

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Preserving initiatives for the Filipino language: Analysis of language protection through personal efforts among Filipino students

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ABSTRACT

The decline in the use of the Filipino language can be attributed to various sociocultural, economic, and educational factors. There is an increase in preference for English, widely regarded as the global lingua franca and a key to career advancement and socioeconomic mobility. This is particularly pronounced among younger generations, who often perceive English as a marker of modernity, competence, and access to global opportunities. This paper examined how Filipino students adapted to the shifting focus on language use by developing and employing personal strategies for language preservation. Sixteen Filipino students were purposively selected as participants using an online open-ended questionnaire. Narratives were collected through one-on-one interview sessions, and recurring themes were identified and analyzed. The study found that learners who value preserving Filipino see it as essential to culture and identity, emphasizing its role in cultural perspective, expression, and unity. Students emphasized its role as a repository of the nation's cultural heritage, safeguarding historical narratives, traditions, and identity. The language was also viewed as a vehicle for intellectual and creative expression, transcending utilitarian use to encourage national solidarity and bridge regional divides. Online advocacy involved creating Filipino-language content on social media, promoting its relevance in digital spaces, and fostering cultural pride. Traditional methods included consistent use within familial and academic contexts, sparking discussions about Filipino identity and encouraging intergenerational transmission. Students valued the Filipino language in cultural preservation, intellectual development, and social cohesion, emphasizing the importance of deliberate preservation strategies to ensure its continued vitality.

Keywords: culture; Filipino language; language maintenance; language preservation; solidarity

1. Introduction

The modernization of societies has rendered many languages vulnerable to marginalization or extinction, as they are overshadowed by globally dominant languages^[1]. This strengthens the urgent need for intentional and sustained efforts to preserve linguistic diversity. Such preservation allows languages to coexist harmoniously while enriching cultural identities and fostering a truly inclusive global community^[2]. The preservation of languages is not merely an act of cultural safeguarding but a vital contribution to the

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protection of unique cultural expressions and the promotion of diversity.

In the Filipino context, cultural values such as warmth and a strong sense of community, which provide foundation for language preservation by encouraging collective pride and a shared identity. However, cultural values alone are insufficient to ensure the survival of the Filipino language. For example, Lindquist^[3] observes that generational shifts often result in distinct linguistic styles, which can fragment continuity within a language. This generational divergence highlights the necessity of bridging these gaps to ensure cohesion and sustain a unified linguistic identity. McIvor and Anisman^[4] argue that language preservation requires multi-level collaboration, involving individuals, communities, and governmental entities. Consistent and coordinated efforts across these levels are crucial to shielding languages from external pressures that threaten their relevance and significance. Terraza et al.^[5] further caution that even stable languages may revert to a vulnerable state without sustained reinforcement, particularly in the face of socio-economic changes.

Language maintenance refers to the continued use of a community's language despite pressures from a dominant language^[6]. Fasold and Connor-Linton^[7] describe it as a community's conscious effort to preserve its native tongue, even in adverse conditions. Socioeconomic disadvantages often lead minority language speakers to adopt dominant languages, which sometimes cause negative attitudes toward their own language^[8]. This shift can result in language decline unless proactive measures are taken to sustain it. A strong emotional connection with one's language is crucial for its preservation, as language shift begins when speakers distance themselves from their mother tongue^[9].

The widespread phenomenon of multilingualism arises from various socio-political, religious, and economic factors that encourage communities to adopt languages perceived as advantageous^[10]. Such shifts often enable speakers to engage more effectively in trade, education, politics, and social interactions. However, this process frequently results in the gradual displacement of native languages by second languages, ultimately leading to the decline or extinction of mother tongues^[11]. A notable example is Sesotho, which faces a similar fate to Khoisan and Chi-Jahunda—languages that linguists believe have vanished. Sesotho has been increasingly overshadowed by Ndebele, regarded as a language of power and associated with the Black elite^[12]. A similar issue is observed in the Philippines, where younger generations and their parents, tend to favor the use of English due to its perceived positive impact on career prospects and personal development^[13-14].

Insights from behavioral neuroscience emphasized the profound influence of affective factors on learning^[15-17]. However, the existing body of research remains constrained by a limited focus, particularly in its representation of different linguistic and cultural learning environments. The prevailing emphasis on second language and foreign language learners within Western-centric and Global North contexts has created a research gap that excludes heritage, migrant, and Indigenous language learners^[18-19]. This focus neglects the distinctive emotional landscapes encountered by multilingual learners, which often deviate from traditional second language frameworks. For example, while heritage language learners experience linguistic insecurity—a phenomenon identified in qualitative accounts—empirical studies exploring this dimension are scarce^[20]. Such gap limits the scope of understanding concerning how emotional factors shape the experiences of marginalized and racialized learners^[21]. Expanding research agendas to incorporate culturally inclusive methodologies and emotional frameworks is essential to achieving a comprehensive understanding of the affective dynamics in language learning worldwide. This paper examined the preservation of the Filipino language in a globalized world, emphasizing the role of affective factors rooted in cultural identity and social change.

2. Literature review

The debate surrounding the choice of a national language and its role in education reflects complex concerns about identity, communication, and accessibility. It is fundamental to the learners since learning a specific language is a vehicle to convey one's feelings, thoughts, and experiences; this, in turn, would allow him or her to build relationships and harmony with other people^[22]. Within this debate, the Filipino language stands out as a powerful tool that enhances students' conversational skills, offering more than just vocabulary; it provides a means to express ideas and build confidence in self-expression. This unique role positions Filipino as a bridge between students' ideas and their ability to communicate effectively, underscoring its significance beyond classroom instruction

In terms of language preservation, Pun and Gurung^[23] outline three essential strategies. First, government protection is crucial, as policies that safeguard and promote native languages create a supportive environment for their continued use. Second, Septiyan and Margiansyah^[24] emphasize that educational policies play a significant role, as they determine how languages are integrated and valued within the academic curriculum. Finally, the active involvement of the language community itself is necessary to sustain these efforts. Together, these strategies highlight the multifaceted approach required for effective language preservation, where both policy and community engagement work hand in hand to secure the language's future.

Continuing support for language preservation is essential because language endangerment often arises from changing social, economic, or political factors. Murphy^[25] notes that while linguists can document and archive languages, the implementation of preservation programs ultimately depends on the community of speakers. This insight shifts the responsibility from external language experts to the language users themselves, empowering them to take active steps in maintaining their language. Therefore, a collaborative approach is crucial, where linguists provide tools, and communities take ownership of their language's future.

The method of language delivery also plays a vital role in shaping students' engagement and understanding, especially in academic settings. Yunaldi^[26] discusses how language serves as a medium for conveying thoughts and emotions, and how different teaching approaches—from formal, structured methods to casual, interactive techniques—affect students' comprehension. This variety in instructional styles highlights the importance of adapting language delivery to suit the needs of students, particularly when the aim is to make language a meaningful tool for both academic and personal expression

Studies have shown that teaching in a student's native language can significantly enhance cognitive comprehension and academic performance. Meligrito^[27] found that using native languages in instruction supports students' understanding, boosting their confidence and engagement. Trujillo^[28] observed similar results in the Philippines, where native language use not only improved students' academic performance but also encouraged more active participation in class. Panmei and Waluyo^[29] further emphasize that proficiency in one's native language contributes to higher academic grades, demonstrating the clear connection between language use and academic success.

The role of English in the Philippines is another important consideration in language education, as it remains a valuable tool for access to global opportunities. However, Sibayan^[30] argues that English cannot be the primary language for most Filipinos due to limited access to quality education in English beyond higher education. Instead, Filipino serves as the most practical and inclusive language for the majority, providing a foundation for shared communication and cultural unity. This perspective highlights Filipino's role as a unifying language that bridges diverse regional backgrounds and supports the majority's access to education.

Acquiring Filipino language proficiency may be easier for students in the Tagalog-speaking regions, but this is not always the case for students from Visayas and Mindanao, where other dialects dominate. Nelson^[31] emphasizes that teachers must understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students and employ various teaching strategies to enhance Filipino language acquisition. This approach not only improves language proficiency but also respects the linguistic diversity within the Philippines, promoting an inclusive educational environment where all students can engage with the national language.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This paper explored the personal efforts of Filipino students in preserving the Filipino language amidst the fear of language shift. Exploratory studies investigate specific questions or provide preliminary insights into phenomena that are not fully understood, serving as a foundation for more focused research^[32-35]. Swedberg^[36] highlights their role in framing broad frameworks that guide future investigations, while Chavez et al.^[37] emphasize their effectiveness in addressing gaps in literature by engaging participants in co-creating knowledge. These methodologies capture the complexities of human experiences, particularly where existing data or theories are limited. Despite critiques of their methodological rigor, exploratory studies are valued for their flexibility and ability to efficiently frame research problems and collect initial data^[36]. Akhtar et al.^[38] note their significance in generating hypotheses and laying the groundwork for more structured inquiries. In social sciences, such studies use systematic procedures to identify patterns that enhance understanding of social or psychological phenomena^[13,39]. While some question their rigor, exploratory research is critical in comprehending complex issues and advancing theoretical frameworks^[40-41]. This paper addresses a critical question in mitigating the potential language shift in Filipino: What personal strategies do students adopt to preserve the Filipino language? This understanding can guide the development of effective initiatives and interventions focusing on preserving the Filipino language.

3.2. Population and sampling

Exploratory research prioritizes understanding phenomena over quantification, often employing smaller, targeted sample sizes to gain extensive narratives^[42-43]. Unlike quantitative methods, exploratory studies focus on purposeful selection of cases and participants to explore specific experiences or expertise critical to the research focus^[44-45]. Purposive sampling, a non-probability method, is widely used in this context to deliberately select participants with relevant characteristics, allowing researchers to refine sampling criteria as new insights emerge during the study^[46,14,47]. The flexibility of purposive sampling is particularly suited to uncovering patterns and generating innovative concepts, which is vital in qualitative exploratory designs such as phenomenology and narrative inquiry^[14,48]. These designs typically rely on small, focused samples—ranging from one to 20 participants—where depth of analysis takes precedence over breadth, enabling the identification of emergent themes that might otherwise be diluted in larger datasets^[49-50]. Participants were selected using online purposive sampling^[51], facilitated through preliminary open-ended questions distributed via Google Forms. Three major sampling criteria was established: (1) enrolled in Academic Year 2024-2025, (2) frequently used the Filipino language (both informal and academic), (3) presented positive outlook for language preservation. There were 16 selected participants out of 75 who responded in the sampling process. **Table 1** summarizes the information of the sampled participants.

Table 1. Information from 16 sampled participants.

Name	Sex	Age	Outlook Towards Filipino Language Preservation
Alex	Male	18	Advocates active usage in daily conversations.

Bea	Female	19	Believes in integrating Filipino language in modern media.
Carl	Male	20	Prefers promoting Filipino literature to younger audiences.
Dina	Female	18	Supports preserving Filipino through academic inclusion.
Ethan	Male	22	Encourages teaching Filipino culture in schools.
Faith	Female	21	Promotes the use of Filipino in digital platforms.
Gabe	Male	23	Advocates speaking Filipino at home and among peers.
Hana	Female	20	Believes in combining Filipino language with creative arts.
Ian	Male	18	Emphasizes the importance of Filipino in formal education.
Joy	Female	19	Supports initiatives promoting regional dialects.
Karl	Male	20	Advocates creating modern Filipino-based literature.
Lia	Female	21	Encourages celebrating Filipino language festivals.
Mark	Male	22	Believes in integrating Filipino language in tech fields.
Nina	Female	19	Promotes using Filipino in mainstream entertainment.
Oscar	Male	23	Stresses on intergenerational use of Filipino at home.
Paula	Female	20	Encourages Filipino language immersion programs.

Table 1. (Continued)

3.3. Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to gather the responses from the participants. Unlike rigid standardized questionnaires, semi-structured interviews prioritize adaptability, allowing researchers to explore participants’ experiences, beliefs, and perspectives while also accommodating new insights that emerge during the conversation^[52-54]. This approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of essential themes while maintaining the openness needed to uncover unanticipated dimensions^[34]. The process of developing an effective semi-structured interview guide begins with a thorough understanding of the research objectives and context. These elements inform the initial design of questions, which should be open-ended, relevant, and capable of eliciting detailed responses. Conducting pilot testing is an essential step to ensure the reliability of the interview guide and its alignment with the objectives of the study. Pilot testing allows researchers to redefine questions for clarity, accessibility, and relevance, while feedback from experts further enhances the guide’s methodological robustness^[53,55]. Kallio et al.^[53], drawing on a review of 2,703 methodological studies, outline a systematic five-step process for developing a robust guide: identifying prerequisites to establish foundational knowledge and context; leveraging prior knowledge by integrating existing literature and theoretical frameworks; drafting preliminary open-ended questions aligned with research objectives; conducting pilot testing to evaluate and refine the guide with a small sample; and finalizing the guide by incorporating feedback from pilot testing and expert reviews. This structured yet flexible approach ensures that the interview guide is methodologically sound and contextually relevant, serving as a roadmap for systematic interviews while encouraging participants to share ideas about the phenomena under investigation^[56-57]. Following a comprehensive process of pilot testing and expert validation, the finalized interview guide questions are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Final interview guide questions.

Objectives	Interview questions
Determine the value of the Filipino Language to learners who intentionally preserve it.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the importance of the Filipino Language to you as a Filipino? Explain using different scenarios. 2. Why did you consciously intend to preserve the Filipino Language in your personal capacity? Elaborate further.

Identify personal actions of learners who intentionally wants to preserve the Filipino Language.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What do you get from personally campaigning to use and preserve the Filipino Language? Explain further. 1. At the personal level, what specific actions do you do to preserve the Filipino Language? Explain with specific situation. 2. What are some gains did you have so far in exerting efforts to preserve the use of the Filipino Language? Elaborate further. 3. What do you think is the best initiatives for Filipino learners to preserve the Filipino Language? Enumerate and explain each.
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Table 2. (*Continued*)

3.4. Data gathering procedure

Narratives are essential in social science exploration, serving as a tool for participants to express their perceptions and emotions. Storytelling provides structure to the interview, offering rich, detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences^[58,59,57,60]. Modern qualitative approaches emphasize preserving narrative continuity, minimizing interviewer bias, and encouraging positive interaction throughout the process^[61]. This process requires active engagement through attentive listening and thoughtful interpretation, aiming to uncover the nuances of lived experiences^[62-63]. Researchers must develop a comfortable environment by ensuring confidentiality, using accessible language, and maintaining an open, nonjudgmental demeanor to encourage participants' reflective responses^[64]. Semi-structured interviews are often preferred due to their balance of flexibility and focus, allowing conversations to flow naturally while ensuring critical topics are addressed^[65-66]. A typical interview process consists of three phases: the preliminary phase, where researchers outline the study's objectives, explain confidentiality measures, and describe data use^[67]. The second phase involves thematic questioning supplemented by follow-up probes to explore participants' responses in depth. Lastly, the concluding phase, which summarizes the discussion and allows participants to provide final remarks^[68].

3.5. Data analysis

Thematic analysis, particularly reflexive thematic analysis, was carried out to analyze narrative data from one-on-one interviews, offering a systematic framework to identify, organize, and interpret patterns within qualitative data. This approach is valued for its flexibility and adaptability, making it especially suitable for exploratory research where themes emerge organically from the data rather than being constrained by pre-existing frameworks^[69,37]. Reflexive thematic analysis emphasizes the active role of the researcher in interpreting the data, incorporating reflexivity to mitigate potential biases and enrich analytical depth^[70-71]. The analytical process follows six iterative phases: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report^[69,72]. The iterative nature of this method allows for revisiting earlier phases to refine themes, ensuring coherence and rigor in the analysis^[73]. Reflexive thematic analysis further distinguishes itself by acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity as an integral part of the analytical process rather than a limitation. Researchers actively engage with the data through their specific research questions, using their positionality to guide interpretation while remaining attentive to the participants' voices^[71,74]. An inductive, data-driven approach is often preferred, where codes and themes are derived directly from the data itself, ensuring alignment with participants' responses and minimizing bias^[75].

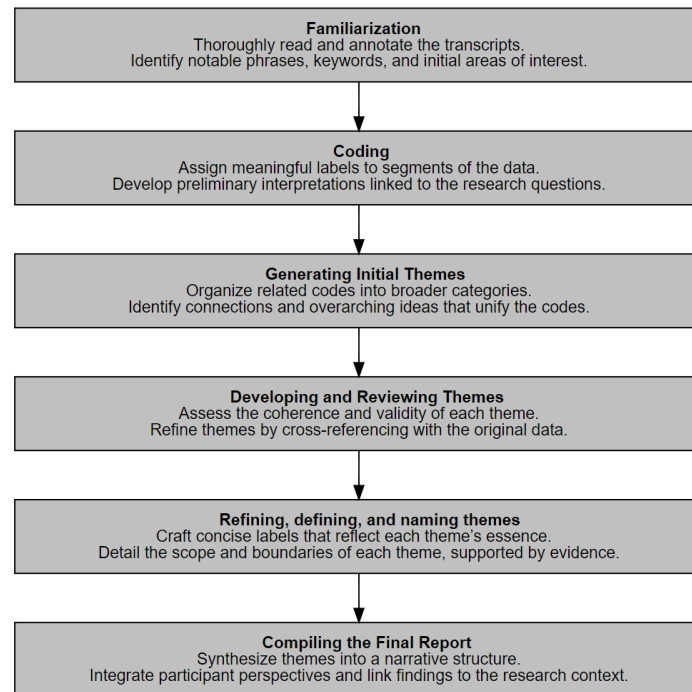


Figure 1. Workflow of reflexive thematic analysis.

4. Results

Objective 1: Determine the value of the Filipino Language to learners who intentionally preserve it.

This paper observed belief systems about the value of preserving the Filipino language based on three contexts: cultural perspective, expression, and unification. The findings revealed that perceptions mainly extended beyond linguistic functionality, reflecting the Filipino language as a cornerstone of cultural identity and national solidarity. Students articulated that the Filipino language was not merely a communicative tool but an essential repository of the nation's cultural heritage. They also described the language as a unifying medium that transcends regional and cultural divides, allowing for the articulation of creativity and intellectual discourse.

Theme 1: Cultural Perspective

The Filipino language was perceived not solely as a functional medium of communication but as an integral repository of the Philippines' historical narratives, collective memory, and cultural ethos. Participants articulated the Filipino language's vital role in safeguarding traditions and values, emphasizing that it functioned as a vessel through which the worldview and identity of the Filipino people were preserved.

There was a profound acknowledgment among respondents that the Filipino language was inextricably linked to the preservation of cultural narratives, stories, and customs. They conveyed that its neglect or erosion could precipitate the loss of historical continuity and a disconnection from national identity. Emphasizing language is the key to heritage and that it safeguards our sense of identity, the respondents highlighted its irreplaceable role in sustaining the shared experiences and values that define the Filipino people.

“For me, the Filipino language is not just a means of communication but also a vessel for preserving our rich cultural heritage.”

“Filipino as a carrier of cultural values and traditions. Through language, we preserve not just words, but the history and worldview that have shaped our nation.”

“I believe that language is the key to our heritage. It's not just a tool to speak, but a symbol of who we are as a people.”

The students articulated that the potential loss of the Filipino language would invariably lead to the erosion of cultural narratives, traditional stories, and the collective sense of identity integral to the nation. The language was perceived as a repository of cultural meaning, involving the expressions of respect and the art of storytelling that constitute the essence of Filipino heritage. This perspective underscored the Filipino language's role as a perpetual reminder of ancestral origins and national identity, affirming its indispensable function in preserving the cultural and moral fabric of the Filipino people.

“If we lose the language, we risk losing our cultural narratives, stories, and even our sense of identity.”

“I realized how much of our culture is embedded in the language. From the way we express respect to how we tell stories, Filipino holds so much meaning. It's a constant reminder of where we come from and who we are.”

Theme 2: Expression

This theme reflected that the Filipino language functions as a unifying instrument, transcending the diverse regional distinctions within the nation and encouraging a collective sense of connection among Filipinos, regardless of their geographic origins. This realization emphasized the language's role not only as a medium for everyday communication but also as a vehicle for thought, creativity, and intellectual expression, elevating it beyond its utilitarian function.

“Filipino as a unifying tool. The language can transcend regional differences, making all Filipinos feel connected no matter where they come from.”

“Filipino is more than just a conversational tool; it's the language of thought, creativity, and expression.”

The preservation of the Filipino language was viewed as imperative for its integration into higher education and intellectual discourse, wherein it was recognized as capable of articulating complex thoughts and ideas that resonate within academic and professional spheres. Respondents highlighted the necessity of sustaining the language through diverse avenues of expression, such as personal interactions, media, and public conversations, thereby reinforcing its cultural and intellectual significance.

“Preserving the language means using it in higher education and intellectual discourse to show that it can express thoughts and ideas.”

“We must preserve Filipino not just through textbooks but through conversations, media, and even through our own daily interactions.”

There was a concerted desire to reframe Filipino as a primary medium for self-expression and cultural pride, rather than a mere secondary language. There was the growing visibility of Filipino in popular culture, particularly through media representations in films, television shows, and advertisements, which had notably strengthened participants' appreciation and motivation to actively participate in preserving and promoting the language for future generations.

“I want to help younger generations appreciate Filipino not as a 'secondary' language but as a primary avenue for self-expression and cultural pride.”

“Watching the younger generation embrace Filipino in films, shows, and even advertisements have deepened my appreciation for the language, and I’m more motivated than ever to contribute to this movement.”

Theme 3: Unification

Students emphasized that the preservation of the language served as an instrumental force for unification, establishing a shared foundation upon which individuals, regardless of their distinct heritages, could engage with one another. This process was recognized as a catalyst for social change, as the language facilitated a deeper understanding and connection among citizens, thus transcending divisions that might otherwise separate them.

“I’ve seen how language preservation can be a way to unify people, regardless of their background. It’s also made me appreciate how powerful language can be in bringing about social change.”

“I feel that we should protect the Filipino language because it is something that helps us connect to each other.”

Respondents highlighted that Filipino language functions as a unifying thread that weaves together the varied linguistic landscapes of the nation, helping to create a cohesive collective identity that is reflective of shared experiences, values, and aspirations. This understanding reinforced the notion that the Filipino language is an essential vehicle through which a unified sense of belonging and cultural continuity is maintained.

“There are many native languages and dialects in the Philippines. I think, Filipino helps us unify as a country because it connects us—our identity, ideas, and culture.”

The Filipino language was regarded as a critical component in strengthening national solidarity, safeguarding cultural heritage, and empowering the nation to advance collectively in a manner that respects and celebrates its diverse backgrounds.

“The Filipino language helps us stay connected to each other, regardless of our cultural backgrounds.”

Objective 2: Identify personal actions of learners who intentionally wants to preserve the Filipino language.

Two distinct yet complementary themes emerged from the data: online interaction and traditional interaction. Each of these themes highlighted the multifaceted efforts employed by individuals to contribute to the vitality and continued relevance of the Filipino language in both digital and interpersonal spaces. Respondents underscored the value of digital advocacy, such as creating Filipino-language content, including book reviews, memes, and social issue posts, to encourage cultural pride and stimulate social change. The conscious effort to use Filipino within families and among friends also proved to be a significant strategy. Respondents noted that through consistent use, even in informal settings, others were gradually influenced to adopt the language, with some family members and peers beginning to use Filipino more frequently.

Theme 1: Online Interaction

The findings of the inquiry revealed a deliberate and strategic effort to preserve the Filipino language through the use of online interaction, particularly through social media platforms. Respondents emphasized

the significance of these platforms in normalizing Filipino within digital spaces, particularly as a tool to facilitate its continued relevance and usage among the youth.

The use of social media was viewed not only as a space for engaging in global discussions but also as a mechanism for ensuring that the Filipino language remained deeply connected to local identity despite the dominance of globalized communication. The participants believed that these platforms were instrumental in advancing Filipino as a language of cultural pride and social change, positioning the language as a medium through which narratives and cultural values could be both preserved and propagated.

“Social media is where so much of our youth is today, and it’s essential to use these platforms to normalize Filipino in digital spaces.”

“Social media allows Filipino to be part of discussions on global topics while still staying rooted in our local identity, which is something I believe is crucial for its survival.”

Through the act of posting content such as book reviews, memes, and social issue discussions in Filipino, the respondents demonstrated their commitment to the language’s vitality. This proactive use of Filipino in digital communication reflected an understanding that language preservation transcends mere linguistic survival and includes the safeguarding of cultural identity and societal values. The act of creating informative content, such as blog posts, podcasts, and videos, further illustrated the multifaceted ways in which the Filipino language could be employed as a vehicle for engagement and awareness, enhancing its presence across diverse media forms. The participants’ involvement in these campaigns served not only as a means of reinforcing linguistic identity but also as an avenue for cultural connection and national solidarity.

“I use my social media platforms to advocate for Filipino by posting content in our native language.”

“I regularly post Filipino-language book reviews, share memes that use Filipino, and write short posts in Filipino about social issues that are important to me.”

“Campaigning for Filipino in the media has allowed me to combine my passion for communication with my love for culture.”

“I write blog posts, create podcasts, and make short videos, all in Filipino. By producing creative content that is engaging and informative, I get to connect with people while showcasing the beauty of Filipino in different forms of media.”

The findings also revealed a broader realization among participants that language in media has the potential to affect significant socio-cultural change. By advocating for Filipino within their digital interactions, the respondents acknowledged the capacity of language to do more than merely inform or entertain—it could also build cultural pride and instigate social transformation. The unexpected engagement from their audiences, which included the active use of Filipino in comments and discussions, signaled a collective movement toward reviving the language in a contemporary, accessible form.

“I’ve learned that language in media doesn’t just inform or entertain it can build cultural pride and even spark social change.”

“I’ve gained a stronger sense of cultural pride and have learned to appreciate the power of media as a tool for change.”

“Through this campaign, I’ve discovered that language preservation isn’t just about keeping words alive, it’s about keeping our stories and values alive too.”

“I started sharing Filipino-language content on my social media—book reviews, current events, even memes—and the engagement I received was unexpected. Many of my followers began joining in and using Filipino to comment or engage in discussions.”

Theme 2: Traditional Interaction

The findings revealed that participants actively engaged in traditional interaction as a means of preserving the Filipino language within both academic and personal spheres.

In the academic setting, participants indicated their deliberate efforts to incite discussions surrounding Filipino identity and culture, which encourage an environment wherein the Filipino language became a medium for exploring and reinforcing cultural values. The classroom emerged as a venue for dialogue that extended beyond the curriculum, serving as a platform for the reaffirmation of cultural pride and the collective identity of the Filipino people.

“In the classroom, I’ve been able to spark conversations among my peers about Filipino identity and culture.”

In their personal lives, the participants underscored the importance of speaking Filipino within the family context, even when there was a preference for the English language. This intentional use of Filipino was viewed as an act of cultural preservation and a conscious effort to transmit the language across generations.

Notably, the participants reported that their consistent use of Filipino had a ripple effect, with others—particularly family members—beginning to adopt the language in their daily conversations, thus contributing to its sustained use within family interactions.

“In my personal life, I make an effort to speak Filipino with my family, even if some of them prefer to speak in English.”

“It’s a small thing, but I’ve noticed that when I speak Filipino, others start using it too, even if it’s just a few words or phrases.”

“One of the most rewarding aspects of my effort to preserve the Filipino language has been seeing how my family and friends have started using it more in their daily lives.”

“...after consistent use and encouragement, I’ve noticed my younger siblings speaking in Filipino, even when they’re with their friends.”

Further, the participants organized Filipino-only meetups as a proactive measure to ensure that the language was utilized in more informal, yet meaningful, contexts. These gatherings, where the discourse was intentionally restricted to Filipino, facilitated conversations about cultural topics such as music, movies, and current events.

“I started organizing casual ‘Filipino-only’ meetups where my friends and I can only speak in Filipino. We talk about music, movies, or even current events, but only in our language.”

“I also consciously avoid using too much English when chatting with my friends, especially when we’re talking about Filipino culture or history.”

5. Discussion

The Filipino language transcends its role as a medium of communication, serving as a vital cornerstone for the preservation of the Philippines' cultural heritage. Efforts to maintain and enrich the Filipino language, such as translating traditional stories and folklore, ensure the survival of a rich cultural legacy for future generations. Pastera^[76] emphasized the significance of living traditions as vital to safeguarding the nation's cultural, historical, and traditional identity. This paper observed that students had manifested the willingness to adapt to the challenging situations of language shift, which nourishes the Filipino language.

Filipino language proficiency also evokes a profound connection to cultural roots, with students recognizing it as a repository of heritage, respect, and storytelling. Pacio^[77] highlighted the critical role of folklore and oral traditions in cultural preservation, citing the Yakan community as a prime example. Respondents' advocacy for sustaining Filipino as a living language reaffirms its centrality to cultural identity, which strengthens the sense of belonging and pride in one's heritage. For one student, "If we lose the language, we risk losing our cultural narratives, stories, and even our sense of identity." As a dynamic symbol of cultural continuity, Filipino transcends its linguistic boundaries, acting as a unifying force that connects generations while adapting to contemporary realities. In this way, the language becomes a living testament to the nation's rich heritage, ensuring that cultural narratives, values, and identities are preserved and passed on to future generations.

In linguistically diverse regions, young Filipinos have embraced the unifying power of the Filipino language through initiatives such as language exchange programs, encouraging national solidarity and cultural inclusivity. Eslit^[78] asserts that practices, beliefs, and traditions are essential to a nation's cultural identity, with the Filipino language playing a significant role in bridging regional divides and promoting collective unity. For example, one student said that "language preservation can be a way to unify people, regardless of their background." This sentiment highlighted the broader societal impact of the Filipino language as a key element in advancing inclusivity and solidifying a unified national identity. For Filipino students, the language is more than conversational; it's an academic tool that encourages inclusivity and enriches intellectual engagement. The Philippines is a multilingual country where Filipino and English are official languages, with Filipino as the primary medium in schools^[79]. This setting allows students to develop critical and creative skills in Filipino, as seen in the respondents' initiatives to use the language in intellectual contexts.

While English dominates business and higher education^[80], the students advocate for embedding Filipino in intellectual and academic spaces to sustain its relevance and role as an essential medium of cultural expression and pride. One student suggested that using the Filipino language within the classroom can "...spark conversations among my peers about Filipino identity and culture." The use of the native language positively affects language skills, as code-switching and the use of the mother tongue in the classroom enhance students' oral proficiency and self-expression^[81]. The integration of the native language provides an inclusive learning environment by providing students with a sense of comfort and familiarity, which enhances their ability to engage actively in discussions. Students believed that using the Filipino language in classrooms not only encourages cultural identity, but also helps young individuals share their ideas with different people.

One remarkable strategy in encouraging the extensive use of the Filipino language was the emergence of media contents. Digital platforms have emerged as transformative tools in the advocacy for the Filipino language, providing an unprecedented opportunity to reach diverse audiences across geographic and social boundaries. Bulnes^[82] believed that social media facilitates education, promotion, and cultural engagement.

Students utilized social media to amplify the visibility of Filipino content, ensuring its integration into modern digital culture and reaffirming its relevance in contemporary society. Students used the Filipino language to share memes, make book reviews, write posts, and publish blogposts. One student believed that having this enables a person to have "...a stronger sense of cultural pride and have learned to appreciate the power of media as a tool for change." Using the native language could cultivate nationalism and sense of identity^[83], even in the globalized world wherein younger generations are exposed to dominant languages. Social media can be a powerful tool to reshaping cultural interaction^[84-85]. This is a critical aspect of learning as social media has significantly improved education^[86-87].

As the Filipino language transcends its role as merely a tool for communication, it becomes a key pillar for safeguarding the nation's cultural heritage and fostering a collective sense of identity. The use of Filipino in academic settings, for instance, enhances students' sense of belonging, encouraging inclusivity and active participation, and develop connection to their cultural roots. Similarly, social media serves as a transformative tool, enabling students and other advocates to share content in Filipino, ensuring its integration into contemporary digital culture. The integration of Filipino into both academic and digital platforms has significant implications for the future of education in the Philippines. It emphasizes the importance of nurturing a bilingual educational system that values the native language as an essential tool for intellectual development and cultural connection.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the value of preserving the Filipino language, highlighting its cultural, expressive, and unifying roles in the lives of learners. The narrative highlighted the significance of the Filipino language as more than a tool for communication, but as a vital component of cultural identity and national solidarity. Participants consistently emphasized the language's role in preserving the Philippine cultural heritage, unifying different regional groups, and encourage intellectual expression. Further, the students exhibited active efforts to preserve Filipino both online and in traditional settings. Through digital platforms, they contributed to the normalization of the language in modern discourse, while also engaging in personal actions such as speaking Filipino within their families and organizing Filipino-only meetups. These actions reflect a deeper commitment to ensuring the language's continued relevance across various spaces and generations.

There is a need for efforts to preserve the Filipino language to extend beyond academic and formal contexts, especially digital platforms and personal interactions. Educators and policymakers are positioned to promoting the use of Filipino in education, media, and other intellectual domains to reinforce its status as a language of thought and creativity. Moreover, advancing digital advocacy and encouraging the language's use on online platforms can significantly contribute to a broader movement developing cultural pride and social transformation. Given students' active involvement in language preservation, schools and universities are urged to integrate initiatives into curricula and extracurricular programs, particularly emphasizing the creative and intellectual potential of Filipino. Finally, families and communities should be encouraged to adopt Filipino as a primary medium of communication in daily life which ensures its continued transmission across generations.

This study encountered several limitations that could impact the generalizability and depth of its findings. First, the sample size was relatively small, focusing only on students who were already committed to preserving the Filipino language, which may not represent the broader student population. The data collection methods were primarily qualitative, relying on interviews and thematic analysis, which, while rich in detail, may not fully capture the perspectives of non-participants. Similarly, the study focused on a

specific group of participants, making it difficult to generalize the findings to all Filipino learners. The reliance on self-reported data may have introduced biases, as participants may have overrepresented their efforts or actions in language preservation. Future research could benefit from larger, more diverse samples and a mixed-methods approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of language preservation in various contexts.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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