Promoting Heritage Language: A Phenomenological Study on the Approaches Used by Cordilleran Students

Bryan V. Catama*, Mark Gerald N. Murillo, Priestly Van G. Marcos, Joshua T. Mesa, Mark Lester N. Navida, Zion Delmar L. Podes and Kathrina C. Tabilin

School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts, Saint Louis University, Baguio City, Philippines

*Corresponding author
E-mail address:
bvcatama@slu.edu.ph

https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9252-6352

ABSTRACT

Heritage languages are crucial to identity and community cohesion, but they face a threat from dominant global languages in education, media, and mobility. This threatens their transmission between generations and risks their survival and evolution. This phenomenological study aimed to investigate the approaches utilised by university students in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in one of the universities in Northern Philippines to promote their heritage languages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 purposively sampled participants who met specified inclusion criteria. Thematic analysis uncovered four main strategies students employ: intergenerational family transmission, interpersonal sharing and storytelling, informal peer teaching and exchange, and online dissemination. Findings reveal the vital role of families in developing heritage language proficiency through exclusive daily use and active transmission across generations. Students leverage interpersonal interactions and storytelling to affirm cultural identities and foster belonging. Peer teaching enables organic exchange and retention through translation, lessons, and collaborative projects. Interactive online platforms provide expanded reach for promoting heritage beyond local communities. Overall, promotion occurs through interconnected familial, social, educational, and virtual modes that empower students as change agents counteracting assimilation pressures. This contributes to identity formation, pluralism, and sustaining marginalised traditions often excluded from formal domains. Recommendations include an integrated approach reinforcing students' informal efforts through heritage programmes, intergenerational activities, media guidance, policy support, and community collaboration. Formal initiatives should strategically nurture familial foundations and amplify student-driven promotion spanning diverse spheres.

1. Introduction

Preserving heritage languages is a significant challenge for diverse communities globally, with younger generations at risk of losing these languages. Factors contributing to language loss include the dominant language's prestige, lack of societal support, diminished group identification, and negative attitudes towards preservation (Al-Jumaily, 2015; Ghanbari & Rahimian, 2020; Muhammad, 2013). Research shows that younger generations possess some heritage language knowledge but struggle with fluency, highlighting a proficiency disparity across generations (Bromham et al., 2020). Extensive exposure to the majority language can also diminish heritage language proficiency (Montrul, 2004). Hence, developing effective strategies for preserving and promoting heritage languages is crucial to ensuring the continued cultural diversity of minority groups.

Heritage languages, closely tied to identity, culture, and family, are typically acquired informally through the home or community (Montrul, 2015). In the Philippines' Cordillera Administrative Region, languages like Ibaloi, Kankanaey, Ifugao, and Bontoc exemplify the region's linguistic diversity (Lewis, 2009). These languages, with their unique features, are essential for cultural transmission and community identity (Reid, 1994). However, globalisation and socioeconomic changes threaten their survival, as dominant languages like Filipino and English gain prominence (Altbach, 2015). Consequently, urgent preservation efforts are necessary to protect heritage languages and the cultural identity they represent.

The education system primarily supports dominant languages, while Cordilleran languages preserve indigenous knowledge and ethnic identity within communities (Almazan, 2017). Factors like migration, intermarriage, and media affect language transmission (Spolsky, 2021). The region's unique ecology significantly influences local languages, emphasising the need for community-driven preservation efforts to protect cultural heritage and linguistic diversity (Moseley, 2010). Research highlights the importance of language vitality, individual agency, and community initiatives, particularly among Cordilleran youth (Fishman, 1991; May, 2005; Ruiz, 2016). Innovative preservation methods can foster linguistic diversity and uphold cultural heritage, deepening our understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and environment.

In the linguistically diverse Cordilleran region of the Philippines, cultural identity is deeply tied to language. Heritage languages like Kankanaey, Ibaloi, and Ifugao embody the history, traditions, and collective memories vital for cultural preservation (Wiley & Valdés, 2000). Intergenerational language transmission is crucial for preserving cultural narratives and knowledge systems unique to the region. Language connects individuals to their ancestry, providing a sense of belonging essential for maintaining cultural identity. The Cordillera region's cultural landscape highlights language's role in shaping cultural heritage and identity, offering insights for conserving indigenous cultural heritage and promoting linguistic diversity in the face of globalisation.

The education system's focus on dominant languages like Filipino and English hinders the transmission of heritage languages, despite their cultural significance (Muysken, 2019). However, Cordilleran youth play a vital role in preserving cultural affiliations through their linguistic choices on social media and in cultural practices (Pavlenko, 2006). Bilingual education supporting heritage languages can foster linguistic proficiency, cultural pride, and historical consciousness among youth (Palmer, 2019). By acknowledging multilingualism, education can empower Cordilleran youth to embrace their linguistic heritage, promoting cultural identity and linguistic diversity (Little, 2020).

The preservation of Cordilleran heritage languages among young people is hindered by the dominance of global languages in education, urban migration, and limited opportunities to use heritage languages, leading to language attrition (Sook Lee, 2012; García & Amorós-Negre, 2020). Mainstream media and lack of technological support exacerbate the issue (Carreira & Kagan, 2018). To address this, a comprehensive approach is needed to support heritage language maintenance. Empowering Cordilleran youth requires examining language hierarchies and recognising the intersections of language, culture, and identity, enabling innovative strategies to revitalise heritage languages and promote linguistic diversity.

Intergenerational language transmission breaks hinder language preservation when older fluent generations fail to pass on languages to their children (Kondo-Brown, 2005). Although cultural festivals showcase traditions, daily language use is crucial for survival but lacks support (Hinton, 2011; McCarty, 2003). To address complexities, heritage language inclusion in education, urban spaces, and leveraging media/technology is essential to engage youth and foster intergenerational connections (Wiley & Valdés, 2000). Empowering Cordilleran youth as active agents of language preservation is crucial, moving beyond documentation. Understanding youth conditions and practices through data collection is vital for effective preservation programmes.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Differentiating Linguistic Concepts: Heritage Languages, Indigenous Languages, Dialects, and Registers

Differentiating between heritage languages, indigenous languages, dialects, and registers is essential for understanding language variation's impact on individual and community identity. Heritage languages, tied to familial or cultural background (Doerr & Kumagai, 2014; Leeman & King, 2014), often exist as minority languages, leading to varying bilingualism levels (Scontras et al., 2015). Indigenous languages, spoken by indigenous peoples prior to colonisation, are vital for cultural identity and social cohesion (Verdon & McLeod, 2015; McCarty et al., 2018). Dialects emerge within specific areas or communities, differing in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Kirk et al., 2018), whilst registers refer to language styles adapted to specific contexts (Schaefer & Warhol, 2019). Recognising these distinctions illuminates the complex relationships between language, culture, and identity that underlie individual and community identity.

1.1.2 Role of Education, Community, and Individual Agency in Language Preservation

Preserving linguistic diversity and cultural heritage requires collaboration between education, community, and individual agency. Quality education, emphasizing language instruction, cultural awareness, and diversity, is crucial for safeguarding indigenous languages and cultures (Yagelski, 2021). Community involvement, particularly in indigenous and regional contexts, is vital for heritage language preservation, with stakeholders motivating and maintaining linguistic diversity (Gupta, 2020; Somadayo et al., 2022). Individual agency also plays a significant role in shaping language policies and practices, with individuals exercising autonomy in developing proficiency and integrating target languages (Little, 2020; Benson et al., 2001).

Effective preservation efforts require collaboration between governments, customary councils, and community members, ensuring active individual participation in language revitalisation and preservation (Taher et al., 2022; Pratiwi & Dewi, 2019).

1.1.3 The Educational Initiatives in Promoting Heritage Language in the Philippines

The Philippine educational system plays a crucial role in preserving heritage languages, with the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) programme aiming to use learners' mother tongue as the basis for learning in early grades (Metila et al., 2016). However, the programme's implementation has faced challenges, including linguistic diversity, teacher training, resource availability, and policy frameworks (Metila et al., 2016; Cansino et al., 2022; Paz, 2018; Aperocho, 2023). Moreover, beyond the early grades, heritage language instruction and support are scarce, with few opportunities for students to engage with their local languages in secondary and higher education settings. In contrast, university-led initiatives, such as the Cordillera Studies Centre at the University of the Philippines Baguio, have made concerted efforts to promote heritage languages, particularly in regions with strong linguistic diversity (Villanueva, 2013, 2016). These efforts demonstrate a commitment to heritage language promotion, serving as a model for further integration and support within the educational system.

1.2 Research Gap, Statement of the Problem and Research Objective

Existing research has shown that heritage language exposure often occurs mainly in the home domain (Carreira, 2000; Raschka, 2002). As children begin formal schooling conducted in the majority societal language, their heritage language proficiency and usage tends to decline outside of the household context (Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández Chávez, 2003). This pattern has been observed among Spanish-speaking students acquiring English in school, negatively impacting their Spanish abilities (Aparicio, 1983; Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández Chávez, 2003). While research extensively covered heritage language use domains and identity relationships (Leeman, 2015; Farr et al., 2018; Shin, 2023; He, 2022), there has been limited investigation into how indigenous university students in the Cordillera region in the Philippines engage with their heritage language. The Cordillera region is known for its extensive ethnolinguistic diversity, with speakers of many Philippine indigenous languages and dialects (Florendo, 2010). Yet little is known about how Cordilleran students promote their ethnolinguistic heritage while pursuing postsecondary degrees, often conducted in English or Tagalog. Post-secondary education encompasses various forms of higher education, including two-year community colleges, four-year colleges and universities (Brint & Clotfelter, 2016). This gap in understanding is concerning, as the intergenerational continuity of minority languages relies on active usage and transmission by younger community members across domains (Civico, 2019; Katalinić & Tamaskó, 2022). More research is needed to examine how Cordilleran university students maintain and propagate their diverse linguistic traditions (Catama et al., 2016). Thus, this study aims to investigate the approaches that Cordilleran students employ to promote their heritage language. Specifically, the research question guiding this study is: What are the modes in promoting heritage language employed by the Cordilleran students who are enrolled in the Northern Philippines universities?

1.3 Significance of the Study

By understanding the grassroots promotion strategies of young people deeply connected to these linguistic and cultural roots, valuable insights will be gained into both opportunities and barriers experienced. Such findings can directly inform the development of more targeted and effective policies, programmes, and support mechanisms at institutional and community levels.

As linguistic diversity is threatened globally (Bouckaert et al., 2022), preserving heritage languages is crucial for cultural preservation.

This research can benefit Cordilleran language revitalisation and offer lessons for other indigenous communities facing similar pressures. By exploring promotion strategies from the youth perspective, this study aims to provide practical recommendations to strengthen intergenerational transmission, linguistic continuity, and community resilience, ultimately empowering cultural identity amid socioeconomic change.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This qualitative research study explored Cordilleran students' experiences in promoting their heritage language. Qualitative approaches gather information directly from individuals to elicit meanings and perspectives (Williams & Cutler, 2020). The study adopted a phenomenological approach to explore Cordilleran students' first-hand experiences and strategies for preserving their heritage language. Phenomenology investigates how individuals ascribe meaning to their lived experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Interviews were conducted to gather first-hand accounts from Cordilleran students about their approaches to advocating for and maintaining their heritage language.

2.2 Settings and Participants

This study employed purposive sampling to select 10 participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This non-probability method is effective for studying cultural domains with knowledgeable experts, facilitating efficient data gathering (Tongco, 2007). While sample sizes in phenomenological research can be small, studies have successfully used this approach with as few as two participants (Groenewald, 2004; Holroyd, 2001; Knaack, 1984). The optimal sample size for phenomenological research designs is debated among scholars, with no definitive guidelines (Brysbaert, 2019). The current study employed the following inclusion criteria in order to identify appropriate participants: (1) a student being enrolled in a tertiary level teacher education programme at one of the universities in the Northern Philippines; (2) a student being born and raised in any of the six provinces of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), namely Mountain Province, Benguet, Abra, Kalinga, Apayao, and Ifugao; (3) a student having both parents who are natives of the CAR; and (4) a student having a first language that falls under the category of heritage languages, such as Bontoc, Ibaloi, Kalinga, Kankanaey, Ifugao, Itneg, Isneg, Tinguian, Ga'dang, Kalanguya, Iwak.

2.3 Instrumentation

A semi-structured in-depth interview protocol was developed to obtain qualitative data. To ensure validity, the protocol underwent a rigorous review process and was approved by a panel of three academic experts. The protocol consists of nine key questions, aiming to explore the strategies Cordilleran students use to promote their heritage language. To facilitate open expression and accommodate linguistic preferences, participants were interviewed in either English or Filipino, based on their preference, allowing them to respond naturally and without linguistic constraints.

2.4 Data Explication and Analysis

Data collection was conducted through in-person interviews using a semi-structured protocol with open-ended questions. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times for participants, and after obtaining consent, they were digitally recorded. A detailed interview guide was developed and finalized to ensure a logical flow and extract important information.

Table 1. Interview Schedule for the Participants

Type of Question	Sample Interview Question
Opening/ Introductory	Can you tell me about your experiences with your heritage language as a Cordilleran student?
Transitory	What importance, if any, does your heritage language hold in your life and identity? In what ways, if any, do you engage with your heritage language inside and outside of your university?
Body / Central	How do you feel the university supports or promotes the use of heritage languages? In what ways could the university better support heritage language use? What role, if any, do student groups or peers play in your use of your heritage language? Are there any initiatives or programs, either at the university or in the broader community, that you feel effectively promote your heritage language? Why? What factors motivate you to use and promote your heritage language? What barriers, if any, do you face?
Concluding / Utmost	What recommendations would you suggest for universities or communities to better engage and support heritage language use for Cordilleran students like yourself? Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with or perspectives on your heritage language as a university student?

Follow-up questions were used to clarify ambiguous responses. Written notes were also taken as a precaution in case of technical issues with the audio recordings.

The interviews were scheduled to accommodate the participants' availability, with an average duration of approximately 40 minutes. The aim was to promote understanding between the interviewer and participant (Husband, 2020). The researcher began by giving an introduction that covered the study's purpose, background information, and interview structure. Initial guiding questions were used to commence the interviews. Probing questions were asked based on the interviewees' responses, following the semi-structured interview format (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The collected datasets were analysed using qualitative data coding techniques to facilitate interpretation. Qualitative data coding techniques involve the systematic categorisation and analysis of textual or visual data to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data (Brooks et al., 2018). Thematic analysis was conducted by coding the data and consolidating these codes to identify noteworthy themes (Creswell, 2007). The researchers, acting as analysts, followed a rigorous process that included the following steps: (1) initial coding, (2) identifying important words and phrases

(Noble & Smith, 2013), (3) analysing, organising, and transcribing the collected data, (4) connecting the recorded data to analytical codes (Stuckey, 2014), and (5) utilising axial coding to synthesise the data into more structured categories and subcategories. This process of coding, which is a critical step in qualitative analysis

(Hartanto & Kusuma, 2022), revealed concepts and relationships within a hierarchical coding framework (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). To safeguard the privacy of the participants, unique numerical codes (e.g., S1, S2, S3, etc.) were employed for identification purposes during the interviews.

Table 2. Themes, Codes and Codes Descriptions

Themes	Codes	Codes Descriptions
Intergenerational Transmission through Family Interactions	Grandparents' native language use	It emphasizes grandparents' vital role in preserving and passing on the native language to younger generations, ensuring its continued use and transmission.
	Family language interactions	It highlights family interactions as a key means of passing down the heritage language from one generation to the next.
	Intergenerational language transmission	It encapsulates the transmission of heritage language within families across generations.
Interpersonal Language Sharing and Cultural Storytelling	Cultural storytelling	It embodies the sharing of cultural stories, fostering language exchange and preserving heritage through personal connections.
	Intergenerational story transmission	It encapsulates the passing down of cultural stories through generations, promoting language and cultural heritage within family networks.
	Peer language interactions	It involves sharing and promoting the heritage language through interactions and efforts among peers and friends.
Informal Language Education Through Teaching and Exchange	Peer language teaching	It embodies peer-to-peer informal language exchange, promoting heritage language learning and preservation through a relaxed, educational approach.
	Translation learning strategy	It utilises translation as an informal learning tool, promoting the heritage language through practical exercises and exchange.
	Collaborative language projects	It showcases students' collaborative projects, promoting the heritage language through shared learning and cultural exchange initiatives.
Interactive Digital Sharing of Cultural Heritage	Online cultural videos	It involves sharing cultural content, like traditional songs on video, via online platforms, facilitating interactive digital cultural heritage sharing.

	Literary social sharing	It showcases literary works, like poems, in the heritage language on social media, enabling interactive sharing and engagement with a broader audience.
	Cultural exchange podcasts	It showcases podcasts as a platform for sharing cultural heritage through stories, knowledge, and customs, with interactive exchange through question and answer (Q&A) and translations.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

This study emphasized the ethical principle of informed consent, a cornerstone of ethical research practice. Informed consent safeguards participant privacy and confidentiality (Zahle, 2017). The researchers obtained approval from the Undergraduate Research and Innovation Coordinator (UGRIC) and the Dean of the School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts (STELA) to request voluntary participation from subjects, ensuring compliance with institutional guidelines.

The endorsement letter ensured participants understood the study's purpose and significance of their involvement. Regardless of their decision to participate or not, their viewpoints were acknowledged. Confidentiality and anonymity were prioritized, with researchers ensuring that every effort was made to protect participants' identities in reports, presentations, and other forms of dissemination (Crow & Wiles, 2008).

3. Results and Discussion

Data analysis unveiled four main themes that encompassed the strategies employed by Cordilleran students in promoting their heritage language: (1) intergenerational transmission through family interactions, (2) interpersonal language sharing and cultural storytelling, (3) informal language education through teaching and exchange, and (4) interactive digital sharing of cultural heritage.

3.1 Intergenerational Transmission through Family Interactions

This theme highlights the vital role of families, particularly grandparents, in ensuring the continuity of heritage languages across generations through active use in daily family interactions. Cordilleran students mention being exposed to their native tongues from a young age within the home domain, where grandparents converse with them exclusively in the heritage language. This familial foundation allows them to develop proficiency and retain the language into adulthood, as highlighted by a student's remark, "My grandparents on both sides speak to us only in our native language. That is why my siblings, and I are able to speak our language very well" (S5).

Using heritage languages as the primary mode of communication at home entrenches their role across generations, with a student noting, "Since childhood, I have been proficient in our native language, which serves as the primary means of communication within my household. Both my parents and grandparents converse with me in our language" (S1). Elders also reinforce use by correcting mixing with the dominant language, as stated by a student, "At home, my grandparents reprimand me for incorporating English words into our language when speaking. They consistently emphasise the importance of using exclusively our native tongue to maintain its integrity" (S3).

The study reveals the significance of intergenerational communication within families in preserving heritage languages. Consistent use of the heritage language by grandparents and parents may establish a strong foundation for linguistic continuity, mitigating the impact of societal changes. This supports Vygotsky's theory of language development, which emphasises the impact of social and cultural interactions, especially within families (Vygotsky, 1978). Families play a crucial role in shaping children's linguistic skills, cultural knowledge, values, and heritage language identities.

Existing research corroborates the vital role of intergenerational language transmission within families. Studies have shown how daily exposure to grandparents' and parents' native language use lays the groundwork for linguistic continuity (d'Apice et al., 2019; Roskam & Stiévenart, 2013). The findings underscore the experiential, contextual nature of language maintenance, where the family serves as the primary site for the transmission and acquisition of heritage languages. By reinforcing native language use within the family, students develop stronger cultural identity and wellbeing (Little, 2020). However, community-level support through initiatives like story documentation projects and parent-led programmes is also necessary to complement family-based transmission (Gharibi & Boers, 2016; Potter, 2017).

3.2 Interpersonal Language Sharing and Cultural Storytelling

This theme represents the various ways in which Cordilleran students use their heritage language to connect with friends and share stories from their culture. They enjoy telling traditional tales and explaining the meanings of words to classmates, as well as trying to converse with each other in their different languages in order to learn about their diverse backgrounds. Students took pride in conversing and narrating cultural stories, with one noting "It is enjoyable to share the stories of the Cordillera with my friends in our own language" (S7). Passing down intergenerational stories provides continuity, as a student shared, "Whenever I return to our province, my cousins always pass on the stories that our grandfather shared with us" (S9). Attempts at exchange required effort but were enriching, per a student, "My friends are making an effort to communicate with me in our language" (S2).

The findings suggest that sharing heritage languages and storytelling can help students affirm their cultural identities, establish intercultural connections, and foster a sense of belonging. These language-based interactions allow students to celebrate and preserve their ethnic roots, counteract feelings of isolation, and improve overall wellbeing. This aligns with identity theory, which emphasises the role of social interactions and cultural practices in the formation and negotiation of individual and group identities (Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Sharing heritage languages and cultural narratives can empower students to assert and reinforce their ethnic and cultural identities, which are often marginalised or devalued in dominant educational settings. Participants expressed pride in speaking their heritage languages and sharing cultural stories with peers and family members. They viewed these interactions as opportunities to affirm their ethnic identities and establish meaningful intercultural connections. Engaging in these practices enables students to celebrate their cultural roots and share vital aspects of their heritage.

Previous research has shown that maintaining heritage languages and engaging in cultural storytelling can benefit students' academic, social, and emotional development (Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Wright & Taylor, 1995). These practices can enhance students' self-esteem, intercultural competence, and overall wellbeing (Hwang et al., 2023;

Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2020). From an identity theory perspective, this study highlights the empowering and identity-affirming nature of interpersonal language sharing and cultural storytelling. By engaging in these practices, students can assert their authentic selves, challenge negative stereotypes, and cultivate a stronger sense of belonging within their communities. It is also worth noting that these practices counteract isolation and foster overall wellbeing by enabling the celebration of students' ethnic roots.

Schools should actively support and facilitate opportunities for students to engage in cultural clubs, tutoring programmes, and other formal and informal settings that enable interpersonal heritage language sharing and storytelling. Recognising and validating students' cultural and linguistic knowledge can further enhance the empowering nature of these practices and promote a deeper sense of belonging and community within the school ecosystem. By creating culturally responsive environments, educational institutions can better support the identity development and overall wellbeing of diverse student populations.

3.3 Informal Language Education Through Teaching and Exchange

This theme illustrates how students informally teach their heritage languages through collaborative peer exchange. The data reveals students' willingness to translate words, phrases, and poems in order to share cultural and linguistic knowledge with classmates. One student highlight being asked by a friend to provide informal Kankanaey language lessons, noting "he asked me to teach him how to speak Kankanaey" (S4). This exemplifies requests for peer tutoring that enable organic transmission of heritage languages. Another student focuses on direct word-for-word translation as a teaching strategy, saying "I translate it into our language" (S10). This points to translation as a key technique for imparting lexical and grammatical knowledge. Additionally, a student describes the rewards of working together to translate a poem for a cultural event, calling the process "challenging but rewarding" (S6). Collaborative translation projects allow peer teaching through co-creation and meaning negotiation (Vandepitte et al., 2015).

The study sheds light on informal language education, where students teach each other, fostering heritage languages, intercultural understanding, and linguistic diversity. Reciprocal learning across traditional boundaries enhances linguistic and cultural knowledge. This aligns with language socialisation theory (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) and the concept of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where language and culture are woven into the fabric of social interactions and transmitted through shared experiences, such as peer teaching and informal language exchanges.

Despite limited formal training, the study participants often informally teach their linguistic and cultural knowledge to their peers. They engage in peer-to-peer language exchange, using translation as an informal learning tool and collaborating on shared projects that promote the heritage language and facilitate cultural exchange. This informal peer teaching and exchange aligns with language exchange models that benefit both parties involved (Kunduz, 2022; Reznicek-Parrado et al., 2018). These organic processes support the maintenance of minority languages and facilitate cultural sharing (Tran et al., 2022), empowering marginalised voices and allowing students to shape their linguistic destinies while forging intercultural connections.

Existing research confirms the significance of informal language education through peer teaching and exchange. Studies highlight the role of informal peer-to-peer transmission in preserving heritage languages and facilitating cultural sharing (Martin-Beltrán et al., 2020;

Reznicek-Parrado et al., 2018). While informal language education through peer teaching and exchange occurs naturally, strategically nurturing and facilitating these practices within educational settings can amplify their impact. Schools can harness these informal processes by establishing partnerships between peer teachers, creating exchange clubs, and providing methodological training (Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Kunduz, 2022). This structured approach can empower students, foster linguistic pluralism, and promote the retention and transmission of heritage languages while facilitating intercultural connections.

To harness the potential of informal language education, educational institutions should recognize and support peer-led practices. This can be achieved by establishing platforms for language exchange, collaborative projects, and training in informal teaching methodologies. By embracing these approaches, schools can empower students, promote linguistic diversity, and foster intercultural understanding, ultimately preserving and transmitting heritage languages.

3.4 Interactive Digital Sharing of Cultural Heritage

This theme explores how students use online platforms to share their cultural heritage and linguistic traditions with virtual audiences beyond their local communities. They use social media networks, video sharing websites like YouTube, and personal blogs to document and upload elements of their heritage in their native minority languages, such as traditional songs, poems, stories, and accounts of lifestyle experiences. One student discussed recording and posting traditional songs sung in their heritage language on YouTube, noting that this "showcases the culture here in the Cordillera" to a global audience and allows "many people to enjoy the videos" (S8). Another student mentioned composing poems in the heritage language and sharing them on Facebook to "showcase and teach our language to a wider audience" and to "promote language learning and raise awareness about our unique language" (S4). These examples demonstrate how digital media are used to broadcast cultural and linguistic works beyond the local community. In addition, interactive formats like podcasts in minority languages provide students with a creative way to educate global audiences about their cultural heritage. For example, as one student exemplified, "My podcast shares words, stories and customs while answering listeners' questions using translations to impart cultural knowledge globally" (S5).

Students engage in collaborative, situated learning through interactive digital sharing of cultural heritage. By sharing cultural knowledge, literary works, and personal narratives online, they create shared understandings within a community of practice. These digital platforms become communities of practice, where learners collectively engage with and transmit their cultural heritage. Participants feel empowered and proud sharing their linguistic and cultural knowledge with a broader audience, shaping their identities and connecting with others who share their heritage.

The study participants are able to bypass traditional institutional barriers and reach wider, global audiences by harnessing online platforms. This enables them to take ownership of their cultural narratives, assert their voices, and engage in dynamic literacy practices that challenge dominant language hierarchies. Research has shown the potential of online and digital platforms for supporting minority language maintenance, cultural transmission, and intercultural exchange (Belmar & Glass, 2019; Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

Interactive digital sharing of cultural heritage can empower marginalised communities,

promote linguistic and cultural pluralism, and foster intercultural understanding (Burkey, 2019; Paris, 2009). These student-driven practices demonstrate the experiential and context-dependent nature of language and cultural learning. Educational institutions should incorporate and amplify these practices by integrating translingual pedagogy and providing resources and training for digital media creation and curation.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study sheds light on the diverse strategies used by Cordilleran university students to promote and preserve their heritage languages in the Northern Philippines context. The main finding reveals that students employ four interconnected modalities to advocate for their heritage languages: familial, interpersonal, educational, and virtual. The intergenerational transmission of language and culture within families serves as the foundation for proficiency and retention, which is then reinforced through interpersonal interactions, peer instruction, and online platforms. These modalities empower students to maintain their marginalised cultural roots and counteract assimilation pressures, highlighting the resilience and agency of Cordilleran youth in preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage.

This study showcases how promoting heritage languages traverses familial, social, educational, and digital spheres. Students spearhead grassroots initiatives to preserve and revitalise marginalised traditions. Their promotional efforts intersect and reinforce one another, with familial foundations bolstering interpersonal pride, educational exchange, and virtual dissemination, culminating in identity affirmation, cultural pluralism, and a sense of belonging. The study reveals the multifaceted, integrated modes of promotion that serve sociolinguistic functions for Cordilleran youth. The findings have significant implications for amplifying minority voices and sustaining linguistic diversity, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach that formally acknowledges and supports students' informal efforts to preserve their heritage languages.

This study on promoting heritage languages among Cordilleran students provides key recommendations. An integrated educational approach is needed to formally support students' efforts through collaboration with families, communities, and cultural experts. Schools should develop heritage language programmes, intergenerational activities, and peer partnerships to nurture familial, interpersonal, and informal transmission. Educators require training to facilitate student-led initiatives like clubs, projects, and exchange models that promote cultural pluralism. Students creating online content need guidance on media literacy and technical assistance to enhance authenticity and responsible promotion. Policymakers must recognise heritage languages as educational assets through formal certification, curriculum integration, and resource expansion. Further research should explore virtual promotion and compare familial and scholastic transmission models. These recommendations emphasise a collaborative approach that reinforces students' multifaceted practices in promoting their heritage languages through context-specific, community-driven initiatives. By supporting informal and formal spheres, schools can amplify students' efforts and foster comprehensive language preservation.

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