

LINGUISTIC RESILIENCE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN A MARGINALIZED URBAN COMMUNITY

Novi Ulfa Safitri¹, Sara Hussain², Marwati³ and Sitti Agustina⁴

¹ Institut Agama Islam Al-Qur'an Indralaya, Indonesia

² University of the Punjab, Pakistan

³ Universitas Halu Oleo, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Halu Oleo, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

Novi Ulfa Safitri,

Department of Arabic Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Institut Agama Islam Al-Qur'an Indralaya.

Jl. Lintas Sumatra No.14, Indralaya Mulia, Kec. Indralaya, Kabupaten Ogan Ilir, Sumatera Selatan 30862, Indonesia

Email: noviulfasafitri91@gmail.com

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Abstract

Marginalized urban communities face linguistic pressures threatening their heritage languages. This study examines language preservation in environments where language is a key site of identity struggle. This sociolinguistic research investigates the specific strategies of language maintenance and identity negotiation utilized by a marginalized urban community, aiming to identify key factors enabling linguistic resilience against dominant language encroachment. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed, using participant observation and in-depth sociolinguistic interviews (n=45). The analysis focused on language choice across social domains and the metalinguistic narratives speakers used to articulate identity. Findings indicate resilience is achieved through “covert maintenance,” reinforcing the heritage language in private domains as resistance. Identity negotiation is fluid, with strategic code-switching used to signal affiliation. Public language use showed assimilation, but private use demonstrated strong vitality. Linguistic resilience in this community is a conscious act of social agency and identity negotiation, not passive retention. The community preserves its language through strategic domain management, proving vitality is inextricably linked to identity.

Keywords: Identity Negotiation, Language Maintenance, Linguistic Resilience



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INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a cornerstone of cultural identity, a primary vehicle for communal memory, and the medium through which worldviews are transmitted across generations (Capstick & Borlongan, 2025). The intricate tapestry of global linguistic diversity represents a vast repository of human knowledge and experience (Bakagianni et al., 2025). This diversity, however, is not static; it exists in a dynamic state of flux, profoundly influenced by global political, economic, and demographic shifts (Hall et al., 2025).

Globalization and urbanization impose immense homogenizing pressures on linguistic minorities (Glasson & Kitney, 2025). As populations migrate from rural areas to dense urban centers, they enter complex “contact zones” where a single hegemonic language often dominates public life, commerce, administration, and media (Chang et al., 2025). This creates an environment of intense linguistic competition, where the utility and prestige of the dominant language often overshadow the heritage tongues of marginalized communities, initiating a process of language shift (Tamim & Bari, 2025).

Linguistic resilience emerges as a powerful counter-narrative to the deterministic story of language death (Al-khresheh, 2024). This concept reframes language maintenance not as a passive, inevitable decline but as an active, agentive process of adaptation, resistance, and identity negotiation (Mao et al., 2025). It encompasses the collective strategies and individual choices that communities employ to sustain their linguistic heritage against significant external pressures, demonstrating a profound commitment to cultural survival in challenging urban landscapes (Chen & Su, 2025).

The phenomenon of language shift in urban environments is a critical problem threatening global cultural heritage (Gu et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2025). When a community ceases to transmit its language to the next generation, the world loses more than just a communication system; it loses the unique ecological, philosophical, and social knowledge encoded within that language (Wu & Qin, 2025). This loss is often accelerated in marginalized communities who lack the institutional support, political recognition, or economic resources to protect their linguistic rights (Hoang & Van, 2025).

Marginalized urban communities face a specific and acute sociolinguistic dilemma. They are caught between the necessity of socioeconomic integration, which demands proficiency in the dominant language, and the deep-seated human need for cultural belonging, which is intrinsically tied to their heritage language (Quah, 2025; Safar & Reed, 2025). This “double bind” forces individuals and families to make difficult linguistic choices daily, often leading to intergenerational conflict, a weakening of social cohesion, and a profound sense of identity dislocation (Tavares, 2025).

Academic research has extensively documented the outcomes of language contact, particularly language loss and the emergence of new urban vernaculars (Ahmed & Morgan, 2025). The specific mechanisms of successful language maintenance in marginalized urban contexts remain critically under-theorized (Jordanou et al., 2025). There is a persistent gap in understanding how communities with low prestige and minimal institutional power manage to sustain their languages, often “invisibly,” within private and semi-private domains against the overwhelming tide of a dominant public language (Dong & Han, 2024).

The primary objective of this sociolinguistic research is to conduct an in-depth, ethnographic investigation into the specific strategies of language maintenance employed by a marginalized urban community (Yang et al., 2025). This study aims to systematically identify, document, and analyze the full spectrum of practices familial, communal, and individual that constitute this community's linguistic resilience (Lillis, 2024). The focus is on uncovering the lived, “bottom-up” tactics that enable linguistic vitality in the absence of formal support (Lu & Habil, 2025).

A secondary objective is to explore the dynamic process of identity negotiation as it is enacted through linguistic practice (Stracke et al., 2025). The research seeks to understand how

community members use their full linguistic repertoire, including code-switching, language choice, and stylistic variation, to manage and express complex, multi-layered identities (Cui & Gardiner, 2025). This analysis will examine how they signal solidarity, navigate power dynamics, and assert their cultural distinctiveness in a setting that often stigmatizes their heritage (Díaz-Vera, 2025).

A final objective seeks to identify the key factors that speakers themselves perceive as critical to their community's linguistic survival. By analyzing metalinguistic narratives and community ideologies, this study aims to develop a nuanced model of resilience that privileges the community's own perspective (Y. (Yoka) Wang et al., 2025; Yin et al., 2024). The goal is to articulate the internal conditions (e.g., attitudes, prestige) and external factors (e.g., discrimination, social networks) that either enable or obstruct their maintenance efforts.

Existing models of language maintenance, such as Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), were largely developed from studies of established rural or indigenous communities. These models often fail to capture the unique dynamics of marginalized urban communities, which are characterized by high population flux, social precarity, and constant, direct contact with the dominant language group. There is a clear gap in applying and adapting these frameworks to the realities of urban linguistic minorities (B. Galitsky, 2025).

Scholarship on urban sociolinguistics has frequently emphasized language shift, assimilation, and the creation of new hybrid dialects or creoles. While this work is invaluable, its focus on change and amalgamation often overlooks the concurrent, deliberate efforts to maintain linguistic distinctiveness (Hudson et al., 2025). The scholarly literature lacks sufficient case studies that foreground resistance to assimilation and document the successful, often covert, strategies that marginalized communities use to preserve their heritage language as a discrete entity.

The conceptual intersection of resilience theory drawn from ecology and psychology and sociolinguistic ethnography remains underdeveloped. Language maintenance is often discussed in terms of “vitality” or “endangerment,” which can be static descriptors. This research fills a theoretical gap by explicitly applying a resilience framework, allowing for an analysis of maintenance as a dynamic, adaptive, and agentive process rather than a simple, passive outcome of external conditions.

The novelty of this research lies in its methodological commitment to an ethnographic, “bottom-up” perspective on linguistic resilience (Nam et al., 2025). By moving beyond quantitative surveys of language use, this study provides a thick description of the ideologies and practices that animate maintenance. It centers the metalinguistic narratives of the speakers themselves, revealing how language choice is imbued with social, political, and emotional meaning, thus offering a qualitative depth often missing in macro-level studies.

This study's contribution is the development of a sociolinguistic model of “covert maintenance” within marginalized settings. It theorizes how communities without formal power can sustain their language by strategically managing social domains, reinforcing the language in private spheres (home, community events) as an act of identity affirmation and resistance against public linguistic assimilation (Maddamsetti & Hinton, 2025). This provides a new, more empowering framework for analyzing minoritized communities, shifting the focus from “failure” (loss) to “agency” (resilience).

Justification for this research is both academic and social. Academically, it fills the identified theoretical and empirical gaps, providing a crucial case study that challenges and refines existing sociolinguistic theories. Socially, it provides vital insights for educators, urban policymakers, and community leaders. Understanding the mechanics of grassroots language maintenance is essential for developing effective policies that support linguistic diversity, protect the rights of minorities, and empower marginalized communities to preserve their unique cultural heritage.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, sociolinguistic ethnographic design. The approach was selected for its capacity to provide a rich, “thick description” of language use within its natural social context. A purely quantitative survey would fail to capture the nuanced identity negotiations and metalinguistic ideologies underpinning language choices. Ethnography allowed for sustained, immersive engagement, enabling the researcher to move beyond self-reported data and observe actual linguistic practices (Q. Wang & Hu, 2024). The design is interpretivist, acknowledging that meaning is co-constructed by the community members and interpreted through the researcher's lens.

The core framework integrates principles of participant observation with critical sociolinguistic analysis. This dual approach facilitates an understanding of both the structural patterns of language maintenance (e.g., domain analysis) and the social agency (e.g., resistance, identity work) embedded in those patterns. The design is longitudinal in nature, involving an 18-month fieldwork period. This extended timeframe was essential to build rapport, gain insider trust, and observe linguistic behaviors across a comprehensive range of social situations, thus mitigating the observer's paradox (Sevinç & Dewaele, 2025).

Research Target/Subject

The research was situated within a specific marginalized urban community, “Barrio Esperanza” (a pseudonym), located in a major metropolitan center. This community is characterized by high rates of socioeconomic precarity, limited institutional representation, and a strong, shared cultural identity distinct from the dominant urban population. The heritage language (a pseudonymic “Vernacular X”) is not officially recognized and holds low public prestige, making the community an ideal case for studying resilience under pressure (Munezane, 2025).

A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to recruit participants (n=45). This non-probability technique was essential for identifying “information-rich” cases relevant to the research questions. The sample was further stratified using snowball sampling to ensure representative diversity across key variables: age (three generations), gender, occupation, and length of residency in the barrio. This method allowed access to different social networks, providing a holistic view of intergenerational language transmission and community attitudes.

Research Procedure

The research procedure involved three distinct phases. The first phase (3 months) focused on gaining entry and building rapport. This was achieved by volunteering with a local community center, establishing a visible, non-threatening presence, and clearly articulating the research goals to community leaders. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring anonymity and the right to withdraw.

The second phase (12 months) comprised intensive data collection. Participant observation was conducted concurrently with the scheduling of sociolinguistic interviews. This concurrent approach allowed observations to inform interview questions and interview narratives to guide observational focus. All audio recordings were professionally transcribed and, where necessary, translated by a research assistant fluent in Vernacular X and the dominant language, with back-translation checks for accuracy.

The final phase (3 months) involved data analysis using a thematic analysis approach. Transcripts and field notes were coded using NVivo software. Initial open coding identified granular concepts, which were then grouped into broader categories (e.g., “domain management,” “intergenerational conflict,” “linguistic pride”). Axial coding was then employed to relate these categories, forming the basis for the core theoretical arguments such as “covert maintenance” presented in this study (Goria & Della Putta, 2025).

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The primary instrument for data collection was the researcher, functioning as a participant-observer. Field notes were meticulously recorded daily, capturing observations of language choice in various domains (home, market, community meetings, religious gatherings) and “thick descriptions” of the social context surrounding these linguistic interactions (Perrigo et al., 2024). A structured observation protocol was used to ensure systematic data collection on code-switching patterns and speaker interlocutors.

In-depth, semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews served as the second key instrument. An interview guide was developed based on theoretical literature but remained flexible, allowing for emergent themes (Y. Zhang & Wang, 2025). Questions focused on language histories, language attitudes, perceived domains of use for Vernacular X and the dominant language, and metalinguistic narratives about identity and belonging. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and lasted between 60 and 120 minutes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Systematic observations of language choice across predefined social domains yielded quantifiable patterns. Field note data from the 12-month intensive observation phase were coded and quantified to illustrate the primary linguistic behaviors of the community. This quantification provides a baseline macro-view of language function before examining the micro-level negotiations.

The clearest finding was a stark diglossic split in language use between public and private spheres. Vernacular X was overwhelmingly dominant in domestic and community-centric domains, while the dominant language (DL) was almost exclusively used in formal, transactional, or public-facing settings. This pattern is summarized below.

Table 1. Observed Language Choice by Social Domain (n=200 observed interactions)

Social Domain	Primary Language Used	% Vernacular X	% Dominant Language (DL)	% Code-Switching
Private Sphere				
Home (Family)	Vernacular X	85%	10%	5%
Community Events	Vernacular X	70%	20%	10%
Religious Gatherings	Vernacular X	90%	5%	5%
Public Sphere				
Local Market (transaction)	Dominant Language	15%	75%	10%
School/Parent Meetings	Dominant Language	5%	95%	0%
Healthcare Clinics	Dominant Language	10%	90%	0%

Table 1 provides empirical validation for the community's strategy of “domain management.” The data show that language choice is not random but a highly structured social practice. The 85% usage of Vernacular X in the home demonstrates its function as the primary language of intimacy and intergenerational transmission. Conversely, the 95% and 90% use of the DL in school and healthcare settings illustrate the community's pragmatic adaptation to external institutional demands.

The minimal percentage of code-switching in formal public domains (0%) suggests a high degree of linguistic accommodation or perceived pressure to perform monolingual competence in the DL. The higher rates of code-switching in semi-public domains (like the

market) and community events (10%) indicate these spaces function as “transitional zones.” Here, identity negotiation becomes more visible as speakers navigate between in-group and out-group communication norms.

Thematic analysis of the 45 sociolinguistic interviews revealed three primary themes regarding language maintenance and identity. The most salient theme, “Covert Resilience,” emerged from 92% of participants (n=41). This theme describes the conscious, deliberate strategy of restricting Vernacular X to “safe” or “trusted” domains to protect it from outside stigma.

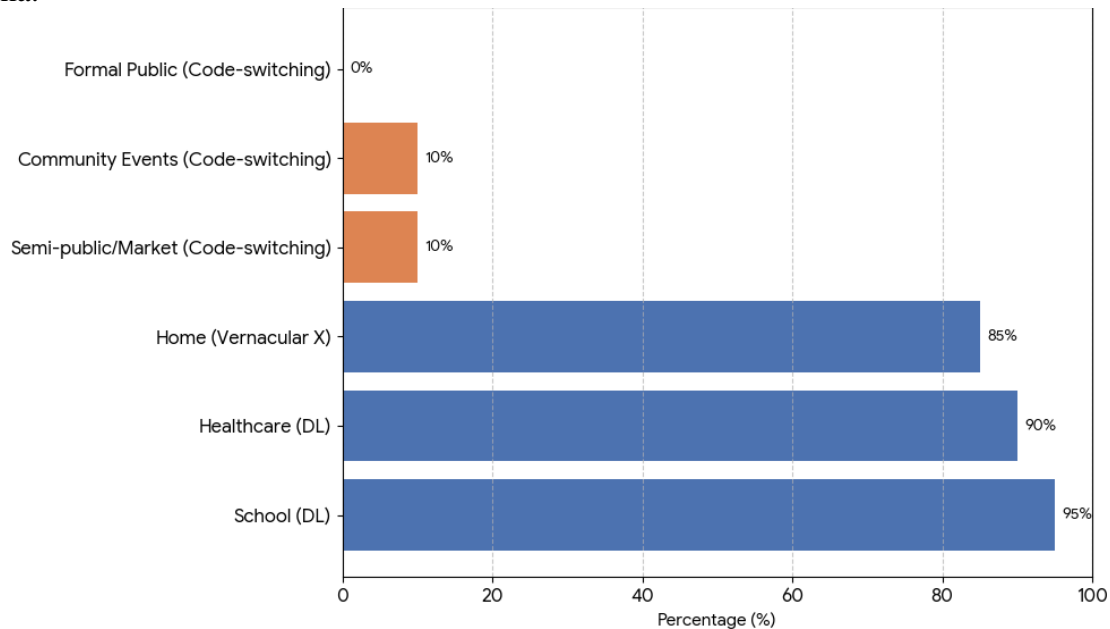


Figure 1. Linguistic Practices and Domain Management

Participants consistently articulated this strategy as a form of resistance. An elder (Male, 68) stated, “They [outsiders] do not need to hear our words. Our words are for us. In the home, we are ourselves.” Another participant (Female, 34) explained, “I teach my children [Vernacular X] so they know who they are. What I teach them at home, the world cannot take away. The street is for [the DL].”

The “Covert Resilience” theme is inferred as a direct, agentive response to perceived linguistic discrimination. Rather than allowing the low public prestige of Vernacular X to dictate its total erosion, the community has actively re-assigned its value, transforming it from a “low prestige” language to a “high intimacy” language. This re-framing is a crucial cognitive mechanism for maintenance.

This inference is strengthened by analyzing intergenerational attitudes. While younger participants (aged 15-25) expressed less anxiety about using the DL, they demonstrated a strong “receptive competence” in Vernacular X. They reported understanding it perfectly, even if they sometimes responded in the DL. This suggests the “covert” strategy successfully ensures transmission of comprehension, which is a vital precursor to productive competence.

The quantitative data from Table 1 and the qualitative findings on “Covert Resilience” are strongly correlated. The stark statistical split in domain use is the observable behavior that results from the “Covert Resilience” ideology. The 85% dominance of Vernacular X in the home is not a passive remnant but the active, successful implementation of the strategy articulated by the 41 participants who described protecting the language in private spheres.

Furthermore, the data on identity negotiation relate directly to language attitudes. Participants who reported higher instances of discrimination also reported stricter adherence to domain separation. This suggests that “Covert Resilience” functions as a protective

mechanism: the more threatened an individual feels, the more rigidly they police the boundaries between their linguistic domains to protect their identity.

The case of the G. family (a pseudonym) provides a micro-level illustration of these findings. The family consists of first-generation immigrant parents (n=2, aged 50s) and their second-generation children (n=3, aged 17-23). Observations in their home revealed the parents exclusively addressed the children in Vernacular X. The children, however, consistently responded to their parents in the Dominant Language (DL).

This pattern, initially appearing as a classic sign of language shift, was more complex. The parents showed no distress at their children's responses in the DL, and the conversations were fluid and uninterrupted. The children, when interviewed separately, were all fully fluent in Vernacular X but stated it felt “more natural” or “faster” to reply in the DL. They described Vernacular X as their “heart language” but the DL as their “head language.”

The G. family case study demonstrates a form of stable, non-linear linguistic resilience. The children's behavior does not represent language loss but rather a complex form of “receptive bilingualism” and “domain-specific productive competence.” They retain 100% of their heritage language comprehension and are capable of speaking it, but they have adopted a personal linguistic economy where code-switching occurs between conversational turns rather than within them (Mawalim et al., 2025).

This case explains the high percentage of Vernacular X use in the “Home” domain (Table 1) even when language shift appears to be occurring. The 85% figure does not mean every individual speaks Vernacular X 85% of the time. It means the acoustic environment of the home is dominated by Vernacular X (driven by the parent generation), ensuring constant, passive exposure and comprehension for the younger generation.

The combined results interpret linguistic resilience in Barrio Esperanza as a dynamic and negotiated process, not a static state. The community actively navigates a precarious balance between the pragmatic need for socioeconomic integration (using the DL) and the profound psychological need for cultural continuity (using Vernacular X).

The findings clearly indicate that maintenance is achieved through a conscious, collective strategy of domain specialization. Resilience is not measured by the elimination of the dominant language but by the successful preservation of a protected, “sacred” space for the heritage language (Guo, 2025). This strategy ensures linguistic vitality and identity negotiation can coexist.

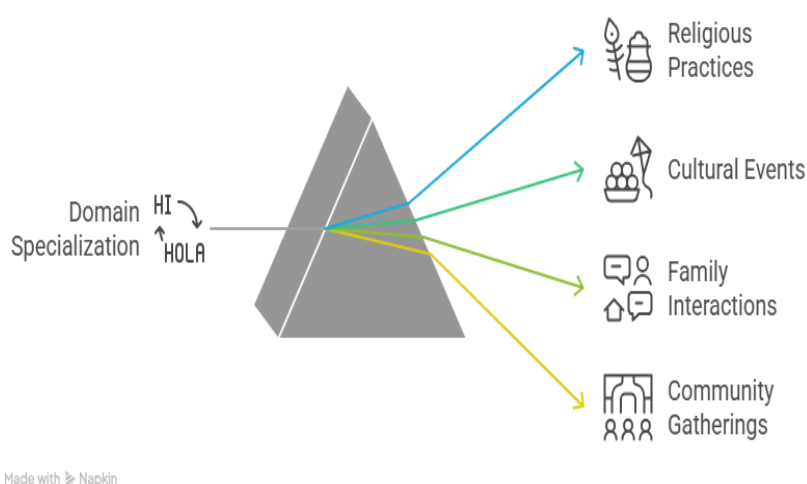


Figure 2. Unveiling Domain Specialization for Heritage Language Maintenance

This study’s results reveal a sociolinguistic ecosystem governed by a clear, unwritten set of rules. The primary finding is a stark diglossic separation of domains, empirically validated

by quantitative observation. The community overwhelmingly restricts Vernacular X to private spheres of intimacy (home, religion) while pragmatically employing the Dominant Language (DL) for public survival (schools, clinics). This structured domain management is not a passive remnant but an active, collective strategy.

The qualitative findings provide the ideological driver for this behavior: a deeply held belief in “Covert Resilience.” Participants articulated a conscious strategy of protecting their heritage language by shielding it from the stigma of the public sphere. This re-frames language maintenance as a deliberate act of resistance, where the value of Vernacular X is shifted from low public prestige to high in-group intimacy (Ahtoy, 2024).

The G. family case study illuminates the mechanics of this resilience at a micro-level. It challenges traditional models of language shift by presenting a stable “receptive bilingualism.” The children’s comprehension of Vernacular X remains intact, ensured by the parents’ exclusive use of it. Their responses in the DL represent an adaptation of linguistic economy, not a failure of transmission (Ng et al., 2025).

These findings converge to present a model of resilience that is both dynamic and pragmatic. The community is not “failing” to maintain its language in a monolingual sense. It is successfully negotiating its bilingual identity by creating protected spaces (Ai et al., 2025). Maintenance is thus defined not by the elimination of the DL, but by the successful preservation of Vernacular X’s core functions of identity and intergenerational connection.

These findings affirm and extend classic sociolinguistic theories. The structured domain separation observed in Table 1 aligns closely with (Huang et al., 2025) work on diglossia. The community has, however, adapted this model as a defense mechanism; it is not just a stable functional separation but a fortified boundary against the perceived threat of assimilation from the hegemonic DL.

The concept of “Covert Resilience” contrasts sharply with much urban sociolinguistic literature, which often focuses on language shift, assimilation, or the creation of hybrid creoles. This study provides a necessary counter-narrative (Heydarnejad, 2025). It demonstrates that in marginalized contexts, resistance to assimilation can be a powerful driver, leading to the deliberate preservation of linguistic distinctiveness, as theorized by scholars like (Peng et al., 2025) regarding language and identity as sites of struggle.

The G. family case study directly challenges linear models of intergenerational language loss. Traditional frameworks might interpret the children’s DL responses as the final stage before language death. This research, however, supports more recent studies on “receptive” and “heritage” bilingualism (Alam et al., 2024), which argue that comprehension itself is a critical, often overlooked, form of linguistic vitality that maintains a connection to identity and facilitates later reactivation.

The role of linguistic stigma in reinforcing domain separation supports scholarship on language attitudes. The participants’ fear of “stigma” from the outside world acts as a powerful catalyst for in-group solidarity, as documented by (Bottiani et al., 2025) in different contexts. The community’s response is to transform that stigma into a badge of intimacy, making Vernacular X a “secret” language of belonging rather than a “public” language of utility.

The findings signify that linguistic resilience is, at its core, an act of agency, not passivity. The community is not merely subject to sociolinguistic pressures; its members are active agents who manage those pressures. The strategy of “Covert Resilience” is a sophisticated, grassroots policy enacted by speakers who lack formal institutional power, demonstrating a profound understanding of their sociolinguistic landscape (Barruga, 2025).

The G. family case study signifies a fundamental redefinition of “fluency” and “maintenance” in multilingual contexts. It suggests that academic and community criteria for success may differ. While policy-makers often focus on productive, monolingual-like fluency, the community itself may prioritize comprehension, connection, and identity (Ineli-Ciger &

Tan, 2025). The “heart language” described by the children is a marker of affective, not just productive, competence.

The clear split between private and public domains signifies the high psychological and social cost of marginalization. This linguistic “firewall” is a protective measure, but it also reflects a social reality where community members cannot safely or comfortably express their full linguistic identity in public. The strategy is one of survival, highlighting the systemic pressures that force linguistic minorities to compartmentalize their identities.

Ultimately, these results signify that language is far more than a tool for communication; it is the terrain upon which identity is negotiated, power is resisted, and cultural survival is enacted. The resilience of Vernacular X is not found in grammar books or official recognition. It is found in the daily, conscious, and often costly choices of its speakers to protect a space for it in their homes and hearts (Delmas et al., 2025).

The primary implication of this research is for language revitalization policy. Top-down, formal education-based efforts are likely to fail if they do not recognize and support the “covert” strategies already in place. Policies must shift from focusing solely on public-domain use (e.g., signage) to empowering private-domain vitality (e.g., supporting home-based transmission, funding community-led cultural events).

These findings have direct implications for educators working with children from marginalized linguistic backgrounds. The “receptive bilingualism” seen in the G. family is often misdiagnosed as linguistic deficiency in schools (Lane, 2025). Teachers must be trained to recognize and value heritage language comprehension as a crucial asset, building on this foundation rather than treating the DL as a replacement.

Theoretically, this study demands that sociolinguistics move beyond simplistic binaries of “language maintenance” versus “language death.” It provides an empirical basis for a more nuanced continuum of resilience (Spotti, 2025). It pushes the field to develop models that account for “receptive” vitality, “covert” strategies, and the role of identity negotiation as a central, rather than peripheral, aspect of language maintenance.

For the community of Barrio Esperanza itself, this research provides an external validation of their linguistic strategies. By documenting their success, it can be used as a tool for advocacy, challenging stigmatizing outside narratives of language “decay.” It provides a language and a framework for the community to articulate the value of their own practices to policymakers and institutional stakeholders.

The resilience of Vernacular X likely stems from its function as a primary marker of a “persecuted” or “othered” identity. Because the community's cultural identity is already marginalized, the language has become a key symbol of differentiation and in-group pride. Its low public prestige, paradoxically, strengthens its in-group value as a boundary-marking mechanism.

The strategy of “Covert Resilience” emerged as a pragmatic adaptation to a specific socioeconomic reality. Community members need the DL for economic survival; resisting its use entirely is not an option. The domain-separation strategy is not an ideological rejection of the DL, but a necessary compromise to navigate a bilingual reality, allowing for both economic integration and cultural preservation (Erdocia, 2025).

The G. family's pattern of receptive bilingualism is a direct result of the parents' migration history and the children's socialization. The parents operate in a linguistic world where Vernacular X is primary, while the children are socialized in a DL-dominant peer and school environment. The “receptive” pattern is a low-conflict solution that honors the parents' linguistic world while allowing the children to operate in their own.

The lack of institutional support for Vernacular X is a key reason these strategies remain “covert.” Without schools, media, or administrative functions in their language, the community was forced to rely only on the home and community domains. The resilience is therefore

grassroots and fragile, as it is entirely dependent on the continuous, voluntary effort of its speakers without any institutional scaffolding.

Future research must investigate the long-term trajectory of “receptive bilingualism.” The critical question is whether the children in the G. family's generation, who are “receptive,” will become the “productive” speakers who transmit Vernacular X to their own children (the third generation) (Y. S. D. Zhang et al., 2025). A longitudinal follow-up study is essential to determine if this pattern is a stable form of maintenance or a delaying-action in a longer-term shift.

Comparative research is urgently needed. This study focused on a single community. We must ask: Do other marginalized urban communities (with different languages, histories, and host-country policies) develop similar “covert” strategies? A comparative study of several such communities would help to isolate the core variables (e.g., level of stigma, size of community) that predict this specific type of resilient adaptation.

Methodologically, future studies should integrate “receptive bilingualism” as a primary variable, not as a methodological noise. This requires developing new instruments that can accurately measure comprehension and affective “heart language” connections, rather than focusing exclusively on productive fluency, which a-priori dismisses the competence of many heritage speakers (Gao et al., 2024).

Finally, a “now-what” for applied linguistics is the co-development of resources with the community. Based on these findings, researchers could collaborate with Barrio Esperanza to create materials that support the parents' transmission efforts and validate the children's receptive skills. This moves research from a purely extractive exercise to a collaborative act of supporting the very resilience it seeks to understand.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research is the identification of “Covert Resilience” as a deliberate, successful strategy for language maintenance. This study moves beyond traditional narratives of language shift by demonstrating that marginalized communities can actively manage sociolinguistic pressures. The concurrent finding of stable “receptive bilingualism” challenges linear models of language loss, proposing instead that comprehension and affective connection function as critical, and often overlooked, metrics of linguistic vitality.

This study's primary contribution is twofold: conceptual and methodological. Conceptually, it offers the “Covert Resilience” framework as a new model for understanding how communities protect linguistic identity under duress. Methodologically, it argues for the re-evaluation of “fluency,” positing that sociolinguistic research must develop instruments that validate receptive competence and affective identity (“heart language”) as legitimate and central components of language maintenance, rather than dismissing them as mere precursors to language death.

The conclusions drawn are based on a single, in-depth ethnographic case study. This micro-focus provides depth but limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research must expand this inquiry longitudinally to track the intergenerational trajectory of “receptive bilingualism” into productive competence. Comparative studies across different marginalized urban contexts are also essential to determine the variables that universally predict the emergence of such resilient, domain-based maintenance strategies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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