Are old languages worth saving?

READING C1 - PARAGRAPH HEADINGS

Match each paragraph to the correct heading.

A A CASE FOR REJOICING?
B ENGLISH: A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE
C A DIVERSE SOLUTION
D THE LANGUAGE EXTINCTION RATE
E LANGUAGES EVOLVE
F LANGUAGE IS MORE THAN SIMPLY COMMUNICATION
G SOME IN DANGER, SOME GONE FOREVER – EXAMPLE
H MY OWN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE
I ONE WORLD, ONE LANGUAGE

EXAMPLE	*G*

Right now, somewhere in the world, the last speaker of an ancient language is breathing his or her last breath. When this person dies, so will another language. Ever heard of Jiwarli? No? It's no surprise: The last native speaker died in Australia in 1976. Or Chinook? It used to be the language of trade in the Pacific Northwest, as many of the region's Native American tribes spoke it as a second language. Now, not even the Chinook speak Chinook.

1	

For many centuries the world has been losing languages, but they do seem to be disappearing at an incredible rate more recently. Roughly 6000 languages are spoken in the world today, it is staggering to hear linguists predict that half of them will vanish in this century, and 90 percent will be gone by the next.

2	

A disaster? Not to everyone. John Miller, writing in The Wall Street Journal, asserts that every time a language dies, it is time to celebrate because another "primitive" tribe has joined the modern world. Although Miller fails to describe what he considers so great about the modern world, perhaps he has a point: it's only a language. Terms like "extinction" and "endangered" put language disappearance on the same footing as the disappearance of a species. But there is a difference.

3	

A single species cannot survive alone; a decrease in numbers of one species affects others around it. A single language, however, can do just fine. Calling the disappearance of languages "extinction" introduces the notion of catastrophe: one which can, and should, be averted. Yet fewer languages means more people sharing a common language. What's wrong with everyone in the world being able to understand one another?

4	

Yet every language has subtle distinctions and allusions of its own which cannot be fully expressed in another language. It's not just about literal translation or grammar. A language reflects its culture, from the vocabulary it contains to its style and literary traditions. Not everything can be translated into English or any of the other major languages: it might retain its meaning but it will surely lose its spirit.

5	

When people integrate, a language is often lost or adapted. Whenever newcomers have settled in a new land they and the local people have usually ended up speaking the same language. English was born when Germanic-speaking Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded the Celtic-speaking islands. Romans gave that form of German a shot of Latin and this became Old English. Later French-speaking Normans conquered England but were defeated by its language. Instead Old English absorbed French words and became Middle English. The process of change continues, thankfully more peaceably, to this day.

6	

For purely interactive purposes, one language may be all the world needs. There is no end to the things that can be expressed in English--or in any other language. But language is an expression of culture and perhaps the bilingual, multicultural, integrated society is where we are heading. Then we can tell each other about our own special cultures - and language.