

The Case of Cogtong's Timori: Features, Usage and Vitality

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Abstract. Language is a dynamic and ever-evolving entity crafted by human necessity, but its intricacies can fade into obscurity if not meticulously documented and preserved. This case study was employed to gain a deep understanding of the research design inherent in the data, which focuses on exploring the linguistic intricacies of Cogtong's Timori language. This looks into its distinctive features regarding phonology, morphological and lexical blends, and syntax. Through in-depth interviews and observations, key informants shed light on Timori's multifaceted usage, encompassing family, educational, and workplace communication. Additionally, it unveils Timori's historical role as a secret code during World War II, a means for discreetly poking fun at others, and a stealthy language for sharing gossip. Despite its vitality within the Cogtong community, Timori remains confined to this locality, facing a dearth of comprehensive written documentation and formal language promotion efforts. To safeguard this unique linguistic heritage of this community, recommendations are proposed, including the need for comprehensive language documentation, the implementation of bilingual education programs, public promotion initiatives, and advocacy for language policies. Timori's significance lies in its ability to connect people through culture and identity, underscoring the necessity of concerted efforts to ensure its continued vitality for future generations.

Keywords: Creolization; Sociolinguistics; Philippines; Timori Language.

1.0 Introduction

The evolution of language stands as a testament to its dynamic and continuously changing nature, reflecting the intricate tapestry of human expression (Smith, 2010). In a symbiotic relationship with cultural evolution, language consistently forges new avenues to articulate ideas and concepts that were hitherto unexplored. This transformative journey extends even to the genesis of entirely novel languages, thereby emphasizing the remarkable adaptability of human communication (Mufwene, 2015).

Further, from the historical emergence of Creole languages along trade routes to the contemporary inception of digital languages in virtual realms, language's inherent flexibility is evident in its capacity to seamlessly assimilate innovative cultural, technological, and social landscapes (Bakker & Daval-Markussen, 2017). This incessant linguistic evolution underscores language vitality and mirrors the boundless creativity intrinsic to human thought, propelling an enduring exploration of uncharted linguistic territories (Markov et al., 2023). In addition, Vogt (2009) contends that the fascinating interplay between human creativity and language finds a compelling association with the intricate phenomenon of creolization. Altarriba & Basnight-Brown (2022) added that this

process, characterized by the convergence of diverse cultural influences, results in the emergence of novel linguistic expressions, identities, and modes of communication. The case of the Timori language in Cogtong, Candijay, Bohol, exemplifies how this phenomenon unfolds in practice. Creativity takes center stage in the context of language as individuals from different linguistic backgrounds interact and adapt to their multicultural surroundings. Through this interaction, new linguistic forms are born, reflecting a fusion of vocabulary, syntax, and cultural nuances. Hiver & Al-Hoorie (2022) stated that these creative adaptations often transcend the boundaries of established languages, leading to the development of creole languages or dialects that uniquely encapsulate the experiences of those who engage in this linguistic cross-pollination.

However, it is paramount to acknowledge that creolization is not solely characterized by harmony; it can also emerge as a response to oppression, conflict, and adversity. Marginalized communities have often leveraged this phenomenon to construct alternative avenues of communication, thereby asserting their identities amid challenges (Mufwene, 2001). These occurrences underscore the intricate interplay of multifaceted forces that drive the transformative trajectory of languages and cultures, revealing human societies' profound resilience and ingenuity when confronted with adversities.

In tough times, according to Gutiérrez Rodríguez & Tate (2015), it can be seen that creolization has a big impact on the field of linguistics. The evolution of the Timori Languages of Cogtong, Candijay, and Bohol offers a compelling case. This unique language emerged as a testament to its community's resilience and adaptability, shaped by historical trials of oppression, conflict, and societal upheaval. War and marginalization forced the people of the area to combine their mother tongues with that new linguistic identity – this hybrid language aided in covert communication, the statement of group identity, and successfully negotiating challenges. The Timori language is a living example of creolization under hardship, demonstrating the resilient human spirit's ability to adapt and survive and flourish in the face of the most challenging conditions.

Steels & Szathmáry (2018) state that language is dynamic and ever-evolving. However, Fang (2017) asserts that language is also vulnerable to disappearing over time if not actively preserved, promoted, and supported by language policies. In the context of the Timori language, the absence of comprehensive language policies and support mechanisms puts it at risk of fading away. The younger generation may not see practical benefits in learning and using Timori, particularly if it is not integrated into modern education or communication platforms. If steps are not taken to address these challenges, the Timori language could gradually diminish, erasing a valuable piece of cultural heritage and community identity.

In light of these compelling dynamics, this research highlights the need for an in-depth investigation into the linguistic characteristics of Timori, its role in the community, how it is being used in modern contexts, and how it might be undergoing changes due to various sociocultural factors. This could contribute to the preservation of a potentially endangered language and provide insights into the broader processes of language transformation and revitalization. Specifically, this thrives in discerning its linguistic features and usage patterns and assessing its language vitality. Furthermore, the research recommends language preservation programs and promotions based on findings.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A case study is employed to gain a deep understanding of the research design inherent in the data, as emphasized by Merriam (1998), cited in Zainal (2007). This study focused on a limited number of participants due to the need to thoroughly examine individuals, topics, and issues, aligning with Hay (2004) as referred to in Armfield (2007). This approach was particularly apt because no prior research had been conducted, especially concerning the Timori language in Cogtong, Candijay, Bohol, Philippines. The study aimed to depict data narratively (McDonough, 1997). As cited in Zainal (2007). The case study design entails six steps: defining the research question (often starting with "how" or "why"), selecting the case and specifying data collection methods, preparing for data collection, gathering and organizing field data, conducting data analysis, and ultimately reporting the findings (Glen, 2015).

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Barangay Cogtong, located in the municipality of Candijay, within the Province of Bohol, Philippines. This coastal village in Eastern Bohol is situated 6.1 kilometers from the national highway in Poblacion, Candijay. The locality per se serves as a credible criterion for this research, as its residents are recognized for their extensive knowledge and proficiency in the Timori language.

2.3 Research Participants

The Key Informants for this study comprised eight individuals purposefully chosen from the local community of Cogtong. These informants were carefully selected based on specific inclusion criteria to ensure their meaningful contribution to the research. The informants were divided into four categories: three belonged to the elderly age group, three were professionals, two were ordinary residents, and two were 21st-century learners. A fundamental criterion for their selection was their residency within the study's location, ensuring their deep-rooted familiarity with the community. Additionally, all eight key informants possessed fluency in the Timori Language, facilitating effective communication and ensuring the authenticity of their shared insights. This diverse group of informants was pivotal in offering multifaceted perspectives and insights that enriched the study's findings within the unique context of Cogtong, Candijay.

2.4 Research Instrument

In this study, the primary instruments are the researchers, and the information was acquired through observation, focus groups, and in-depth one-on-one interviews. The researchers prepared interview guide questions that focus on the area of inquiry in the study.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

First, the researchers conducted the pre-gathering phase, as indicated in the succeeding steps. After identifying the respondents, each participant was sent a letter of permission to conduct an interview. Following the participants' consent to participate in the study, the researcher discussed the study's purpose, the time required to complete the interview, and plans for using the interview results. After all of these concerns had been secured, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the respondents using the actual data-gathering procedure.

As for the post-gathering procedure, the researchers conducted the subsequent steps. Coding plays a crucial role in uncovering ideas, recognizing similarities, and spotting recurring themes within the data. It serves as the bridge between collecting data and shaping theoretical developments (Chun et al., 2019). The interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim, and from there, we constructed codes to represent the key concepts relevant to our study. Themes emerged as we meticulously analyzed the data, going line by line, and integrated subcategories by constantly comparing, modifying, and dissecting the concepts.

In this research, the data underwent a process of synthesis, during which essential statements were condensed without sacrificing the integrity of the data. This approach, as advocated by Sharan (2009) and Harrison et al. (2017), was employed to enhance the credibility of the interpretation, drawing on the insights from Merriam (1998), as cited by Yazan (2015), and to bolster the overall rigor of the study, following the guidance of Harrison et al. (2017).

2.6 Ethical Considerations

By ethical standards, informed consent was comprehensively explained to and obtained from every participant before the commencement of each interview. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, and any identifying information within the interview transcripts was either altered or removed. Field notes containing participants' pseudonyms were securely stored separately, and confidentiality was maintained about identifying details. Skordis-Worrall, et al. (2015) emphasize that ethical considerations are paramount in research, necessitating the assurance of participants' full awareness and understanding of their roles. Furthermore, to protect both the individuals and the institution involved, the report refrained from disclosing the institution's names, safeguarding all parties' privacy.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The analysis of transcripts revealed three major themes that best describe the linguistic tapestry of Timori based on the view of the key informants. Each theme was labeled in a phrase deduced from the formulated meanings of the informants' responses. The Three major themes and their sub-themes, as derived from the present set of transcripts, were as follows:

Theme 1: Timori Linguistic Features

Letter assignment correspondence (Phonology)

As shown in Table 1, in the case of the Timori language, a thorough analysis of its phonological aspects reveals a distinctive feature: a specific letter assignment to other letters in the alphabet, which plays a pivotal role in altering the pronunciation and sound of words.

Table 1. Equivalent letter assignment of the alphabet to Timori

English Alphabet	Timori Letter Correspondence
A	O
B	T
C	C
D	P
E	E
F	F
G	G
H	H
I	I
J	J / S
K	K
L	R
M	N
N	M
NG	M
O	A
P	D
Q	Q
R	L
S	Y
T	B
U	U / O
V	V
W	W
X	X
Y	S
Z	Z

Expanding on the unique phonological features of the Timori language, the specific letter assignments mentioned affect pronunciation and contribute to its phonetic system's richness and complexity. This distinctive aspect may stem from historical linguistic influences or indigenous language evolution within the Cogtong community. Understanding these letter assignments requires a deep dive into Timori's phonological rules and patterns, which may include phonetic shifts, assimilation, or vowel harmony. Moreover, the significance of these letter assignments extends beyond mere pronunciation; they often carry cultural and semantic nuances, reflecting the language's connection to the community's identity, traditions, and environment. This linguistic feature is evident in the respondents' statement:

PG: *When I became conscious, I began to understand the words my elders and parents spoke. Later, I realized it was the Timori language, and then I learned that there are letters that can be replaced with other letters.*

PF: *For example, letter (a) will become letter (o), letter (b) will become letter (t), and letter (r) will become letter (l).*

This letter-to-sound correspondence creates a complex phonological system unique to Timori and contributes to its overall linguistic identity. Castello (2015) suggests an innate ability to adapt to linguistic nuances and highlights the importance of exposure and immersion in language acquisition. Additionally, Kuhl, (2010). Asserts that it showcases the flexibility and complexity of language, where phonetic variations can significantly alter the

meaning of words. Overall, the implication is that language acquisition is a dynamic process influenced by one's environment and exposure to linguistic patterns.

Cebuano-Binol'anon Viayan Blends (Morphology and Lexicons)

As shown in Table 2, Timori employs a fascinating blend of linguistic elements to form words.

Table 2. Sample Visayan & Timori Blend

TAGALOG	BINOL ANON / CEBUANO WITH PREFIX	TIMORI
Taga saan	Taga asa	Taga oyo
Mag lakad	Maglakaw	Mag rokow
Babae	Baji	Toji
Lalaki	Laki	Roki
Magsulat	Magsowat	Magyawob
Bumili	Pagpalit	Pagdorib
Tingin	Tan-aw	Bom-ow
Magkano	Pila	Diro
Maliit	Gamay	Gonos
Sobra	Sobra	Yatlo
Halaga	Kantidad	Kombipop
Tiwalala	Salig	Yorig
Marunong	Kama o	Komo a
Saya	Lipay	Ridos
Tara	Ali	Ori
Lagi	Kanonay	Komamos
Punta	Adto	Opba
Akyat	Saka	Yoko
Higa	Higda	Higpo
Mag ayos	Magtarong	Magbolam

Notably, the language incorporates Visayan prefixes into its structure, adding complexity and richness to its morphological makeup. These prefixes, originating from the Visayan language family, interact with Timori's translated letters, producing a lexicon that embodies both its indigenous roots and external linguistic influences. Incorporating Visayan prefixes into the Timori language reflects a dynamic process of linguistic borrowing and adaptation, illustrating the region's interconnectedness of diverse language families. This blending of linguistic elements enriches Timori's morphological repertoire and underscores its historical and cultural interplay with neighboring linguistic communities. These are their statements:

PO: *These affixes in Bisaya are not always changeable; only the root words can be replaced with other letters. However, it also depends on other letters because some cannot be separated. Like in 'maglaba,' (washing) 'mag' remains, while 'laba' can be replaced. It's 'magroto' now in Timori.*

The statement underscores the contentment of Raviv et al. (2021), stating the complexity and variability of morphology and lexical aspects within languages. It highlights how different languages or dialects may employ unique rules and patterns for word formation and transformation. This variability in word formation can make language learning and comprehension more nuanced and complex, emphasizing the need for listeners to be attuned to these linguistic nuances.

Mother Tongue-Based Syntactic and Grammatical Structure

Examining Timori's syntactic and grammatical features, it becomes apparent that the language's syntax closely aligns with the Binol'anon or Cebuano Visayan language. This is largely due to the significant linguistic and cultural interaction between the speakers of Timori and these neighboring languages. As the majority of Timori speakers also consider Binol'anon or Cebuano Visayan as their mother tongue, the syntactic and grammatical structures have naturally converged, leading to similarities in the way sentences are constructed and grammatical rules are applied. The observed convergence of Timori's syntactic and grammatical features with Binol'anon or Cebuano Visayan languages underscores the intricate dynamics of language contact and bilingualism within the Cogtong community. This linguistic feature is evident in their statement:

PE: *It will follow the structure of the Visayan language. It would not be easy if it followed the English structure.*

PJ: *Visayan is the language of communication here, which will be the basis for it.*

The statement demonstrates that syntax and grammatical structure vary across languages, and individuals navigate their linguistic environments by adhering to the specific rules and structures of the language that are culturally relevant or contextually appropriate (Fine et al., 2013). This adaptive behavior underscores the dynamic nature of language use, reflecting how individuals seamlessly integrate language with cultural and contextual cues to communicate and interact effectively within diverse sociolinguistic settings. In the case of this study, the mother tongue (Binol'anon-Cebuano) is the proper syntax to use.

Theme 2: Timori Linguistic Usage

Socio-Linguistic Context

The socio-linguistic context significantly shapes the language dynamics of Cogtong's Timori, revealing its versatile usage across various settings. Primarily employed within families, the language fosters intimate communication. Its application is limited in educational spheres, mainly when teachers employ Timori to elucidate specific language topics. Interestingly, employees hailing from Cogtong utilize Timori as a means of workplace communication, highlighting its role beyond personal interactions. The interplay between Timori and its socio-linguistic contexts reflects the intricate dynamics of language maintenance, adaptation, and identity negotiation within the Cogtong community, underscoring the importance of understanding and valuing linguistic diversity in all its forms. This multifaceted deployment underscores the intricate interplay between Cogtong's Timori and its socio-linguistic environment. These are evident in their statement as follows:

PO: *That's how we talk here in our barangay. Many here speak Timori in casual conversations. Even at home, we speak Timori.*

PF: *In our previous job, whenever there was a co-worker from Cogtong, we automatically spoke Timori.*

PJ: *In our class, if there's someone from Cogtong, we speak Timori and have a conversation".*

PL: *Before [mentioning the teacher's name], my teacher spoke Timori well in his class. But those who were not from Cogtong couldn't understand".*

PM: *They use Timori in class as an example.*

These statements conform with the statement of Holmes (2001) that illustrates that there is a complex interplay between language, identity, social interaction, and education in the sociolinguistic context, and in this case, this exists in the Timori language. They show how language is not just a means of communication but also reflects social and cultural dynamics within the community. The use of Timori within family settings highlights its role in fostering intimacy and reinforcing familial bonds, echoing the notion of language as a vehicle for expressing identity and belonging. Similarly, its occasional use in educational contexts underscores its cultural significance and its potential as a resource for promoting linguistic heritage and identity among students. Moreover, using Timori in workplace communication among employees from Cogtong emphasizes its functional adaptability and its role in facilitating social cohesion and solidarity within professional environments. These observations support Holmes' framework and provide concrete examples of how language operates as a dynamic and multifaceted construct intimately intertwined with broader social, cultural, and educational processes within the Timori-speaking community.

Historical and Contemporary Linguistic Function

In the context of the Timori Language in Candijay, its historical significance during World War II reveals a fascinating aspect of its usage. During that critical period, when the Japanese army grasped the Visayan language, the Timori Language became a crucial tool for covert communication. To avoid detection and interception, the local population ingeniously altered the language, using it as a secret code to relay information, plans, and messages without arousing suspicion. Today, even in modern times, the Timori Language retains its unique role beyond day-to-day communication. It has evolved into lighthearted banter and humor, allowing people to poke fun at others discreetly, keeping the intended target unaware of the jest.

PE: *In the olden days, Timori was already there, according to my mother, who said if she were still alive now, she would be 101 years old. The use of Timori increased during the Japanese occupation so the Japanese wouldn't catch them at that time of war. Because there were already Japanese who could speak Bisaya, they spoke Timori to avoid being caught.*

PJT: *So that they wouldn't be caught during the war.*

PF: *Nowadays, people do it among themselves so it won't be known that they're joking to someone.* "

PM: *When they exchange gossip, so others who don't understand Timori won't know*".

This connects to the concept of "argot" or antilanguage, according to Burhanuddin et al. (2022), which states that language is a powerful tool that could separate secret society members from other people. And in the case of the Timori Language in Cogtong, it was used as a secret language during times of war and oppression. Further, (Minchew & Hopper, 2008) claims that Language is a powerful tool for creating lighthearted fun and humor, allowing people to share laughter and joy. This dual functionality, both as a historical instrument of secrecy and a contemporary tool for amusement, underscores the resilience and adaptability of the Timori Language in the rich tapestry of linguistic expression within the Candijay community, serving as a testament to the enduring cultural significance of language in shaping social dynamics and communication practices.

Theme 3: Language Vitality

Inter-Generational Language Continuity

Assessing the vitality of Cogtong's Timori reveals that this language has undergone an intriguing transformation, evolving into a creole within the locality and being unconsciously transmitted to younger generations, who have come to recognize it as the Timori language. The assessment of Cogtong's Timori language highlights a fascinating linguistic evolution and transmission journey within the local community. The transformation of Timori into a creole reflects a dynamic process of language contact, adaptation, and innovation shaped by the complex sociolinguistic dynamics of the locality. Their statements are as follows:

PO: *I wasn't really taught how to speak Timori; I just learned it on my own. And from what I've learned, it's just about replacing one letter with another letter. I'm very proud that we have the Timori language in our place, but some people are hesitant to use it because they don't know how. And if there's something funny, they won't understand.*

PG: *Nowadays, the youth are very good at speaking Timori. If you live here, you'll learn Timori quickly because that's what they always use.*

PF: *Here in Cogtong, even the children nowadays are skilled at speaking Timori. It's only here. But in other barangays, they don't speak it; it's only here. Even in Poblacion, they don't know it. Some may be aware, like students from here, but it's different from in Cogtong.*

Language remains vibrant and thriving when passed down from generation to generation, sustaining its vitality and cultural significance across time (Puthuval, 2017). The transmission of the Timori language from one generation to the next is crucial for its survival and preserving the rich cultural heritage it embodies. As Timori is passed down, it carries the collective wisdom, traditions, and unique community identity, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity among its speakers. Moreover, the intergenerational transmission of Timori ensures that younger generations inherit a powerful means of communication that reflects their cultural roots and enables them to engage actively in their cultural practices and expressions, reinforcing the language's significance in both sociolinguistic and cultural contexts.

However, it raises an intriguing question about why this unique linguistic phenomenon has yet to spread to neighboring barangays. Understanding the factors contributing to this localized linguistic preservation while remaining relatively isolated from neighboring areas becomes crucial in crafting effective language revitalization strategies, considering the specific dynamics of the Timori language in Cogtong. Identifying and addressing these factors may be key to the language's continued vitality and potential for broader revival.

Language Documentation and Resources

Unfortunately, despite Cogtong's Timori language retaining its vitality, there needs to be more comprehensive written documentation in the form of linguistic corpora, dictionaries, grammar guides, and other resources. The absence of comprehensive written documentation for Cogtong's Timori language poses significant challenges to its long-term preservation and promotion. While the language remains vital and actively spoken within the community, more written resources are needed to study, teach, and revitalize Timori in formal educational settings and academic research. Linguistic corpora, dictionaries, and grammar guides play crucial roles in documenting a language's structural and functional aspects, facilitating language revitalization efforts, and ensuring its transmission to future generations. Without such resources, there is a risk of language erosion and

loss, particularly as younger generations may encounter difficulties learning and using Timori in formal educational contexts where written materials are essential for language instruction. As stated by the informants:

PO: *No, it wasn't written like that at all.*

PF: *No, you only heard that from the way people talk.*

PG: *There is no such thing written like such.*

The study of Rogers (2020) claims that the absence of written materials hinders efforts to capture and preserve the unique nature of the language fully. The absence of such resources limits its potential for academic research and makes it challenging to effectively pass down the language to future generations. Recognizing the importance of these linguistic resources is a crucial step toward ensuring the continued vitality and cultural richness of the Timori language within the community. Efforts to rectify this gap in documentation should be undertaken with sensitivity to local perspectives and priorities, involving collaboration with the community to ensure the preservation of this valuable linguistic heritage.

Language Planning and Revitalization

It is unfortunate that, in the case of the Timori language, there are currently no dedicated efforts for its promotion and no existing policy on bilingual education.

PG: *People have yet to make a program to promote and preserve our language.*

PJT: *There is no such promotion of language.*

According to UNESCO (2008), promoting language is essential for preserving culture, identity, cognitive development, social inclusion, economic opportunities, linguistic diversity, interdisciplinary learning, and global understanding. Moreover, Hornberger (2012) asserts that language promotion and policy play a fundamental role in enriching societies and ensuring that no culture or group is left behind. Despite the language's cultural significance and the pride associated with speaking it, the absence of formal initiatives to support Timori's preservation is a concerning gap. This oversight highlights the need for immediate attention and action to ensure that this unique linguistic heritage, which holds a special place in the hearts of its speakers, can continue to thrive and be passed down to future generations. The development of language promotion programs and policies on bilingual education could play a pivotal role in safeguarding the vitality and cultural richness of Timori within the Cogtong community. Beyond just communication, maintaining the Timori language inside the Cogtong community has significant implications. It is essential for maintaining social cohesiveness, protecting cultural identity, and giving future generations access to education. The community may secure economic development, fortify intergenerational relationships, and contribute to global linguistic diversity by supporting bilingual education and language preservation projects. Taking note of these implications highlights the necessity of acting quickly to save Timori as an essential part of the community's cultural legacy and collective identity, as well as a means of communication, guaranteeing its survival for future generations.

4.0 Conclusion

The case of Cogtong's Timori language within its sociolinguistic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and functional contexts has provided a multifaceted understanding of this unique linguistic heritage. Timori's distinct phonological features, such as letter assignments, showcase its adaptability. It's used in various social settings, from family conversations to workplace interactions, and even as a secret code during wartime, highlighting its flexibility. The language remains vibrant and has been passed down to younger generations, preserving cultural heritage and identity. However, the need for written documentation and formal language promotion poses challenges. To safeguard Timori's rich heritage, we need resources, documentation, and policies supporting bilingual education. Timori holds a special place in the community, connecting people through culture and identity, and efforts are needed to ensure its continued vitality for future generations.

Efforts should be undertaken urgently to document Cogtong's Timori comprehensively, including creating linguistic corpora, dictionaries, and grammar guides, preserving the language for future generations, and enabling further research. Collaborative initiatives should involve the community to ensure cultural relevance and sensitivity. Introducing bilingual education programs incorporating Timori into the curriculum can facilitate

intergenerational transmission. Public promotion through cultural festivals and language workshops can raise awareness and appreciation. Advocacy is needed to establish language policies supporting Timori's preservation and promotion. Addressing these recommendations will help safeguard the vitality and cultural richness of Timori within the Cogtong community, bridging the gap between its remarkable linguistic heritage and its future.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors affirm the following contributions: JM—main author, writing, data gathering and analysis, editing, and supervising; JR—co-author, writing, data gathering, editing, research presentation; BF—co-author, writing, data gathering, research presentation; ED—co-author, data gathering, research presentation, and LT—co-author, data gathering, research presentation.

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