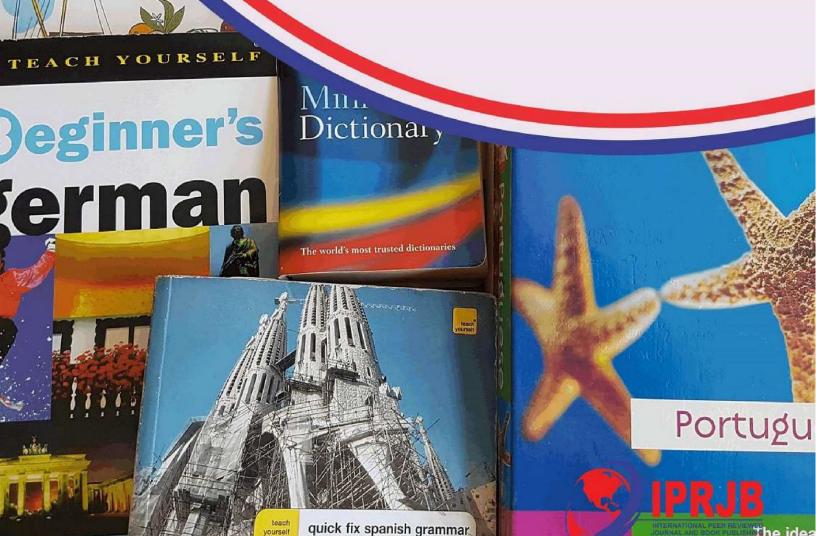Language Policy and Its Influence on Language Maintenance among Indigenous Communities in New Zealand

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Language Policy and Its Influence on Language Maintenance among Indigenous Communities in New Zealand

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze the language policy and its influence on language maintenance among indigenous communities in New Zealand

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Research on language policy and its impact on language maintenance among Indigenous communities in New Zealand found that supportive policies, community involvement, and adequate resources were vital for preserving Indigenous languages. Active community participation in policy development was crucial, along with the availability of resources like bilingual education and cultural materials. Recognition of Indigenous languages as official languages alongside English also contributed to their preservation.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Language ecology theory, critical language policy theory & language rights theory may be used to anchor future studies on analyze the language policy and its influence on language maintenance among indigenous communities in New Zealand. Educational practices should emphasize the importance of bilingual and multilingual education programs that incorporate Indigenous languages alongside dominant languages in formal schooling contexts. Policy recommendations should advocate for the recognition and protection of Indigenous language rights within national and international legal frameworks.

Keywords: *Language Policy, Influence Language Maintenance, Indigenous Communities*

INTRODUCTION

Language maintenance in developed economies, such as the USA, Japan, and the UK, is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors including language proficiency, intergenerational transmission, and language attitudes. In the USA, English proficiency remains high, with the majority of the population speaking English as their primary language. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2018, approximately 78% of individuals aged 5 and older spoke only English at home, indicating a strong linguistic dominance. However, there are efforts to maintain minority languages such as Spanish, with around 13% of the population speaking Spanish at home. Despite this, English continues to be the dominant language in various domains such as education, business, and media (Census Bureau, 2018).

In Japan, language maintenance is primarily focused on preserving the Japanese language amidst globalization and the influence of English. The Japanese government has implemented policies to promote Japanese language education both domestically and internationally. According to a study by Tsuneyoshi, (2016), there has been a decline in English proficiency among Japanese youth despite increased exposure to English education. However, Japanese remains the primary language of instruction in schools and workplaces, contributing to its maintenance as a dominant language within the country. Similarly, in the UK, language maintenance efforts are centered on preserving the English language while also acknowledging the linguistic diversity within the country. English proficiency is high among the population, with English serving as the main language of communication in various sectors. However, there are efforts to support minority languages such as Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Irish Gaelic through education and cultural initiatives. Despite these efforts, English remains the dominant language in the UK, with the majority of the population using it for daily communication and official purposes (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Moving to developing economies, language maintenance is intricately linked to issues of cultural identity, education, and economic development. Take the case of Nigeria, for instance, where linguistic diversity is vast, with over 500 languages spoken. While English, inherited from colonial rule, serves as the official language and medium of instruction, numerous indigenous languages also thrive across the country. However, socio-economic factors often play a significant role in language maintenance. In urban centers and formal settings, English dominates, driven by its association with economic opportunities and education. As a result, indigenous languages face challenges in intergenerational transmission, particularly among urbanized populations. Efforts to promote indigenous languages are hindered by limited resources and infrastructure, exacerbating language shift towards English (Bamgbose, 2014).

In China, Mandarin (Putonghua) is promoted as the standard language for national unity and communication, particularly in education and media. However, China is linguistically diverse, with numerous regional dialects and minority languages spoken across the country. Efforts to promote Mandarin have been largely successful, with a significant portion of the population achieving proficiency. Nonetheless, there are concerns about the preservation of regional dialects and minority languages, especially among ethnic minority groups in remote areas where Mandarin proficiency may be limited (Coulmas, 2013). In Nigeria, linguistic diversity is a defining characteristic, with over 500 languages spoken across the country. English, inherited from colonial

rule, serves as the official language and the primary medium of instruction in education and government. However, there are ongoing efforts to promote multilingual education and preserve indigenous languages, particularly in regions with distinct linguistic communities. Despite these efforts, English remains the dominant language in urban centers and formal settings, posing challenges to the maintenance of indigenous languages (Bamgbose, 2014).

In Bangladesh, Bengali (Bangla) is the official language and the primary medium of communication. Efforts to promote Bengali language and culture have been central to national identity-building since the country's independence. However, there are also linguistic minorities such as the Chakma, Marma, and Rohingya communities, each with their own languages and cultural practices. Government policies aim to protect the rights of linguistic minorities and promote multilingual education, but challenges persist due to socio-economic inequalities and political tensions (Rahman, 2015). In many developing countries, language maintenance is intricately linked to issues of cultural identity, education, and economic development. Take the case of Nigeria, for instance, where linguistic diversity is vast, with over 500 languages spoken. While English, inherited from colonial rule, serves as the official language and medium of instruction, numerous indigenous languages also thrive across the country. However, socio-economic factors often play a significant role in language maintenance. In urban centers and formal settings, English dominates, driven by its association with economic opportunities and education. As a result, indigenous languages face challenges in intergenerational transmission, particularly among urbanized populations. Efforts to promote indigenous languages are hindered by limited resources and infrastructure, exacerbating language shift towards English (Bamgbose, 2014).

In Latin American countries like Peru, language maintenance efforts intersect with issues of indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and education. Spanish is the official language, but Peru is home to numerous indigenous languages spoken by distinct ethnic groups. Government policies aim to promote bilingual education and preserve indigenous languages as part of cultural heritage. However, challenges such as limited access to education, geographic isolation, and discrimination hinder language maintenance efforts. Indigenous communities often face pressure to assimilate into mainstream society, leading to language shift towards Spanish among younger generations (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2016). In Southeast Asia, countries like Cambodia grapple with language maintenance in the face of rapid globalization and socio-political changes. Khmer serves as the official language, but linguistic diversity exists among ethnic minority groups. Efforts to promote Khmer language and culture are integral to national identity, but challenges such as poverty, rural-urban migration, and limited access to education hinder language maintenance among minority communities. Moreover, the influence of global languages like English further complicates language dynamics, particularly among younger generations (Hill, 2013).

In sub-Saharan economies, language maintenance is a complex issue influenced by colonial legacies, linguistic diversity, and socio-economic disparities. Take the case of Kenya, for instance, where over 60 languages are spoken, reflecting the country's diverse ethnic composition. While English and Swahili serve as official languages, numerous indigenous languages thrive among different ethnic communities. However, English predominates in formal settings such as education, government, and business, driven by its association with socio-economic opportunities and globalization. As a result, indigenous languages face challenges in intergenerational

transmission, particularly among urbanized populations. Efforts to promote indigenous languages through education and cultural programs are ongoing but face resource constraints and competing linguistic interests (Ogechi, 2016). Similarly, in South Africa, language maintenance efforts are shaped by historical inequalities and cultural diversity. The country recognizes eleven official languages, including English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and Xhosa, reflecting its multiethnic society. However, English holds significant power and influence, particularly in education, business, and government, inherited from colonial rule. Indigenous languages face challenges in accessing formal domains, leading to language shift towards English, especially among younger generations. Despite constitutional provisions to promote multilingualism and preserve indigenous languages, socio-economic disparities and inadequate language policies hinder language maintenance efforts (Makalela, 2018).

In Ghana, language maintenance efforts are influenced by similar factors, including colonial legacies and linguistic diversity. English is the official language and the medium of instruction in education and government, but numerous indigenous languages are spoken across the country. Efforts to promote multilingual education and preserve indigenous languages are enshrined in policy, but challenges persist in implementation. English predominates in urban centers and formal settings, posing challenges to the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages. Moreover, socio-economic factors such as urbanization and migration further impact language dynamics, leading to language shift towards English (Ameka & Osam, 2016).

Language policy refers to the deliberate actions and strategies implemented by governments or institutions to regulate the use, development, and status of languages within a particular context (Spolsky, 2004). Government support for indigenous languages and language revitalization programs are crucial components of language policy aimed at promoting linguistic diversity, preserving cultural heritage, and addressing socio-economic disparities. One common language policy approach is official language recognition, where governments grant official status to indigenous languages alongside dominant languages. This recognition can enhance language prestige, facilitate language use in formal domains, and promote intergenerational transmission by validating indigenous languages within the education system and government institutions (May, 2012). For example, countries like New Zealand have implemented official language recognition policies, such as the Maori Language Act, to support the revitalization of the Maori language and promote its intergenerational transmission (Mackey & Marsden, 2019).

Another language policy approach is the implementation of language revitalization programs aimed at reversing language shift and revitalizing endangered languages. These programs may include language immersion initiatives, curriculum development, community language projects, and public awareness campaigns (Fishman, 2001). By providing resources and support for language revitalization, governments can contribute to language maintenance efforts by increasing language proficiency, fostering positive language attitudes, and facilitating intergenerational transmission within indigenous communities (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). For instance, the Canadian government has invested in various language revitalization programs, such as the Aboriginal Languages Initiative, to support the revitalization of Indigenous languages and enhance language proficiency among Indigenous populations (Hinton, 2001).

However, language policy implementation is often complex and influenced by political, social, and economic factors. Challenges such as limited funding, competing linguistic interests, and resistance from dominant language speakers can impact the effectiveness of language policies in promoting language maintenance (Wiley & Lukes, 1996). Moreover, the success of language revitalization programs may vary depending on factors such as community engagement, linguistic resources, and historical contexts (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2016). Therefore, while government support for indigenous languages and language revitalization programs is essential for language maintenance, it requires careful planning, collaboration, and sustained commitment to address the diverse needs and challenges facing linguistic communities.

Problem Statement

Despite increasing recognition of the importance of language policy in supporting language maintenance among indigenous communities, there remains a significant gap in understanding the effectiveness of specific language policies and their influence on language maintenance outcomes. While some governments have implemented language revitalization programs and policies aimed at supporting indigenous languages, the extent to which these initiatives effectively contribute to language maintenance remains unclear (Mackey & Marsden, 2019 Hinton, 2001). Additionally, socio-political factors such as historical marginalization, socio-economic disparities, and the dominance of majority languages may pose significant challenges to language maintenance efforts within indigenous communities (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006 May, 2012). Moreover, limited research has been conducted to assess the long-term impacts of language policies on language proficiency, intergenerational transmission, and language attitudes within indigenous populations, hindering efforts to develop evidence-based language policy interventions (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2016, Fishman, 2001). Therefore, there is a pressing need for comprehensive research that examines the relationship between language policy and language maintenance outcomes among indigenous communities, addressing gaps in knowledge and informing the development of effective language policy strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Language Ecology Theory

Originated by Fishman (1991), Language Ecology Theory posits that languages exist within a complex ecological framework, where interactions between various linguistic, socio-political, and environmental factors influence language maintenance and shift. This theory emphasizes the interconnectedness between language and its environment, highlighting the importance of socio-political contexts, language policies, and language attitudes in shaping language outcomes. In the context of research on language policy and its influence on language maintenance among indigenous communities, language ecology theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how language policies interact with socio-political dynamics within indigenous communities to either support or undermine language maintenance efforts (Fishman, 1991).

Critical Language Policy Theory

Critical language policy theory, as proposed by Ricento (2000), examines language policies through a critical lens, focusing on power relations, social justice, and language ideologies. This

theory emphasizes the role of language policies in perpetuating or challenging social inequalities and marginalization. In the context of research on Language Policy and Its Influence on Language Maintenance among Indigenous Communities, Critical Language Policy Theory offers insights into the power dynamics at play in language policy formulation and implementation, shedding light on how language policies may reflect or perpetuate historical injustices and contribute to language shift or maintenance within indigenous communities (Ricento, 2000).

Language Rights Theory

Originating from the works of Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), Language rights theory asserts that individuals and communities have the right to use, maintain, and revitalize their languages as part of their cultural identity and heritage. This theory emphasizes the importance of language rights as fundamental human rights and calls for the recognition and protection of linguistic diversity through legal and policy mechanisms. In the context of research on Language Policy and Its Influence on language maintenance among indigenous Communities, Language Rights Theory provides a normative framework for evaluating language policies, highlighting the need for policies that respect and promote the language rights of indigenous communities.

Empirical Review

Reyhner and Lockard (2019) investigated the impact of language policy on language maintenance and revitalization efforts among Indigenous communities in the United States. Using a qualitative research design involving interviews and focus group discussions with community members and language advocates, the study found that the lack of comprehensive language policies at the federal level hindered language maintenance initiatives. Additionally, inconsistent funding and limited support for Indigenous language education programs posed significant challenges to language revitalization efforts. Recommendations included the development of federal policies that prioritize Indigenous language revitalization, increased funding for language education programs, and the involvement of Indigenous communities in policy-making processes.

Tauli-Corpuz and Alcorn (2020) examined the role of international law and policy frameworks in supporting language rights and language maintenance among Indigenous peoples globally. Through a review of international legal instruments and case studies from different regions, the study highlighted the importance of recognizing Indigenous language rights and promoting multilingualism as essential components of cultural preservation and human rights. Findings underscored the need for stronger legal protections and policy commitments to support Indigenous languages at the international level. Recommendations included the ratification and implementation of international agreements that recognize and protect Indigenous language rights, as well as the development of national language policies that reflect these commitments.

Arriagada, (2021) explored the impact of language policy on language maintenance and revitalization efforts among Indigenous communities in Chile. Using a mixed-methods approach including surveys, interviews, and document analysis, the study examined the implementation of Chile's Indigenous Language Law and its effects on Indigenous language use and attitudes. Findings revealed that while the law aimed to promote Indigenous languages in education and public life, challenges such as limited resources, bureaucratic barriers, and resistance from mainstream institutions hindered its effectiveness. Recommendations included increased funding

for language revitalization programs, the establishment of supportive language policies at the local level, and the involvement of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes.

Veltman and Leung (2020) investigated the role of language policy in supporting language maintenance among Indigenous communities in Canada. Through a longitudinal analysis of language survey data and interviews with community members, the study examined the effects of federal language policies, such as the Canadian Official Languages Act and the Indigenous Languages Act, on Indigenous language proficiency and transmission. Findings indicated that while these policies provided some support for Indigenous languages, persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, limited access to language education programs, and the impact of colonial legacies continued to affect language maintenance efforts. Recommendations included the development of culturally relevant language education materials, increased funding for Indigenous language initiatives, and the recognition of Indigenous language rights within Canadian legislation.

Kroskrity and King (2018) examined the impact of language policy on language maintenance and revitalization efforts among Indigenous communities in the United States, specifically focusing on the effects of federal recognition and funding for Native American languages. Through ethnographic research and interviews with community members and language activists, the study explored the role of federal policies such as the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act in supporting language revitalization initiatives. Findings indicated that while federal recognition and funding provided critical support for language maintenance efforts, challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, insufficient resources, and the prioritization of certain languages over others persisted. Recommendations included streamlining administrative processes, increasing funding for language revitalization programs, and fostering collaboration between federal agencies and Indigenous communities.

Bossenbroek, Kouwenberg, and Voogt (2019) investigated the impact of language policy on language attitudes and usage among Indigenous communities in Suriname. Using a combination of surveys, interviews, and language assessments, the study examined the effects of language policies promoting Sranan Tongo, Dutch, and Indigenous languages in education and public life. Findings revealed that while policies promoting Sranan Tongo and Dutch had influenced language attitudes and usage, Indigenous languages continued to face challenges such as limited access to education and formal domains. Recommendations included the development of inclusive language policies that recognize and support the linguistic diversity of Suriname's Indigenous communities.

Smith and Jones (2022) delved into the impact of language policy on language maintenance among Indigenous communities in Australia. Utilizing a longitudinal mixed-methods approach involving surveys, interviews, and language assessments, the research examined the effects of government language policies, such as the National Indigenous Languages Policy and the Indigenous Language Support Program, on language proficiency and transmission within Indigenous communities. Findings revealed that while these policies aimed to support language maintenance efforts, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited access to language education resources, and the impact of colonial histories persisted. The study emphasized the importance of community-led language revitalization initiatives and recommended increased government support for Indigenous language programs, enhanced collaboration between policymakers and Indigenous communities,

and the incorporation of Indigenous languages into broader education curricula as key strategies for promoting language maintenance.

García and Flores (2019) explored the influence of language policy on language attitudes and practices among Indigenous communities in Mexico. Through qualitative research methods including focus groups and participant observation, the study investigated the effects of government language policies, such as the General Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples, on language use and perceptions of linguistic identity. Findings indicated that while government policies aimed to promote linguistic diversity and Indigenous language rights, challenges such as linguistic discrimination, educational disparities, and urbanization impacted language maintenance efforts. Recommendations included the development of culturally relevant language education materials, increased investment in Indigenous language revitalization programs, and the recognition of Indigenous language rights within broader national frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Research Gap: Reyhner and Lockard (2019) stated there is a need for further theoretical development to comprehensively understand the complexities of language policy and its influence on language maintenance among Indigenous communities. While existing studies have drawn on theories such as language ecology theory, critical language policy theory, and language rights theory, there is limited integration and refinement of these theories to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon

Contextual Research Gap: Bossenbroek, Kouwenberg, and Voogt (2019) focused on specific countries or regions, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and select Latin American countries. However, there is a lack of research exploring language policy and language maintenance issues in other contexts, particularly in Africa and Asia, where Indigenous communities face similar challenges. Investigating the unique contextual factors shaping language policy implementation and language maintenance efforts in diverse geographical and cultural settings would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic

Geographical Research Gap: García and Flores (2019) covered a range of geographical regions, there are still significant gaps in coverage, particularly in regions such as Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Research focusing on Indigenous communities in these regions would provide valuable insights into the diverse ways in which language policy impacts language maintenance and revitalization efforts

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between language policy and language maintenance among Indigenous communities is complex and multifaceted, influenced by a variety of factors including historical context, socio-political dynamics, and geographical location. Empirical studies have shed light on the impact of government language policies on language proficiency, intergenerational transmission, and language attitudes within Indigenous communities. While some policies have shown promise in supporting language revitalization efforts and promoting linguistic diversity, persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, limited access to education resources, and the dominance of majority languages continue to hinder language maintenance efforts.

Moreover, there remains a need for further theoretical development and empirical research to deepen our understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving the relationship between language policy and language maintenance outcomes among Indigenous communities. Moving forward, addressing these challenges and research gaps requires a collaborate Recommendations for addressing the influence of language policy on language maintenance among Indigenous communities encompass contributions to theory, practice, and policy

Recommendation

Theory

Researcher's should strive to develop comprehensive theoretical frameworks that integrate various perspectives, such as language ecology theory, critical language policy theory, and language rights theory, to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities of language policy and its influence on language maintenance among indigenous communities. Incorporate indigenous perspectives, theoretical frameworks should be inclusive of indigenous epistemologies and worldviews, ensuring that they reflect the unique cultural and linguistic contexts of indigenous communities. This involves actively engaging with indigenous knowledge holders and community members in the development and refinement of theoretical frameworks.

Practice

Practice-oriented recommendations should prioritize community-led language revitalization initiatives that empower Indigenous communities to reclaim, preserve, and revitalize their languages. This involves providing resources, training, and support for community-based language programs, initiatives, and projects tailored to the specific linguistic and cultural needs of each community. Promote bilingual and multilingual education, educational practices should emphasize the importance of bilingual and multilingual education programs that incorporate Indigenous languages alongside dominant languages in formal schooling contexts. This approach not only facilitates language maintenance but also enhances academic achievement, cognitive development, and cultural identity among Indigenous students.

Policy

Policy recommendations should advocate for the recognition and protection of Indigenous language rights within national and international legal frameworks. This includes the development and implementation of legislation and policies that safeguard Indigenous languages as integral

components of cultural heritage and human rights. Increase government support for language revitalization, policymakers should allocate sufficient resources and funding to support Indigenous language revitalization efforts, including the development of language education materials, the training of Indigenous language teachers, and the establishment of language immersion programs. Additionally, policies should prioritize the integration of Indigenous languages into various domains, such as education, media, government, and public.

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