

Language Survival and Cultural Preservation: A Comparative Analysis of Hmong and Miao Communities

Danyou Tang

*Waterford School, Sandy, USA
danyoutang@gmail.com*

Abstract: The rapid spread of globalization poses a growing threat to the survival of minority languages, which serve not only as tools for communication but as vessels of cultural identity, oral history, and collective memory. This study focuses on the Hmong and Miao—two ethnically and linguistically related groups originating from Asia—to examine how language and culture are being preserved across two divergent contexts: the Hmong diaspora in the United States and the Miao population in China. Using data from sixty interviews, this research conducted a comparative analysis of language proficiency, cultural practices, and community efforts in both groups. Results reveal a common trend of language attrition among younger generations, driven by the dominance of national languages—English and Mandarin—in education, media, and public life. Nonetheless, many cultural traditions such as festivals, clothing, and cuisine remain resilient and widely practiced. Both communities have initiated preservation efforts through language programs, community events, and digital outreach, although access to resources is uneven, especially in rural Miao regions. The study highlights how socio political environments, generational attitudes, and access to education shape the trajectory of language and cultural maintenance. It also identifies promising strategies for revitalization, such as stronger institutional support and increased cultural visibility through social media. By comparing two groups with shared origins but differing experiences of migration and assimilation, this research offers valuable insights into the broader challenges and possibilities of preserving minority identities in an increasingly globalized world.

Keywords: Hmong, Miao, Language Preservation, Culture Preservation

1. Introduction

Losing a language means more than the disappearance of words and grammar—it is the erosion of an entire worldview [1]. Language encodes unique systems of knowledge, values, oral traditions, and cultural practices passed down through generations [1]. As globalization accelerates, many minority languages are becoming endangered [2], taking with them not only their linguistic richness but also the distinct identities and histories of the people who speak them. UNESCO estimates that one language dies every two weeks, and nearly half of the world's 6,000+ languages may vanish by the end of the century.

Among the many languages at risk are those spoken by the Hmong and Miao communities, which are part of the Miao-Yao (Hmong-Mien) linguistic subfamily [3]. The Miao people are an ethnic minority primarily residing in the mountainous regions of southwest China, including provinces such

as Hunan, Yunnan, and Guizhou [4]. The Hmong, descendants of the Miao who migrated southward during the nineteenth century, later formed a diaspora in the United States following displacement during the Indochinese Wars in the twentieth century [3]. Though culturally linked, the two groups now live in very different socio-political contexts, leading to divergent patterns in language maintenance and cultural expression.

The diversity of the Miao language reflects the historical isolation of different subgroups across China. It comprises three primary dialects—eastern, central, and western—with limited mutual intelligibility. Interestingly, the western Miao dialect remains mutually intelligible with both major Hmong dialects [5]: Hmong White and Hmong Green, which are themselves named after the traditional clothing colors worn by women in each group [6]. These overlapping yet distinct linguistic systems offer a unique opportunity to study the intersection of cultural continuity, migration, and language shift.

While there has been some research on language and culture preservation within each community [7-10], studies have largely focused on isolated contexts. For instance, research in the U.S. has documented generational language shifts in cities such as Merced, California [7], and gauged attitudes of Hmong Americans toward preserving their linguistic heritage [8]. In China, scholars have examined the sociolinguistic dynamics among the Miao in regions such as Xiangxi, including their interactions with other ethnic minorities and the impact of education policy on language vitality. However, few studies have undertaken a comparative analysis of the Hmong and Miao communities despite their shared origins.

Comparing these communities can yield valuable insights into how minority languages survive—or falter—under different political, economic, and cultural pressures. Around the world, other minority groups have implemented innovative strategies to counteract language and cultural erosion. For example, the Māori of New Zealand revived their language through *Kōhanga Reo* (language nest) preschool programs [11]. Hawaiian saw a resurgence due to immersion schools and official recognition of the language [12]. In Wales, government policies have normalized bilingualism in education, media, and public life [13]. These examples underscore the vital role of institutional support, community engagement, and intergenerational transmission in preserving linguistic heritage.

This paper seeks to contribute to this broader conversation by investigating the similarities and differences in language proficiency, cultural practices, and community maintenance between the Miao in China and the Hmong in the United States. Through interviews with community members, this study examines the current state of language and cultural preservation, highlighting the strategies employed, the challenges faced, and the socio-political factors influencing both communities. By exploring key dimensions such as education, fluency, and cultural celebrations, the research aims to illuminate how minority languages evolve in different environments—and what can be done to help them thrive. For clarity, this paper uses the term *Miao* to refer to the community residing in China, and *Hmong* to denote the American Hmong population.

2. Methods

This study aims to compare the Hmong and Miao communities—who share a common cultural origin but have experienced different trajectories in the United States and China—in order to identify effective strategies for preserving their endangered language and cultural heritage.

Table 1: Demographic information of Hmong interviewees

ID	Age	State	Education	Proficiency
H1	36	AK	High school	Basic
H2	40	CA	Associate	Proficient

Table 1: (continued)

H3	27	OR	Bachelors	Proficient
H4	33	NC	Associate	Intermediate
H5	35	CA	High school	Proficient
H6	N/A	MI	N/A	N/A
H7	32	CA	Bachelors	Proficient
H8	16	N/A	High school	Basic
H9	14	MN	High school	Intermediate
H10	27	WI	Associate	Intermediate
H11	37	NC	Bachelors	Proficient
H12	22	WI	Bachelors	Proficient
H13	27	WI	Bachelors	Intermediate
H14	39	WI	Associate	Proficient
H15	39	PA	Masters	Basic
H16	17	CA	High school	Intermediate
H17	36	MI	Masters	Intermediate
H18	31	MO	Bachelors	Intermediate
H19	35	WI	Associate	Proficient
H20	38	NV	Masters	Intermediate
H21	27	NY	Bachelors	Intermediate
H22	30	WI	Bachelors	Intermediate
H23	39	NC	Associate	Proficient
H24	21	SC	Pursuing Bachelors	Intermediate
H25	27	CA	Bachelors	Intermediate
H26	23	WI	Bachelors	Intermediate
H27	17	MN	High school	Intermediate
H28	43	CA	2-year college degree	Intermediate
H29	26	CO	Bachelors	N/A
H30	22	WI	Bachelors	N/A

Table 2: Demographic information of Miao interviewees

ID	Age	Location	Education	Proficiency
M1	32	Guizhou	Bachelors	Proficient
M2	27	Hunan	Bachelors	Proficient
M3	42	Hunan	Associate	Proficient
M4	33	Guizhou	Middle school	Proficient
M5	48	Guizhou	Vocational school	Proficient
M6	29	Hunan	High school	Proficient
M7	63	Hunan	Associate	Proficient
M8	33	Chongqing	Bachelors	Proficient
M9	27	Yunnan	Middle school	Proficient
M10	21	Hunan	Associate	Basic
M11	70	Hunan	Associate	Proficient
M12	35	Hunan	Middle school	Proficient

Table 2: (continued)

M13	28	Hunan	Middle school	Proficient
M14	39	Guizhou	High school	Proficient
M15	46	Hunan	Associate	Proficient
M16	27	Hunan	Middle school	Intermediate
M17	22	Guizhou	Middle school	Proficient
M18	57	Hunan	Associate	Proficient
M19	25	Guizhou	Bachelors	Proficient
M20	22	Yunnan	Bachelors	Proficient
M21	47	Hunan	Bachelors	Proficient
M22	45	Hunan	Bachelors	Basic
M23	42	Hunan	Bachelors	Basic
M24	69	Guizhou	Bachelors	Proficient
M25	51	Hunan	Vocational school	Proficient
M26	29	Guizhou	High school	Proficient
M27	37	Guizhou	Masters	Proficient
M28	29	Yunnan	Middle school	Proficient
M29	25	Hunan	Bachelors	Basic
M30	59	Hunan	Associate	Proficient
M31	47	Hunan	Middle school	Proficient

Note. IDs starting with “H” denote Hmong participants, and IDs starting with “M” represent Miao participants. “N/A” indicates that the participant chose not to report this information. Self-reported language fluency was standardized into three categories—basic, intermediate, and proficient—by interpreting participants' varied descriptions. Responses such as "elementary level" or "very slow" were categorized as basic, terms like "conversational" or "moderate" were classified as intermediate, and descriptors such as "fluent" or "advanced" were grouped under proficient.

A total of sixty individuals participated in this study, comprising thirty Hmong participants and thirty Miao participants. All participants were identified through the Chinese social media platform RedNote by searching for posts related to Hmong and Miao cultural topics. Individuals were contacted via direct message and invited to participate in an interview-based study.

To ensure accessibility and flexibility, participants were offered two modes of participation: a scheduled phone interview or a written response format. Those who opted for the written format received the full interview questionnaire and were asked to complete and return it at their convenience. Data collection took place between January 2025 and March 2025.

The interview consisted of sixteen open-ended questions divided into three thematic sections:

- **Language Use and Transmission** – Questions examined participants' proficiency, frequency of use, and contexts in which they speak their heritage language, as well as intergenerational language transmission within families and communities.
- **Cultural Practices and Identity** – This section explored participants' engagement with traditional customs, festivals, clothing, cuisine, and other cultural expressions, as well as how these practices shape their sense of identity.
- **Challenges and Strategies for Preservation** – Participants reflected on the obstacles their community faces in maintaining their language and cultural traditions, as well as any personal or collective efforts they undertake to preserve them.

Responses from both interview formats were analyzed and summarized to highlight key similarities and differences in the language and cultural experiences of the Hmong and Miao communities, with attention to preservation efforts in each group.

3. Results

3.1. Similarities of Hmong & Miao communities

3.1.1. Learning the dialects

The Hmong and Miao communities share similarities when it comes to the language learning process. People in both Hmong and Miao communities reported that they learned the local dialect within the household and practiced with community members, despite living in a nation where their dialect is not the official language. In other words, family and local community shape the language systems they grew up in. One interviewee from North Carolina summarized the community influence well(H10):

“I grew up in a Hmong speaking household so I learned a lot from family members. Most of the elders only speak Hmong so it’s important to speak Hmong back to them so they can understand you. Aside from the household, there are also Hmong churches that sing and preach in Hmong and read the Bible in Hmong.”

For those who grow up in a household where family members don’t intentionally speak the dialect at home, however, visiting the heavily Hmong/Miao populated communities could be a difficult experience. Interviewees reported “feeling like an outsider” (H14, M9, M27, etc) since most members in a heavily populated community use the dialect to communicate. Not speaking Hmong/Miao would make it difficult to communicate with the elders who only speak Hmong/Miao, and it is often frowned upon. This language barrier can hinder their ability to fully participate in cultural traditions, family gatherings, and community events. Marrying into a traditional family will also be harder because speaking to the elders would be difficult. While not speaking the language can create a disconnect within Hmong/Miao communities, it is not as big of an issue in places where the Hmong/Miao population is more dispersed.

3.1.2. Decreased usage of dialects with globalization

The spread of the Hmong/Miao dialects and culture is significantly hindered by globalization, which refers to the exchange of cultural symbols among people worldwide, fostering shared norms and behaviors that shape both individual identities and collective cultures. [14]. When popular media primarily use a dominant language, younger generations in minority communities often grow up with limited proficiency and interest in their heritage language. The prevalence of English in mainstream culture and social media further challenges their ability to maintain fluency. One individual explained this factor well(H2):

“I believe that the media is the sole reason why we’re losing our language. Screen time is always in English in this day and age where young children are given phones and tablets. A touchy but relevant reason is that parents don’t speak Hmoob [Hmong] in the household anymore. Children thus, have no information streams going back to them in their mother tongue.”

In both Hmong and Miao communities, the younger generation is shifting towards mostly using the dominant language, which is English in the US and Mandarin in China, even at home with their parents. Though they would still learn the dialects, they practice and speak mostly when visiting the older generation, who are less proficient in the dominant language. In some cases, English has become the primary language in the home, too, because everyone is so accustomed to English. This trend is also evident in China, where Mandarin has significantly impacted the decline of Miao.

In addition to daily language practices with close family and friends, globalization has reinforced the dominance of major languages in education, work, and social life due to globalized media, urban migration, and economic pressures. Younger Hmong and Miao speakers increasingly prioritize languages like English and Mandarin, as opportunities for education and employment often require fluency in these dominant languages. Consequently, the decline of the Hmong/Miao dialect is particularly present in urban areas. In the US, the small Hmong population and the necessity of English for school and work force the younger generation to pay more attention to improving their English rather than practicing Hmong voluntarily. The younger generation tends to struggle with speaking and writing unless they attend a Hmong school or actively immerse themselves in the language.

Similarly, in China, urban migration and the use of Mandarin in social media and the education system has led many Miao speakers to neglect their native language in favor of Mandarin. The younger generation substitute Mandarin for words they don't know how to express in Miao, especially if they have spent less time in the Miao regions. While children in rural areas maintain more fluency due to exposure to elders and villagers who advocate for Miao, children in urban areas have decreased fluency due to lack of language environment and education in Mandarin. The modern advocacy for Mandarin in kindergarten, the best time for learning a language [15], has further contributed to language loss. The increasing incorporation of Mandarin words into Miao vocabulary has contributed to the language's decline and transformation. One interviewee's response summarized the situation well(M10):

“在生活在同一苗族地区的人,与会慢慢不说苗语,逐渐汉化,忘却本族语言。因普通话的普及,和本地人口流失(如外出务工),和对自己民族文化不自信。”

People living in the same Miao communities slowly stop speaking Miao, gradually assimilating into Han culture and forgetting their native language. This is due to the spread of Mandarin, the migration of local populations (such as leaving for work), and a lack of confidence in their ethnic culture.

The increasing reliance on dominant languages has made it difficult to pass down Hmong and Miao traditions and cultural knowledge. In the US, the younger generation are mostly speaking English, which makes it difficult to pass down the language, traditions, and culture to future generations.

Facing the reality of globalization and decreased importance of the dialects, both Hmong and Miao languages have adapted by incorporating elements from local languages into their daily conversation. The older generation of Hmong Americans often mix in Thai and Laotian words when they speak because they primarily came from Thailand and Laos. The younger generation often mix Hmong and English together, especially when something cannot be fully expressed in Hmong. Likewise, in China, Miao speakers frequently substitute Mandarin words, especially modern terms such as internet slang or modern inventions.

As an effort to combat the decreased usage of dialects due to globalization, language classes have been established in regions with large Hmong and Miao populations to help preserve linguistic heritage. In the United States, some areas with concentrated Hmong communities, such as Minnesota and California, offer Hmong language courses in schools and community centers. Similarly, in China, some schools in Miao-populated regions provide instruction in the Miao language, although Mandarin remains dominant in formal education. Despite these efforts, accessibility to language education remains limited, and many learners rely on family and community resources to maintain fluency.

3.1.3. Cultural preservation through food, festivals, and artifacts

While language is a key vehicle for cultural preservation, many Hmong and Miao people still maintain their culture through celebrating holidays and cooking traditional foods. In the American Hmong community, many people practice their culture by attending Hmong church services, singing Hmong songs, and performing traditional Hmong dances. There are also cultural events such as Hmong New Year, funerals, and weddings. Cooking Hmong traditional foods is also an important cultural practice. Many people report eating Hmong foods more often than eating other foods.

Hmong and Miao preserved similar cultural objects, including clothing, embroidery, silver jewelry, and *lusheng/qeej*. The *paj ntaub*, which translates to flower cloth, also prevails as an important symbol of the Hmong/Miao culture. Silver accessories such as necklaces (*xauv/sauv*), earrings, and headpieces remain an important part of the traditional Hmong/Miao costume worn during big festivals. Individuals from both communities report eating foods that they grow such as green vegetables.



Figure 1: Left is *xauv/sauv*, right is *paj ntaub*

3.1.4. Preservation challenges

Although many Hmong/Miao people own traditional objects, traditional craft skills and foods are at risk of being lost. For example, the art of silversmithing is highly exclusive – within a community, only specific families possess the skills. Additionally, due to traditional gender norms in the community, such skills can only be passed down to sons, not daughters. This exclusivity of the skill has been expressed by a Miao participant (M24):

“(银饰锻造)只传家族里的人,不外传,不传给女儿。”

(Silver jewelry forging) is only passed down within the family, not to outsiders, and not to daughters.

The strict rules for knowledge inheritance, combined with urbanization, have made cultural transmission almost impossible. Sons who live in urban areas typically do not prioritize learning the systematic and meticulous processes for creating embroidery; therefore, embroidery is also in decline. One Hmong individual from Portland reported(H3):

“I own a lot of Hmong clothes and Hmong silver accessories. But I don't know how to embroider such clothes anymore. I don't have the skills.”

3.2. Differences between the Hmong and Miao communities

3.2.1. Written texts for dialects

Although both Hmong and Miao have written scripts, only the Hmong have widely adopted theirs. All Hmong interviewees reported the existence of a written system, while only 32% of Miao respondents acknowledged one, and among them, the majority lacked proficiency in writing it.

Hmong is commonly written using the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), which was developed by French missionaries in Laos during the 1960s [16]. Similarly, the Miao community has the Pollard script [17], created by British missionary Samuel Pollard in 1905. Despite the existence of these writing systems, cultural transmission among the Miao remains primarily oral, and formal documentation is often conducted in Mandarin. One interviewee from Hunan described the limited use of the written system (M12):

“这个文字在近代才发明的,所以普及和运用范围很小很小,只有一小部分喜欢苗文的苗族人才会去学习和认识,对于主要的传承的话,还是靠口口相传,或者一些传统的习俗,和官方的记录。”

This script was only invented in modern times, so its popularity and usage are very limited. Only a small group of Miao people interested in Miao writing take the initiative to learn it. For cultural transmission, oral communication, traditional customs, and official records remain the primary methods.

The lack of a widely adopted written system has posed challenges for the transmission of the Miao language. However, the Miao people have preserved their stories and traditions through alternative forms of cultural expression, such as embroidery, which features intricate, symbolic patterns sewed by colorful yarn, and batik, a fabric-dyeing technique that uses wax to create detailed designs.

3.2.2. Dialect fluency and education level

A comparison between fluency and education level reveals notable differences in language retention among the Hmong and Miao communities. In the Hmong American community, higher education levels often correlate with lower fluency in Hmong, as individuals are more immersed in English-dominant environments for academic and professional success. Many Hmong individuals with college degrees reported struggling with speaking or writing in Hmong unless they actively maintained the language through cultural events or family interactions.

In contrast, within the Miao community, education level does not show a strong correlation with fluency. Since Mandarin is the primary language of education in China, both highly educated and less formally educated Miao individuals often experience similar levels of fluency loss in their native language. Many Miao individuals rely on oral transmission to maintain their language, and those who pursue higher education often shift to using Mandarin for formal and professional communication. This contrast highlights how different socio political and educational structures influence language maintenance in minority communities.

The t-tests for both the Hmong and Miao groups indicate a statistically significant relationship between education level and language proficiency. For the Miao community, the t-test revealed a highly significant result with a p-value of 0.00096, suggesting a strong association between higher education levels and better language proficiency. This implies that formal education may provide opportunities to maintain or improve language skills, possibly due to structured language instruction or more consistent exposure to the language in educational settings. On the other hand, the Hmong

group also showed a significant result with a p-value of 0.041, indicating a similar pattern where education level correlates with language proficiency. However, the relationship is less pronounced in the Hmong community compared to the Miao group, which could reflect different cultural, social, or environmental factors. Overall, these results suggest that education plays a key role in language retention for both groups, with the Miao community showing a stronger connection between education and proficiency.

3.2.3. Documentation and education of tribal history

The preservation of history plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity, and the Hmong and Miao communities differ in their approaches to documenting their past. The Hmong community has a big push to preserve history and appears to have more documentation on their history. Hmong history is preserved in academic books and essays and is taught in classes, both in person and online. There are also Hmong cultural shows, art exhibits, film festivals, podcasts, and print magazines from Hmong artists. Additionally, the government has also helped fund museums to preserve Hmong history. In contrast, many Miao people report little to no documentation on Miao history. Their knowledge of history is mostly learned verbally through elders in the community.

When asked about their history, Hmong and Miao tend to focus on different aspects of their history. Hmong Americans tend to emphasize their contributions in the IndoChinese wars and their migration to the US. Many talked about how the Hmong people helped the USA in the Secret War and then were sponsored by Christian and Catholic churches to come to the US. As one interviewee explained (H28):

“Also specifically I know the story of how Hmong people (from Laos) escaped to America during the War. Many American-Hmong are taught about how we helped the USA in the Secret War and it is why we became refugees in America.”

The Miao people, on the contrary, discuss ancient history with legends. One prominent figure in Miao mythology is Chiyou, a warrior leader often depicted as having the head of an ox and the body of a man. According to legend, Chiyou was the leader of the Nine Yi tribes and fought against the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi, and his ally, Yandi, in a legendary battle. One participant discussed this history in the interview (M4):

“最早从黄河中下游发源, 神话故事里的蚩尤战败了, 蚩尤九 yi 部落统领, 他头上有牛角, 牛头人身, 炎帝和黄帝联合打败了蚩尤, 争夺了很多地盘, 苗族被迫迁徙去往西南地区 云南贵州四川广西湖南。所以苗族傍山而建, 为了躲避敌人, 不容易被发现, 在山上可以耕田种菜。”

The Miao people originally lived in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. In the myths, Chiyou, who had horns on his head and the body of a bull, was the leader of the Jiuyi tribe. He was defeated by Yandi and Huangdi, who joined forces to claim territory, forcing the Miao people to migrate southwest to Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangxi, and Hunan. This is why the Miao settled in the mountains—to avoid enemies and remain hidden while farming and growing vegetables there.

3.2.4. Sharing traditions and welcoming all

Hmong Americans often reflect a blending of traditional Hmong values with influences from American culture. Many embrace both sets of values, combining respect for elders, strong family ties, and cultural traditions with American ideals such as individualism, personal freedom, and career advancement. This integration is reflected in one participant’s response (H4):

“I appreciate Hmong values like respect for elders, strong family ties, and cultural traditions. At the same time, I also embrace American values like individualism, personal freedom, and career advancement. I try to balance both in my daily life.”

In contrast, many Miao individuals in China emphasize continuity with long-standing cultural traditions. They tend to prioritize collective values such as respect for elders, hospitality, harmony with neighbors, simplicity, and diligence—principles that have played a central role in sustaining their community over generations. One individual named some Miao values (M10):

“祖先崇拜、家族观念、自然崇拜、和谐共生、勤劳勇敢、坚韧不拔、团结互助、社会和谐、艺术审美、文化传承。”

Ancestor worship, family values, nature worship, harmonious coexistence, hard work and bravery, perseverance, solidarity and mutual assistance, social harmony, artistic aesthetics, and cultural heritage.

4. Conclusion

The preservation of minority language and culture is not merely a matter of cultural nostalgia but an urgent necessity, as communities face the unstoppable pressures of globalization and cultural uniformity. Projections indicate that nearly half of the approximately 6,000 existing languages may become extinct by the end of this century [1]. This concerning statistic underscores the necessity of devising comprehensive strategies to preserve linguistic diversity, which functions not only as a cultural artifact but also as an extensive repository of human knowledge accumulated over thousands of years [1]. The Hmong and Miao cultures, in particular, are repositories of valuable skills and crafts such as silversmithing, embroidery, and ancestral storytelling. The loss of these cultural elements would be an irreplaceable loss to humanity's collective heritage.

This study conducted a comparative analysis of language and cultural preservation between the Hmong American and Chinese Miao communities, aiming to better understand the challenges faced by each group and the factors influencing their efforts. Through interviews, data collection, and statistical analysis, the research revealed a shared trend of declining language proficiency among younger generations, often tied to limited use at home, educational and assimilation pressures, and globalization. The study also explored how attitudes toward heritage language and culture differ across communities and generations and highlighted potential strategies for revitalization, including community events, government support, and the use of digital platforms. By comparing the experiences of these two culturally connected yet geographically separated groups, the research contributes new insights into the preservation of minority identities in a globalized world.

The study has shown that both the Hmong American and Miao communities are struggling to preserve their cultures, especially among the younger generation. The data indicates that Hmong Americans have made efforts to provide resources and opportunities for language and culture learning, while the Miao community faces limitations due to scarce resources. This discrepancy underscores the impact of differing socio-political environments on language maintenance. Comparing the experiences of these communities offers valuable insights into effective language and cultural preservation strategies. For instance, the presence of a written system in some communities appears to contribute to higher literacy and fluency, suggesting that formalized education and documentation could play a crucial role in sustaining these languages. By learning from each other's successes and challenges, both groups can refine their efforts to ensure the survival of their linguistic and cultural heritage.

The implications of these findings are profound. Firstly, if younger generations do not attain full proficiency in their native languages by the time they must pass it on to their children, both Hmong and Miao languages risk further decline. Secondly, if cultural traditions are not actively preserved and transmitted, key aspects of these communities' identities—such as traditional crafts and historical narratives—may be lost forever. Many participants pointed to education as a central vehicle for maintenance, emphasizing the need for robust programs that teach younger generations about the

culture and history of the Hmong and Miao peoples in ways that foster pride and connection. While some Hmong schools exist in highly populated areas of the U.S., their reach and quality remain limited. Participants called for stronger government support, such as bilingual education policies and funded cultural preservation programs, especially in Miao regions of China.

Additionally, community members highlighted the importance of attending cultural events to reinforce communal identity and provide immersive environments for language use. Respondents also underscored the transformative power of social media in spreading awareness, fostering pride, and engaging younger audiences in revitalization efforts. If Hmong and Miao culture can be more present and valued in mainstream culture—especially through digital storytelling—it may empower younger generations to see their heritage as an integral part of their national identity.

The need for further study is clear. Future research should explore effective language planning strategies tailored to each community's unique circumstances. Longitudinal studies on generational language retention, the role of government policy, and the impact of digital media could provide valuable data for shaping preservation efforts. Continued examination of how language attitudes, policies, and practices evolve is essential to better support minority communities in sustaining their cultural and linguistic legacies.

In conclusion, the preservation of Hmong and Miao languages and cultures is not just a matter of remembering the past, but a vital component of sustaining the diversity of human experience for the future. Without action, centuries of knowledge, worldview, and identity may be lost. However, through education, policy, community engagement, and creative initiatives, these voices can continue to speak, sing, and shape the world. The responsibility falls on researchers, educators, governments, and community members alike.

References

- [1] Huszka, Balazs, Alexander Stark, and Indah Aini. "Linguistic Sustainability: Challenges and Strategies of Preserving Minority and Indigenous Languages-The Case of Indonesia." *preservation* 7.6 (2024).
- [2] McCARTY, TERESA L. 2003. "Revitalising Indigenous Languages in Homogenising Times." *Comparative Education* 39 (2): 147–63. doi:10.1080/03050060302556.
- [3] CULAS, CHRISTIAN, and JEAN MICRAUD. "A Contribution to the Study of Hmong (Miao) Migrations and History." *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 153, no. 2 (1997): 211–43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27864832>.
- [4] Diamond, Norma. "Defining the Miao Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views" *Cultural encounters on China's ethnic frontiers* (1995): 92–116. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780295804088-004>
- [5] Johnson, Michael. "An Overview of Hmong Sa (West Hmongic, Thailand ex. Myanmar) Phonology and Lexicon."
- [6] Xee Vang. *The Hmong Language*. <https://studyhmong.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Hmong-Language-by-Xee-Vang.pdf>
- [7] Withers, A. C. (2004). *Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in Merced, California*. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(3), 425–461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2004.10162624>
- [8] Xiong-Lor, Vicky. *Current Hmong perceptions of their speaking, reading, and writing ability and cultural values as related to language and cultural maintenance*. California State University, Fresno, 2015.
- [9] Yang, Zhuohua, et al. "The Religious Dynamic and Changing Identity of Hmong Peoples in the Midwest: Preservation and Perseverance." (2016).
- [10] Mingsheng Li, Stephen M Croucher & Lin Shen (2024) *Language endangerment and the linguistic vitality of Miao in China: cultural shifts and revitalisation strategies*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2024.2411006
- [11] Hohepa, M., Smith, L. T., & McNaughton, S. (1992). *Te Kohanga Reo Hei Tikanga Ako i te Reo Maori: Te Kohanga Reo as a context for language learning*. *Educational Psychology*, 12(3–4), 333–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144341920120314>
- [12] Wilson, W.H. and Kamana, K.. "Chapter 3. Insights from Indigenous Language Immersion in Hawai'i". *Immersion Education: Practices, Policies, Possibilities*, edited by Diane J. Tedick, Donna Christian and Tara Williams Fortune, Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2011, pp. 36-57. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847694041-006>
- [13] May, S. (2000). *Accommodating and Resisting Minority Language Policy: The Case of Wales*. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3(2), 101–128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050008667702>

- [14] Cosenza MG, Gavidia ME, González-Avella JC (2020) Against mass media trends: Minority growth in cultural globalization. *PLoS ONE* 15(4): e0230923. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230923>
- [15] Griva, Eleni, and Rena Sivropoulou. "Implementation and evaluation of an early foreign language learning project in kindergarten." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 37 (2009): 79-87.
- [16] Long, Y., & Liu, H. (2023). The history and current situation of the Hmong writing system. *Journal of Chinese Writing Systems*, 7(4), 263-271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25138502231209506>
- [17] Z. Deng, "Pollard script's creation and spread," *Journal of Sino - Western Communications*, vol. 1, (1), pp. 1-8, 2009. Available: <https://login.ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/pollard-scripts-creation-spread/docview/750520357/se-2>