

VLACH Lectures: Heritage and Resilience

How long does it take for a language to disappear?

Rapid and radical language shift in the
village of Gio (Sulawesi, Indonesia)

Nikolaus P. Himmelmann University of Cologne

Friday,
23.10.2026
Start: 16:00

OeAW, Theatersaal
Sonnenfelsgasse 19
1010 Vienna



Program

Welcome and Introduction

[Thede Kahl](#), Chair of the Commission Vanishing Languages and Cultural Heritage,
Member OeAW

Lecture

[Nikolaus P. Himmelmann](#), University of Cologne

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(Sulawesi, Indonesia)

Discussion

Small Reception

[Nikolaus P. Himmelmann](#) focuses his research at the Institute of Linguistics at the University of Cologne on typology and the study of universals, grammaticalization and linguistic theory, prosody and grammar, as well as language documentation and description.

The most common scenario for language death is a complete language shift: a community does no longer use the traditional language but shifts to another one. There are many ways why and how such shifts come about. The presentation first introduces major aspects of language shift and then illustrates a recent case from Indonesia where such a shift appears to have happened within one generation. The case to be presented is not only of note for its fast pace. It also illustrates the rather rare scenario that speakers shift from one local endangered language to another one rather than to the national language or a dominant regional language.

CONTACT

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REGISTRATION

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