

## PRESERVING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN THE PHILIPPINES THROUGH A MULTIFACED APPROACH

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There is a growing concern regarding the state of Philippine languages, as highlighted by the Ethnologue (2022) report, which indicates that out of the 175 Indigenous languages in the archipelago, 35 are currently endangered, and 11 are on the brink of extinction. Indigenous languages hold immense importance in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and worldviews. They are not solely a means of communication but also serve as a central element of culture and socialization (Paulino et al., 2018). Indigenous languages are specific to particular groups or communities with longstanding historical connections to specific regions or territories. These languages are passed down through generations and represent an integral part of the cultural identity and heritage of indigenous peoples (Fforde et al., 2013). The languages encapsulate the worldview and ways of being of indigenous communities, which are deeply embedded and not easily translatable into another language (Chiblow, 2020). Thus, the knowledge and use of indigenous languages are crucial for the maintenance and survival of indigenous cultures and psychologies (Jacob et al., 2019).

The sustainability of land, language, and culture within indigenous communities is interconnected. The preservation of one aspect often contributes to the protection of the others. For instance, individuals residing in remote areas are more likely to engage in activities like hunting, fishing, and gathering, which are closely tied to their indigenous language and culture. Moreover, indigenous languages contribute to the social and emotional well-being of indigenous peoples, as there exists a positive relationship

between the sustainability of indigenous land, language, and culture and the subjective emotional well-being of indigenous individuals (Biddle & Swee, 2012).

However, indigenous languages face the risk of extinction due to various factors, including language shift, colonization, and globalization (Ksenofontov et al., 2017). The decline in the number of fluent speakers poses a significant challenge to the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages. It is imperative to undertake efforts to support indigenous language education and revitalization to ensure the continued survival and well-being of indigenous communities (Jacob et al., 2019). Preserving indigenous languages is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and transmitting traditional knowledge (Johnson, 2013). Efforts to support language preservation and revitalization can be undertaken through grassroots initiatives that promote the use of indigenous languages in schools and society (Johnson, 2013). Successful examples include the Navajo, Quechua, Māori, Nāhñu, and Sámi communities (Johnson, 2013).

Collaborating with mainstream teacher education programs is important, integrating indigenous language education into teacher training to ensure future educators understand the significance of language preservation (Jacob et al., 2019). Technology can play a role through digital tools and resources that support language learning and teaching, while land-based learning and education connect language acquisition with traditional ecological knowledge (Chiblow & Meighan, 2021; Galla, 2016). Lastly, creating opportunities for language use in multiple domains, such as home, community, and education, is essential for language maintenance (Mbatha et al., 2023).

Preserving indigenous languages requires a comprehensive approach that includes grassroots initiatives, collaboration with mainstream education, the use of technology, land-based learning, and opportunities for language use in various domains. These strategies contribute to the revitalization and maintenance of indigenous languages, supporting the cultural identity and well-being of indigenous communities.

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