



PART 2

Read the text below and answer questions 14–26.

LANGUAGE DEATH AND REVITALISATION

The world's linguistic diversity is often described in dramatic arithmetic: some researchers estimate that, on average, one language falls silent roughly every two weeks. With around seven thousand languages still spoken, the figure is meant to capture how quickly entire speech communities can be pulled into larger linguistic systems. Although languages have always changed and sometimes disappeared, contemporary language loss is rarely just “natural evolution”. It is more often linked to hegemony: dominant languages acquire institutional power through schooling, mass media, law, and wage labour, and minority languages are pushed into shrinking domains where they become less useful for social mobility.

When a community stops transmitting a language, what vanishes is not merely a list of words. Languages encode identity, kinship relations, humour, and oral history; they also store categorisations of landscape, plants, seasons, and social roles that have been refined over generations. In many places, ecological knowledge—how to read weather patterns, track animals, or manage local soils—is carried through specialised vocabulary and narrative genres rather than through formal textbooks. As linguistic attrition progresses, a community may retain symbols of heritage while losing the communicative routines that once supported cultural memory, leaving only fragments of songs, greetings, or ceremonial phrases.

The most decisive change usually occurs inside households. Under socio-economic impetus such as poverty, insecure employment, or discrimination in public institutions, parents may choose to raise children in the dominant language because they believe it offers greater safety and opportunity. The choice is often made reluctantly, not out of shame about the ancestral language, but out of fear that bilingualism will “confuse” children or that accent will trigger stigma. In this stage, the minority language may survive among elders or in ritual settings, while younger members become passive listeners who understand more than they speak. Over time, reduced confidence leads to reduced use, and reduced use leads to further erosion.

Linguists sometimes model this process as a sequence of stages. A language may be vulnerable when children still learn it but use it in fewer settings; it becomes moribund when intergenerational transmission is largely broken and fluent speakers are mostly older adults. A later stage is dormancy, where the language is remembered only in partial forms—isolated words, prayers, or family nicknames—without a stable community of



speakers. Finally, a language is considered extinct when there are no living speakers at all. The transitions are not always linear, but the key warning is that once transmission collapses, decline can accelerate quickly, particularly when schooling and work opportunities operate entirely in a dominant language.

Because the final stages can arrive faster than outsiders expect, revitalisation efforts frequently begin with documentation. Field researchers and community experts record speech, compile dictionaries, and produce grammatical descriptions; they also preserve oral texts such as stories, chants, and place-name traditions. Documentation is sometimes criticised as academic archiving, but it can be pedagogical scaffolding: if fluent speakers become scarce, recordings and written materials can help later learners rebuild pronunciation, vocabulary, and discourse patterns. The aim is not to “freeze” a language as a museum object, but to keep enough evidence of its structure and use so that teaching remains possible.

For historically unwritten languages, creating an orthography can be psychologically and practically transformative. A workable writing system enables literacy materials, classroom handouts, signage, subtitles, and digital messaging; it also makes it easier to share the language beyond face-to-face interaction. Orthography design, however, is not merely technical. Decisions about spelling can become debates about identity, regional variation, and authority: whose pronunciation becomes standard, and which symbols look legitimate to community members? When these tensions are managed collaboratively, a writing system can expand the language’s public presence and give learners a visible sense that the language belongs in modern domains.

One of the most widely adopted methods for rebuilding everyday fluency is immersion, particularly for children. Early-childhood programmes often called language nests create an environment where the endangered language is the normal medium of play, care, and routine instruction. By placing children in sustained communicative contact with fluent elders and trained educators, nests attempt to restore intergenerational transmission in the very age range where language acquisition is most natural. Over time, successful programmes extend beyond preschool into primary education, teacher training, and community media, aiming to produce speakers who can live in both linguistic worlds without treating the heritage language as merely symbolic.

Historical and contemporary case studies are frequently used to show what reversal can look like, even if no single model transfers perfectly. Hebrew is often cited as an extraordinary example of a language moving from a largely liturgical role into modern daily use through coordinated education, publishing, and state-building. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, te reo Māori has grown through official recognition, immersion preschools, and



increased visibility in broadcasting and public signage, although challenges remain in expanding adult fluency. In Wales, Welsh has been strengthened through Welsh-language media, official status, and compulsory schooling provisions that normalise the language for younger generations. These cases suggest that revival is most plausible when community motivation is matched by institutional support.

Even so, revitalisation efforts face constraints that are difficult to overcome quickly: limited funding, shortages of fluent teachers, competing demands on families, and the constant pull of global languages that dominate entertainment and employment. Some communities experience “project fatigue” when short-term grants end before long-term transmission is re-established. Yet many speakers argue that the effort is a form of cultural resilience. Languages are not interchangeable tools; they are repositories of knowledge and relationships. Saving a language therefore becomes both a practical educational project and a political statement about whose voices and histories deserve to remain audible.

Questions 14–18

Complete the summary below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

Language loss and revitalisation

A language is sometimes estimated to die about every **14** This loss is often driven by pressure from **15** associated with education, employment, and political power. When a community stops transmitting its speech, it may lose cultural memory as well as **16** carried through specialised vocabulary and narrative genres. Revitalisation efforts commonly begin with **17**, so the language can be taught even when fluent speakers are scarce. For young children, immersion programmes known as **18** aim to rebuild everyday fluency.

Questions 19–22

Look at the following cases and the list of features below. Choose the correct letter, **A, B, C, D, E** or **F**.

List of Features

- A** Creating a writing system can support literacy materials and wider use.
- B** Often cited as moving from a mainly liturgical role to daily use.
- C** Strengthened through media, official status, and compulsory lessons in schools.



- D** Revived without policy involvement, relying only on informal home use.
- E** Supported by official recognition and immersion preschools, plus increased visibility.
- F** Presented as a case where revival failed despite documentation.

19 Hebrew

20 te reo Māori

21 Welsh

22 A historically unwritten endangered language

Questions 23–26

Select the correct answer.

23 What is the main purpose of the first paragraph?

- A** To explain how dictionaries are compiled for endangered languages
- B** To describe the scale of language loss and its main causes
- C** To argue that language change is always natural and unavoidable
- D** To list examples of languages that have already become extinct

24 According to the passage, one reason parents shift to a dominant language is that they believe it offers greater

- A** humour and creativity
- B** grammatical simplicity
- C** safety and opportunity
- D** connection to ritual traditions

25 Why does the passage say creating an orthography can be a “turning point”?

- A** It supports resources and communication beyond face-to-face use
- B** It guarantees a language will gain official status immediately
- C** It prevents younger speakers from learning the dominant language
- D** It removes the need for documentation

26 Which difficulty is mentioned as a continuing barrier to revitalisation?

- A** A complete lack of public interest in heritage languages
- B** The inability to record speech with modern technology
- C** The absence of any examples of partial recovery
- D** Shortages of fluent teachers and the pull of global languages



Answer Key

- 14. two weeks
- 15. dominant languages
- 16. ecological knowledge
- 17. documentation
- 18. language nests
- 19. B
- 20. E
- 21. C
- 22. A
- 23. B
- 24. C
- 25. A
- 26. D