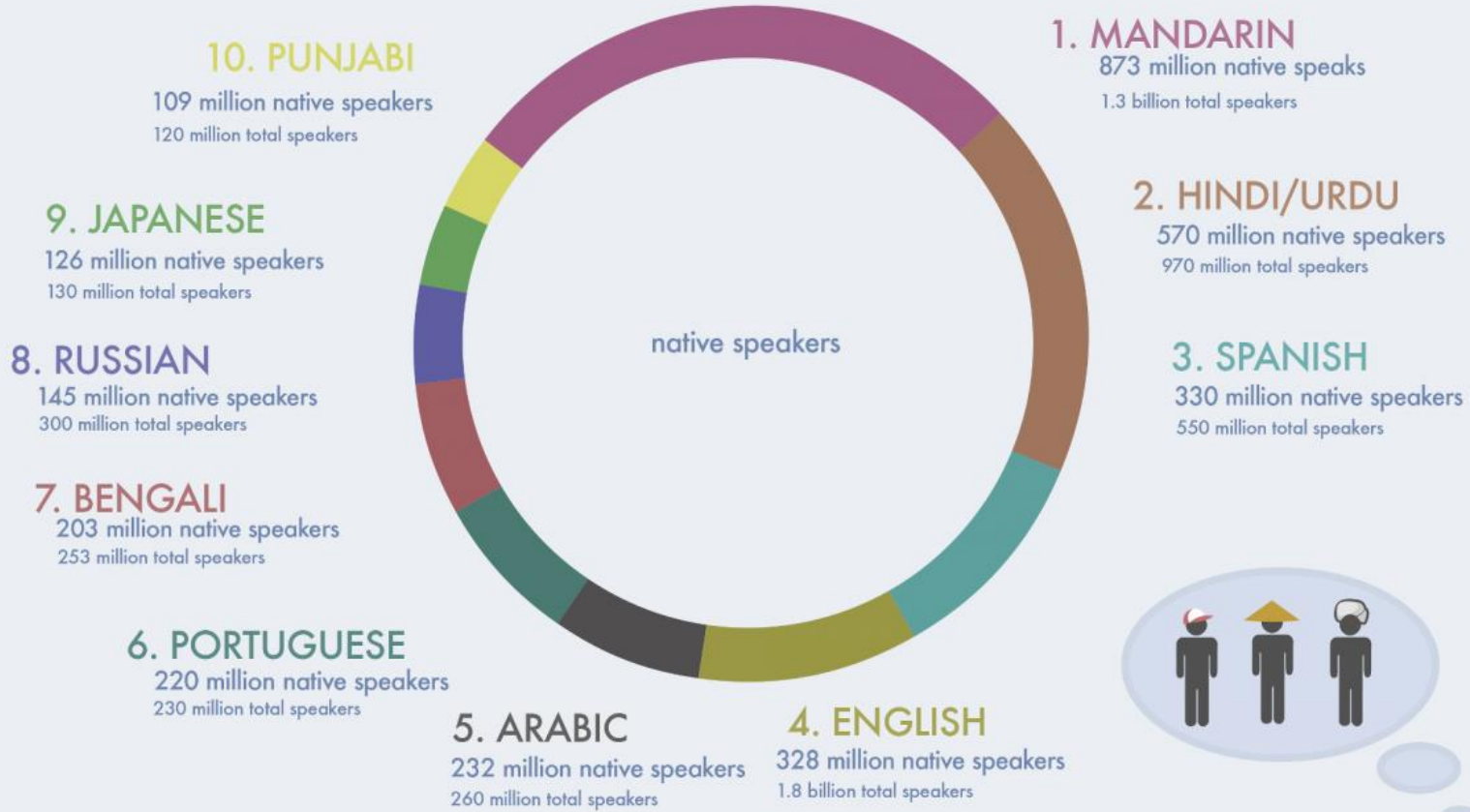


Can the Circassians preserve their language in the diaspora?

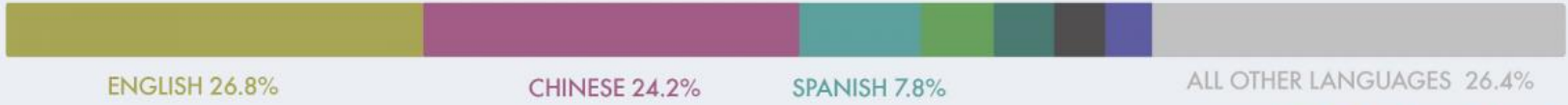
Diana Forker & Viacheslav Chirikba

WORLD'S TOP LANGUAGES

THERE ARE 6,900 SPOKEN LANGUAGES,
BUT 3 OUT OF 7 BILLION PEOPLE ON EARTH
SPEAK ONE OF THESE 10 LANGUAGES



OUT OF THEM IN THE TOP 10
LANGUAGES USED **ON THE INTERNET**

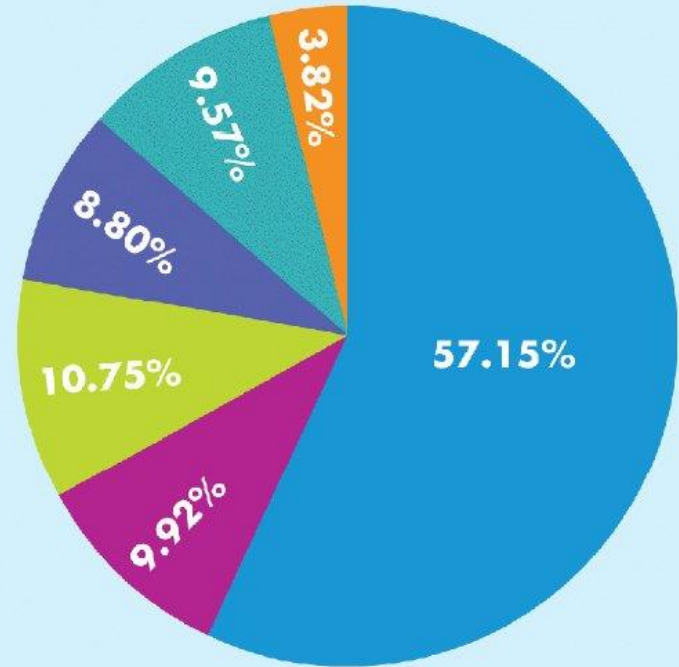


sources: internetworldstats.com

Language endangerment is a world-wide issue

THE WORLD'S ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

Out of an estimated **6000** languages spoken in the world, at least **2571** are endangered.



● Safe or data-deficient
● Vulnerable

● Definitely endangered
● Severely endangered

● Critically endangered
● Extinct

Endangered languages

Threats for Caucasian languages (incl. diaspora)

- asymmetrical contact situation: big languages (Russian, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Arabic vs. Caucasian languages)
- urbanization
- migration
- mixed marriages
- schooling / education
- no or little financial and institutional support ...

The sociolinguistic situation in Daghestan (East Caucasus) today

- 14 official languages (Russian, Avar, Agul, Azeri, Dargi, Kumyk, Lak, Lezgian, Noghay, Rutul, Tabasaran, Tat, Tsakhur, Chechen)
- plus around 15 other minority languages

Ethnic groups in Daghestan (2010)	#	%
Total of inhabitants	2,910,249	
Avars	850,011	29.21
Dargi	490,384	16.85
Kumyk	431,736	14.84
Lezgians	385,240	13.24
Azerbaijanis	130,919	4.50

The sociolinguistic situation in Daghestan today

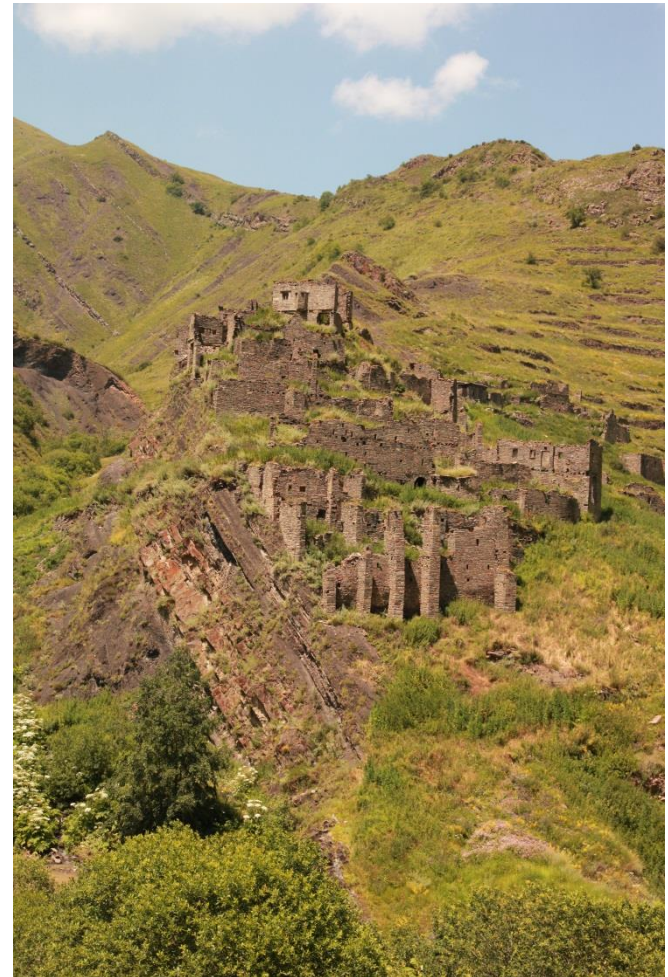
- official languages are taught in school and at the university
- used in the media, theaters, music
- mentioned in the constitution
- huge Russian influence
- high mobility: people moving from the mountains to the lowlands and to other parts of Russia
- increasing percentage of interethnic marriages



The sociolinguistic situation in Daghestan today

Sanzhi Dargwa

- around 250 speakers from the village of Sanzhi
- 1970-1978 moved to Druzhba ('friendship')
- other ethnic groups in Druzhba: Dargwa varieties, Tabasaran, Agul, Lezgians, Lak, Kumyk, Russians and Avars



Endangered languages

Languages used in a Sanzhi family in Druzhba

- Amatullah and Asabali (oldest generation): Sanzhi, Icari, (little) Russian



- Hadzhimurad (middle generation): Sanzhi, Russian, Tabasaran, little Standard Dargwa, Agul



- children and grandchildren (youngest generation): Russian, passive knowledge of Sanzhi Dargwa



Endangered languages

The West Caucasian diaspora

- after the end of the Russian-Caucasian War (1864) most of the West Caucasians were coerced to leave their country and resettle across the Ottoman Empire
- there are Circassian and Abkhaz communities in the Middle East (Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Israel), Western Europe and the USA
- most Circassians went to Turkey
- today an estimated number of 600 Circassian villages
- **in Jordan and Israel is Circassian taught in ethnic schools**

Circassians in Israel

(pictures from Yuri Lander, Moscow)



Circassians in Israel



Circassians in Israel





Endangered languages

There are many reasons for keeping languages alive

(from <https://7000.org/>)

Reason #1

Living languages mean a better future for our kids.

Kids who speak a heritage language **score higher** on tests than their monolingual peers.

Reason #6

Heritage language speakers have healthier brains.

Knowing another language improves **logic** and **memory**, and may slow the effects of diseases like **Alzheimer's**.

Endangered languages

There are many reasons for keeping languages alive

(from <https://7000.org/>)

Reason #4

Languages build our kids' self-esteem.

When taught a heritage language, children are **less anxious, more confident, and more focused.**

Reason #5

Language revival prompts academic success.

In New Zealand, indigenous students are **60% more likely to graduate** if they attend a Māori-language school.

Endangered languages

There are encouraging examples

- Catalonia
- Basque country in Spain
- Modern Hebrew
- Hawaiian
- Welsh
- ...

Endangered languages

Caucasian languages in 2067?

