boarding school is described as a parenthetical interruption of her language and identity, which she would later rediscover by becoming a teacher of Innu (p. 72):

(...)
September, I leave with my parents
On the territory
I am the salmon swimming upstream
And spawning in the waters

This time it's impossible
Because I have to learn to read and write
My knowledge will have to learn to take its time
I have to be absent
From teaching my identity

Today is today
I teach my identity
In a classroom

I become myself again
In laughter

In contrast to the natural environment, the city, where Bacon has lived for a long time ("wanders", as she puts it), is also the place where she loses her inner self (p. 86):

You go to the city
Aspiring to a better life
In your flight
You flee from yourself
(...)
You go so far away
In your birth
(...)
You are elsewhere

You are a frightened little girl
 They don't speak your language
 You are where you lose yourself
 (...)

In her lament, Bacon summarises the suffering of so many other indigenous citizens, assimilated by the dominant culture and condemned to an urban life far from contact with Nature, which is the foundation of their identity. In this case, her personal literary voice is closely linked to the collective voice of Innu Culture (p. 28), a poetic milieu where writing and orality come together:

(...)
 My hands speak of wind
 You listen to me to hear my voice
 (...)
 You are the Spirit of ancient tales

Or again (p. 56):

Oral tradition reassures my fears
 From time immemorial

Returning to this shore, in *Ogella line*, the vision of the rocky beach triggers questions about poetic writing, a meta-poem that also constitutes a complaint about the historical invisibility of the LGBTQ+ community and, ultimately, a questioning of oneself (poem 'To what extent?', p. 47):

It surprises me to realise
 To what extent we must stoop
 To let words flow
 Without malice, without jealousy
 Without hatred
 To write a clear poem
 With new syntaxes
 And also, why not,
 To sow conjunctions of coordination
 Of loves unspoken and denied
 Since time immemorial
 (...)
 Ogella amazes me.
 I don't know to what extent.
 Who am I?

Conclusions: the value of Literature towards Sustainable Development

This short comparative analysis has allowed to find out the thematic, identitarian and contesting links between these two artists who raise their voices from the peripheries of languages, genres and ancient knowledge, and whose survival is threatened by the weight of dominant languages and ideologies. In this regard, I would like to emphasise that this research is fully in line with the guidelines of the IdeoLit research group of which I am a member at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/ EHU), as well as it integrates various Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations, since both literary texts promote respect for the earth (SDGs 13, 15), respect for humanity (SDGs 10, 16) and gender equality (SDG 5), to name but a few. Additionally, this presentation is part of an ongoing project about minoritarian literatures in France and in French speaking countries.

Following the wakes of the Basque transatlantic journeys of the sixteenth century, this study seeks to highlight the feminine voices belonging to indigenous and minority language communities and cultures, which joined for common working five centuries ago and which have survived and developed unequally until nowadays on the shores of the Atlantic. These two poetry volumes appear to us as songs echoing at the same time the inner journey of one's own self, which proclaims the non-exploiting admiration of Nature, and a profound call to its necessary re-enshrinement. This poetic cry may be directly connected to the defence of endangered languages and nations, and not only as a general approach, according to which biodiversity is related to the diversity of languages and cultures (Gorenflo *et al*, 2012). But, moreover, because, in this case, the creative texts of Bacon and Borda have been precisely written in minority and

indigenous languages (for the Innu writer this situation is more critical than for the Basque one). After all, they showcase a clear example of how art and culture represent an essential tool for sustainable development, all the more when it is transmitted by linguistically endangered communities. In the case of literature this value is demonstrated in a distinct and double manner, as language provides both its roots and its means of creation. Hence, we hope that this contribution will help to strengthen the evidence of the need of the 18th Sustainable Development Goal.

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Indigenous Language Revitalisation through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) – A Case Study on Irula and SDG 4

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Abstract

Indigenous languages are disappearing rapidly worldwide. The Irula language, spoken by fewer than 15,000 people in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, India, illustrates cultural erosion and the need for revitalization. This study evaluates a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) application co-designed with Irula elders, educators, and youth through participatory workshops. The learner community included semi-speakers seeking fluency and adult heritage speakers developing literacy, while elders contributed to the collection of oral histories. The application offers features that support language learning and preservation, including audio lessons, literacy tasks, and community-hosted servers. Three key learning features shaped the design: offline speech recognition, adaptive gamification, and community-led updates that embed the oral tradition. A three-month study involving 120 participants aged 12-65 showed that 78% reported improvements in language skills. This approach, which combines technology with community involvement, has proven to be promising for language revitalization. The challenges included smartphone affordability, small screens, and weak connectivity. Solutions included shared tablet-based "language hubs," solar-powered devices, and telecom subsidies. These outcomes align with SDG 4, which promotes inclusive education and another unspecified goal. By implementing these solutions, stakeholders aim to enhance access to language learning resources in underserved communities. This paper demonstrates how Indigenous language revitalization promotes education, equity, and global cooperation by integrating documentation with mobile technology and community ownership, providing a model for sustainable development in under-resourced contexts.

Introduction

The global linguistic landscape is diverse and rich in resources. Every language carries its own special cultural background, together with traditional wisdom and individual perspectives on the world. The world faces a significant threat to its diverse population. The world is in danger because globalization causes indigenous languages to vanish at a rapid pace. Language extinction destroys a community's cultural heritage. The practice serves to sever family connections between different family members, thereby removing the shared cultural background that unites all human beings. The country of India is renowned for its diverse languages. Fewer than 15,000 individuals speak the Irula language in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, India. This situation demonstrates the phenomenon as described by Cabo et al. (2017). The unstable position of this area requires immediate intervention to address the situation. Innovative and sustainable approaches are needed to revitalize the minority languages.

Traditional language preservation methods struggle to remain effective due to rapid social transformations and technological advancements. Changes in society have led to the disappearance of languages. Mobile technology serves as an innovative answer to improve this field. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has become a promising educational teaching method. The system provides language education through smartphones, which serve as interactive learning tools for flexible education, as noted by Imtiaz and Murshed (2000). The study examines MALL technology as a resource that helps restore the Irula language through its educational applications. It examines the co-design of a MALL application. It also discusses its implementation in a heterogeneous learning community setting. The observed outcomes

and challenges encountered were then analyzed. This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This supports SDG 4, which champions inclusive and equitable, quality education. It also supports SDG 17, which emphasizes partnerships for capacity building and digital inclusion (Bishwokarma & Bishwokarma, 2023). This case study integrates robust documentation with accessible mobile technology. This fosters a profound sense of community ownership. The Irula language project offers a replicable model of sustainable development in under-resourced contexts. This demonstrates a powerful pathway for advancing education, equity, and global cooperation through the revitalization of Indigenous languages.

The Crisis of Indigenous Language Endangerment

Global linguistic diversity is facing an unprecedented crisis. A language dies every two weeks. By the end of this century, nearly half of the world's 7,000 languages may disappear (Crystal, 2000). Indigenous languages are particularly vulnerable to extinction. This vulnerability stems from historical oppression, globalization, and the dominance of majority languages. Dominant languages prevail in education, media, and economic spheres. The loss of these languages is not merely a linguistic phenomenon. This represents an irreplaceable loss of cultural heritage. This indicates a loss of traditional ecological knowledge. Unique cognitive frameworks and distinct identities are also at risk of disappearing.

For communities like the Irula, the threat of language extinction is a tangible reality (Kornai, 2013). The Irula language is indigenous to the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, India. A dwindling number of people in this region speak it. The language contains a rich collection of historical knowledge, cosmic understanding, and environmental wisdom of the people. The disappearance of this tradition results in a significant loss of cultural heritage. The community faces difficulties in preserving its ancient knowledge as a result of this. It also affects their ability to maintain a strong, collective identity. The communities require urgent intervention to protect their languages from disappearing. It is a matter of cultural survival and human rights.

Traditional language revitalization efforts include classroom-based instruction, the creation of dictionaries and grammar, and community immersion programs. Although these methods are crucial, they face significant challenges in their implementation. Challenges include limited resources, geographical dispersion of speakers, and a lack of trained educators (Zhuang et al., 2016). Engaging younger generations requires innovative approaches. This is because younger people are often more exposed to dominant languages and digital media. New approaches should resonate with their lived experiences.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as a Revitalization Tool

Mobile technology, particularly through smartphones, enables new educational approaches for language learning and revitalization programs. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) delivers language learning materials through mobile device capabilities, enabling students to study at any time from anywhere (Amalia, 2020). MALL offers several benefits over traditional methods. Online learning offers students three essential advantages: self-directed education, personalized content, and authentic language practice opportunities. Mobile devices enable effective language learning because they offer both portability and user-friendly features and interactive functions. MALL offers multiple benefits that help students learn languages more effectively while gaining an understanding of different cultures and preserving endangered languages in various educational settings.

Research on MALL has demonstrated its effectiveness in various linguistic contexts. It has been particularly effective in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, improving listening and speaking skills, and fostering learner motivation (Jeong, 2022). MALL applications often incorporate gamification elements, making them interactive. This can make language learning more engaging and less intimidating for the students. This is especially beneficial for learners who may have had negative experiences with formal educational systems. MALL applications can integrate multimedia elements such as audio, video, and images. This ability caters to diverse learning styles and provides rich contextual cues for language acquisition.

However, the application of MALL to indigenous language revitalization presents unique challenges. These include limited digital literacy within some Indigenous communities, the scarcity of existing digital language resources, and the need for culturally appropriate content (Meighan, 2021). Moreover, technical issues such as Internet connectivity, device affordability, and small screen sizes hinder effective implementation. Despite these challenges, the potential of MALL to reach dispersed communities, engage younger generations, and provide flexible learning opportunities makes it a powerful tool in the fight against language extinction.

The Irula Case Study: A Participatory Approach to MALL Design

The Irula language revitalization project demonstrates the successful implementation of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) for the preservation of Indigenous languages. The research design used participatory action research (PAR) as its methodology. The method involved the active participation of Irula elders, together with educators and youth members, who co-created the MALL application, LearnIrula. The team members collaborated to implement technology correctly,

ensuring alignment with both cultural requirements. The program meets the particular language requirements and teaching methods of the community. The success of language revitalization depends on community involvement, according to this method.

The learner community for this project was heterogeneous in nature. This reflects the diverse stages of language proficiency among the Irula population. The community included semi-speakers eager to achieve fluency. It also had adult heritage speakers seeking to develop literacy skills in their ancestral language. Crucially, elder fluent speakers contribute to invaluable oral histories and traditional knowledge. Intergenerational participation is crucial for the sustainability of reciprocal learning environments. Knowledge flows from the elders to the younger generations and vice versa. This strengthened intergenerational bonds and ensured the authenticity of the language content.

Design Feature of the Irula MALL Application

The co-design process led to the development of an application with three core learning-centered features, each addressing specific challenges and opportunities in Indigenous language learning:

Offline Speech Recognition for Pronunciation Feedback: Accurate pronunciation is a significant barrier to learning any new language. This is especially true for languages with unique phonetics, such as the Irula language. Figure 1 shows the integration of offline speech recognition technology as a novel feature. This allows learners to practice their speaking skills and receive immediate feedback without requiring constant internet connectivity. This is particularly important, given the often-limited internet access in remote Irula communities. The offline feature empowered learners to self-correct and build confidence in their spoken Irula. This is a critical component of fluency.

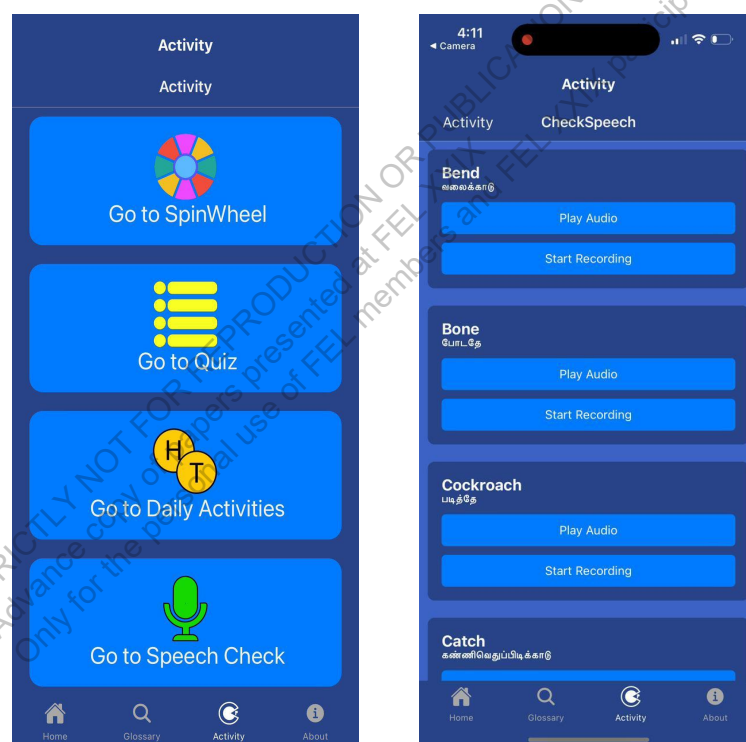


Figure 1: Speech Recognition Tool

Adaptive Gamification to Maintain Engagement: Sustaining learner motivation is a common challenge in language education, particularly over extended periods. The Irula MALL addresses this issue by incorporating adaptive gamification. These elements transformed the learning process into an engaging and enjoyable experience for students. Figure 2 illustrates the application, which features progress tracking and rewards for completing tasks. It also offers

interactive challenges tailored to the learner's proficiency level. Gamification makes learning enjoyable and encourages consistent learner engagement. Consequently, language practice has become a daily habit rather than a chore.

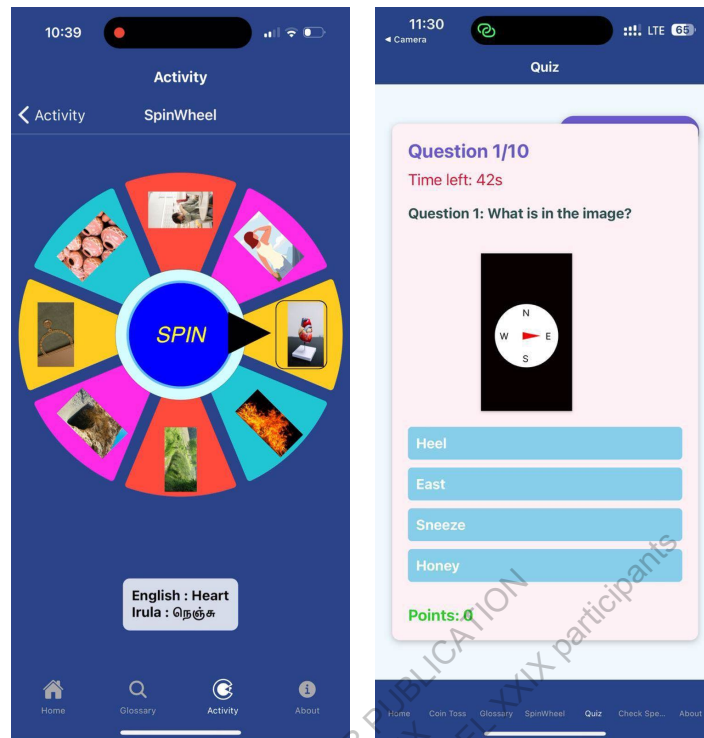


Figure 2: Spin wheel & Quiz Game

Community-Led Updates Embedding Oral Traditions into Vocabulary: Language is intrinsically linked to culture. For indigenous languages, oral traditions often serve as the primary vehicles for transmitting cultural knowledge to future generations. The application facilitated community-led updates.

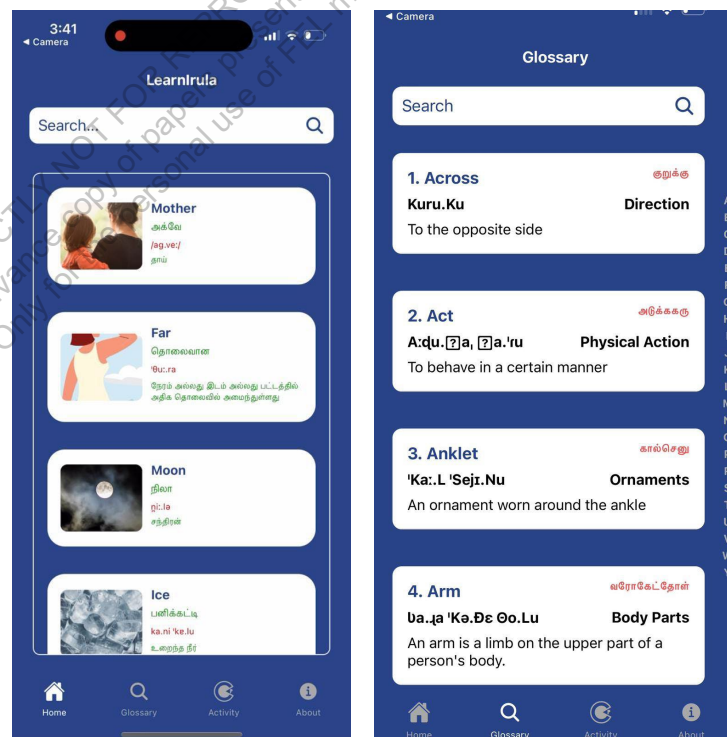


Figure 3: Glossary Screen

This allowed Irula elders and cultural practitioners to continuously embed oral traditions, stories, and cultural narratives into the app's vocabulary and lesson content, as shown in Figure 3.

It is deeply rooted in the Irula cultural practices and worldview. This reinforced cultural identity alongside linguistic proficiency. The use of a community-hosted server ensured data security. It also guarantees community ownership of linguistic and cultural assets.

Observed Outcomes and Challenges

The implementation of the Irula MALL application yielded significantly positive results. The project spanned three months. The study involved 120 participants aged 12–65 years across the four villages. The results demonstrate the tangible impact of a well-designed mobile learning solution. The application has proven to be community-centric and effective for language revitalization efforts.

Positive Outcomes

Improved Language Proficiency: Remarkably, 78% of the participants reported noticeable improvements in their Irula language skills due to the training. These improvements were observed in speaking, comprehension, and basic literacy skills. This outcome is particularly significant for the following reasons: the learner community has diverse proficiency levels. The application has been proven effective across a wide range of applications. It benefits semi-speakers and those developing foundational literacy skills.

Increased Intergenerational Language Use: The project led to a significant increase in the intergenerational use of Irula within households. This is a vital indicator of successful revitalization. The transmission of language from elders to younger generations within the family unit is paramount for its long-term survival and sustainability. This application catalyzed renewed linguistic interaction. It bridged generational gaps and reinforced the role of language in daily family life.

Enhanced Community Engagement and Ownership: The participatory design process cultivated a strong sense of ownership among the Irulas. The community-led update mechanism further enhances this engagement. The application became more than just a tool for Irula. It has transformed into a living repository of their language and culture. The community continuously enriches this repository.

Challenges Encountered

Despite its successes, the project also highlighted several practical challenges inherent in implementing technology-based solutions in under-resourced Indigenous contexts. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and scalability of similar initiatives.

Smartphone Affordability: The cost of smartphones remains a significant barrier for many individuals and families in remote and economically disadvantaged communities. Mobile technology is widespread. However, access to personal devices capable of running the application smoothly was not universal in the present study. This limited broader participation in the study.

Small Screens and User Experience: The small screen size of smartphones presented usability challenges for some users. This particularly affected elders and those with visual impairments. These issues impact the comfort and ease of interaction with the application. This highlights the need for design considerations that accommodate diverse user needs. It also emphasizes the importance of addressing device limitations.

Weak Connectivity: The application was designed with offline functionality in mind. However, initial content downloads, updates, and specific community features still require Internet connectivity. This poses a challenge in areas with weak or intermittent network coverage. This affects seamless user experience and access to the full range of features.

The present circumstances demand total solutions that will effectively address these issues. These solutions need to extend beyond their current implementation. The programs need to handle the total economic and physical conditions of the communities they serve. The research findings show that technology enables organizations to obtain operational tools that work effectively. The successful deployment of these technologies requires additional methods for their successful implementation. These methods help eliminate the digital divide by providing digital access to all people on an equal basis.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Irula language revitalization project employs an innovative application of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and a community-centric approach. It directly contributes to several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, it aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for Goals). This alignment highlights the broader significance of the project. It serves as a model for sustainable development in under-resourced areas.

SDG 4: Quality Education

SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." The Irula MALL project embodies this goal in several key ways.

Inclusive Education: The project developed a language learning tool specifically for the Irula community. This promotes an inclusive education that respects and values linguistic diversity. It provides access to quality learning resources for marginalized groups. The Irula language is often excluded from mainstream educational systems in India. The application's design caters to a heterogeneous learner community. This includes semi-speakers, adult heritage speakers, and the elderly. This ensures that education is accessible to individuals at various stages of their language journeys. It also makes learning available across various age groups.

Equitable Learning Opportunities: The project addresses educational inequities by providing a low-cost, accessible platform for language learning. Challenges such as smartphone affordability exist. However, this project proposes solutions to overcome these barriers. These include shared tablet-based "language hubs" and solar-powered devices. These solutions aim to further democratize access to educational resources. They ensure that economic barriers do not prevent individuals from learning their heritage language.

Lifelong Learning: The participatory nature of the project fosters a culture of lifelong learning. Community-led updates and the integration of oral traditions are key. This approach encourages continuous engagement with language and cultural contexts. It extends beyond formal schooling to encompass learning as an ongoing, community-driven process. This application facilitates intergenerational learning. Elders continue to teach, while younger generations learn and contribute their knowledge. This exemplifies the concept of lifelong learning.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

SDG 17 focuses on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development. The Irula Project exemplifies the spirit of this goal through its collaborative and multi-stakeholder approach:

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: The co-design process involves Irula elders, educators, and youth. This approach exemplifies an effective local partnership. The collaborative model ensures culturally appropriate, community-owned, and sustainable solutions are implemented. The abstract suggests the need for broader partnerships. It mentions the need for telecom subsidies and the potential for replicable models. This indicates a framework for collaboration among communities, technology providers, NGOs, and government bodies.

Capacity Building: The project actively builds capacity within the Irula community. This empowers them to take ownership of their language revitalization efforts. Community members are involved in the design and content creation. This involvement enhances their digital literacy, pedagogical skills, and ability to manage the use of linguistic resources. Community-hosted servers also contribute to local capacity. This improves data management and technological self-sufficiency.

Digital Inclusion: SDG 17 targets for digital inclusion are achieved through efforts to solve problems with poor network access and unaffordable smartphones. The proposed solutions consist of two parts: shared language hubs and solar-powered devices. The following steps outline successful approaches to linking individuals who do not have internet access. They work to make technology serve as a development tool, rather than an obstacle, for underdeveloped areas. The project demonstrates how mobile technology operates in challenging-to-reach areas. The research delivers critical information about worldwide efforts to create digital access for every individual.

The Irula language revitalization project serves as an initiative that extends beyond the preservation of the language. This represents a complete development program. The project requires technological equipment, along with active community involvement, to achieve success. The program fosters equal educational opportunities through the development of strong alliances among various organizations. The program serves as a significant research case for this investigation. The following sequence shows the path to reach the broader Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The case study of Irula language revitalization through a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) application offers a compelling narrative. It showcases hope and innovation in the face of linguistic endangerment. This project demonstrates the profound potential of technology in preserving cultural heritage. It also provides a replicable model of sustainable development in under-resourced contexts worldwide. The initiative embraced a participatory-action research approach. This approach led to the successful co-design of a MALL application. The application is culturally resonant, pedagogically practical, and deeply rooted in community ownership.

The observed outcomes underscore the transformative impact of this study. These include significant improvements in Irula language proficiency, a vital increase in intergenerational language use within households, and enhanced community

engagement. The application's unique features played a crucial role in achieving this success. These features include offline speech recognition for pronunciation feedback, adaptive gamification for sustained engagement, and community-led updates that embed oral traditions. These elements collectively create a dynamic and accessible learning environment. This environment resonated with a diverse learner community, ranging from semi-speakers to elder fluent speakers.

This project revealed critical challenges in scaling and sustaining such initiatives. Smartphone affordability, small screen limitations, and weak Internet connectivity highlight the persistent digital divide. Proposed solutions include shared tablet-based "language hubs," solar-powered devices, and telecom subsidies. These are not merely technical solutions. They represent a commitment to equitable access and digital inclusion. The solutions emphasize that technological interventions require infrastructural and socioeconomic support. This support is crucial for empowering marginalized communities.

The Irula language revitalization project demonstrates the link between linguistic preservation and the Sustainable Development Goals. This aligns directly with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This positioning makes it more than just an initiative for language. It serves as a holistic development model for the same. This project promotes inclusive and equitable education. It fosters multi-stakeholder partnerships. It builds local capacity for digital inclusion. These efforts demonstrate how the revitalization of indigenous languages can contribute to achieving global development objectives.

The success of the Irula model provides a framework for preserving other endangered languages. Future initiatives should focus on several critical areas. Scaling up is imperative, which entails adapting and implementing similar Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) solutions for other indigenous languages. These solutions must be tailored to the specific linguistic and cultural contexts of each language group. Policy advocacy represents another significant avenue, encompassing the promotion of policies that facilitate digital inclusion, affordable technology, and robust Internet infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities. Interdisciplinary collaboration is vital, necessitating enhanced cooperation among linguists, technologists, educators, anthropologists, and policymakers. Such collaboration can yield comprehensive and sustainable strategies for language revitalization. Furthermore, long-term monitoring and evaluation are essential for this purpose. Robust frameworks should be established to assess the sustained impact of MALL interventions and evaluate their effects on language vitality and community well-being over time.

In conclusion, the Irula MALL project stands as a beacon of hope. This demonstrates that language endangerment can be reversed through thoughtful design, community collaboration, and strategic integration of technology. This project serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of preserving linguistic diversity. This shows that such efforts go beyond saving the words. They safeguard human heritage, promote educational equity, and contribute to building a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

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Sustainable Development through Traditional Knowledge System

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Abstract

Linguistic and cultural diversity are intrinsically linked to biodiversity, forming a vital biocultural resource essential for life on Earth. Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), passed down orally through native languages, offer unique insights into ecosystem dynamics, resource management, and human well-being. These languages are not mere communication tools but carriers of traditional environmental knowledge (TEK), cultural identity, and sustainable living practices.

The preservation of native languages is crucial for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to good health, climate action, and life on land. Co-evolution theory highlights how languages, cultures, and biodiversity have mutually shaped each other, embedding TEK that influences worldviews and sustainable practices. The author's research on endangered languages—Dhimal, Toto, Mahali, and Koda—demonstrates how language loss leads to the erosion of this invaluable TEK. Examples include the Dhimal community shifting from nature worship to Hindu practices, the Toto community losing traditional food storage methods and traditional folksongs, Mahali's detailed bamboo knowledge and conservation taboos, and Koda's medicinal ant knowledge and totemic beliefs. The paper argues that integrating TKS, facilitated by linguistic preservation, offers holistic and locally relevant approaches to development, moving beyond one-size-fits-all solutions.

1. Introduction

Linguistic and cultural diversity are often linked to biodiversity, suggesting that combined biocultural resources are integral to the survival of life on Earth (Maffi and Woodley, 2010; Gorenflo et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2015). A deeper consideration of biocultural diversity and indigenous knowledge can enhance our understanding of the diverse human perceptions and values regarding life on earth, ecosystem dynamics, and natural resource use. Moreover, this knowledge system plays a crucial role in human well-being (ICS 2002). This knowledge is passed from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth (oral tradition) in the form of not only folktales but also through day-to-day practices and daily rituals.

The relationship between the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and languages, particularly indigenous languages, is profound and multifaceted. While native languages are not explicitly listed as an SDG, their preservation and promotion are intrinsically linked to the achievement of many, if not all, of the 17 goals. Some of them, such as Good Health and Well-being, Climate Action, and Life on Land, are directly connected to the languages of indigenous communities. This connection stems from the fact that these languages are not merely communication tools; they are carriers of traditional knowledge, cultural identity, social cohesion, and unique perspectives crucial for sustainable living.

Most indigenous communities have lived in harmony with their environments for centuries, developing sophisticated land and resource management techniques. These include sustainable farming practices, rotational grazing, water harvesting methods, and an understanding of ecological indicators. Indigenous communities, often living in vulnerable environments, have developed adaptive strategies to cope with environmental changes. Co-evolution theory suggests that language evolved in tandem with other human traits, such as cognitive and biological changes. It argues that human cultures, languages, and biodiversity have shaped each other through complex feedback loops (L. Maffi, 2001; V. Toledo, 2000). “This cultural knowledge, commonly described as “traditional environmental knowledge” (TEK), has been passed on from generation to generation, through language as well as practical teachings. TEK has shaped ways of life, worldviews, and a sense of place, serving material as well as psychological and spiritual needs” (Maffi, 2014). TEK is the outcome of a long period of connection between the community and the environment through the co-evolutionary processes. In the process, languages have also evolved to pass on that information. Languages that have developed throughout human history are another fundamental expression of life's evolution.

Traditional knowledge systems are intimately tied to specific languages. As languages disappear, so too does the intricate web of knowledge they encode. It is the loss of the knowledge that we have gained through the process

of evolution over many years. Through this paper, I show how the loss of languages can lead to the loss of the traditional knowledge that is important for achieving the SDGs. SDGs can be achieved by the inclusion of speech communities and their traditional knowledge system. It can promote a more holistic and locally relevant approach to development, moving beyond one-size-fits-all solutions. In this paper, I have used case studies from four endangered languages: Dhimal, Toto, Mahali, and Koda. The present work is based on primary data collected from the above-mentioned four languages between 2014 and 2024.

2. Background of the Languages

2.1 Dhimal

Dhimal or Dhemal (ISO 639-3: dhi) is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in both Nepal and India. The language has developed into two different varieties due to the geographical differences and different linguistic surroundings. The Indian variety of Dhimal is considered an endangered language by the Government of India. UNESCO (2010) marks Dhimal as a “severely endangered” language. Dhimal refers to both the language and the community. Officially, these areas were not marked in the government documents till 2011. The 2011 census conducted by the Government of India has marked the area where the Dhimal community resides as Dhemal village. According to the census (2011), there are 85 families in this village. There is hardly any detailed linguistic study on the Indian variety of Dhimal. Though there is a grammar on the Dhimal of Nepal variety by King (2009). Driem (2001) grouped Dhimal with Toto under Dhimlish. Toto is another TB language of West Bengal. They share lots of linguistic features. King (1994) also noted that Toto is the closest relative of Dhimal.

2.2 Toto

The Toto community has been identified as a critically endangered linguistic community in India by UNESCO. The Totos live in Totopara, which is an isolated village at the foothills of the Himalayas in India. The village is located at the Indo-Bhutan border in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. The community maintained different practices of their cultural legacy due to an isolated location. However, in recent days, the community is moving towards a hybrid cultural identity. The new cultural identity has been shaped and reshaped due to its confrontation with the 'outsiders' who have a dominant culture. Toto people, along with Toto (ISO 639-3 txo; Ethnologue 2020), also speak other neighbouring languages like Bangla and Nepali. Bangla and Nepali are the two dominating languages of this area. Grierson (1901) mentions Toto as a language of the Himalayan subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman Language family. Sanyal (1973) presented an ethnographic sketch and a list of words of Toto in his book, ‘The Meches and the Totos’. Driem (1995 & 2001) has discussed some linguistic features of Toto. The examples given in the paper were collected from the field visits of 2018 and 2024.

2.3 Mahali

The Mahali community speaks a particular variety of Mundari, which has been categorized as the Mahali language (Anderson 2008, Mahapatra 1979). Mahali is a variety in the continuum of Kherwarian languages. Mahali denotes a socially distinct and endogamous group among the Santal people (Anderson 2008). Mahali (Mahle or Mahli as in Ethnologue 2018) is also referred to as the bamboo-basket making community of West Bengal and Orissa (India). The main traditional occupation of the Mahali community is to weave different types of bamboo baskets. Locally, they are known as the basket-makers. They are also referred to as the artisan community (Das 2013, Panda & Mall 2013, Pan-2011). Driem (2007) mentions that the Austroasiatic language family is the oldest linguistic phylum in mainland South and Southeast Asia. Munda languages are a part of it. At present, the influences of the major Indo-Aryan languages of the area are endangering the Munda languages. “All Munda language communities are under heavy demographic and socio-economic pressure to assimilate linguistically to the local Indo-Aryan majority language”, (Driem 2007; 291).

2.4 Koda

Kodas are a tribe and the language found in West Bengal, India. The total number of the Koda population is 47,181 (Census 2011), which is nearly 3 percent of the total tribal population of West Bengal. Koda is also written as Kora and is spoken as /koɾa/ by community members (Lahiri 2020). The community members also refer to their language as *thar*. ‘Thar’ in this region is used for many local languages by their speakers. Grierson (1903) marks that ‘thar’ means the ‘language in fashion’. Grierson (1903) gives several names for Koda: *Khaora*, *Khaira*, *Khairyra*, etc. Though Koda is a Munda language, the name Koda is recognised as an Indo-Aryan word, which is related to digging. The main occupation of the Koda community is to dig the land. They generally specialise in earth-digging. However, Kora in Munda languages means *boy*, and the name of the language may have developed from there. The most recent work on Koda is a description of some aspects of Koda by Anderson (2008).

3. Endangered Language and Traditional Knowledge

All the above speech communities are shifting to the major languages of the area. These major languages are not the native languages of these areas, so they hardly carry any TEK, which is vital for understanding local environments, biodiversity, and climate patterns. Moreover, when the speakers are shifting to other languages, they are forgetting their language, leading to a loss of the TEK. For example, young Dhimel community members could not recall the names of the plants that we could find in their village. They would tell us the Bangla names of some of them, instead of the Dhimel words for others, they would say there is no name. But a few older members not only gave us the terms but also mentioned their medicinal value. The Dhimel community has not only adopted the Bangla language but also undergone acculturation. They had no concept of religion. They worshipped Nature, and so they had various religious practices that were in line with the sustainability of the local environment. But recently, they have built a temple in their village where Hindu Gods are worshipped (Lahiri 2018). The temple is decorated with plastic flowers. The concept of creating a building to worship idols is very new. Here, the connection between the community and Nature breaks. Sustainable religious practices lose value and shift to borrowed religious practices. Language shift and acculturation are interrelated and both lead to the loss of the traditional knowledge system.

The Toto community, till recently, was practising a self-sustainable life where there was no need to import anything from outside their village. Their houses were made on top of a tree with a storage for the fruits available in the area. Totopara, where Toto is spoken, is a place where we find lots of jackfruits and maize. The community knows how to store them for a longer period of time, without refrigerating them, so that they don't get rotten. The community also makes a type of thing called *koyam* from maize (*Sonja*). Now, with recent acculturation and language shift and government initiatives, people are shifting to modern houses where they can't store the maize or jackfruit without a refrigerator. As the language is endangered, the young generation does not communicate in Toto. There was very little intergenerational transmission of the language and the TKS. From the traditional way of storing the fruits, they have shifted to refrigerators, which adds to global warming. Sadly, traditional knowledge is lost as the medium of transmission of the knowledge is getting lost.

Old Toto songs carry indigenous knowledge about the community and the geography where they reside. The songs described the power of Nature (Sadu: Songs for energy of the moon and Jemo: Songs of energy of the sun) or the blessings of the almighty (Tashe song: Blessing of Ipsha (God)). The songs were closely related to Nature. But with modernization, we see a change in the worldview. Though older members still carry a positive attitude towards the older songs, the newer generation carries a negative attitude towards the older songs. They are shifting to popular Hindi and Nepali songs (Lahiri, 2024).

In the Mahali language, we can name 9 different types of bamboo while describing their features. For example, *ma?* is the term for bamboo, but there are compounds (modifier + bamboo) to describe the features. However, these modifiers are only used with bamboo like *kātama?* (a thick type of bamboo). The community members can very easily identify the bamboos according to their features and names, which is difficult for others to do. I argue that it is due to linguistic relativity that even the children of the community can identify the different kinds of bamboo and name them, which outsiders of the community can't do.

The community not only consumes bamboo but also follows norms to preserve it. They have certain taboos that are maintained and strictly followed by all the community members, maintaining sustainability in the environment. Like they do not cut bamboo on Tuesdays and Sundays. It is believed that Tuesday is the birthday of bamboo, hence it should not be cut on that day. On Sundays, the bamboos are not cut because they are believed to have a fever on Sundays. This type of belief system is transmitted through oral guidance and folklore. The Mahali linguistic community shows how protecting a language is crucial for conserving a specific ecosystem.

As the Koda community is largely involved with earth-digging, they encounter different types of ants. They not only have terms for all these ants, but they also know a particular type of ant (*mui?*) which can cure cough and cold. It is common knowledge across the community. We were also told that it is sold in the local market. Loss of this term, with the loss of the language, will lead to loss of this knowledge as well. Koda is a community that mainly worships the sun as their God. While the sun is the main or the head God, Nature is perceived as different forms of God. The word for God is '*bongga*', so the sun is also called '*bongga*'. The general term for *season* is also referred to as '*bongga*', as seasons are believed to be ruled by the sun. Every house has its own God. This God is referred to as '*ara bongga*' (house god). The semantic range of '*bongga*' is so wide that it is not only difficult to translate the word, but it is also difficult to translate the worldview that is reflected through this word.

The concept of totems often reflects a holistic worldview where humans are an integral part of nature, rather than separate from or superior to it. Language helps to frame and perpetuate this worldview, embedding it in daily communication and thought. Both the Mahali and Koda communities believe they have descended from various natural objects like animals, birds, trees, etc. They have around 38 totems like *g^hug^huar* (a type of bird), and *haf^hda* (wild swan). They used the name of their totems as their second names, but as they are shifting to other major

languages, they are replacing their second names with the second name patterns of the adopted speech community. This is also bringing change in the whole belief system and the worldview. The relationship between totems and language is a powerful example of how human culture, expressed through language, profoundly shapes and is shaped by the natural world. Totemic systems demonstrate how languages encode not only practical knowledge about biodiversity but also profound spiritual, social, and ethical frameworks for human-environment relationships. The health and vitality of native languages are thus critical for the transmission and perpetuation of totemic beliefs, which, in turn, contribute to the conservation of biocultural diversity and the maintenance of sustainable human societies. The erosion of native languages directly threatens the rich tapestry of totemic knowledge and the unique worldviews they represent.

4. Conclusion

Linguistics provides the tools to unlock, preserve, and understand the invaluable insights contained within traditional knowledge systems. By working collaboratively with indigenous communities, linguists can help ensure that these systems contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, fostering a future that is both ecologically sound and socially just. This interdisciplinary approach is not merely about preserving the past, but about building a more sustainable and equitable future for all. Languages offer unique ways of categorizing and understanding the world. Analysing the semantic domains related to flora, fauna, natural phenomena, and social structures within traditional languages can reveal sophisticated ecological knowledge and sustainable practices. Conceptual metaphors like totems, often deeply embedded in language, can also shed light on how communities perceive their relationship with the environment. For traditional knowledge to be effectively integrated into broader sustainable development initiatives, one needs to give equal weight to the language as well. Linguistic analysis can help uncover and interpret this ethnobotanical and ethno-zoological knowledge, which can be invaluable for biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, traditional medicine, and overall well-being of humans.

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From Local Landscape Lexicons to Global Goals: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge to Successfully Implement SDG15

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Abstract

Landscape is a universal domain of perception and linguistic research shows that communities differ greatly in how they define and categorize their environment, shaped by local practices and belief systems. Such variation challenges universalist approaches to the concept of landscape and highlights the need to integrate linguistic and cultural diversity to successfully implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly, SDG 15, Life on Land. Here, we present evidence from free-listing tasks with Dâw and Nadëb communities (Naduhup family, Northwest Amazonia, Brazil). Their responses reveal landscape categorizations rooted in subsistence practices and traditional ecological knowledge, with differences between the groups reflecting distinct histories and relationships to land despite inhabiting a similar local environment. These findings show that language is not only a cultural resource but also a practical tool for tailoring land rights negotiations and environmental policies to local worldviews, fostering more equitable and effective governance.

Introduction

Do all humans perceive, think about, and talk about landscape in the same way? While landscape is a universal domain of perception, linguistic and cognitive research has demonstrated that communities differ significantly in how they define, categorize, and linguistically encode the environment (Mark *et al.*, 2011; Burenhult & Levinson, 2008). Linguistics has shown that different languages segment and label the physical world using distinct semantic principles, often shaped by culturally specific practices, subsistence patterns, and belief systems (e.g., Mark *et al.*, 2011; Thornton, 2011; Basso, 1996; Ingold, 1993; Sapir, 1922). These findings challenge assumptions of conceptual universality and highlight the difficulty of applying global environmental categories, such as landscape, in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts. As such, this intimate relationship between land and language must be taken seriously in the design of sustainability agendas, particularly those related to Sustainable Development Goal 15: Life on Land. In this paper, we argue that the recognition and inclusion of linguistic diversity, especially in environmental domains such as landscape, is essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and aligns with current calls for an additional SDG18, dedicated to linguistic and cultural diversity.

We present evidence from our work on the linguistic encoding of landscape with Indigenous collaborators from the Dâw and Nadëb communities (Naduhup family) from Northwest Amazonia (Brazil). To investigate the concept of landscape through the lens of language, we conducted a free listing task in which community members listed terms associated with landscape. Across the two languages, community members listed terms that can be largely grouped into terms expressing flora and fauna and landforms, many of which correspond to common motifs for landscape free listing across societies (Van Putten *et al.*, 2020). And yet, a closer look at the most frequently listed items suggests a landscape categorization that is oriented toward functionally and culturally significant zones. Notably, we also observed variation between the two communities in the types of landforms and number of flora and fauna species listed, despite the shared ecological setting and despite being closely related languages. This underscores how the linguistic encoding of the environment can be shaped by locally specific values, histories, and interactions with land. Such variation provides further support for recognizing linguistic diversity as not just a subject of academic inquiry, but, as envisaged by the proposed SDG 18, a foundation for context-sensitive landscape management as advocated for by SDG15.

Dâw and Nadëb: Land, Language, and People

Dâw and Nadëb are two of the four languages spoken by peoples in the small Naduhup family (formerly “Makú” Epps & Bolaños, 2017). These groups traditionally inhabit the interfluvial zones of the middle and upper Rio Negro region in Northwestern Amazonia, an area characterized by dense river networks, food-rich forests, and partially mountainous terrain.

This region is not only ecologically diverse but also linguistically rich and is home to at least 23 languages from five language families (Epps & Stenzel, 2013). The Naduhup groups are distinctive within this multilingual landscape for two reasons: they do not participate in linguistic exogamy (intermarriage across language groups) and they maintain subsistence patterns based on foraging and forest-based mobility. Although most communities are now settled, aspects of

these traditional livelihoods remain central to their cultural identity, contrasting with the agricultural lifeways of neighboring Arawakan and Tukanoan peoples.

Within the Naduhup family, Hup and Yuhup are most closely related, with Dâw being a more distant sister and Nadëb occupying its own primary branch (Epps & Bolaños, 2017). Despite clear lexical similarities, these languages differ strikingly in grammar due to long-term contact with neighboring groups. Nadëb shows restructuring toward an Arawakan profile, reflecting intensive interaction with Arawakan speakers, while Dâw exhibits influences, however, to a lesser extent, associated with both Tukanoan and Arawakan contact (Epps & Obert, 2021; Epps & Bolaños, 2017).

These two communities, thus, provide a valuable context for examining how landscape concepts can be shaped by language, subsistence practices, and patterns of interaction. Their shared ecological setting and related languages allow us to explore how closely connected peoples may nonetheless differ in how they linguistically encode and conceptualize the environment.

Methods

For our data collection with Dâw and Nadëb community members, we employed a free listing task to generate a comprehensive inventory of landscape terms used in everyday contexts. Free listing is a well-established method for eliciting concepts within a semantic domain from an emic, or insider, perspective (Balée & Nolan, 2019; Bernard, 1994; Romney & D'Andrade, 1964). In this task, participants are asked to produce examples or instances related to a specified semantic domain. Analyzing the frequency and order of the listed terms provides insights into the conceptual organization of the domain. Terms that are mentioned both early and by many participants tend to be more familiar and prototypical, whereas those mentioned by only a few individuals may represent more peripheral or marginal concepts (Balée & Nolan, 2019).

For the Naduhup study, we conducted the free listing task with four speakers of Dâw and four speakers of Nadëb (see participant demographics in Table 1) within their respective communities. The task was administered by Obert and carried out, whenever possible, in Dâw and Nadëb.

Language	<i>n</i>	Woman	<i>M</i> age	Range age
Dâw	4	3	28	22–36
Nadëb	4	1	36	20–55

Table 1: Participant demographics

Before conducting the individual free listing sessions, Obert met with groups of Dâw and Nadëb teachers to discuss a suitable term that would capture the semantic domain of ‘landscape.’ Discussions with the Dâw teachers revealed that there is no direct equivalent for Brazilian Portuguese *paisagem* (‘landscape’) or related notions such as *natureza* (‘nature’) and *meio ambiente* (‘environment’). The group suggested the neologism *dâw wây’ pay*, literally “what we see”, as the term to define the semantic domain for the subsequent free listing task. By contrast, Nadëb speakers readily proposed the expression *nadëb sa hēj n’aa*, meaning “the forest/land of the Nadëb.”

Each individual session began with two practice domains—‘game animals’ and ‘body parts’—to familiarize participants with the task format. The domain of ‘landscape’ was always addressed last. For each domain, Obert introduced the relevant term in Dâw and Nadëb respectively and posed a prompt, such as for Dâw: *rûu – Pay âm xaxun?*, and for Nadëb: *harëng – H’ëd ôm hedoo?* (‘game animals – What are you thinking of?’). Responses were audio-recorded for later transcription. There was no time limit, and each session concluded when the participant indicated that they could not think of additional examples.

Results

On average, participants from both language groups listed 17 terms. Dâw speakers produced between 16 and 18 terms, while Nadëb speakers listed a broader range, with at least 11 and 29 terms at most. Notably, it was the oldest Nadëb participant (55 years) who listed the most terms (29) more quickly and with greater apparent ease than the other participants. This pattern may indicate that landscape expertise accumulates throughout a person’s lifetime and continues to develop with age. Alternatively, if landscape expertise is primarily acquired by early adulthood, the finding may instead suggest that younger generations have comparatively less knowledge of landscape terms than members of older generations, which makes the preservation and maintenance of land knowledge an even more urgent endeavor.

Overall, we identified 45 unique Dâw terms and 51 unique Nadëb terms (see Table 2). A similar number of terms were mentioned by more than one participant (15 Dâw (D) and 14 Nadëb (N) terms). For both speaker groups, the terms can be broadly grouped into three semantic categories common in landscape freelisting tasks (Van Putten *et al.*, 2020): flora and fauna species (*N* = 30; *D* = 22), landscape elements (*N* = 20; *D* = 21), and other terms (*N* = 1; *D* = 2).

Among the most frequently listed terms (i.e., those mentioned by at least two speakers), five pairs could be considered translation equivalents across the two languages, although only one pair is a clear cognate: *tyw n’aa* in Nadëb

and *tuuw* in Dâw both mean ‘path’. These five pairs all represent salient landscape features of Nadëb and Dâw surroundings: N: *kas’aag* – D: *wâak* (‘sandy soil forest’), N: *tamih* – D: *nâax póg* (‘main river body’), N: *wa-ěě* – D: *paas pëeg* (‘mountains’), and N: *kapyj* – D: *nâax pis* (‘creek’).

The remaining ten most frequent terms highlight important differences between the groups. Nadëb speakers most often listed the generic term for ‘forest’ *hëej*, while Dâw speakers did not list a generic term. Instead, they named several specific types of forest, such as *paa* (‘highland forest’), *waar* (‘overgrown swidden’), and *wâak* (‘sandy soil forest’ (regional Portuguese: *chavascal* or *caatinga*)). This suggests that the Dâw conceptualize forests primarily through distinct biomes that are directly tied to their subsistence activities, making these specific forest types more cognitively salient than a generalized notion of ‘forest.’

Another major difference concerns the treatment of flora species listed in the tasks. Nadëb speakers placed much greater emphasis on trees with edible fruits, including both domesticated species (e.g., *hoob* ‘abiu species’; *madyyk* ‘açai’; *jamad* ‘abiu species’; *jëë* (*Monopteryx uauçu*), *sawwym* ‘turu palm’; *wäng* ‘seje palm’) and wild species. In contrast, while the Dâw group did not emphasize these fruit-bearing species to the same extent, they also displayed a salient distinction between domesticated (*yüum* ‘generic domesticated plant’ vs. wild plants (*yüum xaay dee* ‘forest plants’, as well as domesticated animals (*rüu*) vs. wild animals (*rüu xaay dee*) in generic terms. These patterns reveal shared semantic domains between the two groups—both mention flora/fauna and landscape elements—yet there are marked differences in salience, i.e., which terms are listed earlier and more frequently. For example, Dâw speakers tend to mention landscape terms earlier and more consistently, reflecting the centrality of specific forest types and terrain features in their daily mobility and subsistence practices. Nadëb speakers, in contrast, foreground flora, particularly fruit-bearing trees, both early in the freelisting task and throughout their lists.

This contrast suggests that each group’s landscape conceptualization is shaped by distinct ways of engaging with the local ecologies. For the Dâw, navigating and exploiting different forest types is critical for hunting and gathering, making these spatial distinctions cognitively salient. Nadëb practices, by comparison, emphasize the cultivation and foraging of fruit species, which explains the prominence of domesticated and wild fruit trees in their responses. Thus, while both groups share a broad conceptual framework of the landscape, the relative salience of terms reflects culturally specific ways of interacting with the environment, illustrating how language encodes ecological knowledge and preferred subsistence practices.

However, as pointed out by Janz (2011: 114), term frequency does not necessarily indicate cultural importance. Vice versa, terms which aren’t mentioned may be important nonetheless, but regarded as sacred or unique. This is one of the limitations of the free listing method which can be remedied by triangulation with ethnographic data, as we tried to demonstrate. Furthermore, free listing is apt to generate more refined research questions which can be followed up by discussing results with community members. For instance, we noticed that terms related to bitter manioc cultivation (e.g., *kaaw* ‘manioc garden’, *bood top* ‘manioc roasting house’) were more salient among the Dâw, even though it is not their traditional subsistence practice, as they frequently pointed out. According to Dâw elders, they only recently adopted bitter manioc cultivation as part of a broader shift from a mobile to a settled lifestyle, hence bitter manioc has acquired symbolic weight in processes of identity reconstruction and social positioning. This novelty and social significance could explain why manioc-related terms were disproportionately salient in their free lists. Conversely, the absence of manioc-related terminology in the Nadëb lists, despite their longer engagement with manioc cultivation mediated through potential long-term contact with Arawakan agriculturalists (cf. Epps & Obert, 2021), may indicate that for them, manioc has become a normalized and unmarked part of daily subsistence, and thus does not stand out as particularly salient.

F	Dâw terms	Translation	Translation	Nadëb terms	F
4	<i>bee</i>	tree	forest	<i>hëej</i>	3
3	<i>kaaw</i>	manioc garden	species of abiu (fruit tree, <i>Pouteria caimito</i> family)	<i>hoob</i>	3
3	<i>paas</i>	mountains	domesticated açai; <i>Euterpe oleracea</i>	<i>madyyk</i>	3
3	<i>tâwâat</i>	bird (generic)	game animal (generic)	<i>harëng</i>	2
3	<i>wâak</i>	sandy soil forest; <i>chavascal</i> (regional Brazilian Portuguese)	species of abiu (fruit tree, <i>Pouteria caimito</i> family)	<i>jamad</i>	2
3	<i>waar</i>	overgrown manioc garden; regional Portuguese ‘capoeira’	uauçu tree (<i>Monopteryx uauçu</i>)	<i>jëë</i>	2
2	<i>bood top</i>	manioc roasting house	smaller forest creek	<i>kapyj</i>	2
2	<i>mem</i>	butterfly (generic)	sandy soil forest; <i>chavascal</i> (regional Brazilian Portuguese)	<i>kas’aag</i>	2
2	<i>nâak</i>	domesticated açai; <i>Euterpe oleracea</i>	turu palm (edible fruit)	<i>sawwym</i>	2

2	<i>nâax pis</i>	creek	fish (generic)	<i>tah'ÿÿb</i>	2
2	<i>nâax pôog</i>	main river body; toponym referring to Rio Negro	river	<i>tamiih</i>	2
2	<i>paa</i>	highland forest; regional Portuguese 'terra firme'	path	<i>tyw n'aa</i>	2
2	<i>paas pêeg</i>	big mountain; also place name for Bela Adormecida	mountains	<i>wa-ëë</i>	2
2	<i>tuuw</i>	path	seje palm (edible fruit)	<i>wäng</i>	2
2	<i>xusee</i>	rapids	tree (edible fruits); species unknown	<i>ara</i>	1
1	<i>'lëep</i>	clearing	tree (generic)	<i>b'aah</i>	1
1	<i>'wênh</i>	forest with dense vegetation	fruits (generic)	<i>b'aah aag</i>	1
1	<i>bee çaat</i>	tree species (unknown)	large (generic) trees	<i>b'aah hewëëh dooh</i>	1
1	<i>bee çoo</i>	flower (generic)	bitter manioc	<i>boog</i>	1
1	<i>bee pêeg</i>	big (generic) tree	rapids	<i>cachoeira (PB)</i>	1
1	<i>bee reew</i>	many (generic) trees	tree (edible fruits); species unknown	<i>gatsûk</i>	1
1	<i>bug uu</i>	cloud	beach	<i>hood</i>	1
1	<i>buuj</i>	lizard	wild tuber species	<i>hooj</i>	1
1	<i>bux</i>	bat	wild tuber species	<i>jahoow</i>	1
1	<i>çuuw tâag</i>	peach palm tree; <i>Bactris gasipaes</i>	wild cupuaçu	<i>jakaro nadëëts dooh</i>	1
1	<i>dâw nũ xóo rabet ked</i>	people in a canoe	domesticated cupuaçu	<i>jakaro yb</i>	1
1	<i>kas eeg xaay dee'</i>	wild forest fruits	(one's) manioc garden	<i>ji gëëw</i>	1
1	<i>mõor</i>	oxbow lake	lit. What we hunt in the sky, i.e. bigger birds	<i>ji kebooh dooh poop habong dooh</i>	1
1	<i>mũu</i>	Tree (edible fruits); <i>Pouteria ucuqui</i>	(one's) house	<i>ji tób</i>	1
1	<i>rëer</i>	snake (generic)	plants (generic)	<i>joom</i>	1
1	<i>rôm</i>	local domesticated fruit tree; 'abiu', <i>Pouteria caimito</i>	Edible fruit tree	<i>kananuur</i>	1
1	<i>rũu</i>	game (also domesticated animals like dogs and chickens)	Tree (edible fruits); species unknown	<i>karahoor</i>	1
1	<i>rũu xaay dee'</i>	game animals from the forest	oxbow lake	<i>karajaa</i>	1
1	<i>ruul</i>	local domesticated fruit tree; 'cupuaçu', <i>Theobroma grandiflorum</i>	nut tree	<i>kené</i>	1
1	<i>tukmâr</i>	local domesticated fruit; 'tucumã', <i>Astrocaryum aculeatum</i>	turu palm	<i>looj</i>	1
1	<i>tũn</i>	island	tree (edible fruits); <i>Pouteria ucuqui</i>	<i>mã</i>	1
1	<i>tũw pêeg</i>	big path; also a place name	honey (generic)	<i>mabaa</i>	1
1	<i>xalãs</i>	car	açaí that grows in sandy soil forest	<i>madyyk kas'aag buuj</i>	1
1	<i>xeew</i>	beach	Rio Uneiuxi	<i>Man'uuts</i>	1
1	<i>xutum</i>	sun/moon	water/rain	<i>naëng</i>	1

1	<i>yaak</i>	bitter manioc root	umari (edible fruit tree)	<i>p'aats</i>	1
1	<i>yoy paas</i>	Yoj mountains; place name	stone/rocks	<i>pā</i>	1
1	<i>yu'</i>	heat	community	<i>panang</i>	1
1	<i>yūum</i>	domesticated plant (generic)	old/uninhabited community	<i>panang paah</i>	1
1	<i>yūum xaay dee'</i>	native plants from the forest (generic)	igarapé Natal	<i>rakob</i>	1
			river mouth	<i>ta g'aad</i>	1
			flooded forest	<i>tajuu</i>	1
			path cut in a river bend	<i>takahod</i>	1
			wild tuber	<i>took</i>	1
			buriti	<i>tsëëng</i>	1
			edible fruit tree	<i>wao-si</i>	1

Table 2: Dâw and Nadëb terms, ordered from most frequent (top) to least frequent (bottom). Bold-faced terms indicate the presence of presumed translation equivalents in both lists. F = frequency.

Conclusions

Our study shows that variation in how communities linguistically encode and conceptualize the landscape is more than a matter of academic interest—it is a practical tool for advancing sustainable land management. The free listing data from Dâw and Nadëb speakers reveal that local landscape categories can be deeply shaped by subsistence practices, histories, and identities. Such insights are crucial for SDG 15, which seeks to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (United Nations, 2015). If policies are designed around external, universalist categories of land and environment, they risk overlooking the ways communities engage with and govern their territories (Burenhult, 2023; Pascual *et al.*, 2022). By integrating linguistic knowledge, SDG 15 initiatives can be better aligned with local worldviews, leading to more culturally coherent and politically effective interventions. Recognizing linguistic diversity—potentially through the proposed SDG 18—is therefore key to building equitable and context-sensitive sustainability strategies under SDG 15.

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Euskara eta kulturartekotasuna. Hizkuntza gutxitu baten erabilera sustatzeko erronka testuinguru kulturalen batean.

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Laburpena

Lan honetan aurkezten den esperientziak erakusten du nola sustatu hizkuntza gutxitu bat (euskara) harrera eta erabilera hizkuntza moduan immigrazioa gora egiten ari den testuinguru batean. “Euskara eta kulturartekotasuna” proiektua 40 udalerrian gauzatzen ari da. Eskoletako hezkuntza komunitateekin elkarlanean lehenengo, eta herriko beste eragile batzuekin batera ondoren, hainbat irizpide landu eta hainbat tresna sortu dira euskararen erabilera, euskara ulertzen ez dutenekin komunikazioa eta pertsonen arteko harremanak eta kulturartekotasuna sustatzeko. Testuinguru demolinguistikoak agerian uzten du etorkinen kopuruak hazten jarraituko duela, eta horrek, beste faktore batzuekin batera, eragin zuzena izango du transmisioan, ezagutzean eta erabileran. Esperientzia honekin erakutsi nahi dugu nola sustatu euskararen zein etxeko hizkuntzen aldeko jarrera eta ekimena, nola erraztu identitate pluralen eraikuntza, eta nola uztartu euskararen erabilera eta kulturarteko bizikidetzak. Horretarako egiten den prozesuan espazioak eta denborak antolatzen dira ikastetxeetako irakasle eta familiekin zein herriko beste hainbat eragilarekin hainbat gogoeta eta ekintza sustatzeko.

Hizkuntza gutxitua testuinguru kulturalen batean

Euskal gizarteak hainbat hamarkada daramatza euskara berreskuratzeko lanean inplikaturik. Berreskuratze prozesu horretarako bide nagusietako bat euskara eskolan irakastea izan da (Gorter & Cenoz, 2011), eta horrek emaitza positiboak eman ditu, bereziki Euskal Autonomi Erkidegoan (Siadeco, 2025). Hala ere, euskara urrun dago oraindik normalizatuta egotetik: azken inkesta soziolinguistikoaren arabera, Euskal Herriko euskararen ezagutza % 36,2koa da (Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoko Administrazioa Kultura eta Hizkuntza Politika Saila, 2024), baina alde nabarmenak daude lurralde eta udalerrien arabera. Egoeraren aurrean prozesuarekiko kezka eta ahalegin sozial handiagoa egiteko premia azpimarratzen dira, eta erronka handien artean aipatzen da gero eta jende gehiago iristen dela beste herrialde batzuetatik, eta, oro har, ez dutela hizkuntza gutxitua ikasten, gehiengoarena baizik (Barquín & Goikoetxea, 2022; Begirune, 2023; Siadeco, 2023). Proiektzio demolinguistikoek erakusten diguten panorama, gainera, ez da euskararekiko baikorra (Siadeco, 2025).

Immigrazio datu batzuk ematearren, Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan, biztanleen % 14,1 atzerrian jaio da (Ikuspegi, 2025), eta 2024an jaioberrien % 34,8k ama atzerritarra izan zuen (EUSTAT, 2025). Nafarroan, biztanleen % 17,9 atzerrian jaioa da (Ikuspegi, 2025), eta 2023an jaiotako haurren % 27,8k ama atzerritarra izan zuen (Nastat, 2023). Datuen argitara, esan daiteke jatorri atzerritarreko ikasle eta familien presentzia esanguratsua dela hezkuntza-sisteman, baita udalerri euskaldunetan ere. Ikasle horiek, gainerakoak bezala, ikaste-hizkuntza euskara duten ikastetxeetan eskolatzen dira, baina haien familiek ez dute hizkuntza hori ezagutzen eta, kasu askotan, iritsi aurretik ez zuten horren berri ere. Familia horiek euskara-erabilera oso handiko herrietako ikastetxeetara ere iritsi dira: adibidez, 2021-2022 ikasturtean Zaldibiako ikastetxeko Haur Hezkuntzako haurren familien % 38,8k jatorri atzerritarra zuen. Eta joera hori areagotzen ari da herri askotan. Horrek zaildu egiten du egoera guztietan euskaraz hitz egitea eta aldi berean iritsi berri diren familiekiko komunikazioa eta harremana bermatzea.

Esan dezagun, jarraitu baino lehen, euskararen biziberritze prozesua azken urteotan aurkitzen ari den zailtasunak askotarikoak direla (Iurrebaso, 2023). Ez da egokia, beraz, etorri diren herritarrei prozesuaren erantzukizuna egozte. Eta, aldi berean, immigrazioa oso kontuan hartzeko faktorea da. Demolinguistikaren arloan, aro berri baten hasieran egotearen kontzientzia zabaltzen ari da. Siadecoren ikerlanaren ondorioen artean (2025) azaltzen da atzerrian jaiotakoek biztanlerian duten pisuak nabarmen egingo duela gora, 2036an %23,2 izateraino —hazteko asko gaztelania lehen hizkuntza dutenak— eta joera demografikoek berebiziko eragina izango dutela euskararen bilakaeran: transmisioan, ezagutzean eta erabileran.

Euskara eta kulturartekotasuna hezkuntza komunitatean

Testuinguru eta proiektzio horien erdian, azken lau urteetan Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoan eta Nafarroan garatzen ari den esperientzia bat aurkeztera gatoz. Oraingoan 40 udalerrian gauzatzen ari da, gehienak Udalerri Euskaldunen

Mankomunitatekoak (UEMA¹) eta esperientzia horren bidez euskara eta kulturartekotasuna artikulatzeko ahalegina sustatzen ari da. Egitasmoaren izena honakoa da: euskara eta kulturartekotasuna gure hezkuntza-komunitatean.

Proiektu pilotu moduan jarri zen abian 2021-2022 ikasturtean Zaldibiako udalerrian. Atzeritik etorritako familien kopurua gora egiten ari zen, eta horrek eragindako kezka eta erronkari erantzuteko, eskolak laguntza eskatu zuen eta Mondragon Unibertsitateak eta UEMAk elkarlanean bultzatu zuten proiektua². Horrekin hiru helburu lortu nahi ziren: 1) ikastetxean euskaraz bizitzen jarraitzea, 2) euskaraz ez zekiten familiei (gehienak jatorri atzeritarrekoak) komunikazioa eta parte-hartzea erraztea, eta 3) harremanak eta kulturartekotasuna sustatzea. Hasierako kezka eskola-eremutik abiatu bazen ere, gaur egun proiektua udalerrietako hainbat eragileren arteko akordio gisa gauzatzen ari da, hau da, herrian euskararen erabilera, euskara ez dakitenen ulermena eta kulturarteko harremanak sustatu nahi dira.

Esperientzia hau euskal komunitatea bere hizkuntza mantendu eta biziberritzeko egiten ari den ahaleginaren adibide bat da, eta, aldi berean, etorritako pertsonen hizkuntzekiko estimuan ere oinarritzen da. Horretarako, euskararen aldeko jarrera ez ezik, etxeko hizkuntzak transmititzearen aldeko gogoeta ere bultzatzen da, harrera gizartean gaztelania ez diren beste hizkuntza guztien egoera ere minorizatu dela kontuan izanda. Gogoan dugu, halaber, hizkuntza lotuta dagoela identitatearen eta komunitatearen eraikuntzarekin, eta, horiei erantzuteko, gure esperientziak apustua egiten du identitate pluralak sustatzearen alde (Maalouf, 1998; Barquín, 2009; Urizar et al, 2023). Ikuspegi hori integrazioaren eta elkarbizitzaren gakotzat jotzen dugu eta, baita, horrekin lerrotatuta, komunitatearen garapen jasangarriaren eragileztat ere.

Prozesua eta tresnak

Urteko esku-hartzea prozesu gisa antolatzen da, eta abiapuntua euskararen estatusari eta erabilerari buruzko oinarritzko gakoak azaltzeko saio bat izaten da (Anaut, 2013; Barquín, 2008; Belmar, 2024; Fishman, 1991; Iurrebaso, 2023; Izagirre, 2010; Torrealdei, 1998; Zapata, 2016, 2021), proiektuan parte hartzen duten eragile guztiekin partekatzen dena. Horrekin batera jorratzen dira, besteak beste, familia guztiekiko komunikazioaren garrantzia (Quintas et al, 2022), familiek lurraldeko hizkuntza gutxituarekiko duten jarreraren garrantzia (Ni Dhiorbháin et al, 2023), etxeko hizkuntzen garrantzia, eta familien eta eskolaren hizkuntza-politikaren planifikazioa (Coelho et al, 2013; Cummins, 2017; Curdt-Christiansen, 2022; Hollebeke et al, 2020). Oinarri horiek partekatzea ezinbestekoa da prozesuan proposatzen diren estrategiak eta tresnak inplementatzeko. Proiektuak espazioak eta denborak proposatzen ditu eztabaidarako eta ekintzarako, herriko askotariko eragileek batera eta modu dialogikoan esku har dezaten, bakoitzak bere eragin-esparruan eta, elkarrekin, herrian.

Aipatutako tresnei dagokienez, mota eta helburu desberdinetako tresnak ditugu. Horietako batzuk diseinatzeko orduan, hezkuntza-komunitatean helduen arteko bilkura eta komunikazio-egoerak identifikatu dira, familiek nolabait parte hartzen duten egoerak, eta komunikazio-egoera horietan elkar ulertzeko eta elkarrekin aritzeko estrategiak diseinatu dira, egoera horiek kudeatzeko hizkuntza-trataera eta, aldi berean, komunikazioa eta familien arteko harremana sustatzeko. Proposatutako tresna horien artean ditugu marko linguistikoa partekatze saioa (aurreko paragrafoan aipatu duguna), proiektua laburtzeko diptikoa, bilera eta jardueretan komunitateko kideek egindako aldibereko itzulpena, bi faseko bilerak (bigarren faseak familien parte-hartzea bilatzen du), idatzizko oharak bidaltzeko irizpideak, familien gelako whatsapp/telegram taldeen kudeaketa edo familia-organoen bileren hizkuntza-trataera.

Beste tresna batzuek, berri, erakundeetan hizkuntzak erabiltzeko eta kulturartekotasuna sustatzeko alderdien gaineko gogoeta proposatzen dute, gogoeta horiek erakundeen printzipioetan eta egiteko moduetan eragin dezaketelakoan. Proposatutako gogoeta horien artean ditugu etxeko hizkuntzen trataera, pertsona atzeritarren parte-hartzea erakundeetako organo eta ekintzetan, eskolaz kanpoko jardueretan jatorri atzeritarreko familietako haurren parte-hartzearen sustapena edo kulturarteko ospakizunak antolatzeko irizpideak. Eta hezkuntza-komunitateak tresna horiek elkarrekin aztertze eta egokitzeko, probatzeko eta ebaluatzeko prest egon dira.

Une honetan hamabost tresna daude erakundeen esku-hartzean eragiten lagundu nahi dutenak, proiektua martxan dagoenetik sortu, egokitu eta gehitzen joan direnak. Hurrengo lerroetan haietako 4 azalduko ditugu labor, proiektuaren inplementazioan nolako ekintzak egiten diren ulertzeko.

Bilera eta jardueretan aldibereko itzulpena. Garrantzitsua da bileretan edo egiten diren ekintzetan euskaraz dakitenak eta ez dakitenak elkarrekin egotea, hor sustatu ahal direlako harremanak eta garrantzitsua delako gogoeta partekatua egitea, beraz, garrantzitsua da esaten dena denok ulertzea, eta hobe aldi berean. Horretarako, aldibereko itzulpena egitea bideratu da telefono mugikorra erabilita, Telegram aplikazioko ahozko kanalaren bidez. Itzulpena euskaratik gaztelaniara

¹ UEMA erakunde publikoa da eta bertan boluntarioki parte hartzen duten udalerrietako biztanleen %70etik gora euskalduna da.

² Azaltzen ari garen proiektuaren diseinua eta tresnak artikulatu hau sinatzen dugunok egin genituen eta baita prozesu batzuen aholkularitza egin ere. Une honetan, UEMako teknikariak ari dira UEMako herrietako prozesuak kudeatzen, eta autoreok udalerrri euskaldunak ez diren herrietan ari gara prozesuak egokitzen.

izaten da orokorrean, baina beste aukera batzuk ere egon daitezke, horretarako prest dauden pertsonak aurkituz gero: euskaratik arabierara, euskaratik errumanierara... Kasu horietan kanal bat ireki daiteke hizkuntza bakoitzeko. Itzulpena ez da profesionala, komunitateko pertsonen egina da. Beraz, ez da perfektua, eta euskaldunei zein euskara ez dakitenei ahalegina eskatzen die, ahalegin partekatua da, elkarrekikotasun-ariketa bat da.

Familiekin ikasturte hasierako bilera. Proposamena da bilera hori hiru alderditan eraldatzea: aldibereko itzulpena, bileraren egitura eta gurasoak erakartzeko motibazioa. Gelako tutoreak gurasoekin egiten duen ikasturte hasierako bilera testuinguru bikaina da familien arteko harremanean eragiteko. Horretarako, bileraren forma eta egitura aldatu da. Batetik, bilerak euskaraz egiten dira aldibereko itzulpenarekin. Horrek irakasleei elkarlana eskatzen die, bai bilerak prestatzeko, bai batak bestearen bileran itzultzaile lana egiteko. Bestetik, bilerak bi fase izango ditu, lehendabizi, informatiboa, eta, ondoren, gurasoen arteko dinamika eta elkarriketa. Bigarren fase horretan, gurasoak taldeka biltzen dira galdera edo gai baten inguruan hitz egiteko, eta horren ostean gelan partekatzen dituzte ondorioak. Proposatutako gaiak esanguratsuak izan behar dira, gurasoek benetako ekarpena egin ahal izateko. Dinamika horrek norabide bakarreko komunikazioa gainditzien laguntzen du, familien parte-hartzea, ekarpena eta partaide izatearen sentimendua sustatzen ditu, eta familien arteko harremana eta giro ona eraikitzen laguntzen du, une horretan eta bileratik irten ondoren ere bai. Bilerako aldaketak erronka handia izan dira irakasle askorentzat eta kezka ere eragin dute. Baina esperientzia berria oso positiboki baloratu dute, irakasleek ez ezik, baita familiak ere, eta, kasu gehienetan, aldaketei eutsi egin diete, bai eta aldaketa horiek eskolako beste ekintza batzuei aplikatu ere.

Gelako Whatsapp/Telegram taldeak. Familien arteko komunikazio eta harremana gelako whatsapp taldeen bidez egiten da askotan. Kasu batzuetan gela berean familiak bi taldetan banatuta ere egon daitezke, euskaldunak eta euskaldunak ez direnak, ulermena bermatzeko. Talde bakarra egon izan denean, gatazkak sortu izan dira maiz, euskaraz adierazten direnen eta euskaraz ulertzen ez dutenen artean. Egoera horren aurrean, Telegram aplikazioa erabiltzea sustatu da aplikazio horrek itzultzailea txertatuta duelako, beraz, euskaldunak mezuak euskara hutsean bidal ditzake eta, itzultzeko aukera aktibatuta izanez gero, mezuen gainean bi klik eginez mezuak telefonoa konfiguratuta dagoen hizkuntzara itzultzeko aukera dago. Horretarako, euskaldunak ere ahalegin berezia egin behar du, batzuentzat batere erraza ez dena: mezuak euskara batuan eta zuzen idazten saiatzea, aplikazioaren itzultzaileak egoki itzuli ahal izateko. Estrategia honek ere ahalegin partekatua eskatzen du.

Etxeko hizkuntzen presentzia eta trataera. Eragile bakoitzak aztertuko du bere erakundean nolako presentzia edota trataera duten euskara ez diren familia-hizkuntzek, eta landuko du nola erakutsi estimua edota nola eman lekua hizkuntza horiei bere eremuan. Hau eskola-eremuan hartzen da bereziki aintzat, eta horretarako eskolako hizkuntza guztiak zerrendatu eta ongi-etorri mezuak jartzen dira, hiztegitxoak sortzen dira, euskararen egunean etxeko hizkuntzei tokia egiten zaie, familiak geletara gonbidatzen dira... Telegram taldeetan ere badute tokia familia hizkuntzek, euskaldunak euskaraz bidali ahal du eta beste hizkuntza baten jasotakoa itzuli ere bai.

Hondar hitzak

Ikaskuntzak ugariak izan dira, eta inplikaturako pertsonen balorazioak, positiboak. Gero eta udalerrri gehiagok dute parte hartzeko eta aldaketa-dinamikak sustatzeko interesa, baita UEMATik kanpoko hainbat herri ere —non euskararen ezagutza eta erabilera ez den UEMAKo herrietan bezain altua—, jakitun baitira etorkinen kopuruak gora egiten jarraituko duela datozen urteetan euskal gizartean (Aierdi, 2022; Siadeco, 2025). Beraz, tresnak garatzen jarraitu behar dugu euskara biziberritzeko eta bizikidetzat eraikitze bidean aurrera egiten jarraitzeko. Proiektu honek bide horretan lagundu nahi du, komunitateko kideek elkarrekin pentsatzea eta beren komunitatea modu kolaboratiboan eraldatzea erraztuko duten espazio eta estrategien bidez, modu inklusiboan eta jasangarrian. Euskara erdigunean jarri dugu, baina elkarbizitza eta kulturartekotasuna aldi berean eraikitze. Euskara da proiektuaren abiapuntu eta jomuga, baina ezin dugu ahaztu elkarrekikotasun ariketa bat dela eta lankidetzan egin behar dugula. Hori da honen izpiritua.

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Basque and Interculturality: The Challenge of Promoting a Minoritised Language in a Multicultural Context.

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Summary

The experience presented in this work explains how to promote a minority language (Basque) as a language of reception and use in a context of increasing immigration. “Basque and interculturality” project is being implemented in 40 municipalities. First in collaboration with the educational communities of the schools and then with other local actors, different criteria have been developed, and tools have been created to promote the use of the Basque language, communication and interpersonal relations and interculturalism with those who do not understand the Basque language. The demolinguistic context shows that the number of immigrants will continue to grow, which, together with other factors, will have a direct impact on transmission, knowledge and use. With this experience we want to show how to promote attitudes and initiative in favour of both the Basque language and home languages, how to facilitate the

construction of pluralistic identities, and how to combine the use of the Basque language with intercultural coexistence. In the process carried out for this purpose, spaces and times are organized with the teachers and families of the centres, as well as with other local actors, to promote various reflections and actions.

Minoritised language in a multicultural context

Basque society has been involved in the recovery of the Basque language for decades. One of the main strategies for this recovery process has been the teaching of Basque language in school (Gorter & Cenoz, 2011), which has yielded positive results, especially in the Basque Autonomous Community (Siadeco, 2025). However, the Basque language is still far from standardised: according to the latest sociolinguistic survey, the knowledge of the Basque language in the Basque Country is 36.2% (Administration of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Department of Culture and Linguistic Policy, 2024), but there are significant differences between territories and municipalities. Attention is drawn to the concern for the process and the need for greater social effort in the face of the situation, and among the major challenges is the increasing influx of people from other countries, who generally do not learn the minority language but the majority (Barquín & Goikoetxea, 2022; Begirune, 2023; Siadeco, 2023). Moreover, the picture shown by demolingistic projections is not positive towards the Euskera (Siadeco, 2025).

To provide some immigration data, 14.1 per cent of the population in the Basque Country was born abroad (Ikuspegi, 2025) and 34.8 per cent of newborns had foreign mothers in 2024 (EUSTAT, 2025). In Navarre, 17.9 per cent of the population was born abroad (Ikuspegi, 2025), and 27.8 per cent of children born in 2023 had a foreign mother (Nastat, 2023). The data show a significant presence of students and families of foreign origin in the education system, as well as in Basque municipalities. These students, like the rest, are enrolled in schools where the language of learning is Basque, but their families do not know it, and in many cases, they did not even know it before their arrival. These families have also reached schools in villages with a very high level of Basque use: for example, 38.8 per cent of families with children's education at the Zaldibia school in 2021-2022 were of foreign origin. And this trend is increasing in many towns. This makes it difficult to speak Basque in all circumstances, while ensuring communication and contact with newly arrived families.

Let us say, before continuing, that the difficulties encountered in the process of reviving the Basque language in recent years are varied (Iurrebaso, 2023). It is therefore not appropriate to attribute responsibility for the process to the citizens who have come, and at the same time, immigration is a factor that must be taken into serious consideration. In the field of demolingistics, there is a growing awareness of being at the beginning of a new era. Among the conclusions of Siadeco's study (2025) is that the weight of those born abroad in the population will increase considerably, to 23.2% by 2036 — many of them with Spanish as their first language — and that demographic trends will have a decisive influence on the evolution of the Basque language: in transmission, knowledge and use.

Basque and interculturalism in the educational community

Amidst these contexts and projections, we come to present an experience that has been developing in the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarre over the past four years. At the moment it is being carried out in about 40 municipalities, most of them belonging to the Association of Basque-speaking Municipalities (UEMA³), and through this experience it is promoting an effort to articulate the Basque language and interculturalism. The name of the project is Basque and interculturality in our educational community.

It was launched as a pilot project in the 2021-2022 school year in the municipality of Zaldibia. The number of families coming from abroad was increasing, and in response to this concern and challenge, the school asked for help and Mondragon Unibertsitatea and UEMA jointly promoted the project⁴. The project aimed to achieve three objectives: (1) to continue living in Basque at school; (2) to facilitate communication and participation of families who did not know Basque (mostly of foreign origin); and (3) to promote relations and interculturalism. Although the initial concern started from the school environment, the project is currently being implemented as an agreement between various municipal actors to promote the use of Basque in the municipality, the understanding of those who do not know Basque and to foster intercultural relations.

This experience is an example of the efforts being made by the Basque community to preserve and revitalize its language, while at the same time being based on respect for the languages of the people who have come. To this end, the initiative

³ UEMA is a public institution in which more than 70% of the inhabitants of the municipalities participating on a voluntary basis are Basque.

⁴ The design and tools of the project we are outlining were made by those of us who signed this article and advised on some processes. Now, the UEMA technicians are managing the processes in the villages of UEMA, and the authors are adapting the processes in the villages that are not Basque municipalities.

not only promotes a positive attitude toward Basque, but also encourages reflection on the transmission of home languages, taking into account that, in the host society, all languages other than Spanish are often marginalized. It is also important to remember that language is closely linked to the construction of identity and community; to address this, our experience is committed to fostering plural identities (Maalouf, 1998; Barquín, 2009; Urizar *et al*, 2023). We consider this perspective to be key to integration and coexistence, and, aligned with it, a driving force for the sustainable development of the community.

Process and tools

The annual intervention is organized as a process and the starting point is an attempt to explain the linguistic framework for explaining the basic keys to the status and use of the Basque language (Anaut, 2013; Barquín, 2008; Belmar, 2024; Fishman, 1991; Iurrebaso, 2023; Izagirre, 2010; Torrealldai, 1998; Zapata, 2016, 2021), which is shared with all the actors involved in the project. In parallel, the project addresses, among other aspects, the importance of communication with all families (Quintas *et al*, 2022), the significance of families' attitudes toward the local minoritized language (Ní Dhiorbháin *et al*, 2023), the role of home languages, and the planning of language policies for families and the school (Coelho *et al*, 2013; Cummins, 2017; Curdt-Christiansen, 2022; Hollebeke *et al*, 2020). Sharing these bases is essential for the implementation of the strategies and tools proposed in the process. The project provides spaces and times for discussion and action, enabling the diverse actors in the municipality to engage collaboratively and dialogically, each within their sphere of influence and collectively within the community.

As for the instruments mentioned, we have instruments of different kinds and purposes. In designing some of them, adult meetings and communication situations have been identified in the educational community, situations in which families are involved in some way, and strategies have been designed to understand and interact in these communication situations in order to promote linguistic treatment and, at the same time, communication and the relationship between families in order to manage these situations. These proposed tools include a session to share the linguistic framework (referred to in the preceding paragraph), a brochure to summarize the project, simultaneous translation of community members into meetings and activities, two-phase meetings (the second phase seeks the participation of families), criteria for sending written notes, management of whatsapp/telegram groups in the family classroom, or language treatment of family body meetings.

Other instruments propose a reflection on the aspects of the use of languages and the promotion of interculturalism in organizations, which may affect the principles and ways of doing so. The proposed considerations include the treatment of home languages, the participation of foreign persons in institutional bodies and activities, the promotion of the participation of children from foreign families in extracurricular activities or the criteria for the organization of intercultural celebrations. And the educational community has been willing to study, adapt, test and evaluate these tools together.

At the moment there are fifteen instruments which are intended to contribute to the intervention of the institutions, and which have been created, adapted and expanded since the project was under way. The following lines summarize 4 of them to understand the actions taken in the implementation of the project.

Simultaneous translation in meetings and activities. It is important that those who know and do not know Basque are together at meetings or events, as this fosters relationships and enables shared reflection. Therefore, it is essential that everyone understands what is being said, and ideally at the same time. To achieve this, simultaneous translation is provided using mobile phones through the audio channel of the Telegram App. Translation is generally from Basque to Spanish, but there may be other options if volunteers are available, for example from Basque into Arabic or Romanian... In these cases, a channel can be opened for each language. The translation is not professional; it is carried out by community members. Consequently, it is not perfect, and it requires effort from both Basque speakers and those who do not know Basque. It is a shared effort and a practice of reciprocity.

Beginning-of-the-school-year meeting with families. The proposal is to transform this meeting in three ways: simultaneous translation, meeting structure, and motivation to engage parents. The initial meeting that class tutors hold with parents at the start of the school year provides an excellent context for fostering relationships among families. To this end, the form and structure of the meeting has been changed. On the one hand, meetings are held in Basque with simultaneous translation. This requires teachers to work together, both to prepare meetings and to work as translators at each other's meetings. On the other hand, the meeting will consist of two phases: an initial informational phase, followed by a second phase focused on parent dynamics and dialogue. In this second phase, parents gather in small groups to discuss a question or topic, and subsequently share the outcomes with the class. The proposed topics must be significant so that parents can make a real contribution. This dynamic helps to overcome one-way communication, encourages the participation, contribution and feeling of belonging of families, and helps to build the relationship and good atmosphere between families, even at that time and after leaving the meeting. The changes at the meeting have been a challenge for

many teachers and have also caused concern. But the new experience has been highly appreciated not only by teachers but also by families, and in most cases the changes have been sustained and applied to other school activities.

Class Whatsapp/Telegram groups. Communication and relationship between families is often done through class whatsapp groups. In some cases, families in the same room may be divided into two groups, Basques and non-Basques, to ensure understanding. When there has been only one group, there have often been conflicts between those who express themselves in Basque and those who do not understand it. In view of this situation, the use of the Telegram app has been promoted because it incorporates the translator, so that the Basque can send messages entirely in Basque and, if the translation option is activated, it is possible to translate messages by double-clicking on them into the language in which the phone is configured. To do this, the Basque must also make a special effort, which is not easy for some: to try to write the messages in Standard Basque, so that the translator of the application can translate them properly. This strategy also requires a shared effort.

Presence and treatment of domestic languages. Each agent shall examine the presence and/or treatment of home languages other than Basque within its organization, as well as how to value and give them space in its field. This is especially relevant in schools, where steps are taken to make these languages visible: listing all the languages spoken in the school, displaying welcome messages, creating small vocabulary resources, highlighting them on Basque Day, and inviting families to classrooms. Home languages are also present in Telegram groups, where Basque speakers can write in Basque and translate messages received in another language.

Final remarks

The lessons learned have been numerous and the evaluations by those involved have been positive. An increasing number of municipalities are interested in participating and promoting dynamics of change, as well as other localities outside UEMA, where the knowledge and use of the Basque language is not as high as in UEMA, aware that the number of immigrants will continue to increase in Basque society in the coming years (Aierdi, 2022; Siadeco, 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to continue developing tools to advance the revitalization of Basque and the construction of coexistence. This project aims to contribute to this through spaces and strategies that facilitate the joint thinking of community members and the collaborative transformation of their community in an inclusive and sustainable manner. We have put the Basque at the centre, but to build coexistence and interculturality at the same time. Basque is the starting point and goal of the project, but we must not forget that it is an exercise in reciprocity and that we must cooperate. "That is the spirit of this project."

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