

The UNESCO Chair in Environmental Leadership, Cultural Heritage, and Biodiversity at VinUniversity
 celebrates

International Mother Language Day 2026

Theme: The role of youth and technology in multilingual education: Challenges and opportunities

Wednesday 11 February 2026, 12:00-13:30pm (ICT/ GMT+7)
 Peace Room I-201, Building I, VinUniversity, Hà Nội, Việt Nam; & Online



International Mother Language Day, first proclaimed by UNESCO and later adopted by the UN General Assembly, underscores the role of languages in promoting diversity and inclusion and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Multilingual education fosters inclusive societies and supports the maintenance of non-dominant, minority, and indigenous languages – a cornerstone for equitable access to education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The UNESCO Chair in Environmental Leadership, Cultural Heritage, and Biodiversity at VinUniversity is celebrating International Mother Language Day 2026 with a Roundtable showcasing some of our ongoing research and engagement which advance the theme of *The role of youth and technology in multilingual education: Challenges and opportunities*.

~ PROGRAMME ~

Introduction 12:00-12:05

to the UNESCO Chair at VinUniversity, Heritage and Diversity Roundtable, & IMLD2026
 ~ Lisa Lim, Director of Engagement & Development, UNESCO Chair, VinUniversity

Opening Remarks 12:05-12:10

~ Jonathan Baker, UNESCO Representative & Head of Office in Việt Nam

Showcase Presentations 12:10-12:40

Bahnar environmental knowledge and the Bahnar Talking Dictionary ~ Trần Hoài

<https://talkingdictionary.swarthmore.edu/Bahnar/>

Bahnar Epic Tale bilingual ebooks, with an excerpt narrated in Bahnar ~ Trần Phước Lâm Huy & Y Nuy

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0GBVSYRCK/>

Sustaining Khmer language & heritage in southern Việt Nam ~ Lý Quốc Đặng, Cần Thơ University

Hanoi Sign Language Talking Dictionary ~ Nguyễn Thái Minh

<https://talkingdictionary.swarthmore.edu/vietnamesesign/>

Commentary 12:40-12:45

Languages, communities, technology, and education – Looking ahead

~ K. David Harrison, Chairholder, UNESCO Chair, VinUniversity

Questions & Discussion & Closing 12:45-13:00

~ Audience & UNESCO Chair VinUniversity team

Reception & Networking 13:00-13:30

For more information or to RSVP, please contact: unescochair@vinuni.edu.vn

Further background to International Mother Language Day & other UN initiatives for multilingualism

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) was first proclaimed by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1999. IMLD originated as the international recognition of Language Movement Day, which has been commemorated in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) since 1952, when Dhaka university students were killed by the Pakistani police and army. The students were staging peaceful protests against the Governor General's 1948 declaration of Urdu as the only official language for both East and West Pakistan, in spite of Bengali being the main language of the people of East Pakistan.

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) has been observed worldwide every year since February 2000 to **promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism**. A quarter of a century on, there is growing awareness that languages play a vital role in development, in ensuring **cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue**, but also in strengthening co-operation and attaining **quality education for all**, in building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving cultural heritage, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/mother-language-day>

Growing recognition of the importance of languages include the following initiatives, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly:

The International Year of Languages (2008): to develop, support and intensify activities aimed at fostering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages, in particular endangered languages, linguistic diversity and multilingualism <https://www.unesco.org/en/years/international-year-languages-2008>

The International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL) (2009): to promote and protect Indigenous languages and improve the lives of those who speak them, contributing to achieving the objectives set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development <https://en.iyil2019.org/index.html>

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) (2022-2032): to ensure Indigenous peoples' right to preserve, revitalise and promote their languages, offering an opportunity to collaborate in the areas of policy development and stimulate a global dialogue and to take necessary measures for the usage, preservation, revitalisation and promotion of Indigenous languages around the world <https://idil2022-2032.org/>

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The work of the UNESCO Chair in Environmental Leadership, Cultural Heritage, and Biodiversity at VinUniversity encompasses research, engagement, advocacy, and action in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4 Quality Education, SDG10 Reduced Inequalities, SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG13 Climate Action, SDG14 Life under Water, SDG15 Life on Land, SDG17 Partnerships for the Goals.