



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

27-28 November 2015
San José, Costa Rica



MULTILINGUALISM IN CYBERSPACE:

Indigenous Languages for Empowerment



PARTNERS





I . Introduction

MULTILINGUAL INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE ARE KEY DETERMINANTS OF WEALTH CREATION, SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Linguistic diversity is an integral part of cultural diversity. It has the capacity to reconcile the emotions, ideas and values of people from diverse cultural, social, economic and professional backgrounds. It is a key contributor to dialogue, tolerance and peace. Language also plays a part in the construction and expression of individual and collective identity. It is an intangible but invaluable resource which is hard to acquire but, once acquired, easy and rewarding to share.

Languages allow the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next and are a strong force in disseminating cultures and traditions as well as being key for societal development, and scientific and technological progress. Equally, the role of language has been recognized as a crucial factor in group identity, and identified as a key component for the creation of sustainable and inclusive knowledge societies.

Yet the world's languages are disappearing at an alarming rate. There is evidence ascertaining that global linguistic diversity has long been in decline but, according to some estimates, half of all languages spoken currently will have disappeared by the year 2050. The implications of language loss are profound at all levels and have an evidently negative effect on societal development and individual empowerment.

GROWING THREAT TO HUMANITY AS LANGUAGES CONTINUE TO DISAPPEAR AROUND THE WORLD

UNESCO's Atlas of Languages in Danger provides information on nearly 2,500 languages that are in danger, of which 199 have fewer than ten speakers or have actually been extinct since 1950. The interactive and collaborative online edition includes information on the number of speakers and degree of endangerment, sources, International Standard Organization (ISO) codes and geographic coordinates. UNESCO is in the process of using the online edition to create a new World Atlas of Languages which will include digital maps, data sets covering all of the world's languages, new technical functionalities and content levels.

For Central America, the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger shows in total 64 languages in danger: for Belize 4, Costa Rica 8, El Salvador 2, Guatemala 23, Honduras 8, Nicaragua 11, and Panama 8. To underline the importance for neighboring countries and the LAC region: Colombia counts 68, Mexico 143, and Brazil 190 languages in danger.

Furthermore, many indigenous languages are still spoken today in Latin America. Some of the language communities have very large number of speakers, however many other indigenous languages are of Latin America are severely endangered as the region spans many countries, and communities live in remote areas that are very hard to reach using physical and virtual means. This means that unless the situation changes at political, educational, cultural, technological, and other levels, they are not likely to survive in the near future. Therefore, it is essential to encourage local governments, academia and other memory and information institutions to document, safeguard and share digital information on linguistic diversity.

Over the past decade, the issue of languages in danger of disappearing has gained greater awareness among the scientific community, international organisations and increasingly, the public. There has also been a growing interest in the role that a multilingual Internet can play in the preservation, revitalization and promotion of languages. This has resulted in the development and endorsement of several international normative instruments by UNESCO and other organizations.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND LANGUAGE VITALITY – OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

New ICTs are making the current Internet landscape increasingly complicated for users globally. On the one hand, sophisticated software mainly from the corporate sector such as online translation, spell and grammar checkers as well as navigation systems for language utilization on the Internet, is empowering a wider range of native language users. On the other hand, the very nature of global Internet practice and experience is contributing to the flourishing of a digital lingua franca. Speakers of lesser-used, minority or non-dominant languages must therefore master this lingua franca – at least in reasonable measure – to obtain international recognition, visibility and adoption of their work, often at the cost of reduced exposure for their own language.

Furthermore, a large number of languages are still not present on the Internet. It is estimated that out of the world's approximately 6,700 languages, just 10 of them make up 84.3 per cent of people using the Internet, with English and Chinese the dominant languages, accounting for 52 per cent of Internet users worldwide.

This vast linguistic divide will only exacerbate the existing digital and knowledge divides, so it is obvious that everyone should have access to a multilingual Internet. Speakers of non-dominant languages need to be able to express themselves in culturally meaningful ways on the Internet in their mother tongue. The Internet should be a multilingual and culturally diverse place where every culture and language has its own space.

The role of cutting edge ICTs, particularly the growing impact of mobile technology, in documentation, revitalization and the promotion of multilingualism is a vital tool helping communities to provide and gain access to the services to which all citizens are entitled in the context of an open, pluralistic and inclusive Internet.

At a time when language vitality and diversity are increasingly threatened by unequal access to ICTs and global knowledge systems, it is vital to build up global online platforms which promote information and knowledge exchange between different language users, encouraging them to become active language learners, advocates and participants, as well as creators themselves of new user-generated content, tools and resources.

UNESCO'S ROLE IN PROMOTING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND MULTILINGUALISM IN CYBERSPACE

Cultural diversity and multilingualism have, for UNESCO, a key role to play in fostering pluralistic, equitable, open and inclusive knowledge societies. UNESCO therefore encourages its Member States to formulate comprehensive language-related policies, allocate resources, and develop and use appropriate tools in order to promote and facilitate linguistic diversity and multilingualism in the media and the Internet.

The implementation of an appropriate language policy is seen as a powerful political instrument for promoting the coexistence of different languages. International normative instruments such as conventions, treaties or recommendations can be reinforced at national level if comprehensive language policies are formulated, concrete measures are introduced, resources are allocated, and effective language tools are provided and used by all stakeholders concerned.

The Communication and Information Sector coordinates UNESCO's overall contribution to the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes and is in charge of the implementation of UNESCO's "Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Access to Cyberspace", adopted by the General Conference in 2003. The sector also collaborates with Intergovernmental Information for All (IFAP) within its strategic priority - multilingualism.

Through this above-mentioned normative instrument recommendations, UNESCO encourages Member States to support equitable and affordable access to information and to promote the development of multilingual knowledge societies.

Member States are requested to consider undertaking and financing actions in four areas – based on best practice – to facilitate the implementation of this Recommendation:

- Development of multilingual content and systems;
- Facilitation of access to networks and systems;
- Development of public domain content;
- Reaffirmation of the equitable balance between the interests of rights-holders and public interest.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

With view to empower speakers, particularly of indigenous languages, into the sustainable development agenda in Latin American countries, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Government of Costa Rica, national, regional and international partners is organizing a regional conference entitled "Multilingualism in Cyberspace Indigenous Languages for Empowerment" in San Jose, Costa Rica from 27-28 November 2015.

The major objective of the event is to:

- Promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms, with special focus on an equal access to multilingual information and knowledge, for all language speakers through effective applications of ICTs;
- Raise awareness on the importance of linguistic diversity for sustainable development and provide assistance and guidance to UNESCO Member States in the implementation of international, regional and national commitments related to language development and ICTs;
- Identify existing challenges, practical solutions and good practices among the professional community working in the language documentation, safeguarding, policy and industry fields;
- Encourage constructive dialogue among various stakeholders, be they from government, academia, industry, memory, media and information organizations, IT sector or civil society and not the least language speakers;
- Encourage corporate partners to design appropriate language tools, products and services for indigenous communities;
- Elaborate on the recommendations for the preparation of the Regional Road Map for the development of a Regional Atlas of Languages within the context of UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages,
- Mobilize necessary resources and foster synergies among partners for a joint action in the Latin America region.

The expected outcomes of the regional conference

- Concrete recommendations are defined by relevant stakeholders finding a consultative and consensus based process and used to improve the status of indigenous communities with regard to the role of ICTs in increasing access to multilingual information and knowledge in public sphere, social services, products and job opportunities
- Research and identification undertaken on the good practices and solutions of ICTs for promotion of multilingualism in cyberspace
- A clear understanding of the needs of indigenous communities as well as the benefits of technological development of multilingualism and social action encouraged at a regional level
- More public and private sector partners encouraged to provide multilingual information, services and design products
- Partnerships initiated, communication forged and networks established among various stakeholders for exchange of good practices, sharing information and collaboration.
- Regional Road Map elaborated for the development of the Atlas and contributed to the implementation of other international, regional and national commitments and mechanisms such as WSIS and IFAP.

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE



PARTICIPANTS

More than 80 international, regional and national participants are expected from around the world, including:

- Universities: Linguistics, research and technology
- Indigenous students
- Teachers for language and culture
- Local, national, and international media
- Ministries, Legislative Assembly and Defenders of Inhabitants
- Representatives of UN Country Teams
- Regional/ sub-regional development agencies
- NGOs and civil society
- ICT companies/ software and app developers
- National Statistics institutes
- Intergovernmental organizations

Working languages of the event are English and Spanish.



II. Central American Outline for A Regional Road Map to develop a Regional Atlas of Languages within the context of UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages

1. These Central American recommendations and statements intend to guide policy and practice in the area of multilingualism in cyberspace and provide suggestions for the creation of a cyber-presence that is characterized as open, participatory, inclusive and equitable for each language speaker and community. Furthermore, the outline will be used for the preparation of a Road Map to design a Regional Atlas of Languages within the context of the UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages.
2. The long-term objective is to contribute to the safeguarding of the world's diverse linguistic and cultural heritage through a global interactive, collaborative and open online platform entitled "UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages" for preservation, monitoring, promotion, and information and knowledge sharing, as well as learning and teaching of languages, with a special focus on use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for the creation of truly multilingual societies and Internet and influence of UNESCO's 2003 recommendations on language vitality and endangerment
3. The below outlined objectives of this initiative will reflect the following actions:
 - a. Establishment of a Regional Task Force on Multilingualism within the context of UNESCO's plans to establish a Global Task Force on Multilingualism which would adopt a human-rights based approach,

in terms of gender equality, non-discrimination, geographical representation, and wide outreach to language communities in order to address language issues better in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda;

- b.** Mobilization of regional and national partners to document, share and disseminate language resources using open and inclusive technological solutions;
 - c.** Creation of a unique regional institutional network comprising public and private local, national and regional institutions working in the language field which will collect and share language-related data and information on available language tools and resources within higher educational institutions, archives, museums, libraries and language standardization bodies, as well as keep track of cutting-edge solutions being developed by the private sector;
 - d.** Building of national professional and institutional capacity to garner language revitalization and documentation efforts through the use of multilingual web interfaces and collaborative actions and further encouragement of language documentation, monitoring and content development, particularly among indigenous communities, etc.;
 - e.** Involvement of specific language speaker communities to create their own online space and providing of access to public information in local languages on the Internet.
- 4.** Following the Universal Human Rights Declaration (1948), and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003), the Centro-American recommendations for the development of a Regional Road Map might include:
- a.** Taking the necessary measures to alleviate language barriers,
 - b.** Ensuring that all language speakers can express themselves and have access to cyberspace in all languages, including indigenous ones,
 - c.** Encouraging and supporting capacity building by Member States and international organizations for the production of local and indigenous content on the Internet,
 - d.** Formulating appropriate national policies by Member States on including indigenous languages in public information, and in support of survival of indigenous languages in cyberspace,
 - e.** Supporting international cooperation and implementation of concrete actions within the context of international mechanisms such as Intergovernmental Information for All (IFAP) and World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) processes,
 - f.** Promoting language teaching, including mother tongues, in cyberspace,
 - g.** Documenting, safeguarding and sharing language documentation using open, inclusive and participatory technological solutions,
 - h.** Encouraging appropriate partners to develop language tools, products and services,
 - i.** Encouraging collaborative participatory research and development on, and local adaptation of operating systems, search engines, web browsers with multilingual capacities, online dictionaries and terminologies,
 - j.** Promoting access to the Internet as a service of public interest,
 - k.** Facilitating universal access to the Internet through affordable telecommunications and Internet costs with special consideration given to the needs of public service and educational institutions, and of disadvantaged and disabled population groups,
 - l.** Facilitating community access and reach out to all levels of society,
 - m.** Encouraging open access solutions including standards, accessibility, portability and interoperability,
 - n.** Including an open, integrated and intercultural education combined with ICT skills, Media and Information Literacy and other training including awareness of ethical principles and values,
 - o.** Promoting UNESCO chairs on indigenous languages in university programs and core curricula in indigenous languages,
 - p.** Fostering new partnerships and synergies among different stakeholders for joint actions.

http://www

III. Contact information

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IV. Useful weblinks

UNESCO website on Linguistic diversity and multilingualism on Internet

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/linguistic-diversity-and-multilingualism-on-internet/>

UNESCO Atlas of Languages in Danger

<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/>

UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003)

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/about-us/how-we-work/strategy-and-programme/promotion-and-use-of-multilingualism-and-universal-access-to-cyberspace/>

UNESCO brochure (2015). A decade of Promoting Multilingualism in Cyberspace

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232743e.pdf>

Intergovernmental Information for All Programme (IFAP) 2012

Linguistic and cultural diversity in Cyberspace. Proceedings of the 2nd International IFAP Conference. Yakutsk, Russian Federation, 12-14 July, 2011. Moscow: Interregional Library Cooperation Centre, 2012.

http://www.ifapcom.ru/files/News/Images/2013/Yakutsk_web.pdf

V. Tentative Conference Agenda

AGENDA

DAY 1 • FRIDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2015

08:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:45	<p>SESSION 1: Opening - Protocol Ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilar Álvarez Laso, Director and Representative, UNESCO Cluster Office in San José for Central America • Luis Guillermo Carpio Malavasi, Rector, National University of Distance Education, Costa Rica • Sonia Marta Mora Escalante, Minister of Public Education MEP, Costa Rica (tbc)
09:45-10:45	<p>SESSION 2: Keynote speakers – Global Perspectives on indigenous languages and multilingualism in cyberspace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderador: Lizett Brenes Bonilla, Vice-Rector of Research, National University for Distance Education (UNED), Costa Rica • Álvaro Pop, Vice-President of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) • Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Paris <p>DISCUSSION</p>
10:45-11:15	Coffee break
11:15-11:30	<p>Explication of structure of the two-day conference and working dynamics to finalize in working groups the sub-regional Plan of Action for Multilingualism in Cyberspace and the UNESCO Atlas of Languages in Central America</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Paris
11:30-13:00	<p>SESSION 3: Panel - Legal frameworks for indigenous languages regarding education policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderador: Randall Brenes, Inter-American Development Bank, Costa Rica • Rapporteur: Clara Chu, Director and distinguished Professor, Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA • Carmen Rojas Chaves, Assessor, Department of Intercultural Education, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica • Gilvan Müller de Oliveira, Institute for Research and Development in Language Policy (IPOL), Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianopolis, Brazil • Alicia Matta Gonzales, Ministry of Education, Peru • Gutberto Leiva, Vice Minister of Education, General Director of Bilingual and Intercultural Education – DIGEBI, Guatemala <p>DISCUSSION</p>
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	<p>SESSION 4: Panel - Promotion of indigenous languages in cyberspace. Best practices. Part I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderador: Xinia Zúñiga Muñoz, Coordinator of the Research Program, Centre for Investigation of Culture and Development (CICDE), National University for Distance Education (UNED), Costa Rica • Rapporteur: Alicia Matta Gonzales, Ministry of Education, Peru • Filiberto Penados, Center for Engaged Learning Abroad, CELA Belize • Raymundo Caz, Representative of the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala (ALMG) • Clara Chu, Director and distinguished Professor, Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. • Translator of National Languages: 22 Mayan languages, Garífuna and Xinka into English and Spanish Julio de León, Association for Linguistic and Scientific Research and Mayan Worldview, Guatemala • Suyapa Educational State Television for basic educational content in indigenous languages: the future role in Internet. José Reynuery Nuñez, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, • Chatino Portal and smartphone app, Hilaria Cruz, México. <p>DISCUSSION</p>
15:30-15:45	Coffee break
15:45-17:00	<p>PARALLEL SESSIONS/WORKING GROUPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Paris <p>SESSION 5: Development of multilingual content and systems (language data collection) Room: Auditorium with interpretation</p> <p>SESSION 6: Facilitation of access to networks and systems (universities) Room: Sala 2 without interpretation</p>

AGENDA

DAY 2 • SATURDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2015

09:00-11:00	<p>SESSION 7: Panel - Promotion of indigenous languages in cyberspace. Best practices. Part II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Romano González Arce, Unit of planning and social action in Health, Ministry of Health, Costa Rica • Rapporteur: Hilaria Cruz, México • Cuna Náhuat, Revitalization of the Náhuat Language Jorge Lemus, University of Technology, Santo Domingo de Guzmán, El Salvador • Edgar Salazar Francis, Universidad Intercultural URACCAN, Nicaragua • Francisco A. Sapón Orellana, Director, Research Management, University Rafael Landívar, Guatemala • Production of didactical material in indigenous languages and the program of digital inclusion at UNED. Javier Montezuma y Diana Hernández, UNED, Costa Rica. <p>DISCUSSION</p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-13:00	<p>PARALLEL SESSIONS/ WORKING GROUPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Paris <p>SESSION 8: Development of public domain content (Role of Governments); Room: Auditorium with interpretation</p> <p>SESSION 9: Reaffirming the equitable balance between the interests of rights-holders and public interest (Indigenous issues). Room: Sala 2 without interpretation</p>
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-14:30	SESSION 10: Results of sessions 5+6 and 8+9 (moderators and rapporteurs)
14:30-15:30	<p>SESSION 11: Discussion - Road Map for Central America Based on the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003) and UNESCO World Atlas of Languages (based on a draft of task force and institutional network, additional input by moderators and rapporteurs of sessions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmen Rojas Chaves, Assessor, Department of Intercultural Education, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica • Günther Cyranek, Consultant for the Communication and Information Program, UNESCO Cluster Office San José for Central America • Xinia Zúñiga Muñoz, Coordinator of the Research Program, Centre for Investigation of Culture and Development CICDE, National University for Distance Education (UNED), Costa Rica, Way forward for the Road Map Way forward for the road map • Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO Paris
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break
16:00-17:00	<p>CLOSING SESSION 12: Protocol Ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilar Álvarez Laso, Director and Representative, UNESCO Cluster Office in San José for Central America • Adela López Vargas, Cristhian González Gómez, Indigenous Inter-University Movement Costa Rica • Lizett Brenes Bonilla, Vice-Rector of Research, National University for Distance Education (UNED), Costa Rica • Silvie Durán, Minister of Culture and Youth, Government of Costa Rica (tbc)



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National University for Distance Education (UNED)
Auditorium/Paraninfo Daniel Oduber Quirós, Sabanilla

In partnership with

Academy of Mayan Languages (ALMG), Guatemala
Indigenous Inter-University Movement Costa Rica
UNESCO Department of Multilingualism, Rafael Landívar University, Guatemala

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