

Preserving Indigenous Languages in Urbanized Setting among Indigenous Youth in Davao City

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Abstract

Indigenous languages is dying. I explored the impact of mainstream culture, media, and education systems on the vitality of Indigenous languages in urbanized setting and the efforts of Indigenous Youth to preserve their language use within households in urbanized setting. I used a descriptive qualitative study, using semi-structured I interviewed with 16 indigenous youth whom I purposively selected. I employed thematic analysis to analyze the data and found out the vitality of Indigenous languages amid the influence of mainstream culture, media, and education through continuous preservation efforts. I recommend that educational institutions incorporate indigenous languages in the curriculum. A quantitative study uses the identified themes as variables and sub-themes as indicators, as well as a qualitative study to explore additional emerging themes in greater depth for future research.

Keywords: *Preserving indigenous languages, urbanized setting, indigenous youth*

1. Introduction

The decline in the preservation of indigenous languages remains a critical global issue (United Nations, 2019). Grenoble and Whaley (2020) emphasized that the erosion of Indigenous languages is directly linked to a lack of revitalization efforts.

In the United States, the loss of Indigenous languages across generations continues to pose a serious threat to cultural continuity (Hinton, 2013). Similarly, in Canada, many indigenous communities have shifted toward English, leading to a gradual abandonment of ancestral tongues (Nicholas et al., 2022). This reflects the broader, ongoing loss experienced by Indigenous peoples worldwide.

In the Philippine context, the decline in the preservation of indigenous languages is similarly attributed to the Tagalog and English languages (Paredes et al., 2023). This leaves little room for mother tongues to be spoken. The decline of indigenous languages has similarly been experienced in the local context, as reported by Almario (2023). This decline occurs as communities increasingly adopt Tagalog and English leaving the ancestral languages behind.

The decline in indigenous language preservation in urbanized settings is a problematic situation with far-reaching consequences that result in indigenous language erosion (Muehlmann, 2022). There is an urgent need to study the decline in the preservation of indigenous languages. Without timely and culturally grounded intervention, the entire linguistic tradition risks being lost within a generation. It is for this urgency and gap that this study was pursued.

1.1. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study it explores how mainstream culture, media, and educational systems affect the vitality of Indigenous languages, especially in urbanized settings where Indigenous Peoples (IP) youth often find themselves negotiating between their native tongues and dominant languages. I was drawn to this inquiry by a strong desire to understand how these youth experience and express their linguistic identities in spaces that frequently overlook their cultural heritage. By centering their voices and stories, I hope to contribute not only to the academic field of language preservation but also to the larger movement of cultural revitalization. I believe this research can offer practical insights to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in designing more responsive and culturally rooted language programs. At the same time, I see it as a form of affirmation for IP youth—one that fosters a stronger sense of identity, raises awareness of their heritage, and renews connections to ancestral traditions. I also hope educators, particularly in the social sciences, will draw from this work to create more inclusive, respectful learning environments that recognize and value Indigenous knowledge. Ultimately, this study reflects my commitment to supporting Indigenous communities in sustaining, reclaiming, and celebrating their languages and cultural legacies in the face of ongoing change.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study I aimed to explore the impact of mainstream culture, media, and education systems on the vitality of

Indigenous languages in urbanized communities and the survival conditions and efforts of Indigenous Peoples in preserving their language use within households in the urbanized setting of Davao City. The central research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What are the impacts of mainstream culture, media, and education systems on the vitality of ethnolinguistic in Indigenous languages in urbanized settings?
2. What are the manifestations of the survival conditions of Indigenous people amid language erosion to preserve the IP language use within households in the urbanized setting of Davao City?

1.3. Interview Guide Questions

The interview focused on preserving indigenous languages in urbanized settings among indigenous youth in Davao City. The questions explored the impacts of mainstream culture, media, and education on ethnolinguistic vitality, as well as practices for preserving Indigenous languages in a modern world.

1. What impacts have mainstream culture, media, and the education system had on the use and vitality of your Indigenous language in an urban setting like Davao City?

2. What practices have you or your family taken to preserve the use of your Indigenous language within your household despite the erosion of its use in the community?

1.4. Assumptions

I believe that the struggles Indigenous youth face in preserving our native languages stem from the overwhelming pull of mainstream culture, especially through mainstream culture, media, and the education system, where our mother tongue is often dismissed or viewed as outdated. Growing up in an urbanized setting, I have seen how speaking English or Filipino is encouraged, while indigenous language slowly fades into the background, used only at home or with elders. Yet, despite these impacts, I think many of us are finding quiet but meaningful ways to hold on to our linguistic roots by speaking our native tongue with family members, participating in cultural gatherings, or even using it creatively on social media. These strategies might seem small, but to me, they are acts of resistance and keeping our identity alive in a world that often tells us to let go of it.

1.5. Theoretical Lens

In this study, I anchored in the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality is defined as “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting” (Giles et al. 1977). It was suggested that the more vitality an ethnolinguistic group has, the more likely it is to survive and thrive as a collective entity in the intergroup context. Conversely, it was suggested that ethnolinguistic groups that have little or no vitality would eventually cease to exist as distinctive linguistic groups within the intergroup setting. Three broad dimensions were suggested as most likely to influence the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups: these were status factor, demographics, and Institutional Support.

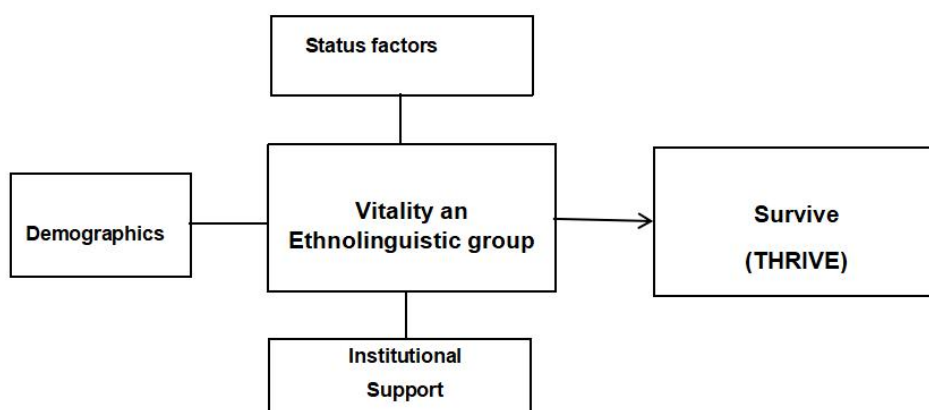


Figure 1. The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory Giles, et.al (1977)

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

For this study, I used a qualitative descriptive research design. I selected this approach because it allowed me to focus on the specific experiences of Indigenous youth regarding the use and preservation of their native languages. This design was appropriate for exploring the practical and social aspects of language retention in everyday contexts. I wanted to understand the situations, conditions, and responses of these young individuals as they encounter challenges related to language use. By using this design, I aimed to present their experiences in a clear and structured manner based on direct accounts from participants (Colorafi & Evans, 2020).

2.2. Locale of the Study

Davao City was selected as the location for this research due to its cultural diversity and the presence of several Indigenous groups. I focused specifically on urban areas where Indigenous youth are actively engaged in both community and educational settings. These locations offered relevant opportunities to observe how language practices are influenced by interactions with institutions, peers, and the wider community. The demographic and cultural composition aligns with the goals of this study, particularly in understanding how Indigenous youth manage language preservation in an urban environment.

2.3. Sample and Sampling

I used purposive sampling to select participants who could provide relevant and informed perspectives on the topic. This method allowed me to choose individuals who are knowledgeable about and directly affected by the issue of Indigenous language retention. With the support of local cultural leaders, I identified 16 participants: eight for individual interviews and eight for a focus group discussion. All participants were members of the five major Indigenous tribes found in Davao City. The interviews were conducted in person to ensure a more direct and focused exchange of information. This approach helped me gather detailed responses that are essential for understanding the research problem from the viewpoint of those most affected.

2.4. Data Gathering Technique

In conducting this study, I adopted a qualitative research approach, using both focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) guided by a semi-structured interview format. This format allowed me to ask open-ended questions while providing participants the freedom to express their experiences and perspectives in their own words. As outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008), this approach avoids leading the participants and allows authentic insights to emerge.

To enhance the credibility of the data, I used methodological triangulation by comparing interview data with field notes and documents. I also used member checking by letting participants review their responses to make sure their views were accurately recorded.

Throughout the data collection process, I remained conscious of potential biases and practiced reflexivity to maintain objectivity and improve the trustworthiness of the study. I created a respectful and comfortable environment for participants, which encouraged open communication and helped produce meaningful and consistent data. In addition to formal interview sessions, I also engaged in informal and unstructured conversations when appropriate, which helped me refine some of the main questions and gain additional contextual understanding.

While English was the primary language used for interviews, I provided translations when necessary to ensure that participants could respond clearly and comfortably. Prior to any data collection, the semi-structured interview guide was submitted for approval and underwent ethical review to ensure compliance with established research standards, as recommended by Jamshed (2014).

All participants were fully briefed on the purpose of the study, including any potential risks. Participation was strictly voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

2.5. Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I used thematic analysis, which helped me identify recurring ideas, phrases, and patterns from participants' responses. After transcribing all interviews and desk review materials, I carefully read through them to become familiar with the content, jotting down early impressions. Using Creswell's (2013) guidance and the steps from Braun and Clarke's (2006) model, I began coding significant quotes and sorting them into possible themes.

From there, I reviewed and refined these themes, checking how well they fit with the rest of the data. I created a thematic map to visualize the connections and better understand the bigger picture. As I shaped the final themes, I selected strong quotes and examples that reflected the core of my findings. These helped me weave a meaningful narrative that clearly connects back to the research questions, the objectives of the study, and existing literature.

2.6. Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this research, I adhered to four key criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility was established by aligning the research questions with relevant literature and supporting the findings with well-documented evidence. The study's ethical approval further reinforced its reliability. Prior to conducting any interviews, I obtained informed consent from all participants, ensuring that they fully understood the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of their participation. These ethical considerations contributed to the overall integrity and transparency of the research process. (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004)

Dependability was maintained by applying consistent data collection methods, using accurate and relevant sources, and implementing clearly defined participant selection procedures. This approach ensured that the study could be replicated under similar conditions with comparable outcomes. (Cohen et al., 2011).

To enhance transferability, I provided detailed contextual descriptions of the study's setting, participants, and procedures, allowing readers and future researchers to determine the applicability of the findings to other contexts (Bitsch, 2005)

For confirmability, all conclusions were grounded in the data rather than in personal interpretations or assumptions. I maintained comprehensive records of the research process, engaged in member checking by inviting participants to review and validate their responses, and sought feedback from academic advisors to further minimize bias. In accordance with the Privacy Act of 2012, I used coded identifiers to protect participant anonymity and ensured that all data were securely stored or appropriately disposed of after the study. The use of an audit trail served as a transparent record, allowing others to trace the study's path. These procedures upheld the ethical standards of the research and reinforced the credibility and objectivity of the findings (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

3. Results

In this chapter, I presented the results derived from the responses of my study participants. Specifically, I introduced the modified paradigm based on the identified themes and corresponding subthemes. I also explained how these findings align with the core concepts of Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, which emphasizes: (1) the vitality of ethnolinguistic, and (2) language preservation as essential to their survival.

Modified Paradigm

The modified paradigm in the image visually extends the framework of Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, which outlines the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group and language preservation as the key to survival. These factors can support the study of indigenous languages by highlighting the experiences faced by Indigenous youth regarding the impact of the vitality of ethnolinguistic in preserving their language within urbanized settings.

The Vitality of an Ethnolinguistic Group

The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group can be understood as the strength and continuity of its language and culture. This vitality is closely tied to the group's relationship with mainstream society, where dominant cultures, media, and education systems can either reinforce or weaken minority languages.

Modified paradigm illustrating these findings is presented below:

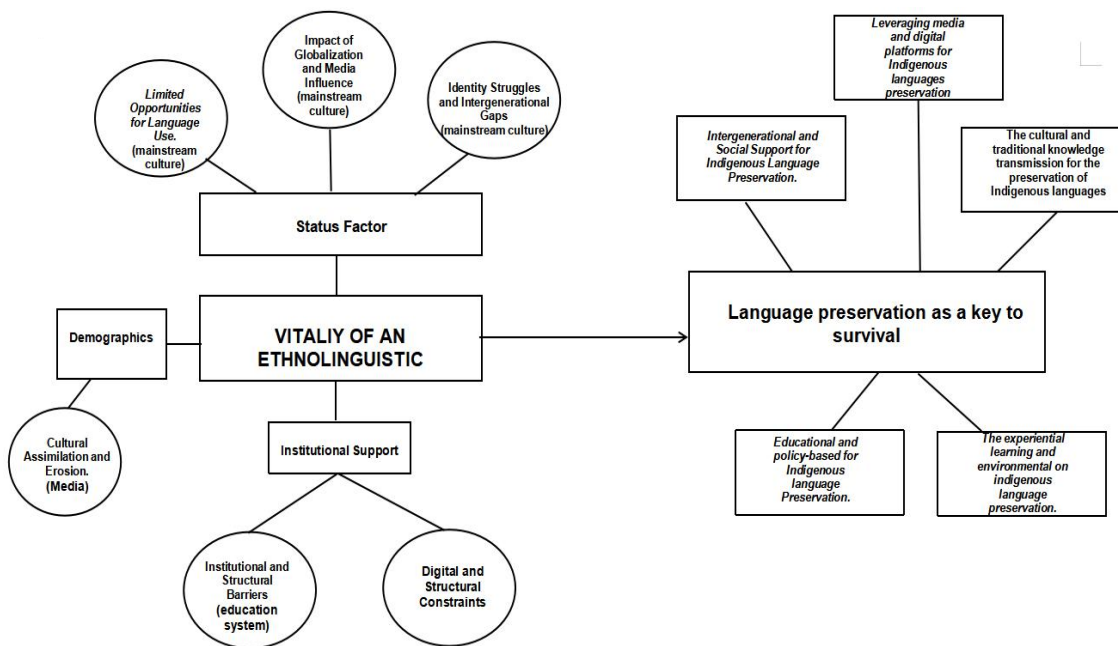


Figure 2. Thematic Analysis Result through the Lens of Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles, et.al, 1977)

The Vitality of an Ethnolinguistic

When dominant languages are favored in these spaces, minority languages often become marginalized, resulting in a loss of linguistic identity. I believe that incorporating Indigenous or minority languages into mainstream education and media can significantly aid in language revitalization. I have identified three emerging sub-themes: 1) Status factor, 2) Demographics, and 3) Institution Support.

On the vitality of status factor in indigenous language preservation. The vitality of the status factor influences language preservation. Through my conversations with Indigenous youth in urban settings, it has become increasingly clear that dominant languages are often viewed as essential for success in mainstream culture. Many youths shared feelings of marginalization, explaining how their indigenous languages are associated with limited opportunities due to their lower status and reduced access to resources. This prioritization gradually diminishes the perceived value of Indigenous languages, positioning them as less relevant or useful in the eyes of younger generations. Opportunities due to their lower status and reduced access to resources.

This issue deeply concerns me, especially as Indigenous youth face pressure from both family and society. Many parents, hoping for their children's success, prioritize dominant languages and unintentionally set aside their own, believing these offer more opportunities. While well-intentioned, this leads to a loss of heritage, as young people are overwhelmed by school, work, and social demands, leaving little room for ancestral language use. With dominant languages seen as gateways to success, Indigenous languages lose their value, putting future generations at risk of losing not just the language but also their cultural identity and community ties. As Maria stated during the interview:

"Gina-awhag mi sa among mga ginikanan nga magpokus sa Iningles aron magmalampuson sa kinabuhi, mao nga lisod usahay ipangatarungan ang pagkat-on sa among kaugalingong pinulongan." IDI-P1

(Our parents encourage us to focus on the English language so we can succeed in life, which makes it harder to justify learning our language)

Listening to Maria's story made my heart ache because I saw my own experience in hers. Like her, I grew up surrounded by my native language, hearing it in everyday moments and family conversations. But as I got older, everything school, work, and even my parents' hopes pushed me to focus on Tagalog and English. Slowly, my mother tongue became something I used less and less until it felt distant, like a fading memory. I often wanted to speak it again, but the fear of being judged or not understood held me back. In choosing what was practical, I unknowingly let go of something deeply personal. Maria's story reminded me of what I had lost, not just a language but a part of myself.

Another Indigenous youth I interviewed, named Mary, shared her thoughts during our conversation:

"Ang tanaw sa uban tao na ang among pinulungan kay ubos maong nasinati namo ang kakulangan sa oportunidad makapugong kanamo sa paglambo sa kinabuhi ug sa pagkat-on ug ubang mga pinulungan nga makatabang unta namo sa pag-abot sa among mga tumon" IDI-P3

(The way other people see our language as inferior has made us feel a lack of opportunities, which holds us back from improving our lives and learning other languages that could have helped us reach our goals.)

During our interview, she spoke quietly, with hurt in her eyes, as if her voice did not matter. I saw how negative views toward Indigenous languages can silence someone's dreams. I felt that pain; I have lived it, too. I grew up hearing my grandmother speak our native language, but over time, I used it less, being told that English was the path to success. Now, I struggle to remember the words that once felt like home. In addition, I interviewed Cristine, and she shared this during the interview:

"Gusto unta namo gamiton ang among pinulungan sa digital nga mga plataporma, pero kadaghanan sa mga plataporma dili kini gisustento tungod sa ubos nga pagtan-aw niini." FGD-P4

(We want to use our language in digital spaces, but most platforms do not support it because of its low status.)

Christine's disappointment highlighted the deep impact of the lack of digital support for her language. She longed to share it online, but the platforms did not recognize it, leaving her feeling invisible. I could relate, recalling how my own posts in my native language were often autocorrected or ignored, erasing my identity. Christine's story reminded me of the pain of being unheard in a world that fails to make room for voices like ours. Without space for our languages online, we're not just losing words. We're losing a piece of who we are.

Language is deeply tied to identity, shaping how individuals connect to their culture and sense of self. In my interviews with Indigenous youth, it became clear that preserving their language means preserving who they are. However, status factor influences such as the low social value placed on Indigenous languages make this difficult. Mainstream culture often treats these languages as inferior, leading to social pressure, identity struggles, and generational divides. As a result, in my study, many youths lose confidence in their heritage, weakening cultural pride and reinforcing the idea that their language is less useful or important. This not only threatens language survival but also deepens marginalization. As Maria stated in her answer during the interview:

"kataw-an pa gani mi kung mogamit mi sa among inilangpinulungan, bisan pa sa among kaugalingong komunidad." IDI-P8

(Sometimes, people laugh at us when we speak our native language, even within our own communities.)

Also, Maria said that:

"Usahay, sakit kaayo kay ang among kaugalingong pinulungan, imbes nga ikapasigarbo, nahimong hinungdan sa pagbiya sa among damgo tungod kay kataw-an ra mi bisan sa among kaugalingong komunidad" IDI-P8

(At times, it's deeply painful that our own language—something that should be a source of pride—becomes

the very reason we give up on our dreams, simply because we're mocked for it, even within our own community.)

During the interview, Maria shared a painful truth that deeply touched me: many Indigenous youth face ridicule, even within their own communities, for speaking their native language. The language is seen as outdated dismissed with unintentional laughter that makes them feel small and disconnected. Her story hit home for me, too. I have felt that same sting, wanting to speak my language only to be laughed at or judged. It's like a part of you is slowly being erased. Maria's struggle, like mine, reflects the pressures Indigenous youth face—urbanization and societal expectations pulling us further from our culture and language. It's an emotional battle that feels increasingly difficult to win.

On the vitality of demographic in language preservation. The vitality of demographics has impacted Indigenous youth in urban areas, disconnecting them from the communities where their languages are spoken. As Indigenous youth adapt to mainstream media languages, their native tongues become less relevant. Globalization, media, and identity struggles make preserving these languages harder, while the fast pace of urban life and changing family structures hinder intergenerational language transmission. Without support or cultural spaces, Indigenous youth risk losing their language and identity. As I spoke to Joel during the interview, he said that:

"Tung panahon na mobalhin mi sa siyudad para sa edukasyon o trabaho, hinay-hinay na nga mawagtangan og koneksyon sa among pinulongan ug mga tradisyon" FGD-P8

(When we move to the city for education or work, we lose connection with our language and traditions.)

As he spoke, I could feel the weight of loneliness and the aching longing for home in his words. Listening to him, I felt that same ache within me. I've been there, caught between worlds, unsure where I truly belong. I, too lost touch with my language as life in the city took over. I have felt the sting of not being able to speak the words I once shared with my family. His story made me realize how crucial it is to preserve our culture and language they are the very foundation of who we are.

Furthermore, another demographic influence experienced by indigenous youth came up during our interview when Jimmy, Joel's brother, shared in our conversation that:

"Tungod sa panginahanglan sa mas maayong edukasyon ug trabaho, daghan sa among komunidad ang napugos sa pagbalhin sa siyudad. Apan sa among pagpuyo didto, hinay-hinay usab nga naputol ang among koneksyon sa among pinulongan ug kultura, labi na ang impluwensya sa media." FGD-P7

(Because we needed better education and job opportunities, many people in our community had no choice but to move to the city. But as we lived there, little by little, we started to lose touch with our language and culture, especially with the influence of the media.)

As I listened to his answer, I felt a quiet sadness in his voice. He said, *"Tungod sa panginahanglan sa mas maayong edukasyon ug trabaho, daghan sa among komunidad ang napugos sa pagbalhin sa siyudad."* His words lingered in my mind, and I felt a deep loneliness, realizing that sometimes moving forward means leaving parts of ourselves behind. It was not just about living in the city; it was about slowly losing the language and traditions that once connected them to home. His experience made me reflect on how urban migration leads to cultural and physical displacement, leaving many disconnected from their heritage. This challenge is worsened by the lack of institutional support for language preservation, making it harder to protect and pass on Indigenous languages.

On the vitality of Institutional support in language preservation. Institutions, including the education system, play a vital role in ethnolinguistic, influencing the use and preservation of Indigenous languages, especially in urban areas. The lack of support for Indigenous languages fosters an environment in which they become invisible and undervalued. As dominant languages are prioritized, many Indigenous youths view their native tongues as outdated or irrelevant. Without institutional backing, the responsibility for language preservation falls on families and communities, making it harder to pass the language on. These insights I have drawn from the experiences of Indigenous youth highlight how institutional neglect marginalizes Indigenous linguistic heritage. As Mark articulated his frustrations regarding these impacts during my interview:

"Daghan sa amo ang naglisod og padayon sa pagkinabuhi sa among pinulongan tungod kay pirmi nga ma-expose sa Iningles nga sinultian sa eskwelahan" IDI-P5

(Many of us struggle to keep our language alive because we are constantly exposed to the English language in schools.)

In addition, Mark also said that:

Ang among mga katigulangan maningkamot og tudlo sa amo, pero dili gyud mikanunay maka-tuon tungod sa eskwela ug uban pang mga responsibilidad. IDI-P5

(Our elders try to teach us, but we don't always have time to learn because of school and other responsibilities.)

He shared something that stuck with me his frustration was clear, and I could feel it, too. He said their language felt like a faint signal, always there but drowned out by the louder sounds of daily life. He explained how English dominated education and media, making their language seem unimportant. Even when it was used, it felt like an afterthought. Elders tried to pass it down, but with life moving so fast, there was little time to truly learn. Listening to him, I could not help but think about my own experience. I have felt that same struggle, watching my own language slowly fade away. His story reminded me that without support, our languages risk disappearing, just like paper boats drifting away in a fast-moving current.

Moreover, in my interview, an Indigenous youth shared how schools often treat Indigenous languages as secondary subjects rather than essential to cultural identity. This lack of institutional support disconnects younger generations from their ancestral languages, widening the generational gap and weakening ties between language, identity, and community. As John articulated regarding his experience:

"Ang sistema sa edukasyon dili mohatag ug prayoridad sa among inulongan, ug bisan pa man kung apil kini sa kurikulum, gihimo ra kini nga murag side subject imbis nga tan-awon nga usa ka importante nga bahin." FGD-P2

(The education system doesn't prioritize our language, and even when it is included, it is treated as a side subject rather than something essential.)

I was saddened to hear how their language was pushed aside and seen as unimportant in the education system, treated as optional rather than essential. It reminded me of my own experience trying to speak my language only to have it ignored or dismissed. Without support from schools, media, or digital platforms, Indigenous languages slowly fade away, like sand slipping through our fingers. It is painful to watch something so important to our identity disappear. This experience was not limited to schools; it also extended to media and digital spaces, where their language was rarely seen or heard.

The lack of support for Indigenous languages in education, combined with digital and structural barriers, creates an environment where these languages are invisible and undervalued. Dominant languages dominate media and digital platforms due to their ease of production and wide distribution, sidelining Indigenous languages and hindering their preservation. The absence of investment in Indigenous media, along with structural influence, reinforces the idea that these languages are less important, contributing to cultural erasure. These issues reflect deeper institutional inequalities affecting Indigenous communities.

As I interviewed Joey, he articulated:

"Ang mga movie, music, ug online content kasagaran sa Ingles, ug tungod niini, magdako ta nga magtan-aw ug makapaminaw niini. Kini nagpasabot nga ang atong inanglengwa mahimong ikaduha, labi na sa lain-laing institusyon, ilabi na sa among eskwelahan." FGD-P3

(Most movies, music, and online content are in English, and growing up surrounded by this, we naturally end up watching and listening to it. As a result, our native language often takes a backseat, especially in schools and other institutions.)

He also stated:

"Tapos, ang online content kasagaran sa Iningles, ilabi na sa amonng skwelahan diin ang Iningles kasagaran ang giprioritize, nga naghatag og kalisud sa pagpreserbar ug pagpalambo sa atong inanglengwa" FGD-P3

(Most online content is in English, especially in our school, where English is often prioritized. This creates difficulty in preserving and developing our native language.)

As I listened to his story, a deep sadness filled me. He shared how everything around him was in English while his native language quietly faded into the background. It reminded me of my own experience, where English often seemed like the only practical choice, and my own language was slowly left behind. The digital world, with all its opportunities, often draws us further from our roots, making it harder to preserve the languages that once defined us.

The Language preservation as a key to survival

The survival of Indigenous languages is vital for preserving cultural identity and heritage. Social and educational

support, along with experiential learning, help Indigenous youth reconnect with their language. When reinforced by family, community, and media, the language becomes part of daily life. Policies that promote Indigenous language education provide essential resources and encourage younger generations to uphold their culture. The transmission of cultural knowledge through language is crucial for sustaining Indigenous traditions. I have identified five key subthemes: 1) Intergenerational and Social Support for Language Preservation, 2) Using Media and Digital Platforms for Language Retention, 3) Cultural Knowledge Transmission, 4) Educational and Policy Support for Language, and 5) Experiential Learning and Environmental Reinforcement.

On the Intergenerational and Social Support for Language Preservation The survival of Indigenous languages among youth is deeply shaped by the support they receive from their families, peers, and communities. As mainstream culture, media, and education continue to prioritize dominant languages, Indigenous youth find ways to maintain their connection to their native languages through the support of those around them. I believe that the role of elders in passing down the language, alongside the encouragement from peers and the wider community, is crucial in keeping these languages alive. Families, despite the prevalence of English in schools and public life, often make a conscious effort to speak their native language at home. In my perspective, these efforts are vital for helping youth maintain a sense of cultural identity and belonging, providing them with the strength to resist the pressures of assimilation into the larger society. Ana said during the interview:

"Bisan pa man nga ginakinahanglan nga mag-Iningles mi sa eskwelahan, sabalay, pirmi gyud mi istoryahan sa among ginikanan gamit ang among inilang pinulongan. Ingon sila nga importante nga dili gyud namo kalimtan kung asa mi gikan." IDI-P3

(Even though we are required to speak English in school, at home, my parents always talk to us in our native tongue. They say it's important to never forget where we come from.)

During the interview, as Ana shared her excitement about her experience, I felt happy to hear that, despite the academic necessity of using English in school, her family consistently uses their native language at home, which can be seen as a form of "cultural preservation." Her parents understand the importance of staying connected to their heritage, emphasizing that language is not just a tool for communication but also a means of preserving one's origins. It is clear that the home environment plays a crucial role in reinforcing language use outside the classroom. This reinforcement of the native language within the family serves as an anchor, balancing the dual linguistic demands of the academic environment and personal heritage.

Furthermore, the support from elders is crucial in countering the social stigma often associated with speaking Indigenous languages. Elders act not only as linguistic transmitters but also as cultural custodians, passing down the values, traditions, and identities tied to the language. In urban environments, where dominant languages prevail, Indigenous youth often face societal pressures that deem their native languages outdated or irrelevant. However, when elders actively reinforce the language and its cultural significance, they help challenge these negative perceptions, fostering pride and continuity in younger generations. This support is essential in creating a sense of community and belonging, enabling Indigenous youth to resist cultural erasure and maintain their linguistic and cultural identity despite broader societal pressures. As stated by Lina during the interview:

"Usahay maulaw ko gamiton ang among pinulongan kay ang mga tawo sa akong palibot dili kasabot, pero kanunay ko pahimangnuan sa akong lola nga kini usa ka gasa, dili usa ka kabug-at." IDI-P4

(Sometimes I feel embarrassed to speak it because people around me do not understand, but my grandmother always reminds me that it's a gift, not a burden)

Hearing Lina's story made me reflect on my own hesitations about speaking my language, feeling it sometimes I did not belong. But like Lina, I gain confidence when my family reminds me of its importance. Her grandmother's reminder that the language is "usa ka gasa" (a gift) gave me motivation, showing how elder support can overcome the shame often tied to Indigenous languages. I realized that strong family and community support is key to keeping a language alive. When peers embrace the language, it becomes easier to preserve and take pride in it.

In urban settings, peer influence and informal communication are essential in preserving Indigenous languages among youth. Everyday interactions, whether through casual conversations, social media, or community gatherings, play a crucial role in passing down language and cultural practices. As urbanization and external pressures threaten traditional languages, these informal moments empower Indigenous youth to strengthen their language skills and connect with their identity, ensuring their native languages remain vibrant outside the formal education system. As Carlos said:

"Ako ug ang akong mga amigo nagapaningkamot nga mag-istorya gamit ang among pinulongan pinaagi sa mga message ug chat. Bisan pa man og gamay ra kini, makatabang gihapon kini sa among pagpraktis." FGD-P8

(My friends and I make an effort to converse in our language through messages and chat. While it may seem small, it helps us continue practicing)

Reflecting on Carlos's statement made me proud because his joy showed how much he values his heritage. It made me think about how small actions, like speaking the language with friends, can help preserve Indigenous languages. His efforts reminded me that casual conversations and social media can strengthen language skills. Despite the influence of dominant languages in cities, I've come to realize how important it is to keep using our language in everyday life. This personal understanding inspires me to do the same for my own culture.

In today's digital age, indigenous youth are finding ways to preserve their native languages, even with English dominating the media. By engaging with content in their own languages and using them on social media, they not only strengthen their bond to their heritage but also contribute to the larger movement of language revitalization. As Juan stated during the interview:

"Nakakita ko og mga Indigenous content creators sa YouTube ug TikTok nga naggamit sa among" pinulongan, ug nakaproud kaayo kini. Nagpahinumdom kini nga naa pa gihapon kami diri." IDI-P6

(I see Indigenous content creators on YouTube and TikTok using our language, and it makes me proud. It reminds me that we are still here.)

During my interview with Juan, his words stood out as a powerful reflection of cultural pride and presence. It made me realize how much digital spaces can shape language and identity. For me, this moment felt like a spark of understanding, a reminder that platforms like YouTube and TikTok are not just entertainment but modern spaces where cultures thrive and are shared. Juan's statement resonated deeply with me, highlighting how digital media has become a living ground for cultural roots to grow, not just for others but for myself as well. It encouraged me to think about how I can use these platforms to celebrate and preserve my own heritage.

On the leveraging media and digital platforms for language prevention. In digital platforms even though most content online is in English or other big languages, I believe digital platforms can still help keep Indigenous languages alive. When someone posts or chats in their native language, it's a small but powerful way to show pride and keep the language visible. It's not just about saving words. It is about keeping culture and identity strong. These everyday actions remind us that Indigenous languages are still here and still matter, not just as part of the past but as a living part of today. As Nolly also stated in the interview:

"Puno ang social media sa Iningles nga pinulongan, pero paningkamotan nako nga mag-post ug mag-comment gamit ang akong inilang pinulongan kung mahimo. Mao kini ang akong pamaagi sa pagpadayon sa kahulugan niini." FGD-P6

(Social media is full of English language, but I try to post and comment in my Indigenous language when I can. It's my way of keeping it relevant.)

When I spoke with Nolly during the interview, I was amazed by how her actions offered meaningful insight into everyday acts of language preservation. It made me realize how small, intentional efforts, like hers, can create visibility for languages in spaces where they're often overlooked. Her contributions were like quiet data points on a larger map, showing how individuals weave their languages into the fabric of online life. This reminded me that even a single post or comment can be a thread in the larger tapestry of cultural continuity, and it encouraged me to think about how I can also contribute to preserving and sharing my own language with pride.

On the cultural and traditional knowledge transmission for the preservation of Indigenous languages. Aside from the digital space, cultural and traditional knowledge transmission play a vital role in helping Indigenous youth preserve their native language. Through oral storytelling, songs, prayers, and community events, language is passed down across generations, strengthening both identity and continuity. Despite the strong pull of mainstream culture, Indigenous communities continue to use ceremonies and cultural gatherings to keep their language alive, demonstrating that it remains relevant and meaningful in modern life. As Rosa stated during the interview:

"Aduna kami'y community gathering matag buwan diin ang mga katigulangan mag-istorya gamit ang among pinulongan. Usa kini ka pamaagi aron mapadayon namo ang pinulongan." IDI-P4

(Every month, our community comes together to hear elders share stories in our language. It's a simple but powerful way for us to keep it alive and pass it on.)

When I spoke with Rosa during the interview, the excitement in her eyes as she shared her story made me feel genuinely happy. Her words reminded me of how powerful community-based practices are in keeping a language alive. I saw it as a cultural regeneration language being passed from one generation to the next through shared traditions. It made me reflect on my own community, where simple moments and storytelling could have the same impact. Like Rosa, I believe these practices form a living tradition where every conversation and gathering strengthens our identity and connection. I now feel more inspired to be part of that continuity in my own way.

Moreover, cultural and spiritual practices, like learning and reciting traditional songs and prayers, play a vital role in keeping our language alive. They offer meaningful ways to use the language regularly, not just in daily life but in deeply spiritual moments. I have come to see how these practices help people grow in fluency while also strengthening their emotional and cultural connections. By weaving language into sacred traditions, we are not just preserving words. We are nurturing identity and passing our heritage on to future generations. As Melchor stated in our conversation:

"Ang pagkat-on og mga kanta ug mga pag-ampo sa among inilang pinulongan makatabang nako nga hinumdoman ug gamiton kini adlaw-adlaw." IDI-P3

(Learning songs and prayers in our native language helps me stay connected to it and use it in everyday life.)

When interviewing Melchor, his statement highlighted the deep connection between language and culture. I saw it as a clear example of how oral traditions help preserve language. Songs and prayers, filled with cultural meaning, act as tools that keep the language alive in everyday life. These traditions are like lifelines, connecting him to his heritage and making sure the language stays part of his daily routine. Each prayer and song gently reinforces the language, showing how important it is to support these practices with educational initiatives and policies to keep the language alive.

On the educational and policy-based language preservation. Education and policy play a vital role in preserving Indigenous languages. Including them in school curricula and supporting bilingual learning can help reverse the loss caused by mainstream systems. When students choose to learn their native language, it's a powerful act of pride and continuity. Institutional support not only validates the language but also helps young people embrace it as part of who they are. As Linda stated in the interview:

"Ang among eskwelahan naghatag og opsyonal nga klase sa inilang pinulongan, ug gikuha nako kini kay gusto ko mahimong bihasa ug magtudlo sa akong mga anak sa umaabot." IDI-P4

(Our school offers an optional class in our native language, and I took it because I want to become fluent and pass it on to my children one day. fluent and teach my kids some)

During my interview with Linda, her words highlighted the important role of formal education in language revitalization. This conversation inspired me to think about how I can help preserve my own language and heritage, both within my community and through education. Seeing her pride in her language made me reflect on how education can preserve and grow cultural knowledge. Linda's decision to learn her language reminded me of the importance of actively engaging in language learning, not just for myself but for future generations.

On the experiential learning and environmental on language preservation. Experiential learning is key to preserving Indigenous languages and creating an environment where language is not just taught but lived. Unlike traditional classrooms, this approach focuses on meaningful interactions with fluent speakers, especially in communities where the language thrives. By connecting with elders, participating in cultural practices, and immersing themselves in Indigenous-speaking environments, youth gain fluency in natural and impact ways. Language becomes part of daily life, making it easier to retain and pass on. Immersion in rural communities plays a crucial role, providing authentic opportunities to engage with the language while deepening cultural understanding. As Anne stated in the interview:

"Bisan kanus-a ko mubisita sa baryo sa akong lola ug lolo, sigurado ko nga mag-istorya gamit ang among pinulongan. Mao ra kini ang pamaagi nga makapraktis ko uban sa mga lumad nga storya." FGD-P5

(Whenever I visit my grandparents' village, I make sure to speak in our language. It's the only way I can practice with native speakers)

When I interviewed Anne, I could see the happiness in her eyes. It showed how powerful real-life experience can be for learning a language. Anne's efforts made me realize how important it is to engage with my own language in a real-world context. It reminded me that, like Anne, I can connect more deeply with my culture and identity by spending time in environments where the language thrives. This has inspired me to consider how I can be more active in preserving and practicing my language, both in formal settings and through everyday interactions.

Viewpoint and Standpoint

I view their journey to preserve their cultural identity in the face of urban environments influenced by mainstream culture, media, and formal education, the influence they encounter, including the pressure to adopt dominant languages in schools and online, and the diminishing use of their native language in everyday life creates a significant impact on maintaining their linguistic heritage. Despite these influences, I observe their resilience. Their efforts, such as speaking their native language at home, learning through songs, prayers, storytelling, and even creating content on social media, demonstrate that their language can still be preserved, even in an urban setting. Through this, I aim to support their efforts by highlighting their experiences and recognizing their strength in maintaining a language that is integral to their identity, history, and sense of self.

4. Discussions

In this chapter, I discussed the findings based on participants' responses and review relevant studies to highlight points of agreement or contradiction with my study's result. The discussion is organized into key themes and sub-themes that reflect the participants' insights. These focus on two main areas: (1) the vitality of Ethnolinguistic group; and (2) language preservation as the key to survival. I also discuss the implications for teaching and learning and suggest directions for future research.

The Vitality of an Ethnolinguistic Group

The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is essential for preserving Indigenous languages, particularly in urban areas where dominant languages often overshadow them. Strong community support, pride in cultural identity, and institutional involvement are key to keeping these languages alive, especially among young people who are often pressured to adopt the dominant culture.

The vitality of status factor in indigenous language preservation. The preservation of Indigenous languages is affected by their low status in society. These languages are often seen as less important than global or national languages, which limits their presence in mainstream culture. This discourages younger generations from using their native languages, making it harder to keep them alive. My findings agree with Fishman's (1991) theory, which says that when languages are not passed down from generation to generation and globalization takes over, people start to prefer English over their native languages. This lowers the value of Indigenous languages and speeds up their decline.

In addition, global languages dominate in mainstream culture, especially in cities, weakening Indigenous youth's connection to their languages. The focus on global languages in education makes Indigenous languages seem less important, which makes it harder to preserve them. This aligns with study of Crystal's (2003) showing that media and technology favor global languages, pushing smaller languages aside and causing cultural loss.

In cities shaped by globalization, indigenous youth often struggle with their identity. Social pressures push them to use global languages for success in school and society. This disconnect from their heritage, affirmed with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), suggests that youth may stop using their native language to avoid discrimination. Despite their efforts, urbanization, demographic shifts, and the need to fit in continue to make language preservation difficult.

The vitality of demographic in language preservation. Demographic influence poses significant barriers to Indigenous language preservation, particularly due to the declining number of native speakers. As indigenous populations move to urban areas, language shift occurs as individuals adopt dominant languages for socio-economic reasons. Declining birth rates and an aging population of fluent speakers increase the risk of language loss and cultural erosion. In urban environments, the lack of social contexts and institutional support for Indigenous languages makes it difficult for youth to maintain proficiency, further hindering language retention even for those who wish to remain fluent.

In my study, demographic impacts Indigenous language preservation as urban migration and a declining number of fluent speakers lead to language shift. This aligns with Hornberger's (2008) study, which shows that urban migration removes youth from language-rich environments, deepening challenges in language transmission and preservation due to limited culturally responsive education.

The vitality of institutional support in language preservation. The decline in the vitality of Indigenous languages is largely driven by weak institutional support, as dominant languages like English and Filipino are prioritized in schools. Education systems, particularly in urban areas, often marginalize native tongues. Although there are efforts to include Indigenous languages in curricula, these remain limited and inconsistently implemented. As a result, Indigenous youth increasingly shift toward dominant languages in pursuit of academic success and social mobility, accelerating the erosion of their mother tongues. My findings affirm Hornberger's (2008) assertion that indigenous languages cannot thrive in schools unless they are actively supported and fully integrated into the education system. This is also in line with King's (2001)

study which stated that without strong institutional backing, the efforts of families and communities alone may not be enough to prevent language loss, especially among youth facing academic and social pressures.

These educational shortcomings are further compounded by structural constraints in digital spaces. The internet dominated by global languages across social media, entertainment, and online platforms provides little visibility or space for Indigenous languages. This limited presence diminishes their perceived value among youth, who often prefer dominant languages for wider communication and access to opportunities. As digital engagement grows, online use of Indigenous languages continues to decline, contributing to a rapid language shift. My study aligns with Mufwene (2008), who stressed that structural inequalities, both offline and online, play a critical role in either sustaining or marginalizing minority languages. These findings underscore that language preservation is essential to the survival of Indigenous identity, cultural continuity, and community resilience.

The language preservation is the key to survival.

Language preservation is vital for the survival of Indigenous languages because it carries identity, traditional knowledge, and worldviews. These efforts supported the preservation of Indigenous languages in urbanized settings. Based on this, I identified five key areas: (1) *intergenerational and social support for language preservation*; (2) *leveraging media and digital platforms for language retention*; (3) *cultural and traditional knowledge transmission for the preservation of Indigenous languages*; (4) *Educational and policy-based language preservation*; and (5) *The experiential learning and environmental on language preservation*.

Intergenerational and Social Support for Indigenous Language Preservation. Intergenerational and social support are undeniably pivotal in the preservation of Indigenous languages, especially when fostered through family-based reinforcement. In urbanized settings, Indigenous youth often face significant challenges in maintaining their native languages, as dominant linguistic influences and shifting cultural dynamics increasingly shape their environments.

In my findings intergenerational and social support play a crucial role in preserving Indigenous languages, particularly when encouraged through family-driven reinforcement. As my study supports with Berardi-Wiltshire (2017) the importance of family language policies and the active use of Indigenous languages within the home to preserve not only linguistic but also cultural identities. By creating a home environment where Indigenous languages are spoken regularly, parents and elders serve as key figures in reinforcing cultural heritage, even in the face of external pressures. Beyond the household, social support networks, such as community organizations and cultural institutions—also play an essential role in sustaining language use.

Leveraging media and digital platforms for Indigenous languages preservation. Media and digital platforms are essential for preserving Indigenous languages, especially in urbanized areas where youth face challenges maintaining their linguistic heritage. By incorporating indigenous languages into entertainment and online content, these platforms foster cultural pride and support intergenerational transmission. As affirmed by Crystal (2000), for a language to survive, it must be present in modern communication channels like entertainment and social media. This in turn provides a space for young speakers to use their native languages in a contemporary setting. Indigenous youth who use digital platforms to engage in their native languages show how these spaces can support language preservation.

The cultural and traditional knowledge transmission for the preservation of Indigenous languages. The transmission of cultural and traditional knowledge is important for preserving Indigenous languages. Community traditions and oral storytelling help keep languages alive, as stories, rituals, and conversations between generations strengthen linguistic heritage despite outside influences. The findings of my study affirm the study of Hinton (2011) claiming that storytelling embeds language within narratives that convey historical knowledge, values, and social norms, making it a powerful method for intergenerational learning. Through active participation in these traditions, Indigenous youth not only preserve their language but also uphold the cultural identity and collective memory of their communities.

Furthermore, Language learning through traditional songs and prayers also strengthens the daily use of Indigenous languages. As my study supports with McIvor, Napoleon, and Dickie (2009) that music and spiritual practices play a vital role in language revitalization by offering repetitive and meaningful engagement with Indigenous vocabulary. Singing and reciting prayers help reinforce correct pronunciation, rhythm, and cultural significance, ensuring that the language remains a living part of everyday life. These practices not only support linguistic development but also deepen cultural identity and continuity across generations, highlighting the importance of educational and policy-based language promotion in providing structured support and resources for sustained language learning and preservation.

Educational and policy-based for indigenous language Preservation. Educational and policy-based plays a vital role in preserving indigenous languages, as many young indigenous people face challenges in keeping their native tongues alive. Formal education and institutional language support help by offering programs such as optional Indigenous language classes in schools. These classes allow students to learn and practice their heritage languages, giving them the skills to pass them on to future generations. These findings align with Fishman (1991), that for a language to survive it must be used across multiple domains, including education. Schools that offer indigenous language courses combine experiential learning—through cultural practices and land-based activities with environmental reinforcement to create immersive,

authentic contexts that promote lasting fluency beyond home and community settings.

The experiential learning and environmental on indigenous language preservation. Experiential learning and environmental reinforcement help Indigenous youth preserve their languages amid urbanization. Peer influence, informal communication such as texting, and support from elders encourage consistent use and reduce language-related stigma. Immersion in rural communities and visits to ancestral homelands further deepen cultural and linguistic ties. As affirmed by Meek (2011), elders serve as linguistic and cultural mentors, transmitting not only vocabulary and grammar but also traditional stories, histories, and values. Engaging with elders within their communities fosters a deeper connection to the language, as it is acquired in its original cultural and social context. Together, these factors illustrate how Indigenous youth navigate urban challenges while sustaining and revitalizing their ancestral languages.

Implication for Practices

As a social studies teacher this study helped me to realize that educators have a crucial responsibility in preserving indigenous languages, especially in urbanized environments where cultural erosion is a daily reality. It seems clear to me that incorporating indigenous languages into lessons not just as historical artifacts but as living, modern tools can make a real impact. We should move beyond textbooks and create spaces where indigenous students can hear, speak, and see their languages respected and used. In my view, even small practices, like displaying indigenous words around the classroom or encouraging their use in projects, can foster pride and normalcy. I am convinced that when educators treat indigenous languages as part of everyday learning, they empower students to hold onto their identity despite the pressures of urban life.

Community members may work even harder to keep their languages alive amidst the distractions and demands of city living. I often think that community events and mentorship programs can provide the reinforcement young people need. Beyond activities, I believe there should be strong community-driven policies, such as requiring indigenous languages to be used in public signage, community centers, and local media. Policies that support funding for language classes and prioritize indigenous representation in city planning would also help make the language visible and valued. I have seen that when communities combine action with policy, they create lasting structures that give indigenous languages a real place in urban life education.

Finally, in education systems may take an active and committed role in preserving indigenous languages, especially within urban settings. I believe schools should establish indigenous language programs, hire fluent indigenous language teachers, and collaborate closely with local Indigenous communities to ensure authenticity. I am convinced that without bold, systemic changes, education will continue to fall short in supporting indigenous youth and the survival of their languages.

Future Directions

Based on my conversation with participants regarding their experiences in preserving indigenous languages in urbanized settings, a quantitative study can be developed by identifying the utilizing themes as variables and their sub-themes as indicators. This approach can examine the correlation between ethnolinguistic vitality and the preservation of indigenous languages. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis may be applied to develop questionnaires aimed at quantifying strategies for preserving indigenous languages in urban environments. Furthermore, this study can be developed further by exploring more emerging themes and sub-themes.

Future research may adopt the Theory of Ethnolinguistic Vitality to explore how challenges faced by indigenous youth influence language preservation. This theoretical framework can help identify effective strategies for language maintenance and inform the development of programs that align with preservation goals.

In conclusion, future efforts to revitalize indigenous languages should adopt a multifaceted approach grounded in both quantitative methods and strategic frameworks such as the Theory of Ethnolinguistic Vitality. By integrating these tools, researchers and policymakers can better design strategies to support the preservation of indigenous languages in increasingly urbanized settings.

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