



Mapping SWAK Initiatives in Mindanao: A Framework for Ecological Language Planning

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Abstract

This study examined the evolving role of Sentro ng Wika at Kultura (SWAK) in Mindanao within the shifting landscape of contemporary Language Policy and Planning (LPP). Moving beyond top-down governance, the research utilized an ecological qualitative design to evaluate SWAK's effectiveness in a region with over 40 living languages. An analysis of terminal and annual reports (2018–2025) from six centers revealed uneven language vitality: while dominant regional languages expand, minoritized indigenous languages face endangerment. Although SWAKs function as critical "ecological nodes," findings indicated strategic gaps in intergenerational transmission and regenerative revitalization. To address these disparities, the study proposed an Ecological Language Planning Framework emphasizing biodiversity mapping, institutional planning continua, and identity-memory integration. This research provided a foundational empirical basis for decentralized planning, reinforcing the need for context-responsive strategies to preserve Mindanao's linguistic diversity.

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Introduction

Recent developments in postmodern Language Policy and Planning (LPP) scholarship indicate a shift from centralized, top-down policy control toward more localized, community-rooted models of planning and implementation. This reorientation reflects a broader theoretical move from viewing language policy as a state-centered, technocratic process toward understanding it as a socially embedded, negotiated, and context-sensitive practice enacted across multiple levels of social life.

Within this shifting paradigm, agency has become a central concept in LPP discourse, referring to the capacity of actors and institutions to negotiate, initiate, and enact language-related change (Liddicoat & Leech, 2021). This emphasis on agency has directed scholarly attention toward micro-level sites where language policy is actively lived and performed. In the Philippine context, this is reflected in the expanding role of the Sentro ng Wika at Kultura (SWAK), which function as localized institutional agents engaged in linguistic research, cultural work, and the contextualized implementation of national language policies. Despite their growing institutional significance, however, systematic empirical studies assessing SWAK's effectiveness in fulfilling their linguistic and cultural mandates remain limited.

The relevance of this decentralized and agency-oriented approach becomes particularly pronounced in Mindanao, a region characterized by exceptional linguistic and cultural diversity. Mindanao is home to the highest concentration of ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines, with an estimated 40–50 living languages (KWF, 2018). This complex linguistic configuration is the result of centuries of trade contact, migration, resistance, and cultural transmission (Macaspac, 2020). Communities such as the Maranao, Maguindanaon, Tausug, Manobo, Bagobo, Blaan, and T'boli continue to



sustain rich oral traditions, including the Darangen, Ulahingan, and Tud Bulul, which function not only as literary forms but also as repositories of cosmological, historical, and ecological knowledge (UNESCO, 2008).

In such a multilingual and culturally stratified context, institutions like the Sentro ng Wika at Kultura (SWAK) function not merely as implementers of national policy but as critical mediators between state-directed language planning, local linguistic ecologies, and community knowledge systems. Understanding how these institutions exercise agency within Mindanao's sociolinguistic landscape is therefore essential to grasping how language policy operates in practice and how it contributes to the preservation, transformation, or marginalization of linguistic and cultural resources. Philippine scholarship on language policy and planning has been extensive, particularly in examining ideological formations of national language policy (Tupas, 2015), multilingual education reforms, and the politics of Filipino and English in formal domains. Parallel to this are studies in language documentation and revitalization that foreground community-based initiatives, such as work on endangered Philippine languages, mother tongue education, and indigenous literacy programs (Nolasco, 2008; Dita, 2011; Lobel, 2013). Research on language documentation has likewise generated valuable descriptive corpora and grammars, particularly for Mindanao languages, while revitalization studies have highlighted grassroots efforts to sustain local linguistic practices through schools, churches, and cultural organizations.

Despite these contributions, much of the existing literature remains polarized between macro-level analyses of national policy frameworks and micro-level accounts of individual language communities. Empirical studies on policy implementation tend to concentrate on classroom practices in Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (Burton, 2013; Metila et al., 2016) or on localized revitalization projects, with limited attention to the institutional spaces that connect these two spheres. Consequently, the meso-level role of university-based centers such as SWAK units as decentralized agents of planning, research, and community engagement remains underexplored. These centers occupy a strategic position; they translate national mandates into localized programs, curate linguistic and cultural resources, and negotiate between academic, governmental, and community stakeholders. Yet, their actual practices, constraints, and forms of



institutional agency have received little systematic investigation. By focusing on SWAK as an institutional actor, the present study addresses this gap and extends Philippine language policy scholarship beyond its dominant focus on either state policy texts or community-level initiatives, offering a more nuanced account of how language planning is enacted within intermediary organizational contexts.

Theoretically, this study is anchored in the Ecology of Language paradigm (Haugen, 1972; Hornberger, 2003), which views languages not as isolated codes but as interacting species within an environment. It also draws upon the concept of Agency in Language Policy, examining how local actors (SWAK centers) interpret and implement top-down mandates. These concepts guide the analysis by shifting the focus from mere compliance to the ecological 'health' and regenerative capacity of the language programs. This study is directly relevant to the field of language policy and planning, particularly to research on multilingual education, minority language maintenance, and institutional language governance. By examining how language-related programs are enacted within SWAK centers, the study contributes empirical insight into how language policy is interpreted and operationalized at the institutional level. This focus aligns with applied linguistics and language education scholarship that emphasizes the gap between policy design and policy practice and the need to understand how language planning functions in real social and educational contexts.

Consequently, this study aims to evaluate the ecological alignment of SWAK Mindanao operations with principles of linguistic vitality and community sustainability. Based on this evaluation, the study intends to develop an Ecological Language Planning Framework to guide decentralized language planning initiatives in the region.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative ecological research design grounded in the ecolinguistic frameworks of Haugen (1972), Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001), and Morales-López (2023). Language was conceptualized as an ecological phenomenon embedded within social, cultural, and institutional environments. Accordingly, the study examined both the content and



ecological functions of Sentro ng Wika at Kultura (SWAK) programs in Mindanao, focusing on how these initiatives contribute to linguistic diversity, cultural transmission, and localized policy enactment.

A descriptive–analytical documentary approach was adopted. The primary data consisted of terminal and annual reports from seven (7) universities hosting SWAK offices across Mindanao, covering the period 2018–2025. These documents were supplemented by program proposals, activity documentation, and official communications from the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF). Documents were formally requested from SWAK directors and organized by institution and year.

The study did not seek to measure change or causal effects; therefore, the analysis focused on describing patterns, interpreting ecological alignment, and assessing structural features of institutional language practices.

Purposive institutional sampling was employed. Universities were selected based on three criteria: (a) the presence of an operational SWAK office, (b) the availability of documentary records for the period under study, and (c) geographic and ethnolinguistic representation across Mindanao. Eight universities were selected to balance analytical depth with feasibility within the research timeframe. This sample size is appropriate for qualitative comparative institutional analysis and allows for cross-case pattern identification while preserving contextual specificity.

The analytical framework was developed inductively from recurring patterns in the documentary data and deductively from ecological language planning theory. The three-phase structure reflects the layered nature of institutional language work, progressing from description to interpretation and then to structured assessment.

The first phase involved systematic documentation and mapping of all reported SWAK activities from 2018 to 2025. Terminal reports, program briefs, and annual narratives were coded using a content analysis matrix capturing program type, linguistic focus, target communities, objectives, materials produced, and institutional partnerships. This phase produced a categorical map of activities across institutions and years and served a primarily descriptive function.



The second phase employed thematic and relational analysis to interpret how identified programs aligned with major frameworks in ecological language planning, including those of Haugen, Fill and Mühlhäusler, Hornberger, Kaplan and Baldauf, and Wiertlewska. Activities were classified according to ecological dimensions such as community ecology, cultural ecology, environmental ecology, and ideological or discursive ecology. This phase focused on explaining how programs function within language habitats and contribute to intergenerational transmission, identity formation, and local policy mediation.

The final phase involved applying a set of predefined ecological indicators to assess the structural and ecological coherence of SWAK initiatives. These indicators included community participation, continuity of implementation, resource production, intergenerational reach, representation of minoritized languages, and alignment with ecological principles such as diversity, balance, and adaptability. This phase did not evaluate outcomes or impacts but examined whether programs possessed features associated with sustainability and ecological consistency.

Credibility and dependability were enhanced through multiple strategies. Data triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing terminal reports, annual reports, program proposals, and KWF communications. Interpretive validation was supported through consultation with SWAK coordinators regarding program classification and contextual interpretation. Coding reliability was strengthened through repeated coding of a subset of documents, with discrepancies reviewed and resolved. An audit trail documenting coding decisions, category definitions, and analytical memos was maintained throughout the analysis.

The framework was developed through an iterative process combining inductive coding and theory-guided refinement. Recurring activity types were identified through open coding and cross-case comparison, then aligned with key constructs in ecological language planning theory. The provisional framework was subsequently reapplied to the dataset and adjusted to ensure analytical coherence.

This study involved minimal risk as it relied exclusively on institutional documents and did not involve human participants. Purposive sampling



and sample size were ethically justified based on relevance, representativeness, and feasibility. The researcher declares no financial, professional, or personal conflict of interest with any of the institutions included in the study.

No personal or sensitive data were collected, and no individual identifiers were recorded. Institutional names were anonymized where necessary to avoid reputational or administrative risk. The study did not involve engagement with vulnerable populations. All documents were stored in password-protected digital folders accessible only to the researcher and will be retained for five years prior to secure deletion.

To mitigate the risk of institutional misrepresentation, findings were presented analytically and contextually rather than evaluatively or judgmentally, and interpretations were grounded in documented evidence.

Ethics Statement

This research complied with standard ethical guidelines for qualitative documentary research, including principles of transparency, confidentiality, responsible representation, and data protection.

Results and Discussion

Language planning is an ecological process of relationship-building, balance, participation, and sustainability among people, language, culture, and environment. In the context of Mindanao, the Sentro ng Wika at Kultura (SWAK) functions as microhabitats of the national language, operating as spaces where linguistic programs cultivate multilingual coexistence and cultural reproduction.

Descriptive Mapping of SWAK Programs and Activities

The first phase involved systematic documentation and classification of SWAK programs implemented across six centers in Mindanao, namely BukSU, USM, DorSU, MSU–Marawi, MSU–GenSan, and JRMSU. Analysis of institutional reports revealed that SWAK initiatives clustered into recurring program types, including documentation and archiving of oral traditions,



translation and localization of materials, literary and cultural performances, community literacy initiatives, and digital cultural production.

Table 1 presents the four recurring functional orientations observed across these programs: interconnectedness, balance/diversity, community participation, and sustainability. These orientations were not imposed theoretically but emerged as descriptive regularities in program objectives, target beneficiaries, and institutional rationales.

Table 1

Four Foundational Principles Identified in SWAK Programs and Activities

Principle	Meaning	Aim	SWAK Example
Interconnectedness	Language, culture, and society mutually shape one another.	Strengthen organic relationships between language and community.	SUWARA–Marawi; Karunungan Bayan–BukSU
Balance/Diversity	Languages must coexist without dominance.	Protect linguistic diversity as cultural wealth.	Parada ng Lahi–GenSan
Community Participation	Language planning must begin with speakers.	Empower indigenous and local communities.	Teduray Translation–USM; Subanen Archives–JRMSU
Sustainability	Languages must adapt while preserving roots.	Link language to modern platforms and technology.	SIBUWI & PANAGTIBU–DorSU

A synthesized overview of the recurring orientations identified across SWAK programs and activities is presented above. It summarizes four foundational ecological principles such as Interconnectedness, Balance and Diversity, Community Participation, and Sustainability by outlining their conceptual meanings, programmatic aims, and concrete institutional examples. The table thus functions as an analytical consolidation of the descriptive data gathered from institutional reports, project documentation, and program narratives.



The table is significant because it transforms dispersed program descriptions into an organized interpretive map. Rather than listing individual initiatives in isolation, it highlights the shared orientations that characterize SWAK operations across different centers in Mindanao. By grouping programs according to these principles, the table makes visible the underlying logics that guide institutional practices and priorities. It therefore establishes an empirical baseline from which more in-depth analysis can proceed.

At this stage, the analysis remains intentionally descriptive. The table and its accompanying discussion serve to map the types of ecological orientations present in SWAK activities, without yet interpreting them through formal theoretical frameworks or evaluating their broader implications. The primary objective is to document what orientations are evident and how they are manifested in actual programs. This descriptive mapping ensures transparency and traceability between the raw data and the analytical categories employed in the study.

Beyond summarizing findings, the table also prepares the groundwork for the next phase of analysis. The identified principles provide the conceptual entry points for Relational and Theoretical Interpretation, where these orientations are examined in relation to established theories of ecological language planning. By clarifying the patterns present in the data, the table enables a systematic transition from description to interpretation.

Finally, the table plays a formative role in the construction of the analytical model presented in Proposed Analytical Model. The dimensions of the model were not predetermined; rather, they were inductively derived from the recurrent themes and relationships captured in Table 1. Observed program characteristics such as collaboration with communities, promotion of multilingual balance, integration of cultural knowledge, and adaptation to digital platforms directly shaped the conceptual structure of the model. In this way, the movement from data to table to model follows a clear analytical path, ensuring that theoretical synthesis remains firmly grounded in documented empirical evidence.



Relational and Theoretical Interpretation

Building on the descriptive mapping presented in descriptive mapping of SWAK activities, this phase of the analysis moves from classification to interpretation. The four orientations summarized in Table 1 Interconnectedness, Balance and Diversity, Community Participation, and Sustainability are here examined in relation to established perspectives in ecological language planning.

The descriptive findings revealed that SWAK initiatives are not isolated projects but interrelated practices shaped by shared ecological logics. Drawing on Haugen's (1972) conception of language as a social ecology and Fill and Mühlhäusler's (2001) socio-ecological paradigm, these orientations can be understood as principles that structure how language planning is enacted within institutional and community contexts. Hornberger's (2002) continua of biliteracy further illuminate how SWAK programs negotiate multilingual realities, while Wiertlewska (2012) and Fouces (2020) highlight the importance of sustainability and plurilingual coexistence.

Programs categorized under Interconnectedness demonstrate how language initiatives are consistently linked to history, culture, and social relationships. Activities such as Tertulya sa Wika (MSU–Marawi) and Karunungan- Bayan (BukSU) illustrate that SWAK work treats language not as an abstract system but as a living practice embedded in collective memory and community experience.

The principle of Balance and Diversity reflects efforts to maintain equitable coexistence among languages. Initiatives like Parada ng Lahi (MSU–GenSan) foreground minoritized languages alongside Filipino, embodying the ecological view that linguistic vitality depends on diversity rather than dominance.

Community Participation emerges as a central operational value. Projects such as the Teduray Translation Project (USM) and the Subanen Archives (JRMSU) demonstrate that SWAK programs position local speakers as primary agents of language planning. This aligns with Kaplan and Baldauf's



(1997) argument that sustainable language initiatives must be community-rooted and collaborative.

Finally, Sustainability highlights the adaptive dimension of SWAK practices. Digital and hybrid initiatives such as SIBUWI and PANAGTIBU (DorSU) show how language programs respond to changing technological and social environments, ensuring that local languages remain relevant in contemporary platforms.

Taken together, these principles reveal a relational ecology within SWAK operations. They do not function independently; rather, they intersect and reinforce one another. Community participation enables sustainability, interconnectedness supports diversity, and balance fosters inclusive engagement. This relational understanding provides the conceptual bridge to the analytical model developed in the next section.

Ecological Model Construction and Synthesis

The third phase synthesized the relational findings into an Ecological Language Planning Model composed of four interacting dimensions: community-based, environmental, cultural, and discursive. These dimensions integrate both empirical observations and theoretical constructs, providing a conceptual framework for understanding how language planning operates ecologically in Mindanao. Table 2 presents these four dimensions and their corresponding theoretical bases and institutional examples.



Table 2
Four Ecological Dimensions on SWAK Practices

Dimension	Basis	SWAK Example	Linked Principle	Application
Community-Based	Haugen; Kaplan & Baldauf	Teduray Translation (USM)/ Subanen Archives (JRMSU)	Participation	Planning begins at community level
Environmental	Fill & Mühlhäusler	BukSU Ethnoecology; GenSan Rainforest of Languages	Inter-connectedness, Balance	Language tied to land, tradition, biodiversity
Cultural	Hornberger; Bakhtin	DorSU Literary Digitalization; MSU-Marawi SUWARA	Balance, Sustainability	Language as art, identity & creative heritage
Discursive	Wiertlewska; Foucault; Bakhtin	Marawi Peace Dialogues; GenSan Tertulya	Interconnectedness, Sustainability	Language as space for ideology, power & change

A synthesized overview of the ecological dimensions that characterize SWAK practices across institutions in Mindanao is presented above. It organizes program initiatives into four interrelated dimensions such as community-based, environmental, cultural, and discursive while identifying their corresponding theoretical bases, representative examples, linked principles, and practical applications. By structuring the data in this way, the table demonstrates how diverse SWAK activities converge around shared ecological orientations rather than functioning as isolated projects. It highlights the multiple levels at which language planning is enacted: as community participation, as engagement with biocultural contexts, as



creative cultural production, and as spaces for dialogue and social transformation. The table therefore serves as an analytical bridge between the descriptive mapping in Table 1 and the conceptual synthesis in ecological dimension sections, making explicit how empirical findings were translated into the proposed ecological model.

The community-based dimension emphasizes grassroots participation and local ownership of language work. The environmental dimension situates language within biocultural and ecological contexts. The cultural dimension highlights language as artistic, mnemonic, and identity-forming practice. The discursive dimension frames language as a site of ideological negotiation and social transformation.

Together, these dimensions form an integrated ecological system rather than a hierarchy. Their interaction illustrates how SWAK centers function not merely as implementers of policy but as ecological agents that cultivate linguistic diversity, cultural continuity, and social meaning. Building on the integrative mapping presented in the preceding table, this subsection provides a detailed examination of each ecological dimension that shapes SWAK practices. The discussion moves from summary to close analysis, exploring how community-based, environmental, cultural, and discursive orientations are operationalized in concrete programs and activities. By elaborating on these dimensions individually, the section demonstrates how the proposed ecological model functions in actual institutional contexts and how SWAK centers enact language planning as a relational, participatory, and context-sensitive process. This detailed analysis clarifies the mechanisms through which descriptive patterns identified earlier translate into coherent ecological practices.

Community-Based Dimension (Language as a Product of Grassroots Participation)

The foundation of this dimension lies in Haugen's view of language as a social organism and Kaplan & Baldauf's principle that sustainable language policy must emerge from bottom-up processes. Language does not live in documents it lives in people. Therefore, planning must begin with those who speak, inherit, preserve, and recreate the language in everyday life.



This is exemplified by the Teduray IEC Translation Project of USM, where mothers, youth, and tribal elders collaborated to translate health materials into Teduray. They were not passive recipients but co-owners of the process. Similarly, the Subanen Oral History Archive Project of JRMSU engaged Subanen elders as narrators, translators, and knowledge-bearers affirming that the community is the archive itself.

From these examples, the community-based dimension asserts the following language planning must not be imposed but co-created with communities; indigenous speakers are not objects of preservation but agents of intellectualization and grassroots collaboration is the root system of linguistic survival. When planning emerges from the ground rather than policy headquarters, language transformation becomes organic, legitimate, and socially rooted.

Environmental Dimension (Language as Biocultural Habitat and Ecological Inheritance)

The second dimension draws from Fill & Mühlhäusler's conception of language as part of biocultural diversity. Like plants or rivers, languages are shaped by geography, climate, food systems, ritual spaces, and landscapes. When languages are uprooted from habitat, they die not linguistically first, but culturally and ecologically.

This dimension is strongest in SWAK initiatives like BukSU's Karunungan Bayan Project, where proverbs, riddles, and folklore of the Talaandig, Manobo, and Binukid peoples were archived and taught. Each narrative encoded ecological knowledge forest seasons, soil cycles, river spirits marking language as a map of environment. Likewise, MSU-GenSan's Parada ng Lahi symbolizes a linguistic rainforest, where Blaan, Tboli, Tausug, Maranao, Manobo, Cebuano, and Filipino coexist like species in biodiversity.

From these examples, the environmental dimension affirms that language vitality reflects ecological vitality to save one is to save both. While documentation must include environment-based memory, not vocabulary alone and diversity is the balance that prevents linguistic extinction. A



healthy linguistic ecology is one where no language must shrink for another to survive.

Cultural Dimension (Language as Identity, Art, Imagination, and Memory)

Hornberger situates literacy within continua fluid, dynamic, context-driven. Bakhtin deepens this by describing language as memory, art, and social meaning. Thus, languages flourish when they are not only spoken but performed, written, sung, painted, and felt.

The cultural dimension is powerfully reflected in DorSU's digital literature initiatives (SIBUWI, PANAGTIBU, LITMAN) where Mandaya poetry entered cyberspace, allowing young speakers to write their identity rather than merely inherit it. In MSU-Marawi's SUWARA and Pintula, Meranaw was used not only to preserve stories of siege and recovery, but to process trauma, reclaim peace, and imagine futures. Language here becomes healing, creation, and rebirth.

This dimension establishes that language survives through art because memory survives through emotion; cultural performance is not entertainment it is linguistic regeneration and SWAK operates as seedbank of culture, storing identity for future growth. Where there is song, story, and literature there language remains alive.

Discursive Dimension (Language as a Space of Power, Ideology, Rights, and Voice)

Drawing from Wiertlewska, Fouces, and Bakhtin, this dimension views language as a site of negotiation where marginalized voices contest dominance, reclaim narratives, and articulate alternative identities. Language planning, therefore, cannot be neutral every decision favors someone, silences someone, empowers someone. This dimension surfaces clearly in DorSU's online spoken word forums where youth questioned colonial language hierarchies; Marawi's Tertulya sa Wika, using Meranaw as language of peace and gender discourse; and in GenSan's Tertulya ng Lahi, where indigenous lexicons appeared in public intellectual spaces no longer peripheral, but central.



Taken together, these four dimensions illustrate the multifaceted nature of ecological language planning as practiced by SWAK centers in Mindanao. They show that effective language initiatives require simultaneous attention to community agency, environmental context, cultural creativity, and discursive engagement. Rather than operating separately, the dimensions interact to form an integrated system in which languages are cultivated as living, adaptive, and socially meaningful resources. This detailed analysis confirms the validity of the ecological model proposed earlier and demonstrates how it is enacted in concrete institutional practices across Mindanao.

Structural Integration of the Model

Building on the four dimensions, the model was further articulated into three interacting layers: (1) external ecology (macro-level national language environment), (2) internal ecology (micro-level SWAK centers as language habitats), and (3) dynamic flow (circulation between policy, culture, discourse, and community knowledge). This layered structure illustrates how language planning operates across scales through reciprocal rather than linear processes. Table 3 summarizes this integrative structure.

Table 3

The Single Ecological Organism from the combination of Four Dimensions

Root	Trunk	Leaves	Fruit
Community	Environment	Culture	Discourse
(Origin & ownership)	(& (Habitat balance)	(& (Identity creativity)	(& (Power, future & change)

This table presents a metaphorical synthesis of the ecological model developed in the study. Using the image of a living organism, it illustrates how SWAK language planning operates as an integrated system. The community serves as the root, representing the origin and ownership of language initiatives. The environment functions as the trunk, providing the cultural and ecological habitat that sustains linguistic life. Culture forms the leaves, where language becomes visible through creativity, memory, and expression. Finally, discourse is represented as the fruit the tangible outcomes of dialogue, empowerment, and social change. Together, these



elements demonstrate that effective language planning grows organically from community foundations toward broader cultural and societal transformation. This final synthesis addresses the second research objective by offering a grounded ecological model of language planning derived from SWAK practices in Mindanao.

Ecological Language Planning Framework: Insights from the Experiences of SWAK Centers in Mindanao

This subsection presents the Ecological Language Planning Framework derived from the analysis of SWAK programs and activities in Mindanao. The framework synthesizes the relational and evaluative findings discussed in the preceding section and provides an analytical model for examining how language planning operates across institutional, community, and policy levels in multilingual contexts.

The framework draws on key perspectives in ecological language planning, including Haugen's (1972) view of language as a social ecology, Fill and Mühlhäusler's (2001) socio-ecological paradigm, Hornberger's (2002) continua of biliteracy, Wiertlewska's (2012) sustainability-oriented approach, and Fouces's (2020) concept of plurilingual ecology. These approaches converge in conceptualizing language as embedded in social relations, cultural practices, and institutional arrangements.

The model is organized around four analytical dimensions - community-based, environmental, cultural, and discursive which capture how language planning is enacted through participation, biocultural context, symbolic practice, and ideological negotiation. These dimensions are analytically distinct but empirically interrelated.

Structure of the Ecological Model

The framework is structured as a three-layered system reflecting different but interacting scales of language planning: (a) the macro-level national language environment, (b) the micro-level institutional ecology represented by SWAK centers, and (c) the intersystemic layer capturing circulation and feedback between these levels (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). First, external ecology (macro-level) refers to national



policies, educational frameworks, and media practices that shape the broader linguistic environment in which local languages operate. Filipino functions primarily as a connective language facilitating interregional communication (Bernardo, 2004; Tupas & Lorente, 2014). Second, internal ecology (micro-level) consists of SWAK centers as institutional sites where language planning is enacted through practices such as documentation, translation, literary production, and pedagogical integration (Hornberger, 2002; Hult, 2010). Lastly, dynamic flow (inter-systemic circulation) captures the bidirectional relationship between policy and practice, wherein local initiatives inform broader discourse while institutional support enables local sustainability (Johnson, 2013).

Taken together, the framework conceptualizes language planning as a multi-scalar, relational process rather than a linear implementation of policy. It positions SWAK centers as mediating institutions within a broader linguistic ecology and offers an analytical lens for examining how community practices, institutional structures, and policy environments interact in shaping language outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study contributes to language policy and planning research by highlighting how educational and cultural institutions mediate between national language policy objectives and the linguistic realities of minority communities. By examining the practices of SWAK centers in Mindanao, the study underscores that language planning in multilingual settings is not enacted solely through formal policy instruments but is shaped through educational programs, institutional practices, and community engagement. From an educational policy perspective, the findings suggest that institutions such as SWAK centers play a significant role in supporting multilingual learning, cultural transmission, and the symbolic recognition of minoritized languages. These functions are particularly relevant in contexts where formal education systems have historically prioritized dominant languages. Recognizing and strengthening the role of such institutions may therefore contribute to more inclusive language-in-education policies that accommodate linguistic diversity and promote equitable access to cultural and educational resources.



With respect to minority language policy, the study points to the importance of creating institutional conditions that enable minoritized languages to be visible, valued, and usable across educational and public domains. Rather than relying exclusively on top-down measures, policies that support localized initiatives, community participation, and institutional mediation may be more effective in sustaining minority languages over time.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is based on documentary analysis and does not directly examine learner outcomes, classroom practices, or community perspectives. In addition, the focus on Mindanao and on SWAK institutions limits the generalizability of the conclusions. Future research could extend this work by examining how educational language policies are interpreted by teachers and learners, or by comparing similar institutional arrangements in other multilingual regions. Overall, the study suggests that language-in-education and minority language policies benefit from being understood as multi-level, practice-based processes. Attention to institutional mediation, local capacity, and community engagement may enhance the effectiveness and equity of language planning in multilingual societies.

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