

Forum: General Assembly 3

Issue: The Question of Protecting the Rights of Linguistic Minorities in a Globalizing World

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Introduction

The question of protecting the rights of linguistic minorities in a globalising world is an important issue for the development of different nations around the world. As the world evolves into a better, more populated and more technologically advanced world; linguistic diversity falls as dominant languages spread. Languages are important for many people's identities and lifestyles. As many countries begin to expand their territories and grow their populations, their languages grow to become more world-spoken. Examples of these languages would include English as 1.53 billion people speak it, followed by Mandarin Chinese (~1.18 billion) and Spanish (~609 million).¹

Linguistic diversity is crucial for developing countries. As these countries grow their native languages tend to be buried within their history due to less people speaking and using them anymore. Language is a big part of cultural identity as they are ways to show commitment, history, values, and togetherness with their people. Globalizing countries are spreading their languages world wide causing smaller, native languages to wane. Having linguistic diversity is an act of freedom and goes against discrimination people face for speaking their languages.

Definition of Key Terms

Linguistic Minorities

¹Statista <https://www.statista.com> Accessed 21 December 2025

A smaller group of people within a bigger group or country who speak a different language from the major or dominant language of others.² This can include speaking a language which is not official to the country. This could affect lives as members of linguistic minorities may face discrimination in accessing public services and in showing their own native identity.³

Minorities

A smaller number than half within a whole. This can be shown as a smaller number of individuals in a population or community. This word can be used to identify a smaller ethnic, linguistic or religious body.

Globalization

Process by which nations, societies, and countries become more interconnected through the improvement of services, technology, trade, media, cultural exchange and economic, social and political development.

Discrimination

When people, whether groups, communities or individuals experience prejudicial treatment, behaviour and bias directed towards them due to different characteristics of their existence. This can include language, religion, race, age, disabilities, ethnicity and more.

Freedom

The fundamental right for a person to act, speak, think or believe what they would like to. This can also mean the power of not being enslaved. Freedom is normally associated with the principle freedom of speech⁴ and expression, which includes the ability for individuals to share their beliefs and opinions freely amongst themselves and others.⁵

Cultural Identity

² Study Smarter <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk> Accessed 21 December 2025

³ What europe does for me <https://what-europe-does-for-me.europarl.europa.eu> Accessed 21 December 2025

⁴ United States Courts <https://www.uscourts.gov> Accessed 21 December 2025

⁵ Youtube Sprouts <https://www.youtube.com/watch> Accessed 21 December 2025

The belonging of an individual to a group which is defined by their values, beliefs, faith, tradition, language and history. This can alter how people see themselves and others around them. It influences how they interact with others and act upon matters which are influenced by their opinions and identity.⁶

Official Language

Is a language which is legally recognized and designated to a particular country. This language is used in the country's government for laws, court and public announcements. The educational system is also typically taught in this language. It also shapes the people under that nation into one.⁷ Official language is different from the national language as it is the language for more governmental aspects.⁸

National Language

Is a language that is connected to a country's history, people and cultural identity. National languages are normally ones that were spoken when the country was first developing and which are a part of a nation's historical background and culture.⁹ National language is connected to tradition as it ties deep into a country's heritage. The concept of a national language is different from the official language because it is more symbolic and connected to culture. An example which differs from this is Finland, which has both Finnish and Swedish as official and national languages even though Swedish is a minority language in Finland.¹⁰ This is due to Finland and Sweden's history together.

Cultural Homogenization

The process in which distinct cultures around the world become more and more similar since they lose their diversity as they are forgotten and left behind. This is due mainly to globalization. These cultures adopt traits and traditions from other cultures to become more popular mainly to media platforms and tourists. A popular example of this on social media is the "Americanization" of cultures. Americanization also known as westernization is when other cultures become similar or identical to American customs.¹¹

⁶ Lifestyle Sustainability Directory <https://lifestyle.sustainability-directory.com> Accessed 21 December 2025

⁷ Fiveable <https://fiveable.me/key-terms/ap-hug/official-language> Accessed 21 December 2025

⁸ Quora <https://www.quora.com> Accessed 21 December 2025

⁹ Encyclopedia <https://www.encyclopedia.com> Accessed 21 December 2025

¹⁰ Nordics <https://nordics.info> Accessed 21 December 2025

¹¹ Longdom <https://www.longdom.org>. Accessed 5 January 2026

Explanation of the Question

Importance of Linguistic Minorities

Linguistic minorities is a spoken language by a smaller population within a country. This language could be national and connected to the country's heritage, indigenous people or from immigrants from other countries. Linguistic minorities can also consist of those who have mother tongues which differ from a country's official languages. Generally countries have a few official languages to keep the system for education, government, etc. the same and to make life simpler for their people. Although this can help improve how smooth a country runs, it doesn't improve the problem of linguistic minorities disappearing; it instead deteriorates the problem to a higher extent. These languages are typically linked to people's cultural identity. The loss of these languages can affect traditional ways and the history connected to them. It can also affect one's identity to their culture and group. The Question of Protecting the Rights of Linguistic Minorities in a Globalizing World is focused on protecting and keeping these important languages from disappearing. This question calls for measures to be taken on supporting linguistic diversity.

Effect of Globalization

Globalization has changed the world as it affects people's daily lives. Globalization has changed communication, access to information, digital platforms and other technological advancements a lot. It has also helped certain languages to become more globally spoken. These languages include English and Mandarin.¹² Mandarin and English are both languages which are spoken in real life by millions of people. These languages are spoken mainly on social media platforms which is a reason as to why they grew in popularity fast. As these languages become more and more globalized, they are taught in schools around the world instead of minority languages. The result of this is people learning these "Global" languages rather than indigenous and vulnerable ones. Because of the dominance that these languages are maintaining, linguistic minorities are closer to extinction now more than ever. The cultures that these languages sustain are lost and the homogenization of culture continues.

¹² Statista <https://www.statista.com> Accessed 21 December 2025

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

Key Member States

Canada

Canada views linguistic diversity as an asset for their country. They are dedicated to protecting these linguistic minorities as they had created “The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms”. This is an act allowing the freedom of speech and expression in Canada. There is a national day celebrated every year on April 17 to honor that the charter was signed in 1982.¹³ Canada is willing to embrace cultural diversity, especially regarding languages as they are willing to protect linguistic rights and minorities from possible homogenizing.¹⁴

France

France’s view on this matter is at the moment quite complex as they are working on improving and protecting regional languages. Before France was focused on adopting the French language to be dominant in France, since many other European languages were spoken in France. They had ended up banning more than 20 minority languages before the 21st century. Recently France has been focusing on the protection of the regional languages Breton, Occitan, Basque, and Catalan. This is almost the opposite of what France was determined to complete not that long ago.¹⁵ France has also started to recognize the dialects: Breton, Occitan, Basque, Corsican as distinct languages. This is mainly because of the country wanting to raise more cultural awareness for linguistic diversity.¹⁶

Spain

Spain has been working on multiple tasks regarding linguistic minorities. Spain has taken two approaches: protecting and promoting co-official regional languages and improving the globalization of Spanish. Spain has been recognizing the importance of regional languages as their constitution also identifies the co-official regional languages Catalan, Valencian, Basque, Galician, and Aranese.¹⁷ Besides this, Spain has been trying to promote the use of

¹³ Government of Canada <https://www.justice.gc.ca> Accessed 21 December 2025

¹⁴ Government of Canada <https://www.justice.gc.ca> Accessed 21 December 2025

¹⁵ Global Voices <https://globalvoices.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

¹⁶ Library of Congress <https://guides.loc.gov> Accessed 7 January 2026.

¹⁷ European Parliament <https://www.europarl.europa.eu> Accessed 21 December 2025

Spanish worldwide.¹⁸ They have been doing this through the Media as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁹

Finland

Finland's stance on protecting linguistic minorities from globalization has been taken very seriously. They are known to be a role model for other nations to look up to for these situations. Finland has a long history of protecting linguistic rights and minorities as they have created a thorough plan regarding linguistic and other minorities. Regardless, Finland has been facing trouble recently regarding minorities such as Swedish-speaking Finnish people.²⁰

China

Even as Mandarin grows on a global scale, China is also focusing on keeping their value of linguistic diversity the same. Mandarin is rising to be one of the most spoken languages world wide. China's constitution grants people the right to use their own language. Besides that, Mandarin is still heavily promoted to be used in China and globally. On the other hand the Chinese state is also working on assimilating minority language speakers into Mandarin speakers.²¹ This is working to limit the use of other languages in China.

The Netherlands

Frisian has officially been recognized as a regional language in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands. Before this, Frisian was already recognized as a regional minority language. The Netherlands had also recognized regional minority languages Limburgish and Low-Saxon dialects.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO predicts that 50% of languages will be extinct by 2100. That's why UNESCO is taking action now to prevent this. They have started the International Decade of Indigenous

¹⁸ Ministerio de Asuntos exteriores <https://www.exteriores.gob.es> Accessed 21 December 2025

¹⁹ Ministerio de Asuntos exteriores <https://www.exteriores.gob.es> Accessed 21 December 2025

²⁰ Human Rights Center <https://www.humanrightscentre.fi> Accessed 21 December 2025

²¹ Time <https://time.com> Accessed 7 January 2026

Languages 2022-2032²² which promotes the preservation of languages, including linguistic minorities.

Minority Rights Group (MRG)

The MRG works with minority groups to keep their cultures alive amongst their communities. The MRG has written an essay on the topic of linguistic minorities. The essay states that globalization is harming linguistic diversity majorly and it is only upholding the rise of dominating languages.²³ Even though globalization is harmful, it also helps minority languages as it assists to promote them on media platforms. The MRG is standing to be unbiased on the matter.²⁴

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

This Non-governmental organization has been working on improving and aiding linguistic minorities from globalization. In 2012 produced a document on this matter. The OHCHR is very dedicated to protecting the rights of language minorities.²⁵

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
12 June 1987	"The Sami Act". The 56 act (also known as The Sami Act) concerning the Sami Parliament and Sami legal matters. This act allowed the Sami people to have their own parliament who was elected by and among the Sami people. ²⁶ Norway had also approved the official Sami flag and officially the Sami language equally side by side Norwegian. ²⁷
1996	"Rosetta Project". This project is a linguistic collection to ensure that no language goes away without a trace. This project is there to collect languages as globalization is threatening culture and the importance of linguistic

²² Unesco <https://www.unesco.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

²³ Francis Press <https://francis-press.com> Accessed 21 December 2025

²⁴ Minority Rights Groups <https://minorityrights.org/about-us/> Accessed 21 December 2025

²⁵ Ohchr <https://www.ohchr.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

²⁶ Government no <https://www.regjeringen.no> Accessed 21 December 2025

²⁷ L saamelaiskäräjistä <https://www.finlex.fi> Accessed 21 December 2025

diversity.²⁸

2003

“FirstVoices”. FirstVoices is an online platform for people to share and promote their own language as well as the history behind it.²⁹

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations is in favor of helping and protecting linguistic minorities and diversity. The UN strongly supports the human right for people to speak minority languages freely. The UN has predicted that there will be over 6,000 languages lost if there is no safeguarding of them.³⁰

- UNESCO Indigenous Languages Decade (2022-2032)³¹
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992)³²
- OHCHR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)³³

Possible Solutions

Minority Languages in Education Systems

The option to take minority languages as electives, courses or classes in school. This option allows students to have the choice and the ability to take one of their country's native and minority languages without it being extra work outside of school. This could also allow the youth to learn their own language without enduring more academic pressure to take other languages in school. This ability would help to improve the population of those who speak minority languages. These minority languages would be available in all lower school, middle school, upper school and universities. This can also enhance the multicultural and linguistic diversity of a country's citizens.

Recognition of Linguistic Minorities

²⁸ Rosetta Project <https://rosettaproject.org/> Accessed 21 December 2025

²⁹ First Voices <https://www.firstvoices.com/about> Accessed 21 December 2025

³⁰ United Nations <https://news.un.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

³¹ Unesco <https://www.unesco.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

³² Ohchr <https://www.ohchr.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

³³ Ohchr <https://www.ohchr.org> Accessed 21 December 2025

This would consist of each country formally recognizing minority languages as regional or country wide known languages. This would increase the visibility of minority languages as well as educating visitors to the country about them. This could also be shown by representing these minor languages in constitutions, laws, and public service announcements such as nationwide street signs which contain text.

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