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LANGUAGE IN GOVERNANCE: POLITICAL LEXICONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORITY IN AN INDIGENOUS PHILIPPINE COMMUNITY

Gemalyn B. Liwaliw¹, Ronald B. Bulwayan², Daisy A. Mamaril³, Lailani C. Banggawan⁴

¹Assistant Professor I, Kalinga State University, liwaliwgemalyn425@gmail.com,
ORCID: 0009-0009-2573-5488

²Assistant Professor III, Kalinga State University, ronaldbulwayan16@gmail.com,
ORCID:0009-0000-9571-6607|

³Assistant Professor III, Kalinga State University, dazeynysn@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0000-6600-6091 |

⁴Associate Professor I, Kalinga State University, lbanggawan@ksu.edu.ph, ORCID: 0009-0006-5659-0910

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Corresponding Author: Gemalyn B. Liwaliw
(liwaliwgemalyn425@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This research explores the workings of political and legal terms in governance practices of the Mangali community in Tanudan, Kalinga, Philippines. Through a qualitative methodology that combines thematic analysis and discourse-informed analyses, interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analyses were conducted with 23 participants, including elders, local leaders, and members of the Mangali community. The study reveals that certain terminologies support the legitimisation of authority, organise participation processes, and mediate conflict management. Such language practices also bridge formal and customary governance practices. The research offers empirical evidence of language's instrumental nature in governance and adds to indigenous governance and linguistic anthropology debates.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous governance; political lexicon; discourse analysis; symbolic power; legal pluralism; linguistic anthropology; decolonial governance; Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a vehicle for communication; it is constitutive of social reality. Across contemporary social science, there is growing recognition that governance is not only institutional but also discursive—produced and reproduced through the meanings embedded in language. Political authority, legitimacy, and justice are not simply enacted through formal structures; they are articulated, negotiated, and sustained through the words that communities use to describe them. As recent scholarship has emphasized, language functions as a form of social infrastructure, shaping how governance is understood and practiced across contexts (Blommaert, 2020; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

This perspective becomes particularly salient in indigenous settings, where governance is deeply embedded in cultural systems rather than confined to bureaucratic institutions. Native governance systems typically revolve around oral cultures, customary law, and relational modes of governing that are intimately bound up in language. Scholarship has increasingly suggested how such systems co-exist with state systems, resulting in hybrid governance structures (with legal and cultural pluralism and continuity) (Tamanaha, 2021, McKinley & Tuhiwai Smith, 2023). These and other studies have also shown how understanding such systems requires shifting focus from external outputs and outcomes to a closer engagement with indigenous worldviews, such as language as a site of knowledge (Smith, 2021).

In this new wave of research, language is emerging as a key element in governance. In this regard, research in political linguistics and legal anthropology has shown how language influences institutional processes, governance, and forms of power (Fairclough, 2015; Mokoena et al., 2025). But much of this work still privileges the macro level - state language policies, political speech, or national identities. Even in research on indigenous governance, language is typically reduced to a descriptive category, used to record cultural practices or markers of identity, rather than as an analytical framework through which we understand the organisation of governance.

Although research has increasingly acknowledged the role of language in governance, current research tends to focus on macro-level processes around language policy, rhetoric, and discourse in institutions. There is little empirical work, however, exploring the use of specific language agents, such as political and legal terminologies, in the micro processes of day-to-day

governance at the community level. This research sheds light on this question by examining how these terminologies are deployed to construct governance practices of authority, involvement, and mediation in an Indigenous governance case.

In answering these questions, a refocusing of analysis is needed, from language as representation to language as practice. This study takes its point of departure from the notion of terminologies as not mere representations of political and legal cultures, but rather as active components of governance. In this regard, the study fits three overlapping theoretical frameworks.

First, it draws on the theory of linguistic relativity, which views language as influencing social actors' understanding of the world (Lucy, 2016). Although this approach is not deterministic, it highlights how language categories impact the way governance is understood and practised.

Second, the research draws on Foucauldian discourse theory, which considers language as a medium of power production through meaning-making practices (Foucault, 1980). In this context, legal and political terms can be considered discursive formations that construct frameworks of legitimate governance, legitimate conduct, and just outcomes. Governance, then, is not only about institutional practices but also the discourses that underpin them.

Third, the analysis draws on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power to emphasise the ways in which some forms of language are legitimised within a social field (Bourdieu, 1991). For example, indigenous societies discuss elders, customary law, and "good" behaviour, which may be endowed with symbolic power that legitimates authority and confirms hierarchy. Language, then, is a tool for the exercise and negotiation of power.

These views build on understandings of legal pluralism, which acknowledge the presence of multiple normative frameworks in any given society (Tamanaha, 2021). This approach, therefore, does not distinguish between areas of formal and customary governance, but enables an examination of their inter-relationship, often via language. Legal and political terminologies might be used as intermediary mechanisms that mediate, translate, or negotiate between these systems.

In practice, this paper examines the Mangali people's governance system in Tanudan, Kalinga, in the Philippines, which is a combination of customary and formal political systems. Existing research has focused on various aspects of governance in the region, including the bodong governance system and the leadership of the tribal leaders; however, little is

known about the linguistic means by which governance is carried out. Through an analysis of the significance, usage, and implications of political or legal terminologies, this study aims to show how governance is not only institutionalised but also linguisticised.

This study contends that political and legal terminologies have a functional role in shaping governance patterns by affecting the recognition of authority, modes of participation as well as the resolution of conflict and pursuit of justice within a community. As such, they hold up a culturally anchored and ever-evolving governance, combining tradition and modernity.

Through its emphasis on language, this study adds to conversations in the fields of linguistic anthropology, geography and in indigenous studies. It contributes to these efforts by providing an empirical account of the role of language in enacting

governance, and it answers demands to decolonise research methodologies that take indigenous knowledges seriously, not just as subjects of study, but also sources of theoretical knowledge.

This study aims to examine how political and legal terminologies function within governance practices in the Mangali community. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify and document key political and legal terminologies used in governance contexts;
2. Analyze the meanings and contextual usage of these terminologies based on participant interpretations;
3. Examine how these terminologies function in governance processes, particularly in relation to:
 1. legitimation of authority,
 2. structuring of participation, and
 3. framing of conflict resolution.

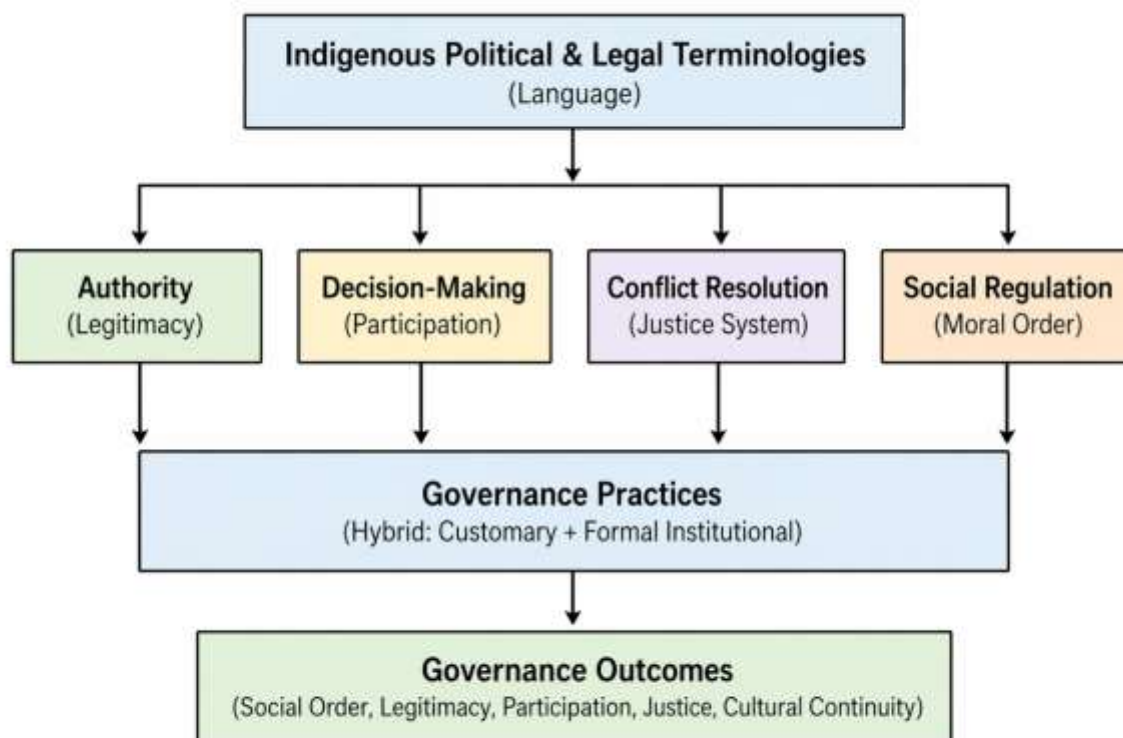


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, illustrating how indigenous political and legal terminologies function as mechanisms that play a significant role in shaping governance practices within the Mangali community.

This study conceptualizes political and legal terminologies as discursive resources that perform key governance functions. Specifically, language is examined through three analytical dimensions: (1)

legitimation of authority, (2) structuring of participation, and (3) framing of conflict resolution.

These functions operate within a context of legal pluralism, where customary and formal governance systems coexist and interact. Rather than treating governance as purely institutional, the framework assumes that linguistic practices mediate how actors interpret authority, rights, and responsibilities.

The framework guides the analysis by examining how specific terminologies are used in practice to legitimize leadership, regulate participation, and shape the resolution of disputes within the Mangali community.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between language and governance has increasingly been re-examined in recent scholarship, particularly within interdisciplinary fields such as sociolinguistics, legal anthropology, and political science. Rather than treating language as a neutral conduit for communication, contemporary research positions it as a constitutive element of governance—one that shapes authority, regulates participation, and structures access to justice. This shift is especially significant in indigenous contexts, where governance systems are embedded in culturally grounded knowledge systems, oral traditions, and localized forms of meaning-making. Understanding how language operates within these systems is therefore central not only to theoretical debates but also to broader efforts toward inclusive and decolonial governance.

2.1. *Language, Power, and Governance Structures*

Recent studies have reaffirmed that language plays a critical role in structuring political and legal systems. For instance, Mokoena et al. (2025) demonstrate that language policies in multilingual states function as mechanisms of both inclusion and exclusion, shaping access to governance and reinforcing existing power hierarchies. Their narrative review, which synthesizes interdisciplinary research from 2021 to 2025, highlights that dominant languages often marginalize minority groups in legal and administrative processes, thereby reproducing structural inequalities.

Similarly, Aluya (2024) examines the intersection of language and law in Nigeria, revealing how linguistic dominance affects access to justice. Through qualitative discourse analysis, the study shows that language barriers influence legal representation, court proceedings, and overall participation in the justice system. While these findings underscore the structural importance of language, both studies remain largely focused on formal institutional contexts, leaving unexplored the role of localized or indigenous linguistic systems as independent governance mechanisms.

Complementing this line of inquiry, Sofyan (2023) employs discourse analysis to examine how minority

political actors in Indonesia use language strategically to construct identity and gain representation. The study demonstrates that language functions as symbolic power, enabling marginalized groups to negotiate political space. However, its focus on electoral politics limits its applicability to broader governance processes, particularly those operating outside formal political arenas.

2.2. *Indigenous Governance and Legal Pluralism*

A parallel body of literature has explored governance within indigenous communities, often framed through the lens of legal pluralism. Karso (2025) highlights the coexistence of customary and state legal systems, noting that while such arrangements suggest inclusivity, they often operate within hierarchical structures that privilege state law. Using a political ecology approach, the study reveals that indigenous governance systems are frequently marginalized despite their continued relevance in local contexts. This finding is echoed by Aboagye (2024), whose analysis of mineral rights governance in Ghana shows that legal frameworks often fail to recognize indigenous terminologies and meanings, resulting in limited empowerment of local communities.

Methodologically, these studies rely on document analysis and policy review, which provide valuable macro-level insights but lack engagement with everyday linguistic practices. While they highlight the structural limitations of existing governance systems, they do not sufficiently explore how language operates within indigenous institutions themselves.

Recent scholarship has begun to integrate decolonial perspectives into this discussion. Abdullah et al. (2025), through a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis, identify a growing trend toward decolonial governance frameworks that emphasize indigenous epistemologies and participatory approaches. However, the study also notes a lack of empirical research, particularly in Southeast Asia, and calls for more context-specific analyses that move beyond conceptual discussions. This gap is particularly relevant to the present study, which seeks to provide such empirical grounding.

Language, Culture, and Institutional Continuity

Another emerging strand of research focuses on the relationship between language, cultural preservation, and governance. Saputra (2024) examines how governance frameworks in Indonesia influence cultural heritage preservation, arguing that language plays a crucial role in maintaining

institutional continuity. The study adopts a qualitative approach, combining policy analysis with community-level observations, and finds that governance systems are more effective when they incorporate local linguistic and cultural practices.

Similarly, Puspitasari (2024) explores collaborative governance in regional language revitalization programs, highlighting the role of language in achieving sustainable development goals. The study demonstrates that language revitalization is not merely a cultural endeavor but also a governance strategy that enhances participation and social cohesion. However, both studies tend to treat language as an outcome of governance rather than as a mechanism through which governance is structured.

In the technological domain, recent work on indigenous languages further underscores their importance in governance contexts. Fernandez-Sabido and Peniche-Sabido (2025) argue that indigenous languages must be understood as systems of knowledge that inform governance practices, particularly in the design of community-based technologies. Likewise, Shi and DiFranzo (2026) highlight the risks of ignoring cultural and linguistic diversity in governance frameworks, particularly in the context of multilingual artificial intelligence systems. These studies expand the discussion beyond traditional governance structures, emphasizing the broader implications of language in shaping institutional practices.

2.3. Synthesis: Patterns, Contradictions, and Gaps

Across these bodies of literature, several patterns emerge. First, there is strong consensus that language plays a central role in shaping governance, whether through discourse, policy, or cultural practices. Second, indigenous governance systems are increasingly recognized as complex and effective, particularly in maintaining social cohesion and resolving conflicts. Third, there is a growing emphasis on decolonial approaches that prioritize indigenous knowledge systems.

However, significant gaps remain. One major limitation is the lack of micro-level analysis of language within governance systems. While macro-level studies focus on policy and institutional frameworks, and ethnographic studies examine governance structures, few studies analyze how specific terminologies function as operational mechanisms in governance processes. This gap is particularly evident in studies of legal pluralism, where the focus remains on institutional coexistence

rather than linguistic mediation.

Another issue is the fragmentation of theoretical approaches. Research on discourse, legal pluralism, and indigenous governance often operates in isolation, resulting in a lack of integrative frameworks. For example, while discourse studies emphasize the role of language in shaping power, legal pluralism research tends to prioritize institutional arrangements. This creates a disconnect between theoretical insights and empirical findings.

Contradictions also emerge in how language is conceptualized. Some studies treat language as a tool of exclusion, emphasizing its role in reinforcing inequalities (Mokoena *et al.*, 2025; Aluya, 2024), while others highlight its potential for empowerment and cultural preservation (Saputra, 2024; Puspitasari, 2024). These differing perspectives suggest that language functions both as a mechanism of control and as a resource for resistance, depending on the context.

In light of these gaps, the present study seeks to advance the literature by examining how political and legal terminologies function as constitutive elements of governance within the Mangali community. Unlike previous studies that treat language as descriptive or symbolic, this research positions it as a central analytical lens for understanding governance processes.

By focusing on specific terminologies, the study provides a micro-level analysis of how authority is legitimized, how decisions are made, and how conflicts are resolved. Methodologically, it integrates qualitative approaches with discourse analysis, addressing the limitations of both macro-level policy studies and purely descriptive ethnographies. Theoretically, it bridges discourse theory, legal pluralism, and decolonial perspectives, offering a more cohesive framework for understanding governance.

However, existing studies remain limited in two key respects. First, they predominantly rely on macro-level analyses, such as policy review or institutional discourse, with limited attention to how language operates within everyday governance interactions. Second, language is often treated as a descriptive or symbolic feature rather than as an analytical mechanism. As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how specific terminologies function in practice to structure governance processes.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative design integrating thematic analysis with discourse-oriented analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring political and legal terminologies, while discourse analysis focused on examining how these terms function within social interactions to construct authority, regulate participation, and frame conflict resolution.

Narrative inquiry enabled the collection of lived experiences, oral histories, and culturally embedded interpretations of political and legal terms. To extend beyond descriptive accounts, thematic analysis and discourse-oriented analysis were employed to systematically examine how these terminologies structure governance processes such as leadership, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

3.2. *Research Locale*

The study was conducted in the municipality of Tanudan, Province of Kalinga, Philippines, focusing on the Mangali community. The site was selected due to its well-preserved indigenous governance system, where customary practices coexist with formal political structures, making it suitable for examining hybrid governance dynamics.

3.3. *Participants and Sampling*

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals with direct knowledge and experience of governance practices within the community. These included:

- Tribal elders (pangat) and customary law practitioners (lumilintog), who possess deep knowledge of political and legal terminologies
- Elected local officials (nabilinan), who operate within formal governance structures
- Community members with active participation in governance-related activities

A total of 20–25 participants were engaged, ensuring representation across different roles and perspectives. Sampling continued until data saturation was reached, defined as the point at which no new significant themes or terminologies emerged.

3.3. *Data Collection Methods*

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure triangulation and alignment with the study objectives:

3.3.1. *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to

identify and document political and legal terminologies and to explore their meanings and interpretations. Interview guides included open-ended questions on leadership, governance practices, conflict resolution, and the use of specific terms in everyday contexts.

3.3.2. *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)*

Focus group discussions were conducted to capture collective interpretations and shared meanings of terminologies. FGDs also provided insights into how language is negotiated within group settings, particularly in decision-making processes.

3.3.3. *Participant Observation*

Non-participant observation was conducted during community meetings, dispute resolution sessions, and other governance-related activities. This method allowed the researcher to examine how terminologies are used in practice, particularly in shaping authority, participation, and justice processes.

All indigenous language excerpts were transcribed using a consistent orthographic representation based on participants' spoken forms. Translations into English were conducted by the researchers and verified through member checking with native speakers to ensure semantic accuracy. Where necessary, contextual meanings rather than literal translations were prioritized to preserve cultural nuance.

3.3.4. *Document Analysis*

Relevant documents, including community records, written agreements, and local materials, were analyzed to support the identification and contextualization of terminologies and to aid in the development of a glossary.

The discourse-informed interpretive analysis focused on examining how specific terminologies were used within naturally occurring and reported speech. Analytical attention was given to how speakers invoked terms to legitimize authority, frame participation, and resolve conflicts. Rather than isolating language as text, the analysis situates discourse within its social context, consistent with Foucauldian notions of discourse as constitutive of social reality and Bourdieusian perspectives on language as symbolic power.

3.3.5. *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using an iterative coding process integrating thematic and discourse-

functional analysis. The analysis followed three levels:

1. Lexical Identification – Political and legal terminologies were extracted from interview, FGD, and observational transcripts.
2. Semantic Coding – Identified terms were categorized based on participant-defined meanings and contextual usage.
3. Discourse-Functional Coding – Terminologies were analyzed in interaction to determine how they function in governance processes, particularly in:
 - legitimization of authority,
 - structuring of participation, and
 - framing of conflict resolution.

For example, the term pangat was coded semantically as a leadership role and analyzed functionally as a mechanism of legitimization, as it was consistently used to justify authority based on cultural knowledge and community trust.

Patterns were identified across multiple data sources to ensure analytical consistency and triangulation.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards in research involving indigenous communities. Approval was obtained from relevant institutional bodies and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) was secured from both community leaders and individual participants.

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and coding. Special care was taken in handling Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), ensuring that cultural protocols were respected throughout the research process.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Language in Governance Practices: Empirical Findings

This section presents empirical findings on how political and legal terminologies function within governance practices in the Mangali community. The analysis focuses on how these terminologies contribute to the legitimization of authority, structuring of participation, and framing of conflict resolution. These patterns are identified based on recurring linguistic practices observed across interviews, focus group discussions, and community

interactions.

4.2. Legitimation of Authority

Leadership within the Mangali community is shaped through culturally embedded linguistic practices. Terms such as pangat and lumilintog are used to identify individuals recognized as legitimate authorities.

4.2.1. Empirical Illustration

“Siya pangat te igammo na kan maawatana lintog ya sa ugalin da umili.”

(“He is a pangat because he understands the customs and laws of the community.”)

This suggests that authority is recognized based on cultural knowledge and adherence to community norms rather than formal designation alone.

Another participant emphasized the relational basis of leadership:

“adikapun makwa we ambalin ak pangat nu naid talek da umili kan dika.”

(“One cannot be a pangat without the trust of the people.”)

These findings indicate that leadership legitimacy is socially constructed through shared linguistic and cultural criteria.

This pattern aligns with the concept of symbolic capital, where authority is sustained through collective recognition rather than formal power.

4.3. Structuring of Participation

Participation in governance is mediated through terminologies such as bubbutus (election) and butantis (voters), which reflect the integration of formal democratic processes into indigenous governance practices.

4.3.1. Empirical Illustration

“Amine botantis ket awad de karbengan da, ngem masapole maawatan da de ugalin da umili.”

(“All voters have rights, but they must understand the customs of the community.”)

This suggests that participation is not solely based on formal rights but is conditioned by cultural understanding.

4.3.2. Another participant noted:

“Uray na awad karbengam nu adimpun maawatan kaugaliyan da umili kn lintog da, adidapun dika dongngon.”

“If you do not understand the customs, even if you have rights, you will not be heard.”

This indicates that meaningful participation depends on linguistic and cultural competence.

These findings show that participation is structured through both formal eligibility and culturally embedded expectations.

4.4. Framing of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is organized through terminologies such as lintog (customary law), uugod (settlement), and sapata (oath), which reflect a restorative approach to justice.

4.4.1. Empirical Illustration

“Settlement is not just ending the case, but restoring peace.”

This suggests that conflict resolution prioritizes the restoration of social harmony rather than punishment.

4.4.2. Another participant explained:

“Sa sapata kad dakampun ak ampatingga si ugud, isapatam we tuttuwa ibagbagam si sangun da umili.”

“An oath is not just words, but the affirmation of truth before the community.”

This indicates that truth and accountability are established through socially recognized practices.

These findings show that justice is framed through culturally embedded meanings that emphasize reconciliation and collective responsibility.

4.5. Language as Social Regulation

While not a primary analytical category, moral terminologies also emerged as an important supporting dimension that reinforces governance practices by guiding acceptable behavior

Beyond formal governance processes, language operates as a mechanism of informal regulation through moral terminologies such as agum and kamumus (greed).

4.5.1. Empirical Illustration

“Sa pangat, dakampun ak agom.”

(“Greed has no place in leadership.”)

This suggests that moral terminologies function as informal regulatory mechanisms guiding acceptable behavior.

These findings indicate that language can both enable and constrain participation, depending on individuals’ familiarity with culturally embedded terminologies.

This demonstrates that governance operates not only through institutions but through internalized linguistic norms, where individuals regulate themselves according to culturally embedded expectations.

4.5.2. Tensions, Exclusions, and the Limits of Linguistic Governance

While the findings highlight the integrative role of language in governance, they also reveal its potential to produce exclusion and inequality. Participation in governance processes is not equally accessible to all members of the community, as access is mediated by familiarity with culturally embedded terminologies. As one participant noted,

“No saan mo nga ammo dagiti sasao, narigat a makipaset iti panag-istorya”

(“If you do not know the terms, it is difficult to participate in discussions”), indicating that linguistic competence functions as a prerequisite for meaningful engagement.

It highlights inequalities in the distribution of linguistic capital, which shapes individuals’ capacity to influence decision-making processes. Younger members, in particular, may be disadvantaged due to limited exposure to traditional terminologies, while outsiders or formally educated actors may possess institutional knowledge but lack cultural fluency.

Moreover, the authority of elders, while culturally legitimized, may also reinforce hierarchical structures that limit alternative voices. The reliance on customary discourse can therefore simultaneously sustain cultural continuity and constrain the diversification of perspectives within governance processes. These findings complicate idealized representations of indigenous governance as inherently inclusive, revealing instead a more nuanced system in which language operates as both an enabling and constraining force.

4.6. Synthesis of Findings: Language in Governance Practices

The findings show that political and legal terminologies function in three key ways within governance practices. First, they contribute to the legitimation of authority by defining leadership based on cultural knowledge and community trust. Second, they structure participation by linking formal rights with culturally embedded expectations. Third, they frame conflict resolution through restorative principles that emphasize social harmony and collective accountability.

These patterns demonstrate that language operates as an important mechanism in shaping governance practices within the Mangali community.

5. CONCLUSION

This research explored the roles of political and

law terminologies in governance in the Mangali community. The results reveal that language is a crucial aspect of governance, shaping aspects such as recognition, participation and conflict resolution.

This research shows that these terminologies work as tools that regulate social and institutional functions. Linguistically, language is not merely descriptive, but also contributes to the constitution of governance in practice.

This research shows the need to include linguistic dimensions in studies of governance, especially those undertaken in indigenous and multilingual contexts.

Theoretically, the research builds on previous work by expanding discourse-oriented thinking about governance to micro-level indigenous language systems. It illustrates the role of symbolic power in local terminologies, and empirically supports decolonial approaches that view indigenous knowledge systems as a source for institutional practice. In doing so, the study also challenges mainstream governance models that focus on formal structures and overlook the linguistic tools of governance.

The study's findings extend beyond the local context to inform governance in other indigenous and multilingual contexts. They point to the need to explore language systems to understand effective governance. So understanding language as part and parcel of governance helps develop inclusive, culturally sensitive and sustainable governance practices.

In conclusion, the study confirms that governance in the Mangali community is not achieved only through institutions, but actually through language - the words that constitutes governance and its practices that define hierarchy, that mediate social and political relations and maintain social order.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on one community, thus limiting contexts to which the findings can be applied. Second, the interpretation of language practices is qualitative and may reflect the researchers' positions and the translation process. Third, the research recognizes patterns in language use but does not empirically quantify patterns on governance. This could be remedied by comparative research and/or mixed methods.

The researchers acknowledge and reflect on their role in interpretations of indigenous language practices. The authors have made attempts to enhance translation and interpretation accuracy through member checking and consultation with Indigenous community members. But translation

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and interpretation could still affect representations of meanings. Being mindful of this, the analysis centers on participant meanings and their use.

5.1. Recommendation

5.1.1. Policy and Governance Integration

Indigenous political and legal terminologies should be regarded as part of governance systems rather than cultural add-ons for local governance units and policy-makers. Government policies to promote local governance should align with these terminologies in areas like conflict resolution, local participation, and leadership building. This can increase cultural legitimacy and the effectiveness of governance programs in indigenous communities.

Educational and Institutional Application

Schools are urged to include indigenous political and legal terminologies in their governance, social studies, and civics education programs. This can happen through the creation of culturally relevant educational resources, such as the glossary developed from this research. This can assist in raising awareness of indigenous systems of governance, as well as respect for cultural and language diversity.

Documentation and Knowledge Preservation

There should be more focused support for the documentation and sustainability of indigenous terminologies, especially related to governance and law. It is important that researchers work together with elders and practitioners to document and pass on this knowledge system.

5.2. Further Research

Research could be undertaken to investigate how language and power intersect in the indigenous governance system in terms of inclusion and exclusion. Research could explore how language (political and legal) is accessed differently according to gender, age or status, and its impact on governance. Cross-cultural studies among indigenous communities are also advised to discern patterns and variations in indigenous language governance systems.

5.3. Integration into Decolonial Governance

Indigenous language systems should be included in decolonial governance frameworks by practitioners and academics. Understanding language as institutional knowledge can inform more context-sensitive and inclusive forms of governance in diverse and postcolonial contexts.

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