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## Tagakaulo in Trade: A Phenomenological Exploration on the Journey of Language Preservation

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**ABSTRACT:** Trade plays a significant role in human history, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas across cultures, especially language, which is vital for communication, negotiation, and understanding. This paper examined the Tagakaulo language and its role in trade from a phenomenological perspective. The study used a qualitative-phenomenological research design and an in-depth interview (IDI), and it was analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological data analysis. A thematic analysis was used to explore the Tagakaulo language and its role in trade from a phenomenological perspective. The themes that emerged from challenges experienced during the trade of products were Marginalization, Cultural Differences, Lack of Representation, Cultural Preservation, and Language. Cultural Preservation (Language Preservation), Cultural Promotion, and Assimilation emerged from coping mechanisms in navigating trade issues and concerns. Aspects of native language to emphasize mitigating challenges emerged themes of Vocabulary for Trade, Tagakaulo Language Awareness and Utilization, and Trade Etiquette. Future research could further study long-term trade effects on the Tagakaulo dialect and cultures, focusing on language preservation, revitalization through cultural promotion, and the impact of tourism on language documentation, effective trade negotiation strategies on language preferences, cross-cultural communication in trade, and representation of Indigenous voices in trade.

**KEYWORDS:** trade, Tagakaulo language, culture, marginalization, cultural differences, cultural heritage and deterioration.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tagakaulo, a name given to an estimated 6,000 hill tribe members living in the transitional region between the interior uplands (Bilaan territory) and the western Davao Gulf coast, which Kulaman and Moro groups primarily inhabit, means "those who dwell at the head of the river," (Cole, 2023). Although native Tagakaulo still lives in the interior on the higher tributaries of the Malita, Lais, and Talaguton rivers, they can currently be found in the coastal cities of Malita and Lais working as plantation labourers. Biana et al. (2016) categorized Tagakaulo as one of the most Mindanaoan languages in the Southern and Eastern Mindanao language groups. Tagakaulo's native language is slowly decreasing due to the marginalization of the language as Tagakaulo natives migrate into the coastal cities of Malita and assimilate the majority language, Bisaya, as a means of communicating in the community. According to the Friendly Border Staff (2012), the Philippines faces language extinction unless immediate preservation efforts are undertaken, with languages like Agta Villa-Viciosa and Agta Dicamay already lost.

Trade plays a significant role in human history, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas across cultures. The social and economic dynamism of the time was primarily determined by trade (Murray, 2022). In the trade study, language is vital for communication, negotiation, and understanding. Language use is integral as it plays a crucial role in identifying identity and expressing ideas, thoughts, and opinions (Budiyono et al., 2021). Tagakaulo language plays a significant role in preserving their cultural heritage in trading.

Cultural diversity is rapidly disappearing, with 90% of languages predicted to be extinct or moribund by the century's end because of population dynamics and behavioural deviations (Zhang & Mace, 2021). A "degraded division" of Tagakaulo, known as Laoc, was found in the Haguimitan Mountains of the San Agustin Peninsula, on the east side of the Gulf (Cole, 1913, as cited by Paluga et al., 2013). However, a survey of the Haguimitan region in 1991 discovered the area populated by the Mandaya with little to no signs of once known as Tagakaulo. Globalization's rapid interconnectedness and dependence endanger linguistic diversity, dissolving cultural identity and resulting in the loss of knowledge, experiences, and traditions, with linguists concerned that more minor languages are vanishing due to state and market standardization (Khan et al., 2015).

Language and literature can boost vitality and prevent language extinction through language study, recording in various contexts, and supporting language use within the family (Siregar, 2022). Total language immersion is crucial for language mastery. However, it faces challenges due to cost and lack of funding, emphasizing support for proficient elderly speakers and community-based strategies like trading to preserve languages (Chiblow & Meighan, 2021). Disregarding the maintenance, protection, and

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respect of local languages contributes to their extinction, emphasizing the need to prioritize the vitality and survival of regional tongues for language preservation (Siregar, 2022).

Retaining the languages, customs, and territories of Indigenous Peoples is the most effective way to stop language extinction (Estrada et al., 2022). The UN General Assembly declared 2022-2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, focusing on indigenous language preservation, revitalization, and promotion to uphold indigenous peoples' rights and integrate linguistic diversity into sustainable development initiatives (UNESCO, 2022). Pine and Turin (2017) say that an endangered languages specialist at the Institute of Linguistics in the United States had spent much time learning many of the Philippines' little-known languages. However, a protracted fight begins to save the Philippines Indigenous languages (Metila et al., 2016).

Language preservation is an effort to keep the language alive by continually using that language to face competition among other languages in society (Fishman, 1991). Language societies must actively work to preserve languages to prevent them from becoming endangered, as the existence of a language relies on the efforts of its speakers (Rogers, 2020). Language maintenance is also a part of language planning, similar to the statement of Baldauf (2005), "Language preservation is one of the goals in language planning". It means that language preservation aims to balance minority and majority languages in communication, ensuring cultural diversity and protecting linguistic heritage for future generations.

On the other hand, language preservation refers to a situation where a speech community favours language shift and holds on to its language (Coulmas, 2013, as cited by Carrie, 2017). When the speech communities prefer to use the majority language, they lose proficiency in their heritage language. Therefore, heritage or indigenous languages are endangered in that situation. Furthermore, Sunwell (2019) defined language preservation as continuing to speak a language in the face of competition from more dominant or numerically more robust languages in the region and society. Thus, in the process of maintaining their native language or heritage language, parents should pay attention to their children's proficiency in heritage language.

Preserving and promoting the Tagakaulo language is essential for maintaining the cultural richness, social cohesion, and sustainable development of the Tagakaulo community. The growth of national cultures is obstructed by globalization, but retaining national identity necessitates sustaining the manifestation of distinctive cultural traits and spiritual heritage within national customs (Ergashev & Farxodjonova, 2020). The Tagakaulo people can share their customs, traditions, and values with traders from different communities through trade interactions. The trade language acts as a medium for cultural exchange, allowing the Tagakaulo to maintain and transmit their unique cultural identity to future generations. By using their native language during trade, the Tagakaulo community ensures preserving their cultural practices and knowledge (Jones, 2020). The phenomenological study on the language of trade among the Tagakaulo people aims to address the issues and concerns surrounding the potential loss of their language in the trade context. Through an exploration of the challenges faced and an examination of the unique characteristics of the language, this study seeks to contribute to efforts to preserve and promote the Tagakaulo language in the field of trade.

The result of this investigation shall have significance to the Tagakaulo community; the result may give adequate information on the Tagakaulo people about the language of trade and its exploration. The study shall also benefit the academic sector by discussing the importance of preserving heritage language, especially the Tagakaulo dialect, one of the most prevalent dialects in Mindanao among teachers and learners. The study of language preservation globally helps retain identity such as name, clan, origin, culture, and wisdom for present and future generations. The study is also significant to social function, for it will teach them how to use and preserve the language. It will also be helpful to future researchers whose study findings will be used for further studies.

## 2. Research Objectives

This paper explores the Tagakaulo language and its role in trade from a phenomenological perspective. By examining the nature of the language, its usage in trade contexts, and its impact on cultural exchange, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the role language plays in facilitating trade relationships. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. The traditional challenges experienced during the trade of products.
2. The coping mechanisms for navigating the issues and concerns.
3. The aspect of the native language needs to be emphasized to eliminate the challenge.

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 Participants

Ten (10) participants from Pangian, Malita, Davao Occidental participated in the research study. They had first-hand knowledge of the Tagakaulo belief systems, their culture preservation, and even those individuals who have lived experiences in the language of trade. According to InterQ Research LLC (2024), based on academic research, inquiry processes on qualitative research with as few as ten people can still produce comprehensive, valuable, and usable data. Additionally, ten qualitative sample sizes within a homogeneous community are sufficient (Sandelowski, 1995). The researchers required that samples be representative of a broader population and be chosen randomly to apply findings outside of the study sample (Staller, 2021). Quantitative research necessitates standardized protocols

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and random participant selection to mitigate bias, maximize reliability, and allow generalization across various demographics (Sargeant, 2012). Implementing random sampling is the best strategy to reduce bias (Houghton et al., 2020).

### 3.2 Instruments

The study's primary research tool was a specialists approved interview guide questions. An in-depth interview was conducted, in which the researcher prepared a specific set of preset questions. The materials used in this study were video and audio recorders for the whole interview towards the Tagakaulo in trade: a phenomenological exploration on the journey of language preservation in Pangian, Malita, Davao Occidental.

### 3.3 Design and Procedure

This study used a qualitative method. Qualitative research gathers non-numeric data to explore social phenomena, focusing on groups or places and understanding people's views and experiences. (Crossman, 2020). The researchers used in-depth interviews, one of several qualitative research methods, to collect information about participants' subjective experiences (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). The purpose is to get detailed information that sheds light on an individual's perspective and the perceived meaning of a particular topic, issue, or process concerning the language of trade of Tagakaulo of Pangian, Malita, Davao Occidental.

Descriptive phenomenology was employed in this study, which was concerned with the revealing essence of the essential structure of any phenomenon under investigation – those features that make it what it is rather than something else (Morrow et al., 2015). The fundamental component of all human experience is consciousness, and the object of a study should be the occurrence as experienced by the individual's consciousness (Neubauer et al., 2019). As cited by Shorey & Ng (2022), Husserl posits that people can access and ponder their consciousness to uncover their life, where universal essences represent features of shared lived experiences among people who have encountered similar situations. Therefore, descriptive phenomenology seeks to capture the lived experience's universal essence, which embodies the actual character of the phenomena.

Researchers immersed themselves in the community and participated in everyday activities, observations, and interviews to understand the native culture, behavior patterns, language, beliefs, and obstacles in life. Before conducting the study, the researchers validated the research questionnaire and interview guidelines with the help of the Research Publication of UM Digos College. Researchers made sure that all documents were implemented. These included the letter signed by the RPC, Dean of College, Program Head, Research Adviser, and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. The possible participants were asked about their availability for time, and an in-depth interview was conducted face-to-face.

The data analysis used Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological data analysis. Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenology approach aimed to produce an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon (Gumarang et al., 2021). Colaizzi's method highlights essential passages from the verbatim transcription and creates interpretations resulting in theme clusters (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021). Colaizzi devised a seven-step method for phenomenological data analysis, providing a transparent, sequential process that uniquely involves participant validation, thus enhancing accuracy and credibility in research outcomes (Wirihana et al., 2018). The steps are: (1) Read transcripts to grasp the content, (2) Extract significant statements, (3) Formulate meanings from statements, (4) Sort meanings into themes, (5) Integrate findings into phenomenon description, (6) Describe the fundamental structure, and (7) Validate findings with participants' experiences (Sanders, 2003; and Speziale & Carpenter, 2007, as cited by Shosha, 2012).

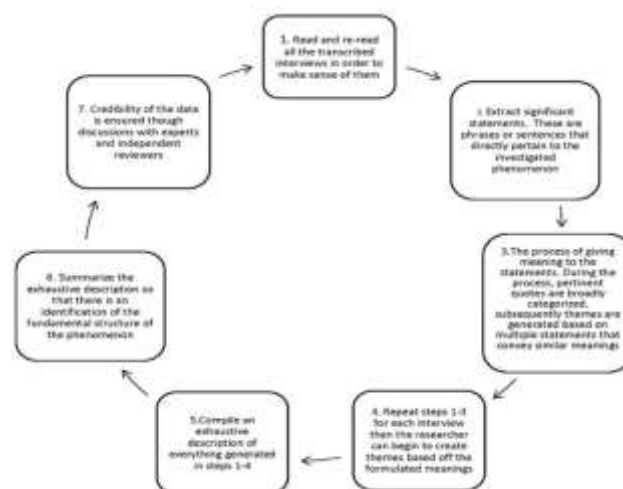


Figure 1. Colaizzi's Modified Seven-Step Method Data Analysis

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## 3.4 Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to the ethical protocols and guidelines established by the University of Mindanao Ethics Committee. The researcher diligently sought and obtained permission from the school authorities to conduct the research. Additionally, proper authorization and consent were acquired from the participants, ensuring that their rights would be secured throughout the research process, particularly concerning the handling of data such as, but not limited to:

**Permission from Organization/Location.** The researcher formally sent a letter with the signed consent of the Research Publication of the University of Mindanao, the Dean of the College, the Program Head, the Research Adviser, and the Barangay Tribal Council to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) for formality and permission and thus only interviewed after its approval.

**Informed Consent Process.** The survey's straightforward questions ensure that participants are aware of the advantages for the school. The survey is carried out with respondents' explicit authorization and the approval of school officials, ensuring openness and accuracy throughout the entire research process.

**Voluntary Participation.** Participation by respondents is entirely voluntary and anonymous, protecting their privacy. Before making a participation decision, clarifications are given if needed. The respondents' identities are confidential; only the researcher knows the particular responses. Numbers are allocated to confidential responses; the researcher can only relate responses to specific people.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** In compliance with ethical standards, study data is kept private to safeguard participants' rights and maintain privacy.

**Conflict of Interest.** Professional judgment prioritizes participant welfare and research validity over secondary interests such as financial gain or academic prestige, eradicating conflict of interest.

**Benefits.** Studying the Tagakaulo dialect promotes the preservation of language, culture, and identity. Traditional information, practices, and values recorded are more accessible and can be passed down through generations. It also promotes pride in cultural heritage and increases communal togetherness.

**Risks.** The researchers took precautions to protect the participants' physical, psychological, and financial well-being by avoiding high-risk circumstances throughout the research.

**Deceit.** The paper's content abstains from dishonesty, and a team of professionals has verified all of the material to safeguard the respondents' well-being.

**Falsification.** The study complies with the APA 7th edition citation guidelines, guaranteeing that the collected data has not been altered or misrepresented, providing accurate information.

**Fabrication.** This work carefully avoids fabrication by relying only on previously conducted research. Every material is carefully referenced and only comes from respected academic journals and publications to ensure authenticity and dependability.

**Plagiarism.** When citing theories from other scholars, the researcher ensured that the correct citation guidelines were followed, using the Grammarly and Turnitin applications to check the document for plagiarism and grammar errors.

**Authorship.** The researcher carefully collaborated with the research adviser, considered the significant contributions of the research, drafted the concept, design, data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation, and extensively revised to guarantee significant intellectual substance leading to the research's publication.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### A. Themes of Cultural Differences, Marginalization, Lack of Representation, Cultural Preservation, and Language Deterioration.

The research question 1 The traditional challenges experienced during trade of products extracted themes from sorted meanings of participants answer are themes of marginalization, cultural differences, lack of representation, cultural preservation, and language deterioration.

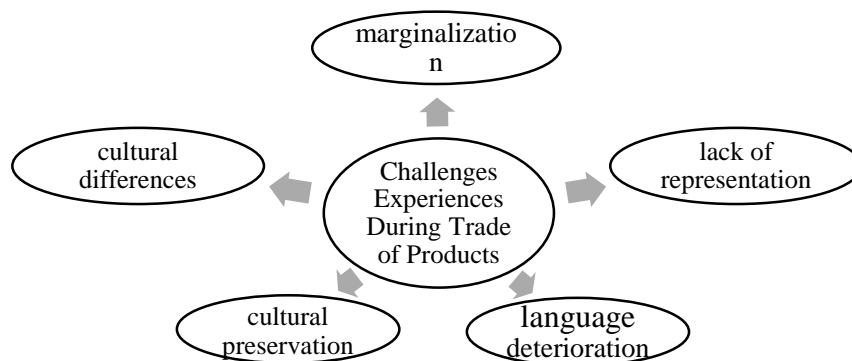


Figure 2. Challenges Experienced During Trade of Products

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**Marginalization.** Indigenous communities were discriminated against; culture and traditions were threatened because they were labelled as indigenous individuals. Tagakaulo had a hard time trading products in the past due to the discrimination of their dialect. They experienced being left behind in trading as they were referred to as indigenous people who were likely labelled as individuals who could not read and write and had a low understanding of Filipino or English communication. The following participants stated their experiences about marginalization:

*P3. Marginalization ug diskriminasyon ang mga lumad nga katawan kasagaran nag-atubang sa diskriminasyon ug marginalization, nga mosangpot ngadto sa limitado nga access sa edukasyon, pag-atiman sa panglawas, ug ekonomikong mga oportunidad.*

“Marginalization and discrimination indigenous peoples often face discrimination and marginalization, leading to limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.”

Some of the uncertainties faced by the Indigenous people were limited access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and social stigma against attending school. Indigenous children faced challenges in accessing quality education. Limited resources, cultural insensitivity in the curriculum, and a lack of teachers who understand and respect indigenous cultures hinder the educational development of Tagakaulo children. Educators who teach ethnic minorities struggle to incorporate multicultural components into their lesson plans and teaching resources, manifesting a monocultural teaching attitude (Ng et al., 2021). Even well-meaning teachers can perpetrate linguistic genocide by excluding indigenous languages from education, aiming to assimilate children into the dominant group, despite their good intentions toward indigenous/tribal students or minority students (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2020). Indigenous people experienced a lack of access to healthcare and economic opportunities. Due to linguistic barriers, certain services and amenities are inaccessible to ethnolinguistic collectivities with low sociopolitical status (Ndhlovu, 2007).

*P5. Ang mga lumad nga komunidad nag-atubang ug daghang hulga sa ilang kultura ug tradisyon; ang pagpangilog sa yuta gikan sa pagmina, pagtroso, o mga kompanya sa lana nakaguba sa sagradong mga dapit nga adunay mahinungdanong kahulogan alang niini nga mga tawo (lakip na ang mga lubnganan)samatang gipapahawa ang nagkadaghang populasyon; ang mga bata sa komunidad nag-atubang sa mga kalisud sa ag-access sa edukasyon tungod sa kakulangan sa mga eskwelahan sa hilit nga mga lugar; sosyal nga stigma batok sa pag-eskwela sa mga tagagawas nga nagdala kanila nga mobati nga dili gusto sa mga pampublikong kampus diin sila mahimong mailhan nga lahi sa uban tungod kay dili sila gusto. Makasulti ug larino nga tagalog filipino/ingles.*

“The indigenous communities have faced many threats to their culture and traditions; land-grabbing from mining, logging, or oil companies has destroyed sacred sites that hold significant meaning for these people (including burial grounds) while displacing an ever-growing population; children of the community face difficulties accessing education due to lack of schools in remote areas, social stigma against attending school with outsiders which leads them to feel unwelcome on public campuses where they could be singled out as being different than everyone else because they don’t speak fluent Tagalog Filipino/English.”

Tagakaulo people faced economic instability and loss of cultural ties because land development projects disrupted their traditional livelihoods, such as agriculture and hunting. Tagakaulo people experienced marginalization by being treated differently from being unable to speak English or Filipino, and their experiences were likely harmful and unjust support from their side, as in Tagakaulo, where societal rights and governmental support are neglected. Language in a linguistic community is marginalized when people or groups are subjected to discrimination or oppression, including any malicious or unintentional acts that devalue them because of the language they speak (Ndhlovu, 2007; Mohanty, 2019, as cited by Kukulka-Hulme et al., 2023). The government’s ineffective enforcement of education policies, worsened by poverty, lack of advocacy and knowledge about the right to an education, exacerbates the marginalization, inferiority, and oppression that Indigenous peoples and cultural communities already endure, leading to language marginalization (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021).

*P8. Nag atubang sa makaysasayanong diskriminasyon, ang mga lumad nga grupo wala access sa mga serbisyong katilingbanon ug ekonomikanhong ug politikanhong mga oportunidad.*

“The preservation of indigenous languages, traditions, and customs is threatened by modernization and external influences.”

Modernization and external influences jeopardize the integrity of indigenous languages, traditions, and customs. Indigenous people are drawn to modernism which challenges the notion that cultural preservation efforts, particularly language preservation initiatives, are universally respected showing how difficult it is for indigenous people to balance modernity and tradition (Li et al., 2023). Indigenous languages are marginalized across domains, with native voices translated into English frequently failing to convey diverse perspectives of these marginalized (Matsaw et al., 2020).

*P10. Bisan pa sa pagka usa ka komunidad nga kanunay nga gilambigit sa mga termino nga dili makamaong mubasa mapihigon ug kakulangan sa edukasyon ang pipila ka lumad nga estudyante nagpakita ug positibo nga kalambuan sa ilang kahanas sa ikaduhang pinulongan sa inengles.*

“Despite being a community that is often associated with the terms illiterate marginalized and educationally disadvantaged certain indigenous students demonstrate positive development in their second language proficiency.”

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Indigenous students, often labelled as illiterate, marginalized, and educationally disadvantaged, study hard to gain proficiency in English and aim to be college graduates to empower the status of indigenous communities, dedicating themselves to preserving their culture, language, and traditions. The Pamulaan Center for Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education, located within a larger campus, provides college education to around 100 young individuals from over 30 tribes across the Philippines, such as Badjao, Mandaya, and Tagakaulo, aiming to empower their communities (Doyo, 2011). Despite legal protections, Norman King, the first indigenous Aeta to graduate from a prestigious state university in the Philippines, faced prejudice because of his native background, and poverty overcame this dispute (Robinson, 2018).

The endangered status of indigenous and minority languages were because of social justice failures—oppression, marginalization, stigmatization, exclusion, and deprivation that occur within the framework of nationalist dominance (Roche, 2020). Exploring societal exclusion and challenges faced by those on social fringes characterized by marginalized spaces sheds light on the “disappearance” and “forced disappearance” of culture, language, and tradition (Gatti, 2020). Languages vanish because the cultures associated with them dissolve into a larger culture that absorbs all the smaller cultures that exist within it (Britton, 2020).

**Cultural Differences.** Tagakaulo has its own culture, and their culture makes them different from other tribes and the majority. The Tagakaulo culture, as stated by participants, makes them misunderstood when it comes to trade negotiations because of their different dialect; this comes as one of their problems for negotiating products. Tagakaulo stands to what they believe and what their culture is; this is their identification as Tagakaulo; somehow, with this, they often misunderstand, and barriers exist in communication, and this becomes a problem in establishing relationships towards each other. The following participants stated that there is indeed a cultural difference in language and product trading as follow:

*P2. Mga dili pagsinabtanay sa kultura. Ang mga kalainan sa kultura mahimong mosangpot sa dili pagsinabtanay sa negosasyon sa pamatigayon. Kini mahimong resulta sa dili patas nga mga kasabutan sa pamatigayon o bisan sa mga panagsumpaki.*

“Cultural misunderstandings. Cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings in trade negotiations. This can result in unfair trade agreements or even conflicts.”

*P4. Mga kalainan sa kultura: Ang tribong Tagakaulo isip kaugalingong talagsaon nga kultura ug tradisyon, nga usahay masaypan sa pag sabot o dili hingpit nga maapresyar sa mga tagagawas. Kini mahimong mosangpot sa mga kalisdanan sa pag establisar sa mga realsyon sa pamatigayon.*

“Cultural Differences: The Tagakaulo tribe has its own unique culture and traditions, which can sometimes be misunderstood or not fully appreciated by outsiders. This can lead to difficulties in establishing trade relationships”

Cultural differences could cause miscommunications that could result in unjust agreements or disagreements in trading. Communication has become an intercultural form involving the sharing of ideas and cultural practices in trade and technological exchange in the modern world. Nonetheless, it has also given rise to problems such as intercultural miscommunication (Malik et al., 2023). Establishing trade partnerships can be difficult because of the misperception or undervaluation of the Tagakaulo tribe's distinctive culture and traditions by outsiders. Due to cultural variations and language diversity, trade flow in cultural products is negatively impacted by language, despite the fact that language, as a cultural symbol, promotes mutual cultural understanding and commerce business spirit, allowing trust and information transmission (Li et al., 2020).

**Lack of representation.** Tagakaulo representation is an absolute necessity in all aspects of decision-making, especially in the implementation of policies, governmental regulations, community gathering for laws and order, and the preservation of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community. Unfortunately, there is a significant need for improvement in the representation of the rights and voices of the Tagakaulo. Without adequate representation, Tagakaulo's rights are often unheard of, resulting in low access to their privileges, their rights to trade products, and the challenges they face because of their dialect and differences in culture. A participant stated that lack of representation is one of their problems in the community.

*P6. Kakulang sa representasyon: ang mga lumad sagad kulang sa igong representasyon sa proseso sa paghimog desisyon ug mga palisiya nga makaapekto sa ilang mga komunidad, nga mosangpot sa kakulang sa tingog ug ahensya sa pagdumala.*

“Lack of representation: Indigenous peoples often lack adequate representation in decision-making processes and policies that affect their communities, leading to a lack of voice and agency in governance.”

Indigenous people's lack of representation of culture, tradition, and linguistics limits their agency and voice in governing decisions. Due to Indigenous people's extreme vulnerability, current standards provide only a limited degree of protection, particularly for language-related cultural expressions and ties to their ancestral lands (Figueira, 2020). Current laws and regulations have not been able to guarantee nondiscrimination in modern usage or address the legacy of official suppression of indigenous languages (Carpenter & Tsykarev, 2020).

**Cultural Preservation.** The indigenous community in Pangian, Malita, has spoken, especially the Tagakaulo people, who faced numerous challenges in their culture and community. The main problem and challenge they have is their decision to preserve their tradition and culture, remain steadfast as Tagakaulo, or they have to adapt to the new norms of the community as it faces cultural changes. Tagakaulo people still want to preserve what they have in their society. Nevertheless, there is an urge and pressure

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on the new community to adopt the new changes, especially the language barrier, for a better relationship in the surroundings. A participant stated that:

*P9. Adunay usa lamang ka nag unang hagit nga gi atubang sa mga lumad bisan asa ug kana nga mao ang desisyon nga magpabilin sa ilang lumad nga estilo sa kinabuhi o mosagop sa estilo sa kinabuhi sa kadaghanan nga papulasyon.*

“There is only one main challenge facing indigenous people everywhere and that is the decision to remain in their indigenous lifestyle or adopt the lifestyle of the majority population.”

Indigenous people are faced with the obstacle of preserving their language, culture, and tradition or adapting to the majority’s language and practices to be able to keep to the evolving community. Preservation of cultural heritage is essential in the midst of globalization because it protects knowledge and traditions across generations, maintaining cultural identity, including language preservation (Hiswara et al., 2023). Keeping ancestral languages alive in the modern day has been a difficulty for many as acquiring majority languages becomes increasingly important (Ong, 2021).

**Language Deterioration.** Linguistic functions facilitate man's ability to communicate with others. Due to the rise of technological advancement, the Tagakaulo language was threatened because Tagakaulo needed language progress with the majority to survive. The preservation of indigenous languages is challenged as the world's linguistic and cultural diversity is changing. A participant stated that:

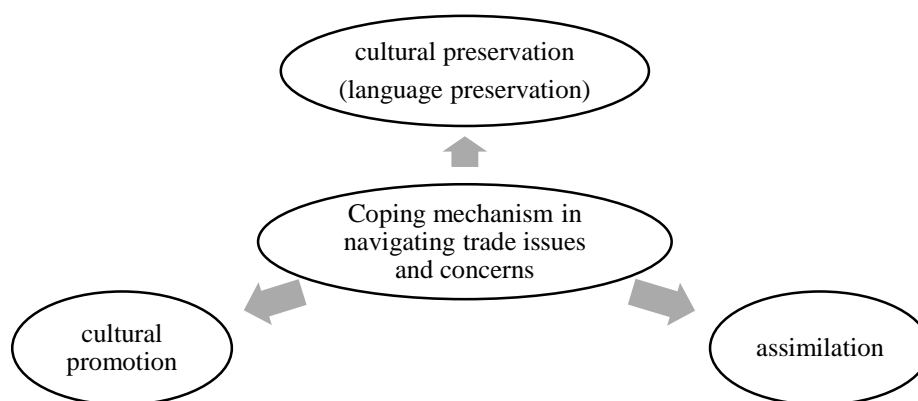
*P8. Pagreserbar sa kultura sa lumad nga mga pinulongan, tradisyon, ug kustumbre gihulga sa modernesasyon ug mga impluwensya sa gawas.*

“The preservation of indigenous languages, traditions, and customs is threatened by modernization and external influences.”

The Philippines, a global “language hotspot,” lost its diversified language population rapidly, causing a loss of culture (Alejan et al., 2021). The number of speakers of Indigenous languages is dwindling, and institutions need to act promptly to conserve these languages (Khawaja, 2021). To combat the dominance of lingua franca, which frequently pushes indigenous learners to adopt new languages owing to teacher restrictions, Filipino scholars advocate for policies favoring the use of indigenous languages in schools and encouraging collaboration to conserve them (Bonifacio et al., 2021).

### B. Themes of Cultural Preservation (Language Preservation), Cultural Promotion, and Assimilation

Three themes emerged from the sorted meanings of participants' responses to the second research question, which asked, "What are the coping mechanisms in navigating the issues and concerns?" These themes include cultural preservation (including language preservation), cultural promotion, and assimilation.



**Figure 3. Coping Mechanism Navigating Trade Issues and Concern**

**Cultural Preservation (language preservation).** Tagakaulo tribe always strive to maintain their cultural identity, and language preservation is the key to being known for their identity. From their ancestors, Tagakaulo still practices their beliefs and knowledge by preserving their language even though advancement pressures them in any aspect, especially in understanding advanced communication. In order to preserve their culture, Tagakaulo has found ways to promote their cultural aspects to the broader audience actively. It also helps them generate income and give significant awareness of their culture to a broader audience. Participants stated that:

*P2. Pag preserbar ug pagpasa sa among trdisyunal nga mga gawi ug kahibalo. Kini makatabang kanamo sa pagpadayon sa among kultural nga pagkatawo bisan pa sa gawas nga pagpamugos.*

“Cultural Preservation. The tribe places a strong emphasis on preserving and passing down the traditional practices and knowledge. This helps us maintain our cultural identity despite external pressures.”

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*P4. Gikan sa pagpreserba sa kultura hangtod sa promosyon sa kultura: samtang ang pagpreserbar sa kultura usa pa ka hinungdanon nga pokus, daghang mga komunidad ang nagsugod usab nga aktibo nga nagpasiugda sa ilang kultura sa mga tagagawas. Nakatabang kini kanamo nga makamugna og kita ug makapataas sa kahibalo bahin sa among takagsaon nga mga tradisyon.*

“From Cultural Preservation to Cultural Promotion: while cultural preservation is still a key focus, many communities have also started to actively promote their cultural to outsiders. This has helped us generate income and raise awareness about our unique traditions.”

The tribe prioritizes passing down traditional knowledge to preserve cultural identity. Communities now actively market their culture to outsiders, not only for preservation but also to generate revenue and highlight their unique customs. Indigenous language methods empower language revitalization efforts, accessible through dictionaries and instructional materials, fostering confidence among non-fluent speakers to revive both language and legal systems (Metallic, 2023). Reinforce the efforts of the local communities to preserve the biocultural integrity of Indigenous people’s territories, as well as their knowledge systems, languages, stewardship rights, and connections to lands and waterways (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2023).

**Cultural Promotion.** Tagakaulo community strives to strengthen their culture and tradition by promoting their community. It allows them to preserve their identity and helps them generate income while opening their community for tourism with a great purpose. A participant stated that:

*P4. Turismo sa Kultura: ang ubang mga tribo midangop sa turismo sa kultura isip usa ka paagi sa pagmugna og kita. Kini nagtugot kanato sa pagpaambit sa talagsaon nga kultura ug tradisyon sa mga tagagawas samtang kita usab.*

“Cultural Tourism: some tribes have turned to cultural tourism as a way to generate income. This allows us to share our unique culture and traditions with outsiders while also earning revenue.”

Tribes have resorted to cultural tourism to share their distinctive culture and customs, as well as as a means to earn money. Tourism is recognised for promoting and sustaining Indigenous cultural heritage encompassing tangible and intangible aspects like language, art, and rituals, with cultural products offering socio-economic benefits to communities (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2021). The growing recognition of dignity in the tourism industry, especially in community-based Indigenous tourism, highlights how important it is to support Indigenous languages in order to preserve cultural identity and enhance genuine experiences (Camargo et al., 2022).

**Assimilation.** Tagakaulo, as days passed by, slowly adapted to the changes in their community. The adoption of the changes enabled them to understand more about the rights of product trading, their way of living, and how being adaptive helps them to eliminate circumstances that affect their living. Tagakaulo slowly inclined their trust to develop changes around them; they were able to accept adoption as a positive coping mechanism. Participants stated that:

*P5. Dawata nga ang pagbag-o kabahin sa pagkinabuhi. Sulay inga dungangan ang imong pagka-flexible ug sabta nga ang pipila ka mga tumong mahimong dili na makab-ot sa pagdawat sa mga sirkumstansya nga dili na mausab mahimong makatabang kanimo sa pagpunting sa imong atensyon sa mga kahimtang nga mahimo nimong usbon.*

“Accept that change is part of living. Try to increase your flexibility and understand that some goals may no longer be attainable. Learning to accept circumstances that cannot be changed may help you focus your attention on circumstances you can change.”

*P6. Ang mga mekanismo sa pagsagubang mao ang mga kinaiya nga nagtumong sa paglikay sa stress o dili maayo nga mga emosyon. Kini nga mga kinaiya mahimong positibo (adaptive) o negatibo (maladaptive). Ang pagsagubang nga nakapokus sa problema nagtumong sa pagwagtang o pagbag-o sa tinubdan sa imong kapit-os, samtang ang pagsagubang nga nakapokus sa emosyon makatabang kanimo sa pag-usab sa paagi sa imong reaksyon sa imong mga stressor.*

“Coping mechanisms are behaviors that aim to avoid stress or unpleasant emotions. These behaviors can be positive (adaptive) or negative (maladaptive). Problem-focused coping aims to eliminate or change the source of your stress, while emotion-focused coping helps you change the way you react to your stressors.”

Accepting change in life is essential in order to be flexible and to concentrate on attainable objectives. Coping strategies, whether problem- or emotion-focused, assist in adaptively managing stress by addressing its cause or changing responses. Despite being compelled to assimilate and accept the changing environment, Indigenous peoples persisted in trying to protect their cultures and languages (Almas & Mazhar, 2024). Indigenous peoples have demonstrated tenacity in the midst of violence, adapted to evolving circumstances, and preserved their languages and culture in spite of the pervasive change brought about by globalization (Hibbard, 2021).

### C. Themes of Vocabulary for Trade, Tagakaulo Language Awareness and Utilization, and Trade Etiquette.

The themes that emerged from the categorized interpretations of the participant's responses to the third research question, which asked, "What aspect of the native language needs to be emphasized to eliminate challenges?" are trade etiquette, Tagakaulo language awareness and utilization, and vocational vocabulary.



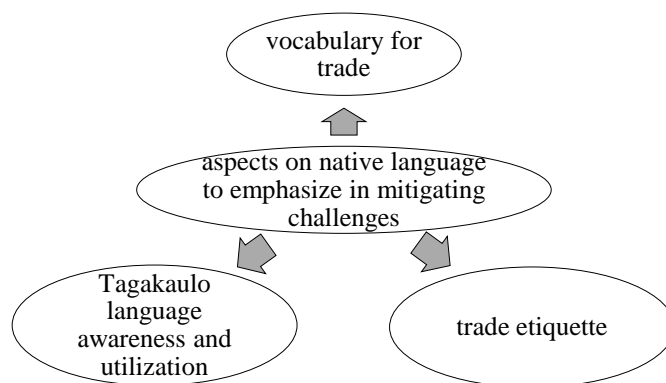


Figure 4. Aspects on Native Language to Emphasize in Mitigating Challenges

**Vocabulary for Trade.** Tagakaulo placed significant emphasis on the vocabulary related to trade and business transactions. Their learning and understanding of the terms to be used in the trading of products or negotiating business is fundamental to them in order to help them effectively communicate with the different businesspersons and efficiently be able to transact smoothly. Different participants stated the importance of vocabulary for trade.

*P1. Bokabularyo alang sa pamatigayon. importante ang pagpalambo ug paghatag og gibug-aton sa bokabularyo nga may kalabutan sa pamatigayon ug komersiyo sa lumad nga pinulongan busa naglakip sa mga termino alang sa lain-laing mga produkto, negosasyon, pagpresyo, ug mga transaksyon sa negosyo.*

“Vocabulary for trade. It is important to develop and emphasized vocabulary related to trade and commerce in the native language. This includes term for different products, negotiation, pricing, and business transactions. This can help facilitate effective communication during trade interactions.”

*P4. Bokabularyo alang sa pamatigayon: importante ang pagpalambo ug paghatag og gibug-aton sa bokabularyo nga may kalabutan sa pamatigayon ug komersiyo sa lumad nga pinulongan. Naglakip kini sa mga termino alang sa lainlaing mga produkto, negosasyon, pagpresyo, ug mga transaksyon sa negosyo. Makatabang kini nga mapadali ang epektibo nga komunikasyon sa panahon sa mga interaksyon sa pamatigayon.*

“Vocabulary for trade: it is important to develop and emphasize vocabulary related to trade and commerce in the native language. This includes terms for different products, negotiation, pricing, and business transactions. This can help facilitate effective communication during trade interactions.”

Tagakaulo's dialect is fundamental to developing and emphasizing phrases related to trade and commerce. These terms should include terms for different kinds of goods, bargaining techniques, pricing schemes, and business dealings. This makes economic transactions more effective in terms of communication, guaranteeing mutual understanding and clarity between involved parties. Native speakers should create bilingual word lists in a culturally acceptable manner, with or without equivalent translations to the majority language, which will help non-native speakers understand the dialect (Coxhead et al., 2020). Indigenous languages should set standards in establishing legislation texts and interpretations of their statutory legislations, and they should follow the same guidelines as non-English treaties (Murphy, 2021).

*P5. Ang mga babag sa pinulongan sa komunikasyon mahimong motungha gikan sa lainlaing mga hinungdan. Ang pagsabot niini nga mga hinungdan makatabang sa mga indibidwal ug organisasyon nga aktibo nga masulbad ang mga babag sa pinulongan ug kinatibuk-ang pagkapektibo sa komunikasyon.*

“Language barriers in communication can arise from various causes. Understanding these causes can help individuals and organizations proactively address language barriers and overall communication effectiveness.”

*P6. Kini nga mga babag mahimong motumaw tungod sa daghang mga hinungdan, lakip ang limitado nga kahanas sa sinultian, dili maayo nga gramatika/spelling/punctuation, o wala’y usa ka sinultian nga parehas sa imong interlocutor*

“These barriers can arise due to many reasons, including limited language proficiency, poor grammar/spelling/punctuation, or not having a language in common with your interlocutor.”

*P7. Ang mga babag sa lengguwahe kay yanong mga babag nga motumaw panahon sa paggamit ug pinulungan.*

“Linguistic barriers are simply obstacles that arise during language use.”

Individuals and organizations must have a thorough understanding of the various sources of language obstacles to improve communication efficacy. Effective cross-cultural corporate communication incorporates hiring multilingual employees, providing language training, and repeating information to reduce language barriers and instill mutually understood language (Adanlawo et al., 2021). These language use limitations include things like poor language ability, grammatical or punctuation issues, or not speaking the same language as the other person. Due to grammatical structure confusion, lousy spelling, interference from first languages, and a lack of vocabulary, people needed help with language use (Farooq et al., 2020). Individuals are urged to communicate with

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one another in the dominant language, which serves to further enforce social constraints (Mamajanova & Yu, 2022).

**Tagakaulo Language Awareness and Utilization.** Tagakaulo community and its people put significance on their language and culture by practicing it every day and acknowledging it as their root of existence. Tagakaulo have always had their identity as Tagakaulo by utilizing their beliefs and maintaining their image as Tagakaulo. Their awareness of the existence of their tribe is symbolized through their actions and communication with each other and, most importantly, by using their language as a deterrent factor as a Tagakaulo individual. It serves as a positive factor for them in showing awareness not just to their community but also to the other tribes.

*P7. Ang mga ekspresyon sa nawong ug lihod makatabang sa pagbuntog sa semantikong mga babag sa komunikasyon tungod kay kini makatabang sa pagpatimaw sa kahulogan.*

“Facial expressions and gestures can help to overcome semantic barriers of communication because they help to clarify meaning.”

*P9. Ang mga babag sa komunikasyon mahimong mabuntog pinaagi sa pagsusi kon mayo ba kini nga panahon ug dapit sa pagpakigsulti sa tao.*

“Barriers to communication can be overcome by checking whether it is a good time and place to communicate with the person.”

*P10. nagtugot alang mas makahuluganon nga komunikasyon nga makapadali sa pagtahud alang niini nga mga relasyon inon man sa kabilin nga kultura sa kinatibuk-an. Ang pagpadayon sa lumad nga pinulongan usa usab ka importante nga butang sa pagbilin sa personal nga pagkatawo.*

“It allows for more meaningful communication that can facilitate respect for these relationships as well as heritage culture as a whole. Native language maintenance is also an essential factor in the retention of personal identity.”

Gestures and facial expressions help to clarify information, while timing and setting are also important considerations for efficient communication. Communication encompasses verbal and non-verbal elements, where body language, including gestures and facial expressions, plays a fundamental role in the transactional process of generating, disseminating, and controlling meaning (Uzun, 2020). The preservation of one's native tongue is essential to maintaining one's sense of self, promoting meaningful connection and respect for interpersonal relationships and historical culture. Colonial powers harmed Indigenous languages, and there is increasing interest in their revitalization, which is essential for maintaining historical culture and legacy (McIvor, 2020).

**Trade Etiquette.** The usual behaviors, manners, and protocols that are observed during commercial transactions and contacts between parties involved in trade are referred to as trade etiquette. It includes things like negotiation strategies, professionalism, ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity, and communication styles. Maintaining proper trade etiquette promotes rapport-building, trust-building, and productive commercial partnerships. A participant stated that:

*P2. Ang paggamit sa local nga lengguwahe makapakita ug respeto ug apresasyon sa local nga kultura. Makatabang kin isa pagtukod og lig-on nga mga relasyon sa mga customer, nga hinungdanon sa Negosyo.*

“Using the local language can show respect and appreciation for the local culture. This can help build strong relationships with customers, which is crucial in business.”

The use of local language in business transactions with respect among both parties can really build strong relationships with one another. Building confidence, which is necessary for long-lasting commercial partnerships, strengthens national identity and cultural resilience by presenting an authentic translation picture that incorporates the opinions of both native speakers and visitors (Schleiermacher & Bernofsky, 2021). Using the local language for Tagakaulo is also a symbol of great respect and respectable appreciation of the culture. While interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, using indigenous language promotes appreciation and an understanding of the identified cultural differences between cultures (Aririguzoh, 2022).

## 5. Implication and Concluding Remarks

### 5.1 Implications

This study explored the nature of the Tagakaulo language, its usage in trade contexts, its impact on cultural exchange, and the role language plays in facilitating trade relationships. The study implied the following: (1) development of government policy ensuring complete protection of Indigenous rights; (2) fostering multicultural education by providing adequate training to teachers; (3) preserve heritage by boosting cultural tourism; (4) construction of multilingual programs and resources to revitalize endangered language; (5) use indigenous language in trading; (6) engage in cultural sensitivity training; (7) collaboration of Indigenous people to national and international associations; (8) document and protect Indigenous knowledge through research; (9) involve Indigenous communities in decision-making policies that impact them; and (10) advocate social awareness of issues faced by the Indigenous people through social media and activism.

### 5.2 Concluding Remarks

The study explores the Tagakaulo language and its role in trade from a Phenomenological perspective. Tagakaulo's native language is slowly decreasing due to the marginalization of the language as Tagakaulo natives migrate into the coastal cities of Malita and assimilate the majority language, Bisaya, as a means of communicating in the community. By examining the nature of the

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language, its usage in trade contexts, and its impact on cultural exchange, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the role language plays in facilitating trade relationships. Moreover, this Phenomenological study on the language of trade among the Tagakaulo people aims to address the issues and concerns surrounding the potential loss of their language in the trade context.

The study used a qualitative-phenomenological research design. The data was gathered through In-Depth-Interview (IDI) with ten participants. A standardized interview guide was created with the help of the researcher instructor, the researcher, and the adviser. Interviews were recorded to gather data clearly and concisely. The data was analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological data analysis. A thematic analysis was used to explore the Tagakaulo language and its role in trade from a phenomenological perspective.

Based on the thematic analysis done, three final themes emerged, namely, challenges experienced during the trade of products, coping mechanisms in navigating trade issues and concerns, and aspects of native language to emphasize in mitigating challenges. Each final theme comprises composite themes concluded from participants' responses during In-Depth-Interview. Considering all responses, three questions were identified as having essential themes.

The first query, which was designed to determine the challenges experienced during the trade of products, had five essential themes: Marginalization, Cultural Differences, Lack of Representation, Language Deterioration, and Cultural Preservation. The second query posed in the study was to discover the coping mechanism in navigating trade issues and concerns, and the key themes were Cultural Promotion, Cultural Preservation (Language Preservation), and Assimilation. Aspects of native language to emphasize in mitigating challenges were the third and last questions that were answered, respectively. Vocabulary for Trade, Trade Etiquette, and Tagakaulo Language Awareness and Utilization were the last identified themes, respectively.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researchers involved in this study have not disclosed any potential conflicts of interest. We have conducted the study and analyzed the collected data impartially to ensure the reliability and objectivity of the research findings. This impartiality indicates that the researchers have no personal biases or vested interests that could potentially influence the results or conclusions drawn from the study.

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