CHOOSING ENGLISH AS A DOMINANT LANGUAGE AMONG INDIGENOUS YOUTH: CULTURAL BOON OR IDENTITY BANE?

Liaa Eve Dalilis Tacio[1]; John Rey Osben Pelila[2]*

[1,2]College of Arts and Humanities, Benguet State University
La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines
[1]liaaeve11@gmail.com; [2]johnpelilalpt@gmail.com

How to Cite: Tacio, L. E. D., & Pelila, J. R. O. (2025). Choosing English as a dominant language among indigenous youth: Cultural boon or identity bane?. *Lingua Cultura, 19*(1), 75-83. https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v19i1.13771

ABSTRACT

Cultural disconnect is increasingly evident among Indigenous youth who struggle to maintain fluency in their native languages, even when they retain passive understanding. This disconnect is often shaped by family language policies (FLPs) that prioritize English over Indigenous languages, creating long-term implications for cultural continuity and identity. The research aims to explore why Indigenous college students prefer English as their dominant language and how FLPs influence this preference. Using qualitative methods, nine Indigenous youth were interviewed through snowball sampling, and their responses were transcribed and coded into emerging themes. Findings indicate that youth view English as essential for academic and professional advancement. However, they also acknowledge that using English exclusively distances them from their heritage language and culture. Many participants reported a fear of being criticized for mispronunciations or errors when attempting to speak their native language, which further discourages active use and reinforces their reliance on English. It is concluded that Indigenous youth who speak English have scholastic and professional benefits. However, because family language policies devalue local languages, it also leads to cultural alienation and the loss of heritage languages. Although it is recommended that, through community-based revitalization initiatives and positive reinforcement, families and institutions should create welcoming, inclusive environments that actively promote the use of heritage languages.

Keywords: phenomenological research, undergraduate students, Indigenous people, family language policy, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic diversity is a defining feature of many regions worldwide, especially within Indigenous communities. In the Philippines, this diversity is exemplified in areas such as Bukidnon, Mindanao, where seven Indigenous cultural groups speak Binukid or Bukidnon, each with mutually intelligible dialects (Bonifacio et al., 2021). The broader Mindanao region is home to approximately eighteen ethnic groups collectively known as the Lumad (Bonifacio et al., 2021). According to the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF), the country boasts 130 Indigenous languages. However, 39 of these are endangered,

and eight are at serious risk of extinction (Bonifacio et al., 2021). Globally, Indigenous peoples speak between 80% and 90% of the world's estimated 3,000 to 6,000 languages (Bonifacio et al., 2021). Despite this linguistic richness, many Indigenous languages are now critically endangered (Bonifacio et al., 2021; Magadan et al., 2025; Pelila & Ayao-ao, 2024).

Language shift is a primary threat to these languages, the gradual process through which one language replaces another across generations (Hassan, 2023). This often occurs in immigrant or marginalized families, where children, exposed to formal education and dominant cultural norms, adopt the mainstream language instead of their heritage tongue. Even when

parents speak the native language at home, children may respond in the dominant language and use it exclusively with siblings and peers (Hassan, 2023). Studies on German-Russian and German-Turkish adolescents in Germany confirm this pattern: despite exposure to their heritage languages, these youths exhibit greater proficiency in German, illustrating how dominant language environments accelerate language shift (Dünkel et al., 2024). Various factors contribute to this shift, including globalization, cultural hegemony, colonial legacies, and the widespread influence of technology (Bonifacio et al., 2021). A particularly harmful aspect is the breakdown of intergenerational transmission, where parents intentionally cease to pass on their language to their children. The consequences are profound: language loss often severs cultural ties, weakens oral traditions, and creates emotional distance within families. For Indigenous communities, this is not merely a linguistic issue; it is existential. As a language disappears, so does a worldview and a way of life (Bonifacio et al., 2021). In Bukidnon, for instance, Binukid is being displaced by Cebuano, Filipino, and English, with many Lumads now adopting Cebuano as their primary language (Bonifacio et al., 2021). Similar patterns have been observed in Kazakhstan, where university students, even with limited English proficiency, view English as a vehicle for social and academic mobility, perceiving it as a replacement for Kazakh and Russian (Agbo et al., 2022).

Language shift is a primary threat to these languages, the gradual process through which one language replaces another across generations (Hassan, 2023). This often occurs in immigrant or marginalized families, where children, exposed to formal education and dominant cultural norms, adopt the mainstream language instead of their heritage tongue. Even when parents speak the native language at home, children may respond in the dominant language and use it exclusively with siblings and peers (Hassan, 2023). Studies on German-Russian and German-Turkish adolescents in Germany confirm this pattern: despite exposure to their heritage languages, these youths exhibit greater proficiency in German, illustrating how dominant language environments accelerate language shift (Dünkel et al., 2024). Various factors contribute to this shift, including globalization, cultural hegemony, colonial legacies, and the widespread influence of technology (Bonifacio et al., 2021). A particularly harmful aspect is the breakdown of intergenerational transmission, where parents intentionally cease to pass on their language to their children. The consequences are profound: language loss often severs cultural ties, weakens oral traditions, and creates emotional distance within families. For Indigenous communities, this is not merely a linguistic issue; it is existential. As a language disappears, so does a worldview and a way of life (Bonifacio et al., 2021). In Bukidnon, for instance, Binukid is being displaced by Cebuano, Filipino, and English, with many Lumads now adopting Cebuano as their primary language (Bonifacio et al., 2021). Similar patterns have been observed in Kazakhstan,

where university students, even with limited English proficiency, view English as a vehicle for social and academic mobility, perceiving it as a replacement for Kazakh and Russian (Agbo et al., 2022).

Partial bilingualism, which is the ability to understand but not speak a language fluently, poses another challenge for Indigenous youth (Tacio & Pelila, 2025). Many young people comprehend their ancestral language but struggle to express themselves fluently, often due to early and sustained exposure to global languages like English. However, recent scholarship cautions against viewing this as a deficiency. Wiese et al. (2022) argue that bilingual heritage speakers should be considered native in both languages and that 'non-canonical' features represent natural variation, particularly in informal contexts. This reframing positions bilingualism as a dynamic strength rather than a shortcoming. Still, the disconnect remains personal: partial fluency can prevent youth from fully engaging in cultural rituals, conversing with elders, or accessing language-based scholarships. In Bukidnon, although many young people are fluent in Cebuano, Filipino, or English, they lack proficiency in Binukid because their parents have ceased using it at home (Bonifacio et al., 2021). The language gap becomes more than symbolic and becomes a tangible barrier to belonging and opportunity.

Shared Language Erosion often unfolds in small, everyday moments. Some youth reported needing to translate for their parents or finding it easier to speak English, highlighting how casual interactions reflect deeper shifts in familial power and communication dynamics (Cox et al., 2025). This dynamic undermines parental authority and disrupts traditional cultural socialization. Parents often feel frustrated about losing their heritage language (Sevinç & Mirvahedi, 2022). Others describe the effort to reverse this trend as emotionally draining, especially when it involves reshaping household language norms (Little, 2022). Parents with limited English proficiency may feel excluded in households where siblings primarily use English, further weakening familial bonds (Cox et al., 2025). Yet when children are encouraged to use their heritage language, it often strengthens emotional ties and identity formation (Little, 2022).

This is where Family Language Policy (FLP) plays a critical role. Whether explicit or implicit, FLPs represent families' decisions regarding which languages to use, prioritize, or pass on at home (Rose et al., 2023). FLP comprises three key components: ideology (beliefs about language), management (strategies for language use), and practice (actual daily use) (Sevinç & Mirvahedi, 2022). Parental beliefs, particularly positive attitudes toward bilingualism, strongly influence children's language development (Mak et al., 2023). Effective management and consistent practices at home can boost heritage language proficiency and enhance emotional well-being (Rose et al., 2023). Importantly, research on Dutch bilingual families highlights that the quantity of language input, rather than which language is spoken

at home, is a key predictor of a child's language proficiency (Verhagen et al., 2022). Children raised in homes with intentional FLPs tend to develop stronger ethnic identities and benefit from secure attachment and improved psychosocial health (Cox et al., 2025; Tacio & Pelila, 2025).

However, implementing FLPs is rarely straightforward. These decisions are shaped and often constrained by social, political, and economic pressures. Many families lack formal language policies (Pourbahram & Gholami, 2023). Some parents are not able to support heritage language learning due to linguistic limitations (Mak et al., 2023). In Wales, for instance, parents who lack fluency in Welsh often choose English as their home language, relying on schools to teach Welsh, which can undermine intergenerational transmission (Gruffydd et al., 2024). Similarly, even well-intentioned parents may default to it in neighborhoods where the dominant language prevails more frequently (Tsinivits & Unsworth, 2021). External factors such as professional advice or school policies also influence FLPs. Educators often advise the greater use of the dominant language to promote academic success, inadvertently contributing to the decline of heritage languages (Hollebeke et al., 2022). Reversing language shift within families requires more than good intentions; it demands the cooperation of children, consistent engagement, and emotional resilience (Little, 2022). Successful strategies often involve adjusting communication styles, promoting linguistic equality, and negotiating a balanced use of multiple languages (Sihombing & Rani, 2023).

Increasingly, English has become the language of aspiration among Indigenous youth. In La Trinidad, Benguet, many young people prefer English because it is a pathway to education, employment, and broader social networks (Tacio & Pelila, 2025). From an early age, children are immersed in English through school, media, and peer interactions, often at the expense of their heritage languages. Fluency in English is not just practical; it is associated with intelligence, professionalism, and success. For many, English becomes the default language for formal writing, digital communication, and emotional expression.

This preference is often mirrored by parents, some of whom worry that using the heritage language may limit their child's potential. In extreme cases, this leads to what scholars refer to as "linguistic suicide," a deliberate decision to abandon the ancestral language in favor of English or other dominant tongues (Pelila & Ayao-ao, 2024). While many parents still value heritage languages for preserving culture and kinship, they see English as vital for their child's academic and economic future (Mak et al., 2023). Some attempt to counteract language loss by enrolling their children in heritage language programs or setting clear home language rules. However, challenges remain, including the disconnect between the informal 'home version' of a heritage language and its formal, academic version taught in schools (Cox et al., 2025). Within families, language ideologies can clash, as fathers may strictly enforce the use of a heritage language, while mothers prioritize ease of communication (Cox et al., 2025). Ironically, in some cases, parents' limited English forces them to rely on schools to teach it, which reinforces its dominance at home (Mak et al., 2023). Interestingly, families from lower-income households are statistically more likely to retain and use heritage languages at home (Mak et al., 2023).

Although FLP has been widely studied in the context of immigrant and diaspora families (Rose et al., 2023; Mak et al., 2023; Cox et al., 2025), there remains limited empirical research on how these dynamics operate within Indigenous communities, especially amid the growing preference for English. While prior studies have identified the roles of parental language ideologies, formal education, and monolingual societal norms in facilitating language shift (Sevinç & Mirvahedi, 2022; Woltran, 2025; Tsinivits & Unsworth, 2021), few have examined how these factors intersect in Indigenous contexts, where English is increasingly perceived not just as a tool but as a replacement for the ancestral language (Pelila & Ayao-ao, 2024; Tacio & Pelila, 2025). This shift raises complex questions about identity, cultural continuity, and intergenerational communication. Despite anecdotal accounts of 'linguistic suicide,' there is a lack of empirical data explaining why and how such choices are made. Therefore, the research explores the dynamics behind the preference for English as the dominant language among Indigenous youth and examines the resulting impacts on heritage language attrition, identity, and family language practices.

METHODS

The research employed a phenomenological design using a qualitative approach. A phenomenological research aims to set aside biases about human experiences, feelings, and responses to specific situations. It enables the researcher to explore the perceptions, perspectives, understandings, and emotions of individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation. In this context, phenomenology refers to the direct investigation and description of lived experiences consciously perceived by individuals. Accordingly, the researcher interpreted the experiences behind the language choices of Indigenous youth who use English as their dominant language.

The participants of the research were Indigenous youth who are currently undergraduate students and identify English as their dominant language. All participants had spent a significant portion of their lives in La Trinidad, Benguet. The municipality is hypothesized to be home to diverse Indigenous communities from various regions, such as Benguet, Pangasinan, Mountain Province, and La Union. As a result, Indigenous families may adapt their family language policies (FLP) in response to the broader linguistic environment, potentially shifting toward

English in everyday use.

To identify participants, the researcher employed snowball sampling, a qualitative method in which a small number of initial participants are selected based on specific inclusion criteria (see Table 1). These initial respondents refer other potential participants who meet the research criteria. This process continues until data saturation is achieved. Participants such as P1 and P8 were among the initial sources who referred other Indigenous youth who identified English as their dominant language.

Table 1 Criteria of the Target Respondents

Inclusion Criteria	Description
Demographic	Indigenous youth, specifically those who identify with an Indigenous community in the region.
Age Range	Respondents must be within the age range of 18 to 25 years.
Educational Status	Must be currently enrolled as an undergraduate student in any field of study.
Language Proficiency	Must consider English as their dominant language and be comfortable using it in both spoken and written contexts.
Location	They must have spent a significant portion of their lives in La Trinidad, Benguet, contributing to their cultural context.
Cultural Engagement	Respondents should have had some engagement with their Indigenous culture, traditions, or practices through family or community involvement.
Community Background	They must come from Indigenous families representing various communities.

Snowball sampling was particularly effective for reaching Indigenous youth within the region. For instance, P1 and P8 served as the initial participants who had already made the shift to English as their primary language. Their referrals enabled the researcher to access a broader network of youth facing similar sociolinguistic experiences. Through these connections, the research captured complex patterns of language preference and its impact on identity among Indigenous populations. This method highlighted how language practices circulate within social networks, allowing for a deeper exploration of language use and cultural affiliation.

As presented in Figure 1, a total of nine (9) participants were interviewed. Two participants (P1 and P8) served as initial sources: P1 referred six participants (P2 to P7), and P8 referred one participant (P9). These participants belong to different ethnolinguistic

groups from Northern Luzon, including Kankanaey, Pangasinense, and Ibaloy. Their academic backgrounds span various disciplines such as information technology, agriculture, biology, air transportation, civil engineering, and public administration. Notably, most of their parents have attained college degrees, which may provide additional context for their use of English as a dominant language.

Participant Code: P1
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey and Pangasinense
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
Parents' Background: College degree holders
Referral Details: First source to be interviewed

Participant Code: P2
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
Parents' Background: College degree holders
Referral Details: Referred by P1

Participant Code: P3
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Agriculture
Parents' Background: Not Applicable
Referral Details: Referred by P1

Participant Code: P4
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey and Ibaloi
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Biology
Parents' Background: Not Applicable
Referral Details: Referred by P2

Participant Code: P5
Ethnolinguistic Group: Pangasinense
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Biology
Parents' Background: Not Applicable
Referral Details: Referred by P4

Participant Code: P6
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey and Ibaloi
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Air Transportation major in Advanced Flying
Parents' Background: College degree holders
Referral Details: Referred by P4

Participant Code: P7
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
Parents' Background: College degree holders
Referral Details: Referred by P6

Participant Code: P8
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey and Ibaloi
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering
Parents' Background: College degree holders
Referral Details: Second source to be interviewed

Participant Code: P9
Ethnolinguistic Group: Kankanaey and Ibaloi
Education Background: Bachelor of Science in Public Administration
Parents' Background: College degree holders
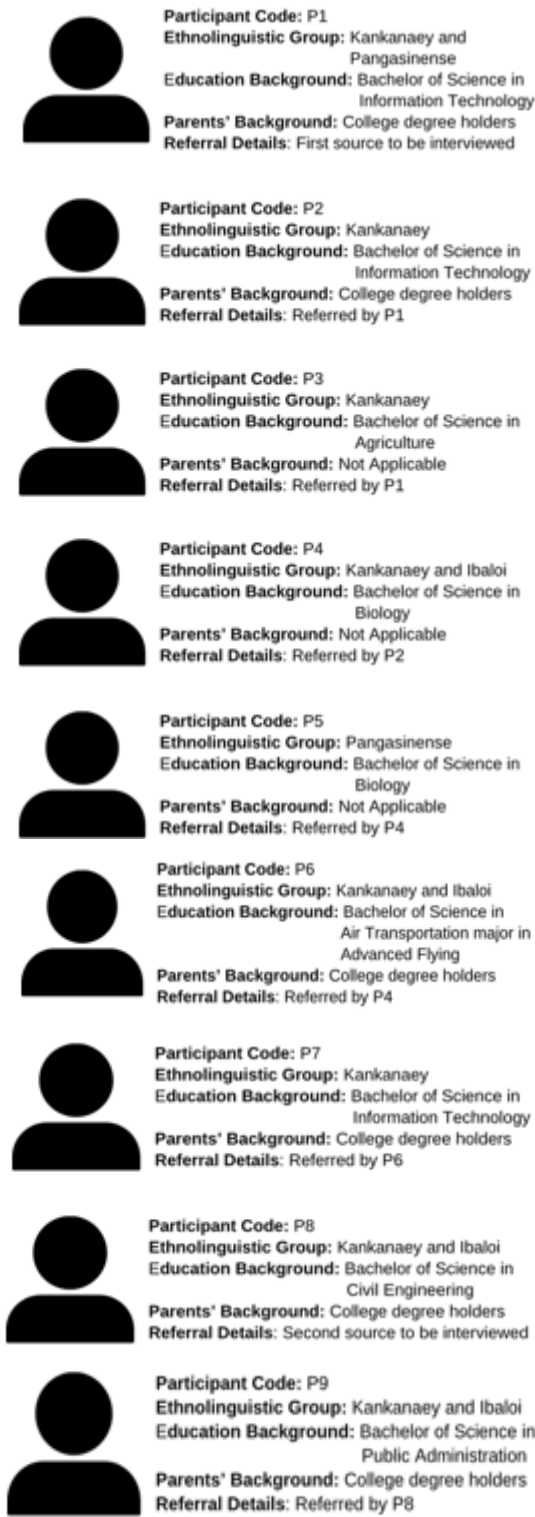Referral Details: Referred by P8

Figure 1 Profile of the Participants in the Research
(Continued)

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview questionnaire to gather detailed responses about participants' language development, experiences, and choices. The instrument also aimed to help participants reflect on their cultural identity in relation to their language use. Unlike standardized surveys, interviews provide deeper insights into social phenomena, particularly when prior knowledge or individual perspectives are limited.

The interview questionnaire was divided into three parts based on a priori codes. The first section collected demographic and background information. The second explored participants' perspectives and attitudes toward English as their dominant language, addressing the first research question. The third focused on identifying the factors that influenced their language preference. An aide-mémoire, or concise guide containing prompts and questions, was used to ensure the interviews remained focused while allowing for flexibility. For content validation, the interview guide was reviewed by five experts in research and language education. They were given seven days to provide feedback, which the researcher consolidated before finalizing the questionnaire.

The data collection began with a letter of request sent to each target participant, which explained the research's purpose, the participant's role, and the procedures to be followed. An informed consent form and the interview questions accompanied this letter. Participants were asked to choose a convenient time and place for the interview. Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the research, assured participants of confidentiality, and clarified that participation was voluntary and withdrawal was possible at any time. Participants were also asked to consent to audio recording, which ensured the accurate capture of data, including tone and pauses. Each interview lasted 30 to 60 minutes, although this was flexible depending on the depth of the responses. Consent forms were signed, and each participant received a copy of their signed form.

The interview began with basic demographic questions such as age, academic background, and ethnolinguistic identity. These helped build rapport and offered contextual understanding for later responses. After the introductory section, the interview followed the core questions based on the research problems. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up or probing questions to explore responses in greater depth.

Throughout the interview, the researcher paid close attention to verbal and non-verbal cues. The audio recording allowed for greater focus during the conversation and enabled detailed transcription later. After each session, the recordings were stored in a password-protected folder, accessible only to the researcher, in accordance with ethical standards for data confidentiality.

Next, thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. This method provided a structured yet adaptable framework for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The process involved familiarizing oneself with the data, manually generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and producing the final report. Here, the researcher used Microsoft Excel to organize responses based on interview questions. Participant answers were plotted using assigned codes, then grouped into similar categories through coding. These codes were later consolidated into broader themes that addressed the research questions. Once the themes were finalized, the researcher began writing the findings and corresponding discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The main themes that arose from Indigenous youths' narratives about their language choices, specifically their inclination for English as a dominant language, are depicted in Figure 2. Both advantages, such as access to education, professional growth, and international communication, and disadvantages, including emotional detachment, cultural alienation, and loss of heritage language, come with this decision.

Influence of Family Language Policy (FLP)

English as a Tool for Social Mobility

Emotional and Cultural Cost of English Dominance

Role of Generational Dynamics in Language Transmission

Code-Switching and Translanguaging as Survival Strategies

Generational Language Shift and Heritage Language Attrition

Tension Between Cultural Identity and Modern Aspirations

Figure 2 Themes on Indigenous Youth's Preference for English

A family's language policy has a significant influence on the language choices of young people. English has become increasingly important in family life, especially for work and communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Many participants shared that their families use English in formal situations and when interacting with individuals outside their immediate community. One participant, P6, recounted her mother's experience as a nurse: "My mom uses English to communicate better with service crews, especially when she needs to express herself clearly." This highlights how English often becomes the default in professional settings, particularly in healthcare, where clarity and trust are essential. In these contexts, fluency in English enables individuals to navigate formal interactions with greater confidence and ease.

Beyond professional domains, English is key in maintaining relationships with family members abroad. P7 reflected, "We normally are who our relatives go to for writing official or formal letters/ emails." For many families, English proficiency is a bridge that helps them stay connected across borders. P6 noted, "Whenever we meet with professionals, the language to be used is English since it's more comfortable." In such cases, English serves as a lingua franca, facilitating cross-cultural communication with familiarity and precision.

However, the dominance of English within the home can also create emotional and linguistic divides. P6 admitted, "I feel outcasted by my uncles and cousins for not speaking Ilocano, which has led to limited inclusion in family conversations." This sense of exclusion reveals the emotional cost of shifting away from Indigenous languages. When fluency is lost, individuals may struggle to fully participate in family life, leading to disconnection. This reflects the phenomenon of partial bilingualism, where one understands a heritage language but lacks the ability to engage in meaningful conversation in it. The result is not just a loss of vocabulary, but a weakening of ties to culture and kin.

For many participants, the pressure to prioritize English came from its perceived connection to education and future success. P8 acknowledged, "Maybe it's also my responsibility... since it's my identity to know or to use the language," but admitted she struggled to maintain fluency in Kankanaey. This internal conflict illustrates the difficulty of preserving cultural identity when English dominates the household. P5, whose mother was a teacher, explained, "My mom used to be a teacher," noting that their family strongly emphasized English for academic benefits. This supports previous findings that families often associate English with opportunity, choosing it for practical reasons that may eventually displace heritage languages (Mak et al., 2023; Pelila & Ayao-ao, 2024).

The role of grandparents also emerged as a significant yet complex factor in language retention. While older relatives are often viewed as guardians of Indigenous languages, some families still prioritize English. P6 shared that her grandfather practiced English with her to help with school, even though her use of Ilocano was declining. This dual role of encouragement and adaptation reflects how efforts to support educational success can unintentionally accelerate the erosion of Indigenous language use (Rose et al., 2023).

Despite these pressures, several families deliberately tried to retain their linguistic heritage. P7 explained, "We mix languages at home, sometimes Ilocano, sometimes Tagalog, and sometimes English, depending on who we're talking to." This code-switching strategy shows how families attempt to maintain multiple linguistic identities. Through translanguaging, they preserve cultural roots while adapting to a multilingual society. Still, participants noted that maintaining this balance takes consistent effort, especially in a world where schools, workplaces, and media often promote English as the norm (Tsinivits & Unsworth, 2021).

Some respondents even expressed aspirations to improve their families' English proficiency further. P9 said, "I aspire for my family to communicate better in English, especially for my younger siblings." While this goal reflects a desire to improve opportunities and communication, it also signals a generational shift that may lead to alienation from older relatives who are more comfortable using Indigenous languages.

Media and technology further influence language use at home. Most digital content and educational resources are presented in English, and children are exposed to them at an early age. As P7 remarked, "Most of our schoolwork is in English, so even at home, I prefer to use English when explaining things to my siblings." These external factors often privilege English while relegating Indigenous languages to more passive roles.

In this context, families navigate a complex linguistic landscape. English offers clear advantages in education, employment, and global communication, but its rise may also widen cultural gaps at home. The challenge lies not in rejecting English but in cultivating family and community spaces where both dominant and heritage languages are valued and allowed to coexist meaningfully. Achieving this balance allows families to support their children's growth in a modern world while sustaining Indigenous identities and traditions (Cox et al., 2025; Sevinç & Mirvahedi, 2022; Tacio & Pelila, 2025).

Parental influence plays a pivotal role in shaping language preferences. Many participants described being raised in households where English was deliberately chosen as the dominant language. P7 explained, "My parents are both fluent English speakers, and throughout my upbringing, they would talk to me in English." Similarly, P1 shared, "In school, most of the lessons were in English, and I felt that if I didn't get used to speaking it, I would fall behind." These accounts show how families align language use with educational goals, often treating English as a

gateway to achievement and success (Tacio & Pelila, 2025).

This pattern of language choice often spans generations. P6 shared, "My granddad is proficient in English and Ibaloi, and he communicates with me primarily in English." At the same time, P9 recalled, "My parents encouraged me to use English, but my grandparents preferred we speak in Kankanaey at family gatherings." Although fluent in heritage languages, these examples suggest that even older generations may prioritize English to support the futures of younger family members. However, this shift interrupts intergenerational transmission, reflecting wider language attrition patterns in Indigenous communities (Magadan et al., 2025).

Still, some families practice linguistic compartmentalization, using English in formal or external settings while preserving Indigenous languages for private interactions. P8 noted, "While my family can communicate in English, they speak more often in Ilocano, Tagalog, and Kankanaey." This approach enables families to respond to societal demands while preserving their cultural roots. P2 added, "English is preferred for family discussions, while Kankanaey is reserved for private conversations between my parents." These distinctions highlight evolving language policies that reflect both practical needs and emotional considerations.

However, prioritizing English can have unintended consequences. P1 shared, "My parents encouraged me to speak English more often, even at home." At the same time, P9 explained, "My sisters do not comprehend Kankanaey or Ilocano, so English is the most accessible language for family discussions." As English becomes the default, younger generations may lose touch with heritage languages, especially if they are no longer part of everyday conversation.

For some families, the choice to use English is closely tied to aspirations for economic and educational advancement. P7 said, "My parents preferred English as the language of instruction, believing it would provide better opportunities." P1 added, "My parents believed that speaking English would give me better opportunities, especially in school." These reflections demonstrate that language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a means to achieve social mobility (Pelila & Ayao-ao, 2024).

Participants also described how they navigate language use in diverse family contexts. P9 said, "I try to use Tagalog when speaking with relatives who don't understand English." Nevertheless, this adaptability cannot always offset the decline of Indigenous languages. Some expressed discomfort about their limited proficiency. P6 admitted, "I couldn't do it anymore," referring to speaking Ibaloi, and added, "I overheard my family saying my Ibaloi sounded like Tagalog." These remarks reveal the embarrassment and internalized pressure that can accompany language loss.

Generational differences in language attitudes were also apparent. P6 recalled, "My grandparents always used Ibaloi at family gatherings, even if they knew we were more comfortable with English." At the same time, P3 noted, "She speaks in Ibaloi to my dad if she doesn't want us to understand." In these situations, heritage languages become identity markers and tools for maintaining family boundaries, preserving cultural knowledge, and creating linguistic distance.

Participants often described the tension between tradition and modernity. P2 noted that while his parents valued English for academic achievement, his grandparents emphasized Kankanaey for cultural continuity. This situation shows the everyday struggle of many Indigenous families: how to help their children succeed in today's world while also keeping their native language and culture alive. Families must constantly decide which language to use, when, and why it matters in different situations.

CONCLUSIONS

The research investigated the lived experiences of Indigenous youth in La Trinidad, Benguet, who have adopted English as their dominant language. It also examined how this preference influences identity development, alters family language practices, and contributes to the attrition of heritage languages. By shifting the focus from immigrant or diaspora families to Indigenous communities in a multilingual society where English is increasingly viewed as a replacement for ancestral languages, as well as a valuable tool for academic and professional mobility, the research fills a significant gap in the literature.

The results showed that language choices are significantly shaped by family language policy (FLP), whether it be explicit or implicit. Due to its perceived value in education, the workplace, and international communication, English is often given priority in the family. However, this change frequently leads to cultural disconnection, emotional distance, and incomplete bilingualism, especially among younger generations who find it challenging to participate in Indigenous customs or speak fluently with elder family members. These relationships highlight the complex tension between pursuing social mobility and preserving cultural continuity.

In conclusion, the use of English speeds up the loss of Indigenous languages and identities even while it opens up more chances. It takes more than just individual effort to promote balanced bilingualism in Indigenous communities; institutional support and culturally sensitive family practices that value heritage languages, in addition to English, are also necessary. By encouraging positive attitudes toward Indigenous languages and collaborating with families to support language maintenance across generations, schools can play a crucial role. Furthermore, especially for young people juggling many cultural identities, language revitalization initiatives must target not only linguistic proficiency but also the emotional and aspirational aspects of language use.

Th research has several limitations. Firstly, the sample consisted of only nine participants from La Trinidad, which may not accurately represent the range of Indigenous experiences throughout the Philippines. Second, because individuals were recommended within interconnected social networks, selection bias may have been introduced through the use of snowball sampling. Third, the examination of language use in real-time circumstances was constrained by the lack of observational or interactional data, despite interviews providing valuable personal insights.

Thus, by incorporating a larger and more varied participant pool from various geographic and ethnolinguistic situations, future studies could overcome these constraints. It may be possible to monitor the changes in language identities and preferences over time with the aid of longitudinal studies. Furthermore, families and young people could be actively involved in co-creating heritage language preservation initiatives through participatory action research. The ways that gender, digital media, and educational policy affect language choices in Indigenous homes could also be the subject of future research.

Author Contributions: Conceived and designed the analysis, L. E. D. T., and J. R. O. P.; Collected the data, L. E. D. T.; Contributed data or analysis tools, L. E. D. T., and J. R. O. P.; Performed the analysis, L. E. D. T., and J. R. O. P.; Wrote the paper, L. E. D. T., and J. R. O. P.; Other contribution (Initiated the revisions based on the reviewers' feedback), L. E. D. T., and J. R. O. P.

Data Availability Statement: Data available on request from the authors. The data that support the findings of the research are available from the corresponding author, **J. R. O. P.**, upon reasonable request. Explain the reason why the readers must request the data.

REFERENCES

Agbo, S. A., Pak, N., Akbarov, A., Madiyeva, G., & Saurykov, Y. (2022). Global Competitiveness Myths and Ideals: English Language Policy in Universities in Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 34*(3), 515-542. https://doi.org/10.1177/10567879221137572

Bonifacio, R. M., Zaman, D. J. M. R., Prantilla-Arambala, M. D., & Zarate, M. S. (2021). Effects of indigenous language conversation skills enhancement program among Bukidnon and Talaandig youths in the Philippines. *Ampersand, 8,* 100076. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2021.100076

Cox, R. B., Arredondo-Lopez, A., León-Cartagena, M., Dorda, C., & deSouza, D. K. (2025). Families navigating two languages in a country built for one: Shared language erosion among Hispanic parents and youth. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 42*(8), 1849-1879. https://doi.

org/10.1177/02654075251332034

Dünkel, N., Knigge, M., & Brandt, H. (2024). Language exposure within peer and family contexts and bilingual reading profiles of German–Russian and German–Turkish adolescents in Germany. *International Journal of Bilingualism, 29*(1), 128-146. https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069231221103

Gruffydd, I., Tamburelli, M., Breit, F., & Bagheri, H. (2024). Investigating the relationship between language exposure and explicit and implicit language attitudes towards Welsh and English. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 44*(1), 79-106. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X241294031

Hassan, A. S. (2023). Family language policy among Libyan families in the UK: Maintaining heritage language in the home. *The Open Review Journal (online), 8*, 171-187. https://doi.org/10.47967/TOR2022COL/VOL8.18

Hollebeke, I., Agirdag, O., & Struys, E. (2022). Shifting towards the institutional language? Predictors of parental institutional language exposure efforts. *European Journal of Language Policy, 14*(2), 227-248. https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2022.13

Little, S. (2022). 'Half of who you are': Parent and child reflections on the emotional experiences of reversing familial language shift. *International Journal of Bilingualism, 27*(2), 217-231. https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069221125705

Magadan, C., Eman, N., & Dayanan, D. (2025). Translanguaging in language learning: IP students' insights and experiences. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Higher Education, 1*, Article 82. https://doi.org/10.70847/590779

Mak, E., Vanni, N. N., Yang, X., Lara, M., Zhou, Q., & Uchikoshi, Y. (2023). Parental perceptions of bilingualism and home language vocabulary: Young bilingual children from low-income immigrant Mexican American and Chinese American families. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, Article 1059298. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1059298

Pelila, J. R. O., Ayao-ao, S. L. (2024). How significant is the role of family socioeconomic status in archaism among Kankanaey speakers?. *English Language and Literature, 13*(1), 231-243. http://dx.doi.org/10.24036/ell.v13i1.127041

Pourbahram, R., & Gholami, J. (2023). Family language policy through the lenses of parents: The case of Azerbaijani Turkish in Iran. *European Journal of Language Policy, 15*(1), 83-104. https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2023.5

Rose, K., Armon-Lotem, S., & Altman, C. (2023). Family language policy and vocabulary of bilingual children across different ages. *Ampersand, 11*, 100154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2023.100154

Sevinç, Y., & Mirvahedi, S. H. (2022). Emotions and multilingualism in family language policy: Introduction to the special issue. *International Journal of Bilingualism, 27*(2), 145-158. https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069221131762

Sihombing, L. H., & Rani, S. D. (2023). The use of code-switching and code-mixing in English learning for

children: A case study of an Indonesian-American couple. *Lingua Cultura, 16*(2), 249-256. https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v16i2.8403

Tacio, L. E. D., & Pelila, J. R. O. (2025). How do schools and community influence Indigenous youth's perceptions of English?. *ETDC: Indonesian Journal of Research and Educational Review, 4*(2), 263-274. https://etdci.org/journal/ijrer/article/view/2851

Tsinivits, D., & Unsworth, S. (2021). The impact of older siblings on the language environment and language development of bilingual toddlers. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 42*(2), 325-344. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716420000570

Verhagen, J., Kuiken, F., & Andringa, S. (2022). Family language patterns in bilingual families and relationships with children's language outcomes. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 43*(5), 1109-1139. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716422000297

Wiese, H., Alexiadou, A., Allen, S., Bunk, O., Gagarina, N., Iefremenko, K., Martynova, M., Pashkova, T., Rizou, V., Schroeder, C., Shadrova, A., Szucsich, L., Tracy, R., Tsehaye, W., Zerbian, S., & Zuban, Y. (2022). Heritage speakers as part of the native language continuum. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, Article 717973. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.717973

Woltran, F. (2025). What is the problem represented to be? Applying poststructural policy analysis to examine Austrian German language support legislation. *Policy Futures in Education, 23*(5), 990-1006. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103251323090