

Reading Practise

Read the passage below and answer questions 1-10.

Language Conservation and Revitalisation

It is estimated that around the approximately six thousand languages that are spoken today, over three thousand of them are likely to have disappeared by the year 2100. Many of these are now classified as endangered languages and are classified as such by factors such as the number of speakers a language has, the age of the speakers, and the percentage of the youngest generation acquiring fluency in the language. For example, a language with many tens of thousands of speakers may be considered endangered if the children in the community are no longer learning the language. This scenario may happen in a place like Indonesia which has many different languages in use, but is trying to make communication easier by teaching a national language nation-wide. In another scenario, a language may only have a few hundred speakers but may not be considered endangered because all of the children in the community are learning the language.

Once a language is classified as endangered, conservation efforts may be made in an attempt to save or revive the language. Whether or not to make such efforts is a decision which is ultimately made by the speakers of the language themselves, but success often requires a great deal of help and approval from the government or other authorities.

One of the most famous language conservation success stories is that of the Welsh language. Historically, large numbers of Welsh people spoke only Welsh, but eventually English became the main language of Wales and fewer and fewer people learned Welsh. Conservation efforts began to be made in the mid-20th century with the establishment of such organisations as the Welsh Language Association in 1962. The Welsh Language Act and the Government of Wales Act, but passed in the 1990s, protected the Welsh language and made sure that English and Welsh would have equal status in Wales. Since 2000, the study of the Welsh language has been a compulsory subject in school. Today, over 22% of the population of Wales are Welsh speakers, up from 18% in 1991.

Another famous example, Hebrew, is not so much a story of language conservation as much as language revitalisation. Hebrew was once a spoken language but by the 4th century BCE it had been replaced by Aramaic. Hebrew continued to be used for religious purposes and in literature but the language was no longer used for everyday purposes. In the 19th century, there was a movement to revive Hebrew as a spoken language, and when the State of Israel was founded in 1948, Hebrew was adopted as the official language. There was some resistance to this idea, as Hebrew was considered a religious language, not a language to be used for common communication. In addition, because Hebrew was an ancient language, it lacked many of the words that are used in modern times and many new words had to be coined. However, because there was a need for a common language in Israel, the language was accepted and now thrives.

The successes of language conservation are many, but many more attempts at language preservation do not succeed and there are many languages that have not survived except for a few recordings made by the last native speakers before their deaths. In some cases, the number of remaining speakers at the start of conservation efforts was not enough to sustain revitalisation, and in others, efforts may fail because there is often no economic benefit to learning an endangered language at the expense of a more commonly spoken national or international language.

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the article?

In boxes 1-10 on your answer sheet write

TRUE

if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE

if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN

if there is no information on this

- 1) Half of the languages spoken today will be gone by 2100.
- 2) A language may be considered endangered if children of the speakers are no longer learning the language.
- 3) Indonesian an endangered language
- 4) Most endangered languages today are saved and revived.
- 5) Welsh was revived mainly due to government legislature.
- 6) The number of Welsh speakers is expected to rise rapidly in the future
- 7) All school lessons in Wales are taught in Welsh.
- 8) Hebrew died out completely in the 4th century BCE.
- 9) Hebrew and Aramaic are similar languages.
- 10) Many new terms had to be added to Hebrew to make it functional for today's world.