
Should we try to preserve endangered cultures and their languages?

In this essay, we will be going into depth in the question; "Should we try to preserve endangered cultures and their languages?". we will be looking at the for and against arguments and how these are affected.

An endangered culture is practices, ideas and customs of people in society that are beginning to die out because it is losing its believers, new traditions and practices being introduced, this causes cultures that are dying out and the languages which these cultures use are also dying out alongside them.

Examples of these are old traditional welsh words, traditional rainforest tribes, Inuksuit people of north-west Greenland,²the Vilyui Sakha, indigenous horse and cattle breeders in the Vilyui River region of northeastern Siberia.³ some of the arguments for preserving endangered cultures and their languages are: in some ways it preserves our past and keeps us connected to our ancestors, their cultures are their beliefs and they are what make those people in the cultures belong together, it is said that the cultures they follow are dying out and they feel that as they lose this they also lose part of their identity. Some of the arguments against are: they are old-fashioned in a modern world, the language that the endangered cultures use is not necessary in a world that has its main languages e.g. old Welsh, our wildlife and environment are far more important to preserve than endangered cultures.

The first FOR the preservation of endangered cultures is that cultures allow people to protect their homes even if they are an isolated group. For example, nature.com says "A small isolated group of humans with no vote or voice is as valid for preservation as an endangered species. A country such as Ecuador has everything to gain by protecting both intact ecosystems and cultures through hands-off policies that are akin to those used for endangered species."⁴ This means that they help one another to protect their home and its environments they do this by means of protest or if they are living in the wild such as the traditional rainforest tribes making it known that they are living there and the land should not be harmed. This is a for the preservation of endangered cultures because cultures bring people together by creating a community but it also gives them a common goal such as protecting the rainforests or one another.

The first AGAINST the preservation of endangered cultures is that the cultures that are endangered are ill-equipped for the modern world. For example, tropical rainforest cultures

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would be ill-equipped for the modern world because they live in the rainforest they haven't been brought up within society and therefore live very isolated lives and grow old not knowing the modern world meaning they have idea of all the new findings such as advance medicines and technologies e.g. mobiles, computers, iPad, speakers. This makes them illipe for joining the modern world such as if the rainforests end up being completely destroyed by man for their energy sores, they would be illipe for this because they wouldn't understand this technology and wouldn't be able to function alongside it.

The second FOR the preservation of endangered cultures is that it brings people together, this is shown in Tom Belt story about his tribe's language not being taught to the younger generation and him being a minority amongst his people that can speak Cherokee, this language brought him and his wife together because she was shocked when they met that he knew the language and that he could speak the language clearly she had said to him 20 years ago "the thing that attracted her to me was that I was the youngest Cherokee she'd ever met who could speak Cherokee". This shows that even for someone from the same culture as him sees that Cherokee is a language that isn't spoken this therefore make Tom realize that he was just one in 400 people that are left speaking Cherokee in the eastern band of the tribe. So far, the people that are speaking the language are threatened with demise and this isn't the only language threatened by this. "Over the past century alone, around 400 languages – about one every three months – have gone extinct, and most linguists estimate that 50% of the world's remaining 6,500 languages will be gone by the end of this century (some put that figure as high as 90%, however). Today, the top ten languages in the world claim around half of the world's population. Can language diversity be preserved, or are we on a path to becoming a monolingual species?" but also at least "100 around the world have only a handful of speakers" this varies "from Ainu in Japan to Yagna in Chile." It can be difficult to find these people too due to the lack in their numbers. In some famous cases such as "Marie Smith Jones passed away in Alaska in 2008, taking the Eyak language with her" however, they are usually older individuals who don't advertise their language skills.

The second AGAINST the preservation of endangered cultures is that it's pointless to try to preserve a language where the younger generation that comes from that culture/language speakers are preferring a more popular language such as English. An example of this would be the Pitkern speakers from the Pitcairn islands and the Norfolk islands in the south pacific only has 500 people speaking it the rest of the people are more interested in speaking other languages such as for example, "Younger speakers are increasingly preferring English, and many of them are moving to New Zealand or other English-speaking places. Even the small Pitkern-language version of Wikipedia has been proposed for closure twice." This shows that more and more people are not wanting to keep their own cultural languages around so why should we try to preserve these languages if their own practitioners don't wish to keep them alive in their daily life because of being more interested in the more popular languages around.

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However, some linguists believe that in losing a language is like losing a specie for example “linguist James Crawford says “when languages die the world loses four big things: linguistic diversity, intellectual diversity, cultural diversity, and cultural identity.””

The third FOR the preservation of endangered cultures and their languages is because language is an important part of society, this is because enables people to Communicate and express themselves to others. To a person being able to express themselves is an important side to them because it makes them who they are and without a language it is easier for an endangered culture to die out. According to the united nations educational, scientific, and cultural organization “from facts published in their "Atlas of Languages in Danger of Disappearing," there are an estimated 6,000 languages spoken worldwide today, and half of the world’s population speaks the eight most common. And 3,000 languages are spoken by fewer than 10,000.” Ways In which have been suggested to help prevent this dying out of languages is by teaching the younger generations as they grow up so that they are raised speaking this language and therefore being encouraged to keep up their traditions and language and end up teaching their children the same language and cultures in which they were raised to believe and follow from a young age. It is necessary to preserve language because without them we won’t have our cultures and our cultures make us who we are.

The third AGAINST is that if the language is unsuccessful in being kept alive then there is no point in trying. The article I’m going to use to prove this point is by a person called Kris, he says that “To me, languages are like businesses. The successful businesses thrive and create a great surplus, that is to say, more speakers of the language are born or made than speakers are dying.” This shows that he doesn’t think that languages should be preserved because if a language is dying out we should let it because it is unsuccessful. He also said that there are only 6 reasons to learn a dead or near-extinct language and these are: “1. Because an infographic in your Facebook news feed said you should, 2. “Just because”,3. Because you want to save the language, 4. Because you are bored, 5. Because you need a distraction from studying another language (procrastination), 6. Because it's cool,” he also states that reason 3 is one that it is the one with the most contradicting points and he found it very difficult to put that point into his post as it contradicts his point of view.

Another FOR the protection of endangered cultures could be to protect isolated cultures from being harmed by other societies. For example, in the article supporting this, it says that we have learned that in history that when other cultures have met with the endangered cultures that live in isolation from other cultures have been struck by disease, and in some cases misunderstandings of the smaller less advance culture and their belfies. This shows that we should be careful in our contact with them but also, we should protect these cultures as by not protecting them and causing disturbances with them we are not only damaging their culture but also other human life which we must not do under any sercanstances.

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