

Language Maintenance and Shift: Narratives of Indonesian-Sangir Communities in Southern Mindanao

Annabel Casumpa

University of the Immaculate Conception

Abstract:

This qualitative multiple-case study examines the phenomena of language maintenance and shift among five Indonesian-Sangir migrant communities through in-depth interviews. Participants were selected using maximum variation sampling, and data triangulation was achieved through corroboration with other community members familiar with the participants. Thematic analysis revealed five key themes in maintaining Bahasa Sangir or shifting to dominant languages: language transmission across generations, adaptation to a multilingual environment, cultural identity and pride, the role of religious and community gatherings, and language shift dynamics.

The analysis identified both similarities and differences across the cases. Three of the five cases demonstrated similarities in four themes: language transmission, multilingual adaptation, cultural identity, and language shift dynamics, although these were not consistently the same set of cases. For the theme of religious and community gatherings, only two cases showed similarities.

Participants' ways for addressing challenges were categorized into three themes: cultural preservation through traditions, intergenerational language transmission, and community cohesion and identity. Again, three of the five cases were similar in their approaches, but the specific cases varied across themes.

The study's findings underscore the critical role of intergenerational transmission, with elders and parents as key agents in sustaining Bahasa Sangir. Community and religious gatherings are vital for fostering linguistic pride and cultural identity. Challenges such as multilingual pressures and language stigma necessitate practical strategies, including bilingual education, public awareness campaigns, and strengthened networks among Sangir speakers. Tailored interventions are particularly needed to address language loss in mixed-marriage families. These insights highlight the importance of holistic efforts at the family, community, and policy levels to preserve minority languages and cultural identities.

Keywords:

Language maintenance, language shift, Indonesian-Sangir communities, Indonesian-Sangir migrants.