UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
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Ongula Ngee Twa Penduka

ILLUMINATING FUTURES -
PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENT-TEACHERS ON THE FUTURE
OF THE OSHIWAMBO LANGUAGE

Master's Degree Programme in Futures Studies (MA)
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Abstract

Oshiwambo, is a living indigenous language within Namibia's multilingual and multicultural landscape. Despite its sociocultural significance, it faces increased marginalisation propelled by the forces of globalisation and urbanisation. The national language policy prioritises English as the primary medium of instruction in schools. The use of Oshiwambo is in decline particularly among younger generations who increasingly favour English for their education and economic mobility and social interaction.

Using an exploratory qualitative participatory approach this study combines ethnography with futures research methods, to explore the perspectives of 53 student teachers on the possible trajectory of the Oshiwambo language by 2054. The study uses Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) in futures workshops combined with ethnographic observations to study and explore this topic. Teachers of indigenous languages offer important insights into the processes of language transmission, loss, and revitalisation in multilingual and multicultural societies and therefore, their views on the future of the language they intend to teach provide critical insights on broader sociolinguistic dynamics.

The study, further, explores the complex interplay of language policy, societal attitudes, ecological sustainability, and the ongoing technology advances shaping the trajectory of the Oshiwambo language. Although multilingualism is celebrated in developmental discourse, African languages remain increasingly confined to informal domains, reinforcing patterns of systemic marginalisation. The study affirms this complex paradox, as participants assert that, while Oshiwambo is deeply valued as a symbol of cultural identity, it remains marginalised in both everyday communication and in institutional settings.

While this study is personally motivated, it is partly informed by a distinct lack of futures research and methodologies studies on Namibian languages. It provides scholars a framework for deconstructing complex societal issues with a foresight perspective. By exploring both optimistic and pessimistic views of the future, the study identifies key drivers and opposing forces influencing the trajectory and sustainability of the Oshiwambo language.

Cultural resilience, ecological knowledge, and the innovative use of technology emerged as promising avenues for language revitalisation. In contrast, societal neglect, policy inertia and balancing individual choice with emerging global trends were seen as forces accelerating language decline. The results highlight young educators' agency and capacity to reimagine language futures underscoring the critical role of intergenerational transmission in sustaining the indigenous African language futures.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on indigenous language sustainability. It reveals how intergenerational agency, the awareness of plurality of futures, and most importantly the application of creativity in engaging with technologies can inform innovative language revitalisation strategies. It underscores the need for dynamic, community-rooted approaches that reimagines Oshiwambo as a living, evolving language - capable of thriving within Namibia's shifting sociocultural and technology landscape.

Keywords: Indigenous languages, Oshiwambo, Language policy, Language revitalisation, Futures studies, Causal Layered Analysis, Narrative analysis Language revitalisation, Cultural sustainability

Masters' Thesis

Oshilongwa: Eilongo Lyonakuyiwa
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Efalemo

Oshiwambo, shoka shi li elaka li na omwenyo muNamibia ngoka e li oshilongo shi na omalaka nomithigulukwakalo dha yoolokathana. Nonando shi na esimano lyopankalathano nopamuthigululwakalo wo osha taalela okudhinwa. Eyunipaleko, endoolopaleko, omilandu dhopashigwana dhelaka dhoka dha tula komeho/koshiyalo. Elongitho lyOshiingilisa ongelaka lyomalogelo nolyopambelewa oyo naanaa tayi endeleleke egwopevi lyelaka ndi, unene maapopi yalyo aagundjuka mboka taa tsikile noku li yambidhidha omolwelongo nomolwomahupilo.

Epekapeko ndika otali longitha omukalo gwomakonakono gopauvalelwamo, nomapekapeko gomonakuyiwa/gomatalikomeho okukonakona onkalo yelaka lyOshiwambo oku ka thika ko2054 oku shi talela pamayiuvo gomulongwalongi. Epekapeko olyo tuu ndika otali konakona nkene omulandu gwelaka, omaiyuvo gaakwashigwana, ehumokomeho lyuungomba nuutekinolohi, osho wo elongitho lyomalaka gopaigwana tayi nwetha mo onkalo yelaka ndika.

Omanga elongitho lyomalaka ogendji tali nyanyukilwapwaa na okutula milonga, omalaka gOshiafrika onkee ngaa haga kala ga ngambekelwa koonkalo inadhi ihwa po, shoka hashi fala mokuthigwa po. Aapopi yelaka aagundjuka onkee ngaa taa tsikile nokusimaneka Oshiingilisa omolwelongo nosho wo molwomahupilo, shoka tashi fala Oshiwambo monkalo ondhigu okuuva ko moka lya simanekwa ongedhidhiliko lyopamuthigululwakalo ihe olya dhinika pakulongithwa.

Epekaapeko ndika otali longitha omukalo omupe gwo CLA okulalakanena okutala konakuyiwa, pwaa na omalimbililo ihe opena eyikwatopomutima, mokuvongokonona mboka ya simana mokutunga po ekalekepo lyOshiwambo. Aalongi yomalakaoyo yeli yasimana unene mokulandula nokunjdandjukununa ngene elaka hali ilongwa, okutaandelithwa nenge okuli kanitha po. Mokulongitha epekapeko ndika lyokutala komeho, otaku ka yelithwa mo nawa ependulepo nekalekepo lyelaka lyOshiwambo moNamibia.

Omanga epekaapeko ndika olyopumwene, otali mono mo woo kutya omaiyuvo gaapopi yelaka kombinga yalyo osho wo omatsomukumo ga ngambekwa oyo iiyetithi yeikwatopomutima, omanga iikwamuthigululwakalo oyo tayi humitha komeho omadhiladhilo nomaiyuvo omawanawa kombinga yelaka muulethimbo. Elongitho lyiikwaungomba nomakwatathano oyo omikalo / iilongitho iiwanawa mekalekepo lyelaka.

Iizemo yepekapeko otayi gwedha ko wo koonkundathana dha mbwalangandja kombinga yomulandu gwelaka, ehumithokomehonawa lyomuthigululwakalo, nonkandangala yomalaka gaavalelwamo mehumokomeho lyaAfrika,nokugandja uuyelele mekuthombinga ndyoka tali shilipaleke ompumbwe tayi tsikile yOshiwambo momimvo dhomilongo tadhi ya. Otashi tende omuthindo ompumbwe yo ku etapo omikalo dha guma aakwashigwana oku lundulula nkene ya taalela onakuyiwa yelaka lyoshiwambo, li kale lina omwenyo lyo li tsikile nokuhuma komeho moNamibia yo nakuyiwa njoka ya taalela ehumo komeho monkalathano no pautekenika.

Iityadhindo: Omalaka gaavalelwamo, Oshiwambo, Omulandu gwelaka, ekolekululo lyelaka, Eilongo lyonakuyiwa, CLA, Efatululo, Omuthigululwakalo gwiixwapo,

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Abbreviations

CLA – Causal Layered Analysis

L1 – First language denoting Mother tongue

Mol – Medium of Instruction

NAGN – National Art Gallery of Namibia

NSA – Namibia Statistics Agency

UNAM – University of Namibia

HPC – Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

GIDS – Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

EFR – Ethnographic Futures Research

ILO – International Labour Organisation

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

RQ –Research Question

1 Introduction

Oshiwambo, a living indigenous language in Namibia, is facing growing marginalisation, despite its deep sociocultural significance. This chapter positions the research by providing a brief context on Namibia and Africa's linguistic landscape while highlighting the challenges facing indigenous languages. It situates the study within broader debates on language policy, preservation, and revitalisation while framing the research question within contemporary discourse of uncertainties by questioning the future potentialities of Oshiwambo, an indigenous Namibian language.

1.1 The Namibian Context

Situated on the southwest coast of Africa is Namibia. A vast yet sparsely populated country. A richly multilingual and multicultural society where linguistic diversity is celebrated, respected and forms an integral part of its social fabric. Multilingualism refers to the coexistence of diverse linguistic practices, each carrying a varying degrees of economic and symbolic value (Iipinge & Huddleston 2023). While multiculturalism refers to the existence, respectful cohabitation of multiple cultures, Nic Craith (2006) emphasise that it must go beyond mere tolerance or coexistence arguing for meaningful intercultural dialogue and participation of these cultures particularly those with histories of linguistic and ethnic divisions. Van Pinxteren and Charamba (2022) further echoes this position by asserting that Africa's unique linguistic and cultural landscapes play a significant role in shaping both sustainable language policies and societal dynamics. At independence in 1990, Namibia adopted English as its official language to unify, reconcile and promote peace and equity in a country emerging from colonialism and a protracted war against apartheid rule (GRN 1990). By 1992, the Namibia government adopted English as the medium of instruction (MoI) in all public schools with mother tongue (L1) education for Grades 1-3 with the aim of promoting equal development of all languages (MEAC 2016). Notwithstanding this policy provisions, indigenous languages are experiencing a steady decline. As Norro (2022) suggests, only 35% of primary school children were receiving instruction in their mother tongue (L1). The rate of urbanisation and the perceived benefits of English accelerates this linguistic shift, with the proportion of Namibian households reporting English as their first language having risen from 3.4% in 2011 to 13% in 2023 (NSA 2023). Although the education policy provides foundational guidelines for

greater inclusivity, the implementation of the language policy in education remains inconsistent (Ashikuti 2019; Norro 2022). Given the complexity of linguistic dynamics, this study employs a qualitative participatory futures research and ethnographic approach to explore potential trajectories for the Oshiwambo language up to the year 2054.

1.2 The Oshiwambo Language

This study focuses on the Oshiwambo language.

At the turn of the 16th century, various Bantu-speaking communities migrated from the Great Lakes region in central Africa, settling in most parts of north and central Namibia. The Aawambo (also known as Ambo or Ovambo) established themselves in the low floodplains of the Etosha basin primarily in north-central Namibian regions of Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati, and Oshikoto known as Owambo as well as in south-central Angola's Cunene Province (Haugh 2022). The local economy is traditionally based on subsistence farming combining land cultivation and animal husbandry, which is also integral to the culture and traditional livelihood of the Aawambo community.

Oshiwambo, the language spoken by the Aawambo people, comprises twelve dialects: Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama, Oshingandjera, Oshikwambi, Oshikwaluudhi, Oshikolonkadhi, Oshimbalantu, Oshivale, Oshikwankwa, Oshikafima, and Oshindombodhola. Despite the number of dialects represented, they remain highly intelligible among speakers due to shared features in morphology, syntax, and semantics, Mbenzi and Shifidi (2014) concludes. Of these dialects, Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama are standardised, documented, and modernised. This is primarily attributed the Finnish missionary society work that started in 1870 in Owambo who provided the initial foundation of the written form of the Oshiwambo language (Mbenzi 2019). This early engagement between the Finnish missionaries and the Aawambo people also marked the start of a complex intercultural relationship between Namibia and Finland (Kaartinen, Koivunen and Shiweda 2019).

Mbenzi (2019) contends that although primarily driven by religious objectives, the Finnish missionaries under the leadership of Martti Rautanen contributed significantly to the promotion of Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama due to the location of their mission stations. These language development efforts were later expanded into domains of education and administration with the development of missionary schools and hospitals in the

Owambo area. One of the earliest developmental milestones was the Okaambeendee,[1] the very first Oshindonga primer, by Pietari Kurvinen in 1877 who deciphered the language structure and grammar formation. His work laid the foundation for religious texts, notably Rautanen's translation of the Bible in Oshiwambo, Ombiimbeli ya Nakambalekanene[2], in 1882. These early literary efforts significantly shaped the linguistic landscape of northern Namibia and impacted the evolution of the Oshiwambo language. Today, Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama dialects continue to be used widely and recognised in formal settings such as education, radio broadcasting, and in the small existing selection of written publications, reflecting their elevated status among the Oshiwambo dialects (Mbenzi 2019).

Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama continue to be recognised as dialects for teaching and learning. This means that, irrespective of the dialect spoken, Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama syllabus is used as (L1) for Grade 1-3.

Notwithstanding its widespread use and ranking as the most spoken local language in Namibia, its everyday use is on a steady decline, particularly among younger generations. The language faces a paradoxical situation: While it is considered a strong identity and cultural marker, it is increasingly marginalised in formal domains and at the same time, experiences a decline in user perception and utility-value. Brentzinger's (2014) contends that the indicator of the number of speakers alone cannot be used as a reliable measure of language vitality, emphasise that the decline of a language is not predicated on the speaker population but largely on external forces. This notion supports Kangira (2016) observations in which an increasingly pronounced number of parents favouring English in their upbring as a perceived entry point to education and employment while Iipinge (2018) maintains that attitudes and perceptions toward Oshiwambo remain mixed in urban and professional contexts.

1.3 Colonial Legacies and Linguistic Landscapes

Namibia's linguistic landscape is significantly shaped by its history. Germany colonised Namibia (1884–1915) and South Africa practiced apartheid rule in Namibia (1915–1990). During both these periods, indigenous languages were systematically marginalised

[1] The ABC.. (Alphabet) booklet
[2] The Bible of Martti Rautanen -know to Aawambo people as Nakambalekanene (chief of the hat bearers)

through language policies designed to reinforce racial hierarchies (Hayes 1998; Bamgbose,1999). Until after the Second World War, Namibia was referred to as German or Deutche-südwesafrika in which German became the language of the master and its value elevated until 1914. With South Africa taking administrative control of the territory in 1915, Afrikaans alongside German enjoyed this privilege, although both remained minority languages. The Germans controlled the economy while South Africa took responsibility of administering the country and its inhabitants (Haacke 1994). As a result, Afrikaans was systematically introduced not only in the administration system but in all public schools making Afrikaans the defacto language in education (SWA legislative assembly 1962). Indigenous languages had little or no curriculum. The Afrikaans language policy and medium of instruction was practiced until 1990. The sustained dominance of these Indo-European languages undermined the status of indigenous languages, leaving them with minimal or no institutional support to develop its lexicon (Fredericks 2021). This is further evidenced by the number of loan words in most indigenous languages associated with either German or Afrikaans (Uushona 2019; Fredericks 2021). Although considered a colonial language, the ultimate adoption of English was seen as not departing from international norms and practices justifying it as a language to promote unity and reconciliation (Ashikuti 2019). Yet, the poor performance of English among learners in the Owambo area was highlighted by several scholars as Iipinge (2018) contends while proposing a pro-mother tongue policy beyond the first three years of schooling.

This trend reflected the wider African continent. Following declarations of independence, most African states retained the languages of former colonial rulers – English, French or Portuguese – as official languages, often at the expense of their diverse languages (Bamgbose 1999; Kangira 2016). Today, indigenous languages remain underrepresented in formal domains such as education, governance, and media (van Pinxteren & Charamba 2023). Owusu-Ansah (2018) states that, although the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 seeks to promote indigenous languages as part of its broader decolonialisation strategy, these languages are yet to be recognised as official working languages of the AU limiting their use in continental affairs.

wa Thiong'o (2013) warns that the ongoing reliance on colonial languages perpetuates cultural dislocation and dependency. He argues that teaching and communicating in colonial languages displaces indigenous languages from daily life and thought, creating a

persistent hierarchy in which European languages are viewed as superior and more 'intellectual.' He advocates for deliberate policy shifts and societal commitment, without which linguistic diversity in Africa will continue to face increasing precarity.

1.4 Research Gap and Motivation

Despite Oshiwambo's widespread use in Namibia, its decline in intergenerational use and transmission raises serious concerns about its long-term vitality. English, largely considered an enabler for social and economic mobility, is increasingly preferred (Kangira 2016). While the dominance of English is well documented, there is a noticeable lack of futures-oriented research on the trajectories on Namibian languages particularly from the perspective of young emerging educators.

This thesis explores trajectory of possible futures for the Oshiwambo language by 2054 based on the perspectives of university-level student teachers. As future language educators, their views may offer valuable insight and offer a critical vantage point into how Oshiwambo is valued, imagined, and possibly reshaped within formal and informal learning spaces. Methodologically, the study integrates Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah 2009), ethnographic methods (Maso 2001) and narrative analysis (Cortazzi 2001) using triangulation with the view to deepen and validate the findings. By prioritising student teachers' voices, placing them at the centre on this inquiry, the study hold potential to contributing to academic discourse on the development, sustainability and revitalisation of indigenous languages in Namibian.

This research is grounded in both academic inquiry and personal experience. It is deeply informed by the researcher's personal journey and reflections on intergenerational language loss within their own family and community. Being a parent to a child who does not speak Oshiwambo, it raises profound questions about identity, belonging, and cultural continuity in post-colonial Namibia. This personal context serves not as bias but as a sensitising lens, guiding an deeper exploration and interrogation into language choice, perception and the subtle power dynamics embedded in linguistic preferences. Researchers' observation reveals that even in Oshiwambo speaking households, parents often default to English, and young speakers increasingly favour it. This shift warrants critical examination, particularly in the light of wa Thiong'o (1986) assertion that language preference reflects deeper attitudes towards power, identity and the perceived value of one's own language.

2 Research Designs and Objectives

Oshiwambo is an indigenous language in Namibia and an MOI from Grades 1-3. Attributed to more than half of Namibia's population, it is experiencing a decline both in its perceived value and social status. This decline, particularly in intergenerational transmission, has contributed to increased language switching and shifts, placing Oshiwambo at risk of decline and potential loss. This exploratory study explores potential trajectories of the Oshiwambo language by 2054, exploring the perceptions of student teachers at the University of Namibia Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus (UNAM-HPC) in north-central Namibia. The student teachers are training to become language teachers. Amid the rise in urbanisation, the shifting lifestyle patterns, and the evolving linguistic practices, young speakers are increasingly disengaging from the practical and sustained use of their mother tongue (Kangira 2016; Iipinge 2018).

For the study, a 30-year time horizon (2024-2054) was chosen, as it aligns with the Namibia's 30-year vision-setting framework. Masini (1993) submits that futures studies are concerned with identifying and anticipating long-term patterns and transformative changes, rather than focusing solely on immediate trends. A timeframe of several decades allows scholars to move beyond trends and to explore systemic shifts and substantial cultural transformations.

2.1 Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

Investigate trajectory for the Oshiwambo language through the lens of future language teachers in training.

Explore how changing socio-economic and cultural dynamics shapes these young speakers' relations with their indigenous language.

Utilise Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) workshops as a foresight method to collect and analyse student teacher perspectives and narratives on the Oshiwambo language.

Observe and report on the impact of futures research methods on participants

2.1.1 Research Questions

The study is guided by two primary research questions and two outcome-based inquiries:

RQ1: What role does Oshiwambo, as an indigenous language or mother tongue, play in the futures-making of student teachers?

RQ2: What images and narratives do student teachers create about the future of Oshiwambo in 2054?

These two questions are supported by the following two sub-questions:

RQa3: What themes and worldviews emerge from the student teachers' future perspectives?

RQb4: What insights do the student teachers gain through this knowledge-creation exercise?

Research Questions in Detail

RQ1 challenges current perceptions of first language (L1) teachers in training as they prepare to teach their mother tongue. It prompts critical reflections on the significance and relevance of language to their future teaching practice and raises questions on language dynamics in an ever-evolving Namibian society.

RQ2 examines the student teachers' worldviews and the critical role of educators in language transmission, preservation, and development. It underscores the idea that promoting indigenous languages is not limited to the home, but extends and flourish in educational environments, fostering pride and heritage consciousness in future generations.

RQa3 and RQb4 aim to strengthen the arguments presented in this study by exploring the ongoing shifting perceptions of language use, worldviews, and the transformative role of educators. Their contribution to formulating alternative and preferred futures for the Oshiwambo language.

Reflexivity Note: Reflexivity is actively and consistently practiced throughout this research process. The researcher pays special attention to articulating his positionality. This is broadly reflected in the next section and throughout this thesis as a constant and ongoing reflexivity practice to ensure both authenticity and analytical rigour.

2.1.2 Value-based Reflection of the Study

This is a qualitative participatory study adopting an interdisciplinary approach integrating futures studies with ethnographic research methods. It investigates the future trajectory of the Oshiwambo language in 2054 from a student teacher perspective in a country whose sociocultural landscape has evolved over the last 34 years. The study synthesises insights from various disciplines, to develop an understanding of how language intersects with politics, culture, technology, and the environment.

Rooted in futures studies, this research embraces the pluralistic nature of futures. In this thesis, the researcher intentionally adopts the plural form futures to reflect the multiplicity of potential trajectories and interpretations of what lies ahead. This usage aligns with the foundational perspective of the discipline of Future Studies. Accordingly, this thinking includes the exploration of possible, probable, plausible, and preferable futures, which Masini (1993) views not as passive predictions but as active processes of inquiry capable of generating new knowledge, allowing people to engage with multiple futures to guide societal actions towards transformation. Bengston (2008) also supports this view, highlighting that such futures inquiry balances collective fears with aspirations and fosters the creation of hopeful and constructive future visions. The researcher thus builds on the normative value that futures thinking is not only an analytical tool, but also, a deeply embedded human capability. It is seen as a foundational process of collective knowledge generation, enabling individuals and communities to make sense of uncertainty, imagine alternatives, and co-create more just, resilient and sustainable futures.

In line with these theoretical orientations, the study adopts a value-based stance that acknowledges the role of research in promoting ethical, cultural, and linguistic sustainability. Drawing from Saldaña (2013) and Denzin (1997), qualitative research is inherently value-laden as it involves meaning-making processes, areas that are shaped by the researchers' positionality, ethical commitments, and the sociocultural context of the participants. Rather than taking a neutral stance, this study foregrounds values of equity, respect, cultural continuity, and intergenerational responsibility. Its participatory design reflects a commitment to inclusivity and respect for knowledge systems, prioritising the voices of the student teachers. Their narratives, visions, and anticipations are not treated as mere data points but as expressions of cultural agency and future-oriented thinking.

This approach resonates with Pouro-Mikkola and Wilenius (2023) concept of transformative futures learning. It also aligns with Maso's (2001) assertion that ethnography must be grounded in the values and lived values and realities of participants, fostering authentic understanding and relational ethics.

Although the right to language transmission is not always explicitly codified in international or national legal instruments, it is implicitly safeguarded within broader human rights frameworks - particularly those concerning cultural, indigenous and minority rights (Asia Pacific and OHCHR 2013). Notably, key normative instruments such as the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO 2005), as well as, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirm rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples to preserve, use, and transmit their own languages to future generations. Taken collectively, these frameworks support the notion of linguistic inheritance as an essential dimension to cultural sustainability. Read together, these frameworks seem to support what wa Thiong'o (1986) powerfully argued: language is not merely a medium of communication but a carrier of cultural expression, collective memory, and identity formation. Furthermore, the continued absence of explicit constitutional protection for indigenous languages in Namibia – as noted by the Office of the Ombudsman (2022) - might have profound long-term implications for cultural and linguistic equity. Such omissions systemically and structurally marginalise - even widely spoken languages such as Oshiwambo - in formal education, governance and public discourse. As this thesis attempts to argue, this situation presents both a challenge and an ethical call to action. The researcher uses the term indigenous to describe Oshiwambo as per the language policy for schools framework MEAC (2016) which states that Namibian languages that are of African linguistic heritage and origin are considered indigenous. This is further supported by the Ombudsman (2022) which recognises as a general or literal meaning that 'there is no question that all Africans are indigenous to Africa in the sense that they were there before European colonisation. Further elaboration on this clarification and distinction between Indigenous (capital I) and indigenous people (small i) which will be elaborate on in Chapter 3.

This thesis is both personally motivated and academically anchored, seeking to bridge lived experiences with scholarly investigation to illuminate the complex futures of Oshiwambo in a post-colonial Namibia.

3 Theories and Concepts

This chapter is divided into two sections. First, it establishes the conceptual foundations around language, followed by the theoretical framework of futures that underpins this study. It draws on linguistic studies, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and futures research demonstrating the multidisciplinary foundations for investigating and analysing how student teachers perceive and envision the future of the Oshiwambo language by 2054.

3.1 Language, Culture and Heritage

All languages are important.

Language is a foundational human element of cultural identity and collective memory, a vessel for transmitting values and ways of life (wa Thiong'o 1986). Fishman(1991) describes language as a vessel through which historical consciousness, values, and traditions are transmitted across generations. Without language, cultural identity is diminished, and collective memory risks erasure (ibid). It can be argued that the United Nations has made strides in promoting Indigenous languages, particularly through its declaration of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) (UN General Assembly 2019). However, many warn that the focus tends to privilege First Peoples as defined in settler-colonial contexts (e.g., Native American or Aboriginal Australian languages). Makoni and Pennycook (2007) caution that many African languages, particularly those not officially classified as 'Indigenous' under existing settler-colonial frameworks, remain overlooked in global preservation efforts although they display deep-rooted cultural significance.

To ensure conceptual clarity, it is important to distinguish between the two known uses of the term *indigenous languages*. *Indigenous languages* (**capital "I")** are typically viewed as those spoken by officially recognised Indigenous Peoples - groups with historical continuity in territories before colonisation, and possessing distinct social, cultural, and political institutions. These languages are protected within the broader framework of Indigenous Peoples rights, which include self-determination, land ownership, and cultural preservation. They are afforded specific international legal protection under the ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN (2007). Their languages are often endangered, requiring special legal protection and revitalisation efforts (ILO 1989; UN 2007)). On the other hand, i*ndigenous languages*

(lowercase "i") refer to languages that originate within a particular region but are not necessarily associated with Indigenous Peoples in the legal or political sense. While they are typically spoken by ethnic groups within nation-states, these languages do not enjoy legal protections as those linked to Indigenous Peoples. Instead, they fall within broader frameworks that advocate for multilingualism, mother-tongue education, and non-discrimination, without the territorial and political claims tied to Indigenous status (Nic Craith, 2012). While all Indigenous Peoples speak indigenous languages, not all speakers of indigenous languages belong to recognised Indigenous groups. This distinction is significant for noting in policymaking, as Indigenous languages globally require policies tied to sovereignty and self-determination, whereas indigenous languages are broadly situated within national and regional frameworks focused on linguistic diversity and cultural protection (Ibid.).

Although Namibia has endorsed international frameworks such as the UN (2007) referred to as UNDRIP and is party to various treaties affirming cultural rights, it has not ratified the ILO Convention 169. Due to its multilingual and multicultural character, all Namibian languages have equal status and can be classified as ‘indigenous’ within Namibia’s constitutional framework (GRN 1990, article 3). Due to its complex history, Namibia adopted English as its official language and placed all other local languages on the same status. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity or tribe or language (GRN 1990).

Indigenous Namibian languages fall in three distinct language clusters: the Bantu, Koekoegowab, Khoe-San and the Indo- European clusters. While the Khoe-San language cluster enjoys explicit protection under the Rights of Indigenous Peoples OHCHR (2013) provisions , (capital ‘I’), it is strongly argued that the Ovahimba, Ovatua and Ovatjimba although from the Bantu cluster should be considered Indigenous groups due to their way of life. Aawambo who speak Oshiwambo falls in the Bantu cluster and are regarded as indigenous expressed (lowercase ‘i’).

Nic Craith (2012) contends that indigenous languages remain vulnerable to marginalisation, particularly in postcolonial societies where dominant languages are privileged in policy and practice. Supporting Nic Craith’s perspective extends to the impact of differentiation, Mac Giolla (2007) on the other hand, examines the effects of globalisation on contemporary language planning, revealing how economic and political forces often

prioritise dominant languages, further marginalising indigenous languages. This shift, she asserts, not only diminishes linguistic diversity but disrupts the cultural sustainability of communities that rely on their indigenous languages to pass down intergenerational knowledge. Similarly, Saville (2007) underscores the importance of these linguistic human rights and their link to education, emphasising that access to education in indigenous languages or mother tongues is crucial for preserving cultural identity and ensuring the continuation of traditional ecological and cultural knowledge, plays a pivotal role in environmental sustainability and conservation.

Furthermore, heritage is deeply embedded in language, whether spoken or written. Language heritage plays a vital role in cultural preservation, historical continuity, and shaping of social identities. It refers to the linguistic traditions passed down through generations, encompassing both spoken and written forms (Fishman 2001). He defines heritage languages as those that serve as a cultural anchor for communities, particularly in multilingual and diasporic contexts. These languages are vital for transmitting traditions, reflecting the historical and political forces that shape language evolution. Heritage, therefore, can inform policies designed to protect and revitalise linguistic diversity, he asserts. For Nic Craith (2007), the emphasis on language heritage being closely tied to national and ethnic identity is undisputed. In a sense, language is not merely viewed as a tool for communication, but a repository, allowing access to heritage and preserving historical knowledge, traditional practices, and collective memory. In this sense, language serves as a bridge between past and present cultural expressions, and thus, heritage practices must reflect plural narratives that engages and values diverse cultural identities. In all this, re researcher contends that these characteristics ascribed to indigenous languages befits the Oshiwambo language.

Eriksen (1993, 57) reinforces this concept, stating:

> Ethnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved; they are both. They are wedged between situational selection and imperatives imposed from without.

Within this context, Eriksen (1993) identified language as a marker of ethnic identity and a boundary marker constantly contested and negotiated. This reinforces the position that the evolution of language heritage is as continuous a process, one that is influenced by historical and political phenomenas such as colonialisation, migration, and globalisation. Recognising these dynamics is crucial for engaging discourse on language policy, cultural

sustainability, and linguistic rights, ensuring that interventions are appropriately tailored based on their unique socio-political contexts while safeguarding the rights of both Indigenous Peoples and indigenous languages (Nic Craith 2012). In the Namibian context, the researcher contends that this perspective aligns with the country's political and colonial trajectory, highlighting the need for revitalisation strategies that account for the historical, political, and cultural complexities that have shaped indigenous Namibian languages.

3.2 Indigenous Language and Colonialism

In his seminal work Decolonising the Mind, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) offers a powerful critique of language suppression as a premier mechanism for colonial domination. According to wa Thiong'o, the colonial suppression of indigenous African languages was a deliberate strategy aimed at severing people from their cultural roots and controlling the continent's intellectual and cultural domains. Wa Thiong'o defends indigenous African languages as essential tools of cultural identity, resistance, and total liberation from colonial domination. Colonialism imposed hierarchical language structures, most of which continue to influence language dynamics today (ibid.). Phillipson's (1992) theory of linguistic imperialism argues that dominant languages often suppress indigenous and minority languages, resulting in linguistic erosion. The tension between indigenous African languages and former colonial languages remains a significant challenge in contemporary African language policy discourse, as nations seek to preserve linguistic diversity while contending with past colonial legacies. English has fallen under numerous criticisms for its global dominance, which reinforces structural inequalities, marginalising local languages and cultures – particularly in countries striving to reclaim and strengthen their linguistic and cultural identities. The continued institutionalisation of colonial languages as official mediums of governance and education in most African countries results in further marginalisation of indigenous languages, contributing to cultural erosion and loss of identity, Phillipson (1992) argues further. On the other hand, wa Thiong'o (1986), underscores the urgency of linguistic reclamation, asserting, "To starve or kill a language is to starve and kill a people's memory bank,"advocating for the Africans writers to express themselves in their own languages. This positional statement is worthy of reflection as Africa seeks to focus on developing its people and reviewing its economies while addressing some of the imbalances of the past, Bamgbose (1991) asserts.

Blommaert (2010) locates language as a site of power, negotiation, and symbolic capital. Arguing that language possesses the authority to direct and to decide. While this capability is inherent in all languages, not all of them enjoy equal status and quality. Although English is only represented by a minority native English speakers, its official status as a language perpetuates a hierarchy that privileges those proficient in it.

Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue for 'disinventing' languages, challenging rigid colonial-era construction and recognising the fluid, dynamic nature of Africa's languages. These dynamics continue to shape linguistic policies in Africa, as nations strive to preserve linguistic diversity while negotiating political and economic impact of globalisation (Phillipson 2013). In many African countries, English, French and Portuguese have been institutionalised at the expense of indigenous languages. This formalisation Phillipson (2013) argues, reinforces systemic disparities in access to education and employment. Proficiency in these colonial languages is often linked to greater socio-economic opportunities, thereby establishing a linguistic hierarchy that marginalises native languages and their speakers (ibid.). Bakar (2023) critiques this ongoing colonial legacy, analysing how British colonial policies have perpetuated English dominance. While acknowledging English's role as a global lingua franca, he argues, its dominance should not be allowed to lead to the extinction of indigenous languages in those territories. Instead, he continues, language policies should promote multilingualism, ensuring that indigenous languages are enabled to thrive alongside global languages.

In this study, the emphasis on language marginalisation not merely represents a relic of the past, but a continuous quest to potentially shape and occupy a peripheral position in the domains of education, politics, and social realities. Indigenous languages, such as Oshiwambo, may therefore prompt questions of equity, representation, and survival within these multilingual landscapes.

Many African nations, including Namibia, are on the path to actively engage decolonial rhetoric. The decoloniality surrounding reparations for atrocities inflicted upon the Namibian population has gained momentum with the declaration of Genocide Remembrance Day (GRN Gazette 8373 2024). Others included the return of cultural artifacts of Namibian heritage objects from German and Finnish museums—symbolising a reclaim of cultural dignity and agency (NAGN 2023). These decolonisation movements across vari-

ous sectors extend beyond restorative justice of material objects to include the reclamation of indigenous languages, which function as living repositories of memory, dignity, and cultural knowledge systems. As wa Thiong'o (1986) asserts, language reclamation lies at the heart of the broader struggle to decolonising the mind and restore control over cultural narratives. In this approach, suggesting that the consistent and conscientious efforts by Africans to take charge of their narratives will result in a more endoglossic approach in both social and cultural spheres. Could such efforts elevate the status of indigenous languages to meaningfully aligned with heritage and restorative justice, underscoring decoloniality not merely as symbolic gestures but one with potential pathways towards more inclusive sustainable futures?

3.3 Globalisation, Urbanisation and Technology Disruption

Globalisation can be described as a multidimensional and interconnected process of economy, politics, culture, and technologies. According to Giddens (1990), it involves not only the movements of people, goods, and ideas across borders but also an intensified global social interconnectedness of causality. Referencing it as a complex and contested phenomena with implications on all spheres of life. Bagamba & Gibson (2015) echoes this view, referring to it as an integrated flow of world economies and societies that significantly threatens the diversity of cultures and identities. In response to increased globalisation, Phillipson (2007) critically examines the dominance of English in Europe, questioning whether it acts as a unifying force or a threat to linguistic diversity. He argues that the global spread of English has often led to the erosion of smaller linguistic communities in Europe. In the context of Northern Ireland or multilingual Europe, Nic Craith 2007) emphasises the role of language as an identity marker arguing that multiculturalism cannot be fully realised without linguistic inclusion and policy reform. However, Graddol (2024) argues to the contrary, suggesting that demographic shifts and technological advancements are reshaping the global linguistic landscape. Significantly, he posits, the dominance of English as a first language has been gradually declining. As presented in the tables below, Graddol illustrates this position by comparing English to other global languages in populous regions. Table 1. represents estimates of the number of native speakers for the world's ten most spoken languages in 1995. Mandarin dominates with 1.1 billion speakers placing English in second position with 372 million), Hindu/Urdu (3016 million) and Spanish (304 million).

Table 1 Estimates of numbers of native speakers globally in 1995 (Graddol 2024)

Table 1. Estimates of numbers of native speakers globally in 1995 for the top 10 languages (*1*).

Language	No. of native speakers (millions)
1. Chinese	1113
2. English	372
3. Hindi/Urdu	316
4. Spanish	304
5. Arabic	201
6. Portuguese	165
7. Russian	155
8. Bengali	125
9. Japanese	123
10. German	102

It reflects global linguistic order at the close of the 20th century, heavily shaped by history of colonialisation, state formation and demographic expansion. Juxtaposing this to illustrates his position, Graddol (2024) presents an outlook on the future of English in 2050. In Table 2, he projects the estimated numbers of native speakers aged 15-24 by 2050. While Chinese speakers remain dominant, English is noticing a decline (from 2nd to fourth position) while Arabic and Hindu/Urdu are trending.

Table 2 Estimates of the numbers of native speakers globally aged 15 to 24 in 2050 (Graddol 2024)

Table 2. Estimates of numbers of native speakers globally aged 15 to 24 in 2050 (*1*).

Language	No. of native speakers globally (millions)
1. Chinese	166.0
2. Hindi/Urdu	73.7
3. Arabic	72.2
4. English	65.0
5. Spanish	62.8
6. Portuguese	32.5
7. Bengali	31.6
8. Russian	14.8
9. Japanese	11.3
10. Malay	10.5

English was spoken natively by approximately by 9% of the world's total population and is expected to significantly drop to about 5% by 2050, driven by the population growth in non-English-speaking regions and the diversification of global communication trends. Graddol (2024) posits that this emergence, where English may not become a dominant

language of the future means multilingualism will be enhanced with possible new ones emerging in cities and extended social groups. groups. These tables suggest a shift in the linguistic landscape in which the demographic weight of younger generations will play a key role in redefining global language hierarchies. These projections further highlight the importance of intergenerational transmission suggesting that shifts in youth language patterns may be critical indicators of a language's long-term vitality. Could the decline of a dominant language such as English challenge the prevailing assumptions about global linguistic futures and open opportunities for indigenous languages to reclaim their relevance and visibility? For Africa however, the accelerated rate of globalisation continues to have a significant impact on the continent' movement patterns, impacting language. As both Mufwene (2001); Bagamba and Gibson (2015) assert when highlighting Africa's rate of urbanisation: it is rapid and has become – among the fastest in the world. These increases, they argue, exert additional pressure on indigenous languages. Urban centres often become linguistic melting pots where dominant global or national languages overshadow minority languages, leading to increased reliance on code-switching, language attrition, and, in most cases, language shift. Bagamba and Gibson (2015) cite the emergence of 'Kibera English' in Kenya's informal settlement as an example of this phenomenon.

Namibia is not spared from this occurrence. Rural-to-urban migration in search of better opportunities is reflected in historical colonial migrant labour systems, resulting in the underdevelopment of rural places (Wallace 2011). Inevitably, these rural-urban movements remain economically induced. Combining this necessity with the pervasive influence of the media and the Anglo-dominated education, a significant percentage of younger generations are unable to converse in their mother tongue (Ashikuti, 2019). Kangira (2016) argues that while urban areas may offer enhanced economic opportunities, they also accelerate the rate of displacement of indigenous languages in favour of more socially and economically advantageous lingua francas.

To contextualise this argument, Fishman's (1991) introduces the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) that assesses language vitality. This nine-point scale can be used to access the status of a language in any speech community. He, however, proposes that language survival largely depends on a strong intergenerational transmission approach—a process increasingly undermined by rapid urbanisation, globalisation, and the evolving digital communication trends. Sankoff (2018) agrees with this

assertion, suggesting three possible trajectories of a language within speech communities: stability, youth-driven change, and resistance, effectively illustrating the complex dynamics of how languages evolve. Unfortunately, realities for current African urbanites are it's a new culture, a new way of life with its own rules and structures, and thus requires self-expression in the form of this Kibera English language, Bagamba & Gibson (2015) asserts. Increasingly suggesting that constant negotiation and rapid choice-making may well be considered strong skills in navigating and adapting to the fast, ever-changing linguistic landscapes on the Continent.

3.4 Language Shift and Language Switch

Language shift and language switch are key concepts for understanding linguistic adaptation and how they shape linguistic identities and development within societies.

In sociolinguistics, language shift as an interaction phenomenon is rooted in social and group identity in which speakers of a community change their habitual language to another in response to social, political, or economic pressure, often resulting in a redefinition of that social or group identity (Gumperz 1982). However, Fishman (1991) situates language shift in the context of a microsocial interaction in which, systemically over time, intergenerational transmission of language is abandoned in family and community settings in favour of a dominant language. Referring to it as the gradual replacement of one language by another, often driven by social, political, or economic pressures. He thus conceptualise language shift as a process rooted in structural inequalities where dominant languages gain prestige in critical areas such as education, governance, and employment. This occurrence is especially evident in post-colonial societies, where indigenous languages are often marginalised despite efforts to promote linguistic diversity (Phillipson 1992). Agreeing with the statement, Crystal (2000) concludes that the global dominance of English in business, higher education, and technology accelerates language shift phenomena and contributes to the decline of minority languages worldwide.

Language switch, or code-switching, on the other hand, involves the alternating use of different languages in social contexts, particularly among bilingual or multilingual speakers. It is not necessarily a sign of linguistic decline, but it can represent a flexible and strategic linguistic practice Gumperz (1982) intimates. While several scholars have attempted to provided further differentiation between the various forms of code-switching,

three forms are more prominently studied: situational code-switching where speakers alternate languages based on their social setting (Blom & Gumperz 1972) – for instance, using English in professional environments but Oshiwambo at home. Conversational or intra-sentential code-switching, a situation wherein language shifts occur in a conversation to emphasise meaning or emotion (Poplack 1980) and metaphorical code-switching are instances where language vocabulary choices symbolically reflect a social identity and group belonging (Myers-Scotton 1993). While language shift often leads to cultural loss, code-switching on the other can foster linguistic innovation. Hybrid languages such as Spanglish, Hinglish, and Sheng have all emerged through this process (Pennycook 2007). Furthermore, bilingualism offers cognitive and social benefits, enhancing adaptability in multilingual societies. Bialistok (2009) concludes. Norro (2022) and Iipinge and Huddleston (2023), highlight the widespread use of code-switching techniques in Namibian classrooms, emphasising its role in bilingual education to enhance overall comprehension for learners. While language shift may result in cultural erosion, code-switching facilitates linguistic adaptability and innovation, contributing to a dynamic multilingual landscape (Bialistok 2009) notes. The intersection of globalisation, urbanisation, and technology creates a complex landscape wherein these forces accelerate linguistic shifts while similarly, presenting new opportunities for revitalisation (Phillipson 2013). While English and other dominant languages dominate digital spaces, emerging digital tools – such as social media platforms, mobile applications and virtual learning environments offer unprecedented opportunities for indigenous language revitalisation (Fong 2021). Fong (2021) introduces the notion of techno-linguistic agency to describe how speakers of minority languages use digital media to reframe and revitalise their linguistic identities. Mobile-based tools such as language apps, community-led WhatsApp storytelling groups, and informal online language tutorials represent low-cost but impactful efforts to expand the domains in which a language can thrive. These grassroots practices highlight how language use in new media are not simply a matter of translation or preservation, but an act of adaptation to new communication ecologies (ibid). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such technological interventions depends on adequate access, digital literacy, and the sustained involvement of speakers themselves. Without this foundation, the role of technology in language revitalisation may remain superficial or unevenly distributed. As Philipson (2013) warns, linguistic hierarchies persist in digital spheres, reinforcing the structural power of dominant languages.

3.5 Cultural Sustainability, Language Maintenance, and Revitalisation

Cultural sustainability extends beyond preserving physical artifacts; it requires the dynamic maintenance and revitalisation of languages, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems (Hawkes 2001). Language plays a pivotal role as a vessel of collective memory, worldviews, and ecological wisdom—these elements need to be enforced during early on (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

Strongly advocating for L1 instruction of at least 6-8 years of schooling, she insists that children hold the right to be educated in their mother tongue in schools. Denying children their right is linguistic genocide which leads to marginalisation of a child' development which is an irreplaceable loss. (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). argue that language loss is not only cultural erosion but also a form of epistemic suicide: the systematic destruction of knowledge embedded with linguistic and cultural systems (ibid).

Hawkes (2001) identifies culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability, alongside economic, social, and environmental factors, emphasising that cultural continuity is vital for a society's long-term resilience. Critiquing mainstream sustainability models for their failure to explicitly account for culture, Hawkes (2001) argues that culture is not just a by-product of the three other pillars of sustainable development but a foundation that shapes values, meanings and collective decisions. It has direct relevance to language which is a core medium through which culture is expressed and transmitted. This is particularly relevant for Indigenous communities, where language is fundamental to identity, traditional knowledge and social cohesion. The (UNESCO adhoc expert group on Indigenous 2003) echoes this perspective and further asserts that linguistic vitality is central to cultural sustainability and calling for policies that protects indigenous languages as key components of cultural heritage also adds to the protection of environmental knowledge systems. It reinforces the notion that the protection of a language is a complex continuum shaped by both external forces such as policy and the media and internal forces such as community dynamics, underscoring the importance of community agency and context-sensitive assessment. (UNESCO ad Hoc expert group on endangered languages 2003). A quote from this expert report profoundly places agency, an inalienable right of being human at the centre of language and the right to expression stating the following:

> 'I speak my favourite language because that's who I am. We teach our children our favourite language because we want them to know who they are'

> Christine Johnson, Tohono O'odham elder, American Indian language Development Institute (June 2002)

Eriksen (2016) concept of overheating provides a valuable macro-sociological frame for understanding how rapid globalisation disrupts inherited cultural systems. While Eriksen (2016) does not explicitly focus on language, his discussion of ethnic identity crises and cultural dislocation (2016, 5) offers a critical entry point. Just as Fishman (1991) and the UNESCO expert group (2003) affirm, language is not only a marker of ethnic identity, but also a carrier of intergenerational knowledge, collective memory and social belonging. In this instance, language loss or marginalisation becomes a key expression of the dislocation referred to by Eriksen. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000-311) insist that "Subtractive schooling where Indigenous children lose their language is a form of linguistic genocide." arguing that, those with bilingual education, especially those with mother tongue immersion, have the best cognitive and academic outcomes. Early immersion models too maintain and strengthen L1 while others like Kōhanga Reo does by immersing Māori children in te reo Māori from infancy, she concludes.

Therefore, this is interpreted to mean that when indigenous languages are sidelined in education, media and the public life, the results is not merely a communicative disadvantage, but rather a deeper form of identifying fragmentation. This is precisely what Eriksen's cultural 'overheating' is with unsustainable modernity. The convergence of these two insights strengthen the case for treating language revitalisation as a response not only to linguistic decline, but to broader crises of identity and cultural sustainability in an accelerating world.

In Namibia, languages like Oshiwambo remain numerically dominant, yet socially marginalised. Achieving cultural sustainability requires more than symbolic recognition – it demands sustained intergenerational transmission and reintegration of indigenous languages into critical domains such as education, media, governance, and digital platforms (Fishman 1991). Krauss (1992) and Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) stresses that genuine revitalisation must be community-driven, relying on participatory engagement rather than the top-down policy approach. Intergenerational learning, community storytelling, and institutionalising and integrating indigenous languages in public life are essential pillars for maintaining linguistic vitality.

Like cultural artifacts, language is a living evidence to a people's history and identity. Reclaiming indigenous languages cannot be separated from broader decolonial efforts. It must consider and involve restoring disruptive knowledge systems, renegotiate and correct historical narratives, and ensuring future generations inherit not only artifacts, but living, evolving cultural identity markers of a sustained language. As Namibia advances its sustainability agenda, revitalising indigenous languages requires a critical approach as an urgent and transformative priority. priority.

SECTION 2

3.6 Futures Studies and Casual Layered Analysis

This is a qualitative study grounded in futures studies. It uses participatory and ethnographic research approaches to explore the trajectory of the Oshiwambo language by 2054, as perceived by student teachers in a higher education institution.

Futures studies is an interdisciplinary field that systematically explores, anticipates, and generates possible, probable, plausible, and preferable futures (Masini 1993; Bell 2003). Unlike traditional predictive approaches, futures studies embrace complexity and uncertainty and is pluralistic by design. It questions assumptions about inevitability, fostering the creation of alternative futures (Sardar 2010). Central to the discipline is the recognition that the future does not follow a predetermined trajectory, but it is a domain of agency, imagination, and transformation (Slaughter 2004).

Masini (1993) defines a trajectory as a continuous, dynamic process of societal evolution shaped by cultural, economic, and technological forces, while at the same time, influenced by human agency and its prevailing conditions. Building on this perspective, Slaughter (1998) conceptualises trajectories as structured sequences over time connecting present actions to future outcomes, emphasising the complex interplay between human-made and natural systems, a perspective central to this study. The participants' views on the future of the Oshiwambo language are framed through their cognitive models and socio-cultural contexts. Futures studies, therefore, provides a theoretical foundation for reimagining the declining trajectory of the language, underscoring that it is possible for such a trend to be altered through deliberate foresight and collective reimagination (ibid.)

What is central to futures research is the shift in understanding that the future is not something existential and distant but something that can be internally generated by an individual or through collective experiences (Inayatullah 2004; Miller 2018). Inayatullah (2004) further posits that problematising an issue helps to reorder mental frameworks, influencing how people perceive the future. He identified four key approaches to foresight: *1) Predictive:* Is grounded in empirical social science data. *2) Interpretive:* Acknowledges the multiple ways of understanding the future rather than simply forecasting it. *3) Critical:* Is influenced by post-structural thinking, approaching result with questions on how certain futures are privileged over others by examining their underlying assumptions. *4) Participatory Action Learning*: Is grounded in democratic processes where stakeholders actively shape their futures based on their perspectives of time – whether linear or cyclical.

To ground this critical perspective, the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) framework operationalise this vision by Sohael Inayatullah offering foresight practitioners a multi-layered methodology for deconstructing complex societal issues to reframe and reimagine futures (Inayatullah 1998; 2004). The CLA framework is structured around four layers of Litany, Social, Worldviews, and Myths and Metaphors. The phases are carefully crafted, providing a holistic and robust methodology of working through an issue. Inayatullah (2004) suggests it for complex societal issues as well as strategic works citing multiple projects already having used the methodology.

Fig. 1 illustrates the different layers of Inayatullah's CLA framework. While the initial conceptual framework used a triangle or iceberg, the figure below uses a tree as metaphor to depict these multiple layers. Several scholars have applied the framework in multiple ways while maintaining the visible layers. Surface-level issues represent only a small fraction of its true complexity. Beneath the surface lie deeper systematic causes, worldviews, and mythic narratives that sustain and shape the problem.

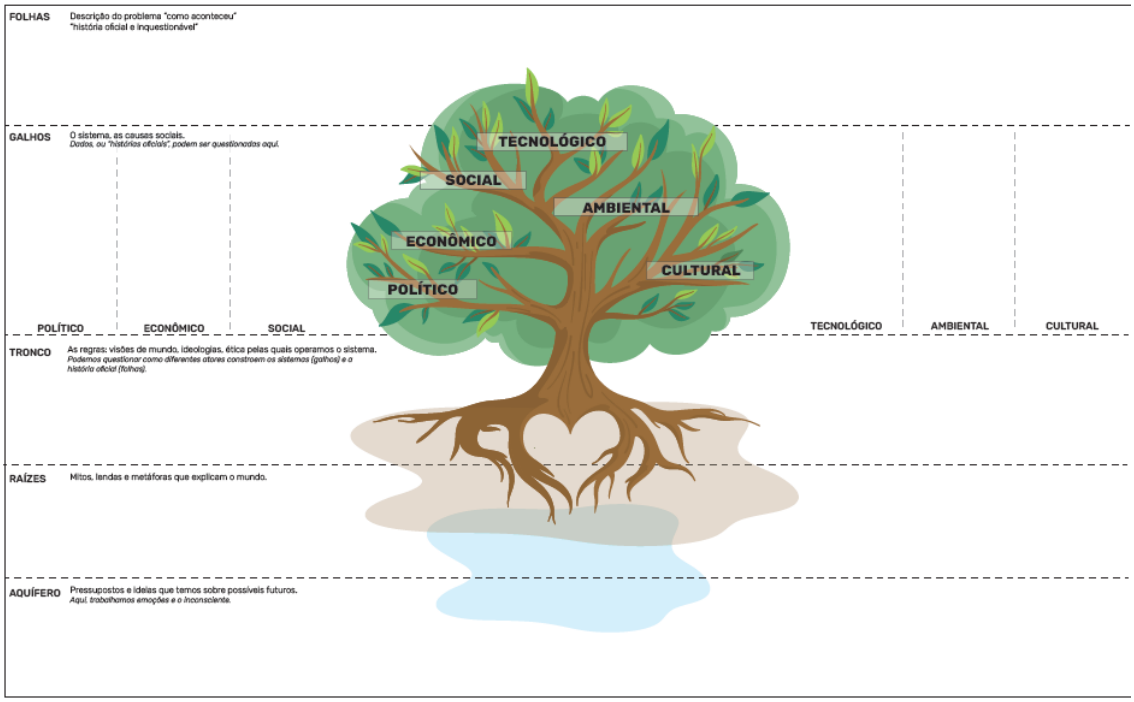

Figure 1 Causal Layered Analysis Tree Source: Ferreira-Aulu et al. (2003).

Ferreira-Aulu et al. (2023) adapted Inayatullah's CLA framework using the metaphor of a tree during mosaic workshops to explore challenges and solutions with Indigenous communities in the Rio Negro region of Amazonia. Instead of the traditional iceberg naming of levels, Ferreira-Aulu opts for descriptions along the ecological lines of Litany representing the *Leaves,* Social for the *Branches*, Worldview for the *Trunk*, and *Roots* for the Myths and Metaphors. The 5th deeper layer or Aquifer within the CLA framework is an introduced by Ferreira-Aulu to delve deeply into the emotions at a more individual level, arguing that societal and ecological challenges although experienced collectively, impacts individuals differently. Inayatullah maintains that this multi-layered approach encouraged the researchers to move beyond superficial explanations and to interrogate the underlying cultural, historical, and ideological constructs that reinforce certain existing practices and policies (Inayatullah 1998). Embracing this multidimensional yet analytic lens helps uncover concealed dynamics that influence, in this instance, language use and policy decisions, providing a resource richer in holistic understanding of issues that influence impacts the future trajectories of indigenous languages in this case, Oshiwambo. The layers are further expanded and elaborated on below, demonstrating the effectiveness of the theories that underpin this study. The framework is not just a tool to create and cocreate futures, but the same tool can be used to analyse results by going up and down different opposing levels (Inayatullah,1998).

Inayatullah (2004) provides an overview of each Layers of Analysis

Level 1: Litany

This surface layer focuses on quantitative trends, media headlines, and immediate concerns. It reflects the typical way issues are presented in public discourse—often sensationalised and lacking deeper systematic context. While effective for raising awareness, litany-level analysis once revealed, can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed and powerless (Inayatullah 2004). Slaughter (2004) cautions that futures research confined at this level risks reinforcing existing dominant worldviews instead of fostering transformation.

Level 2: Social/Systemic Causes

At this level, problems are examined through structural and systemic lenses, encompassing economic, political, environmental, and cultural factors. The focus lies on identifying causal relationships and understanding stakeholder dynamics. While most policymakers, researchers and formal institutions operate here, they rarely challenge the deeper foundational assumptions that underpin these systems in which they operate (Inayatullah 2004).

Level 3: Worldview/Discourse

This deeper layer addresses the discursive and epistemological assumptions that underpin social systems. It involves critically examining the paradigms, ideologies and belief systems that construct particular realities. Revealing these worldviews helps researchers uncover how certain futures become visible or are rendered invisible (Inayatullah 2015). As Slaughter (2008) emphasises, true transformative change demands not only surface-level adjustments but also fundamental shifts in underlying paradigms.

Level 4: Myth/Metaphor

The deepest layer of CLA delves into the collective unconscious archetypes and symbolic narratives that shape predominant worldviews. This level focuses on cultural meaning-making and the metaphors through which societies interpret their realities. Myths, far from being mere falsehoods, are foundational stories that influence perception and behaviour. When these myths become outdated, they can limit the imagination of alternate futures; however, when reinterpreted, they hold the power to inspire new possibilities.

For instance, the myth of the 'heroic leader' may restrict the emergence of more inclusive and collaborative leadership models (Inayatullah 2025).

In a context like Namibia, where indigenous languages are influenced by colonial histories, coupled with phenomenas of globalisation, and the changing socio-economic dynamics, surface-level interventions are insufficient. Therefore, CLA helps to foster deeper understanding of these complexities, opening up spaces for transformative futures (Inayatullah 2015).

3.7 Anticipation and Futures Literacy

Furthermore, futures studies are progressively including anticipation and transformative learning. Anticipation as defined by Poli (2017), regards individuals as proactive architects of future outcomes rather than passive recipients. These subjective individuals, although appearing trivial, hold significant decision-making and preparedness capacities, underscoring the importance of beliefs, mental models, and future projections (ibid.). Comprehending the present and anticipating the future therefore involves considerable cognitive exertion. It requires prompting humans who depend on historical patterns, secondary knowledge, and personal evaluations to formulate visions of possible futures (ibid). Kwazema (2024) argues that anticipation is deeply and inextricably tied to historical context. In his past-future framework, he posits that the present is shaped by the past, just as the future is shaped by the present. By examining historical trajectories, we gain deeper appreciation into why people think and act as they do.

This means that if anticipation is human-generated and historically dependent, then as Poli (2017) posits, people need to have certain knowledge and awareness about their futures. Futures literacy is the ability to anticipate and negotiate multiple futures. This understanding, as Miller (2017) suggests, is central to building resilient and adaptive societies. He advocates for a shift in futures thinking from viewing the future as an external event (something that happens to us) to recognising that futures are continually generated internally through individual and collective experiences. This shift emphasises the need to study anticipation as a core component of futures studies, bridging personal and collective perspectives to shape future-oriented thinking and capabilities for actioning (ibid.).

3.8 Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is often misunderstood or overused, but at its core, it involves profound cognitive shifts when individuals encounter new knowledge and experiences (Taylor & Cranton 2012). Mezirow (1991) introduced transformative learning as a process that disrupts and challenges an individual's existing perspectives, triggering cognitive stages where individuals attempt to integrate unfamiliar, often unsettling information.

Development in transformative learning theory acknowledge non-cognitive elements, including emotions, intuition, spiritual experiences, and embodied learning. All these have the capacity to contribute to deep transformation (Taylor & Cranton 2012; Merriam & Bierema 2013). While this study does not focus on traditional learning, the collective futures-making process inherently involves transformative engagement through storytelling. Merriam and Bierema suggest that arts-based learning, emotional reflection, and collaborative knowledge construction all contribute to transformative learning. In contemporary discussions, transformative learning theory serves as a foundation for exploring sense-making processes, examining assumptions, and practising critical self-reflection in futures research. Kuosa (2011) aligns Mezirow's framework, which asserts that futures-orientated methodologies recognise the transformative potential inherent in collective future envisioning. Thus, learning is not just about acquiring knowledge or skills, he argues, but about reshaping perspectives to engage more effectively with different futures.

Pouru-Mikkola and Wilenius (2023) introduce transformative futures learning, which emphasises cognitive, motivational, and action-oriented faculties to enhance individuals' capacity to shape future possibilities. Their framework expands transformative learning by stressing the need for a proactive mindset oriented towards the future. This approach moves beyond theory into practical applications, particularly in education and foresight methods, supporting and strengthening the arguments suggested by Miller (2017) of futures literacy. Narrative foresight further reinforces this approach by emphasising the role of stories in constructing and transforming futures (Miller 2018). This study draws attention to the perspectives towards empowerment of student teachers as co-creators and as future narrators for the Oshiwambo language.

Lastly, the study resonates with principles of Ethnographic Futures Research (EFR) (Riner 1991), which combine ethnographic methods with futures thinking, enabling the elicitation of culturally grounded and community-driven futures. Through the application of CLA within a participatory, ethnographic framework, this research positions the student teachers not as subjects but as co-creators of futures, making them agents of change.

3.9 Narrative Analysis and Ethnography

Narrative analysis centres on the recognition that human beings make sense of their experiences through storytelling. Rather than just merely reporting facts, narratives construct, and shape lived realities. As Cortazzi (2001) emphasise, narratives are pivotal tools for expressing identity, articulating values, and constructing social meaning. In this sense, he argued, narratives are not mere reflections of reality but active agents in the formation of those realities. Within ethnographic research, narratives offer the emic (insider) perspective crucial for contextual and cultural understanding as he indicates, "We need to know how teachers [in reference to the teachers studied by Cortazzi in classroom situations] themselves see their situation, what their experience is like, what they believe, and how they think" (ibid.). On the other hand, Riner (1991) highlights that narrative ethnography allows researchers to access not only what participants are saying but also how they construct and inform their identities through storytelling. Such an approach aligns well with contemporary cultural sustainability research, which regards narratives as vehicles for transmitting traditional knowledge, historical memory, and collective aspirations. While Geertz's (1973) concept of thick description establishes the foundational practice of embedding narratives within their rich social context, contemporary scholars continue to push these ideas further, in which Eriksen (2010) critiques Geertz's static depiction of culture, arguing for a dynamic, fluid understanding that is continuously shaped by globalisation, multiculturalism, and sociopolitical shifts. In line with this, the inquiry into narratives not only captures lived experiences but also explores the how of student teachers in reshaping future linguistic and cultural landscapes. Cortazzi (2001) identifies four key dimensions of narrative analysis, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of human experiences and occupations: Sharing the Meaning of the Experience: In recounting their stories, participants not only describe events but also provide personal interpretations. This dual aspect includes the objective recounting of events and subjective sense-making, forming a holistic picture of the experience. Voice: Narrative analysis amplifies voices of groups, ensuring their experiences are acknowledged and

understood. This includes considering the diversity and setting in which these voices speak. Van Loon (2001) further remarked that the inclusion of multiple perspectives, especially those less often heard, enriches the understanding of societal and professional experiences. Human Qualities: These narratives reveal personal and professional attributes (the insider view) often overlooked in occupational contexts. For instance, teachers in training express their real school experiences and frustrations with policies, revealing insights into their dedication, patience, and struggles (ibid.). The Story Itself: This dimension is linked to the voice and tone of the narrative. Ethnography often constructs a narrative account of the research journey, transitioning from outsider to insider using storytelling conventions to engage readers (Atkinson 1990). Reflexivity is crucial, where researchers must be mindful of biases and ethical dilemmas in how stories are told and how participants are represented. This involves co-authoring stories with participants, making meaning through interpreting their lived experiences (Mishler, 1995).

Table 3. illustrates the adaptation of the Cortazzi's framework for narrative analysis providing the elemental perspective and the description of the each of the elements allowing for a deeper understanding of the four dimensions of narrative analysis within a framework. The level of orientation depicts where the speaker situates the narrative.

Table 3: Narrative Analysis Framework for Story Interpretation, from Cortazzi (1998;2001)

Narrative Element	Description
Orientation	Provides background information: who is involved, when, and where the events occurred.
Complication	Introduces the main problem, conflict, or event that drives the narrative forward.
Evaluation	Offers the narrator's reflection on the events, highlighting their significance and meaning.
Resolution	Describes how the conflict or problem was resolved or the outcome of the narrative.
Coda	Returns the story to the present moment, closing the narrative and linking it to current reality.

The who, when, and where of the story—providing a contextual background understanding of the event. The complication allows for the core of the narrative, expressing the tension or conflict that the speaker must address or resolve. Evaluation allows the speaker to reflect on the meaning or significance of the events – why the story matters and what lessons are drawn from it. Resolution allows for how the tension or conflict was

resolved with Coda that helps to return to the present moment, indicating closure while connecting the narrative back to the speaker's current life.

Cortazzi Cortazzi (1998) provides a powerful tool for analysis of how individuals structure their life experiences and use it to create meaning, allowing for a deeper reflection of individual choices which allows them to project or alternatively, create images of the futures. The framework is particularly useful for identifying how participants position themselves as agents of change within their narratives—an important aspect for this study, which investigates how future language teachers envision the trajectory of the Oshiwambo language.

Their narratives, collected during CLA workshops, will reveal not only current realities but also hopes, fears, and aspirations for the future of the participants. Through stories, analysed through this abovementioned narrative structure, participants' stories and narratives are deepened, allowing for insights into the emotional and symbolic dimensions giving participants a sense of agency in creating alternative futures. of language sustainability.

3.10 Reflexivity and Positionality

Reflexivity is widely regarded and accepted as a cornerstone of good and ethical qualitative research, and not just an optional addendum. Maso (2001) contends that reflexivity demands researchers to critically engage with their own positionality. The researcher is partly 'emic' and partly 'ethic' and thus constantly acknowledges this position and their backgrounds, identities, and assumptions helping it to shape the research process. For researchers working with indigenous and minority communities, this ethical self-awareness and reflection becomes even more critical. Finlay (2002) elaborates that reflexivity requires both self-reflection and relational awareness – recognising how power dynamics, insider-outsider tensions, and epistemological assumptions influence not only the data collection process, but also the interpretation of such data. Similarly, Reissmann (2021) argues in his thesis for self-reflexivity in multicultural education research settings, one that resists over-analysis in autoethnography in knowledge practices and prioritises collaborative, respectful co-production of knowledge by walking in the "other's shoes" although not entirely possible. The researcher undertakes to navigate these dualities: emotional investment in language survival and secondly, academic commitment to rigour and criticality. Drawing on Riner (1991), the research foregrounds participant narratives, not

as data to be extracted, but as co-creators of meanings whose voices and agency need to be honoured. Reflexivity therefore adopts an ongoing practice of critical self-scrutiny and ethical responsiveness.

This chapter outlined the theoretical frameworks and key concepts that underpin the study. Drawing on insights from sociolinguistics, anthropology, cultural sustainability, futures studies, and narrative analysis, establishing a solid theoretical foundation for exploring the trajectory of the future of the Oshiwambo language. In so doing, it situates indigenous language revitalisation discourses with individual identity, power, and possibilities. The following chapter will deal with the methodology and how the research was conducted.

4 Methodology

This chapter provides information on the framework used to explore both the research questions and address the objectives. The study is rooted in participatory futures research method using CLA workshops and ethnographic observation. It position student teachers as co-creators of knowledge as they share their perspectives on the future of the Oshiwambo language in 2054.

4.1 Participants

The study group consisted of 53 student teachers (41 female, 12 male) from the University of Namibia's Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus (UNAM-HPC), who will specialise in language instruction, specifically Oshiwambo. They joined willingly and were recruited with the support of their academic chair. All participants volunteered because of their personal interest in the subject. They were categorised into three groups based on their academic year: second, third, and fourth (final) year. Preparations were made for four working groups per workshop session per year group. In the end, year four only consisted of two groups. All workshop participants provided consent not only to take part in the workshop but to also have the discussion sessions be recorded on audio as well as video and photographs. All participants provided their personal data and they also got the participant sheet (Appendice A) which was explained to them before the start of the workshop. In all the workshops was a researcher assistant who help to do recordings of the workshop and take pictures. The assistant did not participate in any of the workshops. Part of the team was the researchers' assistant who assisted in recording

Table 4. below provides detailed numbers of student teachers who participated in the study over the three-day period. The table further indicates the number of groups per year-group across the 3 workshop days. female participants constituting over 70% of the overall sample size. While this aspect may raise concern over the study's validity, as it was not designed for representation, it adheres to the recommendations for futures workshops proposed by Nygrén (2019). The table illustrates the composition of workshop participants on the respective workshop days, their year of study, the number of groups per workshop session, and their gender profile.

Table 4. Demographic profile of workshop participants

Workshop Day	Academic Year	Group ID	No. of Participants	Gender Composition	Workshop Duration	Location
Day 1	Year 2	Group 1	5	3F / 2M	4 hours	UNAM-HPC Media Room
		Group 2	6	5F / 1M		
		Group 3	6	6F		
		Group 4	6	4F / 2M		
Day 2	Year 3	Group 1	6	5F / 1M	4 hours	UNAM-HPC Media Room
		Group 2	5	4F / 1M		
		Group 3	6	5F / 1M		
		Group 4	5	4F / 1M		
Day 3	Year 4	Group 1	4	3F / 1M	4 hours	UNAM-HPC Media Room
		Group 2	4	4F		
Total	-	-	53	41F / 12M		

4.2 Data Collection Methods

4.2.1 Casual Layered Analysis (CLA)

Futures Workshops

Futures workshops is one method-based approach for applied research or data collection that explore conceptual frameworks on the future, in which participants engage, co-create, and share knowledge. Futures researchers credit Jungk and Müllert (1987) with developing this approach, which involves citizens in the quest for favourable societal futures. These workshops are designed to equip participants, influence decision-makers, and provide solutions, based on the selected focus. These are organised, collaborative sessions that provide a forum for people to consider and deliberate on significant concerns, that advance the creation of concrete solutions and the making of alternative futures (Nygrén 2019).

To prepare for the workshop sessions, the researcher put together a workshop toolbox consisting of a guiding script for self-developed guiding program and script (Appendix B) that outlines the workshop format and length, to direct the proceedings and maintain uniformity in the facilitation of all three workshops. Because the results of futures workshops are dependent on participants' perspectives, their full engagement and participation is essential. Thorough planning was thus vital not only to ensure success of

the session but to standardisation. Jungk and Müllert (1987) and Nygrén (2019) claim that attention must be directed to the setting and surroundings of the workshop as the best engagement happens in inviting, tranquil environments that allow participants to feel comfortable and to engage fully.

The workshop toolbox included a guiding program and script, with 12 CLA posters developed specially for the group work sessions 4 posters per year session – adapted from the CLA tree (Ferreira-Aulu et al. (2023). The tree is marked Appendice D and its design will be discussed later. Inside the kit were different colour markers and Post-its, pens, a flip chart and sticky-stuff. Each four-hour session was structured in the following manner:

Presentation (45 min): An introduction to futures studies and a guided mental time travel exercise. Each group with a poster and tools to work with

Interactive Discussion (15 min): Participants sharing their reflections and initial ideas on mental travel.

Group Ideations(20 x3) : Small groups using CLA posters, sticky notes, and markers to collaboratively work through each level of CLA, guided by clear instruction. Reveal, Reframe Rethink,

Group Presentations (5 Mins): Teams presenting their visions of Alternative and Preferred Futures for the Oshiwambo language.

Reflection session (25 mins)

Figure 2:Field Images of student teacher in CLA workshop setting

Figure:3 Field Images of CLA workshops in session with interaction

The workshops alternated between English and Oshiwambo, in line with participants' bilingual abilities. Lecturers left the room after the welcome remarks to allow for a freer and more open discussion space. The bilingual methodology mirrors prevalent linguistic tendencies noted in indigenous language classrooms emphasised by Iipinge and Huddleston (2023); Ashikuti (2019) and Norro (2022) corresponding with participants lived experience of language use in the classroom environment.

Mental Time Travel Excercise

Futures thinking workshops use mental time travel to have participants imagine the future as if they were watching a movie. Participants use their imagination for the experience, which allows them to explore a range of possibilities. Mental time travel refers to the human ability to mentally move backward or forward in time – in this case, to imagine life in 2054. It relies heavily on our episodic memory and our capacity to anticipate the future (Suddendorf & Corballis 2007). The researcher used a script to help participants imagine travelling through time, making it a new and exciting experience for those trying it for the first time. The prompts asked participants to imagine life in 2054, and to connect with their culture by focussing on their relationship with a mother figure, which is important in the Oshiwambo matrilineal tradition. This method helps participants

discover new ideas and hopes, without being limited by existing norms. It creates space to imagine bold and creative futures, without limits.

The goal was also to help participants feel relaxed and to assure them that they were in a safe space where they could freely explore their thoughts during the CLA exercise.

The script used is attached to the workshop toolkit and marked as Appendix B.

Through the workshops, participants applied the CLA methodology, which helped them dissect and reframe mutual or common issues. At each stage, the researcher as facilitator would explain the task, allocate time for it, and provide clarity at each level before the participants performed the task in groups. The group numbers allowed enough time and space for each participant to participate and the researcher's role was that of ensuring that every group member contributes their thought. The process was structured, and time allocated to each level of the CLA. The guide for each level of the CLA was designed along three main components: Reveal, Reframe, and Rethink. In the “Reveal phase,” participants are requested to explore their existing assumptions – what is the current situation or the challenge that exists about the Oshiwambo language? What they see In the “Reframe” phase, they experiment with alternatives that challenge their initial assessment. Here, the participants are asked to come up with a newspaper headline to serve as an entry point into reframe, to find new words and vocabulary to use in the group discussions. Finally, in the “Rethink” phase, participants are invited to reflect on the new insights, explore fresh questions which they may have about the future and then present it to other groups. In their reflection, participants considered actions they could take to integrate the insights gained in applying the knowledge in their personal and daily lives and hopefully in the work they will end up doing. The facilitator at this phase humbly asked that each participant say something about the workshop experience.

Throughout the process, the researcher created an open atmosphere for participants to fully explore the various levels of the CLA posters., reimagining the futures in ways that stretched and strengthened their ability to anticipate and discover new solutions to the problems. The researcher as facilitator in this instance, engaged in questions from individual groups throughout the group work sessions while observing and asking questions of clarity not only on the task but also on the explanation of concepts and ideas being expressed in the groups. These interactions were marked as observations.

4.2.2 Ethnographic Observation

The researcher used non-intrusive ethnographic observations to complement the workshops, including field notes, and focusing on language use, group dynamics, and cultural behavioural patterns. Silverman (2010) and Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2001) indicate that ethnographic observation deepens contextual understanding and reveals nuances that are not captured through discussion alone.

In addition to the structured workshops, the researcher used an ethnographic approach to document observations from participants in their social contexts. This method, rooted in cultural anthropology, draws attention to unstructured, on-site observations, interaction, dialogues, like a collaborative brainstorming session, where researchers and participants interact to create knowledge (Maso 2001). In his paper on the critical turn in cultural studies, Joost van Loon (2001) argues that ethnography is a way of representing ideas, showing both social and symbolic connections. In the general sense, representation means speaking for others—like politicians speaking for voters (ibid), but in this study, representation means participants expressing their own experiences and aspirations and their views and opinion are documented as observation. Instead of others speaking for them, participants tell their own stories, in line with ethnographic focus on recording true voices and self-expression.

To understand language shift and switch, the researcher may take a position on the views of these future teachers and the language for further study. Mandla Reissmann (2021), in his master's thesis, talks about how researchers should try to see things from the perspective of the people they study—to “walk a mile in the shoes of those being studied.” Although adopting this approach is not always possible, it is nonetheless valuable for researchers to aim for it throughout their studies (Denzin 1997).

4.3 Data Management and Analysis

Data Management

Data was collected from different sources to achieve a complete holistic understanding on student teachers’ perspective. The researcher, ensuring that all the nuances are adequately considered, captured, certain sections of the sessions including group interaction

were captured with help from an assistant and the researcher's own observation reels. The following sources thus forms part of the dataset:

- 8h.37 minutes of Audio and 2h22 minutes of video recordings of the main sessions and discussions. All these were done with participants' permission, which was sought at the beginning of each workshop session.
- Participants' sticky notes, which were pasted on the CLA poster boards during the group sessions and time travel exercise. A total of 10 CLA posters with sticky notes were generated across all three workshops.
- The researcher also compiled field notes of observations and audio recordings of lived environments during and around the workshop sessions and outside areas around the campus area in their everyday setting.

All recordings of the main and discussion sessions were transcribed, translated when needed, and made anonymous before analysis. Furthermore, all data is securely stored in a clearly labelled folder, Oshiwambo Language Trajectory Futures Research Folder" on a local device as well as on a secured cloud with a personal password. The archive contains workshop photos, digitised CLA poster pictures, transcripts, field notes, participant images, and audio-visual materials.

Coding and Thematic Development

In view of the qualitative nature of the study, data analysis commenced with the systematic coding of written material. According to Meissner and Hasselberg (2012), coding is a process of "purifying and distilling" raw data—sorting participants' views, narratives, and reflections into clear, useful parts for analysis. Instead of resorting to 'labelling', coding was approached as a deeper exercise in linking data to conceptual categories, based on the guidelines presented by Richards and Morse (2007). The initial codes were generated manually and on the basis of recurring themes and perceptual patterns identified across workshop discussions, as recommended by Saldaña (2013), to ensure rigour and traceability. The data was organised in Excel spreadsheets to group responses, to recognise patterns and summarise common themes. The codes were refined incrementally, moving from broad descriptive labels to more nuanced interpretive categories. A dual strategy was adopted for this process. Firstly, statements and narrative fragments were coded in accordance with key issues raised within each workshop group. Secondly, by

comparing all the groups', repeated codes, they were then combined into main themes. A codebook was created at this stage to systematically document codes, sub-codes, and thematic definitions, with inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure analytical consistency and transparency. The final coding structure aligned with the developed thematic codebook (Appendix E & G) and reflects the multi-layered narrative and worldview dimensions central to the study. This structure supports the arrangement of the data into major themes, subthemes, and key metaphors to revealed participants' perspectives leanings. The codification and labels of participants follow the year, the group to which the individual belongs, and the number in the group, assuring the promised anonymity ascribed to narratives or comments. This is the codification (Year of study/group no./participant). Eg. Y3/2/1.

Data Analysis Strategy

As detailed in the methodology, the study's analysis was primarily guided mainly followed the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) framework, which was used both as a method of inquiry and a structure for interpretation. However, during coding, the researcher incorporated an additional qualitative model to confirm the analysis.

To improve validity and analytical depth, a triangulation strategy was employed by combining the narrative data from the workshops with ethnographic field notes. Denzin (1978) submits that triangulation strengthens credibility by using multiple data sources to cross-validate findings. This approach provides appreciation not just for what participants said, but for how and why they expressed it.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA): The first step involved categorising data into CLA's four levels—Litany, Social Causes, Worldview, and Myth/Metaphor—as outlined by Inayatullah (1998; 2004). A fifth layer, the Aquifer, adapted from Ferreira-Aulu et al. (2023) was added to capture deeper, often unspoken cultural undercurrents influencing participants' personal sentiments and spiritual connections. Table 5. sets out the analysis framework to identify themes and subthemes along the CLA levels. The 2nd column carried the metaphor names used during the workshop in mainly Oshiwambo to better position the participants in their natural spaces mentally. The researcher did a reiterative strategy to sif out relevant codes despite repetitions from the various groups.

Table 5 CLA Omugongo Tree Level Interpretation

CLA Level	Metaphor Level	Emerging issues/example
Litany	Leave and Fruits	Surface concerns, the immediate problems (e.g., declining use of Oshiwambo, poverty)
Systemic Causes	Branches	Systemic, institutional structures (Policy and institutional setup of the schools, national policy)
Worldview	Trunk	Deep cultural and societal issues that uphold the held beliefs. (reconcile, peace,
Myth/Metaphor	Roots	Deeply rooted cultural narratives and collective memory that remain unchallenged
Aquafer	The Spirit	That which is felt at emotional and spiritual level and connects the the essence of being

Visual Model - Omugongo CLA Tree in appendix D: The Omugongo (Marula) tree in figure 4. was used as a visual and metaphorical model to represent the layered character of CLA during the workshops. It was produced in large-format posters and provided to participants from which they needed to explore the language. In Oshiwambo culture, the marula tree symbolises resilience, nourishment, and collective memory—all key themes that emerged from the data. A much more legible visual representation is in the appendix.

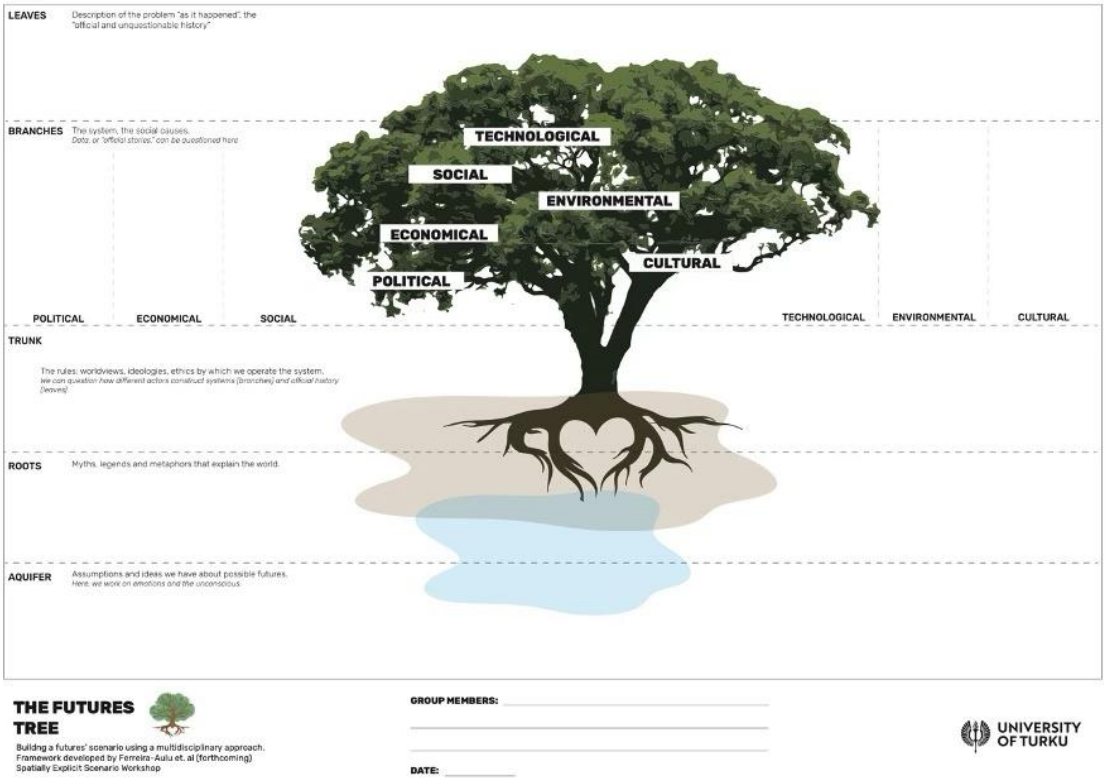

Figure 4: Omugongo Tree as a Metaphor for CLA Layers Adapted from Ferreira-Aulu (2023)

Just like this giving tree, the workshop offered seeds of wisdom, care, and hope for the future. Deeply rooted in Oshiwambo culture, the *Omugongo* plays a significant role in

traditional rituals and ceremonies, The tree is safeguarded under Namibian customary law, while the harvest celebration associated with it - Omagongo cultural festival – is and recognised by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2015). Inspired by Ferreira-Aulu's (2023) CLA tree, the researcher adapted this model by incorporating tree metaphors in CLA visualisation, where each part of the Omugongo tree symbolised a distinct layer of CLA. The deeper "aquifer" level represents emotional, cultural and spiritual undercurrents, helping participants to articulate their deeply held values, beliefs and attachments.

Cortazzi's Narrative Analysis: This narrative analysis uses Cortazzi's (1998; 2001) and Cortazzi and Jin's (2006) consolidated method to analyse content derived from CLA layers to identify and validate themes and subthemes. How participants' reflections on the creation of meaning and future aspirations relate to values, language, and identity is critical. In each inquiry, questions are posed, and the CLA analysis will respond to each of the sets of answers using the information already identified and categorised. Narrative analysis shows how people make sense of their experiences through storytelling. This framework and its rationale are employed to investigate how student teachers conceptualised their narratives and so shed light on their understanding of identity, culture, and language in the exploration of their values, anxieties, and perceived futures.

Ethnographic Integration: The researcher's ethnographic observations enriched the study by contextualising and validating emerging themes, confirming Silverman's (2010) argument that field observation offers deep cultural insight. By observing participants' behaviour, language use, and interactions during workshops and around campus, the researcher could ground the narrative data in real-world settings.

These insights were coded manually and integrated within the CLA framework, allowing for a layered interpretation of participants perspectives. Juxtaposing narrative themes with ethnographic data made it possible for the researcher to connect what participants said with how they acted, in line with the theories presented by Silverman (2010) and Emerson et al. (2001).

Figure 4 Triangulation across narrative, ethnographic, and CLA data offered a nuanced understanding of the data, reduced researcher bias, and strengthened the credibility of the findings. Figure 5 illustrates this convergence, showing how data flowed across the dif-

ferent methods to strengthen analysis. The source data from the workshops and observation are used to complete the CLA grid and structured the observations. The organised data is integrated in the CLA/narrative analysis (triangulation) and reordered again back into the CLA with the themes and narratives that explains each of the CLA levels.

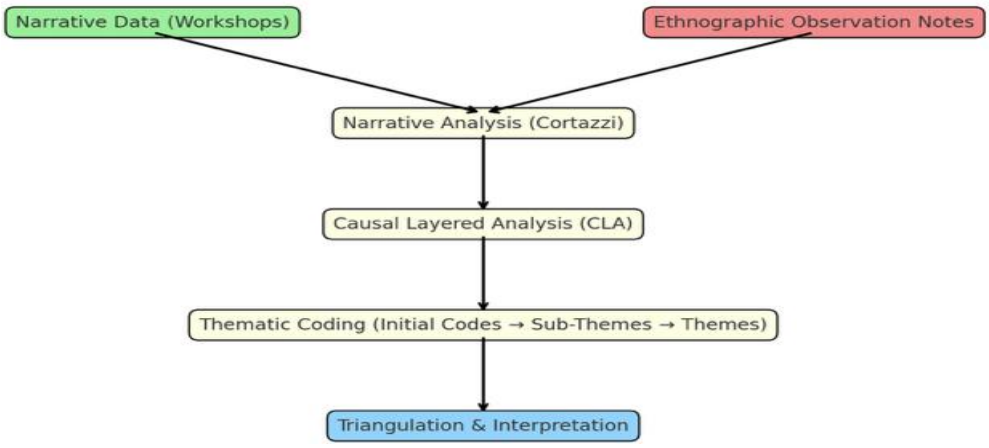

Figure 5. Data integration and triangulation flow chart

In both the application of the CLA framework and integration of the narrative and ethnographic data, the researcher spent extensive time reviewing transcripts and audio recordings, cross-checking the spoken content with written transcripts, and incorporating field observations. A deep familiarity with the material was essential for identifying meaningful themes and sub-themes. The analysis was rooted in attentive listening, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to co-creating meaning with participants—principles drawn from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria and the qualitative approaches of Gibbs (2007) and Emerson et al. (2001). Table 6 represents an extract from the codes used in the advancement of the research question. These codes emerge through several iterative rounds of analysis, rather than from a single exercise. The process involved triangulation through repeated cycles of inquiry, probing, and questioning – applied both within CLA framework and narrative analysis, and later sythensised through the triangulated CLA /Cortazzi framework. This methodology layering not only strengthened the validity of the insight but also revealed deeper challenges and arguments that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. In this extract, each code serve as the primary unit of analysis, followed by its definition drawn from the narrative statement, and an explanation of the corresponding challenge. The subsequent columns show the criteria for inclusion and the supporting quote or action. next two columns indicate inclusion and lastly

the quote or action that supports it. A more detailed version of the coding framework is available in Appendix G.

Table 6. Thematic code book example extraction

Code	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Quote
Language Shift	Transition from Oshiwambo to English or other dominant languages in daily life and education.	Mentions of switching to English; preference for English in schooling/work; language loss narratives.	General comments on language use without a shift dynamic; multilingual appreciation without decline.	'We are taught in English now; Oshiwambo is just for home.(Y2/2/4)
Loss of Knowledge Ecology/Customs Tradition	Loss of environmental and ecological wisdom embedded in indigenous languages and practices.	References to farming, land use, traditional ecological practices linked to language; loss of oral lore.	General cultural loss unrelated to environment; loss of religion or ceremonies without ecological link.	'Without farming, we lose the words we use it for the land and crops.' (Y3/1/2)

4.4 Trust and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the credibility and ethical integrity of the study – particularly given the researcher's close involvement—this research adhered to the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was established through triangulation of the workshop data, field notes, and participant narratives, allowing for the validation of the findings from multiple sources. Transferability and dependability were supported by providing thick, detailed descriptions of the research context and methodological process, enabling others to assess the study's relevance to similar settings. Confirmability was maintained through a reflexive journal, which documented the research journey. Ethical standards were strictly followed, with informed consent and respect for participant anonymity, dignity, and freedom of speech all maintained. These measures collectively reinforced the study's trustworthiness and upheld the ethical responsibility owed to participants and the broader research fraternity.

4.5 Reflexivity and Positionality

Drawing on Maso (2001), Finlay (2002), and Reissmann (2021), the researcher applied reflexivity throughout the study. As both an insider familiar with Oshiwambo culture and an academic observer, the researcher balanced emotional connection with critical self-awareness, and applied control tools to guide the data analysis and interpretation. Reflexivity ensures that participants' narratives are respected as co-creators of meaning, not just as data sources.

This chapter outlined the research design, data collection, and analysis processes. By using participatory futures workshops, narrative analysis, and ethnographic observation, the methodology provides a robust, credible, and culturally respectful exploration of how student teachers envision the future of the Oshiwambo language by 2054.

5 The Findings

This chapter presents the research findings drawn from triangulated data collected through three CLA futures workshops and ethnographic observations with student teachers at UNAM-HPC. Using the CLA framework as both an inquiry and analysis tool and integrating it with Cortazzi's narrative analysis framework, the chapter explores surface level concerns, systemic causes, worldviews, and deep myths affecting the future of the Oshiwambo language.

The chapter has five parts: a participant overview, thematic analysis aligned with CLA's four layers (litany, systemic causes, worldview, myth/metaphor) plus an added "aquifer" layer that captures feelings; an exploration of optimistic and pessimistic futures; and a conclusion linking key findings to the research questions. Participant quotes are included to preserve their voices and reflect the study's participatory approach; highlighting the social, cultural, and political aspects shaping the Oshiwambo language's future by 2054.

5.1 Emerging Theme

5.1.1 Litany: Surface-Level (Leaves and Fruits)

Concerns

At this level, participants pointed out clear challenges with the Oshiwambo language's present and future, focusing on decline, neglect, and marginalisation. A dominant reason for the emergence of this theme was the overwhelming preference for English in education and daily life. One Year 3 participant said, "When we teach Oshiwambo, even some of the learners laugh. They prefer English because they are told it will take them somewhere" (Y3/3/4). This view was common in all workshops. Ethnographic observations showed students and teachers using English during lectures and Oshiwambo mostly for casual socialising, reinforcing English's prestige and Oshiwambo's informal status which aligns with the conclusion of both Norro (2022) and Iipinge & Huddleston (2023) of their findings of the prevalence of code-switching practices in Namibia classrooms. There was also concern about the lack of updated Oshiwambo teaching materials. A frustrated Year 2 participant said, "Imagine, we are expected to teach with very old books. Learners don't see Oshiwambo as modern. How can they if no one has a book in the class except the one old book the teacher is using?" (Y2/3/6) This lack of modern

resources undermines mother tongue instruction and signals to learners that Oshiwambo is obsolete and ignored. Participants also worried about declining fluency among the youth. A Year 4 participant said:

> "Some students don't know proper Oshiwambo anymore; I observe this even in our lectures as future teachers. They are still mixing Oshiwambo and English words when they are trying to explain or convey an idea, and imagine [that is done] during the Oshiwambo lesson." (Y4/2/2)

During the workshops, many participants hesitated to speak or write exclusively in Oshiwambo, often switching to English. This suggests that Oshiwambo is losing its formal use, which puts its use in education and intellectual exchange in a vulnerable position.

These obvious concerns paint a worrying picture of a language in decline but also show that there is hope for revitalisation, which is explored in deeper analysis.

5.1.2 Systemic Causes (Branches)

Structural Factors Shaping Language Decline

Moving beyond the evident symptoms at the litany level, the analysis of systemic causes highlighted frustration among participants during the group exercise. Two of the groups in year 3 felt that the systemic issues were overwhelming and that there is simply nothing they can do. To motivate participants, the researcher asked that they at least list or discuss these issues and have a chance to share their views. This level illustrates the deeper structural dynamics that affect the future of the Oshiwambo language. These deep-rooted social, political, economic, and educational forces reinforce language hierarchies and often quietly push communities toward language assimilation and marginalisation.

A central systemic issue identified by participants was the clear dominance of English in Namibia's formal education system. While Oshiwambo is taught in the early years of schooling, participants felt that policy changes have made English proficiency as the standard across all levels. In contrast, there is no standard for indigenous languages. Without a required passing grade, efforts to maintain indigenous languages beyond Grade 3 crumble. As one participant expressed, "When a child reaches Grade 4, everything changes to English. Oshiwambo is just for beginners and after that, it is thrown away, forgotten." (Y2/1/5). This aspect**,** built into the national education policy, is repeatedly

cited as a structural barrier to maintaining the vitality of indigenous languages. Participants viewed this as much more than a curricular decision but as a symbolic gesture, reinforcing the perception that the standards instituted for English confirm it as 'privileged and the language of advancement', while Oshiwambo is only a stepping-stone.

The researcher's observations during workshop discussions confirmed that even students aspiring to be Oshiwambo language teachers viewed English as necessary for professional and academic success. During informal conversations outside the workshop sessions, many expressed frustrations at how language policies, claiming to support bilingualism, accelerate the loss of indigenous languages.

Another key concern on systemic factors affecting the language, centered around the lack of dedicated institutional investment in the promotion and modernisation of indigenous languages. Participants expressed concern about the absence of government structures tasked with ensuring the development and updating of teaching materials and digital resources. A Year 3 participant commented:

> 'It is like the government has already given up on the language. I think perhaps when they budget, they can only put all the material online instead of printing books, We are in development if the money is not enough.' (Y3/2/3)

This comment reflects a broader concern about institutional neglect, as noted in field observations where participants contrasted the abundance of English-language materials with the lack of Oshiwambo resources. The lack of educational materials discourages students and makes teachers work harder as they often must translate or create their own material, which further diminishes the perceived legitimacy of indigenous language education. Economic issues also emerged as a key systemic factor. Participants noted that no national budget funds are set aside for indigenous language development, while extra English classes are provided in some schools for those who struggle with English. Furthermore, the aspect of learners whose parents can afford private tutors for English outside government schools highlights the economic discrepancies inherent in language treatment. Another issue is that English skills are tied to jobs, higher education, and social status. A Year 4 participant reflected on this scenario: "If you want a job, you must speak good English. Oshiwambo will not help you in the city." (Y4/1/4)

Although anecdotal, these perceptions reflect wider socio-economic patterns in Namibia where indigenous language skills are seldom valued in the labour market. The researcher's

ethnographic notes also show that students often switch to English during informal conversations, which is an unconscious yet clear sign of the existing language hierarchy.

The impact of urbanisation and migration amplifies these factors. Participants noted that life in urban centres requires fluency in widely spoken languages—mainly English—which further sidelines languages like Oshiwambo. Participants reflected on the stark difference in language practices between their home communities and urban centres, as captured in one Year 2 participant's reflection: “At home in the village, everyone speaks Oshiwambo, but when you come to town, it is different. You must adjust to survive” (Y2/3/2). These insights align with the broader ethnographic observations of the study, where urban students appeared more inclined toward code-switching and English-dominant communication, while rural students were more fluent in Oshiwambo, but anxious about their ‘marketability’ in urban environments.

Together, these systemic factors—the structure of the education system, limited institutional support, absence of clear policies and strategies to promote indigenous languages, economic incentives favouring English, and the pressures of urbanisation—significantly marginalise indigenous languages like Oshiwambo. This creates a reality where even well-intentioned efforts to preserve languages can face strong challenges from powerful socio-economic and political factors.

Identifying these systemic causes helped participants move beyond surface-level issues to understand the deeper structures limiting the future of Oshiwambo and other indigenous languages in Namibia. Party politics and election promises were also noted as systemic problems, though mainly by three Year 3 groups. However, as the study reveals, these challenges are not permanent; they are shaped by participants' worldviews, and their ideas and stories offer hope for change and revitalisation.

5.1.3 Worldviews/Discourse (Trunk)

Deep Structures of Meaning and Identity

Going deeper into the third layer of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), the study reveals the underlying worldviews and ideas that help shape participants' perceptions of the Oshiwambo language's future. These deep-rooted beliefs and assumptions are often unspoken but have a powerful impact on how people think and act.

A common belief from the workshops was that English is linked to modern life, success, and being part of the world, while Oshiwambo is seen as traditional, rural, and something from the past. One participant said, “Oshiwambo is who we are, but English is how we survive” (Y3/3/1). This quote sums up a tension in many discussions: participants felt a strong emotional connection to Oshiwambo as part of their identity but also saw English as the language that offers opportunities as noted by Kangira (2016). The researcher's notes highlight this divide, showing that students used Oshiwambo in informal conversations but naturally switched to English when discussing goals, jobs, or global issues.

Some participants saw the decline of Oshiwambo as more than just losing a language—they felt it was a loss of culture and identity. Many group discussions focused on how the language connects to their way of life and values. One participant shared this worry succinctly:

> “If we lose Oshiwambo, we lose ourselves. It is more than just words we speak; it is in the stories we tell, the history, the way we live, the food we eat...” (Y2/4/3)

The researcher noted many heartfelt moments where participants spoke about how language is deeply tied to family, food, weddings, funerals and traditions like land ownership and farming. They saw losing the language not just as a personal problem, but as a shared loss of memory and identity. Participants shared a sense that language decline feels unavoidable because it is tied to larger systemic problems. They pointed out that globalisation and climate change—like less rainfall in Namibia —change how people live, damage land and soil, and weaken cultural traditions and language. Many described this in almost hopeless terms.

> “The world is changing, and we must change with it too if we want to survive, we are only 2.8 million people in Namibia and the world is very big. That is how I see it. Maybe Oshiwambo is just not strong enough to survive.” (Y4/2/2)

This pessimistic view came from a feeling of helplessness. Participants saw Oshiwambo as valuable but doubted it could survive against powerful global forces of development and systems beyond individual control. The researcher’s notes show that while many wanted to see the language revived, few could suggest clear ideas or plans, showing a wider sense of resignation.

However, some Year 4 participants offered hopeful views, believing Oshiwambo could adapt and stay relevant, especially in digital spaces where young people connect. One participant suggested:

> "We can use technology, social media, even now, the music keeps Oshiwambo alive. It is like our cellphone, it must move with us, not stay behind" (Y4/1/1).

This changing view sees Oshiwambo not as something stuck in the past, but as a living language that can grow and change. In the workshops, the researcher noticed younger participants mentioning podcasts, local music, and YouTube content in Oshiwambo, showing how the language could have a future in digital spaces with the right support. Another common view was the important role of education in keeping the language alive. Participants stressed that schools treat indigenous languages like Oshiwambo as just subjects to pass. Instead, they feel these languages should be part of all aspects of school life:

> "It must not only be in textbooks. It must be in school songs, in the debating competition with awards, in school ceremonies and events. Otherwise, we just memorise it and forget it later because we are not using it." (Y2/2/4)

These comments reveal a hidden call for a fuller, more involved way of teaching indigenous languages—one that makes Oshiwambo part of students' everyday lives, not just as a side subject. Putting together these ideas, we see a mixed picture: strong feelings for Oshiwambo as part of identity and culture, but also real pressure and doubts about its future. Still, there are signs of hope and new ideas to keep the language alive by using technology and adapting to social changes.

Understanding these ideas is important because they affect how participants see the present and imagine the future. As the next part shows, these strong beliefs and stories turn into myths and symbols that can either limit or create new possibilities for Oshiwambo's future.

5.1.4 Myths and Metaphors (Roots)

What makes us who we are?

At the deepest level of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), the study looks at myths and metaphors—those powerful, often unconscious, stories that shape how participants see

Oshiwambo's future. These myths and metaphors go beyond logic and carry shared memories, identity, and culture (Slaughter 2004; Inayatullah 2004).

During the workshops, a recurring metaphor emerged: Oshiwambo as a "tree with deep but drying roots." Participants described the language as deeply connected to their ancestors, strong and nourishing, but increasingly fragile because of modern life and climate change. One participant said:

> "Oshiwambo is like this marula tree—it has fed us for generations, but now there are no fruits, the leaves are withered, the branches are breaking off, the soil is dry, and the tree is thirsty." (Y2/1/5)

This image fits well with a common African symbol—the tree, which represents life, strength, and continuity. This idea is also shown in the Omugongo tree used in this study. The marula (Omugongo) is more than just a tree; it shares important knowledge about nature, community, and culture [al festivities] (UNESCO 2015), indicating how closely connected language, land, and life are. The concerns about the environment—like "dry soil" and "thirst"—show that participants are very aware of problems like drought and soil erosion. They use these as a metaphor for the decline of their language. This is consistent with Eriksen's (2016) argument that studies today need to understand how caring for the environment and culture are connected, since damage to nature often goes hand in hand with loss of culture.

Another common myth was that Oshiwambo is like a home called "kowambo oko kegumbo"[3]—a safe and steady place where people can go out into the world but always come back to. One Year 3 participant said this:

> "Nande owu ye peni kiilongo yi ili noyi ili, kegumbo okegumbo[4]. English may take us out into unknown worlds, countries, and cultures, but Oshiwambo is where we eventually come back to, it is our home where we belong. You need to have a place you call home otherwise you have no roots." (Y3/2/2)

This home metaphor shows both a personal and shared feelings and a sense of belong. This is generally indicative of the annual exodus of Oshiwambo speakers from major urban setting to Owambo. this is in line with what Wallace (1995) refer to as maintaning kinship with the rural areas – an indicative sign of holding to tradition. during the holiday

[3] Owambo is where home is
[4] Even if you find yourself in various countries, home is home. (referring to both country and village)

season . It echoes Barth's (1969) idea that language helps separate groups of people. Here, Oshiwambo is more than just a communication tool; it is like a soul's home, a place of belonging and an important heritage to pass down through generation.

Participants often referred to proverbs and traditional storytelling as the "bones" of the language:

> "Our proverbs are the [structural..] bones that upholds Oshiwambo, like this trunk here upholding the tree. Even if you forget the words, the wisdom stays." "Ngeenge ondati omuvyuululwakalo owo fimba ina ongodi oto tile koshike? [5]" (Y4/1/3)

The participant in this statement asked the researcher to explain the meaning of the proverb and why it is important in the language. This idea supports wa Thiong'o's (1986) view that indigenous languages are more than just words—they hold shared memories, ideas, and teachings. Proverbs are full of wisdom, knowledge about the environment, and social values that are hard to translate and can be lost when the language fades. Using proverbs and oral stories is a significant way to keep the language alive, helping pass on Oshiwambo's deep beliefs and knowledge from one generation to the next.

A participant in Year 4- who was generally very reflective, described the language as a "fire that needs tending" (Y4/2/2)

"If we don't gather wood and keep the fire burning, it will go out in the night." (Y2/3/4). This builds on the proverb "Omuthigululwakalo ogwo omulilo gwoshilongo" which speaks of culture as a shared fire that must be kept alive through sustained, collective effort. The fire metaphor connects with the African philosophy of ubuntu and collective responsibility (Bamgbose 1991). It suggests that keeping a language alive is not an individual task, but a duty for the whole community—a task of caring for, teaching, and protecting it. The fire metaphor is also a reminder that concerted effort is needed; respect alone is not enough to keep a language alive.

The researcher's observations showed that, in casual moments—joking, showing care, offering support, or expressing condolences, participants often used Oshiwambo to connect with each other. This natural code-switching shows what Skutnabb-Kangas (2000)

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[5] If I say, heritage culture or traditions is as pregnant with a rope, what does it mean?

calls the “linguistic sanctuary” role of indigenous languages—places where identities that are not regularly expressed, can be shared and result in the building of a community.

In bringing these myths and metaphors together, it is clear that participants do not see Oshiwambo’s future in purely pragmatic or institutional terms. Instead, they view the language as deeply tied to culture, the environment, memory, and belonging. These myths are not just about the past—they are active ideas that shape how people imagine keeping the language alive in a changing world.

The strong connection to myths and metaphors shows that language revival efforts can draw on lasting cultural ideas. As Inayatullah (2004) points out, changing the metaphors we live by can shape the futures we build. Recognising and using these metaphors could be a powerful way to keep Oshiwambo alive—not just as a language but as a living heritage.

5.2 Deep Analysis Using the CLA-Narrative Framework

In this section, the analysis deepens by combining Cortazzi (1998;2001) narrative components with Inayatullah’s (2004) CLA. This helps give a richer understanding of how student teachers see and interpret the future of Oshiwambo. This integration goes beyond surface-level findings and explore how participants made sense of their experiences as students, as potential future teachers, and as members of the community imagine the future of their indigenous language.

Each part of the narrative—abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda—is linked to a matching CLA level. This helps keep participants' voices, cultural nuances, and wider contexts clear and meaningful, while adding depth to the analysis.

5.2.1 Abstract – What is the Story About? (Litany Layer)

On the surface, participants focused on their immediate concerns about the clear decline in the use of Oshiwambo. The language, once vibrant in homes and communities, is increasingly relegated to informal spaces, while English is increasingly dominant in schools, workplaces, and urban environments especially. These concerns reflect the *litany* layer of Causal Layered Analysis—where problems are seen as disconnected facts, without deeper links to systems or culture (Inayatullah 1998). Much more than that, it reveals

through the narratives the sources of some of the challenges. A Year 3 (Y3/2/4) participant spoke about home, while a Year 2 (Y2/1/5) shared their reflection on community events:

> "You find that even in our own homes in town, we speak English to our younger brothers and sisters. It's because we are used to it now—at school, at work, in the shops—English everywhere. It feels strange to suddenly speak Oshiwambo. Sometimes, we even forget some words." (Y3/2/4)

> "When you go to weddings or traditional gatherings, you hear Oshiwambo, but it is mixed with English. The elders speak pure Oshiwambo, but we young ones, we switch without even thinking. It shows how we are losing it slowly without noticing." (Y2/1/5)

Both views reflect what Fishman (1991) described as the "gradual erosion" of intergenerational transmission of languages, as indigenous languages are used in fewer areas of life. They also mentioned Phillipson's (1992) theory of *linguistic imperialism*, where a colonial language gradually overtakes indigenous languages. This was not made clear initially in the workshops. In informal conversations before and after sessions, students mostly switched to English for academic or official topics and used Oshiwambo mainly for casual or funny moments. The challenge is not only individual but its of community. Society is getting accustomed to and now easily code-switch, making what Gumperz (1982) as taking on the identity of the others.

The message from participants is clear: Oshiwambo is increasingly seen as a language of tradition, emotion, and informality—while English is seen as the language of progress, learning, and urban sophistication.

5.2.2 Orientation – Who, When, Where? (Systemic Causes Layer)

Participants' stories linked their language experiences to wider societal aspects—education and language policies, urbanisation, and socio-economic pressures—that have changed how they use language. This fits the *systemic causes* layer in CLA, where structures and institutions frame individual experiences (Inayatullah 2004). Participants reflected a lot on space and geography. Indicating that this plays a big role in terms of language skills development and acquisition. The researcher noted the enthusiasm in the year two groups with one of the Year 2 participants commenting about the issue of education saying:

> "In primary school, we were told that English is the future. Even now in teacher training, the serious subjects — science, maths, even history — are taught in English. Oshiwambo is only for one subject. So, we start believing that it is not important, even when it is part of who we are." (Y2/3/2)

Similarly, a Year 4 participant, Group 2, explained:

> "You can't survive in Windhoek or even here [town] with Oshiwambo only. Jobs need English. Universities need English. Our parents encourage us to speak English so that we can have better opportunities. They say, 'English is your future." (Y4/2/3)

These reflections show how policies and social views present English as the language of progress and success, relegating indigenous languages to secondary roles. It resonates with Blommaert's (2010) assertion that language beliefs maintain social and economic hierarchies, where mastery of a global language becomes a gateway to privilege.

The researcher observed that, even among peers, students often switched to English when discussing aspirations, careers, and education opportunities—invariably reinforcing the systemic devaluation of Oshiwambo in future-oriented conversations.

Thus, the *systemic causes* are not only found in formal structures but become internalised; and, ultimately, shape how participants imagine the future of their language.

5.2.3 Complicating Action – What Informs Action? (Worldview Layer)

At this deeper level, participants grappled with the tension between embracing modernity and preserving tradition. Their narratives revealed almost opposing worldviews—valuing their culture while also wanting success in a world where English and 'global' ideas dominate. This complex dynamic reflects the *worldview* layer of CLA, which considers hidden cultural beliefs and ideas (Inayatullah 1998). Within CLA this is generally a very confusing level for the participant. From Year 3,

> "Sometimes I feel proud when I speak Oshiwambo, like during a traditional wedding or cultural festivals here at the university. But when you come to the city or even on social media, you feel like it's not 'cool.' You must communicate in English or even mix with other languages to be accepted. It's like Oshiwambo is for when you have to speak to old people, like your grandmother or for domestic discussions and having fun, making jokes etc. I don't know much English jokes, but yes, Oshiwambo ones are many." (Y3/1/2)

Another participant's deeper personal issues were revealed, making reference to their mother. This is a profound discovery. the participant from Year 2 elaborated:

> "My mom taught us proverbs, the songs, and the meanings of life in Oshiwambo when we are doing housework. But I don't think we pass it on. We think it's better to be modern, to follow the world, to leave the 'old primitive' ways behind. Even weddings today have more English speeches than Oshiwambo stories, something that never used to happen." (Y2/4/1)

This tension in how people see the world is not simply generational; it reflects deeper socio-cultural shifts underpinned by changing environments. One poignant observation from Year 3, linked language to traditional knowledge about the environment:

> "I learned many Oshiwambo words and proverbs from my mother when we are in the field cultivating 'omahangu.; The significance of rain, the wind, seasons, even the soil treatment — they are all part of what makes up Omuwambo, to understand how you live in the language. But if growing omahangu becomes impossible because of the droughts, how will the next generation of children learn these words? How will they feel this meaning we have today? "(Y3/2/4)

Such reflections show that language is part of everyday life and intricately connected to the land, supporting Eriksen's (2001) argument that culture and the environment are inseparably linked. In this regard, the loss of traditional farming practices due to climate change threatens not only food security, but also language and culture. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) predicted that when indigenous languages disappear, nature often suffers too. Hawkes (2001) shares this perspective, arguing that culture and language are as important to sustainability as the economy, society, and the environment. As land use changes and ecological crises deepen, the ways within which Oshiwambo is transmitted are being seriously disrupted.

From an observational standpoint, students became more contemplative when discussing farming, land, and language together, illustrating that they recognise how the environment and language are connected. Participants' use of English when discussing future livelihoods or urban-based aspirations not only reflects a change in language use, but a fundamental shift in regard to their **e**nvironmental identity and practice.

Thus, at the *worldview* layer, the negotiation is not simply between tradition and modernity, but between being rooted in an ecological-linguistic world and adapting to rapidly changing socio-economic and environmental realities.

5.2.4 Evaluation – What Does It Mean? (Myth/Metaphor Layer)

Participants' narratives moved further into symbolic realms where their use of myths and metaphors revealed their emotional ties to the language. Here, Oshiwambo was seen not just as a tool for communication but as a living representation of cultural dignity, resilience, and identity. This aligns with the *myth/metaphor* layer of CLA, where deep-rooted narratives and collective archetypes surface (Inayatullah 2004). From Year 4 participant who supports an earlier perspective from a Y/2/1/5 who both asserts that

> "Oshiwambo is like a tree — it has deep roots, but the leaves are falling. The roots are strong because of our ancestors, but if we do not water it, the tree will die. We are the water." (Y4/1/2)

Similarly, a participant from Year 3, stated:

> "It feels like Oshiwambo is a river that is drying up. Before, it was full, flowing everywhere. Now only small streams remain — in the villages, at ceremonies. If we don't build dams, it will disappear." (Y3/3/5)

These metaphors resonate with Eriksen's (1993) and Barth's (1969) conceptions of ethnicity as dynamic and relational, linked to collective memory and cultural survival. The imagery of nature—trees, rivers—also reflects the ecological knowledge embedded within indigenous languages. To this effect, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), equated language loss to the loss of valuable ecological knowledge and culture.

The researcher's observations supported these notions; participants who were most emphatic about language loss, often drew on environmental metaphors without prompting, revealing their deep, internalised connection between language and the land, tradition, and survival.

Thus, in the *myth/metaphor* layer, Oshiwambo transcends functionality; it becomes a symbol of enduring cultural resilience—a fading yet rooted heritage consideration.

At the deepest level of analysis—the *myth/metaphor* layer—participants drew on images, proverbs, and symbolic narratives that capture the collective, unconscious, essence of their communities. Inayatullah (1998) suggests that this is where the deep metaphors of a people reside; shaping how they view themselves and their futures.

Participants' stories revealed a tension between the enduring metaphors of tradition and the emerging myths of modernity. One Year 2 participant shared:

> "We say 'Oonkandja mbali ihadhi tokoka gwo omulilo gwaayeni ita gu ku fike'[6] — a foreign fire cannot warm you. It means if you lose your mother tongue, even if you learn all the other languages, you are still empty inside." (Y2/3/2)

This idiomatic expression strongly supports wa Thiong'o's (1986) conception that language is so much more than a mere medium of communication; that it is central to cultural identity and collective memory. Losing your language is akin to losing your roots. It's a disconnection from the self. A Year 3 participant shared:

"My grandmother used to say 'Omandengu gomuuzilo ohaga tema omulilo ngu gwa kwata oshilongo shaAandonga ya Nangolo.' [7]The fires lit by our ancestors fortify and lits the way for a strong and united Ondonga kingdom. If we forget Oshiwambo, it's like trying to walk in darkness without that light." (Y3/2/5)

This powerful metaphor sees the ancestral flames as more than just sources of warmth and identity—they are also lights that guide future generations. This imagery resonates deeply with the core of this thesis, *Illuminating Futures*, where the act of remembering, speaking, and transmitting the language itself becomes a means by which to shed light on the way ahead.

From the observations, it was clear that when participants used such proverbs or ancestral references, they became more serious. This shows that these metaphors carry deep emotional and cultural meanings. It also showed that these metaphors are not static relics; they are *living codes* that inform action, shape identity, and inspire visions of the future.

As Eriksen (2001) puts forward, ethnic and cultural identities are not merely inherited but are constantly negotiated, especially in times of rapid socio-economic change. To this effect, participants' use of Oshiwambo metaphors suggests active engagement with their heritage, reinterpreting it in the face of current challenges. These metaphors anchor their sense of belonging even as globalisation and urbanisation disrupt the foundation of traditional life.

The ecological dimension of these myths is significant too. The ancestral fires represent both cultural continuity and ecological stewardship. Traditional expressions—rooted in language and land—hold important knowledge for a sustainable future. This reinforces

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[6] Two bark twines (ropes) connected doesn't break easily and your own fire cannot burn you
[7] The brave man from the east lit the fire which keeps together the land of Aandonga ruled by Nangolo

Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000) view that indigenous languages are vessels for ecological wisdom, embedding environmental sustainability into the heart of cultural identity.

Thus, at the level of myths and metaphors, participants envision futures where Oshiwambo is a living, evolving force—powered by traditional knowledge and illuminating new pathways. Language is more than a means of expression; it is about resilience, dignity, and the continuity of a people's soul.

5.2.5 Resolution – How Did It End? (Systemic Resistance)

Notably, participants did not seem to resign themselves to an apparent inevitable decline of the language. Many articulated visions of both resistance and revitalisation—expressing agency in imagining how Oshiwambo could regain vitality. These reflections resonate with Inayatullah's (2004) advocacy for preferred futures and Inayatullah's (2004) emphasis on intentional cultural regeneration. From Year 2,

"We can teach children from small again. Use Oshiwambo more at home, in church, and in community meetings. We must bring it back not only in schools but in life." (Y2/2/3)

Another voice from Year 3 indicated that:

> "Media must be part of this. More Oshiwambo TV, radio, podcasts. If youth see that Oshiwambo can be used for serious things, even new technologies, they will use it proudly." (Y3/2/1)

These proactive endeavours align with current revitalisation frameworks that emphasise the integration of indigenous languages into new domains—media, technology, education—spotlighted by UNESCO (2015) and revitalisation scholars like Grenoble and Whaley (2006).

Thus, at the *resolution* level, participants display acute awareness of the potential decline of the language and are able to articulate tangible strategies for reversing the trend—a powerful testament to their part not just as passive bystanders, but as active change agents.

5.2.6 Coda - Why Does it Matter? (Reframe: Alternative Futures)

In their closing reflections, participants framed the preservation of Oshiwambo as a moral, cultural, and generational imperative. This reframe aligns with Slaughter's (1998)

view that futures thinking must catalyse alternative imaginaries that challenge prevailing trajectories. A year 4 participant indicated:

> "If we lose our language, we lose our way. Language is our root, our mirror. If we let it die, we will be strangers to ourselves [...]." "The future must have Oshiwambo in it" (Y4/2/2)

Similarly, Year 3 reflected:

> "Teaching children Oshiwambo is not just language [...] it is teaching pride, respect, history. Without it, "the future will have no memory." (Y3/3/1)

While these views provided a deep understanding of the importance of language transmission, it reflected deep-seated moral value and obligation on the part of the language teacher and in particular mother tongue teacher or instructor. These statements shows a deep reflective aspects on their role as educators within society and not simply following a syllabus. This perspective supports wa Thiong'o's (1986) declaration that language is the basis of cultural survival and also his broader call for linguistic decolonisation. These views also echo Hawkes' (2001) perspective that culture—including language should be highly regarded as the fourth pillar of sustainability, which is vital for societal resilience. Thus, a moral obligation in the role of language teachers is identified as a strong enabler of "retention of memories."

Ultimately, the *coda* points firmly towards *reframing* the future—not as a passive loss but as an active reclamation of linguistic and cultural identity, championed by the very educators being trained today.

5.3 Summary of the integrated analysis approach

Having examined participants' initial narratives, their reframing of assumptions, and their grounding in metaphorical traditions, it becomes evident that they do not have a binary view on the future of Oshiwambo as solely one of loss or decline. They have a far more expansive view on the matter, derived from critical consideration of the forces at play—structural, cultural, and ecological—as well as reflection on their own potential agency within these dynamics.

Participants displayed a remarkable ability for evaluative reflection, diagnosing the current state of the language while critically examining the underlying frameworks that support it. A year 2 participant reflected:

> "We are taught English because it is the door to opportunities, but if we close the door of Oshiwambo, where will our identity enter from?" (Y2/3/2)

This analysis highlights the tension between modernity and tradition, which wa Thiong'o (1986) coined as the conflict between the language of the coloniser and that of indigenous populations. In *Decolonising the Mind*, wa Thiong'o posits that the erosion of indigenous languages corresponds to a deterioration of collective memory and cultural consciousness—a sentiment echoed by participants. Equally, Eriksen's (1993) notion of identity being both ascribed and achieved resonated deeply with participants's narratives. Participants spent considerable time reflecting on their evolving identities within an increasingly globalised, Anglophone Namibia. One Year 3 student commented:

"It is not that we want to forget Oshiwambo, but the places we dream of working in, they need English. Oshiwambo is kept for home, but our future is outside home." (Y3/2/3)

The participant emphasises the concrete reality of living with language hierarchies, expressed by Blommaert (2010) as social structures that allocate varying status and utility to different languages. The participants' reflections further underscore that the future of Oshiwambo is not simply a matter of individual choice, but that it is interwoven with the complex intersections of education, economy, and cultural capital. These reseacher from observation noted that most of the participants were concerned with future jobs and thus the perspective.

Another critical insight from participants is the recognition that environmental and ecological factors are vital, albeit indirect, influences on language sustainability. As one Year 4 participant noted:

> "If there is no land to farm, if droughts destroy the harvests, then the stories our mothers told us in the fields will not be told. Oshiwambo will die quietly with the land." (Y4/2/1)

This observation reinforces the *ecological perspective* outlined by Mufwene (2008), who suggested that languages, like ecosystems, are vulnerable to external pressures like economic, political, and environmental forces. Language loss, therefore, cannot be understood in isolation from the broader socio-ecological systems in which it is embedded.

Moreover, many participants regarded their role as teachers not merely as transmitters of the curriculum, but as guardians of cultural identity. This awareness reflects Masini's (1993) call for *preferred futures*—visions grounded in ethical and collective responsibility. One participant from year 3 eloquently summarised:

> "I think we are not just supposed to teach words based on curriculum but we must find creative ways to teach, do lesson preparations beforehand. Maybe we need to carry the stories, the wisdom, the ways of our people into the future." (Y3/1/1)

In the context of Namibia's overarching narrative of reconciliation and nation-building, participants' reflections demonstrate profound awareness of the transformative potential of education. For these future educators, the practice of teaching Oshiwambo becomes a form of cultural resistance, resilience, and renewal.

5.4 Addressing the Research Questions

This section offers a critical reflection on the findings presented in the thesis by directly addressing the four research questions that guide the study. Using a combination of narrative analysis, Causal Layered Analysis, and ethnographic observation, the discussion places the student teachers' voices and perspectives at the centre within the broader theoretical and conceptual frameworks outlined.

5.4.1 RQ1: What role does Oshiwambo play in the futures-making of student teachers?

The findings showed that Oshiwambo has an important symbolic and functional role in the student teachers' ability to create future images. For many, Oshiwambo is more than a communication tool; it is a vessel of identity, cultural knowledge, and ancestral wisdom. This mirrors wa Thiong'o's (1986) assertion that language is the carrier of culture and identity, a theme powerfully expressed in the fire narratives where participants in Group 3 describe their mother tongue as the "voice of the ancestors" and "the fire that must never be extinguished" (Y3/3/3), echoing what participant (Y3/2/5) had reframed as the ancestral fire analogy.

Eriksen's (1993) description of ethnicity as both ascribed and achieved is equally pertinent, as participants actively imagine Oshiwambo as their linguistic heritage—something to be protected and revitalised. Their narratives show that participants experience

language as profoundly connected to their everyday lives—in land cultivation, storytelling, traditional events, and practices—and, thus, as central to futures-making. Without language, participants argue, the cultural knowledge and social fabric that shapes their communities would break down, leaving future generations "rootless, voiceless and homeless" (Y2/2/1).

For these participants, Oshiwambo plays a foundational role in personal identity formation and is also a vital medium for sustaining collective futures.

5.4.2 RQ2: What images and narratives do student teachers create about the future of Oshiwambo in 2054?

The images and narratives co-created during the workshops demonstrated a sense of both optimism and despair among participants. Participants envisioned futures where Oshiwambo could either flourish through sustained intergenerational transmission or fade into obsolescence under the pressures of globalisation and linguistic imperialism.

Through Causal Layered Analysis, metaphors such as "roots being pulled from "dry soil" and "Oshiwambo as a home with doors either closed or open" emerged, highlighting participants' uncertainty about the future of the language. The myth/metaphor layer revealed a profound cultural desire for continuity. In the words of one participant, "Our language is like the Omugongo tree — even in the drought, it must bear fruit" (Y4/2/1).

This finding is consistent with Fishman's (1991) argument that intergenerational transmission is the cornerstone of language vitality and Graddol's (1997; 2024) caution that demographic shifts can radically change linguistic landscapes. Still, many participants expressed optimism, citing the adaptability of young people and the role of technology in reviving language practices. They gave examples of the increased use of Oshiwambo in social media, music, and community initiatives; irrefutable evidence that new narratives of linguistic resurgence are possible.

Participants' visions of the future fluctuated between decline and revival, with each outcome closely tied to the social action of language actors and policy support.

5.4.3 RQ3: What themes and worldviews emerge from the student teachers' future perspectives?

Several dominant themes and worldviews surfaced from the exploration:

Ecological Sustainability and Language: Participants associated keeping the language alive with caring for the environment. They remarked that as climate change harms the land and traditional ways of life, the language and culture associated with them also suffer. One participant remarked, "If we can't plant omahangu[8] with our mothers, we cannot learn the words" (Y3/4/2). This shows how the future of the environment and language are linked, which matches Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer's (1998) argument on cultural sustainability.

Globalisation and Hybrid Identities: Tension between embracing global modernity accelerated by urbanisation, and retaining traditional identities was evident. The notion of hybrid identities— speaking English for opportunity and Oshiwambo for identity—aligns with Makoni and Pennycook's (2007) idea of 'disinvention' and re-imagining of African languages. Furthermore, it was also evident that English was not the only global language threatening Oshiwambo, but Mandarin as well. This supports the perspective Graddol (2024) presented on the emergence of new languages, supporting this finding.

Fear of Cultural Loss: A deep-rooted fear that Oshiwambo may become "a museum language" (Y2/1/4), used only in ceremonial settings instead of everyday life, underlies many narratives. This reflects Skutnabb-Kangas's (2000) concept of linguistic genocide by neglect.

Overall, the views shared demonstrate a keen awareness of the socio-political forces shaping language futures, along with an increasing recognition of participants' own agency and the power to envision and create alternative futures.

[8] Pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum)* traditional staple consumed among Aawambo

5.4.4 RQ4: What insights do the student teachers gain through the knowledge-creation exercise?

Research Question 4 aimed to establish what participants learned from the knowledge-creation exercises in the CLA futures workshops. These workshops, based on Causal Layered Analysis (Inayatullah 2004) were used both to collect data and to help participants learn and change. Participants took part in critical reflection, storytelling, and anticipatory thinking, in line with Miller's (2018) notion of *transformative foresight*—the capacity to imagine and act upon alternative futures. Throughout the workshops, participants reflected on the systemic challenges facing the Oshiwambo language, but more importantly, they saw themselves not merely as transmitters of linguistic heritage, but as *future-makers* and agents of cultural resilience.

For example, one participant said: "We have a duty to keep the fire burning for the next generation" (Y3/1/2), signalling a shift from passive concern to proactive stewardship. Another said: "Thinking far ahead" showed me "something new" which I was not aware of" (Y2/3/5), illustrating how the futures-thinking exercise helped them imagine new possibilities—a core technique used to elicit imaginative thinking (Suddendorf & Corballis 2007). These experiences fit with Mezirow's (1991) theory of *transformative learning*, which argues that critical reflection enables individuals to rethink deeply held beliefs and develop new, more inclusive ways of seeing the world. Through this futures-based knowledge-creation process, participants not only considered the risks of language decline but also conceived concrete, actionable pathways—like founding their language clubs at the university and adding indigenous knowledge to school lessons—to revitalise the Oshiwambo language.

The workshops also served as an opportunity to engage in *anticipatory capacity building* (Poli (2015) and Miller (2018), encouraging participants to internalise the notion that the future is not predetermined but co-constructed through collective agency. Their narratives reinforced the principle that language revitalisation is closely linked with ecological knowledge, cultural identity, and intergenerational continuity—themes central to the broader frameworks of cultural sustainability (Hawkes 2001) and indigenous rights (OHCHR 2013). The undertaking showed that futures thinking, when grounded in indigenous perspectives and brought to light through participatory methodologies, can build

a strong sense of ownership and responsibility in young language advocates. One participant reflected, “It is up to me as a teacher to be creative in the classroom and make the language learning interesting for the learner; they will love my class” (Y2/3/5). Participants emerged from the process not as passive recipients of tradition but as active custodians and innovators, ready to guide the Oshiwambo language into new and evolving.

The knowledge-creation process is both an intellectual and affective journey, where memory, identity, and foresight converge to establish the groundwork for a resilient, living linguistic future. With imagination and courage, the story of the Oshiwambo language has the potential to transcend expectation and be renewed, carried forward by a new generation committed to illuminating the path for future generations.

5.5 Summary of the Findings

The study found that indigenous languages are not static; they evolve. While they may decline, they also have the capacity to recover. By using multiple methodologies, the researcher conducted a layered and comprehensive exploration of how student teachers envision and express the future of the Oshiwambo language by 2054.

Using the CLA framework, the study identified surface-level challenges (litany) such as declining language use, the dominance of English, and lack of formal institutional support. Examining systemic causes revealed broader social, political, and economic forces—education policies favouring English, urbanisation trends, and shifting socio-economic aspirations—that indirectly contribute to the marginalisation of Oshiwambo. Delving deeper into worldviews, the narratives revealed a complex negotiation between the promises of modernity and the values rooted in indigenous language and identity. At the myth and metaphor layer, emotional, symbolic, and spiritual foundations emerged that continue to sustain the language: Oshiwambo was described as a “root,”a “fire passed on by ancestors,”and a “light guiding the future”.

Applying Cortazzi’s (2001) narrative structure—orientation, complication, reframing, evaluation, resolution, and coda—deepened the analysis by revealing the participants' stories not merely as reflections on language loss, but as creative acts of futures-making. Their narratives progressed from feelings of disconnection and struggle to hopeful visions

of renewal, innovation, and resilience, highlighting that young speakers are not passive heirs to decline, but active agents in shaping alternative futures.

The use of indigenous proverbs and metaphors—such as "*Oonkandja mbali ihadhi tokoka"* [9] and *"Omandengu gomuuzilo ohaga tema omulilo ngu gwa kwata oshilongo shaAandonga ya Nangolo"* [10]highlighted how the future of the language is deeply tied to cultural knowledge, ecological heritage, and the active role of younger generations. These insights emphasise that language is inseparable from lived experience, identity, and social futures.

Furthermore, the findings support wa Thiong'o's (1986) perspective that language serves both as a carrier of culture and a site of struggle. Eriksen's (1993) focus on identity formation in a globalised world highlights the complex challenges African languages face today. Futures studies, especially through Causal Layered Analysis, provided a transformative lens through which to deconstruct and reimagine these challenges, demonstrating that alternative futures become possible when historical awareness, cultural pride, and anticipatory skills are activated.

The findings show that the survival and growth of Oshiwambo rely on resisting linguistic imperialism and creating spaces that prioritise indigenous voices, knowledge systems, and creativity. The student teachers imagined futures where the language is both preserved and adapted to changing realities, fulfilling the main goal of this thesis: to reveal how future custodians of the language envision Oshiwambo's future. The next chapter will deepen the discussion by placing these findings within wider theoretical and practical contexts. Chapter 6 will explore their significance for indigenous language sustainability, futures thinking, and approaches to education.

[9] Two bark twines (ropes) connected doesn't break easily
[10] The brave man from the east lit the fire which keeps together the land of Aandonga ruled by Nangolo

6 Discussions

This chapter discusses the findings from Chapter 5 through the theoretical frames introduced in Chapter 4. It makes a connection between the Oshiwambo language and the wider debates on the phenomena of languages, in particular indigenous languages, amid globalisation underpinned by ongoing complexities. The chapter also provides policy and education recommendations, reflects on the methodology used, its contribution, and limitations, and suggests further research.

6.1 Linking the Results to Theory

The findings support and expand key theories of wa Thiong'o (1986); Fishman (1991) and Nic Craith (2007), emphasising language as a vessel of cultural identity and collective memory. Student teachers showed how Oshiwambo anchors family ties, traditions, and community. The tension between indigenous languages and colonial linguistic imperialism (wa Thiong'o 1986; Phillipson 1992) was confronted when student teachers described how the dominance of English contributes to the fear of decline exemplified by the ongoing tension with the ongoing code switching and language shift Fishman (1991) elaborated about. This again further echoes wa Thiong'o's (1989) call to decolonise African languages and reclaim cultural autonomy, a view also strongly supported by both Fishman (1991) and Nic Craith (2007). Accountability and ownership emerged as a key driver of sustainable future language management, calling on themselves not only to be passive observers but become active language agents in their role as teachers.

Their stories also affirmed Hawkes (2001) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) on cultural sustainability, linking language to ecology and land use, aligning with Eriksen's (2016) view of culture-environment interdependence. Using Causal Layered Analysis (Inayatullah 2004) and the integrated narrative analysis of Cortazzi (1998;2001) and Cortazzi and Jin (2006) revealed multiple layers of stories and narratives behind language decline and revitalisation—surface issues, systemic causes, worldviews, and deep myths. The metaphor of 'kegumbo[11]'-(home) - association to a physical space of belonging—suggests a strong link between language use and origin, a place of tradition, cultivation, and customs interpreted as collective cultures. As most of the participants narrated, 'Home is

[11] At house - in this context, home. Aawambo make a distinction between the two. A house is in an urban setting while home is where the roots are, in the village. Home hold significant value for Aawambo

where we all must return to keep in touch with our culture.' [Being] connected to their roots can aid sustainable language management.

The study confirmed futures research as emancipatory (Inayatullah 2004), showing how student teachers imagined revitalised Oshiwambo language futures through technology, education, and community efforts, reflecting what Slaughter (2008) terms, the goals of transformative futures research.

6.2 Interpretation of the Key Findings

The narratives revealed Oshiwambo as a living, evolving practice that is deeply tied to identity and collective memory (Fishman 1991; Nic Craith 2007). Participants saw the language not only as a heritage but as a space for active reinvention. In line with wa Thiong'o (1986), they strongly emphasised the need for Oshiwambo's active and consistent use in education and daily life to thrive. Participants viewed themselves as active agents reshaping the language's future, echoing Miller's (2018) transformative futures literacy—the ability to imagine alternatives beyond inevitable decline. While the participants agreed Oshiwambo was not yet official, it remains central to cultural resilience, shift in view which is strongly supported by Slaughter (2004) when asserting that futures thinking results in shifting worldviews.

6.2.1 The Role of Oshiwambo in Future-Making

Student teachers placed Oshiwambo at the heart of family and community life, viewing it not through nostalgia but as vital to education, culture, and daily communication—echoing Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) call to liberate indigenous languages from the fringes. Their narratives demonstrated that they see themselves not just as future custodians but as active agents capable of reshaping the language's trajectory, aligning with Miller's (2018) concept of transformative futures literacy.

The results further reveal and demonstrate that for most participants, Oshiwambo represents a site of cultural resilience. As one student put it, 'Our language is not just words—it's where our wisdom lives.' Their reflections align with Slaughter's (2004) emphasis on shifting worldviews as central to futures-making.

6.2.2 Images and Narratives of the Future

The futures narratives constructed by participants oscillated between dystopian and utopian imaginaries. Many students foresaw the decline of Oshiwambo if current systemic neglect persists, citing the dominant status of English in education and public life. This mirrors Phillipson's (1992) theory of linguistic imperialism, wherein the global spread of English undermines the vitality of local languages. One participant referred to this 2054 worldview as 'an English house with our values in it' a site wherein he would find it challenging to experience his own identity.

Yet, alongside these fears and anxieties, participants also narrated and expressed optimistic futures wherein Oshiwambo is revitalised and developed. through strategic interventions — particularly through education and technology. Participants imagine a world in 2054 where Oshiwambo would live alongside English in status and significance. This utopian perspective was driven by the narratives of the newspaper headlines imagined. Oshiwambo became the official language and is now available on Google. Participants proposed innovative pathways such as integrating Oshiwambo into digital platforms, leveraging social media for language promotion, and developing culturally resonant curricula.

This dual perspective aligns with what Inayatullah (2004) refers to as alternative futures. The recognition of both probable or undesirable future trends and the identification of preferable or aspirational futures. The ability of the participants to imagine both decline and revitalisation dimensions reflects a mature approach to futures from the student teachers, as they themselves grapple with balancing systemic complexities of a rapidly changing world with their personal hopes and ambitions of finding teaching jobs. This view strongly supports Masini's (1993) multiplicity of futures and the power of collective envisioning towards social transformation.

6.2.3 Emerging Themes and Worldviews

Three critical themes emerged from the layered analysis, which the researcher will refer to as enabling drivers of linguistic sustainability. The first one is:

Ecological Sustainability and Language: Participants often linked language sustainability to ecological practices, suggesting that environmental degradation and the erosion of traditional land use practices carried out for centuries are linked to language use and threaten the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. This resonates with Eriksen (2016) work on the intersections between culture, ecology, and sustainability. Strong perception from participants: they associate many Oshiwambo lexicons and expressions with ecology and customary land issues and activities. This further suggests that the frequency at which these words are used in everyday language use indicates language vitality. Their absence in everyday speech, therefore, impacts language sustainability—a strong indicator of language vitality.

Cultural Resilience through Innovation: There was a clear desire among participants to reimagine language use beyond traditional domains, suggesting that innovation — rather than mere preservation—is key to cultural survival. This affirms the notion of 'cultural sustainability' as posited by Hawkes (2001). While participants felt that there were certain structures to be respected—referring to the constitution and language policy,- culture and a sense of belonging are critical elements worth maintaining. Language, in this instance, becomes a site of negotiating cultures and heritage matters. Oshiwambo as earlier indicated, was viewed as a site of cultural resilience. As one student put it, 'Our language is not just words—it's where our wisdom lives'. Their reframing of a problem and finding innovative solutions to the challenge is what Slaughter's (2004) emphasis on shifting worldviews to emerge with solutions is. Even in the application of technology as a solution, the space for negotiation becomes a technology space accessible to all.

The third worldview is that of *negotiating one's own identity in a globalised world*: The tension between maintaining the indigenous identity and embracing the opportunities afforded by a globalised world was a recurring theme. While participants endeavour to seek a balanced bilingual future, where Oshiwambo and English coexist without discriminating or marginalising the other, participants reflected on the other Namibian languages in a similar situation, making specific mention that all those languages also need to be considered and not only Oshiwambo when it comes to formal structures. This alignment with the pluralistic visions of linguistic coexistence is advocated by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000). 'Thirty years after independence, there is no reason why our indigenous languages cannot be regarded as official languages.'(Y3/1/3) Such views, echoed, disputed, and negotiated by the participants, emerge as a useful driver for language revitalisation. Calls

for deliberate budgeting further suggest the heightened anticipatory capabilities of the participants, as posited by Poli (2017), who sees individuals as proactive architects of futures rather than mere passive recipients.

The emergence of these themes underscores how the linguistic sustainability of indigenous languages is deeply entwined with identity, ecology, and adaptability.

6.2.4 Knowledge Creation and Transformation Practice

There is no doubt that the participatory, futures-oriented methodology was transformative. Participants did not merely recount past experiences but actively reimagined futures, engaging in what Pouru-Mikkola and Wilenius (2023) call 'transformative futures learning.' Echoing this, Cortazzi and Jin (2006) assert that narrative analysis enables participants to negotiate identity and meaning.

Moreover, the reflexivity embedded in the research process — guided by Maso (2001) and Reissmann (2021)—ensured that participants' voices remained central. The integration of ethnographic observation further validated the authenticity of the narratives, capturing the often subtle non-verbal affirmations of identity and community witnessed during the workshops.

Thus, the interpreted findings suggest that the future of Oshiwambo—and, by extension, other indigenous languages—lies not only in resisting the forces of globalisation and marginalisation but acknowledging language as a dynamic, living system capable of evolving alongside societal transformations. Reimagining language sustainability thus requires active agents willing to consider adaptive strategies, create innovative ecosystems and spaces to enhance cultural resilience, and ecological awareness that supports language revitalisation.

6.3 Implication for Indigenous Language Futures

In reflecting on the perspective of the participants from the results analysed, the researcher critically considered the insights in broader trajectories and their implications of language for the future. This view is not only for Oshiwambo but also for similarly positioned indigenous languages. Drawing from the students' narratives and the analysis grounded in the triangulated narratives from Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) and ethnographic observations, several conclusions can be made.

Reimagining Indigenous Languages as Living Systems

The narratives reaffirm that indigenous languages should not be viewed as static artifacts preserved solely for cultural nostalgia but as dynamic, living systems capable of evolving alongside societal transformations. In line with Fishman's (1991) view of language as a vital component of cultural vitality and resilience, the participants positioned Oshiwambo as integral to identity and ecological knowledge systems.

Their suggestions for digital integration, innovative curricula, and community-based initiatives suggest that sustainable futures for indigenous languages depend on strategies that balance traditional knowledge systems with innovation. As wa Thiong'o (1986) argued, reclaiming linguistic space in public and private life is an act of cultural liberation—a sentiment echoed by the student teachers who saw the survival of Oshiwambo as tied to its everyday relevance.

Thus, any policy interventions must move beyond preservationist frameworks and adopt a more dynamic approach that recognises indigenous languages as adaptable and resilient, capable of thriving in new and emergent spaces such as digital media, creative industries, and environmental advocacy. The perspective is strongly supported by the inevitable increase in globalisation and the emergence of more complexities demands resilience and strong anticipatory capabilities.

Intergenerational Futures and Active Agency in Language Sustainability

The researcher struggled to maintain composure upon discovering this finding, regarding it as one of the most compelling insights emerging from the student teachers' narratives. The importance placed on intergenerational transmission—not merely as passive receivers of traditional or cultural knowledge but as active agents shaping the linguistic futures they wish to inhabit. This reflects a deep awareness that the continuity of Oshiwambo depends not only on preserving the language in its current form but also on adapting its use to new realities and generations. This finding essentially positions the student teachers as active agents at the centre of transformation, making them one with the ecology of the language.

Drawing from Inayatullah's (2004) notion of anticipatory action and Miller's (2018) futures literacy framework, participants demonstrated an ability to envision themselves as

pivotal actors in the co-creation of linguistic futures. They perceived language transmission not simply as a heritage responsibility or a mere unconscious act between a parent and a child, but as a deliberate, dynamic, future-oriented praxis. They advocate for continuous ways to actively build and develop intergenerational links that are resilient to disruptions as globalisation and ecological change phenomena continue.

Importantly, their reflections align with Fishman's (1991) emphasis on the significance of the family and community as domains that are critical to reversing language shift. Most of the participants recognised that sustainable language futures require embedding Oshiwambo into the daily lives of future generations, ensuring that it remains a functional language of emotion, culture, and knowledge. This view jaxtaposes that of English, as the language of status and social mobility.

Moreover, the narratives resonate with what Pouru-Mikkola and Wilenius (2023) describe as transformative futures learning—where participants not only imagine preferable futures but also develop the agency to pursue them. By positioning themselves as future teachers, mentors, and advocates, the student teachers underscored the vital role of educators in cultivating linguistic agency and instilling a sense of pride and responsibility in young learners.

Thus, any policy interventions must go beyond structural reforms and actively foster the agency of young indigenous speakers. This includes integrating futures thinking into teacher education, promoting community-based language initiatives, and supporting intergenerational learning practices that empower youth as co-creators of their linguistic futures.

6.4 Policy and Educational Recommendations

The findings of this study not only deepen the understanding of the possible futures for the Oshiwambo language but also suggest practical insights for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders concerned with revitalisation of indigenous languages. Several key recommendations emerge from the analysis

Foster Dynamic Language Policies

Rather than static preservation, language policies should adopt a dynamic, futures-oriented approach. Policies should consider recognising indigenous languages as living systems, capable of adaptation and innovation. Echoing Fishman's (1991) argument, this means moving beyond tokenistic inclusion of languages in official documents toward robust support for their everyday use across societal domains. Policies should strive to actively advocate for the integration of indigenous languages into public life—creating spaces where their everyday use is normalised and valued.

In Namibia's case, the National Language Policy could be reviewed by embracing the dynamic nature of languages as it is with cultures. This review could be two-fold, firstly addressing the fluidity of MoI in primary schools and secondly embracing innovation in the policy through the explicit support of digital space for indigenous language promotion, including deliberate funding for the development of language apps, online content, and digital storytelling platforms not only in Oshiwambo but also in other indigenous languages can benefit from this immersion.

Integrate Futures Literacy into Teacher Education

The student teachers' participation in CLA workshops clearly demonstrated the transformative potential of futures thinking. Incorporating futures literacy into teacher education programmes has the potential to empower future educators to act as agents of linguistic sustainability and embrace the concept of 'active agents.' Miller (2018) underscores the concept of futures literacy as an important enabler for young educators to critically anticipate trends, envision alternative futures, and develop novel linguistic sustainability strategies.

Therefore, it is suggested that teacher training curricula should include a component of futures studies, scenario planning, and anticipatory exposure, ensuring that indigenous language teachers are equipped not only with pedagogical skills but also empowered with foresight capabilities needed to revitalise current language teaching praxis—that strongly relies on code-switching as established by both Norro (2022) and Iipinge & Huddleston (2023)—in changing socio-political landscapes.

Strengthen Intergenerational Language Transmission

As the findings showed, participants placed considerable emphasis on the role of intergenerational learning in language sustainability. Policy efforts, therefore, should support

community-based language initiatives fostering dialogue and storytelling across generations. Such support could take the form of funding for intergenerational mentorship programmes, heritage language camps, and storytelling festivals that celebrate oral traditions by bringing elders and youth together in these intergenerational spaces.

There is no doubt that the Namibian population has endured systemic discrimination and decades of oppression (Hayes 1998). As the government plans the next long-term development vision for the country, educational institutions could draw inspiration from successful models such as the Māori Language Nests in New Zealand, where immersive early childhood programs, as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) argues, support language acquisition within culturally rich and affirming environments.

Align Language and Ecological Sustainability

Most participants highlighted the ecological dimension of language vitality and decline intertwined with environmental degradation; language revitalisation strategies must consider incorporating customary ecological education. Policy frameworks and curricula that advance ecological literacy, indigenous land use rights, and sustainable development can serve a dual purpose: preserving and strengthening traditional knowledge systems and enhancing the linguistic ecosystems of grammar and syntax within which Oshiwambo can thrive. As one of the participants argued during the plenary sessions, ‘If we are no longer practicing cultivating omahangu and living off the land, can we still call ourselves Aawambo, or what are we?’ Curricula could be designed to integrate indigenous environmental knowledge, linking language learning to practical activities such as farming, conservation, and ecological stewardship, as recommended by Eriksen (2016), ethnicity viewed through symbolic boundary lenses continues to use shared cultural traits as markers supported by language, religion, and customs or local traditional practices. Language act as this continuous boundary marker that distinguishes ‘us from ‘them’ in cultural spaces within speech communities and groups.

Promote Plurilingual Education Models

Participants’ concerns on the future dominating by English underscore the need for plurilingual education models that respect and elevate indigenous languages alongside global languages. Plurilingualism, as advocated by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), acknowledges the value of multilingual competence and can create more inclusive educational spaces.

Educational reforms should thus move toward bilingual and plurilingual models where Oshiwambo and English (and other national languages) are integrated into the curriculum not merely as subjects but as mediums of instruction across disciplines. Such models would affirm linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a barrier, promoting cognitive flexibility and cultural pride among learners.

Support Youth-Led Language Innovation

Finally, future policies should recognise and harness the creative potential of its youth. As the study participants demonstrated, young people are not passive bearers of tradition but active innovators. Encouraging youth-led initiatives can favour language revitalisation and make indigenous languages cool again and can result in dynamic youth movements both in lived and digital spaces. Such initiatives can be in the form of digital storytelling projects, indigenous language podcasts, and music and arts festivals.

Incentive schemes, micro-grants, and institutional support for student-led indigenous language projects can energise this space and ensure fully engaged next-generation co-creators of linguistic futures.

6.5 Methodological Reflections and Reflexivity

The participatory nature of the research was one of its primary strengths. By centering student teachers as co-creators of knowledge, the study embraced a core tenet of transformative futures research. As posited by both Inayatullah (2004) and Miller (2018), the futures we anticipate are shaped through dialogue, collective reflection, and imagination. The CLA workshops facilitated deep engagement, moving participants from surface-level concerns to underlying systemic structures, worldviews, and myths while capturing the multi-layered dimension of their perspectives.

The integrated narrative analysis allowed the researcher to prioritised the voices of the teacher students. By placing the participants' stories and narratives of their lived experiences and imagined possibilities in a format that honoured their agency and cultural context, the researcher managed to eliminate first-round analysis biases and validate the findings. Cortazzi and Jin's (2006) asserts that this approach respected the storied nature of human experience, suggesting that futures are constructed not only through data but through narrative structures imbued with emotion, memory, and identity.

Ethnographic observations enriched the data by capturing non-verbal dynamics and socio-cultural cues that would otherwise have remained invisible. As Geertz (1973) argues, deep cultural description is essential for understanding the context within which narratives emerge. Observations before, during, and after the workshops allowed for a textured, more holistic view of participant engagement and the subtle markers of linguistic identity and cultural attachment.

Reflexivity remained a guiding principle. Following Maso (2001) and Reissmann (2021), the positionality stance of the researcher retained criticality, maintaining self-awareness throughout the study. Recognising this dual position as both an insider (a speaker of Oshiwambo) and an outsider (a scholar engaged in inquiry). This insider-outsider perspective became an asset, enabling deeper insight analysis into the emotional and cultural perspectives of the participants. The consistent ongoing critical reflection avoided over-identification with participants' narratives and maintained the rigour and objectivity expected of such research (Finlay 2002).

Moreover, the reflexive stance extended to the design and facilitation of the CLA workshops. The researcher was attentive to power dynamics within the groups, ensuring that all participants—regardless of gender, year of study, or linguistic proficiency—had equitable opportunities to make their contributions. By creating a culturally safe and linguistically inclusive environment, the workshops fostered genuine engagement and authenticity in the narratives and stories told.

6.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This qualitative research study is shaped by its design, context, and value-based positionality. It combines CLA futures workshops and ethnographic observation triangulated with narrative analysis that produce rich, layered insights of student teachers' views on the future of Oshiwambo by 2054. However, as it is in any research endeavour, there are limitations worth noting:

Firstly, the study was conducted at a single site, reflecting one institutional and regional perspective. Broader perspectives might emerge from multi-campus environments. Although participation was voluntary, the invitations were extended through the senior lecturer. Most likely, attracting only those already interested in language issues, as potential

bias may have led to more optimistic or activist narratives. Secondly, while both Oshiwambo and English were used to accommodate participants' preferences, some may have struggled to express complex ideas in a bilingual setting. The dual language facilitation was further challenged by futures studies concepts not being easily translatable, and these had to be explained. Nuances may have been lost. Thirdly, asking participants to project into 2054 can be considered creative; to others, it can be a daunting challenge, as futures research remains relatively new to Namibia's educational research environment.

Suggestions for Future Research

Having built on the strengths and discussed the limitations, several pathways for future research emerge. Firstly, a clear need for longitudinal studies that track language attitudes and user change over time among young speakers and educators can provide valuable insights into the efficacy of education interventions in language revitalisation. Secondly, there emerges a need for futures-related research with community-based participatory research with language actors such as parents, elders, and policymakers alongside students. This will provide valuable intergenerational transmission insights and enrich the understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing indigenous languages. Thirdly, the incorporation of digital ethnography to explore Oshiwambo presence and innovations in online spaces responds well to the participant's interest in digital revitalisation strategies as a means of linguistic vitality. Fourthly, the application of arts-based methods such as scenario painting, storytelling festivals, or poetry to explore emotional and symbolic layers of language futures is an interesting space to explore, allowing for creative expression in a country whose cultures have long been suppressed. Finally, as Namibia looks beyond 2030, there is room to investigate the intersection of language vitality to ecological sustainability in support of linguistic resilience for future generations. This study demonstrates participants' creative agency in imagining Oshiwambo not as a static heritage but as a dynamic, co-created force capable of transformation. Building on these insights can support more inclusive and resilient linguistic futures.

7 Conclusion

This study explores the future of the Oshiwambo language from the perspectives of student teachers at the University of Namibia's Hifikepunye Pohamba Campus in north-central Namibia. It is qualitative in nature, integrating participatory futures research methods and ethnographic observations. It examines how student teachers envision the language in 2054 through futures workshops using the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) framework, ethnographic observation, and triangulation methods to interpret participants' views amid challenges of globalisation, linguistic imperialism, and ecological changes. The research reveals complex yet clear drivers of linguistic sustainability and its linkages to factors that promote them. It also highlights inhibiting forces that may propel the further decline of the Oshiwambo language if they are allowed to persist.

Student teachers see language not as a fixed cultural artifact but as a living system shaped by daily use, sustained intergenerational transmission, and an enhanced community life. As one participant noted, 'Oshiwambo is more than communication—it is a conduit for ancestral knowledge, ecological wisdom, and cultural pride.' Their symbolic metaphors affirm indigenous languages as reservoirs of collective memory, suggesting a strong emergence of alternative futures for the sustained use of the Oshiwambo language. While optimism prevailed and dominated this exploratory discourse, inhibiting forces remain deeply rooted in historical power dynamics, colonial legacies, and post-independence language policy structures.

The researcher maintained a reflexivity, balancing insider-outsider roles clearly positioning personal motivation for academic rigour and ethical care throughout the research process. By prioritising the voices of the student teachers, the researcher adhered to ethical standards, including informed consent, anonymity, and demonstrating dignity and respect, honouring the trust bestowed in the researcher to convey their views and perspectives.

The findings highlight the young educators' active agency as holding significant power to alter the trajectory of their language. They imagine futures where Oshiwambo thrives in classrooms, digital spaces, and Namibia's evolving socio-cultural landscape. They see themselves not as passive inheritors but 'active custodians and designers' of their linguistic and cultural futures. futures.

As Sohail Inayatullah reminds us, 'We are not prisoners of the future; we are its creators.' The seeds of change have been planted—carefully, intentionally, and hopefully. It is now up to these young educators and their communities to nurture these futures. Oshiwambo's future, as expressed by its young speakers, is a living possibility requiring ongoing imagination, resilience, and collective commitment. Language is more than communication—it is a powerful tool linking past and present and illuminating futures yet to be imagined.

Declaration in the use of other intelligence

The researcher employed AI-enhanced tools and services as follows:

1) Elicit reviewed and compared various papers for relevance to the topic of study. 2) UTU Volter database, Scopus, and ResearchGate/Sage were all used as resources to search, find, and identify relevant articles, books, and publications; 3) Microsoft Transcribe features aided in transcribing some audio recordings, which the researcher reviewed, re-edited, and revised. 4) Grammarly and ChatGPT-4 were used to double-check grammar, spell-check, and, in some instances, suggest better formulation of sentences. better-written language in English.

Dedication

While recognising that this work is personal, the researcher acknowledges the enormous challenge facing researchers in the pursuit of the African language question. This study is dedicated to all African researchers and scholars charting new courses, crafting distinct African narratives, and helping us discover and define who we are. Your work not only illuminates the richness of our numerous cultures and languages but also empowers us to see ourselves through new lenses, offering a path towards greater understanding, pride, and progress. Your tireless dedication to reclaim, preserve, and promote African language and heritage is an invaluable gift to current and future generations. May your efforts continue to inspire and lead toward futures where more voices and stories are heard, acknowledged, and celebrated.

Acknowledgments

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Appendices

Appendix A – Participants' Information Sheet

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12 March 2024

Participant Information Sheet

Esteemed Participant,

As part of my Master's thesis in Futures Studies at the University of Turku, Finland, I will conduct a series of workshops utilising participatory futures methods to gain insights into the future trajectory of Oshiwambo. This encompasses all dialects of Oshiwambo.

This will be an exploratory study in which you will be required to:

Provide and present your perspective on the future trajectory of the language you speak or intend to teach.

You are also required to furnish feedback regarding any insights gained from your participation and observations during the workshop.

Your insights and feedback would be invaluable for this innovative research methodology.

Details of the workshop:

Duration: The workshop will last approximately 4 hours, including breaks.

Language: Oshiwambo and English (whatever language you feel comfortable with)

Format: This will consist of facilitated workshops.

The initial phase requires participants to construct a mental future representation of Oshiwambo. You will be guided through this.

The second phase will be facilitated Causal Layered Analysis that helps identify systemic and societal issues towards future states.

Note: This is an exploratory study. There are no judgments of correct or incorrectness of answers.

Data safeguarding:

Confidentiality: All data (names, phone numbers, ages) will remain confidential and will be utilised exclusively for research purposes. Statements made will be attributed anonymously and will not be linked to any real name.

Your consent to take photographs and to record the workshop sessions will be requested for research purposes. Should you not wish to be recorded or photographed, please do indicate so on the registry.

Register: A register of all the participants' details will be required only for the purpose of the research as proof of consent and participation, and such data will be kept confidential.

Contact: Should you have additional inquiries or wish to engage in prior discussion, I am available to assist you. Contact me via email at anakwa@utu.fi

Thank you for consenting to partake in these workshop sessions.

I look forward to learning from you.

Abius Akwaake, Researcher

Appendix B – Workshop Guide

CLA Workshop Guide (4-Hour Session)

Workshop Objectives:

- To engage participants in critical and creative thinking about the future.
- To surface underlying assumptions, worldviews, and cultural narratives.
- To collaboratively construct preferred futures for reimagining the language - which does not always come cognitively conscious in the awareness as we communicate (language sustainability).

Workshop Agenda with Guidelines and notes-to-self for facilitation

Time	Session	Details : memos for facilation
09:00	**Welcome and Context Setting**	- Opening remarks. - Brief intro to Futures Thinking and CLA (5-10 min). - Overview of session flow. (Masini) Futures *NB! Prepare (1 slide on 4Ps)*
09:10	**Guided Time Travel Exercise**	- **Mental Time Travel to 2054** : The guided imagination travel exercise: participants close eyes and are led to imagine waking up in the future — describe the world around them (sights, sounds, emotions, environment). 10 mins. - Quick 5 min reflective journaling / jotting impressions.: *NB! Use the same guided script*
09:25	**Phase 1: Reveal (Group Work)**	**Participant Introductions** (5 min): Ice-breaker **Probable Futures** (15 min): Brainstorm what the future currently looks for Oshiwamob and what it will be like if trends continue: *NB! Do not lead them to your own assumptions* (*Litany* level) Do. **Desirable Futures** (15 min): Imagine ideal futures. **Assumptions Discussion** (15 min): Identify hidden assumptions driving both futures (*Systemic Causes*). *NB! Remember to encourage participation as you go through groups*
10:20	**Phase 2: Reframe (Plenary)**	- Address assumptions, discard outdated ones. - Renegotiate values; surface deeper cultural assumptions. - Identify using deep **myths/metaphors revealed**. Visualise/draw these metaphors. (*Myth/Metaphor* layer) *NB! It is important for each group to discuss their findings very shortly. Encourage applause from all the other groups and note there are no wrong answers*
11:10	**Break (10 min)**	- Short energiser or informal discussion break. *NB! Time to observe and listen - you can ask questions if they notice you are hearing them - but listen and more listening…*

11:20	**Phase 3: Imagining Desirable Futures**	- Open-up futures based on new myths/narratives. - Group activity: create "future newspaper headlines" or or do storytelling. - Define roles: what is *my/our* role in realising these futures? NB! The newspaper heading is an easier and quicker entry into the creative space. These are potential worlds and images of the future. Allows for debate and agreement in the groups on a headline/ narratives and what is possible. *NB don't let the headline imagination take too long. Allow for more time for discussions/narrative to select and agree among themselves: Listen a lot and ask question to probe more*
12:20	**Snack Break (30min)**	- Light refreshments. *NB! This is time to observe but also to build rapport and trust: Listen, listen and listen…*
12:50	**Phase 4: Reflection and Synthesis**	- Reflect on process: What shifted in your view of the future? - Group/individual reflection: key insights, what actions are now visible.
13:50	**Closing Remarks**	- Summarise key learnings. - Explain next steps and thank participants. *NB! Be open, be free and keep observing and listening. Don't pack up immediately and leave, Hang around and listen, its part of the process*

Why the Mental Time Travel?

The Mental **Time Travel** is a classic and *important* tool to help participants and to introduce them to futures thinking through the CLA and Futures Workshops (Inayatullah (2004) Participants are easily introduced to reimagine and to not be shy about it particularly at emotions and sensory levels.

It helps participants:

- Loosen their thinking from the present. -
- *"Visit" the future* before analysing it.
- Activate the imagination and emotional connection — vital for deeper CLA layers later.

Mental travel helps to prime the imagination before rational analysis. It helps to open up emotions and senses - critical ahead of going deeper into the CLA layers that are complex for the imagination. It also helps to loosen present biases ('it can only be like this" by experiencing alternative futures themselves and participating and sharing their experiences after the entire travel session.

I am excited at what this will reveal. Here we go!

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Jungk, R., & Müllert, N. (1987). *Future workshops: How to create desirable futures*. Institute for Social Inventions.
Masini, E. B. (1993) *Why futures studies?* Grey Seal, London.

Step 4: Its time to Notice the Everyday Transitions
Look around your home. What items are around you?
What food are you consuming? Has it changed from what you used to eat in 2024?
Now, pick a book in your hands, open it —what language is it in?
How do you interact with those outside your home? What devices do you use?

Step 5: Go towards the door and step Outside your home
What do you observe?
Look at your environment—what has evolved?
What sounds do you hear? Are these new noises, unfamiliar words, or advanced technologies?
What signs and writings are present? In what languages are these signs?
Take a moment, remain in this world and soak in the details. Reflect on the transformations that have occurred over the last 30 years.

Step 6: Returning to the Present **(don't repeat this line)**
Observe and absorb as much as you can of this world. Check your emotions. How do you feel, happy, sad, indifferent? Stay in that moment and reflect.

When I snap my fingers, you will gently guide yourself back to the present.

Observe your breath - breathe in, breathe out, feel your body in the chair, the space around you. You feel the space, this room you are seated in.

After 10 seconds: **SNAP**

Open your eyes when you are ready.

Pause to reflect: **Are we all back…?**

- *What stood out the most for you?*
- *Did anything feel surprising or strange?*
- *What emotions did this experience evoke?*
- *This trip to 2054 provides a glimpse into potential futures that each of us hold. What future do you want for your language? Welcome to our futures workshop.*

Appendix C – Time Travel Script

Guided Mental Time Travel Exercise

Script: (to be repeated for all Workshops)

* **Grounding:**

* Before we embark on this transformative journey together, I invite you to take a deep breath in… and then slowly exhale, releasing any tension you may be holding. Centre yourself in this room, feeling the comforting embrace of your chair beneath you. Take a moment to appreciate the senses around you—the gentle caress of the air and the serene presence of those who share this space and experience with you. Allow yourself to sink into relaxation as you fully tune into this moment.

Now, softly close your eyes. You are here, right now, completely aware of your environment. Embrace this moment to reflect on everything you understand about our world—the languages that connect us, the technologies that shapes our lives, and the ways we engage with one another. Realise how these elements have a profound impact on our interactions and experiences. Let this awareness deepen your journey ahead.

Step 2: We journey to the future…
With your eyes closed, envision that time is advancing, the years are passing by as you find yourself in the future, specifically, the year 2054. You are at home, engaged in a conversation with your mother. (Slowly)

Step 3: Now, observe the Change in Language & Communication
You are standing in front of your mother. Listen to your language. What words are you using?
Your mother replies—what language is she speaking?
Are the words you hear familiar, or have they evolved?
Now, focus on your siblings. What language do you use while speaking with them?
How does it feel to you? Natural or Strange?
Is there anything that surprises you?

Appendix D – Omugongo tree CLA Poster

Appendix E – Thematic Coding Table CLA/Narrative

The reshuffled thematic codes after triangulation exercise.

CLA Layer	Theme	Sub-Themes
Litany	Resource Scarcity in Oshiwambo Education	Lack of relevant textbooks Inadequate digital tools Urban-rural material gaps
Litany	Implementation Gaps in Policy	Policy-practice mismatch Inconsistent enforcement Symbolic policy gaps
Litany	Student Motivation and Identity	Engagement via clubs Disengagement via language hierarchy Peer influence on language loyalty
Social/Systemic	Educational Infrastructure and Policy	Teacher shortages Urban-rural inequality Weak curriculum integration
Social/Systemic	Institutional Legacy and Hierarchy	Colonial language dominance English prioritisation Policy-classroom disconnect
Worldview/Discourse	Perceptions of Language Value	English as prestige Oshiwambo as cultural-only Generational value gap
Worldview/Discourse	Socioeconomic Pressures	Urban migration effects Language as mobility tool Parental job-market influence
Myth/Metaphor	Language as Identity	Language as heritage Language as home Loss = loss of self
Myth/Metaphor	The Tree Metaphor – Omugongo	Tree as resilience Roots as ancestral knowledge Fruit as intergenerational wisdom

CLA Layer	Narrative Themes	Participant Quote(s)	Researcher Observation
Litany	Surface-level concerns: decline in Oshiwambo use, dominance of English, fears of language loss	We always speak English at school, Oshiwambo is for home, but even there, we mix. (Y2/2/2) English is the future. But it is sad because our language becomes smaller. (Y3/3/3)	Observed frequent code-switching; participants hesitated when discussing traditional language use.
Systemic Causes	Structural issues: Education policy favouring English, urban migration, lack of language resources	We have no textbooks in Oshiwambo for older grades. (Y2/4/1) City life makes you forget village life, and with it, the language. (Y4/2/3)	Discussions pointed to systemic barriers; frustration visible among participants.
Worldview	Cultural identity and pride: Language as heritage, community cohesion, pride in speaking Oshiwambo	Oshiwambo is not just language, it is our way of thinking. (Y3/1/4) If we lose Oshiwambo, we lose our ancestors voice. (Y4/1/2)	Participants connected language to identity; emotional expressions intensified when discussing heritage.
Myth/Metaphor	Deep narratives: Oshiwambo as a root, English as a wind that uproots, language as ancestral fire	English is like the wind, it blows everything. Our language is a tree; it can fall if not protected. (Y3/2/2) Oshiwambo is a fire my mother lit; I must keep it burning. (Y2/1/1)	Metaphors deeply embedded; strong resonance when participants reflected on family and land.

Appendix F – CLA Thematic Category

CLA Layer	Theme/Category	Sub-themes / Details	Example Quotes	Participant Coding
Litany	Loss of Language in Urban Areas	Language switching, peer influence, shame of mother tongue	We only speak Oshiwambo at home, outside we switch to English.'	Y2/1/2, Y3/2/3
Litany	Declining Everyday Use	Preference for English in urban and professional settings	When we are in town its like we forget Oshiwambo.	Y3/3/3, Y2/4/4,
Litany	Limited Visibility in Education	Rare use in schools, lack of textbooks	There are no Oshiwambo books in the library- old books Learners laugh at teacher/Shame of teachers Without language is like you are rootles, voiceless and homeless	Y2/3/6 Y4/1/2, Y2/2/1 Y3/3/4
Systemic	Policy and English Connected	Lack of Oshiwambo istandards. Standard applied for English in every subject, LP is not fair	Limited knowledge of language, From Grade 4 throw away Oshiwambo.Teachers don't feel like speak Oshiwambo anymore, It is politics. Who will vote for you?	Y4/1/1 Y2/1/5 Y3/3/2
Systemic	Migration and Urbanisation	Movement from rural to urban spaces erode linguistic practice. Space dimension and language practice	Adjust to suvive, City life changes the way we talk	Y2/3/2 Y2/3/3, Y3/4/2

Systemic	Language Funding	Lack of Investment and allocation for language development.	I have not heard of a budget for languages, No text books in oshiwambo, languages need to catch up like technology We don't want to forget Oshiwambo..[…] future is outside home -Y3/2/3	Y3/2/3 Y3/3/2
Systemic	Technology Use Patterns	Lack of indigenous language presence on social media and apps	Everything online is in English, so we forget Oshiwambo.'	Y3/2/2, Y2/2/2
Worldview	Language and Identity	Oshiwambo as pride, belonging, cultural backbone	Without Oshiwambo, we lose who we are.'	Y2/4/3, Y3/3/1
Worldview	Perceived Utility of English	Belief that English is necessary for success	"Oshiwambo is who we are English is how we survive, " If you want a good job, speak English, Children don't know Oshiwambo anymore….(p3)..may be Oshiwambo is not strong enough to survive…. 'If we lose our language, we lose our way m(Y4/2/2)	Y3/3/1, Y4/1/4, Y4/2/2

Worldview	Language Technologies	Believe in new media as a solution, Use of other innovations	Move with the times. We can use techs[nology…social media] nowadays learning is not only in texbook, a song, poetry debate…its in everyday life]… put it online so it is there forever, " I see Oshiwambo on google in the future"	Y4/1/1 Y2/2/4 Y3/3/5
Worldview	Bilingualism and Hybrid Identity	Balancing indigenous identity with global modernity - Go with the flow	We can be proud Owambos and still speak English.'	Y2/3/4, Y4/1/3
Metaphor	Roots and Seeds Imagery	Language as a nurturing tree with roots, traditions as seeds to nurture, Kowambo (home) is seen as roots of culture, proverbs as the skeleton (structure) of language	Its like this Marula tree…[..tree is thirsty], Our language are our roots, they feed our identity.'Kowambo okegumbo- English will take us to unkown world but we must return home, our proverbs are the bones..	Y2/1/5 Y3/2/2, Y2/1/2 Y4/1//3
Metaphor	Ancestory Fires Imagery	*Omulilo gwoshilong, Omandengu gomuuzilo ohaga tema omulilo* metaphor of ancestral continuity	Keeping the fire burning like our ansestors did, Our language is the fire our ancestors left to guide us.'	Y4//2/2(see also Y2/3/4 Y4/2/3, Y3/1/2
Metaphor	Canoe Without Paddle	*Oonkandja mbali ihadhi tokoka* metaphor highlighting risk of loss	A canoe is a vessel, without us, Oshiwambo is a canoe without a paddle	Y3/2/1, Y2/4/2

Metaphor	Roots and Seeds Imagery	Language as a nurturing tree with roots, traditions as seeds to nurture, Kowambo (home) is seen as roots of culture, proverbs as the skeleton (structure) of language	Its like this Marula tree…[..tree is thirsty], Our language are our roots, they feed our identity.'Kowambo okegumbo- English will take us to unkown world but we must return home, our proverbs are the bones..	Y2/1/5 Y3/2/2, Y2/1/2 Y4/1//3
Aquifer	Emotional Ties and Responsibility	Sense of duty to preserve and transmit language	It is up to us to teach our children.'	Y2/2/4, Y4/1/1
Aquifer	Fear and Nostalgia	Fear of language disappearance, longing for childhood memories	I learned Oshiwambo while planting omahangu with my mother. How can I throw it away?	Y3/3/1, Y2/3/2
Aquifer	Hopes for Revitalisation	Optimism on role of innovative in preservation initiatives	Technology will save Oshiwambo	Y4/2/1, Y3/1/4

Appendix G – CODE BOOK DEV

Codebook: Oshiwambo Language Futures Studies 2054

Code Name	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Quote
Language Shift	Transition from Oshiwambo to English or other dominant languages in daily life and education.	Mentions of switching to English; preference for English in schooling/work; language loss narratives.	General comments on language use without a shift dynamic; multilingual appreciation without decline.	We are taught in English now; Oshiwambo is just for home. (Y2/2/4)
Loss of Knowledge Ecology/Customs Tradition	Loss of environmental and ecological wisdom embedded in indigenous languages and practices.	References to farming, land use, traditional ecological practices linked to language; loss of oral lore.	General cultural loss unrelated to environment; loss of religion or ceremonies without ecological link.	Without farming, we lose the words we use for the land and crops. (Y3/1/2)
Identity and Cultural Resilience	Resilience against cultural erosion through active preservation of language and traditions.	Pride in language; efforts to use Oshiwambo in modern settings; reclaiming traditional practices.	Nostalgic memories without active efforts; broad cultural pride without mention of language practices.	We must use Oshiwambo at work, not only at home, to keep it alive. (Y4/1/3)
Digital Futures of Languages	Use of technology and digital media to promote and sustain indigenous languages.	Proposals for apps, social media, online teaching of Oshiwambo; ICT-related language ideas.	General complaints about technology without connection to language revitalisation.	If we create apps in Oshiwambo, youth will find it cool. (Y2/4/1)
Bilingualism and Code-Switching	Strategic or habitual use of multiple languages; switching between English and Oshiwambo.	Mention of mixing Oshiwambo and English; situational language choice; code-switching behaviour.	Comments about language learning without switching; strict use of only one language.	In town, we mix English and Oshiwambo all the time. (Y3/3/2)
Policy Gaps and Linguistic Inequality	Gaps in official language policies leading to disadvantage or decline of indigenous languages.	Complaints about education, government policy, or lack of support for Oshiwambo.	Personal issues unrelated to broader policy; complaints about school life without policy context.	English is official, but where is Oshiwambo in government work? (Y2/1/5)

Futures Literacy and Anticipation	The ability to think critically about possible, probable, and preferable futures regarding language.	Imagining futures of Oshiwambo; critical reflections on potential scenarios; visioning activities.	Nostalgia about the past; focus only on present-day language issues without futures orientation.	In 2054, Oshiwambo could be strong if we work now to preserve it. (Y4/2/1)
Intergenerational Transmission	Importance of teaching and learning language across generations to ensure its survival.	Talking about elders teaching youth; children learning Oshiwambo; worries about loss among youth.	Education not framed around generation; general learning not tied to family or lineage.	My grandmother taught me Oshiwambo in the fields. (Y3/1/3)
Educational Role in Language maitenance	The role of teachers, schools, and curriculum in promoting language vitality and usage.	Teachers role in saving Oshiwambo; calls for better school support; curriculum innovation.	Critique of education without language focus; general dissatisfaction with school.	We need Oshiwambo textbooks and lessons like we have in English. (Y2/2/2)
Language and Emotional Attachment	Emotional ties to Oshiwambo, viewing it as integral to personal and communal identity.	Sentimental and emotional expressions about the meaning of language; pride, sadness, or hope.	Technical or practical language issues; purely economic or utilitarian language arguments.	Oshiwambo is who I am. Without it, I am lost. (Y4/1/4) also Y4/1/2 and Y2/1/5 says its like a tree…